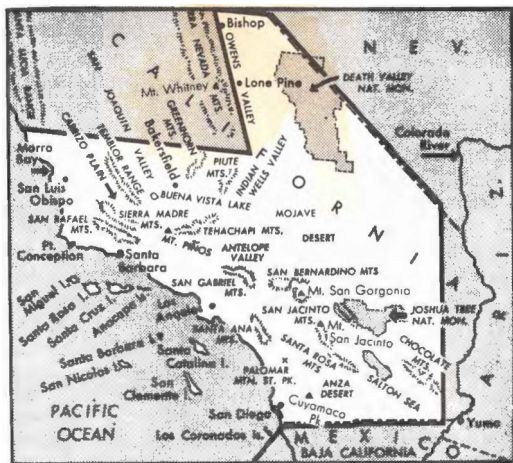


## **SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION**

**/Guy McCaskie**

The summer season was mostly dry, with only a few thunder showers in the mountains during July, but the effects of last winter's heavy rainfall were still evident with much lush vegetation, full lakes, and running streams remaining. Extensive breeding bird surveys conducted by the California Department of Fish and Game revealed some startling facts about the status of various riparian nesting species, and it is clear that we are on the verge of losing some as breeding birds.



**LOONS, GREBES** — All three species of loon regularly found in s. California during the winter were present along the coast throughout the summer in small numbers as indicated by reports of *ca.* 40 Com. Loons, *ca.* 50 Arctic Loons and *ca.* 15 Red-throated Loons during June and July. A Com. Loon on L. Murray June 16 (CGE) and another on L. Cuyamaca July 29 (PU) were at inland localities. A flock of 150 Arctic Loons off Pt. Mugu June 10 (KG) were northbound migrants, and indicate how late migrants of this species are encountered in this Region.

Some 200 Eared Grebes were present on Baldwin L. all summer with some nesting; six pairs bred at McGrath S.P. near Ventura (RW), three pairs were nesting near the mouth of the Santa Margarita R., near Oceanside in early August (PU), and over 40 nests were found at the north end of the Salton Sea (hereafter, N.E.S.S.) June 27 (GSG); this species nests only locally and sporadically in s. California, and is previously unrecorded as a breeding species on the Salton Sea. For the second year W. Grebes nested on the Salton Sea with at least ten nests seen at N.E.S.S., June 27 (GSG); Sweetwater Res. in San Diego is the only other locality within the Region where this species breeds.

**SHEARWATERS, STORM-PETRELS** — Sooty Shearwaters outnumbered Pink-footed Shearwaters offshore, with six Manx Shearwaters off San Diego July 25 (DP) being the only other shearwater species reported. Small numbers of Black Storm-Petrels were present offshore throughout the summer with no other storm-petrel species reported.

**PELICANS, FRIGATEBIRDS** — Brown Pelicans were continuously present on the Salton Sea after an early arrival May 24, with a high count of 20 on July 23 (EC); one on L. Cuyamaca July 29 – Aug. 3 (PU) was the first to be found in the mountains of San Diego County. Magnificent Frigatebirds were somewhat scarce with one at Carlsbad July 16 (DS) and another over San Diego July 28 (SD) being the only two seen

along the coast; inland one was at the south end of the Salton Sea (hereafter, S.E.S.S.) July 9 - 15 (JD,EC), and another was at the unlikely locality of Rancho Bernardo near Escondido July 16 (ME).

**HERONS THROUGH SPOONBILLS** — Cattle Egrets were more numerous along the coast this summer than in previous years, with groups of up to 35 reported in San Diego County (PU), and nesting should be checked for in the coming years. A Reddish Egret remained in San Diego to at least June 30 (CGE) and another was present in Imperial Beach July 16+ (GMCC). A juv. Am. Bittern found in Goleta May 18 (BS) documented nesting at that locality, one at McGrath S.P. all summer was believed to be a non-breeding individual (RW), and two flushed from the dense reed beds at N.E.S.S., July 12 (GSG) could well have been nesting at that locality; this species has been found nesting along the coast s. to Los Angeles, but recent records are few indeed and it is not known to nest at the Salton Sea. At least ten pairs of White-faced Ibisess successfully nested at N.E.S.S. (GSG), and up to six remained along the coast of San Diego County all summer (PU); this species formerly nested commonly at the Salton Sea, with smaller numbers breeding along the coast s. of Los Angeles. A sub-ad. White Ibis at Pt. Mugu June 6 - 10 (RD) attracted much attention, however, the fact that a similarly marked bird was at nearby Malibu during March and April (KG), and that a pair of captive birds at Busch Gardens in the San Fernando Valley have successfully nested and raised young (all but one having escaped), cast doubt on the wild origin of the Pt. Mugu bird. A brightly colored sub-ad. Roseate Spoonbill at N.E.S.S., throughout the summer (GMCC) was probably the same individual seen at S.E.S.S. last winter.



*Immature White Ibis, Pt. Mugu, Ventura Co., Calif., June 9, 1978. Photo/ Ron Dow.*

**GEESE, DUCKS** — Two or three Brant were found summering along the coast as usual; one at N.E.S.S., June 11 (LD) and another at S.E.S.S., July 15 (EC) were the only two seen on the Salton Sea. A pair of Gadwall, an uncommon and very localized breeding species in s. California, successfully nested at McGrath S.P. (RW) and two pairs were found breeding around Oceanside in late May (PU). Two pairs of Blue-winged Teal at Bishop July 3 (TH) and a male near Big Pine June 10 (LB) were in the n. portion of the Owens Valley where nesting should be anticipated; a male at Goleta July 27 (PL, LB) was probably an early fall migrant, but a male in Carlsbad July 6 (AF), and another male at

McGrath S.P. throughout June (RW) indicate that nesting along the coast of s. California is a possibility. A White-winged Scoter lingered in Goleta to June 15 (PL, LB). Surf Scoters were more numerous than usual along the coast this summer, with 25± around Santa Barbara, 90± along the coast of Ventura County, and 100+ in San Diego during July; one at N.E.S.S., June 11 – July 15 (GMcC), and single birds near there July 15 & 23 (EC) were the only ones found on the Salton Sea this summer. A Black Scoter at McGrath S.P., June 9 – 11 (RW, PL) was exceptionally late. Up to ten Red-breasted Mergansers were present near Big Pine in the Owens Valley all summer (TH), an unusual locality for this species.

**KITES, HAWKS, FALCONS** — White-tailed Kites have evidently extended their range to include the Antelope Valley with one near Valyermo all summer and an adult accompanying two juveniles near Lancaster July 25 (KG, JD). Most interesting were four reports of Goshawks with one near Big Pines in the San Gabriel Mts., Mar. 25 (FH), two together at Green Valley in the San Bernardino Mts., May 21 (KG), one near L. Fulmer in the San Jacinto Mts., May 6 (PL) and another at Tahquitz Meadow in the same mountains June 7 (DMM); nesting is not known s. of the Sierra Nevada in California, but continued reports from these s. California mountains during the summer strongly suggest that small numbers are resident s. to the San Jacintos. Very few Sharp-shinned Hawk nests have been found in s. California, hence single birds around Idyllwild in the San Jacinto Mts., May 5 – 6 (JD) and an apparent pair near Julian in the mountains of San Diego County Apr. 29 (JD) are of interest. A Red-shouldered Hawk in Kelso July 12 (SC) and another along the Colorado R., near Needles July 26 (SC) were both e. of the species' normal range in California. An ad. Zone-tailed Hawk at Ft. Piute in e. San Bernardino Co., June 17 (GMcC) was unexpected. A pair of Swainson's Hawks, now an exceptionally rare breeder in s. California, fledged two young from a nest near Lancaster (KG) and another pair successfully raised one young at a nest in the Lanfair Valley of e. San Bernardino County (SC). A Peregrine Falcon near Imperial Beach July 4 (EC) was the only one reported this summer.

**QUAIL, RAILS** — Mountain Quail were found to be commoner than usual in many areas with a number of young seen in the San Gabriel Mts., and a pair with ten young found in the desert scrub of Ballinger Canyon of n.e. Santa Barbara County July 10 (PL). A juv. Virginia Rail at Batiquitos Lagoon near Carlsbad July 5 (PU) substantiated nesting at that locality. Two calling Black Rails near Seeley in the Imperial Valley Mar. 18 (CGE) would suggest nesting there.

**OYSTERCATCHERS, PLOVERS, SANDPIPERS** — A Black Oystercatcher remained at Playa del Rey all summer (KG). Nine pairs of Am. Avocets were found nesting in coastal San Diego County during May (PU) and five active nests were seen at S.E.S.S., in May and June (GSG); this species is a rare breeder in both areas. About six nests of Am. Avocets at Furnace Creek

Ranch in Death Valley (hereafter, F.C.R.) in late May (GMcC), and a pair with four juveniles at Baker July 12 (SC) established positive breeding records for the Mojave Desert. A Semipalmated Plover in Bishop June 10 (TH) and four near Tecopa July 16 (JT) were in areas from which few have been reported. An Am. Golden Plover on San Miguel I., June 29 (JG) was unexpected, the date being exceptionally early for a fall migrant and too late for a spring migrant. A pair of Long-billed Curlews accompanied by three juveniles near Big Pine in the Owens Valley in July (TH) establishes the southernmost breeding record in California. A Whimbrel near Big Pine July 22 (LB) and five near Palo Verde along the Colorado R., July 21 (KVR) were in areas from which few are reported. A Solitary Sandpiper at Baker July 18 (SC) and another near Encino July 25 (JD, KG) were early fall migrants. Most unusual was a Wandering Tattler at S.E.S.S., June 11 (LD) since the species is but an accidental straggler away from the coast and offshore islands. A Surf-bird on San Diego Bay July 14 (DE) was either an early fall migrant or had summered locally. Two Red Knots at S.E.S.S., July 9 (DE) and six there July 15 (EC) were at an inland locality where small numbers occur regularly each fall, however, one near Lancaster July 25 (JD, KG) was unexpected and only the second found inland away from the Salton Sea and Colorado R. Valley in s. California. The first Baird's Sandpiper of the fall was one at McGrath S.P., July 31 (RW). A breeding-plumaged Dunlin at McGrath S.P., June 11 (RW) and another at N.E.S.S., the same day (LD) were both exceptionally late. The last of the spring migrant Stilt Sandpipers was at S.E.S.S., June 4 (LD), and ten there July 23 (EC) were the first for the fall at the Salton Sea; one at McGrath S.P., July 18 – 26 (RW, PL) was at a coastal locality, this species being very rare anywhere in California away from the Salton Sea.

**LARIDS** — One or two Pomarine Jaegers, along with an equal number of Parasitic Jaegers, were found off the coast of San Diego and Ventura Counties during June and July (DP, RW) indicating that small numbers of both species summered in s. California waters. A South Polar Skua was 10 mi off Oxnard June 25 (BS); this species is now being found regularly in s. California waters during May and June.

Two sub-ad. Herring Gulls at N.E.S.S., July 3 (PU) were summer stragglers; this species is exceedingly rare in s. California during the summer, with most documented records being from the Salton Sea. Numbers of Laughing Gulls at S.E.S.S., built up to ca. 300 by late July (GMcC); this is a regular post-breeding visitor to the Salton Sea, and is not known to have nested there in recent years. Four Franklin's Gulls were seen on the Salton Sea June 11 (LD), and a dying bird was captured at N.E.S.S., July 9 (DE); one or two are found around the Salton Sea almost every summer, but all are in non-breeding condition. An ad. Heermann's Gull, a casual straggler to the Salton Sea, was at S.E.S.S., July 3 (PU), followed by an immature there July 15 (GMcC) and another immature at N.E.S.S., July 23 (EC).

Over 200 pairs of Forster's Terns nested at N.E.S.S. this summer (GSG); a nesting colony on San Diego Bay

since 1962 (*Condor* 65:246, 1963) and irregular nesting at S.E.S.S. since 1970 (*AFN* 24:717, 1970) are the only other nesting records for s. California. An Arctic Tern off San Diego June 7 (DP) and three off Oxnard June 10 (RW) were spring migrants; this species is normally found in small numbers off our coast from mid-May into early June, being one of our latest migrants. A Least Tern was at N.E.S.S., July 9 (DE); this species is a casual straggler to this inland locality.

Black Skimmers again nested in large numbers on the Salton Sea, and 12 adults succeeded in raising seven young on San Diego Bay during the summer (PU); this species is now well established as a breeding bird in s. California.

ALCIDS — A few Com. Murres evidently summered along the coast as indicated by six off Oxnard June 10 (RW), another there July 29 (RW), one off San Diego June 7 (DP) and two there June 20 (DP). A Xantus' Murrelet (*Endomychura hypoleuca scrippsi*) 3 mi off San Diego July 11 (DP) was of interest since these birds appear to disperse from s. California waters in late June to be replaced by Craveri's Murrelet and the occasional nominate form of Xantus' Murrelet (*E. h. hypoleuca*). A Rhinoceros Auklet off San Diego Aug. 7 (DP) had evidently summered locally.

DOVES, CUCKOOS, OWLS — A Band-tailed Pigeon at Ft. Piute June 17 (PU) and another in Solana Beach June 22 (GMcC) were both out of range. A White-winged Dove near San Diego July 30 (DP) was in coastal lowlands away from the species' desert habitat. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo at Ft. Piute June 17 (PU) was believed to be a migrant, however, a group of 3-4 near Vista Aug. 11-12 (CW) was judged to be a family group, and if so, establishes the first nesting record in San Diego County in over thirty years. Spotted Owls were reported from all the s. California mountain ranges, and three juveniles were found along Big Rock Cr., on the n. side of the San Gabriel Mts., July 15 (KG). A Pygmy Owl at 8500 ft in the Inyo Mts., near Lone Pine June 16 (LB) was in Pinyon Pines and most likely of the Rocky Mountain race, *G. g. pinicola*. Some ten pairs of Elf Owls nested along the Colorado R., n. of Needles, with young being fed on May 13, young fledged by June 2, and an adult still present as late as July 26 (SC); these and another pair located near Blythe June 10 (SC) are believed to be the only individuals of this species still remaining in California. Long-eared Owls were found nesting near Lancaster (2 pairs in May — JD.KG), at Morongo Valley (1 pair in May — BAC.RCY) and near Borrego Springs (1 pair in April — PU).

GOATSUCKERS, SWIFTS — Whip-poor-wills were found at Camp Angeles in the San Bernardino Mts., from May 13 well into July (DMM.SG) and one was at Big Pines in the San Gabriel Mts., June 28 (KG); this species is present each summer, but definite breeding evidence is still lacking. Ten Com. Nighthawks at Table Mt., in the San Gabriel Mts., July 28-29 (KG) would suggest nesting at that locality, however, there is no previous record for these mountains, an isolated area in the neighboring San Bernardino Mts. being the only known breeding locality in s. California. The only Black

Swifts reported were eight in Santa Anita Canyon of the San Gabriel Mts., in June and July (FH.GSS) and an equal number at Fallsview in the San Bernardino Mts., throughout June (DMM.GSS); the species is known to nest at both localities. Some 50 Chimney Swifts were discovered going to roost in a chimney in Burbank July 6 (JB) and were still present at the end of the season; this is by far the largest group so far recorded in California. Intriguing were 3-4 Vaux's Swifts over Big Bear L., in the San Bernardino Mts., July 22 (KG); this is the rarer of the two *Chaetura* swifts occurring in s. California during the summer, however, one was seen in this same general area during the summer of 1976 (*AB* 30:1005, 1976) and nesting locally is a distinct possibility.

FLYCATCHERS, LARKS, SWALLOWS — Two E. Kingbirds at Tinnemaha Res., in the Owens Valley June 12 & 24 (TH) may have been nesting; breeding records for California are few indeed (*West. Birds* 4:33-44, 1973). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, always a rare find in California, was ca. 30 mi n. of Baker July 18 (ASE) and another was near Needles July 26 (SC). A Wied's Crested Flycatcher near Victorville July 27 (SC) was in suitable breeding habitat, and had it nested, would have extended the species' breeding range NW by about 50 mi from Morongo Valley; a pair near Mecca during May and June (GSS.LD) were the first to be found in the Coachella Valley. Willow Flycatchers were formerly common breeding birds of willow thickets throughout s. California, hence, it is a great concern that only two territorial birds were found, both in coastal San Diego County, during surveys conducted in suitable habitat throughout s. California this summer (SG). A pair of Dusky Flycatchers seen feeding a juv. Brown-headed Cowbird at Cibbets Flat in the Laguna Mts., July 4 (DP) establishes the second breeding record for the species in San Diego County. A pair of Horned Larks feeding three juveniles at the summit of San Geronio Peak (11,485 ft) July 6 (DMM.SC) establishes an altitude record that will be hard to beat. Breeding Purple Martins were found only in San Diego County with six at nest holes along San Onofre Cr., on Camp Pendleton July 6 (AF), eight flying around holes near the Mt. Palomar Observatory July 16 (PU) and up to 17, including juveniles, at Cuyamaca Peak during July (CGE); the species is nearly extirpated from s. California.

VERDINS THROUGH VIREOS — Verdins found nesting near Palmdale in March (JD.KG) established the northwestern extreme of the species' range. Long-billed Marsh Wrens were fairly numerous as breeding birds in the marshes n. of Lancaster this summer (KG); this locality is outside the species' known nesting range (*Pacific Coast Avifauna* 27:338-341, 1944). Unprecedented was a pair of Water Pipits at the summit of San Geronio Peak June 15 - July 6 (DMM.SC), with one observed carrying food on June 20 & 24, since nesting was only recently established for California (*AB* 29:1028, 1975).

During an extensive survey of most of the riparian habitat still remaining in s. California a total of 89 territorial ♂ Bell's Vireos was located (SG), certainly a far cry from what a similar survey would have revealed 50 years ago, and there is just cause to be concerned



about the species' continued existence as a breeding bird in California. Fourteen territorial ♂ Gray Vireos were located in the area e. of Baldwin L., in the San Bernardino Mts. (SG), and 3-4 pairs were present on the s. side of the Laguna Mts. of San Diego County this summer (ME); this is another species that is on the decline. The gray race of the Solitary Vireo *V. s. plumbeus*, continues to move W. with two pairs found along Big Rock Cr., on the n. side of the San Gabriel Mts., July 15 (KG) along with a ♂ *plumbeus* apparently paired with a *cassinii*; this is the first recorded instance of these two distinct forms of the Solitary Vireo occurring together on breeding territories. Only one pair of Warbling Vireos could be found in San Diego County during June and July (PU) indicating that this once common nesting species is almost extirpated as a breeding bird.

**WOOD WARBLERS** — A ♂ Black-and-white Warbler in Los Angeles June 8 (GSS) was a late spring vagrant. Virginia Warblers were found on breeding territories in the White Mts. (RW), and on Clark Mt. (DE) during May and June as expected, but one at Green Canyon in the San Bernardino Mts., July 22 (KG) was w. of the species' established range (*West. Birds* 5:45-56, 1974). Yellow Warblers once were abundant breeding birds throughout the riparian habitat of s. California, yet only 80 territorial males were located w. of the deserts during the summer (SG) with none along the Colorado R. A Townsend's Warbler in Glendale July 25 (OC) was exceptionally early for a fall migrant. Several territorial ♂ Hermit Warblers were around Green Valley in the San Bernardino Mts., May 21 (KG), and another territorial male was located in the San Gabriel Mts., June 9 (KG) giving us additional evidence to support the theory that small numbers regularly nest in these mountains each summer; one on Mt. Pinos July 22 (RW) was most likely a fall migrant. A ♀ Blackpoll Warbler near Imperial Beach June 24 (GMCC) was a spring vagrant. A ♂ Prairie Warbler at Tollhouse Springs in the White Mts., June 2 to at least July 1 (RW,LJ,TH) was most unusual, there being but one previous spring record; it would appear that this year's bird remained all summer. Small numbers of MacGillivray's Warblers were in willow thickets along streams in both the San Bernardino and San Gabriel Mts. all summer (KG,DMM); it now nests in these mountains every year. One or two Red-faced Warblers were at Charlton Flats in the San Gabriel Mts., June 17 - July 2 (BM,RW,JA); this species is a casual straggler to California, however, half the records are from mountain localities such as this in May and June. A Canada Warbler, an exceptionally rare vagrant in spring, was found in the Sacramento Mts. of San Bernardino Co., June 3 (ASE). The only Am. Redstart reported this summer was one in Goleta June 16 (JG).

**ORIOLES, GRACKLES, TANAGERS** — A ♂ Baltimore Oriole at Tollhouse Springs in the White Mts., June 6 (TH) was a late straggler from the spring movement. Two or three pairs of Great-tailed Grackles appeared to be nesting at F.C.R., at the end of May (RW), which extends the species' range in California N from the Colorado R. Valley. Two pairs of Hepatic

Tanagers on Clark Mt., May 20 (PL,DE) were the only ones reported. A few Summer Tanagers were found w. of the Colorado R. Valley, with two pairs at Brock Ranch May 20 (SC,BB), a pair near Palm Springs May 3 (SG), a male in Whitewater Canyon May 3-8 (SG), and three pairs around Morongo Valley after May 5 (BAC,RCY,SG) all believed to be on breeding territories; a male near Saugus June 15 (SG) was apparently a summer wanderer w. of its range.

**FINCHES, SPARROWS** — A ♂ Rose-breasted Grosbeak was in Corona July 6 (SG), another was near Imperial Beach June 23 (EC) and a third was on Pt. Loma in San Diego June 30 (CGE); summer stragglers are not too infrequent. A ♂ Indigo Bunting near Blythe in late June appeared to be paired with a Lazuli Bunting (KVR), and another male in Morongo Valley during July also appeared to be paired with a Lazuli Bunting (SG). A pair of Lawrence's Goldfinches successfully nested ca. 10 mi n. of Bard with a juvenile seen accompanying the adults June 11 (KVR); this species is previously unrecorded as a breeding bird along the Colorado R. Valley. The breeding range of the Green-tailed Towhee was extended S into San Diego County with a juvenile seen in the company of adults on Cuyamaca Peak July 29 (PU).

#### S.A.

Totally unexpected were nesting Lark Buntings in the Lanfair Valley of e. San Bernardino County. One or two ad. males were seen in the area during May but had departed by the end of the month leaving two females. A nest containing four young was discovered May 27 (SC, EAC), and both females were seen with young out of the nests June 4 (DMM), with one female still accompanying two juveniles June 17 (GSS). I can only speculate that the lush growth stimulated by last winter's heavy rains induced these birds to stay and breed. Northwestern New Mexico and e. Colorado are the closest known breeding localities, and these are some 650 mi distant from the Lanfair Valley.

Probably as a result of the introduction of citrus orchards, Lark Sparrows are now common nesters around Blythe (KVR); formerly the species was unrecorded breeding anywhere in s.e. California. A few territorial White-crowned Sparrows were present in willow thickets around the summit of San Geronimo Peak all summer (DMM); breeding was first established here in s. California in 1956, and it appears that small numbers are still nesting each summer. The presence of up to eight Fox Sparrows on Cuyamaca Peak during June and July (PU) strongly suggests nesting at that locality; the species is previously unrecorded breeding s. of the San Jacinto Mts. Several pairs of Lincoln Sparrows nested near Big Bear L., in the San Bernardino Mts., as usual (KG), but two pairs on Mt. Pinos June 18 (RW) and two more pairs at Big Pines in the San Gabriel Mts., all summer (KG) establish new nesting localities within the Region.

**CORRIGENDA** — In the winter season report the photograph of the Coues' Flycatcher should be credited

to Kenneth V. Rosenberg, and the record of a wintering ♂ Cape May Warbler at Finney L., Mar. 5 - 20 (SC,JD) was omitted.

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