

MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION

/Stephen A. Laymon

The spring season was cooler than normal, with evenly spaced rains until mid-May. This resulted in the grasses remaining green longer and in later bloom on many flowers, shrubs and trees. Despite the almost weekly pattern of cold fronts moving through the area few if any waves of migrants could be detected.

It was considered one of the slowest springs on record on the coast, with few migrant or vagrant warblers and no large movements of birds (P.R.B.O.). In the Central Valley (hereafter, C.V.), similar conditions were noted, with migrant numbers 60% of normal.

With the warming of the weather around mid-May, several observers commented that the landbird migrants disappeared overnight and only a few stragglers were seen after that. This contrasts to the normal tapering off of migrants through the end of May.

The most remarkable ornithological undertaking of the spring was Barry Sauppe's Pigeon Point (hereafter, P.P.) migration watch in San Mateo County. From March 7 to May 24 he censused migrant seabirds from dawn to dusk every day! In 1056 hours of observation he recorded 2,257,552 individuals of 44 species. Hats off to Barry and to his extremely valuable addition to our knowledge of seabird numbers and migrational timing.

Jon Winter who has served ably as regional co-editor for four years, retired this spring so he could devote more time to his research and teaching. This fall Dave Shuford will be tak-ing over the landbird section.

LOONS THROUGH TUBENOSES — Common Loons were reported in lower-than-usual numbers inland, however 34,076 were counted at P.P., 3X last year's birds/man-

hour figure. The peak migration date was Apr. 12, with 3836 (BSa). A Yellow-billed Loon was at P.P., May 9 (BSa) for our latest spring record. Arctic Loon was the most abundant migrant at P.P., with 1,002,361. Peak of migration was Apr. 21 with 72,680 (BSa). The birds/man-hour ratio was equal to last year's. Red-throated Loons were 3X last year's birds/man-hour ratio at P.P., with 33,232 for the period and a peak of 3806 Apr. 21 (BSa). One was inland at Nicasio Res., Marin Co., Mar. 14 (DS).

Eared Grebes were reported only from the salt ponds in s. San Francisco Bay (hereafter, S.F. Bay) with an exceptional total of 1800 Mar. 28 (*vide* DE). Western Grebes were found to be abundant at L. Berryessa Apr. 14, with 1500 (SAL).

Black-footed Albatrosses were in normal numbers at P.P. (BSa), but few were reported elsewhere. Most were seen from the last week in April to mid-May which is normal. A Laysan Albatross was following a freighter at P.P., Mar. 30 (BSa). The only N. Fulmars reported were 12 at P.P., Mar. 7-19 (BSa). Few Sooty Shearwaters were found away from P.P., where 105,395 were recorded. The peak migration date was Apr. 26, with 28,217 (BSa). The only Short-tailed Shearwaters were eight at P.P., Mar. 16 (BSa), which is normal. Manx



Shearwaters were reported in numbers equal to last year's, but much higher than previous years with 170 at P.P. (BSa) and scattered sightings n. to Sonoma County. The only Storm-Petrel of the season was a Leach's found freshly dead at Pajaro Dunes May 28 (PM).

HERONS — An ad. Little Blue Heron was again found at Palo Alto Baylands May 5 (TC, J&SLi) where they have been seen in recent years. Cattle Egrets were found nesting in the Region again, with 15-25 pairs at the S. Wilbur Flood Area (hereafter, S.W.F.A.), Kings Co., May 13 & 18 (RW). An additional 15 were found, with ten at Maxwell, Colusa Co., May 2

(WA) being the largest group. In a few years this species will probably be a common nester in this Region.

The only Least Bittern report was of one calling at S.W.F.A., May 13 (RW). Scattered coastal Am. Bitterns are to be expected, but 8-10 at W. Pittsburg, Contra Costa Co., May 21-25 (DE) seems high. White-faced Ibis were reported from the C.V., in better-than-average numbers, with 11 at Delevan N.W.R., Mar. 16 (J. Snowden), 15 w. of Colusa, Colusa Co., Apr. 9 (B. Thornton), four still there in mid-May (*fide* WA) and two at S.W.F.A., May 13 (RW).

WATERFOWL — More Canada Geese than normal were found at coastal locations well into the spring with 17 reported at eight locations until May 20. Black Brant were recorded in record numbers at P.P., with 155,826 (BSa), about 50% higher/man-hour than last year. Twelve at Sherman I., in the Delta region Apr. 26 (CS) were quite unusual. The Ross' Goose at Crespi Pond, Monterey Co., was last seen Mar. 4 (JRI). Surprising was another at L. Pillsbury Mar. 25 (SAL) in the c. coast range, a probable first record for Lake County.

Mallards nested in unusual locations, with one nest at the Dumbarton Bridge in *Salicornia* marsh Apr. 3 (DE) and one brood of 11 in the Sutter Buttes May 15 (WA). Only eight ♂ Blue-winged Teal were reported, which is about 30% of recent spring totals. A Cinnamon × Blue-winged Teal was at Springtown, Contra Costa Co., Mar. 17 (AE). The existence of hybrids certainly complicates the identification of females of these species. Forty Am. Wigeon at Bolinas Lagoon Apr. 29 (LCB) were many for so late. Wood Ducks were common on the Russian R., near Geyserville Apr. 9 - May 31+, with 22+ present daily (DS).

The ♂ Tufted Duck was last seen at Limantour Estero, Marin Co., Mar. 10 (DRo). Three Oldsquaws were found along the coast, which is normal, but one at the Petaluma Sewage Ponds May 6 (BBu *et al.*) was of note. Scoter numbers at P.P., were 9613 White-winged, 250,879 Surf and 422 Black (BSa) which works out to the same number/man-hour as past years. Twenty-five White-winged Scoters in S.F. Bay at San Leandro was noteworthy (DE). Away from P.P., 97 Black Scoters was a very high count for spring. One ♂ Red-breasted Merganser was at Oroville Mar. 9 (KVV) and 587 passed P.P. (BSa).

RAPTORS, RAILS — A Turkey Vulture was on the Farallon Islands (hereafter, F.I.) May 22 (P.R.B.O.) for the first island record. Only ten Sharp-shinned Hawks were reported, which is much lower than normal. One at Jenner, Sonoma Co., May 9 (J&BDP) was as late as they are ever found away from nesting areas. The Broad-winged Hawk at W. Pittsburg was last seen Mar. 27 (DE). Swainson's Hawks were reported in normal numbers, with all 25 sightings in the C.V. Rough-legged Hawks left the Region early. The only ones reported were 11 in Honey Lake Basin Mar. 2-4 (B&CY) and three there Apr. 7-8 (SAL). Despite the poor winter, seven Ferruginous Hawks were recorded this spring, which is more than normal. All of these were seen Mar. 1-9. An ad. Peregrine Falcon and an unidentified large, brown falcon were at Mendota

Wildlife Area, Fresno Co., Apr. 29 (RH), a late date for the s. C.V.

A Clapper Rail at Martinez, Contra Costa Co., May 26 (B. Richmond) was at a new location. The only Black Rail was one calling at Bolinas Lagoon Mar. 11 (DS).

SHOREBIRDS — Forty Semipalmated Plovers at Gray Lodge W.M.A., Apr. 26 - May 9 (BED) was unprecedented for the C.V. Snowy Plovers were well reported. Unusual were 150 at the Leslie Salt Ponds at Hayward Apr. 7 (CS) and 18 with one on a nest at S.W.F.A., May 18 (RW). Of the 35 pairs at Pajaro Dunes, 19 had either had nest failures or lost broods by May 31+ (J & RW). Eight Am. Golden Plovers were reported, which is more than usual for the season.

Up to three Marbled Godwits were at Lower Klamath N.W.R., Apr. 8-22 (RE). Whimbrels were found in smaller numbers in the C.V., than has been the case in recent years, with the largest flock, 28, at S.W.F.A., May 13 (RW). Three Solitary Sandpipers were reported, one near Lick Observatory, Santa Clara Co., May 12 (DES), one near Grenada, Siskiyou Co., Apr. 15-20 (RE) and one at Fresno Apr. 17 (KH).

Three hundred Wilson's Phalaropes were at L. Pillsbury for what seems to be a first Lake County record. Northern Phalaropes were well represented at P.P., with 239,404 Apr. 16 - May 24 (BSa). They peaked May 5 with 33,922. This same day 3400 were found in Lake County at various locations, including flocks of several hundred flying low over chaparral-covered mountains n. of Clear L. (SAL *et al.*). Red Knots were found inland, with one at Lower Klamath N.W.R., Apr. 17 (RE) and one at S.W.F.A., May 13 (RW). Inland Sanderlings were two at Mendota Wildlife Area May 15 and three at S.W.F.A., May 18 (RW). Three Semipalmated Sandpipers were reported this spring with one at Bolinas Lagoon Apr. 25 (P.R.B.O.), one at Pajaro Dunes May 28 (P.M. *et al.*) and one at S.W.F.A., May 18 (RW) for one of few inland records for the Region. Up to seven Baird's Sandpipers were well described at Lower Klamath N.W.R., Mar. 24 - Apr. 22 (RE). A Pectoral Sandpiper was found at Struve Slough, Santa Clara Co., Apr. 9 (P.M.). A breeding-plumaged Rock Sandpiper was at P.P., May 3 (BSa) for one of our latest Regional records.

GULLS, TERNS — A Glaucous Gull at F.I., Mar. 1 - Apr. 2 (P.R.B.O.) and another at Tomales Bay Apr. 21 (SAL) were the only ones reported. An ad. **Black-headed Gull** was at the Stockton Sewage Pond, San Joaquin Co., Mar. 20-27 (DRo, JM, DE) for the seventh state record and the first one inland. A Laughing Gull was at Pajaro Dunes May 23 (J&RW) and breeding-plumaged Franklin's Gulls were at P.P., Apr. 25, May 17 & 21. A Little Gull was also found at the Stockton Sewage Ponds Mar. 20-27 (DE, DRo, JM) and another was at P.P., Apr. 19 (BSa) for the sixth and seventh Regional records. Sabine's Gulls were reported in low numbers with only 25 at P.P., May 5-6 (BSa) and one F.I., Apr. 22 (P.R.B.O.).

Common Terns made a poor showing with only 37, of which 36 were at P.P., Apr. 15 - May 24 (BSa). Arctic Terns were also much scarcer than in recent years with only 31 seen Apr. 24 - May 24, 30 of which were at P.P. (BSa). An ad. Royal Tern was at Pajaro Dunes

May 14-20 (J&RW) and an immature there May 20-28 (J&RW, PM), for only the fourth and fifth regional record for the 1970s. A very early Elegant Tern was at Moss Landing May 19 (David Wharton).

ALCIDS — The Com. Murre total for the P.P., lookout was 125,421 (BSa). This is 30% of last year's/man-hour total. Marbled Murrelets were seen at P.P., in unprecedented numbers with a total of 562, and a peak of 203 Mar. 11 (BSa). High numbers of Tufted Puffins were recorded with 60± at Point St. George, Del Norte Co., Apr. 12 (J&BDP, KVV), eight at Elks Head, Humboldt Co., May 5 (DE), eight on F.I., May 13 (DE) and a total of five at P.P., May 5-21 (BSa).

PIGEONS THROUGH OWLS — Band-tailed Pigeons, absent this winter in the C.V., began to move into the valley by mid-April and were seen in flocks of 50 or more in the Chico area by mid-May (SAL). There seems to be little pattern to the migratory movements of this species.

Two Long-eared Owls at Pt. Reyes May 9 (P.R.B.O.) may have been breeding. Nesting Short-eared Owls were found in Contra Costa County with four fledglings at Livermore June 1 (AE) and a nest with young at W. Pittsburg in mid-May (*fide* DE). These are the first known nestings for the country. Four pairs of Saw-whet Owls were found on Pt. Reyes; three at Arroyo Hondo (P.R.B.O.) and one at Laguna Ranch (JE). Two nests were found, one was in a nest box and the other was in a dead alder in a riparian location. There are few nesting records for Marin County.

HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH FLY-CATCHERS — Hummingbirds were found to be very common in the Contra Costa area (JRI,LF), but were very scarce at feeders in the C.V. (m.ob.) and the Sierra foothills (MA). Costa's Hummingbirds were found at Healdsburg, Sonoma Co., Mar. 25 - May 15 (J&BDP) and Alama, Contra Costa Co., Apr. 15 - May 28 (JRI, DE). A ♂ hummingbird, which appeared to be an Anna's × *Selasphorus* was at Golden Gate P., San Francisco May 17 (DHE).

Lewis' Woodpeckers were reported from coastal locations in higher-than-normal numbers, including seven at Novato until May 6 (DS) and two at Filoli Estate, San Mateo County May 22 (PM), a late date. An influx of Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers was noted, with five found in an hour (EH). A woodpecker, described to be a ♂ N. Three-toed Woodpecker was seen at Castle L., Siskiyou Co., Apr. 29 (B&CY). If accepted by the state rare bird committee it would be the first record for California.

The pair of E. Kingbirds returned to Edgewood, Siskiyou Co., May 21 (*fide* MT), for the second straight year. An E. Phoebe was at Laguna Ranch, Pt. Reyes Apr. 3 (JE *et al.*). This is an unusual date as most records are for late fall and winter. Black Phoebe have become quite common in Shasta and Scott Valleys, Siskiyou Co., with a nesting pair under every bridge. They were formerly rare in this area, but have been expanding their range in recent years. A W. Wood Pewee at Fairfax, Marin Co., Apr. 14 (DS) was about two weeks early.

A Bank Swallow at the Chico Oxidation

Ponds Mar. 16 (KVV) was quite early, as were two at L. Merced, San Francisco Co., Mar. 27 (PM) and one near the Sutter Buttes Mar. 31 (LCB).

S.A.

Most of the Bank Swallow colonies along the Sacramento R., in Tehama Co., were destroyed by rip-rap bank stabilization projects, displacing at least 400 pairs (SAL). The rest of the nesting sites are slated for destruction in a similar manner in the next few years. These stabilization projects are also injurious to bank-nesting Belted Kingfishers and Rough-winged Swallows and to all species which are dependent on early successional stages of riparian growth, such as Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Willow Flycatchers, Bell's Vireos, Yellow Warblers, Blue Grosbeaks. By stopping the natural erosion and deposition, new willow forests will not be created.

Twenty-one pairs of Purple Martins were censused at Lava Beds, N.M., Siskiyou Co., breeding in lava tubes May 24-26 (T. Lund). This is one of the largest populations in the Region, but has declined in recent years.

CHICKADEES THROUGH WARBLERS

— The only Black-capped Chickadees were reported from Siskiyou County; at Grenada Mar. 2 and Greenhorn P., Yreka Mar. 8 (*fide* MT). Plain Titmouses were found at two locations in s.e. Humboldt County, May 8 (DE) where they are rare. Winter Wrens fledged five young in Golden Gate P. (JM) for the first modern nesting record there. Late migrants of this species were at Gray Lodge S.W.M.A., Apr. 4 (BED) and at Dog I., Tehama Co., Mar. 28 (SAL). Rock Wrens nested on F.I., for the first time since 1971 (P.R.B.O.). Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were reported in numbers twice normal, both around the C.V., and in coastal foothill areas. Eleven Phainopeplas were at one location in the Sutter Buttes May 15 (WA), an unusual concentration. A Loggerhead Shrike was on F.I., May 11-12 (P.R.B.O.) for one of few island records.

Three Black-and-white Warblers were reported; one at Watsonville Apr. 16 (PM) and one at F.I., May 15 (P.R.B.O.) were normal for spring, but one at L. Merced Mar. 10 (PM) probably wintered. A Worm-eating Warbler at Palomar, Pt. Reyes May 4 (P.R.B.O.) was quite unusual, especially in spring. Ten Tennessee Warblers were found; nine were from the outer coast and F.I., May 15-22 (P.R.B.O., JM). One at Golden Gate P., Mar. 7 (DHE) may have wintered. This is many more than normal for spring. A large flock of 35-45 Nashville Warblers at Aetna Springs, Napa Co., Apr. 11 (J&BDP) was impressive and unusual. Three Virginia Warblers at F.I., May 26, 28 & 29 (P.R.B.O.) were unusual for spring and one at Monitor Pass, Alpine Co., May 29 (KVV) was of interest. A ♂ N. Parula was at Princeton, San Mateo Co., May 24 (BSa).

Single Magnolia Warblers were found at F.I., May 20-23 (P.R.B.O.) and Lincoln P., San Francisco May 23 (LCB). The Black-throated Blue Warbler that wintered at Auburn was last seen May 15 (*fide* EH). The two Palm Warblers at Pacific Grove Mar. 3-4 (JRI) probably wintered, but the three at Santa

Cruz Apr. 15 (PM) and one at Gold Bluff's Beach, Humboldt Co., Apr. 25 (*fide* BBe) likely were migrants. An Ovenbird was on F.I., May 21-22 (P.R.B.O.). The N. Waterthrush at Five Brooks Pond, Marin Co., was last seen Mar. 10 (JM). A Kentucky Warbler was on F.I., May 11-12 (P.R.B.O.) for the sixth Regional record, five of which are in spring. Hooded Warblers were found on F.I., May 11-12 (P.R.B.O.) and Golden Gate P., May 21 (†DHE). The only Am. Redstart was on F.I., May 21 (P.R.B.O.).

BOBOLINK THROUGH FINCHES — A Bobolink was at the Pt. Reyes Lighthouse May 21 (JM). Twelve Hooded Orioles were reported, which is many more than usual for spring. The reports were all from known locations. A "Baltimore" Oriole on the F.I., May 15 was the only one reported. A **Common Grackle** at W. Pittsburg May 25 (†DE, S. Foreman) provided only the third Regional record. Brown-headed Cowbirds were noted in larger-than-normal numbers in c. Contra Costa County in early spring (AEJRI). The wintering flocks broke up in late March. They were first noted in the Sierra foothills Mar. 15 (BBa) and in the riparian woodland at Red Bluff Apr. 9 (SAL). Three Summer Tanagers were reported; one on F.I., May 15 and another there May 20-24 (P.R.B.O.). An imm. male was at the Fish Docks May 16 (JM). This is more than are normal for spring.

The only Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at F.I., May 20 (P.R.B.O.). This is expected since most spring records are in June. An exceptionally early Black-headed Grosbeak was at Los Altos Mar. 13 (J&SLi). A Blue Grosbeak at W. Pittsburg May 22 was w. of its normal C.V. range (DE). Two Indigo Buntings were reported from F.I., May 10-11 and 21-22 (P.R.B.O.). The only lowland Evening Grosbeaks were in the n.w., with 12 at Arcata May 9 & 16 (*fide* BBe) and one on the Smith R., Apr. 12 (J&BDP). Two Pine Grosbeaks were at Gover Hot Springs S.P., Alpine Co., May 12 (EH,KVV). Pine Siskins continued their absence of the past winter and went unreported. A pair of Red Crossbills was at L. Merced Apr. 20 - May 31 (PM).

Three Lark Buntings were found; two at Panoche Pass, Fresno Co., Mar. 4 (DRo) and one breeding-plumaged male at s.e. Sutter Buttes Apr. 4 (WA). Only three Grasshopper Sparrows were reported, all from known locations. The four Sharp-tailed Sparrows which wintered at Bolinas Lagoon were still there May 1 (P.R.B.O.). One male was singing at Palo Alto Baylands Apr. 23 (WB). The only Chipping Sparrow seen was at Palomar, Pt. Reyes May 31 (P.R.B.O.), much fewer and later than normal. A Brewer's Sparrow was at the Chico Oxidation Ponds Apr. 26 - May 8 (KVV,SAL) for one of few C.V. records. The only others reported were two on the F.I., May 12 & 25-26 (P.R.B.O.). Three Harris' Sparrows were reported, which is surprising since only two were found all fall and winter. The only longspur was a Lapland on F.I., May 15 (P.R.B.O.). This is one of our latest spring records.

CORRIGENDA — The Black Terns in the corrigenda AB 33:212 refer to AB 32:1051 not AB 31:1051. The Flammulated Owls AB 32:1052 were along Buckeye Creek near Claire Engle L. The White-faced Ibis AB 33:210

were not the first Marin County records. There were two, not one, Buff-breasted Sandpipers on F.I., Aug. 29 - Sept. 5, AB 33:210.

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