

MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION

/Stephen A. Laymon and
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The summer was a mild one with inland temperatures averaging 10°F or more below normal until the middle of July and again dropping back down to low levels by the end of the month. Winds were very light throughout the period inland, however, coastally the Farallon Islands (hereafter, F.I.) reported wind less than 10 knots on only seven days in all of June. These persistent NW winds coupled with extended periods of clear weather put a damper on coastal land bird migration and vagrant sightings.

The only rain was on July 20 and 21 resulting from a tropical storm which penetrated the area. The storm brought a frigatebird mini-invasion, including the Region's first inland sighting. The highlights of the summer were the addition of two species to the state list, Red-tailed Tropicbird and Crested Auk-let. The low point was the complete destruction of the Negit Island, California Gull colony at Mono Lake, a fate which had been pre-dicted for several years by biologists working at the lake.

LOONS THROUGH STORM-PETRELS — Summering loons were down in numbers from recent years, with only two Commons, 12 Arctics and eight Red-throats reported, all from the coast. A pair of Horned Grebes was building a nest mound at Lower Klamath N.W.R., June 27, but only one bird and no nest was there on further investigation in July (RE,MR).

Two Black-footed Albatrosses at F.I., June 6 (P.R.B.O.) were the only ones reported. The only Pink-footed Shearwater was one seen from Pt. Pinos July 20 (DRo). Both of the above species are usually much more commonly reported during summer. Sooty Shearwaters were reported in unprecedented numbers with 500,000 moving W-NW of the F.I., July 3-5 (P.R.B.O.), one million (est.) heading S past Rodeo Lagoon, Marin Co., July 15 (BL) and 13,000 flying W out of Monterey Bay July 20 (DRo). No storm-petrels were reported.

TROPICBIRDS THROUGH HERONS — An ad. Red-tailed Tropicbird was observed from the F.I., July 3 (P.R.B.O.). It is the first

record for California and possibly the first for North America. Surprising were 40 White Pelicans at Tulare L., Kings Co., June 9 (HLC). This is a site of a former large nesting colony, but no nesting was in evidence. As usual several hundred had arrived in San Francisco Bay (hereafter, S.F. Bay) by July 31. Southbound migrant Double-crested Cormorants were noted on the Sacramento R., at Hamilton City, Glenn Co., as early as July 1; 45 passed S between that date and July 15 (SAL). A large concentration of 200 was at the Hayward salt ponds by July 24 (HLC). Magnificent Frigatebirds staged an invasion comparable to the summers of 1972 and 1977. Six were sighted along the coast from Berkeley to Crescent City July 11-29 (m.ob.). Most notable was an immature soaring with Turkey Vultures over the Sacramento R., at Hamilton City, Butte and Glenn Cos., July 27 (SAL). This represents the first inland record for the Region.

At the Palo Alto Baylands Little Blue Heron was again seen July 3-11 (m.ob.). Snowy Egrets were well reported, with 35 nests at the Hartson Res., Lassen Co., colony June 10 (SAL), 345 at Palo Alto Baylands Aug. 1, 120 in a heronry s.e. of old Tulare L., June 9 (HLC) and 35+ at the Humboldt Bay colony June 16-17 (DE), all illustrating expanded numbers or range. The Hartson Res. heronry also had 150 Black-crowned Night Herons June 10 (SAL) and hundreds were seen flying to a heronry between Colusa and Delevan N.W.R.s, July 11 (SAL,KC). A Least Bittern was calling at Sacramento N.W.R., July 11 (SAL,KC) and four sightings were made at Gray Lodge S.W.M.A., July 6-31+ (BED). Three White-faced Ibis at Gray Lodge July 8 were the first for Butte County since 1964 (BED) and 10-30 summered and were believed to have nested near Colusa, Colusa Co. (Randy Gray, *vide* Alan Craig). This is very encouraging since they have not nested in the Central Valley for many years.

WATERFOWL — A White-fronted Goose summered at the Chico Oxidation Ponds along with one Snow Goose and five Canadas (SAL). Two additional Snow Geese were at Sacramento N.W.R., July 11 (SAL) and another was at Tule Lake N.W.R., July 23 (B&CY). Mallard numbers were found to be 25% below the four-year average on censuses run in Butte County (JS). A flock of 106 Pintails at Nelson in c. Butte Co., June 25 (JS) was a very high total for that date. Was this a post-breeding flock of local birds or early migrants from the n.? A ♂ Eur. Wigeon at Palo Alto Baylands July 8 & 24 (JM,SFB) provided the first summer record for the Region. Fifteen Am. Wigeon at the same location July 8 (AE) was a high total for a coastal site in mid-summer.



A ♂ Redhead also summered at the Palo Alto Baylands (WB). The only Ring-necked Ducks reported were a pair at Baum L., e. Shasta Co., July 4 (DM); none were at Manzanita L., where they have bred in recent years. Seven Harlequin Ducks were found along the coast from Del Norte to San Mateo Cos. An additional bird at the Oakland Airport June 11 (*vide* ERO) was most unusual. A few White-winged Scoters are always found in summer, but 100 at the n. jetty of Humboldt Bay June 16 (SFB) and hundreds at the mouth of the Mad R., July 15-30 (RLeV) were out of the ordinary. Eighteen Black Scoters were reported, which is a higher-than-normal summer total. Three broods of Com. Mergansers were observed on the Sacramento R., between Red Bluff and Chico during July (SAL,JS). A brood of four flightless young at the mouth of Salmon Cr., Sonoma Co., Aug. 4 (JP,BDP) was unusual. A Red-breasted Merganser at Pine Cove on Trinity L., Trinity Co., June 3 (B&CY) was also a surprise.

HAWKS THROUGH RAILS — A downy young Turkey Vulture was found in a nest in a driftwood pile along the Sacramento R., near Chico July 1 (JS). White-tailed Kite status is still open to question. In the Chico area nestling kites were the most numerous among the raptors brought into the bird rehabilitation center there and a housing project was held up until a nest with seven young fledged (*vide* LT). At Gray Lodge they were judged very scarce with no immatures seen (BED).

An extraordinary 34 pairs of nesting Goshawks were found on Forest Service timber sale areas in the Warner Mts., in Modoc Co. (*vide* Sharon Whisler). This must be the highest concentration in our Region. Only two other Goshawks were reported. Several Sharp-shinned Hawk sightings indicated possible nesting locations; Platina, Shasta Co., June 3 (B&CY), Priest Grade Rd., Tuolumne Co., June 30 (AE) and two at Manzanita L., Shasta Co., July 4 (DM). One June 8 at Golden Gate P., San Francisco (PM) was a real surprise. An imm. Red-shouldered Hawk near Yreka, Siskiyou Co., July 26 (RE) was unusual.

A pair of Sandhill Cranes had two half-grown young at Papoose Meadows near Eagle L., June 10 (SAL). This is a new nesting area for this species. The only Black Rails were two heard calling in the Delta region at Lost Lake, Tule I., June 11 (Doug Ellis). Common Gallinules again nested successfully at Palo Alto Baylands (WB).

SHOREBIRDS — Black-necked Stilt numbers were found to be 50% above the four-year average on B.B.S. routes in Butte County (JS), and a range expansion of 40 mi occurred when they colonized a new rice field s. of Red Bluff. Thirty were found there July 25 and several immatures were found (SAL). There was also a range expansion in the S.F. Bay area when a pair and four downy chicks were found at San Rafael, Marin Co., July 14 (BRa). They nested there last summer but were not reported at that time.

The Snowy Plovers at Pajaro Dunes fledged only 15 young from 44 nests (J&RW). Other nesting areas were; Waddell Cr. mouth, Santa Cruz Co., three pairs July 7 (PM), Ano Nuevo Pt., July 9, four pairs (PM), and the Oakland Airport June 11, three pairs (*vide* ERO). More-than-normal numbers of Black-bellied Plovers summered at Alameda South Shore with 48 June 9 and 118 there June 21 (*vide* ERO). A Greater Yellowlegs was at Pescadero Marsh June 11 (PM), a time when there are very few coastal records. Spotted Sandpipers again nested near the mouth of Pajaro R., where a nest with four eggs was found June 4 (PM).

A total of 38 Wilson's Phalaropes was seen at Pajaro Dunes June 23 - July 30, with a peak of 15 on July 6 (J&RW). This is many more than is normally recorded there. A late migrant N. Phalarope was also at Pajaro Dunes June 6 (J&RW). The Semipalmated Sandpiper found in the spring at Pajaro Dunes was still there at the end of the summer (PM, J&RW). Summering Dunlin were two at Pajaro Dunes June 8 (J&RW) and one at Monterey Bay July 11 (DRO).

JAEGERS THROUGH ALCIDS — One Pomarine Jaeger was at Pt. Pinos July 20 (DRO) for an early migration date. Parasitic Jaegers were reported from Pajaro Dunes June 3-4 and July 5 (PM, J&RW). Herring Gulls, very rare in summer, were at Bay Bridge Toll Plaza June 6 (SFB) and Alameda South Shore June 9 & July 7 (ERO).

S.A.

Approximately 35,000 of Mono Lake's 50,000 breeding California Gulls failed to nest successfully this year. The Negit I. gullery which supported 75% of Mono's nesting gulls was finally connected to the mainland by a land bridge despite three efforts by California Department of Fish and Game and Bureau of Land Management to blast a channel. Mono Lake's level continues to decline as a result of the ongoing diversion of its tributaries. A measure to finance dredging of an effective channel in fall 1979 is expected to pass the legislature. While this may provide a temporary solution to the gull nesting problem, the outlook for the birds of the lake will not be improved until the decline of the lake level is stopped.

—David Winkler

An ad. Laughing Gull was at Pajaro Dunes June 10 (J&RW). One-third of our regional records date from June. After the hundreds of summer Bonaparte's Gull sightings over the last three years it seems odd to have only one reported this year, at Dumbarton Pt., July 8 (AE). An interesting and probably normal migration sequence was noted for Heermann's Gulls at Pt. Pinos. Two were there June 11, "a few" July 3, several hundred July 11 and 1000+ July 16 (DRO).

Common Terns again summered at S.F. Bay and Monterey Bay with 15 reported June 6 - July 28; seven of these reports were from June.

S.A.

Least Terns had very poor nesting success when the colony at the Alameda Naval Air Station was completely destroyed. Of the 100 pairs nesting May 20, not one egg or chick could be found June 11 (*vide* ERO). This is very disturbing, since it was the largest and most stable colony in the Region. The only immature reported was one at Pajaro Dunes July 21 (J&RW).

Black Terns were well reported in the Sacramento Valley and were 100% above the four-year average on B.B.S. routes in Butte County (JS). Breeding success, however, appeared to be low and only four of a flock of 40 at Sacramento N.W.R., in July were immatures (SAL, KC).

Eight to nine pairs of Marbled Murrelets were seen flying in and out of Jedediah Smith S.P., Del Norte Co., June 18 (GS) and 30 were seen calling and chasing each other at Crescent City July 18 (GS). A Crested Auklet was identified 5 mi n. of Bolinas, Marin Co., July 16 (Fred O. Weyman). The next day the bird was found dead on the beach at the same location and the specimen was sent to California Academy of Sciences (P.R.B.O.). This documents the first record for California and possibly the first s. of Alaska.

PIGEONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Band-tailed Pigeons almost certainly nested at Pine Cr. Landing, Butte-Glenn Cos. Birds were repeatedly seen carrying nesting material and heard calling throughout the period (SAL). These observations provide the first evidence of nesting anywhere in the Central Valley (hereafter, C.V.). Singles June 6 & July 8 above 10,000 ft at the Hall Natural Area (hereafter, H.N.A.), Mono Co., are perhaps altitudinal records for the state (DDeS *et al.*). A flock of 200 on July 20 at Auburn, Placer Co., was a large number for a foothill locality at this time of year (BBa). A minimum of 17 Yellow-billed Cuckoos was reported from eight sites in the C.V. (m.ob.). Remarkably, four nests, fledging a total of seven young, were found near Hamilton City, Glenn Co. (SAL). Three of these nests were in walnut orchards and adults foraged in adjacent riparian stands. Concentration of pesticides in their food chain had been postulated as one of many factors contributing to recent declines of this species in California; however, more direct effects were noted as one brood apparently suffered impaired balance and slowed development when an orchard was sprayed while young were still in the nest (SAL).

Coastally, a cuckoo was at F.I., July 27-28 (P.R.B.O.).

There were only two reports of Flammulated Owls, both from known localities in the Sierra (JP, BDP, JH). An intensive search for Great Gray Owls this summer, in an attempt to obtain a total census of the species in the state, turned up only six birds (JW). Although population numbers historically were never very great, this species presently would seem to warrant endangered status. Hopefully future studies would provide more information on specific ecological requirements which can be used in land management decisions that will enhance Great Gray Owl habitat.

The courting Long-eared Owls at Palomar-in, Pt. Reyes National Seashore (hereafter, P.R.N.S.) remained through the period (P.R.B.O.). A late report indicated that this species bred in a Monterey pine stand at Home Bay, P.R.N.S., where there had been a winter roost. On May 12 three adults and one downy but full-sized juvenile were seen (John Lovio, †Napa/Solano Audubon). Up to seven Short-eared Owls, including three somewhat downy juveniles were seen June 24-26 at N. Pt. Reyes Beach, P.R.N.S. (SFB, JM *et al.*). Although local nesting was not confirmed, there are no previous summer records for this area. The nesting Saw-whet Owls at Palomar-in found this spring successfully fledged seven young (P.R.B.O.). It seems not unlikely that these three species of owl were responding to a micro-tine rodent peak evident throughout the Pt. Reyes area (m.ob.).

S.A.

The phenomenon of up-mountain drift of landbirds in late summer has long been known. The birds that usually move up-slope in the high mountains are primarily juveniles in their post-breeding wanderings, mostly from late July onwards, interspersed with some adults after completion of their post-nuptial molt. Undoubtedly some species migrate in fall at high elevations thus complicating the picture.

Naturalists at H.N.A., Mono Co., while studying sub-alpine bird communities this summer, discovered an impressive number of altitudinal vagrants, all above 10,000 ft, on the Sierran Crest (DDeS *et al.*). Contrary to previous experience and expectations these vagabonds arrived in late June and mid-July and were virtually all ad. birds; many were singing males! The first wave occurred June 22-26 and had no easy explanations. The following species, all ad. males, were involved: Yellow Warbler (one June 22); Hermit Warbler (one June 22, two June 23, one June 26); and Tree Swallow (one June 26). The second wave occurred July 12-13 and correlated with a very warm spell. Involved this time were: W. Flycatcher (one probable adult July 13); Black-headed Grosbeak (one probable female July 12); Lazuli Bunting (one ad. female July 12); Lesser Goldfinch (one ad. male and one unknown age/sex July 13); and Sage Sparrow (one adult July 12). As if there is not already a dizzying array of local and long distance bird movements to keep track of, these observations further complicate matters. If anyone has any idea as to what this all means please let us know.

A Poor-will July 31 at H.N.A., was seen at 10,500 ft where it occasionally strays (DDeS *et al.*). An errant Lesser Nighthawk reached F.I., July 21 (P.R.B.O.). Black Swifts were widely reported, largely from known nesting sites (m.ob.). Ten flying N at Golden Gate P., June 8 were undoubtedly migrants but one there July 1 seemed out of place since there are no known nesting sites in the vicinity (PM). Two Vaux's Swifts nesting in a chimney in Sonoma, Sonoma Co., July 11 were originally thought to be Chimney Swifts. Netting and subsequent measurements of one individual confirmed its identification as a Vaux's (LCB), and underlines the difficulty of identifying these two species in the field.

A ♂ Black-chinned Hummingbird July 23 at Lower Klamath N.W.R., was near the n. edge of its range in the Region (B&CY). Anna's Hummingbirds first appeared at Dog I., Tehama Co., July 11 and an influx peaked there with 12 birds July 25 (SAL). Although in some places this species is seemingly sedentary, it can often be highly migratory. The first southbound "fall" migrant Rufous Hummingbirds were recorded June 26 at Auburn (MA) and June 29 at Palomarin (P.R.B.O.). A nest of a Calliope Hummingbird was found July 8 at H.N.A., at 10,000 ft on the Sierran Crest (Craig Benkman, *vide* DDeS)! This nesting attempt was unsuccessful but another female was feeding young in the same area in August (DDeS *et al.*). These observations confirmed suspicions dating back to "Dawson" that Calliope bred "nearly up to timberline" (Gaines, *Birds of the Yosemite Sierra*, 1977).

Movements of "Red-shafted" Flickers in our Region are puzzling, with many areas having influxes or departures at different seasons. At Auburn, in the Sierra foothills, flickers are absent "annually for three months April - June" with the first fall bird returning this period July 9 (BBA). Williamson's Sapsuckers were "almost everywhere above 6500 ft" at Lassen N.P., July 4-14 (DM). Two pairs of Downy Woodpeckers July 4 at Manzanita L., Lassen N.P., at 5800 ft was noteworthy (DM); one female feeding an immature at this site does not, however, confirm nesting at this elevation. Reports of five Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers were about normal for the season (m.ob.).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH VIREOS — An E. Kingbird was seen at the Fish Docks, Pt. Reyes July 1 (*vide* SFB). A singing ♂ Willow Flycatcher June 12 at Dog I. (SAL), was an encouraging find since this species has been essentially extirpated as a breeding bird in the C.V., in recent years. A Gray Flycatcher at 9700 ft June 24 near Sawmill Campground, Mono Co., was of altitudinal interest (DDeS *et al.*). A W. Flycatcher was on territory June 14-29 at Mammoth Lakes, Mono Co. (PL), e. of the Sierran Crest where its breeding status is uncertain. A flock of 600, presumably post-breeding, Horned Larks was seen at Black Butte Res., Tehama-Glenn Cos., July 4 (SAL); this seems to be an unusual concentration for such an early date.

The only reported Gray Jays were two on July 11 at Lower Twin L., Lassen N.P. (DM). Mountain Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported significantly down on four of five U.S. F.&W.S. B.B.S.s. (LT, *vide* SALJS). A Long-billed Marsh Wren was at F.I., June 8 for the first inland spring record

(P.R.B.O.). Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were seen in Siskiyou County in the Kilgore Hills near Yreka July 4 and at Lava Beds, N.M., July 14 (RE, *vide* MT). Suspected breeding at the latter locality, if confirmed in the future, would provide the northernmost breeding outpost in the Region.

Two Water Pipit nests were found at H.N.A., July 10 (Craig Benkman and Brett Engstrom, *vide* DDeS *et al.*), and a total of five breeding pairs was estimated for the immediate area (DDeS). Not coincidentally this is the site of the first California nesting record in 1975. A flock of 25-30 Cedar Waxwings flew over Lafayette July 1 (LF) at a time when this species is very rare in the s. part of our Region. A Hutton's Vireo at 5800 ft at Manzanita L., Lassen N.P. (DM), was at a high elevation on the e. edge of its range. A Red-eyed Vireo at F.I., June 3 was the only one reported (P.R.B.O.).

WARBLERS THROUGH ICTERIDS — Six Tennessee Warblers June 1-18, were all sighted in coastal areas (m.ob.). Since Orange-crowned Warblers are not known to breed on the floor of the C.V., one at Pine Cr. Landing June 7 was perhaps a post-breeding wanderer (SAL). A ♂ N. Parula was at Golden Gate P., June 2-4 (LCB,DM) as well as a male and female at Muddy Hollow, P.R.N.S., June 24-25 (Jri *et al.*). It was suggested that these two might have bred, but no details were submitted. A ♂ Magnolia Warbler turned up at Natural Bridges S.P., June 9 (SG) in addition to a male June 3-4 and a female June 10-11, both at F.I. (P.R.B.O.). Townsend's Warblers at Pine Cr. Landing June 6 (SAL) and Golden Gate P. July 31 (DHE,JGH) were late spring and early fall migrants respectively.

A singing ♂ **Yellow-throated Warbler** (identified as *D.d. albiflora*, the expected race) treated observers June 23 - July 3 at Nunes Ranch, P.R.N.S. (George Hugenberger, †JM *et al.*). This is the ninth Regional record, but only the first mainland "spring" record. Chestnut-sided Warblers made two appearances: one June 8 at F.I. (P.R.B.O.) and a male July 5-7 at Golden Gate P. (LCB,GK, JM). A ♂ Blackpoll Warbler June 5-6 at Drake's Beach (GK *et al.*) was followed by one June 24-27 at F.I. (P.R.B.O.).

A Palm Warbler visited the Pt. Reyes Lighthouse June 2 (JM), but more unusual was one identified as the "yellow race" (*D.p. hypochrysea*), at F.I., June 26-28 (P.R.B.O.). Single Ovenbirds were grounded at F.I., June 3 and June 26-28 (P.R.B.O.); this is considerably fewer than we've come to expect in recent years. Hooded Warblers, contrary to other parulids, were sighted in unprecedented numbers, with singing males June 11 at Gazos Cr., San Mateo Co. (PM); Muddy Hollow June 23 (Jeri Langham, *vide* SFB); Golden Gate P., June 27 (LCB,JM); and a female at F.I., June 4 (P.R.B.O.). Six Am. Redstarts were seen in coastal Marin and San Francisco Cos., June 1 - July 24 (m.ob.).

Always rare in spring, a ♂ Bobolink was observed near Bolinas June 5 (P.R.B.O.). A Tri-colored Blackbird colony s. of Half Moon Bay June 2 (FN) and a flock of 200, presumed not to be breeding, on outer Pt. Reyes June 26 (JM) were notable since this species is rare on the immediate coast in summer. Hooded Orioles were reported in normal numbers from the usual parts of their range (m.ob.). Migrant numbers of "Bullock's" Orioles peaked at 25

at Dog I., July 18 (SAL); this correlated well with departure dates from Alamo, Auburn, and Lafayette (Jri,MA,LF). A ♂ "Baltimore" Oriole was at the Pt. Reyes Lighthouse July 6 (FN). The Great-tailed Grackle that graced San Francisco for many months was still there July 4 (*vide* SFB). The 4000 Brown-headed Cowbirds near Hamilton City July 30 (SAL) were the most ever reported at this season in our Region. Is this species still on the increase?

FINCHES THROUGH SPARROWS — Nine Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were seen on the coast June 1 - July 1 (m.ob.) — somewhat less than average for recent years. A well out-of-range Blue Grosbeak was at Hiouchi, Del Norte Co., June 10 (GS). Seven Indigo Buntings were seen along the coast from Mendocino to San Mateo Cos., June 3 - July 8 (m.ob.). Most interesting was the sighting of a hybrid ♂ Indigo X Lazuli Bunting June 22 at Olema Marsh (†JM) where a ♂ Indigo has been seen every year since 1976 (m.ob.). As Lazulis regularly breed at this site the hybrid sighting suggests that interbreeding occurred there in recent years. However, more direct evidence of interbreeding was observed near Ukiah, Mendocino Co., where a male Indigo was recorded June 19 - July 8 (†OJK,BBu). The male was seen chasing female Lazulis and was seen feeding a begging young at the nest (OJK). Several observers noted that Lazulis were more common than usual this season.

A ♀ Dickcissel June 24-27 at F.I. (P.R.B.O.) is only the sixth Regional spring record. A ♂ Lawrence's Goldfinch at Fairhaven June 17 provided the first Humboldt County record (DE,SFB). A Grasshopper Sparrow at F.I., July 20 (P.R.B.O.) was probably an early fall migrant. "Out-of-range" Black-throated Sparrows were recorded in Siskiyou County at the Kilgore Hills near Yreka July 1 & 11, and at Lava Beds N.M., July 14 (RE, *vide* MT); also of note was one at Cohasset Ridge, Butte Co., June 30 (JH).

Up to two Brewer's Sparrows were near Butte Meadows, Butte Co., June 14 & 20 (JS) and one was seen Aug. 4 near Meridian, Sutter Co. (JP,BDP *et al.*); records from the Sierra foothills and C.V., are quite rare. A singing ♂ Fox Sparrow July 2 at H.N.A., above 10,000 ft (DDeS *et al.*) was at a very high elevation, especially at this date. A singing ♂ Lincoln's Sparrow June 12 at Mammoth Lakes (PL) was notable as there is little evidence of breeding e. of the Sierran Divide.

ADDENDUM — A ♂ Summer Tanager was seen in Davis, Yolo Co., May 5, 1979 (†Jeffrey T. Wilcox).

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