

MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION

/Kurt F. Campbell and Stephen F. Bailey

With notable similarity to last year, our Region switched from a drenching late fall to a dry winter, but this year a month earlier, near the period's start. It was colder and foggy than average, with the first hard frost at San Francisco Bay December 15/16. There appeared to be low winter mortality among landbirds, perhaps because of dry conditions with most wild food crops apparently excellent; there were few significant storms. This was the Year of the Irruptive Species, from shearwaters to siskins, and nuthatches to nutcrackers; see especially the finches. Irruptions are still among our most enigmatic phenomena. The causes, and in many cases the irrupting populations' origins, are quite unknown.

Complete reports for only 11 of the 50+ Christmas Bird Counts in the Region were seen.

All sightings from Palomarin and Southeast Farallon Island should be credited to Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory. References to the *Gull* refer to Golden Gate Audubon Society's publication, whose observations column is currently written by SFB. A dagger (†) indicates that documentation is on file with the Regional Editors.

ABBREVIATIONS — C.B.R.C. = California Bird Records Committee; C.V. = Central Valley; F.I. = Southeast Farallon Island; P.R.B.O. = Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory; S.F. = San Francisco; ph. = photo on file with the Regional Editors. *Italicized* place names are counties.

LOONS THROUGH CORMORANTS — Diving birds were generally scarce, both coastally and inland. Inland loons were a Red-throated on Pardee Res., *Amador*, Jan. 5 (SAL *et al.*), another at O'Neill Forebay, *Merced*, Dec. 20-21 (CB, KFC), two Arctics at O'Neill Forebay Dec. 21 (KFC *et al.*), one Arctic on Sizer Flat Res., *Santa Clara*, Dec. 22-23 (RK, JC), and nine Commons, all in the central lowlands. The only Yellow-billed Loon was at Pacific Grove, *Monterey*, Jan. 13 (AB, S.J.). Thermalito Forebay and Afterbay, *Butte*, held 20-30 Horned Grebes Feb. 18 (T & AM). Elsewhere inland this species was in more normal numbers, with about 15 reported from 5 localities. Typical numbers of Red-necked Grebes were in expected concentrations: 31 on



Tomales Bay, *Marin*, Dec. 15 (CSW *et al.*), 30+ at Limantour, *Marin*, Feb. 10 (JE), and nine along the Monterey-Pacific Grove shoreline Jan. 26 (AB, S.J.). Inland there were up to three on Foster City lagoon, *San Mateo*, Dec. 5-22 (PJM, CBe), one at Palo Alto Flood Control Basin, *Santa Clara*, Dec. 8-9 (CR, GW), and one on Thermalito Forebay Feb. 18 for apparently the 5th *Butte* record (T & AM). Only two "Clark's" W. Grebes were reported from the n. coast, where rare.

Three sightings of Laysan Albatross near Monterey Bay Dec. 1 were believed to represent two individuals (AB, TC, S.J.). Northern Fulmars were abundant all winter both offshore and along shore in the Monterey Bay area (AB, S.J., m.ob.), with a peak concentration of 500 from shore at Pacific Grove Dec. 12 (AB). Much smaller numbers were seen n. of Santa Cruz. A Mottled Petrel was well seen from Pt. Pinos,

Monterey, as it fought a gale Dec. 12 (†DR). Assuming acceptance by the C.B.R.C., this would be only the 2nd healthy Mottled Petrel seen in California. Monterey boats found one to four Pink-footed Shearwaters/trip after the early December stragglers. Two Flesh-footed Shearwaters Dec. 1 (AB, TC, S.J.) and one Dec. 27 (SFB, KLH, S.J.) off Monterey were unexpectedly late. Buller's Shearwaters also tarried to Dec. 1, with two at F.I. and 30 off Monterey (highest count all fall—AB, TC, S.J.). Short-tailed Shearwaters seemed normal, with up to eight/trip off Monterey (S.J., SFB) and *Del Norte* (GSL, RAE). The unprecedented flight of Black-vented Shearwaters continued into winter around Monterey Bay and along *San Mateo*. Peak numbers were 876 feeding at Pigeon Pt., *San Mateo*, Dec. 7 (BS), 200-300 along Pacific Grove shoreline Dec. 12 (DR, AB), and 100 off Monterey as late as Feb. 3 (S.J.). Only two to four were there later (S.J.). Twenty-five Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels and two Ashy Storm-Petrels were at Monterey Harbor Jan. 31 (SyH) as the first of a series of storms brought flocks of Fork-tailed to shore. Small numbers occurred there through February, one was ¼ mi w. of the Golden Gate Bridge Feb. 3 (StW), and three were off the Klamath R. mouth Feb. 25 (*fide* GSL).

The largest aggregation of Am. White Pelicans was 4000 at S. Wilbur Flood Area, *Kings*, Feb. 4 (BMCA, *fide* BoB). Reversing the trend of the last 3 winters, the exodus of Brown Pelicans was swift and virtually complete. On F.I., 75 remained Dec. 2, but after Dec. 10 only one to three were found on 4 days to Jan. 12. Elsewhere, only 10 individuals were noted after early December. Double-crested Cormorants were reported as scarce at Bodega Harbor, *Sonoma* (NTC), but "up" in the Sacramento area (EH). Three counts at the Badger Cr. roost near Galt, *Sacramento*, ranged from 632 Jan. 21 to 825 Feb. 4 (B & HK).

HERONS THROUGH WATERFOWL — A Great Blue Heron in Yosemite Valley Jan. 11 (JE) provided one of few winter records for the park. The fall's strong irruption ("best ever" according to many) of Cattle Egrets to the coast continued in the expected pattern, peaking in December, then dropping to few by February. Interestingly, the best numbers were from north of S.F. Bay (e.g., 140 Dec. 16, *Del Norte* C.B.C., *fide* RAE, vs. 14 Dec. 28, Monterey Pen. C.B.C., *fide* DR). Numbers in the C.V. were also generally considered high. Most significant was one carrying nest material at L. Merritt, *Alameda*, Feb. 16 (JM); one was noted here last year in the egret colony, but there is still no confirmed breeding for the S.F. Bay area.

Two Trumpeter Swans convincingly reported on the Tule Lake C.B.C., Dec. 23 (RE, MR) were not seen later because of poor weather. Six blue morph Snow Geese (all C.V.) and one blue Ross' Goose (Jan. 21 at Merced N.W.R., RJB) was apparently near average for those forms. Only 13 Brant were reported; one at Sacramento N.W.R., Dec. 12 (*fide* MRH) was among few interior records. A flock of 170 Canada Geese flew S past Palomarin Dec. 24; there seems to be little precedent for so large a flock on the immediate coast s. of *Del Norte*.

State and federal waterfowl population surveys conducted in January and early February revealed a "tremendous decline" in Pacific Flyway duck populations, from 5 million to 2 million, with "the most numerous duck in the state, N. Pintail, down from 2.3 million to 759,000 in one year. At this point the decline is attributed to the continuing drought (4 yrs.) on the Canadian prairies . . . the totals this year were the lowest in the 30 years that these counts have been made" (RWL). Three "Eurasian" type Green-winged Teal were found: Jan. 20-27 at Arcata Marsh (B. Sapena, *fide* JSt), about Jan. 26-Feb. 9 in *Fresno* (KH, †GP *et al.*), and Feb. 9 e. of Gustine, *Merced* (*fide* Gull). As usual the 'spring' migration of Cinnamon Teal was evident in much of the Region by late January, but ± 50 at the Arcata Bottoms, *Humboldt*, Dec. 21 (*fide* JSt) was "an incredible number for mid-winter" there. Reports totalling 46-52 Eur. Wigeons (including five to six reported as females) were perhaps average; one-third were coastward, while 13+ were at Tule Lake N.W.R., Dec. 30-31 (RE, NC, MR). A well-described ♂ Eur. Wigeon x Am. Wigeon was at Limantour Estero, *Marin*, Feb. 17 (†JM) and had little certain precedent for the Region. Most such reports have appeared to pertain to variant Eurasians, which can have green on the face.

Waterfowl population surveys recorded very high numbers of Canvasbacks, scaups and Ruddy Ducks in S.F. Bay, perhaps concentrated by dry conditions statewide, as populations in total were lower. An apparent Ring-necked Duck x scaup (sp.) male was well-described from L. Merritt, Feb. 16 (†JM). The status of Greater Scaup in the interior in

winter is not well-elucidated; they are perhaps very locally regular in small numbers. Among 6 such reports this season, the largest was of "up to 24" at Copco L., *Siskiyou*, Jan. 21 + (CYo, RE, MR), said to be a regular wintering locale. Of 20 Oldsquaws reported, half were in *Del Norte*, while the one interior record was of a female at L. Shastina Dec. 15-Jan. 1 (m.ob., *fide* MR). A count of 150+ Black Scoters off Pt. St. George, *Del Norte*, Jan. 12 (GSL, RAE *et al.*) may have been the highest ever for the Region.

S.A.

Alarming was the discovery by U.S. Fish & Wildlife personnel of high levels of selenium in Surf Scoters which were collected in 1982 in southern S.F. Bay (*fide* RWL). The origin and extent of this toxicity is unknown, but these levels equal those in dabbling ducks at the now-infamous Kesterton N.W.R. Kesterton served primarily as evaporation ponds for agricultural runoff, which subsequently concentrated naturally-occurring low levels of selenium, causing deformities in scores of waterfowl young and creating much news and controversy. Kesterton was closed to runoff this season, but the larger and impending problem of water pollution in the San Joaquin Valley has yet to be addressed. The potential economic and conservation ramifications are immense.

Barrow's Goldeneyes were widely reported, with at least 21 from 7 locales in the interior and 53+ in S.F. Bay counties. A ♂ Red-breasted Merganser on the American River below Nimbus Dam Feb. 24-25 (ph., †TM, AM) was noteworthy for the interior.

RAPTORS — A Turkey Vulture was s. of Crescent City Dec. 8 (JAR, RAE); they are casual in *Del Norte* as wintering birds. One Jan. 21 near Ft. Dick (RT) was felt by RAE to be a first returning bird for *Del Norte*. Twenty-four Ospreys were reported (half of these on the few C.B.C. reports I saw), 10 from the C.V. and periphery, the rest from the S.F. Bay/*Sonoma* area. This species seems to be on the increase in winter but it is not clear what age/sex classes are occurring (see Nat'l Geographic Society field guide, but note that immatures are apparently indistinguishable from adults after mid-winter). Reports of Bald Eagles probably represented at least 234 birds; nearly all reports were of one to six, with a count of 153 (14% imm.) at Tule Lake N.W.R. and Lower Klamath N.W.R., Feb. 9 (B & CY). A subad. Broad-winged Hawk in Pacific Grove Dec. 28 (†JP *et al.*) was seen only on the C.B.C. there. A report of an imm. Swainson's Hawk seen Dec. 8 at Creighton Ranch Preserve, *Tulare*, by a skilled observer (RH) was exciting, although no details are in hand for confirmation. This would be our 3rd December-January record (AB 38:353) and is probably best assumed to have been a late migrant.

Ferruginous Hawks appeared in average to moderately above-average numbers through the Region. Rough-legged Hawks showed a little better in most areas, but the few watchers in our Great Basin areas found them in excellent numbers. Eighty were tallied on a hawk watch in Fall R. Valley, *Shasta*, Jan. 26 (B & CY *et al.*), and 99 was a record for the Honey Lake C.B.C., Dec. 31 (*fide* TM); the Mono Lake C.B.C. also had an all-time high (*fide* DDeS). Merlin reports reached an impressive 71. They were most conspicuously above normal numbers in the *Sonoma/Marin/Napa* area. Noting those he saw in Marin to be dark *F. c. suckleyi* from the northwest, Stallcup speculated a causal connection between the crossbill/siskin irruption and that of Merlins. Two *suckleyi* Merlins were also reported away from the northern S.F. Bay, and two of the very pale *richardsonii* were reported, both away from the immediate coast. Caution is urged in making these (and all!) subspecific identifications, as our more common *bendirei* (now usually merged in *F. c. columbarius*) can show considerable variation.

GROUSE THROUGH CRANES — A Ruffed Grouse near Ft. Dick, *Del Norte*, in late December (JAR) was on the coastal plain—perhaps the first such noted there.

S.A.

In a 1981-1983 study of Corte Madera Ecological Reserve, Marin, JE (along with G. Page) witnessed 2 cases of predation on Black Rails by N. Harriers. A literature check and further study by Evens this November to February at the s. end of Tomales Bay has revealed rail predation by herons (and harriers?) to be routine, at least there: "During 15.1 hours of observation I recorded 28 cases of predation on rails: 17 Black Rails, eight Virginia Rails, three unidentified. Of 17 Black Rail predations, 16 were by Great Egrets, one by a Great Blue Heron. Of 8 Virginia Rail predations, 5 were by Great Blue Herons, 2 by Great Egrets and one by a N. Harrier." He further noted that "Our work at Corte Madera indicates that transitional upland vegetation around the marsh periphery offers refuge to rails during periods of vulnerability (high tides). The Tomales Bay marsh lacks upland cover due to grazing, dredging and diking for agriculture." Black Rails seem to be getting the squeeze play between egrets and man. Foremost among questions JE hopes next to address: "What are the densities of Black Rails at the few locations of known occurrence, and can their continued existence be assured given the dual threats of habitat loss and heavy predation?"

Reports of single "Caribbean Coots" came from Golden Gate P., S.F., Dec. 27 and L. Merritt Feb. 16 (both JM). Such birds are not exceptionally rare in the Region, and it seems more likely we are dealing with only variants of Am. Coot than that we are feeling the effects of either a sloppy Caribbean Coot breeder, or repeated, transcontinental, reverse migration, vagrant coots. Sonoma's first Sandhill Crane was flying S high overhead near Sebastopol Dec. 12 (LCB), and one was near Five Brooks, Marin, Dec. 29-Jan. 1 (*fide Gull*).

SHOREBIRDS — Black-bellied Plover numbers in the C.V. in winter seem very variable, perhaps due to movements in response to ephemeral habitat. A count of 499 on the Los Banos C.B.C. (Dec. 20, *fide KFC*) was 7 times average, but 400-500 through the period at Lodi sewage ponds (DY) was "about the normal wintering number." Of 33 *fulva* Lesser Golden-Plovers, one was interior—once again at the Lodi sewage ponds (DY). A Semipalmated Plover at the Stockton sewage ponds Dec. 4 (DY) was quite late for the C.V., but singles at Smith R. estuary (Dec. 18, GSL) and L. Earl (Jan. 28, ADB) provided about the 3rd and 4th winter records for *Del Norte*. There are fewer than 10 records of Mountain Plover for *Humboldt*, so two at Mad R. mouth Jan. 12-Feb. 10 (CC, JSt) were of note. A Black Oystercatcher at Castro Rocks, *Contra Costa* Jan. 31 (BR) was at a vicinity where they are probably regular. Two hundred Marbled Godwits at E. Hacienda, *Kings* (RHG), and 126 on the Los Banos C.B.C. (Dec. 20, *fide KFC*; 9 times, average) were impressive totals. Two Surfbirds Jan. 2 (Richmond Marina) and one Feb. 5 (old Albany dump) were in S.F. Bay where casual in winter (BR). Rock Sandpipers were absent from Sonoma; they had not been missed at Bodega Head in the previous 17 winters.

Ruffs were a female at Merced N.W.R., Nov. 29-Feb. 28 (RJB), and one (possible male) there Feb. 27 to at least Mar. 9 (RJB, *fide Gull*); this was the 5th consecutive winter of central *Merced* records. Poorly-documented or undocumented reports of Short-billed Dowitchers from the interior in winter are occasionally received; this is especially true on C.B.C.s. Observers should be aware that there is *not a single acceptable winter record* for this species from the interior of California (or North America?). Large, even for the C.V., were Long-billed Dowitcher aggregations of 5300 at Sacramento N.W.R., Dec. 3 (MRH) and 3422 on the Los Banos C.B.C. (Dec. 20, *fide KFC*). Wilson's Phalarope records at Lodi sewage ponds Dec. 2-13 (†DY) and Merced N.W.R., Dec. 14 (†RJB) might have represented only one bird. Nineteen Red Phalaropes at Alviso Dec. 16 (R & MFO) were excellent for the San Jose C.B.C.

JAEGERS THROUGH ALCIDS — Two S. Polar Skuas off Monterey Dec. 1 were very late (AB, TC, S.J.). The first-year Franklin's Gull, ad. Little Gull, and ad. Com. Black-headed Gull all inhabited the Stockton Sewage Ponds through the period (DY, m.ob.). Another first-year Franklin's Gull visited Napa Valley College Feb. 19-24 (MFR, m.ob.). With the departure of Brown Pelicans, Heermann's Gulls were

quite scarce, especially n. of Monterey Bay. As usual, the Stockton and Lodi sewage pond areas held the largest inland concentrations of Mew Gulls, with 100 at Stockton Jan. 12 the peak (DY). Small numbers wintering in the Sacramento area were expected (m.ob.), but 10 that wintered at the Modesto sewage ponds were believed to provide the first *Stanislaus* record (DY). Farther inland, singles were at a sewage pond near Lake of the Pines Dec. 22 (†JML, ML, LK), Oroville Dec. 2 (BED), Chico Dump Dec. 30 (SAL, MDH), L. Almanor Dec. 27 (†HG), and L. Shastina Jan. 3-6 (CYo, RE, MR). Thousands of California and W. gulls feasted on millions of pelagic red crabs (*Pleuroncodes planipes*) throughout the period along Monterey area shores (AB, m.ob.).

S.A.

As most Bay Area garbage dumps and pig farms close or move inland, Thayer's Gull will bear careful observation. Winter concentrations such as the 300+ near Marshall on Tomales Bay (RS, DDeS *et al.*) presumably depend on herring runs, but these totals cannot account for the many hundreds more that had subsisted on garbage. Dumps extant around the Bay still host many Thayer's Gulls (*e.g.*, 50-125 at ponds beside the Martinez Dump—BR), but counts only up to 10 were reported from dumps, sewage ponds, and salmon runs in *Sacramento*, *Yolo*, *San Joaquin*, and *e. Alameda* (m.ob.). More inland sightings included one at Oroville Dec. 2 (BED), four at Chico Dump Dec. 30 (SAL, MDH), one at Tulare L., Feb. 16 (SAL, MDH), and one at Tule Lake N.W.R., Feb. 24 (CYo, RE). As Thayer's Gulls lose their favored dumps it seems few are successfully switching to natural foods. So far, even fewer have followed dumps inland. Will this species become much less common in California? Some other gulls populations are expected to decrease, but only Thayer's appears really vulnerable.

The season's most popular gull was a white-winged adult at Bodega Harbor, Sonoma, seen poorly Dec. 30 and Jan. 5 (KFC *et al.*). Better studies Jan. 6 (†KFC), 10 (†RS), & 12 (DDeS *et al.*) resulted in the word being spread that it was California's first Iceland Gull. This beautiful gull delighted several hundred Californians from Jan. 13 (ph., †m.ob.) until Jan. 18 (ph. RLeB). Most, but by no means all, experts are



Two views of the bird identified as an adult Iceland Gull at Bodega Bay, Cal., Jan. 14, 1985. Photos/Peter M. LaTourrette.

convinced that it was an Iceland Gull (miniature Glaucous Gull would be the alternative). Although the primaries matched those of the Greenland race *glaucoides*, white primaries apparently can occur in *kumlieni*, which is more expected geographically.

Inland Glaucous-winged Gulls were one at the Chico Dump Dec. 30 (SAL, MDH) and three in the Sacramento area (T & AM). Our distribution of credible Glaucous Gulls was fairly typical: two offshore, seven coastal, three to five around San Francisco and San Pablo bays, and three inland. Black-legged Kittiwakes were generally seen in numbers from one to 10, but Monterey boats Jan. 26 and Feb. 3 & 10 found 150-200 (S.J., AB, BB). An ad. Sabine's Gull described from Cypress Pt., Monterey, Dec. 28 (†CCh) was exceptionally late.

Unless some were wintering, two Caspian Terns at L. Success, *Tulare*, Dec. 16 (FRG, BoB) were late and singles at Bethel I., *Contra Costa*, Feb. 19 (BR) and E. Hacienda, *Kings*, Feb. 28 (RHG) were early. Two imm. Com. Terns at the Santa Cruz Wharf Dec. 16 were very tardy (†BB, BLab, TN). Flocks of 10-15 Forster's Terns are now established wintering on Humboldt Bay (JSt *et al.*) and Stockton sewage ponds (DY, JML, EH). They were seasonally unknown inland and in n.w. California until recently. A Forster's at Los Banos N.W.R., Feb. 25 (RHG) may have been an early migrant.

With few exceptions, alcids were all scarce (AB, S.J., m.ob.). This was especially true for Com. Murre and other species most susceptible to gill net mortality. From *Monterey* to *Sonoma* murre counts were less than 10% of normal numbers. One was found dead w. of Coyote Hills, *Alameda*, Dec. 23 (JL). A Marbled Murrelet strayed s. to Monterey Dec. 23 (AB). Rarely found in winter, an ad. Tufted Puffin was off *Marin*, 6 mi s.w. of Bodega Harbor, Jan. 26 and Feb. 10 (KFC).

DOVES THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS — A White-winged Dove at Bodega Harbor Dec. 1 (†JML *et al.*) gave us our 3rd winter period record. A cooperative imm. Spotted Owl at Merced N.W.R., Feb. 3 to at least Mar. 23 (S. Finnegan, P. Rostron, ph.; m.ob.) was apparently only the 2nd for the C.V. floor (the other Jan. 31-Feb. 2, 1975, Chico, SAL *et al.*), but note last winter's comments on dispersal. Long-eared Owls were in typical numbers, judging from reports of 19, but 13 locales is easily the most ever for one season. A strong showing of Short-eared Owls was well-documented toward the coast: 130+ individuals *Del Norte* through *Alameda*, with the 23 reports averaging four individuals, aside from the 66 carefully counted on Grizzly I., *Solano*, Dec. 19 (BDP). Elsewhere numbers were clearly average or below, even with the steady Regional decline. Intriguing was a well-documented report, by a careful (and hardy!) listener, of a calling owl at Echo Summit (7300 ft), *El Dorado*, the night of Jan. 21-22 (†MG). The well-heard voice and circumstances both indicated Boreal Owl, a species unrecorded in California (but note a specimen Mar. 21, 1902, Ft. Klamath, Ore.). A N. Saw-whet Owl at Davis Dec. 5 and Jan. 6 (M. Halterman, SAL) was exceptional on the C.V. floor.

Of nine to 10 Com. Poorwills noted Dec. 19-Feb. 22, five to six were in *Marin*, four in the foothills of the C.V.; a good showing. Two Vaux's Swifts were said to have been "well seen" over Calaveras Res., *Santa Clara*, Jan. 19 (*fide Gull*); one was over Carson Ridge, *Marin*, Feb. 5 (†JE). The species has now been seen 5 winters in succession (often in flocks), with few seasonal records previously. Three Costa's Hummingbirds wintered: males at Salinas Feb. 13-18 (JB) and near Folsom L., *Placer*, Dec. 27 into January (JaW *et al.*), and a female Jan. 27 at Corral Hollow, *San Joaquin* (†DY). They were perhaps related to last spring and summer's irruption, as we had had but 10 records in 10 previous winters. The first Rufous Hummingbird was an ad. male Feb. 24 at Coyote Hills (JL). Timing of spring arrival of *Selasphorus* is clouded by occasional overwintering (when Rufous is more common?) and difficult identification (even in hand at this time of year); suspected Rufous Hummingbirds before mid-February or Allen's before Jan. 15 would best be documented. The first Allen's noted was Jan. 18 at Alamo, *Contra Costa* (JR), perhaps a few days early.

WOODPECKERS THROUGH DIPPER — Lewis' Woodpeckers returned to a normal scattered few after last winter's modest irruption, with 48 (apparently average) on the Mt. Hamilton C.B.C., Dec. 19 (*fide DSc*) the only large number specified. Immature *varius* Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were at Pacific Grove Dec. 28 (†JSt, LCB) and near Nicasio, *Marin*, Dec. 29-Feb. 9 (ph. RS, LCB, m.ob.)—these apparently

provided the 8th and 9th Regional records of this form; all have been Dec. 10-Mar. 29, and 7 of the 9 have been coastal. Five of the "Red-naped" form (*S. v. nuchalis*) were reported (a good showing) with a male Feb. 20 n. of Crescent City (ADB) the latest, and a first for the species in *Del Norte*. An apparent hybrid *nuchalis* Yellow-bellied Sapsucker x Red-breasted Sapsucker was described from Sunol Regional Wilderness, *Alameda*, Feb. 2 (†ALE, BR). Mixed pairs have been reported from Great Basin portions of our Region, but I know of only one other such hybrid report (January-February 1972, *San Mateo*) away from those areas.

The Region's 3rd Greater Pewee was located Dec. 23 at Union City, *Alameda*, by J. Edgar and remained until at least Mar. 7 (†JM, †RAE, †KLH, †JML, m.ob.). Three W. Flycatchers graced the Region: two in Carmel Mission P., Dec. 1, one of which remained through Dec. 28 at least (RS, WR), and one in Sacramento Dec. 23 (DY). Although this is our most expected winter *Empidonax*, we average fewer than one in this season. An *Empidonax* at Sutter Buttes Feb. 17 (†DSc) was not a Willow or Gray flycatcher. Say's Phoebe sightings at Arcata Bottoms Dec. 7, Feb. 12 & 19 (JSt, SH *et al.*) were assumed to be of one wintering bird (they are rare on the n. coast), but more likely referred to one late straggler and one or two early-to-normally-timed 'spring' migrants, based on Regional movements. There is perhaps no other species with as many unacceptable winter records for the Region as Ash-throated Flycatcher. Thus it was satisfying that two (both from C.B.C.s) were well-described this season: Santa Clara Univ., *Santa Clara*, Dec. 16 (†BH *et al.*) and O'Neill Forebay Wildlife Area, *Merced* (†CB, †KFC *et al.*). A 3rd bird in Oakland Dec. 14-Jan. 13 (MP, m.ob.) was reportedly well-described (*fide JM*), but no documentation is in hand. A Tropical Kingbird at the Carmel R. mouth tarried through Dec. 9 (DR).

The Eurasian Skylark on its 7th annual winter visit to outer Pt. Reyes was last seen Feb. 17 (JM). A cursory examination of longstanding C.B.C.s with significant Horned Lark populations indicates this species is on a serious decline through much of the Region. Observers are urged to take note of the presence and absence of larks in their local areas, both as wintering and as breeding birds. Very large concentrations of Violet-green Swallows were 250 at Pescadero Marsh Dec. 29 (PJM) and 175 w. of Santa Rosa Dec. 16 (BDP). Two Barn Swallows were at Lodi's sewage ponds Dec. 13 (†DY) and another was at Grizzly I., *Solano*, Jan. 9 (*fide Gull*). Out-of-place Scrub Jays were one in Chester, *Plumas*, Dec. 27 (†MG) and another n. of Crescent City, thus on the coastal plain of *Del Norte*, Feb. 2 (ADB). "A few" Clark's Nutcrackers were low at 3000 ft elevation near Trimmer, *Fresno*, Jan. 13 (RA), but more than a few were the 191+ counted at Chester Feb. 20 alone (DAA); an amazing 500-750 total were thought present throughout the period there. JLo reported that Yellow-billed Magpies are "apparently moving S in *Solano*," and that "they are now regularly seen around Fairfield, but are still quite rare s. of there." Thus 11 he noted in Lynch Canyon between Fairfield and Vallejo Dec. 24 were noteworthy, as was one at L. Herman, n. of Benicia, Feb. 18 (PeG, *fide JLo*).

There was no consensus on Red-breasted Nuthatch numbers; apparently they were in excellent numbers at least at some locales (e.g., Palomar; all time highs on 5 greater S.F. Bay area C.B.C.s). Exceptional Winter Wren counts for their respective locales were 21 at Palomar Jan. 21 and five in *San Joaquin* on the C.V. floor during the period (DY), although the latter reporter speculated that "they are perhaps more common there than previously expected." One on the Los Banos C.B.C., Dec. 20 (†KH) apparently provided a first *Merced* record. Fifteen Am. Dippers reported from S.F. Bay counties seemed startlingly good, and included six on Arroyo Hondo at Smith's Cr., *Santa Clara*, Jan. 26 (J. Yurchenko, A. Lauterbach, *fide WGB*).

KINGLETS THROUGH VIREOS — The comments made on Golden-crowned Kinglets at Palomar seemed generally accurate for the whole Region: "Numbers greater than most years, and more actually than last year. Decrease noted only at the very end of February. Very little mortality." It was clearly an excellent year for Mountain Bluebirds with many reports of birds from *Colusa* through *Tulare*, the largest being easily a new high count for the Region: 450 along Little Panoche Rd., *San Benito*, Jan. 27 (*fide Gull*). Yet there were only 2 clearly extralimital records: three at Sunol Regional Wilderness Jan. 4 (BR) and a male on Estero Lane, *Sonoma* in early December (RLeB). A total of 15 Townsend's Solitaires on Mt. St. Helena Feb. 16 (BDP, KFC, LCB)

was high for the southernmost regular wintering locale coastwardly; three singles were on the periphery of the C.V. As always, quantitative data on Am. Robin movements was sparse, but coastally numbers seemed to rise to average winter levels through November, then a 2nd influx late December to early January (through the Region?) brought numbers well above average, where they stayed until mid-February. Checked C.B.C.s mostly recorded average numbers; a dawn flock of $20,000 \pm$ in San Rafael on the Marin County (S.) C.B.C. (KFC *et al.*) was the only major roost noted. Thousands moving N through Rohnert Park, Sonoma, mid-January to mid-February (KFC, LCB) were presumably departing. Varied Thrushes were clearly irruptive coastally but average or less in the C.V. Note that wintering coastal and interior birds are of different races. Wrentits on the C.V. floor are sparse at best, so $10 \pm$ at Lodi along the Mokelumne R., Feb. 9 & 21 (DY), formed a noteworthy concentration.

A N. Mockingbird at Lower Klamath N.W.R., Jan. 8 (CSt) was the first for the refuge, and still one of few for the Klamath Basin (*fide* MR). Displaced Sage Thrashers were ones at Corral Hollow Jan. 30 (†DY) and W. Butte Rd., Sutter, Dec. 1 (*fide* Gull). Bohemian Waxwings were not seen outside n. Great Basin locales, but Cedar Waxwings were clearly in very good shape, with flocks of 500-600 in Tulare and San Joaquin (RHG, DY) and a high count of 40 at Smith R., Del Norte, Jan. 19-24+ (RAE) being good numbers. Twenty Phainopeplas on the Mt. Hamilton C.B.C., Dec. 19 (*fide* DSc), was an excellent total; two were far w. near Clear L., Dec. 18-Jan. 2 (KT). In one of their best-ever showings, at least 24 N. Shrikes were noted (including C.B.C. birds reported to me): 15 on the n. coast, six reported from Great Basin areas (probably more seen), and three well s. The latter were immatures at Yolo Bypass, Yolo, Jan. 1-26 (HJ, m.ob.) and Bay Farm I., Alameda, Dec. 16-Feb. 4 (DJ, m.ob.), and an adult at Año Nuevo State Reserve Dec. 7 (*fide* Gull). For the bad news, a swarm of Eur. Starlings passing over Stockton Dec. 14 was estimated at $10,000,000 \pm$ (DY, KH, RA), dwarfing all of our previous reports. "The poor cash year in grapes causing farmers not to pick over 50% of their crops is considered the cause" (DY).

A Bell's Vireo at Pt. Reyes Station Dec. 13-Jan. 8 (ph. RS, m.ob.) gave us a first Regional winter record; it was referable to one of the gray, w. races. An amazing six Solitary Vireos were reported (all as *cassinii*): three in Humboldt Dec. 7-15 (RLeV, JSt), two in Marin Dec. 10-17 (RS) & 23 (*fide* Gull), and one in the interior at Stockton Feb. 7 to the end of February (†DY). Unprecedented were $23 \pm$ Hutton's Vireos on the C.V. floor, Sacramento through Fresno, where generally quite rare.

WARBLERS THROUGH TANAGERS — Six Tennessee Warblers (all coastal) was an average number; 33 Nashville Warblers (also all coastal) was above the recent average, but note that 2 new coastal C.B.C.s (S.F., which started last winter, and Arcata this winter) together produced 11 of our records. A Lucy's Warbler was documented from Pacific Grove Dec. 28-29 (†JP, LCB). Nine Yellow Warblers were found, with records from the Carmel R. mouth to Smith R., Del Norte, nearly matching last year's unprecedented 10. With the apparently low insectivore mortality, the fact that only three were reported for any extended period is mostly an indication of birder behavior and not Yellow Warbler movement. A Chestnut-sided Warbler on the Mad R., Dec. 7 (RLeV), was probably a late migrant; we have but one record of a wintering bird. Black-throated Gray Warblers had their best showing yet with 20 records; 9 were coastal, with 11 in the C.V. Four Townsend's Warblers were away from the coast: three in San Joaquin (HR, KM) and an ad. male s. of Lake of the Pines Dec. 22 (†JML *et al.*) in the low Sierran foothills. A Yellow-throated Warbler in Olema, Marin, Dec. 12-Jan. 12 (RS, †JE, m.ob.) was of the *D. d. dominica/stoddardi* form, as indicated by long bill and yellow lores and chin. It was the first of this form identified for our Region (2nd for the state), and provided a first Regional winter record for the species.

Palm Warblers were reported in unsurprising numbers ($30 \pm$); all were coastal (25 from the n. coast), and only two to five were noted after December. At 6 records, Black-and-white Warblers were in only half the recent-average numbers. Only one was non-coastal: a 7th Yosemite area record (first for October-April) was an ad. male at 2100 ft in El Portal, Mariposa (†PD). A N. Waterthrush was said to have wintered in Santa Cruz (*fide* Gull); we have $10 \pm$ previous records of birds apparently wintering. Eight Wilson's Warblers was high (but our recent average

is now five to six) with all in coastal counties; only the northernmost was shown to stay past the C.B.C.s: Nov. 29-Feb. 5 near Ft. Dick, Del Norte (RT *et al.*). A Ø Summer Tanager at Bolinas Jan. 23 (RS *et al.*) furnished our 6th winter report in 5 years, all but one of which was from the S.F. Bay area. Winter W. Tanager records are considerably more widespread, but this year's 4 (near average) were all in the S.F. Bay/Sonoma area.

GROSBEAKS THROUGH ORIOLES — Our only *Pheucticus* grosbeak was an imm. ♂ Black-headed in the Carmel Valley, Monterey (DR), which at Dec. 1 only was perhaps straggling, not wintering. A Ø Dickcissel at Smith R., Dec. 16-Jan. 12 (RT, †RAE) gave us a 2nd winter record, and only our 10th mainland record in 15 years, with an equal number from F.I. in that time. A Green-tailed Towhee at Kaweah Oaks Preserve, Tulare, Dec. 30 (L. Wilson, *fide* RH) was probably the one that wintered there last year. After a year of searching appropriate habitat, birders in Shasta discovered a singing Rufous-crowned Sparrow Feb. 23, 3 mi e. of Coleman Fish Hatchery, ½ mi n. of Battle Cr. (BV). This extended the known range n. in the Region (and the world) by 37 miles. Breeding confirmation was anticipated. Four Vesper Sparrow reports were of birds away from regular locales: singles at Stafford L., Marin, late December-Feb. 4 (RS), Concord Ave. at Briones Rd., Contra Costa (JR), and s. of Los Banos Dec. 20 (KH, †KH), and five on Ave. 12, Madera, Jan. 9 (KH, KH).

Two Sage Sparrows just n. of Volta on the Los Banos C.B.C., Dec. 20 (†JMa) were at the northernmost known locale for *A. b. canescens* (see AB 36:1014). Enigmatic were two Sage Sparrows on the shore of S.F. Bay: a definite *A. b. belli* on the Emeryville Marina Dec. 9-Jan. 29 (JG, m.ob.), and probably another *belli* on Robert's Landing (†HG). A Grasshopper Sparrow at Arcata Marsh Dec. 15-25 was possibly wintering (MH). A Sharp-tailed Sparrow at Pine Gulch Cr. mouth, Marin, Dec. 9 (†JM) was at an annually productive locale for the species. Three other reports were undocumented. Two reports of 'eastern' (*P. i. iliaca/zaboria* type) Fox Sparrows near Ft. Dick were the first such for Del Norte; singles Dec. 16 and Jan. 7-12 (RAE) were 2 mi apart and probably best interpreted as one record. Swamp Sparrows were noted the length of the coast (at least 16) and at 4 inland locales (singles). Only 29 White-throated Sparrows were reported, a poor but not awful showing; White-crowned Sparrow numbers on C.B.C.s might best be described in stock market jargon: slightly down in mixed trading. Amazing were reports totalling 71+ Lapland Longspurs; 7 sites were in coastal counties, 2 sites in n. Great Basin areas.

A ♀ Tricolored Blackbird at F.I., Feb. 28 was but 7 days earlier than last spring's female there, and exceptional for the island. Sixth and 7th Regional records for Great-tailed Grackle were males at Pescadero, San Mateo, Dec. 29 (†PJM) and Martinez Marina, Contra Costa, Jan. 10-11 (BR, JR); a male and female together still inhabited S.F. through the period, as they have since June 1978 (♂) and September 1979 (♀). A Ø Orchard Oriole in Smith R., Dec. 16-Mar. 19 (RLeV, †RAE) provided a 2nd Del Norte record, while a report of one from Humboldt lacked details. Four reports of Hooded Orioles were all away from the immediate coast. Details for only one were submitted, and they fit Streak-backed Oriole (a potential vagrant to our Region—see the Southern Pacific Coast report) as well as they did Hooded (*e.g.*, "subtle streaked back"). Even more critical is the question whether Orchard Oriole is ruled out in cases of suspected displaced Hooded Orioles (and vice versa). I have heard rumors of opinions that Hooded Oriole is regular in winter; observers holding such opinions are strongly encouraged to substantiate them; I remain open-minded. Two of 12 N. Orioles were "Baltimore" types: female, Golden Gate P., Dec. 19-Mar. 2 (LCB, m.ob.), male, Millbrae, Dec. 22 (*fide* Gull). The rest were all "Bullock's."

FRINGILLIDS — Purple Finches were in flight-year numbers in some areas (Sacramento, Marin) but apparently not all. More unusual was a widely-scattered irruption of Cassin's Finches. They are rarely noted in lower w. Sierra foothills, so reports of many small flocks Mariposa through Fresno, Jan. 20 on (JLo, KH, VJ) were impressive. Yet less expected were a report of four on the C.V. floor at Stockton Feb. 7 through the end of February (†DY), and 5 coastward reports: a flock of 35 Dec. 22 for the 2nd Clear Lake C.B.C. record (*fide* KT), one Jan. 9 and another Jan. 25 on Sonoma Mt. (RMe; †KFC—2nd & 3rd

Sonoma records), two or more Feb. 1 at Alpine L., *Marin* (RS), and one Feb. 10 at Inverness (RS). The only Great Basin report was from *Siskiyou*: "large numbers . . . present in towns at lower elevations in the county" (MR). Red Crossbills continued their Regionwide explosion with no clear change in abundance, August through February. With few areas untouched, they were still clearly most abundant in *Marin* (e.g., 2834 on 2 C.B.C.s there). A flock there on Limantour Rd., Feb. 17 was noted by JM to consist of "250 ± small-billed birds and 50 medium-billed. The different bill types give different call notes. . . . It is possible that more than one species is involved, observers are urged to pay attention to vocalizations and bill size when possible." Note the illustration of the 3 bill-size types in the Nat'l Geographic Society field guide (three right-most birds). There have still been no signs of breeding reported. Pine Siskins as well were abundant, with thousands seen coastally (9116 on Dec. 30, W. Sonoma C.B.C., *fide* DSi, being the highest number seen). Their presence was also conspicuous in the C.V., where normally very scarce; many observations were of 10-50. Our *only* reported locale for Lawrence's Goldfinch, after last spring and summer's invasion, was at and near Napa R. Ecological Preserve; 25 were noted Jan. 1 and "over 50" Feb. 7 (*fide* Gull). There were no reports of large numbers of Evening Grosbeaks, but there *were* many reports of small flocks. Two near Ft. Dick Dec. 19 (RAE) furnished the only *Del Norte* sighting, but there were dozens of sightings *Sacramento* through *Fresno*, and small numbers were on many central coast C.B.C.s.

ADDENDA — Acceptable documentation is now on file for the following records: Cape May Warbler, Pacific Grove, Jan. 31, 1980 (AB 34:304); Costa's Hummingbirds: San Rafael Dec. 3-31, 1983 (AB 38:354), and see AB 38:430 for photo; Los Banos Dec. 26, 1983 (AB 38:354).

CORRIGENDUM — For AB 37:335, the Black-and-white Warbler

was near Pt. Arena, not Ft. Arena.

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