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## SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION

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### Guy McCaskie

**M**ost observers considered this spring to be one of the duller in years, with a noticeable lack of migrant landbirds, and the few vagrants that did occur remained only for short periods of time, being seen by remarkably few observers.

As previously pointed out (*Am. Birds* 37:911-912, 1983), large numbers of waterbirds that winter in the Gulf of California are assumed to migrate across southern California each spring, going undetected unless grounded by stormy conditions. On March 16 a major frontal system passed through southern California, bringing with it strong winds and rain. Robert McKernan was at Lake Perris, located in



extreme western Riverside County, that day, and encountered incredible numbers of waterbirds including 500 Horned Grebes, 90 Brant, 18 White-winged Scoters, 1000 Common Mergansers, 14 Red-breasted Mergansers, two Mew Gulls, and three Glaucous-winged Gulls, among the more expected waterfowl and gulls. As in previous cases where such numbers have been grounded by adverse weather conditions, virtually all departed as soon as the weather cleared, there being very few birds on the lake on March 17.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — F.C.R. = Furnace Creek Ranch in Death Valley, Inyo Co.; N.E.S.S. = north end of the Salton Sea, Riverside Co.; S.E.S.S. = south end of the Salton Sea, Imperial County. As virtually all rarities found in s. California are seen by numerous observers, only the observer initially identifying the bird is included. Documentation is on file with the California Bird Records Committee (c/o Don Roberson, 282 Grove Acre, Pacific Grove, CA 93950) for all rarities listed in this report, and records submitted without documentation are not published.

**LOONS THROUGH STORKS** — A Com. Loon in flight over Buckhorn Campground in the San Gabriel Mts., Los Angeles Co., Apr. 26 (KLG) was at 7000' elevation. A Laysan Albatross 40 mi w. of San Miguel I., Apr. 11 (TW) was over deep water where this species probably occurs regularly. The presence of seven N. Fulmars off San Diego May 17 (REW) suggested a few might stay through the summer in s. California waters this year. Most interesting was the report (without details) of four to five **Murphy's Petrels** (*Pterodroma ultima*) seen 40 mi n.w. of Pt. Conception, Santa Barbara Co., Apr. 11 by 2 seasoned pelagic birders (TW, LS); when viewed along with the reports of *Pterodromas* off central California this spring, one can only speculate as to how common and/or regular these birds are over deep water off California.

A Red-billed Tropicbird seen off San Diego May 17 (REW) was one of a very few ever to be seen in spring off s. California. A Brown Pelican at N.E.S.S., Mar. 21-30 (NBB) was exceptionally early for this inland locality, and seven were there June 1 (REW). An ad. Olivaceous Cormorant, a casual visitor to s.e. California, was at N.E.S.S., Mar. 23 (DRW) and Apr. 20 (BWK), and may have been the individual seen off and on at this location in late summer since 1982.

American Bitterns appeared to be nesting at Guajome L. near Oceanside in April with five seen there Apr. 6 (EC); nesting is unrecorded s. of Orange County, and nesting records for anywhere in s. California in recent years are few indeed. An ad. Little Blue Heron in California City, Kern Co., May 10 (RS,

ph.) and another at Seal Beach May 11 (LRH) were the only ones found away from San Diego County, and were part of an emerging movement of adults N in May and June. The wintering Tricolored Heron near Imperial Beach was last seen Mar. 23 (CGE). Up to two ad. Wood Storks, now considered casual to accidental along the coast, were present in the Oceanside/San Elijo Lagoon area Mar. 29-May 26 (NS) with one of these near Imperial Beach Apr. 25 (DHE); an adult at N.E.S.S., May 2 (AB) was exceptionally early for the Salton Sea.

**WATERFOWL, RAPTORS** — Three Fulvous Whistling-Ducks, now considered accidental away from S.E.S.S., were in California City May 16 (JWi, ph.). Two Black-bellied Whis-



Fulvous Whistling-Ducks in flight near California City, Cal., May 16, 1986. Photo/John Wilson.

ting Ducks near Imperial Beach May 24 (RoP) were probably escapees; however, this species appears to be on the increase in Arizona, and is now a casual visitor to the Salton Sea, hence it is worth noting all occurrences in s. California. A wintering Snow Goose that remained in Huntington Beach to May 18 (DRW) and an apparently healthy bird at F.C.R., May 22 (BED) were both exceptionally late, as were the two wintering Ross' Geese that remained in Long Beach through May 14 (BED). A ♂ Eur. Wigeon on L. Henshaw, San Diego Co., Mar. 14 (RH) was the latest of the wintering birds. The ♂ Harlequin Duck at Bolsa Chica, Orange Co., was present through Mar. 29 (LRH). An Oldsquaw near Santa Maria Mar. 26 (PEL) was in a flooded pasture, a most unusual place for this species. A Surf Scoter at N.E.S.S., May 31 (REW) and another at nearby Salton City the same day (REW) were the only ones found inland. A ♂ White-winged Scoter on Quail L., Los Angeles Co., Apr. 19 (KLG) was far inland and the only one found inland away from L. Perris. Two Com. Goldeneyes on a small pond in Death Valley Junction, Inyo Co., May 25-31 (BED) were unexpected, especially at this time of year.

A Black-shouldered Kite near Westmorland, Imperial Co., Apr. 26 (GMCC) was outside the species' normal range in California. The presence of two ad. Bald Eagles on Santa Margarita L., San Luis Obispo Co., on the late date of May 25 (LD) suggested this may have been a pair nesting, or planning to nest, at this locality; Bald Eagles formerly nested at a few secluded locations in s. California up to the 1950s, but not since that time. Swainson's Hawks are now exceedingly rare along the coast; hence, one over El Capitan State Beach near Santa Barbara Mar. 30 (JLD) and another over San Diego Apr. 23 (GMCC) were of interest.

**SANDPIPERS THROUGH SKIMMER** — A Solitary Sandpiper, very rare in spring, was in Anaheim Apr. 6 (DRW) and another was in California City May 17 (JWi). A Wandering Tattler, casual inland, was at Salton City May 10 (JO). Ruddy





Semipalmated Sandpiper (rear bird) with Least Sandpiper at San Luis Obispo, Cal., between May 10 & 12, 1986. Photo/Gregory P. Smith.

Turnstones were scarcer than normal on the Salton Sea with eight there May 10 (GMcC) being the largest number found. A Black Turnstone, always much rarer inland than the previous species, was at Salton City Apr. 12 (GMcC). Ninety Red Knots at various localities around the Salton Sea Apr. 27 (RRV) was the largest number reported this spring, but smaller numbers were present from Mar. 30 (GMcC) to June 1 (REW). A Semipalmated Sandpiper at S.E.S.S., Apr. 26 (GMcC) was followed by two to three at N.E.S.S., May 4 (RRV) and three together at S.E.S.S., May 10 (GMcC); one in San Luis Obispo May 10–13 (GPS, ph.) was along the coast where most unusual in spring. A Baird's Sandpiper, very rare in spring, was at S.E.S.S. on the exceptionally late date of June 1 (REW). A Pectoral Sandpiper, another rarity in spring, was in Goleta Mar. 31 (PEL). The Rock Sandpiper that spent the winter at Avila Beach, San Luis Obispo Co., remained through Mar. 31 (CB). Stilt Sandpipers remained more numerous than usual around S.E.S.S. during March and April with an impressive 250 together there May 10 (JO); one at N.E.S.S., May 31 (REW) was quite late. The wintering ♀ Ruff was last seen at Goose L., Kern Co., on Apr. 11 (MOC), one was at Pt. Mugu Mar. 4 (AS, ph.), and a 3rd was near Santa Maria Mar. 26 (PEL). A Red-necked Phalarope near Santa Catalina I., Mar. 23 (KLG) may well have wintered locally, spring migrants not normally arriving in s. California before late April.



Female Ruff in basic (winter) plumage at Pt. Mugu, Cal., Mar. 4, 1986. Photo/Arnold Small.

Unprecedented was a flock of 27 ad. Pomarine Jaegers at N.E.S.S., Apr. 5 (LRH); these birds were seen approaching from the s. in a compact group, and upon reaching the n. shore of the Salton Sea broke up into small groups and settled on the water. A S. Polar Skua, rare but regular off s. California in spring, was near Santa Catalina I., Apr. 28 (BWK) and another was off San Diego May 17 (PU). An ad. Laughing Gull, a casual straggler to the coast of California, was at Bolsa Chica May 29 (CC). As usual, a few Franklin's Gulls were found in late April and early May with single birds near Lakeview, Riverside Co., Apr. 21 (AMC), near Palm Springs Apr. 30 (BCa), at Lancaster, Los Angeles Co., May 3 (JB), and in San Luis Obispo Apr. 24 (GPS, ph.), and up to two were in Malibu Apr. 30–May 9 (CF). A W. Gull at Salton City Apr. 12–26 (GMcC) was far inland, but increasing numbers appear to have been getting to the Salton Sea in recent years. A Glaucous-winged Gull at N.E.S.S., Mar. 23 (DRW) was the only one found on the Salton Sea this spring. A Glaucous Gull near Cayucos May 5 (TME) was quite late.

Two Gull-billed Terns present on s. San Diego Bay Apr. 29–May 8 (CGE) appeared to be a mated pair; one seen here July 15, 1985 (AB 39:962, 1985) was the first ever to be found on the coast of California. Elegant Terns arrived on schedule with the first seen in San Diego Mar. 10 (REW), but unlike in previous years, pushed on N up the coast as indicated by up to 19 at the Santa Clara R. mouth near Ventura Apr. 11+ (JSR), two in Goleta Apr. 10 (JLD), one near Morro Bay Apr. 21 (GPS), and two on Morro Bay May 13 (TME). An Arctic Tern at N.E.S.S., June 1 (REW) was one of a very few ever to be found inland, but all previous inland occurrences for s. California have been between June 4 and 13. One or two Least Terns at Tecopa, Inyo Co., May 23–25 (JWh) gave us only the 2nd inland record of this species away from the Salton Sea, but the previous record was of one at nearby F.C.R. on May 27, 1981 (AB 35:863, 1981). A Black Tern at S.E.S.S., Apr. 12 (GMcC) was exceptionally early. Two Black Skimmers in Santa Barbara May 17 (JF) and up to three on Morro Bay Apr. 23–May 1 (G. McClure) were unusually far north.

**DOVES THROUGH VIREOS**—Single White-winged Doves on Pt. Loma May 2 (JWo) & 18 (REW) were the only ones found along the coast this spring. Up to six Chimney Swifts were over Exposition Park in downtown Los Angeles May 2+ (KLG), this species now occurring every summer at this location; another was seen going down a chimney in Big Pine May 24 (PJM), a location where nesting has been suspected since the summer of 1983. A ♂ Broad-tailed Hummingbird well seen in California City May 11 (JWi) was a little to the w. of the species' normal range, and a bird believed to be a ♀ Broad-tailed Hummingbird on Pt. Loma May 10 (REW) was well to the w. of the species' range. An Acorn Woodpecker at the Linda Mia Ranch in the Antelope Valley, Los Angeles Co., May 10 (A & JC) was away from areas of normal occurrence. A Gila Woodpecker at Corn Springs, Riverside Co., Apr. 5–May 10 (DK) was at an unusual locality. A Downy Woodpecker on Pt. Loma Apr. 12 (REW) was also out of range.

A Gray Flycatcher on Figueroa Mt. near Santa Barbara May 1 (PEL) and another in Los Osos May 9–11 (TME) were both close to the coast and n. of Los Angeles, where considered very rare. An E. Phoebe at F.C.R., May 23 (PDG) was only the 3rd ever to be reported in s. California in May. A ♀ Vermilion Flycatcher in California City May 17 (A & JC, ph.) was somewhat n. and w. of the species' range. For the 5th consecutive year a Brown-crested Flycatcher was found at F.C.R., this year's bird being present May 25–31 (BED). Single E. Kingbirds were at F.C.R., May 29–31 (BED), at nearby Emigrant Ranger Station May 28 (BED), and at Deep Springs May 23 (PJM); small numbers clearly pass through this area of California during late May each year. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, a casual visitor to California, was on San Clemente I., June 2 (DW).

A Veery well seen at Deep Springs, Inyo Co., May 17 (TME) was only the 3rd to be found in s. California and the 7th for



the entire state. A Varied Thrush near San Diego May 4 (FD) was quite late. A Gray Catbird, a casual straggler to California, was on Santa Barbara I., May 20 (GMF). A Brown Thrasher in Mojave May 6 (JLD) was the only one found this spring. Two pairs of California Thrashers at Thousand Palms Oasis located in the foothills at the s. end of the Little San Bernardino Mts. on the e. side of the Coachella Valley, Riverside Co., May 23 (DRW) were outside the known range of this resident species. California Thrashers are resident in Morongo Valley at the extreme n. end of the Little San Bernardino Mts. some 40 mi to the n.w. of Thousand Palms Oasis, and in the foothills of the San Jacinto Mts. some 15 mi to the w., but the latter place is across the Coachella Valley where Crissal Thrashers are resident. The only Red-eyed Vireos to be found this spring were a somewhat early individual in Huntington Beach May 21 (SGa) and a 2nd in California City June 1 (A & JC).

**WOOD WARBLERS** — Wood warblers were scarce throughout the Region, with most observers commenting on the lack of the regularly-occurring w. species during April and early May, and a poor showing of vagrant species in late May and early June. Eleven Tennessee Warblers between May 9 and June 8 were far fewer than expected. Only four N. Parulas were found with a somewhat early male in Orange Apr. 20 (SGa), a male in California City May 18 (JWi, ph.), another at F.C.R., May 25–30 (PJM), and the 4th at Ft. Piute, San Bernardino Co., May 25 (SFB). The wintering Chestnut-sided Warbler in Arcadia was last seen Apr. 13 (BCo), and a male in California City May 31 (NBB) was the only one this spring. Only three Magnolia Warblers were found with single birds in California



Male Magnolia Warbler at California City, Cal., May 26, 1986. Photo/John Wilson.

City May 26 (BED, ph.) and June 1 (A & JC), and the 3rd at Stovepipe Wells in Death Valley May 28 (BED). A singing ♂ Black-throated Green Warbler in Glendale Apr. 7–12 (GB) was at least 6 weeks earlier than the previous earliest spring record, suggesting it may have wintered locally.

The presence of at least two ♂ Grace's Warblers on Clark Mt. in e. San Bernardino Co., May 23 (PDG) suggested this species may now be nesting at that locality. The Palm Warbler present at Dana Pt., Dec. 1+ was last seen Apr. 9 (BH) and another present in Santa Barbara Mar. 26–Apr. 2 (PS) had undoubtedly wintered locally. A ♂ Bay-breasted Warbler, a casual spring vagrant, was in California City May 23–24 (JWi, ph.). Black-and-white Warblers were remarkably scarce with only eight reported, and Am. Redstarts were even scarcer with only three reported. An Ovenbird in Morongo Valley Mar. 21 (NBB) was far too early for a spring migrant and must have been wintering locally; the only spring migrants were one in Kelso May 17 (EAC), and single birds in San Diego June 6 (EC) & 8

(REW). Nine N. Waterthrushes between Apr. 26 and May 25 were fewer than expected. A ♂ Mourning Warbler in California City May 16 (JWi) was the 6th to be found in s. California in spring. Three Hooded Warblers were found with a male in Glendale May 12–17 (GB) and single females in California City May 11 (JWi) & 24 (JWi, ph.). A Yellow-breasted Chat near San Diego Apr. 5 (AME) was a little early.

**TANAGERS THROUGH ORIOLES** — The ♀ Hepatic Tanager that wintered in Irvine was last seen Apr. 13 (DRW). Three Summer Tanagers along the coast May 20–30, along with six found in the n.e. corner of the Region May 17–28, were all believed to be vagrant rubra from the east rather than cooperi from the breeding population in s.e. California. A ♂ Scarlet Tanager in Capistrano Beach June 5 (MP) was about the 12th to be found in s. California in spring. A ♀ N. Cardinal was still present along the Colorado R. at the San Bernardino/Riverside Co. line May 10 (BWK). A Pyrrhuloxia in San Diego Mar. 17 (LaB) was the 2nd to have been found in this area, and added to an increasing number of spring sightings from well to the w. of the species' range. A ♂ Rose-breasted Grosbeak in La Jolla Mar. 30–Apr. 8 (EHM) had undoubtedly wintered locally, and nine found between May 17 and June 6 were far fewer than expected. A ♂ Black-headed Grosbeak on Pt. Loma Mar. 16 (JO) was quite early. Only 11 Indigo Buntings were reported between May 17 and June 2. A ♂ Painted Bunting at Oasis May 23 (PJM) was the first to be found in s. California during the spring migration period. A ♀ Dickcissel, a rare vagrant in spring, was in Tecopa May 31–June 1 (JT). A singing Cassin's Sparrow at Bolsa Chica May 10–18 (BED) was only the 2nd to have been found on the coast of s. California, the first having been an individual present near San Diego in the spring/summer of 3 different years between 1970 and 1978, all other records having been during the spring/summer of 1978 when there was an "invasion" into the s.e. portion of the Region. A Swamp Sparrow in Tecopa May 19 (SGo) was late, but there are at least 3 previous late May records from the e. portion of the Region. One of the two Harris' Sparrows that spent the winter in Ojai remained to May 10 (JG) and another late individual was in California City May 18 (JWi, ph.). A ♂ Lapland Longspur at F.C.R., May 3 (DHo) was exceptionally late as was a ♀ Chestnut-collared Longspur at the same location May 18 (TME).

As usual a few Bobolinks occurred in the n.e. portion of the Region with two at Oasis May 24 (C & ES), one at Scotty's Castle May 24 (DR), and five at F.C.R. between May 24 and 31 (PDG, BED). A Great-tailed Grackle near Weldon, Kern Co., Mar. 7 (RHe), single birds at L. Casitas, Ventura Co., all spring (RM), in Ventura Mar. 13–19 (KPS), and at Santa Clara R. mouth



Male Lapland Longspur at Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley, Cal., May 3, 1986. Photo/Don Hoechlin.



Apr. 17-27 (JSR), three in La Jolla Mar. 26 (J & DS), and another in San Diego Apr. 29 (RuP) were all away from areas of regular occurrence, but this species is still expanding its range. A ♂ Bronzed Cowbird in Brawley May 10 (JO) was w. of the Colorado R. but may prove to be regular in small numbers at a few select locations in the Imperial Valley. Single N. (Baltimore) Orioles on Pt. Loma May 11 (JO), in Ventura May 13-15 (VK), and at Scotty's Castle May 29 (BED) were the only ones reported.

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