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## MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION

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David G. Yee, Richard A. Erickson,  
and Stephen F. Bailey

**M**any Great Basin lakes were dry or too low for nesting by waterbirds such as *Aechmophorus* grebes and Am. White Pelicans, some of which may have returned early to coastal waters instead of breeding this year. Farallon Island seabirds showed excellent reproductive success, with Cassin's Auklets double-clutching. Knowledge of our breeding landbirds has greatly increased as birders in more areas conduct breeding bird atlases or counts. Late spring vagrant waves were notable for their quantity rather than

quality, as many of our "regulars" were observed in near-record numbers.

We thank Kurt F. Campbell for compiling the landbird reports for Yee's analysis.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — C.B.R.C. = California Bird Records Committee; C.V. = Central Valley; Cyn. = Canyon; F.I. = S.E. Farallon I.; S.F. = San Francisco; ph. = photo on file with the Regional Editors. Use of "Period" and "Region" (capitalized) refers to these terms as defined for *American Birds*. All records from S.E. Farallon I. and Palomarin should be credited to Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory (P.R.B.O.). Place names in *italics* are counties.





**GREBES THROUGH FRIGATEBIRD** — Late grebes included two Horneds on southern S.F. Bay June 4 (CB, G. Hoyt) and a Red-necked at Pt. Reyes June 15 (RS). *Aechmophorus* grebe counts in n.e. Monterey Bay declined to 1247 by June 30, then increased to 2721 by July 29 (DLSu). Clark's Grebes averaged 15.9% of those identified in these surveys. Among the major *Aechmophorus* colonies that did not exist this summer due to low water levels were those at Bridgeport L., Mono (RS) and Mountain Meadows Res., Lassen (SFB).

Tubenoses were generally scarce, except for Sooty Shearwaters in n.e. Monterey Bay. After a lull in the afternoon visits of large Sooty flocks to Santa Cruz waters, 1,200,000 returned June 19 (DLSu). An adult or near-adult **Brown Booby** roosted at Pt. Lobos, Monterey in the afternoons of June 15–19 (P. Mosimann, M. Trocme, †AB, †DR, †ALE). Perhaps this represented a continuation of last year's booby irruption.

Boat surveys of the bridge colonies of Double-crested Cormorants found 350–375 nests on the S.F. Bay Bridge, Alameda and 275–300 nests on the Richmond Bridge, Contra Costa (M. Rauzon, HRC). Counts of 900–1100 of this species in the central Baumberg salt ponds, Hayward, Alameda through July (SFB) were considered typical (LRF) for this major habitat for piscivores. An all-time high 1522 Brandt's Cormorant nests with young were visible from public trails at Pt. Lobos, Monterey July 2 (AB). The count of 28 Pelagic Cormorant nests there was considered "good", but 30 Pelagic nests were active under the Monterey Bay Aquarium, with others elsewhere along Cannery Row (AB). This illustrates the shift to man-made nest substrates by this species as well as by the Double-crested. A ♀ Magnificent Frigatebird flying S at Capitola, Santa Cruz July 20 (†CKf) continued S past Zmudowski State Beach, Monterey the same day (K. Kwan).

**HERONS TO WATERFOWL** — A Least Bittern at Joyce I., Solano June 21 (RS) was at a new location. Little Blue Herons and Cattle Egrets were reported nesting at Alviso, unfortunately without details (WGB). An apparent Little Blue Heron x Snowy Egret hybrid was at the Stockton sewage ponds July 11–15 (†DGY, †JM). There are few unequivocal Regional records of this form or imm. Little Blue Heron. A few Little Blue Herons have presumably been breeding on S.F. Bay, and occasionally elsewhere in the Region, for many years. Hybrid offspring and, worse yet, backcross offspring would seem to be as numerous

as pure Little Blue Heron offspring. The identification of these forms has not yet been adequately studied. Especially confusing is that dusky wingtips are almost never seen on these birds.

Estimates of the number of White-faced Ibises at the Woodland Sugar Ponds in mid-June ranged from 100+ to 1000; many were nesting (fide TDM, HG). One thousand were estimated present in the central Sacramento Valley this summer with 300 active nests at Colusa N.W.R. (fide BED). Numbers dropped off dramatically in Stanislaus after May with the last bird seen June 19 (HMR).

A Greater White-fronted Goose near Newark July 10 (LRF) was the Region's first coastal summer record. Two others were reported inland. Brant have the reverse pattern with over 150 along the coast being far overshadowed by singles in Mono at Bridgeport Res. May 28 (DS) and Mono L. July 27 (PJM). Canada Geese are now so commonly released that interpreting their natural summer distribution is almost hopeless. California Fish & Game plantings in the Arcata Bottoms and Eel R. delta this spring resulted in numerous sightings in the Humboldt Bay area (fide PFS, RAE).

A Mallard brood at 10,850' Evolution L., Fresno July 20 (HG) is our highest nesting record ever. A ♂ **Garganey** at the Woodland Sugar Ponds June 19 (GEw; details to C.B.R.C.) was in a sensitive wader nesting area so news of its discovery was suppressed. The date may be prohibitively late for a naturally occurring bird as 4 previously accepted California records span Mar. 10–Apr. 29. The bird's rumored presence a week or so later is further damaging and will be considered in the C.B.R.C. decision-making process.

Lesser Scaup again nested near S.F. Bay. A female with chicks was at Palo Alto Flood Control Basin July 3 (PMB). An Oldsquaw remained at Pt. Reyes to at least July 5 (JMR et al.). An imm. ♂ Barrow's Goldeneye at Tule Lake N.W.R., Siskiyou June 26 (†RE) was the first summer Period record in over 50 years. With another Siskiyou record from May 1987, hope remains alive that we may see this species once again nesting in California.

**RAPTORS** — An unusual total of nine summer reports of Sharp-shinned Hawk in greater S.F. Bay Area counties included Santa Cruz's 2nd nesting, on Pine Mt. near last year's first (RAM). Cooper's Hawks continued expanding their breeding range in San Mateo, especially in urban habitats (PJM, RSTh, D. Keller).

**RAILS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS** — A Sora landed aboard a U.S. naval vessel 80 miles W of San Francisco Aug. 1 (J. Harris). A Com. Moorhen at Arcata Marsh June 5–8 (FJB et al.) may have been the same individual seen there in April.

#### S.A.

Intensive coverage of n. Humboldt Bay this summer (33 visits May 15–July 4) by Broerman et al. gave us our best estimate to date of the number of truly oversummering shorebirds on a major estuarine system. Their results: 148 Black-bellied Plovers, 3 Greater Yellowlegs, 4–5 Willets, 44 Whimbrels, 125 Long-billed Curlews, 105 Marbled Godwits, 2 Ruddy Turnstones, 15 Red Knots, 3+ W. Sandpipers, and 7 dowitchers (only Short-billed identified). As expected, the highest numbers were of the larger species, which presumably take longer to reach sexual maturity. Most surprising were the absence of any Semipalmated Plovers (no reports Regionwide in June) and the low number of Willets.



Adult Lesser Golden-Plovers were at Samoa, Humboldt June 12 (FJB), Limantour Estero, Marin July 16 (D. Bromley), and Abbott's Lagoon, Pt. Reyes July 29-31 (RS, †DAH). The former was *fulva*, the latter *dominica*, and the other unspecified. San Francisco Bay continues to host Black Oystercatchers. A brood was seen at W. Marin I. this summer (M.J. Rauson, HRC) for the first time.

The first juv. Lesser Yellowlegs reported was in the Arcata Bottoms July 21-23 (FJB). Three Solitary Sandpipers were found in the last 10 days of July, all inland. A basic-plumaged Wandering Tattler at Scott Cr. Beach, Santa Cruz June 18 (DEG) is one of very few potentially oversummering records. Nesting Spotted Sandpipers on the American R. Parkway, near Watt Ave. June 17 into July (DoM) and at Arden Bar June 26 (DJo), were the first such records for Sacramento.

Eight to nine Semipalmated Sandpipers were found in July with two in Eureka July 7 (FJB) our earliest ever. The first juv. Semipalmated, Western, and Least Sandpipers were all found July 24-25 (RSTh, FJB). For the second consecutive year, an alternate-plumaged Baird's Sandpiper lingered on the n. Santa Cruz coast, this one at Wilder Cr. Beach June 17-18 (†DEG). The first fall migrants were adults at Abbotts Lagoon July 20 (PP) and Moss Landing July 21 (DR) and juveniles at Hayward Regional Shoreline July 22 (RJR) and Moss Landing (4) July 24 (DR, DLSu et al.).

Three Dunlins in the first 5 days of June were considered late spring migrants, one in basic plumage at Hayward July 16 (†SFB) was probably summering, and two in alternate plumage at Hayward Regional Shoreline July 30 were considered possibly very early fall migrants (RJR). An alternate-plumaged Long-billed Dowitcher on Pt. Reyes June 10-12 (†DAH, JM) was the only June report. Wilson's Phalaropes began staging very early at Mono L. with 7900 present by June 16; the widespread drought in the prairies was thought possibly responsible (JRJ).

**SKUAS THROUGH ALCIDS** — Four reports of single S. Polar Skuas July 9-23 spanned the full length of our Region's coast. An ad. Laughing Gull on F.I. June 2-4 (ph.PP) was the Island's second ever. An ad. Franklin's Gull flying N past Pigeon Pt. June 23 (BS) was followed by a conspecific at Modesto sewage ponds July 3 (ph.†ERC). The systematic counts along the Santa Cruz coast found fewer Heermann's Gulls than last year, with the Palm Beach to New Brighton Beach segment peaking at 3596 July 19 versus 7442 last year (DLSu). Boat surveys of nesting W. Gulls in S.F. and San Pablo Bays tallied 580-650+ nests in 27 colonies (M. Rauson, HRC), despite not censusing the second largest colony in these bays, the Alameda Naval Air Station breakwater (SFB). The number of new sites, including many single nests on channel marker piles, adds to the picture of the W. Gull's great expansion into the Bay system. An imm. Glaucous-winged Gull at Bridgeport Res., June 20 (†PJM) was Mono's first. The now-annual summer occurrence of Sabine's Gull continued as 30 were offshore Monterey July 23 and two were near F.I. the next day (both ToJ).

Eighty-eight more observations were made of Caspian Terns apparently commuting over the Santa Cruz Mts. in Santa Cruz (DLSu, RAM, GAB, CKf, BSch—see A.B. 41:1483). Analysis supports "the hypothesis that most . . . are breeding in the south S.F. Bay . . . commuting S at a wide variety of times to forage Monterey Bay . . . staying late [perhaps] to maximize their take" (DLSu). Apparent migrants were headed N in spring, adults carried fish (all N) by mid-June, and fledglings followed adults (all but one flying S). The huge flocks of Sooty Shearwaters fish these waters only during the afternoon, so an advantage to late foraging seems likely.

Despite the early spring flight of Elegant Terns, this species was much less numerous than in any of the last 10 years, except 1982. For example, Suddjian's Palm Beach to New Brighton Beach count July 29 was only 102, versus 1924 July

27, 1987. Least Terns had another good year at Alameda Naval Air Station, with 58-67 pairs (79 nesting attempts) producing 80-87+ fledglings (LDC). At most one other fledgling resulted from 11 nests at the other 3 colonies in the Region (LDC). A pair of Black Skimmers at Pajaro R. mouth, Monterey/Santa Cruz June 21 (C. Bissel) was followed by a pair along Elkhorn Slough, Monterey July 24-28 (MJL, J. Marshman, L. Love).

Pigeon Guillemots were down sharply in all segments of the Santa Cruz coast (DLSu). The total decrease was 57%, and it was 72% in the area of highest population density. Marbled Murrelets were almost absent in these same waters (DLSu), but 251 by adjacent Ano Nuevo Reserve July 31 (GJS) indicated where many of them went. Eight more reports of Horned Puffins arrived. One was 4 mi W of Point St. George, Del Norte July 10 (†GSL, NEC, †RAE). Another was at F.I. June 17, and singles were in the Gulf of the Farallones June 9 (S. Cooper) and July 24 (ToJ), and two birds there July 31 (ToJ). Singles were offshore Monterey July 17, 23, and 24 (DLM, ToJ, RER). Each of the Farallon or Monterey birds could have been seen more than once, as many boats scoured these waters.

**CUCKOOS TO WOODPECKERS** — Excitement caused by eight Yellow-billed Cuckoos along the immediate coast (Marin & S.F.) during the Period was overshadowed by 34-37 pairs along the Sacramento R. from Woodson Bridge S.R.A., Tehama, to Colusa June 16-July 31 (MDH). While this appears to conflict with past statements about their status in our Region (AB 41:1484), no mention of reproductive success was received. Their troubles in the state should not be underrated. There are few summer records of Long-eared Owl along the coast n. of Monterey, so two in Humboldt, which has at least one breeding record, were noteworthy: Snow Camp Mt. June 20 (KI) and near Ettersberg July 15 (JCS). Santa Cruz had its first breeding record in over 41 years as an adult attended a juvenile on Santa Rosalie Mt. July 21 (DLSu).

A Com. Nighthawk at Waddell Cr. Beach, Santa Cruz June 5 (GJS) was rare for the central coast. Efforts to understand the breeding status of Black Swift in Santa Cruz produced some eye-opening results: an estimated 17-20 pairs were observed along the coast with 9 nests located (C. Himmelwright, †DLSu). Our only extralimital Costa's Hummingbird was in Eureka July 1-4 (GSL, RAE et al.). An ad. ♂ Broad-tailed Hummingbird at Plumas-Eureka S.P. June 20 (DoM) was a first for Plumas and only the 3rd sighting n. of Mono in the e. part of the state.

Statistics produced by the Palo Alto Breeding Bird Count have clearly revealed the coastward expansion of breeding Nuttall's Woodpeckers. Since the first individual was observed on the lower S.F. Peninsula Mar. 6, 1969, "the rise in the population appears nearly exponential and it is now the most abundant woodpecker with the exception of Acorn Woodpecker" (WGB). Interestingly, this increase has occurred without a decrease in numbers of its long-established congeners, Downy and Hairy woodpeckers (WGB). Continued coastal nesting was also noted in Santa Cruz (DLSu) and Sonoma (NTC). An ad. ♂ "Yellow-shafted" N. Flicker at El Granada, San Mateo, June 22 (BS) was considered "pure," and furnished a first in our files for this form in June. After Alameda's first Pileated Woodpecker last Season, Contra Costa had its first and outdid its neighbor by garnishing itself with another: a female along Curry Canyon, Mt. Diablo S.P., June 5-6 (†KGH et al.) was joined by a male June 11 (GFI, JMR et al.).

**FLYCATCHERS TO PIPITS** — Dusky Flycatcher breeding was confirmed on San Benito Mt., San Benito, when 2 nests with fledglings were discovered June 18 (see last Season). A single Gray Flycatcher was observed the same day (both †DSg). Pushing for a Regional altitude record of 10,850 ft was a Black Phoebe at Evolution L., Fresno, July 20 (HG). Vagrant E. King-



birds were at Pt. Reyes June 15 (RS) and the Big Sur R. mouth June 30 (BGE). Our 2nd Scissor-tailed Flycatcher of the year dazzled only one lucky observer at the Moss Landing W.A. July 21 (†Bill Niendorf).

A summer trek to the Lassic Mts. produced two Clark's Nutcrackers: one at Red Lassic, Trinity, and another along the Trinity/Humboldt line at Black Lassic June 13 (PFS). They appear to be very rare in summer in this section of the Coast Ranges. American Crows are expanding their range as breeders along the central coast, especially in urban areas; several new nest sites were discovered in Santa Cruz (RAM), and San Mateo had its first confirmed breeding record (WGB).

A pair of Bushtits with young at Mono L. June 12–13 (HG, PDG) represented one of several noteworthy events in the Mono Basin this Season. A pair of Bewick's Wrens at the same locale June 20 (PJM) beckoned interest, as the only breeding record of this species for the area was in June 1984. The aftermath of the Mono Basin's first W. Bluebirds last fall at Lee Vining was a pair feeding a fledgling there June 23 (PJM).

Two Hermit Thrushes appearing to be of an eastern race were on F.I. June 11 & 14, while one (race?) in Carmichael, Sacramento, June 18 (V. Vandermeer) was observed on a very odd date for the C.V. A couple of Brown Thrashers paid Humboldt a visit: Eureka July 1 (SWH) and Lanphere Dunes July 11 (D. Ralph, CJR). Up to 15 Water Pipits including a fledgling were observed in the high Sierra at Evolution Basin, Fresno, July 19–22 (†HG) where breeding was suspected 11 years ago. This species is known to breed at several locales in this section of the Sierra.

**VIREOS, WARBLERS** — A plumbeus Solitary Vireo at Mono L. July 26 (PJM) was near areas where this form has bred. A singing *Philadelphia Vireo* in Golden Gate Park June 15–17 (ASH, †SFB, JM) was only the Region's 2nd during spring. Our only Red-eyed Vireo visited F.I. June 11.

Tennessee Warblers were scarce with only one at Pt. Reyes June 16–17 (RS et al.). A singing N. Parula was at L. Talawa, Del Norte, July 4–9 (PFS et al.) while the singing male at Sycamore Grove, Santa Cruz, remained through July 25 (BMMo, m.ob.). On the latter date the bird was observed feeding a Brown-headed Cowbird chick! No other Parula nor nesting activity by this bird was ever observed, so it was assumed he was only responding to the begging stimulus and the chick was not "his" (DLSu). Four Chestnut-sided Warblers June 16–July 4 and 10 Magnolia Warblers June 11–17 were all coastal. Two Cape May Warblers were on F.I. June 14–16 while four "Myrtle" Yellow-rumped Warblers there June 15–22 were probably of eastern origins.

Three territorial ♂ Black-throated Gray Warblers and one female were in Mt. Diablo's Pine Cyn. for over a month June 13+ (KGH, CTH), for their first evidence of breeding in Contra Costa. A single Black-throated Green Warbler on F.I. June 14–16 met our spring average. Also in the singular was a Bay-breasted Warbler at Pt. Reyes June 15–17 (DWe et al.) while five Blackpoll Warblers were shared between Pt. Reyes and F.I. June 16–July 12. Eight Black-and-white Warblers June 11–July 12 were all coastal save one netted at Modoc N.W.R. July 15. Interestingly, this bird was two-thirds through a prebasic molt suggesting it spent the summer (†EckB).

A rather impressive 16 Am. Redstarts were observed June 12–July 24: 14 coastal and two inland in Mono. An even more impressive 13 Ovenbirds were found with all but one (Pt. Reyes) on F.I. June 11–July 21. A singing N. Waterthrush near Silver L., Mono June 17–23 (BHG et al.) mirrored the dates and location of last year's singing bird. Rare *Oporornis* warblers treated only observers on F.I.: a Kentucky June 17 (†PP) and a Mourning June 14–15 (†PP). A singing ♂ MacGillivray's Warbler at the Consumnes R. Preserve, Sacramento June 25 (MP) was unusual for the C.V.; it was probably a nonbreeding wanderer. For the 11th consecutive spring Hooded Warbler was found in the Region: a singing male in S.F. June 21 (ASH, JM, MLR).

Solano's first confirmed breeding record of Wilson's Warbler (!) came from Wild Horse Cr. June 4 (†MBG, JCL) as a pair was observed raising a family. Was a singing Yellow-breasted Chat at Mono L. June 21–23 (PJM) on territory? Mono Basin breeding records are few.

**TANAGERS TO FINCHES** — Western Tanagers are known to breed as low as 700 ft. in the Sierran foothills, but a male observed in appropriate habitat below Jenny Lind, Calaveras June 18 (DGY) was at only 200 ft. Twenty-three Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (21 coastal, two interior) almost doubled our 10-year average for the Period! Of interest was the ad. male along Gazos Cr. Road, San Mateo June 23–30 (GJS, BS et al.); the same site where an ad. male courted a ♀ Black-headed Grosbeak last summer for a month. Both of our coastal Blue Grosbeaks appeared in San Mateo (its first for spring): El Granada June 1 (BS) and Pacifica June 18 (S. Smithson). Indigo Buntings made quite a splash this spring as a total of 18 were sighted during the Period to add to the six from the spring report. Fifteen were coastal while three were from the interior: one at Mono L. June 11 (AME, HG, ES) and two along the Sacramento R., Glenn June 15–July 9 (MDH).

Typical of our spring Clay-colored Sparrow records, two were on F.I. June 11 & 21. However, our 3rd for the mainland during spring showed up at Pt. Reyes June 16 (†DAH, JM). The only extralimital Brewer's Sparrow was on F.I. June 1. A Black-throated Sparrow singing in Butte Valley, Siskiyou June 16 (MFRb) was in an area where they are not known to breed. The arrival dates of breeding coastal Grasshopper Sparrows versus those in the interior were hinted at by DR who first noted three singing males in Robinson Cyn., Monterey during the first part of June (a new locale) while those in the e. part of the county arrive in late March. Linger Zonotrichia sparrows included an unhealthy Golden-crowned in Menlo Park, San Mateo May 23–June 8 (BGR) and a healthy "Gambel's" White-crowned in Del Puerto Cyn., Stanislaus June 19 (†HMR).

Four Bobolinks made an average showing: one at Pebble Beach, Monterey June 4 (D. Donnelly), two at Ft. Dick, Del Norte June 14–16 (RSTr), and one at Mono L. June 20 (PJM). Great-tailed Grackles continue to trickle into our Region as about our 11th was in the Marin Headlands June 15–17 (CLF, BiL, RS). Two very rare spring Orchard Orioles were noted: a female on F.I. June 11 and an ad. male in Alamo, Contra Costa June 22 (†J. Ketsdever). A vagrant "Baltimore" N. Oriole was at Pt. Reyes June 12 (AG, m.ob.). An estimated 12 Cassin's Finches around Mt. Lassic, Humboldt/Trinity June 24–25 (GSL, LPL) were from an area where their breeding status still needs to be assessed. It was difficult to surmise what Evening Grosbeaks were up to this summer as up to 15 birds were reported from coastal lowland areas during the Period and two were over Redding in the C.V. June 3 (BAP). Most intriguing was a pair with three immatures at Inverness, Marin June 7 (RS).

**CITED CONTRIBUTORS** (sub-regional editors in bold-face) — Alan Baldrige, C. Bissel, Clark Blake, E. Clark Bloom (EckB), **William G. Bousman**, Fred J. Broerman, Geraldine A. Brown, Phylliss M. Browning, Eric R. Caine, Harry R. Carter, Neal E. Clark, Laura D. Collins, Nancy T. Couzett, **Bruce E. Deuel**, Daniel Donnelly, Arthur L. Edwards, Alan M. Eisner, Ray Ekstrom, Bruce G. Elliott, Gil C. Ewing (GEW), Carter L. Faust, Leora Feeney, George Finger (GFi), Douglas E. George, Bruce H. Gerow, **Ron H. Gerstenberg**, Albert Ghiorso, **Helen Green**, Paul D. Green, Betty Groce, Marguerite B. Gross, Mary D. Halterman, Stanley W. Harris, Craig Himmelwright, Charles T. Hines, Jr., Kevin G. Hints, David A. Holway, Alan S. Hopkins, Grant Hoyt, Ken Irwin, Joseph R. Jehl, Jr., Dick Johnson, Tom Johnson (ToJ), D. Keller, Clay Kempf (CKf), James Ketsdever, K. Kwan, David Lemon (DLm), Bill Lenarz (BiL), **Gary S. Lester**, Lauren P. Lester, Michael J. Lippmeyer, L. Love,



John C. Lovio, Timothy D. Manolis, J. Marshman, Peter J. Metropulos, Randall A. Morgan, Bryan M. Mori (BMMo), Joseph Morlan, P. Mosimann, Don Munson (DoM), Bill Niendorff, Barbara A. Peck, Michael Perrone, Peter Pyle, C. John Ralph, Duncan Ralph, M. Rauzon, Harold M. Reeve, Jean M. Richmond, Robert J. Richmond, Michael F. Robbins, Don Roberson, Robin E. Roberson, Mary Louise Rosegay, Barry Sauppe, Barbara Scharfenstein (BSch), David Shuford, Daniel Singer (DSg), Scott Smithson, Paul F. Springer, Rich Stallcup, John C. Sterling, Gary J. Strachan, Emilie Strauss, David L. Suddjian (DLSu), Ronald S. Thorn (RSTh), M. Trocme,

Richard S. Tryon (RSTr), Virginia Vandermeer, Kent Van Vuren, David Weiss (DWe), Jerry R. White, Bob Yutzy. Many more contributors were not specifically cited; all are appreciated.—STE-PHEN F. BAILEY (grebes through frigatebird, raptors, skuas through alcids), Dept. of Ornithology & Mammology, Calif. Academy of Sciences, Golden Gate P., San Francisco, CA 94118; RICH-ARD A. ERICKSON (herons through waterfowl, rails through shorebirds), P.O. box 523, Bayside, CA 95524; DAVID G. YEE (Cuckoos through Finches), 2930 Driftwood Pl., #39, Stockton, CA 95207.

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## SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION

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