

SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION

Guy McCaskie



As is normal, the summer season was dry, leaving Southern California very dry after the exceptionally dry winter and spring. Water levels at most reservoirs were lower than usual. From comments by observers who ventured into the mountains, it appears that drought conditions there kept populations of insectivorous birds quite low. Two seven-day cruises aboard the research ship the *New Horizon* in July produced reports of some unexpected seabirds. Waterbirds at the Salton Sea appeared to be in lower than expected numbers, possibly owing to the increase in salinity or to the declining overall quality of the water.

ABBREVIATIONS — N.E.S.S. = north end of the Salton Sea, Riverside County; S.C.R.E. = Santa Clara River Estuary near Ventura, Ventura County; S.E.S.S. = south end of the Salton Sea, Imperial County. Place names in *italics* are counties. As virtually all rarities found in s. California are seen by numerous observers,

only the initials of the observer initially identifying the bird are included. Documentation is on file with the California Bird Records Committee (% 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 TO FRIGATEBIRDS — Loons were scarcer than normal along the coast this summer, especially south of Pt. Conception, Santa Barbara. A summer-plumaged Horned Grebe near Santa Maria July 4 (PEL) was most unusual. Since Eared Grebes are considered rare and sporadic breeders along the coast, the presence of 25 sitting on nests on Batiquitos Lagoon, San Diego, July 8 (JO) was of interest.

The only Black-footed Albatrosses reported were 10 in an area between 58 and 127 mi w.s.w. of San Nicolas I. on July 23 (PP), and 15 more in the same general area July 26 (RRV). Twenty-one Cook's Petrels were seen between 31° 30'N–120° 17'W and 30° 49'N–121° 28'W on July 20 (PP), 11 were seen between 31° 43'N–121° 18'W and 32° 25'N–119° 58'W on

July 23 (PP), nine were in the area of 32° 40'N–121° 30'W on July 26 (RRV), and two more were relatively close to shore at 33° 55'N–121° 30'W on July 30 (RRV), all being over waters where this species undoubtedly occurs regularly. At least nine, and possibly as many as 13, **Band-rumped Storm-Petrels** in the area between 31° 11'N–120° 38'W and 30° 58'N–121° 24'W (between 134 mi s.s.w. of San Nicolas I. and 160 mi s.s.w. of San Nicolas I.) on July 20 (PP), and another only 15 mi w. of San Nicolas I. July 25 (RRV), were a real surprise, since there is only one previous record of this species in California waters. A **Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel**, a species recorded fewer than half a dozen times in California waters, was well seen and photographed at 32° 08'N–120° 37'W (about 83 mi s.w. of San Nicolas I.) on July 23 (PP).



Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel about 83 miles southwest of San Nicholas Island, California, July 23, 1989. Photograph/Peter Pyle.

Two Red-billed Tropicbirds about 65 mi s.w. of San Clemente I. July 19 (PP) were the only ones reported, this species appearing to be less numerous off s. California today than in the 1970s. Brown Pelicans were remarkably numerous on the Salton Sea this summer with 750 seen on only a portion of the Sea July 15 (GMCC), indicating at least 1000 present; one in flight near Riverside July 5 (DM) was most unusual. Magnificent Frigatebirds were less numerous than usual with two immatures over Goleta July 10 (MAH), one at Seal Beach, Orange, June 21 (JF) and what may have been the same bird over the Balboa Peninsula, Orange, June 22 (BA), and one around San Diego July 4–6 (JM) along the coast, and single birds inland at the Salton Sea July 15 (RMCK) and Aug. 9 (TP).

HERONS TO RAPTORS—An Am. Bittern along the upper Santa Ynez R., Santa Barbara, June 9 (JMG) was in an area where considered unusual in summer. At least one pair of Great Egrets successfully raised young near Escondido this summer (JO) to give San Diego its first confirmed nesting record. Seven ad. Snowy Egrets accompanying five dependent young just to the s. of Bakersfield, Kern, June 20 (MOC) provided the first modern-day breeding record for this area of California. Up to six ad. Little Blue Herons were present around s. San Diego Bay this summer, with at least one pair raising young (GMCC). A bird initially thought to be a molting imm. Little Blue Heron in Playa del Rey, Los Angeles, July 22 through the end of the period (AW) had the head and scapular plumes of a breeding adult, so was variously considered a hybrid Snowy Egret x Little Blue Heron or a partially albino

ad. Little Blue. A Tricolored Heron, most unusual in summer, was in San Diego June 24–July 15 (BF). The imm. Reddish Egret that appeared at the mouth of the San Diego R. last Nov. 20 was still present at the end of the summer period. A Cattle Egret near Santa Maria July 19 (SEF) was in an area where this species is normally absent in summer. The ad. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in La Jolla paired with a Black-crowned Night-Heron, built a nest and stood by its mate sitting on the nest, but the eggs evidently did not hatch and it departed the area July 19 (JO'B). The two Wood Storks near Escondido since May 31 built a nest, but did not appear to hatch young, although they were still present Aug. 24 (DR); at S.E.S.S. no more than 20 could be found during July (GMCC), these being mostly adults; this is a far cry from the numbers occurring here 10 years ago, when virtually all were immatures.

As usual a few Brant could be found along the coast with one or two near Cayucos, San Luis Obispo, June 10–25 (TME), three on Morro Bay throughout the period (TME), up to six at Pt. Mugu, Ventura, through July (REW), up to four at Malibu Lagoon, Los Angeles, through June 19 (KLG), and at least one on San Diego Bay all summer (GMCC); in addition, up to seven were inland at N.E.S.S. during June (MAP) with all succumbing to the summer heat by July, but two at S.E.S.S. Aug. 17–31 (SEF) were evidently more successful. A ♀ Wood Duck accompanying three ducklings near Wynola, San Diego, June 28 (CGE) was unusually far south, and gave us the first evidence of breeding in the county. A ♀ Green-winged Teal accompanying two ducklings in the Fremont Valley n. of Mojave, Kern, July 29 (MTH) was most unusual, since there are only a handful of nesting records for the Region. Summering Canvasbacks included one on Batiquitos Lagoon July 29 (JO), another in Ontario, San Bernardino, July 29 (MAP), and a third at S.E.S.S. July 9 (MAP). Summering Ring-necked Ducks included one in Atascadero June 29 through the end of the period (TME), three or four in Saticoy, Ventura, May 26–Aug. 20 (RM), one near S.C.R.E. July 9–Aug. 11 (AB), another near Oxnard July 15 (RM), and one near Redlands, Riverside, June 12–July 9 (RMCK). Along the coast a Greater Scaup was found on Morro Bay June 10 (TME) and another was in Goleta May 24–June 30 (PEL), while a female spent the entire summer inland at N.E.S.S. (GMCC) and another was at S.E.S.S. Aug. 31 (JLD). Summering Surf Scoters were scarcer than usual along the coast south of Pt. Conception, and only nine summering White-winged Scoters could be found along the Santa Barbara n. coast where much larger numbers are the rule. Inland, 16 Surf Scoters were at N.E.S.S. June 25 (MAP) with five surviving through July, and another was at S.E.S.S. June 25–July 23 (GMCC). Two White-winged Scoters were at N.E.S.S. June 25 (BED) with one remaining through the end of the period (MAP). Two Buffleheads near S.C.R.E. July 9–Aug. 20 (RPH) were the only ones reported. A ♀ Com. Merganser with five or six young on Gibraltar Res., Santa Barbara, June 2 (JMG), and another female with five or six downy young on nearby Mono Creek June 6 (JMG), provided the southernmost records for nesting in California.

One of the 2 nesting pairs of Ospreys on L. Isabella, Kern, was feeding three young in the nest on July 29 (JCW) but the other nest was flooded by rising waters. Of extreme interest was a pair of **Northern Goshawks** that fledged two young from a nest on Mt. Abel, Kern, in June (GT), and another pair at a nest near the base of Mt. Pinos, Kern, at the same time (ASm); the only other record for nesting in s. California was represented by a set of eggs taken on nearby Mt. Pinos in 1904. A subad. Harris' Hawk was at the mouth of the New R. at S.E.S.S. June 25 (GMCC) where wild birds have not been known since the 1950s; this species is being reintroduced to the Lower Colorado R. about 80 mi to the east, and is known to be kept in captivity by "falconers." Early imm. Red-shouldered Hawks in the desert east of the species' normal range included one in the Fremont Valley June 10 (MTH) and another in Salton City, Imperial, July 9 (GMCC). A pair of Zone-tailed Hawks was again present on Hot Springs Mt., San Diego, this summer (JO'B), acting as if breeding but with the

nest not located. A Prairie Falcon near Montana de Oro S.P., San Luis Obispo, July 6 (TT) was the first ever in this area in summer.

SHOREBIRDS — Fall arrival dates for adults of some of the common shorebirds were: Black-bellied Plover at S.E.S.S. June 25 (GMcC), Semipalmated Plover at S.E.S.S. June 25 (GMcC), Greater Yellowlegs in Goleta June 17 (PEL), Lesser Yellowlegs on Whale Rock Res., San Luis Obispo, June 26 (TME), Willet in Goleta June 16 (PEL), Whimbrel at S.E.S.S. July 25 (GMcC), Least Sandpiper in Goleta June 26 (PEL), Western Sandpipers near Santa Maria and S.E.S.S. June 25 (PEL, GMcC), Short-billed Dowitcher in Goleta June 28 (PEL), Long-billed Dowitcher at S.E.S.S. June 25 (GMcC), and Wilson's Phalarope in San Luis Obispo June 13-14 (MM), with numbers increasing rapidly after these dates. An early Lesser Golden-Plover in Goleta after July 31 (PEL) was of the Asiatic form *fulva*. Up to five Black Oystercatchers around Ventura June 25-Aug. 7 (SEF) were unusual for summer, and one in La Jolla, San Diego, June 9-17 (BC) was in an area where considered very rare. A juv. Greater Yellowlegs at S.C.R.E. July 29 (SEF) was early. An ad. Solitary Sandpiper at N.E.S.S. July 15 (GMcC) was the first to be found this fall. Inland Ruddy Turnstones included single adults at Edwards, Kern, July 22 & 29 (MTH), two on the Tulare L. Evaporation Ponds near Delano, Kern, July 30-Aug. 2 (JCW), and four relatively early birds at S.E.S.S. June 25 (GMcC) and another there July 23 (GMcC). An ad. Black Turnstone at S.E.S.S. June 25 (BED) was an early fall migrant, and the first ever to be found inland in fall in this Region. Two Surfbirds in Santa Barbara July 11 (FS) were the earliest to be noted this fall.

The only Red Knots found away from the coast were three on the Tulare L. Evaporation Ponds July 23 (MTH) and five early fall migrants at S.E.S.S. June 25 (BED). A Sanderling on the Tulare L. Evaporation Ponds July 30 was the only one found inland away from the Salton Sea. An ad. Semipalmated Sandpiper was at S.E.S.S. July 20 (NBB) and two more were at Edwards July 29 (MTH); the first of the juveniles were single birds near Santa Maria July 30 (KH) and in Goleta July 31 (PEL), and two at S.C.R.E. July 30-Aug. 5 (TEW). An ad. Baird's Sandpiper at Seal Beach July 8 (BED), another in Lancaster, Los Angeles, July 13 (NBB), and a third at Salton City on the Salton Sea July 15 (RMcK) were the only ones reported. A Dunlin, most unusual in summer, was at Bolsa Chica, Orange, June 11-16 (REW), and another was at Upper Newport Bay, Orange, July 8-15 (JB). A Stilt Sandpiper at Edwards July 22 (MTH) was the only one found away from the Salton Sea. A ♀ Ruff was at the Goose L. Evaporation Ponds near Wasco, Kern, July 28-Aug. 6 (JCW), and the male that has spent the past 7 winters on s. San Diego Bay was present there after July 19 (JW). Twelve Com. Snipe displaying at Cartago, Inyo, Apr. 30 (RRV) indicated this species was nesting at this location, and one to 3 pairs in the Garner Valley of the San Jacinto Mts., Riverside, fledged three young there this summer (RMcK) proving nesting at that locality; one along the coast in Atascadero July 16 (KAH) was exceptional considering the date. A Red-necked Phalarope near Cayucos, San Luis Obispo, May 25-June 17 (TME), and two in Goleta June 17 (PEL) were unusual for mid-summer, as was also the Red Phalarope at the Santa Maria R. mouth, Santa Barbara, July 15-30 (JSR).

JAEGERS TO ALCIDS — Eight Pomarine Jaegers seen from Pt. Arguello, Santa Barbara, July 9 (SEF) were assumed to be summering locally. Six ad. Long-tailed Jaegers seen offshore July 28-31 (RRV) were early fall migrants. A S. Polar Skua, rare but regular off s. California in late spring, was near Santa Barbara I. June 10 (REW). An ad. Laughing Gull, very rare along the coast, was seen midway between Long Beach, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara I. June 19 (KLG), and another was present on Upper Newport Bay after July 29 (SG). An ad. Franklin's Gull near Santa Maria June 1 (SEF) was undoubtedly a late spring migrant, but another at China Lake, Kern,

June 24 (DBI) was a summer straggler, and another there July 25 (DB) was a southbound juvenile. Three ad. Heermann's Gulls were found inland with one on L. Henshaw, San Diego, June 24 (GMcC), another at N.E.S.S. June 25 (MAP), and the 3rd at S.E.S.S. the same day (MAP). Juvenile California Gulls returned to s. California a littler earlier than usual with three on the Salton Sea July 9 (GMcC). A first-summer Herring Gull, rare in s. California in summer, was at the Santa Maria R. mouth July 4 (AA), and one or two more were at N.E.S.S. during July (MAP). An ad. Yellow-footed Gull at Senator Wash, Imperial, July 27 (BED) was the first to be reported from along the Colorado R. Valley. A first-summer Glaucous-winged Gull was inland at S.E.S.S. July 15 (GMcC). A first-summer Black-legged Kittiwake in La Jolla after July 8 (BC) was summering locally. An ad. Sabine's Gull 70 mi s.w. of San Clemente I. July 19 (PP) was early for a fall migrant. At least six pairs of Gull-billed Terns again nested on s. San Diego Bay (EC), but numbers at the Salton Sea were very low (GMcC). The nesting colony of Elegant Terns at Bolsa Chica increased to over 1000 pairs this summer with more than 800 young fledged (LRH). A Least Tern at China Lake June 23 (DBI) was the first to be found in Kern. One hundred pairs of Black Skimmers successfully fledged about 100 young at Bolsa Chica (LRH), while another 20 pairs on Upper Newport Bay fledged 14 young (MTH), but none appeared to nest at the Salton Sea (GMcC).

As usual Marbled Murrelets appeared on the ocean off San Simeon, San Luis Obispo, in July with an adult accompanying a juvenile there July 19 (GPS); single birds south of there included one off n. Vandenberg A.F.B., Santa Barbara, July 23-Aug. 6 (KH), another at Pt. Arguello July 9 (SEF), and a third in Santa Barbara July 25 (FS). A Craveri's Murrelet was flushed off the water about 55 mi s.w. of San Clemente I. July 19 and three more were seen in the waters about 75 mi s.w. of San Nicolas I. on July 23 (PP). Up to 11 Rhinoceros Auklets were continually present off Shell Beach, San Luis Obispo, throughout the period (BS), and six more were at Pt. Arguello during the same time (KH), suggesting local nesting. A Tufted Puffin seen flying close to shore off n. Vandenberg A.F.B. July 9 (PEL) was remarkable considering how few are recorded in s. California. A breeding-plumaged **Horned Puffin** seen in flight at 31° 30'N-120° 18'W (about 120 mi s.w. of San Nicolas I.) July 20 (PP) was remarkable considering the time of year.

CUCKOOS TO VIREOS — Six pairs of Yellow-billed Cuckoos were present at s. California's last stronghold along the S. Fork of the Kern R. east of L. Isabella, managing to fledge six young from 4 nests (SL); a calling bird in the Prado Basin near Riverside June 22-Aug. 10 (DRW) was the only other one reported. Three calling Flammulated Owls on Big Pine Mt., Santa Barbara, June 21-22 (SEF) were in the same area as the one reported in the spring. A calling W. Screech-Owl at 7000 ft in the San Gabriel Mts., Los Angeles, June 13 (KLG) was at an unusually high elevation for this species. Three calling N. Pygmy-Owls were heard June 12 near L. Henshaw (CGE), where the species is considered quite rare. A survey conducted by the California Dept. of Fish and Game documented the presence of 17 to 24 Elf Owls at 10 sites along the Lower Colorado R. Valley (*fide* PM). A calling N. Saw-whet Owl at Buckhorn in the San Gabriel Mts., Los Angeles, June 13 (KLG) was in an area where small numbers appear to be resident. Forty-three Lesser Nighthawks together near San Juan Capistrano, Orange, July 13 (DBO) made a large number for a coastal location. A Black Swift at Pt. Buchon, San Luis Obispo, June 29 (TT) was in an area where nesting has long been suspected. Two Chimney Swifts over San Diego June 16 (PU) were the only ones reported this summer. A Hairy Woodpecker in the Prado Basin June 15 (DRW) was outside the species' normal range.

Up to 10 Gray Flycatchers, including four young, in Dry Canyon and along the N. Fork of Lockwood Creek in the

Lockwood Valley, Ventura, May 12–July 22 (FS) gave us another nesting locality for this species in s. California. A Cordilleran Flycatcher in pines on a dry slope at about 9500 ft at the upper end of Cottonwood Creek in the White Mts., Inyo, June 24 (REW) was possibly on nesting territory. Johnson and Marten (Auk 105:177–191, 1988) reported this species as nesting only in the extreme northeastern corner of California, but Miller and Russell (Condor 58:75–77, 1956) reported collecting a male nominate *difficilis* in breeding condition in this same area on June 27, 1954. That specimen should be checked for identity since the habitat in this area would appear to be more suited to the Cordilleran Flycatcher than the Pacific-slope Flycatcher. Two pairs of Brown-crested Flycatchers along the S. Fork of the Kern R. east of L. Isabella this summer (MW) were at the n.w. extreme of the species' range. A Cassin's Kingbird in the Fremont Valley July 29 (JCW) was only the 2nd ever in the desert region of Kern. A Barn Swallow in Huntington Beach June 10–11 (GMcC) showed plumage coloration and pattern normally associated with birds from Europe and Asia, indicating either that there is more variation in North American birds than generally believed or that a stray from Asia reached s. California.

A Yellow-billed Magpie near El Capitan, Santa Barbara, June 26 (TEW) was outside the species' present known range, indicating some individuals will move short distances on occasions. A pair of Am. Robins in Mojave, Kern, in June (MTH) appeared to be nesting, indicating this species is willing to adapt to man-made suitable habitat even when that habitat is in the middle of the desert. A pair of Plumbeous Solitary Vireos at Big Bear L. June (DRW) was a little outside the known breeding range of this race, and in habitat that appeared more suited to *cassinii*.

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES — A Tennessee Warbler on Pt. Loma in San Diego June 11 (MAP) and another there June 14–16 (AME) were late spring vagrants, but a singing male in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, July 9–10 (BM) was unexpected considering the time of year. A Lucy's Warbler in Victorville, San Bernardino, was a little to the n.w. of the species' normal range. A ♂ N. Parula was along the S. Fork of the Kern R. east of L. Isabella on the unusual date of July 4 (SL). A Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler in Morro Bay S.P. June 24 (GPS) was away from known breeding locations. A late spring vagrant **Yellow-throated Warbler** at Deep Springs, Inyo, June 25 (REW) clearly had yellow lores and may have been of the nominate race; however, *albilora* can show yellow on the lores, and there is only one record of the nominate race in s. California. A Black-and-white Warbler on Pt. Loma in San Diego June 16 (OO) was evidently a late spring straggler. A ♂ Am. Redstart spent the summer in Oceano, San Luis Obispo (MP), molting from first-year to adult plumage during its stay, and another male found near Imperial Beach July 30 (GMcC) had probably summered locally. An Ovenbird on Pt. Loma June 17 (BP) was late for a spring vagrant. A N. Waterthrush in San Pedro, Los Angeles, June 22 (MK) was unusually late for a spring straggler.

Between 25 and 30 pairs of Summer Tanagers along the S. Fork of the Kern R. east of L. Isabella this summer represented the largest concentration left in California; one on Pt. Loma in San Diego June 17 (BJ) was a summer straggler along the coast. A W. Tanager in Upper Lopez Canyon, San Luis Obispo, July 1 (TME) was in a lowland area where nesting could occur. A ♀ Rose-breasted Grosbeak on Pt. Loma June 16 (AME) was a little late. Up to five ♂ Indigo Buntings in Goleta between July 8 & 29 (KB) were frequenting the same area as that used by a similar group this time last year, and a singing male in Huntington Beach July 16 (BED) was still present in August. A ♂ Painted Bunting seen in Coronado, San Diego, June 3 (EC) could just as easily be considered a spring vagrant as an escapee. A ♂ Dickcissel frequenting a feeder in Carpinteria June 6–7 (ASt) was probably a late spring vagrant. The presence of 12 Savannah Sparrows, including one juvenile, around

China Lake in June (MTH) extended the breeding range for this species southward from the Owens Valley. A pair of Dark-eyed Juncos was seen feeding young in Torrey Pines S.P., San Diego, July 22 (JRJ), documenting breeding at this coastal locality.

A Yellow-headed Blackbird at S.C.R.E. July 31–Aug. 22 (RM) was in an area of the state where considered very rare in summer, and several pairs were nesting in Los Alamitos, Orange, in June (DP). The ♂ Great-tailed Grackle initially found in Oceano in 1988 was still present at the end of the summer period (TME), at least eight different birds were present at various localities in Ventura during the period, and at least 3 pairs nested near Imperial Beach in June (GMcC), indicating this species is still expanding its range westward to the coast. At least 10 different Bronzed Cowbirds, including two juveniles, were seen in Brawley, Imperial, during June and July (GMcC); the summering population in this area may be increasing.

A few Red Crossbills were to be found in the mountains as indicated by one on Big Pine Mt. June 21 (PWC), another on Mt. Pinos July 1 (BED), and two in the White Mts. of Inyo June 25 (REW), and eight flew over the S. Fork of the Kern R. east of L. Isabella on July 8 (SL).

ADDENDUM — A report of subad. **Brown Booby** at the s. end of San Clemente I. May 13 (HK) was received too late to be included in the Spring Report.

CONTRIBUTORS (county coordinators in boldface) —

Alex Abela, Bob Anderson, Allyn Bissell, David Blue (DBL), Dave Bontrager (DBo), Jeff Boyd, Karen Bridgers, N. Bruce Broadbooks, **Eugene A. Cardiff** (San Bernardino), Bob Cate, **Mark O. Chichester** (Kern), Paul W. Collins, **Elizabeth Copper** (San Diego), Brian E. Daniels, Jon L. Dunn, **Tom M. Edell** (San Luis Obispo), Claud G. Edwards, Alan M. Eisner, John Fallon, Shawneen E. Finnegan, Bob Florand, Sylvia Gallagher, **Kimball L. Garrett** (Los Angeles), James M. Greaves, Gjon Hazard, Karen A. Havlena, Loren R. Hays, Matt T. Heindel, Ken Hollinga, Mark A. Holmgren, Joseph R. Jehl, Bunnie Jones, Mark Kincheleo, Howard King, Steve Laymon, **Paul E. Lehman** (Santa Barbara and Ventura), Mark Markworth, **Robert McKernan** (Riverside), Peter Metropulos, Barbara Millett, Joanne Moore, Randy Moore, Doug Morton, John O'Brien, Jerry Oldenettel, Oz Osborn, Michael A. Patten, Mary Payne, Tommy Peterson, Bob Pittner, Dick Purvis, Peter Pyle, David Remlinger, Jim S. Royer, Florence Sanchez, Brad Schram, Gregory P. Smith, Arnold Small (ASm), Annette Strain (ASt), Tom Tolman, Guy Tingos, Philip Unitt, Richard R. Veit, John Walters, Albert Warren, Richard E. Webster, **Douglas R. Willick** (Orange), John C. Wilson, Tom E. Wurster. An additional 40± observers who could not be individually acknowledged submitted reports this season. —**GUY McCASKIE, San Diego Natural History Museum, Balboa Park, P.O. Box 1390, San Diego, CA 92112.**

