

SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION

Guy McCaskie

Tropical storms off the southern tip of Baja California pushed moist air northward, bringing with it some rain, but not enough to make a significant difference to the drought conditions prevailing throughout the Region. Conditions along the coast were such that water rationing was in effect in many localities, most of our reservoirs were at their lowest in many years, many creeks were bone dry, and conditions throughout the mountains were extremely dry.

A late movement of "spring migrants" was evident at oases in the eastern portion of Kern County on June 16 when the list of birds found by Matt T. Heindel included Western Wood-Pewee (8), Willow Flycatcher (20), Pacific-slope Flycatcher (10), Swainson's Thrush (2), Solitary Vireo (1), Orange-crowned Warbler (5), Yellow Warbler (6), Yellow-rumped Warbler (1), Yellow-breasted Chat (1), Western Tanager (2), Black-headed Grosbeak (3) and Indigo Bunting (1), this being an excellent example of just how late spring migrants can be found in southern California. This same observer found fall migrant landbirds in this same area as early as July 14, leaving very little time in summer when migrants are absent.

Abbreviations: C.L.N.W.C. (*China Lake Naval Weapons Center in extreme n.e. Kern*); N.E.S.S. (*north end of the Salton Sea, Riverside*); S.C.R.E. (*Santa*



Clara River Estuary near Ventura, Ventura); S.D.N.H.M. (*San Diego Natural History Museum*); S.E.S.S. (*south end of the Salton Sea, Imperial*). Place names in *italics* are counties. As virtually all rarities found in southern California are seen by numerous observers, only the observer initially identifying the bird is included. Documentation is on the 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 TO FRIGATEBIRDS

A Com. Loon at Silver Lakes, *San Bernardino*, Aug. 5 (MAP) had undoubtedly summered at that inland location, and one at S.E.S.S. Aug. 18 (GMcC) was one of a very few to have summered at this location. A Horned Grebe, casual in sum-

mer, particularly so inland, was at N.E.S.S. June 30-July 7 (GMcC). Since Eared Grebes are considered sporadic breeders in s. California, the presence of 3 nesting pairs at N.E.S.S. this summer (RMcK) was of interest. In addition, 18 Western Grebe nests and 15 Clark's Grebe nests were found in this area (RMcK).

The presence of four N. Fulmars in the San Pedro Channel July 1 (KLG), along with 3 or 4 sightings of single birds in that same area during June and July, indicated a few of these birds spent the summer in s. California waters. Two Buller's Shearwaters off Morro Bay Aug. 8 (MJL) were a little early. A Sooty Shearwater was found at S.E.S.S. July 14 (BED), and what may have been the same individual was seen flying north towards the N.E.S.S. off Salton Sea Beach July 19 (MTH), at the N.E.S.S. July 21 (JO'B), and back at the S.E.S.S. July 25

(CS); this species is accidental inland, but there are 2 previous records from the Salton Sea, another from just north of the Salton Sea, and a 4th from s.w. Arizona, all during spring and summer. Unusual numbers of Black-vented Shearwaters were present off the coast as indicated by 12 off La Jolla July 16 building up to 1100 on Aug. 4 (JO'B), and 40 off Pt. Dume, *Los Angeles*, Aug. 2 (KLG); this species is not normally found in s. California waters during summer. A Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel off Pt. Conception, *Santa Barbara*, Aug. 6 (MJL) and another off Morro Bay Aug. 8 (MJL) were unusually far south.

Sixteen Red-billed Tropicbirds were seen between July 30 and Aug. 4 during a scientific survey cruise off s. California, including eight in the San Pedro Channel between Dana Pt., *Orange*, and Long Beach, *Los Angeles*, July 31 (MJL). After a hiatus of ten years, Blue-footed Boobies

once again put in an appearance on the Salton Sea with a minimum of four (three adults and one immature) present between July 12 (JLD) and the end of the period. Brown Boobies were also present with at least eight (two adults, five subadults, and one immature) between July 12 (JLD) and the end of the period, these being the first on the Salton Sea since 1974. Brown Pelicans moved into the area of the Salton Sea in June with numbers increasing to a unprecedented 2000+ on Aug. 4 (GMcC). Thirty years ago Brown Pelicans were classified as accidental inland; twenty years ago counts of 25 on the Salton Sea were considered remarkable, and ten years ago the largest numbers recorded there were still under 100, hence there has clearly been a major change in the status of this species on this inland sea in recent years. Away from the Salton Sea, single Brown Pelicans were inland around Redlands July 10 (ELaR) & 11 (GH), on Puddingstone Res., Los Angeles, July 25-Aug. 1 (KLG), and over Pasadena July 9 (RMcK). Magnificent Frigatebirds appeared to be somewhat scarce along the coast with one near Imperial Beach Aug. 8 (RR), another over Bolsa Chica July 13 (VL), one over Pacific Palisades July 22 (RF), two at Redondo Beach July 23 (AH), one over Santa Barbara July 25 (GR), and another near Cambria July 23 (SL); inland there were at least ten reports of single individuals from various points around the Salton Sea between June 30 and July 27 (GMcC, SEF, D & MH), three together at N.E.S.S. Aug. 2 (DJ), and one more over Puddingstone Res. Aug. 1 (LFK).

HERONS TO GROUSE

The Little Blue Heron found on Upper Newport Bay in January was still present at the end of the period, having now molted into adult plumage, and was the only one reported away from coastal San Diego. An ad. Tricolored Heron, now very rare in California, was near Imperial Beach Aug. 4-9 (JO'B). An imm. Reddish Egret at N.E.S.S. July 28 (GMcC) was only the 7th to be found at this inland locality. The ad. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron that has frequented the



Blue-footed Booby at Salton City, California, August 5, 1990. The invasion of boobies to the Salton Sea was the highlight of the season for southwestern birders. Photograph/Kevin J. Zimmer.

coast of San Diego since 1981 was in La Jolla July 31 (JO'B), and what was most likely the same bird was on nearby Mission Bay later the same day (LP). Wood Stork numbers built up to around 75 at S.E.S.S. in July, this being more than in recent years, but fewer than the numbers found 20 years ago; encouraging, however, was that

about half were immature, indicating successful nesting somewhere in w. Mexico. Along the coast, where Wood Storks are now considered casual stragglers, one was present on Oso Flaco L., San Luis Obispo, June 16 (BS).

At least 60 Brant were on the Salton Sea at the start of the season, but they dwindled in num-

bers as summer progressed, with 15 at S.E.S.S. being all that could be found at the end of the season. A Canada Goose of the small race *minima* was in Goleta June 27 (PEL) and in adjacent Santa Barbara June 28 (RWH), another found on Laguna L., San Luis Obispo, July 29 (KAH) was still present at the end of the period, and a third was in



Adult Brown Booby at Red Hill Marina, Salton Sea, on August 5, 1990. Photograph/Kevin J. Zimmer.

Bishop, *Inyo*, July 28 (T & JH), giving us the first records of "Cackling Geese" in s. California in summer. A ♀ Wood Duck raised five young in Descanso Gardens, *Los Angeles*, in May (GB) and another was seen with two young in Fullerton, *Orange*, at the same time (BB), to give us two more records for nesting in the s. portion of this Region; up to two present in the Fremont Valley of e. *Kern* June 9 through the end of the period (MTH) were unexpected for summer. A Canvasback, quite rare in summer, was at N.E.S.S. July 14 (MAP), another was in Ontario, *San Bernardino*, throughout the period (MAP), and two more were near S.C.R.E. May 7-July 28 (RJM). A Ring-necked Duck, also quite rare in s. California in summer, was present in Ontario July 4 (MAP). A ♀ Greater Scaup at N.E.S.S. June 30 (GMcC) was evidently attempting to summer locally.

Two ♂ Harlequin Ducks, rare anywhere in s. California, were at Pt. Sal, *Santa Barbara*, May 26-June 25 (DK), and were clearly summering locally. A ♂ Oldsquaw, also rare in s. California, present on the San Diego Bay June 17-30 (REW) was also summering locally. The ♀ Black Scoter found at N.E.S.S. Apr. 14 was present through July 13 (CMcG) and the immature male at nearby Desert Shores was last seen July 12 (JLD), there being only 2 previous records of this species summering on the Salton Sea; one at El Capitan, *Santa Barbara*, July 3 (RGJ) was on the coast where small numbers can be found in winter. Some 25 Surf Scoters present on the Salton Sea in early June had declined to about 10 by the end of the period, this being an exceptional number to attempt summering at this inland locality. In addition, the nine White-winged Scoters present around N.E.S.S. in early June had been reduced by the harsh conditions of summer to three by the end of the period, this also being a remarkable number to attempt summering at this locality.

A pair of Bald Eagles successfully raised two young on L. Cachuma, *Santa Barbara*, early this summer (PEL), this species having first nested here last year. A pair of Sharp-shinned Hawks



Lesser Golden-Plover near Lancaster, California, July 14, 1990. Apparently a bird of the race *fulva* (unexpected inland) in partial alternate plumage. Photograph/Matt T. Heindel.

fledged two young from a nest near Santa Margarita, *San Luis Obispo*, in July (JR), for the 2nd documented record for nesting along the coast; one in Millard Canyon in the San Bernardino Mts. June 16 (CMcG) was in suitable breeding habitat but not proven to be nesting. A pair of N. Goshawks again nested on Mt. Abel, *Ventura*, hatching two young in June (RJM), but the nest was later abandoned and/or the young stolen; an adult carrying food in the White Mts., *Inyo*, July 13 (T & JH) was believed to be nesting locally, although breeding is unknown in these mountains. The only Peregrine Falcons found around the Salton Sea this summer were an immature at Salton City June 30 (MAP), another at N.E.S.S. July 14-26 (CMcG), and an adult at S.E.S.S. July 20 (MTH), these birds believed to be from the population breeding in the Gulf of California.

Twenty-one Sage Grouse were found in the higher portions of the White Mts. July 27 (T & JH), the southernmost being nine at Reed Flat adjacent to Schulman Grove, *Inyo*, the

southern limit of this species' range.

SHOREBIRDS TO GULLS

A Lesser Golden-Plover photographed near Lancaster, *Los Angeles*, July 14 (MTH) was clearly *fulva*, most unusual inland, and another found at S.E.S.S. July 20 (MTH) was identified as *dominica*, the form normally found inland, although any occurrence away from the coast is noteworthy and documented records of adult *dominica* in fall are rare indeed. The first of this fall's Solitary Sandpipers was one at S.E.S.S. July 12 (JLD) followed by at least six more at various locations within the Region by the end of the month. Two Black Turnstones at S.E.S.S. July 12 (JLD) established the 2nd record for this species inland in fall. A Ruddy Turnstone at Edwards, *Kern*, July 14 (MTH) was the only one found inland. A breeding-plumaged Surfbird inland at S.E.S.S. June 16 (GMcC) was probably a lost spring migrant. Four Red Knots at S.E.S.S. July 7 (GMcC) were early fall migrants, and one at Edwards July

14 (MTH) was the only one found away from the Salton Sea. An ad. Semipalmated Sandpiper was found at Edwards July 14 (MTH), another was near Lancaster July 21 (KLG), and single adults were photographed at S.C.R.E. on July 21 & 27 (RJM), and the first juvenile of the fall was a relatively early individual in Goleta July 24 (PEL). An ad. Rufous-necked Stint photographed at the Santa Maria R. mouth, *Santa Barbara/San Luis Obispo*, July 15 (JSR) was the 4th to be found in s. California. An early Pectoral Sandpiper was at N.E.S.S. June 30 (KR). The earliest Baird's Sandpiper this fall was an adult in Goleta July 12 (SEF), with the first juveniles found near Lancaster July 27 (NBB). The first Stilt Sandpipers to be found this fall were 25 at S.E.S.S. July 20 (MTH), followed by one on the coast at San Elijo Lagoon, *San Diego*, July 22-29 (GMcC). The Buff-breasted Sandpiper found at Edwards June 3 was still present June 9 (MTH). An adult ♂ Ruff in Goleta July 16 through the end of the period (PEL) still had remnants of breeding plumage when first found. Common Snipe again nested in the Garner Valley of the San Jacinto Mts. this summer (RMcK).

Two jaegers, one of which was clearly a Pomarine, at Salton City July 12 (JLD) established one of a very few records for this species inland in California. A S. Polar Skua, quite scarce in s. California waters, was off Morro Bay Aug. 8 (MJL). Laughing Gulls, regular post-breeding visitors to the Salton Sea, were relatively common this year with a high count of 750+ made at S.E.S.S. July 7 (GMcC); an adult in Imperial Beach June 17 (REW) was along the coast where considered very rare. Five different Franklin's Gulls, rare on the Salton Sea in summer, were at S.E.S.S. June 9-10 (MAP, GMcC), and an adult was near Salton City July 18-28 (GMcC); in addition, a first-year bird was at Edwards June 9 (MTH), and another was in San Diego June 10 (GMcC). At least four Heermann's Gulls were found on the Salton Sea with a first-year bird present around S.E.S.S. July 12-28 (JLD), a juvenile there July 14-15 (GMcC), and two first-year birds off Salton City Aug. 4

(GMcC, MAP); an adult photographed at Edwards June 16 (MTH) was the first to be found in Kern. Since Herring Gulls are exceptionally rare in summer anywhere in s. California, the presence of an adult around S.E.S.S. June 9-July 15 (GMcC), a first-summer bird there July 12-28 (JLD), and an adult at N.E.S.S. July 21-28 (SM) were of interest. Yellow-footed Gull numbers built up to more than 1000 on the Salton Sea in early August, with the first juveniles noted there July 7 (GMcC). A first-year W. Gull, casual on the Salton Sea, was present around S.E.S.S. June 9-July 28 (REW), and an adult was found there July 21 (JO'B). An adult Sabine's Gull off *San Diego* July 16 (JO'B) was early for a fall migrant, and another was on-shore at the Santa Maria R. mouth July 29-Aug. 2 (PEL).

TERNS TO ALCIDS

At least 150 pairs of Gull-billed Terns managed to nest around S.E.S.S. (JMcK) and 10 more pairs attempted nesting on s. San Diego Bay this summer (EC). A Gull-billed Tern at the Santa Ynez R. mouth, *Santa Barbara*, June 3 (KH) was the first to be



Adult Rufous-necked Stint at the mouth of the Santa Maria River, California, July 15, 1990. Photograph/Shawneen Finnegan.



An adult Heermann's Gull quite far inland at Edwards Air Force Base, California, on June 16, 1990. Photograph/Matt T. Heindel.

found on the coast away from the vicinity of San Diego. An adult Royal Tern in non-breeding plumage photographed at N.E.S.S. July 19 (MTH) furnished the first confirmed record for this species inland in the West. Two or 3 pairs of Royal Terns nested at Bolsa Chica this summer, with two young banded July 7 (EB), there being very few documented records for breeding in this state. A single Elegant Tern, casual to accidental inland, was at N.E.S.S. June 16 (RAE), another was at S.E.S.S. July 7 (GMcC) and a third was photographed there July 20 (MTH). The status of Elegant Terns along the coast is changing, individuals arriving north of known nesting localities much earlier than ten years ago, as indicated by the presence of at least 35 in Malibu in late March (KLG) and two in Santa Barbara on Apr. 3 (FS); at least 1000 pairs nested in *Orange*, but none attempted nesting in *San Diego* this year. A breeding-plumaged Com. Tern, unknown inland away from the Salton Sea in spring, was near Lost Hills, *Kern*, June 17 (JCW). An ad. Arctic Tern at S.E.S.S. July 7 (GMcC) and a first-year bird there July 14 (REW) were the first to be found inland in s. California in summer; another adult photographed at Edwards June 16 (MTH) was a little late for spring and only the 2nd to be found in *Kern*.

Two Least Terns, considered casual inland, were at S.E.S.S. June 10-16 (MAP). Of extreme interest was the presence of a Bridled/Sooty Tern visiting the tern colony at Bolsa Chica Aug. 5 (ELM); there is one record for Sooty Tern and none for Bridled in California, but both are known to occur along the w. coast of Mexico. Remarkable were two Black Skimmers at C.L.N.W.C. July 28 (MTH); one near Lakeview, *Riverside*, Aug. 27 to Sept. 4, 1978 (AB 33:214, 1979) and one on L. Havasu on the Colorado R. Sept. 1-4, 1977 (AB 32:241, 1978) were the previous northernmost occurrences on record in the e. portion of the Region, although a pair nested on Tulare L. at the s. end of the San Joaquin Valley in 1986 (AB 40:1251, 1986). At S.E.S.S. at least 500 Black Skimmers were present this summer, although only 100 pairs attempted to nest (JMcK). Along the coast, numbers continue to increase n. of San Diego, as indicated by at least 275 pairs nesting at Bolsa Chica (EB); in addition, up to 70 individuals at Pt. Mugu, *Ventura*, between April and June (LRH, RJM) included 10 banded as young in *Orange*.

A Pigeon Guillemot in Goleta July 26 (SEF) was at an unusual locality. As many as 16 Marbled Murrelets could be found along the n. coast of *San Luis Obispo* at

the end of the period (GPS), this being near the s. limit of regular occurrence for this species. Twelve Craveri's Murrelets, regular late summer visitors to the waters off s. California, were off Morro Bay Aug. 8 (MJL).

DOVES TO VIREOS

A White-winged Dove, very rare along the coast in summer, was in *Ventura* July 24 (TT). The only Yellow-billed Cuckoos reported were 2 nesting pairs, along with seven unmated males, along the S. Fork of the Kern R. near Weldon during June and July (SL). Flammulated Owls were again present on Black Mt. in the San Jacinto Mts., *Riverside*, with at least two heard there June 2 (RMCK), another was heard on Mt. Pinos June 1 (JEL), and two were calling on Big Pine Mt., *Santa Barbara*, June 21 (JEL); a pair feeding two young in a nest in a dead bristlecone pine in the White Mts., *Inyo*, in July (T & JH) gave us the first proof of breeding in this mountain range. A Whip-poor-will was heard at Hartbar Campground in the San Bernardino Mts. June 2 (SM), this being one of about half-a-dozen localities within California where this species is suspected to nest. A *Chaetura* around Atascadero June 18-July 8 (RZ) was probably a Chimney Swift, the most likely of the two

to be found in summer in s. California; one over Malibu June 17 (KLG), three together near Santee, *San Diego*, June 22 (REW), and three more over Chula Vista July 21 (EC) were all positively identified as Chimney Swifts. The presence of 16 Black Swifts near Pine Cove in the San Jacinto Mts. May 27 (RMCK) and 10 around Forest Falls in the San Bernardino Mts. June 2 (SM) suggested they may have again bred at these known nesting localities. A Ladder-backed Woodpecker at Vail L. near Temecula, *Riverside*, July 24 (SJM) was west of its normal desert range.

The presence of at least 44 Gray Flycatchers, along with "several" nests, in the Lockwood Valley/Quatal Canyon area of n.w. *Ventura* between Apr. 15 and June 3 (RJM) showed this species to be much commoner than originally believed in this area. A pair of Brown-crested Flycatchers in Mojave Narrows Park near Victorville June 16-July 8 (SJM), and 3 to 5 pairs along the S. Fork of the Kern R. near Weldon throughout the summer (SL), were probably nesting at these two locations. A pair of Barn Swallows found nesting near *Riverside* Aug. 21-22 (RMCK) provided the first breeding record in recent history for *Riverside*.

Eight singing Cactus Wrens at Joshua Flats, 25 mi e. of Big Pine, July 16 (T & JH) were at the edge of this species' breeding range. A pair of Am. Robins successfully fledged one young in Mojave in July (MTH), outside this species' known nesting range in California. A Le Conte's Thrasher in the Cuyama Valley of s.e. *San Luis Obispo* June 19 (BS) was at the n.w. extreme of the species' range.

A pair of Solitary Vireos on Black Mt. July 8 (MAP) were gray birds of the interior form *plumbeus*, previously unrecorded on the San Jacinto Mountains in summer. A Red-eyed Vireo in Mentone, *San Bernardino*, June 9 (GH) was a late spring vagrant.

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

A ♂ Tennessee Warbler in the Fremont Valley of e. *Kern* June 16 (MTH) was a spring vagrant, as were the two N. Parulas with it, but a singing N. Parula on

San Rafael Mt., *Santa Barbara*, June 17 (JH) could have been summering locally. A ♀ Magnolia Warbler at Butterbreed Springs north of California City, *Kern*, June 8 (MTH) was late, and the only one reported this "spring." A Hermit Warbler at 8000 ft. on Black Mt. in the San Jacinto Mts. May 27 (RMCK) may well have been on territory. This species is known to nest in the San Bernardino Mts. just to the north, where 18 territorial males were found June 10 (DGO). A ♂ Black-and-white Warbler in Borrego Springs, *San Diego*, June 5 (AM), and another near Weldon June 10-13 (SL) were both late spring vagrants. A ♂ Am. Redstart at Pt. Piedras Blancas, *San Luis Obispo*, June 10 (GPS) was a late spring migrant, but another near Imperial Beach May 27-June 30 (JO) was undoubtedly the same individual present here last summer. A ♀ MacGillivray's Warbler near Cayucos July 14 (TME) was in suitable breeding habitat. A ♂ Kentucky Warbler, one of the rarer stragglers to reach California, was in Mojave, *Kern*, June 9 (MTH).

A ♂ *Pyrrhuloxia* photographed on San Miguel I. July 19-23 (DGu) was remarkable. There are about 10 records from the s.e. portion of the Region, along with 2 from the coastal slope, indicating this species occasionally wanders from its known range; but in order to reach San Miguel I. an individual would have to travel at least 400 miles, including some 35 miles of open ocean. On the other hand, there are no sources for escapees on San Miguel Island. Reports of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks included a male at Oceano June 12 (BS), one near Pt. Sal in mid-June (DF), another in Goleta June 28 (PEL), and a 4th in Huntington Beach July 29-Aug. 4 (TG); reports of Indigo Buntings included a male near Big Pine June 28-July 15 (T & JH), three males along the S. Fork of the Kern R. near Weldon throughout the period (SL), a male feeding two young (young suspected to be hybrids with Lazuli Bunting) near Morro Bay July 12-14 (JMcD), two more near Santa Barbara May 20-June 12 (NS), and another in Goleta June 26 (NS).

An imm. Black-throated Sparrow at Vail L. July 20 (SJM)



Far from its normal range was this male *Pyrrhuloxia* on San Miguel Island, California, July 19, 1990. Photograph/Dan Guthrie.

was west of the species' normal range. Two Large-billed Savannah Sparrows, a form that disperses northward after nesting around the head of the Gulf of California, were near Pt. Mugu on the somewhat early date of June 24 (RJM), and the first were found at the Salton Sea July 7 (MAP). Grasshopper Sparrows are now quite rare in the developed areas along the coast, hence a singing male in the San Jose Hills near Walnut, *Los Angeles*, Mar. 23-25 (DRW) and as many as four in the Puente Hills near Pomona, *Los Angeles*, Apr. 3-June 19 (SJM) were of interest.

Small numbers of Great-tailed Grackles are now nesting as far north as Lone Pine in the Owens Valley (T & JH), California City in the w. Mojave Desert (MOC), near Bakersfield in the s. San Joaquin Valley (MOC), and around San Diego/Oceanside on the coast (EC), indicating the species is still expanding its range. Bronzed Cowbirds continue to expand their range westward with small numbers present in Brawley, *Imperial*, through at least July 29 (GMCC), and single males as far west as Borrego Springs May 27 (AM) and June

23 (PU, *S.D.N.H.M.).

Eight Red Crossbills in California City July 14 (MTH) were well out on the Mojave Desert, and defied explanation; one in the White Mts. of *Inyo* July 20 (MAP), up to eight on Mt. Pinos June 8-23 (FS) and 15 on San Rafael Mt. June 17-18 (JH) were in suitable nesting habitat.

Addenda: An injured Clay-colored Sparrow, most unusual along the coast in spring, was found in Santa Barbara in early May, but not correctly identified until late July (PEL) when still in captivity.

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