MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION

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The fourth year of drought affected California's waterfowl nesting effort, as several major wetlands in the northeast went dry. The May rains helped some by creating additional brood water, but duck production was reduced from last year. The drought also appeared to have adverse effects on nesting landbirds such as Barn Owl and Tricolored Blackbird. We can only speculate to what degree bird populations will be affected by what is turning out to be one of the worst droughts in this century for the state.

We are grateful to Phyllis Bailey for compiling the landbird reports for Yee's analysis.

ABBREVIATIONS — C.B.R.C. = California Bird Records Committee; C.C.R.S. = Coyote Creek Riparian banding Station, Santa Clara; C.V. = Central Valley; F.I. = Southeast Farallon Island; S.F. = San Francisco; ph. = photo on file with Regional Editors. All records from F.I. should be credited to Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory (P.R.B.O.). Place names in italics are counties.

LOONS TO PELICANS — Among Com. Loon counts e. of the Sierra, 27 on Crowley L. Apr. 7 (T. & J. Heindel) and 28 on Topaz L. Apr. 20 (PJM, ES) were record highs for Mono. The Season's lone Yellow-billed Loon was at Trinidad, Humboldt, Mar. 14—Apr. 15 (†RAE, †LPL). An Eared Grebe at Alviso, Santa Clara, late February to Apr. 1 was "90% albinistic" (GHt, MJM).

As in Winter, only two Laysan Albatrosses were found: 20 mi w.s.w. of Ano Nuevo Pt., San Mateo, Mar. 31 (RSTh, m.ob.) and 3 mi n.w. of Pt. Pinos Apr. 23 (L. Shumacher, fide RT & AB). A boat reached Pterodroma waters May 19. Three Murphy's Petrels 35 to 73 mi s.w. of Pt. Reyes and one Cook's Petrel 75 mi s.w. of Pt. Reyes were the reward (†SFB). A Flesh-footed Shearwater offshore Monterey Apr. 7 (DLm, fide AB) was during this species' rarest season here. A Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel with a brood patch, mistnetted on F.I. May 27–28 (GeM, P.R.B.O.) "strengthens suspicions that they may breed here in very low numbers" (see AB 40:1249 and 43:1362–1363). Single Black Storm-Petrels (or the same bird?) over Soquel Canyon, Monterey Bay, May 6 & 17 (RT, fide AB) provided the earliest credible reports for the Region.

An imm. Masked Booby 2 mi w. of Pt. Lobos Apr. 5 (†DLm, ph.) furnished the first record for the Region. American White Pelicans continued to be unusually widespread and numerous in most coastal and S.F. Bay counties, with the rarest being five at L. Talawa, *Del Norte*, Apr. 18 (RMcN). An ad. Brown Pelican was inland in Santa Clara at Vasona Res. about May 24 (JDuB), roughly 15 mi and 3 days removed from last year's immature.

BITTERNS TO WATERFOWL — American Bitterns were reported in "good numbers" from the n. coast (J. Hewston, ADB), in contrast to other parts of the Region.

Two pairs of Snowy Egrets displaying and entering nest sites on Prince I. at the Smith R. mouth, Del Norte, throughout May (ADB) represented the first nesting record for that county, and the first on our coast n. of Humboldt Bay. Charleston Slough's resident Snowy Egret X Little Blue Heron was present at least through Apr. 26 (PJM). A Cattle Egret and White-faced Ibis nesting colony at Colusa N.W.R. was abandoned by May 14 because the nesting pond went dry, causing collapse of the nest platforms. The ibises may have moved to Sutter N.W.R., where 991 birds were counted May 14 (S. Berendzen). Ibises were reported from 16 counties this spring, with single birds near Vallejo, Solano, May 5 (MBG et al.) and in Sierra Valley, Plumas, May 27 (DGY, L. Jensen), and 40 in a possible nesting location at Ahjumawi Lava Springs S.P., Shasta, May 27 (RbL et al.) being among the more unusual.

Included in seven coastal Greater White-fronted Goose reports were 10 exceptionally late adults near Ft. Dick, Del Norte, May 21 (ADB). A single bird at Topaz L. Apr. 23 was Mono's latest ever for spring (PJM, ES). The wintering blue morph Snow Goose at Shorebirds Pond, Santa Cruz, was last seen in early April (fide DLSu). Another was seen at the Ukiah sewage pond, Mendocino, Mar. 24 (OJK, RJK). Six adult Canada Geese with 12 chicks in the Carson–Iceberg Wilderness, Tuolumne, June 2 (D. Dow) represented the southernmost nesting record for the Sierra Nevada w.

slope.

A Eur. Green-winged Teal in the Arcata Bottoms Mar. 3-Apr. 15 (L. Long, BED) furnished the only report. Mallard X N. Pintail hybrids were seen on Grizzly I. Road., Solano, Apr. 18 (J. Ferrera) and at Bridgeport Res., Mono, Apr. 23 (†PJM). The duck of the season was an immature & Garganey at the Bolinas Sewage Ponds, Marin, Mar.



Male Garganey, apparently in first-spring plumage, at Bolinas, California, April 29, 1990. Photograph/Stephen F. Bailey.

27-Apr. 30 (ph. †KH, ph. †SFB, †HG, ph. EDG, m.ob.). This would be the Region's 8th if all the records currently being reviewed by the C.B.R.C. are accepted. Another Blue-winged X Cinnamon Teal hybrid was found at the Stockton Sewage Ponds Apr. 6 (DGY). Much less common was an apparent Blue-winged Teal X N. Shoveler in Palo Alto Apr. 26-May 1 (†PJM). Eurasian Wigeon were last reported from the C.V. Apr. 26 (GEw), from the coast Apr. 27 (RS), and from Bridgeport Res. Apr. 28 (JMHu et al.). The latter bird established the first record for the e. side of the Sierras.

Wintering Tufted Ducks remained until Apr. 4 at Warm Springs, Alameda (LRF) and Apr. 26 in S.F. (DSg, m.ob.). Additional birds were at Richardson's Bay, Marin, Mar. 6 (D. Whitworth) and on Mare I., Solano, Mar. 15 (DAsh, RbL), the latter being a new locale for this bird. The King Eider that was present at Pt. Reyes since the previous August was last seen Apr. 21 (m.ob.). An Oldsquaw on Mare Island Mar. 15–22 (RbL, DAsh, CLO) was the only one reported away from the immediate coast. Eight inland Red-breasted Mergansers were observed Mar. 10–May 22.

RAPTORS — A partially albino Turkey Vulture at Sonoma May 1 (A. Cermak) must have been a rare sight. Black-shouldered Kites were considered very few in *Mon*-

terey (DR) and Del Norte (ADB). Immature Bald Eagles are now being found widely throughout our Region and locally all year, as the reintroduction efforts progress. The increase in reports is reminiscent of Peregrine Falcon, except that adult Bald Eagles will take longer to appear. New nesting range for Red-shouldered Hawks included s.e. Alameda (ALE) and e. Santa Clara (D. Elliott). A Swainson's Hawk over S.F. Mar. 19 (ASH) was a rare coastal migrant. A survey of San Joaquin located about 100 active Swainson's Hawk nests (W. Holt, J. Estep). As the population for the entire state of this Threatened species is estimated at only 550 pairs (J. Estep), it is hoped that the identification of the San Joaquin nests will lead to the protection of many as the county is developed.

GROUSE TO SHOREBIRDS — Nine drumming & Ruffed Grouse were found in the Region's northwest, way above our recent average. A Sora on F.I. Mar. 28 was only the island's 2nd for spring. When an adult Sora was flushed off a nest with eggs at Hanson Slough May 9 it provided a 2nd Santa Cruz breeding record, the first since 1976 (DLSu). A Com. Moorhen found at Arcata Marsh last period lost a wing during the winter, but survived until at least May 19 (fide GSL).

All wintering fulva Lesser Golden-Plovers were gone by Apr. 22. The only migrants reported were two in breeding plumage at Lake Talawa, Del Norte, May 16 (ADB). A breeding-plumaged dominica, much rarer in spring, was seen Apr. 28 in Lower Garrissere Canyon, for the first inland Salinas Valley record of any golden-plover and the first in spring to be subspecifically identified in Monterey (†DR). Another dominica was reported from the Arcata

Bottoms May 12 (FJB).

A pair of Black Oystercatchers was found on the Smith R., a mile and a half from the ocean, Mar. 11 (ADB, J. Gartland). An impressive total of 14 Solitary Sandpipers was reported from the coast Apr. 21-May 13. Inland, one was at L. Shastina, Siskiyou, Apr. 20 (RE) and one or two were found Apr. 21-28 at Dechambeau Ponds, Mono (J. & D. Parker, JMHu et al.). The only inland Ruddy Turnstones noted were two at Tule Lake N.W.R. May 9 (ADB, RE, RAE). Thirteen Sanderlings were reported from Lower Klamath N.W.R. May 22, the largest number ever seen in the Klamath Basin (RE), while 23 alternate-plumaged birds at the Lodi Sewage Ponds May 23 were late and a large number for San Joaquin (DGY). Single Baird's Sandpipers at Pt. Reyes Apr. 13 (LES) and Hayward Shoreline, Alameda, May 5 (RJR) were fewer than most recent springs. Similarly, only two Pectoral Sandpipers were reported: from the Modesto Sewage Ponds May 6 (ERC, N. Selover) and the Hayward Shoreline May 20 (RJR). The Ruff that had wintered along the Hayward Shoreline was last seen Apr. 17 (m.ob.).

JAEGERS TO ALCIDS — Amazing was the sight of three ad. Long-tailed Jaegers flying s.w. from S.F. Bay at Palo Alto May 30 (†PJM), for a first for Santa Clara. Very unseasonal was a S. Polar Skua 30 mi offshore Humboldt

Bay Apr. 8 (GSL, †RAE, SWH).

Our 10 Franklin's Gulls were all adults. Pairs at Mono L. Apr. 21 (PJM) and at Crowley L. Apr. 22 (T. & J. Heindel) were firsts for spring in Mono. Five at Lower Klamath N.W.R., Siskiyou, May 22 (RE) echoed last year's nesting there. The other Franklin's was near Coyote Hills Regional Park, Alameda, Apr. 14 (RS), where a Little Gull was found Mar. 3 (†C. Jones). A Com. Black-headed Gull stopped briefly at Pigeon Pt., San Mateo, Apr. 7 (BS, †SMo). About 32,000 California Gull nests were counted at Mono L. in May (J. Dierks, fide I. Mandelbaum), up from the 25,000 average since 1983 (ES). Over 50 Black-legged

Kittiwakes at the Klamath R. mouth, *Del Norte*, Mar. 22 (JMa) made a large number ashore in California.

Elegant Terns again returned early, with four at Moss Landing Apr. 21 (CKf), Santa Clara's first in spring May 4 at Charleston Slough (PJM), and one at Crescent City May 29, Del Norte's earliest by over a month (ADB). Three Black Skimmers at the Carmel R. mouth, Monterey, May 17 (P. Eastman) presumably represented the annual migrants that must be nesting somewhere around S.F. Bay.

One of the **Thick-billed Murres** lingered near Monterey to April 9 (m.ob., AB, RS). Five sightings of Xantus' Murrelets near F.I. and offshore Monterey Mar. 7–May 19 (m.ob.) continued to suggest another undetected seabird species nesting locally (see AB 40:1251 and AB 41:139). Residual to February's wreck of Horned Puffins, two more dead or dying individuals were found Mar. 4–19 in each of 3 counties: *Monterey* (fide AB), Santa Cruz (DEG), and Mendocino (DT). Live birds were still seen at sea: one off Monterey Mar. 4 (PtW), two off Humboldt Bay Mar. 15 (GSL, ph. C.L. Vardaman), eight sightings at F.I. peaking at four on Mar. 29, and 15 birds up to 74 mi s.w. of Pt. Reyes May 19 (SFB). The latter appeared to be healthy, and are probably normal at that distance offshore in many years (see AB 43:533).

OWLS TO WOODPECKERS — A sharp decline from recent years in nesting Barn Owls within a closely monitored area in s. Monterey (G. Work) has DR wondering if the drought is the culprit. The Burrowing Owl seeking refuge under eaves in S.F. Feb. 1–Mar. 17 (L. Keidel, MLR) was one of few found within the city. Short-eared Owls nested successfully in the Arcata Bottoms (FJB). This appears to establish the first nesting record of this species along our coast n. of the S.F. Bay area! Fifteen Com. Nighthawks at Ahjumawi Lava Springs S.P. May 26 (RbL et al.) made an impressive early congregation of this latearriving species.

"Most extraordinary migratory experience I've witnessed" was GSL's description of the spectacular flight of about 2000 Black Swifts at Trinidad State Beach, Humboldt, May 27 during a 4-hour evening watch (†GSL, LPL et al.). The Region's previous high count was 150! An Anna's Hummingbird at Tom's Place Apr. 12–May 9 (CDH) and a Rufous Hummingbird at Mono L. Apr. 22 (PJM) furnished first and 2nd spring records, respectively, for the Mono Basin.

The decimation of Acorn Woodpecker colonies by the Eur. Starling invasion has been noted in the S.F. Bay area for many years. Thus, pairs attempting to nest in starling-infested areas of Alameda Apr. 18 (HG et al. — first nesting attempts here since 1979) and Livermore Apr. 24—May 4 (HLC) were probably observed with excitement and cheering. Rare sapsuckers included a Yellow-bellied in Monterey, two Red-napeds in Contra Costa with another in Mono, and a Yellow-bellied/Red-naped in San Joaquin. Pileated Woodpecker continued to show signs of increasing its range along the central coast with at least two new nest sites in Santa Cruz (DLSu, L. Clark) and a bird in Moraga, Contra Costa, Apr. 9–28 (H. Nathan et al.).

FLYCATCHERS TO WRENS — The passage of 13 Olive-sided Flycatchers through San Joaquin May 6-June 8 was 3 times the spring average (DGY). A W. Wood-Pewee at Pine Cyn., Mt. Diablo, Contra Costa, Apr. 4 (KGH) was exceptionally early. Empidonax flycatchers are justifiably among the big groans in birding identification. Not helping matters is their often enigmatic distribution over our Region. For instance, the Hammond's Flycatcher in Pacific Grove Apr. 15 (AB) furnished one of few Monterey records during spring. It maintains this vagrant status along the

central coast up to S.F.; however, slightly inland within the Inner Coast Ranges and from *Marin* northward, they are rare but regular spring migrants.

The wintering Least Flycatcher near Inverness persisted until Mar. 28 (RS). Seemingly territorial Gray Flycatchers at San Benito Mt., San Benito (five), May 19 (DSg, DWm) again suggested breeding at this locale. An E. Phoebe at Mono L. May 31 (fide JM) was the Region's first in spring in 7 years. San Francisco's **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** tarried at Pine L. Park until May 20 (DSg, DL), while the wintering Ash-throated Flycatcher in Sacramento remained until Mar. 3 (MJL). A Cassin's Kingbird at Wilder Ranch S.P. Mar. 7 (DEG et al.) established a Santa Cruz first. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher made a cameo appearance at Crespi Pond, Monterey, May 8 (†RER, ph. †DR).

The Steller's Jay near Madison, Yolo, Apr. 28 (DLSu) was probably a residual reminder of the winter invasion into the lowlands. Common Ravens continued to increase in numbers and range along the central coast. Moffett Field played host to Santa Clara's first nesting record Apr. 4 and later (MRo, P. Zell)! They no doubt have nested in the Diablo Range of the county in substantial numbers but have simply gone undetected (WGB). Along the Santa Cruz/Monterey line where there were no records prior to 1989, one in the Pajaro R. Valley May 18 was the area's 6th (DLSu). And for only the 2nd time in 21 years, they were seen in Alamo, Contra Costa, Apr. 22 (JMR — two birds).

A bird census along 3 mi of the Stanislaus R., including Caswell S.P., San Joaquin, May 6, produced an amazing 290 House Wrens (DGY, W. Holt) — all appeared territorial. A Winter Wren at C.C.R.S. May 10 (fide WGB) was lingering late.

THRASHERS TO WOOD WARBLERS — Following a belated report of a Le Conte's Thrasher in the Kettleman Hills, Fresno, last summer (RH), two singing males were found in the same area Mar. 24 (†DGY). Except for a bird seen just to the immediate south Apr. 29, 1980, there have been no Regional sightings in almost 20 years. Undoubtedly, their secretive nature keeps them elusive, but their preferred habitat of Atriplex-lined washes has all but vanished from our Region, with the Kettleman Hills (and other areas?) probably maintaining a remnant population. The intriguing sighting of a bird well described as a Gray Wagtail at Tuolumne Meadows, Yosemite N.P., May 20 (†D. Bouldin) will draw close scrutiny from the C.B.R.C. With only one previous Phainopepla on record, Marin's three birds were exceptional: e. of Olema Feb. 22-Mar. 31 (CSp, M. Ward), Novato Apr. 6-29 (RS), and Pt. Reyes May 22 (RS). Additional birds in Sacramento Mar. 25 (TDM, AM) and Stockton May 2 (W. Holt) were rare on the C.V. floor during spring.

It was a very good season for Tennessee Warbler. Excluding the bird that wintered in Golden Gate Park, S.F., until Apr. 1 (MLR), there were four along the coast Apr. 8–May 28 and two at F.I. May 9 & 13. A male N. Parula at Gazos Cr. Road, San Mateo, Apr. 21 (fide JM), and one singing at Bear Valley Rd., Pt. Reyes, Apr. 22 (RS, DDeS) were our earliest ever for spring and better fit a pattern of breeding birds (known breeder in Marin) than typical vagrants. For the 3rd straight spring a Hermit X Townsend's Warbler was found: a male at Mt. Diablo S.P. Apr. 29 (†JM et al.) was at the same locale as one 2 years ago. Wintering Palm Warblers lingered late in Pacific Grove Apr. 12 (AB) and Arcata Marsh Apr. 13 (B. Widdowson), but six birds along the immediate coast Apr. 18–May 6 were probably migrants. A rare-in-spring Blackpoll Warbler was at F.I. May 24.

A Black-and-white Warbler was at F.I. May 9-10 while

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one at the Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey*, Mar. 3 (PEG) surely had wintered locally. Additional last dates of known wintering warblers included the Am. Redstart at Golden Gate Park, S.F., Apr. 7 (m.ob.) and the N. Waterthrush at Arcata Marsh Apr. 15 (FJB). Single Ovenbirds were at F.I. May 9 (our earliest ever) and June 3. A nesting pair of MacGillivray's Warblers n. of Cascade Cr. May 17 was only *Santa Cruz's* 3rd, but 2nd in 2 years (DLSu). In the delta region of *Sacramento*, 15+ territorial Com. Yellowthroats May 20 (TDM, AM) indicated healthy breeding in a county where they were formerly feared extirpated as a breeder.

TANAGERS TO FINCHES — Corralitos Cr., Santa Cruz, and Pine L. Park, S.F., kept their wintering Summer Tanagers content until Mar. 19 (m.ob.) and Apr. 8 (DSg et al.), respectively, while another in the "jungles" of Golden Gate Park Mar. 27—Apr. 7 (JMR, m.ob.) had probably wintered locally as well. Our only Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were at F.I. May 17 and Tom's Place, Mono, May 30 (CDH). An excellent movement of Black-headed Grosbeaks through San Joaquin was highlighted by an impressive 180 along a 3 mi stretch of the Stanislaus R. May 6 (DGY, W. Holt). Two Blue Grosbeaks at San Luis N.W.R., Merced, Apr. 1 (JMR) were the earliest in the Region by a day, typical arrival dates being the 3rd week in April. Single & Indigo Buntings were at Rodeo Lagoon, Marin, May 26—June 5 (L. Tierney, m.ob.), Mt. Diablo, Contra Costa, May 31 and later (MiW et al.), and Bennett Valley,

Sonoma, May 28 and later (fide RAR).

Wintering Clay-colored Sparrows were last observed Mar. 11 in Pescadero (RSTh) and Apr. 23 in Blue L., Humboldt (M. Morris), with the singing male at Elk Cr., Del Norte, May 22 (ADB) a very rare spring vagrant for the mainland. In the past, Black-chinned Sparrow has been thought to invade the Region during drier years. But during the past 2 years of our 4-year drought, there has been little sign of irruptive tendencies from this erratic species. The few birds reported this season were from locales in Contra Costa, Santa Clara, San Benito, and Monterey where it is seen annually. With the Lark Bunting at Hayward Regional Shoreline, Alameda, Apr. 14 (RJR), this hotspot now has all 3 records of this species (first in spring) for the heavily birded East S.F. Bay area. Interesting Grasshopper Sparrow news included Napa's first nesting record w. of Napa May 5 (†MBG) and the singing bird returning to Pt. Saint George, Del Norte, May 12 (ADB). The singing Sharp-tailed Sparrow at Arcata Marsh May 5-12 (FJB et al.) most likely had wintered locally.

Was the ad. Golden-crowned Sparrow with a white crown at Reichmuth Park, Sacramento, Apr. 27 (†TDM et al.) showing White-crowned introgression, or was it just an aberrant Golden-crowned? Wintering Harris' Sparrows were last noted at the Carmel R. mouth Apr. 15 (H. Osborne, P. Zucker), Pengrove, Sonoma, May 2 (H. Boysen), and Blue L., Humboldt, May 7 (M. Morris). Additional birds were in Concord Mar. 17–Apr. 20 (B. & B. Gallagher et al.) and Sunny Brae, Humboldt, Apr. 10–24 (SWH). A Lapland Longspur at L. Talawa, Del Norte, May 16 (ADB) appears to be the Region's latest by 3 days, although there are several questionable birds from F.I. in

June.

The only encouraging words on Tricolored Blackbirds were of up to five males at Ft. Dick May 3–13 (RAE, ADB, LPL) for one of few *Del Norte* records; otherwise, only *Sacramento* reported nesting attempts (from 2 sites only), with *Santa Cruz* noting total nesting failures! Has the drought compounded this sensitive species' already erratic nesting behavior? The ô Hooded Oriole near Smith R. May 12 (ADB, GSL, LPL) was considered "probably *Del*

Norte's most overdue first record." A Purple Finch and two Pine Siskins at Lodi L. May 25 & 29, respectively, were very late on the C.V. floor (DGY). With Lawrence's Goldfinch flocks of up to 75 birds found in the central Inner Coast Ranges and numerous smaller groups in Santa Clara, WGB stated they were "...still plentiful in their Diablo Range strongholds...the Santa Cruz Mts. invasion appears to be not quite over."

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