

## MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION

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Signs of the El Niño continued, with more storm-petrels seen from shore, single Masked and Brown boobies visiting, and Craveri's Murrelets arriving almost 2 months early.

Our drought condition severely affected waterbird habitats on the managed refuges in the northeast. Several were virtually dry, while water deliveries for agriculture continued almost unabated.

Among landbirds, the "East goes West" show that started during mid-spring continued well into summer. It has been hypothesized that unique weather patterns over the Gulf of Mexico played a major role in many vagrant landbirds streaming into the west, including thrashers, vireos, warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, buntings, and possibly thrushes.

County Breeding Bird Atlas projects continued to roll along and are now the last word on local bird populations, while statewide censuses of Burrowing Owl and Tricolored Blackbird are now being conducted. We encourage all to participate.

**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*); All records from F.I. and Palomarin should be credited to Point Reyes Bird Observatory. Place names in *italics* are counties.

### LOONS THROUGH BOOBIES

An apparent Arctic Loon in basic plumage was at the mouth of Bolinas Lagoon May 28 (†SNGH, †KH). Three alternate plumaged Horned Grebes at Bridgeport L., *Mono*, June 5 (RS) included a *courting pair* there July 5 (†RS), but nesting was not established. Three alternate-plumage Horned Grebes at Ano Nuevo July 1–30 (GJS, *fide* RSTh), one at Hayward Shoreline June 6 (RJR), and two very worn basic-plumage stragglers at Mono L., June 15 (RJI) were all far from nesting habitat but summed to a record summer total. A count of 808 Eared Grebe nests at Crowley L., *Mono*, July 22–23 (PJM) was up from 121 in 1991. These may have been concentrated by the loss of other lakes to the 6-year drought, but no similar increase of *Aechmophorus* grebes was seen there. Western and Clark's grebes were courting on L. San Antonio, *Monterey*, but the lake was drained for irrigation water so any nesting was aborted (BJW).

A Flesh-footed Shearwater was offshore Monterey June 27 (DLSh). Rare far inside S.F. Bay, a Sooty Shearwater flew S past Hay-



ward Shoreline, then W along the San Mateo Bridge July 25 (RJR). A **Short-tailed Shearwater** closely seen beyond F.I., July 12 (†DGY, †WRH) was almost unprecedented in mid-summer.

What was once California's largest colony of Leach's Storm-Petrels (10,000 in the 1960s) is being destroyed by the expanding Double-crested Cormorant colony on Little River Rock, *Humboldt* (GeM). Several Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels were seen at F.I., and another with a brood patch was caught there about June 25. It is unusual to see storm-petrels from land. One Ashy and three Black storm-petrels were seen at Pigeon Pt., July 11 (RN) and a Black was at Cypress Pt. July 29 (SHa).

An ad. **Masked Booby** of the yellow-billed form *californica* roosted at Salinas R. mouth, *Monterey*, June 18, 20, & 22 (†JB, †RDo, †DR, †ph.SFB, †JM), but most birders waited on odd-numbered days. A white ad. booby at Capitola Pier, *Santa Cruz*, June 8 (S. Griffin) was likely the same bird. Both prior accepted California records were made from boats, but two other Masked Boobies were seen from shore in the Southern Pacific Coast Region this June. An imm. **Brown Booby** that frequented F.I., May 25-Aug. (P. Martin, †PP, ph.†F. Gardner) was the island's 3rd but only the Region's 4th acceptable record.

#### EGRETS THROUGH DUCKS

A Great Egret nest found on Huichica Cr., June 13 (D'Tak) and 5 Snowy Egret nests at the Napa State Hospital June 14 (J. Maillard) provided first *Napa* breeding records, results of an atlas project. An ad. Little Blue Heron was in the Alviso heronry, *Santa Clara*, June 5-12 (MiF, SAG), while an immature in the area July 18 & 23 (JAC) was suspected to be a backcross between a Snowy Egret and a Little Blue × Snowy hybrid, a combination that was predicted last year (WGB). A Cattle Egret at 2000 feet in the Diablo Range, *Santa Clara*, June 30 (JY) was surprising, as was one near Crowley L. July 14 (†M. Coughlin, N. Gerhart), the Region's first summer *Mono* record. White-faced Ibis nesting was suspected but not confirmed at the s. end of S.F. Bay (m.ob.).

A pair of Canada Geese with a brood on Soap L., *San Benito*, June 25 (WGB) documented continued expansion of the introduced c. coast population. Two ♂ Wood Ducks, rare e. of the Sierra-Cascades, were at Bridgeport Res., *Mono*, June 23 (RSTh), with two more at Modoc N.W.R., July 10 (RLR). Most of our ducks can overwinter anywhere in the Region, occasionally breeding. Several of this season's more unusual records were from the n. coast in *Del Norte*: a pair of Green-winged Teals near Ft. Dick



June 11, the county's first in June; a brood of Blue-winged Teals on L. Earl W.A., June 12, one of few actually seen in the Region; and a companion brood of N. Shovelers, even less expected at that location (all ADB). A concentration of 1200 Cinnamon Teals at Bridgeport Res., July 5 (RS) must have been a response to the drought, as these birds should have been nesting at that time. Gadwall raised 3 broods at Arcata Marsh (m.ob.), where *Humboldt's* first breeding record was established only 2 years earlier.

There were 9 Lesser Scaup broods at Sunnyside sewer Ponds, *Santa Clara* (PJM), our only regular nesting location away from the n. Great Basin. A ♂ Harlequin Duck summered at Monterey (m.ob.), the only one reported, in contrast to recent years. The first to summer in *Mono*, up to three ♀ Com. Goldeneyes were at Crowley L., May 30-July 23 (PJM). An imm. Barrow's Goldeneye was at Tule Lake N.W.R., July 19 (RE), where one also appeared last summer. Since they no longer breed in the Region, summer records are very rare. Expanding the known breeding range in the Region, a Com. Merganser brood was found at Crystal Springs Dam, *San Mateo*, July 14 (PJM). A ♀ Hooded Merganser at Topaz L., *Mono*, June 23 (RSTh) was quite out of range for summer. A Ruddy Duck brood at Sonora Junction, *Mono*, July 5 (RS) was from a previously unreported locale.

#### RAPTORS

A Bald Eagle at Arcata July 17 (BED, FJB) was rare on the n.w. coastal plain in mid-summer because it was an adult. A calling Swainson's Hawk on Mt. Davidson, S.F.,

July 12 (†WRH, †DGY) strayed coastward on a strange date. Only 150 feet of fence line supported 59 Am. Kestrels in Sierra Valley, *Plumas*, July 30 (LJ, KL).

#### SHOREBIRDS

Snowy Plovers were found nesting in *Alameda*, *Napa*, and *Mono*. While still nesting around Monterey Bay, serious concern exists for all outer coast breeders, which is why this population is proposed for Federal listing. Five Semipalmated Plovers at Huichica Cr., June 27 were probably early fall migrants (DASH). Black-necked Stilts reached the n. coast again, with three on L. Earl W.A., June 9 (D. Scott). Seven downy Am. Avocets at the Hollister sewer ponds July 21 (RMrr) established the first *San Benito* breeding record. Eight alternate-plumage ad. Greater Yellowlegs flying SW from the Lodi sewer ponds, *San Joaquin*, June 15 (DGY) could have been migrating in either direction. A Lesser Yellowlegs at the Hayward Shoreline June 6 (RJR) was a late spring migrant, there

being very few June records. Territorial behavior by a Willer at Bridgeport L., June 23 (RSTh) suggested nesting, which would extend the known breeding range 60 mi s.

A flock of 133 Whimbrels on Rd. 104, *Yolo*, July 19 (GEW) was unprecedented for the C.V. in fall. Two ad. Ruddy Turnstones and an ad. Red Knot at the Davis sewer ponds July 11 (GEW) were inland, where always noteworthy, as was a Ruddy Turnstone at Mono L., June 14 (DGY). Sanderlings provided an illustration of the complexities of shorebird migration when four basic-plumage birds at the Salinas R. mouth, *Monterey*, June 18, presumed overwintering, were supplemented by 15 alternate-plumage birds June 19, presumed early fall migrants (both DR). An ad. Semipalmated Sandpiper at the Salinas R. mouth June 23 (DGY, RJR) provided one of very few June records, while 8 coastal reports July 26-31 were about normal. A very late northbound ad. Baird's Sandpiper was at L. Earl June 6 (ADB), the Region's only June record. Wilson's Phalaropes at the Alviso salt ponds, *Santa Clara*, June 5-12 (MFi et al.) and in s. *Sacramento* all period (TDM, PDe) were thought to be nesting, a rare event away from the Great Basin.

#### SKUAS THROUGH ALCIDS

A rare summer S. Polar Skua was offshore Monterey June 27 (DLSh, L. Cole). Of eight Franklin's Gulls, the adult and immature at Lower Klamath N.W.R. July 19 (RE) stand out because the species has nested there (AB 43:1363). A first summer Mew Gull at Sunnyside July 28 (PJM) was one of few credible summer reports. Ten Sabine's Gulls from



Cordell Bank to F.I. June 20 (SFB, JM, DR) were stragglers in the area of most previous June records.

An early high count of Elegant Terns was 830 on June 7 at Bolinas Lagoon (KH). By late July, a n.w. coast record 3000 Elegants were estimated in Humboldt Bay, evenly divided between n. and s. portions of the bay (FJB *et al.*). Ten Arctic Terns from Cordell Bank to F.I., June 20 (SFB, JM, DR) were early, late, or both. Up to five Least Terns at Salinas R. mouth through June (m.ob.) included a dive-bombing pair, strongly suggesting the first nesting attempt in *Monterey* since 1955. Four Black Terns were in Alameda June 6–7 (RJR, LJP) and another stopped at Salinas R. mouth June 7 (JHB). Three or four Black Terns in Monterey Bay July 8 (DLm *vide* AB) were farther from their inland haunts.

A Black Skimmer was at Hayward Shoreline June 7 (RJR) and two were at Alameda June 7–8 (LJP, LLu, AD, JM, ES). These were presumably the same birds seen in spring and during most recent migration seasons around Monterey Bay, but they spend most of each summer hidden in the S.F. Bay's extensive salt ponds.

Xantus' Murrelets remained widespread, with a pair north to 4.5 mi off Trinidad, *Humboldt*, June 25 (SWH). Four Craver's Murrelets offshore Monterey June 27 (DLSH, L. Cole) produced our first summer record; Aug. 8 had been the record-early arrival.

#### DOVES TO SWALLOWS

A White-winged Dove at Pt. Reyes June 26 (BiL, MLR, DDeS) was only the Region's 2nd in spring. Though we received no word on the Sacramento Valley's Yellow-billed Cuckoo population, one was banded at Lamphere Dunes, *Humboldt*, June 4 (CJR), one was at last year's site in Sierra Valley June 18–July 30 (E. Meyers) and one at Modoc N.W.R. July 3 was the first there in 5 years (RLR). Intense surveys for Burrowing Owls in *Monterey* by a local Audubon group produced only 14 pairs with none in the Elkhorn Slough/Castroville area where there had been 5–10 pairs only 5 years ago (DR, m.ob.). A ♂ Broad-tailed Hummingbird at Truckee, *Nevada*, July 27–28 (†M. Meyers) was yet another Sierran record away from their traditional *Mono* strongholds where sightings have increased in recent years. Extralimital records of Costa's Hummingbird are regular throughout most of the Region, however, up to five in the Owens R. Gorge, *Mono*, June 23 (PJM) constituted a first for our Great Basin away from the Fall R. Valley.

A very well described ♀ Three-toed Woodpecker at Dixie Mt., *Plumas*, June 26 (†LJ) would be only the state's 2nd pending acceptance by the C.B.R.C. The first was in the remote Warner Mts. Nov. 2, 1985 over 100 mi to the north. Flycatchers were apparently not involved in the major displacement of eastern passerines as one Least Flycatcher at Pt. Reyes June 7 (M. Bergstrom *et al.*), six vagrant E. Kingbirds June 1–23, and a Scis-

sor-tailed Flycatcher in Olema, *Marin*, June 28–30 (P. Snyder, S. Johnson, †ph. LLu *et al.*) were a meager showing.

About 20 Violet-green Swallows e. of Rancho Seco June 14 (TDM *et al.*) included recently fledged young for one of few *Sacramento* breeding records; their nesting habits in the low Sierran foothills are very poorly known. The state *threatened* Bank Swallow has seen dramatic population reductions in recent years despite new colonies found in *Mono* and along the n. coast. The largest colony has been in Fall R. Valley, *Shasta*. Despite the relocation of this colony due to predators (snakes, ground squirrels, and skunks—DPM), this year 5000 birds were counted June 1 in McArthur (KvG)! This is almost 10 times the recent concentrations for the Region, but we have no idea whether or not these birds are from colony failures along the Sacramento R.

#### CHICKADEES TO PHAINOPEPLA

With Mountain Chickadees again nesting on Cone Peak and a family group rediscovered on Junipero Serra Peak July 5 (CT, KiK), they are again present in Sugar Pines over 5000 ft. in the s. Santa Lucia Mts., *Monterey* (DR). A Cactus Wren at White Mt. Ranch s. of Benton, *Mono*, June 26 (RSTh) was only the Region's 2nd. This species is a local resident just to the south in *Inyo*. Nesting Rock Wrens in Fair Oaks, *Sacramento*, June 30 (GEw) may have been at a record-low elevation in the C.V. The family of Winter Wrens in Redwood Regional Park June 24 (†SAG) established a nesting first for *Contra Costa*. Three Am. Dippers at Arroyo Hondo, *Santa Clara*, July 19 (MMR, AL, JY) represented one of few resident populations in the Diablo Range (WGB).

The Region scored big-time with rare thrushes this spring as a Veery at Pt. Reyes June 4 (†SNGH), Gray-cheeked Thrush at the Smith R. mouth, *Del Norte*, June 6 (†ADB), and Wood Thrush at Dechambeau Cr., *Mono*, June 2–7 (†D. Parker, †DS *et al.*) were the Region's 3rd, first, and 2nd during spring, respectively. Nesting Varied Thrushes were again documented at Butano State Park, *San Mateo*, all Period (†DLSu *et al.*) as at least three singing males and a female carrying nesting material were observed. Gray Catbirds near Merced June 6 (†AD), Red Lake, *Alpine*, June 23 (†L. Comrack), and Pt. Reyes June 25 (ph.RS) came to an unprecedented spring total. The Region's 2nd summering Brown Thrasher completed its pre-basic molt in Daly City, *San Mateo*, early-July to mid-August (†RFz, m.ob.). The Bendire's Thrasher at F.I. June 26 may very well have been a bird of the fall since they breed so early. Two Phainopeplas on S. Fork Rd. along the Trinity R. July 24 (D. Fix) were *Trinity's* first.

#### VIREOS AND WOOD WARBLERS

Extensive surveys by 3 teams along 6–8 mi of the Salinas R. near Bradley, *Monterey*, June 6 (DR *et al.*) produced no Bell's Vireos where

three were found in 1983. Additionally, Yellow and Wilson's warblers along with Yellow-breasted Chat were in much lower numbers than 1983; Brown-headed Cowbirds, of course, were more numerous than ever (DR). A Yellow-throated Vireo was at Centerville, *Humboldt*, June 26 (†ph.BBA, LPL, †GSL).

#### S.A.

As mentioned in the spring report, one of the most noteworthy events to occur in the Region was the unprecedented number of s.e. passerine vagrants. This event was not confined to n. California, as these species broke records for arrival dates and total numbers in states and Regions throughout the west. Because these species comprise a distinct subset of s.e. migrants (*i.e.* relatively early trans-Gulf-of-Mexico migrants) and because the phenomenon was widespread, we feel that spring weather patterns are an appropriate starting point for possible explanation. In fact there were some highly unusual weather phenomena associated with the spring of 1992. Rather than the typical S or SE winds that flow across the Gulf from Yucatan to the n. Gulf coast in spring, 1992 was characterized by a series of weak high-pressure systems that tended to sit over the s.e. states generating E winds across the Gulf. From mid-to-late April there were several sustained conditions that produced E and even NE winds across the Gulf that dominated the weather for days. Extraordinary for the time of the year, this condition set up a pattern of persistent E and SE flow of air across the s.w. all the way to California and the effect should have been to shift the trans-Gulf flight westward. The early first arrival dates of these vagrants support the hypothesis that these unusual weather patterns were at least partially responsible for this unique situation.—Scott B. Terrill and Kenneth P. Able.

The vagrant warblers that seemingly were affected by the anomalous weather patterns over the Gulf of Mexico are listed in Table 1. Some species had impressive early movements during May, but had more "normal" spring totals during June–July. Not coincidentally, the unaffected species consisted of the more n. breeding group that tends to migrate later in the season: nine Tennessees June 3–July 6, five Chestnut-sideds May 31–June 12, five Magnolias June 3–27, no Black-throated Greens, one Blackburnian June 2, two Blackpolls June 6–17, one N. Waterthrush June 19, and two Canadas June 1–3.

The Region's 5th spring Golden-winged Warbler in Alpers Canyon above Mammoth L., *Mono*, July 15 (†DS) was the state's first in July (summering?). Among four Virginia's Warblers at Benton Hot Springs, June 26 (DS), one feeding young established yet another breeding locale in *Mono*. Intense surveys for Yellow Warblers in the Glass Mt.



**Table 1—Eastern U.S. passerine migrants that moved through N. California in unprecedented numbers this spring.**

Species	1992 Spring Total (May–July)	Recent 10-year avg. (May–July)
Gray Catbird	3	.4
Yellow-throated Vireo	3	.3
Red-eyed Vireo	14	3.0
N. Parula	88	6.5
Yellow-throated Warbler	3	1.0
Prairie Warbler	2	.1
Black-and-white Warbler	21	8.8
Am. Redstart	57	12.5
Prothonotary Warbler	1	.1
Worm-eating Warbler	8	.2
Ovenbird	17	9.2
Kentucky Warbler	10	1.5
Hooded Warbler	29	3.0
Summer Tanager	12	1.1
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	53	17.4
Indigo Bunting	33	13.3

range, *Mono*, revealed the species to be a very local and uncommon breeder. The densest population was an estimated 10 pairs in the Owens R. Gorge, which was still several miles from known concentrations of the presumed exterminator, Brown-headed Cowbird (PJM). Three additional Yellow-throated Warblers graced the Region this spring: two at Pt. Reyes June 2 with one still there June 3 (E. Holst, T. Easterla, †JM, †RS, m.ob.) and one in Arcata July 3 (†FJB, †GSL, †ph.BBA *et al.*). Our 2nd Prairie Warbler of the spring was in Fairhaven June 23–July 7 (JCS). The Region's first summering Bay-breasted Warbler was also in Fairhaven June 15–July 3 (GSL, LPL). Among six Worm-eating Warblers May 31–June 24, most interesting was the Region's 2nd summering record at C.C.R.S. June 17–August (SSBT *et al.*). The Kentucky Warbler at Tahoe Donner Ski Area remained until June 27 (Region's first summering record) while additional Kentuckys were at F.I. June 1 & 7, and Pacific Grove, *Monterey*, June 14–21 (†SFB, †DR, m.ob.). A ♀ Com. Yellowthroat feeding young at Black L. in the Adobe Valley June 27 (DS) was the species' first confirmed breeding for the Mono Basin, though this has long been suspected there.

#### TANAGERS TO ORIOLES

As noted in Table 1 Summer Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks also appeared to be caught up in the big W push. All sightings were coastal except for the birds mentioned in the spring report and the following: a Summer Tanager along Putah Cr., *Yolo*, June 13 (RS) and single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in Davis, *Yolo*, June 5 (K. Kemmerling) and Alamo, *Contra Costa*, June 7 (RJR). Amid this flurry, it is not surprising that the latter species established its first Regional nesting record when a ♂ Rose-breasted Grosbeak was seen sharing nest-sitting duties and even-

tually feeding two young with a ♀ Black-headed Grosbeak in Tilden Regional Park, *Contra Costa*, June 1–July 8 (B. Gillis, †KGH, JM, m.ob.). However, first blood on nesting Rose-breasted Grosbeak may have been drawn in *Monterey* when an apparent one-year-old ♂ Rose-breasted × Black-headed appeared in Del Rey Oaks July 29–early August. The bird was in a yard that has held a summering ♂ Rose-breasted for 3 consecutive years, and was very possibly its hybrid young from a year ago (N. & M. Citron, †ph.DR).

A Blue Grosbeak at White Mt. Ranch, *Mono*, June 26 (RSTh) was only the Region's 2nd for the Great Basin District. However, this species is known to breed just outside our Region at nearby Oasis, *Mono*, and Owens Valley. A Clay-colored Sparrow at Brisbane, *San Mateo*, June 6 (ASH) and two at L. Earl, *Del Norte*, June 6–17 (ADB *et al.*) were very rare mainland sightings; most spring records are from F.I. A Brewer's Sparrow was in McArthur, *Shasta*, June 1 (KvG) where they are suspected of breeding. *Shasta* claimed its first Grasshopper Sparrows with two singing males at McArthur June 1 (KvG). Single Bobolinks at F.I., June 1–2 and Bodega Harbor June 1 (C. Demartini) met the recent spring average.

#### S.A.

Unprecedented numbers of Tricolored Blackbirds were reported this year, including a colony of more than 60,000 breeding adults in *Kings*. Colonies were discovered in previously unoccupied counties such as *Humboldt*, *Mendocino*, and *Napa*, and breeding was reported in *Yolo* for the first time in 2 decades. The current breeding population probably stands at about 250,000 adults, a major increase from estimates compiled in the late 1980's which averaged about 50,000 adults (range 35,000–100,000). This recent increase suggests a favorable breeding response to the unusually wet early springs in the s. San Joaquin Valley the past few years. Monitoring of current occupied sites and the search for new ones in California and Oregon during the next few years will be important to assess the variables that will lead to proper management for this highly unpredictable species. Send observations on size, success, nesting substrate, and dates to AB regional editor DGY.—Edward C. Beedy.

A Great-tailed Grackle at Dechambeau Ponds, *Mono L.*, June 14 (AD) was only the Region's 2nd for the Great Basin. Two ♂ Scott's Orioles near Benton Hot Springs, *Mono*, June 26 (DS) were the Region's first for its Great Basin District, though the species regularly breeds in arid woodlands just out of the Region to the s. and e. of this area.



**Masked Booby at the Salinas River mouth, California, June 22, 1992. Photograph/Stephen F. Bailey.**

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