# SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION

Guy McCaskie

This was one of the wettest winters on record, ending the 6-year drought with major flooding in many areas. By the end of the period, most southern California rivers were actually running, and virtually all reservoirs were overflowing.

Birdwise, this was one of the most uneventful winters in memory. A minimal number of mountain species, such as Red-breasted Nuthatches and Mountain Chickadees, made their way down to the lowlands; berry-eaters, such as Hermit Thrushes, American Robins, and Cedar Waxwings, were present in only about average numbers. Pine Siskins were widely scattered in large numbers, but other finches, such as Purple Finches, were scarcer than normal away from breeding areas. Abbreviations: F.C.R. (Furnace Cr. Ranch, Death Valley, Inyo Co.); H.D.L. (Harper Dry L., n.w. of Barstow. San Bernardino Co.); N.E.S.S. (n. end of the Salton Sea, Riverside Co.); S.B.C.M. (San Bernardino Co. Muse-um); S.C.R.E. (Santa Clara R. Estuary near Ventura, Ventura Co.); S.E.S.S. (s. end of the Salton Sea, Imperial Co.); S.F.K.R.P. (South Fork Kern R. Preserve near Weldon, Kern Co.).

As virtually all rarities in s. California are seen by many observers, only the observer(s) initially finding and identifying the bird are included. Documentation is on file with the California Bird Records Committee (c/o Michael A. Patten, P.O. Box 8612, Riverside, CA 92515) for all rarities listed in this report. Records submitted without documentation are not published.

## **LOONS TO STORM-PETRELS**

A Red-throated Loon on L. Isabella, Dec. 21 Jan. 5 (MTH) was the first to be documented in *Kern*.. Two Pacific Loons, rare but regular on the larger inland lakes, were also on L. Isabella, Dec. 22 Jan. 5 (JCW). Two Yel-

low-billed Loons were found, with one on Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo, Dec. 10 (TME, CAM), and the other photographed in Santa Barbara harbor, Dec. 11 (J&PC): there are only 2 previous records for the coast of s. Cali-fornia, and 2 more for inland lakes within the Region. The Red-necked Grebe in Santa Bar-bara, Nov. 21–Feb. 10 (JMG), one on Morro Bay, Dec. 7 (KAH), and another in Malibu, Los Angeles, Jan. 4 (BE) were the only three re-ported in the Region.

Only five Laysan Albatrosses were seen during the Jan. 12-27 CalCOFI Scientific Cruise off s. California, with the closest one 53 nautical mi SW of San Nicolas I., Jan 17 (PP). Three Laysans were sighted 70-80 nautical mi W of Pt. Arguello, Santa Barbara, during an organized pelagic birding trip, Feb. 6 (SJS), and one flew over the same waters dur-ing a similar trip, Feb. 15 (KLG). The only Cook's Petrels seen within 200 mi of the coast were one 172 nautical mi WSW of San Nico-las I., Jan. 16 (PP); another 147 nautical mi WSW of San Miguel I., Jan. 21 (PP); and a 3rd, 65 nautical mi W of Pt. Arguello, Feb. 15 (BKS, SEF). Eight Black Storm-Petrels con-



centrated in an area 24–28 nautical mi W of the n. tip of San Clemente I., Jan 17 (PP) were unexpected, as few have been found in California waters this time of year.

## TROPICBIRDS TO HERONS

Single Red-billed Tropicbirds were seen 49 nautical mi SW of San Clemente I., Jan. 13 (PP) and 46 nautical mi SSW of San Nicolas I., Jan. 17 (PP); this species is unusual in s. California waters in winter. A Red-tailed Tropicbird was sighted at 31°18'N, 120°40'W, about 130 nautical mi SW of San Nicholas I., Jan. 14 (PP) and another at 31°28'N, 122°06'w, about 161 nautical mi WSW of San Nicolas I., Jan. 16 (PP); both locations are over deep water w. of the continental shelf, where this species is proving to be rare but regular. A Brown Pelican near Brawley, Imperial, Dec. 23-Feb. 6 (WRR) was evidently wintering at this inland locality. An ad. ♀ frigatebird near Bolsa Chica, Orange, Feb. 19, was not specifically identified (J. de la Cuesta); considering that a Great Frigatebird was photographed over s.e. Farallon I., at about this time of year (AB 46:475, 1992), this species cannot be eliminated, though Magnificent would appear the more likely.

The only Little Blue Heron reported away from San Diego Bay was an unprecedented immature photographed inland on the high desert at California City, Kern, Dec. 19–22 (MTH). The imm. Tricolored Heron found at the mouth of the Tijuana R. near Imperial Beach, San Diego, Oct. 24, was still present at the end of the period, joined by an adult, Jan. 22–Feb. 5 (TC). The imm. Reddish Egret at Bolsa Chica, Oct. 18–Mar. 20 (DRW) was the only one found in California this winter. The Yellow-crowned Night-Heron that has frequented the San Diego coast N of La Jolla



Immature Little Blue Heron inland at California City, California, December 20, 1992. The near wingtip is drooping slightly, showing the dusky primary tips that help to distinguish this species from pale-legged young Snowy Egrets. Photograph/John Wilson.

since fall 1981 was present among Blackcrowned Night-Herons in La Jolla, Dec. 26+ (EC).

### **SWANS TO RAPTORS**

The three marked first-year Trumpeter Swans observed near Independence, *Inyo*, Dec. 24–27 (LK) and then on nearby Tinnemaha Res., Jan. 22–31 (T&JH) had been transported from Red Rocks Lakes N.W.R., Idaho, and released at Summer L. in extreme s. Oregon earlier this winter. A "Blue Goose" was noted on Owens L., *Inyo*, Jan. 19–Feb. 2 (T&JH); this color morph is unusual away from the regular wintering flocks of Snow Geese at S.E.S.S. A tally of 35 Eur. Wigeons scattered throughout the Region was a little lower than normal. A & Eur. × Am. Wigeon was present in Goleta, *Santa Barbara*, for its 4th winter (PEL), and another was on s. San

Diego Bay, Dec. 5 (GMcC); this hybrid is found in California every year and is probably commoner than the few reports would indicate. The only Tufted Ducks reported were a male on Lopez L., San Luis Obispo, Jan. 3-4 (KAR) and another male, near Santa Maria, Santa Barbara, Dec. 27-Feb. 28 (ph. BHi). The & Harlequin Duck seen at Pt. Mugu, Ventura, Jan. 29 (BL) has been present since 1990. An Oldsquaw was inland at S.E.S.S., Dec. 22-Feb. 13 (DDi), and the male found on the Colorado R. below Parker Dam, Nov. 27, was still present Jan. 22, accompanied by a female (JLD); eight counted along the coast was about average. Black Scoters have become exceedingly rare in s. California waters in recent years, as indicated by only four reported S of Pt. Conception this winter. The only scoter found inland was a White-winged at S.E.S.S., Dec. 22 (DDi). A P Barrow's Goldeneye near Cantil, Dec. 19 (MTH) was only the 2nd to be found in Kern,

and another, shot by a hunter at S.E.S.S., Dec. 20 (DDi) was a very unusual find, this far south.

An imm. Bald Eagle at Pt. Mugu, Ventura, Dec. 5 (BL) was the only one found on the immediate coast. An imm. N. Goshawk near Shandon, San Luis Obispo, Jan. 9-Feb. 28 (EMcM), joined by an adult, Feb. 15 (GPS), are two of a very few ever to be found away from the higher coastal mountains and the extreme n.e. corner of the Region. Swainson's Hawks (2-4) carefully identified in the Central Valley W of Bakersfield, Kern, Jan. 21-Feb. 19 (SF), were clearly wintering; an immature at Pt. Mugu, Feb. 13-27 (JMC), was thought to have been wintering locally, but extremely early spring migrants this year included one over the San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles, Feb. 17 (DA), two more there, Feb. 20 (RB), and another in Imperial Beach, San Diego, Feb. 26 (GMcC). Three Zonetailed Hawks were found along the coast this winter, including an adult near L. Murray, San Diego, Dec. 14 (JM); another, possibly the same, in nearby Santee, Jan. 29-30 (EA); and a 3rd adult in Capistrano Beach, Orange, Jan. 11 (JEP). With few records of Harlan's Red-tailed Hawks in s. California, the presence of one near Big Pine, Inyo, Feb. 13+ (T&IH) and of another near Needles, San Bernardino, Dec. 5 (MAP), is of interest.

## **SHOREBIRDS TO PUFFINS**

Wintering Pacific Golden-Plovers included two near Santa Maria, through Jan. 15+ (KH); ≤3 on n. Vandenberg A.F.B., Dec. 19–Jan. 27 (AA); and eight at Seal Beach, *Orange*, November+ (DRW). Unusual for this time of year was a count of ≤11 Snowy Plovers, for Owens L., Dec. 23–Feb. 2 (T&JH). Seven Mt. Plovers at Pt. Mugu, Dec. 10 (BL) were



Ruff at Port Hueneme, California, December 5, 1992. Photograph/Don Desjardin.

on the immediate coast, where they are now considered rare, and an unusual locality was Owens L., Jan. 28-Feb. 2 (T&JH), where 2-3 were found. Numbers of Mt. Plovers persist in the Palmdale/Lancaster, Los Angeles, area, where ≤150 turned up (MSM); in Lakeview, Riverside, with <70 in December (CMcG); and around S.E.S.S., hosting >250 throughout the winter (WRR). The Solitary Sandpiper sighted in Torrance, Los Angeles, Nov. 25, and still present at the end of the period (DM), is one of a very few to have wintered in California. Two Ruddy Turnstones at N.E.S.S., Feb. 6 (GH) were believed to be wintering on this inland body of water. Owens L. had ≤4 Sanderlings, Jan. 19+ (T&JH), the first to be found staying inland away from the Salton Sea. A Pectoral Sandpiper in Niland, Imperial, Dec. 22 (PAG) is one of less than a half-dozen observed in California in winter. As usual, small numbers of Stilt Sandpipers congregated around S.E.S.S., with 130, seen Feb. 20 (REW), the largest single-day count. A Ruff remained at Port Hueneme, Ventura, Dec. 5-Mar. 14 (DDe). Two Wilson's Phalaropes in Salton City, Imperial, Feb. 6-14 (CMcG) were undoubtedly wintering locally.

An ad. Laughing Gull present in Santee, Jan. 17-Feb. 12 (CGE) was in the coastal lowlands ca. 20 mi from the coast, a most unusual locality for this species. A first-winter Franklin's Gull in Lake Forest, Orange, Dec. 5-6 (JTo) was most likely a late fall straggler, but the same could not be said of the immature noted in Long Beach, Los Angeles, Dec. 22-Feb. 20 (KL). The first-winter Common Black-headed Gull found in Santa Barbara, Nov. 21, was last seen Dec. 21 (SEF). An ad. Yellow-footed Gull in Newport Beach, Jan. 9 (MTH) was the first for Orange, one of a very few to be found away from the Salton Sea in California. Four Glaucous Gulls were reported this winter, with single first-winter birds around Arroyo Grande, San Luis Obispo, Dec. 6-13 (TME), at Goleta, Feb. 9 (TS), at SCRE, Jan. 29-Feb. 5 (RWH), and in San Pedro, Los Angeles, Feb. 6 (JDB). Black Skimmer numbers in Santa Barbara peaked at 117 in January (FS), and three were on Morro Bay, Dec. 16 (G. McClure), with one or two remaining through Feb. 21 (EG, TME, DWQ)-amazing considering that this species was unrecorded in this area before 1976.

A dead Ancient Murrelet on the beach in Cayucos, San Luis Obispo, Jan. 16 (DC) was the only one reported this winter. A Parakeet Auklet at 31°03′N, 121°12′W, about 158 nautical mi SW of San Nicolas I., Jan. 14 (PP) plus an unheard-of concentration (in modern times) of possibly ≤40 (18 positively identified) materialized between 34°28′N, 122°06′W and 34°34′N, 121°53′W, -75–60 nautical mi W of Pt. Arguello, Jan. 25 (PP). Three Tufted Puffins, a species rarely reported in s. California waters, came into view between Santa Rosa and San Miguel Is., Jan. 22 (CH).

# DOVES TO WOODPECKERS

In recent years, White-winged Doves have wintered at oases along the e. base of the San Diego mountains, and this year was no exception, with ≥25, December-February (H&PB); along the coast, where they are unexpected, as many as five were in Goleta, Jan. 1-Mar. 12 (LB, PEL), as well as another in Irvine, Orange, Dec. 20 (RAE). Seven Inca Doves were still at F.C.R., Jan. 4 (T&JH) but could not be found at the end of the period. Common Ground-Doves have expanded their range N along the coast, appearing to favor citrus orchards; they are now resident as far N as Santa Barbara. One found in Santa Maria, Jan. 8-Feb. 28 (DWQ) was N of the species' known range. Five Ruddy Ground-Doves remained at FCR, fall-Jan. 4 (T&JH), and two stayed on (REW). The Groove-billed Ani found along the San Gabriel R. in Whittier, Los Angeles, Nov. 27, was last seen Dec. 30 (AME), after which access to the area was hindered by flooding. A Lesser Nighthawk over Brawley, Imperial, Dec. 30 (AK) was undoubtedly wintering locally. A number of Vaux's Swifts spent the winter in the Greater Los Angeles Basin, as indicated by two winging over San Gabriel, Jan. 10 (KLG), 50 over Sierra Madre, Feb. 4 (CMcG), 25 over the lower portion of Santa Anita Canyon, Feb. 20 (MSM), and ≤37 over Hansen Dam, Feb. 17-25 (DA). A & Broad-billed Hummingbird, a rare-to-casual straggler to s. California, was on a private golf course in W. Los Angeles, Jan. 3 (KLG). A Costa's Hummingbird found dead in San Luis Obispo, Jan. 16 (JMu) was unusually far N for this time of year. Four Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were reported, including an adult in Santa Barbara, Nov. 28-Jan. 2 (AB), a juvenile near Santa Ynez, Santa Barbara, Dec. 3-30 (CP), another near Lompoc Dec. 20 (KH), and a 3rd juvenile near Cantil, Kern, remaining fall-Jan. 23 (MTH).

## **FLYCATCHERS TO VIREOS**

A Greater Pewee found near Imperial Beach Dec. 19 (GR) was present through Jan. 3, when the area became inaccessible due to major flooding. A Hammond's Flycatcher, rare in winter, was on Pt. Loma in San Diego Dec. I–Jan. 24 (REW). Twelve Gray Flycatchers were found wintering along the coast, and single birds were inland at Yaqui Wells, San

Diego, Dec. 6-Jan. 20 (AM), at S.E.S.S., Jan. 25-Feb. 13 (PEL), and near Cantil fall-Dec. 19 (MTH); this is the expected *Empidonax* in s. California, this time of year. A "W. Flycatcher," rare in winter, was seen in Irvine, Dec. 8-Jan. 30 (RAE), another in nearby Mission Viejo, Dec. 20 (BED), and a 3rd far inland at SFKRP, Jan. 3 (SL); one at SCRE, Feb. 27 (BHef), was probably an early spring migrant. Three E. Phoebes are known to have been present during the period, with single birds on Santa Cruz I., Jan. 23 (MAH); in Irvine, Dec. 8-Mar. 7 (RAE); and inland near Borrego Springs, San Diego, Dec. 29-Feb. 22



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher wintering in Goleta, California, January 5, 1993. Photograph/Hugh P. Smith.

(AM). Two Dusky-capped Flycatchers, a casual straggler to California, were found: one in Goleta Dec. 29+ (SEF) and another in San Marino, Los Angeles, Dec. 13-19 (KLG). Ashthroated Flycatchers numbered 16 along the coast this winter-far more than usual. Single Tropical Kingbirds at Pt. Mugu, Dec. 1-13 (GS); in Solana Beach, San Diego, Dec. 1-5 (RP); and near Imperial Beach, Dec. 15 (TC) are best viewed as late fall stragglers. One in Goleta, Dec. 1-Mar. 15 (BHen) had clearly wintered locally, and another inland near Chino, San Bernardino, Mar. 11-13 (HC) is believed to be the same individual present here most winters since 1981-1982. A Thickbilled Kingbird returned to Seal Beach for its 2nd winter, Oct. 9+ (DP). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was in Solana Beach, Dec. 4 (PAG); another was present in El Monte, Los Angeles, Dec. 6-Jan. 1 (JG); and a 3rd was in Goleta, Dec. 11-Mar. 5 (BHen); there are only about a dozen previous records of wintering Scissor-taileds in California.

Reports of Rough-winged Swallows were of interest, as this species is considered casual along the coast in winter: a single bird in Goleta, Dec. 29—Feb. 2 (PEL), as many as 25 around El Monte, Jan. 10 (KLG), and several remaining all winter—two in Long Beach (MH), ≤3 near Irvine (RAH), and ≥6 in Santee (CGE). A Barn Swallow near Cantil, November—Jan. 23 (MTH) certainly chose an unusual locality to winter in. The Bendire's Thrasher near Lakeview, *Riverside*, since Nov. 8 was last reported Dec. 22 (TM), but major flooding in this area precluded access to the site. The only N. Shrike reported was one near Bishop, *Inyo*, Dec. 23 (JF).

A Bell's Vireo on the Hidden Valley



Adult male Orchard Oriole at Irvine, California, January 3, 1993. Photograph/Matt Heindel.

Wildlife Area, Riverside, Dec. 19 (MAP) is one of a very few found in California in winter. Twenty-four Solitary Vireos were reported from along the coast, 16 of the interior race plumbeous; one seen in Arroyo Grande, San Luis Obispo, Jan. 30–Feb. 28 (KAR) was identified as solitarius; another in Independence, Dec. 5 (AK) was unusually late for the area. A Warbling Vireo in Santa Barbara, Dec. 18 (HPR) was thought to be wintering locally.

#### **WOOD-WARBLERS**

Twelve Nashville Warblers along the coast was a less-than-normal count. A N. Parula, rare in winter, was at NESS, Jan. 2-Mar. 6 (HK). Yellow Warblers appeared to be scarcer than usual, with ≤20 reported. A Chestnut-sided Warbler in Niland, Dec. 22 (PAG) was the 6th found in this general area, this time of year. The only Hermit Warblers reported were one near Pt. Buchon, San Luis Obispo, Dec. 14 (MC) and another in Newport Beach, Feb. 5 (JB). Sightings of 10 Palm and of 10 Blackand-white warblers along the coast this winter were disappointing. Eight Am. Redstarts along the coast was a little less than average, and only three were found around S.E.S.S., where small numbers are expected. An Ovenbird near Hansen Dam, Feb. 17-14 (DA) is one of a very few to be seen in California in winter. A N. Waterthrush in Newport Beach, Dec. 10-Mar. 7 (RAE) was the only one reported. A very late, or possibly wintering, MacGillivray's Warbler was found injured in Santa Barbara, Dec. 5 (ED), and another was present in San Diego, Dec. 19-20 (PU). One of the two Hooded Warblers at Hansen Dam at the end of November was last seen Jan. 6 (DA). Twenty-one Wilson's Warblers on the coast was certainly less than we have become accustomed to. A Painted Redstart, a rare but regular straggler to s. California, was in Costa Mesa, Orange, Dec. 5-Feb. 5 (RAH).

#### **TANAGERS TO FINCHES**

The & Hepatic Tanager found in Irvine, Nov. 21, was still in evidence Mar. 5 (MTH), another known to have been in Santa Barbara for the past 10 winters was again present, Nov. 13-Mar. 5 (SEF), and a female was seen elsewhere in Santa Barbara, Jan. 3-Feb. 13 (PEL). Eight Summer Tanagers along the coast was less than expected, and W. Tanagers were far less numerous than in recent years. A Rosebreasted Grosbeak in Niland, Dec. 22 (PAG) was only the 2nd seen in this area of California this time of year; just three more were found on the coast. Single Black-headed Grosbeaks, normally much scarcer than Rose-breasteds in winter, were in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, Dec. 26-Feb. 25 (P& GZ) and in Santa Barbara, Dec. 28-Jan. 14 (JL). An Indigo Bunting, most unusual in winter, was seen in Santa Barbara, Jan. 9 (ph. SEF).

A Clay-colored Sparrow, rare in winter, was in Santa Barbara, Dec. 11-Jan. 13 (PEL), another in Anaheim, Orange, Feb. 13-20 (BED), and a 3rd somewhat inland near Lakeview, Dec. 22 (GH). The only Lark Buntings were one in Niland, Dec. 22-Feb. 13 (PAG), another at H.D.L., Feb. 1 (EAC, \*S.B.C.M.), and a 3rd near Soda L., San Luis Obispo, Feb. 2 (KH). A LeConte's Sparrow photographed near Malibu, Dec. 20-Jan. 21 (SH, KLG) was the first to be found in Los Angeles, and only the 7th along the coast of California, away from the Farallon Is. Twenty Swamp Sparrows scattered throughout the Region was about average, a similar number of White-throated Sparrows was a little less than average, and six Harris' Sparrows was near average. A flock of Horned Larks near Palmdale contained ≤2 McCown's Longspurs, two Lapland Longspurs, and six Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Dec. 15-Jan. 1 (JKA); the only other longspurs reported were a Lapland at SESS, Feb. 20 (GMcC) and a Chestnut-collared on the Plano Trabuco, Nov. 21-Jan. 30 (DRW).

A Rusty Blackbird, a rare straggler to California, was in Malibu, Dec. 31 (SJS) and another in Long Beach, Feb. 24 (ph. MH). The only Orchard Orioles were a male in Irvine, Dec. 19–Jan. 30 (BO'C) and another male in Goleta, Jan. 14+ (ZL). Six Hooded Orioles, normally very rare in winter, were found along the coast, December–January. Northern Orioles, scarcer than normal, included five galbula; a bullockii near L. Isabella, Jan. 24 (JS) and another in nearby Weldon, Feb. 2 (JE) were inland, where they are unexpected in winter. As appears normal, small numbers

of Scott's Orioles were found wintering along the extreme w. edge of the desert in San Diego; however, the presence of ≥15 along the coast was far more than expected.

Three Red Crossbills in Cambria, Jan. 13–15 (BB) were the only ones found, but very few finches, other than Pine Siskins, were noted away from breeding localities.

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