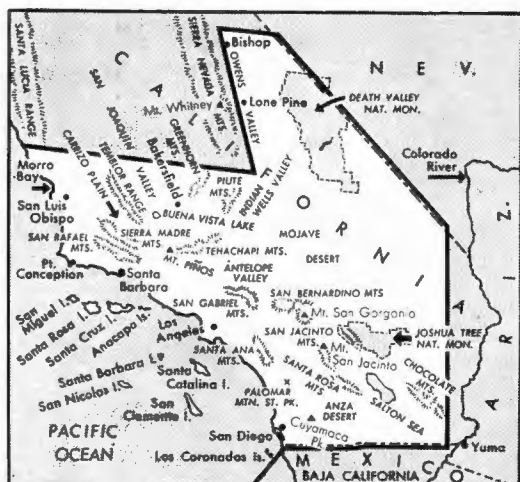


SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION.—The weather year concluded on June 30, 1959 constituted the driest in the 89 years of the Los Angeles weather bureau. Generally, precipitation was about 30 per cent of normal with the Los Angeles area receiving about 5 inches through the winter and spring as compared with a normal of about 14.5 inches. This picture was repeated throughout the Region. Temperatures during March, April, and May averaged a few degrees higher than normal for most southern California areas. Wildflowers in the desert were



almost non-extant as compared with the phenomenal display of 1958 and the crops of seeds, nuts, and berries were very poor. The mild weather encouraged early departure of migrant waterfowl and winter visitants and accounted for a somewhat early migration of landbirds. Fire danger in the chaparral was extreme during the early spring and with no relief in sight, this promises to be a record fire-year in southern California. Numerous small blazes sprang up in various chaparral areas during March and April (at a time when usually there are almost none) but happily no extensive fires were reported to July 1. A mild storm during the latter part of March brought but small amounts of precipitation to the Region but almost no snow cover was received in the mountains. Another mild storm at the end of April did little to relieve the situation as was the case with a very weak front which moved through the Region on May 12. The spring season then brought no weather fronts of any consequence and precipitation was negligible. A sampling of weather data for parts of Region will give some idea of the situation:

Station	Temp. departure from normal (° F)	Total Precip.	Precip. departure from normal (inches)
March			
Santa Maria	+2.8	trace	-2.29
Los Angeles	+7.5	0	-1.91
San Diego	+5.1	trace	-1.52
Big Bear Lake	-	trace	-6.17
April			
Santa Maria	+2.9	0.26	-0.94
Los Angeles	+6.2	0.39	-0.57
San Diego	+4.2	0.31	-0.52
Big Bear Lake	-	0.59	-2.27
May			
Santa Maria	-1.6	trace	-0.32
Los Angeles	+3.5	trace	-0.30
San Diego	+1.1	trace	-0.26
Big Bear Lake	-	0.17	-0.54

Loons, Grebes.—The great concentrations of sea-birds observed feeding on baitfish close to the southern California beaches during the early part of the

winter had for the most part dispersed by the end of March. Probably, local movements of these small fish away from the coastal waters accounted for this. In any event, loons of all three species, as well as Western, Horned, and Eared Grebes were generally scarce along the coast from the end of March through the end of May. In recalling last year's spring migration of loons (which was one of the finest in memory), this year's flight was almost non-existent. Although California waters continued their warming trend through the winter and spring, the phenomenal concentrations of seabirds observed earlier in the winter were not to be seen during the spring. Western Grebes had departed for their inland and northern nesting grounds by the end of March. Thousands of Eared Grebes were still present on the Salton Sea late in April, but most had departed by the end of May.

Albatrosses, Fulmars, Shearwaters, Petrels.—A pelagic trip to an area some 100 miles southwest of Newport Beach was thwarted on May 9 by 35-40 knot winds, but observations on the spring migration of pelagic birds were made near the east end of San Clemente Island. Two Black-footed Albatrosses, a single Fulmar, about 75 Pink-footed Shearwaters, approximately 5500 Sooty Shearwaters, 21 Manx Shearwaters, 25 Leach's Petrels, about 75 Black Petrels, and a single Fork-tailed Petrel were noted by the group.

Pelicans.—Two White Pelicans remained at Upper Newport Bay through the middle of May. About 200 White Pelicans were seen feeding at Buena Vista Lake, Kern County on April 12 and it had been hoped that they would remain to breed; however, this lake was drained a few days later (killing thousands upon thousands of carp), and on a return visit on May 30 no pelicans were found (Ed., James R. Huffman, Herbert and Olga Clarke). A visit to Goose Lake, Kern County (about 30 miles northwest of Buena Vista Lake in western San Joaquin Valley) on May 30 revealed about 600 White Pelicans feeding on the carp in this shallow lake. It was hoped that a nesting colony would be established here, but on a return visit on June 13 the lake was almost completely dry and only about 40 White Pelicans were found. No White Pelicans were known to be nesting near the south end of the Salton Sea although some 400+ were seen circling there on June 7 (Ed., Robert E. Blackstone). After having made a fairly complete survey of their potential nesting areas one can only conclude that this species failed to establish any nesting colonies in southern California this spring.

Heron, Egrets, Bitterns, Ibises.—About 200 Black-crowned Night Herons were counted at Goose Lake, May 30 (Ed., JH, HC, OC) but none were observed nesting there and no old nests were seen. These birds were reported as increasing within the city limits of San Diego. Great Blue Herons nested in small numbers at the south end of the Salton Sea (William R. Nuess), but were somewhat scarce elsewhere during the spring migration. About 175 Snowy and only 3 Common Egrets were at Goose Lake, May 30 (Ed., et al.). A single Am. Bittern was at Fairmont Park, Riverside, April 4 (Merle J. Whitney) and 1 Least Bittern was at Fisherman's Retreat during April (*vide*

Ethel West). Some 50 White-faced Ibis were at the Imperial State Waterfowl Management Area, Imperial County, April 25 (J. H. Comby), but only a single bird was roosting there on June 6 and no nesting colony was located at the south end of the Salton Sea (WRN). Three White-faced Ibis were still at the gun club near Upper Newport Bay, May 2 (Ed., Ben King, Jr., Guy McCaskie).

Waterfowl.—The spring migration of waterfowl occurred somewhat early this year and most species of geese and ducks which do not nest in the Region had departed by the first week in April. Mild, summerlike weather plus drought no doubt encouraged early departure for these birds. No Whistling Swans were reported. Black Brant were scarce everywhere as only 25 were at Mission Bay, San Diego County, May 2. Only 154 were counted on Morro Bay, March 31 (J. Kittredge) and none were seen on Black Brant Slough, Point Mugu during the winter or spring. Three Black Brant were at Playa del Rey, May 1 (BK, Jr.) and 3 more were found near Seal Beach, May 2 (Ed., et al.). Six Snow Geese were observed flying over Pomona, March 13 (James A. and Emma W. Kryder). The only Wood Ducks reported were a pair at Fairmont Park, Riverside, April 4 (MJW). Surf Scoters lingered in small numbers well into May but White-winged Scoters (which showed a good winter flight) had departed for the most part by the middle of March. A single White-winged Scoter was seen as late as May 2 on San Diego Bay (Arthur Morley). Still evidencing a good winter flight, 15 Common Scoters were at Morro Bay, March 23 (Ed., REB); 5 were still at Playa del Rey, May 1, and 3 on May 8 (BK, Jr.). Blue-winged Teal were reported as follows: 1 male at Fisherman's Retreat, March 3-21; 2 at the gun club near Upper Newport Bay, May 2 (Ed., et al.); and 6 near the south end of the Salton Sea, May 3 (Guy McCaskie, Bjørn Christoffersen).

Condors, Kites, Hawks.—Condors were reported near Shandon, San Luis Obispo County by Eben McMillan as follows: 3 ten miles southeast of Shandon, April 3 (Bob Lewis); and 1 over the McMillan Ranch near Shandon, April 27. Two White-tailed Kites were at the gun club near Upper Newport Bay, May 2 (Ed., et al.). Eben McMillan was the only observer to witness the spring flight of Swainson's Hawks this year. Apparently the majority of these birds pass through our Region in a relatively few days and unless one happens to be afield at the proper time, the flight goes unrecorded. McMillan counted more than 50 Swainson's Hawks on the ground 6 miles south of Devil's Den, Kern County on April 3 and more than 100 over the Carrizo Plains, April 6. A single Swainson's Hawk flew over Thousand Palms Oasis, April 24 (Ed.). One **Rough-legged Hawk** was near the Owens River near Whitmore Hot Springs, March 25 (Ed.) and another was seen on the road to Granite Station, May 23 (Ed., et al.). Single Ferruginous Hawks were found on the Carrizo Plain, March 3 and 5, one-half mile south of Shandon, March 16 (EMcM), and at Granite Station, Kern County, April 11 (Ed.). Harris' Hawks have virtually disappeared as a summer resident from Imperial County

as none have been reported there in almost 7 years, whereas formerly they were regular there in small numbers. Two Bald Eagles flew over the Owens River near Whitmore Hot Springs, March 25 (Ed., REB). No migrating Ospreys or Pigeon Hawks were reported and Prairie Falcons continued their decline.

Grouse, Cranes, Rails.—Chukars were reported as numerous in Death Valley during this spring. Eleven Sandhill Cranes were still present on the Carrizo Plain, March 2 (which was about two weeks late for them) (EMcM). Virginia Rails and Soras were reported as present in good numbers (for rails) at Fisherman's Retreat during the spring (MJW). Virginia Rails, Soras, and 2 **Black Rails** were reported from the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum on March 1 (EWK) and 4 Soras were found at a pond 4 miles south of Shandon, March 17 (EMcM).

Shorebirds.—Nothing much can be said of the spring migration of shorebirds other than that it was about normal in most areas where suitable habitat still remained. Continued reclamation of coastal marshes further reduced shorebird numbers throughout the Region. Some 75 Surfbirds were still present at Ballona Creek breakwater, April 25 (JHC) which was somewhat late for so many. Nineteen Ruddy Turnstones were still near San Diego, May 2, but were unrecorded elsewhere this late in the spring. More than 300 Long-billed Curlews were at Morro Bay, March 21 (Ed., REB), but very few were recorded elsewhere. Common Snipe were scarce during the spring season after many were reported during the winter period from this Region, indicating a very early departure. Wandering Tattlers moved through the Region in fair numbers; 9 were seen near La Jolla, May 2 (Dr. Leon Gardner, Earl Sanders, *vide* AM). Willets seemed down but Greater Yellowlegs were about normal. The only Lesser Yellowlegs reported were 6 at the lagoon south of Cardiff, San Diego County, June 7 (Boyd and Minta Robinson). The only Knots reported were 8 at Mission Bay, May 3 (Harriet Popejoy, Ethel Brown, *vide* AM). No Solitary Sandpipers and very few Pectorals or Baird's were reported. Large numbers of shorebirds swarmed at Upper Newport Bay in late March. On March 28 there were 2000+ Dunlins, 3000+ Short-billed Dowitchers, and 4000+ Western Sandpipers in addition to lesser numbers of the other shorebirds. More than 580 Short-billed Dowitchers were at San Diego Bay, May 3 (*vide* AM). The really great concentrations of small shorebirds occurred at the shallow lakes in the southern San Joaquin Valley during late March and through April. More than 10,000+ Dunlins were at Buena Vista Lake, April 12, together with 400+ Long-billed Dowitchers and 3500+ Western Sandpipers. Large numbers of these shorebirds were likewise present on Goose Lake at this time. More than 200 Am. Avocets were at Upper Newport Bay, March 28; 300+ were at Buena Vista Lake, April 12; and 200+ were at Goose Lake, May 30 (Ed.). More than 75 Black-necked Stilts were at Buena Vista Lake, April 12, and 400+ were at Goose Lake, May 30. More than 150 Am. Avocets and 400+ Black-necked Stilts were seen feeding and nesting within a small

area of the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, June 7 (Ed., REB). Phalaropes were very scarce. Only 20 Northern Phalaropes were found at the south end of the Salton Sea, May 3 (GMCC, BC); only 20 Northern and 28 Wilson's Phalaropes were found near San Diego on May 2 and 3; and only 60 Wilson's Phalaropes were found at Upper Newport Bay, May 2 (Ed., et al.).

Jaegers, Gulls, Terns, Alcids.—Only 2 Pomarine Jaegers were found near San Clemente Island, May 9 (Ed., et al.) and 2 Parasitic Jaegers were seen off Sunset Beach, May 2 (Ed., et al.). These observations constituted the only reported sightings of jaegers this spring. Glaucous-winged and Short-billed Gulls departed for the north about two weeks earlier than normal this year. No Laughing Gulls were found on a visit to their nesting grounds on the Salton Sea, June 6 (Ed., REB, WRN). In contrast with other northern gulls, Black-legged Kittiwakes lingered well into the spring season after what was apparently one of the heaviest winter flights of these birds into southern California in many years. Four were at Newport Bay, May 2 (Ed., et al.); 6 remained near La Jolla through April and until at least May 3 (*vide* AM); 2 were at Pierpoint Landing, Long Beach, May 27 (Betty Lawrence); and a single bird was continuously around the Malibu pier through May and into June (Warren G. Blazer). Sixty migrating Sabine's Gulls were found near the east end of San Clemente Island, May 9 (Ed., et al.). Some 40+ pairs of Gull-billed Terns were nesting at the south end of the Salton Sea, June 6 (Ed., REB, WRN). Common Terns were present in small numbers until mid-May and a small number of Elegant Terns were reported from San Diego during late April and early May. More than 30 Arctic Terns were seen migrating near the east end of San Clemente Island, May 9 (Ed., et al.). Small numbers of Black Terns were seen migrating along the coast during the early part of May and 10 were at Goose Lake, May 30 (Ed., et al.). More than 100 were at the Imperial State Waterfowl Management Area (Ramer Lake) on June 6 and a fair number of flying young later in the month indicated breeding. A single Common Murre was near Santa Barbara, March 19 (JK).

Doves.—No large concentrations of Band-tailed Pigeons were observed but flocks numbering fewer than 100 were noted throughout foothill areas. Mourning Doves appeared to be exceedingly abundant in the Imperial Valley and could be found in some of the severest desert adjacent to highway U. S. #111 where no other species seemed to occur. A single Ground Dove was found dead in Corona, April 26, and another seen, April 30 (Norman H. Mellor). A few Ground Doves were found near Nestor, San Diego County during April (AM) and as many as 20 birds were present near Calipatria, Imperial County through the winter and spring. Two Ground Doves were at Thousand Palms Oasis, April 24 (Ed., et al.), and 2 White-winged Doves were in White Water Canyon in San Geronio Pass, April 24 (Ed.).

Owls, Hummingbirds, Woodpeckers.—The Elf Owl was reported as nesting again at Cottonwood Springs, Joshua Tree National Monument. It was observed

in late April (Viola Washburn) and May 7 (Ethel West). Two Spotted Owls were calling on Palomar Mountain, May 19 (John Bishop) and 2 Short-eared Owls were near Goose Lake, May 30 (Ed., et al.). The migration of swifts was very good. Black Swifts were seen at Morongo Valley (1) April 25 (MJW) and 5 were seen near San Diego, May 2. Vaux's Swifts had one of the best recorded flights in several years. Skies during late April and early May were generally overcast with lowering clouds and this no doubt was a contributing factor. The main stream of the Vaux's Swift migration channeled along the southern face of the San Bernardino Mountains and San Gabriel Mountains and through the San Gabriel Valley. Flocks of thousands were seen from the third week in April until the flight diminished at the end of the first week in May. The flight through coastal San Diego County continued as heavy until late in May. More than 4500+ swifts flew through Thousand Palms Oasis, April 24, and many hundreds more were observed moving through the Imperial Valley, April 25. This was in marked contrast to the virtually unobserved Vaux's Swift flight of spring 1958. Several reports were received of their intrusions into living rooms in Riverside County via the chimneys. The spring hummingbird migration was about normal except that these birds were generally scarce except in the vicinity of gardens where flowers bloomed. The winter drought produced virtually no wildflowers and these birds were reported as more numerous and in some places even abundant in and about nurseries and flower gardens. The mild winter enabled large numbers of small winged insects to hatch and this source of food was greatly utilized by the migrant hummingbirds. Mountain meadows, a usual source of nectar food for hummingbirds, were dry and flowerless during the spring months and hummingbirds remained largely in the lowland areas—even the mountain-loving Calliopes were common in foothill areas. Both Yellow-bellied and Williamson's Sapsuckers were scarce and no Lewis' Woodpeckers were noted.

Passerine Landbirds (general).—The mildness of the season no doubt contributed to the slightly early migration of landbirds. Insect food abounded but nuts, seeds, and berries were scarce. Winter visitants departed rather early and the expected influxes of wintering Robins and Cedar Waxwings were minimal. The annual San Diego County Spring Bird Census held on May 2 and 3 yielded 18,543 birds of 198 species. Four southern California and Central California birders (Ben King, Jr., Guy McCaskie, Bjørn Christophersen and Arnold Small) attempted to record as many species during the height of the spring migration as possible within a 24-hour period. Over a well-traveled route (for this type of census), this group (traveling as a single party in one car) recorded 206 species on May 2 even though no outstanding rarities were encountered and the waterfowl were virtually lacking. The best previous effort over this route (in 1958) yielded 190 species for the single party. The success of this count can be attributed to careful planning and good luck as well as an abundance of migrants at this time. Had more waterfowl and waterbirds been present, the total would

have been much higher.

Flycatchers, Swallows.—Two **Eastern Kingbirds** were reported in the Region: near Santa Barbara, March 10 (P. F. Howden, *vide* Waldo G. Abbott) and in Morongo Valley, April 25 and 26 (MJW). An **Eastern Phoebe** was carefully identified in Hidden Valley, May 16 (MJW). Gray Flycatchers seemed to be more common this spring. At least 6 birds were at Thousand Palms Oasis, April 24 (Ed., *et al.*); "many" were reported in Morongo Valley, April 25 and 26 (MJW); a single bird was near Norco, May 2 (Ed., GmC); another was near Calexico, May 24 (JB); and as many as 40 were counted in Death Valley, June 6 (BK, Jr., Richard Cunningham). Vermilion Flycatchers evidently have become well-established in the vicinity of San Diego as permanent residents. One male was at the San Diego Naval Hospital, March 11 (AM). 2 pairs were found nesting there in late March (*vide* AM), and another was at Campo, March 7 (AM, Jean Morley, Edward Block). Five birds were found in the vicinity of San Diego, May 2 and 3, on the San Diego County Spring Bird Count. Another pair was seen in Morongo Valley, April 25 and 26 (MJW). Violet-green Swallows were still at Ramer Lake, Imperial Valley in mid-June (Ed.) and a large migration of these birds was seen at Santee, May 1 (James E. Crouch). Two Bank Swallows were seen near Santa Barbara, March 31 (JK).

Jays, Nuthatches, Thrashers.—Ten Piñon Jays were still near Big Bear City, May 2 (Ed., *et al.*). Red-breasted Nuthatches were scarce in the lowlands during the spring in contrast with their good flight last year. The **Brown Thrasher**, present in the San Diego area (Balboa Park) was still present on May 3 (AM). Six Sage Thrashers were present along southwest shoreline of Buena Vista Lake, March 25 (EMC) but they were absent from their usual wintering grounds at Lake Mathews.

Thrushes.—Robins continued to make ornithological news by their conspicuous absence as winter visitors to the lowlands. However, they were more widely reported as nesting in foothill areas and in many parts of Los Angeles. No Varied Thrushes were reported. Most Hermit Thrushes had departed for the mountains and the northern part of the state by the end of April and a single **Veery** was found in the UCLA Botanical Gardens, May 1 (H. B. Chaney). Mountain Bluebirds were virtually absent from interior valleys and lowland areas throughout the late winter and spring.

Starlings, Waxwings, Vireos.—More and more Starlings continue to be found summering and nesting in the southern part of the state, whereas formerly they were considered merely winter visitors. Five were in Lone Pine, March 26 (Ed., REB); a single bird was at Ramer Lake, April 25 (JHC); 8 pairs were reported as nesting in Laguna Canyon during April: 1 in Culver City, April 29 (Ed.); 1 at Santee, May 1 (JEC); 3 at Santee (possibly nesting), May 8

(JEC); 2 nests with young were found in the Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara County, May 13 (Waldo G. Abbott) while 100+ were found near Santa Maria, March 16 (*vide* WGA); one bird was at Lebec, 5 more at Greenfield, Kern County, May 23 (Ed.); and more than 20 were seen in the Imperial Valley, June 6 (Ed., REB). Cedar Waxwings, although experiencing a poor flight this winter, remained in the Region in flocks numbering 25-50 until the third week in May. Phainopeplas were reported as very numerous in foothill areas away from the deserts, and were very common in the interior valleys. Gray Vireos were still to be seen in the vicinity of Phelan during the late spring.

Warblers.—The warbler migration was fairly good but somewhat early. **Northern Waterthrushes** were found at two localities: one bird was at Thousand Palms Oasis on April 24 (Russell and Marion Wilson, *et al.*) and again on April 27 (JHC); another was at the UCLA Botanical Gardens, June 4 (HBC). More **Am. Redstarts** than usual were seen. A male was in Loma Linda, April 20 (MJW); a female was at Thousand Palms Oasis, May 23 (MJW); another was in Presidio Park, San Diego during the first week in May (Carl Trowbridge, *vide* AM); one was in Santa Monica, May 29 (BK, Jr.); and another was in Manhattan Beach, May 30-31 (Donald and Caroline Adams). A single **Painted Redstart** was at Cottonwood Springs, May 1 (*vide* Ethel West).

Blackbirds and Orioles.—Yellow-headed Blackbirds were very numerous in the Imperial Valley and more than 600 Tricolored Blackbirds were at Buena Vista Lake, April 12. Hooded and Bullock's Orioles arrived about 10 days early in considerable numbers. A single male Scott's Oriole was found in Japutul Valley, in the foothills west of the mountains, singing from the top of a live oak, May 8 (JEC).

Tanagers, Finches, Sparrows.—Western Tanagers arrived in small numbers very early in April and their flight continued to gain momentum until the first week in May when flocks of hundreds were seen near Corona until the middle of the month. Elsewhere in the Region the migration of Western Tanagers was reported as very heavy during the last week in April and the first week of May. Lawrence's Goldfinches were erratic in dispersal, being generally scarce in the lowlands and fairly common in some high chaparral and pine forest areas. Blue Grosbeaks arrived somewhat early and a single Grasshopper Sparrow was in Morongo Valley, April 25 (MJW). Most of the wintering White-crowned Sparrows had departed by the second week in April and small numbers of Golden-crowned Sparrows were seen as late as May 5. The single White-throated Sparrow, which had been coming to a feeder in Azusa since Dec. 8, left on April 18 (Jere B. Stair).—ARNOLD SMALL, 3028 Carendish Drive, Los Angeles 64, Calif.

