

MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION.—Summer weather this year was so very hot and dry that it seemed dismaying to birds and bird observers alike.



Following the pattern started during the spring season, rain, even coastal drizzles or mountain thunderstorms, was almost non-existent from March on through July. Temperatures soared, and stayed high. As a result, vegetation dried up, setting the scene for many and disastrously fast-spreading forest and brush fires. What all this has done to the distribution and production of the next generation of birds largely remains to be seen and interpreted.

Those who take note of nesting in particular commented that the birds seemed to arrive early in the lower areas, nest hurriedly, and leave for parts elsewhere much sooner than in other summers. Very few second nestings of the smaller birds, such as Plain Titmouse, House Wren, House Finch, and Song Spar-

row occurred. Ponds and small lakes dried up, reservoirs lowered alarmingly fast in many areas, and bird baths were highly attractive to summering birds that seldom visit yards and gardens. In the Santa Rosa area, Blue-winged Teal were present on a small pond; Mr. Bolander was hoping to follow nesting, but the ducks left when the pond evaporated. This was the locality referred to later on where a concentration of herons harvested the crayfish, bullfrogs, and catfish that concentrated during the drying-up process. The Sierra foothills, too, were so hot and dry that water was hard for birds to find—and much appreciated when provided. This seemed more tolerable, however, than in the valleys, for many successful nestings were noted, and consequent young birds conspicuous. By far the most enthusiastic comments about nesting variety and success came from the lucky people who were able to follow the apparent movements of birds to higher, cooler, and wetter habitats in the mountains. Fortunate are we, too, for more observations of nesting in the mountain meadows and slopes were the result of the mass migration uphill. Activities of species such as Green-tailed Towhees, Lincoln's Sparrows, Dippers, Blue Grouse, Spotted Sandpipers, Calliope Hummingbirds, warblers, and several kinds of woodpeckers were under more observation than usual. In addition, apparent post-breeding up-mountain movements of Western Kingbirds, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Bullock's Orioles, Band-tailed Pigeons, and, possibly, Sage Sparrows in the Trinity Alps were noted. In the Fort Bragg area, Mrs. Coy comments about the "unusual numbers of nesting birds here." A Swainson's Hawk way up in Hope Valley, Alpine County on the edge of the Great Basin, on May 31 was early for being so high (FGE), but was probably another indication of the birds' reaction to heat and dryness in the lowlands.

Pelagic Birds, Pelicans.—An offshore boat trip from Santa Cruz on June 22 presented observers on board with sightings of several interesting birds: 8 to 12 Black-footed Albatrosses were clustered around the boat taking hand-outs, and 2 of them later followed the boat toward shore for several miles; a total of 18 Pink-footed Shearwaters were noted, a good count from this locality; a very early New Zealand Shearwater was spotted $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles offshore (VLY); about 520 Sooty Shearwaters, close to 20 Fork-tailed Petrels, 5 Ashy Petrels, and 4 Black Petrels were tallied. Then, after the passengers had debarked, 3 more Fork-tailed Petrels could be seen swinging over the beach and water close to the pier (HLC & EAP). Six White Pelicans at McClusky Slough, Mess Landing, on July 24 and present to the end of the month (CA & VA, JH & CCH) were unusual for this summery date. Brown Pelicans nested at Point Lobos Reserve State Park as follows: 27 nests were noted on May 24, fewer than the 52 counted at the same time last year (MF); on June 30, 600+ were resting on Bird Island, while a few still were on nests (EAP); by July 19, there were just 2 nests with 4 young, while many adults and immatures remained nearby (JH, CCH, FB). Meanwhile, the first of the fall Brown Pelicans to appear near the San Francisco Beach was sighted on July 17, number increasing to

50 by the end of the month (BDC).

Hérons, Geese, and Ducks.—About 20 Great Blue Herons, and several Black-crowned Night Herons, were attracted to a pond about 8 miles west of Santa Rosa during the season for foraging (GLB); on June 21, at least 10 Great Blue Herons, at least 80 Common Egrets and 120 Snowy Egrets, and 6 Black-crowned Night Herons were part of a nesting colony on Little Marin Island, east of San Rafael (HLC); and there were at least 40 Great Blues foraging in a lagoon, July 12, at Bolinas Bay (JH, CCH & S.C.V.A.S.). Two Whistling Swans arrived at a pond on the Nielsen Ranch, near Red Bluff, on July 12, and stayed on through very hot weather during the month (BN). Two Black Brant on the same day at Pillar Point on the north side of Half Moon Bay were unusual summer stragglers. A nest of Pintails on an artificial island in Lake Merritt, Oakland, constituted the first successful nesting of these ducks there (PC). An immature King Eider that appeared decrepit through a 20 X 60 scope on June 24 and 25 was observed in Monterey Bay Harbor again (or still?) (HAA, GPL, LW, VLY).

Birds of Prey.—A White-tailed Kite, June 12, near Fort Bragg (WMP) seems noteworthy. The nesting of Bald Eagles, for the second-known year's success, at McArthur-Burney Falls State Park was well-documented (RJ & LP): on March 10 an adult eagle flew up, circled, and returned to settle back on the nest like a hen over her eggs; by May 20, an eaglet the size of a raven could be seen; on June 4, both adults were observed feeding 2 young what appeared to be decomposed carp picked up from the surface of nearby Lake Britton; on the same day photos were taken of the 2 well-feathered eaglets. Single Ospreys were seen: on a nest, May 24, near O'Brien's Resort, Lake Shasta (AW); at Boca Reservoir, north of Lake Tahoe, July 4 to 12 (GMCC); at Lake Van Norden, July 11 (GMCC, CH, G.G.A.S., ALC); in the Trinity Alps on July 19 (AP & LP); and between Stewart's Point and Jenner, the same day (HLC). Sixteen were sighted on July 29: 1 of 8 near Fort Ross was calling from a tree 2 miles east; the other 8 were scattered along the coast, in pairs, to Stewart's Point (EAP).

Gallinaceous Birds.—Blue Grouse were reported: from Clark Station, 2 miles west of Yuba Pass (BCS); from Yosemite in normal numbers (WJF); and on July 16 from Big Flat Campground (Elev. 5000 ft.), Trinity Alps, a female with 4 half-grown young (LP & AP). Many observers indicated a successful nesting season for California Quail; and Mountain Quail were noted with several broods at Clark Station (BCS), and in the Trinity Alps (AP & LP). Six Common Gallinules on July 5 were the earliest seen at Santa Rosa (GLB).

Shorebirds.—A Snowy Plover nest with eggs, on July 7, and 2 earlier nests with eggs, were found on a salt pond dike at Alviso (EWS, *vide* EDS). Meanwhile, these birds began to appear again: 1 at Bay Farm Island, July 5 (HLC); 12 on San Francisco Beach on July 26 (BDC); and 6 on Bodega Bay outer sand spit, July 24 (AW). Twenty Black-bellied Plover, June 20, on Bay Farm Island, were early

(HLC), and 36 Long-billed Curlews there on July 5 were a good number (HLC). Common Snipe were perched on fence posts along a highway near Sierra-ville, June 21 (WMP). Two Wandering Tattlers at the Cliff House, San Francisco, July 18, were followed by another, July 30, and 4 on the 26th; a Surf-bird on July 11, and Black Turnstones on July 19 were the first of the coastal stream of fall migrants (FP, BDC). Three hundred Short-billed Dowitchers at Bay Farm Island on July 5 (HLC), and 200 to 300 dowitchers at the Davis sewage-plant ponds on July 28 (AW) are good numbers at these dates. A conservative estimate of at least 1000 Western Sand-pipers at Bay Farm Island, July 5 (HLC), indicates that these birds are arriving in good numbers rather early. American Avocets nested in the San Leandro Bay area, but were so secretive and picked such un-reachable sites for nests, that good estimates of numbers of nests were difficult. However, 10 adults with 1 or 2 young apiece were present, July 5 (HLC); defensive tactics near a suspicious tussock were observed on July 19 (JWK); while at Alviso, the 11th nest was found along a one-half mile salt pond dike, July 7, for "fewer than usual" nests with eggs (EWS). At least 75 Wilson's Phalaropes at the Davis sewer ponds, July 28, were the largest number Alice Williams has ever seen there.

Gulls, Pigeons.—Summer sightings of gulls more usual in winter were odd: an immature Glaucous Gull on the Seal Rocks, near the Cliff House, on July 28 (ALC) (same as the April bird at Lake Merritt?); about 6 Bonaparte's Gulls on June 10, north of Bodega Bay (WMP); and several Glaucous-winged Gulls. Four adult California Gulls, with 3 young of the year, arrived on San Francisco Beach by July 26 (BDC). Band-tailed Pigeons did not stay to nest near Sonora (where the concentration was reported in a previous report), but 30 to 40 were reported at the upper edge of vegetation at an estimated elevation of 7729 ft., June 21, above Deer Creek Lodge, north-west side of Lake Tahoe (Cora Baker & Alfrieda Meuser, *vide* AW).

Owls.—A Great Horned Owl, perched on a stump at 2:00 P.M., Aug. 1, in Monterey County was a startling sight (JH & CCH, FEH). A Pygmy Owl, feeding mice to 2 full-sized young, July 28, at Van Damme State Park, Mendocino County, was evidence of success. About 16 Burrowing Owls were observed foraging by hovering over grassland from 30 ft. up on June 12, and 3 more acting similarly on July 4 were seen along the Freeway near Milpitas (HLC). Spotted Owls and Great Gray Owls have been on hand at Yosemite all summer (WJF).

Swifts, Hummingbirds.—Black Swifts nested in sea caves near Santa Cruz as usual (EDS), and at McArthur-Burney Falls State Park, 5 nests were believed under incubation by June 5, just a month after arrival. Twenty-five to 30 birds were observed in early mornings and evenings flying about the falls (RJ, *vide* LP). Black Swifts were seen also: 2 above a meadow in Trinity Alps on July 13 (LP & AP): 1 with a White-throated Swift were over Veeder Mountain, Sonoma County, on June 4 (GLB): 10 were 7 miles inland from Lucia, Monterey County, with Purple

Martins and Violet-green Swallows, and another, June 8—the day after—12 miles south of Carmel (VLY); 1 near Half Moon Bay on July 3 (ALC); 1 at Boca Reservoir, Nevada County, July 12 (GMcC, CH, ALC, G.G.A.S.); and at least 12 on July 24, 36 miles south of Carmel at Anderson Creek (GPL). On July 27 and 28, an estimated 2000 to 3000 humming-birds (spp.) were observed feeding during the early morning and late evening hours in meadows south of Silver Lake, Amador County (Rod Reynolds, *vide* ERP), and an Anna's Hummingbird was found at the Sugar Bowl, near Donner Summit, on July 11 (ALC & G.G.A.S.). Hummingbirds, *Selasphorus* (spp.), were found to be common in the Trinity Alps Wilderness Area (LP & AP) between July 8 and 21.

Woodpeckers.—Two males of the subspecies of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker had roles to play in an interesting experience reported from near the inter-breeding range of the 2, Manzanita Lake, Lassen Volcanic National Park on June 17; a clearly-marked male that appeared to be *Spbyrapicus v. nuchalis*—the Red-naped—was observed hawking at swarming insects that were attracting many other birds, and carried about a dozen insects at a time into a nest hole 25 ft. up in a blasted pine at the edge of the lake. Good looks at this male and a "red-breasted" one, but unfortunately not of the female, were obtained (WMP). A nest of Williamson's Sapsuckers was located June 24 to 30 at Lake Tahoe (JWK), and Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers turned up where our mountain-seeking contributors could find them: 1 seen almost daily between June 12 and 16 at Squaw Valley (GMcC); 1 along with a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and White-headed Woodpecker at Manzanita Lake, June 16 (WMP); another at Hat Lake, Lassen National Park, July 26 (VKC); and a pair nesting at Bridal Veil Campground, Yosemite (WJF). At Clark Station, a pair of Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers built a nest just 19 inches from the ground in a Lodgepole Pine, June 9; incubation was under way by June 17; the young hatched and their voices were heard, but on July 8, the nest was deserted (BCS).

Flycatchers, Swallows.—Western Kingbirds fed on an influx of grasshoppers near San Andreas, Calaveras County, in June (VLC); while at Lake Tahoe on July 10 an "up-mountain movement" of these birds was observed (GMcC). Black Phoebe, too, may have moved upward as a pair were seen at Coffee Creek, Trinity County (4500 ft. elev.), on July 17 (AW). A Say's Phoebe was feeding nestlings on June 12 in Hernandez Valley, San Benito County (EDS) for one of the few nesting records recently reported. A Kiskadee Flycatcher, first seen in November 1957, was still present in the Willow Glen district of San Jose on June 6 (GMcC & RS). Traill's Flycatchers were present in the willows in Big Flat Meadow, Trinity Alps, between July 8 and 21, while Hammond's Flycatchers nested 25 ft. up in a White Fir in the same vicinity. The young flew on July 9 (LP & AP). One of the few multiple nestings reported was that of a Western Flycatcher that had 3 broods in coconut shell halves from April on, in Sequel, the second

nest built on top of the first: after the young had flown (FEH). Tree Swallows were reported to have raised 3, or possibly 4, broods in the same nesting box near Santa Rosa (GLB), emphasizing the comment about nesting success of all swallows in general.

Magpies, Chickadees, Dippers, Wrens, Thrashers.—A Yellow-billed Magpie was found, June 7, on the north end of San Pablo Ridge, east of Berkeley, outside its normal local range. But in an area usually thick with magpies, south San Joaquin Valley along Route 152, none could be found on July 21, or 2 other occasions (DBH). Chestnut-backed Chickadees, within calling distance of Mountain Chickadees, were watched in Calaveras Big Trees State Park campground from June 15 to 18, but no evidence of nesting could be seen (EAP). At Whitehall, El Dorado County, Dippers apparently had 2 broods, as 2 sets of fledglings with parents were seen in front of the house in the first week in May, and again July 18 (ERP). Other reports of Dippers bear out this story of successful nesting in the Sierra. A Winter Wren was "squeaked" into view at Big Flat Campground, Trinity Alps, July 8 to 21 (AP & LP). An account of a male California Thrasher that helped alternate mates raise 3 broods of young, and was still feeding one youngster on Aug. 13 while molting heavily, came from Saratoga (EDS).

Vireos, Warblers.—A "noticeable lack" of Solitary and Warbling Vireos at Whitehall (ERP), and the same for the latter species at Clark Station (BCS) was reported. However, they were reported nesting, probably as usual, in the Trinity Alps and coastal areas. A Black-and-white Warbler was seen singing in Tilden Park, Contra Costa County, June 21 (ALC). Hermit Warblers were plentiful in the Sierra and Trinity Alps, and at Big Basin they remained until June 26 (EAP). Wilson's Warblers also were confirmed as numerous and conspicuous everywhere. A female Am. Redstart was watched with other warblers in a pine near a patch of willows, June 28, at Tahoe City (GMcC).

Orioles, Tanagers.—Hooded Orioles nested in Fan Palms in Oakland and Berkeley (HLC, RS, ASC), but a nest in a Valley Oak in Los Gatos from which young were fledged on May 24 was followed by a nest under a palm leaf, 50 ft. away, which was also successful (Lawrence Earle, *vide* EDS). Bullock's Orioles, nesting 3 pairs to the acre of trees near the lake, were gone by June 30 at Millerton Lake State Park (FHW). Western Tanagers continued to be seen abundantly, but seemed to remain in lowlands as late as mid-June, arriving late in breeding localities, with the breeding population building slowly to normal in the Sierra locations of Clark Station (BCS) and Whitehall (ERP).

Finches, Towhees.—A small (family?) group of Evening Grosbeaks were perhaps early migrants at Van Damme State Park, near Mendocino, July 28 (EAP), and they were frequent visitors around Big Flat Meadow, Trinity Alps between July 8 and 21 (AP & LP). A **Melodious Grassquit**, possibly an escape from a dealer who lost some in late winter, was observed in a Sacramento yard between July 10 and 23, has fed on wild weed seeds, and "showed

evidence of a brood patch" (FGE). Lawrence's Goldfinches, seemingly so numerous and widespread during the spring migration, were unreported as nesting birds, surprisingly. Green-tailed Towhee males, singing, and later feeding young, indicated nesting in the chaparral near Clark Station, although no actual nests were found (BCS). Four Green-tailed Towhees also were noted on July 2 between Silver Lake and Carson Spur, along Highway 88 (MSH), and the species was considered common in Trinity Alps Wilderness area in mid-July (LP & AP).

Sparrows.—Two Savannah Sparrows were noted foraging with House Sparrows, June 17, on the planted strip of grass and shrubs on Great Highway, San Francisco (BDC). Four Grasshopper Sparrows were seen and heard on San Pablo Ridge, east of Richmond, on June 7 (ALC). Another species at home in the Great Basin has made several appearances in the Region: a Black-throated Sparrow turned up in low brush near Lake Shasta, May 24 (AW); 2 were seen on June 6 in Santa Clara County, from the Mt. Hamilton Road, near the Patterson Road turnoff (LS, RS, GMcC); another of these "desert" sparrows was noted in a clearing among pines near Tahoe City, June 28 (GMcC). The presence of **Sage Sparrows** in Big Flat Meadow, Trinity Alps during the period, at least, between July 8 and 21 (LP & AP) may be another result of the extremely dry conditions prevailing throughout the Region. The same observers had not found them in the same area the previous late (and wetter) July, so they carefully observed singing and markings to be sure of the identity of the birds in this unusual moist meadow habitat. No carrying of food that might indicate nesting was noted, however. Lincoln's Sparrows were observed in nesting activities in the Sierra Nevada: at Lake Tahoe, June 24 to 30, a nest with 4 eggs was located in a meadow (JWK); and at Clark Station 3 nests were found in wet meadows, the last brood of 5 leaving the nest on July 6 (BCS).

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