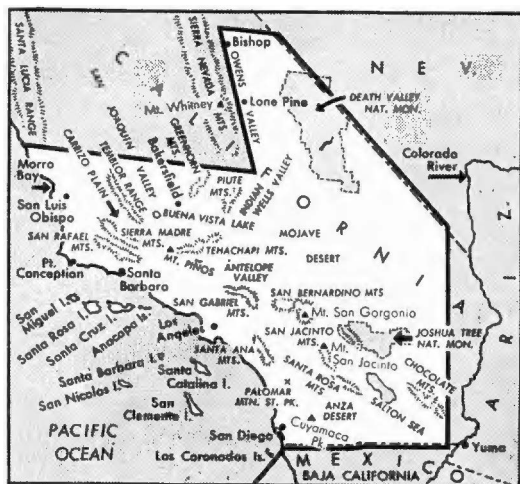


SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION.—Following the driest winter season in the 89-year history of the Los Angeles weather bureau, the summer



months promised no relief from the prolonged dry spell. The tinder-dry chaparral and mountain forests indicated extreme fire-danger would prevail well into the last quarter of 1959 and fire-fighting personnel prepared for one of the worst onslaughts of fire in history. Happily, due to the vigilance of U. S. Forest Service personnel, fire marshals, and law-enforcement officers, as well as the cooperation of a well-informed public, few or small fires were prevalent in the southern California mountains during the summer season. A small number of lesser fires were inevitable but none of them were out of control for long—save for one large burn near the west entrance to Yosemite National Park which actually threatened some of the standing *Sequoia gigantea*. Dry stream beds, absence of flowers in the desert as well as in chaparral areas and mountain meadows, desiccating desert winds, and above-normal temperatures did leave their marks on the avian fauna of the Region. Owing to a lack of ground cover (from earlier burns and a disappointing herbage) ground-nesting species, particularly quail, were hard pressed to raise broods. Other species such as Brown and Rufous-sided Towhees, Song Sparrows, and Western Meadowlarks, fared poorly in nesting activities. Small crops of mistletoe berries and lack of water no doubt caused a wide dispersal of Phainopeplas out of desert areas and into foothills and gardens, as well as urban parks. Early southbound migrant hummingbirds such as Allen's and Rufous were for the most part absent from the virtually flowerless mountain meadows and were reported in extremely large numbers in lowland urban areas, especially in San Diego and Orange Counties where hummingbird feeders were drained

nearly as fast as they were filled. But who can explain the appearance of northern seabirds in coastal waters during this dry season? Birds such as Black-legged Kittiwakes, Common, Surf, and White-winged Scoters in moderate numbers, as well as Common Murres and Pigeon Guillemots refused to leave the Region after the Winter Season and were present throughout the summer! June and July were virtually without precipitation, and with temperatures slightly above normal. Some summer thunderstorms brought grief to some desert-dwellers in late August as flash-floods and mud-slides took a number of lives. Late-summer thunderstorms as a result of a tropical hurricane that crossed Baja California del Sur near La Paz in early September brought some little relief from the drought in the mountains, but what little benefit was gained was more than offset by the lightning fires that resulted. Insectivorous species did not fare so badly as the ground-nesters, as most reporters remarked on the abundance of insect life. Lack of drinking water no doubt forced many quail out of the foothills and into urban settlements, and they even were reported from well within the city limits of Los Angeles, visiting birdbaths in areas where they have not been noted since subdivision took place. The warming-trend of oceanic waters leveled off, and although tropical marine waters were still with us, the late summer flight of pelagic species was disappointing.

Loons, Grebes.—Summering loons were reported only from Santa Barbara (John Kittredge) while small numbers of non-breeding Western Grebes were seen at various points along the coast. Dried-up marshlands in interior valleys obviated nesting of many marsh-dwellers such as Pied-billed Grebes, which had a poor season except in the Imperial Valley (William R. Nuess).

Albatrosses, Shearwaters, Petrels.—About 25 Black-footed Albatrosses were counted near the east end of San Clemente Island, Aug. 1 (Ed., Joel Abramson) and only 5 were seen on a return trip there, Sept. 7 (Ed., et al.). On Aug. 1 no petrels whatever were seen although Blacks were certainly to be expected at that time. On Sept. 7 only 140+ Black Petrels, 40+ Ashy Petrels, 2 Leach's Petrels, and a single Least Petrel were found in the waters southeast of San Clemente Island as opposed to the thousands encountered there last year at about the same time. On Aug. 1 only 5 Sooty, 2 Pink-footed, and 4 Manx Shearwaters were noted there; on Sept. 7 only scattered small flocks (50-100 birds) of shearwaters were found there. They were mostly Pink-footed, with 3 Manx Shearwaters.

Tropic-birds, Pelicans.—The only Red-billed Tropic Birds reported since their almost phenomenal flight of 1958 (fall) were 2 birds sighted near Los Coronados Islands in mid-August (fide Malcolm Gordon). An unconfirmed report suggested that White Pelicans nested somewhere on the west side of the Salton Sea (WRN) and this represented their only possible nesting area within this Region this year as other potential breeding grounds had dried up by early summer (see *Audubon Field Notes* 13:4, pp. 399-340).

Herons, Egrets, Bitterns, Ibises.—No large rookeries of herons were found this summer, and a small number of Snowy Egrets nested near the north and south ends of the Salton Sea. Least Bitterns continued to decline as their habitat diminished. The nesting grounds of the White-faced Ibis near the south end of the Salton Sea were not utilized this year and their numbers remained at a very low level until late July, when their numbers, apparently swelled by young birds and post-breeding adults from Mexico, began to rise (WRN). A few Wood Ibis were noted along the Alamo River, Imperial County, June 12 (somewhat early), but only 4 appeared at Carlsbad Lagoon, San Diego County, Sept. 9 (Minta Robinson).

Waterfowl.—Three Black Brant were near Goleta, June 8 (JK) and no other geese were reported. Small numbers of non-breeding dabbling ducks remained in the Region through the summer months. A single male Blue-winged Teal was noted near Santa Barbara, June 24 (Waldo G. Abbott). Unusual were the numbers of scoters, which remained through the summer. Normally a few small flocks of Surf Scoters are to be expected, but to illustrate: more than 200 were near Playa del Rey, July 25 (Ed., JA) and smaller numbers were noted from San Diego (John and Marilyn Bishop) to Santa Barbara (JK). White-winged Scoters, which normally occur only in small numbers during the winter, likewise were present through the summer in some places in excess of their normal *winter* numbers. Some 75+ were near Playa del Rey, July 25 (Ed., JA) and others were reported from San Diego (JB, MB) and Santa Barbara (JK). A single Common Scoter was near Santa Barbara, Aug. 27 (JK). A few Redheads nested in lagoons south of Carlsbad (MR).

Condors, Kites, Hawks.—The largest number of California Condors reported was a group of 19, one mile west highway Calif. 41 near Fresno, May 29 (Eben McMillan). White-tailed Kites were reported as sporadic in occurrence and only a few nestings were reported, while apparently no large roosts were discovered. No summering Ospreys were reported and the only Bald Eagle reported was a single bird near Morro Bay, Aug. 20 (Alma Stultz). Prairie Falcons were reported only from near Red Rock Canyon, 1 (James F. Clements) and between Paso Robles and Blackwell's Corners, 2 (Guy McCaskie, Richard Stallcup).

Grouse, Rails.—Chukars were reported as numerous in the vicinity of Death Valley Junction and near Maricopa (Russell and Marion Wilson). The dry conditions forced many Mountain Quail to seek mountain canyons and campsites where water was easily obtainable. California Quail were reported with smaller broods than normal and many seemed to have difficulty locating water, and thus entered urban areas. Clapper Rails have disappeared from the lower reaches of Upper Newport Bay as that area was completely filled with sand in the Newport Dunes development; almost none were reported from the Upper Bay itself.

Shorebirds.—Summer shorebirding generally was dull in June and July. Large numbers of Am. Avocets and Black-necked Stilts nested successfully near the south end of the Salton Sea, at Goose Lake, near

Bolsa Chica, at the Ventura County Gun Club, and near Carlsbad Lagoon. Wilson's Phalaropes were about normal in late summer, but were rather early arrivals. Northern Phalaropes were at their lowest ebb in years. As many as 10 pairs of Black Oystercatchers were to be seen on the coastal rocks just south of Morro Bay during the summer (AS). Six Knots were near Goleta, Aug. 1 (JK) which was very early, and a single Wandering Tattler near Laguna Beach, Aug. 1 (Leo Best), followed by 2 there on Aug. 8, was very early.

Jaegers, Gulls, Terns, Alcids.—Jaegers were virtually absent from our coastal waters and only 10 Pomarine and 3 Parasitic Jaegers were seen between Newport and San Clemente Island, Sept. 7 (Ed., et al.). Despite the excellent Elegant Tern flight during the summer and early fall, almost no jaegers were seen in the immediate vicinity of the coast, whereas in former years they could almost be rated as abundant as they pirated the Elegant Terns. How can one explain the presence of as many as 5 **Black-legged Kittiwakes** at Malibu Lagoon throughout the summer or the 4 birds that flew over Morro Bay, Aug. 8 (AS)? No Laughing Gulls were seen at the Salton Sea this year (WRN) and this may mean the end of their small nesting colony that has persisted there for years. A very nice flight of as many as 75 Sabine's Gulls was encountered between Newport and San Clemente Island, Sept. 7 (Ed., et al.). Almost 50 pairs of Gull-billed Terns nested at the south end of the Salton Sea, and although their actual nesting grounds were not discovered, Caspian Terns must have had a fairly successful nesting there also since numerous flying young were seen near the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge during the mid-summer (WRN). This year's **Elegant Tern** flight was early and was one of the largest on record. For the first time, this species was reported as **nesting** within the borders of the United States. At least 31 nests were counted among the nests of Caspian Terns at the Old Salt Works south of San Diego in June (*vide* JB). It was reported that Fred Gallup banded 7 young birds and that most of the nests were destroyed before other young could be reared. By July 25 more than 2500 Elegant Terns had assembled at Point Mugu (Ed., JA) while dozens had appeared at Malibu and Playa del Rey by the last week in July. Some 200+ were at Playa del Rey by Aug. 20 (Bess M. Hoffman) and this number had swelled to more than 1800 by the end of August (James R. Huffman). Strangely enough, very few were noted at Upper Newport Bay during the late summer although the lower portion (which is now sandhill) used to be a favorite feeding area for these birds. Several hundred were encountered in dispersed flocks almost 65 miles from the mainland between Newport and San Clemente Island, Sept. 7 (Ed., et al.). More than 25 Arctic Terns were found in these same waters at that time. Common Terns increased in numbers during the late summer and their numbers reached "hundreds" by early September. No Xantus' Murrelets were found near San Clemente Island, Aug. 1 (Ed., JA) although presumably they nest there, and only 4 were found in that vicinity after very thorough searching.

Sept. 7 (Ed., et al.). About 40 pairs of Pigeon Guillemots probably nested just south of Morro Bay (AS), and a single individual was found near Playa del Rey in early September (Ernest Willoughby). One Common Murre was seen off the Ballona Creek breakwater during the last two weeks of August (JRH).

Pigeons, Doves.—Band-tailed Pigeons were sporadic in distribution in mountain areas. They were reported as fairly common only in the Mill Creek area of the San Bernardino Mountains (Merle J. Whitney) and very few were encountered near Quaking Aspen in the southern Sierra Nevadas in June. But they were reported as nesting in Los Angeles just south of Griffith Park (fide BMH) and near Alhambra (both lowland areas). Ground Doves nested successfully near Mecca (Don R. Bleitz) and in the Tiajuana River wash near San Diego (JB).

Owls, Swifts, Hummingbirds, Woodpeckers.—Elf Owls nested successfully near Cottonwood Springs in Joshua Tree National Monument (DRB) but Screech Owls were reported as very scarce near Loma Linda (MJW). Two Spotted Owls were near Palomar Mountain observatory, June 6 (JB, MB) and Pygmy Owls were noted only in the Laguna Mountains, July 18 and at the Vallecito Stage Station, July 25 and Aug. 1 (JB, MB). Vaux's Swifts on June 29 and again July 15 near San Diego (JB, MB) were most unusual. Five very late Black Swifts were at Tahquitz Peak, June 20 (RW, MW). Both Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds were noted by many observers to be in great abundance during mid-summer, especially in San Diego and Orange Counties. Williamson's Sapsuckers generally were scarce in mountain areas.

Flycatchers, Swallows, Jays, Thrashers.—Several reporters commented on the absence of flycatchers. Vermilion Flycatchers again successfully reared two broods at the San Diego Naval Hospital (JB, MB).

Purple Martins were reported as nesting at O'Neill Park in Orange County (Margaret Harding) as well as near Charlton Flats in the San Gabriel Mountains. A small number of Piñon Jays lingered through the summer near Big Bear City (Richard Cunningham). A Crissal Thrasher was at the Vallecito Stage Station, July 25 and Aug. 1 and a Le Conte's Thrasher was seen there, Aug. 1 (JB, MB).

Thrushes, Starlings, Phainopeplas.—Robins were widely reported as nesting in foothill areas and other lowland areas (including within Los Angeles City Limits). A single Starling was seen in downtown San Diego in February (Ken Stott, fide JB); another was reported in Escondido in June (Frank Gander); and a nest was found near San Onofre by Kirby Wolfe (fide JB). Many observers commented on the increase of Phainopeplas in foothill and canyon areas and their virtual absence from many portions of the desert.

Vireos, Warblers, Blackbirds.—A Gray Vireo was seen near the Vallecito Stage Station, Aug. 1 (JB, MB). Flocks of migrant warblers began appearing in mountain areas by the third week of August and an Am. Redstart was at the U.C.L.A. Botanical Gardens, July 10 and 13 (H. B. Chaney). Yellow-headed Blackbirds nested successfully near Buena Vista Lake (DRB) and at the Imperial State Waterfowl Management Area, Imperial County (Ed.).

Finches and Sparrows.—Lawrence's Goldfinches, which nested in large numbers near Mecca last year, were absent from there this year (DRB). A male Indigo Bunting was found near Big Pines in the San Gabriel Mountains, June 28 (John P. Schaefer, Carl Niemann); and near Cholame after an absence from that area for many years, Grasshopper Sparrows moved into farm fields that had been retired into the U.S.D.A. Soil Bank (EMcM).—ARNOLD SMALL, 3028 Cavendish Drive, Los Angeles 64, Calif.