

**MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION.**—Heavy rains, and what some folks term "an old-fashioned winter," came at last in February to end the long-term



drought in California. Storm after storm swung in from the northeastern Pacific Ocean, pelted down on thirsty forest and soil, and drenched the Region good and proper. There was little let-up—the more usual pattern of winter—and since the rains seemed heavier than normal, one might wonder that the land could continue to make good use of the watery bounty. But it did—and still is, very definitely! The precipitation for a good part of the state took, of course, the form of snow which piled higher and deeper on our mountain ranges. An excellent and long-needed runoff from the Sierra is expected—a most important factor in general well-being of the Central Valley for all forms of life there, avian, botanical, and human. The

beneficial effect on all phases of birdlife in the entire Region can hardly be overrated, and this is a valuable opportunity for observers to keep an eye open for any changes in the local bird populations which may be attributed to this break in the long drought cycle.

The general impression seemed to be that numbers of several species were low—possibly more so in the southern than the northern parts of the Region. Conspicuous exceptions were Robins everywhere in the lowlands, and possibly Audubon Warblers which concentrated in certain areas. In addition, several reporters mention the apparent sudden disappearance of birds just after the heavy February storms. It is difficult to draw conclusions without quantitative comparisons on given areas over several seasons, but the adverse effects of last summer's prolonged heat on nesting success of some species, the dearth of berries, acorns, cones and other food supplies, coupled with the low temperatures and fury of the winter storms may lend positive support to the general impression that landbirds were "low."

Migrants usually arriving in the latter half of February, despite their climatic greeting, arrived in time and apparently in normal numbers. But, quite obviously, Western Flycatchers, Wilson's Warblers, and Warbling Vireos (looked for in late March) were delayed about 10 days; the exceptionally stormy February and wet March over most of the state may have slowed this part of the progression temporarily. Further discussion of migratory movements should be in the spring report.

**Influxes and Unusual Concentrations**—There were unprecedented numbers of Fulmars throughout the season, with surprising proximity to shore for this pelagic species. The influx of northern and montane species extended through March, varying somewhat from the fall picture: Evening Grosbeaks took over a predominant role, while Clark's Nutcrackers, still present, declined in numbers. Townsend's Solitaires were scattered but not uncommon, and a minor influx of the Bohemian Waxwing developed. Striking by their almost complete absence were Red Crossbills.

**Shorebirds**—Although this season's records in this group are of particular interest because of unusual occurrence or possible range extension (as outlined below), it is unfortunate that one might gain the impression from most of the reports received that the common species have all but vanished from our scene, which of course is not true—yet! With the accelerated destruction of suitable habitat for our shorebirds, we need counts—or careful estimates—of *all* species, at coast and inland locations, to enable us to intelligently answer such questions as: Are the birds shifting to more inaccessible areas or are they actually decreasing? Are the wintering birds extending their range north? Has the pattern of migration in the Central Valley changed? A fine example of the kind of frequent check in the same area that results in a meaningful report is the comprehensive account received from Dr. Benjamin Parmeter of the common as well as the more unusual shorebirds and other wintering birds at Bodega Bay and his home area of Santa Rosa.

**Rarities**—Confirmed by one method or another were: a Trumpeter Swan, a Black Rail, 2 Rock Sand-

pipers, an Eastern Phoebe, and a Ruff. See the text for circumstances.

**Fulmars, Petrels, Herons**—1500 Fulmars were observed near Cannery Row, Monterey Bay on Dec. 1, decreasing to about 100 by mid-December (*GPL*), with 75 to 100 at Point Lobos State Park on Dec. 15 (*MF*). Numbers dwindled rapidly to 50 to 75 through February near Monterey and by mid-March, only single individuals could occasionally be seen (*GPL*). The species was reported from coastal points north of Monterey in numbers of 40 to 150 through January. On Dec. 10, 25 Fork-tailed Petrels appeared with a strong northwest wind close to the Monterey-to-Pacific Grove stretch of shore (*GPL*). While on a round-trip drive through the Yolo-By-Pass area on Feb. 11 from Sacramento to Woodland to Davis, not a single heron or egret was seen (*FGE*). The decline of Black-crowned Night Herons may be somewhat offset by a count of 200 (!) in a roost area in Los Banos Nat'l Wildlife Refuge on Dec. 2 (*RLB, ATN, GPL*) and 45 at the San Francisco Bay Salt Marsh Sanctuary on Jan. 6 (*G.G.A.S.*)

**Swans**—Whistling Swans made an unusual appearance on Lake Tahoe: 100 were noted in mid-December, perhaps retreating from Nevada's frozen lakes (*GMcC*); and 5 were still in Emerald Bay, Lake Tahoe, from Jan. 10 through 15 (*HBH*). By far the most exciting swan was one that arrived on Abbott's Lagoon on the Pt. Reyes Peninsula about Christmas, staying until March 9. Thanks to Alfred Grossi's fine cooperation in allowing many persons access across his land to study the bird, it was recognized as a *Trumpeter Swan* by comparison with neighboring Whistling Swans and noting of its low voice (*AW*). Mrs. Grace Miller wrote untiringly to authorities to attempt positive identification. On Feb. 18 and 19, Eugene Kridler, familiar with the species at Malheur Nat'l Refuge, journeyed here, rowed to the swan, heard it call, and identified it positively!

**Geese, Ducks**—White-fronted and Snow Geese visited clear to the coast in unusual numbers; most flocks of either species numbered under 100, but were widely noted. An adult Blue Goose was again recorded on the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge on Dec. 18 (*AS, fide GMcC*). Large numbers of ducks, especially Pintail and Am. Widgeon, were judged to winter in Contra Costa County (*LF*). If only this were true throughout the nation! 107 Green-winged Teal at Laguna de Santa Rosa, Sonoma Co. on March 18 was considered the best count ever for that area (*BDP*). A male European Widgeon was noted at the Carmel River Lagoon on Dec. 1 (*MF*) and stayed through the month (*EAA, GPL*). Up to 6, including a possible hybrid Am. X European Widgeon, were discovered on the Sacramento Refuge in December and January (*GMcC*); with one still there on March 31 (*MM*). Seventeen Ring-necked Ducks were at Dry Lagoon, Humboldt Co. on March 20 & 21 (*AJE*). An immature male Barrow's Goldeneye, rarely picked out from the Common here, was noted: Jan. 1, 7 and 16, on Abbott's Lagoon, Pt. Reyes (*GMcC, GM & AW*). Another with the same characters was seen at Bolinas Bay on March 29 (*GM*); and a pair of Barrow's were found on March 16 in the Feather

River Canyon (*AJE*). Hooded Mergansers were present in good numbers: 8 on the Marchbanks Pond near Walnut Creek on Dec. 2 (*EAP*); 6, Dec. 7 near Freedom, Santa Cruz Co., and from 1 to 4 there until Feb. 2 (*GPL*, *et al.*); a pair apparently wintered near Tahoe City (*GMcC*), and 2 were present on Lake Almanor in Plumas County on March 15 (*AJE*). Two Red-breasted Mergansers were at St. Mary's College, March 26 (*ASC*).

**Hawks, Eagles, Cranes, Rails**—A fair flight of Rough-legged Hawks into central California apparently occurred, for numbers were present, but fewer than last year's good flight. Perhaps as a result of the January inventory of Bald Eagles, we are becoming more eagle-conscious; at any rate, there were more than the usual reports of both Golden and Bald Eagles throughout the northern Region: for instance, 12 Bald Eagles at Lake Tahoe was the highest count ever (*GMcC*). Single Pigeon Hawks that allowed close views were at Inverness, Feb. 15 (*GM*), and at Soquel, Santa Cruz Co. on March 16 (*FEH*). An estimated 4500 to 5000 Sandhill Cranes were seen foraging and courting, and flying in and out of open fields near Goshen, Tulare Co., east of Highway 99 on Feb. 25 (Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Webb, *vide MEM*). These may have been birds on migration from the Carrizo Plains, which probably harbors the largest wintering population in the state. Nicely correlating with this was the sighting of "flock after flock" of cranes flying north and northwest over Yolo By-Pass about noon on March 4 (*BK*). A flock of 15 was noted over Olema, Marin Co. on Jan. 4 (*AW*)—a coastal area seldom visited by these striking birds. One of the most secretive of rails, the *Black Rail*, allowed 14 lucky birders a close and rare view in the San Francisco Bay Salt Marsh Sanctuary on Jan. 6 (*GM*, *GMcC*, *G.G.A.S.*)!

**Shorebirds**—An unusual concentration of 23 Black Oystercatchers was seen at Point Lobos, Feb. 7 (*MF*). An early Killdeer nest, with warm eggs, was located along a road within the Sacramento Refuge on Feb. 26 (*JH*). *Am. Golden Plovers*, rare enough in the fall are even more unusual as winter visitors, yet there were numerous sightings (extended from last fall's spectacular migration?): From 1 to 3 were seen on eight different dates from Dec. 28 through April 6 at Bodega Bay (*GPL*, *BDP*, *MS*, *AW*); one inland at Woodland on Dec. 9 (*GMcC*); and three sightings were reported from the Santa Cruz area (*vide DBII*). Ruddy Turnstones are becoming increasingly common during the winter months; among other records, 16 were at Bodega Bay on Jan. 21 (*BDP*). An estimated 500 Whimbrels (300 in one flock) were in the vicinity of Los Banos on March 24 (*MM* & *PdLB*), but none were found a week later in the middle Sacramento Valley (where they are rarely reported). In keeping with older records, they seem to stop over in the San Joaquin Valley, but largely pass over the northern valley on their way to the breeding grounds. The presence of Knots during every winter month in the past 3 years in this Region—and in good numbers—may indicate possible extension of their winter range: 2 at Moss Landing on Dec. 16 (*GPL*); 4 at Bay Farm Island, Alameda on Dec. 30 (*GMcC*, & *RS*);

5 on Feb. 5 at Moss Landing (*GPL*); 81 on Feb. 18 at Alameda Southshore and B. F. Island (*MM* & *PdLB*); and 30 there on March 10 (*MM*). An excellent description of a *Rock Sandpiper*, seen at the end of December (Mrs. Beth C. Snyder, *vide MM*), 2 identified on Jan. 7 (*MM*), and 1 on Jan. 14 (*HA*, *LF*, *G.G.A.S.*)—all records in the same general area of rocky coastline south of Jenner in Sonoma County in company with Surfbirds and Black Turnstones—place the species there this winter. These birds of the northern Pacific coast have been reported regularly from Humboldt Bay in recent years, and casually as far south as Baja California. Although we have knowledge of only one sight record on the central Regional coast (1957), scattered individuals may occur more regularly than assumed on our coast in winter. Now supported by a recent San Diego specimen, an excellent sight record of a *Ruff* in fall plumage (reported to us last fall, but for obvious reasons not included in the report at that time) seems advisable to record. Both birds were recognized by well-qualified European observers who knew the species in its native haunts. Our Regional record was observed at Bodega Bay on Sept. 10, 1961, for a total of 1½ hours at distances from 10 to 50 feet. The observer carefully checked every mark, took notes in the field, and compared with Pectoral Sandpipers, Knots, and other shorebirds (*MM*). By virtue of its comparatively large size the bird was believed to be a male. This species has thus proven its west coast occurrence south of Alaska. An attempt on the next day and subsequently to obtain confirmation was unsuccessful, for the bird was gone.

**Gulls, Alcids**—An immature Glaucous-winged Gull, confirmed from the Sierra Nevada near Tahoe City on Jan. 9 (*GMcC*) is a most unusual inland record. Two Herring Gulls were at the same location 2 days later (*GMcC*). Black-legged Kittiwakes were present in good numbers (up to 50) from January to March on the Monterey Peninsula shoreline (*E.A.G.*, *GPL*, *ATN*). Rhinoceros Auklets were noted close to the Monterey shore: on Dec. 28 to Jan. 1 when nuptial plumes and horn on a single bird were evident (*GPL*), and on Feb. 24 when 5 were seen (*MM* & *PdLB*).

**Pigeons, Owls**—Band-tailed Pigeons were notably scarce in the East Bay, and in almost every other area were reported in numbers below 10—or none. With these exceptions: During the winter, about 1000 were in the Boulder Creek area, Santa Cruz Co. where there were acorns (*FEII*); on Jan. 12 near Colfax, at least 1500 were observed coming in small groups from the North Fork of the American River Canyon and heading for the oak belt in the lower Sierran foothills (*FGE*). During the third week in March, though, they were noted foraging in the tops of the Grand Firs near Fort Bragg, increasing in numbers to 75 (*RC*); they also returned to the central Regional coast during the same month. A Roadrunner was observed, Jan. 2, in Pt. Lobos State Park (*MF*). Eighteen Long-eared Owls were flushed from the "famous" pine tree near Courtland, Jan. 16, that offers winter haven regularly (*GMcC*).

**Poor-wills, Hummingbirds, Flycatchers**—A Poor-

will caught by a cat in a Berkeley yard in early December (*vide Fritz Stolz*) and the one calling for the Oakland Christmas count denote winter activity for the species there. Rufous Hummingbirds had a good migration with the first reported at Walnut Creek on Feb. 21 (*LF, FS*); by March 12 at Pacific Grove, about 30 were watched as they flashed in the sun feeding at a row of *Echium* bushes (*GPL*). An *Eastern Phoebe* was noted at Inverness on Dec. 27, Jan. 1, 7 and 14 (*AW, GMcC, HA*). This rare straggler disappeared after the cold spell in mid-January (*GM*).

**Swallows, Nutcrackers**—Although up to 15 Violet-green Swallows were seen in various areas in February—and near Santa Rosa all winter (*BDP*)—the bulk of them were not reported until March 29 and 30, when 800 to 1000 were seen, mixed with a few Rough-winged and Cliff Swallows at Success Lake, Tulare Co. (*MEM*). An early Bank Swallow was noted at Soquel on March 28 (*JH*); and 2 early Cliff Swallows were at Moss Landing on Feb. 2 (*RLB*), and again on March 2 (*GPL*). By March 23, 50 to 60 Cliff Swallows had started nests near Chico—an early date (*VKC*). Steller's Jays "in annoying numbers" were still at Murphys, April 9 (*Mrs. JCS*). Clark's Nutcrackers remained near Monterey and Santa Cruz through the season. Dr. John Davis kindly brought to our attention a report of a flock of 25 to 50 of these birds which were observed following a tractor finding food in the freshly stirred earth on the Hoover Ranch near the mouth of Waddell Creek, in Santa Cruz Co. in November. On Dec. 6, they were watched feeding on pine nuts probed from the ground under the trees at the same location. Numbers decreased in Pacific Grove to 8 or 9, but they were reported to be ostensibly feeding "young" at a feeder (unconfirmed, but interesting to alert observers). Research revealed that Clark's Nutcrackers nest in February, with 18 days incubation; this might chronologically check out for this March 20 observation (*GPL, VLY*).

**Creepers, Thrushes**—Brown Creepers were noted in the Valley and nearby: 3 on Dec. 16 at Colusa State Park, Colusa Co. (*BM*); on Mt. Diablo (where they are not normal or regular) on Dec. 18 (*EAP*); and one was in the willows north of Stockton in early March (*BM*). One species that was so conspicuously numerous everywhere that people couldn't help noticing it was the Robin! "Hundreds," "thousands," "500 in one field," and "tremendous numbers all winter"—these are typical descriptions of their abundance in the lowland areas, as seemingly was forecast in the fall. The consensus of opinion on Varied Thrushes, however, was scarce to nil below Marin County, while more northern areas found them at least in moderate numbers. "Hundreds" of Mountain Bluebirds were around the Sutter Buttes on Jan. 15 and 16, and one on the northern coast at Bodega Bay on Jan. 17 (*GMcC*); while small flocks were noted at Stockton (*BM*) and Springville (*MEM*). A few Townsend's Solitaires were reported throughout the lowlands during the season. 🍌

**Waxwings, Phainopeplas**—We received two definite reports of *Bohemian Waxwings*: 1 at Tahoe City on Jan. 18 (*GMcC*), and 6 in Yreka (*MSC*),

but there were additional records from central California brought indirectly to our attention, leading us to consider that the species was possibly more numerous than the above marginal records would indicate. Cedar Waxwings were considered scarce in the middle of the Region, but note the curve of abundance in Porterville, Tulare Co.: 9 on Jan. 12; 88 on Jan. 19; 250 on Jan. 25; 300 on Feb. 8; 250 on Feb. 9; decreasing to about 75 by Feb. 22 (*MEM*). It is careful tabulating of numbers like this that brings out the movements of our common species. Wintering Phainopeplas were fairly numerous, especially in the Sacramento area—6 mentioned.

**Warblers, Tanagers, Grosbeaks, Sparrows**—A very early Yellow Warbler was heard at Soquel in a walnut tree on March 18, but the species was not detected again until mid-April (*RJR*). East Bay and Santa Cruz County observers agreed that Audubon's Warblers were scarce, but these warblers congregated on the Pt. Reyes Peninsula for in a day's birding, Dec. 31, more than 2000 were estimated (*MM*). An exceptionally early male Western Tanager was at Soquel Creek on March 21 (*JH*), and a female Black-headed Grosbeak wintered at Carmel (*GPL*). Evening Grosbeaks exceeded last winter's good showing: Groups of 15 to 30 were widely reported in coast, valley, and foothill locations, but a group of 40 to 50 feeding in an almond orchard at Chico in mid-December had increased to 100 by the third week in March, while there were about 150 in another orchard by month's end (*VKC*). The largest number, a flock of 200, was reported from Alameda in January, the first record there in 40 years (*ER*). Single Vesper Sparrows were noted: Jan. 15 at Success Lake; Jan. 25 at Porterville (*MEM*); and at Millerton Lake at the end of March (*FHW*). Both Slate-colored Juncos and White-throated Sparrows were again reported widespread in small numbers.

**Corrigendum**—The numbers of Black-footed Albatross on the seventh line from bottom on page 490, *Audubon Field Notes* 15(5) should read "increasing to 95," instead of "35" as printed.

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