

stragglers survived the winter, including a Tropical Kingbird, an Orchard Oriole, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and an Indigo Bunting. Other species wintered north of their usual limits, or higher in the mountains than usual.

An unalleviated stretch of forty-two days without rain, the longest mid-winter rainless period on record, was broken only on the last day of January. The precipitation that fell during the warmest February on record, however, often took the form of rain rather than snow in the mountains. The result was the thinnest Sierra snow pack ever known. At the end of February the ground was bare at Norden (Donner Summit), an unprecedented condition at a spot where an average 93 inches usually lies at that date. The lightest previous snow pack since measurements began at Norden in 1908 was 13 inches two years ago. Only the late spring rains of March and April alleviated an incipient drought condition with dangerous implications for food and cover for next winter.

MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION.—The winter season along the Middle Pacific Coast had two major characteristics that appeared to affect birdlife.



Berries and cones were abundant, the result in part of last year's heavy snow pack, and snow was almost completely absent this year in the Sierra. Most observers believed that this combination of factors, rather than some hypothetical mass mortality due perhaps to insecticides, explained the relative scarcity along the coast and in the lowlands of some wintering species, insofar as any explanation accounts for a complex pattern of scarcities. An open winter and abundant food possibly enabled such species as Robins and Cedar Waxwings to remain in the north and in the high country, and probably accounted for the absence of Clark's Nutcrackers and Evening Grosbeaks in the lowlands, in marked contrast to last winter.

Late December and January were cold and dry. In spite of record lows at many points in the Region during January, however, an unusual number of

Grebes, Petrels, Herons—Red-necked Grebes seemed commoner this winter than usual. Eight Horned Grebes on Conn Lake, Napa County, on Dec. 2 (*PdeB*, *G.G.A.S.*) were an unusual number for so far inland. In contrast to last year's Fulmar invasion, only three were reported this season (Tomaes Bay Christmas count). Wintering Green Herons were reported as far north along the coast as Humboldt Bay, where Black-crowned Night Herons (80) and Common Egrets (30) were also common through the winter (*BDP*).

Ducks, Geese, Swans—Geese, swans, and dabbling ducks all appeared to begin northward migration somewhat earlier than usual, Pintail and Am. Widgeon leaving Lake Merritt in Oakland by Feb. 6 (*AWa*) and duck numbers at Merced Nat'l Wildlife Refuge dropping sharply after Feb. 17 (*RVP*). A *Trumpeter Swan* wintered again on Abbott's Lagoon, Marin Co. (*PdeB*, many other observers). Last year's coastal invasion of geese was not repeated, although 4 White-fronted Geese wintered west of Santa Rosa (*GLB*).

William Anderson of the California Fish and Game Department writes: "By neck-banding Ross' Geese with colored plastic bands on their breeding grounds in northern Canada and later observing the ratio of banded to non-banded birds on the wintering grounds, it now appears that the total population may be in the neighborhood of 40,000. This is not to be interpreted as an increase in Ross' Geese. That many, or perhaps more, may have existed for many years. Techniques for counting them have improved." Five thousand were seen near Merced on two occasions. Mr. Anderson and Charles MacInnes observed a total of 5 Blue Geese in our area this winter.

A Fulvous Tree Duck, rare this far north in winter, was noted on Jan. 28 at Merced NWR (Melvin Ford, *fide RVP*). The second sight record of a *Common Teal* in California was made on Jan. 19 at Arcata, Humboldt Co. (*BDP*). Cinnamon Teal wintered as commonly in the Humboldt Bay area (13, Mad River Slough, *BDP*), as in the San Francisco Bay Area (16, Oakland Airport, *ER*). Seven European Widgeon

were reported from five localities.

Unusually large concentrations of wintering Wood Ducks were noted near Santa Rosa (22, *GLB*) and near Chico (75-100, *JT*, *vide TLR*). Another unusual concentration was 225 Ring-necked Ducks on Conn Lake, Napa Co., Dec. 2 (*PdeB*, *G.G.A.S.*). Reports of Redheads (over 500 in Humboldt Bay, *BDP*; 80 at Freedom Pond, near Santa Cruz, *RLB*) are encouraging. Barrow's Goldeneyes may be more regular along this coast than supposed. Three females or young males were at Abbott's Lagoon on Dec. 3 (*GSP*, *HHJ*, *ROP*), and one adult male was there on Jan. 20 (*TC*, *W'FN*, *ENA*). Six Oldsquaws seen at 5 places in central California, in conjunction with observations farther south, suggest a larger flight this year than normal. Harlequin Ducks, however, were less common than usual (3 observed).

Hawks, Eagles—The White-tailed Kite apparently continues to increase, especially along the coast (reports from Moss Landing—*GPL*; Inverness—*GM*; Fort Bragg—*RC*; and Eel River, Humboldt Co.—*BDP*). This was not a flight year for Rough-legged Hawks, only a few coming into the Point Reyes Peninsula in late January, for instance (*TC*, *W'FN*, *ENA*). Wintering Bald Eagles were reported from Tulare County (*MEM*); Chico (*LR*, *HW*); Donner Lake (*MS*); Lake Tahoe (*HBH*); Carlem River (*RGMcC*) and Los Banos (*PdeB*, *EW*). An Osprey near Big Lagoon, north of Humboldt Bay, on Dec. 17 (*PdeB*, *RGMcC*) was an extremely far north winterer. Another was at Bodega Bay at least as early as Feb. 11 (*W'A*).

Cranes, Gallinules—The northward movement of wintering Sandhill Cranes appears to have been early this year. Whereas Central Valley observers usually see migrating flocks during the first week in March, reports this year centered about the period Feb. 21-25 (*VKC*, *TLR*, *EH*). Common Gallinules were far more common than in the past 17 years at Gray Lodge State Game Refuge, Butte Co., with about 60 seen on Jan. 26 (*TLR*).

Shorebirds—One Am. Golden Plover wintered in a dry field near Bodega Bay for the third successive year, and several others were found in a field on the Point Reyes Peninsula (*MM*, *AW*, *PdeB*, *GLB*). Since all three previous California winter specimens belong to the Eastern Siberia-Western Alaska race, it was not surprising that one of these birds collected by George E. Chaniot on April 2 could also be assigned to *fulva*.

Intensive development around San Francisco Bay has not destroyed the area's usefulness as a wintering ground for shorebirds. "A hundred thousand shorebirds can be found within a few hours' search time" by visiting several favored localities (*HLC*). Fresh-water pools in the new Oakland Airport provided "loafing grounds" at high tide for thousands of shorebirds which could continue to feed there when all tidal flats were covered. As an example of mid-winter numbers, a total of about 32,400 shorebirds were found on Dec. 30 during the two hours on either side of high tide by Marshall Jenks, James Linford, and Howard L. Cogswell along the south shore of Alameda, on the west end of Bay Farm Island, and at the Oakland Airport:

Semipalmated Plover	21
Snowy Plover	40
Killdeer	24
Black-bellied Plover	1,260
Long-billed Curlew	120
Willet	520
Greater Yellow-legs	4
Knot	1
Least Sandpiper	550
Dunlin	18,000
dowitcher (sp.)	520
Western Sandpiper	7,200
Marbled Godwit	550
American Avocet	2,300

Shorebirds also wintered in good numbers well to the north of the state, although our reports may be more a result of good coverage of the Humboldt Bay area than of special conditions this winter. A few Semipalmated Plovers wintered in Humboldt Bay (4 on Jan. 20), while Black-bellied Plover remained in numbers up to 250 at Arcata Bay, Humboldt Co. (*BDP*). A single Ruddy Turnstone at Mad River Slough, Humboldt Co., on Feb. 22 may be the first winter record so far north (*BDP*). Ten others remained as far north as Bodega Bay (*PdeB*). As in recent winters, a few Wandering Tattlers remained as far north and a few Rock Sandpipers came as far south as the north jetty at the entrance to Humboldt Bay (*BDG*, *RGMcC*, *PdeB*, *EW*). Up to 25 dowitchers (Short-billed?) remained at Field's Landing, Humboldt Co., into January (*BDP*). Am. Avocets also wintered that far north, with up to 35 in December, January, and February at Arcata (*BDP*).

A Killdeer on the Yosemite Park Christmas count was an indication of the winter's unusually open conditions. Since Lesser Yellow-legs are not reported every winter, a single bird at Oakland (*RS & JK*), and 1 at Santa Cruz, 2 at Palo Alto, and 10 at San Jose suggest an unusually high wintering population (Christmas counts).

Knots, once considered strictly migrant, wintered for the fourth consecutive year in the San Francisco Bay area in numbers second only to the peak year of 1959-60. Nine remained "all winter" along Frontage Road in Oakland (*RS & JK*), and 2 at the east end of the Oakland Bay Bridge in December and January (*PdeB*, *EW*). Red Phalaropes are probably also regular in winter in small numbers. Eleven were seen off Point Lobos on Dec. 28 (*RLB*), and a single bird at Dillon's Beach, Marin Co., on Jan. 1 (*RS & JK*).

Jaegers, Gulls, Alcids—Occasional jaegers continue to turn up in winter, sometimes inland. In addition to 2 Parasitic Jaegers off San Francisco on Dec. 23 (*RS & JK*) and one probable Pomarine Jaeger off Abbott's Lagoon on Jan. 1 (*PdeB*), a probable dark-phase Parasitic was noted "on several occasions" between Feb. 3 and March 23 passing over San Jose with the gulls that travel from San Francisco Bay to Calero Reservoir (*DDMcL*). An adult *Franklin's Gull* was closely observed at Woodland, Yolo Co., on Feb. 16 (*RS & JK*). Ancient Murrelets occurred as usual along the coast with a peak single observation of 17 together in the mouth of Humboldt Bay on Jan. 19 (*BDP*).

Hummingbirds—An Allen's Hummingbird on the Monterey Peninsula on Dec. 26 (I'LY), a male Costa's Hummingbird at Patterson Pass, Stanislaus Co., Jan. 5 (BCS), and a Rufous Hummingbird seen repeatedly in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco (G.G.A.S.) reinforced the over-all impression of a winter marked by stragglers.

Flycatchers, Swallows, Wrens—Although apparently regular fall vagrants, Tropical Kingbirds had not been known to survive the winter along the Middle Pacific Coast. A bird that appeared in Alameda on Nov. 15 was seen regularly until at least March 27 except for short absences during the midwinter cold spells when it (ER and many other observers) was thought to have moved to other feeding grounds. Another appeared in Pacific Grove, Monterey Co., on Dec. 26 (Christmas count, *fide* I'LY). Violet-green Swallows were reported wintering in large numbers (over 300) in the Sebastopol area, Sonoma Co., where they outnumbered the more typical wintering species, Tree Swallows, about 20 to 1 (GLB). A Cañon Wren in Tilden Park, Alameda Co., Dec. 30 (RS & JK) was about 30 miles from the nearest known breeding locality to the south.

Thrushes, Waxwings, Phainopeplas—In great contrast to last year these conspicuous berry-eating birds were late arriving and never made a good winter showing in this Region. Most observers commented on the scarcity of Robins, Hermit Thrushes, and Cedar Waxwings which contrasted so noticeably with last year's exceptional flight. At southern San Jose Robins were 30 per cent of normal (DDMcL). In the wake of *Silent Spring*, many suggested that the birds had perished from insecticides; others made the far more likely suggestion that the open winter permitted these species to winter farther north or higher in the mountains than usual. Available evidence seems to support this latter hypothesis, at least as a partial explanation.

In Tulare County, for example, the light snowfall allowed Hermit Thrushes to winter in the chaparral and lower forest zone between 2000 and 6400 feet, where they are usually absent (MEM; see similar observation on Fox Sparrows, below). Mountain Bluebirds were more numerous in the Lake Tahoe area in late December than in the previous 5 years (RGMcC). The berry-eating birds were no more numerous in northern coastal and valley areas, however, than in central lowland areas (Eureka, BDP; Yreka, MSC).

Further complexity is added to the picture by the fact that while some normal wintering species were reduced in numbers, others were observed in numbers equal to or greater than last year. Varied Thrushes, for example, Christmas counts to the contrary, were somewhat more numerous in suitable habitat than last year, although not sufficiently numerous to spill over into less typical habitats as they did in the banner flight of 1958-59 (AMM, MS, PdeB). Some 15 Phainopeplas, more than usual, were reported from 5 localities this winter, the northernmost being a male in Colusa State Park, Colusa Co., on Dec. 28 (BM). This "increase" may, of course, reflect merely more observation within the winter range of the species.

In the second place, almost all observers noted an increase of both Robins and Cedar Waxwings after the very cold periods of mid-January. Robins increased only relatively, from groups of 4-5 in early January at Berkeley, for instance, to groups of 15-20 in late January. Cedar Waxwings, present in some areas by mid-October, were first seen in other parts of the Region only by late January. This complex picture of selective scarcities suggests that there is more than one simple explanation for this winter's low populations.

Gnatcatchers, Kinglets, Shrikes, Starlings—A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Elkhorn Ferry, Yolo Co., Jan. 5 (RS & JK), may be the first winter record for the Sacramento Valley, although it is known to winter on the coast in very small numbers. While Ruby-crowned Kinglets were noticeably scarce in some lowland regions (fewest in 13 years at San Jose, with 5 records between Nov. 1 and March 22—DDMcL), a single bird at a feeder in Tahoe City, at 6250 feet, was unprecedented. The species usually leaves that elevation by mid-November (RGMcC). A notable isolated record was an immature at the Sacramento Bypass, Yolo Co., on Dec. 1 (RS & JK), one of the very few records for the Sacramento Valley. Following the cold spell of mid-January, Starlings disappeared from a few areas, especially northward along the coast (Eureka, BDP; Santa Rosa, GLB).

Warblers—Orange-crowned Warblers were judged more numerous than last winter in the Stockton area (6 compared with 0 in a census area, BM); a wintering bird was found as far north as Requa, Del Norte Co. (RGMcC, EW); the arrival of singing birds was "on time" in mid-February. A Nashville Warbler, carefully described, appeared at a feeder at Inverness, Marin Co., Feb. 10-27 (GM), with another bird possibly this species at Soquel, Santa Cruz Co., on Dec. 29 (FEH). To date there is no winter specimen of this species for California, and sight records must be carefully distinguished from a similar gray-crowned plumage in the Orange-crowned Warbler. A Yellow Warbler at Pacific Grove, Monterey Co., at the end of December (I'LY) is believed to be the second California winter record. On the coast Myrtle and especially Audubon's Warblers were less numerous than last winter; in the Central Valley, where most observers reported a decrease in numbers, the one quantitative study area in the Valley had about twice as many of these species as last year (BM). These data point up the need for more Winter Bird-population Censuses in this Region. A Black-throated Gray Warbler was seen in Pacific Grove at the end of December (I'LY), and 5 Hermit Warblers were reported from various points all the way north to Sonoma County (GM, GLB, BDP, RLB), usually with flocks of wintering Townsend's Warblers. Of particular note were two eastern species coming suggestively after a fall migration season in which unprecedented numbers of eastern warblers were found both in this Region and in Southern California. A Palm Warbler was found in Sutro Heights Park, San Francisco, on Dec. 23 (RS & JK), and an immature male *Am. Redstart* near Sebastopol, Sonoma Co., Feb. 24-March 9 (GLB—probably also present

in January). Although both of these species straggle to the coast with some regularity in fall, this appears to be the third winter record for our Region for the Palm Warbler (specimen in 1953, 2 birds in 1954-5), and the first for the Am. Redstart.

Orioles, Tanagers—An adult male *Orchard Oriole* was found at Lover's Point, Monterey Co., on Jan. 2 and was joined about Jan. 8 by a small all-yellow female oriole, the same size and shape as the male, and about Jan. 12 by a second female or immature, slightly larger, showing all the marks of a Baltimore (*PdeB & AWa*). Although sight identification of winter female orioles can probably not be definitive, the presence of any orioles in the Region in winter is noteworthy. The male was photographed by RLB and remained until at least the end of March (*VLY*). An adult male Hooded Oriole was seen in San Jose on Feb. 7 (*DDMcC*). Western Tanagers were reported from Glen Ellen, Sonoma Co. in January (1, *MS*); El Cerrito, Contra Costa Co., in late December (*ALC*); and Stockton in December and early January (*VJ*).

Fringillidae—Male Black-headed Grosbeaks were seen in Oakland on Jan. 18 (*RS*) and near Chico on Dec. 31 and Jan. 4 (*JT, EH*). More unusual was the female *Rose-breasted Grosbeak* trapped and banded in Santa Rosa, Sonoma Co. on Jan. 13 by *MS*. The bird was taken to the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in Berkeley for authoritative identification and released in Santa Rosa, where it was still present at the end of the report period. Although there are a number of sporadic records for this species, none has been known to winter. A male *Indigo Bunting*, the fourth record for this Region, was present at a feeder at Ferndale, Humboldt Co. from early January to the end of the period (*BDP*).

Normal winter fringillids, like the berry-eating birds, showed a complex pattern of abundance, with some species unusually scarce and others in normal or even increased numbers. Evidently some species remained at higher altitudes because of the light snowfall. In Tulare County, for example, Fox Sparrows were reported from the high chaparral (2000 to 6400 feet) where they are usually absent (*MEM*). At Lake Tahoe, Cassin's Finches and Pine Siskins were more numerous than in any of the 5 previous winters (*RGMcC*). Only Yreka (*MSC*), at the northern limit of the Region, reported normal numbers of White-crowned Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, and Oregon Juncos.

In the lowlands and along the coast these species were widely reported as reduced in numbers. Even at Lake Tahoe, where they have wintered before, White-crowned Sparrows and Oregon Juncos were largely absent (*RGMcC*). A banding station in San Jose where about 40 Fox Sparrows were noted last winter had none this winter (*DDMcL*); in a winter census area near Stockton, where sixteen were found last year, there were none this winter (*BM*). At San Jose, Gambel's White-crowned Sparrows were off 40 per cent from last year, and the Puget Sound race off 25 per cent (*DDMcL*). This species and Oregon Juncos showed some tendency to build up in late January. Golden-crowned Sparrows were, if anything,

more numerous than last year. Normal scattered individual Slate-colored Juncos and White-throated Sparrows were reported, as well as 2 of the less frequent Harris' Sparrow, one at Santa Cruz on Dec. 15 (*RGMcC*) and one at San Jose (*DDMcL*).

Contributors—ENA, Eugene N. Anderson, Jr.; RLB, Dr. Ronald L. Branson; GLB, Gordon L. Boller; ASC, Dr. Arthur S. Campbell; MSC, Margaret S. Chandler; HLC, Dr. Howard L. Cogswell; RC, Rachel Coy; ALC, A. Lawrence Curl; VKC, Vee K. Curtis; G.G.A.S., Golden Gate Audubon Society; FEH, Florence E. Haas; HBH, Harold B. Habel; EH, Emilie Hodnette; VJ, Verna Johnston; JK, Jan Kroesen; MM, Marie Mans; RGMcC, R. Guy McCaskie; DDMcL, Donald D. McLean; BM, Bob Miller; GM, Grace Miller; WFN, William F. Noble; BDP, Dr. Benjamin D. Parmenter; RVP, Ronald V. Papike; LR, Leila Roberts; TLR, Dr. Thomas L. Rodgers; ER, Elsie Roemer; RS, Richard Stallcup; BCS, Beth C. Snyder; MS, Marianne Shepard; MS, Madeline Sheridan; JT, Janet Turner; AWa, Arthur Wang; AW, Alice Williams; HW, Howard Wurlitzer; VLY, Vernal L. Yadon.

Editorial Committee—Horace H. Jeter, George S. Peyton, Jr.

Compilers—PAUL DE BENEDICTIS, 1901 Grove St., Berkeley, Calif.; THEODORE CHASE, JR., 2314 Oregon St., Berkeley, Calif.; ROBERT O. PAXTON, 2416 Hillside Ave., Berkeley, Calif.