

MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION.—The winter season in this Region was dry, a condition which will probably have more effect upon next year's cone



and berry crop than upon this season's wintering bird population. By the end of February precipitation was below normal in all parts of the Region, and the weather station at Red Bluff reported the driest winter since 1882-3. Temperatures were above normal along the northern coast in December (although there was severe cold in the Central Valley and along the central coast) and throughout the Region in February, which was one of the sunniest and mildest winter months on record.

The outstanding features of the wintering bird-population were: 1) the widespread wintering of insectivorous species (swifts, swallows, flycatchers,

phainopeplas, gnatcatchers) which recalls similar occurrences during the winter of 1954-5; 2) an abundance of berry-eating birds, such as the Robins and Cedar Waxwings which were unusually scarce in the lowlands last year, and the irregular Bohemian Waxwings which occurred widely in the Region; 3) an invasion of the lowlands in moderate numbers by northerly and mountain seed-eating species, such as Evening Grosbeaks, Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins, and widespread reports of the irregular Lawrence's Goldfinch; and 4) an unusual number of stragglers. These included both normal summer nesters (swifts, hummingbirds, swallows, gnatcatchers, warblers, orioles, and tanagers) and eastern wanderers (flycatchers, warblers, orioles, tanagers, and grosbeaks).

The increasing number of stragglers reported in the Region at all seasons is in part merely a reflection of more intensive field work. One outstanding feature of these reports deserves comment, however—the tendency of such birds to collect on promontories and headlands such as Point Reyes, the Monterey Peninsula, and the Samoa Peninsula (Humboldt County). These areas are now covered with particular intensity by bird students; but the concentration of records from the Monterey Peninsula for the second winter in a row reinforces the impression that disoriented and displaced birds gather in "traps" where the ocean blocks their further wandering, and where salt water moderates the winter climate.

During this past winter season a eucalyptus grove in Greenwood Park, at Pacific Grove, Monterey County, harbored at least ten orioles of several species, a Summer Tanager and 10 Western Tanagers, and a number of wintering warblers, finches, and hummingbirds. Other no less unexpected birds wintered elsewhere on the Monterey Peninsula, at Carmel (Nashville and Palm Warblers, Summer Tanager), and at Point Lobos (Eastern Phoebe, Wilson's Warbler, Swamp Sparrow).

Fulmars, Herons—Among waterbirds the winter of 1963-4 was chiefly notable for the Fulmar flight. Although not as great as that of 1960-1, it was comparable to that of 1961-2, with a peak observation of 1200 in Monterey Bay, Jan. 11 (RS). Of about 1000 seen on Dec. 10 in Monterey Bay, 75% were of the "double-dark" phase, 5% "dark," 10% "light," 10% "double-light," with 5 individuals of the "triple-light" and two of the "triple-dark" (PRL). Many Fulmars were found dead along the shore, with a maximum of 40 dead per mile of coastline, Feb. 29 (RLB); one was skinned and found to have an empty stomach and be without fat. However, there was no increase in numbers of other Procellariiformes, an observer seeing no other species at all off the northern California coast on Jan. 10 (PDeB).

An immature *Little Blue Heron* was observed on March 7 and 8 at Bodega Bay (HHJ & ROP) and collected March 15 (HHJ & AW); although there are several inadequately supported sight records from San Francisco Bay southward, this is the first known specimen from the state. It will be reported on more fully elsewhere.

Swans, Geese, Ducks—Dispersal of Whistling Swans to coastal regions included 6 at Cleone Lake,

Fort Bragg, Mendocino County, Dec. 2, 8 (RC); 28 miles west of Santa Rosa, Nov. 29 to Dec. 5 (GLB); 2 at Moss Landing, Jan. 2 (RLB); and 150 at Paicines, San Benito County, Feb. 2 (RLB & GPL). Numbers of geese wintering at Merced Nat'l Wildlife Refuge were down from previous years, probably because the birds were wintering farther north in larger numbers (DNW); among geese shot at Grey Lodge Waterfowl Management Area during the hunting season were a Blue Goose, and 5 Snow Geese banded in the U. S. S. R. (refuge manager John Cowan, reported in the *Chico Enterprise-Record*, Jan. 4). Two Ross' Geese appeared at Pacific Grove in early December; one was accidentally shot and is now in the Monterey Peninsula Museum for the first record from Monterey Peninsula (VLY, RLB, GPL). Duck numbers do not seem to have been significantly different from last year, although Green-winged Teal and Am. Widgeon were more common at Merced Refuge. The danger of using reports of numbers of ducks at one location to determine general population levels may be seen by comparing the abnormally low numbers of Wood (2, Jan. 11, MJW) and Ring-necked Ducks (Dec. 8, RS, PDeB, JK, MM) at Conn Lake with the unusual numbers of Wood Ducks (140) at Laguna de Santa Rosa (Jan. 15, BDP & GLB) and of Ring-necked Ducks at Glen Ellen (up to 50—twice the usual total number of all ducks on this lake [MS]). Rare ducks reported included Blue-winged Teal (lighthouse pond, Pacific Grove, Jan. 1—Feb. 3 [RLB, RS, GMcC]; 6 miles north of Santa Cruz, Feb. 27 [FEH & VW]), Barrow's Goldeneye (two immature males "with nearly completely developed crescents," foot of 7th St., Oakland, Jan. 4 and thereafter [RS & JK, many observers]), and Oldsquaw (8 males, Alameda, on Oakland Christmas count [VDaC, ER, et al.]; 1 male, Navy Postgraduate School pond, Monterey, Feb. 10 [RLB & GPL]).

Vultures, Kites, Eagles—The early reappearance of Turkey Vultures (Feb. 18) and California Condors (2, Feb. 28, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Webb, *vide MEM*; description given) in the Springville area of Tulare County was ascribed to "exceedingly dry weather and an early spring" (MEM). Reports of White-tailed Kites continue reassuringly numerous. Few winter hawks were seen, but reports of 5 Bald Eagles from four localities are encouraging.

Cranes, Rails—Sandhill Cranes seemed to be present at more than their normal wintering grounds; over 1000 were at San Lucas, Monterey County, Feb. 21 (RLB & GPL), several thousand were at Merced Refuge, where there are normally only a few score (DNW), and some 200 were 10 miles SW of Chico, Dec. 29 (EH; reported to EH by other observers throughout the winter). Appearance of 250 south of Sacramento on Feb. 21 was believed to indicate migration (EP & MP). No less than 70 Common Gallinules were seen at Merced Refuge, Jan. 25 (JHD).

Shorebirds—Among shorebirds, perhaps the most interesting reports are of many uncommon species wintering in the Humboldt Bay area. Besides the Rock Sandpipers considered regular there (max. 11, RS & GMcC, Dec. 18), the north jetty at the mouth of the bay produced a Snowy Plover (Dec. 7, FZ),

2 Semipalmated Plovers (Dec. 7, FZ), and Wandering Tattlers (max. 5 [FZ]; one observed still farther north at Crescent City, Dec. 19 [RS & GMcC]; numerous reports suggest that it may be unusually common as a winterer this year); Mad River Slough (near Arcata) produced a Lesser Yellowlegs (Dec. 18, RS & GMcC) and 5 Knots (Dec. 18, RS & GMcC), and 67 Am. Avocets were observed at the north end of Humboldt Bay on Dec. 17, 31 on Jan. 4 (FZ)—a notably northern wintering record. An Am. Golden Plover was observed on Jan. 4 at Bodega Bay (BDP & GLB), and, most unusual, 5 Baird's Sandpipers were seen in the San Leandro Bay area on the Oakland Christmas count, Jan. 1 (VDeC); this is the first known winter observation in this Region, but the observer described all field marks carefully in conversation with one of the editors. Unusual (for winter) occurrences of Am. Avocets included 50+ at Woodland sugar ponds, Feb. 1 (MJW) and one at Chico sewage plat, Jan. 26 (Janet Turner, *vide* EH). Phalaropes straggled very late; 100+ Red Phalaropes were at Monterey, Dec. 14–15 (GMcC) and one was seen at Rodeo Lagoon, Marin County, Jan. 18 (VDeC); 10 Northern Phalaropes were at the east end of Dumbarton Bridge, Alameda County, Dec. 1 (RS & JK).

Jaegers, Gulls, Terns, Alcids—From San Jose Donald D. McLean reported a Parasitic Jaeger which "travels regularly back and forth each day [with gulls] from the bay to Calero Dam, where it has been seen robbing gulls, also on school grounds of Schellenberger School, where it also robs gulls of children's lunch hand-outs." Observations of individual Black-legged Kittiwakes from shore were augmented by 15–20 off Half Moon Bay, Jan. 10 (PDeB); but the species was more common off southern California. A Forster's Tern at Yolo Bypass, Jan. 26 (MJW) is unusual for winter. Reports of Ancient Murrelets suggest an unusual number this year, the high being 11 at Bodega Head, Jan. 4 (GLB & BDP).

Goatsuckers, Swifts, Hummingbirds—The first Poor-will specimen for the Monterey Peninsula flew into car headlights at Point Lobos on Feb. 1. This species, which occurs commonly nearby in summer, is a "rare transient" on the Monterey Peninsula (VLY). Three Vaux's Swifts were studied closely on Dec. 23 with a group of about 20 Violet-green Swallows near Carmel. This is the first winter record for the Monterey Peninsula (RLB, ATN, & OA), although there is one previous winter observation in Marin County. Since Chimney Swifts have been found in winter in a torpid condition, an occasional winter record of this species within its breeding range is highly suggestive. An adult male *Black-chinned Hummingbird* at Pacific Grove, on Jan. 11 (RS) is unprecedented. The bird does not regularly breed that far north along the coast, and this is the first winter record for this Region.

Flycatchers—Although there were no Tropical Kingbirds reported in the San Francisco Bay area for the first time in five winters, a single bird turned up unusually far north on the tip of the Samoa Peninsula, Humboldt County, on Dec. 7; it was not seen

subsequently (FZ). On the same day a *Myiarchus* flycatcher thought to be an Ash-throated (distinguished from Olivaceous and Wied's Crested, but not from the very similar Nutting's, whose range is only slightly more southerly than that of the Tropical Kingbird) was seen at the remarkable location of Ferndale, Humboldt County (FZ). An Eastern Phoebe, the fourth record for this Region, wintered at San Jose Creek, Point Lobos State Park, where it was seen by numerous observers (RLB, ATN, AW); a good clear photograph was examined by the editors. A Say's Phoebe wintered north of its usual winter limit along the coast (Sonoma County) on the Samoa Peninsula, where it was seen on Dec. 7 and Jan. 24 (FZ).

Swallows—Swallows wintered more widely and abundantly than usual in the Region. Violet-green Swallows, which until recently were thought not to occur every winter, outnumbered Tree Swallows at Santa Rosa, where they have wintered regularly since 1955 (GLB). In Monterey County up to 150 were seen on Jan. 7 at Big Sur (RLB). Tree Swallows occurred as far north in the Central Valley as Grey Lodge Waterfowl Area for the first time since 1955, where 12 were seen on Jan. 26 (EH). Most remarkable of all were two reports of Rough-winged Swallows: 3 at the Salinas River mouth, Monterey County, Jan. 9 (RLB) and a single bird near Cordelia, Solano County, Dec. 17 (RS & JK).

Nuthatches—Red-breasted Nuthatches, which swarmed to the coast in a major invasion last fall, were no more in evidence than usual along the coast and southward in this Region during the winter, but they remained "unusually abundant" in the north end of the Central Valley (Tehama and Butte Counties). At Mineral, Tehama County, 64 birds were found on the Christmas count, as compared with 12 and 31 on the last two Christmas counts; 12 of those 64 were at elevations of 5000 to 6000 feet (EH).

Mockingbirds—These continue the northward and westward expansion apparent through much of this century. One bird wintered at Redding, Shasta County, where they are known as "occasional" but "becoming more usual" (RC1), and 2 others at Fort Bragg, on the coast (Mendocino County), where there was a similar record three years ago (RC).

Thrushes—Robins, after having been scarce in the low country last winter (although their numbers were nearer normal in the north and at higher elevations), moved in great numbers into the lowlands in January and February. All observers commented upon the apparent "return" of this species, whose numbers did not, however, match the great wintering flocks of 1961–2. To cite one of many reports, the Chico Christmas count reported 352 Robins, as compared with an all-time low of 6 in 1962 and an all-time high of 1225 in 1961 (EH).

The winter movements of this species in the Middle Pacific Region are still poorly understood. It is all too easy to conclude that the population has declined dramatically, when in fact the birds may merely have remained in the north or in the mountains. Suggestive reports have come from Mrs. Mabel E. Mires in Tulare County, where Robins and Cedar

Waxwings move down when snow falls at low elevations in the mountains.

Varied Thrushes were less common than usual in the lowlands this winter, although their numbers may have been nearer normal at higher elevations in Tulare County (*MEM*) and in Sonoma County (*GLB*). Hermit Thrushes, similarly, were scarcer than usual in such lowland areas as South San Jose, Santa Clara County (*DDMcL*), but "numerous" at higher elevations, as in Tulare County (*MEM*).

Gnatcatchers—The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, ordinarily a sparse winter visitor to lowlands in this Region, made the best winter showing since 1955. One bird was seen repeatedly at Carmel from October through February, and another on Jan. 7 at the mouth of the Big Sur River (*RLB*). Other reports, which may represent only lingering migrants, came from San Francisco (Nov. 17, *SK*) and Thornton, San Joaquin County (Nov. 24–25, *BM*).

Waxwings, Silky Flycatchers, Shrikes, Starlings—A minor invasion of Bohemian Waxwings failed to reach the proportions of the great influx of 1961–2. Reports came from four localities: more than 200 feeding on *Toyon* berries near Lucerne, Lake County, on Jan. 14 (*JH*); two birds observed in South Sacramento on Dec. 29 (*EP & MP*); 30 birds at Saratoga (Santa Clara County) on Feb. 22 (*DDMcL*); and repeated observation of 6 to 8 birds at South San Jose (*DDMcL*). Cedar Waxwings, like Robins, flocked in great numbers in the lowlands in January and February. At South San Jose waxwings were present in "considerably greater numbers" than in any year since 1958 (*DDMcL*); 2500 birds were seen in one flock at Diablo Valley College, Contra Costa County, Feb. 14 (*RS*). Phainopeplas, which sporadically winter as far north as they breed, were reported in the greatest numbers since 1955; a pair was observed regularly on the Stanford University campus (Santa Clara County) from Feb. 17 on (*JHD*), a pair was found at Pinnacles National Monument (San Benito County) on Feb. 20 (*GPL*), and 5 birds were seen at Pleytos (Monterey County) on Jan. 11 (*RLB*).

No reports of Northern Shrikes were received in this Region, although 3 birds were seen just east of our borders at Honey Lake on Dec. 20 (*GMcC*). The continued rapid increase of the Starling as a wintering bird in California was further documented; to the north, the largest flock so far seen at Redding, Shasta County, 50 birds, was observed, Jan. 8–10 (*RCL*). A flock of about 6000 wintered near San Jose (*DDMcL*).

Vireos, Warblers—Last fall's remarkable accumulations of stray eastern warblers on promontories and headlands carried over into the winter season, especially on the Monterey Peninsula. Palm Warblers, which had been the most widespread of the vagrant migrants, continued to hold first place during the winter. At least one bird was observed repeatedly all winter at Monterey (*RLB*, *GMcC*, *AW*), and 4 were seen at once on Dec. 23 (*RLB*). Although this species, formerly unknown except for one 1898 record, has been reported regularly as a migrant in the last ten years, only in the winters of 1952–3 and 1954–5

were there previous winter records. An Am. Redstart was also seen repeatedly through the winter at Monterey (*GMcC*, *RLB*).

Among normal nesting warblers that do not normally winter in the Region, a single Wilson's Warbler was seen at San Jose Creek, Point Lobos State Park, on Jan. 22 (*RS*, *JK*); 2 Nashville Warblers were seen from December through Feb. 16 at Carmel (*GMcC*, *RLB*), and a single bird at Monterey on Feb. 2 (*AW*). There appear to be no previous winter records for Wilson's Warbler in this Region, and only two possible winter records (1955, 1959) for Nashville Warbler.

Unusual wintering warblers were reported outside the Monterey Peninsula as well. Another Wilson's Warbler was seen at Arcata, Humboldt County, on Dec. 4 (*FZ*). One Black-throated Gray Warbler was found in a large winter flock of 6 Townsend's Warblers, 10 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and 15 Bushtits in a live-oak grove on the north slope of the Santa Lucia Mts. (inland Monterey County), Feb. 15 (*ROP & GP*). There are three winter records of this warbler in the past seven years from localities as far north as Eureka. Even the normal wintering Townsend's Warblers were found north of their usual Sonoma County limit along the coast; one bird was observed on the Samoa Peninsula on Dec. 10 and another at Arcata on Dec. 9 and Feb. 20 (*FZ*).

Icteridae—Two male Yellow-headed Blackbirds were seen north of their usual Central Valley wintering range at Grey Lodge Waterfowl Area, Butte County, on Feb. 23 (*EH*).

Up to 10 (perhaps 11) orioles, all in female or immature male plumage, were seen repeatedly all winter in the now notorious eucalyptus grove at Pacific Grove, where there were 4 orioles last winter (*RLB*, *VLV*, *GMcC*). It is very difficult to identify all these birds with any certainty without collecting them. One possible breakdown lists 5 Baltimore's, 2 Bullock's, and 3 others which may be Hoodeds or Orchards. The normal criteria of range provide no guidance, for the eastern vagrants seem fully as likely to appear in midwinter in this Region as the normal summer nesting species. Are there readers of these reports, either amateur or professional ornithologists, who can supply helpful distinctions, such as bill size and shape, to separate dull-plumaged Orchards from Hoodeds in the field? There must be few places in this country where such an assemblage of orioles occurs together in the wild.

At least 4 other orioles reported outside the Monterey Peninsula. One male Hooded was observed all winter at San Jose (*DDMcL*). An oriole with a yellowish belly, thought to be a Hooded, was observed on Feb. 4 and 9 on Bay Farm Island, Alameda County (*ER*), and 2 birds thought to be Bullock's were seen at Chico (Jan. 28, *EH*) and Redding, Shasta County (Feb. 26, *RC1*). All such identifications must remain tentative as long as eastern vagrants seem more likely in midwinter than the nesting species; any oriole in midwinter in this Region is remarkable.

Tanagers—At least 12 tanagers were included among the displaced birds on the Monterey Peninsula.

Ten Western Tanagers (VLY, RLB, ATN, GMcC) and one *Summer Tanager* (VLY, RLB) were at Pacific Grove. A female or young male *Summer Tanager* was observed regularly and its call heard at Carmel from Dec. 2 through Feb. 20 (GPL, RLB). These birds constitute the third and fourth records of *Summer Tanager* for this Region. One Western Tanager also wintered outside the Monterey Peninsula, at Glen Ellen, Sonoma Co. (MS).

Fringillids—One male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, with no leg band, turned up at the same feeder in Santa Rosa where a bird identified as a female was banded last year, and was observed from Dec. 18 through Dec. 25 (*vide* MS). Evening Grosbeaks invaded the lowlands in moderate numbers, with reports from as far south and west as Carmel (RLB).

Pine Siskins wandered more widely and abundantly than usual, even into the San Joaquin Valley (BM). Vee K. Curtis banded three times her normal number (22) at Chico, between Feb. 6 and 28.

Red Crossbills irrupted into the lowlands, even to valley floor localities such as San Jose, where they occurred for the first time at the property of Donald D. McLean. Four birds were in the Central Valley at South Sacramento on Feb. 4 (BK). There were many other reports elsewhere in the Region, up to March 28 at Points Reyes (ROP + HHJ).

A single bright *Sharp-tailed Sparrow* at the east end of the Dumbarton Bridge, Alameda County, on Dec. 1 (MM, RS, AW, ROP, and G.G.A.S.), taken in conjunction with a recent specimen, suggests that this bird winters perhaps less sporadically than suspected, well hidden in a habitat little frequented by bird students.

Five White-throated Sparrows (FEH, BDP, GLB) and 5 Slate-colored Juncos (BK, AW, MJW) are a normal report for these uncommon but regular wintering species. No Harris' Sparrows were reported this year within the Region.

Chipping Sparrows wintered north of their usual range in Monterey County, where one was seen on Jan. 11 (RLB, VLY) and at Chico, where one was banded (?) on Feb. 17 (VKC). *Zonotrichia* sparrows were back to normal in the lowlands after low numbers last winter. About 20% more than last year were banded at South San Jose (DDMcL). A Swamp Sparrow was observed at San Jose Creek, Point Lobos State Park, Jan. 22 (RS).

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