

MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION.—The Winter Season in the Middle Pacific Coast Region was not marked by noteworthy population trends, insofar



as the Region's reporters could discern. The main weather feature of the season was extensive flooding in northern California during Christmas week. Since there are few reporters in the affected area, and since their mobility was drastically curtailed, we have only limited evidence of the floods' effects on birdlife. Fewer stragglers were reported from the Monterey Peninsula, Point Lobos, Point Reyes, the Samoa Peninsula and other "vagrant traps" than in previous winters, although some interesting flycatchers, orioles, tanagers, and warblers appeared outside their normal winter ranges. No very firm conclusions could be drawn about wintering thrush and finch populations from an unusually ambiguous set of reports. It was a season of normalcy, with few surprises and no conspicuous invasions.

A major event in this Region, one which will affect ornithology in the country at large, was the establishment of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, which went into operation on March 1 in the new Point Reyes National Seashore, fifty miles north of San Francisco. Sometime regional editor Paul De Benedictis is serving as the first resident biologist of the station, setting up a permanent program of trapping and banding non-game birds. The Director of the Observatory is Professor L. Richard Mewaldt of San Jose State College.

The purpose of the Observatory is to increase knowledge of migrant and resident bird populations along the Pacific Coast by intensive banding. We know of no comparable full-time professional banding station now operating in this country. Its location is particularly promising. In the coastal chaparral and pasture country of the outer Point Reyes penin-

sula, occasional cypress oases collect concentrations of migrants, and the Point's role as an accumulator of vagrants is well known to the readers of these pages.

The Observatory is now supported by contributions and memberships. Readers of this journal who would like to contribute or become members may write to the Point Reyes Observatory, Star Route, Lighthouse Road, Inverness, Calif., for further information. Members receive the Observatory's annual report and enjoy visitors' privileges. Simple dormitory facilities are available for those who, with the Director's approval, wish to undertake research projects or help with the program of the Observatory.

Shearwaters, Petrels—Although Fulmars continued to be much less common than in the last two years, fair numbers were seen on the Monterey and Santa Cruz Christmas counts. The fall's records of Slender-billed Shearwaters were added to by one well identified from Tomales Point, Marin Co., Jan. 1 (AW). On Feb. 27 Fred Zeillemaker, *et al.* banded 10 Fork-tailed Petrels and 274 Leach's (of over 500 present) on an offshore rock near Trinidad, Humboldt Co. (known as a breeding area for both species.) The Leach's Petrel is accounted a "summer resident" in Grinnell and Miller, *The Distribution of the Birds of California*, though there are winter reports from the San Francisco Bay area; but the bird is so rarely seen near shore in daylight hours that it is not surprising that it has not previously been recorded farther north in winter.

Pelicans, Herons, Ibises—About 350 White Pelicans migrating eastward over Hayward, Alameda Co., Dec. 3, included two orange-dyed birds (from the colony at Lower Klamath Refuge) (HLC). Dr. Cogswell comments on a roost of about 35 Black-crowned Night Herons in southern Alameda County: "Numbers are the largest (even though small compared to former numbers) I've seen in recent years about the Bay." White-faced Ibises were observed at Los Banos State Waterfowl Management Area from Jan. 28 on (ROW, JK, T & ZC, PO & Jim Cunison). A *Wood Ibis* was observed on four occasions by a total of 8 observers at East Adams Slough, Cache Creek, Yolo Co., Dec. 5-27 (BK); probably a straggler from the 3 seen at Woodlands in August.

Geese and Ducks—The heavy rains and flooding conditions of late December resulted in a dispersal of geese from the Central Valley refuges, so that only about 10 percent as many were on Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa and Sutter (SRW) and Merced (KAW) Nat'l Wildlife Refuges in early January as in early December; in February the geese had largely returned to the refuges. Ducks also dispersed to the many water areas created by the rains (ROW, SRW), but the effect is less perceptible in the available data, and they apparently returned to the refuges earlier. The state-wide duck census showed a 27 percent increase over the preceding January (4,574,000 ducks as against 3,601,000 [*vide* SRW]). Goose numbers recorded were down 4 percent, but this is attributed to spreading with flood conditions. The only *Emperor Goose* recorded this winter was at Woodlands, Yolo Co., Feb. 6 (MW). Gadwall were reported

increased over last year at two Central Valley locations (MP, KAW) with a peak of 1235 at Merced Refuge in early January. A drake Blue-winged Teal and 2 females at the head of San Leandro Bay, Oakland, Jan. 3, were unusual, especially for being on salt water (RS). Good numbers of Wood Ducks were seen near Chico (140, Dec. 7—EH) and at Beale AFB, (88 on one pond, Feb. 14—MP). A Greater Scaup, rarely reported inland, was at the "pocket" area of Sacramento, Feb. 12, and was later joined by another pair (6 observers, including BK; good details); possibly birds which had earlier taken advantage of flood conditions? Unusual numbers of Barrow's Goldeneyes were reported in the San Francisco Bay area this winter: up to 6 (including females) at Lake Merritt, Oakland (RS, many observers), 5 at Point Molate, Richmond, Feb. 11 (JS), 6 at Tiburon, Marin Co. (Lynn Stafford, *vide* W. S. Picher), and at least one on the Tomales Bay Christmas count, Jan. 1. Possibly they had been driven from inland streams by floods and consequent muddy water. At least 14 Oldsquaws were reported (usually about 5 a winter), including 4 on salt evaporation ponds (HLC, RLB). Some 60+ Common Mergansers 15 miles north of Red Bluff, Tehama Co., Dec. 31, were an unusual concentration (EH).

Hawks—Although no concentrations were reported, observers continued to mention the increase in White-tailed Kites. An immature Goshawk was at Los Banos State Waterfowl Management Area on Feb. 13 (T & ZC, JK), only the second record outside the mountains in recent years. Few reports of Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks were received (not a good year, but not a really bad one), but Bald Eagles are perhaps increased, despite the efforts of Marin County rancher Leroy Martinelli, who in January shot a Golden Eagle and a Bald, claiming they were molesting his sheep. Reports in the press indicate that they were not molesting when shot, and that there is grave doubt whether they ever molested live sheep; the case is in the Federal courts. Three reports of Prairie Falcons from coastal counties were received, and Peregrines and Pigeon Hawks were apparently normal.

Cranes, Rails—Sandhill Cranes apparently wintered in the Sacramento Valley in larger numbers than in recent years (EH, TC, AW & MHE); migration over Sacramento was first observed on Feb. 21, the same date as last year (ERP). Single Black Rails were observed on Dec. 16 and Jan. 14 in Alameda (RS); undoubtedly they are normal occurrences, but who sees them?

Shorebirds—A Snowy Plover at San Luis Wasteway Waterfowl Management Area, near Volta, Merced Co., Feb. 17 (ROW) was the first seen in the area by the observer in 12 years there, though it is listed as locally resident in the San Joaquin Valley by Hoffman (*Birds of the Pacific States*, 1927) and Grinnell and Miller (1944). Besides such normal winterers in the Humboldt Bay region as Snowy Plover (3), Surf-bird, Wandering Tattler, Rock Sandpiper (10), and Western Sandpiper (2100), 10 Long-billed Curlews and a Whimbrel were at Arcata Bottoms on Feb. 5 (FZ, *et al.*). Knots were

perhaps a little commoner than usual in the San Francisco Bay area, including one at Schooner Bay, Point Reyes Nat'l Seashore, on Jan. 1, for what is believed to be the first Marin County record (HLC). A Rock Sandpiper was at Duncans Cove, Sonoma Co., Dec. 30 (GMcC); considering how much inaccessible rocky coastline there is in this Region, the species may be a more common winterer than is commonly believed. Dr. Howard Cogswell notes that the Marbled Godwit is less inclined to shift its waiting (non-feeding) grounds than most species of shorebirds, returning to the same dikes repeatedly despite frequent disturbance. Black-necked Stilts arrived in the Los Banos area at least by Feb. 15, two weeks earlier than usual (ROW). The species winters rarely, at least on the east side along San Francisco Bay (north of the east end of San Mateo Bridge, 3, Jan. 23 [HLC]).

Jaegers, Gulls, Alcids—Again as last winter (AFN:18:3:383) and the two preceding, a Parasitic Jaeger flew back and forth between San Francisco Bay and Calero Dam with gulls (DDMcL); the same individual? No fewer than 8 well identified Glaucous Gulls were reported: Dillons Beach, Marin Co., Jan. 1, 1 first-year bird (RS, Ken Schulz); Oakland Scavenger Co. dump, San Leandro, Jan. 3 and 5, 1 second-year bird (HLC); Berkeley dump, San Leandro, Jan. 3, second-year bird (PDeB, MHE); Palo Alto, Jan. 7, nearly adult (TCk); Point Molate, Feb. 11, 3 (JS); and Palo Alto March 2, immature (TCk, JK). This probably reflects less an increase in numbers than in ability to identify this species, one of the most difficult field problems in this Region. Dr. Cogswell says of the Herring Gull at dumps in the Oakland area: "Predominantly a 'garbage-feeder' in this area. It often outnumbered even the Glaucous-winged Gull, which was always most common in such situations in the 1950's." Another winterer at Oakland dumps was a Heermann's Gull, which winters very uncommonly in this area, normally on the shore of the open ocean. The winter occurrence of the Sabine's Gull in this Region was confirmed by a bird inland at Santa Rosa, Jan. 3 (GLB, Dr. John Arnold). The second California record of the *Thick-billed Murre* was a bird found in Monterey harbor, Feb. 22, by Mrs. Helen Lind of the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, and identified by curator Vern Yadon, who writes: "In the event that any future sight records are turned in to the *Field Notes*, the description in *Birds of Alaska* should be referred to. A winter-plumage Thick-billed Murre *in the hand* is not an easy bird to identify. It comes more easily with a ruler."

Owls, Pigeons—A Burrowing Owl was at the North Jetty, Samoa Peninsula, Humboldt Bay, Dec. 4 (FZ); it has been considered "rare or absent" in the northwest coastal zone (Grinnell and Miller). A Band-tailed Pigeon squab brought to the Pacific Grove Natural History Museum (Monterey Co.) in December was only the latest in a series of observations which suggest that the species occasionally breeds in December and January in Monterey County in open winters (VLY). A bird was also

reported seen on a nest at Pacific Grove on Dec. 28 (Mrs. William Reese, *vide* RLB). Previous published nesting records in California range from February 1 through November 1 (H. J. Peeters, *Condor* 64:450).

Swifts, Woodpeckers—White-throated Swifts wintered somewhat north of their normal winter limit. Along the coast, 4 birds were feeding with Violet-green Swallows at Santa Rosa, Sonoma Co. on Jan. 3, and a single bird was with Tree Swallows in the same area on Feb. 10 (BDP, GB, Dr. John Arnold). In the Central Valley, 6 birds on Jan. 6 were a first report from the San Luis State Waterfowl Management Area, Merced Co. (ROW). Nuttall's Woodpeckers, ordinarily restricted in this Region to interior foothills, were reported on two coastal Christmas counts: Santa Cruz, Jan. 1 (present all month) and Tomales Bay, Jan. 1 (Aileen Pierson; present on the Point Reyes Peninsula at least since last summer [C. John Ralph]). A report of at least 6 White-headed Woodpeckers feeding together in a group of twelve woodpeckers in a large Sugar Pine near Morgan Summit, Tehama Co. at 5500 feet, suggests occasional flocking behavior that does not seem to be mentioned in the literature (EH).

Flycatchers, Swallows—An Eastern Phoebe remained along San Jose Creek, Point Lobos, Monterey Co. from Dec. 28 through February, in the same field where one was present last winter (RLB, VLY, GMcC). Violet-green Swallows continue to winter as far north along the coast as Sonoma County, as they have done regularly since 1961. About 50 Violet-greens were at Santa Rosa on Jan. 6 (BDP). More remarkable were reports of Cliff Swallows wintering for the second consecutive year in Pine Canyon, Contra Costa Co. (LF). Swallows migrated early in some places. A group of 250 Tree Swallows at Santa Rosa on Feb. 3, where a few birds also occasionally winter, suggested "the earliest arrival date in years" (BDP). A single Rough-winged Swallow was seen in Solano County on Feb. 22 (RS). Cliff Swallows were at Los Banos Refuge on Feb. 13 (ROW) and in Solano County on Feb. 22 (RS).

Maggies, Chickadees—A Yellow-billed Magpie feeding in a park in the center of Cotati, Sonoma Co. on Feb. 20 (BDP) appears to be the second sight record of this interior species on the coastal slope north of San Francisco Bay; it is believed to be the first in Sonoma County. Chestnut-backed Chickadees continued to expand their range in Contra Costa County (LF).

Mockingbirds, Thrashers, Thrushes—The Mockingbird continues to expand as a wintering species in north-central California. It is now a "common" winterer in Sonoma County (BDP); and in South San Jose, Santa Clara Co., it has "more than doubled in the last twelve years" (DDMcL). A single bird was at Arcata, Humboldt Co. throughout the winter (FZ). Sage Thrashers were found north and west of their usual wintering area. At least 2 were at Point Reyes between March 19 and 22 (PDeB), and a more remarkable report was re-

ceived of a single bird in the Sacramento Valley at Marysville, Yuba Co. on Jan. 2 (MP). The only previous winter record this far north is of a bird collected near Livermore, Alameda Co. on March 18, 1964 (RS). Wintering thrushes presented a more ambiguous picture than usual. Robins built up in the lowlands from low numbers in December to a February peak as usual, but their numbers were described as "moderate" (HLC) or "slightly below normal" (DDMcL) in the general vicinity of San Francisco Bay. Farther north, a flock of 15,000 was at Arcata, Humboldt Co. in early February (FZ). Hermit Thrushes have generally not returned to the peak numbers of 1960-61.

Kinglets, Starlings—An unusual case of albinism in a Ruby-crowned Kinglet was carefully observed at Inverness, Marin Co. (GM). The bird's erectile crest seemed to be pure white. Reporters in all areas except Sonoma County commented on the continued rapid increase of the Starling population. Flocks going to roost on the Point Reyes Peninsula totaled some 16,300 birds on Jan. 1 (HLC). At Los Banos Refuge, Starlings increased from about a dozen last winter on the waterfowl area to "several thousand" this winter (ROW). Lynn Farrar observed competition between Starlings and woodpeckers, and a number of other observers speculated on the impact of Starlings upon native hole-nesters.

Waxwings, Phainopeplas—No Bohemian Waxwings were reported in the Region. Cedar Waxwings presented an even more ambiguous impression than usual. At Cotati, Sonoma Co., the peak of the winter build-up was reached about Feb. 10, when "thousands" were observed (BDP). Banding evidence at South San Jose, Santa Clara Co. suggested that numbers were slightly below normal (DDMcL). Phainopeplas wintered north to Burson, Calaveras Co. in the Central Valley (BM); also along the coast to the Hunter Liggett Reservation, Monterey Co., where 5 were seen on Jan. 10 along the San Antonio River in a spot where they have wintered before (VLY, RLB).

Warblers—Warblers were represented by some unusual winter stragglers, as is now considered normal in this Region where, at least along the coast, winter conditions are sufficiently mild to permit insectivorous birds to survive. Two Black-and-white Warblers were present in Carmel, Monterey Co. on December 28, one of them at the same feeding station at Asilomar where one had been observed in October (RLB). Two Nashville Warblers spent the winter at a Carmel locality where the species has been found regularly in recent winters (RLB, GMcC). A Hermit Warbler, seen daily at Inverness, Marin Co. after Jan. 2, was slightly north of its usual wintering limit (GM). The Palm Warbler at Dillons Beach, Marin Co. was seen up through Jan. 1 (TC, AW); another was at Carmel on Dec. 27 (GMcC). Neither of these birds was seen subsequently. A *MacGillivray's Warbler* was reported wintering in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco (KRS). A confirmed winter record of this species would be the first for the Region.

Among the normal wintering warblers, Town-

send's Warblers were commoner than ever before at Inverness, Marin Co., where 14 or more rather than the usual 2 or 3 were present around the home of Grace Miller. By contrast, Audubon's and Myrtle Warblers appeared very low in numbers to those observers who commented on these species (*DDMcL*, *MEM*).

Orioles, Tanagers—The astonishing accumulation of wintering orioles and tanagers present at Pacific Grove during the past two winters failed to reappear this season. A single Western Tanager was there on Dec. 27 (*PDeB*, *GMcC*, *JK*). Another Western Tanager, this time from an inland location, turned up on Feb. 11 at the Jack London Ranch, Glen Ellen, Sonoma Co. (*MS*). Remarkable coastal vagrants farther north were 2 Bullock's Orioles at Arcata, Humboldt Co. on Dec. 15 (*FZ*).

Finches, Sparrows, Buntings—Five reports of White-throated Sparrows (*MS*, *RLB*, *LF*, *HCA*) and four of Slate-colored Juncos (*GM*, *RS*, *HCA*) were normal for the season. Individual Harris' Sparrows were reported from two localities: South San Jose (*DDMcL*), and the Del Norte County Christmas count (present since Nov. 7); the species occurs in many, but not all winter seasons. Reports of the normal wintering sparrows were too ambiguous to permit strong conclusions. Winter finches, especially Purple Finches, were notably uncommon (*LF*, *MEM*). After a banner season last year, Pine Siskins were little in evidence. Only one Central Valley bird was reported to the Sacramento Audubon Society (*MP*).

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Corrigendum—The altitude of the late Barn Swallow nesting record in Tehama County (*AFN* 19(1):74, Feb. 1965) should read 4600 ft., not 600 ft.