

MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION. — Of special interest during the spring period were the unprece-dented numbers of Black-footed Albatrosses found



along the coast. While on the subject of seabirds, it was good to learn of the detailed censuses now being made of breeding bird populations on the Farallon Islands by personnel of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory. The revelation that there is widespread DDT contamination of marine food chains, as well as increasing oil pollution along the coast, make detailed censuses of seabird colonies necessary as groundwork for future conservation efforts. In the same vein, the comments of several contributors on the disappearance of Black Terns and perhaps, to a lesser extent, of Wilson's Phalaropes, from the San Joaquin Valley, with the suggestion that aerial spraying of rice paddies is to blame, make it incumbent on all observers to watch the scene closely.

Probably the single most exciting event of the season was the initiation of Operation Transect by the

Northern California chapter of the Western Bird Banding Association. Thanks to the help of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, the project was a success. Thirteen stations were established, generally located between 37°N and 39°N, across the state from the Farallon Islands and Point Reyes on the west to Mono Lake and Deep Springs in the east. These stations were manned continuously for ten days from May 1 to 10. A similar transect was run in southern California during the same ten-day period. The results of this project are being analyzed and will be published in detail elsewhere. The preliminary results, however, indicate that there are, indeed, waves of migrants passing through the Region and that these waves, like the similar but larger waves in the East, can be correlated with weather patterns.

Several observers commented on the apparent scarcity of landbird migrants. One of them (*EAP*), located at Oroville in the foothills of the Sierras, blamed this on "the misguided efforts of a local mosquito abatement man who plane-sprays every morning with Malathion!"

Loons, Grebes — The usual heavy coastal migration of Arctic Loons was observed in the Monterey area, where 215 were noted flying north in 15 minutes on April 16 (*AB*), with 860 counted on the water off Pacific Grove on April 26 (*VR*). The big flocks had broken up by May 13 (*VR*). Fourteen Red-necked Grebes were seen in southern Monterey Bay on April 26 (*VR*), and 2 were noted in nearby Carmel Bay on May 11 (*VR*). An estimated 1000 Eared Grebes were counted near Coyote Hills Regional Park, Alameda Co. on April 23 (*WMP*).

Albatrosses, Shearwaters, Storm Petrels — This spring produced larger numbers of Black-footed Albatrosses than have been previously reported from the state. A remarkable 200+ were observed from a boat off Eureka on April 26, with no less than 112 around the boat at one time (*R.R.A.S., TE*). In Monterey Bay, numbers rose from 15 on April 18 to a maximum of 131 on May 27, including 83 on the water around one fishing boat (*VR*). This species was observed from Point Pinos, Monterey Co. on eight separate days during the period of May 3-28, with maxima of 11 on May 3 and 31 on May 28 (*VR*). We have no explanation for this influx. Up to 4 Fulmars were reported from Monterey Bay on three occasions (*AB, VR*). Pink-footed Shearwaters were reported off Eureka, 15 on April 26 (*R.R.A.S., TE*) and off the Farallon Islands, 4 on the same date (*G.G.A.S., AB*), with 27 noted in Monterey Bay on May 27 (*VR*). Over 30 Sooty Shearwaters were noted off Eureka on April 26 (*R.R.A.S., TE*). One or two Fork-tailed Petrels were seen in Monterey Bay on three dates in April (*AB, VR*, Laidlaw Williams). On the Farallon Islands, Ashy Petrels increased from small numbers in April to close to 5000, May 20-26 (*JL*). In Monterey Bay, where this species is rare in spring, 2 were seen on April 29 (*AB, VR*). Leach's Petrels were not found on the Farallons until May 8, but an estimated 500-1000 were present by late May (*JL*).

Pelicans, Cormorants — Large numbers of White Pelicans remained late in the San Joaquin Valley, with 400 present on San Luis Islands Nat'l Wildlife Refuge,

Merced Co., May 15-25, and 175 still at nearby Los Banos Waterfowl Management Area, Merced Co. on May 31 (*U.S.F.W.S., GAS, ROW*). Up to 50 Double-crested Cormorants, 5000 Brandt's Cormorants and 3000 Pelagic Cormorants were present on South Farallon by the end of the period (*JL*). We hope that the details of breeding success may be available for the next report. A die-off of Brandt's Cormorants again occurred at Monterey this spring: 22 freshly dead, unopened birds were found in early April along one mile of beach (Gene Gerdes, *AB*).

Hérons — Evidence of Great Blue Heron rookeries was reported as follows: 200-300 pairs just north of San Luis Islands Refuge on April 18 (*U.S.F.W.S.*); 10+ pairs near Waterford, Stanislaus Co. on April 17 (*DMS*); 17 nests at Hogan Dam, Calaveras Co. on May 11 (*DMS*). Forty Com. Egret nests were visible on West Marin Is., Marin Co. and up to 175 Snowy Egrets were also present on the island (*ABu*). A flock of 9 Cattle Egrets observed and photographed near Moss Landing, Monterey Co. on April 5 (*MN, fide AB*) probably represented the remnant of the birds reported from nearby Watsonville, Santa Cruz Co. during the winter. Up to 200 Black-crowned Night Herons were present on West Marin Is. during the period (*ABu*). An adult Yellow-crowned Night Heron reappeared for the third successive year at San Rafael, Marin Co. on May 10 and was again photographed (*WMP*). A Least Bittern, always an uncommon bird in this area, was found dead, tangled on a barbed wire fence, at Los Banos W.M.A. on May 31 (*ROW*).

Waterfowl — The Fulvous Tree Duck reported at Coyote Hills Regional Park during the winter period remained until at least May 5 (*WMP*). A very late male Harlequin Duck was found at the southerly locality of Pescadero Beach, San Mateo Co. on May 10 (*JG & RG*). A female King Eider, last seen in Monterey Harbor in mid-March, was found again on May 29 and 30 (*WH*). The scoter die-off at Monterey at the end of the winter period persisted into early April, with numbers of dead, unopened White-winged Scoters and Surf Scoters found (*AB*). Up to 7 Com. Scoters remained at Monterey Harbor until May 6 (*AB, VR*). The last remaining Hooded Merganser of 6 wintering birds was seen at Lafayette Reservoir, Contra Costa Co. on May 5 (*TS*).

Condors, Hawks, Eagles — There were five reports of California Condors, involving 4 different birds, 2 adults and 2 immatures, in the Sierra foothills of Tulare County. None were reported "from the Coast Ranges north of San Luis Obispo County this year" (*U.S.F.W.S., GAS*). Two Red-shouldered Hawks found in April and May in the Smith River Valley, northern Del Norte Co. (*JJH*) were the most northerly known sightings in the western range of the species. At least 1 pair of Swainson's Hawks bred on San Luis Islands Refuge, although it was not indicated whether or not the nesting was successful (*U.S.F.W.S., GAS*); 8 migrants were observed at Oroville, Butte Co. on April 10 (Maxine Le Clerc, *fide EAP*). An adult Bald Eagle was seen over Arcata, Humboldt Co. on April 27 and 28 (*TE*). Three migrant Ospreys were reported away from known nesting areas during the period.

Coot, Shorebirds — An Am. Coot spent two weeks at South Farallon in late May (JL). A Snowy Plover with young was seen at Woodland, Yolo Co. in May (TM, JT, *fide* BK); the species was last reported breeding there in 1963. A count of 750 Black-bellied Plovers in southeastern San Joaquin County on April 6 (DMS) was a large number, and a report of 60 Surfbirds near Crescent City, Del Norte Co. on April 4 (JH) also was noteworthy. The Region's first inland report of the *Black Turnstone* was of a single bird noted at San Luis Wasteway Waterfowl Management Area on May 7 (ROW); to the south, in the Southern Pacific Coast Region, this species has been found inland at the Salton Sea on two occasions, both in May. A Solitary Sandpiper was found along Florin Road near Sacramento on April 16 (TM, JT, *fide* BK). Knots were reported only from Moss Landing, with 15 noted on April 26 and 2 still there on May 19 (AB). Away from the coast, a Marbled Godwit was observed on May 20 at San Luis Wasteway W.M.A. (ROW); this is a regular stopping place for the species. No Wilson's Phalaropes were found in the San Joaquin Valley, with aerial spraying of rice fields believed responsible for their absence (DMS). Very early Northern Phalaropes were found in Monterey Bay, with 33 noted on March 24 (AB), and a major flight soon developed, evidently caused by strong northwesterly winds, with birds present from April 14 through April 29. The peak of this flight occurred on April 14 when 51,150 were estimated to have passed Point Pinos between 7:45 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. (VR).

Jaegers, Gulls, Terns — Two adult Pomarine Jaegers were seen near the Farallon Islands on April 26 (G.G.A.S., AB); another was observed at Chicken Point, San Rafael, far from the open sea, on May 29 (ABU). A Parasitic Jaeger was noted at Point Pinos on May 28 (AB). A second-year Glaucous Gull was seen at Moss Landing until at least May 11 (JG & RG, *et al.*), and a bird in similar plumage, perhaps the same individual, was observed at Point Lobos Reserve, Monterey Co. on May 2 (LDF). A heavy gull migration was observed at South Farallon on April 14, involving, during a two-hour period, some 2000 Bonaparte's Gulls, 24 Black-legged Kittiwakes and many thousands of Western Gulls (LCB). Although the winter population of Black-legged Kittiwakes in Monterey Bay was very low, numbers rose steadily in May, with at least 150 visible on rocks at Point Pinos on May 28 (AB); 100 were seen flying north near the Farallon Islands on April 26 (G.G.A.S., AB). Common Terns were reported from four coastal localities, April 12-29. A pair of Least Terns observed at the mouth of the Salinas River, Monterey Co. on May 11 (JG & RG) was the only report. A Caspian Tern seen at the Farallon Islands on May 26 (JL) was considered off course. Three observers commented on the absence and one on the scarcity of Black Terns in the San Joaquin Valley this spring, and one of them (DMS) considered aerial spraying of rice fields to be the major factor.

Alcids — At South Farallon, numbers of Com. Murres increased from 4000 to 6000 during April and May, numbers of Pigeon Guillemots increased from 600 to 1500 during the same period, and numbers of

Cassin's Auklets, apparently the most common bird on the island, rose from 50,000 to 80,000 by mid-May, with the peak of egg-laying occurring around April 18. Numbers of Tufted Puffins at South Farallon rose from 3 in late April to 50 at the end of May (JL). About 30 Marbled Murrelets were seen from a boat off Eureka on April 26 (R.R.A.S., TE). A very late immature Ancient Murrelet was observed off South Farallon on May 26 (JL). Fourteen Cassin's Auklets and 4 Rhinoceros Auklets also were seen at sea off Eureka on April 26 (R.R.A.S., TE). In Monterey Bay, numbers of Rhinoceros Auklets declined from 50 on April 8 to 5 on May 27 (AB, VR).

Pigeons, Owls — Band-tailed Pigeons were reported as more numerous in the Santa Cruz Mountains than during the past several years (MP), and an unusually high estimate of 1400 was made in the plowed artichoke fields at the mouth of the Carmel River, Monterey Co. on May 3 (VR). The little-known Flammulated Owl was heard in two Sierran localities from which the species has not been reported in recent times: Mather, Tuolumne Co., 2 observed, May 19-21 (MP), and Sequoia Nat'l Forest, Tulare Co., in the exact location mapped out by J. T. Marshall 31 years ago, 2 seen on May 28 (JW).

Nighthawks, Swifts, Hummingbirds — Lesser Nighthawks again were found on South Farallon where the Common Nighthawk would be more expected, single birds being noted on May 19 and May 26 (JL); at San Luis Refuge, an area where this species would be considered normal but is seldom reported, 2 were seen on April 17 (GAS). Black Swifts were observed migrating in four coastal locations where they are seldom noted: 1 at Lafayette, Contra Costa Co. on April 28 (LDF); 4 at Arcata on April 30 (TE & CE); 3-4 at Alviso, Santa Clara Co. on May 2 (JG & RG); 4 at San Anselmo, Marin Co. on May 23 (WMP & ABU). Vaux's Swifts also were observed in migration along the coast, the most noteworthy reports being of 11 at Pacific Grove on April 28 (VR & AB) and 3 on South Farallon, May 5-26 (JL). Single Black-chinned Hummingbirds were found in three coastal locations where the species is considered vagrant: Plaskett Creek, Monterey Co. on April 13 (TC & ZC), Pacific Grove on April 26 (VR), and Oakland on May 28 (ST). A migratory concentration estimated at some 200 Rufous Hummingbirds was feeding on the flowers of the introduced eucalyptus trees at Plaskett Creek on April 13 (TC & ZC). Migrating Calliope Hummingbirds were reported from at least ten coastal and Central Valley locations, which is many more than is usual.

Flycatchers — An *Eastern Kingbird* was carefully studied and described from Sacramento County on May 24 (SS & MS), providing one of the few spring records for the Central Valley. One of the accomplishments of Operation Transect was to shed more light on the movements of *Empidonax* flycatchers in the Region, particularly since several of the western species are so difficult to identify during migration, except in the hand. Although not all of the data has been submitted or analyzed, the following seem interesting: Hammond's Flycatcher — 4 on South Farallon, April 16-May 26 (JL), 1 at Point Reyes Bird

Observatory on May 15 (*BS*), and 3 banded at Sacramento, May 1-12 (*SS, et al.*); Dusky Flycatcher — 2 at Point Reyes Bird Observatory, May 4-13 (*BS*) and 5 on South Farallon on May 15 (*JL*); Gray Flycatcher — 1 at Point Reyes Bird Observatory on April 26 (*BS*), at least 3 on South Farallon, May 15-25 (*JL*), and 1 or more at Sacramento, May 1-12 (*SS, et al.*); Western Flycatcher — a high of 25 on South Farallon on May 25 (*JL*). In light of the coastal and Central Valley records of the Gray Flycatcher, it is interesting to note that an individual of this species was found in the high mountains of Yosemite Nat'l Park on May 16, at a location about 25 miles west of the species' Great Basin habitat (*JG & RG*). A high count of 45 Western Wood Pewees also was registered on South Farallon, April 29–May 4 (*JL*).

Swallows, Nuthatches — Although it is difficult to comment upon the spring arrival of swallows, owing to the sizable wintering population in the Region, it was generally felt that they arrived earlier than in most years. Most noteworthy were 2 Barn Swallows sighted on Feb. 28 at Coyote Hills Regional Park and 3 singing Cliff Swallows noted on Feb. 14 in Merced County (*VR & MP*). Two Bank Swallows, an uncommon species in this Region, were seen at the unusual location of South Farallon on May 26 (*JL*). Individual Red-breasted Nuthatches remained in, or moved through, coastal, Central Valley and Sierran foothill locations during the spring as remnants of last fall's lowland invasion.

Warblers — The generally continuous and strong northwesterly winds along the coast made this season's crop of "vagrant" warblers smaller than last year's. On May 26 a female Black-and-white Warbler was seen and a male Parula Warbler and an Ovenbird were banded on South Farallon (*JL*). The less common western warblers found on South Farallon included a Black-throated Gray Warbler and 2 Yellow-breasted Chats banded on May 4, with two more chats and a Hermit Warbler banded on May 15. A Nashville Warbler was banded on South Farallon on May 26 and a female Blackpoll Warbler on May 27 (*DDeS*). May 26 was a major wave day on South Farallon, with 90 Wilson's Warblers banded along with a smattering of Orange-crowned, Townsend's and MacGillivray's Warblers, and with a Myrtle Warbler and 3 Yellowthroats observed in addition to the above-mentioned migrants (*DDeS*). Heavy migration of the common Myrtle and Audubon's Warblers was reported as occurring from mid-March until mid-April on the San Francisco Peninsula (*MP*). Hermit Warblers, often missed in migration, were reported more commonly this spring, with 5 singing males noted in San Mateo County on Jasper Ridge, Stanford University, April 10-May 12 (*MP*); 7 found, 3 of which were banded, near Sacramento, May 1-12 (*SS, et al.*), and 1 seen at Los Banos on May 1, reported by the observer (*ROW*) as the first seen in 15 years at that Central Valley location. The role of weather in producing a wave of grounded migrants is illustrated by the Wilson's Warbler banding data for May 5 and 6, given in Table 1. It is apparent that a major wave developed on May 6 in an area reaching from the Central Valley eastward through the Region but did not develop along the

TABLE 1

Wilson's Warbler bandings, May 5 and 6, 1970.

Area	Number of Stations	Birds banded per 100 net hours	
		May 5	May 6
Coastal	3	1.1	0.7
Inner Coast Range	2	1.0	0.6
Central Valley	2	1.1	10.6
West Slope of Sierras	2	2.7	13.7
East of Sierras	2	24.1	96.8

coast or in the Inner Coast Range. During this period a cold front stretching diagonally from northeast to southwest moved rapidly across the Region in a southeasterly direction. The brunt of this cold front reached the coastal areas on the afternoon of May 5, bringing high winds; reached the western slope of the Sierras about 2:00 a.m. on May 6, bringing rain squalls; and, finally, reached the eastern side of the Sierras about 5:00 a.m. on May 6, bringing snow flurries. The effect of this cold front was to prevent groundings of migrants in coastal areas during the night of May 5-6, to ground birds in the Central Valley and on the western slope of the Sierras after a half night's flight, and to pile up birds east of the Sierras after a full night's flight.

Blackbirds, Orioles, Tanagers — A Bobolink seen on South Farallon on May 26 (*JL*) constituted only the second known spring record for the Region, the first being a record in early June 1911 near San Bruno Lake, San Mateo Co. Two Yellow-headed Blackbirds were reported near the coast where the species is uncommon: 1 male at McKinleyville, Humboldt Co., date ? (*TE & CE*) and 1 female or immature male at the Palo Alto Baylands on May 5 (*TC*). Another noted at 8000 feet elevation in a mountain meadow in Yosemite Nat'l Park on May 16 (*JG & RG*) seems even more unusual. A female Orchard Oriole was carefully studied at the mouth of Plaskett Creek, Monterey Co. on April 13 (*TC & ZC*); most records of this uncommon species in this Region are from the fall and winter. A belated report was received of a male Hooded Oriole wintering in Davis, Sacramento Co. (*WMG*). Although Hooded Orioles have been found wintering in coastal areas, this is the first known winter record for the much colder Central Valley, where the species is near the northern limits of its range. Two Baltimore Orioles, very uncommon in the Region, were found on South Farallon on May 26 (*JL*). A migratory movement of Bullock's Orioles was noted at Searsville Lake, San Mateo Co. on April 19 when 6 males were seen together (*MP*). An obvious migratory concentration of 15 Western Tanagers was found in Pacific Grove's tiny Greenwood Park on May 17 (*VR*).

Finches, Sparrows — Remnants of the minor coastal invasion of Evening Grosbeaks of last fall and winter were reported in four coastal localities: 10-12

birds were seen at Kentfield, Marin Co. on April 7 (JW); flocks of 6-20 were noted in the Santa Cruz Mountains from April 17 on (MP); 6 were found in Palo Alto on the late date of May 23 (JG & RG); and the species was considered "abundant" at Arcata throughout the season (TE & CE). Two pairs of Cassin's Finches were carefully studied and well described from China Camp in the Santa Lucia Mountains, Monterey Co. on May 2 (AW & WR). This report adds plausibility to an unpublished May 3-4, 1968 observation of 3 males and 1 female in the same general area (WR). The species has not been recorded as nesting away from its Sierra Nevada range. A Lawrence's Goldfinch seen on South Farallon on May 26 (JL) constituted only the second record there; 5 were observed to fly out over Monterey Bay from Point Pinos on May 8 (VR). Small flocks of Red Crossbills were reported lingering along the coast throughout the spring season after the invasion of last fall and winter. Most interesting of the reports were sightings of up to 50 in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park to the end of the period (LCB) and an observation of courtship feeding at nearby Lake Merced on May 1 (Luis Baptista, *vide* BS). A Green-tailed Towhee was found on South Farallon on May 16 (JL), providing one of the few coastal spring records. A flock of 13 *Lark Buntings* that included 5 males was discovered and photographed in the Yokohl Valley, Tulare Co., April 28-29 (SRW & Dean Carrier); this is only the fourth spring record for the Region. A Black-throated Sparrow was seen in a mountain meadow at almost 8000 feet elevation in Yosemite Nat'l Park on May 16 (JG & RG) and May 22 (MP). Interestingly enough, there was another report of this species outside of its desert habitat: an individual photographed at Taylor Creek on the southern side of Lake Tahoe, El Dorado Co., on May 22 (CSL). The banding of a Sage Sparrow on South Farallon on April 17 (JL) provided the first record for the island, and the observation of a Brewer's Sparrow there on May 22 (JL) provided one of the few coastal spring records for the Region. The Harris' Sparrow that wintered in Arcata remained until at least May 3 (TE & CE). A White-throated Sparrow banded near Sacramento in the period April 28-May 1 (SS, *et al.*) was the only report of the species this spring. Some 26 Lincoln's Sparrows, a high total, were banded on South Farallon during the late period — for the coast — of April 29-May 4 (JL).

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