

SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION.—Lack of moisture continues to dominate the weather picture in southern California. Already serious drought conditions have been intensified by the normal summer dry season, and now Lake Henshaw in San Diego County has been added to the growing list of completely dry lakes. Lake Hodges, also in San Diego County, and Big Bear Lake in San Bernardino County, are just fractions of their normal size.



Several late rains in April and early May prolonged the spring growing season somewhat, and kept the fire danger index down until the end of July. August brought a series of small fires in the San Gabriel and

San Bernardino Mountains with only one moderately large burn occurring in the Lake Arrowhead region. Needless to say, many thousand acres of good nesting territory are destroyed each summer in this manner, often remaining useless for a number of years before regrowth enables reestablishment of some sort of bird population.

A tropical storm off San Diego at the end of August brought very small amounts of rain to the coastal areas. Temperatures in the higher mountains of San Diego County were the highest on record, but in other respects the summer weather was quite normal.

Water Birds.—This has been an unusually rich season for some rare and interesting species which breed far south of the Mexican border, although there seem to have been no climatic upheavals which could account for their appearance in this region. The skipper of a fishing boat out of Newport (*vide* J. H. Comby) reported seeing an unusual bird in the Catalina Channel on Aug. 26 whose description perfectly fits that of a **Red-billed Tropic-bird** (*Phaethon aethereus*), a rare vagrant from southern waters. Another rare southern visitant, the **Man-o'-war-bird**, was studied at close range in Upper Newport Bay, Orange Co., on July 12 (Bill Hawkins). Its visit in this area was apparently short-lived, however, since the locality was searched carefully on following days by several observers without success.

A third extremely rare southern visitor, the **Yellow-crowned Night Heron**, was successfully photographed in a backyard near Venice, Los Angeles Co., during the last week of June. This is the first *bona-fide* record of this species for the State.

After several years' near-absence from coastal California, the Wood Ibis again appeared in more normal numbers with 66 post-breeding wanderers counted in the Carlsbad-Oceanside area, San Diego Co., on July 22 (RLP). The same number were still present on Aug. 14.

An immature **Roseate Spoonbill**, still another sporadic visitor to this area, was positively identified on June 23 by John Parrish (*vide* William Anderson) in a shallow pond at the State Hazard Area, near Salton Sea Nat'l. Wildlife Refuge, Imperial Co. On June 12, Anderson discovered and showed to others an adult **Black-bellied Tree-duck**

in company with 28 Fulvous Tree-ducks, one mile from Calipatria, Imperial Co. This bird is regarded as an extremely rare vagrant, or pioneer, from the south and there is but one previous authentic instance of occurrence in the State: a bird taken in the same general area in the fall of 1912. Anderson also reported a pair of Fulvous Tree-ducks with 10 downy young on his lawn at imperial State Refuge, Imperial Co., June 25.

Brown Pelicans, which normally nest on the islands off southern California in spring, were still present along the Los Angeles County coast during late April and May in numbers from 30 to 150 (Howard Cogswell, Small). Small numbers of Sooty Shearwaters (25-35), Pink-footed Shearwaters (5-6) and Fulmars (6) were reported in the Catalina Channel during July and August (Comby, *et al.*), but the large post-breeding flocks of these birds have not yet materialized. Eighteen Black Petrels were noted 8 miles southeast of Catalina Island, July 15 (Small). A small group of Surf Scoters, apparently lingering through the summer, was observed on July 14 and 29 just north of Laguna Beach, Orange Co. (Eds.).

Shorebirds, Gulls and Terns.—A late brood of 4 small Snowy Plover chicks was found at Buena Vista Lagoon, Carlsbad, Aug. 22 (Eleanor Beemer). Black-necked Stilts, previously a common breeding bird in the marshes around Bolsa Chica, Orange Co., were reduced to only a few nesting pairs this year, although they continue as a common breeder at the Salton Sea. Summer records of Glaucous-winged Gulls along the coast include single birds on July 4, July 29 and Aug. 14 (Eds.).

Anderson concluded a successful survey of nesting Laughing Gulls at the Salton Sea and definitely established the location of five nests with 1 to 3 eggs in each. He estimated the total population at from 16 to 20 individuals.

On July 29 the editors were fortunate to find an adult **Franklin's Gull** in full breeding plumage at Santa Margarita Inlet, San Diego County. The bird was studied at close range and at leisure, both on the water and flying, and all field marks were noted.

Suitable breeding areas for Least Terns have been severely encroached upon by human pleasure seekers resulting in the complete loss of the nesting site at Playa del Rey and at least partial destruction of other choice sites.

The outstanding ornithological event of recent years is the marked influx of post-breeding **Elegant Terns** to this region. These beautiful terns nest on scattered islands in the Gulf of California, and occasionally individuals wander in late summer as far north as San Francisco Bay; but never before has there been such an invasion as this. In 1950, a few individuals were first discovered in late August and a peak number of 48 birds at Playa del Rey, Los Angeles Co., in early September was considered to be unprece-

dented. This year, the first birds appeared at Bolsa Chica and Santa Margarita Inlet, July 29, and 18 were counted at Playa del Rey on Aug. 5. During the following two weeks, they increased rapidly and steadily, reaching the truly astounding number of 1100 at Playa del Rey on Aug. 20. Flocks of 97 to 224 were recorded on various dates in August at Bolsa Chica, Santa Margarita and at a point on the coast 5 miles north of Ventura in Ventura County. Reduced numbers of them were still present on the first of September. The birds tend to congregate in close, noisy flocks which include many adults with a noticeable rosy bloom and some young of the year. A good bit of residual nesting activity could be observed in many individuals, including strutting, begging and subsequent feeding of young.

Hawks, Grouse, Owls.—E. Z. Rett located 8 White-tailed Kites near the Santa Ynez River, Santa Barbara Co., April 1. A pair of these birds began nest-building in April at the San Gabriel Wildlife Sanctuary, Los Angeles Co., and at least one young bird was successfully raised in the same general territory where adults with young were seen last year (Alma Stultz). A pair was also observed by Comby through the summer near La Mirada. A Marsh Hawk was found to be nesting in a small ravine close to a well-traveled highway in Palos Verdes, Los Angeles Co., and both young apparently were raised successfully (R. N. Stuart). A Sooty Grouse, presumably of the Mt. Pinos race, was seen, July 1, on this mountain, at the extreme southern outpost of its normal range (Herbert Clarke, Henry Isham). The seldom-seen Flammulated Owl was heard calling quite clearly, and for a considerable length of time, near the summit of Mt. Pinos, June 30 (Eds.). Cogswell reported that a Spotted Owl was still present (as last year) at 4800 ft. on the north side of Sunset Peak in the San Gabriel Mts., and was heard calling on April 2, 24 and 25.

Land Birds (general).—Cecelia Foulks reported many more song birds, quail and Mourning Doves than in other years in her area around Mecca, Riverside Co., apparently due to new hunting restrictions and the fact that more water and food have been available. Otherwise, it is difficult to draw general conclusions on land-bird nesting as birds are relatively quiet after June and amateur observers are generally reluctant to go afield during the hot, dry season.

Cuckoos, Goatsuckers, Hummingbirds.—At least one nest of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo was discovered during May in SGWS (Stultz). A Poor-will was flushed from 2 eggs on the ground, May 31, near Camp Baldy, San Gabriel Mts., and was brooding 2 small downy young, June 12 (Cogswell). A newly-hatched Anna's Hummingbird was brought into the Los Angeles County Museum, Feb. 27 (Kenneth Stager).

Flycatchers, Nuthatches.—Three young Western Flycatchers were ready to leave a nest on a porch ledge near Whittier, June 25 (Comby). A pair of Vermillion Flycatchers with 3 young was continuously observed through August at the Hospital Grounds in Mecca (F). Two of the wintering White-breasted Nuthatches at SGWS remained to start nesting activities, but apparently unsuccessfully (Stultz). Nesting of nuthatches in this type of riparian woodland at such a low elevation would be most uncommon. Cogswell reported the probable breeding of Red-breasted Nuthatches in the San Gabriel Mts. this year, where the species is not known definitely to have nested previously.

Robins, Chats, Blackbirds.—Am. Robins continue to nest in increasing numbers in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, and have drawn considerable attention from newspapers and the public. Yellow-breasted Chats were much more numerous in SGWS this year (Stultz). A large nesting colony (at least several hundred) of Tricolored Blackbirds was found at Rancho Cielito, near Chino, Riverside Co., in late April. An estimated 1000 pairs nested here in 1943 (Cogswell).

Finches.—A survey of singing male Cardinals in the Rio Hondo and San Gabriel River bottoms in late spring revealed an estimated 100 birds. Cardinals were introduced in this area in the early 1900's, but in the ensuing years they have remained localized, although increasing slightly in numbers. Blue Grosbeaks had a good year in at least two areas of Los Angeles County. Stultz reported them nesting close to the headquarters of SGWS, and generally in good numbers throughout the Sanctuary. W. Dan Quattlebaum concluded from repeated observations that at least two pairs nested successfully in the Los Angeles Arboretum. Eight Pine Siskins were noted on the Museum Grounds in Santa Barbara, April 23 (Rett).—ROBERT L. PYLE, 1143 21st St., Santa Monica, Calif., and ARNOLD SMALL.