

# Middle Pacific Coast Region

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Abbreviations: C.V. (*Central Valley*); F.I. (*Southeast Farallon Island*); H.R.S. (*Hayward Regional Shoreline, Alameda*); P.R.B.O. (*Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory*); S.F. (*San Francisco*); All records from F.I. and Palomar should be credited to Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory.

## Petrels

This spring's only 18-hour boat trip from the Golden Gate found five Murphy's Petrels May 7 (BHi, SBT). Three of nine Cook's Petrels up to 160 mi s.w. of Pt. Piedras Blancas, *San Luis Obispo* May 24 (DR, SFB) were in *Monterey* waters. No other boats plied deep waters. Three Monterey boat trips and one from S.F. found Flesh-footed Shearwaters Mar. 26–Apr. 16 (DLSh, SFB, MLE). In spring this species remains rare but is now almost regular. Sixty Black-vented Shearwaters were late Mar. 26 in Mon-



terey Bay (DLSh), but the last one was seen Apr. 1, 10 mi off S.F. (MLE). A Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel over Vizcaino Knoll May 15 (RLv, SWH) provided the long-overdue apparent first reported *Mendocino* record. Past research cruises must have tallied this species in this county's little-birded waters, as it is probably regular.

### Bitterns to Ibis

An Am. Bittern "pumping" at Hunters Lagoon, Manchester S.B., Mar. 28 (RJK) provided an infrequent report for *Mendocino*, a county with little bittern habitat. A Least Bittern at Martinez Apr. 9–12 (B. Elliot, RJR) was *Contra Coast's* first, and one in Sierra Valley May 7 (M. Meyers) furnished the 3rd spring record for *Plumas*. A new colony of Great Blue Herons on the Arroyo Seco R., *Monterey* held 6 nests May 29 (Dse, *fide* DR).

Stands of vigorous exotic trees in cutover coastal lowlands can provide important structure for colonial wading birds. A long-established mixed-species heronry in tall Monterey Cypress at Eureka was complemented this season by a colony of ca. 40 pairs of Great Blue Herons, 30 pairs of Great Egrets, and many Black-crowned Night-Herons in maturing Monterey Pines on s.e. Humboldt Bay (DFx, JRo).

Only one Little Blue Heron was seen at the Alviso heronry, an adult May 19–26 (SCR, PJM, MJM, S. Spakoff). Cattle Egrets were suspected of nesting at Alviso (MJM, SCR, WGB) and at Humboldt Bay (LeE, DFx *et al.*). Numerous reports of one–thirty birds elsewhere included <40 altogether from the C.V. A Cattle Egret at Modoc N.W.R., May 9 provided the first spring record for the refuge (RLR).

White-faced Ibis continued to be found in good numbers locally in the C.V., with 500 along Santa Fe Grade Rd., Merced Apr. 28 (SFB, DWm, JMH) the high count. Wild rice paddies between Likely and Alturas, *Modoc* held 352 ibis Apr. 25 (DS). In contrast to some springs, this year's n. passage exhibited no strong coastal component, as one–two ibis at Moon Glow Dairy, *Monterey* Mar. 27–May 9 (SFB, DR, RC, JMH m.ob.) was the only coastal report.

### Waterfowl

An ad. Tundra Swan lingered through May at Arcata (v.o.). Migrant Brant peaked at about 20,000 during March in s. Humboldt Bay (DFx *et al.*). A Brant at Sunnyvale May 15–30 provided only the 5th *Santa Clara* record (PJM, m.ob.). Single "Blue" Ross' Geese were at Merced N.W.R., Mar. 5 (CKf) and at Tule Lake N.W.R., Apr. 11 (RE).

Blue-winged Teal made a typical showing, with one–four birds widely noted from the coast and the C.V., most during April. Eleven along Santa Fe Grade Rd., *Stanislaus*, Apr. 10 (DSg, ASH) was the only group larger than four birds. Single ♂ Tufted Ducks in *Alviso* Mar. 6 (MMR) and at L. Merritt to Mar. 28 (ES *et al.*) were holdovers from winter. A pair of Tufted Ducks at the Petaluma sewage ponds Apr. 9–23 (D. Nelson *et al.*) provided the 3rd *Sonoma* record.

An Oldsquaw at Tule Lake N.W.R., Feb. 25–May 15 was briefly joined by another Mar. 13 (RE). Easily the most remarkable among the 20 coastal Oldsquaws as a female at tiny Crespi Pond, *Monterey* Mar. 29–Apr. 10 (N. Bain, SFB *et al.*). Nearly as amazing, this occurrence had a precedent from May 1962.

Departure of Barrow's Goldeneyes from their traditional wintering sites around S.F. Bay was noted to be nearly complete by early March (v.o.). The only Barrow's away from S.F. Bay were a pair at Hat Cr. County Park, *Shasta* Mar. 1 (BED). A pair of Hooded Mergansers at L. Almanor May 26 were unusually late (HG). A brood of Com. Mergansers along the Big Sur R. at Pfeiffer-Big Sur Park May 27 provided the first proven nesting for *Monterey's* coastal slope (BH *et al.*). Red-breasted Mergansers inland included two females at Tule Lake N.W.R., May 1 (RE) and a male at Mono L., May 6 (DS).

### Raptors

A kettle of 57 Turkey Vultures migrating N along the e. edge of the Sierra beside Mono L., May 6 (DS) was a large group for our Basin district. Nesting Cooper's Hawks are "rapidly expanding into residential suburbs and urban areas" of *Sacramento* (TDM, KKw). An ad. N. Goshawk came to a Spotted Owl call imitation at Bothe-Napa Valley S.P., *Napa* Apr. 4 (†SDF, †A. Desch). Goshawks are always rare in the S.F. Bay area. A pair of Red-shouldered Hawks at Parkfield, *Monterey* May 18 represented the first presumed breeders after a local 8-year absence during the drought (DLSh). Two nests of Swainson's Hawks on Modoc N.W.R. were the first there since 1961 (RLR). Up to 15 Swainson's Hawks e. of King City Apr. 16–18 (†DR, RC, DLSh, H. Kronkyte) was a number unprecedented in *Monterey* from many years. "Is this species on the comeback" asks D. Roberson.

### Rails to Cranes

An ad. Virginia Rail accompanying a chick at Ft. Bragg May 3 was noteworthy along the *Mendocino* coast (DT). Eight Com. Moorhens along the coast included four in *Monterey*, one in *Sonoma*, one in *Mendocino*, and two in *Humboldt* Apr. 17–May 12, and were evidence of a tangible northward push.

One-thousand migrant Sandhill Cranes in *Sierra Vista* Mar 20 was a large flock to be on the ground in *Plumas* (K. Gilmore). The first Sandhill Crane on a nest at Modoc N.W.R. was noted Mar. 29 (RLR), vividly illustrating the difference in phenology between migrant "Lesser" and breeding "Greater" Sandhill Cranes occurring in California.

### Plovers to Phalaropes

A Snowy Plover nest found Apr. 27 at Virgin Cr. Beach, MacKerricher S.P., was the first confirmed *Mendocino* nest. It was later destroyed by Com. Ravens (DT). Snowy Plover use of the Alviso salt ponds was felt to be greater than normal (MJM, SCR, WGB). Two Black-bellied Plovers at Modoc N.W.R., Mar. 15 beat the previous early arrival date there by a month (RLR). Well-watched wintering Pacific Golden-Plover at Big Sur R. mouth and at Pt. Reyes lingered until the last week in April. Two sightings referable to migrant Pacific Golden-Plovers included one molting into alternate plumage in S. Grasslands, *Merced* Apr. 18 (DS) and another in full plumage at Moon Glow Dairy, *Monterey* May 8–9 (JBo, TEa, †DR, SFB *et al.*).

An Am. Avocet at L. Shastina, *Siskiyou* May 5 furnished the first spring record for the Shasta Valley (RE). Avocets and Black-necked Stilts were noted as "virtually nonexistent in rice fields of s. *Butte*, *Sutter*, and *Colusa*, but fairly common in District 10, *Yuba*, and in n. *Sacramento*" (TDM). Three pairs of Black-necked Stilts initiated nesting at Fay Slough Wildlife Area n. of Eureka in mid-May, providing a rare *Humboldt* breeding attempt and the first since 1987 (M. Fisher, *fide* BBA).

One-thousand Whimbrel flying to roost at the Salinas R. mouth Apr. 30 indicated a migratory peak (SFB, JMH)! Ninety-five Marbled Godwits between Alturas and Likely Apr. 25 (DS), with ten still there May 9 (BED), were rare in the Great Basin. Numbers of Greater Yellowlegs at H.R.S. ranged from eight Mar. 26 to a notable peak of 104 Apr. 19 (RJR). At Lower Klamath N.W.R., a mixed flock of 35 Greater Yellowlegs and 46 dowitchers (sp.) were early returnees Mar. 5 (DFx, JRo *et al.*). Twenty-eight Lesser Yellowlegs were found Mar. 13–May 18 at 10 locations. Peak counts were seven each at H.R.S., Apr. 19 (RJR) and at Ft. Bragg Apr. 27 (DT). One at Cosumnes R. Preserve, *Sacramento* Mar. 26 and Apr. 16 (BrW) were the only C.V. reports. Seven Solitary Sandpipers all appeared during the last 2 weeks of April.

A Semipalmated Sandpiper at Moon Glow Dairy May 9 (†SFB) provided the

2nd spring report for *Monterey* and was the only one noted in the Region. Migration of *Calidris* sp. at Modoc N.W.R. was undetected until Apr. 25 and was felt to be late (RLR). None of three Baird's Sandpiper reports was detailed. Only 17 Red Knots were noted, but the slim total involved singles inland, where very scarce, at Lower Klamath N.W.R., May 5 (RE) and at the Woodland sewage ponds, *Yolo* May 17–18 (GEW *et al.*). Two at Palo Alto Baylands Mar. 18 (MMR) furnished only the 2nd or 3rd spring record for *Santa Clara*, and another May 3 at MacKerricher S.P. was a rarity for *Mendocino* (DT).

A great surprise was the Region's first spring record of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Pescadero Marsh, *San Mateo* May 14 (†ph. RSTh, DPo). It was relocated the following day at San Gregorio Cr. mouth and then farther south at Pescadero Cr. mouth (RSTh, BS *et al.*). Always notable in spring, two Pectoral Sandpipers were found: at Moon Glow Dairy Apr. 30 (DSg, RFT, †DR) and along Brewer Rd., *Plumas* Apr. 27 (BrW). Fourteen Sanderlings on the e. side of Mono L., May 5 (DS, C. Hickey) were unexpected in spring e. of the Sierras. Four–six territorial ♂ Com. Snipe continued through the period at Spenceville Wildlife Area, *Yuba*, where nesting again seemed likely (BrW). A ♀ Ruff at the Castroville sewage ponds, *Monterey* Apr. 30–May 9 (†SFB, RC, DR *et al.*) was believed to have wintered locally.

Only about 62 Red-necked Phalaropes were reported, indicating a paltry coastal passage, but 46 at the Alviso salt ponds May 4 were unexpected in spring (MJM, SCR, WGB *et al.*). Two at the Davis sewage ponds Apr. 30 (T. Rosenmeier, K. Kluge) were the only phalaropes reported from the C.V.! A Wilson's Phalarope near Sunnyvale Apr. 20 (SCR, MMR) was unusual in spring in *Santa Clara* and was the only one noted outside the Great Basin. The May 15 boat trip from Ft. Bragg found 30 Red Phalaropes. One in Mt. View May 15 provided the first spring record for *Santa Clara* (†SCR).

## Larids

A S. Polar Skua offshore Ft. Bragg, *Mendocino* May 15 (SWH, RleV) made the 6th consecutive spring in which a skua was seen. An ad. Laughing Gull flew S past the Salinas R. Mouth, *Monterey* Apr. 28 (†SFB, DWm, JMH); the majority of Regional records are from Monterey Bay. Four ad. Franklin's Gulls showing alarm to the observers at Lower Klamath N.W.R., May 12 suggested nesting again there

(RE). Two of the other five Franklin's March 28–May 24 were also in the Basin district, with three coastward. An ad. Little Gull flying N at H.S., *Alemeda*, Apr. 18 (†RJR) was the first there. A pair of Heermann's Gulls nested on Año Nuevo I., *San Mateo* (*vide* GJS). The only confirmed Regional nesting had been in 1980 on Alcatraz I., S.F. (AB 34:926). A sub-ad. Mew Gull s. of Alturas, *Modoc* Apr. 25 (DS) was rare in the Great Basin. Ten Glaucous Gulls lingering in coastal counties was about average.

A very early migrant Com. Tern visited Monterey Bay Mar. 28 (DR). Single alternate-plumaged Com. Terns at Honey Lake W.A., *Lassen* May 15 and at Tule L., *Siskiyou* May 17 (both DS, CAx) were rare in our Basin district, but probably not as rare as the paucity of spring records suggests (DS). Three Black Terns at the Hollister sewage ponds May 4 formed the first *San Benito* record (RMrr, KVV), but six in *Santa Clara* (SCR, MMR) and three in *Alameda* (RJR) May 4–22 were normal for the S.F. Bay. Two Black Skimmers visited Bodega Harbor, *Sonomas* May 22 (NTC), the site of the first Regional record July 24, 1971.

## Corrigenda

Lines were omitted from last spring's Laughing Gull summary (AB 47:451). It should read: "The first basic Laughing Gull lingered at L. Mendocino until Mar. 3 (*vide* JM) and was almost certainly the same bird seen at Lakeport City Park, Clear L., *Lake* Mar. 8 (†JRW). Perhaps it was also the same bird as the one seen at the Palo Alto Duck Pond, *Santa Clara* Apr. 17 (ph. G. Walker). All represented first county records."

In the same paragraph, the Mew Gull was at the *Loyalton* sewage ponds and was *Sierra's* first.



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Pescadero Marsh May 15, 1994. Photograph/Ronald S. Thorn.

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