

Middle Pacific Coast Region

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January was very wet, February was very dry. Overall it was a mild winter, with stormy January creating one of the best Sierra Nevada snowpacks in recent years. Waterfowl numbers were the highest in a decade. The mild temperatures may have contributed to the many passerine species, such as swallows, grosbeaks, tanagers, and orioles, that overwintered, despite it not being an exceptional winter for flowering exotic plants.

Abbreviations: C.V. (*Central Valley*); Cyn. (*Canyon*); H.S. (*Hayward Shoreline, Alameda*); S.F. (*San Francisco*). All records from F.I. and Palomarin should be credited to Point Reyes Bird Observatory.



Loons to Tropicbirds

Fall's ad. Yellow-billed Loon off Pacific Grove and Monterey was molting out of alternate plumage Dec. 12 (†SFB) and remained through Feb. 7 (†SCR, m.ob.). An imm. Yellow-billed Loon frequented the same area Dec. 12–Feb. 16 (J. Bouton, †SFB, m.ob.). Another ad. (or sub-ad.) Yellow-billed Loon on Tomales Bay, *Marin*, Feb. 19–Mar. 16 (KB, †DSg, †JM, RS) was found dead (2–3 days old) on Dillon Beach Mar. 19 (*C.A.S.). It was the 7th specimen for California.

Two Red-necked Grebes on Clifton Court Forebay, *Contra Costa*, Feb. 14 (SAG) were a scarce inland find. Four dependent young W. Grebes at 3 sites in *Santa Clara* Jan. 2–Feb. 18 (SCR, WGB, MMR) evidenced very late fall breeding, though perhaps not locally.

A hint that Laysan Albatrosses may be prospecting California for nesting sites was the individual that regularly flew in to spend long periods of time in Pt. Arena Cove, *Mendocino*, Nov. 30–Mar. 5 (M. Martin, m.ob.); a local boat skipper reported that it had been present since July! Three Flesh-footed Shearwaters at Cordell Bank Dec. 10 (RS, DLSh) preceded 4 sightings of singles from there s. to Monterey Bay Dec. 12–Feb. 16 (DLSh, SFB, BS). Fall's peak of 300 Short-tailed Shearwaters was equalled at Cordell Bank Dec. 10 (RS, DLSh). Manx Shearwaters extended their visits into winter with 3 Monterey Bay sightings, including 2 on CBCs: Santa Cruz CBC Dec. 17 (†DLSh, †SA), Monterey Bay CBC 10 mi off Pajaro R. mouth, *Monterey & Santa Cruz*, Dec. 30 (DLSh, †SFB), and 3.4 mi n. of Pt. Pinos Feb. 16 (DLSh). Again R. Richmond spotted an Ashy Storm-Petrel off H.S., *Alameda*, this time on the late date of Dec. 29.

An unidentified *tropicbird* was reported from an aerial survey of seabirds in Monterey Bay Feb. 2 (WBT, JD).

Hérons to Ibises

Cattle Egret reports noted only about 137 individuals, with 88% of these coastal or near-coastal. *Humboldt* reported the most with 37, but even there local CBCs reported low numbers. The only coastal White-faced Ibises—two in *Santa Cruz* Jan. 1–4 (CKf, m.ob.) and two-three in *Monterey* Feb. 11–28 (DSe, m.ob.)—probably involved the same birds.

Waterfowl

The mid-winter waterfowl census conducted by California Fish and Game and United States Fish and Wildlife Service in January had only 80% coverage due to poor weather conditions. Nevertheless, totals, es-

pecially for dabblers, suggested that many species were more numerous than at any time since the early 1980s.

Two Fulvous Whistling-Ducks found on a CBC at the S.F. Bay N.W.R., *Alameda*, Dec. 18 were of questionable origin, as all records from the past 10 years have been during spring and summer from the San Joaquin Valley.

The only "Bewick's" Swan report came from *Colusa* Jan. 24 (EDG). An ad. Whooper Swan in *Colusa* Jan. 17–Feb. 7 (BWb, †JM, †SCR, m.ob.) marked the 4th consecutive year one (the same?) has been reported from the Sacramento Valley and/or the Klamath Basin. The origin of individuals s. of Alaska remains controversial.

Coastally, the 141 Greater White-fronted Geese reported was the most since 1970–1971. In contrast, Snow Geese were largely absent. Seventy-seven Greater White-fronteds Feb. 2 (SCR) over San Jose were considered a record count for *Santa Clara*, while up to 31 at Pacines Res. and San Felipe L., *San Benito*, Feb. 2–9 represented the county's 2nd–5th records (RMrr, KVV). A bird described as having the plumage of a blue-morph Ross' Goose and the size and proportions of Snow Goose was at *Colusa* Jan. 27 (†SCR). A Ross' Goose at San Felipe L., Dec. 30–Feb. 13 was a first for *San Benito* (KVV). The only report of blue-morph Ross' Goose was two from *Merced* Feb. 4 (†SCR). Two Emperor Geese in Crescent City, *Del Norte*, Dec. 27–Feb. 3 (ph.GjH) and one in Bodega, *Sonoma*, Dec. 30+ were well-documented (†JM, †DSg, ph. EDG), but 3 additional reports lacked details.

Six Eur. Green-winged Teal were from s. S.F. Bay and two others were inland. Mallard x N. Pintail hybrids were at Mt. View, *Santa Clara*, Dec. 19–Feb. 9 (ph. MMR, †SCR) and near Watsonville, *Santa Cruz*, Jan. 1 (†CLK). An Eur. Wigeon at Crowley L., *Mono*, Dec. 11 (DS) was only the 2nd record e. of the Sierra, according to our notebooks.

At least 10 Tufted Ducks included *Lake's* first Jan. 16 (†JRW) and four–five in *Santa Clara*. One reported from *Mendocino* Dec. 25–Jan. 1 included details which strongly suggested a Tufted Duck x scaup hybrid. An eider that flew by Pigeon Pt., *San Mateo*, Dec. 4 (†RSTh, DPo) could not be conclusively identified, though King would be most likely. Approximately 36 Oldsquaw reports was a very good showing and included inland reports from *Trinity* Jan. 2 (DFx), *Lake* Feb. 8–9 (JRW, JPM), and *Sacramento* Jan. 1 (EDG). A Barrow's Goldeneye at Elkhorn Slough, *Monterey*, Jan. 1 (REM) was locally rare. The only inland scoter report was of a Surf Scoter n. of Los Banos, *Merced*, Feb. 11 (DSH).

Raptors

Following a Fall with no late migrant Broad-winged Hawks, one was seen at Inverness, *Marin*, Dec. 17 (KH, *fide* AD). Swainson's Hawks are known to winter in the San Joaquin Delta, with a few birds scattered more widely (AB45:316 & 46: 311). Adults in s.e. *Colusa* Jan. 25 (TDM, BWb) and Jan. 28 (WEH) fit this pattern, but adults over Bolinas, *Marin*, Dec. 6 (KH) and in Millbrae, *San Mateo*, Dec. 25 (†PJM) were more likely late migrants. Merlins continued to increase and three *richardsonii* were reported (RS, MMR), including a male wintering in Mountain View for the 5th year (MMR).

Rails to Cranes

The Benicia CBC had its highest ever Black Rail count with 10 heard in Suisun Marsh, *Solano*, Dec. 19, but one at Cooley Landing carried off by a Ring-billed Gull Dec. 3 furnished the only *San Mateo* record in 20 years (ADeM). Up to 45 Clapper Rails Jan. 1 just n. of the Palo Alto Baylands indicated the last stronghold for this species in *San Mateo* (RSTh). Fourteen Sandhill Cranes at Modoc N.W.R., *Modoc*, Feb. 12 were the 2nd earliest arrivals at these breeding grounds (RLR), but an unprecedented early pair returned to Ash Creek W.A., *Lassen*, Jan. 5, where their early nesting attempt failed due to flooding (L. Ashford!).

Shorebirds

Reports of Pacific Golden-Plover were below normal and involved about 26 individuals. Most were at traditional wintering spots such as Pt. Reyes, *Marin*, and Loleta Bottoms, *Humboldt*; two near Los Banos, *Merced*, Feb. 9 (DS) were the only reported inland. A Snowy Plover 6 mi n.w. of *Colusa* Jan. 25 (†C. Hickey) furnished the first-ever winter record in the C.V. north of Los Banos (*fide* DS). Twenty-three near Los Banos, *Merced*, Feb. 8–11 were at the n. limit of their normal winter range in the interior (DS, *et al.*). Only 292 Mt. Plovers Dec. 16–Feb. 2 was a poor showing.

Sixty-four Black Oystercatchers at Greyhound Rock, *Santa Cruz*, Dec. 21 was perhaps the most ever reported from one spot in the Region (T. Newberry). A W. Sandpiper at the Hollister sewage ponds Dec. 23 was a winter first for *San Benito* (KVV). Rock Sandpipers were fewer than usual and not encountered s. of *Mendocino*. Red Phalaropes were abundant in Monterey Bay throughout the Period, but peaked in December and declined thereafter.

Larids to Alcids

Winter's only Franklin's Gulls were both first basic birds in *Monterey*: Salinas sewage ponds Dec. 5–16 (SFB, DR, RC) and Monterey

Harbor Feb. 19 (GMcC). The Region's 16th Com. Black-headed Gull was an adult at Ravenswood, Menlo Park, *San Mateo*, Feb. 17–18 (†RSTh, †JM, m.ob.). A Mew Gull at Millerton L., *Fresno*, Dec. 27 was the 3rd for this inland county (*fide* KH). An astounding >5000 Herring Gulls (98% adults) were grounded by high winds at the Alviso salt ponds, *Santa Clara*, Jan. 22 (PJM). That was far greater than the county's wintering population; from where did they come? A 2nd-basic W. Gull at Clear L., Dec. 17 (†JRW, DE, DW) was the 5th for *Lake*.

SA An unprecedented invasion of Glaucous Gulls produced countless reports Nov. 25+. Even lacking subregional reports from *Humboldt* and *Del Norte* (where many must have been seen), analysis of reports from 15 counties totaled >85 Glaucous Gulls. Up to five birds were counted at Walker Cr., *Marin*, and a seasonal total of 8–15 was estimated there (RS). Two were found dead in *Marin* (**C.A.S.), and Stallcup noted that others were infirm. Most were the expected first-year age class, but eight 2nd-basic, three 3rd-basic, and one adult (Jenner, *Sonoma*, Feb. 12; RS) were reported Regionwide.

The 2800 Black-legged Kittiwakes at Pt. Pinos Feb. 16 (DLSH) was the largest number reported since 1971—remarkable considering that this gull was otherwise rather scarce. A flock of 25 Elegant Terns at Santa Cruz Dec. 17 (†JMS), with four lingering in *Santa Cruz* to Jan. 3 (Sunset State Beach; †DLSu), was unexpected because there had been no known lingerers through fall and previous stragglers had been only a few birds. A Black Skimmer at Seaside, *Monterey*, Jan. 29–Feb. 4 (P. Covell, J. Scolton, D. Dixon) was rare in winter but not unprecedented (AB47:297).



Glaucous Gull in first basic (= first-winter) plumage, surrounded by Western and Ring-billed gulls, at Sunset State Beach, Santa Cruz County, California, January 3, 1995. Record numbers invaded northern California during this season. Photograph/David L. Suddjap.

A startling all-white Com. Murre flew past Pigeon Pt., Feb. 18 (PJM). Six **Parakeet Auklets** were seen "briefly but convincingly" in flight over 1200–1500 fathom water w. of Cordell Bank, *Marin*, Dec. 10 (RS, DLSh, SBT). We know Parakeet Auklets are offshore California, but their numbers, regularity, seasonality, and water preferences will probably remain mysterious for some time to come.

Doves to Woodpeckers

Most Mourning Doves withdraw from the Great Basin district during winter; one at Tom's Place Jan. 30 (CDHa) was *Mono's* first for January. Short-eared Owls appeared to have a good winter flight as 34 in the greater S.F. and Monterey bay areas during the period was one of their best coastal showings in recent years. Up to four at Bridgeport Jan. 20 (ES, MiMc) provided only *Mono's* 3rd for January. Not surprisingly, our "Indian Summer" during February coincided with numerous Com. Poorwill sightings: four at Mt. Diablo, *Contra Costa*, Feb. 1–11 (KGH); one at Palomarin, *Marin*, Feb. 4 (ES, MiMc); and nine at Loma Prieta and Summit Ridge, *Santa Clara/Santa Cruz*, Feb. 2 (DLSu). An active bird at Henry Coe S.P., *Santa Clara*, on a chilly Dec. 18 (JY, AL) was unexpected.

Male Costa's Hummingbirds near Watsonville, *Santa Cruz*, Nov. 1–Feb. 28 (A. Harrold, †DLSu, m.ob.) and in Vallejo, *Solano*, Jan. 22–Feb. 2 (D. Lee, K. Gish) established county winter records, but were not unexpected in the c. state. One at Arcata, *Humboldt*, Dec. 17–24 (JCS *et al.*) was one of few for the n. coast during winter. Adult Allen's Hummingbirds in *Santa Cruz* at Watsonville Jan. 1 (†DLSu), Happy Valley Jan. 2 (B. Bedzin), and University of California, Santa Cruz arboretum Jan. 6 (DLSu) were extremely early migrants. The U.C. Berkeley Botanical Gardens, *Alameda*, has become the spot for lingering imm. *Selasphorus* hummingbirds; four were there Dec. 18 (DFW).

The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker returned to Davis, *Yolo*, for its 2nd winter Nov. 7–Feb. 28 (MP, m.ob.), and one at Monte Rio, *Sonoma*, returned for its 4th Dec. 31–Jan. 7 (DSH). Three additional birds were in the S.F. Bay/Sacramento areas Oct. 27–Feb. 26. Among eight Red-naped Sapsuckers was *Mono Basin's* 2nd during winter at Lee Vining Feb. 20 (MFe *et al.*). Red-breasted Sapsuckers are very rare during winter in our Great Basin district, so three in Lee Vining Nov. 26–Jan. 31 (DS, JMHu, D. Banta) and one at Tom's Place Dec. 8–Jan. 18 (CDHa) were notable for *Mono*. Just how prevalent are Red-breasted x Red-naped hybrids? In w. *Marin* during January–Febru-

ary, seven of 12 sapsuckers were thought to be such mixtures (RS). The first William's Sapsucker for S.F. was a male at Golden Gate Park Feb. 20–Mar. 4 (ASH, †DSg, m.ob.). The Nuttall's Woodpecker at Lee Vining Dec. 11–Jan. 17 (DS, JMHu) was a very rare winterer for this portion of our Great Basin district.

Flycatchers to Magpies

A Hammond's Flycatcher in Sacramento Dec. 13–21 (TDM) was probably a very late fall migrant. The Dusky Flycatcher at Natural Bridges S.B., *Santa Cruz*, overwintered Nov. 19–Feb. 23 (†DLSu, †SGe, m.ob.) and furnished only the Region's 4th such attempt. Five "Western" Flycatchers in the c. state during December–Jan. 1 was a healthy total. Eastern Phoebes at Davis, *Yolo*, Nov. 13–Mar. 4 (GEw, m.ob.) and San Jose Dec. 8–Feb. 28 (SCR, m.ob.) returned for their 3rd and 2nd winters, respectively. Additional birds at Pt. Reyes Station Jan. 3–Mar. 9 (RS, m.ob.) and Bodega Bay Feb. 26–27 (CLU, LLu, DN) made for an average winter.

For the 3rd year in the past 4 a Vermilion Flycatcher pushed high into the state: one near Ft. Dick, *Del Norte*, Dec. 9 (PFS). As usual, a couple lingering Tropical Kingbirds were found, though it was possible these were the same bird: South S.F., *San Mateo*, Nov. 24–Dec. 11 (PJM, m.ob.), and S.F., Dec. 31–Jan. 2 (S. Fishbine). The Region's first well-documented wintering Western Kingbird was at Lighthouse Field S.B., *Santa Cruz*, Dec. 17–Jan. 17 (†JMS, AWi, †DLSu, †RMrr, m.ob.). There were 3 prior undocumented December records of brief visiting birds.

Up to three wintering N. Rough-winged Swallows at Sandy Wool L., *Santa Clara*, Dec. 4–Jan. 6 (MMR *et al.*) had little Regional precedent. Barn Swallows made an early entry into the Region with 4 sightings of 16 birds along the c. coast Jan. 29–Feb. 11 (PJM, AWi, RJR, BMcl). One at Elkhorn Slough, *Monterey*, Jan. 1 (PJM) may have wintered locally. Ranging far into Black-billed country, a Yellow-billed Magpie below Woodfords, *Alpine*, Feb. 11 (†RAR, L. Petruilas) was a first e. of the Sierra.

Chickadees to Vireos

The event that brought three Chestnut-backed Chickadees near Wallace, *Calaveras*, Dec. 31 (J. Blades) was possibly related to Fall's lowland birds in nearby *Sacramento/Yolo*. White-breasted Nuthatch typically shuns the Region's moist coastal areas, thus four in *Santa Cruz* Dec. 17–Feb. 11 (*fide* DLSu), two in S.F., Dec. 28 (RS), and four at Elkhorn Slough Jan. 1 (DR, RC) were rare winter visits.

Two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were at Cow Mt., *Mendocino*, Dec. 18 (Alf, J. Booth); they are very rare on the n. coast during winter. Townsend's Solitaires continued to be widespread with 15 on Mt. Saint Helena, *Sonoma*, Dec. 28 (DN) and 12 reports scattered throughout the c. state during the period. Despite Am. Robins being abundant, they were rare in *Modoc* due to very heavy snowpack (RLR). The Varied Thrush invasion remained strong through the winter as nearly all CBC's reported record totals. One at Tom's Place Jan. 28 (CDHa) furnished only *Mono's* 2nd for January. The Brown Thrasher in Lincoln Dec. 17–Jan. 16 (BW, m.ob.) was *Placer's* first.

Bohemian Waxwings staged a small incursion into the Great Basin district, highlighted by ≤200 in Lee Vining, *Mono*, Dec. 12–Feb. 19 (DS, m.ob.). In contrast, Cedar Waxwings were reported in below-average numbers throughout the Region. Phainopepla is rare anywhere on the n. coast; one in Ukiah Dec. 18–Feb. 11 (CEV) provided *Mendocino's* 4th record. The only N. Shrikes away from expected locales were in Ukiah, *Mendocino*, Dec. 10–31 (†DAE, †RJK, m.ob.) and along Little Panoche Rd, *San Benito*, Dec. 29 (LCh). A "Blue-headed" Solitary Vireo in Arcata, *Humboldt*, Dec. 17–18 (JCS *et al.*) provided the Region's first December record of this rare form. Unfortunately, no description was received. The only "Cassin's" Solitary Vireo was in Pacific Grove Dec. 29 (TEa); we had been averaging three–four in December. A Solitary on Pinehurst Rd, *Contra Costa*, Feb. 22 (SAG, RSL) surely wintered but was not identified to race. A late-moving Warbling Vireo was in San Jose Dec. 18 (DJK, ADeM, BMcK).

Warblers to Finches

As has been the recent trend, most of our regularly occurring rare winter warblers were found coastally, during December, and in small numbers: three Tennessees, 14 Nashvilles, three Yellows (very low), 30 Palms, two Am. Redstarts, three N. Waterthrushes, and one Wilson's (low). Seventeen Black-and-white Warblers was above average.

Territorial ♂ Orange-crowned Warblers were first noted at Moore Cr., *Santa Cruz*, Feb. 19 (DLSu, H. Walker), Pescadero Feb. 20 (BMcK), and Pacifica, *San Mateo*, Feb. 22 (DSg); it is one of our earliest arriving summer residents. An impressive three Lucy's warblers were found: L. Merced, S.F., Nov. 26–Jan. 23 (PJM, †SCR, m.ob.); Marina, *Monterey*, Dec. 13–Feb. 28 (T. Amaral); and Pacific Grove, *Monterey*, Dec. 29–Jan. 1 (JCS, DPo). This species has been found on our c. coast 5 of the past 6 winters. Yellow Warblers in Stockton Dec. 18–Jan. 21

(DGY) and Lost L., *Fresno*, Dec. 27 (*fide* KH) were C.V. rarities. A Magnolia Warbler in Soquel, *Santa Cruz*, Dec. 16–17 (†DLSu) was only the Region's 3rd or 4th for the period. A Black-throated Blue Warbler in S.F. Dec. 28–29 (M. Healy) may have been a late migrant, but one at Clear L., Jan. 3–Feb. 1 (B. Atkins, †JRW, m.ob) was one of few to truly winter. The Region's 3rd wintering Black-throated Green Warbler returned for its 2nd season to Eureka, *Humboldt*, Dec. 17 (*fide* JCS). The Com. Yellowthroat at MacKerricher S.P., Dec. 21 (DT) furnished one of few winter records for *Mendocino*. The Region's first wintering Hooded Warbler was in Capitola, *Santa Cruz*, Nov. 15–Mar. 5 (†DLSu, RMrr, SBT). A Wilson's Warbler in Sacramento Dec. 17 (DSH) was very rare for the interior.

Just one Summer Tanager in Palo Alto, *Santa Clara/San Mateo*, Feb. 14–Mar. 5 (DSt, m.ob) was well below the recent winter average, but 11 W. Tanagers in the c. state Dec. 7–Feb. 10, with five after Jan. 1, was almost invasionary. Our lone Rose-breasted Grosbeak wintered in Menlo Park, *San Mateo*, Dec. 24–Feb. 26 (P. Armer, LCh), but an above-average five Black-headed Grosbeaks plus one *Pheucticus* species were along the c. coast Dec. 17–Feb. 16. A Green-tailed Towhee in San Jose Jan. 29+ (SCR, m.ob.) returned for its 2nd winter; true overwintering individuals are few.

There were only 2 Am. Tree Sparrow reports: ≤two at Fall River, *Shasta*, Dec. 26–Feb. 6 (*fide* BY), and one in Watsonville, *Santa Cruz*, Jan. 1 (†DLSu). After fall's record-breaking total, just two Clay-colored Sparrows came as a surprise: Bolinas, *Marin*, Dec. 11–13 (KH) and Rancho San Gregorio, *San Mateo*, Dec. 23 (RSTh). The Lark Sparrow near Yreka, *Siskiyou*, Jan. 2 (JCR) had little Regional winter precedent in our mountain region. Like recent winter Grasshopper Sparrow sightings, one was along the c. coast at Rancho San Gregorio Dec. 23 (RSTh). However, one on Mt. Hamilton, *Santa Clara*, Dec. 21 (†DES *et al.*) was exceptional in the Diablo Range during winter. A Lincoln's Sparrow at Hot Cr. Fish Hatchery, *Mono*, (7100 ft) Feb. 3 (DS) was exceptionally high for winter. Longspurs again wintered e. of San Jose on Sierra Rd., *Santa Clara*: one Lapland Dec. 11–Jan. 17 (MJM, †SCR, m.ob.) and ≤four Chestnut-Collareds Nov. 1–Feb. 18 (MJM, †SCR, m.ob.).

It was a banner season for orioles. Single Orchards were at Sunset S.B., *Santa Cruz*, Jan. 3 (†DLSu) and S.F. Jan. 15–Feb. 12 (MMcC). Hoodeds were at Live Oak, *Santa Cruz*, to Jan. 20 (A. Robinson, †DSL) and Half Moon Bay Dec. 17–25 (AME, RSTh). An unprecedented 24 "Bullock's" N. Orioles were found coastally S.F. to *Santa Cruz* all

season. In *Mono* a House Finch at Tom's Place Dec. 9–Jan. 26 (CDHa) and three more in Bridgeport (6500 ft) Feb. 2 (DS), were very rare in winter at these Great Basin locales—and even more exceptional at these high elevations.

Corrigendum:

Credit for the Light-mantled Sooty Albatross should have read (RS, †JM, m.ob.).

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