

Middle Pacific Coast Region

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The following report was received incomplete. Red Phalaropes, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Northern Fulmars, and Ancient Murrelets staged major early-winter irruptions, and kittiwakes and fulmars remained abundant in Monterey Bay all winter. A strong storm Dec. 11–12 moved some seabirds to unusual sites, affected shorelines, and blew down many trees.

Loons to Storm-Petrels

Two Pacific Loons on Lewiston Res., Trinity, Dec. 18 (JSt, JEHu) were scarce inland. As in winter 1994–1995, three Yellow-billed Loons appeared in the Monterey area. The adult off Pacific Grove stayed through Feb. 10 (RT, †JM, ph. BMcK). Another adult was off Ft. Ord Dec. 29 (DLSh, SFB, ph. BMcK) and an immature was off Pt. Pinos Feb. 5 (RT). Probably both adults were returning birds.

Warm temperatures and open water allowed 4 species of grebes to linger into Winter at Modoc N.W.R. (RLR). Thus the “early” Horned Grebe at Tule L., Siskiyou, Feb. 17 (R.R.O.S.) might have wintered there.

The high count of Laysan Albatrosses was >16 offshore Monterey Jan. 14 (DLSh). Exciting news to landlubbing birders was the return of the Laysan Albatross to Pt. Arena Cove, Mendocino, Dec. 5–Mar. 14 (GS, m.ob.).

The N. Fulmar irruption was exemplified by 1025 counted flying N past Pillar Pt., San Mateo, Dec. 2 (RSTh). The proportion of white morphs increased in February to about one-third (DR). A



Adult Yellow-billed Loon near Pacific Grove, California, December 29, 1995. Photograph/Bert McKee.



This Laysan Albatross again spent most of the winter just offshore at Point Arena, California, where it was photographed December 9, 1995. Photograph/Steve Metz.



"Cookilaria" petrel seen from Santa Cruz during >70 mph winds from the SSW Dec. 12 (†DLSu) was probably a Cook's Petrel, based on its status. California's only specimen of Cook's Petrel was grounded in Santa Cruz Nov. 17, 1983 (*Western Birds* 17:79-84).

Peak winter counts of 15 Pink-footed Shearwaters and eight-ten Flesh-footed Shearwaters were in Monterey Bay Feb. 10 (DLSh, DR, JM, RC), the latter number being especially high for winter. A Manx Shearwater 7 mi off Pt. Pinos, *Monterey*, Feb. 10 (†DR, †JM, RT, DLSh) was almost as late as last February's.

After the big blow, a Leach's Storm-Petrel was feeding 3 mi up the Eel R., *Humboldt*, Dec. 13 (SMcA). Also very late, but in a normal location, was a Black Storm-Petrel seen during an aerial survey of Monterey Bay, *Santa Cruz*, Dec. 14 by an observer who had confidently separated Blacks from Ashies during an October flight (†JDv).

Ibises to Waterfowl

White-faced Ibis made another poor showing coastally, with one at Moon Glow Dairy, *Monterey*, Dec. 27+ (DEG, m.ob.) and another at San Pablo N.W.R., *Napa*, Jan. 24-28 (M. Bentley, J. Boyd, RLCL, m.ob.). The species continues to thrive in the C.V., as evidenced by 5964 flying into a roost Dec. 28 in Merced (DS, PJM).

A large flock of swans near Grimes, *Colusa*, in early January included 4 taxa: Tundra, "Bewick's", Whooper, and Trumpeter! The Whooper Swan, present Jan 3-4 (M. Rauzon, †JM) was presumably back in the Region for its 5th consecutive winter. A Trumpeter Swan there Jan. 4 (†JM) was well documented. Identification of unmarked Trumpeters is notoriously difficult and under-appreciated. Two first-year Trumpeters banded in Alberta, Canada, were near Lincoln, *Placer*, Feb. 17-25 (TEa) and represented a first for the county; another two were heard calling while flying overhead Dec. 17 on Rindge Tract, *San Joaquin* (†WRH).

An "Aleutian" Canada Goose was in S.F. since at least Dec. 8+ (DHe, m.ob.). "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal were probably underreported or overlooked, with only 2 coastal reports received. Similarly, a total of 57 Eur. Wigeon reflected average numbers from areas reported, but certainly many more went unreported from areas such as *Marin* and the C.V.

Four Tufted Ducks, three from the S.F. Bay area and one from *Humboldt* Dec. 17+ (m.ob.), were well-below recent averages. A male in S.F. returned for its 8th consecutive winter Jan. 14 (†DSg, m.ob.). The only inland Oldsquaw reports were from

opposite ends of the Region: one at Lewis-ton Res., *Trinity*, Dec. 18 (JCS), while two at the Tulare L. bed, *Kings*, Dec. 26 (WLP) may have represented a first for the county.

Rails to Shorebirds

Black Rails went unrecorded at the Palo Alto Baylands for only the 2nd time since 1978-1979. One in *Nevada* Dec. 16 (J. Techlin) was not only late but at an elevation of approximately 1000 ft. Up to seven Clapper Rails in the S. San Francisco baylands, *San Mateo*, Dec. 17 (*fide* DPM) suggested this recently-discovered population has increased. An unbelievable 462 Virginia Rails were reported on the Benicia CBC, *Solano*, Dec. 18.

A Pacific Golden-Plover near Woodland, *Yolo*, Dec. 7 (*fide* TDM) and another in Lodi, *San Joaquin*, Dec. 17 (K. Foley) provided the only inland reports. Coastal reports suggested average or slightly below-average numbers wintered at traditional sites. A Rock Sandpiper at Pescadero, *San Mateo*, Jan. 15 (ADeM) was the only one reported s. of *Humboldt*. *Santa Clara* claimed a monopoly on Ruffs, with single females Dec. 17 (R&C Carlson) in Sunnyvale and Crittenden Marsh Feb. 11+ (PJM, m.ob.) considered different individuals (*fide* WB). Two Red-necked Phalaropes in Soquel, *Santa Cruz*, Dec. 16-17 (†E. Frost, †DLSu) may have been late migrants, but were clearly associated with a tremendous wreck of Red Phalaropes resulting from high winds during a storm Dec. 11-12. Many thousands were onshore during most of December and early January and were particularly numerous in *Humboldt* and *Del Norte*. One inland at Pacines Res., *San Benito*, Dec. 2 (SDF, KVV) provided a first for the county. Other inland reports included one in *San Joaquin* Dec. 16-20 (DGY) and one in *Lake* Dec. 21-24 (JRW, m.ob.).

Raptors

Given the recent decline of White-tailed Kites in parts of our Region, the 31 on Inner Bair I., *San Mateo*, Dec. 2 (ADeM) was encouraging. An ad. "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk s. of Halfmoon Bay Dec. 20 was *San Mateo's* 2nd (†ph. BMcK). Another on Tyler I., *Sacramento*, Jan. 26 was considered a returning bird (TDM). Three Swainson's Hawks at Holland Tract, *Contra Costa*, Feb. 4 (JM, J. Matkin) fit their recent pattern of wintering in the Delta. Ferruginous Hawks were considered above average in several counties, but Rough-legged Hawks were scarce.

Larids to Alcids

A second-basic Laughing Gull visited Marshall, *Marin*, Jan. 21-26 (RS, JM, †GFi). After a poor autumn for Franklin's Gulls, only one was reported: a first-basic bird at Moss Landing, *Monterey*, Dec. 21 (DLSu). The ad. Lesser Black-backed Gull stayed in the Alviso area, *Santa Clara*, to March (m.ob.), except for an excursion to near Newby I., *Alameda*, Feb. 13+ (†RJR, SAG, *fide* RJR). In an average flight of imm. Glaucous Gulls was an adult at Alviso Feb. 7 (MMR). The Black-legged Kittiwake invasion included an estimated 35-40% immatures in Monterey Bay (AB, DR). An immature at Lakeport Dec. 11 (JRW, †B.J. McIntosh) was *Lake's* first kittiwake. Three Black Skimmers were at Charleston Slough, *Santa Clara*, to Dec. 9 (m.ob.), with two last seen Dec. 18 (MMR).

An albino Com. Murre followed a normal bird, probably its parent, off Pacific Grove Jan. 20 (SFB, RT, m.ob.). A Thick-billed Murre at Monterey Feb. 11-16 (RT, †DR) equaled Fall's single bird. Following last August's strays, Marbled Murrelets irrupted S into *Monterey* in numbers



Received too late for the previous issue was this shot of a Bar-tailed Godwit (lower, with Marbled Godwit) at Point Reyes, California, October 12, 1995. Photograph/Ed Greaves.



Marbled Murrelet of the Asian or "Long-billed" form, probably soon to be considered a distinct species, off Humboldt Bay, California, December 7, 1995. Note that the areas of black below the eye and on the side of the breast are very limited, the white in the lore is very limited, and there is a faint pale area on the side of the black hindneck. Photograph/Sean McAllister.

unprecedented in recent years. Up to eight per day were seen in Monterey and Pacific Grove Dec. 31–E.O.P. (AB, DR, RC), and >20 was a guess at the true total present. Up to four or more settled off the Big Sur R. mouth Jan. 14+ (RH_y, JT_z, DR). A cooperative "Long-billed" Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus [marmoratus] perdix*) foraged just outside the N. Jetty of Humboldt Bay, *Humboldt*, Dec. 7–9 (DF_x, ph. SMcA, †JT_z). This Asian form, probably soon to achieve recognition as a full species, has established an impressive record of vagrancy. Details of previous unpublished records in n.w. California during other seasons will appear elsewhere (DF_x). Four single *scrippsi* Xantus' Murrelets were found in the Monterey Bay area Dec. 29–Jan. 14 (JiD, †SFB, DR, AB, DLSh); they are rare even at that latitude in winter, but a Xantus' Murrelet was reported as far north as Shelter Cove, *Humboldt*, Jan. 17 (M. Woods, *vide* SWH). Peak reports of Ancient Murrelets included 170 in Monterey Bay Dec. 29 (JiD, SFB, DLSh) and 180 at Pt. Arena Cove Jan. 6 (RS).

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