

# Southern Pacific Coast Region

## GUY MCCASKIE

This winter was mild with slightly below-average amounts of rainfall, particularly so in the southern portion of the Region. Higher-than-normal numbers of Northern Fulmars off the coast throughout the period, a "wreck" of Red Phalaropes along the coast following a series of December storms, and an incredible number of Ancient Murrelets along the coast at the same time made seabird watching exciting. An remarkable 19 species of gulls included California's first Red-legged Kittiwake and Ivory Gull. Most invasive species were rare (*e.g.* Purple Finches, Pine Siskins) or virtually nonexistent (*e.g.* Red-breasted Nuthatch, Varied Thrush) away from breeding localities, and our common winter wood warblers and sparrows appeared to be in low numbers, particularly at the start of the season. However, the diversity of passerines, particularly wood warblers, was astonishing and included several

species accidental in north America in mid-winter. In all this was an exciting winter for Southern California birders.

Abbreviations: C.B.R.C. (*California Bird Records Committee -Michael A. Patten, Secretary, P.O. Box 51959, Riverside, CA 92517*); L.A.C.N.H.M. (*Los Angeles County Natural History Museum*); N.E.S.S. (*north end of the Salton Sea, Riverside Co.*); S.E.S.S. (*south end of the Salton Sea, Imperial Co.*); S.F.K.R.P. (*South Fork Kern River Preserve near Weldon, Kern County*); S.Y.R.M. (*Santa Ynez River mouth west of Lompoc, Santa Barbara County*). As virtually all rarities in s. California are seen by many observers, only the observer(s) initially finding and identifying the bird are included. Reports submitted without documentation are not normally published.

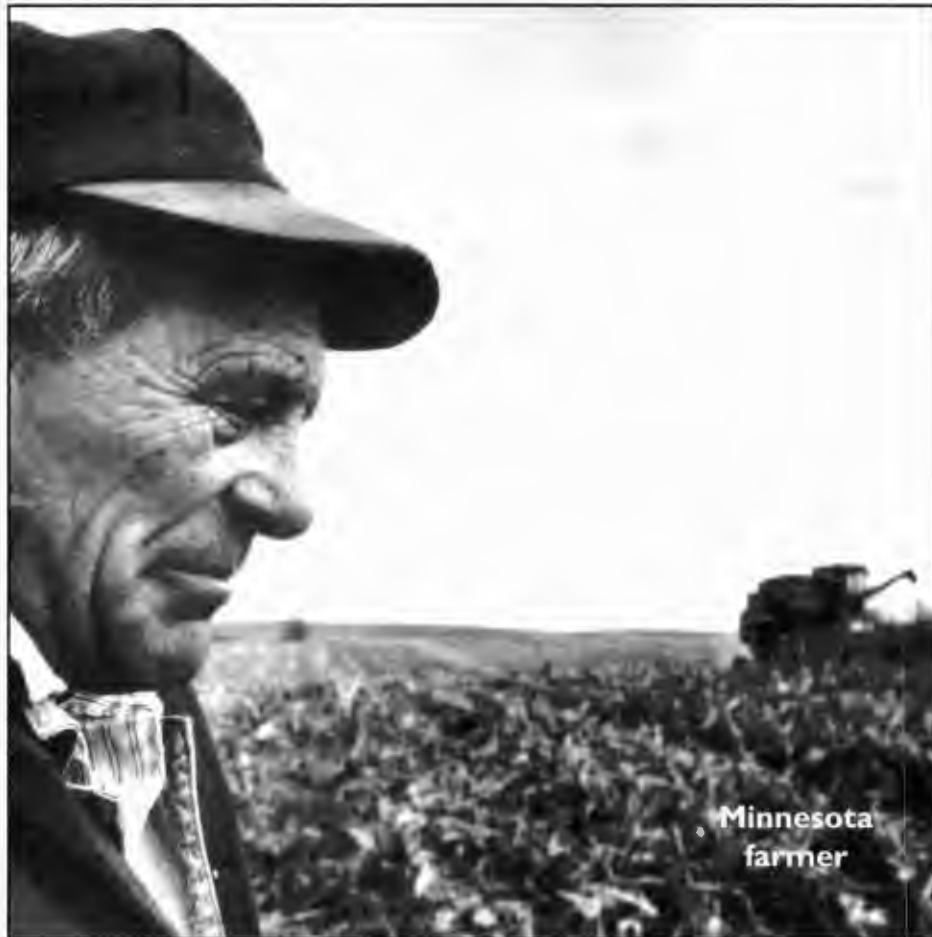
## Loons to Herons

A Pacific Loon far inland on Klondike L. near Big Pine, *Inyo*, Dec. 5 (T&JH) was a late fall migrant. The only Red-necked Grebe reported was one in Santa Barbara Dec. 30 (DA).

A Laysan Albatross over the Santa Barbara Channel Feb. 3 (PK) was closer to shore than normal. Since Flesh-footed Shearwaters are rare over s. California waters, one seen from Long Pt. on the Palos Verdes Pen., *Los Angeles*, Dec. 23 (BSc) and another seen from a boat off Laguna Beach, *Orange*, Dec. 29 (JEP) were noteworthy. A Leach's Storm-Petrel in La



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Jolla, *San Diego*, Dec. 14 (SW) is one of very few seen from shore in s. California.

An ad. Tricolored Heron at S.E.S.S., Mar. 2–30 (MAP) was believed to have wintered locally, and established the 5th such record for the Salton Sea.

### Whistling-Ducks to Hawks

Six Fulvous Whistling-Ducks, rare in winter, were at Ramer L. near S.E.S.S., Dec. 25–28 (MAP). An imm. Tundra Swan at S.E.S.S., Feb. 20–Mar. 2 (KS, MAP) was unusually far south. A ♂ Garganey near S.Y.R.M., Dec. 29+ (BH) was the first to be found wintering in s. California. Four Tufted Ducks were reported, with a male spending its 3rd winter on Oso Flaco L., *San Luis Obispo*, Dec. 26–Jan. 15 (MP), a female near Saticoy, *Ventura*, Feb. 11–Mar. 5 (ST), a male on Pyramid L., *Los Angeles*, Dec. 10–19 (KLG), and another male at S.E.S.S., Jan. 14–21 (RogH). A ♂ Tufted Duck x scaup sp. well studied on San Elijo Lagoon, *San Diego*, Feb. 18–24 (ELM) was the 4th example of this hybrid to be identified in s. California. A ♀ King Eider, a casual straggler to s. California, was at S. Laguna Beach, *Orange*, Dec. 23 (JEP), and what may have been the same bird was about 20 mi to the northwest at Huntington Beach Dec. 28 (DSP). The ♀ Harlequin Duck found in Cayucos, *San Luis Obispo*, Oct. 31 was still present Feb. 11 (JSR). Two Oldsquaws on the Colorado R. near Needles, *San Bernardino*, Dec. 26 (EAC) and an ad. male in Riverside Nov. 29–Jan. 6 (BGP) were inland, where rare. A Black Scoter, the least likely scoter inland, was on the Colorado R. below Parker Dam, *San Bernardino*, Feb. 11–Mar. 16 (SG). A ♂ Surf Scoter at S.E.S.S., Jan. 22–27 (PEL) was inland, where unusual at this time of the year. The ♂ Barrow's Goldeneye that returned to L. Cachuma, *Santa Barbara*, Nov. 26 for its 3rd winter remained through Jan. 13 (JEL).

The Harris Hawk that returned to San-tee, *San Diego*, Oct. 11 for its 2nd winter could not be found after Jan. 10 (RS), but ≤seven around Borrego Springs, *San*



**Male Garganey in flight near the mouth of the Santa Ynez River, California, January 2, 1996. Photograph/ Brad Hines.**

*Diego*, since at least October (these birds may have been present all summer, *fide* RT) were still present at the end of the period. A Swainson's Hawk photographed near S.Y.R.M., Feb. 11 (BH), another seen near Leucadia, *San Diego*, Feb. 15 (K&CR) and two more near Bakersfield, *Kern*, Feb. 16 (MOC) could all have been wintering locally or been exceptionally early spring migrants. At least six Zone-tailed Hawks were present in the coastal lowlands, where small numbers are now found each winter, with one that returned to Goleta, *Santa Barbara*, Sept. 22 for its 3rd winter still present Mar. 25 (JEL), one that returned to Ojai, *Ventura*, Nov. 26 for its 3rd winter still present Mar. 11 (BSi), and four more reported from scattered localities in coastal *San Diego*.

### Cranes to Murrelets

A Sandhill Crane first seen on San Nicholas I. in October and still present Feb. 25 (WW), another found on the Palos Verdes Pen., Feb. 5 (possibly late November) and still present Mar. 7 (MB), and a third near San Juan Capistrano, *Orange*, Dec. 16–17 (SSta, MD) were all far from areas of normal occurrence.

Five Pacific Golden-Plovers at their traditional wintering locality in Seal Beach, *Orange*, throughout the period (DRW) were the only reported. A flock of 42 Mt. Plovers in Seal Beach Dec. 30 (JF) represented a large number for along the coast today. An American Oystercatcher with one–two Am. x Black Oystercatcher hybrids and ≤19 Black Oystercatchers in Laguna Beach much of the winter (DRW) probably included the two "Am. Oystercatchers" reported there Sept. 2–5, and was exceptional since any oystercatcher is very rare to casual in *Orange*, and "pure" Am. Oystercatchers are casual to accidental in California; another Am. x Black Oystercatcher hybrid was photographed in *Ventura* Jan. 8–9 (DDJ). The Solitary Sandpiper in Torrance, *Los Angeles*, since Nov.

12 was still present Dec. 31 (MH) and was believed to have spent its 6th winter at this location. Up to seven Ruddy Turnstones at S.E.S.S., Dec. 9–Jan. 31 (GMCC) were wintering at this inland locality. A ♀ Ruff at S.E.S.S., Mar. 12–26 (DN, SSe) was believed to have wintered locally.

Two Laughing Gulls at N.E.S.S., Jan. 14 (CMcG) and one–two around S.E.S.S./Ramer L. all winter (GMCC) were unexpected for this time of the year. A Franklin's Gull in Arvin, *Kern*, Dec. 15–16 (JCW) was probably a late fall straggler. An ad. Little Gull was with a large flock of Bonaparte's Gulls off Pt. Fermin, *Los Angeles*, Dec. 23 (BSc) and another adult was at N.E.S.S., Mar. 2 (GMCC). The Black-headed Gull that returned to Santa Barbara Nov. 21 for its 4th winter remained through Jan. 30 (JEL). Up to three Mew Gulls, rare far inland, were in Arvin throughout the winter (JCW), and single birds were at S.E.S.S., Jan. 19 (PEL) and at nearby Brawley Jan. 26 (ELM). Three ad. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found, with one present for its 2nd winter at Dana Point, *Orange*, Dec. 18–Mar. 20 (JEP, HLJ), another photographed in Oceanside, *San Diego*, Feb. 22–Mar. 2 (PAG), and the third inland in Brawley Jan. 22–28 (PEL); these, along with one more in the San Francisco Bay area to the north, suggest this species is now more than an accidental straggler to the West Coast. An ad. Yellow-footed Gull photographed at Cabrillo Beach in Long Beach Jan. 7 (MH, KL) provided the first record for *Los Angeles*. A first-year W. Gull photographed at Parker Dam, *San Bernardino*, Dec. 28 (EAC) is one of a very few ever found along the Colorado R. A first-winter Glaucous Gull in Oceanside Mar. 14 (PAG) was the only one reported. A first-winter Black-legged Kittiwake on Baldwin L. in the *San Bernardino* Mts., Dec. 4 (REW) and



**Adult male Oldsquaw in Riverside, California, November 30, 1995. Photograph/Brian G. Prescott.**



**Adult Lesser Black-backed Gull at Oceanside, California, March 2, 1996. One of three present in the region this winter. Photograph/Jack W. Schlotte.**



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**ASTOUNDING** was this immature Ivory Gull found in far southern California at Dana Point January 5, 1996. A first for California, it apparently provided the southernmost record ever for the species. Photograph/Joel Weintraub.

another first-winter bird photographed at S.E.S.S., Dec. 17–Feb. 10 (RogH) were inland, where accidental. A Red-legged Kittiwake picked up in a weakened condition in Anaheim, *Orange*, Feb. 28 was taken to a local animal shelter, where it died 2 weeks later (DRW, \* L.A.C.N.H.M.); since there are 5 records for the Oregon coast, this species was expected in n. California waters, but not inland at an apartment complex in s. California. Totally unexpected was a first-winter Ivory Gull photographed at Dana Pt., Jan. 5 (JW); this was the first to be found in California, and established the southernmost locality for this species not only in North America but the entire Northern Hemisphere.

A remarkable 487 Ancient Murrelets were counted flying S past La Jolla during 11 1/2 hours of seawatching Dec. 14–18, including 257 in 4 hours Dec. 15 (SW); in addition, 30 were seen from Newport Beach Dec. 15 (BED). But despite this apparent massive movement into s. California waters, no more than one–two individuals were reported from other localities along the coast later in the winter.

### Doves to Woodpeckers

A White-winged Dove in Ventura Dec. 27 (ST) was along the coast, where unexpected in winter. At least two Com. Ground-Doves were still present in Nipomo, *San Luis Obispo*, at the end of the period (PAW); this species appeared at this n. extreme of its expanding range in 1994 and now appears established as resident. A Groove-billed Ani, the 10th to be found in California, was in Harbor City, *Los Angeles*, Dec. 2+ (TK, NP, PGS). A N. Pygmy-Owl at S.F.K.R.P., Dec. 27 (SR) was away from any area of normal occurrence. A Com. Poorwill in Orange Feb. 14 (DRW) is one of only a few seen in winter. A flock of 20 Vaux's Swifts just to the s. of San

Clemente, *San Diego*, Feb. 7 (LRH) was undoubtedly wintering locally. A ♂ Broad-billed Hummingbird that returned for its 3rd winter to Camarillo, *Ventura*, Oct. 14 was still present Mar. 9 (J&HW).

The fact that ≥eight Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were found scattered throughout the Region supports the idea this species is a rare but regular visitor to California. The White-headed Woodpecker found in Castaic, *Los Angeles*, Oct. 29 was still present Mar. 3 (KLG).

### Flycatchers to Vireos

The Least Flycatcher found in Manhattan Beach, *Los Angeles*, Sept. 25 was still present Feb. 9 (MH), and another wintering individual was in Costa Mesa, *Orange*, Jan. 1–Mar. 17 (BED). A Gray Flycatcher in Manhattan Beach all winter (EH), and another in San Diego Dec. 16–Feb. 12 (JZ) were the only two reported. Single "Western Flycatchers" were in Goleta Jan. 12–15 (LRB), in Riverside all winter (CMcG), and a 3rd in Harbor City Jan. 14 (KLG) was giving the "psu-weet" calls of a Pacific-slope Flycatcher. Single E. Phoebe at L. Cachume Dec. 2 (JC), in Lompoc Dec. 9 (VH), and in Santa Barbara Dec. 9–Jan. 1 (CH) may have been exceptionally late fall stragglers, but one near Tecopa, *Inyo*, Jan. 8–Mar. 9 (BB), another in Riverside Dec. 29–Mar. 18 (C-TL), one near Point Mugu, *Ventura*, Jan. 27–Feb. 17 (AL), and a 4th near Earp, *San Bernardino*, Feb. 4 (RMcK) were all clearly wintering. A Vermilion Flycatcher near Independence Dec. 10–22 (RAH) was unusually far north for this time of the year. The Tropi-



**GROOVE-BILLED ANI** in Los Angeles County, California, December 4, 1995. About the tenth state record. Photograph/Arnold Small.

cal Kingbird that arrived in Goleta Oct. 26 for its 4th winter was still present Mar. 6 (JEL), and another was near Point Mugu Feb. 16–Mar. 11 (DDJ). The Thick-billed Kingbird present in Pomona, *Los Angeles*, for its 4th winter was still present at the end of the period (KLG).

A N. Rough-winged Swallow in Goleta Nov. 25–Feb. 6 (JEL) was the same bird present here during the past 3 winters. At least 20 Barn Swallows found scattered throughout the Region in December and early January were more than expected in winter.

A Verdin at the n. tip of Pyramid L. in extreme n.w. *Los Angeles* Jan. 1 (KLG) establishes the w. extreme of this species' range.

A Rufous-backed Robin found in Borrego Springs Mar. 16 (KE) was still present at the end of the month; from its aggressive behavior towards other berry-eating birds it is believed to have been present much of the winter and is the 7th to be found in California. A Gray Catbird, most unusual in California and particularly so in winter, remained in Costa Mesa Dec. 31–Feb. 19 (JEP). A Brown Thrasher, rare in California at any time of the year, was in Solana Beach, *San Diego*, Jan. 13–Feb. 24 (PAG).

An imm. Black-backed Wagtail at Dana Point Jan. 25–Apr. 7+ (TR) posed an identification challenge when first found, but acquired a black back as spring approached; this is the 8th to be found in California but the first to winter, although there is a winter record for Oregon. What was believed to be a Sprague's Pipit was seen near Soda L. on the Carrizo Plains Jan. 9 (DSP), but could not be relocated on later dates; the documentation will be assessed by the C.B.R.C.

Since Bell's Vireos are very rare in winter, especially away from the coast, one banded at S.F.K.R.P., Dec. 18–24 (SR, DLaB) and another seen along the Colorado R. at the *San Bernardino/Riverside* line Feb. 4 (JEP) were of note. The expected small number of Solitary Vireos were present, with most inland being *plumbeus* and half of those along the coast being *cassinii*, as is normal. A Warbling Vireo at S.Y.R.M., Feb. 17 (BH) was believed to have wintered locally.

### Wood Warblers

A ♀ Golden-winged Warbler near Glendale, *Los Angeles*, Mar. 1–3 (DM) had undoubtedly been present all winter; there are a handful of records from the w. United States in December, but one in *Orange* Feb. 19–Mar. 14, 1992 appears to be the only one previously known to spend the winter in North America. A Tennessee Warbler in Torrance, *Los Angeles*, Dec. 26 (KL) was probably an exceptionally late fall

straggler. Ten Nashville Warblers along the coast was slightly less than normal, but one at S.E.S.S., Jan. 26 (ELM) was inland, where unexpected this time of the year. A Lucy's Warbler, rare in winter, remained in Fullerton, *Orange*, Dec. 10–Feb. 17 (JEP). A N. Parula in Bishop, *Inyo*, Dec. 19 (JP) and another near there Dec. 18–21 (DP) are best treated as exceptionally late fall stragglers. The expected small number of Yellow Warblers remained along the coast and around S.E.S.S. through the winter, along with one in Shandon, *San Luis Obispo*, Mar. 7 (TME) and another at Galileo Hill Park in extreme e. *Kern* Jan. 14 (JCW). Six Chestnut-sided Warblers were found along the coast, including long-staying individuals in Santa Barbara Nov. 23–Mar. 28+ (HPR), Harbour City Nov. 26–Feb. 11+ (MH), Huntington Beach Jan. 1–Mar. 24+ (BED), and in Imperial Beach Nov. 26–Apr. 6+ (TRC). Another was inland at Finney L., *Imperial*, Jan. 14–Mar. 16+ (SBT). A Cape May Warbler seen at S.E.S.S., Feb. 24 (RogH) was undoubtedly wintering in that area, but could not be relocated on later dates despite much searching. A ♂ Black-throated Blue Warbler in the Cuyamaca Mts., *San Diego*, Dec. 20–Jan. 1 (DPo) probably succumbed to cold weather. An average number of Black-throated Gray Warblers remained along the coast as indicated by >30 reported. Two Hermit Warblers in *Santa Barbara* and three more in *Los Angeles* also represented an average number for this time of the year. A Black-throated Green Warbler, rare to casual in California at any time of the year, was in Goleta Dec. 19–Jan. 4 (RAE), another was near Oceanside Dec. 24–Mar. 3 (PAG), and a third was inland in *Riverside* Jan. 13–Feb. 11 (C-TL). A Blackburnian Warbler in Malibu, *Los Angeles*, Dec. 17 (KLG) may have been an exceptionally late fall straggler, but another in La Crescenta, *Los Angeles*, Jan. 20–28 (KLG) was believed to be wintering locally, and one of very few to do so in North America. A Yellow-throated Warbler at Ramer L. near S.E.S.S., Dec. 17–Mar. 16 (M&R Toochin of British Columbia) was a yellow-lored bird of the nominate race considered accidental in California.

Remarkable was a Grace's Warbler associating with Pygmy Nuthatches and other such mountain species at 5400 ft. in the San Gabriel Mts., *Los Angeles*, Oct. 22–Mar. 3 (TK), surviving snow storms and below-freezing temperatures during its stay. A ♂ Prairie Warbler found in Santee Mar. 31 (DY) had undoubtedly been present all winter. Only six Palm Warblers were reported, but four of these were inland, where unexpected, including single birds at the Hidden Valley Wildlife Area near *Riverside* Jan. 27–Feb. 4 (RodH), Desert Center,



**Yellow-throated Warbler at Ramer Lake, California, January 14, 1996. Photograph/Larry Sansone.**

*Riverside*, Feb. 3–17 (RMCK), L. Perris, *Riverside*, Feb. 11 (LRH), and at S.E.S.S., Mar. 2–16 (MAP). The usual small numbers (ten reported between *Santa Barbara* and *San Diego*) of Black-and-white Warblers were present along the coast. An Am. Redstart near Big Pine Dec. 17 (T&JH) was a late fall straggler, but six along the coast and ≥four more around S.E.S.S. during January and February was about average. A Prothonotary Warbler in downtown *Los Angeles* Feb. 24–Mar. 31+ (KLG) is one of a very few to have successfully wintered in California. A N. Waterthrush in Duarte, *Los Angeles*, Jan. 23–Feb. 10 (MSM), another in Newport Beach Nov. 30–Jan. 30 (JEP), and a 3rd at S.E.S.S., Mar. 9 (K&CR) were the only three reported. A Kentucky Warbler, a casual straggler to California, was in S. Laguna Beach Dec. 17–Mar. 24+ (JB) and one of only a few to have wintered in the state. The only MacGillivray's Warbler found was near Laguna Beach Jan. 20 (BED). Unexpected were two Hooded Warblers: a male in *Santa Barbara* Dec. 30–Jan. 1 (MSM) and another male in Costa Mesa Dec. 31–Mar. 16+ (JEP). About 25 Wilson's Warblers along the coast was an expected number for winter. Four Painted Redstarts along the coast was certainly more than expected, with single birds in *San Luis Obispo* Jan. 3–Feb. 11 (OY), near Goleta Oct. 2–Feb. 18 (JMC), in Huntington Beach Dec. 31–Mar. 17+ (BED), and the 4th present for its 4th winter in Costa Mesa Oct. 5–Mar. 9+ (JEP).

### Tanagers to Finches

A ♂ Hepatic Tanager in *Santa Barbara* Dec. 4–Feb. 13 (HPR) was the same bird present here during the past 2 winters. Six Summer Tanagers along the coast were fewer than normal. Single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in *Santa Barbara* Dec. 1 (DPe) and at Canebreak, *Kern*, Dec. 1–2 (DVB) were probably late fall stragglers, but one in Lompoc Jan. 13–Feb. 29+ (LS) and three more in the Goleta/Santa Barbara area during January

and February were undoubtedly wintering locally. Two Black-headed Grosbeaks, scarcer than the previous species in winter, was an average number for this time of the year, with one in Goleta Jan. 7–27 (JNB) and the other in *Agora, Los Angeles*, Feb. 17+ (RW). Single Blue Grosbeaks near Glendale, *Los Angeles*, Dec. 5 (KLG) and in the Sepulveda Basin, *Los Angeles*, Dec. 9 (KLG) were both exceptionally late for fall migrants.

A Green-tailed Towhee in Huntington Beach Feb. 4–27 (DRW) and another in the San Fernando Valley, *Los Angeles*, Jan. 19 (RB) were slightly to the n. of areas of regular occurrence in winter, but another at Galileo Hill in e. *Kern* Nov. 24–Jan. 14 (JCW) was the first to be found wintering in the high desert. Only two Clay-colored Sparrows were found; one in Orcutt, *Santa Barbara*, Feb. 3–29+ (AA) and another in Sylmar, *Los Angeles*, Jan. 21–28 (CAM). A "Large-billed" Savannah Sparrow at Morro Bay S.P. in November was still present Jan. 20 (DVB), this being the n. extreme of this species' winter range. A Grasshopper Sparrow near Big Pine Dec. 13–14 (T&JH) and another at Montana de Oro S.P., *San Luis Obispo*, Jan. 14 (SSte) were away from areas of normal occurrence. A Sharp-tailed Sparrow present on Morro Bay since October was still present Jan. 20 (DVB), and ≤ two present on Upper Newport Bay since November were still present Feb. 18 (MSM). Swamp Sparrows appeared to be a less numerous than in recent years, with only 20 reported scattered throughout the Region. White-throated Sparrows were decidedly scarce, with only 12 reported, but ten Harris' Sparrows was about average, and included one virtually on the Mexican border near Imperial Beach Dec. 16–Jan. 27 (RC).

A Lapland Longspur near Lancaster Dec. 16 (KLG), a Chestnut-collared Longspur near Big Pine Jan. 5–7 (T&JH), and ≤ three more at S.E.S.S., Feb. 24–Mar. 9 (WJM) were the only longspurs reported.

A Rusty Blackbird, rare in California, was photographed in Baker, *San Bernardino*, Dec. 24 (EAC); another was in Goleta Jan. 24–Feb. 15 (KK). Two Orchard Orioles, also rare stragglers to California, were present, with a female in *Santa Barbara* Nov. 20–Mar. 17+ (JEL) and an imm. male at another location in *Santa Barbara* Mar. 1–22+ (JEL). Six Hooded Orioles along the coast was about average, but 30 Bullock's Orioles in the same area was less than expected. A Scott's Oriole in *Santa Barbara* Dec. 24–Feb. 25 (SSh) and another in Sylmar throughout the period (DM) were along the coast and away from known wintering localities in the w. part of the low deserts in e. *San Diego*.

A Purple Finch photographed near Earp Feb. 4 (RMCK) was along the Colorado

R., where this species is considered rare and irregular. An intriguing report was of a Com. Redpoll at Mt. Home Village in the *San Bernardino* Mts., Jan. 13–15 by two ornithologists/biologists (Dr. John D. Goodman and Dr. Nan Jenks-Jay); this species has been found in California during only 3 previous winters, and then only in the extreme n. portion of the State. The documentation will be reviewed and commented by the C.B.R.C..

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