

Middle Pacific Coast Region

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Loons to Shearwaters

A large migration brought 46,835 Pacific Loons past El Jorro Pt., *Santa Cruz*, Apr. 19 (DLSu). A late imm. Yellow-billed Loon at the Albion R. mouth May 1+ (R. Weibe, D. Weibe, †DT, ph. †RJK, m.ob.) was *Mendocino's* first.

Laysan Albatross was seen from many boats all period, especially offshore *Monterey*, but the high count was only five there May 18 (JiD, DLSH, SFB, RT). A Laysan Albatross found on a hillside >10 mi inland at Woodside, *San Mateo*, Mar. 6 was released at sea Mar. 8 (*fide* P. Latas). We expect one Laysan inland each spring, but Black-footed Albatross, more common near shore, is unrecorded inland.

Up to four Flesh-footed Shearwaters were seen offshore *Monterey* Mar. 17–Apr. 5 (RT, DLSH). Until recently this species was very rare in spring. Three Manx Shearwaters were seen from shore in early May: Pt. Pinos, *Monterey*, May 2 (†DR); and Pigeon Pt., *San Mateo*, May 5 (†G. Deghi, N. Lethaby) and May 11 (†DPo, RSTh). This recent invader now appears almost year-round. A Black-vented Shearwater at Pt. Pinos May 2 (†DR) was very late.

Hérons to Waterfowl

Great Blue Herons continued their Bay Area breeding expansion with a new nesting site detected in *Santa Clara*, and at least 2 or possibly 3 nests at the S.F. colony in Golden Gate Park. An imm. Little Blue Heron at Lower Klamath N.W.R., *Siskiyou*, May 31 (N. Clark, RE) continued

a trend of rare spring sightings from the Klamath Basin dating back 15 years. Cattle Egrets made a poor showing along the coast except in *Monterey*, where ≤ 18 were present Mar. 30–May 16, mostly around Elkhorn Slough (m.ob.). Ten White-faced Ibis over C.C.R.S., *Santa Clara*, May 11 (SCR) and 17 at n.e. Humboldt Bay, *Humboldt*, May 12 (GLF) represented the only coastal or near-coastal reports.

Blue-morph Ross' Geese were noted in *Siskiyou* Mar. 5 at Lower Klamath N.W.R. and Apr. 1 at Tule L. (RE), where they are regularly found with staging white-morph Ross' in early spring. Three Brant near Volta, *Merced*, May 19 (RMrr) represent one of very few reports from the San Joaquin Valley in spring. This species is very unusual inland away from the Mono and Klamath basins.

An Eur. Wigeon at San Felipe L., *San Benito*, Mar. 30 (SDF) represented only the 2nd county record. Another along the *Mendocino* coast May 18 was one of our latest ever (DT). Migrant Tufted Ducks were noted in San Lucas, *Monterey*, Mar. 10 (J.H. Banks, H. Kronkhyte, †DR), Petaluma, *Sonoma*, Apr. 15–17 (DN, RLe), and Ferndale, *Humboldt*, Apr. 28 (†DFx). A pair of well-documented Harlequin Ducks at Yreka Apr. 20 accounted for *Siskiyou's* first record (†RE).

Raptors

Bald Eagle reintroductions by the Ventana Wilderness Sanctuary on the Big Sur coast



have produced 3 nesting pairs in *San Luis Obispo* and *Monterey*, and the female of a new breeding pair in *Alameda*. Two N. Harriers nesting in a tiny salt marsh by a busy beach in *Alameda* May 14 amazed observers (LRF, ES). *Contra Costa* had few records of Swainson's Hawk before 1993, but counts of 55 Mar. 7 and 29 May 21 were made near the e. edge of the county, where some now may nest (all SAG). Unusual numbers of single migrant Swainson's Hawks were seen in our Region's s.w. counties, with five in *Santa Cruz* Mar. 2–Apr. 27 (BMMo, DLSu), six in *Monterey* Apr. 8–27 (m.ob.), and one in *Santa Clara* Mar. 28 (DLSu).

Cranes to Shorebirds

A Sandhill Crane near Arcata provided some excitement and a very rare record for *Humboldt* May 26–28 (J.Sikkens, m.ob.).

At least 14 Solitary Sandpipers spanning Apr. 13–May 7 were somewhat more than normal, and included five in *Santa Cruz* and four in *Monterey* Apr. 13–May 7. The only inland record came from *San Benito* May 1 (RMrr). A Wandering Tattler at Butte Valley W.A., *Siskiyou*, May 18 (†BED, †RE) was an impressive inland rarity. Three Semipalmated Sandpipers were noted: one from *Santa Clara* May 4 (JMR) and evidently different individuals at the Arcata Marsh Project, *Humboldt*, Apr. 29 & 30 (†DFx). Four Pectoral Sandpipers along the Pajaro R., *Santa Cruz/Monterey*, Apr. 27 (†DLSu) and one at the Hollister Sewage Ponds, *San Benito*, May 1 (†ADeM, DLSh) were the most ever observed in our Region during spring. A Rock Sandpiper at Pebble Beach, *Monterey*, Mar. 6–13 (†DR) provided the first record in that county since 1979. A Curlew Sandpiper,

still mostly in basic plumage at Mountain View, *Santa Clara*, May 1–4 (†SCR, ph. BMck), represented the Region's first in spring. *Santa Clara* continued its hold on the Region's Ruffs, with a wintering female lingering at Crittenden Marsh until Apr. 27 (m.ob.) and a male near Alviso Apr. 7 (†PJM). Red Phalaropes were noted up and down the coast in late April. Most impressive was a massive wreck in Monterey Bay Apr. 28, where a flock estimated at 20,000 was at the mouth of Moss Landing Harbor, with thousands more visible just offshore (DR, DSg, m.ob.). Many thousands were reported throughout Monterey Bay during the next several days (m.ob.) and an estimated 30,000 flew by Pigeon Pt., *San Mateo*, May 1 (BMck).

Larids to Alcids

A very high shore count of 57 Pomarine Jaegers passed El Jarro Pt., *Santa Cruz*, Apr. 19 (DLSu). An ad. Laughing Gull on Humboldt Bay May 30+ (P. Schmidt, †DFx, JCPo) was quite rare, but adults tend to appear at this season. Franklin's Gull repeated near Table Rock, *Santa Cruz*, with two adults May 6 (DLSu). An ad. Franklin's Gull was 28 mi up the coast at Pescadero Cr., *San Mateo*, May 14 (†GFi, MPI). Franklin's Gulls at Lower Klamath N.W.R., *Siskiyou*, had increased to 15 by May 31 (RE). *San Benito's* first Little Gull inhabited Hollister sewage ponds Mar. 1–Apr. 9 (DS, SDF, †RMrr). An imm. Black-headed Gull passed Pigeon Pt., *San Mateo*, Apr. 20 (†RSTh, MiW). For the 3rd consecutive year a pair of Heermann's Gulls set up territory on Ano Nuevo I., *San Mateo* (GJS).

Two ad. W. Gulls at San Felipe L., Apr. 8 made the 2nd *San Benito* record (KVV).

A 3rd-year Glaucous-winged Gull at Clear L., *Lake*, May 21 (JRW) was quite late inland. The strong NW wind brought a high 103 Sabine's Gulls close by Pigeon Pt., *San Mateo*, Apr. 27 (RSTh).

SA Eleven years ago an ad. Swallow-tailed Gull visited Monterey for 3 days (AB 39:958–959). Although many birders believed that this fantastic bird was a wild accidental, the California Bird Records Committee debated bitterly for a decade before rejecting the record (*Western Birds* 26:26–27). Some argued that the gull might have been transported by man. The lack of other definite records n. of Panama bolstered their claim that tropical waters were too great a barrier for this bird to cross. Others countered that it was almost certainly a naturally-occurring vagrant, but not an "accidental" because they predicted another such vagrant individual. It happened. An ad. Swallow-tailed Gull was seen at close range by an observer who has seen >1000 at sea (†LS). As predicted, it too was in full alternate plumage, though the Mar. 3 date was different from the June 6–8 of 1985. The gull was over 3000 meter deep water 15 mi w.s.w. of F.I., arguably farther from the major gull colony than predicted. But it is time for the naysayers to reconsider the 1985 record.—SFB

Our earliest spring Com. Tern ever was in Monterey Bay Mar. 21 (RT). Common Terns at Paicines Res., Apr. 26 (DS, DLSh, ADeM, JLx) and San Felipe L. May 5 (KVV) provided the 2nd and 3rd report for *San Benito*, and an adult at Sunnyside May 18 (SCR) was the first clear spring migrant for *Santa Clara*. Although Least Tern is believed to migrate over the Santa Cruz Mts. spring and fall, three over Lexington Res., May 12 (DLSu) made a first spring record for *Santa Clara*. Black Terns often visit coastward counties, but ten at Hollister sewage ponds Apr. 29 (DLSh, ADeM) was a lot.

How many Black Skimmers did we have? Five—seven migrants moved through *Monterey* and *Santa Cruz* Apr. 29–May 24 (m.ob.), after the first two arrived at Charleston Slough, *Santa Clara*, Apr. 25 (PMB). *Santa Cruz* had three (ph. M. Harris) the same day (May 1), four were at Charleston Slough (B. Juhl, *fide* LCh), but only one pair nested at the latter site (SCR, MMR), and a single was at the H.S., *Alameda*, nest site Apr. 30 and May 19 (ES).



Curlew Sandpiper at Crittenden Marsh, Santa Clara County, California, May 5 1996. Photograph/Mike Harris.



Two of three Black Skimmers (with California Gulls) at Santa Cruz, California, April 30, 1996. Photograph/Mike Harris.

An alternate-plumaged "pair" of Marbled Murrelets to mid-May and at least one basic-plumaged bird into June at Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey* (B.S.O.L.), suggested possible breeding up that river, but they may have been mere stragglers from the fall-winter irruption s. across Monterey Bay. Fourteen Ancient Murrelets near Pt. Pinos, *Monterey*, May 18 (DLSh, SFB, JiD) were very late for so many. Four active Cassin's Auklet nests were on Ano Nuevo I., where nesting was confirmed in 1995 (GJS).

Pigeons to Woodpeckers

Rock Doves rarely solicit comment, but a nesting pair on Brushy Peak, n.e. of Livermore, *Alameda*, Apr. 20 (SCR) was the observer's "only natural nest ever seen." The erratic Band-tailed Pigeon went mostly without comment except for "hundreds" at the Carmel R. mouth, *Monterey*, May 19+ (m.ob.), and 250 at Redding, *Shasta*, May 31 (BY, CY). Both of these areas are usually down to small numbers by the end of the period. A Lesser Nighthawk over Coyote Cr., Apr. 23 (C. Otahal) provided only *Santa Clara's* 4th since 1980. A Black Swift over San Benito Mt., May 25 (RMrr) furnished *San Benito's* 2nd; the species is rarely detected away from coastal areas during migration. A Vaux's Swift at Del Valle Res., *Alameda*, Mar. 26 (JMR) was on the early side. Over 150 at Mt. Diablo, *Contra Costa*, Apr. 27 (DGY) represented one the Region's larger spring passages from the interior.

At least five Costa's Hummingbirds—and a nest—at the Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey*, Apr. 30–May 21 (B.S.O.L.) was most impressive along the immediate coast. The ♂ Broad-tailed Hummingbird at Clear L. Riviera, *Lake*, Apr. 29 (†CJP) was our first n. of the S.E. Bay area. Only nine Rufous Hummingbirds banded at C.C.R.S., Mar. 29–Apr. 24 represented the lowest total since 1988 (*fide* WGB). Tree Tobacco control efforts were given the blame. A pair of Red-breasted

Sapsuckers were again attempting to nest in the same tree from last spring near Pescadero, *San Mateo*, Apr. 23 (ph. BMcK), but they abandoned the project by Apr. 29. The Pileated Woodpecker continued its expansion down the Coast Ranges as *Monterey* recorded its 2nd on Michael Ridge in Partington Canyon May 18 (†J Norman); the county's first was a specimen from Sand City June 5, 1994.

Flycatchers to Thrushes

Single Willow Flycatchers in *Monterey* May 9 at the Big Sur R. mouth (B.S.O.L.) and along the Pajaro R. (DLSu) were quite early; late May is when most start to arrive. Thirty-four Hammond's Flycatchers in the Diablo Range and San Joaquin Delta Apr. 9–mid-May was typical, but seven coastally *Monterey* to *San Mateo/Santa Clara* Apr. 16–28 was high. Indicative of the poor passerine migration, 11 Pacific-slope Flycatchers banded at C.C.R.S., Apr. 8–May 26 (*fide* WGB) represented their lowest total ever.

Known wintering E. Phoebes were last observed at Bodega Bay through the end of March (*fide* RAR), and at Shady Oaks Park, *Santa Clara*, Mar. 6 (RWR, FV). One at Elkhorn Slough, *Monterey*, Mar. 24 (T. Newberry) was not previously reported, but most likely wintered locally. The wintering Dusky-capped Flycatcher at Elkhorn Slough spanned Dec. 27–May 6 (†DEG). Pioneering Cassin's Kingbirds at Piper Slough, *Contra Costa*, May 3 (SAG; a pair), and Arastradero Preserve, *Santa Clara*, Mar. 13 (TAC, FV) provided 2nd and 4th county records, respectively, but not far from known nesting stations. A pair of nesting W. Kingbirds near Soda L., *Santa Cruz*, May 26 (DLSu) furnished only the 2nd documented breeding record for the county.

Four singing Horned Larks near Soda L., May 26 (DLSu) were at the county's only known extant breeding area. An abandoned Bank Swallow colony near King City, *Monterey*, may not have been all bad news as a relatively new colony, 2 mi away, grew this spring (J. Banks *et al.*) suggesting birds from the abandoned colony moved there. The Yellow-billed Magpie at Garrapata S.P., *Monterey*, Mar. 15 (JBo) was the first here since 1926. A singing Canyon Wren along the lower Trinity R. near Hoopa May 4 (DFx *et al.*) was at the only known reliable site in *Humboldt* for the species. Suddjian first discovered nesting Varied Thrush in the Santa Cruz Mts. in 1991. Continuing his surveys, he found nesting birds in 2 new watersheds: a female at Hidden Gulch, *San Mateo*, May 5 (Pescadero Cr. water-

shed); and a female and male at different sites near the headwaters of Gazos Cr., *San Mateo*, May 14 & 31.

Tanagers to Finches

The wintering ♂ Summer Tanager at Stanford University, *Santa Clara*, remained until Mar. 20 (DSt). A female at Piper Slough, *Contra Costa*, May 14 (SAG, RSL) was apparently the Region's first in the C.V. during spring. A Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Rio Del Mar, *Santa Cruz*, Mar. 14–Apr. 15 (D. Salaices) probably wintered locally; spring vagrants were at the Pajaro R. mouth, *Santa Cruz*, May 11 (DLSu) and Bodega Bay May 23 (DN). A Black-headed Grosbeak wintered in Pacific Grove, *Monterey*, Dec. 2–Apr. 13 (SRO). Blue Grosbeaks moved coastally, where very rare: one at the confluence of the Pajaro R. and Pescadero Cr., *Santa Cruz*, Apr. 22 (DLSu), one at the Big Sur R. mouth Apr. 28 (B.S.O.L.), and two more there May 9 (JBo *et al.*). *Monterey* and *Santa Cruz* also captured the season's Indigo Buntings with ≤three at the Big Sur R. mouth May 26+ (B.S.O.L.), and two along the Pajaro R., Apr. 27 and May 28 (both DLSu).

A Dickcissel at Mt. View May 28–30 (ph. L&R Dobbins) was *Santa Clara's* first; we average less than one a spring. The wintering Clay-colored Sparrow in Sebastopol, *Sonoma*, remained until Apr. 17 (RoM). A spring vagrant was at L. Merced, S.F., May 14 (JM, JMk, ASH). Grasshopper Sparrow made a very strong showing this Spring, especially in *Monterey*, *Humboldt*, *Napa*, and *Stanislaus*. This was possibly a result of luxuriant grasses following heavy winter and spring rains (DFx). A singing Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow remained at the Palo Alto Baylands, *Santa Clara*, until Apr. 14 (L. Gray); reports of this species past January are surprisingly few. The state's 4th Rustic Bunting wintered near Hoopa, *Humboldt*, Dec. 23–Mar. 17 (†DFx, m.ob.).

The wintering Rusty Blackbird at Pescadero remained until Mar. 13 (BMcK). Great-tailed Grackles showed no signs of slowing down, as the Monterey Bay area was hit this time. At least seven birds, and possibly ten, were found coastally from Marina, *Monterey*, to Santa Cruz early April–May 4 (ph. DR, †DLSu, †JDv *et al.*). Another was found inland in Greenfield, *Monterey*, Apr. 25 (M. Tidwell). The birds appeared to wander widely during the course of a day, which is consistent with earlier invaders. Additional birds were at the Garcia R. mouth, *Mendocino*, Mar. 3 (†SCR, MMR), and L. Merced, S.F., May 14 (JM, JMk, ASH). A

black-backed ♂ Lesser Goldfinch at Arastradero Preserve, *Santa Clara*, Apr. 26 (†SCR) was assumed to be a variant of the local green-backed race rather than from the Texas population. Lawrence's Goldfinch staged an impressive invasion coastally and to the north this spring. They were widespread and common in *Monterey*, with much coastal nesting, which is irregular there (DR). At least 16 birds were along Skyline Blvd., *San Mateo*, May 27 (BMcK), and at least one nest found on Langley Rd., May 18 (†JDv *et al.*). Way to the north, single pairs were suspected of nesting near Grenada and Killgore Hill, *Siskiyou*, May 9–19 (RE); their rare status this far north is reflected by the fact there is but one record of the species for Oregon.

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