

# Southern Pacific Coast Region

## GUY MCCASKIE

This summer was warmer and dryer than normal, with all areas, particularly the mountains and deserts, left unusually dry at the end of the season. Work on the *Los Angeles Breeding Bird Atlas* produced a number of interesting nesting records, including some new to that area of California.

Abbreviations: C.L. (*China L. Naval Air Weapons Station, extreme n.e. Kern Co.*); E.A.F.B. (*Edwards Air Force Base, s.e. Kern Co.*); L.A.C.N.H.M. (*Los Angeles County Natural History Museum*); N.E.S.S. (*n. end of the Salton Sea, Riverside Co.*); S.C.R.E. (*Santa Clara R. Estuary near Ventura, Ventura Co.*); S.D.N.H.M. (*San Diego Natural History Museum*); S.E.S.S. (*s. end of the Salton Sea, Imperial Co.*); S.F.K.R.P. (*South Fork Kern R. Preserve near Weldon, Kern Co.*). A plus (+) following the date indicates the referenced bird was present through the end of the period (July 31,

1996). Since virtually all rarities in s. California are seen by many observers, only the observer(s) initially finding and identifying the bird are included. Documentation for species on the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC) review list is forwarded to the CBRC Secretary and archived at the Western Foundation for Vertebrate Zoology in Camarillo.

## Petrels to Frigatebirds

Fulmars remained through the summer, as is often the case following winters like this past, when above-average numbers of these birds are in s. California waters. Two **Dark-rumped Petrels** (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*) were well seen from the research vessel David Starr Jordan at 33° 39'N, 120° 37'W (24 nautical mi s.w. of San Miguel I.) July 31 (RLP, SSm); this is the 3rd sighting of this species within California waters, but it is believed to be widespread over much of the e. Pacific s. of California. A **Flesh-footed Shearwater**, scarce in s. California waters, was between Ventura and Santa Cruz I., June 8 (AS). A **Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel** compared directly with Leach's Storm-Petrels at 33° 39'N, 120° 37'W July 31 (RLP) was one of a very few reported off California.

A **Masked Booby**, the 6th to be seen in California waters, at 33° 51'N, 120° 51'W (23 nautical mi s.w. of San Miguel I.) July 16 (RLP, SSm) was a bird of the year that had not begun its first molt; since no color was seen on the bill, it could not be identi-





fied as either the yellow-billed *dactylatra* or the orange-billed *granti* form/species occurring in the e. Pacific. An ad. Brown Booby at the Diablo Canyon Power Plant near Pt. Buchon July 10–25 (JC) was the first to be found in *San Luis Obispo*. The presence of at least nine well-grown young Brown Pelicans at S.E.S.S. in June (K. Sturm and D. Anderson, *vide* KCM) documented the first nesting of this species inland. The last of the Neotropic Cormorants that arrived around the Salton Sea this spring were two that remained along the New R. near Seeley, *Imperial*, to June 14 (JEP) and one at N.E.S.S., June 1 (MAP). Magnificent Frigatebirds were remarkably scarce, with an early immature over fishing boats off La Jolla, *San Diego*, June 15 (PAG) and another at S.E.S.S., July 27 (RHi) being the only two reported.

### Hérons to Ducks

A pair of Am. Bitterns successfully fledged two young from a nest found near Santa Paula, *Ventura*, Apr. 26 (BS) and established one of a very few records for breeding in s. California in recent years. Several pairs of Great and Snowy egrets successfully nested along the Santa Ana R. in Anaheim, *Orange* (RAH), and at least 5 pairs of Snowy Egrets fledged young from the Great Blue Heron/Great Egret rookery in Morro Bay S.P. in June (TME); numbers of nesting egrets appear to be increasing along the coast of s. California and the Snowy Egrets are the first known to nest in *San Luis Obispo*. A "calico" Little Blue Heron with Cattle Egrets near El Centro, *Imperial*, July 6 (SBT) was the only one found away from the resident population in *San Diego*. Three ad. Reddish Egrets were at Bolsa Chica, *Orange*, July 10 (MJSanM), but could not be relocated on later dates. The ad. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron remained with nesting Black-crowned Night-Herons in La Jolla into early June (DWA), another adult remained with nesting egrets near Ocean Beach, *San Diego*, to at least June 27 (LB), and the immature along the New R. near Seeley was still present June 30 (RZR).

A Tundra Swan along the Los Angeles R. in Long Beach, *Los Angeles*, June 9–10 (KGL) was certainly unexpected considering the time of the year. Eleven Brant on Tinemaha Res. near Big Pine, *Inyo*, July 1–21 (T&JH), one found at C.L. in May remaining to June 24 (SSt), and another found at E.A.F.B. in May remaining to June 29 (MTH) were undoubtedly birds that had moved N out of the Gulf of California and become lost in the interior; stragglers from the large number of these geese that pass through the Salton Sea each spring regularly

remain there through the summer, but are rarely found elsewhere in the interior this time of the year. A ♂ Tufted Duck near Lancaster, *Los Angeles*, July 14+ (RLG) was the first to be found in s. California in summer; individuals of virtually every species of waterfowl recorded in California have been found summering in the state and are presumed to be either non-breeding first-year birds or individuals injured during the winter. The imm. Black Scoter found at N.E.S.S., May 4 was still present July 13 (GMCC) and is presumed to have successfully summered; small numbers of scoters—predominantly Surfs, but with the occasional White-winged and rarely a Black—can be found in summer along the coast, but are noteworthy inland. Four Surf Scoters were still present at N.E.S.S., July 20 (GMCC), indicating these birds remained from May through the summer. Three White-winged Scoters present at N.E.S.S. since Mar. 23 remained into June, with an imm. male found dead June 29 (\*S.D.N.H.M.) and the remaining two still present July 13 (GMCC). Unexpected were two ♀ Bufflehead with two half-grown ducklings in Bishop, *Inyo*, May 30–June 1 (T&JH), and a pair with two 3/4 grown ducklings near Lancaster July 7 (MSanM), since nesting was previously unknown in s. California.

### Kites to Rails

A pair of courting White-tailed Kites near Bishop in May (J&DP) were in an area where nesting is yet to be proven, and a pair at a nest at S.E.S.S. in May (GMCC) were in an area only recently colonized. A pair of Bald Eagles fledged young from a nest at L. Nacimiento, *San Luis Obispo*, (SO) and a pair was present at L. Cachuma, *Santa Barbara*, all summer (EM); this species has been reintroduced to the Channel Is. and reports of individuals scattered around s. California in summer are increasing, with one over Mt. Palomar, *San Diego*, June 15 (GLR).

Most encouraging is the fact that Clapper Rails have reestablished themselves in the marshes at Carpinteria, *Santa Barbara*, after being feared extirpated in the 1980s, with four, including one chick, seen there May 23 (RWH).

### Plovers to Terns

An Am. Golden-Plover at the Santa Ynez R. mouth July 28 (BH) was an early fall migrant, but a Pacific Golden-Plover in Goleta, *Santa Barbara*, June 23–25 (JEL) was exceptionally early for a fall migrant. Returning Solitary Sandpipers included one at S.E.S.S., July 20 (GMCC) and at least five in coastal *Los Angeles* and *Orange* July 28+ (PB, KLG, RAH, DRW). A

Ruddy Turnstone in Bakersfield, *Kern*, July 21 (MEW) was the only one reported inland away from the Salton Sea. An alternate-plumage Black Turnstone, unusual inland and especially so in fall, was at S.E.S.S., July 6 (PAG). A basic plumage Red Knot at S.E.S.S., June 15 (GMCC) probably spent the summer locally, and is one of a very few found on the Salton Sea at this time of the year. Single ad. Sanderlings at C.L., July 26 (DVB) and at E.A.F.B., July 27 (MTH) were the only two reported from inland away from the Salton Sea. At least five ad. Semipalmated Sandpipers were found with W. Sandpipers along the coast in *Santa Barbara*, *Los Angeles*, and *Orange* July 18–29 (DD, RAH, BH, MSanM) and another was inland at N.E.S.S., July 20 (PAG); the first juvenile was one at the Santa Ynez R. mouth July 23 (BH). Two ad. Baird's Sandpipers near Lancaster July 21 (MSanM) and another near Santa Maria, *Santa Barbara*, July 26 (BH) were followed by the first juveniles at S.C.R.E., July 27 (DA). Two ad. Pectoral Sandpiper in Long Beach July 20–28 (MSanM) and another adult near Santa Maria July 23–26 (BH) were the first to be found this fall. A brightly-colored ad. Curlew Sandpiper at the Santa Margaret R. mouth near Oceanside July 10 (CGE, GH) was the 2nd to be found in *San Diego* and the 6th adult in s. California at this time of the year. A Stilt Sandpiper, noteworthy anywhere away from S.E.S.S., was in Bakersfield July 19–23 (MEW).

A sub-ad. Pomarine Jaeger photographed at S.E.S.S., Aug. 13 (LJE) had probably been present on the Salton Sea most of the summer. Two ad. Franklin's Gulls on Klondike L. near Big Pine June 3 (T&JH) were undoubtedly late spring migrants, but a 2nd-year bird at S.E.S.S., June 29–July 25 (PAG, CAM) was summering locally. An ad. Heermann's Gull along the New R. near Seeley July 6 (GMCC) and an immature at S.E.S.S., July 15 (GMCC) were inland around the Salton Sea, where rare. Two pairs of California Gulls laid eggs at N.E.S.S. but failed to fledge young (RCM); the southern-most documented nesting is on Mono L., 350 mi to the north. An ad. Sabine's Gull at N.E.S.S., June 9–15 (RP) was late for a spring migrant and at an inland location.

At least 1000 pairs of Caspian Terns nesting on Mullet I. at S.E.S.S. this summer (KCM) was a remarkable number considering this species has only recently started nesting on the Salton Sea, and 20–30 pairs attempted to nest on dredged spoil in Los Angeles Harbor in May (RK), but were inundated by high tides. Fourteen pairs of





Among several sightings of Sooty Terns on the southern California coast this season, this pair was at the mouth of the Santa Margarita River near Oceanside July 6, 1996. Photograph/Brian Foster.

Royal Terns nested among the Caspian (38 pairs) and Elegant (3000 pairs) terns and Black Skimmers (138 pairs) at Bolsa Chica, Orange (CTC). In addition, a Sandwich Tern was again present with nesting Elegant Terns at Bolsa Chica, being seen off and on June 15–July 21 (NBB, KGL), but with no indication of nesting, as happened last summer. An ad. Sooty Tern also returned to join nesting Elegant Terns at Bolsa Chica June 6–Aug. 24 (CTC) and appeared to be on an empty nest scrape much of this time. In addition, an ad. Sooty Tern was seen at the Santa Margareta R. mouth near Oceanside July 6 (BF), two apparently mated birds were photographed there July 7 (BF), what may have been these same two mated birds were with the nesting Elegant Terns at Bolsa Chica July 19–24 (PK) and at s. San Diego Bay Aug. 23 (JK), and another adult was at San Elijo Lagoon in Solana Beach, San Diego, July 28 (NS).

### Pigeons to Woodpeckers

A Band-tailed Pigeon at Galileo Hill in e. Kern June 13 (GH) was at a desert oasis, far from any area of normal occurrence. A White-winged Dove near Independence, Inyo, June 22 (DMo) was somewhat n. of its normal range. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Goleta June 23 (GVP) would appear to be a lost bird; single calling Yellow-billed Cuckoos in suitable breeding habitat along the Owens R. near Big Pine July 9 (T&JH) and at Mojave Narrows Regional Park in Victorville, San Bernardino, June 15 (SJM) were probably on territories, and 13–16 pairs at S.F.K.R.P. all summer (SAL) were at California's remaining stronghold for this species. A Flamulated Owl on Big Pine Mt., Santa Barbara, June 18 (JEL)

was in an area where only recently discovered. Four Com. Nighthawks at Barton Flats in the San Bernardino Mts., June 5 (EAC) were at the southern-most known breeding locality in California, where believed to be declining. Calling Whippoorwills were on Clark Mt., in e. San Bernardino, May 11 (A&VH) and at Hart Bar Campground in the San Bernardino Mts. throughout the summer (JEH, SBT); although calling birds are heard in suitable breeding habitat each summer, nesting has yet to be documented in California. Totally unexpected was a ♂ Buff-collared Nightjar picked up alive near Oxnard, Ventura, June 8 (N. Morgan, *vide* DD); this bird, the first to be found in California, was held at a local bird recovery center until it died July 6 and was taken to L.A.C.N.H.M. Up to six Chimney Swifts remained around downtown Los Angeles through all summer (KLG); small numbers of these birds are present every summer, but nesting has yet to be documented. Two Chateaux over Montana de Oro S.P., San Luis Obispo, June 8 (JLR) could also have been Chimney Swifts based on our knowledge of the seasonal occurrences of Chimney and Vaux's swifts in s. California. An ad. Allen's Hummingbird at S.F.R.R.P., July 6–11 (SAL) was in an area of California where few have been identified.

The recent splitting of Gilded Flicker renewed interest among birders to see this species; multiple sightings—including a pair at a nest hole Apr. 6 (MAP) and another pair with two fledged young May 25 (EAC)—at various localities within the E. Mojave National Scenic Area, San Bernardino, indicate a small population continues to survive in the Joshua Trees there, and this

area may prove to be the only stronghold for this species in California.

### Flycatchers to Martin

Since Willow Flycatchers have drastically declined as a breeding bird in s. California, the presence of at least 29 pairs at S.F.K.R.P. (parasitism below 10% due to the cowbird removal program at this location; SAL) and another 12 pairs along the Santa Ynez R. in Santa Barbara (JG) was encouraging. In addition, a pair fledging young from a nest at Thurman Flats in the San Bernardino Mts., Aug. 2 (EAC, CMcG) was the first known to breed in these mountains in many years. The presence of at least 4 pairs (one nest located) of Gray Flycatchers on Pine Ridge in the San Gabriel Mts., June 30 (KLG) provides the first evidence of nesting in Los Angeles. A pair of Pacific-slope Flycatchers seen feeding two fledged young in Victorville July 12 (BD) would appear to be the first known to nest in the Mojave Desert. A pair of Cordilleran Flycatchers was watched nest-building in firs on Clark Mt., May 29 (JEH); since other species normally associated with the Great Basin occur on this isolated mountain in e. San Bernardino, it is not too surprising this flycatcher is now added to the list. Two pairs of Vermilion Flycatchers nesting around S.F.K.R.V. in June (SAL, BB) extend the breeding range of this species a little farther northwest. A Brown-crested Flycatcher found near Mecca, Riverside, May 21 (SJP) evidently nested, since a pair with what appeared to be a young bird were there Aug. 3 (GMcC), giving us the 2nd record of probable nesting in the Coachella Valley; in addition, 2 pairs were in Victorville all summer (SJM), where only recently found nesting. An E. Kingbird was seen at the upper end of Arastra Cr. in the San Bernardino Mts., June 4 (ASy), another was at nearby Big Bear L., July 22 (DMe), and a 3rd was on San Nicolas I., June 16 (HC). Ten Purple Martins in Arcadia, Los Angeles, June 1–July 19 (MSanM) and a pair over L. Hemet, Riverside, May 25 (MMR) were believed to be nesting; the breeding population of these birds is fast disappearing from s. California and needs monitoring.

### Wrens to Wood Warblers

A singing Winter Wren at 8000 ft. above Bishop, Inyo, June 30–July 1 (T&JH) was close to the s.e. limit of this species breeding range in California. Three California Gnatcatchers found near Moorpark, Ventura, Mar. 4 (MAH)—along with 2 pairs seen feeding young in early July (CAJ)—indicate a small population persists in this area, unknown to hold this species prior to a year



ago (*Field Notes* 49:982, 1995). The presence of Mt. Bluebirds feeding recently fledged young on Liebre Mt., s.e. of Gorman, June 15 (JF) establishes the first record for breeding in *Los Angeles*. Since Swainson's Thrushes are now virtually extirpated from coastal lowlands in the s. part of this Region, the presence of one singing in Irvine, *Orange*, July 7 (RAH) was noteworthy. A Wrentit at c. 8000 ft. near Onyx Summit in the San Bernardino Mts., July 13 (JEP) was at an unusually high elevation. Concentrated efforts to eliminate Brown-headed Cowbirds from riparian habitat in coastal s. California has had a noticeable effect on the numbers of Bell's Vireos successfully fledging young in *San Diego* and *Orange*. Three singing Warbling Vireos along Arroyo Trabuco in Mission Viejo, *Orange*, June 16 (RAH, DRW) were the only potential breeding birds reported in s. California this summer.

A Tennessee Warbler at Buckhorn Campground in the San Gabriel Mts., *Los Angeles*, June 9 (MSanM) was probably a lost spring vagrant. A Black-and-white Warbler in the San Gabriel Mts., June 8 (KLG) could have been a late spring vagrant, but one along the Salinas R. in *San Luis Obispo* June 27 (ZL) and another near the Santa Ynez R. mouth June 30 (NG) appeared to be lost summer wanderers. A ♀ Am. Redstart at S.E.S.S., July 13 (GMCC) was certainly lost. A Prothonotary Warbler at Cerro Alto Campground near Atascadero, *San Luis Obispo*, July 11+ (BM) was one of very few to be found in California at this time of the year. Up to three MacGillivray's Warblers were believed nesting at San Marcos Pass above Santa Barbara this summer (G&JH, JEL), this being the southern-most locality along the coast where this species breeds. A ♂ Hooded Warbler at Cerro Alto Campground near Atascadero June 28+ (LS) had probably been present since arriving in the spring. A singing Wilson's Warbler near Buckhorn Campground in the San Gabriel Mts., June 9 (RLG) appeared to be on territory; this species has been virtually eliminated as a breeding bird in the s. half of this Region. A lost Painted Redstart was found on E. Anacapa I., June 3 (TG).

### Tanagers to Finches

A pair of Hepatic Tanagers on Clark Mt. in e. *San Bernardino* May 29 (JEH) was probably nesting, but a female at Bluff L. in the San Bernardino Mts., July 13 (DEW) would appear to be a wandering individual. Twelve pairs of Summer Tanagers in Victorville (SJM) and 35–40 pairs at S.F.K.R.P. (SAL) indicate healthy populations still persist along the w. limit of this species' breeding range.

A pair of N. Cardinals on the Colorado R. at the *San Bernardino/Riverside* line Apr. 6+ (JEP) was at the only location in California now known to support this species. A singing ♂ *Pyrrhuloxia* was photographed near El Centro May 28–June 5 (G. Marth, *fide* RHi) and an immature was reported near Westmorland July 30 (RHi).

Reports of wandering Rose-breasted Grosbeaks included a male in the San Jacinto Mts., June 6 (SM), one in Huntington Beach July 27 (RHe), another on E. Anacapa I., June 8 (ST) and a 4th in Ocotillo, *Imperial*, June 10–12 (SV). A ♂ Painted Bunting in Big Pine June 9 (T&JH) and another near Inyokern, *Kern*, July 1 (TM) would appear to be a lost vagrant. Up to ten territorial ♂ Indigo Buntings were at S.F.K.R.P., May 11+ (SAL), at least four territorial males were in the Prado Basin, *San Bernardino/Riverside*, June 19–July 17 (JEP), a returning territorial male was on N. Vandenberg Air Force Base, *Santa Barbara*, May 14–July 7 for its 4th summer (BH), one was along Wyman Canyon in the White Mts., Inyo, June 20 (B&BT), another was near Big Pine throughout June and July (T&JH), and yet another territorial male was near Gorman June 15 (DC); in addition, a first-year male along the Los Angeles R. in Long Beach June 22 (DA) and another in Huntington Beach July 27 (LO) were probably summering locally, and a ♂ Indigo x Lazuli Bunting hybrid was near Big Pine June 13 (T&JH). A ♂ Lark Bunting in Chula Vista, *San Diego*, July 22 (D&MV) was probably a very early fall migrant.

A singing Grasshopper Sparrow in alpalpa near Seeley Apr. 27 (MAP) disappeared when the field was cut 2 weeks later; singing males in alpalpa near S.E.S.S., June 17–23, 1984 (AB 38:1063) provided the only other record of this species in s.e. California at this time of the year, but isolated colonies of these birds persist in suitable habitat w. of the Coast Range, though this habitat is fast going in the s. part of this Region. A Golden-crowned Sparrow in Santa Barbara May 28–June 6 (JB) was unusually late.

A ♂ Bobolink at Oso Flaco L. in San Luis Obispo June 30–July 14 (KW) evidently spent the summer locally. Bronzed Cowbirds continue to spread into the Imperial Valley s. of the Salton Sea, with small numbers present in Brawley, Calipatria, and near Niland throughout the summer (GMCC); a male at Salton Sea Beach near N.E.S.S., July 6 (GMCC) was the only one reported n. of the Imperial w. of the Colorado River.

A ♂ Red Crossbill at Galileo Hill June 14–July 27 (JMa, JMo) and another in

Ridgecrest, *Kern*, July 27 (HLJ) were at desert oases far from suitable habitat and clearly lost. Nesting Lawrence's Goldfinches were found in Independence in June (A&LK) to establish only the 3rd breeding record in Inyo.

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