

middle pacific coast region



Abbreviations: C.B.R.C. (*California Bird Records Committee*); C.V. (*Central Valley*); S.B. (*State Beach*) S.F. (*San Francisco*). Banded birds from Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey*, should be credited to Big Sur Ornithology Lab.

LOONS TO FRIGATEBIRDS

A large summer flock for Humboldt Bay was 250 Pacific Loons at King Salmon July 31 (SMcA). Three Com. Loons (two in alternate plumage) on Bridgeport Res., *Mono*, July 26 (HuC, HaF) were presumably early migrants. An unseasonal alternate-plumaged Horned Grebe summered on Elkhorn Slough, *Monterey*, from July 14 on (SFB, m.ob.). Summer Red-necked Grebes were at Pt. Reyes June 22–July 12 (L. Cole, m.ob.), Bodega Bay July 5 (B. Gallagher), and Humboldt Bay July 2 & 31 (SMcA). The at least 200 Eared Grebe nests on Bridgeport Res. July 26 (ES, M. McClaskey) were 10 times the previous high there. Perhaps high water at Crowley L. and other Great Basin lakes was responsible (ES). Lake Hennessey's 44 nests of W. Grebes and 8 nests of Clark's Grebes June 25 were considered very large numbers for *Napa* (A&L Angel, RLCL).

Three Laysan Albatrosses at Cordell Bank, *Marin*, July 26 (DLSh, SNHG) provided a high summer count for this locally increasing species. The year's 2nd Flesh-footed Shearwater was at Cordell Bank June 28 (DLSh, SNHG). The ENSO brought single Black-vented Shearwaters remarkably early, with the first at Pt. San Pedro, *San Mateo*, June 1 (†RSTh) and three farther south July 7–16 (RT, AME, RSTh).

A Wilson's Storm-Petrel 17 mi w.s.w. of Shelter Cove June 15 (MFO) was unusual in *Humboldt*. Other storm-petrel highlights were two Wilson's near Cordell Bank July 26 and two–three Fork-tailed there June 28 (both SNHG, DLSh), plus nine ENSO-early Blacks 38 mi offshore *Monterey* July 20 (JBo).

An imm. **Masked Booby** 10 mi w. of Pt. Arena, *Mendocino*, June 15 (†MFO) was the northernmost in Pacific North American waters and only the 4th for our Region.

The end of July brought a few imm.

**DON ROBERSON,
STEPHEN F. BAILEY,
and DANIEL S. SINGER**

The growing El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) brought warm ocean waters and early high counts of various seabirds. Juveniles of Arctic seabirds and shorebirds also arrived early. Coastal landbirds, in contrast, had a poor breeding season. Craig Hohenberger from Big Sur Orni-

thology Lab wrote that although July is usually among their top months for banding, captures were down 60% this summer and productivity in coastal *Monterey* showed a 70% decline. Perhaps a dry and warm spring and summer were responsible; rainfall totals on the Monterey Peninsula were the lowest since 1850. Away from the coast, and continuing the trend from spring, grassland and xeric country sparrows bred widely in new areas.

Magnificent Frigatebird sightings: one near Chimney Rock, Pt. Reyes, July 26–28 (K. Quigley, m.ob.); a different bird flying south past San Gregorio S.B., *San Mateo*, early July 28 (GJS); and two (the same two?) off Manresa S.B., *Santa Cruz*, July 29 (DLSu).

HERONS TO WATERFOWL

Continued scrutiny of potential nesting Am. Bitterns near Hollister resulted in confirmed nesting June 12–13 when three young were seen clamoring in the reeds as an adult flew in with food (DLSh), apparently a first breeding record for *San Benito*. Two Little Blue Herons were discovered in *Marin*, an adult at Bolinas Lagoon June 17–22 (RS) and an immature at Tomales Bay from July 18 on (J. Kelly, m.ob.). An adult feeding a just-fledged Snowy Egret at Zmudowski S.B. August 17 (DR, RC, SFB) furnished *Monterey's* first confirmed nesting. Breeding White-faced Ibises continued to decline in *Siskiyou*, where 800 pairs at Lower Klamath N.W.R. were far below the estimated 4000 pairs breeding there in the late 1980s and early 1990s (RE).

Sightings of some of our less common waterfowl included pairs of Blue-winged Teal in *Santa Clara* and *Humboldt*, two Harlequin Ducks in *Contra Costa*, and individual Oldsquaws in *Sonoma*, *Contra Costa*, and *Monterey*. Small numbers of summering Ring-necked Ducks have been regular at Calaveras Res., *Santa Clara*, in recent years, hence breeding confirmation Aug. 3, while a pleasant surprise, was not totally unexpected (SCR). There appear to be no prior breeding records away from the n.e. corner of the state. A Hooded Merganser on Lewiston Res. June 21 (RHw) was thought to provide the first summer record for *Trinity*.

RAPTORS

Sightings of Ospreys continued to increase in *Santa Clara* and *Monterey*, where it seems only a matter of time before nesting is confirmed. A juv. Sharp-shinned Hawk in Richmond, *Contra Costa*, July 23 was early (SAG). A report of 22 Am. Kestrels concentrated in a small area of Long Valley, *Mono*, July 27 (HuC, HaF), while seemingly unusual, was not without precedent (*American Birds* 46:1174).

SHOREBIRDS

Many observers commented on the early arrival of adults and juveniles of several shorebird species, suggesting an early and successful nesting season of these mostly

Arctic and subarctic breeders (SFB). A juv. Semipalmated Plover at Pescadero, *San Mateo*, July 19 (RSTh) was perhaps our earliest-ever juvenile and was followed by another at the same location July 25 (RSTh). Juvenal-plumaged birds are not usually noted before August, though there is at least one July record from Southern California. A basic-plumaged Wandering Tattler summered at Coyote Pt., *San Mateo*, May 29–Aug. 8 (RSTh). An alternate-plumaged male Bar-tailed Godwit at Point St. George, *Del Norte*, June 30–July 5 (B&D Mutchie, †GjH) was our earliest-ever fall migrant. Semipalmated Sandpipers appeared in record or near-record numbers, with at least 29 found July 6–31. Two juveniles at Honey L. July 26 (†TDM) were considered *Lassen's* first well-documented record. Conversely, Baird's Sandpipers were reported in smaller than usual numbers, with an early adult July 4 at Cosumnes R. Preserve, *Sacramento* (JTr), and a handful of juveniles during the end of July. Three ad. Pectoral Sandpipers July 23–30 were not unexpected, but a juvenile at Salinas ponds, *Monterey*, July 29 was very early (SFB). Most juveniles, which include the vast majority of birds seen in California, typically start passing through in late August. An ad. Curlew Sandpiper in Mountain View, *Santa Clara*, July 23–30 (MMR, †DR, †JM) may have been the same bird seen in spring at Palo Alto. An ad. female Ruff in Alviso, *Santa Clara*, June 29 (SCR) was not only early, but represented the Region's first June record.

LARIDS TO ALCIDS

Six South Polar Skua sightings was high for summer. Singles were close offshore *Monterey* July 6 (RT) and at Cordell Bank June 28 (DLSh) and July 13 (BDP), followed by three at Cordell Bank July 26 (DLSh, SNHG). A juvenal-plumaged Parasitic Jaeger at Point St. George, *Del Norte*, July 17 (†DFx, C. Strong, M. Fisher) was extremely early.

Franklin's Gulls were represented only by a first-alternate bird flying N past Pigeon Pt., *San Mateo*, June 1 (†AME) and two at Lower Klamath N.W.R., *Siskiyou*, June 10 (MFRb, RE). Numbers have been low at Lower Klamath since 27 Franklin's Gulls were present June 13, 1995 (RE). A juv. Bonaparte's Gull at Arcata, *Humboldt*, July 20 (R.J. Adams) was early. The ad. Mew Gull at Bolinas Lagoon stayed to June 15 (KH), and immatures were at Seaside, *Monterey*, June 22 (DHpt) and Palo Alto, *Santa Clara*, July 4 (SCR). In *San Mateo*, an

ad. Herring Gull at Ravenswood Pt. July 6 (RSTh) and a very worn first-year Thayer's Gull at Gazos Cr. June 13 (†RSTh) were unexpected. High numbers of Sabine's Gulls visited Cordell Bank very early, with 94 counted June 28 and 150 July 26, including three–four very early juveniles (both DLSh, SNHG).

Elegant Terns were abundant early, with 450 at Humboldt Bay June 25 (DFx, JCP) and 3000 at Pajaro R., *Monterey*, July 30 (SFB). Many foraged unusually far offshore (DLSh). The ad. Arctic Tern again returned to Hayward Shoreline, *Alameda*, where it harassed Forster's Terns June 17–July 20 (KGH, m.ob.). Another ad. Arctic was on shore at Pajaro R., *Monterey*, July 19 (RC, SFB, DR). Seven Arctic Terns at Cordell Bank included a very early juvenile July 26 (DLSh, SNHG). *San Benito's* first Least Tern was an adult at Paicines Res. July 8 (†DLSh).

Black Skimmers again proved puzzling. The only pair known to be resident inhabited Hayward Shoreline June 17–July 20 (KGH, m.ob.). One bird visited w. *Solano* June 1 (SCH); *Santa Clara* and *San Mateo* had four June 7 (MMR, MJM) and at least two July 23–25 (MMR, PJM); and one strayed to Bolinas Lagoon, *Marin*, July 26 (KH). Apparent fall migrants passed through *Monterey* July 13–30 (m.ob.), with a peak of six at Pajaro R. mouth July 26 (C. Rodgers).

Two Craveris' Murrelets at Cordell Bank July 13 (BDP) were early that far north. Small numbers of Xantus's Murrelets also appeared in late July. Up to five tardy Ancient Murrelets remained at Chimney Rock, Pt. Reyes, June 16–28 (D. Hamilton et al.). Another Ancient Murrelet wandered into S.F. Bay at Albany, *Alameda*, July 22 (B. Finch). Tufted Puffins were again suspected of nesting at Mendocino (DT). The high count of summering Horned Puffins at Chimney Rock, Pt. Reyes, included three June 7 (S. Cox). Another flew past S.F. June 20 (ASH), and one was at Cordell Bank July 26 (SNHG, DLSh).

CUCKOOS TO HUMMINGBIRDS

A migrant Yellow-billed Cuckoo, a prize anywhere in our Region, was at Big Sur R. mouth June 11 (JBo). Three vocal W. Screech-Owls in the Adobe Hills, *Mono*, June 12 (ES) were in pinyon pine forest, where their status is poorly known. A just-fledged N. Saw-whet Owl was videotaped at Duck L., *Lassen*, July 27 (AM, TDM). Common Nighthawks out-of-range were in Petaluma, *Sonoma*, June 23 (A. Wight) and

on Snow Mt. June 21 (4th *Lake* record, could they nest here? JRW), but none was found at historic sites around Humboldt Bay (*fide* DFX, JCP). An unidentified night-hawk over Stanford July 18 (SCR) was a surprise; any species is rare there.

Vaux's Swifts were widely reported from little-known sites within their patchy breeding range. A nest with young was in the chimney of the Portola S.P., *San Mateo*, visitor center July 27 (PJM). In the mountains, small groups were in likely breeding habitat from Hayfork, *Trinity*, June 14 (TEa) and Clear Cr., *Lassen*, June 15–July 27 (TDM, AM) to Dorst camp, Sequoia N.P., June 18 (DR) and Rainbow Falls, *Madera*, July 28 (NLe). First post-breeding dispersal along S.F. Bay was noted July 31 at Mountain View (WGB, MiF).

A male Black-chinned at Lee Vining June 11–14 (ES et al.) and a male Broad-tailed at a Tom's Place feeder June 11–July 6 (ES et al.) were both scarce hummingbirds n. of the White Mts. in *Mono*. Male Costa's Hummingbirds were unexpected at feeders in San Jose after July 18 (D&J Crawford et al.) and at Willits, *Mendocino*, after June 28 (S. Harris et al.; likely same as immature here earlier).

WOODPECKERS TO THRASHERS

An ad. Lewis's Woodpecker feeding a fledgling in Mitchell Ravine June 7 (SAG) was the first confirmed breeding in *Alameda* in 20 years, although the species is regular there and in adjacent *San Joaquin*. A male Red-naped Sapsucker was paired with a female Red-breasted at a nest along Little Jones Cr., *Del Norte*, July 2–4 (JEH, GSL, LPL). Another Red-naped was unusual at Horse Meadows, *Mono*, June 14 (HuC, HaF). A pair of Red-breasted Sapsuckers in Butano Canyon, *San Mateo*, fledged three young (BMCK); this species continues to extend its range s. in the Coast Range.

Scarce e. Sierran breeders found June 14 in Lundy Canyon (R. Scaff) and Lee Vining Canyon (J&D Parker), both *Mono*, were Willow Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, and Nashville Warbler. Gray Flycatcher was confirmed nesting just s. of Sierra Valley, *Sierra*, June 2 (†HGr). The initial nesting attempt of Cassin's Kingbird on San Felipe Rd., *Santa Clara* (reported last season), apparently failed as the pair was building a 2nd nest in eucalyptus June 22 (WGB, SCR et al.); a vagrant was along Coyote Cr. July 16 (AJ). In *Mono*, W. Kingbirds were confirmed nesting at Bridgeport Res. July 26 (ES et al.); the only prior evidence of county breeding was an active nest here July 6,

1991 (BS, RSTh), and in the extreme s.e. corner at Oasis, where it is common. A vagrant E. Kingbird was at La Honda, *San Mateo*, June 18 (PJM).

A new Purple Martin colony (estimated 25 birds) was at L. Britton, *Shasta*, July 6 (B&CY). In *Mono*, Bank Swallow colonies at 2 sites appeared healthy, while Cliff Swallows continued to colonize newly built buildings (ES; few nesting records just 10 years ago). Three pairs of Yellow-billed Magpies nested in eucalyptus near Knightsen, the only colony in *Contra Costa* (SAG), while one at the Carmel R. mouth, *Monterey*, July 5 was a local vagrant (H. Osborne). In *San Mateo*, a family group of Am. Crows at Moss Beach July 22 provided the first confirmed coastal nesting there (PJM).

Perhaps not surprising after the spectacular winter incursion, Red-breasted Nuthatches lingered in lowlands far from nesting areas near Laytonville, *Mendocino*, June 18 (RJK); Coyote Cr., *Santa Clara*, July 29 (AJ); and Pacific Grove July 2 (RC). Single singing Marsh Wrens away from previously known breeding sites were at Lewiston Res., *Trinity*, June 14 (TEa); Little Alkali L., *Mono*, June 12 (ES); and Conway Ranch, *Mono* Basin, June 14 (M. McClaskey et al.). Totally unexpected (and unexplainable?) was a female Mt. Bluebird along Pescadero Cr., *San Mateo*, June 15 (†RSTh). Hermit Thrush was confirmed nesting for the first time in *Alameda* July 12 (adult feeding young), while up to 19 were singing at Redwood Regional Park here and in adjacent *Contra Costa* (SAG); this is very near where breeding was confirmed back in 1941. Twelve territorial Hermit Thrushes in coastal scrub of *San Mateo* were far from conifers July 5 (PJM), a habitat more typical of montane races.

A singing Gray Catbird at Carmel R. mouth June 7–10 (BHL, †DR, m.ob.) recalled last summer's three in *Monterey*. Evidence of steady range expansion of N. Mockingbird included a family group in Killgore Hills, *Siskiyou*, July 27 (RE); singing males at 3 *Lassen* sites in mid-June (TDM); and one at Mono L. County Park June 14 (AD, JaW). A vagrant Brown Thrasher was near Muir Beach, *Marin*, June 29–30 (D. McKenzie), and an out-of-place Sage Thrasher was running through a horse pasture near Salmon Cr., *Humboldt*, July 27 (M. Wachs). A male Cedar Waxwing feeding a female on a nest in Big Pines June 14 (B&CY) may have represented *Shasta*'s first documented breeding attempt.

VIREOS TO GROSBEAKS

The number of summering "eastern" vireos and warblers in our Region is getting out of hand. We expect late spring vagrants through late June, but more and more are lingering through July, as if searching for wayward mates ("California fern bars," if you will). From this season alone we had three Red-eyed Vireos in *Monterey/San Mateo* (one banded at Big Sur R. mouth July 28 was in heavy molt); six Tennessee Warblers (likely all late migrants) from *Del Norte* to *San Mateo* (which had four itself; RSTh); 12 N. Parulas from *Humboldt* to *Monterey* (one definitely summered at Big Sur R. mouth; CHo, JBo); six Chestnut-sided Warblers, including one inland at Sacramento, *Sacramento*, June 6 (†D. Williams); five Magnolia Warblers from *Humboldt* to *Marin* (including one 15 mi offshore Pt. Cabrillo, *Mendocino*, June 15; MFO); four Black-and-whites (including three in *Marin*; RS et al.); singing N. Waterthrushes along Gazos Cr., *San Mateo*, June 20 (RSTh) and at Trinidad, *Humboldt*, June 24–July 5 (KI, TWL); and four Hooded Warblers, including one inland at Caswell S.P., *San Joaquin*, June 18 (HMR).

Head spinning yet? There's more. Among rarer warblers were a Prairie at Pt. Reyes July 12 (†LED); a Palm at Patricks Point S.P., *Humboldt*, 25 June (KI); single Blackpolls at San Gregorio, *San Mateo*, June 13 (male; RSTh) and Point St. George, *Del Norte*, July 8 (ADB); a Prothonotary banded at Big Sur R. mouth June 6; and an Ovenbird singing on Butano Ridge, *San Mateo*, June 5 (DLSu et al.). Then there was the saga of southwestward Am. Redstarts. Summering birds (nesting evidence obtainable with effort) are now routine in *Del Norte/Humboldt*. Farther south, this summer saw the first proven breeding in *Marin*, *San Mateo*, and *Monterey*. Evidence in the first 2 counties was recently fledged young at, respectively, Stinson Beach July 27 (RS) and San Gregorio Cr. August 2 (†RSTh). In addition, a nesting pair at Phipps Ranch, *San Mateo* (male singing June 8, paired June 20, nest found June 26) hatched two baby "brownstarts" (PJM's term for cowbirds) by July 16 (BMCK, RSTh). At Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey*, a singing male returned for its 3rd summer to the "headlands patch" June 1–12 (DR et al.), but it was a first-year male just upstream that attracted a mate by June 29 and was feeding just-fledged young Aug. 12 (CHo, JBo). Eight more redstarts was scattered along the c. coast.

June also brought three Summer



In a recent burn at 5000 feet in El Dorado County, California, this adult Black-throated Sparrow was carrying food to a fledgling on July 12, 1997. This represents one of the very few breeding confirmations on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada. Photograph/Don Roberson

Tanagers, from *Marin* to *Monterey*, and 12 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks along the entire coast (DSg, m.ob.), plus four more in July (including a male along Green Valley Rd., *Napa*, July 10; D&A Smith).

BUNTINGS TO FINCHES

Territorial Indigo Buntings included two at Cosumnes R. Preserve, *Sacramento* (plus a hybrid; JTr), and up to three near Tioga Lodge, *Mono*, July 28 (HaF, HuC); three more were coastal June vagrants in *San Mateo/Monterey* (RSTh, JBo, DR). Astonishing July wanderers were a male Dickcissel at Pt. Sur, *Monterey*, July 16–22 (M. Wohlgenuth, ph. DR et al.) and a Green-tailed Towhee at Olema Marsh, *Marin*, July 7 (CLF). Both Black-chinned and Sage sparrows were at False Ant Pt., *Trinity*, in June (JEH, GjH et al.), where they are poorly known; three more Black-chinneds were on Snow Mt., *Lake* (JRW). A couple of Lark Sparrows July 13 e. of Indian Valley Res., *Alpine* (DR, RC) were in an area where their status is uncertain.

A pair of Black-throated Sparrows was feeding a just-fledged bob-tailed baby along Granite Springs Rd., *El Dorado*, July 12 (DR, RC), on the Sierran w. slope. This confirms the breeding which was hypothesized in the spring report. East of the Sierran crest, singing Black-throated Sparrows were in Lava Beds N.M., *Siskiyou* (B&CY), and 10 mi n. of Alturas, *Modoc*, in June (RLR), while 14 were recorded on a survey

route at Honey L. (TDM). Another singing male e. of Indian Valley Res. June 24 (SRv) was in little-known *Alpine*. Some of these locales have sparrows most years, so this did not turn out to be a big Black-throated Sparrow incursion as in 1974–1975, 1984–1985, or 1994, but they were nonetheless interesting. While on this topic, we belatedly report two singing males near Red Mt., s.w. *Trinity*, June 27–July 6, 1996 (E. Elias), and are pleased at the receipt of details of *San Benito's* first record (ADeM), mentioned in our spring 1997 report as undocumented.

Up to eight Grasshopper Sparrows near Igo June 1–22 (S. Brown, B&CY) furnished *Shasta's* first breeding evidence. Lots of Grasshoppers were present in s. *Humboldt* all summer (JCP, DFx), while new locales were discovered in poorly known *Trinity* (TEa). Odd summer Golden-crowned Sparrows were near Little Shasta Cemetery, *Siskiyou*, June 8 (RE), and Big Sur R. mouth June 20 (JBo). A couple of Bobolinks were singing near Eagleville, *Modoc*, June 4 (RE); they have nested nearby before.

Following the unprecedented winter incursion, up to six Cassin's Finches were seen and heard on Chews Ridge, *Monterey*, Aug. 11 & 15 (SFB, JML), where they may have attempted to breed. Summer reports here 1968–1974 (e.g., *Am. Birds* 28:850) have been questioned in recent years (Roberson, *Monterey Birds*, 1985), but perhaps birds do linger following invasions. For Red

Crossbills, nesting after winter flights is well known. Breeding was suspected in *Monterey* (juvenile seen June 17 Big Sur R. mouth; SFB) and *San Mateo* (adult feeding fledgling June 10 El Grenada; BS); individuals were still on *San Benito* Mt., *San Benito*, June 1–2 (DLSH). Lawrence's Goldfinches continued to occur very widely, with new nesting sites discovered on the c. coast. Breeding was suspected in w. *Contra Costa* (would be first here; SAG), and many birds were scattered n. to *Shasta* ("undoubtedly bred;" B&CY), *Trinity*, and s.e. *Humboldt* (TEa, JEH, TWL et al.). Very late Evening Grosbeaks lingered in the lowlands at Big Sur R. mouth June 3–4 (JBo); La Mar, *San Mateo*, June 19 (DLSu); and Walnut Cr., *Contra Costa*, June 12 (L. Ashlock).

Cited contributors and sub-regional editors (in boldface):

Stephen F. Bailey, Alan D. Barron, **William G. Bausman**, Jim Booker, **Penelope Bowen**, Rita Carratello, Hugh Cotter, Al DeMartini, Ann Dewart, Leo Edson, Alan M. Eisner, **Ray Ekstrom**, Carter L. Faust, **David Fix**, Michael Force, Harry Fuller, **Steve A. Glover**, **Helen Green**, Steve C. Hampton, Keith Hansen, David Haupt, Gjon Hazard, Rob Hewitt, Bill Hill, Kevin G. Hints, Craig Hohenberger, Alan S. Hopkins, Steve N.G. Howell, **John E. Hunter**, Ken Irwin, Alvaro Jaramillo, **Robert J. Keiffer**, **Robin L.C. Leong**, Tom W. Leskiw, Gary S. Lester, Lauren P. Lester, Nick Lethaby, Michael J. Mammoser, Annette Manolis, **Timothy D. Manolis**, Sean McAllister, **Bert McKee**, **Peter J. Metropulos**, Joseph Morlan, Benjamin D. Parmeter, **Jude Claire Power**, Harold M. Reeve, **Don Roberson**, Michael F. Robbins, Mike M. Rogers, Stephen C. Rottenborn, Steve Rovell, **Ruth A. Rudesill**, Ronnie L. Ryno, Barry Sauppe, Debra L. Shearwater, Daniel Singer, Rich Stallcup, Gary J. Strachan, **Emilie Strauss**, David L. Suddjian, Richard Ternullo, Ronald S. Thorn, Dorothy Tobkin, John Trochet, Janet Wessel, **Jerry R. White**, **Bob & Carol Yutzy**. Many more observers were not specifically cited, but all are appreciated.

Don Roberson (Doves to Finches), 282 Grove Acre Ave., Pacific Grove, CA 93950; **Stephen F. Bailey** (Loons to Frigatebirds, Larids to Alcids), Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, 165 Forest Ave., Pacific Grove, CA 93950; **Daniel S. Singer** (Hérons to Shorebirds), c/o Arroyo & Coates, 500 Washington St., Ste. 700, San Francisco, CA 94111.

