

Middle Pacific Coast Region

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A series of remarkable events made 1996 perhaps the most memorable autumn since at least 1987, and perhaps back to 1977. While the Northern Hemisphere's first Great-winged Petrel was the single highlight, broader-scale phenomena also drew attention. Large fish schools along the southern *Santa Cruz* coast November 9 attracted an estimated 242,000 seabirds of 32 species, many in local-record numbers, such as 100,000 Pacific Loons, 29 Red-necked Grebes, 13,800 Western Grebes, 4150 Clark's Grebes, and 23,000 Heermann's Gulls (†DLSu, JGr). Western landbird migration was heavy on the coast, but not in the Great Basin (RLR) with Warbling Vireo and Yellow Warbler abundance exceeding any recent migrations (DLSu, DFX, JBo), while variety

among vagrant species was high. Southwestern birds were notable, with five Yellow-green Vireos, impressive totals for Virginia's and Lucy's warblers, a Painted Redstart, and a Painted Bunting. Most spectacular was an invasion of montane birds to the coast.

This season Don Roberson takes over the landbirds section from David G. Yee. We appreciate David's years of service and wish him well (he remains subregional editor for *San Joaquin*). Upon writing a much-too-lengthy first draft, Roberson remarked that times have indeed changed since he last served as a regional editor (1983–1984), and he regrets there is insufficient space to detail many interesting records only briefly summarized here.

Abbreviations: C.B.R.C. (*California Bird Records Committee*); C.C.R.S. (*Coyote Cr. Riparian Station, Santa Clara*); C.V. (*Central Valley*); F.I. (*Southeast Farallon I., S.F.*); H.S. (*Hayward Shoreline, Alameda*); S.F. (*San Francisco*). All records from F.I. and Palomar should be credited to Point Reyes Bird Observatory; banded birds from Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey*, should be credited to Big Sur Ornithology Lab. Reports of exceptional vagrants submitted without documentation are normally not published.

Petrels to Boobies

After 1994's Light-mantled Albatross, probably the most surprising Southern Hemisphere seabird yet found off California was the Northern Hemisphere's first Great-winged Petrel (*Pterodroma macroptera gouldi*) from New Zealand. The Aug. 24 boat trip also found N. America's 3rd Dark-rumped Petrel on the w. edge of Cordell Bank (JiD, DLSh, †SBT, †MiF).

Already expected in fall, 15 Manx Shearwaters (five documented) were found from Monterey Bay (13) to Pigeon Pt. and F.I., Aug. 4–Oct. 21 (DLSh, ††DR, †BMCK, †PJM, †JND). Peak numbers of most storm-petrels were at Cordell Bank Aug. 24



Great-winged Petrel (*Pterodroma macroptera gouldi*) near Cordell Bank, California, August 24, 1996. First Northern Hemisphere record. Note the large size compared to the adjacent Northern Fulmar, the large wing (hence the name "macroptera"), large bill, and lack of a white flash in the wing, with only faintly paler under-primaries. The extensive white face indicates the New Zealand race. Photograph/Mark Welfare.

(DLSh): 15 Wilson's, 146 Fork-tailed, and 7680 Ashys. Monterey Bay *maxima* (DLSh) were only single Wilson's and Fork-tailed, plus 1800 Ashys (Aug. 26) and 2400 Blacks (Sept. 22). In *Alameda*, an Ashy visited H.S., Sept. 10 ("almost regular in fall," RJR) and one was wind-killed in Berkeley Oct. 17 (A. Howard, *M.V.Z.).

The Region's 6th Red-tailed Tropicbird was an adult being chased by Peregrine Falcons at F.I., Sept. 11 (†PP). Seabird colonies often attract vagrant ad. seabirds. An unidentified tropicbird was off *Santa Cruz* Sept. 1 (DLSh, RT). For the 5th consecutive fall, F.I. attracted one Brown Booby, an ad. female Oct. 10 (†PP); last year's was male. An unidentified booby described as dark above and light-bellied flew toward Humboldt Bay over Manila Sept. 20 (†GjH).

Hérons to Waterfowl

The Region's 3rd (but *Sonoma's* 2nd and *Marin's* first) Tricolored Heron was an adult which lingered at Bodega Bay Sept. 17–Oct. 1 (PGC, †JM, ph. DWN) before appearing at Limantour Estero Oct. 6–7 (RS, KH). White-faced Ibis made a poor showing coastally, but 85 in e. *Contra Costa* Aug. 30 (DS, DW) provided a seasonal county first and considered a high count for the East Bay.

Eighty-four Greater White-fronted Geese at F.I., Oct. 2 and 24 Nov. 3 far exceeded the previous high of six, while three Snow Geese there Oct. 27 provided only the 5th island occurrence. "Aleutian" Canada Geese away from known wintering and staging areas are typically noted singly, so flocks of ≤five near Bolinas,



Marin, Nov. 13–Dec. 5 and 34 Nov. 26 were noteworthy (DS). Among 24 Eur. Wigeons was *Trinity's* first at Trinity L., Oct. 18 (GjH). A well-described ♂ Com. x Barrow's Goldeneye at Shoreline L., *Santa Clara*, Nov. 16–17 (†SCR, JCS) was one of few ever reported in California.

Raptors

Many raptors circle at the Golden Gate, so the actual number of birds cannot be observed, thus the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory measures sightings per unit time as raptor activity. The G.G.R.O. (CLF, compiler) posted 10-year highs for total raptor activity (28,430) and 8786 Turkey Vultures, 804 N. Harriers, 2746 Cooper's Hawks, 9801 Red-tailed Hawks, and 120 Peregrine Falcons. New lows were 2820 Sharp-shinned Hawks and 32 Broad-winged Hawks. That there were almost as many Cooper's as Sharp-shinned was astonishing, not only for our Region but for almost any lookout in N. America.

Single N. Goshawks passed G.G.R.O., Sept. 28 & 30, Oct. 29, and Nov. 6. An imm. goshawk visited a new hawk migration lookout in Richmond, *Contra Costa*, Oct. 17 (†SAG). Immature N. Goshawks tripled *Santa Cruz's* records by appearing over *Santa Cruz* Nov. 11 (†JND) and n.w. of Loma Prieta Nov. 26 (†DLSu). Despite only 32 Broad-winged Hawks at G.G.R.O., normal numbers of four were reported from *San Mateo* and four from *Monterey/Santa Cruz*. An ad. ♂ Merlin at Marin Cheese Factory Aug. 6 was astoundingly early (RS).

Cranes to Shorebirds

Unusual Sandhill Cranes included 30 flying NE over Mt. Hamilton, *Santa Clara*, Sept. 27 (WGB) and two flying SE over n.e. *Monterey* Nov. 9 (DSe).

Golden-plover reports of 17 Americans and 47 Pacifics spanned Aug. 10–Nov. 24, with all but five coastal; *Napa* had its first Pacific ever Nov. 22 (RS). A juv. *Mongolian Plover* at Bodega Bay Oct. 2–3 (ph. DWN, †LLu) represented the 7th state record and 5th for our Region, but this was surpassed by a *Common Ringed Plover* well-seen and heard by an experienced observer at Pt. Reyes Sept. 9 (†RS). If accepted by the C.B.R.C., it would represent the first record for California. Three Mt. Plovers at Pt. Reyes were unusual along the outer coast Nov. 21 (RS).

Eight Solitary Sandpipers were found Aug. 14–Sept. 19, with five inland and four in *Monterey/Santa Cruz*. A Bar-tailed Godwit was at Eel R. Wildlife Area, *Humboldt*, Oct. 2 (ph. SMcA). A juv. Semipalmated Sandpiper at Moss Landing,

Monterey, Oct. 16–22 (JBo, †SFB) was our latest ever. At least six Sharp-tailed Sandpipers along the coast Sept. 10–Oct. 9 represented a good showing. Eighteen Stilt Sandpipers equaled last year's strong showing, with most reports coming from *Santa Clara* and *Humboldt*. Our only Buff-breasted Sandpiper was at Cape Mendocino, *Humboldt*, Sept. 27 (JCS). Twelve Ruffs was slightly above average and included one inland in *San Joaquin* Nov. 23 (WRH).

Larids to Alcids

A full-tailed ad. Long-tailed Jaeger was 3 mi inland over Salt R., *Humboldt*, Aug. 31 (GLE, JEH, SRv, TEa).

The vast mixed flock of seabirds off *Santa Cruz* Nov. 9 held an ad. Little Gull at Sunset State Beach (†DLSu). Juvenal Mew Gulls arrived unprecedentedly early; singles were offshore *Monterey* Aug. 3 (ph. PJM, DLSu), at Sunset State Beach Aug. 17 (DLSu), at Sunnyvale, *Santa Clara*, Aug. 20–25 (PJM), and at Palo Alto, *Santa Clara*, Aug. 31 (SCR). An ad. W. Gull at Clear L., *Lake*, Oct. 18 (JRW) and a near-ad. Glaucous-winged Gull on the Sacramento R. above Rio Vista Aug. 23 (TDM) were also early for inland. Adult Glaucous Gulls are always rare in our Region: One was on Folsom L., *Placer* and *El Dorado*, Nov. 8–9 (BWb, †TDM). *Santa Clara* hosted this season's farthest-inland Black-legged Kittiwake at Palo Alto Nov. 18 (†SCR) and Sabine's Gull at Sunnyvale Sept. 2 (PJM), the 4th and 7th for the county, respectively.

June's White-winged Tern returned to Arcata, *Humboldt*, Aug. 27–30 (DFx, m.ob.). A shorter-distance vagrant congener was a Black Tern 39 mi off *Monterey* Sept. 22 (DLSu).

All juv. Black Skimmers probably came from the H.S. nest. Two were at nearby San Leandro Aug. 19 (RJR) and one visited w. *Contra Costa* Aug. 27–Sept. 19 (SAG). One at Charleston Slough, *Santa Clara*, Sept. 26 (WGB, LCh) was joined by a 2nd from Oct. 2+ (PMB, MiF). Their parents probably contributed to ≤three adults wandering in w. *Contra Costa* Aug. 4–Sept. 19 (SAG), but three ad. skimmers at White Slough (*Solano's* first) Aug. 3–5 (†RLCL, ph. ABtt), with one remaining to Nov. 14 (DE), included at least some different birds. The pair with failed nests in both *Santa Clara* and *San Mateo* this summer settled at Charleston Slough from Aug. 26+, augmented by one of the other adults from Oct. 2+ (MMR, m.ob.).

One of three–four pairs of Xantus' Murrelets far off *Monterey* Oct. 28 were nominate *hypoleucus* (DLSu, SFB, DR), but

only seven Craveris' Murrelets were reported, including one scoped from Pt. Pinos in high winds Oct. 19 (†DR). Summering Ancient Murrelets continued, with one at *Monterey* Aug. 7 (D. Holman), six at Pt. Lobos Aug. 13 (BHL), and three off Bodega Head, *Sonoma*, Aug. 13 (K&LN, JMR). September birds also summered or were very early. A Rhinoceros Auklet at H.S., Oct. 18–23 (RJR) was rare inside S.F. Bay.

Doves to Flycatcher

Seven coastal White-winged Doves Aug. 8–Nov. 26 were an expected total. *Humboldt's* most exciting vagrant was a Black-billed Cuckoo at Fairhaven Sept. 19–Oct. 2 (B. Cariss, †GjH, †DFx, m.ob.). A Yellow-billed Cuckoo banded on F.I., Oct. 10 had measurements fitting either w. or e. populations. Long-eared Owls in Soquel, *Santa Cruz*, Aug. 23 (RAM) and day-roosting in a Pacific Grove yard, *Monterey*, Nov. 19 (BJW) were suburban surprises. A Black Swift over Pt. Richmond, *Contra Costa*, Sept. 23 (SAG) may have been the first in fall for the East Bay. A Black-chinned Hummingbird calling along Matadero Cr., Palo Alto, Sept. 3 (SCR) was only a mile s. of *San Mateo*, which still lacks records, and a male at H.S., Sept. 10 (RJR) was unexpected. Vagrant ♂ Costa's Hummingbirds were at Big Sur R. mouth Nov. 10 (JBo) and at Rio Del Mar, *Santa Cruz*, Aug. 30–Nov. 2 (SEd, DLSu, JND).

Seven Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were scattered from *Alameda* to *San Benito* Oct. 12–Nov. 24. Wandering Nuttall's Woodpeckers were at Weaverville, *Trinity*, Nov. 9 (GAS, JEH) and Paradise, *Mono* (ES). Willow Flycatchers made a strong showing Aug. 22–Oct. 7, including 21 in the *Humboldt* coastal plain (TWL *et al.*), 42 banded at C.C.R.S., and 19 in *Santa Cruz* (DLSu, SGe *et al.*). Least Flycatchers on F.I., Sept. 9 & 18–25 (PP) and at Big Sur R. mouth Sept. 24–27 (JBo, ph. DR) were banded or well-documented, but reports of five others (included four inland) were either undocumented or unconvincing. An E. Phoebe was on F.I., Nov. 9–10 (PP).

A Great Crested Flycatcher banded on F.I., Sept. 30 (J. King, *vide* PP) was exciting, but even more so was the Region's 3rd Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher at Pt. Reyes Oct. 1 (†JMR *et al.*). At least 32 Tropical Kingbirds appeared after Sept. 19, including one inland at Lagoon Valley, *Solano*, from Nov. 20+ (†J. Knight *et al.*). Vagrant E. Kingbirds were in *Santa Clara* along the Pajaro R., Aug. 15–28 (DLSu; quite early) and Arastradero Preserve, Palo Alto, Oct. 12 (SCR), while another was at Bolinas, *Marin*, Sept. 23–Oct. 3 (RS). The only Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was at Moss Beach, *San Mateo*, Sept. 5 (†DJJK).

Swallows to Jays

Purple Martin concentrations are rarely seen in our Region, but 55 were perched in Douglas fir at dawn Aug. 17 in Bear Valley, Pt. Reyes (RS). A Bank Swallow was late over the Pajaro R., *Santa Cruz/Monterey*, Oct. 28 (DLSu).

"Something screwy happened" (PP) to Cliff Swallows in late October when unbelievable numbers flew north along the coast for several weeks. It started with ten at Butano Ridge, *San Mateo*, Oct. 15 (BMcK) but mushroomed to 470 during a 2-hour count at Pescadero Beach Oct. 16, plus 50 at Moss Beach that day (PJM). Two were at Pt. Richmond Oct. 17 (SAG), seven were at Purisma Cr. mouth, *San Mateo*, Oct. 20 (RSTh), and F.I. received seven Oct. 25–29 (PP). On Oct. 26, the last of the wave were birds at Calabazas ponds, *Santa Clara* (AV), and Ano Nuevo Pt. (PJM). Considering the dates, and the other "Mexican" vagrants this fall, perhaps these swallows originated far south or east, possibly the interior *H. p. tachina* or the Mexican *H. p. melanogaster*, neither yet documented in our Region. Both have cinnamon forecrowns, recalling Cave Swallow, but apparently none of our October birds were studied in detail.

A W. Scrub-Jay of a pale interior race, probably *A. c. nevadae*, at McGurk Meadow, Yosemite N.P., Sept. 15 (†JLD) was the westernmost on the Pacific slope of the Sierra Nevada, but interior "Woodhouse's Jays" have been w. of the crest at high elevations n. of Yosemite Valley (AB 36:214).

Nutcracker to Nuthatches

SA Autumn 1996 will be recalled as the "Fall of the Montane Invasion." Prominent invaders were Clark's Nutcracker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Cassin's Finch, and Red Crossbill; good numbers of Golden-crowned Kinglet, Townsend's Solitaire, Varied Thrush, and Evening Grosbeak were also present. Nothing on this scale has ever been documented before. Massive cone-crop and other food-source failures must have occurred somewhere, but where? Widely-separated events may have combined to produce the phenomenon.

At least 105 Clark's Nutcrackers at 20 coastal and Bay Area locales, most in piney highlands, from *Humboldt* to *Monterey*, dwarfed the previously incursion of fall 1972 (when 39 were in coastal counties). Birds were first noted Aug. 17 on the *Humboldt/Trinity* border (MHg); they arrived in mid-coastal counties in mid-

October, suggesting a northern or Great Basin origin for these corvids. Reports included small flocks in interior *Humboldt* Sept. 14 (JCP, DFX) & 22 (RLeV); from Hull Mt. to Bald Mt., *Mendocino*, Nov. 2 (JRW); at Mt. Tamalpais, *Marin*, Oct. 24 (RS); in Castle Rock S.P., *Santa Clara/Santa Cruz* border, Nov. 18–23 (DLSu, MJM *et al.*); on Jacks Peak Oct. 19+ (SRv, m.ob.) and Cone Peak Oct. 23–30 (ph. DR, JND), both *Monterey*; and on San Benito Mt., *San Benito*, Nov. 16 (SRv, KVV, JCS). Two at Butano Ridge Oct. 22 (DLSu) and one at Junipero Serra Park, San Bruno, Nov. 13 (RSTh) provided the 2nd & 3rd records for *San Mateo*. Birds even reached the C.V., with singles at Natomas, *Sacramento*, Nov. 5–11 (C&LB, †TDM) and Davis, a first for *Yolo*, Nov. 30 (JMH).

Monterey observers felt that Com. Ravens at Big Sur R. mouth Oct. 9 (JBo, †DR, RC, SFB), Jacks Peak Oct. 19 (SFB, †DR, RC), and Pacific Grove Oct. 20 (†SRv), each a first for the locale, were also vagrants related to the nutcracker invasion. At least five Mt. Chickadees appeared in *Humboldt* lowlands Sep. 21–Nov. 17 (GjH, RLeV, DFX).

There have been irruptions of Red-breasted Nuthatches before, but most observers thought this fall's event more impressive than any in memory. A trickle arrived in August, but it was late September before huge numbers appeared everywhere in the coastal lowlands. Highlights included 98 on F.I., Aug. 17–Nov. 17 (only the 125 in 1972 eclipsed this total); 72 on the *Santa Clara* Valley floor after Sept. 28 (WGB, m.ob.); 82 responding to rape in 100 acres of *Monterey* pines along Last Chance Rd., *Santa Cruz*, Nov. 11 (DLSu), and the first ever for H.S., Oct. 23 (RJR). Perhaps related to this irruption, Golden-crowned Kinglets were locally common on the c. coast and in the C.V.

Thrushes to Vireos

California's 10th Northern Wheatear was on private land near Sebastopol, *Sonoma*, Sept. 22–26 (K. Murphy, ph. †DWN, †JM, †BDP *et al.*). At least 48 Townsend's Solitaires appeared beyond their usual limits in coastal ranges, including lowland birds at Woodside, *San Mateo*, Oct. 31 (RSTh); H.S., Nov. 20 (RJR); and along the American R. Parkway, *Sacramento*, Sept. 17 (†TDM). An impressive 21 were on San Benito Mt., Nov. 16 (JCS, SRv, KVV). Staggering diurnal flights of Varied Thrush included 780 flying N over Butano Ridge in 90 minutes Oct. 15, and 625 there during a 2-hour count Oct. 16 (BMcK). Hundreds were over Pacific



Northern Wheatear near Sebastopol, California, September 22, 1996.
Photograph/Dan W. Nelson.

Grove Oct. 27 (DSg, RC, DR). Could wildfires in the Santa Lucia Mts. have pushed these birds north?

Vagrant Gray Catbirds, still a C.B.R.C.-reviewed species, were at Pt. Reyes Sept. 18–27 (†BDP, †MiF, m.ob.) and F.I., Oct. 29–Nov. 2 (†PP). Eleven wandering Sage Thrashers reached the coast Aug. 30–Oct. 30. A Yellow Wagtail was at Arcata Marsh Aug. 27 (†DFx *et al.*), expanding the known "window" for this vagrant one week earlier. A Black-backed Wagtail at Casper Cr. mouth Sept. 27–30 (†JRW *et al.*) represented a first for *Mendocino* and only the 5th for our Region. The only Red-throated Pipits were three on F.I., Oct. 2–30, and two at Lawsons Landing, *Marin*, Oct. 16 (RS).

Three "Blue-headed" Solitary Vireos were banded on F.I.; mainland birds were described from Big Sur R. mouth Sept. 24 (†DR); Houda Pt., *Humboldt*, Sept. 29 (†DFx); and (quite late) Guadalupe R., San Jose Nov. 28 (†SCR) and L. Merced, S.F., Nov. 30 (†PJM). Four others were undocumented; details should be included until the identification and occurrence of this form (species?) is better understood. "Plumbeous" Solitary Vireos were at Big Sur R. mouth Oct. 9 (JBo), Pajaro R., *Santa Cruz*, Nov. 6 (DLSu), Pacifica Sept. 29 (DSg), and Moss Beach Oct. 4 (AJ); the latter two provided the first and 2nd records for *San Mateo*. Very rare Yellow-throated Vireos were at Houda Pt., Sept. 27–Oct. 1 (†TWL, †GjH, m.ob.) and MacKerricher S.P., *Mendocino*, Sept. 14–15 (†CEV, †JRW, †BbD, †PBS). Philadelphia Vireos were near Ferndale, *Humboldt*, Oct. 2 (ph. SMcA) and Bolinas, *Marin*, Oct. 6 (†RS, †LLu). Ten Red-eyed Vireos included a worn adult near Isleton, *Sacramento*, Aug. 8–10 (†RAH, †DGY), and the summering bird at Pescadero until Sept. 22 (TN). Five Yellow-green Vireos eclipsed the previous

Regional high (three in 1988): singles at Big Sur R. mouth Sept. 22–24 (ph. †CHo, ph. †DR), Carmel R. mouth Sept. 28–Oct 14 (†Rfo, †DR, m.ob.) and Oct. 5 (different bird; †BHL), Rodeo Lagoon, *Marin*, Oct. 5 (†RS), and Pt. Reyes Oct. 7–8 (HK, †GFi, †JMR, m.ob.).

Warblers

Warbler variety was excellent (e.g., 28 species in *Humboldt* and 29 in *Monterey*) but absolute numbers of “eastern” vagrants were low. In contrast, “southwestern” vagrants were unusually numerous. A good example was two *Vermivoras*: there were only 14 Tennessees (normally a fairly common vagrant) but 11 of the usually very rare Virginia’s. Among the more regular species (nearly all coastal) were four N. Parulas, 18 Chestnut-sideds (including *Sacramento*’s first at Paradise Beach Sept. 17; †TDM), ten Magnolias, eight Black-throated Blues, seven Blackburnians, 12 Prairies, 106 Palms (lowest in years), 62 Blackpoll (also low), 31 Black-and-whites (four were inland, including at Yreka, *Siskiyou*, Sept. 4; †RE), 29 Am. Redstarts, six Ovenbirds, 22 N. Waterthrushes, and four Canadas.

Among rarer warblers, four Lucy’s were in *Monterey* (Rfo, DR, RC, JBo) and one was at L. Merced, *S.F.*, Nov. 30 (PJM). The first *Monterey* Cape May in 15 years frequented a Pacific Grove bottlebrush Oct. 23–26 (JBo, ph. †DR, m.ob.). Single Black-throated Greens were on F.I., Sept. 3 (early; PP) and at Carmel R. mouth Oct. 13–26 (DHp, m.ob.). Four scarce Bay-breasteds were distributed between F.I., Sept. 26 (two birds; PP), Pt. Reyes Oct. 5 (†JAn, JM, m.ob.), and Clam Beach, *Humboldt*, Sept. 30 (†SMcA). Four Prothonotaries represented a good showing: San Francisco State University Sept. 4 (*C.A.S.), Bodega Bay Oct. 12–19 (S. Cogan, ph. DWN, m.ob.), Clam Beach Sept. 30–Oct. 2 (SMcA, †GjH, m.ob.), and Golden Gate Park Oct. 12–19 (DPM, †SBT, †JMR, m.ob.). The only Worm-eating was banded at Big Sur R. mouth Oct. 6 (CHo, ph. DR), and the only Kentucky was at Arcata Marsh Oct. 5–7 (S. Bulger, †GjH, m.ob.). A Connecticut was on F.I., Sept. 14–27 (†PP). Four records of Mourning were well-documented: banded at Big Sur R. mouth Sept. 22 (ph. JBo) and F.I., Sept. 26 (†PP); and seen at Moss Beach Oct. 1 (first for *San Mateo*, †SBT) and Carmel R. mouth Oct. 11–13 (KH, †DR, †MFe, m.ob.). Hoodeds were at Houda Pt., Sept. 29 (K. Irwin *et al.*) and in San Jose Nov. 28 (†SCR, MMR). Arguably the landbird of the season was a Painted Redstart at Mission Trails Park,

Carmel, *Monterey*, Oct. 31–Nov. 3 (†J. Narvaez, ph. †DR, m.ob.), only the 4th for our Region.

Tanagers to Orioles

Among seven Summer Tanagers was a first for H.S., Sept. 16 (RJR) and one banded on F.I. of the s.w. *cooperi* race. Eleven coastal Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and eight Indigo Buntings were below-par, but five coastal Blue Grosbeaks were notable. *Monterey*’s first Painted Bunting briefly appeared at Big Sur R. mouth Oct. 9 (†JBo). The only Dickcissel was at Willow Cr., *Humboldt*, Sept. 18–19 (TWL, †GjH, JCP, DFx). Four stray Green-tailed Towhees were *Solano*’s first at Ledgewood Cr., Sept. 4 (†F. Scarlett), *San Joaquin*’s 4th at Lodi L. Nature Area Sept. 7 (JRo), one banded at Big Sur R. mouth Sept. 19, and one at Rockaway Beach, *San Mateo*, Nov. 10 (DSg). Rare coastal Am. Tree Sparrows were on F.I., Nov. 10 & 25 (PP) and in Golden Gate Park Nov. 16 (JM). Thirty-six Clay-colored Sparrows included early individuals at Big Sur R. mouth Aug. 27–Sept. 4 (†JBo) and F.I., Sept. 3 (PP), and one inland at Shasta Valley, *Siskiyou*, Sept. 13–16 (†RE). Rare Black-throated Sparrows were at Big Sur R. mouth Sept. 8–18 and Oct. 5–6 (†CHo, ph. DR, m.ob.) and at a Laguna Cr. feeder, *Sacramento*, Nov. 30 (E. Burkett, †TDM). Among ten Lark Buntings were three at Milton, *Calaveras*, Nov. 17 (TF).

A dark-lored White-crowned Sparrow (*leucophrys* or *oriantha*) was in Palo Alto Nov. 5 (a *Santa Clara* first; †SCR). The only McCown’s Longspur was in w. *Placer* Nov. 23–28 (TEa *et al.*) but fair numbers of other longspurs appeared: ≥71 Laplands in 7 counties, and 11 coastal Chestnut-collareds. Snow Buntings were on F.I., Oct. 29–30 (two birds; †PP) and at 4 *Humboldt* sites Oct. 28–Nov. 10 (four–five birds; †DFx, GjH *et al.*).

Fourteen coastal Bobolinks were scattered Aug. 31–Oct. 29, with one inland at Lodi Sept. 7 (†DGY), a first for *San Joaquin*. More Great-tailed Grackle records piled up, with singles at H.S., Aug. 13 (RJR) and El Portal, *Mariposa*, Sept. 15 (JLD). A dozen Orchard Orioles were located after mid-September.

Finches

The largest previous coastal irruption of Cassin’s Finch was 21 birds in fall 1987 (AB 42:133). This fall smashed that record with about 96 birds at 23 sites in coastal counties. The invasion was first detected in the south, at Jacks Peak, *Monterey*, Oct. 19 (†DR, RC, †SRv). Within the next month birds were scattered n. to *Marin*,

but none reached the n.w. coast, suggesting a different origin than the invading cohort led by the nutcrackers. Up to 38 were in *Santa Cruz* Nov. 4–26 (†JND, DLSu *et al.*) and lowland feeders hosted birds in *S.F.*, Oct. 28–29 (JM, JnM), Berkeley Nov. 1–23 (K. Loughman), San Jose Nov. 10 & 23 (SBT), Alamo, *Contra Costa*, Nov. 16 (JMR), and Pacific Grove Nov. 11 (AB). Two at Natomas, *Sacramento*, Nov. 9 (JTr) were on the C.V. floor. Singles reached Big Sur R. mouth Oct. 26–Nov. 24 (banded) and F.I., Oct. 27–30 (PP).

Red Crossbills were present in astonishing numbers throughout the lowlands. A few appeared by Aug. 11 (Big Sur R. mouth, JND) but most arrived mid-October to early November (23 even reached F.I.). Observers from *Humboldt* to *Monterey* thought small-billed, n.w. “type 3” birds might be involved (from J. Groth’s 1993 paper which separates Am. Red Crossbills into 8 types; *Univ. Calif. Publ. Zoology* 127), especially after Roberson taped a flock on Jacks Peak Oct. 17 and an initial sonogram was compared to DeBenedictis’ synopsis (*Birding* 27:495) and to examples on the Internet (research.amnh.org). But the tape has since been reviewed by Groth, who concluded (*pers. com.*) that the calls were just variations on “type 2.” This assessment was supported by measurements (P.G.M.N.H.) of four crossbills found dead during the irruption. “Type 2” is the commonest crossbill, breeding from British Columbia to Mexico, and regularly in the Sierra. This invasion could have originated virtually anywhere.

Lawrence’s Goldfinches were unusually common in coastal *Monterey/Santa Cruz* (DR, DLSu+) all fall; three reached F.I., Sept. 25–30 (PP). Evening Grosbeaks were widely reported from *Monterey* to *San Mateo/Santa Clara* after early October (MMR, m.ob.), but only a few were farther north, a pattern shared with the invading Cassin’s Finches.

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