

Southern Pacific Coast Region

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An average winter with the continued presence of mountain species in the low deserts and along the coast, and an interesting selection of rarities.

Abbreviations: H.D.L. (*Harper Dry Lake, n.w. of Barstow, San Bernardino Co.*); N.A.S. (*Naval Air Station*); N.E.S.S. (*north end of the Salton Sea, Riverside Co.*); S.B.C.M. (*San Bernardino County Museum*); S.E.S.S. (*south end of the Salton Sea, Imperial Co.*). 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 review list is forwarded to the C.B.R.C. Secretary and archived at the Western Foundation for Vertebrate Zoology in Camarillo.

Mountain Forest Birds

Many of the mountain forest birds that invaded this Region during the fall remained through the winter. At least three of the White-headed Woodpeckers found close to the coast in *Santa Barbara* remained through February, with one still present Mar. 29 (G&JH), one was near Ventura Dec. 21 (DDJ), and the bird found in the Santa Ana Mts. in October still present Feb. 11 (BED). Lewis' Woodpecker numbers remained a little higher than normal throughout the winter, with small numbers pushing as far south as the Imperial Valley (GMCC).

Clark's Nutcracker continued to push southward and towards the coast, with six at Castle Craigs, *San Luis Obispo*, Dec. 18 (BKS) and one in the Santa Ana Mts., *Orange*, Dec. 16 (SGM), along with two in Lemon Heights, *Orange*, Dec. 22-23 (BED), one in Huntington Beach Jan. 5-6 (SGM), three in Oceanside, *San Diego*, Dec. 29-Jan. 1 (D&CW) and five at L. Murray in San Diego Jan. 5-6 (VL) in the coastal lowlands.

Red-breasted Nuthatches remained far more numerous and widespread than usual throughout the winter, as did Red

Crossbills—numbers reported on CBCs should more clearly show the number and distribution of these 2 species. Cassin's Finches reached the coast in force during December (54 on the Santa Barbara CBC is unprecedented) and remained common to as far south as the Los Angeles Basin through the end of the period.

Loons to Herons

A Red-throated and Pacific loon together on Haiwee Res. in the Owens Valley, *Inyo*, Dec. 18 (T&JH) and two Pacific Loons on L. Henshaw, *San Diego*, Dec. 7-8 (CGE) were late migrants passing through the interior, but two on L. Isabella, *Kern*, Dec. 28 (MTH) could have been wintering on this large freshwater lake. An imm. Yellow-billed Loon photographed in Ensenada Jan. 12 (K&CR) was the 2nd to be found in Baja California, and undoubtedly passed through S. California. A Red-necked Grebe, rare in S. California, was at Morro Bay, *San Luis Obispo*, Jan. 15-16 (JLR) and another was near Pt. Mugu, *Ventura*, Jan. 14-Mar. 8 (RS, ST).

A Laysan Albatross caught in San Pedro, *Los Angeles*, in mid-January was released far off Pt. Conception, *Santa Barbara*, Feb. 1 (MH), in an area where \geq three others were seen during February (MH, RR). A Manx Shearwater was reported during an organized pelagic birding boat-trip off Morro Bay, *San Luis Obispo*, Jan. 19 (BKS, AS); sightings of this species along the California coast are increasing.



Present for a month in January and February 1997, this near-adult Masked Booby at the Point Mugu Naval Air Station furnished a ninth record for California. Photograph/Brian E. Small.

A near-ad. **Masked Booby** well photographed at the Pt. Mugu N.A.S., *Ventura*, Jan. 18–Feb. 18 (MF) is the 9th to be reported in California. A Blue-footed Booby photographed on Mullett I. at S.E.S.S., Feb. 14 (KCM) and found near death on the nearby shore Mar. 1 had undoubtedly been present on the Salton Sea since early September.

The ad. Reddish Egret present on s. San Diego Bay since at least Oct. 13 was still present Mar. 25 (EC, DWA).

Swans to Hawks

A Tundra Swan at Pt. Mugu N.A.S., Dec. 18 (DL), another at Seal Beach, *Orange*, Dec. 28–29 (JF), and a 3rd near Lakeview, *Riverside*, Feb. 9 (R. Higbie) were the southernmost this winter. A blue-morph



Ross' Goose found at S.E.S.S., Dec. 26
was still present Feb. 2 (TRC).

A dark duck resembling an Am. Black Duck seen with Mallards at N.E.S.S., Jan. 4-Feb. 22 (EAC) was not positively identified; an Am. Black Duck reported from the Salton Sea in 1978 was treated as a probable escapee, and one shot in N. California in 1911 remains the only one endorsed by the C.B.R.C. as a genuine vagrant. Thirty Eur. Wigeon scattered throughout the Region was an expected number.

The ♀ Tufted Duck found at Saticoy, Ventura, Nov. 28 remained through Dec. 6 (ST) and was the only one known to be present in S. California this winter. A ♀ Harlequin Duck, rare in S. California, was on the coast at the *Los Angeles/Ventura* line Jan. 7+ (TK). At least ten Oldsquaws along the coast was about average, as was an equal number of Black Scoters in the same area. Up to six Surf Scoters around the N.E.S.S. throughout the period (CMcG) were the only ones reported inland this winter.

A Swainson's Hawk near Brawley, *Imperial*, Feb. 2 (GMcC) had probably wintered locally. Along the coastal slope the ad. Zone-tailed Hawk present in Goleta, *Santa Barbara*, since Oct. 24 was still present Mar. 22 (JEL), the adult around Ojai, *Ventura*, since Oct. 12 was still present Dec. 21 (KK), one was reported over Tustin, *Orange*, Dec. 22 (LS), another was reported around Escondido, *San Diego*, Dec. 27 (BHa) and Feb. 26 (BS), one was near San Diego Feb. 23 (LE), and an adult was in the foothills over Pine Valley, *San Diego*, Feb. 17 (MAP). Farther inland, where much rarer, an immature sporadically roosted with Turkey Vultures near El Centro, *Imperial*, Dec. 4–Feb. 22 (ph. KZK). A "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk near Saticoy Jan. 4–Mar. 1 (WM) was one of a very few found along the coast of S. California, and another near Ridgecrest, *Kern*, Feb. 9 (DVB) was believed to be the same bird present at this locality each of the past 10 winters. Seven Harris' Hawks around Borrego Springs all winter (RT) were the same birds first noted in this area in 1994, and another in the w. portion of the Antelope Valley Dec. 29 (TK) was believed to be the same bird first seen there in the spring of 1996. An imm. Broad-winged Hawk over El Segundo, *Los Angeles*, Jan. 16 (DAN) was only the 2nd to be reported in winter since 1985–1986. Rough-legged Hawks were remarkably scarce this winter, with only four in the Owens Valley (T&JH), one in the Cuyama Valley, *Santa Barbara*, Dec. 31 (ST), and another at the Santa Ynez R. mouth, *Santa Barbara*, Mar. 2 (BHi) being the only six reported. An ad. Crested Caracara feeding on a dead



Ruff foraging near Point Mugu, California, February 22, 1997. Photograph/Don DesJardin.

sheep near Brawley Jan. 31 (RHigson) was the 2nd to be reported in *Imperial*, but the condition of its wing-feathers suggested it had recently been in captivity.

Plovers to Auklets

Fourteen Pacific Golden-Plovers near Santa Maria, *Santa Barbara*, Dec. 29 (MB), \leq five near Port Hueneme, *Ventura*, all winter (DDJ), and five–seven at Seal Beach throughout the period (DRW) were at traditional wintering localities. A Mt. Plover near Big Pine, *Inyo*, Dec. 16 (T&JH) was probably a late migrant, but 90 on the Carrizo Plain, *San Luis Obispo*, Feb. 24 (JSR), 95 near Lancaster, *Los Angeles*, Dec. 21 (KLG), and 175 near Lakeview Dec. 26 (SJP) were at inland wintering localities away from S.E.S.S., and 40 at Seal Beach Dec. 28–30 may be at the last wintering location on the coast.

An oystercatcher photographed at Royal Palms Beach on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, *Los Angeles*, Jan. 18–Feb. 14 (BB) was, based on its plumage characters (Jehl in *Neotropical Ornithology* 1985), a hybrid American x Black Oystercatcher. A Ruff was photographed at a traditional wintering locality near Pt. Mugu N.A.S., Feb. 22–23 (DDJ).

Three first-winter Franklin's Gulls were found, with a late migrant on L. Henshaw Dec. 7–8 (CGE), a wintering bird at Dana Pt., *Orange*, Feb. 24 (JW), and the other in Coronado, *San Diego*, Feb. 18 (EC). The ad. Little Gull found in Corona Nov. 8 was present through Dec. 13 (HK), and what was probably the same adult was present at nearby Hidden Valley Nature Preserve in Riverside Feb. 2–Mar. 25 (RHigbie). The ad. Black-headed Gull found in Santa Barbara Nov. 26 was last seen Feb. 28 (JEL). An ad. Lesser Black-backed Gull at Dana Pt., Dec. 8–Jan. 5 (JW) was believed to be the same bird present at this location during the past 2 winters. Two Mew Gulls far from the coast at the s. end of the San Joaquin Valley near Bakersfield Jan. 5 (MTH) were in an area where small numbers are proving to be present every winter. An ad. Yellow-footed Gull, decidedly rare on the coast, was at Dana Pt.,

Jan. 11 (MTH, MAP). A first-winter Glaucous-winged Gull on Haiwee Res., Dec. 18 (T&JH) was the 2nd to be found in *Inyo*. We had more than the average number of Glaucous Gulls, as indicated by first-winter birds along the coast near San Simeon Jan. 2 (GPS), at Morro Bay Dec. 14 (JSR), the Santa Ynez R. mouth Dec. 22–Feb. 19 (BH), Dana Pt. Jan. 9–19 (JEP, BED), La Jolla, *San Diego*, Jan. 13 (SW), on San Nicolas I., Feb. 1–2 (MTH), a first-winter bird inland at S.E.S.S., Feb. 2–23 (TRC) and an adult there Feb. 8 (GMCC), along with \geq two more first-winter birds in n. Baja California (KLG, K&CR). A first-winter Black-legged Kittiwake photographed at S.E.S.S., Dec. 8 (CJE) was one of a very few to be found inland in S. California.

A flying Parakeet Auklet was seen from San Nicolas I., Feb. 2 (MTH); this species is probably a regular winter visitor to the waters far off S. California, but—apart from dying and dead birds—is rarely, if ever, reported from shore.

Doves to Woodpeckers

The number of White-winged Doves wintering along the w. edge of the Colorado Desert in e. *San Diego* increases each winter, with flocks of 10–15 present at multi-



A rare visitor to the desert regions of southern California was this Northern Saw-whet Owl in a Christmas-tree farm near Ridgecrest December 6, 1996. Photograph/John C. Wilson.

ple locations—such as Agua Caliente Springs and Yaqui Wells—throughout the period. Single White-winged Doves at Morro Bay Dec. 13 (GPS) and in Goleta Jan. 4 (DR) were along the coast, where rare in winter, and another in El Centro, *Imperial*, Feb. 8 (J&CF) is one of less than half-dozen ever reported in the s.e. portion of this Region in winter. An Inca Dove in Borrego Springs Dec. 22 (PA) was only the 2nd to be found in e. *San Diego*, but the established population in the Imperial Valley is expanding its range, so additional birds should be anticipated in this apparently suitable area.

A N. Saw-whet Owl present at a Christmas tree farm near Ridgecrest Dec. 14 into January (LS) is one of only a few to be found at such desert localities.

Up to six Vaux's Swifts around Pasadena, *Los Angeles*, in December (KLG) was less than normal and the only ones reported in the Region this winter; 20 years ago this species was far more numerous and widespread at this time of the year.

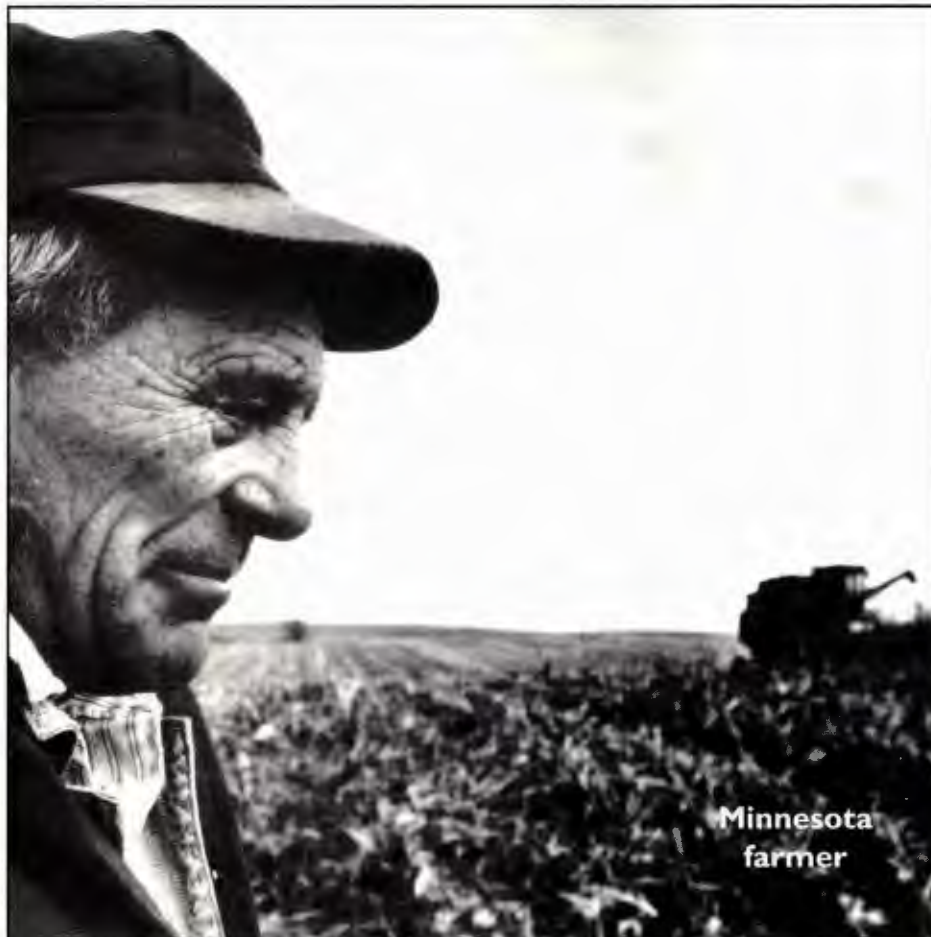
A ♂ Broad-billed Hummingbird in Camarillo, *Ventura*, Dec. 16 (HW) was probably one present at this location each of the previous 3 winters. Since Costa's Hummingbirds are not normally found n. of Santa Barbara-Goleta in winter, a female in San Luis Obispo Dec. 8 (JSR) was somewhat noteworthy.

Eight Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers found along the coast would appear to represent a normal number. A Red-naped Sapsucker in Los Osos, *San Luis Obispo*, Jan. 5 (M&PC) was a little to the northwest of where this species normally occurs in winter. A ♀ Williamson's Sapsucker in Sylmar, *Los Angeles*, Oct. 30–Jan. 24 (RB), another female in Lemon Heights, *Orange*, Dec. 29–Jan. 12 (BED), and a male on Pt. Loma in San Diego Dec. 2–Jan. 3 (GJ) were w. of their normal range.

Flycatchers to Vireos

Three Least Flycatchers were reported, with a late fall migrant in La Jolla Dec. 1–3 (K&CR), one present in Costa Mesa, *Orange*, Oct. 23–Feb. 17 (BED) for its 2nd winter, and the 3rd in Newport Beach, *Orange*, Jan. 8–11 (JEP). A Hammond's Flycatcher in Westminster, *Orange*, Nov. 29–Dec. 17 (BED) was believed to be a late fall migrant, but another in L. Forest, *Orange*, Dec. 7–22 (GLT) was believed to be wintering locally. Two Gray Flycatchers in *Orange*, one in *Riverside*, and another in e. *San Diego* were the only four reported; 20 years ago this was the "expected" *Empidonax* in winter. At least five "Western Flycatchers" were seen along the coast between Dec. 1–Jan.

Just one of the species protected by the Endangered Species Act.



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7, but one in Long Beach, *Los Angeles*, Feb. 15 (BED, JEP) was the only one later in the winter, suggesting most were late fall stragglers rather than wintering birds. The only E. Phoebe was one at O'Neill Regional Park in *Orange* Dec. 22–Jan. 11 (GLT). The Dusky-capped Flycatcher found in Newport Beach Nov. 29 could not be found again after Dec. 6 (DRW), so was assumed to be a late fall straggler. Single Ash-throated Flycatchers in Newport Beach Jan. 5–7 (SS) and San Diego Dec. 21–28 (GJ) were the only reported. A Tropical Kingbird near Pt. Mugu N.A.S., Jan. 21–Feb. 9 (ST) undoubtedly spent the winter in that area. Up to two Thick-billed Kingbirds were in Pomona, *Los Angeles*, through Mar. 4 (SJP), after having been present since Sept. 9 and mid-November. A W. Kingbird in Tustin, *Orange*, Dec. 20 (JEP) was unusually late, but not believed to be wintering. An ad. Scissor-tailed Flycatcher photographed in Long Beach, *Los Angeles*, Jan. 17–Feb. 23 (KJ) is one of a very few known to have wintered in California.

A Bank Swallow photographed near the Santa Ynez R. mouth Feb. 22–23 (BHi) is one of a very few found in California in winter. Small numbers of Barn Swallows are present in S. California every winter, especially so around the Salton Sea. However, reports such as that of 20 at Oso Flaco L., *San Luis Obispo*, Jan. 10 (JSR), eight on n. Vandenberg A.F.B., *Santa Barbara*, Dec. 8 (BH), 24 at the Santa Ynez R. mouth Jan. 24 (BH), three near Saticoy Dec. 24 (ST), three near Chino, *San Bernardino*, Dec. 5 (JEP) and ≤ 15 in Irvine throughout the period (BED) indicate more than normal present this winter.

The Pinyon Jay frequenting a feeder in El Centro since Nov. 15 remained through Mar. 16 (J&CF). A Winter Wren in Riverside Feb. 9 (MAP) was a little farther south than normal. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in Ft. Independence, *Inyo*, Jan. 31 (A&LK) was unexpected, since this species normally withdraws from this area of California in winter. A Townsend's Solitaire in Newport Beach Jan. 5 (DRW) was on the immediate coast, where unexpected.

A Wood Thrush at Mt. Home Village in the foothills of the San Bernardino Mts. near Redlands, *San Bernardino*, Dec. 21–24 (EAC) was most unusual, since there is only one previous record of this species in California in winter. A Sage Thrasher in Costa Mesa Jan. 3–5 (JEP) was along the coast, where unusual in winter. The imm. N. Shrike found in Independence, *Inyo*, Nov. 20 remained through Feb. 6 (A&LK).

A Bell's Vireo in Newport Beach Jan. 5

(BED) was presumed to be wintering locally. Slightly less than the expected number of Solitary Vireos were found along the coast, with *V.s.cassinii* outnumbering *V.s.plumbeus* as expected, but a "Blue-headed" Solitary Vireo (*V.s.solitarius*), a casual straggler to California, was carefully identified on s. Vandenberg A.F.B., *Santa Barbara*, Dec. 22 (JMC).

Wood Warblers to Buntings

Three Tennessee Warblers were found, with one at Santa Barbara Jan. 7–13 (JEL), another in Ventura Dec. 24 (JSR), and the 3rd in Costa Mesa Jan. 8–11 (BED). Six Nashville Warblers along the coast was slightly less than expected in winter. A N. Parula at Rio Hondo, *Los Angeles*, Dec. 21 (PS) was probably a very late fall vagrant, but a male in Brawley Feb. 2–April 9 (RHigson) was clearly wintering locally. As usual, a few Yellow Warblers were found wintering along the coast and around the S.E.S.S., as indicated by ≥ 20 reported from those areas; however, one near Victorville, *San Bernardino*, Jan. 5 (CMcG) was in an area where unrecorded at this time of the year. Small numbers of Hermit Warblers regularly winter along the coast of California, with most of these along the central coast, and with very few s. of *San Luis Obispo*, so one near Santa Maria Dec. 29 (JMC), two in Santa Barbara Jan. 4 (JEL), one in Irvine Dec. 27–Jan. 5 (BW), one in Oceanside Jan. 1 (DWA), and ≤ 2 in Coronado Dec. 21–Jan. 12 (EC) were of interest. A ♂ Black-throated Green Warbler found in National City, *San Diego*, Nov. 27 was still present Mar. 31 (DWA). A Prairie Warbler found in Burbank, *Los Angeles*, Mar. 10 (GP) had undoubtedly been present all winter. Six Palm Warblers w. of the mountains was less than we have become accustomed to in winter. A Bay-breasted Warbler in Mission Viejo, *Orange*, Nov. 26–Dec. 7 (JEP) appeared to have been a very late fall straggler. Ten Black-and-white Warblers along the coast was average, but an Am. Redstart in Oceano, *San Luis Obispo*, Feb. 11 (KMH), another in Wilmington, *Los Angeles*, all winter (MH), and a 3rd near Redlands, *San Bernardino* Jan. 8 (RMcK), along with a N. Waterthrush spending its 5th winter (DRW) in Newport Beach, were fewer of these 2 species than we have become accustomed to. A Worm-eating Warbler in San Pedro, *Los Angeles*, Nov. 23–Jan. 30 (MH) and another in Ventura Jan. 6–25 (DDJ) were evidently attempting to winter locally. Wilson's Warblers may have been a little more numerous than usual

along the coast, since ≥ 25 were found. A Kentucky Warbler in Los Osos, *San Luis Obispo*, Dec. 15–Feb. 28 (BTM) was the 2nd to attempt wintering at this exact location. The Painted Redstart found near Goleta Oct. 3 remained through Mar. 9 (JEL), but the one in San Diego Oct. 30 disappeared at the end of November, when the eucalyptus upon which it was feeding were severely pruned.

A ♀ Hepatic Tanager in Sylmar Dec. 8 (MSM) was believed to be the same bird present at this location during the past 3 winters. At least 15 Summer Tanagers along the coast was a little more than expected, and single birds near N.E.S.S., Jan. 4 (SJP) and in Brawley Nov. 23–Dec. 8 (TRC) were inland where rare at this time of the year. Only 15 W. Tanagers were reported from along the coast, but one in Banning, *Riverside*, Jan. 21 (RMcK) and another in Brawley Dec. 8 (MAP) were inland, where much more unusual. Seven Rose-breasted Grosbeaks along the coast, most frequenting feeders, was an average number for this time of the year, but six Black-headed Grosbeaks in the same area was more than usual.

Sparrows to Finches

A Green-tailed Towhee in Costa Mesa all winter (JEP) and another in Ventura Dec. 21 (DDJ) were both a little to the northwest of areas of regular occurrence. Three Clay-colored Sparrows was expected, with one at Morro Bay Dec. 21–Jan. 19 (JSR), another in Goleta Dec. 30–Jan. 11 (MAH), and the 3rd in Costa Mesa from December–Feb. 17 (JSB). A Brewer's Sparrow in Mission Viejo Dec. 21–28 (RAH) was close to the coast, where now considered unusual. The Lark Bunting found in Bishop, *Inyo*, Nov. 10 remained through Feb. 24 (J&DP), and another was nearby in Big Pine Dec. 28 (T&JH). Up to three Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows at Morro Bay all winter (JSR) and another at Upper Newport Bay Nov. 24–Mar. 23 (BED) were frequenting saltwater marshes, where small numbers regularly winter, but an immature at H.D.L., Dec. 6 (GB, * S.B.C.M.) was inland, where rarely found. Swamp Sparrows were decidedly scarcer than in recent winters, with only six reported. Likewise, White-throated Sparrows were much scarcer than usual, but eight Harris' Sparrows scattered throughout the Region was close to average.

Two Lapland Longspurs near Port Hueneme Dec. 1 (ST), another near Palmdale, *Los Angeles*, in early December (KLG), and a 3rd near Lakeview Dec. 1 (DG) were probably fall migrants, but three near S.E.S.S., Dec. 29 (MB) were



Providing a sixth record for California, this Streak-backed Oriole (photographed January 3, 1997) remained for three months in a small park in Huntington Beach. Photograph/Monte M. Taylor.

probably wintering locally. The only Chestnut-collared Longspurs reported were two near Lakeview Jan. 31 (CMcG).

A Rusty Blackbird near Port Hueneme Dec. 1 (R&PK) was probably a fall vagrant. A Common Grackle photographed in Torrance Mar. 3–17 (MH) was the first to be found in *Los Angeles*. A ♂ and ♀ Orchard Oriole together in Goleta Jan. 4 (RJ), a female spending its 2nd winter in Santa Barbara Dec. 3–Jan. 4 (HPR), a male in Ventura Mar. 1 (DDJ), and two females together in Newport Beach Jan. 5–25 (DRW) was a little more than normal. A Hooded Oriole, rare in winter, was in Grover Beach, *San Luis Obispo*, Jan. 8 (CD), another was in Santa Ynez, *Santa Barbara*, Dec. 31 (HS), a 3rd was in Carpinteria, *Santa Barbara*, Dec. 6 (RWH), and a 4th was near Santa Paula, *Ventura*, Dec. 21 (JT). A Streak-backed Oriole in Huntington Beach, *Orange*, Dec. 29–Mar. 27 (JEP) was the 6th to be found in California and the 2nd in winter. Five Baltimore Orioles along the coast was an average number, but 30 Bullock's Orioles in the same area would appear less than expected—these birds are normally associated with flowering eucalyptus in winter. Small numbers of Scott's Orioles regularly spend the winter at such desert localities as Borrego Springs at the e. base of the *San Diego* mountains, but a male in Joshua woodland near Lancaster Dec. 29 (TK) was far from this area. In addition, four were found along the coast, with one near Santa Barbara Jan. 5 (SB), two near Santa Paula Dec. 21–Feb. 15 (DDJ), and another in Sylmar Dec. 31 (NP).

Four Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches in Big Pine Jan. 13 (T&JH) were at an unusually low elevation. An Evening Grosbeak at Inkopah Jan. 12 (RH) is one of a very few to be found in *Imperial*.

Correction

The report of 600–700 Short-billed Dowitchers on Rosamond L. in the Antelope Valley (*AFN* 50:330, 1996) should be deleted.

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