

southern pacific coast region



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It was unusually dry throughout the period, with none of the storm fronts that push south along the coast at this time of the year reaching Southern California. Observers on the coast were unable to find concentrations of landbirds, even during the peak migration time between late April and early May, and made such comments as "a lackluster spring for landbirds" and "a less than exciting period." However, some of the summer visitors arrived early, as indicated by the presence of territorial Yellow Warblers and Yellow-breasted Chats in the Prado Basin of northwest Riverside/southwest San Bernardino on the early dates of March 25 and April 1 reported by Pike. To the east in Imperial, Riverside, San Bernardino, and particularly Kern, numbers of migrant landbirds were greater than expected, and included an exceptional variety of rarities, giving observers in that area one of the most exciting springs in memory. Why observers to the north in Inyo considered the

period "boring," except for three days of excitement in late May, is open to speculation. Did the migrants passing through the eastern part of the Region move up into the Sierra Nevada, through such locations as Butterbrecht Springs at the southern end of these mountains, and avoid Inyo, or did they fly over the area without stopping at watched locations in the Owens Valley and desert oases to the east?

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.*); F.C.R. (*Furnace Cr. Ranch, Death Valley National Monument, Inyo Co.*); I.M.P.S. (*Iron Mt. Pumping Station in s.e. San Bernardino Co.*); L.A.C.N.H.M. (*Los Angeles County Natural History Museum*); N.E.S.S. (*north end of the Salton Sea, Riverside Co.*); S.B.C.M. (*San Bernardino County Museum*); 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. (*south end of the Salton Sea, Imperial Co.*); S.F.K.R.P. (*South Fork Kern River*

Preserve near Weldon, Kern 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 (CBRC) review list is forwarded to the CBRC Secretary and archived at the Western Foundation for Vertebrate Zoology in Camarillo.

MOUNTAIN FOREST BIRDS

Some of the mountain forest birds that invaded this Region during the fall of 1996, and remained through the winter, were still in evidence into the spring period.

Most of the Lewis's Woodpeckers had moved N by March, but three remained in e. Orange through Apr. 26 (WG), and another was still present in La Cañada Flintridge, Los Angeles, at the end of the period (KLG).

A flock of eight Pinyon Jays near Ventucopa in n.e. Ventura Mar. 22 (DDJ) was unexpected; 13 in Ridgecrest, Kern, May 4 (DMo) and six-eight at nearby Galileo Hill May 11 (SJP) were at desert oases far from any area of normal occurrence. Not unexpected, considering the scale of last fall's influx, were continued reports of out-of-range Clark's Nutcrackers, such as one in the Santa Lucia Mts. of San Luis Obispo May 3 (JSR), one in the Laguna Mts. of San Diego May 31 (GLR), and a flock of 12 at Weldon, Kern, May 15 (KP), with four more near there June 2 (SAL).

Small numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches were still present in the coastal lowlands and at some desert locations into April, with stragglers remaining to the end of April in San Diego, early May in Santa Barbara, and to the end of May in San Luis Obispo.

Cassin's Finches appeared to have departed the foothill areas of Santa Barbara by early April, but numbers were still present in the coastal lowlands of San Diego and Los Angeles into April, with concentrations such as 500 in Water Canyon at the base of the San Gabriel Mts. of Los Angeles Apr. 4 (MSM) suggesting many thousands were still present along the s. edge of these mountains at this time. Red Crossbills were

still to be found in the coastal lowlands of *San Diego* and *Orange* through April and into early May, and similar numbers remained at desert locations in *Los Angeles* and *Kern* into mid- and late May, with six still present as far south as Brawley, *Imperial*, as late as May 3 (RH). A wintering flock of 25 Evening Grosbeaks in the foothills of the San Bernardino Mts. remained through early April, but stragglers were reported into May, with one in Pine Valley, *San Diego*, May 9–13 (ES); another in the nearby Laguna Mts. May 15 (RAH); two in Los Osos, *San Luis Obispo*, May 28 (M&PC); and one in California City, *Kern*, June 1 (MAP) all being noteworthy.

LOONS TO WATERFOWL

A Horned Grebe at C.L. Apr. 23–May 10 (MTH) was in an area of California where very few have been found. A Red-necked Grebe, rare in S. California, was at the Santa Maria R. mouth, *Santa Barbara*, Apr. 17 (WW).

A sick Short-tailed Shearwater captured on the beach in Coronado, *San Diego*, Apr. 28 (BF) and another found dead there May 2 (EC) were late for S. California. A decomposed Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel on the beach in Coronado May 26 (BF) was unusually far south.

An ad. Little Blue Heron at Bolsa Chica, *Orange*, May 4–18 (TS) was the only one found away from s. coastal *San Diego*, where resident in small numbers. An ad. Tricolored Heron at N.E.S.S. May 3–6 (GMCC) and another adult at S.E.S.S. May 3 (GMCC) were in an area where this species is considered very rare to casual. A Reddish Egret, a rare but regular straggler to the coast of extreme S. California, was at Bolsa Chica Apr. 24–May 11 (PK), joined by a second Apr. 30–May 2 (DPe). An ad. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was again present with nesting Black-crowned Night-Herons in La Jolla, *San Diego*, Mar. 1–May 3 (AME), having first been seen in this area in October 1981.

A Wood Duck at N.E.S.S. Mar. 29 (GMCC) was in an area where few have occurred. A male Eur. Wigeon near Bishop, *Inyo*, Apr. 10–13 (JMF) and another on San Elijo Lagoon, *San Diego*, Apr. 22 (MT) were the latest of the wintering birds in this Region to depart. The female Harlequin Duck found at the *Los Angeles/Ventura* line Jan. 7 was last seen Mar. 8 (ST). The half-dozen Oldsquaws along the coast in March and April were expected, but two photographed at Pico Rivera, *Los Angeles*, Mar. 9 (LSc) were inland. A flock of 900 Surf

Scoters on L. Henshaw in the mountains of *San Diego* Mar. 23 (GMCC, TRC) were probably forced down by stormy weather, and give an indication as to the number of these birds moving undetected across the interior of s.e. California in spring on their way N from wintering grounds in the Gulf of California.

RAPTORS TO CRANES

An elusive ad. **Common Black-Hawk** at Oasis, *Riverside*, was seen by birders on only 7 occasions between Mar. 28–May 2 (MAP), despite much looking; an adult at nearby Thousand Palms Oasis April 13, 1985 (W. *Birds* 20:11–18, 1989) is the only one previously recorded in California. Up to eight Harris's Hawks remained around Borrego Springs, *San Diego*, through the period (RT), and two more were in Palm Springs, *Riverside*, May 10 (LRS). Nineteen Swainson's Hawks near Borrego Springs Mar. 17 (PRJ) and 16 over S.F.K.R.P. Apr. 6 (SAL) represented the largest flocks reported this spring, and one at Seal Beach, *Orange*, Mar. 30 (SGM) was the only one on the immediate coast. The Zone-tailed Hawk that spent the winter in Santa Barbara/Goleta was last seen Apr. 4 (BN), and an immature photographed at F.C.R. May 24–25 (MAP) was the 4th to be found in *Inyo*. A Peregrine Falcon at E.A.F.B. May 4 (MTH) was only the 3rd to be found in *Kern*.

An exceptionally late and out-of-place Sandhill Crane was at Upper Newport Bay, *Orange*, May 4 (JS).

PLOVERS TO TERNS

Six wintering Pacific Golden-Plovers were still present at Seal Beach Apr. 26 (TEW), but an alternate-plumaged individual on s. San Diego Bay May 8–11 (DPa) was the only migrant reported. A Mt. Plover near Bishop, *Inyo*, Mar. 15 (ChH) was away from areas of normal occurrence.

Since Solitary Sandpipers are normally rare in spring, the presence of two inland at Desert Center, *Riverside*, Apr. 26 (GH), one at Baker, *San Bernardino*, May 4 (AME), and two at F.C.R. Apr. 17–19 (CrH), and single birds along the coast in Irvine, *Orange*, Apr. 26 (BAA), San Pedro, *Los Angeles*, Mar. 29 (JAJ), and near Cayucos, *San Luis Obispo*, Apr. 22 (KMH) were of note. Two Black Turnstones, rare to casual inland, were found on the Salton Sea, with one near Salton City May 3 (GMCC) and the other at S.E.S.S. May 25 (KLG). About 2000 Surfbirds, along with hundreds of other shorebirds, feeding along a stretch of



Immature Zone-tailed Hawk at Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley, California, on May 25, 1997. Only the fourth record for Inyo County. Photograph/Tom Heindel



Far more Franklin's Gulls than usual passed through the southwestern states this season. This adult was at Edwards Air Force Base, California, on May 11, 1997. Photograph/Matt T. Heindel

beach at Seal Beach Mar. 24 (TJ) were evidently attracted to that location by Grunion (a small fish that lays its eggs in the wet sand during very high tides) eggs. The only Semipalmated Sandpiper reported was one at N.E.S.S. May 10 (GMCC). A Baird's Sandpiper, most unusual in spring, was at E.A.F.B. May 15–26 (MTH). One can only guess at the number of Red-necked Phalaropes that moved N through the Santa Barbara Channel Apr. 28–May 1 from counts such as 125,000 in 1.5 hrs. at Goleta Pt. Apr. 28 (JEL), and similar numbers at East Beach in Santa Barbara Apr. 29 (JEL).

A South Polar Skua off Seal Beach May 18 (DP) would appear to be only the 2nd seen off *Orange*. A Laughing Gull in Goleta, *Santa Barbara*, May 6 (DDJ) was on the coast, where it is rare. Far more than the expected number of Franklin's Gulls passed through the Region as indicated by more

than 175 reported between Apr. 26–June 2, including an impressive 85 on the Salton Sea May 26 (MAP, KLG, MB); one in Anaheim, Orange, Mar. 6–22 (DB) had probably wintered locally, and another near Independence, Inyo, Apr. 12 (RP) was somewhat early. Heermann's Gulls are rare inland, especially so away from the Salton Sea, so an adult at S.E.S.S. May 4 to the end of the period (KCM) and another at E.A.F.B. May 10–11 (MTH) were of note. Three Herring Gulls in e. Kern (Apr. 26 & 27 and May 22–24; MTH) and another at Owens L., Inyo, Mar. 27 (RAH) were in an area of California where this species is rarely found. A somewhat late Thayer's Gull was at N.E.S.S. May 3–10 (GMCC). A pale-winged first-year gull in Anaheim Mar. 8–15 (GLT), was joined by a similar looking gull on Mar. 15 (DRW), were variously identified as Iceland and Thayer's gulls; multiple reports of Iceland Gulls in California are currently on hold by the CBRC awaiting a taxonomic decision by the American Ornithologists' Union. Five Glaucous Gulls reported from the coast during March and April were more than expected; a late first-year individual was near Oceanside, San Diego, May 4 (RP) and another was inland at N.E.S.S. May 3–10 (GMCC).

A **Sandwich Tern** was present with nesting Elegant Terns at Bolsa Chica, May 9 through the period (JA, CTC), and was believed to be the same individual present at this location each of the past 2 summers. An unprecedented movement of Least Terns into s.e. California placed two near Seeley, Imperial, May 31 (GMCC); single birds on Ramer L., Imperial, May 3 (RH), N.E.S.S. May 3 (PAG), and Desert Center Apr. 28 (AS) and May 11 (MAP); three together near Lancaster, Los Angeles, May 31–June 1 (AH); and single birds in Helendale, San Bernardino, June 1 (MAP), California City, Kern, May 17–18 (MF), C.L. May 22 (MTH) and at Death Valley Junction, Inyo, May 25 (MAP). A **Sooty Tern** with nesting Elegant Terns at Bolsa Chica Mar. 26 through the period (CTC) was believed to be the same individual at this location each of the past 3 summers; another was seen at s. San Diego Bay Apr. 15–16 (MG, DWA).

DOVES TO VIREOS

A White-winged Dove in Goleta May 10 (RPH) was the only one found along the coast, and another in Independence Apr. 10–14 (A&LK) was a little to the north of this species' normal range. Up to six Inca Doves at F.C.R. in May included two juve-

niles believed to have been hatched locally (MSM, T&JH). A pair of Com. Ground-Doves was still present in Nipomo, San Luis Obispo, May 29 (PAW), this being at the n. extreme of this species' range along the coast of California. One in Arcadia, Los Angeles, May 11 (MSM) was away from areas of normal occurrence.

A Yellow-billed Cuckoo at S.F.K.R.P. May 17 (BM) was unusually early, and another at c. 6500 ft near Big Pines in the San Gabriel Mts., Los Angeles, June 2 (TN) was not only at an unusual locality, but also one of a very few found away from the limited breeding localities in California.

Two Chimney Swifts over downtown Los Angeles May 8 (KLG) were the first of the small number now present at this location every summer, and two over California City May 25 (MTH) provided the 4th record for Kern. A male Black-chinned Hummingbird on Santa Catalina I. May 9 (PU) is believed to be the first for the Channel Islands.

The wintering Least Flycatcher in Costa Mesa, Orange, was last seen Mar. 30 (JEP); a singing Least Flycatcher at S.F.K.R.P. May 14–18 (MHa) was the first to be found in Kern in spring. An E. Phoebe on Pt. Loma Apr. 1–2 (REW) is one of a very few to be found in California in spring. A Dusky-capped Flycatcher on Pt. Loma, San Diego, Apr. 12–May 1 (PAG) had probably been present all winter, since an unidentified *Myiarchus* was seen at this location Jan. 19 (BF). Single Brown-crested Flycatchers in the Granite Mts. of e. San Bernardino May 17–18 (MAP) and at F.C.R. May 27 (MSM) appeared to be migrants far from known nesting localities. Four E. Kingbirds were reported, with single birds in the e. part of the Region at I.M.P.S. May 20 (AS) and Galileo Hill, Kern, May 29–30 (MAP), and along the coast in Westminster, Orange, May 31 (TEW) and s. Vandenberg A.F.B., Santa Barbara, May 21 (MAH).

A Chestnut-backed Chickadee in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, Apr. 19–May 9 (MAH) was s. of this species' range. Two Varied Thrushes on Pt. Loma May 4 (TRC) and another there May 17 (REW) were far south and unusually late. Two Bendire's Thrashers at Smoke Tree Wash in the Anza-Borrego Desert S.P. Mar. 9 (PJ) may have been on a breeding territory, but one near Seeley Mar. 21 (RH) was a migrant.

A White-eyed Vireo photographed near Cantil May 26 (MTH) was the 5th to be found in Kern. A singing Bell's Vireo at S.F.K.R.P. Apr. 10 (SAL) was well outside this species' present-day range in California.

A Gray Vireo photographed in Redondo Beach, Los Angeles, May 11 (MHe) was one of a very few ever to be found away from known nesting localities in S. California. A male Yellow-throated Vireo, a casual to accidental straggler to California, was present in Westminster May 29–30 (BED), but two others in May lack documentation. Three Red-eyed Vireos were reported, with one at Morongo Valley, San Bernardino, May 21 (EAC), another near Chino, San Bernardino, June 8 (DPe), and the 3rd at Butterbrecht Springs, Kern, May 29–30 (MAP).

WOOD WARBLERS

A male Blue-winged Warbler, a species rarely found in California, was at Butterbrecht Springs, located in the foothills at the s. end of the Sierra Nevada Mts. n. of California City, Kern, June 8 (MTH). A male Golden-winged Warbler, a little more frequent straggler to California than the previous species, was in California City, Kern, May 31 (ST). Four Tennessee Warblers—with one at F.C.R. May 31 (CK), another at nearby Indian Ranch May 28 (MSM), a 3rd at Butterbrecht Springs June 8 (MTH), and the 4th in Huntington Beach, Orange, May 17–18 (JSB)—were fewer than expected. A dozen N. Parulas scattered throughout the Region (seven in the e. portion of the Region and five w. of the coast range) between Apr. 27 and June 3 was about the expected number. A Chestnut-sided Warbler in Huntington Beach May 15 (BED) was the only one reported. The only Magnolia Warblers reported were three in e. Kern, with one at Galileo Hill May 11 (BD), another in California City May 17 (NF), and the 3rd at Butterbrecht Springs May 31 (ST). A male Black-throated Blue Warbler, most unusual in spring, was in California City May 26 (JCW). A male Blackburnian Warbler, also most unusual in spring, was on s. Vandenberg A.F.B. June 7 (MAH). Four Yellow-throated Warblers—with single birds on Pt. Loma Apr. 10 (PAG), at Mesquite Springs in Death Valley N.P. May 24 (RPH), Crystal L. in the San Gabriel Mts. May 26 (JF), and in Westminster May 29 (BED)—was more than expected. The Prairie Warbler found in Burbank, Los Angeles, Mar. 10 (GP) was last seen Mar. 25, and another at Butterbrecht Springs May 26 (SS) was the 2nd to be found in Kern at this time of the year. A wintering Palm Warbler remained in El Monte, Los Angeles, through Apr. 19 (PB); a single bird in Goleta Mar. 20–Apr. 8 (DC) and another there Apr. 20 (JEL) had probably wintered locally rather than being



Among the many interesting eastern strays found in Kern County, California, during the season was this Golden-winged Warbler at California City on May 31, 1997. Photograph/Matt T. Heindel

spring vagrants. A male Bay-breasted Warbler, rarely found in this Region in recent years, was photographed at Butterbredt Springs May 25–26 (TEW). A male **Cerulean Warbler** photographed near Bishop May 23 (T&JH) was the first to be found in *Inyo*, and one of a very few recorded in California. About 20 Black-and-white Warblers reported from as many localities scattered throughout the Region between Apr. 14 and May 30 was close to expected numbers, but less than a dozen Am. Redstarts, all in the e. portion of the Region between May 16 and June 8, was far less than normal. A male Prothonotary Warbler at Galileo Hill May 14–17 (AS) was the only one reported this spring. Thirteen Ovenbirds in the e. portion of the Region between May 11 and June 8 was more than expected, but one on Pt. Loma May 17–18 (REW) was the only one found along the coast. A wintering N. Waterthrush in Irvine, *Orange*, remained through Apr. 5 (RAE); three N. Waterthrushes in the e. part of the Region in May was far below average. A dead Kentucky Warbler was picked up in Ridgecrest, *Kern*, in mid-late May (SF, *L.A.C.M.). Ten Hooded Warblers were found in the e. part of the Region, with one at Cottonwood Springs in Joshua Tree N.M. May 6 (BP), another at I.M.P.S. May 20 (AS), and eight more in e. *Kern* between late April and June 12 (DVB, MTH, MAP, BS, LSa, REW). A Painted Redstart photographed at Butterbredt Springs May 4 (JD) was a long overdue first for *Kern*.

TANAGERS TO FINCHES

Seven Summer Tanagers in May, most probably stragglers from the nominate population, w. and n. of known breeding localities in the s.e. portion of the Region, was about average for this time of the year.

Single wintering Rose-breasted Grosbeaks remained in Santa Barbara through Apr. 10 (FS) and in Ventura through Mar. 8.

(JA). Fifteen Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and about 25 Indigo Buntings at as many locations scattered throughout the Region during May was about average for these 2 species. A female Dickcissel, most unusual in spring, was near Bishop May 24 (T&JH).

Since Clay-colored Sparrows are rarely found in spring, single individuals at Desert Center May 11 (MAP) and at I.M.P.S. the same day (MAP) were of note. A Black-chinned Sparrow in California City May 9–11 (DVB) was only the 3rd to be found at a desert oasis in this part of the Region. The Lark Bunting found in Bishop Nov. 10 remained through Apr. 10 (J&DP), and single spring stragglers were near La Panza, *Los Angeles*, Apr. 16 (JS), at L. Perris, *Riverside*, Apr. 19 (PD) and along the Colorado R. north of Needles, *San Bernardino*, May 11 (EAC). A Harris's Sparrow found in Lompoc, *Santa Barbara*, Feb. 9 remained through May 4 (PR) and another was in Lone Pine, *Inyo*, May 10 (JW). The latest of the wintering White-throated Sparrows were single birds in Goleta through Apr. 17 (KB) and Los Osos, *San Luis Obispo*, through May 1 (JP); one in Jawbone Canyon May 10 (REW) and another at nearby Butterbredt Springs May 23 (REW) were spring vagrants. A Golden-crowned Sparrow near Lompoc May 21 (DMi) and a singing Gray-headed Junco at I.M.P.S. May 26 (MAP) were both unusually late migrants.

Only four Bobolinks were found, with two at Desert Center May 11 (MAP), one in California City May 26 (DVB), and the 4th at Galileo Hill June 7 (DVB). The male **Common Grackle** found in Torrance Mar. 3 remained through Mar 24 (MHe) and was accompanied by a female Mar. 17–24 (MHe); another was seen in flight over Pt. Loma May 13 (REW). A male Bronzed Cowbird at Desert Center Apr. 28–May 12 (AS) was the only one found away from along the Colorado R. and around the

Salton Sea. Single Baltimore Orioles in Huntington Beach May 17 (JSB) & 26 (JEP), and another in Mojave, *Kern*, May 25 (DVB) were the only three reported.

A female **Black Rosy-Finch** in Aspen-dell, *Inyo*, Apr. 6 (SJP) was at the same feeder where a similar looking bird was present Feb. 11–15, 1995.

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