

# southern pacific coast region



## GUY MCCASKIE

The winter was wetter than normal, particularly so during February. In sharp contrast to last winter, almost no mountain species ventured into the lowlands, and those irruptive species such as the Red-breasted Nuthatch, Cassin's Finch, and Red Crossbill went virtually unreported away from areas of expected occurrence. An impressive number of gulls on the Salton Sea were probably attracted by the abundance of dead and dying fish.

The highlight of the season was the discovery of a long-staying Couch's Kingbird in Orange County. A Slaty-backed Gull on the Salton Sea proved more elusive, but may establish the first record for the State. An Arctic Loon and Eurasian Dotterel just south of the border were both new for Mexico.

**Abbreviations:** F.C.R. (Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley National Monument, Inyo); N.E.S.S. (north end of the Salton Sea, Riverside

Co.); 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 (CBRC) review list is forwarded to the CBRC Secretary (Michael M. Rogers, P.O. Box 340, Moffett Field, CA 94035-0340) and archived at the Western Foundation for Vertebrate Zoology in Camarillo.

## LOONS TO WATERFOWL

An **Arctic Loon**, the first to be found in Mexico, videotaped at San Quintin, *Baja California*, Feb. 21 (SNGH, RAE, RAH) had undoubtedly passed along the coast of S. California on its way south last fall. The Red-necked Grebe found at Morro Bay Nov. 9 was still present Jan. 18 (TME); single birds were at Santa Barbara Jan. 3–13 (PCC) and Marina del Rey, *Los Angeles*, Jan. 10–Feb. 15 (KL); the one found at Bolsa Chica, *Orange*, Nov. 6 was still present Feb. 5 (DRW); another was at Dana Pt., *Orange*,

Feb. 15 onward (TR); and the one found inland near Victorville, *San Bernardino*, Nov. 16 was still present Jan. 4 (CMcG). This was far more than normally expected in S. California.

A Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel, rare in S. California waters, was seen in the Santa Barbara Channel off Santa Barbara Mar. 1 (AK). A near-ad. **Masked Booby** photographed near San Miguel I. Feb. 16 (PMcN) is the 10th to be reported in California. A Blue-footed Booby at S.E.S.S. Feb. 19–28 (JEP, DSP, DN, GE) may have been the same bird seen at Salton City Nov. 29. At least three Brown Boobies were found along the coast, with one at the entrance to Morro Bay Dec. 20–22 (JSR, KAH) and what may well have been the same bird at nearby San Simeon Jan. 19 (KH); an immature around the entrance to Newport Bay, *Orange*, Dec. 7–Feb. 7 (LRH, JP) and what was probably the same bird off Newport Beach Jan. 17 (DSP); and an ad. male *brewsterii* with Brown Pelicans on the cliffs in La Jolla, *San Diego*, Feb. 4 (PL), and what was most likely the same bird on the cliffs at nearby Pt. Loma Feb. 7 (RR).

The imm. Tricolored Heron at Bolsa Chica since Sept. 20, and the other at Imperial Beach, *San Diego*, since Nov. 3, were both still present at the end of the period (JEP, GMcC), and an adult found inland at N.E.S.S. Jan. 31 was still present Mar. 7 (MAP). The ad. Reddish Egret at Imperial Beach since Aug. 7 remained through Dec. 20 (GMcC). A Wood Stork at the San Diego Wild Animal Park near Escondido Jan. 27 (JB) is known to have been present at least 10 years.

A Tundra Swan near Lakeview, *Riverside*, Mar. 8 on (VH) was the southernmost of the very few reported in this Region this winter. The dark-morph Ross's Goose first seen at S.E.S.S. Nov. 17 was still present Feb. 21 (MAP). A female Tufted Duck at Satcoy, *Ventura*, Jan. 17–28 (ST) was believed to be the same individual present at this location during past winters, but a male in Bakersfield Jan. 23–Feb. 7 (JCW) and another male in San Diego Feb. 5–Mar. 1 (BRZ) were at locations where previously



unrecorded. A female Harlequin Duck, rare in S. California, was at San Simeon, *San Luis Obispo*, Jan. 25 (BAB); another was at Morro Bay Dec. 5–Jan. 18 (AC); one flew S past La Jolla Feb. 20 (GMCC); and a 4th was in Chula Vista, *San Diego*, Jan. 22–30 (RP). Oldsquaw appeared to be a little more numerous along the coast than usual, with at least 10 reported during the period, and Black Scoters were definitely more numerous than in recent years, with at least 35 reported, including five together as far south as Imperial Beach Dec. 20–Jan. 1 (GMCC). A Surf Scoter on Klondike L. near Big Pine, *Inyo*, Feb. 24 (T&JH), another near Victorville Jan. 15–Feb. 1 (SJM), and a male in Borrego Springs, *San Diego*, Feb. 8–9 (PAG), along with three more on the Salton Sea during February (GMCC, CAM), were inland. A White-winged Scoter on Tinemaha Res. near Big Pine Jan. 2 (MTH) was inland.

#### RAPTORS TO SHOREBIRDS

Bald Eagles were more numerous and widespread than normal, with individuals at such unexpected localities as the Sepulveda Basin near Encino, *Los Angeles*, Dec. 11–Jan. 16 (DS) and at least five more in coastal *Orange* between Dec. 21 and Mar. 12 (DRW). The Zone-tailed Hawk spending its 5th winter in Goleta, *Santa Barbara*, was still present Mar. 14 (JEL); the adult spending its 5th winter around Ojai, *Ventura*, was seen Dec. 3 (WW); another was at Rancho Mission Viejo, *Orange*, Dec. 20 (PDeS); and the adult found near Escondido Sept. 28 was still present Dec. 26 (GMCC). A Swainson's Hawk near S.E.S.S. Feb. 7 (BRZ) was believed to be wintering locally. Rough-legged Hawks were considered more numerous than usual in the Owens and Antelope Valleys (T&JH, MSanM), with individuals pushing as far south as near S.E.S.S. Nov. 22–Feb. 21 (EAC).

Two Sandhill Cranes near Pt. Mugu N.A.S., *Ventura*, Nov. 27–Dec. 21 (ST) were on the immediate coast, where most unusual. Up to nine Pacific Golden-Plovers near Pt. Mugu N.A.S. all winter (DDJ) and two–three in Seal Beach, *Orange*, during the same period (DRW) were at traditional wintering localities; one in Huntington Beach, *Orange*, Jan. 18 (BED) was believed to be wintering in that area, but one in Goleta Dec. 12–31 (DAK) and two remaining near Imperial Beach to Dec. 16 (PM) appeared to be late fall stragglers. A flock of 139 Mt. Plovers on the Carrizo Plain Jan. 24 (TME) were the only ones reported away from the major wintering area in the Imperial Valley s. of the Salton Sea. A

**Eurasian Dotterel**, the first to be found in Mexico and well photographed near La Mission, *Baja California*, Jan. 30 onward (K&CR), is a species recorded five times in N. California, and yet to be found in S. California. A Red Knot inland at S.E.S.S. Mar. 6 (GMCC) was believed to have spent the winter locally. A male Ruff near Pt. Mugu N.A.S. Mar. 7 (ST, DDJ) had probably wintered locally.

#### GULLS TO MURRELETS

Single Laughing Gulls along the coast in San Luis Obispo Jan. 16 (JSR), Morro Bay Feb. 18–27 (SD), and Huntington Beach Nov. 16 onward (JEP), along with up to two in Carlsbad, *San Diego*, Jan. 16–Mar. 28 (ToH) and another at San Nicolas I. Mar. 1 (MAP), were unexpected since this species is most unusual anywhere in California away from the Salton Sea. A Franklin's Gull in Goleta Jan. 16 (FE) was the only one reported this winter. The **Black-headed Gull** present for its 6th winter in Santa Barbara since Nov. 17 remained through Dec. 24 (JEL). The **Band-tailed (Belcher's) Gull** found near Imperial Beach Aug. 3 remained through Jan. 2 (DGS). The ad. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** present at Dana Pt. for its 4th winter was still present Mar. 4 (JW). The only Glaucous Gull was a first-winter bird near Imperial Beach Mar. 13–15 (PAG). Black-legged Kittiwakes remained virtually absent through January, but the

presence of at least 15 at San Nicolas I. Feb. 28 (MAP), along with two or three more along the coast in late February, suggested a small influx of these birds late in the winter. An Elegant Tern at Dana Pt. Dec. 14 (MTH), two seen flying past Pt. Mugu Jan. 1 (ST) and another at Zuma Beach, *Los Angeles*, on the same day (DAP) were unusually late.

A Marbled Murrelet found at Marina del Rey Nov. 16 was still present Mar. 1 (KLG). Two Ancient Murrelets at the entrance to Morro Bay Dec. 8 (BAB), another off Morro Bay Dec. 31 (GPS), and at least seven at San Nicolas I. Feb. 28 (MAP) were the only ones reported.

#### DOVES TO SWALLOWS

Eurasian Collared-Doves appear to be established and breeding in coastal *San Luis Obispo*, *Santa Barbara*, and *Ventura*, but may have originated from released birds rather than reaching California from the expanding populations in the s.e. United States. Up to two White-winged Doves in Morro Bay all winter (KJZ), another in Goleta Dec. 10–Jan. 3 (DC), and single birds in Huntington Beach Dec. 1 (SGM) and in nearby Costa Mesa Jan. 4 (JEP) were along the coast where rare, especially so at this time of year. Two Inca Doves at F.C.R. Jan. 29 (T&JH) were at a location where this species now appears established and resident.

A Lesser Nighthawk at Finney L. Jan.

**SA** The influx of gulls to the Salton Sea this winter was without precedent. Given that there is over 100 mi of shoreline, accurate counts are difficult, but tens of thousands of Ring-billed and California gulls, 1000–2000 Herring Gulls, and 10–15 Yellow-footed Gulls are expected most winters. In addition, five–eight Thayer's, three–five Glaucous-winged and an occasional Mew Gull are also present.

A conservative estimate of 10,000–15,000 Herring Gulls, along with about 30 Thayer's, at least 15 Glaucous-winged, and single ad. Mew Gulls at S.E.S.S. Feb. 14 (WCR) and at N.E.S.S. Feb. 16 (MAP), were present during January and February. More unusual at this time of the year were single Laughing Gulls at N.E.S.S. Feb. 7 (GMCC), Finney L. near S.E.S.S. Feb. 14 (GMCC), and at Salton City, *Imperial*, Feb. 28–Mar. 1 (CHoo, RW, DSC). At least five sub-ad. W. Gulls between Jan. 28 and Mar. 8 (CAM, GMCC, MAP), along

with an ad. *wymani* at Desert Shores, *Imperial*, Mar. 8 (MAP), far exceeded the number recorded in any previous year, and a 2nd-winter Heermann's Gull at S.E.S.S. Jan. 18–24 (MAP), along with an adult there Jan. 24 onward (MAP), increases the number of winter records for the Salton Sea to five. Topping this were five **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, a casual straggler to California, with an adult at S.E.S.S. Jan. 19 (GMCC), a first-winter bird at the same location Jan. 24–Mar. 8 (MAP), an adult at N.E.S.S. Jan. 21–Mar. 7 (DSP), another adult at another location at N.E.S.S. Feb. 14–Mar. 8 (MAP), and an adult in Salton City Mar. 1–7 (KSG). However, the star of the show was a 4th-winter **Slaty-backed Gull** photographed in Salton City Feb. 21–28 (MTH, CAM, GMCC, MAP); a gull believed to be this species was photographed in *Ventura* Feb. 5, 1995 (*Field Notes* 49:198–199), but is still pending endorsement by the C.B.R.C.





**Eurasian Collared-Dove (with Mourning Doves) in Morro Bay, California, on December 4, 1997. This species appears to be established at some localities along the coast of southern California, but the origin of these populations is unknown. Photograph/Barry R. Zimmer**



**Couch's Kingbird in Fullerton, California, on January 11, 1998. A first record for the Pacific Coast, this bird was understandably first identified as a Tropical Kingbird. Although vocalizations are the best way to distinguish the two, notice this bird's very broad-based bill, seen to good advantage in this picture. For another photo, see the pages of Pictorial Highlights. Photograph/Larry Sansone**

24-Feb. 14 (TRC) is one of a few known to have spent the winter in S. California. Three Vaux's Swifts near Cambria Jan. 19 (BAB) and one with White-throated Swifts over L. Hodges, *San Diego*, Dec. 14 (BKS) were undoubtedly wintering locally. A female Broad-billed Hummingbird in Rancho Santa Fe, *San Diego*, Jan. 5-10 (MBS) was the only one found this winter. Totally unexpected was a male **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** in Santa Barbara Jan. 3 on (RAH), since this species is accidental along the coast and recorded only once before in California in winter. Six Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were reported, with single birds along the coast at El Capitan State Beach near Goleta Nov. 26-Jan. 15 (JEL), in Goleta Mar. 1 (KB), at Saticoy Dec. 21-Feb. 15 (ST), Orange Jan. 18-25 (DRW), in San Diego Mar. 3 (DA), and inland at California City, *Kern*, Jan. 10 (JCW).

A "Traill's" Flycatcher in Irvine, *Orange*, Dec. 20-22 (CR, DRW, JEP) was only the 2nd to be found in California at this time of year. Two Least Flycatchers were found this winter, with one near Lakeview, *Riverside*, Dec. 30-Mar. 1 (KFC) and the other near Imperial Beach Jan. 28 (TRC). A Hammond's Flycatcher, less likely in winter than the previous species, was in Westminster, *Orange*, all winter (TEW), and a 2nd was in

nearby Huntington Beach Jan. 27-Mar. 17 (KSG). A calling Dusky Flycatcher in Newport Beach Jan. 4 (DRW) was only the 2nd to be found in *Orange* in winter. A Gray Flycatcher in Newport Beach Dec. 30-Mar. 21 (JEP) was the only one reported. Single "W. Flycatchers," unexpected in winter, were at separate localities in Long Beach, *Los Angeles*, Dec. 27-Jan. 1 (JFin) and Feb. 4 (TEW); near Chino, *San Bernardino*, Feb. 27 (JEP); and five more were at various localities in *Orange* during the period (DRW, JEP, KSG). The only E. Phoebes found were one in L. Forest, *Orange*, Dec. 21-Feb. 15 (TEW) and another inland at S.E.S.S. Feb. 15-Mar. 7 (DSP). A Vermilion Flycatcher in Santa Barbara Jan. 31-Feb. 21 (MAH) was the northernmost of the 10 reported wintering along the coast. Two Dusky-capped Flycatchers were found, with one in L. Forest Dec. 21-Jan. 24 (TEW) and the other inland at Finney L. near S.E.S.S. Jan. 12-Mar. 28 (BDW). An Ash-throated Flycatcher in Long Beach Nov. 27-Jan. 10 (TEW) and another in Huntington Beach Nov. 2-Feb. 28 (TEW) were along the coast where rare in winter.

A vocal **Couch's Kingbird** well documented in Fullerton, *Orange*, Dec. 31-Feb. 21 (BED, JEP) was the first to be identified on the Pacific coast, and illustrates the fact

that all "Tropical Kingbirds" should be identified by call before being identified to species. Six Tropical Kingbirds, identified by voice, were known to be present, with single birds in Goleta Oct. 22-Feb. 27 (JEL), near Pt. Mugu N.A.S. Jan. 4 (ST), in Long Beach Nov. 30-Jan. 1 (KSG) and at another location in Long Beach Dec. 15-Feb. 28 (KSG), and two together in Imperial Beach Dec. 20-Jan. 24 (CGE). Impressive numbers of Cassin's Kingbirds at communal roosts included 70-75 in Fullerton (BED), 35-40 at one location in Long Beach (KSG), and 30-35 at another location in Long Beach (KSG). The Thick-billed Kingbird present for its 6th winter in Pomona, *Los Angeles*, since Oct. 30 was still present Feb. 21 (RWR). At least one W. Kingbird with roosting Cassin's Kingbirds in Fullerton Jan. 5-11 (BED) was unexpected, since less than half a dozen have been found in California in winter. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, a casual straggler to California, was in Murrieta, *Riverside*, Dec. 13-Jan. 3 (KFC).

Although a few N. Rough-winged Swallows regularly winter around the Salton Sea, and an occasional individual is found along the coast at this same time, one near Bakersfield Dec. 21-Feb. 28 (JCW) was unexpected. A Bank Swallow at S.E.S.S.



Dec. 23 (GMcC) was one of very few to be found in California in winter. A Cliff Swallow at S.E.S.S. Feb. 16 (CAM) was believed to have wintered locally, and another in Bishop, *Inyo*, Feb. 22 (CHow) was remarkably early for this far north, if a spring migrant. Barn Swallows appeared more numerous and widespread, as indicated by at least 15 at S.E.S.S. Dec. 23 (GMcC), 42 at N.E.S.S. Jan. 31 (MAP), 18 at Oso Flaco L., *San Luis Obispo*, Jan. 21 (BAB), and two as far north as Big Pine Jan. 14 (T&JH).

## CHICKADEES

### TO WOOD WARBLERS

A Chestnut-backed Chickadee in Carpinteria Nov. 29–Mar. 6 (JEL) was s. of this species' range. Up to two Winter Wrens in Capistrano Beach, *Orange*, Jan. 10–19 (BED) were unusually far south. A Brown Thrasher, a casual straggler to California, was seen in Long Beach Feb. 22 (DR). Remarkable was the presence of at least 12 Sprague's Pipits near S.E.S.S. Jan. 10–Mar. 28 (EAC) since this species is considered a casual straggler to California, with five being the previous largest number at one location. An imm. N. Shrike in Big Pine Dec. 7–8 (T&JH) and an adult at nearby Tollhouse Springs Dec. 14 (T&JH) were the only two reported.

A wintering Bell's Vireo remained near Corona, *Riverside*, Nov. 18–Mar. 12 (JEP). Five Cassin's Vireos and nine Plumbeous Vireos were reported in the coastal lowlands during the winter, but those in December may have been late fall stragglers rather than wintering birds. A Warbling Vireo in Newport Beach Jan. 14 (JEP) was one of a very few ever to be found in California at this time of year. The Philadelphia Vireo present in Irvine since Oct. 24 was last seen Dec. 14 (ST).

The only Tennessee Warbler reported was one near San Pedro, *Los Angeles*, Jan. 6 (RB). Eight Nashville Warblers at various localities along the coast between San Luis Obispo and San Diego was about average. Single Lucy's Warblers, rare in winter, were in Ventura Nov. 21–Feb. 22 (CHol) and Eagle Rock, *Los Angeles*, Dec. 20–Jan. 8 (DSC). Yellow Warblers were decidedly scarcer than expected along the coast, and only two were found around S.E.S.S., where small numbers are normal in winter. Four Chestnut-sided Warblers were found, with single birds in San Luis Obispo Dec. 23–Jan. 18 (JSR), W. Los Angeles Jan. 16 (TEW), Long Beach Dec. 30–Mar. 10 (KSG), and in Huntington Beach Jan. 12–Feb. 7 (KSG). Single Hermit Warblers in

Santa Maria, *Santa Barbara*, Jan. 21–Feb. 17 (JMC); Long Beach Dec. 7 (MSanM); Santa Ana, *Orange*, Jan. 2–4 (GLT); Newport Beach Jan. 4–11 (BED); Lemon Heights, *Orange*, Jan. 24 (JEP); and in San Diego Dec. 19–Jan. 22 (PU) were a little more than expected. A female Black-throated Green Warbler near Oceanside, *San Diego*, Nov. 16–Mar. 1 (PAG) and a male in National City, *San Diego*, Nov. 4–Apr. 10 (DWA) were the same birds at these 2 locations all of last winter.

The Pine Warbler found in Long Beach Nov. 25 was present all winter (KSG) and another was in Fullerton Dec. 1–Jan. 24 (JEP); one or two are now present in S. California most winters. A Prairie Warbler near Sweeny Pass in the s. part of Anza Borrego S.P. Feb. 8 (JOZ) was undoubtedly wintering in that area. At least eight Palm Warblers along the coast was slightly less than we have become accustomed to at this time of the year. At least 15 Black-and-white Warblers were found along the coast for an average number for this time of year, but four Am. Redstarts in the same area were fewer than expected. The Worm-eating Warbler found in Westminster Oct. 30 was still present Feb. 28 (JEP). Wintering N. Waterthrushes included single birds along the coast in Irvine Dec. 31–Jan. 27 (RAE) and near Imperial Beach Dec. 20 (GMcC), and inland at S.E.S.S. Dec. 23 (GMcC). A MacGillivray's Warbler, most unusual in winter, was in W. Los Angeles Jan. 21 (NL). An average number of Wilson's Warblers were present along the coast, with most in *San Luis Obispo* and *Santa Barbara*, as usual. A Painted Redstart at El Capitan State Beach Sept. 28–Jan. 24 (JEL) was the same bird present at this location during the past 2 winters, and another in San Diego Feb. 2 (TaH) was also most likely wintering locally.

### TANAGERS TO ORIOLES

A female Hepatic Tanager at c. 4000 ft. in Trabuco Canyon, *Orange*, Dec. 27 (CR) was at an unexpected locality, and the only one reported. Twelve Summer Tanagers at various localities along the coast between Los Osos, *San Luis Obispo*, and San Diego was about as expected, but wintering W. Tanagers in the same area appeared scarcer than normal. Four Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported, with three around Santa Barbara between Oct. 29 and Feb. 2 (JEL, VM, SH) and the 4th in San Dimas, *Los Angeles*, Jan. 31–Mar. 3 (JG). A Black-headed Grosbeak, less likely in winter than the previous species, was in Goleta Dec. 15

(CR) and another was in *Santa Barbara* Jan. 3 (FS), but these were probably exceptionally late fall migrants rather than wintering birds. A Lazuli Bunting in Goleta Jan. 2 (RAH) was only the 3rd to be found in California in winter. A male Painted Bunting frequenting a feeder in Eagle Rock most of the winter was probably an escapee.

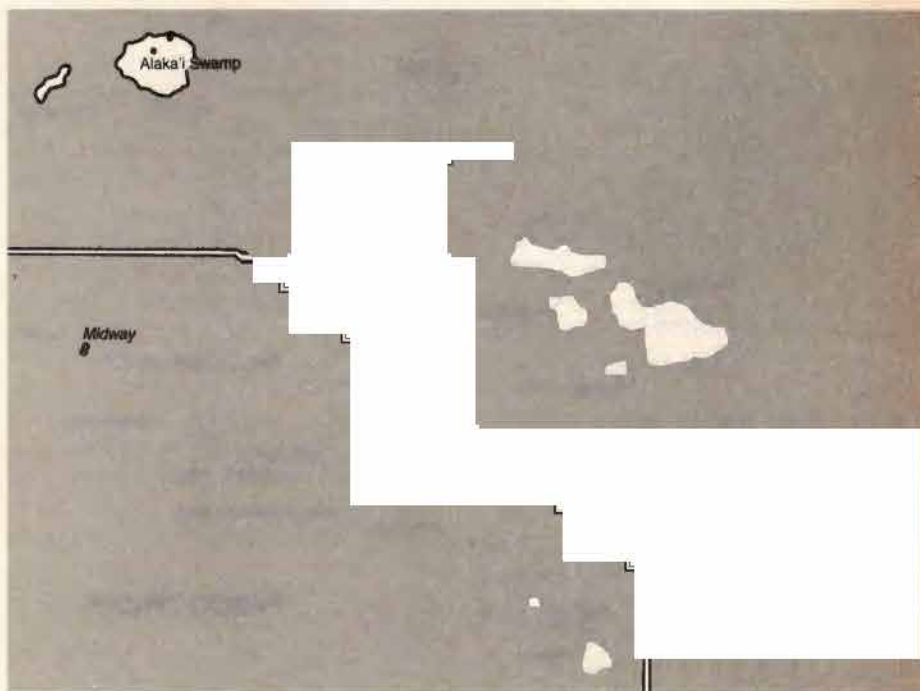
A Green-tailed Towhee in Seal Beach Feb. 5 (JEP) was the only one reported from along the coast. A Black-chinned Sparrow in a remote area of Anza Borrego S.P. Jan. 11 (JD) was one of a very few to be found in California in winter. A Black-throated Sparrow at L. Cachuma, *Santa Barbara*, Nov. 7–Apr. 3 (JEL) and another near Ojai Jan. 4 (DP) were w. of the mountains, where unusual any time of year. The only Lark Bunting was one near Big Pine Dec. 16–Mar. 3 (T&JH). A Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow on Morro Bay Dec. 2–Jan. 16 (CG) and up to two on Upper Newport Bay Nov. 13–Jan. 25 (JEP) were at large salt-marshes where small numbers probably occur every winter. Thirteen Swamp Sparrows scattered throughout the Region were fewer than expected. Twelve White-throated Sparrows at various localities in the Region was far less than normal, but seven Harris's Sparrows in the same area were about normal. A McCown's Longspur and at least one Chestnut-collared Longspur near Norco, *Riverside*, Dec. 14–18 (DSC), up to two Chestnut-collared Longspurs near Big Pine Jan. 31–Feb. 9 (T&JH), and a Lapland Longspur in Goleta Dec. 13–26 (MAH) were the only longspurs reported.

A Rusty Blackbird in Bakersfield Jan. 17–Feb. 7 (BM) was probably the same individual seen in nearby Arvin Nov. 15. A Com. Grackle, a casual vagrant to California, was in Bishop Dec. 14 (JFit), and another was photographed in Widomar, *Riverside*, Jan. 21–Feb. 15 (CH). A female Orchard Oriole spending its 3rd winter in Santa Barbara Nov. 16–Mar. 19 (JEL) was the only one known present. A Hooded Oriole, by far the rarest of the orioles found in California in winter, was in Long Beach Dec. 27 (TEW), another was in Costa Mesa Jan. 4 (JEP), and a 3rd was in Anaheim Feb. 7 (DRW). Ten Baltimore Orioles along coastal areas was an average number for this time of year, but 35 Bullock's Oriole in the same area were fewer than expected. Small numbers of Scott's Orioles regularly spend the winter along the w. edge of the low deserts of *San Diego* and *Riverside*, but one near Santa Barbara Dec. 29–Jan. 2 (SB) was the only one reported w. of the mountains.



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