

middle pacific coast



Scott B. Terrill and Stephen C. Rottenborn

(Loons to Frigatebirds, Larids to Alcids)
H. T. Harvey & Associates
3150 Almaden Expwy., Ste. 145
San Jose, California 95118
(sbterrill@aol.com)

Daniel S. Singer

(Hérons to Shorebirds)
c/o Arroyo & Coates
500 Washington St., Ste. 700
San Francisco, California 94111
(dsg@isp.net)

Steven A. Glover

(Doves to Wrentit)
6526 Conestoga Lane
Dublin, California 94568
(Sgloverccc@aol.com)

Don Roberson

(Thrashers to Finches)
282 Grove Acre Ave.
Pacific Grove, California 93950
(creagrus@montereybay.com)

For landbirds it was a mild and rather uneventful winter. Despite the warm temperatures, only a rather routine set of vagrants wintered, perhaps because eucalyptus and other exotics bloomed late (often not until January) in many coastal locales. There was no significant movement of winter finches or other irruptive species.

Abbreviations: C.B.R.C. (California Bird Records Committee); C.V. (Central Valley); F.I. (Southeast Farallon Island); S.F. (San Francisco); N.M. (National Monument); N.S. (National Seashore); R.S.

(Regional Shoreline); S.R. (State Reserve); W.A. (Wildlife Area). Reports of exceptional vagrants submitted without documentation are normally not published, including C.B.R.C. review species and claims of first county records.

GREBES THROUGH SHEARWATERS

Due to the lack of lakes and reservoirs in Sutter, *Aechmophorus* grebes have been recorded there only on a few occasions when the Sutter Bypass has been flooded (BED). This winter, one Western and ≤ 4 Clark's Grebes were at the Bypass from 15 & 25 Feb, respectively, into Mar (BED, TEa, m.ob.). The total of 4798 *Aechmophorus* on the Santa Cruz County CBC exemplified high coastal numbers in Dec–Jan (DLSu). Red-necked Grebes at L. Hennessey, Napa, 30 Dec (BDP) and Nicasio Res., Marin, 29 Feb (RS) were unusual at these somewhat inland locations. A **Short-tailed Albatross** near Cordell Bank, Marin, 8 Jan (DN) was the Region's 6th in the last six seasons, all juveniles. Laysan Albatrosses were unusually numerous offshore. A Regional record of 83 about 42 nmi w. of Klamath R. mouth, *Del Norte*, 13 Dec included a single flock of 65 feeding along a squall line (MFO). Counts of 25–30 Laysans at Cordell Bank 8 Jan (DN) and daily totals of 25–30 during 25–29 Feb ± 30 nmi w. of FI, San Francisco (LSp, DGA), indicated consistently high numbers off our coast. A few were also recorded around Monterey Bay (ShJ), and one returned to Pt. Arena Cove, Mendocino, for its 5th winter, 4 Dec–12 Feb (D. Sierra, m.ob.).

Three Mottled Petrels ± 42 nmi w. of Klamath R. mouth 13 Dec (MFO) were the first reported in the Region since Nov 1996, although this species is probably regular in late fall far offshore. After a near-record autumn, Flesh-footed Shearwaters were very scarce, with one off Santa Cruz 29 Jan (ShJ) providing the only report. A Manx Shearwater was on Monterey Bay, Monterey, 24 Feb (\dagger JBo). This species has been reported from this locality on nearly an annual basis since the mid-1990s. Black-vented Shearwaters, nearly absent last fall, failed to show until 4 Feb, when 42 were on Monterey Bay, Monterey (ShJ). The general absence of this species this past fall and winter is related to the return of inshore cold water.

HERONS THROUGH RAPTORS

The only concentration of Cattle Egrets were 40 at Bethel I., Contra Costa, 26 Jan (FGB). Coastally, five were in *Humboldt*, one in

Mendocino, two in *Marin*, and one in *Santa Cruz* 2 Dec–29 Feb (m.ob.). Coastal numbers have shown a sharp decline the past two winters. Nineteen White-faced Ibises over Capitola, Santa Cruz, 24 Dec (DLSu) was the only report along the coast; one at Lower Klamath N.W.R., *Siskiyou*, 6 Dec was very late (RE).

Approximately 200 Aleutian Canada Geese at the Yolo Bypass, Yolo, 19 Feb (RS, LLu, CLu) were a good number away from the n. coast but not unexpected given the recovery of this subspecies during the past decade. In contrast to last winter, this Season's only Trumpeter Swan was a well-described individual at *Del Norte's* Smith R. estuary 19 Dec (\dagger DFx, \dagger JCP). Fourteen Eur. Wigeons at Bolinas Lagoon, *Marin*, all winter were about twice normal (RS, m.ob.). A Blue-winged Teal in nw. Mono Basin 17 Feb provided *Mono's* first winter record (B. Miller). A concentration of 10,000–12,000 *Aythya* ducks (mostly Lesser Scaup) at Sutter Bypass/Butte Slough included at least 137 Greater Scaup 15 Feb (C. Hawley, BED) and *Sutter's* first Tufted Duck 25 Feb–Mar (\dagger TEa et al.). Reports of 12 other Tufted Ducks were almost evenly split between the interior and coast. A well-described Tufted \times scaup hybrid was at Tule Lake N.W.R., *Siskiyou*, 8 Feb (\dagger RE). Two Surf Scoters at Dechambeau ponds 8 Dec (L. Ford) were *Mono's* first since 1989 and the first in winter there. The bird of the season was California's second **Smew**, a difficult-to-locate adult male on the "Old River" at Tracy, *San Joaquin*, 20 Jan–29 Feb (E. deRusha, \dagger T. Ronneberg, \dagger WWho, m.ob.). A Red-breasted Merganser at Hensley L. 21 Feb was considered *Madera's* first confirmed record (\dagger KVV).

Three Broad-winged Hawks was a good showing: an adult at College L., *Santa Cruz*, 1 Jan–14 Feb (DLSu) wintered, but imms. at Half Moon Bay, *San Mateo*, 4 Dec (RSTh) and in n. *Marin* 5 Dec (LLu, CLu) were probably migrants. A dark-morph Swainson's Hawk returned to Harkins Slough, *Santa Cruz*, 11 Nov–5 Jan for its 2nd consecutive winter (m.ob.).

CRANES THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Coastal Sandhill Cranes were noted in *Marin*, *Sonoma*, and *Humboldt*. The last bird, near Shively 6–19 Dec (SWH, \dagger DFX, BED, TWL), was suspected of being of the *tabida* race (Greater Sandhill Crane) and if so was highly unexpected. Sizable Mt. Plover flocks were

found in *Yolo*, with ≤ 100 present 29 Dec–2 Jan (J. King, L. Edson, m.ob.); *Solano*, with 50 seen 24 Jan (JSL); and *Stanislaus*, with 16 noted 16 Jan (JHG). One near Soledad, *Monterey*, 27 Dec was our only other reported (BHG). Three Black Oystercatchers at Coyote Pt., *San Mateo*, 22 Jan–5 Mar were rare so far s. in S.F. Bay (ADeM). Up to five Rock Sandpipers were at MacKerricher S.P., *Mendocino*, 2 Dec–27 Feb (DT, JRW, RS, GEC), while one another was at Wilder S.B., *Santa Cruz*, 18–28 Dec (R. Wolfe, DLSu). In *Santa Clara*, a Ruff at Sunnyvale 19 Dec (NL, M. Murphy) and Alviso 17 Jan (AJ) was thought to be the same one present in Nov. A rare winter Wilson's Phalarope was at Vic Fazio W.A., *Yolo*, 1 Feb (SCH).

JAEGERS THROUGH ALCIDS

A count of 49 Pomarine Jaegers w. of Klamath R. mouth 13 Dec (MFo) provided a record high for winter, suggesting that at least some were late migrants. Our two "regular" Lesser Black-backed Gulls continued in *Santa Clara*, with the Alviso adult present to at least 3 Feb (AJ, SCR, NL) and the fourth-basic L. Cunningham bird present into Mar (m.ob.). A dark-mantled adult gull at Folsom L., *Placer*, 14–15 Feb (where any dark-mantled gull is unusual) showed characters of Slaty-backed Gull but unfortunately could not be studied at close range (BWb, JCS, TEa). Although there are no C.B.R.C.-accepted records for the Region, an adult gull well-photographed by Webb at the same location 5–6 Jan 1998 was probably this species. However, details of the wing pattern, critical to the conclusive identification of Slaty-backed Gull, were not seen on either bird.

High numbers of Glaucous Gulls (43), including *Butte's* first at the county landfill 16–17 Feb (BWb, JHS, †TDM), were reported for the 2nd consecutive winter. In a typical winter, the vast majority that reach our region are juveniles/first-winter birds, with only a handful of older birds. However, of the 38 for which age was reported this winter, half were second-year or older. The unusually high number and percentage of older birds suggests low productivity last summer and a strong southerly movement by older birds. Perhaps unusually warm Bering Sea conditions related to the mortality of other seabirds and low salmon populations over the past few years is affecting Glaucous Gull productivity in summer, while driving above-average numbers s. in winter.

At least two Caspian Terns were at several locations around Humboldt Bay, *Humboldt*, throughout Dec–Jan (JCP, DFx, P. Lohse, KNN). Oddly, Humboldt Bay is one of the most regular wintering locations for this

species (albeit in low numbers) in the Region. An Elegant Tern on Elkhorn Slough, *Monterey*, lingered to 1 Jan (Y. Gideon, R. Norden), our latest. A juv. Common Tern at New Brighton S.B., *Santa Cruz*, 15 Dec (DLSu) was late, as this species is rarely found in the Region in winter. Interior Forster's Terns are fairly rare away from the C.V. delta in mid-winter. Although they disperse farther inland (particularly into San Joaquin Valley) in Feb, one on West Butte Road, Sutter, 29 Feb (C. Hawley) seemed unusually far n. of the Delta for such an early date. Up to 11 Black Skimmers wintered again at Charleston Slough in Mountain View, *Santa Clara* (WGB, m.ob.). Two at Sunset S.B., *Santa Cruz*, 13 Jan (S. Fernandez) were the only others reported.

Two Marbled Murrelets calling as they flew over Western Addition, S.F., during a storm on the evening of 13 Feb (S. Davies) were unusual 3 mi from the ocean. Other interesting alcid records included five Xantus's/Craveris' Murrelets 1.5 mi off Santa Cruz 18 Dec (S. Allison) and a Horned Puffin s. of Elk, *Mendocino*, 28 Jan (GEC, CEV, DT).

OWLS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

A N. Saw-whet Owl at Bay View Hill 29 Dec provided just the 3rd record for S.F. (J. Andersen). A Lesser Nighthawk at Modesto, *Stanislaus*, 29 Feb (M. Cummings) was an extremely early migrant, but one at Don Edwards San Francisco Bay N.W.R., *Alameda*, 30 Dec was surely wintering (ph., †J. Buffa, †C. Morris), apparently a first for the Region. A Vaux's Swift over College L. 1–28 Jan provided a rare winter record for *Santa Cruz* (DLSu), but 40–60 over L. San Antonio, *Monterey*, 5–13 Feb (G. Meyer) were high numbers in this season.

Seven Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers well distributed along the coast was a better-than-average showing. Of eight coastal Red-naped Sapsuckers, an astounding seven came from *Santa Cruz* (m.ob.). The two inland reports were from Cosumnes R. Preserve, Sacramento, 9 Jan (JTr) and Paradise, *Butte*, 16–17 Feb (BWb, JHS, TDM). San Francisco averages less than one Nuttall's Woodpecker a year, so one at L. Merced 21 Jan–1 Mar was of interest (B. Fitch). A Hairy Woodpecker in *Santa Cruz* 2 Feb was thought to represent one of the Pacific Northwestern forms (†DLSu).

Wintering Least Flycatchers were at Delta Pond, *Sonoma*, 14–20 Jan (*Sonoma's* 3rd; DN et al.) and Arcata marsh, *Humboldt*, 13 Dec–29 Feb (KNN, †DFx et al.). Single Hammond's Flycatchers were at Pt. Reyes, *Marin*, 15 Jan (CLU, LLu, RS) and Cosumnes R. Preserve 29 Dec (JTr, WEH). Five E.

Phoebes were above the recent average the late fall bird at Merced N.W.R., *Merced*, to 12 Dec (KVV, JCS, JSL); Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey*, 19 Dec (JBo); Santa Rosa, *Sonoma*, 19 Dec–20 Jan (BDP et al.); Tracy, *San Joaquin*, 15–21 Feb (B. Reiling, F. Vanslager, DGY et al.); and Sutter N.W.R. 13 Feb (*Sutter's* first; †JCS, JSL). Two Say's Phoebes at Mono L. 16 Feb beat the previous *Mono* early date by four days (J. Carle). The lone Dusky-capped Flycatcher was at Año Nuevo S R., *San Mateo*, 2 Jan–7 Feb (†PJM, †RSTh, ph AWn).

A modest total of just three Tropical Kingbirds was reported: Half Moon Bay 18 Dec (G. Nunn, J. Hully); Moss Beach, *San Mateo*, 13 Jan (RSTh); and L. Merced, S F, 3 Jan–1 Mar (B. Fitch, m.ob.). Two Cassin's Kingbirds in se. *Santa Clara* 30 Dec (MMR) were at a site of known residency, but singles at King City, *Monterey*, 25 Feb (J&HBa) and Moss Landing, *Monterey*, 28 Feb–8 Mar (RF) were thought to be early migrants. Last winter's **Thick-billed Kingbird** reappeared at Half Moon Bay 18 Dec–7 Mar (G. Degh, m.ob.).

SHRIKES THROUGH THRASHERS

Of seven N. Shrikes, five were in the interior and two were in coastal *Humboldt*, yet just one, an imm. at Davis, *Yolo*, 20 Feb (SCH) was reported into Feb. A Loggerhead Shrike in *Mono* 5 Dec provided a rare winter record e. of the Sierra (J&DP). Seven "Solitary" Vireos were reported (none documented) one Blue-headed from *Humboldt*, four coastal Cassin's, and single Plumbeous from *Humboldt* and *Stanislaus*. A Warbling Vireo at Harkins Slough, *Santa Cruz*, 2 Dec was a late migrant (TN, B. McLaughlin).

Tree Swallows were oft-mentioned and widespread this season, including a flock of 850 (with 450 Violet-greens) at College L., *Santa Cruz*, 1 Jan (a noteworthy winter count; DLSu). Typical arrival dates were mid-Feb, including *Mono's* earliest ever 17 Feb (2 birds; B. Miller). *Mendocino's* first migrants were at Ukiah 6 Feb (15; GEC, CEV) and *Siskiyou* recorded its earliest ever when two headed n. over Bass L. on the wintery date of 20 Jan (RE). A N. Rough-winged Swallow at Ukiah, *Mendocino*, 22 Jan (CEV), may have wintered locally; the first migrants were not detected in *Santa Cruz* until 21 Feb (DLSu) or in *Santa Clara* until 22 Feb (AJ). A Cliff Swallow at the Stockton Oxidation Ponds, *San Joaquin*, 21 Dec (KVV, JSL, SRv) was probably the same bird seen at both the same location and s. of there 21 Nov (KH). Cliff Swallows are extremely rare in winter in California.

A Rock Wren at a Davenport quarry 20 Jan provided the first *Santa Cruz* winter

record "in quite a few years" (DLSu). An Am. Dipper on Clear Cr. 12–17 Jan furnished the first *San Benito* record in over 20 years (SDF, KVV) Single Blue-gray Gnatcatchers at Salt R. 3 Jan (G. Gray, S. Pagliuchi) and Blue L. 13 Feb (L. Elias) furnished rare *Humboldt* winter records. A controversial female bluebird at Palo Alto, *Santa Clara/Santa Mateo*, 14 Dec–14 Jan (ADeM, MMR, m.ob.) was apparently finally settled as a Western. Few Mt. Bluebird reports were received and smaller numbers were noted from traditional locations; 23 on 5 Dec in e. *Mono*, where rare in winter, were noteworthy (J&DP). A N. Mockingbird 28 Dec at Lewiston was *Trinity's* best bird this Season (B. Peck); only a handful winter this far north. Unlike last winter when Sage Thrashers were widespread, the only notables were one in Miller/Knox R.S., *Contra Costa*, after 5 Jan (K. Burton et al.), and two in *San Joaquin* 21 Dec–8 Jan (JSJ et al.).

WARBLERS THROUGH SPARROWS

Few warblers surprised observers this Season. The "usual suspects" among e. or s. species were in low-to-average numbers: Tennessee (3), Nashville (20), Yellow (4), Palm (28), Black-and-white (20, a strong showing), Am. Redstart (6), N. Waterthrush (2, but one inland at Tracy, *San Joaquin*, 6 Jan; G. Welch, J. Cuerdo), MacGillivray's (1), and Wilson's (10) A Virginia's Warbler was at Natural Bridges S.B. 30 Dec–1 Jan (A. Kopitov, DLSu; first in winter for *Santa Cruz*). Unusual Lucy's Warblers were in a Oakland yard 26 Dec–19 Feb (the first for *Alameda* since 1953; S. Dickie et al.) and in Ferndale bottoms, *Humboldt*, 2–3 Jan (G. Bloomfield et al.). A Black-throated Blue Warbler remained in Golden Gate Park, S.F., 24 Dec–28 Jan (ASH). A Blackburnian Warbler in Seaside, *Monterey*, 29 Nov–15 Dec (†SRv, m.ob.) did not linger long, but another along Eel R. at Fernbridge, *Humboldt*, was attempting to winter (P. Herrera, †DFx, †JCP). Three Prairie Warblers were in *San Mateo* and *Santa Cruz* (RSTh, DLSu et al.). A Hooded Warbler at Aptos, *Santa Cruz*, first found in Fall, stayed until 12 Dec (H. DeDiego).

Many warbler reports this Season lacked evidence that the birds wintered locally. Most found around Christmas Counts may actually be late migrants. This pattern is hardly news but is worth repeating occasionally. Of the 93 "usual suspect" warblers summarized above, only 13 individuals (14%) were known to be present on dates later than 10 January.

The only Summer Tanagers were a female at Carmel R. mouth 28–29 Dec (SRv, R. Fowler) and a male in King City 20 Jan (J&HBa), both *Monterey*. A wintering Green-

tailed Towhee along Coyote Cr., *Santa Clara*, after 28 Jan (AJ) was unusual, as were two Chipping Sparrows north to Ukiah, *Mendocino*, 18 & 23 Dec (†M. Matthiessen, RJK, CEV). Eight Clay-colored Sparrows from *Humboldt* to *Santa Cruz* was an unexpected total; wintering individuals seem more regular now than in past decades. As usual, one or more Lark Buntings wintered in Panoche Valley; *San Benito* (†AME) but another along Radio Rd., *Sacramento*, 27 Dec–26 Feb was a surprise (†TDM et al.).

We are learning that Grasshopper Sparrows winter in small numbers in our Region, sometimes in the same fields in which they nest (e.g., 5 in a non-disked field in San Jose, *Santa Clara*, 9 Feb; SCR). Are these birds resident? The only Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows reported were two at Inverness Park, *Marin*, 23 Dec (RS). Eight Harris's Sparrows were a fine showing: two at Lava Beds N.M., *Siskiyou*, 21 Dec–12 Mar (MFRb et al.); McKinleyville 17 Dec into Mar (LPL, GSL) and Garberville 30 Jan–28 Feb (J. Sooter), both *Humboldt*; 22 Jan–6 Feb at Grizzly Island W.A., *Solano* (W. Legg, ph. MEa); 17 Dec–3 Jan Capitola (DLSu) and 1 Jan Felton (R. Golling), both *Santa Cruz*; and 30 Jan–20 Feb near Elkhorn Slough, *Monterey* (RE, m.ob.). The only winters with higher numbers west of the Sierran/Cascade divide were 1971–1972, 1982–1983, and 1985–1986.

California has hosted big flocks of wintering longspurs before, but always in the north-east (especially Honey L. or Tule L. areas). This winter's numbers on the C.V. floor were unprecedented. In e. *Yolo*, a mixed flock near Dunnigan all season held up to 55 Chestnut-collareds, one Lapland, and two McCown's (SCH, †MMR, m.ob.). In *Colusa*, three widely scattered Chestnut-collareds 25 Feb were county firsts (TEa), while ≤7 McCown's wintered along Browning Rd. 20 Jan–Mar (BDW, m.ob.); three more were along Lodi Rd. 25 Feb (TEa). A flock of 22 Chestnut-collareds were at Consumnes R. Preserve 1 Jan (JTr), and one Lapland was at the Bishop Tract, *San Joaquin*, 19 Dec (TEa). Near the coast, a Lapland was at MacKerricher S.P., *Mendocino*, 11 Dec (DT), two Chestnut-collareds were near Buchli Station, *Napa*, 28 Dec–12 Feb (†M. J. Berner) and one Chestnut-collared was at Halfmoon Bay, *San Mateo*, 29 Nov–3 Feb (AJ, AME, ph. A. W. Kratter). The Chestnut-collareds were the first to winter in their respective counties.

GROSBEAKS THROUGH FINCHES

About the same number of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (four) wintered as Black-headed (five); one Rose-breasted was inland at

Sacramento 28 Jan (†D. Williams). Rarely wintering Blue Grosbeaks were at Davis, *Yolo*, 27–29 Feb (C. Schwedler, M. Perrone) and Consumnes R. Preserve, *Sacramento*, 29 Dec–6 Jan (JTr). An imm. Indigo Bunting at Pescadero, San Mateo, 1 Jan (†RSTh) was not seen again.

Yellow-headed Blackbirds rarely winter along the coast, but one was in the Arcata bottoms, *Humboldt*, 17 Dec–18 Feb (KNN et al.). *Humboldt's* 2nd Great-tailed Grackle, a female at King Salmon, remained 28 Nov–19 Feb (M. Wachs, m.ob.). It was not much of a winter for orioles: only three Orchards, one Hooded, nine Bullock's, and one Baltimore were reported, all coastal. The Baltimore was a female in Golden Gate Park 24 Jan–2 Mar (S. Davies, N. White). A few scattered Lawrence's Goldfinch remained north, as usual, including four n. to L. Hennessey, *Napa*, 8 Jan (BDP). The only Evening Grosbeaks of note were two females that wintered at Pt. Reyes N. S. headquarters, *Marin* (RS, LLu, CLu et al.).0

ERRATA

Our Spring reference to Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches at Sierra Buttes, *Sierra*, representing a county first, was in error. Richard E. Johnson previously collected the species here in breeding condition in May 1967 (*Auk* 92: 586–589).

Cited observers (county coordinators bold-faced): David G. Ainley, Jim & Helen Banks, Florence G. Bennett, Jim Booker, **William G. Bousman**, **Penelope K. Bowen**, Rita Carratello, George E. Chaniot, **Luke Cole**, **Hugh Cotter**, Al DeMartini, **Bruce E. Deuel**, Todd Easterla, Mark Eaton, Alan M. Eisner, **Ray Ekstrom**, Sam D. Fitton, **David Fix**, Michael Force, Rick Fournier, **James H. Gain**, Bruce H. Gerow, **Steven A. Glover**, Steve C. Hampton, Keith Hanson, W. Edward Harper, Stanley W. Harris, Waldo Holt, Alan S. Hopkins, John E. Hunter, Alvaro Jaramillo, **Robert J. Keiffer**, **Robin L.C. Leong**, Tom W. Leskiew, Gary S. Lester, Lauren P. Lester, Nick Lethaby, Cindy Lieurance, Les Lieurance, John S. Luther, **Timothy D. Manolis**, **Peter J. Metropulos**, Dan Nelson, Kristie N. Nelson, Todd Newbury, Jim & Debby Parker, Benjamin D. Parmeter, **Jude C. Power**, Robert Ramer, **Michael F. Robbins**, **Don Roberson**, Michael M. Rogers, Stephen C. Rottenborn, Steve Rovell, **Ruth A. Rudesill**, Shearwater Journeys, Dan Singer, Jim H. Snowden, Larry Spear, Rich Stallcup, John C. Sterling, **Emilie Strauss**, **David L. Suddjian** (DLSu), Scott B. Terrill, Ronald S. Thorn, Dorothy Tobkin, John Trochet, Chuck E. Vaughn, **Kent Van Vuren**, Bruce Webb, Jerry R. White, **Brian D. Williams**, Adam Winer, David G. Yee, **Bob & Carol Yutzy**. Many more observers were not specifically cited, but all are appreciated.

