

Central Valley Bird Highlights: December 2002 through February 2003

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WATERBIRDS

A rare, inland **Red-throated Loon** at Kutras Lake from 18 December to at least 6 January (B & CY) was the second Shasta County record. It was joined by **Pacific Loon** from 2-6 January (B & CY). A calling ***Trumpeter Swan** delighted observers at Staten Island, San Joaquin County on 3 & 4 January (SS, GI). A high count of 59 Eurasian Wigeon was made at Gray Lodge on 26 December (BD). Two thousand **Greater Scaup** at the Yolo Bypass on 8 February (JK) was an extremely high count for the valley floor. A female **Long-tailed Duck** on 7 December (KK, RH) was one of few ever in Kings County, another female at the Chico Sewage Ponds (MSk) was one of few ever in Butte County, and another was on O'Neill Forebay in Merced County throughout January (JL+). Also rare inland, a **White-winged Scoter** was there on 20 January (SG). A female ***Red-breasted Merganser** was at the Nimbus Dam area in Sacramento County on 12 December (JK) and another at Turlock Lake from 30 December on (JL+) in Stanislaus County. A ***Swainson's Hawk** north of Roseville on 27 December (DC) and 30 January (JSt, WW) was one of few winter records for Placer County. At least one and perhaps two **Broad-winged Hawks** were in Merced County with one at San Luis NWR on 5 January (LP) and 2 February (EG), and possibly a different bird on 12 January along Santa Fe Grade (LC).

High counts of **Black-necked Stilts** included 122 for a record count in Gray Lodge on 26 December (BD) in Butte County and 150 at the Sacramento NWR (B & CY) in Glenn County. A flock of 40+ **Mountain Plovers** 1 December to mid-January (RF) near Turlock Lake, Stanislaus County was a typical time and location for this elusive species. Yolo's first winter ***Sanderling** was at the Davis Wetlands on 1 January (JK). Five **Stilt Sandpipers** in a wetland in Kings County on 16 January (AD) was perhaps the highest count ever for the Central Valley. Once again, a ***Ruff** wintered at the Vic Fazio Wildlife Refuge and was first spotted on 9 February (RM). An unseasonable ***Wilson's Phalarope** at the Vic Fazio NWR on 7 December (JH) should have been in South America on that date. A first-winter ***Franklin's Gull** at Folsom Lake (BW) was Placer County's second record. Remarkably, Shasta County's second **Laughing Gull** (an immature) appeared at Kutras Lake on 14-20 February a little over a year after the first (RB, BD). Kutras Lake also attracted a **Mew Gull** from 18 December to 23 January (B & CY) and two **Western Gulls** with one on 6 January and the other on 27 January (BD, RB). A first-year **Western Gull** at Folsom Lake on 30 January (JSt, WW) was at another inland location where this species may

become annual. An adult **Mew Gull** was on O'Neill Forebay on 6 February (JF). An adult **Glaucous-winged Gull** at the Sacramento NWR on 8 December (SG) was one of few records for Glenn County. Calaveras County's first **Mew Gull** and **Glaucous-winged Gull** were found at Camanche Reservoir on 16 February; the latter was also Amador County's first (TS, FS). To the delight of many, an immature **Black-legged Kittiwake** frequented a canal near Santa Nella from 30 December to mid-January (MR) for Merced County's first record and one of very few for the Central Valley (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) near Santa Nella, Merced County, January 2003. *photo by Todd Easterla*

LANDBIRDS

Two good woodpeckers briefly visited Lake Solano County Park along Putah Creek on 11 December (JL): a ***Red-naped Sapsucker** (replaced by a hybrid Red-naped X Red-breasted Sapsucker later) and a ***Pileated Woodpecker**. Joining the throng of rare birds in Merced County, a male **Vermilion Flycatcher** was at Los Banos Wildlife Area from 18 February + (BP). Another rare valley flycatcher was an **Eastern Phoebe** at the Kern NWR on 15 February (DP). A ***Plumbeous Vireo** near Lincoln on 27 December (SG) was a first for Placer County.

A worn adult **Barn Swallow** at Kutras Lake on 22 January (BD) was likely a wintering bird as was one near Winters on 15 December (MS). A ***Sage Thrasher** sheltered in some berry shrubs at the Davis Raptor Center from 12 February on (RM) for perhaps only the second Solano County record. Another was on Fields Road on 18 January (WT) in Merced County. One of the better sightings for the season was of a ***Gray Catbird** at Lodi Lakes 15 January to the end of February (KM) for San Joaquin County's second record and one of very few for the Central Valley. A male **Mountain Bluebird** in rice country along Brewer Road on 30 January (JSt, WW) was one of few

found in western Placer County. A ***Townsend's Solitaire** in downtown Sacramento on 21 January (MP) and another near Winters on 15 December (MS) were the only reports of this montane species for the valley floor this winter. A **Northern Shrike** in western Stanislaus County on 3 January (TE) was a first record for that county and another played with birders by flying back and forth between San Joaquin and Sacramento County at Tyler and Staten islands from 6 January to 28 February + (EW, TS). A ***Black-and-white Warbler** along the American River Parkway on 7 December only (JML) was mostly likely a late fall migrant. The Central Valley's second ***Cape May Warbler**, an unseasonable wintering bird found on March 1 at Larchmont Park, Sacramento County, was that county's first record (JML).

Yolo County's second ever ***Clay-colored Sparrow** was in Davis for a few days in early December (SH). Staten Island hosted a ***Lark Bunting** on 14 December (JM) for San Joaquin County's second record, another was near the Sutter Buttes on 26 December (RR), and a third was in Merced County along Keyes Road on 30 January (DF). The only reported ***Swamp Sparrow** was an uncooperative individual at the Davis Wetlands on 25 December (JK). A ***Harris Sparrow** near Lincoln on 27 December to 28 February (TE) was Placer County's second, another was in Glenn County on 26 December (JG, JLe, MSk), and one near Redding from 18 January to late February (JHut) was one of few ever for the valley floor in Shasta County. A report of two **Chestnut-collared Longspurs** on 1 December (KK, RH) was a first record for Tulare County and single **Chestnut-collared** and **Lapland Longspurs** in western Stanislaus County on 3 January (TE) were also county firsts. The usual longspurs were along Brewer and Nicholas roads in western Placer County, with three ***Laplands** and a ***Chestnut-collared** on 27 December (TE, JSt) and a ***McCown's** on 28 December (TE). A rare winter ***Hooded Oriole** on the Marysville CBC was a surprise and an overdue first record for Yuba County (*fide* TM). A female **Great-tailed Grackle** near Redding on 25 January (LS) was unseasonal and near the northern extreme of its ever-expanding range.

* Pending endorsement by the Sacramento Bird Records Committee

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