

## Central Valley Bird Highlights: August through November 2011

*John Sterling, 26 Palm Ave, Woodland, CA 95965*

A **Brant** was on the far western edge of the region in the Benicia waterfront on 15-21 August (RMu, CDL). **Cackling Geese** were in the Tulare Basin with twelve in Kings County on 12 October (JLt) and three there on 13 November (MSy). Locally rare **Barrow's Goldeneyes** included a male at Turlock Lake Outlet in Stanislaus County on 18 November (JHG) and a pair between Bouldin and Staten islands in San Joaquin County on 28 November (CG). A female **Red-breasted Merganser** on O'Neill Forebay on 5 November (KVV) was at a location where this species is present during most winters. Kutrass Lake, which is part of the Sacramento River in Redding, was once again a hot spot of rare inland waterbirds as an adult male **Surf Scoter** on 12 November (BY), a **Pacific Loon** on 21+ November and a **Red-necked Grebe** on November 28 (both RBr) joined the "resident" **Black Scoter** continuing from last spring. California Park Lake in Chico, Butte County was an unusual location for a rare inland **Pacific Loon** on 26 October (JBS). Another one on Woodward Res. on 30 November was an overdue first record for Stanislaus County (SSa, JH). Loons are rare in Tulare County, so a **Pacific Loon** and two **Common Loons** on Lake Kaweah on 5 November (JSL) was a surprise.

Wandering juvenile **Brown Pelicans** continued to be found after a few entered the region during July. One was at the Lodi WTP on 7-13 August (JRo, WEH). Four were in the Delta Region on Contra Costa County side of the Antioch Bridge on 15 August (DaW). The juvenile found over the summer on Little Panoche Res. was still present on 16 August (Chi). The Re-ecology plant on Gaffery Road in Stanislaus County attracted juvenile **Brown Pelican** on 14 November (MtB) but this bird was not seen afterwards. Yolo County had two more with one in West Sacramento on 24 August (CF) that moved to the Port of Sacramento by 6 September and remained there through the fall (MW), and another in Woodland at the Farmer's Central Pond on 3 September (TEa+) for only the second and third documented records in Yolo County. A **Least Bittern** was in the Ton Tache Wetlands near Alpaugh in Tulare County on 21 September (SAL). This cryptic species is rare and local in the San Joaquin Valley and Tulare Basin.

One of the most amazing birds ever to be found in the Central Valley was the second-year male **Common Ringed Plover** at the Davis Wetlands, Yolo County on 19-26 August (TEa). This well photographed Eurasian shorebird established the first record for California and the western United States away

from western Alaskan islands. It even made the evening news! **Snowy Plovers** are rare in the region outside of the salt ponds in the Tulare Basin, so one at the Fresno WTP on 1-3 August (JND) was noteworthy. Two others were at the Lincoln WTP to establish one of only a few Placer County records on 8 August (RPz). The rarest of the two golden-plovers, an **American Golden-Plover** was at the Hanford WTP in Kings County on 10 September (MSy), another was at the Woodland WTP in Yolo County on 4-6 November (TEa), and a third at the Fresno WTP on 15 November (MtB, GW) was the second record for Fresno County.

A **Marbled Godwit** present at the Lincoln WTP on 8 August (RPz), and five at the Marysville WTP on 11 August (BED) were noteworthy records for Placer and Yuba counties, respectively. Six at the Lodi WTP on 13-15 August (JRo) and four on Sherman Island on 15 August (DaW) were large flocks for San Joaquin and Sacramento counties. A few **Solitary Sandpipers** migrated through the region with one at the Cosumnes River Preserve on 6 August (JTr), and on 15 August (DaW) on Sherman Island in Sacramento County, one at the Lincoln WTP in Placer County on 6-9 September (DCv), one at the Farmer's Central Pond in Woodland, Yolo County on 12 September (DS) and a very late one at San Luis NWR in Merced County on 27 October–5 November (MP, MDo). Yuba County's second record was at the Maryville WTP on 29-31 August (S&DR). Always a nice find the region, a juvenile **Red Knot** was at the Jack Stone Ponds in Kings County on 6 September (MSy) and perhaps the same bird along Elgin Road on 12 September (GW). Establishing one of few records for Tulare County, a juvenile **Ruddy Turnstone** briefly visited the Ton Tache Wetlands on 9 September (SAL).

Rare inland **Sanderlings** were at the Jack Stone Ponds in Kings County on 6 August (MSy), Ton Tache Wetlands near Alpaugh in Tulare County on 13-14 August (SAL), Davis Wetlands on 11-15 September (DS, SCH), and the Hanford WTP on 23 September (MSy). As usual in fall, numerous **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were found including; singles at the Madera WTP on 6 August (MtB), at Cosumnes River Preserve on 6 August (JTr), a juvenile at the Fresno WTP on 1-2 August replaced by an adult there on 3 August (both JND), at the Fresno WTP and the Madera WTP on 12 August (JLx), at the Woodland WTP in Yolo County on 8 September (JCS), four at the Fresno WTP on 12 September (GW), and two at the Farmer's Central pond in Woodland, Yolo County on 15 September (BC). **Baird's Sandpipers** were reported from Seven Mile Road in Butte County on 30 August (JLx), four at the Jack Stone Ponds and another at the Jersey Ave ponds in Kings County on 6 September (MSy), four at the Woodland WTP on 8-15 September (JCS, BC) along with another at the adjacent Farmer's Central pond and four at the Davis Wetlands in Yolo County on 11 September (BC, RAd), one along Elgin Road in Kings County on 12 September (GW), and lastly, one at the Marysville WTP on 9 September (EP) was one of few records for Yuba County.

Two **Pectoral Sandpipers** at the Lincoln WTP on 29-31 August (S&DR) and two in the East Sand Slough section of the Red Bluff Recreation Area on 9 September (BED) were rare for Yuba and Tehama counties, respectively. A very late **Pectoral** was at Merced NWR on 29 November (KHL). A **Stilt Sandpiper** was at the Ton Tache Wetlands near Alpaugh, Tulare County on 1 September (SAL), another was at the Jersey Ave ponds in Kings County on 6 September (MSy), a third was at the Davis Wetlands in Yolo County on 15 September (SCH) and a fourth was the Davis WTP on 29-30 September (TEa, JCS). Another amazing shorebird was the juvenile **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** at the Lincoln WTP on 29-31 August (DCv+), which was the first Placer County and second Central Valley record. The only **Ruff** reported was along Sante Fe Grade Road in Merced County on 5 November through the fall (KVV) where this species has been found in many previous falls and winters. Last but not least was the **Red Phalarope** at the Jersey Ave ponds in Kings County on 14-15 October (JSy, GF).

The only jaeger report was of a **Long-tailed Jaeger** in the southern Tulare Basin on 31 August (JLD). A **Least Tern** was at the Lodi WTP on 7 August (WEH) for one of few San Joaquin County records. This species has been found increasingly in the San Joaquin Valley and Tulare Basin, and has bred in Kings and Sacramento counties in recent years. Yolo County's first **Arctic Tern** was in a flock of 12 **Common Terns** circling over the Davis WTP for five minutes on 24 August (JCS). This was also the highest count of **Common Terns** for the county and probably the region. Also present in Yolo County was a juvenile **Sabine's Gull** at the Woodland WTP on 8-15 September (JCS, EP, BC). Another **Sabine's Gull** was in the southern Tulare Basin in Kings County on 4 October (JLt) and two were present there on 18 October (JLt). The first **Little Gulls** found the region in many years were two at the Modesto WTP on 13 November (SSa, HMR) for Stanislaus County's second record and were not present a month later. The Re-ecology plant on Gaffery Road on the Stanislaus/San Joaquin County line once again supported many **Western, Glaucous-winged and Thayer's gulls** in November (MtB). A second cycle **Lesser Black-backed Gull** in the southern Tulare Basin from 7 September (MSy) through the fall was the second record for Kings County of this European species. The **Glaucous Gull** along the Sacramento River in Redding on 23 November (RBr) was only the third Shasta County record.

Very rare on the valley floor, a juvenile **Band-tailed Pigeon** was in Davis on 1 October (SCH). A **White-winged Dove** at Birds Landing on 17 November (ZS) was a first for Solano County of this increasingly found vagrant from the desert. Another southern species, **Common Ground-Dove**, has been spreading northward through the Tulare Basin in recent years. One flew over the Kern/Kings County line just north of the Kern NWR on 2 October (MSy) for the second Kings County record. **Black Swifts** are rarely found in migration in the Central Valley, so three over San Luis Reservoir in Merced County on 4

October (SSa, RB), and two others over the Tuolumne River by the La Grange Trail in adjacent Stanislaus County on 6 October (SSa) were unexpected surprises. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at downtown Sacramento 2 November was passing through (CIH), as was one below Kaweah Dam in Tulare County from 5-11 November (JLx, JLt). Most Central Valley records of **Vermilion Flycatcher** are of wintering birds, so a fall migrant at Ton Tache Wetlands in Tulare County on 22 September (DF) was very unusual. An **Eastern Kingbird** found at the Yolo Bypass WA on 30-31 August (MSc) was the third record for Yolo County with the second record way back in 1973. Basalt Campground near San Luis Reservoir often harbors migrants and is a good spot to look for vagrants. A **Plumbeous Vireo** was there on 2 October (KVV).

The best landbird of the season was the **Winter Wren**, recently split with Pacific Wren as two species. This was of the eastern and northern boreal population and has only been documented in California a few times. This bird was video taped and its diagnostic call was recorded. Found on 27 November at the Cosumnes River Preserve (CCo), it established the bird Central Valley and Sacramento County record. As expected in fall, a few **Sage Thrashers** were found with on southwest of Merced on 28 October (CG), and another along Little Panoche Road in Fresno County on 21 November (KPa). A **Varied Thrush** at Liberty Farms in Kings County on 13 November (MSy) was unusual for that location. Not many longspurs have been reported in recent years, so one-two **Lapland Longspurs** at two different locations between Woodland and Davis in Yolo County on 17-26 November (SCH) were noteworthy. A **Tennessee Warbler** joined a migrant flock along Putah Creek in Yolo County on 1-2 October (MSr, KvG). Nearly annual during fall in the region, a **Blackpoll Warbler** was along Putah Creek near Pedrick Road in Yolo and Solano counties on 16 September (SCH). The best vagrant warbler of the season was the female **Black-throated Blue Warbler** at Lost Lake Park on 16 September (LyH) for the first Fresno County record. A **Northern Waterthrush** bobbed its way around a pond at Contra Loma Regional Park in Antioch, Contra Costa County on 30 August–2 September (PSc). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** “invaded” Yolo County with one near Lake Solano on 6 October (SCH) and another in Davis (AK).

**Black-throated Sparrows** made news with one near Esparto on 21 October through the fall (SCH) for only the second record for Yolo County, one returned on 1 November (SDS) for its fifth year to winter near Springville, Tulare County, and another was a one day wonder on Meridian Road in Tehama County on 4 November (KSb). Also unusual on the valley floor was a **Sage Sparrow** of an interior subspecies on Sherman Island found on 7 November and remained into winter (DaW). Several **Lark Buntings** were in Merced County with two at O’Neill Forebay on 24 September (DFr), and three on Healy Road 19 November stayed into winter (BLS). Another found in nearby Little Panoche Valley Road in Fresno County on 21 November (KPa)

also remained into winter. In addition, a **Lark Bunting** and eight **Brewer's Sparrows** were along Devil's Den Road in western King's County on 11 September with the Lark Bunting remaining through the season (MSy). Two more **Brewer's Sparrows** were at the Ton Tache Wetlands on 11 September (SAL). Even more unusual was the **Clay-colored Sparrow** in a flock of **Chipping Sparrows** at the Lake Success campground area in Tulare County on 14 October (SDS). There have been several records from this and other similar locations in the foothills north into Mariposa County. A **Swamp Sparrow** along Sante Fe Grade Road in Merced County on 5 November (KVv) was the only report of this scarce wintering vagrant. A very late **Hooded Oriole** visited a yard in Redding, Shasta County on 19 September (FS).

The observers are: Roger Adamson (RAd), Ralph Baker, Matt Brady (MtB), Ray Bruun (RBr), Brent Campos, Dennis Cavallo (DCv), Chris Conard (CCo), Jeff Davis (JND), Bruce Deuel (BED), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Jon Dunn (JLD), Todd Easterla (ToEa), Dave Fagundes, Cliff Feldheim, Gary File, Dave Froba (DFr), Jim Gain (JHG), Cory Gregory, Kevin Guse (KvG), Steve Hampton (SCH), Ed Harper (WEH), John Harris, Steve Laymon (SAL), Ed Harper (WEH), Cliff Hawley (CIH), Lynn Heminck (LyH), Chris Hiatt (CHi), Alison Kent, Steve Laymon (SAL), Kelli Heindel-Levinson (KHL), John Lockhart (JLt), Jim Lomax (JLx), Calvin Lou (CDL), John Luther (JSL), Don Marsh, Roger Muskat (RMu), Ed Pandolfino, Kathy Parker (KPa), Michael Perrone, Ron Pozzi (RPz), Harold Reeve (HMR), Steve & Diane Rose (S&DR), Jim Rowoth (JRo), Sal Salerno (SSa), Frank Sanderson, Mary Schiedt (MSc), Paul Schorr, Jeff Seay (JSy), Dan Skalos, Zach Smith, Jim Snowden (JBS), Kenneth Sobon (KSb), Mark Stacey (MSy), John Sterling (JCS), Mike Strom (MSr), Brian Sullivan (BLS), Steve Summers (SDS), John Trochet (JTr), Kent Van Vuren, Magill Weber, Dan Williams (DaW), Gary Woods (GaW), and Bob Yutzy.

Abbreviations used:

WA=State Wildlife Area; WTP=Wastewater Treatment Ponds; NWR=National Wildlife Refuge; Res.=Reservoir.