

## Central Valley Region Bird Highlights: August 2008 through November 2008

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### WATERBIRDS

A wintering **Snow Goose** in Groveland, Tuolumne County, on 14 November was a rare find in the foothills (JR). Rare inland, typical numbers of **Surf Scoters** were found including a female at the Lincoln WTP, Placer County, 27 October–10 November (EPa, DeR+) and two females/immatures at Kutras Lake (on the Sacramento River near downtown Redding, Shasta County, where they have recently been seen annually) 30 October – 4 November (RBr, BY. The adult male **Surf Scoter** found on 26 June at the Fresno WTP, Fresno County, “disappeared” until refound on 2-15 August (GaW+). A female **White-winged Scoter** was on the O’Neill Forebay, Merced County, 21-27 November (JCS, OsJ, KVV). A large concentration of 16 **Red-breasted Mergansers** at the O’Neill Forebay on 6 November (PJM) may be the highest count for the Central Valley.

A **Common Loon** in the northwest pond at the Madera WTP, Madera County, from 31 October (GaW) was a rare find for the middle of the valley floor. Undoubtedly the same **Yellow-billed Loon** found in November 2007 was rediscovered on San Luis Reservoir, Merced County, on 15 September (JSL) in heavy wing molt, indicating that it summered locally. It was seen regularly until 12 October by many birders and then again on 14 November (PJM), when it and another were seen together on the nearby O’Neill Forebay, thereby providing the first state record of multiple birds. Unusually early was the **Pacific Loon** at Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County on 21 September (JSn). This location is one of few on the valley floor that regularly hosts loons. **Red-necked Grebes** have increasingly been found in fall and winter, and in this season singles were at the Winters WTP, Yolo County, 19 October (GEw) and at Woodward Reservoir on 15-21 November (JLx, JCS+), the latter a first record for Stanislaus County.

Inland **Brown Pelican** reports have also been increasing in number in recent years and this fall several were found including one in Stockton on 28 September (LB) for the 3rd San Joaquin County record, and up to four from 14-20 September at San Luis Reservoir and O’Neill Forebay, (TEa, JSL, KVV+), with one remaining until 22 November. The **Brown Pelican** found in June at the Chowchilla WTP, Madera County, lingered until at least 4 August (GaW). **Cattle Egrets** are rare in Placer County, so 14 along Brewer Road on 29 November (BWb) was noteworthy and provided that county’s highest count. A report of a **Glossy Ibis** along Kempton Road on 2 September (TEa, LJ) in Sutter County is awaiting CBRC approval and would provide that county’s second record. **American Golden-Plover** status is

still not well known in the Central Valley and one at the Lodi WTP on 29 November (DGY) in San Joaquin County is awaiting CBRC approval. The more common **Pacific Golden-Plover** was found at the Ceres WTP, Stanislaus County, with two on 13 September (JG, HMR). Three **Mountain Plovers** near Mendota in Fresno County on 4 September (GaW) were extremely early fall migrants. This species normally doesn't arrive until mid-October or November. A **Snowy Plover** at Bravo Lake, Tulare County, on 29 August (TKz) was a rare migrant as it was far from known breeding locations in the Tulare Basin area.

Six **Marbled Godwits** at the Lincoln WTP on 19 August (EPa) in Placer County were noteworthy, and one was at the Madera WTP on 27 September (PFa) for one of few Madera County records. Two species of turnstones together in Kings County on 26 August (JSy) featured that county's 6th **Black Turnstone** record. Nearly half of all the Central Valley's records of this rocky coastline species are from Kings County. A very late **Solitary Sandpiper** was at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on October 18 (GEw). Tulare County's second **Red Knot** visited the Stoil Pond on 20 September (TKz). There were many more **Sanderlings** than usual in the region with one at the north end of Black Butte Reservoir on 6 September (TEa) for a first Tehama County record followed up by five at the south end for the first Glenn County record on 7-13 September (JCS, JSL, JLx). The first Sutter County record came shortly afterward with one on the river at Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary on 18-19 September (DEQ, FrO). Other **Sanderlings** were found including one near Dixon in Solano County on 13-14 September (JML), two at the Ceres WTP on 11 September (JCS) for one of few Stanislaus County records away from the Modesto WTP, up to 9 at three locations in western Placer County on 25 August – 19 September, and up to 3 in Kings County on 16-29 November (GF, JSL). Two **Stilt Sandpipers** were found near Alpaugh, Tulare County, 17-19 August (SDS+). **Ruffs** included the first record for Stanislaus with up to 2 at the Ceres WTP 1-5 September (HMR, JSL, DEQ+); two in Merced County with one off Gun Club Road on 3 October (KPa); and one at Merced NWR on 6 November (PJM). A nice surprise was a confiding **Red Phalarope** (see back cover) at the Lincoln WTP on 7-8 October (EPa, PR, JCS, JSL+).

A few of the coastal-dwelling **Western Gulls** routinely occur in the Central Valley during winter at a few favored locations, but one at the Ceres WTP on 11-12 September (JCS, EC) and another at San Luis Reservoir on 14 September (TEa) were very early dates and the former was at an unusual location. A **Franklin's Gull** was at the Ceres SP on 19-20 October (HMR, DG+) for one of few Stanislaus County records and another was near Alpaugh on 17 August (SDS, JLt) in Tulare County. **Sabine's Gull** records continue to pile up with many fall reports in recent years. This fall there was one in Tulare County near Allensworth on 13-22 September (TKz, JLt), two at the Madera WTP on 17-18 September (GaW), two at the Fresno WTP on 19-23 September (LH, GP+), one at Corcoran Reservoir, Kings County, on

19-20 September (JCS, JSL), one or two at San Luis Reservoir from 14 September - 8 October (TEa, PJM, GH+), another in Merced County at the Gustine WTP 2-7 October (MMR, KPa), and one at the Woodland WTP, Yolo County, and perhaps the same individual at the Davis Wetlands on 25 September (TR, SHa). A rare inland incursion of **Heermann's Gull** included four at Kutras Lake on 4 November (KB, RBr, BED, ph. BY, CY) for Shasta County's first record. One at the O'Neill Forebay, Merced County on 20 September (ph. KVV, KPa) was most unexpected. In recent years **Common Terns** are proving to be regular migrants in small numbers at reservoirs along the edges of the Central Valley where they can be found in mid-August to early October, so seven at Black Butte Reservoir on 7 September in both Glenn and Tehama counties (JCS, JSL), seven at O'Neill Forebay on 14 September (TEa) in Merced County, and two at Lake Kaweah from 27 September to 1 October (RHa, JLt, TKz) in Tulare County fit that pattern, but each provided only the 2nd or 3rd records for their respective counties. Several were found in the center of the valley floor where perhaps less regular, including two at Buena Vista Lake, Kern County, on 19 September (JCS), one at the Davis WTP, Yolo County, on 9 September (TR), and two at the Fresno WTP on 17-19 September (GaW, JCS). An adult **Least Tern** at the Hanford WTP in 6 August (RHa) in Kings County may have wandered from a known breeding site 30 miles away. The pair that bred at the Sacramento Regional WTP was last seen 5 August (CCo). Up to four **Least Terns** at Turlock Lake established the first Stanislaus record on 23 August (DF, SSa). Surprisingly, Stanislaus County's second record occurred 35 miles away along the San Joaquin River where an immature was seen on 24 August (HMR, EC). A juvenile **Long-tailed Jaeger** harassed terns and gulls on O'Neill Forebay and San Luis Reservoir, 14 September - 8 October (TEa, GH+) for one of few Merced County records.

## LANDBIRDS

Shasta County's overdue first record of a **Barred Owl** surprisingly came from the Redding area and was well photographed on 12 November (RBU). This is also the first record for the Central Valley region of this species, which first invaded California from Oregon in the mid-1980s and has spread as far south as Marin County in the coast range and Fresno County in the Sierra Nevada. A male **Costa's Hummingbird** on 20 November at the UC Davis Arboretum (AE, IE, MT) was the first in Yolo County in several years. On the edge of the range of our reporting area, an adult male **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** visited a feeder near Nevada City from 23-31 August (RD+). This extraordinary find was one of few records for the entire state. Amazingly, both California records of adult males are from Nevada County. While searching for the pelagic birds at the O'Neill Forebay on 20 September, KVV spotted a **Black Swift** in a migrant flock of swallows and **Vaux's Swifts** for one of few Merced County records. This fall a chimney

at the UC Davis Medical Center, Sacramento County, served as a roosting site for migrating Vaux's Swifts. On 9 September, a **Chimney Swift** was heard calling several times in one of these roosting flocks for one of few reports of this eastern species from the Central Valley (JHo). A juvenile **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was reported from Slide Hill Park in east Davis on Nov 28 (MW). An adult male was at Reading Island on the Sacramento River in southern Shasta County on 5 October (BO). An adult male **Red-naped Sapsucker** was found in Stillman Magee County Park just N of Clements on 27 November (JRw) for a rare San Joaquin County record. A very early male was at Springville on 15 September (TKz) in Tulare County. A few reports of this species in the Central Valley have proven to be hybrid Red-naped X Red-breasted Sapsuckers, so caution is urged in reporting "pure" birds. A **Hairy Woodpecker** found at Cosumnes River Preserve on 28 September (JTr) was only the 4th record in 20 years of surveys at the preserve.

A **Tropical Kingbird** near Fairfield on 25 November (TJ) was the third Solano County record and one of few for the Central Valley region of a primarily coastal vagrant from Latin America. Exceptionally late-lingering **Western Kingbirds** included singles at Merced NWR from 7 October – 6 November (PJM), and at the Lodi WTP on 22-29 November (JCS, DGY+). Rare and local in the Central Valley, a wintering **Cassin's Kingbird** at Merced NWR was first discovered on 6 November (PJM) for a first record for that location and one of few for Merced County. A **Cassin's Kingbird** was at the end of Beckwith Road on 29 October (DG) in Stanislaus County where rare, and yet another was near Eastman Reservoir from 19 October into the winter period (LH+) for one of few Madera County records. There was a late fall invasion of at least 21 **Steller's Jays** discovered from 26 October – 9 November in Butte, Placer, Sacramento, and Yuba counties. The most extraordinary avian spectacle this season was the huge flock of **Tree Swallows** roosting in cornfields for several days in the Delta region of San Joaquin County in mid October (JRw+). It attracted widespread media and birder attention. Estimated as at least several hundred thousand swallows, the roost was discovered through radar by a swallow researcher Bruce Cousens from British Columbia and then located on the ground by Jim Rowoth. A **Chestnut-backed Chickadee** at Dinosaur Point near San Luis Reservoir on 5 October (SAG) was a first record for Merced County. An individual was at Discovery Park on 10 September (DW) for one of few Sacramento County records, and four-five were along Corral Hollow Road in western San Joaquin County on 11 November (EPa).

A **Sage Thrasher** was near Byron on 11 November (HH, EL) in eastern Contra Costa County. Yolo County's first two **Red-throated Pipits** were in a large flock of American Pipits along Road 105 near Davis on 20 October (TEa). Eastern warblers made a decent showing in the Central Valley this fall with most records coming from well known vagrant traps. A male **Tennessee Warbler** was along Putah Creek, Yolo County, on 9 September (JTr). A **Northern Parula** enjoyed the Cosumnes River Preserve for at least

64 days from 26 July - 28 September (JTr, CCo), and another at the O'Neill Forebay picnic area on 25 September (GaW) established the second Merced County record. A **Blackpoll Warbler** was along Putah Creek at Fishing Access #2 on 4 October (TF, RH, MK, BWa) in Yolo County and another was at the O'Neill Forebay picnic area on 21 September (PJM). The **Chestnut-sided Warbler** at North Davis Farm Ponds on 6 October (SHa) was one of few Yolo County records. A **Palm Warbler** (see back cover) along the American R. Parkway 23-25 September (DKo+) was the 4th for Sacramento County. Lightning struck twice when the 4th Sacramento County record of a **Bay-breasted Warbler** (an immature) along the American River Parkway on 20-21 September (JML+) was at the same location where another immature was found the previous fall. An **Ovenbird** at Red Bluff Recreation Center on 16 September (DW) was a first for Tehama County. Further north in Shasta County, a **Black-and-white Warbler** was in Kidde Park on 31 October (MD) for one of few county records. A **Connecticut Warbler** hit a window in Brentwood on 3 October, and pending acceptance by the CBRC, would provide a first for the Central Valley and Contra Costa County, and one of very few inland records for the Region (ph. Lindsay Wildlife Museum, *fide* SAG).

The only report of **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was of one along the American River Parkway, in Sacramento on 10 September (DW). **Green-tailed Towhees** are rare migrants in the Central Valley, but one in Davis on 10 August (GT) was early as most records are in September. A **Grasshopper Sparrow** near County Roads 12 and 97 in Yolo County on October 30 (MP) and another at the Chico State University Farm on 1 October (JSn) are two of few records of fall migrants in the region. A **Swamp Sparrow** at Cosumnes River Preserve on 28 November (JTr) was the only one reported this fall. A **Bobolink** at the Chico State University Farm near Chico on 26-27 October (JSn, BED+) was a first Butte County record and one of few for the Central Valley.

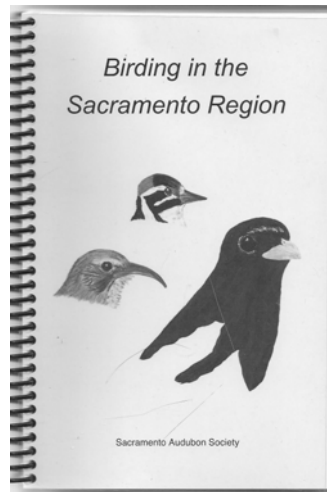
I greatly appreciate the summaries of bird sightings for Yolo County generously provided by Steve Hampton (SHa) and the Middle Pacific Coast Regional Report provided by Ed Pandolfino (EPa). Other observers: Ken Bachman, Ray Bruun (RBr), Lynette Buckman, Randy Bush (RBU), Eric Caine, Chris Conard (CCo), Mike Damoth, Rudy Darling, Bruce Deuel (BED), Todd Easterla (TEa), Andy Engilis, Irene Engilis, Gil Ewing (GEw), Peter Fahey (PFa), Gary File, Tavis Forrester, Dave Froba, Jim Gain, Dan Gilman, Steve Glover (SAG), Rob Hansen (RHa), Rachel Harris, Hugh Harvey, Gjon Hazard, Lynn Hemink, Jim Holmes (JHo), Tim Jenkins, Oscar Johnson (OsJ), Lisa Jorgensen, Dan Kopp (DKo), Mark Kudrav, Tony Kurz (TKz), Jeri Langham (JML), Eugenia Larson, John Lockhart (JLt), Jim Lomax (JLx), John Luther (JSL), Peter Metropulos (PJM), Bill Oliver, Frances Oliver (FRo), David Quady (DEQ), Kathy Parker (KPa), Michael Perrone, Gary Potter, Harold Reeve (HMR), Jeanne Ridgley, Phil Robertson, Mike Rogers (MMR),

Toby Rohmer, Deren Ross (DeR), Jim Rowoth (JRw), Sal Salerno (SSa), Jeff Seay (JSy), Jim Snowden (JSn), John Sterling (JCS), Steve Summers (SDS), Gene Trapp, John Trochet (JTr), Melanie Truan, Kent Van Vuren, Bobby Walsh (BWa), Bruce Webb (BWb), Mike Welch, Dan Williams, Gary Woods (GaW), David Yee (DGY), and Bob and Carol Yutzy. Abbreviations used: WTP=Wastewater Treatment Plant; CBRC= California Bird Records Committee; NWR=National Wildlife Refuge.

## Announcements

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### **Now's The Time to Go Birding – New Local Guidebook Shows Best Spots**



Spring has sprung, and it's a great time for local birdwatching, as warblers and other migratory birds in brightest plumage pass through on their way to breeding grounds in the mountains or the far north. Learn the best places around Sacramento to see them from the new **Bird Guide to the Sacramento Region** just published by the Sacramento Audubon Society.

The updated and greatly expanded guide details 77 spots recommended by experienced local birders and locates these sites on Google maps. The site descriptions tell what species may be found at each spot, and when they can be expected. A correlated section lists the birds by species, and the places to look for them. With ring-binding and sturdy front and back covers, the book is designed for hard use in the field.

The guide can be purchased on line for \$10 from the Sacramento Audubon Society at [sacramentoaudubon.org](http://sacramentoaudubon.org), or at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Ancil Hoffman Park, and with a slight mark-up from Wild Birds & Gardens at Madison and Fair Oaks, Wild Birds Unlimited at Loehman's Plaza, and The Naturalist in Davis.

*William C. Dillinger*