

Central Valley Region Bird Highlights: June through July 2009

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WATERBIRDS

A juvenile **Brown Pelican** flying over Highway 5 just north of Elk Grove on 6 July (KMz) provided the third record for Sacramento County. There are still very few Central Valley records of this coastal species. **Least Bitterns** are rare and local in the San Joaquin Valley, so a calling pair on private property on 19 July (HR) was exciting as it provided one of few Stanislaus County records.

A **Snowy Plover** at the Davis Wetlands on 24 July (SHa) is noteworthy, but this species has been found with increasing frequency in Yolo County in recent years. The best shorebird of the season was the Central Valley's second and King County's first **Hudsonian Godwit** on private property from 10-18 June (JSy, ph.+). This was only the second June record for the state. Unusual records of **Willet** include: two at the Modesto WTP on 28 June (EC), four at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on 10 July (TEa), six at the Galt WTP in Sacramento County on 11 July (AEn), one at the Madera WTP on 19 July (PF), 11 at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on 24 July (TEa), four at the Davis Wetlands and two at the Davis WTP on 24 July (SHa) and another at the Sacramento Regional WTP on 24 July (CCo). Unusual records of **Marbled Godwit** include one at the Madera WTP on 4 July with two there on 19 July (both PF). Unusually early records include: two adult **Semipalmated Sandpipers** at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on 10 July (TEa), another at the Madera WTP on 15 July (DVP, LH), and three adult **Pectoral Sandpipers** at the Marysville WTP on 14 July (JLa). Rare but annually found in Kings County, a **Stilt Sandpiper** and **Ruddy Turnstone** were at the Jersey Avenue Ponds on 23 July (JSy), with the **Stilt Sandpiper** and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** there on 24-25 July (MS, DVP, LH), and a **Ruddy Turnstone** at the Nevada Avenue Pond on 25 July (MS). A **Solitary Sandpiper** at the Madera WTP on 1 June (KPa) was present on an unusual date.

An adult **Franklin's Gull** visited the Davis WTP on 30-31 July (TEa, JCS+) for Yolo County's second July record in three years. Another **Franklin's Gull** graced the Modesto WTP in Stanislaus County on 28 June (EC). Five more were near Corcoran in Kings County on 3 June with one remaining on 18 June (JSy). After last year's appearance marked the first Sacramento County record, a pair of **Least Terns** returned to the Sacramento Regional WTP to successfully breed and raise two young (CCo) that fledged on 13 July and remained throughout the season (Figure 1). This is the first record of successful breeding for the Central Valley north of Kings County (see the article in Volume 12, Number 3, of the CVBC Bulletin). A

Least Tern found on 6-15 May at the Madera W.T.P. (GW, JR+) may have been the same bird seen there in late May.



Figure 1. Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) chick at the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant, Sacramento Co., 9 July 2009.

photo by Chris Conard

LANDBIRDS

Yellow-billed Cuckoos primarily occur from Sutter County north to Tehama County along the main river corridors, so one found in Shingle Springs on 28 June in the lower foothills of El Dorado County was unexpected. It was captured by a cat, but sent to a wildlife rehabilitator for treatment (fide BW, SAb). A **White-winged Dove** attracted to grain set out for a Mourning Dove study near Lincoln on 4-5 July (PR, ph., BWb) was Placer County's first record. There are very few records for the Central Valley region, and this is the first documented record for the Sacramento Valley. **Vermilion Flycatchers** have been found increasingly in the Central Valley but primarily in winter, so an adult male at the Tule Elk Preserve in Kern County on 3 June (Bill Moffat fide AS) was a pleasant surprise. This species may eventually become regular breeders in the valley as their range in California has been expanding northward in recent decades. The **Red-breasted Nuthatch** at the Cosumnes River Preserve on 12 July (JTr) was early for a lowland record as most other "summer-dispersal" records are from August.

A **Bell's Vireo** was singing at O'Neill Forebay Wildlife Area on 21 May (PM) but could not be relocated in subsequent days. We hope that this

species will successfully re-establish its range in the Central Valley—a hope not imagined only a few years ago (see the article in Volume 8, Number 3, of the CVBC Bulletin). A singing **Red-eyed Vireo** was found at North Pond in Davis on 18-30 July (CD, JCS+) for Yolo County's second record. Amazingly, a female **Northern Parula** was found at the same location on 29 July (SHa) and seen for several days to establish Yolo County's fifth record. Another north of Vacaville on 17 June (DB) was the second record for Solano County. A big surprise was the singing **Ovenbird** next to the Federal Building on Cottage Way in Sacramento from 1-8 June (JW+). It was only the third Sacramento County record and one of very few for the Central Valley. Rounding out the eastern warbler sightings was a singing male **Chestnut-sided Warbler** in the Sutter Bypass on 25 June (RDIG) for the second Sutter County record. A singing male **Indigo Bunting** was seen on territory in chaparral along Old Auburn/Forestville Road in the lower foothills of Placer County from 5-15 June (BWb+). In Orangevale, Sacramento County, an adult male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited a feeder on 8-9 July (TC, ph.).

Thanks to Chris Conard (CCo) and Bruce Deuel (BED) for supplying summaries of bird sightings. Other observers include: Steve Abbott (SAb), David Bell, Tom Cadle, Eric Caine, Ryan DiGaudio, Chris Dunford, Todd Easterla (TEa), Andy Engilis, Jr. (AEn), Peter Fahey, Steve Hampton (SHa), Lauren Harter, Jim Laughlin (JLa), Peter Metropulos, Kurt Mize (KMz), Kathy Parker (KPa), Harold Reeve, Phil Robertson, Jill Rucker, Jeff Seay (JSy), Alison Sheehey, Mark Stacy, John Sterling (JCS), John Trochet (JTr), David Vander Pluym (DVP), Bruce Webb (BWb), Jim Weigand, Bill Wade, and Gary Woods. Abbreviation used: WTP = Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Corrections to Spring 2009 report: Bruce Deuel was the discoverer of the Willet in Sutter County and Steve Glover found the Grasshopper Sparrow in Tehama County—both on 4 May.