

Central Valley Region Bird Highlights: June through July 2010

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WATERBIRDS

Least Bitterns were back again for the fourth summer in a row at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (DF). This species is a recent addition to the list of breeding species in Yolo County as a result of habitat creation/restoration by Wildlife Area personnel. A **Brant**, rare at any time in the Central Valley, was along Main Canal near Firebaugh in Fresno County on 28 June (SBT, JSy). A **Snowy Plover** at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on 13 July (ToE) was no longer considered highly unusual as it is now found there annually. A nice mix of rare shorebirds graced the Lodi WTP in San Joaquin County on 24 July (DGY) with a **Snowy Plover**, **Solitary Sandpiper** and a juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper**. A **Solitary Sandpiper** was also there on 5-6 July (JR), and another was in southwestern Sutter County on 20 July (JSL). Two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were at the Chico WTP, Butte County on 20 July (JSL). A total of 6 adult and 3 juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were found at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area during July (ToE). Most surprising were six **Ruddy Turnstones** there on 30 July (ToE) which is a very high count for an inland site in California away from the Salton Sea. A basic-plumaged **Red Knot** summered at Atwell Island in southwestern Tulare County from 8 June to at least 19 July (SAL). Four **Marbled Godwits** and a rare fall migrant **Whimbrel** visited the Sacramento Bufferlands on 19 July (CCo). **Marbled Godwits** are rarely reported during any season from Sacramento County. In contrast, twelve **Marbled Godwits** and four **Whimbrels** were in neighboring Yolo County just north of Davis along County Road 105 on 18 July (ToE, KvG). Two **Willetts** were at the Volta Pond on Henry Miller Road in Merced County on 25 July (JD). A **Willet** was at the Llano Seco Unit of the Sacramento NWR on 20 July (JSL), one was at the Ceres WTP on 12 July (EC), and another was at the Lincoln WTP on 22-23 July (DeR). Two **Willetts** in rice fields in southwestern Sutter County on 19 July (JLa) established only the third county record. This species is uncommon to rare in the Central Valley north of the Tulare Lake Basin. Six **Franklin's Gulls** near Corcoran, Kings County, on 4 June (JSy) were late spring migrants, and a high total for the Central Valley of this rare gull. The most unexpected waterbird of the season was Stanislaus County's first **Laughing Gull** at the Modesto WTP on 13 June (EC). An adult **Heermann's Gull** flew north over the Sacramento River in Anderson for Shasta County's second or third record (BP). As in last summer, a pair of **Least Terns** bred at the Sacramento Bufferlands, with one chick fledging on 25 July (CCo).

The landbird of the season was the “needle-in-a-haystack” **Mexican Whip-poor-will** in logging country near Forbestown, Butte County, for our first area record. Found beyond the end of a logging road during an owl survey on 26 June (SHU), it remained until at least 19 July. There is only one other inland record for northern California—one returned for three years in western Trinity County—and only a couple other records from coastal counties. **Say’s Phoebe** breeding status in the Central Valley and surround foothills is not well understood and is limited and sporadic. A single bird near Porterville on 2 July (SDS) may have been a rare, local breeder in Tulare County. **Least Bell’s Vireos** found during spring remained at San Luis NWR through July (KVV+), near Lake Success to at least 16 July (SDS, RH), and in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area through July (EW+). A singing **Red-eyed Vireo** in Galt on 23 June (DGY) was one of few Sacramento County records. A singing **Canyon Wren** at Atwell Island in southwestern Tulare County was a surprise summer visitor on 17 July (SAL). This species is rare and unexpected on the valley floor, but is known to wander down slope from the Sierra Nevada during winter. A mid-summer record does not fit into any expected pattern of vagrancy. Late spring vagrant warblers found included a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** at Loomis Basin Regional Park, Placer County, on 5 June (RB), a **Northern Parula** (possibly two) near the Sacramento River west of Woodland, Yolo County, on 3 June (SCH) and a singing second-year male **American Redstart** south of West Sacramento, Yolo County, on 4 June (ToE). A male **Indigo Bunting** near Lake Success, Tulare County, on 3-19 July (SDS, JLD, JLx) was discovered with a female on 16 July (SDS, RH). These were the only ones reported this summer. Placer County’s third documented breeding record for **Grasshopper Sparrow** was of a juvenile bird photographed along Chamberlain Road near Lincoln on 18 July (PR).

Thanks to Steve Hampton (SCH) for supplying summaries of bird sightings. Other observers include: Ruth Baylis, Eric Caine, Chris Conard (CCo), Joe Devine, Jon Dunn (JLD), Todd Easterla (ToE), Dave Feliz, Kevin Guse (KvG), Rob Hansen, Scott Huber (SHU), Jim Laughlin (JLa), Steve Laymon (SAL), Jim Lomax (JLx), John Luther (JSL), Barbara Peck, Phil Robertson, Deren Ross (DeR), Jim Rowth, Jeff Seay (JSy), Steve Summers (SDS), Scott Terrill (SBT), Kent Van Vuren, Ed Whistler and David Yee (DGY). Abbreviations used: NWR = National Wildlife Refuge; WTP = Wastewater Treatment Ponds.