

# Central Valley Bird Highlights: March through May 2013

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A rare inland **Brant** was discovered on the O'Neill Forebay in Merced County on 22 May (KVV) and stayed into June. Individuals of the Eurasian subspecies of the **Green-winged Teal** are annually found in the region and this year one lingered at the Yolo Bypass WA in Yolo County until 3 March (GEw), and another until 18 April at the Llano Seco Unit in Butte County (JB). A rare, lingering immature male **Barrow's Goldeneye** was found on the late date of 14 May (JCS) at the Iron Horse WTP in Contra Costa County. Scoters are rare inland, but Sherman Island has become a somewhat regular location in recent years for **Surf Scoters** with seven there on 10 March (GEw) and four on 12 March (CC). Seven **Red-breasted Mergansers** at the Tulare WTP on 14 May (JLk) was a high count for Tulare County.

**Common Loon** is rare in the region away from a handful of large reservoirs, so one at Corcoran Res. on 15 May (JLk) was a surprise and perhaps only the second or so record for Kings County. Five **Brown Pelicans** that arrived in the fall, continued until at least 24 March (DMo) on San Luis Res. in Merced County. Three exceptionally late, lingering **Rough-legged Hawks** were in southern/eastern Sacramento County with one on 27 March (JTr), and two on 30 March (EP, CCo, CIH).

An early **Snowy Plover** stopped at the Woodland WTP on 14 March (SCH) and one there on 10 April (CG) may have been the same bird. Another was at the Modesto WTP in Stanislaus County on 14 April (HMR). This "coastal" species is rare in the region away from saline ponds in the Tulare Basin. **Pacific Golden-Plovers** are rare and local in the region, and there are usually some wintering with flocks of **Black-bellied Plovers**. Two were at the Modesto WTP on 9 March (JG), and a migrant was at the Kern NWR on 3 May (AS). On Waltz Road along the western edge of Mariposa County, a **Black-necked Stilt** on 9 April (JLu) delighted the observer for one of few county records. Tracy WTP in San Joaquin County hosted a **Red Knot** on 26 April (DGY) as did Corcoran Res in Kings County on 21 April (MSy) and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** on 28 April (SSt). Also in Kings County, a **Stilt Sandpiper** was at a dairy in the eastern side of the county on 21-28 April (JLk) and a **Ruddy Turnstone** was on the Nevada Ave ponds on 11 May (JLk). Another **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at the Kingsburg WTP in Fresno

County on 14 May (SDS). This species is much scarcer in spring than during fall migration in the state.

Rare Sutter County **Willetts** were singles along Marcuse Road and Catlett Road on 20 April (JLg, DSk). Two large flocks of 15 and 21 **Willetts** at the Woodland WTP and Davis WTP on 18 April (TEa) have little precedence in Yolo County. The Granite Bay boat ramp proved to be a magnet for unusual shorebirds with: a **Snowy Plover** on 6 April (RP), a **Willet** on 17 April (RP), a **Marbled Godwit** on 22 April (RP), two **Willetts** on 3 May (RP), and two **Sanderlings** on 7 May (SD) joined by two **Marbled Godwits** on 8 May (SD). Three **Sanderlings** visited the Modesto WTP on 11 May (KPa) and were joined by a flock of nine **Franklin's Gulls** on 13 May (HMR) which is likely the highest count for Stanislaus County and the Central Valley. Another **Franklin's Gull** was at Corcoran Res on 21 April (JLk). **Glaucous Gulls** remained on wintering areas into March with two at Modesto WTP in Stanislaus County on 9 March (JG). Away from the Delta region, **Mew Gull** is rare and local, so one at Black Butte Res. on 5-13 March (PC, S&DR) was a noteworthy Tehama County record, and one on Marcuse Road on 20 April was only the second Sutter County record (JLg, DSk).

The best bird of the season was the **Inca Dove** that first visited a backyard in Tulare on 16 May (DF) and stayed for many months. This is the first record for the Central Valley. Although it is possible that it came from a cage, there have been numerous records from Death Valley, eastern Kern County and the Antelope Valley. Given the date and the pattern of records, I consider this record as a wild bird. **Spotted Owls** are birds of montane forests and deep, wooded canyons, so an immature owl wandering into Rocklin on 25 February was lost and found to be emaciated. It was rehabilitated by Gold Country Wildlife Rescue and released in Tahoe National Forest in April. There are few records for the valley floor with one notable record from Los Banos Wildlife Area in Merced County in the 1980s.

A pair of **Costa's Hummingbirds** coming to a feeder in Redding, Shasta County on 12 April (JSm) were well north of their usual range. Yolo County's first **Red-naped Sapsucker** found in February was last seen on 11 March (MPe). **Cassin's Kingbird's** enigmatic distribution varies somewhat annually. One was at the Basalt Campground near San Luis Res. in Merced County on 9 May (KVv), and two pairs there on 14 May (JCS) were likely nesting. Three individuals were still present on 20 May (DMo). A **Gray Flycatcher** at the Sacramento Bypass in Yolo County on 13 May (SCH), at Liberty Farms in Kings County on 28 April-1 May (JLk, JCS), and along the American River Parkway in Sacramento County on 18 April (KT), 11 May (DKo) and 16 May (MM) were the only reports of this scarce spring migrant. A singing **Bell's Vireo** visited the Bufferlands in Sacramento County on 29-30 April (CC), but could not be found on subsequent searches.

Shasta County's first **Black-capped Chickadee** visited a feeder in Redding in February and last appeared on 1 March (BC). This established the first record for the entire Central Valley. **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** are rare and local in the Delta Region and very rare elsewhere in the valley and western foothills. One was at Oak Grove Regional Park in San Joaquin County on 31 March–1 April (MT, JLx), and another at Frank Raines Park in Del Puerto Canyon on 13-18 May (KPa, MD) was one of a few records for Stanislaus County. As usual, a few **Sage Thrashers** were seen in March with the northernmost record in Tehama County, where rare, on Spring Branch Road on 2 March (RW). Following this past winter's records of **Townsend's Solitaires** in Sacramento County, one visited a backyard in Carmichael on 24 March (KB).

King County's second **Northern Parula** record came from Liberty Farm on 22 May (JLk), and another was at the Cosumnes River Preserve on 11 May (JRo). The **Palm Warbler** at Sandy Beach Park south of Rio Vista in Solano County was last reported on 7 March (JCS). Also remaining from the winter period, the **Green-tailed Towhee** at Jacob Myers Park in Stanislaus/San Joaquin counties was still present on 4 March (SSa), and a migrant on the Sacramento Bypass in Yolo County on 7 May (RM). The **Harris's Sparrow** continued in north Davis, Yolo County until 9 April (CD). A singing **Grasshopper Sparrow** on Mooney Flat Road near Englebright Lake on 24 April through at least mid-May (KNN) was a first record for Nevada County. Two male **Lark Buntings** on County Road 38 in southern Yolo County on 6 May (AE) and one remaining on 9 May (KPa), and another on Del Puerto Canyon Road in Stanislaus County on 24 April (HH) were the only ones reported. A rare migrant **Black-throated Sparrow** was detected in Lincoln, Placer County on 4 May (HW). **Brewer's Sparrows** migrate through the region each spring in low numbers and this spring they were found at: Michigan Bar Road and Nottoli Park in Sacramento County on 7 April and again at Nottoli Park on 16 April (AC), Michigan Bar Road on 24 April (EP), 5-6 on White Rock Road in western Mariposa County on 24 April (SL), one along Meiss Road in Sacramento County on 13 April (MM, TF) and six there on 22 April (LP, KZ), and one at Beale Air Force Base in Yuba County on 25 April (HW).

An immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was in Modesto on 29 May (EC) for one of few Stanislaus County records, and which fits with the peak timing of vagrants moving through the region. The only **Indigo Bunting** reported was a female on Del Puerto Canyon in Stanislaus County on 20 May (JLu). Four **Red Crossbills** also remained in McKinley Park, Sacramento through at least 7 March (DB), and one adult male was found at Beyer Park in Modesto on 30 April (JA) for one of a few records for Stanislaus County. **Evening Grosbeaks** graced a backyard in Orangevale, Sacramento County, with four on 11 March and two on 20 March (BA) adding to the list of recent

late winter/early spring records for the valley floor. Several were seen irregularly through the winter and last seen on 13 April in the eastern suburbs of Fresno (LH, CH).

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Abbreviations used; NWR=National Wildlife Refuge; WTP=Wastewater Treatment Plant; WA=State Wildlife Area



Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*). Shasta County California.  
8 March 2013. Photo © Bob & Carol Yutzky.