

Central Valley Bird Highlights: June through July 2003

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WATERBIRDS

There were few reports of unusual bird sightings in summer 2003. Probably the waterbird highlight for the season was the number of **Least Bitterns** reported, following the pattern set the previous spring, with several records in areas where they are rarely found. One calling in Markham Ravine on Dowd Road, Placer County, on 14 June (EP) was only the second or third county record. Another was on the Faith Ranch in Merced County on 24 July (GZ). Two or three were on County Road 30 near Davis during the summer and were thought to be nesting there for what would be a first for Yolo County if documented (SH+). **Clark's Grebes** nested at the Davis Wetlands (SH+) for the first documented breeding record for Yolo County.

This is the season when fall migration begins for shorebirds with the first adults usually arriving during the last week in June and the first juveniles during the last week in July. Few shorebirds are found in the Central Valley from early to mid-June; some of these may be late spring migrants or early fall migrants, but some are over-summering birds. A visit to the Madera Sewage Ponds, Madera County, on 4 June (JLu) yielded 6 **Black-bellied Plovers**, 2 **Greater Yellowlegs**, and one **Red-necked Phalarope**. Observation of two **Franklin's Gulls** there on 1 June (MF) was one of few records for Madera County. Two **Marbled Godwits** at the Modesto Sewage Ponds on 11 July (JG) was a rare sighting for Stanislaus County, but 17 **Willetts** there on 27 July (JG) was one of the largest flocks ever recorded from that region of the valley. One remained there on 30 July along with a **Solitary Sandpiper** for only the 4th or 5th county record of the latter species (JLo, JLu). The **Solitary Sandpiper** was also seen the following day along with two **Snowy Plovers** and 2 **Marbled Godwits** (JLo, JG). Only one **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was reported for the season: off of Henry Miller Road in Merced County on 24 July (KVV).

LANDBIRDS

The bird of the season was a well-documented **Eastern Wood-Pewee** singing on 22 June (JML) from outside the observer's backyard along the American River Parkway in the Sacramento metropolitan area. This is the first Sacramento County record and only the second for the Central Valley—the other was in San Joaquin County from mid-August to mid-September 1983. Pending acceptance by the California Bird Records Committee, this would only be the 10th record for the state. Another great, well-documented

find was Yolo County's first **Gray Catbird** on the Conaway Ranch in the Yolo Bypass near Woodland, 12-15 June (AE, many observers). Other landbird highlights were first Yolo County nesting records of **Purple Martin** in Davis (CR), **Grasshopper Sparrow** in the western foothills on private property, and probable nesting of **Dark-eyed Junco** in Thompson Canyon (SH+).

Observers: Andy Engilis, Mike Feighner, Jim Gain, Steve Hampton, Jeri M. Langham (JML), Jim Lomax (JLo), John Luther (JLu), Ed Pandolfino, Chad Roberts, Kent Van Vuren, and Gary Zahm.

Announcements

President's Message

As the end of the year and my term as President of the CVBC approaches, I've spent some time thinking about the progress we've made towards achieving the goals that were established by the bird club back in the summer of 1997. Those goals were presented by interim President, Tim Manolis, in the first issue of the Bulletin. Tim wrote "the general goals of the CVBC are to foster collection and dissemination of information about, and promote interest in, the birdlife of the Central Valley. A major concern of the group in formulating these goals is the conservation of avian diversity in this region." While it may be difficult to accurately measure to what degree we've succeeded in the pursuit of these goals, certainly progress has been made.

Here are some facts and figures to help illustrate just how successful we've been: (1) our membership is at its highest level since our inception with over five hundred members; (2) nearly four hundred participants attended the 7th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium, which is now recognized as one of the premier birding events in the County; (3) we have a quarterly journal that the membership can be proud of and that continues to improve; (4) we maintain a popular listserv that is used by birders throughout the Central Valley; (5) we've developed a successful scholarship program and awarded our first scholarship earlier this year; (6) we recently completed the first Central Valley Bird checklist and plans are already underway to develop a more comprehensive version; and (7) we are fortunate to have a healthy budget and solid cash reserves in the bank. These kinds of accomplishments would make just about any non-profit, birding organization envious – let alone one that is only entering its eighth year.