

**Central Valley Bird Highlights:
December 2004 through February 2005**

John Sterling, 26 Palm Ave, Woodland, CA 95965

WATERBIRDS

A **Pacific Loon** at Lake Success on 31 December (L&CL) and 15 January (MF) was a first record for Tulare County. The **Red-necked Grebe** found earlier in November was still present through early February at Tulloch Lake in Calaveras and Tuolumne counties (JLu, JS+). Another near Davis on 30 January (SH) was present for several weeks and was the second or third record for Yolo County. Two **Tundra Swans** at Salt Springs Valley Reservoir in the foothills of Calaveras County on 1 December (JLu) was the tenth county record—all of which have come from that location. **Eurasian Wigeon** are not too uncommon in the Central Valley during winter, but 24 found at Kutras Lake on 13 December (BD, BY) was an unusually large group for that location and is probably a record high count for Shasta County. A first-year male **Tufted Duck** at Merced Falls from 17 January to 12 February (SG+) was well photographed for the first record for Mariposa County and the first for eastern Merced County as well. In the past two decades there have been several records of this species for O'Neill Forebay on the western side of the county including one on 23 January (DR). An extraordinary record of a male **Harlequin Duck*** came from the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area where one was shot by a hunter on 23 January (*vide* MSc). Needless-to-say, this was a first record for Yolo County and one of few for the Central Valley. A **Long-tailed Duck** at the O'Neill Forebay (Figure 1) on 21 December (JG) was one of several records for this location in Merced County. Another was at the Llano Seco Unit of the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (hereafter



Figure 1. Long-tailed Duck at O'Neill Forebay, Merced Co., 21 December 2004.

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NWR) on 8 January (MS, JLe) and what may have been the same bird along the Feather River in Oroville in February (BS) were two of few records for Butte County. A very rare inland **White-winged Scoter** was at the O'Neill Forebay on 12 January (GW) for one of few records for Merced County. A female Surf Scoter was at Kutras Lake during February (RS)—a location where the species has been record several times in recent winters.

A **Stilt Sandpiper** found at the Merced NWR on 6 February (LCh) and 14 February (JG) was at a location where the species has wintered in recent years. An adult **Western Gull** at Kutras Lake on 3 December (RS) that remained to mid-February was at a location in Shasta County where that species and other rare gulls are becoming somewhat regular in winter. Another adult **Western Gull** photographed at Delevan NWR on 19 February (L&CL) was a first record for Colusa County. A first-year **Thayer's Gull** at the Nevada Avenue Pond on 4 December (SG) and another along 6th Avenue on 17 January (JS) were two of few records of this species for Kings County. Five **Thayer's Gulls** were also nearby in southern Fresno County, attracted to a landfill on American Road on 14 December (JD). This species may prove to be more regular in the lower San Joaquin Valley than previously thought. A **Mew Gull** wandered north to Oroville at the Feather River Fish Hatchery on 5 December (BD). In the Central Valley, this species is primary found in the vicinity of the Delta, Sacramento and Davis. Another **Mew Gull** at Buena Vista Lake on 3 February (ML) was in Kern County where this species very rare.



Figure 2. Common Black Hawk at North Lake, Stockton, San Joaquin Co., 28 January 2005. *photo © Herb Clarke*

LANDBIRDS

The **Common Black Hawk** (Figure 2) found in the fall in Stockton remained through the winter and was eventually seen by many birders. A **Long-eared**

Owl on Staten Island on 20 January (JR) was a rare find for San Joaquin County. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** wintered at Ming Park in Bakersfield, Kern County (MM). An **Eastern Phoebe*** was discovered frequenting both banks along Putah Creek on 2 December (IT) for only the second record for Yolo County and a first for Solano County. The **Eastern Phoebe*** found at the Cosumnes River Preserve in November (Figure 3) continued through at least December. Another was at Lemoore on 18 January (MSt) for a first or second Kings County record. A **Vermilion Flycatcher** at a golf course near Kerman from 14 December into at least February (GW+) was a great find for the valley floor and Fresno County, and another was found at Los Banos Wildlife Area (HR) in Merced County, where it likely wintered and where there are records from recent winters. And yet another **Vermilion Flycatcher** at the Kern NWR on 19 January (JP) had undoubtedly wintered there. A **Townsend's Solitaire** on the Sutter Buttes on 22 December (*vide* BD) was one of few Sutter County records. A **Northern Shrike** at Gray Lodge on 22 December (BD) in Butte County and one near the Waldo Bridge in the Spenceville Wildlife Area on 7 January (JLu, JLo) in Yuba County were the only ones reported this winter for the region.

A female **Summer Tanager*** was photographed in a backyard in Sacramento on 30 January (RSO). A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** coming to a backyard birdfeeder in Redding in January (*vide* BY) was a surprise for

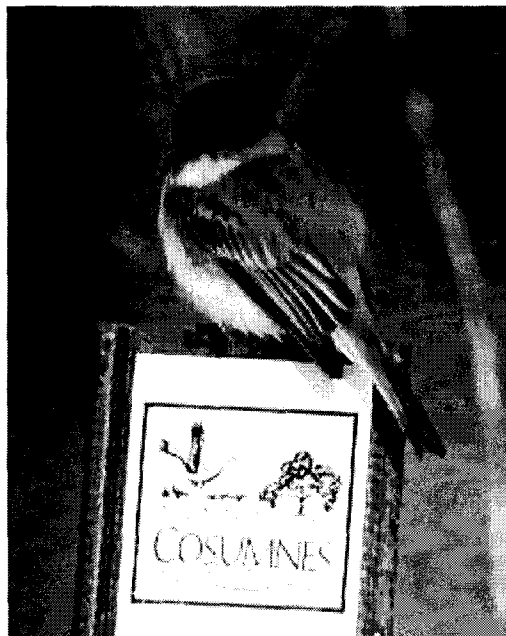


Figure 3. Eastern Phoebe at Cosumnes River Preserve, Sacramento Co., 15 November 2004.

photo © Steve Abbott

Shasta County birders. At a development in Lincoln, Placer County, a **Green-tailed Towhee*** was discovered wintering in January (EP) for one of few valley floor records and even fewer winter records for northern California. Wintering at Ming Park in Bakersfield was a **Clay-colored Sparrow** (MM). A rare wintering **Grasshopper Sparrow** was at the Jepson Prairie on 9 January (BG) and was only the second record for Solano County. A **Harris's Sparrow** (Figure 4) at the west end of Beckwith Road on 29 January (HR) stayed for several weeks and many birders enjoyed this first record for Stanislaus

County. A **Lapland Longspur*** on Flannery Road, 1/2 mile east of Hwy. 113, on 5 December (KK) was the only one reported, and one of few records for Solano County.

A female **Orchard Oriole** found coming to backyard bird feeders in Manteca, San Joaquin County on 5 February and again from March to mid-April (TG, WH+) was only the second county and Central Valley record. It was well photographed and seen by many. Details will be published in a later



Bulletin. There was also a rare wintering female **Hooded Oriole** there during the same period. A lucky birder noticed a **Red Crossbill*** flying overhead in Citrus Heights on 9 January (SA) for a rare valley floor and Sacramento County record.

* Pending endorsement by the Sacramento Bird Records Committee

Figure 4. Harris's Sparrow at Beckwith and Page Roads, Stanislaus Co.

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