

Central Valley Bird Highlights: March through May 2005

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It was a great spring for our regularly-occurring birds once again, but a slow spring for rare birds in the Central Valley. The highlight was the first valley record of **Cassin's Sparrow** along Latrobe Road in the grasslands of southeastern Sacramento County (EP+) from 21-30 May, and was seen and photographed by many birders (Pandolfino 2005). Birders looking for it also found a **Brewer's Sparrow** on nearby Michigan Bar Road (GE+) from 22-24 May as well as at least three **Common Nighthawks** and at least seven **Lesser Nighthawks** along Meiss Road (AE+) from 24-30 May. This is a traditional location for **Lesser Nighthawks**, but **Common Nighthawks** were previously considered to be extremely rare migrants in Sacramento County. The Common Nighthawks exhibited courtship behavior and were documented to be present for at least a week, so they likely bred there. This species has a very patchy distribution in the Central Valley, with regular breeding known only near Lincoln, Placer County, and a few locations near the Sacramento River in Tehama County. Both Lesser and Common Nighthawks have been found during the breeding season near the Chico and Oroville airports in Butte County, primarily on U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Breeding Bird Surveys, with nesting reportedly documented for both species near the Chico Airport (*vide* TM). Interestingly, however, both species have not been found breeding in the same year at either Butte County location.

A **White-winged Dove** at King's Row adjacent to Burriss Park in the NE corner of King's County (LH+) 19-20 May was a first county record and one of few ever found in the Central Valley. Also of interest were up to four **Purple Martins** in the Yokohl Valley in Tulare County (RH) on 21 May for what is thought to be only the third county record.

Observers: Andy Engilis, Gil Ewing, Rob Hansen, Lynn Hemmink, Tim Manolis and Ed Pandolfino.

LITERATURE CITED

Pandolfino, Ed. 2005. First Central Valley Record of Cassin's Sparrow. Central Valley Bird Club Bulletin 8: 21-25.