

Central Valley Bird Highlights: August through November 2005

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WATERBIRDS

At Lake Success from 15-24 September, an immature **Brown Pelican** was present for a first Tulare County record (SS, JLx). Two **Least Bitterns** at the Consumnes River Preserve on 22 November (JT) were in an area from which there are increasing numbers of records in recent years. This species is known to occasionally winter in the Central Valley, but the extent of this



Figure 1. Brown Pelican, Lake Success, Tulare Co., 15 September 2005.

photo by Steve Summers

is not fully understood due to the species' cryptic behavior and the large expanses of under-surveyed marshlands. A **Black Brant** at the Modesto Sewage Ponds in Stanislaus County on 12 October (JSL) was a good find. This species is rarely reported from the Central Valley, but is usually in association with large flocks of Cackling Geese (especially Aleutians). An immature male **Harlequin Duck** was found at the Stockton Sewage Ponds during the Central Valley Bird Symposium on 20 November (BW+) and apparently wintered there. Although not unprecedented for the valley floor, it was an unexpected surprise for the second San Joaquin County record

and one of very few inland records away from suspected breeding locations in the Sierra Nevada. A **Mississippi Kite** found along the Tule River, Tulare County on 5 October (MSM) is the first Central Valley record accepted by the California Bird Records Committee.

Three **Marbled Godwits** in rice field near the Thermalito Afterbay, Butte County on 7-13 October (BWi, JCS) were in an area where they are rare, especially that late in the fall when most regional godwits are in the southern San Joaquin Valley. The Chowchilla Sewage Ponds hosted the first **Marbled Godwit** for Madera County on 26 August (GW) along with a high count of three **Solitary Sandpipers**, up from one found there on 24 August (JD) that was with a **Baird's Sandpiper**. A single **Solitary Sandpiper** also was present there on August 15 (JG). Gray Lodge in Butte County also hosted



San Joaquin Co., 20 November
photo by Richard Hall

piper on 16 and 17 August (O, JRo) were two **Baird's** ty record. Two **Pectoral derling** were at the Fresno). A **Willet** at the northern &CL) was perhaps the only species, which is rare in the Lodi Sewage Ponds on 9 and onds on 8 October (DY). A on 15 September (JG, JCS) or the entire Central Valley Stanislaus County that day it of 23 **Lesser Yellowlegs,** **iper** (JG). A **Ruddy Turn-** ent Plant in Yolo County on species inland than the Black it regular locations in Kings ds on 4 September (JK). A

Sanderling was at the Sacramento Regional V September (CC). The best shorebirds of the se **Sandpipers** found along Utica Road on 9 Octob County record, and two found at the Vic Fazio V from 31 October to 12 November (DC, JCS+). Brewer Road in western Placer County on 29-3 only a handful of county records as was one in (SG) at Sutter NWR.

A **Western Gull** in Redding, Shasta Count ber (BD) may have been the same one that wint is becoming one of the more regular inland local species. However, one at the Corcoran Ponds i



Figure 3. Sabine's Gull at Stoil Ponds, Tulare Co

date of 9-13 September (KK, LH) was a first c for the valley south of Merced County. Two im Stoil Ponds along Highway 43 in southwe September (SS) was an overdue first county r ered at the Jersey Ave ponds in Kings County one at the Modesto Sewage Ponds on 11 Octo for Stanislaus County. A rare, inland **Arcti** Common Terns at the Lodi Sewage Ponds in 27 September (WH, DY, JSL+) for one of very **A Least Tern** at the Fresno Wastewater Treatn LH) was one of few records for the species in t salt ponds in southwestern Kings and northw



Figure 2. Harlequin Duck, Stockton Sewage Ponds, San Joaquin Co., 20 November 2005. *photo by Richard Hall*

three **Solitary Sandpipers** and a **Baird's Sandpiper** on 16 and 17 August (JLa). Nearby in District 10 on 18 August (FO, JRo) were two **Baird's Sandpipers**, for an overdue first Yuba County record. Two **Pectoral Sandpipers**, one **Baird's Sandpiper** and a **Sanderling** were at the Fresno Sewage Treatment Plant on 13 August (BB, LH). A **Willet** at the northern end of Black Butte Reservoir on 9 September (L&CL) was perhaps the only the second record for Tehama County of this species, which is rare in the Sacramento Valley. **Red Knots** appeared at the Lodi Sewage Ponds on 9 and 18 September (KM), and the Stockton Sewage Ponds on 8 October (DY). A **Black Turnstone** at the Modesto Sewage Ponds on 15 September (JG, JCS) was a first for Stanislaus County and one of few for the entire Central Valley of this coastal species. Other shorebirds seen in Stanislaus County that day at the Ceres Sewage Ponds included a high count of 23 **Lesser Yellowlegs**, 2 **Pectoral Sandpipers** and one **Solitary Sandpiper** (JG). A **Ruddy Turnstone** was at the Woodland Wastewater Treatment Plant in Yolo County on 4 Aug (RH, JH). It is a rare, but more regular species inland than the Black Turnstone. The only **Stilt Sandpiper** away from its regular locations in Kings and Kern counties was one at the Davis Wetlands on 4 September (JK). A

Sanderling was at the Sacramento Regional Water Treatment Plant on 23 September (CC). The best shorebirds of the season were the **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** found along Utica Road on 9 October (JLx, JSL) for a first Kings County record, and two found at the Vic Fazio Wildlife Area in Yolo County from 31 October to 12 November (DC, JCS+). A **Ruff** in a rice field along Brewer Road in western Placer County on 29-30 October (TE+) was one of only a handful of county records as was one in Sutter County on 15 August (SG) at Sutter NWR.

A **Western Gull** in Redding, Shasta County, discovered on 15 November (BD) may have been the same one that wintered the previous year. This is becoming one of the more regular inland locations of this primarily coastal species. However, one at the Corcoran Ponds in Kings County on the early

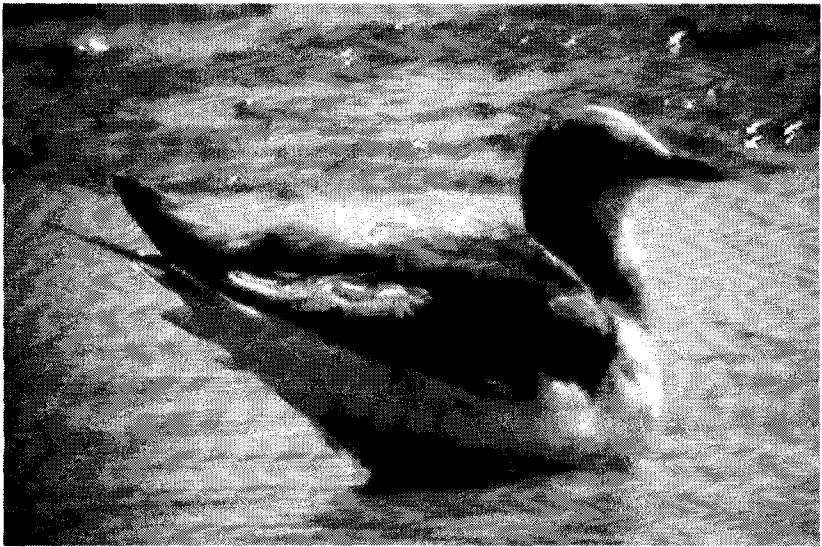


Figure 3. Sabine's Gull at Stoil Ponds, Tulare Co., 21 September 2005.

photo by Steve Summers

date of 9-13 September (KK, LH) was a first county record and one of few for the valley south of Merced County. Two immature **Sabine's Gulls** at the Stoil Ponds along Highway 43 in southwestern Tulare County on 21 September (SS) was an overdue first county record. Another was discovered at the Jersey Ave ponds in Kings County on 26 September (JSe), and one at the Modesto Sewage Ponds on 11 October (JG) was the third record for Stanislaus County. A rare, inland **Arctic Tern** was with a flock of **Common Terns** at the Lodi Sewage Ponds in San Joaquin County from 22-27 September (WH, DY, JSL+) for one of very few Central Valley records. A **Least Tern** at the Fresno Wastewater Treatment ponds on 13 August (BB, LH) was one of few records for the species in the Central Valley away from salt ponds in southwestern Kings and northwestern Kern counties. This

species has bred in recent years in Kings County, so we anticipate more records in the San Joaquin Valley.

LANDBIRDS

A **Hammond's Flycatcher** at Burris Park in Kings County on 22 November (MSM) and a **Western Kingbird** near Snelling in Merced County on 4 November (JTz) were very late migrants. Kern County hosted two rare wintering flycatchers: an **Eastern Phoebe** at the Tule Elk Preserve first found on 14 November (BM), and a male **Vermilion Flycatcher** at the Kern NWR in Kern County discovered on 22 October (D&KM). Another **Eastern Phoebe** put in a brief showing at UC Davis on 7 October (BBE). Hot on the heels of the summer's **Least Bell's Vireo** records, a molting bird was found in the riparian vegetation below Lake Success on 15 September (SS) for the first Tulare County record, and one of few recent records for the species in the entire Central Valley. A male and female **Purple Martin** at the Gustine Sewage Ponds on 23 September (AD) was a rare record of a migrant on the valley floor and one of few records for Merced County. The **Mountain Chickadee** at Slide Hill Park in Davis on 23 November (MP+) was the first record in Yolo County in 24 years and one of very few on the valley floor in the past decade. A **Sage Thrasher** on Pyramid Hills Road in Kings County on 26 September (JLx, FO) was in a location and habitat where one would expect to find this species during migration.



Figure 4. Mountain Chickadee in Davis, Yolo County, 25 November 2005.

photo by Marcel Holyoak

Babel Slough produced another fine warbler record with a **Northern Parula** found on 18 September (MK) for one of few for Yolo County. One of the best land bird finds of the season was the discovery of a **Blackburnian Warbler** at the Orr Ranch in southern Sacramento County on 25 September (CC). The only **Blackpoll Warbler** reported was along Babel Slough on 7 October (SH, MK, MP) in Yolo County. A **Palm Warbler** at the Gray Lodge Wildlife Management Area on 26 November (MM+) was one of few records ever for Butte County and the Central Valley. A more regular vagrant, a **Black-and-white Warbler**, was on the American River in Rancho Cordova on 9 November (DJ). A well photographed **Ovenbird** on 5 November (JmD; see back cover) along Putah Creek was found in Yolo and Solano counties during its several month stay. It represented the first documented record for both counties. An **American Redstart** at Kings Row in northern Kings County on 8 October (JR) was one of few records of an eastern warbler for that county.

A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** coming to a bird feeder in Redding from 15-21 November (LS, BY+) was one of few records for Shasta County and the northern Sacramento Valley, and one along Babel Slough on 11 September (LE) and another in Davis on 12 September (MH) provided Yolo County with two records! **Green-tailed Towhee** is a rare migrant on the valley floor, so one at Caswell State Park in San Joaquin County on 9 October (WH) was noteworthy, and another at the Jersey Ave. ponds on 8-13 October (JR, LH+) was the first record for Kings County. A **Brewer's Sparrow** at Michigan Bar Road on 3 September (EP+) was a rare find in Sacramento County as was one in Kings County at the Jersey/Kent Ave. ponds on 11 October (JSe). A **Swamp Sparrow** was discovered at the Cache Creek Settling Basin on 5 November (MP, MK+) and seen again the following day. An immature **Harris Sparrow** was in southern Shasta County on 29 November (RM). Butte County's fourth record of a **Lapland Longspur** came from one found at the Chico State Univ. Farms on 14 November (JSn).

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