

## 1994 Report of the Sacramento Bird Records Committee

The Sacramento Bird Records Committee (SBRC) was established by Sacramento Audubon Society to compile and review records of unusual birds reported within the boundaries described by the *Checklist of the Birds of the Sacramento Area* (published by Sacramento Audubon Society; most recently revised in 1993). Current members of the SBRC are Ted Beedy, Bruce Deuel, Ed Greaves, Ed Harper, Jeri Langham, Tim Manolis, John Trochet, and David Yee.

Bird species, reports of which the SBRC accepts for review, include those previously unreported for the area, those listed as of accidental occurrence on the *Checklist*, and certain other species of casual occurrence or difficult to identify, indicated on the *Checklist* by asterisks (see the *Checklist* for details). The SBRC also reviews records for the small bit of Sacramento County that lies south of the southern boundary of the *Checklist* (Highway 12) and, occasionally, records from just outside other area boundaries. The committee also evaluates records of unseasonable occurrence, especially reports of birds found on local Christmas Bird Counts (e. g., Yellow Warbler, Hooded Oriole, Ash-throated Flycatcher) which are normally present locally only in summer or on migration.

Committee decisions determine those records accepted on local Christmas Counts, and the status of species on the *Checklist*. But while most of the activity of the SBRC involves review of records, I think the real value of the SBRC is that it serves as a repository for these reports, whether accepted or not. By

preserving these records, many of which include photographs or sketches, the SBRC is maintaining a potentially valuable data base on a wide range of difficult bird identification problems, many of which (e. g., large gulls, golden-plovers, *Empidonax* flycatchers) remain to be thoroughly resolved. Copies of all records received are to be filed (following review) at both California State University, Sacramento, and American River College, and be made accessible to the public.

Since January 1992, the committee has reviewed and voted on 96 records, and another 39 reports are currently under review. This article presents the committee's decisions as of June 1994. Of the records reviewed, 65 (67.7%) have been accepted, 13 (13.5%) not accepted, and 18 (18.8%) have been held over for recirculation because of split votes (votes of 8-0 or 7-1 constitute acceptance; votes of 6-2, 5-3, or 4-4 trigger recirculation; votes of 3-4 or less constitute non-acceptance). The number in parentheses preceding a record listed below is the record number, and indicates when the record was received (e. g., number 24-86 was the twenty-fourth record received in 1986).

The SBRC sincerely thanks all those observers who have submitted reports. Don't be discouraged if you don't see your submitted observation(s) here; we'll get to them all eventually. Thanks for your patience.

Tim Manolis

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### REPORTS ACCEPTED

**Red-throated Loon** — (24-86), one in the American River Parkway near Discovery Park, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 11 February 1986; (26-86), one in West Sacramento, Yolo Co., 14 March 1986; (5-87), one in the Sacramento River opposite Rio Vista, Sacramento Co., 10 February 1987; (28-87), one on Lake Berryessa, Napa Co., 20 December 1987.

The first two records may involve the same bird.

**Pacific Loon** — (20-91), two birds on Folsom Lake, near (on?) the border of Sacramento and Placer cos., 28-29 December 1991.

This is the first record of this species the committee has reviewed since the Pacific Loon was raised to a full species (separate from Arctic Loon) in 1985. Previous records were accepted as Arctic Loons, but probably refer to Pacifics; they will require recirculation.

**Horned Grebe** — (31-87), one in the American River Parkway near Discovery Park, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 27 December 1987; (30-88), one at the same place, 30 November-26 December 1988.

These records may involve the same bird returning to the same site each winter. This species is a regular winter visitor in the checklist area; these records were reviewed in reference to their occurrence on the Sacramento Christmas Bird Count.

**Red-necked Grebe** — (34-88), one on Folsom Lake, El Dorado Co., 29 December 1988.

**Clark's Grebe** — (27-87), one on Lake Berryessa, Napa Co., 12 December 1987; (14-88), one on the American River near Rancho Cordova, Sacramento Co., 25 April 1988; (4-93), one on Lake Berryessa, Napa Co., 20 December 1992.

Since this form was recognized in 1985 as a species separate from Western Grebe, it has proved to be a regular migrant and winter visitor in the area. It is no longer a reviewed species.

**Brown Pelican** — (22-92), one along the N. Fork of the Mokelumne River, west of Thornton, San Joaquin and Sacramento cos., 14 October 1987 (reported present at the site from about 26 September-22 October).

An interesting report, involving a first-year bird hanging around a dock for handouts. Although the possibility of ship-assisted passage was raised, SBRC members were inclined to accept the observer's contention that the bird most likely arrived on its own. This is the first record for San Joaquin County and only the second accepted record for the area.

**Little Blue Heron** — (23-86), one adult at Delevan National Wildlife Refuge, Colusa Co., 25 January 1986.

Although this report is from slightly north of the *Checklist* area, the SBRC decided to review it anyway.

**"Common" Green-winged Teal** — (19-92), one at Woodbridge Ecological Reserve, San Joaquin Co., 14 February 1987.

This record was accepted as involving either one or the other of two races (*Anas crecca crecca* or *A. c. nimia*) formerly considered a separate species, Common Teal. This is the first record of the form for San Joaquin County.

**Oldsquaw** — (9-90), one in the Yolo Bypass along Highway 16, Yolo Co., 22 December 1990.

This is the first record for Yolo County and the area.

**Red-breasted Merganser** — (18-91), one female near Beale's Point, Folsom Lake, Placer Co., 28 December 1991; (7-92), one female on the American River at the Nimbus Fish Hatchery, Sacramento Co., 12 January 1992; (38-92), one male on Camanche Reservoir, San Joaquin Co., 1 January 1992.

The observer of 18-91 was also the observer of 7-92. He reported (without documentation), that two females were seen at Beale's Point on 1 January 1992, and suggested that the same birds may have been involved in all three sightings.

**Swainson's Hawk** — (25-86), one dark phase adult at the Sacramento Executive Airport, Sacramento Co., 19 February 1986.

Winter records of this species have long been a point of contention locally (although this record is on the borderline of when the first spring migrants are noted in California). Recent observations suggest a small population winters in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta; winter sightings away from the vicinity of Staten, Bouldin, and Andrus islands, however, should still be submitted to the SBRC for review.

**Lesser Golden-Plover (Pacific or American)** — (34-92), one along Woodbridge Road near Thornton, San Joaquin Co., 15 December 1990.

**Pacific Golden-Plover** — (41-92), two birds on Tyler Island, Sacramento Co., 20-25 February 1992.

These records, and a number of others either being reviewed or yet to be reviewed, were submitted prior to the recent A.O.U. decision to split Lesser Golden-Plover into two species, Pacific and American. The SBRC has decided to retain a separate listing, "Lesser Golden-Plover (Pacific or American)", for records either submitted and accepted as such, or for reports of either species which the committee feels are not supported by the evidence submitted, but which convincingly suggest a Lesser Golden-Plover of some kind. Record 34-92 falls in the former category. Record 41-92 is the first record for Sacramento County.

**Spotted Redshank** — (10-92), one on Staten Island, San Joaquin Co., 19 November 1988.

This the first record for San Joaquin County and the area.

**Ruddy Turnstone** — (13-87), three at the Davis Sewer Ponds, Yolo Co., 26 July 1987; (5-89), one at the Woodland Wastewater Treatment Ponds, Yolo Co., 29 August 1989.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper** — (32-86), one at the Woodland Sugar Ponds, Yolo Co., 8-11 August 1986; (19-87), one in the Yolo Bypass along Highway 16 ("Trestle Ponds"), Yolo Co., 8

August 1987; (17-88), one at the Woodland Sugar Ponds, Yolo Co., 7 August 1988; (6-91), one in the Natomas Main Drain near Elverta, Sacramento Co., 5 September 1991.

Record 6-91 is the first record for Sacramento County.

**Franklin's Gull** — (43-92), one along the N. Fork of the Mokelumne River between Tyler and Staten islands, Sacramento and San Joaquin cos., 10 May 1992.

This is the first record for Sacramento County.

**Little Gull** — (15-92), one along Woodbridge Road near Lodi, San Joaquin Co., 13 March 1986.

The bird, a winter-plumage adult, was suspected of being one of three birds present at the Stockton Sewage Ponds on 18 March 1986.

**Western Gull** — (1-84), one at the Yolo County Landfill, Yolo Co., 18 December 1983; (22-91), one at the Cliff House along the Sacramento River, Sacramento Co., 2 October 1991; (23-91), one near Brannan Island State Park, Sacramento Co., 2 October 1991.

Record 23-91 is slightly south of the area defined by the *Checklist*; this species may be rare but regular in that part of Sacramento County. Record 1-84 is the first accepted by the SBRC for Yolo County and the area.

**Black Swift** — (20-92), one at Lodi, San Joaquin Co., 17 May 1991.

An area first and only the second for San Joaquin County.

**Costa's Hummingbird** — (22-88), one at Reichmuth Park, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 19 September 1988; (26-88), one near Cool, El Dorado Co., 7 October intermittently to at least 11 November 1988.

Record 26-88 is from slightly above the area's eastern boundary (the 1000 foot elevation contour).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** — (21-91), one in Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 10 December 1991.

This is the first record for Sacramento County.

**Least Flycatcher** — (16-92), one in Lodi, San Joaquin Co., 5 September 1988.

This is the first record for San Joaquin County and the area. Because *Empidonax* flycatchers are notoriously difficult to identify, this record generated a number of comments from SBRC members, and its unanimous acceptance on the first round might have been in doubt if the observer had not heard, and made note of, the bird's calls, emphasizing the importance of critical scrutiny of as much as possible, particularly vocalizations, when identifying birds in this genus.

**Townsend's Solitaire** — (13-92), one in Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 26 January 1992.

There were a number of other local reports of this species during the fall of 1991 and the winter of 1991-92; two of these are currently being reviewed.

**Solitary Vireo** — (1-88), one "Cassin's" Solitary Vireo in the Pocket area of S. Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 27 December

1987; (11-88), one "Plumbeous" Solitary Vireo at Reichmuth Park, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 13-15 April 1988; (24-88) one "Plumbeous" Solitary Vireo at Reichmuth Park, 9-21 October 1988; (6-89) one "Plumbeous" Solitary Vireo at Reichmuth Park, 3 November 1989-7 March 1990.

The records of the "Plumbeous" form are the first for Sacramento County and the area. One SBRC member suggested the possibility that the Reichmuth Park records might refer to one bird returning in successive years. "Cassin's" Vireo is a regular migrant locally, but winter records require documentation.

**Northern Parula** — (34-86), one at Reichmuth Park, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 26 August-6 September 1986; (12-87), one at Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary, Sutter Co., 20 June 1987; (54-92), one in the Sutter Bypass near Knight's Landing, Sutter Co., 22 August 1992; (58-92), one in West Sacramento, Yolo Co., 19 September 1992.

Record 12-87 is the first for Sutter County, record 58-92 the first for Yolo County.

**Yellow-throated Warbler** — (44-92), one in Orangevale, Sacramento Co., 25 May 1992.

The first record for Sacramento County and the area.

**Palm Warbler** — (46-86), one along the American River Parkway near Cal Expo, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 27 December 1986-8 January 1987.

The first record for Sacramento County.

**American Redstart** — (36-86), one at Reichmuth Park, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 3-4 September 1986; (14-91), one along lower Putah Creek west of Davis, Yolo Co., 26 August 1989.

**Northern Waterthrush** — (8-89), one along the American River Parkway near Cal Expo, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 23 December 1989-1 January 1990; (9-91), one at Sherman Island Fishing Access, Sacramento Co., 2 October 1991.

Record 8-89 is the first record for Sacramento County, record 9-91 the second (and a bit outside the *Checklist* area).

**Hooded Warbler** — (49-92), one at Reichmuth Park, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 5 September 1992.

The first record for Sacramento County and the area.

**Canada Warbler** — (33-86), one at Reichmuth Park, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 24 August-8 September 1986.

The first record for Sacramento County.

**Summer Tanager** — (48-92), one at Reichmuth Park, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 5 September 1992.

The first accepted record for Sacramento County and the area.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak** — (28-92), one adult male at Lodi, San Joaquin Co., 14 July 1986; (29-92), an adult female at Lodi, 23 August 1986; (53-92), an adult male in Davis, Yolo Co., 5 June 1992.

Records 28-92 and 29-92 were the first and second for San Joaquin County.

**Indigo Bunting** — (10-87), a male at Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary, Sutter Co., 6 June 1987.

**Lark Bunting** — (31-92), one at intersection of Lower Sacramento and Forest Lake roads near Acampo, San Joaquin Co., 1 January-2 February 1986.

The first record for San Joaquin County.

**Bobolink** — (13-91), one found dead in Woodland, Yolo Co., 27 May 1989.

The first record for Yolo County and the area, the specimen, an adult male, is #3560 in the U. C. Davis Museum of Wildlife and Fisheries Biology.

**Orchard Oriole** — (21-92), one at Lodi, San Joaquin Co., 22 October 1987.

The first record for San Joaquin County and the area.

**Hooded Oriole** — (9-89), one at Reichmuth Park, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 23 December 1989.

This species is a regular breeder, but winter records, such as this one, require documentation.

**Northern Oriole** — (18-92), one adult male "Baltimore" Oriole at Lodi, San Joaquin Co., 18 August 1987.

The first record for this form for San Joaquin County and the area.

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## REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

**Tufted Duck** — (4-87), an adult male near Lodi, San Joaquin Co., 20 December 1986-16 January 1987.

The observer admitted the bird may have been the same as one identified as a possible Tufted Duck x scaup(?) hybrid in the same area a few years earlier, and a majority of the SBRC (including one member who had seen the bird) felt the same (the vote was 3-5). The biggest concern was the gray color of back contrasting with the black coloration fore and aft.

**Harris' Hawk** — (11-90), an adult at Lake Washington, West Sacramento, Yolo Co., 22 December 1990.

The committee unanimously accepted the identification, but felt the record probably referred to a bird that escaped from captivity. The species is commonly kept by falconers, and all recent reports from the state have been considered probable escapees by the state records committee. This bird was very tame and was reported seen off-and-on in the area through at least the spring of 1992.

**Swainson's Hawk** — (10-90), one north of West Sacramento, Yolo Co., 22 December 1990.

The vote was 1-7, most members noting that the described wing pattern (dark wing linings, lighter flight feathers) suggested possible misidentification.

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** — (7-91), one at the Woodland Sugar Ponds, Yolo Co., 13 September 1991.

Although the description was suggestive of this species, it was judged of insufficient detail to clinch the identification by a majority (5-3) of the committee.

**Western Gull** — (9-88), one at the Yolo County Landfill, Yolo Co., 23 January 1982.

The vote was 3-5. The bird was described as an adult, which should be relatively easy to identify, but the description was much too brief, failing, among other things, to rule out other dark-backed, pink-legged gulls.

**Cassin's Kingbird** — (19-90), one at Folsom Lake, Placer Co., 29 December 1990.

The SBRC unanimously voted against acceptance. The description was too brief to confirm a mid-winter record of a species not previously recorded in our area.

**Black-capped Chickadee** — (7-87), one in Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 21 March 1987.

Although the description was reasonable, most (7 of 8) members felt it was just short of detail to clinch such an unusual record.

**Swainson's Thrush** — (7-89), one along the Garden Highway north of Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 23 December 1989.

A reasonable description, but the committee felt unanimously that a mid-winter record of this species requires a more cautious approach. Comments focused on the unfortunate fact that vocalizations were not heard; that behavior, vis-a-vis nearby Hermit Thrushes, was not noted; and that other possible species were not entirely ruled out.

**Yellow Grosbeak** — (4-89), one at Ancil Hoffman Park, Sacramento Co., 10 August 1989.

An amazing report that garnered a wide range of opinion within the committee: one member accepted it outright; four accepted the identification but felt the bird must have escaped from captivity; and three felt a misidentification was likely. The few records of this species for the U. S. come from the Arizona-Mexico border in summer, and there is even some question as to whether these are the result of natural dispersal (the species is kept as a cagebird in Mexico).

**Dickcissel** — (23-87), a pair in West Sacramento, Yolo Co., 11 October 1987.

The vote was 1-7. Most members cited inconsistencies in the description (particularly, mention of white wingbars) as indicating another species (the possibility of an escaped cagebird, either a cardueline or a weaver finch, was raised by one member).

**Smith's Longspur** — (8-87), one east of Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 22 April 1987.

The vote was 2-6. One member was told by another observer of this bird that it was a Black-headed Grosbeak, and the description suggested as much to some other members.

**Snow Bunting** — (9-92), one in Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 22 December-20 January 1992 (and reported present the previous winter).

The bird visited a residential yard with House Sparrows, in search of bird seed, odd behavior for a Snow Bunting. Most members were not convinced by the description, but the clincher came when the observers submitted reasonably good photographs that allow identification of the bird as a partial albino male House Sparrow.

**Rusty Blackbird** — (10-91), one at the Cosumnes River Preserve, Sacramento Co., 8 December 1990.

Although the observer may indeed have seen a Rusty Blackbird, the SBRC unanimously agreed that he quite simply failed to adequately describe one. This is the major pitfall of most records that are not accepted — the description is too incomplete to clinch the case.

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The following observers kindly submitted reports evaluated herein: Daniel Airola, Ted Beedy, Brian Bell, Ron Cole, Mark Cudney, Laurie Daniel, Bruce Deuel, Hugh Dingle, Leo Edson, Andrew Engilis, Jr., Richard Erickson, Gil Ewing, Alan and Marjorie Fiers, Marie and John Freeman, Ed Harper, Carolyn Harry, Bob Haussler, Kevin Hintsa, David Johnson, Frances and Clayton Jones, Ken Kemmerling, John Kemper, Jeri Langham, Michael Lippsmeyer, Tim Manolis, Jerry Marinovich, Phil Mendes, Kurt Mize, Barbara Mohr, Joseph Morlan, Art Pancheri, Michael Perrone, June Persson, Dell Richards, Nancy Sanders, John Schick, Susan Scott, Bruce Sedloff, Ron Storey, John Trochet, Bruce Webb, and David Yee.