

# Central Valley and Foothills Bird Highlights: March through May 2016

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An **Emperor Goose** was found with the large flocks of **Greater White-fronted, Snow** and **Ross's geese** on Twitchell Island in the Delta section of Sacramento County on 9-27 March by state waterfowl staff and seen by many birders. Six **Red-breasted Mergansers** at the San Joaquin River NWR in Stanislaus County on 9 April was a large migrant flock (ErH). Three females were at the Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County on 24-25 March (KSb+). Three were at Los Banos Creek Reservoir in Merced County on 26 March (PD). Two males were at Lake Natoma in Sacramento County on 7 April (CrS). In Madera County, one or two very late females were discovered with singles at the Chowchilla WTP on 22 May (GW) and the Madera WTP on 23 May (GF). **Surf Scoters** found in the winter continued at Sherman Island in Sacramento County to 22 March (JHm+).

A **Red-throated Loon**, rare inland, was at Granite Bay in Folsom Lake within Placer County on 26 March (RPz). A **Glossy Ibis** fed in the Yolo Bypass WA from 2-8 April (JE+). Four Brown Pelicans must have been quite a sight at the Sacramento NWR in Glenn County on 20 April (LA). This coastal species is very rare inland with sightings of single birds prior to this record.

Three migrant **Snowy Plovers** visited the Modesto NWR in Stanislaus County on 8 May (RB). Two at the Yolo Bypass WA on 19 April (TKz) were at a location where they have been seen with increasing regularity in spring. One was at Abel Road in Colusa County on 7-9 April (KS, SA) for the third Colusa County record. An **American Golden-Plover** was at the Cosumnes River Preserve in Sacramento County on 24 April (CCo). Scarce annual spring migrant **Solitary Sandpipers** were at the Redding WTP in Shasta County on 29 April–1 May (KVV+), Cosumnes River Preserve on 23 April (CCo), Colusa NWR on 21 April (GD), and Llano Seco Unit in Butte County on 16 April (DB). Single **Ruffs** visited the Cosumnes River Preserve on 28 April (LD) and the Yolo Bypass WA on 19-20 April (CR, TKz+). Three and four **Stilt Sandpipers** together at the Kent Ave Ponds in Kings County on 10 and 30 April, respectively, (MSy) were large groups for the valley. The bird of the season was the **Marsh Sandpiper** found at the Yolo Bypass WA on 16-23 April (DW, FF+), which delighted hundreds of birders from throughout the country. This Eurasian shorebird was only the third state record and may have been the same individual seen for a few days in April 2014 in nearby Solano County. **Willetts** are very rare north of Yolo County, so five at Vina in Tehama County on 11

April (LD) and three at the Llano Seco Unit in Butte County on 16 April (MRg) were great finds. Also rare in the northern part of the valley, two **Marbled Godwits** were near Proberta in Tehama County on 29 May (MSw). **Ruddy Turnstones** are rare anywhere inland, so it was a treat when one was found at the Llano Seco Unit on 20 April (MF), one was photographed at White Slough in San Joaquin County on 23 April (BB), and another found at Los Banos in Merced County on 2-7 May (KVV). A rare inland **Sanderling** was at the Tulare WTP on 26 April (DF).

**Franklin's Gull** reports have increased with the establishment and growth of the breeding colony in the Klamath Basin. One at the Redding WTP on 30 April (BY) was the first for the valley portion of Shasta County. Only the second Sacramento County record was at the Cosumnes River Preserve on 24 April (JTr). Three were found in Yolo County with singles at Davis WTP on 28 April (KB) and 4 May (MPe) and near Davis on 16 May (RW). Singles were at the Colusa NWR on Abel Road on 9 April (TDM) in Colusa County, Folsom Lake at Granite Bay in Placer County on 1 May (RPz), and Los Banos on 7 May (KVV+) in Merced County. The **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at the Yolo Landfill found in winter stayed to at least 4 March (SCH). The wintering **Glaucous-winged Gull** remained at the Sacramento NWR in Glenn County until at least 22 March (BED). The **Least Tern** pair returned to nest again at the Sacramento Regional WTP on 23 May (CCo). Two **Black Terns** at the Olive City Nature Center on 7-9 May (MSw+) established one of very few records for Tehama County.

Rare in the valley, a **Plumbeous Vireo** was well studied along the American River Parkway in Sacramento County on 1 May (JML+). Equally rare in the valley, **Townsend's Solitaires** are typically a winter vagrant so three spring birds in Yolo County were highly unusual with singles at the Yolo Bypass WA on 16 April (MY), near Winters on 19 April (JTr) and at Putah Creek and Mace Ave on 1 May (KG). A **Northern Parula** sang in the Tall Forest at the Cosumnes River Preserve on 17 May (JTr) as did a **Summer Tanager** from 22 May to the summer (CCo+) for a third consecutive summer in the preserve. Bidwell Park in Chico, Butte County hosted an **American Redstart** on 9 May (RD+). The top vagrant warbler of the spring was the singing **Blackpoll Warbler** at Pedrick Road and Putah Creek in Yolo/Solano counties (SSA). The wintering **Black-and-white Warbler** at Lodi Lake Nature Area in San Joaquin County was last reported on 12 March (DGY).

Rare on the valley floor, a **Green-tailed Towhee** was at Ancil Hoffman Park in Sacramento on 4 May (MMc). A lingering **Swamp Sparrow** was at the Sutter NWR on 23 March (JSL). An amazing pair of adult **Orchard Orioles** was photographed in a private yard near Cressey on 28 March for the first Merced County record (*fide* SSA). The male **Baltimore Oriole** that visited Westgate Landing in San Joaquin County in spring of 2015 returned on 23 May (SG).

Surprisingly, two **Evening Grosbeaks** found in Davis in winter remained to 8 May (EW).

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WA=State Wildlife Area; WTP=Wastewater Treatment Ponds; NWR=National Wildlife Refuge; Res.=Reservoir