

Central Valley Bird Highlights: August through November 2015

John Sterling, 26 Palm Ave, Woodland, CA 95965 jsterling@wavecable.com

Two **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were at the Marysville WTP on 24 November (RF). This is the only location with records for this species in Yuba County. The only reported **Red-breasted Mergansers** were a female at the Lodi WTP in San Joaquin County on 21 November (SSt), and three females/immatures at Corcoran Res in Kings County on 20 November (MSy). A **Surf Scoter** was a nice find at the Tulare WTP on 20 October (DK). An adult **Glossy Ibis** was photographed at the Yolo Basin WA on 18 September in Yolo County (JCS, TEa, JSL). This species, which has expanded westward into California in recent years, has only been recorded in Sutter, Yolo, Sacramento and Merced counties in the Central Valley.

An adult **Pacific Golden-Plover** found in July at the Yolo Basin WA, at a location where nearly annual, was still present in August and two wintering birds were found on 5 November (TG). Singles at the Red Bluff Rec. Area in Tehama County from 8-12 September (BED+), along Pueblo Ave in Kings County on 29 September (MSy) and at Colusa NWR (WEH) on 16 November were in counties where there are very few records. Four **Snowy Plovers** at the Woodland WTP on 4 September (KB) was a high number for Yolo County. Single **Solitary Sandpipers** were at the Yolo Basin WA on 1 August (HO), at the Ripon WTP in San Joaquin County on 31 August to 1 September (DG, JH), and at the Maxwell WTP in Colusa County on 15 August (S&LA). A **Black Turnstone** at the Woodland WTP on 15-30 September (MSw) was only the second record for Yolo County—the first was in May 1977. The rare, but more common **Ruddy Turnstone** put in an appearance at the Gustine WTP in Merced County on 12 August (PD). Rare **Marbled Godwit** sightings included one below Black Butte Res dam on 30 September (LP, FrO), one at the Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County on 18 August (S&LA) and at last four more there on 19 September (IG). The only reported **Red Knot** was one at the Woodland WTP in Yolo County on 17 September (SH). A juvenile **Ruff** visited the Yolo Basin WA from 20-23 September (TG) and another was at the 6th Ave dairy in Kings County on 20 November (JSy). Single juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were at the Chico WTP in Butte County on 14 September (JCS+), the Madera WTP on 21 August (JCS) and at the Fresno WTP from 21-25 August (GW). Glenn County's second record for **Sanderling** was three at Black Butte Res on 28 September (SRs, DRs+) with one lingering two days later. Others were at the Chico WTP from 6-14 September (MRg+), Fresno WTP on 10-15 September

(GW), Folsom Lake in Placer County on 10 September (RP), Tulare WTP on 15-16 September (DF, Jlk) and Gustine WTP in Merced County on 26 August (PD) and 15 September (KVV), with two more near Los Banos in Merced County on 15 September (KVV). Due to the drought, the water levels at Comanche Res exposed a lot of shorebird habitat, which resulted in the best shore birding in Amador County history in the spring. A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** there on 7 August (JLD+) was a first county record, followed by two the following day (JCS+), with one remaining to 18 August (GH+).

A juvenile **Long-tailed Jaeger** visited the Fresno WTP from 19-22 August (GW). **Common Tern** was a long overdue first for Butte County with two present on 30 September to 2 October at the Thermalito Afterbay (MRg+) and one-three **Sabine's Gulls** were there from 11 September to 9 October (MRg+). Three **Common Terns** flew around Black Butte Res in Glenn and Tehama counties on 23 and 29 September (MRg, Jlw), and three perched at the Hanford WTP in Kings County on 23 August (MSy). **Franklin's Gulls** were found as usual in recent years with one at the Thermalito Afterbay on 18-20 August (JLD), 18 September (KSb), and two from 6-20 October (BB, FrO+). Two more were at the Fresno WTP on 15 September (GW) and another was at the Hanford WTP in Kings County on 8 November (MSy). The Gaffery Road site in Stanislaus County that has hosted many rare gulls in winter had two adult **Western Gulls** on 4 August (SSa), an exceptionally early date. A first cycle **Western Gull** was at the 6th Ave dairy in Kings County on 20 November (S<) where this species is still rare.

The third Kings County record of **Common Ground-Dove** was at the 14½ Ave and Newton Ave migrant spot on 6 September (MSy). The second Solano County record of **White-winged Dove** was in Benicia 15-21 November (DaS). At least one and as many as three **Chimney Swifts** were in a large flock of Vaux's and White-throated Swifts over Babel Slough in Yolo County on 13 September (TEa). The only rare sapsucker was a **Red-naped Sapsucker** at Lake Solano in Solano County on 3 October (MSw). Also at Babel Slough was a **Least Flycatcher** on 1 October (TEa), about the fifth record for Yolo County. The only **Eastern Phoebe** was one at the Merced NWR on 29 November (DaS). The male **Vermilion Flycatcher** returned to its favorite wintering spot along the Santa Fe Grade and Wilson Road in Merced County on 28 October (XS). The bird of the season was California's second and Tulare County's first **Couch's Kingbird** at Sunset Park in Visalia. Found by Ron and Nancy Overholtz on 12 November, it was first identified as the much more likely and extremely similar Tropical Kingbird. On 18 November, Steve and Priscilla Summers located the bird and heard its diagnostic call and were able to identify it as a Couch's Kingbird. It remained into the winter period. An amazing record! A **Bendire's Thrasher** was photographed near Bakersfield in Kern County in early August (EE), which is the first record for the Central Valley in many years. A **Townsend's Solitaire** attacked its reflection in a window in Benicia on

18 October (*fide* DSw). The only **Northern Shrike** was in Orland in Glenn County on 16 November (MM).

Babel Slough in Yolo County hosted vagrants once again with a **Northern Parula** on 5 September (SCH) and a juvenile **Black-chinned Sparrow** on 30 September through the fall (MSw) for the first fall and first valley floor record for the county. Other Yolo County vagrant warblers include a **Northern Parula** along Putah Creek at Mace Blvd on 11 September (TG), a **Black-and-white Warbler** at the UC Davis Arboretum from 30 September to 2 October (KB, CW) and a **Blackpoll Warbler** at the Putah Creek Preserve on 12 September (SH). A **Blackpoll Warbler** along the Tulare River on 24 September (SDS) was one of few Tulare County records. At Lake Woolomes in Kern County, another **Northern Parula** was located on 12 August (SDS). The Basalt Campground near San Luis Res in Merced County is a migrant hotspot at times. This fall several vagrant warblers were found with a **Blackpoll Warbler** and an **American Redstart** on 19 September (PD), with the Blackpoll remaining to 21 September (JSL), a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** on 3-5 October (CHi), followed by two **Chestnut-sided Warblers** together on 6-8 October (JG, GW) with a **Black-and-white Warbler** on 7 October (GW). At the nearby O'Neill Forebay, another **Blackpoll Warbler** was present on 27-30 September (PD, JCS).

Three **Virginia's Warblers** were found, with one along the Tulare River in King's County on 7 September (SDS), one along the Tulare River in Tulare County on 8 September (SDS), and one at the Kern Water Bank in Kern County on 21 September (JCS). There were very few Central Valley records prior to this fall. Butte County's first **Canada Warbler** was at Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park on 13 September (MRg, MF), only the fifth record for the Central Valley. Also at that site was an **American Redstart** on 2-3 September (WH). The Gristmill Access on the American River Parkway in Sacramento County also hosted an **American Redstart** from 30 August to 8 September (JL, CH, CSw).

The Central Valley's second **Painted Bunting** record came from Lone WTP in Amador County on 12 September (TEa) during a week in which several were found in the state. Rare valley floor **Green-tailed Towhees** were at Wood Duck Lake on 26 August (LE) and Putah Creek Preserve on 22 August (SH) in Yolo County, near Putah Creek in Solano County on 6 September (MK), at Lodi Lakes in San Joaquin County on 16 September (D&PC), and in Gridley, Butte County on 24 September (WA). Wandering **Red Crossbills** included up to twenty at the Putah Creek Preserve/Arboretum on 1-5 November (TG) and ten in Winters on 21 November (SCH) in Yolo County, in Marysville in Yuba County on 18 November (IG), a large flock in Fair Oaks, Sacramento County on 30 October (TEa), several in South Natomas in Sacramento County on 17 November (BG), and in the Colusa-Sacramento SRA in Colusa County on 29 November (EE). An early **Evening Grosbeak** was at the Putah Creek Preserve

on 8 October (TG), but two in Davis on 31 October (BG) and four more on 12 November (MP) were on time for late fall dispersants.

The observers are: Walt Anderson, Stuart and Linda Angerer (S&LA), Pat Bacchetti, Keith Bailey, Chris Conard (CCo), Dave and Pat Croft (D&PC), Bruce Deuel (BED), Jon Dunn (JLD), Todd Easterla (TEa), Leo Edson, Elias Elias, Dane Fagundes, Matthew Forster, Rob Fowler, Jim Gain, Ted Gilliland, Dan Gilman, Ian Gledhill, Ben Graber, Steve Hampton (SCH), Chris Hiatt (Chi), John Harris, Cliff Hawley, Greg Hemig, Wyatt Hersey, Scott Hoppe, Diane Kinder, Manfred Kusch, Jeri Langham, John Lockhart (JLk), John Luther (JSL), Mary Murchowski, Harry Oakes, Frances Oliver, Michael Perrone, Linda Pitman, Michael Rogner (MRg), Steve Rose (SRs), Diane Rose (DRs), Sal Salerno (SSa), Xavier Sandoval, Mark Sawyer (MSw), Jeff Seay (JSy), Ken Sobon (KSb), Mark Stacey (MSy), John Sterling (JCS), Steve Summers (SDS), Dale Swanberg (DaS), Danny Swicegood (DSw), Craig Swolgaard (CSw), Kent Van Vuren, Charles Walker, and Gary Woods.

Abbreviations used: WA=State Wildlife Area, WTP=Wastewater Treatment Plant; CBRC=California Bird Records Committee; NWR=National Wildlife Refuge.



Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*). 8 Feb 2016. Maxwell, Colusa Co., California. Photo © Dan Brown