

Central Valley Bird Highlights: August through November 2017

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Madera County's second and third **Surf Scoters** were found together at the Madera WTP on 9-11 October (GW, JSy+). Another was at the Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County on 15 October (MF), two were on San Luis Res in Merced County on 16-17 October (RB+) and two were at the Lincoln WTP in Placer County on 17-19 October. Scoters are very rare inland with records for all three species scattered in the valley. Also rare inland was a **Red-necked Grebe** at the Thermalito Afterbay on 21 October (MF).

Least Bitterns are local in the valley with most records from wildlife refuges in the Sacramento Valley, so noteworthy records include one at a small marsh in Vivian & Fulkerth roads in Stanislaus County on 3-7 August (XS+) and another at Bridgeway Island pond in West Sacramento in Yolo County on 7 August (T&M L).

The usual rare-but-regular fall migrant shorebirds were well represented. **Pacific Golden Plovers** were at the Woodland WTP on 3-24 November (SCH+), Yolo Bypass WA on 11 November (SHo), and the Fresno WTP on 27 October to 4 November (GW). An **American Golden-Plover** was discovered in the Tulare Basin in Kings County on 27 September (MSy) and Fresno County's third was at the Fresno WTP on 31 October to 4 November (GW). **Solitary Sandpipers** were reported from Stockton WTP on 4 August, at the Lodi WTP on 6-7 August (both DGY) in San Joaquin County and at the River West Open Space Area in Fresno on the exceptionally late dates of 24-25 November (KR-E+).

Single **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were reported from Lodi WTP in San Joaquin County on 4 August (DY), Jersey Ave ponds in Kings County on 24 August (GW), the Tulare Basin on 20 (2), 26-27 August (MSy), and the Fresno WTP on 13 September (GW). **Baird's Sandpipers** were present with three at the Woodland WTP in Yolo County on 8 August (KB), one at the Fresno WTP on 12-13 September (RSx+), and one at the Davis WTP on 26 September (KB). One **Stilt Sandpiper** was in the Tulare Basin on 19 August (MSy). A **Red Knot** was at the Fresno WTP on 12-13 September (RSx+). Rare inland **Sanderlings** were found with three at the Fresno WTP on 22 September (RSx). Single **Ruffs** were at the Tulare Basin in Kings County through August-September (MSy+) and the Corcoran State Prison pond in Kings County on 3 November (DR).

A juvenile **Long-tailed Jaeger** graced the ponds in the Tulare Basin on private property in Kings County on 20 August (MSy+), as did a **Parasitic Jaeger** on 23 September (MSy, JSy+). An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull**

visited the Koster Road gravel pond in San Joaquin County on 25-31 November (DGY) where this Eurasian species has been seen in recent winters. **Franklin's Gulls** were found at the Woodland WTP on 20 November (JLD+), in the Tulare Basin on 12 and 19 August (MSy) and 23 September (JSy+), San Luis Res in Merced County on 10-18 October (RB+), and a late migrant at the Woodland WTP on 20-24 November (JLD+).

Common Ground-Doves were unknown in the Central Valley until a small population was found in orange groves in the southernmost edge of the valley. Although the true extent of the population is not known in terms of numbers and distribution, there have been increasing records elsewhere in the valley in Kern, Kings and Tulare counties in orchards. One west of Fresno in a vineyard adjacent to orchards on 2 August (GW) was a first for that county. Rare valley floor **Band-tailed Pigeons** were in San Joaquin County with one at Lodi Lake 7 October to 18 November (LzW+) and another in Stockton on 17 November (DGY). Very rare in the valley, a **White-winged Dove** was along the Tule River in Tulare County on 18 September (DR)

Rare sapsuckers include: San Joaquin County **Yellow-bellied** at Lodi Lake on 4 October and Louis Park in Stockton on 1 November (both DGY); and **Red-naped** at Babel Slough in Yolo County on 19 November (MSw), and in Paradise, Butte County on 28 November (CCI).

Always a thrill to see in California, a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** in the Tulare Basin on 23-26 September was a first for Kings County (JSy+). **Vermilion Flycatchers** continue their influx into the valley with a first year male at Allensworth State Park in Tulare County on 14 October to 11 November (RH+), three at the Kern Water Bank near Buttonwillow in Kern County during the fall period (JCS), Butte County's third record near Gridley on 22-23 October (MRg), a female at the Merced NWR on 28 October to 20 November (JH+), and Madera County's overdue first was at the Madera Canal on 7-16 November (GF+).

Purple Martins have been extirpated from most if not all of their range in the valley except for a few colonies in freeway overpasses in the Sacramento metropolitan area. Migrants are exceptionally rare anywhere away from known colonies. Therefore, three males and a female/juvenile that were likely migrating over the Sacramento River near Los Molinos was a significant find for Tehama County on 5 August (MS). A late migrant was along Babel Slough in Yolo County on 11 September (GEw).

An exceptionally late **Cliff Swallow** was photographed at Woodward Res in Stanislaus County on 17 November (JG). Be aware that this is a good date for the similar looking **Cave Swallow** that could occur in the Central Valley, as there are now several records for southern California. A montane **Townsend's Solitaire** descended upon Babel Slough in Yolo County on 24 September (JC+). Far more regular in the region, a **Sage Thrasher** was at Staten Island in San

Joaquin County on 25 October (IS-C), another was along Putah Creek on 11-13 October (SA), and a third was off Orestimba Rd in Stanislaus County on 8 November (RBr).

It was a good fall for vagrant warblers with nine species reported. Yolo County had the following nearly annual vagrants; a **Tennessee Warbler** foraged along Cache Creek by Wild Wings County Park (BC) while another was at the Putah Creek Reserve with a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** on 15 September (HD), another **Chestnut-sided Warbler** at Putah Creek near Pedrick Rd on 6 October (DC), and a **Blackpoll Warbler** was along Rd 16 east of the Yolo Bypass (KB). In Merced County at the Basalt Campground—an excellent vagrant spot near San Luis Res, a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** lingered from 13 September to 5 October (PD+), a **Blackpoll Warbler** was found on 10 October (RB) and the second county record of **Plumbeous Vireo** delighted birders from 12-18 October (KVV+). Another **Chestnut-sided Warbler** visited the Cosumnes River Preserve in Sacramento County on 26 September (JTr).

A well-described **Virginia's Warbler** discovered at the Riverbottom Park in Fresno on 21 September (LP) was the rarest warbler for the period. A molting female **Hooded Warbler** apparently over summered in north Davis, as it was present from its discovery on 16 August to 21 October (SCH+). An over summering **Northern Parula** discovered on 15 July remained to at least 19 August at Heritage Oak Winery in Acampo, San Joaquin County (DGY). An early migrant **Northern Waterthrush** and **American Redstart** were at the Cosumnes River Preserve in Sacramento County on 18 August (JTr) and 19 August (KT, JTr), respectively. Both of those species were also found along Putah Creek near Winters on 25 September (AE) and 28 September (JTr), respectively. A **Palm Warbler** at the Woodland WTP was Yolo County's first in 17 years when found on 24 November and remained into winter (SHu+).

Summer Tanagers are rare in the valley with records from all seasons. A male was at Cache Creek Wildwings Park west of Woodland, Yolo County on 5 August (SCH). A singing male **Indigo Bunting** was on territory along the Mokelumne River in Acampo, San Joaquin County on 4-10 September (DGY), and a female was reported along Putah Creek on 15-16 September (MP+). Foraging along a county line slough, a female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** established a record for Glenn and Butte counties on 12 September (MRg). An **Orchard Oriole** was photographed and seen by many in north Davis on 30 November (SCH+) and remained into December for only the second or third well-documented Yolo County record.

Green-tailed Towhees are rare migrants on the valley floor, so two at Babel Slough in Yolo County were noteworthy on 1-15 September (KSw+) as was one along the American Parkway in Sacramento on 2 September (JML). They have been found at the former location almost annually in the fall in recent years. The Fremont Weir WA in Yolo/Sutter counties hosted a juvenile

Lark Bunting on 12-13 September (KSw+) and another was at the Dry Creek Res. grassland in Fresno County on 20 September (RSx). Merced County's second **Black-throated Sparrow** was at the O'Neill Forebay on 21-24 September (KVV+), another was in Sacramento County on Michigan Bar Rd on 24-25 September (DW+) and a third was at the Ceres River Bluff Regional Park on 29-30 October (HR). A **Swamp Sparrow** was found at the Yolo Basin WA on 25 November (SCH+).

Brewer's Sparrows are rare but regular migrants usually found in open grasslands or scrublands. One visiting at backyard in Davis on 1 September was at an unusual location (A&AK) as were singles along the American River Parkway in Sacramento on 7 September (GEw), at the Davis Wetlands on 25 September (JT), and at the Bufferlands office in Sacramento County on 13 September (CCo). The Davis backyard bird was likely of the Timberline subspecies due to its dark plumage documented in photographs. This subspecies nests at high elevations in the Canadian Rockies and its occurrence in California is not well understood.

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was photographed by an anonymous eBirder at the Yolo Bypass WA on 9 September, and another at Putah Creek at Pedrick Rd on 24 September (SCH+) for two of the few Yolo County records. Another was photographed in Fresno County at the Riverbottom Park on 22 September (JN). Yolo County's first record of **Sagebrush Sparrow** was of one photographed just west of Woodland on 20 October in grassland (RW). This species is closely related to **Bell's Sparrow** but seems to prefer grassland habitat in winter in the valley whereas Bell's prefers native scrub. Lastly, two **Evening Grosbeaks** sighted in Davis came on an early date of 23 September (EW) for this rare winter visitor to the valley.

The observers are: Stuart Angerer, Keith Bailey, Ralph Baker, Richard Brown (RBr), Brent Campos, Joe Clemens, Cris Cline (CCI), Chris Conard (CCo), Dan Cook, Hugh Dingle, Jon Dunn (JLD), Pete Dunton, Andy Engilis Jr, Kevin Enns-Rempel, George Folsom, Matt Forster, Steve Hampton (SCH), Rob Hansen, John Harshman, Scott Hoppe (SHo), Stanton Hunter (SHu), Arav & Aranya Karighattam (A&AK), Jeri Langham (JML), Jeremy Neipp, Michael Perrone, Harold Reeve, Dominique Roche, Michael Rogner (MRg), Xavier Sandoval, Mark Sawyer (MSw), Rick Saxton (RSx), Jeff Seay (JSy), Ian Sousa-Cole (IS-C), Mark Stacey (MSy), Michele Swartout (MS), Kirk Swensen (KSw), Kevin Thomas, John Trochet (JTr), Kent Van Vuren, Dan Welsh, Liz West, Rick Williams, Ed Whisler, Gary Woods, and David Yee (DGY).

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