

Central Valley and Foothills Bird Highlights: March through May 2018

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Red-necked Grebes are very rare inland with most records from late fall and winter, so one at Lagoon Valley in Solano County on 11-28 March (RM+) was a surprising spring migrant. **Tundra Swans** are rare south of Merced County; so one at Bravo Lake in Tulare County on 21-27 March (DFg) was a good find. Care should be taken to make sure that out of range swans are not **Mute Swans**—an increasing non-native species. A **Red-breasted Merganser** was at the Clear Creek WTP near Redding in Shasta County on 24 March (GH). **Glossy Ibis** appeared at the Woodland WTP in Yolo County on 24 May (HC, EI+) with at least two adults in a White-faced Ibis nesting colony. A **Black Rail** at Blackstone Marsh in El Dorado Hills on 26 May (JH) was at the location where the species was first recorded in El Dorado County in recent years.

One **Pacific Golden-Plover** was in the Black-bellied Plover flock at the Tulare WTP on 9 and 20 April (MM, SDS+) for one of few Tulare County records. Another at the Madera WTP on 13-14 April was also one of few Madera County records. The bird of the season was the **Marsh Sandpiper**, presumably the same individual found in spring in 2014, 2016, and on 15-24 April 2018 (SCH+). As in the 2016 record, it was at the Yolo Bypass WA. This is the second individual of this Eurasian species recorded in California, with a third found in winter in Baja California a few years ago. Other rare shorebirds at that Yolo County location include a **Ruff** on 18-21 April (BT+) and a **Stilt Sandpiper** on 21 April (PH). Ten **Stilt Sandpipers** on private property in the Tulare Basin in Kings County on 10 May (MSy) was a high number, but at the best location for this rare species in the region. **Willetts** are rare north of the Delta, so one at the Llano Seco Unit of the Sacramento River NWR in Butte County on 16 April (MF) and 1 May (JTL), followed by two on 2 May (LH) with one remaining to at least 6 May, were noteworthy. A female **Ruff** there on 25-27 April was one of few Butte County records (MF). One **Sanderling** at the Fresno WTP on 9 May (DJ) was the only one reported of this rare but regular migrant in the valley. Rare in spring migration, a **Baird's Sandpiper** was at the Llano Seco Unit in Butte County on 18 April (MF). A **Solitary Sandpiper** visited the Bufferlands in Sacramento County on 6 April (CC)—surprisingly, the only one reported this spring.

Costa's Hummingbirds are generally rare throughout the valley region and can appear at any month or location. Two were at different locations in Shasta County near Redding on 19 April and 7 May (B&CY, MSw). An

extraordinary photographed **Red-throated Pipit** in alternate plumage was a shock to big day birders at the Modesto WTP in Stanislaus County on 14 April (LK+). There are only a handful of spring records for the state, and this is the first county and fourth Central Valley record with previous records from fall.

Furthering the species comeback in the Central Valley, a singing male **Bell's Vireo** was heard at the Los Banos WA in Merced County on 5 May (SM). Two rare migrant **Purple Martins** were at the Kern NWR on 25 March (AS, JD). There are very few records of this rare and declining swallow in the lower San Joaquin Valley and Tulare Basin. Cache Creek in Yolo County added to its list of eastern vagrant birds. This spring's rare visitor was a male **Hooded Warbler** singing on 21 May (BC+). A **Northern Waterthrush** was at the Volta State WA on 21-24 April (PD+) for one of few Merced County records. A **Summer Tanager** returned to a location where it had been found in the previous winter north of Redding in Shasta County on 5-22 March (LJ+).

Rare migrant **Harris's Sparrows** stopped over in Yolo County at Putah Creek Fishing Access #3 on 3 April (EI), near Clarksburg on 14 April (DW), and at the Davis Wetlands on 7 May (JT). The wintering **Swamp Sparrow** at the Yolo Basin WA was last seen on 7 April (SCH). The wintering **Black-throated Sparrow** at the Ceres River Bluff Regional Park in Stanislaus County was last reported on 26 March (HR). Unexpectedly, a female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was spotted at the Putah Creek Riparian Preserve in Yolo County on 26 April (HC, EI).

As usual, a few **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, **Calliope Hummingbirds**, **Gray Flycatchers**, **Sage Thrashers** and **Brewer's Sparrows** were reported. These have proven to be annual spring migrants in small numbers; therefore, I will not be listing each record in this report or in future spring reports.

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