

Central Valley Bird Highlights: August through November 2018

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The Fresno WTP is the only place to find a variety of shorebirds in Fresno County. Therefore, local and visiting birders often find rare species during fall migration. A **Solitary** and two **Baird's sandpipers** were present on 2 August (L&NP), another **Baird's** on 1 and 11 September and four on 13 September (GW, RS, RSx), a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** on 1 September (GW), the county's third record of **American Golden-Plover** on 1-8 November (GW+), and lastly, a **Ruff** on 28 November (RSx). For Stanislaus County, the Ceres WTP is a top spot for shorebirds with a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** on 6 August (RB), a **Stilt Sandpiper** on 14 August (DG), a **Baird's Sandpiper** on 19 August (RB) and two on 27 August (RB), and another **Baird's** and a **Pectoral sandpiper** on 9 September (HR). In Placer County, two **Baird's Sandpipers** visited the Lincoln WTP on 28 August (DR) and one on 11 September (MRg), and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** foraged in a flooded field off Brewer Road (DR) on the former date. In Madera County, the Madera WTP is the shorebird hotspot with **Baird's**, **Semipalmated**, **Pectoral** and **Solitary sandpipers** discovered on 29 August (GW, GF), and the second county record of **American Golden Plover** with a **Stilt Sandpiper** and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** on 27 September (GW), with the plover remaining until 29 September, and lastly, the county's third and fourth **Ruffs** on 26 and 29 November (GW) determined to be different individuals based upon plumage differences seen in photographs.

Yolo County's first and the Central Valley's third **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was present at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area from 31 August - 5 September (SCH+). The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area hosted an **American Golden-Plover** on 20-27 October (SHo+). A fourth regional **American Golden-Plover** for this fall was photographed at the Modesto WTP on 28 October (SSa+) for one of few Stanislaus County records. Unfortunately, the best shorebird of the season was reported on eBird and not seen again—Glenn County's first and the Central Valley's second **Upland Sandpiper**, photographed at the Sacramento NWR on 8 September (WW). Pixley NWR in Tulare County had water this fall, which attracted a **Stilt Sandpiper** on 16-19 October (SSt) and a **Ruff** on 26 November (BB).

Tulare County's first **Red-necked Grebe** appeared at Lake Success on 17 October – 17 November (TK+). Another was at the San Luis Reservoir in Merced County on 13-20 November (DSw+). Rare inland, a **Pacific Loon** was on the Sacramento River in Old Sacramento on 7 November for both Yolo (4th county record) and Sacramento counties (DK). Six **Red-breasted Mergansers**

were on O'Neill Forebay in Merced County on 24 November (JR+). This is one of the best valley locations for this primarily coastal species. An exceptionally early adult **Mew Gull** was photographed along the American River in Sacramento County on 2 September (JML). **Franklin's Gulls** were on time in their fall migration to South America, with one at the Woodland WTP and another at the Davis WTP in Yolo County on 20 September (HC+).

Flammulated Owls migrate to winter in Mexico but are very rarely found during migration. An injured bird was found in northern Fairfield, Solano County on 6 October (TL) but died from internal injuries at the Suisun Wildlife Center. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** paid homage at the Stockton Rural Cemetery in San Joaquin County on 18-23 November (JR+) and another visited Madera and Fresno counties at Lost Lake on 20 November (JR+).

Highlighting the flycatcher records, an **Eastern Kingbird** played hide-and-seek on Putah Creek at UC Davis in Yolo and Solano counties on 3 September with out of state visitors and luckily refound later that day (JC, ER, HC, EI+). **Cassin's Kingbird** is generally rare in the Central Valley with only a few locations where it is regularly seen, so one at the Modesto Junior College on 29 October (GH) was a noteworthy record for Stanislaus County. One at Sycamore Island on 8 November was Madera County's fourth record (GW). Another was at the Tulare WTP on 12-15 November (RH+) for only the second Tulare County record. The Fresno Zoo entertained a **Tropical Kingbird** for the first Fresno County record on 13-20 November (SS+). The **Least Flycatcher** is nearly annual in the Central Valley during fall migration with Yolo County as the major area for records. One was photographed at Cache Creek-Wildwings Park in Yolo County on 21-22 October (BC+). **Vermilion Flycatchers** have been found in the Central Valley in increasing frequency in the past 15 years. Stanislaus County's first record bird returned for another winter at Dawson Lake on 3 October (RMcd). Colusa County's first bird returned to the Maxwell Cemetery for its fourth winter on 22 October (SA). A possible returning bird from previous winters was spotted along Sante Fe Grade in Merced County on 27 November (AR). Yolo County's second ever was at the Woodland WTP on 20-21 October (JT). Six were present during the fall at the Kern Water Bank near Buttonwillow, Kern County (JCS). Tulare County's second or third record of **Eastern Phoebe** was at Pixley NWR on 26-27 November (SSt).

Babel Slough is one of the better migrant spots in Yolo County. Regular coverage usually results in some rare finds and this fall the top bird was a **Gray Catbird** on 9-18 September (RF). A **Sage Thrasher** wandered onto Folsom Point State Recreation Area in Sacramento County on 8-13 September (AL+). A well-described **Plumbeous Vireo** was found in the North Davis Greenbelt in Yolo County on 17-28 September, as was a **Cassin's Vireo** on 17 November (both CD). A **Northern Shrike** was near Discovery Bay in eastern Contra Costa County on 1- 7 November (DK) might have been a first county

record. Another was in Woodland in Yolo County on 15-20 November (DM+). Always a nice find in the lowlands, a **Townsend's Solitaire** visited the riparian habitat at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on 9 September (DC) and another at the Wood Duck Ponds along the Sacramento River in Yolo County on 19-21 September (LE+) and a third in Carmichael, Sacramento County on 18 October (DW). Longspurs have not been reported in the regional much in recent years, so a **Lapland Longspur** at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on 14-15 October (RF+) was noteworthy.

The fall vagrant landbird season started on 31 July with a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** that lingered until at least 12 August along Putah Creek at Pedrick Road in Yolo and Solano counties (DC, JR+). Most vagrants don't appear until at least late August, so this bird may have over summered locally. Another **Chestnut-sided Warbler** graced Del Paso Regional Park in Sacramento County on 15-16 September (DW+), and Amador County's second record was photographed in Sutter Creek on 2 September (DS). A roadkill **Magnolia Warbler** died on Mace Ave at Putah Creek on 3 October (AEjr), and a live one at Shasta College in Redding, Shasta County on 27 October (DG) were two of very few valley records. Yolo County hosted an **American Redstart** at the Wood Duck Ponds along the Sacramento River in on 13 September (LE) and at Hwy 45 and Road 98A north of Knight's Landing on 27-29 October (SCH+). The best vagrant warbler record was of the **Canada Warbler** at William Land Park in Sacramento County on 23 September (AL). The Basalt Campground near San Luis Reservoir in Merced County has had a fair number of vagrants in recent years; a **Black-and-white Warbler** foraged among the pines there on 2-3 October (GW+). A **Palm Warbler** was at the Clear Creek WTP in Shasta County on 19 October (DP) and two were at Folsom Lake in Sacramento County on 20-21 October (AL+).

A **Summer Tanager** was found at Reichmuth Park in Sacramento County on 17 August (JLD, EP) and another was along Putah Creek at UC Davis in Solano and Yolo counties on 19 August – 25 September (KSsw+) that was joined by a **Green-tailed Towhee** on the latter date (JR), by a male **Indigo Bunting** on 17 September (JCS) and finally by a **Blackpoll Warbler** on 19-30 September (HC). A third **Summer Tanager** visited the Lake Solano County Park along Putah Creek on 2 September (L&MW) and a fourth was at the Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County on 19 September (MF). A big surprise was the **Black-throated Sparrow** at the Fresno WTP on 1 September (GW) and another at the Big Dry Creek Reservoir Grasslands on 12 October (RSx) where a **Grasshopper Sparrow** was found on 16 October (RSx), all in Fresno County. Another **Grasshopper Sparrow** was in Madera County along the Madera Canal on 17-26 October (RSx) where a **Lark Bunting** was also discovered on 14 November (RSx). A **Swamp Sparrow** found at Maidu Park in lowland Placer County on 24 November (JRy) was one of few county records. What may be Sacramento County's first fully documented record of **Clay-**

colored Sparrow was photographed at Folsom Lake on 20 October (AL). A late and locally rare **Hooded Oriole** visited Porterville, Tulare County on 26 October (SSu, PS).

The observers are: Stuart Angerer, Ralph Baker, Brent Campos, Holly Coates, John Colbert, Dan Cook, Chris Dunford, Jon Dunn (JLD), Leo Edson, Andy Engilis Jr, George Folsom, Matt Forster, Robert Furrow, Dan Gilman, Dan Greaney, Steve Hampton (SCH), Rob Hansen, Garry Hayes, Scott Hoppe (SHo), Emmett Iverson, Dan Kopp, Tony Kurz, Jeri Langham (JML), Andrew Lee, Ronald McDow, Dan Murphy, Ed Pandolfino, L & N Parmeter (L&NP), David Pluth, Harold Reeve, Jason Riggio, Michael Rogner (MRg), Deren Ross, Jim Royer (JRy), Andrew Rush, Erica Rutherford, Rick Saxton (RSx), Dave Skinner, Robert Snow, Susan Steele (SSt), John Sterling (JCS), Steve Summers, Priscilla Summers, Dale Swanberg (DSw), Michelle Swarthout (MS), Jim Thomas, Lois and Mike Wall (L&MW), Wayne Washam, Dan Williams, and Gary Woods.

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