

Central Valley Bird Highlights: December 2019 through February 2020

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A rare inland **Red-necked Grebe** was at Lake Success in Tulare County 14 December–29 January (SDS+) where this species had been recorded during the two previous winters. A rare **Bewick's** (Eurasian form) of the **Tundra Swan** was photographed at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on 8 January (MPi). The male **Garganey** at Bridgeway Island Pond in West Sacramento, Yolo County, returned for its second winter when discovered on 3 January (LS) and last reported on 31 January. It or a second male **Garganey** delighted birders along White Rd for a first Colusa County record on 26 February into the spring season (SA). Staten Island is managed by The Nature Conservancy which restricts birders from much of the island, so a **Long-tailed Duck** there on 17-23 December (KS+) was a good find for a biologist contracted to monitor bird populations. Exceptionally rare in the lower part of the valley, a male **Barrow's Goldeneye** was at Hart Park near Bakersfield 14 December–4 January for one of few Kern County records (K&BK).

A **Red-breasted Merganser** along the American River Parkway in Sacramento on 17-22 December (GEw+) was at a location with numerous records in previous winters. Two males and a female were on Lake Ming in Bakersfield, Kern County on 17 December (BB), and another was at Lake Success on 27 December (TKz). An immature **Brown Pelican** mixed in with American White Pelicans in the Tulare Basin, Kings County when first found on 26 February (TC) and remaining for months afterward.

A male **Ruff** was photographed at Jacksnipe Rd pond in Solano on 16 December (MD), a second was at the Yolo Bypass WA on 27 February (CD), and a third was at the Tulare WTP on 26 December–4 February (TKz). **Solitary Sandpipers** are supposed to winter in South America, but documented winter records have been piling up in the state during the last 15 years so it has not been as unexpected as before. One was along Charter Oak Drive on a small pond in Tulare County on 1-4 (DF+) and another was at the Modesto WTP in Stanislaus County on December 21 (JH+).

Mew Gulls are rare away from the Delta islands, so one at Corcoran City Park in Kings County on 6 December (DP) was particularly noteworthy as most extralimital records are from sewage ponds in the valley, and another was at the Visalia WTP in Tulare County on 24-25 December (TKz+). As now expected in Yolo County every winter, a **Glaucous** and a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** were at the county landfill pond on 21 December (BW), and joining the throng of

gulls there was a beautiful adult **Slaty-backed Gull** on 31 January–15 February (SCH+).

Lesser Black-backed Gulls are now annual in the valley with new locations each winter. An adult was at the Visalia WTP in Tulare County on 24–25 December (TKz+), Shasta County's first was an adult going between the Redding WTP and Kutras Lake on 17 January–27 February (GH+), a third cycle was in Woodland, Yolo County on 25 February (LW)—and likely the same bird at the Yolo Bypass WA on the following day (EI), a second cycle was at that the Visalia WTP on 31 January (LS, LC), another adult with an adult **Glaucous Gull** was at the American River Parkway on 28–29+ December (GEw, TKz+)—where the first record was found for the valley over 15 years ago. A first cycle **Glaucous Gull** was at Gray Lodge in Butte County on 29 January (KS). The rarest gull of the season was the **Black-legged Kittiwake** on Stony Gorge Res. on 28 January–23 February (LK) establishing the first record for Glenn County of this pelagic species and the first in the valley in over fifteen years.

The first documented valley record of a **Barred Owl** was in south Davis in Yolo County from 11 December–12 January (EI+). It was found roosting in a barn, then along Willow Slough on the last date (see CV Birds 23: 37–39 for details). Far less expected was the first winter record of a **Common Nighthawk** photographed at the San Joaquin River NWT on 5 January (HR+). This may be the first winter record for the state of this migrant that winters in South America! There are a few accepted eBird reports for North America from Texas to Florida, but none further west.

There have been a few **White-winged Doves** in the valley in the past 20 years, but they remain very rare late fall and winter visitors. Sacramento County's first came on 24 January–1 February along Meiss Rd (MF+). **Costa's Hummingbirds** are rare but regular in the valley and could appear anywhere at any month. A male returned for its second winter in a yard in Davis, Yolo County from 17 December into the spring season (RT). **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** are rare but annual winter visitors in the valley with an immature along Dry Creek in Modesto on 13 January (DG). The usual number and locations of other **Yellow-bellied** and **Red-naped sapsuckers** were reported throughout the season.

An **Eastern Phoebe** at the Kern Water Bank near Buttonwillow was the third record for the location on 2 December (JCS). The second documented **Tropical Kingbird** for Sacramento County found in November (MB) on Sherman Island continued to 11 January (ZVZ). Tulare County's first **Least Flycatcher** wintered from 11 December to at least 5 January (NB+) and a more expected but still seasonally rare **Hammond's Flycatcher** was nearby at the Sequoia Riverlands Trust, Dry Creek Preserve on 5–6 February (SDS+). Also unexpected in winter was a **Gray Flycatcher** at Cosumnes River Preserve in Sacramento County that was photographed on 4 January–17 February along

with a more expected but also rare **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** (AL+). There are fewer than five winter records of the **Gray Flycatcher** for the Central Valley.

The number of **Vermilion Flycatchers** wintering in the valley continues to grow with two at Allensworth State Historical Park in Tulare County found on 17 December (SDS), a female returned to the Merced NWR in December and an adult at Alves Rd on 9 December (SM)—both in Merced County. An adult male returned to the Maxwell Cemetery in Colusa on 21 December (AG), one found in fall remained in Tanzanite Park in Sacramento County until at least 26 February (KW), an adult male at the Buena Vista Recreation Area in Kern County on 10 January (WR), with three more at the nearby Kern Water Bank throughout the season (JCS). Madera County's first returned for another winter along the Madera Canal (GW), and an adult male was at the Kern NWR on 29 December (TT).

Rare but annual on the valley, an adult and an immature **Northern Shrike** were along Cottonwood Rd in Butte County on 6-20 January (SA, LW, JRw+) and another along White Rd in Colusa County on 29 February (KS). Equally rare in winter in the valley, a **Sage Thrasher** was far north on East Canal Rd in Tehama County on 9 January for one of only a handful of county records and first for winter (MSw). A probable **Black-capped Chickadee** appeared at the Red Bluff Recreation Area for a potential first Tehama County record on 24 January (DD, BED). The description did not completely rule out a **Mountain Chickadee** that was missing its white supercilary, as the observers did not note the buffy flanks that would secure the identification. There is only one documented record of **Black-capped Chickadee** for the valley when one was found in Redding during winter a few years ago. Yolo County was a hotspot for vireos with its first documented wintering **Plumbeous Vireo** in Winters from 8 December into spring season (KSw), a second in the county was found at UC Davis on 29 January (KD), and two **Cassin's Vireos** found in two different areas in Davis on 26 February (DC, MPE).

The first Central Valley record of a **Cave Swallow** was documented with many photos and observers at the Tulare WTP on 29 January–1 February (SDS+). It was the 13th record for the state accepted by the California Bird Records Committee and the first for Northern California.

A **Black-and-white Warbler** was found near Bartlett Park below Lake Success Dam for one of few Tulare County records on 12 December (EE) and another was at Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary in Sutter County on 2-4 February (DSh). The **Worm-eating Warbler** found in south Davis in the fall continued through the winter to at least 28 January (JZ). Other rare eastern vagrant warblers include a **Tennessee Warbler** briefly seen and photographed in Davis on 29 December (SS), and an equally rare **American Redstart** was at the Mokelumne Fish Hatchery in San Joaquin County along with a much rarer

inland wintering **Wilson's Warbler** on 17 January (DY, FO). Although regular in small numbers in winter along the coast, especially in southern California, **Yellow Warblers** are also very rare in the Central Valley in winter so one at the Raine Rest Area along Hwy 99 in Tulare County on 26 December was an excellent record (BM).

A lucky find in a yard in Stockton was the immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** from 11-17 December—a rare winter record for San Joaquin County (JRw+). The only longspur reported was a **Lapland** at Flood and Waverly roads in eastern San Joaquin County on 24-31 December (MD+). The only **Lark Bunting** of the season was in northern Yolo County on Rd 86 and Rd 16 on 1-29 February (MP, SCH+). The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area once again hosted (now an annual event) a wintering **Swamp Sparrow** with the first sighting on 21 December (SHp). The only **Harris's Sparrow** was in Woodland, Yolo County returning for its second winter (SLaR). An overdue first documented record of a **Clay-colored Sparrow** in Sacramento County was found on 27 December in Tanzanite Park (DM+) and remained to at least 9 March. Madera County's second **Black-throated Sparrow** record was from Millerton Lake State Recreation Area on 8 January (RC+). And lastly, an adult male **Hooded Oriole** was on Sherman Island on 25 January (AH) for one of few winter records for Sacramento County, and another showed up on a yard in Porterville, Tulare County on 30 January (SDS) that may have overwintered locally.

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Observers: Stuart Angerer, Ralph Baker, Bob Barnes, Max Brody, Nancy Bruce, Rachel Clark, Teresa Connell, Dan Cook, Lucas Corneliussen, David Dankhe, Mark Dettling, Bruce Deuel (BED), Matthew Dodder, Konshau Duman, Chris Dunford, Elias Elias, Gil Ewing, Marc Fenner, Dan Gilman, Anne Goff, Steve Hampton (SCH), Geoffrey Hembold, Adrian Hinkle, Scott Hoppe, Emmitt Iverson, Tony Kurz (TKz), Ken and Brenda Kyle (K&BK), Sami LaRocca (SLaR), Andrew Lee, John Luther (JLu), Scott Magneson, Bruce Mast, Dan Murphy, Frances Oliver, Don Pendleton, Michael Perrone (MPe), Michael Pierson (MPi), Harold Reeve, Karen Richardson, William Rockey, Jim Rowoth (JRw), David Shuford (DSh), Sean Smith, Ken Sobon, Lucas Stephenson, John Sterling (JCS), Lucas Stephenson, Katie Stoner, Steve Summers (SDS), Michele Swartout (MSw), Kirk Swenson (KSw), Teresa Thome, Robert Traverso, Zeke VanZante (ZVZ), Bart Wickel, Kevin White, Lynette Williams, Gary Woods, David Yee, and Joe Zinkl.

CBRC=California Bird Records Committee; NWR=National Wildlife Refuge; SRA=State Recreation Area; WTP=Wastewater Treatment Plant; WA=State Wildlife Area.