

Central Valley Bird Highlights: December 2018 through February 2019

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

The best record of the season was of a **Baikal Teal** unfortunately shot by a hunter at the Los Banos Gun Club in Merced County (*fide* MS). This bird was photographed, and the record submitted to the California Bird Records Committee. Yolo County's second **Trumpeter Swan** record was photographed at the Yolo County Landfill pond on 13-14 January (MSw+). A rare inland **Brant** visited the Cosumnes River Preserve in Sacramento County on 13-14 January (LC) to the delight of county birders. A male **White-winged Scoter** at the Nimbus Fish Hatchery along the American River on 13 December–24 February (TF+) was only the third Sacramento County record. Another was at the Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County on 28 December–26 January (MF+) where rare loons, grebes and diving ducks are regularly found, and Fresno County's fourth record came from the Fresno WTP on 24-25 January (EE+).

Woodward Reservoir hosted a rare Stanislaus County **Red-breasted Merganser** on 20 February (RB+). One at the Clear Creek WTP near Redding, Shasta County on 21 December (GH+) was in an area where they are regular. A rare inland **Red-necked Grebe** was along Staten Island, Sacramento County on 2 January (JTr) and another was at Lake Success, Tulare County on 13 January (DP). Also, very rare inland, a **Red-throated Loon** was seen by a lucky few along the deep-water channel in West Sacramento on 27 January (KB) for Yolo County's fifth record.

Now annually found in the valley, a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was picked out of the roosting gull flock along with two **Glaucous Gulls** on Clifton Court Forebay, Contra Costa County on 6-7 December (NA+). Another **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at the Yolo County Landfill on 26 December–1 January (KS w) where this species is often reported in winter, and a second-cycle bird was at the Redding WTP on 22 February (DPI). A first year **Glaucous Gull** thrilled birders at Gray Lodge Wildlife Area in Butte County on 20-22 January (CD+). But up to two along with a first cycle Lesser Black-backed Gull at the Koster Road gravel pit in San Joaquin County on 17-25 February (DY, TEa, LS+) were at a location where these species are now annually found. An adult (18-23 February, DY+) and a young (24 February, TEa+) **Slaty-backed Gull** also there were unexpected and the first county records of this Siberian species. Another young **Slaty-backed Gull** was at Folsom Lake in Placer County on 5 February (TEa, JCS+).

Up to 61 **Mountain Plovers** were in northern Yolo County along Hwy 45 on 31 December–7 February (SLaR+). The **Ruff** found in late November at the Madera WTP, Madera County was still present on 7-8 December (GW+) for the first county winter record and fourth overall. A **Stilt Sandpiper** at the Modesto WTP on 9 December (HR+) was a great find for Stanislaus County. Rare wintering **Sanderlings** were at the Los Banos WTP in Merced County on 27 December (AW) and the Modesto WTP in Stanislaus County on 10 February (JG+).

A **White-winged Dove** was found for the second time at the Holland Tract on 19 December–21 February (EM+) for the second Contra Costa County record. **Common Ground-Doves** continue their colonization of orchards in the lower San Joaquin Valley with Fresno County's fourth record at Flum Ditch in Biola on 20 December (GW).

A **Red-naped Sapsucker** along the American River near Bushy Lake, Sacramento County was found on 1 December (LD+). The **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** found in the late fall was still at the Stockton Cemetery on 1-16 December (JH+), another in Davis, Yolo County on 12 January (SCH) was a hybrid, a third was present at the Lost Lake Recreation Area in Fresno County on 24 January–1 February (RSx+), and a fourth was in Millville, Shasta County on 6 January (BF). The **Vermilion Flycatcher** that returned in late October (SA) at the Maxwell Cemetery, Colusa County remained through its fourth winter there. As usual, a few were on the southern section of the valley with one at Colonel Allensworth State Historical Park, Tulare County on 18 December (SDS), and at least three at the Kern Water Bank, Kern County through the winter (JCS). The male along Santa Fe Grade in Merced County returned for another year (*fide* DB). Almost annual in fall or winter in the valley, the **Eastern Phoebe** found in the fall remained at Pixley NWR, Tulare County on 5 December (JLu). Yolo County's second winter record of a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** came from Putah Creek on 29 December (SCH). A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was at the Sacramento City Cemetery, Sacramento County on 12 January (AL).

An adult **Northern Shrike** at the Woodland WTP, Yolo County on 8 December–18 February (RT+) was the second one there this fall/winter—the other was a juvenile that was refound on 20-21 December (SCH+). Another at the Holland Tract in eastern Contra Costa County on 9-16 December (DV+) was one of few county records. A bit further north, a juvenile was at the Sacramento NWR, Glenn County on 10-27 December (TB+) and lastly a juvenile graced a yard in Anderson, Shasta County on 14 February (BP). Wintering Solitary type vireos in the valley are equally likely to be Cassin's or Plumbeous. In Woodland, Yolo County, a **Plumbeous Vireo** was found on 27+ January (KR+), and in nearby Davis, a **Cassin's Vireo** was present on 26 January (KSw).

Very rare in the valley, a **Brown Thrasher** visited Isenberg Crane Preserve, San Joaquin County on 1 December–15 January (DF+). A trip up the Sutter Buttes yielded a rare Sutter County **Townsend's Solitaire** (CCo) on 18 December. The only longspur reports were of a **Lapland** along County Road 103 in Yolo County on 20 December (KB) and another along Creed Road in Solano County on 2-4 January (LS+). One of the few records of **Black-and-white Warbler** for Fresno County was established with one wintering at the Lost Lake Recreation Area on 2-30 December (TD+). A big surprise was Tuolumne County's first **Palm Warbler** found at Tuttleton Recreation Area on 13-21 December (RMcD). Another **Palm Warbler** in Davis, Yolo County on 22 February (SCH+) was the fourth county record. The vagrant warbler highlight was the Central Valley's first winter record of a **Tennessee Warbler** in Davis on 25-29 January (SCH). This species is sometimes seen in winter along the coast but is exceptionally rare inland. Another rare winter inland warbler was a **Nashville Warbler** photographed in Anderson, Shasta County from 19 January–8 February (BP). This may be the first winter record for the valley.

A rare winter **Clay-colored Sparrow** mixed into a Chipping Sparrow flock along Gaddini Road in northern Solano County on 17 December (DW+). The only **Harris's Sparrow** report came from Chico, Butte County on 27 December–26 January (MSk+). **Swamp Sparrow** sightings were at Ceres Bluff Regional Park in Stanislaus County on 20 January (HR+) and along Santa Fe Grade in Merced County on 22 December (BS). There are few valley winter records of **Green-tailed Towhee**, so one in Cordelia on 17-31 December (DH+) was noteworthy and was only a few miles from the first Solano County winter record a few years prior. Yolo County's second winter record of a **Bullock's Oriole** came from the Sacramento River at West Sacramento on 22 December (EI+). Another surprise was a **Hooded Oriole** visiting a hummingbird feeder in Lodi, San Joaquin County on 18 January (FO), and one at Davis, Yolo County on 3 February (KD). There are very few winter records for any orioles in the Central Valley.

Thanks to Steve Hampton for Yolo County summaries and to Bob Yutzky for Shasta County summaries.

Observers: Stuart Angerer, Noah Arthur, Keith Bailey, Ralph Baker, Tim Bray, Dan Brown, Lyann Comrack, Chris Conard (CCo), Tom Dayton, Colin Dillingham, Lily Douglas, Konshau Duman, Todd Easterla (TEa), Elias Elias, Bret Fessenden, Tim Fitzer, Matt Forster, David Fries, Jim Gain, Denise Hamilton, Steve Hampton (SCH), Geoffrey Hembold, Jim Hoagland (JH), James Holmes, Emmett Iverson, Sami LaRocca (SLaR), Andrew Lee, John Luther (JLu), Ron McDow (RMcD), Ethan Monk, Frances Oliver, Barbara Peck, Dan Pittenger, David Pluth (DPI), Harold Reeve, Karen Richardson, Rick Saxton (RSx), Mike Skram, Lucas Stephenson, John Sterling (JCS), Michael Stubblefield, Brian

Sullivan, Steve Summers (SDS), Michele Swartout, Kirk Swenson (KSw), Rick Timmons, John Trochet, Doug Vaughn, Alacia Welch, Dan Williams, Gary Woods, David Yee, and Bob and Carol Yutzy (B&CY).

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



Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*) nestlings in a nest box, Angels Camp, Calaveras Co., California, 9 June 2019. Over the last three years, the Airolas placed 25 boxes for various species on the ranch property. The boxes have been adopted by bluebirds, Tree Swallows, House Wrens, Ash-throated Flycatchers, and Wood Ducks. *Photo by Layla Airola*