

# Central Valley and Foothills Bird Highlights: March through May 2021

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The **Neotropic Cormorant**, which has been colonizing southern California in recent years, is now extending into the Central Valley. One found at Ellis Lake in Marysville on 28 May (AP) was the state's northernmost record. It continued through the summer season. A first record for Madera County came on 6-9 April (GW+) in ponds on the north side of the Fresno River, and it was seen on the Fresno County side on 22 April (KT). A **Sandhill Crane** photographed over Cache Creek in Yolo County on the surprisingly late date of 23 May (BC) was one of, if not the latest, spring record for this species in the Central Valley. Most depart in March for their breeding grounds.

Increasing as a migrant in the Sacramento Valley, a **Snowy Plover** was along Desmond Rd at Cosumnes Preserve in Sacramento County on 27 March (LW+) and 2-3 May (AL+), and another was at the Llano Seco Unit in Butte County on 19 April (LW). Rare but regular in large flocks of wintering **Black-bellied Plovers**, a **Pacific Golden-Plover** was at Ave 160 and Rd 96 in southwest Tulare County on 3 March (DF). An unprecedented number were found in a migrant flock with up to 12 along Swan Rd south of Dixon, Solano County (AJ+)! A rare spring **Stilt Sandpiper** was photographed on the Jersey Ave-to-Kent Ave ponds south of Lemoore in Kings County on 12-13 May (GW, TC). **Baird's Sandpiper** is a rare but regular fall migrant in small numbers, but is much rarer in spring, so one photographed at the Ripon WTP on 5-6 May (RR, JTh) was a good find for San Joaquin County as was one or two at the Llano Seco Unit in Butte County on 11-14 April (LH). Also, much rarer in spring than fall, a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** foraged along the Chico WTP on 22 April (LH) for Butte County's first spring record, and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** provided one of few spring records for Yolo County on 19 April at a pond along Rd 103 north of Davis (SSm). A rare inland **Sanderling** winged across the Fresno WTP on 30 April (GW).

An adult **Little Gull** briefly visited the Corcoran Reservoir in Kings County on 22 May (MSy). Most records in recent decades for the region have come from Kings County. Increasingly found in the valley, up to four **Franklin's Gulls** were photographed on O'Neill Forebay on 8-10 May (RB+), singles were on the Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County on 2 and 28 April (LH, LW), and two were at the Tulare WTP on 2 May (DF). A **Glaucous Gull** picked on a carcass for a few minutes on Hwy 45 near the north edge of Yolo County on 10 March (LW).

**Allen's Hummingbird** has been slowly expanding its range inland. Two adult males, well-photographed frequenting a feeder in southeastern Yolo County from 22 March–20 May (TU+), provided one of very few documented records for the county and delighted many local birders. A **White-winged Dove** was well-documented along 63<sup>rd</sup> St in Sacramento on 14-17 April (JHm+).

**Bell's Vireos** were extirpated from the Central Valley decades ago, but conservation successes in southern California have led to increasing records in recent years. A singing male was found at the Kern NWR on 9 May (ASH). Merced County's overdue first **Chestnut-collared Longspur** was photographed near Los Banos Creek Res. on 29 March (PD). Eastern vagrant warblers were scarce this spring with a **Northern Waterthrush** on the Tule River on 5 May for Tulare County's first record (DF+).

A rare **Black-throated Sparrow**, which recovered from hitting a window in Davis on 3 May, was refound on 7 May (MM) for only the fifth record for Yolo County. Two more were found along Michigan Bar Rd in eastern Sacramento County on 18-19 April (LD, GE+). A wintering flock of **Chipping Sparrows** attracted a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at the Creekside Golf Course in Stanislaus County from 6-31 March (DG+). A rare spring migrant **Clay-colored Sparrow** was photographed singing at Clements Cemetery in San Joaquin County on 15 April (KF+). A **Swamp Sparrow** was a rare find in Tulare County at Bartlett Park near Lake Success on 6-9 April (SDS+). Big surprises in Turlock, Stanislaus County were a **Harris's Sparrow** in a backyard on 5 March (GS) and a male **Cassin's Finch** coming to a different backyard (SN+) from 18-19 April. Amazingly, a female **Cassin's Finch** was photographed at the Grasslands Park in Yolo County on 17 April (BW, MPe) for second county spring record of this rare montane visitor, and another female was in a backyard in Oakdale, Stanislaus County on 21 March (JH).

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

Wintering birds that were reported into the spring season included a **Yellow-billed Loon** on the South Mokelumne River in San Joaquin County to 2 March, **Red-necked Grebe** on Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County to 6 May, **Neotropic Cormorant** at Plaza Park in Visalia, Tulare County to 26 April, **White-winged Scoter** on Folsom Lake in Sacramento County to 1 April (GE), **Broad-billed Hummingbird** in Davis, Yolo County to 3 March, **Red-naped Sapsucker** in Sacramento to 5 March, **Eastern Phoebe** along Cache Creek in Yolo County to 5 April, **Green-tailed Towhee** in Davis to 4 March, **Harris's Sparrow** along Putah Creek in Davis to 11 April, and a female **Cassin's Finch** in Orangevale, Sacramento County to 28 March.

Thanks to the following observers who reported their significant findings to the Club's listserv and/or to eBird; Ralph Baker, Brent Campos, Teresa Connell, Lily Douglas, Pete Dunten, Gil Ewing, Dane Fagundes, Dan Gilman, James Holmes (JHm), Liam Huber, Andrew Lee, Siera Nystrom, Asher Perla, Michael Perrone (MPe), Rosemarie Richardson, Alison Sheehey (ASh), Sean Smith (SSm), Mark Stacey (MSy), Steve Summers (SDS), Janet Theilen, Kym Toews, Tom Uslan, Bart Wickel, Lynette Williams, Lisa Winslow, and Gary Woods.

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

**Correction:** Ron Pozzi found the **Franklin's Gull** at Beal's Point at Folsom Lake in Placer County on 2 April 2019, and it was seen the following day.