

Central Valley Bird Highlights: August through November 2020

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A **Red-throated Loon** on San Luis Res. on 28 November (JH) was one of few records of this species in the region. A **Pacific Loon** was a likely summering bird at Woodward Res. found on 29-30 August in Stanislaus County (JG+). This species is occasionally found in summer at inland lakes. Another was found at the Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County on 20 October – 21 November, where this species has been found several times (JTL). One was present at Black Butte Lake in Glenn and Tehama counties on 7-17 November (MSw). Two **Red-necked Grebes** were below Oroville Dam on 27 October–23 November in Butte County (LH) and Yuba County's second record came from Collins Lake on 30 October–3 November (AP+). Another graced Glenn and Tehama counties at Black Butte Lake on 28 November (MSw+). A very rare inland juvenile **Brown Pelican** swam in the Tulare WTP on 1 November (DFg) for the only Tulare County record away from Lake Success where one was present from 8-22 November (HJ+). **Neotropic Cormorants** have been colonizing southern California in recent years and have started appearing in the lower Central Valley. One in Fresno on 12 September – 20 November was the northernmost record to date and a first for the county (KC+).

A **Trumpeter Swan** photographed along Richvale Hwy on 10 November in Butte County (LH), and another photographed on Kibbe and Browns Valley Roads in Yuba County on 22-24 November (MSw, AP+) were the only ones reported. This species remains rare in the region, but records have increased in recent years with photographic documentation and more birders attuned to their identification. A great showing of rare inland scoters found this fall included a **Surf Scoter** at the Woodland WTP on 18-27 October (KD, LW+), one at White Slough WTP in San Joaquin County on 27 October–10 November (JG+), another along the American River Parkway in Sacramento on 24 October–3 November (JLg), one at Black Butte Lake in Glenn and Tehama counties on 7-25 November (MSw), a **White-winged Scoter** photographed at the Thermalito Afterbay on 29 October–5 November (JTL+), and another found dead in an agricultural field in Merced County on 30 October (HC). Two **Red-breasted Mergansers** were a rare find at Black Butte Lake in Glenn and Tehama counties from 17-28 November (LH+). A **Tundra Bean Goose** was well photographed at Cosumnes River Preserve on 14-15 November (PG+) establishing a first record for Sacramento County and the first seen by birders

prior to being shot by hunters in the Central Valley. Alas, this bird was later shot by a trophy hunter at a different location.

Migrant **Pacific Golden-Plovers** are rarely found, especially away from large flocks of Black-bellied Plovers at a few WTPs. One along the Richvale Hwy on 15 August was one of few records for Butte County (MMu+). Even more rare in the region, an **American Golden-Plover** visited the Woodland WTP on 28-30 November (SHo, MMA). Clifton Court Forebay in eastern Contra Costa County has held some great birds over the years, Birders on 1 August discovered a **Black Turnstone**—one of few ever found in the Central Valley—and a locally rare **Snowy Plover** (EM, SC). **Marbled Godwits** are rare away from the Delta and Tulare Basin regions, so one at the Thermalito Afterbay on 2 August (MF) and two along Richvale Hwy on 8 August and two there on 16 August (both LH), and two on Nelson Shippee Road on the late date of 18 November (MSw) all in Butte County; one along Lurline Ave on 8-11 August in Colusa County (ZP); and another at the Modesto WTP on 8 August in Stanislaus County (JRw+) were noteworthy. Also present at the Modesto WTP on 8 August was a rare inland **Ruddy Turnstone** (JRw+). A locally rare **Willet** was along Woodbridge Road on 4 August (JG) and at the Ripon WTP on 27 August (JH) in San Joaquin County, and another was along Richvale Hwy in Butte County on 10 August (LH).

The usual small number of rare migrant **Solitary, Pectoral, Baird's** and **Semipalmated sandpipers** were reported at typical locations. Photographed **Solitary Sandpipers** at the Circle J-Norris Ranch pond in Tulare County on 6-13 September (KMCC+) and at the Tracy WTP (HK) on the late date of 23 November were noteworthy for their locations. A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** along Ramirez Road on 7 September was one of few recorded in Yuba County (AP). Rare north of the Tulare Basin, a **Stilt Sandpiper** graced the wetlands at Cosumnes Preserve in Sacramento County on 13 August (JTr). Yolo's third and the Central Valley's sixth **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was at the Yolo Bypass WA on 22-23 September (LE+). An adult **Ruff** at the Sycamore Cutoff in Colusa County on 30 September–24 October (SMcA) was a first Colusa County record. A rare inland **Red Phalarope** was on Clifton Court Forebay on 15 November (SC+) in eastern Contra Costa County and on private property in Kings County on 14 November (SDS+). The shorebird highlights were the very rare **Curlew Sandpipers** from Eurasia that delighted many birders with one along Grimes Arbuckle Road on 17 September (JLx+) for a first Colusa County record and another returning for its second winter and later joined by two Ruffs and several Stilt Sandpipers on private property in Kings County on 5 September (SDS+).

An early 27 November **Glaucous Gull** was at the San Joaquin and Stanislaus County line at the Gaffery Road canal that has attracted many rare gulls in recent winters (JG). Rare away from landfills and fish hatcheries in the

valley, a **Glaucous-winged Gull** flew over the Sacramento NWR on 14 November (MD). Yuba County's first **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was along South Beale Road on 28 November (JLx+), and a second cycle was photographed at the Kern NWR on 30 November (SDS). A **Thayer's Iceland Gull** at the Colusa NWR on 22 November (CG) was rare for that location and county. **Short-billed** (formerly **Mew**) **Gulls** are rare away from the Delta region, so one at Black Butte Lake in Glenn and Tehama counties on 17 November was noteworthy (LK+). The only jaeger reported was a **Long-tailed Jaeger** on private property in Kern County on 5 September (JSy). A juvenile **Common Murre** wandered inland to Benicia on 8 August (SR), for one of few records of this coastal species for the valley—all at that same location.

The **Lesser Nighthawk** is a locally uncommon species in the valley with only a few scattered locations in the region but is very rare away from those locations. One seen at sunset flying south from Putah Creek on 15 August was the second record for that well-birded location and one of few Solano County records (ZP). **Cassin's Kingbirds** also are highly local and very rare away from a few scattered locations in the Central Valley. One at the Tulare WTP on 5 November (DFg) was the second for that location and one of fewer than five for the county. Another was at a private eucalyptus grove on 14 October in for Kings County's third record (MSy). Although **Tropical Kingbirds** have proven to be rare but regular fall and winter visitors to coastal California, there are far fewer inland records. One along the Tuolumne River Parkway Trail on 3 October (GH) was a first for Stanislaus County. A rare migrant **Least Flycatcher** was well-photographed at Babel Slough on 5 September (ZP+) for one of few Yolo County records. **Vermilion Flycatchers** once again extended their range into the Central Valley with one at Lake Yosemite in Stanislaus County on 29 September (DS) joined by two more on 16 October (DK), Yolo County's second at the Woodland WTP on 31 October (SHo), the Maxwell Cemetery male on 7 October (LH+) for its sixth winter at that site in Colusa County, two at the Chico WTP on 14 October (LH+) and another at the Chico University Farm on 17 October (SA, MF) in Butte County, six at the Kern Waterbank in October and November (JCS) and another at the Kern NWR on 5 November (BGC), three at Colonel Allensworth State Historical Park in Tulare County on 16 November (SDS), and one at Merced NWR on 23 November (HF).

A crazy-late **Bank Swallow** was photographed over Clifton Court Forebay on 15 November (EM, LK+). Yolo County's fifth record of **Gray Catbird** was at Putah Creek fishing access #3 on 27 September (KSw). A **Sage Thrasher** along Road 302 on 12 November provided one of few records for Glenn County (SA+). King County's second **Townsend's Solitaire** was on Utica Road on 26 September (JSy). A **Red-eyed Vireo** was photographed visiting a yard in Rio Vista on 30 September (ML) for one of few Solano County records. An

immature **Northern Shrike** was photographed at Leininger Road in Tehama County on the very early date of 27 October (JHe). This species doesn't normally arrive in the state until later in the winter.

Eastern vagrant warblers put on a remarkable and early showing this fall starting with a **Black-and-white Warbler** at South Fork Putah Creek in Solano County on 23 August–9 September (RM, LS+), a **Hooded Warbler** at Putah Creek off Pedrick Road on 23 August (SHo) in both Yolo and Solano counties, a **Northern Waterthrush** at East La Loma Park on 24 August in Stanislaus County (DG), a **Canada Warbler** at Gibson Ranch County Park on 26 August in Sacramento County (MB), a **Northern Parula** at Ancil Hoffman Park on 27-29 August in Sacramento County on 27 August (MMA+), an adult male **American Redstart** at Paradise Beach on 27 August in Sacramento County (SW), Yolo County's first record of **Blackburnian Warbler** at Putah Creek on 4-6 September (EM+), a **Northern Waterthrush** on Putah Creek, a few miles east of Winters, on 7-9 September (MK+) in Yolo and Solano counties, a **Tennessee Warbler** along Putah Creek on 10 September (SCH+) in both Yolo and Solano counties, a **Black-and-white Warbler** at Babel Slough in Yolo County on 15 September (LC, MMA), a **Blackpoll Warbler** along the American River Parkway on 15-20 September (JLg+), a **Canada Warbler** photographed in a yard at an undisclosed location in Solano County on 16 September (LR-N), another **Canada Warbler** at the Lone WTP on 19 September (TEa) for the first Amador County record, a **Tennessee Warbler** at Lodi Lakes entrance on 22 September in San Joaquin County (DGY+), a **Northern Parula** at Putah Creek at Pedrick Road on 25 September in both Yolo and Solano counties (LG+), a **Blackpoll Warbler** a few miles east of Winters along Putah Creek on 2 October (MK) in Solano County, Glenn County's first **Chestnut-sided Warbler** photographed at the Sacramento NWR on 5 October (LB+), and lastly, a **Northern Waterthrush** at the Thermalito Afterbay on 5 November (KVB).

An immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited the Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park at Big Chico Creek Access on 17 September for one of few Butte County records (LH) as was the adult male **Summer Tanager** photographed near Chico on 27 September (LH+). Twelve **Red Crossbills** visited Slide Hill Park in Davis, Yolo County on 27 October and two on 23 November (MPe), and in Sacramento County, a flock was in Orangevale, on 9 November (MB) and three in Sacramento on 21 November (MSw). **Green-tailed Towhee** is a rare migrant on the valley floor. Individuals visited yards in Davis on 26 August (SE), in West Sacramento on 30 August (AB), and along Babel Slough on 19-20 September (SCH+)—all in Yolo County, along with another at the Bufferlands on 10 September in Sacramento County (CC). One **Lark Bunting** was described from the Merced NWR on 28 October–22 November (KE+). **Sagebrush Sparrow** occasionally winters in grasslands in the region from Yolo south as documented photographically for a few records.

One was on Cooperstown Road in Stanislaus County on 22-23 October (JG) for the second county record. **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** are uncommon residents of the chaparral and oak savannah in the upper foothills but are exceptionally rare on the valley floor. One was recorded calling at Babel Slough on 19 September (SCH). A rare **Clay-colored Sparrow** visited Henderson Park in Merced County on 6 October (JH, RB), another was at the Richvale WTP in Butte County on 2 August (LH), and Sacramento County's second documented individual was photographed at Folsom Pt on 13 September (GS, ZVZ, NP+). A rare **Black-throated Sparrow** visited Mississippi Bar in Sacramento County for a drink on 27-30 September (LC, MMA+).

There are very few records of **Bobolink** in the Central Valley, so 2-3 at the Chico University Farm were unexpected and provide the second record for that location and Butte County (LH+), and one at the Cosumnes Preserve in Sacramento County on 22 September (JTr) was equally surprising.

The observers are: Stuart Angerer, Ralph Baker, Linda Barth, Max Brodie, Ann Burris, Srikant Char, Hugo Ceja, Kaia Colestock, Lyann Comrack, Chris Conard, Matt Davis, Konshau Doman, Todd Easterla (TEa), Leo Edson, Sid England, Karen Evans, Dane Fagundes (DFg), Matt Forster, Howard Friedman, Jim Gain, Lief Gallagher, Dan Gilman, Casey Girard, Beth Grafton-Cardwell (BGC), Peter Grunow, Steve Hampton (SCH), John Harris, Garry Hayes, John Hendrickson (JHe), Scott Hoppe (SHo), Liam Huber, Hal Johnston, Logan Kahle, Henry Koertzen, Doug Krajnovich, Manfred Kusch, Mona Lang, Jeri Langham (JLg), Andrew Lee, John Lewis (JTL), Jim Lomax (JLx), Mark Martucci (MMA), Sean McAllister (SMcA), Karen McClure (KMCC), Ethan Monk, Mary Muchowski (MMu), Roger Muskat, Nora Papian, Asher Perla, Michael Perrone (MPE), Zane Pickus, Scott Restivo, Loren Roman-Nunez (LR-N), Jim Rowoth (JRw), Jeff Seay (JSy), Gavin Stacey, Mark Stacey (MSy), John Sterling (JCS), Lucas Stephenson, Steve Summers (SDS), Dale Swanberg, Michele Swartout (MSw), Kirk Swenson (KSw), Kevin Thomas, John Trochet (JTr), Karen von Bargaen (KVB), Zeke VanZante (ZVZ), Sally Walters, Lynette Williams, and David Yee (DGY).

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Abbreviations used: Res.=Reservoir, WA=State Wildlife Area, WTP=Wastewater Treatment Plant; NWR=National Wildlife Refuge.