

Central Valley Bird Highlights: December 2020 through February 2021

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Pacific Loons are rare but regular in winter inland, especially on large reservoirs. Two were on Folsom Lake in Sacramento County on 2 January—5 February (ZVZ+) and one remained from fall until at least 30 December (MSk). One found in fall remained at Black Butte Lake in Tehama and Glenn counties until 8 December (MF). The **Red-throated Loon** at O'Neill Forebay found in November was seen again on 1 December (LP, FO). The Central Valley's third **Yellow-billed Loon** along the South Mokelumne River 14 January—18 February was also a first for San Joaquin County of this rare arctic species (KD, LW+). Also, along that river, a **White-winged Scoter** was present on 1 December but not viewable from a public location (KD, LW) and two were in Sacramento and Placer counties at Folsom Lake on 3 January—18 February (ZVZ+). The Butte County **Trumpeter Swan** found in the fall was photographed near Biggs on 8 January (KD, LW). The only **Tufted Duck** was off Bethel Island in eastern Contra Costa on 29 January—9 February (ALk+). A Eurasian **Baikal Teal** was shot by a hunter at Delevan NWR for Colusa County's first record on 20 January. This was the third record for the Central Valley and the ninth record for California. A **Long-tailed Duck** was on private property in Kings County on 10-19 January (MSy).

The Oroville area **Red-necked Grebe** from the fall continued at the Lake Oroville spillway until 18 December (LH) and then was found at Thermalito Afterbay on 30 December and 21 February (MSk); another was present on Folsom Lake in Sacramento and Placer counties on 31 January—19 February (ZVZ+), a third was along the West Sacramento Ship Channel in Yolo County on 27 January—5 February (EI+), a fourth was on Lake Solano in Putah Creek in Solano and Yolo counties on 1-2 February (CW+), and lastly, two were on Lake Success on 15 December—29 January (DF+) where one has wintered in previous years. As noted in the fall report, **Neotropical Cormorants** are beginning to colonize the Central Valley after extending their range northward into southern California over the past two decades. One photographed at Plaza Park in Visalia on 25 December—28 February (DF+) was a first for Tulare County. The same bird or another was at the Visalia WTP on 15 January (DF). The **American Golden-Plover** found at the Woodland WTP, Yolo County in November lingered until 18 December (RPz, SR, MRu, SCH). Rare in Stanislaus County, especially in winter, two **Marbled Godwits** were along Sante Fe Grade on 5 December (MRz). The Kings County **Curlew Sandpiper** remained through the winter on private property.

Very rare away from the Delta and Sacramento region, a **Western Gull** was discovered at the Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County on 30 December—7 January and 20-24 February (LH+). Few **Glaucous Gulls** were reported with one at the American River Parkway on 14 December—2 January (AB) and a second at the Yolo Landfill on 17 December (KSw+). As is now usual, two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were documented at the Yolo Landfill on 7-17 December (CT) and 1-16 February (SCH, LS+); on Folsom Lake, one was in Placer County on 2-5 January (ST), a second-cycle was below the Nimbus Fish Hatchery along the American River in Sacramento County on 22 December (EI) and an adult there on 1 December (GS), two were on in El Dorado County on 20 January (TEa), and an adult was on Bravo Lake in Tulare County on 27 January (DF). A **Short-billed (formerly Mew) Gull** was a rare find away from the Delta region at Black Butte Lake in Tehama County on 31 January—21 February (MSw+) and at the Visalia WTP in Tulare County on 14 January (GW). The best gull of the season was the **Black-headed Gull** from Eurasia at the Stockton WTP on 4-30 December (DGY+), joined there by a **Franklin's Gull** on 4-13 December (DGY+).

The first Central Valley record of **Broad-billed Hummingbird** came from a yard in Davis, Yolo County on 30 January—20 February where it was photographed and enjoyed by many birders due to the wonderful hospitality of the homeowners (VC+). **Costa's Hummingbirds** are generally rare throughout the Central Valley and can appear at any season. An immature male visited a feeder in Anderson, Shasta County on 7 and 10 February (BP). One was at the Green Acres Nursery in Folsom, Sacramento County on 24 January (TEa). An annual but rare winter **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** tapped some trees at the Lema Ranch in Redding from 29 November—22 February (BP+), and in Fresno County, a juvenile tried the same at Lost Lake Recreation Area on 3 January (TD, SH), and an adult was photographed at Woodward Park on 23 December (CC). Typical numbers of **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were found with one photographed in Orangevale, Sacramento County on 8-13 February (MB), another photographed in Chico on 9 February (KW), an adult female at Little Chico Creek Diversion Dam in Butte County on 3-26 January (MSk), and one in Brentwood, Eastern Contra Costa County on 29-30 January (BB+).

Empidonax flycatchers are rare in winter in the state, with **Pacific-slope** being the most likely species. One was at Shasta Lake on 15 January (LS) and a second was on Sherman Island in Sacramento County on 1 January (AH). Sacramento County's third documented **Tropical Kingbird** was at Reichmuth Park on 31 January—12 February (AL). An **Eastern Phoebe** was at Cache Creek on 24 January—12 February (BC+) and another at Clifton Court Forebay on 17—21 January (JC+). As is now the norm, a few **Vermilion Flycatchers** overwintered with the returning bird at the Maxwell Cemetery in Colusa

County, two at the Merced NWR, and individuals in Kings and Tulare counties. One found in Madera County was its second record on 18 January (BS+), and its first was returning for another winter along the Madera Canal on 12 December (GW+). **Sage Thrashers** are regular migrants in small numbers through the valley, but a few linger into winter. One was photographed at the Merced NWR on 8-22 February (BD+), and another was at the end of Central Ave. in Yolo County on 21 December (BH). “Solitary-type” vireos are rare in winter in the Central Valley with Plumbeous and Cassin’s equally likely. A **Cassin’s Vireo** was at Kearney Park in Fresno County on 26 February (GW) and in Davis on 12 January—20 February (CD+). A **Plumbeous Vireo** in Brentwood in eastern Contra Costa County lingered at Creekside Park from 1—18 December (EM+). An adult and an immature **Northern Shrike** were photographed along Cottonwood Road in Butte County on various dates from 6-22 February (LH+), and an immature was photographed at the Sacramento NWR in Glenn County on 3 and 26 January (LD, AR). A **Townsend’s Solitaire** descended to lowlands at the American River Parkway, Sacramento County on 20 December (LC, MMA).

Black-headed Grosbeaks are very rare in winter in the state and especially in the Central Valley and are about as likely to occur as their eastern counterpart, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**. One along the Tuolumne River Parkway Trail on 11 January (GHy) was one of few winter records for Stanislaus County. Equally rare in winter, two **Hooded Orioles** visited a feeder in Waterford, Stanislaus County on 25 January (GHy), and were in Porterville, Tulare County on 5 December—24 February (SDS), at the Fresno WTP on 8 February (GW), and eucalyptus trees on Brannan Island in Sacramento County on 21 February (ZVZ). The only eastern warbler was a **Black-and-white Warbler** at Lodi Lake in San Joaquin County on 5-8 December (SRm+).

A first Merced County record of a **Snow Bunting** was photographed in a restricted area at a solar panel array on 3 February (JT). The only **Lark Buntings** were singles at the Merced NWR on 3 December—10 January (RB) and the Yolo Bypass WA on 30 December (JE). **Harris’s Sparrows** are always a treat to find in the region. One wintered in Redding from 11 December through February (LS+). Another found in Davis delighted birders from 22-28 February (KB+). A rare **Red Fox Sparrow** was photographed at the Merced NWR on 15 February (GW) for one of few documented records of this eastern and boreal subspecies for the region.

Cassin’s Finches are montane residents that occasionally descend into the valley floor. Small numbers were found throughout the Redding area in Shasta County in February (B&CY). A female was in Oakdale on 14 February (JH) for one of fewer than five Stanislaus County records. A male visited a yard in Sacramento on 22 February (TM) as did two males and a female in Orangevale, Sacramento County on 29 January—5 February (MB, NP+). A pair

spent a few days in a yard in Davis, Yolo County where first found on 3 December (SS). Three were at a yard in Chico, Butte County on 12 February (MM). **Red Crossbills** were reported in the Sacramento area in the fall, and seven were at the Sacramento City Cemetery on 6-12 February (KSw), and on 12 February, two were at the Port of Sacramento in Yolo County (EI).

Corrigendum

Madera County's **Black-throated Sparrow** record from Millerton Lake State Recreation Area on 8 January 2019 (RC+) was at least the 10th record for the county not the second as stated in an earlier report (*fide* GW).

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

Observers: Ralph Baker, Kathy Blankenship, Max Brody, Bruce Brown, Aiden Brubaker, Nancy Bruce, Brent Campos, Corry Chen, Jim Chiropoulos, Lyann Comrack, Victoria Cross, Tom Dayton, Lauren Dow, Konshau Duman, Chris Dunford, Bob Dunn, Todd Easterla (TEa), Jonathan Eisen, Dane Fagundes, Matt Forster, Jody Hallstrom, Steve Hampton (SCH), Garry Hayes (GHy), Stephanie Hines, Adrian Hinkle, Brad Holtz, Scott Hoppe (SHo), Rich Howard, Emmitt Iverson, Andrew Lee, Albert Linkowski (ALk), Tim Manolis, Mark Martucci (MMa), Ethan Monk, Mary Muchowski, Frances Oliver, Nora Papian, Barbara Peck, Linda Pittman, Ron Pozzi (RPz), Srini Raman (SRm), Sonja Raub, Mark Rauzon (MRz), Andrew Rush, Mike Rushton (MRu), Larry Siemens, Mike Skram (MSk), Sean Smith, Gavin Stacey, Lucas Stephenson, Brian Sullivan, Steve Summers (SDS), Michele Swartout (MSw), Kirk Swenson (KSw), Simon Tache, Cameron Tescher, Justine Tortosa, Lynette Williams, Chris Wills, Gary Woods, David Yee (DGY), Bob and Carol Yutzy (B&CY) and Zeke VanZante (ZVZ).

Abbreviations used: NWR=National Wildlife Refuge; SRA=State Recreation Area; WTP=Wastewater Treatment Plant; WA=State Wildlife Area