

Two more records of Flammulated Owl for the Central Valley -- the first for Sacramento County

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The Flammulated Owl (*Otus flammeolus*) is a small, insectivorous owl that breeds in conifer forests of Western North America from British Columbia south to the highlands of Central Mexico and winters from central Mexico to Guatemala and El Salvador (Winter 1974, AOU 1983). Records of migrants away from the breeding range in California have been very slow to accumulate (Winter 1974, Collins et al. 1986, Schulz 1991), not surprising considering the species' relatively unobtrusive and nocturnal habits. We here document two additional records of fall migrants from the Central Valley floor, the first for Sacramento County.

Some time in October 1994, a Flammulated Owl in weakened condition was found on the windowsill of the front porch of a residence in North Highlands. The owl was taken to the nearby Sacramento Science Center by the homeowners, whose names unfortunately were not recorded. The bird was given to a local wildlife rehabilitator, M. B. Goodier, who nursed it back to health and, in December, carried it by plane to San Diego, where it was transferred to a raptor rehabilitation facility and eventually released in spring 1995 (*vide* M. B. Goodier). Tim Manolis and Bruce Webb saw and photographed the owl in November before it was flown to San Diego.

At about 1030 on 5 October 1997, Jeff Cesar was birding in Goethe Park along the American River Parkway in Rancho Cordova. His attention was drawn to Anna's Hummingbirds (*Calypte anna*) and Oak Titmice (*Baeolophus inornatus*) fussing noisily in a live oak tree overhanging a trail. He first thought the birds were squabbling, but after a few minutes of scanning with binoculars, he spotted a small owl perched on a branch about 6-7 m up in the tree. Although its eyes were closed and he had never seen the species before, Cesar thought the bird might be a Flammulated Owl because of its small size and short ear tufts. He called Tim Manolis that afternoon, and they and Ellen Manolis found the bird and videotaped it at the same spot at about 1500. Its identification as a Flammulated Owl was confirmed at that time, based on the (now visible) dark brown eyes, orange-buff facial disks and gray-and-white mottled plumage "flammulated" with rusty orange at the base of the ear tufts, around the neck, and on the scapulars. The bird was seen again and photographed at about 1700 by a group of 13-14 people led to the spot by Cesar. At that time it seemed more alert, wary of observers, and considerably more active, moving around on its perch. It was not found when Marc and Natalie Fenner returned to look for it between 1930 and 2000, nor the following morning.

These are the first records for Flammulated Owl for Sacramento County, but there are four records for the Central Valley from neighboring Yolo County, all in October (Collins et al. 1986, Schulz 1991). In addition, Collins et al. (1986) listed a 23 September 1977 sight record for "2 mi. SW of Monticello Dam" (originally published [Erickson and Morlan 1978] as "near L. Berryessa") and attributed it to Yolo County. The location as described would actually be in the foothills of Solano County, and McCaskie et al. (1979) attributed it, apparently correctly, to the latter county. The two records for Sacramento County lend further support to speculation by Schulz (1991) that Flammulated Owls are regular but rarely detected migrants through the Central Valley in October.

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