

1999 (Fifth) Report of the Sacramento Bird Records Committee

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The Sacramento Bird Records Committee reviews records of unusual birds reported within the boundaries described for the *Checklist of the Birds of the Sacramento Area* (Sacramento Audubon Society 1993; hereafter referred to as the *Checklist*). Current members of the SBRC are: Ted Beedy, Bruce Deuel, Ed Greaves, Ed Harper, Jeri Langham, Tim Manolis (chair), Brian Williams, and David Yee. Brian Williams was elected to the SBRC in 1999 to replace John Trochet, who respectfully resigned in favor of other commitments. This is the third SBRC report to appear in the CVBC Bulletin (see Manolis 1998, 1999).

Thirty-five records have been evaluated by the SBRC since the last report. Of these, thirty have been accepted, one not accepted, and four held over for recirculation. Recirculation is triggered by votes of 6-2, 5-3, or 4-4; votes of 8-0 or 7-1 constitute acceptance, votes of 3-5 or less constitute non-acceptance. Note the deliberate use of the term "non-acceptance" rather than "rejection." In some cases the SBRC reaches the conclusion that a misidentification has been made, but in many other cases of "non-acceptance" the documentation received is simply incomplete or inconclusive, leaving the committee unable to render a decision of unqualified acceptance. We urge observers to be detailed and exhaustive in their documentation (photos, sketches, and corroborating accounts by others are most helpful). This makes the work of the SBRC much easier and increases the chance of acceptance.

Observers frequently express confusion as to which species require documentation to the SBRC. First of all, reference to the 1993 *Checklist* is necessary. Any species not on that checklist requires documentation (except for Grasshopper Sparrow, now considered a regular member of the local breeding avifauna; see Manolis 1999). Second, reports of any listed species of accidental occurrence on the *Checklist* require documentation. Finally, the following species on the main body of the *Checklist* should be documented: Red-throated Loon, Surf Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Northern Goshawk, American Golden-Plover, Pacific Golden-Plover, Snowy Plover, Solitary Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Greater Roadrunner, Long-eared Owl, Common Nighthawk, Costa's Hummingbird, Allen's Hummingbird, Red-naped Sapsucker, Mountain Chickadee, Sage Thrasher, Bohemian Waxwing, Northern Shrike, Black-and-White Warbler, American Redstart, Green-tailed Towhee, Brewer's Sparrow, and Harris's Sparrow.

The information for each record listed here includes: the record number (e.g., 30-99 is the thirtieth record received in 1999); for accepted records, the initials of the observer(s) submitting documentation; and comments on additional supporting documentation (e.g., photos, tape recordings, etc.).

REPORTS ACCEPTED

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) – A male (33-97, JTr) seen at the Cosumnes River Preserve, Sacramento Co., 14-19 February 1997, is the first record accepted for Sacramento County. An earlier record from this location is still under review by the SBRC.

Oldsquaw (*Clangula hyemalis*) – A female (42-94, JTr, JL, EG [photos], TM [sketch]) along the American River at Sailor Bar, Fair Oaks, was a first for Sacramento County and a very obliging bird seen by many local observers from at least 22 November 1994 to 12 February 1995.

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) – Three reports of this typically-coastal duck were accepted: A female (35-95, SH, JK, TB) along Cache Creek near Woodland, Yolo Co., 6-8 June 1995; a female (48-96, TM) at Beals Point, Folsom Lake, Placer Co., 11-13 December, 1996; and a female (1-97, DSt, EG) on Putah Creek at the base of Monticello Dam, Yolo Co., 5-21 January 1997.

Record 35-95 was unusual in being from summer, and was only the second record for Yolo County. Fall and winter records of this species in the Central Valley seem to have increased in recent years (pers. obs.).

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*) – One (27-96, TE, GE [photo], EG, TM) found in the Cache Creek Settling Basin, about 4 mi. E of Woodland, Yolo Co., on 5 May 1996, a first for the county and the Central Valley, was discussed by Easterla (1998).

Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*) – The SBRC accepted two reports, one (26-93) over Fair Oaks, Sacramento Co., 23 June 1993 (BM) and another (31-94) over the American River Parkway in eastern Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 11 September 1994 (JL).

There are a handful of earlier reports, from late summer and fall, for Sacramento County. An explanation for the occurrence and status of Common Nighthawks observed over the valley floor, especially in summer, deserves investigation.

Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) – Two reports were accepted, of one (57-95, EG [photos]) seen and photographed along Gates Canyon Road near the intersection with Pleasants Valley Road, Solano Co., 2 November 1995, and one (19-96, PRG, SM) at the Solano Lake Campground, Highway 128 and Pleasants Valley Road, Solano and Yolo cos., 14 April 1996.

Pileated Woodpeckers apparently reside in the inner Coast Ranges around Lake Berryessa, and occasionally wander down below the 1000-foot contour (the *Checklist* boundary along the eastern edge of the Central Valley). The April bird was initially seen flying across Putah Creek from the Yolo County side into Solano County.

Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*) – One (11-96, JTr) was seen at the Cosumnes River Preserve, Sacramento Co., on 27 August 1995.

Close on the heels of a record of this species from the same location in November 1993 (Manolis 1998), this report offers further hope that Bell's Vireo, extirpated locally in the 1950s, may once again become a part of the regular breeding avifauna in the Central Valley.

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – The first record for Sacramento County and the Central Valley, a singing bird (28-96, JTr [tape recording], EG) at the Cosumnes River Preserve, 7-10 June 1996, was discussed by Trochet (1998).

It was a good thing the bird was singing, as it was exceptionally difficult to locate visually. A number of other birders were able to hear the thrush during its brief stay, but few had even a brief glimpse of it, usually as it flew behind a screen of leaves.

Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Dendroica pensylvanica*) – One (38-96, TM) was along the American River Parkway in east Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 17 September 1996 and another (45-96, JR) was at Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary, Sutter Co., 8 October 1996.

These are the first accepted records for these two counties. The autumn of 1996 was an exceptional one for this warbler in our area, with three being reported (one of these not yet submitted to the SBRC). There was only one prior record for the *Checklist* area.

Black-and-White Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*) – Reports accepted included: A male (26-92, DY) at Lodi Lakes Wilderness Area, Lodi, San Joaquin Co., 8-10 April and 26 May 1986; a female (27-92, DY) at Lodi Lakes, 17 December 1986; and a male (4-96, NF) along Humbug Creek in Folsom, Sacramento Co., 31 December 1995.

Records 26-92 and 27-92 were the first and second for San Joaquin County. The spring observations at Lodi Lake, despite the span of dates, were submitted as the same bird (singing on the latter date) and accepted as such. It was suggested by the observer that the bird might have wintered at the site. This species seems to be found about as often in winter as during periods of migration in our area.

Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*) – Four records were accepted by the SBRC: One (20-88, TM) at Reichmuth Park, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 8-9 September 1988; one (40-96, JL, TMc, KK) along the American River Parkway, in eastern Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 14 September 1996; one (24-97, JTr) at the Cosumnes River Preserve, Sacramento Co., 15 September 1996; and one (56-97, SW) along Old River Slough, Sutter Co., 3 September 1997, a first for Sutter County (see Wright 1998).

Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) – The SBRC accepted a report of an apparent female (32-96, RLS) in Fair Oaks, Sacramento Co., 15 September 1996.

Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*) – Two recent records were accepted: An adult (5-94, EG [photos], TB) near the intersection of Putah Creek Road and Holmes Lane, Solano Co., 19 December 1993 to at least 28 February 1994 (EG, TB); and an immature bird (7-98, MFe) in the Lexington Hills subdivision of Folsom, Sacramento Co., 4 January 1998.

Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*) – One (40-97 (TM [sketch], BW) was reported along Brewer Road .6 mi. N of Nicolaus Road, Placer Co., on 5 February 1996, and another (9-98, SH) was found along County Road 34A NE of County Road 106A, Yolo Co., on 24 January 1998.

Three species of Longspurs were found along Brewer Road on 4 February 1996 (Todd Easterla), and were seen in the area into March (e.g., a report of 6 Lapland Longspurs on 3 March), but only this one observation of *C. lapponicus* from that site was documented. Record 40-97 is the first for Placer County.

McCown's Longspur (*Calcarius mccownii*) – The following reports, all from Brewer Road .6 mi. N of Nicolaus Road, Placer Co., were initially considered as separate records (29-97, JTr; 40-97, TM [sketch]; and 61-97, KK), but the SBRC decided to treat them as one record (29-97): Two males and one female, 9 February 1996; a male, 3 December 1996; and a male, 24 November 1997.

Three individuals of this species were initially reported at this site on 4 February 1996 (see above under Lapland Longspur). At least one bird was seen there in the winter of 1996-97, and from three-five were reported through the winter of 1997-98. The reports accepted here were the only ones documented, however. No reports were received in the winter of 1998-99, but there were rumors of their presence at this site in autumn 1999. The SBRC felt that the same group of birds, returning each winter, was the most reasonable interpretation of these reports. These are the first records for Placer County and for the Checklist area.

Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Three reports were reviewed and accepted: A male (21-96, TM [sketch]) at the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant constructed wetlands in south Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 4 April 1996; one (34-96, DW [sketch]) at the Cosumnes River Preserve, Sacramento Co., 12 October 1996; and a male (49-97, LE) at Mather Lake, Mather Regional Park, Sacramento Co., 2 May 1997.

These are the first records for Sacramento County. The only previous record for the area is of a bird seen in Davis in the winter of 1981-82 (Beedy 1993). The male at the constructed wetlands had attracted a female by mid-May and juveniles were seen there later in the season; This site remains occupied, at least during the breeding season, to this day (R. Jones, pers. comm.). Another small population became established in the Checklist area in 1996, at Baldwin

Reservoir on the Placer-Sacramento county line near Folsom; these birds are often found at nearby Beals Point, Folsom Lake (B. Webb, pers. comm.). As this species continues to gain a foothold as part of the region's established fauna, its days on the SBRC list of reviewed species are numbered.

REPORT NOT ACCEPTED

Lark Bunting – A report of an adult female (8-95) was received from Newcastle, Placer Co., 29-31 August 1992.

The vote was 2-6. Those voting to accept felt the described presence of "white wing patches" ruled out other species, but the majority felt that, since little else but the wing patches were described, and the identification essentially hinged on these alone, that other possibilities (e.g., a partial albino of just about any streaked sparrow) were not eliminated. The description was written from memory two-and-a-half years after the observation, which probably accounts, at least in part, for the skimpy details. This record is a perfect example of where making notes, sketches, photos, etc., at the time of observation, or alerting others about the bird (which was present over a three-day period) would have greatly enhanced the chance of acceptance.

The SBRC sincerely thanks all those who have submitted reports, including the following observers who submitted reports evaluated herein: Ted Beedy, Todd Easterla, Leo Edson, Gil Ewing, Marc Fenner (MFe), Natalie Fenner, Mark Fowler, P. Ross Gorman, Ed Greaves, Steve Hampton, Ed Harper, John Kemper, Keith Kwan, Jeri Langham, Tim Manolis, Sheri McFarland, Todd McNicholas, Barbara Mohr, John Ranlett, Robert L. Smith, Dan Stoebel (DSt), John Trochet (JTr), Bruce Webb, Dan Williams, Stan Wright, David Yee.

Please send reports for SBRC review to the author, at the address provided at the beginning of this article.

LITERATURE CITED

Beedy, E. C. 1993. Checklist of the Birds of Yolo County. Yolo Audubon Society, Davis, CA.

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