

# 1997 (Third) Report of the Sacramento Bird Records Committee

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The Sacramento Bird Records Committee (SBRC) reviews records of unusual birds reported within the boundaries described by the *Checklist of the Birds of the Sacramento Area* (published by Sacramento Audubon Society; most recently revised in 1993). Current members of the SBRC are Ted Beedy, Bruce Deuel, Ed Greaves, Ed Harper, Jeri Langham, Tim Manolis, John Trochet, and David Yee.

Bird species, reports of which the SBRC accepts for review, include those previously unreported for the area, those listed as of accidental occurrence on the *Checklist*, and certain other species of casual occurrence or difficult to identify, indicated on the *Checklist* by asterisks (see the *Checklist* for details). The SBRC also reviews records for the small bit of Sacramento County that lies south of the southern boundary of the *Checklist* (Highway 12) and, occasionally, records from just outside other area boundaries. The committee also evaluates records of unseasonable occurrence, such as reports of birds found on local Christmas Bird Counts (e. g., Yellow Warbler, Hooded Oriole, Ash-throated Flycatcher) which are normally present locally only in summer or on migration. Copies of all records received are filed (following review) with Jeri Langham at California State University, Sacramento, and with Ed Harper at American River College, and are accessible to the public.

This article presents the committee's decisions since December 1995 and as of April 1997. Of the 53 records reviewed, 40 (75%) have been accepted, 3 (6%) not accepted, and 10 (19%) have been held over for recirculation because of split votes (votes of 8-0 or 7-1 constitute acceptance; votes of 6-2, 5-3, or 4-4 trigger recirculation; votes of 3-5 or less constitute non-acceptance). The information in parentheses for each record listed below includes: the record number, indicating when the record was received (e. g., number 24-86 was the twenty-fourth record received in 1986); for accepted records, the initials of the *observer(s) submitting documentation* (i. e., not necessarily the discoverer[s] of the bird), and comments on supporting documentation other than a written description (e. g., photos, tape recordings, etc).

The SBRC sincerely thanks all those observers who have submitted reports. Don't be discouraged if you don't see your submitted observation(s) here; we'll get to them all eventually.

## REPORTS ACCEPTED

**Garganey** - A male (16-88, GE, MC [photo]), was at the Woodland Sugar Ponds, 19 June 1988. (A reported sighting of [presumably] the same bird on 26 June may be correct, but has not been documented).

This, a first record for Yolo County and the *Checklist* area, required two circulations. The identification, exhaustively documented and including a good photograph, was never in doubt, but concerns had been raised about captive origin and the late date (most California records of this Eurasian teal are for periods of migration, particularly spring). The SBRC decided to await the review of the California Bird Records Committee, which eventually accepted the record. After reviewing the CBRC decision, the SBRC also accepted the record.

**Eurasian Wigeon** - There were four records accepted: A male (25-87, GE) at Bass Lake, El Dorado Co., 13 December 1987; a male (6-88, GE) at Upper Beach Lake, Sacramento Co., 22 and 28 January 1988; a male (15-90, GE) in the Yolo Bypass just north of Interstate-5, Yolo Co., 22 December 1990; and a male (37-92, DY) on Camanche Reservoir, San Joaquin Co., 28 December 1991.

This species has proven to be a regular winter visitor to the area in small numbers, which seem to have increased a bit in recent years. It was removed from the list of species reviewed by the SBRC as of the 1993 *Checklist*.

**Greater Scaup** - A male (28-86, GE) was at the Woodland Sugar Ponds, Woodland, Yolo Co., 14 March 1986.

**Surf Scoter** - A male (12-89, GK) was on the American River, approximately 3.5 mi. upstream from the confluence with the Sacramento River, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 24 December 1989.

This is one of but a few records for Sacramento County, and the first to be reviewed and accepted by the SBRC.

**Barrow's Goldeneye** - Four records were accepted, as follows: Two males and one female (32-87, DY) along the American River near Cal Expo, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 27 December 1987; two males (33-87, BM, PP) along the American River at the Highway 160 bridge, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 27 December 1987; a first-year male (18-88, WM, KS) at the Woodland Sugar Ponds, Yolo Co., 2 April 1988; and a male (28-88, JRo, RR) along the American River near Cal Expo, Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 26 December 1988.

The December records were documented for Sacramento Christmas Bird Counts. Record 33-87 also made mention of the group of birds documented in record 32-87. Record 28-88 included mention of a female, but did not include a description of her. This duck is a regular part of the area's avifauna and is not typically a reviewed species.

**Lesser Golden-Plover (Pacific or American)** - One (18-87, GE) was seen in the Yolo Bypass at Highway 16 (Trestle Ponds), Yolo Co., 9 August 1987.

Seen prior to the taxonomic split of "Lesser Golden-Plover" into two species, this bird was reported as the Pacific form. After two circulations, the committee felt this assessment was probably correct, but that the descriptive evidence was too incomplete to support it unequivocally.

**Semipalmated Plover** - Three reports were accepted: one (34-87, MC) in the Yolo Bypass at Highway 16 (Trestle Ponds), Yolo Co., 27 December 1987; two (2-89, TB, MP) in the Yolo Bypass north of the S. Fork of Putah Creek, Yolo Co., 26 December 1988; and, one (10-89, EH) in the Yolo Bypass north of Interstate-5, Yolo Co., 22-23 December 1989.

This species is normally not reviewed by the SBRC. These reports were reviewed because they were unusual records for the Sacramento Christmas Bird Count.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper** - One (45-92, TM, GE) was at the Woodland Sugar Ponds, Yolo Co., 22 August 1992.

This bird appeared to be an adult in nearly complete molt to basic plumage. In this plumage Semipalmated Sandpiper is extremely similar to Rufous-necked Stint; fortunately, some observers of this bird were able to detect the semipalmated toes at close range.

**Sanderling** - One in juvenile plumage (19-88, TM) at the Sacramento Metro Airport Sewage Ponds, Sacramento Co., 6 September 1988, became the first record accepted for Sacramento County.

**Western Gull** - A first-year bird (24-91, SB) at the Davis Sewage Ponds, Yolo Co., 18 December 1991, required two circulations.

The first vote was 7-1, but the dissenting member suggested recirculation pending the publication of information concerning phenotypic variation in hybrid Western X Glaucous-winged gulls. Subsequent evidence suggested that the bird as described fell within the range of variation possible for Western Gull and reasonably could be assumed to have been one.

**Sabine's Gull** - An immature bird (22-87, GE, LM) at the Woodland Sugar Ponds, Woodland, Yolo Co., 16 October 1987, was the third record for Yolo County and the area. All reports are in the fall.

**Common Tern** - One (5-90, GE), at the Davis Sewage Ponds, Yolo Co. on 1 September 1991 was accepted as the first record for Yolo County and the area.

**Bell's Vireo** - One (32-93, GL, JL) was at the Cosumnes River Preserve, Sacramento Co., 7 November 1993.

This record is remarkable for a number of reasons. Bell's Vireo formerly bred in the Sacramento Valley but apparently was extirpated some time in the 1950s; this is the first report for the *Checklist* area in nearly 20 years. The date is extremely late for northern California, especially for the Central Valley (perhaps the latest ever?). The bird was reported as *Vireo bellii pusillus*, the race breeding in most of California, but one committee member did not feel the description ruled out the very similar *V. b. arizonae* of the southwestern U. S.

**Yellow-green Vireo** - One (10-95, JL, GL, JTr) was at the Cosumnes River Preserve, Sacramento Co., 3 October 1994.

Yet another incredible vireo record from the Cosumnes River Preserve. Yellow-green Vireos are extremely rare anywhere in California. This is apparently the first interior record for the north state, definitely the first for the *Checklist* area and Sacramento County.

**Red-eyed Vireo** - Two reports were accepted, one (37-95, JL, GE [photos], TM) of a singing bird along the American River Parkway near the Gristmill Access, Sacramento Co., 24 June 1995, and one (58-95, JL) of a bird at Sweetwater Creek, El Dorado Co., 11 August 1995.

These are the first records for the *Checklist* area and for the counties in question. The date of (37-95) was incorrectly reported by one observer as 30 June, which unfortunately found its way into print in *Audubon Field Notes* (49(5):978).

**Virginia's Warbler** - One (34-93, DY, TM) seen along the Mokelumne River 2 mi. west of Acampo, San Joaquin Co., from 26 November 1993 to 19 March 1994, became the first accepted record for San Joaquin County and the area.

This bird was extremely elusive. Presumably the same bird was present at the same site from December 1995 to January 1996, but independent documentation of the latter bird has not been submitted to the SBRC. Despite the gap of more than two years between sightings, the 1995-96 bird was considered the same one seen in winter 1993-94 by two observers who saw the bird(s) in both winters.

**Northern Parula** - A singing male (20-94, DAH) along Cache Creek near Woodland, Yolo Co., 23 June 1994, was apparently the second record for Yolo.

**Palm Warbler** - One (15-95, JTr) was at the Cosumnes River Preserve, Sacramento Co., 10 November 1993.

**Black-and-white Warbler** - One (55-95, JRa, JTr) was at the Cosumnes River Preserve, Sacramento Co., 2-25 November 1995.

**American Redstart** - Two reports were accepted, one (57-92, BW, JTh) on the Spenceville Wildlife Area, Yuba Co., 5 September 1992, and one (60-92, TM) at Reichmuth Park, Sacramento Co., 16 December 1992.

Record 57-92 is perhaps the first for Yuba County.

**Black-throated Sparrow** - One (14-94, EG, TM) was along Meiss Road 1.6 mi. west of Ione Road, Sacramento Co., 9-11 May 1994. Four birds (28-94, BW) were at the Spenceville Wildlife Area, Nevada Co., 28 May 1994 (one seen and heard there on 18 June).

All four birds at Spenceville were in a small patch of *Ceanothus* chaparral; two were singing as if on territories. These records coincided with the incursion of unusually large numbers of Black-throated Sparrows into the northern part of

the Great Basin during the spring and summer of 1994. Such incursions, occurring every 10-11 years, have produced similar small, ephemeral populations in patches of foothill chaparral in Butte and El Dorado counties.

**Grasshopper Sparrow** - Six reports were accepted: one (11-94, BW) along Meiss Road 2.5 mi. from the junction with Dillard Road, Sacramento Co., 26 March 1994; one (13-94, TM) along Meiss Road 2.9 miles from the intersection with Dillard Road, Sacramento Co., 7 April 1994; one (17-94, EG) one along Meiss Road, 1.3 mi. from junction with Ione Road, Sacramento Co., 9 May 1994; at least two (26-94, BW) seen at the Spenceville Wildlife Area, Yuba Co., 23-28 May 1993; one (27-94, BW) at the Spenceville Wildlife Area, Yuba Co., 13 May 1994; one (30-94, JL) seen at the Cosumnes River Preserve, Sacramento Co., 2 July 1994.

A former breeding species in the Sacramento area that had gone unreported for decades, this sparrow returned to the local scene in 1993 and, in a big way, 1994.

**Swamp Sparrow** - Two records were accepted, one (3-94, BW) for the Spenceville Wildlife Area, Yuba Co., 13-15 February 1994, and one (6-94, TB) for Solano Lake, Yolo Co., 30 January 1994.

Record 3-94 is apparently the first for Yuba County.

## REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

**Little Blue Heron** - Report (4-90) was of an immature bird at Gray Lodge State Wildlife Area, Butte Co., 9 August 1990.

This report is from slightly north of the *Checklist* area, but the SBRC decided to review it anyway. The report was circulated twice; the first vote was 5-3, the second, 0-8. The committee's concerns centered on the possibility that the bird was a hybrid (possibly Little Blue X Snowy Egret), which was suggested by the color of the lores, described as "yellowish." Indeed, the observer raised the possibility of a hybrid, citing a reported mating of Little Blue Heron and Cattle Egret (!) at nearby Colusa National Wildlife Refuge in 1989. Normally a hybrid would be a rarer find than a bird of either parental species, but Little Blue Herons are very rare in northern California and have been found hybridizing with other ardeids in the region on a number of occasions.

**Indigo Bunting** - Report (25-94) was of a male and two females seen in Davis, Yolo Co., 1 August 1994 (the male) and 3-4 August 1994 (the two females).

On the first circulation, the committee voted 7-1 for the male and 3-5 to reject the females. Before the record of the male could be recirculated, the observer requested that the record be withdrawn; the committee concurred.

**Hooded Oriole - Report (1-91), of a male seen in south Sacramento, Sacramento Co., 20 December 1990, was circulated twice.**

The first vote was 6-2, but because of concerns raised by the two members voting against acceptance, the second vote was 0-8. In general, members felt the identification was possibly correct, but that the description was not conclusive.

The following observers kindly submitted reports evaluated herein: Stephen Bailey, Ted Beedy, Mark Cudney, Bruce Deuel, JoAnn Dick, Andrew Engilis, Jr., Gil Ewing, Ed Greaves, Steve Hampton, Ed Harper, David A. Holway, David Johnson, George Koch, Gary Langham, Jeri Langham, Tim Manolis, Louise McCullough, Wayne Meyer, Barbara Mohr, Peter Perrine, Michael Perrone, John Ranlett (JRa), John Rombold (JRo), Rob Rombold, Kim Snipes, Jill Thompson (JTh), John Trochet (JTr), Brian Williams, and David Yee.