

Central Valley Bird Highlights: December 2016 through February 2017

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Trumpeter Swans are rare in the valley, so numerous sightings were especially noteworthy with the first sightings of five at the Bible College in Redding, Shasta County on 8-9 December (BMcD), one at Hog Lake in Tehama County on 19-25 February (MSw+), four on Lodi Road in Colusa County on 6-9 January (TEa+), and most notable was Yolo County's first documented record with four along Hwy 45 north of Knight's Landing on 5-29 January (TEa+). Five **Snow Geese** at the Nevada Ave Ponds in Kings County on 22 January (JCS) were rare that far south in the valley.

The Eurasian **Common Teal**, currently considered a subspecies of the Green-winged Teal, is a rare winter visitor to the valley. One was photographed at the Sacramento NWR in Glenn County on 1 January (BA). A very rare Kern County **Barrow's Goldeneye** was at Hart Park in eastern Bakersfield on 19-20 December (TM+). A rare inland **Long-tailed Duck** was on the Feather River in Oroville, Butte County from at least 30 December (MF) until it was illegally shot by a trophy hunter on 12 January. The east levee of Sherman Island provided a vantage point for birders to view several rare ducks that arrived in late winter in both Sacramento and Contra Costa counties. A **Long-tailed Duck** was found on 27 January (JR) and joined by an adult male **Tufted Duck**, an immature male **Barrow's Goldeneye**, two **White-winged Scoters** with hundreds of **Greater Scaup** on 29 January–1 March (KSw), and joined by a **Surf Scoter** on 11 February (DW) followed by two more 15-19 February (DFo). The Winters WTP in Yolo County harbored a migrant **Surf Scoter** on 5-8 February (KB).

Nearly annual at the O'Neill Forebay in Merced County, a **Red-breasted Merganser** was found there on 21 January (KVV), and two males and one female were present on 12 February (BD). Other singles were at the Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County on 22 January (SHu), on the Cornelia Cleo Ave pond in Fresno on 4 February (GF), and in Tehama County at Black Butte Res. 1-5 February (RW) and Angler's Cove on 5 February (MSw).

Rare in most of the valley, a **Common Loon** was on the California Aqueduct at Kettleman City, Kings County on 11-13 December (MSy+), and high counts of 2 and 3 were at Lake Solano on 26 (SLaR) and 27 February (JRg, KB+), respectively, in Yolo and Solano counties. Unexpected was the rare inland **Brown Pelican** at Lake Natoma, Sacramento County on 17 February that then flew to Folsom Lake, El Dorado County on 18 February (GEw).

A **Mew Gull** at the lone WTP provided one of few records for Amador County on 18 December (DM). Two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were at the large gull congregation on Koster Road on the San Joaquin/Stanislaus County line on 10 January (DGY). This is becoming a somewhat regular location for this and other rare gulls. One of these was likely the same bird found on Staten Island on 21 January (DS). Another **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at the Teapot Dome landfill in Tulare County on 18 January–7 February (SDS, DF) was about the third record for that location. An adult photographed at Kutras Lake on 27 January (GH) was a first for Shasta County, but could not be found again on subsequent days. The only **Glaucous Gull** reported in Yolo County was an adult at the Yolo Bypass WA on 11 February (SCH).

Rare sapsuckers are annually found in the valley. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was along Cantelow Road in Solano County on 19 December–29 January (Wry+), and a juvenile was at Hart Park in eastern Bakersfield on 23 December (K&BK). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was photographed in Chico, Butte County on 17-20 December (MF+). Another at the Waldo Bridge at the Spenceville WA in Yuba County on 17-24 December (IG) was possibly a hybrid. Another was at the Lost Lake Recreation Area in Fresno on 22 December (GW), and one was photographed at the base of Black Butte Dam, Tehama County on 1-26 January (BS+).

A **Hammond's Flycatcher** at Clear Creek WTP in Redding, Shasta County on 7 December (MG) was one of few winter records north of Yolo County in the valley. One was photographed in Davis at the West Pond in Yolo County on 11 January–7 February (AB, DB). Two **Pacific-slope Flycatchers** were reported, with one at Gray Lodge in Butte County on 27 December (GZ), and the other at the San Luis NWR in Merced County on 2 January (PDU). It is quite possible that these could be **Cordilleran Flycatchers** as both species would be winter vagrants and would be nearly impossible to identify without recorded diagnostic vocalizations.

Vermilion Flycatchers are now annually recorded in winter in the Central Valley but are still noteworthy. One was in Porterville, Tulare County on 10-11 December (SDS, PS), another returned to the Maxwell Cemetery in Colusa County (SSk), where it spent the previous winter establishing a first county record, and one was at River West in Fresno on 21 December–24 February. Glenn County's first record of **Cassin's Kingbird** found in late November at the Sacramento NWR continued to 11 December (MSG+). One at the Modesto Junior College on 19 January (GH) was a rare find for Stanislaus County as was one on the Enterprise Trail in Fresno on 23-29 January (RSx+). This species is very local and generally rare anywhere in the valley. Sacramento County's first fully documented **Tropical Kingbird** was photographed on Brannan Island on 11 February but not seen again despite several searches (*vide* CH).

As almost expected in winter, a **Cassin's Vireo** was at the Sacramento City Cemetery on 13 December (DA) and one was at Lake Solano, Solano County

on 25 January (DW). Not expected in winter, 2-3 **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** were at the Bridgeway Pond in West Sacramento, Yolo County on 16 January (LE). **Sage Thrashers** once again visited the valley in late winter with one near Woodland, Yolo County on 27 January–7 February (SCH+), one in the Dunnigan Hills north of Woodland on 30 January–1 February (ABr+), and one on Meiss Road in eastern Sacramento County on 12 February (DK).

The Clear Creek WTP in Redding harbored a **Nashville Warbler** on 1 December (MG), one of few ever found in winter period in the Central Valley. It did not linger, however. A **Wilson's Warbler** photographed along the American River Parkway in Sacramento County was a surprise on 4 February (RY). The **Black-throated Sparrow** found in the fall on River Road in Madera County was still there on 9 December (RSx). A **Swamp Sparrow** at the Mendota WA, Fresno County was found on 6 December (GW) and another at the Yolo Bypass WA in Yolo County on 18 December where found in most recent winters (JY). A **Harris's Sparrow** in Redding was seen on 27-28 December (B&CY).

A **Summer Tanager** was photographed in a residential area in Bakersfield on 6 January (BDp). **Hooded Orioles** are becoming increasingly reported in the valley in winter. One found in November was still present in North Davis, Yolo County on 26 December (LD), another was in Escalon, San Joaquin County on 15-16 January (RL), and another was in Visalia, Tulare County on 10 January (DJ).

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Observers: Ben Abramovitz, Dan Airola, Keith Bailey, Ann Brice (ABr), Dan Brown, Andi Burnett, Laura Davis, Bill Deppe (BDp), Bob Dunn, Pete Dunton (PDu), Todd Easterla (TEa), Leo Edson, Gil Ewing, Dane Fagundes, George Folsom, Deb Ford (DFo), Matt Forster, Ian Gledhill, Matt Gould, Steve Hampton (SCH), Cliff Hawley, Garry Hayes, Geoffrey Hembold, Lynn Hemink, Scott Huber (SHu), Daniel Jeffcoach, Dan Kopp, Keith and Brenda Kyle (K&BK), Sami LaRocca (SLaR), Randy Little, Don Marsh, Brooke McDonald (BMcD), Tim Miller, William Rockey (MRy), Jim Rowoth, Mark Sanger (MSg), Rick Saxton (RSx), David Sibley, Shannon Skalos (SSk), Becky Spence, Mark Stacy (MSy), John C Sterling (JCS), Priscilla Summers, Steve Summers (SDS), Michele Swartout (MSw), Kirk Swenson, Kent Van Vuren (KVV), Denise Wight, Dan Williams, Robin Wolcott, Gary Woods, David Yee (DGY), John York, Ron Yoshihara, Bob and Carol Yutzy (B&CY), and Gena Zolotar.

CBRC=California Bird Records Committee; NWR=National Wildlife Refuge; SRA=State Recreation Area; WTP=Wastewater Treatment Plant; WA=State Wildlife Area