

# Field Notes

*(August-September 2016)*

by Pete Dunten

## Geese through Terns

A skein of 34 **Greater White-fronted Geese** was over Don Edwards NWR on 27 Sep (SJ) and a gaggle of 10 remained on 28 Sep (LL). A **Snow Goose** with Canada Geese at Coyote Lake on 18 and 19 Aug (BM, RSh) was unexpected; wild Snow Geese typically don't arrive until the end of Oct. An **American Bittern** in the marsh between Alviso salt ponds A16 and A17 on 22 Aug (PDU) was one of only a few Aug records. **White-faced Ibis** sightings began with two flying over the Santa Teresa Golf Club on 9 Aug (TB); subsequent sightings from 20 Aug through 27 Sep were all at the edge of San Francisco bay, with high counts of 14 on 6 Sep (BJ) and 9 on 7 Sep (WP) at Sunnyvale WPCP, and 11 on Alviso salt pond A16 on 6 Sep (DN). A **Sandhill Crane** announced its presence over the Gilroy SCRWA on 23 Sep (WGB) and was then seen over Llagos Creek heading southeast (MPx et al.). A single **Solitary Sandpiper** stopped at Coyote Lake from 15 to 21 Aug (MJM, m. ob.). A **Bar-tailed Godwit** alternated between Alviso salt ponds A16 and A17, depending on the tide, between 21 and 29 Aug (ChJ, m. ob.). Only the 4th record for the county, the Godwit was likely the same individual which spent 11 to 16 Aug in Marin county before reaching us, and then moved north to Alameda county where it was seen between 3 and 6 Sep. Two **Black Turnstones** were found in a closed part of Don Edwards NWR on 28 Aug (MMR, MJM, RJ). Single **Ruddy Turnstones** were at Alviso salt pond A16 on 11 Aug (AR) and the Stevens Creek delta on 25 Aug (BM). Two **Wandering Tattlers** on the Alviso salt pond A10/A11 levee were a nice find on 28 Aug (MMR, MJM, RJ); one was found along the

edge of salt pond A11 on 29 Aug (CWf). Ten **Sanderlings** at Alviso salt pond A16 on 11 Sep (MJM, JHa) was the high count during the peak of their fall migration. A single **Pectoral Sandpiper** was noted at Alviso salt pond A15 on 28 Aug (MMR, RJ, MJM). Single **Baird's Sandpipers** on their way south stopped at Alviso salt pond A13 on 11 Aug (AR), at Coyote Lake from 14 to 19 Aug (PDU, m. ob.), and at New Chicago Marsh on 29 Aug (BM, RWR). **Red Knots** were seen on five dates between 23 and 31 Aug, with a high count of nine on closed refuge ponds on 28 Aug (MMR, MJM, RJ). New Chicago Marsh can be crowded with shorebirds in the fall, and a careful study is sometimes rewarded with a rarity. A **Stilt Sandpiper** was there between 2 Sep (JJo, SMa) and 9 Sep (m. ob.). A **Ruff** in New Chicago Marsh was first noted on 9 Aug (WBr), then not again until 28 Aug. It was often not far from a boardwalk over the marsh, and delighted observers through 26 Sep (m. ob.). Immature **Sabine's Gulls** stopped at the south end of the bay this year, the first arriving on 15 Sep at Sunnyvale WPCP (LB). Two were there on 17 Sep (PDU) until late in the day, when one was taken by a Peregrine Falcon (SPz, AIH). The remaining gull was seen daily through 20 Sep and again on 27 Sep (m. ob.). Additional sightings were made on 24 Sep on Adobe Creek (LG) and on 25 Sep on closed refuge ponds (MMR, MJM, RJ). Sabine's Gulls have been found in the fall about one year in every two on average over the past 30 years. After arriving in late July, **Elegant Tern** numbers increased through Aug and Sept and peaked on 25 Sep with 66 tallied on a survey of closed refuge ponds (MMR, MJM, RJ). Two **Common Terns** were noted on the same survey. **Least Tern** numbers peaked on 1 Sep when 32 rested on the Alviso salt pond A10/A11 levee (WGB), and none were reported after 3 Sep (SMa, TB).



*Ruff by Louise Liou*

## Swifts through Phainopepla

Persistent sleuthing in tracking **Vaux's Swift** movements late in the day was rewarded with the spectacle of 200 swifts spiraling over potential roosts in chimneys in a neighborhood adjacent to Almaden Quicksilver CP on 4 Sep (JPa). The spectacle was repeated with 300 swifts participating on 23 Sep over another nearby neighborhood (JPa). **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** regularly visited feeders in the Willow Glen neighborhood of San Jose through 13 Sep, with a high count of 8 on 5 Aug (BM). **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were found in their traditional stronghold in the county, San Antonio Valley, with three on 10 Sep (CB, HP) and one on 16 Sep (WGB). The first **Prairie Falcons** noted at low elevation were solo falcons hunting along Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley on 22 Aug (RSh) and over the landfill south of the Don Edwards EEC on 4 Sep (MK). The fall passage of **Willow Flycatchers** began on 18 Aug with one at J Grant CP (MBo) and continued through the period with sightings of one or two on many dates (m. ob.). There were an unusual number of **Purple Martin** sightings this fall, of birds not at the known breeding locales. These could be local dispersants, or passage migrants. On the one hand, historical data show the frequency of Purple Martin sightings in the county tails off from a peak in the spring, with no noticeable increase due to fall migrants passing through. On the other hand, we can uncover the

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timing of fall migration by looking at the frequency of sightings in San Francisco, where Martins don't breed and observations peak during spring and fall migration. Based on observations in San Francisco, migrants are expected to pass through Santa Clara county starting the second week of Aug, peak in the second week of Sept, and tail off in the first week of Oct. This year's pattern is consistent with migrants, with Martins over Los Capitancillos Ponds (JPa, AVe), the Guadalupe River (AVe), and bayside locations in Sunnyvale (MDo, JL, BM, SMa, WP, RSh) between 18 Aug and 11 Sep. The mixed group of swallows over the reed bed at Sunnyvale WPCP included a **Bank Swallow** on 17 Sep (MDo et al.). The only reports of **Phainopepla** were from San Antonio Valley, where singles were observed on 18 Aug and 16 Sep (both WGB).

### Warblers through Goldfinches

September brings the excitement of visits from eastern warblers, heralded this year by the arrival of a **Northern Waterthrush** at Stevens Creek near La Avenida on 5 Sep (MMR). A Northern Waterthrush was seen at this location several times through 21 Sep (m. ob.). Another Northern Waterthrush was at Ogier Ponds on 18 Sep (SCR). A **Canada Warbler**, only our 4th, spent 17 to 26 Sep near the SCVWD headquarters in Almaden Valley, though it was not found every day (AVe, m. ob.). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** stopped at Sunnyvale Baylands on 18 Sep (PKe et al.). A **Blackpoll** was near the Shoreline Golf Course on 13 Sep (DWn). Two **Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warblers** at Vasona CP on 6 Aug (JPa) were likely dispersants from the local breeding population in the Santa Cruz range. Continuing with our western warblers, single migrant **MacGillivray's Warblers** were skulking in Monte Bello OSP at

the pond near gate 5 on 19 Aug (GHa) and at Ogier Ponds on 18 Sep (SCR). Two were at Ogier Ponds on 19 Sep (RSh). Single **Hermit Warblers** passing through on their way south were at the Don Edwards NWR EEC on 10 Sep (ChW, TW) and at Sunnyvale Baylands on 13 Sep (PKe). The earliest **Townsend's Warblers** to arrive were at Loma Prieta on 9 Aug (AR) and at a residence in the Santa Cruz Mountains outside of Gilroy on 11 Aug (AA, JA). Transient sparrows passing through the county included a **Clay-colored Sparrow** along Matadero Creek near the bay on 13 Sep (DWn). Another member of the *Spizella* genus, the **Chipping Sparrow**, is an uncommon resident of the Santa Cruz Range. One was near the Stevens Creek Reservoir dam on 2 Aug (WGB), and one returned to TJ Martin Park in San Jose on 29 Sep (JPa). This is the beginning of the tenth consecutive winter the sparrows have been found at TJ Martin Park. An unidentified *Spizella* visited the garden at Sunnyvale Baylands on 25 Sep (PKe). The same date a **Vesper Sparrow** was seen in a closed area of the Don Edwards NWR (MMR, MJM, RJ). Another Vesper Sparrow was at Ed Levin CP on 30 Sep (WGB). A first-year male Rose-breasted Grosbeak graced Lake Cunningham on 1 Sep (PDU). At this time of year, based on historical eBird data, the frequency of occurrence of **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** is ~1/20th that of Black-headed Grosbeak. September also brought **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** on passage, with singles at soccer fields in Morgan Hill on 10 Sep (SCR), the Sunnyvale WPCP on 11 Sep (MMR), along Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley on 13 Sep (WP), and at Ulistac NA on 26 Sep (SJ). **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were found in their stronghold, the San Antonio Valley, in respectable numbers. Counts on 18 Aug and 16 Sep were of 18 and 42 finches, respectively (both WGB), with 2 along Mines Rd on 17

Sep (TJ, MT). Smaller numbers were encountered at Loma Prieta on 5 Aug and 21 Sep, when counts of one and four were tallied (both AR).



*Canada Warbler by Richard Jeffers*

Observers: Amir Avnit (AA), Julie Avnit (JA), Laurie Bechtler (LB), Chris Benesh (CB), Terry Blows (TB), Michael Bolte (MBo), Will Brooks (WBr), Bill Bousman (WGB), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Dunten (PDU), Luca Gugelmann (LG), Janet Hanson (JHa), Garth Harwood (GHa), Alfred Hochstaedter (AIH), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Chris Johnson (ChJ), Steve Johnson (SJ), Tom Johnson (TJ), J Joseph (JJo), Bob Juhl (BJ), Michael Karpinko (MK), Pat Kenny (PKe), Louise Liou (LL), Jasen Liu (JL), Sean MacLiam (SMa), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Brooke Miller (BM), David Nickerson (DN), Howard Patterson (HP), Janna Pauser (JPa), Mark Paxton (MPx), William Pelletier (WP), Sergio Perez (SPz), Rob Reiling (RWR), Alex Rinkert (AR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Robert Shields (RSh), Linda Terrill (LTe), Scott Terrill (STe), Mary Tombley (MT), Ann Verdi (AVe), Dan Wenny (DWn), Chris Wills (ChW), Teri Wills (TW), Christine Wolfe (CWf)

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