

Field Notes

(December 2017-January 2018)

by Pete Dunten

Geese through Bitterns

Greater White-fronted Geese were found at many sites near the bay, with a few at outlying locations. High counts were 24 on 17 Dec at the entrance to Don Edwards NWR (BrB et al.) and 34 at Don Edwards on 13 Jan (JVs). Other notable counts were twelve at Byxbee Park on 23 Jan (PL) and nine at Independence HS in San Jose on 17 Dec (AVe, RPa). High tallies of **Cackling Geese** were 67 flying over the entrance to Don Edwards NWR on 6 Jan (GL et al.), eleven along Bailey Ave in Coyote Valley on 12 Jan (DN), eleven at Shoreline Lake on 14 Jan (ErS), and ten at the Shoreline Park kite-flying area on 30 Jan (SPv, AS). One to two **Snow Geese** were found at several locations, with high counts of two along Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley on the morning of 13 Jan (DDi et al.), and two at Calero Reservoir in the afternoon of that date (BH, PL, SPz). The longest staying geese were a single at Los Capitancillos Ponds from 27 Dec to 7 Jan (m. ob.) and the geese in Coyote Valley between 30 Dec and 13 Jan. A single **Ross's Goose** was found in Coyote Valley near Laguna Ave on 13 Dec (STu). It remained in the area of Laguna and Bailey Ave through 26 Jan (m. ob.). **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** were found at four locations. One was at San Tomas Aquino Creek on 6 Dec (JK), one continued at Charleston Slough through the period (m. ob.), one was on the North VTA Mitigation Pond on 3 Jan (RJ), and one was at the Palo Alto Baylands Duck Pond on 28 Jan (GL et al.). Astonishing numbers of **Redhead** have been in the ponds along the edge of the South Bay this winter. Thorough counts exceeded 1000 Redhead in December and January, with a high count of 3288 on 12 Jan (AR, VH). A male **Barrow's Goldeneye** joined the Common Goldeneyes on Shoreline Lake beginning on 22 Dec (FV). It was seen through 21 Jan (m. ob.). A single female was on Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 10 Jan (AR). A young **Common Loon** frequented the Los Capitancillos Ponds between 25 Dec

and 6 Jan (m. ob.). Careful scrutiny of the cormorants on Alviso Salt Pond A14 revealed a **Pelagic Cormorant** along with the usual Double-crested Cormorants (MMR, RJ). It was found again on 29 Jan on the A14/A11 Levee (FV). Single **American Bitterns** were spotted at Alviso Slough on 14 Dec (WGB) and at the end of Terminal Way on 15 Dec (DZ). The Bittern at the latter location remained through 28 Jan (m. ob.).



Vermillion Flycatcher by Mike Mammoser

Hawks through Sapsuckers

Ferruginous Hawks were widespread. A Ferruginous Hawk at the Stanford Dish on 11 Dec (DT) was further northwest in the county than is typical. The same individual may have been at Felt Lake on 18 Dec (AME, HM). Two were along Marsh Rd on 17 Dec (DZ, TO), and two were at Arastradero Preserve on 19 Jan (ABr). The high count in Coyote Valley, their traditional wintering grounds, was two (m. ob.). Three were counted over Coyote Ridge on 30 Dec (RH). In the south county, the two wintering along Jamieson Rd since the first week of November were seen again through 28 Jan (WP, KON, m. ob.). The **Ruff** present in New Chicago Marsh since the first week of November was seen through 7 Jan (m. ob.). The first **Glaucous Gull** of the winter was found on 30 Dec at the Kirby Canyon Landfill (SCR). Another was at Ogier Ponds on 19 Jan (WBG). A **Selasphorus Hummingbird** was heard on the Stanford campus on 31 Jan (RFu). Although Allen's Hummingbirds are expected to arrive in the county first as the earliest migrant of the year, this year Rufous Hummingbirds arrived at other

locations around the bay in late January. The **Lewis's Woodpeckers** at Chesbro Reservoir remained through the period, with a high count of four noted on 28 Jan (WP, KON). One was seen south of Coyote Valley OSP on 11 Jan (RPh, ABr). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** returned to Almaden Lake Park on 10 Dec (JPa) for its fourth winter and has stayed into February (m. ob.). Another was at Silver Creek Linear Park in San Jose on 30 Dec (PDU).

Flycatchers through Phainopepla

The highlight of the Audubon Christmas Bird Counts was a male **Vermillion Flycatcher** seen in Coyote Valley on 30 Dec (RPh) and enjoyed by many into February. It was the first county record. Wintering kingbirds of any species are exceptional, yet we had two sightings of **Cassin's Kingbirds** at different locations this winter. One was photographed in a San Jose neighborhood on 16 Dec (DWn) and a second was further south at the Gilroy SCRWA on 2 Jan (WP, KON). Large numbers of

Tree Swallows

were found earlier in the winters of 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 than in previous years. Notable counts were sixty over Shoreline Lake on 12 Dec (GL), 25 at Lake Cunningham on 17 Dec (EvM, SL), and 110 over Guadalupe Slough on 18 Dec (MJM, JHa). By 15 Jan, a flock of 200 swallows, presumably composed of mostly Tree Swallows, was over New Chicago Marsh (WGB). **Violet-green Swallows** were not found in exceptional numbers this winter, with the high count being twenty at Monte Bello OSP on 8 Dec (GHa). An unseasonal **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** was along Silver Creek in San Jose on 16 Dec (WP, KON). Hardy **Barn Swallows** were seen on three occasions, with three over Charleston Slough on 13 Dec (JY, AL), one over Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 10 Jan (RPh), and four over the Bailey Ave Pond in Coyote Valley on 12 Jan (DN). The **House Wren** wintering at Ulistac NA was found again on 26 Jan (PW), and another was noted near the Emily Renzel Wetlands on 18 Dec during the Palo Alto CBC (RJ). This winter has been a banner winter for **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers**. The two Blue-gray Gnatcatch-

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ers wintering at Santa Teresa CP stayed through the period (JRy, m. ob.). On 17 Dec, the date of the San Jose CBC, two gnatcatchers were along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 (WGB) and two were at Calaveras Reservoir (ARy, JiM, PDU). Another was found the next day on the Palo Alto CBC along Matadero Creek (RJ). Single gnatcatchers were found in Mountain View on 27 Dec (MSh) and at J Grant CP on 1 Jan (EF). One to two were found wintering at Calero Reservoir on dates between 28 Dec and 1 Jan (DN, BM, SBy). The **Phainopepla** at Guadalupe Oak Grove Park stayed through the period (m. ob.), and another wintering bird was at the entrance to Almaden Quicksilver CP, first noted on 29 Dec (JPa).

Warblers through Evening Grosbeak

One of the hardier warblers is the **Yellow Warbler**. During this period five were detected, one in an Alviso neighborhood on 17 Dec (MMR, SCR), one on 18 Dec at the Palo Alto WPCP (MMR), one on 5 Jan at Los Capitancillos Ponds (STu), one on 11 Jan along Coyote Creek near Silver Creek Valley Rd (JPa), and one at Coast Casey Forebay on 28 Jan (RC). One of the two **Palm Warblers** present in New Chicago Marsh since late October was resighted on 6 and 7 Dec (GL, WP). On 17 Dec one was nearby in Alviso Slough adjacent to the Yacht Club (MJM, DMc). **Black-throated Gray Warblers** and **Wilson's Warblers** also occasionally stay for the winter. There were two sightings of Black-throated Grays in the well-covered Almaden Valley, one continuing along the Alamos Creek Trail near Graystone Lane on 1 Dec and one along the Guadalupe Creek Trail above Camden on 4 Jan (both JPa). A third was along Stevens Creek below La Avenida on 18 Dec (MMR, StR). Single Wilson's Warblers were at the Almaden Lake on 8 Dec (JTa), Lake Cunningham on 17 Dec (PL, KON), and Guadalupe Creek near Los Capitancillos Ponds on 4 Jan (BM). The number of **Chipping Sparrows** at TJ Martin Park increased to seven by 7 Dec (DZ), and ten by 5 Jan (SPv). Two were found at nearby Guadalupe Oak Grove Park

on 7 and 13 Dec (BrB, SPz). Another two were found at William St. Park in San Jose on 17 Dec (RJ). **Grasshopper Sparrows** have been found on nine out of the last twelve Calero-Morgan



Evening Grosbeak by Dave Zittin

Hill CBCs, and this year one was tallied on Coyote Ridge on count day, 30 Dec (RH). A **Slate-colored Fox Sparrow** on 12 Jan along the Santa Teresa Canal Trail was a nice find (JPa). A wintering **Song Sparrow** that appeared to be from one of the Pacific Northwest groups was seen along the Guadalupe River Trail near Tasman on 17 Dec (NoA) and another was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 12 Jan (WGB). **Swamp Sparrows** turned up at three locations in December, with one at the San Jose/Santa Clara WPCP on 4 Dec (PDU), one at Stevens Creek below Crittenden on 18 Dec (MMR, StR), and one at Palo Alto Baylands on 18 Dec (MMR, NM). The Baylands sparrow remained through the period (m. ob.). Two **Slate-colored Juncos** graced the Moffett Golf Course on 18 Dec (MMR), and one was in New Almaden on 18 and 30 Dec (JPa). For the second winter in a row, a **Summer Tanager** visited Stanford campus (PtM). About a third of our records for Summer Tanager are wintering birds. **Western Tanagers** were reported from five locations, all single birds (m. ob.). A **Bullcock's Oriole** was a nice surprise on 13

Jan, along Adobe Creek near Shoreline Park (JVs). Winter finches have been represented by widespread **Pine Siskins** and one to two **Evening Grosbeaks** in downtown Los Altos. A single Grosbeak was first found on 17 Dec (JL), and the latest report was from 5 Jan (MJM).

Observers: Noah Arthur (NoA), Bruce Barrett (BrB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Andrew Bradshaw (ABr), Sean Byrnes (SBy), Reef Comer (RfC), David Diller (DDi), Pete Dunten (PDU), Al Eisner (AME), Erin Fisher (EF), Janet Hanson (JHa), Rick Herder (RH), Victoria Heyse (VH), Bob Hirt (BH), Richard Jeffers (RJ), John Karp (JK), Garrett Lau (GL), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Stephen Lester (SL), Jasen Liu (JL), Patricia Lynch (PL), Nateri Madavan (NM), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Hugh McDevitt (HM), David McIntyre (DMc), Eve Meier (EvM), Jim Meikrantz (JiM), Peter Metropulos (PtM), Brooke Miller (BM), David Nickerson (DN), Tom Olson (TO), Kitty O'Neil (KON), Rich Page (RPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Sergey Pavlov (SPv), Wil-

liam Pelletier (WP), Sergio Perez (SPz), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Alex Rinkert (AR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steven Rogers (StR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Allen Royer (ARy), Jennifer Rycenga (JRy), Mike Shafto (MSh), Eric Storms (ErS), Aaron Sun (AS), Jenny Ta (JTa), David Tattoni (DT), Steve Tucker (STu), Frank Vanslager (FV), Jason Vassallo (JVs), Ann Verdi (AVe), Pingang Wang (PW), Dan Wenny (DWn), James Yurchenco (JY), David Zittin (DZ)

Please send notice of rarities to Pete Dunten via email at pdunten@gmail.com