

Field Notes

(April-May 2013)

by Bill Bousman

Geese through Falcons

Late **Greater White-fronted Geese** included three at the Coyote Creek GC on 6 Apr (SCR), one on Thompson Creek on 7 Apr (MMR, RGJ), and another at the Morgan Hill Community Park on 27 Apr (MMR, SCR). At least one male **Eurasian Wigeon** remained on the unnamed pond near Moffett Field through 7 Apr (v.ob.). A male Eurasian was on newly filled Pond A16 on 25-27 Apr (MJM, LCr) and another was seen on Pond A2E on 27 Apr (MMR, SCR). A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** was found in Artesian Slough in Alviso (and perhaps moved to New Chicago Marsh on occasions) through 27 Apr (MJM, m.ob.). Single males were in the Lockheed Martin ponds on 19 Apr (RFu et al.) and at the South County Regional WasteWater Authority treatment ponds in Gilroy on 3 and 15 May (AME, GZ). **Redheads** in unusual triple digit numbers in March dropped to double digits by 3 Apr with 50 in Pond A3W on 3 Apr (RFu et al.) and single digits by the end of the month on 27 Apr with just two birds in the triangular pond north of Moffett Field (MMR, SCR) and two in Pond A16 in Alviso (MJM). The 1st-winter **Red-throated Loon** found at Shoreline Lake in late March remained through 1 Apr (JAC). **Common Loons** during the period included one at Lexington Reservoir on 14 Apr (RCP et al.) and two flying over the Pajaro River on 6 May (DLSu). A **Red-necked Grebe** was rediscovered on Pond A4 in Sunnyvale on 17 Apr (BM, MAA) and was seen through 22 Apr (v.ob.). This is likely the same bird seen on A2E in late February. **Western Grebes** were discovered nesting on Coyote Reservoir again on 11 Apr (JAC) and **Clark's Grebes** as well on 13 Apr (TGr). The water levels soon dropped and all of the nests were abandoned by 10 May (BH). The Mountain View Forebay **American Bittern** was last seen on 13 Apr (GL). The first **White-faced Ibis** of the spring was a bird in the New Chicago Marsh area on 24 Apr (HMCD, GZ). Sizeable spring ibis flocks included 23 over Pond A12 on 2 May (PDU) and about 25 over Hwy 101 and Masten Avenue on 20 May (DM). **Ospreys** have again nested in the Los Gatos Creek watershed and as of 25 May were raising three young (WGB). The nesting pair of **Bald Eagles** on the west side of Calaveras Reservoir hatched two chicks with both young seen on 7 Apr (MMR, RGJ). The pair at Coyote Reservoir hatched a single chick and it was nearly fledged by 10 May (BH). The nest tree/limb used by last year's pair near Casa de Fruta failed over the winter (DLSu). The big story of the spring period has been the number

of **Swainson's Hawks** coming through. In the 1920s, there were occasional sightings of up to 25 birds, but in the past 30 years we have been lucky to see one or two in any spring. The best spring we've had was 2004 when six birds were found in widely scattered locations in the county. This year has been remarkable in the number of passage birds, mostly in the Coyote Valley where they have fed on voles or other rodents in the alfalfa fields. The harbinger was

There were numerous rarities this month, but they were overshadowed by the unprecedented spring migration of Swainson's Hawks.

an adult on West Palm Avenue in Coyote Valley on 7 Apr (BH). At least five Swainson's were seen in the valley on 16 Apr (RPh), then six on 18 Apr (JPa, KBu). Nine were counted over the alfalfa fields on 4 May (SCR) and an amazing total of 14 in the valley on 20 May (RPh). Away from this metropolis, there have been at least six other birds seen during this passage, exceptional in its own right. A **Prairie Falcon** in Halls Valley on 23 Apr (MJM) was the only report and is likely a resident bird.

Shorebirds through Woodpeckers

Snowy Plovers finally showed up in New Chicago Marsh with two to five birds 16-27 Apr (RWR, FV, v.ob.). Subsequently, one to eight birds were found on Pond A12 nearby (BM, v.ob.) with the high count on 15 May (PDU). A single bird was on Pond A9 on 1 May (WGB). A family group of two adults and two young were on Pond A16 on 29 May (RWR, FV), our first sign of nesting. Three **Solitary Sandpipers** were found this spring. The first was seen along Thompson Creek above Tully Road 14-19 Apr (RCP et al., v.ob.). The second was at the Lockheed Martin ponds 19-28 Apr (RFu et al., v.ob.). The third was along the shore of Anderson Reservoir on 22 Apr (SCR). The **Lesser Yellowlegs** found at State and Spreckles in March was seen again on 1 Apr (BM). One was in Artesian Slough on 3 Apr (RFu et al.). The last was a bird in the impoundment north of Alviso Marina CP on 17 Apr (BM, MAA). We haven't had any spring **Ruddy Turnstones** in the last three years, so the assortment this spring was nice. Five birds were off the Palo

Alto Baylands on 3 May (BM). Two birds were on Pond A12 on 22 May and one was on Pond A9 on 30 May (both PDU). More surprising was our third spring record of a **Black Turnstone** in New Chicago Marsh on 17 Apr (BM, MAA). We have few records of **Red Knots** in the spring period. Singles this spring included one on Charleston Slough on 27 Apr (MMR, SCR) and another on Pond A12 on 22 May (PDU). The real surprise was 37 birds on Pond A9 at a high tide on 30 May (PDU). **Wilson's Phalaropes** don't show much of spring passage so a female in the impoundment north of the Alviso Marina CP on 17 Apr (BM, MAA), one on Pond A12 on 19 Apr (RWR), two on that pond on 4 May (PDU), and two farther out on Pond A15 (PDU) were a good showing. **Red-necked Phalaropes**, on the other hand, have a moderate passage and were found from 2 Apr to the end of the period (m.ob.). The highest count was of 660 birds on Pond A12 on 1 May (WGB). A spring passage **Black Tern** was found on Pond A17 on 21 May (PDU). Much less expected was a basic **Common Tern** on Pond A14 on 27 Apr (MJM), only our third or fourth spring record. A 'cooing' **Greater Roadrunner** deep in Henry Coe SP on the Bear Mountain Road on 27 May (MMR) was the only report this period. A single **Black Swift** over the Coyote Valley on 25 May (SCR) was more typical compared to the large numbers in 2012. The first **Vaux's Swift** arrived on 13 Apr in the Almaden Valley (JPa). There were few obvious migrant flocks during the period, the highest counts were four over Monte Bello OSP on 19 Apr (GHa) and four over Vasona CP on 17 May (GZ), the later a part of the summering population. A male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** at Kelly Park on 19 Apr (PDU) and 22 Apr (SCT et al.) was a returning summer resident. A male along the Guadalupe River near Curtner on 28 Apr (WGB) and 21 May (MJM), and a female along Coyote Creek below Embedded Way on 19 May (JPa) were also summer residents. A female at Ed Levin Park on 27 Apr (MMR, SCR), a male there on 30 Apr (BM), and one along the Pajaro River above Hwy 129 on 6 May (DLSu) were likely migrants. We don't see **Calliope Hummingbirds** every spring so a male at Ed Levin on 27 Apr (MMR, SCR) and female there 30 Apr (BM) were nice. **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were found in the San Antonio Valley throughout the period (m.ob.), the high count was of 10 on 11 May (MDo et al.).

Flycatchers through Sparrows

An early **Hammond's Flycatcher** was seen in Los Altos Hills on 1 Apr (PJM). Other Santa Cruz Mountain records included one at Monte Bello OSP on 20 Apr (MMR et al.) and second bird there on 1 May (GHa). Diablo Range records included two birds along Gilroy Hot Springs Road on 6 Apr (MDo et al.), a

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single bird at Smith Creek on 11 Apr (MJM, LCr), and three more at the same location on 23 Apr (MJM). **Gray Flycatcher** is rarely found in the county so one along the Pajaro River above Hwy 129 on 6 May (DLSu) was a good find. **Say's Phoebe** nested for the third year northeast of Hellyer Avenue (WGB, BJ). **Cassin's Kingbirds** returned to their favored nesting area on San Felipe Road on 3 Apr (BM) and two to three birds were seen through the period. Six **Purple Martins** returned to an area northwest of the lower saddle on Loma Prieta Avenue where they have nested in the past on 7 Apr (AR, JG). They have remained there through the period with 10 birds seen on 26 Apr (RWR, FV). The **Red-breasted Nuthatch** irruption trailed off in April with the last bird seen at Ed Levin CP on 19 Apr (RFu et al.). A **Canyon Wren** was found singing at outcrop on the Grizzly Gulch Trail in Henry Coe SP on 26 Apr (WGB) and was found again on 28 Apr (PDU) and 4 May (MMR, ARo). At least one **American Dipper** was found repeatedly through the birdathon period in Stevens Creek Canyon (m.ob.). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were seen along the John Nicholas Trail with two on 5 Apr (KBU, JPa) and one on 11 Apr (BM). **Phainopepla** have seemed scarce in the San Antonio Valley in recent years so a female on 14 Apr (SEM) and a male on 4 May (RWR et al.) were welcome finds. But the 18 birds on the Coe Bird Study Route #8 on 27 May (MMR) almost matched the 21 found on Routes #4 and #5 last summer. Coe remains a bird terra incognita for us. Wintering **Northern Waterthrush** in the last decade have rarely remained into late April, although there is a 1 May record. With excellent coverage, the last bird this spring was found on 20 Apr (MMR et al.). But the real surprise came when a bird was seen along Stevens Creek below Hwy 101 on 30 May (MMR). Previously we have banded two birds at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) in early May but none have been found in late May or early June as occurs sometimes for birds migrating in the western United States. We had a nice passage of **Nashville Warblers** this spring with about 17 birds reported. The earliest was one at Stevens Creek CP on 7 Apr (DWe). About half were found in the Santa Cruz Mountains and the other half in the Diablo Range. **MacGillivray's Warblers** moved through quickly. The first was singing in Rancho San Antonio OSP on 26 Apr (MJM, LCr), one was banded at CCFS the next day (SFBBO), and the third was along the Pajaro River above Hwy 129 on 29 Apr (DLSu). A bird was along Llagas Creek beside Casa Loma Road on 1 May (AV) and a singing bird was heard along Hicks Road 2-5 May (JPa, v.ob.). A singing **Palm Warbler** was found at Lake Lagunita 20-24 Apr (RFu, v.ob.) for one of our few April records. The

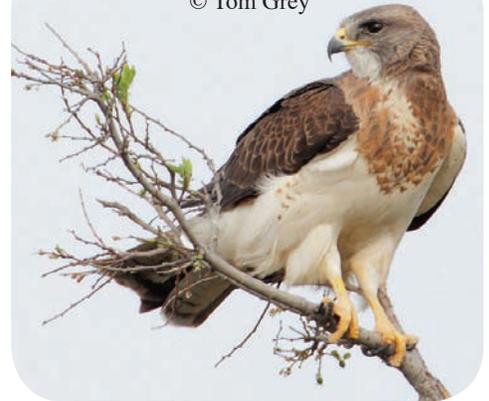
main passage of **Hermit Warblers** appears to have been from 19 Apr to 21 May (GHa, RFu, v.ob.) with at least 14 birds. Two males singing in Sanborn-Skyline CP southeast of Indian Rock on 21 May (WGB) were probably summer residents. A **Yellow-breasted Chat** at the SCRWA treatment ponds 26-29 Apr (MJM, v.ob.), one at Monte Bello OSP on 2 May (GHa), and one east of Sargent Creek on 6 May (DLSu) may all have been migrants. **Black-chinned Sparrows** have occupied burned chamise just over the county line off Summit Road again this spring (m.ob.). Nine singing birds were found on route #8 in Henry Coe SP on 29 May (MMR). One or two **Sage Sparrows** were found along Loma Prieta Avenue 18-21 May (JG, NLe, JPa, EBa). They are rare in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Late winter **White-throated Sparrows** included three continuing birds: one at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park through 19 Apr (RFu et al., v.ob.), Stevens Creek below Hwy 101 through 27 Apr (MMR, SCR, v.ob.), and one on the Alamitos Creek Trail through 22 Apr (JPa). New birds included singles at Coyote Lake CP on 12 Apr (BM) and Kelly Park on 17 Apr (PDU). Missed in February and March, the Oka percolation pond **Harris's Sparrow** was seen again on 6 Apr (RCP et al.). An adult was found at the edge of the Lockheed Marin marsh on 22 Apr (BM), possibly a spring migrant. The three Harris's this past winter is a remarkable number.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak through Evening Grosbeaks

A singing male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was found at Almaden Lake on 21 May (JPa). A second-year male **Blue Grosbeak** was singing along the Pajaro River on 27 Apr (WGB). An adult male was there on 29 Apr (RWR, FV), at least three birds on 5 May (MMR). Farther down the river, one to three were seen 8-9 May (RWR, FV, BM). An **Indigo Bunting** was found on private land along Pescadero Creek above the Pajaro River on 11 May (AR, NLe). Four **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were seen at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 26 Apr (PDU). Five were there by the next day and a few lingered to 3 May (v.ob.). One to two birds were seen along the Pond A16 levee 5-11 May (PDU, WGB) and a female was near First Street in Alviso on 10 May (ES). **Great-tailed Grackles** have been found widely during the period, from the Ogier Avenue ponds to the Mountain View Forebay (m.ob.). At least 10 were seen along Thompson Creek on 15 Apr (MJM). A singing male **Baltimore Oriole** was found at Vasona CP on 15 May (KBU, JPa) and on various occasion moved nearby to University Avenue (SCR, v.ob.). It has provided pleasure for many observers through the end of May. **Red Crossbills** have been irregular at Monte Bello OSP where two were first found on 19 Apr (RFu et al.). A high count was of 32+ birds on 2 May (GHa). Two were

Light-morph Swainson's Hawk

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over Stanford on 21 Apr (RFu) and at least one bird was on Skyline Boulevard on 7 May (JPa). Our amazing **Pine Siskin** flight tapered off in late April. Lingering birds in May included at least one at Monte Bello OSP on 2 May (GHa), one at the McClellan Ranch Preserve on 16 May (RCP), and three in Henry Coe SP on 26 May (MMR). **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were found widely in the Diablo Range in April with a few on the valley floor. Small numbers appeared at various spots in the Santa Cruz Mountains by early May. The winter irruption of **Evening Grosbeaks** was almost exclusively in urban areas from Palo Alto to Sunnyvale. A few birds remained in Sunnyvale in April with one seen bathing in a yard on Mango Avenue as late as 27 Apr (CK). April also found a few birds in the mountains, perhaps birds moving from locations farther south. A single female was at Ed Levin CP on 13 Apr (DWe). Fourteen birds were in Stevens Creek CP on 14 Apr (RFu). A few birds were at Monte Bello OSP on both 20 Apr (MMR et al.) and 27 Apr (MMR, SCR).

Observers: Mary Ann Allan (MAA), Ellen Bateman (EBa), Bill Bousman (WGB), Karen Burnson (KBU), Jack Cole (JAC), Lea Crisp (LCr), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Duntun (PDU), Al Eisner (AME), Rob Furrow (RFu), John Garrett (JG), Tom Grey (TGr), Beth Hamel (BH), Garth Harwood (GHa), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Bob Juhl (BJ), Carla Kirschenbaum (CK), Nick Levandosky (NLe), Garrett Lau (GL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Hugh McDevitt (HMCD), Peter Metropulos (PJM), Brooke Miller (BM), Steve Miller (SEM), Dominik Mosur (DM), Janna Pauser (JPa), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Bob Power (RCP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Alex Rinkert (AR), Alma Rogers (ARo), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO), Emilie Strauss (ES), David Suddjian (DLSu), Steve Tracey (SCT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Dave Weber (DWe), and Gena Zolotar (GZ).

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