

Field Notes

(June - July 2013)

by Bill Bousman

Ducks through Hawks

One year in ten we may find an oversummering **Eurasian Wigeon**, so a male seen in Pond A2E on 1 Jun (MJM, LCr) was exceptional. **Northern Shovelers** occasionally nest in the South Bay so it was interesting to see a female with three ducklings at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 27 Jul (WGB). Female **Northern Pintail** were apparently incubating nests in New Chicago Marsh in Alviso on both 17 Jun (MJM) and 28 Jul (MJM, RGJ), but the outcome of neither attempt is known. **Redhead** occasionally oversummer as the example of five males in eclipse plumage in Pond A16 on 26 Jul (WGB) shows. A female **Lesser Scaup** with 11 ducklings a few days old was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 27 Jul (WGB). Some years, downy young are not seen until August, last year none were found. In most years we find **White-faced Ibis** in spring and fall, so their presence this summer is unusual. A single bird was seen in the north pond of the Palo Alto FCB on 10 Jun (MDo) but was not found there again. Two were discovered in the Lockheed Martin marsh on 18 Jun (DC), at least 10 were there on 22 Jun (MJM,

LCr, v.ob.) and at least a few nonbreeders have remained through the period (m.ob.). **Ospreys** are very scarce in the Diablo Range. One seen at Mississippi Lake on 22 Jun (JY) is only the third record from Coe Park in the last 30 years. Perhaps related to the amazing concentration of **Swainson's Hawks** during the spring migration, a pair of Swainson's built a nest along Coyote Creek on county park lands and raised a single youngster. The nest was found on 14 May (WGB) and monitored through the end of the present period (RPh, WGB). Eggs were

23 Jun, then were found farther out again (m.ob.) Two birds were heard calling on 10 Jun (WGB) and 27 Jun (JTh). A bird was heard from Artesian Slough 6-7 Jun (Pdu, v.ob.) and another again on Alviso Slough on 8 Jul (Pdu). One or two birds were last heard in Alviso Slough on 17 Jul (GR). At least two birds were involved in this incursion, maybe more. Based on egg collections, the California Black Rail, our local subspecies, lays eggs from 10 Mar to 6 Jul (Birds of North America), so these were likely birds trying to establish breeding territories. A **Virginia Rail** was heard along the maintenance road in Shoreline Park on 8 Jun (WGB), three weeks after this species has normally left the South Bay. A calling bird in Monte Bello on 16 Jun (MJM, LCr) was from the sag pond where they have been heard before in the summer.

Shorebirds through Guillemots

Snowy Plovers appear to have had a fairly good breeding season with multiple broods found from New Chicago Marsh and Pond A16 west to Pond A12 and the unnamed triangular pond north of Crittenden Marsh. On 28 Jul alone, young were found in New Chicago, the impoundment north of the Alviso Marina CP, Pond A12 (four broods), and the unnamed pond (MJM, RGJ, SCR, FV). The first of the returning adult **Lesser Yellowlegs** was found on Pond A16 on 2 Jul (WGB). Good numbers have been found in that area through the end of the period with a peak count of five on 20 Jul (MJM, LCr). The end of July has been good for **Ruddy Turnstones** with three or more birds in Pond A16 on 21-28 Jul (DWe, v.ob.) and one over Pond A9 on 29 Jul (WGB). Two **Red Knots** on Pond A9 on 28 Jul (MJM, RGJ, SCR) were the first of the fall birds. An adult **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was seen in New Chicago Marsh on 23 Jul (MJM, LCr) and an unaged bird was found Charleston Slough on 25 Jul (DPe). An adult **Pectoral Sandpiper** was seen in New Chicago Marsh on 28 Jul (SCR), the juveniles are not likely before September. The peak count of passage **Wilson's Phalaropes** was 2400+ in New Chicago on 18 Jul (WGB). The high count of **Red-necked Phalaropes** was 500 in New Chicago on 28 Jul (MJM, RGJ), we should

Summer was marked by three unrelated events: the first Pigeon Guillemot to be found in the county, the first nesting of Swainson's Hawk in a hundred years, and a remarkable summer incursion of Black Rails.

collected from a pair of Swainson's in 1889, but as far as we know, this is the first successful nest of this threatened species since then. I hope that details of this successful nesting can be distributed in the near future. Apart from the nesting pair (both intermediate morphs), a light morph adult was seen in Coyote Valley on 2 Jun (BHi, GP) and another light morph adult was over Hwy 152 at the Merced County line on 20 Jul (DLSu).

Rails

Like the case of the Swainson's Hawk, there is evidence from the 19th century of nesting by **Black Rails** in Alviso. Since that time, Black Rails have been an occasional wintering presence in some of our better marshes in favorable years. The two exceptions have been a bird heard calling at the peak of the spring period on 26-27 Apr 1993 in Palo Alto (MMR, WGB, SCR) and one seen on 30 Aug 1995 at the Sunnyvale WPCP (JMD). This summer a Black Rail was heard calling well out in Alviso Slough on 6 Jun (Pdu). For the most part, calling rails moved upstream in the slough through



Swainson's Hawk
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Field Notes *cont'd*

see much greater numbers in late August or early September. **Least Terns** arrived in their favored staging area of Pond A2E on 19 Jul (WGB) when 10 were seen. Numbers increased rapidly (v.ob.) and at least 118 were there on 31 Jul (WGB). An adult and juvenile **Elegant Tern** on Pond A2E on 21 Jul (MMR) were two to three weeks early. **Black Skimmers** nesting on an island in Pond A16 hatched two young on 20 Jul (FV), but one succumbed in a few days. Breeding attempts at Shoreline Lake by another pair were unsuccessful (v.ob.). On a survey for Snowy Plovers the team discovered a juvenile **Pigeon Guillemot** on Pond A14 in Alviso on 28 Jul (SCR, MJM, RGJ), a first record for the county. The youngster has been seen through the end of the month (m.ob.) and looks healthy, but the South Bay is not always a good place for alcids.

Roadrunners through Martins

Our token **Greater Roadrunner** of the period was a 'cooing' bird northeast of Hellyer Avenue on 27 Jun (WGB). Nesting of **Vaux's Swifts** include a belated report of birds calling in a chimney on Hosta Lane in San Jose on 8 May (BH fide JPa) and a pair that nested in a chimney near the McAbee entrance to Almaden-Quicksilver CP 21 Jun-23 Jul (JPa, v.ob.). An adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** was seen at a Morgan Hill feeder on 22 Jun (SCR). **Willow Flycatchers** are very scarce spring migrants so one banded at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) on 2 Jun (SFBBO) and two birds at Monte Bello OSP on 6 Jun (GHa) are of interest. Surprising in the northwest corner of the county, a **Say's Phoebe** was seen at Monte Bello OSP on



Pigeon Guillemot
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1 Jun (ViT, PP). Better described as astounding was an adult with two fledglings at Moffett Field the same day (MMR, NMa). We have regular breeding records from the eastern Diablo Range, very occasional records from western edge of the Diablo Range (two fledglings were off Hellyer Avenue on 13 Jun (BJ)), but none from the South Bay edge. Two of the Moffett birds were seen again on 4 and 13 Jun (MMR) and one was at the edge of Crittenden Marsh on 31 Jul (WGB). At least two **Purple Martins** continued near the lower saddle on Loma Prieta Avenue through at least 17 Jul (v.ob.). Three birds were below Mt. Umunhum on 9 Jun (AV) and 11 Jun (BHi et al.). A female was at Monte Bello OSP on 6 Jun and an immature bird was there on 31 Jul (both GHa).

Wrens through Goldfinches

A **Rock Wren** was heard in the quarry adjacent to Rancho San Antonio OSP on 4 Jul (MMR, ARo). They have been resident in this private quarry for many years and are now accessible for those with sharp ears on the new Quarry Trail in the OSP. The nearest known populations are on the western side of the Diablo Range below Monument Peak and in the Santa Teresa Hills. **American Dippers** tend to be more reclusive in the summer so singles along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road on 7 Jun (BM) and on Los Gatos Creek above Main Street on 21 Jun (DoS) were of interest. A single **Phainopepla** near Mississippi Lake on 22 Jun (JY) was the only one seen this summer (21 birds were seen there last summer). **Sage Sparrows** are scarce anywhere in the Santa Cruz Mountains so singles along the Indian Creek Trail in Monte Bello OSP on 1 Jun (RFu), beside Loma Prieta Avenue on 20 Jun (AMR), and on the Rancho San Antonio OSP side of Black Mountain on 4 Jul (MMR, ARo) are of interest. The singing male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at Almaden Lake on 31 May (not 21 May as in my previous column) was seen briefly the next morning, 1 Jun (JPa et al.). Another singing adult was found along the Pajaro River east of Sargent Creek on 23 Jun (DLSu). **Blue Grosbeaks** continued to be found along the Pajaro River with a female near the Santa Cruz border on 3 Jun and an adult male singing nearby in both counties on 23 Jun (both DLSu). A **Yellow-head-**



Black Rail
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ed Blackbird in the Lockheed Martin channel on 5 Jun (BM) is only the fourth record for the summer period. **Great-tailed Grackles** were reported from the Palo Alto FCB to the Coyote Creek GC (v.ob.) with a peak count of 17 birds near Riverside Drive on 19 Jun (MJM). The adult male **Baltimore Oriole** continued at Vasona CP through 5 Jun (KBU, ViT). It was seen once again on 9 Jul (KBU). A single **Pine Siskin** over Monte Bello OSP on 2 Jun (RFu et al.) may have either been part of the coastal resident population or a lingering bird from last winter's invasion. Very few **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were reported from the Diablo Range and none from valley floor. Adults and juveniles were widely found in the Santa Cruz Mountains albeit in low numbers. Up to six birds were found in Rancho Canada del Oro OSP during the period and one or more nests were seen 8-19 Jul (JPa).

Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), Karen Burnson (KBU), Dotty Calabrese (DC), Lea Crisp (LCr), Mike Danzenbaker (JMD), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Duntun (PDu), Rob Furrow (RFu), Garth Harwood (GHa), Bev Hesse (BH), Bob Hirt (BHi), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Bob Juhl (BJ), Nateri Madavan (NMa), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Brooke Miller (BM), Parag Patil (PP), Janna Pauser (JPa), Don Pendleton (DPe), George Peyton (GP), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Geary Ridings (GR), Alex Rinkert (AMR), Alma Rogers (ARo), Mike Rogers (MMR), San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Don Starks (DoS), David Suddjian (DLSu), Jim Thomas (JTh), Vivek Tiwari (ViT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Dave Weber (DWE), and James Yurchenco (JY).

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