

Field Notes

(August 2013-September 2013)

by Bill Bousman

Ducks through Falcons

Blue-winged Teal are often not found until late September, but three were at the South County Regional WasteWater Authority treatment ponds in Gilroy on 15 Aug (RWR, FV). Oversummering **Redhead** were seen again, this time with three birds on Pond A16 on 1 Aug (WGB). Wintering **Red-breasted Mergansers** normally arrive in late October. Occasionally birds oversummer, the likely explanation of a female/immature in a closed refuge pond on 25 Aug (MMR, MJM). An **American Bittern** flying over Pond A16 in Alviso on 1 Aug (WGB) was a surprise, we have few summer records from along the Bay. Few **White-faced Ibis** summer locally so the birds in the vicinity of the Lockheed Martin channel through 8 Sep (m.ob.) were surprising. The highest count was of eight birds on 3 Aug (AA). Those birds that were photographed appeared to be second-year birds. One bird was found elsewhere near the Alviso EEC on 31 Aug (DWe). An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** was seen over Los Altos on 29 Sep (BM). Most of our few records are of fall migrants. The **Swainson's Hawk** youngster successfully fledged from the nest along Coyote Creek on 6 Aug (RPh). The first **Ferruginous Hawks** of the season were seen in Coyote Valley on 28 Sep (LMY et al., SSu), an adult and an immature. The first **Merlin** of the fall was found at Vasona CP on 29 Aug (PDU, KBu). A **Prairie Falcon** in the Coyote Valley on 30 Sep (MJM), away from the Diablo Range, was the only record for the period.

Shorebirds through Alcids

A juv "**Lesser**" **Golden-Plover** was seen over Pond A16 on 31 Aug (SCR, MMR), but could not be found again so as to confirm the species. **Snowy Plovers** were found in good numbers in August with up to 21 birds in the vicinity of New Chicago Marsh and 16 in the vicinity of the dried triangular pond north of Crittenden Marsh (m.ob.). But as more water was let into New Chicago Marsh in late

August, those birds moved on. At least three chicks or young birds were seen in the Alviso area (MJM, WGB) and at least five were in the triangular pond (MMR, MJM). **Lesser Yellowlegs** were fairly well distributed both in time and space, but mostly in low numbers. Some high counts included four in the Lockheed Martin ponds and channel on 27 Aug (WGB), four in New Chicago and Pond A16 on 31 Aug (SCR, MMR), and four in New Chicago Marsh at the end of Gold Street on 29 Sep (MMR et al.). The only fall **Ruddy Turnstone** was an alter-

Rare vagrants marked the season: Virginia's Warbler, Canada Warbler, and Orchard Oriole. All were third county records.

nate bird in Pond A16 on 8 Aug (MJM). Less expected was a **Black Turnstone** in Pond A9 on 10 Sep (WGB). **Red Knots** are found in the largest numbers in fall and early winter. Breached Pond A6 is particularly attractive with 46 counted there on 17 Aug (MMR). At major high tides, these birds appear to roost on Pond A9 across Alviso Slough and 80 were tallied there on 17 Sep (PDU). Good numbers were also found on closed refuge ponds with a count of 33 on 25 Aug (MMR, MJM). Away from Alviso, eight birds were found on Charleston Slough on 19 Sep (RWR, FV). Only two juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were found during the period, both in New Chicago Marsh. The first was there on 10 Aug (MJM) and the second on 31 Aug (MMR, SCR). One to two decades ago there were many Septembers where we might see 30 to 60 **Pectoral Sandpipers**, but no more, I guess. This fall there were two. One was in Pond A9 in Alviso 5-11 Sep (PDU, MMR). The other was found in the Mountain View Forebay on 17 Sep (KDeM, KPa) and enjoyed by many through 24 Sep. The number of **Least Terns** staging on Pond A2E dropped in August with two

birds there last seen on 25 Aug (MMR). Four to 13 **Least**s were seen in the Alviso pond 1-8 Aug (MH, WGB), and two were seen over the Stevens Creek mouth on 3 Aug (WGB). A juvenile **Black Tern** was found on Pond A2E on 2 Aug (DPe, PDU) and was well seen and photographed at least through 14 Aug (m.ob.). A juvenile seen on Pond A16 on 17 Aug (SCR) may be a second bird. Always rare, singleton **Common Terns** were found on Pond A16 on 31 Aug (SCR, MMR) and on Charleston Slough and Pond A1 on 18-19 Sep (MDo, RWR, FV). **Elegant Terns** found on Pond A2E in July continued through 14 Aug (m.ob.) with a high count of five on 10 Aug (MMR, ARo). More Elegants were found on the Alviso ponds 17 Aug-13 Sep with a high count of 34 on 11 Sep (MMR). Four birds were found on closed refuge ponds on 25 Aug (MMR, MJM), a single was on Pond A16 on 31 Aug (SCR, MMR), and two were on Pond A1 on 19 Sep (RWR, FV). The second **Black Skimmer** chick hatched on Pond A16 did not last past 6 Aug (v.ob.). A juvenile **Parasitic Jaeger** was found on Pond A14 in Alviso on 11 Sep (PDU) and remained there at least through 21 Sep (m.ob.). This is our first Parasitic since 2008. The **Pigeon Guillemot** found in Pond A14 at the end of July was enjoyed by many through 8 Aug (m.ob.).

Roadrunners through Dippers

A **Greater Roadrunner** was seen at Hwy 130 and Smith Creek on 14 Sep (RN). Northeast of Hellyer Avenue, another was found on 17 Sep (BJ). The fall migration of **Vaux's Swifts** seemed slow, but was brightened considerably with at least 60 birds seen over the Guadalupe River below Coleman Avenue on 26 Sep (JPa). Fall **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** included a male along the Guadalupe River below Coleman on 22 Aug



Black-chinned Hummingbird
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Field Notes *cont'd*

(AV) and female/immature birds on the Alamitos Creek Trail on 3 Aug (JPa) and at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 31 Aug (DWe). A HY male **Costa's Hummingbird** established territory at a number of waverly sages on the west end of the arch bridge at Vasona CP this fall. It was first reported on 24 Sep (fide PDU) and birders began to avidly study this desert hummer on 29 Sep (PDU et al.). That excitement brought forth some photographs of the bird taken at the same spot on 15 Aug (OA) — quite a story. Most of our records are from July to September. Likely HY Rufous-Allen's Hummingbirds show up every fall and we had multiple records over the period. But one HY female **Rufous Hummingbird** in a San Jose yard on 20 Sep (HD) was photographed as it spread its tail, well enough that we could determine the species. The only report of **Lewis's Woodpeckers** was of two in San Antonio Valley at the Lazy Z Ranch on 17 Sep (WGB, VF). Although there are a couple of late July banding records, a **Willow Flycatcher** at the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) ponds on 11 Aug (AV) was the earliest observed arrival we've had. We've had good numbers in September and perhaps a few will linger. A **Say's Phoebe** along Moffett Field on 4 Aug (MMR, NMa) is likely part of the family that nested there this summer. The first winter arrival was at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 3 Sep (GZ) and was quite early. **Western Kingbirds** are scarce fall migrants, so one near the SCVWD ponds on 21 Sep (JPa) and another in Coyote Valley on 29 Sep (MMR et al.) were of interest. The only **Red-breasted Nuthatches** noted were at Monte Bello OSP on 6 Sep (GHa) and at Mt. Madonna CP on 20 Sep (JMy). These were likely local residents, there have been no irruptive records this fall (it is an off year). An **American Dipper** near the fish ladder on Los Gatos Creek above Lexington Reservoir on 20 Aug (GKe) was a location where they've not been reported. One along Upper Penitencia Creek in Alum Rock Park on 28 Aug (SCR) was from an area where they've nested in the past, but have not been seen in recent years. A bird along Los Gatos Creek above Los Gatos



on 6 Sep (H&DMcD) was from a historical location.

Warblers through Goldfinches

A **Northern Waterthrush** was found at the Charleston Road marsh on 28 Sep (DWe). This is the 12th winter that one or more birds have been at this location. Three **Tennessee Warblers** have been found this fall. The first was seen at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park 2-8 Sep (MMR, v.ob.). The second, a HY bird, was along the Guadalupe River Trail below Coleman Avenue on 12 Sep (AV, JPa). The third was again at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 20-22 Sep (PKe, RKe, v.ob.) and was reported to be whiter on the underparts than the earlier bird. Although we may find a few more in October, only one **Nashville Warbler** was found by the end of the period, a female at La Rinconada Park in Los Gatos on 28 Sep (SP). A highlight of the fall was a **Virginia's Warbler** found on the north side of the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant on 24 Sep (RKe, PKe). It was seen, sometimes with difficulty, over the next two days by many observers. This is the third county record. Typically, September is a good month for fall **MacGillivray's Warblers**, but only one was found this fall, a HY bird in a Morgan Hill yard (SCR). A female or immature **American Redstart** was seen at the Ulistac Natural Area on 12 Sep (PW) and a rapid report allowed a few observers to see the bird that day, it was not found the next day. Competing with the Virginia's Warbler seen later in the month, a **Canada Warbler** at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 2 Sep (SCT, GZ, DW, m.ob.) was another vagrant highlight. Two **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found by the end of September. One was in the community garden at the McClellan Ranch Preserve on 25 Sep (PDU) and the second along

the Guadalupe River Trail near the fish ladder below Coleman Avenue on 27-30 Sep (AV, m.ob.). Lake Cunningham has become the center of **Great-tailed Grackles** in recent years. A tally of 84 on 18 Sep (SCR) is the highest count so far in the county. Our special oriole year went the next step when a female or immature **Orchard Oriole** was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 94-26 Sep (MMR, m.ob.) and was well studied and photographed. This bird was found during a follow-up search for the Virginia's Warbler. Surprisingly, another Orchard Oriole was found at the McClellan Ranch Preserve 26-27 Sep (MMR, v.ob.), again in a follow-up search for the Clay-colored Sparrow. These are both examples of the famed "Patagonia Rest Stop" effect. Two **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were seen at Monte Bello OSP on 6 Sep (GHa). At least 69 birds were found along Mines and San Antonio Valley road on 17 Sep (WGB, VF), all near limited water resources.

Observers: Arvind Agrawal (AA), Ozzie Altus (OA), Bill Bousman (WGB), Karen Burnson (KBu), Helen Daley (HD), Karen DeMello (KDeM), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Dunten (PDU), Volney Ford (VF), Garth Harwood (GHa), Marcel Holyoak (MH), Bob Juhl (BJ), Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKe), Greg Kerekes (GKe), Nateri Madavan (NMa), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Hugh & Deb McDevitt), Brooke Miller (BM), Jean Myers (JMy), Lisa Myers (LMy), Rod Norden (RN), Kay Partelow (KPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Sergey Pavlov (SP), Don Pendleton (DPe), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Bob Reiling (RWR), Alma Rogers (ARo), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Shravan Sundaram (SSu), Steve Tracey (SCT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Pingang Wang (PW), Dave Weber (DWe), and Gena Zolotar (GZ).

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