

Field Notes

(December 2013-January 2014)

by Bill Bousman

Geese through Pelicans

An immature **Greater White-fronted Goose** was found in Cupertino on 10 Dec (PLD). Another immature was seen at the kite-flying area at Shoreline Park on 14 Dec (AME) and remained there through 6 Jan (v.ob.). Between two and four birds were observed to move between the Palo Alto Muni GC and the Baylands 21-29 Jan (DSt, v.ob.). A **Snow Goose** was seen on Calero Reservoir on 3 Dec (PDU). Two birds were in Pond A16 in Alviso on 4-25 Jan (FV, RKe, m.ob.). A **Ross's Goose** found along Thompson Creek above Tully Road on 15 Dec (JPa) has remained in the area through 26 Jan (v.ob.). **Eurasian Wigeon** were found in many locations along the Bay in this period. One was at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 1 Dec (MDo, KDo). One or two were in Pond A14 in Alviso 6 Dec-18 Jan (WGB, m.ob.). One was seen in Pond A2E on 31 Dec (LBe). A male was in Adobe Creek on 7 Jan (CL) and 19 Jan (EFE et al.). Four males were in closed refuge ponds on 18 Jan and another male at the mouth of Stevens Creek the same day (MMR, MJM, LCr). Single males were in Pond A16 in Alviso on 21 Jan (WGB) and the outfall channel at the Palo Alto Baylands on 26 Jan (AV). A female **Blue-winged Teal** was found again on the Mountain View Forebay on 5 Dec (MDo). A pair was seen at the holding ponds in the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 15 Dec (SEM). The major Blue-winged Teal concentration was in Artesian (Mallard) Slough 1-29 Jan (PDU, m.ob.). The high counts were four males on 23 Jan (JMa) and two females on 29 Jan (SJa). The November male **Blue-winged X Cinnamon Teal** was found there again on 8 Dec-29 Jan (MJM, LCr, v.ob.), and a different hybrid teal was there on 29 Jan (SJa). The high count of wintering **Redhead** was 20 birds on the Alviso ponds on 15 Dec (MMR, NMa), our lowest count in well over a decade. We were bereft of **Barrow's Goldeneyes** in December, but the first of the expected Shoreline Lake crowd was a female seen on 2 Jan (SEM). By the period's end, a pair was there and an additional two or three males were on the lake or in nearby Pond A1 (m.ob.). The only Barrow's away from these areas was an immature male in Pond A13 in Alviso on 18 Jan (MMR, MJM, LCr). The 94 **Red-breasted Mergansers** tallied on the Alviso ponds on 18 Jan (MMR, MJM, LCr) was a fairly good number for the South Bay. An immature male inland at the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) percolation ponds 4-12 Dec (JPa, BHa) was changing from immature to adult plumage. Our token loon for the winter period was a juvenile **Red-throated Loon** on closed refuge ponds on 18 Jan (MMR,

MJM, LCr). In recent years, it has been usual to have **Brown Pelicans** after December. During this period only one bird was seen in January, a juvenile over the Sunnyvale WPCP oxidation ponds on 17 Jan (WGB).

Bitterns through Skimmers

The **American Bittern** in the entrance channel to the Mountain View Forebay in October and November was not seen again until 31 Dec (PMB). It has been seen regularly in January (m.ob.). Other wintering bitterns included one found in creek channels near the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 15 Dec (SEM), one north of Pond A14 on 15 Dec (MMR, NMa),

Top rarities of the period included a Rough-legged Hawk, a Cattle Egret, and a Black-and-White Warbler.

and one to two birds along the Alviso Slough 31 Dec-1 Jan (PDU, MHo, SCR). A **Cattle Egret** at the ponds of the Coyote Creek GC 27 Dec-5 Jan (SCR, m.ob.) was the only record for 2013. Interestingly, this bird was found at the Kirby Canyon Landfill on 28 Dec as well as at the GC. **Ferruginous Hawks** were well reported from Coyote Valley with at least three birds there on 28 Dec (RPh et al.), 11 Jan (AA), and 15 Jan (RWR, FV). Elsewhere, a juvenile was at Tennant and Foothill in San Martin 9-14 Dec (JF, BHa), one was over Ed Levin CP on 15 Dec (LMY et al.), two were on the east side of Calaveras Reservoir on 15 Dec (PKi et al.), one was along Marsh Road on 20 Dec (CVR), another was on the west side of Calaveras Reservoir on 22 Dec (SS), two were along Coyote Ridge on 28 Dec

(SCR), one was along San Felipe Road on 28 Dec (MMR), and single birds were in the San Antonio Valley (WGB, RPa) and Isabel Valley (MMR, NMa), both on 30 Dec. About half of these records were on private lands accessed on our CBCs. An adult female **Rough-legged Hawk** was seen flying from Santa Clara County into San Benito County near Lover's Lane off Hwy 152 on 8 Jan (DLSh), our first since the winter of 2007-08. About 14 **Snowy Plovers** were found in Pond A13 on 15 Dec (MMR, NMa), but none after that. Wintering **Lesser Yellowlegs** appear to be becoming more common in the South Bay. The high count was of 12 birds on Pond A12 in Alviso on 18 Jan (MMR, MJM, LCr). A single bird along San Tomas Aquino Creek on 23 Jan (PKi et al.) was slightly away from the Bay, but one in the Isabel Valley in the Diablo Range at about 2300 feet on 30 Dec (MMR, MJM, NMa) was only the third record for the Mt. Hamilton CBC in 37 years. **Red Knots** are particularly rare in the winter period so three on Pond A14 on 16 Dec and one on Pond A9 on 1 Jan (both MHo) were of interest. In this mostly stormless period, the only **Red Phalaropes** were one to two birds in Pond A12 on 7-8 Dec (PDU, MJM). Two **Glaucous Gulls**, a 1st-cycle and a 2nd-cycle, were at the Kirby Canyon Landfill on 28 Dec (SCR). These birds probably commute to the Ogier Avenue ponds, but two 1st-cycle birds there on 28 Jan (WGB) showed different plumage characters. No **Black Skimmers** have been reported since August, so it was nice that one showed up in Charleston Slough on 31 Dec (PMB) and remained there at least through 13 Jan (v.ob.).

Roadrunners through Solitaire

The only report of a **Greater Roadrunner** was one at Coyote Reservoir on 14 Dec (BHa, THa). Single **Short-eared Owls** were daytime sightings along Alviso Slough on 15 Dec (MMR, NMa) and 2 Jan (MHo). Four **Short-eared Owls** at dusk were found again this winter in the Coyote Valley on 28 Dec (RPh et al.) and were seen there irregularly through 31 Jan (v.ob.). Six birds were observed on 31 Jan (RPh, AB). The male **Costa's Hummingbird** at Vasona CP was last seen there on 7 Dec (SJa), it was present for 115 days as it molted from immature to adult plumage. The minor fall and winter movement of **Lewis's Woodpeckers** into the western Diablo Range continued with one-to-two birds at the Coyote Lake-Harvey Bear Ranch CP 2-12 Dec (JF, BHa) and likely a different bird nearby off Roop Road on 10 Dec (JPa et al.). The Mt. Hamilton CBC reported 62 birds in Isabel Valley (MMR, MJM, NMa) and 14 along Mines Road and in the northern San Antonio Valley (RFu et al.). These numbers are more than twice the long-term average. The wintering adult male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Ed Levin CP was seen more or less regularly through the period and was well photographed. Another bird was reported from Santa Teresa CP



*Rough-legged Hawk
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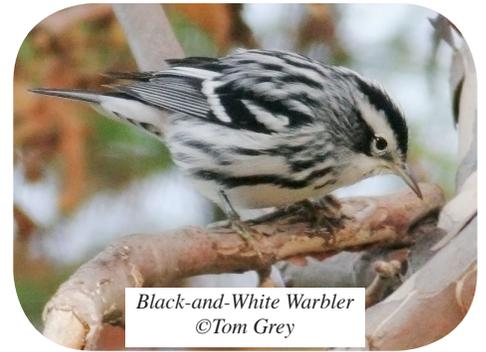
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on 13 Dec (JTh). A male **Red-naped Sapsucker** was seen and photographed at Foothills College on 11 Jan (CO'C). It showed some limited red feathers not expected for this species, but within the range of museum specimens (*vide* SCR). Single birds at Ed Levin CP on 11 Jan (JAC) and the SCVWD ponds on 23-24 Jan (JPa, KBu) were also reported. As occurs in most winters, multiple hybrid sapsuckers were also seen. Approximately 10 **Prairie Falcons** were seen, most within the Diablo Range. Flatland or Santa Cruz Mountain foothill birds included one bird in the Coyote Valley 9 Dec-21 Jan (v.ob.), one near the Jubilee Christian Church in Alviso on 15 Dec (WGB, JTh), and one near Uvas Reservoir on 7 Jan (MJM). A **Cassin's Kingbird** was seen northeast of Hellyer Avenue on 28 Dec (PDU), about our third winter record. Wintering **Tree Swallows** were few this winter, 40+ over Lake Cunningham on 13 Dec (JPa) was the high count. Six birds examining previous years' nest sites along Coyote Creek near the Coyote Creek GC on 31 Jan (RPh) were early. The only other winter swallow was a **Barn Swallow** among the trees at Lake Cunningham on 13 Dec (JPa). Flatland **Pygmy Nuthatch** reports are always of interest. Two came to feeders along Southampton Drive in Palo Alto on 1 Jan (JMu, RPo), probably the most southerly flatland record yet. A **House Wren** was seen along the San Francisquito Creek Trail near the golf course on 16 Dec (MMR, NMa). Another bird was found at the SCVWD ponds on 30 Dec and 1 Jan (JPa). Half-hardy **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** included one along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 15 Dec (WGB, JTh), another near the dam at Calero Reservoir on 28 Dec (RCP), and two birds near the Fortini Trail in Santa Teresa CP on 3 Jan (JPa). An **American Dipper** was spotted along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road on three occasions between 28 Dec and 17 Jan (LMY, MMR, MJM, LCR). After a slow start, quite a few **Golden-crowned Kinglets** showed up during the period. On 28 Dec, seven birds were found along San Felipe Creek and Road (MMR), three were near IBM on Bailey Avenue (RHe), and three were in pines east of Coyote Ridge (SCR). More surprising were three kinglets on the east side of the Isabel Valley on 30 Dec (MMR, MJM, NMa). The John Nicholas Trail provided a single bird on 11 Jan (MJM, LCR) and more than 10 birds in one flock on 15 Jan (JPa, AV et al.). A single bird was in Graystone Park on 13 Jan (JPa). A **Townsend's Solitaire** turned up on 30 Dec in Trumpler's Garden near the top of Mt. Hamilton (KHo, DaS, EG).

Phainopepla through Goldfinches

A female **Phainopepla** was seen in the Isabel Valley on 30 Dec (MMR, MJM, NMa). The best vagrant in January was a female **Black-and-White Warbler** that showed up in

a Mountain View yard on 12 Jan (HH) and then moved on. A **Nashville Warbler** seen at Lake Cunningham on 15 Dec (JPa) was probably trying to winter. A **Common Yellowthroat** found in the Isabel Valley on 30 Dec (MMR, MJM, NMa) is only the second record for the Mt. Hamilton count. In some winters we have multiple **Yellow Warblers** that hang on, but only one near the Palo Alto WQCP on 16 Dec (MMR, NMa) was found this season. Overwintering **Wilson's Warblers** are found about every other year, but we had three this year. The first was on the Guadalupe River Trail below Blossom Hill Road on 4 Dec (JPa), the second was in a subdivision east of Thompson Creek on 21 Jan (JPa et al.), and the third was at the SCVWD ponds on 25 Jan (MMR). The wintering **Chipping Sparrows** that have used Jeffrey Fontana Park in San Jose have moved west to TJ Martin Park, two were seen on 8 Jan (JPa) and one on 13 Jan (MJM). A **Vesper Sparrow** was found at the Sierra Road summit on 11 Jan (WGB). A **Bell's Sparrow** was seen near Loma Prieta on 28 Dec (JDo et al.) and multiple birds were found along Mines Road on 30 Dec (RFu et al.). It has apparently been a good season for overwintering **Grasshopper Sparrows** hiding in our grasslands. One was in Santa Teresa CP on 1 Dec (JPa), the next on Coyote Ridge on 28 Dec (CEd), another in Santa Teresa CP on 17 Jan (JPa), and a surprising five on the trail to Monument Peak on 20 Jan (MHo). **Swamp Sparrows** continued along the trail at the Palo Alto Baylands that parallels the runway. Most folks saw a single bird, but photos suggest that at least three may have been present in the area during the period. Well away from the Bay, a Swamp Sparrow was found along Coyote Creek below Silver Creek Valley Road on 18 Dec (JPa). On New Year's Day, one was seen along the Alviso Slough (SCR) and another between Ponds A16 and A17 (PDU). Good numbers of **White-throated Sparrows** continued with at least 17 for the period and three more at feeders. A female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** popped up in a Milpitas yard on 10 Dec (MO'B). We only have winter birds every five or ten years or so. Lake Cunningham and the Coyote Creek GC/Ogier Avenue ponds remained the center of distribution for **Great-tailed Grackles** with high counts at the former of 36-43 birds on 15 Jan (WGB) and 13 at the latter on 28 Dec (KHo, RPa, MJM). An overwintering 1st-year male **Bullock's Oriole** was found at the SCVWD ponds on 24 Jan (KBu) and was seen also on 29 Jan (JPa, CL). Spring arrivals normally show up in early March. Two **Pine Siskins** along the John Nicholas Trail on 13 Jan (MHo) were the only report. **Lawrence's Goldfinches** have been in high numbers in the Diablo Range for the second winter in a row. On 30 Dec, the tally in Isabel Valley was 194 (MMR, MJM, NMa), 38 were counted on Mines Road (RFu et al.), and 21 in the San Antonio Valley (WGB,



Black-and-White Warbler
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RPa). The Santa Cruz Mountains had a few birds including two in the Sierra Azul OSP on 14 Dec (ER), four in Palo Alto Foothills Park on 16 Dec (KHo, RPa), four at the Stanford Dish on 28 Dec (JVM, MBi), and four at Monte Bello on 3 Jan (GHa).

Observers: Arvind Agrawal (AA), Laurie Bechtler (LBe), Mary Bibb (MBi), Bill Bousman (WGB), Andy Bradshaw (AB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), Karen Burnson (KBu), Jack Cole (JAC), Lea Crisp (LCr), Kelly Dodder (KDo), Matthew Dodder (MDO), Peggy Don (PLD), Judy Donaldson (JDo), Pete Duntun (PDU), Craige Edgerton (CEd), Al Eisner (AME), Eric Feuss (EFe), John Fox (JF), Rob Furrow (RFu), Elinor Gates (EG), Beth Hamel (BHa), Tom Hamel (THa), Garth Harwood (GHa), Rick Herder (RHe), Howard Higley (HH), Kirsten Holmquist (KHo), Marcel Holyoak (MHo), Sastry Jandhyala (SJa), Roland Kenner (RKe), Petra Kinsman (PKi), Caroline Lambert (CL), Nateri Madavan (NMa), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Juliana Manoliu (JMa), Steve Miller (SEM), John Moore (JVM), Julio Mulero (JMu), Lisa Myers (LMY), Matthew O'Brien (MO'B), Chris O'Connell (CO'C), Rich Page (RPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Renee Polizotto (RPo), Bob Power (RCP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Edward Rooks (ER), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Debra Shearwater (DLSh), Dale Stalbecker (DaS), Dick Stovel (DSt), Jim Thomas (JTh), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), and Chuq Von Rospach (CVR).

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