

Field Notes

(February - March, 2014)

by Bill Bousman

Geese through Rails

The only **Snow Goose** of the period was an immature at the Coyote Creek GC on 26 Feb (DWe). A will-o-the-wisp **Ross's Goose**, probably present since December, was seen again on 22 Feb (MDo et al.) and 28 Feb (WGB, MSm). **Eurasian Wigeon** along the Bay included one to two males in the Alviso ponds 15 Feb (SCR, MMR) and 16 Mar (MHo), three males in Pond A16 on 15 Feb (SCR), a male on Pond A3W on 2 Mar (BM), a male in outer Charleston Slough on 6 Mar (WGB), and a male in the Palo Alto estuary on 18 Mar (DJ). Four male and a female **Blue-winged Teal** were in Artesian (Mallard) Slough in Alviso on 4 Feb (JPa et al.). Single males were seen in the slough on 23 Mar and also in the Lockheed Martin ponds the same day (both RCP et al.) and two males were in the nearby Sunnyvale WPCP west pond on 28 Mar (WGB). Only small numbers of **Redhead** were found earlier in the winter, but 190 on Pond A3W and the nearby Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 12 Feb (WGB) and at least 157 on Pond A18 in Alviso on 15 Feb (SCR) brought us back to more typical numbers. A pair of **Barrow's Goldeneyes** remained on Shoreline Lake at least through 1 Mar (m.ob.). A **Red-throated Loon** found on closed refuge ponds on 17 Mar (JStP) may have been the same one seen there in mid-January. A **Brandt's Cormorant** on the Pond A13/A15 levee in Alviso on 18 Mar (JGo) was a surprise. Except in two recent invasion years, this coastal cormorant is very rare in the county. The Mountain View Forebay **American Bittern** was seen again in late February and most of March (v.ob.). An adult **Bald Eagle** was at a nest at Coyote Reservoir on 13 Feb (MJM, LCr). An incubating bird was at its nest west of Calaveras Reservoir on 14 Feb-26 Mar (CVR, MJM, v.ob.). A **Broad-winged Hawk** was seen along Skyline Boulevard on 16 Mar (*vide* NZ). This is the earliest spring record we have in the county. At least two **Ferruginous Hawks** remained in the Coyote Valley through 8 Mar (m.ob.). Other birds included an adult along Marsh Road on 2 Feb (DWe) and one along Metcalf Road on 16 Mar (MHo). Eight calling **Black Rails** were heard along Alviso Slough 15-17 Feb (SCR, v.ob.). This is an area where we had calling birds last summer, so perhaps

they will nest.

Shorebirds through Hummingbirds

Four to eight **Snowy Plovers** were found on the unnamed panne north of Crittenden Marsh on 15-27 Mar (FV, RFu, v.ob.), the first in the county since mid-December. They nested in this panne last summer. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** near Pond A13 in Alviso on 16 Mar (MHo) was the only report of the period. A 2nd-cycle **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was tantalizingly close on San Felipe Lake in San Benito County on 8 Feb (SCR, DLSh). **Glaucous Gulls** commuting to the Kirby Canyon landfill continued to be seen on the Ogier Avenue ponds through at least 18 Mar (m.ob.). At least three birds were there on 8 Feb (SCR), two 1st-cycle and a 2nd-cycle. A

Among other rarities, a Brandt's Cormorant, a Lark Bunting, and a Baltimore Oriole stood out.

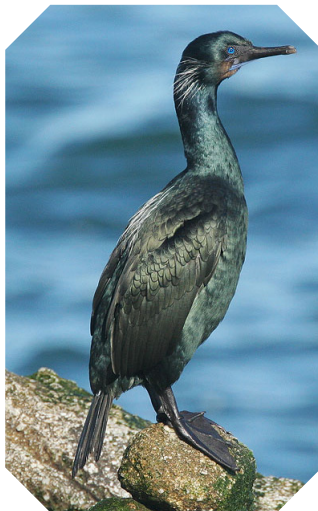
1st-cycle Glaucous was feeding in fields near Bloomfield and Hwy 15 on 8 Feb (SCR) and another was seen flying from San Felipe Lake into the county the same day (SCR, DLSh). An immature bird was at the Newby Island recycler on 7 Mar (JStP). Another 1st-cycle bird was on Pond A16 on 29 Mar (MMR, MJM, LCr). Numbers of **Black Skimmers** began to increase at Charleston Slough during the period with five there on 21 Feb (CL), building to at least 14 on 21 Mar (GL). Three to four **Greater Roadrunners** were seen, all at the western edge of the Diablo Range. One was northeast of Hellyer Avenue on 11 Mar (MJM). The next day another was seen east of the Metcalf Road summit running on the road (CEd). A singing bird was found about a mile up Metcalf Road on 14 Mar (RWR, FV) and perhaps the same bird was on the other side of the road on 25 Mar (MHo). At least some **Common Poorwills** overwinter, one was heard off Del Puerto Road at the county line on 16 Feb (JGa). A bird in Morgan Hill on 29 Mar (SCR)

was likely a migrant as we have few records of flatland birds. A strong low pressure system with a good amount of rain came through the evening of 27 Feb and remained into 1 Mar. Perhaps related to this, on 1 Mar we had a **Vaux's Swift** over the Los Gatos Creek percolation ponds (LMY et al.), one over the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) ponds (AV), and perhaps the same bird over Almaden Lake (JPa). The next day, two were seen along the San Francisco Bay Trail near the Sunnyvale WPCP (BM) and one over Los Gatos (MHo). No more were found until the first seasonal arrival in Alviso on 29 Mar (MMR, MJM). A male **Costa's Hummingbird** showed up at a south Los Altos feeder on 21 Mar (ATe, AHe).

The first **Rufous Hummingbird** of the season was a male in the Ulistac Natural Area on 1 Mar (L&MR). Additional males were found in at least six other locations in March, most on the west side of the valley. The first male **Allen's Hummingbird** of the seasons was seen along Coyote Creek near Sycamore Drive in Milpitas on 31 Jan (PDu). A few more have been found in this period, but no evidence of nesting.

Woodpeckers through Warblers

A wintering **Lewis's Woodpecker** was found again along Roop Road 16 Feb to 29 Mar (JPa, CHu, RWR, v.ob.). The wintering adult **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Ed Levin CP continued during the period through at least 9 Mar (DWe, v.ob.). A second adult was discovered at the end of Geng Road in Palo Alto on 7 Mar (JMa) and has remained at least through 21 Mar (v.ob.). It has been a remarkable winter for **Red-naped Sapsuckers**, less common than the Yellow-bellied. A female found at the SCVWD ponds in January was rediscovered on 5 Mar (BM, KBu) and has remained at least through 16 Mar (v.ob.). Another female, quite pale, was found in the Ulistac Natural Area on 4 Feb (JPa, EBa et al.) and photos taken on 15 Feb (K&SB) convincingly supported the id. This bird remained at least through 5 Mar (m.ob.). Flatland **Prairie Falcon** reports included one at the Jubilee Christian Church in Alviso on 1 Feb (MHo) and another in the Coyote Valley OSP on 8 Mar (RWR et al.). A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at Lake Cunningham on 16 Feb (PDu et al.) and 22 Feb (MDo et al.) was likely wintering and the same bird found there in late November (JPa). **Say's Phoebes** are again nesting in outbuildings northeast of Hellyer Avenue, a pair was seen carrying nest materials there on 24 Feb (JPa). Two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were heard along the John Nicholas Trail in Sanborn-Skyline CP on 22 Mar (GZ), the only ones during the period. Single **American Dippers** were found along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road throughout the period (v.ob.). The male **Golden-crowned Kinglet** wintering at



Brandt's Cormorant
Photo courtesy of Tom Grey

Field Notes *cont'd*

Graystone Park in the Almaden Valley was seen and enjoyed by many in February and remained at least to 14 Mar (JPa). A flock of at least six kinglets was seen near Hobbs Road in Henry Coe SP on 25 Feb and 4 Mar (both CL). At least two birds were heard along Skyline Boulevard south of Page Mill Road on 25 Feb (RFu). A **Townsend's Solitaire** was seen along the Fish Trail at Coe on 4 Mar (CL), an excellent find. The **Northern Waterthrush** in the Charleston Road marsh has been particularly secretive this winter, but was found on 13 Feb (PLaT). Two wintering **Nashville Warblers** have been a treat, one at the SCVWD ponds on 15 Feb (MHo) and another at Graystone Park on 16 and 18 Feb (AV, JPa). A second **Yellow Warbler** for the winter was one along Coyote Creek at Sycamore Drive on 15 Feb (DWe). A wintering **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was seen at the Ulistac Natural Area 23-24 Feb (GZ, v.ob.). One singing in Stevens Creek CP on 4 Mar (BM) was likely a bird that wintered nearby as our returning summer birds usually turn up a month later. An immature male **Hermit Warbler** was found at Graystone Park on 4 Feb (WGB) and was seen regularly through the end of the month (m.ob.).

Sparrows through Goldfinches

One to seven wintering **Chipping Sparrows** have continued at TJ Martin Park in San Jose (v.ob.). Three birds in Las Palmas Park in Sunnyvale on 6 Mar (GZ) suggest another group of urban wintering birds. A singing **Bell's Sparrow** was seen along Willow Ridge in Henry Coe SP on 22 Feb (JY, AL). Another was found in a chamise field on Del Puerto Road on 19 Mar (MHo). A female-like **Lark Bunting** was found with Lark Sparrows along Marsh Road on 20 Mar (RFu) and has remained at least through 25 Mar (m.ob.). This is our 6th county record and

the first in spring. A **Swamp Sparrow** at the Palo Alto Baylands was found again on 26 Feb (WGB). A new bird was seen along Stevens Creek between Crittenden Lane and Hwy 101 on 28 Feb-3 Mar (CL, MDo et al.). **White-throated Sparrows** were found at six locations plus four at feeders (m.ob.). Birds continued at the Ulistac Natural Area through the period with six counted on 2 Mar (DWe, GZ, AME). An adult, all-red tanager was briefly seen along Stevens Creek at La Avenida on 16 Feb (WGB), it was likely a Summer Tanager (we have no local records for Hepatic). A smattering of wintering **Western Tanagers** included two along Coyote Creek at Sycamore Drive on 1 Feb (MHo), one in Mountain View again on 27 Feb (MDo), and a bird heard at Stanford on 28 Feb (RFu). A 1st-winter male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at a San Jose feeder 1-19 Feb (JaJ), our second this winter. High counts of **Great-tailed Grackles** were 30 at the Coyote Creek GC on 26 Feb (DWe) and 30 more at Lake Cunningham on 28 Feb (WGB, MSm). The wintering 1st-winter male **Bullock's Oriole** was seen again 8-9 Feb (AV, MMR) near the SCVWD ponds. A surprise was the return of the male **Baltimore Oriole** to Vasona CP and its haunts on nearby University Avenue on 18-19 Mar (KBU, JPa). A few **Pine Siskins** were in Stevens Creek on 2 Mar (SEM), the only reports for the period. The only **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were a pair at a Morgan Hill yard on 22 Mar and a male over the Ogier Avenue ponds the same day (both SCR).

Observers: Ellen Bateman (EBa), Karen & Scott Black (K&SB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Karen Burnson (KBU), Lea Crisp (LCr), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Dunten (PDU), Craige



Baltimore Oriole
Photo courtesy of Tom Grey

Edgerton (CEd), Al Eisner (AME), Rob Furrow (RFu), Jim Gain (JGa), Jessica Gonzalez (JGo), Ann Hepenstal (AHe), Marcel Holyoak (MHo), Cait Hutnick (CHu), Deborah Jamison (DJ), Jane Jordan (JaJ), Caroline Lambert (CL), Pete LaTourrette (PLaT), Garrett Lau (GL), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Juliana Manoliu (JMa), Brooke Miller (BM), Steve Miller (SEM), Lisa Myers (LMy), Janna Pauser (JPa), Bob Power (RCP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Logan & Milly Rosenberg (L&MR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Debra Shearwater (DLSh), Marc Smits (MSm), Jason St. Pierre (JStP), Andrew Tey (ATe), Frank Vanslager (FV), Dave Weber (DWe), Ann Verdi (AV), Chuq Von Rospach (CVR), James Yurchenco (JY), Nickie Zavinsky (NZ), and Gena Zolotar (GZ).

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