

# Field Notes

*(April-May 2014)*

by Bill Bousman

## Geese through Rails

Few **Greater White-fronted Geese** linger past mid-April, so a single bird along Adobe Creek on 9 and 13 May (JL, JHa) was unexpected. **Ross's Geese** sometimes are seen well into May, so a bird lingering at Lake Cunningham until 26 Apr (MMR, MJM, v.ob.) was less surprising. The last of the wintering **Eurasian Wigeon** was a male in the Alviso ponds on 20 Apr (MHo). **Blue-winged Teal** continued in Artesian (Mallard) Slough with three there on 2 Apr (RFu), single males on 9 Apr (MJM) and 26 Apr (MMR, RGJ), and a female on 21 May (WGB). A female-plumaged **White-winged Scoter** was seen on closed refuge ponds on 26 May (MMR, MJM) and is likely the same bird found nearby in February. Few **Horned Grebes** remain after the third or fourth week in April, so a bird in alternate plumage in Artesian Slough on 31 May (AME) was unusual. A **Cattle Egret** was seen at the Newby Island landfill on 4 Apr (JStP). Our only spring movement of **White-faced Ibis** was of single birds at New Chicago Marsh on 30 Apr (BM), the SCRWA (Gilroy) treatment ponds on 15 May (CL), and over the Mountain View Forebay on 16 May (AB et al.). The pair of dark-morph **Swainson's Hawks** that nested in the Coyote Valley last year returned on 5 Apr, were re-furbishing their nest on 6 Apr, and were incubating on 22 Apr (all RPh). Migrating birds seen in Coyote Valley were not always described, but it appears that at least six birds were present from 6 Apr-1 May (v.ob.). A pair of dark morph birds seen on 30 May (RPh) were different from the nesting pair and may also attempt a nest near the valley. Migrants seen elsewhere included one over Ed Levin on 29 Apr (RFu et al.) and the SCRWA (Gilroy) treatment ponds on 9 May (GZ). **Black Rails** were heard calling again in Alviso during the period, all during late morning. One was heard southwest of Pond A17 on 4 May (PDU) and possibly the same bird on 21 May (GZ) and 22 May (MJM). Likely a different bird was heard on Alviso Slough on the south side of Pond A10 on 25 May (BM). Interestingly, a **Northern Mockingbird** at the Alviso EEC was imitating two of the Black Rail's typical vocalizations on 30 May (SCR).

## Shorebirds through Hummingbirds

**Snowy Plovers** remained in the triangular panne north of Crittenden Marsh during the period (m.ob.) with a

high count of 11 on 4 May (MMR, MJM, RGJ). On that date, three birds were on nests, but not afterwards. Five birds remained on the panne on 26 May and two had moved to Crittenden Marsh (MMR, MJM). The only **Snowy Plovers** found away from there were two in Pond A13 in Alviso on 25 May (BM). They could not be found the next day (MMR, MJM). The spring passage of **Solitary Sandpipers** was marked by one to two birds in the drawn down Campbell percolation ponds 26 Apr-3 May (LMY et al., MHo) and a single birds along Llagas Creek along Old Oak Glen Avenue on 30 Apr (PDU). One to four **Lesser Yellowlegs** were found at the end of Gold Street in Alviso

## *A Continuing White-winged Scoter And A Spring Tropical Kingbird Were Unique Records For The Period.*

20-26 Apr (RCP et al., v.ob.). A single bird was in Pond A16 nearby on 13 May (MHo). Single **Ruddy Turnstones** were found in the Palo Alto Baylands on 23 Apr (SEM), along Pond A15 in Alviso on 30 Apr (JStP), and in the breached Pond A6 on 4 May (MMR, MJM, RGJ). An alternate **Red Knot** was seen at Charleston Slough on 26 Apr (MMR, RGJ). Two spring passage **Black Terns** were in the entrance ponds at the SCRWA on 12 May (MHo). A male (and sometimes a female) **Greater Roadrunner** have been seen in the vicinity of the boat launch at Coyote Reservoir since last fall (PMcC). The male frequently calls. Observations during the period included one on 25 Apr (JStP) and 29 Apr (RSh). To the northwest, one was seen on Silver Creek Road on 17 May (GZ et al.). A single **Black Swift** was seen over Hidden Villa

on 5 May (GHa et al.), we have only one earlier record for this spring migrant. After the curious fallout of **Vaux's Swifts** in early March, their arrival and passage in April and May seemed normal, the high count was of 19 birds flying over the lower saddle on Loma Prieta Avenue on 23 Apr (JB). It has been an exceptional spring for **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** with birds found widely. A female arrived at Morgan Hill feeders on 12 Apr and a male the next day (SCR). Two displaying males were seen at Kelly Park on 22 Apr (PDU), one appeared paired. Through 1 May at least three females and nests were found (v.ob.). Migrants were found in Ed Levin CP 25-26 Apr (PDU et al.) and another was nearby on Old Calaveras Road on 29 Apr (RFu et al.).

Perhaps the biggest surprise was the number of birds found at Willow Glen feeders and along the Los Gatos Creek Trail. At least two males and a female were at one set of feeders 29 Apr-21 May (BM). A single male was at another feeder, but not seen in prior years (AY). The discovery of additional Black-chins along the Los Gatos Creek Trail between Meridian and Leigh on 7 May (BM) provided many observers close observations. Elsewhere, a female and nest was found along the Coyote Creek Trail below Silver Creek Valley Road on 3 May (JPa) and a female was seen along the Guadalupe River below Curtner on 4 May (AV). **Calliope Hummingbirds** were found in Ed Levin CP with a female seen on 26 Apr (PDU) and a male and female the next day (m.ob.). The last observation was a female on 3 May (MDO, EG).

## Woodpeckers through Warblers

The **Lewis's Woodpecker** wintering along Roop Road was last seen on 25 Apr (JStP). Single birds were reported from San Antonio Valley on 3 May (RWR et al.) and 9 May (MMR, NMa). A **Pileated Woodpecker** was seen feeding at least one nestling near Sanborn-Skyline CP on 28 May (JJo), the only nest record reported in the period. A **Willow Flycatcher** was heard singing along the Pajaro River above Pescadero Creek on 26 May (WGB) and another one was found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 31 May (SCR). The spring passage of **Hammond's Flycatchers** was slightly above average. Birds were found at Smith Creek on 10 Apr (MJM), 17 Apr (JAC), and 9 May (MMR, NMa). Hammond's were also near Gilroy Hot Springs Road on 25 Apr (JStP), Stevens Creek CP on 4 May (BM), and one to three birds were present east of Mt. Hamilton 14-15 May (MHo). **Say's Phoebes** nesting northeast of Hellyer Avenue were apparently successful this spring (JPa, BJ). Elsewhere, two Say's were seen on 9 May (MMR, NMa) in San Antonio Valley where they nest regularly. One along the



*White-winged Scoter*  
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## Field Notes *cont'd*

East Fork of Coyote Creek in the middle of Coe Park on 18 May (MMR) was in an area where this species has not nested before. A **Tropical Kingbird** was seen in the Mountain View Forebay and Shoreline Lake on 14 May (FV), our first spring record for the county. A **Cassin's Kingbird** showed up on San Felipe Road on 14 Apr (MJM) and two birds have been there through the remainder of the period (m.ob.). They have apparently nested successfully in the blue gums there in recent years. At least four **Purple Martins** returned to the area of Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta on 7 Apr (AMR, CSc) and up to 10 birds were found in the vicinity through the end of the period (m.ob.). Birds were seen using nest holes on 22 May (BM, SM) and 31 May (WGB). Single migrants were seen over Calero Reservoir on 18 Apr (SCR), the Alviso ponds on 19 Apr (MHo), and Calaveras Reservoir on 20 Apr (RFu et al.). Four birds in the Sierra Azul OSP on 26 May (AV) may have been summer residents as well. Single **American Dippers** were found along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road throughout the period (v.ob.) and on Los Gatos Creek above Los Gatos on 2 Apr (RCP et al.). A single bird was also seen carrying food to a nest on Saratoga Creek at a private campground on 28 May (SPa et al.). There have been a number of dipper records over the last 20 years along the creek from the campground to the Sunnyvale-Saratoga Road, but this is the first evidence of breeding. Two **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were found at Smith Creek on 5 Apr (MMR) and multiple birds were along the John Nicholas Trail at Sanborn-Skyline CP on 15 Apr (BM). Up to five male and a female **Phainopepla** were seen in Santa Teresa CP 16-19 May (WGB, v.ob.). One or two males and a female were found in Alum Rock Park on 18 May (JJo et al.). Six birds were found in the center of Coe Park on Bear Mountain Road on 18 May as well (MMR). The spring passage of **Nashville Warblers** was

off a bit, only six were reported. The first was one at Smith Creek on 5 Apr (MMR), followed by singles on Gilroy Hot Springs Road on 14 Apr (MJM), and the John Nicholas Trail on the next day (BM). Another Nashville was at the end of Gilroy Hot Springs Road on 25 Apr (JStP) and another at Rancho Canada del Oro OSP on 26 Apr (JPa). A late bird east of Mt. Hamilton was seen on 15 May (MHo). Passage was delayed slightly for our other rare western migrant warbler, **MacGillivray's**, but slightly more were found than in most years. Single birds were found at Rancho Canada del Oro OSP on 26 Apr, 30 Apr, and 13 May (all JP a), probably different birds. A singing bird was in Monte Bello OSP on 26 Apr (MMR, RGJ), one was east of Mt. Hamilton on 26 Apr (MHo), and the last of the passage birds was heard off Hicks Road on 26 May (JP a). Most of our spring **Yellow Warblers** are migrants with the first birds seen in mid-April. Two fledged young were seen along Coyote Creek near the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) waterbird pond on 31 May (SCR) while migrants headed farther north were still passing through in substantial numbers. At least 20 migrant **Hermit Warblers** were reported during the period (m.ob.), at least eight were found in Monte Bello OSP on 22 Apr (RFu et al.). A singing male near Indian Rock off Skyline Boulevard on 23 May (WGB) was in an area where the species nests. Likely migrant **Yellow-breasted Chats** included one along Old Oak Glen Avenue in Morgan Hill 29-30 Apr (AV, JP a), a singing bird along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Avenue 6-12 May (WGB, GZ, MHo), one in an Almaden Valley yard 14-15 May (JP a), and a singing Diablo Range bird near Isabel Creek on 19 May (GZ, JZ).

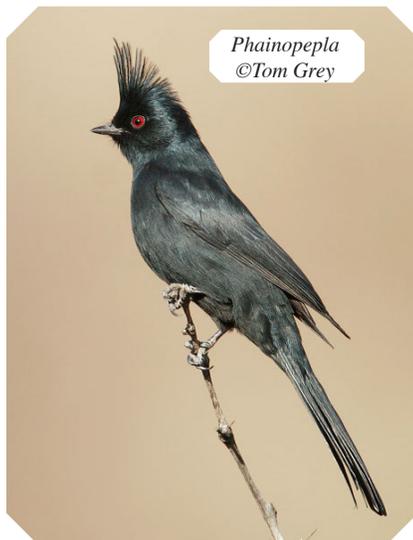
### Sparrows through Goldfinches

At least 16 **Black-chinned Sparrows** were singing along Bear Mountain Road in Coe Park on 18 May (MMR), the highest number detected on this fire recovery survey route. The **Lark Bunting** found on Marsh Road in late March was last seen on 3 Apr (SL). **White-throated Sparrows** were found at six locations plus two at feeders (m.ob.). The latest were three, all singing, at the Ulistac Natural Area on 4 May (JStP). An adult male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was seen at La Rinconada Park in Los Gatos on 14 Apr (GZ) and remained at least through 17 Apr (m.ob.). An adult male **Blue Grosbeak** found at the Oka percolation ponds on 13 Apr (OA) was the earliest spring record by six days. Another male was seen near Sargent Creek and the Pajaro River on 19 May (GZ, RWR) and a female was along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 31 May (SCR). Three pairs of **Great-tailed Grackles** were bringing food to nestlings at Cottonwood Lake on 31 May (SCR), a new breeding location. Understanding **Lawrence's Goldfinches** is never easy. In their Diablo Range strongholds they were notably scarce. On a survey in Coe Park on 18 May (MMR)



only one was found, 'virtually non-existent.' Of six records in the range, the high count was of two birds in Joseph Grant CP on 17 May (AME). A number of birds were found in grapes along San Felipe Road with nest building on 7 Apr (MJM) and up to four or more birds there through 12 May (m.ob.). Three records from the Santa Cruz Mountains included a pair in Santa Teresa CP on 4 May (JTh), another pair in Arastradero Preserve on 25 May (OA), and a pair at Skyline Boulevard and Page Mill Road on 29 May (RSTh).

Observers: Ozzie Altus (OA), Jeff Bleam (JB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Andy Bradshaw (AB), Jack Cole (JAC), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Dunten (PDu), Al Eisner (AME), Rob Furrow (RFu), Eric Goodill (EG), John Harshman (JHa), Garth Harwood (GHa), Marcel Holyoak (MHo), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Jim Johnson (JJo), Bob Juhl (BJ), Caroline Lambert (CL), Jasen Liu (JL), Stephen Long (SL), Natari Madavan (NMa), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Patricia McCarter (PMcC), Sonny Mencher (SM), Brooke Miller (BM), Steve Miller (SEM), Lisa Myers (LMy), Janna Pauser (JP a), Steve Patt (SP a), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Bob Power (RCP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Alex Rinkert (AMR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Christian Schwarz (CSc), Randy Shingai (RSh), Jason St. Pierre (JStP), Jim Thomas (JTh), Ron Thorn (RSTh), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Amy Yee (AY), Gena Zolotar (GZ), and Jeff Zolotar (JZ).



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