

Field Notes

(August-September 2014)

by Bill Bousman

Geese through Rails

The first **Greater White-fronted Geese** of fall were three over Pond A12 in Alviso on 27 Sep (MMR, MJM). An immature was seen the next day in the Ogier Avenue ponds (SCR). Two **Cackling Geese** at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 29 Sep (MJM) were also the first of the season. A non-breeding male **Eurasian Wigeon** was found on Pond A16 on 22 Sep (WGB). A female/immature **Blue-winged Teal** was seen at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 28 Sep (SCR), the only report for the period. The female-plumaged **White-winged Scoter** on closed refuge ponds was last seen on 17 Aug (MMR, MJM, RGJ). Few **Hooded Mergansers** are found in late summer, so a female/immature on the Gate 5 Pond at Monte Bello OSP on 20 Aug (GHa) was a surprise. Two **Red-breasted Mergansers** on closed refuge ponds on 27 Sep (MMR, MJM) were probably oversummering birds. Single **White-faced Ibis** were in Pond A16 in Alviso on 5-7 Sep (WGB, GZ) and over the Sunnyvale WPCP on 28 Sep (MMR et al.). Another single was in the Mountain View Forebay on 30 Sep (CL), and two to four birds were at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 28-29 Sep (SCR, MJM). A light morph adult **Swainson's Hawk** was seen along Laguna Avenue on 19 Aug (JPa et al.). A **Black Rail** was heard in Alviso Slough near Pond A11 on 3 Aug (GZ), apparently the last of our vocalizing birds in Alviso this year.

Shorebirds

An adult **Pacific Golden-Plover** in partial breeding plumage was seen along the RR spur in New Chicago Marsh on 23 Aug (PW) and was seen by many observers that day and the next. Surprisingly, a second adult (less than 30% adult plumage) was there on 24-25 Aug (MMR, MJM, RGJ, v.ob.). A calling **Golden-Plover** species was over closed refuge ponds on 27 Sep (MMR, MJM), but never landed. Fourteen adults and 10 young **Snowy Plover** were on the dried out panne between Crittenden Marsh and Pond A2E on 24 Aug (MMR, MJM, RGJ) and at least 11 birds were seen there on 28 Sep (MMR, MJM). Three adults and three chicks were in Pond A13 in Alviso on 24 Aug as well (MMR, MJM, RGJ). A **Solitary**

Sandpiper, first found in Alpine Pond on the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains, moved over to the Gate 5 Pond at Monte Bello OSP, where it was seen later in the day on 17 Aug (GHa). The **Lesser Yellowlegs** passage picked up in August and September with at least 26 birds from Alviso to Palo Alto. High counts included seven at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) waterbird pond on 1 Sep (MMR) and seven at the Palo Alto Baylands on 10 Sep (MDo). An alternate **Ruddy Turnstone** was seen in Pond A9 in

was in Pond A16 on 4 Aug (BM). An adult and two juveniles were seen in New Chicago Marsh 23-25 Aug (MMR, SCT, v.ob.). Three were in Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin on 30 Aug, and a single bird was nearby in the Mountain View Forebay on 26 Sep (both CL). The first juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was found in New Chicago Marsh on 7 Aug (BM). One or two were seen in Charleston Slough on 28 Aug (WGB, MJM) and possibly another was in the Mountain View Forebay on 1 Sep (KSc). A single juvenile was seen off and on in Pond A12 in Alviso on 13-16 Aug (BM, CL, SME, v.ob.).

Jaegers through Falcons

A juvenile **Parasitic Jaeger** was found on Pond A4 in Sunnyvale on 28 Sep (JLi) and has been seen by many through the end of the month. If we are lucky, we find these juvenile birds in one fall every three years in our local South Bay ponds (but not so lucky for these disoriented pelagic migrants). Earlier, a juvenile **Long-tailed Jaeger** was seen over Shoreline Lake on 31 Aug (SCT), photographs were key to its identification. This is only our third county record. Two juvenile **Common Murres** were found in closed refuge ponds on 27 Aug (JStP), another pelagic species that does not do well in the South Bay. Rounding out the accidental oceanic birds, a juvenile **Sabine's Gull** was seen in the Sunnyvale WPCP on 20 Sep (KK1 *fide* PDU) and was present through at least 28 Sep (m.ob.). Surprisingly, a second juvenile was there and on nearby closed refuge ponds on 27 Sep (DWe, MMR, MJM). **Least Terns** remained on Pond A2E through 10 Aug when a high count of 11 birds was obtained (MJM). Two Least Terns were also seen that day on Pond A10 in Alviso (GZ). Four juvenile **Black Terns** were found on Ponds A9 and A10 in Alviso on 9 Aug (MHo) and were there through 13 Aug (v.ob.). Another bird was seen on Pond A3W on 9 Aug (BM). Two juvenile **Common Terns** were found on Pond A2E on 9 Sep (GZ, MMR) and appear to have remained there through 27 Sep (MMR, MJM, v.ob.). The first **Elegant Tern** of the season was an adult over Pond A10 on 8 Aug (WGB). It has been a record season for this species in the South Bay (and not over yet). Eighty-two birds were counted on various Alviso ponds on 27 Sep (MMR, MJM) and eight more were tallied that day on Pond A1 in Mountain View (CL). As in recent years, **Black Skimmers** disappeared in late

Juvenile Long-Tailed and Parasitic Jaegers Gave a Pelagic Flavor to Fall. A "Trail's" Flycatcher Was Perhaps Unique and a Green-tailed Towhee Was the First Since 2007

Alviso on 10 Aug (GZ). Its coastal cousin, the **Black Turnstone**, was found on Pond A16 on 22 Sep (WGB). **Red Knots** have been regular during the period in the outer Alviso ponds. A good tally was the count of 82 birds in Pond A9 on 1 Sep (MMR). We missed **Ruff** last year, so it was nice when a juvenile showed up in Pond A12 on 13 Sep (AM, SR, m.ob.). It has remained there through the period. A juvenile **Baird's Sandpiper** was seen in the Mountain View Forebay on 31 Aug (MMR), the second year in a row with only a single passage bird. It has also been a poor season for **Pectoral Sandpiper** with 13 sightings where typically there may be ten times that number. One



Parasitic Jaeger
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Field Notes *cont'd*

summer, the last sighting was of five birds at Shoreline Lake on 1 Aug (WGB). But contrary to that trend, three were seen again on Charleston Slough and Shoreline Lake again on 30 Sep (CL). One of the Hellyer Avenue **Greater Roadrunners** showed up at Cobham on 16 Sep (BJ) to enjoy its reflection in a glassed-in breezeway. A **Black Swift** was seen over Monte Bello on 6 Sep (GHa), our second fall record—the first was of nine birds there two years ago. By late August, the **Vaux's Swift** migration was well underway, high counts included 75 swifts mixed with swallows over Alviso on 23 Aug (SCR) and 50 over the Sunnyvale WPCP on 4 Sep (BM). Ten lingering **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were along the Los Gatos Creek Trail between Meridian and Leigh on 11 Aug (JPa). Migrants included a female in a Los Gatos yard on 7 Sep (KBU, JPa) and an immature at Morgan Hill feeders on 13-14 Sep (SCR). An immature male **Costa's Hummingbird** was seen at a Los Gatos feeder on 7 Sep (KBU) and remained at least through 18 Sep. A female **Calliope Hummingbird** was reported from Vasona CP on 3 Sep (BM), there are few verified coastal records for this species. One to two **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were seen in San Antonio Valley on 6 Aug and 30 Sep (WGB). A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** was photographed at Vasona CP on 22 Aug (JPa) and was likely seen there again on 10 Sep (JPa, FV et al.). Wintering birds normally arrive about 28 Sep, perhaps this is a bird that had dispersed from the small population that breeds on the west side of the Santa Cruz Mountains. The first **Merlin** of the fall was over a Morgan Hill yard on 28 Sep (SCR).

Flycatchers through Goldfinches

A hatch-year "**Trail's**" **Flycatcher** was banded at CCFS on 30 Aug and recaptured the next day (JS). The photographs obtained are sufficient to eliminate the western subspecies of Willow Flycatcher, but not the eastern subspecies (the alternative would be Alder Flycatcher). Hence, it is described as *Trail's* which was the name used when the Alder and Willow subspecies were considered a single species in the 1960s. A fall migrant **Bank Swallow** was at the west end of the Sunnyvale WPCP on the Moffett Channel on 11 Aug (WGB). Two or three birds were seen at the other end of the plant 22-27 Sep (WGB, v.ob.). This should be an invasion winter for **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, but the evidence is slim. At least one bird was

in a Morgan Hill yard on 17 Aug (RH). A leucistic bird was seen at Lake Cunningham on 16 Sep (PDU) and identified by voice. A **Rock Wren** was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 23 Sep (BM), occasional migrants or wintering birds are seen along the Bay edge. Five plus **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were along the John Nicholas Trail on 22 Aug (BM) and may be part of the resident populations. A single bird banded at CCFS on 3 Sep (*fide* MMR) was certainly a migrant or early wintering bird. A male **Phainopepla** was near the Mines Road crossing of Colorado Creek on 6-7 Aug (WGB, MHO). Less expected was a **Phainopepla** in the Ulistac Natural Area on the latter date (JStP). Late in the period, at least two males and two females were at the Colorado Creek crossing feeding on chokecherries (WGB). A **Northern Waterthrush** was seen at the Gate 5 pond in the Monte Bello OSP on 26 Aug (GHa). This is a tie for the earliest fall arrival date, but most surprising, it is the first bird found away from the valley floor. A **Black-and-White Warbler** was seen in Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 7 Sep (ChW). Single **Tennessee Warblers** were seen in the Baylands Park on 1 Sep (PKe, RGJ, GZ) and 24 Sep (PKe et al.). A third Tennessee was along Almaden Lake on 27-30 Sep (SCT, v.ob.). Single **Nashville Warblers** at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 28 Aug (VW) and 14 Sep (JLi) were the only ones found in the period. The only **MacGillivray's Warblers** were one along Stevens Creek below La Avenida on 16 Aug (MMR) and one banded at CCFS on 10 Sep (*fide* MMR). A female/immature **American Redstart** was seen at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 19 Sep (PKe, RKe). A **Palm Warbler** was found at the Baylands Park on 22 Sep (GZ). **Hermit Warblers** seen in Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 9 Sep (DWe), 12 Sep (WGB), and 15 Sep (BM, GZ) may have been multiple birds (or just one). A female was in a Morgan Hill yard on 28 Sep (SCR). That famed skulker, the **Yellow-breasted Chat**, was detected at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 5 Sep (GZ, v.ob.). A **Green-tailed Towhee** was banded at CCFS on 17 Sep (JS), the first in the county since 2007. It has been a good fall for **Vesper Sparrows**. The first was along Stevens Creek above Crittenden Lane on 29 Aug (MMR), our earliest fall bird. Next, a single bird was at Monte Bello OSP on 12 Sep (GHa, MW). The last was another bayside bird on closed refuge pond on 29 Sep (JStP). Two **Grasshopper Sparrows** at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 28 Sep (SCR) were the only report this fall. A female **Rose-breasted**



Green-tailed Towhee
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Grosbeak was seen and photographed at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 21 Sep (GZ, RBh, SCT, DWe). Single female-type **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were seen at the CCFS waterbird pond on 1 Sep (MMR) and at the Ogier Avneue ponds on 28 Sep (SCR). Observations of **Great-tailed Grackles** were limited to the Sunnyvale WPCP and Lake Cunningham. Sixty-eight at the latter location on 3 Sep (PDU) was a high count for the period. A male and female **Red Crossbill** were seen over the Gate 5 pond at Monte Bello OSP on 21 Aug (GHa), the only ones so far in 2014. **Pine Siskins**, nearly as rare, were at the same location 21 Aug-17 Sep (GHa). Up to 30 **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were along San Antonio Valley, Mines, and Del Puerto roads on 7 Aug (MHO), but none have been reported since in the Diablo Range. A male and female were at the Gate 5 pond in Monte Bello OSP on 6 Sep (GHa).

Observers: Raju Bhupatiraju (RBh), Bill Bousman (WGB), Karen Burnson (KBU), Matthew Dodder (MDO), Pete Duntun (PDU), Garth Harwood (GHa), Rick Herder (RH), Marcel Holyoak (MHO), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Bob Juhl (BJ), Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKe), Kathy Kleinstein (KKI), Caroline Lambert (CL), Jasen Liu (JLi), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Andy Melnick (AM), Sonny Mencher (SMe), Brooke Miller (BM), Janna Pauser (JPa), Sheila Raymond (SR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Ken Schneider (KSc), Josh Scullen (JS), Jason St. Pierre (JStP), Steve Tracy (SCT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Pingang Wang (PW), Dave Weber (DWe), Virginia Willcox (VW), Chris Wolfe (ChW), Matt Wyatt (MW), and Gena Zolotar (GZ).

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