

Field Notes

(October-November 2014)

by Bill Bousman

Geese through Ibis

The first **Snow Goose** of the winter season as an adult found on Cottonwood Lake in Hellyer CP on 25 Nov (GZ), it has continued through the end of the month (m.ob.). A hatch-year **Ross's Goose** was seen at Shoreline Lake on 13 Nov (JuM), but did not remain. An adult was with the Snow Goose in Hellyer Park on 25 Nov (GZ). **Eurasian Wigeon** were found widely. One was at the South County Regional Waste Water Authority (SCRWA) ponds in Gilroy on 24 Oct (WGB). Up to four or five birds were seen in Adobe Creek or nearby Pond A1 from 8 Nov to the end of the month (m.ob.). One or two birds have been seen in Pond A14 in Alviso on 8-11 Nov (MMR, MJM, WGB) and a single male was found in the Almaden Reservoir on 15 Nov (JPa). Two male **Blue-winged Teal** were at the SCRWA ponds on 24 Oct (WGB). Artesian (Mallard) Slough and Pond A16 in Alviso provided sightings from 29 Oct to the end of the period (v.ob.), with at least five birds there on 6 Nov (WGB). A female was at the Sunnyvale WPC oxidation ponds on 25 Nov (WGB). The first wintering **Redhead** were seven on Calaveras Reservoir and four on Pond A18 on 4 Oct (MMR et al.). Birds have been found widely Bayside with a high count of 381 in the Alviso ponds on 8 Nov (MMR, MJM). A female **White-winged Scoter** photographed on Guadalupe Slough near closed refuge ponds on 18 Nov (NW) is probably the same bird that summered in those ponds. A male hybrid **Common X Barrow's Goldeneye** was seen on the Guadalupe percolation ponds on 12 Nov (AV), probably the same bird that has wintered in the area over the last eight or nine years. Two female **Barrow's Goldeneyes** in Pond A12 in Alviso on 28 Nov (BM) were the first of the season. A straying **Ashy Storm-Petrel** was seen on Pond A12 in Alviso on 8 Oct (WGB), a third county record. A **Pelagic Cormorant** has apparently returned for another fall to the Alviso ponds, first seen on 8 Nov (MMR, MJM) and reported through the end of the month (v.ob.). A likely wintering **American Bittern** has shown up again in the entrance to the Mountain View Forebay, first seen on 26

Oct (JuM, MMR et al.). Two **White-faced Ibis** were seen over the Palo Alto Baylands on 1 Nov (DLK *vide* SHo).

Hawks through Shorebirds

A review of photographs resulted in the identification of a juvenile **Swainson's Hawk** in the Coyote Valley on 7 Sep (JPa). A juvenile **Ferruginous Hawk** in the Coyote Valley on 11 Oct (WGB) was the first of the winter season. Four or more birds have used the valley during the period (m.ob.). Elsewhere, single birds have been seen in the new Sierra Vista OSP, with one there on 14 Oct (MO'B) and 26 Nov (SPa et al.). Another was seen along Roop Road on 9 Nov (JStP et al.). Fall is when our **Snowy**

Exceptional fall records included an Ashy Storm-Petrel and an American Tree Sparrow

Plovers gather in winter flocks and we often do not see them for months. During the period they have used a number of the Alviso ponds (v.ob.), but the big surprise was a record count of 157 on Pond A12 on 8 Nov (MMR, MJM). **Lesser Yellowlegs** transition to their low winter numbers in October and November. Single birds were seen in the Mountain View Forebay on 2-3 Oct (CLa, GLa) and one was at Shoreline Lake on 8 Oct (JuM). An arm of New



Ashy Storm-Petrel
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Chicago Marsh at the end of Gold Street in Alviso held two to three birds through at least 8 Nov (v.ob.). **Black Turnstones** must hug the coast in their migration, as they are rarely found at the southern edge of the Bay. One near Pond A10 in Alviso on 28 Nov (BM) was well past the fall passage and our first record for November. Pond A9 in Alviso occasionally provided good counts of **Red Knots** with three birds there on 12 Oct (MHo) and 72 on 11 Nov (WGB). The juvenile **Ruff** in Pond A12 was last seen on 8 Oct (WGB). An adult was found at the Palo Alto Baylands on 5 Oct (CJC). The first **Sanderlings** of the season were three sighted on Pond A9 in Alviso on 8 Nov (MMR, MJM). Singletons were seen there occasionally during the month (v.ob.). **Wilson's Phalaropes** are mostly gone by the end of September, so a single bird that remained at the end of Gold Street on 4 Oct (MMR et al.) and 8 Nov (MMR, MJM) was exceptional. **Red-necked Phalarope** stay in substantial numbers into the second week of October. One to two birds in Pond A12 through 8 Nov (MMR, MJM, PDU) were quite late.

Jaegers through Falcons

The juvenile **Parasitic Jaeger** discovered on Pond A4 in September remained there through 11 Oct (v.ob.). A **Long-tailed Jaeger** was found at Mathilda and El Camino on 8 Sep and was taken to the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley, but it succumbed (TTs). In recent years, more and more **Elegant Terns** have lingered into November. This year, 89 Elegants were found on closed refuge ponds on 6 Nov (JStP) and two days later, the total on closed and open ponds was at least 93 (MMR, MJM). These numbers decreased through the month, a single bird on A10 on 28 Nov (BM) was the latest record so far for the county. Two **Black Skimmers** were at Charleston Slough on 2 Oct (CLa) and one there again on 17 Oct (GLa). A **Greater Roadrunner** was seen again northeast of Hellyer Avenue on 10 Oct (BJ). A singing bird was heard near the Coe Park headquarters on 23 Oct (WGB). The boat launch bird at Coyote Reservoir was recorded three times 1 to 13 Nov (m.ob.). A **Short-eared Owl** was seen along Alviso Slough on 11 Nov (WGB). Two birds were on Laguna Avenue in the Coyote Valley on 23 Nov (RFu). Wintering **Lewis's Woodpeckers** show up in about one year in two, although

Field Notes *cont'd*

the number of birds and locations this year is greater than usual. The first of the birds was one along Sierra Road on 4 Oct (MMR et al.). Since then, individuals and groups have been seen at many locations including the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains near Stanford, the Alamitos Creek Trail, Santa Teresa CP, Calero CP, various spots in the Coyote Valley, and along Marsh Road and Roop Road in foothills of the Diablo Range (m.ob.). Some of these may have been migrating birds, but others may winter. Our rare sapsuckers can present difficult identification problems, as has happened this fall. A male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was reported at Ed Levin CP on 26 Oct and there again through 11 Nov. But photos taken there on 18 Nov (BM) were of a female **Red-naped Sapsucker** with features similar to a male Yellow-bellied. It is possible that some or all of the earlier reports of a Yellow-bellied there were the female Red-naped instead. A sapsucker seen there on 30 Nov (DWe) was carefully observed and was a male Yellow-bellied. Thus we know that both species have been at this location at least some of the time this fall. There was no controversy over a Red-naped Sapsucker seen on the Alamitos Creek Trail on 25 Oct (JPa). The first lowland **Prairie Falcon** was one at Lake Cunningham on 20 Oct (PDU). A juvenile bird predated an American Coot at Shoreline Lake on 10 Nov (RFR).

Flycatchers through Goldfinches

The end of the **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** fall passage is typically the first or second week in October, so a bird on the Alamitos Creek Trail on 25 Oct (JPa) was very late or was attempting to winter. Similarly, a **Barn Swallow** near the Mountain View Forebay on 2 Nov (CLa) wintering bird. The only lowland **Red-breasted Nuthatch** of the period was in urban Mountain View on 27 Nov (GZ). Two **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** along the Calero Creek Trail on 7 Nov (JPa) and one nearby on 18 Nov (MJM) may represent birds attempting to overwinter again. Single **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were found away from their breeding areas, one was at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 2 Oct (GZ), another at Casa Grande in New Almaden on 4 Oct (JPa), and the third at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 13 Oct (PKe, RKe, GZ). A **Nashville Warbler**

in Ulistac Natural Area on 4 Oct (SCT) was the last of our fall passage birds. A hatch-year **American Redstart** along the maintenance road at Shoreline Park on 15 Oct (WGB) was our second redstart of the fall. Possible wintering **Yellow Warblers** were seen, one in an Almaden Valley yard on 9 Nov (JPa) and the other at the Palo Alto Baylands on 18 Nov (MDo). A **Palm Warbler** was found along Stevens Creek above Crittenden Lane on 3 Oct (MMR) and was also seen later that day (CLa). Another Palm was along the outfall channel at the Palo Alto Baylands on 5 Nov (WGB). An **American Tree Sparrow** was seen along the Sunnyvale West Channel on 25 Oct (SCR) but could not be refound. This is the second record for the county—the first was a bird banded exactly 40 years earlier near Alviso. Two **Chipping Sparrows** were found at Jeffrey Fontana Park on 2 Oct. At least one has been seen there again or at TJ Martin Park in November, locations where they have wintered in recent years (JPa). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was seen in Shoreline Park on 10 Oct (RCafide PDU). Filling out the **Vesper Sparrow** fall, a fourth bird was found in Joseph Grant CP on 19 Oct (JStP et al.). Single migrant (or perhaps wintering) **Grasshopper Sparrows** turned up at the Palo Alto FCB on 9 Oct (CLa), Calero CP on 11 Oct (PDU), and Santa Teresa CP on 18 Oct (JPa). A wintering **Swamp Sparrow** was at the Palo Alto Baylands on 5 Nov (WGB), the same place where birds wintered last year. The first **White-throated Sparrow** of the winter arrived at the Ulistac Natural Area on 4 Oct (SCT), a bit early. Over the rest of the period there three birds have been found at feeders and 10 more in other locations (m.ob.). An immature male **Black-headed Grosbeak** was at Vasona CP on 3 Nov (BM) and may be wintering locally. A late female-type **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 1 Oct (BM). A couple of **Great-tailed Grackles** remained in the vicinity of the Sunnyvale WPCP through 2 Nov (v.ob.). Up to four birds have been wandering from Shoreline Lake to the Palo Alto Duck Pond during the period (m.ob.). A male was singing on a closed refuge pond on 8 Nov (MMR, MJM). A fall smattering of **Pine Siskins** has become more of a flood in November. A single siskin at a Willow Glen feeder on 26 Oct (BM) was the first out of the mountains. Numbers increased at feeders and in



local parks through the period (m.ob.). The highest count was 60+ at Sanborn-Skyline CP on 6 Nov (GZ).

Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), Ruth Cantwell (RCa), Charles Coston (CJC), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Dunten (PDU), Ron Fredrick (RFR), Rob Furrow (RFu), Marcel Holyoak (MHo), Susie Hons (SHo), Bob Juhl (BJ), Dan Keller (DJK), Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKe), Caroline Lambert (CLa), Garrett Lau (GLa), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Juliana Manoliu (JuM), Brooke Miller (BM), Matt O'Brien (MO'B), Janna Pauser (JPa), Steve Patt (Spa), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Jason St. Pierre (JStP), Steve Tracy (SCT), Traci Tsukida (TTs), Ann Verdi (AV), Natalie Washburn (NW), Dave Weber (DWe), and Gen Zolotar (GZ).

RARITIES: Please drop me a note:
Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way,
Menlo Park, CA 94025,
or: barlowi@earthlink.net