

Field Notes

(February-March 2015)

by Pete Dunten

Geese through Rails

Uncommon geese in the county included 12 **Greater White-Fronted Geese** near the bay (m.ob.), with four remaining through Mar 30, two in the Diablo range at J Grant CP noted Feb 5 and Mar 14 (MBo, MDo et al.), and single birds at Oka ponds on Feb 18 (KO), Parkway Lakes on Feb 13 (MJM), and Vasona Lake throughout Feb (m.ob.). The high count of 12 **Cackling Geese** on Mar 5 were near the bay (m.ob.). Two were at J Grant CP on Mar 14 (MDo et al.), three favored Lake Cunningham (m.ob.), and single birds were in Morgan Hill on Feb 7 (SCR) and at Ogier Ponds on Feb 9 (RWR). A single **Ross's Goose** continued in Shoreline Park through Mar 19 (m.ob.). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** dabbled at the Palo Alto FCB Feb 27 and Mar 7 (CLa, JL), another male was present at the SCRWA ponds in Gilroy on Mar 10 (MJM), and six were noted on Salt Ponds A14 and A16 on Feb 21 (MJM, RJ, MMR). Four were found on Salt Ponds A9 and A14 on Mar 29 (MMR, RJ). The high count of **Blue-winged Teal** was eight at the SCRWA ponds in Gilroy on Mar 17 (MJM). Two were found on Mallard Slough at Don Edwards NWR through Mar 15 (m. ob.), and singles were noted on Salt Pond A5 on Feb 21 (MJM, RJ, MMR) and at the Palo Alto Baylands on Mar 1 (RPr). **Green-winged Teal (Eurasian)** occasionally winter in N. America; a male was at Shoreline Park on Mar 16 (HL). **Green-winged Teal (intergrade)** show features of both parents; a male was photographed on Mar 22 at Shoreline (JB, WB). An immature **Pacific Loon** was found on Calero Reservoir on Mar 9 (RPh, ABr). Two **Red-throated Loons** continued on Shoreline Lake until Feb 5 (GZ, JE), with one remaining through Mar 25 (m. ob.). **Wild Turkeys** with wanderlust turned up Feb 13 at the Moffett Blvd guard house (MMR) and in late January on Stanford campus at the business school (AM). **Red-necked Grebes** aren't found every year; one was on Calero Reservoir through Mar 9 (m. ob.) and another stayed at Coyote Lake through Mar 29 (m. ob.), long enough to display breeding plumage. **American Bitterns** stayed through early March, with

the Mountain View Forebay Bittern seen Mar 7 and another noted at Ogier Ponds on Feb 14 and Mar 6 (m. ob.). A single **Cattle Egret** was on Newby Island on Mar 26 (CJ, JStP). On Feb 1, a solo **White-faced Ibis** flew over the Charleston Rd marsh (KD). A pair of **Cooper's Hawks** was seen working on a nest in a yard in Saratoga as early as Feb 17 (PM). **Ferruginous Hawks** continued to be seen in February in and around Coyote Valley, with the last sighting on Mar 4 at Santa Teresa CP (KO). Vocal **Black Rails** delighted many at

Late Winter Surprises Include a Black-throated Blue Warbler and a Townsend's Solitaire.

Alviso Marina beginning on Mar 13 (FV) and a lucky few caught glimpses of the elusive birds. They continued to be heard throughout the period, with a high count of four on Mar 22 (MDo).

Shorebirds through Falcons

On Mar 10, a **Killdeer** nest scrape with two eggs was noted on the Stanford campus (ABe). On Mar 11, the nest held three eggs, and on Mar 14, four eggs. The water levels on the salt ponds at Alviso have been high this winter, eliminating suitable habitat for some shorebirds. A group of five **Sanderlings** was found on New Chicago marsh at Don Edwards NWR on Mar 13 (FV) and again Mar 14 (m. ob.). The **Slaty-backed Gull** at Vasona Lake CP was last seen on Feb 2 (m. ob.), drawing visitors from all over California. **Glaucous Gulls** were either late this winter, or evaded detection until a second-cycle bird was seen Feb 7 at Ogier Ponds (SCR). It was last noted on Feb 24. A first-cycle **Glaucous Gull** was at Ogier Ponds beginning Feb 28 (WGB) through Mar 2 (m. ob.). The first **Caspian Tern** to arrive was at Alviso Marina on Mar 21 (TF-H). **Black Skimmers** continued to be seen at bayside locations through the period, with numbers increasing to 12 on

Mar 18 (WGB). A **Greater Roadrunner** continued to be found at the Coyote Lake boat ramp through the period (m. ob.). A **Common Poorwill** was heard calling early in the evening of Mar 28 in Los Gatos near the Sierra Azul OSP (CLa). Hummingbirds returned in March, with a **Black-chinned Hummingbird** on Mar 31 (BM) and a **Rufous Hummingbird** on Mar 4 (JPa), both at feeders in San Jose. **Lewis's Woodpeckers** remained in the area through the end of the period, with 14 reported west of the Diablo Range crest. The three **Red-naped Sapsuckers** reported were all continuing birds, one at Ed Levin through Mar 16, one at Almaden Lake Park through Mar 8, and one along Casa Loma Rd near Rancho Canada del Oro OSP on Mar 14 (JPa). A **Prairie Falcon** was at the end of Marsh Rd on Feb 25 (CLa).

Flycatchers through Phainopepla

One of the passerines to arrive in March was **Pacific-slope Flycatcher**; the first of the spring was heard on Mar 14 at J Grant CP (MDo et al.). A pair of **Cassin's Kingbirds** along San Felipe Rd near the San Benito county border may have overwintered in the area, given that one was found just over the county line in San Benito county on Feb 4 (DLS). The pair was in Santa Clara county Mar 5 (GHa), and on Mar 15 they were carrying nesting material to one of the towering eucalyptus trees (AH). **Western Kingbirds** arrived on Mar 14 at both the west side of Coyote Valley (JMa) and at J Grant CP (MDo et al.). The first **Warbling Vireo** of the spring was along Coyote Creek upstream of Hellyer CP on Mar 7 (JPa). Our cavity-nesting swallows noticed the arrival of spring and started investigating nest boxes. **Tree Swallows**



Townsend's Solitaire
photo courtesy of Gail West

Field Notes *cont'd*

were at nest boxes outside of Gilroy on Feb 1 (JMy) and at J Grant CP on Feb 14 (JH). **Violet-green Swallows** visited nest boxes in Lost Gatos on Mar 5 (LSu). **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** returned in Feb, with one at Coyote Lake on Feb 11 (WGB) and one at Oka ponds on Feb 12 (JL). A **Cliff Swallow** at Lake Cunningham on Feb 28 (MDo et al.) was well ahead of the traditional date (Mar 19) for the return of the swallows to Mission San Juan Capistrano. A **Barn Swallow** was over Shoreline Lake on the same date, Feb 28 (JL). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** have been scarce this winter. The only report during the period was of one visiting a feeder in San Jose on Mar 15 (BM). The pair of **Canyon Wrens** at the Coyote Lake dam were seen carrying nesting material on Mar 24 (DZ). The pair of **American Dippers** upstream of the Main St bridge along Los Gatos Creek were seen collecting nesting material in January and again on Feb 12 (GW). **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** arrived on Mar 8, with one at the Stanford Dish trail (JG) and a pair in the interior of Santa Teresa CP (DN). A **Townsend's Solitaire** was a nice surprise in the Willow Glen neighborhood of San Jose, staying from Feb 10 to Feb 25 (BM, m. ob.). The **Phainopepla** near the Mendoza Ranch entrance to Coyote Lake CP continued to be seen through Mar 11 (JJ). Three Phainopeplas were along the Hotel Trail at J Grant CP on Feb 14 (JH).

Warblers through Evening Grosbeak

The **Ovenbird** wintering at the tree line bordering the Charleston Rd marsh was last seen on Mar 1 (AVe), and the **Northern Waterthrush** wintering in the marsh was last noted on Feb 20 (CLa). The first **MacGillivray's Warbler** of the spring was at Star Creek Ranch in the Santa Cruz Mtns on Mar 28 (AR). A second-year male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was found Feb 9 upstream of the Main St bridge along Los Gatos Creek (MS), and enjoyed by many through Feb 20. This is only the fifth county record, with three overwintering birds and two noted during fall migration. The **Black-throated Gray Warbler** overwintering in the trees east of Charleston Rd marsh was last seen on Feb 7 (GZ, DN). The first of the arriving spring migrants was noted on Mar 26 at Mount Umunhum (JPa). **Hermit Warblers** occasionally overwinter. None

were detected this year before the beginning of spring migration on Mar 21, when one was found in the lowlands along Los Gatos Creek near Meridian (BM) and another was found on Loma Prieta in the Santa Cruz Mtns (CK). The earliest arriving **Wilson's Warbler** was at Stevens Creek CP on Mar 8 (BM). The high count of **Chipping Sparrows** at Jeffrey Fontana Park was five on Feb 25 (JPa). Three were last seen on Mar 5 (KO). Singles were at a feeder in Los Gatos on Feb 28 (LSu), at Rancho Canada del Oro on Mar 14 (JJ et al.), and at Vasona Lake CP on Mar 20 (BM). The **Grasshopper Sparrow** at Ed Levin CP on Mar 10 was the first found at the park this year (BM). In the urban areas of the county, the most frequently seen Fox Sparrows during the winter are in the "Sooty" group. Red Fox Sparrows and Slate-colored Fox Sparrows are reported less often. The **Red Fox Sparrow** along the tree line east of Charleston Rd marsh remained through Mar 1 (AVe). A **Slate-colored Fox Sparrow** was in the orchard between Calero Creek and Santa Teresa Creek in the Almaden Valley on Mar 19 (JPa). Winter also occasionally brings **Pacific Northwest Song Sparrow** to the area. One was at Stevens Creek CP on Mar 29 (BM). The **Swamp Sparrow** overwintering at the Palo Alto Baylands was last noted on Mar 29 (WGB). **Western Tanagers** overwintering were at Stanford on Feb 21 (WBr) and in Mountain View neighborhoods on Feb 24 and 30 (GZ) and Mar 22 and 29 (MDo). A Western Tanager along Los Gatos Creek near Meridian on Mar 21 was first noted on a date consistent with a migrant (BM). **Black-headed Grosbeaks** encountered in the late winter to early spring period included the second-year male overwintering in Los Altos through Feb 17 (JT), one at Vasona Lake CP on Feb 9 (KB), one along Penitencia Creek downstream of Alum Rock park on Mar 2 (AN), and a returning migrant in the Santa Cruz Mountains west of Gilroy on Mar 15 (JA, AA). The first **Hooded Orioles** of the year were singles at Hellyer Park on Feb 16 (AVi) and in Morgan Hill on Mar 12 (SCR). The first returning **Bullock's Oriole** was seen at Rancho Canada del Oro on Mar 14 (JPa). This has not been a banner year for **Lawrence's Goldfinches**. The high count during the period was six along San Felipe Rd in the southern part of the county, first noted on Mar 6 (PDu). At least one was also seen along Canada Rd in the southern part



Black-throated Blue Warbler
photo courtesy of Gail West

of the county on Mar 29 (RWR). A group of seven **Evening Grosbeaks** was reported on Mar 11 in Sunnyvale on Danforth Dr east of their usual haunts, the first and only report since January (MS).

Observers: Julie Avnit (JA), Amir Avnit (AA), Avery Berkowitz (ABe), Andrew Bradshaw (ABr), Michael Bolte (MBo), Jim Brooks (JB), Will Brooks (WBr), Bill Bousman (WGB), Karen Burnson (KB), Karen DeMello (KD), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Dunten (PDu), James Estes (JE), Thomas Ford-Hutchinson (TF-H), Joel Glassman (JG), Garth Harwood (GHa), Jan Hintermeister (JH), Alfred Hochstaedter (AH), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Jim Johnson (JJ), Cole Jower (CJ), Clay Kempf (CK), Howard Laidlaw (HL), Caroline Lambert (CLa), Jason Liu (JL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Juliana Manoliu (JMa), Alice Miller (AM), Brooke Miller (BM), Paul Morris (PM), Jean Myers (JMy), Alex Navarro (AN), David Nickerson (DN), Kurt Ongman (KO), Janna Pauser (JPa), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Richard Price (RPr), Rob Reiling (RWR), Alex Rinkert (AR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Mike Sabin (MS), Debi Shearwater (DLS), Marty Sidor (MS), Jason St. Pierre (JStP), Linda Sullivan (LSu), Jack Tomlin (JT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AVe), Alie Victorine, (AVi), Gail West (GW), David Zittin (DZ), Gina Zolotar (GZ)

Welcome Aboard to the new Field Notes Compiler, Peter Dunten!

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