

# Field Notes

*(April-May 2015)*

by Pete Dunten

## Geese through Phalaropes

A few geese have remained through the period, with a single **Greater White-Fronted Goose** at bayside locations on 13 Apr (RK) and 27 May (DPe) and two on 25 Apr (CLa, MDo). Two were at the Coyote Creek Golf Course on 11 Apr (ST), and one was at Parkway Lakes on 13 May (MMR). A solo **Cackling Goose** favored Charleston Slough and Shoreline Park 13 May through 30 May (AH, MDo, JL). A single **Ross's Goose** was also seen at Shoreline Park and nearby between 19 Apr and 25 May (RFu et al., m. ob.). **Common Loons** and **Red-throated Loons** are expected passage migrants in spring. Single **Common Loons** were on Salt pond A18 on 10 Apr (JStP, CJ), Coyote Lake from 11 Apr through 25 Apr (ST, CLa, LSp, MDo et al., LM et al., JBI), and Salt pond A14 from 28 Apr through 9 May (JStP, MMR, GZ). Two **Common Loons** flying NW over Loma Prieta on 11 Apr were unusual, given the location (AR, JGa, NK). A **Red-throated Loon** first noted 4 May on Lexington Reservoir (SP) remained through the period (m. ob.), and was joined by a second bird noted only on 10 May (EGo). **Red-necked Grebes** are not seen every year; they continued to delight observers this year with the bird at Coyote Lake acquiring breeding plumage and remaining through 13 Apr (CLa), and another bird gracing Lexington Reservoir from 3 May through 17 May (SP, m. ob.). Our first May record of a **Pelagic Cormorant** was an individual on the Alviso salt pond A10/A11 levee on the 30th (MDo). A **Broad-winged Hawk** on its way north passed over Loma Prieta on 19 Apr (DW). One member of a pair of **Swainson's Hawks** returning to breed in Coyote Valley was first noted on 1 Apr (RPh), and both birds were seen on 29 Apr (MMR). **Black Rails** at Alviso Marina, along Alviso Slough, and in the marsh at the SW corner of Salt pond A17 continued to be vocal through the period, with a high count of three calling at Alviso Marina on three dates (m. ob.). **Snowy Plover** numbers remained low, with a high count of three birds at Crittenden Marsh on 3 May (MMR), where one to two Plovers were reported from 1 Apr through 19 May (RFu, m. ob.). A pair was subsequently found at Pond A3N on 25 May (MMR, MJM). A remarkable sighting of a **Black Oystercatcher** on the Alviso salt pond A10/A11 levee on 14 Apr (JStP) was the first county record for the spring. The Oystercatcher was seen throughout the period, though not by all who undertook the trek along the levee trails (m. ob.).

Aptly, a single **Solitary Sandpiper** was found this spring, at Llagas Creek along Old Oak Glen Road on 19 Apr (BH et al.). One **Sanderling** was reported in the impoundment east of Salt pond A12 at Alviso on Apr 11 (BW et al.), and four very late birds were on the Alviso salt pond A5/A7 levee on May 25 (MMR, MJM). The spring movement of phalaropes through the area concluded with reports of two **Wilson's Phalaropes** on Salt pond A13 on 3 May (MMR), seven **Red-necked Phalaropes** on Salt ponds A6 and A13 on 25 May (MMR, MJM), and one **Red-necked Phalarope** on Salt pond A12 on 28 May (WGB).

## Gulls through Woodpeckers

### *Charms of Calliope and Rufous Hummingbirds Highlighted This Year's Spring Migration*

A **Franklin's Gull** briefly visited Salt pond A16 on 21 May (EM), the first in the county since 2010. Two out-of-season **Elegant Terns** were over Salt pond A1 on 20 Apr (JStP, CJ, VH). They typically arrive in June from southern breeding grounds. **Black Skimmers** nest on small islets in the south bay; the high count for the period was 15 noted during a Snowy Plover census on 25 May (MMR, MJM). A nesting pair of **Greater Roadrunners** continued to be seen near the dam at Coyote Lake CP through 10 May (m. ob.). **Northern Saw-whet Owls** are often heard and seldom seen. A nice find was young Saw-whet Owls at Mt. Madonna CP, where the owls are nesting in old Pileated Woodpecker cavities. Three owls were seen on both 24 Apr

and 2 May (DPo et al.). The passage of **Black Swifts** peaks late in spring. One was over Loma Prieta on 10 May (GHa), and a flock of 20 were over Skyline Ridge OSP on 30 May (PKe et al.). The first returning **Vaux's Swifts** were single birds seen on 7 Apr at Almaden Lake Park and Guadalupe Oak Grove Park (both JPa). **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were reported late in May along Coyote Creek (JPa, AVi), Los Gatos Creek (m. ob.), Calero Creek (DPe), and Uvas Creek (JS). Observations at the end of May in appropriate habitat suggest nesting is underway at those locations; breeding is known to have occurred in past years along Coyote and Los Gatos Creeks. The spring passage of **Calliope Hummingbirds** was well noted, beginning with single birds at Ed Levin CP on 11 Apr (PDU), Morgan Hill on 15 Apr (SCR), Pacheco SP on 16 Apr (PDU), and at feeders on the eastern slope of the Santa Cruz Mountains west of Gilroy on 17 Apr (JA, AA). A charm of seven came to feeders temporarily set up at Loma Prieta on 17 Apr (JGa, NK), two were at the feeders on 18 Apr (AR et al.), one was at Grant Ranch CP on 19 Apr (TO), and the last report was of five at Loma Prieta on 27 Apr (AR).

The feeders set up at Loma Prieta attracted migrating **Rufous Hummingbirds** as well, with counts of 19 on 4 Apr (AR, JGa), 38 on 11 Apr (AR, JGa, NK), 20 on 17 Apr (JGa, NK), and 26 on 27 Apr (AR). The feeders attracted 59, 67, and 71 hummingbirds recorded as Rufous/Allen's on 4 Apr, 11 Apr, and 27 Apr, respectively. The latest **Lewis's Woodpeckers** wintering in and around Coyote Valley were one at Calero CP on 2 Apr (JPa), one along Hellyer Ave on 10 Apr (BJ), one at the end of Laguna Ave on 16 Apr (KO, EO), one along Felter Road on 3 May (VT), and one at Bel Gatos Park in Los Gatos on 17 May (LR). One to two were noted at Pacheco SP between 16 Apr and 9 May (PDU, MMR). Lewis's Woodpeckers breed in the San Antonio Valley east of the crest of the Diablo Range; four were seen there on 26 May (WGB).

## Flycatchers through Phainopepla

The earliest arriving **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was at Lake Ranch Reservoir in Sanborn-Skyline CP on 10 Apr (BM). A wave of migrants on 16 and 17 May included an Olive-sided Flycatcher stopping along the Stevens Creek Trail (JL), two at Charleston Road Marsh (JL, WGB), and another at Ulistac NA (AE). The first **Western Wood-Pewee** to return was along Old Oak Glen Road upstream from Chesbro Reservoir on 16 Apr (AVE). The northward movement of **Willow Flycatchers** occurs late in spring, and they are much harder to find during spring migration than in the fall. This year one was at the Gilroy SCRWA on 22 May (MMR). Migrant **Hammond's Flycatchers** are not uncommon in the Diablo range in the spring, and



*Black Oystercatcher  
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## Field Notes *cont'd*

were found behind the Smith Creek Fire Station in J Grant CP on several dates from 3 Apr to 16 Apr (MMR, m. ob.). A migrant was also present along Los Gatos Creek near Meridian Ave from 21 to 23 May (BM, m. ob.). **Say's Phoebes** historically weren't known to nest on the Valley floor; in recent years their range in the county has expanded. Two or three pairs of Say's Phoebes were at Moffett Field throughout the period, with two nests noted (MMR). Two young birds were seen along Uvas Creek in Gilroy on 13 May (WGB), and a single bird was seen on 16 May in Coyote Valley along Palm Avenue (Ave, KH, RPa). The earliest **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was at Almaden Reservoir on 2 Apr (JPa). **Purple Martins** returned to the snags they prefer for nesting at Loma Prieta on 4 Apr, when nine birds were noted (AR, JGa, CK). The high count during the period was ten Martins on 20 Apr (AR). Martins were also found foraging over Calero Reservoir, with six counted on 27 May (OA) and four on 28 May (Ave). A single Martin was heard over Uvas Canyon CP on 30 May (BMA). A **Bank Swallow** perched on a wire together with Barn Swallows next to the Bay Trail at the western end of the Sunnyvale WPCP was a nice find on 16 May (JL). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were found at several locations in the Santa Cruz Mountains during the period. Lowland **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were noted on only two dates, one on 14 Apr in a Mountain View neighborhood (GZ) and another on 19 Apr at Charleston Road Marsh (RFu et al.). The nesting pair of **Canyon Wrens** at the Coyote Lake dam progressed to the stage of feeding young. One was seen carrying food on 10 May (MJM). The first Swainson's Thrush detected this spring was a migrant over San Jose on 26 Apr, identified by its nocturnal flight call (KO). **Phainopeplas** were not easily found. One was near the Milton Ranch pond in the San Antonio Valley on 12 Apr (RC et al.), and another was seen 16 May along Bear Mountain Road in Henry Coe SP (MMR, RJ).



Calliope Humminbird  
©Tom Grey



Rufous Humminbird  
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### Warblers through Goldfinches

**Nashville Warblers** on their way north were found behind the Smith Creek Fire Station in J Grant CP between 3 Apr and 23 Apr, with five noted on 8 Apr (MMR, m. ob.). Single migrants were found within the same span of dates at Alum Rock Park, Monte Bello OSP, Coyote Lake CP, and along Canada Road (m. ob.). A **MacGillivray's Warbler** was along Smith Creek in J Grant CP on 16 Apr, 28 Apr, and 30 Apr (MA, CLa, RWR), one more was at Hidden Villa on 13 May (GHa), and a third was by Gate 5 in Monte Bello OSP on 15 May (GHa). The first **Yellow Warbler** of the spring was in Coyote Valley at the Laguna Ave bridge over Fisher Creek on 11 Apr (ST). The highlight among the warblers was unfortunately a one-day wonder, a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** in the Willow Glen neighborhood of San Jose on 26 May (BM). Most of our previous records have been in the fall or winter; this is the first for May. Migrant **Hermit Warblers** were noted to 20 May (m. ob.), with a high count of eight at Loma Prieta on 13 May (AR). **Yellow-breasted Chats** were not hard to find, with reports of one or two birds at the Gilroy SCRWA from 27 Apr through 14 May (RWR, m. ob.), another in Stevens Creek CP near the reservoir dam on 28 May through the end of the period (MJM, m. ob.), and birds noted on a single day only in J Grant CP on 9 May (GHa), along Uvas Creek in Gilroy on 13 May (WGB), and at Lexington Reservoir on 16 May (AIH). **Black-chinned Sparrows** returned to known haunts at Loma Prieta and along Bear Mountain Road in Henry Coe SP. At the Loma Prieta upper saddle one was singing on 14 Apr (KO) on the Santa Clara county side of the county line. On a survey in Henry Coe on 16 May, 11 Black-chinned Sparrows were tallied (MMR, RJ). **Bell's Sparrows** were found in the interior of Henry Coe SP and along Mines Road in the northeastern corner of the county. The 16 May survey in Henry Coe SP found 63 Bell's Sparrows; one to two were heard and sometimes seen along Mines Road from 9 May through the end of the period (MDo et al., m. ob.). One to two **Chipping Sparrows** were reported from ten locations in the period, with two reports at

the edge of the Santa Clara Valley floor and all others at higher elevations surrounding the Valley. The Chipping Sparrows near the Valley floor were one at Guadalupe Oak Grove Park on 30 Apr (KK) and a singing male on 16 May at Day and Watsonville Roads outside of Gilroy (SCR). A late-staying **Slate-colored Junco** was spotted in Los Gatos on 23 Apr (SCR). The last **White-throated Sparrows** to depart were both seen on 29 Apr. One was banded at the Coyote Creek Field Station (WH), and one visited feeders outside of Gilroy (JA, AA). The earliest arriving **Lazuli Bunting**, operating on a different schedule, was at Santa Teresa CP on 5 Apr (JPa). **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** made a stopover between 6 May and 14 May at the Gilroy SCRWA (MJM), with a high count of 11 on 8 May (RWR). Two more were found at J Grant CP on 11 May (PS). Single **Pine Siskins** were reported from lowland locations as late as 28 May (CF). Flocks of 100 - 300 Siskins were found at Mount Hamilton on 7 Apr (EGa) and at Monte Bello OSP on 14 Apr, 20 Apr, and 27 Apr (GHa). **Lawrence's Goldfinches** kept to the Diablo Range and its foothills, with small groups of no more than six found in many locations (m. ob.).

Observers: Mary Ann Allen (MA), Ozzie Altus (OA), Julie Avnit (JA), Amir Avnit (AA), Jeff Bleam (JBI), Bill Bousman (WGB), Richard Cimino (RC), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Dunten (PDu), Al Eisner (AE), Craig Fosdick (CF), Rob Furrow (RFu), John Garrett (JGa), Elinor Gates (EGa), Eric Goodill (EGo), Garth Harwood (GHa), Victoria Heyse (VH), Bob Hirt (BH), Alfred Hochstaedter (AIH), Kirsten Holmquist (KH), William Hoppes (WH), Andy Howey (AH), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Cole Jower (CJ), Bob Juhl (BJ), Clay Kempf (CK), Pat Kenny (PKe), Kathy Kleinsteiber (KK), Nicholas Kronick (NK), Caroline Lambert (CLa), Jason Liu (JL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Bruce Mast (BMA), Brooke Miller (BM), Emily Moffitt (EM), Lisa Myers (LM), Tom Olson (TO), Eric Ongman (EO), Kurt Ongman (KO), Rich Page (RPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Don Pendleton (DPe), Stephen Peterson (SP), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Dennis Porter (DPo), Rob Reiling (RWR), Alex Rinkert (AR), Laurie Roberts (LR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Peter Scott (PS), Larry Spivak (LSp), Jason St. Pierre (JStP), Jeff Stacey (JS), Vivek Tiwari (VT), Steve Tracey (ST), Ann Verdi (Ave), Alie Victorine, (AVi), Bill Walker (BW), Dave Weber (DW), Gina Zolotar (GZ)

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