

Field Notes

(October–November 2015)

by *Pete Dunten*

Geese through Ibises

Three of our four rare geese were reported during the Oct – Nov period. **Greater White-fronted Geese** were found at several locations, with thirteen at Don Edwards NWR on 2 Oct (DWn) the high count for the period. **Cackling Geese** were reported from many locations with high counts of eight at Coyote Lake CP on 3 Nov (JPa et al.) and seven at Lake Cunningham CP on 21 Nov (AME). **Snow Geese** were seen twice, with an immature in Coyote Valley along Richmond Ave on 14 Oct (AAg) and four at the SCRWA in Gilroy on 19 Nov (WGB). **Eurasian Wigeon** occurred at locations along the bay as well as at the Gilroy SCRWA, with a high count of five on Alviso salt pond A14 on 17 Nov (EO, KO). Alviso salt pond A14 also held an exceptional number of **Redhead**, 596, on 8 Nov (MMR, MJM, RJe). A solo male Redhead was found far from the bay in San Jose on one of the Alamitos recharge ponds on 25 Nov and 29 Nov (JPa). The first **Barrow's Goldeneye** of the winter was found on Shoreline Lake on 25 Nov (WBr). The only loon of the period was a **Common Loon** on Alviso salt pond A14 on 8 Nov (RJe, MMR, MJM). A **Red-necked Grebe** on Alviso salt pond A16 on 7 Nov and 11 Nov (SMa, WGB) was the first of the winter. Careful scrutiny of cormorants turned up a **Pelagic Cormorant** on a closed refuge levee on 8 Nov (MJM, RJe, MMR). **American Bitterns** were found at three locations. One returned to the channel at the end of Terminal Blvd on 13 Oct (WGB), another was at Ogier Ponds on 17 Oct (SCR), and one was at Alviso Slough on 7 Nov (SMa). **White-faced Ibis** became scarce after their influx earlier in the fall, with one at Don Edwards NWR on 16 Oct (BB) and one at the Gilroy SCRWA on 3 Nov (JPa et al.).

Hawks through Thrushes

An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** passed through on its way south, and was seen briefly over San Jose on 5 Oct (AR). The number of

Ferruginous Hawks wintering in Coyote Valley near Laguna Ave went up to two, both seen on 9 Oct (RPh). **Sanderling** have been hard to find this fall and winter, with only two reports. On 11 Nov one was found at Alviso salt pond A16 (WGB) and on 23 Nov three were at New Chicago Marsh (SP). An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was resting on private land near the bay on 23 Nov (PDU). A late-to-depart **Caspian Tern** was at Shoreline Lake on 6 Nov (GZ). **Elegant Terns** also remained near the bay late in the year, with 14 present at Salt pond A8 on 23 Nov (MMR), one at Don Edwards NWR on 25 Nov (SBe) and

on 14 Oct (LH). A female **Williamson's Sapsucker**, only the 6th county record, was seen at Loma Prieta on 25 Oct (AR) and 1 Nov (NL). A male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** arrived at Ed Levin CP on 10 Nov (WGB). It was seen again on 12 Nov (MMR) and 16 Nov (DW). An **Eastern Phoebe** in a residential area near Stanford on 7 Oct was the earliest fall arrival for the county (WBr). Single **Tropical Kingbirds** were found twice near the bay, on 31 Oct at Sunnyvale WPCP (RFu et al.) and on 6 Nov at Palo Alto Baylands (EL). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were widely reported, though the high count was only four (m. ob.). Fall migration brings **Golden-crowned Kinglets** to Sunnyvale Baylands Park, and this year the kinglets were present between 3 and 9 Oct with a high count of three on 8 Oct (PKe, m. ob.). Late migrant **Swainson's Thrushes** were found 29 Oct at Charleston Road Marsh (STe, LTe) and 9 Nov in a Mountain View neighborhood (MDa). The first **Varied Thrush** to arrive for the winter was at Coyote Lake CP on 14 Oct (LH, DVP).

Longspurs through Siskins

The first **Lapland Longspur** since the winter of 2012 was at Byxbee Park from 7 to 13 Nov (PDU, m. ob.). On 22 Nov a Lapland Longspur was noted in flight at Alviso Marina CP (MMR, MJM). The arrival of the longspur was preceded on 5 Nov by the arrival an extremely rare visitor from the tundra, a female **Snow Bunting** (SS, CLa, m. ob.). The Snow Bunting favored graveled areas along the trails at Charleston Slough frequented by hikers, cyclists, and roller-skaters. It was the first in the county and stayed for only a day. One **Northern Waterthrush** was reported, on 4 Oct along Los Gatos Creek at Oka Ponds (LKO). The location is not far downstream from a Northern Waterthrush sighting at Vasona CP in September. A **Virginia's Warbler** was at Sunnyvale WPCP on 1 Nov (SMi); it too stayed for only one day. A **Nashville Warbler** visited Charleston Road Marsh on 6 Oct (STe, LTe). A **Yellow Warbler** is wintering again at Palo Alto Baylands this year. It was present through the end of the period (m. ob.). Two **Blackpolls** were found in October, one at Ulistac NA on 1 Oct

Fall Migration Delivers Two County Firsts: a Snow Bunting and a Pine Warbler!

three at Salt pond A2E on 29 Nov (WBr). The 7th county record of **White-winged Dove** was a single bird flying by the quarry adjacent to Ed Levin CP on 19 Oct (GK). **Short-eared Owls** returned in Nov, the first on 8 Nov near Alviso salt pond A15 (MMR, MJM, RJe) and two in Coyote Valley near Laguna Ave on 27 Nov (CLa). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was on the west side of the Diablo range at Coyote Lake CP



*Snow Bunting at Charleston Slough
Photo courtesy Caroline Lambert*

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(BC) and one in San Jose's Chantillery neighborhood on 7 Oct (MH). The fall warbler migration yielded a county first record, a **Pine Warbler** at Sunnyvale Baylands from 7 to 8 Oct (PKe, m. ob.). The warbler spent time on the grass lawns, allowing easy observation with no risk of 'warbler neck'. Rounding out the warblers, a **Hermit Warbler** is wintering in the San Jose Willow Glen neighborhood and has been present since 29 Oct (BM). A migrant **Clay-colored Sparrow** spent 26 to 28 Oct enjoying the seeds at the BeWell Garden on Stanford campus (JW, PDU). Up at the Sierra Road summit a **Vesper Sparrow** was found on 11 Nov (AR, DWn). In some years **Grasshopper Sparrows** stay in the area over the winter. A late individual was noted at Calero CP on 30 Oct (JPa). A **Song Sparrow** in the Pacific Northwest group of subspecies, found here only in the winter, was in a Palo Alto neighborhood on 3 Nov (CLa). The first **Swamp Sparrow** on its wintering grounds was photographed on 24 Oct along Mallard Slough at Don Edwards NWR (AT). Another was at Coast Casey Forebay on 20 Nov (BSw). A third was found at Palo Alto Baylands on 24 Nov (WGB) and again 25 and 26 Nov (m. ob.). A **Summer Tanager** visiting a Palo Alto neighborhood on 6 Nov (RS) was a nice find; they aren't found in the county every year. Most **Black-headed Grosbeaks** are gone by the end of September. The latest **Black-headed Grosbeak** lingering in the area was one at Ulistac NA on 1 Oct and 2 Oct (GZ, BB). **Evening Grosbeaks** returned. Transients were noted at Loma Prieta on 6 Oct, a fly-over with a type 1 call (AR), and in Morgan Hill on 17 Oct (RH). Two wintering birds returned to the Chinese Pistache trees in downtown Los Altos on 18 Nov (DMc); one was found downtown on 25 Nov (GHa). November saw the arrival of **Red Crossbills** in numbers, with reports from many locations. The first observation was a single bird at Monte Bello OSP on Nov 5 (GHa). The high count for the period was 34 Crossbills at Lexington Reservoir on 17 Nov (AR). Flight calls have identified some of the Crossbills as Western Hemlock, or type 3 (AR). **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were found twice during the period, with two at Monte Bello OSP on 12 Oct (GHa) and six in San Antonio Valley along Mines Road on 23 Oct (WGB).



Santa Clara County Pine Warbler
Photo courtesy Peter LaTourrette

Observers: Arvind Agrawal (AAg), Stephen Berlyant (SBe), Bob Bolles (BB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Will Brooks (WBr), Bill Chen (BC), Mike Danzenbaker (MDa), Pete Duntun (PDU), Al Eisner (AME), Rob Furrow (RFu), Lauren Harter (LH), Garth Harwood (GHa), Michael Hawk (MH), Rick Herder (RH), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Pat Kenny (PKe), Gary Kittleson (GK), Lena Kolesnikova (LKo), Caroline Lambert (CLa), Earl Lebow (EL), Nicholas Levendosky (NL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Sean MacLiam (SMa), David McIntyre (DMc), Brooke Miller (BM), Steve Miller (SMi), Eric Ongman (EO), Kurt Ongman (KO), Janna Pauser (JPa), Stephen Peterson (SP), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Alex Rinkert (AR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Sachindev Shenoy (SS), Richard Stovel (RS), Byron Swift (BSw), Annette Teng (AT), Linda Terrill (LTe), Scott Terrill (STe), David vander Pluym (DVP), Dave Weber (DW), Dan Wenny (DWn), Joyce Wong (JW), Gina Zolotar (GZ)

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