

# Field Notes

(December 2016-January 2017)

by Pete Dunten

## Geese through Ibises

Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** were found through the Dec – Jan period between Bailey Ave and Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley (m. ob.). Wintering **Cackling Geese** arrived in greater numbers, with groups of thirteen along Bailey Ave on 27 Dec (RPh et al.) and eighteen at Los Capitancillos Ponds on 15 Jan (KB, MMR). A group of **Snow Geese** at the Bailey Ave wetland started with one adult noted on 6 Dec (MJM), grew to two birds on 26 Dec (BH) and finally four birds on 20 Jan (LFl, GnM, DgP, DnP). Single Snow Geese were also found at Grant Lake on 4 Dec (RSh) and in Byxbee Park on 18 Dec (PhB). The lone **Ross's Goose** wintering at the Shoreline Park area was at the kite flying area on 2 Dec (AME) and 4 Dec (WGB) and on Salt Pond A1 on 9 Dec (AR). **Tundra Swans** haven't been found in the county since the winter of 2012-2013, but on 3 Dec a group of ten flew over Alviso (ChJ), and on 15 Jan one was on Ogier Ponds (MMR). A **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** has been at Charleston Slough since 5 Dec (BJ, RSh), remaining through the end of Jan, and another was seen at Harvey Marsh on 20 Jan (RJ). An intergrade **American x Eurasian Green-winged Teal** was also found at Charleston Slough on 11 Dec (OA), and another was at Palo Alto Baylands on 13 Jan (GL). A count of 2079 **Redhead** on 2 Dec on closed refuge ponds was unusually high (MMR, RJ), suggesting the ducks either had an excellent breeding year or Redhead which usually winter elsewhere have come to the south bay this winter. The only **Barrow's Goldeneye** of the winter was a female photographed on Alviso Salt Pond A15 on 3 Dec (ChJ). A second male **Barrow's x Common Goldeneye** was found on Alviso Salt Pond A11 on 29 Jan (RJ, MJM, MMR). The hybrid male at Los Capitancillos Ponds was seen by many through 29 Jan. The dearth of loons this winter was relieved by the arrival of a **Pacific Loon** on 15 Jan at Los Capitancillos Ponds (KB, MMR, ChJ) which stayed through 29 Jan (m. ob.). **Pelagic Cormorants** are rare this far south in the bay, but occasionally occur with Double-crested Cormorants. One was with Double-crested Cormorants on the levee between Alviso Salt Ponds A11 and A14 on 29 Jan (PW). With the absence of the **American Bittern**

at the end of Terminal Way, reports are again a matter of chance encounters. Only one was reported during the period, from Alviso Slough on 16 Jan (WGB). Single **White-faced Ibises** were seen at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 9 Dec (WGB) and in New Chicago Marsh on 24 and 25 Jan (RJ, GL).



*Pacific Loon by Garrett Lau*

## Hawks through Sapsuckers

The **Ferruginous Hawk** count along Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley increased to three on 3 Jan (MJM). They were also found at the Sierra Rd summit from 2 Jan (WP), when one was present, and through 30 Jan, when two were seen (JCh, DH). A late-to-migrate **Broad-winged Hawk** passed over Oka Ponds on 2 Dec (JVs) and wasn't seen again. A stunning leucistic fourth-year **Bald Eagle** visited Ogier Ponds on 2 Jan (SCR, DZ, ER). With its distinctive plumage, the bird was easy to track around the area. On 5 Jan (DLS) and 7 Jan (SCR) it turned up at San Felipe Lake and on 9 Jan it was at Natural Bridges SB in Santa Cruz (NU). Tracking an individual eagle might also be possible with photos showing molting wing feathers, something for our local photographers to explore. While **Black Rails** have recently established themselves near Alviso Marina, they have in the past been noted at Palo Alto Baylands during days with high tides. One was seen at the Baylands on 12 Jan during a high tide event (SMi, KP). **Wilson's Phalaropes** are rarely found over winter; hence one on Alviso Salt Pond A12 on 16 Jan was unexpected (WGB). A single **Red Phalarope** on Alviso Salt Pond A13 was a nice year-end find, as it was a species that was missed last winter. The phalarope was found between 18 Dec (MMR, SCR) and 1 Jan (m. ob.). An adult **Kumlien's Iceland Gull** was with other gulls at Sobrato HS in Morgan Hill on 7 Jan (SCR). Their status in the county is difficult to determine given the similarities between juveniles and pale and worn Thayer's Gulls. The **Glaucous Gull** is a gull that typically arrives later in

the winter than other wintering gulls. True to form, the first Glaucous Gulls noted were two at Ogier Ponds on 2 Jan (SCR) and another at Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 25 Jan (SJ) and 29 Jan (MJM, MMR, RJ). **Caspian Terns** stayed well into December, with one to two found around the bottom of the bay through 13 Dec (m. ob.). The latest **Elegant Tern** to stay in the area was one noted at Alviso Salt Pond A11 on 2 Dec (MMR, RJ) - our first record in December. A **Greater Roadrunner** was spotted near Harry Rd and Bernal Rd on 28 Jan (JPa), a location they've been known to frequent. A **Long-eared Owl** was heard calling at the San Felipe Ranch during the Calero-Morgan Hill CBC on 27 Dec (MMR). **Short-eared Owls** were missed in Dec, but found on 2 Jan at Don Edwards NWR (WP, KON) and on 11 Jan at Palo Alto Baylands (JCh, GHa). Wintering **Burrowing Owls** are sometimes found at higher elevations than known breeding areas, and this winter was no exception. Single owls were spotted near Felt Lake on 11 Dec (AME, PDU), near the south end of Calaveras Reservoir on 18 Dec (DZ et al.), and near the Sierra Road summit on 22 Dec (WP, KON) and 11 Jan (GL). These were likely owls from Western Canada supplementing our local population over winter. The higher elevation habitat that supports Burrowing Owls during winter will be free of owls over summer. **Allen's Hummingbird** is the earliest migrant to return to our area, well before spring. The first returning hummingbirds were noted on 30 Jan, when one was at Los Capitancillos Ponds (DN) and a male was performing shuttle and dive displays for a female along Coyote Creek at Sycamore Drive (PDU). This is our earliest arrival date for a female Allen's Hummingbird. Many observers enjoyed the **Red-naped Sapsucker** at Almaden Lake Park through the end of Jan; another was sighted along Oakmead Parkway in Sunnyvale on 3 Dec (PDU). One Red-naped and one **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** continued to be seen at Ed Levin CP through the period (m. ob.).

## Flycatchers through Phainopepla

Two wintering Empidonax Flycatchers were found during Dec and Jan. A wintering **Hammond's Flycatcher** graced the San Jose CBC on 18 Dec, along Coyote Creek on the Los Lagos Golf Course grounds (FV). It remained through 1 Jan (MMR, MJM). The **Gray Flycatcher** found at Sunnyvale Baylands in early November stayed through 2 Jan (m. ob.). Two **Cassin's Vireos** were found in Dec, one on 3 Dec (RJ) and 4 Dec (WGB) along

## Field Notes *cont'd*

Oakmead Parkway in Sunnyvale, and one on 15 Dec (DK) near Permanente Creek in Mountain View. During this period an extraordinary number of swallows were reported, frequently in mixed-species flocks. **Tree Swallow** flocks of over a hundred swallows were over the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) on 18 Dec (AR), the vicinity of the Don Edwards NWR EEC on 21 Dec (AR), and Mallard Slough on 2 Jan (JL, WBr). Another sizable group of 30 – 40 Tree Swallows was along Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley on 11 and 12 Jan (WBr, OA). Flocks of 20 – 50 **Violet-green Swallows** were reported along Laguna Ave on 9 Dec (RPh), at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 11 Dec (JC, BT), CCFS on 18 Dec (AR), over Don Edwards EEC on 21 Dec (AR), Ogier Ponds on 2 Jan (SCR), and Parkway Lakes on 12 Jan (DN). Most surprising were reports of **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** from three locations - one over the CCFS on 7 Dec (AR) and 18 Dec (AR, WGB, MC), another over Felt Lake on 11 Dec (PDU, AME), and another at Vasona Lake CP on 17 Dec (LM et al.). **Barn Swallows** were present throughout the period, both near the bay and further south over Parkway Lakes and Ogier Ponds, with high counts of fifteen over Mallard Slough on 2 Jan (WBr, JL) and ten at Palo Alto Baylands on 12 Jan (MDO). **House Wrens**, notable in the winter, were found in Dec and Jan - one stayed along Stevens Creek near Crittenden Lane where it was noted on 5 Dec and 19 Dec (both AR); one was along Los Alamitos Creek on 12 Dec (BB), another was at Ulistac NA on 17 Jan (ChJ) and 20 Jan (RJ); and one was at Ed Levin CP on 22 Jan (BM). Hardy **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were found in Dec but not in Jan. Singles were along Harry Rd near Santa Teresa CP on 3 Dec (JPa), Coyote Creek in the vicinity of the CCFS on 18 Dec (AR, WGB, MC), Matadero Creek near the Palo Alto FCB on 20 Dec (AR), Calero Creek near Santa Teresa CP on 27 Dec (WGB), and Calero Reservoir on 27 Dec (RCP et al.). An **American Dipper** on the Diablo Range's western slope was a nice find on the San Jose CBC on 18 Dec (KS et al.). The upper end of Arroyo Hondo east of Calaveras Reservoir is within the count circle, and this winter there has been ample water in the drainage. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was one of several frugivores finding berries in the Belgatos neighborhood of Los Gatos. The solitaire was first seen from 21 Jan (GL) through 29 Jan (m. ob.).

A small flock of **Mountain Bluebirds** visited the Sierra Rd summit on 15 Jan (DBb, KBp). Mountain Bluebirds occur about one year in three, between late Nov and early Apr. The Sierra Rd summit group was not seen again. The **Phainopepla** wintering at Guadalupe Oak Grove Park remained at least through 19 Jan (JPa, m. ob.), another was found at Ed Levin CP on 15 Jan (LSu) and 22 Jan (BM).

### Wood Warbler through Goldfinch

A **Northern Waterthrush** at Ulistac NA on 20 Jan (RJ) was the first for that park, one of the best places in the county to look for vagrant warblers. A **Nashville Warbler** was at Los Capitancillos Ponds on 27 Jan (LSu). A **Yellow Warbler** at CCFS on 18 Dec was a nice find for the San Jose CBC (AR). **Palm Warblers** were found at Palo Alto FCB and at Don Edwards NWR EEC in Nov, missed in Dec, and present again in Jan. EEC sightings included one bird on 13, 15 and 24 Jan (DN, ChJ, RJ), two on 25 Jan (MMR, MJM), and one again on 26 and 27 Jan (PL, GL). One was found at Palo Alto FCB on 13 and 15 Jan (WBr, JVs, WGB). Wintering **Black-throated Gray Warbler** singles were noted at Quicksilver CP on 5 Dec (JPa), at CCFS on 18 Dec during the San Jose CBC (AR, WGB, MC), at Arastradero Preserve on 19 Dec during the Palo Alto CBC and along Stevens Creek near La Avenida on the same date (MMR, NM), and at Casa de Fruta in the south county on 30 Dec (SPk). Rounding out the warblers was a **Wilson's Warbler** at the CCFS on 7 Dec (AR). The high count of **Chipping Sparrows** at TJ Martin Park in San Jose has been only four this winter (SPv, MJM). Two **Grasshopper Sparrows** were tallied during the Calero-Morgan Hill CBC on 27 Dec at a location they've spent previous winters, on Coyote Ridge (RH et al.). A **Slate-colored Fox Sparrow** was at Isabel Ranch on 2 Jan (MMR, MJM, NM, CnB). A **Swamp Sparrow** continued to be present at Palo Alto Baylands, and on 13 Jan two were found at that location (WBr, JVs). Single wintering **Slate-colored Juncos** were reported from Stevens Creek below Hwy 101 on 19 Dec (MMR, NM) and from a Palo Alto yard on 22 Jan (JY). One of the highlights of the Palo Alto CBC was a **Summer Tanager** on the Stanford campus (RFu et al.) which stayed briefly, with sightings 19 – 21 Dec (m. ob.). Another Summer Tanager was seen in the Belgatos neighborhood of Los Gatos (KB) from 17 Jan through 26 Jan (m. ob.). One to two **Western Tanagers** were reported from eight

locations, for a total of twelve tanagers (m. ob.). A **Hooded Oriole** was found near Los Capitancillos Ponds on 27 Jan (EvM). They occur during the winter in about one in every three years. While this has not been a banner year for winter finches, a large group of 239 **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were a treat at Isabel Ranch in the San Antonio Valley during the Mt Hamilton CBC on 2 Jan (MMR, MJM, NM, CnB).



*Leucistic Bald Eagle by Steve Rottenborn*

**Observers:** Ozzie Altus (OA), Philip Ball (PhB), Cynthia Berg (CnB), Bob Bolles (BB), Will Brooks (WBr), Bill Bousman (WGB), Daniel Bump (DBp), Kathi Bump (KBp), Karen Burnson (KB), Matthew Carney (MC), Juli Chamberlin (JC), Matthew Dodder (MDO), Pete Duntun (PDU), Al Eisner (AME), Leslie Flint (LFl), Rob Furrow (RFu), Garth Harwood (GHa), Derek Heins (DH), Rick Herder (RH), Bob Hirt (BH), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Chris Johnson (ChJ), Steve Johnson (SJ), Bob Juhl (BJ), Dmytro Kuzmin (DK), Garrett Lau (GL), Jasen Liu (JL), Patricia Lynch (PL), Nateri Madavan (NM), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Ginny Marshall (GnM), Eve Meier (EvM), Brooke Miller (BM), Steve Miller (SMi), Lisa Myers (LM), David Nickerson (DN), Kitty O'Neil (KON), Kathryn Parker (KP), Janna Pauser (JPa), Sergey Pavlov (SPv), William Pelletier (WP), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Sarah Polekoff (SPk), Donna Pomeroy (DnP), Doug Pomeroy (DgP), Bob Power (RCP), Alex Rinkert (AR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Edward Rooks (ER), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Debi Shearwater (DLS), Robert Shields (RSh), Kepler Stone (KS), Linda Sullivan (LSu), Bob Toleno (BT), Norman Uyeda (NU), Frank Vanslager (FV), Jason Vassallo (JVs), Pingang Wang (PW), James Yurchenco (JY), David Zittin (DZ)

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