

# Field Notes

(February-March 2017)

by Pete Dunten

## Geese through Sapsuckers

Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** continued to be seen at Byxbee Park and Palo Alto Golf Course through the end of March (m. ob.). The largest gaggle of **Cackling Geese** was a group of 22 at the Los Capitancillos and nearby ponds on 3 Feb (DG) and 11 Feb (DPv). A single **Snow Goose** frequented bayside locations in Palo Alto and Mountain View through the end of March (m. ob.). No **Ross's Geese** were found. One to two **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** were reported from Charleston Slough through 26 Mar (m. ob.), and another was at Lake Lagunitas on 22 Feb (RFu), a first for that location. A **Pelagic Cormorant** conveniently flew by an observer with a camera at Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 19 Feb (GL). This is within a few days of the latest winter date a Pelagic Cormorant has



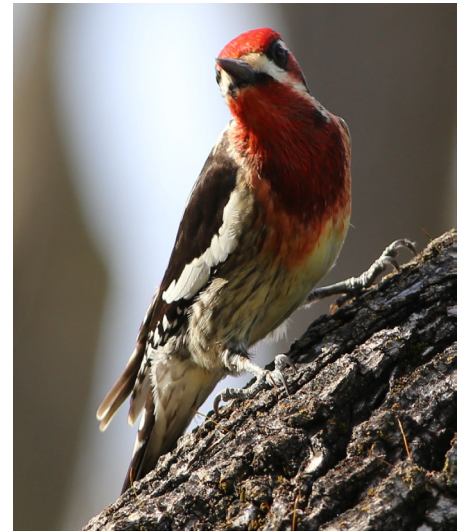
Red-necked Phalarope by Tom Grey

stayed in the South Bay. An **American Bittern** finally appeared in the channel at the end of Terminal Way on 25 Feb (GL). A solo **Cattle Egret** was seen briefly alongside Mallard Slough on 12 Mar (DN). The latest dates **Ferruginous Hawks** were found in the county were 8 Mar when one was at Sierra Road Summit (BP, PL) and 11 Mar when one was at Coyote Ridge OSP (RH). The leucistic **Bald Eagle** present in the area since the first week of Jan was spotted again on 27 Feb at Lake Vasona CP (KB). A **Ruddy Turnstone** flirted with the county line at San Francisquito Creek Delta on 28 Mar (JL) and again on 29 Mar (DN). The first **Red-necked Phalarope** on

passage, and one of the first in the state (based on eBird submissions), was on Lake Lagunitas on 23 Mar (BN). This is a first record for Lake Lagunitas; Red-necked Phalaropes have turned up on many bodies of water, including small ponds, away from San Francisco Bay. Though it was an extraordinary winter for rare gulls on the coast, no particularly rare gulls were noted in the South Bay. **Glaucous Gulls** put in a good showing in March, with one to four found on Alviso Salt Ponds A12 and A16 between 7 and 23 Mar (WP, WBr, WGB, NoA, GL, AR, JCh). Twelve **Caspian Terns** returned to nesting islets at Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 29 Mar (WGB), and three were noted at Palo Alto Baylands on the same date (DN). Those inclined to count terns at A16 need to be careful not to count decoys placed on the islets. After being absent all winter, the first **Black Skimmer** to return was at Charleston Slough on 4 Mar (RSh). Only one bird has been noted at Charleston Slough and Shoreline Lake on dates in March this year (m. ob.). The **Long-eared Owl** first heard during the Calero-Morgan Hill CBC was heard again on 13 Feb (WGB). Two **Short-eared Owls** were active midday at Palo Alto Baylands on 10 Feb (GC). The earliest **Rufous Hummingbirds** were singles visiting feeders outside of Gilroy on 10 Feb (JA, AA) and on Stanford campus on 14 Feb (RFu). The high count during spring migration has been recorded at the Loma Prieta Saddle in past years, in late March and early April. This year, 23 were tallied a bit earlier on 9 Mar, along with 17 Rufous/Allen's Hummingbirds (AR). The **Red-naped Sapsucker** wintering at Almaden Lake Park was last seen on 14 Mar (MRe). The wintering **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Ed Levin CP stayed through at least 23 Mar (BSw). A hybrid **Red-naped x Red-breasted Sapsucker** returned for its third winter to a Mountain View neighborhood and was present through 9 Mar (PDU). An interesting aspect of the biology of this hybrid combination is that hybrids are thought to have lower fitness (i.e., reduced survival) away from the breeding grounds, which limits the hybrid population size. Some hybrids make it through winter and breed, leading to backcrosses, which can more closely resemble the pure parental species.

## Flycatchers through Orioles

An early or wintering **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was at Stanford on 28 Feb (TGr), and the second report during the period was of one found on 13 Mar at McClellan Ranch (BLL, VLL). The first **Western Kingbird** of the spring was at Santa Teresa CP on 17 Mar (SPv). **Warbling Vireos** arrived on 11 Mar, with two on territories along the Guadalupe Creek Trail in Almaden Valley (JPa), one at Rancho Canada del Oro OSP (AMc), and one on passage near the Don Edwards EEC (BSt). An early **Purple Martin** was with swallows near the western end of



Red-naped x Red-breasted Sapsucker  
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Almaden Reservoir on 19 Mar (AVe). **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** returned on 3 Feb, when one was along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 (WGB) and two were at Ed Levin CP (RJ). A group of **Pygmy Nuthatches** first recorded in a Los Altos neighborhood last July remained there into late March, with one noted on the 24th (JT). They haven't been documented as nesting in that lowland part of the county, so it will be interesting to see if the nuthatches stay and raise young. The **House Wren** that spent the winter at Ulistac NA was singing on 21 Feb (ChJ), one of the unmistakable sounds of spring. Two returned to their territories at a residence in the Santa Cruz Mountains outside of Gilroy on 24 Feb (AA, JA). One of the two **Palm Warblers** that has wintered at the Don Edwards EEC was last seen on 5 Feb (DW) and 11 Feb (JVs). A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** on the Stanford campus on 21 Mar was the

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## Field Notes *cont'd*

first migrant spotted (WL). **Wilson's Warblers** found in late winter included two at Santa Clara University on 14 Feb (JFw et al.) and one on Stanford Campus on 24 Feb (SCR). The first migrant was at Sunnyvale Baylands on 14 Mar (BLL, VLL). As many as four **Chipping Sparrows** remained at TJ Martin Park in San Jose through 16 Mar (m. ob.). Single birds turned up at three other locations in March, one at Santa Teresa CP on 17 Mar (SPv), one at the junction of San Antonio Valley and Del Puerto Canyon Roads on 18 – 29 Mar (WBr, JVs, BSw, BD), and one at Foothill College on 25 Mar (PDU). **Grasshopper Sparrows**, whose song may be a less familiar sign of spring than that of the House Wren, were back on their territories at Ed Levin CP on 12 Mar (BSt). The **Summer Tanager** discovered on the Stanford

Campus during an Audubon CBC was still present on 14 Feb and 21 Feb (both RFu). Single **Western Tanagers** were reported from six locations (m. ob.), with no noticeable uptick in numbers as of the end of March. **Black-headed Grosbeaks** added to the spring chorus, returning on 10 Mar to Uvas Creek near Watsonville Road (JMy) and on 19 Mar to Santa Teresa CP (BM). Our colorful orioles also returned in March, with the first **Hooded Oriole** in the Willow Glen neighborhood of San Jose on 10 Mar (BM) and the first **Bullock's Oriole** outside of Gilroy on 3 Mar (AA, JA).

**Observers:** Noah Arthur (NoA), Amir Avnit (AA), Julie Avnit (JA), Will Brooks (WBr), Bill Bousman (WGB), Karen Burnson (KB), Jim Chiropoulos (JCh), George Chrisman (GC), Bob Dunn (BD), Pete Dunten (PDU), John Farnsworth (JFw), Rob Furrow (RFu), Daniel George (DG), Tom Grey

(TGr), Rick Herder (RH), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Chris Johnson (ChJ), Barry Langdon-Lassagne (BLL), Virginia Langdon-Lassagne (VLL), Garrett Lau (GL), William Lawton (WL), Jasen Liu (JL), Patricia Lynch (PL), Amy McDonald (AMc), Brooke Miller (BM), Jean Myers (JMy), Becca Nelson (BN), David Nickerson (DN), Janna Pauser (JPa), Dimitry Pavlov (DPv), Sergey Pavlov (SPv), William Pelletier (WP), Mike Resch (MRe), Alex Rinkert (AR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Robert Shields (RSh), Brian Steger (BSt), Byron Swift (BSw), Jack Tomlin (JT), Ann Verdi (AVe), Jason Vassallo (JVs), Dave Weber (DW)

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