



# Bird Notes

Please report rarities to  
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Santa Clara County eBird Reviewer

## Sandpipers to Woodpeckers

Movement of **Solitary Sandpipers** through the region began on 11 Apr, with one at Smith Creek in J Grant CP (CG) and others the same day in Merced and San Benito counties. Three more stopped in the county on their way north in late April, one at Coyote Lake on 22 Apr (MDo), one at Los Capitancillos Ponds on 24 Apr (CG) and one at Ulistac NA on 29 Apr (EFI). None of these migrants were found on more than one day.

In March, four **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were seen in the Alviso area, a record number for a winter season. On 5 Mar an adult was found at pond A12, followed by a 3rd-winter gull on 11 Mar (both NoA). Two Lesser Black-backed Gulls were present on 13 Mar, a 1st-winter and an adult (STu, NoA, m. ob.). The 3rd-winter and adult gulls were seen again on 19 Mar (NoA), and a second adult was at pond A12 on 25 Mar (NoA). All sightings occurred at Alviso ponds A12 and adjacent A13, save for one report of an adult moving between A16 and the adjacent New Chicago Marsh on 12 Mar (DB). In the following weeks, water levels were brought up on A13 in preparation for work on the levees, reducing the attractiveness of A13 for gulls.

A **Common Tern** at Emily Renzel Wetlands on 22 Apr was a nice find (BM). The tern was our 4th spring record. An **American Bittern** at Calero Reservoir on 1 Apr (MGy) was an intriguing find. Sightings a bit later in the year are of particular interest, as Bitterns have been found nesting in the county on only three occasions in modern times. Two **California Condors** soared over Bohlman Rd in Saratoga on 25 Apr (fide eBird), for our 4th county record. With their ability to cover large distances, it is surprising there haven't been more visits from the Condors resident at Pinnacles NP in San Benito county. A **Pileated Woodpecker** was at Hunting Hollow in Henry Coe SP on 4 Apr (ER). While rare in the Diablo Range, the frequency of records is increasing. First noted in 2006, ten of our twelve sightings have been in the years from 2017 to 2021, and eleven of twelve have been in the months between December and April.

## Flycatchers to Tanagers

An **Eastern Phoebe** spent part of the winter along the Guadalupe River near Ulistac NA, for our 10th county record. The Phoebe was first noted on 16 Feb (EFI) and last seen on 3



Common Tern  
Brooke Miller



Solitary Sandpiper  
Garrett Lau



Lesser Black-backed Gull  
Garrett Lau

Apr (GLk), which is now the latest date we have for a wintering Eastern Phoebe. The male **Vermilion Flycatcher** returned to J Grant CP on 8 Mar this year (GL). The Flycatcher's arrival date was 13 Apr in 2020, and 23 July in 2019. It hasn't been found later than 20 Sept in the fall. Vermilion Flycatcher has an interesting status in the county—one has wintered, one was a spring transient, and the J Grant bird has been present during three breeding seasons.

**Cassin's Kingbirds** have nested for several years in the far south of the county near the San Benito line, and there have been occasional birds that passed through further north but didn't stay. This year repeated sightings have come in from two locations further to the north, beginning with two Kingbirds on the east side of Morgan Hill near Jackson Park the first week of March (TrP, PDu). On 9 Apr and following dates two Kingbirds were seen at the Harvey Bear Ranch entrance to Coyote Lake CP (EvM).

Four Lesser Black-backed Gulls were seen in the Alviso area, a record number for a winter season.

This year appears to be an irruptive year for Lawrence's Goldfinches—they have been widespread in the flatlands this spring.

The **Cassin's Finches** at the top of Mt Hamilton were present between 5 Nov and 10 Apr (EGa), setting a record for the length of their visit. This year appears to be an irruptive year for **Lawrence's Goldfinches**—they have been widespread in the flatlands this spring. On 12 Apr a female was building a nest at Ed Levin CP (DW). Nest construction was also underway at the Smith Creek fire station in the Diablo Range on 15 Apr (MJM). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** posed briefly for photographs at J Grant CP on 29 Apr (CC). The adult male **Summer Tanager** found along Geng Rd on 6 Dec explored a nearby neighborhood in Palo Alto in search of olives and was seen there on 27 Jan and 15 Feb (MRw). An immature male was photographed in Midtown, Palo Alto on 27 Mar (OZ).

**Observers** Noah Arthur (NoA), Dana Bangs (DB), Caitlin Chock (CC), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Dunten (PDu), Erica Fleniken (EFI), Carter Gasiorowski (CG), Elinor Gates (EGa), Michelle Geary (MGy), Garrett Lau (GL), Greg Luckert (GLk), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Eve Meier (EvM), Brooke Miller (BM), Theresa Plass (TrP), Edward Rooks (ER), Margaret Row (MRw), Steve Tucker (STU), Dave Weber (DW), Oliver Zhang (OZ)



Matthew Dodder  
Quiz Master

TRACK & FEATHER

It's always fun when we can identify a bird's species from a single discovered feather. Still better when we can learn something else about it, such as its sex. This month's mystery feather was found on a dry hill trail, cluttered with rocks, California poppies and Artemisia. This particular location and habitat is not the only place this bird can be found in our county, but let's not give too much away...

Answer will be posted in the next issue of *The Avocet*.

Books

Bird Tracks & Sign:  
A Guide to North American Species  
by Mark Elbroch with Eleanor Marks

**Note** The collection or sale of feathers from native species is prohibited by law. If you find a feather, admire it and leave it behind.

**Answer** (SPRING 2021)

The long parallel tracks on the trail were made by a male **Wild Turkey** dragging its primaries along the ground as he strutted around puffed up and displaying to females. The females do not drag their feathers in this way.

Photo: Tom Grey

