



Field Notes

Please report rarities to
pdunten@gmail.com

Pete Dunten
Santa Clara County eBird Reviewer

Swans to Woodpeckers

A flock of 12 **Tundra Swans** flew over San Jose on 13 Dec, destination unknown (MJM). A female or immature male **Tufted Duck** was spotted on 12 Nov amongst Lesser Scaup on Alviso pond A16 (JPt). With the Scaup greatly outnumbering the Tufted Duck, looking for it was like searching for Waldo in a 'Where's Waldo?' illustration. The Tufted Duck is the first in the county since the winter of 2004/2005. It has remained into January. A **White-winged Scoter** paused on pond A4 from 6 – 7 Dec (COV, m. ob.). One was also found on Alviso pond A11 on 6 Jan (RWR). A **Red-necked Grebe** was captured on camera at Coyote Lake on 5 Jan (HF). A pair of **Sandhill Cranes** flew over Portola Valley on 26 Dec (PCI & RCI). Most of our records are of flyover Cranes; the longest-staying individual spent close to three weeks in and near Thompson Creek during the winter of 2010/2011.

Our second **Ruff** of the fall was seen at the Gold St & Elizabeth St pond on 7 Nov (MDo) and at the State St and Spreckles Ave pond on 8 Nov (FV). A **Curlew Sandpiper** at Palo Alto Baylands on 20 Dec was a nice surprise found during the Palo Alto CBC (MMR). The sandpiper has remained through January; is the first to overwinter; and represents only the 6th county record. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** on 31 Dec at Ogier Ponds was a nice find and the first of the winter (CG). A **Common Loon** was on Shoreline Lake, occasionally dodging kayaks, between 12 Nov and 22 Dec (LKo, m. ob.). The long-staying **Brandt's Cormorant** on Shoreline Lake was last reported on 19 Dec. The Cormorant arrived on 9 Aug and holds the record for length of stay in the county. A **Rough-legged Hawk** on 29 Oct along Canada Rd in the south county unfortunately moved on rather than stay (MJM).

The **Williamson's Sapsucker** at Vasona CP continued through January after arriving on 4 Oct. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was also found at Vasona CP on 7 Dec (COV), and it too has stayed through January. A **Red-naped Sapsucker** posed for photographs at Ulistac NA on 1 Nov (EFI) and 3 Nov (PLa). This was the second Red-naped Sapsucker found this winter; neither bird has been seen again. A **Lewis's Woodpecker** at Monte Bello OSP participated in the Palo Alto CBC on 20 Dec (DPY et al.). Lewis's Woodpeckers occur infrequently in the Santa Cruz Mountains.



Harris's Sparrow
Betty DeLuco, Bob McNamara



Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Bob Reiling



Curlew Sandpiper
Barry Langdon-Lassagne

Flycatchers to Grosbeaks

Single **Hammond's Flycatchers** were found at two locations, one in the late fall on 6 Nov in Henry Coe SP (FxC) and one wintering along the Guadalupe River above Ulistac NA beginning on 10 Jan (fide eBird). Also wintering along that stretch of the Guadalupe River was an **Eastern Phoebe**, first noted on 8 Jan (TKP). A migrant **Tropical Kingbird** was seen at the edge of pond A4 in Sunnyvale on 29 Oct (PW). Tropical Kingbirds historically were found in one of every three years. One to two have wintered in the vicinity of Byxbee Park, the Duck Pond at Palo Alto Baylands, and Geng Rd for the past three winters. One was reported at Palo Alto Baylands on 1 Oct, followed by a gap until 8 Nov when one was seen on the San Mateo County side of San Francisquito Creek (DPe), then two were seen at the Duck Pond on 13 Nov (EdP). One to two have been reported near Geng Rd through January. **Cassin's Kingbirds** were found in the south county in both November and January. The late fall records include one along Canada Rd on 29 Oct (MJM) and one in a Gilroy neighborhood west of Hwy 101 on 10 Nov (AP). January records include three locations, with one Kingbird at the Gilroy SCRWA on 6 Jan (MJM), two west of Hwy 101 on 9 Jan (AP), and one along San Felipe Rd on 13 Jan (GL). A **Townsend's Solitaire** at Sanborn CP delighted many observers in January after being discovered on 11 Jan (BM). A **Harris's Sparrow** at Palo Alto Baylands on 14 Nov (BtD & BbD) was the first in the county since 2013. It unfortunately was a one-day wonder.

Wilson's Warblers occasionally overwinter. Whether these are locally breeding birds or birds from more northerly populations is unknown—we simply don't have good photo documentation. A Wilson's Warbler was briefly seen on 6 Jan along the Guadalupe River above Ulistac NA (WGB). Another was found along the Penetencia Creek trail at the groundwater recharge ponds on 16 Jan (JPa). That individual was found again on 22 Jan and photographed (GL, SW), and the photos suggest it was from a more northerly breeding population, perhaps *pusilla* (fide PP). Documentation of more wintering Wilson's Warblers could be a challenging project, given their tendency to constantly be in motion. The theme of this installment of the Field Notes which stands out is that observers are successfully picking out and identifying uncommon birds even when the identification isn't straightforward. So it is fitting to end with a pair of Grosbeaks. A female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was photographed at a feeder in a Los Altos neighborhood on 4 Dec and as late as 18 Dec (AnH, RWR). The same feeder attracted a female **Black-headed Grosbeak** on 17 Dec and later dates into January (AnH).

Observers Pamela Clark (PCI), Robert Clark (RCI), Felix Cloutier (FxC), Betty DeLuco (BtD), Bob DeLuco (BbD), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Erica Fleniken (EFI), Howard Friedman (HF), Carter Gasiorowski (CG), Ann Hep (AnH), Lena Kolesnikova (LKO), Peter LaTourrette (PLa), Garrett Lau (GL), Mike



Mystery Feather
Matthew Dodder

Matthew Dodder
Quiz Master

TRACK & FEATHER

The key to feather identification is *context*—in other words, where was the feather found? In this case, the mystery feather was found on Limantour Beach in Point Reyes in December. It was a gray and windy, post-Christmas weekend, and we found this delicate feather embedded in the sand, just a few yards from the surf.

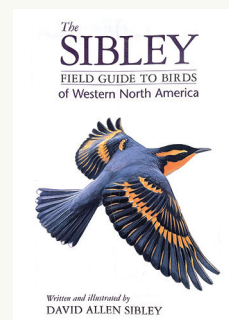
Notice the two small white dots at the tip of the two inch long feather. If you think you know, let me know. Include a short description of how you arrived at your answer. Email director@scvas.org. Answer will be posted in the next issue of *The Avocet*.

Books

Bird Feathers:
A Guide to North American Species
by S. David Scott & Casey McFarland

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 (WINTER 2022)
Varied Thrush (secondary feather, right wing). **Image:**
Cover of Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America



Mammoser (MJM), Brooke Miller (BM), Chris Overington (COv), Janna Pauser (JPa), Andy Pedler (AP), Don Pendleton (DPe), Ed Perry (EdP), James Petersen (JPt), Devin Peyton (DPy), Tracy K Pham (TKP), Peter Pyle (PP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Frank Vanslager (FV), Pingang Wang (PW), Susan Weinstein (SW)