

Field Notes

(October-November 2016)

by Pete Dunten

Geese through Terns

The high counts of **Greater White-fronted Geese** at the four locations they occurred were 25 over the Alviso salt ponds on 5 Oct (TR), nine at Grant Lake in J Grant CP on 6 Oct (OHo), twelve along Bailey Ave in Coyote Valley on 12 Oct (RWR), and two at Byxbee Park on 22 Nov (PDU). **Cackling Geese** have not arrived in any numbers yet, with singles at Ed Levin CP on 10 and 11 Nov (KP, DZ) and at De Anza Park on 21 Nov (JPa). **Snow** and **Ross's Geese** have also been represented by single birds to date. A Snow Goose was at Byxbee Park on 18 Oct (RA, DW) and a Ross's Goose was at Adobe Creek on 26 Oct (MSh) and nearby at the Shoreline Park kite-flying area on 23 Nov (BJ). A male **Common x Barrow's Goldeneye** returned to the Los Capitancillos Ponds for its tenth winter on 25 Nov (JPa). The high count of **White-faced Ibis** this fall migration was forty over Don Edwards NWR on 12 Oct (RQ). Two **Ferruginous Hawks** arrived at their winter quarters along Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley on 9 Oct (BSw, JRC). **Broad-winged Hawks** on migration tend not to linger, and some luck is involved in any sighting. One was over Palo Alto on 12 Oct (JY). The fall passage of **Pectoral Sandpipers** started in late Aug and finished in Oct with two at New Chicago Marsh on 18 Oct (RWR) and one on 19 Oct (m. ob.). The **Stilt Sandpiper** in New Chicago Marsh was found again on 10 Oct (RWR), the only sighting during the period. The **Ruff** in New Chicago Marsh was sighted again on 15 Oct (LL) and several times between 8 Nov and 15 Nov (m. ob.). The first **Mew Gulls** of the winter reached the South Bay on 12 Nov (WGB) when three were at Alviso Salt Pond A12. A12 also hosted an

adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** between 11 and 13 Nov (NoA, BT, GZ). Lesser Black-backed Gulls have stayed for several months in previous winters, something to keep in mind as we approach the Audubon Christmas Bird Count season. **Caspian** and **Elegant Terns** stayed well into Nov, with six Caspian Terns at Alviso Salt Pond A12 on 17 Nov (RJ) and one remaining on 24 Nov (RCa). Thirteen Elegant Terns were still present on 26 Nov at Alviso Salt Pond A16 (WBr, JBr) and seven were in the Alviso area on 27 Nov (MMR, RJ, WBr). There are Northern California records for Elegant Terns in Dec but no records in the South Bay.

Owls through Flickers

The first **Short-eared Owl** of the winter was over the marsh adjacent to Alviso Salt Pond A14 on 5 Oct (TR) and the second was over Alviso Slough adjacent to Salt Pond A9 on 12 Nov (WGB). A **Common Poorwill** in a business park in Sunnyvale near the bay on 3 Nov was at an unusual location on an unusually late date (PSo). Even more surprising was a late **Nighthawk sp.** at Uvas Reservoir on 11 Nov (JF). The mystery of where many of our wintering **White-throated Swifts** roost was solved on 16 Nov when 75 were seen entering their night quarters on Stanford campus (RFu). The spectacle was observed again on 29 Nov when one bird of the group failed to negotiate the restricted entrance and headed elsewhere for the night (RFu). One hummingbird in addition to Anna's can be found in the county at any time of year. An adult male **Costa's Hummingbird** visited the fountain in a Los Gatos backyard between 25 Oct and 15 Nov (KB). **Red-naped Sapsuckers** returned for the winter at traditional locations, one at Almaden Lake Park on 12 Oct (JPa) and one at Ed Levin CP on 29 Oct (GL). On 7 Nov, two female Red-naped Sapsuckers were visiting the same

trees at Ed Levin CP (GL). **Yellow-shafted Northern Flickers**, winter visitors to our area, were seen at Ulistac NA on 1 Oct (WP), Sunnvale Baylands on 13 Oct (MMR), and a Los Gatos yard on 6 and 7 Nov (KB).



Gray Flycatcher by Garrett Lau

Flycatchers through Blackbirds

A **Gray Flycatcher** noted on 11 Nov at Sunnyvale Baylands (PKe, RKe) stayed through the end of the period and photographs have given us glimpses of the progress of the hatch-year flycatcher's first prebasic molt. In photos showing the dorsal side of the flycatcher, the molt of the central pair of tail feathers can be followed, as well as the adventitious replacement of one of the outer tail feathers. Gray Flycatchers rarely winter this far north; the Gray Flycatcher wintering in Alameda County in 2009 – 2010 was only the third recorded for Northern California. Other birds staying late and potentially through the winter were three **Barn Swallows** at the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin on 30 Nov (MDo), another on the same date in Alviso near the northeast corner of Salt Pond A15 (WGB), and single **House Wrens** at Coit Lake in Henry Coe SP on 19 Nov (JY, AL) and at Ulistac NA as late as 21 Nov (PW). A few **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** often winter, and they were noted at four locations in Nov. Two were at Santa Teresa CP on 4 Nov (JPa), one was at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) on 20 Nov (AR), one was at

Field Notes *cont'd*

Calero Reservoir on 24 Nov (PDU), and one was south of Matadero Creek below Hwy 101 on 26 Nov (WGB). A **Phainopepla** delighted observers at Guadalupe Oak Grove Park between 13 and 19 Nov (JPa, m. ob.). Phainopeplas spent part of last winter in the park, although they were not detected until late in Dec last year. The **Northern Waterthrush** at the Charleston Road Marsh was noted only once, on 22 Oct (PLa). The nice collection of fall vagrant eastern warblers from Sept grew in Oct with the addition of a **Cape May Warbler** at the Palo Alto WTP from 15 to 17 Oct (SCR, m. ob.) and a **Magnolia Warbler** at Sunnyvale Baylands on 12 Oct (PKe, CWf).



Cape May Warbler by Thy Bun

Those were the second and ninth county records, respectively. The Cape May Warbler took advantage of a termite flight during its brief visit. While **Palm Warblers** don't occur every year, this fall and winter have already yielded several. The first to arrive, on 6 Oct at Lake Cunningham (JPa), stayed only through 8 Oct (m. ob.). Another turned up on 6 Nov at Charleston Slough (RLw) and two were photographed together there on 11 Nov (OM). On 21 Nov one was found at New Chicago Marsh (RWR), and two were nearby at the Don Edwards NWR EEC from 23

to 27 Nov (AR, m. ob.). Additional warblers that might stay for the winter included single **Black-throated Gray Warblers** at Ulistac NA on 5 Nov (KON) and at J Grant CP on 25 Nov (AMc) and a **Wilson's Warbler** at the CCFS on 20 Nov (AR). A spiffy hatch-year **Clay-colored Sparrow** visited Foothill College in Sunnyvale between 8 and 13 Nov (ARu, m. ob.). A **Slate-colored Fox Sparrow** at the Don Edwards NWR EEC on 3 Nov was a nice find (AR). A **Swamp Sparrow** was netted at the CCFS on 9 Nov (JSc), and closer to the bay at Palo Alto Baylands one was seen on 13 and 15 Nov (RJ, GL, ChJ). **Slate-colored Juncos** augment our local population of Oregon Juncos in the winter; one was at Sunnyvale Baylands on 13 Nov (EGo) and another at Lake Cunningham on 23 Nov (WGB). The first **White-throated Sparrow** to arrive for the winter was one seen at Sunnyvale Baylands on 9 Oct (CWf) and again on 13 Oct (PKe). **Western Tanagers** remaining into Nov included one along Uvas Creek in Gilroy on 1 Nov (JMn et al.), one at Ulistac NA on 7 Nov (PB), and one at Santa Clara University on 12 Nov (JVs). **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** continued to be present at two locations, with one staying at the Sunnyvale WPCP until 2 Oct (VT) and two along Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley until 14 Oct (MJM).



Clay-colored Sparrow by Garrett Lau

Observers: Robin Agarwal (RA), Noah Arthur (NoA), Patrick Baglee (PB), Jim Brooks (JBr), Will Brooks (WBr), Bill Bousman (WGB), Karen Burnson (KB), Richard Carlson (RCa), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Dunten (PDU), John Fox (JF), Rob Farrow (RFu), Eric Goodill (EGo), Owen Holt (OHo), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Chris Johnson (ChJ), Bob Juhl (BJ), Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKe), Peter LaTourrette (PLa), Garrett Lau (GL), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Robert Lewis (RLw), Louise Liou (LL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Jeff Manker (JMn), Amy McDonald (AMc), Oscar Moss (OM), Kitty O'Neil (KON), Kathryn Parker (KP), Janna Pauser (JPa), William Pelletier (WP), Rodolfo Quinio (RQ), Rob Reiling (RWR), John Rice-Cameron (JRC), Alex Rinkert (AR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Tobias Rohmer (TR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Andrew Rush (ARu), Josh Scullen (JSc), Mike Shafto (MSh), Pete Sole (PSo), Byron Swift (BSw), Vivek Tiwari (VT), Bob Toleno (BT), Jason Vassallo (JVs), Pingang Wang (PW), Dave Weber (DW), Christine Wolfe (CWf), James Yurchenco (JY), David Zittin (DZ), Gina Zolotar (GZ)

Please send notice of rarities to
Pete Dunten via email at
pdunten@gmail.com