

Field Notes

(April-May 2017)

by Pete Dunten

Geese through Skimmers

A pair of **Greater White-fronted Geese** stayed near the Palo Alto Golf Course into April, with sightings on 2 Apr (WGB) and 21 Apr (DPe). **Cackling Geese** remained in the area about a week longer, with singles noted at Los Capitancillos Ponds on 28 Apr (STu), Almaden Lake on 29 Apr (MMR et al.), and Shoreline Lake on the same date (MMR et al.). A **Snow Goose** at the Palo Alto Golf Course on 1 Apr (RFu et al.) was the last to depart. A pair of **Northern Pintail** at New Chicago Marsh and two pair of **Redhead** at Alviso Salt Pond A16 were found on 22 May (both MJM). Paired Pintail and Redhead have been sighted into June (m. ob.). Both species have nested in previous years, though the tendency of Redhead to lay eggs in other duck's nests complicates tracking their success. The most surprising find among the ducks were two **Long-tailed Ducks** on Alviso Salt Pond A14 on 2 – 3 Apr (MMR, m. ob.). They prefer coastal waters and have not been spotted in the county since the winter of 2011. Rounding out the ducks, a survey of the bayside salt ponds on 29 May turned up three **Common Goldeneye** (including a pair), a **Bufflehead**, and a **Red-breasted Merganser** (MMR, MJM, RJ). A Bufflehead was also present at the Los Capitancillos Ponds as late as 23 May (GL). A **Common Loon**, apparently content to stay for the summer, arrived at the Los Capitancillos Ponds on 22 May (STu) and has stayed into June (m. ob.). A lone **Cattle Egret** visited the Gilroy SCRWA on 27 Apr (MJM) and stayed through 2 May (DN). **Swainson's Hawks** have nested in Coyote Valley since 2013, and two arrived at Coyote Valley OSP on 1 Apr (WP). Three Swainson's Hawks, likely migrants, were sighted further south along Gilroy Hot Springs Road and San Felipe Road on 22 Apr (MDo et al.). **Black Rails** continued their exploration of the South Bay, with one heard at Charleston Slough between 25 Mar (ChJ) and 20 Apr (m. ob.). A few **Semipalmated Plovers** have stayed in New Chicago Marsh as summer approaches, rather than migrate north. Two were seen on 29 May (RJ). Single migrant **Solitary Sandpipers** stopped at one of the SCVWD Ponds from 15 to 19 Apr (JPa, GL) and at Thompson Creek near Tully on 29 Apr (JPa,

KB). Spring migration also brought a **Ruddy Turnstone** to Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 3 May (DW), where it rested and refueled through 7 May (RJ) before moving on. No Wilson's Phalaropes were found this spring. They typically pass through on migration and are found during the spring in four years of every five. Gulls remaining in the area longer than expected included a **Mew Gull** at Don Edwards NWR on 29 Apr (MMR et al.) and a **Glaucous Gull** that moved between Alviso Salt Pond A16 and New Chicago Marsh as late as 6 May (MJM). The number of **Black Skimmers** in the South Bay increased to two on 1 Apr (SG), and two were seen at Charleston Slough on 6 Apr (GZ) and Shoreline Lake on 14 Apr (FV).

Nighthawks through Kingbirds

A **Nighthawk** at Ogier Ponds on 18 May (SCR) was intriguing. The heavy winter rains this year and subsequent high flow of water in Coyote Creek may have left gravel beds along the creek. Lesser Nighthawks are known to have nested on gravelly areas along Coyote Creek early in the last century. **Vaux's Swifts** returned on 7 Apr, when one was over Los Gatos Creek CP (JVs) and more arrived on 8 Apr,

pass over the Loma Prieta Saddle in April, with thirteen tallied on 20 Apr together with thirteen Rufous/Allen's Hummingbirds, and five counted on 29 Apr together with eighteen Rufous/Allen's (all AR, with NL on 29 Apr). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** at Casa de Fruta on 29 Apr was one of the few recent records outside the San Antonio Valley (SCR). The first arrivals of **Olive-sided Flycatcher** on 28 Apr (GL, WP, KON) and **Western Wood-Pewee** on 19 Apr (AA, JA) were both outside of Gilroy on the edge of the Santa Cruz Mountain Range. The second Olive-sided Flycatcher noted was in the Diablo Range east of Mount Hamilton on 3 May (MHo). The spring movement of **Willow Flycatchers** was marked by a single sighting at Monte Bello OSP on 29 May (GHa). Eight reports of **Hammond's Flycatchers** at six locations are about average with respect to the number of spring migrants. The first noted was at Gilroy Hot Springs and Canada Roads on 8 Apr (MJM) and the last was at Loma Prieta on 19 May (WBr, JVs). A **Say's Phoebe** at the end of Marsh Road on 23 Apr (BH et al.) was late for a wintering bird and may be one of the phoebes that stays to attempt nesting in the county. The first **Ash-**



Plumbeous Vireo by Richard Jeffers

when one was noted at Guadalupe Oak Grove Park (JPa) and one or more were at Calero Reservoir (LM et al.). **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were not found until 21 Apr (WGB), when two males were seen along Los Gatos Creek upstream of Meridian Avenue. Loma Prieta was once again the most reliable spot to detect **Calliope Hummingbirds** on migration. Singles were there on 25 Apr (DN) and 29 Apr (AR, NL). Good numbers of **Rufous Hummingbirds** continued to

throated Flycatchers to return were one at Henry Coe SP on 4 Apr (BK) and another near Chesbro Reservoir on 5 Apr (JPa). **Cassin's Kingbirds** faithfully returned to their two known nesting locations in the South County. One was along San Felipe Road on 5 Apr (DN, RWR, MJM), two were there on 29 Apr (SCR), and two were along the entrance road to the Recology Pacheco Pass Landfill on 29 Apr (SCR).

Field Notes *cont'd*

Vireos through Blackbirds

The first eastern vagrant to arrive at the tail end of migration on 23 May was a **White-eyed Vireo** along the Lower Berryessa Creek Trail (AF). The vireo called attention to itself with its distinctive song. This county-first record was unfortunately a one-day wonder. Another rare vireo visited the county on 9 Apr (RJ, MJM) and also stayed for only a day. The **Plumbeous Vireo** at Overfelt Gardens was the eighth county record. A congress of 115 **Common Ravens** in Metcalf Canyon on 28 May was a noteworthy high count (MMR). Single **Red-breasted Nuthatches** in a Los Altos neighborhood on 18 May (PDu) and at Cuesta Park in Mountain View on 20 May (DZ) were interesting. Red-breasted Nuthatches are known to nest in the Santa Cruz Mountains but not elsewhere in the county. **Pygmy Nuthatches** were present in a Los Altos neighborhood through May as well, with a high count of two on several dates (JT). In addition to the regularly reported **Canyon Wrens** at the Coyote Lake Dam, one was heard singing at Alum Rock Park on 7 and 16 May (DWn, NT). The first **Swainson's Thrushes** were a single bird at Monte Bello OSP on 29 Apr (MMR et al.) and two along Llagas Creek near Bloomfield Avenue on 1 May (GZ). It is not hard to believe the **Northern Waterthrush** found at Ulistac NA on 4 May (ChJ) was the same individual seen this winter on 20 Jan (RJ), given the reclusive habits of the species. Most of our migrant **Nashville Warblers** were reported from eastern parts of the county. One was at Joseph Grant CP on 17 Apr (WGB), two were at Pacheco SP on 29 Apr (SCR), another at Henry Coe SP on 1 May (MJM), and two more were noted crossing a ridge east of Mount Hamilton on 3 May (MHo). Nashvilles at other locations included one at the Loma Prieta Saddle on 29 Apr (AR, NL) and one at Rancho Canada del Oro on 14 May (AW). Another reclusive warbler, **MacGillivray's**, returned on 27 Apr when one was heard singing along the Los Alamitos Creek Trail (SMi). Single MacGillivray's Warblers were also found at Pacheco SP on 29 Apr (SCR), Pichetti Ranch OSP on 3 May (MJM), a ridge east of Mount Hamilton on 3 May (MHo), Santa Clara University on 13 May (JVs), Rancho Canada del Oro on 14 May (AW), and along Llagas Creek near Monterey Avenue on 17 May (SCR). The first **Yellow Warbler** of

the spring was on territory in Coyote Valley at the Laguna Avenue Bridge over Fisher Creek on 5 Apr (JPa). The county's first spring arrival in 2015 was at the same location.

Valley along Palm Avenue from 4 - 7 Apr (GZ, DN, m. ob.), and single blackbirds were seen briefly flying over Casa de Fruta on 29 Apr (SCR) and Ulistac NA on 4 May (ChJ).



Indigo Bunting by Melissa Kung

Hermit Warblers occurred widely throughout the county on migration, with the first noted on 6 Apr at the SCVWD HQ (MMA). High counts occurred on 29 Apr when six were at the Loma Prieta Saddle (AR, NL), on 14 May when four were at Mount Hamilton (WBr, JVs), and on 20 May at Loma Prieta when five were tallied (WBr, JBr). **Yellow-breasted Chats** made themselves heard along Llagas Creek near Bloomfield on 1 May (GZ) and along Alamitos Creek Trail on 19 May (JPa). Neither Chat was heard again on subsequent dates. A **Grasshopper Sparrow** nest with four eggs near Santa Teresa CP on 6 Apr was a serendipitous find (SCR). The 6 Apr date is the earliest date we have for a nest containing eggs. A **Lazuli Bunting** brought a splash of color to Santa Teresa CP on 8 Apr (DN), the first sighting of the year. On 3 May, which must have been a favorable day for migration, 59 Lazuli Buntings passed a ridge east of Mount Hamilton (MHo). A male **Indigo Bunting** provided nice photo opportunities near Ed Levin CP on 28 May (MKu) and into June (RJ). Indigo Buntings occur about one year in every two during the late spring and summer. A male **Blue Grosbeak** found on 21 May (WBr) along the Pajaro River in the southernmost part of the county has also remained into June (DN). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** passing through the county stopped in Coyote

Observers: Amir Avnit (AA), Julie Avnit (JA), Bill Bousman (WGB), Jim Brooks (JBr), Will Brooks (WBr), Karen Burnson (KB), Pete Dunten (PDu), Andrew Ford (AF), Rob Furrow (RFu), Sue Gragg (SG), Garth Harwood (GHa), Bob Hirt (BH), Marcel Holyoak (MHo), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Chris Johnson (ChJ), Bryan Kett (BK), Melissa Kung (MKu), Garrett Lau (GL), Nicholas Levandosky (NL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Michael Martin (MMA), Steve Miller (SMi), Lisa Myers (LM), David Nickerson (DN), Kitty O'Neil (KON), William Pelletier (WP), Don Pendleton (DPe), Rob Reiling (RWR), Alex Rinkert (AR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Nancy Teater (NT), Jack Tomlin (JT), Steve Tucker (STu), Frank Vanslager (FV), Jason Vassallo (JVs), Dave Weber (DW), Dan Wenny (DWn), Andrea Wuenschel (AW), David Zittin (DZ), Gina Zolotar (GZ)

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