

# Field Notes

*(August-September 2017)*

by Pete Dunten

## Geese through Terns

The first **Greater-white Fronted Geese** to return were three at Penetencia Creek Park on 28 Sept (RWR). A female **Blue-winged Teal** with five ducklings on 21 Aug was a nice find at Charleston Slough (GL). Although teal are present year-round in the county, this is only the second time breeding has been documented. A raft of 27 **Common Mergansers** on Shoreline Lake on 22 Aug was unexpected (GL); groups of the mergansers this large are typically found on our reservoirs after the

Waterbird Pond. A single **Solitary Sandpiper** was at the Mountain View Forebay on 2 Sept (WGB). **Black Turnstones** are found about one year in two during the fall. Five Black Turnstones at Charleston Slough on 14 Aug (WBr) tied the county record for highest count in a day. Another was seen on Alviso Salt Pond A17 on 26 Aug (SPz). The **Little Stint** found in New Chicago Marsh at the end of July remained through 1 Aug (MJM, m. ob.). The southward passage of **Semipalmated Sandpipers** which started in early July continued through the end of August, with sightings at New Chicago marsh, Charleston Slough, and the Palo Alto FCB. Singles were seen in New Chicago Marsh through

at the CCFS Waterbird Pond from 4 Sept to 6 Sept (MJM, MMR, m. ob.). While fall shorebird migration can be spectacular, bringing thousands of birds to the South Bay, it is also a good time of year to look for uncommon gulls. A **Franklin's Gull** resting on Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 25 Aug was a nice find (RFk). **Elegant Tern** numbers increased in Aug and Sept, with high counts of fifty on 17 Aug on Salt Pond A2E (FV) and seventy at Charleston Slough and adjacent Pond A1 on 11 Sept (GL). Up to five were still present on the last day of Sept at the Sunnyvale WPCP (RFu et al.). A **Common Tern** at Salt Pond A2E on 2 Aug was only the second found this fall (WBr). The number of **Least Terns** staging on Salt Pond A2E tapered from twenty on 2 Aug (WBr) to one on 25 Aug, the last date they remained in the South Bay (WGB). A southward-bound **Black Tern** also visited A2E between 9 Aug (DW) and 13 Aug (m. ob.).



Chestnut-sided Warbler by Jason Vassallo

breeding season. **White-faced Ibis** visited New Chicago marsh on three dates, with 14 on 26 Aug (FV, m. ob.) and ten on both 1 Sept (MJM) and 29 Sept (GL). A **Swainson's Hawk** over Campbell on 27 Aug (LM) was the only one recorded during the period. A group of 24 **Sandhill Cranes** on the move were over Monte Bello OSP on 23 Sept (JY, AL), and on the opposite side of the county, two were at Newby Island on 26 Sept (VH). Fall brought **Lesser Yellowlegs** in impressive numbers, first eight at the Palo Alto FCB on 18 Aug (WBr), followed by counts of 29 (MJM, MMR) and 28 (MJM) on 4 and 5 Sept at the CCFS

26 Aug (SCR). The high count was three at the Palo Alto FCB on 18 Aug (WBr). The first **Baird's Sandpiper** heading south was along the edge of Pond A3W on 12 Aug (PhB). One was found at the Palo Alto FCB on multiple dates between 16 Aug (JL) and 21 Aug (m. ob.). Numbers of **Red Knots** this fall were low, with singles at the San Francisquito Creek mouth on 9 Aug (WBr) and 5 Sept (WGB) and a group of five on a closed refuge levee on 27 Aug (MMR, MJM). Some years hundreds of knots are noted in the South Bay in the fall. Single **Stilt Sandpipers** stopped at Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 21 Aug (DW) and

## Swifts through Pipits

Fall migration brought the spectacle of hundreds of **Vaux's Swifts** in the air over Los Capitancillos Ponds late in the day on 30 Aug (JPa). Fall also ushers in arriving birds that winter here. The first **Red-breasted Sapsucker** of the season was at Ulistac NA on 12 Sept (SMn, CLa, BM). The first **Prairie Falcon** in Coyote Valley was one along Laguna Ave on 8 Aug (JnM). The second arrival in the lowlands was one at Ed Levin CP on 20 Aug (WHS). The first **Merlins** to arrive were one at Shoreline Lake on 19 Sept (RBU) and one at Stevens Creek CP on 28 Sept (FV). **Willow Flycatchers** were widely reported beginning on 20 Aug when one was at Almaden Reservoir (JPa). One to three were found on many dates through the end of Sept. Fall migration brought a **Purple Martin** to Palo Alto Baylands on 4 Sept (GL). **Bank Swallows** passed through the county on their way south, with singles stopping at Charleston Slough on 18 Aug (WGB) and 8 Sept (GL). Returning **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were noted on 19 Sept at Pearson-Arastradero Preserve (RBU) and on 20 Sept outside of Gilroy

## Field Notes *cont'd*

(JMy). A **Townsend's Solitaire** along the Grizzly Flat Trail in the Santa Cruz range near the western edge of the county on 27 Sept was the earliest to arrive in the fall (AR). A **Sage Thrasher** on a closed refuge levee on 19 Sept was also the earliest fall arrival for the county (AR, ES). The first **American Pipits** to arrive were two at Don Edwards NWR on 16 Sept (JVs).

### Warblers through Pine Siskin

Warbler migration is well underway. On 4 Sept a **Northern Waterthrush's** distinctive calls were heard and recorded at Ulistac NA (ChJ). A **Tennessee Warbler** was another drop-in at Ulistac NA on 12 Sept (ChJ, BM, SMn, CLa). Single **Nashville Warblers** were at the Don Edwards EEC on 31 Aug (WGB), at West Valley College on 13 Sept (OA), and along the Guadalupe River Trail near Coleman Road on 24 and 25 Sept (JPa, BM). Two **MacGillivray's Warblers** turned up at the CCFS on 3 Sept (DWn). Single MacGillivray's were found on 12 Sept along Stevens Creek near La Avenida (PKe) and on 16 Sept along the Guadalupe River below Trimble (SCR). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** stopped at Sunnyvale Baylands between 19 Sept (PKe) and 21 Sept (m. ob.). A **Blackpoll** delighted many at Ulistac NA from 28 Sept (PLa) to 30 Sept (m. ob.). An immature **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was at the Stanford Dish on 6 Aug (GL). Our local population is the source of birds seen in August. A few Yellow-rumped Warblers nest in the Santa Cruz range, and some dispersal typically occurs after nesting. The first migrants of the fall were single birds which arrived on 3 Sept at Lake Vasona CP (KWn) and 4 Sept at Ulistac NA (MBu). **Hermit Warblers** were also on the move in August, with four noted at Henry Coe SP on 12 Aug (JAc), one there on 14 Aug (RN), and one at Rancho Canada del Oro on 29 Aug (WGB). **Yellow-breasted Chats** were found on 3 Sept at CCFS (DWn) and on 30 Sept in the Willow Glen neighborhood of San Jose (BM).

The two chats found this fall is about triple the long-term average for fall migrants. A **Green-tailed Towhee** found suitable habitat below Anderson Dam on 8 Sept (SCR). The last year one occurred in the county was 2014. A **Brewer's Sparrow** at the Alviso Marina graced a Big Half Day effort on 17 Sept (MMR et al.) and stayed through 19 Sept (m. ob.). It was the first in the county since 2011. Five

**Observers:** Jeff Acuff (JAc), Ozzie Altus (OA), Philip Ball (PhB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Will Brooks (WBr), Mike Buccieri (MBu), Robert Buchsbaum (RBU), Rich Ferrick (RFk), Rob Furrow (RFu), Victoria Heyse (VH), Chris Johnson (ChJ), Garth Harwood (GHa), Winnifred Homer-Smith (WHS), Pat Kenny (PKe), Caroline Lambert (CLa), Peter LaTourrette (PLa), Garrett Lau



Brewer's Sparrow by Jason Vassallo

**Chipping Sparrows** returned to the native plant garden next to TJ Martin Park at the north end of Almaden Valley on 16 Sept (JPa). This marks the eleventh consecutive year Chipping Sparrows have wintered there. A **Black-throated Sparrow** at CCFS on 3 Sept (DWn) was our first fall record. Others have been found in December and stayed for a longer time. A **Fox Sparrow** outside Gilroy on 23 Aug was an early arrival (JMy). The next noted were two at Don Edwards NWR on 16 Sept (JVs). A male **Summer Tanager** brightened Chitactac Adams Heritage Park outside Gilroy on 17 Sept (WP, KON). Seventeen **Red Crossbills** flew over Monte Bello OSP on 5 Sept (GHa). Crossbills were abundant the winter of 2015-2016 and absent the winter of 2016-2017. **Pine Siskins** are also irruptive, and were scarce the winter of 2016-2017. This fall there were reports of one to three Siskins from five locations between 14 Sept and 25 Sept.

(GL), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Jasen Liu (JL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JnM), Sonny Mencher (SMn), Brooke Miller (BM), Jean Myers (JMy), Lisa Myers (LM), Richard Norton (RN), Kitty O'Neil (KON), Janna Pauser (JPa), William Pelletier (WP), Sergio Perez (SPz), Rob Reiling (RWR), Alex Rinkert (AR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Emma Stevens (ES), Frank Vanslager (FV), Jason Vassallo (JVs), Dave Weber (DW), Kathryn Wendel (KWn), Dan Wenny (DWn), James Yurchenco (JY)

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