

Field Notes

(June-July 2018)

by Pete Dunten

Swans through Least Terns

A single **Mute Swan** arrived on Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 29 Jun and has stayed through the period (LL, m. ob.). Rare summering ducks included single **Canvasbacks** on Pond A1 on 2 Jun (WGB) and on a closed refuge pond on 23 Jun (RJ, MJM, MR). A single **Redhead** was found on 2 Jun on Pond A3W during the Palo Alto Summer Count (fide WGB). Six were counted on closed refuge ponds on 23 Jun (RJ, MJM, MMR). Then on 29 Jun a female Redhead was photographed with five ducklings in tow (LL). The family group was seen in the vicinity of New Chicago Marsh through 12 Jul (MB, STu, RPh, GL). A single Redhead was on Pond A3W on 29 Jul (RJ, MJM). Redhead have not been confirmed breeding since 1984. They were absent during the summer in ten of the twenty years prior to 2012. Since then Redhead have been found every summer, albeit in low numbers. Other summering diving ducks included single **Common Goldeneye** at Sunnyvale WPCP on 24 Jun (MSh) and one on Pond A3W on 29 Jul (MJM, RJ). Two **Red-breasted Mergansers** on 23 Jun were unseasonal, with one on Alviso Salt Pond A16 and one on a closed refuge pond (both MJM, RJ, MMR). Both **Clark's** and **Western Grebes** nested successfully at Calero Reservoir this summer. Western Grebes were seen on nests on 17 Jun (MJM) and 26 Jun (JPa), and a young grebe was present on 16 Jul (JPa). Young Clark's Grebes were with doting parents on 30 Jul (JPa). The **Swainson's Hawk** pair nesting in Coyote Valley also had a good year, with two young seen together with one of the adults on 21 Jul (RPh). A single **Virginia Rail** was found at Sunnyvale WPCP on 6 Jul (JMa). These elusive rails may breed at the WPCP, but conclusive evidence is hard to come by. **Black Rails** were hard to miss in June and July, with one to two at the triangle marsh near Salt Ponds A15 and A17 between 23

– 28 Jun (RJ, EvM, PL, WP), one in Alviso Slough adjacent to Salt Pond A12 on 10 Jul (JC), and as many as five at the Alviso Marina between 30 Jun (PB) and 30 Jul (m. ob.). Remarkably, a **Northern Mockingbird** was heard mimicking Black Rail calls at the Don Edwards NWR EEC on 7 Jul (STu). Shorebird migration got underway in July. A **Black Oystercatcher** wandered into the Alviso area on 24 Jul (LL). The first **Lesser Yellowlegs** of the fall graced New Chicago Marsh

Only one **Elegant Tern** visited the county in July, staying at Pond A2E just long enough to be photographed on 26 Jul (LL). Peak counts occur between mid-August and the first week of November. Dispersing **Least Terns**, on the move following breeding further north in the bay, reached us on 13 Jul when one was spotted at Pond A2E (GL, RPh). The high count through the end of July was five, two adults and three young, on 25 Jul at the same location (WGB).



Black Turnstone by Tom Grey

on 10 Jul (BM). Two **Black Turnstones** roosting with other shorebirds at Palo Alto Baylands on 22 Jul were a nice find (LL). Black Turnstones frequent rocky coasts and do not often visit the South Bay. Single **Ruddy Turnstones** turned up at the Stevens Creek delta on 23 Jul (LL) and on the levee between Alviso Salt Ponds A10/A11 on 29 Jul (RJ, MJM). A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** along the Don Edwards NWR entrance road on 6 Jul (LL) was on schedule. The first fall arrival has been in the first week of July in roughly one-third of the years for which we have records (fide WGB). The shorebird assemblage at Palo Alto Baylands on 22 Jul included two **Red Knots** in addition to the Black Turnstones (LL). The first **Dunlin** of the fall was a lone bird in Crittenden Marsh on 24 Jul (GL).

Swifts through Lawrence's Goldfinch

The June through July period is unusual in that there is overlap between late spring migrants and early fall shorebird migration. A **Black Swift** passed over Black Rd on 1 Jun (BM), the second spring migrant of the year. A migrant **Purple Martin** passed over Henry Coe SP on 10 Jun (MMR, RJ). Another was at Calero Reservoir, not far from their known breeding range in the Santa Cruz Mountains, on 16 Jul (JPa). Two **Bank Swallows** joined the mixed flock of swallows at Alviso Marina CP on 29 Jul (RBk). They are summer visitors in the June – July period in roughly one year in three. Twelve **Cedar Waxwings** at Ulistac NA were the last to depart on 4 Jun (GL). A single Cedar Waxwing

Field Notes *cont'd*

was noted along the Calero Creek Trail on 10 Jul (HM); waxwings are rare in the summer in the county, though they have successfully nested at least once, in 2002. **Phainopepla** is another uncommon summer visitor to the Santa Clara Valley; one was at the Santa Clara Valley Water District in Almaden Valley on 1 Jul (AVe). An **Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warbler** along the Skyline Trail on 5 Jul was singing (WGB). Yellow-rumps nest at elevation along the western edge of the county in the Santa Cruz Mountains. A **White-crowned Sparrow** on 3 Jul at the Don Edwards NWR EEC was unusual given the date (WA). On 13 Jul, a White-crowned Sparrow found at the same location was missing its tail (DN). **Lawrence's Goldfinches** continued to be found at elevation on both sides of the Santa Clara Valley, with notable high counts of eight at Blue Oak Ranch Reserve on 8 Jun (DR) and nine at Loma Prieta on 15 Jul (RPh). At lower elevation, a pair were found in the foothills of the Santa Cruz range at the Stanford Dish on 2 Jun during the Palo Alto Summer Count (WP, GL, KON, SPz, GRy), and two were at Santa Teresa CP on 5 Jun (JRy).



Ruddy Turnstone by Tom Grey

Observers: Will Anderson (WA), Patrick Baglee (PB), Ralph Baker (RBk), Meg Barron (MBa), Bill Bousman (WGB), Jay Carroll (JCa), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Garrett Lau (GL), Louise Liou (LL), Patricia Lynch (PL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Juliana Manoliu (JMa), Hugh McDevitt (HM), Eve Meier (EvM), Brooke Miller (BM), David Nickerson (DN), Kitty O'Neil (KON), Janna Pauser (JPa), William Pelletier (WP), Sergio Perez (SPz), Ryan Phillips (RPh), David Rankin (DR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Jennifer Rycenga (JRy), Gordon Rydquist (GRy), Mike Shafto (MSh), Steve Tucker (STu), Ann Verdi (AVe)

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