



Bird Notes

Please report rarities to
pdunten@gmail.com

Pete Dunten

Santa Clara County eBird Reviewer

Geese to Sandpipers

While **Snow Geese** don't visit the county in the same vast numbers as occur in the Central Valley, single birds and small groups do occasionally stay for the winter. Our 'large' numbers this winter included three immature **Snow Geese** spotted at a small pond in a residential area of Mountain View on 16 Dec (ABt). They stayed through the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on 21 Dec (GZ), and turned up in Sunnyvale and Cupertino, often with Canada Geese, through the end of the period (m. ob.). Thirteen Snow Geese flying over the Stevens Creek delta with two **Ross's Geese** on 21 Dec were the high counts during the period, for both Snow Geese and Ross's Geese (MDo). Another group of three Snow Geese including one adult were at the San Jose/Santa Clara WTP on 2 and 3 Jan (BM, SwS, Vhb).

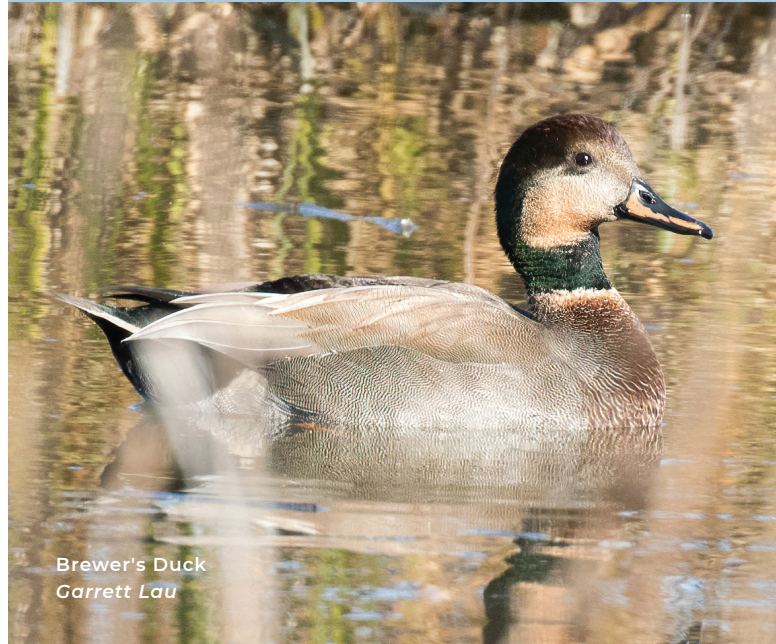
A lone **Brant** forsook the company of its own kind, as well as its usual diet of eel grass, and joined Canada Geese on the green grass at Shoreline Park. It was first seen on 7 Dec (RPh) and has remained through the end of January. This is the 15th county record and first since 2010. Rounding out the geese, a notable 464 **Cackling Geese** flew over Alviso Marina CP on 20 Dec (MMR, SCR). A **Brewer's Duck**, originally named by John James Audubon and now known to be a hybrid **Gadwall x Mallard**, was photographed at Palo Alto Baylands on 14 Dec (GL). **Long-tailed Ducks** don't occur every winter; a single duck on Alviso pond A11 between 16 – 18 Jan was a nice find (MDo).

Red-necked Grebes visit the county every other year on average, though the latest records were in 2016. On 12 Jan one was seen in Alviso Slough near the Alviso Marina boat launch (AW). It has remained through the period and photographers have been able to capture images of the aquatic life the Grebe has been catching in the slough.

The two **Pacific Golden-Plovers** that stopped in New Chicago Marsh in October remained through the end of November, with the last sighting of one on 29 Nov (LPi). Though they overwinter in California, the Golden-Plovers stopping at the south end of the bay rarely stay into January. The **Ruff** in New Chicago Marsh since 12 Aug has stayed through the winter (m. ob.).



Red-tailed x Rough-legged Hawk
Peter Hart



Brewer's Duck
Garrett Lau



Cassin's Finch
Elinor Gates

A late **Pectoral Sandpiper** on migration stopped at Palo Alto Baylands on 10 Nov (StA), representing the tail end of the extraordinary number of Pectoral Sandpipers present this fall.

Cormorants to Tanagers

The two **Brandt's Cormorants** present at pond A4 since the first week of September remained for two months and presumably returned to the coast after the last sighting of one of them on 6 Nov (MMR). **Cattle Egrets** can occur rather unpredictably throughout the year. Two were along Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley on 11 Nov (CVR), one was there on 12 Nov (m. ob.), and they were not seen again.

A **Swainson's Hawk** in Gilroy near the SCRWA on 21 Jan was only the second record for January (ERz). An apparent hybrid **Red-tailed x Rough-legged Hawk** at Monte Bello OSP on 29 Dec was an unusual sighting (PH); there are only a handful of records of this combination in all of North America. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** turned up at Vasona Lake CP on 24 Jan (STu). Whether birds like this arrive late in winter or avoid detection until late in winter is a mystery. **Red-naped Sapsuckers** outnumbered their Yellow-bellied relatives three-to-one this winter, flipping the historical ratio of three-to-one in favor of Yellow-bellied. One Red-naped Sapsucker was at Picchetti Ranch Preserve beginning on 23 Nov (JMa), one on the Stanford campus on 9 Jan (MTh), and one along the Guadalupe River bank at Ulistac NA on 14 Jan (PLa). The last individual is likely the same immature sapsucker first detected on 7 Oct in Ulistac NA, when it lacked the black border surrounding the red throat patch (MKn). It was seen once again in October, then missed until January.

A **Willow Flycatcher** at Sandy Wool Lake in Ed Levin CP between 6 and 20 Dec was our first December record (CG, DWn). A **Tropical Kingbird** put in a brief appearance at the Emily Renzel Wetland on 4 – 5 Nov (ABr). Then beginning on 4 Dec and continuing through the end of January one has been found in the vicinity of the Geng Rd pond on the Palo Alto Municipal Golf Course (DB, m. ob.). With the sighting of a **Cassin's Kingbird** near the SCRWA in Gilroy on 21 Jan (ERz), the Kingbirds have been found in the winter in three of the last four years.

Northern Rough-winged Swallows were found at four locations in December and January. These insectivores have been found in four of the last five winters. As many as five **Cassin's Finches** have been backyard birds at feeders on Mt Hamilton beginning on 4 Nov and continuing through 21 Jan (EGa). More surprisingly, two visited a feeder in a Mountain View neighborhood on the valley floor on 27 Nov (fide eBird).

A **Green-tailed Towhee** was a nice find on 26 Dec along the Calero Creek Trail (WGB). The Towhee, the second found in the county in 2020, has stayed through the end of January. An unusually late **Yellow-breasted Chat** stopped at a bird



Wilson's Warbler
Chris Johnson

SELF-GUIDED FIELD TRIPS

New! SCVAS trip leaders have been developing a series of self-guided field trips. We will pick out a few special places to bird each month based on where you can socially distance and enjoy the best of the birding season.

Visit scvas.org/self-guided-field-trips to see this month's selection. Regular field trips have been suspended but will resume as soon as it is safe to do so.

bath along Summit Rd at 1700 ft elevation on 29 Oct (LKr). 17 October was the previous record for a late migrant. A **Hooded Oriole** in a Santa Clara neighborhood on 7 Jan was unexpected (fide eBird); most are in Central America at this time of year. Two **Summer Tanagers**, both adult males, are spending the winter in the area. One arrived on 31 Oct in Los Gatos near Guadalupe Creek, presumably the same individual that has wintered at this location for three successive years now (JPa). The second was seen on 6 Dec along the edge of the Palo Alto Municipal Golf Course on Geng Rd (BM) and has been enjoyed by many through the end of January (m. ob.).

Observers Noah Arthur (NoA), Stephanie Arthur (StA), Dana Bangs (DB), Antariksh Bothale (ABt), Bill Bousman (WGB), Andrew Bradshaw (ABr), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Carter Gasiorowski (CG), Elinor Gates (EGa), Peter Hart (PH), Vinayak Hebbagil (VHb), Mark Kinsman (MKn), Lisa Krieger (LKr), Garrett Lau (GL), Juliana Manoliu (JMa), Brooke Miller (BM), Janna Pauser (JPa), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Linda Pittman (LPi), Ellie Resendiz (ERz), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Schweta Shidhore (SwS), Michelle Thurber (MTh), Steve Tucker (STu), Chuq Von Rospach (CVR), Dan Wenny (DWn), Andrea Wuenschel (AW)