

A List of Birds Observed on Mt. St. Helena, California

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MOUNT ST. HELENA is a bold chaparral peak that blocks the northern end of Napa Valley. It lies partly in Napa, Sonoma, and Lake counties, and is one of the southernmost high mountains of the northern Coast Range. The peak itself is about 4600 feet in height, and rises far above all the neighboring hills. From Calistoga it appears as a large dome, from the base of which cliffy ridges radiate off in several directions. In between the ridges are deep picturesque canyons, some of which, especially those toward the Napa Valley, are taken up with ranches and vineyards. Timber extends up to a mean altitude of 2400 feet, above which the main covering of the mountain is a rather thick chaparral. On the southwestern half of the peak trees are more or less scattered, there being no very large areas of forest; but on the northeastern half trees are more abundant, and in canyons the stand of timber certainly deserves the name of forest. The woods are very attractive since they are composed of deciduous trees and conifers. The more conspicuous species are the following: Digger Pine (*Pinus sabiniana*), Narrow-cone Pine (*Pinus attenuata*), Yellow Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), Sugar Pine (*Pinus lambertiana*), Douglas Spruce (*Pseudotsuga mucronata*), California Nutmeg (*Tumion californicum*), Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), Poplar (*Populus trichocarpa*), Black Oak (*Quercus californica*), Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), Golden-cup Oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*), Tanbark Oak (*Quercus densiflora*), Blue Oak (*Quercus douglasi*), White Oak (*Quercus garryana*), Valley White Oak (*Quercus lobata*), Mountain Live Oak (*Quercus wislizeni*), Bay (*Umbellularia californica*), Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), Madrone (*Arbutus menziesi*). Such shrubs as the Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus nuttalli*), Azalea (*Azalea occidentalis*), Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* of various species), Hazel (*Corylus rostrata californica*) Wild Grape (*Vitis californicus*) and Poison Oak (*Rhus diversiloba*), form a characteristic part of underbrush. Above the belt of trees the chaparral holds full sway, the following species being largely represented: Chamiso (*Adenostema fasciculatum*), Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus betulifolius*), Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos canescens*, *A. glandulosa*, *A. manzanita*, et *A. stanfordiano*), Fringe Bush (*Garrya fremonti*), Pigeon-berry (*Rhamnus californica*), likewise *Rhamnus ilicifolia*, *Quercus wislizeni* (scrub), *Xylothermia montana*, *Dendromecon rigidum*, *Ceanothus parryi*(?), *C. cuneatus*, *C. foliosus*, *C. velutinus*, *C. cordulatus*(?) (usually in canyons).

The life zones represented on the mountain are two: Upper Sonoran and Transition. They are dove-tailed in a very confusing way. The former rises on hot slopes to at least 2500 feet (and undoubtedly much higher in some places) and is characterized by such plants as: *Pinus sabiniana*, *Quercus douglasi*, *Quercus agrifolia*, *Quercus garryana*, small forms of *Quercus lobata*, and *Vitis californicus*. The Transition below 2500 feet is confined to cool canyons and north slopes, and comprises such species as *Quercus californica*, *Quercus densiflora*, *Quercus chrysolepis*, *Arbutus menziesi*, *Pseudotsuga mucronata*, *Pinus ponderosa*, *Pinus lambertiana*, *Pinus attenuata*, *Tumion californicum*, *Cornus nuttalli*, *Azalea occidentalis*, *Corylus rostrata californica*, and others. The chaparral area is largely Transition, with certain Sonoran elements on the hotter slopes.

Late in summer water becomes scarce and is confined to a comparatively few springs and small seeping streams.

The following notes are based on observations made between August 29 and September 14, 1900. The publication of such a comparatively small list finds its excuse, perhaps, in the locality. Some of the forms on Mt. St. Helena are characteristic of the drier inland districts, while nearly related races are found in the

humid coast belt just to the west. Thus we have closely related but ordinarily rather widely separated races brought close together. Geographical variation within narrow limits of territory is always of interest.

Oreortyx pictus plumiferus(?). PLUMED QUAIL.

This species is found on the upper slopes of the mountains in Transition. Its range overlaps that of *Lophortyx californicus*, which is found on the lower slopes. Unfortunately I did not secure a specimen of this quail, but it seems probable from analogy that the form is referable to *plumiferus*, rather than to *pictus* straight which is found in the humid area near the coast.

Lophortyx californicus vallicolus. VALLEY QUAIL.

This is an Upper Sonoran species which is abundant, particularly among the vineyards. It ranges a short distance into Transition.

Zenaidura macroura. MOURNING DOVE.

Abundant on lower slopes.

Cathartes aura. TURKEY BUZZARD.

Surprisingly common.

Buteo borealis calurus. WESTERN RED-TAIL.

Not infrequently seen. They were particularly noisy.

Buteo lineatus elegans. RED-BELLIED HAWK.

I observed one only.

Aquila chrysaetos. GOLDEN EAGLE.

A pair is reported to nest in some high cliffs near the summit.

Falco sparverius deserticolus. DESERT SPARROW HAWK.

Fairly common.

Megascops asio bendirei(?). CALIFORNIA SCREECH OWL.

I heard the well-known note of the Screech Owl, but saw no birds.

Bubo virginianus pacificus(?). WESTERN HORNED OWL.

I know of this species only from the report of hunters who have long been in the region.

Speotyto cunicularia hypogæa. BURROWING OWL.

This species properly belongs to the valley but it undoubtedly occurs on the lower slopes of the mountain.

Glaucidium gnoma californicum. CALIFORNIA PYGMY OWL.

I did not find this species, but it was very accurately described to me by Mr. D. Patton of the Toll House, who says he has seen the species on the mountain.

Dryobates pubescens gairdneri. GAIRDNER WOODPECKER.

This little woodpecker was not uncommon in the oak woods, Transition.

Melanerpes formicivorus bairdi. CALIFORNIA WOODPECKER.

Common.

Melanerpes torquatus. LEWIS WOODPECKER.

I observed several in the Transition zone.

Colaptes cafer collaris. RED-SHAFTED FLICKER.

Common.

Phalænoptilus nuttalli californicus. DUSKY POOR-WILL.

Several times, during the early evening, I heard the Poor-will's call near Toll House on the Lake County road. In each case it was probably the same bird.

Calypte anna. ANNA HUMMINGBIRD.

Common at Toll House, altitude 2300 feet.

Sayornis saya. SAY PHOEBE.

I collected a single specimen, the only one observed on the mountain.

Contopus richardsoni. WESTERN WOOD PEWEE.

I saw a few on the border between the timber and the chaparral belts.

Empidonax trailli. TRAILL FLYCATCHER.

Common in the Transition Zone.

Pica nuttalli. YELLOW BILLED MAGPIE.

Although this is really a valley bird, it is a species commonly found in the foothill regions, and probably comes up on the lower slopes of the mountain sporadically.

Cyanocitta stelleri frontalis. BLUE-FRONTED JAY.

This is one of the commonest birds on the mountain. It is confined fairly well to the Transition Zone, from which it sometimes makes short sallies down the mountain. This jay is very destructive to corn. I observed a small field which had been ruined by this and the following species. I have compared a specimen from Mt. St. Helena with fairly typical *frontalis*, and with the darker form, *carbonacea*, from the Santa Cruz mountains. I find the St. Helena bird is referable to *frontalis*. This is interesting as showing a tendency toward paleness, though but a short distance from the dark coast forms.

Aphelocoma californica. CALIFORNIA JAY.

Very abundant. This species is characteristic of the Upper Sonoran Zone, whence it ranges into Transition, for some distance.

Sturnella magna neglecta. WESTERN MEADOWLARK.

Lower slopes of mountains and Napa Valley.

Icterus bullocki. BULLOCK ORIOLE.

I saw an old nest, (alt. 2300 ft.), but the birds had left the mountain.

Scolecophagus cyanocephalus. BREWER BLACKBIRD.

This species ranges up on the mountain sporadically. I saw a few, evidently on their way over to Lake County, at 2500 feet, Transition.

Carpodacus mexicanus obscurus. LINNET.

Found around vineyards and ranches in the Upper Sonoran, also in Napa Valley (dilute Lower Sonoran).

Astragalinus psaltria. ARKANSAS GOLDFINCH.

I observed a few on the upper border of timber, flying about in the tall chaparral.

Pipilo maculatus megalonyx. SPURRED TOWHEE.

Abundant.

Pipilo fuscus crissalis. CALIFORNIA TOWHEE.

Common.

Zamelodia melanocephala microrhyncha Grinnell. BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK.

Fairly common in maple and black oak woods.

Piranga ludoviciana. LOUISIANA Tanager.

This species was very abundant in Transition woods. I saw no adult males.

Petrochelidon lunifrons. CLIFF SWALLOW.

A few observed.

Tachycineta thalassina. VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW.

A small flock was observed circling about a large rock on the upper slopes of the mountain. A specimen collected has the first traces of adult feathers on the back. The majority of the flock were apparently immature.

Vireo gilvus swainsoni. WESTERN WARBLING VIREO.

I observed one at close quarters, in a scrub oak, on the north slope of the mountain, alt. 1600 ft.

Vireo huttoni. HUTTON VIREO.

Very common; all that I observed were in the Transition Zone.

Dendroica nigrescens. BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER.

This beautiful warbler was exceedingly common in the Transition Zone. Its favorite haunt was rather open oak trees. I observed as many as a dozen in a single tree and this was no great exception.

Dendroica townsendi. TOWNSEND WARBLER.

I secured two in the Transition Zone. These were evidently migrants.

Wilsonia pusilla pileolata. PILEOLATED WARBLER.
Rather common in cool shady canyons.

Harporhynchus redivivus. CALIFORNIA THRASHER.
Common in the chaparral.

Salpinctes obsoletus. ROCK WREN.

I found this species about the craggy outcrops which are such a characteristic feature of the mountain and its spurs.

Catherpes mexicanus punctulatus. DOTTED CANYON WREN.

One specimen was taken in a rather narrow canyon at the foot of a steep crag. I saw no other birds.

Thryomanes bewicki spilurus. VIGORS WREN.

This species was taken in the open chaparral, where it was apparently common.

Anorthura hiemalis pacifica. WESTERN WINTER WREN.

I found this tiny wren common in the heaviest woods, particularly in dark young growth of the Douglas spruce. Here it seemed to delight in the "spookiest" corners obtainable.

Certhia familiaris occidentalis. CALIFORNIA CREEPER.
A few were observed.

Sitta carolinensis aculeata. SLENDER-BILLED NUTHATCH.
One specimen was taken, evidently a migrant.

Sitta canadensis. RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH.

I observed a small company of these birds working in some young Douglas spruce. One specimen was shot for identification.

Parus inornatus. PLAIN TITMOUSE.
Common.

Parus rufescens. RED-BACKED CHICKADEE.

This species was very common on the mountain during my stay. From the locality one would expect to find *P. r. neglectus*, but the specimen collected has been identified as typical *rufescens* by Dr. A. K. Fisher. Further collecting would probably have revealed true *neglectus*, for I am at present unwilling to admit that all the chickadees were migrants; the specimen collected undoubtedly was.

Chamaea fasciata. PALLID WREN-TIT.

One of the commonest sounds in the chaparral portions of the mountain was the Wren-tit's song. Sometimes they would hop about in the thick chamiso almost within reach of my hand, uttering querulous observations, the white iris of their eyes peering attentively out of the shadows. I have compared this form with *fasciata intermedia* and with *fasciata typica* from southern California, and find it is very close to, if not identical with the latter.

Psaltriparus minimus californicus. CALIFORNIA BUSH-TIT.
I observed several small flocks.

Regulus satrapa olivaceus. WESTERN GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET.
One specimen was taken. I heard them frequently in the tall trees.

Polioptila caerulea obscura. WESTERN GNATCATCHER.

The Gnatcatcher was one of the most characteristic birds of the chaparral slopes. Their songs were continually heard and the birds themselves were frequently seen. Several times when they were flitting straight away, with their usual nonchalant air, I have lost sight of the birds by distance, but continued to see tiny flashes of black and white from their restless tails.

Hylocichla aonalaschkæ sequoiensis (Belding). SIERRA THRUSH.

One specimen was taken in a thick growth of young Douglas Spruces. (Identified by Dr. A. K. Fisher).

Merula migratoria propinqua. WESTERN ROBIN.
Common.

Sialia mexicana occidentalis. WESTERN BLUEBIRD.

I saw a small company of immature birds with one or two old ones feeding in a vineyard.