

watched him awhile; but, pitying the poor Nuthatch lost in this land of starvation, I humanely secured him from further privation. Which even a tender-hearted Audubonist might not have done!

10. **Auriparus flaviceps.** Verdin.

Two specimens were obtained and three others seen, in each case keeping shyly to the cover of the thickest bushes. The only notes heard were faint attenuated ones, like the repeated "tsip, tsip" of the female Anna Hummingbird. Verdins' nests were numerous wherever there were thorny bushes, being situated from one to eight feet above the ground. There were sometimes three in a single bush. These nests are very durably constructed and must last many years, thus accounting for their abundance as compared with their builders. The walls consist of firmly interlaced twigs from the thorn bushes. The nests are flask shaped, resembling miniature cactus wren's nests, but fixed among the supporting branches with the opening rather more downwards than to the side,

11. **Regulus calendula.** Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

A lone ♀ obtained.

12. **Merula migratoria propinqua.** Western Robin.

Two individuals were flushed before sun-rise from the margin of the River.

13. **Sialia mexicana occidentalis.** Western Bluebird.

Two flocks, of 8 and 13 respectively, were noted flying down the valley high overhead.



Some Winter Notes From Marin County, Cal.

BY JOSEPH MAILLIARD, SAN GERONIMO, CAL.

THE PAST winter has been remarkably mild for this vicinity.

We have had abundance of rain but very little cold weather. Instead of periods of frosty mornings, when the registering thermometer would show a minimum of any where between 12° and 22° day after day, there have been but few severe frosts and then only for two or three days at a time. This mildness seems to have affected the bird life to a considerable degree.

Some species which are seldom seen here in winter have been comparatively common. In my list of land birds of Marin County, (THE CONDOR II, No. 3) Thick-billed Sparrows, (*Passerella i. megarhyncha*), and Townsend's Solitaire, (*Myadestes townsendi*) are mentioned as occurring only in very cold winters. The past winter has proved an exception to this rule, as the former species was here in limited numbers and the latter was more numerous than ever before noted. This state of affairs may have been occasioned more by the

heavy snow-fall in the Sierras than by the mildness of the temperature in this locality.

The Western Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes v. montanus*), seems to have been quite common all along the coast this year and several small flocks were noted about here and in San Rafael. Golden-crowned Kinglets (*Regulus s. olivaceus*) have been very numerous and several specimens of each sex have been taken, whereas my last record of this species in midwinter was in 1895. Heretofore observation has led me to believe that most if not all, of the Ruby-crowned Kinglets, (*Regulus calendula*) wintering here were ♂ ♂, as I had never taken a ♀, but this winter has been an exception to this rule also, as the two sexes seem to have been about equally represented.

Owing to the fact that the San Geronimo Valley is usually much colder in winter and spring than the adjacent country on the eastern side of the compassing hills, many spring immigrants

appear on the eastern slope of this range some days before they are seen here. I have heard Lutescent Warblers (*Helminthophila c. lutescens*) for instance two miles east of my house, but over the range, a couple of weeks before hearing them here. This winter however has been so mild that there were practically no local differences in temperature. The buckeye trees leafed out on both sides of the range simultaneously which never happened before in my recollection. In consequence of these unusual conditions this spring the Lutescent Warblers appeared in numbers in this valley without having dallied on the other side of the divide. Before March 6 I had neither heard nor seen a single specimen between here and San Rafael, but on the morning of that day they were piping away merrily on all sides.

Usually they have seemed to drop in by twos and threes, becoming more numerous as spring advanced, but this year they came in a wave. My earliest record before this was on the east side of the range Feb. 15; San Geronimo March 1, of the same year, 1896. It is an open question as to whether the movements of these birds at this time depend upon the temperature itself or upon the food supply as affected by it. On January 26 of this year I noticed near my stable a strange sparrow among a flock of Zonotrichias and Juncos that feed around the buildings all winter. I could not identify it at the moment, but went at once to the house for a gun. On returning I saw through an open window another strange bird which could be nothing else than *Zonotrichia albicollis*. It was on a willow limb overhanging a bank, and too close to shoot even with the auxiliary, but fearing that it might be difficult to find again among the other species I aimed a little to one side and dropped it. Unfortunately it must have been only crippled as it utterly disappeared before I reached the bank down which it fell.

This was an adult bird in apparently

fine plumage. My disappointment was great and being needed elsewhere there was no time to search for the first stranger. However in the afternoon several visits were made to the stable and finally the capture was achieved. This proved to be another *Zonotrichia albicollis* in the first winter plumage and a new record for Marin county.

Another interesting take was that of a specimen of *Passerella* which approaches very closely to *iliaca* proper, having the back somewhat streaked, the wing coverts distinctly tipped with whitish and the breast and lower parts very much lighter than in *unalaschcensis*. I also came upon another still lighter and nearer *iliaca*, while riding through some low brush. This one was not more than six feet from me, but escaped before I could back away far enough to shoot. I have looked for years for intermediates of this sort in this locality, but never found one before.

On Jan 16, a ♂ Ruddy Horned Lark (*Otocoris a. rubra*) was taken on top of our range of hills in open ground and a ♀ Short-eared Owl (*Asio accipitrinus*) in some low brush close by. The latter seemed very much out of place among rocks and chapparal on top of the hills as I had always associated this species with marshes and lowlands.

The California Thrasher, *Harporhynchus redivivus*, was mentioned in my list as having been heard but never seen in this county. On Feb. 27, last I distinctly and unmistakably heard one of these birds singing his best in the midst of a dense mass of chemical on a steep hillside about three miles from my house, but was as heretofore unable to catch a glimpse of the songster. It will be interesting to see whether the mildness of the winter will have any effect upon the regular spring migrations later on.



R. B. Moran of San Luis Obispo, well known as an active ornithologist, has registered at Stanford University, whence THE CONDOR expects to hear from him.