

Middle Pacific Coast Region

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With increased pelagic coverage during June and July, we now expect several seabirds that were formerly considered very rare in summer. A Laysan Albatross, Flesh-footed Shearwaters, all three jaeger species, South Polar Skuas, Sabine's Gulls, and Arctic Terns were typical offshore sightings. Conversely, two of this season's pelagic seabirds ranked among the most outstanding ever; see details in report.

The influx of desert species that started in spring, especially among sparrows, continued into summer.

Abbreviations: B.S.O.L. (*Big Sur Ornithology Lab., Monterey*); C.B.R.C. (*California Bird Records Committee*); C.C.R.S. (*Coyote Cr. Riparian banding Station, Santa Clara*); C.V. (*Central Valley*); Cyn. (*Canyon*); F.I.

(*Southeast Farallon Island*); H.R.S. (*Hayward Regional Shoreline, Alameda*); S.F. (*San Francisco*); s.p. (*sewage ponds*). All records from F.I. and Palomarin should be credited to Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory.

Albatross to Cormorants

A Laysan Albatross was seen off *Monterey* June 27 (J. Lomax).

SA One of the most exciting vagrants in the history of birding was the Northern Hemisphere's first Light-mantled Sooty Albatross (*Phoebastria palpebrata*) at Cordell Bank, *Marin* July 17 (†JM, RS, m.ob). It was studied and photographed at close range on the ocean for over half an hour. The C.B.R.C. has been rejecting, based on "questionable natural occurrence," most records of vagrants far out of range unless there is a "a pattern of intermediate records." However, it is this author's opinion that accepting this record would help repair the C.B.R.C.'s credibility. Barring some new evidence to the contrary, this must be as clean a record as any "accidental" vagrant anywhere. Every vagrant hypothetically could have been involuntarily transported by a human, so to impeach the origin of birds such as this albatross would mean that no record of a very rare vagrant could ever be accepted.

Two Flesh-footed Shearwaters were seen at Cordell Bank July 18 (THK). Three S. Polar Skuas were off *Monterey* and *Santa Cruz* June 27–29 (†SCR). Eclipsed only by the Light-mantled Sooty Albatross was North America's 2nd Dark-rumped Petrel (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*) 30 mi w.s.w. of Cypress Pt., *Monterey* June 26 (ph. †SCR). Distant but diagnostic photos were the first of this species within 200 nautical mi of North America. The prior sighting was May 3, 1992, farther off the coast. Perhaps this petrel will prove to be another of those species that are most numerous off California during late spring and early summer, albeit much rarer than Murphy's and Cook's petrels.

The slick from an apparent Killer Whale kill at-

tracted 25 Wilson's Storm-Petrels at Cordell Bank July 17 (JM, m.ob.). Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels in the same area peaked at 20 July 21 (B. Rowe). Six Black Storm-Petrels at Cordell Bank July 19 (RAR, DN) were early.

California's 11th Red-footed Booby, a dark-morph ad. female on the beach in Daly City, *San Mateo* June 13 (ph. †K. Cebra, †R. Bandar) became the state's first specimen when it was found dead the next day (†JM; * C.A.S.). The combination of dark tail and bright red feet (*i.e.* adult) should link this bird to the Eastern Tropical Pacific population (JM). An ad. Brandt's Cormorant at Palo Alto June 4–8 (MMR, SCR) was *Santa Clara's* seventh.

Hérons

An Am. Bittern at Artesian Slough June 26 (PJM) and another near Gilroy July 6 (KVV) provided *Santa Clara* with its first documented summer records. Great and Snowy egrets and Black-crowned Night-Herons all nested for the first time at H.R.S. (SGL, RJR). Little Blue Herons maintained their foothold as a Regional breeder, as 2 nests were found in the Alviso heronry July 23–25 (PJM, VL). Among five ad. Little Blue Herons seen, one at Walker Cr., Tomales Bay July 9 (DH, m.ob.) was the only one outside of n. *Santa Clara's*. *Alameda*.

The high count of Cattle Egrets for the period was 17 at favored Arizino Ranch, Alviso June 18 (SCR). Five Cattle Egret n. of Eureka June 19 (DFx, JRo) and one at the Indian I. heronry July 10 (DFx) furthered suspicions that this species bred on Humboldt Bay.

Waterfowl

Spicing reports of summering geese were two Greater White-fronteds at Abbott's Lagoon, *Marin* July 4 (ES *et al.*). Among about 15 Brant noted coastally was one at the Big Sur R. mouth June 29 that had been banded in summer 1993 on the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta, Alaska (CHo). A brood of Wood Ducks at Modoc N.W.R., June 21–26 gave us the first proof of breeding in n.e. California (RLR, BED). Three Wood Ducks at Andrew Molera S.P., June 11 (CHo) furnished a first local summer record. A brood of N. Shovelers at the Hayward Shoreline s.p., June 3 (RJR) was possibly *Alameda's* first. Lesser Scaup, among the scarcer Regional nesters, continued to breed at their Sunnyvale, *Santa Clara* outpost, with broods noted July 19 & 23 (PJM). One of three ♀ Lesser Scaup summering at the Arcata s.p. showed off nine ducklings Aug. 5+, providing the first n. coastal California breeding record (SWH, B. Cairns *et al.*). Broods of Ring-necked Ducks and Buffleheads July 3 at Plumas-Eureka S.P. *Plumas* (PEG, *vide* JM) were farther south than their traditional s. Cascades breeding areas.





No doubt the most outrageous record of the season (or of many seasons) was provided by this Light-mantled Sooty Albatross at the Cordell Bank off Marin County, California, July 17, 1994. Widespread in southern oceans, this species evidently had never been recorded before in the Northern Hemisphere. Photograph/Scott B. Terrill.

Raptors

Immature and ad. N. Goshawks July 15–16 (JRW) were in *Lake*, where seldom seen. Single ad. Swainson's Hawks appeared s.e. of San Jose, *Santa Clara* June 9 (†SCR) and near San Lucas, *Monterey* June 15 (BGE). This hawk is rare in coastal counties even during its usual migration periods, but there have been occasional summer sightings in *Alameda*, *Santa Clara*, and *Monterey* since at least 1928 (*vide* WGB, AB notebooks).

Rails to Sandpipers

A Sora at Big L., *Trinity* June 4 (LeE) was in an area with no previous summer reports. Among the flurry of confirmations of new or recent repeat breeders at H.R.S. were Sora and Com. Moorhen June 5 (RJR). An ad. Com. Moorhen along the Pajaro R. s. of Gilroy July 19 was the first in summer in *San Benito* (KVV).

A concentration of 652 Black-bellied Plovers at the San Francisquito Cr. delta, *San Mateo* June 4 (MMR) was a high number of oversummering birds. Two Black-bellieds at Borax L., July 15 furnished the 2nd *Lake* record (JRW, SK, B. McIntosh). A Pacific Golden-Plover at the Salinas R. mouth June 9 (REM) was late. Snowy Plover breeding evidence was lacking at some traditional sites in *Mono* and *San Mateo* (PJM).

Recurvirostrids made news in *Humboldt*. Two Black-necked Stilt chicks at Faye Slough Wildlife Area near Eureka July 6 confirmed the county's first breeding report since 1987 (M. Fisher, *vide* SWH), and Am. Avocets nested for the 2nd consecutive year at Humboldt Bay N.W.R., with two chicks seen in June (S. Lewis, *vide* SWH).

A Lesser Yellowleg at Bridgeport Res., *Mono* June 17 (PJM) provided the first June record for the Mono Basin. Well-watched sites in *Santa Clara* supported high July numbers of Lessers, with 39 at Palo Alto Flood Control Basin July 23 (MJM), 28 at Mountain View Forebay July 28 (MMR), and 22 at Crittenden Marsh July 19 (PJM). The Hollister s.p. hosted *San Benito's* 2nd Willet July 19 (KVV).

Local away from the coast, three Whimbrels at Borax L., July 17 provided the first *Lake* record (†B. McIntosh), while six n. of Hollister July 19 furnished the 2nd report from *San Benito* (KVV). An ad. Black Turnstone at H.R.S., June 19–July 31 was unusual in summer inside S.F. Bay (RJR, JCS), as was a Sanderling at Alviso July 17–31 (SCR, RJe, MMR).

An alternate-plumage Semipalmated Sandpiper June 12 at the Salinas R. mouth (REM) had tarried well into the breeding season. Nearly coincident with single ad. Semipalmateds at Crittenden Marsh July 22 (†SCR) and at H.R.S., July 31 (RJR)

were single juveniles at the Woodland sugar ponds July 22 & 29 (DAH). Two ad. Baird's Sandpipers at Bridgeport Res., July 11 (PJM) were at the early end of their southern migration "window" through the Region.

Three alternate Dunlin June 12 at the Salinas R. mouth (REM) were likely late spring migrants. However, single Dunlins July 4 at Abbott's Lagoon (ES *et al.*) and July 18 at H.R.S. (RJR), as well as a basic Dunlin at Alviso July 31+ (MMR), were early arrivals. A Stilt Sandpiper at the Castroville s.p., July 4 (SFB, DR, RC) was *Monterey's* first in alternate plumage and was early even for an adult. Just as fancy was an alternate ♀ Ruff July 22–28 in n. *Santa Clara* (†SCR, MJM, MMR).

Larids to Alcids

All three jaeger species were seen on pelagic trips. Four Long-tailed Jaegers at Cordell Bank July 17 (JM, RS, m.ob.) were more than expected in mid-July. A Glaucous-winged Gull nested in a hybrid mating with a W. Gull at Pt. Reyes, *Marin*, producing two large chicks that likely fledged (C. Corben, ES, JM). This represents the first (half) breeding of Glaucous-winged in California. More than 15 Sabine's Gulls were seen offshore.

Two ad. Elegant Terns flying S over San Jose more than 10 mi from S.F. Bay July 25 were an inland surprise and were not on the direct path of Caspian Terns commuting between S.F. and Monterey bays (SCR, REM). Three Com. Terns at H.R.S., *Alameda* June 3 (RJR) and another at Ravenswood, *San Mateo* June 4 (†SCR) were just late stragglers inside S.F. Bay, but the ad. Arctic Tern at H.R.S., June 3 remained through the period. Five Arctic Terns were seen offshore. A dozen juv. Forster's Terns at Richardson Bay July 20 were suspected of having fledged locally (ES), but there remains no known nesting of any tern in *Marin*. Two Least Terns at Walker Cr., Tomales Bay, *Marin* July 18 & 19 (L. Hug, C. Corben, RS) were rare n.w. of S.F.

Black Skimmers were finally found nesting around S.F. Bay at 2 sites: H.R.S., *Alameda* (RJR, m.ob.) and Sunnyvale, *Santa Clara* (VL, PJM, ph. MMR, †SCR). Both pairs were present June 3+ and hatched four chicks, but only one appeared to fledge at Sunnyvale, and perhaps two at Hayward. These are the first skimmer nests discovered n.w. of Tulare L. basin (where skimmers nested in 1986). Single skimmers in *Marin* at Redeo (Z. Smith) and Bolinas (*vide* KH) lagoons June 22 and at Tomales Bay the next day (RAR, BDP, LLu) may all have been the same bird. However, a 3rd adult visited Hayward's nesting pair on the latter date.

Considering the continuing decline of Com. Murres, a new and successful colony at Mendocino, albeit only 15 pairs, was good news (DT). Two Craver's Murrelets at Cordell Bank, *Marin* July 17 (JM, RS) and three a few miles n. at Bodega Canyon, *Sonoma* July 21 (DN) were early. An Ancient Murrelet at Bodega Bay July 1 (DN) continued our long series of occasional summer birds.

Doves to Woodpeckers

The White-winged Dove at Pt. Reyes May 28 (BDP) was only the Region's 3rd in spring and the first for May. Any Yellow-billed Cuckoo reports are now like breaths of fresh air, such as the migrant at B.S.O.L., June 16–18 (JDv, SRo), the first in *Monterey* since 1980. A calling Flammulated Owl on Bald Mt., June 10–25 (JRW, BW, RJK, *et al.*) confirmed the species on the *Mendocino* checklist. Three pairs of Short-eared Owls produced at least four fledglings on Bair I., *San Mateo* May 26–July 16 (PJM), perhaps their last breeding locale within the S.F. Bay area.

Lesser Nighthawk was finally confirmed breeding in *Yolo* when a female was flushed off her scrape in Cache Cr., June 7 (DAH). Seven additional birds were noted in the area that day.

SA It has been six years since Black-chinned Hummingbirds were first noted in "amazing" numbers (17) at C.C.R.S. (*AB 43*, Vol. 1). Confirmed breeding was noted in 1991, and the general consensus was that we were witnessing a range expansion into the S.F. Bay area. Then along came Rotterborn with his almost daily visits to riparian corridors within urban *Santa Clara*. The results of his work along Coyote Cr., Guadalupe R., and Los Gatos Cr. within the San Jose/Milpitas areas this spring and summer were startling: 84 birds and 10 nests! The author tends to agree with Bousman that Black-chinned Hummingbirds have always been present within the mature cottonwood riparian habitats of the metropolis, but have gone undetected until now.

Costa's Hummingbird appeared to be part of the "desert connection" into the Region as seven birds were found in all districts away from normal haunts in the I.C.R. A ♀ Broad-tailed Hummingbird at Fall R., *Shasta* July 13–15 (R. Modine, †BED) was unexpected away from traditional sites in *Mono*. An apparent pure N. "Yellow-shafted" Flicker at Coyote Cr., July 25–29 (†SCR, RMI, MMR) was one of the Region's few for the season.

Flycatchers to Vireos

For the first time since 1982, a pair of Willow Flycatchers was detected nesting in Lee Vining Cyn., *Mono* June 11 (D. Dulen). All nesting Willow Flycatchers within the Region are noteworthy. Seven Pacific-slope Flycatchers along the C.V. floor of *Sacramento* June 24–July 16 (*fide* TDM) were possibly very rare local breeders, as C.V. nesting records are scant. Two very rare Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were noted in *Mono*: Lee Vining June 10–13 (JMHu, †PJM) and *Mono* L., June 13 (†PJM).

Two pairs of Purple Martins at Loma Prieta May 24–June 11 (SCR *et al.*) were possibly the last nesters in *Santa Clara*, and some of the last in the S.F. Bay area. Forty nesting birds at Shelter Cove, *Humboldt* July 16 (RHw *et al.*) was a significant number and location for the species. Common Ravens gave us examples of how they are expanding their ranges in the s. and e. sides of S.F. Bay by raising young on transmission towers in *Santa Clara* (*fide* WGFB), on the San Mateo Bridge, *Alameda* May 22–June 3 (RJR), and in downtown Oakland June 7–16 (ES). A nesting pair of Brown Creepers was observed feeding young in Eylar Cyn., *Alameda* July 23 (MMR), one of the eastern most outposts for the species in the Diablo Range. Unusual midsummer sightings included a Red-breasted Nuthatch in Pacific Grove, *Monterey* July 15 (WRe), a Rock Wren at Alviso, *Santa Clara* July 17 (SCR, RJe, MJM), and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet (!) in *Sacramento* July 29 (JRa). Probably none over-summered locally.

A Swainson's Thrush on F.I., June 20 was one of the very rare e. races. One of the passerine highlights of the season was *Monterey's* first White-eyed Vireo at B.S.O.L., June 4 (†CHO); there are less than 10 Regional records. Three coastal Red-eyed Vireos June 10–July 29 met the recent average for the species.

Warblers to Tanagers

Our lone Tennessee Warbler was at Elk Head, *Humboldt* June 13–16 (GSL). Northern Parula was a probable breeder in the Region for the 4th consecutive year as ≥ five at Samuel P. Taylor S.P., *Marin* June 18–July 9 (RS, BDP, *et al.*) included a female with a brood patch. Six additional birds were observed during June in *San Mateo*, *Marin*, and *Humboldt*, while in the interior a singing male was along the Merced R. near Portal, *Mariposa* June 7 (RS). Single Chestnut-sided Warblers were at Carmel R. mouth June 4–5 (RFT *et al.*) and Bodega Bay, *Sonoma* June 30–July 4 (LSf, m.ob.). The Yellow-rumped "Audu-

bon's" Warbler feeding two young at Lookout Pt., s. of Del Valle Res., July 16 (MMR) provided one of few nesting records for the Diablo Range and possibly the 2nd for *Alameda*. The Black-throated Green Warbler at Pt. Reyes June 10 (DDeS, RS) met our spring quota. Two Palm Warblers in *Marin* June 4 and July 22, and two in coastal *Monterey* June 18 and July 6, provided a high total for spring; they have maintained a strong presence since their incredible showing last fall. The Bay-breasted Warbler at *Mono* L., June 7 (RS) provided *Mono's* first, and the Region's first interior spring record. Another Bay-breasted at Elk Head June 12–July 3 (RHw, ph. GSL *et al.*) provided only the Region's 2nd summering record. Just one Blackpoll Warbler at Pt. Reyes June 10 (RS) was a poor turnout.

Coastally, two Black-and-white Warblers at B.S.O.L., June 5 & 12 was below the recent average. A healthy 13 coastal Am. Redstarts May 29–July 24 included a pair with young at Mad R. County Park, *Humboldt* July 28 (JTz); sporadic nestings on the n coast's willow-lined creek mouths have occurred since 1972. The Prothonotary Warbler at Bodega Bay June 6–8 (DE, DN, DHo *et al.*) was only the Region's 3rd for spring. Single Ovenbirds at F.I., June 20 and Klamath, *Del Norte* June 22 (DFx), and a N. Waterthrush in San Gregorio, *San Mateo*, June 2 (RSTh) were very meager portions, but a Mourning Warbler at B.S.O.L., May 31 (†JDv) was exceptional for spring. Seven coastal Hooded Warblers was a good total and included a female with a brood patch at B.S.O.L., June 16, indicating local nesting must have been attempted.

Four Summer Tanagers was a very good passage: Carmel R. mouth June 9–13 (REM, RFT, RC); L. Solano, *Solano* June 30 (†DAH); Coyote Cr., July 29–31 (†SCR, MMR); and an apparent summering male near Oroville, *Butte* May 5–June 21 (TDM, BWb, JHS). On the heels of *Alameda's* first nesting W. Tanager in 29 years last year came the discovery of nine adults along Arroyo Valle June 12–July 23 (MMR); breeding bird atlasing projects are certainly revealing. Generating much excitement, an ad. ♂ Scarlet Tanager along Coyote Cr. in Milpitas July 13–31 (ph. †SCR, †JM, m.ob.) may have been the species' first summering attempt in the Region.

Grosbeaks to Finches

Eighteen Rose-breasted Grosbeaks June 4–July 13 met our recent spring average; all were coastal save singles in *Plumas*, *Napa*, and *Mono*. A total of 11 Indigo Buntings May 7–July 21 was on the shy side. Territorial

males were at Napa May 14–June 6 (RLCL, m.ob.), and B.S.O.L., June 12–29 (RFT, m.ob.) A wayward Green-tailed Towhee was at Pt. Reyes June 18 (C. Corben).

A Brewer's Sparrow was at F.I., June 20; spring vagrants are few. Black-chinned Sparrows are sporadic breeders in the high country of the greater S.F. Bay area. However, they were well reported from nearly all known areas of occurrence. One at Hopland, *Mendocino* May 24–25 (RJK, CEV) and up to two at El Granada, *San Mateo* June 8–20 (BS) provided 2nd country records. Black-throated Sparrows showed up in small numbers along the Sierran foothills of *Sacramento*, *Yuba*, and *Calaveras*, where they are very rare local breeders. Forty-seven near Honey L., *Lassen* May 30 (TDM) was over twice the previous high during a similar survey during the 1970s. Unprecedented numbers were on territory in the Killgore Hills, *Siskiyou* (RE). Up to four in Fall R., *Shasta* June 2 (WLe), and singles near Likely June 14 and Alturas June 16 (both RLR in *Modoc*) were from areas of very few records. A Sage Sparrow in Belmont, *San Mateo* June 1 (RSTh) was from an area of suspected breeding, but nesting is still not confirmed in the county. Three adults at 5700 feet on Bald Mt. near Long Barn, *Tuolumne* July 3–Aug. 1 (†SyB) were near their elevation limit on the w. slope of the Sierra Nevada.

A Lark Bunting was a surprise at Yuba Pass, *Plumas* June 19 (SAG). Although Grasshopper Sparrows are widespread in c. California, especially toward the coast, several families near Hopland June 15 (RJK, CEV) were *Mendocino's* first confirmed breeders. Up to six birds along Meiss Rd. in e. *Sacramento* all spring into early June (BW, †TDM, m.ob.) and a singing male on the C.V. floor at the Cosumnes R. Preserve, *Sacramento* July 3 (JML) were probable breeders for that county. A White-throated Sparrow at C.C.R.S., July 12 would have been the Region's first definite record for July if not for the Region's first summering White-throated Sparrow in McKinleyville, *Humboldt*, all period (RLeV).

Great-tailed Grackle continued its conquest of the Region as *Alameda* scored its first at H.R.S., June 3 (RJR, SAG); six adults had *Mono's* first babies (four) at Benton Hot Springs July 7 (DJK), and *Mendocino* had its 2nd record at Pt. Arena June 3 (JRW). A pair of Lawrence's Goldfinches near Mono L., June 10–July 11 (JMHu, †HG) provided *Mono's* 5th or 6th record. While nesting may be suspected, there are still no nesting record for our Great Basin district.

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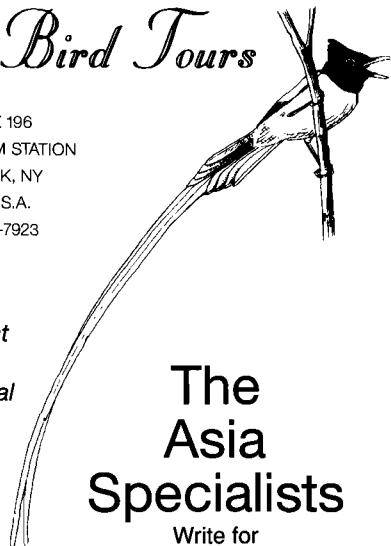
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Lesser Sundas

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13 August-1 September