



middle pacific coast region

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It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. El Niño storms pounded the coast throughout the spring. Nearly four feet of rain drenched San Francisco since the fall, breaking records going back to the Civil War. Landslides on Big Sur's Highway One closed the road until early May. El Niño became a part of the average person's vocabulary; many joked they would never see the sun again. And out of those gloomy skies dropped incredible numbers of migrant birds and a selection of vagrants recalling the glory days of the 1970s.

That Pacific Basin phenomenon known as El Niño-Southern Oscillation occurs every 2 to 22 years (R. Barber, "El Niño Revisited," lecture at Hopkins Marine Station), but we are learning that all El Niños

are not alike. Many events are mild; only occasionally does an event have major repercussions. Readers may recall the 1982-1983 El Niño, the most devastating in its effect on seabird productivity and distribution since the great El Niño of 1890-1891. During these extraordinary events, productivity approaches nil in the Peru Current (as measured by the anchovy catch off Peru; Barber, *op.cit.*). Vagrant seabirds are scattered in all directions (e.g., Inca Terns and other Peruvian species in Panama; Reed, 1988, *Am. Birds* 42:172-173). In the 1891 event, Black-vented Shearwaters reached up the Pacific Coast to British Columbia; in the 1983-84 event it was Elegant Terns that were pushed that far north. Substantial El Niños also devastate locally breeding seabirds along our coast.

This year's El Niño did depress breeding seabirds (see below), but it was the impact on shorebird and landbird migration that

was most noticed by observers. The Alaskan jet stream (which brought us rain surpassing those in 1890) was pulled south into the path of migrating Bristle-thighed Curlews over the North Pacific. Numbers of these endangered transoceanic migrants reoriented downwind and landed on the Pacific Coast (as seen in the Oregon-Washington reports; two or three reached northern California). Regional records of one or more Gray-tailed Tattler are likewise attributable to this phenomena. The unsettled air delayed migrant landbirds (many species arrived "late") and produced some spectacular fallouts along the coast. At Big Sur Ornithology Lab, over 3500 captures were logged, including 1900 in the middle week of May alone, breaking all records by wide margins. The fallout of landbirds continued well into June with many more rare species (and as to them, to quote Susan Roney Drennan, "stay tuned" for next season's report).

El Niño brought way too much rain to the Pacific Coast, but it also contributed an invasion of Bristle-thighed Curlews. California's first well-documented bird was at Crescent City May 14–16, 1998. Photograph/ Don Roberson

While Bristle-thighed Curlews reaching California was not predicted, a crash in seabird productivity with a major El Niño is now expected. Final results are not in at this writing, but breeding failure in some seabirds (especially cormorants and alcids) was the most severe since 1983, and among the worst in the history on the West Coast. Food unavailability offshore (Point Reyes Bird Observatory) also brought pelagic birds close to shore or into San Francisco Bay.

We also do not know if this El Niño will have the long-term effects of the 1982–1983 event, when anomalies in oceanic distributions lingered for years (e.g., pelagic red crabs lingered well north of their range, and a vagrant Swallow-tailed Gull appeared in Monterey Bay in June 1985). But we do know we may never look at distribution the same way again.

Abbreviations: C.B.R.C. (*California Bird Records Committee*); C.V. (*Central Valley*); P.R.B.O. (*Point Reyes Bird Observatory*); S.F. (*San Francisco*); S.B. (*State Beach*). Banded birds from Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey*, should be credited to Big Sur Ornithology Lab. Reports of exceptional vagrants (including most first county claims) are generally not published without written details or other documentation.

LOONS TO PELICANS

The ad. Yellow-billed Loon wintering off Pacific Grove, *Monterey*, was last seen Mar. 19 (RT). A partial albino Horned Grebe on Shoreline L., *Santa Clara*, was also unusual by lingering into June (m.ob.). After *Santa Clara's* unprecedented nine Red-necked Grebes in winter, the county had six more Mar. 5–May 14 (m.ob.). Two at Oakland Apr. 15 (B. Brandriff) were late for *Alameda*, and two individuals passed through Shasta Valley, *Siskiyou*, Mar. 15 and Apr. 3 to the end of May (RE).

The Laysan Albatross at Pt. Arena Cove, *Mendocino*, was last seen Mar. 8 (CEV, GEC). Some 375 Pink-footed Shearwaters in Monterey Bay May 16 (DLSh) provided a record number for spring. Six Pink-footeds near Pt. Arena May 15 (DT) were the first



ones this steady observer had seen from shore in *Mendocino*, although up to six per day (Apr. 24) from Pigeon Pt., *San Mateo* (BS, BMcK, PJM), were more normal numbers there. Single rare spring Flesh-footed Shearwaters were at Cordell Bank May 7 (DN) and at Monterey Bay, *Monterey*, May 16 (DLSh). An Ashy Storm-Petrel was netted at night at Año Nuevo Reserve, *San Mateo*, in late May (*vide* GJS), suggesting that it was prospecting for a nesting site.

There were no Am. White Pelicans in *Santa Clara*, but up to 45 were in nearby *San Benito* Apr. 11–May 25 onward (MMR, MJM, m.ob.), where San Felipe L. had been greatly expanded by the El Niño rains. Consistent with their earlier migration to the Great Basin in recent years, eight Am. White Pelicans at Modoc N.W.R., *Modoc*, Mar. 3 were 2 weeks early, unlike most other species which were late (RLR).

The vast expansion of San Felipe L.

inspired *San Benito's* first nesting Double-crested Cormorants, with 4–11 nests Apr. 11–May 25 onward (J. Hintermeister, MMR, SCR). El Niño crushed the breeding of marine cormorants in *Monterey*, where Brandt's completely failed at Pt. Lobos (BJW, AB), and failure of Pelagics was nearly complete there (BJW). Only eight+ nesting Brandt's survived at Bird Rock, Pebble Beach, June 28 (BJW). These colonies combined for 4677 nesting pairs in the 1989 colony survey (U.S.F.W.S.).

HERONS TO RAPTORS

Two new nesting sites for Snowy Egrets in *Santa Clara* were discovered on islands in small urban lakes Apr. 22 and May 9 (SCR). An ad. Little Blue Heron at the Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey*, Apr. 30 (†JBo) was only *Monterey's* 3rd. Five Cattle Egrets at San Felipe L. May 31 (SCR) included several carrying nesting material, and provided a

first nesting record for *San Benito*. Locally rare reports of White-faced Ibis included Napa's 3rd at Napa R. mouth Mar. 16 (L. Margler), one at Lower Elk R., *Humboldt*, Apr. 29 (KI), and another at Big Sur R. mouth Apr. 30 (JBo).

Tundra Swans at Concord Naval Weapons Station, *Contra Costa*, were very late, with six immatures flying over May 18 and three adults on a pond June 1 (both SCR). Not as unusual, but still late, were a Greater White-fronted Goose at L. Merced, S.F., May 27–28 (ASH, LkC) and single small Canada Geese at L. Merced May 27–28 (LkC) and Carmel R. mouth, *Monterey*, May 31 (BH). Twelve Brant at Tahoe City, L. Tahoe, *Placer*, Apr. 24 (KVV, TEa, BWb, SAbb) represented a county first and a remarkable Sierran record.

A Green-winged Teal with three young near Fremont, *Alameda*, May 22 (SCR) may have been the first county nesting since 1915 (*fide* WGB). A male *Garganey* in all its finery was in Salinas Apr. 25–May 4 (†CHO, †DR, m.ob.), an overdue *Monterey* first. A pair of Tufted Ducks near San Lucas Mar. 9–13 (J&HBa, †DR, m.ob.) marked the 3rd spring out of 4 that this species has been found in s. *Monterey*. Fourteen Harlequin Ducks at Crescent City Harbor, *Del Norte*, Mar. 5 (ADB) was the largest congregation reported to us in years, but was not exceptional by that county's standards. Evidence of winter's invasion of Surf and White-winged scoters into the S. Bay and inland *Santa Clara* continued into spring, with good numbers of Surfs persisting through the period and the last of the White-wingeds departing Alviso Mar. 24 (SCR, SBT, MJM).

An ad. Bald Eagle at Salt Spring Valley, *Calaveras*, Apr. 27 (J. Vallely) was notably late. Nesting Swainson's Hawks, discovered at 2 sites in e. *Contra Costa*, provided only the 3rd or 4th breeding records there. A Ferruginous Hawk Mar. 15 near Ft. Dick, *Del Norte*, was the latest ever there by a month (ADB).

SHOREBIRDS

Forty Lesser Yellowlegs were at Jersey I., *Contra Costa*, Mar. 8 (GFi). Reports of Solitary Sandpiper were low with just 10 birds noted Regionally Apr. 15–May 4.

A Sanderling at Martis L. Apr. 24 (†KVV, TEa, BWb, SAbb) represented county firsts for both *Placer* and *Nevada*. A Ruff at Jersey I., *Contra Costa*, Mar. 14 (CL, †GG) may have wintered locally, but one at Lower Klamath N.W.R., *Siskiyou*, May 12 (†RE) was clearly a migrant. A Red-necked

Phalarope at Modoc N.W.R., *Modoc*, May 1 (RLR) was the first there in 10 years.

SA With only one prior state record from s. California from 1981, the possible occurrence of multiple **Gray-tailed Tattlers** this spring in our Region was difficult to comprehend. Only one documented record reached us—a bird at Bodega Bay, *Sonoma*, May 30 (†RAR)—but an earlier report of a well-studied bird at Pt. Reyes, *Marin*, will hopefully be submitted to the CBRC and details published elsewhere. There isn't much that could top Gray-tailed Tattler, but topped it was when the state's first well-documented **Bristle-thighed Curlew** was discovered in Crescent City, *Del Norte*, May 14–16 (ph. ADB; †BED, †JM, †DR, ph. DWN). As if by exclamation point, another was at Kehoe Beach, Pt. Reyes, *Marin*, May 16–22 (†LL, CL, GG; †BDP, †DSg, m.ob.). Yet a 3rd briefly seen bird flew by Big Lagoon, *Humboldt*, May 9 (JEH). Though the latter record may ultimately be dismissed as "one that got away," it nonetheless underscores the scope of the movement of curlews into the Pacific Northwest (See Oregon–Washington report).

LARIDS TO ALCIDIS

The imm. Laughing Gull at Moss Landing, *Monterey*, was last seen May 2 (DHpt, CHO). Twelve Franklin's Gulls were scattered from *Monterey* and *Santa Clara* to Del Norte Apr. 30–May 31 (m.ob.), and up to two were at Lower Klamath N.W.R., *Siskiyou* (RE), where this species has nested. An ad. Little Gull at Alviso, *Santa Clara*, Apr. 28–May 2 (SCR, m.ob., †MiF) was followed quickly by a first-summer bird there May 8–17 (SCR, SBT, MMR, m.ob.). These were *Santa Clara's* 2nd and 3rd records. An ad. basic Bonaparte's Gull in the Sierran foothills at Salt Spring Valley Res. April 15 (WRH) may have been only the 2nd for *Calaveras*.

Over 60 Heermann's Gulls (mostly immatures) spent the winter at Crescent City Harbor, *Del Norte* (m.ob.), farther north than usual. Two ad. Mew Gulls at Tule Lake N.W.R., *Siskiyou*, Apr. 10 (MFRo) were rare in our Great Basin region. The imm. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at L. Cunningham, *Santa Clara*, was last seen Mar. 31 (BMcK). Five Glaucous Gull reports reflected usual departure dates in March and early April. Food problems offshore were suggested by

the 220 Black-legged Kittiwakes in the surf at Smith R. mouth, *Del Norte*, Mar. 3 (ADB, E. Cooper); 16 Sabine's Gulls at Pigeon Pt., *San Mateo*, May 14 (BS); a first-alternate Sabine's Gull on McClures Beach, *Marin*, May 26 (Dan Froelich), and 14 adults at the s. end of Bolinas Lagoon, *Marin*, May 28 (KH).

Some Elegant Terns returned early with 37 at Pescadero Cr. mouth, *San Mateo*, Apr. 15 (M. A. Bourret) and smaller numbers all the way to *Humboldt* (10; DFx, GJH) and *Mendocino* (four; JRW) May 28–29. A flight of 32 ad. Com. Terns and one ad. Arctic Tern passing Redwood Shores, *San Mateo*, on S.F. Bay May 15 (RSTh) again suggested avoidance of food-poor pelagic waters; the day before there were Com. Terns and four Arctic Terns very close to shore at Pigeon Pt., with calm winds (BS). Another Arctic was at Cliff House, S.F., May 12 (ASH). An ad. Least Tern strayed N to Bodega Harbor, *Sonoma*, May 30 (RAR).

Eleven Black Skimmers were last seen at Palo Alto Apr. 18 (A. Winer). Up to nine visited the island where skimmers nested in 1995 at Mountain View, *Santa Clara*, Apr. 19–28 (PMB, M. Dotter). Three migrants stopped at Pajaro R. mouth, *Monterey*, May 25 (RE, CKF).

An inexplicably large flight of 8800 Com. Murres flew N past Pigeon Pt., *San Mateo*, May 17 (PJM). Few Pigeon Guillemots attended their usual nesting islands at Pt. Lobos, *Monterey* (BJW). Two juvenals among 36 Marbled Murrelets at Point St. George, *Del Norte*, May 29 were the earliest juvenals ever there (ADB). In this case, at least, conditions apparently advanced the onset of breeding rather than prevented it. A Xantus's Murrelet was netted at night at Año Nuevo Reserve, *San Mateo*, in late May (*fide* GJS). The simple explanation is that the bird was prospecting a new nesting location, the first n. of the Channel Islands. But prior spring/summer observations (AB 39:959, 40:1251, 41:139), including a pair guarding a chick off the Monterey Peninsula Aug. 8, 1986, have hinted that a few may already have been breeding in our Region undetected. Perhaps at Año Nuevo?

PIGEONS TO HUMMINGBIRDS

A White-winged Dove at Pt. Sur, *Monterey*, May 18–19 (JBo) was an exceptional spring vagrant; most records are in fall. As development spreads, local populations of Greater Roadrunner decline. One at Pleasant Hill Apr. 15 (J. Mason, G. Trabert) was one of very few left in *Contra Costa*. In contrast, populations of Barred Owl continue

to spread in the northwest, with new locations routinely found by Spotted Owl researchers in *Humboldt* (GjH et al.) and at least 5 known territories in *Trinity* (P. Carlson, JEH). A pair of courting Lesser Night-hawks at Clifton Court Forebay Apr. 28 (JCS) were unusual for *Contra Costa*.

Migrating Vaux's Swifts along the coast encountered unsettled weather in mid-May, concentrating in the hundreds at Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey*, May 9–17 (JBo, DR, RC), while 104 were counted over Coyote Pt., *San Mateo*, May 4–14 (RSTh). Among these were single vagrant Chimney Swifts at Big Sur R. mouth May 10–17 (†DR, †JND) and Table Bluff, *Humboldt*, May 16 (†JSL).

Male Costa's Hummingbirds at Ft. Bragg Apr. 22 (DT) and Willits May 10 (S. Harris), both *Mendocino*, were rare that far north; a male at Tom's Place, *Mono*, May 25 (MEa) was the earliest ever in the Mono Basin. Calliope Hummingbirds appeared in the coast ranges in unprecedented numbers. In *Monterey*, where one–two per spring is usual, nearly 20 were found from Big Sur R. mouth (five banded; CHo, JBo) to Salinas Apr. 6–25. Another nine were on Mt. Diablo, *Contra Costa*, Apr. 17–27 (RS, SAG et al.), singles were banded May 3 at Coyote Cr., *Santa Clara* (*vide* AJ), and Apr. 19 on Mt. San Bruno, *San Mateo* (M. McCormick); another male was at Ed Levin Park, *Santa Clara*, Apr. 19 (SCR). Likewise, Rufous Hummingbirds brightened the coastal lowlands in unusually high numbers, including at estimated 65 at Big Sur R. mouth Apr. 9 (JBo) and 17 records at *Santa Clara* locations Mar. 16–Apr. 28 (WGB et al.).

WOODPECKERS TO FLYCATCHERS

Single Acorn Woodpeckers at Año Nuevo Reserve May 17 and Pescadero May 28, both *San Mateo* (BMcK), were away from known breeding sites. Pileated Woodpeckers continue to expand their range in the Santa Cruz Mts., where a pair bred at Table Mt (MJM, m.ob.) for *Santa Clara's* 2nd confirmed nesting record. A silent woodpeewee photographed at Big Sur R. mouth Apr. 21 (DR) had an all-yellow lower mandible generally indicative of Eastern; several vocal E. Wood-Pewees would appear in June (see Summer report). Local W. Wood-Pewees arrived late everywhere; only one appeared as early as Apr. 21 at Gazos Cr., *San Mateo* (BMcK).

Many observers commented on the number of flycatchers this spring; the rains evidently slowed down and concentrated these migrants. Ten species were in *Del Norte* lowlands May 25, including scarce

Willow, Gray, and Ash-throated (ADB). A Willow Flycatcher at the confluence of Willow Cr. and Trinity R., *Humboldt*, May 18 (TWL) was early. Rare Least Flycatchers were on Pt. Reyes, *Marin*, Mar. 22 (RS; presumably wintered nearby) and May 31 (JSL, †JM; the first of many "eastern" vagrants there over the next 3 weeks). Migrant Hammond's Flycatchers were found Apr. 4–May 29 from *Monterey* (six banded at Big Sur R. mouth) to S.F. (three on Mt. Davidson Apr. 17–19; DSg, J. Romeu) and *Marin* (earliest Apr. 4, KH) and e. to *Contra Costa* (SAG). Migrant Dusky Flycatchers were also widespread from *Monterey* (six banded May 9–24) to *Del Norte* (four May 25; ADB). Two Gray Flycatchers, the scarcest coastal Empid migrant, were at Coyote Pt. May 24–25 (RSTh); another was at Lewiston L., *Trinity*, Apr. 25 (JEH, TWL).

The San Jose, *Santa Clara*, E. Phoebe was last seen Mar. 11 (K. Guse); one at Santa Rosa, *Sonoma*, Mar. 1–4 (C. Grabill, DN) had not previously been discovered. At least five Ash-throated Flycatchers in coastal *Humboldt* during the last week of May (DFx et al.) represented a pronounced influx. A pair of W. Kingbirds nest-building at Newby I., *Alameda*, May 24 (SCR) was an odd bayside location.

SWALLOWS TO SHRIKES

The first arriving Purple Martins were Mar. 16 (Sacramento; EDG) & 17 (Alamo, *Contra Costa*; JMR); a flock of 50 weathered the storms at Trout L., *Siskiyou*, May 28 (RE). Newly discovered colonies of Bank Swallow are also welcome in this Region, where they are threatened; four adults were at a bank with 20 burrows at Topaz, n. *Mono*, Apr. 19 (DS).

A pair of Yellow-billed Magpies was nest-building at Italian Cemetery, Colma, *San Mateo*, Apr. 13–26 (S. Van Loon, m.ob.), but they were suspected to be escapes. The suburban habitat was atypical, one bird had a red plastic band on its left leg, and local native populations were extirpated before World War II (PJM). Common Raven populations continue to explode. A pair likely nested at Hurricane Pt., *Monterey* (JBo), the first for Big Sur coast; stilt and avocet nests at Palo Alto Baylands, *Santa Clara*, now face raven predation (WGB); and 7 new nests were discovered on transmission towers in e. *Contra Costa* (SAG). Six Townsend's Solitaires were widely scattered throughout the Bay Area Apr. 21–May 7 (m.ob.).

A rare Gray Catbird was at Pt. Reyes lighthouse May 31 (RS) A pair of N

Mockingbirds in Arcata bottoms in May (KI, M. Wachs) provided the first recent confirmed breeding for *Humboldt*. Wayward Sage Thrashers were at Salinas Apr. 25 (BHG, KVV, SFB), Palo Alto Baylands Apr. 7 (BWb), Coyote Pt. April 20 (RSTh), Arcata bottoms May 12 (SMcA) & 25 (KI), and L. Earl, *Del Norte*, May 3 (B. Mize, ADB) An ad. N. Shrike at Humboldt Bay N.W.R. March 29–Apr. 2 (EE) was possibly the wintering bird.

VIREOS TO GROSBEAKS

A singing Plumbeous Vireo at Mt. Diablo S.P. April 19 (RS) could have been *Contra Costa's* first, but no details were provided. Likewise, no details accompany a report of a Yellow-throated Vireo in S.F. May 8 (ASH).

A high marine layer dropped numerous vagrants on Pt. Reyes May 31, including a Red-eyed Vireo and the following "eastern" warblers: two Tennessees, two N. Parulas, a Bay-breasted, two Blackpolls, and a singing Ovenbird (JSL, JM, RS et al.). Elsewhere, Tennessees were banded at Big Sur R. mouth May 20 and June 1, and another was on Mt. Davidson, S.F., Apr. 29–May 2 (H Cotter et al.). *Monterey* had N. Parulas at Ft. Ord May 17 (D. Cowans), Cachagua Rd May 26 (BHG), and a male on territory at Big Sur R. mouth May 21 into June (JBo) More singing male N. Parulas were at Coyote Pt., *San Mateo*, May 13 (RSTh), in S.F. May 28 (ASH), and at L. Pillsbury May 17 (RC, ph. DR, JRW).

Among western migrants there were huge fallouts of Yellow and Wilson's warblers (as well as Warbling Vireos) along Coyote Cr., *Santa Clara*, May 6 (SCR), and 73 Yellows were banded at Big Sur R. mouth May 20. Late migrants delayed by wet weather were three Townsend's Warbler at Mono L. May 27–28 (ADeM) and two in Diamond Valley, *Alpine*, May 30 (†HG). A dozen Palm Warblers along the coast from *San Mateo* to *Humboldt* Mar. 28–May 6 were more than usually located in spring, suggesting a migration of successful winterers. The wintering Prothonotary Warbler in Golden Gate Park, S.F., reappeared Mar. 8–21 (J. Anderson, m.ob.). Three Am Redstarts were along the coast, as was a N Waterthrush banded at Pillar Pt., *San Mateo*, May 19 (R. Colwell). Four Hooded Warblers were one-day wonders: singing male on Sonoma Mt., *Sonoma*, May 13 (T Eliot); male and female in Marin Apr. 27 (Muddy Hollow; BDP) and May 14 (Pine Gulch; BDP), respectively; and a female at Mountain L. Park, S F, May 18 (DWN)

Vagrant Summer Tanagers were at San Bruno, *San Mateo*, May 24 (RSTh) and in Hatton Canyon, *Monterey*, May 31 (P&E Schemella); S.F.'s wintering bird was last seen Mar. 22 (MEa).

It was an excellent spring for vagrant Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, with nine scattered coastally Apr. 6–May 31. Farther inland, males visited feeders at Fairfield May 31–June 3 (ph. C. Adkins; a *Solano* first) and in Lee Vining Canyon, *Mono*, May 12 (J. Sasson). A female Blue Grosbeak nest-building in Ed Levin Park Apr. 19 (MJM, m.ob.) provided a first *Santa Clara* breeding confirmation.

BUNTINGS TO SPARROWS

Three male Indigo Buntings in the S.F. Bay Area included one on territory at Piper Slough May 30 into June (SAG, m.ob.), a first for e. *Contra Costa*. California Towhees continued to push N from Humboldt Bay with birds to McKinleyville and Fieldbrook (m.ob.); monitoring this expansion is just one benefit of *Humboldt's* Breeding Bird Atlas project.

Vagrant Clay-colored Sparrows precipi-

SA A more spectacular result of atlasing was the discovery of previously unknown populations of Rufous-crowned Sparrows s. of Alderpoint, *Humboldt*, straddling that county's s. border with *Trinity* (†JEH, †TWL; first & second records for the respective counties). Since the discovery May 24, up to nine birds and a nest have been located in this nearly xeric habitat in these humid counties. Another bird in *Trinity* was n.w. of Kekawaka May 30 (JEH, TWL, GJH). Previously, this local sparrow was known north only to n. *Mendocino*, and the range extension (possibly the result of manmade scree and talus from blasting for a railroad tunnel) was exceptionally satisfying to hard-working atlasers.

tated by the weather landed at Smith R. estuary, *Del Norte*, May 23 (ADB) and Pt. Reyes May 31 (RS et al.). Equally out-of-place were single Brewer's Sparrows along Crabtree Rd., *Stanislaus*, May 2 (JHG) and in the Belmont hills, *San Mateo*, May 10 (RSTh). One of the Panoche Valley, *San Benito*, Lark Buntings lingered to Mar. 14 (L. Chibana). An apparent Golden-crowned × White-crowned sparrow hybrid was in Henry Coe S.P., *Santa Clara*, Apr. 25 (MMR). A Harris's Sparrow near Grenada, *Siskiyou*, Mar. 23–Apr. 2 (RE) likely win-

tered. Two Lapland Longspurs were late over Crescent City, *Del Norte*, May 17 (ADB).

ICTERIDS TO FINCHES

Single Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Pt. Sur Apr. 21 & 27 (JBo, DR) provided only the 2nd & 3rd record for the Big Sur coast, *Monterey*. Other wanderers were 54 at Moss Landing May 2 (ASH, DSg, SFB, DR); a dozen scattered between 3 *Santa Clara* sites Apr. 4–May 4 (NL, PJM, SCR); nine in the Belmont hills Apr. 26 (RSTh); two at Ft. Dick, *Del Norte*, May 27–28 (ADB); and six at Modoc N.W.R., *Modoc*, Apr. 10 (RLR).

SA The spread of Great-tailed Grackles into our Region is reaching epidemic proportions. This season brought eight to *Monterey* May 1–3 (J&H Banks, m.ob.); a nest-building pair from May 25 on at San Felipe L., *San Benito/Santa Clara* border (†SCR, m.ob., ph. DR; a first for *San Benito*); breeding colonies at Woodlake, Tulare, from Apr. 29 (JCS) and in *Placer* through May (TEa et al.); a male at Oakley May 9 (SAG; 2nd for *Contra Costa*) and another at L. Merced, S.F., May 28 (ASH); and one in Sierra Valley, *Plumas*, May 24 (M. Schiedt). East of the Sierran divide was one at Mono L. Park May 2 (C. Elphick), and continuing nest-builders at Benton Hot Springs May 24 (MEa). Most individuals and pairs are found in tules and cattails. We can expect widespread (if local) breeding in coming years, and their n. barrier is not yet known.

Vagrant Com. Grackles were at Pt. Sur Apr. 21 (JBo, ph. DR) and Honey L. Wildlife Area May 11 (†F. Hall), providing first records for *Monterey* and *Lassen*, respectively. Another icterid continuing its infiltration of our Region was the unwelcome Brown-headed Cowbird; the *Del Norte* lowlands witnessed the heaviest influx ever recorded there (ADB). Male cowbirds had arrived as far north as Redding, *Shasta*, by Apr. 21 (B&CY).

Unusually high numbers of coastal migrant Hooded Orioles appeared at Big Sur R. mouth Apr 11–May 10 (over a dozen; JBo, DR), while *Siskiyou* obtained its first record, a fine male at a feeder in the Big Springs area Apr. 22–26 (W&S McClain, †RE). Vagrant Baltimore Orioles were at Sonoma May 10 (D. Menefee; no †) and a male at Coyote Pt. May 13 (RSTh).

In a non-invasion year, two Red Cross-

bills on Mt. Diablo Apr. 4 (J. Robinson) seemed odd.

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Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *Field Notes* are keyed on page 295.