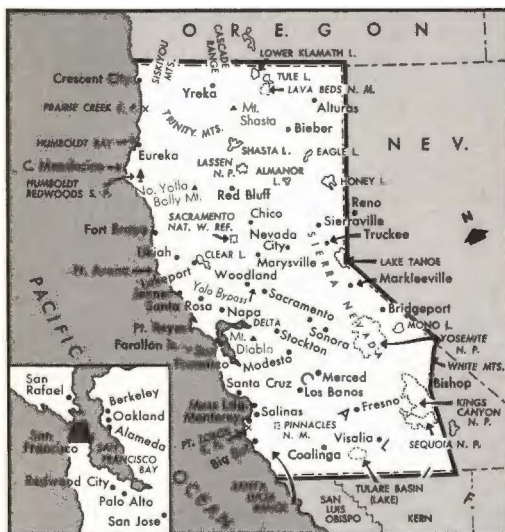


LOONS, GREBES — Only one Yellow-billed Loon was reported, at Pacific Grove Feb. 12 (SFB,VR). At least six Arctic Loons reported on various freshwater lakes in the Region is a slightly higher-than-normal total for one winter. A Red-throated Loon on the Thermalito Afterbay Dec. 31 (SAL,J.Webb), and probably the same bird there Feb. 25 (†TM, B.Webb,K.V.V.), was a Butte County first. Another, probable Red-throated Loon was observed briefly on the American R., near Sacramento Jan. 18 & 22 (*fide* BK,†EH). Red-necked Grebes seemed slightly more common than usual on the coast, and one on Avocado L., Feb. 15 was the first Fresno County record (†KH *et al.*).

MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION

/Jon Winter and Tim Manolis

The midwinter storms typical of the Region reappeared with atypical ferocity, ending with breathtaking speed the worst drought in California's history. Rain continued on and off from December through the end of the period, filling most of the Region's empty reservoirs by the end of January. Water rationing was called to a halt in many areas. Observers in the Central Valley (hereafter, C. V.) reported that waterfowl concentrations seemed to disperse after the rains, as birds scattered widely throughout the Region (BED,RH). Pelagics reported onshore and coastal species inland were at least, in part, storm-related.



It was a winter with especial interest in gulls, with Little, Black-headed, and Lesser Black-backed Gulls wandering into the Region; the latter for the first time in the state's history. Many montane species appeared at lower levels, possibly owing to tremendous snowfall at higher elevations.

With this report we regretfully announce the retirement of Dick Erickson. Dick wishes to devote more time to finishing his thesis. Dick's successor is Tim Manolis, an observer with much skill and experience, who is well known to many of the Region's active birders. We wish to thank Dick for his excellent work as editor; his contributions will be sorely missed.

TUBENOSES — A "good early winter flight" of N. Fulmars "seemed to disappear in January" (LCB), but shearwaters made an excellent showing. Pink-footed Shearwaters were in Monterey Bay in small numbers through the period with a maximum of eight there Feb. 5 (DRo,JM,G.G.A.S.). There were three reports of singles off Marin and Sonoma Cos., in December, four were seen from shore at Pt. Reyes Jan. 4 (DD), two were off Bolinas Feb. 4 (JE,O.S.) and ten were at the Cordelle Banks (BDP,GMCC,W.F.O.). Two or three Flesh-footed Shearwaters were also at the Cordelle Banks Feb. 4 (†GMCC,BDP), and one was in Monterey Bay Feb. 5 (†JM,DRo); they represent the fourth and fifth regional winter reports. Impressive numbers of Short-tailed Shearwaters, once only sporadically abundant winter visitors offshore, were reported for the first time in at least 20-30 years. A "spectacular concentration" of 600 accompanied 1500 fulmars at a mass of dead anchovies 4 mi w. of Moss Landing Dec. 2 (*PK). Numbers in Monterey Bay apparently dropped off after that, but at least 18 were still there Feb. 5 (†JM,†DRo). Two were off Bodega Head Dec. 31 (RS *et al.*) and 30-75 were at the Cordelle Banks Feb. 4 (BDP,DS,†GMCC). After their best fall in recent years, Manx Shearwaters were reported throughout the winter in Monterey Bay with as many as 15 off Pt. Pinos Jan. 15 (RS *et al.*) and two as late as Feb. 7 off Santa Cruz (DP). During stormy weather on the Pt. Reyes CBC, Dec. 17, a Manx Shearwater, a Leach's Storm-Petrel and an Ashy Storm-Petrel were seen from shore at Abbott's Lagoon (BDP,JP,BL). One or two Ashies were in Monterey Bay Jan. 14 (LCB, GMCC,W.F.O.).

PELICANS, HERONS, SPOONBILLS — Brown Pelicans were present in excellent numbers and stayed very late (m.ob.). A few were present in Monterey Bay through February, as usual. Singles lingered n. at Bodega Bay Feb. 23 (DS) and Bolinas Lagoon Feb. 15 (JE), with two off San Francisco Feb. 27 (PM). Cattle Egrets continued their steady expansion in n. California. Reports of 260± this season included a flock of 128 following a tractor near Kerman, Fresno Co., Feb. 26 (RH *et al.*).

Perhaps the most bizarre find of the season was an imm. Roseate Spoonbill in artichoke fields with egrets near Moss Landing Jan. 1 (P. Gordon, †E&AM *et al.*) and seen by many until at least Feb. 13. This apparently represents the second regional record and only the second spoonbill ever found in California in winter, but then who has been checking artichoke fields?

WATERFOWL — An ad. Bewick's Swan was with massed Whistling Swans on Victoria I., Dec. 21 – (DRu,CH,†DE) at least Dec. 30 (m.ob.). Up to three possible Bewick's x Whistling Swan hybrids were also seen there (†DE,†VR,GMCC). Another possible Bewick's x Whistling Swan was near Benton, Mono Co., Feb. 19 (†TH *et al.*). An Emperor Goose, at the Pajaro R. mouth Dec. 19 (J&RW,DP,TB), was found again at Moss Landing Jan. 2 (m.ob.). Three very obliging Emperor Geese delighted countless observers at Limantour Estero Dec. 28 (*fide* DRo) to mid-February. Up to four ad. Ross' Geese were near Napa Dec. 6-15 (JP,BDP,MR) and one adult was at Novato Dec. 24 – Jan. 11 (RS *et al.*).



Emperor Geese, Pt. Reyes. Limantour Estero, Jan. 29, 1978. Photo/ Joel H. Hornstein.

An apparent Eur. x Am. Wigeon was at the San Francisco Zoological Gardens Jan. 17-18 (PM,HLC). Forty-four inland Greater Scaup was a good showing, and larger-than-usual numbers were reported from Pajaro Dunes (J&RW,DP), Golden Gate Pk. (LCB) and the Benicia area (FKB). A ♂ Tufted Duck was on L. Merritt Jan. 23 (EM) and another was on L. Hennessey Jan. 30 – Feb. 5 (†JP,JM *et al.*). The Tufted Duck found at Muddy Hollow Jan. 7 (RS *et al.*) was identified as a female as late as Jan. 29 (†JM), but the only Tufted Duck noted there Feb. 4-12 was a molting male (GMCC,DD *et al.*)! Some observers felt that only one bird was involved, but finally Feb. 20, a male and female were there together (D. Hutchinson, *fide* P.R.B.O.). Two ♀ Barrow's Goldeneyes at Moss Landing Jan. 1-2 (†E&AM) and one female on the Kings R., below Pine Flat Dam Feb. 11 – Mar. 5 (†RH *et al.*) were the farthest s. of 38 reported. Very rare "spring" migrants inland were two Surf Scoters on Leavitt L., Lassen Co., Feb. 4 (RS *et al.*) and up to three on L. Shastina Feb. 11-28+ (*fide* MT).

RAPTORS, RAILS — White-tailed Kites were reported reduced in numbers in parts of the C.V. and San Francisco Bay area (AE,FKB,RAB,SFB). This apparent trend should be carefully watched. An imm. Broad-winged Hawk found in Tiburon Dec. 5 was seen by many until the middle of January (RS *et al.*). Another was reported on the Pt. Reyes CBC. There are only four or five previous records from the Mon-

terey Bay area of wintering birds. Rough-legged Hawks were reported from the coast and C.V. in numbers comparable to the big flight of 1973-1974 (m.ob.). Some observers felt that the proportion of ad. Rough-leggeds to immatures was perhaps greater than usual w. of the Sierras (DS,TM). Very encouraging news of Bald Eagles in the Region were reports indicating that 100+ birds, mostly immatures, wintered in the C.V. and surrounding foothills from Shasta to Tulare Cos., and there were 20± reports from the coast (m.ob.). Numbers were near normal in the Klamath Basin (*fide* MT).

A Black Rail was flushed at Benicia S.P., Dec. 9 (*fide* P.R.B.O.) and one was at the Palo Alto Baylands Jan. 9 & Feb. 5 (E. Parker, TC).

S.A.

It was perhaps inevitable, given the manic levels reached by birders in the past few years, that our zealotry would get the best of us. Despite forewarnings from within their ranks, a group of n. California birders, converging on Benicia S.P., during a high tide Dec. 10, managed to literally harass a Black Rail to death while attempting to flush it. A sobering experience for those involved, but who among us does not recognize, in this story, behavior perhaps too similar to his own at times?

SHOREBIRDS — A Black Oystercatcher circled a small farmyard pond near Scott's Valley, Santa Cruz Co., Feb. 14, then landed, 5 mi from the nearest ocean, only to be chased off by domestic geese (*fide* TB)! Only one previous inland record exists for the Region (*Calif. Birds* 1:83). The decline of Snowy Plovers in the Region has recently attracted attention. A census of "all beaches" in Marin and Sonoma Cos., Feb. 8, produced 248 birds (*fide* DS), and an "all-time high winter flock" of 151 was at the Pajaro Dunes Jan. 22 (J&RW). Alarm was expressed at the rate with which "reliable areas" for Mountain Plovers in Tulare County are fast "turning to cotton" (RAB).

For the second consecutive year a Ruff was found wintering at Pacific Grove Dec. 27 – Feb. 28+ (BDP,JP *et al.*), but this bird was apparently different from last year's, and at a different spot. Red Phalaropes were widely reported in good numbers along the coast (m.ob.). Hundreds were seen flying S from shore on the Pt. Reyes CBC (BDP,JP,DE) and they stayed in Monterey Bay through the period, with up to 50 still flying S past Pt. Pinos Feb. 11 (DP,TB). Two were near the Dumbarton Bridge Jan. 25 (JRI) and a very out-of-place individual was on L. Shastina Dec. 18 (†R. Ekstrom, *fide* MT). A N. Phalarope at the Salinas R. mouth, Dec. 8 was late (†DP).

JAEGERS, GULLS — Slightly better than average numbers of Parasitic Jaegers were reported, with four sightings around Monterey Bay Dec. 27 – Jan. 3, one at a concentration of gulls and terns in Tomales Bay Dec. 12 (DS,P.R.B.O.), and one at Bodega Bay Dec.

30 (BDP,JP). A dark phase bird at L. Hennessey Jan. 28-31 (B. Lutes, JP) established only the second inland winter record for the Region.

S.A.

The most mysterious bird of the season was an ad. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Robert's L., Seaside, Monterey Co., on the afternoon of Jan. 14 (LCB,BDP,JP, ph. R. Branson). The bird was carefully studied at very close range and a description has been sent to the W.F.O. Records Committee. Many of California's leading field ornithologists were in the Monterey area that weekend for boat trips, but the bird could not be found the next day or subsequently despite intensive searching. Having wandered an ocean and a continent to surface as a first state record, it quickly resubmerged into the anonymity of a gull's world.

Fresno County's first Mew Gull was an immature near Pinedale Dec. 4-29 (†KH,RH *et al.*). The fifth or sixth regional Black-headed Gull was near Arcata Feb. 19 to at least Feb. 26 (BDP,JP *et al.*). Originally identified as an aberrant Franklin's Gull, it was correctly identified Feb. 25 (J. Dunn,VR,†GMCC). A previous individual at this location in 1972 was "apparently . . . *Larus ridibundus sibiricus*" (AB 26:901), and at least one observer felt that this bird was also of Siberian origin. But if Lesser Black-backed and Little Gulls can get here, apparently from the east, why not *L. r. ridibundus*? An ad. **Little Gull** was also in the Arcata-Eureka area from Feb. 21 to at least Feb. 26 (M. Phillips,†DE *et al.*), and this is not the first time Little and Black-headed Gulls have been found at the same spot on the Pacific Coast within days of each other (AB 29:109). A report of two imm. Sabine's Gulls seen from shore at Pt. Reyes in stormy weather Jan. 4 (†DD) was exceptional. Heermann's Gulls paralleled Brown Pelicans in abundance and tardiness this season (m.ob.), with a few still as far n. as Bodega Bay at the end of the period (DS).

TERNs, ALCIDS — Single Com. Terns at Pajaro Dunes Dec. 9 (J&RW) & 19 (†DP,TB, J&RW) were very late, as was an Elegant Tern there Dec. 5 (J&RW). A Thick-billed Murre was carefully described from Pacific Grove Jan. 21 (†DRo,†DD). For the second consecutive winter a few Xantus' Murrelets were in Monterey Bay with a maximum of three Jan. 15 (RS *et al.*).

PIGEONS THROUGH OWLS — In the n. C.V., Band-tailed Pigeons staged an awesome invasion from early December through early February. A census conducted by the Calif. Fish and Game Dept., above L. Oroville produced 30,000+ birds (*fide* SAL). This downslope movement may have been triggered by the heavy snowfall in the mountains in early December. A late report was received of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo seen Nov. 2 along the Pajaro R., Santa Cruz Co. (*fide*

DP). Apparently there have been no records of this species in Santa Cruz County since 1903. In addition to the Snowy Owl reported from Arcata during the fall period two more birds found at Manila, Humboldt Co., Jan. 8 remained through Feb. 28 (DE,SH, m.ob.). At least 15 Pygmy Owls were reported, all except one from inland locations. An injured Long-eared Owl picked up just s. of Ukiah Feb. 9 (OJK), provided Mendocino County with its first record. Eleven dead Saw-whet Owls were found along Hwy 80 between Colfax and Donner Summit Jan. 29 (RS). This species, rare in the Sierra, may winter here in larger numbers than is suspected.

GOATSUCKERS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

— Most unusual was the presence of two Vaux's Swifts near Piedra, Fresno Co., Feb. 11 (†RH *et al.*), and yet another bird was seen at Friant Feb. 13 (†KH). A ♂ Costa's Hummingbird frequented a feeder in Longvale, Mendocino Co., Dec. 28 – Jan. 26 (B.Breese). This hummer is rarely found in winter and this individual the first ever recorded in Mendocino County (OJK). Perhaps the most remarkable event of the season was the discovery of a ♀ **Blue-throated Hummingbird** at a feeder in Three Rivers, Tulare Co., Dec. 27 – Feb. 28+ (†G. Schuckert, m.ob.). The bird was easily seen and was observed by literally hundreds of birders. It was the first time this species has ever been recorded in California. A juv. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*S.v.varius*) was seen Dec. 31 – Feb. 28+ in Tiburon, Marin Co. (†GMCC, m.ob.). It was the first time this race was recorded in the Region, and points out the need for more careful study of subspecies distribution by all observers (see *West. Birds* 6:69-86, 1975). A Williamson's Sapsucker was found well out of its range in Portola Valley Dec. 26 (†R.&A.Wallace). It is very rarely ever reported away from the mountains. Four more Tropical Kingbirds were found after last fall's invasion and elected to stay most of the period. A single E. Phoebe was at Kelly L., Santa Cruz Co., Jan. 1 (RM *et al.*).

SWALLOWS THROUGH THRUSHES — A good description of a ♀ **Purple Martin** at Stinson Beach, Marin Co., Jan. 1 was received (RS *et al.*). This represented the first time this species was recorded in winter in California. In addition to the Blue Jays reported during the autumn, two more birds appeared in Humboldt County. One was present from the middle of January – Mar. 9 at Fieldbrook (†DE,CH,JW, JM, m.ob.) and the other was Dec. 31 – Jan. 8, 2 mi n. of Willow Cr. (S.Anderson, DA, m.ob.). A stray Clark's Nutcracker on Mt. St. Helena Dec. 12 was well w. or s. of its normal range (KVV). Very scarce in winter in the C.V., and in the Great Basin, single Winter Wrens were found at Putah Cr., Dec. 18 (DE,DS,SJ) and near Cedarville, Modoc Co., Dec. 21 (WS *et al.*). The Bendire's Thrasher in Courtland has become something of a regional fixture and the last word the editors received was that it was still present Feb. 21 (JRI). Unreported in the fall period, a Brown Thrasher was present in Santa Rosa Nov. 24 – Feb. 28+ (†M. Shepard,BDP *et al.*). Varied Thrushes made a massive invasion into the Region this winter. Many

observers reported abnormally high numbers. Townsend's Solitaires were reported in Lake and Fresno Cos., and on Mt. St. Helena in mid-December.

SHRIKES THROUGH WOOD WARBLERS — At least 14 N. Shrikes were reported, which is above normal for the period. Six were found on the Peace Valley CBC, Dec. 19 (BED). Single Solitary Vireos were reported at Lover's Pt., Monterey Co., Feb. 26 (PL), and at Burris Pk., Kings Co., Jan. 18 (KH *et al.*). As expected, Black-and-white Warblers wintered in small numbers. Five were reported; four from near the coast and one inland. A **Worm-eating Warbler** was present in Sunnybrae, Humboldt Co., Dec. 29 – Mar. 10 (SH,†DRu *et al.*). It is the second winter occurrence of this species. An incredible ten Tennessee Warblers wintered from Marin to Monterey Dec. 4 – Feb. 26 (m.ob.). Four Yellow Warblers, three from the coast from San Francisco to Santa Cruz and one inland were present Nov. 28 – Feb. 2 (PM,SAL,TB,LCB). A Magnolia Warbler was found along the Pajaro R., Santa Cruz Co., Jan. 2 – Mar. 3 (†TB,PM,EM). This represents the first regional winter record for this species. At least 11 Hermit Warblers were seen November – Feb. 25, all coastal, six of which were recorded on the Pt. Reyes CBC (RS,DS,LCB,EM *et al.*). Following last fall's record number of Palm Warblers, at least 20 birds were found along the coast from Bodega Bay to the Carmel R., Dec. 1 – late February (m.ob.). A single Wilson's Warbler was on the Carmel R., Dec. 4 (EM *et al.*). American Redstarts were on the Pajaro R., Jan. 1–22 (PM) and a bird found last fall at Forestville, Sonoma Co., was last seen Jan. 7 (BDP).

BLACKBIRDS THROUGH FINCHES — Yellow-headed Blackbirds were reported in concentrations five times their normal numbers on the Peace Valley CBC, Dec. 19, where 2500+ were tallied (*fide* BED). A Tricolored Blackbird seen at Weaverville, Trinity Co., Feb. 18, provided the first record for that county (DA). Always scarce in winter, an ad. ♂ Hooded Oriole was at Dry Cr., Fresno Co., Feb. 11 (BK *et al.*). An imm. ♂ "Baltimore" Oriole was present at Pacific Grove Dec. 27 – Feb. 5 (RS *et al.*). Brown-headed Cowbirds were reported this winter in surprising numbers; a total of 465 was reported, of which 350 were at Bethal I., Dec. 21 (DE).

Observers discovered two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks: males were seen at Los Altos Hills Dec. 1 (†TC) and at Golden Gate Pk., Dec. 30 (LCB *et al.*). A Black-headed Grosbeak found at Three Rivers, Tulare Co., Dec. 19, was the only one reported (JLi). Following last fall's downslope invasion of Evening Grosbeaks, 187 more were found wintering throughout the Region, all in coastal areas. This suggests that the birds may have come from the Cascades rather than the Sierra. A Sharp-tailed Sparrow was at the Palo Alto Baylands Ref., Feb. 8 (A.Ghiorso,JM *et al.*) and the Bolinas Lagoon bird was last seen Jan. 1 (RS). Ten Vesper Sparrows found at Panoche Valley Dec. 9 were the only ones reported (TC). The Red Bluff CBC tallied a substantial count for Rufous-crowned Sparrows. At least 13 were found at the mouth of Antelope Canyon Dec. 17 (DAG). Tree Sparrows were at Davis

Dec. 18–19 (H. Smith), and at Lost L., Fresno Co., Dec. 11, where it furnished the first county record (†RH). Incredible was a report (with no substantiating details) of 20 Tree Sparrows at Hospital Rock, Tuile L. (*fide* MT). Harris' Sparrows were in lower-than-normal numbers; with only three reported, two inland and one along the coast Dec. 17 – Jan. 7 (m.ob.). Another good description of a Golden-crowned x White-crowned Sparrow hybrid was submitted of a bird seen at Putah Cr., Dec. 18 (DS). A Fox Sparrow Dec. 30 at Lee Vining was clearly not one of the far western races, being very rusty in color (†TM). Swamp Sparrows were reported in excellent numbers; the high count of 44 seen on the Peace Valley CBC, Dec. 19 (*fide* BED). This editor can remember not too many years ago when this bird was considered rare in winter. A Lapland Longspur seen on the Pt. Reyes CBC, Dec. 17 (RS,DS *et al.*) and two more seen at Estero Americana, Sonoma Co., Feb. 10 (BDP,DS). A single Chestnut-collared Longspur was found in the Arcata Bottoms Dec. 1 (GMC).

CORRIGENDA — In the introduction AB 31:1183 the reference to nesting should pertain to N. Parulas and not to Yellow-crowned Night Herons. In the same issue AB 31:1187 although Grace's Warblers have been found on territory in California (*West. Birds* 5:45–56, 1974, AB 31:1048, 1977, and AB 29:1034, 1975) and breeding is almost certain, an actual nest has yet to be found.

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Please note Blue List Cooperator's Form pages 405-6. It is due your Regional Editor by September 15.