

Field Notes

(August-September 2018)

by Pete Dunten

Geese through Shorebirds

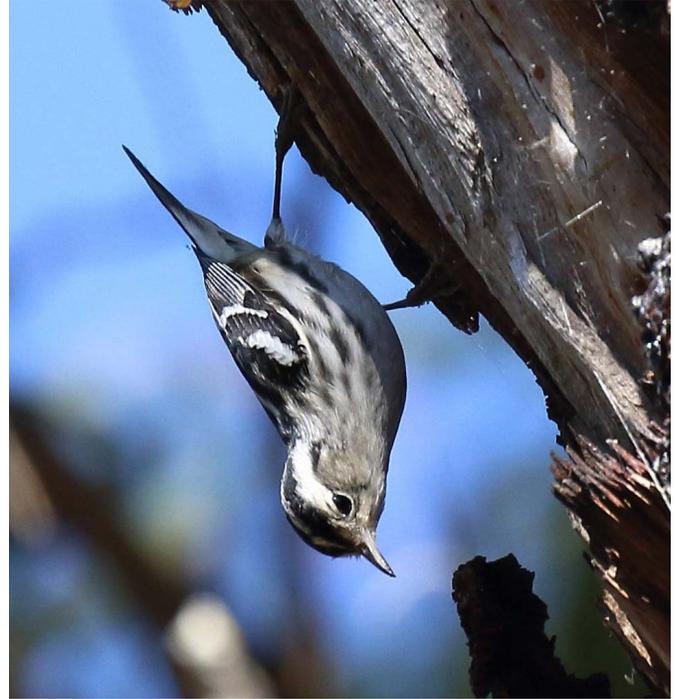
Greater White-fronted Geese returned this fall on 7 Sept, when thirteen flew over the EEC at Don Edwards NWR (LL). A skein of 29 flew over Ulistac NA (GL, BM, ChJ) on 23 Sept and 43 settled in at New Chicago Marsh on the same date (STu). The **Mute Swan** at Alviso Salt Pond A16 was seen through 12 Sept (TJ). Unseasonal **Common Goldeneyes** were reported on Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 8 Aug (EvM) and on Pond AB1 on 22 Aug (EvM, PL). **Brown Pelican** numbers were up this year, with a survey tallying 182 at the Alviso Salt Ponds on 30 Sept (MJM, RJ). 2007 and 2008 were the last years with such high counts. An early **American Bittern** was photographed at Alviso Marina on 25 Aug (LW). The second fall sighting of a bittern was at Mallard Slough on 18 Sep (GL). A single **White-faced Ibis** flew over Alviso (LL, DW) and Byxbee Park (FV) on 4 Sept. A group of ten was over the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin on 6 Sept (RCa). A **Zone-tailed Hawk** roosting with Turkey Vultures somewhere in the vicinity of Anderson Reservoir was only the third county record. The hawk was known to be present between 16 - 22 Aug (KWi, m. ob.), and likely in the area for a longer time. A survey on 26 Aug tallied an impressive 121 **Snowy Plovers** on the extensive dry areas of Alviso Salt Ponds A13 and A15 (MJM, RJ). The plovers had moved to nearby Salt Pond A12 on 30 Sept, when 119 were counted (MJM, RJ). Twelve **Lesser Yellowlegs** at the north VTA mitigation pond on 10 Sept was a good count (RJ). A solo **Solitary Sandpiper** on a small pond at the Pearson-Arastradero Preserve from 15 - 17 Aug was a nice find for a location that doesn't attract many shorebirds (RPa et al., GL, MDo). Single **Ruddy Turnstones** turned up at the San Francisquito Creek mouth on 21 Sept (GL) and along the Don Edwards NWR entrance road on 23 Sept (MMR, RJ). A **Wandering Tattler** at the Alviso Salt Ponds on 18 Aug (LL) was another nice find. Tattlers visit the county about one year in two, with most of our records in the fall. The second wave of **Semi-palmated Sandpipers** to pass through the county on fall migration are the birds hatched during the summer. The first immature arrived on 28 Aug at Don

Edwards NWR (LL). This was the latest arrival date recorded for this age class, by twelve days. A late thaw in the Arctic, delaying the start of breeding, may explain the late arrival of immatures this year. Their breeding habitat is "Low and sub-arctic tundra, near water." (Hicklin, P. and C. L. Gratto-Trevor (2010) in the BNA account) The high count was four on 2 Sept in the marsh at State St and Spreckles Ave (STu), and all had departed after 9 Sept when one was seen in the marsh at Grand Blvd and Spreckles Ave (STu). Five **Pectoral Sandpipers** at Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 3 Sep were a nice count (MH). The last year in which the number tallied in one day was in double digits was 2004. Two more Pectoral Sandpipers stopped at the SCRWA Ponds in Gilroy between 26 - 28 Sept (MJM, RWR). One to two **Baird's Sandpipers** were found in the Alviso area between 9 Aug and 4 Sept (m. ob.). Baird's Sandpiper is another arctic breeding bird, and the fall migrants on the west coast are immature birds. Their arrival date this fall was not delayed relative to other years. Their preferred nesting habitat is "Dry coastal as well as upland, well-drained, exposed tundra, typically the first snow-free sites available for nesting." (Moskoff, W. and R. Montgomerie (2002) in the BNA account). On 30 Sept, 38 **Red Knots** were noted on a closed refuge pond (MJM, RJ). Numbers peaked this year in the fall, in contrast to the last two years when the peak was in early June.

Gulls through Phainopepla

A first-cycle **Heermann's Gull** flew over Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 4 Aug and was caught on film (LL). Heermann's Gull is rare away from the coast and occurs in the county about one year in two, typically in the fall. **Elegant Tern** numbers increased towards the end of August, with 43 at Pond A2E on 21 Aug (RWR) and 53 tallied at four ponds bor-

dering the South Bay on 30 Sept (MJM, RJ). Two **Common Terns** were on the remnant of the levee separating Alviso Salt Ponds A10 and A11 on 30 Sept, and another was at a closed refuge pond the same date (RJ, MJM). One to two **Least Terns** were seen at Pond A2E through 19 Aug (FV, AME, LL), their numbers tapering off from a high count of only five



Black-and-white Warbler by Mike Mammoser

this fall. While present every year since records have been kept, the high count has been as low as five terns only once before, in 1995. A **Common Murre** on Alviso Pond A16 on 19 Aug was a one-day wonder (LL). A **Short-eared Owl**, one of the winter residents in the county, was spotted flying over the marsh next to Coyote Creek close to Alviso Pond A17 on 28 Sept (TR). **Vaux's Swift** numbers peaked on 15 - 16 Sept when up to 500 were over the Los Capitancillos Ponds in the early evening (JPa). Observers were treated to the spectacle of the flock beginning to spiral in a synchronized fashion before departing. The first **Red-breasted Sapsucker** returning for the winter was at the Santa Teresa Golf Course adjacent to the county park on 13 Sept (SPv). The first **Prairie Falcon** to arrive in the valley was at Anderson Reservoir on 24 Aug (BB). Not long after, the first **Merlin** was found at TJ Martin Park in San Jose on 29 Aug (JPa, RoB). **Willow Flycatchers** were widely reported beginning on 18 Aug, with migrants still passing through into October. The first arrival on 18 Aug was a single flycatcher along the Guadalupe River

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Trail (JPa). Notable high counts were four along the Guadalupe River Trail between Trimble and Thamien Park on 29 Aug (WGB), three at the SCRWA Ponds in Gilroy on 31 Aug (MJM) and six at the Don Edwards NWR EEC on 9 Sept (STu). A single **Hammond's Flycatcher** stopped at Ulistac NA on its way south on 9 Sept (RJ). There were two sightings of **Purple Martins** distant from the Santa Cruz Mountains, where they are frequently seen near their nests. Four were at Calero Reservoir on 2 Aug (JPa) and one was at Ogier Ponds on 11 Aug (SCR). **Bank Swallow** migration was marked by a single swallow at Coast Casey Forebay on 21 Sept (GL). A **Townsend's Solitaire** frequented Juniper trees, a favored source of berries, at West Valley College in Saratoga between 10 Sept and 26 Sept (OA, m. ob.). Photos show the Juniper berries were fueling replacement of tail feathers (PSv, JVs). Another solitaire was present along Mines Rd in the San Antonio Valley on 28 Sept (WGB). A **Phainopepla** on the move visited Ulistac NA for a day on 28 Aug before continuing on its way (PLa).

Wood Warblers through Bobolink

Fall is the favorite season for some because it brings vagrant warblers from the east that have misoriented in their journey south. While the coastal counties find many more of these vagrants, a few pause in Santa Clara County and are found by diligent searchers. This September yielded a number of nice surprises. A **Black-and-white Warbler** stopped at Ulistac NA between 23 – 27 Sept (RPh, m. ob.). Single **Tennessee Warblers** were found on 14 Sept at Coast Casey Forebay (LL) and on 27 Sept at Ulistac NA (PB). A skulking **Hooded Warbler** showed itself only briefly at Coast Casey Forebay on 23 Sept (AVe). It was only the ninth county record, and the first in September. A stunning adult male **American Redstart** along Adobe Creek near the bay on 23 Sept was another nice bird that didn't linger (SSm). A **Blackburnian Warbler** at Vasona CP between 8 – 19 Sept delighted many observers (LM et al., m. ob.). It was only the fifth county record. A **Chestnut-sided**

Warbler dropped in at Ulistac NA on 22 Sept (STu). And rounding out the litany of eastern warblers, a **Blackpoll** was photographed at Ulistac NA on 21 Sept (DN) and seen again on 22 Sept (MJM). Some of our expected migrant warblers also passed through in low numbers. A **Nashville Warbler** visited Ulistac NA on 24 Sept (PB, ChJ, BM, JVs). **MacGillivray's Warblers** turned up at four locations, with one along the Guadalupe River Trail between 26 – 29 Aug (JPa, KB, AVe, BM), one at Vasona CP between 3 – 4 Sept (JPa, GL),



Green-tailed Towhee by Garrett Lau

one at the Don Edwards EEC on 3 Sept (MHo), and one at the wetland west of the Sunnyvale WPCP on 8 Sept (PKE, RKe). Single **Hermit Warblers** on migration were noted at four locations, with one at Ulistac NA on four dates between 10 – 26 Aug (PLa, PB, MJM, STu), one at Anderson Reservoir CP on 27 Aug (AD), one at Guadalupe River Park in downtown San Jose on 30 Aug (EF) and one at Vasona CP on three dates between 9 – 19 Sept (GL et al., BM, MBa et al.). A **Green-tailed Towhee** at the Don Edwards EEC upland on 7 – 8 Sept (GL, MDo) was unexpected. The strays that reach the county have been found in backyards and at elevations from the bayside to 1500' in the Diablo Range and 3700' near Loma Prieta. They've been found year-round except for mid-summer, with one in three records falling in September. A **Brewer's Sparrow** moved furtively around the SCVWD headquarters in Almaden Valley on 3

Sept (STu). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** posed for photos at Ulistac NA on 22 Sept (LL). Three **Chipping Sparrows** were at TJ Martin Park in Almaden Valley on 5 Sept (JPa). The park has been a time-honored location for overwintering for many years. A **Le Conte's Sparrow**, the county's first, was seen briefly near the Don Edwards EEC on 7 Sept (MJM). Three **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** in September was a good total. One was at the Don Edwards EEC on 9 Sept (GZ), the second was at Ulistac NA on 19 Sept (MJM), and the third was at the Don Edwards EEC on the same date (LL). One to two **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** joined the mixed flock of blackbirds along Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley between 13 – 22 Sept (JPa, m. ob.). Two **Bobolinks** flew over the Alviso Marina on 11 Sept; an experienced observer recognized and recorded their flight calls (TJ).

Observers: Ozzie Altus (OA), Patrick Baglee (PB), Roberta Baker (RoB), Meg Barron (MBa), Bob Bolles (BB), Karen Burnson (KB), Richard Carlson (RCa), Dani Christensen (DCn), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Adam Dudley (AD), Al Eisner (AME), Erin Fisher (EF), Marcel Holyoak (MHo), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Chris Johnson (ChJ), Tom Johnson (TJ), Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKE), Peter LaTourrette (PLa), Garrett Lau (GL), Louise Liou (LL), Patricia Lynch (PL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Eve Meier (EvM), Brooke Miller (BM), Lisa Myers (LM), David Nickerson (DN), Rich Page (RPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Sergey Pavlov (SPv), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Tobias Rohmer (TR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Scott Smithson (SSm), Peter Svensson (PSv), Steve Tucker (STu), Frank Vanslager (FV), Jason Vassallo (JVs), Ann Verdi (AVe), Liam Waters (LW), Dave Weber (DW), Kate Wilmot (KWi), Gena Zolotar (GZ)

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