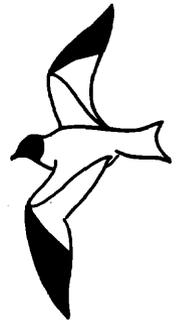


# WESTERN BIRDS



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## SIXTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

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In this report we review 239 records of 86 species and one hybrid recently assessed by the California Bird Records Committee (hereafter the Committee or CBRC). Of these records, 160 were accepted, yielding an acceptance rate (68%) consistent with the most recent reports (Roberson 1993, Patten and Erickson 1994). This rate, however, is lower than in earlier reports, primarily for two reasons. First, in the recent reports, we have voted on a substantial number of historical records that have been published but not reviewed, and a higher percentage of these records has been rejected. Second, the Committee has become more conservative recently. For this report, records dating from 1956 to 1991 were reviewed, the majority being from the summer of 1990 through the spring of 1991.

This report adds no species to the California list, which stands at 586 species. This "inactivity" is temporary, as the acceptance of the Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*) will be reported in the 17th report and that of Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor*) and Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savanna*) in the 18th. Other potential additions to the state list under review are the Dark-rumped Petrel (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*), Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus*), and Black-tailed Gull (*Larus crassirostris*). The Band-rumped Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*), on the state list by means of a single sight record, is being reconsidered. Outstanding decisions included in this report are the acceptance of California's second record of Stejneger's Petrel (*Pterodroma longirostris*) and the rejection of prospective first state records of Townsend's Shearwater (*Puffinus auricularis*), the Band-tailed (*Larus belcheri*), Iceland (*L. glaucoides*) and Swallow-tailed Gulls (*Creagrus furcatus*), and the Oriental Turtle-Dove (*Streptopelia orientalis*).

All records reviewed by the CBRC are archived at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, 439 Calle San Pablo, Camarillo, CA 93010. All

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forms of documentation (written descriptions, photographs, recordings, videotapes, etc.) are housed at the foundation, where they are organized taxonomically and by CBRC record number. All are available for public review. The CBRC solicits information on all occurrences in California of species on its Review List (see Roberson 1993) and requests that documentation be sent to Michael A. Patten, CBRC Secretary, P. O. Box 51959, Riverside, CA 92517-2959.

The format of this report closely follows that of recent reports (e.g., Patten and Erickson 1994). In general, records are listed chronologically by first date of occurrence. Included with each record is the location, county abbreviation (see below), and date span. The date span generally follows that published in *American Birds*; if the CBRC accepts a date span differing from that in a published source, the differing dates are italicized. Initials of the observer(s) responsible for the record, if known, are listed first, followed by a semicolon, then the initials of additional observers submitting documentation, then the CBRC record number. All records are sight records unless otherwise noted. Initials followed by a dagger (†) indicate that the observer supplied an identifiable photograph. A “#” indicates a specimen record, and is followed by the acronym of the institution housing the specimen and the institution’s catalog number. An asterisk (\*) prior to a species’ name indicates that it is no longer on the Review List. The number in parentheses following the species’ name is the number of records accepted by the CBRC. Two asterisks (\*\*) after this number indicate that the number of accepted records is limited to in a restricted review period or includes records accepted for statistical purposes only [see Roberson (1986) for more information].

When individual birds return to a locality after an absence (for example, in consecutive winters) or remain continuously for multiple years, their occurrence in each subsequent year is reviewed as a new record. The Committee judges, by a majority vote, whether or not the same individuals are involved.

Although the Committee does not formally resolve identification issues below the species level, comments on age, sex, or subspecies are often included. The authors of this report assume responsibility for all such comments, although they are usually based on comments by Committee members during circulation of the record.

The Committee uses the following codes for California counties: ALA, Alameda; ALP, Alpine; AMA, Amador; BUT, Butte; CLV, Calaveras; COL, Colusa; CC, Contra Costa; DN, Del Norte; ED, El Dorado; FRE, Fresno; HUM, Humboldt; IMP, Imperial; INY, Inyo; KER, Kern; KIN, Kings; LAK, Lake; LAS, Lassen; LA, Los Angeles; MAD, Madera; MRN, Marin; MRP, Mariposa; MEN, Mendocino; MER, Merced; MOD, Modoc; MNO, Mono; MTY, Monterey; NAP, Napa; NEV, Nevada; ORA, Orange; PLA, Placer; PLU, Plumas; RIV, Riverside; SAC, Sacramento; SBT, San Benito; SBE, San Bernardino; SD, San Diego; SF, San Francisco; SJ, San Joaquin; SLO, San Luis Obispo; SM, San Mateo; SBA, Santa Barbara; SCL, Santa Clara; SCZ, Santa Cruz; SHA, Shasta; SIE, Sierra; SIS, Siskiyou; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; STA, Stanislaus; SUT, Sutter; TEH, Tehama; TRI, Trinity; TUL, Tulare; TUO, Tuolumne; VEN, Ventura; YOL, Yolo; YUB, Yuba.

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Museums that have allowed Committee members access to specimens or have provided information are as follows: CAS, California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco; LACM, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Los Angeles; SBCM, San Bernardino County Museum, Redlands; and SDNHM, San Diego Natural History Museum. Deborah L. Davidson and Michael A. Patten submitted photographs of and information about museum specimens. Other abbreviations used are AFB, Air Force Base; I., island; n. mi., nautical miles; NM, National Museum; NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; Pt., point; R., river; SB, State Beach; and SP, State Park.

An addendum/corrigendum for the 14th report is available from its author, Don Roberson, at 282 Grove Acre Ave., Pacific Grove, CA 93950.

### THE ROLE OF THE CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

In this section we explore, in part, the role of the Committee and its interaction with the birding community. All opinions and definitions are those of the authors, not those of the Committee as a whole. We ask that our readers keep the following thoughts in mind. First, the CBRC does not attempt to “prove” a record; this is beyond our means. Furthermore, our failure to accept a record does not mean the reported bird was not present. Rather, we decide collectively whether the available evidence supports the record to a certain threshold, a threshold that varies tremendously from member to member. The threshold also varies with the significance of a record. The more unexpected a record, on the basis of date and geography, the more cautious some members may be. Criteria for acceptance of a record may follow a continuum; although each member needs to believe that the identification was correct in order for him or her to vote for the record, some members may require less documentation for some species whereas other members may require the same high level for all species. In other words, some want the Committee to approximate as closely as possible what really happened, whereas others would rather reject records that are likely good if there is any question about them. Let’s use the following example to illustrate this point. Suppose 100 records are circulated, of which 90 are indeed valid. One member supports 92; the other supports 80. The first favors a more liberal policy, even though it resulted in the acceptance of two bad records, because it more accurately reflected what really happened. The other favors a more conservative policy, even though it resulted in the rejection of ten good records, because it ensured that all accepted records were, in fact, good. Of course, the situation is not this simple, but this example points out how differently various members approach this issue. There is no right or wrong, just ten individuals driven by various philosophies.

Committee decisions can have undesired results. For example, most people feel a certain sense of frustration or anger if their record is not accepted. (“I know what I saw,” etc.). A sense of inequity is felt by some, who feel that if you are not part of the “gang,” your description will not be given the same chances. There is, unfortunately, likely some truth to that feeling, although most Committee members are aware of the potential for that bias. Some argue that only a description should be reviewed, without

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regard for who the observer is. We believe, however, that the observer's reputation and previous experience are important factors. If a person has a history of being able to correctly identify some difficult species, and has demonstrated that he or she understands variation that so often trips up even careful observers, that should weigh in favor of a record's gaining acceptance. There remains, then, an element that is "unfair" to those who write a similar description but do not receive the benefit of such doubt. There is no easy answer, but an understanding of the process and an objective view would be of value.

Let us share the message behind certain sentiments recently expressed to Committee members, a resentment that some (many, we fear) do not submit their sightings because they feel they will not be believed. If so, this is "birding's loss," diminishing our knowledge base to some degree. Several solutions to this problem are possible. The Committee could take a rather permissive tone and accept more records. This may please more people and stimulate more involvement. However, we fear that this "kinder, gentler" approach would not serve the scientific study of bird distribution. Another route is to work with the birding community, leading the way to a higher standard of documentation by helping birders understand what it takes to document a record sufficiently. We can do this, in part, through articles in local newsletters (e.g., *The Western Tanager* and *The Gull*), through workshops at meetings of the Western Field Ornithologists and local Audubon Society chapters, and through individual correspondence.

Yet another angle is to minimize what we call the human side. It is not logical to expect that someone would care enough to write a description and submit it to the CBRC yet not care if the record was accepted. However, we are hopeful that some of this displeasure, and the corresponding "drop-out rate," can be reduced. We feel, and these definitions are ours, there is a distinction between a "sighting" and a "record." In some cases, we might feel that a species was likely seen, as reported, but do not want to embrace the sighting as an accepted "record." Why? Referring to the previously mentioned continuum, we feel that there must be definitive documentation to ensure that when future ornithologists look back at the records we accept the errors will be as few as possible. Removing one's ego from the process can be a difficult task but is a worthwhile goal. Heindel can provide a personal example. The Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) reported from Orange County and listed in this report under Records Not Accepted was his. Yes, he is disappointed that it was not accepted. Yes, he has likely seen more Little Stints (from years of experience in the Middle East) than any other member of the Committee. But this is a difficult identification, and the record was of an adult, then unprecedented. Even though the description was lengthy, it had its weaknesses. The Committee made a defensible decision. The process is more important than one person's ego. Sometimes a sighting in which the observer has complete confidence fails to gain acceptance. Perhaps it is the "wrong" decision, although such issues are rarely cast in black and white. But we feel strongly that withdrawing from the process solves little, and the potential knowledge that goes unreviewed lessens our ability to learn more about the fascinating subjects of avian vagrancy and range expansions.

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Why spend so much effort discussing this topic? We feel a need to reach out, increase communication within the birding community, and solicit your help. It is not self-serving to underscore that the Committee has done some worthwhile work. Yet it is not free of problems. Some of its internal conflicts have not been pretty, and have been waged for too long. This is a shame, but is also on the mend and does not negate the solidity of the Committee's work. This discussion is a recognition of the complexities of the process and reflects a determination to improve it continually.

Birders are hopelessly human. The Committee will always be imperfect; some of its decisions will ultimately be judged wrong. But ornithology can only gain by everyone's working together to raise the level of documentation. We are under no delusions here—we do not expect reams of description for every Philadelphia Vireo (*Vireo philadelphicus*), nor do we expect to receive flowers from someone who has seen his or her record rejected. The less the CBRC is a self-serving, self-important group, the members voting on each other's records, the better. The more inclusive it is, the more information it will generate for future use. We feel that, with your help, the process can yield improved results, which in the end will be worth the effort.

### RECORDS ACCEPTED

**YELLOW-BILLED LOON** *Gavia adamsii* (51). An immature was at Moss Landing, MTY, 30 Dec 1990–17 Feb 1991 (SFB, JLD, MJL, GMcC, DR, SBT; 6-1991). This sighting fits the pattern of records for this species. The straw-colored distal half of the bill and the dark auricular spot, which contrasted with the paler head, were mentioned; both of these marks are excellent for this species.

**MOTTLED PETREL** *Pterodroma inexpectata* (30). Eight were 42 n. mi. offshore due west of Klamath River, DN, 10 Dec 1990 (MF; 23-1991). This species continues to be seen offshore from November to March, although numbers may fluctuate from year to year.

**STEJNEGER'S PETREL** *Pterodroma longirostris* (3). Two were well studied, with one being photographed (Figure 1) 53 n. mi. SW of Pt. Reyes, MRN, 17 Nov 1990 (MJA, SFB, BB, AD, EG, KH, CHK, THK, JMk, RN†, DRi, BR, TS, MT†, AW; 175-1990). The only previous record for California was for the same date in 1979 (71-1979); that earlier record was not accepted by the American Birding Association Checklist Committee, generating substantial controversy (see McCaskie and Roberson 1992; Kaufman 1991). Therefore, the photographs supporting these records are most welcome. In addition to the photographs, published in *Am. Birds* 45:146 and 45:174, the observers compiled an impressive series of descriptions. In particular, Bailey and Hansen were very thorough, ensuring that all congeners were eliminated. For an excellent discussion of identification criteria in this complex, see Roberson and Bailey (1991) and Spear et al. (1992).

\***WILSON'S STORM-PETREL** *Oceanites oceanicus* (128). Up to two were on Monterey Bay, MTY, 11 Sep–7 Oct 1989 (RS; 95-1992). This species has proven to be quite regular in this area, and records from 1990 and later are no longer reviewed.

**BROWN BOOBY** *Sula leucogaster* (36). At least eight (two adults, five subadults, and one first-year bird) were at the Salton Sea, IMP and RIV, 12 Jul–29 Sep 1990 (JLD†; SFB, NBB, MJL†, GMcC, RLM†, MAP, DR, JCW†; 99-1990). Determining the exact number of individuals was complicated. In addition to the problems caused by movements of individuals around the sea, inconsistencies among observers in

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terminology and ageing led to some controversy. In the end we followed the recommendations of Patten and McCaskie, who spent the most time at the sea and analyzed the situation most thoroughly.

**TRICOLORED HERON** *Egretta tricolor* (4\*\*). An adult in the Tijuana R. estuary, SD, 5-9 Aug 1990 (GMcC; JFW; 137-1990) was felt to be the same as one found nearby in the Tijuana R. valley, SD, 28 Dec 1990-11 Jan 1991 (MJL; GMcC, MAP†; 24-1991). An immature was in the Tijuana R. valley, SD, 7 Dec 1990-3 Feb 1991 (SFB; GMcC, MAP; 211-1990). One at the Whitewater R. mouth, north end of the Salton Sea, RIV, 27 Jul-24 Aug was an adult (GMcC; MAP; 110-1991). Only records from 1990 and later are under Committee review.

**REDDISH EGRET** *Egretta rufescens* (55). An adult at the south end of San Diego Bay, SD, 2 Sep 1990-1 Jan 1991 (GMcC; MJL, MAP, GR; 135-1990, 105-1991) was the same bird with a deformed bill that had been seen annually since 1982 [see Patten and Erickson (1994) for date spans]. An immature was also on San Diego Bay, SD, 2 Sep 1990-8 Feb 1991 (GMcC; 136-1990). Another immature was found slightly to the north near Del Mar, SD, 15-24 Oct 1990 (LS; 191-1990). Yet another San Diego-area record was of an adult at San Elijo Lagoon, SD, 19 May 1991 (SW†; 100-1991). An adult in Marina del Rey, LA, 27 Apr 1990 (JR†; 16-1991) was only the second for Los Angeles County.

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** *Nyctanassa violacea* (14). An adult in La Jolla, SD, 18 Dec 1990-26 Feb 1991 (JLD, SFB; 46-1991) was considered to be the same individual seen here and along the adjacent coast north to San Elijo Lagoon since 25 Oct 1981; for a complete date span, see Patten and Erickson (1994). An



Figure 1. This Stejneger's Petrel (175-1990) was photographed on 17 Nov 1990, 53 n. mi. off Pt. Reyes, Marin Co. The photographs and accompanying descriptions eliminated all congeners and give California its second record of the species.

Photo by Rod Norden

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adult was in the Tijuana R. valley, SD, 30 Sep 1990–7 Jan 1991 (GMcC, MAP; 153-1990), and a subadult at this same location on 16 Jun 1991 stayed until at least 31 Mar 1992, by which time it had molted into adult plumage (GMcC, SEF; 88-1991).

EMPEROR GOOSE *Chen canagica* (58). Two arrived on SE Farallon I., SF, 25 Jan 1991; one left around 1 Feb 1991, the other remained to 28 Mar 1991 (JW†; PP†, DAS; 55-1991). Another was found at Pt. Reyes, MRN, 11 Feb–10 Mar 1991 (PP; SFB, GMcC, JLD, MJL, JO'B; 47-1991); by an 8–2 majority, the Committee felt this individual to be different from the one that vacated the island. Another was seen at Tule Lake NWR, SIS, 25 Jan–14 Feb 1987 (SEF, KHi, MFR; 86-1987). This bird, for which documentation was slow in coming, was agreed by the Committee to be the same bird that was at Tule Lake 19–21 Oct 1986 (Roberson 1993).

We also received, through the efforts of Roberson and Patten, two older records. Two Emperor Geese were photographed near Santa Cruz, SCR, 9 Jan–19 Mar 1956 (JM†; 176-1992). This record would have remained unreviewed (see Roberson 1993) were it not for the efforts of many, including a suggestion by Laudenslayer et al. (1991); we thank Hal Michael for his help in piecing together his father's record. Also, an immature was photographed at the Eel R. mouth, HUM, 8–20 Nov 1961 (CFY†; SWH; 112-1992).

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula* (13). An adult male in Irvine, ORA, 12–20 Sep 1990 was the first for that county (MTH, GMcC, MAP; 132-1990). California's first Garganeys in the desert were near Cantil, KER, 30 Sep 1990 (MTH†; JLD; 197-1990) and at Furnace Creek Ranch, INY, 12 Oct–1 Nov 1990 (JLD†; SEF†, KLG, BH†, PEL, MJL, GMcC, KCM, MAP; 150-1990). Both of these individuals were thought to be immature males from the bold border to their speculum but relatively pale blue-gray forewing; most of the Committee felt, however, it was wiser to leave the question of the birds' age unanswered. See Jackson (1992) for a more thorough discussion of ageing of this species. An adult male in Bolinas, MRN, 10 Oct–11 Nov 1990 (GAF, MJL, JM†, JM, SWM; 166-1990) and refound 29 Dec 1990–5 Jan 1991 (DAS; PP; 13-1991) was felt to be the same bird seen 27 Mar–30 Apr 1990 (51-1990; Patten and Erickson 1994).

COMMON POCHARD *Aythya ferina* (1). A male at Silver Lakes, SBE, 17 Jan–23 Feb 1991 (SFB, JLD, RAE, KLG, EG†, RAH, JML, PEL, GMcC, MAP; 7-1991; Patten 1993) was judged to be a returning bird, first seen at the same location 11–17 Feb 1989 (Patten and Erickson 1994). This single state record continues to raise concern as possibly pertaining to an escapee. By a 9–1 vote, the Committee concluded that its return at an "appropriate" season, coupled with the few records for Alaska (including a spring record for Homer, which might indicate a bird wintering on this side of the Pacific), outweighed the possibility of the bird's having escaped from captivity.

\*TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula* (63). A female in Saticoy, VEN, 23 Dec 1990 (JLD; 106-1991) was judged to be the same individual present most winters since Feb 1985. Another in nearby Ventura, VEN, 19 Jan–5 Mar 1991 (PEL, DD†; 15-1991) was judged to be different, as it lacked some white near the bill apparent on the Saticoy bird. An excellent photograph of the Ventura bird appeared in *Am. Birds* 45:320. This is a good example of the value of detailed descriptions.

Puddingstone Res., LA, was home for what was believed to be a returning male, seen 14–17 Jan 1990 (KAR; MB, JLD, KLG†, MAP; 23-1990) and 17 Nov 1990–30 Jan 1991 (GMcC, MAP; 17-1991). Two males were on Castaic Lake, LA, 28 Dec 1990–21 Jan 1991 (KLG; 101-1992).

A female on Bouldin I., SJ, 15 Dec 1990 (MJL; 198-1990) was thought to be the same as one found some 10 mi. away in Stockton, SJ, three days later (DGY; 60-1991). This is only the third record for the Central Valley, the previous two being for

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Stockton 22 Mar 1984 (70-1984) and San Luis Reservoir, MER, 17 Feb 1986 (173-1986) and 21-22 Feb 1988 (209-1988).

Males wintering at at least three sites in the San Francisco Bay area generated confusion over the number of individuals involved. Morlan effectively sorted out the situation as follows: A male was first found at Rodeo Lagoon, MRN, 16 Nov 1990 and was last seen there 15 Mar 1991 (SFB, JLD, GMcC, JM; 48-1991). What was likely the same bird was seen on the Sutro Bath ponds, SF, 18 Jan-16 Mar 1991; it was then seen on Lake Merced, SF, 23-30 Apr 1991 (56-1991). All of these sightings likely pertain to one returning individual, initially present 19 Nov 1988-27 Mar 1989 (257-1988) and seen again 9 Jan-26 Apr 1990 (7-1990). One observer's seeing the bird fly from the Sutro Baths across the Golden Gate toward Rodeo Lagoon convinced the majority of the Committee that one energetic male was responsible for the various sightings.

An adult male in the Mare I. area of Vallejo, SOL, 15 Mar 1990 (DAs, RL; 8-1991) was considered the same as one located 3 mi. away, in Glen Cove, a year later, 16-22 Mar 1991 (MBG; 73-1991).

Records of this species after the winter of 1991-1992 are no longer reviewed.

KING EIDER *Somateria spectabilis* (29). A female was at Monterey harbor, MTY, 18 Mar 1991 (BAF; 521991). What was almost certainly the same bird was at Moss Landing harbor, 2 Jun-6 Sep 1991 (DR, RST; 101-1991). It was one of the few King Eiders to be seen through the summer in California.

MISSISSIPPI KITE *Ictinia mississippiensis* (20). A first-year bird was at Oasis, MNO, 25-26 May 1990 (PR; 89-1990). The majority of the records of this species are from late spring at such desert oases.

ZONE-TAILED HAWK *Buteo albonotatus* (31). An adult was near San Marcos, SD, 22 Dec 1990 (JO'B; 107-1991). Another adult photographed near Escondido, SD, 19 Dec 1990-12 Mar 1991 (GMcC, MAP, HW†; 26-1991) was felt to be a returning bird, seen first on 30 Dec 1989 (84-1990). An immature was at this same location 30 Jan-18 Mar 1991 (GMcC; 25-1991). This species is becoming quite routine in winter in portions of San Diego and Orange counties.

GYRFALCON *Falco rusticolus* (6). One at Lower Klamath NWR, SIS, 23 Jan 1985 (RRH†; 198-1989) came to our attention in a most unusual way. In the May 1989 issue of *MD Magazine*, in an article discussing the comeback of the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), mixed in with a few photos of Peregrines was one of a Gyrfalcon (Figure 2), labeled as a Peregrine. Craig Roberts of Tillamook, Oregon, noticed the misidentification and alerted us.

WILSON'S PLOVER *Charadrius wilsonia* (5). One was photographed at the mouth of the Tijuana River, near Imperial Beach, SD, 9 Apr 1991 (DP-C; DWA, AM†, REW; 97-1991). This is the earliest of the five state records, the others falling between 20 May and 29 Jun; it is also the first since 1979.

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus palliatus* (12). One was on Santa Barbara I., SBA, 30 May 1987 (BWA; 375-1986); this record has been subsumed into the 1986 record of one at the same locality, reported by Bevier (1990).

UPLAND SANDPIPER *Bartramia longicauda* (11). A juvenile was photographed near Oxnard, VEN, 15-20 Sep 1990 (RJM; DD†, KLG, BH†, PEL, GMcC, JO'B, MAP, DR; 124-1990). The cooperativeness of this bird was much appreciated, as most previous Upland Sandpipers in California remained for only a single day.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT *Limosa haemastica* (9). California's second was photographed near Daggett, SBE, 9 May 1975 (GS†; 102-1990). A photo was published in *Am. Birds* 29:908, but that photo did not, in some people's minds, eliminate the

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Black-tailed Godwit (*L. limosa*), a potential stray to California. The Committee thanks Mike San Miguel for his work in obtaining copies of the original photos, which were conclusive.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta* (3). Most remarkable was a Little Stint in first basic plumage collected at Harper Dry Lake, SBE, 21 Nov 1988 (#SBCM 52766; 210-1990). It was clearly a small *Calidris* without any trace of webbing, fitting the Little Stint/Rufous-necked Stint (*C. ruficollis*) species pair. Patten carefully measured the specimen on two occasions, confirming its identification as *minuta*. For further information on measurements and identification, see Prater et al. (1977). This species' being found in California on this date is both exciting and disconcerting. How many others have come through (or stayed), only to be overlooked in their basic plumage, which so closely matches that of the Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*)?

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER *Calidris fuscicollis* (11). An adult was in Irvine, ORA, 9-13 Sep 1990 (BED, MTH†, GMcC, MAP; 131-1990). Adult White-rumped Sandpipers are very dull at this time of year; this bird was in typical basic plumage



Figure 2. This picture of the Gyrfalcon at Lower Klamath Natl. Wildlife Refuge, Siskiyou Co., 23 Jan 1985 (198-1989), shows a grayish bird with a poorly defined moustache and a tail extending well beyond the primary tips, both excellent marks for this species.

Photo by Richard Hansen

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except for a few black streaks on the flanks. This is the third fall record for California; all three are of adults.

\*BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER *Tryngites subruficollis* (77). Juveniles were photographed on SE Farallon I., SF, 15–18 Aug 1990 (PP†; 144-1990) and 31 Aug 1990 (PP†; 145-1990). A juvenile was at Pt. Reyes, MRN, 1 Sep 1990 (AME; 212-1990). A juvenile photographed at Edwards AFB, KER, 16 Sep 1990 (MTH†; 201-1990) was the fourth recorded at this locality. One in the Tijuana R. valley, SD, 21–25 Oct 1990 (GMcC; 161-1990) was late but overshadowed by an even later one there 17–23 Nov 1990 (GMcC; 1-1991). At the time this was the latest record for California and the entire United States, though subsequently a juvenile was photographed at the same locality 4–7 Dec 1993 (*Natl. Audubon Soc. Field Notes* 48:248). This species has proven regular in California and poses little identification problem; records after 1991 will no longer be reviewed.

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus* (43). An adult was at Ravenswood, SM, 31 Mar 1991 (PJM; 86-1991). A first-winter bird was in Santa Cruz, SCZ, 23 Dec 1990–6 Feb 1991 (PEL†; GMcC, MAP, KAR†, SBT; 3-1991); a photograph of it appeared in *Am. Birds* 45:317.

THICK-BILLED MURRE *Uria lomvia* (20). One was photographed in Monterey Bay, MTY, 26 Aug–6 Sep 1990 (MO'B; SFB†, DR†; 116-1990). The early date and worn plumage elicited considerable debate. Some felt the bird was more likely a holdover from the influx of the previous fall (Patten and Erickson 1994); in the end the Committee agreed to consider it a new arrival because of the absence of this species at this locale in the intervening months.

PARAKEET AUKLET *Cyclorhynchus psittacula* (36). Two were about 95 n. mi. WSW of San Nicolas I., VEN, 3 Mar 1991 (both PP; 61- and 62-1991). In his notes Pyle indicated that these birds were in a zone of water mixing on the boundary of the California Current. He saw another approximately 98 n. mi. W of San Nicolas I., VEN, 6 Mar 1991 (PP; 63-1991). Pyle, who has extensive experience with alcids, noted the bright white undertail coverts this species typically shows as it flies away from a boat. Parakeet Auklets often fly 4–5 m above the surface, enhancing this character's visibility.

RUDDY GROUND-DOVE *Columbina talpacoti* (25). One was at Iron Mountain Pumping Plant, SBE, 1 Oct 1990 (DSt; 139-1991). A female was at Imperial Beach, SD, 8 Sep 1990 (GMcC, JM; 134-1990). A male was photographed at Deep Springs, INY, 26 Sep 1990 (PEL, JLD†; 169-1990), constituting the northernmost record for the state. A male photographed near Cantil, KER, 30 Sep 1990 (MTH†; JLD; 190-1990) was the first for Kern County.

Determining the number of Ruddy Ground-Doves at Furnace Creek Ranch, INY, can be difficult. This species can be easily overlooked, and difficulty of sexing some individuals (Patten and Erickson 1994) leads to confusion; the Committee followed the scenario proposed by Patten: A male was present from 14 Oct to 24 Nov 1990, combining records 156-1990 and 204-1990 (KLG†; PEL, GMcC, MAP, KAR). A female was there 17–24 Nov 1990 (GMcC, MAP; 205-1990). Two birds, variously reported as males or females but best left undetermined, were present 17 Nov–23 Dec 1990 (MAP; GMcC, MP, KAR†; 219-1990, 220-1990 and 109-1991).

\*BARRED OWL *Strix varia* (7). One nicely sketched bird was near Crescent City, DN, 29 Oct 1989 (ADB; 35-1990). Although records of this species in California are still few, its apparent establishment in the northwestern corner of the state prompted the Committee to remove it from the Review List in 1990.

BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD *Cynanthus latirostris* (35). A male was in Orange, ORA, 11 Feb 1991 (DRW; 68-1991). Although this species was seen

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regularly from 1976 to 1988 (31 records), this is, strangely, the first accepted record since March 1988.

**GREATER PEWEE** *Contopus pertinax* (25). One at Peters Canyon, Tustin, ORA, 10–13 Feb 1991 (GMcC; DLD, MAP†; 20-1991) was the second recorded in Orange Co., the first being at the same site 14 years earlier. This bird undoubtedly wintered locally, fitting the well-established fall and winter pattern for this species in California.

**SULPHUR-BELLIED FLYCATCHER** *Myiodynastes luteiventris* (6). One was photographed at Goleta, SBA, 23–28 Sep 1990 (RFJ†; SEF, PEL, MAP; 163-1990); a color photo was published in *Am. Birds* 45:177, 1991. Many Committee members included in their comments a discussion of the identification of this bird vis-à-vis other species of *Myiodynastes* and related tyrannids, concluding that its plumage was diagnostic for *luteiventris*. The late September date fits within the expected mid-September to early October pattern in California of this highly migratory neotropical species.

**GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER** *Myiarchus crinitus* (34). One was at Pismo SB in Oceano, SLO, 7–10 Oct 1990 (KJZ; JLD; 34-1991). Like the great majority of Great Crested Flycatchers in California, this bird was along the immediate coast; all accepted records are between 4 September and 1 November.

**THICK-BILLED KINGBIRD** *Tyrannus crassirostris* (8). One at Peters Canyon, Tustin, ORA, 16 Dec 1990–16 Mar 1991 was returning for its ninth consecutive winter (JW†, DLD, JLD, BH, GMcC, MAP; 21-1991).

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** *Tyrannus forficatus* (68). One was near Big Pine, INY, 29 Sep–13 Oct 1990 (TH†, JH; SEF, PEL, GMcC, MAP; 157-1990). One was at Upper Newport Bay, ORA, 17 Mar–27 Apr 1991 (BO; JLD, MTH†, GMcC; 70-1991). One was at Lake Cuyamaca, SD, 26–28 Jun 1991 (DDG; GMcC; 89-1991). One was photographed at Furnace Creek Ranch, INY, 23 May 1991 (BH†; 99-1991). Unlike many vagrants to California, the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher occurs in a complex seasonal pattern, with records for the state in every month of the year (at least one accepted December record will be published in an upcoming CBRC report). The Big Pine bird was a fall vagrant; the Furnace Creek Ranch bird was a spring vagrant. The March record coincided with the first major wave of migrant Western Kingbirds but could also pertain to a wintering bird; the late June record is more difficult to categorize.

**WOOD THRUSH** *Hylocichla mustelina* (9). One at Harbor Regional Park, Harbor City, LA, 10 Oct 1990 was accepted 9–1 (MH; BPE, BP; 148-1990). The one dissenter based his vote primarily on the brevity of the observation by all three reporting observers and the slightly early date. Four of the eight previously accepted records of this species are from late October and November.

**GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH** *Catharus minimus* (14). One was at Pt. Loma, SD, 10–11 Sep 1990 (GMcC†, RAE; 133-1990). It was mist-netted and banded by Bunny Jones and Ginger Johnson on the first date, when McCaskie took in-hand photos. All but two of the accepted records of this species for California are from September and October; this for Pt. Loma establishes the earliest in fall by two days. The only specimen of the Gray-cheeked Thrush for California is of the widespread race *C. m. aliciae* (or *minimus* if the former is not recognized). The records with measurements (e.g. those from SE Farallon I.) conform with *aliciae* and eliminate the smaller and more richly colored Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*), considered specifically distinct by Ouellet (1993).

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GRAY CATBIRD *Dumetella carolinensis* (52). One was photographed near the mouth of the Santa Maria R., SBA, 5 Oct 1990 (SEF†; 183-1990). One was in Costa Mesa, ORA, 19 Oct 1990 (BO; RAE, RAH; 186-1990). One was at Black Rock Fish Hatchery, 10 mi. S of Independence, INY, on 23 Oct 1990 (JH, TH; 218-1990). One was photographed at Pajaro Dunes and Sunset SB, SCZ, 1 Jan-9 Feb 1991 (PJM; SFB, JLD, RAE, EG, MJL, PEL, GMcC, DR, DLS, SBT, RFT†; 14-1991). One was in Joshua Tree woodland near Butterbredt Spring, KER, 1 Jun 1991 (MTH; 76-1991). The first three records fit a well-established fall and early-winter pattern; small numbers are also recorded in late spring, as indicated by the Kern County record.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava* (8). One was at Crescent City, DN, 12 Sep 1986 (ADB; 134-1992). This species has a well-defined September "window" of occurrence in California; all records are for the immediate coast between 4 and 21 September.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba* (2). A returning adult male was at settling ponds near Saticoy, VEN, 8 Nov 1990-9 Mar 1991 (DDe†, GMcC, MJL, MAP; 188-1990; Figure 3). From 22 Nov 1987 to 6 Mar 1988 and 16 Oct 1988 to 4 Mar 1989 it was about 2 mi. away at a different set of ponds. Because the bird was not seen at all during winter 1989-1990, some Committee members felt the one in 1990-1991 was possibly a different individual, but all agreed that the best scenario was to accept it as a returning bird.

\*RED-THROATED PIPIT *Anthus cervinus* (73). Two were on the Oxnard Plain in Port Hueneme, VEN, 30 Sep-3 Oct 1990 (LS; JLD, RJM; 149-1990). Up to two were in the Tijuana R. valley, SD, 13-24 Oct 1990 (GMcC; 158-1990). One in Goleta, SBA, 1 Oct 1990 was identified principally by call note (JLD, PEL; 180-1990). One was near the Santa Maria R. mouth, SBA, 6-7 Oct 1990 (PEL; 1811990). One was in fields near the Oxnard Plain in Camarillo, VEN, 7 Oct 1990



Figure 3. This adult male White Wagtail (188-1990) at the Saticoy settling ponds in Ventura Co. on 17 Nov 1990 was thought to be the same individual present nearby in the winters of 1987-1988 and 1988-89.

Photo by Don Desjardins

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(PEL; 182-1990); this site is several miles from that for record 149-1990. One (distant photos) was on SE Farallon I., SF, 24-27 Sep 1990 (PPT; 101991). One was at Thompson Reservoir, Santa Catalina I., LA, 26 Oct 1990 (HLJ; 38-1991).

This Eurasian species, no longer on the CBRC Review List, has a well-defined pattern of vagrancy, primarily to coastal regions, from mid-September through mid-November, with the great majority of records from late September to late October; all of the records above fit this pattern.

**YELLOW-THROATED VIREO** *Vireo flavifrons* (39). One was near the east shore of Upper Newport Bay, ORA, 3 Jan 1988 (HLJ; 28-1989). The only previous midwinter record was of one in Riverside, RIV, 5 Dec 1969-19 Mar 1970 (Binford 1983). Considerable discussion centered around the question whether the bird at Upper Newport Bay was a Pine Warbler, much more likely in midwinter; these two species are confused frequently in the southeastern United States in winter (J. V. Remsen pers. comm.). One was at Panamint Springs, INY, 13-14 Oct 1990 (GMcC; KLG, KCM, MAP; 151-1990).

**PHILADELPHIA VIREO** *Vireo philadelphicus* (81). One was on Pt. Loma, SD, 22-26 Sep 1990 (LSa; GMcC; 152-1990). One was near the Carmel River mouth, MTY, 6 Oct 1990 (KVV; 173-1990). One was at Galileo Hill Park, KER, 19 Oct 1988 (REW; 66-1991). One was collected at Harper Dry Lake, SBE, 11 Oct 1990 (#SBCM 52732; 54-1992); this bird proved to be an immature female. One was at the Smith R. estuary, DN, 4 Sep 1990 (ADB; 135-1992). The last represents the first for Del Norte County; Mendocino County, relatively undercovered, is now the only county on the immediate coast lacking a record of this species.

**YELLOW-GREEN VIREO** *Vireo flavoviridis* (29). One was in Golden Gate Park, SF, 23-26 Sep 1990 (SWM; JM, RST; 139-1990). One at Pt. Loma, SD, 7-17 Oct 1990 (GMcC, AME; 155-1990), was seen by several observers during this period, but documentation was submitted only for 7 and 14 Oct. This problem is a recurring one, and all observers are encouraged to send in descriptions, both to increase the quality of documentation of records and to fill in date spans. All but one of the California records of this species are coastal, and all fall between 8 September and 30 October.

**BLUE-WINGED WARBLER** *Vermivora pinus* (12). A singing male was photographed at Huntington Central Park in Huntington Beach, ORA, 28 May 1990 (DRW; MH†; 105-1990). Of the 12 California records, seven are for May and June; this, however, is only the second spring record for the coast.

**BLUE-WINGED × GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER** *Vermivora pinus* × *chrysoptera* (3). A Brewster's-type hybrid was captured and banded on SE Farallon I., SF, 6 Jun 1991 (PPT; 80-1991; Figures 4 and 5).

**GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER** *Vermivora chrysoptera* (41). A male was in Moss Beach, SM, 22-24 Sep 1990 (RST; JM, BDP; 141-1990). A male was at Morongo Valley, SBE, 27 Oct 1990 (MAP; DLD; 164-1990). A male was at Lake Palmdale, LA, 21 Sep 1990 (JKA; 195-1990). A male was banded and photographed on SE Farallon I., SF, 3 Jun 1991 (PPT; 79-1991); a color photograph was published in *Am. Birds* 45:1179. A singing male was along Keys Creek, midway between Pala and Valley Center, SD, 22 May 1991 (EL; 91-1991). A female was in the Tijuana R. valley, SD, 15 Dec 1990 (REW; 104-1991).

These records engendered considerable discussion of age criteria in this species. The Committee concluded that the males were best left unaged, except for the one on SE Farallon bird, identified in the hand as a second-year bird by the shape, wear, and faded colors of the rectrices and remiges.

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Figures 4 and 5. These pictures of a Brewster's (Blue-winged  $\times$  Golden-winged) Warbler (80-1991), taken on SE Farallon I. on 6 Jun 1991, are the first from California to be published in color. This is only the third record of this hybrid for California.

*Photos by Peter Pyle*

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Figure 6. This Louisiana Waterthrush (78-1991) is the first for northern California. It was found on SE Farallon I. on 2 Jun 1991.

*Photo by Peter Pyle*



Figure 7. California's fourth Brambling (196-1990) was widely seen in Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz Co. This photo was taken on 31 Dec 1990.

*Photo by Bob Hefter*

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**PINE WARBLER** *Dendroica pinus* (40). A male was in Morro Bay, SLO, 20 Dec 1988–3 Feb 1989 (TME; 31-1989). A majority of Committee members felt this bird was probably not the same individual there 19 Dec 1987–29 Mar 1988 (Pyle and McCaskie 1992). A male (immature?) was in the Tijuana R. valley, SD, 17–19 Oct 1990 (GMcC; 160-1990). A female-plumaged bird was in San Diego, SD, 3–21 Mar 1991 (GMcC, MAP; 49-1991). Even though this species is an early spring migrant in eastern North America, the early March date and lengthy stay strongly suggest that the last bird wintered locally. All Pine Warblers in California have been in fall and winter except for one on 31 May 1984 at Furnace Creek Ranch, INY (Roberson 1986), a singing male 5–6 Jun 1987 at Torrey Pines SP, SD (Langham 1991), and one on 7 Apr 1984 at Clear Creek Station, LA (Bevier 1990); the last may also have wintered in the vicinity.

**YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER** *Dendroica dominica* (61). One at Pismo SB, Oceano, SLO, 30 Sep–2 Oct 1990 (KJZ†, MJL; 143-1990) showed the characters of the expected race *albiflora*.

**GRACE'S WARBLER** *Dendroica graciae* (26). One was in Montecito, SBA, 23 Sep 1990–25 Feb 1991 (PEL, SEF, GMcC; 177-1990). From its relatively dull plumage it was a female, probably immature, and thus not a repeating wintering bird (males have wintered nearby). A female-plumaged bird was at Deer Spring, MNO, 26 Jun 1991 (WDS; 111-1991) and represents the first accepted record north of San Bernardino County, though Johnson and Garrett (1974) noted some expansion of the breeding range.

**WORM-EATING WARBLER** *Helmitheros vermicivorus* (58). One was banded at Palomarin, MRN, 4 May 1979 (KH†, DDeS; 24-1989).

**LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH** *Seiurus motacilla* (5). One was banded and photographed on SE Farallon I., SF, 2–3 Jun 1991 (PP†; 78-1991; Figure 6). In-hand criteria suggest that bird was in its second calendar year; though there was speculation based on its dull plumage that it might have been a female, this species cannot be sexed by plumage characters. This is the first record of this species for the thoroughly worked Farallon Islands and for anywhere in northern California.

**KENTUCKY WARBLER** *Oporornis formosus* (59). One was on Pt. Loma, SD, 14–17 Sep 1990 (DWA, GMcC, MAP; 130-1990). One was in Pacific Grove, MTY, 21–29 Oct 1990 (DR†, BJW; 162-1990), the first for well-covered Monterey County. One was banded and photographed on SE Farallon I., SF, 1–3 Oct 1990 (PP†; 12-1991). Of the 12 Kentucky Warblers recorded for SE Farallon, this bird, a hatch-year male, was only the second in fall. A singing male was at Scotty's Castle, Death Valley NM, INY, 31 May–1 Jun 1991 (JH, TH; GMcC, MAP; 71-1991). One was banded and photographed on SE Farallon I., SF, 2–4 Jun 1991 (PP†; 77-1991). One was at California City, KER, 19 Oct 1984 (JCW; MTH; 216-1992). Though this represents the first record for Kern County, 15, all but one in spring, have been accepted through 1992.

**MOURNING WARBLER** *Oporornis philadelphia* (73). One was at the Carmel R. mouth, MTY, 28 Sep 1990 (GWL; 142-1990). One was at Gaviota SB, SBA, 13 Sep 1990 (PEL; SEF; 176-1990). One was along Carpinteria Creek, SBA, 23 Sep 1990 (PEL; 178-1990). One was banded and photographed on SE Farallon I., SF, 30 Sep 1990 (AB, PP†; 11-1991). One was at Mad River County Park, HUM, 5–8 Sep 1990 (GSL, LPL; BBA, SWH; 64-1991). These fall records fit a well-established pattern. A female was banded and photographed on SE Farallon I. 7–11 Jun 1991 (PP†; 81-1991); though this is the 37th record for the island, it is only the first of a female in spring.

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CONNECTICUT WARBLER *Oporornis agilis* (61). One was on Pt. Loma, SD, 14–15 Sep 1990 (GMcC; 129-1990). One was at Stovepipe Wells, Death Valley NM, INY, 22 Sep 1990 (MAP, KAR; 167-1990). One was at Scotty's Castle, Death Valley NM, INY, 22–27 Sep 1990 (KAR; JLD†, JH, TH, MAP; 168-1990). One was in Goleta, SBA, 28–30 Sep 1990 (SEF, PEL; 179-1990). One was 4 mi. S of Half Moon Bay, SM, 22 Sep 1990 (RST; 187-1990). One was banded, measured, and photographed on SE Farallon I., SF, 18 Sep 1990 (RPH†; 9-1991). These fall records fit a well-established pattern for this species in California; all but five state records are from 1 September to 22 October, and over half of these are for the latter half of September. The two for Death Valley are only the second and third records for interior California.

SCARLET TANAGER *Piranga olivacea* (75). One male was on Pt. Loma, SD, 14–16 Oct 1990 (GMcC, JLD; 159-1990). One male at Mojave, KER, 19 Oct 1990 (MTH, JCW†; 202-1990) was the first for Kern County. One was in Costa Mesa, ORA, 12 Nov 1990 (RAE, RAH; 45-1991); the bird was possibly present several days earlier, when briefly seen by RAH.

PYRRHULOXIA *Cardinalis sinuatus* (12). A male was on San Miguel I., SBA, 19–23 Jul 1990 (DAG†; 140-1990; photo published in *Am. Birds* 44:1188). This represents the first record for the Channel Islands and is an amazing example of vagrancy. The question of possible captive origin has been raised with all coastal sightings, but the consensus of the Committee was that natural occurrence was more likely on this remote island.

PAINTED BUNTING *Passerina ciris* (36). One was in Cambria, SLO, 18–19 Sep 1988 (JHa, GPS, KHa; 235-1988). One was in Goleta, SBA, 18 Sep 1989 (ABi; SEF, PEL; 157-1989). One was at Furnace Creek Ranch, INY, 25 Sep 1990 (PEL, JLD; 170-1990). One was near Cantil, KER, 6 Oct 1990 (RAE; MTH†; 203-1990). The Committee engaged in its usual discussion of natural occurrence, weighing such factors as coastal vs. interior localities, spring vs. fall dates, adult male vs. other plumages, and urban vs. rural habitats. Many records also generated discussion about ageing and sexing. Most Committee members were conservative with ageing female-plumaged birds, given the complexity of molt in *Passerina* buntings (see Thompson 1991).

LE CONTE'S SPARROW *Ammodramus lecontei* (19). One was at the Santa Clara R. estuary, VEN, 23–24 Sep 1990 (RJM, BH†; 185-1990). The submitted descriptions were not convincing in themselves, but the photographs were identifiable, and suggested that the bird was an immature, retaining some juvenal plumage.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis* (44). Two were at Lower Klamath NWR, SIS, 30 Oct–11 Nov 1989 (JO, BEDe, RE; 124-1989). Although there was no question about the identification of these birds, resolving the date span proved more difficult. Two were at Bear River Ridge near Scotia, HUM, 2–10 Nov 1990 (GH; BBA, GSL; 65-1991). One was at Tule Lake NWR, MOD, 27 Dec 1990 (MFR; 108-1991). One was at Lower Klamath NWR, SIS, 2 Dec 1990 (CY†; 180-1991).

COMMON GRACKLE *Quiscalus quiscula* (25). One was at Oasis, MNO, 24 May 1987 (CDB; SFB, SEF, JML, PEL, MJL, CAM, GMcC, DR; 140-1987). The record generated considerable debate regarding the reported presence of a second bird. Even though the first bird was accepted on the first circulation, the Committee took three additional rounds discussing the second; on the final round the vote was 6–4 in favor of accepting two birds, not enough for approval. Another was at Fish Springs, south of Big Pine, INY, 12 Dec 1990 (JH, TH†; 50-1991); this represents the latest fall record for the interior. A male was at the Smith R. mouth, DN, 24 Sep 1990 (ADB; 235-1992), the third record for Del Norte County.

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BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla* (4). One was in a residential area in Santa Cruz, SCZ, 15 Dec 1990-16 Feb 1991 (DV, PR; SFB, PDeB, JLD, TF, BH†, CK, PEL†, EL†, MJL, GMcC, JM, JO, MAP, DR, DLS, SBT; 196-1990; Figure 7). This widely seen bird was recorded on videotape, broadcast on a local television news program! It represents the fourth record for California, all for late fall and winter.

### RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONABLE

YELLOW-BILLED LOON *Gavia adamsii*. An interesting rerort was of one at Eureka, HUM, 16 Apr-1 May 1988 (202-1988). Distant photos suggested this species, giving a sense of a pale bill, but the description specified a pale gray culmen. The record circulated four rounds with the final vote evenly split, 5-5. One in Abbott's Lagoon, MRN, 20 Aug 1990 (192-1990) failed to gain any votes on the first round. The bird was said to have a pale gray bill, which with the unusual date caused considerable concern.

WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER *Puffinus pacificus*. An intriguing description was received of one along the shore at Pt. Reyes, MRN, 16 Dec 1989 (205-1989). Another, from an experienced pelagic observer, was of one seen 60 n. mi. off San Nicolas I., VEN, 16 Jan 1991 (67-1991). The first was said to have glided on bowed wings, a feature good for this species. However, the descriptions of the tail length and shape, as well as wingbeats, differed greatly between observers. The record failed 3-7 on the second round. The observation off of San Nicolas I. was too brief and lacked details on bill color and tail length and shape. California still has only two records of this species: off Pt. Pinos, MTY, 31 Aug 1986 (Stallcup et al. 1988) and the remarkable stray at the north end of the Salton Sea, RIV, 31 Jul 1988 (McCaskie and Webster 1990).

TOWNSEND'S SHEARWATER *Puffinus auricularis*. One was reported near Cordell Banks, west of Pt. Reyes, MRN, 28 Oct 1990 (165-1990). This would have been a first record for California and the United States but was rejected 3-7 on the third round. All Committee members were impressed with the level of documentation, in both the thoroughness of the descriptions and the number of submitting observers (19). Everyone agreed that an interesting small black-and-white shearwater was seen. Furthermore, the bird showed white "saddles" on the sides of the rump, a feature of this species. The undertail coverts were thought to be dark, but there was not a consensus on this point. As is so typical with pelagics, the observation was rather brief, in this case less than a minute. Questions about the undertail covert color and no black being noted in the axillaries (a mark Townsend's should show) led the majority to reject. Some members wondered whether the Manx Shearwater (*P. puffinus*) was eliminated, which might find these cold waters more attractive. At least one of the observers now believes this record does pertain to a Manx. Manx shows some degree of white "saddles" (Howell et al. 1994). One or more possible Manx shearwaters photographed off central California in fall 1993 are currently circulating through the Committee. Pyle has noted an anomalous Black-vented Shearwater (*P. opisthomelas*) showing white saddles. It is apparent that we still have much to learn here about the occurrence of small shearwaters off of our coast.

BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL *Oceanodroma castro*. A report of nine seen 115-175 n. mi. SW of San Nicolas I., VEN, 20 Jul 1989 (107-1989) has raised again the issue of the identification of this difficult species. The observer, one of our most experienced with pelagics, shares the opinion of the majority of Committee members that we are still learning about the identification of Band-rumped and Leach's (*O. leucorhoa*) Storm-Petrels and that this record should not be accepted at this time. Leach's may vary substantially in the amount of white it can show wrapping

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification questionable, Cont.

around the base of the tail and in flight characteristics. The depth of the tail fork seems to be a reliable measurement but can be exceedingly difficult to judge accurately in the field. Some feel that the Band-rumped is likely in our waters but that photographic or specimen evidence may be necessary to prove this. At a minimum our level of knowledge must be increased.

One 15 n. mi. W of San Nicolas I., VEN, 25 Jul 1989 (22-1991) was unanimously rejected, as the description was very brief.

The true status of this species in our waters is causing substantial debate within the Committee. There is one accepted record: 12 Sep 1970 off San Diego, SD (McCaskie 1990). Because of the issues discussed above, the Committee voted at its 1994 annual meeting to recirculate the 1970 record for further evaluation.

**MASKED BOOBY** *Sula dactylatra*. An adult was reported from San Elijo Lagoon, SD, 14 Nov 1987 (57-1988). It was apparent that a white booby with a black tail was seen. However, many members were concerned about the face's being described as "vivid blue," as the bare facial skin of the Masked Booby should be black, or subtly dark blue. The Red-footed Booby (*S. sula*) was not eliminated in the opinion of some. The latter may have bright blue at the base of the bill. The record received only two accept votes after three rounds.

**BLUE-FOOTED BOOBY** *Sula nebouxii*. A report of an unsalvaged dead bird at the north end of the Salton Sea, RIV, 11 Sep 1973 (86-1990), was rejected 4-6 on the third round. No notes were taken at the time, and the recollection was understandably incomplete. Although this species has occurred a number of times at this locale, it usually does so only during "invasion" years. No other reports of this species were received in 1973.

**TRICOLORED HERON** *Egretta tricolor*. A most unusual heron that may well have been an aberrant Tricolored was seen near Red Hill at the south end of the Salton Sea, IMP, 11 Aug 1990 (29-1991). Distant photos showed a blue-and-white heron with the general pattern of this species in a plowed field. Marks causing concern included tertials with white fringes, patches of white on the scapulars and wing coverts, and traces of bluish on the thighs. The scapulars may have been bleached-out breeding plumes, and the bluish thighs might be matched by a photo in Farrand (1983). However, the tertial pattern caused concern, and some felt the overall coloration looked too pale, more like that of a Little Blue Heron (*E. caerulea*), engendering talk of hybridization. The bird's being in a field, abnormal haunts for a Tricolored Heron, was also a source of concern. Although the record was rejected on the second round, we hope that this lengthy explanation accomplishes a couple of objectives. First, if the bird was not a Tricolored Heron, it was something even more significant. Second, thorough, honest write-ups like this one can greatly increase our knowledge, in turn helping the evaluation of future records.

**REDDISH EGRET** *Egretta rufescens*. One was reported at the north end of the Salton Sea, RIV, 8 May 1978 (98-1992). This bird was seen by an experienced observer but was not described at the time, resulting in a reject vote by the majority. This case exemplifies the difficulty this Committee has with many older records. Records long accepted have often never been reviewed, and there is little or no documentation for many of them. Various members have suggested that we create a category for these records, as it may be unfair to demand that they stand up to today's standards. There are still no acceptable spring records of the Reddish Egret for the interior of the State.

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** *Nyctanassa violacea*. One at Bodega Bay, SON, 4 May 1991 (87-1991) was rejected 3-7 on the first round. Although the

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification questionable, Cont.

date is good for an arrival in northern California, the description was brief and incomplete. Also, one of the observers questioned whether the bird was a Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), a species most unlikely to be confused in this case; this, and the distance of observation, prompted the reject vote.

**TRUMPETER SWAN** *Cygnus buccinator*. A silent solitary swan was reported from Sierra Valley, PLU, 18 Mar–2 Apr 1988 (111-1988). Identification of silent swans, particularly when there are no other swans for comparison, is perilous. Some of the details were interesting, but a videotape, which surfaced after the voting, was inconclusive according to the two experts who evaluated it and may have better fit the Trumpeter's more common congener, the Tundra Swan (*C. columbianus*). A dead bird was identified as this species by a California Department of Fish and Game employee at Venice I. in the Sacramento–San Joaquin R. delta, SJ, 20 Jan 1989 (53-1989). Measurements were somewhat ambiguous and the specimen was not kept, so a majority rejected the record on the fourth round. Two swans reported near Stockton, SJ, 1 Jan 1991 (59-1991) were seen only in flight. They were said to have a warm pink lateral stripe on the bill; observers are cautioned that many Tundra Swans also show this character, and some lack a yellow loreal patch. This is one of the most complex identification issues confronting observers without extensive experience with both species. See Patten and Heindel (1994) for more information.

**EMPEROR GOOSE** *Chen canagica*. One was seen in flight at Colusa NWR, COL, 8 Dec 1990 (5-1991). The observer, a Committee member at the time, urged a reject vote after spending more time with geese in the Northwest Territories, Canada. His experience revealed greater variation in blue-morph Snow Geese (*C. caerulescens*) than he had previously thought. Reports of Emperor Geese should be detailed enough to exclude the possibility of other "blue" geese.

\***TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula*. One in Oakland, ALA, 4 Apr 1991 (75-1991) went 4–6 on the first round. It was described as having a dark back with a "tuft" visible under some conditions. A minority of the committee felt it was poorly described Tufted Duck but most objected because of such problems as no discussion of the bill and flank color. One at Abbott's Lagoon, MRN, 7 Oct 1981–22 Feb 1982 (163 and 164-1987) was rejected by a split vote after four rounds.

**COMMON BLACK-HAWK** *Buteogallus anthracinus*. One was reported in the Tijuana R. valley, SD, 1 May 1991 (96-1991). The description was interesting but did not specify the color of the cere or legs, both of which should be bright yellow and obvious on this species. In addition, the bird was compared to a Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*), a species most unlikely to cause confusion. There is only one accepted record: 13 Apr 1985, Thousand Palms Oasis, RIV (Daniels et al. 1989).

**ZONE-TAILED HAWK** *Buteo albonotatus*. One reported from Finney Lake, IMP, 24 Apr 1960 (93-1988) was rejected 3–7. There was little doubt that the claim was correct, but a majority were troubled by the lack of documentation prepared at the time of the sighting and therefore felt this did not meet the criteria of a "record."

**RUFIOUS-NECKED STINT** *Calidris ruficollis*. One was reported (*Am. Birds* 45:147) from Moonglow Dairy, Moss Landing, MTY, 1–2 Sep 1990 (64-1992). This sighting provoked an extended controversy, but in the end everyone agreed the bird was a Western Sandpiper (*C. mauri*). We also reviewed a published record (*Am. Birds* 35:979) of an adult at the south end of the Salton Sea, IMP, 19 Jul 1981 (214-1992). One of the observers is no longer convinced that an alternate-plumaged Sanderling (*C. alba*) was eliminated; the description is not detailed enough to preclude this species or an adult Little Stint (*C. minuta*).

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification questionable, Cont.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*. An adult was reported from Upper Newport Bay, ORA, 9 Jul 1988 (156-1988). This was a single-observer sighting, and photographs were not obtained. At the time there were no records of adult Little Stints in California. Any record as unprecedented as this needs to withstand strict scrutiny, and after four rounds it was one vote short of acceptance.

RUFOUS-NECKED/LITTLE STINT *Calidris ruficollis/minuta*. A juvenile peep at Bolsa Chica, ORA, 16 Aug 1990 was reported as one of these two species (221-1990). Although the bird was described as being quite bright and having a white "V" on the mantle, the Committee was concerned by its similarity to a juvenile Least Sandpiper (*C. minutilla*). Additionally, several parts of the bird, such as the underparts and sides of the breast, were undescribed. Vagrants of *Calidris* need to be thoroughly documented, as this genus presents significant identification challenges.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER *Calidris fuscicollis*. Two were reported from the Tijuana R. valley, SD, 30 Aug 1990 (128-1990). The descriptions were somewhat incomplete, and the simultaneity of two birds caused some concern. The descriptions seemed better for alternate-plumaged birds, with rusty edges to the upperpart feathers and a thin white "V" on the scapulars. By late August most adult White-rumped Sandpipers are remarkably dull, being mostly brownish with a few dark flank streaks. Juveniles, not yet recorded in California, are late migrants in the East, normally not seen until after mid-September.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER *Tryngites subruficollis*. An interesting description, possibly of this species, was received from the Santa Clara R. estuary, VEN, 9 Dec 1990 (51-1991). Perhaps a report from mid-September would have received less scrutiny, but a Buff-breasted Sandpiper on 9 December would be the latest for North America. Concerns existed about some "blotchiness" on the belly and the size comparison to a Sanderling. Only two members supported the record.

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*. An adult was reported from the Santa Clara R. estuary, VEN, 9 Nov 1989 (202-1989), another adult was reported from Pigeon Pt., SM, 7 Apr 1990 (57-1990), and a third bird was reported from Shelter Cove, HUM, 27 Jun 1977 (19-1991). The report from Pigeon Point received the most support, though still only three accept votes. The concerns included the dark bill (the Black-headed Gull usually has a bright red bill unless it is in breeding condition, when the bill can darken), the bird's being in basic plumage in April, and the wing's not being seen well enough for its exact pattern to be determined. The bird at the Santa Clara R. estuary was said, among other problems, to have a light iris.

BAND-TAILED GULL *Larus belcheri*. An adult reported from San Nicolas I., VEN, 9 Nov 1987-28 Jan 1988 (76-1988) generated considerable debate, on both identification and natural occurrence issues. The record would have been the first for California. The identification was rejected with two "identification questionable" votes. The eight members supporting the identification noted that the bird was seen on four or five occasions and that the description covered the basics of a distinctive species. The dissenters were concerned that for such a significant record the details needed to be more thorough, to ensure both that the expected race (*L. b. belcheri*) was involved and that hybrids were eliminated.

Had this record passed on identification, it would still have failed on the question of natural occurrence. Gulls are a notoriously difficult group with respect to the natural occurrence of vagrants. They may wander great distances yet may also be kept captive. A Committee member usually makes his or her decision from individual philosophy. In the case of this species, generally restricted to the Humboldt Current

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification questionable, Cont.

off western South America, there has been a record for Panama. The tremendous gap between the Panama and California records, combined with this bird's location near a major shipping channel, caused dissenters to wait for more evidence that this species could arrive under its own power. As with most controversial "natural occurrence" records, there was no evidence of captivity.

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus fuscus*. Three records were rejected. One was from the Mattole R. mouth, HUM, 11 Jul 1988 (54-1991), another was from the Salton Sea, IMP, 18 Jun 1990 (174-1990), and a third was from Riverside, RIV, 24 Jan 1990 (62-1990). On the Humboldt record, the identification was not made until months after the sighting, and the description was incomplete; it received no accept votes. The Imperial report lacked enough information to support an unprecedented summer occurrence. Some felt that the California Gull (*L. californicus*) was not adequately eliminated; that species can appear quite dark-backed. The photos of the Riverside bird as the photos clearly show a gull with a dark mantle. The Western Gull (*L. occidentalis*), though abundant along the coast, would be exceptional at this location some 60 mi. inland. Committee members felt that a Lesser Black-backed should have dusky head streaking in January (the head was described as pure white). The bill shape and length was hard to determine, but some felt it favored this species. However, foot and leg color were not seen, meaning that acceptance would be based mainly on the bird's "looking like a Western, but being too small and therefore a Lesser Black-backed."

**BRIDLED/SOOTY TERN** *Sterna anaethetus/fuscata*. A most intriguing report came from Bolsa Chica, ORA, 5 Aug 1990 (138-1990), where this bird was attracted by the colony of Elegant Terns (*S. elegans*). An extensive written description pointed to an adult of one of these two species. All Committee members felt one or the other was involved with the vote split as to which better fit the description. Marks supporting the Bridled included supercilium shape and upperwing contrast (described as recalling that of a Long-tailed Jaeger, *Stercorarius longicaudus*). The lack of a collar and the underwing pattern seemed best for the Sooty. There is only one California record of the Sooty Tern, from the San Diego R. mouth, SD, 27 Sep 1982 (Webster et al. 1990), none of the Bridled. Eight members felt it best not to force a name on this bird, as either species would be remarkable and neither was completely supported by the documentation. In the summer of 1993 another interesting tern, reported as either a Bridled or a Gray-backed (*S. lunata*), was also at Bolsa Chica (*Am. Birds* 47:1150). At this site yet again in 1994, an adult Sooty Tern was reported, currently under review by the CBRC.

**THICK-BILLED MURRE** *Uria lomvia*. The two rejected records were of birds seen in flight only. One flew past SE Farallon I., SF, 28 Oct 1989 (214-1988); the other was seen from the lighthouse at Pt. Reyes National Seashore, MRN, 28 Jun 1990 (139-1989). Both observers are excellent, with extensive alcid experience. In both cases four dissenting members felt the birds, described as stockier and blacker, may have been correctly identified but that more specific details were needed.

**KITTLITZ'S MURRELET** *Brachyramphus brevirostris*. Two pairs were reported near Shelter Cove, HUM, 15 Mar 1991 (53-1991). Most members felt that the variation in the amount of white in the face of the Marbled Murrelet (*B. marmoratus*) is not appreciated by most observers, and none was willing to support this record. Also, with only three records south of Alaska, a sighting of two pairs seems improbable.

**ORIENTAL TURTLE-DOVE** *Streptopelia orientalis*. One reported from Furnace Creek Ranch, INY, 29 Oct 1988 (246-1988) would represent the first record for the

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification questionable, Cont.

contiguous United States. It was rejected on identification by three members, though it was seen very well by one of our best field observers, with extensive experience with this species in Asia. The supporting details, while good, were not exhaustive, and there were some minor differences between the two descriptions submitted. The dissenters centered most of their arguments on whether the documentation established such a unique record. A debate over whether this species would likely occur as a natural vagrant also ensued. There certainly has been a pattern of records in Europe (Hirschfield 1986), indicating that the species is prone to vagrancy. There are a few records from Alaska, but not all of these are necessarily unattainable. The recent record from British Columbia (Peterson 1992) was for August, earlier than a fall vagrant might be expected. For the Furnace Creek Ranch bird, the late October date seems good, and the location is a famous vagrant trap far from human population centers. In addition to the three reject votes on identification, four members decided there were too many concerns about the bird's origin to accept it as a naturally occurring vagrant, even in the absence of evidence of captivity.

**RUDDY GROUND-DOVE** *Columbina talpacoti*. A female was reported from the Tijuana R. valley, SD, 22–24 Oct 1988 (69-1989). A male was at the same location 12–20 Oct 1988 (Patten and Erickson, 1994), and two dissenters felt the description was inadequate to establish a second individual. What would have been Orange County's first was reported from Huntington Central Park, Huntington Beach, ORA, 10 Oct 1989 (154-1989). A majority rejected this record on the third round, feeling the description needed to be more complete and that some marks better fit the Common Ground-Dove (*C. passerina*), a common resident in the area. A report from Ridgecrest, KER, 29 Sep 1990 (32-1991) was far too brief; it would have been the first for that county by one day. There was no description of the bill or the covert pattern, leaving many to wonder if the Common Ground-Dove was eliminated. One reported from Desert Center, RIV, 23 Nov 1990 (31-1991), had some support, but the majority felt the brief view in poor lighting was insufficient to ensure the bird was not one of the two Common Ground-Doves present at the time.

**RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD** *Archilochus colubris*. An adult male was reported from Pt. Loma, SD, 19 Sep 1990 (33-1991). The vast majority of adult males have migrated south by the end of summer, and although it is conceivable that one could make it here this late in the year, it should have a flawless description. In this case there was no mention of the forked tail usually evident in this species, nor of bill length, flank color, or vocalizations.

**YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER** *Empidonax flaviventris*. One was reported at Montaña de Oro SP, SLO, 27 Sep 1989 (13-1990); the observer was acknowledged to be experienced, excellent, and careful by all Committee members, but an uneasiness about accepting a single-observer record of a silent vagrant *Empidonax* seen for only about a minute ultimately led to the record's rejection. Ironically, an accepted Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (Patten and Erickson 1994) was found the same day in Kern County.

**GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER** *Myiarchus crinitus*. A report of one at Pt. Loma, SD, 20 Oct 1974 (95-1988) had not been submitted earlier, and the description received was a recollection written by one of the observers 14 years later. Sightings not documented during or immediately after the fact normally have a rough ride through the CBRC. Those accepting the record cited the date and locality, which fit perfectly within the species' established pattern of occurrence in California, and the observers' giving convincing verbal description to at least two Committee members immediately after the sighting. The record ultimately received a 5–5 decision during a fourth circulation.

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification questionable, Cont.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER *Tyrannus forficatus*. One was reported in Afton Canyon, SBE, 25 May 1990 (97-1990). The fact that the bird was described as a juvenile troubled some members; no pink or salmon color was described on the bird, and the tail was said to be "relatively short." An inordinate number of Scissor-tailed Flycatcher sightings in California are supported by brief and weak documentation, perhaps because observers feel that the species is obvious enough not to require a detailed description.

VEERY *Catharus fuscescens*. One was reported from a residential area in La Jolla, SD, 14 Sep 1990 (36-1991). Although some characteristics of this species were described, particularly the face pattern, the views were admittedly brief, and the observer indicated less than 100% certainty as to the identification. The record was unanimously rejected.

WOOD THRUSH *Hylocichla mustelina*. One was seen and heard by several observers in Sunnybrae, HUM, 15 Jun 1984 (343-1986; Harris 1991). The brief descriptions submitted to the CBRC were considered by several members to be inadequate to confirm the identification of so rare a vagrant to California. Several experienced observers heard the bird's song, but none offered a detailed description of it, and a taped recording made by one observer was apparently lost subsequently. The record ultimately received 6 supporting votes, but was considered by the four dissenters to be almost certainly good but unfortunately too poorly documented.

EYEBROWED THRUSH *Turdus obscurus*. Two were reported with a flock of American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) at Pt. Reyes, MRN, 25 Feb 1990 (101-1990). The observer had no previous experience with the species, and all Committee members agreed that the details were inadequate to support a first record for the state. The record was unanimously rejected. As with other recent claims of the Eyebrowed Thrush in California, the Committee felt that the birds were possibly confused with dull American Robins (which can show a pale supercilium), or perhaps with Varied Thrushes (*Ixoreus naevius*).

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*. A report of two in urban San Francisco, SF, 11 Oct 1990 (194-1990) was considered inadequately documented by all ten Committee members. The described black throat (incorrect for an October White Wagtail) and behavior ("swooping from tree to tree") left little doubt that the birds were not even wagtails.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*. One was reported at Arroyo de la Cruz, SLO, 23 Sep 1990 (37-1991). Several points in the description, including the call, suggested the Yellow Wagtail, but the views were less than ideal. The observer was not convinced of the bird's identity until some time after the observation, and most Committee members were unconvinced.

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT *Anthus spragueii*. One reported from the Tijuana River Valley, SD, 25 Nov 1990 (39-1991) received only two accept votes on the first round, with many Committee members expressing concern that the bird might have been a relatively unmarked American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*). The bird's being seen in an open plowed field was atypical for the grass-loving Sprague's.

PHILADELPHIA VIREO *Vireo philadelphicus*. A report of one in Golden Gate Park, SF, 4 Oct 1983 (99-1987) ultimately failed by an 8-2 vote. One reported near the Carmel R. mouth., MTY, 17 Sep 1987 (367-1987) was rejected 4-6. Two were reported on Pt. Loma, SD, 20 Apr 1991 (92-1991); the Committee unanimously considered this report a misidentification because of an unconvincing description and the unprecedented date. Of 84 previously accepted California records, only ten are

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification questionable, Cont.

for spring, and the earliest of these is for 23 May; no previous report involved more than one individual. The rejected fall records more closely fit the expected pattern and received split votes in four circulations. The Philadelphia Vireo continues to have one of the highest rejection rates of any species reviewed by the CBRC.

A bird collected at Harper Dry Lake, SBE, on 30 Sep 1990 (#SBCM 52709) and published as a Philadelphia Vireo (*Am Birds* 45:152) was reexamined and proved to be a Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*).

**YELLOW-GREEN VIREO** *Vireo flavoviridis*. One reported from Upper Newport Bay, ORA, 29 Sep 1990 (154-1990) fits the pattern of vagrancy of this species in California, but the brief views and incomplete description led to a 1-9 first-round vote.

**YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER** *Dendroica dominica*. One was reported seen on SE Farallon I., SF, 4 Jun 1978 (20-1988), and another was banded there 2-7 May 1980 (21-1988). No description of either bird was recorded at the time, although the former was noted in the Farallon journal to have been of the "white-lored race"; the latter was described only in recollections from two observers written 7 and 8 years, respectively, after the fact. As noted above, votes on such records generally break down along philosophical lines, as no Committee members raised serious doubts that the birds were correctly identified. These two records were defeated by 7-3 and 8-2 votes, respectively.

**PINE WARBLER** *Dendroica pinus*. One at Pismo SB, Oceano, SLO, 27 Oct 1990 (41-1991) was considered inadequately documented and received a 1-9 decision on the second round.

**CERULEAN WARBLER** *Dendroica cerulea*. One was reported in Arroyo Grande, SLO, 1 Oct 1989 (17-1990), but a majority of committee members felt the description contained features incorrect for this species.

**\*PROTHONOTARY WARBLER** *Protonotaria citrea*. One was seen by numerous observers in Zuma Canyon, Malibu, LA, 30 Sep-11 Oct 1979 (152-1987). However, not a single observer submitted any real description (although several persons did indicate that the bird was missing its tail). Two Committee members rejected the record on its fourth and final circulation, each indicating that they believed a Prothonotary Warbler was present but that it was incumbent upon the Committee to affirm the adequacy of documentation submitted and not simply the likelihood that an identification was correct.

**SWAINSON'S WARBLER** *Limnothlypis swainsoni*. One reported on Gazos Creek, SM, 18 Jun 1990 (80-1990) was considered inadequately documented for a potential first state record. The date does accord well with the only other record of this species from the far West, of one in Apache County, Arizona, 12-13 Jun 1981 (Monson and Phillips 1981).

**WORM-EATING WARBLER** *Helmitheros vermicivorus*. One was banded on SE Farallon I., SF, 5 Jun 1973 (204-1987), and another was observed there 28 May 1981 (22-1988). No descriptions of the former bird were available, and the latter bird was documented only with recollections supplied several years after the sighting. The records received eight and seven accept votes, respectively.

**CONNECTICUT WARBLER** *Oporornis agilis*. One observed on SE Farallon I., SF, 5 Oct 1978 (24-1988) was supported primarily by the statement "perfect clean eyering on drab *Oporornis*"; although a majority of committee members voted to accept this record on all four circulations, it was ultimately defeated by a 6-4 vote. One reported from Galileo Hill Park, KER, 19 Sep 1990 (42-1991) was seen only briefly, although its reported walking behavior certainly suggested this species.

## RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification questionable, Cont.

MOURNING WARBLER *Oporornis philadelphia*. One was banded on SE Farallon I., SF, 13-14 Sep 1981 (25-1988); no plumage description was provided, and although measurements presented suggested the Mourning Warbler, the important wing-minus-tail measurement was at or near the overlap zone with MacGillivray's (*O. tolmiei*); the record was narrowly rejected on an 8-2 vote. One reported from Gaviota SP, SBA, 13 Sep 1989 (155-1989) was felt by most Committee members to have probably been a Mourning, but several characters were inadequately described, and the yellow throat is now known not to eliminate all MacGillivray's Warblers (Pyle and Henderson 1990).

BAIRD'S SPARROW *Ammodramus bairdii*. One was reported from near Lake Earl, DN, 18 Sep 1987 (174-1988). This record circulated for four rounds, losing an accept vote each round and ending up at 6-4. There are only three accepted records of this species in California, each supported by a specimen or photograph. Any report based on written details only needs to be thorough.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*. One was reported from SE Farallon I., SF, 26 Oct 1972 (251-1987) but was not supported by any description; a recollection by one observer 15 years after the sighting was considered inadequate documentation by the three rejectors on the fourth and final circulation.

## RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, NATURAL OCCURRENCE QUESTIONABLE (IDENTIFICATION ACCEPTED)

SWALLOW-TAILED GULL *Creagrurus furcatus*. An adult was extensively photographed at Pacific Grove and Moss Landing, MTY, 6-8 Jun 1985 (AIB; RAE, KLH, ASH†, JML, MJL, GMcC, JM, GN†, DR, PLT†, REW†; 79-1985); color photos were published in *Am. Birds* (39:958) and by Roberson (1985). The record was the first of this species north of Panama. The question of whether a Swallow-tailed Gull would more likely appear far from home on its own, or with human assistance, generated an emotionally charged debate. The species breeds near the equator, on islands off Colombia and in the Galapagos Islands. It disperses after breeding, so should not be considered sedentary.

After four rounds, a discussion at our annual meeting, expert commentary, and hundreds of pages of documentation and comments, the vote on this record remains evenly split. Truly accidental records (that is, unprecedented records that defy easy explanation and may never be repeated) represent a major challenge for this or any committee, a challenge further complicated when the potential for captivity is difficult to assess. For example, below we reject a Purplish-backed Jay (*Cyanacorax beecheyi*), a species resident in Mexico. Vagrants of this species are not known, and jays are kept caged in Mexico. For most of us, this was a rather straightforward decision. In contrast are two examples from the other extreme: the Golden-cheeked Warbler from SE Farallon I., SF, 9 Sep 1971 (Lewis et al. 1974) and the Arctic Warbler found in Baja California on 12 Oct 1991 (Pyle and Howell 1993). Both of these records are unique but insectivorous passerines are not likely captives, and these two species are highly migratory (and therefore subject to navigational errors). Furthermore, the timing of these two records coincides with the species' expected period of movement. These extremes are much easier to resolve. Such was not the case with the Swallow-tailed Gull.

Many people have been surprised and dismayed at the level of emotion and animosity this record generated, both inside and outside the CBRC. The polarization engendered by this record reflects the differing philosophies discussed in our introductory comments. Regardless of these arguments, nothing concerning the bird's origin is provable.

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, natural occurrence questionable (identification accepted), Cont.

Those members who supported the Swallow-tailed Gull as more likely to have occurred on its own had many good arguments. First, gulls have an ability to wander, occasionally being found far from home. Examples could include the Ring-billed (*Larus delawarensis*) in Hawaii (Pyle, in comments) and the Laughing (*L. atricilla*) in the Marshall Islands (Garrett 1987), but the list of examples could be quite lengthy. Second, the Swallow-tailed is a highly pelagic gull. It is not sedentary, wintering along the coast of South America, where it has been found as far south as 36° S (Jehl 1973). Therefore, if a Swallow-tailed Gull traveling that distance traveled in the wrong direction, it would reach the latitude of California. Also, there are no known records of captives; zoos and other sources were not known to keep this species. Although this species occasionally follows boats, the likelihood of one's being held captive then released in our waters must be remote. Finally, the El Niño/Southern Oscillation in 1983 may have been related to the bird's arrival in California. In that year this regular phenomenon was exceptionally strong, and the entire population of this species was displaced from its breeding grounds. It was suggested that a young bird, presumably more susceptible to displacement, wandered into northern waters. As it molted into adult plumage it came ashore with other gulls, perhaps prospecting the area as a potential nesting site; this species generally remains at sea except to breed.

The Committee members who could not support the record all felt that the bird was quite possibly a natural vagrant but could not place it on the state list because of the degree of uncertainty. Doubts centered on a Swallow-tailed Gull's ability to get here on its own. This species is generally tied to cold waters, and would have to cross 2000 miles of warm water to reach the cold California Current. The lack of intervening records (only one questionable report from Panama) means that acceptance of this record greatly expands the known range of this species and has wider implications for its biology. This species' having reached 36° S may or may not indicate it could move to an equivalent northern latitude. The southernmost record may represent only an overshoot of the normal nonbreeding range, only a small percentage of the displacement necessary to bring a Swallow-tailed Gull to California. Dissenters agreed that the proof of captivity is nonexistent; however, people capture birds all too regularly and the fact that one was photographed while being held on a boat shows that this possibility is real, though small. The Swallow-tailed Gull at Monterey occurred two years after El Niño, making any connection tenuous. El Niño recurs regularly, implying that another record should be expected. The Committee concurred that an undisputed record well north of the Swallow-tailed Gull's breeding range would be cause to reconsider this record.

As discussed by Patten and Erickson (1994), we maintain a Supplemental List, created for species not on the state list whose identification is accepted and natural occurrence was rejected, in cases where the majority felt natural occurrence was plausible. At the 1994 annual meeting we unanimously voted to place the Swallow-tailed Gull on this list.

**PURPLISH-BACKED JAY** *Cyanocorax beecheyi*. An unbanded immature was photographed in Calexico, IMP, 13 Dec 1990 (WRR; 102-1992); the bird had been present since late November 1990. The Living Desert Museum in Palm Desert, RIV, confirmed that two individuals of this species were housed there, but both were banded and accounted for. Committee members unanimously considered the bird an escapee rather than a natural vagrant; the species is a sedentary resident in western Mexico north to southern Sonora. Presumed escapees are known from El Paso, Texas, and from southern California; in fact, a pair apparently bred in the Tijuana

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, natural occurrence questionable (identification accepted), Cont.

River Valley, SD, in the 1980s (fide Guy McCaskie). This record once again raised the issue of the origin of Neotropical vagrants along our southern border. The Committee believes that sedentary species are not likely to be natural vagrants, especially when found in urban areas.

PAINTED BUNTING *Passerina ciris*. An adult male was seen in the Tijuana R. Valley, SD, 3 Nov 1979 (DP; 233-1988), and a male was seen in a yard in Coronado, SD, 3 Jun 1989 (EC; 1971989). These records received six and four accept votes, respectively. Records of adult male Painted Buntings always receive extra scrutiny, as are all records from urban regions near the Mexican border.

## UNRESOLVED RECORDS

At the 1994 annual meeting, the CBRC voted to "table" three records of the Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*) until the taxonomic status of that complex is better understood. Currently, Thayer's Gull (*L. thayeri*) is considered a species separate from Iceland Gull, the latter including the nominate race and *L. g. kumlieni*. As of this writing the American Ornithologists' Union's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature has not yet made the anticipated move of merging *thayeri* and *glaucoides*. The darker *thayeri* may not even be ranked as a subspecies, if the cline leading into the paler *kumlieni* is too gradual. Whatever the ultimate taxonomic outcome, it appears hopeless for the Committee to attempt to judge the identity of an



Figure 8. This gull, reported as an Iceland, was photographed in Bodega Bay, Sonoma Co. (7-1985). There is still confusion over its identity, and the Committee has not resolved this issue.

*Photo by Dan Nelson*

CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS



*Photo by Richard E. Webster*



*Photo by Arnold Small*

Figures 9 and 10. This first-winter gull was photographed on 26 Jan 1986 near San Diego (15-1986). It shows the characters of subspecies *kumlieni* of the Iceland Gull, a most unexpected bird at this locale. The short bill, long primary extension, and barring on the tertials and tail are all visible in these pictures.

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### UNRESOLVED RECORDS, Cont.

individual bird when species limits are so uncertain. Zimmer (1991) discussed problems posed by variation in Kumlien's Iceland Gull. The records are as follows:

An adult was well studied and photographed at Bodega Bay, SON, 30 Dec 1984–17 Jan 1985 (7-1985). The photographs (e.g., Fig. 8; see also *Am. Birds* 39:206) clearly show a "white-winged" gull in adult plumage. This bird appeared too white for *thayeri* or most *kumlieni*, but in this case the issue is not linked directly to the *glaucooides-kumlieni-thayeri* problem but instead concerned differentiation from the Glaucous Gull (*L. hyperboreus*). The race *L. h. barrovianus*, the one occurring in California, is the smallest race of the Glaucous Gull, and many Committee members wondered if the photographs could eliminate it. Substantial commentary was received from some of the most knowledgeable gull experts in the world. The debate continues, however, as opinions are split.

A first-winter bird was photographed extensively near San Diego, SD, 18–25 Jan 1986 (15-1986). Figures 9 and 10 (see also AB 40:334) show an intriguing gull, far paler than *thayeri*; in fact, the bird appears to be at the pale end of *kumlieni*. The questions surrounding the validity of this record centered on the species-limit questions, as well as on the likelihood of a "real" *kumlieni* occurring near the Mexican border, at the latitude of the southernmost limit of its winter range. Everyone agreed that the bird's identity would not be given a second thought if a similar bird were in New England.

An adult was well studied in Arcata, HUM, 6–23 Feb 1987 (72-1987). Unlike the Bodega Bay adult, this bird did not look like nominate *glaucooides* but rather showed a primary pattern traditionally associated with *kumlieni*. Thus elimination of the Glaucous Gull was not a question. There was some conflict among the written descriptions in eye color, mantle color, etc., but everyone agreed that this bird "showed the characters" of *kumlieni*.

Most Committee members reviewing these records feel that two or three of them represent the Iceland Gull as understood in the past. Much remains much to be learned regarding how far west the pale extreme of this complex breeds and migrates. We hope our declining to put a specific name on these birds does not discourage observers from giving attention to such gulls.

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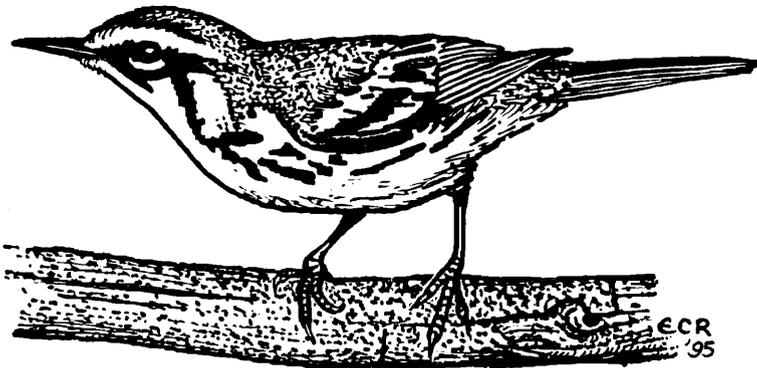
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Yellow-throated Warbler

*Sketch by Edward Rooks*