December 2020-March 2021
by David Pereksta

The most exciting find of the period was Ventura County’s first record of *Verdin* discovered at Ormond Beach 5 Dec-14 Feb (KS & SS). There are very few records of this species along the California coast so this was a surprising record. Other birds of note at Ormond Beach included a *Tundra Swan* 22-29 Dec (AW), a *Cattle Egret* 1-4 Jan (CT), a *Tropical Kingbird* 30 Nov-6 Feb (ZA), a *Lucy’s Warbler* on 5 Dec (KS & SS), and a *Palm Warbler* on 5 Dec (DB).

**Eurasian Wigeons** included one in Arroyo Simi 1-31 Dec (AW), one at Lynn Ranch on 28 Dec (DB), one in Fillmore on 13 Mar (TT), and a continuing individual at Mugu Lagoon through 16 Mar. Three *White-winged Scoters* were along the coast south of Pont Mugu on 20 Dec (AS, BH, DM) and the continuing one at Mugu Lagoon was joined by a second on 31 Dec (DP & SK), with both staying through 16 Mar. *Long-tailed Ducks* included one at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 21 Jan (ZA) and another at Mugu Lagoon 19 Feb-11 Mar (MR). Two *Sandhill Cranes* were at the Santa Clara River Estuary 18 Jan-13 Mar (ES & MG). An unseasonably late *Solitary Sandpiper* was in the Arroyo Simi 6-7 Dec (MB). Two *Marbled Murres* were offshore of the Ventura Harbor on 22 Mar (JB) and two *Ancient Murres* were in the Santa Barbara Channel on 17 Mar (PB). A *Neotropic Cormorant* was at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 23 Dec (KS) and later found at the Ventura River Estuary 2 Jan-26 Mar (KS & SS). A different *Neotropic Cormorant* was at the Naval Base at Port Hueneme on 1 Mar (MR). An *American Bittern* was at Lake Sherwood 6-27 Mar (MH) and another was on the Oxnard Plain on 21 Mar (DP). The wintering *Tricolored Heron* at Mugu Lagoon, now in its third winter there, continued through 16 Mar.

**Swainson’s Hawks** included an amazing 21 near Fillmore on 13 Mar (LH), one south of Fillmore on 30 Mar (SC), and 3 over Matilija Lake on 31 Mar (JG & BS). There were several *Zone-tailed Hawks* along the Highway 33 corridor this winter including one at Canada Larga Road 30 Jan-12 Mar (VP), a juvenile in Ojai on 18 Jan (DP), and an adult in Ojai 28 Nov-8 Mar (JM). *California Condors* continue to recover and expand their range locally with a number of reports below their usual mountainous habitat including 14 at Steckel Park on 16 Feb (KK) and as many as three at Canada Larga 18 Feb-28 Mar (LE).

*White-winged Doves* included as many as two in eastern Camarillo 1-18 Jan (DP), one near the Camarillo Airport on 20 Dec (JM), one in Newbury Park on 29 Dec (DB), one at Point Mugu on 17 Feb (MR), one continuing along Old Lewis Road through 13 Dec, and several individuals continuing at Arroyo Verde Park through 20 Mar with a high of four on 7 Mar (SS). A *Broad-billed Hummingbird* continued in Oak View through 18 Mar. A *Williamson’s Sapsucker* continued in Oak Park through 23 Feb. A *Yellow-bellied Sapsucker* was at the South Victoria Tipus 6 Jan-27 Feb (DB) and another was at Lake Casitas on 13 Jan (DM). *Red-naped Sapsuckers* included one at Lake Casitas on 2 Jan (JG et al.), one at Toland Park 11 Dec-11 Feb (KO), one at Conejo Community Park on 20 Dec (KR & SR), one in Thousand Oaks on 28 Feb (GR), one in Conejo Creek North Park on 8 Mar (DP), and as many as two continuing at CSUCI through 7 Feb.

Ventura County’s third *Dusky-capped Flycatcher* continued at Camino Real Park through 26 Jan. A *Scissor-tailed Flycatcher* was near Pitts Ranch Park in Camarillo 20-27 Dec (MB & CL). Wintering *Gray Flycatchers* are rare locally so one at Arroyo Vista Community Park 15 Dec-5 Mar (SC) and two at Point Mugu on 20 Dec (MR, RM & DP) were notable. *Eastern Phoebes* included one in Moorpark 31 Jan-6 Mar (DB) and one on the Oxnard Plain 27 Feb-30 Mar (DP). Remarkable in mid-winter was a *Philadelphia Vireo* at Camino Real Park 31 Jan-2 Feb (SS). A *Plumbeous Vireo* was at Pitts Ranch Park 10 Dec-7 Mar (DP). A *Chestnut-backed Chickadee* continued at Camino Real Park through 17 Mar. *Red-whiskered Bulbuls* included one at CSUCI 6-14 Dec (SS) and another in Oxnard on 23 Mar (KS). This species has expanded in the San Gabriel and San Fernando Valleys, but there are few records for Ventura County. A *Varied Thrush* at Matilija Lake 22-31 Jan was the only one reported during the winter (JG & BS).
As many as four **Lapland Longspurs** were along Arnold Road 17 Jan-19 Feb (DP). The only **Clay-colored Sparrow** this winter continued in Newbury Park through 5 Dec. A **“Red” Fox Sparrow** was in Ojai 17-23 Dec (JG). Individual **“Gray-headed” Oregon Juncos** continued at the Conejo Cemetery through 20 Dec and in Thousand Oaks through 15 Feb (GR). **White-throated Sparrows** included one at Conejo Creek South Park on 7 Jan (SR), one in Simi Valley on 6 Dec (DK), and one continued in Newbury Park through 13 Mar. A **“Large-billed” Savannah Sparrow** was at McGrath State Beach on 10 Jan (DB). A **Swamp Sparrow** was on the Oxnard Plain on 16 Feb (DP) and another continued on San Nicolas Island through 7 Jan. A **Northern Waterthrush** continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 15 Jan and a **Black-and-white Warbler** was there 10 Dec-22 Feb (KS). A **Lucy’s Warbler** was at the South Victoria Tipus 2-13 Jan (RM & MR). A **Palm Warbler** was at Round Mountain on 29 Dec (KR & SR). The **Painted Redstart** continued in its second winter at Arroyo Verde Park through 16 Mar.

A **Scarlet Tanager**, only the second midwinter record ever for California, was at the Harmon Barranca in Ventura 3-10 Jan (DP & SC). Other notable birds in the barranca included a male **Summer Tanager** 2 Jan-27 Feb (RM & MR), a **Baltimore Oriole** 2 Jan-15 Feb (RM & MR), and as many as four **Western Tanagers** 29 Dec-4 Mar (m. obs.). The nearby Cornucopia Gardens hosted a wintering **Green-tailed Towhee** 26 Nov-11 Mar (AF) and a **White-throated Sparrow** 2 Jan-22 Mar (AF). **Orchard Orioles** included one at Bubbling Springs Park 6-8 Feb (SK, SS & SB) and one at the Ventura Community Park 10 Feb-11 Mar (DP). A **Summer Tanager** was in Camarillo on 31 Dec (DC). Backyard feeders attracted a few buntings that are rarely found in California in winter, including a **Painted Bunting** in Ventura 6-19 Feb (JMc) and an **Indigo Bunting** in Ojai on 27 Jan (BK). A **Rusty Blackbird** that frequented backyard feeders in Camarillo 2-18 Jan (LH) was one of the few records of this species ever in the county.

Thank you to those who reported sightings during this period. If you have any questions about local birds or have a good one to report (please no calls about nuisance birds) e-mail David Pereksta at <pereksta@pacbell.net>

**Good birding,**

**David Pereksta**

Observers: Zack Abbey, Joel Barrett, Peter Bedrossian, David Bell, Marc Better, Sage Bylin, Dan Cooper, Sammy Cowell, Linda Easter, Adele Fergusson, Jesse Grantham, Marianne Gunn, Linnea Hall, Mary Hansen, Deven Kammerichs-Berke, Sangeet Khalsa, Bob Kilpatrick, Don Klabunde, Karl Krause, Carol Langford, Jerry Maryniuk, Dan Maxwell, Robert McMorran, Jim McWaters, John Mueller, Kris Ohlenkamp, David Pereksta, Griffin Rohrer, Martin Ruane, Karen Rusch, Steve Rusch, Spencer Seale, Bill Shanbrom, Eric Shaphran, Kirill Shtengel, Tina Tan, Cameron Tescher, Amy Worell