

# Central Valley Bird Highlights: June through July 2023

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Multiple **Yellow-billed Cuckoos**, a scarce breeder in the Central Valley, were heard singing and calling by experienced observers in Colusa (SS) and Glenn counties (MR) in early July. This species once bred commonly in the riparian zones of the Central Valley but has been nearly extirpated as a breeder due to habitat loss. Two “peenting” **Common Nighthawks** foraged over the Sacramento River near Red Bluff in Tehama County during the period (MSw). This seems to be an annual occurrence at the location, the only place this species occurs semi-regularly on the valley floor. Three **Costa’s Hummingbirds** were observed, in Madera (GW), Kings (MSt), and Fresno (BM) counties. A male in Lemoore, Kings County stayed six weeks. For the third year in a row, **Allen’s Hummingbirds** were at a private residence near Clarksburg in Yolo County (TU). First found in April, a lone male stayed until June and was suspected of breeding in the area. This species is an abundant breeder on the coast but is exceedingly rare anywhere in the Central Valley.

Summer is a slow season for songbirds in the Central Valley, but fall shorebird migration ramps up in late June and is in full swing by July. An adult **Stilt Sandpiper** was found on 30 July and hung around an extra day for birders at Staten Island in San Joaquin County (AE). A **Pacific Golden-Plover** in breeding plumage was at Tracy WTP in San Joaquin County on 2 July (RPe KF). Five Snowy Plovers were present in the period. One was at the Robben Road Ponds in Solano County on 1–2 July (RM), another was on the shore of Tulare Lake in Kings County on 5 July (AH), and a single bird was at Clifton Court Forebay in Contra Costa County on 31 July (SC). Also, two birds were amongst a massive shorebird flock in Kings County on 23 July (MSt).

A **Sanderling** on 28 July was quite a surprise at the Lincoln WTP in Placer County (RPo). Only two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were found in all of the Central Valley this July. Compared to the 10 records from July 2022, this was a poor year for the species in the region. A juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at the Sacramento Regional WTP in Sacramento County on 31 July (CC), and a worn adult was at the Tracy WTP on the same date (RR).

A single **Solitary Sandpiper** was scurrying around the edges of vernal pools at the Anatolia Vernal Pool Preserve in Sacramento County (AB, LB) from 19–24 July. **Baird’s Sandpipers** showed up right on time, as the valley’s

first birds of the fall were found in late July in Yolo (KD, LWD) and Contra Costa (JC) counties. A **Common Tern** found by a San Joaquin Audubon field trip on 5 July at McDonald Island (DY) is only the fourth Central Valley record for the summer period. An adult **Franklin's Gull** photographed at Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County on 27 July (SA) was also noteworthy.

An immature **Brown Pelican** spent most of June south of Manteca on the San Joaquin River (EH) before (presumably) being refound in late July on the other side of San Joaquin County just south of Lake Camanche. The Natomas **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** found in May was refound a few miles away on June 11th (MH), where many birders chased it for their Sacramento County list. A **Glossy Ibis** at the Davis Wetlands in Yolo County was seen by a lucky few birders between 4–10 July (SH). This well-documented bird was accepted by the California Bird Records Committee for the eleventh Central Valley record.

A singing **Red-eyed Vireo** was at the Turtle Bay Bird Sanctuary in Shasta County on 22 July (EO). The bird remained through 1 August and was the second **Red-eyed Vireo** present in the county at the time, along with another bird outside of the Central Valley. An astonishing, sixth Central Valley record of **Black-billed Magpie**, first noted visiting a feeder near Nur Pon Open Space Preserve in Redding (B&CY) on 9 April, continued through the period. Although this species is not rare in the eastern (Great Basin) portion of Shasta County, its location in the north Central Valley is exceptional. Even more incredibly, the bird eventually paired with a Yellow-billed Magpie and produced two hybrid offspring. An article on this occurrence was recently published (Airola and Yutzy 2025. *Western Birds* 56:60–67).

Black-and-white Warbler  
(*Mniotilta varia*).  
13 July 2023.  
Upper Butte Basin WA,  
Little Dry Creek Unit,  
Butte County.

*Photo by  
Liam Huber.*



A singing **Black-and-white Warbler** at the Upper Butte Basin WA—Little Dry Creek Unit in Butte County on 13 July (LH, MSk, MF) was the sixth summer record for the species in the Central Valley. An **American Redstart** was heard singing from a survey point count on 13 June on the Yolo County side of Putah Creek at Fishing Access #4 (FF). As previously reported (Oliver et al. 2024. CV Birds 27:41–50), a pair of **Summer Tanagers** were found in early June at a park near Ripon in San Joaquin County (DY). This closely monitored pair was ultimately nested successfully, a first nesting record for San Joaquin County and the Central Valley.



Summer Tanager  
(*Piranga rubra*).  
14 July 2023.  
Oak Park, Ripon,  
San Joaquin County.

*Photo by Jim Gain.*

We thank the following observers for reporting their significant findings to the Central Valley Bird Club's listserv, eBird, and, where appropriate, the California Bird Records Committee: Stuart Angerer, Linda Barth, Aidan Brubaker, Srikant Char, Jim Chiropoulos, Chris Conard, Konshau Duman, Lynette Williams Duman, Andy Engilis, Frank Fabbro, Michael Fischer, Kasey Foley, Alex Henry, Mackenzie Hollender, Scott Hoppe, Eric Hopson, Liam Huber, Bruce Mast, Roger Muskat, Eric Ongman, Richard Petersen (RPe), Ron Pozzi (RPo), Rene Reyes, Michael Rogner, Shannon Skalos, Mike Skram (MSk), Mark Stacy (MSt), Michele Swartout (MSw), Tom Uslan, Gary Woods, David Yee, Bob and Carol Yutzy (B&CY).

m.obs. = many observers; WA = State Wildlife Area; WTP = Wastewater Treatment Plant.