

Central Valley Bird Highlights: December 2024 through March 2025

Emmett Iverson¹ and Zane Pickus²

¹9231 Voula Lane, Wilton, CA 95693; emmett.iverson95@gmail.com

²324 Merganser Pl, Davis, CA 95616; zanep987@gmail.com

A **Brant** on 30 December at North Area Drainage Pond in Davis (KO), only the second Yolo County record, stayed only for a few hours and was not associated with a migrant flock of geese. San Joaquin County also had a **Brant** 19 March, the fifth county record away from Staten Island (AM). Three **Trumpeter Swans** were at the Oro-Chico Wetland in Butte County on 27 December (SA), and Tehama County had four on 6 January at Table Mountain (SL, MSw). A hunter harvested the sixth county record of **Long-tailed Duck** at the Yolo Bypass W.A. on 4 December (PC). The Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County had its second-ever sighting of a **Long-tailed Duck** on 29 March (LHu). A smattering of nine observations of **Red-breasted Mergansers** were found from Shasta County to Tulare County. A first **Barrow's Goldeneye** for Kings County was a female at a private section of the Tulare Lake Drainage District on 10 December (LK). A **Red-necked Grebe** was at Clifton Court Forebay in Contra Costa County on 28 January (JB).

A handful of **Common-ground Doves** occurred this winter in the southern Central Valley, often as small flocks. Three reports from Tulare County included a flock of four at Bravo Lake (DF). Kern County had a **Common-ground Dove** from the Buttonwillow rest stop on 31 March (KM). A **White-winged Dove** was seen briefly along the Tulare River in Tulare County on 8 March (DF).

Three new **Costa's Hummingbirds** were found, including a subadult male at Heritage Oak Winery in San Joaquin County on 18 December that was last observed 22 February (KF, RP). A female **Costa's Hummingbird** visited a feeder in a Lemoore neighborhood through the end of March (MSt). A displaying male at Lowell Park in Bakersfield was seen on 10 January (WR). Three other **Costa's Hummingbirds** in Tehama (MSw), Sacramento (LP), and Yolo (JR) counties continued from the previous fall. An **Allen's Hummingbird** near Clarksburg on 8 March (TU) was seen for several days at a private residence. This species has rarely occurred in Yolo County but has been seen regularly in March and April at this residence for the past five years.

A **Pacific Golden-Plover** on Desmond Road near the Cosumnes River Preserve in Sacramento County on 10 February was joined by a second bird the next day before both vanished (PM). Tipton NWR in Tulare County also got in on the **Pacific Golden-Plover** action with a bird seen for a few days in early February (DF) as did Merced NWR with a 22 March bird (DS). A **Pacific Golden-Plover** at Thermalito Afterbay in Butte County, found among a flock of **Black-bellied Plovers** on 29 March, was a one-day wonder (LH). The **Mountain Plovers** north of Knight's Landing in Yolo County were seen for the sixth winter in a row with a high count of 70 birds (JG). The historical **Mountain Plover** flock along Flannery Road in Solano had a high count of 58 birds (RM). Three flocks were further south in Kern County with up to 50 birds, and Manning Road in Fresno County had a flock with 105 individuals. A **Snowy Plover** at Clifton Court Forebay in Contra Costa County on 29 March was the only one for the period (DH). A **Marbled Godwit** was an unusual winter visitor to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area from 8–13 January (JG).

A **Western Gull** was along the American River Parkway in Sacramento County on 28 December (EH). A banded **Western Gull** seen at the Davis Wetlands in Yolo County on 30 December (JG) has returned there each winter since at least 2012! Quite the high count was four **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** at the Visalia Landfill in Tulare County on 30 December (TK). Two different **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were at the Yolo County Landfill in January and February (JG). Yolo County had two **Glaucous Gull** together in late January (ZP, JJ, EMa). Another **Glaucous Gull** was at San Luis Reservoir in Merced County on 9 February (GW).

A **Red-throated Loon** at Little Venice Island in the San Joaquin County portion of the Delta on 10 February was the only one in the valley (JT). Birders learned of an incredible record of a **Wood Stork** at Los Banos NWR in Merced County on 13 March when it was posted to social media (DE). A northerly **Neotropic Cormorant** at Woodward Park in Fresno was present between December and March (CCh), and up to seven were seen together in Bakersfield. This species first appeared in California in 1971 (per CBRC) and has been gradually expanding northward into the Central Valley. A **Brown Pelican** that stayed for 12 days in late December at the Stockton WTP may have been the same immature that was last seen on 29 October (ZP, JJ, EMa, BW). A **Brown Pelican** was at Dos Rios State Park in Stanislaus County in an oxbow of the Tuolumne River with a group of **American White Pelicans** (JM).

A **Barred Owl** in the East Sacramento neighborhood was posted to social media 29 March to the delight of birders who got to see this first Sacramento County record (KH). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was at William Land Park in Sacramento County 21 December (AE). A last-minute **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was found on 31 December along Babel Slough in Yolo County (JG). Three **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** were found this winter, including one outside of

Davis in Yolo County on a CBC 27 December (KS), one the next day at Gibson Park in Sacramento County (KT), and one at Del Lago Park, Tulare County on 27 January (DF). Three **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were seen this winter within Butte, Yolo, and Sacramento counties. The Butte County sapsucker was in a Chico backyard on 21 February (JL) and another was at the West Davis Pond in Yolo County on 22 February (JL, EMa). Another was at Ancil Hoffman Park in Sacramento on 12 January and last seen 8 February (LHi).



Barred Owl (*Strix varia*). 29 March 2025. E Sacramento, Sacramento County, California. *Photo by Ed Harper.*

A **Tropical Kingbird** graced birders for three days in early March at Bridgeway Lakes Community Park in Yolo County (AG). A **Cassin's Kingbird** found on the Putah Creek CBC on 15 December remained for a few days in Solano County (ES, ZP, EI, GR). Three **Hammond's Flycatchers** were found during this winter between Butte, Sacramento, and Kern counties. One was at

Gray Lodge Wildlife Area on 17 December in Butte County (LH). Another was seen for a single day at Ancil Hoffman Park in Sacramento County on 23 December (MM), and a third was at Lowell Park in Kern County from 11 December to 15 January (WR). A **Vermilion Flycatcher** was found on the Peace Valley CBC on 17 December in Sutter County (CB, EM, ZP). An immature male **Vermilion Flycatcher** found on a late December CBC at Wild Wings Golf Club in Yolo County was last seen 10 March (BC). A **Plumbeous Vireo** was seen intermittently over the winter at the Odd Fellows Cemetery in Sacramento (GE, AL), and another visited a private residence in Porterville in Tulare County (SS). A **Northern Shrike** on 3 December at the Bufferlands in Sacramento County remained for a few days (CCo). It was a slow winter for the **Red Crossbill** in the Central Valley with only two observations: a flyover on 1 December at O'Connor Woods in San Joaquin County (DY) and a pair on 7 January at the Odd Fellow Cemetery in Sacramento (EJ).

It was a fun February for longspurs in the Central Valley with a mixed flock north of Knight's Landing in Yolo County and another flock a 30-minute drive north in Sutter County. Up to five **Thick-billed Longspur** were seen between 14 January and 26 February along Garmire road in Sutter County and at least two were present in the Knight's Landing flock (LH, AP, ZP, JJ, EMo). Three **Lapland Longspur** were seen in Yolo north of Knight's Landing (SSm), and a single bird was seen in Sutter County (MH). A **Chestnut-collared Longspur** was scoped in the Yolo County flock amongst hundreds of **Horned Larks** on 17 February (SSm, KS).

A **Lark Bunting** was at the Kern Water Bank on 10 January, and another was at Lemoore College in Kings County in mid-March (TE, MSt). A **Sagebrush Sparrow** spent all of December on Road 28 in rural Madera County before it was last seen on 4 January (GW). A **Sagebrush Sparrow**, the first for Contra Costa County, was photographed at the Byron Airport on 11 January and last reported on 24 January (ER, JC). Four **Swamp Sparrow** reports came in from across the valley within Contra Costa, Sacramento, Yolo, and two birds were seen together in Stanislaus counties (JJ, EMa, ZP).

The fifth Butte County **Northern Waterthrush** was found at Gray Lodge Wildlife Area on the Peace Valley CBC on 17 December and stayed until 24 January (LK, EI, CCho). A **Black-and white Warbler** at Swenson Park in San Joaquin County remained from mid-February until 19 March (KF, RP). A **Tennessee Warbler** in San Joaquin County on 28 December was only the second winter record for the county (DY). An **American Redstart** found 10 December at Lowell Park in Kern County stayed through mid-January (WR). **Summer Tanager** had a fair showing this winter with four records including the male at William Land Park in Sacramento County returning for a third year in a row. The Rio Cosumnes CBC had a **Summer Tanager** along Elk Slough in Yolo County on 2 January (ZP, EI). A beautiful male was in Roseville, Placer

County, on 20 March (MMo), and another was at American Legion Park in San Joaquin County on 9 March.

We thank the following observers who reported their significant findings to the Central Valley Bird Club's listserv, eBird, and, where appropriate, the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC): Stuart Angerer, Jerald Britten, Carolyn Brown, Caitlin Chock (CCho), Phil Choi, Bruce Christensen, John Colbert, Chris Conard (CCo), Corry Chen (CChe), David Eagle, Todd Easterla, Dane Fagundes, Kasey Foley, Andrew Engilis, Gil Ewing, Alexandria Ginez, Joshua Greenfield, Kristina Halvorsen, Ed Harper, Derek Heins, Marcel Holyoak, Liam Huber, Emmett Iverson, Eric Johnson, Julian Johnson, Logan Kahle, Tony Kurz, Steve Laymon, Andrew Lee, John Lewis, Mark Martucci, Ethan Matsuyama (EMa), Kai Mills, Paul Miller, Ethan Monk (EMo), Julian Morin, Margaret Morneau (MMo), Andrea Mott, Roger Muskat, Kelli O'Neill, Asher Perla, Richard Petersen, Zane Pickus, Linda Pittman, Jennifer Raven, Grant Rhodes, William Rockey, Erica Rutherford, Elliot Schoenig, Sean Smith (SSm), Mark Stacy (MSt), Steve Summers, Dale Swanberg, Michele Swartout (MSw), Kirk Swenson, Jason Talbott, Kevin Thomas, Tom Uslan, Bart Wickel, Gary Woods, and David Yee.

NWR = National Wildlife Refuge, W.A. = Wildlife Area, WTP = Wastewater Treatment Plant.