

NOTES FROM THE FIELD: April - June 2023 by David Pereksta

The most noteworthy bird found locally this spring was Ventura County's first Cassin's Sparrow, which was at the Ventura Settling Ponds 26-27 Apr (SC). This species has been long overdue in the county, but it was not expected to show up as a migrant at the ponds. Some of us have listened for singing birds in appropriate habitat around the county for a number of years. This species is normally found in grasslands and shrublands in the southwestern U.S. and Great Plains.

The only summering Wood Duck was a male in Wildwood Park 5 May-14 Jun (SB). A Long-tailed Duck was in the Channel Islands Harbor on 14 Apr (SK). A Red-necked Grebe continued in the Ventura Harbor through 4 Apr. A Laughing Gull was at Mugu Lagoon on 18 Apr (PD) and a Franklin's Gull was at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 16 Jun (MB). A Common Tern was on the Oxnard Plain on 23 Apr (DP). Neotropic Cormorants were found at several locations as they continue to expand their range into coastal southern California including individuals in east Ventura on 30 Apr (DP & SP), the Ventura River Estuary on 10 May (SK & LLG), and Lake Sherwood 9-31 May (MH). An American Bittern continued on the Oxnard Plain through 23 Apr. A Reddish Egret continued at Mugu Lagoon through 25 Jun and as many as two Cattle Egrets were at Lake Casitas 29 Apr-24 May (GH). A late Zone-tailed Hawk continued in Ojai through 10 Apr. Migrant Swainson's Hawks were reported widely this spring with too many records to summarize.

A Williamson's Sapsucker was on Mount Pinos on 6 Apr (NW). Bank Swallows included one at Lake Casitas on 1 Apr (LLG), as many as seven at the Ventura Settling Ponds 24 Apr-18 May (KS, m obs.), as many as eight on the Oxnard Plain 9-14 May (DP), and one at Point Mugu 22-26 May (DP). Purple Martins included one in east Ventura on 3 May (DP), two at the Ventura Settling Ponds 3-4 May (SC et al.), one on the Oxnard Plain on 14 May (DP), and one in the Rose Valley on 29 May (LLG & RR). Red Crossbills have been scarce the last few years so two on Mount Pinos on 23 Jun were notable (DP). Birders are always hopeful for eastern vagrants in May and June, but only a few were found this year and their stays were brief including a Yellow-throated Vireo at Rancho Sierra Vista on 14 May (RB), a Gray Catbird at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 13 Jun (MB), and a Baltimore Oriole at Arroyo Verde Park on 26 May (DP).

Eastern vagrant warblers were hard to come by this spring with the only two being singing Northern Parulas at Point Mugu State Park on 27 Apr (PP) and Thousand Oaks on 17 May (AM). Summer Tanagers were at Canada Larga Road on 16 May (LLG), Arroyo Verde Park on 22 May (MBr), and the Ventura Settling Ponds on 7 Jun (MB). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks included individuals at Rancho Dos Vientos on 26 Apr (RB), on the Sandstone Peak Trail on 27 May (MS), Thousand Oaks on 11 Jun (GR), Newbury Park 13-30 Jun (CB & RA), Ojai 18-19 Jun (BB), and two in Ventura 9-10 May (DH). Indigo Buntings included singing individuals at Arroyo Verde Park on 23 May (SC) and Canada Larga on 7 Jun (DP & LLG).

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 messages about nuisance birds) e-mail David Pereksta at <pereksta@pacbell.net>

Good Birding,
David Pereksta

Observers: Richard Armerding, Betsy Bachman, Marc Better, Catherine Bourne, Max Breshears, Ryan Burnett, Stephen Bylin, Sammy Cowell, Patricia Deventer, Mary Hansen, Debbie Herrera, Graeme Hinde, Sangeet Khalsa, Lukas Le Grice, Ava Molnar, David Pereksta, Sandy Pereksta, Paul Pyle, Rick Ridgeway, Griffin Rohrer, Kirill Shtengel, Maximilian Sluiter, Nolan Walker