

*T. M. ...  
1983*

**THE BIRDS OF  
SANTA BARBARA  
AND VENTURA COUNTIES,  
CALIFORNIA**

**By  
Richard Webster  
Paul Lehman  
Louis Bevier**



**Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History  
Occasional Paper No. 10**

**Santa Barbara, California**

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## Key To Habitats

### District 1—COASTAL AQUATIC HABITATS

- 1a**—open ocean (generally beyond the kelp-line)
- 1b**—inshore waters, harbors, rocky and sandy beaches
- 1c**—marshes, estuaries (coastal wetlands of marine influence)

### District 2—LOWLANDS

- 2a**—stream and canyon woodland
- 2b**—oak woodland, savanna
- 2c**—chaparral
- 2d**—areas altered by man: agriculture, residential, urban
- 2e**—freshwater habitats: marshes, rivers, lakes, reservoirs

### District 3—MOUNTAINS, MONTANE VALLEYS, ARID VALLEYS

- 3a**—coniferous forest (includes riparian within coniferous zone)
- 3b**—rocky habitats, montane chaparral
- 3c**—piñon-juniper, semi-desert scrub, sage
- 3d**—high plains (e.g. Cuyama Valley)

District 1 covers the ocean and coastal aquatic habitats under a marine influence. The line between habitats 1a and 1b is not precise. Category 1a refers to the open ocean, and most of the species preferring this habitat are seldom, if ever, seen from shore, although a few, such as Sooty Shearwater, may be visible from shore regularly and/or in large numbers. The Santa Maria River mouth, Goleta Point, and Point Mugu are the best accessible vantage points for seeing pelagic species. Habitat 1b pertains to sheltered, inshore waters (along south-facing beaches often inside a bed of kelp), harbors and marinas, and beaches. Natural harbors and deep bays are nonexistent in the region; there are man-made harbors in Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Oxnard. Accessible, rocky beaches are minimal and the region is not known to support wintering populations of some of the rocky shorebirds. Exploration of some of the restricted areas north of Point Conception is still needed.

All aquatic habitats in close proximity to the coast are covered by Habitat 1c. Included are estuaries, river mouths, sewage ponds, creek channels, flooded fields, ponds, and salt, brackish, and freshwater marshes. Many wetlands in this region have either been eliminated or greatly reduced in extent by man. Only two healthy salt marshes exist: Sandyland Slough, in Carpinteria, and the marsh at Point Mugu. The mouths of the Santa Maria, Santa Ynez, and Santa Clara Rivers provide extensive habitat for waterbirds. Other excellent areas are in Goleta: Devereux and Goleta Sloughs and the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB) Lagoon. Regular coverage of the Santa Maria and Santa Ynez River mouths and the Point Mugu marsh commenced only recently and much is still to be learned about these areas.

District 2 deals with the lowlands, lower slopes, and aquatic habitats beyond the marine influence. Only the most arid lowlands of the northern interior are excluded from this district. Habitat 2a represents various riparian situations. Most extant areas of this habitat are in canyons, although some riparian still exists along the larger rivers. Typical trees of this habitat are oak, sycamore, and willow, with more local additions of cottonwood, alder, bay, and maple. Relatively few permanent streams exist. Habitat 2b is used to designate areas of oak woodland and savanna mixed with oaks. Most of this habitat is in western Santa Barbara County in the San Antonio Creek drainage and the Santa Ynez Valley. The characteristic bird of this habitat is the Yellow-billed Magpie. The larger stands of oak are on some north-facing slopes in this area. In Ventura County, smaller pockets of this habitat are found around Ojai and in the Conejo Valley.

Chaparral, the term for a variety of dense, brushy plant communities, is the primary ground cover of most hillsides and is labeled 2c. Typical shrubs of these areas are varieties of ceanothus, manzanita, chamise, and scrub oak. Wrentit and Rufous-crowned Sparrow are typical of this habitat.

Category 2d is the catchall for habitats altered or created by man. Included are everything from agricultural areas and ranch yards to golf courses, plantings of exotic species, backyards, and areas of habitats such as 2ac that have become encompassed by urban development. Recent coverage in winter of the most luxuriantly foliated urban

### Key to Bar Graphs

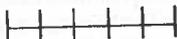
common to abundant



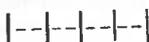
uncommon to fairly common



rare, but regular



casual to rare and irregular



a broken bar connected by a line or thinner bar represents significant fluctuations in numbers from year to year between the abundances shown

individual records (shown here: brief visit, extended visit)  $\bullet \cdots \bullet$

### Symbols Used

ph—photographed

\*—specimen

"South Coast"—the coastal lowlands between Gaviota and Point Mugu

### Breeding Status in Last Twenty Years

†—regular

††—irregular

I—Channel Islands only

12 COMMON MERGANSER: Very rare on the coast.

TURKEY VULTURE: Common in winter only in the Santa Maria area, with smaller numbers also present just west of Goleta and at Pt. Mugu at this season.

CALIFORNIA CONDOR: Numbers decreasing. Best observation points in the region are Mt. Pinos (July-September) and around the Sespe Condor Sanctuary (winter and early spring). For more details see *Birding* 10(1): 1-5.

MISSISSIPPI KITE: Near Goleta 18 June 1933 (\*) and Santa Barbara 3 June 1970.

GOSHAWK: Inland records: a nest with three eggs found on Mt. Pinos 6 May 1904, (4) Ventura Co. during the winter of 1916-1917 between 30 October and 27 February, Mt. Pinos 1 August 1953, Santa Ynez Valley 6 December 1972 (\*), Mt. Pinos 18 June 1976, and Figueroa Mt. 6 April 1977. Coastal records: Santa Barbara 23 December 1972 and Pt. Mugu S.P. 7 December 1974-3 January 1975.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK: Single immatures were in Santa Barbara 12 March 1976, Fillmore 25 November 1976, Santa Barbara 28 September 1977, Goleta 6 October 1977, Montecito 23 January-14 April 1978 (ph), Carpinteria 28 January-13 April 1978 (ph), near Pt. Mugu 30 September 1978, and Santa Barbara 30 December 1978-4 February 1979 (ph).

SWAINSON'S HAWK: Formerly more regular in the area. Only recent records: Montecito 17 September 1974 (\*), Goleta 2 September 1976, and near Lake Casitas 1 April 1979.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK: Regular in the Cuyama Valley. It is casual in other inland areas and along the coast.

FERRUGINOUS HAWK: Regular in the Cuyama Valley and in the Santa Maria and Buellton areas. Very rare along the South Coast.

GOLDEN EAGLE: Casual on the South Coast.

BALD EAGLE: A small number regularly winters on Lake Cachuma. Away from this locality, the eight records in the last eleven years are from Vandenberg, Refugio Pass, Goleta, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Saticoy, Piru, and Pt. Mugu.

MARSH HAWK: Breeds in the Vandenberg A.F.B. area. Only recent summer records away from there are: Goleta 21 July 1968 and Pt. Mugu 21 July 1979.

OSPREY: Recent nesting record at Lake Casitas in 1974.

PRAIRIE FALCON: Resident in the Cuyama Valley area. Rare along the South Coast.

PEREGRINE FALCON: One pair is known to nest in the region.

MERLIN: Most easily found in the Cuyama Valley. Late records: (2) Goleta 16 April 1977, near Camarillo 21 April 1979, and Goleta 23 April 1979 (ph).

BLUE GROUSE: A lack of recent, documented sightings makes the present status unclear. Recent reports for Mt. Pinos and Sawmill Mt. on steep, north-facing slopes with White Fir above 7000-8000 feet. Possibly exists in similar habitat on Reyes Peak and Big Pine Mt.



28 VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW: Most winter records are from inland areas (e.g. Lake Cachuma, Gibraltar Reservoir).

TREE SWALLOW: A few still breed near Santa Maria, at Lake Cachuma, and at McGrath. In winter, regular only in the Santa Maria and Pt. Mugu areas.

BANK SWALLOW: Only definite recent nesting record is from McGrath (1976). Three at McGrath 1 April 1979 were early, and one there 17 October 1977 was late.

ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW: One winter record: near Pt. Mugu 1 January 1978.

BARN SWALLOW: Three at Pt. Mugu 23 January 1972, one at Port Hueneme 27 January 1977, and one at McGrath 27 January 1979 were probably early spring migrants.

CLIFF SWALLOW: Early migrants were at Pt. Mugu 11 January 1964 and at McGrath 27 January and 5 February 1979.

PURPLE MARTIN: A few still breed in the Santa Ynez Valley; most easily found at Nojoqui Falls Park. A small number nests on Big Pine Mt. The earliest spring record is of one at Pt. Mugu 2 March 1974; the latest fall record is of one at McGrath 24 September 1978.

STELLER'S JAY: Rare away from the coniferous forest; casual in fall and winter on the coast. Several summered near San Marcos Pass in 1979.

YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE: Common particularly in the Santa Ynez Valley. An isolated population exists west of New Cuyama, the only known locality in the Cuyama River drainage. Along the coast, still exists west of Gaviota; last recorded in the Goleta/Santa Barbara area in 1973. Last recorded in Ventura County in 1910.

COMMON RAVEN: Absent along the coast in the Santa Barbara area.

PIÑON JAY: Status unclear. Several undated reports from areas of piñon pine and juniper in the northern part of the region. Other inland records include: Big Pine Mt. 7 December 1968 and in the Piru Basin 21 December 1968. Coastal records include: (7) Santa Barbara 8 October 1955, ("several") Santa Barbara early November 1955, Goleta 18 October 1972, and near Pt. Mugu 30 September 1977.

CLARK'S NUTCRACKER: Resident in the Mt. Pinos area. Very rare on the lower peaks in fall and winter. Recorded in coastal Santa Barbara: 28 January 1917, 15 October 1919, 24 September-16 October 1935, late 1961, and (several) November 1972-March 1973.

CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEE: Resident near the coast in suitable riparian habitat along the Santa Maria River, San Antonio Creek on Vandenberg A.F.B., and the Santa Ynez River. One in Montecito 24 October 1975-10 March 1976 is the only record away from these areas.

PYGMY NUTHATCH: "Several" near Ojai 3 January 1970, up to thirty in coastal Santa Barbara 29 August 1972-February 1973, and one in Goleta 28 August 1978 are the only lowland occurrences.

BROWN CREEPER: One in Santa Barbara 14 August 1968 was unseasonal for the lowlands.

DIPPER: Resident on a few permanent streams in inland areas (e.g. Sespe Creek). A rare winter visitor to streams on the coastal slope of the Santa Ynez Mts., where a few remain to breed if water conditions are adequate.

