Check List of the
Birds of Sacramento and Vicinity

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THE BIRDS OF SACRAMENTO AND VICINITY

Situated at the confluence of two major rivers, Sacramento provides some riparian woodland and marsh, and vast areas of agricultural lands over the flat valley. In the foothills to the east and west there is grassland, extensive chaparral and oak woodlands. This variety of bird habitat, together with the mild winters, makes the vicinity of Sacramento one of the outstanding inland areas in the entire United States, both on the basis of a rich variety of species and of total bird population.

The bird population may be classified according to the season and duration of stay. Residents remain throughout the year. Most Summer Visits arrive in March or April, nest here, then depart in the fall for their southern wintering grounds. Winter Visits flock into the valley from the high mountains and from as far north as the Arctic to avail themselves of the mild winter climate and an abundant food supply. Finally there are the Migrants, those birds that stop over briefly as they pass through the valley on their way to their nesting territories in the spring, or their wintering grounds in the fall. These temporary populations of summer and winter visitants tend to build up gradually, sometimes over a period of weeks, and similarly taper off as the birds depart.

This check-list includes 228 birds that reasonably might be expected to be found in the course of a year, plus 75 occasional and accidentals. The horizontal bar after the bird's name indicates the time of the year during which the bird is likely to be present. The bars are designed in three widths in an effort to give some idea of the chances of finding the species on any particular field trip. The thick bars represent less common species, and thin bars indicate those uncommon or secretive species that seldom reveal themselves. Dashed lines indicate species found in an irregular pattern of years; i.e. wanderers, and breeders with slight tolerance for changing habitat.

The territory considered extends from State Sign Route 12 on the south to the Sutter Buttes on the north, and east and west into the Sierra and Coast Range to about 1000 feet elevation, including Folsom Reservoir and Lake Berryessa behind Monticello Dam.

Some species of special interest are in this area. Sandhill Cranes usually winter in the fields south of Thornton, and Long-billed Curlews in the fields bordering the Bypass wetlands. The Yolo Bypass is an excellent place for ducks, geese, swans, shorebirds, and occasionally White Pelicans. Three miles west of the Bypass on Highway 16 and one mile north on Road 102 are the settling ponds of the Spreckels Sugar Company which, in season, provide habitat for Wilson’s and Northern Phalaropes, and Sandpipers. Avocets and Stilts nest here, Black Terns in the rice fields.

The names of the birds used here, and the taxonomic order, are according to the Fifth Edition of the A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds, and will vary in a few instances from those in the older field guides and reference books. For identification purposes two excellent field guides are available: Roger Tory Peterson's Field Guide to Western Birds, and A Guide to Field Identification, BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA by Robbins, Bruun, Zim, and Singer.