



Fall Migration: Vagrant Hunting—Fall Flycatchers, Vireos and Warblers! 21 September 2014

Late-September is typically an ideal time to get out to the coastal migrant traps and look for vagrant landbirds. For this local Fowlerope trip, participants and I ventured to some of the known “migrant trap” hotspots to try and find rare flycatchers, vireos and warblers. Overall it was a nice day with great weather but was a bit slow in terms of rarities. A good diversity of species was seen, including a Merlin and the first Yellow-rumped Warblers of the year. The rarity highlight was a continuing CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER that I found along the School Rd. trail in McKinleyville the day previous while scouting for this trip.

In brief, we started at the School Rd. trail, trying to refind the Chestnut-sided. We caught up with one chickadee flock along the trail but they were in a location where we didn’t have very good views of the birds present with them so after about an hour or so we left the location to maybe return and try again later. We made a brief stop along the Hammond Trail section between Fischer and Hiller Roads, here in McKinleyville, where we found a SPOTTED TOWHEE, the first coastal report for the fall season (they generally start appearing along the coast from inland areas around mid- to late-September). After the Hammond Trail we drove out to the famous “vagrant trap” willow patches of the north spit of Humboldt Bay. In general, all the willow patches were pretty slow—a typical trend for some reason this fall. After having lunch at the cypress patch at the south end of the north spit (actually the busiest spot on the spit; see eBird list below) we drove back towards Arcata and stopped at Shay Park to check on migrant flocks here. We had a small flock at the park with some nice looks at some TOWNSEND’S WARBLERS. After Shay we headed back to the School Rd. trail in McKinleyville once again to look for the CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER since it had been reported by others after we left the location this morning. We ended the day with really nice and prolonged looks at the Chestnut-sided and I even managed to get a digiscoped photo of the bird (see photo below).

When scheduling a trip like this—which relies heavily on good “vagrant weather”—it is always hard to predict how successful it will be based on the number of rarities found. Overall, I think we did pretty well with very nice looks at our one “vagrant” warbler for the day, while enjoying a nice diversity of species, fun birding locations, and good camaraderie amongst the participants and I.

eBird lists from the day:

[School Rd. trail in the A.M.](#)

[Hammond Trail Fischer Rd to Hiller Rd.](#)

North Spit willow patches: [Horse Pasture](#), [Airport and Satellite](#), [Entrance](#), and the [Cypress Patch](#).

[Shay Park](#)

[School Rd. trail in the P.M.](#)

Bird Species List

TOTAL SPECIES: 59

KEY FOR THIS LIST

I = introduced

Anseriformes – screamers, Swans, Geese, and Ducks

Anatidae - Ducks, Geese, Swans

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*

Gaviiformes - Loons

Gaviidae - Loons

Red-throated Loon *Gavia stellata*

Podicipediformes - Grebes

Podicipedidae - Grebes

Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis*

Suliformes – Frigatebirds, Boobies, Cormorants, Darters, and Allies

Phalacrocoracidae - Cormorants

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Pelagic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*

Pelecaniformes - Pelicans, Herons, Ibises, and Allies

Pelecanidae - Pelicans

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*

Ardeidae - Herons and egrets

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Accipitriformes - Hawks, Kites, Eagles, and Allies

Cathartidae - New World Vultures

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Charadriiformes - Shorebirds, Gulls, Auks, and Allies

Charadriidae - Lapwings and Plovers

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

Scolopacidae - Sandpipers, Phalaropes, and Allies

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Alcidae - Auks, Murres, and Puffins

Common Murre *Uria aalge*

Laridae - Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers

Heermann's Gull *Larus heermanni*
Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*
Western Gull *Larus occidentalis*
California Gull *Larus californicus*
Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans*

Columbiformes - Pigeons, and Doves

Columbidae - Pigeons and Doves

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* – I

Apodiformes - Swifts, and Hummingbirds

Apodidae - Swifts

Vaux's Swift *Chaetura vauxi*

Trochilidae – Hummingbirds

Anna's Hummingbird *Calypte anna*

Coraciiformes - Rollers, Motmots, Kingfishers, and Allies

Alcedinidae - Kingfishers

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*

Piciformes - Puffbirds, Jacamars, Toucans, Woodpeckers, and Allies

Picidae - Woodpeckers and Allies

Downy Woodpecker *Picoides pubescens*

Falconiformes - Caracaras and Falcons

Falconidae - Caracaras and Falcons

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Passeriformes - Passerine Birds

Tyrannidae - Tyrant Flycatchers

Black Phoebe *Sayornis nigricans*

Vireonidae – Vireos

Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus*

Corvidae - Crows and Jays

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

Paridae - Chickadees and Titmice

Black-capped Chickadee *Poecile atricapillus*

Chestnut-backed Chickadee *Poecile rufescens*

Troglodytidae – Wrens

Pacific Wren *Troglodytes pacificus*

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*

Regulidae - Kinglets

Golden-crowned Kinglet *Regulus satrapa*

Sylviidae - Sylviid Warblers

Wrentit *Chamaea fasciata*

Turdidae – Thrushes

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*

Motacillidae - Wagtails and Pipits

American Pipit *Anthus rubescens*

Bombycillidae – Waxwings

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*

Parulidae - Wood-Warblers

Orange-crowned Warbler *Oreothlypis celata*

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia*

Chestnut-sided Warbler *Setophaga pensylvanica* (one immature bird continued at the School Rd. trail in McKinleyville. Photo below)



Figure 1: imm. Chestnut-sided Warbler

Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's) *Setophaga coronate auduboni*

Townsend's Warbler *Setophaga townsendi*

Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*

Emberizidae – Emberizids

Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus*

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis*

Fox Sparrow *Passerella iliaca*

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*

Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii*

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

Golden-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia atricapilla*

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*

Icteridae – Blackbirds

Brewer's Blackbird *Euphagus cyanocephalus*

Fringillidae - Fringilline and Cardueline Finches and Allies

House Finch *Haemorhous mexicanus*

Purple Finch *Haemorhous purpureus*
Lesser Goldfinch *Spinus psaltria*
American Goldfinch *Spinus tristis*

Passeridae - Old World Sparrows
House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* - I