

2007 Addendum to Annotated Checklist of Birds of Ballona Valley
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With this addendum, three new species are added to the Ballona Valley checklist: **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, **Calliope Hummingbird** and **Wrentit**. I present details on several other scarce birds at Ballona from 2007, including second or third local records for Cackling Goose, Swainson's Hawk, Rock Sandpiper, Little Gull, Tropical Kingbird, Bell's Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler, and Tricolored Blackbird; and rare modern records for Black Tern, Hutton's Vireo, Rock Wren and California Thrasher.

Abbreviations used in text:

BFM = Ballona Freshwater Marsh, "Playa Vista"

B. Cr. = Ballona Creek, from Mar Vista to Playa del Rey

BW = Ballona Wetlands proper; flat areas west of Lincoln Blvd.

DRL = Del Rey Lagoon, Playa del Rey

DW = Dune Willows, western edge of Ballona Wetlands

See "Annotated Checklist of Birds of Ballona Valley, Los Angeles County, California" (Cooper 2006a) for list of observers cited by initials below.

Greater White-fronted Goose: A first-year bird appeared at BFM on 18 Nov. (KL), remaining into 2008.

Cackling Goose: One appeared at BFM on 21 Oct. (BJG et al.) and is still present. This is only the third local record; one, possibly the same individual, was present a year ago to the week (28 Oct. KL).

Brant: One at the Ballona Cr. mouth on 25 Mar. (KL) was within the expected spring migration window of this scarce transient.

American Wigeon: As in 2005, one spent the summer at BFM, recorded 28 July into fall, when wintering birds arrived.

Green-winged Teal: One at BFM on 10 Aug. (KL) was slightly early, though birds begin arriving in late August.

Common Goldeneye: Three birds along Ballona Cr. on 26 Jan. may have been involved with a record of 1-2 birds at nearby BFM from 28 Mar. - 02 Mar. (KL).

Red-throated Loon: One along Ballona Cr. on 02 July (E. Brooks) provided a rare summer record.

American Bittern: One at BFM on 01 Dec. (DSC) suggested at another wintering attempt by this species, extirpated during the latter half of the 20th Century in the Ballona Valley.

Cattle Egret: Scarce in recent years, one was on the Ballona Wetlands on 06 May (K. Keane) during the expected winter/spring period.

White-faced Ibis: Spring records include what was likely one bird was seen on and off at BFM between 24 Apr. and 19 June (KL, m. ob.), with a flock of 8 here on 07 May (DSC) and a fall record of 15 along Ballona Cr. on 03 Sept. (KL). A late first-year bird at BFM on 28 Nov. (DS) remained into early Dec. (DSC), but did not overwinter.

Turkey Vulture: Transients overhead on 10 and 25 Mar. (both KL) were the only ones reported in 2007.

Osprey: At least one bird was essentially resident at Mdr/Ballona Cr. this year, with rare winter and summer records obtained on 01 Jan. (RVDH) and 06 June (DS). This species is increasing in southern California, and though year-round sightings have been made in recent years, this is the first individual that has taken up residence here; nesting should be watched for.

Northern Harrier: A first-year male present on 03 Aug. (KL) remained to the end of the period; this is the second year in a row that a young bird has wintered; during 2006-07, a female was present from early Nov. on. Several other sightings of female harrier(s) were made during fall 2007, but only the young male appeared to be wintering.

White-tailed Kite: One or two birds over-summered at BW (m. ob.), providing rare Apr., May and June records of this species. However, no breeding activity was noted.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: One at BFM on 24 Sept. (DSC) was the earliest yet at Ballona by about two weeks.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Additional records of this scarce fall and winter transient include one along Pershing Dr. in PdR on 26 Jan. (KL), and a long-staying immature bird at BFM and nearby Playa Vista from 17 Oct. on (DS, m. ob.).

Swainson's Hawk: A late-moving fall migrant was over the base of the Westchester Bluffs in Playa Vista on 25 Nov. (KL), providing just the 3rd local record.

Red-tailed Hawk: A migrating group of 10 birds on 20 Oct. over Mar Vista (KL) was unusual, as Ballona is not on a typical flight path for migrant raptors.

American Kestrel: Two copulating at LMU on 07 May (DSC) indicated continued breeding of this declining falcon.

Virginia Rail: One at BFM on 30 May (DS) was nearly a month later than previous spring records, and suggests an attempt to over-summer.

Black-necked Stilt: Two nests were constructed on the small island at the southern extension pond of BFM during May, both being abandoned by mid-June (*vide* DS). There has apparently been no successful breeding of this species locally since 2004, and it may become "re-extirpated" as a nester without predator/vegetation management.

American Avocet: A spate of records in early fall (05 July - 01 Sept., m. ob.) peaked at 12 birds on the latter date at DRL (RVDH), which conforms to a recent trend in larger numbers of this once-common migrant that historically bred and wintered.

Wandering Tattler: One at PdR on 25 June (RB) was about two weeks before the earliest local record, but was within the mid-summer arrival period for this species.

Surfbird: A major, early-spring stopover of this species apparently occurs along lower Ballona Cr. in March and early Apr.; KL counted birds during spring visits in 2007 starting with 130 birds on 11 Mar., with peak numbers (800) on 08 April.

Rock Sandpiper: One in alternate plumage on the PdR jetties 22 - 23 Apr. (M. Byhower, m. ob.) was thought to be the same individual present from the previous fall, last recorded on 28 Jan. (T. Benson, to LACoBirds). Where it went during the intervening months is unknown.

Red Knot: Birds at PdR on 10 July (RB) and 15 July (2, *vide* KL) were both slightly early, but within the expected mid-July arrival period for fall transients.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: First Ballona record. One discovered along Ballona Cr. on 28 Sept. (C. Taylor) remained just one day and was seen (and photographed) by many. This species staged a "mini-invasion" of the state this year, and several counties obtained rare or first records of this shorebird.

Wilson's Snipe: Several dozen birds were present during fall and winter at the southern extension pond at BFM, where they roosted in short grass along the shoreline. This exceeds previous highs, which were mainly in the single-digits (m. ob.).

Little Gull: There have been three reports of this species from Ballona since the initial 1992 sighting (listed incorrectly as 1991 in Cooper 2006a; see also Hamilton et al. 2007). Of these three, just one (Ballona Cr. on 29 Jan. 2005, T. Wurster) has been reviewed (and accepted) by the Calif. Bird Records Committee; the other two sightings involve birds at the Ballona Cr. mouth on 27 Jan. 2001 (BGJ, as reported to R. Schep; LACoBirds) and most recently a sighting from Ballona Cr. on 03 Mar. 2007 (KL), bringing the total number of local records to four (assuming all are valid).

Black Tern: Sightings of what were probably the same individual were made between 28 July and 10 Aug. (both KL) at the mouth of Ballona Cr., representing the first record since 1980.

Forster's Tern: Scarce in recent years, 50 at PdR at 30 Nov. (KL) was a notable concentration.

Black Skimmer: Recent records have been sparse; one at Playa del Rey on 04 Mar. (KL) was within the expected late winter/early spring window, but one along Ballona Cr. 12 June (RVDH) provided a rare mid-summer record.

White-winged Dove: One at BFM on 12 Aug. (DSC) was the only record of this rare fall transient.

Burrowing Owl: An over-wintering bird on the western Ballona Wetlands was last seen on 03 Feb. 2007 (JC).

Rose-ringed Parakeet: This exotic is still maintaining a tiny population at Playa del Rey; 7 were present here on 21 Jan. (KL).

Black-chinned Hummingbird: Only the fourth modern record of this rare transient, one was in scrub along Ballona Cr. on 12 Apr. (KL), and flew south toward BFM.

Costa's Hummingbird: One heard "zing-ing" along the Riparian Corridor at Playa Vista on 22 Apr. (KL) represents just a handful of modern records of this species, which is apparently a rare winter and spring transient.

Calliope Hummingbird: First Ballona record. Singles were observed at two locations in Marina del Rey on 15 and 20 Apr. (KL), part of a remarkable coastward incursion of this species, which normally migrates through the foothills, in spring 2007.

Rufous Hummingbird: Four birds between 04 Mar. and 15 Apr. (KL) probably bracketed the expected spring migration period of this scarce transient through the Ballona Valley.

Nuttall's Woodpecker: One at BFM on 23 Sept. provided the only 2007 record of this barely-annual visitor.

Downy Woodpecker: One was at LMU on 07 May (DSC); this is the only semi-regular locale for this species.

Yellow-shafted Flicker: One was at LMU on 10 Mar. (RDS), where apparently annual.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Numbers were seen widely in late spring, with up to three birds at BFM 07 - 23 May, providing the first BFM records for this well-worked locale.

Hammond's Flycatcher: Of several reports of transients (both spring and fall), one at LMU from 17 - 24 Mar. was exceptionally early; most spring migrants do not arrive until early April.

Gray Flycatcher: A late-moving fall migrant was at BFM on 09 Nov., providing a rare Ballona Valley-floor record (BGJ/J. Moore, LACoBirds).

Dusky Flycatcher: Two birds were in a wave of migrants at LMU on 07 (DSC), one of just a handful of local records.

Say's Phoebe: A single pair again apparently bred at Playa Vista, with an adult and a juvenile here on 28 May (KL).

Tropical Kingbird: One was photographed at BFM on 31 Oct. (DS); another was reported from the Venice Beach tern colony on the odd date of 18 Mar. (TS, et al). There was just one previous record prior to this year (11 Oct. 2003).

Cassin's Kingbird: Four at BFM on 04 Nov. (JP et al.) were notable; usually only singles are recorded here.

Bell's Vireo: A singing bird at BFM on 31 May (DSC) was just the third local record, all recent (post-2000). It was not present the next day or thereafter (KL).

Hutton's Vireo: A calling individual was found at Oxford Drain/Washington Lagoon on 14 Dec. (KL) for a long-awaited first modern record.

Violet-green Swallow: Three at BFM on 20 Mar. were during the (recently) established early-spring period for the sparse passage of this species, but 50 here on 10 Oct. (DS) was unprecedented.

Cliff Swallow: Three birds at BFM on 02 Mar. (JP et al.) provide a good early record of arrival into the valley.

Rock Wren: One in the construction zone of Playa Vista on 28 May (KL) provides only the 4th modern record; this species was historically resident on the Westchester Bluffs (Cooper 2006b) but is more likely as vagrant in fall/winter.

Marsh Wren: Two singing along the Riparian Corridor, Playa Vista on 17 Mar. (KL) were weakly suggestive of an attempt to breed, but a one-day wonder was singing at BFM on the late date of 27 Apr. (DSC), over a month after the departure of the wintering birds at the site, and the first true breeding-season record in about 70 years (Cooper 2006b).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: One was at BFM on 07 May (DSC), the latest ever in the Ballona Valley.

Swainson's Thrush: One at BFM on 24 Sept. (DSC) provided just the second fall record for Ballona (much more common in spring).

Wrentit: The first certain record for the Ballona Valley (see Cooper 2006b for discussion), a singing bird was present in native scrub along Ballona Cr. near Culver Blvd. from 04 Mar. (KL) to 28 Aug. (JC).

California Thrasher: One present at BFM for one day (07 May, DSC) was one of fewer than five modern records.

Virginia's Warbler: An apparently returning (late-) wintering bird was present at BFM 11 Mar. to 25 Mar. (KL), but a transient here on 25 Sept. (KL) did not remain to winter.

Black-throated Gray Warbler: A wintering bird was present at Oxford Drain/Washington Lagoon (last seen 01 Jan., N. and M. Freeman), which may represent a returning individual.

Townsend's Warbler: This species seemed especially common this spring, with 8 found at BFM during a large migrant wave 07 May (DSC).

Hermit Warbler: A bird reported from LMU 01 Mar. was apparently wintering (LACoBirds) for the third local wintering record; another wintering bird was nearby at West Los Angeles College in Culver City on 10 Feb. (DSC)

Palm Warbler: Birds were recorded at BFM on 27 Oct. (RDS/DSC), 04 Nov. (2, KL) and 18 Nov. (KL), where this species is now a regular late-fall migrant.

Black-and-white Warbler: One at LMU on 31 Mar. (RDS) is difficult to categorize; in 2005, one was seen at the same location on 19 Mar. (also RDS), which was considered to be an over-wintering bird (Cooper 2006a). This represents just the third Ballona Valley record of this rare-but-regular transient through California.

Wilson's Warbler: Two winter sightings, one along Ballona Cr. at McConnell in Jan. (DSC), and another at LMU in Feb. (RDS); an astonishing concentration of 200+ birds was at BFM on 07 May (DSC).

Spotted Towhee: Birds at BFM on 03 Jan. (DS) and 26 Oct. (DSC) were the first records for this well-worked locale.

Chipping Sparrow: This species seemed rather common this year, with ten along the new Riparian Corridor at Playa Vista on 22 Apr. (KL) and small numbers at BFM during April and early May (DSC).

Clay-colored Sparrow: Two were discovered at BFM on 23 Apr. (DSC), with one lingering to 27 Apr. (KL); the first spring records of this rare-but-regular fall transient.

Lark Sparrow: Two individuals of this rare transient were found, one in spring (28 May, Playa Vista; KL) and another in fall (17 Oct., BFM; DS).

Vesper Sparrow: One at BFM 23 - 25 Sept. (DSC) adds another record during the expected mid-fall window.

White-throated Sparrow: One was in a mixed sparrow flock at BFM 21 Oct. - 07 Nov. (KL), about the fifth local record.

Dark-eyed Junco: One ("Oregon") at BFM on 25 Nov. provided a rare valley-floor record; a late bird was singing at LMU on 07 May, suggesting possible breeding attempt (both KL).

Blue Grosbeak: A pair summered along the new Riparian Corridor at Playa Vista, observed on 28 May and 28 June (KL).

Lazuli Bunting: Large numbers moved through in mid-spring, with 100+ observed along the Riparian Corridor at Playa Vista on 22 Apr. (KL).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Once again, this species moved through in great numbers during late April and early May (up to 400, mainly at BFM), with the first birds arriving on 17 Apr. (7 at BFM, KL).

Tricolored Blackbird: Up to two adult males were present at BFM 04 - 20 May (JP, m. ob.), and another was along the Riparian Corridor at Playa Vista on 17 June (BGJ), but no breeding activity was observed. This year saw numerous records from around coastal Los Angeles Co. away from usual breeding and wintering locales (see LACoBirds); there were just two other Ballona Valley records prior to these sightings, from the summer of 2003.

Sources cited:

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