

The **SKIMMER**



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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, May 15, at 6:00 p.m., in the Hoffman room of the San Diego Foundation Building, 2508 Historic Decatur Road. Going south on Rosecrans St. (in the Midway area of town), turn left on Roosevelt Rd. into Liberty Station, and then left again on Decatur. Park in the first parking lot, or on the street.

Program: SDFO member Joe Sweeney will discuss "The Birds of Rancho La Puerta." Just south of the California/Mexico border, near the town of Tecate, North America's oldest fitness resort has been attracting health-seeking people for 72 years. With its 32 acres of lush gardens, plus riparian, grassland and chaparral habitats, the Ranch also attracts a healthy variety of birds. Joe Sweeney will share images of some of the common and not-so-common bird sightings at the spa, and he will briefly explain some of the fascinating history of the famous resort that was recently voted the World's Best Destination Spa (for the second year in a row). Joe will also show 3 minutes of home movies from the seventies, chronicling his attempts to fly like a bird when he was a hang glider pilot.

During the past 31 years, Joe Sweeney has lived and worked at the Ranch as a fitness instructor. He also leads bird walks at Rancho La Puerta, where he has identified 155 bird species.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, June 19, same time, same place. Annual business meeting and election of officers for 2012-2013 (see following item). Program to be announced.

SDFO Board Elections Scheduled for the June Meeting

During our upcoming June meeting, SDFO members will vote on our new board members for the year June 2012-June 2013. Outgoing President Paul Lehman is not eligible to serve again. The nominations to date are as follows:

President: Tom Blackman
Vice President: Gary Nunn
Treasurer: Sara Mayers
Membership: BJ Stacey
Secretary: Ann Hannon

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SDFO News (cont.)

However, if any member would like to nominate someone else for any of these positions, please contact Barbara Carlson at barbarac2003@yahoo.com or by calling her cell phone at (619) 806-9094 before June 11.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, APRIL 2012

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

The two Snow Geese that spent much of the winter at Penasquitos Lagoon remained through the late date of 1 Apr (SES). The presence of a Brant on the highway at Butterfield Ranch 24 Apr (SES) was storm related, as was a Surf Scoter found dead in McCain Valley 5 Apr (*fide* JPa) and a flock of eight Common Loons in flight over the same location 12 Apr (JPa)—as presented in Unitt (2004), Brant, Surf Scoters and Common Loons wintering in the Gulf of California routinely follow a route in spring that crosses eastern San Diego County. Under normal weather conditions, these birds pass over the County undetected. However, during stormy conditions some are evidently unable to fight the headwinds, and become grounded. Two Brown Pelicans in flight over McCain Valley 13 Apr (JPa) may have been following the same route used by the Brant etc., but spring is not normally the time of year that Brown Pelicans disperse northward out of the Gulf of California. A Sabine's Gull found with a broken wing in McCain Valley 12 Apr (Laurie Gorman and Fern Hoffman) had no doubt moved northward up the Gulf of California and found itself forced to follow the same overland route as used by Bonaparte's Gulls (see Unitt 2004)—this record parallels that of three in the Imperial Valley some 60 miles to the east on 8 Apr 2011 (*North American Birds* 65:114-115).

Sea-watching highlights included an Ashy Storm-Petrel at Pt. La Jolla in La Jolla 14 Apr (PEL)—one of a very few ever seen from shore in this County—and what appears to have been an immature Blue-footed Booby photographed off Carlsbad 30 Apr (JMCM, BM). The most recent report of a Reddish Egret was that of one at the San Diego River mouth 12-15 Apr (AR, JPe)—it is normal for those Reddish Egrets wintering in San Diego County to withdraw southward in spring to nesting areas in Baja California. Two pairs of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were attending nests in Imperial Beach at the end of the month (GMCC), and the same can be said for the pair of Harris's Hawks in Jacumba (EGK, PP).

The Pacific Golden-Plover at the Tijuana River mouth since 14 Aug remained through 11 Apr (MS), and the other at the San Dieguito River mouth/Penasquitos Lagoon since 20 Dec was also last seen 11 Apr (JPa). A migrant Solitary Sandpiper, very rare in spring, was in Escondido 18 Apr (JMCM). An impressive flock of 75 Surfbirds in Oceanside 5 Apr (KW) were no doubt northbound migrants. A late-staying immature Glaucous Gull was at the Santa Margarita River mouth near Oceanside 23-25 Apr (ST, MB). A tern looking most like a Sandwich Tern associated with a large group of Elegant Terns at the J Street Marina in Chula

Vista 12-15 Apr (PEL, GMcC). This tern looked remarkably similar to the “Sandwich Tern” at the San Diego River mouth on 11 May 2009. Apart from the extent of yellow at the tip of the bill, and the lack of a well-defined cutoff between the yellow and black on the bill, this tern matched Sandwich Terns seen on the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts. However, any Sandwich Tern reaching California no doubt originates from the area of the Caribbean Sea adjacent to Costa Rica and Panama, crosses the isthmus into the Pacific, then moves north with Elegant Terns. Since “Cayenne Terns”, a form of Sandwich Tern with varying amounts of yellow on their bills, occur on the Caribbean coast of South America, the possibility of our birds having some Cayenne Tern in their blood should be considered before writing them off as Sandwich x Elegant Tern hybrids.

Most of the migrant land birds had returned by the end of April, leaving only the late migrants such as Black Swift, Willow Flycatcher and Brown-crested Flycatcher to be reported. Calliope Hummingbirds made a good showing in April as indicated by reports of 2 or 3 a day regularly on Pt. Loma between 7 and 28 April (PEL, EGK, GN). A Pinyon Jay at Wooded Hill in the Laguna Mountains 22 Apr (GN) was likely associated with the major movement of this species into San Diego County in October.

Continuing wintering rarities included the Thick-billed Kingbird at the lower end of Poggi Canyon in Chula Vista remaining through 9 Apr (GMcC), the Black-and-white Warbler at the Bird and Butterfly Garden in the Tijuana River Valley, first noted 25 Mar (EGK), still present 25 Apr (GLR), the Palm Warbler at Westminster Park on Pt. Loma since 20 Nov continuing through the end of the April (SR, PEL), the wintering Clay-colored Sparrows found near the Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park 26 Feb (PEL) still present 16 Apr (CA), and the male Summer

Tanager at Westminster Park last seen 7 Apr (PEL).

A Plumbeous Vireo at Santee Lakes in Santee 1 Apr (PEL) was believed to have wintered locally. In addition, a “female” American Redstart in Escondido 18 Apr (JMCM) likely wintered locally as the date is too early for any spring migrant redstart in the West. A Palm Warbler at Chollas Park in San Diego 22 Apr (TC) may have wintered locally, but another at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on Pt. Loma 30 Apr (BLC) was surely on the move. A Lark Bunting at Borrego Springs 5 Apr (PA) was a nice find; however there are multiple early- April records for this area (Unitt 2004), suggesting somewhat regular occurrences there at this time of the year. A high-plumage adult White-throated Sparrow at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 17 Apr (GN) appeared to be a migrant. A male Indigo Bunting was seen briefly at Sabre Springs near Poway 22 Apr (AA). An adult male Baltimore Oriole at Hilltop Park in Chula Vista 15 Apr (JO) was known present since mid-March, so wintered locally.

Listed observers: Alex Abela, Paulette Ache, Christopher Adler, Matt Brinkman, Barbara L. Carlson, Tim Cooper, Eric G. Kallen, Paul E. Lehman, Guy McCaskie, Jimmy McMorran, Brennan Mulrooney, Gary Nunn, Jeff Opydycke, James Pawlicki (JPa), Jim Pea (JPe), Phil Pryde, Anne Reilly, Steve Ritt, Geoffrey L. Rogers, Matt Sadowski, Susan E. Smith, Steven Tucker, Ken Weaver.

Literature Cited

Unitt, Philip. 2004. San Diego County Bird Atlas. *Proc. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist.* 39. San Diego Nat. Hist. Mus., San Diego.

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Your contributions to *The Skimmer* are appreciated. Submit articles and notices by the first of the month of publication by mail to John Walters, 5552 Horse Ridge Way, Bonita, CA 91902, or by e-mail to john-walters@cox.net

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