

# *The* **SKIMMER**

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## **SDFO NEWS**

### **Monthly Meeting**

Tuesday, June 17, 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 proceed a couple of blocks to Decatur. Parking is available on the street or in the adjacent parking lots.

Our annual business meeting and election of officers for the coming year. The Nominating Committee is recommending the following slate of officers:

President: Gary Nunn      Vice-President: Dave Povey

Secretary: Conny Jamison      Treasurer: Rich Breisch

We encourage additional nominations from the floor.

Program: Movie, “The Condor’s Shadow,” by Jeff McLoughlin. “The Condor’s Shadow” profiles the ongoing challenge of bringing the iconic California Condor back from the brink of extinction. Biologist Joseph Brandt, zookeeper Mike Clark, veterinary pathologist Bruce Rideout as well as a feisty condor named Pitahsi all contribute to the narrative in a year-in-the-life story of endangered species recovery. With vérité footage shot in the ruggedly beautiful nesting habitat of the condor and interviews with those who have lived the story for more than thirty years, this heart-wrenching and beautiful film will make you appreciate the passion and hard work required to pull a species back from the brink. Trailer and additional information: [www.TheCondorsShadow.com](http://www.TheCondorsShadow.com).

Jeff McLoughlin has had a 25-year career in creative media for Fortune 1000 companies. In 2010, after a six-year stint as Creative Director for a publicly traded Silicon Valley technology firm he decided that his personal dream had been on hold long enough. He left the corporate world behind and embarked upon documentary film production with “The Condor’s Shadow.” In an era when environmental stories are frequently bleak, Jeff set out with the goal of creating an uplifting environmental film. What began as the success story of the California condor evolved into an exploration of the passion and diverse talents required to enable the restoration of an endangered species. As it turned out, “The Condor’s Shadow” became a human story as much as one about a iconic endangered species.

Next month’s meeting: Tuesday, July 15, same time, same place. Program: “A Tour of the Tanagers – an Evolutionary Burst of Beaks and Colors,” by Professor Kevin J. Burns, Department of Biology, San Diego State University.

# SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, MAY 2014

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

Following the late April/early May “fallout” reported by Sara B. Mayers (see April 2014 *Skimmer*), Santa Ana winds again prevailed 12-15 May, pushing large numbers of migrant passerines westward to the coast and beyond, with Warbling Vireos, Wilson’s Warblers and Western Tanagers being the most numerous, along with lesser numbers of Western Wood-Pewees and Swainson’s Thrushes.

Observers on the 12-hour boat trip from San Diego Bay to the ocean waters of the 9-Mile and 30-Mile Banks on 17 May were treated to single Black-footed Albatrosses over the 30-Mile Bank and the San Diego Trough (the deep waters between the 9-Mile and 30-Mile Banks), an Ashy Storm-Petrel with “rafting” Black Storm-Petrels at the 30-Mile Bank, a cooperative Red-billed Tropicbird over the San Diego Trough, and single South Polar Skuas over the San Diego Trough, and with a Pomarine Jaeger at the north end of the 9-Mile Bank. However, the most unusual bird seen was a first-summer (one-year-old) Laughing Gull that followed the boat for a short time over the San Diego Trough (32°42’59” W, 117°34’51” N). This gull is a rare vagrant to the Pacific coast of California, with records scattered throughout the year, including the only previous “at sea” record of one off San Diego on 9 September 1972 (*Audubon Field Notes* 19:511). A Brown Booby remained inside San Diego Bay at the “bait barge” adjacent to Harbor Island 11-13 May (JTS, MS).

The Yellow-crowned Night-Heron nest at the Imperial Beach Sports Park was wiped out when a large branch fell to the sidewalk on 22 May and the remainder of the nest tree was removed on 23 May under the guise of “Public Safety”—we will have to wait to see if the

adults stay in the area. Two Black Oystercatchers were photographed flying south along the shore at La Jolla 29 May (DWA)—this species nests as close as Los Coronados Islands, but possible nesting at the Zuniga Jetty at the entrance to San Diego Bay in 2003 (Unitt 2004) still stands as the only suggestion of breeding locally. The presence of at least 15 nesting pairs of Gull-billed Terns at south San Diego Bay at the end of May (MS) is encouraging since more than 90% of the local population was believed “lost” in May 2013. Single alternate-plumage Black Terns, now rare in coastal San Diego County, were on south San Diego Bay 14 May (RTP) and at the mouth of the Santa Margarita River 27 May (JB). A White-winged Dove at Mast Park in Santee 18 May (CA) was the only one known to wander west to the coastal lowlands this May. A migrant Black Swift over Leucadia 10 May (JMCM) was the only one reported this spring.

A Dusky Flycatcher at Cuyamaca Peak 9 May (GLR), and a singing male high in the nearby Laguna Mountains 12 May (GN), were both in areas where this species has bred in the past. Vermilion Flycatchers are becoming more numerous and widespread throughout the County, adapting well to golf courses with scattered isolated trees as evident by the presence of five pairs, all successfully fledging young, at the San Luis Rey Golf Course in Bonsall this month (PT). A Dusky-capped Flycatcher photographed in Ocean Beach near Famosa Slough 4 May (TJ) most likely wintered locally undetected—a known wintering bird in Long Beach was still present 13 May, illustrating how late wintering Dusky-capped Flycatchers remain in California. Two pairs of Brown-crested Flycatchers were at the Roadrunner Club in Borrego Springs after 5 May (PA,

TH, CAM)—this is where the first breeding Brown-crested Flycatchers were found in San Diego County in 2003 (Unitt 2004)—and have nested each summer to the present. A calling Tropical Kingbird well photographed at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on Pt. Loma 26 May (GN) was exceptional as there are very few records of spring vagrants in California, and no previous May record for San Diego County.

At least two of the three Clark's Nutcrackers found at Laguna Meadows in the Laguna Mts. on 16 Feb (DK)

headed Blackbird was in suitable breeding habitat in Jacumba on 11 May (JRM).

Anticipated “vagrants” from the East were few indeed, but included a Gray Catbird at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 27-31 May (GN). A stunning adult male Lapland Longspur on the beach at North Island on the unprecedented date of 20 May (KR) establishes by far the latest date for one in San Diego County – one can only guess where this bird spent the winter. The only vagrant wood-warblers were a Black-and-white Warbler at Agua Caliente County



This brightly colored male Lapland Longspur on the beach in Coronado/North Island on 20 May 2014 establishes the latest date ever for a spring vagrant in San Diego County.

Photo by Kerry Ross.

were still present and photographed there on 24 May (“Mike”). A Bank Swallow, rare in fall and occasional in April, was photographed in flight over Leucadia on 15 May (JMCM). A Townsend's Solitaire on Cuyamaca Peak 9 May (GLR) was an exceptionally late-staying bird if it had wintered locally, as most wintering birds in the local mountains are gone by the end of March; however, there is a record of an apparent pair on 19 June 1988 and a single bird on 19 July 1987 (Unitt 2004) at this same location, suggesting possible nesting. A singing Summer Tanager in Jacumba 27 May (EGK) was at a location where this species has nested in the past, and a female Yellow-

Warbler at Agua Caliente County Park on 11 May (AA) and a second at a private residence on Pt. Loma on 15 May (SBM); single Tennessee Warblers at Westminster Park on Pt. Loma 11-12 May (MS) and near Lake Murray on 13 May (JRM); a “female” American Redstart at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 12-15 May (JW); and a singing Northern Parula at a private residence in La Jolla on 11 May (HI). Additional vagrants included a Clay-colored Sparrow at Borrego Springs 16-20 May (NC, TH), a Brewer's Sparrow (not a vagrant to California, but un-

expected along the coast) in a residential yard on Pt. Loma 14 May (SBM), and single male Indigo Buntings at Borrego Springs 11-12 May (LD) and at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 29 May (GN).

Late-staying winter visitors included two Lincoln's Sparrows at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 12 May (MS)—the latest published in the Bird Atlas (Unitt 2004) being one at Angelina Spring on 16 May 1999. Single dark-lored White-crowned Sparrows *Zonotrichia leucophrys oriantha*, the population that breeds in the Sierra Nevada and winters in Mexico, were in Jacumba 17 May (EGK) and Borrego Springs

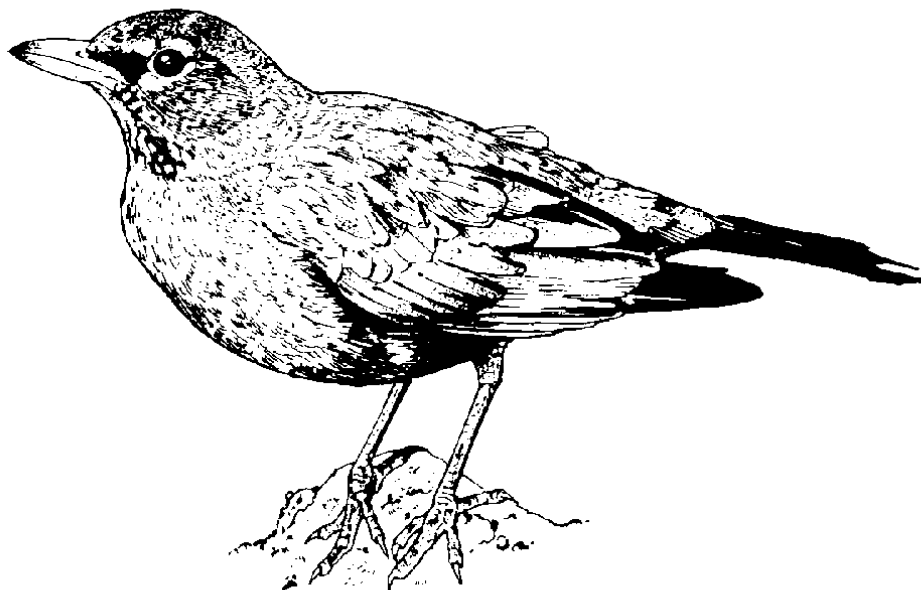
21 May (TH), and a Golden-crowned Sparrow with a damaged leg was at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 26 May (GN).

Listed observers: Alex Abela, Paulette Ache, Douglas W. Aguillard, Caron Andregg, Justin Bosler, Nancy Christensen, LeRoy Dorman, Terry Hunefeld, Hank Ingersoll, Tom Johnson, Eric G. Kallen, Dan King, Curtis A. Marantz, Sara B. Mayers, Jimmy McMorran, James R. Morris, Gary Nunn, Robert T. Patton,

Geoffrey L. Rogers, Kerry Ross, Matt Sadowski, Justyn T. Stahl, Paula Theobald, Joseph Worley.

#### 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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