The **SKIMMER**

Volume 40, Number 4—April 2013

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, April 16, at 6:00 p.m., in the Hoffman Room of the San Diego Foundation building, 2508 Historic Decatur Rd. 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. Park on the street or in any of several parking lots.

Program: Bruce Rideout will present on "The Sounds of San Diego Birds—Beyond the Familiar." Abstract: I'll start out with a brief introduction to the components of bird sounds and a standard vocabulary used to describe them. I'll use spectrograms to help us visualize the subtle elements of vocaliza tions that we might not otherwise detect, as well as to help the hard of hearing appreciate aspects of bird sounds they might not be able to hear. Using examples and a quiz format, I'll discuss why so many songbirds have high-pitched calls in their repertoires, and why it's so difficult to locate a bird making high-pitched calls; how you can identify different stages of song development; what song and call characteristics reveal about the habitat and biology of birds; and the function of calls and songs and how birds interact during singing bouts. My goal is to instill a greater appreciation for the complexity of bird vocalizations and to equip people to listen more carefully to bird sounds and what these sounds reveal about the behavior and natural history of the birds we are watching.

Biographic Sketch: Bruce Rideout is a disease investigation specialist for San Diego Zoo Global, where he is director of the Wildlife Disease Laboratories. He received his D.V.M. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of California, Davis, and is a Research Fellow of The Peregrine Fund. He participates in a variety of conservation efforts, including recovery programs for California Condors, San Clemente Loggerhead Shrikes, and Hawaiian forest birds. His research focuses primarily on infectious diseases and disease risk assessments for reintroduction programs.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, May 21, same time, same place. We will see and hear from SDFO President Tom Blackman about his recent journey to the Southern Oceans—one of our favorite subjects, seabirds!

SDFO NEWS (cont.)

A Text Service for Local Birders, by BJ Stacey

The San Diego County Rare Bird ABC text service is a quick way to get word out to a large group of people without having internet access. There are times that smartphones simply can't connect to the internet for email or posting to SDBirds, but phone service connection is still live. With only text service one person can immediately notify everyone on the list of a rare bird.

There is no fee to anyone for this service other than reporting the rare birds that they find.

Anyone can join the group by going to the following link:

https://groupme.com/join_group/4077591/UDh1nf

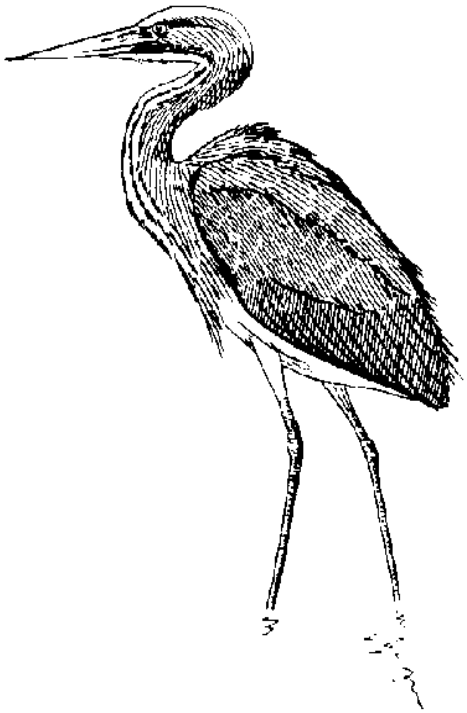
I highly recommend that they set-up an online account in addition to downloading the free app. From all the testing that we have done today, we are finding that it is much easier to receive and send messages through the app, but you can do so through SMS texts.

The latest version of the ABC species ranking can be found at:

https://sites.google.com/site/sdabcbirds/

If not able to understand the directions I can add you through your phone number, but that is a bit more difficult to do.

Thanks for joining.



SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, MARCH 2013

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

Of extreme interest was a tern that looked very much like a **Sandwich Tern,** photographed with Elegant Terns at Camp Del Mar on Camp Pendleton 27 Mar (JMcM), and what may have been the same tern photographed with Elegant Terns at the San Diego River mouth 31 Mar (GN), along with a second tern with yellow mottling along the length of the bill. Recent research (Efe *et al*. 2009) shows that the North American Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis acuflavidus* and the Caribbean-South American Cayenne Tern *T. s. eurygnathus* are virtually indistinguishable genetically, with the Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans* a closely related "sister species". On the other hand they show that the European Sandwich Tern *T. s. sandvicensis* is genetically different, and propose that the European and American Sandwich Terns are separate species—Sandwich Tern in the Old World and Cabot's Tern in the New World. The yellow-tipped black-billed North American Sandwich Tern and the yellow-billed Caribbean-South American Cayenne Tern are known to interbreed in the West Indies, producing birds with a mixture of black and yellow bills, some probably matching the bill coloration on the San Diego County terns. As such, these terns may not be hybrid Sandwich x Elegant Terns, as suggested by some, but be Sandwich (Cabot's) Terns with some Cayenne Tern blood.

Probable Sandwich Tern at Camp Pendleton. Photo by Jimmy McMorran.

The White-winged Scoter found on Glorietta Bay 27 Jan (M & PT) remained through 12 Mar (JRM), the male Long-tailed Duck found within the South Bay National Wildlife Refuge 23 Jan (MS) was last reported 10 Mar (PEL), and a female found at the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge 21 Mar (MS) was still present at the end of the month (PEL). The Red-necked Grebe found on San Diego Bay at the Embarcadero 4 Dec moved across the Bay to North Island where last reported seen on 12 Mar (JRM). About 25 Northern Fulmars within 10 miles of the coast in San Diego 3 Mar (PEL) was the most reported locally this winter. Following in the footprints of San Diego County's 6th and 7th Manx Shearwaters were two more on 2 Mar, with one 4 miles off Torrey Pines State Reserve (CAM) and the other7 miles off La Jolla (BJS). A young Red-billed Tropicbird, exceptional close to shore and especially so in March, at the Silver Strand State Beach 17 Mar (MM) was taken to Project Wildlife where it unfortunately died (specimen to San Diego Natural History Museum). Single Brown Boobies 10 miles off San Di-

ego 12 Mar (JRM) and at the Tijuana River mouth 30 Mar (DP) no doubt came from the thriving colony at Los Coronados Islands. One or two Reddish Egrets were still present on south San Diego Bay 11 Mar (PEL). Two pairs of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were at the Imperial Beach Sports Park at the end of the month (GMcC), each attending a nest.

Harris's Hawks remained at Jacumba through March (EGK), and are likely attending a nest. High single-day counts of migrant Swainson's Hawks at Borrego Springs include 844 on 17 Mar (BT) and 379 on 24 Mar (HC). A Zone-tailed Hawk at De Luz in the northern part of the County 4 Mar (BM) was the only one this month. A Rough-legged Hawk at Borrego Springs 23 Mar (WH) was totally unexpected, as this species has not been documented in San Diego County in the last 12 years. The Pacific Golden-Plover wintering around San Dieguito Lagoon in Del Mar was still present at the end of the month (PEL). More unusual was a Wilson's Plover at the Tijuana River mouth 29 Mar (MS), this being the 14th recorded in San Diego County and the 23rd in California. A Black Oystercatcher at Sunset Cliffs in Ocean Beach 2 Mar (JB) was the only one reported in the County since the fall. A Laughing Gull, very rare along the coast of California, was at the San Diego River mouth 30-31 Mar + (GN, BJS), and an early migrant Franklin's Gull was photographed at the San Luis Rey River mouth in Oceanside 28 Mar (BM). What will probably prove to be the latest Short-eared Owl this winter was one seen on Otay Messa 19 Mar (JMcM). At least one of the wintering Lewis's Woodpeckers was still present near Julian 17 Mar (JK).

As predicted, early March produced the first Gull-billed Tern—south San Diego Bay 16 Mar (GMcC), Pacific-slope Flycatcher—Rancho Bernardo 14 Mar (JN), Western Kingbirds—Pt. Loma 14 Mar (GN), Bell's Vireo—Tijuana River Valley 17 Mar (JB), Warbling Vireo—Borrego Springs 16 Mar (GN), Lucy's Warblers—Borrego Springs 16 Mar (GN), Bullock's Oriole—Pt. Loma 14 Mar (GN), and Black-chinned Sparrow—Pt. Loma 14 Mar (GN); the sparrow providing one of a very few records of a migrant away from nesting areas in the County. By the end of March the earliest Ash-throated Flycatcher—Mission Gorge 28 Mar (BLC), Gray Vireo—Kitchen Creek in the Laguna Mts. 29 Mar (DA), Nashville Warbler —Kitchen Creek 30 Mar (PEL), Black-throated Gray Warbler —Mission Bay 28 Mar (PEL), Wilson's Warbler—Agua Caliente Springs 16 Mar (GN), Black-headed Grosbeak—Jacumba 26 Mar (EGK), and Scott's Oriole —Kitchen Creek 30 Mar (PEL) had returned, all being close to the "earliest spring arrival dates," but a few days later than those listed by Unitt (2004). Two adult male Hermit Warblers with migrant Orange-crowned Warblers at San Diego City College 31 March (PEL) were believed to be spring migrants. However, the earliest date for a spring migrant listed by Unitt (2004) is 12 April, with the majority passing through this county in late April and early May.

The wintering Eastern Phoebe near the San Diego Mission remained through 13 Mar (CH), and the one at the Dairy Mart Ponds in the Tijuana River Valley was last seen 11 Mar (GG); however, one photographed in Jacumba 29 Mar (EGK) provides an unexpected record of a migrant. The pair of Vermilion Flycatchers at Crown Point on Mission Bay since 13 Jan (BS) was still present 28 Mar when the female was seen sitting on a nest (PEL). The wintering Thick-billed Kingbird at the polo field near Del Mar was still

Laughing Gull at the San Diego River mouth. Photo by Gary Nunn.

present 26 Mar (SB), and the other near I-805 and Main St. in Chula Vista was also present the same day (JP)—in the past, wintering Thick-billed Kingbirds in California have remained well into April. The wintering Pacific Wren at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery was last reported present on 16 Mar (GLR). An impressive 700 Violet-green Swallows foraging over Lake Hodges 9 Mar (PEL) were no doubt "stopped" by the inclement weather at that time. Noteworthy were single Varied Thrushes at the Maderas Golf Course in Poway 12 Mar (Randall) and at Tamarisk Grove Campground in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park 18 Mar (BB), the latter location being at the edge of the desert where unusual.

Most of the wintering wood-warblers noted in February remained into March, with the Bay-breasted and Prairie Warblers together at Lower Otay Lake since 30 Dec (JS) and 31 Dec (BJS) remaining through 19 and 22 Mar (DP and JD), and the female Black-throated Blue Warbler in San Carlos last seen 18 Mar (JRM). The brightly colored male Pine Warbler on Margarita Ave. in Coronado was still present 13 Mar (JRM), but the drab female at Greenwood Cemetery in San Diego has not been reported since 3 Mar (SS); however, a brightly colored male at Hilltop Park in Chula Vista 20-21 Mar (MS) no doubt wintered locally. The Grace's Warblers on Cliffside Ave. in Spring Valley was still present 17 Mar (JB). The Chestnut-sided Warbler at Pantoja Park in downtown San Diego was last reported 6 Mar (PEL), and two Palm Warblers were known present, with one at the southwest corner of Montgomery Field in Kearny Mesa 4 Dec-4 Mar (PEL), and the other near the Bali Hai restaurant on Shelter Island 9 Jan-25 Mar (SBM). Two known wintering Black-and-White Warblers remained into March, with one in a residential area of Pt. Loma 27 Nov-9 Mar (SBM, GN), and the other at Pantoja Park 9 Dec-12 Mar (PEL, JRM), along with a "new" one at Seaport Village 31 Mar (PEL). The wintering Northern Waterthrush at the Dairy Mart Ponds since 9 Sep (BJS) put in another appearance on 10 Mar (GMcC), and the adult male American Redstart around Nestor Park since 4 Nov was still present 3 Mar (SS), with a "new" female/young male near the intersection of Duncan Ranch and Hunte Parkway in Chula Vista 2 Mar (DP). I can only speculate that a singing Northern Parula at the San Diego Zoo 26 Mar (TRS) was an early migrant rather than being an overlooked bird that wintered locally.

A molting male Lark Bunting photographed at Indian Canyon Wash in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park 23 Mar (LK) was in an area of the county where found sporadically in spring (Unitt 2004). The Swamp Sparrow found in Jacumba17 Nov (GN) was still present 28 Mar (SBM), and the White-throated Sparrow found at Pantoja Park 17 Dec (DN) was still present 19 Mar (JP). The male Hepatic Tanager spending its 7th winter at the Sports Park in Imperial Beach was still present at the end of the month (CAM)—based on its past history, it is close to leaving. Five Summer Tanagers were known present in March, with the female found at the Sports Park 9 Nov (BM) still present 30 Mar (GMcC), a male in Presidio Park since 28 Nov (BM) remaining through 14 Mar (CH), a male present around Collier Park/Famosa Slough since 13 Jan (MS) persisting through 16 Mar (EE) and an adult male that put on a show for Bird Festival participants at Marina Village on Mission Bay 28 Feb-3 Mar (SR), along with a singing male at Point Loma Nazarene University 28 Mar (PEL). Unexpected was a flock of at least twelve Red Crossbills in Jacumba 23-28 Mar (BJS, SBM), and the wintering female Evening Grosbeak there disappeared after 22 Mar (EGK).

Listed observers: Don Adams, Josh Beck, Beau Boulding, Jeff Bouton, Steve Brad, Barbara L. Carlson, Hal Cohen, Jack Daynes, Elias Elias, Gary Grantham, Christine Harvey, Wes Hetrick, Logan Kahle, Eric G. Kallen, Jay Keller, Paul E. Lehman, Curtis A. Marantz, Sara B. Mayers, Guy McCaskie, Jimmy McMorran, Marie Molloy, James R. Morris, Brennan Mulrooney, Jan Nordenberg, Dick Norton, Gary Nunn, Daniel Palmer, Jim Pea, Dave Povey, Steve Ritt, Geoffrey L. Rogers, Matt Sadowski, Steve Sosensky, BJ Stacy, Trent R. Stanley, Bruno Struck, Bob Theriault, Millie and Peter Thomas.

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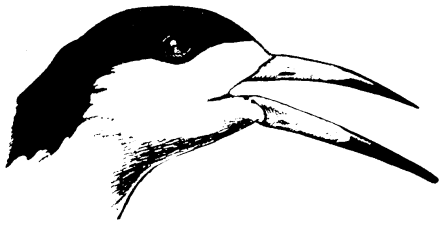
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