The **SKIMMER**

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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, August 20, 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. Park in the lot to the left or find street parking.

Program: Kelly Barr presents "Population genetics in the Cactus Wren in coastal southern California and the severe effects of habitat loss on connectivity."

Kelly Barr is from Chocowinity, North Carolina, a tiny one-stoplight town in the midst of a sea of tobacco fields. After graduating from the University of North Carolina with a BS in Public Health in Environmental Sciences, Kelly would go on to spend a year Panama working on phylogenetics projects focused on marine snails at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Unfortunately, he did not discover an affinity for birds until he left that ornithologist's paradise and started working on a conservation genetics project on Black-capped Vireos and Golden-cheeked Warblers as a masters student at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. From there, he'd spend four months as a volunteer studying dispersal of Brown Treecreepers in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia, and another six months living in a Mitsubishi Pajero while exploring the rest of the continent and adding hundreds of birds to his life list. After spending a short time back in the marine population genetics world at Hopkins Marine Station in Monterey, CA, Kelly returned to working on songbird conservation projects with the U.S. Geological Survey. In the past three years, he's worked on a number of San Diego County's imperiled species, including the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, California Gnatcatcher, and Cactus Wren.

Next month’s meeting: Tuesday, September 17, same time, same place. We will hear about local birds of prey from raptor specialist Peter Bloom.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, JUNE 2013

Compiled by Sara Baase Mayers and Guy McCaskie

There were two exceptional highlights this month. The first was an adult **Lesser Sand-Plover** (*Charadrius mongolus*) retaining alternate plumage that stayed on south San Diego Bay, most often near the north end of 7th Street in Imperial Beach, 19–24 July (MSa, PEL). This is a new species for San Diego County, increasing the county list to 510 species. There are eleven previous records for California, with only two of those in Southern California, the most recent being in Orange County 25 June–2 July 2011. The subspecies *C. m. stegmanni* found in North America breeds primarily in northeastern Siberia, winters in southeastern Asia to Australia, is a very rare straggler to extreme western Alaska, and casual to accidental elsewhere in North America. The second exceptional bird was an adult **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** in the south San Diego Bay Salt Works 18–20 July (MSa), only the third adult ever found in fall in Southern California, and only the fourth Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in San Diego County, with the most recent being an adult at Batiquitos Lagoon 24–25 July 1988.

Lesser Sand-Plover at south San Diego Bay.

Photo by Larry Sansone..

The long-staying Greater White-fronted Goose at Lindo Lake continues 2007–31 July (JK, SBM); similarly, the Cackling Goose at the Scripps Ranch Library near Lake Miramar 2008–30 July (GG). A Laysan Albatross was found dead near Fish Creek in the Split Mountain Area of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park 26 June (SB). The remains were brought to the San Diego Natural History Museum in early July (SDNHM 53922). Two previous reports from Anza-Borrego Desert State Park did not include a specimen or photograph. The two prior records for the county were also dead birds; they were found on San Diego beaches in 1983 and 2000. Additional desert records of Laysan Albatross include four at the Salton Sink, two in Coachella Valley, and two in southwest Arizona. A Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel at Point La Jolla 28 July (DDiT) was remarkable because of the date. Prior records range from 9 Sept through 9 June, with none in summer. Fourteen Ashy Storm-Petrels at and beyond the Nine-Mile Bank 27 July (PEL) is a high

count for San Diego waters. An immature Brown Booby stayed at the Sub Base on Point Loma 02–07 July, and an adult was at Border Field State Park 11 July (MSa). An American Bittern was in Oceanside near the San Luis Rey River mouth 27 July (AB); two recently fledged juveniles that probably hatched nearby were at Camp Pendleton 22 July (JMcM). The count of Reddish Egrets is up to seven, with five at south San Diego Bay (four adults and a second-year bird) 30 May–28 July (PEL, MSa, GMcC) plus a first-year bird at the Tijuana River mouth 4 July (MSa) and an adult at the San Diego River mouth 25 July (GN). The two pairs of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons nesting in Imperial Beach continue 30 Mar–31 July (GMcC); three young were observed at one of the nests 10 July (SBM). A third pair attended a nest with three young at SeaWorld (JP) and were seen along the San Diego River 11–29 July (BJS, JP). Two Harris's Hawks continue in Jacumba 7 Jan 2011–31 July (EGK).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at south San Diego Bay salt works.

Photo by Matt Sadowski.

Three adult Solitary Sandpipers were seen, one each at Camp Pendleton 22 July (JMcM), Lindo Lake in Lakeside 26 July (JP), and Ramona Pond in Ramona 29 July (NC). The Dunlin in breeding plumage, unexpected here in summer, continued at south San Diego Bay 27 Jun–21 July (MSa, PEL, GMcC). An adult Stilt Sandpiper arrived early and stayed at the south San Diego Bay Salt Works 17–31 July (MSa). Small numbers of Stilt Sandpipers are seen in San Diego's coastal wetlands in fall, though not every year. Most recently, in Sept 2011, there were three in Imperial Beach and one in Sorrento Valley. The summering first-summer Mew Gull continued in Oceanside 23 June–29 July (JK, KWe). A Black Tern was at south San Diego Bay 16 July (MSa, GN), and two Common Terns, the first of the fall migrants, were there 10–11 July (MSa) and 24 July (BLC). A one-year old Arctic Tern, an early fall migrant, was at the Nine-Mile Bank 27 July (PEL), and a Common Murre flew past Pt. La Jolla 25 July (PEL). There were two reports of Pigeon Guillemots at Pt. La Jolla, one on 19 July (SW) and one on 21 July (GCH).

One Yellow-billed Cuckoo was in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park 6 July (KWi) and two were at the San Luis Rey River near Bonsall 10 July (JMcM), the third year at the latter location. Single Bank Swallows, fall migrants, were seen in Imperial Beach 10 July (MSa) and 19 July (MSa) and at Camp Pendleton 22 July (JMcM). A Cedar Waxwing in Tierrasanta 16 July (JK) was likely summering locally. A Large-billed Savannah Sparrow, an early first for the season, was at the Salt Works 31 July (MSa). A Western Tanager in Tierrasanta 4 July (JK) is presumed an exceptionally early fall migrant; the gap between late spring migrants, such as the one 12 June, and very early fall migrants is only a few weeks. Yellow-headed Blackbirds are unusual in coastal locations, but one female was in Sorrento Valley 6 July (GG). A juvenile was at Lindo Lake in Lakeside 15 July (JMo).

Observers: Steve Bier, Andy Brumbaugh, Barbara L. Carlson, Nancy Christensen, Dean DiTommaso,

Gary Grantham, Gjon C. Hazard, Eric G. Kallen, Jay Keller, Paul E. Lehman, Sara Baase Mayers, Guy McCaskie, Jimmy McMorran, James Morris, Gary Nunn, Jim Pea, Matt Sadowski, BJ Stacey, Stan Walens, Kenneth Weaver, Ken Wilson.

References:

Robert A. Hamilton, Michael A. Patten, and Richard A. Erickson, *Rare Birds of California*, Western Field Ornithologists, 2007.

Michael O'Brien, Richard Crossley, and Kevin Karlson, *The Shorebird Guide*, Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

Philip Unitt, *San Diego County Bird Atlas*, San Diego Natural History Museum, 2004.

54TH SUPPLEMENT TO THE AOU CHECKLIST SPLITS THE SAGE SPARROW

Every summer avid birders await the latest pronouncement from On High as to the current state of bird taxonomy, when the American Ornithological Union publishes the latest revision to its *Checklist of North American Birds* every July (this is the 54th iteration). As usual, there are numerous minor changes in spelling and Latin grammar of marginal interest to the average birder, as well as changes in the systematics of tropical species that don't occur here (but you never know what may wander into your field of view while shooting videos of Least Bitterns!). Not too many changes to our local species this time around, with one major exception.

That exception is the Sage Sparrow, which got its generic name changed last year from *Amphispiza* to *Artemisiospiza.* This year the species was split into Bell's Sparrow, *A. belli*, and Sagebrush Sparrow, *A. nevadensis.* Around San Diego, what we usually see is Bell's Sparrow, which is resident in coastal southern California. Go out in the desert, and what you'll see in the winter is Sagebrush Sparrow, which breeds in Nevada. The kicker is the race *A. b. canescens,* which is intermediate in appearance and also range; this "intermediate sage sparrow" is currently placed in Bell's Sparrow, although it is possible that the AOU may raise it to full species status in the future.

Some other changes involve scientific names. Perhaps the most interesting involves several shorebirds formerly in their own individual genera which have now been lumped into the genus *Calidris* with the peeps; these include the Surfbird, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Spoon-billed Sandpiper, and Ruff. There has been a minor change in the spelling of the family name of the Phainopepla, from Ptilogonatidae to Ptiliogonatidae with an extra "*i*". The Flammulated Owl, previously placed in the genus *Otus* with the scops-owls, now gets its own genus *Psiloscops.*

Birders who spend time in Arizona will be pleased to learn that those parrots you encounter in suburban Phoenix are now considered countable; this is the Rosy-faced Lovebird (also known to parrot fanciers as the Peach-faced Lovebird).

So not too much new stuff to learn. "Sage sparrow" identification will be trickier, but fortunately the AOU has resisted (for now) a scary proposal that would have further divided the Canada Goose into as many as FIVE species!

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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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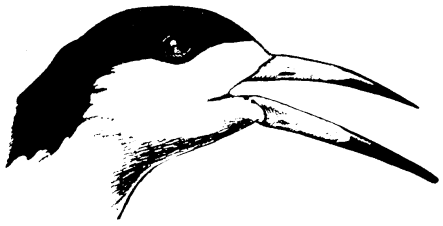
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