

The **SKIMMER**



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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

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

Program: Peter Bloom will speak on "Vagrancy, Migration and Natal Dispersal in Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks Banded as Nestlings in Southern California: A 40-year Study".

Pete Bloom, who has been studying California raptors most of his life, will be reporting on the results of his dissertation research at the University of Idaho on the movements of two common buteos. Approximately 10,000 young hawks were banded and later retrapped or recovered.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, October 15, same time, same place. We will have a visit from Tom Stephenson, author of a new book, "The Warbler Guide," and learn more about identification and vocalizations of the parulid wood-warblers.



Yellow-crowned Night Heron hunting crabs on the Flood Control Channel of the San Diego River.

Photo by Gary Nunn.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, AUGUST 2013

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

All three of the small similar-looking black and white *Synthliboramphus* murrelets are known to occur in the waters off San Diego County, but normally at different times of the year, so having all three reported here in August is unusual. The northernmost breeding species, **Scripps's Murrelet**, nests on the Channel Islands off Southern California and at Los Coronados Islands off northern Baja California, so is easily found in San Diego County waters during the breeding season. However, after nesting the population moves northward and farther off shore to as far north as the waters off British Columbia where very rare. As such, one missing most of its primaries, over the San Diego Trough between the 9-Mile and the 30-Mile Banks on 31 Aug (MSa) was unexpected. The recently "split" **Guadalupe Murrelet**, having white under-wings like Scripps's Murrelet, but with the white on the face arching up in front and over the eyes, breeds on Guadalupe and the San Benito Islands off the west coast of the Baja California Peninsula. Like the Scripps's Murrelet, the Guadalupe Murrelet population moves northward and farther off shore after breeding, getting to as far north as the waters off Oregon and Washington, and occasionally British Columbia. An adult and a hatch-year bird photographed together at the 30-Mile Bank just north of the Mexican border on 1 Aug (DP) were at an expected time of the year, but a little closer to shore than most. **Craveri's Murrelets**, looking much like the Scripps's Murrelet, but having dark under-wings, breeds on islands off Baja California Sur. Like the other two *Synthliboramphus*, this murrelet

also moves northward and farther off shore after nesting, but only to the waters off southern California, normally no farther north than Monterey Bay, being exceptionally rare north of there, but with one recorded as far north as the waters off Washington. However, occurrences off California have been sporadic, with none recorded in most recent years. As such, the presence of Craveri's Murrelets over the San Diego Trough during the last half of August this year has sparked much interest amongst birders—two Craveri's Murrelets, along with eight unidentified *Synthliboram-*



Two views of Guadalupe Murrelet at 30-Mile Bank.
Photo by Tom Blackman.

phus, were seen on 18 Aug (MSa), six more, along with six unidentified *Synthliboramphus*, were seen on 25 Aug (DP) and six more were identified there on 31 Aug (MSa).

Other noteworthy pelagic birds included a handful of Buller's Shearwaters, normally quite rare in

San Diego County waters, with three at the 30-Mile Bank off San Diego 25 Aug (DP), one photographed from a whale-watching boat 5-6 miles off Mission Bay 25 Aug (MSt), another at the 9-Mile Bank off San Diego 31 Aug (MSa), and one from shore at Pt. La Jolla on 28 Aug (BM). Leach's Storm-Petrels appeared closer to shore than usual with 35 at the 30-

Two young Harris's Hawks were accompanying the adults in Jacumba at the end of August (EGK).

A Red-billed Tropicbird, always an exciting bird to see, was just north of the Mexican border 20 miles southwest of Pt. Loma 18 Aug (MSa), and another was at the north end of the 9-Mile Bank on 25 Aug (DP). Brown Boobies continue their presence in

San Diego County waters, with three immatures at the 9-Mile Bank on 1 Aug (DP), an adult along with an immature there on 18 Aug (MSa), and one visible from shore at Pt. La Jolla on 9 Aug (PEL). Single Brown Pelicans well inland on Lake Morena 11-31 Aug (R & SB, BJS), El Capitan Reservoir on 22 Aug (SR) and on Lake Sutherland on 31 Aug (BJS) likely originated in the Gulf of California, as large numbers push northward from there in the late summer every year.

Scarce shorebird migrants included a southbound adult Pacific Golden-Plover in the area of San Elijo Lagoon 8-11 Aug (MB, MSa, JMcM).



Craveri's Murrelets over the San Diego Trough.
Photo by Gary Nunn.

Mile Bank on 18 Aug (MSa) being likely the highest one-day count in San Diego County waters. Ashy Storm-Petrels were also in evidence, with eight at the 30-Mile Bank 1 Aug (DP) followed by smaller numbers on subsequent days. One or two Reddish Egrets remained at the mouth of the Tijuana River and on south San Diego Bay through August (MSa, GMcC); one was seen flying north over the ocean at Torrey Pines 27 Aug (MSa) and what may have been this same bird was at the San Luis Rey River mouth in Oceanside 29 Aug (SB). At least two adult Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were in the area of the Imperial Beach Sports Park through August (GMcC), and two locally hatched juveniles were still within the grounds of Sea World on Mission Bay 28 Aug (JP).

Six juvenile Solitary Sandpipers were reported with single birds at Lake Henshaw 10 Aug (PEL), Sweet-water Reservoir 19 Aug (PEL), San Elijo Lagoon 30 Aug (GMcD) and Kit Carson Park in Escondido 31 Aug (BJS), along with two together at Loveland Reservoir 22 Aug (SR). The July adult Stilt Sandpiper remained at the salt works on south San Diego Bay through 2 Aug (MSa). Baird's Sandpipers were unusually scarce, with up to two juveniles at the salt works 8-9 Aug (MSa) being the only ones reported. An adult and juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper together at Lake Henshaw 17-18 Aug (PEL, CA), with the juvenile remaining to 19 Aug (NC), and another adult at the sod farm adjacent to Dairy Mart Rd. in the Tijuana River Valley 19-23 Aug (JP, GMcC) were a little on the early side. The only Semipalmated Sandpipers were single juve-

niles at the salt works 7 and 17 Aug (MSa) and at the extreme southwest corner of south San Diego Bay 12 Aug (PEL). Juveniles of most shorebird species arrive much later than do the adults, so it is of interest to note the arrival dates for the earliest hatch-year birds in their “crisp” fresh plumage. This year the earliest juvenile Lesser Yellowlegs was noted on 8 Aug (MSa), Least Sandpiper on 4 Aug (MSa), Western Sandpiper on 4 Aug (MSa) and Short-billed Dowitcher on 12 Aug (PEL). Two Wilson’s Snipe in Jacumba 18 Aug (EGK) were unusually early for fall migrants—Unitt (2004) lists 16 and 20 August as the earliest dates for fall migrants. A South Polar Skua, always a noteworthy bird in San Diego County waters, was at the north end of the 9-Mile Bank on 1 Aug (DP). The somewhat bedraggled looking Mew Gull summering at the San Luis Rey River mouth in Oceanside was still present 31 Aug (JK, PJF), and was joined by a juvenile Black Tern 22-24 Aug (KW, LR).

Since very few Black Swifts are recorded locally in fall, the presence of one with swallows over Lake Henshaw on 10 Aug (PEL) establishes the earliest date for a fall migrant in San Diego County. A Belted Kingfisher in Coronado 18 Aug (DWA) was the earliest on the immediate coast this fall. A Red-breasted Sapsucker well photographed at Guajome County Park 18 Aug (AB) was exceptionally early for a location away from the mountains. A Red-breasted Nuthatch in Oceanside 5 Aug (PT) was in the coastal lowlands where not expected until September or October. Vermilion Flycatchers are now permanent residents at four or five scattered locations such as golf courses in the coastal lowlands, but a female near the

east end of Sunset Ave. in the Tijuana River Valley 14 Aug (PEL) appeared to be an early migrant, and a Purple Martin with other swallows over the salt works 25 Aug (MSa) was clearly a migrant. Two Warbling Vireos in Jacumba 3 Aug (EGK), a Nashville Warbler at Agua Dulce Creek in the Laguna Mts. 7 Aug (SBM), a MacGillivray’s Warbler in Jacumba 15 Aug (EGK), a Yellow-rumped Warbler at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on Pt. Loma 30 Aug (GN), a Hermit Warbler at Wooded Hill in the Laguna Mts. 7 Aug (SBM) and a Wilson’s Warbler in Oceanside 2 Aug (PT) were the earliest of our expected fall vireos and wood-warblers this fall. An adult male American Redstart along Pine Valley Creek near Pine Valley 17 Aug (JN) and a female Summer Tanager near the northwestern edge of Balboa Park 29 Aug (ME) were the first of the fall vagrants.

Listed observers: Christopher Adler, Douglas W. Aguillard, Maryanne Bache, Allen Bond, Steve Brad, Rich and Susan Breisch, Nancy Christensen, Michael Evans, PJ Falatek, Eric G. Kallen, Jay Keller, Paul E. Lehman, Sara B. Mayers, Guy McCaskie, Garrett McDonald, Jimmy McMorran, Brennan Mulrooney, Jan Nordenberg, Gary Nunn, Jim Pea, Dave Povey, Lisa Ruby, Steve Ritt, Matt Sadowski (MSa), Mark Stratton (MSt), BJ Stacey, Paula Theobald, Kenneth 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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