The **SKIMMER**

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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, January 21, 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.

Program: Jonathan Feenstra will discuss "Birding in the Middle East". Expect an exciting presentation with warblers and wheatears of the Old World variety! Jonathan is a freelance biological consultant based in the greater Los Angeles area, frequent international birding guide, pelagic birds enthusiast, and globetrotting traveler. He currently seems to be spending a lot of his time in Ecuador!

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, February 18, same time, same place. Kimball Garrett of the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum will speak on "Baffling Birders and Bedeviling Biotas: Avian Invaders in California."

Pay Your Dues!

It's that time again, so if you haven't gotten current with the club, see Membership Chair Mike Goldhamer at the meeting, or mail him a check. See the back page for details.

Barbara Carlson's Final Total: 387 Species!

As reported in the November *Skimmer*, SDFO member Barbara Carlson has smashed the previous record for most bird species seen in San Diego County in one year. Her final total is 387 species. That's a lot of birds, Barbara! So, who is going to fire up the binoculars and challenge her record?

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, DECEMBER 2013

Compiled by Sara Baase Mayers

This month we include reports on highlights of the various Christmas Bird Counts around the county and then a review, with a little less detail than usual, of other notable birds seen in December outside the count circles and/or dates.

San Diego CBC, Dec. 14 (by Steve Ritt and Chris Smith, coordinators)

Without a doubt, Blue-footed Booby was the most exciting species of the count. Four were seen over the ocean from the south end of Seacoast Dr. in Imperial Beach. Between 1980 and the irruption beginning in September 2013, there were only four records in San Diego waters, each of a single bird. This is the first time this species has been present for a Christmas Bird Count.

Other highlights from the southern part of the county include a Brown Booby (also seen from the end of Seacoast Dr.), a good-sized flock of 27 Mountain Bluebirds near Monument Rd., four Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in their now usual place at the Imperial Beach Sports Park, a White-winged Scoter at the Imperial Beach Pier, a Northern Waterthrush at the Dairy Mart Ponds, two Palm Warblers in San Ysidro, three American Redstarts, one Clay-colored Sparrow in Nestor (its second year), the Hepatic Tanager (returning for its impressive 8th winter at the IB Sports Park), three Green-tailed Towhees in Imperial Beach, and a Baltimore Oriole at Sunnyslope Park.

The Greenwood Cemetery warblers (Black-throated Green, Grace's, and Pine) and Plumbeous Vireo were all seen for the count. Balboa Park produced an Orchard Oriole, a returning Hammond's Flycatcher, an Oak Titmouse (rare this far west), and our second Hepatic Tanager (near the Marston House for its third winter). The San Diego Zoo had a Golden-crowned Kinglet and Black-and-white Warbler. A Reddish Egret, a Ross's Goose, and a Glaucous-winged Gull were at the bayfront in Chula Vista, and the Thick-billed Kingbird was seen for its fourth year in Chula Vista. Coronado provided a Tropical Kingbird, a Tennessee Warbler, and a Varied Thrush. Other notable birds include a Bald Eagle and a high count of 24 Snow Geese at the Sweetwater Reservoir, a returning Northern Parula at Rohr Park, a Hermit Warbler at San Diego City College, a White-throated Sparrow at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery, and a second Baltimore Oriole at the San Diego Country Club.

Notable species that are regionally in decline included two Loggerhead Shrikes in the Tijuana River Estuary, a Burrowing Owl at Ream Field, two Costa's Hummingbirds in Coronado and the Silver Strand, and 38 California Quail near the Chollas Landfill. About 230 Tricolored Blackbirds at the Otay Valley Landfill were a nice surprise. The Phainopepla and two White-breasted Nuthatches are species unusual as far west as the count circle.

Other regular but notable species included Eurasian Wigeon, multiple Common Goldeneyes, three Common Mergansers, multiple Common Ground-Doves, Mew Gull, Thayer's Gull, three Red-naped Sapsuckers, two Pacific-slope Flycatchers, three Vermilion Flycatchers, and two Nashville Warblers.

Notable misses included Northern Fulmar, Common Murre, Cassin's Auklet, Rhinoceros Auklet, Red-breasted Sapsucker, and Rock Wren. Some of these may have been missed due to our pelagic crew having technical difficulties, but many were in low numbers

this year or are simply easy to miss. Many chaparral species appear to have been low in numbers due to drought, and many irruptive northern species were not present this year.

The preliminary total is 215 species. A few are still under review.

Anza-Borrego CBC, Dec. 15 (by Bob Theriault, coordinator)

Very pleasant weather greeted 74 participants who recorded 120 species and 13,271 total birds. In comparison, all time high figures are 134 species in 2010 and 14,140 total birds in 2009. Several unusual species were reported: two Wood Ducks at Rams Hill; two Inca Doves, one at the RoadRunner Club and one on a farm; Vermilion Flycatcher; a Plumbeous Vireo at the RoadRunner Club; two Townsend's Warblers on the Palm Canyon Trail; and one Green-tailed Towhee in Coyote Canyon.

Our two most numerous species, White-crowned Sparrow and House Finch, have remained so at robust numbers, while the Orange-crowned Warbler, usually with just a few or none observed, spiked at 20 individuals.

The American Crow and Turkey Vulture are now year-round residents in the Borrego Springs area. The crow appears to be increasing in numbers, from about 5 in Borrego Valley last year to 14 spotted at lower elevations during this CBC. A rather steady (outside of migration) 12 Turkey Vultures roost at the RoadRunner Club, even through the summer—six of these were noted on count day.

A new difficulty is identifying the now split Sage Sparrow, as both Bell's Sparrow (the drab *canescens* race) and Sagebrush Sparrow apparently inhabit the salt bush flats of Borrego Valley. Intrepid birders identified half (39 out of 78) of this group of sparrows: 17 Bell's and 22 Sagebrush.

We dipped on Le Conte's Thrasher, notoriously hard to find when not singing, as well as on the Barn Owl, which seems to be at a low point in its natural cycle. We missed both the Broad-billed Hummingbird and Gray Catbird that were in the area earlier and presumed to have left, but both showed up again later in the month.

Lake Henshaw CBC, Dec. 16 (by Gretchen Cummings, coordinator)

For the 34th annual Lake Henshaw count, 26 participants covered twelve areas and saw a total of 119 species, with an overall total of 10,866 individual birds.

We didn't have any rain or snow this year, but there were high winds with gusts up to 37.7 mph. Overall, the count circle was dry. The fields surrounding Lake Henshaw were not muddy, and many of the small ponds within the count circle were dry. Numbers of birds were generally down. Trend observations of note included decreases in Wild Turkey (267 last year and only 85 this year), White-tailed Kite (10 last year, none this year), Ferruginous Hawk (11 last year, none this year), the steady invasion of Eurasian Collared-Dove (first seen on the count in 2009 and every year since), and an invasion year for Mountain Bluebirds (none last year, and 81 this year).

Unusual species detected this year included two Vermilion Flycatchers, one Short-eared Owl, and four Cackling Geese. The Short-eared Owl was seen on the southeast shoreline of Lake Henshaw. One of the Vermilion Flycatchers was seen on Monkey Island and the other was at Old Warner Ranch. The four Cackling Geese were on the edge of Lake Henshaw.

Oceanside CBC, Dec. 21 (Tim Burr and Andy Mauro, coordinators)

Please see the report by Andy Mauro on page 4.

Escondido CBC, Dec. 28 (by Ken Weaver, coordinator)

Our CBC teams reported a total of 152 species. Top bird was our first-ever Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (Safari Park). Other scarce birds included Cackling Goose (three at the Safari Park and also ob-

Oceanside Christmas Bird Count—December 21, 2013

Vermilion Flycatcher —M. Stratton

A total of 195 bird species was recorded on the 2013 Oceanside Christmas Bird Count, the same number reported on last year's count. This marked the 67th annual Oceanside CBC, now sponsored by Buena Vista Audubon Society. The total number of birds reported was 45,611, down only slightly from the 47,772 reported on the 2012 count. Twelve species were recorded that were not seen in 2012, and twelve species were missed from last year's count. A significant find for 2013 was the Swainson's Thrush discovered by Van Remsen and confirmed by Guy McCaskie on count day afternoon at Maxton Brown Park. Reportedly, only a few valid winter records exist for CA or anywhere in the U.S./Canada for this species. A Glaucous Gull at the mouth of the San Luis Rey River was a good bird seen by many. Dave Povey's pelagic team spotted single Pink-footed and Sooty Shearwaters, two species missed in 2012. The Swamp Sparrow photographed by Steve Brad at Aviara Golf Course was an exciting new find this year. A single Northern Rough-winged Swallow at Whelan Lake and 7 Barn Swallows were additions to this year's list, as were 6 Merlin, a Thayer's Gull, 4 Red-naped Sapsuckers, and a Mountain Bluebird. Add to that list a Common Merganser at La Costa Golf Resort that came in for a brief stay on count day. Last year's abundance of Red-breasted Nuthatches and Pine Siskins were notably absent from this year's count. Also missed were the Common Murre, Bald Eagle, Baltimore and Bulllock's Orioles, Plumbeous Vireo, Green-tailed Towhee, Tri-colored Blackbirds, Red Crossbills, and Red-headed Parrots seen in 2012. Several distant jaegers seen by the pelagic team this year could not be positively identified, so the Parasitic Jaeger listed in 2012 also had to be added to the "missed in 2013" column. Other noteworthy observations during the 2013 count were repeats from 2012, including the 4 male Vermilion Flycatchers seen on the San Luis Rey golf course, a returning White-throated Sparrow at B.V. Lagoon, a coastal Cactus Wren and 3 Loggerhead Shrikes on Pendleton, a Eurasian Wigeon at Batiquitos Lagoon, Summer and Western Tanagers at Buddy Todd Park, and a Hooded Oriole. Selasphorus hummingbirds continue to increase their presence on the Oceanside count, with a total of 287 Allen's and Allen's/Rufous sightings reported in 2013, up from a count of 222 in 2012. Finally, the 8,000 Black-vented Shearwaters recorded in this year's count won the title for "most abundant species", topping the 5,028 American Coots listed on the 2012 count. As is normal, a number of expected species were missed on count day, offering possibility and hope for even greater success on a future Oceanside CBC. Thank you to all the participants. *--Andy Mauro*

Swamp Sparrow —S. Brad

2013 Oceanside Christmas Bird Count Highlights:

*21 species of ducks and geese, including 2 **Cackling Goose**, 1 **Eurasian Wigeon** (Batiquitos Lagoon), 9 **Hooded Mergansers** and 1 **Common Merganser** (La Costa Golf Course).
*3 species of shearwaters, including 1 **Pink-footed Shearwater**, 2 **Sooty**, and 8,000 Black-vented (our most numerous species recorded, all recorded by Dave Povey's pelagic team).
*2 **Least Bittern** (Buena Vista Lagoon).
*6 **Merlin** and 6 **Peregrine Falcons**.
*4 **Clapper Rails** (Batiquitos Lagoon).
*10 gull species, including **Glaucous, Glaucous-winged, Thayer's,** and **Mew**.
*4 **Common Ground-Doves** in Bonsall.
***Western Screech-Owl** at Dawson Creek Reserve.
*287 **Allen's** and Allen's/Rufous **Hummingbirds** spread throughout the circle.
*2 **Red-breasted** and 4 **Red-naped Sapsuckers**.
*5 male **Vermilion Flycatchers**, all at the San Luis Rey Golf Course.
*3 **Loggerhead Shrikes** at Camp Pendleton.
*4 species of swallows, including **Northern rough-winged Swallow**.
*6 species of wrens, including **Cactus Wren** (Camp Pendleton), **Rock Wren** (Gopher Canyon), and **Canyon Wren** (Gopher Canyon and Lake San Marcos).
***Swainson's thrush** (found at Maxton Brown Park by Van Remsen and observed by Guy McCaskie—reportedly only a few valid winter records for CA or anywhere in the U.S./Canada for this species).
*9 species of warblers included **Nashville Warbler, Black-and-White, Black-throated Gray, Yellow,** and **Wilson's**.
*2 **Summer Tanagers** and 1 **Western Tanager**.
*14 species of towhees and sparrows, including a returning **White-throated Sparrow** (near Buena Vista Lagoon) and a **Swamp Sparrow** (found by Steve Brad at Aviara Golf Resort).
*1 **Hooded Oriole** (found by Paul Lehman near Poinsettia Park in SW Carlsbad).

served in the San Pasqual Valley), a White-fronted Goose (same spots as the Cackling), Eurasian Wigeon (one at golf course near Kit Carson Park), Redhead (two at Oak Hill Cemetery), Hooded Merganser (recorded by three teams), Bald Eagle (two near Rangeland Road in Ramona), Zone-tailed Hawk (one at the Safari Park), Golden Eagle (two in Pamo Valley, one near the Ramona Airport), Burrowing Owl (one near Rangeland Road), Lewis's Woodpecker (eight in north Pamo Valley), Vermilion Flycatcher (continuing at Oak Hill Cemetery), Yellow Warbler (three at the Safari Park), Wilson's Warbler (one at the Safari Park), and Summer Tanager (one on Canyon Road near Kit Carson Park in Escondido).

Masked/Nazca Booby off Pt. Loma. Photo by Matt Sadowski.

More San Diego County birds

Among the rarest of the birds this month were a Masked/Nazca Booby and a Laysan Albatross. The immature booby was seen from a boat 7.5 nautical miles southwest of Pt. Loma 29 Dec (PEL); it was the second one this year. The Laysan Albatross was found dead, as were the two prior confirmed Laysan Albatross in San Diego County. This one was retrieved from Anza-Borrego Desert State Park 24 Dec (BT) for the San Diego Natural History Museum. This bird is particularly unusual in that most of the small number of records of Laysan Albatross in the desert Southwest are in spring and summer.

Up to three Black Scoters were in south San Diego Bay 11 Nov-4 Dec (PEL, MSa). A fourth Black Scoter 5 Dec and a Long-tailed Duck 7 Dec flew by La Jolla (GNu). A Flesh-footed Shearwater at the 9-Mile Bank off San Diego 1 Dec (DWA) was probably the same one seen a few times since October. A Short-tailed Shearwater off Mission Bay 20 Dec (DWA) was the earliest this winter. One Harris's Hawk 18 Dec and a female Williamson's Sapsucker 17 Dec were in Jacumba (EGK). Eleven Scripps's Murrelets off San Diego 29 Dec (PEL) were earlier than usual. A first-winter Franklin's Gull was at Lower Otay Lake 28 Dec (CS). A first-winter Mew Gull at Lake Murray 26 Dec (JRM) was unusually far inland.

Single Western Kingbirds, a species very rare here in winter, were at Lake Murray 25 Dec (JRM) and in Encinitas 26 Dec (PEL). A Blue-headed Vireo continues in its fourth winter at San Gorgonio and McCall Streets on Pt. Loma 16 Nov-8 Dec (JK, AR). Few Cassin's Vireos appear in San Diego in winter; one was in residential Pt. Loma 31 Dec (GNu). A very late Red-throated Pipit was in El Toyon Park in National City 10 Dec (SR). The three Lapland Longspurs on Fiesta Island in Mission Bay continue 12 Oct-31 Dec (PEL, GMcC). In addition, there were four at the Sweetwater River mouth in Chula Vista 5 Dec (RTP) and one at the salt works in San Diego Bay 12 Dec (MSa).

A Bay-breasted Warbler continues in University City 28 Nov-31 Dec (PEL, SMe). A Chestnut-sided Warbler at Pantoja Park in San Diego 31 Dec (PEL) has returned for its second winter, and a Black-

throated Blue Warbler continues through 31 Dec at a residence in San Diego, also for its second winter (JRM). A Painted Redstart on Park Blvd. near Balboa Hospital in Balboa Park 20-30 Dec (JB, CAn) will likely entertain observers throughout the winter. One Nelson's Sparrow appeared at the Kendall-Frost Reserve in Mission Bay at high tide 2 Dec (AS).

Leucistic Yellow-rumped Warbler in San Pasqual Valley, Photo by Janice Nordenberg.

The following are additional individuals of species in the CBC reports: Small numbers, up to five, of Blue-footed Boobies were seen from Seacoast Dr. in Imperial Beach throughout the month (DP, PEL, EC, MSa, GMcC, BED, DdiT, PC). A Brown Booby was southwest of Pt. Loma 29 Dec (PEL). A Glaucous Gull was at the Otay Landfill in Chula Vista 5 Dec (SR). A male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker is spending its second winter in a Pt. Loma residential neighborhood 11-31 Dec (GNu). A female Varied Thrush was in Balboa Park 2 Dec (SR). A Tennessee Warbler continues at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery (FRNC) on Point Loma 15-31 Dec (GNu). Palm Warblers were seen in Encinitas 9 Dec (SES) and Escondido 26 Dec (JZ), and a Black-throated Green Warbler continues in Solana Beach 26-31 Dec (PEL). There were six additional Black-and-white Warblers at locations ranging from the Bird and Butterfly Garden in the Tijuana River Valley to Carlsbad (PEL, GG, GNu, TRS, DK, TABe, MSt, JP). A stunning leucistic Yellow-rumped Warbler in the San Pasqual Valley 28-31 Dec (JN) was mostly white but had all its yellow in the right places. A male Orchard Oriole continues in Encinitas 27-31 Dec (PEL, SB), and a Hooded Oriole continues in Rancho Santa Fe 26-31 Dec (PEL).

Orchard Oriole in Encinitas. Photo by Nancy Christensen.

Brown Creepers and Golden-crowned Kinglets appeared in higher than usual numbers near the coast. Creepers were at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery (up to two) 23 Nov-31 Dec (JB, GNu), in Balboa Park 8-25 Dec (CAd, SBM), and in Mission Valley 15 Dec (JB). Up to two kinglets were at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 25 Oct-31 Dec (GNu), with two more in residential Pt. Loma 11-31 Dec (GNu), another at the Bird & Butterfly Garden 8 Nov-5 Dec (GNu, GLR), four in Chula

Vista 5 Dec (SR), one at the zoo for the CBC (TRS), and two in Encinitas 25 Dec (GNe) for a total of 12. Nineteen Summer Tanagers, an unusually high number, are wintering in scattered locations along the coast from Pt. Loma to Carlsbad and inland to Escondido.

Listed observers: Christopher Adler, Douglas W. Aguillard, Caron Andregg, Jennifer Baldwin, Thomas A. Benson, Steve Brad, Philip Chaon, Elizabeth Copper, Brian E. Daniels, Dean DiTommaso, Eric G. Kallen, Jay Keller, Dan King, Paul E. Lehman, Sara B. Mayers, Guy McCaskie, Sherry Meddick, James R. Morris, Gretchen Nell, Jan Nordenberg, Gary Nunn, Robert T. Patton, Jim Pea, Dave Povey, Anne Reilly, Steve Ritt, Geoffrey L. Rogers, Matt Sadowski, Susan E. Smith, Colleen Southern, Lea Squires, Trent R. Stanley, Annie Stockley, Mark Stratton, Bob Theriault, Jim Zimmer.

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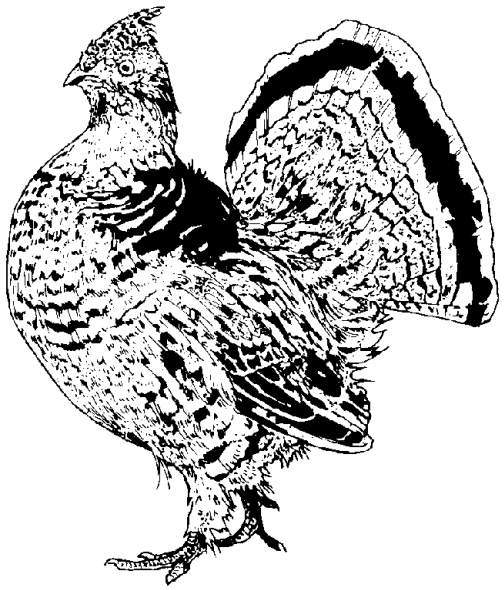

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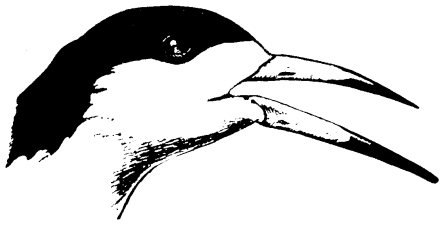
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