

The **SKIMMER**



Volume 39, Number 11—November 2012

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, November 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: Henry Detwiler will discuss "Birding the lower Colorado River Valley." This presentation will feature the spectacular Lower Colorado River Valley between the Mexican border and the Bill Williams National Wildlife Refuge. On our 150-mile journey we'll follow the river north, detouring to prime birding destinations in California and Arizona. We'll watch Ferruginous Hawks hunting the agricultural lands, listen to Black Rails in the marshes, chase Gilded Flickers through the saguaros, and watch Snow Geese gliding into cornfields. Natural history abounds in the eight areas we'll explore: Yuma, Mittry to Martinez Lake, Picacho, Kofa Queen Canyon, Cibola, the CRIT Valley, Parker, and Bill Williams. Specialty birds here include Black & "Yuma" Clapper Rails, Elf Owl, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, "Southwestern" Willow Flycatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Crissal and Curve-billed Thrashers, and Abert's and Canyon Towhees. We'll also pay homage to the other plentiful wildlife and geology of this amazing region!

Henry Detwiler started birdwatching 40 years ago one snowy winter in Illinois when his parents brought home a birdseed "bell." Roger Tory Peterson helped ID the Carolina Chickadees, the White-throated Sparrows, and the Northern Cardinals. 20 years ago he moved to Yuma, AZ to work for the Bureau of Reclamation, and he's been dodging chollas and chuckwallas in pursuit of southwestern species ever since. In the year 2000 he and Bob Miller started Southwest Birders, and he's had great fun guiding other nature enthusiasts. He's had a stint on the Arizona Rare Bird Committee, been a compiler for AZFO, written two bird-finding guides, and organizes the local CBC every year.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, December 18, same time, same place. Our annual Holiday Party. See next month's *Skimmer* for details.

SDFO NEWS (cont.)**Register Now for the New Year's Day SDFO Pelagic Trip**

Join us on January 1, 2013 as we welcome the new year and each other by watching seabirds together. Only SDFO members can register from now until Nov 30. Book early to ensure that you will be on the trip. Details are below.

Check-in Time: 7:00 - 7:15 a.m.

Boarding Time: 7:20 a.m.

On-Board Orientation: 7:40 a.m.

GATES CLOSED AND LOCKED: 7:45 a.m. sharp

Return: 1:30 p.m.

REGISTRATION:

EARLY-BIRD REGISTRATION is \$25 through Nov 30.

Registration is \$35 after Nov 30.

Late Registration after Dec 21 is \$45

This trip has sold out every year for the past 15 years.

RESERVATIONS: Telephone Point Loma Sportfishing (the landing) seven days a week at (619) 223-1627. Tell them you wish to make a reservation for a birding trip on *Grande*.



SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, OCTOBER 2012

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

When Tropical Storm Paul reached San Diego during the early morning of 18 October it brought with it **Magnificent Frigatebirds**, far more than ever recorded at one time in San Diego County or elsewhere along the coast of California. Jay Keller, birding with Stanley Walens at Pt. La Jolla in La Jolla, first saw two Magnificent Frigatebirds circling over a small boat anchored off the point at about 8:30 a.m., then noticed a group of twelve more circling farther offshore. Most were white-headed immatures, but Jay obtained photos of an all black adult male

and a black-headed adult female. The initial frigatebirds drifted northward out of sight, but as the morning progressed, white-headed immatures started appearing from the north, and by 11 am seventeen immature Magnificent Frigatebirds were circling over La Jolla Cove. At about 9:45 am five Magnificent Frigatebirds were over Cabrillo National Monument on Pt. Loma (specialkaya), and just over an hour later, what were most likely four of these five were photographed over the Naval Base in Coronado (AA). With a minimum of 17 immatures and two adults at La Jolla, and 5 more at Point Loma/Coronado, we come up with a minimum of **24** birds. Following this conservative approach, I consider the up to four immatures at La Jolla between 3:00 and 6:40 pm likely to be some of the immatures present there in the morning, and one at Imperial Beach at about 4:30 pm likely to be one of the



Female Magnificent Frigatebird at La Jolla.

Photo by Jay Keller.

many seen farther north earlier in the day—the actual number of frigatebirds present in San Diego on 18 October will never be known, but is likely greater than 24. Most records for San Diego County involve single birds between late June and mid September, with the high counts being five in the Tijuana River valley on 20 July 1997 and five over Lake Cuyamaca on 2 August 1979 (Unitt 2003)—not only was the high count for the County increased by a factor of five, but the late date is extended from 1 to 18 October.

The earliest of the wintering Eurasian Wigeon were two males on the lower Sweetwater River 12 Oct (PEL)—no doubt the same two present here last winter. A Red-billed Tropicbird 12 nm west of Pt. Loma 6 Oct

(TMcG) was closer to shore than expected. Somewhat unprecedented was the number of Cassin's Auklets visible from Pt. La Jolla, with 2500-3000 on 15 and 16 Oct (SW), and 7000 seen flying north in a quarter-hour on 30 Oct (PEL). Two Reddish Egrets remained on south San Diego Bay through at least 5 Oct with one still present 28 Oct (PEL), an adult first reported at the Tijuana River mouth 13 Sep (MS) was still present 12 Oct (PEL), a hatch-year bird found at the San Diego River mouth 6 Sep (PAG) was last seen 1 Oct (MM), another hatch-year bird found at the San Luis Rey River mouth 9 Sep (MM) was still present 27 Oct (RMcN), and one at Buccaneer Beach in Oceanside 11 Oct (MM) was believed to be an additional bird. Two adult Yellow-crowned Night-Herons remained in Imperial Beach through October (GMcC), but one at Sea World 8 Oct (JP) was the latest of the birds frequenting Famosa Slough and the lower San Diego River through the summer. At least two of the presumed resident Harris's Hawks were still present in Jacumba at the end of the month (EGK). An adult Zone-tailed Hawk was photographed over Oceanside 9 Oct (GN).

An American Oystercatcher with Black Oystercatchers on Ballast Point at the entrance to San Diego Bay 13 Oct (PEL) was likely the same bird present here much of last winter. The latest of the few Pectoral Sandpipers locally were one at Sweetwater Reservoir 13 Oct (JK) and another at Lake O'Neill on Camp Pendleton 20 Oct (BJS). A Short-eared Owl roosting at the south end of San Diego Bay (off 13th St. in Imperial Beach) 19-28 Oct (MS) is likely wintering locally, and one was seen flying north just above the rooftops in Imperial Beach on 26 Oct (GMcC). A Black-chinned Hummingbird in Tierrasanta 9 Oct (PEL) and another at the Bird & Butterfly Garden in the Tijuana River Valley 10 Oct (PEL) were both unusually late—most have departed California by the second week in September. Most unusual was a Hairy Woodpecker at Greenwood Cemetery in southeast San Diego 31 Oct (BM)—only a handful have previously been found in the coastal lowlands.

A short-staying Eastern Phoebe was at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on Pt. Loma 20 Oct (JK). The Tropical Kingbird found at the east end of Sunset Ave. in the Tijuana River Valley 28 Sep (DP) was still present 14 Oct (EGK), what was likely a different one was at the sod farm adjacent to Dairy Mart Rd. 7 Oct (GMcC), one remained at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 2-8 Oct (JK), and a fourth was at Robb Field in Ocean Beach 9 Oct (JP). The Thick-billed Kingbird present at the lower end of Poggi Canyon through the past two winters had returned for a third winter 14 Oct (RN). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher remained with Cassin's Kingbirds in the area of Vine St. and Oceanside Blvd. in Oceanside 5-13 Oct (MM, NG)—we average about one every two or three years, so each occurrence is noteworthy. The long-staying White-eyed Vireo at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery was last seen 6 Oct (EGK, TRS). The earliest Plumbeous Vireos this fall/winter were single birds at the Bird & Butterfly Garden 21 Oct (RN), in Del Mar 23 Oct (SES), Greenwood Cemetery 31 Oct (BM) and at Famosa Slough in Loma Portal 31 Oct (PEL).

Red-breasted Nuthatches continue to draw attention with numbers increasing throughout the coastal lowlands in October, but the number of Mountain Chickadees reported west of the mountains appears to be about average. However, it is the number of Pine Siskins that are now drawing the most attention, with single birds reported along the coast at such locations as the Tijuana River Valley, Pt. Loma and Torrey Pines State Park after 19 Oct (SS, GN and JK), and up to twenty counted at Friendship Park in Chula Vista 28-31 Oct (MS, GMcC). Red Crossbills are still present as indicated by at least eight at Friendship Park 30 Oct (MS) and two at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 28 Oct (GN) on the coast, and seven in Jacumba 28 Oct (JK) inland. The presence of two Cassin's Finches at Heise County Park near Julian 20 Oct (SES) may indicate some of these high-mountain finches are on the move, and an Evening Grosbeak at Paso Picacho in the Cuyamaca Mountains 20 Oct (SS) is the southernmost of the many being reported on the move in California.

A Pacific Wren, rare in San Diego County, especially so along the coast, was at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 20-21 Oct (GN, MS). A Mountain Bluebird at the sod farm adjacent to Dairy Mart Rd. 13 Oct (GMcC) appears to establish the earliest date for a fall migrant in this County. A brightly colored male Varied Thrush, a scarce visitor to San Diego County, remained at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 26-31 Oct (GN). A Red-throated Pipit remained with American Pipits at the sod farm adjacent to Dairy Mart Rd. 13-19 Oct (GMcC, JS), with two present 16-18 Oct (PEL, GMcC). The only longspurs reported were single Chestnut-collared Longspurs at the sod farm adjacent to Dairy Mart Rd. 14-20 Oct (GMcC, JK) and on Fiesta Island in Mission Bay 22 Oct (GN).

A nice variety of Wood Warblers reported during the month included late vagrants and rare winter visitors. Late vagrants included a Tennessee Warbler at Cottonwood Creek Park in Encinitas 15 Oct (JMCM), a Magnolia Warbler in Borrego Springs 11-12 Oct (RT), a Blackburnian Warbler at Lake O'Neill on Camp Pendleton 2 Oct (PAG), two Chestnut-sided Warblers at Lake O'Neill 2-6 Oct (PAG, JN) and a third at Mission Bay Park in San Diego 24 Oct (GN), five Blackpoll Warblers at scattered locations between 2 and 13 Oct (PAG, SES, PEL, TRS and EA), and a male Black-throated Blue Warbler in residential Pt. Loma 22 Oct (JW). In addition an impressive **13 +** Palm Warblers have been reported along the coast during the month, with some anticipated to attempt to winter locally. A Northern Waterthrush present at Dairy Mart Ponds in the Tijuana River valley since 9 Sep was accompanied by a second bird 28 Oct (PEL), suggesting two may have been present for some time and are likely to stay through the winter. A Black-and-white Warbler in Nestor 10 Oct (PEL) was considered the same bird

present here last winter; one in residential Pt. Loma 23 Sep-3 Oct (TRS, SES), another at the Bird and Butterfly Garden 21-30 Oct (RN, AM) and a third in residential Del Mar 23 Oct (SES) were at locations where this species has been found in previous winters, so could also be wintering locally. An American Redstart at Viewpoint Park in Encinitas 17 Oct (DA) was the same male present through the past three winters, but one at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 2 Oct (SBM)



Male Varied Thrush at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery.

was a late vagrant. A Grace's Warbler at Greenwood Cemetery 31 Oct (BM) and a Painted Redstart at Rohr Park in Bonita 29 Oct (DWA) were both clearly these same two birds present at these two locations last winter. Only time will tell if the Pine Warbler photographed at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 30 Oct (AA) will winter locally.

A Swamp Sparrow was at Famosa Slough 31 Oct (PEL) and up to three White-throated Sparrows were at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 17-29 Oct (RN, GN, EGK). A male Hepatic Tanager near the Marston House in Balboa Park 18 Oct (MS) was no doubt the same bird present here during the past two winters. A Summer Tanager near Imperial Beach 5

Oct (JMCM) and another at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 14 Oct (BJS) were likely late fall vagrants, but single birds in Rose Canyon 12 Oct (JR), near Famosa Slough 16 Oct (PEL) and in Del Mar 23 Oct (SES) were at locations where this species was present last winter, so likely returning for another winter. An Indigo Bunting in the Southcrest portion of San Diego 10 Oct (PEL), and single birds at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 11 Oct (GN) and in the nearby residential area 13 Oct (GLR) were the only three reported this fall. A Painted Bunting put in a brief appearance in the Tijuana River Valley on 8 Oct (PEL). A Baltimore Oriole at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 28 Oct (GMcC) was clearly on the move, but an adult female at Sunnyslope Park in Nestor was the same bird present here during the past three winters.

Literature Cited:

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