

The **SKIMMER**



Volume 39, Number 3—March 2012

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, March 20, at 7:00 p.m., at the Tecolote Nature Center, at the east end of Tecolote Road, off I-5.

Program: “Finding Birds in the Digital Age: From eBird to Listservs to Smartphones to FaceBook,” by BJ Stacey.

Finding information on birds, both expected and rare, has never been easier. Birders now have a variety of digital tools to consult from their desktop computer at home, their laptop on the road, and their smart device in the field. BJ will show you how he prepares for out-of-town birding adventures, gets notified of local list needs, and receives information on rarities.

BJ Stacey is a local San Diego birder who birds everywhere he travels, even from the windows at airport gates. Though still new to the listing game compared to many local birders, he has ticked over 100 birds in 13 California counties, has over 100 species in 6 states while only birding in 16 states to date. Being a technology geek and striving to keep up with new technologies serves his birding passion, by helping him make the most of his too-limited birding time and maximize his chances of finding those desired species.

Next month’s meeting: to be announced. See next item.

Looking for a Home: SDFO as a Social Club

As you may know, after March we will no longer be able to have our meetings at the Tecolote Nature Center. In looking for a new meeting place, the SDFO Board has discovered that most venues require that groups which use their facilities be registered non-profit organizations. In the case of SDFO that means registering with the federal government as a 501(c)7 organization (a social club).

To qualify we have to make some small changes to our club bylaws. Therefore, the Board is proposing the following changes. We will put these changes to a vote of the members at the March meeting (which will be at Tecolote for the last time). If you can't make the meeting and wish to discuss any of this, please e-mail me (lehman.paul@verizon.net) or call me(858-268-1937 h) before the meeting, and I'll be happy to speak with you about it.

[continued]

SDFO NEWS (cont.)

Please note that one change is that we can no longer state that our meetings are open to the general public. Members can invite guests, but we can't advertise that the meetings are open.

-- Paul Lehman, President, SDFO

SDFO BYLAW changes required to become a 501(c)7 organization

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

Original:

SECTION 1. PURPOSE: The San Diego Field Ornithologists shall strive to enhance the knowledge of field ornithology (birding) through educational programs, publication of information, and the encouragement of record keeping.

Change to:

SECTION 1. PURPOSE: The purpose of the San Diego Field Ornithologists is to bring together birders in San Diego County who wish to enhance their knowledge of field or nithology through regular meetings and educational programs.

Original:

SECTION 2. AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES. SDFO may engage in any activities consistent with its purposes and in conjunction with any other organizations and individuals.

Change to:

SECTION 2. AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES. SDFO may engage in any activities consistent with its purpose.

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP, DUES, AND VOTING

Original:

SECTION 1. MEMBERSHIP. Membership in SDFO shall be open to all interested persons. Membership shall run...

Change to:

SECTION 1. MEMBERSHIP. Membership in SDFO shall be open to persons with an interest in field ornithology. Membership shall run...

ARTICLE IV - MEETINGS OF MEMBERS

Original:

SECTION 2. MONTHLY MEETINGS. Meetings shall be held monthly at a time and place determined by the president and announced in the monthly newsletter. Meetings

shall be open to the public.

Change to:

SECTION 2. MONTHLY MEETINGS. Meetings shall be held monthly at a time and place determined by the president and announced in the monthly newsletter. Meetings shall be open to members and their guests.

REMEMBERING MICHELLE MATSON

by Sue Smith, Guy McCaskie, Sara Mayers, Janis Cadwallader,
and Jan Nordenberg

On 21 February 2012, Michelle Matson, our dear friend and accomplished San Diego birder, passed away peacefully at the Asa Wright Center in Trinidad after a long and valiant battle with cancer. She had traveled to Trinidad with her husband, Mark, to spend her last days among the beautiful birds in that lush tropical place. The trip was long and arduous, but she spent the next morning on the old plantation house veranda watching the honeycreepers, tanagers and hummingbirds. She saw five life birds and sent word to her mother, Elva, that she had made it to paradise.

Michelle was deeply loved and highly respected throughout the San Diego birding community and beyond. She served as vice president of the San Diego Field Ornithologists from 2008 to 2010 and was secretary since 2010. She was also much loved and respected within the Poway school system at Rancho Bernardo High School, where she taught physics and oceanography and was a highly sought-after student counselor. Dedicated and compassionate, she provided the best one-on-one guidance possible to many grateful students, lending a sympathetic ear and helping them prepare for college and post-high school life. She was a champion marksman before she turned her sights from bull's-eyes to the avian world, and so, naturally, had a sharp eye for birds. With her sci-



At San Jacinto State Park, August 2004.
Photo by Mike McClintock

entist's mind, she was also a voracious student of the finer points of bird identification, distribution and occurrence, and other aspects of bird biology, always striving to learn more. And while she loved to learn, she also loved to teach and to

share her knowledge with the rest of us. She enjoyed birding with her many friends and joined the “Wednesday Birding Group” after she was unable to return to her teaching and counseling career. She birded with the group as often as her illness allowed. When a particular bird sparked the group’s interest, she researched it carefully after returning home, then emailed the information to everyone in the group, enthusiastically sharing what she had discovered.

As a co-leader on the San Diego Festival “Birding along the Border” field trips, Michelle carefully planned the route, knew the expected birds at each stop, and was able to identify all with her keen hearing. She also enriched the experience of the field trip participants with facts and stories about landmarks along the route. We learned from her that the prominent circular antenna at the Naval Station at the south end of the Silver Strand was known locally as “the elephant cage.” Certainly she was one of the best co-leaders ever.

When Michelle learned that the Snow Bunting at Robb Field in 2009 was the 500th species found in San Diego County, she felt compelled to do more than announce it as such at the SDFO meeting. She delved into

the occurrences far to the south of that species’ expected range, and gave a most informative presentation to the club at the May meeting. Her presentation was well received, so she expanded it to compare the San Diego bird-list with that of Los Angeles. This ended up being a most instructive one-hour Power-Point talk presented to the SDFO and Los Angeles Audubon Society.

We will remember Michelle for her inquiring mind, her love of the natural world, her sparkling beauty, her merry laugh, her warmth and vivaciousness, her thoughtful and wise ways, her devotion to her family and friends, and her astonishing grace, bravery and determination in the face of her illness. Her husband, Mark, during the long stress-filled journey of her illness, provided her with incredible care and strong yet gentle, support.

Her mother, Elva, a former nurse, was another anchor of steady support. Elva was the source of Michelle’s favorite quote: “Ninety percent of what we worry about is stuff we can’t do anything about, so we might as well spend that time enjoying life.” Michelle certainly took that advice to heart, especially in these past few years. Her amazing courage, heart and optimism provide us all with inspiration for years to come.



SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, FEBRUARY 2012

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

The Eurasian Wigeon in the San Diego River Flood Control Channel since 6 Nov was still present 29 Feb (JP), and one of the two on the Sweetwater River in Chula Vista remained through 4 Feb (PEL). Two White-winged Scoters, now decidedly rare in San Diego County, were off the Silver Strand north of Imperial Beach 29 Feb (BM). At least one Reddish Egret remained on south San Diego Bay through February (GMcC, RTP), and the immature present in the San Diego River Flood Control Channel since 19 Dec was still present 29 Feb (JP). As many as four adult Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were roosting in the pines adjacent to the Sports Park in Imperial Beach during the month (GMcC).

Three Harris's Hawks in Jacumba at the end of the month (EGK) appear to be the pair that nested there last summer along with the young bird they fledged. Migrant Swainson's Hawks included 20 at Borrego Springs 14 Feb (RT), along with single birds west of the mountains over El Cajon 10 Feb (EC), at the San Diego Wild Animal Park and over Santee on 18 Feb (RAH, BM). A Zone-tailed Hawk photographed at the eastern end of Lake Hodges 19 Feb (RS) was likely the one known wintering at the nearby San Diego Wild Animal Park, another was at the Granite Hills area of El Cajon 25 Jan-15 Feb (YT), and a third flew over Santee Lakes in Santee 19 Feb (GLR). A dark Merlin from the Pacific Northwest subspecies *suckleyi* was at the Tijuana River mouth 24 Feb (GN).

The wintering Pacific Golden-Plover at the Tijuana River mouth since August was still present 29 Feb (MS), and a second frequenting the San Dieguito River mouth/Penasquitos Lagoon beach since 20 Dec was

still there 20 Feb (PEL). The first of the spring Elegant Terns was an adult in full breeding-plumage with Royal Terns at south San Diego Bay on the record early date of 23 Feb (MS)--Unitt (2004) cites 3 March as the earliest date for spring arrival. At the end of the month we were treated to record high numbers of Common Murres and Rhinoceros Auklets along the coast as indicated by counts of 243 Common Murres at Pt. La Jolla in La Jolla on 27 Feb (SW) followed by over 300 there the following day (JMcM), and a count of 68 Rhinoceros Auklets there on 27 Feb (SW)--the single highest one-day count of Common Murres known to Unitt (2004) was 140 on 21 December 1958. An Allen's Hummingbird photographed on a nest in Westminster Park on Pt. Loma 25 Feb (MG) provides the southernmost nesting record for this species--the resident subspecies *sedentarius* is expanding its range northward, eastward and southward in coastal Southern California, first found nesting in San Diego County in 2008, and with the previous southernmost nest site being in Encinitas in 2011.

The well documented Dusky Flycatcher found at Dos Picos Park in Ramona 16 Nov (SES) was still present 20 Feb (JTS), so presumably wintered successfully. A Pacific-slope Flycatcher in Tierrasanta 9 Feb (JK) presumably wintered locally, since the first of the spring migrants are not expected before the first week in March. The Eastern Phoebe in extreme northwestern Rancho Santa Fe was still present 20 Feb (SW)--wintering birds of this species are not expected to stay past the first week in March, so this individual may well have departed by now. In addition, the Dusky-capped Flycatcher on Kingfisher Ln. at the Aviara Re-

sort in Carlsbad since 11 Dec was still present 28 Feb (SB), and the Thick-billed Kingbird at the lower end of Poggi Canyon in Chula Vista since 25 Oct was still present at the end of the month (RN, GMcC).

Plumbeous Vireos have been unusually scarce this winter, but one at Famosa Slough in Ocean Beach 23 Nov-9 Feb (JP, LM) and another at Heritage Park in Chula Vista 12 Feb (JLS) undoubtedly wintered locally. A flock of about 25 Pinyon Jays was still around the area of Stonewall Mine in Cuyamaca Rancho State Park as of 29 Feb (GLR). The Pacific Wren found at the Botanic Garden in Encinitas 5 Dec was still present 6 Feb (SES). A Varied Thrush, rare in San Diego County, was at William Heise Park near Julian 5 Feb (GLR), and two were together at the Cibbets Flat Campground in the Laguna Mts. 25-29 Feb (MS, SR). An elusive Gray Catbird, very rare anywhere in California in winter, was along the west side of Lake Hodges 14-19 Feb (TS, EH). Sage Thrashers were noted in expected numbers passing through Anza-Borrego Desert State Park during the month, but three at San Onofre 3 Feb (JMcM) were on the immediate coast where unexpected.

Two Black-and-white Warblers remained into February, with one in Balboa Park 23 Nov-11 Feb (PEL) and the other in Nestor 19 Oct-26 Feb (PEL, SW); the American Redstart found in Nestor 14 Dec was still present 26 Feb (PEL, SW); a Palm Warbler found at Westminster Park on Pt. Loma 20 Nov was still present 24 Feb (PEL, LM); the hard-to-find Grace's Warbler in San Diego's Greenwood Cemetery was last seen 20 Feb (LM); and the Painted Redstart in Bonita's Rohr Park was last seen 23 Feb (BM). Single Hermit Warblers in Chula Vista 3 Dec-7 Feb (PEL, BLC), at the Aviara Resort in Carlsbad 14 Dec-17 Feb (PAG, JN) and in San Diego's Greenwood Cemetery 17 Dec-19 Feb (JZ, JK), were augmented by one near Famosa Slough in Ocean Beach 11 Feb

(JLS) for a total of four this month--well above the expected number. Noteworthy were seven Nashville Warblers in the greater San Diego area in February, this being significantly more than expected in an average winter as indicated by Unitt (2004)--the earliest of the spring migrants are not expected before the last week in March. Twelve Yellow Warblers known present was a respectable number for February--small numbers regularly winter in the coastal lowlands, with the first of the spring migrants being males at nesting locations, such as Old Mission Dam at Mission Trails Regional Park, in the last week of March. Ten Black-throated Gray Warblers during the month would appear about average--again, the earliest of the spring migrants will be adult males found in the last week of March. Five Wilson's Warblers reported in the coastal lowlands in February was only half the number expected--the first of the spring migrants reach Southern California quite early, with adult males expected in the second week of March.

One of the big surprises of this winter was the number of Clay-colored Sparrows found: a total of eight, with four this month--one at Fairbanks Ranch near Del Mar 27 Dec-5 Feb (PEL), at least one of the three at Heritage Park in Chula Vista on 17 Jan still present 19 Feb (SW), one near the Golden Hill section of Balboa Park 18 Jan still there 29 Feb (PEL) and another near the Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park 26 Feb (PEL). Almost as unexpected was a Brewer's Sparrow near the Organ Pavilion on 26 Feb (PEL)--records of this sparrow along the coast in winter are few and far between. Up to two White-throated Sparrows at Kate Sessions Park in Pacific Beach 10-29 Feb (MH, SBM) and another at City College near downtown San Diego 26 Feb (PEL) undoubtedly wintered at those locations.

The Hepatic Tanager present for its 2nd winter at the Marston House in Balboa Park since 30 Oct, and the other present for

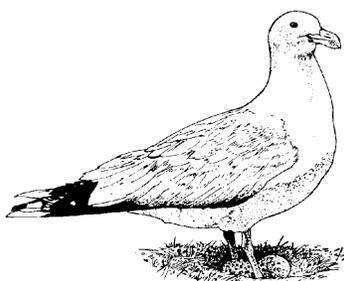
its 6th winter at the Sports Park in Imperial Beach since 12 Dec were both still being seen 29 Feb (CR, GMcC). Seven of the Summer Tanagers present in January were known to stay into February, and were joined by a female at Marina Village on Mission Bay 9-26 Feb (MS, JK) and another female at Westminster Park on Pt. Loma 22 Feb (PEL). As expected, some wintering Western Tanagers continued to be reported, with at least ten known in and around San Diego this month--wintering birds will persist into April, with the first of the spring migrants, brightly colored adult males, arriving in the second week of April. A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak in La Jolla 18-21 Feb (PEL, MM) clearly wintered locally. At least two wintering Hooded Orioles were still present in Balboa Park, with one near the southeast corner 18 Jan-25 Feb (PEL, EGK), at another at the Organ Pavilion 21 Feb (PEL), but a brightly colored adult male there 25 Feb (EGK) was believed to be an exceptionally early spring migrant--Unitt (2004) lists 26 February as the earliest known arrival date through 2003. At least six wintering Bullock's Orioles were known present into February, and four wintering Baltimore Orioles were reported during the month, with an adult female remaining at Sunnyslope Park in Nestor 26 Nov-17 Feb (PEL), a young female in Tierrasanta 3 Jan-3 Feb (PEL), a stunning adult male at the southeast corner of Balboa Park 24 Jan-22 Feb (PU, MM) and a young female at Cottonwood Creek Park in Encinitas 12-20 Feb (PEL, JMCM).

The **Common Redpoll** found at The Bird Watcher store in Julian 4 Feb (MG) remained through 19 Feb (LR), this being the southernmost of nine in California this winter, with two together at Tule Lake, Siskiyou County, and single birds at McArthur, Shasta County, Taylorsville, Plumas County, June Lake, Mono County, Paradise, Mono County, Woodlands, Yolo County and in Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz County--certainly the most widespread movement of redpolls into California on record. Most impressive was the flock of over **500** Lawrence's Goldfinches at "Hoehn Porsche" in Carlsbad 27-29 Feb (SB)--certainly an exceptional number for the coastal lowlands.

Listed observers: Steve Brad, Barbara L. Carlson, Ross Christie, Elizabeth Copper, Peter A. Ginsburg, Mike Goldhamer, Robert A. Hamilton, Ed Hall, Matt Hysell, Eric G. Kallen, Jay Keller, Paul E. Lehman, Marcie Mason, Sara B. Mayers, Guy McCaskie, Jimmy McMorran, Leo Miller, Brennan Mulrooney, Jan Nordenberg, Richard Norgaard, Gary Nunn, Robert T. Patton, Jim Pea, Steve Ritt, Geoffrey L. Rogers, Linda Rnna, Matt Sadowski, Susan E. Smith, Ray Spencer, Justyn T. Stahl, Todd Stands, Robert Theriault, Stanley Walens, Yvonne Trahan, Philip Unitt and Jim Zimmer.

Literature Cited

Unitt, Philip. 2004. San Diego County Bird Atlas. *Proc. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist.* 39. San Diego Nat. Hist. Mus., San Diego.



SAN DIEGO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

President	Paul Lehman (858) 268-1937 lehman.paul@verizon.net
Vice-president	Tom Blackman (619) 222-2630 obeach@cox.net
Treasurer	Sara Mayers (619) 225-1217 mayerss@cox.net
Program Chair	Tom Blackman (619) 222-2630 obeach@cox.net
Membership Chair	BJ Stacey (619) 596-8133 bjjnsd@yahoo.com
Skimmer Publishing Editor	John Walters (619) 267-1821 john-walters@cox.net Herb Young (858) 622-0337 coulterpine@juno.com BJ Stacey

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

San Diego Field Ornithologists
c/o BJ Stacey
9407 Domer Rd.
Santee, CA 92071

JOIN SDFO

Dues for Calendar year: \$25.00, including all renewals. Add \$10.00 for each additional member in same household. **MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO SDFO** and mail or give check to Membership Chair: BJ Stacey, 9407 Domer Rd., Santee, CA 92071. For membership information, call BJ at (619) 596-8133.

Visit our website at

www.sandiegofieldornithologists.org

