The SKIMMER

Volume 41, Number 11—November 2014

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, November 18, 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: "Birds of Northern and Western India," by Ed Henry, President of the San Diego Audubon Society. Come and enjoy the great diversity of exceptional birds found in India and photographed by the speaker on his recent trip.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, December 9, same time, same place. Our annual holiday party. Note: This is the first Tuesday of the month.

Christmas Bird Counts

Here are the dates and contact information for the county's Christmas Bird Counts next month:

Sunday, Dec. 14: Anza-Borrego
Robert Theriault robertttheriault@juno.com

Monday, Dec. 15: Lake Henshaw
Gretchen Cummings Gretchen.bc@sbcglobal.net

Saturday, Dec. 20: San Diego
Steve Ritt stevenmritt@gmail.com
Chris Smith stlbirdman64@yahoo.com

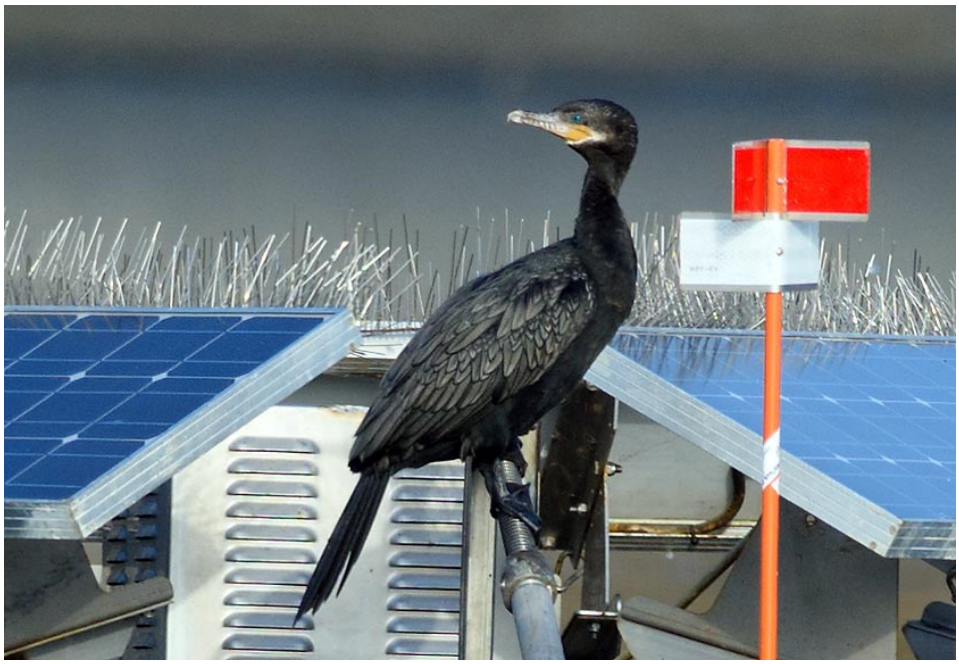
Saturday, Dec. 27: Oceanside
Andy Mauro akamauro1@gmail.com

Sunday, Dec. 28: Escondido
Ken Weaver gnatcatcher@sbcglobal.net

Saturday, Jan. 3: Rancho Santa Fe
Robert Patton rpatton@san.rr.com

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, OCTOBER 2014

Compiled by Guy McCaskie



Neotropic Cormorant at Lake O'Neill

Photo by Trent Stanley.

The 8-12 October Western Field Ornithologists 39th Annual Conference in San Diego drew many skilled birders to the area, resulting in the discovery of multiple rarities around San Diego, including one species new to the list of birds recorded in San Diego County – an adult **Neotropic Cormorant** at Lake O'Neill on Camp Pendleton 12-31 Oct + (TH, PAG). Neotropic Cormorants have recently expanded their range northward into Arizona and southeastern California, now being regularly found along the Colorado River to as far north as Lake Havasu, throughout the Imperial Valley, and at the Salton Sea. One photographed in the Riverside County portion of the Prado Basin 30 May 2013 was the first to be found west of the mountains, but many local birders expected the first in San Diego County to be east of the mountains around Borrego Springs, not in the coastal lowlands. At the end of October four photos taken on 13 July 2014 by Jim Billups of a **Blue-throated Hummingbird** at Palomar Mountain surfaced, this documenting only the 3rd to be recorded in California – the other two being a female at a feeder in Three Rivers, Tulare County, from 27 December 1977 through 27 May 1978, and a male staying only part of 18 September 2014 at a feeder in Crestline, San Bernardino County. The addition of the cormorant and hummingbird increases the number of species recorded in San Diego County to **517**.

Two Brant on Mission Bay on 22 Oct (GMcC) along with a Cackling Goose there on 21 Oct (LHan) were the earliest reported this winter. A male Eurasian Wigeon that arrived on the lower San Diego River on 8 Oct (JBr) was followed shortly after by a male hybrid Eurasian x American Wigeon, with both still present on the San Diego River/Famosa Slough through the end of the month. Observers are cautioned to take a second look at any Eurasian Wigeon to make sure it is not a hybrid before posting on the internet or reporting to eBird – errors have been made in the past.

Pelagic trip highlights included a Black-footed Albatross only 8.5 nm west of Pt. Loma on 13 Oct (DP), an adult Red-billed Tropicbird 2.5 nm west of Pt. Loma on 2 Oct (DP) and 4 nm west of Pt. Loma on 9 Oct (PEL), and the latest of the Craveri's Murrelets, with six off San Diego on 4 Oct (PEL) and two more there on 9 Oct (PEL). Most unusual was an adult male Magnificent Frigatebird over La Jolla 22 Oct (GN) – most

recorded in California are immatures in July and August. With 2-3 Blue-footed Boobies still present on Los Coronados Islands since the September 2013 "invasion," and the number of Brown Boobies there increasing to well over 100, it is not surprising that boobies, particularly Brown Boobies, are now being seen regularly in San Diego County waters. At least one Blue-footed Booby has been seen from the Tijuana River mouth sporadically through 12 Oct (GMcC, PEL), and an impressive 80 Brown Boobies were counted from there on 12 Oct (SCR); farther north 14 Brown Boobies were reported from Pt. La Jolla in La Jolla on 30 Oct (SW). Two Common Murres off Pt. La Jolla 20 Oct (SW) were the earliest this fall. A confiding Ancient Murrelet at Vacation Island on Mission Bay 20-31 Oct (LHan) attracted much attention, but was killed by a Western Gull on 1 Nov (LS); a second was reported at the Scripps Pier in La Jolla on 24 Oct (BW).

An immature Swainson's Hawk over Nestor 7 Oct (PEL) was unusually close to the coast. The only reorts of Zone-tailed Hawk this month were one over Jamul on 2 Oct (JMa) and another at Potrero County Park on 18 Oct (JS).

Black Oystercatchers were present around the mouth of San Diego Bay through October (JW) with a high count of six, along with an American x Black Oystercatcher, at Ballast Point on 9 Oct (PEL), and one was photographed on the breakwater at the Oceanside Harbor on 31 Oct (AB). As expected, the Pacific Golden-Plover that arrived in Del Mar 31 Aug for its 4th winter at that location was still present at the end of the month (SBrad), and another at Crown Point on Mission Bay 3-11 Oct (PEL) could also be wintering locally. A somewhat late migrant Solitary Sandpiper was at Dairy Mart Pond in the Tijuana River Valley on 11 Oct (GMcC). A juvenile Ruff at the San Luis Rey River mouth 29-31 Oct (SBrad) is the first in the

Front to back: Eurasian Wigeon, American x Eurasian Wigeon, American Wigeon. Photographed on the San Diego River by John Bruin.

Ancient Murrelet at Mission Bay.

Photo by John Bruin.

Ruff at San Luis Rey River mouth.

Photo by Steve Brad.

county in a couple of years. A Baird's Sandpiper at south San Diego Bay 9-10 Oct (RP, JMo) was the latest of the very few found in this county this fall. Less than a dozen migrant Pectoral Sandpipers were reported this month, with one at Lake O'Neill on Camp Pendleton 9-14 Oct (PAG), up to three at the San Luis Rey River mouth in Oceanside on 14-24 Oct (MM, KW), one videotaped at Lindo Lake in Lakeside 16-24 Oct (SBrea), one at Dairy Mart Pond 17-31 Oct (JP, PEL) and one at Sweetwater Reservoir on 27 Oct (PEL) – numbers reported in the West this fall have been noticeably fewer than average. A first-winter Franklin's Gull was well photographed 8.9 nm southwest of Pt. Loma on 28 Oct (DP). A second-year Heermann's Gull photographed at Lake O'Neill 18 Oct (TAB) was unusually far inland.

A Band-tailed Pigeon at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on Pt. Loma on 10 Oct (SF) and another on Mission Bay 21 Oct (PEL) were on the immediate coast where unexpected. However, Band-tailed Pigeons have been reported elsewhere away from the species' normal range in Southern California this fall, suggesting a movement of these birds away from the mountains. The number of Inca Doves known present at Borrego Springs has now increased from one to four, with up to three together at the Roadrunner Club and another at Rams Hill after 9 Oct (DI, RT and WTH). Three White-winged Doves were found along the coast, where rare, with single birds in Del Mar on 12 Oct (WM), Imperial Beach on 17 Oct (SY) and on Pt. Loma on 20 Oct (PEL). As in most years, Lewis's Woodpeckers are being reported at scattered locations in the foothills and mountains, including at least ten together near Ranchita since early October, but one photographed in Presidio Park on 7 Oct (TH) was unexpected. Acorn Woodpeckers are certainly on the move in much of southern California; locally, one in Encinitas 26 Sep-1 Oct (SC), two together at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 11 Oct (KLG) and another in La Jolla 18 Oct (EP) were all well away from home.

A Willow Flycatcher photographed at Kumeyaay Lake near Santee 18 Oct (M & PT) was late for a migrant – the latest listed by Unitt (2004) were three on Pt. Loma 26 Oct-3 Nov 1981. A Dusky Flycatcher, rare along the coast, was well photographed at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 2-3 Oct (GN). The Tropical Kingbird found in Presidio Park 25 Sep (CAd) was known present through 3 Oct (PEL) and likely to 27 Oct (TG), and another found at the Dairy Mart Ponds 30 Sep (JP) remained through 10 Oct (JTS). An additional eight were reported this month with single birds at Whelan Lake on 4 Oct (PGN), at

Dusky Flycatcher at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery.

Photo by Gary Nunn.

Maxton Brown Park in Carlsbad on 12 Oct (LHar), in Kimball Park in National City on 15 Oct (PEL), near Imperial Beach 22-30 Oct (TF, JP), at the San Luis Rey River mouth in Oceanside 22 Oct (PJF) and along Saturn Blvd. in the Tijuana River Valley on 31 Oct (PEL), along with up to two together at Liberty Station in San Diego 6-12 Oct (PEL). A Plumbeous Vireo at the Cultural Education Center in south San Diego 15-27 Oct (PEL) and at San Diego City College near downtown San Diego 18-28 Oct (PEL) are believed to be the same two present at these locations last winter, so undoubtedly wintering locally, and additional birds were found in El Cajon on 17 Oct (CKS) and in Del Mar 22 Oct (SES). A Yellow-green Vireo at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 11-17 Oct (DM, DA) was the third to be found locally this fall – this species is now recorded in California far more regularly than is the Red-eyed Vireo.

Brown Thrasher at Jacumba.

Photo by Gary Nunn.

A Varied Thrush was near Lake O'Neill on Camp Pendleton on 23 Oct (SBrad), and another was seen at the Dairy Mart Ponds 26-27 Oct (SBrad, MS). A Brown Thrasher, a decidedly scarce vagrant to San Diego County, was in Jacumba 30-31 Oct (EGK). A secretive Sage Thrasher on Saturn Blvd. in the Tijuana River Valley 15-23 Oct (PEL) could be wintering locally. Red-throated Pipits attracted much attention after the first were found at the AG Sod Farm in the Tijuana River Valley in September, with as many as four together through 11 Oct (GMcC), and one later 22-25 Oct (JBo, MW). Up to three Lapland Longspurs were with the pipits in the Tijuana River Valley 8-11 Oct (GMcC) and another was seen on Fiesta Island in Mission Bay on 10 Oct (LHar). The only Chestnut-collared Longspurs this fall were single birds at Fiesta Island on Mission Bay 3-5 Oct (PEL), with the pipits in the Tijuana River Valley on 29 Oct (PEL) and near Ramona on 31 Oct (JMcM).

American Pipit, *japonicus* race, at AG Sod Farm, Tijuana River Valley.

Photo by Gary Nunn.

A noteworthy variety of wood-warblers were known present in October, with many staying for extended periods. An Ovenbird was at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 6-8 Oct (AA) and another was at Tamarisk Grove Campground in the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park 12

-16 Oct (RT). Northern Waterthrushes were continually present through October at the Dairy Mart Ponds, with as many as five seen/heard in a day and three still known present on 27 Oct (MS); an additional bird was along the Tijuana River at Saturn Blvd. on 15 Oct (PEL) and another was along the San Diego River in Mission Valley on 6 Oct (PEL). At least ten Black-and-white Warblers were reported this month, with single birds at scattered locations along the coast from Carlsbad (Aviara Resort) on 22 Oct (PAG) and Cardiff-by-the-Sea on 14 Oct (PEL) south to Nestor (Nestor Neighborhood Park) 8-25 Oct (RH, MW) and the Tijuana River Valley (Bird & Butterfly Garden) 7-11 Oct (JMcM). A Prothonotary Warbler frequented a suet feeder at the Vandegrift Boulevard housing on Camp Pendleton 21-24 Oct (ASa). Unexpected were three Lucy's Warblers, with one on Mission Bay on 6 Oct (PEL), another at the Bird and Butterfly Garden in the Tijuana River Valley on 11 Oct (AJS), and the third frequenting the southern most of the Dairy Mart Ponds 18-31 Oct (MA, PEL). At least six American Redstarts were reported, with at least two at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery between 2 and 10 Oct (PEL, DSh), one at the Bird and Butterfly Garden on 12 Oct (JMcM) and up to two at Lake O'Neill on Camp Pendleton 12-23 Oct (PAG) along the coast where expected, but the sixth was photographed at Lake Cuyamaca 15-20 Oct (JRM) where few if any have previously been recorded. Up to two Magnolia Warblers were at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 4-14 Oct (VW, DSo). A long-staying Blackburnian Warbler was at Nestor Neighborhood Park 12-26 Oct (RH, PEL) and another was at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 13 Oct (DSo). Single Chestnut-sided Warblers at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 4-10 Oct (MH, GMcC), at Whelan Lake near Oceanside on 8 Oct (PAG), along San Gorgonio St. in residential Pt. Loma on 11 Oct (LK) and at Rose Canyon in San Diego on 18 Oct (CAn) were along the coast where one or two are found most falls; however, one in Jacumba on 14 Oct (EGK) and another at Rams Hill in Borrego Springs on 26 Oct (WTH) were in areas where unexpected. Only two Blackpoll Warblers were reported, with one on Mission Bay 6 Oct (PEL) and the other a long-staying bird at Seaport Village near downtown San Diego 13-28 Oct (PEL). A female Black-throated Blue Warbler was in Cardiff-by-the-Sea on 14 Oct (PEL), another female remained at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 19-24 Oct (MF, ASt), and a male was in Del Mar on 22 Oct (SES). Palm Warblers regularly reach San Diego County each fall, with some remaining through the winter. One was at El Camino Park in Sorrento Valley 14-28 Oct (MN, TG), three or four were present at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery between 7 and 26 Oct (RN, GN, BS), one was at the ball fields on Sunset Ave. in the Tijuana River Valley 6-9 Oct (JP, GMcC) and another was nearby at the AG Sod Farm on 29 Oct (PEL). A Black-throated Green Warbler in San Diego's Greenwood Cemetery on 29 Oct (MS) was no doubt the same bird present here last winter. A short staying Canada Warbler was photo-

Clay-colored Sparrow at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery. Photo by Gary Nunn.

graphed at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 29 Oct (JBr, GN). A migrant Painted Redstart stopped briefly at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 11 Oct (GN), but another at Southcrest Park in San Diego on 27 Oct (PEL) could be attempting to winter locally.

Four Clay-colored Sparrows were reported, with single birds along Saturn Blvd. on 7 Oct (PEL), at Fiesta Island on Mission Bay on 7 Oct (WM), at Seaport Village near downtown San Diego on 13 Oct (LP) and at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 9-11 Oct (JMo) - fewer than average for this time of the year. The fact that only three Brewer's Sparrows were found along the coast during the same period, with one at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 2 Oct (GN) and two at widely separated locations in the Tijuana River Valley 7 Oct (PEL), supports the idea that Brewer's is now every bit as rare, if not rarer, than the Clay-colored Sparrow along the coast of San Diego County. A Vesper Sparrow, scarce along the coast, was at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 10 Oct (GMcC). Single Grasshopper Sparrows photographed at a private residence in San Diego 16 Oct (RA) and in the marshes at San Elijo Lagoon 18 Oct (SP) were both at unexpected locations, suggesting they were migrants. A Swamp Sparrow was found at Kimball Park in National City on 27 Oct (PEL). The only White-throated Sparrows reported this fall were one at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 7 Oct (GN), one at San Diego's Presidio Park on 30 Oct (PEL) and a third near Valley Center on 31 Oct (TL).

A Summer Tanager at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 20 Oct (PEL) was likely a migrant, but single birds near the Marston House in Balboa Park 16-28 Oct (ME), at Kimball Park in National City on 22 Oct (PEL), Rohr Park in Bonita on 27 Oct (PEL), the San Diego Zoo in Balboa Park on 30-31 Oct + (TRS, BR) and at the northern edge of Mission Bay on 30 Oct (PEL) were likely birds that will remain for the winter. Single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were found along the coast in Chula Vista on 5 Oct (PEL) and in Del Mar on 12 Oct (LHar), and a third was in the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park at Tamarisk Grove Campground on 16 Oct (RT). A Dickcissel was found at the Roadrunner Club in Borrego Springs on 9 Oct (DI) and single birds were along the coast at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 2 Oct (GN) and in Del Mar 12-13 Oct (RH, JTS). Two Orchard Orioles were identified, with single "females" at Nestor Neighborhood Park in Nestor 7-8 Oct (PEL) and in Del Mar on 11 Oct (LHar). Two "female" Baltimore Orioles at Pantoja Park in downtown San Diego on 18 Oct (PEL) and another at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 19 Oct (MF) appeared to be migrants, but a fourth at Rohr Park in Bonita 22-23 Oct (PEL) was believed to be the same bird present here last winter.

The presence of Cassin's Finches and Evening Grosbeaks at scattered locations in southern California and Arizona this month suggests some mountain finches are on the move. Reports of single Purple Finches in the coastal lowlands in Del Mar on 12 Oct (LHar) and El Cajon on 28 Oct (CKS), single Cassin's Finches at Cuyamaca Rancho State Park on 9 Oct (GLR) and in the Laguna Mts. on 29 Oct (JRM), 5-6 Red Crossbills on Mount Palomar on 5 Oct (GCH) and two Evening Grosbeaks on Mt. Palomar on 10 Oct (KW) indicate this movement is bringing a few of these birds to San Diego County. A Pine Siskin on Pt. Loma on 19 Oct (MS) and three in the Tijuana River Valley on 27 Oct (MS) were some of the first of small numbers widely reported throughout the County.

Listed observers: Alex Abela, Christopher Adler (CAd), Dorian Anderson, Caron Andregg (CAn), Ryan Andrews, Marc Arndt, Alex Bairstow, Thomas A. Benson, Johnny Bovee (JBo), Steve Brad (SBrad), Sara Breatigam (SBrea), Jim Bruin (JBr), Steve Cameron, Mike Evans, PJ Falatek, Shawneen Finnegan, Michael Force, Tom Frankenberger, Kimball L. Garrett, Peter A. Ginsburg, Tito Gonzales, Lesley Handa (LHan), Lauren Harter (LHar), Gjon C. Hazard, Rich Hoyer, Mike Huang, W. Terry Hunefeld, Thereas Hyde, David Irons, Logan Kahle, Eric G. Kallen, Paul E. Lehman, Trysten Loefke, Curtis A. Marantz, Don Marsh, John Martin (JMa), Michael Martin, Guy McCaskie, Jimmy McMorran, William Moramarco, Joseph Morlan (JMo), James R. Morris, P. Gretchen

Nell, Mike Nelson, Richard Norgaard, Gary Nunn, Robert Patton, Jim Pea, Stephen Perry, Ethna Piazza, Linda Pittman, Dave Povey, Bruce Rideout, Geoffrey L. Rogers, Steven C. Rottenborn, Matt Sadowski, Ben Sandstrom, Amy Saye (ASa), Dave Shuford (DSh), Christopher K. Smith, Susan E. Smith, David Sonneborn (DSo), Lea Squires, Adam J. Stacy, Justyn T. Stahl, Trent R. Stanley, Jeremiah Stock, Annie Stockley (ASt), Robert Theriault, Millie and Peter Thomas, Stanley Walens, Vic Warren, Kenneth Weaver, Judy Wilbur, Mindy Woodruff, Brian Woodward, Susan Yamagata.

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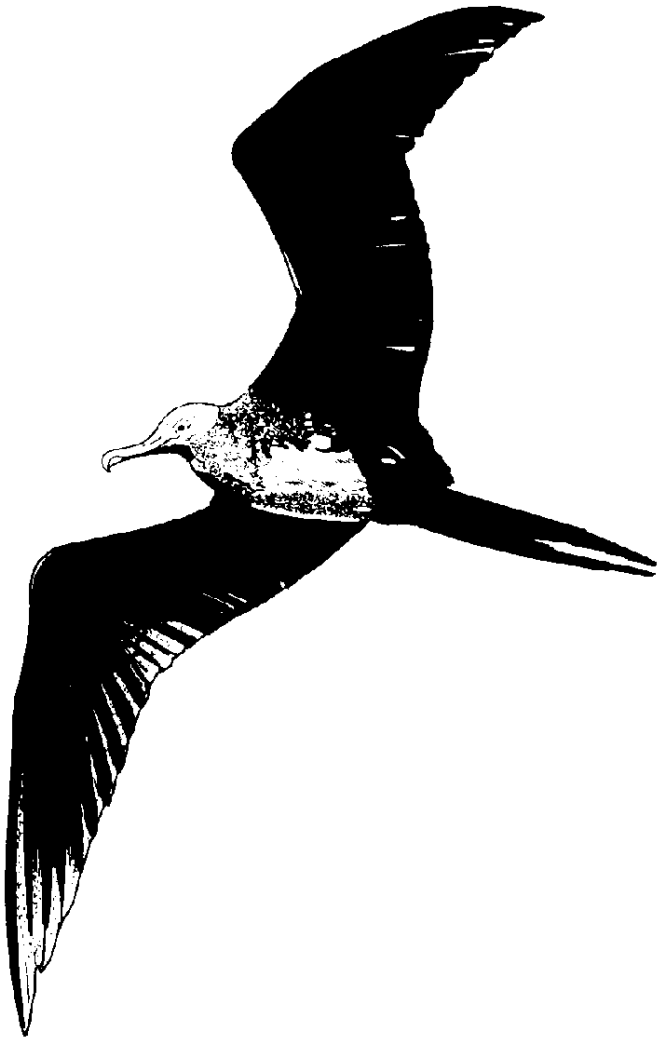

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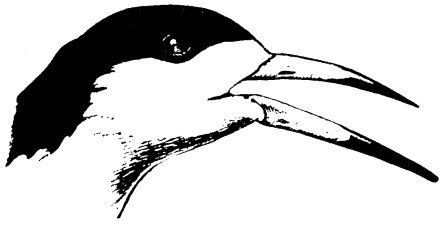
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