



SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, September 16, 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: Dr. Lance Benner will discuss “Remarkable Red Crossbills.”

Red Crossbills are finches with beaks that cross at the tips. In North America they have recently been classified into ten types, based on their flight calls, which may actually represent a number of different crossbill species. This talk will discuss the biology and adaptations of the Red Crossbill, make extensive use of eBird maps to illustrate their geographic distribution, and use recordings and sonograms to demonstrate how to identify their flight calls.



In the past three years Lance Benner has worked with Walter Szeliga, Kathi Ellsworth, and John Garrett, using sonograms to determine the Red Crossbill flight call types found in southern California. This led to the discovery that the Red Crossbill type occurring most often in southern California is Type 2, while many of the Red Crossbill in our area during the irruption of 2012-2013 were Type 3.

Lance Benner is a Research Scientist at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory where he specializes in radar observations of near-Earth asteroids. He received an A.B. in Physics at Cornell in 1987 and a Ph.D. in Earth and Planetary Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis in 1994. He came to JPL as a National Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow in 1995 and became a JPL employee in 1998.

Lance leads birding trips for Pasadena Audubon and has spoken at southern California Audubon meetings on owls, birds of Puerto Rico, birds of Guatemala, near-Earth asteroids, and red crossbills. His principal areas of bird expertise include owls and nightjars, red crossbills, montane and chaparral birds of southern California, birds of Puerto Rico, and birding by ear. Lance regularly contributes observations to eBird and audio recordings to Xeno-Canto, an online archive of world-wide bird vocalizations.

Next month’s meeting: Tuesday, October 21, same time, same place. Program to be announced.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, AUGUST 2014

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

A Hooded Merganser on Lake Cuyamaca 1 Aug (JTS) was most likely present all summer, and if so, provides the only known record for a summer straggler in San Diego County. A trip looking for storm-petrels at the 30-Mile Bank off San Diego on 30 Aug succeeded in locating a raft of about 750 birds, most being Black Storm-Petrels, but including one **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** and about 20 Least Storm-Petrels (DP). Certainly unexpected was a **frigatebird**, most likely a Magnificent Frigatebird, high over Jacumba on 12 Aug (EGK); there are six previous records from the interior of San Diego County, the most recent at Lake Henshaw on 8 Aug 1983, and all believed to have reached the county by way of the Gulf of California (Unit 2004). Probably related was a frigatebird at the south end of the Salton Sea on 11 Aug associated with a movement of tropical air northward from west Mexico. A young Masked Booby, having an obvious white collar, was reported off the mouth of the Tijuana River on 25 Aug (TM). What may have been the same adult Blue-footed Booby was fishing off the mouth of the Tijuana River on 8 Aug (PEL) and 26 Aug (GMcC), but more than one was known on the nearby Los Coronados Islands on 15 July. The number of Brown Boobies seen in San Diego County waters continues to increase, with more than 50 reported during this month (SW, PEL, JTS, BR, TM), highlighted by **30** counted at and just north of the mouth of the Tijuana River on 26 Aug (GMcC).

At least one adult Reddish Egret was on south San Diego Bay through August (GMcC), and at least two adult Yellow-crowned Night-Herons could be seen around the Sports Park in Imperial Beach during August (GMcC). A **Black Vulture** photographed over Jacumba on 3 Aug (EGK) provides the 2nd record for San Diego County, both documented by the same pho-

tographer. A Zone-tailed Hawk over Oceanside 24 Aug (MM) could have been the same bird reported over the Oceanside Golf Course on 31 Jul, and another was observed over Kit Carson Park in Escondido on 29 Aug (GDeL).

Five Black Oystercatchers at the tide pools on Pt. Loma 15 Aug (GJ) were the first to be reported locally in nearly two months. Two juvenile Solitary Sandpipers at the Dairy Mart Ponds in the Tijuana River Valley 30-31 Aug (NC, GMcC) were the earliest of the fall migrants this year. Baird's Sandpipers were generally late arriving in Southern California this fall; however, five had been found in this County by the month's end, with single juveniles at the Santa Margareta River mouth on 2 Aug (JB) and 18 Aug (JMCM), a juvenile photographed on the salt ponds at south San Diego Bay on 22 Aug (RTP) and two juveniles together at the Tijuana River mouth on 28 Aug (MS). The three Semipalmated Sandpipers known present were all ju-



Black Vulture in Jacumba.
Photo by Eric Kallen.

veniles on the salt ponds at south San Diego Bay, with one there 3-8 Aug (KR, PEL), another on 15 Aug (MS) and the third there on 17 Aug (MS). The only Pectoral Sandpiper was an adult photographed at the San Luis Rey River mouth in Oceanside on 20 Aug (JB). A Wilson's Snipe at Lower Otay Lake on 3 Aug (PEL) provides the earliest date for a fall migrant in San Diego County.

Unexpected at this time of the year were two Scripps's Murrelets about 3 miles off Pt. Loma on 2 and 3 Aug (SW, GN) and a recently dead one recovered about 15 miles west of La Jolla on 20 Aug (DP)—Scripps's Murrelets are believed to move northward and farther off shore after nesting, with records from as far north as the waters off British Columbia. Reasonable numbers of Craveri's Murrelets were present off San Diego through August as evident from reports of as many as 13 seen in a day in the area 5-10 miles off Pt. Loma on 2 Aug (SW), 17 Aug (JTS), 20 Aug (DP) and 30 Aug (DP). A Franklin's Gull, rare in San Diego County, flew over Pt. La Jolla in La Jolla on 4 Aug (PEL). More Black Terns were reported on the coast this fall than in recent years, with a flock of 14 at Pt. La Jolla on 3 Aug (JB, SW), along with one there on 4 Aug (PEL) and two more there on 5 Aug (PEL), one at the San Luis Rey River mouth on 8 Aug (JB), one at Border Field State Park on 21 Aug (MS) and another on south San Diego Bay on 25 Aug (TAB).

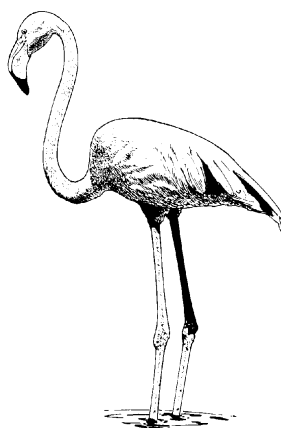
A few White-winged Doves move west to the coast each fall, with single birds seen in Leucadia 8 Aug

(JMCM), the Linda Vista area of San Diego 14 Aug (KR), the Sabre Springs district of San Diego 15 Aug (LR), the Del Mar Housing area of Camp Pendleton 18-22 Aug (JMCM, JB), on Pt. Loma 24 Aug (GN) and in Imperial Beach 30 Aug (CA) so far this fall. A Vermilion Flycatcher at Batiquitos Lagoon 24-25 Aug (TG, PAG) was an early fall migrant. A silent molting adult kingbird photographed at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on Pt. Loma 23 Aug (GN) looked most like a Tropical Kingbird—since most, if not all Tropical Kingbirds occurring along the coast of California in fall are hatch-year birds, and none have ever been found this early in the fall, the true identity of this bird may never be known. An adult Magnolia Warbler found in Jacumba 21 Aug (EGK) was still present at the end of the month. A Green-tailed Towhee at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 28 Aug (GN) establishes the earliest date for a fall migrant in this county.

Listed observers: Caron Andregg, Thomas A. Blackman, Justin Bosler, Nancy Christensen, Gail DeLalla, Peter A. Ginsburg, Tito Gonzalez, Ginger Johnson, Eric G. Kallen, Paul E. Lehman, Michael Martin, Guy McCaskie, Jimmy McMorran, Tom Meixner, Gary Nunn, Robert T. Patton, Dave Povey, Bruce Rideout, Kerry Ross, Lisa Ruby, Matt Sadowski, Justyn T. Stahl, Stan Walens.

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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