The **SKIMMER**

Volume 42, Number 12—December 2015

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, December 8, 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. **Note the changed date!**

Program: Members of SDFO! Mark your calendars: this year our Holiday Party gathering will be on **Tuesday, 8 December 2015 at 6 p.m**. We will be meeting in the Hoffman Room as usual with food and drinks, a look at San Diego County Rare Birds in 2015, and socializing! Come and enjoy the holiday spirit with fellow SDFO members. Volunteers are needed to help with party setup—please e-mail Dave Povey **dpovey @nethere.com**.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, January 19, 2016, same time, same place. Program to be announced.

Christmas Bird Counts Are Coming!

Here is a list of dates and contact information for the local Christmas Bird Counts:

San Diego Sat Dec 19th Steve Ritt stevenmritt@gmail.com

Anza-Borrego Sun Dec 20th Bob Theriault rtheriault@uci.edu

Lake Henshaw Mon Dec 21st Gretchen Cummings gretchen.bc@sbcglobal.net

Oceanside Sun Dec 27th Andy Mauro akamauro1@gmail.com

Rancho Santa Fe Tue Dec 29th Robert Patton rpatton@san.rr.com

Escondido Sat Jan 2nd Ken Weaver gnatcatcher@sbcglobal.net

SDFO NEWS (cont.)

SDFO New Year's Day Pelagic Trip

The San Diego Field Ornithologists New Year's Day Pelagic will be aboard the *Sea Adventure 80* out of H&M Landing in San Diego Bay. The trip will sail at 8 a.m., and return at 2:30 p.m., Jan. 1, 2016. Cost is $40, and this trip has no non-paying leaders. Fifty-seven spots are open to all SDFO members, their families, and friends. Leftover spots will sold in December.

Please make your reservation with me at my e-mail dpovey@nethere.com , give the name of each person going and a contact phone number. Payment will be made to SDFO on the morning of the trip. We cannot take credit cards.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, NOVEMBER 2015

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

The highlight in November was the presence of a well studied and photographed female-plumaged **Varied Bunting** at the home of Keith and Sara Mayers on Pt. Loma 1-2 November. This record will no doubt be endorsed by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC), bringing the number of species known in San Diego County to an impressive **518**. This is only the 5th or 6th time that Varied Bunting has been recorded in California depending on the outcome of the Indigo/Varied Bunting discussed in last month's *Skimmer*. The earlier records of Varied Bunting in California are of a flock of 15 or more along the Colorado River at Blythe, Riverside County in February 1914 (specimens of a female and an adult male tak-

A female/immature male Varied Bunting at Point Loma on 1 November. Note the lack of streaking on the underparts and the curved culmen. Photo by Thomas A. Blackman.

en on 8 and 9 Feb), an adult male at Mesquite Springs in Death Valley National Park 18-21 Nov 1977, a "female" at Horse Thief Spring in the desert of San Bernardino County 10-12 Oct 2012, and an adult male along the San Gabriel River near Encanto Park, Los Angeles County 26 Mar-20 Apr 2014. A well photographed Cave Swallow in Long Beach on 28 November should bring the Los Angeles County species total to **518** as well. However, San Diego County has Nazca Booby and Gray Thrasher pending CBRC endorsement, whereas Los Angeles County has Black-bellied Whistling-Duck pending—all three of these records are burdened with provenance and/or identification questions, so not guaranteed to receive CBRC endorsement.

A Long-tailed Duck flying south with Surf Scoters at Point La Jolla in La Jolla on 4 November. Photo by Gary Nunn.

November saw the first of the wintering Brant, with over 100 at the J Street Marina in Chula Vista on 3 Nov (GMcC), along with a major influx of wintering Surf Scoters. A careful check through southbound flocks of Surf Scoters flying past Pt. La Jolla in La Jolla resulted in the photographing of a White-winged Scoter there on 15 Nov (GN), two Black Scoter there on 3 Nov (GN), four there on 4 Nov (MS) and two more on 25 Nov (MS, GN), and a Long-tailed Duck there on 4 Nov (GN). In addition, at least one adult male Black Scoter has been accompanying the Surf Scoters on south San Diego Bay off Grand Caribe Shoreline Park since 5 Nov (MS), and a female was at the northern end of the Tijuana River estuary marsh on 25 Nov (GN). A Short-tailed Shearwater, a species that has been unexpectedly scarce off California this fall, was photographed at Pt. La Jolla on 26 Nov (MS). The Neotropic Cormorant known present on Lake O'Neill at Camp Pendleton since 30 Sep was still there on 26 Nov (SB). A somewhat late migrant Broad-winged Hawk was photographed over Cabrillo National Monument on Pt. Loma on 4 Nov (CJ). A Swainson's Hawk over Coronado on 29 Nov (PEL) was either an exceptionally late migrant or a bird attempting to winter locally. An adult presumed wintering Zone-tailed Hawk at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park near Escondido since at least 14 Nov (CS, PM) was joined by an immature on 21 Nov (CJ).

A cooperative second-winter Black-legged Kittiwake was at the Imperial Beach pier 25-29 Nov (CA). A first-winter Laughing Gull was at Pt. La Jolla 2-3 Nov (GN), and an adult was associating with other gulls at the J Street Marina 17-30 Nov (JMcM). However, the most unexpected gull was a juvenile Less-

A juvenile Lesser Black-backed Gull at the mouth of the Tijuana River on 24 November. Photo by Matt Sadowski.

er Black-backed Gull at the Tijuana River mouth on 24 Nov (MS), which provides the 10th record for San Diego County—this species is not known to nest any closer to California than in Iceland, so has flown a great distance in its short life. A Northern Saw-whet Owl photographed at a private residence in Borrego Springs on 13 Nov (CW) was probably a migrant from well to the north of San Diego County rather than a bird from our local mountains. A Long-eared Owl roosting in the willows at San Elijo Lagoon on 11 Nov (ML) attracted many of our local bird photographers.

An Eastern Phoebe found in Jacumba on 21 Nov (TRS & EGK) and another at Lake Cuyamaca on 24 Nov (DB) are the only two reported locally this fall. One of the two Tropical Kingbirds near the Sail Ho Golf Course at Liberty Station in October was still present 29 Nov (MS) and will likely spend the winter. The Thick-billed Kingbird, present at the lower end of Poggi Canyon in Chula Vista during the past five winters, had returned on 21 Nov (PM) and will hopefully remain into March. The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, first seen at San Elijo Lagoon on 12 Oct (RTP), has been faithfully visiting the agricultural field fence line west of Mira Costa College at San Elijo Lagoon since 9 Nov (SB). A Townsend's Solitaire at San Diego City College in downtown San Diego 27-29 Nov (M & PT) was certainly unexpected. A Brown Thrasher at a private residence in Oceanside 2-3 Nov (KB) was a nice addition to the list of "rarities" known in this County this fall. Noteworthy wood-warblers found this month included a Magnolia Warbler along J St. in Coronado on 29 Nov (PEL), a Chestnut-sided Warbler on Coronado Ave. in Coronado on 22 Nov (PEL) and a Painted Redstart along West

A Long-eared Owl roosting in willows at San Elijo Lagoon on 11 November. Photo by Alex Bairstow.

An Eastern Phoebe in Jacumba on 21 November. Photo by Trent R. Stanley

ary salt-water marshes 23-30 Nov (MS, PEL), will undoubtedly remain for the winter, but probably only visible at times of very high tides. A Swamp Sparrow in National City's Kimball Park 28-30 Nov (SR) will likely winter locally. An Orchard Oriole well photographed near the west end of North Mission Bay Dr. in Pacific Beach on 28 Nov (GN) is presumably attempting to winter in that area.

Mountain finches are evidently on the move in the West: single Purple Finches reached our coast at Mt. Soledad in La Jolla on 2 Nov (ESP) and Cardiff-by-the-Sea on 19 Nov (PEL). A Cassin's Finch ate at a feeder in Jacumba on 29 Nov (EGK). Four Red Crossbills near the intersection of Del Mar Heights and Carmel Mountain Rds. in Carmel Valley on 11 Nov (DK), at least two along Inspiration Dr. in La Jolla on 16 Nov (PEL) and two over Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on Pt. Loma on 21 Nov (GN) were along the coast, and up to five visiting a feeder in Jacumba since 17 Nov (EGK) were well inland. Small numbers

The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at San Elijo Lagoon on 21 November. Photo by Mark Stratton.

Shepherd Canyon in Tierrasanta since 28 Nov (PEL). In addition, the Black-throated Green Warbler present for the 3rd winter in San Diego's Greenwood Cemetery since 16 Oct was still there on 8 Nov (MS), and another found in Chula Vista's Friendship Park on 1 Nov (PEL) was still present on 27 Nov (LS). An adult male Painted Bunting was with introduced Scaly-breasted Munias at the Public Works Buildings in Del Mar on 24 Nov (DT).

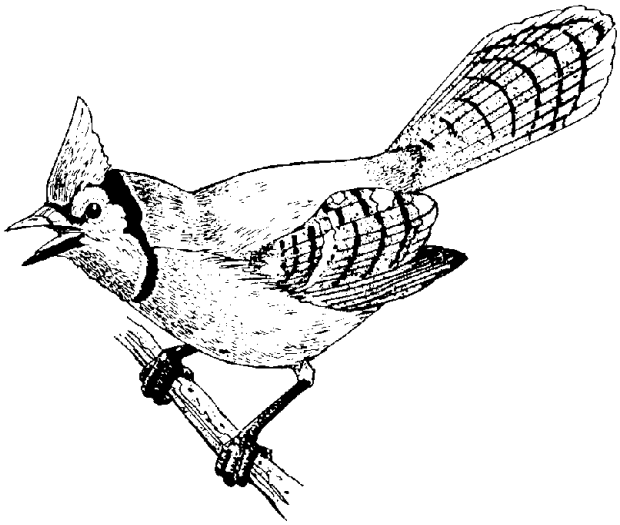
At least five Nelson's Sparrows, forced into view by the 7-foot + tides, at the northern part of the Tijuana River estu-

One of at least five Nelson's Sparrows at the northern part of Tijuana River estuary on 26 November. Photo by Anthony Mercieca.

of Pine Siskins were seen throughout the coastal lowlands, including at least twelve at a thistle feeder on Mt. Soledad after 5 Nov (ESP). An Evening Grosbeak was at a feeder in Jacumba on 30 Nov (EGK).

A flock of Pine Siskins at a feeder on Mount Soledad in La Jolla on 5 November. Photo by Ethna S. Piazza.

Listed observers: Christopher Adler, Dave Batzler, Steve Brad, Kate Brown, Charles Jackson, Eric G. Kallen, Dan King, Paul E. Lehman, Max Leibowitz, Guy McCaskie, Jimmy McMorran, Peter Musta, Gary Nunn, Robert T. Patton, Ethna S. Piazza, Steve Ritt, Matt Sadowski, Chelsea Smith, Lea Squires, Trent R. Stanley, Millie and Peter Thomas (M & PT), David Trissel, Christina Warren.



SAN DIEGO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

President	Gary Nunn (650) 305-0029 garybnunn@gmail.com
Vice-president	Dave Povey (619) 972-3098 dpovey@nethere.com
Secretary	Conny Jamison (619) 269-3264 cmjamison@cox.net
Treasurer	Rich Breisch (858) 278-6280 rsbreisch@san.rr.com
Program Chair	Gary Nunn (650) 305-0029 garybnunn@gmail.com
Membership Chair	Mike Goldhamer (619) 888-6183 mikeegee@cox.net
Skimmer Publishing Editor	John Walters (619) 267-1821 johnfwalters5552@gmail.com Gary Nunn (650) 305-0029 garybnunn@gmail.com

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 **johnfwalters5552@gmail.com**

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: Mike Goldhamer, 1231 Myrtle Ave., San Diego, CA 92103. For membership information, call Mike at (619) 888-6183.

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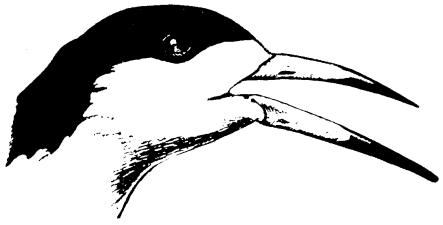
San Diego Field Ornithologists
c/o Mike Goldhamer
1231 Myrtle Ave.
San Diego, CA 92103