The SKIMMER

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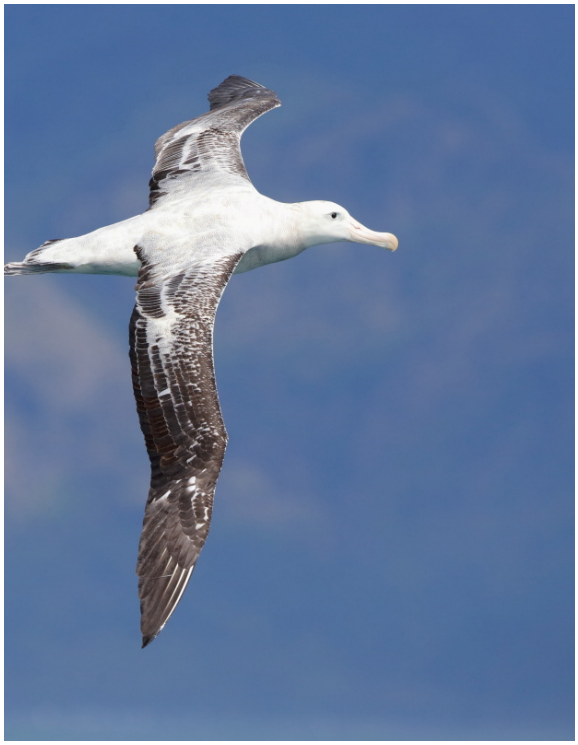
SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, March 15, 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: "Joys and Challenges—Pelagic Bird Photography Around the World," presented by Matthew Binns, Encinitas, California.



Matthew Binns will describe pelagic trips on four continents and the challenges that pelagic birds present to bird photographers. Matthew will share some of his experiences and passion for pelagic birding.

Matthew Binns is a molecular geneticist who has had an interest in birds since childhood. He has been lucky enough to travel extensively with his scientific work and has taken the opportunity to bird wherever he has been. Growing up close to the North Sea in England, and with a father who had a passion for boats, he had an early introduction to seabirds. Over the years his interest in bird photography has grown, so that he now describes himself more as a bird photographer than a birder.

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

Pay Your Dues!

If you haven't paid your SDFO dues for 2016 yet, see the back page for details. You can pay Membership Chair Mike Goldhamer at the March meeting, or send him a check by mail.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, FEBRUARY 2016

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

The earliest of the spring migrants have arrived, with eleven Swainson's Hawks at Borrego Springs 13-14 Feb (HC), a Rufous Hummingbird in Jacumba on 1 Feb (EGK), at least one Pacific-slope Flycatcher in the Tijuana River Valley on 27 Feb (MiS), two Cliff Swallows foraging over Lake Murray on 4 Feb (SBu) and a Scott's Oriole in Ramona on 16 Feb (SE). It is more problematic to determine whether a Sage Thrasher near Jamul on 11 Feb (JM) was an early spring migrant or a bird wintering locally. This thrasher is known as an early spring migrant, with birds moving north through San Diego County in February (Unitt 2004), but a long-staying bird at San Elijo Lagoon 28 Jan-24 Feb (SBr) appeared to have wintered locally, whereas seven together near Ranchita on 26 Feb (Nancy Christensen) were obvious migrants. The first of the spring Bell's Vireos are normally singing males at known breeding locations in the latter half of March (Unitt 2004), so a silent individual at Bataquitos Lagoon on 26 Feb (MaS) probably wintered locally. An adult male Wilson's Warbler, a species known to winter in coastal San Diego County in very small numbers, at a residence in Santee on 25 Feb (JS) was almost two weeks earlier than the previous earliest published date of 6 March in San Diego County. The male Hooded Oriole in Jacumba 17 Feb (EGK) would be exceptionally early if a spring migrant, with an adult male in Sabre Springs on 26 Feb (LR) establishing one of the earliest dates for arrival (see Unitt 2004). In the first half of March observers should watch for the first Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Western Kingbirds, Warbling Vireos, Lucy's Warblers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Bullock's Orioles, and Black-chinned Sparrows. Keep in mind, the earliest arrivals are invariably adult males in full color, so such species as a Yellow Warbler (earliest of the spring migrants not expected until the end of March) or a Western Tanager (earliest of the spring migrants not expected until early April) in other than bright summer plumage, are more than likely birds that wintered locally—it is important to know the status and seasonal occurrence of the birds in the area one is birding, and Unitt (2004) certainly contains this information for San Diego County.

This Zone-tailed Hawk photo taken at Safari Park near Escondido on 13 February 2016 well shows the tail pattern of an immature—an adult would show only one or two much broader white bands. *Photo by Jim Pawlicki*

The wintering adult and an immature Zone-tailed Hawk remained in the area of Safari Park near Escondido through 20 Feb (AEC) and 29 Feb (CH); additional individuals elsewhere in the County were an immature at Fallbrook on 16 Feb (AM) and an adult at Pacific Highland Ranch on 23 Feb (MW). The known wintering Pacific Golden-Plovers at the Tijuana River mouth and in Del Mar were still present 28 Feb (BF) and 7 Feb (SES), with both expected to stay well into March. The adult Laughing Gull found on south San Diego Bay at Chula Vista on 17 Nov (JMcM) was still present 23 Feb (MaS) when in the adjacent salt works ponds. Two Lesser Black-backed Gulls were known present, with a well marked first-winter bird sporadically seen at Lower Otay Lake 18 Jan-15 Feb (JP, EA), and an adult commuting between Lower Otay Lake and the salt works ponds on south San Diego

This adult Lesser Black-backed Gull photographed within the "salt works" at the south end of San Diego Bay on 11 February 2016 was also seen with other gulls at Lower Otay Lake—note that the streaking on the head is most concentrated around the noticeably pale eyes; that the bill is noticeably slimmer than that of a Western Gull, and that the legs and feet are yellow. *Photo by Matt Sadowski.*

there 20 Feb (RA), and another at the North Island Navy Base since 18 Dec (RTP) was still present 9 Feb (JMcM). The Thick-billed Kingbird spending its 6th winter at the lower end of Poggi Canyon in Chula Vista was still present 29 Feb (JW) and can be expected to stay into April. A Cassin's Vireo found in Del Mar on 10 Jan (EC) was still present 3 Feb (SES), at least one around the Nature Center at San Elijo Lagoon 3-19 Feb (TG, ML) was in the same area frequented by a known wintering Plumbeous Vireo, and a third photographed at the now abandoned San Luis Rey Downs Golf Club near Bonsall on 27 Feb (DM) was in the same area where a Blue-headed Vireo was photographed on 27 December 2015. A known wintering Northern Wa-

Bay 9-24 Feb (BM, MaS). A Short-eared Owl, scarce in San Diego County, was at the salt works ponds on south San Diego Bay 21-24 Feb (MaS). Most unusual was a vocal Northern Saw-whet Owl at about 400 ft. elevation in Harmony Grove 19-24 Feb (EH)—one in El Cajon on 27 Nov 2015 (PU) provides the only other record for the coastal lowlands of San Diego County, though two have been found around Borrego Springs in recent years. Common Poorwills were first heard calling this spring in Tierrasanta on 20 Feb (RTP). A brightly colored adult male Broad-billed Hummingbird was photographed at a feeder near Lake Murray on 17 Feb (M & PT). The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker known wintering in Collier Park in Ramona was still present 28 Feb (RA), and an adult male was found at Santee Lakes in Santee on 10 Feb (JS).

A Pacific-slope Flycatcher around the Nature Center at San Elijo Lagoon 21 Dec-22 Feb (CD, JP) and another at a private residence in Oceanside 23 Jan-13 Feb (AB) were both evidently wintering locally. A Tropical Kingbird, present along Woodworth Way at Liberty Station since October, was still

This vocal Northern Saw-whet Owl in Harmony Grove on 22 February 2016 provides only the second record for the coastal lowlands of San Diego County. *Photo by Dave Batzler.*

This adult male Broad-billed Hummingbird photographed near Lake Murray on 17 February 2016 provides the only record for this species in San Diego County this winter. *Photo by Millie and Peter Thomas.*

The wintering Hepatic Tanager near the Marston House in Balboa Park has not been reported since 13 Feb (LS), but is likely still present. Far more noteworthy than the multiple Summer Tanagers known present in and around San Diego this winter, was an adult male photographed at the De Anza Country Club in Borrego Springs on 25 Feb (D & MY), this no doubt being the same male found here on 20 Dec (TAB). A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak frequenting a feeder in Jamul since 20 Dec was still present 27 Feb (JM). An adult male Orchard Oriole found along Arden Dr. in Solana Beach on 29 Dec (PEL) was still there 24 Feb (DT), and unexpected was a female photographed at this same location on 20 Feb (RA). Four Baltimore Orioles were known present this month, with the wintering adult male and female along Woodworth Way at Liberty Station still there 21 Feb (JB), the adult male found at North Island Navy Base on 19 Dec (RTP) seen again on 9 Feb

terthrush adjacent to the Nature Center at San Elijo Lagoon was still present 22 Feb (JP); the Palm Warbler found near Pantoja Park in downtown San Diego on 16 Dec (SC) was still present on 20 Feb (RA); the Black-throated Green Warbler spending its 3rd winter in San Diego's Greenwood Cemetery was still there on 29 Feb (AB); the Painted Redstart found at West Shepherd Canyon in Tierrasanta on 28 Nov (PEL) was still there on 23 Feb (RG), and another was photographed east of Lower Otay Lake in Hollenbeck Canyon on 21 Feb (KF).

Two adult male Lark Buntings were well photographed in Jacumba, with one present 19-21 Feb (EGK) and the other 24-27 Feb (EGK). At least one of the wintering Nelson's Sparrow was along Seacoast Blvd. in Imperial Beach on 6 Feb (TG), but it takes super high tides to push these sparrows out of the marsh vegetation and into view, so at least one or two are probably still present. Three White-throated Sparrows were known present this month, with one frequenting a feeder in Jamul since 30 Dec still present on 27 Feb (JM), one seen along Ponto Dr. in Carlsbad on 11 Feb (MM), and the third found near the Seascape Apartment complex in Carlsbad on 27 Feb (TG).

This adult male Lark Bunting molting into alternate plumage in Jacumba on 19 February 2016 was one of two such birds there at the end of February. *Photo by Eric G. Kallen.*

Wintering Summer Tanagers are much scarcer in the interior of California than along the coast, and this adult male photographed at the De Anza Country Club in Borrego Springs on 25 February 2016 provides the first such record for eastern San Diego County. *Photo by Dick and Marcy Yates*

(JMcM), and another adult male along Grape St. in Balboa Park 25 Jan-7 Feb (NC, PEL).

Listed observers: Eitan Altman, Ryan Andrews, Alex Bairstow, Thomas A. Blackman, Steve Brad (SBr), Jeff Bray, Samuel Burckhardt (SBu), Nancy Christensen, Scott Clark, Hal Cohen, Elizabeth Copper, Colin Dillingham, Steve Ellis, Bobby Figarotta, Kyle Fischer, Tito Gonzalez, Richard Griebe, Ed Hall, Charity Hagen, Eric G. Kallen, Alexander E. Koonce, Paul E. Lehman, Max Leibowitz, John Martin, Michael Martin, Jimmy McMorran, Alan Miller, Brennan Mulrooney, Dustin Murray, Robert T. Patton, Jim Pawlicki, Lisa Ruby, Matt Sadowski (MaS), Mike Sanders (MiS), Susan E. Smith, Lea Squires, Jeremiah Stock, Millie and Peter Thomas, David Trissel, Philip Unitt, James Weis, Mandy Weston, Dick and Marcy Yates.

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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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**

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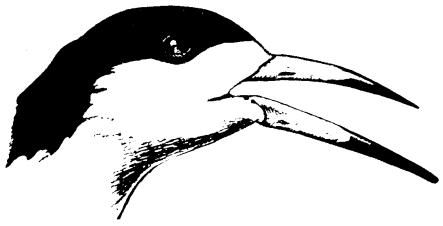
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