The SKIMMER

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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, August 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: Ed Henry will discuss "Bhutan: Birds & Other Animals."

Ed and his wife Connie visited Bhutan for 17 days in April of 2016. They were there to see the place, people, and culture, and especially to photograph birds and other wildlife. Ed's photos will show over one hundred species of birds, some of them quite colorful (like this Green-tailed Sunbird), and a few species of mammals.

Ed Henry took his undergraduate degree in Industrial Engineering and Business Management from Kettering University, but a blossoming interest in folk music and society led him to graduate school at Michigan State University, where he earned the doctorate in Cultural Anthropology. In the village in northern India where he carried out his Ph.D. fieldwork on folk music he enjoyed seeing birds like the Green Bee-eater and Indian Roller, but he taught Cultural Anthropology at San Diego State University for 33 years before doing more serious bird-watching and bird photography. Ed has published a book, long-playing record, and compact disc on the folk music of India. He is a past President of San Diego Audubon Society.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, September 20, same time, same place. Program: "Threatened Woodpeckers and Habitats of California," by Stephen Shunk.

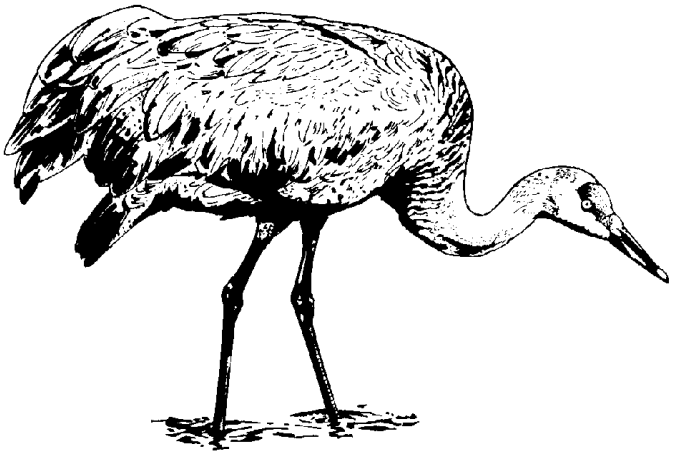
57TH SUPPLEMENT OF AOU CHECKLIST SPLITS THE WESTERN SCRUB-JAY

It's AOU Supplement time again, when the American Ornithological Union revises the official list birders use as the last word on avian relationships. Quite a bit of major reshuffling of higher-level relationships, based on new DNA work, especially among the shearwaters, shorebirds, tanagers, and vireos (Kevin Burns's work on tanagers has finally made the Big Time). As far as our local birds are concerned, the biggest change is a split in the Western Scrub-Jay. The birds we see around San Diego and coastal California become California Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), while the interior birds in the Great Basin and Rockies become Woodhouse's Scrub Jay (*A. woodhouseii*). Keep an eye out for Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay—it hasn't yet been reported from San Diego County, but it's on the Los Angeles County list.

Another split of interest to our local pelagic birders is a three-way split of Leach's Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*). The birds breeding off Guadalupe Island, Mexico become Townsend's Storm -Petrel (*O. socorroensis*) and Ainley's Storm-Petrel (*O. cheimomnestes*). The breeding ranges of the two new species overlap, but Townsend's breeds in the summer, while Ainley's breeds in the winter. In addition, the genus *Puffinus* of shearwaters has been split into *Puffinus* and *Ardenna*—the two new genera are quite distinct at the DNA level.

There's been a major reshuffling of the shorebirds in the family Scolopacidae—no changes to the common names, but a major reordering of subfamilies and such. The most interesting change is the inclusion of the phalaropes with the tringine sandpipers (including the genus *Tringa*).

What else? The New World vultures in the family Cathartidae have been pulled out of the raptor order Acciptriformes and given an order of their own: Cathartiformes. The Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* is now *Antigone canadensis.* And a couple of minor changes to common names: the misbegotten Sky Lark has been returned to Eurasian Skylark, and the Orange Bishop, an escaped cage bird occasionally sighted around San Diego, is now officially the Northern Red Bishop. There are lots of other changes, mostly of birds south of the border; you can see the full list at *The Auk* 133:544-560.



SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, JULY 2016

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

At least two Reddish Egrets, now expected in coastal San Diego County, were present on south San Diego Bay through July (GMcC), and an adult at the Tijuana River mouth 19 Jul (PEL) was joined by a hatch-year bird on 24 Jul (DDiT). At least three Yellow-crowned Night-Herons remained in the area of the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge through July (GMcC).

The adult American Golden-Plover found at the Cockleburr Creek mouth on Camp Pendleton on 16 June remained through 14 July (BM), and another adult in alternate plumage at the Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge in Chula Vista 19-20 July (RTP and LS) provided the 3rd record for the County this year. An adult Solitary Sandpiper at Famosa Slough in Ocean Beach 15-16 July (SES, M & PT) was an early fall migrant. Two Dunlin in alternate plumage on south San Diego Bay 1-2 July (PEL) were most unusual since few have been recorded in California during mid-June through August. A Curlew Sandpiper in alternate plumage photographed near the San Diego River mouth on 10 July (JB) was the 9th ever to be found in San Diego County.

Single Common Murres at Pt. La Jolla in La Jolla on 7 July (GN) and 9 July (PEL) were most unusual, since wintering birds are normally gone from the waters off San Diego County by mid-May and are not expected to return much before mid-October (Unitt 2004). Two Craveri's Murrelets off San Diego on 15 July (M & PT), and two more there on 16 July (DP) were the only ones reported this month.

Two Sabine's Gulls 4 km off Pt. Loma on 24 July (GN) were the earliest of the expected fall migrants this far south. Single Heermann's Gulls far inland on Lake Cuyamaca on 13 July (DG) and 31 July (DG) were most likely individuals that had moved northward from the Gulf of California rather than birds wandering inland from the coast. A Black Tern, now quite scarce along the coast of San Diego County, was 7.5 km off Pt. Loma on 24 Jul (GN). An Elegant Tern a short distance inland on Sweetwater Reservoir on 3 July (PEL) provides one of a very few such records away from the immediate coast and bays in San Diego County (Unitt 2004). Single Common Terns at Emory Cove on San Diego Bay on 10-15 July (PEL, MS) and at the San Luis Rey River mouth in Oceanside on 28 Jul (PT) were the only two this month—a far cry from the numbers at this time of the year ten years ago.

The third American Golden-Plover found in San Diego County this year was this adult in alternate plumage at the Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge in Chula Vista 19-20 July 2016. *Photo by Lea Squires.*

At least two Brown-crested Flycatchers were still present at the Roadrunner Club in Borrego Springs on 16 July (AB), and one was along San Felipe Creek near Scissors Crossing on 16 July (GN). An adult female Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Twin Trails Park in Rancho Penasquitos, first seen on 26 June (PS), was still there at the end of July, at which time it was feeding three fledged full-grown young. However, the young are clearly hybrids, most likely Scissor-tailed Flycatcher x Western Kingbird from their appearances. The pair no doubt nested in this immediate area, so the female must have been present since at least early June. No Western Kingbirds were known present at the end of July, suggesting the mate left, leaving the care of the young to the female.

An adult female Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Twin Trails Park in Rancho Penasquitos along with two of the hybrid offspring on 30 July 2016. *Photo by Thomas Ford-Hutchinson.*

Totally unexpected was this brightly colored Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler at Villa La Jolla Park in La Jolla on 5 July 2016. *Photo by Tito Gonzalez.*

A Warbling Vireo in Jacumba on 29 July (EGK) was the earliest of the fall migrants to be reported this year. Since the Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler is at best a rare breeder in the highest portion of our mountains, and unknown in the coastal lowlands in July (Unitt 2004), the presence of one at Villa La Jolla Park in La Jolla on 5 July (TG) and another at the San Diego Botanical Garden in Encinitas on 21 July (SES) were unprecedented.

A Black-throated Sparrow in Spring Valley on 30 July (RN) was in the coastal lowlands where considered a rare fall straggler. A Summer Tanager in Jamul on 29 July (JM) was well away from any known nesting locations, so best considered an early fall vagrant. A Yellow-headed Blackbird, scarce along the coast, was at Famosa Slough in Ocean Beach 14-19 Jul (GN).

Listed observers: Alex Bairstow, John Bruin, Dean DiTommaso, Tito Gonzalez, David Goodward, Eric G. Kallen, Paul E. Lehman, John Martin, Guy McCaskie, Brennan Mulrooney, Richard Norgaard, Gary Nunn, Robert T. Patton, Dave Povey, Millie and Peter Thomas, Matt Sadowski, Susan E. Smith, Lea Squires, Peter Syka, Paula Theobald.

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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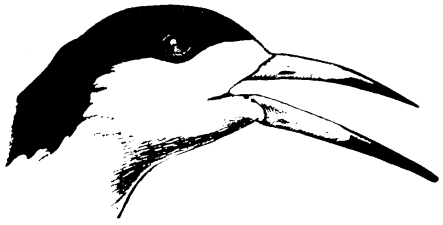
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