The SKIMMER

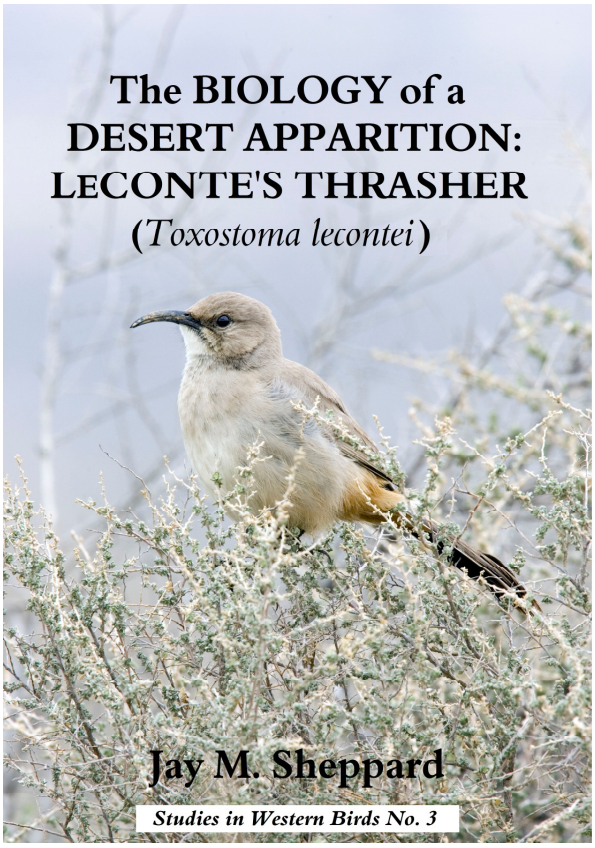
Volume 45, Number 4—April 2018

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, April 24, at 6:00 p.m., in the Hoffman Room of the San Diego Foundation Building, 2508 Historic Decatur Rd. 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!** Our speaker was unable to be with us at the normal time.

Program: "Chasing a Desert Apparition: LeConte's Thrasher," by Jay Sheppard.



LeConte's Thrasher is a poorly-known and little-studied species found in the hottest and driest deserts of the American Southwest and northwestern Mexico. Mr. Sheppard has spent years studying this enigmatic bird. He will be providing some of the results of his study and some insight into the daily life of this thrasher. A well-illustrated presentation of the thrasher's ecology will be followed by a detailed summary of its general biology. A color-marked thrasher population was studied near Maricopa, California, resulting in a better understanding of their daily lives, dispersal and movements. Other fascinating aspects of this shy bird's life include information on reproduction, behavior, and vocalizations, as well as feeding and prey preferences. Numerous anecdotes will also be given in this talk. Jay's monograph on this species is being published by the Western Field Ornithologists and is expected to be out this coming April. Jay is a retired ornithologist of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and now lives in Laurel, Maryland.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, May 15, same time, same place—we will be meeting on our usual third Tuesday of the month. Program to be announced.

SDFO NEWS [cont.}

New Address for the SanDiegoRegionBirding Listserv

We hope you've all made the jump to the new home of San Diego Region Birding:

https://groups.io/g/SanDiegoRegionBirding/

If you haven't, copy the link above to your browser to join, so you don't miss out on any emails to the listserv. The new host is sleek and modern, and allows easy searches of the SDRB archives (back to 2013). Unfortunately, we were unable to move the historic SDBirds archives over without permission from the list owners.

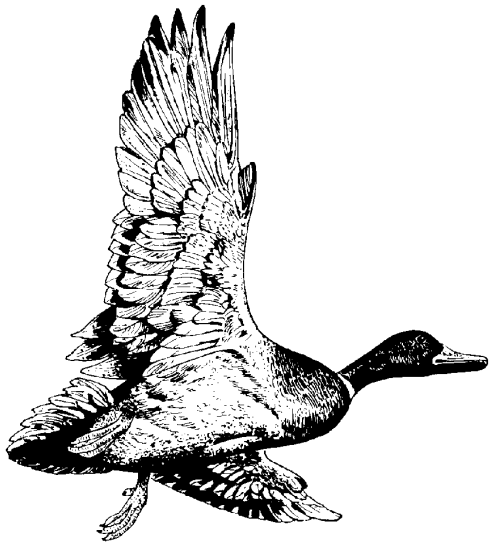
We hope this new host will prevent the hiccups we had been experiencing with Yahoo! Groups wherein email delays of several days were occurring.

If you have any questions email **justyn.stahl@gmail.com**

City Nature Challenge, 27-30 April 2018

Justyn Stahl (iNaturalist handle: vireolanius) writes,

"The weekend of April 27-30, an international bioblitz competition will be taking place. In order to participate, observations (photo/audio required) much be submitted to iNaturalist, either online, which is easy for drag-and-drop photos from camera, or through the app using your phone's camera. All organisms count (fleas, cacti, parrots, voles, sharks, you name it), but our specialty here is birds, obviously, and we hope to win by showcasing the diversity of species occurring in San Diego County during that period. I'll provide more updates later, and help orchestrate a strategy to maximize our avian results, but in the meantime, I'd encourage you to check out the app, and play around with uploading your new or existing photos. Then you'll be an expert by late April!"



SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, MARCH 2018

Compiled by Sara Baase Mayers

Notes: Species in bold are on the California Bird Records Committee review list. A "+" following 31 Mar indicates known presence into April. We use *eBird* as the attribution for the latest date when there are multiple reports on eBird for that date.

Migrants and summer residents have been arriving as expected in March, but a few species showed up early. The *San Diego County Bird Atlas* indicates that Least Terns typically begin arriving in mid-April and gives 30 March as the earliest date, but they set a new record for the county this year. On 25 Mar, one was photographed at the west basin of Batiquitos Lagoon in Carlsbad (TG), and two were reported at La Jolla (SW). (Orange County also had a new early-date record with one photographed 24 Mar [Winkleman].) Purple Martins, now rare in San Diego County, typically return in April, with an early date of 23 Mar, but this year two broke that record: a male photographed at San Elijo Lagoon in Cardiff 18 Mar (SP) and another photographed in Borrego Springs 19 Mar (DM). (An early male was also seen on San Clemente Island in LA County 17 Mar [Stahl].) Sightings of Purple Martins continued through the month: one at Doane Pond in Palomar Mountain State Park 23 Mar (EM), one at Santee Lakes in Santee 24 Mar (BM), five at Lake Hodges in San Diego 24 Mar (JS), and one at Bayfront Park, J St., in Chula Vista 25 Mar (CZ). A few Black-headed Grosbeaks arrived early, with one in Carlsbad 16 Mar (DE) and one at a residence in Encinitas 18 Mar (SC); the Atlas describes them as punctually arriving in the last few days of March, with a record early date of 16 Mar. Lazuli Buntings typically arrive in April; a male photographed at Harry Griffin Regional Park in La Mesa 24 Mar (EA) was early.

This female Eurasian Wigeon on the golf course at the Roadrunner Club in Borrego Springs was photographed 13 Mar by Chezy Yusuf.

Wintering Eurasian Wigeons continued into March with single males at San Elijo Lagoon 29 Nov-27 Mar (JMcM, SMcG), on the Sweetwater River in Chula Vista 16 Dec-18 Mar (DJ, JS), and in the Highland Valley/ Rangeland Rds. area near Ramona 15 Jan-4 Mar (BP, *eBird*). A female was photographed at the Roadrunner Club in Borrego Springs 13 Mar (CY). Surf Scoters away from the coast—probably spring migrants flying northward from the Gulf of California—included two at Lower Otay Lake (east of Chula Vista) 11 Mar (LS), two at Lake Hodges 11 Mar (DH), one at Lake Cuyamaca (near Cuyamaca Rancho State Park) 12 Mar (SH) and four there 23 Mar (NC), and one at Santee Lakes 15 Mar (JR). An immature male White-winged Scoter was photographed from the beach at Border Field State Park 21 Mar (MSa). Up to four Black Scoters were in south San Diego Bay near Coronado Cays 11 Dec-4 Mar, with all four present on 4 Mar (BLC, MSa); an immature male was

photographed at the Tijuana River mouth 16 Mar (NJD), and two males were at the D St. Fill in Chula Vista (a restricted area) 26 Mar (MSa). Three Long-tailed Ducks were in the county, with two seen at various times in the Otay River and the saltworks in south San Diego Bay 9 Dec-24 Mar (DB, JTS) and 22 Feb-24 Mar (GCH, JTS, MSa) and a third in the southernmost of the Dairy Mart ponds in the Tijuana River Valley 14-31 Mar+ (JN, *eBird*).

A Red-necked Grebe stayed just off Shelter Island on San Diego Bay 19 Jan - 31 Mar+ (SJ).

Two Vaux's Swifts over the Dairy Mart ponds in the Tijuana River Valley 25 Mar (CJ) may have wintered locally; the Atlas cites 4 Apr as the earliest date for migrants. A Ridgway's Rail was documented by audio recording away from the coast in Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve in San Diego 26 Mar (MN). The Pacific Golden-Plover that returned for a second winter at the mouth of the Tijuana River was present this season 21 Aug-31 Mar (CB, *eBird*). A Mountain Plover, now very rare in the county, was at the Tijuana River mouth 2-15 Mar (DR, *eBird*). Single adult Black-legged Kittiwakes were seen from Pt. La Jolla in La Jolla 15 Mar (SF) and 17 Mar (BR). An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull, a very rare bird for San Diego County, was photographed at the saltworks in south San Diego Bay 8 Mar (MSa). A Black-footed Albatross was photographed in flight over the ocean at the Coronado Escarpment 18 Mar (MMcL). A long dead Buller's Shearwater was found on Seaside Beach in Cardiff, near San Elijo Lagoon, 6 Mar (BM & JMcM). This species is very unlikely in San Diego County in March, and the dead bird was in poor condition; identification was made by comparison with specimens in the collection of the San Diego Natural History Museum. Of the four adult **Nazca Boobies** that showed up on south San Diego Bay 11 Dec (PEL), two were still present 14 Mar (*eBird*) and one remains through 31 Mar+ (*eBird*). The California Bird Records Committee has accepted only two prior records of Nazca Booby in San Diego County, one in 2015 and one in 2017, with others—juveniles or too distant to distinguish—accepted as Masked/Nazca.

This male is the third Long-tailed Duck in the county this year; it remained at the southernmost Dairy Mart pond 14-31 Mar+. Photo by Millie & Peter Thomas

Two **Tricolored Herons** were present this winter: One in south San Diego Bay was seen at vari-

This photo of the Black-footed Albatross that circled a boat on 18 Mar nicely shows details such as the small white area on the face around the bill and the white in the primaries. Photo by Mindy McLarty

ous locations including the north end of 7th St. in Imperial Beach and the saltworks 1 Oct - 4 Mar (JGa, *eBird*). The other moved around near the mouth of the San Diego River (Dog Beach and Robb Field) and Famosa Slough in the Ocean Beach neighborhood 13 Oct - 31 Mar+ (LR, *eBird*). At least two Reddish Egrets were present, with two seen on a survey of San Diego Bay 4 Mar (MSa, DP) and up to two reported at the Tijuana River mouth through 22 Mar (DP). Other reports (since November) at numerous points around the bay and continuing through 30 Mar (LH) make it difficult to determine whether there were more than two present in March and when they arrived; there was at least one adult and one immature bird. Up to five Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were present at the Imperial Beach Sports Park and Tijuana River estuary in Imperial Beach through 31 Mar+ (JB); this species has been breeding in that area since 2005.

A Harris's Hawk continues in the vicinity of the Ramona airport 30 Dec - 30 Mar (SP, *eBird*); it remains undetermined whether it is a released or escaped bird. Hal Cohen reported that 3718 Swainson's Hawks migrated through Borrego Springs in March, fewer than the yearly average of 4,775. Two more flew over Kit Carson Park in Escondido 28 Mar (RA), and one was photographed in flight over a home about half a mile from the Mission Trails Regional Park visitor center in San Diego 31 Mar (CA). Up to two adult Zone-tailed Hawks were in the vicinity of the San Diego Safari Park in Escondido 21 Sep-7 Mar (KW, *eBird*), one (immature) was near the Santee Walmart 8 Mar (DA), one was in Otay Valley (near the east end of Chula Vista) 13 Mar (SB), and one flew over Barnett Ranch Preserve near Ramona 27 Mar (SE).

This photo shows the Brown Thrasher on Silvergate Ave. in Pt. Loma 10-22 Mar—in one of the few moments when it was not completely hidden in dense foliage. Photo taken 11 Mar by Tito Gonzalez

A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker remained in Rancho Santa Fe 4 Feb-25 Mar (SY, AA), and another was photographed at Santee Lakes in Santee 3 Mar (CM). The wintering **Greater Pewee,** near 6th Ave. and El Prado on the west side of Balboa Park in San Diego, was present 5 Dec-31 Mar+ (JP, PEL, *eBird*). An early Hammond's Flycatcher was photographed in the Cool Canyon area of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park 26 Mar (RT). A Tropical Kingbird was in Spreckles Park in Coronado 9 Mar (JTS). San Diego's faithful **Thick-billed King-**

bird spent its eighth winter in the Poggi greenbelt in Chula Vista, first seen this season 23 Oct (PEL) and still present 31 Mar+ (*eBird*). The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, spending its second winter in the same area as the Thick-billed Kingbird, was found (this season) 27 Oct (DP) and last reported 31 Mar (*eBird*).

Several Plumbeous Vireos were present; likely all wintered locally because they were early for spring migrants. The locations and dates (in each case for single birds) are Heritage Park in Chula Vista 6 Nov - 7 Mar (PEL), Mast Park in Santee 2-31+ Mar (EGK, M&PT), Famosa Slough 4-8 Mar (EM, EGK), Villa La Jolla Park 8-24 Mar (TG, *eBird*), and a private residence in El Cajon 23-31 Mar (CKS). A Cassin's Vireo spent its second winter in Nestor Park in Nestor 20 Oct-6 Mar (PEL, *eBird*); another, in Kit Carson Park in Escondido 2 Mar (AR & CMcC) may have been in the area for the winter. Single Cassin's Vireos near Stonewall Mine in Cuyamaca Rancho State Park 23 Mar (NC) and at the Butterfield Ranch (near the west edge of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park) 25 Mar (PG) might be early migrants. Brown Creepers are uncommon in the coastal area; there were up to two at Lindo Lake in Lakeside 19 Nov-6 Mar (RB, RC) and one on Silvergate Ave. in Pt. Loma 17-22 Mar (CE, MH). Up to four Golden-crowned Kinglets were in the vicinity of Doane Pond in Palomar Mountain State Park 12-24 Mar (NC, MH). Up to two Varied Thrushes were singing near the Lower Doane Trail in Palomar Mountain State Park 12-23 Mar (NC, RA, SES).

This Scott's Oriole visited a bare plum tree in Poway 30 Mar. Photo by Roger Uzun

A couple visiting from Georgia found a Brown Thrasher, rare in San Diego County, on Silvergate Ave. in Pt. Loma on 10 Mar (G&L J); it was last seen 22 Mar (MH). A Swamp Sparrow was at Santee Lakes 1-21 Mar (AR & CMcC, NC). Six White-throated Sparrows were present in March: one each at a residence in Leucadia 14 Oct-28 Mar (KA); a residence near Ramona 7 Nov-5 Mar (NC); a residence near Tecolote Canyon in San Diego 13 Nov-31 Mar (MM); at Dos Picos Park near Ramona 3 Dec-1 Mar (JS, *eBird*); at a residence in Coronado 4 Feb-24 Mar (PEL, EC); and along Silvergate Ave. on Pt. Loma 9 -20 Mar (CK, RA).

The female Orchard Oriole wintering at Nestor Park was reported 1 Jan-28 Mar (TRS, DP); another was in Tecolote Canyon Natural Park in San Diego 24 Mar (AK). The male Baltimore Oriole spending its third winter in Nestor Park was present 14 Oct-28 Mar (PEL, L&MS), and a brightly colored female came to a hummingbird feeder at a residence in Imperial Beach 18 Mar (GMcC). An adult male Scott's Oriole was among numerous Bullock's and Hooded Orioles in the yard of a residence near Iron Mountain in Poway 30 Mar (RU), well west of the main desert breeding areas for this species.

Six Black-and-white Warblers were present, one each at Nestor Park (for its third winter) 23 Sep-31 Mar (GDeL, LE), Famosa Slough 29 Sep-31 Mar+ (NJD, LO'N), at 28th & Ash Sts. in Balboa Park for its sixth winter 28 Oct-3 Mar (MA, PU), along Silvergate Ave. 9-20 Mar (CK, IK), at Legoland in Carlsbad 10

Mar (BJD), and along the San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center Loop 22-28 Mar (EM, MC). A Lucy's Warbler wintered in residential Coronado 29 Dec-15 Mar (EC). A male Hooded Warbler, a rare species for San Diego, wintered in Del Mar 28 Nov-31 Mar (SES). Two American Redstarts wintered locally: a female in Dos Picos County Park near Ramona 23 Feb- 22 Mar (BT, *eBird*) and another seen at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park near Escondido 7 Mar (JGy). A Northern Parula at heavily-birded Nestor Park 13-21 Mar (NC, *eBird*) likely wintered in another nearby location, as spring vagrants typically come much later. The Chestnut-sided Warbler at Pantoja Park since 28 Jan (PEL) was reported once this month, 22 Mar (MH). A Palm Warbler at the southernmost of the Dairy Mart ponds in the Tijuana River Valley 11 Feb (DJ) was refound a month later in alternate plumage and remained 13-31 Mar (ECK, MiSa). The **Grace's Warbler** found on a residential street along Crest Canyon in Del Mar 5 Feb (PEL) remained through 31 Mar+ (JM). Two wintering Painted Redstarts continued, with one in West Shepherd Canyon in the Tierrasanta neighborhood of San Diego for its third winter 19 Oct-12 Mar (PEL) and one near Crown Point on the north side of Mission Bay for its second winter, lingering later than typical, 24 Oct-31 Mar+ (PEL, CD). A third Painted Redstart was seen for only a week in Pt. Loma along Silvergate Ave. 9-15 Mar (SBM).

A Hepatic Tanager was in Villa La Jolla Park in La Jolla 16-31 Mar (TG, GN). Given that the county recently had two Hepatic Tanagers return for eight winters, this bird is one to look for next year. Five Summer Tanagers were reported: a female on the west side of Balboa Park, near 6th Ave. & El Prado, 4 Dec-31 Mar (TRS, CD); an immature male turning red in March in Nestor Park 9 Dec-26 Mar (GMcC, *eBird*); a young male at Sunnyslope Park in south San Diego 12 Dec-24 Mar (PEL, JTS); a female visiting a water feature at a residence in Encinitas 22 Jan-18 Mar (SC); and a male along West Shepherd Canyon in Tierrasanta 6 Feb-12 Mar (NC, PEL). A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak continued along West Shepherd Canyon in Tierrasanta 26 Jan-31 Mar (PEL, MSt).

This photo of the Hepatic Tanager in Villa La Jolla Park 16-31 Mar shows a tomial tooth, that is, a small, sharp projection on the cutting edge of the upper mandible. Photo taken 18 Mar by Nancy Christensen

Observers cited: Alex Abela, Chris Adler, Kathy Aldern, Eitan Altman, Ryan Andrews, Daniel Arndt, Marc Arndt, Stephen Barlow, Joachim Bertrands, Dylan Beyer, Richard Breisch, Chris Brown, Steve Cameron, Barbara L. Carlson, Mark Chavez, Nancy Christensen, Elizabeth Copper, Ross Christie, Gail DeLalla, Nicole J. Desnoyers, Colin Dillingham, B. J. Dooley, Carl Ebeling, Larry Edwards, Steve Ellis, David Emmerson, Sean Fitzgerald, Peter Gaede, Johnny Galt (JGa), Tito Gonzalez, Joe Gyekis (JGy), Gjon C. Hazard, David Hekel, Susan Hengeveld, Michael Hilchey, Lisa Hug, Charles Jackson, Dan Jehl, Grace & Lester

Jensen, Storm Jensen, Brian Jones, Eric G. Kallen, Anitra Kaye, Iris Kilpatrick, Chad King, Paul E. Lehman, Max Leibowitz, Eve Martin, Marcie Mason, Sara Baase Mayers, Guy McCaskie, Sia McGown, Mindy McLarty, Jimmy McMorran, Jeff Miller, Charlotte Morris, Brennan Mulrooney, Dustin Murray, Mike Nelson, Jan Nordenberg, Gary Nunn, Lara O'Neal, Jim Pawlicki, Bill Pelletier, Steve Perry, Dave Povey, Andy Reago & Chrissy McClarren, Dave Richardson, Bruce Rideout, Jim Roberts, Lisa Ruby, Matt Sadowski (MSa), Mike Sanders (MiSa), Christopher K. Smith, Susan E. Smith, Lea Squires, Justyn T. Stahl, Trent R. Stanley, Lucas & Mark Stephenson, Jeremiah Stock, Mark Stratton (MSt), Robert Theriault, Millie & Peter Thomas, Bill Thompson, Philip Unitt, Roger Uzun, Stan Walens, Kenneth Weaver, Sandy Yayanos, Chezy Yusuf, Catherine Zinsky.

References:

California Bird Records Committee online database, **www.californiabirds.org**.

Stahl, Justyn, email, March 18, 2018.

Unitt, P. 2004. *San Diego County Bird Atlas*. Proc. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist. 39. San Diego Nat. Hist. Mus., San Diego.

Winkleman, Ryan, SanDiegoRegionBirding, message #7984, March 25, 2018.

Acknowledgments: Thank you to Guy McCaskie for his extensive notes for the first few weeks of March, to Paul Lehman and Justyn Stahl for reviewing my draft and answering questions, and to Elizabeth Copper for background information and help with research. Also, thank you to the photographers whose photos we used.

SAN DIEGO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

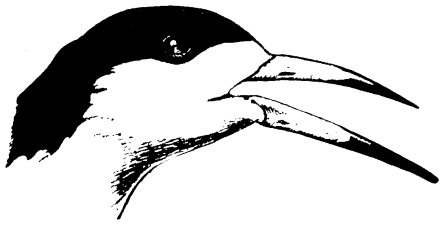
President	Dave Povey	(619) 972-3098
	dpovey@nethere.com	
Vice-president	Justyn Stahl	(619) 992-4595
	Justyn.stahl@gmail.com	
Secretary	Paula Theobald	(760) 613-9677
	paulatheo@icloud.com	
Treasurer	Conny Jamison	(619) 269-3264
	cmjamison@cox.net	
Program Chair	Justyn Stahl	(619) 992-4595
	Justyn.stahl@gmail.com	
Membership Chair	Nancy Christensen	(760) 788-8180
	nancy.r.christensen@gmail.com	
Publishing *Skimmer* Editor	John Walters	(619) 267-1821
	johnfwalters5552@gmail.com	
Webmaster	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: Nancy Christensen, 14041 Mussey Grade, Ramona, CA 92065. For membership information, call Nancy at (760) 788-8180..

Visit our website at

www.sandiegofieldornithologists.org

San Diego Field Ornithologists
c/o Nancy Christensen
14041 Mussey Grade
Ramona, CA 92065