The SKIMMER

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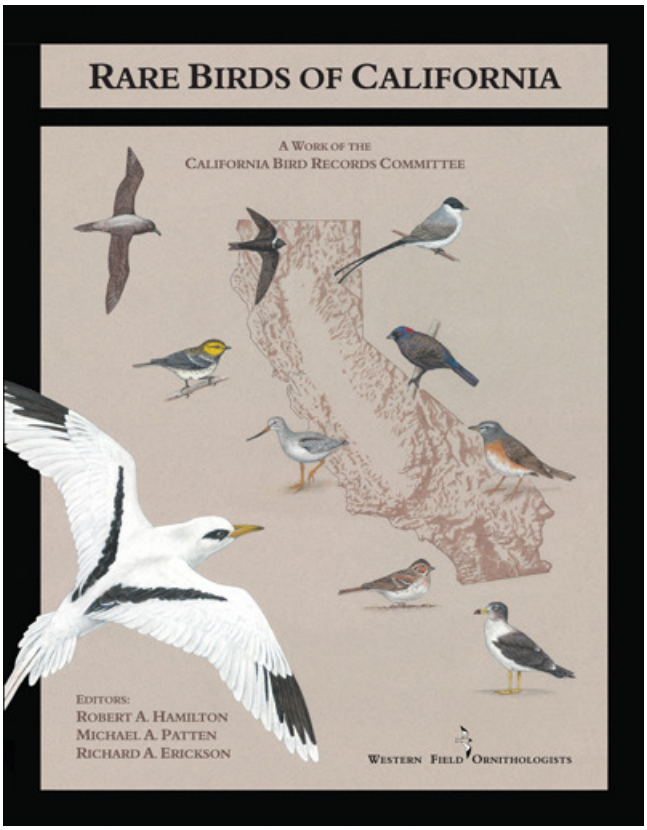
SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, June 19, 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.

Our annual Business Meeting and election of club officers for 2018-19 (see below).

Program: Guy McCaskie presents "Foundation, Functioning, and Accomplishments of the California Bird Records Committee."



From *Rare Birds of California*: " The California Bird Records Committee (hereafter the CBRC or Committee) was established in 1970 to help bridge the gap between scientific ornithology and recreational birding. Operating under the auspices of the California Field Ornithologists (later to become Western Field Ornithologists), it was the first committee formed in the Americas for the purpose of vetting records of vagrant and similarly rare bird species."

The purposes of the CBRC, as listed in the Bylaws:

"A. Endorse records of selected birds from the State of California and adjacent ocean, including, but not limited to, all such records submitted for publication to any official journal or checklist of the Western Field Ornithologists. "Adjacent Ocean" is herein defined as that area within 200 nautical miles of the California coast and for which California is the nearest point of land.

B. Permanently maintain or cause to be maintained the original bird records and all Committee votes and comments for use by future bird students.

C. Publish at least minimal data on all records receiving a decision.

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D. Provide a means by which sight records can gain universal acceptance as valuable scientific data.

E. Increase knowledge of the birds of California.

F. Establish standards of observation and reporting against which field observers may compare their own techniques.

G. Keep, or cause to be kept, the official California State Bird List."

The Godfather of California birding, Guy McCaskie is the co-founder of both Western Field Ornithogists, serving as its first president, as well as the CBRC, serving as either a member or a non-voting secretary since its inception in 1970. Guy's impact on birding in California cannot be overstated. A 1992 article in *American Birds* (46: 204-213) says it best: "McCaskie raised the status of observation of complex avian events to a highly sophisticated part of the scientific procedure. He discovered serendipitously the large-scale and frequent occurrence of vagrants in California and took the lead in systematically exploiting that boon. He recognized the densifying properties of desert oases and coastal sites...As a result, he found birds where no one before him dreamed of looking and set into motion the gears of change for the whole birding community through his leadership and example. He defined the leading edge for a generation of birding innovators by developing a method of critical field observation that was unique when he started and which, for many, is now the standard."

In December 2016, Guy was presented with the Citizen's Award by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service "for his excellence and outstanding contribution to knowledge of the status and distribution of birds at the Salton Sea." Making weekly visits to the Salton Sea, Guy, as Kimball Garrett noted, is synonymous with the Salton Sea, and one cannot think of one without the other.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, July 17, same time, same place. Brian Myers will discuss "An Allen's x Rufous Hummingbird Hybrid Zone."

SDFO Needs Officers

As noted above, at the June meeting we will be electing club officers for 2018-19. At the moment, the slate looks like this:

President:	Secretary: Char Glacy
Vice-president:	Treasurer: Conny Jamison
Membership Chair: Nancy Christensen	Program Chair:

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As you can see, the god-like position of President, and the nearly god-like positions of Vice-president and Program Chair are still unfilled. Here is your chance at apotheosis! If you can help out the club, contact Tom Blackman ahead of time, or show up at the meeting with your brass knuckles and plenty of cash. And be sure to attend the meeting, or you are liable to be elected *in absentia*.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, MAY 2018

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

A female White-winged Scoter with Surf Scoters in Imperial Beach 18-23 May (PEL, *eBird*) may well attempt to summer locally as this species has done on at least two occasions in the past (Unitt 2004). A Bufflehead at Dairy Mart Ponds in the Tijuana River Valley on 14 May (PEL) and another at Santee Lakes in Santee on 31 May (CA) were either late-staying wintering birds or attempting to summer locally, which this duck occasionally does (Unitt 2004).

White-winged Doves are now resident in and around Borrego Springs and elsewhere along the eastern edge of the mountains, but they are rare in the coastal lowlands, with one in the eastern part of the Otay Valley Regional Park on 12 May (SMcG) and another photographed in residential Pt. Loma on 28 May (GN) being the only two reported this May. Black Swifts are rare migrants in San Diego County, with most recorded on the immediate coast in May, with a few scattered throughout the County in fall. As such, any sighting is noteworthy. This May, with heavy overcast conditions along the coast, far more than usual were seen, with one photographed over Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on Pt.t

[Above] This Black Swift flying over Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery on Point Loma, San Diego County, on 6 May 2018 was the first of well over one hundred to follow later in the month. *Photo by Gary Nunn.*

[Right] This Chimney Swift, photographed on 23 May, remained with half a dozen Vaux's Swifts under heavy overcast near Dairy Mart Ponds in the Tijuana River Valley, San Diego County, 23 and 24 May 2018. *Photo by Eric G. Kallen.*

Loma on 6 May (GN), two at Mission Trails Regional Park on 13 May (MSt), an impressive 40 over Pt. Loma, 80 over Mt. Soledad in La Jolla and two more over residential Encinitas on 20 May (GN and JMcM), and an additional five over Mt. Soledad on 23 May (BM). However, counts of 200 and 300 have been reported in the past (Unitt 2004). A Chimney Swift, a rare late spring and summer stray to California, was well studied and photographed near the Dairy Mart Ponds in the Tijuana River Valley on 23 and 24 May (PEL). A late migrant female Calliope Hummingbird was at the Bird & Butterfly Garden in the Tijuana River Valley 21-23 May (PEL, JCS)—records for 24 and 25 May (Unitt 2004) establish the latest dates in this County.

A Stilt Sandpiper, rare anywhere on the coast of California, was at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge on 14 May (PEL). A Common Murre three mi. south-southwest of Pt. Loma on 20 May (PEL) was late for San Diego County ocean waters if not attempting to summer locally. An adult Laughing Gull, rare in San Diego County, was photographed on the beach at Torrey Pines State Reserve on 3 May (SF). A Black Tern, now much rarer along the coast than it was twenty years ago, at Pt. La Jolla in La Jolla on 3 May (TF-H) was the only one reported this spring.

A Black-footed Albatross at the 30-Mile Bank off San Diego was one of the highlights of the San Diego pelagic birding trip on 20 May (DP). A distant black and white shearwater at the 30-Mile Bank on 20 May proved to be a Manx Shearwater upon studying John Diener's digital photographs. Remarkably, four species of booby were known around San Diego in early May. Along with the now expected Brown Boobies, an adult Masked Booby was photographed on one of the channel marker buoys at the entrance to San Diego Bay on 1 May (DS), a sub-adult Nazca Booby photographed over south San Diego Bay on 1 May (MSa) was found dead on a buoy off National City on 5 May (MW – SDNHM specimen 55680) and a sub-adult Red-footed Booby, a casual to accidental straggler to California's pelagic waters, was photographed at the entrance to San Diego Bay on 6 May (WKH). The Tricolored Heron found around the south shore of south San Diego Bay on 1 Oct (BF) was still present on the late date of 16 May (BLC). A Swainson's Hawk over Sorrento Valley on 18 May (TG) was not only late but also along the coast where unexpected at this time of the year.

A Willow Flycatcher at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 6 May (GN) was the earliest this spring—the endangered subspecies *extimus* nesting in southern California is unrecorded locally away from breeding sites, while the much commoner *brewsteri* that nests throughout much of the West is a late arriving spring migrant, with 5 May on at least two different years being the earliest verified date. A pair of Brown-crested Flycatchers had returned to the traditional nest site at the Roadrunner Club in Borrego Springs by 15 May (PA). The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher that paired with a Western Kingbird and fledged young at Twin Trails Park in Rancho Penasquitos in 2016 and 2017 had returned for a 3rd summer by 27 Apr (*fide* EA) and was still present 31 May (*eBird*). Since Purple Martins are now rare on the immediate coast, reports of one at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 6 May (GN) and a remarkable eight there 20 May (GN), along with two

This well-marked adult White-throated Sparrow was photographed on the last day of its 26 April to 8 May 2018 stay at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on Pt. Loma, San Diego County. *Photo by Sia McGown.*

This male Chestnut-sided Warbler was obviously attracted to the running water at a private residence in the desert at Vallecito, San Diego County, on 23 May 2018. *Photo by Britta Lee Shain.*

at Mt. Soledad on 24 May (TG) and one over San Elijo Lagoon on 25 May (JMcM) were certainly noteworthy. Although a few Bank Swallows are seen in fall, they are exceptional in spring, so one photographed over Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 20 May (GN) and another at Dairy Mart Ponds 21-23 May (PEL, *eBird*) were certainly unexpected.

A White-throated Sparrow photographed at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 26 Apr-8 May (GN, *eBird*) with a second bird photographed there on 8 May (MSe) were somewhat late – Unitt (2004) lists 12 May as the latest date for a wintering bird in San Diego County. Our wintering White-crowned Sparrows, *gambelii*, have mostly departed for breeding grounds in Canada and Alaska by late April, so one at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 15-20 May (NJD) was unusually late but was missing one eye. On the other hand, those black-lored White-crowned Sparrows, *oriantha*, that winter to the south of us in Mexico and nest in the Sierra Nevada and other such areas in the western United States are rare migrants in spring, with one photographed at Torrey Pines State Reserve on 13 May (JB) being the only one reported this year. Wintering Golden-crowned Sparrows regularly stay a little later than White-crowned Sparrows, but one at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 21-22 May (CKS, RA) was unusually late. Two Baltimore Orioles were reported this month, with a male east of the mountains in Earthquake Valley on 5 May (GF) and the other near Grossmont High School in La Mesa on 7 May (ATF).

A singing Ovenbird, a somewhat regular vagrant to California, was on Rosecroft Ln. in residential Pt. Loma on 22 May (BM). A Northern Waterthrush and a Black-and-white Warbler were both banded near the western end of Sunset Ave. in the Tijuana River Valley on 8 May (LD). A singing Tennessee Warbler was at Point Loma Nazarene University on Pt. Loma on 27-28 May (GN). A Nashville Warbler reported in residential Pt. Loma on 26 May (GN) was exceptional, since Unitt (2004) lists 25 May as the latest date for a migrant in this County; when encountering such late birds observers should consider the possibility of a vagrant *ruficapilla* from the eastern population – a form yet to be verified as occurring in California. A singing male Hooded Warbler was photographed in the northwestern part of Balboa Park on 5 May (NF). A female American Redstart along Albion St. in residential Pt. Loma on 29 May (SBM) was surprisingly the only one found this month, since at least two or three American Redstarts are expected locally each May. Two Northern Parulas were in Pt. Loma, with one at Point Loma Nazarene University 19-20 May (AA, *eBird*) and the other near the intersection of Warner St. and Silvergate Ave. on 22 May

(JTS). A Chestnut-sided Warbler was east of the mountains at Vallecito on 23 May (BLS). A male Blackpoll Warbler, most unusual in spring, was well photographed at Santee Lakes in Santee 7-14 May (EA, *eBird*). Since Unitt (2004) lists 20 and 24 May as the latest dates for spring migrant Black-throated Gray Warblers, three to five in residential Pt. Loma on 23 May (SES) with one seen there on 24 May (PEL) were certainly noteworthy.

The four reported Summer Tanagers, with single birds at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 19 May (RA), at nearby Point Loma Nazarene University on 24 May (PEL), east of the mountains at Vallecito on 24 May (BLS) and in the mountains at Cuyamaca Rancho State Park's Stonewall Mine on 25 May (TH), were all probably spring vagrants rather than birds that had wintered locally. Single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were at San Elijo Lagoon on 6 May (JD), at Point Loma Nazarene University on 15 May (NJD), east of the mountains at Vallecito on 20 May (BLS), around the intersection of Warner St. and Silvergate Ave. in residential Pt. Loma 24-28 May (PEL) and at the Community Gardens in the Tijuana River Valley on 31 May (NC). A bright blue male Indigo Bunting photographed at the San Diego Zoo in Balboa Park on 28 May (MSJ) was the only one reported.

This male Blackpoll Warbler, photographed on 8 May, remained at Santee Lakes in Santee, San Diego County, from 7 to 14 May 2018. *Photo by Eric G. Kallen.*

Listed observers: Alex Abela, Paulette Ache, Chris Adler, Eitan Altman, Ryan Andrews, John Bruin, Barbara L. Carlson, Nancy Christensen, Logan Derderian, Nicole J. Desnoyers, Jim Determan, Anthony T. Fife, Scott Fleury, Brian Flick, Tony Ford-Hutchenson, Nathan French, Gary Friedly, Tito Gonzalez, William K. Hayes, Terry Hurst, Marcia Siggins Jonas, Paul E. Lehman, Sara B. Mayers, Sia McGown, Jimmy McMorran, Brennan Mulrooney, Gary Nunn, Dave Povey, Matt Sadowski (MSa), Mel Senac (MSe), Britta Lee Shain, Christopher K. Smith, Susan E. Smith, David Sonneyborn, Justyn T. Stahl, John C. Sterling, Mark Stratton (MSt), and Mark Woodruff.

Literature Cited:

Unitt, P. 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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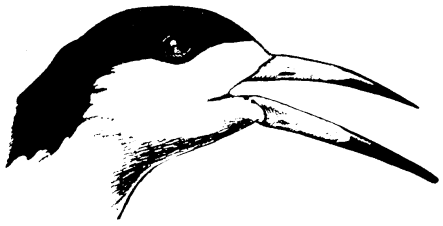
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