The SKIMMER

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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, January 21, at 6:00 p.m., **NEW MEETING LOCATION**! SDFO can no longer meet at the San Diego Foundation Building in Liberty Station. For January and February we will be meeting at the Pacific Beach/Taylor Library Community Room, 4275 Cass St., San Diego.

Directions: From I-5 south or north, take the Balboa/Garnet exit. Follow Garnet until it turns into Grand Ave. Turn left on Dawes St., then right onto Thomas Ave. From I-8 west, take the W. Mission Bay Dr. offramp. Continue north onto Ingraham St. Turn left on Reed Ave. Parking is either on Thomas Ave. or Reed Ave.

Program: "The Decline of North American Avifauna," by Hank Ingersoll.

A recently published scientific article shows a 29 % population loss of North American birds since 1970. This loss of bird abundance signals an urgent need to address threats to avert future avifaunal collapse and associated loss of ecosystem integrity, function and services. Hank will discuss this article in some depth.

Henry G. Ingersoll, M.D. was introduced to bird-watching at an early age with his father in Delaware and Maryland. He participates in citizen science projects such as the Breeding Bird Survey, Christmas Bird Counts, and has entered almost 2500 e-Bird checklists. He is a Past President of the San Diego Field Ornithologists.

Hank is a retired physician-cardiologist who spent his professional career with Sharp Healthcare and the Sharp Rees Stealy Medical Group. He is a graduate of Dartmouth College and the UCLA School of Medicine. He lives in La Jolla with his wife, Marsha. They have 3 children and 4 grandchildren, none of whom are birders.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, February 18, same time, same place. Program: "The Restoration of Lake Apopka and Surrounding North Shore Wetlands, Florida," by David Walker, Basin Program Manager.

Bird of the Year 2019, by Dave Povey

Happy 2020 ! A New Year and time to look forward to what this year will bring. Before we get into speculating about the future, let's take a brief look back to the birds of 2019. We certainly had some good birds show up last year. I hope you got a lifer, a state, county bird, or maybe just nice looks or photos of a bird not seen in sometime. Time to take a moment and think back and vote for the top bird(s) for 2019. Take a look at your list and place your favorites.

[cont.]

SDFO News *[cont.]*

As a reminder:

	2017	2018	2019??
1st. place	**Groove-billed Ani**	**Little Stint**	_____
2nd. place	**Dusky Warbler**	**The Booby invasion** (RFBO, NABO, MABO)	_____
3rd place	**White Wagtail**	**Buff-breasted Sandpiper**	_____
4th. place	**Nazca Booby**	**Laysan Albatross**	_____
5th. place	**Cassin's Sparrow**	**Purple Gallinule**	_____
Honorable mention	**Kentucky Warbler**	**White Wagtail**	_____

Give me your votes at **poveydw747@gmail.com**. I will share the results at the March meeting.

Time to Pay SDFO Dues for 2020

If you haven't yet renewed your membership in SDFO, see Membership Chair Barbara Carlson at the next meeting, or put a check in the mail. Her contact information is on the last page of this newsletter.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARIES

San Diego CBC

by Justyn Stahl

The 67th San Diego CBC was held December 14th. We managed to meet our 10-year average, recording 212 species due to the efforts of 147 participants. As of lunch we had recorded 206, but then added 6 more later in the day or through emailed data after the compilation. Weather was overcast and cool, starting at 56 degrees before clearing around mid-day with a high of 66 degrees.

Thanks as always to San Diego Audubon Society for providing lunch (Lisa and Beth) and assistance with compilation. Paul Lehman (always scouting) and Guy McCaskie were invaluable sources for planning and last-minute advice on birds. Thank you especially to long-term leaders who've done the same

San Diego CBC compilation (compiler Justyn Stahl center) included approximately 10 "first timers" (hands raised). Photo by Nancy Christensen

route year after year.

For this CBC, the rarest birds were: Lesser Black-backed Gull (3rd time on this count), Masked Booby (1st time on this count), and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (3rd time on this count).

New high counts were set for: Allen's Hummingbird (251), Greater Yellowlegs (148), American White Pelican (167), Great Egret (178), Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (14), Red-shouldered Hawk (60), Black Phoebe (528), Cassin's Kingbird (329), House Wren (64), Bewick's Wren (204), Cactus Wren (18), Western Bluebird (209), and Scaly-breasted Munia (107).

Grasshopper Sparrow was one of the new species found on count day. Photo by Ethna Piazza.

Notable rarities included: Snow Goose (3 continuing on Sweetwater Reservoir [PEL, JM *et al.*]), Ross's Goose (J St. [JD, AG]), Greater White-fronted Goose (long-staying bird at Bonita Golf Course [PEL, JB]), Eurasian Wigeon (returning male at the Sweetwater River and Sweetwater NWR [PU, JD, AG]), Black Scoter (6+, at least 4 in south San Diego Bay, 2 in the ocean between Imperial Beach and Coronado [m. obs.]), White-winged Scoter (3 off and south of the Imperial Beach Pier [PEL, MSa, JP]), White-winged Dove (one in Guy McCaskie's yard in Imperial Beach was a new yard bird for Guy [GMcC, TC]), Costa's Hummingbird (3: one in Imperial Beach [PEL] and two east of Balboa Park [LW *et al.*]), Black Oystercatcher (5 on the Zuniga Jetty, [DP, BR *et al.*]), Pacific Golden-Plover (continuing in south San Diego Bay [PEL]), Wandering Tattler (1 at the Cabrillo National Monument tide pools [JSp *et al.*]), Mew Gull (adult in Salt Works [RP, TFH, MSa]), Lesser Black-backed Gull (fresh 1st-cycle at the Chula Vista landfill [PEL]), Black Skimmer (3 in the Salt Works, while most have moved to Mission Bay [m. obs.]), Masked Booby (a 2nd–3rd-cycle bird on the Zuniga Jetty appears to the be same bird released by Sea World on 11 Dec after rehab [RS, MP]), Brown Booby (7+, six or seven from Dave Povey's boat and 1 from a seawatch from Seacoast Dr. [DP, BR, et al., PEL]), Tricolored Heron (Sweetwater NWR [JD, AG]), Reddish Egret (up to 4: 2–3 in south San Diego Bay and at J Street [m. obs.], 1 in the Tijuana Estuary [JP, MSa]), Bald Eagle (continuing immature at Sweetwater Reservoir [PEL, JM *et al.*]), Short-eared Owl (Sweetwater NWR [JD, AG]), Greater Pewee (Continuing in Balboa Park near where one was winter 2017–18, but apparently missed winter 2018–19, [JP, NF, CA, *et al.*]), Pacific-slope Flycatcher (Coronado [PEL, EC]), Tropical Kingbird (Nestor Park [GMcC, NJD]), Thick-billed Kingbird (Poggi Cr. greenbelt back for its 10th winter [EA]), Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (returning birds at Poggi Cr. [EA] and in Coronado [EC, LS]), Cassin's Vireo (returning bird at Nestor Park [PEL]), Plumbeous Vireo (3: Kimball Park [KA, PK, EM, JM], Southcrest Trails Park [PEL, AJB, MH], and El Toyon Park [AJB, MH]), Golden-crowned Kinglet (Memorial Park in Chula Vista [JD, AG]), Grasshopper Sparrow (Balboa Park [EP]), Green-tailed Towhee (3: returning bird at Dairy Mart [JTS], returning bird west of Hollister with a new bird [GR]), Yellow-headed Blackbird (two at Sweetwater Reservoir [JM,

IK, *et al*.]), Orchard Oriole (2: an adult male in Coronado [RP] and a returning female at Nestor Park [PEL]), Hooded Oriole (continuing young male in west Balboa Park [NF, PC]), Black-and-white Warbler (3: returning bird at 28th St. Park [JA *et al*.], Rohr Park [JB, NC, MSe], and Friendship Park [JD, AG]), Nashville Warbler (3: Marston Canyon [PEL, AB, MH], Heritage Park [PEL, PC *et al*.], Southcrest Trails Park [AB, MH]), Pine Warbler (A returning dull female in Coronado, EC).

Observers mentioned: Christopher Adler, Kathy Aldern, Eitan Altman, Jeanie Anderson, Alex Bartolo, John Bruin, Paul Chad, Nancy Christensen, Therese Clawson, Elizabeth Copper, Jay Desgrosellier, Nicole J. Desnoyers, Thomas Ford-Hutchinson, Nathan French, Aaron Gyllenhaal, Michael Hilchey, Iris Kilpatrick, Patty Kroger, Paul E. Lehman, Eve Martin, Guy McCaskie, Jim Morris, Jane Mygatt, Robert Patton, Jim Pawlicki, Ethna Piazza, Maggie Post, Dave Povey, Bruce Rideout, Geoff Rogers, Matt Sadowski, Mel Senac, Rachel Smith, Jeffrey Spaulding, Lea Squires, Phil Unitt, Lindsay Willrick.

Other "low end" rarity totals, followed by 10-year average, included: Bullock's Oriole (5/10.7), Yellow Warbler (5/9.8), Black-throated Gray Warbler (7/7.6), Wilson's Warbler (5/6.4), Summer Tanager (4/6.7), Western Tanager (16/15.5).

General comments on select species: Waterfowl numbers were generally at or just below our 10-year averages. American Wigeon were well above average, as were Surf Scoters, and Green-winged Teal were almost triple the average. Both scaup species were about half-average. California Quail hang on in the count circle, with 5 reported. Peeps and dowitchers were about half of the recent average, but high tides in the morning may have complicated counting. Heermann's Gull numbers are still low, with 173 down from the 10-year average of 498, likely owing to multiple failed breeding seasons in recent years. California Gulls, on the other hand, were up. Pacific Loons showed well (1262), particularly offshore, with nearly 4x our 10-year average. A count of 600 Black-vented Shearwaters was about 10x our recent average. Cooper's Hawks totaled their second highest showing (60 vs 82). Three Loggerhead Shrikes were seen, about the expected number in the last decade. Only 10 Tree Swallows were reported, when hundreds are typically observed. Two Lark Sparrows were at the very eastern edge of the circle.

The following species were at or near 10-year average levels: American Crow, Common Raven, Horned Lark, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, California Gnatcatcher, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Townsend's Warbler. A few species were notably low (with % of 10-year average): Brewer's Blackbirds (50%), Yellow-rumped Warbler (85%), American Goldfinch (33%), Savannah Sparrow (75%), White-crowned Sparrow (75%), and Western Meadowlark (50%). A few were notably up: Chipping Sparrow (nearly double), Golden-crowned Sparrow (nearly triple), Brown-headed Cowbird (nearly triple), Red-winged Blackbird (double).

None of the irruptive species seemed to be irrupting. Red-breasted Nuthatches were on the move in Fall 2019, but only 4 were recorded on our count this year. No Mountain Bluebirds, Pine Siskins, or Lawrence's Goldfinches were recorded in the count circle.

Non-countable exotics included the long-staying, escapee American Flamingo, Red-masked Parakeet (5), Burrowing Parakeet (new for this count), Black-throated Magpie-Jay (just one!), and Pin-tailed Whydah (just one, but the second for our count).

Count week birds known present in the circle within the span of 11–17 December, but not seen on the 14th include: Canvasback, Swainson's Hawk (recorded on only one count), White-faced Ibis, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, and American Redstart.

Anza-Borrego CBC

by Robert Theriault

The official total species recorded at the county's desert CBC stands at 113—the record is 134 species in 2010—while the average over the last 10 years is 119. The total number of birds reported (8,081) indicates a decline in the last 10-year period as well, where the average was 10,445 individuals.

Eighty-five birders participated and found variable wind conditions (some in calm areas and some not),

and temperatures of 48-68° as reported at park headquarters. In any case, all were provided with delicious complimentary food at the compilation meeting held at the Steele/Burnand Anza-Borrego Desert Research Center.

White-crowned Sparrow enjoys a 7-year run as the most numerous bird on the count, having replaced the House Finch in that category in 2013. This finch's numbers have declined since then, but seem to have stabilized somewhat. White-winged Dove placed second in the tally, followed by House Finch, Western Bluebird, Yellow-rumped Warbler (5 Myrtles), and Common Raven.

Three Crissal Thrashers were found, but our counters could not locate the other difficult-to-encounter desert thrasher, Le Conte's. Black-throated Sparrows made a fairly strong showing, but Costa's Hummingbird was notably down in numbers at 76 individuals compared to a ten-year average of 125.

Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Anza-Borrego CBC. Photo by Robert Theriault.

Other birds of interest included Long-eared Owl, Vermilion Flycatcher, Mountain Bluebird, and Scott's Oriole.

Birds found that are rare here or difficult to identify and supported by documentation were Eurasian Wigeon, Canvasback, Northern Pintail, Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker, Green-tailed Towhee, Sagebrush Sparrow, Cassin's Finch (found at high altitude), and Scaly-breasted Munia. This last species, which has been occasionally spotted over the last couple years, is an uninvited guest!

Lake Henshaw CBC

by Gretchen Cummings

The 40th annual Lake Henshaw Christmas Bird Count was held on Monday, December 16, 2019. We had 31 participants cover 13 survey areas. The day was windy and cold, and many of the smaller birds had taken shelter, which resulted in low numbers. Compared to the 2018 results, there were approximately 2,300 fewer birds seen this year! A total of 124 species were seen totaling 6,444 individuals this year. Rare or uncommon birds observed included a Downy Woodpecker (seen only one other time during the 40 years of the Lake Henshaw CBC), a Gray Flycatcher (also seen only one other time during the 40 years of the Lake Henshaw CBC), and a Short-eared Owl. The Downy Woodpecker was seen by Maryanne Bache and Dan Doyle. It was seen foraging in the willows on the edge of a pond at the Warner Springs Ranch Golf Course. The Short-eared Owl was seen and heard by Jim Pea and Chris Staurovsky. The round-headed owl was observed hunting over the grassland on the southern edge of Lake Henshaw. Lastly, the Gray Flycatcher was seen on the north shore of Lake Henshaw, again by Jim Pea and Chris Staurovsky. They observed the *Empidonax* making short, sallying flights from nearly ground-level perches up four feet and back within a small clump of willows.

Oceanside CBC

by Kirsten Winter

The 74th Oceanside Christmas Bird Count was held on December 21, 2019. It was a clear and pleasant day, with light breezes. Temperatures ranged from approximately 35-40 degrees F in the morning to about 60 to 70 degrees in the afternoon. A dedicated group of 116 birders logged 230 hours of birding and 412 miles of travel on foot, by car, by boat, and by golf cart. The teams recorded approximately 30,000 individual birds—detecting birds at a rate of about 135 birds per hour. The total number of individual birds counted was up by about 1,000 or approximately 3% compared with last year. Thank you to all of the team participants, and to the volunteers at the Buena Vista Audubon Nature Center who hosted the post-count lunch and compilation!

A total of 182 species was detected, which is about average for this count. The count record of 200 species was set some years ago. The most numerous birds were American Crow at 2946, Yellow-rumped Warbler at 2311, American Coot at 1813, American Wigeon at 1394, House Finch at 1330, and Bushtit at 1050 individuals.

Many rarities were detected. Appearing for the very first time on the Oceanside count, a beautiful Northern Parula warbler was spotted by Paul Chad at a continuing location near Agua Hedionda Lagoon. A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak appeared for just the 4th time on this count, found by Ken Weaver at Guajome Park near the campground/gazebo. A Gray Flycatcher was found by Paul Lehman and photographed by Dave Batzler on the northeast side of Batiquitos near Hummingbird Rd. A Zone-tailed Hawk was seen by Fred Roberts and team at Alta Vista Gardens. Additional rarities included a Nashville Warbler seen by Paul Lehman near Karl Strauss Brewery, and four Yellow Warblers, two Palm Warblers and a Bullock's Oriole observed by Paul Lehman in the coastal Carlsbad area. One Palm Warbler and one Plumbeous Vireo were detected by Stan Walens at La Costa. Two Ridgway's Rails were seen by Ryan Andrews and BJ Dooley team at Agua Hedionda, and five Ridgway's Rails were recorded at Buena Vista Lagoon by Tom Troy and team, some encouraging news for the success of this endangered species after some rail "releases" in past years. A Brown Creeper was seen by Charlotte Morris and team in the Leo Carillo area near Corte Cisco. Some slightly more frequently recurring rarities included Summer Tanager, seen by Ed Hall at Lake San Marcos and by Kathy Aldern and Maryanne Bache at Seascape Dr. near Batiquitos Lagoon, a female Western Tanager seen by Fred Roberts and team at Brengle Park, Black-and-White Warbler seen by Gretchen Nell and team near El Arbol/ Manzano riparian area, and Brant noted by Ryan Andrews and team at the western basin of Agua Hedionda Lagoon.

Many other species that are rarely found in the Oceanside circle were detected as single birds or as very few individuals, including one Cactus Wren (Robert Patton, Camp Pendleton); one Reddish Egret (Phil Unitt, Camp Pendleton and Dave Povey and pelagic team); one Wilson's Snipe (Stan Walens, La Costa), and Canyon Wren (one seen by Dave Batzler and team, Lake San Marcos, and two seen by Jerry Manning and team at Gopher Canyon).

Very few species were detected at record high numbers. Willet was at a record high of 267 birds. Cooper's Hawk set a record at 44 individuals observed. Seventeen Great-horned Owls were seen or heard. Nuttall's Woodpecker set a record high with 202 individuals, as did Cassin's Kingbird with 304 individuals.

Several species were at record lows, including Loggerhead Shrike, Rhinoceros Auklet, Herring Gull, and Forster's Tern at one individual each.

Returning from last year, one of our 34 survey teams featured young birders. Ryan Andrews led a young birder team at Agua Hedionda, and they located rarities including Brant and Ridgway's Rail. Thanks to this team, as they build the future birding cadre for our area.

Thanks very much to all of the teams who worked many hours to collect these data. Christmas bird counts generate an important and long-running data set dating back to the very first CBC back in 1900! These data help to track bird species trends for the United States and other countries. Thank you for your very important contributions to this effort.

Escondido CBC

By Kenneth Weaver

The Escondido CBC, sponsored by the Palomar Audubon Society, was conducted on December 28. Seventy-nine observers in twenty-five teams recorded 157 species. The top five rarities, all of which were recorded for the third time on this CBC included White-winged Dove, 2 near the Ramona Airport and 10 near Black Canyon Rd.; Harris's Hawk, 1 near Ramona; Barn Swallow, 1 at Rangeland Rd. in Ramona; Nashville Warbler, 1 at Kit Carson Park in Escondido; and Summer Tanager, 2 at the Safari Park.

I noted at least nineteen species on the Escondido count that were not recorded on the San Diego CBC in 2018. These included raptors such as Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, and Prairie Falcon. Songbirds observed that are not frequent in winter on the coastal counts included Mountain Bluebird, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Bell's Sparrow, Scott's Oriole, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Over-wintering birds noted that are more typical of the immediate coast than inland included Plumbeous Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, and Western Tanager.

Some interesting observations included over 57 *Selasphorus* hummingbirds including many adult male Allen's (quite scarce until the last few years), 24 Scaly-breasted Munias spotted by six teams, more than 200 Eurasian Collared-Doves, and a Black-throated Magpie-Jay present at Kit Carson Park, the latter not included in the total number of species. On an encouraging note, many of our coastal sage scrub birds (California Quail, Wrentit, Cactus Wren, California Thrasher) are finally showing increasing numbers following the disastrous fires of 2003 and 2007 which hit this CBC circle especially hard.

Rancho Santa Fe CBC

by Robert Patton

Thanks to 124 participants in 47 groups who made the 4 January 2020 Rancho Santa Fe area Christmas Bird Count a success. Not all groups have reported in yet, but the preliminary total appears to be 187 species (+ 3 subspecies). Notable species reported included 3 Greater White-fronted Geese continuing at Rancho Bernardo High School by Lea Squires (early morning before sports activities began); juvenile Snow Goose and adult Ross's Goose continuing in Fairbanks Ranch horse paddocks north of San Dieguito Rd. by Phil Unitt and Thomas Stebbins, and male Vermilion Flycatcher on north paddock fence adjacent to Morgan Run golf course; Cackling Goose, Least Bittern, and Red-breasted Sapsucker at San Dieguito Reservoir by Gjon Hazard; Wood Ducks in Harmony Grove by Kathy Aldern, Maryanne Bache, Patti Koger, and Jane Mygatt, adjacent to Felicita Park by Nancy Christensen, Russ Christensen, and Alison Davies, and in Poway by Jack Daynes and Kirsten Winter; male Eurasian Wigeon continuing NE of Rios Ave. at San Elijo Lagoon by Jay Desgrosellier, Common Goldeneye at Miramar Lake by Bruce Rideout; Hooded Mergansers at SE Lake Hodges by Jackie Catino, Jim Pea, and Carrie Plarski, in Rancho Bernardo by Tim Burr, and in San Dieguito River Valley by Phil Unitt; 2 Yellow-crowned Night-Herons near Del Mar Public Works by Jerry Bischoff, Joni Ciarletta, Carl Ebeling, Matt Fisher, Graham Gerald, Michelle Merrigan, Denise Riddle; 2 Cattle Egrets in Poway by Jack Daynes and Kirsten Winter; Zone-tailed Hawk over adjacent residential area then NE Lake Hodges then Rancho Bernardo by

Green-tailed Towhee at Lake Hodges, Rancho Santa Fe CBC. Photo by Lisa Ruby.

Tracy Henchbarger, Holly and Karl Garrett, and Tim Burr; Parasitic Jaeger off Solana Beach by Jay Desgrosellier and off Cardiff by Robert Patton; Costa's Hummingbird in Del Dios by Jeanie Anderson, Aaron Polichar *et al*., and SE Lake Hodges by Jim Pea *et al*.; Red-naped Sapsucker and Mountain Chickadee in Harmony Grove by Kathy Aldern, Maryanne Bache, Patti Koger, and Jane Mygatt; Cassin's Vireo in Rancho Bernardo Community Park by Chris and Supeena Adler, Northern Rough-winged Swallow over NE San Elijo Lagoon by Robert Patton, Red-breasted Nuthatches by multiple groups, Canyon Wren in Del Dios Highlands Reserve by Lea Squires, Swinhoe's White-eye on private property in Encinitas by Rob Farber and Eve Martin; Yellow Warbler in eastern Penasquitos Canyon by Vince and Nancy Butsumyo, Vanita Murthy, Erik Tracy, Phoenix Von Hendy; Black-throated Gray Warbler at San Diego Botanic Garden by Jeff Clingan, Gretchen Nell, Manolo Turner; Grace's Warbler along Crest Dr. by Rita Campbell and Sue Smith, Black-and-White Warbler along Crest Dr. by Steve Cameron and Sue Smith; male American Redstart and Green-tailed Towhee along NE Bernardo Bay trail Lake Hodges by Terry Hurst, Charlie Jackson, Lisa Ruby; Hermit Warbler continuing at Torrey Hills Park and Hepatic Tanager on private property in Del Mar by Elizabeth Copper; Wilson's Warblers at Camino del Norte by Gjon Hazard, in Solana Beach by Jay Desgrosellier, in Sorrento Valley by Robert Turner, and in eastern Penasquitos Canyon by Phoenix Von Hendy *et al*.; Western Tanagers along Crest Dr. by Sue Smith *et al*., at San Diego Botanic Garden by Gretchen Nell *et al*., and along North Lane in the Sun Valley area of Solana Beach by Barbara Carlson, Mel Senac, and Trent Stanley; Bell's Sparrows at Elfin Forest Reserve by Steve Brad and Annie Stockley, and at Del Dios Highlands Reserve by Lea Squires; Large-billed Savannah Sparrow in closed area NW of Rios Ave. at San Elijo Lagoon by Jay Desgrosellier; Northern Oriole sp. in Cardiff by Jimmy McMorran, Bullock's Oriole and female Baltimore Oriole near Rancho Santa Fe Executive Golf Course by Mel Senac *et al*.

Species apparently missed included Horned Grebe, Brown Booby, Ruddy Turnstone, Caspian Tern, Glaucous-winged Gull, Western Screech-Owl, Pine Siskin, previously reported rarities in the area Eastern Phoebe, Nashville Warbler.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATONS, DECEMBER 2019

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

As in the past, the December report is mostly limited to noteworthy observations from locations or dates outside our local Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs).

Two Eurasian Wigeons were known outside CBC circles, with the adult male at Famosa Slough/San Diego River mouth, present since 17 Oct (PEL), still there 30 Dec (eBird) and another male at the northern shore of Mission Bay (Rose Creek/ Kendall-Frost Marsh) 25-27 Dec (PC, NC)—a male along the Sweetwater River was seen on the San Diego CBC, a male along Rangeland Rd. near Ramona 22-29 Dec (JP, eBird) was seen on the Escondido CBC, a male on San Elijo Lagoon 9-31 Dec+ was seen on the Rancho Santa Fe CBC (RTP) and a female was found in Borrego Springs on the Borrego Springs CBC (PEL). A Long-tailed Duck, rare in San Diego County, flew south with Surf Scoters from Pt. La Jolla in La Jolla on 27 Dec (DJ).

A White-winged Dove was seen in residential Chula Vista on 12 Dec (PEL). Another in Imperial Beach since 3 Dec (TRC) was still present for the San Diego CBC; a second joined it 30-31 Dec+ (TRC). About 26 Vaux's Swifts near the El Prado/Highway 163 bridge in Balboa Park on 29 Dec (TF-H) were likely wintering locally. Vaux's Swift is the only *Chaetura* recorded wintering in the United States, and formerly occurred annually in numbers around Oceanside at this

time of the year (Unitt 2004).

An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull at Lower Otay Lake on 15 Dec (JP) and another adult at the flooded sod farm in the Tijuana River Valley on 7 and 29 Dec (AG and PEL) were outside CBC circles. A first-year bird at the Otay Landfill was found on the San Diego CBC, while the adult in Coronado since 23 Oct (NF) was a "no show" for the count but was present at the end of the month.

A subadult Masked Booby on the beach at San Onofre on 16 Dec (SJ) is suspected to have moved north to Huntington Beach in Orange County where it was taken to the Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center for rehabilitation and erroneously identified as a Blue-footed Booby. Another subadult Masked Booby, in Encinitas at dusk on 30 Dec (JMcM) and still present the following morning (eBird), may well have been the same bird captured on the pier in Oceanside on 21 Nov (GC) and also erroneously identified as a Blue-footed Booby. The Oceanside bird was rehabilitated at SeaWorld, released five mi. off La Jolla on 10 Dec, and photographed at the tidepools on Pt. Loma on 12 Dec and on the adjacent Zuniga Jetty during the San Diego CBC on 14 Dec (DP). An adult Neotropic Cormorant found on the San Diego River in Mission Valley with Double-crested Cormorants on 7 Dec (PEL) was still present 22 Dec (eBird), then moved to Lake Murray where present with Double-crested Cormorants 23-29 Dec (JP).

A young Bald Eagle and up to two exceptionally late migrant Swainson's Hawks along the flooded Tijuana River east of Dairy Mart Rd. 7-12 Dec (MS, eBird) were probably attracted there by drowned prey.

The presence of a White-headed Woodpecker at Hot Springs Mountain on 22 Dec (NF) was encouraging. This species appears gone from its former southernmost limit in the Cuyamaca and Laguna Mts.; much of the suitable habitat there was destroyed by fires.

An Ash-throated Flycatcher in the Rolando district of east San Diego 15-28 Dec (CJD) is the only one known wintering in this county. The adult Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in the Tijuana River Valley since 24 Nov (CZ) has not been reported since 8 Dec (eBird); however, the one at the Poggi Creek Greenbelt since 6 Nov along with another in Coronado were present for the San Diego CBC. A Gray Flycatcher found at Lindo Lake in Lakeside on 1 Dec (TH) was still present on 31 Dec+ (eBird), so clearly settled for the winter. An Eastern Phoebe, a rare fall vagrant and winter visitor to California, at the east end of the Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve 17-31 Dec+ (RP, eBird) is evidently wintering locally.

The American Redstart at Santee Lakes on 2 December 2019 showing the diagnostic tail pattern of this wood-warbler. Note the prominent supercilium, extensive chestnut fringes on most of the feathers and the blue-gray rump. Photo by Terry Hurst.

Seven Plumbeous Vireos in and around San Diego in December, some included in our CBCs, was a noteworthy number for winter. A Verdin at the San Diego River mouth 30 Nov-31 Dec+ (eBird) was no doubt the same bird there 4-13 Oct (JRM).

A Lark Bunting, reported less than annually in San Diego County (Unitt 2004), found in Jacumba on 17 Dec (PEL) was still present 22 Dec (eBird) and expected to remain through the winter. Two Clay-colored Sparrows were reported, both outside CBC circles, with one photographed along the San Diego River near Sea World on 1 Dec (CR), and the other photographed at the San Ysidro Athletic Area in San Ysidro on 29 Dec (EM). The wintering Nelson's Spar-

row, first seen at Kendall-Frost Marsh on 28 Oct (KR), was again forced out into view by the extreme high tide 27 Dec (NC), so clearly settled for the winter.

The Rusty Blackbird, providing only the seventh record for San Diego County, found with Brewer's Blackbirds at Robb Field in Ocean Beach on 30 Nov (KG) continued there and in parking lots along Sports Arena Blvd. through 31 Dec+ (eBird). An unexpected six Hooded Orioles were known present between Tierrasanta, Balboa Park/Middletown and Ocean Beach in December with only one seen on a CBC. The adult male Baltimore Oriole found at the San Ysidro Athletic Park 27 Nov (PEL) was still present 7 Dec (eBird), and another adult male was photographed at La Jolla Colony Park in La Jolla on 13 Dec (BS).

Six Nashville Warblers in the Greater San Diego area during December was more than expected at this time of the year. The young male American Redstart found at Santee Lakes in Santee on 30 Nov (TRS) was still present 2 Dec (eBird) and is likely remaining in that area. The female in Nestor since 8 Nov (PEL) eluded detection on the day of the San Diego CBC but was photographed there the following day (eBird). A Northern Parula at Santee Lakes 2-6 Dec (TH) is likely wintering locally. A Palm Warbler at Dennis V. Allen Park in San Diego on 7 Dec (JTS) was one of only three found this month, the other two being within the Oceanside CBC circle. An apparent hybrid Yellow-rumped x Hermit warbler photographed in Balboa Park (Palm Canyon) 3 Dec (PEL) was still present 26 Dec (EM). Two Painted Redstarts were outside the CBC circles: one continues for its second winter along the Allen Rd. nature trail in Mission Hills 22 Nov-31 Dec (NF). Another in Tierrasanta 25-31 Dec+ (PEL, eBird) is no doubt settled for the winter; both are expected to remain into March.

A female Hepatic Tanager found on private property in Del Mar on 31 Dec (PEL) provides a nice ending to 2019. A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak was photographed at Guajome County Park on 21 Dec (KW), and another was at a private residence in Hillcrest on 24 Dec (AK).

Listed observers: Observers listed are limited to those finding, identifying and/or last reporting each species. Observers reporting additional sightings to eBird are not listed but acknowledged.

George Cardon, Paul Chad, Nancy Christensen, Therese R. Clawson, Cynthia J. Daverin, Thomas Ford-Hutchinson, Nathan French, Karl Garrett, Aaron Gyllenhaal, Terry Hurst, Dan Jehl, Steve Jorgensen, Anitra Kaye, Paul E. Lehman, Eve Martin, Jimmy McMorran, James R. Morris, Robert T. Patton, Jim Pawlicki, Ryan Pottinger, Dave Povey, Casey Richart, Kerry Ross, Matt Sadowski, Bridget Spencer, Justyn T. Stahl, Trent R. Stanley, Kenneth Weaver and Catherine Zinsky.

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An Apology

To all the hard-working photographers and compilers who contributed to the Christmas Bird Count reports and whose work isn't in this issue, our apologies. We tried! The first draft of this issue ran to 17 pages and crashed the computer when we tried to distribute it. We are sending out this very late second effort with crossed fingers.

—The Editor

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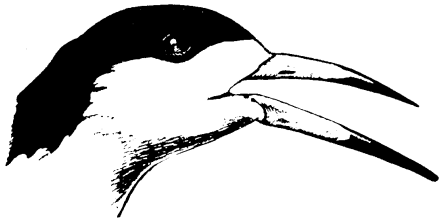
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