The SKIMMER

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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, March 17, at 6:00 p.m., at a new location: the Mission Valley Library, 2123 Fenton Parkway, San Diego. Directions: From I-805 go east on Friars Rd. Turn south (right) on Fenton Parkway. The library is near Ikea and IHOP.

Program: Richard Halsey will speak on "Rediscovering ourselves through Nature, especially through birds."

For more than two million years we evolved outside, in Nature, driven by our instincts. Over the last several thousand years, our newly conscious minds have tried to reconcile the conflict between the demands of civilization, social expectations, and our ancient, wild selves. Yet despite our best efforts, the conflict persists, causing many of the personal, social, and environmental problems we face today. Nature provides the remedy. Join us as we explore how enjoying birds and connecting with Nature through local native habitats like the chaparral, offers us a way to achieve what so many philosophers through the ages have identified as essential to achieving a meaningful existence: to "know thyself."

Richard W. Halsey is a writer, photographer, and the director of the California Chaparral Institute, a non-profit research and educational organization dedicated to the preservation of California's native chaparral ecosystem and supporting the creative spirit as inspired by Nature. Richard loves sharing the magic of Nature best, but is sometimes forced to take government agencies to court when they plan things that would destroy that magic. He started teaching biology as a 16-year-old volunteer naturalist at the El Dorado Nature Center in Long Beach, California, enjoyed college, then taught high school biology for a couple decades until the adults became too much. He's written a handful of research papers, a book, contributed to a few more, but his current favorite is his new coloring book of the chaparral.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, April 21, same time, same place. Program to be announced.

[continued]

SDFO NEWS *[cont.]*

Bird of the Year 2019

The vote is in, and we have a WINNER! Results at the March 17th meeting.

2020 Dues Are Due

See Membership Chair Barbara Carlson at the March meeting, or see the last page of this newsletter for her contact information.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, FEBRUARY 2020

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

Four White-winged Scoters photographed in flight with Surf Scoters at Pt. La Jolla in La Jolla on 3 Feb (GN) and another at Camp Surf in Imperial Beach on 20 Feb (PEL) were the only ones reported this month. Up to six Black Scoters at scattered locations around south San Diego Bay 20-21 Feb (PEL, *eBird*), along with an adult male at the pier in Imperial Beach 27-28 Feb (BA, *eBird*), was a larger than expected number for San Diego County.

A White-winged Dove at a private residence in Imperial Beach since 3 Dec was last seen on 23 Feb (TRC). The male Broad-tailed Hummingbird present for a second winter at a private residence in Chula Vista since 17 Sep was still there on 20 Feb (EHar).

The near-adult Masked Booby at the United States/Mexican border southwest of Point Loma on 28 February 2020. Note the greenish-yellow coloration of the bill, rather than the orangish coloration present on similar aged Nazca Boobies. *Photo by Thomas A. Blackman.*

The Pacific Golden-Plover first seen at the Tijuana River mouth on 1 Aug (RTP) was still present on 29 Feb (*eBird*). A basic-plumaged Wilson's Phalarope at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge 20-27 Feb (PEL, *eBird*) was believed to be the same bird there in November, so wintering locally. Two Elegant Terns in alternate plumage at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge on 29 Feb (GS) were the first of the spring migrants/ summering birds reported this year.

The nominate Red-breasted Sapsucker at Harry Griffin Regional Park in La Mesa on 15 February 2020. Note the extensive amount of red on the head and breast, the lack of white on the malar and the amount of black on the back, all features that differentiate the nominate subspecies from *daggetti*, the subspecies expected in San Diego County. *Photo by Trent R. Stanley.*

A near-adult Masked Booby at the United States/Mexican border, close to seven nautical miles southwest of Point Loma, was the highlight of the San Diego Bird Festival pelagic boat trip on 28 Feb (GS). A subadult Neotropic Cormorant photographed at the Springs Golf Course and Resort in Borrego Springs 28 -29 Feb+ (NC) is the first to be documented within the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

The long-staying Harris's Hawk of unknown origin, first reported in Ramona on 6 Dec 2018 (NC), was still present on 29 Feb+ (*eBird*). A Swainson's Hawk over Julian on 15 Feb (EA) was most likely an early spring migrant. The continuing adult and immature Zone-tailed Hawks were reported at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park and over areas of nearby Escondido and vicinity through February (*eBird*). In addition, an adult was photographed over Lake Jennings on 7 Feb (RR) and another was seen along Rangeland Rd. near Ramona on 27 Feb (JMcM).

The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at the North Clairemont Community Park in Clairemont since 5 Jan (TF-H) was still present 28 Feb (*eBird*), and another was seen in residential Pt. Loma on 16 Feb (SBM). What may well have been a third was photographed at the Bird & Butterfly Garden in the Tijuana River Valley on 12 Feb (RTP—photos not conclusive). A Red-breasted Sapsucker of the nominate subspecies *ruber* was found at Harry Griffin Regional Park in La Mesa on 7 Feb (SES) and continued into March. This subspecies nests in the Pacific Northwest and is considered exceptional anywhere in southern California, with only one previous documented record for San Diego County: one bird five miles northeast of Lakeside on 9 Nov 1957 (Unitt 2004).

An Ash-throated Flycatcher photographed in Borrego Springs on 17 Feb (CJ) likely wintered locally—the first of the spring migrants not expected until

the second week in March. A Tropical Kingbird photographed at North Island Naval Air Station on 29 Feb (EHas) had likely been present all winter. A Cassin's Kingbird in Jacumba on 12 Feb (CKS) was unexpected since few if any have previously been reported in this area in winter. The Thick-billed Kingbird spending its 10th winter at the Poggi Creek greenbelt in Chula Vista was still present 29 Feb (*eBird*) and is expected to stay into April. The adult Scissor-tailed Flycatcher spending its fourth winter at the Poggi Creek greenbelt was still there 29 Feb (*eBird*). The Gray Flycatcher at Lindo Lake in Lakeside since 1 Dec (TH) was still present 29 Feb (*eBird*), another was at Harry Griffin Regional Park 15-17 Feb (TRS, *eBird*), a third was at Whelan Lake near Oceanside 21-29 Feb (RF, *eBird*) and a fourth was unexpectedly in the Pine Hills area south of Santa Ysabel on 29 Feb (JP). A vocal Pacific-slope Flycatcher at Mission Trails Regional Park on 29 Feb (MH) was the first of the summering birds this year. The Eastern Phoebe found at the east end of the Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve on 17 Dec (RP) was still present on 7 Feb (*eBird*), and another was along the Sweetwater River in Rancho San Diego 26-28 Feb (CA, *eBird*).

The secretive Gray Catbird adjacent to Marina Village on Mission Bay on 28 February 2020. Most views were brief, frequently only of the bird in flight, as it had the amazing ability to hide in even the smallest plantings. *Photo by Thomas Ford-Hutchinson.*

A Verdin, unexpected along the coast, found at the San Diego River mouth in Ocean Beach on 4 Oct (JRM) was still present on 19 Feb (*eBird*). A Gray Catbird, a casual straggler to San Diego County, adjacent to Marina Village on Mission Bay 28-29 Feb+ (AG) had likely been present since the fall, frequenting plantings in the large parking area adjacent to the bay.

Evening Grosbeaks were still to be seen near Big Laguna Lake in the Laguna Mts. with 10 present on 29 Feb (AD). Cassin's Finches persist in the Laguna Mts. in small numbers, with three near Big Laguna Lake on 29 Feb (CP). The presence of twenty Red Crossbills near Big Laguna Lake on 29 Feb (CP) indicates healthy numbers remained in the Laguna Mts. through February. In addition, a recently fledged juvenile accompanying an adult male photographed there on 2 Feb (PL) indicates some are nesting.

This colorful adult male American Redstart along the Bessemer Path in Point Loma on 14 February 2020 was clearly wintering locally. *Photo by Nancy Christensen.*

The Lark Bunting found in Jacumba on 17 Dec (PEL) was still present on 12 Feb (*eBird*), so likely to remain through the winter. A singing Black-chinned Sparrow in the Otay Mountain Wilderness Area on 27 Feb (PM) was the first this year. Single White-throated Sparrows were frequenting feeders at Mussey Grade in Ramona 11

The female Hepatic Tanager at the North Clairemont Community Park in Clairemont on 25 February 2020. *Photo by E. A. Butler.*

This obvious male Indigo Bunting was at a private residence in Fallbrook on 5 February 2020. *Photo by Larry Moskovitz.*

Nov-23 Feb (NC), adjacent to Tecolote Canyon in Bay Park 17 Nov-25 Feb (MM) and along Lyons Valley Rd. in Jamul 12 Dec-9 Feb (JM). The wintering Nelson's Sparrow, first seen at Kendall-Frost Marsh in Mission Bay on 28 Oct (KR), was again forced out into view by the extreme high tide of 10 Feb (*eBird*).

The Rusty Blackbird found with Brewer's Blackbirds at Robb Field in Ocean Beach on 30 Nov (KG) continued in nearby parking lots along Sports Arena Blvd. through 29 Feb (*eBird*). The first-winter male Orchard Oriole found at Robb Field on 7 Jan (EM) was still present 16 Feb (*eBird*), a female was along Coronado Ave. in Coronado on 20 Feb (PEL), an immature male was near the northeast corner of Balboa Park on 11 Feb (PEL) and an adult male was along the southern edge of Balboa Park 29 Feb+ (PU, *eBird*). An adult male Hooded Oriole at the North Clairemont Community Park in Clairemont on 23 Feb (LR) may well have been an early spring migrant. Five female/immature Hooded Orioles found in early February bring the wintering total to a record of at least 15. An immature male Baltimore Oriole was at the San Diego Zoo 11 Feb (PEL); a female at Nestor Park in Nestor on 26 Feb (EC) may have been present since December. A singing Scott's Oriole in Dulzura 19-29 Feb (DP) was likely an early spring migrant.

Four Black-and-white Warblers included one spending its fourth winter near the intersection of 28th and Beech Sts. in Balboa Park 28 Sep-29 Feb+ (LW, *eBird*), another along Crest Dr. in Encinitas 12 Nov-16 Feb (SC, *eBird*), a third at Harry Griffin Park Mesa 23 Dec-19 Feb (KK, *eBird*) and one for its fourth winter at Famosa Slough in Ocean Beach on 10-29 Feb (SN, JB). An adult male American Redstart found along the Bessemer Path in the La Playa neighborhood of Pt. Loma on 14 Feb (SBM) was still present 29 Feb+ (PEL) and no doubt spent the winter locally. A Northern Parula near the intersection of 28th and Beech Sts. in Balboa Park

7-11 Feb (JR, *eBird*) is most likely still in that general area. The Palm Warbler on Fleet St. in Carlsbad since 20 Dec (PEL) was still present on 28 Feb (*eBird*), and another around the intersection of Thorn and Bancroft Sts. in North Park since 1 Jan (MS) was still there on 15 Feb (*eBird*). A Hermit Warbler, rare in winter, known to be present in the Stonecrest neighborhood of San Diego 14-16 Feb (PEL and BLC) is likely still there. The Painted Redstart found in Tierrasanta on 25 Dec (PEL) was still present on 22 Feb (*eBird*) and is expected to remain through the winter.

This Dickcissel was with sparrows in desert scrub along the Montezuma Grade above Borrego Springs on 12 February 2020. *Photo by Nancy Christensen*.

The female Hepatic Tanager found at the North Clairemont Community Park in Clairemont on 1 Jan (JD) was still present on 29 Feb (*eBird*). At least eight Summer Tanagers were reported during February in the coastal lowlands between Nestor in the south and Carlsbad in the north. Unexpected in winter was a male Indigo Bunting at a feeder in residential Fallbrook on 5 Feb (LM). Even more unusual was a Dickcissel photographed at the Big Spring pullout on the Montezuma Grade above Borrego Springs on 12 Feb (NC) – very few have been recorded in California in winter, and those few have been in the coastal lowlands (California Bird Records Committee 2007).

Listed observers: Observers listed are limited to those finding, identifying and/or last reporting each species. Some sightings reported to *eBird* are included without specific attribution.

Christopher Adler, Bruce Aird, Eitan Altman, Jeff Bouton, Steve Cameron, Barbara L. Carlson, Nancy Christensen, Therese R. Clawson, Elizabeth Copper, Jay Desgrosellier, Adam Dudley, Ryan Fick, Thomas Ford-Hutchinson, Karl Garrett, Aaron Gyllenhaal, Erin Hart (EHar), Eric Haskell (EHas), Michael Hilchey, Terry Hurst, Cathy Jain, Kenny Kimbrough, Paul E. Lehman, Payton Lykins, Eve Martin, John Martin, Paul Marvin, Marcie Mason, Sara B. Mayers, Jimmy McMorran, James R. Morris, Larry Moskovitz, Stephen Nelson, Gary Nunn, Robert T. Patton, Jim Pawlicki, Catherine Peterson, Ryan Pottinger, Dave Povey, Jim Roberts, Kerry Ross, Ryan Rubino, Lisa Ruby, Gaelen Schnare, Susan E. Smith, Trent R. Stanley, C. K. Staurovsky, Mark Stratton, Philip Unitt and Lindsay Willrick.

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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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President	Nancy Christensen (760) 788-8180 nancy.r.christensen@gmail.com
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Program Chair	John Bruin (505) 401-3022 johnrbruin@gmail.com
Membership Chair	Barbara Carlson (858) 268-1937 barbarac2003@yahoo.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**

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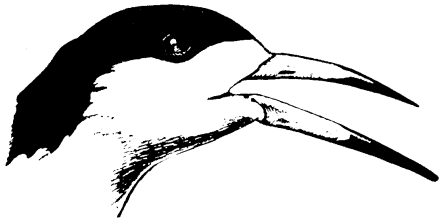
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11192 Portobelo Dr.
San Diego, CA 92124