The **SKIMMER**

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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, December 15, at 6:00 p.m. This will be a virtual meeting, using the Zoom app, which you can download beforehand. Members will receive an email invitation with directions to click on a link, which will open a window in the Zoom app, and you can join the meeting. If you have never used Zoom before, you will be asked to download the application for Zoom. You do NOT need to "sign up" for Zoom, just download the application. It is best to use a desktop or laptop computer, as their larger screen is preferable to a phone or notepad device.

Our annual holiday party. Celebrate your favorite end-of-year holiday with your birding buddies. Since we can't get together in person this year, we'll have to be virtually festive. There will be a retrospective with lots of photos, and you can chime in with your favorite birding moment of the year.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, January 19, same time, same place. Alvaro Jaramillo will speak on "Is that a new species?" A discussion on how all of this taxonomy stuff happens.

Christmas Bird Counts

The pandemic has severely curtailed our annual Christmas Bird Counts. Here is a list of scheduled Christmas Bird Counts in the county, with the count coordinators:

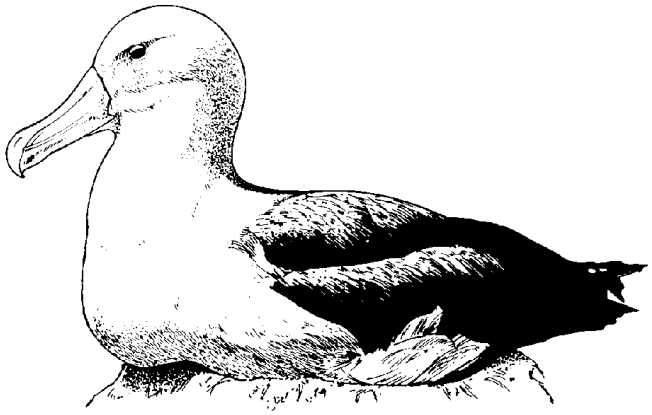
Sat. Dec. 19	San Diego	Justyn Stahl	Justyn.stahl@gmail.com
Sun. Dec. 20	Anza-Borrego	Robert Theriault	rtheriau@uci.edu
Mon. Dec. 21	Lake Henshaw	Gretchen Cummings	Gretchen.bc@sbcglobal.net
Sat. Dec. 26	Oceanside	Jane Mygatt	janemygatt@me.com
Sun. Dec. 27	Rancho Santa Fe	Robert Patton	rpatton@san.rr.com
Sat. Jan. 2	Escondido	Ken Weaver	gnatcatcher@sbcglobal.net

This information is off the San Diego Audubon web site, and some of these email addresses may refer to last year's count. Check with the count coordinator; you may end up counting on your own and submitting an eBird list or some such.

SDFO News *[cont.]*

Jan. 1 Pelagic Trip Cancelled

The headline says it all. Not enough birders responded positively to justify the cost of the boat.



SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, NOVEMBER 2020

Compiled by Paul E. Lehman

November is the last of the three primary rarity months in fall, and it usually runs a distant third place to September's and October's haul of interesting finds. But in 2020, November did especially well! An immature Tundra Swan was at Batiquitos Lagoon on 16 Nov (TG), followed by probably the same bird on Mission Bay 28 Nov (EE). A McCown's (Thick-billed) Longspur at Robb Field on 5-6 Nov (AH) was enjoyed by many, whereas one at Fiesta Island 10 Nov (GN) and another (adult male) along the Chula Vista bayshore from 12 Nov-2+ Dec (RTP) were enjoyed by just a few observers. A Common Grackle in Del Mar on 29 Nov (SB) established only the seventh county record. Rarer vagrant warblers included a dull Cape May at Lake Murray 29 Nov-2+ Dec (JP), a Bay-breasted in Hillcrest on 17 Nov (NF, JTS), a female Black-throated Blue in University City from 15-22 Nov (JD, PEL), a Prairie in Coronado on 28-29 Nov (PEL), and a "Yellow" Palm Warbler in the Tijuana River Valley community gardens from 10 Nov-1+ Dec (PEL), the last a casual visitor to California and the first in San Diego County since 1993 (Unitt 2004).

A two-day storm event on 7-8 Nov produced excellent seawatching results at La Jolla. One or two exceptionally late Arctic Terns were seen on the 7th (GN). There is only one later record for the county: offshore on 10 Dec 1977 (Unitt 2004). Also late were four Sabine's Gulls on the 7th (AG). A Leach's Storm-Petrel photographed on the 7th (GN) was exceptional from shore. Single Long-tailed Ducks were southbound on the 6th, 7th, and 8th (MS, JD, PEL). A total of five or six Ancient Murrelets were seen over the two days (GN, JD), as were two juvenile Black-legged Kittiwakes (GN, MS) on the 7th and a young Laughing Gull on the 8th (GN). Record high totals were established by the 17 southbound Black Scoters on 7-8 Nov

As many as three different McCown's (Thick-billed) Longspurs were found during November 2020.

A well-watched McCown's was at Robb Field 5-6 Nov. *Photo by Mel Senac*

Much harder to pin down was this McCown's at Fiesta Island, here on 10 Nov. *Photo by Gary Nunn*

The third McCown's was this male at the off-limits D Street Fill in Chula Vista from at least 12-21 Nov. *Photo by Matt Sadowski*

(m.obs) and by the 9500 southbound Surf Scoters and 62 Red-breasted Mergansers on the 8th (GN). Other very good counts included 6 White-winged Scoters on 7-8 Nov, 25 Parasitic Jaegers on 7 Nov, 104 southbound Common Murres on 7-8 Nov, and 27 Common Terns on 7-8 Nov (m.obs). Two other late Sabine's Gull were seen well offshore at the 30-Mile Bank on 5 Nov (DP), another Black Scoter was on south San Diego Bay on 25 Nov (PEL), another Long-tailed Duck was at Silver Strand State Beach 27 Nov (NB), and an on-shore Black-legged Kittiwake was at the San Diego River mouth 8 Nov (KK).

Returning and continuing birds of interest were many. A Red-necked Grebe was back for its fourth winter near Shelter Island, San Diego Bay, on 28 Nov-2+ Dec (NC). The Little Stint at the south San Diego Bay salt works (PEL) continued through 2+ Dec. The very late Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Robb Field was last seen 5 Nov (eBird). The Red-footed Booby at the San Diego Bay bait barge was still present through 2+ Dec (m.obs). The returning Greater Pewee in Balboa Park (JP) was still present on 21 Nov. The "Red" Fox Sparrow, a casual visitor, in Leucadia since 27 Oct remained through 2 Nov (JM). The returning adult Lesser Black-backed Gull in Coronado (DJ) remained through the month, and a new individual was at Lower Otay Lake 11-12 Nov (MS). The Tricolored Heron at the San Diego River mouth/Famosa Slough (DB) was still present 28 Nov, and additional individuals were found on south San Diego Bay from 12-25 Nov (MS, LN) and at San Elijo Lagoon from 16 Nov-2+ Dec (SB). Continuing and returning Zone-tailed Hawks were seen at the Safari Park/Escondido (2), near Warner Springs, and at Bonsall (DR, HP, AM), and an additional bird was at Rangeland Road on 26 Nov (DB). The Red-breasted Sapsucker of the *ruber* subspecies, casual in southern California, was back at Harry Griffen Park for its second winter on 27 Nov (CA). The famous, now-ancient Thick-billed Kingbird continued through the month at Poggi Canyon in Chula Vista (DJ), and it was joined by a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher returning for its third year from 24+ Nov (WA). Single Tropical Kingbirds continued at Dairy Mart Ponds (PEL) and in Coronado/NAS North Island (PEL) and were both likely returning, as was a Gray Flycatcher at Harry Griffen Park (KWd), with additional coastal-slope Grays at Rancho Penasquitos on 6 Nov (SH) and at Bonsall on 10 Nov (BB). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at North Clairemont Park 24 Nov-2+ Dec (JN) was probably returning, whereas one in

Balboa Park 21 Nov (PEL) was new. Some five Lapland Longspurs were found between 1-11 Nov (BLC, ST, PEL), and up to three Chestnut-collareds were enjoyed by many at Robb Field from 2-12 Nov (EC). Single Nelson's Sparrows were at Crown Point on Mission Bay and at San Elijo Lagoon on 14 Nov (JR, DAK), both possibly returning birds and both seen on a very high tide. An Orchard Oriole in Nestor 28 Nov (BCS) and single Baltimore Orioles in University City 10 Oct-17 Nov (LE) and in Solana Beach 14-20 Nov (PEL) were all likely returning birds. All three returning Grace's Warblers were seen during November: Villa La Jolla Park, Crest Canyon, and Crest Drive (AA, eBird, SES). A Painted Redstart returned for its second year to Tierrasanta 5-28+ Nov (PEL), and a new bird was in University City from 20 Nov-1+ Dec (DH). A male Hepatic Tanager was back for its third winter on private property in Tierrasanta 12 Nov (PEL).

Following the infamous "50 percent" Cape May Warbler at Villa La Jolla Park in October, it was good to record this pure bird, albeit a very dull individual, at Lake Murray from 29 Nov-2+ Dec. *Photo by Christopher Adler*

Unusually late were a Pectoral Sandpiper at Batiquitos Lagoon on 13 Nov (CJ), a Bank Swallow at Dairy Mart Ponds 19 Nov (PEL), and a Swainson's Thrush in Pacific Beach through 1 Nov (MS). A coastal Brewer's Sparrow in Carmel Valley from 19-29+ Nov (EM) was late and may be wintering locally. A pair of Scripps's Murrelets some 25 miles west of Mission Bay on 18 Nov (DP) represents one of the very few records for San Diego County waters between August and December.

A late and very cooperative Prairie Warbler was present in Coronado on 28-29 Nov. *Photo by Thomas Ford-Hutchinson*

Miscellaneous rarities were well represented. A "Blue" Snow Goose at Guajome Regional Park from 3-6 Nov (PT) was one of just a very few records of this morph in the county. A White-winged Scoter was at Coronado on 21 Nov (CM), a coastal Band-tailed Pigeon was in Pacific Beach on 29 Nov (GN), and up to two Pacific Golden-Plovers were in the Tijuana River Valley from 6-22 Nov (PEL, NC), as was the returning individual at the Tijuana River Estuary through 29+ Nov (eBird). A coastal Bald Eagle (adult) was unusual at Sweetwater Reser-

voir on 15 Nov (PEL), whereas rare interior sightings at Lake Henshaw included a Marbled Godwit on 10 Nov and a "Black" Merlin (*F. c. suckleyi*) on 18 Nov, the latter bird probably returning (KR). Four onshore Red Phalaropes were at the salt works on 12 Nov (MS). An immature Little Blue Heron was north of usual at San Elijo Lagoon from 9 -21 Nov (GV). Single Reddish Egrets and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons at San Elijo (PK) and Los Penasquitos (GG) Lagoons, respectively, were also somewhat north. Short-eared Owls were detected at Crown Point on Mission Bay 1-28 Nov (NC), Carlsbad 10 Nov (TG), San Diego River mouth 19 Nov (SP), and Camp Pendleton 19 Nov (BM), whereas up to two at Fiesta Island from 14-27 Nov (TF-H) were at a more typical location.

This female Black-throated Blue Warbler was present in University City tipu trees 15-22 Nov. This species appears to have declined somewhat as a vagrant to California during recent decades. *Photo by Alison Davies*

Rare near the coast, two Mountain Bluebirds were at Miramar National Cemetery on 2-3 Nov (JP). A Varied Thrush hit a window in Carlsbad 10 Nov (*SDNHM, LS). Purple Finches continued to be found at unusual locations, with several along the coast and additional birds east of normal at Jacumba on 3 Nov (PEL) and at Vallecito on 6 & 18 Nov (BLS). A large number of 45 Cassin's Finches were at Big Laguna Lake, Laguna Mts., on 28 Nov (RG). Unseasonal or out-of-place Grasshopper Sparrows were at Dictionary Hill in Spring Valley 15 Nov (MS), on Camp Pendleton 20 Nov (BM), and at Agua Hedionda Lagoon 29 Nov (JJ), whereas a Black-chinned Sparrow in the desert at Vallecito from 1-25 Nov (BLS) appeared to be wintering locally. Single "dark-lored" White-crowned Sparrows, very rare along the coast, were at Balboa Park on the 4th (HK), Encinitas on the 21st (SB), in University City on the 26th (PEL), and in the Tijuana River Valley from the 27th through 1+ Dec (PEL). Twelve Scott's Orioles in Hellhole Canyon in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park on 28 Nov (AN) was a good count. Single Tennessee Warblers were in Del Mar 22 Nov (RF) and in Chula Vista 28 Nov (JP), as well as in the desert, where more unusual, at Borrego Springs on 25 Nov (GN). An American Redstart appeared in Mission Hills from 8 Nov-1 Dec (MH), and the only Northern Waterthrush was at Dairy Mart Ponds on 22 Nov (PM). The season's second Scarlet Tanager was at North Clairemont Park on 30 Nov (HW). An Indigo Bunting was in Borrego Springs on 27 Nov (GN).

"Yellow" Palm Warblers are casual visitors to California, being far outnumbered by the duller, rare-but-regular "Western" Palms. Note the extensive yellow coloration below and to the supercilium, the reddish crown, and the slight reddish tones to the breast streaking. This tail-less bird was in the Tijuana River Valley beginning 10 Nov. *Photo by Alex Abela*

Lastly, the August-October "glut" of several scarce species west of the mountains continued, with November adding 4 more White-winged Doves, 5 new Vermilion Flycatchers, 6 more Clay-colored Sparrows, 2 each additional "Pink-sided" and "Gray-headed" Dark-eyed Juncos, and 6 more Green-tailed Towhees. November totals of some of our other rare-but-regular late fall and winter visitors included 4 Eurasian Wigeon (including one in the mountains at Lake Henshaw 27-30 Nov, NC), 3 Cassin's Vireos, 11 Plumbeous Vireos, 5 White-throated Sparrows, 7 Black-and-white Warblers, 4 "Western" Palm Warblers, and 8 Summer Tanagers near the coast, with an additional Summer inland at the Safari Park on 19 Nov (KWv).

Sabine's Gulls were found later than usual, in early November, with several from shore at La Jolla during a storm on 7 Nov, plus these two juveniles offshore on 5 Nov. *Photo by Thomas A. Blackman*

One of the big surprises of a two-day storm-event seawatching extravaganza at La Jolla was this exceptionally late Arctic Tern on 7 Nov. *Photo by Gary Nunn*

Cited 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. Alex Abela, Christopher Adler, Will Anderson, Brett Badeaux, Nick Barber, Sean Buchanan, Dean Budd, Barbara L. Carlson, Nancy Christensen, Elizabeth Copper, Jay Desgrosellier, Leo Edson, Elias Elias, Ryan Fick, Thomas Ford-Hutchinson, Nathan French, Rodney Gast, Tito Gonzalez, Gary Grantham, Aaron Gyllenhaal, Michelle Haglund, Steven Haupt, Alison Hiers, Dave Holway, Cathy Jain, Dan Jehl, Julian Jones, Hanna Kallwass, Kenny Kimbrough, Dan A. King, Patti Koger, Paul E. Lehman, Eve Martin, Paul Marvin, Jimmy McMorran, Alan Miller, Caitlin Morrow, Brennan Mulrooney, Andrew Newmark, Jan Nordenberg, Gary Nunn, Lewis Nygard, Robert T. Patton, Jim Pawlicki, Steve Perry, Hans Petermann, Dave Povey, David Rankin, Jim Roberts, Kerry Ross, Matt Sadowski, Britta Lea Shain, Susan E. Smith, Bridget C. Spencer, Lea Squires,

One of the big surprises of a two-day storm-event seawatching extravaganza at La Jolla was this exceptionally late Arctic Tern on 7 Nov. *Photo by Gary Nunn*

A good season for longspurs in coastal San Diego County included some five Lapland Longspurs during November. This bird was one of three at Crown Point, Mission Bay, on 1 Nov. *Photo by Barbara Wise*

This "Red" Fox Sparrow visited a yard in Leucadia from 27 Oct-2 Nov. Note the extensive red coloration to the underpart streaking, face, and especially to the distinct back streaking. *Photo by Jimmy McMorran*

Justyn T. Stahl, Paula Theobald, Stella Tomasi, Geoff Veith, Ken Weaver (KWv), Haim Weizman, Kathryn Wendell (KWd).

Abbreviation used: m.obs = many observers.

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Literature Cited:

Unitt, P. 2004. *San Diego County Bird Atlas.* Proceedings San Diego Society Natural History 39. San Diego Natural History Museum, San Diego.

SAN DIEGO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

President	Nancy Christensen (760) 788-8180 nancy.r.christensen@gmail.com
Vice-president	John Bruin (505) 401-3022 johnrbruin@gmail.com
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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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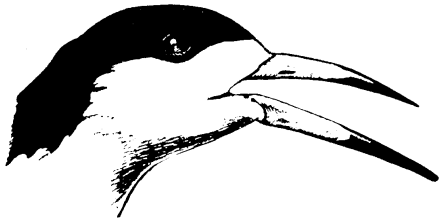
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