

The **SKIMMER**



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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, August 18, 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.

Program: Dr. Ben Van Allen will be presenting “Rails at the Edge: Ridgway’s Rail from Prehistory to the San Diego River Flood Control Channel.”

Ben will discuss Ridgway’s Rail: first the history of the species, including its origins, its original habitat and population size, and some of its biology. Then on to the recent history of the species, and the how and why of its decline to becoming federally Endangered. Finally some focus on San Diego and how the habitat for the species has changed here, its recent status, and how it has shaped the environmental plans for the Mission Bay Drive Bridge project.

Ben has traveled the country and a bit of the world pursuing his education and watching birds. His Ph.D. is in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Rice University, where he also significantly improved his birding by hanging out with Cin-Ty Lee, an amazing birder from Riverside who happens to be a geologist there. Here in San Diego he uses his birding skills as much as his formal education for his job. Among other things, he assists with monitoring the Ridgway's Rails in the San Diego River at the West Mission Bay Drive Bridge Replacement Project.

Next month’s program: Tuesday, September 15, at 6:00 p.m., also on Zoom. Program: “Cape May Raptor Banding Project: Over 50 Years of Banding in Cape May, New Jersey,” by Mandy Mathews, Secretary of CMRBP, Inc.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, July 2020

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

The male Greater Scaup at Santee Lakes since at least 5 Jun was still there on 31 Jul (PEL, *eBird*).

A Yellow-billed Cuckoo, normally an elusive species despite its size and non-cryptic coloration, was photographed along San Felipe Creek near Scissors Crossing on 1 Jul (NC), a location where Yellow-billed Cuckoos have been present in recent summers. A White-winged Dove photographed at a private residence in Carlsbad on 22 Jul (MT) was the only one reported on the immediate coast.

At least one calling Sora in the Laguna Mts. at Water of the Woods on 1 Jul (MMcC) and at West Meadow on 9 Jul (MT) is significant because, although this rail formerly nested in San Diego County (Unitt 2004), there has been no confirmed nesting here for nearly 70 years.

Determining the arrival dates for migrant shorebirds can be challenging because many non-breeding individuals remain locally, especially on south San Diego Bay, through the summer. However, the earliest of the fall migrants are adults in brightly colored, but noticeably worn, alternate plumage, rather than the basic or partial alternate plumages worn by those summering locally. Most of those earliest arrivals are suspected to have had failed nests on the breeding grounds so depart for their wintering grounds early. The first of the

juveniles are normally at least two to three weeks later than the adults and are all in very fresh plumages (no feather wear). This year the first southbound Black-bellied Plover was at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge on 2 Jul (PEL), the first Ruddy Turnstone at Marina View Park in Chula Vista on 13 Jul (PEL), the first Black Turnstone at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge on 4 Jul (PEL), and the first Red Knots were three at Marina View Park on 11 Jul (PEL). The juveniles of all four of these



This Yellow-billed Cuckoo in the dense riparian growth along San Felipe Creek near Scissors Crossing on 1 July 2020 appears to be the only one known in San Diego County this year. *Photo by Nancy Christensen.*

shorebird species are not expected until August. Since multiple Long-billed Curlews, Marbled Godwits and Willets regularly spend the summer on south San Diego Bay, the arrival of the first adults is difficult to determine. The first date for juvenile Long-billed Curlews was 13 Jul (PEL), Marbled Godwits 18 Jul (PEL) and Willets 14 Jul (PEL). A Baird's Sandpiper at the

South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge on 20 Jul (PEL) was suspected to be an adult, but one at San Elijo Lagoon on 24 Jul (JMCM) was believed to be a juvenile, and another near the southwest corner of Camp Pendleton on 26 Jul (PAG) was a juvenile. An adult Little Stint in alternate plumage at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge on 4 Jul (PEL) was likely the same bird



Two of the adult Solitary Sandpipers at Lindo Lake in Lakeside on 30 July 2020. Photo by Terry Hurst.

that spent the past two winters at this location, mostly undetected in the masses of Western Sandpipers. The first of the juvenile Least Sandpipers were two at Lindo Lake in Lakeside on 30 Jul (PEL)—a full month after two adults were seen together at Lake O’Neill in Camp Pendleton on 29 Jun (PAG). A juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper, with other “peeps” feeding on exposed mud at Kendall-Frost Marsh at the northern end of Mission Bay on 26 Jul (JD), was at the expected time of year for the first juveniles to arrive in California. The first of the juvenile Western Sandpipers were two at the San Diego River mouth on 24 Jul (PEL), this being four weeks later than the earliest of the adults. An adult Long-billed Dowitcher was at Lindo Lake on 10 Jul (PEL), but the first of the juveniles will not arrive until well into September.



This Surf-bird in partial alternate plumage, photographed at Marina View Park in Chula Vista on 30 June 2020, evidently spent the summer with other non-breeding shorebirds on south San Diego Bay. Photo by Nancy Christensen.

A juvenile Spotted Sandpiper at Lindo Lake in Lakeside 29-30 Jul (MW, PEL) was far from any breeding location, so clearly a migrant. Adults away from nesting sites have been reported as early as 30 June (Unitt 2004). Up to three adult Solitary Sandpipers were at Lindo Lake 27-30 Jul (PEL, *eBird*). The first juvenile Lesser Yellowlegs was one at the west end of Los Penasquitos Canyon on 30 Jul (JD), this being more than five weeks later than the earliest of

the adults. A juvenile Greater Yellowlegs at Marina View Park in Chula Vista on 23 Jul (PEL) was the earliest this fall. Finally, the first juvenile Red-necked Phalarope was at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge on 29 Jul (PEL).

The Surf-bird photographed at Marina View Park on 30 Jun (NC) was still present on 20 Jul (PEL), so it clearly spent the summer locally.

Single Common Murres off Pt. La Jolla in La Jolla on 3, 14 and 19 Jul (PEL and JD) were believed to be birds dispersing southward from nesting locations to the north.

Since Ring-billed Gulls formerly summered locally in small numbers, we know next to nothing about the arrival of adults and juveniles from the north (Unitt 2004). However, the status of this gull in summer has changed dramatically, with none now believed summering locally. Thus, an adult Ring-billed Gull in Del Mar on 2 Jul (SES) was believed to be an early fall migrant. The first of the juveniles are expected about three weeks later, and observers should report them. California Gulls are now common in summer along the coast, with virtually all being badly worn non-adults. The first of the southbound adults would be easily identifiable, and ob-

server should report them in future years. A juvenile at Marina View Park in Chula Vista on 20 Jul (PEL) was the first this year. The summering Glaucous-winged Gull at Marina View Park in Chula Vista since 10 May was last reported there on 15 Jul (PEL). An adult Black Tern, now much scarcer along the coast than 20 years ago, was off Mission Bay on 9 Jul (GN), and another was near the south end of Seacoast Dr. in Imperial Beach on 31 Jul (NC).

Ashy Storm-Petrels continued to be seen with Black Storm-Petrels off La Jolla through 21 Jul (PEL). A Masked/Nazca Booby, too young to be identified to species, flew southbound off Imperial Beach on 21 Jul (PEL). Two Neotropic Cormorants were at Morrison Pond in Bonita 28-29 Jul (JS, *eBird*). The first Neotropic Cormorant in California was along the Colorado River at West Pond in Imperial County on 13 April 1971 (California Bird Records Committee 2007). By 2003 the species was present in small numbers along the Lower Colorado River Valley and at the Salton Sink (Patten *et al.* 2003). The first successful nesting was at Ramer Lake in the Imperial Valley in 2011 (*North American Birds* 65: 518). The first Neotropic Cormorant in San Diego County showed up at Lake O'Neill in Camp Pendleton on 12 Oct 2014 (*North American Birds* 69:154). This species is now reported



One of the two Neotropic Cormorants at Morrison Pond in Bonita on 28 July 2020. Note the small head, limited size of the gular with its diagnostic white border, and the long tail—all features that separate this small cormorant from the expected larger Double-crested Cormorant. Photo by Jeff Spalding.

northwestward to as far as near Corcoran in Kings County and Goleta in Santa Barbara County (*eBird*).

Two or three continuing Reddish Egrets were reported this month, with one or two on South San Diego Bay through 31 Jul (GMcC) and another around the San Diego River mouth through 31 Jul (*eBird*). The adult Glossy Ibis was still at the Konyn Dairy near Escondido on 11 Jul (JTS) and is likely still frequenting this site and the nearby San Diego Zoo Safari Park.

At least one pair of Brown-crested Flycatchers remained along San Felipe Cr. near Scissors Crossing through 14 Jul (*eBird*). Another pair east of Scissors Crossing at Sentenac Canyon also remained through 14 Jul (*eBird*) and a pair was still at the Roadrunner Club in Borrego Springs through 24 Jul (*eBird*).

Red Crossbills continued to be reported from a couple of locations in the Laguna Mts. with a juvenile at Agua Dulce on 16 Jul (DDiT); the latest report was of one near West Meadow on 29 Jul (JB).

A worn and tailless Magnolia Warbler photographed near Doane Pond on Palomar Mt. on 25 Jul (EM) was most unusual because it no doubt spent the summer locally. Single hatch-year Hermit Warblers at Paso Picacho Campground in Cuyamaca Rancho State Park and near West Meadow in the Laguna Mts. on 29



Although its feathers are badly worn and it is missing its tail, this female Magnolia Warbler near Doane Pond in Palomar Mountain State Park on 25 July 2020 still shows the mostly gray face, two white wing bars, and mostly yellow underparts with dark streaks across the breast and along the flanks associated with this wood-warbler. *Photos by Eve Martin.*

to be early migrants since this species is not known to have nested in this area. A one-year-old Summer Tanager at the Bird & Butterfly Garden in the Tijuana River Valley on 7 Jul (BT) and another at the El Camino Memorial Park in Sorrento Valley on 26 Jul (DK) were the only two reported away from San Felipe Cr. near Scissors Crossing where they are believed nesting. The pair of Indigo Buntings around the Bird & Butterfly Garden since 3 May were still present through 31 Jul (*eBird*). A second male, also present since 3 May, was last reported there through 24 Jul (*eBird*).

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.

Jim Babbitt, Nancy Christensen, Jay Desgrosellier, Dean DiTommaso, Peter A. Ginsburg, Dan Jehl, Dan King, P. C. Koger, Paul E. Lehman, Eve Martin, Guy McCaskie, Mike McClintock, Jimmy McMorran, Gary Nunn, Susan E. Smith, Jeff Spalding, Justyn T. Stahl, Manolo Turner, Bill Tweet and Mike Witmer.

Jul (PCK and JB) were the earliest of the fall migrants to reach San Diego County this year—this species nests no closer to San Diego County than in the San Bernardino Mts. Two Wilson's Warblers at Paso Picacho Campground 29-31 Jul (PCK) were also believed

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61st SUPPLEMENT TO THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S CHECK-LIST OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS MAKES FEW CHANGES TO LOCAL BIRD NAMES

Each summer birders await the latest pronouncements of the American Ornithological Society on the latest fashions in bird names. Some years it's a bloodbath, other years, not so much. This year is one of the latter. San Diego birders don't have to do any crossing out of English names in their field guides.

That's not to say there aren't major changes. However, these are mostly at the higher levels, among the families and genera. The hummingbirds in particular get a major makeover. Our local species have pretty well escaped the carnage, but a couple of the south-east Arizona specialties like Violet-crowned and Berylline Hummingbirds get new generic names. Another group that has been rearranged are the chickens; the

subfamilies of the Phasianidae have been scrambled and redone. The Northwestern Crow is no more; it just isn't different enough from the American Crow to justify a separate name. There are new arrangements of owls, parrots, rails, vultures and cormorants, but again, no changes in English names.

One interesting decision has been to increase the time allowed for an introduced species to be considered established. It used to be 10 years, now it's 15 years.

And I challenge you to read the following sentence: "Change the English name for *Epinecrophylla fulviventris* to Checker-throated Stipplethroat" without bursting into laughter.



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