*The* **SKIMMER**

*Volume 47, Number 9—September 2020*

# SDFO NEWS

## Monthly Meeting

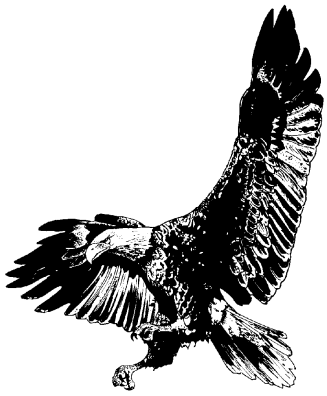
Tuesday, September 15, at 6:00 p.m. This will be a virtual meeting, using the Zoom app, which you can download beforehand. Members will receive an email invitation with directions to click on a link, which will open a window in the Zoom app, and you can join the meeting. If you have never used Zoom before, 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.

Program: This month our speaker is Mandy Mathews, Secretary of CMRBP, Inc. She will be presenting "Cape May Raptor Banding Project: Over 50 Years of Banding in Cape May, New Jersey"

The Cape May Raptor Banding Project has been operating in Cape May, New Jersey since 1967. The group became incorporated in 1999 as Cape May Raptor Banding Project, Inc. (CMRBP), a 501c3 non profit organization. As of 2019, CMRBP has captured and banded 154,858 raptors of 16 different species during fall migration, making CMRBP the largest raptor banding project in North America and one of the largest projects in the world. Tune in to see the raptor banding process demystified and to see some information about the species captured at this important migratory pathway.

Mandy Mathews has been banding raptors in Cape May for CMRBP annually since she was hired as the research technician in 2009. She has since been elected to the Board of Directors and then elected to the Executive Committee as Secretary in 2020. Although raptors are her passion, she works as a general wildlife biologist in the private sector in San Diego. She is an East Coast transplant to San Diego and has been here almost 11 years.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, October 20, at 6:00 on Zoom. Dr. Jenni Brandon from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography will be presenting "Oceans of Plastic."



# SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, AUGUST 2020

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

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

At least nine White-winged Doves were reported from the immediate coastal lowlands between the Tijuana River Valley and Carlsbad—more than typical for August. Every fall small numbers of this migratory dove stray westward from breeding locations east of the mountains, with some reaching the coast and the Channel Islands. A recently-dead Yellow-billed Cuckoo found in the eastern part of Encinitas on 3 Aug was likely lost (AM; specimen at San Diego Natural History Museum). Two Vaux's Swifts over Sweetwater Reservoir on 31 Aug (JoS) were the earliest of the fall migrants this year.

These juvenile Baird's Sandpipers at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge on 20 August 2020 are two of eight seen there that day. Note the scaled appearance of the upper parts formed by the pale buff tips on the otherwise dark brown feathers, and that the longest black primaries extend well beyond the tip of the tail. *Photo by Robert T. Patton.*

An adult Pacific Golden-Plover at the Tijuana River mouth 8-25 Aug (DB, RTP) was no doubt the same bird present last winter, so expected to remain for yet another winter. Small numbers of juvenile Baird's Sandpipers were found on the immediate coast, with up to three at San Dieguito Lagoon 19 -31 Aug (PEL, DK), one at Kendall-Frost Marsh Reserve on Mission Bay on 26 Aug (JD) and up to eight in a day at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge 11-27 Aug (LS). Up to three were a short distance inland at Sweetwater Reservoir 24-30 Aug (KW, *eBird*), and up to two were east of the mountains at Rams Hill in Borrego Springs 23-30 Aug (RT). Since few adult Pectoral Sandpipers are found in California in fall, the presence of two locally is most unusual, with one at San Dieguito Lagoon 11-14 Aug (DK, *eBird*) and the other at the San Diego River mouth 13-23 Aug (KA, *eBird*). A juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge 26 Aug (RTP) was slightly earlier than expected. The only Semipalmated Sandpipers reported this month were single juveniles at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge on 2 Aug (PEL), 12 Aug (RTP) and 17 Aug (PEL). At least seven Solitary Sandpipers were reported from the coastal lowlands, with at least four individuals at San Dieguito Lagoon

The juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge on 26 August 2020. *Photo by Robert T. Patton.*

The juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper at the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge on 12 August 2020. Note the short, blunt-tipped bill and lack of rufous on the scapulars. Most show more obvious dark ear coverts. *Photo by Robert T. Patton.*

19-31 Aug (DK, *eBird*) and single birds at Lindo Lake in Lakeside 6-12 Aug (JR, *eBird*), at Lakeside River Park in Lakeside on 14 Aug (JS) and at Dairy Mart Ponds in the Tijuana River Valley on 16 Aug (TAB). Another was east of the mountains at Rams Hill in Borrego Springs on 23 Aug (RT). A Red Phalarope photographed at Lake Murray 29 Aug (EA) was inland where rare.

Craveri's Murrelets continue to be reported in small numbers on the ocean off San Diego, with one over the 9-Mile Bank on 2 Aug (MS), two within 15 miles off San Diego on 8 Aug (DB), four close to the 30-Mile Bank on 9 Aug (GN) and four more in that same area on 16 Aug (PEL).

The summering Glaucous-winged Gull at Marina View Park in Chula Vista since 10 May was again present there on 12 Aug (PEL).

A flock of 16 Common Loons in basic plumage off Torrey Pines State Beach on 20 Aug (JD) was an exceptional number for summer. A Townsend's Storm-Petrel well photographed over the north end of the 9-Mile Bank on 2 Aug (GN) was only 11.7 miles west of Ocean Beach, much closer to the coast than expected. Single Townsend's Storm-Petrels around the 30-Mile Bank on 9 and 30 Aug (GN and DP) were over waters where probably regular in small numbers in late summer and early fall. A Least Storm-Petrel photographed over the 30-Mile Bank 16 Aug (PEL) appears to be the only one reported this year in United States waters.

Up to three Neotropic Cormorants at Sweetwater Reservoir 3-24 Aug (PEL, *eBird*) likely included the two frequenting Morrison Pond in Bonita 28 Jul-6 Aug (JeS, *eBird*). Review of photographs shows a total of four in the Bonita/Sweetwater Reservoir area.

At least half-a-dozen Reddish Egrets were reported along the immediate coast where now of regular occurrence in small numbers, but an immature bird inland at Lake O'Neill on Camp Pendleton 24-27 Aug (PAG, *eBird*) was unexpected.

The presence of a molting adult Zone-tailed Hawk southwest of Julian 20-28 Aug (JG) and a hatch-year bird over Los Huecos Rd. much farther to the south in the Laguna Mts. on 29 Aug (AD) suggests the possibility of nesting locally. An adult near San Vicente Reservoir on 23 Aug (RU) was likely an early fall wanderer.

A singing White-eyed Vireo found at the El Camino Memorial Park in Sorrento Valley on 3 Aug (PC) was still present 28 Aug (PEL) and likely spent the summer locally. A Plumbeous Vireo well photographed near West Meadow in the Laguna Mts. on 19 Aug (CKS) likely summered locally, since the first of the fall migrants and wintering individuals are not expected before mid-September.

A female or hatch-year Purple Martin over Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on Pt. Loma on 6 Aug (PEL) was an early fall migrant. A Swainson's Thrush photographed at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 30 Aug (AN) was an exceptionally early fall migrant; one in San Marcos on 28 August 1972 (Unitt 2004) establishes the earliest date. An adult **Bendire's Thrasher** at the Wastewater Treatment Plant in Borrego Springs 16-22 Aug (RT, *eBird*) was the first to be found in San Diego County in more than 12 years. However, Bendire's Thrasher was formerly a very rare and irregular fall migrant and winter visitor to the coastal lowlands (Unitt 2004), with the last in the lowlands on Pt. Loma 15-17 Sep 2005 (*NAB* 61:513). The most recent in the county was one in the desert at Clark Dry Lake 20 April 2007. A migratory Bell's Sparrow *Artemisiospiza belli canescens* photographed at the Wastewater Treatment Plant in Borrego Springs 23 Aug (KR) was earlier than expected.

The Townsend's Storm-Petrel over the northern end of the 9-Mile Bank on 2 August 2020. Note the prominent white rump lacking any indication of the central dividing stripe present on most Leach's Storm-Petrels, and note the somewhat short, shallow forked tail. *Photo by Mel Senac*

This photo of the Least Storm-Petrel (on the left) over the 30-Mile Bank off San Diego on 16 August 2020 well shows the size difference between it and a Leach's Storm-Petrel. The size difference between the tiny Least Storm-Petrel and a Black Storm-Petrel is even more dramatic. *Photo by Mel Senac.*

A Black-and-white Warbler photographed at the University of California Ecological Park in La Jolla on 30 Aug (AP) was an early fall migrant. A Lucy's Warbler, an annual post-breeding straggler to the coast of Southern California, was at Harry Griffen Regional Park in La Mesa on 25 Aug (EA). Single Summer Tanagers at Lake Kumeyaay in Mission Trails Regional Park on 18 Aug (EA) and in University City on 27 Aug (JR) were early stragglers to the coastal lowlands. A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 6 Aug (PEL). At

least one of the male Indigo Buntings around the Bird & Butterfly Garden in the Tijuana River Valley since 3 May was still present well into August (*eBird*) and was most recently seen at the adjacent Community Gardens on 29 Aug (PEL). One of the females was present through at least 15 Aug (*eBird*).

The long-staying White-eyed Vireo at El Camino Memorial Park in Sorrento Valley, photographed on 15 August 2020. The bird had molted its tail by this date. *Photo by Rodney Gast.*

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.

Kathy Aldern, Eitan Altman, Thomas A. Benson, Derik Bowen, Paul Chad, Alison Davies, Jay Desgrosellier, Peter A. Ginsburg, John Growth, Dan King, Paul E. Lehman, Anni Mallison, Andrew Newmark, Gary Nunn, Robert T. Patton, Aditya Pontis, Dave Povey, Jim Roberts, Kerry Ross, Mel Senac, Jeff Spalding (JeS), Jonny Sperling (JoS), Lea Squires, C. K. Staurovsky, Jeremiah Stock, Robert Theriault, Roger Uzun, Kathryn Wendell.

Acknowledgements: I thank Sara B. Mayers and Therese R. Clawson for editing, and Paul E. Lehman for providing useful comments on the draft of this report.

This Bendire's Thrasher was photographed on the sixth day of its 16-22 August 2020 stay at the Wastewater Treatment Plant in Borrego Springs. The worn condition of the feathers shows that it is an adult. The pale base to the lower mandible, along with the length of the bill and the coloration of the eyes, differentiate it from the similar but larger Curve-billed Thrasher. *Photo by Curtis A. Marantz.*

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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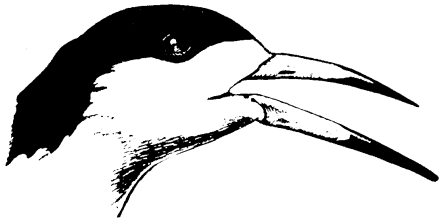
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