The SKIMMER

Volume 48, Number 8—August 2021

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, August 17, 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.

Zoom Tips

When the speaker is presenting his/her program, usually you see a set of small video windows off to one side or on the top of the screen. Each of those windows can be closed separately. On an iPad, there is a little plus or minus on the corner of each video window—click on the minus sign to close that window. On a computer, there is the symbol to minimize the window, which can be clicked to close that window. In this manner you can choose to see only the shared screen of the speaker, or leave the image of the speaker up as well. The host of the meeting has no control of this process; you need to customize your own view. Of course, there is no need to change anything if you prefer.

Program: Nancy Christensen will present "Life Among the Thorns: A Birding Safari."

SDFO President Nancy Christensen and her husband Russ spent most of April 2021 in Tanzania and Kenya, their first trip to that part of Africa. The Rockjumper tour, called Birding and Big Game, took them to many of the most iconic parks in that area, where they saw 525 species of birds. Covid had disrupted travel, and she had the incredible opportunity to experience Africa in isolation: most of the areas they explored had no visitors except the six people on the tour.

Nancy Christensen was born and raised in San Diego. She has had a lifelong

[continued]

SDFO NEWS [cont.]

interest in wildlife. Nancy studied art and photography at UCSD. For many years she was very active with the local Photonaturalist Camera Club, and eventually went on to have over 2,000 published images. Nancy spent time at the San Diego Natural History Museum examining the skins of extinct bird species, then painting images of them. In 2012, Nancy took up the hobby of birding, and has been on the run ever since. Since retirement in 2015, bird ing has become a consuming passion. In 2020 Nancy reported 394 species in San Diego County, a new record. She resides in Ramona with her hus band, Russ. They have two adult children and one grandchild.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, September 21, same time, same place. Allison Shultz will present "In the Eye of the Beholder: Evolution of Feather Color in the Tanagers."

SAY GOODBYE TO THE MEW GULL: 62nd SUPPLEMENT TO AOS CHECKLIST MAKES CHANGES TO OUR LIFE LISTS

Each summer the American Ornithological Society publishes updates to its *Checklist of North American Birds,* reflecting the latest research on the systematics of our bird species. The AOS checklist is regarded by most serious birders as the last word on what to call our local species, either in Latin or in English (they also have official names in other languages, such as French). This year features many changes to the official order of families and species, as well as changes in scientific names, that are probably of minimal interest to most casual birders, but there are a few zingers in there.

The most obvious is the split of the Mew Gull, *Larus canus*, into the Old-World Common Gull *L. canus* and the New-World Short-billed Gull *L. brachyrhynchus.* Old World birds occasionally occur in North America, especially the Kamchatka Gull *L. canus kamschatschensis,* but nearly all our Mew Gulls are now Short-billed Gulls.

Most of the rest of the changes this time around are in the Latin names of our birds. The Ruby-crowned Kinglet, formerly placed in the genus *Regulus* with the rest of the kinglets (and related Old-World species like goldcrests) now gets the nifty new name *Corthylio calendula*. The Five-striped Sparrow of southeastern Arizona and parts south gets yet another new genus name: it is now *Amphispizopsis quinquestriata* (try saying that three times fast!). The Spruce Grouse is now *Canachites canadensis*; it used to be *Falcipennis canadensis* and before that *Dendragapus canadensis*, depending on the age of your field guide. There has been an interesting rearrangement among the cormorants, which traditionally have all been placed in the genus *Phalacrocorax*. Only the east coast Great Cormorant is still a *Phalacrocorax*; the others have been moved either to the genus *Urile* (Brandt's, Red-faced, and Pelagic) or *Nannopterum* (Double-crested and Neotropic). This latter genus includes the Flightless Cormorant *N. harrisi* of the Galápagos Islands, which gave its name to the genus (literally "tiny wing").

A few name changes reflect splits outside our area. The Barred Owl, *Strix varia*, doesn't change here, but its Mexican population has been split off as Cinereous Owl *S. santorii.* Similarly, the Sedge Wren

[Continued]

Cistothorus stellaris has had its southern Mexican population split off as Grass Wren *C. platensis*. The Crested Caracara has been lumped with the Southern Caracara, taking its scientific name, so now we have the Crested Caracara *Caracara plancus.*

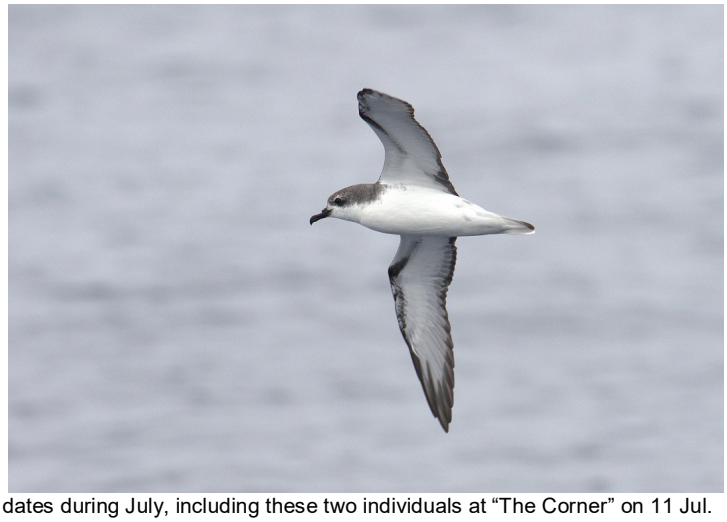
At a higher level, there has been extensive reshuffling in the ordering of the passerine bird families, which shouldn't concern anybody today, but will eventually result in rearranged checklists. Farther down, there have also been rearrangements in the order of species among the swifts, gnatcatchers, and waxbills.

So you shouldn't have to make too many scribbles in your field guide or life list, but over the years, they add up.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, JULY 2021

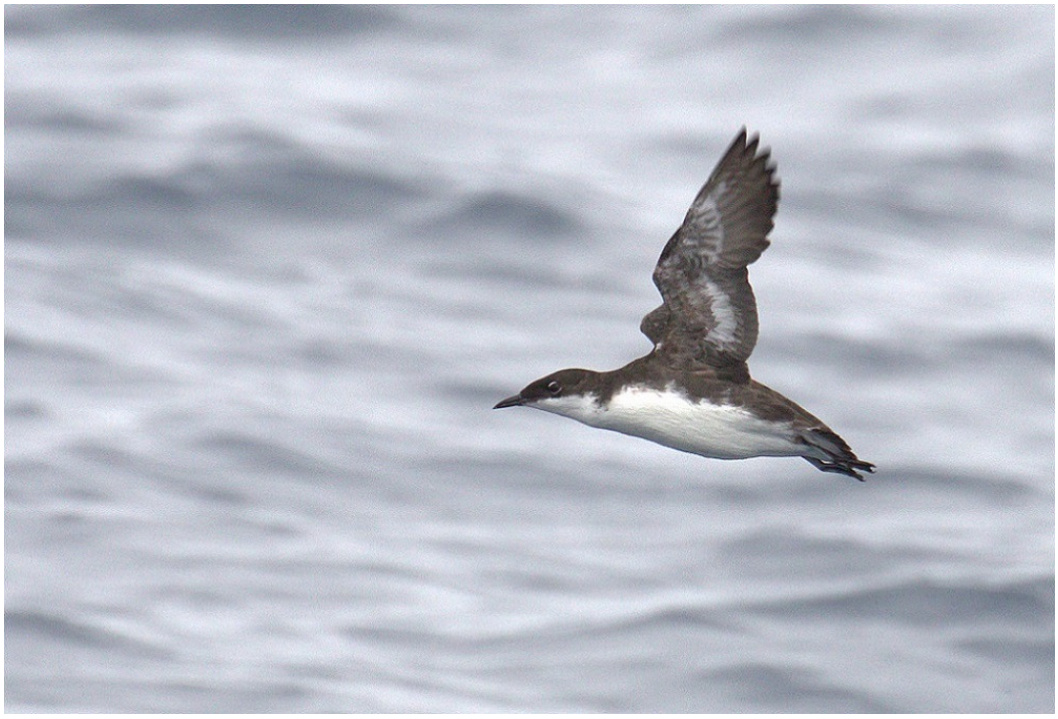
Compiled by Paul E. Lehman

Arguably the most exciting birding in San Diego County during July 2021 occurred in its pelagic waters. Better-than-average observer coverage during the month off the western San Diego Trough, 30-Mile Bank, and "The Corner"—located some 20-33 miles offshore—documented a record occurrence of Cook's Petrels in the county. Dates and totals were 11 July (8-10), 17 July (5+), 18 July (3), and 24 July (27+) (PEL, GN, MS, m.obs), the latter a record one-day total for the county. Most birds were at the 30-Mile Bank and The Corner, but a small yet consistent number were farther east over the San Diego Trough. Even more unusual was the single bird on 24 Jul at the northwest corner of the Nine-Mile Bank (PEL), a mere 13.8 miles west of Pt. Loma, very surprising for this typically deep-water species. Time will tell whether or not Cook's Petrels are somewhat regular in these offshore waters at the western edge of the county during June-July or whether this was an exceptional event. Other offshore highlights this month included a record high count of 68 Craveri's Murrelets on 17 Jul (PEL), a Laysan Albatross (the second this year) at the Corner



Surprising numbers of Cook's Petrels were found well offshore on multiple dates during July, including these two individuals at "The Corner" on 11 Jul. *Photos by Curtis A. Marantz.*

on 18 Jul (GN), an adult Nazca Booby there on 18 Jul (JPa), a South Polar Skua there on 11 Jul (PEL), an early Least Storm-Petrel there on 10 Jul (GN), with two more on 24 Jul (MS), a Manx-type Shearwater at the 30-Mile Bank on 11 Jul (CAM), and single early Buller's Shearwaters in the San Diego Trough on 7 Jul (DP) and 18 Jul (GN). The Manx was especially unusual for mid-summer. Also noteworthy were two or three Townsend's Storm-Petrels at the 30-Mile Bank/The Corner on 24 Jul (MB, GN), a good count of 20+ Leach's Storm-Petrels there on 24 Jul (m.obs), a Black-footed Albatross there on 24 Jul (MB), Long-tailed Jaegers in the San Diego Trough on 17 Jul (two; DP, JD) and 24 Jul (MS), and five arriving Sabine's Gulls at 30-Mile Bank/The Corner on 24 Jul (PEL).



Craveri's Murrelets were found in good numbers offshore during the month, including this bird at the 30-Mile Bank on 11 Jul. *Photo by Curtis A. Marantz.*

Most Leach's Storm-Petrels seen in San Diego County waters have mostly dark rumps, such as this bird near the 30-Mile Bank on 11 Jul. Truly white-rumped birds occur primarily even farther offshore and farther north. *Photo by Curtis A. Marantz.*

Onshore highlights were headlined by the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at the South San Diego Bay salt works on 27-28 Jul (MS, LS), the third county record of an adult. The first two such individuals were present at Batiquitos Lagoon 24-25 Jul 1988 and at the salt works 18-20 Jul 2013. A long-staying American or hybrid American X Black Oystercatcher was at several sites in La Jolla between 9 Jul-3 Aug+ (JD). It may or may not have been the same bird seen earlier on 6 Jul at Pt. Loma (DM). This/These birds may also be the same individual(s) as those seen in the La Jolla area during April and May. The first juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper of the season was right on time at the salt works from 27 Jul -3 Aug (MS). Single frigatebirds, presumably Magnificents, were at Mission Beach on 13 Jul (RC) and over Carlsbad on 25 Jul (JPo). As is typically the case with this species, these birds quickly disappeared. Quite unexpected in mid-summer was the Black-and-white Warbler near Doane Pond on Palomar Mt. 17 Jul (SV) and the *gambelii* White-crowned Sparrow at the Sil-

verwood Wildlife Sanctuary 25 Jul (AD). A Scripps's Murrelet was very unusual inside the mouth of Mission Bay on 21 Jul (AS), and a Brown Booby roosting on the salt works dredge between 29 Jun-29 Jul (MS) was unusual inside San Diego Bay. Up to three Indigo Buntings continued through the month in the Bird & Butterfly Garden area in the Tijuana River Valley (AN), with at least one male still present 3 Aug.

Several somewhat unseasonal Long-tailed Jaegers seen in the San Diego Trough during July, included this one-year-old bird on the 17th. *Photo by John Dumlao.*

Casual in summer, a Canvasback was at Santee Lakes from 23 Jun-28 Jul+ (BM). A Redhead at Borrego Springs on 29 Jul (RT) was a summer surprise there. Single Pigeon Guillemots flew by La Jolla on 3 Jul (AD) and 9 Jul (AC). A Black Tern was at the salt works 12 Jul (MS). A southbound Bank Swallow was at the Dairy Mart Ponds on 16 Jul (PEL).

The third record of an adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in San Diego County was established by this bird at the South San Diego Bay salt works on 27-28 Jul. *Photo by Matt Sadowski.*

Early arrival dates of fall migrants included a Cinnamon Teal passing La Jolla on 6 Jul (PEL), two male Rufous Hummingbirds in Warner Springs on 3 Jul (HP), five Surfbirds at the Mission Bay jetties on 27 Jul (JM), an alternate-plumaged Wandering Tattler at La Jolla from 30 Jun-2 Jul (record early; MM), single Solitary Sandpipers at Borrego Springs 29 Jul (juvenile; RT) and in Ramona on 31 Jul (NC), an Osprey in Borrego Springs on 26 Jul (SM), an adult Zone-tailed Hawk at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park on 1 Aug (NB), two Warbling Vireos in San Carlos on 1 Aug (JPa), a Purple Martin at Jacumba on 3 Aug (MWr), an adult Chipping Sparrow at Harry Griffen Regional Park on 2 Aug (JN), a Yellow-headed Blackbird at Mission Bay on 12 Jul (JR), a Black-throated Gray Warbler at Mission Trails Regional Park on 30 Jul (KH), single Wilson's Warblers at Buddy Todd Park in Oceanside on 29 Jul (SV) and at the Dairy Mart Ponds on 31 Jul (DT), and a Western Tanager at San Dieguito County Park on 3 Jul (GH). A juvenile Red-necked Phalarope at San Elijo Lagoon on 20 Jul (SB) was record-early for that age class, as perhaps were the single juvenile Semipalmated Plovers on 27 Jul at both South San Diego Bay (PEL) and San Elijo Lagoon (SV).

This American or hybrid American X Black Oystercatcher at La Jolla during much of Jul 2021 generated considerable debate as to its proper taxonomic affiliation. *Photos by Mandy Etpison.*

This Brown Booby, having its privacy invaded, took up residence during the month inside San Diego Bay, roosting on the salt works dredge. *Photo by Matt Sadowski.*

An unexpected summering Canvasback was found at Santee Lakes in Jun-Jul 2021. *Photo by Hanna Zhao.*

A strong migration of Red-necked Phalaropes during the latter half of the month produced many sightings of single birds and small groups at inland bodies of water (m.obs), where normally fairly rare. An immature Little Blue Heron at Sweetwater Reservoir on 2 Aug (JA) was casual inland. A westward dispersal event involving White-breasted Nuthatches brought single individuals to Carlsbad Village on 10 Jul (BR), the Bird & Butterfly Garden from 12-2 Aug+ (MWd), Batiquitos Lagoon on 21 Jul (GA), Harry Griffen Park from 21 Jul-2 Aug+ (BW), western Carmel Valley on 22-23 Jul (DAK), Kate O. Sessions Park on 29 Jul (HI), and outer Pt. Loma on 3 Aug (PEL). A wandering Canyon Wren turned up in eastern Encinitas on 19 Jul (GH).

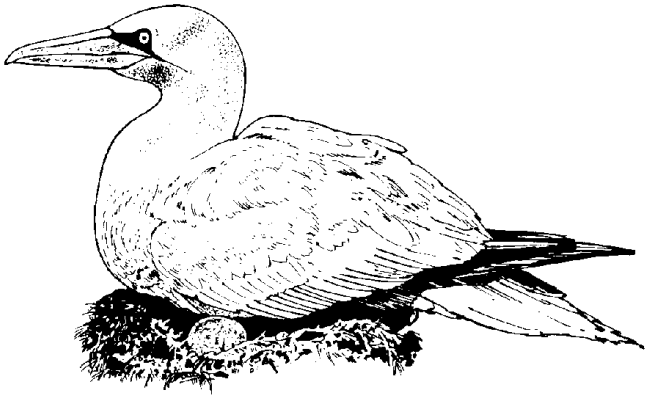
Acknowledgments: Many thanks to Sara B. Mayers and Guy McCaskie for their careful editing.

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. Joe Alsadi, Gavin Aquila, Nick Barber, Matt Baumann, Sean Buchanan, Nancy Christen-

sen, Ross Christie, Adam Cunningham, Alison Davies, John Dumlao, Karen Harnish, Gjon Hazard, Hank Ingersoll, Dan A. King, Paul E. Lehman, Donna Mancuso, Curtis A. Marantz, Marcie Mason, Salvador Mendoza, Brennan Mulrooney, Jane Mygatt, Judy Neave, Andrew Newmark, Gary Nunn, Jim Pawlicki (JPa), Hans Petermann, Jonathan Pope (JPo), Dave Povey, Blanche Ramswick, Jim Roberts, Matt Sadowski, Lea Squires, Annie Stockley, Robert Thériault, David Trissel, Sally Veach, Martha Wild (MWd)), Barbara Wise, Mike Wittmer (MWr).

m.obs = many observers

This alternate-plumaged Wandering Tattler at La Jolla from 30 Jun-2 Jul set a new all-time early arrival date for a presumed southbound migrant. *Photo by Char Glacy*.



SAN DIEGO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

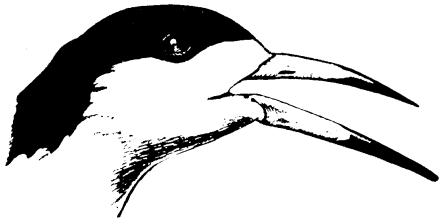
President	Nancy Christensen (760) 788-8180 nancy.r.christensen@gmail.com
Vice-president	Rick Grove (661) 609-7910 rpgrove@gmail.com
Secretary	Charlene Glacy (619) 851-1917 cglacy@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Conny Jamison (619) 269-3264 cmjamison@cox.net
Program Chair	Rick Grove (661) 609-7910 rpgrove@gmail.com
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**

JOIN SDFO

Dues for Calendar year: $25.00, including all renewals. Add $10.00 for each additional member in same household. **MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO SDFO** and mail or give check to Membership Chair: Barbara Carlson, 11192 Portobelo Dr., San Diego 92124. For membership information, call Barbara at (858) 268-1937.

Visit our website at

www.sandiegofieldornithologists.org

San Diego Field Ornithologists
c/o Barbara Carlson
11192 Portobelo Dr.
San Diego, CA 92124