The SKIMMER

*Volume 48, Number 12—December 2021*

# SDFO NEWS

## Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, December 14, at 6:00 p.m. **Note that this is the second Tuesday of the month instead of the third Tuesday.** This will be a virtual meeting, using the Zoom app, which you can download be forehand. 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 down load 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: Our annual Holiday Party. In lieu of a face-to-face get-together, we will again be having a virtual celebration. Nancy Christensen will present an overview of the birds seen around the county this past year. Afterwards, we would like YOU to speak up and tell us briefly your most memorable birding experience in the past twelve months. Let's share our love of birds this holiday season!

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, Jan. 18, same time, same place. Program to be determined; see next month's newsletter for details.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 18 - **San Diego** - Justyn Stahl (justyn.stahl@gmail.com)

Sunday, December 19 - **Anza Borrego** - Jim Dice (dicej@uci.edu)

Monday, December 20 - **Lake Henshaw** - Gretchen Cummings (gretchen.bc@sbcglobal.net)

Sunday, December 26 - **Oceanside** - Jane Mygatt (jane.mygatt@gmail.com)

Sunday, January 2 - **Escondido** - Ken Weaver (gnatcatcher@sbcglobal.net)

Thursday, December 30 - **Rancho Santa Fe** – Robert Patton (rpatton@san.rr.com)

## SDFO NEWS *[cont.]*

### NEW YEAR'S DAY PELAGIC TRIP

Start the new year with our annual SDFO Pelagic Trip. We will take the *Legacy* out of Seaforth Landing in Mission Bay for a half-day excursion to get our first look of the year at our local ocean birds. We will leave the dock at 7:00 a.m., so please arrive at the dock no later than 6:30 a.m. ready to go. The price is $65 per member ($20 for kids under 18 with paying parent).

Memberships for 2022 can also be paid at the same time: $25 for single, $10 for each additional person in the same household. Checks should be written to SDFO.

Please send your reservation and payment to **Barbara Carlson** 11192 Portobelo Dr, San Diego, CA 92124.

### David Burton Kimball (September 1937 - October 2021)

David Kimball, a champion of the Point Loma and San Diego natural environment, died from cancer at Park View Hospice surrounded by his children on Oct. 30, 2021. He was 84 and a 52-year resident of Sunset Cliffs. David will be remembered for many things, but he had particular impact with his work to create native plant gardens where birds could thrive and local communities could enjoy. His greatest legacy is the work he did at the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park. After he retired, Dave started volunteering. He became an active member of the boards of the Friends of Famosa Slough and the San Diego Audubon Society. For each of these organizations he designed, developed and maintained web sites, led fundraising and membership campaigns and presented seminars to hundreds of visitors and students. He served as the president of the San Diego Audubon Board of Directors and for 10 years organized and led the San Diego Bird Festival.

# SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, NOVEMBER 2021

Compiled by Paul E. Lehman

We start this column with a record actually from two years ago that has just recently been confirmed. On 2 Dec 2019, a Mexican Duck was photographed at Lindo Lake, Lakeside (AG, AN). This represents the first San Diego County record of this recently split species, which is thought to be casual anywhere in California. Differentiating "pure" Mexican Ducks from hybrids with Mallards, or simply from some eclipse Mallards, can be challenging.

This Mexican Duck at Lindo Lake on 2 Dec 2019 established the first county record. Note the bill color and color contrast between the head and body. *Photo by Andrew Newmark.*

In November 2021, the top rarity was the potential first state record Eastern Towhee at Jacumba from 6-8 Nov (BS, TSw, ML). This bird, a young male, looked like a pure Eastern Towhee, but it gave vocalizations similar to both Eastern and Spotted Towhees, raising the possibility that it might be a hybrid. The debate currently continues! Following as a close second, a Rufous-backed Robin was photographed at a bird bath one day only, 17 Nov, in residential Sunset Cliffs (SZ). This establishes only the second county record and only the second for coastal California. Virtually all state records are from the deserts.

This bird looks very much like an Eastern Towhee, although its calls were more ambiguous. Present at Jacumba from 6-8 Nov, it would establish the first state record. *Photo by Larry Sansone.*

Other high-end rarities this month included a *new* Thick-billed Kingbird in town, this one along Monument Rd. in the Tijuana River Valley (hereafter TRV) from 23 Nov-2 Dec+ (JP) and a male Hood-

The county's second-ever Rufous-backed Robin visited a residential Sunset Cliffs birdbath on 17 Nov only. *Photo by Sequoia Zook.*

Other new discoveries during November included a Short-tailed Shearwater at the upper Nine-Mile Bank on 27 Nov (MS), a Red-footed Booby at La Jolla on 21 Nov (DD), and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Jacumba from 8-13 Nov (MM). Single Eastern Phoebes were in Fallbrook 4-5 Nov (MK), at Liberty Station 18-21 Nov (JA), and returning in City Heights 26-27 Nov+ (KT). A very popular Red-throated Pipit was at Robb Field in Ocean Beach from 1-10 Nov (NF). Lapland Longspurs were present at Robb Field from 5-8 Nov (MW) and on 26 Nov (MS), and up to three were at Fiesta Island/Crown Point on

This male Hooded Warbler delighted many birders in Hillcrest between 30 Oct-18 Nov and is probably wintering locally. *Photo by Nathan French.*

ed Warbler in Hillcrest from 30 Oct-18 Nov (DT, NF). Both birds are probably attempting to winter locally. A White-headed Woodpecker along the Doane Valley Nature Trail on Palomar Mt. from 20 Nov-1 Dec+ (MS, DJ) was the first widely viewable individual of this species in the county in many years. This species barely hangs on in the county, where its current status is uncertain. Single Flesh-footed Shearwaters were offshore at the southeast San Diego Trough on 13 Nov (PEL, DP) and at the upper Nine-Mile Bank on 27 Nov (MS). A Thick-billed (McCown's) Longspur was in restricted areas along the Chula Vista bayfront on 5 & 13 Nov (MS). A surprising, temporally tightly clustered, *three* Bay-breasted Warblers were discovered this month, in Balboa Park 12 Nov, at Southcrest Community Park 19 Nov, and in Lincoln Park 19 Nov (all PEL); and a surprising, similarly tightly clustered, *trio* of Pine Warblers were at Montgomery Waller Park in Otay Mesa 31 Oct-2 Nov (DD), in the TRV 4 Nov (DP), and in San Ysidro 5 Nov (PEL).

Mission Bay from 18 Nov-3 Dec+ (PEL, EMn), while a Chestnut-collared Longspur was at the latter site on 24 Nov (JSk). A Nelson's Sparrow at Crown Point during high tides on 18-19 Nov (MS) was at an expected location. Scarlet Tanagers turned up in downtown San Diego from 7-10 Nov (LH) and in Carlsbad on 20-21 Nov (AA). Single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks

One of two Flesh-footed Shearwaters seen offshore this month, this bird (with a Black-vented Shearwater) was in the San Diego Trough on 13 Nov. November is the best month for this species off Southern California. *Photo by Barbara Wise*.

were in Coronado on 5 Nov (EC) and in residential Pt. Loma on 19-20 Nov (RD), and a Dickcissel appeared briefly at Robb Field on 2 Nov (EMr, AN).

The fine fall showing of vagrant warblers continued this month, with a Lucy's Warbler in Coronado 15-16 Nov (PEL), a Northern Parula in Kearny Mesa 6 Nov (PEL), a Magnolia Warbler at San Dieguito County Park in Solana Beach from 18-30 Nov (DAK, SY), yet two more Blackburnian Warblers (bringing the season total to an incredible 18 individuals) in Santee 31 Oct-11 Nov (TH) and Del Cerro 14 Nov (CA), single Chestnut-sided Warblers in Santee 31 Oct-21 Nov (TH) and at Lindo Lake 3 Nov (SW), an inland Black-throated Blue Warbler in Alpine 16 Nov (EMa), a returning Grace's Warbler for its fourth winter in Del Mar 20 Nov (DAK), and a returning Painted Redstart for its third winter in Tierrasanta 10 Nov-2 Dec+ (PEL).

Other miscellaneous species of interest include a high count of up to 52 Greater White-fronted Geese at Sweetwater Reservoir from 1 Nov-3 Dec+ (KW); a White-winged Scoter at La Jolla on 1 Nov (MS); Black Scoters at Silver Strand (NB), Imperial Beach (four; MS), and Torrey Pines (DAK); the sole coastal White-winged Dove in the TRV from 5-17 Nov (PEL); a surprising four Pacific Golden-Plovers at the San Diego River mouth on 27 Nov (EL); a Black-legged Kittiwake at La Jolla from 9-11 Nov (MS); up to two Lesser Black-backed Gulls at Lower Otay Lake from 13-22 Nov (MS); and a late-reported group of six Harris's Hawks photographed in eastern Ramona on 27 Oct (MF). The incursion of Lewis's Woodpeckers to the mountains and interior valleys continued (high count: 15 at Big Laguna Lake on 6 Nov (KF)), and one bird was nearer

(Above) The first of three Bay-breasted Warblers in just a week's time was this individual in Balboa Park on 12 Nov. *Photo by Mel Senac.*

(Right) The first of three Pine Warblers in just a six-day period was this individual at Montgomery Waller Park in early Nov, where it frequented a parking lot. *Photo by Char Glacy*.

This Red-throated Pipit was enjoyed by many observers during its ten-day stay from 1-10 Nov at Robb Field. *Photo by Thomas Ford-Hutchinson.*

This approachable male Scarlet Tanager frequented tipu trees at an outlet mall in Carlsbad on 20-21 Nov and thus proved quite popular. *Photo by Alex Abela.*

(Above)) An incursion of Lewis's Woodpeckers to San Diego County this fall brought this individual fairly close to the coast at Los Penasquitos Canyon during Nov. *Photo by Debbie Porter.*

(Right) This Greater Pewee in Balboa Park, here on 12 Nov, has returned for its fourth winter. *Photo by Mel Senac.*

the coast at Los Penasquitos Canyon from 23 Nov-1 Dec+ (EF). A rare and slightly late Violet-green Swallow was at Lower Otay Lake on 22 Nov (PEL), a coastal Golden-crowned Kinglet was on Pt. Loma from 2-6 Nov (JP), a much-enjoyed Varied Thrush was in the lowlands at Lindo Lake from 25 Nov-1 Dec+ (CM), a dark-lored White-crowned Sparrow was in the TRV on 1 Nov (PEL), and a migrant Grasshopper Sparrow was in Del Mar on 11 Nov (JP).

Very unusual inland, single Heermann's Gulls were at Lake Murray (KW) and at Lake Cuyamaca (JP), both on 7 Nov. Unusual in the desert, a Hutton's Vireo was at Agua Caliente County Park on 1 Nov (NC), a Townsend's Solitaire was at Vallecito on 3-4 Nov (BLS), and single Purple Finches were at Vallecito on 1 Nov (BLS) and Jacumba on 7-8 Nov (JSg). A Steller's Jay in Jamul on 11 Nov (JMa) was at an unusually low elevation. Up to two Oak Titmice were unusually close to the coast at Presidio Park from 3-28 Nov+ (MS).

Rarities continuing from the previous months, most involving locally wintering birds, included up to two Pacific Golden-Plovers at the Tijuana River Estuary area (MS); the returning Little Stint at the Salt Works (MS); up to eight Harris's Hawks at Jacumba (PEL), with 10 birds on 13 Nov (EI); Zone-tailed Hawks around the Safari Park/Escondido/Valley Center (up to two), Ramona, and Lake Cuyamaca (m.obs); the returning Greater Pewee in Balboa Park (MH); a

Townsend's Solitaire near Pala (TSt); returning Grace's Warblers in Encinitas (SES) and at Vacation Isle, Mission Bay (JP); Black-throated Green Warbler in Allied Gardens (CA); and Hepatic Tanager at San Dieguito County Park through 4 Nov only (GH).

An early-arrival date was set for Common Goldeneye at the South San Diego Bay Salt Works 5 Nov (MS); whereas late were a Swainson's Hawk at Borrego Springs 5 Nov (HC), an Ash-throated Flycatcher at San Miguel Ranch 23 Nov (JSp), three each Western Kingbirds and Hammond's Flycatchers during the month (v.obs), and a Western Tanager at high elevation on Palomar Mt. 27 Nov (P&DT).

Present since late Sep, this Black-throated Green Warbler in Allied Gardens remained through Nov and appears to be wintering locally. *Photo by Christopher Adler.*

November totals for some of the more regular-occurring rarities included five Tropical Kingbirds; four Gray Flycatchers; five Plumbeous Vireos; a very high 14 White-throated Sparrows; five Black-and-white Warblers; five Tennessee Warblers, including one in the desert at Borrego Springs from 27-29 Nov (PEL); four American Redstarts; a very high 12 Palm Warblers; and 13 Summer Tanagers. In contrast, there was just a single Clay-colored Sparrow (JL) and one Northern Waterthrush (BT) reported.

***Acknowledgments:*** Many thanks to Sara 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. Alex Abela, Christopher Adler, Joe Alsadi, Nick Barber, Nancy Christensen, Hal Cohen, Elizabeth Copper, Robin Dishon, Dean DiTommaso, Ellen Feeney, Kyle Fischer, Nathan French, Marla Fryman, Aaron Gyllenhaal, Michelle Haglund, Gjon Hazard, Lisa Huffman, Terry Hurst, Emmett Iverson, Dan Jehl, Miranda Kennedy, Dan A. King, Ethan Lai, Jacob Langford, Paul E. Lehman, Max Leibowitz, Eve Martin (EMa), John Martin (JMa), Marcie Mason, Eddie Monson (EMn), Elizabeth Morgan (EMr), Charlotte Morris, Jane Mygatt, Andrew Newmark, Jim Pawlicki, Dave Povey, Matt Sadowski, Britta Lee Shain, Susan E. Smith, Bridget Spencer, Jonny Sperling (JSp),Trent Stanley (TSt) John Sterling (JSg), Jeremiah Stock (JSk), Tim Swain (TSw), Dawn Tagburt, Paula & Dave Theobald, Knut Tjelmeland, Bill Tweet, Kat Wendel, Martha Wild, Steven Williams, Sandy Yayanos, and Sequoia Zook.

v.obs = various observers

m.obs = many observers

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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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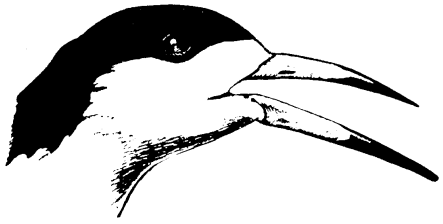
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