The SKIMMER

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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, March 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: Dr. Jessie Salter of the Los Angeles Natural History Museum will discuss "The fabulously diverse New World quails: tales from museum collections."

The New World quails (Odontophoridae) are perhaps best known for their popularity among hunters, but there's more to this group than just gamebirds. New World quails are surprisingly diverse, with 131 subspecies described by differences in male plumage pattern (that's more than 89% of other bird families!), but our understanding of how this incredible diversity evolved has historically been limited by a lack of genetic samples for many members of this group. In recent years, advances in sequencing and laboratory techniques have enabled the collection of genome-scale data from historical museum specimens, unlocking the potential for incorporating historical specimens into studies of phylogenomics, population genetics, and plumage evolution. In this talk, I present my research using data from modern and historical specimens to understand the evolutionary history behind the fabulously diverse New World quails.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, April 19, same time, same place. Chris Swarth will share the life and career of his grandfather, pioneering ornithologist Harry S. Swarth and his contributions to western ornithology.

SDFO News *[cont.]*

We Need a New Membership Chair

Many thanks to our outgoing Membership Chair Barbara Carlson for keeping us sorted out the last several years. Barbara has resigned, so we need a replacement. President Nancy Christensen is serving on an interim basis, so if you can help out, please contact her; Nancy's contact information is on the last page of the newsletter.

SDFO Dues for 2022 Are Due

If you haven't renewed your membership in SDFO for the current year, contact interim Membership Chair Nancy Christensen; her contact information is on the last page of this newsletter.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, FEBRUARY 2022

Compiled by Paul E. Lehman

This casual Bay-breasted Warbler, with matted and missing head feathers, was found in February at a tipu-filled parking lot in Encinitas, but it undoubtedly had been present all winter. Perhaps not a huge surprise given the impressive number of individuals found in the county this past fall (into early December). *Photo by Barbara Swanson*

February is a month typically characterized by the presence of many continuing winter stakeouts and a handful of new oddities. The rarest new species found in February 2022 included Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel and Bay-breasted Warbler, with honorable mentions to two hybrid-type American Oystercatchers, Common Tern, Vaux's Swift, and yet another Northern Parula. The storm-petrel was at La Jolla during strong onshore winds on 23 Feb (JDe), part of a two-day event (22-23 Feb) which also produced three Short-tailed Shearwaters and at least four Black-legged Kittiwakes (m.obs). The Bay-breasted Warbler (19-28 Feb+; BS) and the Northern Parula (21-28 Feb+; PAG) frequented the same tipu-filled parking lot in Encinitas. The former species is casual in winter, although this bird is probably not a total surprise given the unprecedented number found in the county last fall (through early December). The oystercatchers were both likely hybrids, although close to being "acceptable" Americans, one at the Mission Bay jetties and La Jolla from 18-22 Feb (m.obs) and the other at Oceanside Harbor on 20-21 Feb (PLa). The Vaux's Swift was well photographed over Sweetwater Reservoir on 25 Feb (JDu) and may well have been the same individual seen there back in December. A very-rare-in-winter Common Tern was photographed 9.5 miles off La Jolla on 18 Feb (MSa)

amongst a flock of 10 Forster's Terns (PEL) that were unusually far offshore.

A Pacific Golden-Plover was on South San Diego Bay on 13 Feb (NF). Two Lesser Yellowlegs were in the Tijuana River Valley on 23 Feb (DJ). The returning Lesser Black-backed Gull in Coronado, identified by its odd white feathering in the upper wing, was found a surprising distance away at Lake Murray on 8 Feb (JPa), but was back at Coronado a few days later through month's end. Two "new" Lessers turned up during the month on Lower Otay Lake (MSa). One or two Zone-tailed Hawks at Oceanside/Guajome Regional Park on 5&11 Feb (SE, DR) were in an area where virtually annual in occurrence. Six Pink-footed Shearwaters in the Nine-Mile Bank area on 19 Feb (m.obs) was an unusual number for winter, as were the approximately 30 Brown Boobies there on 20 Feb (m.obs). A Ring-billed Gull seen five miles west of Pt. Loma on 11 Feb (PEL) was farther offshore than usual for this landlubber species.

This oystercatcher at the Oceanside Harbor on 21-22 Feb is very close to being an "acceptable" American, although it may be a borderline hybrid. *Photo by David Theobald*

Very rare in winter, this Vaux's Swift was at Sweetwater Reservoir on 25 Feb. *Photo by John Dumlao*

A White-winged Dove was on the coastal plain at Guajome Regional Park on 18 Feb (MMr), an Acorn Woodpecker wandered to the San Diego Botanic Garden in Encinitas on 21 Feb (KM), a wayward Oak Titmouse continued at Presidio Park (MSa) through 18 Feb, lowland Golden-crowned Kinglets continued at La Costa (JA) through 15 Feb and at Vacation Isle (PC) through 13 Feb, a lowland Brown Creeper continued at Kit Carson Park (PEL) through 9 Feb, and one or two coastal Vesper Sparrows were at Robb Field on 17 Feb (eBird). A Tropical Kingbird at Kimball Park in National City on 28 Feb (PEL) was likely the same bird seen there on 19 Nov. Rare in winter, a Cassin's Vireo was in Carlsbad on 13 Feb (TG), a Grasshopper Sparrow was in Tierrasanta on 27 Feb (LS), a dark-lored White-crowned Sparrow was in Vallecito on 20 Feb (BLS), and a Yellow-headed Blackbird was in the Tijuana River Valley on 13 Feb (C&MS). High counts included 21-28 Wilson's Snipe at Fairbanks Ranch

It is sometimes over-stated that Cackling Goose is "as small as a Mallard," but in the case of this very rare *minima* subspecies of Cackling Goose in Coronado during January-February, it is actually quite accurate! *Photo by Elizabeth Copper*

"Eurasian" Green-winged Teal is a casual visitor in San Diego County. This individual was present January-February at the J St. mudflats in Chula Vista for the third year in a row. *Photo by Nancy Christensen*

This popular adult Lesser Black-backed Gull has been a fixture in front of the Hotel del Coronado now for at least the past four winters. *Photo by Andrew Newmark*

from 25-27 Feb (PEL) and four or five Zone-tailed Hawks at the Safari Park on 3 Feb (NC, MSe). Arriving a few days early, but now perhaps typical during late February in recent years, were an Elegant Tern at the San Diego River mouth on 26 Feb (JSt) and an adult male Hooded Oriole at Vallecito on 22 Feb (BLS). Also slightly early was the Cliff Swallow at Lake Murray on 2 Feb (JPa).

Continuing rarities from previous months and their currently-known "last dates" include the following: Cackling Goose (*minima*) Coronado (JAl) 20 Feb, "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal Chula Vista (DDi) 27 Feb, White-winged Scoter Silver Strand (NB) 7 Feb, Black Scoter (up to five) South San Diego Bay (JPa) 1 Mar, Common Merganser Coronado (JSt) 1 Mar, Pacific Golden-Plover (up to four) Tijuana River Estuary area (MSa) 1 Mar, Little Stint South San Diego Bay Salt Works (MSa) 27 Feb, Harris's Hawk (up to 13) Shelter Valley (HH, CV) 1 Mar (one pair seen copulating on 28 Feb), Zone-tailed Hawk (total two) Cuyamaca Rancho State Park/Lake Cuyamaca (RW) 10 Feb, Zone-tailed Hawk (multiples) Escondido/ Harmony Grove/Valley Center/Ramona (v.obs) 28 Feb, Lewis's Woodpecker Mission Trails Regional Park (WE, JPe) 18 Feb, Lewis's Woodpecker Los Penasquitos Canyon (EF) 26 Feb, Lewis's Woodpecker Rose Canyon (CH) 27 Feb, Tropical Kingbird Dairy Mart Ponds (JPa) 3 Feb, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher Del Mar/Fairbanks Ranch 1 Feb (SB), Greater Pewee Balboa Park (MH) 13 Feb, Hammond's Flycatcher Liberty Station (MMs) 27 Feb, Eastern Phoebe City Heights (KT) 12 Feb, Eastern Phoebe San Miguel Ranch (JSp) 6 Feb, Cassin's Vireo Carmel Valley (AA) 6 Feb, Mountain Bluebird (up to two) Chula Vista (TFH) 28 Feb, Lapland Longspur Mission Bay (JSt) 16 Feb, Nelson's Sparrow Crown Point (MSa) 1 Feb, Yellow-breasted Chat San Elijo Lagoon (PK) 10 Feb, Orchard Oriole North Island NAS (PEL) 10 Feb, Orchard Oriole Sunnyslope Park (PEL) 7 Feb, Baltimore Oriole San Diego Zoo (PEL) 20 Feb, Tennessee Warbler Montgomery Waller Park (PEL) 7 Feb, Tennessee Warbler Carlsbad (JDu) 17 Feb, Northern Parula Lemon Grove (JPa) 2 Feb, Northern Parula Carmel Valley (KF) 18 Feb, Magnolia Warbler San Dieguito County Park (DAK, SY) 27 Feb, Pine Warbler Friendship Park (JDe) 1 Mar, Grace's Warbler Encinitas (SES) 1

Returning Eastern Phoebes spent their second winters into February at both City Heights (left) and San Miguel Ranch (right). *Photos by Barbara Wise (left) and John Dumlao (right)*

A moderate incursion of Mountain Bluebirds to the county this winter brought several individuals to the coastal plain, where very rare, including two individuals in Chula Vista throughout the season. *Photo by Paul Lehman*

Mar, Grace's Warbler Vacation Isle (JPa) 7 Feb, Black-throated Green Warbler Allied Gardens (CA) 13 Feb, Black-throated Green Warbler San Diego Mission (SD, JAl) 4 Feb, Painted Redstart Tierrasanta (PEL) 21 Feb, Hepatic Tanager North Clairemont Community Park (TS) 6 Feb, and Hepatic Tanager Tierrasanta (PEL) 1 Mar.

February totals for some of our rare-but-regular wintering species included: two Gray Flycatchers, five Pacific-slope Flycatchers, six Plumbeous Vireos, four White-throated Sparrows, five Green-tailed Towhees, two Hooded Orioles, six Black-and-white Warblers, five American Redstarts, three Hermit Warblers, and eleven Summer Tanagers.

Seasonal (December-February) totals for some of our scarce-but-regular wintering species in 2021-2022 included: 43 Bullock's Orioles, 19 Nashville Warblers, 31 Yellow Warblers, 38 Black-throated Gray Warblers, 27 Wilson's Warblers, and 68 Western Tanagers (new record). All of these counts are above average, but they may mostly reflect better observer coverage rather than actual increases in winter numbers.

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

This American Redstart spent the winter in Coronado, where it was identified by many observers as a female, until it started showing the obvious blackish patches of a young male in late January and February. *Photo by Rodney Gast*

The second of two Black-throated Green Warblers found wintering this season was this individual at the San Diego Mission from early December into February. *Photo by Joe Alsadi*

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. Jenna A. (JA), Alex Abela, Christopher Adler, Joe Alsadi (JAl), Nick Barber, Sean Buchanan, Paul Chad, Nancy Christensen, Jay Desgrosellier (JDe), Scott Dietrich, Dean DiTommaso, John Dumlao (JDu), Steve Ellis, Wendy Esterly, Ellen Feeney, Kyle Fischer, Thomas Ford-Hutchinson, Nathan French, Peter A. Ginsburg, Tito Gonzalez, Michelle Haglund, Hannah Hernandez, Charley Herzfeld, Dan Jehl, Dan A. King, Patti Koger, Patricia Langen (PLa), Paul E. Lehman, Michael Martin (MMr), Marcie Mason (MMs), Kevin Murphy, Jane Mygatt, Jim Pawlicki (JPa), Jennifer Percival (JPe), Daniel Reed, Matt Sadowski (MSa), Mel Senac (MSe), Britta Lee Shain, Susan E. Smith, Jonny Sperling (JSp), Lea Squires, Jeremiah Stock (JSt), Camille & Mark Stratton, Tim Swain, Barbara Swanson, Knut Tjelmeland, Cassandra VanDyne, Robyn Waayers, and Sandy Yayanos.

v.obs = various observers

m.obs = many observers

CORRIGENDUM. Missing caption from the January 2022 report: This Sage Thrasher delighted many birders at Brown Field from 5-17 Jan. This photo was digiscoped with an iPhone. *Photo by Dan Jehl*

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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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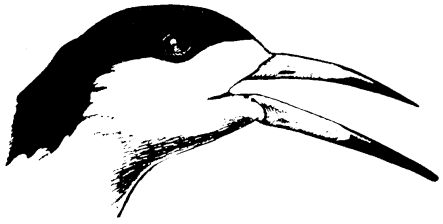
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