The **SKIMMER**

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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, August 16, 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 oom 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: Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program by Justin LeClaire

The South Texas coast is one of the most unique areas in North America and is renowned for its exceptional bird life. The Coastal Bend Bays Plan has served as a regional framework for the management, protection, and conservation of Coastal Bend bays and estuaries for 20 years.

The coastal bays are home to an entire guild of birds that are known for their beauty and were once hunted near to the brink of extinction. These birds – pelicans, herons, spoonbills, terns, skimmers and many others – made easy targets during the breeding season, when they gather in dense colonies on small islets in the middle of the bays and lagoons to breed. After legal protections at the turn of the 20th century assisted the birds in a strong recovery, the birds began to decline again in the latter half of that century. The Coastal Bird Program (a part of Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program) originated with a project fifteen years ago, with the aim of halting and reversing regional declines in colonial-nesting waterbird populations. Since then, we have worked on over 100 islands throughout the Texas coast, while focusing most of our management efforts in the central part of the coast. We have worked to identify causes of declines, develop methods for addressing those causes, and engage the public by implementing successful outreach programs.

Justin LeClaire is an Avian Conservation Biologist with the CBBEP's Coastal Bird Program. Based in

Corpus Christi, he manages rookery islands for declining colonial nesting waterbirds, monitors shorebird productivity at various important breeding sites, and assists in the field with numerous other important avian research projects. Justin grew up in Vermont and received a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology at the University of Vermont. His passion for wildlife conservation and the outdoors led him to work in the wildlife field in five different states before landing in South Texas in 2016. He has also dedicated thousands of volunteer hours to various wildlife research projects, habitat restoration, wildlife rescues, and outdoor education.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, September 20, same time, same place. Program TBD.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, JULY 2022

Compiled by Paul E. Lehman

This adult Gray-tailed Tattler was present along the Chula Vista bay shore from 12-16 Jul, establishing a first San Diego County record and only the second documented report for all of California. In contrast to a Wandering Tattler, note this bird's finer barring to the breast and flanks contrasting with an extensive unmarked whitish belly and vent, the slightly paler gray upperparts, and a darker, more contrasting dark loral stripe.
Photos by Matt Sadowski

An exciting July 2022 was led by the discovery of an alternate-plumaged adult Gray-tailed Tattler along the Chula Vista bayshore from 12-16 Jul (MSa). Although it was on restricted-access property and somewhat fickle to find, many observers saw it during its stay, though not nearly as many as would have liked to. This Asian species occurs annually in small numbers on western Alaska islands, but here it established the first record for San Diego County, the second documented record for California, and the fifth record for the Lower 48 States. The previous accepted state record was also an adult in July, in interior Los Angeles County on 23 Jul 1981.

An apparent Mexican Duck at Lower Otay Lake from 29 Jul-3 Aug+ (MSa, JP) is likely the same male reported there in Aug 2021 and probably also from Dec 2018-Feb 2019. It is an identification often fraught with some level of uncertainty. A female bird very close by on 30 Jul (PEL) also showed characters of Mexican Duck, but that ID comes with even additional uncertainty. These records are currently being deliberated by the California Bird Records Committee. The only other county record of the recently-split Mexican Duck involves a bird at Lindo Lake in Dec 2019.

A summering male Prothonotary Warbler coming to a jelly feeder in residential Encinitas from 9 Jun-2 Aug+ (NG) may establish the first record of a clearly over-summering bird in the state. An alternate-plumaged male Scarlet Tanager at Morley Field in Balboa Park from 24 Jul-3 Aug+ (JL) establishes the first summer record for the county and perhaps only the fourth at this season in the state. The bird presumably had been present most of the summer. A very cooperative Guadalupe Murrelet was enjoyed by a boatload of birders

This apparent Mexican Duck at Lower Otay Lake from 29 Jul-3 Aug+ shows the overall dark, crisp plumage with fully dark tail, undertail coverts, and tertials typical of that recently-split species. *Photos by Mel Senac & Dean Budd*

half way across the San Diego Trough (19.9 miles west of Point Loma) on 16 Jul (BVAS). This species is of only casual occurrence in the county, as it is more typically found in deeper water farther offshore, often near the shelf edge. A Blue-footed Booby flew by La Jolla on 30 Jul (JD).

Other casual species found during July included the returning adult Little Stint for its fifth season at the South San Diego Bay Salt Works beginning 18 Jul (MSa), a Laysan Albatross offshore at "The Corner" on 31 Jul (MSa), a Wilson's Storm-Petrel at the 30-Mile Bank on 10 Jul (early; v.obs), a Manx Shearwater at the eastern San Diego Trough on 16 Jul (NT), a young Magnificent Frigatebird at La Jolla on 19 Jul (DM), a sub-adult Mississippi Kite over southwest La Mesa on 26 Jul (PEL), and a Red-eyed Vireo along Hollister Avenue near the Bird & Butterfly Garden on 12 Jul (KW). Almost unheard of in county waters before 2020, three Cook's Petrels were at the 30-Mile Bank/The Corner on 8 Jul (PEL), six Cook's were there on 24 Jul (v.obs), four were seen 31 Jul (DJ), and one was nearby at the southwest San Diego Trough on 26 Jul (MB).

An alternate male Scarlet Tanager at Morley Field in Balboa Park first found on 24 July (here) was a total shocker at this season. It probably summered locally. *Photo by Jamie Lantzy*

Rare boobies included single Nazcas near both the Nine-Mile and 30-Mile Banks on 10 Jul (v.obs), an immature Masked/Nazca off Mission Bay on 24 Jul (CP), and single Red-footeds at the Nine-Mile Bank on 10 Jul (v.obs) and a mile off Ocean Beach on 16 Jul (BVAS). The Neotropic Cormorant continued from early May at Guajome Regional Park (CH) through 3 Jul, and the bird found at the mouth of San Dieguito Lagoon in Del Mar in late June (DAK) was still present in early

A highlight of the 16 Jul pelagic trip was this very cooperative Guadalupe Murrelet in the San Diego Trough. *Photo by Dan Jehl*

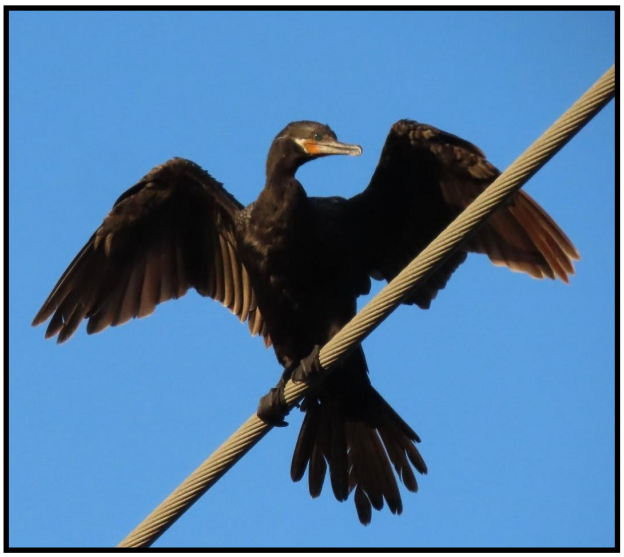
Cook's Petrels have now been recorded in San Diego County offshore waters three summers in a row, with multiple birds each year. This individual was at "The Corner" on 8 Jul. *Photo by Andrew Newmark*

Another offshore rarity in the San Diego Trough on 16 Jul was this Manx Shearwater, identified from photos only after the trip. *Photo by Nick Thorpe*

July.

Single hybrid American X Black Oystercatchers were at La Jolla from 10 Jul-2 Aug+ (returning?; PEL) and in the Point Loma/Zuniga Jetty/Ocean Beach area since March through at least 9 Jul (v.obs). The latter bird was photographed with a Black Oystercatcher *and a young chick* at Cabrillo National Monument on 3 Jul (*iNaturalist*, *fide* BM), establishing the first unequivocal oystercatcher nesting record for San Diego County.

The 16 Jul pelagic trip also recorded an all-time-record one-day total of 77 Craveri's Murrelets, a Townsend's Storm-Petrel closer to shore than usual along the outer edge of the Nine-Mile Bank, a slightly early-arriving duo of Long-tailed Jaegers at the 30-Mile Bank/The Corner, and two Sabine's Gulls and a Black Tern in the San Diego Trough (BVAS). The 24 July trip recorded a Black-footed Albatross at The Corner, an early Least Storm-Petrel in the San Diego Trough, and a Red-billed Tropicbird only four miles off Point Loma (GN, MSa). Tropicbirds have been few and far between the past five or more years. On 26 Jul, three Black Terns were in the San Diego Trough (MB). And the trip on 31 Jul also produced three Long-tailed Jaegers, a South Polar Skua at the 30-Mile Bank, an Arctic Tern in the San Diego Trough, a good count of 48 Craveri's Murrelets, and four Least Storm-Petrels at The Corner (DJ, GN, MSa).



This Neotropic Cormorant was found near the mouth of San Dieguito Lagoon in Del Mar in late June and was photographed here in early July. But reports since that time have become problematic and may involve a possible hybrid bird. *Photo by David Trissel*

One of two hybrid American X Black Oystercatchers present during July was this bird photographed at the Zuniga Jetty at the mouth of San Diego Bay on 8 Jul. *Photo by Barbara Wise*

An adult Baird's Sandpiper at the Salt Works on 22 Jul (PEL) and a Solitary Sandpiper in Ramona on 15 Jul (NC) were both rare and somewhat

A record one-day total of 77 Craveri's Murrelets were tallied offshore on 16 Jul. Note this species' tail held cocked upwards, the blackish upperpart color extending under the base of the bill, and the longer bill relative to Scripps's Murrelet. *Photo by Mel Senac*

This cooperative Red-billed Tropicbird was only four miles off Point Loma on 24 Jul. *Photo by Nancy Christensen*

early. Another Solitary at Lake Henshaw on 26 Jul (KR) was a more typical date. A juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper was at the Salt Works from 26-28 Jul (MSa). A Black Tern was at South San Diego Bay on 13 Jul (JTS). An adult Zone-tailed Hawk in Poway from 20 Jul-4 Aug+ (DS, PEL) was presumably a very early arriving winter bird. The returning, territorial male Indigo Bunting continued at the Bird & Butterfly Garden area in the Tijuana River Valley through the month (m.obs), a second male was noted on 30 Jul (MW), and the accompanying female continued from at least 25 Jun-15 Jul (BWi).

Totally out of season were the alternate-plumaged Horned Grebe on South San Diego Bay on 1 Jul (MSa) and the adult White-crowned Sparrow (probably *gambelii*) at Santee Lakes on 5 Jul (MM). A wandering mid-summer Summer Tanager at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery on 9 Jul (A&TL) was somewhat more expected, as was a Red-throated Loon off Torrey Pines on 30 Jul (SES). Small numbers of summering Northern Fulmars continued through mid-July, with a total of approximately five individuals noted (m.obs). Up to two Bald Eagles at Sweetwater Reservoir through 25 Jul+ (PEL) were unusual near the coast in summer.

This tame, bread-line Cackling Goose at Lake Murray remained from the winter through July and establishes one of the few summer records in the county. Here it provides a good size comparison with a Canada Goose and a Mallard. *Photo by Terry Hurst*

Summering waterfowl included the continuing tame Cackling Goose at Lake Murray through the period (m.obs); a Blue-winged Teal at Famosa Slough (JA) through 14 Jul and another at Mission Trails Regional Park on 12 Jul (MH); an American Wigeon on Lower Otay Lake from 14 Jul-3 Aug+ (DP); single Ring-necked Ducks in Oceanside from 8 Jun-30 Jul+ (SV), at Santee Lakes from 19 Jun-1 Aug+ (CT), at Lindo Lake from 22-31 Jul+ (DB), and at Lower Otay Lake from 27 Jul-2 Aug+ (PEL); a Lesser Scaup at Batiquitos Lagoon from 19 Jun-30 Jul+ (PEL); the long-staying scaup sp. at Santee Lakes through 29 Jul+ (m.obs); and, rarest of all, a continuing Hooded Merganser at Lake O'Neill on Camp Pendleton from 21 Jun-27 Jul (PAG). A flock of 23 Surf Scoters at the Oceanside Pier on 10 Jul (TG) and, especially, 52-83 at Imperial Beach/Camp Surf from 23-31 Jul (BP, LR, BS) were this summer's high counts.

The annual July appearance of Common Murres produced a total of 23 individuals (m.obs), with

most—as usual—being southbound alternate adults at La Jolla. And the annual July appearance of one-year-old Common Terns on South San Diego Bay peaked at 39 birds on 23 Jul (PEL).

Unusual inland, single Heermann's Gulls were at Lower Otay Lake on 2 Jul (MSa) and at Sweetwater Reservoir on 3 Jul (JP), and single Brown Pelicans were at Lake Henshaw on 1 Jul (BWa) and 26 Jul (KR). The latter likely arrived there via the Gulf of California.

One-year-old Common Terns were present in small-to-moderate numbers for most of the month on South San Diego Bay, with a high count of 39 birds on 23 Jul. *Photo by Barbara Wise*

Presumed early "fall" arrivals included a Lesser Nighthawk at the Salt Works on 27 Jul (MSa), up to three Soras at Lower Otay Lake from 17-23 Jul+ (PEL), a Surfbird on the Mission Bay jetties on 16 Jul (v.obs), a Spotted Sandpiper at Sweetwater Reservoir on 3 Jul (PEL), a Belted Kingfisher at Cabrillo National Monument on 9 Jul (A&TL), a Prairie Falcon at Border Field State Park on 12 Jul (KW), a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in residential Rolando Park on 26 Jul (BWi), a Lark Sparrow in Balboa Park on 31 Jul (MSt), six Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Borrego Springs on 17 Jul (RT), up to three Wilson's Warblers at Whelan Lake in Oceanside from 18-22 Jul (JM), and a Western Tanager in the desert at Vallecito on 4 Jul (BLS).

This leucistic adult Turkey Vulture, with a dark-headed juvenile, was quite the sight near Lake Hodges on 25 Jul. *Photo by Tracy Henchbarger*

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

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, Matt Baumann, Dean Budd, Buena Vista Audubon Society pelagic trip, Nancy Christensen, Jay Desgrosellier, Tim Gier, Peter A. Ginsburg, Neal Glasgow, Michelle Haglund, Carl Haynie, Dan Jehl, Dan A. King, Jamie Lantzy, Paul E. Lehman, Aedyn & Trysten Loefke, Mandy Mathews, David Miller, Brennan Mulrooney, Jane Mygatt, Gary Nunn, Bob Packard, Jim Pawlicki, Cody Pham, Dave Povey, Kerry Ross, Lisa Ruby, Matt Sadowski (MSa), Britta Lee Shain, Susan E. Smith, Bridget Spencer, Justyn T. Stahl, Dan Steussy, Mark Stratton (MSt), Robert Theriault, Carolyn Thiele, Nick Thorpe, Sally Veach, Barbara Wasbin (BWa), Martha Wild, Barbara Wise (BWi), and Kale Worman.

m.obs = many observers
v.obs = various observers

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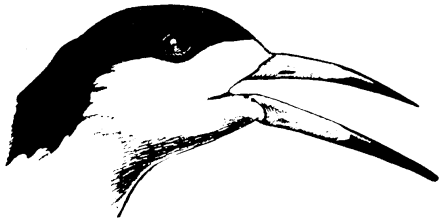

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