

# *The* **SKIMMER**

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*Volume 32, Number 10—October 2005*

## **SDFO NEWS**

### **Monthly Meeting**

Tuesday, October 18, at 7:00 p.m., at the Tecolote Nature Center, at the east end of Tecolote Road, off I-5.

Program: Robert Pitman will give an illustrated program entitled “Clipperton Island: Pig Sty, Rat Hole, and Booby Prize,” a study of the food habits of Masked Boobies. Bob is a biologist at the South West Fisheries Science Center Regional Research Lab under the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA). His specialties are seabirds, sea turtles, flying fish, and marine mammals. Bob recently published a paper on killer whales. He does a lot of sea traveling (you knew that), and he will show some pictures of seabirds from recent trips. Bob's wife, Lisa Ballance, is an expert on seabirds. She will also attend the meeting, and you can ask her the hard questions.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, November 15, same time, same place. Program: Mary Beth Stowe: Bird ID: Wintering Sparrows in San Diego County (Those are the ones wearing scarves and mittens).

### **Updated SDFO Membership List in This Issue**

Check your address and e-mail listing and let Mary Beth Stowe know if any changes are needed. We'll try and keep everyone up to date.

### **Skimmer Editorial Offices Go Broadband!**

Everything's up to date in Kansas City—and in Bonita! As a result of a recent upgrade at the futuristic Skimmer Control, our editorial e-mail address has changed. You can contact our staff at the following address: [john-walters@cox.net](mailto:john-walters@cox.net).

### **Ramona Hawk Watch Returns This Winter**

Our September speaker, Jeff Lincer, announced that the Wildlife Research Institute in Ramona sponsors a Hawk Watch in January and February, Saturday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to noon. A reminder and more details will be published in the December and January issues of *The Skimmer*.

### **Lots of Jays**

When Herb Young went looking for Thayer's Gulls in British Columbia, his guide there was Carlo Giovanella. Carlo and his buddies have done a Big (Corvid) Day in the B.C. area, and we present their results on page 3.

## **SAN DIEGO COUNTY WILL OWN DAIRY MART PONDS; IMPROVEMENTS TO COME**

Dairy Mart Ponds, one of the most significant freshwater marsh/riparian habitats of its size in southern California, will soon come under San Diego County ownership. During the nesting season the area at the eastern end of the Tijuana River Valley is home to many bird species, including such uncommon or endangered species as clapper rails, yellow warblers, American bitterns, and least Bell's vireos. The ponds are equally important for birds during migration and winter. Ducks, egrets, shorebirds, warblers, and sparrows of all kinds are possible, including some of the rarest birds seen anywhere in the county.

The State of California purchased the 60-acre site in 1989. For much of that time, the site has been informally managed by the County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation as part of the Tijuana River Valley Regional Park. The San Diego County Board of Supervisors agreed to accept the land on July 13, 2005. As a result, the State is expected to transfer ownership of the ponds to the County. As part of the transfer

agreement, the County, with funding from the State, will remove a few acres of invasive plant species and debris that had been illegally dumped on the site. The clean-up project is expected to occur in October and November, after the nesting season and prior to the rainy season.

The County has also included Dairy Mart Ponds in its Tijuana River Valley Regional Park Trails and Habitat Enhancement project planning. A Draft Environmental Impact Report on the project, which details paths and amenities such as bird blinds and benches around Dairy Mart Ponds and throughout the park, is expected to be released for public input by year-end. The project includes planning for permitted trails in the Valley and a 60-acre restoration area northeast of Dairy Mart Ponds.

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## **NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OFFERS BIRDING CLASSES**

Come enjoy birding classes and trips through the San Diego Natural History Museum!

Wednesday, October 26: Sketching Birds in the Field.

Wednesday, November 9: Introduction to Sparrow Identification.

Wednesday, November 16: Natural History of San Diego: Ornithology.

Saturday, January 21: Introduction to Shorebird Identification.

Friday, January 20 to Saturday, January 21: Salton Sea Wild Goose Chase.

Wednesday, January 25: Blackbirds and Their Kin.

Thursday, February 23 to Sunday, February 26: A Taste of Baja-Seasoned with Whales and Rock Art.

Saturday, March 25 to Saturday, April 1: Birding Jamaica.

For more information, call (619) 255-0241.

## THE BIG JAY DAY

By Carlo Giovanella  
Surrey, British Columbia

The circumstance of having TWO rather rare (to southwestern BC) species of jays wintering over in the Lower Mainland presented an extraordinary opportunity of ticking an unprecedented number of corvids in a single day. If the two coastal rarities could be located without undue delay, then a quick run to the interior could net a possible total of NINE species!

To this end, a dedicated group of four intrepid Lower Mainland birders (alternately described as "raven" idiots" by their spouses) set out on Sunday morning, Mar. 28, 2004 for the "Big Jay Day." Assembling at the site of the rarest target in Ladner, the odyssey began at 05:53 hours. Success was not at all certain, as the jay had been keeping quiet and reclusive of late, and had not been reported for several days. If the bird did not show in good time, we would have to scrub the mission and there would be nothing to crow about. Weather was another factor, but the dawn opened with patches of blue showing through the gray skies. As it turned out, we could not have a better day, but without a stellar performance by all team members we would not crack or even equal a score of eight species.

At precisely 06:08 the Western Scrub-Jay was sighted, Number 1. A quick drive to south Richmond, where Northwestern Crows were observed frolicking on the dike, Number 2. Within six minutes the Blue Jay was heard then observed by all at 06:33, Number 3. From there eastward though Vancouver to highway 1, with sightings of Common Raven, Number 4 on the Port Mann Bridge (numerous other sightings during the day). At the 232nd off-ramp the crew coalesced into a single vehicle for the trip inland, but not before a Steller's Jay was sighted at 07:37 for Number 5. Arriving at Manning Park Lodge at 09:30, we found the parking lot empty of the 'needed'

corvid species, bringing on the first twinges of doubt. At Lightning Lake a single Gray Jay was coaxed in by a tape of a woodpecker in dire distress, Number 6 at 09:52. A second unaided Gray Jay was at the Gibson's Pass Ski Area, but nutcrackers were nowhere in evidence. Onward to Princeton with increasing concern. After logging Number 7 American Crow at 11:55, we obtained advice that nutcrackers were regularly coming to feeders at a particular property, but on arrival there we found a very large and noisy machine busily altering the landscape and again no sign of the elusive 'crackers. On to a second recommended locality along the Osprey Lake Road, all the while scanning the hillsides for magpies and 'crackers to no avail. Then, just as despair was settling in, at 13:34 a solitary American Magpie appeared beside the road at Wayne Lake, Number 8. And just a few minutes later, close looks at several Clark's Nutcrackers! Species Number 9, and mission accomplished at 13:38. Retiring to a Princeton oasis for a celebratory brew, the final tick of the day was picked from a team member's nape at about 15:45, and summarily dispatched between thumbnail and tabletop.

Nine species of corvids in a day must surely qualify as a northwestern and Canadian record, and probably also an American record. Could it possibly be even a World record?? If anyone anywhere has firm information that our score had been previously bettered or equaled, we would certainly like to hear about it, and would then respectfully rescind our claim(s).

The Team: George Clulow, Burnaby  
Carlo Giovanella, Surrey  
Rob Lyske, North Vancouver  
Brian Scott, Fort Langley

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# SAN DIEGO RARE BIRD ALERT REPORT, SEPTEMBER 05

Compiled by Mike Evans

COMMON NAME	NO	PLUM	OBS DATE	LOCATION	REPORTER
Cook's Petrel	10		9/8/05	MEX: Pacific Ocean, Point Loma to S of Ensenada	Martin, J.
Red-billed Tropicbird	3		9/7/05	Pacific Ocean, 30 mi offshore, half way betw. San Diego & San Clemente I. (The Ridge)	Povey, D.
Red-billed Tropicbird	1		9/8/05	MEX: Pacific Ocean, Point Loma to S of Ensenada	Martin, J.
Reddish Egret	2	Imm	9/2/05	San Diego Bay, J St Marina mudflats	McCaskie, G.
Reddish Egret	2	Ad+Imm	9/3,18,26,29/05	San Diego Bay, J St Marina mudflats	Sadowski, M., G. McCaskie
Reddish Egret	1	Juv	9/5,11/05	San Diego Bay, J St Marina mudflats	Streit, S., Anderson, S.
Reddish Egret	1	Ad	9/14,17/05	San Diego Bay, J St Marina mudflats	McCaskie, G.
Yellow-crowned Night Heron	1-2	SubAd	9/11-30/05	Tijuana Slough NWR, channel at McCoy trail, S from visitor's center, W along a zigzag trail	Young, H., several other birders
Solitary Sandpiper	1		9/10/05	Tijuana R, W of Hollister St	Sadowski, M.
Semipalmated Sandpiper	1		9/11/05	San Diego Bay, S Bay NWR (salt works), central area (restricted access)	Patton, R. T.
Baird's Sandpiper	1		9/3/05	San Elijo Lagoon, N-from trail, N-end, Rios Ave near Duncan's bench	Palette, D.
Baird's Sandpiper	1	Juv	9/4/05	Tijuana Estuary NWR, McCoy trail from visitor center	Walters, J.
Baird's Sandpiper	1-13		9/7-26/05	Tijuana R. Valley, new sod farm at NE corner Hollister St. and Sunset, E of eucalyptus grove	Sadowski, M., Fenner, D.
Baird's Sandpiper	1-2		9/11,17/05	San Diego Bay, S Bay NWR (salt works), central area (restricted access)	Patton, R. T.
Baird's Sandpiper	2		9/13/05	North Island/NAS North Island Skeet Beach	Sadowski, M.
Baird's Sandpiper	1		9/16/05	Tijuana Estuary, along beach	Patton, R. T.
Pectoral Sandpiper	1	Ad/Bas	9/4/05	San Elijo Lagoon, W basin, N of old sewer plant	Palette, D.
Pectoral Sandpiper	1		9/11/05	Tijuana R. Valley Regional Park, athletic fields S of Sunset Ave., E of Hollister St.	Anderson, S.
Pectoral Sandpiper	1		9/12/05	San Elijo Lagoon, E basin	Patton, R. T.
Pectoral Sandpiper	1	J	9/21/05	San Diego Bay, Delta Beach Marsh (restricted)	Sadowski, M.
Pectoral Sandpiper	1		9/26,29/05	Tijuana R Vly, Sunset Ave sod farm	Sadowski, M.

Pacific Golden-Plover	1	Ad	9/4,8/05	San Elijo Lagoon, W basin, N of old sewer plant	Palette, D.	
Pacific Golden-Plover	1		9/9,21/05	Tijuana Slough NWR, dune vegetation, N of river mouth	Patton, R. T.	
Black Oystercatcher	1		9/4/05	Cabrillo NM, tidepool area, from middle parking lot	Hunefeld, T.	
Vermilion Flycatcher	M/Imm		9/17/05	Tijuana R., S of Am-Sod farm, Dairy Mart Rd.	McGrath, T.	
Vermilion Flycatcher	1		9/28/05	Lindo Lake Park, Lakeside, E-lake	Osborne, O., ton, W.	Den-
Tropical Kingbird	1		9/29/05	Tijuana R. Valley, Sunset & Hollister	Sadowski, M.	
Tropical Kingbird	1		9/30/05	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove, dripping faucet	Smith, S.	
*Black-throated Magpie-Jay	#		9/24/05	Tijuana R. Valley Regional Park, riparian area S of Hollister St. bridge	Hazard, G.	
Townsend's Solitaire	1		9/11/05	Cuyamaca Rancho SP, Cuyamaca Peak Fire Road	Carlson, B.	
Brown Thrasher	1		9/6/05	Borrego Springs, private residence near Borrego Springs High School	Jorgensen, P.	
Bendire's Thrasher	1		9/15/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, W side	Altman, E.	
Bendire's Thrasher	1		9/16,17/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, E side, SE-corner	Hunefeld, T., Evans, M.	
Red-throated Pipit	1	1st fall	9/30/05	Tijuana R. Valley, Sunset Ave. sod farm	Karalun, D.	
Savannah Sparrow (Large-billed)	1		9/8/05	North Island/Coronado NASNI, Zuniga Jetty (restricted)	Sadowski, M.	
Savannah Sparrow (Large-billed)	3-4		9/11,17/05	San Diego Bay, S Bay NWR (salt works), central area (restricted access)	Patton, R. T.	
Savannah Sparrow (Large-billed)	1		9/12/05	San Elijo Lagoon, E basin	Patton, R. T.	
Savannah Sparrow (Large-billed)	1		9/13/05	North Island/NAB, ocean side	Sadowski, M.	
Savannah Sparrow (Large-billed)	1		9/16,21/05	Tijuana Estuary, river mouth	Patton, R. T.	
Savannah Sparrow	#		9/19/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC	Worley, J.	
Savannah Sparrow (Large-billed)	1		9/21/05	San Diego Bay, Delta Beach Marsh (restricted)	Sadowski, M.	
Savannah Sparrow (Large-billed)	1		9/21/05	Tijuana Slough NWR, beach, SW of end of Seacoast Dr.	Patton, R. T.	
Clay-colored Sparrow	1		9/17/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, W side, Sec. V, W of dip	Heindel, M. T.	
Tennessee Warbler	1		9/17/05	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove, dripping faucet	Plunkett, T.	
Tennessee Warbler	1		9/18/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, W side, N of Sec. V, in pine	McCaskie, G.	
Tennessee Warbler	1	"winter plum"	9/22/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, W side, dip area, Sec. X	(Orange Co. birders)	
Tennessee Warbler	1		9/24/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, E side, Sec. O	Hazard, G.	

Northern Parula	1	F/1st	9/19/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, W side, N of dip	Worley, J.
Northern Parula	1		9/22/05	Balboa Park, Morley Field bocce ball courts, SE of Upas & Jacaranda	Rogers, G.
Chestnut-sided Warbler	1	1st wint.	9/19/05	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove, dripping faucet	Murayama, V.
Magnolia Warbler	1	F/1st	9/30/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, E side, in Ficus (opposite dip on W side)	Karalun, D.
Blackburnian Warbler	1	M/1st fall	9/24/05	Tijuana R. Valley Regional Park, Hollister St., riparian area S of bridge	Hazard, G.
Grace's Warbler	1-2	M	9/18-30/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, W side	McCaskie, G., several other birders
Grace's Warbler	1		9/19/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, E side	Myers, T.
Grace's Warbler	1	F	9/29/05	Torrey Pines Annex, DAR Trail	Grantham, G.
Prairie Warbler	1	Juv?	9/24/05	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove, dripping faucet	Ginsburg, P.
Blackpoll Warbler	1	F/Juv	9/17/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, E side, near eucalyptus grove	Sadowski, M.
Black-and-white Warbler	1		9/16, 19/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, W side	Puschock, J., Worley, J.
American Redstart	1	M/Ad	9/9/05	Tijuana R. Valley Regional Park, Visitor Center 2310 Hollister, in dense riparian area	Sadowski, M.
American Redstart	1	Juv or F	9/16-24/05	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove, dripping faucet	Conway, V., several other birders
American Redstart	1	M/1st	9/16, 18, 20/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, W side	Puschock, J., 2 other birders
American Redstart	2	F/Imm	9/17/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, E side	Hunefeld, T.
American Redstart	1	F/Imm	9/17/05	Point Loma, on Silvergate Ave., near Cedarbrae & Silvergate	Smith, S.
American Redstart	#		9/19/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC	Worley, Joe
American Redstart	1	M/1st fall	9/19, 23/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, E side, at Eucalyptus grove	Myers, T.
American Redstart	1	F	9/29/05	Tijuana R. Valley Regional Park, Bird and Butterfly Garden, off Hollister St.	Sadowski, M.
Prothonotary Warbler	1	M	9/28/05	Tijuana R. Valley, Hollister St. bridge	?Isik, D.
Canada Warbler	1	F	9/30/05	Tijuana R. Valley, Smuggler Gulch, Tamarisk trees adjacent to Monument Rd.	Karalun, D.
Painted Redstart	1		9/30/05	Tijuana R. Valley Regional Park, Bird & Butterfly Garden	Karalun, D.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1	M/1st fall	9/10/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC, E side, Sec. D	Smith, S.
Lazuli Bunting	1-2	Juv	9/18, 19/05	Ft. Rosecrans NC	Hunefeld, T., Worley, J.