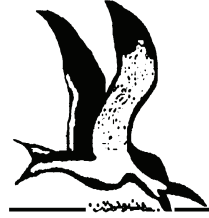


# *The* **SKIMMER**

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*Volume 38, Number 1—January 2011*

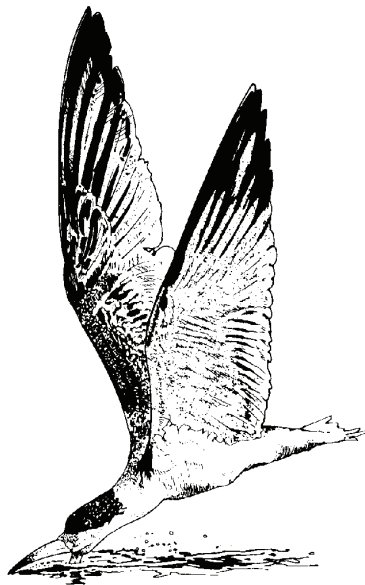
## **SDFO NEWS**

### **Monthly Meeting**

Tuesday, January 18, at 7:00 p.m., at the Liberty Station Command Center Building, 2640 Historic Decatur Rd. going south on Rosecrans St. (in the Midway area of town), turn left on Roosevelt Rd. into Liberty Station and then left again on Decatur.

Program: Our speaker, John Sterling, will speak on “Argentina and Antarctica.” John is President of the Central Valley Bird Club and runs his own business, Sterling Wildlife Biology. He writes, “I have been an active birder in California since 1971 (I started young!). My professional career has included many years as a staff avian ecologist at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and as an environmental consultant in California. I am currently working on a book on the status and distribution of the birds of California.”

Next month’s meeting: Tuesday, February 15, at 7:00 p.m. Location to be announced—see next month’s *Skimmer*. Program: Stephen Shunk on woodpeckers.



## SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS DECEMBER 2010

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

The Escondido, Oceanside, Rancho Santa Fe, and particularly the San Diego Christmas Bird Counts documented the variety of bird species (an accumulated total of nearly 250 species including an impressive 218 on the San Diego count alone) present in coastal San Diego County in December.

Scarce sea ducks included a male Black Scoter on the ocean off the Silver Strand State Beach 15 Dec (LS) that was probably the same male on San Diego Bay at Delta Beach 1 Dec (MS), and a female Long-tailed Duck photographed on San Diego Bay near the Coronado Bridge 18 Dec (TAB). A Flesh-footed Shearwater photographed over the Nine-Mile Bank off San Diego 8 Dec (MBi) provides one of a very few documented records in San Diego County waters. The resident pair of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in Imperial Beach was joined by a third adult 17-31 Dec (PP, GMcC), possibly one of the pair's offspring from a couple of years ago.

Totally unexpected were a dark-morph Swainson's Hawk in the Tijuana River valley 7 Dec (GLR), another dark-morph bird near Rancho Santa Fe 11 Dec (PAG), and a light-morph bird photographed over Coronado on 18 Dec (MBr, OJ) [what may have been the same dark-morph bird seen on 7 December was photographed there on 02 Jan (TRS)]. Three Zone-tailed Hawks were known present, with an adult remaining at the Wild Animal Park near Escondido through 28 Dec (KR, TM), an immature on Mt. Palomar 5 Dec (MS), and an adult over Lakeside 31 Dec (JK)—small numbers regularly winter along the coast north to Ventura and occasionally Santa Barbara counties.

A first-winter Glaucous Gull well photographed off Oceanside Harbor 30 Dec (DWP) is the only one to have ventured this far south so far this winter. An obliging Ancient Murrelet remained around the Imperial Beach pier 1-4 Dec (AH, m.ob)—this small alcid is rarely found to the south in Baja California waters. An adult male Broad-billed Hummingbird, a rare to casual vagrant to California, found by two visiting birders 17 Dec (MBr, OJ), was still present at the end of the month (m.ob).

Gray Flycatcher is proving to be the "expected" *Empidonax* in winter, with single birds in the Tijuana River valley 1-5 Dec (GLR, TRS), another in Balboa Park 15-24 Dec (CA), and a third at Rancho Santa Fe 28 Dec (PEL) along the coast, and an amazing ten found around Borrego Springs on 19 Dec (*vide* BT). A "Western Flycatcher" photographed in Presidio Park 31 Dec (BJS) was the only other *Empidonax* reported this month. An Eastern Phoebe at Lake Henshaw 20 Dec (MW) is surely wintering locally. The only *Myiarchus* were single Ash-throated Flycatchers at different locations in Borrego Springs on 15 Dec (PEL) and 19 Dec (BT)—one or two are found wintering in the County most winters. Single Tropical Kingbirds in Coronado 18 Dec (MBr, OJ) and at Buena Vista Lagoon 24-30 Dec (PEL) are likely still present. Far more exciting is the obliging Thick-billed Kingbird in Chula Vista (Main Street and Otay Valley Road) 16 Dec through the end of the month (RN, m.ob), this being the 6th found in the County, and the first since one spent the winter of 2005-2006 at Lake Hodges.



Thick-billed Kingbird, photo by Trent R. Stanley

In December nine Plumbeous Vireos were reported in the County, with seven on the coast and two at Borrego Springs, while only two Cassin's Vireos were found—single birds at the National City Golf Course 18 Dec (FW) and the San Luis Rey Golf Course 30 Dec (Oceanside CBC). A Verdin on the coast in Nestor last winter was considered most unusual, so single birds in Chula Vista 5-18 Dec (JD, MS) and the Tijuana River valley 24 Dec (DWP), along with one in Nestor 25-31 Dec (EGK), very likely the same individual as a year ago at this same site, comes as a surprise. The Winter Wren found on Pt. Loma 3 Nov (PEL) was still present at the end of December, so clearly settled for the winter. An elusive Gray Catbird was near Rancho Bernardo 7 Dec (JN). The long-staying McCown's Longspur at Fiesta Island in Mission Bay was last seen 8 Dec (BJS) with a Lapland Longspur.

An impressive 20 species of wood-warblers were present this month. Two Nashville, 15 Yellow, 14 Black-throated Gray, three Hermit and nine Wilson's warblers were reported along with the expected Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped and Townsend's warblers, and the Common Yellowthroat. Regular winter-occurring species with a more eastern flavor included three Palm and eight Black-and-white warblers, four American Redstarts and a Northern Waterthrush. In addition a Tennessee Warbler was

photographed along San Geronio St. on Pt. Loma 26-31 Dec (BJS, JK); a Northern Parula was along the Coronado-North Island Naval Air Station boundary 17-29 Dec (MS, JL), with a second found elsewhere in residential Coronado on 18 Dec (MBr, OJ); the Chestnut-sided Warbler found in Balboa Park 16 Nov was still present 29 Dec (M & NF), and another was in Santee at Santee Lakes 14-17 Dec (VM, MB, OJ); a male Black-throated Blue Warbler along San Geronio St. on Pt. Loma 26-31 Dec (PEL, JK) is undoubtedly attempting to winter locally; the Yellow-throated Warbler found in Lakeside at Lindo Lake 27 Nov was still present 29 Dec (JL); a drab female Pine Warbler at Allen School in Bonita-Rancho Del Rey 11-31 Dec (PEL, BLC) is clearly spending the winter, and the Painted Redstart spending its 5<sup>th</sup> winter in the area of Dudley and Albion Streets in residential Point Loma was still present at the end of the month (SBM, JK).

Two Clay-colored Sparrows were found, with one along the Coronado-North Island Naval Air Station boundary 8-18 Dec (PEL, RTP), and the second close to Sunset Ave. and Hollister St. in the Tijuana River valley 18-31 Dec (BM, TRS). The only White-throated Sparrows known in the County this winter are one in Coronado 8-18 Dec (PEL, MBr, OJ) and another in Rancho Santa Fe 23-28 Dec (PEL, PAG). A careful study of White-crowned Sparrows on 23 Dec by Paul E. Lehman produced a dark-lored *oriantha* in Rancho Santa Fe, and a yellow-billed *pugentensis* in Del Mar—the former rare in winter and the latter rare this far south (Unitt, 2004).

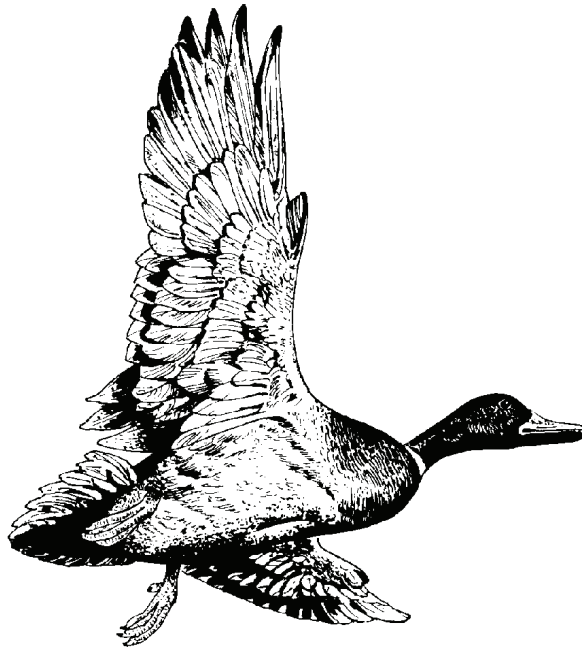
The male Hepatic Tanager at the Sports Park in Imperial Beach since 10 Nov for its 5<sup>th</sup> winter was still present at the end of the month (GMcC). An incredible **30** Summer Tanagers were known present in the County this month—surely the largest number anywhere in the United States in winter—outnumbering the 27 known Western

Tanagers also present. A female Orchard Oriole near Poinsettia Park in Carlsbad 30-31 Dec (PEL, JK) was the only one found—a far cry from the numbers present at this time last winter. Single Hooded Orioles at the San Diego Zoo 3-15 Dec (PEL, EGK) and 9-15 Dec (EGK) were the only two reported, and the 21 Bullock's Orioles known in the County are fewer than expected, and less than half the 45 reported last December. Three Baltimore Orioles were found this month, with a female photographed at the San Diego Zoo 2 Dec (RA), an adult male returning for a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter to residential El Cajon 4-28 Dec (KK), and an adult female returning for a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter to Sunnyslope Park in Nestor 11-31 Dec (JK, TC). A male Scott's Oriole in Poway 9 Dec (CVanT) was unexpected.

Listed observers: Ryan Abe, Christopher Adler, Matthew Binns, Thomas A. Blackman, Matt Brady, Barbara L. Carlson, Tim Cooper, Jay Desgrosellier, Mary and Nick Freeman, Peter A. Ginsburg, Ann Hannon, Oscar Johnson, Eric G. Kallen, Jay Keller, Kenny Kimbrough, Paul E. Lehman, John Luther, Sara B. Mayers, Guy McCaskie, Tom Meixner, Brennan Mulroony, Vic Murayama, Jan Nordenberg, Rick Norgaard, Robert T. Patton, David W. Povey, Phil Pryde, Geoffrey L. Rogers, Kim Roth, Matt Sadowski, Lea Squires, BJ Stacy, Trent R. Stanley, Bob Theriault, Charlie Van Tassel, Michael Wienholt, Frank Wong.

#### Literature Cited

Unitt, Philip. 2004. *San Diego County Bird Atlas*. Proc. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist. 39. San Diego Nat. Hist. Mus., San Diego.



# 2011 NEW YEAR'S DAY SDFO PELAGIC TRIP: COLD WEATHER, HOT BIRDS



Doug Glasko and Guy McCaskie



Black-legged Kittiwake



Charlene Glacy, Pete & Millie Thomas

**PEOPLE: SUE SMITH  
BIRDS: TOM BLACKMAN AND  
BJ STACEY**



Brown Pelican



Mona Baumgartel and others



Left: Keith Mayers and Geoff Rogers

Right: Sooty Shearwater



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## MEET A MEMBER: JAY KELLER

by BJ Stacey

Jay is the Program Manager for a multi-billion dollar advisor referral program at a large national brokerage firm. He finds “birding is primarily a way for me to relieve stress.” He is married with one young son.

*How long have you been birding?*

I’ve been enjoying birds for over 20 years, but I would say I only started seriously birding and making a significant effort to learn to identify all birds in 2004.

*Do you have a favorite birding experience that you would like to share?*

It’s really difficult for me to pick a single experience. Probably the best was experiencing sunrise at nearly 12,000 feet atop the alpine tundra at Rocky Mountain State Park in July 2006 to notch the Brown-capped Rosy Finch. As darkness turned to dawn I realized the large silhouettes outside out my car window were several Bighorn Sheep not more than 25 feet from me. As it got lighter, I was able to see several Rosy-Finches along with White-tailed Ptarmigan and other targets. The whole experience was incredible.

Other than that, the most rewarding was sharing the experience of setting the Virginia statewide Big Day record in 2005 with three birding friends, a record which still

stands, and which required considerable effort of planning and execution.

*Do you have a favorite bird species? If so, what is it and why?*

I’d have to say the Southern Screamer is among the most impressive of birds. In the few times I have seen them in South America, I am always taken aback by their overall look and relative agility despite their size.

More locally, I can never get enough of watching the Magnificent Frigatebird do its thing overhead.

*Are you a lister? If so, care to share your numbers?*

I’m a fairly serious lister right down to the county level. I enjoy competition in general, and more importantly I appreciate how searching for birds has allowed me to see amazing places I’d never have experienced otherwise. It really enhances the overall birding experience.

*What is your favorite San Diego birding location and why?*

San Diego is a great place to bird, but there actually isn’t one location that comes to mind that I enjoy as nearly as much as places like Chincoteague NWR in Virginia or Bombay Hook NWR in Delaware. I really miss visiting those places regularly.



Jay Keller and son, Great Falls, VA, 2007

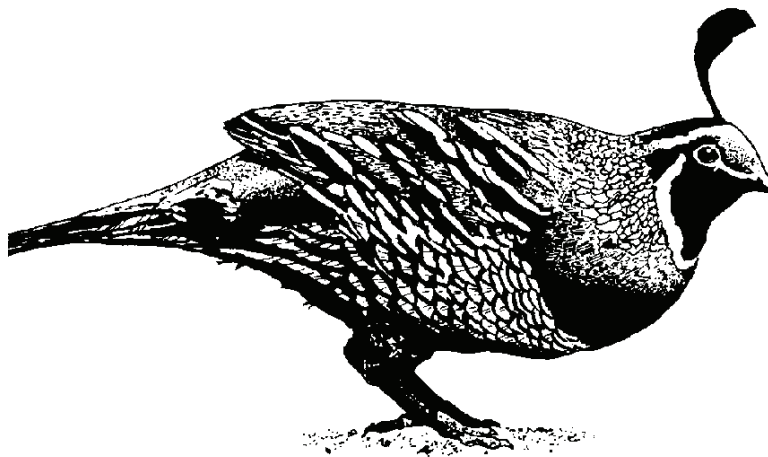
*What is the best advice that you can give to a beginning birder?*

Aren't most of us really just beginning birders? There's so much to learn, and often peeling back layers of the onion only increases the number of challenges and questions. That said, I believe in focusing most strongly on learning as many of the vocalizations as you can. It is a significant time-saver if your goal is

to see interesting species, as it allows one to more easily ignore unseen common birds and focus in on the unusual ones.

*What is the craziest thing that you have done to see a bird?*

Driving through some extremely dangerous gang/cartel areas in South America to have a chance at seeing Large-billed Terns and living to tell the tale.



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