

The **SKIMMER**



Volume 38, Number 2—February 2011

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, February 15, at 7:00 p.m., at the Tecolote Nature Center. **NOTE THE CHANGED LOCATION!** This is where we held our meetings previous to last year. For those of you new to the club since the change in venue, Tecolote Nature Center is at the east end of Tecolote Road. From I-5, take the first exit north of the I-8 interchange (Sea World Dr./Tecolote Rd.). Go east on Tecolote Road to its end, about half a mile. The road ends at a small turnaround circle with a driveway on its opposite side. Continue up the driveway to its end and park.

Program: Join professional naturalist and woodpecker specialist Stephen Shunk for a primer on California's southernmost woodpeckers. Steve will present a basic natural history of the region's ten nesting woodpecker species, also discussing the systematics, distribution, and specialization of these keystone birds. He will also cover the ecology and conservation of some key species, including the story of the Gilded Flicker. Since 1998, Steve has led birding programs throughout western North America with his company, Paradise Birding. Steve co-founded the East Cascades Bird Conservancy and served as its first President; he also co-founded the Oregon Birding Trails program and coordinated its flagship project, the Oregon Cascades Birding Trail. For the last 10 years, Steve has studied woodpeckers on the eastern slope of the Oregon Cascades—and across the continent—and he recently completed the *Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America*. Steve is well known for his ability to make science entertaining for birders of all interest levels, and his dynamic presentation will send you into the field with a new appreciation for southern California's woodpeckers.



Next month's meeting: Tuesday, March 15, same time, same place. Program to be Announced.

Paid Your 2011 Dues Yet?

If not, Membership Chair BJ Stacey will take your money. See the back of the newsletter for details.

SDFO NEWS (cont.)

Address Update

Geoff Rogers has a new e-mail address:
rogersgl@cox.net

IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER UPDATE

by Herb Young

Recently, among the clutter of Mary Mosher's papers, I found a bookmark that had a small reproduction of a painting of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker in flight with large lettering: "found! Ivory-billed Woodpecker" Under that in smaller type: "Long thought extinct, but rediscovered in the Big Woods of Arkansas, 2004." There are more details on the back, and the bookmark was distributed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. I think that Mary got one because she was reporting to the Cornell Lab feeder watch program at the time.

The rediscovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker was the greatest ornithological event of the twentieth century, and the bookmark reminded me that I hadn't heard any news lately. So I looked up "Ivory-billed Woodpecker" in Wikipedia. The conclusion of the Wikipedia article is that there is no hard evidence of the existence of the Ivory-billed, and that it has again disappeared into the swamps of Arkansas and Florida.

The "discoverers" still contend that they saw the bird, but they now take two positions: 1) they are keeping their information secret because they don't want the habitat overrun by hordes of crazed listers, and 2) there were so few birds in 2004 that it may have gone extinct since then. Yeah, Right.



The front and back of Mary Mosher's Ivory-billed Woodpecker bookmark. The text on the back reads, "The magnificent Ivory-billed Woodpecker lives! Thought extinct for over half a century, the largest woodpecker in North America was rediscovered in February 2004, in the Big Woods area of eastern Arkansas. The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and The Nature Conservancy have been key players in the partnership behind the discovery and the renewed effort to save this spectacular symbol of the southern swamp and its habitat."

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, JANUARY 2011

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

A flock of **32** Greater White-fronted Geese adjacent to Rangeland Road near the Ramona Airport 22 Jan (EGK) is the highest number reported in the County in modern times. The only Cackling Geese reported this month were the long-staying bird at the Scripps Ranch Library near Lake Miramar through 7 Jan (CGE) and one at Pt. La Jolla 20-22 Jan (SR, JK). Eurasian Wigeon are clearly scarcer in the County this winter than in the recent past, with single males on the Sweetwater River in National City/Chula Vista 1 Nov-23 Jan (DWA, BJS) and at the San Dieguito Wetlands near Del Mar 18 Nov-31 Jan (PEL) being the only two known. Two Black Scoters, rare in San Diego County, flew past Pt. La Jolla 10 Jan (PEL). An impressive **760** Greater Scaup were counted on south San Diego Bay 18 Jan (MS)--this duck was considered "uncommon to rare" in the County as recently as ten years ago. The only Reddish Egret reported was one at the Coronado Cays on south San Diego Bay 11 Jan (GLeB). The two adult Yellow-crowned Night-Herons found in Imperial Beach in July 2005 were still present 31 Jan (GMcC), and joined by a third adult through 2 Jan (GMcC). Eight Swainson's Hawks that arrived at Borrego Springs 30 Jan (HC) establish the earliest date for a spring migrant--one must conclude that these birds are wintering in west Mexico rather than in South America, but where?

The Pacific Golden-Plover wintering at the Tijuana R. mouth managed to elude observers at the time of the Christmas Bird Count but showed itself on 11 Jan (RTP) so must be frequenting areas not normally covered by birders. An **adult** Glaucous Gull was

with other gulls at Lower Otay Lake 9 Jan (PEL). An Elegant Tern photographed at the Tijuana R. mouth 24 Jan (KRE) provides one of a very few documented records anywhere in California in mid-winter. A count of **165** Common Murres at Pt. La Jolla 22 Jan (JK) indicates large numbers are still present in San Diego County waters. Ten Ancient Murrelets at Pt. La Jolla 7 Jan (BM) were followed by single birds there on 10 and 22 Jan (PEL, JK), and a dead bird on the beach in Coronado 13 Jan (DP *SDNHM). An impressive **38** Long-eared Owls were found around Borrego Springs between 17 Dec and 21 Jan (PJ). The male Broad-billed Hummingbird found at Sunnyslope Park in Nestor on 17 Dec was still present 28 Jan (PM). Northern Flickers are unusually scarce this winter, being absent from many areas where normally present in winter.

A Gray Flycatcher in Balboa Park 15 Dec-7 Jan (CA, BLC), one in Ramona 2 Jan (MW) and another at Harry Griffin Park in La Mesa 7 Jan (CH) were the only three on the coastal slope, though there is no doubt that at least some of the ten found on the 19 Dec Borrego Springs Christmas Bird Count are still present. The Eastern Phoebe photographed at the Rosicrucian Fellowship in Oceanside 13 Jan (SB) was still present 29 Jan (BT) so clearly settled for the winter. The Vermilion Flycatcher present for its 4th winter at the east end of Sunset Ave. in the Tijuana River Valley was still there 26 Jan (PM). The Tropical Kingbird found in Coronado 18 Dec was still present 27 Jan (MS), but the one at Buena Vista Lagoon in Carlsbad was looked for but could not be found after 2 Jan (PEL). However, the Thick-billed

Kingbird has been faithful to the area along Poggi Canyon south of Main St. in Chula Vista, still present 30 Jan (CS) after being found there on 16 Dec (RN). A Western Kingbird, most unusual in California in winter, was photographed in University City 17 Jan (GN).



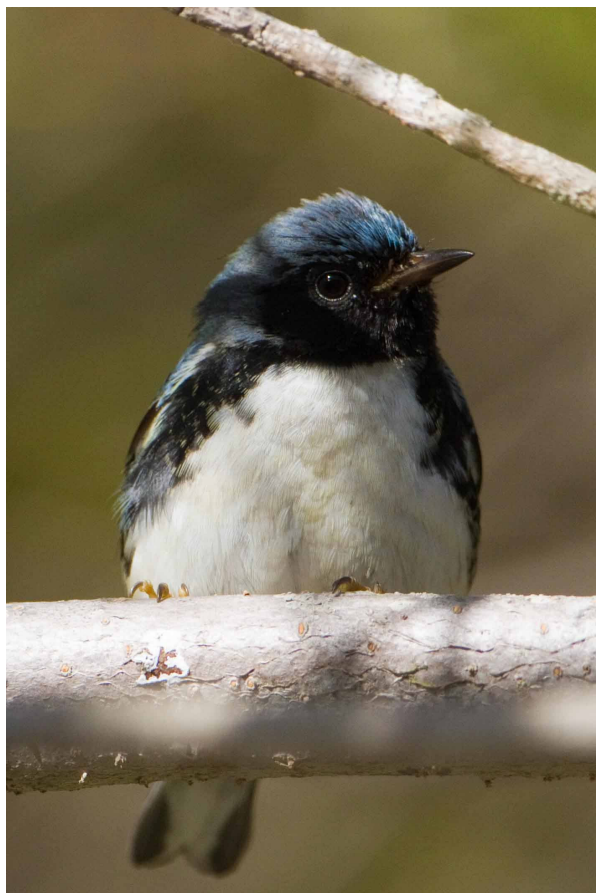
Eastern Phoebe in Oceanside. Photo by BJ Stacey.

Most interesting was a Gray Vireo photographed in an area of Elephant Trees in the Anza-Borrego Desert 22 Jan (DB)--this is the only area in California where Gray Vireo has been found in winter (Unitt 2004). Although nine Plumbeous Vireos were known present in the County in December, one on Pt. Loma 08-09 Jan (JK) was the only one reported this month. A well marked Cassin's Vireo was at Mast Park in Santee 16 Jan (CH). However, of greater interest is a Blue-

headed Vireo in the area of San Geronio and McCall Sts. on Pt. Loma, initially found on 30 Dec, but not identified until 4 Jan (DWA), and still present and occasionally singing through 20 Jan (MS). The Winter Wren found on Pt. Loma 3 Nov (PEL) was still present 20 Jan (JZ), though more often heard than seen. Two Golden-crowned Kinglets were on the coast at Point Loma 8 Jan (JK). A Sage Thrasher at Lake Hodges 23 Jan (M & PT) was likely an early spring migrant--Sage Thrashers are moving north through the east County as early as late January with numbers peaking in late February (Unitt 2004). A Lapland and a Chestnut-collared Longspur were with Horned Larks on Ream Field at the Tijuana R. estuary 6 Jan (PEL), the Lapland likely being the same bird as seen here 25 Nov.

The impressive variety of wood-warblers continued into January with 20 species reported. After the finding of a Tennessee Warbler in the area of San Geronio and McCall Sts. on Pt. Loma on 26 Dec (BJS), it became evident on 8 Jan (PAG) that two were present, with both remaining through 30 Jan (BJS). Single Nashville Warblers on Pt. Loma 4-10 Jan (DJ), in Coronado 9 Jan (PEL), at Lower Otay Lake 9-23 Jan (GMcC) and in Hillcrest 24 Jan (MJE) provide a respectable number for mid-winter. The two Northern

Parulas found in Coronado in December were still present 9 Jan (EC) and 26 Jan (SBM). A Chestnut-sided Warbler found at Lower Otay Lake 9 Jan was still present 23 Jan (PEL, BJS), and the male Black-throated Blue Warbler found on San Geronio St. on Pt. Loma 26 Dec was still there 31 Jan (PEL, MS). Adding to the excitement on Pt. Loma was a Black-throated Green Warbler on San Fernando St. 5-31 Jan (JK, MS). A Hermit Warbler present for its 3rd winter was at



Black-throated Blue Warbler on Point Loma.
Photo by BJ Stacey.

Viewpoint Park in Encinitas 24 Oct-29 Jan (JMCM, BT), and additional birds were at Greg Rogers Park in Chula Vista 18 Dec-2 Jan (BR, RN) and along San Fernando St. on Pt. Loma 18-23 Jan (PEL, PAG). The drab Pine Warbler found in Bonita-Rancho Del Rey 11 Dec was still present 23 Jan (PEL, JK). A Palm Warbler found at the southern edge of San Diego Bay 18 Dec was seen again 23 Jan (JM, EA) and another was at Lower Otay Lake 9-23 Jan (JK, BJS). Five Black-and-white Warblers were known present, with single birds near Ocean Beach 8 Oct-18 Jan (PEL), at Campland-on-the-Bay on Mission Bay 30 Oct-18 Jan (JK, PEL), the Bird and Butterfly Garden in the Tijuana River Valley 18 Dec-6 Jan (GLR, PM), Hilltop Park in Chula Vista 2 Jan (RN) and in Escondido 2 Jan (JN). The only two American Redstarts reported were the male spend-

ing its 3rd winter in Encinitas' Viewpoint Park 24 Oct-26 Jan (JMCM, MS) and one on the 2 Jan Escondido Christmas Bird Count, and a Northern Waterthrush was at the Bird and Butterfly Garden in the Tijuana River Valley 5 Jan (CGE). The Painted Redstart, present for its 5th winter on Pt. Loma, was known present through 9 Jan (SBM).

The Clay-colored Sparrow found in the Tijuana River valley 18 Dec was still present 9 Jan (BM, DN), and another was at Lower Otay Lake 9 Jan (PEL). The Hepatic Tanager spending its 5th winter in Imperial Beach was still present 2 Jan (GMCC), but at times difficult to find. Fifteen Summer Tanagers scattered throughout the coastal lowlands is half the number known present in December, but includes "new" birds in Encinitas 1 Jan (GCH), at the Marston House in Balboa Park 1 Jan (PU), in Tierrasanta 3 Jan (PEL), Carlsbad 5 Jan (DB), Mission Hills 5-20 Jan (EM, LO'B), on Ingraham St. adjacent to Mission Bay 18 Jan (PEL), in Ocean-side 23-26 Jan (GMCC, MS) and in Spring Valley 30 Jan (RN). Likewise, the number of Western Tanagers reported dropped from 27 in December to 18 in January. I suspect the drop in tanager numbers in part reflects the decline in birding activity following Christmas Bird Counts. A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak visited a feeder in Tecolote Canyon 3-7 Jan (S & RB), and an adult Black-headed Grosbeak on Leon Street in Nestor 2 Jan (SBT) was likely the same bird present here a year ago. Most unusual was a Blue Grosbeak on Pt. Loma 6-8 Jan (EGK, JK), this being one of a very few ever found in California in January. A female Orchard Oriole was on Leon Street in Nestor 2 Jan (GMCC), an adult male was at Sunnyslope Park in Nestor 2-26 Jan (TC, PM) and a female was in Coronado 9 Jan (PEL)--still a far cry from the numbers present last January. Ten Bullock's Orioles scattered around San Diego and vicinity in January was less than expected. The adult female Baltimore Oriole

present for at least its 2nd winter at Sunnyslope Park in Nestor was still there 26 Jan (PM). Evening Grosbeaks have been showing up at various locations in Northern and Central California, with a few scattered around in Southern California since November, so a female on Leon Street in Nestor 2-3 Jan (MJB, BLC) was not totally unexpected.

Listed observers: Christopher Adler, Douglas W. Aguillard, Eitan Altman, David Batzler, David Bell, Mark J. Billings, Steve Brad, Susan and Rich Breisch, Barbara L. Carlson, Hal Cohen, Tim Cooper, Elizabeth Copper, Kim R. Eckert, Claude G. Edwards, Michael J. Evans, Peter A. Ginsburg, Christine Harvey, Gjon C. Hazard, Diane Johnson, Paul

Jorgensen, Eric G. Kallen, Jay Keller, Gloria LeBlanc, Paul E. Lehman, John Martin, Paul Marvin, Sara B. Mayers, Guy McCaskie, Jimmy McMorran, Ellen Mosley, Brennan Mulroony, Gretchen Nell, Jan Nordenberg, Rich Norgaard, Dick Norton, Leah O'Brien, Dennis Parker, Robert T. Patton, Bruce Rideout, Steve Ritt, Geoffrey L. Rogers, Matt Sadowski, Colleen Southern, BJ Stacy, Mark Stratton, Scott B. Terrill, Millie and Peter Thomas, Bill Thompson, Philip Unitt, Michael Wienholt, Jim Zimmer.

Literature Cited

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

SOME BIRD TRIVIA

[from *10,001 Titillating Tidbits of Avian Trivia*, by Frank S. Todd]

543. During the egg-collector era, the egg of which bird was occasionally sold as that of a California Condor?

3614. How many alcid species breed in California, and which ones are they?

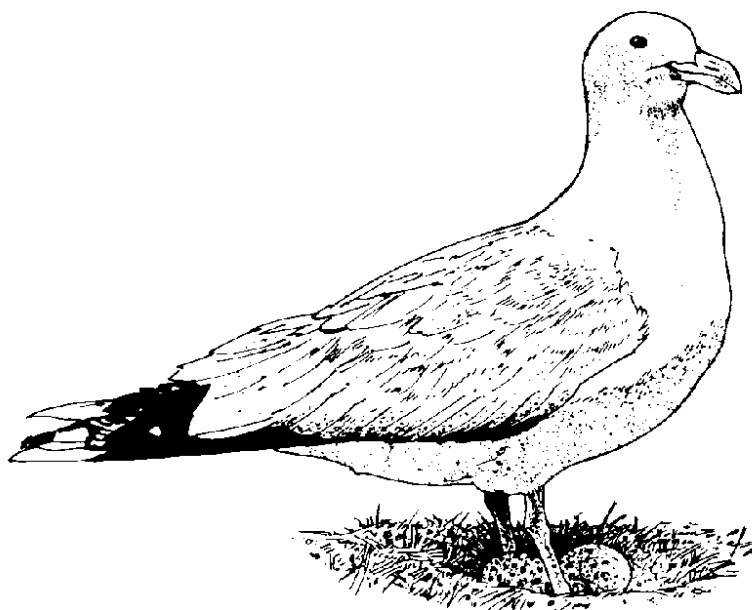
3953. Which North American gull often nests in trees?

5225. What ultimately happened to William Gambel, after whom Gambel's Quail is named?

6130. Has any state selected a hummingbird as the state bird?

7683. What bird is pictured on the 50-dollar gold piece that was struck for the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915?

[Answers on p. 7.]



ANSWERS TO BIRD TRIVIA (p. 6)

543. The Mute Swan. A condor egg was the ultimate for any collector and sold for as much as \$2,000 to \$3,000 each, an astronomical sum at the turn of the 20th century.

3614. Seven: Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Xantus' Murrelet, Marbled Murrelet, Cassin's Auklet, Rhinoceros Auklet, and Tufted Puffin.

3953. Bonaparte's Gull. Herring Gulls also nest in trees, but not nearly to the same extent.

5225. Gambel, an early California field ornithologist, died of typhoid fever in 1849.

6130. No.

7683. An owl.

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