The SKIMMER

Volume 50, Number 2—February 2023

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, February 21, 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: Mark Hainen will present "Boreal Birding at Sax-Zim Bog, Minnesota."

Mark is an avid birder and wildlife photographer who divides his time between northwest Ohio (summer) and central Florida (winter). Each fall he volunteers for 2 months as an observer at the Detroit River Hawk Watch. For the last 8 years he has visited the Sax-Zim Bog in northern Minnesota to find and photograph boreal bird species. Several of his photographs have been published. His photographs have been recognized by local, regional and national organizations including the National Audubon Society, Orange County, Florida Audubon Society, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge and the Detroit River Hawk Watch.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, March 21, same time, same place. Program to be announced; see next month's *Skimmer* for details.

2023 SDFO Dues Are Payable

If you haven't yet paid your annual SDFO dues, you can contact our Membership Chair Eve Martin. Her contact information is on the final page of this newsletter.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, JANUARY 2023

Compiled by Paul E. Lehman

Top rarities discovered during January 2023 include the Pigeon Guillemot at La Jolla on 17 Jan (BS), a first winter record for San Diego County. There are a small number of winter records for the southern California Channel Islands, and a few individuals are found annually at this season in San Luis Obispo and Monterey Counties, but most birds are thought to spend the winter in the Puget Sound/Salish Sea area in Washington and British Columbia. A flock of 110 migrant Swainson's Hawks, along with 120 migrant Turkey Vultures, at Borrego Springs on 3-4 Jan (HC) was unprecedented for the date. A few southbound migrants have been seen there as late as early or mid-November, and flocks of early spring migrants may arrive beginning in early February. These early January birds were thought to be southbound, but another, smaller group was seen over Los Angeles County a couple days later and thought to be northbound. Another 14 Swainson's were at Borrego on 6 Jan (HC).

Spring migrant Swainson's Hawks typically appear in Borrego Springs beginning in early February, with a few southbound birds having been found through early November. Thus, a flock of 110 birds on 3-4 Jan was unprecedented. Here, a dark-morph roosting bird (abpve), and part of the flock with several Turkey Vultures (right). *Photos by Rick Grove and David Trissel*

An Ancient Murrelet was photographed inside western Mission Bay on 23 Jan (SM). Casual in winter, a Gray Catbird in Julian on 27 Jan (GH) was especially unusual in the mountains. A Blackburnian Warbler at Poinsettia Park in Carlsbad from 14-20 Jan (TG) represents the fourth winter record for the county and one of only a very few from anywhere in North America at this season. This is undoubtedly the same individual present at this same site from 12-19 Apr 2022 and which presumably wintered locally in 2021-2022. An Indigo Bunting or hybrid was at Borrego Palm Canyon on 13 Jan (RM). Continuing from last month, the county-first and much enjoyed Yellow-billed Loon has been at Mission Bay from 22 Dec-31 Jan+ (M&BP). It undoubtedly set a new county record for most eBird report submissions! And a Thick-billed

Casual anywhere in North America in winter, this Blackburnian Warbler at Poinsettia Park in Carlsbad from 14-20 Jan was undoubtedly the same individual found there in April 2022. *Photo by Tito Gonzalez*

Kingbird in Nestor Park from 7-31 Jan+ (MC, LD) was possibly one of the two birds present in the nearby Tijuana River Valley between 7-12 Nov 2022 but which had gone missing.

A young male Rufous Hummingbird at feeders in Pacific Beach from 26 Jan-1 Feb+ (GN) was very unusual for the date. There are several previous records of both adult male and young male Rufous appearing in late January. An extremely early migrant arrival would most likely involve an adult male. So perhaps such a young male wintered locally and only became identifiable as a Rufous once it molted in sufficient new back feathering.

A New Year's Day storm produced a suite of great birds at La Jolla, including a casual-in-winter Buller's Shearwater (DJ), a Short-tailed Shearwater (GN), a white-rumped Leach's-type (Leach's/Townsend's/Ainley's) Storm-Petrel (PEL), and a Nazca Booby (SW). A Black-legged Kittiwake was onshore nearby at Los Peñasquitos Lagoon the same day (DAK). This same storm pushed Red Phalaropes well inland, with two birds at 4S Ranch near Rancho Bernardo on 2 Jan (SB) and another individual hit by a car in Lakeside also on 2 Jan (PLa, *SDNHM), as well as high onshore counts of 41 birds at the South San Diego Bay Salt Works on 5 Jan (DS). Another 15 were there on 21 Jan (AL). In addition to producing

There are only a handful of January records of Rufous Hummingbirds. This young male in Pacific Beach from 26 Jan-1 Feb+ may have overwintered locally and easily escaped detection before molting in its full rufous back. *Photo by Gary Nunn*

the guillemot, seawatchers at La Jolla during back-to-back storms between 15-17 Jan recorded a rare-in-winter Pink-footed Shearwater on the 15th (PEL); two intermediate-rumped Leach's-type Storm-Petrels, a Short-tailed Shearwater, a Masked/Nazca Booby, and 225 Red Phalaropes on the 16th (MS); and a Black-legged Kittiwake on the 17th (MS). Large numbers of Pacific Loons were still moving south during these events, with 1600 birds on 1 Jan and 2400 on 16 Jan (m.obs). Another kittiwake was seen off Torrey Pines on 29 Jan (DAK).

Other newly discovered rarities this month included single White-winged Scoters off Imperial Beach on 19 Jan (PEL) and off Coronado on 25 Jan (PEL), a Black Scoter off Black's Beach on 29 Jan (BS), a Nazca Booby 4.0 mi. off Ocean Beach on 18

A highlight of the New Year's Day storm seawatch at La Jolla, this Buller's Shearwater was totally unexpected in January and was exceedingly close to shore. *Photo by Mel Senac*

Lucy's Warblers average about one record every other winter, and many of them frequent tipu trees. This bird was found wintering in tipus at the Carlsbad outlet mall from 7-23 Jan. *Photo by Nancy Christensen*

Jan (NC), and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in the Middletown/Bankers Hill section of San Diego from 27-31 Jan (PEL). A very-rare-in-winter Ash-throated Flycatcher was in Solana Beach from 17-31 Jan (CMs), and the individual first seen at Harry Griffen Regional Park on 6 Dec was seen again 29 Jan (NT, NS). Eastern Phoebes at San Miguel Ranch from 24 Oct-31 Jan (JSl) and in the City Heights/Talmadge neighborhood of San Diego from 28-31 Jan+ (BW) were both back for their third winters. Two "Red" Fox Sparrows were at Agua Dulce in the Laguna Mts. on 1 Jan (JP), and a *pugetensis* White-crowned Sparrow was at Torrey Hills on 8 Jan (DBm). Rarely detected in winter, a Grasshopper Sparrow was at Upper Otay Lake 21 Jan+ (BH). Rare orioles included single Orchards at Crown Pt. on 9 Jan (RC) and at the San Diego Zoo from 12 Jan-1 Feb+ (PEL), a Hooded at the San Diego Zoo from 12 Jan-1 Feb+ (PEL), an Orchard/Hooded (probably Hooded) at Buddy Todd Park from 7-11 Jan (BF), and a returning Baltimore at the San Diego Zoo from 12 Jan-1 Feb+ (PEL). A Tennessee Warbler was found at the San Diego Zoo on 29 Jan (CMw), a Lucy's Warbler was at the Carlsbad outlet mall from 7-23 Jan (JSd), a Palm Warbler was at San Elijo Lagoon on 2 Jan (DG), and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at Borrego Springs on 15 Jan (JBe).

Continuing high-end goodies from previous months include the casual, intermediate-morph "Blue" Snow Goose at Rangeland Rd. near Ramona from 25 Nov-4 Feb+ (JW, NC), the immature Tundra Swan at the Borrego Springs settling ponds from 31 Dec-6 Jan (MP, SE, RT), and the returning Red-necked Grebe on San Diego Bay off Shelter I. from 23 Nov-13 Jan (PEL). The Inca Dove at Borrego Springs first seen 18 Dec was still present 30 Jan (PEL), and two new individuals were discovered at a different site in Borrego from 7 Jan-4 Feb+ (MW). The returning Little Stint was seen sporadically at the Salt Works through the month (MS), as was the casual-in-winter Stilt Sandpiper through 29 Jan (OM, RTP) and Wilson's Phalarope through 4 Feb (v.obs). A Red-footed Booby con-

Of only casual occurrence in San Diego County, this intermediate-morph "Blue" Snow Goose was present along Rangeland Rd. from late November through January. *Photo by Dean Budd*

This immature Tundra Swan was at the Borrego Springs settling ponds from 31 Dec-6 Jan. *Photo by Hal Cohen*

tinued on upper San Diego Bay from mid-Dec to at least 26 Jan (DP). Several long-staying Harris's Hawks continued at both Shelter Valley and Jacumba (v.obs), with apparent nest building observed at the former site on 19 Jan (AL). The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Harry Griffen Regional Park remained through the month (EA). A very-rare-in-winter Western Kingbird in the Tijuana R. Valley/Nestor area since 10 Nov was present through 2 Feb+ (PEL, BW, AL). The returning Greater Pewee was in Balboa Park through month's end (PEL). Four separate Hammond's Flycatchers were present, in Balboa Park 2 Dec-31 Jan (MH), at two sites in University City from 11 Oct-20 Jan (returning, JD) and from 29 Nov-1 Feb (BS), and at San Elijo Lagoon from 26 Jan-1 Feb+ (SB, DT). The casual-in-winter Bank Swallow remained at Lake Murray from 30 Dec-6 Jan (MS). The Sage Thrasher at Crown Pt. since 11 Nov was still present 4 Feb (MO). A Lapland Longspur at Fiesta I. since 17 Dec was last reported 6 Jan (SB).

The sole Clay-colored Sparrow continued at Rohr Park through the end of the month (MO, PEL), the Nelson's Sparrow found at the southwest corner of San Diego Bay on 23 Dec was seen again 23 Jan (DBk, MS), the well-watched Swamp Sparrow at Famosa Slough since 9 Dec was still present 4 Feb (IS), and a new bird was found at San Dieguito Lagoon in Del Mar from 8-11 Jan (DM). Single Baltimore Orioles remained at Rohr Park in Bonita from 18 Nov-14 Jan (PEL) and in Balboa Park from 14 Dec-1 Feb (LR, MH). Continuing warblers included the Northern Waterthrush at the Dairy Mart Ponds from 17 Dec-31 Jan+ (JTS, NG), a Tennessee Warbler at the Carlsbad outlet mall from 13 Nov-23 Jan (TG), single Northern Parulas in University City from 30 Oct-28 Jan (BS) and in Encinitas from 27 Dec-7 Jan (SES), the returning Grace's Warbler in Encinitas from 5 Nov-29 Jan (PGN), a Black-throated Green Warbler at Santee Lakes from 17 Oct-15 Jan (JSk), and the returning Painted Redstart in Tierrasanta from 1 Nov-25 Jan (RTP). A returning Hepatic Tanager in Tierrasanta since 24 Oct was still present 19 Jan (PEL).

Other continuing species of interest included single Black Scoters on South San Diego Bay and off Imperial Beach (PEL); single Long-tailed Ducks at both Mission Bay (DH) and Silver Strand State Beach (NB), with a new bird at La Jolla 25 Jan (SL); up to three coastal White-winged Doves at Poinsettia Park (SV, TG), as well as a new bird at the Tijuana Estuary on 3 Jan (SP); a sporadic Pacific Golden-Plover at the Salt Works (v.obs); and a very sporadic adult Lesser Black-backed Gull on the Chula Vista bay shore through 26 Jan (MS, NT). Zone-tailed Hawks were at regular wintering sites around the San Diego Zoo Safari Park/Escondido (up to *four*, EL), Ramona/ Rangeland Road (JZ), and Oceanside (FR), as well as

Back for its sixth winter at the South San Diego Bay Salt Works, this Little Stint (here 8 Jan) is still much sought by visiting out-of-town birders. Compared to a Western Sandpiper, note the bird's shorter and straighter bill, split supercilium, and patterned scapulars and wing coverts. *Photo by Andrew Newmark*

Very rare in winter, this Western Kingbird was seen sporadically in the Tijuana River Valley and Nestor area between 10 Nov-2 Feb+. *Photo by Barbara Wise*

This wintering Swamp Sparrow at Famosa Slough, 9 Dec-4 Feb+, proved very popular amongst local observers. *Photo by Barbara Swanson*

One of two Northern Parulas present during January, this individual was in University City (here 6 Jan). *Photo by Patti Langen*

at Rancho Santa Fe/Olivenhain on 29 Jan (BMV), a slightly more unusual location. The coastal Lewis's Woodpecker at Santee Lakes remained through the month (JBi). Single Tropical Kingbirds continued in Nestor (PEL, AL), at NAS North Island/Coronado (PEL), and at Famosa Slough (MH), and new individuals were found at Pacific Beach on 4 Jan (MM) and Crown Point on 8 Jan (KM). Lowland Golden-crowned Kinglets remained at La Jolla Farms (two, BS) and Buddy Todd Park (DT), as did two Pacific Wrens along the Doane Valley Nature Trail on Palomar Mt. (KW).

Impressive numbers of Greater White-fronted Geese continued widespread since October, the highest counts in January being 165 at Sweetwater Reservoir (PEL) and 117 at Fairbanks Ranch (v.obs). Canvasback numbers seem up the past several years, including very high South County counts of 148 at Sweetwater Reservoir on 23 Jan (PEL) and 98 at Upper Otay Lake on 4 Feb (MS). Very large—perhaps all-time record—numbers of American Robins continued through the month, with some of the largest counts involving flights of many flocks fairly high in the sky, such as 1200 in 30 minutes over Poway/Rancho Bernardo 22 Jan (PEL) and a record 3000 in two hours over Vista on 28 Jan (TB). Mountain Bluebirds were in above-average numbers, especially in the Borrego Valley; the highest coastal counts were 11 birds near Upper Otay Lake 18 Jan (MS) and up to 30 continuing since December in the western Tijuana R. Valley through 3 Feb (ND). Lowland Townsend's Solitaires added to their all-time-record ways, with some eight near the coast, seven at inland valleys, and five in the desert (m.obs). Up to 15 Red Crossbills remained in the Agua Dulce area (NC), and new birds were discovered at West Meadow (two) on 6 Jan (CKS), in Thing Valley (19) on 13 Jan (MS), on Palomar Mt. (seven) on 22 Jan (AM), and at Paso Picacho Campground (six) on 27 Jan (MT). In contrast, the only Purple Finch found along the coast in South County this month was in Tecolote Canyon on 29 Jan (MO). Good numbers of Cassin's Finches continued in the mountains, and a male in Crest, east of El Cajon, on 31 Jan (CZ) was a casual lowland occurrence. Scarce swallows were much in evidence, with from one to four Northern Rough-winged Swallows recorded at Sorrento Valley (DAK), Mission Trails (CA), Santee Lakes (BM), and Lake Murray (JP); and a notable influx of Barn Swallows between mid-December and late January peaked at an all-time winter record 120-225 birds at Sweetwater Reservoir between 9-23 Jan (PEL).

The White-throated Sparrow and Summer Tanager glut continued, with 34 White-throats and 38 Summers seen countywide during the month. January totals of some of our other scarce-but-regular winter visitors included one Gray Flycatcher, three Pacific-slope Flycatchers, three Plumbeous Vireos, seven Green-tailed Towhees, six Black-and-white Warblers, *six* American Redstarts, and two Hermit Warblers.

Unusual in the desert, at least one Cassin's Kingbird wandered around the Borrego Springs area between 18 Dec-16 Jan (JD, PA), and up to two wintering Townsend's Warblers were at Borrego Palm Canyon from 18 Dec-9 Jan (LN). A Common Merganser remained at Borrego Springs from 4 Dec-5 Jan (TK, RT), and two Oak Titmice were there 7 Jan (CMy).

Unexpected on salt water, a Common Merganser in Coronado on 19-20 Jan (RY) was very likely the same individual found there the previous winter. Very rare near the coast, a Band-tailed Pigeon was on Pt. Loma 23 Jan (AL), and another was at Mission Trails Regional Park 30 Jan (MY). Also out of range but in-

land, a Band-tailed was in Dulzura 26-27 Jan (DP).

White-headed Woodpecker continues to hang on in the Volcan Mt. area, with the latest sighting there of one bird on 27 Jan (CSd).

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. Paulette Ache, Chris Adler, Eitan Altman, Nick Barber, Drew Beamer (DBm), David Beeke (DBk), Jonathan Berman (JBe), John Bishop (JBi), Terry Brashear, Sean Buchanan, Nancy Christensen, Michael Clay, Hal Cohen, Richard Crossley, Nancy Davis, Jay Desgrosellier, Lauren DiBiccari, Steve Ellis, Beth Fife, David Gardner, Nathan Goldberg, Tito Gonzalez, Michelle Haglund, Derek Hameister, Bonnie Henson, Garrett Huffman, Dan Jehl, Tom Keffer, Dan A. King, Phil Lambert (PLa), Alex Lamoreaux, Paul E. Lehman, Steven Lima, Eric Lutomski, Donna Mancuso, Marcie Mason, Otto Mayer, Chris McCreedy (CMy), Kris McMillan, Rebecca Melillo, Charlotte Morris (CMs), Caitlin Morrow (CMw), Allan Muise, Brennan Mulrooney, Sue Murphy, Jane Mygatt, P. Gretchen Nell, Larry Nigro, Gary Nunn, Miko Olsen, Robert T. Patton, Jim Pawlicki, Matthew & Brennan Pendleton, Dave Povey, Simon Priestnall, Mar Pu, Fred Roberts, Lisa Ruby, Matt Sadowski, Dessi Sieburth, Susan E. Smith, Jeff Spaulding (JSd), Bridget Spencer, Jonny Sperling (JSl), Justyn T. Stahl, Nancy Stalnaker, C. K. Staurovsky, Jeremiah Stock (JSk), Caleb Strand (CSd), Ian Swirka, Robert Theriault, Nick Thorpe, Marilyn Tillinghast, David Trissel, Sally Veach, Betsy M. Vixie, Stan Walens, Justin Watts, Ken Weaver, Barbara Wise, Mike Wittmer, Matt Yawney, Ruth York, Jim Zimmer, and Catherine Zinsky.

m.obs = many observers
v.obs = various observers
*SDNHM = specimen to San Diego Natural History Museum

This Black-throated Green Warbler at Santee Lakes from 17 Oct-15 Jan was a very rare winter visitor. *Photo by Bill Tweet*

Record numbers of lowland Townsend's Solitaires were found this season countywide, including this bird at El Camino Cemetery in Sorrento Valley on 21 Jan. *Photo by Paul Lehman*

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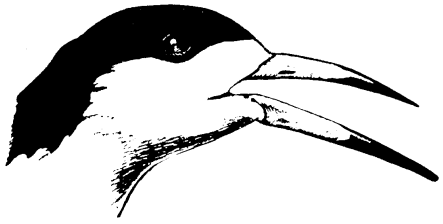

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