THE SKIMMER

SAN DIEGO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

VOLUME 21 DECEMBER 1994 NUMBER 12

Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, December 14, 1994, 7:00 PM

Soledad Club, 5050 Soledad, Pacific Beach

CHRISTMAS PARTY--Sign-up for Christmas Counts and Pelagic Trips--Exhibition of Cartoons by Mary Beth Stowe, War stories and General Schmoozing

January Meeting: Wed. January 18 — Bird Identification Quiz
Instructor: "Professor" Guy McCaskie

February meeting — Identification of Small Owls
Geoff Rogers

San Diego Audubon Society Field Trips

For more details, contact Bill McCausland (280-7710)

Saturday and Sunday, Jan 21, 22 — Salton Sea

Christmas Counts: See Announcements

Pelagic Trips

Sunday, Jan 1 SDFO Pelagic Trip to La Jolla kelp beds; $10.00

Friday, Jan 6 ABA/SDFO Pelagic Trip, 2 boats 50 miles; $45.00

For both trips, pay in advance at December meeting or phone Stan Walens 450-0258 for Hard Reservation

Monthly Bird Censuses

MISSION BAY: First week at lowest tide Contact Bill Haas (284-8694) for details.

PENASQUITOS: January Special, Monday January 2, 7:30 AM to noon. Meet at the Park and Ride. Carmel Valley Road and I-5 Contact Don Adams (565-6426) for details.

SAN DIEGUITO: Third Tuesday 8:00 a.m. bridge at lagoon off San Dieguito Drive--Charmaine Ariotti (755-3899) for details

BATIQUITOS: First Friday 9:00 AM at Batiquitos Park & Ride, La Costa Blvd and I-5

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DECEMBER MEETING CHRISTMAS PARTY

The SDFO social event of the year: the Potluck Christmas Party. Bring a dish and come prepared for a Christmas stuffing while you sign up for Christmas Counts and Pelagic Trips.

There will also be an exhibition of original *Skimmer* cartoons by Mary Beth Stowe. If you have enjoyed "Bird Seed" in the *Skimmer*, you are in for a treat. These 9 x 12 pen and ink drawings are strikingly vivid and full of animated fun.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

Sign up at the December meeting or call your compiler. They need your help.

San Diego	Sat, Dec 17
Claude Edwards	298-2554
Anza-Borego Desert	Sun, Dec 18
Bob Theriault	767-3312
Rancho Santa Fe	Sun, Dec 18
Luis Santaella	632-9060
Lake Henshaw	Mon, Dec 19
Claude Edwards	298-2554
Oceanside	Sat, Dec 24
Herb Williams	723-2448
Escondido	Sat, Dec 31
Ken Weaver	723-2448
Cuyamaca (unofficial)	Sat, Jan 14
Alice De Bolt	459-8159

PELAGIC TRIPS

SDFO is having its January 1 Don't-Miss-It Pelagic Trip again this year. The boat will leave at 8:00 AM from Seaforth Landing in Quivira Basin and return at 11:00 AM for the ridiculously low price of $10. Pay in advance to Stan Walens or phone him at 450-0258 for your reservation.

On Friday, January 6, the day before the ABA Regional Conference in San Diego, there will be a serious pelagic trip jointly sponsored by ABA and SDFO. Be at Seaforth Landing at 6:00 AM. Two boats will depart ASAP and return about 5:00 PM. They will go out about 50 miles besides covering the kelp beds close to shore. The cost is $45. Again, see Stan Walens to pay in advance or phone him for a hard reservation.

Stan reports that he went out on a fishing boat last week to scout the kelp beds and saw a Little Gull. Better sign up.

GENERALLY BIRDS SEEN ON PRIVATE PROPERTY...

When you hear this--and you don't have a bird to report--hang up. This is a request from our tape editor Doug Aguillard. Doug explained that when you hear the beep to signal you to start talking, the phone beeps at his house. Even though the SDFO phone is in his basement, the beeping all day and all night is driving them all crazy, and his wife is plotting to blow up the phone. So don't sit there dreaming about the birds you missed. When you hear "Generally birds seen on private property...," HANG UP.

The Green Sheet

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BATIQUITOS LAGOON: PRESENT AND FUTURE

By Jim Zimmer

There is a mitigation project underway at Batiquitos Lagoon. I was interested, I investigated, and I would like to summarize my finding for you.

This is a huge project. It will cost $55 million, and the work will go on until the middle of 1996. The cost will by covered in full by the Los Angeles Port Authority in mitigation for destroyed wetlands associated with the Pier 300/400 Project in Los Angeles. But don't think that this is a wonderful addition to California's wetlands. It is a new disrupted system in trade for an established old one. They are not the same thing, but they may be some day.

Right now though, Batiquitos Lagoon is being drastically altered. It will no longer be a very shallow fresh water pond. It is going to be a true estuary with an open connection to the sea. The mouth of the estuary will be 120 feet wide flanked by two 300 foot jetties and will be four feet deep at low tide. There will be three basins, each about 10 feet deep. This system will allow full exchange of sea water with the west basin and probably the central basin too. The east basin will be brackish with a strong influence from San Marcos Creek.

The digging necessary to accomplish these changes will be performed by two hydraulic dredges. Three miles of pipes will dump the sand slurry at Encinas Beach creating a beach 300 feet wide and 1.5 miles long. Some of the sand will be used to develop five breeding islands for Least Terns and Snowy Plovers.

What problems will this project create for birds and birders? The most obvious will be a loss of birds by physical disruptions. To minimize disruption, the dredges are electric rather than diesel. There is much less noise. In addition, the project will be stopped in the central basin during the spring and summer as this area had the best Least Tern reproduction success last year (68 chicks hatched).

The second major concern is a food chain problem. The bottom sediments are going to be drastically changed when salt water is introduced. Most fresh water plankton and fish can't withstand this kind of change. When the food chain is stunted there are few birds. No one knows how long it will take for a stable food chain to develop. It could easily take years in the west basin. The east basin should do better because the fresh water mud flats at the east end will as is, and fresh water will still flow in.

Even though there will be changes don't give up on the birding at Batiquitos Lagoon. There are puzzles here beyond bird identification. What <u>are</u> the birds going to do in this changing habitat? It should be interesting to find out.

SAPSUCKER ID REFERENCES

The following references were used by Doug Aguillard in preparation for the Sapsucker identification discussion which he conducted at the November meeting:

Kaufman, Kenn, *Advanced Birding*, Peterson Field Guides, 1990, pp. 173-179.

Devilliers, Pierre, "Identification and Distribution in California of the Sphyrapicus Varius Group of Sapsuckers," *Birding*, August 1979, pp. 181-199.

Dunn, Jon, "The Races of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker," *Birding*, August 1978, pp. 142-149.

Landing, James E., "On Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers with Red Napes," *Birding*, February 1991, pp. 20-22.

Lehman, Paul, "Notes on Plumage Variation in Adult Red-naped and Red-breasted Sapsuckers," *Birding*, February 1991, pp. 23-26.

ABA REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The ABA Regional Conference in San Diego will be held January 7-11, Saturday through Wednesday. Members of SDFO are invited to attend seminars and the evening dinner on Monday, January 9. To encourage attendance, SDFO is going to apply any profits from the Friday pelagic trip to the admission fees of SDFO attendees. So take the pelagic trip on Friday, and part of that cost will help pay for your Monday activities...if there is a profit.

AWRIGHT YOU BIRDERS, FALL IN AND MAKE IT SNAPPY

(Birding at Camp Pendleton)

Have you been itching for the opportunity to tramp around the Santa Rita Estuary on Camp Pendleton? It looks so inviting as you cross the river on I-5 just north of Oceanside. Well, on Saturday, February 4, you will have your chance!

Evelyn Ashton, president of the Santa Margarita River Foundation, has secured a permit for 35 people to spend several hours birding around the Estuary. The outing also includes a bonus visit to a mystery site. This is a rare opportunity. Participation in the event is by reservation only and is open to dedicated birders with a proactive interest in conservation.

The Friends of the Santa Margarita River and the Santa Margarita River foundation have done a remarkable job of protecting and enhancing the River. Your participation in this unique outing will help to support their work. To reserve your spot, call 728-7836.

SNOWBIRDS IN OREGON

Jim and Bea Smith recently returned from a trip to Salem, Oregon where they visited relatives. They planned to drive back down the coast to do some birding. They didn't; too much rain and snow. It's like that in Oregon.

ONE LEGGED BIRDS

By Herb Young

My brother visited me from New York recently, and, to satisfy his compulsion to take walks, I took him to the flood control channel and to Coronado and put a pair of binoculars in his hands. He was impressed by the variety of water birds and by the furious feeding activity of Western Sandpipers. Of course, I identified all of the birds for him--at Coronado, we saw six species of gulls. But one question stumped me: when he saw the sleeping shorebirds near the Coronado ferry landing, he asked, "why do they sleep standing on one foot?" I had never thought about it; of course, shorebirds, wading birds, ducks, gulls, and terns all do it. What an annoying question!

After several sleepless nights, I phoned our resident ornithologist Phil Unitt. His answer: most ornithologists have adopted the explanation that birds tuck one leg into their feathers to conserve heat. So there is the answer; in winter it is surprising that they don't shift from one foot to the other the way they stand in that cold water.

Wait a minute. Which foot do they stand on? Does it vary from species to species, and is it diagnostic? For example, is this a way to tell a Long-billed Dowitcher from a Short-billed? Maybe we're on to something. This needs more research.

Phone in your observations to our research department 281-6113. Hours: Tues. and Thurs. 7-9 PM. Watch this space for updates.

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Your contributions to *The Skimmer* are appreciated. Submit articles by the first of the month to Herb Young, 4557 Utah St, Apt 8, San Diego, CA 92116

Daily Rare Bird Hotline:
479-3400

JOIN SDFO

Dues: $15.00. Mail check and coupon below to Mary Beth Stowe (address below).

Call (619) 279-5636 for further information.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Name:_____

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This is a (new / renewal) membership (circle one).