The SKIMMER

Volume 28, Number 9—September 2001

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Thursday, September 20, at 7:00 p.m., at the Tecolote Canyon Nature Center, at the east end of Tecolote Road, off I-5.

Program: Local bird photographer extraordinaire Tony Merceica will regale us with his latest efforts from South Texas. This area gets a lot of coastal Mexican bird species that occur nowhere else in the United States. See Tony square off against the fearsome Plain Chachalaca!

Next month's meeting: Thursday, October 18, same time, same place. Program to be announced.

Updating the SDFO Phone Tree

Don Hastings has been going over the file of birders that have asked to be called for San Diego County birds. You know if you asked to be called for special birds that are not Code A birds, you should let him know that you have added that bird to your County list...And also it would be nice to call or email if you saw the bird. We have a file with about 15 club members' names that would like to be called for Code A birds. Please let Don know if you still wish to be in this group and your number to be called when you can drop everything and go . If any bird new to the area is found, everyone will be called that can be reached. Please let us hear from you before the next rare bird. Contact Marjorie Hastings at (619) 464-7342 or **mhast27@home.com**

Address List Update

Add the following address to your SDFO membership list:

Carol Parker
395 Camino Elevado
Bonita, CA 91902
(619) 421-112
cmparker@sdcoe.k12.ca.us

FROM THE BWD NEWSWIRE

www.birdwatchersdigest.com/pages/newswire

Compiled by Rick Blom

West Nile Vaccine?

The American Bird Conservancy has joined a consortium of zoos and environmental organizations in funding an effort to develop and test an effective vaccine that will prevent the West Nile virus in birds. The vaccine is needed because West Nile virus is often fatal to birds and could devastate populations in zoos and captive breeding facilities. A similar virus killed 39 whooping cranes at a government facility in the 1980s. While attention in the media has been focused on the dead crows found in urban areas, more than 70 species of birds have been killed by the West Nile virus, many of them in research facilities. One recent sampling showed that nearly 40 percent of birds housed outdoors were infected, and mortality rates were high. West Nile virus was first noted in the northeastern United States in 1999 but has now spread south and west and it is anticipated that it will be found in new areas this year. States as far away as the Midwest are asking people to report dead birds, especially crows, so that they can be tested.

Calling Home

Does the sound of a mobile phone, especially someone else's, raise your irritation level? Do you hate hearing the chirp of a ringing phone when you are walking in your local park or refuge? Brace yourself—it may be getting worse. Scientists in Britain and Scandinavia have discovered that some birds, notably Starlings, have taken to imitating the sound mobile phones make when they ring. While some birds have long imitated man-made sounds (Mockingbirds are particularly adept), the appearance of mobile phone noises as a component of bird songs suggests that the devices have become so ubiquitous that birds are adding them to the repertoire. The news of the discovery was widespread on the Internet but first came to our attention in *Calliope Crier*, the newsletter of the Yakima Valley Audubon Society.

SAN DIEGO RARE BIRD ALERT REPORT, AUGUST 2001

Compiled by Mike Evans

COMMON NAME	NO	PLUM	OBS DATE	LOCATION	REPORTER	NOTE
Reddish Egret	1		8/25/01	Santa Margarita mouth, Camp Pendleton	Foster, Brian	
Reddish Egret	1	Ad	8/25/01	Tijuana Estuary, S end McCoy Trail	Goldhammer, M.	
Little Blue Heron	1		8/4/01	Peñasquitos Lagoon	Blue, David	
Zone-tailed Hawk	1	Ad	8/19/01	San Diego Wild Animal Park	Billings, Mark	Seen from monorail
Golden Eagle	1		8/8/01	Hillcrest area, in palm tree	Mangin, Marilyn	
Peregrine Falcon	1	Ad	8/8/01	Sweetwater River mouth, first electrical tower, N of river	Alvarez, Eduardo	w/Mark Billings
Semipalmated Sandpiper	1	Juv	8/8/01	San Elijo Lagoon	McCaskie, G.	
Baird's Sandpiper	1	Juv	8/18/01	San Elijo Lagoon, SW corner (Encinitas)	McCaskie, G.	
Baird's Sandpiper	1	Juv	8/23/01	San Elijo Lagoon, SW corner (S-most arm) (Encinitas)	Smith, Sue	
Baird's Sandpiper	3	Juv	8/25/01	San Elijo Lagoon, SW corner (Encinitas)	Aldern, Cathy	With Stan Walens
Curlew Sandpiper	1	Alt	8/9/01	San Elijo Lagoon, viewed from Visitor's Center off Manchester Blvd, W of Interstate 5, on trail into marsh	Mulrooney, B.	also seen by A. Mauro, D. Blue Neil Fergusson, others
Wilson's Phalarope	1	Juv	8/19/01	Tijuana R Estuary, trail S of Visitor's Center to end	Walters, John	Bright orange-red legs
Pacific Golden Plover	1		8/22/01	Tijuana Estuary, NE mouth	Patton, Robert	With 75 Black-bellied Plovers
Black Tern	1	Juv	8/1/01	San Diego R Floodway, E of Mission Bay Dr. bridge	Worley, J.	also B. Mulrooney
Black Tern	1	Juv	8/3/01	San Diego R Floodway, E of Mission Bay Dr. bridge	Billings, Mark	
Black Tern	1	Juv	8/7/01	San Diego R Floodway, from Robb Field	Billings, Mark	
Black Tern	1	Juv	8/12/01	San Elijo Lagoon, from Visitor's Center	Billings, Mark	
White-winged Dove	1		8/23/01	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove dripping faucet	Conway, V.	
Common Ground-dove	1		8/11/01	Daley Rch, Escondido, north end of Daley Ranch, off Cougar Pass Road	Stowe, Mary Beth	
Calliope Hummingbird	1	M	8/25/01	Imperial Beach, private back yard near Grove & Iris, in honeysuckle	Goldhammer, M.	
Red-naped Sapsucker?	1		8/12/01	Point Loma, 3802 Point Loma Ave	Hood, John	Feeding on *Podocarpus* tree

Nuttall's Woodpecker	1	F	8/24/01	Osbourn & Cottonwood, in avocado	Alvarez, Eduardo	Young birder, 1st rpt, amigo de M. Billings
Brown-crested Flycatcher	1	Juv?	8/17/01	Borrego Valley, Roadrunner Club, Swan Lake area	Saracini, Paul	fide P. Jorgensen
Brown Thrasher	1		8/2, 30/01	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove dripping faucet	Sams, J.	
Brown Thrasher	1		8/3, 26/01	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove dripping faucet	Evans, M. U.	
Brown Thrasher	1		8/4/01	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove dripping faucet	Hazard, G.	
Brown Thrasher	1		8/5/01	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove dripping faucet	Mulrooney, B.	
Brown Thrasher	1		8/6/01	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove dripping faucet	Adams, Don	
Brown Thrasher	1		8/7/01	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove dripping faucet	Wise, Ken & Rose	
Brown Thrasher	1		8/15/01	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove dripping faucet	Parker, Dennis	
Brown Thrasher	1		8/11, 20, 21, 23 ,27/01	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove dripping faucet	Conway, V.	
Brown Thrasher	1		8/28/01	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove dripping faucet	Wilson, Mike	
Savannah Sparrow (Large-billed)	1		8/11/01	Delta Beach, Silver Strand, N of Fiddler's Cove	Parker, Dennis	
Savannah Sparrow (Large-billed)	2		8/15/01	Tijuana R Estuary, S of Visitor's Center to end	Hastings, M.	
Savannah Sparrow (Large-billed)	1		8/20/01	Peñasquitos Lagoon, near mouth, E of Pacific Coast Hwy	Blue, David	
Savannah Sparrow	1		8/22/01	San Diego Bay, Western Salt Works	Patton, Robert	
Savannah Sparrow (Large-billed)	1		8/22/01	Tijuana Estuary, S of mouth	Patton, Robert	Foraging in kelp
Yellow-breasted Chat	1		8/3/01	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove dripping faucet	Coatsworth, Jim	
Western Tanager	1	F	8/11/01	Cabrillo NM, Myoporum grove dripping faucet	Conway, V.	
*White-collared Seed-eater	1	M	8/25/01	Tijuana R channel, NW of Dairy Mart Bridge, at S end abandoned part of Dairy Mart Rd, W of reveg. area	Evans, M. U.	
Scott's Oriole	2	M+F	8/14/01	Escondido, 2117 Laura Drive, near Wild Animal Park	Adrian?	

For a full listing of all reports, see **http://homepage.mac.com/aves/SanDiego.html**

BIRDS DEFINED

(from The Dictionary of American Bird Names, by Ernest A. Choate)

Osprey. L. *ossifragus, ossifraga*, "an osprey," from L. *os*, "bone," and L. *frangere*, "to break." The bird the old Romans called ossifragus is not the fish hawk. The ossifragus mentioned by Pliny was the Lammergeier, a German name, which means literally "lamb vulture." It received its Latin name from its habit of dropping bones and even tortoises from a height in order to fragment their ossified body parts. It is difficult to tell when the word came into English, when it obtained its present form, and when it came to mean the particular bird it now does. Latin and French (a modified Latin) words came into English in immense numbers from 1300 on. As most literary Englishmen of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were adept in both tongues, they may have borrowed from either for any word. Turner in 1544 and Aldrovandus in 1599 use osprey or an approximation of it for the Osprey. Things then become puzzling. The writers of the King James version of the bible in 1610 have: "And these are they which you shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray" (Leviticus 11: 13) ends the list of proscribed fowls. It is explained in the foreword of most current editions of the bible that the center column running down each page contains references, "an aid in clearing up for the reader obscure passages." Here one finds that the ossifrage is "a species of eagle" and the osprey is "the black eagle." The introduction also contains suggestions on where to find "a cure for ignorance," "aid when discontented," and "sustaining faith when facing difficulty." The commentators responsible for the column were no better ornithologists than the writers of the King James version. This seems a bit odd as Shakespeare had not long before written in *Coriolanus*, "As is the osprey to the fish, who takes it by sovereignty of nature." Willughby and others of his time (1676) still confuse it with the Sea Eagle. His name for the osprey was Baldbusardus anglorum. Tristram is quoted by Driver: "The eagle is really the griffon-vulture; the ossifrage, the bearded vulture, the largest and most powerful of the vulture tribe." This latter is the Lammergeier. Driver goes on to say that the Osprey is the Short-toed Eagle. One is inclined to think that this great Hebrew scholar of the turn of the century did a bit of bird watching. Aeschylus, the Greek tragic dramatist, is said to have been killed by a Lammergeier (ossifrage) dropping a turtle on his bald head which it mistook for a stone. This cannot be verified as the Athenian mortuary records along with most of the plays of Aeschylus have been lost.

Mallard. ME. *malard* from OF. *malard*, "the mallard." From OF. *male*, "male," which derives from L. *masculinus*, extended from L. *masculus*, "male," and L. *mas*, "a male," plus the intensifying suffix *–ard* from HG. *hart*, an adjective meaning "bold, hardy," akin to the E. *hard*. It generally has a pejorative sense as in drunkard, dullard, and sluggard. The suffix seems to fit well the mallard male who exemplifies in his relations with the female a singular concentration on the physical union alone. The female, after she is snatched baldheaded, gets the eggs to hatch, the ducklings to raise, and her drake's name.

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[NUT-BIRD]

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