The SKIMMER

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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Thursday, February 21, at 7:00 p.m., at the Tecolote Canyon Nature Center, at the east end of Tecolote Road, off I-5.

Program: Don Adams will explain how to identify the female and immature humming birds of San Diego County. They all look pretty much alike, but there *are* differences, and Don will show you what to look for.

Next month's program: Thursday, March 21, same time, same place. John Walters tried to present a program on female and immature orioles last fall, but the slides from VIREO didn't arrive until the day after the meeting. He'll try again in March.

2002 Dues

They're due! See the back page of this issue for the details. Give your money to Mary Beth Stowe at the meeting, or mail your check to the return address on this issue.

Annual SDFO Election Is Coming!

OK, it's not till June, but start thinking about helping out the club. President Don Adams is retiring at the end of his term, so we will definitely need a replacement for him. Several of our other officers have served in their present posts or other club positions for many years, and we need new blood. The duties aren't onerous, but someone has to do them.

FROM THE BWD NEWSWIRE

www.birdwatchersdigest.com/pages/newswire

Compiled by Rick Blom

Harry Potter and the Very Bad Idea

It was probably inevitable considering the size of the Harry Potter phenomenon. Following the release of the movie, pet stores and wildlife agencies were being queried by both children and their parents about acquiring a snowy owl as a pet.

One of Harry's companions in the movie was a Snowy Owl named Hedwig. It is of course illegal to keep an owl as a pet. The inquiries also revealed how little many people know about owls and what is required to care for one. The surge in interest was reported in various newspapers, and stories appeared on numerous Internet sites.

Big Bird!

One of the largest feathered creatures known was the Elephant Bird, a flightless species that inhabited Madagascar. They weighed about a half-ton and stood as tall as nine feet. Elephant Birds went extinct about 400 years ago, but at least a few unbroken eggs still exist. The eggs represent the largest single cell known in the animal kingdom and hold about 7.7 liters of material. Now a scientist at the University of Texas has used computerized tomography to see inside the egg. What they found was a tiny, dismembered skeleton of an embryo about 70 percent on the way to hatching. Using digital models they have constructed plastic copies of over 100 bone fragments and are in the process of making a replica of the embryo. The plan is to use the same technique on other intact eggs to attempt to track the development of the embryos. It is hoped that this will provide clues to how the elephant bird evolved into such a large species.

Storm-Petrel Extinct?

The Guadeloupe Storm-petrel is apparently on the verge of extinction. The bird breeds on Guadeloupe Island off the west coast of Baja California, and recent surveys indicated no birds were present and that the breeding habitat has been almost entirely destroyed by goats that were introduced to the island in the early 1800s. Despite the destruction, another Critically Endangered species, the Guadeloupe Junco, was found in better than expected numbers and it is estimated that more than 1,000 individuals remain. The news of the survey will be published at length later but was summarized in *Bird Calls*, the newsletter of the American Bird Conservancy.

Victory?

Developers in Tucson, Arizona went to court to stop the designation of 731,000 acres as "critical habitat" for the endangered Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, and a judge ruled that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had not factored in required economic factors before implementing the plan.

Although many were pleased by the ruling, environmental groups say it could backfire for the developers. That is because new studies have provided a better understanding of what the owl needs to survive and it is expected that the new proposal will designate 1.4 million acres as critical habitat, double the acreage of the old plan. Some groups are planning to file reports showing that habitat preservation also has substantial economic benefits in an effort to dilute the argument of the developers. The story appeared in the *Tucson Citizen*.

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SAN DIEGO RARE BIRD ALERT REPORT, JANUARY 2002

Compiled by Mike Evans

For additional reports, see the full listing at
http://homepage.mac.com/aves/SanDiego.html

COMMON NAME	NO	PLUM	OBS DATE	LOCATION	REPORTER
Blue-footed Booby	1	Ad	1/27/02	Mexico, Islas Coronados, North Island	Mulrooney, B., Percival, Brandon
Masked Booby	1	Ad	1/1-10/02	La Jolla cove, cave area pelican roost	Evans, Michael, many other birders
Reddish Egret	1	Ad	1/1,5,9,10, 17/02	San Diego River Floodway	Billings, Mark, several other birders
Reddish Egret	2		1/7,29/02	San Diego River Floodway	Blue, David, Percival, Brandon
Ross's Goose	1		1/2,3,7, 10,13/02	Mission Bay, near Hilton Hotel	Billings, Mark, several other birders
Ross's Goose	2		1/11/02	NAS North Island, golf course pond across street from SE end of runway	Patton, R.
Ross's Goose	1		1/16/02	Lake Poway, near docks	
Ross's Goose	1	Imm	1/16/02	Santee Lake	Mulrooney, B.
Ross's Goose	1		1/17/02	Sweetwater Reservoir	Chaniot, George
Eurasian Wigeon	1	M	1/1-3, 7,27,29/02	San Diego River Floodway	Wysong, D & Carol, several other birders
Eurasian Wigeon	1		1/20/02	Rose Creek, near Garnet Ave bridge	Trissel, David
Harlequin Duck	1	M	1/1-5, 7,9,10,13, 21,27,28 /02	Mission Bay, extreme NE part, at De Anza Resorts Boat launching area	Evans, Michael, many other birders
Zone-tailed Hawk	1		1/9/02	San Diego Wild Animal Park area, Bear Valley Parkway, 1 mile from cemetery	Grenfeldt, Bill
Zone-tailed Hawk	1		1/10,19, 21,23/02	Oak Hill Memorial Park, Escondido	Rideout, C. E., several other birders
Pacific Golden Plover	1		1/3,8,13, 30/02	San Dieguito River mouth	Benson, Tom, several other birders
Pacific Golden Plover	1		1/11/02	Tijuana River Estuary mouth	Bledsoe, Richard
American Oystercatcher?	1	Ad	1/27/02	San Diego Bay, Zuniga Jetty	Mulrooney, B.
Xantus's Murrelet	4		1/27/02	Pacific Ocean, between San Diego and Islas Coronados, Mexico	Percival, Brandon
Spotted Owl	1		1/12/02	Anza Borrego DSP, Hell Hole Canyon, 2nd palm grove (G23), just below Maidenhair Falls	Otahall, Chris
Broad-billed Hummingbird	1		1/12/02	Anza Borrego DSP, Hell Hole Canyon, 1.5 mi. up canyon, 100 m short of first group of palms	Peterson, Stanley
Lewis's Woodpecker	1		1/5/02	William Heise Park area, SR 79	Hastings, M.
Lewis's Woodpecker	3		1/17/02	Pine Hills, @ intersection SR 78 & Pine Hills Rd	Stowe, M. B.

Lewis's Woodpecker	1		1/26/02	Pine Hills, @ intersection SR 78 & Pine Hills Rd	Hastings, M.
Lewis's Woodpecker	2		1/31/02	Cuyamaca Rancho SP, Trout Pond area, SR 79	Roberts, Jim
Vermilion Flycatcher	1		1/5,8,17,19, 20,26/02	Lindo Lake, Lakeside, NE end of lake	Hastings, M., many other birders
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	1		1/10-13, 17,19-21, 26/02	Greenwood Memorial Cemetery, W portion	Patton, R., several other birders
Tropical Kingbird	1		1/14/02	Chula Vista, Rohr Park, just inside gateway	Hastings, M.
*Green Jay	1		1/21/02	La Mesa, 9020 Johnson Dr, flood channel; W side of SR 125 @ Garfield St	Spain, John
*Black-throated Magpie-Jay	1		1/21/02	Tijuana R Valley, Monument Rd, W Hollister	Hays, Sean
*Black-throated Magpie-Jay	6		1/23/02	Tijuana R Valley, Monument Rd, W Hollister	Bledsoe, Richard
*Black-throated Magpie-Jay	3		1/27/02	Tijuana R Valley, Sunset @ Hollister	Blackman, Tom
Varied Thrush	1		1/8/02	Steltzer County Park, picnic area at foot of Steltzer Ridge trail	Stowe, M. B.
Varied Thrush	1		1/17,21-23, 27,30/02	La Jolla, graduate student complex, La Jolla Shores Dr, corner Discovery Way, across from Horizon Way	Smith, Susan, several other birders
Townsend's Solitaire	1		1/17/02	Pine Hills, near Julian, Cuyamaca Mtns	Stowe, M. B.
Swamp Sparrow	1		1/1719, 20,26/02	Lindo Lake, Lakeside, NE end of lake, in fenced stream culvert	Mulrooney, B., many other birders
Swamp Sparrow	2		1/18/02	Lindo Lake, Lakeside	Aguillard, D.
White-throated Sparrow	1	Ad	1/2/02	De Luz, Ross Dr, W Ross Lake (parallel to Daily Rd)	Weaver, K.
Grace's Warbler	1		1/7/02	Ft Rosecrans NC, W side, along ocean fence, S of Graves Registration Bldg, in pines & cypress	Webster, R.
Palm Warbler	1		1/7/02	San Diego R Floodway, S side, ca. 75 yd E of Mission Bay Drive bridge	Zabriskie, Jimmie
Palm Warbler	1		1/12,21/02	Greenwood Memorial Cemetery	McCaskie, G., Worley, J.
Summer Tanager			1/12,13, 19/02	Spring Valley, S end of Ledgeview Ave, S of Austin Dr.	Norgaard, Richard, Hastings, D.
Summer Tanager	1		1/1/02	La Jolla Cove, commercial area	Copper, E.
Summer Tanager	1	M	1/5/02	Golden Hill Park, large fig tree, SW-restroom, near 25th & Russ	Hollenbeck, Gus
Summer Tanager	2		1/11-12/02	Greenwood Memorial Cemetery, W side	Mulrooney, B., McCaskie, G.
Summer Tanager	1		1/13,19, 26/02	Greenwood Memorial Cemetery, W side	Evans, Michael, Hastings, M., Rogers, G.
Summer Tanager	1	M	1/19/02	Hillcrest residential, 8th Ave, S of Pennsylvania	Evans, Michael
Black-backed Oriole	1		1/5/02	Tijuana R Valley, Smuggler Gulch, in eucalyptus, W side	Reiser, C.
Orchard Oriole	1	F	1/11,12, 19/02	Greenwood Memorial Cemetery, W side	Mulrooney, B., McCaskie, G., Hastings, M.

MORE FROM THE BWD NEWSWIRE

(continued from page 2)

Aleutian Goose Festival

The Fourth Annual Aleutian Goose Festival: A Celebration of Wildness will be held March 22-25, 2002. An extra day will be added this year for all-day field trips. Each spring Crescent City, a small coastal town in the rural northwestern-most corner of California, celebrates the annual staging of virtually the world's entire population of Aleutian Canada Geese, estimated to be at about 40,000. The festival offers participants a dawn spectacular from coastal headlands as 40,000 geese rise from their offshore island's rest and fill the sky.

Located in the home of Redwood National and State Parks, the Smith River National Recreation Area, and the State of California's Lake Earl Wildlife Area, this bird and nature festival provides 75 field excursions, workshops, and ocean, river, and coastal lagoon boat trips. At least 400 species of birds have been recorded in Del Norte County, and 158 species have been counted during the festival. Field trips and workshops feature ancient redwoods, whale watching, Spotted Owls, Marbled Murrelets, nature photography and sketching, wolves, native plants, lighthouse tours, local maritime history, tidepools, and even seal pups. Experienced biologists, ornithologists, and other experts guide and teach all events.

For registration information call 800-343-8300 or (707) 465-0888, visit the Festival on the web at **www.redwoodlink.com/soar**, or e-mail at **soar2@northcoast.com**

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.

Good Albatross News

The short-tailed albatross is one of the world's most endangered seabirds and at one time only a few were known to remain in the wild. Thanks to an aggressive conservation effort by Japan, the birds' last nesting stronghold, Torishima Island, is protected, and the number of albatrosses is on the rise. This year there were 143 young about to fledge on the island, bringing the total there to slightly over 1,000 birds.

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JOIN SDFO

Dues for Calendar year: $10.00, including all renewals. Add $5.00 for each additional member in same household. **MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO SDFO** and mail or give check to membership chair: Mary Beth Stowe 5465 Repecho Dr. J-201, San Diego, CA 92124

For membership information, call Mary Beth at (858) 279-5636.

Rare Bird Hotline
(619) 688-2473
[NUT-BIRD]

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