The SKIMMER

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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, July 18, 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: Barbara Swanson's Bird Photography.

Barbara Swanson has enjoyed photographing nature for a number of years and is a past president of the North County Photographic Society. After retiring a few years ago from a career in biotech, she now has more time to pursue gardening, birding and bird photography, and is a board member of the Buena Vista Audubon Society.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, August 15, same time, same place. James Babbitt will present a program on birds of Cuba.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, JUNE 2023

Compiled by Paul E. Lehman

A *pair* of Yellow-throated Vireos were inland at Champagne Lakes, north of Escondido, from 7-25 Jun (AJ). From 9-12 Jun, a *nest* in the early stages of construction was discovered (AJ)! The nest appeared to be abandoned thereafter, but the pair remained in the area. This represents the first record of attempted nesting of Yellow-throated Vireos in California and perhaps the first pure pairing anywhere west of the Rockies. A Townsend's Warbler present at the Bird & Butterfly Garden from 10 -29 Jun (CB, SBM, PEL), established the second true summer record for the county. Spring migrants pass through into the beginning of June, with the latest record around 10 June; and southbound birds may first appear near the end of July. But true summering individuals are indeed exceptional. The previous record was along the upper San Luis Rey River from 16-23 Jun 2000.

A stunning discovery involved a pair of nesting Yellow-throated Vireos north of Escondido, from 7-25 Jun, the first confirmed nesting attempt of this species in California. Here one of the adults works on early stages of nest construction, 10 Jun. *Photo by Dan Jehl*

Other top rarities found during this month included a Canada Warbler near the Del Mar Public Works facility on 12 Jun (DTr), only the third spring record for the county. Both prior spring reports were in 2015. A coastal Yellow-billed Cuckoo was in the Sunny Creek area of Carlsbad on 28 Jun (TG). A one-year-old Mississippi Kite was over Rangeland Rd. near Ramona on 7 Jun (BMu). June and July are the best months in which to find this casual species. A heard-only, singing Red-eyed or Philadelphia Vireo was recorded at Scissors Crossing on 27 Jun (PLa, SV). A warbler seen only very briefly and photographed at sea some 18 miles off Pt. Loma on 3 Jun (NT) was either a Golden-winged or a "Brewster's"-type hybrid. Exceptional for the date, a Tropical Kingbird was at Whelan Lake on 3 Jun (JMy, PAG). It may have been the same bird seen there back on 4 Feb. A few wintering Tropicals elsewhere in California over the years have remained as late as early June. A casual male Scarlet Tanager at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 13 Jun (DTr) was the second individual found this spring and only the sixth ever at this season.

Additional new discoveries included a Yellow-billed Cuckoo at the more expected site of Scissors Crossing from 26 Jun-2 Jul (DTr), two Masked/Nazca Boobies off Pt. Loma on 26 Jun (SL), a Laughing Gull at the San Diego River mouth on 6 Jun (JPe), a Black-

This male Canada Warbler near the Del Mar Public Works facility on 12 Jun established only the third spring record in the county. *Photo by Nick Thorpe*

This Tropical Kingbird at Whelan Lake was exceptional for the 3 Jun date. It may or may not have been the same bird seen there on 4 Feb. *Photo by Jane Mygatt*

and-white Warbler in Olivenhain on 17 Jun (BMi), an American Redstart in Encinitas from 16-19 Jun (SBr), and single Indigo Buntings in Olivenhain on 10 Jun (BMi) and in the desert at Vallecito on 24 Jun (BLS), with two more in the mountains at Warner Springs on 29 Jun (HP). A Purple Martin in the Guajome neighborhood of Oceanside on 15 Jun (P&DT) was either a very late spring migrant, a summer wanderer, or on a long-distance foraging flight from the mountains.

Very rare in June, a Yellow-headed Blackbird was at Border Field State Park on 8 Jun (MS) and three were in the mountains along Highway 79 north of Descanso on 19 Jun (SBu). A late report involved an adult Nazca Booby photographed from a whale-watch boat off San Diego on 20 May (BBk, *fide* BMu).

The singing White-eyed Vireos at Lake Murray (MS) and along Chollas Creek (LH, JD) both continued through 30 Jun+. Other late May rarities that oozed into this month included an Inca Dove through 2 Jun and a Scarlet Tanager through 1 Jun, both on SE Pt. Loma (M&TR). A record number of Neotropic Cormorants were at several sites, some continuing and some new, totaling as many as 12 birds this month (15 since late March): a total of three at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park through 20 Jun (*v.obs*), at least two at Lake Murray through 30 Jun+ increasing to four birds on 20 Jun (MS), up to two at the San Diego River mouth/Famosa Slough through 30 Jun+ increasing to three from 9-27 Jun (*m.obs*), and one continuing at Lindo Lake through 2 Jun (MD), plus a new bird at Sweetwater Reservoir on 24 Jun (PEL). Up to two male Indigo Buntings remained at Peñasquitos Creek in Carmel Valley through 4 Jun (SL). In the mountains, a few Red Crossbills tarried in the Stonewall Mine area through 4 Jun (*v.obs*).

Northern Parulas, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and coastal-slope Summer Tanagers set very impressive record spring totals. Northern Parulas totaled 21 birds between 28 Apr-19 Jun, with individuals added this month on 5 Jun at both Harry Griffen Regional Park (BW) and residential Bay Park (MT-O), at Rohr Park 13-17 Jun+ (BH), El Camino Cemetery 15 Jun (PM), Point Loma Nazarene University 15 Jun (DTr), Sunny Creek in Carlsbad 17 Jun (TG), and San Diego Botanic Garden 19 Jun (JCl). There were 21 Rose-breasteds between 15 May-20 Jun, with the June additions at SE Pt. Loma 2-6 Jun (up to two; M&TR), Sorrento Valley 3-6 Jun (up to two; JCa), Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 5 Jun (JA), Vallecito 5 Jun & 16-20 Jun (BLS), Bird & Butterfly Garden 5-11 Jun (HRA), and residential Pt. Loma 12 Jun (JA). Additional singing males on Cuyamaca Peak 22 Jun (JD) and at Scissors Crossing 28 Jun (NT) were especially unusual. Summer Tanagers totaled 17, between 10 May-15 Jun, with June additions at Sunny Creek 4 Jun (TG), Bird & Butterfly Garden 5-6 Jun (CK), Point Loma Nazarene University 7 Jun (MW), Serra Mesa 7 Jun (CH), University City 11 Jun (BSp), Safari Park

11 Jun (EL), NAS North Island 12 Jun (BF), Carlsbad outlets 14-15 Jun (SBr), and Rolando Village 15 Jun (KB).

The pelagic trip on 3 Jun provided a record high total of 56 Cook's Petrels in San Diego County waters, mostly between the mid- San Diego Trough and "The Corner." But several individuals were found closer to shore, including singles on and just inside the Nine-Mile Bank, only some 11.5 and 10 mi. out, respectively. This species was almost unknown locally until 2020, but has since been seen on a somewhat regular basis between June and August. Other highlights of the trip included: five Arctic Terns, very rare in county waters during spring, at The Corner; a very good early-June total of seven Leach's Storm-Petrels; single getting-late Sabine's Gulls and Northern Fulmars at the 30-Mile Bank; three Craveri's Murrelets in the San Diego Trough; and a getting-late northbound adult Pomarine Jaeger at the Nine-Mile Bank (BVAS).

Late spring migrants included a Western Wood-Pewee at Point Loma Nazarene University 15 Jun (DTr) and a wood-pewee sp. in Encinitas 16 Jun (DTr); Willow Flycatcher at Jacumba 17 Jun (PEL); Warbling Vireo in University City 11 Jun (BSp); Swainson's Thrush at Vallecito 16 Jun (BLS); single "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warblers on SE Pt. Loma 3 Jun (M&TR) and especially at Lake Murray 13 Jun (JMa); Black-throated Gray Warbler in Encinitas 1 Jun (KA, PGN); Townsend's Warbler at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 6 Jun (PEL); single Western Tanagers at Vallecito 15 Jun (BLS), Escondido 18 Jun (MF), and San Diego Botanic Garden 19 Jun (SES); and Lazuli Bunting at Cabrillo National Monument 2 Jun (NT), with two at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 5 Jun (JA). A migrant Common Loon heading north over Pt. Loma on 6 Jun (PEL) was getting late. Several swimming individuals seen elsewhere in early and mid- June could have been late migrants or were summering locally. A few Pacific Loons, mostly one-year-olds in basic plumage, can be seen heading north offshore through mid-June; e.g., one past La Jolla on 19 Jun (PEL).

A male Lazuli Bunting at Jacumba 17 Jun (PEL) could have been a late spring migrant, a summer wanderer, or a rare east-of-normal breeder. A

One of a surprising two Scarlet Tanagers found this spring, this individual was at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 13 Jun. *Photo by David Trissel*

The third American Redstart found this spring was an immature male in Encinitas from 16-19 Jun. *Photo by Barbara Swanson*

Neotropic Cormorants staged a mini-invasion into the county between late March and the end of June, with as many as 15 birds found in all. This individual, here with a Double-crested Cormorant for good comparison, was a long stayer at Lake Murray. *Photo by Haim Weizman*

A San Diego County record count of 56 Cook's Petrels was tallied during the pelagic trip on 3 Jun. This individual was in the western San Diego Trough. *Photos by Naresh Satyan (left) and Nancy Christensen (right)*

One of the largest concentrations of Cook's Petrels encountered during the 3 Jun pelagic trip was this flock at "The Corner." *Photo by Naresh Satyan*

desert Western Tanager at Vallecito on 23 Jun (BLS) was probably a summer wanderer.

Lingering waterfowl were headlined by a casual-in-summer Greater Scaup at Batiquitos Lagoon from 5-12 Jun (TG) and a continuing Long-tailed Duck in fairly poor condition along the Torrey Pines shoreline through 20 Jun (eBird). Other summer quackers of note included several Blue-winged Teal in early June, with one still present through 1 Jul+ at Famosa Slough (CM) and another through 4 Jul+ at Batiquitos Lagoon (TG, JMy). One or two each Ring-necked Ducks and Lesser Scaup were at several sites during early June (*v.obs*), with later Ring-neckeds at Santee Lakes through 2 Jul (JS) and at Sweetwater Reservoir from 30 Jun+ (PEL) and one scaup sp. still present at the Tijuana River mouth through 26 Jun (v.obs). Only a couple each Northern Pintails, Northern Shovelers, and Red-breasted Mergansers were found. Rare June gulls were up to two Bonaparte's at the South San Diego Bay Salt Works through 18 Jun (PEL, MS); and the only Ring-billeds away from the Oceanside harbor area, where regular in summer, were singles at La Jolla Shores 2 Jun (GN), at J St. in Chula Vista 5-14 Jun (PEL), and at Eastlake in Chula Vista 30 Jun (PEL). Summering shorebirds were mostly pedestrian, including counts from San Diego Bay of 11 Ruddy and one Black Turnstones, 24 Red Knots, 68 Western Sandpipers, and 87 Short-billed Dowitchers (*v.obs*).

Arctic Terns are very rare spring migrants in San Diego County waters, as most northbound birds pass much farther offshore. This was one of five birds found at "The Corner" during the 3 Jun pelagic trip. Note the upperwing and underwing patterns and the strong gray wash to the underparts. *Photo by John Dumlao*

Vallecito is not a regular summering site for Brown-crested Flycatcher. Thus, this bird present there from 1-17 Jun is of note. *Photo by Britta Lee Shain*

Exceptional so far inland, two Elegant Terns were at ponds along Rangeland Rd. near Ramona on 7 Jun (BMu), whereas one at Sweetwater Reservoir on 26 Jun (PEL) was rare though not as unexpected. The Rangeland birds probably arrived via a Gulf of California and Salton Trough route. Very rare inland, especially in June, a Red-breasted Merganser was at Sweetwater Reservoir from 2-5 Jun (PEL).

A new coastal site for Acorn Woodpecker is Crest Canyon in Del Mar where two birds were found

For the fifth year in a row, a territorial male Indigo Bunting was present in the Bird & Butterfly Garden area in the Tijuana River Valley, from 2 May-26 Jun. *Photo by Barbara Swanson*

26 Jun (JMy). Increasing but still somewhat unusual near the coast, a male Vermilion Flycatcher at Robb Field from 1-14 Jun (PEL) was not associated with any known breeding pairs. A juvenile Vermilion at Lake Murray on 9 Jun (JPa) was not at a known nest site but likely was raised nearby. Another juvenile was there in 2022 (MS). The only regular site for summering Chipping Sparrows near the coast is at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery, where the species seems to be barely hanging on; thus, one singing at De Anza Cove on Mission Bay 13 Jun (BBs) was unusual.

The pair of oystercatchers at Cabrillo National Monument, comprising one Black and one American X Black hybrid, bred for the second year in a row, with a nest during May (TL) and two chicks on 9-10 Jun (DJ) but not thereafter. The sporadic American X Black Oystercatcher in the La Jolla area for the past couple or more years was seen again through 3 Jul (v.obs). The new tern colony on West Ski Island in Mission Bay grew further since its initial discovery in 2022, with a 1 Jun tally this month of some 95 Caspian, 73-85 Forster's, and 67 Black Skimmer nests, and the first-ever county breeding of Elegant Terns away from South San Diego Bay, with 66 nests (JJa, *fide* RTP). A continuing pair of Harris's Hawks in Shelter Valley had a nest with three large young on 26 Jun (NC, DJ), and the continuing pair at Jacumba still had an active nest of uncertain status on 17 Jun (PEL). A nesting pair of White-headed Woodpeckers persists on Hot Springs Mountain 19 Jun-1 Jul+, where also sev-

eral each Dusky Flycatchers and Black-throated Gray Warblers were found (PM, NT), all known nesting species there in the past. For the fifth year in a row, a singing Indigo Bunting summered in the Bird & Butterfly area, from May through 26 Jun (DTr), was joined by a female from 5-29 Jun (J&MP), and accompanied by a juvenile on 24 Jun+ (JJo, PZ). This is the fourth year in a row with documented breeding at this site.

The sole American Bittern reported was at the traditional summer site at the east end of San Elijo Lagoon through 25 Jun (v.obs). A Belted Kingfisher at San Elijo Lagoon on 12 Jun (AH) was probably an unseasonal wanderer, although local nesting is a slight possibility. A Brown-crested Flycatcher at Vallecito from 1-25 Jun (BLS) was not at a typical nesting location. A singing Swainson's Thrush along Rose Creek near Mission Bay through 18 Jun (*v.obs*) was the only territorial individual found in South County, which is fewer than normal.

Overall, it was likely a successful nesting season for many species, given the goodly amount of winter rain and the cool, overcast late spring and early summer—conditions conducive for plenty of plant and insect food. A large summer concentration of 90 Northern Rough-winged Swallows, almost all juveniles, were along Sunset Rd. in the Tijuana River Valley on 26 Jun (PEL).

A bright female Wilson's Phalarope at San Dieguito Lagoon on 10 Jun (DAK) was likely a returning southbound migrant, whereas a basic-plumaged Red-necked Phalarope at the Salt Works from 10-28 Jun (MS) summered locally. An alternate-plumaged Lesser Yellowlegs at the Salt Works from 10-14 Jun (MS) was either a very early fall migrant or a summer wanderer. Rare inland, a Willet at Lake Hodges on 25 Jun (PEL) and another at Lake Murray on 28 Jun (MS) were on typical dates for southbound migrants. Early post-breeding or post-fledging dispersers included a juvenile Orange-crowned Warbler in the desert at Vallecito on 3 Jun (BLS), an easterly White-breasted Nuthatch at Jacumba on 17 Jun (PEL) and two westerly birds at Rohr Park from 24 Jun+ (PEL), and an adult Lark Sparrow at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery on 22 Jun (DTr).

This unseasonal, alternate-plumaged Lesser Yellowlegs at the South San Diego Bay Salt Works from 10-14 Jun was either a very early southbound arrival or a summer wanderer. *Photo by Matt Sadowski*

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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. H. Resit Akcakaya, Kathy Aldern, Joe Alsadi, Christine Beck, Brendan Beers (BBs), Brooke Bembenek (BBk), Steve Brad (SBr), Sean Buchanan (SBu), Buena Vista Audubon Society sponsored pelagic trip, Kevin Burns, Jonathan Casanova (JCa), Nancy Christensen, Jeff Clingan (JCl), Mark Dayton, John Dumlao, Marc Fenner, Brian Flick, Peter A. Ginsburg, Tito Gonzalez, Lesley Handa, Chris Harrington, Anita Hayworth, Bonnie Henson, Jennifer Jackson (JJa), Dan Jehl, Angela Johnson, Joshua Joun (JJo), Christina Kidd, Dan A. King, Ty Lamar, Patti Langen (PLa), Paul E. Lehman, Steven Lima, Eric Lutomski, John Martin (JMa), Sara B. Mayers, Betsy Miller (BMi), Caitlin Morrow, Paul Mulholland, Brennan Mulrooney (BMu), Jane Mygatt (JMy), P. Gretchen Nell, Gary Nunn, Robert T. Patton, Jim Pawlicki (JPa), Jim Pea (JPe), Hans Petermann, Jeffrey & Mark

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m.obs = many observers

v.obs = various observers

An inadvertent editorial omission from last month's issue, this "Slate-colored" Dark-eyed Junco at Torrey Pines State Reserve on 13 May set a new all-time late date in spring by a *full month*. *Photo by Marcie Mason*

Sixty-fourth Supplement to the American Ornithological Society's *Check-list of North American Birds,* and Phil Unitt Rejoices: The Western Flycatcher Is Back!

This year's revision to the AOS's *Check-list*, the Last Word on what to call a bird, concerns itself almost entirely with tropical species unlikely to turn up at your bird feeder. The most interesting revision to local birders confirms Phil Unitt's decision to call *Empidonax difficilis* "Western Flycatcher" instead of "Pacific-Slope Flycatcher" in the *San Diego County Bird Atlas*. Phil had good reasons for his decision, and recent research has confirmed his judgment.

About the only other revision of interest to most North American birders is splitting the American Goshawk (*Accipiter atricapillus*) from Eurasian Goshawk (*A. gentilis*), based on genetic studies, as well as behavioral and call notes. Eurasian Goshawk has been seen in North America a handful of times, but you're unlikely to run into one in California.

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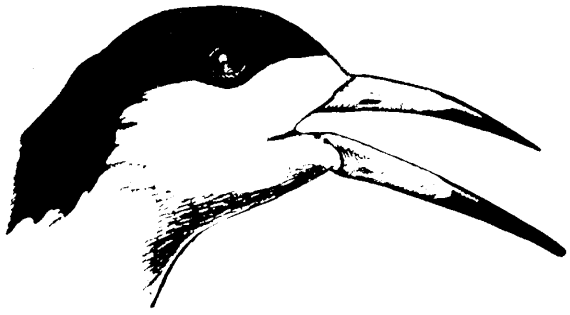
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