The SKIMMER

*Volume 50, Number 11—November 2023*

# SDFO NEWS

## Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, November 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: Brenda Ramirez will discuss "The parrots of Southern California: Our favorite chatty neighbors."

Non-native parrots have become a very present and boisterous element of the urban ecosystems throughout Southern California. Ranging from cities to more natural areas, parrots can be found in a variety of habitats where they coexist with people. Through the Free-Flying Los Angeles Parrot Project (FLAPP) on iNaturalist, we created a dataset focused on two of the more prominent species in Southern California, the Red-crowned and Lilac-crowned Parrots. After being introduced through the illegal pet trade, these sister-species have established their populations and even created mixed-species flocks that would not be possible otherwise. Originally from opposite coasts of Mexico, these parrots are model organisms for answering questions on range shifts and hybridization because of the unique displacement that has led to their coexistence. Our research has focused on distinguishing the two species based on morphological features, comparing the environmental conditions between their respective native ranges and their introduced range, and we are now shifting to understanding how their genetic makeup has been affected. Join us to learn how you can help contribute to our research from your own neighborhoods!

Join FLAPP on iNaturalist: https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/free-flying-los-angeles-parrot-project

Brenda Ramirez is a research technician for the Free-Flying Los Angeles Parrot Project at the Moore Lab of Zoology at Occidental College. Having recently graduated with her Master's degree from Cal Poly Pomona, Brenda has experience working with large community science datasets and incorporating them into spatial models to understand species distributions over thousands of years.

## SDFO NEWS *[continued]*

Next month's meeting: Monday, December 11, at 6:00 p.m. **Note the date and time!** Our annual Holiday Party. More details in next month's *Skimmer*.

### 2023 CBC schedule

Saturday, December 16: San Diego - Please sign up at this link

Sunday, December 17: Anza Borrego - Shannon McNeil (Shannon.McNeil@parks.ca.gov)

Monday, December 18: Lake Henshaw - Chris Staurovsky (1stlbirdman@mail.com)

Friday, December 29: Oceanside - Jane Mygatt (jane.mygatt@gmail.com) and Patti Langen (patti.langenzoo@gmail.com)

Saturday, December 30: Escondido - Jim Beckman (jbeckman@dslextreme.com) & Ken Weaver (gnatcatcher@sbcglobal.net)

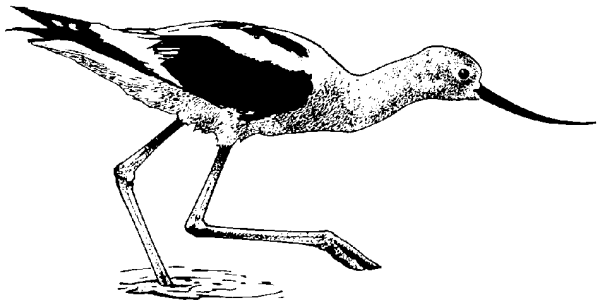
Friday, January 5, 2024: Rancho Santa Fe – Robert Patton (rpatton@san.rr.com)

### 2024 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Membership renewals for 2024 are being accepted now. Annual membership is $25.00 for single plus $10.00 for each additional person in the same household. New this year, you may pay electronically using PayPal or credit card through our website on the Membership page:

https://sandiegofieldornithologists.org/membership/

You may also pay the traditional way by check. Please make out your checks to SDFO. Checks may be sent to: Eve Martin, 1155 Camino Del Mar, Suite 102, Del Mar, CA 92014.



# SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, OCTOBER 2023

Compiled by Paul E. Lehman

Following an excellent September for rarities, October was merely average, with a good first half of the month but much slower finish. The numbers of many regular western landbird migrants continued the trend from August and September with a substantially below-average showing.

Exceptional rarities found during October included a young male Broad-tailed Hummingbird at a Coronado feeder on 4 Oct (CK), one of only a handful of records in San Diego County. The Little Stint was back for its sixth winter at the South San Diego Bay Salt Works from 16 Oct+ (MSa). A casual Inca Dove was especially noteworthy along the coast at the Bird & Butterfly Garden/Community Garden in the Tijuana R. Valley from 11-13 Oct (PC). Single Broad-billed Hummingbirds in the Golden Hill neighborhood of San Diego from 9 Oct-1 Nov+ (LW) and in Normal Heights on 19-20 Oct (BSt) brought the amazing two-month total to *six* individuals. The Thick-billed Kingbird in the Tijuana R. Valley from 29 Oct-1 Nov+ (PM) was almost certainly a returning bird from the previous winter. Rare vireos were well represented: Blue-headed at Solana Highlands from 6-8 Oct (MSe), Red-eyed in Pacific Beach on 4 Oct (GN), and Yellow-green at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery (GN) and Point Loma Nazarene University (NT) on 6 Oct (the latter perhaps involving the same individual). Following a substantial number of October reports of wandering Clark's Nutcrackers to our north, a total of as many as 20 nutcrackers were discovered in the Laguna Meadow area of the Laguna Mts. from 25-28 Oct (DT). A Gray Catbird visited a private yard in Clairemont Mesa West on 26 Oct (RB). A Pine Warbler was at Buddy Todd Park on 17 Oct (BF), and single Grace's Warblers were in residential Chula Vista on 17 Oct (AN) and at Point Loma Nazarene University from 21 Oct+ (NT). The female Hepatic Tanager

With fewer than ten records in the county, this young male Broad-tailed Hummingbird was on private property in Coronado on 4 Oct. *Photo by Christina Kidd*

A very rare visitor to the desert and casual to the coast, this Inca Dove was in the Tijuana R. Valley from 11-13 Oct. *Photo by Paul E. Lehman*

returned for its third year to San Dieguito County Park 31 Oct-1 Nov+ (PLa, SV, TG).

Other October rarities of note included an American Bittern in Borrego Springs 31 Oct (SL), single Broad-winged Hawks over Pt. Loma 2 Oct (PEL) and Mt. Soledad 7 Oct (PEL) and a "Prairie" Merlin in Vallecito 9 Oct (BLS). A Varied Thrush was in the Laguna Mts. at Agua Dulce from 22-28 Oct (AH) and another was along the coast in Balboa Park 30 Oct (PEL). Single dark-lored White-crowned Sparrows were at Vallecito 9 & 28 Oct (BLS) and in the Tijuana R. Valley 16 Oct (PEL), up to two Lapland Longspurs were at Fiesta I. 28-31 Oct+ (PEL), a Chestnut-collared Longspur was there 28-29 Oct (TF-H), and single Swamp Sparrows were at Santee Lakes 26 Oct (BM) and in Borrego Springs 28 Oct (RT). Up to three Bobolinks tarried in the Tijuana R. Valley from 27 Sep-12 Oct (DT). Orchard Orioles were at La Jolla 9 Oct (TS), Encinitas 15 Oct (GH), and Carmel Valley 18 Oct (DAK). The lone Baltimore Oriole was in Balboa Park 23 Oct (PEL).

Returning for its second year, this Thick-billed Kingbird was present in the Tijuana River Valley from 29 Oct+. *Photo by Paul Lehman*

This female Broad-billed Hummingbird in the Golden Hill neighborhood of San Diego from 9-31 Oct (here 10 Oct) was one of *six* birds found in San Diego County since late September. Shown here with its namesake bill base. *Photo by Lindsay Willrick*

Northern Parulas were at San Ysidro 1-6 Oct (PEL), Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery 12 Oct (SV), residential Chula Vista 16-19 Oct (AN), and Balboa Park 17 Oct (PEL). A good crop of four Magnolia Warblers included singles in Carlsbad 4 Oct (TG), residential Chula Vista 9-10 Oct (AN), La Jolla 14-15 Oct (BL), and Encinitas 18-26 Oct (PGN). A Chestnut-sided Warbler was at Santee Lakes 5-6 Oct (BM), and another was inland at 4S Ranch near Rancho Bernardo 15 Oct (SL). The sole Black-throated Blue Warbler was at Lake Murray 17 Oct (MSa), and the sole Black-throated Green Warbler was at Santee Lakes on 13 Oct (BM). Single Scarlet Tanagers were in a Pt. Loma yard on 16-17 Oct (S&KM) and in Carlsbad on 28 Oct (TG), single Indigo Buntings were at Lake Murray 1 Oct (MSa) and in the Tijuana R. Valley 4 Oct (PEL), and single Dickcissels were noted in the Tijuana R. Valley 8 Oct (DT) and at Whalen Lake 10 Oct (SV).

This month hosted a bumper crop of *24* Plumbeous Vireos, 18 Black-and-white Warblers, 13 American Redstarts, 21 Palm Warblers, and 20 Summer Tanagers. The 10 Tennessee Warblers brings the two-month total of that species to 25 individuals. Four additional Lucy's Warblers—San Ysidro 4-8 Oct (DT),

A casual fall and winter visitor, this Blue-headed Vireo was seen by many at Solana Highlands from 6-8 Oct. *Photo by Mel Senac*

This Yellow-green Vireo was a brief visitor on 6 Oct at Point Loma Nazarene University. A reverse-migrant from the south, it is almost annual in fall. *Photo by Nick Thorpe*

Del Mar 5 Oct (EM), Rose Creek 8 Oct (JB), and Carmel Valley (KF)—bring the two-month total to a record *11* individuals. Three additional Blackburnian Warblers—Mira Mesa 9-14 Oct (KF), Poinsettia Park 10 Oct (TG), and Coronado 10-12 Oct (PEL)—bring the two-month total to eight individuals. A healthy eight Rose-breasted Grosbeaks included five coastal plus singles in the mountains at Pine Valley on 27 Oct (LRu) and in the desert at Clark Dry Lake from 12-14 Oct (NC, CAM) and Scissors Crossing on 14 Oct (ML).

A total of as many as 20 Clark's Nutcrackers frequented the Laguna Meadow area in the Laguna Mts. between 25-28 Oct. *Photo by Barbara Swanson*

Totals for some of our more regular-occurring scarce and vagrant species included five coastal White-winged Doves, six Zone-tailed Hawks, twelve Tropical Kingbirds, one Gray Flycatcher, two Bank Swallows, nine Clay-colored Sparrows, one White-throated Sparrow, three Northern Waterthrushes, and three Blackpoll Warblers (m.obs).

Offshore highlights included a Flesh-footed Shearwater six mi. off Ocean Beach on 16 Oct (SL), a Masked Booby 5.2 mi. off Pt. Loma on 18 Oct (PEL), and single Nazca Boobies eight miles off Mission Bay on 17 Oct (GV) and 15 miles off Pt. Loma on 18 Oct (PEL). Onshore, a young Masked/Nazca Booby was standing on the beach at Ocean Beach 2 Oct (v.obs) and a deceased Red-billed Tropicbird was an exceptional find at the Otay R. mouth on South San Diego Bay 4 Oct (MSa). A White-winged Scoter was at Border Field State Park on 30 Oct (TB). Common Murres appeared in numbers beginning in late Oct (v.obs).

Continuing from previous month(s), up to five Harris's Hawks were at Shelter Valley (NC) and up to four were in Jacumba (PEL). The two Neotropic Cormorants at Sweetwater Reservoir were last seen 12 Oct (PEL), but one bird reappeared at the San Diego River mouth 31 Oct (MH). The long-staying birds at Lake Murray were not reported after the end of September (MSa).

This immature Broad-winged Hawk over Mt. Soledad on 7 Oct was one of two seen during the month. *Photo by Sally Veach*

This Chestnut-collared Longspur spent 28-29 Oct at Fiesta Is. on Mission Bay, the "longspur capital" of San Diego County. *Photo by Dan Jehl*

A very rare *minima* Cackling Goose was at Guajome Regional Park on 14 Oct (P&DT), and four were at Sweetwater Reservoir from 29 Oct+ (PEL). The tame, long-staying "Aleutian" Cackling Goose continued at Lindo Lake through 31 Oct+ (MD). The largest flock of Greater White-fronted Geese found was 27 birds at Sweetwater Reservoir from 8-19 Oct (PEL). A count of 25 Wood Ducks at the commissary pond on Camp Pendleton on 11 Oct (PAG) was exceptional away from the few sites with feral populations (e.g., Santee Lakes, Lindo Lake). The summering Common Merganser remained at Lake Cuyamaca through 24 Oct+ (TH). October totals for our rare-but-regular shorebirds included three Pacific Golden-Plovers, two Baird's Sandpipers, and seven Pectoral Sandpipers. A Solitary Sandpiper was at Jacumba on 3 Oct (BW, PEL). A count of 65 Surfbirds on the Mission Bay jetties 28 Oct (SL) was high.

Coastal-slope Common Ground Doves are almost never found away from the few sites where they persist. Some such reports have turned out to involve casual Ruddy Ground Doves. One Common was photographed at Santee Lakes on 5 Oct (eBird).

Unusual near the coast, a Swainson's Hawk was in Oceanside 15 Oct (PLa), up to two Sage Thrashers were at Fiesta Island 30 Oct+ (NC) and one was in Chula Vista 31 Oct (JTS), and a Black-throated Sparrow was at Torrey Pines State Reserve 16 Oct (LRo). Unusual in the desert, a Cassin's Kingbird was at Borrego Springs 22 Oct (BSp).

Early-arriving birds included a Black Scoter flying past La Jolla on 23 Oct (GN; record early by four days), with another there on 27 Oct (JR) and at Camp Surf/Imperial Beach on 30 Oct+ (DJ). Also early were a Short-eared Owl at the Salt Works on 19 Oct (JTS) and a Mountain Bluebird at Jacumba on 20 Oct (PEL). Conversely, three Craveri's Murrelets along the outer edge of the Nine-Mile Bank on 18 Oct (SV, PEL) set a new late date by two days. A few Black-chinned Hummingbirds now routinely linger into the first week of October, with the latest reported this year through 11 Oct at Pacific Beach (GN) and Tierrasanta (PEL). The same holds true with late-lingering Western Kingbirds. Several were seen along the coast into late October, and one at Jacumba on 20 Oct (PEL) was the latest ever in east county. Other late-lingering species included a Solitary Sandpiper at Fairbanks Ranch through 17 Oct (SB) and a Willow Flycatcher at Harry Griffen Regional Park on 18 Oct (BW). A Black-chinned Sparrow at Pena Spring in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park on 22 Oct (BSp) was either a late stealth-migrant or at a poorly known wintering site. A Blue Grosbeak at Jacumba on 13 Oct (PEL) was late for the eastern part of the county, and another Blue Grosbeak in the Tijuana R. Valley on 22 Oct (PEL) and a Lazuli Bunting at Carmel Valley Community Park through 23 Oct (DAK) were getting late for the coast.

This Magnolia Warbler in residential Chula Vista on 9-10 Oct was one of four individuals found this month. *Photo by Andrew Newmark*

A bumper crop of 24 Plumbeous Vireos was found during October, including this individual at Carmel Valley Community Park. *Photo by Jonathan Casanova*

A record autumn season for Lucy's Warblers produced *eleven* individuals along the coastal slope during September-October, including this bird in San Ysidro from 4-8 Oct. *Photo by Nancy Christensen*

An average fall for Clay-colored Sparrows included this individual (left) in direct comparison with a Chipping Sparrow (right) at Torrey Hills Park on 13 Oct. *Photo by Paul Mulholland*

Joining the irruptive Red-breasted Nuthatches, small but widespread numbers of Pine Siskins appeared after 10 Oct, as did a small number of Cassin's Finches in the mountains.

A hybrid Downy X Nuttall's Woodpecker was at Santee Lakes on 27 Oct (EM), and hybrid Townsend's X Hermit Warblers were in Coronado on 4 Oct (NF) and Balboa Park on 25 Oct (NC). A "Yellow-shafted" Northern Flicker was at Torrey Pines State Reserve on 25 Oct (JJ, PZ). This form is equally likely to occur as intergrade "Yellow-shafted" X "Red-shafted" Flickers.

***Acknowledgments:*** Many thanks to Sara B. Mayers and Guy McCaskie for their careful review.

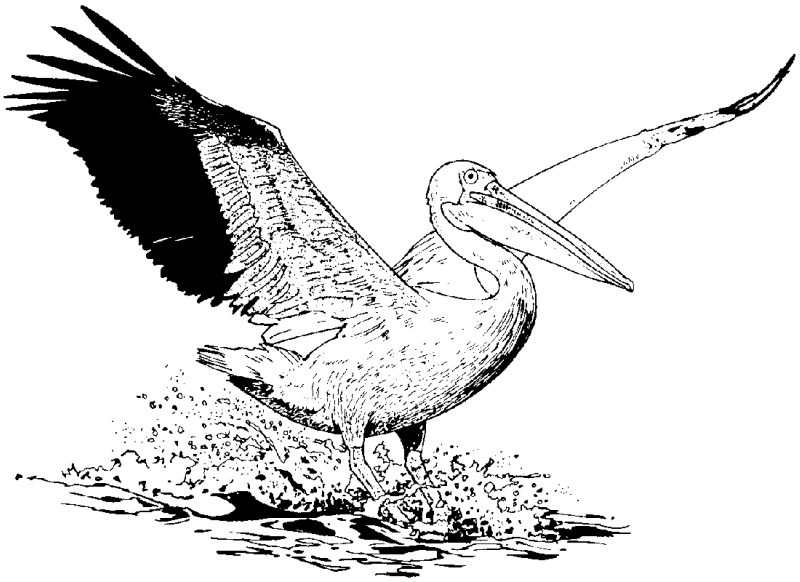
***Cited observers:*** Observers listed are limited to those finding and identifying each species. Some sightings reported to *eBird* are included without specific attribution. Tom Baxter, Richard Breisch, John Bruin, Sean Buchanan, Paul Chad, Nancy Christensen, Mark Dayton, Beth Fife, Kyle Fischer, Thomas Ford-Hutchinson, Nathan French, Peter A. Ginsburg, Tito Gonzalez, Michelle Haglund, Gjon Hazard, Alison Hiers, Terry Hurst, Dan Jehl, Joshua Joun, Christina Kidd, Dan A. King, Braxton Landsman, Patti Langen (PLa), Paul E. Lehman, Max Leibowitz, Steve Lima, Curtis A. Marantz, Eve Martin, Paul Marvin, Sara & Keith Mayers, Brennan Mulrooney, Jane Mygatt, P.

Gretchen Nell, Andrew Newmark, Gary Nunn, Juan Ramirez, Leah Rottke (LRo), Lisa Ruby (LRu), Matt Sadowski (MSa), Mel Senac (MSe), Britta Lee Shain, Bridget Spencer (BSp), Justyn T. Stahl, Brandon Stidum (BSt), Tim Swain, Paula & David Theobald, Robert Theriault, Nick Thorpe, David Trissel, Sally Veach, Geoff Veith, Lindsay Willrick, Barbara Wise, and Pema Zonglo.

m.obs = many observers

v.obs = various observers

This second-cycle Masked Booby was 5.2 mi. off Pt. Loma on 18 Oct. This species has become much rarer than Nazca Booby in recent years. Note the mostly greenish-yellow bill, bill size and shape, clean white nape, and dark central tail. *Photo by Patti Langen*



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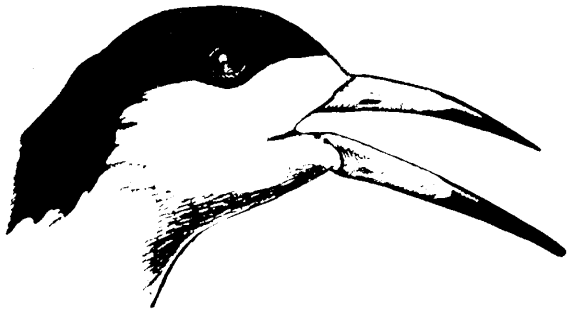
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