The SKIMMER

Volume 51, Number 2—February 2024

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, February 20, 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: SDFO's own past vice-president John Bruin will present "Birds of the Philippine Island of Luzon and the Indonesian Islands of Komodo and Sulawesi"

Part 1: During the month of February 2023 near the end of an extended trip to SE Asia which included two weeks in Thailand with Jon Dunn, Kimball Garrett, and SDFO's Mel Senac, I extended the trip and flew to Manila. There I had arranged a 7-day trip with a local guide who took me around the area surrounding Manila including Subic Bay and the Tanay rainforest.

Part 2: Later in August 2023 I spent a month visiting 7 of the 18,000 or so Indonesian islands. This part will focus on the islands of Komodo, Rinca, and Sulawesi. Sulawesi and Komodo islands are located in eastern Indonesia, and sit within the biogeographical region of Wallacea, so named after the naturalist and explorer Alfred Russel Wallace. In his 1859 visit to the region he recognized the distinct changes in fauna between western and eastern Indonesia and marked an invisible line separating Bali to the west from Sulawesi to the east. The Wallace Line, as it has become known, serves to illustrate the change from Asian biota to the west and Australasian fauna to the east. Long periods of geographical isolation have left this region loaded with bird endemics, with some 90 or more found on the island of Sulawesi alone.

John Bruin started birding as a youngster, growing up near Minneapolis, Minnesota. He graduated from the University of Minnesota with a B.S. degree in forestry. He spent 33 years with the U.S. Forest Service, managing natural resource programs on National Forests in Alaska, Washington, Idaho, New Mexico and California. In his last ten years with the agency, at the Region al Office in Albuquerque, New Mexico, he oversaw the acquisition programs on 10 National Forests in Arizona and New Mex-

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SDFO News *[continued]*

co. The programs acquired through purchase or land exchange, private land from willing sellers that had critical wildlife habitat values or other important natural resource values. He retired in 2009, and in 2012, he and his wife Susan moved to San Diego. Since then he has made visiting foreign countries a priority, enjoying the people, cuisine, and of course birding.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, March 19, same time, same place. Program to be announced; see next month's *Skimmer* for details.

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SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, JANUARY 2024

Compiled by Paul E. Lehman

The female Broad-billed Hummingbird in the Golden Hill neighborhood of San Diego continued through 31 Jan+ (LW), the nearby male continued through 30 Jan (CMw), the immature male in Coronado continued through 26 Jan+ (CK), and a new male in residential Santee on 14 Jan (TA) brought the county total since September to at least *eleven* individuals. There is a good chance that the Inca Dove at the Tijuana River Valley Community Gardens from 3-23 Jan (AN) was the same individual seen in October. A Crested Caracara was seen bordering the Tijuana River Estuary on 28 Jan (AW). A female/immature Painted Bunting at the Community Gardens on 25 Jan (MSa) has a good chance of being a wild bird, unlike many other Painted Buntings seen during the winter over the years.

The number of December-January Blackburnian Warblers reached *four*, with a continuing bird at Lake Murray through 31 Jan+ (BSm) and a new individual in Torrey Hills from 5-16 Jan (PEL). The number of Lucy's Warblers reached *four*, with a continuing bird in Carlsbad from 28 Dec-31 Jan+ (TG), one in the Mountain View section of San Diego on 9 Jan (PEL), and two additional individuals in Carlsbad on

This young male Broad-billed Hummingbird was one of at least *eleven* individuals found in San Diego County since September. It was present in Coronado from 24 Nov-26 Jan+ (here 19 Jan). *Photo by Christina Kidd*

[*Above]* The Blackburnian Warbler at Lake Murray from 7 Nov-30 Jan+ is a casual visitor in winter. It was one of several individuals found during December-January. *Photo by Kris McMillan*

[Right] One of three Orchard Orioles reported this month, this young male visited a La Mesa yard from mid-Dec to 30 Jan. Note the splotches of chestnut beginning to appear. *Photo by Barbara Wise*

16 Jan & 20-29 Jan (TG). The number of December-January Chestnut-sided Warblers also reached *four*, with a continuing bird downtown at Pantoja Park through 26 Jan+ (P&MT) and new birds in San Ysidro from 10-29 Jan (PEL) and in Ocean Beach on 16 Jan (CP). The Hepatic Tanager at Harry Griffen Park continued from 15 Dec-17 Jan (BW), a new bird was discovered near the San Diego Mission on 25 Jan (PEL), and another "new" bird in Del Mar from 5-8 Jan (RTP) is actually a returning bird for its fifth winter but which had been missed the past two years.

Other new birds of note during January included a Red-necked Grebe flying past La Jolla on 7 Jan (PEL) and a Laughing Gull at Los Penasquitos Lagoon on 24-25 Jan (PMu), with a very similar-looking bird in the Tijuana River Valley from 25-30 Jan (DH). A Tennessee Warbler was at Liberty Station on 14-15 Jan (JP), a returning Northern Parula was in University City from 14-28 Jan+ (PEL), and single dark-lored White-crowned Sparrows were in the Tijuana River Valley from 4-6 Jan (DPr) and in the mountains at the Santa Ysabel Preserve East near Julian on 19 Jan (PEL). An adult male Orchard Oriole continued at the

Manx Shearwaters were found 5.8 miles off Point Loma (left), a highlight of the New Year's Day SDFO pelagic trip, and 4.7 miles off La Jolla on 17 Jan (right). Note the white undertail coverts, darkness of the upperparts, and the head pattern including the pale 'ear surround' extension. *Photos by Beth Fife (left) and Dave Povey (right)*

Fairly strong onshore winds on 11 Jan produced several interesting seabirds at La Jolla, including this Short-tailed Shearwater (left) and Black-legged Kittiwake (right). Note the shearwater's narrow, scimitar-shaped wings, underwing pattern, bill size, and steep forehead. *Photos by Nick Thorpe*

San Diego Zoo from 16 Dec-31 Jan+ (TS), an immature continued in southern La Jolla from 28 Nov-27 Jan (PEL), and another immature male was visiting a La Mesa yard from mid-Dec to 30 Jan (RR). A female Baltimore Oriole continued in central-western Balboa Park from Oct through 8 Jan (PEL), a returning female was at the San Diego Zoo from 16 Dec-29 Jan+ (TS), and a new immature male was at Harry Griffen Park in La Mesa from 2-31 Jan+ (MSa). Single White-winged Scoters were at La Jolla 1 Jan (MM) and in Coronado 14-28 Jan (JP). Black Scoters included one at La Jolla 7 Jan (ND) and a total of two on San Diego Bay 26-27 Jan (NF, PEL). The incursion of Red Crossbills continued, with flocks of 2-21 birds found at Stonewall Mine (DT), Pine Valley (KO), Carlsbad (EM), Carmel Valley (DAK), Daley Ranch (RG), Miramar Lake (ML), Rancho San Diego (LG), Olivenhain (MSa), Oceanside (KC), Bonsall (BB), and Rainbow (JSz). Typically, our crossbills are "Type 2" birds, but submitted recordings of some of this season's birds have turned up candidates for the much rarer "Type 3" and "Type 4" (DAK, JMy, MSa).

This wintering Dusky-capped Flycatcher delighted many observers at Kate O. Sessions Park in Pacific Beach during its extended stay from 26 Nov-16 Jan. *Photo by Terry Hurst*

Single Manx Shearwaters were documented 5.8 miles west of Point Loma on 1 Jan (GN) and 4.7 miles northwest of Point La Jolla on 17 Jan (DPo). Seawatching at La Jolla during windy weather on 11 Jan produced a casual-from-shore Leach's-type Storm-Petrel (PMu) and two Short-tailed Shearwaters (PEL). Moderate numbers of Red Phalaropes and Cassin's Auklets, as well as small numbers of Ancient Murrelets and Black-legged Kittwakes, were present offshore during the month.

Figuring out how many Lesser Black-backed Gulls are present during the winter season is an annual struggle since there is likely overlap between some of

This Thick-billed Longspur was present along the Chula Vista bayshore from 16 Dec-26 Jan (here 26 Jan), unfortunately only in an off-limits area. *Photo by Robert T. Patton*

The second Rusty Blackbird discovered this winter was this male at Discovery Lake in San Marcos from 29 Dec-3 Jan. *Photo by Tito Gonzalez*

the individuals seen at different sites (e.g., Lower Otay Lake, the Chula Vista landfill, and South San Diego Bay/Tijuana River Estuary). This month, an adult was at the South San Diego Bay Salt Works on 28 Jan (MSa), a third-cycle bird was at the Tijuana Estuary on 3 Jan (GHe)—perhaps the same as at Lower Otay Lake in November?—and a high count of three first-cycle birds were at Lower Otay Lake on 15 Jan (PEL)—some of the same individuals as at Lake Murray and the Salt Works during December?

Exceptional in the mountains during winter, the Grace's Warbler continued at Stonewall Mine from 5 Dec-12 Jan (P&DT) and the Hammond's Flycatcher continued from 9 Dec-26 Jan (RB, BRe, DH). Also unusual at high elevation, Lake Cuyamaca hosted up to ten Great Egrets through 26 Jan+ and up to five White-faced Ibis through 19 Jan (PEL).

Other continuing goodies from previous month(s) included the sixth-year returning Little Stint at the Salt Works through 28 Jan (MSa, JTS), the seventh-year returning Red-necked Grebe near the mouth of San Diego Bay through 27 Jan+ (PEL), the eighth-year returning Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in the Poggi Canyon area of Chula Vista through 31 Jan+ (DT), the fourth-year returning Eastern Phoebe in the City Heights neighborhood of San Diego through 14 Jan+ (BW), the sixth-year returning Grace's Warbler along Crest Drive in Encinitas through 25 Jan (PGN), and the fifth-year returning Painted Redstart in Tierrasanta through 31 Jan+ (PEL). An American X Black Oystercatcher at La Jolla from 21-30 Jan (PMu) may have been the same individual last seen there in September, and one at Cabrillo National Monument on 26-27 Jan (SM) is likely a returning bird. The casual-in-winter Solitary Sandpiper at Whelan Lake was still present 31 Jan (EM, CMs). The Dusky-capped Flycatcher at Kate O. Sessions Park tarried through 16 Jan (GN) and the Thick-billed Kingbird along Monument Road in the Tijuana River Valley reappeared after a six-week hiatus, from 16-20 Jan (PMa, DH)—as happened last winter as well. The Thick-billed Longspur

The sole Rose-breasted Grosbeak seen this month was this young male at a La Costa feeder from 22 Dec-3 Jan. *Photo by Alison Hiers*

in off-limits bayshore property in Chula Vista since 16 Dec was still present 26 Jan (LS, RTP). Up to three high-tide Nelson's Sparrows at Crown Point on Mission Bay were still present 13 Jan (BT), and a new bird (likely returning) was at San Elijo Lagoon from 13-15 Jan (DT). The new Grace's Warbler at Las Palmas Park in National City since 16 Dec was still present 6 Jan (MSa). The Rusty Blackbird found during the Oceanside CBC at Discovery Lake in San Marcos was last seen 3 Jan (JMa).

The four *minima* Cackling Geese at Sweetwater Reservoir were still present 29 Jan (PEL), two coastal White-winged Doves continued at Poinsettia Park in Carlsbad through 6 Jan (GHa), a total of probably four Pacific Golden-Plovers continued in the South San Diego Bay and Tijuana Estuary areas through Jan (v.obs), and the single Neotropic Cormorant soldiered on in the San Diego River mouth/ Famosa Slough area through 27 Jan+ (MH). Up to four Harris's Hawks were still to be found at both Shelter Valley and Jacumba (v.obs). Up to three Zone-tailed Hawks tarried in the Safari Park/Escondido area (m.obs), as did one or two at Lake Poway (SL) and another near Ramona (LC), and a "new" (though probably returning) bird was near Lake Jennings on 1 Jan (DH).

Yet more continuing rarities included the "Yellow-shafted" Northern Flicker at Torrey Pines State Reserve from 25 Oct-2 Jan (JJ, PZ, PMu) and a new bird at Rancho San Diego on 10 Jan (BSr), single Sage Thrashers at Crown Point through 5 Jan (DH) and at Cabrillo National Monument through 21 Jan (VL), up to three Lapland Longspurs at Fiesta Island through 28 Jan+ (PEL), and single Clay-colored Sparrows in residential Carlsbad through 31 Jan (BRa) and at NAS North Island/Coronado through 13 Jan (ND, PEL). Palm Warblers continued at the Tijuana River Valley Community Gardens through 28 Jan (PEL) and in northeast Mission Bay through 21 Jan+ (JB), and a new bird was in San Ysidro on 26 Jan (PMa). The returning Townsend's X Hermit Warbler was in Coronado from 4 Oct-13 Jan (NF). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak at a La Costa feeder was present 22 Dec-5 Jan (AH, RW).

This Elegant Tern, with two Royals, at La Jolla Cove on 3 Jan represents only about the sixth county record during the month of January. An additional individual was seen elsewhere later in the month. *Photo by Rowan Gibson*

January totals for some of our more regular scarce and vagrant species included 5 Tropical Kingbirds, 5 Gray Flycatchers west of the desert, 12 Plumbeous Vireos, 8 White-throated Sparrows, 2 Northern Waterthrushes, 10 Black-and-white Warblers, 5 American Redstarts, and 34 Summer Tanagers.

Casual in mid-winter, a Common Tern was at the Salt Works on 25 Jan (TE), and single Elegant Terns at La Jolla on 3 Jan (RG) and at the San Diego River

A very rare species in winter, this Bell's Vireo was in residential Rolando Park on 16 Jan. *Photo by Barbara Wise*

mouth on 11 Jan (NF) were only the sixth and seventh January records for the county. Other seasonal rarities included a very rare Swainson's Hawk over Chula Vista on 1 Jan (MSa) and a Bell's Vireo in residential Rolando Park on 16 Jan (BW). A Hammond's Flycatcher was well inland at Dos Picos County Park from 13-17 Jan (eBird), and up to three Northern Rough-winged Swallows were at Lake Hodges between 20 Dec-6 Jan (SL). Single Black-headed Grosbeaks were at a La Costa feeder from 9 Dec-27 Jan (AH, RW), in Poway from 5-25 Jan (KW), and in Carlsbad on 6 Jan (TG). Rare in winter west of the mountains, single Brewer's Sparrows were at Fairbanks Ranch 6 Dec-19 Jan (SB, EC), along the Silver Strand 15 Jan (NB), in the San Pasqual Valley 16 Jan (SL), and at Lake Murray 31 Jan (MSa). Yellow-headed Blackbirds included up to two in the Tijuana River Valley from Oct-31 Jan (PEL) and at least three on Otay Mesa from Nov-31 Jan (DJ, JD). Hooded Orioles were in Carlsbad through 2 Jan (BSs), La Mesa from Nov-19 Jan (BRi), and Balboa Park from 16 Dec -20 Jan (MSt, AN). Hermit Warblers were in Carlsbad on 5 Jan (SES) and Balboa Park on 8 Jan (PEL).

County-wide December-January totals for some of our scarce or rare-but-regular wintering species included *13* Western Flycatchers (previous record 10), 4 Cassin's Vireos, 6 Grasshopper Sparrows, *25* Green-tailed Towhees, 30 Bullock's Orioles, 13 Nashville Warblers, *37* Yellow Warblers (previous record 34), *48* Black-throated Gray Warblers (previous record 44), 12 Wilson's Warblers (low), and *84* Western Tanagers (previous record 73). The totals for a number of these species are especially high, but they probably do not reflect population increases or improved habitat, but simply better observer coverage of preferred wintering areas. The high Green-tailed Towhee total reflects almost half the birds being found by just one observer (SL) who was in part censusing inland and mountain brushy habitats for Fox Sparrows.

Miscellaneous high counts this month included 21 Common Goldeneyes at Miramar Lake 16 Jan (NC), 204 Snowy Plovers at the Salt Works on 28 Jan (MSa, LS), 16 Wilson's Snipe on Otay Mesa 16 Jan (DJ), and 230 Barn Swallows at Sweetwater Reservoir 15 Jan (PEL). It was a better-than-average winter for Short-billed Gulls south of Oceanside, with a single-site high of five birds in a flooded Tijuana River channel from 24-26 Jan (PEL).

Red Phalaropes were onshore at the Salt Works from 1 Dec-4 Jan (up to two; MSa) and at Lake Murray on 3 Jan (MSa) and 11 Jan (NC). A Red-breasted Merganser at Lake Murray on 20 Jan (MSa) was rare inland, as were single Short-billed Gulls there from 14 Dec-17 Jan (JP) and at Lower Otay Lake on 15 Jan (DH).

Away from the few areas of normal occurrence, a Common Ground Dove was in El Cajon on 31 Jan (MC). Rare in the lowlands, single Golden-crowned Kinglets were in San Marcos from 31 Dec-20 Jan (TG) and at Torrey Pines State Reserve on 31 Dec (PMu), and Brown Creepers were in the Normal Heights section of San Diego from 20 Dec-27 Jan (BSm) and near Pala on 31 Jan (JP). Rare near the coast, Bald Eagles were at Sweetwater Reservoir from Nov-6 Jan (PEL), Lake Murray from Dec-3 Jan (PEL), and Batiquitos Lagoon from Dec-24 Jan (ML, SL). The two very rare Cassin's Kingbirds in the desert continued at Borrego Springs from 17 Dec-2 Feb (PEL, RT), and casual there in winter was a Western Sandpiper on 26 Jan (RT).

Six Swainson's Hawks at the Safari Park on 31 Jan (PLa, SV) were early northbound migrants. A Violet-green Swallow at Lake Murray on 20-21 Jan

(MSa) and three at Fairbanks Ranch on 20 Jan (AL) were presumably somewhat early migrants.

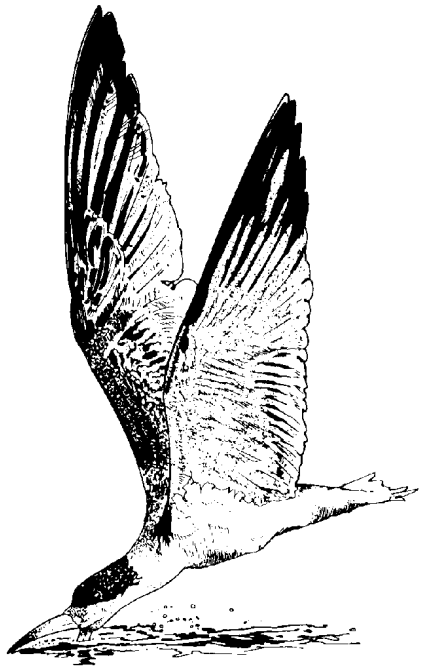
Acknowledgments: Many thanks to Sara B. Mayers and Guy McCaskie for their careful review.

Cited observers: Observers listed are limited to those finding and identifying each species. Some sightings reported to *eBird* are included without specific attribution. Tom Applegate, Ruslan Balagansky, Nick Barber, Bruce Barnhart, John Bruin, Sean Buchanan, Luca Cacciottolo, Kelly Carlin, Nancy Christensen, Madeleine Claire, Elizabeth Copper, Nicole Desnoyers, Jacob Dioli, Todd Easterla, Nathan French, Rowan Gibson, Lauren Glevanik, Tito Gonzalez, Michelle Haglund, Dan Hayes, Gjon Hazard (GHa), Grigory Heaton (GHe), Alison Hiers, Dan Jehl, Joshua Joun, Christina Kidd, Dan A. King, Alex Lamoreaux, Val Landwehr, Patti Langen (PLa), Paul E. Lehman, Max Leibowitz, Steven Lima, Eve Martin, John Martin (JMa), Paul Marvin (PMa), Mandy Matthews, Sara Mayers, Charlotte Morris (CMs), Caitlin Morrow (CMw) Paul Mulholland (PMu), Jane Mygatt (JMy), P. Gretchen Nell, Andrew Newmark, Gary Nunn, Kevin O'Connor, Robert T. Patton, Jim Pawlicki, Cindy Pencek, Dave Povey (DPo), Davis Provan (DPr), Blanche Ramswick (BRa), Beverly Reynolds (BRe), Bruce Rideout (BRi), Robin Rivet, Matt Sadowski (MSa), Susan E. Smith, Bridget Spencer (BSr), Lea Squires, Justyn T. Stahl, Trent Stanley, Betty Stevens (BSs), Brandon Stidum (BSm), Mark Stratton (MSt), Julie Szabo (JSz), Paula & David Theobald, Robert Theriault, Peter & Millie Thomas, David Trissel, Bill Tweet, Sally Veach, Adam Walleyn, Lindsay Willrick, Ron Wilson, Kirsten Winter, Barbara Wise, and Pema Zonglo.

m.obs = many observers

v.obs = various observers

Very rare in the lowlands, this Brown Creeper was enjoyed by many at Ward Canyon Neighborhood Park in the Normal Heights neighborhood of San Diego from 20 Dec-27 Jan. *Photo by Haim Weizman*



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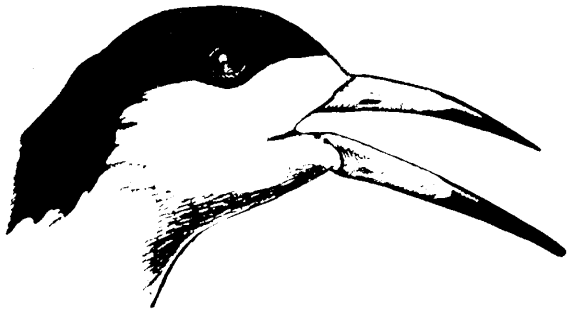
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