The SKIMMER

Volume 51, Number 12—December 2024

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Monday, December 9, at 6:00 p.m. Please join us IN PERSON for our annual Holiday gathering. Food, friends, and former SDFO President Nancy Christensen will review the past year of birds in San Diego: Who could ask for more? Food will be the traditional cold cuts, cheeses, fruits, etc., that we have had in past years. People who would like to help set up the tables and chairs meet at 5:00 p.m. The social gathering begins at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:00 p.m. Presentation at 6:30 p.m. Clean-up must be completed before 8:00 p.m. There will NOT be a live Zoom feed this month but the program will be recorded for distribution to our members after the meeting.

LOCATION: Nobel Recreation Center, 8810 Judicial Drive, San Diego. From Nobel Drive, turn north onto Judicial Drive (signal). Then a left turn onto Research Place (signal). In the parking area, go left all the way to the end of the parking area; the recreation center is the last building.

Next month's meeting will be Tuesday, January 21, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom as usual. Matthew A. Young (Finch Research Network and co-author of the new *Stokes Guide to Finches of the United States and Canada*) and Nathan Goldberg (Red Hill Birding and longtime friend of SDFO) will present updated information on Hawaiian Honeycreepers, specifically their plight, conservation actions, and present day solutions being enacted to help save them from extinction.

2025 Membership Renewals

Membership renewals for 2025 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/** If you prefer to pay by check, please make out your check to SDFO and mail to: Eve Martin, 1155 Camino Del Mar, Suite 102, Del Mar, CA 92014. Be sure and include your email address and names of any additional household members.

Area Christmas Bird Counts

Sat 14 Dec.	San Diego – Philip Unitt. (use link on San Diego Bird Alliance website to register)
Sun 15 Dec.	Anza-Borrego – Shannon McNeil (**Shannon.McNeil@parks.ca.gov**)
Mon 16 Dec.	Lake Henshaw – Chris Staurovsky (**1stlbirdman@gmail.com**)
Tue 17 Dec.	Salton Sea South -- Chris McCreedy (**cmccreedy@abcbirds.org**)
Sat 21 Dec.	Escondido – Jim Beckman, Ken Weaver (**jbeckman@dslextreme.com**) (**gnatcatcher@sbcglobal.net**)
Sun 29 Dec.	Oceanside – Patti Langen (**patti.langenzoo@gmail.com**)
Sat 4 Jan.	Rancho Santa Fe – Robert Patton (**rpatton@san.rr.com**)

SDFO NEWS *(cont.)*

SDFO New Year's Day Pelagic Trip

An annual New Year's Day tradition, please join SDFO for a short pelagic trip on January 1, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Participants should plan to arrive by 7:00 a.m. The reservations will be open to members and their guests at a cost of $65.00 each. On Dec. 21 the price goes up to $80 each and will be open to the general public to purchase tickets as well. We will limit participation to 60 people. Checks should be made out to SDFO and mailed to: Eve Martin, 1155 Camino Del Mar, Suite 102, Del Mar, CA 92014. Be sure and include your email address and the names of any guests. If also sending 2025 membership dues, please make out a separate check to SDFO or consider paying online via the Membership link above.

Because this is a private charter, we pay for the full price of the boat whether it is empty or full. For this reason, refunds will only be issued if the trip is canceled by the captain or the landing. Please contact Rick Grove (**president@sandiegofieldornithologists.org**) or Eve Martin (**membership@sandiegofieldornithologists.org**) if you have any questions. As all attendees are paying participants, we will need volunteers to help with chumming.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, NOVEMBER 2024

Compiled by Paul E. Lehman

An injured American Woodcock was discovered on the grounds of the Coronado High School on 16 Nov, then taken to rehabilitation where it subsequently died (fide MG, PU; *SDNHM). This establishes the first record for San Diego County and only the third for California. The previous state records were also in November from the desert in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties in 1998 and 2006, respectively.

A Yellow-green Vireo in residential Encinitas from 2-7 Nov (MT) establishes the latest San Diego County record and the second-latest record for the state. Another Yellow-green Vireo was found dead near Buena Vista Lagoon in Carlsbad on 30 Oct (fide PU; *SDNHM).

Other notable rarities included single Mountain Plovers at the sod farm in the Tijuana River Valley (hereafter TRV) from 30 Oct-3 Nov (PEL) and at Fiesta Island from 6-9 Nov (DTr). Single Eastern Phoebes were near Batiquitos Lagoon from 11-23 Nov (TG) and at the Tijuana River Estuary on 29 Nov

This American Woodcock in rehab was found injured in Coronado on 16 Nov. It establishes the first record for San Diego County and the third for California. *Photo by Maria Gonzalez*

This very rare Yellow-green Vireo in residential Encinitas from 2-7 Nov establishes the latest fall record for San Diego County and the second latest for the state. *Photo by Manolo Turner*

(eBird), and another was inland at the Ramona Grasslands Preserve from 17-23 Nov (PMu, BM). A Gray Catbird was enjoyed by many off Hollister Avenue in the TRV from 10-30 Nov (PMa). A Red-throated Pipit flew over the Tijuana River Estuary on 16 Nov (MSa), one of very few in California this year. Nelson's Sparrows were back at Crown Point on Mission Bay, with up to two birds there during the high tides from 14-18 Nov (PMu). A Bay-breasted Warbler was at Highwood Park in La Mesa on 24-25 Nov (BW). This very rare species has occurred as a migrant several times into late November or even early December but not remaining, whereas a few individuals have indeed overwintered locally. A Northern Parula was at Mission Bay on 4 Nov (PMu). An Ovenbird in Coronado from 11-30 Nov+ (PEL) is likely attempting to winter locally. A Chestnut-sided Warbler at Lake Murray 28 Nov (PC) is returning for its second winter, and returning Grace's Warblers were at both Crest Drive in Encinitas 4-27 Nov (seventh year; SES) and at Las Palmas Park in National City 9-30 Nov+ (second year; PEL).

A male and a female/immature Hepatic Tanager together in residential Fallbrook on 29-30 Nov+ (JHl) was a big surprise, and all three returning Hepatics continued into November: Tierrasanta from 18 Oct -18 Nov (PEL), San Dieguito County Park from 20 Oct-3 Nov (MSn, ML), and Wing Street Canyon from 21 Oct-27 Nov (MH).

A Long-tailed Duck was at the Tijuana River Estuary on 18 Nov (MSa). A migrant Short-eared Owl was at Fiesta Island on Mission Bay 7 Nov (JR), whereas singles along the Chula Vista bayshore 19 Nov (RTP) and at the Tijuana River Estuary 24 Nov (eBird) were at traditional wintering sites. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was at the Wilderness Gardens Preserve near Pala 17 Nov (SV), a "Yellow-shafted" Northern Flicker was at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery 11 Nov (TB), a "Prairie" Merlin (*F. c. richardsonii*) was in Carlsbad 16 Nov (JM), and single birds showing characters of "Black" Merlin (*F. c. suckleyi*)

Mountain Plovers are now very rare visitors in the county. These individuals were in the Tijuana River Valley from 30 Oct-3 Nov (left) and at Fiesta Island from 6-9 Nov (right). *Photos by Catherine Zinsky (left) and Butch Carter (right)*

One of three Eastern Phoebes found during November, this bird was inland at the Ramona Grasslands Preserve from 17-23 Nov. *Photo by Roee Astor*

This Gray Catbird along Hollister Avenue in the Tijuana River Valley from 10-30 Nov (here 21 Nov) was fairly shy, as are most catbirds in the West. *Photo by Charley Herzfeld*

A late-season Bay-breasted Warbler was discovered at Highwood Park in La Mesa on 24-25 Nov. *Photo by Barbara Wise*

This very rare Ovenbird in Coronado from 11-30 Nov+ (here 11 Nov) appeared to be attempting to winter locally. *Photo by Haim Weizman*

The sole Chestnut-collared Longspur found this season was at Robb Field on 8 Nov. *Photo by Haim Weizman*

One of two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks seen during November, this female was at the Tijuana River Valley Community Gardens from 14-24 Nov (here 20 Nov). *Photo by Paul Mulholland*

were at Jacumba 20 Nov (PEL) and in Carlsbad 22 Nov (TG). Both of these Merlin subspecies average one or two sightings per year. A Sage Thrasher was at the Tijuana River Estuary 1-4 Nov (MD). Single Lapland Longspurs were at several sites around Mission Bay from 5-9 Nov (RTP, DTr), at the TRV sod farm from 9-13 Nov (PEL), and farther west in the TRV on 17 Nov (MSa); and the lone Chestnut-collared Longspur was at Robb Field in Ocean Beach on 8 Nov (MSa). A migrant Grasshopper Sparrow was at San Elijo Lagoon 31 Oct-1 Nov (KH), another was at Silver Strand State Beach 10 Nov (JSk), and one along Rangeland Road near Ramona 22 Nov (SLa) may be attempting to winter locally. Single Swamp Sparrows were in the TRV 6 Nov (PEL), at San Onofre 21 Nov (MK), and at Sweetwater Reservoir 24 Nov (JHn). Single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were in the TRV from 14-24 Nov (JA), at UCSD on 17 Nov (BSp), and inland in residential Fallbrook on 29 Nov (JHl). An Indigo Bunting was in the TRV from 9-13 Nov (PEL), and a late bird was also in the TRV on 30 Nov (MSa).

Single Ancient Murrelets were seen passing La Jolla on 15 & 17 Nov (DJ, GN), and a total of 130 Common Murres were tallied on 15-16 Nov (v.obs). Other La Jolla Cove seawatching highlights included a southbound Franklin's Gull on 15 Nov (NT) and a Black Scoter on 17 Nov (GN). Another Ancient Murrelet was five miles off Mission Bay on 22 Nov (SLi), a Franklin's Gull was at the J Street mudflats from 21-27 Nov (MSa), and a Short-tailed Shearwater was eight miles off Mission Bay on 21 Nov (NC, MSe). Up to two Black Scoters were in the ocean at Imperial Beach from 22-26 Nov (TL) and three birds were in the species' usual haunts on South San Diego Bay between Coronado Cays and Chula Vista on 23 Nov (PEL). A White-winged Scoter was at J Street from 27-29 Nov+ (MSa).

Continuing from previous month(s) were the returning female Broad-billed Hummingbird in the Golden Hill neighborhood from 4 Oct-11 Nov (LW), the returning Little Stint at the South San Diego Bay Salt Works for its seventh year from 21 Oct-29 Nov (MSa), a returning Solitary Sandpiper at Whelan Lake from 24 Oct-30 Nov (P&DT), and up to five Harris's Hawks at Jacumba (PEL). Hybrid oystercatchers continued at both Cabrillo National Monument/Zuniga

This Franklin's Gull flew south past the La Jolla Cove seawatch on 15 Nov. *Photo by Matt Sadowski*

A small number of Black Scoters were seen during November, as has become the norm in recent years, including this male (with a female Surf Scoter) in Imperial Beach from 22-26 Nov (here 23 Nov). *Photo by Dan Jehl*

Up to two adult male Orchard Orioles at the San Diego Zoo through the month (here 12 Nov) were likely returning birds. *Photo by Nathan French*

Jetty (up to three; BSp) and La Jolla (v.obs), as did two Pacific Golden-Plovers at the Salt Works (m.obs). A new Pacific Golden-Plover was in Del Mar from 1-22 Nov (DAK). Up to two Tricolored Herons remained at San Elijo Lagoon through 16 Nov (m.obs), and one continuing bird at the San Diego River mouth

was joined by another from 10-30 Nov+ (m.obs); whereas a new bird seen flying northbound offshore past Imperial Beach on 5 Nov (LK) was possibly the same bird seen later along the Chula Vista bayfront from 6-29 Nov (JTS). An unknown mix of continuing and new adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls included at least several birds at the Salt Works, Chula Vista, Emory Cove, Tijuana River Mouth, and Lower Otay Lake (MSa, RTP, TL, JA); and an additional immature was at Fiesta Island 17 Nov (CV). Presumably continuing single Neotropic Cormorants were at the San Diego River mouth/Famosa Slough from 31 Oct-13 Nov (v.obs) and at Lake Henshaw on 9 Nov (JP). Up to three Zone-tailed Hawks continued in the Safari Park area (ML); additional individuals were seen at Camp Pendleton (ST), Ramona (MB), Fallbrook (DTr), and Warner Springs (HP); and slightly more unusual was one over eastern Santee on 22 Nov (MD).

One of four Clay-colored Sparrows found countywide this month, this individual was at Kearny Mesa on 2 Nov. *Photo by Bridget Spencer*

The coastal Black-throated Sparrow at Famosa Slough was last reported 3 Nov (TB). A male (since 1 Sep) and female (since 24 Oct) Orchard Oriole continued at a Carlsbad feeder through 30 Nov+ (PLa), two returning adult male Orchard Orioles continued at the San Diego Zoo from 29 Oct-30 Nov+ (TS, PEL), and a returning female was at NAS North Island/Coronado on 3 Nov (PEL). A returning adult male Baltimore Oriole continued at Harry Griffen Regional Park from 29 Oct-29 Nov (JD), a female was there on 6 Nov (TH), a returning adult male was at Rohr Park in Bonita from 14-23 Nov (PEL), and one was at the San Diego Zoo from 29 Oct-27 Nov+ (TS, JTS). A Scott's Oriole seen in Balboa Park during late October was seen again at the San Diego Zoo through 28 Nov+ (TS, CAM). The Painted Redstart in Tierrasanta for its sixth winter continued from 27 Oct-1 Dec (RTP), and a new bird was in residential eastern Point Loma on 13 Nov (PEL).

This immature dark-morph Swainson's Hawk in Carlsbad on 6 Nov was one of several coastal birds seen this month. *Photo by Jane Mygatt*

November totals for some of our scarce migrants and rare-but-regular rarities included 4 Tropical Kingbirds (all returning birds), 7 coastal-slope Gray Flycatchers, 9 Plumbe-

Late-lingering species included this MacGillivray's Warbler (left) at La Jolla Cove on 1 Nov and Blue Grosbeak (right) at Vacation Isle, Mission Bay, also on 1 Nov. *Photos by Ted Keyel (left) and Paul Lehman (right)*

ous Vireos, 5 Clay-colored Sparrows, 5 coastal-slope Brewer's Sparrows, 4 dark-lored White-crowned Sparrows, 4 White-throated Sparrows, 2 Northern Waterthrushes, 5 Black-and-white Warblers, 5 American Redstarts, and 20 Summer Tanagers. One of the White-throated Sparrows was in the mountains at Lake Morena, where more unusual, on 20 Nov (TH). The only Tennessee Warbler was in University City on 2 Nov (PMu), and the two Palm Warblers found were in Carlsbad from 31 Oct-6 Nov (DTr) and along the Chula Vista bayshore on 19 Nov (MSa).

Mountain Bluebirds turned up as singles and small flocks in the desert and at several sites near the coast (m.obs), with a high costal count of 13 birds at the Tijuana River Valley sod farm on 30 Nov (PEL). Almost no other irruptive species appeared to be on the move. A Red-breasted Nuthatch at Friendship Park in Chula Vista on 22 Nov (PEL) was thus almost certainly the same individual that lingered there from last winter through at least early July. This establishes one of the few records of a fully over-summering bird in the lowlands, where very rare, away from Point Loma and La Jolla.

Very rare in the mountains, a Herring Gull was at Lake Cuyamaca 20 Nov (JP). Very rare in the desert, a Purple Finch was at Vallecito 27 Nov (BLS) and an American Goldfinch was at Lower Willows in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park 5 Nov (PB). Very rare close to the coast, a Golden Eagle was at Brown Field (Otay Mesa) 22 Nov (DJ), a Bald Eagle flew over the Chula Vista bayshore 1 Nov (MSa), and single Swainson's Hawks were flying over Carlsbad 6 Nov (JM), Whelan Lake 10 Nov (JM), and the Tijuana River Estuary 22 Nov (late; MSs). Another late Swainson's was inland near Escondido on 21 Nov (SLi).

A Lesser Nighthawk at Lake Hodges on 25 Nov (JY) was late, especially so inland. A mini-incursion of late Vaux's Swifts brought single birds to the Tijuana River Estuary 16 Nov (MSa), Sweetwater Reservoir 17-18 Nov (MB), and Batiquitos Lagoon 18 Nov (JC). Late-lingering Western Kingbirds were in Clairemont Mesa 10 Nov (JSk), Carlsbad through 22 Nov (TG), and the TRV 16 Nov (NB). A lingering Hammond's Flycatcher was in the mountains at Agua Dulce 10 Nov (RA) and another along the Doane Valley Nature Trail on Palomar Mountain 17 Nov (L&K) was likely the same individual seen there on 28 Nov 2022. More expected was one in La Jolla on 18 Nov (PMu). A late Yellow-breasted Chat was along the north side of Mission Bay 4 Nov (PMu). Single MacGillivray's Warblers were at La Jolla Cove 1 Nov (MD) and at Lake Murray 3 Nov (JP). A late Blue Grosbeak was at Vacation Isle on Mission Bay 1 Nov (PEL). Somewhat more routine lingerers included Western Kingbird, Western Flycatcher, Cassin's Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Northern Rough-winged Swal-

low, Yellow-breasted Chat, Hooded Oriole, and Hermit Warbler.

Miscellaneous high counts included 22 Cackling Geese over the Tijuana River Estuary 2 Nov (MB), 17 Cacklings at Mission Bay 4-13 Nov (JD), and 19 Wilson's Snipe at Sweetwater Reservoir 10 Nov (PEL).

This Common Black Hawk was photographed at Camp Pendleton on 8 Jan 2020. It establishes the second San Diego County record and is especially unusual in winter in the United States. Note the thick legs with long tarsi, extensive yellow in the face/bill base region, and bulky body shape. *Photo by Angela Johnson*

Addendum: Photos have just now come to light of an adult Common Black Hawk along the Santa Margarita River on Camp Pendleton on 8 Jan 2020 (AJ). This establishes the second record for San Diego County and is especially unusual in winter in the United States. The county's first record was also on Camp Pendleton and involved an immature on 2 Mar 2016, a date more typical of an early spring migrant.

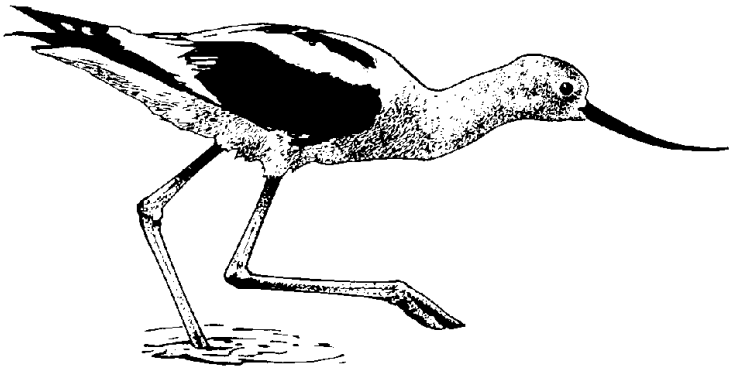
Acknowledgments: Many thanks to Sara B. Mayers and Guy McCaskie for their careful review.

Cited observers: Observers listed are limited to those finding and identifying each species. Some sightings reported to *eBird* are included without specific attribution. Joe Alsadi, Roee Astor, Nick Barber, Tom Baxter, Peter Beck, Margaret Brown, Paul Chad, Nancy Christensen, Jim Colby, Mark Dayton, John Dumlao, Mary Gonzalez, Tito Gonzalez, Michelle Haglund, Joe Hannigan (JHn), Ken Hartman, Justin Hartsell (JHl), Terry Hurst, Dan Jehl, Angela Johnson, Logan Kahle, Dan A. King, Mathias Kuhlmann, Patti Langen (PLa), Samuel Lau (SLa), Paul E. Lehman, Max Leibowitz, Steven Lima (SLi), Liz & Kev, Trysten Loefke, Curtis A. Marantz, Paul Marvin (PMa), Paul Mulholland (PMu), Brennan Mulrooney, Jane Mygatt, Gary Nunn, Robert T. Patton, Jim Pawlicki, Hans Petermann, Jim Roberts, Matt Sadowski (MSa), Mel Senac (MSe), Britta Lee Shain, Susan E. Smith, Bridget Spencer (BSp), Justyn T. Stahl, Trent Stanley, Marcus Stephens (MSs), Jeremiah Stock (JSk), Mark Stratton (MSn), Paula & David Theobald, Scott Thomas, Nick Thorpe, David Trissel (DTr), Manolo Turner, Phil Unitt, Sally Veach, Caleb Villar, Lindsey Willrick, Barbara Wise, and Jeffrey Yang.

m.obs = many observers

v.obs = various observers

*SDNHM = specimen to San Diego Natural History Museum



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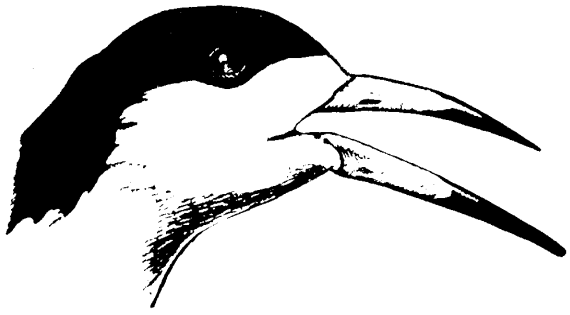
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