The SKIMMER

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SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, May 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: "Wildlife tracking using MOTUS and how MOTUS tags are being used to track Cuckoos across the continent and in the Kern River Valley," by Patrick D. Lorch, Senior Research Biologist, Southern Sierra Research Station.

Pat has an undergraduate degree in Biology from Notre Dame University, a Master's in Zoology from the University of Maryland, and a Ph.D. in Behavioral Ecology from the University of Toronto, focusing on the evolution of insect mating behavior, sexual selection, and life history evolution. After a decade doing academic research and teaching, which included radio tracking of insects with the USDA, Pat moved to working at a large county-level park system managing permits, research, and monitoring. This is where he came into contact with the MOTUS wildlife tracking system (https://motus.org), setting up four stations to track migratory birds as they cross Lake Erie. Pat has tons of experience with field work, research and monitoring, data management, and analysis. At SSRS, he is leading the MOTUS station projects and will be assisting with data analysis as well as grant applications aimed at strengthening the role the station plays in regional conservation. Pat's hobbies include hiking, camping, and river boating.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, June 17, same time, same place. Our annual Business Meeting and Election of Club Officers for 2025-26. Program to be announced; see next month's *Skimmer* for details.

SDFO News (*cont.)*

Who Wants to be Program Chair?

We will be electing Club Officers at the June Business Meeting. If you would like to serve the Club, step forward now! In particular, we have been without a Program Chair for an entire year. Current President Rick Grove is not running for re-election, and the President has plenty to do without also finding us a speaker every month. So now is your chance! If interested this or any other club office, contact Secretary Charlene Glacy at *secretary @sandiegofieldornithologists.org*

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, APRIL 2025

Compiled by Paul E. Lehman

A sub-adult Yellow-footed Gull at Children's Pool in La Jolla on 1 Apr (CH) established the eighth record for San Diego County but the first since 2006. The female Pine Warbler seen at Hilltop Park in Chula Vista on 8 Dec (RB) went MIA for the entire winter until being rediscovered on the rather late date of 12 Apr (AH). Four casual spring migrants were found in the desert: a Zone-tailed Hawk overnighted in Borrego Springs on 8-9 Apr (v.obs, eBird) and another was at Tamarisk Grove Campground on 13 Apr (CE), an Eastern Phoebe was in Vallecito on 13 Apr (BLS), and for the second April in a row a Gray Vireo was at Agua Caliente County Park on 15 Apr (RG). A singing Nelson's Sparrow at the Tijuana River Estuary on 29-30 Apr+ (PMa) had almost certainly wintered there. There have been a few previous records of Nelson's singing when they remain into April or May, which they probably do fairly routinely, given that this species is a notoriously late migrant in spring.

This second-cycle Yellow-footed Gull at Children's Pool in La Jolla on 1 Apr was the first to be found in the county since 2006. *Photo by Charley Herzfeld*

Additional newly discovered species included a Laughing Gull at Batiquitos Lagoon on 21 Apr (JMc) and single Franklin's Gulls in Imperial Beach on 17-18 Apr (MSa) and at Mission Bay on 21 Apr (MM). An American Bittern at Kumeyaay Lake from 8-23 Apr (CJe) was perhaps the same individual present at that site during late 2022. A Black Swift over

This Zone-tailed Hawk was a casual spring migrant at Borrego Springs where it overnighted on 8-9 Apr. *Photo by Tracee Geernaert*

Strictly casual as a migrant, this Gray Vireo was at Agua Caliente County Park on 15 Apr. *Photo by Sally Veach*

This Eastern Phoebe at Vallecito on 13 Apr was a casual spring migrant and the second such individual found this year in the county. *Photo by Britta Lee Shain*

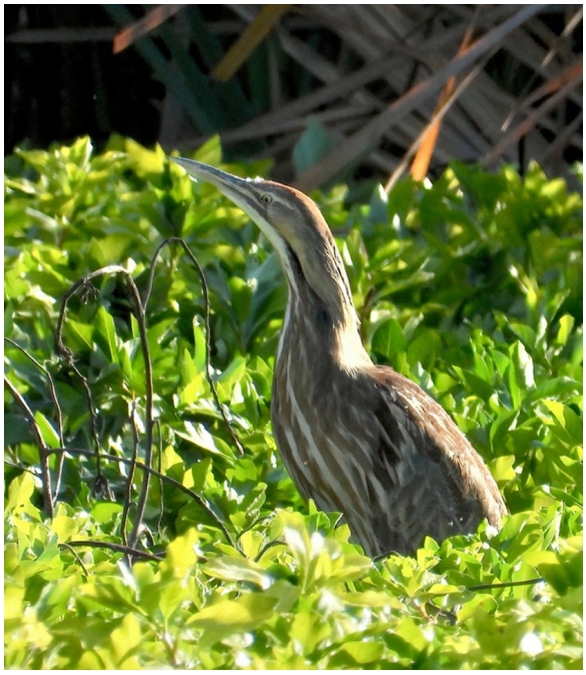
Mission Trails Regional Park on 28 Apr (NG, DJ) ties the early arrival date over the past 20 years. A "Prairie" Merlin at Greenwood Cemetery in San Diego on 28 Apr (BW, JCa) was both rare and getting late. A Palm Warbler at Santee Lakes on 27-28 Apr (JSk) was likely a spring migrant rather than a locally wintering bird.

Migrant Solitary Sandpipers in spring were formerly very rare, but they have increased in numbers statewide during the past couple of decades. Now rare but annual at this season, two were in Del Mar 4 Apr (SB), two there 20 Apr (GH, SB) were presumably different birds, singles were in Borrego Springs 9-10 Apr (PA) and 22 Apr (RT), and up to two were there 25 Apr-1 May (PA). Also, one migrant joined the two wintering birds at Whelan Lake on 11 Apr (JMy), establishing a new spring-season single-site record, with one bird still there 19 Apr.

The first Franklin's Gull of the year was this adult, with Elegant Terns, at the Tijuana River mouth on 17 Apr. *Photo by Matt Sadowski*

Solitary Sandpipers are very rare spring migrants. These birds on 4 Apr were two of five individuals found during March-April bordering the Del Mar polo fields. *Photo by Sean Buchanan*

An impressive 56+ Lazuli Buntings were photographed (with a cellphone) at a single feeder near Ramona on 28 Apr. *Photo by Linda Kelly*



This American Bittern at Kumeyaay Lake from 8-23 Apr (here 10 Apr) was perhaps the same individual seen at the exact location during late 2022. *Photo by Roee Astor*

This rare Black Swift over Mission Trails Regional Park on 28 Apr tied the early arrival date for the county over the past 25+ years. *Photo by Nathan Goldberg*

For the first two-thirds of April, overall landbird migration numbers seemed low and for some species appeared delayed up to several weeks. For example, several species that normally appear during March in good numbers were still surprisingly scarce into early April (e.g., Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Hooded Oriole). In contrast, Western Kingbirds and Chipping Sparrows were in reasonable numbers. By the last week of the month, however, numbers improved, and there were reasonable numbers of Nashville Warblers, Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and especially Lazuli Buntings (including 56+ birds at a single feeder in Ramona on 28 Apr (LK)).

This male Calliope Hummingbird near Ramona on 23 Apr was one of seven individuals seen countywide during the month. *Photo by Nancy Christensen*

April totals for some of our scarce migrants included seven Calliope Hummingbirds, one Gray Flycatcher, seven Bank Swallows, *eighteen* migrant Purple Martins (high count), and five dark-lored White-crowned Sparrows. A migrant Red-breasted Nuthatch at Jacumba on 20 Apr (PEL) was a surprise, given that this species was virtually non-existent this past winter.

Morning-flight monitoring at Mount Soledad in La Jolla (on the small number of days with appropriate weather) produced a coastal Acorn Woodpecker on 8 Apr (PMu), a high-flying and slightly late *migrant* Say's Phoebe on 6 Apr (PEL), and a good season-total of 80 Lawrence's Goldfinches (PMu).

Single Olive-sided Flycatchers along Kitchen Creek Road (CH) and on Mount Laguna (ZB) on 11 Apr were slightly early, as was a migrant Summer Tanager in Shelter Valley from 26-30 Apr (TPi). A Cackling Goose at the San Diego River mouth on 21 Apr (MSa) and a Greater White-fronted Goose at Batiquitos Lagoon on 23 Apr (JCo) were slightly late. A Ferruginous Hawk along Rangeland Road lingered to 18 Apr (CE). A wintering Vesper Sparrow at Mission Trails Regional Park remained through 24 Apr (TH, MSt). A lingering "Gray-headed" Dark-eyed Junco at Stonewall Mine through 21 Apr (JH, EM) set a new late-date in spring.

This lowland Brown Creeper was a popular quest at Lindo Lake between 16 Mar-3 Apr (here 2 Apr). *Photo by Haim Weizman*

Lingering from the winter season were the Long-tailed Duck in Imperial Beach from 17 Feb-18 Apr (CJa, SA), when found beached on the 18th; the "borderline" American Oystercatcher in La Jolla through 14 Apr (eBird, PEL); and the returning Little Stint at the South San Diego Bay Salt Works through 29 Apr (MSa). Two Tricolored Herons in the San Diego River mouth area were still present 30 Apr+ (m.obs). Also remaining were the Greater Pewee at

Up to two wintering Clay-colored Sparrows remained in Balboa Park to the end of April (here 6 Apr). One individual was still present in early May, the latest a wintering bird has ever lingered. *Photo by Haim Weizman*

Hilltop Park through 18 Apr (BH), Dusky Flycatcher at Kimball Park in National City through 21 Apr (PEL), and Brown Creeper at Lindo Lake through 3 Apr (m.obs). Up to two Clay-colored Sparrows lingered in Balboa Park through 30 Apr+ (JTS, ND), as did single coastal Brewer's Sparrows at Harry Griffen Regional Park through 9 Apr (PEL) and at Lindo Lake from 1-4 Apr (ZB), and the Swamp Sparrow at Kimball Park through 6 Apr (JP). A returning Baltimore Oriole lingered at Harry Griffen Regional Park through 12 Apr (JD), and a Palm Warbler in residential Oceanside was still present 30 Apr (BF). The pair of Hepatic Tanagers remained in Tierrasanta through 12 Apr (PEL), and the single male in Wing Street Canyon stayed through 14 Apr (MH); a Rose-breasted Grosbeak was last seen in the Tijuana River Valley on 8 Apr (m.obs). Another Rose-breasted Grosbeak inland at a feeder in the San Pasqual Valley from early Feb-10 Apr (DKd) was back for its third winter. Harris's Hawks at both Jacumba (up to six) and Shelter Valley (up to three) were showing signs of nest building (v.obs).

Also continuing from previous months (all credited to v.obs or m.obs) were up to two Black Scoters at Imperial Beach through 5 Apr, up to two Pacific Golden-Plovers at the Salt Works through 14 Apr and one at Delta Beach from 21-23 Apr, a Zone-tailed Hawk at Safari Park through 18 Apr, and a total of *fourteen* Neotropic Cormorants countywide. Also, a total of three Tropical Kingbirds through 8 Apr, two Gray Flycatchers through 9 Apr, eight Plumbeous Vireos through 24 Apr, four White-throated Sparrows through 23 Apr, four Orchard Orioles through 21 Apr, one Northern Waterthrush through 14 Apr, six Black-and-white Warblers through 20 Apr, three American Redstarts through 26 Apr, and seven Summer Tanagers through 30 Apr.

Rare near the immediate coast, Bald Eagles were sighted at Coronado 4 Apr (NW), San Dieguito Lagoon 4-26 Apr (DAK), Batiquitos Lagoon 12-13 Apr (eBird), and Oceanside 21 Apr (TM). Single Swainson's Hawks were over Santee 5 Apr (JSk, TPr),

Multiple Harris's Hawks continued at both Jacumba and Shelter Valley. This individual at Jacumba on 4 Apr was observed breaking off sticks for a nest. *Photo by Barbara Wise*

National City 6 Apr (LW), Bay Park 14 Apr (TFH), University City 15 Apr (PMu), and San Dieguito Lagoon 22 Apr (ML).

Rare inland, three Red-breasted Mergansers were at Lake Morena 8 Apr (PEL) and a Horned Grebe was at Sweetwater Reservoir 18 Apr (PEL). Two Elegant Terns were at Santee Lakes 15 Apr (BM), another two were at Lake Henshaw 25 Apr (JP), and a third duo were at Lower Otay Lake 27 Apr (MSa). Single Red-throated Loons were at Sweetwater Reservoir 14 Apr (PEL) and 26-27 Apr (RB), and single Brown Pelicans were at Bonsall/Guajome 1 Apr (P&DT), Lake Sutherland 19 Apr (eBird), and north of Escondido 22 Apr (DL). Rarely seen as a migrant, at least one Black-chinned Sparrow was at Vallecito between 13-29 Apr (BLS) and singles were at Agua Caliente County Park on 15 Apr (LR) and 29 Apr (NC).

Miscellaneous high counts included 80 Cinnamon Teal at Lake Henshaw 7 Apr (SL), 60-70 Lesser Nighthawks at the Borrego Springs settling ponds 20-24 Apr (RT), 12 continuing Lesser Yellowlegs at the Salt Works 9-14 Apr (MSa), 62 northbound Red-throated Loons at La Jolla 23 Apr (PEL), and 1200 Cliff Swallows at Sweetwater Reservoir 27 Apr (PEL). A project monitoring roosting Vaux's Swifts in downtown San Diego counted 2000+ birds nightly from 16-20 Apr, with a new record count of 4060 birds on 19 Apr (LH, NT).

Vermilion Flycatchers continue their increase in breeding numbers near the coast, with five pairs with nests at Greenwood/Mount Hope Cemeteries in San Diego (MSa) and one pair with nest at nearby Holy Cross Cemetery (PEL). Nesting was also possible in northeast Balboa Park and several sites in the Carlsbad area (eBird). Recently "colonized" sites such as Rohr Park, Mission Valley, northeast Mission Bay, and Fairbanks Ranch all continue to support breeding birds.

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

This adult Neotropic Cormorant at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park during April was one of an impressive 14 individuals present in the county this month. *Photo by Jane Mygatt*

Cited observers: Observers listed are limited to those finding and identifying each species. Some sightings reported to *eBird* are included without specific attribution. Paulette Ache, Seth Ausubel, Ruslan Balagansky, Zachary Billot, Sean Buchanan, Jonathan Casanova (JCa), Nancy Christensen, Jim Colby (JCo), Nicole Desnoyers, John Dumlao, Carl Ebeling, Beth Fife, Thomas Ford-Hutchnson, Nathan Goldberg, Rick Grove, Michelle Haglund, Lesley Handa, Joe Hannigan, Gjon Hazard, Bonnie Henson, Charley Herzfeld, Adrian Hinkle, Terry Hurst, Charlie Jackson (CJa), Dan Jehl, Colin Jensen (CJe), Linda Kelly, Dan A. King, Don Kirtland (DKd), Paul E. Lehman, Max Leibowitz, Donna Leon, Steven Lima, Eve Martin, Paul Marvin (PMa), Tobin Master, Micheal McMaster, Jimmy McMorran (JMc), Paul Mulholland (PMu), Brennan Mulrooney, Jane Mygatt (JMy), Jim Pawlicki, Torrey Pillsbury (TPi), Tony Provenzano (TPr), Lisa Ruby, Matt Sadowski (MSa), Britta Lee Shain, Justyn T. Stahl, Marcus Stephens (MSt), Jeremiah Stock (JSk), Paula & David Theobald, Robert Thériault, Nick Thorpe, Nat Weber, Lindsay Willrick, and Barbara Wise.

m.obs = many observers

v.obs = various observers

SAN DIEGO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

President Rick Grove (661) 609-7910
president@sandiegofieldornithologists.org
Vice-President (Currently vacant)

Secretary Charlene Glacy (619) 851-1917
secretary@sandiegofieldornithologists.org
Treasurer Conny Jamison (619) 269-3264
connyjamison@cloud.com
Program Chair Rick Grove (661) 609-7910
president@sandiegofieldornithologists.org
Membership Chair Eve Martin
membership@sandiegofieldornithologists.org

Publishing
Skimmer Editor John Walters (619) 267-1821
johnfwalters5552@gmail.com
Webmaster Russ Christensen (858) 344-2290
webmaster@sandiegofieldornithologists.org

Your contributions to *The Skimmer* are appreciated. Submit articles and notices by the first of the month of publication by mail to John Walters, 5552 Horse Ridge Way, Bonita, CA 91902, or by e-mail to **johnfwalters5552@gmail.com**

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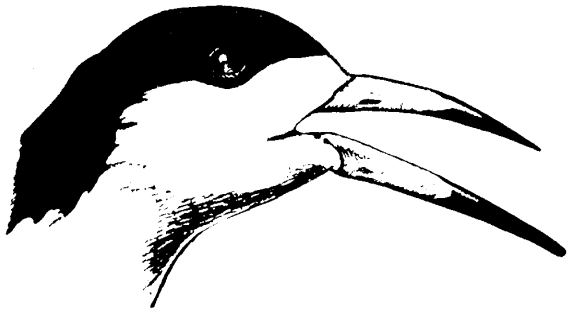
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