

southern pacific coast region



GUY MCCASKIE

It was generally a colder and windier spring than normal, especially so along the coast, thanks to the strong La Niña event. The movement of waterbirds through southern California was somewhat uneventful, with no major rarities found. Arrival dates for some summer visitors were early, but these were exceptions. Most observers commented on the late arrival of most summer visitors, but were overwhelmed by the numbers of migrants throughout the Region. Along the coast the largest push of migrants came through a bit later than average (1–10 May rather than 25 Apr–5 May), with substantial numbers still coming through at the end of May. The same was true in the eastern portion of the Region, with some of the largest numbers of migrant landbirds ever seen around the Salton Sea in May (MAP) and 6000 migrants passing through Butterbreed Springs in Kern on the late date of 19 May (MTH). Vagrants were scarcer than expected along the coast, but almost all of the “low-end” vagrants (species seen multiple times annually) were found in above-average numbers in eastern Kern along with an extensive number of “high-end” rarities, many occurring in June (see the Summer report).

Abbreviations: C.L. (*China L. Naval Air Weapons Station, extreme ne. Kern Co.*); F.C.R. (*Furnace Cr. Ranch, Death Valley Nat'l Park, Inyo Co.*); G.H.P. (*Galileo Hill Park in extreme e. Kern Co.*); I.M.P.P. (*Iron Mt. Pumping Plant in*

s.e. San Bernardino Co.); N.E.S.S. (*n. end of the Salton Sea, Riverside Co.*); S.B.C.M. (*San Bernardino County Museum*); S.D.N.H.M. (*San Diego Natural History Museum*); S.E.S.S. (*s. end of the Salton Sea, Imperial Co.*); S.F.K.R.P. (*S. Fork Kern River Preserve near Weldon, Kern Co.*); + (through 31 May). Because virtually all rarities in s. California are seen by many observers, only the observer(s) initially finding and identifying the bird are included. Documentation for species on the California Bird Records Committee (C.B.R.C.) review list is forwarded to the C.B.R.C. Secretary (Michael M. Rogers, P.O. Box 340, Moffett Field, CA 94035-0340) and archived at the W. Foundation for Vertebrate Zoology, Camarillo.

LOONS THROUGH HERONS

A Pacific Loon near Seeley, *Imperial*, 14 May (GMcC) was a migrant moving n. through the interior. The peak movement of Com. Loons through the interior appeared to be during the 3rd week of April, as suggested by 17 at C.L. 22 Apr (MTH) and four near Big Pine, *Inyo*, 24 Apr (T&JH).

Northern Fulmars were exceptionally scarce in s. California waters, with two 28 Apr being the only ones seen from Pt. Piedras Blancas, *San Luis Obispo*, during full-time observations from that location throughout the period (RR). A Flesh-footed Shearwater, rare in s. California waters, was off Morro Bay, *San Luis Obispo*, 23 May (GPS). A Manx Shearwater, a species proving to be regular in small numbers off the c. coast of California, was seen from Pt. Piedras Blancas 28 Apr (RR). Since Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels are infrequently encountered in s. California waters, one seen from Goleta Pt., *Santa Barbara*, 3 Mar (PK), and single birds found dead on the beach near Oceanside, *San Diego*, and in Coronado, *San Diego*, both 1 May (BFo, * S.D.N.H.M.) were of note. Brown Booby numbers on the Los Coronados Is. off extreme n. Baja California increased from two in January to six in April (BMo); in addition one frequented an abandoned platform off Goleta, *Santa Barbara*, 13 Mar–5 Apr (RPH), one was 2 mi off Ventura 16 Apr (GE) and a 3rd was near Santa Cruz I. 8 May (DC, PK).

A migrant Am. Bittern at F.C.R. 29 May (MJSanM) was at an unexpected location. An ad. Little Blue Heron at Saticoy, *Ventura*, 14 May (ST) was the only one reported away from *San Diego*. The Tricolored Heron present on s. San Diego Bay since 25 Jul remained through 20 Apr (RP) and the other at Bolsa Chica, *Orange*, since 13 Oct remained through 7 May (DRW). The Reddish Egret around s. San Diego Bay since 2 Aug was last seen 20 Apr (RP). The Yellow-crowned Night-Heron associating with nesting Black-crowned Night-Herons in La Jolla, *San Diego*, since 1981 was again present 17–28 Mar (DN).

GEESE THROUGH SANDPIPERS

Single Brant at Domenigoni Valley, *Riverside*, 16 Apr (MDM, *S.B.C.M), Mystic L. near Lakeview, *Riverside*, 24 Apr (MAP), and Yucca Valley, *San Bernardino*, 24 Apr (TEW), and five near Lancaster, *Los Angeles*, 7 Apr (MSanM) with one still there 16 May (MSanM), were the only ones reported from the interior away from the Salton Sea and e. *San Diego*. A Eur. Wigeon in Goleta through 5 Apr (JEL) was the latest staying of the wintering birds. A female Harlequin Duck was at Pt. Piedras Blancas 24 Mar–1 May (RR) and a male was at Playa del Rey, *Los Angeles*, 16 May (KL); this species is rare anywhere along the coast of s. California. The only scoters found inland were at the N.E.S.S., with up to four Surfs 18 Apr+ (MAP, BMu), at least four White-wingeds 25 Apr+ (WJM, MAP), and a Black 28 Apr+ (BMu). Six Long-tailed Ducks present on San Diego Bay 17 Apr (PAG) was a large number, especially so this late in the winter; one inland at Laguna Niguel, *Orange*, since 19 Dec was last seen 24 Apr (KLP), and another was inland on the e. shore of the Salton Sea 27 May (KCM).

Two White-tailed Kites near Blythe, *Riverside*, 5–6 May (RMcK) were along the Colorado R. where few have been reported. The largest migrant flock of Swainson's Hawks reported this spring was that of 74 in Earthquake Valley, e. *San Diego*, 18 Mar (PD); groups of one–three were moving n. along the coastal planes in March and April, and an exceptionally late migrant was near

Westmorland, *Imperial*, 19 May (MAP). A Zone-tailed Hawk at Parker Dam, *San Bernardino*, 17–21 May (RMcK) was close to a known nest site along the Bill Williams R. in Arizona, and another on Palomar Mt., *San Diego*, 17 Apr (CS) was in an area where nesting should be considered.

Two wintering Pacific Golden-Plovers were still present at Seal Beach, *Orange*, 24 Apr (JG) and a migrant was inland at N.E.S.S. 19 May (MAP). More than the expected two–three Solitary Sandpipers were present this spring, with 15 reported from as many locations scattered throughout the Region 21 Apr–9 May. Thirty-two Ruddy Turnstones at N.E.S.S. 4 May (MAP) was the largest flock reported on the Salton Sea this spring, and one at Silver L., *San Bernardino*, 18 May (RH) was the only one reported inland away from the Salton Sea. The wintering Black Turnstone found at S.E.S.S. 2 Feb was still present 8 Apr (BMu). Nine more inland was far more than expected, with one at Twentynine Palms, *San Bernardino*, 23 Apr (EAC) and eight on the Salton Sea in May, with one at N.E.S.S. 4 May (MAP), two near Salton City 25 May (BMu), three together at S.E.S.S. 28 May (DN), and two more at N.E.S.S. 31 May–4 Jun (MAP, GMcC). A Surfbird, also rare inland, was at N.E.S.S. 4 May (MAP). Single Red Knots near Lancaster 25 Apr (KLG) and 16 May (MSanM), a Sanderling on Tinemaha Res. near Big Pine 6 May (T&JH) and two together near Lancaster 16 May (MSanM) were the only ones inland away from the Salton Sea. The only Semipalmated Sandpipers reported were one at S.E.S.S. 1 May (REW) and another near Lancaster the same day (MSanM), suggest-

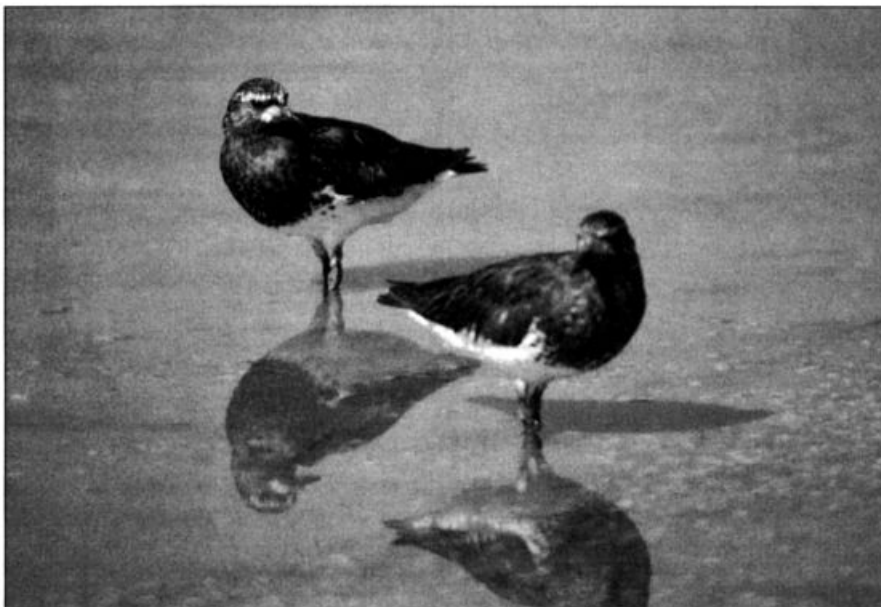
ing less than the expected numbers passed through s. California this spring. A Pectoral Sandpiper, rarely found in spring, was in Irvine, *Orange*, 27 Apr–1 May (DN) and another at C.L. 28 May (MTH) was the first to be found in *Kern* at this time of the year. A Stilt Sandpiper, rare away from S.E.S.S., especially so in spring, was near Port Hueneme, *Ventura*, 17 Apr–1 May (LS).

GULLS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

A Laughing Gull at Pt. Piedras Blancas 17 May (RR) was on the coast where most unusual; one at S.E.S.S. 13 Mar (KCM) was unseasonably early since this species does not normally arrive on the Salton Sea until mid-June. There was a relatively good movement of Franklin's Gulls through the Region as indicated by 65 reported between 12 Apr and the end of the period, with 14 around the Salton Sea, 34 scattered over the high deserts of the e. portion of the Region, and the remaining 17 along the coast. An ad. Little Gull at Mystic L. 17–27 Mar (DSC) was believed to have been present all winter, having been found 15 Nov; a first-year bird at C.L. 19 Apr (SS) was the 2nd to be found in this area at this time of the year, and another at S.E.S.S. 23–30 May (MAP) was believed to be attempting to summer. An ad. Heermann's Gull was associating with nesting California Gulls inland at S.E.S.S. 2 Mar+ (P. March, MAP). Glaucous Gulls remained more numerous than usual with eight reported along the coast during March and April, and a late individual at the Santa Ynez R. mouth near Lompoc, *Santa Barbara*, 2–8 May (BH). Black-legged Kittiwakes were far more numerous than



A first-summer Little Gull at the south end of the Salton Sea, 23 May 1999, with extremely worn wing and tail feathers (which are retained from juvenal plumage and thus nearly a year old). Photograph/Michael A. Patten



Two Black Turnstones at the mouth Whitewater River, north end at Salton Sea, California, 31 May 1999, were rare inland migrants. The left-hand bird is in full alternate plumage, but the right-hand one is in first-alternate (note especially the smaller white facial spot and narrower supercilium). Photograph/Michael A. Patten

usual along the coast of *San Luis Obispo* throughout the period, with more than 5000 off Pt. Piedras Blancas 12–14 Apr (RR) and smaller numbers reported along the coast of *Santa Barbara* (JEL). Two Sabine's Gulls off Pt. Piedras Blancas 9 May (RR) were the earliest reported.

An Elegant Tern, a casual straggler to the interior, was at N.E.S.S. 8 May (GMcC). An Arctic Tern at C.L. 7 May (DVB) was not only inland, but on a date that would be early for the coast, and thus much earlier than previous inland records. Four Least Terns were found inland on the Salton Sea, with one at N.E.S.S. 15 May (CMcG), another near S.E.S.S. 22 May (KCM), and two at N.E.S.S. 27 May (KCM); another was near Lancaster 16 May (MSanM). An Ancient Murrelet, scarce in s. California waters, was 5 mi off San Pedro, *Los Angeles*, 8 May (KLG) and two more were in the channel between Ventura and Santa Cruz I. 15 May (RAH). Two Marbled Murrelets at Pt. Piedras Blancas 8 May (RR) were at the s. limit of their normal range.

Single White-winged Doves at Stovepipe Wells in Death Valley N.P. 25 May (T&JH) and at the w. end of the Antelope Valley, *Los Angeles*, 2 May (LA) were a little to the north and west of their normal range; individuals in Capistrano Beach, *Orange*, 13–14 May (TR) and on Pt. Loma, *San Diego*, 25 & 31 May (REW) were on the coast where considered casual in spring. Eurasian Collared-Doves were near Goleta 29 Mar (DAK) and in Santa Maria, *Santa Barbara*, 8 May (JMC), and four more were in Goleta 8 May (DAK). A **Ruddy Ground-Dove** photographed at Santee, *San Diego*, 16 May (BMu) was the first to be found in spring, although wintering birds have stayed into early June.

A Yellow-billed Cuckoo at S.F.K.R.P. 22 May (BB) was a little early given that frequently they do not arrive before 1 Jun. Four Com. Nighthawks over Bishop, *Inyo*, 27 May (T&JH) were the earliest reported. A Black Swift over Santa Clarita, *Los Angeles*, 2 May (KLG) and two over Pt. Loma 5 May (JRI)

Although a regular spring and fall vagrant to California, Ovenbirds are seldom as obliging as this one at Galileo Hill Park, California, 22 May 1999.
Photograph/Matthew T. Heindel

were at the time of year the first spring migrants are normally encountered. A significant movement was noted 21 May+, as indicated by 20–30 over Irvine 21 May (JSB), 30 near Santa Maria 21 May (WW), 100–200 near Wilmington, *Los Angeles*, 22 May (KL), 500 over Goleta 22 May (JH), and flocks of up to 30 almost daily along the coast of *Santa Barbara* and *San Luis Obispo* through 4 Jun. Five Chimney Swifts near Wilmington 22 May (JAJ) were the only reported. A flock of 75 Vaux's Swifts over downtown Los Angeles 12 Mar (KLG) had undoubtedly wintered locally. More than the expected number of migrant Calliope Hummingbirds were in coastal *San Diego* and *Orange*, and in the e. deserts of *Kern* in April and early May, but went virtually unrecorded elsewhere along the coast.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WARBLERS

An E. Phoebe in Chino, *San Bernardino*, 23–29 Mar (JEP) and another in Yucca Valley 11 Apr (TEW) were believed to have wintered locally. A Vermilion Flycatcher in Independence, *Inyo*, 11–12 Apr (A&LK) was a little n. of this species' normal range. A Dusky-capped Flycatcher in Carpinteria, *Santa Barbara*, 11 Mar–22 May (RWH) had undoubtedly spent the winter in that area. An E. Kingbird near Blythe 5 May (RMcK) was the only one reported. The wintering Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in the Irvine/Newport Beach area since 1 Jan was last seen in Newport Beach 4 Apr (KSG), and one around Escondido, *San Diego*, since 23 Dec was still present 28 Mar (EH); one near El Monte, *Los Angeles*, 25 Apr (RJ, MCL) may have been an early spring vagrant.

A singing White-eyed Vireo, an acciden-

tal straggler to California, was in California City, *Kern*, 29 May (MTH). A Bell's Vireo at I.M.P.P. 29 May (MAP) was one of a few found away from known breeding localities in California. Three Yellow-throated Vireos, a casual straggler to California, were found, with a singing male at ± 1400 m elevation above Pioneertown in the San Bernardino Mts. 2 May (REW), another near Cantil, *Kern*, 26 May (MTH), and the 3rd in Lone Pine, *Inyo*, 27 May (DS). Three Red-eyed Vireos was about average, with singles at I.M.P.P. 22 & 29 May (MAP), and a 3rd at Butterbrecht Spring at the s. end of the Sierra Nevada, *Kern*, 23 May (DVB).

A W. Scrub-Jay at F.C.R. 25 May (T&JH) had wandered into unfamiliar territory. Purple Martin numbers in s. California continue to decline, with no breeding birds, and only 15 migrants reported 4 Apr–23 May. A **Cave Swallow** was compared directly with Cliff Swallows in the Prado Basin, *Riverside*, 29 Apr (DSP); there are only 3 records of this species in California. Unexpected were four migrant Winter Wrens in e. *Kern* 22 Apr–19 May (KSG, RC, DM and JS), and another near Warner Springs, *San Diego*, 3 May (CGE), since this species is normally encountered in fall and winter and considered most unusual in late spring. Likewise, six Golden-crowned Kinglets in e. *Kern* 30 Mar–23 May were most unusual for spring. A Varied Thrush at F.C.R. 28–30 May (AME) was exceptionally late. A Gray Catbird was seen in San Diego 27 Apr (MBS), and single Brown Thrashers were in Atascadero, *San Luis Obispo*, 18 Apr–6 May (KJZ) and near Chiriaco Summit, *Riverside*, 26 May (JSB).

Although regularly occurring vagrant wood-warblers appeared in "good numbers" in *Kern* in May, they were certainly in



below expected numbers elsewhere, with ten N. Parulas (five inland and five along the coast), 20 Black-and-white Warblers (15 inland and five along the coast), 13 Am. Redstarts (all inland), and 11 N. Waterthrushes (all inland). Tennessee Warblers at Scotty's Castle in Death Valley N.P. 23 May (TEW), Butterbreedt Springs 24–26 May (BB), and Twentynine Palms 12 May (EAC) were the only three reported. A Lucy's Warbler near Olancho, *Inyo*, 28 Apr (T&JH) was a little to the northwest of this species' normal range. The Chestnut-sided Warbler wintering in Long Beach since 27 Dec was still present 11 Apr (KSG). Five Magnolia Warblers were found in the e. part of the Region, with one in Needles, *San Bernardino*, 18 May (RMcK), another at G.H.P. 27 May (DN, AME), two together near Cantil 28 May (TEW), and the 4th at F.C.R. 29 May (MJSanM). The wintering Black-throated Green Warbler in National City since 5 Nov remained through 17 Apr (DWA), and the one near Oceanside since 16 Nov was still present 11 Apr (PAG); a female in Wilmington, *Los Angeles*, 31 May (KL) was a spring vagrant. The Pine Warbler found wintering in Long Beach 25 Nov remained through 10 Apr (KSG). Three Palm Warblers along the coast in March–April, and another at S.E.S.S. 11 Apr (A King, *fide* BMu) perhaps wintered locally, but one in Los Angeles 2–3 May (RB) was believed to be a spring vagrant. A male Blackpoll Warbler in Irvine 26 May (BED) was the only one found. Known wintering Am Redstarts in Ventura and near El Monte both remained through 22 Apr (JT, TEW). The only Prothonotary Warbler to be found was one in California City 8 May (VH). Eight Ovenbirds were reported, with one in the Cuyamaca Mts. of *San Diego* 8 May (GLR), another at S.E.S.S. 18 May (BMu), five at various locations in e. *Kern* 18–31 May (MTH), and the 8th at Scotty's Castle 23 May (TEW). A wintering N. Waterthrush near Port Hueneme remained through 8 May (ST). A **Louisiana Waterthrush** at I.M.P.P. 28 May (MAP) was 9th to be found in California. A Kentucky Warbler, a casual straggler to California, was photographed at I.M.P.P. 22 May (MAP), and a male Mourning Warbler, equally rare in California, was near Butterbreedt Springs 26 May (REW).

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

Five Summer Tanagers 19–30 May away from known breeding localities was fewer than expected. A Clay-colored Sparrow found in Anaheim, *Orange*, 14 Nov remain-

ed through 18 Apr (KSG); one in Brea, *Orange*, 28 Mar (DRW) and another in San Luis Obispo 2–13 Apr (MDS) probably wintered locally, but singles at Riverside 24 Apr (BAC) and Desert Center 28 Apr (DRW) were probably spring vagrants. A Lark Bunting in Santa Clarita, *Los Angeles*, 6–16 Mar (KLG) was believed to have wintered locally; one at Ocotillo Wells, *San Diego*, 30 Mar (PU), up to six near Winchester, *Riverside*, 8–22 Apr (MDM), another in Ridgecrest, *Kern*, 27 Apr–13 May (PW), and single birds on the Elkhorn Plain in e. *San Luis Obispo* 16–18 Apr (BAB) and 1 May (GPS) were spring migrants. Known wintering Swamp Sparrows remained to mid-April, with one in Pismo Beach, *San Luis Obispo*, to 15 Apr (BAB) being the latest; one in Big Santa Aneta Canyon, *Los Angeles*, 23 Apr (TEW) and another near Cantil 23–24 Apr (RC) were believed to be spring migrants. White-throated Sparrows were reported through April, with singles in Irvine and Ridgecrest 6 May (DLP and BMe) and Cambria, *San Luis Obispo*, 9 May (RD) being the latest. A wintering Harris's Sparrow in Morongo Valley remained through 27 Apr (TEW) and another in Bishop was still present 3 May (J&DP); apparent migrants were in Big Pine, *Inyo*, 15 Apr and 7 May (T&JH).

A N. Cardinal at Chiriaco Summit 22–27 May (MAP) was far from any populated area with caged birds, but showed possible signs of captivity (RAE). A male Pyrrhuloxia in Costa Mesa, *Orange*, 12 Apr (SB) was only a few miles from the location of the wintering female in the same town. Sixteen Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and 20 Indigo Buntings scattered throughout the Region in May were somewhat fewer than expected, but included six Indigo Buntings together at F.C.R. 25 May (T&JH). A Dickcissel, rare in spring, was at F.C.R. 25 May (T&JH); others were at California City 30 May (HK) and Desert Center 31 May (DSC). The only Bobolinks reported were five at C.L. 22 May (MTH) and one at F.C.R. 28–29 May (AME).

A male Tricolored Blackbird in Big Pine 14 Apr (T&JH) was only the 9th to be reported in *Inyo*. The Com. Grackle found in Lompoc 3 Jan remained through 4 Mar (BH). An Icterid photographed in Santa Maria 8 May+ (JMC) was initially identified as a Com. Grackle but appears most likely to be a hybrid Brewer's Blackbird × Great-tailed Grackle. Single Orchard Orioles in Irvine 28–29 Mar (MTH) and Laguna Hills, *Orange*, 18–20 Apr (Bfi) were believed to have wintered locally, but one in

Goleta 8 May (RPH) appears to have been a spring vagrant. Wintering Baltimore Orioles remained along the coast into early April, with one in Orange 10 Apr (DRW) being the latest; singles in Carpinteria 25 Apr (KB), California City 29 May (MTH), and Goleta 30 May (JEL) were spring vagrants. A Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch at Telescope Peak in the Panamint Mts. of *Inyo* 7 May (REW) was only the 2nd to be found at that location.

Cited observers (county coordinators/major contributors in boldface):

Douglas W Aguilard, Larry Allen, Bob Barnes, Richard Barth, David V. Blue, Jeffery S. Boyd, Bill A Bouton, Steve Brad, Karen Bridgers, Eugene A. Cardiff, Barbara A. Carlson, Jaime M Chavez, Ryan Chornock, **Elizabeth Copper** (*San Diego*), David Compton, Daniel S Cooper, Brian E. Daniels, **Don Desjardin** (*Ventura*), Rob Doll, Pat Dunn, **Tom M. Edell** (*San Luis Obispo*), Claud G. Edwards, Alan M. Eisner, Richard A. Erickson, Graham Etherington, Bill Fisher (Bfi), Brian Foster (Bfo), **Kimball L. Garrett** (*Los Angeles*), Karen S. Gilbert, Peter A Ginsburg, John Green, Edward Hall, Robert A. Hamilton, Robert W. Hansen, Joan Hardie, **Matthew T. Heindel** (*Kern*), **Tom & Jo Heindel** (*Inyo*), Roger Higson, Brad Hines, Ron P. Hirst, Vernon Howe, Joseph R Jehl, Ray Jillson, Jerry A. Johnson, Paul Keller, Howard King, Andrew and Leah Kirk (A&LK), David A. Kisner, Kevin Larson, **Joan E. Lentz** (*Santa Barbara*), Michael C Long, Chet McGaugh, **Robert McKernan** (*San Bernardino* and *Riverside*), Bob Meader (BMe), Mike D. Misenhelter, Kathy C. Molina, Barbara Moore (BMo), Don Moore, William J. Moramarco, Brennan Mulrooney (BMu), Dick Norton, Jim and Debby Parker (J&DP), **Michael A. Patten**, Robert Patton, Dharm S. Pellegrini, Kaaren L. Perry, James E. Pike, Dick L. Purvis, Geoffrey L. Rogers, Richard Rowlett, Tim Ryan, Conrad Sankpill, Michael J. San Miguel, Mike San Miguel, Larry Sansone, Joyce Seibold, Dave Shuford, Gregory P Smith, Susan Steel, M. D. Stiles, Mary Beth Stowe, John Tiffany, Steve Tucker, Philip Unitt, Richard E. Webster, Walter Wehtje, **Douglas R. Willick** (*Orange*), Peter Woodman, Tom E. Wurster, Kevin J Zimmer. An additional 50± observers who could not be individually acknowledged submitted reports this season.

Guy McCaskie, San Diego Natural History Museum, Balboa Park, P. O. Box 1390, San Diego, California 92112

