



San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society

WESTERN MEADOWLARK



Volume 66— Number 6

No General Meetings in July/August

UPCOMING SBVAS FIELD TRIPS July/August 2016

July 9, 10
Greenhorn Mountain Field Trip
CANCELLED

Saturday, August 20, 2016

SBVAS Pelagic Trip
6:30 AM – 3:00 PM

Join SBVAS for our first pelagic trip in recent memory. We will be birding aboard the Ocean Institute's (Dana Point) R/V Sea Explorer in search of pelagic birds, marine mammals, and other oceanic wildlife as we cruise through the Santa Catalina Channel. We expect to see Pink-footed, Sooty, and Black-vented Shearwaters, Black Storm-Petrel, Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers, and Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets. We have a reasonable chance of seeing Brown Booby and Craveri's Murrelet, and additional species of alcids, storm-petrels, shearwaters, and boobies are not out of the question. The trip leaders include Tom Benson, Jon Feenstra, Jimmy McMorran, Brad Singer, and Matt Grube. Meet at the Ocean Institute in Dana Point (24200 Dana Point Harbor Drive) at 6:30 AM. The trip departs promptly at 7:00 AM and will not be held for late arrivals. Half of the 40 spaces available will be reserved for SBVAS members, while the remaining spaces will be available to anyone on a first come, first served basis.

To reserve a space on the trip, email Tom Benson (thomasabenson@aol.com) with your name and phone number, and indicate

whether you are an SBVAS member. Upon receiving confirmation from Tom, mail your \$60 check made out to SBVAS: Pelagic Trip c/o SBVAS PO Box 10973 San Bernardino, CA 92423

The Sea Explorer is a 70-foot research vessel with plenty of standing room, bench seating on both the upper and lower decks, and an interior salon with limited seating. There is no galley on board (though there is usually coffee and hot water), so you should bring your own lunch and snacks for this 8-hour excursion. Weather at sea is often cool relative to the mainland, and can be unpredictable. It is recommended that you dress in layers including a light rain jacket

for potential sea spray (or even rain). Bring your binoculars and cameras, but leave your spotting scopes at home. There are a number of preventative sea sickness treatments available; consult with your doctor if you think you will need them. They are most effective when taken before you get on the boat; do not wait until you are sick. If you have any questions regarding the trip, please contact Tom Benson at: thomasabenson@aol.com. Alternatively, you may scan the waivers as pdf files and email them to Tom at the address above.



Tom Benson

Local Sightings: Spring 2016 by Tom Benson

This issue of local sightings covers the end of winter and spring migration from mid February through early June. Overall, the spring period seemed weaker than average for the passage of normal spring migrants, however, there were still some notable finds. The clear highlight of the spring was what appears to be California's first record of PURPLE SANDPIPER at Salt Creek at the north end of the Salton Sea from Mar 25-Apr 17 (pending CBRC acceptance). The bird was initially identified as a Rock Sandpiper (which also would have been a first county record) based on the apparent dull coloration of the legs and bill, but with further study during its extended stay, and comparison of photos to specimens, was eventually identified as a Purple Sandpiper. What's even more amazing is that (presumably) this same individual showed up on Point Reyes on Apr 25, a week later and over 800 km (500 miles) away. This is one of only a handful of records of vagrant Purple Sandpipers from western North America.



The sandpiper was not the only notable bird at Salt Creek this spring, with up to two GULL-BILLED TERNS there Mar 26-Apr 1 and two or three LITTLE GULLS present there Apr 12-23. Five more GULL-BILLED TERNS were along 72nd Avenue at the north end of the Salton Sea on May 9. The ORCHARD ORIOLE continued in Thermal through Apr 12. Further out at Palo Verde Ecological Reserve were a HARRIS'S HAWK Apr 12 and a ZONE-TAILED HAWK Apr 17-May 20. On the coastal slope, a wintering NORTHERN PARULA was discovered at UC Riverside Feb 17-Mar 5, and a DICKCISSEL was coming to feeders on private property in Mira Loma Apr 9. In the San Jacinto Mountains, a ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK was photographed in Idyllwild May 17.

In San Bernardino County the LARK BUNTING at Helendale sewage ponds remained though Mar 1, and a LAPLAND LONGSPUR was seen there on Feb 28. Nearby a SANDERLING stopped off at Kramer Junction to refuel May 1, while at Harper Dry Lake a SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER (May 16) and an AMERICAN BITTERN (Apr 28) were nice finds. Another AMERICAN BITTERN was an unexpected surprise at Nipton May 28. Lake Havasu enjoyed some good birds with a BROWN PELICAN Mar 12 and a HEERMANN'S GULL Apr 10. The desert oases turned up a number of good birds this spring. The most notable from Zzyzx Desert Studies Center were a HOODED WARBLER May 14 and a BAY-BREASTED WARBLER May 25. And along the Hwy 62 corridor a BROAD-WINGED HAWK passed through Covington Park Apr 22, a LEAST TERN briefly visited Yucca Valley Golf Course May 17, and a KENTUCKY WARBLER was at the 29 Palms Inn May 24-25. On the coastal slope, two PURPLE MARTINS at Glen Helen Regional Park Apr 3



were the only ones reported this spring; hopefully this this doesn't signal doom for the breeding population in the region but there has been a notable decline in recent years. The best birds in the county this spring, however, were found in the mountains: two RED-THROATED PIPITS at Big Bear Lake May 1 represent not only the second and third county records, but also two of only five spring records in California, with one of those occurring on the same date on San Clemente Island.

And finally down in Imperial County, an EASTERN PHOEBE continued at Sunbeam Lake through Mar 9, a GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW was at Ramer Lake Mar 9, and two PINE SISKINS were at the Salton Sea NWR May 7.

Bird of the Month: Rufous-crowned Sparrow By Steve Myers

The Rufous-crowned Sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps*) is a bird of Mexico and the southwestern United States, occurring from the California coast eastward to Arkansas and south into southern Mexico. In California, it occurs as far north as Shasta, Mendocino, and Glenn counties. Its distribution in the state follows southward along the Coast Ranges and the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada. In the region of the SBVAS constituency, there are two subspecies: *A.r. canescens* on the coastal slope and the western edge of the deserts, and *A.r. scottii*, which occurs in isolated desert mountain ranges within the eastern portions of the deserts and east into Arizona, southern Nevada, Utah, and New Mexico.

Rufous-crowned Sparrows are usually found on moderate to steep, dry, rocky, south- or west-facing slopes with shrub cover varying from very sparse to moderately dense (coastal sage scrub or relatively low, sparse chaparral). Many sites contain patches of grasses and forbs, and rock outcrops occur quite commonly in their habitat. Occasionally they can be found away from slopes, such as in large, rocky washes such as Mill Creek and the Santa Ana River near Redlands and San Bernardino.

In early to mid-March, Rufous-crowned Sparrows begin to construct their nests, which are almost always on the ground and typically at bases of shrubs, tufts of grass, or rocks. Up to about 4% of nests are located low in shrubs. The nests are well concealed with overhanging vegetation. Nests are loosely constructed, bulky open cups made of grasses and rootlets, with small amounts of twigs, weed stems, and pieces of bark. The inside of the cup is lined with finer materials such as animal hair or fine plant fibers. The eggs, usually in clutches of 3 or 4, are incubated only by the female, who leaves the nest to forage for short periods of time. Incubation lasts 11-13 days; fledging is thought to occur after 8-9 days, but no studies have definitively determined the nestling period. Fledgling dependency is also not well studied.

Studies of diet and foraging habits are also lacking, but Rufous-crowned Sparrows most likely eat primarily seeds of grasses and forbs, with more insects taken during the nesting period. They have been observed foraging for seeds on the ground by pecking, rather than scratching through leaf litter. Pairs are often seen foraging together, and during the winter they sometimes join other species (e.g., White-crowned Sparrows, Song Sparrows) while foraging.

Rufous-crowned Sparrows are identifiable by their dark rufous crowns (present all year), plain underparts lacking streaks and spots, white eye rings, and blackish malar stripe. In southern California the only species with which they may be confused are adult Chipping Sparrows, which have white wings bars, prominent white superciliary lines, and lack dark malar stripes, and possibly immature (wintering) White-crowned Sparrows, which have striped rather than solid crowns.

During spring and early summer Rufous-crowned Sparrows sing often from conspicuous perches on shrubs, weeds, or rocks. Their song is a rapid series of jumbled, bubbly notes with a similar cadence to the song of the House Wren, albeit higher pitched. It is also similar to the songs of Lazuli Buntings, a species that shares breeding habitat with the Rufous-crowned Sparrows. Very distinctive is the most commonly heard call note of Rufous-crowns, which is referred to as the "dear" call. They often give several "dears" in rapid fire fashion. Several other single note calls are also given.

Continued on p. 5.



Rufous-crowned Sparrow, near Lakeview, Riverside County. ©2013 Stephen J. Myers

July 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9 Greenhorn Mt. Field Trip, CANCELLED
10 Greenhorn Mt. Field Trip, CANCELLED	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20 NO MEETING	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

August 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 Field Trip Meeting 5:30 p.m. Mimi's Cafe 7:00 Board Meeting	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17 NO MEETING	18	19	20 SBVAS Pelagic Trip 6:30 Am Dana Point Harbor
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Dates are subject to changes for weather and unforeseen circumstances. Please check our website - SBVAS.net for updates.

Bird of the Month, continued from p. 3

The coastal southern California subspecies is considered a Species of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, due to a large percentage of its historical habitat being developed into homes, golf courses, and strip malls. Where coastal sage scrub and grassy hillsides remain, the species still occurs in reasonably good numbers. Only through conservation planning efforts that include large tracts of preserved habitat will this continue to be the case.

Want to learn more?

Further reading:

Collins, Paul W. 1999. Rufous-crowned Sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu.bnaproxy.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/472>
doi:10.2173/bna.472

Field Trip Checklist

Comfortable shoes or hiking boots, hat, sunscreen, insect repellent, a good road map, Full fuel tank, drinking water, snacks and lunch, binoculars and/or a scope, field guide.
Come and Enjoy. Call Field Trip Leader for last minute cancellations, questions or changes... 🐻

**Bearpaw Ranch**

Bearpaw Ranch is a 70 acre nature sanctuary, operated by the San Bernardino Audubon Society and may be visited 7 days a week from dawn 'til dusk by members of Audubon and their guests. Bearpaw Ranch is nestled on the north slope of scenic Mill Creek Canyon at 4,500 feet elevation, surrounded by the towering peaks of the San Bernardino National Forest. To reach Bearpaw Ranch, take Highway 38 to the Forest Falls turnoff. Go several car lengths on Valley of the Falls Dr. and look for our small wooden sign on the right. Our driveway is on the right, marked 38801. The driveway is paved and unpaved road that meanders across Mill Creek wash and up the bluff to an electronically operated entry gate. *Members* who wish to visit the Sanctuary should call any board member in advance to get the gate code. It is not a requirement that the caretaker is at home for you to visit. If the gate does not open because of mechanical failure, you are welcome to walk in or stop for birding along the creek bed.

Bearpaw Sanctuary,
38801 Valley of the Falls Drive
P.O. Box 88; Forest Falls, CA 923396

Bearpaw Sanctuary is on Facebook; message us with questions and comments. If you type "Bearpaw Sanctuary" into the SEARCH function, you'll find us. Bearpaw visitors are encouraged to report interesting wildlife sightings and share their favorite nature photos from their Bearpaw visits.

SBVAS Officers 2015/2016
www.sbvas.org

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SBVAS BOOKSTORE AND GIFT SHOP:
Nancy Manning (909) 337-9401

CALENDAR

Board Meetings: No meeting in July. First Tuesday of the Month, August 2, 2016, 7 pm

General Meetings: No General Meetings in July and August.

All meetings are in the San Bernardino County Museum, 2024 Orange Tree Lane, Redlands. Board meetings are the first Wednesday of the month, and General Membership meetings are on the third Wednesday of the month. To reach the museum, take the California St. exit off I-10, go north one block to Orange Tree Lane and turn right. The museum will be on your left. General meetings, except potlucks, start at 7:30 and doors open at 7. Potlucks begin at 6:30.

THE WESTERN MEADOWLARK
c/o San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
P. O. Box 10973
San Bernardino, CA 92423-0973

Everyone is always welcome!

All meetings in the San Bernardino County Museum 2024 Orange Tree Lane, Redlands
Board Meetings are the 1st Tuesday
General meetings are the 3rd Wednesday



SBVAS Membership currently at 1900

To reach the Museum, take the California Street exit off the 10 Freeway and go north 1 block to Orange Tree Lane—turn right. The museum will be on your left...

<p align="center">Chapter Only Membership Application San Bernardino Valley Audubon</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ Zip _____</p> <p>____ SBVAS Membership @ \$20 a/year (includes subscription to <i>The Western Meadowlark</i>)</p> <p>Email Address _____</p> <p>Please enclose a check payable to SBVAS</p>	<p align="center">Membership Application National Audubon Society (NAS)</p> <p>____ NAS Gift/New/Regular/Renewal Membership \$20 (includes 1 year of <i>Audubon</i> magazine)</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ Zip _____</p> <p>Please make check payable to National Audubon Society</p> <p align="right">SBVAS Chapter C2ZC140Z</p>
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Please clip and mail all memberships to: SBVAS Membership Chair
P.O. Box 10973
San Bernardino, Ca. 92423-0973

