



## SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION

/Guy McCaskie

It was a relatively dry summer with only a few thunder showers in the mountains and deserts during July. However, as a result of last winter's heavy rains the entire Region supported more than the average growth of vegetation and most rivers and streams still contained running water at summer's end.

The discovery of nesting Little Blue Herons and a breeding pair of Zone-tailed Hawks added two species to California's list of breeding birds. However, the massive influx of Magnificent Frigatebirds was undoubtedly the most talked-about event of the season, particularly in light of the absence of other wanderers from the south.

**LOONS, GREBES** — The only loons reported along the coast this summer were 18 Com. Loons, 25 Arctic Loons and seven Red-throated Loons in the Ventura/Santa Barbara region. A Com. Loon on L. Cachuma throughout the period (PL) and two on L. Palmdale July 31 (KG) were inland; few are recorded away from the coast in summer. More than 400 pairs of Eared Grebes nested at Baldwin L., in the San Bernardino Mts. (JD) and six pairs nested at McGrath S.P. (REW), both being localities where breeding occurs at least sporadically; 75± pairs nesting near Lancaster (JD) and a pair at the south end of the Salton Sea (hereafter, S.E.S.S.) (GMcC) establish new breeding localities.

**ALBATROSSES, SHEARWATERS, STORM-PETRELS** — A Black-footed Albatross 80 mi off San Diego July 12 (PT) was the only one reported. Shearwaters were scarce off the coast from Santa Barbara s., but thousands (e.g., 500,000 off the Santa Maria R. mouth July 15) were visible from shore n. of Pt. Conception in July as appears to be normal. Thirty Leach's Storm-Petrels were seen 25 mi off San Diego July 13 (PT), this species occurring regularly in these waters in late summer.

**PELICANS, FRIGATEBIRDS** — A White Pelican remaining in Goleta through the period (PL) was the first to be recorded in the Santa Barbara area in summer. Brown Pelicans became quite numerous along the coast n. of Los Angeles in July (e.g., 800 near Rincon July 15) as birds dispersed N after nesting; five on the Salton Sea July 14 (SG) and another at Imperial Dam July 19 (KVR) were the first to arrive in the s.e. part of the Region.

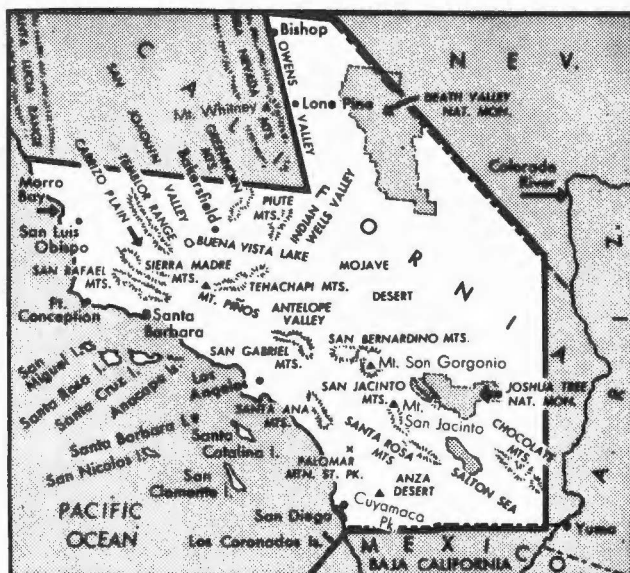
S.A.

Magnificent Frigatebirds appeared in unprecedented numbers after the first was noted over San Diego Bay June 23 (DPO). The species was reported from all six coastal counties, with concentrations of up to five together; five near Imperial Beach July 20 (GMcC), four at Pt. Mugu July 14 (REW) and again July 31 (RDO), and five over Santa Barbara July 20 (RS). It would appear 35-40 individuals were involved, all being immature except for an ad. male near Imperial Beach July 20 and an ad. female near San Diego July 30. At the Salton Sea numbers were even more impressive with nine present July 14 (SG,GMcC) and 22 together at the north end of the Salton Sea (hereafter, N.E.S.S.) July 29 (DPA). Elsewhere inland one was at L. Hemet July 13 (NHM) and another was at Castaic L., July 30 (A. Small, *vide* KG). What caused such an invasion is as yet unknown; however, this is certainly the greatest influx on record.

**HERONS, STORKS, IBISES** — The imm. Little Blue Heron remained in Goleta to June 10 (PL), an adult was at Pt. Mugu July 8 (REW), one was at Imperial Beach June 8-9 (ME) and what may well have been the same adult was 40± mi n. near Leucadia June 12-24 (DM), and another adult was in the Colorado R. Valley near Winterhaven July 19 (SG). Most significant, however, was the presence of up to three adult Little Blue Herons in a large Cattle Egret colony near Seeley in the Imperial Valley after June 10 (MR), with two building a nest, laying four eggs and fledging two young, this constituted the first documented breeding record for California (*Western Birds* 8:151-154, 1977). Cattle Egrets have been nesting in the vicinity of the Salton Sea since 1970 (AFN 24: 715-718, 1970), but breeding has been unknown elsewhere in this Region until this summer when 100 pairs nested in Carlsbad, San Diego Co. (JPR) and an additional 20 pairs nested near Lakeview, Riverside Co. (DMM); this species can be expected to expand nesting into other areas, particularly along the coast where substantial numbers are summering. Twenty active Great Egret nests near Lakeview in July (DMM) gives us the first breeding record for the Pacific slope of s. California. Some 125 pairs of Snowy Egrets nesting in Carlsbad this summer (JPR) were the first known to breed on the coast of s. California; this species appears to be on the increase in this Region. An ad. Louisiana Heron, a rare straggler to the Salton Sea, was at N.E.S.S., July 21+ (GMcC) and another was on the coast near Imperial Beach June 23 - July 6 (SD,RCS). A Least Bittern, now rare along the coast, was near San Pedro July 30 (JA), two

were around Irvine throughout the summer (TS), four were seen in Carlsbad July 30 (DRW) and another was at nearby Leucadia June 2 (EC). Wood Stork numbers built up to 200± around S.E.S.S., in July (GMcC), but one at Furnace Cr. Ranch, Death Valley July 15 (JS) was the only one found elsewhere. Exciting was the discovery of about six pairs (two nests seen) of White-faced Ibises in Carlsbad (JPR), as the last known nesting along the coast of California was in 1901 and the species appears on the decline. An ad. White Ibis at Irvine July 29+ (TS) was probably an escapee from the recently dismantled Busch Gardens in Los Angeles.

**GEESE, DUCKS** — As usual a few Brant remained throughout the summer along the coast with 13 at Pt. Mugu in June (REW) being the largest flock; one inland near Lancaster July 14+ (FH) had undoubtedly summered locally. Nesting Gadwall were found along the coast with two pairs at the Santa Ynez R. mouth (PL), one pair at Goleta (PL), one pair at McGrath S.P. (REW) and two pairs at Pt. Mugu (REW) along with the small numbers regularly nesting in San Diego County; inland at least two pairs are known to have nested near Lancaster (FH) and three pairs bred at Baldwin L. (JD). A pair of N. Shovelers nesting at Tecopa, Inyo Co. (JT) gives us one of the very few specific breeding records for this Region. A pair of Wood Ducks raised four young at L. Cachuma (PL) and another pair raised six young on L. Sherwood (REW); few nest in this Region. Five Ring-necked Ducks spent the summer on L. Cachuma (LRB), one spent the summer near Lancaster (JD), another was on Cleveland L., near Gorman July 29 (FH) and five summered on Baldwin L., in the San Bernardino Mts. (JD); this species is normally rare in s. California during summer. A Canvasback on Baldwin L., Aug. 14 (JD), another at N.E.S.S., Aug. 19 (DPA) and two at S.E.S.S., July 28 (BB) all probably summered locally. Two Com. Goldeneyes at S.E.S.S., June 16+ (GMcC) were the only ones found this summer. A Bufflehead, rare in summer, was at N.E.S.S., June 10 (GMcC), another was near Leucadia July 15 (PU) and a third was on San Diego Bay July 26+ (JD). An Oldsquaw near Lancaster July 14 (FH) was exceptional,



the locality being far inland and the species being rarely found in summer. The ♂ Harlequin Duck remained in Carlsbad throughout the summer (PU). A few White-winged Scoters were found along with the expected summering Surf Scoters; 12 at Shell Beach, San Luis Obispo Co., July 15 (JD), 15 at the Santa Ynez R. mouth Aug. 16 (PL) and six at Pt. Mugu all summer (REW) being the largest groups. A Black Scoter, by far the rarest of the scoters occurring in California, was at Pt. Mugu all summer (REW) and another remained at Marina del Rey throughout the period (KG).

**HAWKS** — A pair of Swainson's Hawks in the Lanfair Valley of e. San Bernardino Co. (SC) was the only pair known to nest within the Region, although a single bird remained in the Antelope Valley throughout the period (JD); one near Lancaster Aug. 2 (JD) and four together there Aug. 11 (JD) were believed to be fall transients. Totally unexpected was a pair of Zone-tailed Hawks at a nest on Santa Rosa Mt., Riverside Co., July 8+ (SC); this species is a casual straggler to California with no pre-



One of two Zone-tailed Hawks found at a nest on Santa Rosa Mountain, Calif., in July. Photo/Lawrence Sansone.

vious indications of nesting. A Prairie Falcon at S.E.S.S., June 16 (JD) was unexpected, the species normally being absent from the Salton Sea in summer. The only Peregrine Falcons reported away from nesting sites were single birds at S.E.S.S., July 14 (SG), near Leucadia July 19 (PU) and in San Diego July 20 (EC).

**RAILS** — A pair of Virginia Rails, a species becoming alarmingly scarce as a nesting species along the coast of s. California, successfully bred at McGrath S.P. (REW), a pair was thought to be breeding at Pt. Mugu (REW) and another pair probably nested near Leucadia (EC). Three calling Black Rails were at Finney L., Apr. 7 - May 12 (EAC) and 11 calling birds were found along the All American Canal near Calexico Apr. 6 - May 13 (SC) indicating that this secretive bird is well-established as a breeding species in the Imperial Valley as well as along the Lower Colorado R.

**SHOREBIRDS** — Two Am. Oystercatchers were at Frazier Pt., on Santa Cruz I., July 6 (DS); one or two have been noted off and on at this locality since 1966 and it is most likely that two birds are resident. The Wilson's Plover remained at Pt. Mugu through June 24 (REW). A Mountain Plover at S.E.S.S., July 15 (SG) was only the third to be recorded in summer in this Region. Three Spotted Sand-

piper nests were found along the Santa Ynez R., of Santa Barbara Co., in June (JG), two pairs nested at McGrath S.P. (REW), another pair nested at the Ventura R. mouth (REW) and four pairs nested along the Santa Clara R., near Piru (REW); this species is a scarce breeder along the coast of s. California with no documented nesting records s. of Ventura County. A Surfbird at McGrath S.P., June 7 (REW) was probably a very late spring migrant whereas another on Pt. Loma, San Diego Co., July 26 (MT) was considered an early fall migrant. A flock of 45 Red Knots at S.E.S.S., July 14 (DPA) was an exceptional number for this locality in fall. An early Baird's Sandpiper near Lancaster July 14 (FH) was most likely an adult (*Studies in Avian Biology* 2:55-68, 1969). A Dunlin, exceptionally rare in summer, was at Pt. Mugu June 17 (REW).

**JAEGERS, GULLS, SKIMMERS** — A Pomarine Jaeger at the Santa Maria R. mouth July 13 (PL) was probably summering locally. A Glaucous-winged Gull was at the Santa Maria R. mouth July 13+ (PL), another was at the Santa Ynez R. mouth July 13 (PL), up to three were at McGrath S.P., throughout the period (REW) and single birds were at Pt. Mugu June 9 (REW), Carlsbad June 17 (GMC), Malibu Aug. 17 (JD), and Marina del Rey July 30 (JD); a few are found summering along the coast each year. A Herring Gull at the Santa Maria R. mouth Aug. 25 (PL) and another at N.E.S.S., Aug. 4-19 (GMC) had both evidently summered locally; it is amazing how few Herring Gulls occur in summer, there being virtually no records from along the coast. Two Mew Gulls in Goleta during July (PL,LRB) were the only ones reported summering this year. Laughing Gull numbers built up to 800± on the Salton Sea in late July after the first of the post-breeding birds appeared in early July (GMC); interesting was that 60%+ were in juvenile plumage, indicating a successful nesting season in West Mexico. A Franklin's Gull at Bolsa Chica May 25 (JA) and another at N.E.S.S., June 10 (GMC) are both best treated as spring migrants, but an adult in Goleta June 21 (LRB) defies categorizing. A Bonaparte's Gull inland near Lancaster July 14 (FH) with three at the Santa Ynez R. mouth July 13-20 (PL) and another at McGrath S.P., throughout the period (REW) were the only ones reported summering this year; numbers present in summer vary greatly from year to year (e.g., "hundreds" present during the summer of 1977). An ad. Heermann's Gull, a rare straggler to the interior, was at Seeley, Imperial Co., July 4-14 (GMC) and an immature was at N.E.S.S., July 29 (DPA). Black Skimmers successfully nested at the Salton Sea and on San Diego Bay, with 14 pairs fledging 25+ young at the latter locality (ME); four near Leucadia Aug. 5-9 (EC), one at Pt. Mugu July 1 (REW) and one or two intermittently at McGrath S.P., June 28+ (REW) were the only ones found away from these two breeding localities.

**DOVES THROUGH GOATSUCKERS** — A Com. Ground Dove in Long Beach June 23 (JA) was somewhat n. of the species' range, small numbers being resident on the coast n. to the Santa Ana/Anaheim area of Orange County. Two Yellow-billed Cuckoos at Tecopa June 22 (JT) could have been nesting, and if

so, were the only ones nesting w. of the Colorado R. valley; one along the Santa Clara R., near Piru June 23 - July 4 (REW) and another in pinyon-juniper woodland of Quatal Canyon, Ventura Co., July 4 (JD) were the only other cuckoos around. Pygmy Owls are scarce in s. California, hence, two on Frazier Mt., Ventura Co., July 7 (REW) are of interest. The only Elf Owls located this year were 4-6 pairs near Needles on the Colorado R., in May (SC); unfortunately the habitat is being cleared for agriculture, and the species appears doomed as a breeding bird in California. The only Whip-poor-wills reported this summer were a calling bird at Big Pines in the San Gabriel Mts., June 13 (KG) and two calling birds at Heart Bar Campground in the San Bernardino Mts., June 17 (MAP); positive proof of nesting in California has yet to be obtained.

#### SWIFTS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

— Most interesting was the presence of up to 14 Black Swifts along the N. Fork of the San Jacinto R., in the San Jacinto Mts., all summer (AS) since they appeared to be nesting behind a waterfall near Idyllwild; the only other nesting localities known in this Region are in the San Gabriel (Santa Anita Canyon) and San Bernardino (Fallsview) Mts. Again Chimney Swifts were found summering with four over Arcadia June 17 (JA) and ten near Burbank July 10+ (JD); however, there was no indication of nesting. An Anna's Hummingbird that fledged two young near Parker Dam, along with a female at Tecopa May 20 (JT), and two more around Blythe during June and July (SG), were along the e. edge of the Region where documented nesting records are few. The migratory Allen's Hummingbirds (*S.s. sasin*) breed s. to Santa Barbara and Pt. Mugu, with the resident race (*S.s. sedentarius*) occurring on the Channel Is., and the Palos Verdes Pen.; hence, at least seven territorial birds at Malibu May 25 (KG), that were believed nesting, are hard to assign to race, although *sasin* appears the more likely. Two pairs of Belted Kingfishers were found nesting along the upper Santa Ynez R., in June (JG), a pair raised two young at the Ventura R. mouth (REW), one was seen near Rancho California, Riverside Co., July 6 (JD), one was near Bon-sall, San Diego Co., June 17 (PU) and two were near San Diego July 7 (CGE); this species is now exceedingly scarce in s. California during the summer. A Lewis' Woodpecker in the Lockwood Valley, Ventura Co., July 1 (JD) was most unusual, the species normally departing from the Region in summer. Two pairs of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers nesting on Mt. Palomar (RH) were at the s. extreme of the species' breeding range. A pair of Hairy Woodpeckers suspected to be nesting near Bishop June 18 (PL) were of interest since the locality is on the floor of the Owens Valley, the lowland area separating the race *hyloscopus* of the s. Sierra from *leucothorectis* of the Great Basin. Four Downy Woodpeckers around Bishop June 18-19 (PL) were in an area believed to support a small resident population that has recently become established; this species was unrecorded here 30 years ago. A Downy Woodpecker at L. Arrowhead in the San Bernardino Mts., July 6 (JD) was at an unusual elevation and away from any known breeding locality.

**FLYCATCHERS, SWALLOWS** — The outcome of the nesting of a Scissor-tailed

Flycatcher paired with a W. Kingbird at Needles is unfortunately unknown, although the original nest containing five eggs was abandoned in early June, and the material from that nest was used to construct a new nest, with the bird still in the area at the end of June (SC). Say's Phoebe normally leave the vicinity of the coast in summer, hence, one on San Miguel I., July 16 (N&HS), another at Pt. Mugu June 9 (REW) and a third near Imperial Beach on the same day (PU) were of interest. The only territorial Willow Flycatcher reported was a singing male near Bishop June 19-20 (PL); numbers of this species have declined at an alarming rate. A Dusky Flycatcher on Cuyamaca Mt., July 1 (PU) was at the s. extreme of the species' breeding range. The presence of a Gray Flycatcher at Pinyon Flats on Santa Rosa Mt., May 14 (AS) suggests nesting at that locality; small numbers breed as far s. as the San Bernardino Mts. (*Western Birds* 5:45-56, 1974). Nesting Purple Martins were located at Nojoqui Falls P., Santa Barbara Co. (3-4 pairs), on Big Pine Mt. (one pair), in the San Jacinto Mts. (6-8 pairs), at Casper Regional P., Orange Co. (three pairs), at O'Neill P., Orange Co. (one pair), on Mt. Palomar (four pairs), at Cuyamaca Peak (three pairs) and at Laguna Mt., San Diego Co. (one pair); a far cry from the numbers present 20 years ago. A flock of 65 Purple Martins passing over Mt. Palomar Aug. 6 (RH) was an unusual concentration, and one at S.E.S.S., July 24 (MAP) was unexpected there at that time of the year.

#### CHICKADEES THROUGH THRUSHES

— Seven Chestnut-backed Chickadees at the Santa Ynez R. mouth July 20 (PL) advance the species' range another step s. A pair of Dippers nested near Santa Barbara (MP) and another pair nested near Idyllwild (AS); only a few breeding records are published for s. California. A Bendire's Thrasher near Yucca Valley June 4 (DRW) was believed to be on breeding territory; the species is scarce in this area, although common in e. San Bernardino County. A pair of Am. Robins again nested in Blythe (SG), and it is suggested the planting of shade trees along with the development of a well-watered golf course are the factors inducing the birds to breed in this area. A singing Varied Thrush on Mt. Pinos July 20 (KG) was totally out of place, the nearest nesting localities being in extreme n.w. California.

**VIREOS, WOOD WARBLERS** — Bell's Vireos were found to be more common than suspected in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties with 50+ pairs along the upper Santa Ynez R. (JG) and 12 pairs present on the Santa Clara River near Piru (REW); seven singing males near Needles in June (SG) were the only ones found on the California side of the Colorado R., and four singing males at Tecopa in June (JT) were the only others reported in the e. part of the Region.

A Black-and-white Warbler at Newport Beach June 10 (SJR) was a late spring straggler. Three or four singing Nashville Warblers were found on Mt. Pinos during June and July (REW,KG), suggesting the species was nesting locally; documented breeding records s. of the Sierra are lacking. Yellow Warblers are commoner than previously indicated (*AB* 32:1210, 1978), with 120 males along the Santa Ynez R. alone (JG), and the species is considered

"common" in parts of Ventura County (REW). A pair of Yellow Warblers nesting at Tecopa (JT) was noteworthy since it probably represents a s. range extension for the race *morcomi*. Three singing Hermit Warblers in the San Gabriel Mts., June 13 (KG) were the only ones reported; small numbers are believed to breed in these mountains every year. Yellow-breasted Chats are still relatively common in suitable habitat of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties; however, a singing male along the Santa Ana River near Fullerton during May and June (J&PR) was the first seen there in several years, indicating we should monitor numbers throughout the Region.

#### BLACKBIRDS THROUGH SPARROWS

— The ♂ Great-tailed Grackle found near L. Cachuma May 12 remained through June (PL) and another male was at Gaviota July 2-7 (DV); the species continues to expand its range. Most unusual was a Com. Grackle, a casual straggler to California, near Blythe June 9 (SC). A ♂ Summer Tanager at Tecopa all summer (JT) was clearly on territory; however, one in Santa Barbara June 7 (WA) and another near Piru June 28 - July 4 (JD) were stragglers w. of the species' normal range. A ♂ Rose-breasted Grosbeak was seen along the upper Santa Ynez R., June 19 (JG) and another was at L. Hemet July 13 (NHM); one or two are found most summers. A Blue Grosbeak at the summit of Mt. Palomar July 16 (RH) was at an exceptionally high elevation (6140 ft). Three or four singing Indigo Buntings at Morongo Valley during May and June (EAC) were clearly on territories, but no nest was located; one in Goleta July 11-17 (PL), and another at Tecopa June 9 (JT) and a third on Mt. Palomar July 20 (RH) were summer wanderers. Interesting were several singing ♂ Lazuli Buntings in citrus orchards around Blythe during June and July (SG) since breeding is unknown for that area. Two Red Crossbills were seen on Mt. Pinos July 20 (KG), one was found near Big Pines in the San Gabriel Mts., June 13 (KG) and another was on Santa Rosa Mt., July 13 (SC); this species is rare in the mountains of s. California. Green-tailed Towhees were again present on Cuyamaca Peak with ten seen July 1 (PU); this establishes the s. limit of the species' breeding range. A pair of Savannah Sparrows was accompanying three young near Tecopa June 19 (JT); the birds were most likely *nevadensis*, extending the range a little S into the high desert. Lark Sparrows were again present in citrus orchards around Blythe during June and July (SG) and undoubtedly nesting. A Black-throated Sparrow in Orange June 12 (JH) was w. of the species' normal range. Three or four pairs of Fox Sparrows on Mt. Palomar all summer (RH) and five seen on Cuyamaca Peak July 1 (PU) were believed to be nesting, but concrete breeding evidence from these localities, s. of the species' known breeding range, has yet to be obtained.

**ADDENDA** — Significant sightings received too late for inclusion in the Spring Report included an ad. Goshawk on Clark Mt., May 23 (AS); this species is believed to nest occasionally in the mountains of s. California. A Red-eyed Vireo, a scarce straggler to this Region in spring, was at Kelso May 25 (AS). A Painted Redstart at Borrego Springs Apr. 1 (SJ) was evidently an early spring straggler,

but a singing male on Clark Mt., May 23 (AS) was in an area where nesting is a possibility.

**CONTRIBUTORS** — Waldo Abbott, Jon Atwood, Dave Baker, Larry R. Ballard, Louis Bevier, Jean Brandt, Bruce Broadbrooks, Hank & Priscilla Brodtkin (H&PB), Eugene A. Cardiff, Steve Cardiff, Elizabeth Cooper, Bart Cord, Fay Dalton, Shirley Doole, Ron Dow (RDO), Robert Drummer (RDr), **Jon Dunn** (coordinator for Los Angeles County), Claude G. Edwards, Mike Evans, Kimball Garrett, Virginia Gilmore, **Sharon Goldwasser** (coordinator for the Colorado River Valley), Jim Greaves, Sherri & Frederick Hamer (S&FH), Jim Hargrove, Fred Heath, Roger Higson, Chuck Hunter, Joseph R. Jehl, Stuart Johnston, Mary Lou Jones, **Paul Lehman** (coordinator for Santa Barbara County), Beverly McIntosh, Norman H. Mellor, Dick Miller, Douglas M. Morton, Dennis Parker (DPA), Eleanor & Bob Parsons (E&BP), Michael A. Patten, Arleta Patterson, Michael Perrone, Dave Povey (DPo), **Sylvia J. Ranney** (coordinator for Orange County), Jerry & Phil Reeder (J&PR), John P. Rieger, Mary Rieger, Ken V. Rosenberg, Steve & Diane Ross (S&DR), Paul Roush, Andrew Sanders, Lawrence Sansone, Brad Schram (BS), Don Schroeder, Trudy Siptroth, Richard C. Smith, Ron Smith, Nancy & Hal Spear (N&HS), John Sterling, G. Shumway Suffer, **Fern R. Tainter** (coordinator for San Luis Obispo County), Jan Tarble, Phil Tetlow, Margaret Thornburgh (MTh), Mike Tove (MTTo), **Phil Unitt** (coordinator for San Diego County), **Richard E. Webster** (coordinator for Ventura County), Douglas R. Willick, Russell & Marion Wilson (R&MW). Photograph on file (ph), San Diego Natural History Museum (S.D.N.H.M.). A plus (+) following a date indicates that the bird or birds were present from that date to the end of the period. — **GUY McCASKIE, San Diego Natural History Museum, Balboa Park, P.O. Box 1390, San Diego, California 92112.**