

### **Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus***

San Diego County is about the southern limit of the Ancient Murrelet's usual winter range; there are only a few records from Baja California. Increased attention to La Jolla as a site for seabird watching has revealed the murrelet to be regular if uncommon. It remains within a few miles of the coast and does not spread over the open ocean. An incursion in December 1995 brought vastly greater numbers than recorded before or since.

**Winter:** La Jolla (P7) is the site where the Ancient Murrelet is seen most frequently in San Diego County. From 1997 to 2002 the highest counts there were of at least 20 flying south from 25 to 30 November 2001 (P. A. Ginsburg, G. McCaskie, S. Walens, NAB 56:106, 2002) and 10 on 21 December 2001 (J. C. Worley). The species is seen occasionally from shore elsewhere, as in the Oceanside harbor (H5; one on 22 December 1979, D. W. Povey), at Sea Cliff Park, Encinitas (K6; two flying south 11 December 2002, G. C. Hazard), and Coronado (T9; one on 24 November 1997, B. Foster, FN 52:126, 1998). There are a few records from the entrances to Mission (R7) and San Diego bays (S8; one on 26 November 1986, M. and D. Hastings, AB 41:145, 1987).

The influx of 1995, which affected the species' entire North American winter range, yielded a count of 487



*Photo by Joseph R. Jehl, Jr.*

migrating south past La Jolla in 11.5 hours of watching from 14 to 18 December (S. Walens, NASFN 50:224, 1996).

**Migration:** The Ancient Murrelet occurs in San Diego County mainly from November to March but has been found as early as 1 August (1999, found ashore at Ocean Beach, R7, SDNHM 50312) and 28 August (1928, off Point Loma, S7, SDNHM 12163). Many of the murrelets seen at La Jolla in December are still migrating south. The latest date is 25 April (1904, picked up oiled at Pacific Beach, Q7, Bishop 1905). Most Ancient Murrelets reaching San Diego County are immature; of eight county specimens in the San Diego Natural History Museum, seven are immature, including the two collected in August.