

Bay-breasted Warbler *Dendroica castanea*

Breeding mainly in Canada's boreal forest, the Bay-breasted Warbler fluctuates in numbers with its primary prey, the spruce budworm. Numbers of vagrants reaching California vary in tandem, so that the warbler averaged one per fall in San Diego County from the 1970s to the mid 1980s but only 0.2 per fall by the turn of the century.

Migration: Most of San Diego County's approximately 41 Bay-breasted Warblers have been at the usual sites for vagrants, Point Loma and the Tijuana River valley. None has been found farther inland than Otay Mesa (V13; 29 September 1973, AB 28:110, 1974). Fall dates range



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

from 9 September (1991, Point Loma, R. E. Webster, AB 46:151, 1991) to 20 November (1985, same location, C. G. Edwards, AB 40:160, 1986), unless one at Coronado (S9) 17–21 December 1983 (R. E. Webster, AB 38:358, 1984) is considered a late fall straggler rather than a wintering bird.

Four Bay-breasted Warblers have been noted in San Diego County in spring, at Point Loma 5–6 June 1979 (AB 33:806, 1979) and 25–28 May 1981 (E. Copper), at Coronado 15 June 1983 (E. Copper, AB 37:913, 1983), and at Pine Valley (P21) 23 June 1993 (C. G. Edwards, AB 47:1151, 1993).

Winter: The one Bay-breasted Warbler clearly wintering in the county was in the University City area of San Diego

(P8) 30 December 1983–10 April 1984 (T. and G. Quinn, AB 38:358, 1984).

Conservation: From 1973 to 1987 the Bay-breasted Warbler was found in San Diego County almost annually, with up to four in 1974 and three in 1987. Subsequently its frequency declined sharply. From 1994 through 2003 there were only two records, both from Point Loma, 26 September 1995 (G. L. Rogers, NASFN 50:117, 1996) and 20–21 September 2001 (J. C. Worley, NAB 56:108, 2002). Patten and Burger (1998) found the high correlation between numbers of the Bay-breasted Warbler reported in California and of the spruce budworm in eastern Canada second only to that for the Cape May Warbler.