

Black Turnstone *Arenaria melanocephala*

Rocky shorelines are the Black Turnstone's principal habitat, where it is more common than the Ruddy Turnstone. It is less numerous but still fairly common on tidal mudflats and beaches. The Black Turnstone occurs in San Diego County as a migrant, winter visitor, and rare nonbreeding summer visitor.

Winter: In San Diego County the Black Turnstone is strictly coastal, concentrating in the two regions of rocky shore, La Jolla (O7/P7/Q7; up to 25 on 20 January 2000, L. Polinsky) and Point Loma (S7; up to 44 on 16 December 2000, M. W. Klein). At times, the Black Turnstone is common also in Mission Bay (R8, 50 on 24 December 1997, P. Unitt; Q8, 30 on 4 and 20 January 1998, B. C. Moore). In San Diego Bay it occurs on both breakwaters (S8; 24 on 16 December 2000, D. W. Povey) and mudflats (T9; 25 on 19 December 1998, N. Osborn).

In the north county the Black Turnstone is uncommon to rare, restricted largely to the breakwaters at the mouths of lagoons and the Oceanside harbor. From 1997 to 2002 our highest count in this region was of six at San Elijo Lagoon (L7) 22 December 2000 (G. C. Hazard). The



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Rancho Santa Fe Christmas bird count averages 3.5, the Oceanside count only 0.8.

Migration: Black Turnstones begin arriving in mid July and depart largely by early May, though a few stragglers have been seen until early June (Unitt 1984). No distinct peaks of migration have been reported, but a count of 79 in the San Diego Bay salt works (U10/V10) 3 November 1993 was exceptionally high (Stadtlander and Konecny 1994).

Summering nonbreeders do not remain on rocky shorelines but they do in small numbers on San Diego Bay. Macdonald et al. (1990) reported two on 24 June 1988; Stadtlander and Konecny (1994) had up to 10 in June 1994. During the atlas period our only records of probably summering Black Turnstones were of one at North Island (S8) 27 May 2000 (R. T. Patton) and five on the jetty and Camp Del Mar (G4) 3 July 1999 (P. A. Ginsburg), though these could have been a late spring migrant and early fall migrants, respectively.

Conservation: The Black Turnstone's minor gain of habitat in the form of breakwaters and riprap is overshadowed by the loss of mudflats around Mission and San Diego bays.

