

Chestnut-collared Longspur *Calcarius ornatus*

The main winter range of the Chestnut-collared Longspur lies east of the Colorado River. In southern California, the species is rare and perhaps sporadic in fall and winter, occurring in dry grassland and agricultural fields. Since the 1970s, it has become much less frequent, as a result of loss of habitat locally, in the breeding range, or both.

Migration: In San Diego County, the Chestnut-collared, like the other longspurs, has been reported most often from the Tijuana River valley. Other fall locations include Point Loma (S7) and Lake Henshaw (G17). The species occurs primarily from mid October to late November; 9 October (1974, one at Point Loma, J. L. Dunn) is the earliest date.

Winter: There is no clear distinction between fall and winter records of the Chestnut-collared Longspur. Reports for January and February are of one at Lake Henshaw 9 January 1977 (AB 31:375, 1977), up to 20 there 7–13 January 1978 (AB 32:402, 1978), 25 at Whelan Lake (G6) 6 February 1977 (AB 31:375, 1977), and one at Lake Cuyamaca (M20) 8 February 1987 (J. O'Brien, AB 41:332, 1987). The flocks at Henshaw and Whelan were the largest ever reported in the county.



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Conservation: With the development of most sites where the Chestnut-collared Longspur formerly occurred in coastal southern California, the species has gone from regular if uncommon to casual or absent. In San Diego County the only records 1997–2003 were from the sod farm in the Tijuana River valley (W11), of three 16–20 October 1999 (G. McCaskie), one 17 October 2000 (J. A. Martin), and one 19 October 2000 (E. Copper).