

**Evening Grosbeak *Coccothraustes vespertinus***

A denizen of boreal forests, the Evening Grosbeak breeds in the Sierra Nevada but not in southern California. In San Diego County it is a rare and sporadic visitor, mainly to the mountains in winter.

**Winter:** Most reports of the Evening Grosbeak in San Diego County are from Palomar Mountain (up to 40 on 9 February 1987, K. L. Weaver, AB 41:332, 1987), the Cuyamaca Mountains (up to eight on 11 November 1997, P. A. Ginsburg, NASFN 51:119, 1997), and the Laguna Mountains (up to 20 from 2 to 18 January 1987,

B. McCausland, AB 41:332, 1987). There are only 12 records below 1500 feet elevation, one as far southwest as the Tijuana River valley (20–22 October 1966, AFN 21:80, 1967).

Like many members of the finch family, the Evening Grosbeak is irregular in its movements. Years may pass with no reports for San Diego County, then, as in 1955–56, 1972–73, 1984–85, or 1986–87, there is a small irruption, often coinciding with irruptions of other finches. During the atlas period, there were no records of the grosbeak between 1997, when an irruption the preceding winter yielded a spring straggler in Noble Canyon, Laguna Mountains (O22), 15 May (R. A. Hamilton, FN 51:927, 1997), and 2001, when at least five were at Paso Picacho Campground, Cuyamaca Rancho State Park (M20), 6 January–4 February (G. C. Hazard, M. B. Mulrooney).

**Migration:** San Diego County records of the Evening Grosbeak extend from 9 October (1972, one at Palomar Mountain, AB 27:125, 1973) to 13 February (1985, two at San Diego, R. E. Webster, AB 39:211, 1985) and from 26 April (2001, one at Paso Picacho Campground, R. Thériault) to 25 May (1971, three at Palomar Mountain, AB 25:804, 1971). The eight spring records include the only desert or desert-edge records, from Yaqui Well (I24) 16 May 1964 (AFN 18:488, 1964) and Jacumba (U28) 30 April 1978 (AB 32:1057, 1978).



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

**Taxonomy:** In lack of a specimen, the subspecies of the Evening Grosbeak reaching San Diego County is not definitely known. But all specimens from elsewhere in California, migrants as well as breeding birds, have been ascribed to *C. v. brooksi* (Grinnell, 1917), which breeds from British Columbia south through the western United States to central Arizona. Shorter-billed nominate *C. v. vespertinus* (Cooper, 1825), breeding in Canada, has reached as far as Arizona, however, as attested by two specimens collected during the invasion of 1955–56 (Phillips et al. 1964).