

EXOTIC AND HYPOTHETICAL SPECIES

The following section addresses species that have been observed in San Diego County since 1984 but are not native and do not (yet) have a well-established self-sustaining population in the wild. Probably or undoubtedly their occurrence in the county is based on escapees from captivity. They range from more or less domesticated birds with little chance of establishing themselves to others, such as the Black-throated Magpie-Jay and Northern Cardinal, well on their way to becoming naturalized. Eight introduced species (Ring-necked Pheasant, Wild Turkey, Domestic Pigeon, Eurasian Collared Dove, Spotted Dove, Red-crowned Parrot, European Starling, House Sparrow) that have been considered established, at least in the past, are covered with the native species on the

main list. Observers for this atlas reported still more escaped cage birds than are listed here, such as the Golden-fronted Leafbird (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) and Rufous Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*); this section addresses only species seen repeatedly, species possibly establishing themselves elsewhere in North America, and species given some consideration by the California Bird Records Committee as prospective natural vagrants.

Also in this section are species reported in *North American Birds* or its predecessors that have been discounted by the California Bird Records Committee. Hypothetical species addressed in my 1984 *Birds of San Diego County* are not repeated here.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck

Dendrocygna autumnalis

Two in the Tijuana River estuary (V10) 24 May 1986 were probably escapees from captivity (R. T. Patton, Langham 1991). Nevertheless, the frequency of natural vagrants in the Salton Sink is increasing, with 19 records for that

area by 2002 (Patten et al. 2003). Thus the Black-bellied Whistling-Duck could join the Painted Bunting as a species of which both vagrants and escapees are likely in San Diego County.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Native to Eurasia, the Mute Swan has been introduced in North America as an ornamental waterfowl. Semidomesticated, the swan has increased in the suburban landscape and spread to the point where it is considered a nuisance in some states. In San Diego County the Mute Swan population is still small, possibly not yet self sustaining.

Breeding distribution: Mute Swans were released at the lake within the Del Mar racetrack (M7) sometime before



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

1997, where they have been fed by racetrack officials, nested repeatedly, and increased (A. Mauro). This source is presumably responsible for the swans seen in the adjacent San Dieguito River estuary (two from 22 April to 10 June 2000, A. Dempsey, D. R. Grine) and at San Elijo Lagoon (L7; up to two on 8 July 1998, A. Mauro, and 22 April 2000, R. T. Patton). Mute Swans elsewhere in the county may be the result of independent introductions. The only site of more than three and of confirmed nesting is Lake San Marcos (18/J8), with up to 12, including cygnets, 14 May and 8 June 1997 (J. O. Zimmer).

Winter: In winter as in the breeding season, Lake San Marcos was our principal site for the Mute Swan, with up to 11 on 27 December 1997 and 9 on 2 February 1999 (J. O. Zimmer). The least-expected site was a pond at the Roadrunner Club, Borrego Springs (F24), where there was one Mute Swan 28 February 1999 (P. D. Jorgensen).

Conservation: This account is the first published report of the Mute Swan's occurrence and nesting in San Diego County. The species was not reported on any Christmas bird count in the county before 1997, though it may have been seen but dismissed as an escapee from captivity. Because of its history of establishing feral populations, the Mute Swan should not be ignored.

Possible negative effects of the Mute Swan's increase include its depleting the food supply for native waterfowl. In Maryland, Mute Swans have trampled eggs and chicks of the Least Tern (Ciaranca et al. 1997). Another threat is



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

the last thing the Least Tern needs in San Diego County.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Native to Eurasia and north Africa, the Ruddy Shelduck is a popular ornamental waterfowl. Birds kept at the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club (P7) are apparently responsible for repeated sightings around La Jolla, including the Torrey Pines golf course, Black's Beach, and Southwest Fisheries Science Center (O7). One found near the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club 23 January 2000 is preserved as SDNHM 50468. No more than two were reported during the atlas period 1997–2002, but eight flew by the Southwest Fisheries Science Center 20 April 2004 (S. E. Smith). In April 2003, an apparent pair were entering and exiting a cave in the cliff face above Black's Beach, suggesting a possible nest site (S. E. Smith). Six were at Crown Point, Mission Bay (Q8), 2 November 2002 (M. A. Faulkner), and one was at a pond just north of Imperial Beach (V10) 31 March 2003 (R. Bledsoe).



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*

As one of the world's most exquisite and popular waterfowl, the Mandarin Duck is kept commonly in captivity. Thus reports from seven locations during the atlas period were not a surprise. All were of single individuals, except at a pond along Buena Creek 2.7 miles southeast of downtown Vista (H8). Here J. O. Zimmer noted a pair on 13 May 1999 and up to eight on 3 January 2000. The Mandarin Duck is not established as a feral bird in California, but such establishment becomes ever more likely with the spreading provision of nest boxes for Wood Ducks. In Fallbrook (D8) in 2003, rehabilitator Terri Halverson reported at least three breeding pairs and a brood of six chicks found when their nest tree was chopped down.

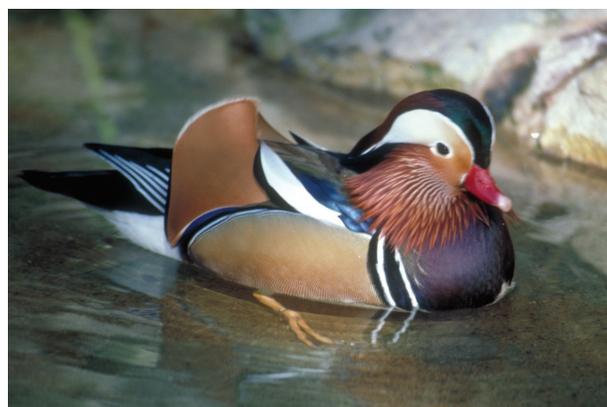


Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Band-rumped or Harcourt's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*

The California Bird Records Committee once accepted a sighting of this difficult-to-identify species 25 miles west of San Diego 12 September 1970 (McCaskie 1990), but it

later reversed itself (Garrett and Singer 1998). There are no well-supported records near California.

Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*

The California Bird Records Committee has accepted a sighting 145 nautical miles west-southwest of San Diego

16 August 1980 (Roberson 1993), but this location is closer to Mexico than to San Diego.

Nazca Booby *Sula granti*

One came aboard a boat 50 nautical miles west of Punta Banda, Baja California, 27 May 2001, and rode the boat as it came into San Diego Bay. Therefore, the bird's occurrence in San Diego was clearly not natural, and the California Bird Records Committee did not add the

species to the list of California birds (Garrett and Wilson 2003). A sibling species of the Masked Booby, the Nazca Booby nests largely on the Galapagos and Malpelo islands, with only a few nesting on Mexico's San Benedicto Island, possibly on the Alijos Rocks (Pitman and Jehl 1998).

Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

The seemingly simple identification of the Anhinga has now been complicated by local sightings of that species' counterpart in the Old World, the Darter. Free-flying

Darters in the Western Hemisphere are undoubtedly escapees from captivity; the species is raised at the San Diego Wild Animal Park and San Diego Zoo. In southern California and Baja California at least two Darters

have been reported from the Imperial Valley, one near Ensenada. In San Diego County one was at Barrett Lake (S18) 2 February and 7 April 2001 (R. and S. L. Breisch,

J. Hannan) and one, probably a Darter rather than an Anhinga, flew over the San Carlos area of San Diego (Q12) 7 April 2002 (J. Morris).

Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway*

The Crested Caracara is resident as far northwest as central Baja California and southern Arizona, where its numbers are declining. But the status of at least 10 reports of caracaras in California is clouded by the question of whether the birds were escapees from captivity. One was photographed in San Diego County near the edge of the Sweetwater River estuary (U10) 9 February 1995 (R. Christie, B. C. Moore; Garrett and Singer 1998).



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Red-necked Stint or Rufous-necked Sandpiper *Calidris ruficollis*

The record of a juvenile photographed in the Tijuana River valley 10 August 1980 (AB 35:226, 1981) was not accepted by the California Bird Records Committee

(Roberson 1986). All nine of the species' well-supported occurrences elsewhere in California are of birds in the more easily identified adult breeding plumage.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

The report of one at Point Loma (S7) 23 January 1990 (AB 44:329, 1990) was not accepted by the California Bird Records Committee. Nevertheless, there are 20 well-supported winter records elsewhere in California, south to Huntington Beach, Orange County.



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Ringed Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia risoria*

The Ringed Turtle-Dove, the domesticated form of the African Collared Dove (*S. roseogrisea*), was one of the first birds to be domesticated. It remains one of the most popular cage birds. Escapees are seen in San Diego County from time to time (two reported by atlas observers), but no nesting in the wild has been confirmed here, and no feral population has established itself anywhere in California.



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus*

The Cockatiel is native to Australia and very popular as a cage bird in San Diego County. Thus occasional escapees are to be expected; atlas observers reported them twice. Unlike some less-frequently held species of the

Psittaciformes, the Cockatiel shows no evidence of establishing a feral population in southern California and is not confirmed to have nested here in the wild.

Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus*

Native to Australia, the Budgerigar is bred commercially in captivity and known generally in America simply as the "parakeet." It has established a feral population in Florida

but not in California. Atlas observers reported escapees in San Diego County twice.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

The Rose-ringed Parakeet, of Old World origin, is establishing itself in metropolitan Los Angeles (population at least 60, Garrett 1997) and Bakersfield (population about 500, A. Sheehy unpubl. data). In San Diego County its nesting is not yet confirmed. In spring 1998, J. A. Martin saw up to four at a communal parrot roost near Point

Loma High School (R8), then no more until May 2002, after which he saw single individuals or pairs in Ocean Beach (R7) irregularly into 2004. He has seen the birds feeding on the flowers of bottlebrush and the fruits of the Canary Island date palm. An apparent pair was at Famosa Slough (R8) 15 July 2000 (A. E. Klovstad).

Moustached or Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*

The Moustached Parakeet, of Asian origin, is a frequent cagebird, and one escapee was reported from Poway (M11). This species has been seen in urban areas else-

where in southern California but has not been naturalized (Garrett 1997).

Blue-and-yellow Macaw *Ara ararauna*

Up to two were seen around Ocean Beach and Point Loma (R7/S7) from at least 1992 through February 2001 (V. P. Johnson). These represent at least three individuals, as one was found contaminated with oil and died in 1998 (B. Kenk), yet a pair was copulating, tearing pieces off a billboard, and entering a cavity behind the billboard 13 June 1999 (J. C. Worley). After 2001, a single bird remained in Ocean Beach into 2004, feeding on loquats and the fruits of other ornamental trees and associating with a captive bird kept in an outdoor yard (J. A. Martin). In summer 1992, a Blue-and-yellow Macaw hybridized with a Red-and-green Macaw (*A. chloroptera*) on Point Loma, raising one young in a cavity at the top of a dead palm tree along Hill Street (R. E. Webster, AB 46:1180, 1992). Another Blue-and-yellow showed up at Morena Village (T22; R. and S. L. Breisch); escapees of this much-loved South American species could be anywhere.



Photo by Kenneth W. Fink

Blue-crowned Parakeet *Aratinga acuticaudata*

Atlas observers reported the Blue-crowned Parakeet, a native of South America, on several occasions from Pacific Beach (Q7), Ocean Beach (R7/R8), and Point Loma (S7). The birds were often in flocks, the largest being 25 at Point Loma 9 February (J. C. Worley). From 2001 to 2004, J. A. Martin noted 4 to 20 daily in Ocean Beach, with a pair investigating a cavity in a vent on the side of a house 13 April 2001 and a pair feeding two fledglings 18 August

2001. Paul Jorgensen noted two at Borrego Springs (F24) 21 February 1999, and I saw small flocks coming repeatedly to my home in North Park (R10) in the summers of 1993 and 1994, feeding on the fruits of the Catalina cherry trees I had planted there. The Blue-crowned Parakeet may be more numerous in San Diego than in metropolitan Los Angeles, where Garrett (1997) estimated the population at less than 50 birds.

Mitred Parakeet *Aratinga mitrata*

The Mitred Parakeet is the most common naturalized conure in the Los Angeles region, where Garrett (1997) estimated a population of 680. In the Point Loma area of San Diego, however, the similar Red-masked Parakeet predominates. Atlas observers reported a maximum of only two of the Mitred, at Point Loma (S7) 13 and 20 April

1998 (V. P. Johnson). The Mitred can easily be overlooked, however, as it is entirely green except for variable, irregular, and often inconspicuous red markings on the head. The species is native to the Andes of Peru, Bolivia, and northern Argentina.

Red-masked Parakeet *Aratinga erythrogenys*

The Red-masked Parakeet, known to aviculturists as the Cherry-headed Conure, has only a small native range in southwestern Ecuador and northwestern Peru. It has become a popular cage bird, and escapees have established themselves in San Diego County in Ocean Beach (R7) and Point Loma (S7), with a pair also noted in Tecolote Canyon (Q8) 10 June 1999 (J. C. Worley).

The largest flock yet reported was 29 near Point Loma Nazarene University 9 February 2000 and 7 May 2001 (J. C. Worley, M. Billings). The species has nested probably since 1997 and definitely since 1998, when an adult was feeding two fledglings at Point Loma on 9 April (V. P. Johnson). John A. Martin saw an adult feeding a fledgling at Ocean Beach in spring 1999.

Black-hooded Parakeet or Nanday Conure *Nandayus nenday*

This South American species may be established in several areas of metropolitan Los Angeles, where Garrett (1997) estimated a population of at least 180. But in San

Diego County our only sighting during the atlas period was of three in El Cajon (Q13) 17 September 1997 (D. C. Seals).

Lilac-crowned Parrot *Amazona finschi*

The status of the Lilac-crowned Parrot in San Diego County is somewhat unclear; it is reported occasionally but is easily overlooked among the more numerous Red-crowned Parrots, with which it often flocks. Sightings since 1997 have all been in the same areas where the Red-crowned Parrot concentrates, Mission Bay/Ocean Beach/Point Loma (Q7/Q8/R7/R8/S7) and El Cajon (Q13/Q14). High counts are of about 40 in a mixed roost of parrots at Point Loma High School (R8) 31 January 1998 (J. A. Martin), 12 along Lomaland Drive, Point Loma (S7), 24 May 2003 (J. C. Worley), and three in east El Cajon (Q14) 8 July 1999 (K. Neal). One was shot in Borrego Springs (F24) 3 April 1996 (SDNHM 49500). Since 1998 the Lilac-crowned has followed the same seasonal pattern in Ocean Beach as the Red-crowned (J. A. Martin). In Los Angeles as in San Diego the Red-crowned is the predominant species of *Amazona*, though in the early 1980s the Lilac-crowned was imported in greater numbers—at least the numbers imported legally known to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Garrett 1997). The Lilac-crowned Parrot



Photo by Kenneth W. Fink

is widespread in western mainland Mexico, ranging north to the southeastern corner of Sonora.

Yellow-crowned Parrot *Amazona ochrocephala*

The Yellow-headed Parrot (*Amazona oratrix*) persists in small, possibly declining numbers in Los Angeles and Orange counties, with nesting confirmed at least twice (Gallagher 1997, Garrett 1997). But in San Diego County, during the atlas period, our closest thing to a sighting

of this species was one of the closely related Yellow-crowned Parrot in Poway (M12; K. J. Winter), presumably an escapee from captivity. On 4 May 2003 J. A. Martin and S. Lynn noted a free-flying Yellow-headed in Ocean Beach (R7).

Northern Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium gnoma*

Though reported in San Diego County repeatedly, back to Sharp (1907) and Willett (1933), the Northern Pygmy-Owl has never been collected or photographed in California south of the San Bernardino Mountains. The lack of conclusive sightings of this largely diurnal species during the atlas period, when all other resident birds were observed repeatedly, convinced me that the Northern Pygmy-Owl does not occur in San Diego County. All reports are hear-

say, based on poor views, or based on calls only, which can be confused easily with calls of the Northern Saw-whet Owl, Mountain Quail, or Merriam's Chipmunk. When presented with the evidence that the pygmy-owl is in fact absent from San Diego County, most of the few living observers who had claimed the species in the county readily recanted their previous claims.

Broad-tailed Hummingbird *Selasphorus platycercus*

The Broad-tailed is the common hummingbird of the Rocky Mountains, but San Diego County lies well outside its normal migration route. None of the four records is supported by a photograph or specimen, so the species' inclusion on the county's bird list is dubious. Though adult males can be identified easily if the characteristic trilled whine of their wings is heard, there is plenty of opportunity for misidentification of this species, as with all hummingbirds.

Black-throated Magpie-Jay *Calocitta colliei*

William E. Haas

A creature that could have sprung from the mind of Dr. Seuss, this bizarre long-tailed corvid is establishing itself in riparian woodlands in southwestern San Diego County. The Black-throated Magpie-Jay is endemic to mainland Mexico, residing in open deciduous woodlands at low elevations of the Pacific slope from southern Sonora to northern Jalisco. Its occurrence in San Diego County is not natural but the result of the pet trade in nearby Tijuana, where the species is popular (Hamilton 2001). The species is kept in aviaries in San Diego County as well; escapees from these presumably account for sightings in northern San Diego County.

Breeding distribution: The Black-throated Magpie-Jay nested successfully at two locations during the atlas period, both in the Tijuana River valley (W10). The first nesting was by a group of three in Goat Canyon in 2000; they continued through 2002. Drought then killed the willow trees in which the birds had nested; after the trees fell, the family moved a short distance east to Smuggler Gulch. A different pair has nested successfully along the Tijuana River just west of Hollister Street since 2001, shifting to a new tree annually (W. E. Haas). At least two Black-throated Magpie-Jays have remained along the Sweetwater River near the Plaza Bonita shopping mall, Bonita (T11), since 1997 (P. Famolaro). They were first confirmed nesting there in 2002, fledging two young (W. E. Haas).

Black-throated Magpie-Jays seen at Jamul (S15) in 2000 and at Point Loma (S7) in 1999 and 2000 (P. A. Ginsburg, S. E. Smith) were probably escapees from local aviaries, although the possibility that these were dispersing individuals from Bonita or the Tijuana River valley should not be dismissed. The species is becoming popular in private collections in the United States as well as in Mexico. Since 2002, I have noted captive magpie-jays at several San Diego County locations, including Jamul, Escondido, and Fallbrook.

Nesting: Typical of the family Corvidae, Black-throated Magpie-Jays build untidy, bulky nests of twigs lined with mosses and lichens. They nest socially, all adults in the family group contributing to the gathering of nest material and nest building. The breeding female then

Guy McCaskie now questions his report of a male in the Tijuana River valley 8 September 1968 (AFN 23:109, 1969). Other published records are of a male attracted to red balloons at a birthday party near the Palomar Observatory (D15) 11–12 July 1978 (R. Higson, AB 33:218, 1969), a male at Point Loma (S7) 14 September 1982 (R. E. Webster, AB 37:224, 1983), and a female at Point Loma 10 May 1986 (R. E. Webster, AB 40:524, 1986).

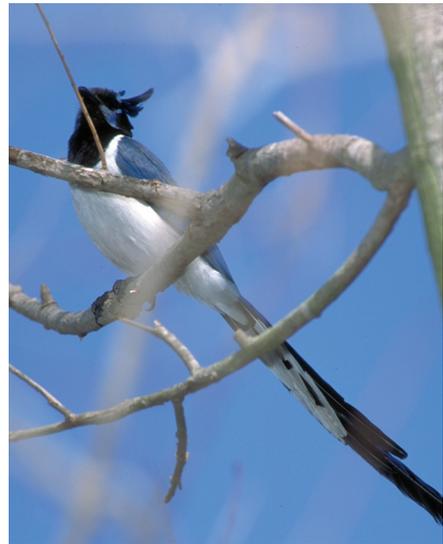


Photo by Anthony Mercieca

rearranges the material to her liking. In 2000 the Goat Canyon family had one helper and raised two fledglings; in 2001 it had three helpers and raised three fledglings. Helpers, however, are not necessary to nest success—the Tijuana River clan, which fledged two offspring in 2001, consisted of just a pair.

All nests (Goat Canyon 2000–2001; Tijuana River 2001; Bonita 2002) were in arroyo willows between 5 and 10 meters above the ground. Nests required almost a month to build; building proceeded slowly at first, then the rate increased gradually to completion, presumably through the time the female was ready to lay. For three nests observed, the incubation period lasted approximately 18–20 days. The female rarely left the nest, even when her mate and any helpers approached and fed her.

The nesting season in San Diego County extends from March to July, although breeding records from Mexico suggest the species may breed from November to July (Howell and Webb 1995). The two periods follow seasonal rains respective to each area.

Winter: San Diego County's Black-throated Magpie-Jays move only short distances from their breeding habitat to feed in nearby agricultural fields and residential neighborhoods. Winter records during the atlas period all come from the vicinity of breeding sites, with up to four in Bonita 15 December 2001 (J. A. Martin) and eight in the southwest quadrant of the Tijuana River Valley the same day (G. L. Rogers). Guy McCaskie has noted groups

of up to 10 foraging in backyard fruit trees in Imperial Beach (V10), about 1.5 miles from the nearest nest.

Conservation: Despite its attractive appearance and intriguing behaviors, the Black-throated Magpie-Jay is an exotic species. Its behavior to date does not suggest that it is becoming an invasive pest. Corvids, however, are notoriously hardy and have the potential to wreak havoc on agriculture. They are important nest predators of native passerines. And they are the primary carriers of the West Nile virus. The Black-throated Magpie-Jay could thus affect native riparian birds, especially the

endangered Least Bell's Vireo, for which the Tijuana River valley is now a major population center. The magpie-jay's potential to increase is exemplified by the survivorship of the Goat Canyon clan—all individuals fledged from 2000 to 2002 persisted through 2003.

Taxonomy: There are two magpie-jays in the genus *Calocitta*, the Black-throated and the White-throated (*C. formosa*). Although they have sometimes been considered conspecific (e.g., Blake and Vaurie 1962), studies of mitochondrial DNA suggest they are separate species (Saunders and Edwards 2000).

Green Jay *Cyanocorax yncas*

Yet another Mexican corvid seen occasionally as an

escapee in San Diego County is the Green Jay. For example, one was in La Mesa (R12) 21 January 2002 (J. Spain).

Purplish-backed or Beechey's Jay *Cyanocorax beecheii*

Originating from western mainland Mexico, this black-and-blue jay with a golden eye is seen occasionally in the Tijuana River valley. Like the Black-throated Magpie-Jay, it undoubtedly arrived as a cage bird escaping in Tijuana, then flying across the border. Free-flying Purplish-backed Jays have been seen in Tijuana at Parque Morelos (M. A. Patten). Unlike the magpie-jay, it is not known to have nested on the U.S. side, though two were together along the Tijuana River (W11) 8 December 1998 (P. Unitt). The similar San Blas Jay (*Cyanocorax sanblasianus*), another Mexican species, may also occur there as an escapee.



Photo by Kenneth W. Fink

Gray Silky-flycatcher *Ptilogonys cinereus*

The Gray Silky-flycatcher resides in the mountains of Mexico and Guatemala, ranging no farther northwest than southeastern Sonora. Sightings in southern California presumably represent escapees from captivity, especially since some have appeared ragged from cage wear. The species is sold in Baja California (Hamilton 2001, pers. obs.), and there are no acceptable records from Arizona. From San Diego County, the California Bird Records Committee has

received one report from Poway (M11/M12; 10–12 March 1994, Howell and Pyle 1997) and three from Point Loma (S7; 4 June 1983, Rottenborn and Morlan 2000; 24 May 1993, McCaskie and San Miguel 1999; 16 June 1999, Rogers and Jaramillo 2002). Supposing there is some chance the species could reach California as a natural vagrant, the committee has included the Gray Silky-flycatcher on its “supplemental list” (Rogers and Jaramillo 2002).

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*

In the early 1980s this Asian species multiplied in San Diego after several escaped from the San Diego Zoo. But

the county department of agriculture considered them a prospective pest and exterminated them in 1983.

White-collared Seedeater *Sporophila torqueola*

The White-collared Seedeater occurs primarily in Central America and mainland Mexico, north on the Pacific side only to Sinaloa. It is a frequent cage bird in Baja California (Hamilton 2001), and escapees flying across the border presumably account for the repeated sightings in the Tijuana River valley (V11/W11). The birds have not yet been reported nesting there, but up to three individuals

have been seen, as on 9 December 2001 (G. McCaskie). The White-collared Seedeaters seen in the Tijuana River valley are of the west Mexican subspecies *torqueola* or *atriceps*, in which the males are more boldly patterned in black, white, and buff than in the northeast Mexican subspecies *sharpei*, the subspecies reaching southern Texas and illustrated in North American field guides.

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*

The cardinal reaches San Diego County not from the east but from the south—as an escapee from captivity, flying across the border. Hamilton (2001) found it to be one of the most commonly sold cagebirds in northern Baja California. Since the mid 1990s, the cardinal has established itself as an uncommon resident in the Tijuana River valley, nesting successfully (e.g., adults feeding young in Goat Canyon, W10, 23 May 2000, W. E. Haas). Our highest counts were of no more than two per day, but several pairs may be scattered through the valley. We also noted the species on six occasions elsewhere in the county, north to Valley Center (G11; V. Dineen). There is no evidence of the small population of the eastern subspecies established in Los Angeles County spreading south.

One specimen, a male from eastern Otay Mesa (V14)

11 December 2000 (SDNHM 50492), is either *C. c. seftoni*, native to central Baja California, or *C. c. affinis*, native to western mainland Mexico from southern Sonora south through Sinaloa. The pattern of black on the face and gray edges on the feathers of the back match the subspecies of western Mexico and the southwestern United States. It is too small (wing 96 mm, tail 110 mm) for *superbus* of Arizona and does not have the bill as bulbous as in *igneus* of southern Baja California. How *seftoni* and *affinis* may differ is not clear; Huey (1940) did not compare them in his original description of *seftoni*. In any case, the bird's subspecies confirms an origin in Mexico. This individual must have escaped just before being picked up by an agent of the Border Patrol; the plumage was still spattered with excrement.

Black-backed Oriole *Icterus abeillei*

One was in Smuggler's Gulch, Tijuana River valley (W10), 9 April–1 July 2000, 28 April–4 July 2001, and 2–13 January 2002, at least (J. E. Hunter, Garrett and Wilson 2003). The species is endemic to central Mexico, ranging north only to central Durango. Although Hamilton (2001) did not find it being sold as a cage bird in northern Baja California, he did see other orioles for sale. Most likely the

bird escaped from captivity in Tijuana and flew across the border; its site in Smuggler's Gulch is less than a half mile north of the line. Nevertheless, the California Bird Records Committee expressed some ambivalence about the bird's origin by placing the Black-backed Oriole on its "supplemental list" with other species given some small chance of reaching the state unaided (Cole and McCaskie 2004).

Orange Bishop *Euplectes franciscanus*

The Orange Bishop, a cage bird of African origin, is establishing itself in flood-control basins and along the concrete-lined rivers of the Los Angeles region. By the late 1990s it was occurring in flocks of up to 100 birds (Garrett 1998). The species has colonized Phoenix, Arizona, as well, nesting in cattails and feeding on the exotic Johnson grass (Gatz 2001). In San Diego County the first report was from Agua Hedionda Lagoon (I6) 8 September 1999 (R. Gransbury). Since then, a few individuals have been

seen at scattered locations in the coastal lowland. So far the only site with more than one report and more than one individual is Famosa Slough (R8), with two on 30 August 2003 (B. J. Peugh). When in breeding plumage the male Orange Bishop can be confused only with other species of the genus *Euplectes*; the sparrowlike striped female may be confusing but differs from any North American species by its pinkish bill. For more details, see Garrett (1998).

Nutmeg Mannikin *Lonchura punctulata*

Long a popular cage bird, the Nutmeg Mannikin is becoming naturalized in southern California. By the beginning of the 21st century it was locally common in Los Angeles and Orange counties (Garrett 2000). But in San Diego County sightings to date have been only sporadic. Nesting is possible in the Tijuana River valley (V11), where the species has been seen repeatedly since at least December 1999 (up to six on 30 December 1999, G. McCaskie), and probable in Tecolote Canyon (Q8), where the species occurred

regularly at least from June 1999 to February 2002 (up to eight, including five immatures, on 17 February 2002, H. E. Stone). Atlas observers reported single individuals from Fallbrook (E8), the upper end of Lake Hodges (K11), and San Elijo Lagoon (L7). This member of the family Estrildidae is native from India east and south to the Philippines and Indonesia. The adult is easily recognized by the fine scaly pattern on its breast and belly; for identification of the plain brown juvenile, see Garrett (2000).