

Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina*

Over the last two decades of the 20th century, several warblers nesting in the Canadian taiga decreased as vagrants to California, while several others nesting in the southeastern United States increased. Preeminent among the latter is the Hooded Warbler, which irrupted from 1992 to 1994, nesting in California for the first time in Los Angeles and Kern counties in 1992. The species was first reported from San Diego County in 1967, but by 2003 at least 50 had been seen here.



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Migration: Unlike most vagrant warblers, the Hooded is more frequent in San Diego County in spring than in fall. Fall records number 13, extending from 11 September (1988, Point Loma, S7, J. L. Dunn, AB 43:170, 1989; 2002, Oceanside, H5, S. Gustafson, NAB 57:118, 2003) to 28 November (1967, Borrego Palm Canyon, F23, McCaskie 1970). The last record is the only one for fall not along the coast.

Hooded Warbler records in spring and early summer (there is no clear division between the two) extend from 16 April (1993, Green Valley, K7, D. R. Willick, AB 47:454, 1993) to 30 June (1998, banded in West Sycamore Canyon, O12, P. A. Campbell, FN 52:504, 1998). Most at this season are along the coast, but some are well scattered inland in riparian woodland where the species might nest, as along the Santa Margarita River north of Fallbrook (C8) 5–19 June 1992 and 24 May 2001 (K. L. Weaver), along Fallbrook Creek in the Fallbrook Naval Weapons Station (D6) 1 June 2001 (P. A. Campbell), along Keys Creek near Turner Reservoir (G11) 22 May 1992 (C. G. Edwards), and along Kitchen Creek between Highway 80 and Interstate 8 (R22) 14 June 1993 (P. Unitt, AB 47:1151, 1993). Six spring records from the Anza–Borrego Desert encompass one from Culp Valley (G23; 15–16 June 1997,

R. Thériault, FN 51:1055, 1997), one from Tamarisk Grove (I24; 15 May 2003, M. B. Mulrooney), three from Agua Caliente Springs (M26), and one from Dos Cabezas Spring (S29; 11 May 1973, AB 27:822, 1973). The Hooded Warbler's irregularity continued through the atlas period with yearly totals varying from zero in 1999 and 2000 to six in spring 2001.

Winter: Four Hooded Warblers are known to have wintered in San Diego County, one at Sweetwater Dam (S12) 17 December 1977–27 January 1978 (AB 32:401, 1978), two in residential areas of Coronado (S9), 11 December 1988–18 March 1989 (G. McCaskie, AB 43:368, 1989) and 31 October 2002–7 March 2003 (E. Copper, NAB 57:118, 259, 2003), and one nearby at North Island Naval Air Station (S8) 15 December 2001 (R. T. Patton, NAB 56:224, 2002).

Conservation: The sudden upsurge in Hooded Warblers in California may represent the beginnings of a range expansion. Patten and Marantz (1996) reviewed several hypotheses such as unusual weather conditions, displacement from degraded habitat, and population increase that might account for the change. The convergence of multiple factors seems likely.