

Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*

The Lapland Longspur nests in the Arctic; in the New World, it winters mostly in the northern contiguous United States. San Diego County is well to the south of its main winter range. Like the other longspurs, the Lapland seeks fields of short grass or bare dirt. With such places becoming ever fewer, longspurs are becoming less and less frequent in San Diego County.

Migration: The Lapland Longspur occurs in San Diego County mainly as a rare migrant in late fall, from mid October to mid December. Most records are of single birds with flocks of Horned Larks; the county's maximum was 10 Lapland Longspurs in the Tijuana River valley 22–27 November 1975. The earliest record, of one collected at Mission Bay (Q8) 2 October 1909 (Stephens 1910, SDNHM 917) was the first for San Diego County and tied as first for California. The only spring record is of one at Mission Bay 21 March 1987 (J. White, AB 41:490, 1987). Most of the county's Lapland Longspurs have been found in the Tijuana River valley; there are also a few from Otay Mesa (V13), Point Loma (S7), and Lake Henshaw (G17).

Winter: San Diego County records of the Lapland Longspur that could be considered to represent wintering birds are from the Tijuana River valley 3 January 1965 (AFN 19:334, 1965) and 13 January 1978 (AB 32:402, 1978) and from Lake Henshaw 29 December 1977 (AB



Photo by Richard E. Webster

32:402, 1978), 3–22 December 1983 (R. Higson, AB 38:359, 1984), and 3–11 January 1987 (D. B. King, AB 41:332, 1987).

Conservation: In San Diego County, like all the longspurs, the Lapland has decreased in frequency since the 1970s with the decline in agriculture. Possibly the trend toward warmer winters drives fewer longspurs as far south as San Diego. The only county records since 1996 are of single birds at the Tijuana River valley sod farm (W11) 23 October 1998 (E. Copper) and 20 October 1999 (G. McCaskie) and at Point Loma 24 October–5 November 2002 (G. McCaskie).

Taxonomy: California specimens of the Lapland Longspur are *C. l. alascensis* Ridgway, 1898.