

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*

Though a common postbreeding visitor and even a sporadic breeding species at the Salton Sea, the Laughing Gull is only a rare vagrant to the Pacific coast of California. In contrast to its status as an almost exclusively summer visitor just to the east, in San Diego County the Laughing Gull has no strong seasonal pattern; the approximately 30 records are scattered throughout the year.

Winter: The atlas study from 1997 to 2002 was a slow period for the Laughing Gull in San Diego County,



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

yielding just one record, of two first-winter birds at Buena Vista Lagoon (H6) 16 January–28 March 1998 (T. Hathaway, FN 52:257, 1998). The winter of 2002–03, however, was unusual in having three. Winter records of the Laughing Gull in San Diego County are coastal or up to 13 miles inland, as far as Santee Lakes (P12; 17 January–12 February 1993, C. G. Edwards, AB 47:301, 1993) and Lake Murray (Q11; 8–29 December 2002, M. Sadowski, NAB 57:257, 2003).

Migration: There were no summer records of the Laughing Gull in San Diego County before 1983 (Unitt 1984). Since then five have accumulated, including one of an immature at Lake Henshaw (G17) 30 September 1983 (R. Higson, AB 38:247, 1984), which presumably arrived over the mountains from the southeast. Two adults were together at San Diego 4 June 1983 (D. M. Parker, AB 37:913, 1983).