

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

The Northern Goshawk is extremely rare in southern California, with only sporadic nesting in the high mountain forests. Surprisingly, one of the old nesting records is from San Diego County. Otherwise, only three winter vagrants are known in the county.

Winter: One was collected at Lower Otay Lake (U13) 9 November 1916 (Stephens 1919b, SDNHM 11577), one was collected at Mesa Grande (H17) 5 January 1928 (Abbott 1928b, SDNHM 11756), and one was seen at Palomar Mountain (D15) 22 March 1984 (R. Higson, AB 38:960, 1984). The winter of 1916–17 was an invasion year for goshawks throughout California and Arizona.

Breeding distribution: Kiff and Paulson (1997) reported a set of goshawk eggs, preserved at the Slater Museum of Natural History, University of Puget Sound, collected by E. E. Sechrist at 5000 feet elevation in the Cuyamaca Mountains 7 May 1937. On the data card accompanying the eggs Sechrist noted that he saw two young at the same location in June of the following year. There have been no subsequent reports from the area, and the next nearest known goshawk nests have been at Mount Pinos and Mount Abel in northern Ventura County, though there have been summer sightings in the intervening ranges (Kiff and Paulson 1997).



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Taxonomy: The specimens from San Diego County are the relatively pale *A. g. atricapillus* (Wilson, 1812), widespread across North America and the only subspecies of the Northern Goshawk known from California.