

### Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

Among the vagrants from eastern North America reaching San Diego County, the Rose-breasted Grosbeak is one of the most frequent. A few are seen annually in both spring and fall. Winter records average about one per year, and there are even a few records in mid summer.

**Migration:** Unlike many vagrants, the Rose-breasted Grosbeak is more numerous in spring than in fall. The spring of 2001 was exceptional, with at least 13. That year the species was seen at Point Loma (S7) continuously from 27 April to 7 June with up to three individuals per day. Most spring records are from mid May through mid June, but birds that were more likely spring migrants than winter visitors have been seen at Tamarisk Grove or Yaqui Well (I24) as early as 6–13 April (1986, B. Knaak, A. G. Morley) and 15 April (1990, A. G. Morley). During the atlas period, 1997–2001, our latest spring record was of one found dead in Chula Vista (T11) 24 June 1998 (SDNHM 50601), but there are at least six records for July, and one of a bird that remained in El Cajon (Q13) to 10 August 1969 (AFN 23:696, 1969).

Fall records are usually two to four per year, though 1986 had an exceptional 18. Fall dates are concentrated from late September to early November but range from 18 August (1986, Tijuana River valley, G. McCaskie) to 6 December (2001, Borrego Palm Canyon, F23, J. Determan) and 6–11 December (1987, Borrego Palm Canyon campground, R. Thériault).

**Winter:** Wintering Rose-breasted Grosbeaks average about one per year, so the atlas period was typical with five over its five years. Three of these, however, were on the grounds of the San Diego Zoo (R9) 15 December 2001 (M. B. Stowe, V. P. Johnson). The maximum in a



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

winter was five in 1982–83 (AB 37:347, 1983). Most of the county's wintering Rose-breasted Grosbeaks have been found in the parks and residential areas of metropolitan San Diego, but a few have been in the lowlands of the north county, such as one near Fallbrook (E7) 20 December 1998 (J. Ginger, P. A. Ginsburg) and one in Bonsall (F9) 1–15 January 1999 (J. Evans). Two records from the Anza–Borrego Desert, from the Roadrunner Club, Borrego Springs (F24), 16 March 1985 and Vallecito (M25) 16 March 1983, apparently represent winter visitors (ABDSP database).

**Breeding distribution:** The Rose-breasted Grosbeak is not known to nest in California, but occasional hybridization with the Black-headed Grosbeak is likely. A male at Pine Hills (K19) 14 June 1994 was paired with a female Black-headed (R. T. Patton), and a male along the Sunset Trail, Laguna Mountains (O22), 8 June 1997 was associating with a nesting pair of Black-headed (P. Unitt). The June specimen from Chula Vista was in breeding condition with enlarged testes.