

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Though primarily a species of the Old World, the Ruff is a regular rare migrant and winter visitor to North America. About 30 have been found in San Diego County, from 1962 through 2002. In this region, tidal mudflats, brackish lagoons, pastures, and fields of sod have all been habitat to the Ruff.

Winter: Only four individual Ruffs are known to have wintered in San Diego County, but one of these returned to the shore of San Diego Bay at Chula Vista (U10) for eight consecutive years, 1984–1991. The other winter records are from the Tijuana River valley 2 November 1968–6 April 1969 (AFN 23:108, 521, 1969) and 16–31 December 1989 (J. Oldenettel, AB 44:329, 1990), and from the south San Diego Bay salt works and nearby beach of the naval radio-receiving facility (U10/V10) 25 October 2002–30 March 2003 (D. M. Parker, G. McCaskie, NAB 57:257, 2003). One at Batiquitos Lagoon (J7) 31 March 1990 (D. R. Willick, AB 44:496, 1990) and California's first Ruff, in the San Diego River flood-control channel (R8) 30 March 1962 (McCaskie 1963, SDNHM 30290), may have been winter visitors or spring migrants.



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Migration: It is as a fall migrant that the Ruff is most frequent in San Diego County. All records are coastal except for one from Lake Henshaw (G17) 4–6 October 1982 (R. Higson, AB 37:224, 1983). The earliest fall record is from the Tijuana River valley 26 June 1983 (G. McCaskie, AB 37:1027, 1983). The bird wintering at Chula Vista was found as early as 15 July in 1984 and 19 July in 1989 (AB 39:103, 1985; 43:1368, 1989).