

Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus*

California's Central Valley is the southern end of the main winter range of the Tundra or Whistling Swan. Farther south, as in San Diego County, the swan is rare. In the five years of the atlas study only a single individual turned up.

Winter: Most Tundra Swans reported from San Diego County have been on the north county lagoons, such as San Elijo (L7; two records, King et al. 1987) or Buena Vista (H5/H6; three on 5 December 1991, M. Johnson, AB 46:314, 1992), or on inland lakes, such as Hodges (K10; three on 29 November 1981, K. L. Weaver, AB 36:217, 1982) or Lower Otay (U14; four from 3 to 5 January 1991, P. Unitt). But the only report from 1997 to 2002 was of a migrant in flight over south San Diego Bay (U10) 16 February 2002 (D. M. Parker, NAB 56:223, 2002). These examples also include the maximum numbers reported in San Diego County since 1958; most records are of single individuals. Though Tundra Swan records are well scattered over the coastal slope of San Diego County there are none from the Anza-Borrego Desert.

Migration: Most Tundra Swans found in San Diego County have been found in December and January. The extreme dates are 12 November (1926, two at Lake Morena, T21, SDNHM 11307-8) and 18 March (1984, two near Escondido, K. L. Weaver, AB 38:357, 1984).

Conservation: The Tundra Swan was always rare in San Diego County, but its frequency is on the decline. Contributing factors may be climatic warming allowing the winter range to shift north and a decline in the population of western North America as a whole (Serie

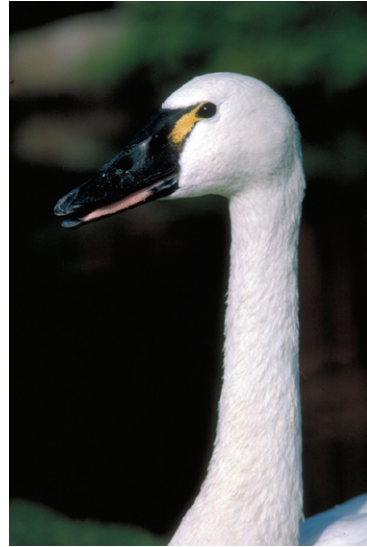


Photo by Anthony Mercieca

and Bartonek 1991). The largest number ever reported in San Diego County was “a flock of over 75...a few days” previous to 21 December 1918 at Warner Springs (F19; Stephens 1920a). The numbers in the winter of 1956-57, 15 at Del Mar (M7) and up to 12 at the San Diego River mouth and on Mission Bay (R8/Q8; AFN 11:60, 290, 1957), have not been approached since.

Taxonomy: The Whistling Swan, the North American subspecies *C. c. columbianus* (Ord, 1815), has little or no yellow at the base of the bill. Bewick's Swan, the Eurasian subspecies *C. c. bewickii* Yarrell, 1830, with extensive yellow on the bill, has been noted a few times as a vagrant to northern and central California.