

## OYSTERCATCHERS — FAMILY HAEMATOPODIDAE

### American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus*

The American Oystercatcher ranges widely, if not continuously, along the Pacific coast of the Americas from Chile north to Mexico. The normal distribution falls barely short of the United States: up to four individuals are seen regularly on Los Coronados Islands off Tijuana, though they are not confirmed to breed there. In southern California the species is rare, most frequent on the Channel Islands.

**Migration:** There are only two records of apparently pure American Oystercatchers in San Diego County. Cooper (1868) collected one at San Diego 16 May 1862 (MVZ 4488). Over a century passed until the next, seen at Point Loma 20–21 April 1978 (Luther et al. 1983). Another oystercatcher photographed at Point Loma 11 March–7 May 1992 was a hybrid between the American and the Black (Erickson and Terrill 1996).



Photo by Kenneth W. Fink

**Taxonomy:** The subspecies of the American Oystercatcher reaching southern California is *H. p. frazari* Brewster, 1888, darker on the back and with less white than the nominate subspecies of the Atlantic coast. In the northern half of Baja California the American Oystercatcher hybridizes frequently with the Black Oystercatcher (Jehl 1985).