

SWIFTS — FAMILY APODIDAE

Black Swift *Cypseloides niger*

Nesting only around waterfalls and sea cliffs, the Black Swift is one of southern California's rarest breeding birds. Only six sites are known (Foerster and Collins 1990), none in San Diego County. Here the Black Swift occurs as a rare migrant, mainly in spring, flocking with other swifts and swallows.

Migration: Only a few Black Swifts are found in San Diego County each year, and some years pass with none at all. The atlas period from 1997 to 2001 was typical with zero to six noted each year and no more than three per day. There are three records, however, of large flocks, of 300 at Carlsbad (probably Buena Vista Lagoon) 29 May 1948 (AFN 2:189, 1948), up to 40 at Buena Vista Lagoon (H5/H6) 21–24 May 1980 (AB 34:816, 1980), and up to 200 at Point Loma (S7) 27–28 May 1987 (M. Rosenquist, R. E. Webster, AB 41:488, 1987). Records of the Black Swift are concentrated in two regions of San Diego County: a narrow strip along the coast and Palomar Mountain. The concentration along the coast is due to the overcast that commonly blankets the coast in spring and keeps the swifts flying low, as well as to the coastal lagoons (two at Buena Vista Lagoon, 23 May 1999, L. E. Taylor). Black Swifts, like other swifts and swallows, are drawn to forage over water. The accumulation of records

from the Palomar Observatory (D15) is due to Roger Higson's observations there from 1980 to 1985. But Black Swifts may also be attracted to mountain tops, as suggested by three at the summit of Hot Springs Mountain (E20) 8 June 2001 (K. L. Weaver).

In spring, the Black Swift occurs principally in May. The only April records are of two along the Santa Margarita River at De Luz Road (C7) 24 April 1999 (K. L. Weaver) and one along Miramar Road 0.5 mile east of Interstate 805 (O8) 30 April 1999 (W. E. Haas). The only records for June are that for Hot Springs Mountain and the only specimen for San Diego County, found dead under a telephone wire 4 miles north of Escondido 5 June 1921 (MVZ 41912; Dixon 1921).

The Black Swift is even less frequent in San Diego County in fall than in spring. From 1997 to 2001 there were seven records in spring, only one in fall. Of at least 16 fall records total, all are from Palomar Mountain or Point Loma except for two at Lake Henshaw (G17) 7 October 1984 (R. Higson, AB 39:103, 1985) and one at Escondido (I10) 24 October 1963 (AFN 18:74, 1964). Fall records extend from 23 August (1985, one at Point Loma, R. E. Webster, AB 40:159, 1986) to 24 October (1963, at Escondido, and 1983, two at Palomar Mountain, R. Higson, AB 38:247, 1984). The largest flock yet noted in fall was of 12 at Palomar Mountain 14 October 1981 (R. Higson, AB 36:218, 1982).