

TYPICAL OWLS — FAMILY STRIGIDAE

Flammulated Owl *Otus flammeolus*

The Flammulated Owl is widespread through the montane pine forests of the western United States but is only a rare and sporadic visitor to San Diego County's mountains. A few individuals have been seen and heard calling territorially, but there is no evidence any were mated and breeding, though some could have been. The Flammulated is only a summer visitor to California; it migrates to southern Mexico and Central America for the winter. There are three records in San Diego County of migrants near the coast.



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Breeding distribution: Though the Flammulated Owl has never been found breeding in San Diego County, most records are from coniferous woodland in summer, where breeding is possible. In its core range, the Flammulated Owl inhabits open forests of ponderosa pine, habitat like that preferred by the Pygmy Nuthatch. In San Diego County, therefore, one might expect the species in the Laguna Mountains, dominated by the similar Jeffrey pine. However, the records are from Palomar, Hot Springs, and Cuyamaca mountains, though sometimes from open pine woodland. The Flammulated Owl has been found five times on Palomar Mountain, with two on 13 and 16 June 1971 (AB 25:907, 1971), two on 29 April 1972 (Winter 1974), one near the observatory (D15) 24 May–3 June 1981 (R. Higson), three along East Grade Road near Dyche Valley (F16) 14 May 1988 (K. L. Weaver, E. Littlefield), and another heard at 5100 feet elevation along Observatory Trail (D15) 19 July 2000 (K. L. Weaver). On Hot Springs Mountain, two were heard, one of which was seen, at 6000 feet elevation 1.8 miles southeast of the sum-

mit (E21) 8 June 1985 (P. Unitt et al., AB 39:962, 1985), one was reported in June 1987 (J. O'Brien, AB 41:1488, 1987), and one was heard at 6200 feet elevation 0.25 mile east-southeast of the summit (E20) 2–3 June and 17 June 2000 (K. L. Weaver, C. R. Mahrtd). In the Cuyamaca Mountains the only report is of one within Cuyamaca Rancho State Park 27 April 1972 (Winter 1974).

Migration: Though the Flammulated Owl is highly migratory, it is rarely seen in migration. In San Diego County, one was captured on a ship in San Diego Bay 10 October 1962 (Banks 1964); unfortunately, the specimen is no longer extant. A specimen (SDNHM 41184) from “San Diego area” bears the information “died 21 Oct. 1971” and “found locally, fallen out of tree, injured leg; brought in to S. D. Zoo by Cal. Fish and Game.” One was at photographed at Cabrillo National Monument, Point Loma (S7), 30–31 May 1991 (R. E. Webster, AB 45:496, 1991).