

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*

More typical of rocky coasts farther north, the Harlequin Duck is only a casual visitor to San Diego County. Here, in atypical habitats at the southern extreme of its winter range, the Harlequin Duck does not do well—several of the birds have failed to return north on their proper schedule. Our five-year atlas period, 1997–2002, saw a spate of Harlequin Ducks, 6 of the 12 recorded in San Diego County.

Winter: During the atlas period, Harlequin Ducks were found at Agua Hedionda Lagoon (I6) 16 February–14 March 2001 (E. Wade, NAB 55:227, 2001), Torrey Pines State Reserve (N7) 26 December 1999 (S. Walens), La Jolla (P7) 20 February 1998 (G. McCaskie, FN 52:257, 1998), De Anza Cove, Mission Bay (Q8), 4–18 March 2001 and 28 October 2001–27 February 2002 (D. G. Seay, NAB 55:227, 2001; 56:106, 223, 2002), the power plant in Chula Vista on San Diego Bay (U10) 22 January–26 May 1998, Chula Vista, R. T. Patton, FN 52:257, 503, 1998), and the Imperial Beach pier (V10) 7 November 1999–17 May 2000 (G. Moreland, T. Stands, NAB 54:104, 220, 326, 2000). One in the San Diego River flood-control channel (R8) 18–30 December 2001 (R. E. Webster) was presumably the same bird spending most of its time at De Anza Cove. Unitt (1984) listed earlier records, three from San Diego Bay and one from Agua Hedionda Lagoon, except for one on the Rancho Santa Fe Christmas bird count 26



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

December 1982. The records for San Diego County were the southernmost for the Pacific coast until the first for Baja California in 2003 (NAB 57:407, 1983).

Migration: The Harlequin Duck's return to De Anza Cove 28 October 2001 is the species' earliest arrival in San Diego County. One on San Diego Bay 5 October 1983 had more likely summered (AB 38:246, 1984). The latter bird included, 4 of the county's 12 Harlequin Ducks have overstayed their expected departure time in March. One found at Agua Hedionda Lagoon 31 December 1977 remained there continuously for over five years until last reported 28 February 1983 (AB 27:338, 1983).