

Pacific Golden-Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

Many migrating Pacific Golden-Plovers cross the North Pacific Ocean, but only a few follow the west coast of North America. Only since the 1990s have criteria for distinguishing them in the field from the American Golden-Plover become widely known, and specimens in California are few (none from San Diego County). Thus the status of the Pacific Golden-Plover could use further clarification, but apparently one to three reach the county's coastal wetlands each year, in both migration and winter. Of this pair of species, only the Pacific has been confirmed wintering on North America's Pacific coast.

Winter: In San Diego County, the Pacific Golden-Plover has been found wintering in the San Dieguito River estuary (M7; 3 January–9 February 2002, N. Ferguson, NAB 56:223, 2002), Mission Bay (Q8; 10 December 2000, E. Wallace), at the San Diego River mouth (R7; one or two annually 1962–74, G. McCaskie), San Diego Bay at Coronado (S9; 12 January 1908, Torrey 1909), in the Tijuana River valley (up to six in the 1960s, AFN 21:458, 1967; 23:521, 1969), and, most frequently, in the Tijuana estuary (V10). From 1999 to 2002, one individual apparently returned to that site annually, and up to three were there 30–31 January 1999 (J. L. Coatsworth, NAB 53:208, 1999).

Migration: Because of the difficulty in distinguishing the Pacific Golden-Plover from the American, especially when the birds are in molt between their breeding and winter plumages, the migration schedules of both species



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

are uncertain. The Pacific has been reported at least from 1 August (1995, San Elijo Lagoon, P. A. Ginsburg, NASFN 50:114, 1996) to 11 May (1997, south San Diego Bay, D. M. Parker, FN 51:927, 1997; 2000, Tijuana River mouth, R. T. Patton, NAB 54:221, 327, 2000). A golden plover in the Tijuana estuary 27 June 1998 (C. G. Edwards) was most likely the Pacific wintering regularly there, returned early. The identification of one at the San Diego River mouth 4–8 June 1983 is uncertain (D. B. King, AB 37:912, 1983). A spring migrant at Point Loma 10 May 1985 was at an atypical site (R. E. Webster, AB 39:350, 1985).

Taxonomy: The Pacific and American Golden-Plovers were considered subspecies until Connors et al. (1993) confirmed assortative breeding where both occur in western Alaska.