

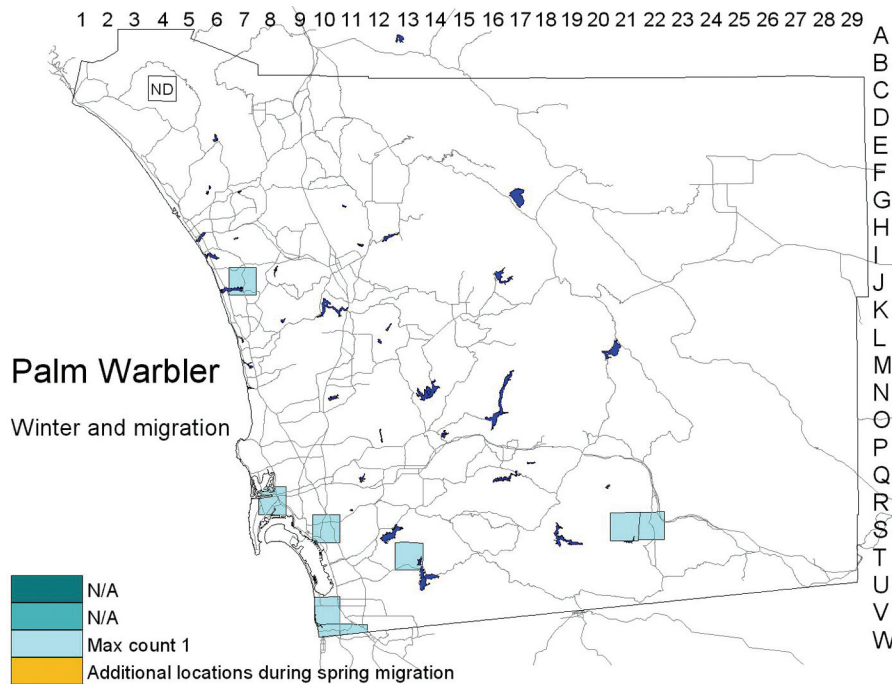
Palm Warbler *Dendroica palmarum*

The Palm Warbler's name is a historical accident. The species nests in the taiga zone east of the Rocky Mountains and winters mainly in the south-eastern United States, the Yucatan Peninsula, and West Indies, where it prefers rather open, scrubby habitats whether these have palms or not. It is a rare but regular fall migrant and winter visitor to the California coast, less frequent in San Diego County than farther north.

Migration: In San Diego County, as elsewhere in California, the Palm Warbler is seen mainly along the coast. As for other eastern warblers, Point Loma and the



Photo by Brian L. Sullivan



Tijuana River valley account for most sightings, but the Palm Warbler has been seen at many other sites as well. Exceptionally far inland were one at Lindo Lake (O14) 31 October 1999 (M. B. Mulrooney), two at Lake Henshaw (G17) 4 October 1982 (R. Higson AB 37:225, 1983), and the three fall records for the Anza-Borrego Desert, of single birds at Tamarisk Grove (I24) 12 November 1989 (M. Green, AB 44:164, 1990) and 12 October 1996 (P. D. Jorgensen) and in Quartz Vein Wash (I25) 22 October 1996 (P. D. Jorgensen).

The Palm Warbler occurs rather late in fall migration, mainly from early October to mid November. One at Point Loma 9 September 1981 (D. Rawlins, AB 36:219, 1982) was exceptionally early. The number of Palm Warblers reported per fall in San Diego County recently has varied from only one in 2000 to about eight in 2001 and 2002.

Sightings of Palm Warblers through the end of April most likely represent wintering birds. Individuals known to have wintered have remained in the Tijuana River valley to 10 April 1983 (J. Oldenettel, AB 37:913, 1983) and

at Greenwood Cemetery (S10) to 20 April 2002 (M. Lubin). The only records more likely to represent spring migrants are from O'Neill Lake (E6) 6 May 2003 (P. A. Ginsburg), Point Loma 7 May 1982 (R. E. Webster, AB 36:895, 1982) and 7 June 2003 (D. Langhoff), and Agua Caliente Springs (M26) 4 May 1996 (G. L. Rogers, NASFN 50:334, 1996).

Winter: One or two wintering Palm Warblers are noted in San Diego County annually. The five-year atlas period, 1997–2002, yielded nine. All of the county's wintering Palm Warblers have been within 10 miles of the coast, except for one at the Morena Conservation Camp, elevation 3060 feet (S21/S22), 23 January 1999 (S. E. Smith).

Conservation: Like some other eastern warblers, the Palm Warbler had a spike in the numbers found in San Diego County in the late 1970s. The San Diego Christmas bird count recorded its maximum of nine in the Tijuana River valley 15 December 1979. No decrease since then has been reported in the breeding range or elsewhere in California, so the apparent change may be due to local habitat changes (fewer low, damp weedy areas) or simply a change in birders' habits in fall migration (narrower focus on Point Loma, which lacks riparian scrub more appealing to Palm Warblers).

Taxonomy: As expected, it is the Western Palm Warbler, *D. p. palmarum* (Gmelin, 1789), that occurs predominantly in San Diego County. There are, however, nine records of *D. p. hypochrysea* Ridgway, 1876, even though it breeds east of Hudson Bay. Unitt (1984) listed seven through 1981; subsequently, one was at Point Loma 15 October 1985 (C. G. Edwards, AB 40:160, 1986) and one was with two Western Palm Warblers near La Jolla (O8) 16 October 1993 (G. McCaskie, AB 48:153, 1994).