

Rough-legged Hawk *Buteo lagopus*

Breeding on arctic tundra, the Rough-legged Hawk reaches the southern edge of its winter range in San Diego County. The only well-supported record for Baja California is of one soaring over the border fence in the Tijuana River valley (Erickson et al. 2001). The Rough-legged seeks the same open grasslands as the Ferruginous Hawk. Though the Rough-legged's abundance in California as a whole varies in a cycle of 3 to 5 years (Garrison 1993), the cycle is ill marked in San Diego County, where the average since the mid 1990s has been less than one per year.

Winter: Records of the Rough-legged Hawk are widely scattered over San Diego County's coastal slope as well as the Borrego and San Felipe valleys on the desert side. They are concentrated, however, in Warner Valley. This region, the county's largest block of grassland, is the only site of reports of more than two individuals: three on 21 March 1976 (AB 30:765, 1976) and five on the Lake Henshaw Christmas bird count 23 December 1985, with three remaining to 1 February 1986. But the three seen during the atlas period 1997–2002 were from other locations: Dameron Valley (C15) 6 February 1999 (K. L. Weaver), San Dieguito Valley (M8) 27 February 1999 (R. T. Patton), and Galleta Meadows (E23) 18 January 2001 (P. D. Jorgensen).

Ascertaining the Rough-legged Hawk's status in San Diego County has been bedeviled by misidentification since Huey (1924) misreported two specimens of the Ferruginous as the Rough-legged. The species' occurrence in the county is confirmed by photos of a bird at Lake Cuyamaca (M20) 2 December 1994 (M.B. Stowe).

Migration: Dates for the Rough-legged Hawk in San Diego County extend from 8 October (1985, one at Lake Henshaw, R. Higson) to 27 March (1982, one at Lake



Photo by Jack C. Daynes

Henshaw, R. E. Webster, AB 36: 894, 1982) and 28 March (1976, two at Lake Henshaw, AB 30:765, 1976). One at Point Loma (S7) 20 November 1984 was likely the same as one at Silver Strand State Beach (T9) four days later and a migrant heading south (D. M. Parker, E. Copper, AB 40:158, 1986). Garrison and Bloom (1993) found that of five Rough-legged Hawks banded in the breeding range and recovered in California, four originated in Alaska, one in arctic Canada.

Conservation: From the early 1990s through 2002 the Rough-legged Hawk was less frequent in San Diego County than in the 1970s and 1980s. Climatic warming could allow the winter range to shift northward so that the hawk no longer reaches its current southern limits.

Taxonomy: The single New World subspecies of the circumpolar Rough-legged Hawk is *B. l. sanctijohannis* (Gmelin, 1788).