

Wandering Tattler *Heteroscelus incanus*

Of San Diego County's shorebirds, the Wandering Tattler is the most restricted to rocky shorelines, though the rocks may be breakwaters of riprap as well as natural formations. The tattler is an uncommon migrant and winter visitor to San Diego County, occurring mainly from August to April.

Winter: San Diego County's two principal areas of natural rocky shoreline, La Jolla and Point Loma, are the tattler's principal sites. At La Jolla (P7), our counts from 1997 to 2002 ranged up to six on 24 February 2002 (K. L. Weaver). Around La Jolla, the tattlers are found regularly from Torrey Pines State Reserve (N7) to Pacific Beach (Q7). At Point Loma (S7), our counts during the atlas period ranged up to only five on 20 December 1997 (M. W. Klein), but totals on San Diego Christmas bird counts range up to 25 on 20 December 1980, and much of the tattler habitat on Point Loma is outside the count circle. Small numbers of tattlers are regular on Zuñiga Jetty at the mouth of San Diego Bay (S8; up to four on 16 December 2000, seven on 18 December 1976, D. W.

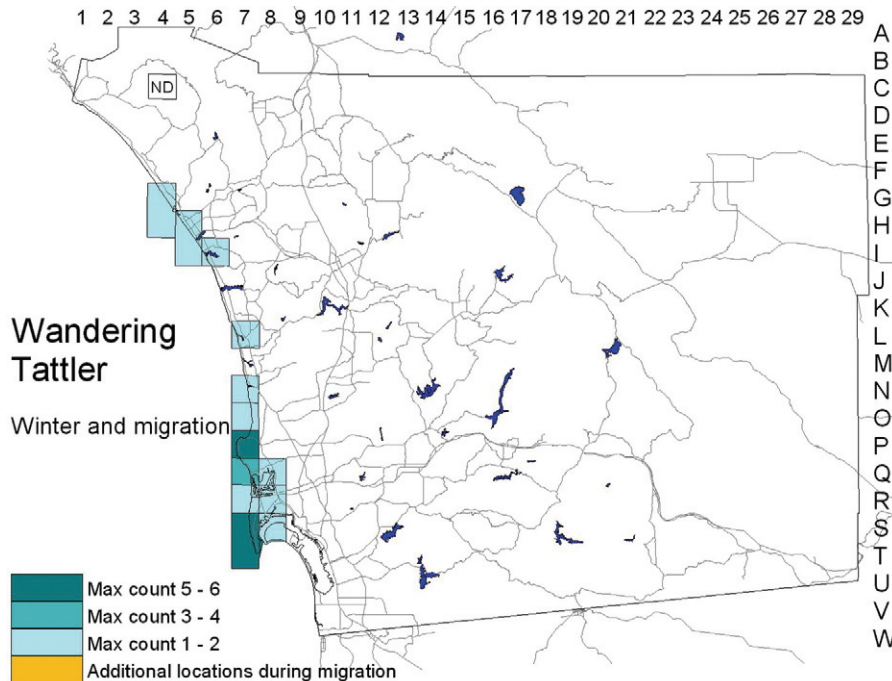


Photo by Anthony Mercieca

Povey), occasional on the breakwaters at the mouth of Mission Bay (R7; up to two on 26 February 2000, V. P. Johnson).

In northern San Diego County the Wandering Tattler is regular only on the breakwaters for the Oceanside harbor (G4/H5). From 1997 to 2002 our maximum counts here were of only two individuals; totals on Oceanside Christmas bird counts average 1.9 and range up to five on 22 December 1979. One tattler was at the mouth of Agua Hedionda Lagoon (I6) 26 December 1998 (C. Sankpill); another was at the mouth of San Elijo Lagoon (L7) 30 December 1998 (R. T. Patton).

Within Mission and San Diego bays the Wandering Tattler is rare. During the atlas periods the only records were both from Mission Bay (Q8), of single birds 13 December 1998 (J. C. Worley) and 1 January 2002 (G. C. Hazard). Neither Macdonald et al. (1990) nor Stadtlander and Konecny (1994) found the tattler on their regular surveys in south San Diego Bay.



Migration: Dates for the tattler in San Diego County range from 12 July (1999, one on the breakwater for the harbor at Camp Pendleton's Camp Del Mar, G4, P. A. Ginsburg) to 22 May (1971, one at Shelter Island, S8, A. Fries). Though most immature Wandering Tattlers remain through the summer in their winter range (Gill et

al. 2002), the only records of overwintering birds in San Diego County remain the three listed by Unitt (1984).

Conservation: The installation of breakwaters gave the Wandering Tattler a little additional habitat in San Diego County.