

Williamson's Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus thyroideus*

Though resident in the higher elevations of the San Jacinto Mountains just 15 miles to the north of the county line, and in the Sierra San Pedro Mártir to the south, in San Diego County Williamson's Sapsucker is a rare winter visitor only. On average, about one individual is found per year, usually in montane coniferous forest.

Winter: During the atlas period, only four Williamson's Sapsuckers were found in San Diego County, one near Wynola (J19) 29 December 1997 (J. Alpert), one at Observatory Campground, Palomar Mountain (E14), 24 February 1999 (G. L. Rogers), one along the Azalea Glen Trail, Cuyamaca Rancho State Park (M20), 23 September 2001 (S. Buchanan), and one at 4472 feet elevation in upper Sheep Canyon (C21) 10 February 2002 (L. J. Hargrove, J. Determan). Earlier records are from similar conifer-dominated habitat on Palomar Mountain, at Julian, and in the Cuyamaca and Laguna mountains. The species is usually seen singly, occasionally in twos.

Only seven Williamson's Sapsuckers have been recorded in San Diego County at elevations below 3500 feet, one at Bonita (T11) 16 December 1968–March 1969 (AFN 23:522, 1969), one near Lakeside (P14) 25 November 1972–1 February 1973 (AB 27:122, 664, 1973), one in La Jolla (P8) 22 November 1989–16 February 1990 (J. Moore, AB 44:162, 330, 1990), and four on Point Loma, 11 October, 15–17 October, and 20–22 October 1987 (AB



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

42:136, 1988), and 2 December 1996–3 January 1997 (V. P. Johnson, NASFN 51:802, 1997). Most of these occurrences at low elevations coincide with irruptions of other montane birds.

Migration: San Diego County records of Williamson's Sapsucker range in date from 23 September (cited above) and 27 September (1980, Palomar Mountain, AB 35:227, 1981) to 10 April (1979, same locality, AB 33:806, 1979).

Taxonomy: Two subspecies of Williamson's Sapsucker were long recognized on the basis of a difference in bill size, but they overlap too much for the distinction to be maintained (Browning and Cross 1999, Patten et al. 2003).