

***Western Birds* abstracts Vol. 40. No. 4.**

RECENT PURPLE MARTIN DECLINES IN THE SACRAMENTO REGION OF CALIFORNIA: RECOVERY IMPLICATIONS

DANIEL A. AIROLA, Airola Environmental Consulting, 2700 6th Ave., Sacramento, California 95818; dairola@sbcglobal.net

DAN KOPP, 8295 La Riviera Drive, Sacramento, California 95677

ABSTRACT: We monitored the Purple Martins (*Progne subis*) breeding in the Sacramento region, California, in 2008 and 2009, following similar monitoring from 2002 to 2007. This bridge-nesting population is the last remnant of the formerly widespread Central Valley population. All 11 colonies occupied in 2007 remained active in 2008, but the number of occupied colonies declined to 9 in 2009. From 2007 to 2009 the number of breeding pairs declined by 34%, from 106 to 70. Since 2004, the population has declined by 60% (103 pairs), and the annual rate of decline has increased. Probability calculations suggest the decline has been caused by factors other than chance fluctuation. If the decline continues at its current rate, the population will be extirpated within 22 years. Causes of the decline are unknown, but our previous studies have implicated mortality during the breeding season from vehicle collisions. Sacramento-area populations also are threatened by disturbance from a variety of construction projects and land-use changes that may affect habitat suitability. Recent losses in Sacramento represent a 6–11% decline in California's estimated Purple Martin population. Increased effort is needed to stabilize the Sacramento population, which would serve as the likely source for any future recovery within the Central Valley.

FURTHER DECLINE IN NEST-BOX USE BY VAUX'S SWIFTS IN NORTHEASTERN OREGON

EVELYN L. BULL, U.S. Forest Service, PNW Research Station, La Grande, Oregon 97850; ebull@fs.fed.us

CHARLES T. COLLINS, Department of Biological Sciences, California State University, Long Beach, California 90840; ccollins@csulb.edu

ABSTRACT: Populations of the Vaux's Swift (*Chaetura vauxi*), a species of conservation concern, are declining in the Pacific Northwest. We compared the number of swifts nesting in boxes 2007–2008 to those nesting in the same boxes 1999–2002 to determine if numbers had changed. There were 51 nest attempts in the earlier 4-year period but only two to five nest attempts in the later 2-year period, an average decline of 72% in nest-box use. The cause of the decline is unknown. Northern Flying Squirrels (*Glaucomys sabrina*), Bushy-tailed Woodrats (*Neotoma cinerea*), and Red Squirrels (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) usurped some of the nest boxes. Seven of seven swifts tested negative for the antibodies of West Nile virus. Conservation measures that protect existing nest and roost sites and create additional nesting sites (nest boxes and chimneys) would help ensure that habitat is not limiting Vaux's Swift populations.

USE OF A NESTING PLATFORM BY GULL-BILLED TERNS AND BLACK SKIMMERS AT THE SALTON SEA, CALIFORNIA

KATHY C. MOLINA, Section of Ornithology, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, California 90007; kmolina@nhm.org

MARK A. RICCA and A. KEITH MILES, U.S. Geological Survey, Western Ecological Research Center—Davis Field Station, 1 Shields Avenue, University of California, Davis, California 95616

CHRISTIAN SCHONEMAN, Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, 906 W. Sinclair Road, Calipatria, California 92233

ABSTRACT: In 2006, we constructed an elevated nesting platform at the Salton Sea, California, and monitored its use by Gull-billed Terns and Black Skimmers over three subsequent breeding seasons. Black Skimmers were the first to colonize the platform with a total of five nests in 2006. In 2007 Gull-billed Terns colonized the platform with a total of 28 nests and the number of Black Skimmer nests increased to 20. Neither species nested on the platform in 2008. Low success for both species was probably influenced by at least two factors. First, when both species nested on the platform, nest densities were higher than is typical of their colonies on larger, earthen islands, and colony success may have been reduced by overcrowding. Second, lack of access to water may have reduced chicks' ability to thermoregulate effectively in the hot environment of the Salton Sea. Refinements to the size, design, and location of artificial nesting habitats are necessary to enhance productivity of colonial groundnesting birds at the Salton Sea successfully.

BIRDS OF PREY AND THE BAND-TAILED PIGEON ON ISLA GUADALUPE, MEXICO

JUAN-PABLO GALLO-REYNOSO, Centro de Investigación en Alimentación y Desarrollo, A.C. Unidad Guaymas, Carretera a Varadero Nacional km 6.6, Col. Las Playitas, Guaymas, Sonora 85480, México; jpgallo@ciad.mx

ANA-LUISA FIGUEROA-CARRANZA, Área de Protección de Flora y Fauna Islas del Golfo de California, Oficina Regional Sonora, CONANP-SEMARNAT, Calle Isla del Peruano esquina con Calle Isla de la Rasa, Col. Lomas de Miramar, Guaymas, Sonora 85450, México

ABSTRACT: We noted eight species of birds of prey at Isla Guadalupe during ten visits from 1991 to 2003. The most abundant species was the Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), found throughout the island; second most numerous was the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), widespread but uncommon. The frequency of the kestrel paralleled the population of mice, peaking 1992, a year of el Niño. We observed the Red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), and Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) two or three times each, the prairie falcon (*F. mexicanus*) once. Our records of the Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) and Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*) are the first for Isla Guadalupe.

FOOD HABITS OF WILD TURKEYS IN NATIONAL FORESTS OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND CENTRAL OREGON

GRETA M. WENGERT , MGW Biological, 102 Larson Heights Road, McKinleyville, California 95519; greta@mgwbio.com

MOURAD W. GABRIEL, MGW Biological, 102 Larson Heights Road, McKinleyville, California 95519

RYAN L. MATHIS , National Wild Turkey Federation, Eureka, California 95501

THOMAS HUGHES, National Wild Turkey Federation, Edgefield, South Carolina 29824

ABSTRACT: We studied the diet of the Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) in five national forests in northern California and two national forests in central Oregon by collecting turkey droppings and analyzing them for specific food items. In all national forests the diet included insects; in all but one it included grasses. We analyzed the diet by sex and season and found that it varied seasonally and that females from California consumed more insects than did males. Seeds made up a small percentage of the diet in most national forests but constituted a majority of the diet in the Tahoe National Forest in California.

SEASONAL VARIATION IN THE DIET OF THE BARN OWL IN NORTHWESTERN NEVADA

ABIGAIL C. MYERS and CHRISTOPHER B. GOGUEN, Science Program, Penn State University, 76 University Dr., Hazleton, Pennsylvania; cbg10@psu.edu

DANIEL C. RABBERS, Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, 1000 Auction Rd., Fallon, Nevada 89406

ABSTRACT: The Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) is a widespread predator of small mammals that is declining in many parts of its range. We analyzed the Barn Owl's diet at Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, Churchill County, Nevada, by identifying remains in pellets collected during the summer (May–September 2007) and winter (October 2007–February 2008). In 306 pellets (143 from summer, 163 from winter), we identified 796 vertebrate prey items including 9 genera of mammals and several species of birds. At both seasons, mammals, primarily of the genera *Microtus* (voles), *Peromyscus* (whitefooted mice), *Reithrodontomys* (harvest mice), and *Dipodomys* (kangaroo rats) were found in >93% of pellets. Bird remains were found in 15.5% and 11.1% of pellets in summer and winter, respectively. Remains of giant water bugs (family Belostomatidae) were present in 7.7% of summer pellets but absent in winter. Although the diet was dominated by the same five categories of prey (four mammal genera and birds) at both seasons, the proportions of *Microtus* and *Peromyscus* declined during the winter, while those of *Reithrodontomys* and *Dipodomys* increased.

NOTES

FIRST RECORD OF A MANGROVE YELLOW WARBLER IN ARIZONA

NATHAN K. BANFIELD, 8 Rainbow Circle, Montgomery City, Missouri 63361;
nathankbanfield@yahoo.com

PATRICIA J. NEWELL 170 E Green St., Warnell School of Forestry and Natural
Resources, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602-2152;
pattijean.newell@gmail.com

PREY REMAINS IN NESTS OF FOUR CORNERS GOLDEN EAGLES, 1998–2008

DALE W. STAHLCKER , Eagle Environmental, Inc., 30 Fonda Road, Santa Fe,
New Mexico 87508

DAVID G. MIKESIC, Navajo Natural Heritage Program, P. O. Box 1480, Window
Rock, Arizona 86515; dmikesic@hotmail.com

JAMES N. WHITE, Jicarilla Game and Fish Department, P. O. Box 313, Dulce, New
Mexico 87528 (current address: Colorado Division of Wildlife, 151 E. 16th Street,
Durango, Colorado 81301)

SPIN SHAFFER, P. O. Box 4084, Truckee, California 96160

JOHN P. DELONG, Eagle Environmental, Inc., 2314 Hollywood Ave. NW,
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103 (current address: Department of Ecology and
Evolutionary Biology, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut 06520)

MARK R. BLAKEMORE, Jicarilla Apache Utility Authority, P. O. Box 916, Dulce,
New Mexico 87528

CRAIG E. BLAKEMORE, P. O. Box 1048, Lake City, Colorado 81235

BOOK REVIEWS

Small Mountain Owls, by Scott Rashid. 2009. Schiffer Publishing, Ltd. 176
pages, over 160 color photos and drawings. Hardback, \$39.99. ISBN 0-7643-
3282-1.

Breeding Bird Atlas of Santa Clara County, California, by William G.
Bousman. 2007. Santa Clara Audubon Society, Cupertino, CA. 547 pages, over
180 black and white illustrations of birds, 177 species maps, 81 figures. Paperback.
\$40.00. Order with www.scvas.org/pdf/BBAOnlineOrderForm.pdf. ISBN 978-0-
9796038-0-8.

FEATURED PHOTO

JUVENAL PLUMAGE OF THE RUFOUS-CROWNED SPARROW

BRAD SCHRAM, 1210 Antler Dr., Arroyo Grande, California 93420;
gonebrdn@lightspeed.net