

SPECIAL-STATUS BIRD SPECIES OF THE BALLONA WETLANDS

Prepared Nov. 2005 by

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Important note: *The following information is based on dozens of sources compiled by the author since 2003, including the unpublished field notes of Kimball Garrett, Art Pickus, Robert Shanman, and many others; the Los Angeles Audubon Society newsletter “The Western Tanager”; the “Southern California” section of North American Birds/Audubon Field Notes; historical publications (e.g. von Bloeker 1943); consulting reports (prepared by Keane Biological Consultants, among others), and 3000+ combined field hours (since 2003) of a network of c. 10 birders active in the Ballona Valley on a daily basis. The data herein have been incorporated into a manuscript which was submitted for publication in a scientific journal in 2005. A complete checklist of the Birds of the Ballona Valley is available on the World Wide Web at www.cooperecological.com – see “current projects”.*

F = Federally Endangered/Federally Threatened

S = State Endangered/State Threatened

C = Calif. Bird Species of Special Concern (see: <http://www.prbo.org/cms/index.php?mid=230&module=browse>)

FP = “Fully-protected” (see: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hcpb/species/t_e_spp/fullypro/fully_pro.shtml)

I = Near-threatened (*per* BirdLife International’s Red Data Book)

Resident (summer, winter or permanent)

Least Bittern C

1-2 pr. are resident, and may breed, at Ballona Freshwater Marsh

California Brown Pelican S,F,FP

Up to 2500 roost on Playa del Rey jetties year-round

Redhead C

Small numbers (1-3) in winter at Ballona Freshwater Marsh [up to 9 in 2005-06]

Peregrine Falcon S, FP

1-2 birds fall, winter and spring

White-tailed Kite FP

Up to 5 as post-breeding visitors (June – Jan.)

Elegant Tern C,I

Several hundred birds roost on Ballona Wetlands (salt pan) or local beach in spring and early fall; *one of the largest concentrations in the state*

California Least Tern S,F,FP

Up to 500 breeding birds at fenced colony on so. Venice Beach; forage in Ballona Cr., Ballona Lagoon, at Ballona Freshwater Marsh and at seasonal pools at Playa Vista (rarely in tidal channels)

Loggerhead Shrike C

2-5 birds in fall and winter; No breeding since mid-1990s

Clark's Marsh Wren C

Up to 5 birds at Ballona Freshwater Marsh in winter

Belding's Savannah Sparrow S

Well-surveyed; confined to saltmarsh, near tidal channels when breeding but more widespread in fall/winter

Large-billed Savannah Sparrow C

1-2 birds in fall and winter on jetties

Yellow-headed Blackbird C

Fairly common spring migrant (up to 300 birds); mainly at Ballona Freshwater Marsh

Occurring regularly (*but in migration only*)

Brant C (extirpated in winter)

1-2 per year

Northern Harrier C (extirpated in 1990s as a winter resident)

1-2 per year

Western Snowy Plover F,C [extirpated as a summer resident (1920s) and as a winter resident (1980s)]

10+ birds in migration and occ. in winter

Long-billed Curlew C

2-5 per year

Royal Tern C

Up to 20 per year

Burrowing Owl C

1-2 per year, mainly in fall/early winter

Vaux' Swift C

Several hundred during spring and fall

Willow Flycatcher C

Up to 3 per day in late spring and early fall

California Swainson's Thrush C

Dozens per day in late spring and fall

Yellow Warbler C

Dozens per day in late spring and fall

"Locally significant" (though *unprotected/non-sensitive*) species particularly dependent on Ballona in coastal L.A. County, either currently or historically.

American Bittern

Several recent records from Ballona Freshwater Marsh

White-faced Ibis

Regular in fall at Ballona Freshwater Marsh (up to 20 birds)

Common Moorhen

1-2 present nearly year-round at Ballona Freshwater Marsh

Pacific Golden-Plover (extirpated 1980s)

1-2 formerly present in short grass and salt pan

Red Knot

1-2 per season; historically fairly common in migration

Wilson's Phalarope

Irregularly fairly common in migration at Ballona Freshwater Marsh

California Quail (extirpated 1980s)

Formerly resident

Black-bellied Plover

Up to 800 birds roost during fall and winter on salt pan

Bonaparte's Gull

Up to 3500 in winter, mainly along Ballona Cr.

American Pipit

Up to 100 birds on bare ground and short grass habitat

Western Meadowlark

Up to 20 may winter – no more than 3-5 pairs still breed, exclusively in salt marsh

Blue Grosbeak

1-2 pairs breed, edges of salt marsh

Not regularly occurring, but occasionally seen

American White Pelican C

Black Skimmer C

Marbled Murrelet S,F,I

Short-eared Owl C (formerly wintered; extirpated 1980s)

Horned Lark C (formerly year-round resident; extirpated 1970s)

Olive-sided Flycatcher C

Bank Swallow C

Yellow-breasted Chat C (formerly bred)

Totally extirpated (no recent records)

Light-footed Clapper Rail S,F,FP (two records since 1950s)

Black Tern C (four records since 1950s)

Either extirpated prior to 1900, or always scarce (not enough information)

Bald Eagle S,F,FP

Fulvous Whistling-Duck C

California Black Rail S, FP

Sandhill Crane C,S,FP

Mountain Plover C

Long-eared Owl C

Bell's Sage Sparrow C?

California Gnatcatcher F

Vagrants (<5 records total; never expected; no evidence of historical decline)

Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel C

Ashy Storm-Petrel C,I

Black Storm-Petrel C

Harlequin Duck C

Swainson's Hawk C

Ferruginous Hawk C

Prairie Falcon C

Craveri's Murrelet I

Cassin's Auklet C

Tufted Puffin C

Yellow-billed Cuckoo S

Vermilion Flycatcher C

Least Bell's Vireo C
Purple Martin C
Lucy's Warbler C
Summer Tanager C
Grasshopper Sparrow C
Tricolored Blackbird C

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF BALLONA FOR REGULARLY-OCCURING, SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES

Very important; no other habitat for miles around

American Bittern*
White-faced Ibis*
Brant
Redhead
Least Bittern
Light-footed Clapper Rail (extirpated)
Common Moorhen*
Northern Harrier
Pacific Golden-Plover* (recently extirpated)
Red Knot*
Wilson's Phalarope*
California Least Tern
Clark's Marsh Wren
Belding's Savannah Sparrow
Yellow-headed Blackbird

Somewhat important; appropriate habitat nearby (Baldwin Hills, area beaches), but significant concentration at Ballona

Western Snowy Plover
Bonaparte's Gull*
Elegant Tern
Loggerhead Shrike

Not particularly important; widespread in region

California Brown Pelican
Peregrine Falcon
Royal Tern
Vaux' Swift
Willow Flycatcher (migrant)
California Swainson's Thrush (migrant)
Yellow Warbler (migrant)

WHAT HABITAT IS MOST IMPORTANT

FOR WHICH SPECIES?

***Note:** See above for seasonal status. Most species below occur only in migration and would not be considered present by regulatory agencies.*

Ballona Lagoon/Del Rey Lagoon and lower Ballona Creek Channel

Brant
Black-bellied Plover*
Long-billed Curlew
Red Knot*
Bonaparte's Gull*
California Least Tern
Burrowing Owl (channel levees only)

Ballona Freshwater Marsh

American Bittern*
Least Bittern
White-faced Ibis*
Redhead
Peregrine Falcon
White-tailed Kite*
Northern Harrier
Wilson's Phalarope*
California Least Tern
Willow Flycatcher
American Pipit*
Clark's Marsh Wren
Yellow Warbler
Belding's Savannah Sparrow
Western Meadowlark
Yellow-headed Blackbird

Playa del Rey/southern Venice Beach

Western Snowy Plover
California Least Tern
Elegant Tern
Royal Tern

Ballona Wetlands saltmarsh (dry and wet)/salt pan

Peregrine Falcon
White-tailed Kite
Northern Harrier
Light-footed Clapper Rail (extirpated)
Pacific Golden-Plover* (extirpated)

Black-bellied Plover*
Long-billed Curlew
Elegant Tern
Burrowing Owl
Loggerhead Shrike
American Pipit*
Belding's Savannah Sparrow
Western Meadowlark*

Dune Willows (and other riparian thickets and scrubland, including Westchester Bluffs)

California Quail* (recently extirpated)
Willow Flycatcher
California Swainson's Thrush
Yellow Warbler
Blue Grosbeak*

Jetties/Breakwater

California Brown Pelican
Large-billed Savannah Sparrow

* **"Locally significant"; *unprotected/non-sensitive* species particularly dependent on Ballona habitats in coastal L.A. County.**

Images of selected sensitive Ballona bird species. Elegant Tern, Least Bittern, Burrowing Owl, Yellow-headed Blackbird, White-faced Ibis





