

Sea & Sage Audubon UNB Monthly Boat Trip/Bird Count from aboard the Newport Sea Base Pontoon Boat

Date: 8/17/11 **Trip Leader:** Nancy Kenyon **Skipper:** Eric Walther

Tide: incoming; high tide. **Birders who conducted the count:** Nancy Kenyon, Sally Menzel, Deana Collins, Darrell Wilson & Kurt Miethke.

Comments: Due to a scheduling problem, we started out 45 minutes later than usual, so the tide was high by the time we entered the Upper Newport Bay, resulting in a complete absence of any exposed mud flats. As a result, the shorebirds we saw were in the cordgrass right at the water's edge. The weather was ideal for birding with a misty gray sky that filtered in just enough light to show the color of the birds to their best advantage. The cordgrass along the shore was a glowing yellow green color, and there was no breeze, so the water was absolutely still with beautiful reflections of the shoreline all the way up the channel. The surprise of the morning was spotting a Loggerhead Shrike perched on top of a bare shrub next to a clump of Pampas Grass near the intersection of San Joaquin Hills Road & Back Bay Drive. Due to loss of habitat, shrikes are infrequently seen these days in Orange County, so this was a treat for everyone. Other interesting sightings included a Barn Swallow perched on an antennae, 1 Black-bellied Plover still with a very pronounced black belly, a Northern Pintail with a duckling, several flocks of Willets with a few Marbled Godwits flying low across the channel, and an enormous "wave" of at least 400 Western Sandpipers flying high overhead, looking very much like a flock in migration. Barn Swallows were everywhere, swooping low over the water. At several points, we observed a series of rectangular boxes in the water, covered with wire mesh and adorned with spikes on the top probably to deter birds. We were told the boxes are for an algae study. The clouds began lifting at 10:30, allowing us some sunshine for our return trip, which was very welcome since the air was exceedingly cold. Next month's trip will have an outgoing tide which will hopefully offer some mudflats for more shorebird viewing. It was a beautiful morning to be out birding!

Ducks	
7	Mallard
2	Northern Pintail
Grebes	
4	Pied-billed Grebe
Cormorants & Pelicans	
19	Double-crested Cormorant
7	Brown Pelican
Hérons & Egrets	
5	Great Blue Heron
8	Great Egret
19	Snowy Egret
Diurnal Birds of Prey	
3	Turkey Vulture
1	Cooper's Hawk
3	Red-tailed Hawk
Plovers	
18	Black-bellied Plover
Sandpipers	
181	Willet
2	Whimbrel
2	Long-billed Curlew
24	Marbled Godwit
406	Western Sandpiper
2	Least Sandpiper
5	Long-billed Dowitcher

Gulls, Terns & Skimmers	
1	Ring-billed Gull
8	Western Gull
30	Caspian Tern
6	Forster's Tern
5	Elegant Tern
17	Black Skimmer
Pigeons & Doves	
10	Rock Pigeon
3	Mourning Dove
Flycatchers	
1	Black Phoebe
Crows	
10	American Crow
Swallows	
54	Barn Swallow
Shrikes	
1	Loggerhead Shrike
Mockingbirds	
1	Northern Mockingbird
Sparrows	
2	Savannah Sparrow
1	Song Sparrow
Finches	
20	House Finch