

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

**Date:** 7/2/16 **Trip Leader:** Nancy Kenyon **Tide:** -0.51 ft. LOW TIDE at 5:46 AM; 4.31 ft HIGH TIDE at 12:05 PM  
**Skipper:** Robert Sloan. **Everyone on board was interested** in the birds and helping with the count. Our regular counters were: Sally, Sharon, Darrell, and Mark, with Nancy doing the tally.

<b>Geese &amp; Ducks</b>	
6	Mallard
<b>Pelicans &amp; Cormorants</b>	
11	Double-crested Cormorant
<b>Hérons, Egrets, Ibis</b>	
4	Great Blue Heron
5	Great Egret
23	Snowy Egret
1	Green Heron
<b>Diurnal Birds of Prey</b>	
1	Turkey Vulture
2	Osprey
<b>Plovers</b>	
58	Black-bellied Plover
5	Semipalmated Plover

<b>Sandpipers</b>	
1	Greater Yellowlegs
245	Willet
5	Whimbrel
2	Long-billed Curlew
75	Marbled Godwit
98	Western Sandpiper
1	Least Sandpiper
15	peeps (back-lit)
12	dowitcher sp.
<b>Gulls, Terns &amp; Skimmers</b>	
12	Western Gull
11	Caspian Tern
13	Forster's Tern
1	Least Tern
1	Elegant Tern

10	Black Skimmer
<b>Pigeons &amp; Doves</b>	
12	Rock Pigeon
2	Mourning Dove
<b>Flycatchers</b>	
2	Black Phoebe
<b>Crows &amp; Ravens</b>	
17	American Crow
<b>Swallows</b>	
9	Barn Swallow
<b>Mockingbirds</b>	
6	Northern Mockingbird
<b>Towhee &amp; Sparrows</b>	
3	Savannah Sparrow
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
1	plastic Great Horned Owl

Except for an occasional American Crow, some Rock Pigeons, and a few Western Gulls, there were no other birds to be seen in the main channel where the Newport Sea Base is; normally we see Surf Scoters and Western Grebes there, but they hadn't returned yet from their breeding grounds up north. After we had turned into the lower section of Upper Newport Bay, our sightings of birds rapidly picked up, especially within view of the Santa Ynez Spit. Because it was still low tide, there was a goodly collection of shorebirds along the shoreline as well as on top of the spit. This is where the Black-bellied Plovers like to sit and they were there, many still in breeding plumage with their black bellies showing prominently. Birds along the shore included Willets, Marbled Godwits, Whimbrels, a Snowy & a Great Egret, a variety of terns and as well as 3 Black Skimmers. A plastic Great Horned Owl stood guard on one of the posts at the Back Bay Science Center dock but the Ospreys which normally are there were seen elsewhere. The water was very calm and as we progressed slowly up the channel, we enjoyed seeing beautiful reflections of the birds at the water's edge including a Snowy Egret fishing in the shallows, his white body reflected in the still water. Mockingbirds seemed to be everywhere, singing from the top of Telegraph Weeds, posts, or shrubbery along the shore, their voices carrying in the still air. Everyone got good views of the Whimbrels, the long thin bill of the Long-billed Curlew, and the bright yellow legs and rufous body of the Green Heron hunched over the water, waiting for an unwary fish or frog to show itself. A dowitcher flew by the boat low to the water, and Forster's Terns were diving for fish, making quite a splash when they hit the water. The Black-bellied Plovers were calling their plaintive call from the shore. Some of the smaller shorebirds – such as the Western or Least Sandpipers were feeding off a mudflat in the distance, their bodies completely backlit, making species identification impossible. When we momentarily stopped the boat to look at some of the birds, the water rippled gently all the way up the channel. One of the Double-crested Cormorants was swimming low in the water with only his head showing; another was perched on shore with his wings stretched out. We saw one of the Great Blue Herons standing along the shore with his head tucked into his body looking like a pale blue blob on stick legs. Further up the channel at the old salt dike, an Osprey was standing in a weedy patch of sticks and grass, a most unlikely spot for an Osprey! We thought for a while that he was caught in the vegetation, but eventually he flew off, greatly relieving our anxiety. Willets seemed to everywhere in small groups or larger flocks along the shore or flying across the channel. Many were still in partial breeding plumage and some were chasing each other along the shore. We saw several Snowy Egrets "dancing" in the shallow water in their attempt to stir up food. An adult Western Gull was sitting on a mudflat in the sunlight along the shore and behind him in the vegetation was a bright yellow butterfly flitting through the grass. On our return trip, a breeze sprung up at 10:00, ruffling the water and creating a feeling of welcome coolness. As we passed the long line of houses overlooking the lower bay, we saw a lone Turkey Vulture soaring above the houses. It was a wonderful morning to be out in the bay.