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SECOND MAINLAND SPECIMEN OF THE RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH FROM BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO

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Since the first mainland record of the Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) for Baja California (Ruiz-Campos and Quintana-Barrios 1991), from the Sierra Juárez (32°04' N, 116°05' W; altitude 1370 m) on 15 September 1990 in coniferous forest dominated by *Pinus jeffreyi*, no specimens of this species have been collected in Baja California.

On 27 October 1996 we collected a Red-breasted Nuthatch climbing on dead trunks of a shack near the beach in Bahía Santa Rosalita, Baja California (28°39'32" N, 114°14'52" W), ca. 64 km southwest of Punta Prieta in the Vizcaino Desert district (Nelson 1921). The specimen (Univ. Autónoma de Baja California 859) is an adult male in nonbreeding condition.

With the Guadalupe Island population possibly extirpated (Howell and Webb 1995), the Red-breasted Nuthatch breeds south to southern Alta California, in San Diego County perhaps only irregularly (P. Unitt pers. comm.). It is subject to occasional massive irruptions that have taken this North American species as far from its normal range as Norfolk, England (Aley and Aley 1995).

Like several other montane forest birds, the Red-breasted Nuthatch irrupted on a large scale in the fall of 1996. Many were seen in the lowlands of southern Alta California throughout the winter of 1996–97, and birdwatchers from the United States observed at least 13 in Baja California, mostly immature individuals (five in the coastal lowlands, four in the Sierra Juárez, and four at Cataviña and Santa Inés [Ynez]). One at Bahía Tortugas, Baja California Sur, also in October, was even farther

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south than our record (R. A. Hamilton pers. comm.). Our collection at Bahía Santa Rosaliita adds substance to this pattern of sight records.

Irrupting Red-breasted Nuthatches typically seek conifers, whether native or planted (Small 1994). Other trees serve if conifers are absent; vagrants to Baja California have used the Arroyo Willow (*Salix lasiolepis*), Mexican Fan Palm (*Washingtonia robusta*), and casuarina (*Casuarina* sp.). The habitat where we collected our specimen was treeless: coastal dunes, with nearby rock outcrops, vegetated with *Haplopappus* cf. *sonorensis*, *Frankenia palmeri*, and *Astragalus* sp. The bird's resorting to a wooded shack dramatized the extremes to which irrupting Red-breasted Nuthatches can be driven. Finally, this record makes evident the need for continuing investigation of the distribution of this species in México, for determining with precision its movements of migration.

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