

Baja California Peninsula



Richard A. Erickson

LSA Associates
20 Executive Park, Suite 200
Irvine, California 92614
(richard.erickson@lsa-assoc.com)

Robert A. Hamilton

34 Rivo Alto Canal
Long Beach, California 90803
(robb.hamilton@gte.net)

Eduardo Palacios

Ecología, Centro de Investigación
Científica y Educación Superior de Ensenada
Miraflores 334, Fracc. Bella Vista
La Paz, Baja California Sur 23050, Mexico
(U.S. mailing address:
P.O. Box 434844, San Diego
California 92143-4844)
(epalacio@cicese.mx)

Roberto Carmona

Departamento de Biología Marina
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur
Apartado Postal 19-B
La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico
(beauty@uabcs.mx)

Observer coverage was very good, especially in the Cape District, producing highlights that included Mexico's first record of Manx Shearwater. Ensenada's second Christmas Bird Count, on 19 December, yielded 190 species, including a very late Scarlet Tanager. Other top rarities included three Wood Ducks and a Common Grackle in the northwest, a Worm-eating Warbler in the northeast, and a Harlan's Hawk and a continuing Terek Sandpiper near La Paz.

Abbreviations: C.P.G.P. (Cerro Prieto geothermal ponds); M.F.O. (*Monographs in Field Ornithology*).

LOONS THROUGH ALCIDS

To our knowledge, 35 Least Grebes at Lagunas de Chametla 29 Jan (RC et al.) was the highest Regional count ever. As recently as the 1980s, the species was considered possibly extirpated (S.R. Wilbur, *Birds of Baja California*, 1987). Seabirds out of habitat included the first Regional interior Red-throated Loon, in a canal se. of Mexicali 14 Jan (ph. MSM, DSC), a Pacific Loon found dead at C.P.G.P. 4 Jan (KAR, CR), a juv. Brown Pelican at C.P.G.P. 13 Jan (MJI, RAE), and Magnificent Frigatebirds 6 km ne. of San Bartolo, BCS 1 Feb (SGM, CB) and at La Purisima (3 birds) 10 Feb (JEP). Unseasonal Magnificent Frigatebirds were at Bahía de Los Angeles 5 Feb (TMcG, MSM) and San Felipe 6 Mar (DSC). Exciting seabirds at La Bufadora on the nw. coast included a Manx Shearwater 6 Feb (†MSM, †TMcG) and an ad. Blue-footed Booby 5 Feb (†R.A. Rude-sill). The shearwater appears to represent the first record for Mexico and follows a dramatic increase in records in California in the previous decade. Also unexpected from shore was the ad. Red-billed Tropicbird at Bahía de Los Angeles 5 Feb (MSM, TMcG). Single Neotropical Cormorants were seen at Chametla, Todos Santos, and Estero San José del Cabo (vt. SGM et al.), and 11 were at Charambucho (near La Purisima) 10 Feb (†JEP), all BCS.

An estimated 15,000 White-faced Ibis roosting for the night at C.P.G.P. 4 Jan (KAR, CR) and up to 15 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at Lagunas de Chametla 28 Jan–10 Mar (vt. SGM et al.) represented Regional high counts. Populations of both species have undergone increases in w. North America in the last 15+ years. The Greater White-fronted Geese at Estero San José del Cabo since 26 Oct were down to 8 on 25–26 Jan (vt. SGM, CB) and 6 on 15 Feb (JEP), and the long-staying Aleutian Canada Goose at Lagunas de Chametla was present at least through 1 Feb (LS). Additional Canada Geese were in the Estero Punta Banda area 19 Dec (7 Lessers or Aleutians; KLG et al.),

at C.P.G.P. 13 Jan (18 *hoffitti*; MJI, RAE), and at Presa Rodriguez 29 Jan (one *hoffitti*; RAE). A Brant at Estero San José del Cabo 15 Feb (JEP) was unusually far south. In Tijuana, a pair of Wood Ducks was at Parque de la Armistad near the Otay border crossing, and a female was nearby at Parque Morelos, all 3 present 29 Jan–8 Mar (ph. RAE, ph. †MJI). Two of the 3 individuals recorded previously in the Region were at these same locations (M.F.O. 3: 120). Six or 7 Eurasian Wigeons represented a record-high seasonal total and included the first from the Colorado Desert: up to 2 males at C.P.G.P. 4–13 Jan (KAR, MJI et al.).

Record diving duck counts included 1875 Redheads at C.P.G.P. 13 Jan (MJI, RAE) and 40 Ring-necked Ducks (record for Baja California Sur) at Todos Santos 14 Feb (JEP). Fifteen Greater Scaup in the Colorado Desert on a canal s. of Algodones 3 Jan (†KAR, CR) and 2 at Presa Rodriguez 8 Mar (MJI) were the first found in the Region's interior since 1928 (M.F.O. 3: 38). Records of rare sea ducks involved a male Long-tailed Duck at Bahía de Los Angeles 13 Jan–4 Mar (Greg Meyer, Tim Sullivan, ph. GF et al.), up to 5 White-winged Scoters there 8 Jan–28 Feb (GF, MF et al.), and individual Black Scoters on the nw. coast at Los Alisitos, Ensenada harbor, and Estero Punta Banda (TMcG, †MJI et al.).

A year-old report was received of an ad. Broad-winged Hawk at Agua Caliente, near Santiago 12 Jan 2002 (ph. Pattie Yost, Elias Elias). Two unexpected species were among the raptors concentrated in the Bórquez area of the Colorado Desert 5 Jan—a juv. Red-shouldered Hawk and an ad. Swainson's Hawk (KAR, CR)—while two n. subspecies were far s. in Baja California Sur: a Harlan's Hawk at Lagunas de Chametla 28 Jan–1 Feb (vt. SGM, CB) and bird at Ciudad Insurgentes 19 Feb that showed at least some characters of a Black Merlin (†JEP). There is only one previous Regional record of the Harlan's Hawk (M.F.O. 3: 39).

Snowy Plovers were reported in high numbers, with estimates of 100 at Estero Punta Banda 19 Dec (KLG et al.), 100+ at Laguna Figueroa 4 Feb (MSM, TMcG), and 200 at Chametla 29 Jan (SGM, RC). In contrast, the first Regional report of Mountain Plover since 1998 (M.F.O. 3: 213) pertained to a small flock of 16 at the traditional site near Laguna Figueroa 4 Feb (MSM, TMcG). The Terek Sandpiper at Chametla, first found in Apr 2002 and returning 22 Aug, was present to at least 10 Feb (RC, vt. SGM, ph. KAR et al.). A local rarity at Chametla was a Red Knot 29 Jan (SGM, RC), and a Regional high count of 979 knots was made at Estero Punta Banda 19 Dec (MJI et al.).

Large numbers of gulls roosted at C.P.G.P. 4–13 Jan (KAR, MJI et al.); reported num-

bers included 35,000 Ring-billed, 12,500 California, 2500 Herring, 2 Herring x Glaucous, 2 Thayer's, a Yellow-footed, and 2 Glaucous-winged. Individual ad. Western Gulls were on the Gulf of California at Bahía de Los Angeles 5 Feb (TMcG, MSM) and at Chametla 29 Jan (RC, SGM). Up to 4 Gull-billed Terns at El Centenario 29 Jan–6 Mar (vt. SGM, RC, IC) represented the first confirmed winter record for the peninsula and one of few records for the state (cf. M.F.O. 3: 192). Alcids in the vicinity of Islas Los Coronados 9 Feb included about 20 Xantus's Murrelets, 100 Cassin's Auklets, and 6 Rhinoceros Auklets (G.L. Rogers et al.).

DOVES THROUGH THRUSHES

The Ruddy Ground-Dove high count this season was 17 at Todos Santos 13–18 Feb (JEP). An imm. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was at Ensenada 18–19 Dec (MJI, †RAH). Presumably wintering Gray Flycatchers, rare in Baja California, were on the Maneadero Plain 19 Dec (RAE) and at Cataviña 5 Feb (JEP). An Eastern Phoebe was at San Ignacio 6 Feb (†JEP), providing the 7th Regional record. With extensive coverage, 15 Thick-billed Kingbirds were found in the Cape District (JEP et al.), surpassing previous seasonal totals; the high count was 7 at Miraflores 26 Jan (SGM, CB). Rare winter Western Kingbird records were obtained on the Maneadero Plain 19 Dec and at Todos Santos 14–18 Feb (both †JEP).

A Plumbeous Vireo was at the Mexicali Zoo 4 Jan (KAR, CR). Several "rather bright" Cassin's Vireos found at San Bartolo and on the road to San Antonio de la Sierra 28 Jan–18 Feb (SGM et al.) were speculated to be the resident subspecies, *V. c. lucasanus*. Given that one of these, at San Bartolo, was heard to intersperse "typical Cassin's" song with "riffs of unadulterated Blue-headed Vireo" (SGM), the previously published records of Blue-headed Vireos in the Cape District—a singing bird at Boca de la Sierra 25 Mar 2002 and a silent bird at San Antonio 25 Oct 2002—are now considered equivocal. Positive identification of a Blue-headed Vireo in the range of *V. c. lucasanus* may require specimen evidence. Seven Warbling Vireos were found wintering in s. Baja California Sur, the northernmost being at San Javier 9 Feb and Ciudad Constitución 19 Feb (both JEP). A Bank Swallow, 3 Cliff Swallows, and 3 Barn Swallows were at Estero San José del Cabo 25 Jan (SGM, CB); Bank Swallow—the most surprising of these—had been recorded there previously during the months of Dec and Feb (M.F.O. 3: 225). The season's only Golden-crowned Kinglet was at Ensenada 19 Dec (vt. RAH). Two Mountain Bluebirds s. of Mexicali 5 Jan (KAR, CR) were the first in ne. Baja California since 1928 (M.F.O. 3: 52), and 2 more

were near El Sauzal 6 Feb (TMcG, MSM). Two American Robins at Guerrero Negro 6 Feb (JEP) were in Baja California Sur, where n. birds are rare in fall and winter.

WARBLERS THROUGH BLACKBIRDS

Heightened observer coverage produced a fine harvest of winter warbler records. Among e. species were the Region's first wintering Northern Parulas, at Caduaño 25–27 Jan (vt. SGM, CB) and near San Antonio de la Sierra 18 Feb (†JEP); the Region's first wintering Magnolia Warbler, at Caduaño 25 Jan (vt. SGM, CB); the Region's 2nd and 3rd wintering Black-throated Blue Warblers, a male at Caduaño 25–27 Jan (vt. SGM, CB) and another male at Ciudad Constitución 19 Feb (†JEP); a Western Palm Warbler at Tijuana 21 Feb–8 Mar (RAE, MJI); Baja California's only Black-and-white Warbler, a female at Ensenada 19 Dec (likely a returning bird; vt. RAH); the Region's 3rd Worm-eating Warbler, and the first to be found in winter, near Ejido Jiquilpan in the Mexicali Valley 3 Mar (†DSC); and a male Hooded Warbler at Miraflores 26 Oct–26 Jan (vt. SGM et al.).

As usual, wintering w. warblers were relatively scarce, especially in Baja California, where drier natural conditions contrast with sw. California's urban landscape. Three Nashville Warblers were found in the Cape District (SGM et al.); the Region's first wintering Virginia's Warbler was at Miraflores 17 Feb (†JEP); the Region's 4th to 7th wintering Lucy's Warblers were at Todos Santos 13 Feb, at Miraflores 16 Feb (2 birds), and at Santiago 17 Feb (all JEP); Yellow Warblers were on the Maneadero Plain 19 Dec (RAE) and in the Mexicali Valley 13 Jan (MJI, RAE); a Black-throated Gray Warbler was at Ensenada 19–20 Dec (vt. RAH et al.); a female Hermit Warbler was on the Maneadero Plain 18–19 Dec (MJI, PAG); an ad. male MacGillivray's Warbler returned for at least its 2nd winter on the Maneadero Plain 18 Sep–6 Feb+ (†RAE et al.), with another at El Rosario 5 Feb (JEP); 2 Belding's Yellowthroats were at a new locale, Caduaño, 17 Feb (JEP); and on 19 Dec, single Wilson's Warblers were on the Maneadero Plain (PAG) and at Ensenada (RAH).

A male Summer Tanager at Ensenada 19–20 Dec (vt. RAH et al.) was likely a returning bird, and 5 or more individuals were found in the Cape District 27 Jan–19 Feb (JEP et al.). A very late female Scarlet Tanager at Ensenada 19 Dec (†RAH) may still have been on the move. A total of 3 Western Tanagers in nw. Baja California 19 Dec–5 Feb (RAH et al.) was consistent with expectations. A Spotted Towhee was still at Cataviña 30 Dec (AC). A Clay-colored Sparrow was on the San Quintin Plain 22 Feb (JEP), and a Brewer's Sparrow on the



BIRD SLIDES

Nearly 6,000 species worldwide
Over 90,000 slides available

SLIDE SETS

Familiar Birds, Eastern Warblers, Raptors, Owls Endangered Species
Bird Behavior, Bird Families of the World, Neotropical Migrants & more

INDIVIDUAL SLIDES

Request our free North American catalog or send custom list
indicating age, sex, behavior, or color morph.

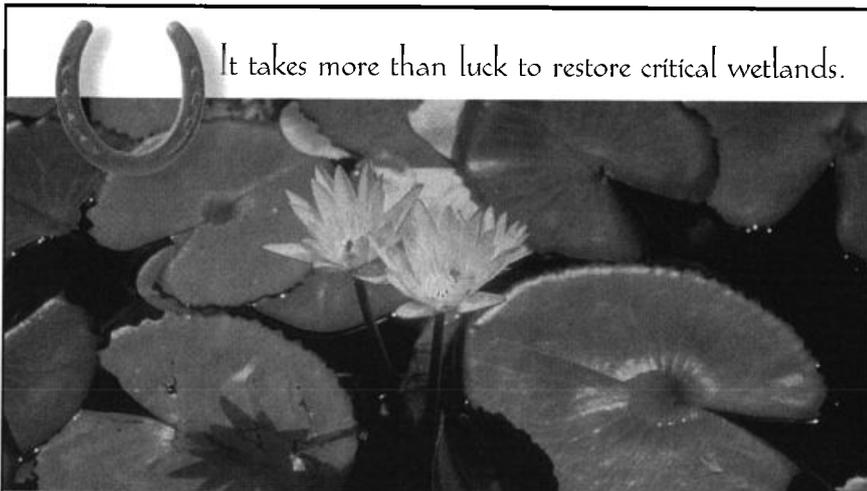
Catalog slides \$3.00 Custom slides \$5.00 Minimum order \$15.00
Allow 4 weeks for delivery.

*These slides are for non-profit lectures only and may not be duplicated.
For publication or other reproduction rights, please call us.*

VIREO (Visual Resources for Ornithology)
The Academy of Natural Sciences
1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway
Philadelphia, PA 19103
(215) 299-1069
www.acnatsci.org/VIREO



©Tom Vezo/VIREO



It takes more than luck to restore critical wetlands.

It takes you.

Help ALC continue to
preserve our nation's most
threatened lands and waters.
Protect and restore our heritage
— support ALC



AMERICAN LAND
CONSERVANCY

Call us at 415.403.3850

or visit us at www.alcnet.org — learn how you can help.

A non-profit organization.
456 Montgomery Street, Suite 1450
San Francisco, CA 94104

Manadero Plain 18 Dec (TEW) was away from its normal habitat. Grasshopper Sparrows apparently winter sparingly in the Region, but records are few, so one at Miraflores 17 Feb (†JEP) was noteworthy. Fox Sparrows of various sorts were reported in n. Baja California, including a Thick-billed far s. at Cataviña 30 Dec (†AC), and one judged to be a Red Fox Sparrow at Hamilton Ranch, near Santo Domingo 4 Feb (†JEP). The only White-throated Sparrow found was a white-striped bird at El Rosario 5 Feb (JEP). Although presumably rare winter visitors, only 2 Golden-crowned Sparrows had been recorded in ne. Baja California (M.F.O. 3: 56) prior to one found s. of Algodones 3 Jan (ph. KAR, CR) and 3 in the same general area 4–5 Mar (DSC). Rare to uncommon forms of the Dark-eyed Junco included 3 Slate-colored at Punta Banda 19 Dec (TEW) and singles at El Rosario 5 Feb (JEP) and s. of Algodones 5 Mar (DSC), and a Pink-sided and a Gray-headed s. of Algodones 4 Mar (DSC). Lapland Longspur could be a regular fall and winter visitor to n. Baja California, but the species is seldom encountered in the vast expanses of suitable habitat there, so one near Estero Punta Banda 19 Dec (†RAE) was noteworthy. The season's only Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at Todos Santos 30 Jan (CB, SGM), and the lone Indigo Bunting was n. of Santiago 28 Jan (SGM, CB). The Region's 3rd recorded Common Grackle was at El Rosario 21 Feb (†JEP). Nine Bronzed Cowbirds at the Mexicali stockyards 13 Jan (ph. MJI, RAE) were the first to be found wintering in the Region.

EXOTICS

The Eurasian Collared-Dove's expansion across the continent reached the Pacific coast in our Region. The first peninsular record in May 2001 was followed by three this season: one with 900 Mourning Doves at the Mexicali stockyards 13 Jan (RAE, †MJI), one at El Rosario 5 Feb (†JEP), and one at Cucupa el Mayor in the Mexicali Valley 6 Mar (DSC). White-collared Seedeaters continued to be found around La Paz, with a high count of 4 at Lagunas de Chametla 4 Feb (*vide* RC).

Contributors: Joe Barth, Casey Beachell, Georgina Brabata, Maicarmen Cárdenas, Roberto Carmona, Israel Cedillo, Daniel S. Cooper, Alexander Cruz, Richard A. Erickson, George Flicker, Mary Flicker, Peter A. Gaede, Kimball L. Garrett, Salvador González-Guzmán, Robert A. Hamilton, Marshall J. Iliff, Gary S. Lester, Guy McCaskie, Todd McGrath, Eric Mellink, Steven G. Mlodinow, Kathy C. Molina, James E. Pike, Cindy Radamaker, Kurt A. Radamaker, Gorgonio Ruiz-Campos, Mike San Miguel, Luis Sauma, Gary J. Strachan, Philip Unitt, Richard E. Webster, Thomas E. Wurster. 🐦