

Baja California Peninsula



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Border coverage was light this season, but more-organized activities included nesting pelican and cormorant surveys by Palacios, Gress, and others in northwestern Baja California, rail surveys by Palacios and others in northwestern Baja California, and ongoing monitoring projects led by Hinojosa-Huerta along the Río Colorado and by Carmona in the La Paz area. Rainfall levels remained low, but the timing of storms was apparently perfectly timed to maximize their benefit for nesting birds. Guest editor Marshall Iliff sat in for the honeymooning Robb Hamilton this season.

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

GREBES THROUGH WATERFOWL

The peninsula's first breeding confirmation for Clark's Grebe was unexpected at hypersaline C.P.G.P., where a pair tended a nest with two eggs 29 May (DSC, RAE, MJI). Potential nesting was reported previously to the west at Laguna Salada (M.F.O. 3: 33) and Presa Rodriguez near Tijuana (N.A.B. 56: 489).

Seawatches 25–26 Mar from Punta Colorado, along the e. Cape of Baja California Sur, were productive (CPD). Peak counts for selected species were 10 Sooty Shearwaters, 6 Black Storm-Petrels, and 100 Pink-footed Shearwaters. Observers are reminded to make their identifications with caution off the s. section of the Region; s. of La Paz, several species that would be w. U.S.A. mega-rarities become regular, specifically including Wedge-tailed and Townsend's Shearwaters and Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel. For example, 3 small, dark, white-rumped storm-petrels seen from Punta Colorado 25 Mar (CPD) probably pertained to this latter species.

Two ad. male Brown Boobies on Middle Rock, Islas Los Coronados, in nw. Baja California 22 May (MJI et al.) may have been returning birds from last year. Confirmation of nesting has yet to be obtained from that site, although 2 birds were incubating there in 2002 (one on a Western Gull egg; N.A.B. 56: 489). Two Neotropical Cormorants at El Centenario, BCS 6 May (RC, DG) evidenced the species' continued presence in the Cape District.

Rare herons along the Río Colorado 29 May included an ad. Little Blue Heron e. of Victoria and an ad. Reddish Egret e. of Murguía (DSC, RAE, MJI). Although about the 6th Regional Colorado Desert record, the egret was the northernmost and one of the earliest, while the heron represented a first for the Colorado Desert subregion.

The number of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at Lagunas de Chametla had dropped off by Mar, with just 2 remaining 10 (RC) & 23 Mar (GC). The tardier waterfowl this season included a Brant at C.P.G.P. 29 May (RAE, DSC, MJI), a Snow Goose in the Mexicali Val-

ley at Ejido Jiquilpan 4 Mar (DSC), single male Blue-winged Teal at the Río del Rosario and Río Guadalupe estuaries 19 May (RAE), 80 Northern Pintails and 2 Green-winged Teal at the Río del Rosario estuary 19 May (RAE), 2 Green-winged Teal at Lagunita El Ciprés 19 May (RAE), and single Buffleheads at Presa Rodriguez and the Río Guadalupe estuary 7 May (MJI). Stellar duck counts included 350 Mallards and 80 Gadwall at Parque de la Amistad, Tijuana 8 Mar (MJI), 600+ Ruddy Ducks at Presa Rodriguez 8 Mar (MJI), and 30–50 Ring-necked Ducks on Canal de Reforma, s. of Algodones, 5 Mar (DSC). One of the season's highlights was the Region's first **Harlequin Duck**, a female found with Surf Scoters at La Joya, BC 7–9 Mar (†RAE, †MJI, ph. KAR, CR). Given that adjacent *San Diego* has had a handful of records (four through 1984; P. Unitt, *The Birds of San Diego County*, 1984), the species had been predicted to occur; Mexico's only previous records are from Puerto Peñasco 26 Mar–9 Apr 1977 and 2–3 there 12 Jan–4 Mar 1990 (Russell and Monson, *The Birds of Sonora*, 1998).

HAWKS THROUGH ALCIDS

The El Sauzal Osprey nest reported last year (N.A.B. 56: 490) was active again this spring on 19 May (RAE). The winter season's **Harlan's Hawk** at Lagunas de Chametla continued through 10 Mar (RC).

Additional rail surveys this spring failed to reveal Black Rails at new sites or even along the lower Río San Telmo, but they were found at two Bahía San Quintín sites (EP et al.). Far less expected in spring than fall, a Solitary Sandpiper along the Río Colorado s. of Algodones 11 Apr (DSC) was the 2nd Regional Colorado Desert record this century. Before that, it had been over 100 years since 2 were found—in Apr 1894 (M.F.O. 3: 42). Two Red Knots at El Centenario, BCS 6 Mar were locally rare (RC, DG). Wilson's Snipe is extremely rare into May, and one at El Rosario 19 May (RAE) may be the Region's latest, while a Wilson's Phalarope at the Río Santo Tomás estuary 7–8 Jun (JEP) was probably also a late spring migrant.

Although small numbers are expected each spring at the Salton Sea, an ad. Franklin's Gull at C.P.G.P. 12 Apr (†DSC), was only the 9th for the Colorado Desert subregion. Five Western Gulls at Punta Colorado 24 Mar (CPD) were noteworthy for the e. Cape region, where decidedly scarce. A genuine Regional rarity at any season, a first-winter Glaucous Gull at El Sauzal, BC 7 May (†MJI) was unprecedented on so late a date. Other gulls of interest were an ad. Sabine's Gull seen from shore at Cabo San Lucas 19 Apr (RH) and 3 ad. Laughing Gulls at C.P.G.P. 29 May (MJI, DSC, RAE), where they have attempted to nest in the past.

Gull-billed Terns are rare in Baja California Sur, but 2–4 have been at El Centenario since Oct 2002; 2 were there 20 May (RC, DG). Six

Elegant Terns at Punta Colorado 24–26 Mar (CPD) were returning spring migrants. Extensive color-banding of Black Skimmers has shed much light on their movements among colonies in *San Diego*, *Orange*, and the Salton Sea (*Western Birds* 27: 127–143). Dispersal of Salton Sea birds to the coast was demonstrated by 5 birds marked at the sea that were observed at Lagunita El Ciprés 19 May (RAE).

Hefty alcid counts were made off nw. Baja



This female Harlequin Duck was photographed at La Joya, Baja California 9 March 2003. This bird, present 7–9 March, represented the first record for the Baja California Peninsula and one of few for Mexico. Photograph by Kurt A. Radamaker.

California this spring, with 250 Cassin's Auklets s. of Isla San Martín 20 May (RAE et al.) and 103 Xantus's Murrelets ne. of Islas Los Coronados 22 May (MJI et al.).

OWLS THROUGH FINCHES

A Barn Owl on Islas Todos Santos 21 May (RAE et al.) may be the first recorded there. A Gila Woodpecker at Cañon de Guadalupe, on the e. side of the Sierra Juárez 16 Mar (RAE, ERL), was in an area where subspecific affinities are disputed (M.F.O. 3: 48). Also in the Colorado Desert, where rare, was a Red-breasted Sapsucker at Campo Mosqueda 6 Mar (DSC). Rare anywhere in the Region, up to 2 Downy Woodpeckers were at Parque Morelos, Tijuana 8 Mar (MJI). The Willow Flycatcher is a common—and late—migrant through ne. Baja California, so 23 counted at various spots there 29 May (DSC et al.) is probably not unusual. A Cassin's Kingbird at San Felipe 5 Mar (†DSC) was unusual, as there is but one record published previously for ne. Baja California.

The only Bell's Vireo reported from ne. Baja California this season was one singing in mesquite w. of Algodones 29 May (MJI, RAE). Two Warbling Vireos at separate locations s. of Algodones 4 & 5 Mar (DSC) appear to be the earliest spring migrants ever recorded in the Region. This spring, American Crows were documented nesting at Tecate, El Sauzal, and Ensenada (RAE, ERL). **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** were identified by Howell et al. (M.F.O. 3: 184) as possible breeders in Baja California Sur, and juvs. were observed at Estero San José del Cabo 1 Jul 2001 (Alvaro Jaramillo), but a pair at a nest near Cabo San Lucas 15–22 Apr (ph. RH) provided the first nesting confirmation for the state.

House Wrens were present in most ranchyards with structures in ne. Baja California 3–6 Mar, but all were gone by 11 Apr (DSC).

Uncommon visitors in ne. Baja California included 4 Western Bluebirds at San Felipe 6 Mar and an American Robin s. of Algodones 4–5 Mar (all DSC). Orange-crowned Warblers have been recorded recently on the islands off nw. Baja California (M.F.O. 3: 226), but nesting had apparently not been confirmed for decades (S.R. Wilbur, *Birds of Baja California*, 1987); one of 4 birds on the s. island of Islas Todos Santos 21 May was carrying food for its offspring. Also on the island that day was an American Redstart, the only one reported this season (both RAE). We judged a female Wilson's Warbler south of Playas de Tijuana 8 Mar to be more likely a wintering bird than an early migrant (MJI).

More (non-Abert's) towhees than expected (M.F.O. 3: 54) were found s. of Algodones, with 3 Green-tailed and "small numbers" of Spotted 4–5 Mar and one Spotted 11 Apr (DSC). Also near Algodones was a singing male Northern Cardinal 6 May (OH-H et al.), presumably from the small population farther upriver and therefore the first wild bird reported from the n. 45% of the Region (*Condor* 49: 84). Of course, the possibility that the bird was an escapee cannot be ruled out (cf. M.F.O. 3: 233, 256). Noteworthy icterid observations included 25 Tricolored Blackbirds at a newly-discovered colony site near San Quintín 19–20 May (RAE), 2000 Yellow-headed Blackbirds near Ejido Jiquilpan in ne. Baja California 3 Mar (DSC), and a record count of 16 Bronzed Cowbirds in ne. Baja California 29 May (MJI et al.).

EXOTIC SPECIES

Two Spotted Doves were in Tijuana 8 Mar (†MJI). More interesting and enigmatic was an unbanded singing Dickcissel in a cage at the Tijuana Zoo 7 May–11 Sep (MJI). We assume the bird was transported there, but House Sparrows (occasional flock-mates of Dickcissels) seemed to be trapped in these cages as well, and it is certainly possible that this was a wild bird associating with the sparrows.

UNDOCUMENTED RECORD

In ne. Baja California, a Sandwich Tern was at Isla Montague 19 Apr (EM). This would represent the first Regional record, so complete documentation is required for full acceptance.

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