

Observer coverage was excellent this season, particularly in the northeast and along the Pacific slope south to the Vizcaíno Peninsula. An influx of Red-throated Pipits had observers plying the fields with extra enthusiasm, yielding the Region's first records of American Pipit of the *japonicus* race and of McCown's Longspur. Firsts were also notched for Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Blue-headed Vireo. Migrant numbers were generally low, however, particularly for the more expected western species.

TUBENOSES THROUGH SKIMMER

Northern Fulmars made news along much of the Pacific coast of North America; the numbers here appear to be the highest on record for the Region. The first report was from the mouth of Estero Punta Banda, where 40+ were present 18 Oct (SGM et al.). The most significant subsequent observations included 250+ off El Socorro 5 Nov (RSAK et al.), 550 off Punta Banda 8 Nov, including several "thermalizing" high into the air with Western Gulls (RAH, RAE), one over the estuary at Guerrero Negro 1 Nov (MSM et al.), and up to 35 offshore w. and s. of Cabo San Lucas 4-7 Nov (MWL). Other boat-based observations of seabirds included 1000+ Least Storm-Petrels off Bahía de Los Angeles 25 Aug (MSM, TMcG) and a Cook's Petrel ca. 85 km w. of Punta Eugenia 8 Nov (MWL).

Unexpected ardeids at El Rosario included an American Bittern 29 Sep and up to 2 Little Blue Herons 29 Sep-18 Oct (JEP). Reddish Egrets were found n. of their usual haunts, with up to 3 imms. ranging between the Río Guadalupe estuary and La Salina 11 Sep-8 Nov (MJI, MSM et al.). The Black-bellied Whistling-Duck high count at Lagunas de Chametla this season was 14 on 20 Aug (RC, DS). Other than Brant, the only geese reported were Snows at El Rosario 18-30 Oct (JEP et al.), El Socorro 5 Nov (BLS et al.), 2 at Bahía de San Quintín 5 Nov (MJI et al.), Cerro Prieto 24 Nov (MJI), and a probable Ross's at Cerro Prieto 24 Nov (MJI). Notable

SA Hurricanes *Ignacio* and *Marty* hit the Region's s. portions in Aug and Sep, and at the n. edge of influence, they brought 9 Magnificent Frigatebirds over the Cataviña area 23 Sep (DSC, MSM). Heavy rains filled the normally dry Laguna Chapala, which yielded an impressive 28 waterbird species 24 Sep-23 Oct. Highlights there included an American White Pelican 13 Oct (KAR et al.), Reddish Egret 28 Sep (RAE et al.), 5 Mountain Plovers 22 Oct (KLG, KCM), 90 Greater Yellowlegs 24 Sep (DSC, MSM), up to 5 Lesser Yellowlegs 28 Sep-18 Oct (PAG et al.), Solitary Sandpiper 19 Sep (JEP), 30 Baird's Sandpipers 28 Sep (RAH et al.), one or 2 Pectoral Sandpipers 2 Oct (JEP), 2 Heermann's Gulls 23 Oct (JEP), and 3 Black Terns 24 Sep (DSC, MSM).

Baja California Peninsula



Robert A. Hamilton

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

Richard A. Erickson

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

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)

SA The Region claims only a few large reservoirs, which birders have covered only sporadically. Repeated visits this season to Presa Rodriguez near Tijuana by MJI et al. produced high counts of species such as Mallard (225, 29 Sep), Cinnamon Teal (320, 29 Sep), Ruddy Duck (1045, 15 Oct), American Coot (1400, 15 Oct), Semipalmated Plover (15, 16 Sep), Black-necked Stilt (420, 11 Sep), Whimbrel (20, 11 Sep), and Marbled Godwit (67, 29 Sep). Observations of less-expected species included up to 15 Lesser Yellowlegs 11 Sep–15 Oct, Red Knot 11 Sep, Baird's Sandpiper 11 Sep, up to 2 Pectoral Sandpipers 16–17 Sep, and up to 125 juv. Short-billed Dowitchers 11 Sep–15 Oct.

Northern Pintail concentrations included 1750 at Laguna Ojo de Liebre 28 Sep (RAE et al.) and 3000+ at nearby Guerrero Negro 22 Nov (RAH, PU). A male **Harlequin Duck** at Punta Banda 11 Oct (†SGM, †KAR) was only the Region's 2nd.

On 16 Nov, one of 12 Ospreys near San Evaristo, on the Gulf coast of Baja California Sur, was nest-building (RAH). Notable hawk observations included 2 juv. Harris's on the San Quintín Plain 5 Nov (ph. BLS et al.), a Swainson's at Cataviña 13 Oct (KAR et al.), 2 Swainson's near Vizcaíno 15 Oct (vt. SGM et al.), and 3 Zone-taileds at Laguna Chapala 13 Oct (KAR et al.).

A juv. Pacific Golden-Plover was at El Socorro 4 Nov (MJI, Ph.BLS et al.). Other notable plover sightings included 200 Snowies at Laguna Ojo de Liebre 28 Sep (PAG et al.), 5 Wilson's near the head of the Gulf at Punta Estrella 30–31 Aug (ph. MJI), 350 Wilson's at Chametla 17 Sep (RC, DS), up to 60 Mountains at Mesa San Jacinto, n. of Camalú 29 Oct–30 Nov (MSM et al.), and 26 Mountains just s. of Camalú 5 Nov (MJI et al.). Four Solitary Sandpipers were found 15 Sep–2 Oct, all in Baja California (JEP et al.). Selected shorebird high counts included 450 Long-billed Curlews at Cerro Prieto 31 Aug (MJI) and 900 at Guerrero Negro 23 Oct (KLG, KCM); 100 Red Knots at Guerrero Negro 19 Sep (JEP); 15,000 Western Sandpipers at Guerrero Negro 23 Oct (KLG, KCM); 1000 Least Sandpipers at Lagunas de Chametla 27 Oct (KLG, KCM); 1200 Dunlins at Guerrero Negro 23 Oct (KLG, KCM); 2000+ Wilson's Phalaropes at Cerro Prieto 31 Aug (MJI); 2400 Red-necked Phalaropes at Cerro Prieto 27 Sep (KAR, CR) and 5000 at Guerrero Negro 23 Oct (KLG, KCM); and 1000+ Red Phalaropes at sea s. of Cabo San Lucas 4 Nov (MWL). The more unusual sandpipers reported included a juv. Semipalmated at Laguna Figueroa 25 Aug

(TMcG, MSM) and a juv. Stilt at El Rosario 30 Sep (RAH et al.).

A late South Polar Skua ca. 85 km w. of Punta Eugenia 8 Nov (MWL) was the first one reported since May 2001. Parasitic Jaeger high counts came from both coasts of Baja California, with 11 at Punta Estrella, s. of San Felipe 30 Aug (MJI), 19 at the mouth of Río San Telmo 25 Sep (MSM, DSC), and 15 at the mouth of Estero Punta Banda 18 Oct (BT et al.). A Franklin's Gull was at El Centenario, BCS 26 Oct (KLG, KCM), and Western Gulls were found on the Gulf coast at Punta Estrella 30 Aug (ph. MJI) and El Centenario (2) 21 Nov (RAH et al.). One ad. and 5 juv. Sabine's Gulls at Cerro Prieto 27 Sep (KAR, CR) were more than expected at an inland site; a juv. at the Río Guadalupe estuary 25–29 Sep (DSC et al.) was unexpected onshore, and 5 were at sea s. of Cabo San Lucas 4 Nov (MWL).

Gull-billed Terns were found again at El Centenario: one on 20 Aug (RC, RV) and 4 on 30 Sep (RC, LS). Elegant Terns were present later than usual; examples included 75 at El Socorro 5 Nov (MJI et al.) and, in Baja California Sur, 2 at San Evaristo 16 Nov and one at El Centenario 21 Nov (RAH et al.). Also later than usual were 7 Least Terns at El Centenario 30 Sep (RC, RV) and singles at Guerrero Negro 1 Oct (JEP) and Estero San José, BC 13 Oct (BT et al.). Black Terns were found at Cerro Prieto (80, 31 Aug; MJI), Punta Estrella (2, 30 Aug; MJI), and Guerrero Negro

29–30 Aug (MJI). A **Whip-poor-will** found roosting near Santa Teresita 24 Sep (DSC, †MSM) was extraordinary; the only other Regional records are from the Cape mts., where the species was first discovered in 1963.

Only 3 Vaux's Swifts were reported, including 2 late ones at the Río Guadalupe estuary 3 Nov (BLS et al.). Also at the Río Guadalupe estuary, vagrant hummingbirds concentrated on 29 Sep (ph. †MJI): an imm. male Broad-billed represented the 2nd state record (and the first anywhere in the Region since 1998), and an imm. female **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** represented a Regional first.

Corresponding to a good flight in California, Lewis's Woodpeckers made their best showing in recent years. One at Cataviña 13 Oct (†KAR, †BT, †SGM) was followed by up to 6 at Laguna Hanson 18 Nov–20 Dec (MJI et al.), while 4 at Mulegé 29 Nov (†PK, TM) established only the 2nd record for Baja California Sur. Sapsuckers at Cataviña provided the only other woodpecker highlights: a female Williamson's 3 Oct (ph. JEP) and an ad. male Yellow-bellied 18 Oct–1 Nov (ph. JEP et al.). Five Red-naped Sapsuckers and a Red-naped x Red-breasted hybrid were reported Regionwide, but pure Red-breasted went unrecorded.

A late Western Wood-Pewee was at El Socorro 4–5 Nov (BLS et al.). The only confidently identified Least Flycatcher was in the n. Vizcaíno Desert at Santa Cecilia 29 Sep (JEP). Late Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatchers were at La Bufadora 6–8 Nov (MJI et al.) and s. of Playas de Tijuana 24 Nov (RAE, RAH). An Eastern Phoebe apparently returned to El Rosario 17 Oct–4 Nov (BT et al.). Kingbirds of note included: at least 3 Tropicals at Bahía Tortugas, where routine in fall, 29 Sep–22 Oct (RAH et al.); the 3rd Cassin's for the Colorado Desert bioregion at San Felipe 29–31 Aug (ph. MJI); Baja California Sur West-erns at Guerrero Negro 28 Sep (PAG et al.) and Santiago 26 Oct (KLG et al.); and an Eastern on the lower Río Santo Tomás 28 Sep (ph. JEP). Loggerhead Shrikes proved to be thriving in the southeastern desert, with a count of 21 along the coast between San Juan de la Costa and San

Evaristo 16 Nov (RAH, PU). A Plumbeous Vireo was near San Evaristo 19 Nov (RAH), where the species may winter sparingly; only 3 were reported elsewhere. A **Blue-headed Vireo** at Guerrero Negro 1 Oct (ph. JEP) furnished the first confirmed record for the Region (see N.A.B. 57: 261). The only Red-eyed Vireos were s. of Playas de Tijuana 2 Oct (RAH) and at Guerrero Negro 30 Sep (ph. JEP), and a Yellow-green Vireo turned



This juvenile Pacific Golden-Plover (below) at El Socorro 4 November 2003 (in flight with Black-bellied Plover) provided the only record for Baja California this fall. Photograph by Brian L. Sullivan.

(6, 23 Oct; KLG, KCM), in addition to Laguna Chapala. Four hundred Black Skimmers at Bahía San Quintín 21 Oct (KLG, KCM) represented a record Regional count.

PIGEONS THROUGH PIPITS

A Band-tailed Pigeon at Bahía de Los Angeles 6 Nov (MF, GF) was the 2nd to be found in the Vizcaíno Desert. Up to 5 Inca Doves were at the s. limit of their range at San Felipe

up s. of Playas de Tijuana 16 Oct (†JEP).

Two Bank Swallows at El Rosario 20 Sep (JEP) were the only ones reported. A Brown Creeper at La Bufadora 6 Nov (MJI, ph. BLS, RSK) provided one of few Regional records. Cataviña provides an oasis for all sorts of wanderers, including a Townsend's Solitaire 1 Nov (JE et al.) and a record-late Swainson's Thrush 4 Nov (MJI et al.). Varied Thrushes were at the Río Guadalupe estuary 15 Oct (RAE, MJI) and El Rosario 29 Nov (TEW, LA). After just one previous Regional record, Gray Catbirds were found at La Bufadora (†KAR, vt., †SGM, †BT) and the Maneadero Plain (†SGM, KAR) 18 Oct, with a 3rd at El Rosario 29 Nov (†TEW, LA). Red-throated Pipits seemed to be everywhere, doubling the number of individuals previously recorded in the Region. At least 20 were in Baja California: 2–3 at Villa Jesus Maria 28–29 Sep (RAE et al.); one n. of Rosarito 29 Sep (MJI); 5+ at Cantamar 15–16 Oct (MJI et al.); 8–10 n. of El Socorro 17 Oct–4 Nov (†KAR, vt. SGM et al.); one at Río del Rosario estuary 17–24 Oct (JEP); and singles at El Rosario 18 (JEP) & 25–30 Oct (JEP et al.). At least 9 were in Baja California Sur, including one at Ensenada Blanca, s. of Loreto 25 Oct (KLG) and 8–10 at Santa Teresita 31 Oct–1 Nov (JE et al.). The Eurasian invasion included the Region's first *japonicus* American Pipits: singles n. of El Socorro 17 Oct (vt., †BT, †SGM, KAR), at the Río del Rosario estuary 25 Oct (†JEP), and at El Rosario 30 Oct (ph., †JE et al.).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Observers remarked on the general scarcity of warblers but through intensive coverage tallied a respectable 33 species. Most notable were the Region's 2nd Pine Warbler—an imm. male at El Rosario 17 Oct (ph. †JEP)—and 4th Bay-breasted Warbler—an imm. male in the Mexicali Valley 18 Nov (TMcG, ph., †MSM). Unusually high totals included 8 Lucy's Warblers 11 Sep–21 Nov (BC 7, BCS 1) and 23 Palm Warblers 4 Oct–23 Nov (21, 2). The following numbers were more typical: 4 Tennessees 29 Sep–21 Oct (1, 3); 2 Northern Parulas 28 Sep–3 Oct (1,1); 5 Chestnut-sideds in Baja California 17 Sep–18 Oct, plus an imm. male collected near San Evaristo, BCS 17 Nov (RAH, PU; *SDNHM); 4 Magnolias 27 Sep–2 Nov (3,1); a Cape May at the Santo Tomás Winery 23 Sep (†MJI, RAE); 4 Blackburnians 1–17 Oct (4,0); 2 Prairies 17 Oct–2 Nov (2,0); 15 Blackpolls 23 Sep–3 Nov (14, 1); 3 Prothonotaries 18–31 Oct (1, 2); 3 Ovenbirds 30 Sep–30 Oct (2, 1); and a Hooded at El Rosario 27 Sep (RAE et al.), plus the lingering female at La Salina to 1 Oct (PAG et al.). Warblers expected in larger

numbers included Virginia's (El Rosario 30 Sep, RAE et al.), Black-throated Blue (wintering at the Santo Tomás Winery 29 Oct+, TMcG et al.), and Black-throated Green (El Rosario 18 Oct, ph. JEP).

Sixteen Summer Tanagers were found s.



The incursion of Red-throated Pipits and American Pipits of the race *japonicus* into western North America this season included the first three *japonicus* to be recorded in Baja California. The bird in the foreground, photographed at El Rosario on 30 October 2003, shows white underparts with dense, thick, dark streaks; white wingbars and supercilium; and upperparts darker than local American Pipits, such as the background bird.

Photograph by Josh Engel.

to the Vizcaíno Peninsula 29 Sep–13 Nov, but the only Scarlet Tanager was at Cataviña 23 Oct–1 Nov (ph. JEP et al.). Late Black-chinned Sparrows were recorded at the Santo Tomás Winery 23 Sep (MJI), along the lower Río Santo Tomás 28 Sep (JEP), and in the lower Valle San Telmo 20 Oct (KLG et al.). Mountain White-crowned Sparrows are generally uncommon to fairly common in Baja California Sur, and an estimated 1000—with 300–400 Lark Buntings—near Vizcaíno 15 Oct (SGM et al.) exceeded all previous



This Brown Creeper photographed at La Bufadora, Baja California 6 November 2003 provided one of few Regional records. Photograph by Brian L. Sullivan.

counts; shortly thereafter, on 31 Oct, 835 Lark Buntings materialized at nearby Santa Teresita (MSM et al.). In contrast to fall 2002, Fox Sparrows were quite scarce—

although a Red Fox Sparrow was found at La Bufadora 18 Oct (vt. †SGM, †BT, KAR)—and Golden-crowned Sparrows went unrecorded. On 28 Nov, single Pink-sided Juncos were encountered at Santo Tomás (†TEW, LA) and at Ejido Yucatan in the Mexicali Valley (DSC). Seemingly overdue, the Region's first McCown's Longspur was n. of El Socorro 17 Oct–2 Nov (†BT, ph., †KAR, vt., †SGM, †MSM et al.). A male Lapland Longspur was also there 17 Oct–2 Nov (†SGM, †KAR, ph. JE et al.), and 3+ more were n. of Laguna Figueroa 30 Nov (TEW, LA). Chestnut-collared Longspurs were found in record numbers: 25–30 n. of El Socorro 17 Oct–5 Nov (†SGM, †KAR et al.); 6 on the Maneadero Plain 31 Oct (RAE); one near the Mexicali airport 28 Nov (DSC); and in Baja California Sur, one at Santa Teresita 31 Oct (JE et al.). Four Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were found in coastal Baja California 11 Sep–12 Oct. The only Indigo Bunting was an imm. male at El Rosario 23 Sep (MSM, DSC), and a green Painted Bunting was on the Maneadero Plain 10 Oct (†KAR). Dickcissel numbers continue to impress, with 14–15 found 11 Sep–25 Oct, compared with just 6 Bobolinks 23 Sep–15 Oct.

Great-tailed Grackles visited the Vizcaíno Desert in record numbers this fall; highlights included up to 40+ at Bahía de Los Angeles 22 Oct–7 Nov (MF et al.), about 20 in the vicinity of Villa Jesus Maria 23 Oct (JEP), and 3 in Guerrero Negro 23 Oct (KLG, KCM et al.), the first recorded in Baja California Sur since 1998. Their colonization of the mid-peninsula agricultural region seems imminent. A Bronzed Cowbird at Bahía Asunción 15 Oct (†KAR, †BT, SGM) was the first to be well documented in Baja California Sur, and another Pacific coast record came from the Maneadero Plain 31 Oct (†RAE). Rare to uncommon orioles included an Orchard at Cataviña 30 Sep (RAE); 6 Bullock's in San Felipe 29 Aug (MJI) and 6 elsewhere 15 Sep–4 Nov (5 in BC, one in BCS); and a Baltimore at Villa Jesus Maria 13 Oct (vt. SGM, †KAR, BT).

Contributors: Liga Auzins, Roberto Carmona, Daniel S. Cooper, Josh Engel, Richard A. Erickson, George Flicker, Mary Flicker, Peter A. Gaede, Kimball L. Garrett, Robert A. Hamilton, Marshall J. Iliff, Robert S.A. Kaler, Paul Keller, Mark W. Lockwood, Ian MacGregor, Todd McGrath, Eric Mellink, Thomas Miko, Steven G. Mlodinow, Kathy C. Molina, James E. Pike, Cindy Radamaker, Kurt A. Radamaker,

Mike San Miguel, Dalia Saravia, Luis Sauma, Edith Suazo, Brian L. Sullivan, Bill Tweit, Philip Unitt, Rosalva Vázquez, Thomas E. Wurster. 🐦