

Observer coverage—especially in the Mexicali Valley and Cape District—was robust this season, and the fourth Ensenada Christmas Bird Count, held on 19 December, was a great success. Among the record-high 202 species tallied were such rarities as Black-chinned Hummingbird, Bell's Vireo, a White-crowned Sparrow of the *pugetensis* race, and four oriole species. The Mexicali Valley hosted several duck species in relative abundance, as well as the Region's first Greater Pewee. In Baja California Sur, Anna's Hummingbirds were confirmed nesting in Guerrero Negro, the Region's first Grace's Warbler topped an extensive bill of noteworthy parulids, and a Ruff provided a state first.

TUBENOSES THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Northern Fulmars remained close to the nw. shoreline through at least early Jan, including 204 recorded off Ensenada during the 19 Dec C.B.C. Brown Boobies continue to be seen regularly at Islas Los Coronados, with 3 females and 2 males there 8 Feb (MB). Two American Bitterns were at Estero Punta Banda 10–11 Dec (KW). Approximately 10,000 White-faced Ibis at Cerro Prieto geothermal ponds (hereafter, C.P.G.P.) 15 Dec (MJI, MSM) fell short of the 15,000 estimated there 4 Jan 2003 (N.A.B. 57: 260).

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks continued at Lagunas de Chametla, with up to 11 there 8 Jan–12 Mar (DRP et al.). Two Snow and 2 Ross's Geese were at El Descanso 18–20 Dec (MSM et al.), and 9 Ross's at C.P.G.P. 18 Jan included one neck-ringed the previous year in Nunavut (†KAR, CR); one remained there 27 Jan (MJI, RAE). The season's 6 Canada Geese, all *B. c. moffitti*, were evenly split between Ensenada 19 Dec (SNGH, RAH) and the Mexicali Valley 27 Jan (MJI, RAE). Quite unusual for the Colorado Desert were up to 2 Wood Ducks at the Mexicali Zoo 27 Jan–26 Mar (ph. MJI et al.) and up to 2 Eurasian Wigeons at C.P.G.P. 15 Dec–27 Jan (MSM, ph. KAR, ph. MJI et al.). Greater Scaup ranged far and wide, including 4 at C.P.G.P. 18 Jan (†KAR, CR), 2 at Guerrero Negro 3 Feb (JEP), and up to 3 at Lagunas de Chametla 20 Jan–9 Mar (vt. SGM, ph. JEP, MJI). Rare scoters included a White-winged at La Joya 3 Nov (BLS et al.) and 6 Blacks along the coast s. to Bahía San Quintín (TMcG et al.). A high count of 16 Common Goldeneyes at C.P.G.P. 15 Dec (MJI, MSM) presaged 100+ at nearby Canal Colima—between Algodones and Ejido Pachuca—24 Jan (KAR, CR), an estimate refined to 156 on 27 Jan (MJI, RAE). Seven Hooded Mergansers was a healthy seasonal total for Baja California (JEP et al.), while a female at San Ignacio 4 Feb (ph. JEP) and a first-winter male at Estero San José del Cabo 11 Mar (ph. MJI) represented only the 3rd and 4th records for Baja California Sur. Up to 19

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Common Mergansers were recorded in the ne., including 5 near Ejido Chiapas 18 Jan (KAR, CR) and 14 at C.P.G.P. 27 Jan (ph. MJI, RAE).

The report of a Common Black-Hawk circling with Turkey Vultures above Lagunas de Chametla 18 Jan was possibly correct, but Zone-tailed Hawk is frequently mistaken for this species; in the absence of a photograph or other physical evidence, the description did not meet the editors' standards for accepting such a significant and unexpected occurrence. The increasing use of digital cameras to document unusual sightings (including digital photos taken through scopes and binoculars) has been a welcome development that can help to resolve such situations, which frustrate observers and editors alike.

An imm. Bald Eagle was unexpected at Estero San José del Cabo 10 Jan (DRP), and dry conditions at Laguna Hanson precluded their usual wintering there. Swainson's Hawks were found foraging in recently burned fields in the Mexicali Valley:

8+ near Mezquital 18 Jan (†KAR, CR) and 3 dark ads. n. of Villa Hermosa 27 Jan (MJI, RAE); in Baja California Sur, 3 were at Ciudad Constitución 9 Feb (DVP), and a second-year bird was at Ejido Conquista 19 Feb (JEP). Baja California's 2nd Harlan's Hawk was near Santo Domingo 21 Feb (ph. JEP). An ad. female Merlin of the *richardsonii* subspecies, one of few recorded in the Region, was at Ojos Negros valley 18 Dec (RAE et al.). At least 80 Clapper Rails were recorded at Estero Punta Banda 10–11 Dec (KW), and one was heard along the Rio del Rosario 1 Feb (JEP).

Pacific Golden-Plovers are not known to winter regularly in the Region away from Isla Guadalupe, so 4 at Estero Punta Banda 19 Dec (MSM, †MJI et al.) were a welcome surprise. Twenty of the wintering Mountain Plovers at Mesa San Jacinto, n. of Camalú, were still present on 2 Mar (TEW, LA). Solitary Sandpiper occurs scarcely in Baja California Sur during winter (Carmona, R., D. Galindo, and L. Sauma. 2003. New and noteworthy shorebird records from south Baja California Peninsula, México. *Wader Study Group Bulletin* 101/102: 62–66); 2 were encountered at Santiago 19 Jan (vt.

SGM, CB), and another was at San Ignacio 5 Feb (ph. JEP). A Pectoral Sandpiper at Lagunas de Chametla 9 Dec (LA) was likely a late fall migrant; one at Estero San José del Cabo 16–17 Jan (vt. SGM, CB) should



Wetlands around La Paz, Baja California Sur are building a reputation for attracting unusual shorebirds. Marshall Iloff found this adult male Ruff, a first for the state and perhaps third or fourth for Mexico, at Rancho Santageda on 10 (here 12) March 2004. Photograph by Andrés González Peralta.

be considered the Region's first winter record. Baja California Sur's 2nd record of Stilt Sandpiper, and the first in winter, came from Lagunas de Chametla 9 Mar (ph. MJI). Rancho Santageda held the



Though common in the Gulf of California, Yellow-footed Gulls are seldom seen on the Pacific side of the Baja California Peninsula. Limited data suggest, however, that small numbers may cross over regularly in southern Baja California Sur. This adult, photographed with Western Gulls on 9 February 2004, was the first to be found at Bahía San Quintín. Photograph by Kathy C. Molina.

state's first Ruff, an ad. male, 10–12 Mar (ph. MJI, ph. RC, LS).

GULLS THROUGH THRUSHES

A first-winter Franklin's Gull was at Presa

Rodriguez, above Tijuana 18 Dec (TMcG, †MSM). An ad. Yellow-footed Gull, rare on the Pacific coast, was at Bahía San Quintín 9 Feb (KLG, ph. KCM). Up to 4 Gull-billed Terns wintered at El Centenario 23 Jan–12 Mar (vt. SGM, ph. MJI, RC). An Elegant Tern was at La Paz 21 Jan (SGM et al.). Long-eared Owls turned up at Laguna Chapala on 21 Feb (†DVP) and at Laguna Agua Amarga (km 41 on the road to Bahía de Los Angeles) on 1 Mar (TEW, LA). Broad-billed Hummingbirds are quite rare throughout the Region, and the season's only report was of an ad. male at Ciudad Constitución 10 Feb (†DVP). A female Black-chinned Hummingbird remained at Estero Beach, near Ensenada 19 Dec–27 Mar (†PP, DSC). At least 7 female Anna's Hummingbirds built numerous nests in Guerrero Negro between mid-Nov and the end of the period (ph. AG, ph. ES), giving Baja California Sur its first breeding records; other southerly birds were at Villa Benito Juárez 9 Feb and 9 at Ciudad Constitución 10 Feb (both JEP).

The Region's first Greater Pewee was found at the Mexicali Zoo 27 Jan (†RAE, ph. MJI). The season's northernmost Gray Flycatcher was at Cataviña 3 Feb (ph. JEP). Single Tropical Kingbirds were noted 5–10

km e. of San José del Cabo 4 Jan (DRP), at Lagunas de Chametla 20 Jan–9 Mar (vt. SGM et al.), at Estero San Jose del Cabo 24 Feb–Mar 11 (KB, MJI), and in La Paz 13 Mar (MJI). Fourteen Thick-billed Kingbirds were encountered around Agua Caliente and Santiago 14–15 Feb (ph. JEP); approximately 14 were found elsewhere (SGM et al.). The only definite wintering Western Kingbird found was roosting with Cassin's Kingbirds at Caliente and Santiago 13–14 Feb (ph. JEP). A Bell's Vireo on the Maneadero Plain 19 Dec (†DSC, PP) appeared to be of the expected race *pusillus* and was the first to be found in Baja California in winter. A northerly Plumbeous Vireo was at Tijuana 22 Dec (MDC). Cassin's Vireos seen away from the s. Cape District—where the brightly colored *V. c. lucasanus* resides—included 3 around San Javier 8 Feb (ph. JEP) and one nw. of La Paz 19 Feb (DVP). Wintering Bank Swallows were once again found in the Cape District, with 4 at Estero

San José del Cabo 16 Jan (SGM, CB) and one or 2 at Lagunas de Chametla 18 Feb (JEP). A surprising 800 Barn Swallows were present at Estero San José del Cabo 17 Jan (SGM, CB). A Varied Thrush was at Cataviña 3 Dec (EP).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Nashville and Lucy's Warblers are not known to winter regularly in the Region, but Baja California Sur yielded 7 of the former 5–27 Feb (DVP et al.) and 13–14 of the latter 18 Jan–18 Feb (JEP et al.). Lucy's were found in relative abundance on the peninsula in autumn 2003 as well. Have these species been overlooked in the past, are their numbers increasing, or were these high winter totals anomalous? Tennessee Warblers, very unusual in winter, were found near Liguí, s. of Loreto, 21 Dec (KB) and at Santiago the same day (BL). Presumed returning were a male Northern Parula at Caduaño 16 Feb (ph. JEP), a female Magnolia Warbler there 17 Jan–11 Mar (SGM et al.), and a male MacGillivray's Warbler on the Maneadero Plain 23 Sep–19 Dec (†DSC et al.; its 3rd winter). Another wintering Magnolia Warbler was at Agraria Reforma No. 2 on 19 Feb (ph. JEP), only the 2nd Regional winter record. The imm. male Black-throated Blue Warbler continued at the Santo Tomás Winery through 26 Feb (ph. JEP et al.). An imm. male Grace's Warbler at Ciudad Constitución 10 Feb (ph. JEP) was the Region's first. A male Prairie Warbler at Villa Benito Juárez 9 Feb (ph. JEP) furnished the Region's 2nd winter record. Nine Palm Warblers in the season (extended to 12 Mar) included 6 in Baja California Sur. Northerly Black-and-white Warblers were on the Maneadero Plain 19 Dec (PP) and at El Rosario 1 Feb (JEP); one at the Mexicali Zoo 27 Jan–26 Mar (RAE et al.) constituted a first for the Colorado Desert portion of the Region. Northerly American Redstarts were seen at La Misión 20 Dec (RAH, PAG) and at El Rosario 1 Feb (JEP). A Prothonotary Warbler at Boca de San Jacinto, Baja California Sur 6 Jan (DRP) provided the Region's first definite winter record. Also unprecedented in the Region in winter was an Ovenbird at Ciudad Constitución 10 Feb (ph. JEP). The only Northern Waterthrush noted in Baja California was on the Maneadero Plain 19 Dec (†PP). A high count of 21 Belding's Yellowthroats was tallied at Santiago 19 Jan (SGM, CB).

Summer Tanagers were found in surpris-

ing numbers, with 8 in Baja California and 10–11 in Baja California Sur (JEP et al.). Baja California's only Western Tanagers were 2 at Ensenada 19 Dec (RAH, SNGH) and 2 at El Rosario 21 Feb (JEP). Three Green-tailed Towhees were found 19 Dec on the Ensenada C.B.C., and another was at El Descanso the same day (SG). Single Clay-colored Sparrows near Ojo Negros 18 Dec (PP, RAE) and at Estero Punta Banda 19 Dec (ph., †MJI) were n. of usual wintering areas. A Grasshopper Sparrow at Santiago 19 Jan (SGM, CB) was the only one recorded. Fox Sparrows were scarce, with only 5 found 19 Dec on the Ensenada C.B.C. and one at Cataviña 3 Feb (JEP). Single Swamp Sparrows at San Ignacio 4 Feb and near Las Cuevas 17 Feb (both JEP)



The first Greater Pewee for the Baja California Peninsula was found 27 January 2004 at the Mexicali Zoo. Photograph by Marshall J. Iliff.

were just the 2nd and 3rd for Baja California Sur. A White-throated Sparrow was on the Maneadero Plain 19–20 Dec (†PP et al.). Mexico's first record of a White-crowned Sparrow of the *pugetensis* subspecies was encountered on the Maneadero Plain 19 Dec (ph., †JEP).

Lazuli Buntings were unusually widespread in Baja California Sur, including an apparently pure flock of 79 along the road to San Antonio de la Sierra on 12 Feb (JEP). The only Indigo Bunting recorded was at Santiago 19 Jan (SGM, CB). A caged Dickcissel at Parque Morelos, Tijuana 22 Dec (MDC) had been present since May 2003. A male Tricolored Blackbird near Laguna Hanson 18 Dec (PP et al.) provided the Region's first montane record. Seven hundred Yellow-headed Blackbirds 19 Feb were at a stockyard in Ciudad Insurgentes (ph. JEP), where 1000 were seen in Jan 2002. A flock of 25 Great-tailed Grackles at

Guerrero Negro 4 Feb (ph. JEP) represents a new high count for Baja California Sur. Bronzed Cowbirds find ideal habitat in Mexicali stockyards, where 16 convened on 24 Nov (ph. MJI); the first wintering record for the nw. occurred on the Maneadero Plain 20 Dec (PP, SNGH, †RAE), close to where one was seen on 31 Oct. Solitary Orchard Orioles on the Maneadero Plain 19 Dec (†DSC, PP), at San José del Cabo 6–11 Jan (DRP), and at Tijuana 15 Mar (RAE) add to the few Regional winter records. Lone Bullock's Orioles, typically scarce in winter, were at Ensenada 19 Dec (SNGH, RAH) and San Ignacio 29 Feb (TEW, LA); an imm. male in Tijuana 15 Mar (RAE) was likely wintering as well. The only Baltimore Oriole found was an imm. male in Ensenada 19 Dec (†SNGH, RAH), and the only out-of-place Scott's Oriole was an ad. male at La Bufadora 19 Dec (RAE, MJM). A high total of 23 American Goldfinches was recorded 19 Dec on the Ensenada C.B.C.

Non-native species: Two years after its last sighting, the ad. male African Darter reappeared in Ensenada 19 Dec (SNGH, RAH). In Mexicali, 17 apparently "pure" Eurasian Collared-Doves (ph. MJI) plus 2 apparent hybrids were the first to be photographically documented in the Region; 2 at Villa Jesus Maria 3 Feb (JEP) and 4 there on 29 Feb (TEW, LA) were well s. of previous Regional records (Ringed Turtle-Dove hybrids were reported there in Oct 2003).

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