

It was a lackluster season for vagrant landbirds generally, especially in September, but shorebirds provided excitement in the north. Four new species were recorded in each state, including two new to the Region (Galapagos/Hawaiian Petrel and Buff-breasted Sandpiper). Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were found nesting for the first time, and a better-than-average movement of northern/mountain species in the northern lowlands included nuthatches, crossbills, and siskins.

GREBES THROUGH TERNS

A Horned Grebe at the Río Guadalupe estuary 9 Oct (†RGW) was nearly a month earlier than previous records. A Buller's Shearwater seen from shore at La Bufadora 17 Oct (†BT, †SGM) was most unexpected, as there are fewer than five previous Regional records. In contrast, Black-vented Shearwaters are numerous in the Region and are seen in large numbers from shore regularly. An estimated 15,000 off Punta San Jacinto 17 Oct (PAG, ph. RAH) was the largest number yet reported to us. Wood Storks were found for at least the 3rd consecutive year: 4 were at Laguna El Indio in the Río Colorado delta 16 Jul (DM, JB, *fide* HI). Black-bellied Whistling-Duck joined the ranks of the Region's nesting birds this season when 2 ads. were seen with 3 chicks at Lagunas de Chametla 20–24 Sep (LS, DS); later, on 2 Dec, the Regional high count more than doubled to 37 (RC, VA, DS). At the same location, a Snow Goose 30 Sep–6 Oct (LS, DS) was followed by the state's first Ross's Goose 6–23 Nov (ph. RC, VA). A Eurasian Wigeon at El Descanso 3 Oct (ph. RAH et al.) and 2 Hooded Mergansers at Campo Mosqueda 24 Oct (RAE) were early; the latter were followed by a Regional high count of 18 there 22 Nov (RAH). Broad-winged Hawks were at El Rosario 6 Oct (ad.; †MSM et al.) and Bahía Tortugas 20 Oct (imm.; †BT). Swainson's Hawks were at traditional locations: up to 3 at Santa Teresita 5–18 Oct (RAH et al.) and 3 in the Mexicali Valley 28 Nov (TEW, LA).

Mesa San Jacinto was again important for plovers, with 4 Pacific Golden-Plovers, 50 Killdeer, and 47 Mountain Plovers there 18 Nov (MDC et al.). More Solitary Sandpipers than usual were reported, with 8+ in Baja California and one in the Cape mountains at La Laguna 28 Jul (MDC et al.). The season's shorebird highlights were both at the Río Guadalupe estuary: a juv. Hudsonian Godwit widely seen 28 Aug–3 Oct (ph. †MJB et al.) and the Region's first juv. Buff-breasted Sandpiper 19–26 Sep (ph. MS et al.). The only previous godwit was collected at Estero San José del Cabo in May 1988. Other rare sandpipers included a total of 5 Semipalmated Sandpipers near La Paz 19–25 Aug (LS, DG, ph. RC) and 3 ad. Stilt Sandpipers at

Baja California Peninsula



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SA Observers willing to attempt to mix birding with other less demanding activities might consider visiting the Region's pelagic waters aboard one of several cruise ships that regularly travel between s. California and mainland w. Mexico (see *Birding* 31: 338–344 and *Winging It* 14.1: 1–4). Erickson spent most of the week of 23–28 Aug so engaged, with seabird highlights including 16 light-morph Wedge-tailed Shearwaters (22° 46' southward), 2 Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrels (ca. 46 km se. of Cabo San Lucas), 2 Red-billed Tropicbirds, 4 Masked Boobies (23° 32' southward), 58 dark-morph Red-footed Boobies (23° 15' southward), and up to 3 **Galapagos/Hawaiian Petrels** 138–147 km sse. Punta Gorda 24 Aug (†). The maps in the *Atlas of Seabird Distribution and Relative Abundance in the Eastern Tropical Pacific* (R.L. Pitman. 1986. National Marine Fisheries Service administrative report) suggest that Galapagos Petrel is perhaps more likely in this location. (There are no published records of either species in the Region, but Pitman is planning to produce a revised edition of this important volume soon, so earlier records may yet surface.) Landbird migrants at sea included 3 White-winged Doves, 3 Mourning Doves, and a Brown-headed Cowbird.

For 30 years, Howard King has traveled annually to the waters far off n. Baja California in search of tuna. On 29 Aug, he found far more birds than ever before about 160 km sw. of San Diego. Highlights there included a banded Black-footed Albatross, 4 Buller's Shearwaters (†), 6 Leach's Storm-Petrels (white-rumped and dark-rumped), 2 Ashy Storm-Petrels, a Long-tailed Jaeger, 50 Common Terns, and 15 Arctic Terns.



Black-vented Shearwaters nest only on Pacific islands off the Baja California Peninsula. Oftentimes thousands can be seen from shore, as shown here at Punta San Jacinto, Baja California 17 October 2004. Photograph by Robert A. Hamilton.

Cerro Prieto geothermal ponds. (hereafter C.P.G.P.) 14 Aug (KAR, DY). Four Baird's and 7 Pectoral Sandpipers were seen on about the n. half of the peninsula, and another juv. Baird's was at Estero San José del Cabo 27 Aug (RAE). A juv. Mew Gull s. of Playas de Tijuana 29 Sep (ph. MJI) was exceptionally early, and a roosting flock of 1800 Common Terns at Estero Punta Banda 10 Sep (RAE) was an unprecedented Regional number.

CUCKOOS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

Two Yellow-billed Cuckoos at Rancho La Burrea (w. side of the Sierra de La Laguna at 500 m) 29 Jul (SGe, EB) represent the first record known to us from the Cape District in nearly 30 years. It has been almost as long since **Black Swift** was reported convincingly in the Region, but 3 were seen this season: one on the w. face of the Sierra de La Laguna 29 Jul (a first for Baja California Sur; †HO, †NEC) and 2 over El Rosario 19 Oct (BLS et al.). Given its breeding status in mainland Mexico and the early date relative to n. migrants, it is fascinating to ponder the

provenance of the first bird. Vaux's Swifts and Black-chinned Hummingbirds are rarely reported from Baja California Sur, so one of the former at Santa Teresita 5 Oct (MSM et al.) and one of the latter at Ejido Benito Juárez 21 Oct (SGM) were noteworthy. Another Allen's Hummingbird was reported



As in so many areas, the number of reports of Ross's Goose has increased recently on the Baja California Peninsula. This one at Lagunas de Chametla, near La Paz 6 (here) through 23 November 2004 was the first for Baja California Sur. Photograph by Roberto Carmona.

from Baja California Sur: a female with 2 other Rufous/Allen's at Ejido Banfil, e. of San Ignacio, 25 Jul (†MDC, †HO). We continue to await an iron-clad record for the state. One or 2 Williamson's Sapsuckers at Laguna Hanson 11 Oct (RGW) were in the Sierra Juárez, where considered casual.

A single Least Flycatcher at El Rosario 19 Oct (BPG et al.) was below the expected number. Intriguing was a reported Cordilleran Flycatcher at La Bufadora 16–19 Oct (†BT, KAR, †SGM, ph. †RAH et al.). Although the richly colored bird was heard giving calls typical of the species on the first day, no recording was obtained. As widespread as this species is in w. North America, it must occur as a vagrant/migrant in the Region, but for the time being we prefer to hold out for more definitive evidence of the species' occurrence. (Note that the species has yet to be proven to occur even in California away from the breeding grounds.) Eastern Phoebe at Bahía Asunción 20 Oct (KAR, vt. †SGM, †BT et al.) and El Rosario 17 Nov (†MDC et al.), a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher near Nueva Odisea (s. of San Quintín) 17–18 Nov (RS, †MDC), and 3 Tropical Kingbirds in Baja California 7–22 Oct rounded out the rare flycatchers for the season.

VIREOS THROUGH WARBLERS

A Blue-headed Vireo at Santa Teresita, BCS 5 Oct (ph. RAH, †MSM, DSC) furnished only the 2nd record for the state and the peninsula; the very similar *lucasanus* subspecies of Cassin's Vireo is very unlikely at this location. A Cassin's on the Río Hardy 24 Oct (RAE) was apparently the first fall migrant recorded in the Colorado Desert portion of the Region. Tallies of other vireos were 3 Plumbeous and one Cassin's in the nw., 3 Yellow-greens in the nw. 25 Sep–22 Oct (LAC, SNGH, vt. †SGM, ph. KAR, MSM), and a Red-eyed at Punta Banda 29 Sep–3 Oct (ph. MJI et al.). A late female/imm. Purple Martin was at El Rosario 6 Oct (DSC et al.).

Nuthatches were widespread in the lowlands: 5 Red-breasteds in the California District represented a good flight, while a White-breasted reached the lower Río Santo Tomás 17 Oct (SGM et al.), and a well-documented Pygmy near El Rosario 18 Oct (vt. SGM, ph. KAR, MSM et al.) represented the peninsula's first lowland record.

Gutierrez-Aguilar's regular coverage of the park in Guerrero Negro produced a Varied Thrush 1 Nov and a long-staying Gray Catbird, Baja California Sur's first, 12 Oct–4 Dec (†AG-A et al.). Additional catbirds were on the Maneadero Plain 25 Sep (LAC, SNGH) and I. Guadalupe for 10 days in mid-Oct (*vide* BK). Details on the Guadalupe catbird and other recent vagrants there will be published in a future issue of *Western Birds*. Details received of an American Pipit at La Laguna 28 Jul (SGe, RKL) were unconvincing for such an unprecedented record; it has been suspected of breeding in the Sierra San Pedro Martír of Baja California but is otherwise unknown in summer in Mexico. Although 3–5 Red-throated Pipits paled in comparison to last year's flight, it is interesting that 2 were noted as ads.: one at El Descanso 18 Oct (ad., "probably male", ph. BLS



The Río Guadalupe estuary, Baja California, received far more coverage than usual this season, thanks to this long-staying juvenile Hudsonian Godwit (here 29 August 2004), the state's first. Photograph by Mark J. Billings.

et al.) and one of 2 at Villa Jesus Maria 19–21 Oct ("probably ad. female", †SGM et al.). While all (or almost all) 2003 Red-throateds were imms., other ads. were in California this fall, and we presume that

these represent second-year birds that successfully overwintered in the New World and completed a successful migration cycle to return southward along last year's route.

This year's tally of 34 warbler species was respectable, especially given the low numbers per species and a poor vagrant season in California. There were four standouts. A male Blue-winged Warbler at La Salina, BC 23 Aug (†MJI, †PAG) represented just the second for the state and the peninsula and was a week earlier than any of

the 14 fall California records. A Yellow-throated Warbler at Punta Banda, BC 29 Sep (ph., †MJI) represented a state first and the 3rd for the peninsula; it was of the expected *albiflora* subspecies. Another (overdue) first for Baja California was the ad. male Grace's Warbler at Ejido Morelos, near Villa Jesus Maria 19–21 Oct (SGa, †MSM, ph. KAR, vt. SGM, †BT). With just two prior records for each state, a Painted Redstart s. of Playas de Tijuana 27 Oct (ph. JEP) was noteworthy. Seasonal tallies for other vagrant parulids follow (all sightings in Baja California except where noted): 9 Tennessees, 2 Virginia's, 5 Lucy's (one BCS), 2 Northern Parulas, 4 Chestnut-sideds (3 BCS), 2 Magnolias, 2 Black-throated Blues (one BCS), 2 Black-throated Greens, one Blackburnian, 2 Prairies, 6–8 Palms, 5 Blackpolls, one Ovenbird, and one Canada. Long overdue, an American Redstart at the Mexicali Zoo 20 Nov (RAH) provided the first record for ne. Baja California.

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

The Region continues to produce Scarlet Tanager records: this year, one was at San Vicente, BC 17 Oct (KAR), a female was at Guerrero Negro 18 Oct (ph. RAH, PAG), and an imm. male was at El Rosario 25–31 Oct (ph. JEP, †MTH et al.). Noteworthy



With extensive wetlands concentrated in an otherwise generally harsh environment near the end of a long peninsula, Laz Paz area shorebirding is often outstanding. Five Semipalmated Sandpipers were recorded there in August 2004, including this one at Lagunas de Chametla 19 August. Would that stint identification were always so straightforward! Photograph by Roberto Carmona.

SA We have received few reports from Baja California Sur during the summer months, so one from a tour group there 22–30 Jul (MDC, EB, NEC, SGe, RKL) was quite welcome. Most of their early migration records (minus shorebirds) are summarized here. Early (?) waterbirds included a Blue-winged Teal, 8 Cinnamon Teal, and a Northern Pintail at Lagunas de Chametla 25–26 Jul; a Gull-billed Tern at El Centenario 25 Jul; and a Common Tern at La Paz 26 Jul. There were more interesting landbirds: Belted Kingfisher at Todos Santos 26 Jul; calling Tropical Kingbird at Lagunas de Chametla 25–26 Jul; 5–7 Cassin's Kingbirds at Ejido Banfil, e. of San Ignacio 25 Jul; 3 scattered Western Kingbirds 22–25 Jul; Bell's Vireo at Estero San José del Cabo 30 Jul; Tree, Northern Rough-winged, Bank, and Cliff Swallows; Common Yellowthroat at Todos Santos 26 Jul; 2 Black-throated Gray Warblers, a Townsend's Warbler, 2 Western Tanagers, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and a Black-headed Grosbeak in the Sierra de La Laguna 27–29 Jul; and Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds at Estero San José del Cabo 30 Jul. Their most interesting nesting observation was of an ad. Say's Phoebe feeding a juv. at Mulegé 23 Jul, but other sightings listed here raise intriguing possibilities of nesting as well. Alas, they observed no Thick-billed Kingbirds.



Although Red-throated Pipits were much scarcer in autumn 2004 than in 2003, several adults found were thought to represent returning birds from the previous year. This adult was at El Descanso, Baja California 18 October 2004. Photograph by Brian L. Sullivan.



The migration and vagrancy of Cordilleran Flycatcher remains one of the mysteries of North American bird distribution, owing to the extreme difficulties of identification in the field. This bird at La Bufadora, Baja California, seen 16 (here) through 19 October 2004, was heard giving call-notes consistent with Cordilleran, but those notes were not recorded and this photograph cannot confirm the identification; there are still no firm Regional records of Cordilleran. Photograph by Robert A. Hamilton.



Scarlet Tanager is documented in California an average of three or four times per year, mostly in the south in autumn. Despite comparatively light coverage on the Baja California Peninsula, it is found almost annually and may be more regular there than in California. This individual at Guerrero Negro 18 October 2004, however, represented the first physically documented record for Baja California Sur. Photograph by Robert A. Hamilton.

sparrows included a Swamp at El Rosario 17 Nov (MDC et al.) and 2 White-throateds, one of which was at Bahía de Los Angeles 24–26 Nov (MF, ph. GF), the first for the Vizcaíno Desert. Following last winter's first *pugetensis* White-crowned Sparrow for the Region, 2 were found this season: an imm. at La Bufadora 17 Oct (†SGM) and an ad. on the San Quintín Plain 31 Oct (†RAE). Single Slate-colored, Pink-sided, and Gray-headed Juncos were at Punta Banda 1 Nov (MTH et al.); 2 apparent Pink-sided × Gray-headed Junco intergrades were also documented, which should inspire caution in those reporting either form. As last

fall, El Socorro proved the Regional hotspot for longspurs: on 30 Oct, the tally was one McCown's (†; 2nd Regional record), 6 Chestnut-collareds, and 2 Laplands (one 31 Oct; MTH et al.). About 9 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and 2 Indigo Buntings in Baja California 25 Sep–31 Oct were expected. A pulse of Painted Buntings included one s. of Playas de Tijuana 3 Oct (†MSM), one at Rancho El Descanso 4 Oct (DSC, †RAH, †MSM), and one on the Maneadero Plain 7 Oct (†DSC). All were green birds (and probably imm.) that we consider wild; there are just two prior records from

the state. Two Dickcissels was a below-average total, but both came from Cantamar on the nw. coast (25 & 29 Sep; RAE, MJB; ph. MJL) rather than the more expected Vizcaíno Desert. Seven Bobolinks were found. The Great-tailed Grackle colonization of the mid-peninsula is on schedule; 80 were at Guerrero Negro 14 Oct (AG-A). Fancy orioles were limited to two separate Baltimores at El Rosario 22–25 Oct (vt. †SGM, MSM, JEP) and single Orchards at the Río Guadalupe estuary 25 Sep (RAE, MJB) and the Maneadero Plain 13 Oct (RGW).

The Purple Finch is found rarely on the peninsula, but one was heard well s. at Cataviña 25 Oct (JEP). Two Red Crossbills in the lowlands at Punta Banda 24 Oct (SGM et al.) provided

the Region's only report; audio recordings of Red Crossbills on the peninsula are much desired to establish call-type. A significant Pine Siskin movement took place this fall, with the first report of 3 in the Cataviña/Santa Inés area 19 Oct (SGM, BPG et al.) and the best count being of 130 at El Rosario 30 Oct (RAE et al.). Six at the Mexicali Zoo 20 Nov (RAH) provided one of few records for the ne.

NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Eurasian Collared-Doves reached triple digits in the Region for the first time this season, with 100+ near Ejido Oaxaca, Mexicali Valley 26 Nov (TEW, LA), and a pair of Black-throated Magpie-Jays nested successfully at Punta Banda Aug–Oct (MSM et al.).



Red-eyed Vireo is annual in low numbers in Baja California, but this individual at Punta Banda 29 September–3 October (here) 2004 was the first to be photographically documented. Photograph by Robert A. Hamilton.

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