

In contrast to most seasons, coverage was best away from the northwest this spring. Generally unsuccessful efforts to find spring vagrants at migrant traps, combined with a geography more conducive to finding fall strays, make vagrant-hunting a largely autumnal activity for Regional observers. Several successes this season by active observers in the Vizcaíno Desert 20 May–5 June should prompt reconsideration.

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

ALBATROSSES THROUGH TERNS

Observations from two offshore cruises included 2 Laysan Albatrosses and a dark-morph Wedge-tailed Shearwater s. of the Vizcaíno Peninsula 9 Apr (KAR, CR) and a juv. Masked/Nazca Booby 10 km s. of the Is. San Benitos 1 Apr (†DW). High ibis counts in the La Paz area 22 Mar included 87 White on the flats n. of town and 209 White-faced at Lagunas de Chametla (DVP, MB, OJ).

A male Eurasian Wigeon × American Wigeon at Lagunas de Chametla 26 Jan (ph. SGM) was seen again 23 Mar (ph. OJ, MB, DVP). All other waterfowl highlights were in the northeast: 14 Brant at the Colonia Zaragoza sewage ponds 4 Apr (MJI) were the first to be found in the Mexicali Valley away from C.P.G.P.; a female Mallard with 3 half-grown young at the Colonia Zaragoza ponds 15 Apr (RAE) represented the first nesting record for that part of the Region; 7000+ Surf Scoters were concentrated at the head of the Gulf at Campo Don Abel 26 Mar, including some flying overland to the n.w. (MS, LN); and a total of 16 Red-breasted Mergansers visited C.P.G.P. 21 Apr–20 May (RAE, DSC, MJI).

We still have much to learn concerning the phenology of migration in the Region, especially in the south; in the s. half of Baja California Sur this season, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, and Merlin (and Sora) were still present 21–25 Mar (MB, OJ, DVP). At least 100 Swainson's Hawks roosting at Alianza Campo, just s. of Ciudad Constitución, 24–25 Mar (DVP, MB, OJ) was far more than ever reported in the Region previously. We assume these birds all wintered on the peninsula and may have been staging prior to migration, but a single bird over Tijuana 16 Apr (ph. MJB) is the only report of an obvious migrant that we are aware of in recent decades.

A Wilson's Plover chick at the mouth of the Rio Colorado on I. Montague 6 May (MR et al.) was at a location where nesting had not been confirmed previously (M.F.O. 3: 41). In the interior northeast, a total of 11

Baja California Peninsula



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Sanderlings was recorded at C.P.G.P. 4 Apr–20 May (MJI, RAE, DSC), and 5 Short-billed Dowitchers were there and at the Colonia Zaragoza sewage ponds 4–15 Apr (MJI, RAE).

Ad. Franklin's Gulls were reported from both ends of the Region: 4–5 were at C.P.G.P. 4 Apr (ph. MJI), and one was at Gorda Bank the next day (†DW). One or 2 ad. Heermann's Gulls at C.P.G.P. 15 Apr (RAE) and one there 10 May (DSC) were the first to be found in the Mexicali Valley. The latest reported Herring and Thayer's Gulls were at C.P.G.P. 15 Apr (RAE) and Playas de Tijuana 3 Apr (MJB), respectively. Rare on the Pacific coast were 2 Yellow-footed Gulls at Guerrero Negro 26 May (AC, VA). One Sabine's Gull was off Pt. Eugenia 9 Apr (KAR, CR), and an ad. was at C.P.G.P. 2 May (RAE).

Gull-billed Terns provided much to comment on: 7 at El Centenario, BCS 22 Mar (DVP, MB, OJ) was the most ever reported there; 4 were foraging at Playas de Tijuana 3 & 17 Apr (MJB); up to 5 were at the Colonia Zaragoza sewage ponds 4–21



This Eastern Kingbird was at San Borja, Baja California 20 May 2005. Photograph by Roberto Carmona.

Apr (MJI, RAE); 2 were at Campo Mosqueda 5 May (RAE); 200+ nested at C.P.G.P. (KCM, KLG et al.); and some of the indi-

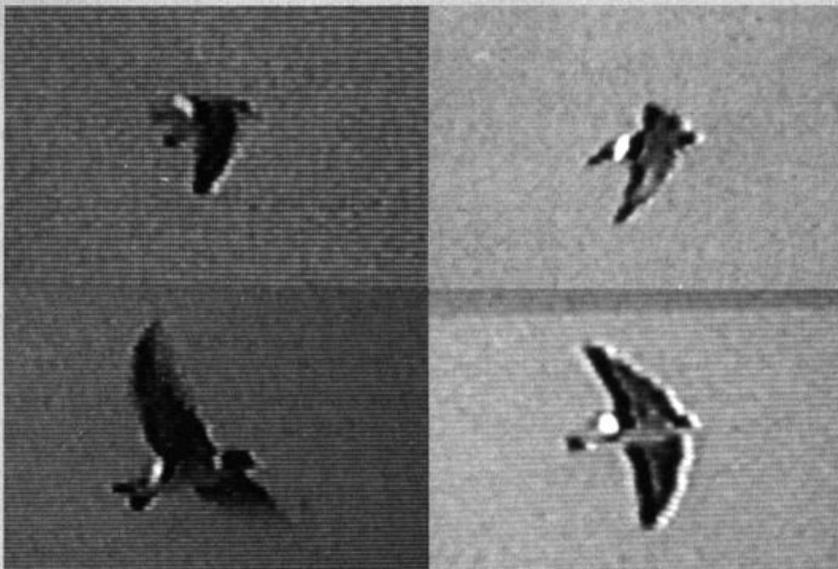
viduals on the Río Colorado near Ejido Chiapas No. 3 (3) and above Colonia Carranza (6) 20 May were carrying fish downstream (DSC, RAE, MJI), presumably to an unknown nesting colony. Ten, 8, and 6 ad. Elegant Terns respectively were at C.P.G.P. on 4 Apr, 6 May, and 2 Jun (MJI; RAE; KLG, KCM); we do not know to what extent birds such as these and the aforementioned Heermann's Gulls revisit the ponds in the course of their wanderings. Other notable terns were early: one or 2 Commons at Playas de Tijuana 3 Apr (MJB) and an Arctic Tern n. of Pt. Eugenia 9 Apr (KAR, CR).

DOVES THROUGH SPARROWS

Separate Common Ground-Doves on I. San José 31 May and 2 Jun (RC, CS) apparently represent the first records there. Cody and Velvarde (appendices 10.5–10.10 in T. J. Case et al., eds. 2002. *A New Island Biogeography of the Sea of Cortés*. Oxford University Press) provided complete bird lists for all of the Gulf islands. While we do not question their treatment of this species, there is much to be skeptical of therein. Although the species presumably breeds regularly in the Cape District, a female Ruddy Ground-Dove carrying nesting material at San José del Cabo 24 Mar (DVP, MB, OJ) provided the first breeding evidence since a pair was observed copulating at the same location in 1997 (M.F.O. 3: 108). Xantus's Hummingbirds are rarely reported from Baja California, so 12 at Santa Gertrudis 22 May (RC, AC) were noteworthy.

Two Dusky Flycatchers provided first records for the Colorado Desert subregion: one near the Mexicali Airport 9 May (DSC) and one at Ejido Chiapas No. 3 on 20 May (†MJI, RAE). A Thick-billed Kingbird at

SA The most intriguing reports of the winter and spring involved multiple claims of Mangrove Swallow. Because it is resident n. to cen. Sonora and has recently strayed to Florida, it has been considered a likely vagrant to occur in the Cape District. Reports this year came from the Gulf coast of Baja California at San Rafael 27 Feb (RC, JAC) and 21 May (AC, RC), the Guerrero Negro saltworks 25 Feb (RC, AG-A), and Lagunas de Chametla 22 Mar (vt. OJ, †DVP, MB). The San Rafael and Guerrero Negro reports are undocumented, and there is concern over possible confusion with Violet-green Swallow, which can appear entirely white-rumped without excellent views. The report from Lagunas de Chametla was probably correct, however, as the identification was supported by an impressive sequence of video showing a smallish swallow with dark extending to below the eye, a fairly short, slightly notched tail (eliminating Common House-Martin), and an entirely white rump well shown in multiple views. Unfortunately the patterns of the forehead and tertials were not noted in the field and thus the identification as Mangrove Swallow rests entirely on the white rump. A sighting of a white-rumped Barn Swallow in Virginia (MJI) raises the question of whether an anomalous white-rumped Tree Swallow could occur and whether such an individual could be eliminated in this case. Given that it would represent a Regional first, and one of few vagrant records for the species, we choose to await more solid documentation before adding Mangrove Swallow to the Regional list.



This possible Mangrove Swallow was videotaped near La Paz, Baja California Sur 22 March 2005. Photographs from videotape by Oscar Johnson.

SA Punta Banda, a narrow peninsula that juts 8 km nw. into the Pacific on the s. side of Bahía de Todos Santos, is a well-known vagrant trap. The dry slopes are mostly vegetated with coastal sage scrub, accented by large agaves, but a 380-m hill near the tip provides some relief and some moister drainages that host chaparral on the peninsula's more mesic n. side. The interesting combination of habitats hosts an unusual mix of breeding landbirds.

It has been known since the early 1990s that Ladder-backed Woodpeckers occur here, the species' northernmost station on the Pacific coast (*M.F.O.* 3: 130). Other species of note include Cactus, Canyon, and Rock Wrens (all scarce breeders along the immediate coast northward), California Gnatcatcher (surprisingly scarce along the coast northward and in the greater Bahía de Todos Santos area), and both Bell's Sage and Rufous-crowned Sparrows (both uncommon and local breeders). Iliff visited the area 30 Mar–2 Apr and in addition to those species, reported territorial behavior by at least 5 singing Black-chinned Sparrows, which is a local breeder inland but is not known to breed along the immediate coast anywhere in the Region or in s. California. Eight Violet-green Swallows were seen investigating cliffs at the point; the species breeds only rarely on the coast. Other species to be watched for as breeders include Costa's Hummingbird, Orange-crowned Warbler, Scott's Oriole (breeds along Rio San Telmo 24 km s.), and possibly even Black-throated Sparrow.

San José del Cabo 13 May (JM) was three days later than any ever recorded in California, sustaining speculation that the species may breed in the Cape District. An Eastern Kingbird banded at San Borja, BC 20 May (ph. RC, AC) and another at Guerrero Negro 5 Jun (†AG-A) provided rare spring records—the only prior Regional record before Aug was one at Laguna Salada 22 Jun 1997 (*M.F.O.* 3: 133). A Plumbeous Vireo at Cañon de Guadalupe 4 Apr (†MJI) was earlier than most records from the California deserts but fit in with

records from *San Diego*. Scarce breeding species found in the Sierra Juárez 19 May included 2 territorial Gray Vireos and 5 Purple Martins at two locations, including two pairs at an apparent nest tree (DSC, RAE, MJI). An American Robin at La Bufadora 31 Mar (MJI) was the first one reported in Baja California in over a year.

The wintering Black-and-white Warbler in Guerrero Negro was last seen 5 Apr (AG-A). Eastern vagrants seem to have arrived in Guerrero Negro 24 May (AG-A): on that date the small park there hosted an Oven-

bird (†) and a male Scarlet Tanager, the latter representing the first spring record for the Region. A Western Palm Warbler 16 Apr (ph. MJB) and 2 Yellow Warblers 12 Mar–2 Apr (ph. MJB, MJI) were at Parque Morelos, Tijuana, where both species wintered last year. A Yellow-breasted Chat at Cañon de Guadalupe 4 Apr (MJI) was nearly two weeks earlier than any migrant recorded in the Salton Sink but matched extreme arrival dates in *San Diego*. Notable sparrows in the desert w. of Laguna Salada 1 Apr included a Black-throated and an *oriantha* White-crowned (RAE), while a Brewer's at La Bufadora 2 Apr (MJI) was a noteworthy spring migrant on the coast.

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