

# Baja California Peninsula



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Many more pelagic reports than usual were submitted this season, with several potentially representing first Regional “summer” records. The highlights were the Region’s first Audubon’s Shearwater and third Wilson’s Storm-Petrel and Baja California’s second Sooty Tern. Baja California Sur was well represented again, with a continuing Wood Duck, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Parula, and first nesting records for Redhead and Brown-headed Cowbird. Recall that there were three new nestings in the spring report.

Abbreviations: E.S.J. (Estero San José, San José del Cabo); S.S.P.M. (Sierra San Pedro Mártir).

## GEESE THROUGH ALCIDS

The Greater White-fronted Goose at Tijuana’s Parque Morelos continuously since Feb 2005 was seen again 30 Jul (MJB), and the male Wood Duck found at E.S.J. 23 May was seen again 13-14 Jul (ph. SGM). Gadwall, Mallard, and Ruddy Duck were found nesting from Ensenada northward, but the only Redhead in Baja California was a female at Estero Punta Banda 10 Jul (RAE). To the s., Ruddy Ducks nested at E.S.J., and five broods of Redheads there 13 Jul (ph. SGM) established the first nesting record for Baja California Sur. Unseasonable ducks included a male Blue-winged Teal at the Río Guadalupe estuary 6 Jun (RAE); male Northern Pintails at Lagunita El Ciprés, Estero Punta Banda, and

E.S.J.; and up to 2 Surf Scoters at Guerrero Negro 27 Jun–1 Aug (AC et al.).

California Quail were found up to 2400 m in the S.S.P.M., with 4 near La Corona 9 May (REW) and 30, including chicks, at Vallecitos 25 Jul (MJI, RAE, TM). The only loon reported this season was a northbound Common near Is. Los Coronados 15 Jun (DWP). A Clark’s Grebe on a nest at the Cerro Prieto geothermal ponds 29 Jun (ph. ESM) established nesting there for the 4th consecutive year.

Sixteen species of tubenoses seen this season surely made a Regional record. The latest Northern Fulmar seen was a light bird on Bahía de Todos Santos 5 Jul (TMcG et al.). Cook’s Petrel was reported off the Pacific coast of Baja California on seven dates, with a maximum of 100+ associated with schools of bait fish in 66° F water e. of the Sixty Mile Bank (wnw. of Ensenada) 22 Jun (AT). Beginning in Mar 2003, the Punta Arena/Punta Colorado area near the se. tip of the peninsula has provided impressive seabirding. Presumably, birds moving southward in the Gulf of California are concentrated as the peninsula trends southeastward. Seven species of shearwaters seen there by Mlodinow included a Flesh-footed Shearwater and 2 dark Wedge-tailed 14 Jul and 2 Townsend’s and an Audubon’s Shearwater 16 Jul (all †SGM). Although regular just to the s., Audubon’s Shearwater had never before been reported in



Marking another southerly record for Wood Duck, this male at Estero San José 23 May through 14 July (here) 2006 represented the first confirmed record for Baja California Sur. Photograph by Steven G. Mlodinow.

the Region. A 15 Jul Wilson’s Storm-Petrel at ~28° 34’ N 115° 54’ W (approximately 48 km nw. of Is. San Benitos; †RAE), was only the 3rd to be found in the Region, or in the Pacific off Mexico (*Monographs in Field Ornithology* 3: 117).

At opposite ends of the peninsula, a near-ad. Masked Booby was at Punta Arena 16 Jul (SGM) and an imm. Masked/Nazca Booby was at 31° 42’ N, 117° 00’ W (sw. of Ensenada) 5 Jul

(TMcG, ph. MS et al.). An ad. female Brown Booby landed on a research vessel sw. of Ensenada late on 11 Jul and rode overnight toward I. Guadalupe from ~31°14’ N, 117° 06’ W to ~30° 10’ N, 117° 45’ W (CM et al.). Alas, the species remains unrecorded at the island (*Western Birds* 37: 23-36). The movements of American White Pelicans in the Region are not well known. Four on the w. coast of Baja California Sur at San Juanico 25 Jul were moving ahead of Tropical Storm Emilia (JAM). Eighty Magnificent Frigatebirds at the same location 26 Jul (JAM) also may have been related to the storm. Elsewhere on the Pacific coast, one was at Guerrero Negro 31 Jul (VA, RC), up to 4 per day were along the s. Baja California coast 17 Jul–28 Aug (BRS et al.), and 2 were far n. at Ensenada 27 Jul (EDZH).

Two White Ibis at the Guerrero Negro saltworks 30 Jul (RC, AC) and 2 at Guerrero Negro 1 Aug (VA, AC) were n. of their usual range. A pair of Zone-tailed Hawks in the S.S.P.M. 25 Jul (TM, RAE, MJI) was in the Region’s only known nesting area. Two in the Cape District 14 Jul were unexpected: an ad. at Caduño and an imm. at Miraflores (SGM). A Sora at the Río Guadalupe estuary 10 Jul (RAE) hinted at possible nesting there. Interbreeding between American and Black Oystercatchers is widespread and long known in the Region. An apparent first-generation hybrid was at the Guerrero Negro saltworks 30 Jul–3 Aug (ph. RC, NA, AC). At the same location, the discovery of four American Avocet nests 3 Jun (VA, PV) was especially noteworthy, as the species had not been found nesting previously on the cen. peninsula. A number of late shorebirds were seen in the nw. on 6 Jun: Greater Yellowlegs at La Salina (MJI, MJB), Wandering Tattler at Is. Los Coronados (DWP et al.), Least Sandpiper at the Río Guadalupe estuary (RAE), and Short-billed Dowitcher at Real del Mar (MJI, MJB, RAE). Toward the end of the season, a Wilson’s Snipe on the Manadero Plain 25 Jul (MJI, TM) appears to be the Region’s earliest fall migrant ever.

Unexpectedly, all of the Region’s stercorariids were seen this season. A South Polar Skua was at Punta Arena 16 Jul (†SGM; a Jun bird was included in the spring report); single Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers were nw. of Is. San Benitos 15 Jul (RAE); a Parasitic Jaeger was at El Centenario 15 Jul (SGM); and single Long-tailed Jaegers were sw. of Ensenada 5 Jul (ph. MS et al.) and w. of Punta San Antonio 18 Jul (RAE). Yellow-footed and Western Gulls are regularly seen in low numbers on the “wrong” side of the

peninsula, respectively, but 52 Yellow-footeds at San Juanico 27 Jul (ph. †JAM) and 12 Westerns at Santa Rosalia 29 Jul (JAM) were exceptional. A summering Glaucous-winged Gull was well s. at the Guerrero Negro saltworks 3 Jun (ph. RC). Sabine's Gulls were sw. of Is. Los Coronados 6 Jun (4; ph. MJI et al.) and 40 km sw. of Ensenada 5 Jul (MJB et al.). An ad. Sooty Tern at  $-28^{\circ} 35' N$ ,  $114^{\circ} 38' W$ , approximately 32 km wsw. of Punta Rocosa, 17 Jul (†RAE, CM) was only the 2nd to be found in/off Baja California, although the species nests off s. Baja California Sur at Rocas Alijos. In addition to many *scrippsi* Xantus's Murrelets (nests at Is. Los Coronados and elsewhere) seen in the nw., 2 *hypoleucus* Xantus's Murrelets (nests at I. Guadalupe) were nw. of Punta Rocosa 17 Jul (RAE), and 2 Craveri's Murrelets were sw. of Ensenada 5 Jul (TMcG, MSM et al.).

## DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

Mourning Doves are now common residents on I. Guadalupe, as evidenced by a count of 200+ on 13 Jul; a White-winged Dove on the same date was unexpected (RAE, LLM). The description of an Inca Dove seen without binoculars at San Juanico 28 Jul warrants serious consideration, but Baja California Sur awaits its first thoroughly documented record. Between 14 and 17 Jul, 8 Yellow-billed Cuckoos were found at Miraflores, and singles were at Caduaño and Agua Caliente (ph. SGM). A Dusky-capped Flycatcher at La Laguna on 20 Jul (†MDC et al.) was the 2nd for Baja California Sur, precedent having been set by a 24 Jun 1896 specimen from the same mountainous area (*Auk* 66: 92). Among 19 Thick-billed Kingbirds at three Cape District sites 14-17 Jul was a food-carrying pair at Miraflores that provided the Region's 2nd confirmed nesting record (SGM).

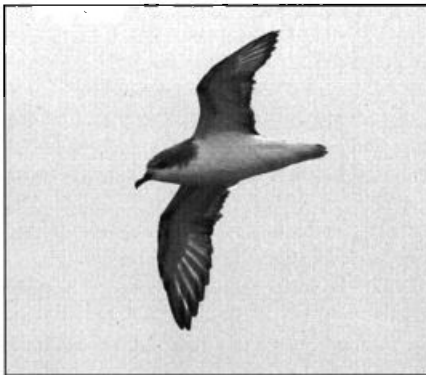
Among the season's most surprising finds was a Red-eyed Vireo—Baja California Sur's 4th and the Region's first in summer—at Miraflores 14 Jul (ph. †SGM). The 6 Jun record of 9 singing House Wrens on Is. Los Coronados suggests that the species breeds there (MJI et al.). Following the 24 May record of an American Robin at 2400 m in the S.S.P.M. (REW), an ad. with 2 fledglings was found at Vallecitos on 25 Jun (ph. MJI, RAE, TM), providing the first confirmation of nesting in that range. First evidence of breeding by Northern Mockingbirds on I. Guadalupe was provided on 14 Jul by a food-carrying ad. that was followed about by a juv. presumed to be from a previous brood (RAE).

Although some Tropical Parulas are known to show a broken white eye-ring, we consider the details of a Northern Parula at Miraflores



This photograph of a juvenile American Robin at Vallecitos 25 July 2006 documents the first confirmed nesting of the species in the Sierra San Pedro Mártir, Baja California. Photograph by Marshall J. Iliff.

on 14 Jul (†SGM)—especially the limited extent of yellow on the underparts—to be adequate to substantiate this exceptional mid-summer record. A Wilson's Warbler at Todos Santos 18 Jul (MDC et al.) was probably an early migrant. A Yellow-breasted Chat was at Santiago 16 Jul (SGM), where 4 had been



Cook's Petrel was well represented off the northern Pacific coast of Baja California this season. This one was photographed southwest of Ensenada on 5 July 2006. Photograph by Matt Sadowski.

recorded on 21 May (MJI, vt./v.r. MJB, RAE), and another chat gave a flight-display at Caduaño 17 Jul (SGM). Western Tanager often move on from their montane breeding territories during Jul, and birds fitting this profile were at E.S.J. 18 Jul (MDC et al.), La Laguna 20 Jul (MDC et al.), and Misión Santo Domingo 24 Jul (RAE, MJI, TM).

A male Northern Cardinal singing on both sides of the Río Colorado near Algodones 28 Jun (JMM) raised hopes that this species may one day be found breeding in the area. Rose-breasted Grosbeak × Black-headed Grosbeak

hybrids are recorded occasionally on the peninsula, and a second-year male at Todos Santos on 15 Jul (†SGM) furnished the Region's first mid-summer record of this combination. Black-headed Grosbeaks are not known to breed in Baja California Sur, so records of 2 each at Miraflores and Caduaño on 17 Jul, including another possible Rose-breasted hybrid at the latter site, presumably refer to early fall migrants. A second-year male Yellow-headed Blackbird at E.S.J. 19-23 May (RAE, ph. MJB) and an ad. male there 13 Jul (SGM) provided the first Baja California Sur records for late spring and summer. A male Bronzed Cowbird at San José del Cabo 18 Jul (MDC et al.) was also unprecedented in the state during summer, and a juv. Brown-headed Cowbird being fed by Blue-gray Gnatcatchers at Caduaño 17 Jul (SGM) served as the first confirmation of breeding by this species in Baja California Sur. A few days earlier, on 13 Jul, a flock of 22 cowbirds that included one juv. was recorded at E.S.J. (SGM). Six House Finches at I. San Benito del Oeste 16 Jul (RAE) were presumably recent colonists, as the subspecies *mcgregori*—formerly resident in that island chain—is believed to be extinct.

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