

NOTEWORTHY AVIFAUNAL RECORDS FROM THE BAJA CALIFORNIA PENINSULA, MEXICO

OCTAVIO R. ROJAS-SOTO, ERICK A. GARCÍA-TREJO, LUIS A. SÁNCHEZ-GONZÁLEZ, SAMUEL LÓPEZ DE AQUINO, IVÁN LIEBIG-FOSSAS, FERNANDO PUEBLA-OLIVARES, and ADOLFO G. NAVARRO S., Museo de Zoología "Alfonso L. Herrera," Departamento de Biología, Facultad de Ciencias, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Apartado Postal 70-399, Ciudad Universitaria, México, D. F., México

BRETT W. BENZ, Natural History Museum, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66045

We traveled to the Baja California Peninsula in April 2001, adding 11 biogeographically or seasonally noteworthy records, 10 of which are supported with specimens. Specimens collected were deposited in the ornithological collection of the Museo de Zoología "Alfonso L. Herrera," Facultad de Ciencias, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, in Mexico City.

We visited the following four localities (Figure 1) on the specified dates. Vegetation types follow Rzedowski (1978) and León de la Luz and Coria (1992).

Sierra de las Tinajas, 6 km west of Ejido José Saldaña (31° 49.73' N, 115° 25.91' W); canyon on east slope; 250 m elevation; 5–8 April 2001. The contiguous mountain area is rocky and steep. In the floor of the canyon the most abundant plant species are creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*), and palo verde (*Cercidium microphyllum*), with other shrubs and grasses.

Río La Bocana, 15 km west-southwest of Cataviña (29° 42.17' N, 114° 50.04' W); 380 m elevation; 10–13 April 2001. This site is a dry wash approximately 4 m wide. The surrounding granitic hills are well-vegetated with cardón (*Pachycereus pringlei*), cirio or boojum tree (*Idria columnaris*), cacti (*Opuntia* spp.), mesquite (*Prosopis* spp.), catclaw (*Acacia greggii*), and agave (*Agave* spp.).

Rancho Monte Alto, 15 km northwest of San Javier (25° 55.87' N, 111° 37.25' W); 400 m elevation; 16–19 April 2001. This is a high plateau on the west slope of the Sierra de la Giganta; the surrounding rocky slopes lack vegetation. Dominant plants on the plateau include *Prosopis* spp., *Acacia* spp., *Cercidium* spp., *Jatropha* spp., *Pachycereus pringlei*, and *Larrea tridentata*. Stagnant water in some seasonal streambeds supports palms (*Washingtonia* sp., *Erythea* sp.) and some riparian shrubs.

Rancho San Dionisio, 20 km northwest of Santiago (23° 33.35' N, 109° 51.94' W); 450–710 m elevation; 22–27 April 2001. This ranch lies along the Río San Dionisio on the eastern slope of the Sierra de la Laguna. The river is perennial but holds very little water in the dry season. Vegetation is tropical low forest, including *Bursera* spp., *Prosopis* spp., *Acacia* spp., *Ferocactus townsendianus*, *Pachycereus* spp., *Ficus palmeri*, *Pithecellobium* sp., *Jatropha* spp., and riparian vegetation. There are some palms (*Erythea brandegei*) and introduced mango trees (*Mangifera indica*). Our upper study area is located 2 km west of the ranch (23° 33.23' N, 109° 53.50' W). The vegetation is quite similar to that of the ranch site but with more abundant figs and other tropical trees.

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*). On 19 April we observed an adult female flying west, high over Rancho Monte Alto. Magnificent Frigatebirds are known to soar over the central and southern Baja California Peninsula with some frequency, particularly in the southern Cape District (Wilbur 1987, Howell and Webb 1992, Clark and Ward 1993, *N. Am. Birds* 57:260).

Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata vioscae*). This pigeon breeds at high altitudes in the Sierra de la Laguna, to which this subspecies is endemic. Lamb (1926)

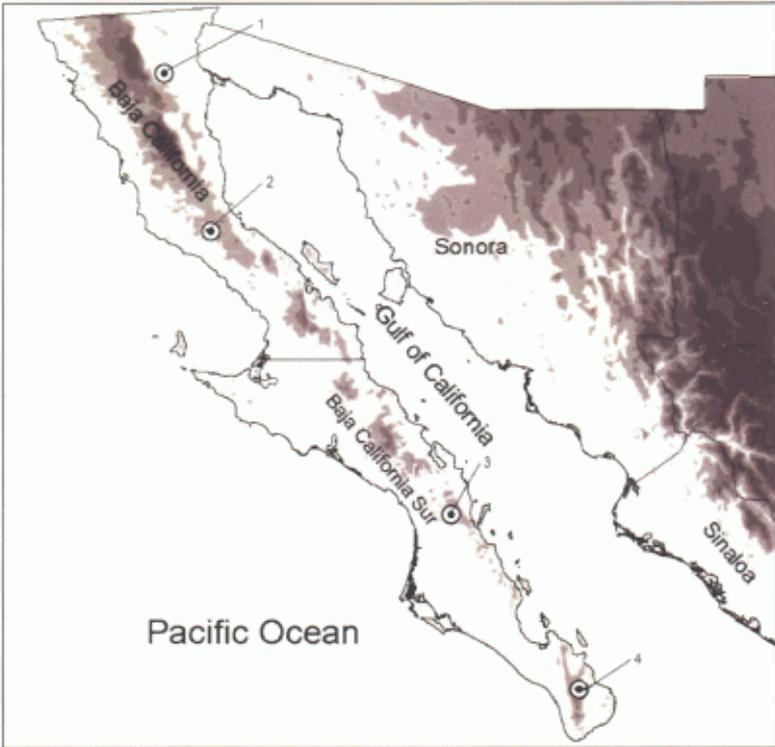


Figure 1. Localities mentioned in the text: (1) Sierra las Tinajas, (2) Río Bocana, (3) Rancho Monte Alto, and (4) Rancho San Dionisio. Underlying topographic map is from CONABIO (www.conabio.gob.mx).

and Banks (1967) described its apparently routine movements down into foothills where grapes and other fruits are grown. We found groups of up to 15 at Rancho San Dionisio, all of them in fig trees, and collected an unsexed subadult on 26 April 2001 (MZFC 16128). We did not observe any nests or nesting behaviors.

Elf Owl (*Micrathene whitneyi sanfordi*). This subspecies is endemic to the Cape District and the deserts on the east side of peninsula north to around latitude 28° N (Howell and Webb 1995). We recorded up to three per night at Rancho Monte Alto, collecting two apparently not in breeding condition (MZFC 16190, unsexed; 16291, female, largest ovule 0.5 mm). We also recorded two at Rancho San Dionisio, at 450 m elevation.

Xantus's Hummingbird (*Hylocharis xantusii*). We observed up to 20 of this Baja California Sur endemic daily at Rancho Monte Alto, collecting two females (MZFC 16154, largest ovule 0.7 mm; MZFC 16071, juvenile) and one male (MZFC 16276, testes 2 × 1 mm). Apparently no individual was in breeding condition.

Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*). On 16 April 2001, we collected a female (MZFC 16151) at Rancho Monte Alto, south of the species' principal range. Anna's Hummingbird is being recorded in Baja California Sur with increasing frequency (e.g., Howell and Webb 1992, Howell and Webb 1995, Whitmore and Whitmore 1997,

NOTES

Hamilton and Erickson 2001, Erickson et al. 2001), including several recent records from the southern Cape District in fall and winter and confirmed breeding in Guerrero Negro during winter/spring 2003/2004 (*N. Am. Birds* 58:286,438-439).

Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus angustifrons*). We collected two immatures, one male (MZFC 16122, testes 4×2.2 mm) and the other unsexed (MZFC 16289), and observed another seven at Rancho San Dionisio. This subspecies, endemic to the Sierra de la Laguna, typically occurs in pine and pine-oak forests, but pines and oaks are not found at this location. According to local people this woodpecker arrives during the winter, suggesting a seasonal altitudinal migration as proposed by Banks (1967). Howell and Webb (1995) questioned the dark color of the irides: "eyes whitish (dark in *angustifrons* of BCS?);" we verified that all individuals (observed and collected) had brown irides.

Gray Flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii*). We observed an apparent spring migrant in the Sierra de las Tinajas on 7 and 8 April. The species winters commonly in Baja California Sur, so an adult of undetermined sex collected at Rancho Monte Alto on 17 April (MZFC 16065) may have wintered locally.

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*). We observed this species commonly and collected three individuals in the Sierra de las Tinajas: two males (MZFC 15990, testes 2×3 mm and MZFC 16012, 6.5×3.4 mm), and one of undetermined sex (MZFC 15997). Western Kingbirds breed commonly in northeastern Baja California (e.g., Patten et al. 2001), and tall trees at this location may constitute nesting habitat suitable for this species.

Nashville Warbler (*Vermivora ruficapilla*). We collected two in the Sierra de las Tinajas (MZFC 16021, 16300), where the species is a fairly common spring transient (Patten et al. 2001). The species' status in Baja California Sur is murkier (most of the population migrates via the east side of the Gulf of California, avoiding the southern peninsula), but we observed a probable spring migrant at Rancho Monte Alto on 18 April.

Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*). On 26 April we collected an immature of unknown sex at Rancho San Dionisio (MZFC 16148). Breeding is known south to Comondú, although a singing bird at San José del Cabo 3 August 1988 "suggests that nesting might occur farther south" (Erickson et al. 2001).

Pine Siskin (*Carduelis pinus*). An immature male collected 18 April 2001 at Rancho Monte Alto (MZFC 16175, testes 1.8×1.4 mm) furnished the first record of an apparent spring migrant in Baja California Sur. The species otherwise is an irregular, and typically rare, winter visitor to Baja California Sur (Unitt et al. 1992, Wurster et al. 2001).

We thank Juan Bautista and Isidro Manríquez for the facilities, kindness, and courtesy during our stays at Rancho Monte Alto and Rancho San Dionisio, respectively. We thank Richard A. Erickson, Ricardo Rodríguez-Estrella, and especially Robert A. Hamilton, for useful comments on the manuscript and great help on editing, and also to Héctor Gómez de Silva for providing us with key literature. Funding was provided by the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACyT R27961), Facultad de Ciencias-UNAM, Programa de Apoyo a Estudiantes de Posgrado (PAEP-UNAM 101331), PAPIIT-UNAM and CONABIO. We thank the Instituto Nacional de Ecología (INE) for providing the scientific collecting license (FAUT 0034) and the special collecting permit for the Sierra de la Laguna Biosphere Reserve (DOO.02-0788).

LITERATURE CITED

- Banks, R. C. 1967. Birds and mammals of La Laguna, Baja California. *Trans. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist.* 14:205-232.
- Clark, W. H., and Ward, D. M., Jr. 1993. Magnificent Frigatebirds crossing the Baja California Peninsula, Mexico. *Euphonia* 2:55-57.

NOTES

- Erickson, R. A., Hamilton, R. A., and Howell, S. N. G. 2001. New information on migrant birds in northern and central portions of the Baja California Peninsula, including species new to Mexico, in *Birds of the Baja California Peninsula: Status, distribution and taxonomy* (R. A. Erickson and S. N. G. Howell, eds.). Am. Birding Assoc. Monogr. Field Ornithol. 3:112–170.
- Hamilton, R. A., and Erickson, R. A. 2001. Noteworthy breeding bird records from the Vizcaíno Desert, Baja California Peninsula, in *Birds of the Baja California Peninsula: Status, distribution and taxonomy* (R. A. Erickson and S. N. G. Howell, eds.). Am. Birding Assoc. Monogr. Field Ornithol. 3:102–106.
- Howell, S. N. G., and Webb, S. 1992. Noteworthy bird observations from Baja California, Mexico. *W. Birds* 23:153–163.
- Howell, S. N. G., and Webb, S. 1995. *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford, England.
- Lamb, C. C. 1926. The Viosca Pigeon. *Auk* 28:262–263.
- León de la Luz, J. L., and Coria, R. 1992. *Flora Iconográfica de Baja California Sur*. Centro de Investigaciones Biológicas de Baja California Sur, A. C., La Paz, B. C. S., Mexico.
- Patten, M. A., Mellink, E., Gómez de Silva, H., and Wurster, T. E. 2001. Status and taxonomy of the Colorado Desert avifauna of Baja California, in *Birds of the Baja California Peninsula: Status, distribution and taxonomy* (R. A. Erickson and S. N. G. Howell, eds.). Am. Birding Assoc. Monogr. Field Ornithol. 3:29–96.
- Rzedowski, J. 1978. *Vegetación de México*. Limusa, México.
- Unitt, P. 2001. Some bird observations from Baja California Sur, in *Birds of the Baja California Peninsula: Status, distribution and taxonomy* (R. A. Erickson and S. N. G. Howell, eds.). Am. Birding Assoc. Monogr. Field Ornithol. 3:107–111.
- Unitt, P., Rodríguez-Estrella, R., and Castellanos-V., A. 1992. Ferruginous Hawk and Pine Siskin in the Sierra de la Laguna, Baja California Sur; subspecies of the Pine Siskin in Baja California. *W. Birds* 23:171–172.
- Whitmore, R. C., and Whitmore, R. C. 1997. Late fall and early spring bird observations for Mulegé, Baja California Sur, Mexico. *Great Basin Nat.* 57:131–141.
- Wilbur, S. R. 1987. *Birds of Baja California*. Univ. Calif. Press, Berkeley.
- Wurster T. E., Erickson, R. A., Hamilton, R. A., and Howell, S. N. G. 2001. Database of selected observations: An augment to *New information on migrant birds in northern and central portions of The Baja California Peninsula*, in *Birds of the Baja California Peninsula: Status, distribution and taxonomy* (R. A. Erickson and S. N. G. Howell, eds.). Am. Birding Assoc. Monogr. Field Ornithol. 3:204–237.

Accepted 6 December 2004