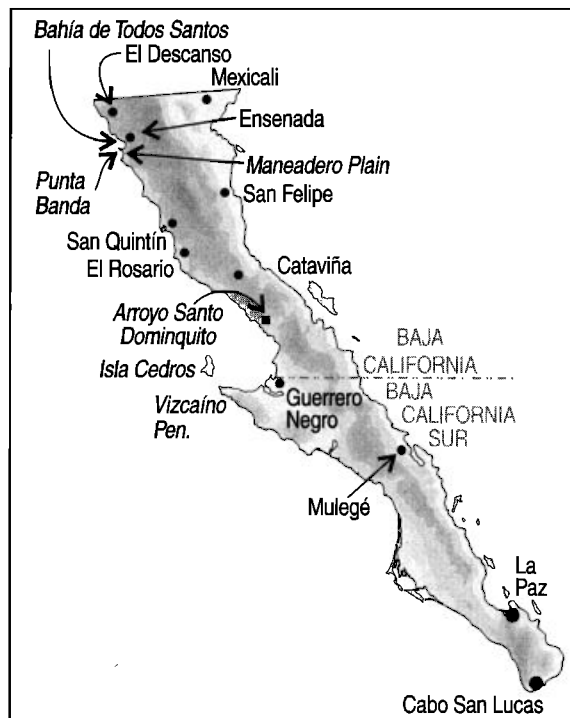


Baja California Peninsula



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With this seasonal report we are pleased to commence coverage of the Baja California Peninsula. This expansion of *North American Birds'* reporting network is fortu-

itously timed, because several years of observations (through 31 Jul 2000) will be published in a collection of papers on the peninsula's birds that Erickson and Steve N. G. Howell submitted to the American Birding Association's monograph series. Upon the monograph's publication (expected in 2001), researchers will have access to a cohesive record of the Region's noteworthy bird records merging seamlessly with the current seasonal report. Given that many species found regularly in southern California have yet to establish solid patterns of occurrence south of the border, we request that observers err on the side of "over-documenting" sightings of species that may not warrant as much attention in California. Documentation of unusual sightings, along with all other submissions, will be permanently archived at the San Diego Natural History Museum and accessible to all responsible researchers.

Regional coverage was spotty, with no reports from south of Mulegé or for the month of November. Two forays to the middle of the peninsula in September and October

suggested that fall migration was somewhat delayed this year. For example, counts of Pacific-slope Flycatcher and Western Kingbird in northwestern BC were lower than expected in early September, but higher than expected in mid-October. Unlike most recent fall seasons, there were no first records for the peninsula, but rarity highlights included a Cerulean Warbler and three Painted Buntings.

Abbreviations: BC (the state of Baja California); BCS (the state of Baja California Sur); V.P. (Vizcaino Pen.).

Loons Through Terns

A Common Loon at Cerro Prieto 1 Sep (SNGH et al.) had undoubtedly summered locally. Highlights of a 3 Sep boat trip w. of Islas Todos Santos included a Northern Fulmar and 2 Ashy Storm-Petrels (PP et al.) An impressive feeding flock of approximately 7500 Brandt's Cormorants was at Bahía Asunción 5 Sep (SNGH et al.). Seven Magnificent Frigatebirds at Punta Blanca 7 Sep (BRS) were on the s. Pacific coast of BC, where the species occurs as a rare post-breeding dispersant. Although the observer has seen the species at this approximate time and place almost annually since 1989, this count was the highest ever, surprising in a year when frigatebirds were almost absent in s. California.

Little Blue Herons are generally rare in BC, so an imm. at El Rosario 8 Sep (SNGH et al.) was of interest. A Reddish Egret at Estero Punta Banda 3 Sep (PP et al.) was on the mainland adjacent to the recently found nesting site on the Islas Todos Santos (*W. Birds* 31:184-189). A White-faced Ibis at Guerrero Negro 9 Oct (RAH, MAP) represented one of few Vizcaino Desert records.

A female Mallard at Guerrero Negro 4-7 Sep (PP et al.) was apparently the first recorded in BCS since 1986. A female Ring-necked Duck on the Maneadero Plain 9 Sep (RAH et al.) was exceptionally early, but 4 Lesser Scaup at Guerrero Negro 4 Sep (PP, vt. RAH et al.) and a female Common Goldeneye at Cerro Prieto 1 Sep (SNGH et al.) are believed to have summered locally. The White-tailed Kite is locally distributed on the peninsula, especially in the mid-section; 3 were at Guerrero Negro 4 Sep (PP, vt. RAH et al.). An estimate of 2500 Marbled Godwits at Estero San José near Guerrero Negro 7 Oct (MAP, RAH) provides

an idea of the size and productivity of this remarkable coastal estuary. Two juv. Red Knots at Cerro Prieto 1 Sep (RAH et al.) were somewhat unusual, occurring inland. A juv. Yellow-footed Gull at Estero San José 7 Oct (†MAP, vt. †RAH) provided BC's 2nd Pacific coast record, following an ad. there 3 Nov 1998. A Least Tern was unusual several miles offshore, w of Is. Todos Santos 3 Sep (SNGH et al.). Five Black Terns were at Estero Punta Banda 12 Aug (ph. SGG).

Doves Through Pipits

A Spotted Dove at the Otay Mesa international border crossing 9 Sep (SNGH et al.) was unexpected, as this exotic species is nearly extirpated in adjacent *San Diego*, California (P Unitt pers. comm.). Approximately 40 Inca Doves in the Mexicali Valley 1 Sep (vt. RAH et al.) provided a representative count of this recently established and localized columbid. The Ruddy Ground-Dove appears to be a vagrant and rare resident in the Cape District, with a male at Mulegé 7 Sep (†RAE) providing the northernmost record to date.

Two or three Western Screech-Owls at Punta Estrella, ±15 km s. of San Felipe, 1 Sep (SNGH et al.) were presumably resident *cardonensis* occupying large cardón cactus there, but one at Mexicali 4 Sep (MAP, BDS) was presumably *yumanensis*. Vaux's Swifts were found in greater abundance than in previous falls, with one in the Mexicali Valley 1 Sep (SNGH et al.) and 15 on the Pacific coast south to the San Quintín Plain 3 Sep–12 Oct. A Red-shafted Flicker at Santa Inés 7 Oct (MAP) was near the s. edge of the taxon's range.

An Olive-sided Flycatcher in Mexicali 1 Sep (RAE et al.) provided apparently the first fall record for the Colorado Desert portion of the Region. The Least Flycatcher is proving to be a rare, regular fall migrant on the peninsula, single birds were at El Rosario 10 Oct (†MAP, RAH) and La Salina 12 Oct (†RAH). Pacific-slope Flycatchers staged a late push, with estimated counts of 20–25 in nw. BC 11–12 Oct (MAP, RAH); many were foraging in *Eucalyptus* trees infested with recently-established exotic psillid wasp "lerps," which have proven attractive to a variety of insectivores and frugivores. Tropical Kingbirds continue to turn up regularly after mid-Sep, with 2 at Bahía Tortugas 8 Oct (MAP, RAH) and singles on 12 Oct at El Descanso (ph. MAP, vt. RAH) and Rosarito (MAP, RAH). Approximately 50 Cassin's Kingbirds were in nw BC 11 Oct, including at least 40 roosting in *Eucalyptus* on the Maneadero Plain, with 4 Western Kingbirds (MAP, RAH). Western

Kingbirds are generally rare after early Oct and away from nw. BC; noteworthy records included 2 at Bahía Tortugas 8 Oct, one 16 km n. of Vizcaíno 9 Oct, one at El Socorro 10 Oct, and 6 (including the 4 roosting birds) on the Maneadero Plain 11 Oct (all RAH, MAP).

Single singing Least Bell's Vireos (*V. b. pusillus*, listed as endangered in Mexico and the United States) at El Rosario 8 Sep, Cataviña 4–8 Sep, and Rancho San José de Castro, V.P., 5 Sep were at known nesting locations, but a singing bird at Arroyo Santo Dominguito, BC, 7 Oct (vt. RAH, MAP), and Lucy's Warblers on 11 Oct at La Bufadora (MAP, RAH) and Punta Banda (†RAH, MAP). A Northern Parula at Cataviña 10 Oct (†MAP, vt. RAH) was only the 7th ever found on the peninsula.

One of the most exciting finds of the season was an imm. male **Mangrove Warbler** (*Dendroica petechia castaneiceps*) at the city park in Guerrero Negro 9 Oct (†RAH, †MAP). Surprisingly, this distinctive mangrove endemic was recorded previously at the n. end of town 29 Jan 1995, ±140 km n. of the nearest mangroves at Estero La Bocana/Laguna San Ignacio. A Black-throated Blue Warbler at Santa Inés 7 Oct (MAP, vt. RAH) was more expected than the peninsula's 4th record of Black-throated Green Warbler, found on the San Quintín Plain 10 Oct (†RAH, †MAP).

Wood-Warblers

This colorful group of birds consistently provides excitement with their wanderings across the continent; 26 species were recorded in fall 2000, many from breeding grounds in e North America. Three Tennessee Warblers at Punta Banda 12 Oct (vt. RAH, MAP) represent the most ever found at one place in the Region. Noteworthy congeners included 2 Virginia's Warblers at Cataviña 8 Sep (SNGH et al.) and another at Arroyo Santo Dominguito, BC, 7 Oct (vt. RAH, MAP), and Lucy's Warblers on 11 Oct at La Bufadora (MAP, RAH) and Punta Banda (†RAH, MAP). A Northern Parula at Cataviña 10 Oct (†MAP, vt. RAH) was only the 7th ever found on the peninsula.

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Surprising in a year when so few were found on the Pacific Coast, this first-fall Red-throated Pipit at Arroyo Santo Dominguito, Baja California, 7 October 2000, furnished the 8th record for the Baja California peninsula and the 10th overall for Mexico. Photograph by Michael A. Patten.

Despite its w. range, the Hermit Warbler is as rare in fall migration in most of the Region as are many eastern species. Four were seen in nw. BC 8 Sep–12 Oct (RAH et al.) and a 5th was at Punta Eugenia 6 Sep (SNGH et al.). Although unrecorded on the peninsula prior to 1987, 15 Prairie Warblers were found since, through 1999; this year singles were at Bahía Asunción 5 Sep (SNGH, RAH) and 8 Oct (vt. RAH, MAP). The Palm Warbler (one at Rancho San José de Castro, V.P., 8 Oct; MAP, RAH) and Blackpoll Warbler (up to 3 at Punta Banda 11–12 Oct; RAH, MAP) are among the most numerous e. warblers in California. In contrast, the **Cerulean Warbler** is among the rarest; thus an imm. male at El Rosario 8 Sep (†RAE, †SNGH, vt. †RAH) was a surprise. One was collected in the Sierra San Pedro Mártir 2 Oct 1925; an unseasonal and undocumented sight record from San José del Cabo 17 Dec 1967 is considered dubious.

A single Black-and-white Warbler was found in early Sep (near Gavilán, BCS, 7 Sep; RAH et al.), but 6 were found from the V.P. northward 7–12 Oct (RAH, MAP). An absence of American Redstarts in early Sep was surprising, but 8 were on the wintering grounds in Guerrero Negro 7–9 Oct and 2 were at mid-peninsula oases 8–10 Oct (all RAH, MAP). With only seven previous peninsula records, 3 Prothonotary Warblers were more than expected, but it was an exceptional fall for the species in the West. A male was at El Rosario 8 Sep (RAE, vt. †RAH, SNGH) and up to 2 females were in Guerrero Negro 7–9 Oct (vt. RAH, †MAP). The arrival of Northern Waterthrushes was noted in early Sep, none were seen during daily birding 1–6 Sep, yet six were found in essentially the same areas from the V.P. northward 7–9 Sep (RAE et al.). A male Belding's Yellowthroat at El Mezquital, BCS, 9 Oct (RAH, MAP) was just downstream of a known breeding locale at San Joaquín. It appears likely that small numbers of this endangered endemic occur at oasis scattered along the Batequi Grande San Joaquín.

Tanagers Through Orioles

Four Summer Tanagers, all presumably the nominate e. subspecies, were found from the VP northward 7–12 Oct (all RAH, MAP). A Spotted Towhee at Cataviña 4 Sep (RAE, PP) was south of previous mainland records in the Region. The bird was well-marked with white above and may have been the "resident" BC subspecies (*P. m. unbraticola*) or one of the migratory subspecies of the interior American west (i.e., *curtatus*, *montanus*, or *arcticus*).

Clay-colored Sparrows winter n. to the

Sierra de San Francisco (e. of Vizcaíno) but are rare and somewhat irregular n. and w. of there; 4 were found from the V.P. northward 8–12 Oct (all RAH, MAP). The Lark Bunting appears to have declined in BC since Wilbur (1987, *Birds of Baja California*, Univ. California Press) described it as a "widespread and locally common winter visitor the length of the peninsula." The only ones reported were a male at Punta Prieta 4 Sep (PP et al.) and a female near Gavilán, BCS, 8 Oct (MAP, RAH). An ad. White-crowned Sparrow on the Maneadero Plain 9 Sep was early (RAH, SNGH), while a Gray-headed Junco (*J. h. caniceps*) on the lower Río Santo Tomás, BC, 11 Oct (MAP) appears to be only the 5th for the peninsula.

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were found at Rancho El Descanso, BC, 10 Oct and at Santa Teresita, BCS, 8 Oct (both RAH, MAP). Buntings (*Passerina*) made an impressive showing in early Sep, with an ad. male Varied Bunting at Rancho Santa Mónica 4–5 Sep (2nd record for the V.P.; María de Jesús Higuera, vt. RAH et al.), and imm. **Painted Buntings** at Punta Eugenia 6 Sep (SNGH,

†RAH, RAE), Rancho Santa Mónica 6–7 Sep (†SNGH, †RAE), and Santa Inés, BC, 8 Sep (†SNGH, †RAH, RAE). It was an exceptional year for the latter species in California as well. There are several records of apparent escapees, but only two previous unequivocal records for the peninsula: one at Cabo San Lucas 15 Nov 1966 and one at Rancho Santa Mónica 29 Sep 1999.

The Red-winged Blackbird has proved to be a very rare fall migrant in the Vizcaíno Desert, so an imm. female at Arroyo Santo Domniguito, BC, 4 Sep (RAH et al.) was of note. Early Oct was good for rare migrant orioles, with an Orchard Oriole at Santa Inés, BC, 7–10 Oct (vt. RAH, †MAP), and Baltimore Orioles at Punta Banda 11–12 Oct, Santa Inés 10 Oct (vt. RAH) and Rancho San José de Castro, V.P., 8 Oct (all MAP, RAH).

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VIETNAM
North, South
3-27 January

THAILAND
North, Central, Peninsular
5-27 January

PHILIPPINES
Luzon, Mindanao, Cebu, Palawan, Bohol, Negros
1 February - 4 March

NE INDIA
Arunachal Pradesh, Assam
8-31 March

BHUTAN
5-28 April

WEST CHINA
Sichuan (Szechuan)
Panda Reserves
3-27 May

MALAYSIA
Malaya, Borneo (Mt. Kinabalu)
4-26 May

2001 BIRDING TOURS

INDONESIA #1
Sulawesi
15 July - 5 August

INDONESIA #2
Greater Sundas
Java, Bali
5-26 August

NORTH BURMA HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION
3 November - 2 December

INDONESIA #1
Sumatra
31 May - 23 June