

NOTES

SIGHTINGS OF THE LAYSAN ALBATROSS IN THE NORTHERN GULF OF CALIFORNIA, MEXICO

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The Laysan Albatross, *Diomedea immutabilis*, the most abundant species of albatross in the north Pacific (Pitman 1985), has recently expanded its breeding range into the eastern Pacific. In May 1986, adults with chicks were discovered on Isla Guadalupe, 230 miles west of Baja California, Mexico (Dunlap 1988), with nesting continuing there at least through 1988 (Oberbauer et al. 1989). Courtship has also been reported at two other sites off Mexico: Alijos Rocks, 185 miles west of Baja California (Pitman 1985), and Isla San Benedicto, in the Islas Revillagigedo, about 230 miles south of the southern tip of Baja (Pitman 1988).

To date, only one account of the Laysan Albatross in the Gulf of California has been published: a single bird seen 5 May 1982, east of Cabo San Miguel, Baja California Norte (Wilbur 1987). Here we provide additional records gathered during fieldwork in the northern Gulf of California.

Each spring from 1986 to 1988 we conducted surveys for the Gulf of California Harbor Porpoise, *Phocoena sinus*, in the northern quarter of the Gulf of California. We used an 8-meter Boston Whaler to visually search 1072 nautical miles north of 30°N (see Silber 1990).

On 23 April 1987, we saw a single Laysan Albatross at 31°16'N, 114°48'W, about 13.5 miles north of San Felipe, Baja California Norte. Two days later, we saw the same or a second bird at 30°53'N, 114°27'W, near a surface slick of oil created by the bloated carcass of a dead Fin Whale, *Balaenoptera physalus*. The slick had also attracted other procellariiforms: Northern Fulmars, *Fulmarus glacialis*, Pink-footed and Sooty Shearwaters, *Puffinus creatopus* and *P. griseus*, and Black and Least Storm-petrels, *Oceanodroma melania* and *O. microsoma*. On 12 April 1988, we again observed a Laysan Albatross at 30°58'N, 114°24'W, about 10 miles southeast of Roca Consag.

There have been several prior records of Laysan Albatrosses occurring in the inland southwest United States. Dunn and Unitt (1977) and McCaskie (1984b) have surmised that these records were the result of Laysan Albatrosses flying north through the Gulf of California and continuing north after they reached the head of the Gulf. Both records for Arizona were from near Yuma, just north of the Gulf along the Colorado River (Monson and Phillips 1981, Rosenberg and Stejskal 1988). All Laysan Albatrosses seen in interior southern California have occurred near, or to the northwest of, the Salton Sea (McCaskie 1984a,b, 1985), an area that has attracted other marine birds from the Gulf. Our sightings are consistent with the above records, all of which are for the spring and summer months.

The expansion of breeding Laysan Albatrosses into the eastern Pacific led McCaskie (1988) to predict that their numbers off California can be expected to increase. The species' occurrence will, no doubt, also increase in the Gulf of California, and it may colonize islands there.

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The Gulf of California Harbor Porpoise study was conducted under research permit numbers 301856, 300422, and 400036, issued by Mexico's Secretaría de Pesca. The study was supported by the Nature Conservancy, The American Cetacean Society (Los Angeles Chapter), and the Center for Marine Conservation. Logistical support was provided by the University of California, Santa Cruz, the Center for the Study of Deserts and Oceans, and the West Coast Whale Research Foundation. The paper was improved by comments from Robert Pitman and Steve Howell.

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Accepted 11 October 1989