

Baja California & the Sea of Cortez

Naturetrek Tour Report

21 February - 5 March 2011



Leaping Dolphins



Baby Humpback Whale breaching



Tropicbird



Meeting a Grey Whale



Blue Whale



Sea Lion pup

Report & images compiled by Lee Morgan



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Day 1

21st February

London to San Diego

With the exception of a few, the group met at London Heathrow's Terminal 4 in the morning ready for departure and the long day of travel ahead. A 4hr stop in Houston provided everyone with a chance to get to know one another and a chance to have a leisurely dinner before our connecting flight onwards to San Diego.

We arrived a little after 11pm and were ferried to our hotel by shuttle bus. We were quickly checked into our rooms and after a very long day we all beat a weary retreat to our beds.

Day 2 – San Diego – Board Searcher

22nd February

We awoke to a bright and sunny San Diego morning. About half the group opted to have a quiet morning wandering around the harbour enjoying the sights... The remainder of the group opted to join Lee for a guided tour of some of San Diego's nature reserves and birding hotspots with David Kimble from the local Audubon Society and at 9am we met in the hotel lobby before setting off on foot for some gentle birding around the harbour. The birdwatching started slowly but we quickly kick-started our list for the day with some lovely views of Spotted Sandpiper, Anna's Hummingbird, Black Phoebe, Bufflehead and Northern Mockingbird.

We then potted back to the hotel where we were met by a bus that took us to Silverwoods, a small nature reserve in the hills to the north of the city. We sat and had a picnic lunch around a feeding station located amidst the chaparral habitats in the heart of the reserve giving the birdwatchers a time for some relaxed birding and the keen botanists a chance to enjoy some of the wonderful plants and trees typical of this interesting habitat. The bird feeders were buzzing with activity and we watched as California Ground Squirrels, Spotted Towhee, Dark-eyed Juncos and Scrub Jays snatching food from the floor beneath the bushes while Anna's Hummingbirds and Lesser Goldfinches zipped between the numerous feeders suspended around our heads. We watched for a while and added numerous other species to our growing bird list including a few local specialities such as Acorn Woodpecker, California Quail, White-breasted Nuthatch and Oak Titmouse.

After lunch we moved to a town park called Lyndo Lake, usually a good spot to get a closer look at a variety of ducks and geese. We spent some time watching Ruddy and Wood ducks, American Coots and Moorhens that dabbled on the lakes as well as getting some great views of a pair of Western Bluebirds, Great-tailed Grackle, Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-throated Warbler and even a Lincoln's Sparrow. However, despite everyone enjoying the wonderful selection of birds at this location, it was that once again the mammals that stole the show as a young Gopher persistently popped out of its burrow just in front of the entire group affording everyone an excellent view!

The San Diego River Estuary was the next stop, a site that usually offers some outstanding bird-watching and, despite being a little quieter than usual, the mudflats were teeming with hundreds of Ring-billed, Western and California Gulls, Royal and Forsters Terns as well as numerous waders, herons and egrets. A little walk also revealed dozens of Goosander (Common Merganser) and Greater Scaup feeding in the shallow water higher up the estuary. Our final stop of the day was at Famosa Slough where we added American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt and Long-Billed Dowitcher, which brought our day list to about 73 species and after such a lovely day, it was with some reluctance that we all boarded the bus and returned to the hotel. After transferring our luggage to M/V Searcher and meeting up with the rest of the group (many of whom had taken some time to enjoy the wildlife around the harbour) most of us took the chance to grab a bite to eat in Mitch's seafood bar before we all boarded M/V Searcher in the late afternoon where we had our welcome orientation and a chance to meet Captain Art and his crew. With lines away at about 10pm, we sailed out into the twinkling lights of San Diego Harbour.

However, a minor detour via the bait pens at the entrance to the harbour meant we were treated to some lamp-lit views of dozens of California Sea Lions and hundreds of Double-crested Cormorants leaving us all very excited about the wildlife watching we could expect in the days ahead of us.

Day 3

23rd February

Ensenada – Todos Santo

Most people awoke to the sound of the slowing engines and were enjoying our morning coffee when we arrived at Ensenada as the sun slowly crept up above the horizon. After Captain Art had dealt with Mexican Customs and Immigration, we departed and slowly motored out of the harbour giving everyone a chance to enjoy some lovely views of the Surf Scoters and Black-necked (Eared) Grebes that swam around in the sheltered waters of the harbour and the numerous Harbour Seals that were hauled out on the along the harbour walls and jetties.

As we left the harbour and headed out into a gently rolling Pacific swell we took some time to watch the gulls that trailed the boat, picking out the odd juvenile Heermann's Gull that lingered with the large groups of Western Gulls. Some of the keen birders even managed to grab a fleeting glimpse of a distant Western Grebe and a couple of Pacific Divers. We drifted slowly past Isla Todos Santos where, amidst the numerous gulls and Brown Pelicans we managed to get some lovely views of a pair of Peregrines perched high up on top of the steepest cliff on the island, while scanning the rocks closer to sea level gave us nice views of American Oystercatcher and even a couple of Pelagic Cormorants too. The beaches had good numbers of Californian Sea Lions and Harbour Seals hauled out on them as well as the odd Northern Elephant Seal, giving us all a sneak preview of the sheer scale of these enormous animals.

This set us all up for the long day of travel ahead of us and as we motored south we all found a comfortable spot out of the wind where we could spend the hours birding and remaining vigilant for any signs of cetacean activity. However, our relaxation was temporarily disturbed by a Mexican Military vessel that requested to board us and undertake a brief search of the vessel. It was certainly all exciting stuff as we were all called to the decks and asked to present our Passports. Actually, most of the heavily armed soldiers that stood quietly alongside us on the deck looked considerably more nervous than any of our jovial group of relaxed, well-seasoned travellers and it was smiles all round as they disembarked the Searcher and we once again continued our journey south.

The seas were generally quiet but it was not long before we were treated to some fantastic Common Dolphin activity, with a large group of several hundred energetically playing around the boat. Birding included a lot of Northern Fulmars (both light and dark phase) feeding at surface along with frequent sightings of both Black-vented and Pink-footed Shearwaters amidst the numerous gulls. A large spout on the horizon soon brought everyone eagerly to the bow as we begin our first approach on a large whale. It eventually turned out to be a large Fin Whale that we slowly tracked for a while before it eventually gave us the slip and we continue into darkness with little more than the occasional dolphin sighting.

Day 4

24th February

Isla San Benitos

It was another very early start to the day with many people emerging from their cabins as early as 4am and by 6pm everyone was enjoying a fantastic breakfast and preparing themselves for our day ashore on Isla San Benito. Calm seas and wonderfully clear blue skies make for a gentle introduction to boarding a skiff and we all enjoyed a quick skiff ride along cliffs to see Osprey at the nest and numerous Guadalupe Fur Seals that jostled for position high up on the rocks above the breaking waves. Keen birders in the group were treated to close views of both Black and American Oystercatcher and numerous Savannah Sparrows picking over the rocks just above the splash line.

After the skiff rides we set ashore on the beach in front of a tiny fishing village. The beach was covered in large bull elephant seals that snorted at us as we paused to photo them our way through the village to start our hike. The fabulous weather made for a very pleasurable walk along the islands cliffs and camera motor drives were whirring as we paused by beach after beach covered with angelic looking Elephant Seal pups and huge displaying bulls. Many took the time to admire the islands unique flora and a stop at the old lighthouse for lunch provided everyone with a chance to admire the wonderful scenery from some of the highest points on the island; a real treat given the wonderfully clear conditions.

After such an eventful day, it was with some reluctance that we all boarded the skiffs and returned to the Searcher but once aboard we all settled in once more as we set off south in search of more whales. We did not have to wait too long as we happened upon several Grey Whales heading north along the coast of the peninsular. We trailed them for a while, giving everyone some great views. An excellent introduction to a species we would undoubtedly be seeing more of in the days to come. We eventually left the whales to continue their journey and did an about turn so that we could continue on our southerly course. We spotted numerous Xantus's' Murrelets and Cassin's Auklets as we were sailing and there appeared to be plenty of shearwaters too and a brief attempt at laying down a chum slick of fish oil and popcorn attracted a frenetic response from several hundred gulls. There was little additional cetacean activity for the rest of the day but a brief but manic feeding frenzy of hundreds of dolphins lifted everybody's spirits before we were eventually called to the saloon for our evening meal. However, a fleeting glimpse of a single Fin Whale passing close to the boat provided one final treat for those that remained on deck until darkness fell.

Day 5

25th February

San Ignacio

We awoke bright and early again, providing everyone with some time for a leisurely breakfast and some early watching as we approached the entrance to San Ignacio Lagoon. Good numbers of Royal Terns patrol the skies at the entrance to the lagoon but all eyes were fixed on the sea as we are joined by a small group of Common Dolphins that shepherd us towards the lagoon. The entrance to the lagoon was thick with the spouts of Grey Whales and the slightly choppy seas and cool breeze did little to deter anyone from excitedly watching from the lower decks of the boat as Art slowly weaved a course across the shallow sandbar at the entrance to the lagoon, being careful to avoid the dozens of whales that spy hopped and fluked all around us. This was truly an astounding first introduction to this marvellous reserve.

Once safely at anchor in the lagoon we were quickly ushered into pangas for our first close up introduction to the Grey Whales and it seemed that we had barely left the sides of the Searcher before numerous adult whales had come in to take a closer look at us! For a first introduction, the whales were certainly not shy. Almost everyone had their first chance to touch a whale and when we all returned to the Searcher wet from the blows of whales (and climbing the walls with excitement) the crew instantly knew that we had all had a fantastic time!

After a quick lunch, we boarded the pangas once more and spent the remainder of the afternoon out with the whales providing everyone with the chance to interact with numerous adult whales and even some newly born calves too.

The huge numbers of whales in the lagoon also provided us with the chance to watch the whales interacting with each other too and amidst thrashing flukes, splashing flippers, spy hops and breaches we spent our afternoon mesmerized by these truly amazing creatures. It certainly gave us all a lot to talk about when we returned to the boat as we compared photos and recounted our own unique encounters over a leisurely evening meal. But our day did not finish there as we all made our way out to the rear deck of the boat and, with the ships generator and lights turned off, we listened to the whales and watched as a wonderfully clear starry sky reveal itself above us. Once our eyes had adjusted to the darkness Dave treated us all to an excellent talk on the stars and pointed out numerous constellations, planets and nebulae that very few of us ever get to see so clearly. Dave had hoped that we might catch a glimpse of the Hubble Space Station passing overhead but it was not to be. Nonetheless, this did little to dampen our spirits as we drew a close to a truly fantastic day.

Day 6

26th February

San Ignacio

Once again, everyone was up before dawn and after coffee and muffins, we boarded our pangas at first light for a slow morning trip around the mangroves where we were rewarded with some great views of Black and Yellow-crowned Night-herons, Tricoloured and Green Herons and even Reddish Egrets that entertained us with their peculiar fishing 'dance'. Black Brent Geese (Brants) in their hundreds flew over the lagoon and along the shores we got some excellent views of White Ibis, Willet and Marbled Godwits. Some sharp-eyed birders even managed a brief view of Clapper Rail as it skulked amidst the roots of the Red Mangroves but few people managed to get any view of the a solitary Mangrove Warbler that stubbornly held its cover before flitting rapidly across one of the small creeks. Nevertheless, it was a lovely relaxed start to the day and we all returned to the boat ready for breakfast.

We whale-watched from the pangas from about 9:00am until noon (with a quick break midway through the morning for some more of Steve's excellent snacks) where we were all provided with lots more friendly whale encounters and some were even lucky enough to get a rather shocking view of mating whales! Even from the deck of the Searcher we were able to watch Grey Whales scratching themselves on the anchor line, breaching and spy hopping and the presence of Bottle-nosed Dolphins and numerous wonderful birds did little to distract anyone from the spectacle of the Grey Whales around us.

After lunch most of the group opted to spend the afternoon out on the pangas with the whales but some opted to take a walk on one of the lagoons wonderful beaches and spent an hour or so taking a closer look at some of the shells that get thrown up by the pacific surf and amidst the numerous robust shells of Stimpsons Surf Clams we also found nice examples of Pacific Razor Clam, Giant Rock Scallop, Pacific Calico Scallop, Baja Pen, Wavy Turban, Punctate Pandora, Sand Dollars and even a few large whale bones. Unfortunately, the birdwatching was a little less lucrative but we did manage to see some small flocks of Sanderling running around amidst the breaking surf and watched the pelicans and Royal terns feeding over the lagoon. We returned to the Searcher late in the afternoon and enjoyed what remained of our last night in the magical Laguna San Ignacio.

Day 7

27th February

Magdalena Bay

Another early start for many as we make our way out of the lagoon and start heading south towards Magdalena Bay.

We had a good chance to enjoy the sunrise over the Pacific and look for large roquales and pelagic seabirds as we make our way south towards the tip of the Baja Peninsula. Choppy seas with lots of white-capped waves made for some tough watching conditions but we were entertained for a while by the occasional group of Long-beaked Common Dolphins that came in to bow ride as we forged our way through the waves.

After a rather prolonged period with little more than a few Ocean Sun fish, a Green Turtle and the occasional glimpse of a Black-vented Shearwater between the troughs of the waves, a sighting of a distant whale blow got everyone excited as we veered off course to investigate. We were not disappointed and our efforts were rewarded with our first sighting of a huge Blue Whale that surfaced several times in front of the boat before eventually giving us the slip. This brief sighting reinvigorated everyone and with slightly improving sea conditions we managed to not only tot up two more Blue Whale encounters and some distant sightings of a couple of Humpbacks but also add both Black-footed and Laysan Albatross to our list of seabirds before night fell. However, our bird encounters did not stop there as we were also treated to several disorientated Cassin's Auklets crash landing on the deck of the boat; giving us all the perfect opportunity to have closer look at these tiny seabirds before we liberated them back into the darkness off the stern of the boat.

Day 8

28th February

Gorda Banks – Los Frailes

Having anchored up off the Gorda Banks in the early hours of the morning, Art was able to lower the ship's hydrophone in to the water and with the engines off we were able to start the day listening to the songs of distant Humpbacks as we enjoyed our morning coffee. For many of the group this proved to be a very moving experience and made for a rather tearful start to another great day...

As we began to round the peninsula (and well within sight of Cabo) we encountered our first Humpbacks. It was a boisterous group of 8 adults and, despite the fact that they were heading in exactly the opposite direction to us, we followed them for several miles and enjoyed a wonderful display of synchronised fluking and a fair amount of flipper slapping too. But eventually we had to retrace our steps and continue our journey around the bottom of the peninsula where we stumbled upon a group of bow-riding Bottle-nosed Dolphins, providing some great photo opportunities for the keen photographers in the group.

Late in the morning we moved closer to the shore to investigate a distant whale blow and were treated to a wonderful display of breaching by a very energetic and very small Humpback calf. We were then treated to a display of breaching by both the cow and calf that lasted over two hours. Yet another magical experience chalked up for the trip!

We anchored at Los Frailes at lunchtime and spent the afternoon on shore birding around the desert scrub on the margins of the rather quirky RV park where we very rapidly added Costas Hummingbird, Verdin, Curve-billed and Sage Thrasher, Roadrunner, Green-tailed Towhee and Black-headed Grosbeak to a growing list of birds for the afternoon. But it was not long before we had to drag ourselves away and return to Searcher to continue our journey. We raised anchor after dinner and headed onwards into an increasingly rough sea where, travelling against both wind and tide made for a rather sleepless night for many of the group.

Day 9

1st March

Isla Espiritu Santo (el Cardonal)

After a night of travelling north into the Sea of Cortez, through some very rough seas, everyone on board was tired, a little worse for wear and ready for a trip ashore to stretch their legs. With an increasing wind and sea state Art selected a sheltered spot on the leeward side of Isla Espiritu Santo known locally as el Cardonal where we were set ashore alongside a beautiful turquoise lagoon and we spend the morning in the warm sunshine birding around the mangroves and cactus scrub and admiring the extraordinary scenery and volcanic geology of the island. Before heading back to the boat we all take a relaxing skiff ride around the lagoon and along the rocky margins of the bay.

No body was in any rush to head back out to the open sea after such a relaxed morning but with a temporary drop in the wind we finished our lunch and headed out whaling once again. It is not long before we managed to spot several spouts and despite a heavy swell Art expertly approaches two Fin Whales that proceeded to give us the run around for much of the afternoon. However, with worsening weather it is not long before we are forced to seek shelter once more and Art took us closer inshore where we encountered an unusually huge group of several hundred Bottle-nosed Dolphins!! We circled them for a while as a mixture of adult and young dolphins leapt all around us but the dolphins showed only a passing interest in play and soon moved on. As darkness fell we made our way further inshore to seek shelter from wind and we all enjoyed a quiet evening and motion-free night at anchor off of Tombobiche.

Day 10

2nd March

Tombobiche

After an early breakfast we set ashore for a walk through salt pan and desert scrub habitats around Tombobiche. This proved to be a real treat for the keen botanists as we managed to find some nice flowers including Sand Verbena, Flannel Bush, Creosote Bush, Ocatillo, Slender Sunflower, California Poppy and Desert Mallow as we explored. The birdwatching was generally slow but nicely varied with views of Spotted and Western Sandpipers, Marbled Godwits and various herons and egrets on the saltpan lagoons. More curve-billed Thrashers and some close views of Says Phoebe proved to be a further treat as we explored the desert scrub. We also managed to get some very close views of Turkey Vultures that lingered around a feeding station that was littered with the desiccated heads and remains of a huge variety of sharks and rays.

We returned to the searcher at about 10am and spent the remainder of the day searching for whales in the deep, and comparatively sheltered waters between Isla Catalina and Monserrat. Within an hour or so were watching two Blue Whales that we followed for some time. Both animals repeated surfaced close to the boat, and one even gave a tantalising glimpse of a fluke before it disappeared. Conditions were improving all the time and it was not long before we encountered a massive group of Common Dolphins that once again gave everyone a chance to hone their photographic skills and the speed of their trigger finger as they leapt all around the boat!

The sight of frenetic bird activity in the distance sent us northwards and we soon found ourselves motoring through dense clouds of krill that were amassing near the surface. Aaron managed to net a few krill out for us but the few tiny animals swimming around in a bucket did little to distract us from the mass of activity that was surrounding the boat; Thousands of Heermann's Gulls, Brown Pelicans, Black Storm Petrels, Pink-footed and Black-vented Shearwaters were feasting on the krill in the waters all around us.

The keen birdwatchers eagerly looked for rarities amidst the clamour of activity. The search for a Least Storm Petrel amongst the thousands of Black Storm Petrels proved to be fruitless (but we did manage to find a Laughing Gull feeding amidst the Heermann's) and before too long most people had resigned themselves to just enjoying the sheer spectacle. With all the food around it seemed almost inevitable that we would encounter a whale and we were not surprised when a Bryde's Whale came surging through the balls of Krill and exploded onto the surface, giving us all excellent views of its massively extended throat pleats.

We all spent the last minutes of the day watching the whale lunge feeding against a glorious sunset sky and it was only with the onset of darkness that we retired to the galley for dinner as the Searcher made its way to a sheltered anchorage off Isla Catalina where the crew rigged up a bright light over the side of the boat and we watched as dozens of Green Jacks and Barracuda picked away at the swarms of Krill and tiny Baitfish that massed around the light.

Day 11

3rd March

Isla Santa Catalina

We spent most of the morning ashore on Isla Santa Catalina exploring the fantastic cactus-lined arroyos on the west side of the island where most of the birders saw Ladder-backed and Gila Woodpeckers, Loggerhead Shrikes, Phainopepla and Yellow-footed Gull. Many of the group had their eyes down looking for the illusive Baja endemic Rattlesnake but despite our best efforts, there were very few reptiles to be found apart from an occasional sighting of the odd Emerald-tailed Lizard.

Having got very hot on the hike ashore, many opted to go for a snorkel and grab a chance to see some of the fantastic colourful fish that live in the sheltered rocky reefs that surround the island. For some, it was their first time snorkelling and, despite some very amusing moments while people were getting into their wetsuits, everyone enjoyed every minute of it!

While at anchor we enjoyed a leisurely lunch and were treated to a small group of Bottle-nosed Dolphins playing around the boat. After lunch we headed out once more into the deep waters between the islands and once again were treated to some excellent Blue Whale encounters (a species we were all becoming surprisingly complacent about seeing) before a shout of 'Sperm Whale breach at 9 o'clock' distracted our attention and sent us off towards the horizon in search of a new species for our cetaceans list. While we managed a good view of the whale between a couple of dives we are all a little disappointed to discover that we had found about the only Sperm Whale in the world that does not fluke between dives! Nonetheless we all enjoyed watching the animal logging at the surface and got great views of the sideways (left side) blow. The light began to fade and we were forced to head south and seek a sheltered anchorage off Isla San Hose but, as we travelled, Art shut off the ship's lights and we all hung over the bow watching a glittering display of bioluminescence and thousands of Needlefish jumping in our wake!

Day 12

4th March

Isla San Hose – Los Isolotes

We started the day with a very leisurely skiff ride through the extensive mangrove channels towards the southern end of Isla San Hose. Here we drifted past dozens of Royal Terns, Brant's Cormorants, Reddish and Snowy Egrets, Yellow-crowned Night-herons and watched Belted Kingfishers fishing in the shallow lagoons.

It was a great morning for photography and some people even managed to get some wonderful photographs of the illusive Mangrove Warbler. The botanists also had a wonderful chance to see all three mangrove species (Red, White and Black Mangrove) side by side and we all got some lovely views of Stingrays cruising around in the crystal clear waters of the lagoon. Both Aaron and Cole then demonstrated their rather unique hand-fishing skills and managed to catch a couple of Balloonfish to show everyone (getting very wet in the process).

We raised anchor and headed north, looking for whales and dolphins en route to Los Isolotes. Once again, it was not long before we were joined by Bottle-nosed Dolphins, and the horizon all around us was filled with the blows of Blue Whales! We spent a little time trailing a few different whales before heading onwards to Isolotes.

We arrived at the stark white rocks of Los Isolotes before lunch and boarded the skiffs to take rides along the sheltered side of the islands where we got great views of the clamorous hordes of California Sea Lions hauled out on the rocks and displaying Blue-footed Boobies on the ledges above our heads. The water was thick with tiny baitfish and we watched as Brown Pelicans and Brown Boobies plummeted into the water all around us. After a quick change back onboard the Searcher, those that were feeling brave enough to face the cold water were ready to go snorkelling with the Sea Lions; a real treat for everyone as adults and pups played in the waters all around us.

As the afternoon draws on we are forced to leave the islands and begin our journey south. We all watched for whales as we travelled and within minutes we were surrounded by Blue Whales once more. A truly spectacular sight, with 8 animals surfacing all around the boat and several more animals surfacing in the distance, nobody was sure where to look!!! It was a truly awesome way to spend our final hours of the trip as we watched the whales until the sun set before slowly moving off and continuing our journey back towards Cabo.

Day 13

5th March

We watched the sunrise off the end of the Cape and carried on in transit to Cabo San Lucas where we enjoy a leisurely continental breakfast as the boat is refuelled. We said our farewells to the crew and disembark. We then got taxis to Cabo Airport. a few people even manage to catch their final glimpse of a whale spout or two as we travel along the coast before we are eventually dropped off outside the airport terminal and we begin our long journey home.

Summary: This was, once again, an outstanding trip. Despite the strong winds that made for rough seas and some tough watching conditions at times, we had quite superb views of a variety of whales and dolphins and had plenty of time to explore some of the marvellous desert habitats too. The extraordinary numbers of Grey Whales (300+) in Ignacio Lagoon resulted in numerous wonderful close encounters and with a tally of up to 25 Blue Whale sightings in the Sea of Cortez; this was truly a 'one off' experience for everyone on board. We saw a lunge feeding Bryde's Whale, mega-pods of dolphins and even a Sperm Whale that didn't fluke! We shared some great food with excellent company and everyone on this tour will have some amazing memories from this trip of a lifetime.

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Species Lists

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted)

	Common name	Scientific name	February/March											
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3	4	
1	Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	1											
2	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓											
3	Black Brant	<i>Branta bernicla</i>				100+	1000+							
4	Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>	✓											
5	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓											
6	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	✓											
7	American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	✓											
8	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	✓											
9	Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	✓											
10	Blue-winged Teal	<i>Anas discors</i>	✓											
11	American Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓											
12	Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	✓											
13	Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	30+											
14	Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	4	30+		✓	✓							
15	Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	✓											
16	Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	✓											
17	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	✓					✓		✓				
18	California Quail	<i>Callipepla californica</i>	✓											
19	Pacific Diver	<i>Gavia pacifica</i>		2										
20	Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>				✓	✓							
21	Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	4											
22	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	✓	✓				✓			✓	1000's		
23	Western Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>		1										
24	Laysan Albatross	<i>Phoebastria immutabilis</i>							1					
25	Black-footed Albatross	<i>Phoebastria nigripes</i>							1					
26	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		50+										
27	Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>			2									
28	Pink-footed Shearwater	<i>Puffinus creatopus</i>		✓	✓	✓			✓					
29	Black-vented Shearwater	<i>Puffinus opisthomelas</i>		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			

	Common name	Scientific name	February/March											
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3	4	
30	Black Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma melania</i>										✓		
31	Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
32	Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>								2				
33	Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>									✓	✓		50+
34	Blue-footed Booby	<i>Sula nebouxii</i>								2	✓			20+
35	Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	40+	50+	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
36	Pelagic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus</i>		2										
37	Brandt's Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax penicillatus</i>	10+					✓		✓	✓			✓
38	Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	100's	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓
39	Yellow-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax violacea</i>						✓		✓	✓			✓
40	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	✓					✓						
41	Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>						✓						✓
42	Tricolored Heron	<i>Egretta tricolor</i>				✓	✓				✓			✓
43	Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	✓					✓						✓
44	Reddish Egret	<i>Egretta rufescens</i>				✓	✓			✓				✓
45	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	✓					✓			✓			✓
46	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓					✓		✓	✓			✓
47	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>								✓	✓			
48	White Ibis	<i>Eudocimus albus</i>				✓								✓
49	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		
50	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	✓		10					✓				✓
51	Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>												✓
52	Red-shouldered Hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	✓											
53	Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	✓		1					✓			✓	
54	Crested Caracara	<i>Caracara cheriway</i>								2	✓			
55	American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	✓								1	✓		
56	Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		2	✓	1				✓			2	
57	Clapper Rail	<i>Rallus longirostris</i>						1						
58	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓											
59	American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>	✓											
60	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	✓											
61	Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	✓											

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			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3	4	
62	Black Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus bachmani</i>		✓	✓									✓
63	American Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>		✓	✓			✓						✓
64	American Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra americana</i>	✓											
65	Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	✓											
66	Willet	<i>Catoptrophorus semipalmatus</i>	✓					✓				✓		✓
67	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	✓					✓						
68	Wandering Tattler	<i>Heteroscelus incanus</i>									1			✓
69	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularia</i>	✓								✓			✓
70	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus</i>	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓		✓
71	Long-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>	✓				✓	✓						
72	Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i>	✓					✓				✓		
73	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	✓											
74	Black Turnstone	<i>Arenaria melanocephala</i>			15									
75	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	✓					✓			✓			
76	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	✓											
77	Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i>	✓								✓	✓		
78	Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	✓								✓	✓		
79	Long-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>	✓											
80	Grey Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>								2				
81	Heermann's Gull	<i>Larus heermanni</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
82	Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	✓	✓										
83	California Gull	<i>Larus californicus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓			
84	American Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓											
85	Yellow-footed Gull	<i>Larus livens</i>									✓	✓	✓	✓
86	Western Gull	<i>Larus occidentalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓								
87	Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>			✓									
88	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>		✓										
89	Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabina</i>		✓										
90	Elegant Tern	<i>Sterna elegans</i>									3			✓
91	Royal Tern	<i>Sterna maxima</i>	✓			✓	✓							✓
92	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>								✓				
93	Forster's Tern	<i>Sterna forsteri</i>	✓											

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94	Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>		1									
95	Xantus's Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus hypoleucus</i>			✓								
96	Craveri's Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus craveri</i>									✓	5+	
97	Cassin's' Auklet	<i>Ptychoramphus aleuticus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
98	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓										
99	Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	✓							✓			
100	White-winged Dove	<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>								✓	✓	✓	
101	Common Ground Dove	<i>Columbina passerina</i>								✓			
102	Greater Roadrunner	<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>								✓			
103	Xantus's Hummingbird	<i>Hylocharis xantusii</i>									✓		
104	Costa's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte costae</i>								✓		✓	
105	Anna's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte anna</i>	✓										
106	Belted Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>											✓
107	Acorn Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes formicivorus</i>	✓										
108	Gila Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes uropygialis</i>								✓	✓	✓	
109	Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	✓										
110	Gilded Flicker	<i>Colaptes chrysoides</i>									✓		
111	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides scalaris</i>								✓	✓	✓	
112	Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	✓							✓			✓
113	Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i>									2		
114	Ash-throated Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>								✓	✓	✓	
115	Loggerhead shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>								✓	✓	✓	
116	Western Scrub Jay	<i>Aphelocoma californica</i>	✓										
117	American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	✓										
118	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>			✓					✓			
119	Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	✓										
120	Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>									✓		
121	Oak Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus inornatus</i>	✓										
122	Verdin	<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>								50+	✓	✓	✓
123	White-breasted nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	✓										
124	Cactus Wren	<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>									✓		
125	Rock wren	<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>								✓			

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126	Blue-grey Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila caerulea</i>								✓				
127	California Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila californica</i>	✓											
128	Western Bluebird	<i>Sialia mexicana</i>	✓											
129	Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
130	Sage Thrasher	<i>Oreoscoptes montanus</i>								✓	✓			
131	Curve-billed Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma curvirostre</i>								✓		✓		
132	European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓											
133	Phainopepla	<i>Phainopepla nitens</i>								✓	✓		✓	
134	Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>			1									✓
135	Audubon's Warbler	<i>Dendroica auduboni</i>	✓											
136	Mangrove Warbler	<i>Dendroica bryanti</i>						1			1			✓
137	Yellow Warbler	<i>Dendroica petechia</i>											✓	
138	Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	✓									✓		
139	California Towhee	<i>Pipilo crissalis</i>	✓							✓			✓	
140	Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	✓							✓				
141	Black-throated Sparrow	<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>								✓		✓	✓	
142	Fox Sparrow	<i>Passerella iliaca</i>	✓											
143	Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	✓		50+			1				✓		
144	Lincoln's Sparrow	<i>Melospiza lincolni</i>	✓											
145	Oregon (Dark-eyed) Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	✓											
146	Black-headed Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i>								✓				
147	Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>								✓		✓	✓	
148	Pyrrhuloxia	<i>Cardinalis sinuatis</i>								✓				
149	Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	✓											
150	Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	✓											
151	Hooded Oriole	<i>Icterus cucullatus</i>								✓				
152	Scott's Oriole	<i>Icterus parisorum</i>								✓				
153	House Finch	<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	✓							✓		✓	✓	
154	American Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis tristis</i>	✓											
155	Lesser Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis psaltria</i>										✓		
156	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓											

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Mammals

1	Gray Whale	<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>		3		100+	250+	200+	3				
2	Blue Whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>						2			8	10+	6+
3	Fin Whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>		1	1					3			
4	Bryde's Whale	<i>Balaenoptera edeni</i>									1		
5	Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>							12+				
6	Sperm Whale	<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>										2	
7	Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>				8	8		100's	500+		8	50
8	Long-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus capensis</i>		100's	40+	100's		100's			500+		
9	Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		50+									
10	California Sea Lion	<i>Zalophus californianus</i>	100+	✓				✓		✓			100's
11	Guadalupe Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus townsendi</i>			200+								
12	Northern Elephant Seal	<i>Mirounga angustirostris</i>		10+	500+								
13	California Ground Squirrel	<i>Citellus beecheyi</i>	6										
14	Botta's Pocket Gopher	<i>Thomomys bottae</i>	2+										
15	Black-tailed Jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>									5+		

Other taxa

Green Turtle

Chelonia mydas

Scalloped Hammerhead Shark

Sphyrna lewini

Common Side-blotched Lizard

Uta stansburiana

Manta Ray

Manta birostris

Orange Throated Whiptail

Cnemidophorus hyperythrus

Ocean Sunfish

Mola mola

Balloonfish

Diodon holocanthus

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