

# Baja California & the Sea of Cortez

Naturetrek Tour Report

8 – 21 March 2018



Grey Whale breaching by Jill Hein



Whale Shark by Debbie Pain



Elephant Seal by Debbie Pain



Grey Whale gaze by Debbie Pain

Report compiled by Duncan McNiven  
Image courtesy of Jill Hein & Debbie Pain



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

Tour participants: Duncan McNiven (leader) & Rob Nawojchik (local naturalist)  
With 20 Naturetrek clients.  
M/V Searcher: Captain Art, Aaron, Bobby, Mike, Gerry-Sue & Sean

## Day 1

**Thursday 8th March**

### London (Heathrow) - San Diego

For this tour, Naturetrek guests were arriving from many starting points across the globe, with only six joining Duncan on the British Airways flight from Heathrow. We landed in San Diego on time at 5.30pm, then transferring to the nearby Ramada Airport Hotel. Some guests had already arrived previously and others joined us during the course of the evening and the following day. Most of the new arrivals opted for an early night whilst a few strolled down to the nearby harbour to sample the local restaurants before retiring for the night.

## Day 2

**Friday 9th March**

### San Diego – Board M/V Searcher

We awoke to a pleasant morning in San Diego's Point Loma harbour. We were not due to board our boat, the Searcher, until the evening so, whilst some of us joined a birding excursion organised by the San Diego Audubon Society, others followed their own itineraries or just chilled out for the day.

At 9am the birders met in the hotel lobby and set off on foot to look at the picturesque harbour. As we made our way to the harbour we soon found that the surrounding trees and gardens were populated by colourful Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warblers as well as Northern Mockingbirds, House Finches and Anna's Hummingbirds. Out in the harbour itself we found that the 'default' local gull was the slate-backed Western Gull, whilst a flock of elegant Western Grebes was accompanied by a single Black-necked Grebe. Further out in the bay some Double-crested Cormorants were fishing and a female Bufflehead was diving. As we returned to the hotel, some of us saw a Cooper's Hawk whilst the tail-enders found a Spotted Sandpiper feeding on the shoreline.

From the hotel, a short bus journey took us across the city to Lindero Lake where we saw a plethora of species including American White Pelican, Great and Snowy Egrets, Black-crowned Night Heron, Wood Duck, Ruddy Duck, American Wigeon, and Green-winged Teal. Great-tailed Grackles and Brewer's Blackbirds inhabited the fringing marsh vegetation whilst the muddy edges were patrolled by Black-necked Stilts and Killdeer. The trees around the margins of the lakes held Cassin's Kingbirds and an extraordinarily confiding pair of Nuttall's Woodpeckers, who were definitely more interested in each other than the captivated Naturetrekers. We also enjoyed our first mammals of the trip with nice views of California Ground Squirrel and Botta's Pocket Gopher.

After another short bus ride we arrived at Silverwoods Reserve, a small nature reserve set amidst the oak chaparral-covered hills to the north of the city. We enjoyed a pleasant packed lunch sitting in the shade of the trees watching the feeding stations. Although activity was a little slow to start with, gradually some of the characteristic birds of this habitat began to show with California Towhee, House Finch and White-crowned Sparrow being the most prominent species, although a pair of more secretive Hermit Thrushes put in a brief

appearance. On the way back to our bus, some of us connected with Bushtit, Wrentit, California Scrub Jay and California Thrasher.

Next stop on our whistle-stop tour of San Diego birding hot spots was the San Diego River estuary which was full of birds. We enjoyed good views of Semi-palmated Plover, Western Sandpiper, Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Curlew, Whimbrel, Grey Plover and Willet. We also saw Little Blue Heron, Brown Pelican, Forster's Tern and both Ring-billed and California Gulls before we ran out of time and had to head back to the hotel.

After our whirlwind introduction to the birding and wildlife around San Diego, we arrived back by mid-afternoon, collected our luggage and joined the others in our group who each had their own experiences of San Diego to tell. After checking in at the Fisherman's Landing, we boarded the M/V Searcher which was to be our home for the next ten days. Most then took the chance to explore the harbour some more, have a bite to eat and generally relax onboard the boat before we all congregated, ready for our safety briefing and our introductions to the boat and the crew.

It was nearly 9.45pm when we cast off and headed out into the cold north-westerly wind of San Diego harbour. Our usual detour via the bait pens at the entrance to the harbour provided everyone with some lamp-lit views of our first California Sea Lion and a few Black-crowned Night Herons and Great Blue Herons, before we eventually headed out of the harbour on to rolling pacific swells.

## Day 3

## Saturday 10th March

### Ensenada – Todos Santos

Just before sunrise we came in to dock in Ensenada Harbour. Most were just waking and enjoying their morning coffee as Mexican customs officials came aboard to issue our visas. The Harbour was quiet and our customs check was brief, and it wasn't long before we were heading out of the sheltered harbour, making our way out towards Todos Santos Islands whilst noting some overflying Royal Terns, California Sea Lions lounging on the breakwater, and a group of Pacific White-sided Dolphins which put on a great show alongside the vessel.

In contrast to the previous day, it was cool with a few spots of rain; a weather pattern that would stick with us most of the day, but the sea was calm. After less than an hour, we approached Todos Santos and cruised slowly by the island looking at its wildlife. As we approached the island we noticed right at the island's summit the resident pair of Peregrine Falcons who immediately began to copulate, a sure sign that spring was approaching. The island was covered by a huge colony of Western Gulls and the cliffs harboured good numbers of Brandt's Cormorants with a scattering of Brown Pelicans, whilst a lucky few spotted a trio of Black Oystercatchers flying around the rocks at the base of the cliffs. Scanning the island's beaches also revealed the usual collection of Harbour Seals and Northern Elephant Seals.

We eventually left the shelter of the island and continued our journey south. The calm conditions allowed us to make good progress and proved to be helpful in spotting cetaceans. Before long we encountered our first Grey Whales and a pod of Short-beaked Common Dolphins, as well as some rather distant Humpback Whales. But the real excitement was yet to come as Katherine, who was enjoying a break from whale watching in the salon,

looked out of the window and spotted a Cuvier's Beaked Whale close to the Searcher! Everyone piled out on to deck to view this rare cetacean and as we turned the vessel for closer observation. It turned out there were three animals altogether. It was a real privilege to be able to observe these unusual whales so closely and a red letter day for our resident marine mammal expert Rob, who in 13 years of doing these cruises had never before seen this species.

Eventually, we continued our journey south looking and encountered good number of Black-vented Shearwaters, Northern Fulmars and some Bonaparte's Gulls, but the hoped-for albatrosses did not materialise, perhaps because of the benign sea conditions. Nevertheless, we continued to enjoy a variety of birdlife including several flocks of both Red-necked and Grey Phalaropes feeding out on the open ocean. Also of interest were small groups of alcids that were flushed by the boat's passage, which included both Cassin's Auklets and good numbers of murrelets. Three species of murrelet occur in these waters and they are extremely difficult to distinguish unless seen well or photographed. However, close scrutiny of some photographs later showed that at least some of these birds were Scripps's Murrelets which breed on some islands off the west coast of Baja.

As the light finally faded we were called into the ship's salon by Mike and Gerry-Sue who had made us a lovely evening meal, and Rob gave us a preview of what to expect the next day when we were hoping for an improvement in the weather..

## Day 4

## Sunday 11th March

### Isla San Benito

After a gentle night of travel most were up early, refreshed and ready to enjoy breakfast and prepare themselves for our day ashore on Isla San Benito. As hoped, the weather had cleared as we progressed south during the night and those who ventured on deck could see the outline of our destination on the horizon. Suddenly, our captain Art called out on the ships tannoy that there were two baleen whales ahead, so everyone piled on deck to see them. After some discussion, it turned out they were Fin Whales, the world's second largest whale. But just as we were about to examine them a bit closer, three more whales surfaced nearby and to our astonishment they turned out to be three more Cuvier's Beaked Whales!

Eventually, after following the two groups of whales, we had to make our way to our destination a few miles away. It was a beautiful, warm sunny morning as we dropped anchor in the bay, got into the skiffs and made our way to the beach on Isla San Benito. Once on the beach, the group split into two with the majority opting to follow Rob on a six-hour, gently-paced trek over the plateau on the top of the island to the lighthouse on the far side and then back along the coast. Meanwhile the rest of the group opted to follow Duncan on a shorter stroll along the coast. Both groups managed to get a look at some of the typical plants, many of which are endemic species of this rather unique island, including Mammillaria Cactus, San Benito Bush Mallow and San Benito Tarweed. We took our time and stopped to talk about the numerous seabird burrows and had a closer look at some of the artificial nest boxes before continuing our walk. Both groups also had their first close up introductions to the notorious Coast or 'jumping' Cholla, but most managed to avoid getting entangled by the prickly pincushion-like cacti.

Birdlife was abundant, though most of it seemed to consist of the very tame endemic San Benito Sparrows, but also some Horned Larks. Along the coast we watched Northern Elephant Seals that lounged lazily along the surf line, snorted and occasionally flicked gravel over themselves to rid them of the irritating kelp flies and to keep themselves cool.

Whilst the trekkers stopped for lunch at the scenic outlook at the derelict lighthouse and scanned the oceans for whales, the strollers ate their packed lunches watched over by nesting Ospreys and Peregrine Falcons on the coast. Finally, after some searching we managed to pick out a few Guadalupe Fur Seals among the much more numerous Elephant Seals.

By 2.30pm we were all back aboard the boat and were soon continuing our journey south to Laguna San Ignacio, accompanied by the ever-present Black-vented Shearwaters and Cassin's Auklets, but before long some sharp eyes among our crew spotted some blows ahead on the horizon and as we approached these proved to be our first close Humpback Whales of the trip. As we were watching these leviathans, a large group of Long-beaked Common Dolphins approached with perhaps 250 animals in the group and some of these made directly for the Searcher so they could bow ride. Finally, we had to tear ourselves away from this spectacle and continue our journey south as darkness fell with a new adventure awaiting us tomorrow.

## Day 5

**Monday 12th March**

### San Ignacio

After a peaceful night of travel, we approached the entrance to San Ignacio Lagoon. The birders were on deck soon after breakfast when a small group of Surf Scoters flashed by the boat, but it was difficult to ignore the sheer number of blows ahead of us as we neared the entrance to the lagoon, in which a recent survey had estimated there were 177 Grey Whales. Art called us down into the salon where he explained the itinerary and routine over the next two days we were to spend in the lagoon. The crew carefully manoeuvred us slowly over the shallow sandbar into the lagoon and we slowly manoeuvred our way towards the heart of the observation area in the lagoon. Gray Whales surfaced and fluked close to the boat as we motored slowly to our anchorage.

We were quickly ushered to the pangas for our first close-up introduction to the whales. The local panga drivers skilfully manoeuvred into position so we could get the best look at some of the whales, allowing for some sensational observation and close interactions for everyone in the group, both with solitary animals as well as cow-calf pairs. During the course of our day we enjoyed two 90-minute panga trips before lunch and one extended trip after, and by the end of the day had observed whales fluking, breaching and spy-hopping, and everyone had managed to actually touch a Grey Whale. Our time on the water also provided us with some nice views of Bottlenose Dolphin, many Royal Terns and both Great Northern (Common Loon) and Pacific (Pacific Loon) Divers. Out near the entrance to the lagoon, a bunch of Pomarine Skuas were loitering, ready to mug any passing terns and rob them of their fish. During lulls in the whale watching, the keen Larophiles in our group (Rachael, Linda and Sally) were able to hone their gull identification skills on the California Gulls and occasional Heerman's Gulls that approached the pangas. On the shore we noted a Reddish Egret whilst White Ibis and Long-billed Curlew flew over.

After dinner we enjoyed a 'lights out' on the rear deck of the boat where, under a cloudless sky, we spent half an hour or so enjoying a spectacular view of the stars and soaking up the quiet of the lagoon - quiet except for the magical sounds of whales exhaling around us.

## Day 6

Tuesday 13th March

### San Ignacio and heading south

We started our day with an early morning trip into the mangroves on the edge of the lagoon, whilst some went out to enjoy the whales once more. Once in the sheltered channels of the mangroves, we had a great time spotting birds such as Great Blue Heron, Little Blue Heron, Reddish Egret, Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Night Herons and Great and Snowy Egrets. In addition, we enjoyed some close views of Marbled Godwit, Willet, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Curlew, and more White Ibis. Some Mangrove Warblers were singing but we only got brief views of them, and we didn't see at all the Clapper Rails that were grunting away, hidden in the mangrove roots. A nice surprise was the appearance of a female Northern Harrier hunting over the scrub at the back of the mangroves.

Meanwhile, for those that wanted it, we managed to fit in four more panga sessions with the Grey Whales out on the lagoon. Time and again, we were treated to more incredible experiences with the friendly whales including one young female that continually demanded attention from those on the panga, surfacing to make eye contact and allowing everyone on the boat to pet her. Another friendly whale came over to the panga straight after breaching close-by and was so demanding of attention that when it came to time to head back to the Searcher, she chased the boat wanting more! The whole experience proved to be so emotional that some participants were moved to tears (of joy!).

Our last session of the day provided some people with the opportunity to visit one of the lagoons beautiful, pristine beaches, where some of the group spent time with Rob finding out about the wonderful array of turtle and whale bones, seashells and other fascinating strandline artefacts, whilst Duncan and Roger headed inland on foot towards the back of the mangroves to do some more birding. Some good views were obtained of a similar selection of birds to the mangrove cruise with the addition of a noisy Greater Yellowlegs, but the big surprise was the discovery of a lonesome Coyote mooching around out on a sand bank.

It was with great reluctance that we eventually said farewell to our panga drivers and San Ignacio's wonderful whales, and by 5pm we had raised anchor and were underway, heading out of the lagoon, Captain Art carefully negotiating the sand bar at the entrance, whilst the rest of us enjoyed the abundant birdlife and said a final farewell to the Grey Whales that were blowing all around us. We enjoyed dinner out on the Pacific Ocean once more as the Searcher continued its journey southwards and many retired early to bed, no doubt exhausted by the emotionally exhilarating experiences we had all shared.

## Day 7

Wednesday 14th March

### Magdalena Bay

It was another early start for many with a beautiful sunrise to greet us as we continued our odyssey down the Pacific coast of the Baja peninsula. We awoke within sight of the northern barrier island at the entrance to Bahia Magdalena. With a full day of travel ahead of us, we settled in for the duration and readied ourselves for our wildlife vigil. The light breeze and following swell made for reasonably comfortable conditions too and many watched from the bench in front of the pilot house or relaxed in the sun on the back deck of the boat.

The birders in the group soon noticed that we were encountering some different species as we continued south with both Black and Least Storm-petrels added to our growing list, along with many Pink-footed Shearwaters among the smaller Black-vented Shearwaters, and a few Craveri's Murrelets. A few Green Turtles were also noticed on the surface as the boat sped onwards.

It wasn't long before we spotted our first whale activity of the day so Art changed course slightly to go and look at a Humpback Whale that was continually breaching in the distance. As we approached the whale continued to put on a great show and sometimes it seemed the whole whale was clearing the surface of the water. Suddenly five pretty Sabine's Gulls, resplendent in their summer plumage, put in an appearance and it was soon clear that they were engaged in a fascinating feeding association with the whale. Every time the whale breached, the gulls fluttered over the splash zone picking food items off the surface of the water – perhaps small items of plankton disturbed or killed by the giant whale crashing back into the ocean.

Soon after leaving this Humpback Whale and continuing our southward journey, we encountered a large pod of Long-beaked Common Dolphins mixed in with some California Sea Lions, whilst above them, attracted by the feeding frenzy, wheeled a huge flock of seabirds which included Magnificent Frigatebirds, Black-vented, Pink-footed and Sooty Shearwaters, Masked and Brown Boobies, Sabine's and Western Gulls, Royal Terns and a single Pomarine Skua. Later scrutiny of some photographs taken during this frenzy revealed that an immature Red-footed Booby had also joined the throng. We ran with the giant pod of dolphins, which might have numbered a couple of thousand animals in total, until captain Art decided that we had to turn south again to try to keep up with our schedule.

But it wasn't long before another Humpback Whale impeded our progress, and this one turned out to be a real show-off, displaying the full range of Humpback behaviour in one animal: continually breaching, fin slapping, tail slapping, head lunging, and fluking. After enjoying its complete repertoire for ages, the whale seemed to sign off by waving its tail fluke in the air as if to tell us it was time to go. As we left it, the Naturetrekers broke into a spontaneous round of applause and cheering to show our appreciation for the entertainment!

We continued our sojourn south for the rest of the day, interspersing our journey with periods of relaxing, sunbathing, snacking, whale watching and birding. As the day drew to a close a final Brown Booby circled the boat and we settled down to enjoy another wonderful dinner and another interesting presentation from our resident marine mammal expert Rob.

## Day 8

Thursday 15th March

### Gorda Banks – Los Frailes

We rounded the southernmost tip of the Baja peninsula ('Lands End') in the early hours of the morning and were greeted into the Sea of Cortez by our first Red-billed Tropicbird of the trip. We spent the whole morning whale watching in the area known as the Gorda Banks. Some of us thought Gorda Banks was England's World Cup winning goalkeeper, but it turns out it's actually a hotspot for Humpback Whales. There was little wind, save a very light breeze that served to relieve us from the searing temperatures of the tropical sun, and the sea conditions were very calm. We spotted numerous Humpback Whales in the area during the course of the morning but saved our advances for the whales that looked to be doing something particularly interesting. Some we watched as they relaxed at the surface in the clear water whilst others as they fluked repeatedly close to the bow of the boat. A few seabirds moved around us providing a distraction from the whales, including a number of pretty Bonaparte's Gulls, still in their non-breeding plumage, though they would soon be setting off for their breeding grounds in Canada. After some wonderful encounters with some very relaxed whales, we eventually broke free from the whale watching and headed towards Los Frailes and the Cabo Pulmo National Park, where we anchored up.

We intended to do some snorkelling for reef fish here, followed by a walk through the scrub at the back of the beach looking for some desert birds. However, unfortunately some local Park officials had other ideas and, despite Captain Art insisting that he had visited this site for over twenty years, we were refused permission to carry out our intended activities. So we had little choice but to carry on up the Gulf of California towards our next destination. Since tomorrow was an important day for us all with opportunities for swimming with Whale Sharks looking promising, we decided to anchor just a little way north of the National Park so that those contemplating swimming tomorrow could 'acclimatise' with the process of using their snorkelling gear and getting into and out of the skiffs easily. With this mission accomplished, we again headed out into the Sea of Cortez and were treated to some more spectacular action from a large school of Common Dolphins which seem to be involved in some kind of gymnastic competition.

Finally, with dusk falling we had another delicious dinner aboard the Searcher after which, whilst drifting in the Sea of Cortez, we watched all manner of sea creatures attracted to the lights on the boat, some of which were briefly caught up for closer examination in a bucket, before release back into the ocean. This way we got close looks at a Needlefish, a squid and a California Flying Fish, before later in the evening we motored northwards into the Sea of Cortez.

## Day 9

Friday 16th March

### La Paz Bay and Los Islotes

Favourable conditions resulted in a very quiet night of travel and an early morning arrival at our temporary anchorage in La Paz Bay. It was a beautiful morning. The ocean was calm, the water looked green with plankton but certainly clear enough to see the largest fish in the world, and there was considerable excitement as we got ourselves ready and waited for our local guides to arrive and take us out to see Whale Sharks. This is a new experience which has been added to the Searcher's itinerary since 2016.



The morning was an amazing experience for both the enthusiastic snorkelers and the observers that preferred to stay dry. We spent time in the company of several Whale Sharks and the local panga drivers carefully positioned the boats so that the snorkelers and observers both got excellent opportunities to see these incredible animals as they slowly cruised below the surface in search of their planktonic prey. The snorkelers quickly got into the routine of jumping off the panga into the water on a given signal and quickly positioning themselves so that they could spend several precious minutes swimming alongside these incredible beasts and in some cases get terrific underwater shots with submersible cameras. Katherine, who appeared to have the swimming capabilities of a fish herself, swam so far with one of the sharks that we thought she had decided to commence a migration with it! For observers on the other panga, it was a great chance to see and photograph these enormous fish as they cruised slowly past the boat.

We returned to the Searcher excited by our success and wonderfully unique experiences with the Whale Sharks. Once back on board we raised anchor and headed slowly out of La Paz Bay towards Los Islotes, but before we could get there another whale interrupted our progress. This time it turned out to be a Fin Whale and we could clearly see the white markings on the right lower jaw that is characteristic of this species.

After a steady cruise past the beautiful island of Isla Partida, we arrived at Los Islotes shortly after lunch. We enjoyed a skiff ride around the island which provided us with some close views of a California Sea Lion colony and the chance to watch Blue-footed Boobies displaying to each other high up on their rocky perches, as well as a couple of Brown Boobies at one end of the island. Some Brandt's Cormorants perched low down on the rocks allowed close scrutiny of their beautiful breeding plumage and blue facial skin, whilst a solitary Wandering Tattler nonchalantly poked around on the rocks between the sea lions.

After our skiff ride we had another opportunity to snorkel. We enjoyed nearly an hour in the water, searching the reef for colourful reef fishes, and a few of us were lucky enough to encounter some very playful sea lion pups under the water too.

As dusk fell, we enjoyed another delicious evening meal prepared by Mike and Gerry-Sue, but as the meal finished we were called outside by Rob who had found a Least Storm Petrel on the boat deck. We all marvelled at the size of this tiny sea bird that spends almost its entire life on the high seas, only returning to land briefly to nest in burrows on isolated islands. Shortly after this another petrel, this time a Black Storm Petrel, crash landed on the boat. Whilst this allowed us to briefly compare the size of this species to its smaller cousin, we realised that the boat's lights were probably disorientating the birds close to their nesting island. So we quickly released the petrels, switched off the boat's lights and moved away from Los Islotes, leaving its seabirds enveloped in darkness again.

As we headed northwards, Rob entertained us with an interesting talk about the history of 'Baja California' but as soon as he finished Aaron called us on deck because the sea was alive with bioluminescence. This phenomenon is created by a chemical reaction in a dinoflagellate, a constituent organism of the oceanic plankton, when it reacts to disturbance such as the bow wave of the boat or the movement of fish and other creatures in the sea. We hung over the bow of the boat marvelling at the almost neon light of the bioluminescence in the bow wave. But the real show was reserved for the few who stayed up long after most had retired to bed as the water around

the boat positively sparkled with bioluminescence as if the stars in the sky had fallen into the sea. What a magical end to a wonderful day.

## Day 10

**Saturday 17th March**

### Punta Colorado (Isla San Jose)

A new day dawned and everyone was up to watch the sun creep over the eastern horizon and illuminate the beautiful sandstone cliffs adjacent to our anchorage at Punta Colorado. As the sun rose, Magnificent Frigatebirds drifted across the cliff face and cast sinister looking shadows on the illuminated orange walls of the cliff. It was another amazing start to a beautiful Baja day.

After breakfast we set ashore to explore the beach and sandstone arroyo where we took the opportunity to have a closer look at fossils in the spectacular sandstone rock formations, and look for desert birds like Verdin, Phainopepla, Black-throated Sparrow and Costa's Hummingbird in the cactus scrub. But the biggest excitement came when Katherine found a male Xantu's Hummingbird in a tree by the arroyo. This 'hummer' is one of the few bird species that is endemic to the Baja Peninsula and is not always easy to find. In typical hummingbird fashion, it soon vanished before too many could get their binoculars focused on it. The warmer weather also meant that there were some nice reptiles active and some enjoyed good views of Western Whiptail, Side-blotched Lizard and Black-tailed Brush Lizard.

After our walk, some of us opted to go snorkelling in the bay from the skiffs and were rewarded with a variety of colourful reef fish, whilst a few 'hard core' birders decided to stick it out on the island searching for more desert birds.

After the morning's activities we enjoyed lunch as the Searcher left its anchorage and headed northwards, deeper into the Gulf of California. By now the wind had picked up quite a bit and the sea was quite choppy, making cetacean finding quite difficult. Nevertheless, our intrepid crew eventually spotted a couple of blows near the eastern coast of the peninsula so we went to investigate. To our surprise, the blows proved to be a female Grey Whale with her calf heading south. They were a long way from the southern tip of Baja California from whence they would be able to 'turn the corner' and head north to their summer feeding grounds in the Bering Sea. After following them for a little while we bade them farewell and wished them luck on the epic journey they were about to undertake.

We then travelled on to our anchorage for the night in a bay on the west side of Isla Santa Catalina to await what morning would bring.

## Day 11

**Sunday 18th March**

### Isla Santa Catalina

Today was going to be a special day. We awoke to find ourselves anchored next to a beautiful, pristine island covered in desert vegetation. Soon after breakfast we went ashore and hiked up an arroyo on the west side of the island which provided an opportunity to marvel at the island's unique flora, dominated by impressive Elephant

Cardon and Wavy Barrel cacti. Rob also managed to find a nice example of the Santa Catalina 'rattleless' Rattlesnake and everyone patiently waited in a line to photograph it. Birding along the arroyo resulted in sightings of Ash-throated Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Verdin, both Gila and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, Northern Cardinals and White-winged Doves, whilst a Peregrine and a Red-tailed Hawk soared overhead.

Returning to the Searcher mid-morning some of us opted to go snorkelling near Elephant Rock whilst others went on a cruise along the coast in the skiffs. The cruisers had good views of White-throated Swifts, Spotted Sandpiper, thirteen Black-necked Grebes and five Ospreys, including a displaying bird high up above the island. Meanwhile the snorkelers enjoyed underwater views of the grebes diving as well as many interesting reef fish.

Just before lunch, the anchor was raised and the Searcher set off westwards looking for whales. Before too long a huge Blue Whale was located just west of Isla Montserrat. We spent some time with this whale as it surfaced at regular intervals enabling us to get many photographs. In the intervals between the whale surfacing, it was noticeable that this area was particularly rich in seabirds with many birds congregating on and around the nearby Roca Blanca or heading further north to breed. At least two hundred adult Heermann's Gulls streamed past the vessel (most of the world's population breed on just one island in the Sea of Cortez); around a thousand Brown Pelicans flew past or loitered on the nearby rocks; and close to a hundred noisy Elegant Terns bickered as they chase each other excitedly ahead of the approaching breeding season. In contrast to these expected birds, a lone breeding plumaged Laughing Gull that pitched alongside the boat was a surprise as this is largely a bird of the Eastern Seaboard. Other birds of interest included a migrating Pomarine Skua and a close pass by a diminutive Least Storm Petrel. However, the highlight of the afternoon's observations was undoubtedly an obliging cow/calf pair of Blue Whales that we were able to follow closely and observe together for an extended period of time. For many on the Searcher, today was their first experience of the planet's largest living mammal and no-one could possibly be disappointed with our experience.

Later that evening, we anchored in the lee of Isla Montserrat and enjoyed a barbeque dinner on deck after which, at 10.30pm, the Searcher raised its anchor and we made our way south again. Most people soon retired to bed after another exciting day of experiences to savour. But with a new moon in the sky making the night inky black, and with a calm sea ahead of us, a few intrepid souls stayed on deck on the off chance that one of the most extraordinary spectacles in the natural world might unfold. As the boat ploughed on south, it became clear that there was some bioluminescence in the sea as the bow wave of the Searcher was glowing with an eerie, almost neon, light. It couldn't happen, could it? Suddenly, a tube of molten water appeared to starboard and shot towards the Searcher like a golden torpedo. A dolphin in the bioluminescence! The animal joined the boat and rode the bow wave as we hung over the bow, awestruck at the spectacle of a 'diamond encrusted ghost dolphin', perfectly outlined with shimmering luminescence below us. Soon more dolphins joined the fun and as each glistening torpedo sped towards us shouts of "incoming" went up, followed by whoops of delight as the spectacle unfolded. Eventually eight glowing dolphins lined up abreast guiding the Searcher through the dark night, one of them jumping clear of the water and crashing back in to the sea in an explosion of fragmented light which elicited further howls of joy on deck. Finally, as ever, the dolphins tired of the game and left us with only the darkness of the night to contemplate. And so it was that at about 1.30am, exhausted by the excitement and

privilege of watching one of the most rarely seen and thrilling wildlife spectacles on the planet, we dragged ourselves off to our cabins to try to get some sleep.

## Day 12

## Monday 19th March

When Mike called us to breakfast at 7am we had already dropped anchor in the idyllic, turquoise, caldera on Isla San Francisco, where we all went ashore for a few hours to explore the island's wonderful, wind-pruned cactus gardens, its incredible geology and spectacular scenery. Some of the group opted to hike up to the highest point on the island to take in the breathtaking views and get some photographs of the beautiful bay. The remainder searched for birds along the boulder beaches where we found Spotted Sandpiper and Reddish Egret and watched a Yellow-legged Gull swallow a puffer fish whole. A pair of Ospreys were perching on their nest on a nearby stack. Exploring a small patch of scrub at the back of the beach proved productive with a smart Loggerhead Shrike, and a male Costa's Hummingbird perching conspicuously on some bare twigs.

The opportunity to snorkel the reef along the edge of the beautiful caldera provided a chance to cool off and to enjoy views of vast schools of Spot-tailed Grunt and other colourful reef fishes. The conditions were also clear enough to get some nice views of the Cortez Garden Eels too (a very localised species within the Gulf of California).

By midday it was time to leave our beautiful anchorage, so we raised anchor and headed out for the last time in search of marine mammals as we slowly made our way southwards, back towards Cabo. As we left the bay a lone Humpback Whale bade us farewell with a slap of his tail. But as we made our way out into the Sea of Cortez for the final time it became obvious that the swell and wind conditions were not conducive to whale watching, so we headed south towards Cabo San Lucas. We enjoyed our final meal on the boat together as another beautiful sunset decorated the Baja skyline, and later we shared memories and personal highlights from our tour together.

## Day 13

## Tuesday 20th March

At last the day dawned when we would have to disembark the Searcher and as she pulled into harbour at Cabo San Lucas and the crew busily set about refuelling for their long journey back to San Diego, we relaxed and readied our things as we waited to disembark. We said our final farewells to the crew and boarded our taxis that transported us to the nearby town of San Jose del Cabo. Some of us then chose to relax in this pleasant tourist town doing some souvenir shopping or enjoying lunch at a local restaurant. The rest of us, determined not to miss any opportunity to enjoy Baja wildlife, walked the short distance to the river and followed the boardwalk towards the sea. Colourful but noisy Hooded Orioles were common in riverside trees, as were White-winged and Common Ground Doves. Out on the river, Northern Rough-winged Swallows were hawking insects and a flock of White-faced Ibises probed for food in the mud whilst a Green Heron skulked in some bushes. A juvenile Cooper's Hawk appeared out of nowhere, no doubt hunting the migrant warblers that were feeding in the riverside scrub which included Audubon's, Orange-crowned, Yellow, Wilson's, Common Yellowthroat and an unexpected Palm Warbler. A grove of palm trees provided some uncharacteristic habitat for some stonking Cactus Wrens and as the river turned estuarine, the final species to make it on to the trip bird list was a small flock of Least Sandpipers roosting at the water's edge.

Finally, it was time to put away our binoculars and cameras and take the short taxi ride to the airport where those catching flights to different destinations bade a fond farewell. Those heading back to the UK had a seamless transfer in San Diego and soon our British Airways Boeing 747 was winging its way across the desert, London bound.

## Day 14

Wednesday 21st March

Today we completed our journey back to the UK, where another Naturetrek adventure came to an end. Had we really just spent two weeks stroking Grey Whales, swimming with Whale Sharks and watching bioluminescent dolphins, or was it all just a wonderful dream?

## Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) to sign up.

## Naturetrek Facebook

We are delighted to launch the Naturetrek Facebook page so that participants of Naturetrek tours can remain in touch after the holiday and share photos, comments and future travel plans.

Setting up a personal profile at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) is quick, free and easy. The [Naturetrek Facebook page](#) is now live; do please pay us a visit!



Grey Whale by Debbie Pain

## Species Lists:

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted; H=heard)

	Common name	Scientific name	March											
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	Brant Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	6		2									
2	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	20											
3	Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>	4											
4	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>												8
5	American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	50											
6	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓											
7	Blue-winged Teal	<i>Anas discors</i>	2											2
8	Cinnamon Teal	<i>Anas cyanoptera</i>												
9	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	20											
10	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>												
11	Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas carolinensis</i>	10											
12	Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>		3	3	1								
13	Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	3											
14	Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	6											
15	Pacific Diver (Pacific Loon)	<i>Gavia pacifica</i>				2	6							
16	Great Northern Diver (Common Loon)	<i>Gavia immer</i>	1			1	2							
17	Least Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma microsoma</i>						2	3	4	1	1	1	
18	Black Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma melania</i>						100+	10	2	5	2	3	
19	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		100	3	2		4						
20	Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>						20						
21	Pink-footed Shearwater	<i>Ardenna creatopus</i>						100	1					
22	Black-vented Shearwater	<i>Puffinus opisthomelas</i>		200	✓	15		100	10		1	1	1	
23	Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	2											1
24	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	2								2	13	2	
25	Western Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>	13				✓							
26	Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>						1						

	Common name	Scientific name	March											
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
27	American White Ibis	<i>Eudocimus albus</i>				2	6							1
28	White-faced Ibis	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>												25
29	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	3	1			4							3
30	Yellow-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>					6							
31	Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>												1
32	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	3				2			1		1		1
33	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	2				2							
34	Reddish Egret	<i>Egretta rufescens</i>				1	5						1	1
35	Tricolored Heron	<i>Egretta tricolor</i>					3							
36	Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	1				8							
37	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	40				5							10
38	American White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>	6				1							
39	Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	4	4	6	✓	✓	6	20	40	30	1000	✓	3
40	Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>						50	20	100		25	2	2
41	Blue-footed Booby	<i>Sula nebouxii</i>								20		1		
42	Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>						4		1				
43	Red-footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>						1						
44	Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>						4	2	4				
45	Brandt's Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax penicillatus</i>		100	2				5	10	15	7		
46	Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	6	1	2	5	✓					4	2	4
47	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>							7	15	30	6	8	10
48	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	1		8	1	1				1	5	2	2
49	Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	1											1
50	Northern Harrier	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>					1							
51	Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	2		1						1	2		
52	Clapper Rail	<i>Rallus crepitans</i>					H							
53	Common Gallinule	<i>Gallinula galeata</i>	4											10
54	American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>	10											50
55	Black Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus bachmani</i>		3										
56	American Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>			2						2			

	Common name	Scientific name	March											
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
57	Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	6											
58	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	2											
59	Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	50											
60	Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	3											
61	Short-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus griseus</i>					1							
62	Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i>	10				12							
63	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	1											
64	Long-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>	2			2	10							
65	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>					1							
66	Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>					1							
67	Wandering Tattler	<i>Tringa incana</i>								1				
68	Willet	<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>	20				30							
69	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	1									1	2	2
70	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>				50	12							
71	Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i>	20				30							
72	Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>												30
73	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	10											
74	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>		100										
75	Red Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>		100			150		20				2	
76	Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>					50	30		6		5	1	
77	Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus philadelphia</i>		1					50					1
78	Laughing Gull	<i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>										1		
79	Heermann's Gull	<i>Larus heermanni</i>	2		1	10	10	2			3	200		
80	Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	20						10	10				
81	California Gull	<i>Larus californicus</i>	70	20		50	✓	10				1	8	
82	Western Gull	<i>Larus occidentalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
83	Yellow-footed Gull	<i>Larus livens</i>								20	30	50	10	
84	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>		2										
85	Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>		✓		✓			✓		✓	□	✓	
86	Elegant Tern	<i>Thalasseus elegans</i>				✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	



	Common name	Scientific name	March											
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
87	Forster's Tern	<i>Sterna forsteri</i>	1											
88	Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>				15	4	2				1		
89	Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>				1								
90	Scripps's Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus scrippsi</i>		4										
91	Craveri's Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus craveri</i>						2						
92	Murrelet sp.	<i>Synthliboramphus sp.</i>		50										
93	Cassin's Auklet	<i>Ptychoramphus aleuticus</i>		10	6	5		2						
94	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓											
95	Eurasian Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	10		2									
96	Common Ground Dove	<i>Columbina passerina</i>												6
97	Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	6		1									2
98	White-winged Dove	<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>										5		20
99	White-throated Swift	<i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>										4		
100	Xantus's Hummingbird	<i>Basilinna xantusii</i>									1			
101	Anna's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte anna</i>	10											
102	Costa's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte costae</i>									2		1	1
103	Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megasceryle alcyon</i>	1				1					4		10
104	Gila Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes uropygialis</i>												
105	Nuttall's Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates nuttallii</i>	2								1	4		1
106	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates scalaris</i>												
107	American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>			1									
108	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>			1									
109	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		2	2							1	1	1
110	Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	1											
111	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax difficilis</i>										1		
112	Cassin's Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus vociferans</i>	2											
113	Ash-throated Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>									4	10		
114	Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>											1	
115	Grey Vireo	<i>Vireo vicinior</i>									2			
116	California Scrub Jay	<i>Aphelocoma californica</i>	1											

	Common name	Scientific name	March											
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
117	American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	✓	□	✓									
118	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	2		6						2	3	2	
119	Phainopepla	<i>Phainopepla nitens</i>									6			
120	Oak Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus inornatus</i>	H											
121	Verdin	<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>									10	10	4	
122	Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>			40									
123	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>												4
124	American Bushtit	<i>Psaltiriparus minimus</i>	2											
125	Wrentit	<i>Chamaea fasciata</i>	1											
126	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus calendula</i>									1			
127	Cactus Wren	<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>												3
128	Blue-grey Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila caerulea</i>												1
129	California Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila californica</i>									6	2		
130	Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	2		1							1		1
131	California Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma redivivum</i>	1											
132	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓											
133	Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>	2											
134	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓		2									
135	House Finch	<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>	20								5	2	2	10
136	Orange-crowned Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis celata</i>	1											1
137	Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>												2
138	American Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga aestiva</i>												1
139	Mangrove Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>				6								
140	Palm Warbler	<i>Setophaga palmarum</i>												1
141	Audubon's Warbler	<i>Setophaga auduboni</i>	✓											✓
142	Wilson's Warbler	<i>Cardellina pusilla</i>												2
143	Hooded Oriole	<i>Icterus cucullatus</i>												20
144	Brewer's Blackbird	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>	1											✓
145	Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	10											✓
146	Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	1											

	Common name	Scientific name	March											
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
147	White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	2											
148	Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>												2
149	San Benitos Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis sanctorum</i>			✓									
150	Black-throated Sparrow	<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>									6	20	8	
151	California Towhee	<i>Melospiza crissalis</i>	2											
152	Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>									2	6		

## Mammals

1	Grey Whale	<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>		5		50	50				2			
2	Blue Whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>										3		
3	Fin Whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>			2					1				
4	Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>		5	3			6+	50+				1	
5	Cuvier's Beaked Whale	<i>Ziphius cavirostris</i>		3	3									
6	Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>				30	30		50	50	20	1	6	
7	Long-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus capensis</i>			250			####	####					
8	Short-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>	□	200										
9	Pacific White-sided Dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus obliquidens</i>		20										
10	Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		25										
11	California Sealion	<i>Zalophus californianus</i>	1	55		1		30	1	200	1	1		
12	Northern Elephant Seal	<i>Mirounga angustirostris</i>		4	####									
13	Guadalupe Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus townsendi</i>		1	7									
14	California Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus beecheyi</i>	10											
15	Botta's Pocket Gopher	<i>Thomomys bottae</i>	1											
16	Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>					1							

## Reptiles & Amphibians

1	Black-tailed Brush Lizard	<i>Urosaurus nigricaudus</i>									4			
2	Santa Catalina 'rattleless' Rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus catalinensis</i>										1		
4	Common Chuckwalla	<i>Sauromalus ater</i>										1		

	Common name	Scientific name	March											
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
5	Green Seaturtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>						3		1				
6	Red-eared Terrapin	<i>Trachemys scripta</i>	10											
7	Santa Catalina Side-blotched Lizard	<i>Uta squamata</i>										4		
8	Santa Catalina Spiny Lizard	<i>Sceloporus lineatulus</i>		□								3		
9	Common Side-blotched Lizard	<i>Uta stansburiana</i>		✓							✓			
10	Western Skink	<i>Eumeces skiltonianus</i>												
11	Western Whip Tail	<i>Cnemidophorus sp.</i>									1			

## Fish

1	Balloonfish	<i>Diodon holocanthus</i>									✓	✓		
2	Barber Fish	<i>Johnrandallia nigriristris</i>								✓	✓	✓		
3	Bicolor Parrotfish	<i>Cetoscarus bicolor</i>								✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Blue and Gold Snapper	<i>Lutjanus viridus</i>									✓		✓	
5	Blue Shark	<i>Prionace glauca</i>		1										
6	Burrito Grunt	<i>Anisotremus interruptus</i>									✓			
7	California Flying Fish	<i>Cypselurus californicus</i>							✓	✓	✓			
8	Coral Hawkfish	<i>Cirrhichthys oxycephalus</i>									✓	✓		
9	Cortez Chub	<i>Kyphosuselegans</i>								✓	□	✓	✓	
10	Cortez Damselfish	<i>Eupomacentrus rectifraenum</i>								✓	✓	✓	✓	
11	Cortez Garden Eel	<i>Heteroconger digueti</i>								□	□	□	✓	
12	Cortez Rainbow Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma lucasanum</i>								✓	✓	✓	✓	
13	Finescaled Triggerfish	<i>Balistes polylepis</i>								✓	✓			
14	Flag Cabrilla	<i>Epinephelus labriformis</i>									✓	✓		
15	Giant Damselfish	<i>Microspathadon dorsalis</i>								✓	✓	✓	✓	
16	Giant Hawkfish	<i>Cirrhitidae cirrhitus</i>									✓	✓		
17	Grey-barred Grunt	<i>Conodon nobilis</i>									✓	✓		
18	Guineafowl Puffer	<i>Arothron meleagris</i>									□	✓		
19	King Angelfish	<i>Holocanthus passer</i>								✓	✓	✓	✓	
20	Leopard Grouper	<i>Mycteroperca rosacea</i>								✓	✓	✓		
21	Mahi mahi (Dorado)	<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>										2		

	Common name	Scientific name	March											
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
22	Mexican Goatfish	<i>Mulloidichthys dentatus</i>									✓			
23	Mexican Hogfish	<i>Bodianus diplotaenia</i>									✓	✓	✓	
24	Moorish Idol	<i>Zanclus canescens</i>								✓	□	✓	✓	
25	Needlefish	<i>Strongylura exilis</i>							1					
26	Orange-sided Triggerfish	<i>Sufflamen verres</i>							✓		✓	✓		
27	Pacific Boxfish	<i>Ostracion meleagris</i>												
28	Panamic Fanged Blenny	<i>Ophioblennius steindachneri</i>										✓		
29	Panamic Sergeant Major	<i>Abuldefduf troschelii</i>								✓	✓	✓	✓	
30	Reef Cornetfish	<i>Fistularia commersonii</i>									✓	✓	✓	
31	Remora (Suckerfish)	<i>Remora remora</i>						✓	✓					
32	Scissortail Damselfish	<i>Chromis atrilobata</i>								✓			✓	
33	Scrawled Filefish	<i>Aluterus scriptus</i>									✓			
34	Smooth-tailed Mobula	<i>Mobula thurstoni</i>							✓	✓	✓			
35	Spotted Sharp-nosed Puffer	<i>Canthigaster solandri</i>									✓			
36	Spottail Grunt	<i>Haemulon maculicauda</i>									□		✓	
37	Striped Marlin	<i>Tetrapturus audax</i>					2							
38	Tinsel Squirrelfish	<i>Neoniphon suborbitalis</i>										✓		
39	Yellowtail Surgeonfish	<i>Prionurus punctatus</i>							✓	✓	✓			
40	Whale Shark	<i>Rhincodon typus</i>								7				

## Other Taxa

1	Tarantula Hawk	<i>Pompilidae pepsinae</i>									✓			
2	Sally Lightfoot Crab	<i>Grapsus grapsus</i>								✓	✓	✓		