

# Baja California & Sea of Cortez

Naturetrek Tour Report

21 February – 5 March 2020

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Breaching Humpback Whale



Red-billed Tropicbird



Northern Elephant Seal



Fluke of Sperm Whale

Report and images by Peter Dunn



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Tour participants: Peter Dunn (leader), Marc Webber (ships naturalist) with 24 Naturetrek Clients  
Searcher Crew: Captain Mike, Buzz, Ryan, Armando and Luis. Cooks: Dan & Mike

## Summary

There are few, if any, whale watching destinations that can rival Mexico's Baja California! Naturetrek's small-ship cruises in February and March – on board 'Searcher' – offer the opportunity to enjoy a breathtaking array of whale, dolphin and seal species, from huge lunging Blue Whales to diminutive Guadalupe Fur Seals. Other highlights included 'eye-to-eye' encounters with Grey Whales, thousands of dolphins in Magdalena Bay, and several other whale species. Northern Elephant Seal, turtles, sea lions and a variety of birds make up a fascinating supporting cast, while the endless blue skies and warm weather was a welcome relief from our cold, grey British winters. Add to this a professional crew on the Searcher, which made this tour such a success.

## Day 1

### Friday 21st February

### London to San Diego

Twenty of the group boarded the plane to San Diego but a technical issue delayed our departure somewhat. The flight passed over Iceland and Greenland curving down over Canada and the United States, eventually landing at San Diego where the milder temperature was most welcome after those back home. After the usual custom and immigration checks, we gathered outside and were taken in groups to the Ramada Hotel where check in was quick. Due to the delays and late arrival most retired to bed pending our first full day in America, with only few strolling across to the marina bars for a nightcap.

## Day 2

### Saturday 22nd February

### San Diego area and leaving

A cloudy start to the day and a sudden downpour warned us of things to come. After breakfast we sorted our bags into storage and gathered to meet David and Jim from the local Audubon Bird Society for our usual birding day. We set off walking with light rain falling and made use of what available shelter there was to view the marina and surrounding gardens. A fine looking Double-crested Cormorant with its summer head plumes was first, with both Townsend's and Orange-crowned Warblers seen feeding in the rain. Escaped populations of Lilac-crowned Amazon parrots flew around and we watched three Anna's Hummingbirds battle for territory before we abandoned the walk and returned to the hotel because of heavy rain.

We loaded up onto the coach and headed out to Lindo Lake where the rain was easing and finally stopped. Here we found many new species including bright American duck such as Wood Duck, Ring-necked Duck and a Bufflehead amongst more familiar Northern Shoveler and Gadwall. A party of huge American White Pelicans sat about on a peninsula with a variety of gulls and geese with Tricoloured and Red-winged Blackbirds feeding around them. In the trees and vegetation Black Phoebe, Audubon Warblers and Ruby-crowned Kinglet fed on insects whilst overhead Violet-green and Northern Rough-winged Swallows did the same. The only mammal here were shy California Ground Squirrels scurrying from vegetation and rocks.

With the day pushing on, we re-boarded the coach and headed inland into the chaparral country at the Audubon owned Silverwood Preserve. Here we met resident manager Phil who explained the history and a bit of biology

of the site while we watched House Finches, White-breasted Nuthatch and a nice roosting Western Screech Owl. We had our picnic lunch here and watched other species coming to the feeders. Both Spotted and California Towhees, and California Quail were added, and we hunted down a singing California Thrasher on the hillside. Just as we were about to leave the heavens opened for one last time and produced some hail so many took shelter before returning to the coach. We thanked Phil and headed back down to the coast where it was now sunny and warm.

We made our final stop along the San Diego river estuary where waders and herons were abundant. We added Hudsonian Whimbrel (newly split from the European Whimbrel), Long-billed Curlew and Marbled Godwit amongst other waders. Say's Phoebe and Buff-bellied Pipits feed around the grass fields whilst out in the estuary Great and Little Blue Herons fed alongside the scarcer Reddish Egret. The usual Osprey nest had two attending adults and finally Black Brant and Brown Pelicans were identified amongst other wildfowl.

Unfortunately, the best weather of the day had set in just as we needed to head back to the hotel to start moving bags across the road to The Searcher. Here we met Celia and her ground crew who settled us into our 'staterooms' as they like to call them, before we headed back to shore for meals and a final look round.

At 8pm all the group, including those independent travellers who had arrived today, met up in the 'lounge' and we all had a welcome, orientation and safety briefing from the owner Art and were introduced to captain Mike and his crew, Buzz, Ryan, Armando and cooks Dan and Mike and naturalist Marc.

We cast off just after 9pm and slowly sailed out of the harbour, with the lights of downtown San Diego in the background. We slowed down at some bait pens as we left, to see (and hear) our first California Sea Lions, who were accompanied by herons, egrets and Brandt's Cormorants all looking for an easy meal. After this, we headed out into the Pacific Ocean where we retired to our cosy rooms for our first night aboard.

## Day 3

Sunday 23rd February

### Ensenada and the Pacific Ocean.

The engines stopped in the early hours of the morning, which was the indication that we were at the Mexican port of Ensenada, where custom official boarded the boat to accept our entry into Mexico and give us our entry visas. We were also joined by Luis who was our Mexican guide and forth crew member, for our visit to the protected zones. This all occurred while many were still asleep and was one of the best entries into a foreign country many had experienced! An Osprey on an old sailboat attracted the attention of photographers and flocks of Surf Scoter were joined by a Long-tailed Duck as we left the harbour.

After breakfast we arrived at Todos Santos, an Island for nesting birds and added Peregrine, Black Oystercatcher and Pelagic Cormorant to our bird list, while mammal interest came in the form of three pinnipeds, Harbour Seal, California Sea Lion and some huge Northern Elephants Seals hauled out on the small beach.

The rest of the day was spent steadily sailing south pausing for wildlife sightings such as a fast-moving pod of Long-beaked Common Dolphin that briefly visited the boat and a number of Grey Whales all starting their migration back north to feed. For the birders, there were increasing numbers of Black-vented Shearwater and initial sightings of both Laysan and Black-footed Albatross before lunch.

The sea was quite active in the afternoon and this gave us more excellent sightings of Laysan and Black-footed Albatross (six of the latter together at one point) and brief pod of Short-beaked Common Dolphin, our first Humpbacks and a few Guadalupe Murrelets.

We finished the day with a healthy beef stew prepared by Dan and Mike followed by run down of the next days activities and a lecture on pinniped given by Marc, after which Peter completed the checklist for those who required it. Most had headed to bed by 9pm after a varied and exciting first full day on the Searcher.

## Day 4

Monday 24th February

### San Benitos Islands

A better night's sleep for everyone as we got used to the movement and noise of the boat and as the day dawned we were approaching the San Benitos Islands. After breakfast we were to land on the large western island.

This was our first skiff landing, so Mike talked us through the procedure and soon we were all safely off and on shore. Marc, Peter and local guide Luis accompanied the group along the flatter section, visiting the Northern Elephant Seal colony. There were many weaners with their mother and some large bulls, eyeing each other up across the shingle beach. A few bulls were still vying for position around the females with pups and we saw a fight and several chases where subordinate males were driven off. Also, one mating was witnessed. We constantly saw the endemic Savannah Sparrow race, only found on the island and also saw scurrying endemic Side-blotched Lizards. As the day warmed up, Luis took five over the top of the island to the lighthouse and finishing with a circular walk, where they saw Horned Larks, whilst the lower group with Peter and Marc added a first-winter Glaucous-winged Gull and American Oystercatcher to the list.

A few special plants were noted including the endemic Mallow, a Cliff Spurge and Blue Dicks as well as the evil Cholla or 'jumping cactus' which 'spiked' a few people.

At the far end of the flat area near the cliffs, we found the colony of Guadalupe Fur Seals in the rocks, whilst overhead, Osprey, Northern Raven, Red-tailed Hawk and Peregrine grace the sky

Between 1pm and 2pm the group were shuttled back to the Searcher where Dan & Mike had a nice afternoon snack of fried chicken waiting for us, before we started the journey south for the famous San Ignacio Lagoon. On our way the boat was visited twice by a Pacific White-sided Dolphin and we passed a number of Grey Whales, whilst all the time Black-vented Shearwaters and Cassin's Auklets were seen together with four Scripps's Murrelets.

As the sun went down, we dined on salad and pork tenderloin followed by cheesecake, after which Peter completed the days logs and Marc gave a presentation on Grey Whales and the Lagoon.

## Day 5

Tuesday 25th February

### San Ignacio Lagoon

As the day dawned, we were about 20 nautical miles from San Ignacio Lagoon sand bar and we started to see many Grey Whales and some Coastal Bottlenose Dolphins. The night before Marc had given us the bad news that we will only get one day in the lagoon because of a strong Santa Ana wind developing, so this morning Mike the captain had spoken with the chief of the panga drivers and we would get three or four extended sessions today while the wind was calmer.

Once we had anchored up, the pangas came over from the shore, we divided into three groups and had two extended sessions out in the Lagoon in the morning but only one in the afternoon as the strong wind had developed.

The morning sessions were just magical as the wind died towards mid-morning, and although only one boat had a friendly whale which one client manage to stroke, we all had extremely close views of cows and calves, and some single animals. We witnessed some spy hopping and also some breaching. To add to this, we saw a variety of birds including both Great Northern and Pacific Divers (Loons), both Arctic and Pomarine Skuas attacking the terns which were mainly all Royal and White Ibis and Tricoloured Herons crossing the lagoon.

Following a one-hour lunch we headed out in calmer weather for another session and this time some boats found some friendly whales and many got to touch one – a highlight of the holiday! We continued on watching whales and birds until the wind started to increase and the water chopped up, so reluctantly the decision was made to cancel the last session and we were to head out of the lagoon tonight and enjoy more time in Magdalena Bay or the Gulf of California in search of larger whales. As we left the lagoon, flocks of Clark's and Western Grebes sailed past the Searcher and many Coastal Bottlenose Dolphins came to the boat to bow-ride and wish us good journey!

We left the lagoon in rocky weather and headed south overnight.

## Day 6

Wednesday 26th February

### Magdalena Bay Area

The day dawned with calm seas after the brief roller-coaster ride during the night and we were to spend the whole day heading south past the entrances of this massive bay. Just as breakfast finished the first Humpback Whales appeared and we began as the day would go on in waiting and watching as they surfaced and tail fluked showing their own individual patterns. Offshore Bottlenose Dolphins came to ride our bow wave, with Grey Phalaropes being the most abundant bird out here and the sea was 'littered' with turtles, both Green and Hawksbill being identified.

After lunch there was an interesting interaction between at least four Humpbacks that appeared to be one female being jousting and sparred for by three males, with trumpet blows, and chins held out of the water. They moved back and forth in front of the Searcher. A little later while we watched further Humpbacks, Marc's attention was drawn to a huge towering blow and he suggested a Blue Whale. Sure enough, after a short wait we all had great views of this whale on a number of occasions which at one time raised its diagnostic angular flukes into the air.

If that was not enough, a 1st year Brown Booby flew around the boat and landed on the bow right in front of everyone, remaining there for nearly an hour, entertaining and being photographed by all. When it left two lucky clients saw it be joined by a Masked Booby before disappearing over the sea. While all this was going on an adult Laysan Albatross, flew around the boat and settled on the sea and a California Sea Lion porpoised in our wake – more photographic opportunities.

This had been a great day and people were settling down to reflect on the events when Peter spotted a tidal wave of dolphins approaching the Searcher and called everyone out. We then witnessed a fantastic display from a ‘super-pod’ of Long-beaked Common Dolphins whilst Marc spoke about their behaviour and biology. More great photographic opportunities and animals kept pace with the Searcher, jumping and head slapping, with a setting sun over the sea to complete the day.

That evening we enjoyed a dinner of Tuna and peach cobbler served up by Dan, Mike and Luis followed by catch up of the checklist for past two days with Peter. We were then briefed about the Whale Shark watching and enjoyed a talk on Humpback Whales from Marc.

## Day 7

Thursday 27th February

### ‘The Cape’ Gorda Bank and Punta Arenas

As the sun rose we were heading towards ‘The Cape’ and entering the channel for the Sea of Cortez. During breakfast we were informed of Humpback sightings and everyone headed out to the bow to witness some cow and calf behaviour, the adult ‘flipper slapping’ regularly. Throughout the morning we headed into the Sea of Cortez (Gulf of California) passing Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo, all the time stopping for Humpbacks. Marc spotted a young Guadalupe Fur Seal asleep at the surface in the classic fur seal “jug-handle” position with a fore flipper draped over the hind flippers. We circled the seal for a moment and noticed it had an injured right fore flipper. We also had our first storm-petrels, initially Black Storm Petrels and then a Least. Magnificent Frigatebirds were regular with a moored sardine boat having them all over it’s rigging. A group of Humpbacks were milling around and attracted our attention and while watching them three Bonaparte’s Gulls flew by followed a little later by an adult Sabine’s Gull.

The plan for the afternoon was to visit Los Frailes on the mainland where those doing Whale Shark swimming would test their snorkelling equipment and the others were to go for a walk in the dry arroyo. However, the weather, yet again had other ideas, with the wind rising and a heavy swell starting, so those plans were abandoned. We headed on another roller-coaster ride to Punta Arenas where the swimmers managed to test their equipment before dusk and dinner.

Dinner tonight was followed by Marc’s talk on California Sea Lions and the usual checklist.

## Day 8

Friday 28th February

### Los Animas, at sea and Puerto Gatos

During the night the weather for La Paz deteriorated and the agents who run the Whale Shark excursions, cancelled our scheduled trip so Mike the captain continued heading north aiming for San Jose island and Punta

Colorado. We did not make the point before the sun came up, so we had to be satisfied with a view from about five miles and when we did arrive, the swell was too much to land. Plan C, we headed out to a small deserted island called Las Ánimas where we discovered a new colony of 67 plus Guadalupe Fur Seals. This is a relatively new haul out site for these fur seals and it will be interesting to watch it grow over the coming years as the species continues to recover from near extinction by sealers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. We had a nice group of 30 California Sea Lions, most in a big raft in the water here as well. Also, we had our first good look at the endemic Yellow-footed Gull, Blue-footed and Brown Boobies and many Magnificent Frigatebirds and Brown Pelicans. After circling the island, we headed for the deep channel between the peninsular and Santa Cruz. Initially it seemed quiet with the occasional Bonaparte's Gull or Elegant Tern, then the crew spotted something in the distance and Peter saw the fluke of a Sperm Whale. What we found were somewhere between 15-20 logging Sperm Whales, some cows with calves and others adult groups of up to three. Some would also fluke-up and came close to the Searcher. We stayed with these animals for nearly an hour, during which time many pictures were taken, and we also found a young Grey Whale, a strange species to find in the Gulf.

We started to head north during lunch time (superb burgers) heading for our afternoon activities. During the journey a Red-billed Tropicbird passed the boat, seen by a few and Peter saw a different rorqual, which turned out to be a Bryde's Whale.

The afternoon activity was snorkelling near to Puerto Gatos followed by a walk ashore. The snorkelers had a great time identifying reef fish around the rocks whilst a few went ashore to wait on the land awaiting the snorkelers to join them for a walk. The early landers found a number of species just off the beach including Verdin, Rock Wren, Costa's Hummingbird and Say's Phoebe.

When the group all met on the beach and went for a walk more new bird species were added such as Gila Woodpecker, Blue-grey and California Gnatcatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Northern Cardinal, Green-tailed Towhee and best of all endemic Grey Thrashers, found by Chris. Mike also managed to photograph an American Grey Flycatcher for the log.

What had to be a little disappointing missing the Whale Sharks, had turned into a fantastic day of special sightings of whales and birds which were discussed over a nice 'duck' dinner followed by the checklist and Marc's talk.

## Day 9

## Saturday 29th February

### Baia Aqua Verde and the Monserrate Channel

As the day dawned this morning, we were approaching the mainland at Bahia Agua Verde for our morning activities. After breakfast we prepared ourselves for a landing to do a morning bird walk, followed for some, with snorkelling from the skiffs. The area was a mixture of semi desert scrub with a seawater channel surrounded by palms and a small cattle ranch. As we landed a pod of Long-beaked Common Dolphins raced across the mouth of the cove and an Osprey caught a fish nearby. Around the beach were Reddish, Great and Snowy Egrets and a Belted Kingfisher fed in the channel. On the beach was a rare find of a Yellow-bellied Sea-snake – unfortunately dead but which is highly venomous.

Walking through the scrub we notched up some nice birds including Grey and Ash-throated Flycatchers, Northern Cardinals and good views of both Anna's and Costa's Hummingbirds. California Quail scurried about

in the gravel whilst California Gnatcatchers sang in the bushes, competing with the numerous Lark Sparrows. The snorkelling group left after two hours while a few carried on the walk. Tony and Greta reported a Phainopepla near to a ranch so we checked this area out. Although we could not find it, we had good views of Yellow Warbler, the endemic Grey Thrasher and a nice bright pair of Hooded Orioles. We also manage to entice a Cactus Wren out into the open near the seawater channel. Another big feature here were the butterflies, in all sizes and colours, many of which were photographed for identification later. The snorkelers had a fine time looking at reef fish and many a go-pro type camera was replayed later, when we all gathered back on-board Searcher for a nice 'Gringo Taco' lunch.

After lunch we headed out to look for whales in the Monserrate Channel. Our first success was a really close Red-billed Tropicbird sat on the water but then we started seeing tall blows in the distance. As we headed towards them, huge Blue Whales were literally popping up around us and also up to four Fin Whales for comparison. The Blue Whales were particularly active with animals regularly side-lunging out of the water over and over again, sometimes ending up upside down at the surface where we could see the throat pleats and the pectoral fins! We were amazed at this behaviour and stayed until dusk to watch and photograph it. We estimated there were around 15 Blue Whales involved and because of the amount of food close to the surface causing this feeding pattern, they were attended by 70+ Bonaparte's Gulls, Brown Pelicans and both Blue-footed and Brown Boobies and a small group of Offshore Bottlenose Dolphins. Even a Humpback joined in!

That night at dinner the air was buzzing with conversations about the days sighting which were logged by Peter in the checklist followed by a talk on feeding behaviour by rorqual whales.

## Day 10

## Sunday 1st March

### Isla San Jose and Punta Colorado

Most of the group were on deck before dawn awaiting the sunrise. When the first rays of light break the horizon, a green flash is seen and then the rocks of Punta Colorado start to glow against the darker background affording wonderful photos. All the time we were being watched by the resident Peregrines.

Following breakfast, we were skiffed over to the island where Marc took the group around some fossils on the shoreline followed by a leisurely walk up the dry arroyo looking out for birds, butterflies and reptiles with Peter. Some of the bird highlights were White-throated Swift, Verdin, Costa's Hummingbird, California Gnatcatcher and an Ash-throated Flycatcher but a surprise was a Zone-tailed Hawk flying with the Turkey Vultures over the hills. This bird mimics the vultures in order to surprise its rodent prey. After two hours part of the group turned back to go snorkelling with Marc while the rest continued up the arroyo with Peter and Luis.

There were many wonderful marine sights for the snorkelers including a Moray Eel whilst the walkers added a Loggerhead Shrike, a Merriam's Kangaroo Rat and myriads of butterflies.

Once back on-board lunch was served, and we spent the rest the early part of the afternoon going north around San Jose and towards the peninsula. During the journey we had jumping Mobula rays. We headed to a landing called Nopolo on the peninsula to do another bird walk. Immediately on the beach the first two skiffs saw an endemic Xantus's Hummingbird which Peter found in the mangrove trees, but it flew off before the third boat arrived. We then did a circular walk around the cove ending back at the mangroves. We failed the find the

Xantus's again but did have good view of Costa's Hummingbird, a colony of Hooded Orioles, and a Baja California Ratsnake.

As the light began to fade, we were shipped back to the Searcher for a spare-rib dinner followed by the checklist with Peter and a talk by Marc on dolphins. During the evening, Peter used a bat detector and detected three bat species for the log.

## Day 11

Monday 2nd March

### Isla San Francisco & Isle Islotes

One thing that could be said for this tour, the morning weather was now consistent, and it was another beautiful sunrise with clear skies as we drifted into the flooded caldera of Isla San Francisco.

After breakfast most landed on the beach and headed over the shingle bank into the scrub lands. Marc took a walking group up onto the southern hill whilst Peter led a birding group around the 'cactus gardens'. All saw the nesting Osprey either in flight or near the nest and also the abundant Black-throated Sparrows. A nesting building Verdin was entertaining whilst Costa's Hummingbirds were ever present. The birders had brief views of Rock Wren at the top of a small valley and a flock of Savannah Sparrows had a Brewer's Sparrow with them. Soon the snorkelers went back to the Searcher for an hour snorkelling around the rocks whilst a small group with Peter walked to the headland where closer views of Rock Wren were had.

Returning to the boat we lifted the anchor and sailed out of the 'natural harbour' and looked for whales in the deep-water channel behind the island.

Our plans was to visit Los Islotes to take a skiff ride around the small islands and also to snorkel with the sea lions, however the change in wind direction had caused a swell too big for us to lower the skiffs, so we had a slow journey around in the Searcher. We still had good views of the wildlife including the large colony of about 200 California Sea Lions, with commentary by Marc on what was happening on the rocks. Also, Peter pointed out a Wandering Tattler and displaying Blue-footed Boobies.

After this we made our way to the nearby island of Espiritu Santo where we entered an inlet that had some mangroves. As we had not had a visit to this type of habitat, the leaders consulted with the captain and skiff rides were arranged. This proved to be great as we got amongst a feeding flock of Brown Pelicans and added Yellow-crowned Night Heron and two much sought-after Mangrove Warblers, one in superb adult male plumage. Other birds included Black-crowned Night Heron, Tricoloured Heron and Osprey.

We made our way back to the searcher exhilarated by the sightings and the boat ride and were treated to a back-deck barbecue with margaritas, before we headed out on our overnight journey south

## Day 12

## Wednesday 3rd March

### The Cape and Gorda Bank

The wind had shifted 90 degrees overnight from a west to east direction and the remnants of a rain front passed away to the south. We had a leisurely breakfast followed by what can be described as a Humpback breach festival. It started with a calf breaching with mum in attendance and a male escort who made it clear to other whales in the area that they were not welcome but slapping his tail. We stayed with these animals for an hour until we became aware of more animals further south and west.

Sailing into this area, we witnessed many, many breaches as big males jostled, bumped and ‘trumpeted’. It was hard to know where to look as breaches were called out in all directions. This lasted past lunch and well into the afternoon but eventually as the action subsided, we turned back towards land to a sheltered anchorage for the evening meal and final presentation and update on disembarkation.

That evening we enjoyed a final dinner cooked by chefs Dan and Mike and Captain Mike ran through the disembarking procedure. We said our thanks to those and the rest of the crew, Buzz, Ryan, Armando and Luis and not forgetting Marc with his wealth of knowledge and the evening talks. All their hard work made this tour such a success with great decisions producing fantastic wildlife sightings. The evening ended with a short video presentation by Peter of some of the highlights we had encountered on this tour.

## Day 13

## Thursday 4th March

### Disembark and Journey home

When we woke, we were heading in Cabo San Lucas and moored up at the fuel quay. After a continental breakfast, we started the process of the long journey home. Three taxis had been ordered and we were duly disembarked, said our fond farewells to the crew and were allotted our ride. Dilys was staying for a few days and the rest were heading home or to other locations but we all went to San Jose del Cabo where we were given a number of hours of freedom to shop, relax or bird the estuary, while the taxi drivers minded our luggage.

The group of birders walked ‘the estuary’ which was a small vegetation-fringed stream flowing to the sea. It had been ravaged by a hurricane in 2015 but now scrub and bushes had returned and it was very rewarding and we added nine new species for the tour here. These included Scott’s Oriole, a number of Belding’s Yellowthroats (another endemic), White-faced Ibis, Western Cattle Egrets, American Kestrel and Western Kingbirds. Additional sightings for those who missed them earlier in the tour were Xantus’s Hummingbirds and Phainopepla. After this productive walk we returned to the Tropicana Hotel café where we had some refreshments before re-boarding the taxis to the airport.

The Check-in and security were quick and easy and we were soon flying into Los Angeles where we cleared a busy immigration, collected bags, and made our way to the International Terminal where we checked in for our BA flight back to London.

The flight was not full and was comfortable in an A380. It left a little late but soon made up time with a tail wind and we sped across America and the Atlantic.

## Day 14

Friday 5th March

### Arrival in London

The flight arrived ahead of time into a quiet Heathrow where we sped through immigration and quickly located our bags. For those who flew back to Heathrow, there were fond farewells at the baggage carousel after an exciting and memorable trip to one of the best whale watching areas in the world.

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Blue Whale lunge feeding showing pectoral



Juvenile Brown Booby



Belding's Yellowthroat



Guadalupe Fur Seals

## Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only; BD = Bat detector)

	Common Name	Scientific Name	February/March														
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4			
1	California Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus beecheyi</i>	✓														
2	Merriam's Kangaroo Rat	<i>Dipodomys merriami</i>											1				
3	Black-tailed Jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>									1						
4	Wagner's Bonneted Bat [floridanus]	<i>Eumops glaucinus floridanus</i>											BD				
5	Underwood's Bonneted Bat	<i>Eumops underwoodi</i>											BD				
6	Pocketed Free-tailed Bat	<i>Nyctinomops femorosaccus</i>											BD				
7	Guadalupe Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus townsendi</i>			25				1	67							
8	California Sea Lion	<i>Zalophus californianus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Northern Elephant Seal	<i>Mirounga angustirostris</i>		10	✓												
10	Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		✓	✓												
11	Bryde's Whale	<i>Balaenoptera edeni</i>								1							
12	Blue Whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>					1				15+						
13	Fin Whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>									4						
14	Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>		2			10	20		1					20		
15	Grey Whale	<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>		20	3	✓				1							
16	Long-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus capensis</i>		20			1000				100						
17	Short-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>		20													
18	Pacific White-sided Dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus obliquidens</i>			2												
19	Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>				✓	30				40	✓	2				
20	Sperm Whale	<i>Physeter catodon</i>								18+							

Birds (F = Feral population; I = Introduced; E = Endemic)

1	California Quail	<i>Callipepla californica</i>	5								✓						
2	Brant Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	1		15	✓											
3	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓														
4	Greater White-fronted Goose (F)	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	2														
5	Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>	2														
6	Blue-winged Teal	<i>Spatula discors</i>	8														
7	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓														

	Common Name	Scientific Name	February/March													
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4		
8	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓													
9	American Wigeon	<i>Mareca americana</i>	✓													
10	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓													
11	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	2													
12	Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas carolinensis</i>														✓
13	Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	✓													
14	Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>		✓		✓										
15	Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>		1												
16	Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	1													
17	Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	✓													
18	White-throated Swift	<i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>							3		8					
19	Xantus's Hummingbird (E)	<i>Basilinna xantusii</i>									1				1	
20	Anna's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte anna</i>	✓								✓		1			
21	Costa's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte costae</i>							1	2	4	5				
22	Rock Dove (F)	<i>Columba livia 'feral'</i>	✓													
23	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	2		2											
24	Common Ground Dove	<i>Columbina passerina</i>									1	1				✓
25	Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	✓		1											
26	White-winged Dove	<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>							6	✓	✓					✓
27	Common Gallinule	<i>Gallinula galeata</i>	1													✓
28	American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>	✓	✓												
29	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	1			2		25	2	✓	6	12				
30	Western Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>				10										
31	Clark's Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus clarkii</i>				15										
32	Black Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus bachmani</i>		20												
33	American Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>			4						2		2			
34	Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>														✓
35	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	1													
36	Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	20								✓					1
37	Hudsonian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius hudsonicus</i>	2									10	10			
38	Long-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>	✓			✓										
39	Hudsonian Godwit	<i>Limosa haemastica</i>	✓													

	Common Name	Scientific Name	February/March											
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4
40	Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i>		✓		✓								
41	Black Turnstone	<i>Arenaria melanocephala</i>			2									
42	Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	✓			✓								
43	Red Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>		10	1		✓	✓						
44	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>								2	3	2		2
45	Wandering Tattler	<i>Tringa incana</i>										1		
46	Willet	<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>	✓			✓								
47	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	2											
48	Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>						1	1					
49	Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus philadelphia</i>						4	10	60				
50	Heermann's Gull	<i>Larus heermanni</i>		10		✓		3	6	20	✓	✓		
51	Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	✓											
52	California Gull	<i>Larus californicus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	
53	Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>			1									
54	Western Gull	<i>Larus occidentalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
55	Yellow-footed Gull	<i>Larus livens</i>						1	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	
56	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>			2	2								
57	Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>				✓								
58	Elegant Tern	<i>Thalasseus elegans</i>	1	✓		5			6			3		
59	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>								1				
60	Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>				10								
61	Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>				2								
62	Guadalupe Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus hypoleucus</i>		2										
63	Scripps's Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus scrippsi</i>		2	4		2							
64	Craveri's Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus craveri</i>					2		4	10				
65	Cassin's Auklet	<i>Ptychoramphus aleuticus</i>		1	✓									
66	Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>							1	1				
67	Pacific Diver	<i>Gavia pacifica</i>				12								
68	Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>		2		✓								
69	Laysan Albatross	<i>Phoebastria immutabilis</i>		3			1							
70	Black-footed Albatross	<i>Phoebastria nigripes</i>		12										
71	Least Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma microsoma</i>					2	1					1	

	Common Name	Scientific Name	February/March											
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4
72	Black Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma melania</i>						5	3					
73	Northern Fulmar (Pacific)	<i>Fulmarus glacialis rodgersii</i>		✓	5	✓	✓							
74	Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>		1										
75	Pink-footed Shearwater	<i>Ardenna creatopus</i>		2			2	3				1	2	
76	Black-vented Shearwater	<i>Puffinus opisthomelas</i>		✓	✓		10	✓	4				✓	
77	Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>					12	✓	✓	✓				
78	Blue-footed Booby	<i>Sula nebouxii</i>							10	✓	✓	✓		
79	Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>					1							
80	Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>					1		4	✓	5	✓		
81	Brandt's Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax penicillatus</i>		✓		✓				✓	6	✓		
82	Pelagic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus</i>		1										
83	Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	2	✓		✓
84	American White Ibis	<i>Eudocimus albus</i>				20								
85	White-faced Ibis	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>												✓
86	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	3								1	1		
87	Yellow-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>										6		
88	Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>												1
89	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>												✓
90	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	✓	2					1	1	2	2		✓
91	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	2			1			1	1	2	1		✓
92	Reddish Egret	<i>Egretta rufescens</i>	1			2				1	1	1		
93	Tricolored Heron	<i>Egretta tricolor</i>				1						1		
94	Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	2			1								
95	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	✓	✓						2	1	2		✓
96	American White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>	10											
97	Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	4	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
98	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	2			2			5	7	15	✓		✓
99	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	2	1	4				1	1	2	3		2
100	Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	1							1				1
101	Northern Harrier	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>							1					1
102	Zone-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo albonotatus</i>									1			
103	Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	2		1				2		2			

	Common Name	Scientific Name	February/March												
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4	
104	Western Screech Owl	<i>Megascops kennicottii</i>	1												
105	Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	1								1				1
106	Gila Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes uropygialis</i>								3	1	1			✓
107	American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>													2
108	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		1	2				1			2			1
109	Lilac-crowned Amazon (F)	<i>Amazona finschi</i>	9												
110	Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	2								1				
111	Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i>	2						1						
112	Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>									1				
113	American Grey Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax wrightii</i>							1	2	2	1			
114	Cassin's Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus vociferans</i>	2												
115	Western Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>													3
116	Ash-throated Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>								6	✓	✓			2
117	Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>										1			
118	California Scrub Jay	<i>Aphelocoma californica</i>	3							1	1				2
119	American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	✓												
120	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	2		✓					1	2	1	4	2	
121	Phainopepla	<i>Phainopepla nitens</i>									1				2
122	Oak Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus inornatus</i>	2												
123	Verdin	<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>								1	✓	3	2		✓
124	Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>			5										
125	Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>	✓									1	2		
126	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	✓												1
127	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus calendula</i>	2												
128	Cactus Wren	<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>								1	1				2
129	Rock Wren	<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>								1			3		
130	Canyon Wren	<i>Catherpes mexicanus</i>										H			
131	Blue-grey Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila caerulea</i>								6	1	1			
132	California Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila californica</i>								4	2	2			
133	White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	2												
134	Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	1								4	1	3		2
135	Grey Thrasher (E)	<i>Toxostoma cinereum</i>								2	2				

	Common Name	Scientific Name	February/March													
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4		
136	California Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma redivivum</i>	2													
137	Common Starling (I)	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓													
138	House Sparrow (I)	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓		1											
139	Buff-bellied Pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>	30													
140	House Finch	<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>	✓								4	2			✓	
141	Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	✓													
142	White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	2							✓		1				
143	Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	2									8			✓	
144	Savannah Sparrow (San Benito) (E)	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis sanctorum</i>			✓											
145	Brewer's Sparrow	<i>Spizella breweri</i>										1				
146	Lark Sparrow	<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>					1				✓					2
147	Black-throated Sparrow	<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>										1	✓			
148	Green-tailed Towhee	<i>Pipilo chlorurus</i>								1						
149	Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	2													
150	California Towhee	<i>Melospiza crissalis</i>	2													
151	Scott's Oriole	<i>Icterus parisorum</i>														2
152	Hooded Oriole	<i>Icterus cucullatus</i>								1	6	✓				✓
153	Tricolored Blackbird	<i>Agelaius tricolor</i>	✓													
154	Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	2													
155	Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	3													
156	Orange-crowned Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis celata</i>	1													1
157	Belding's Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis beldingi</i>														5
158	American Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga aestiva</i>								1	1		1			2
159	Mangrove Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>											2			
160	Audubon's Warbler	<i>Setophaga auduboni</i>	✓													
161	Townsend's Warbler	<i>Setophaga townsendi</i>	2													
162	Wilson's Warbler	<i>Cardellina pusilla</i>														4
163	Western Tanager	<i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>								1						
164	Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>								2	3					2

## Reptiles (D= dead)

1	Green Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>				1	2									
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	Common Name	Scientific Name	February/March											
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4
2	Hawksbill	<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>					15							
3	Northern Chuckwalla	<i>Sauromalus ater</i>									1			
4	Zebra-tailed Lizard	<i>Callisaurus draconoides</i>								✓	✓			
5	Side-blotched Lizard	<i>Uta stansburiana</i>			✓					✓				
6	Orange-throated Whiptail	<i>Aspidoscelis hyperythra</i>									1			
7	Yellow-bellied Sea Snake	<i>Hydrophis platurus</i>								D				
8	Baja California Ratsnake	<i>Bogertophis rosaliae</i>									1			

Butterflies & Moths

Various species of butterflies were seen on the land days and many species of moths were found on the Searcher coming to light. Most need to be identified from images taken but those that were known included:

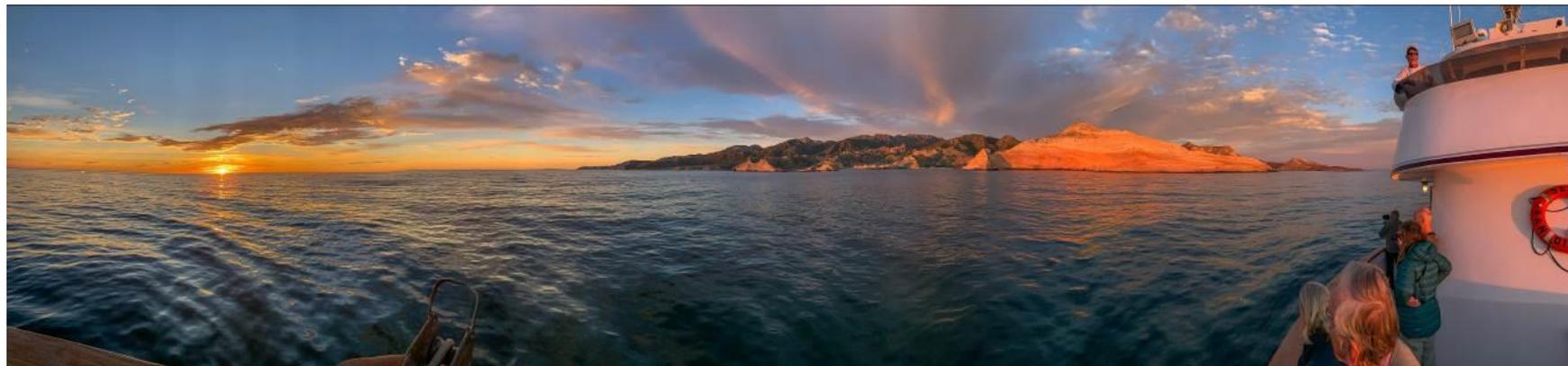
Clouded Sulphur, *Colias philodice*  
 Western Pygmy-Blue, *Brephidium exile*  
 Queen, *Danaus gilippus*  
 Western tailed-blue, *Cupido amyntul*

Southern Dogface, *Colias cesonja*  
 Painted Lady, *Vanessa cardui*  
 White Checker Skipper, *Pyrgus albescens*  
 Funereal Duskywing, *Erynnis funeralis*

Cloudless Sulphur, *Phoebis sennae*  
 Monarch, *Danaus plexippus*  
 Long-tailed Skipper, *Urbanus proteus*  
 Blackened Bluewing, *Myscelia cyananthe*

Other Taxa

American Honey Bee                      Ant lion sp.                      Various grasshoppers and groundhoppers                      Tarantula Hawk Wasp  
 Land Hermit Crab



Punta Colorado at dawn

## Fish &amp; Marine (Courtesy of Marc Webber)

		February/March							
		25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3

## Reef Fish

1	Green Moray Eel						✓		
2	Zebra Moray				✓				
3	Cortez Garden Eel							✓	
4	California Needlefish				✓				
5	Reef Coronetfish				✓	✓	✓	✓	
6	Tinsel Squirrelfish				✓		✓	✓	
7	Leopard Grouper					✓	✓	✓	
8	Panama Graysby							✓	
9	Flag Cabrilla						✓		
10	Barred Serrano						✓		
11	Yellow Snapper					✓	✓		
12	Blue & Gold Snapper						✓	✓	
13	Pacific Dog Snapper					✓			
14	Barred Pargo				✓				
15	Burrito Grunt					✓			
16	Graybar Grunt				✓	✓	✓		
17	Spot-tail Grunt				✓			✓	
18	Mexican Goatfish				✓	✓	✓	✓	
19	Cortez Chub				✓	✓	✓	✓	
20	King Angelfish				✓		✓	✓	
21	Three-banded Butterflyfish				✓			✓	
22	Barberfish						✓	✓	
23	Zebra Perch					✓			
24	Cortez Damselfish				✓	✓	✓	✓	
25	Beaubrummel								
26	Panamic Sergeant Major				✓	✓	✓	✓	
27	Scissortail Damselfish							✓	
28	Giant Damselfish				✓	✓	✓	✓	
29	Bumphead Damselfish							✓	
30	Giant Hawkfish						✓	✓	
31	Coral Hawkfish				✓	✓			
32	Chameleon Wrasse				✓	✓	✓		
33	Wounded Wrasse					✓	✓		
34	Cortez Rainbow Wrasse				✓	✓	✓	✓	
35	Mexican Hogfish				✓	✓	✓	✓	
36	Azure Parrotfish				✓	✓	✓		
37	Panamic Fanged Blenny					✓	✓	✓	
38	Yellowtail Surgeonfish					✓	✓	✓	
39	Finescale Triggerfish				✓	✓	✓	✓	
40	Orange-sided Triggerfish							✓	
41	Guineafowl Puffer				✓		✓	✓	
42	Spotted Sharpnose Puffer				✓	✓	✓	✓	
43	Bullseye Puffer							✓	
44	Balloonfish				✓	✓	✓	✓	
45	Stone Scorpionfish				✓	✓			

		February/March							
		25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3

Reef Invertebrates

1	Giant Coral				✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Emerald or Encrusting Stony Coral				✓	✓			
3	Octopus spp.					✓			
4	Sally Lightfoot Crab				✓	✓	✓	✓	
5	Crown of Thorns Star						✓	✓	
6	Panamic Cushion Star				✓				
7	Yellow Spotted or Pyramid Star				✓	✓			
8	Tan Star					✓	✓	✓	
9	Tamarisk or Purple sea star				✓	✓			
10	Slate Pencil Urchin				✓	✓	✓	✓	
11	Brown Urchin				✓	✓	✓	✓	
12	Flower/Decorator Urchin				✓			✓	
13	Brown Sea Fan				✓				

Pelagic Animals

1	Pelagic Red Crab		✓						
2	Mobula spp				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Striped Marlin							✓	✓
4	Dorado (Mahi Mahi)		✓						
5	Remora		✓						



Grey Whale



Blue-footed Booby



Black-throated Sparrow



Blue Whale fluke