

Baja California & Sea of Cortez

Naturetrek Tour Report

8th – 21st March 2023



Grey Whale approaching clients



Northern Elephant Seal



Masked Booby



Blue Whale

Tour report and images by Hazel Pittwood



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Introduction

The Baja Peninsula of Mexico is arguably the best destination in the world for whale watching and this fantastic two-week itinerary made the most of every possible opportunity to spend time with these magnificent animals. Spending two days interacting with the ‘friendly’ Gray Whales of San Ignacio Lagoon was a dream come true for all guests on this trip (some of whom had been before and loved it so much they wanted to experience it again!) To witness these whales actively seeking out human interaction and to be able to reach out a hand and stroke them, on their terms, is an incredibly moving experience that stays with you forever. But this incredible holiday was not just about the Gray Whales; this was the trip that just kept on giving!

From watching a heat-run of male Humpback Whales breaching and tail-slapping at Gordo Banks to seeing at least fourteen Blue Whales over the course of the trip, we were in whale watching heaven. Super pods of hundreds of Common Dolphins, seeing Northern Elephant Seals and Guadalupe Fur Seals (one of the world’s rarest pinnipeds) and snorkelling with California Sea Lions were also among guest’s favourite moments during the trip.

This was a thoroughly productive and enjoyable itinerary for birders too, with over 130 species seen including endemics such as Belding’s Yellowthroat and San Benitos Savannah Sparrow. Seabirds encountered on our travels included Laysan Albatross, Red-tailed Tropicbird, Magnificent Frigatebird, Masked and Blue-footed Booby, whilst shore-based walks gave wonderful views of Anna’s and Costa’s Hummingbirds, Verdin and Hooded Oriole along with many others.

Several days provided snorkelling opportunities during which we marvelled the incredible wildlife beneath the waves; we watched in awe as a wide variety of beautiful tropical fish darted and shimmered across pristine coral reef habitat. These incredible wildlife experiences, combined with the friendly atmosphere among the group and the fantastic crew of MV Searcher, made this a truly amazing holiday. This is a very special, wildlife rich destination which simply has to be experienced to be believed!

Day 1

Wednesday 8th March

London to San Diego

We met at Heathrow and boarded our flight to San Diego, all of which ran very smoothly. Hopping into our two large taxis, we took the short 10-minute drive to our hotel. After some time to settle in, Hazel and George met guests in the bar to give information relating to activities tomorrow. After a long day of travel, everyone was then ready for bed!

Day 2

Thursday 9th March

Birding in San Diego

Today half of the group were heading out with a guide from the Audobon Society for a day’s birding. With pick up by minibus scheduled for 9am, most were down at breakfast when it opened at 7am and sat chatting over

coffee. Those not birding had a free day in San Diego, so some took advantage of a little lie in before enjoying a later breakfast and then heading out to explore the local area. Highlights included Balboa Park, the world-famous San Diego Zoo and the local coastline. Whatever our chosen activity for the day, we enjoyed the warm, sunny weather.

For the birders, our friendly and highly knowledgeable local guide Stan arrived right on schedule, along with our cheerful minibus driver Maria. En route to our first stop (a park called Lindero Lake) House Finch, White-throated Swift and American Crow were spotted from the bus. Once we arrived it was immediately apparent that our bird list would get off to a good start at this beautiful park. Black-crowned Night Herons and Snowy Egret were very confiding, and a Red-Shouldered Hawk gave fantastic views perched in a tree just above our heads! As we wandered around the lake Phalarope, Great-tailed Grackle and Nuttall's Woodpecker were highlights. Ground Squirrels scurried across the grass, a Monarch Butterfly was seen feeding from some flowers and we observed two species of hummingbird; Anna's Hummingbird and Allen's Hummingbird.

We then journeyed on to Silverwood, a San Diego Audubon Society Reserve, collecting our sandwiches for lunch along the way. The reserve was set within the arid chaparral habitat in the hills to the north of the San Diego. We sat and had lunch on some benches in the shade next to some feeders. These were unfortunately very quiet, but a walk around the short circular trail gave us Californian Scrub Jay, Spotted Towhee and Turkey Vulture. Walking back to the minibus an American Robin was spotted in the undergrowth.

Our third and final stop was along the San Diego river estuary which yielded an abundance of waders and waterfowl. As soon as we stepped off the bus, we were delighted to see a pair of Osprey which circled overhead. We gladly added Semi-palmated Plover, Bufflehead, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Cinnamon Teal, White-crowned Sparrow and Snow Goose to our list, among others. En route back to the bus numerous Fence Lizards could be seen basking on the warm kerbsides on the car park.

We arrived back to the hotel at around 3:30pm, thanked Stan and Maria, and collected our luggage. It was then time to take the five-minute walk to the waterfront to board Searcher, the vessel that would be our home at sea! Guests went for dinner in one of the nearby restaurants before heading back on-board Searcher for the welcome briefing which began at 8pm. Celia and Captain Art, the owners of Searcher Natural History Tours, gave us a warm welcome briefing introducing their highly skilled crew. Celia then disembarked and waved us off whilst Art remained on board as the Captain for our trip. We then lifted anchor and set sail Southwards for Mexico! As we headed out towards open water, we saw lots of California Sea Lions hauled out resting, or in some cases chasing each other or fighting, on the jetty. After that everyone headed to bed to get some sleep ready for our first day at sea tomorrow.

Day 3

Friday 10th March

Ensenada and the Pacific Ocean

We arrived into the port of Ensenada in the early morning, before breakfast. Immigration officials came on board to clear us for entry into Mexico and local guide Miriam embarked to join us for the rest of the trip. A group of Surf Scoters, with males in stunning full breeding plumage, were in the harbour along with Red-breasted Merganser, Black Oystercatcher and a Belted Kingfisher perched atop a lamppost. Plenty of California Sea Lions

could be seen with their flippers raised out of the water as a means of thermoregulation, warming up their extremities, whilst others rested on the navigational markers making their distinctive bark-honking calls. Brown Pelicans and Double-breasted Cormorants lined the Harbour Wall.

We were soon setting sail out of Ensenada towards the open water, by which point it was time for breakfast. Not long afterwards, Hazel spotted some distant dolphins splashes and the Searcher Crew spotted yet more dolphin activity. With time to spare, we were able to go and take a closer look! Upon reaching them, it became apparent they were Short-beaked Common Dolphins, identifiable with their distinctively patterned flanks. We were overjoyed when some chose to come and ride the bow wave in front of the ship! It was especially lovely to see numerous mother and calf pairs within the large aggregation, which consisted of around three hundred animals. Whilst we were still enjoying the dolphin action, whale blows were announced from the bridge: our first Gray Whales! Captain Art skillfully and carefully manoeuvred Searcher nearer to the whales, six of them, which were travelling quickly in a close-knit formation and showing courtship behaviours. We continued to see small groups of North-bound Gray Whales into the afternoon.

During lunch more Short-beaked Common Dolphins turned up, giving fantastic views as they leaped clear out of the water. Over the course of the day, we saw many groups of these acrobatic bow-riding beauties. Later in the day, at around 15:30pm the crew spotted some whale blows, so we carefully journeyed in the direction of the animals to take a look. As we edged closer, it became apparent these were different to the Gray Whales we had seen already today, they were our first Humpback Whales of the trip! We also enjoyed a variety of seabirds, including three Laysan Albatross, Cassin's Auklet, Black-vented Shearwater, Pink-footed Shearwater and Sooty Shearwater.

After dinner Hazel did the wildlife sightings checklist and then local guide Patti gave a presentation to the group regarding Isla San Benito (where we would go tomorrow) and Baja's pinniped species (seals, sea lions and fur seals) that we could hope to see during our trip. Most guests then headed to bed to get some rest whilst a few night owls remained in the saloon.

Day 5

Saturday 11th March

Oeste, Islas San Benitos

It was another beautiful, sunny day this morning when we anchored in a small bay offshore of Oeste, the largest of the three San Benitos Islands. Following a hearty breakfast of chef Josh's blueberry pancakes we received a safety demonstration on how to enter the panga boats that would take us ashore. With that concluded, we collected our packed lunch for the day and disembarked at 8am, walking past several empty fishing huts to a boardwalk from which we could observe some Northern Elephant seals on a distant beach. All around the boardwalk we could see the nesting burrows of the ground nesting seabirds such as Cassin's Auklets and Least Storm Petrels. Returning back along the boardwalk, we were joined by a man named Eduardo (whose primary job is monitoring the waters around the island for the poaching of marine wildlife, such as abalone) and he keenly helped to lead us on a hike around the island. Heading inland and upwards, we looked out for birds as we walked towards the remains of the island's main lighthouse on the Northwest coast. Species seen included Horned Lark, Northern Raven and the endemic San Benito Sparrow. We also spotted the endemic San Benito Side-blotched Lizard!

As we walked, we were very careful not to tread on the dreaded Cedros Island Cholla cactus which Patti and

Miriam has warned us about. This cactus has barbed spikes which can embed themselves in the skin which would have been extremely painful! Armed with pliers our guides plucked away any Cholla that stuck to our shoes. We enjoyed a variety of less hostile plant life on the island, including endemics such as Cedros Island Barrel Cactus and San Benito Bush Mallow. We also saw an intriguing plant called Liveforever, so called because of its ability to survive intense periods of drought.

We stopped at the old lighthouse for lunch but as the area was cloaked in fog everyone was keen to move on to see more wildlife. Sure enough, as we descended towards the shore the weather cleared and we were treated to fantastic views of a pair of Ospreys circling overhead. This couple were one of many which nests on the island; another pair we saw later were provisioning their chicks at their nest with a large fish they had caught. Continuing on, we stopped to watch groups of Guadalupe Fur Seals frolicking around, twirling in the water, or resting on the rocks making sheep like bleating calls. Over the course of the hike, we saw at least five hundred of these rare pinnipeds and local guide Patti commented that this was a high number for that area and hopefully indicative that this species is recovering from historic decline. We were also treated to great views of Northern Elephant Seals, most of them chunky little weaners (this year's weaned pups) which were generally resting quietly but with an occasional snort to clear their nostrils. Most of the adults had already left the colony with their breeding seasons having concluded, but a couple of large males and around ten females remained. We laughed to watch one of the huge males as he charged around in the surf in pursuit of a female who, being much smaller, nimbly outmanoeuvred him and shuffled back onto land!

Back at sea later in the afternoon there were plenty of seabirds to enjoy with Laysan Albatross, Black-vented Shearwater, Cassin's Auklet, Craveri's Murrelet, Heermann's Gull and Western Gull all observed. Humpback whales were also seen, raising their tail flukes as they dived. Prior to dinner a large pod of long-beaked common dolphins, at least five-hundred strong, obligingly hurtled towards us and came in to bow ride! This was a spectacular sight, eliciting cheers of joy and excitement from everyone watching.

Post-dinner, Hazel went through the wildlife list and local guide Patti gave a short talk about Gray Whales. We then we headed to our cabins to get some rest ready for seeing these magnificent animals tomorrow.

Day 6

Sunday 12th March

San Ignacio Lagoon

This morning we arrived at San Ignacio lagoon! Everyone was very excited and was up early to enjoy the spectacular sunrise over the sea. Gray Whales surrounded us before we had even entered the lagoon which served as an incredible welcome. These whales were leaving to begin their journey Northwards to their feeding grounds in the waters off Alaska, but there were still a couple of hundred awaiting us within the lagoon! Captain Art carefully sailed us slowly over the shallow sandbar at the entrance and we made our way towards the heart of the observation area.

After breakfast we received a briefing for how our excursions would run and Captain Art was clearly emotional as he spoke about the magnificent Gray Whales and San Ignacio, both of which are very dear to him. He explained how we would safely board three pangas (wooden boats) which would be expertly driven by the licensed local Mexican operators. With all instructions given, the panga drivers skilfully manoeuvred into position alongside

Searcher and we boarded one by one at around 9am. Over the course of the next couple of hours we had some truly sensational encounters with these whales, including many female and calf pairs, giving everyone in the group the opportunity to interact with them. Almost everyone was able to stroke them and give them a scratch during this first session. We could see every barnacle and whale louse adorning their beautiful marbled skin. Their texture was somewhat similar to that of an aubergine; firm but rubbery! They also seemed to know exactly how to aim their forceful outward blow of breath to cover us in water and whale snot which generated raucous laughter all round (especially from those not caught in the firing line!) We also saw some of the lagoon's coastal inshore Bottlenose Dolphin population and a few California Sea Lions.

Before we knew it, we had to return to Searcher for lunch; we were reluctant to leave the whales, even though it was only for a short break before heading back out to see them in the afternoon! The whales were reluctant for us to leave too, with some of them following the pangas all the way back to Searcher and surrounding us during our lunch. One particular female and her youngster were particularly interested; they swam around the ship nudging the pangas, which were tied up behind the vessel so the drivers (pangeros) could join us for lunch. With our meal finished, we were ready and raring to go see the Gray Whales again!

In the afternoon's session the weather had changed with the wind picking up and increased waves as a result. The whale's behaviour was different too which was truly fascinating to watch. Rather than calmly interacting with us as they had in the morning, it was like the high winds had supercharged them and they were now racing around the lagoon interacting with each other in small groups. They were still surfacing very closeby, but rather than approaching for us to give them a pat they were spyhopping (raising their head out of the water) and some were even breaching! It was amazing to see their power and size whilst gaining an insight into a different aspect of their behaviours.

As we headed back on board Searcher, we thanked our pangeros and looked forward to seeing them again tomorrow. The reality of what we had seen and done today began to sink in. The feel-good emotions were running high with many of us struggling to find the words to describe how we were feeling after this special day. The experience of touching a wild animal challenges the ethos of being a responsible wildlife tourism, and yet here the Gray Whales were, choosing to interact with us, turning on their sides to look up at us as we looked at them, and trusting us to place our hands on them. This is surely one of the most unique and remarkable wildlife encounters in the world and incredibly moving experience.

After dinner and going through the wildlife list Captain Art switched off the engine and lights so we could go outside to gaze at the stars before heading to bed. We could hear the Gray whale breathing, somewhere out there in the peaceful darkness. A perfect end to this incredible day.

Day 7

Monday 13th March

San Ignacio Lagoon

This morning we woke up to another day in the wonderful San Ignacio lagoon. The waters were a little rough (as is usual for the lagoon early in the day) so we had to wait a little while for the wind to drop before heading out in the pangas, but nobody minded one bit as two female and calf pairs were inquisitively surfacing right next to

Searcher. Without wanting to impart thoughts upon them, we couldn't help but feel they were urging us to hurry and get in the pangas to go give them a scratch! A particularly wonderful sight which delighted us all was when one of the whale calves raised its head out of the water and opened its mouth revealing its white bristly baleen plates. Some are keen to avoid the word 'cute' when referring to wildlife, but there was really no other fitting word to describe this sweet moment!

The day was split into four outings. In the morning, we all went to see the whales first, then on the second trip some chose to go into the mangroves to look for birds whilst others went whale watching again. Navigating through the sheltered, narrow channels of the mangroves our sightings proved that herons are well represented here; Great Blue Heron, Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Night Herons and Great Egret, Reddish Egret and Snowy Egret were all observed. Further birding highlights were Marbled Godwit, Willet, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Curlew and White Ibis. A couple of Mangrove Warblers were singing too, which caught the attention of the keen birders among the group.

We then returned to Searcher for lunch turn before all of us headed back out to see the whales. Again, we were treated to incredible close views, with faces and binoculars sprayed with blows! We eagerly leaned over the sides of the pangas, swishing the water to try and entice the whales to come to us for a tickle, which often worked! Mexican guide Miriam seemed to have a particularly successful technique, earning her the nickname of the whale whisperer! For the second trip of the day, some guests opted to go to the beach for a walk whilst the rest went to interact with the Gray Whales one final time. There beach was host to an amazing variety of colourful shells and bones/remains of different marine animals.

We had to set off from the lagoon at around 4:30pm. Everyone was out on deck to say farewell to the Gray Whales; we felt so privileged to have shared two special days with these animals and many people were understandably tearful. A pod of inshore coastal Bottlenose Dolphins came in to bow ride, escorting us out of the lagoon, which softened the fact we were leaving. As we journeyed South, the blows of Gray Whales faded into the diminishing evening light as the sun set on our time in San Ignacio Lagoon.

Day 8

Tuesday 14th March

At sea: offshore, Bahia Magdalena (whales galore!)

Sunrise found us travelling at sea offshore of Bahia Magdalena (Magdalena Bay). The waters were calm, the sun was shining and the day held promise of being productive for spotting wildlife. Indeed it was; with such favourable conditions it was wonderfully easy to spot any animal activity! One of the highlights of many was a group of Fin Whales observed lunging on their sides feeding! These gargantuan animals are the second largest species of whale after the Blue Whale, reaching up to 27m long. Speaking of Blue Whales, we saw plenty of them too, at least ten over the course of the day! We watched in awe as these ocean giants surfaced nearby, exhaling an enormous blow of spray followed by their mottled backs which seems to go on forever, revealing a tiny dorsal fin just before submerging. When above the water the skin of these whales appears more greyish than blue, but just below the surface their colour transforms into a bright, pale blue which almost seems to glow and you see then why there are so-called. Over the course of the day, we also saw at least twelve Humpback Whales, including a cow with a tiny calf accompanied by an escorting male which approached Searcher very closely, giving fantastic views of their

knobbly, tubercle covered heads and huge pectoral fins. Further adding to our cetacean sightings, we observed over seven hundred Long-beaked Common Dolphins and a small group of offshore bottlenose dolphins.

This eventful day also gave us lovely views of Leatherback Turtle, along with our first Magnificent Frigatebird and a Masked Booby.

After dinner we went through the wildlife sightings list with Hazel and Patti then gave a talk about Baja's baleen whale diversity, which we had experienced first-hand today with Blue, Fin and Humpback Whales!

Day 9

Wednesday 15th March

At sea: Gordo Banks, offshore of Cabo San Lucas (Humpbacks galore!)

At sunrise we rounded the point at Land's End at the Southern tip of the Baja Peninsula and began an exciting day in the Sea of Cortez. This got off to a great start with a breaching humpback whale right next to Searcher! This certainly served as an awakening for anyone out on deck who was rubbing the sleep from their eyes! This was the first of many sightings of this species today; we estimated to have seen over fifty throughout the course of today!

After breakfast we spotted a couple of solitary whales, then three mother-calf pairs of humpbacks with escorting males. These males accompany a female waiting for the opportunity to mate with her once her calf is weaned and she is receptive to breeding again; he will fiercely fend off any competitors. One of the Humpback calves was playing at the surface, flapping its flippers and flukes this tiny whale was absolutely adorable and generated many 'awws' from enthralled observers! In addition to the whales, we also spotted a few Bottlenose Dolphins, Green Sea Turtles and several species of seabirds including a Red-billed Tropicbird. When lunch was called, we were reluctant to abandon our vigil at the bow of the ship, but we knew the hawk-eyed Searcher crew would be keeping their eyes peeled for wildlife in our absence. After eating, we headed back outside to look for wildlife or relax and soak up some rays of sunshine seated out on the back deck.

The Humpback Whale action for the day was far from over; during the afternoon we watched several humpback whales breaching in the distance and headed over to take a look at these surface-active animals. This turned out to be a group of seven Humpbacks, consisting of males displaying to and chasing a female! They demonstrated an incredible range of behaviours, from loud, trumpeting as they exhaled to head slaps, flipper slaps and tail lobbs, it was a real sight to behold! Everyone was entranced watching their energetic behaviour which went on for a long time, sequences of behaviour repeated seemingly tirelessly by these ocean giants. We eventually left the whales and continued heading North into the Gulf of California. As we journeyed along hundreds of Smooth-tailed Mobula rays swam by and somersaulted out of the water.

After another delicious dinner Hazel went through the wildlife list and gave a talk for guests regarding the differences between baleen and toothed cetaceans.

Day 10

Thursday 16th March

Punta Colorado (morning) and offshore at sea (afternoon)

We woke up to an incredible sunrise hitting the huge sandstone cliff of Punta Colorado, highlighting the rock face in hues of orange and pink. After enjoying a hearty breakfast, the crew ferried us ashore and we all went for a walk in the arroyo, a steep-sided gully carved into the surrounding rock by fast flowing water after heavy rainfall. There was no sign of rain today though, in fact by now the crew had begun commenting that this was one of the best trips they had ever had in terms of the weather and sea conditions – lucky us! We enjoyed the freedom to sit near the shore, watching the Sally Lightfoot Crabs currying along the water's edge, or to walk the length of the fossil-filled sandstone walls of the arroyo looking for birds and other wildlife. Avian highlights included Black-throated Sparrow, Ash-throated Flycatchers and both Anna's and Costa's Hummingbirds. We also spotted Orange-throated Whiptail Lizards, Zebra-tailed Lizard and San Jose Side-blotched Lizards. After this walk, back on board Searcher, we had the opportunity to borrow snorkelling gear (if we didn't have our own) and then try out our equipment with a snorkelling session amongst the reef fishes and sea fans in a picturesque and sheltered nearby cove.

Following a lovely morning at Punta Colorado we set off for an afternoon of whale watching in the Sea of Cortez. After lunch Captain Art spotted two blue whales; we were all delighted to see them again after hitting the Blue Whale jackpot a few days ago! Humpback Whales, Bottlenose Dolphins and a huge pod of around six-hundred Common Dolphins were also observed. This area was certainly living up to its reputation as paradise for marine mammal lovers! All afternoon Mobula Rays were leaping out of the water, and we also came across several large baitballs of tiny fish bubbling just beneath the water's surface.

After dinner, the crew set up a bright green squid-light off the starboard side of the boat. We watched transfixed as tiny marine invertebrates began to gather at first, followed almost immediately by small baitfish who were feeding on the smaller organisms. These kept increasing over time, amassing into a small bait ball which then attracted larger predatory fish such as Needlefish, Flying Fish, a Pelagic Stingray a Spotted Eagle Ray and even some pelagic swimming crabs. Later, a group of brown pelicans turned up and began plunging their heads underwater to catch the fish drawn to the light. Guests, guides and crew alike stood out on deck enthralled by this spectacle, waiting to see what would turn up next, only heading to bed because once tiredness began to set in.

Day 11

Friday 17th March

Bahia Agua Verde (Bay of Green Water), Mainland Mexico

Today we arrived at the beautiful Bahia Agua Verde on the Mexican mainland. We awoke to another stunning sunrise and watched a mixed group of brown pelicans and other seabirds diving on a baitball near the ship whilst enjoying our morning coffee or tea. After breakfast the crew ferried us ashore so we could enjoy a leg stretch or relax on the beach. Arriving at the beach we travelled past a large aggregation of Brown Pelicans bobbing around in the surf. It felt as though this bird was fast becoming emblematic of the trip, having seen it every day so far. Along the shore we spotted a pair of American oystercatchers foraging in the sand. We walked into the desert vegetation for a short distance, pondering over mammalian tracks we spotted along the way. Birds could be heard singing from various points within the undergrowth and we carefully scanned with our binoculars to try and spot them. Species we encountered this morning included White-winged Dove, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Verdin and

California Gnatcatchers, which were observed flitting among the cacti. We returned back the way we came, walking along the beach to an area of lush, tall palm trees which was also a productive area for birds, including several dazzling bright yellow Hooded Oriole. A Gila Woodpecker was seemingly taunting us from within the dense plant cover; we could hear it calling but despite best efforts it proved impossible to get everyone onto it before we had to head back to Searcher for lunch.

After a marvellous midday meal, some guests went for a snorkel off the beach to peek underwater at the abundant reef life, while others went on a coastal cruise and were treated to a fantastic look at a Blue-footed Booby! The rest of our afternoon was spent whale watching as we continued underway. Observations included a Humpback Whale which slapped the water repeatedly with its colossal tail flukes and breached twice! A couple of Fin Whales were seen too, keeping a low profile as they surfaced and hastily disappeared from view. What the Fin Whale lacks in surface active behaviour, compared to the acrobatic Humpbacks, they make up for in speed of travel. They can travel as fast as 47km/h in short bursts, earning them the nickname 'greyhound of the sea'. A couple of Blue Whales were also spotted off in the distance but proved elusive when we tried to get a closer view.

After dinner and the wildlife list guests enjoyed brief presentations on Baja plant adaptations by Patti and marine mammal citizen science projects by Hazel.

Day 12

Saturday 18th March

Isla San Francisco (morning) and Los Islotes (afternoon)

This morning we were at anchor offshore of Isla San Francisco. Crystal clear blue-green waters, bottlenose dolphins and California sea lions swimming near the boat and white sandy beaches were an amazing sight to wake up to! After breakfast, some of the group enjoyed a hike with Patti to a high vantage point near the top of a cliff, while others went with Hazel for a walk across the salt marsh habitat and along the beach. There was plenty to inspect along the length of the tideline such as pretty shells and a variety of bones, including the long dead remains of a Brown Pelican. There were birds to enjoy that were very much alive too thankfully, including Turkey Vulture and Ospreys in flight overhead and Snowy Egret and Great Blue Heron poised on the rocks waiting to catch a meal. Inland, the red blooms of the Adam's trees attracted feeding and displaying Costa's and Black-chinned Hummingbirds. Following these walks, we returned to Searcher with many guests then preparing to go for a snorkel whilst others opted to relax on the back deck with a book to read and a refreshing cold beverage. For those who chose to snorkel, this area is known as a hotspot for Garden Eel and some guests enjoyed good views of these small, long fish poking their heads out of the sand. Plenty of Reef Fish were here to marvel at too, including a variety of damselfish and wrasse species.

After lunch we arrived at the islet of Los Islotes where we had another opportunity to snorkel. This, however, was a bit different to our other snorkel sessions of the trip: we were at a California Sea Lion colony! Most guests chose to spend some time in the water with the sea lions and later said it was a highlight of their holiday. These playful marine mammals twirled around us, seemingly effortless and incredibly graceful swimmers. We could see this was very much their world and they literally swam rings around us with their prowess underwater, even compared to the most adept swimmers! Three of the sea lions found a lost dive mask somewhere in the depths (not belonging to our group) and three of them were playing with it, chasing each other in the

phytoplankton rich greenish waters. A huge male sea lion patrolled back and forth letting everyone know this was his area – he was a truly impressive beast that no one was going to argue with!

Guests who decided not to snorkel instead enjoyed a coastal cruise in one of the small skiff boats from Searcher. They journeyed around the islet to watch the California sea lions lounging and playing at the rookery from the dry comfort of the boat. They also observed Blue-footed boobies circling above and resting on the rocky pinnacles of the islet.

In the evening, we all enjoyed ship-made margaritas and BBQ, lovingly prepared by chef Josh and assistant Jonno, on the Searcher's stern. What a fantastic feast it was! The crew also demonstrated a 'magic trick', led by crewman Kenny which had us all laughing and clapping. After dinner, we heard lots of splashing about in the water nearby and soon some California Sea Lions appeared out of the darkness. They tore through the water chasing large Needlefish with observers excitedly cheering every time the sea lions were successful in their efforts. After this post-dinner entertainment, it was time for bed before our last full day on board.

Day 13

Sunday 19th March

Isla Cerralvo

Our good fortune with the weather continued this morning as we arrived at Isla Cerralvo. After breakfast we were taken ashore in the skiffs to enjoy a walk. Part of the island was privately owned and fenced off which was a surprise to the crew as this was not the case when they had last visited. However, whilst we were unable to have complete free reign, we still had great views of the birds flying among the cacti and other desert vegetation, including catching up with three Gila Woodpecker which gave everyone great views, Ash-throated Flycatcher and Northern Mockingbird. Scanning the shoreline as we walked along, we found an amazing variety of things washed up, including Paper Nautilus shells, coral, a large number of dead puffer fish blown up like balloons, a fragment of sea turtle shell and Moray Eel skeleton. Several pairs of oystercatchers, foraged along the water's edge including a duo composed of an American and a Black Oystercatcher (which are known to hybridise) and a Turkey Vulture eyed the remains along the shore for anything edible.

Some of us then went for our last snorkel. This turned out to be a truly stunning pristine reef habitat with a plethora of large, healthy coral heads. The fish life was incredible here with a wide variety and abundance of reef fish species; many said this was the best snorkel location of the trip in terms of the sheer diversity and the number of individuals. Highlights included Moorish Idol, King Angelfish, Cortez Rainbow Wrasse and Bicolour Parrotfish. With saltwater in our hair and warm sand between our toes we hopped into the skiffs and got back on-board Searcher. We then headed south to search for whales. As we journeyed back south towards Cabo San Lucas we encountered several humpback whales over the course of the afternoon, including a mother-calf pair, and a duo with one breaching and head slapping the water a few times right next to Searcher. What a wonderful finale to our whale watching!

It was time for our final dinner on board. There was a lovely warm atmosphere in the saloon, testament to the friendship and fun we had all shared over the past couple of incredible weeks together. Captain Art invited us all to share our personal highlights from the trip, during which we relived a variety of moments, from deeply moving to hilariously funny, everyone generously shared their cherished favourite parts of their holiday. Captain Art then gave an overview of departure procedures and shuttle arrangements, and Hazel gave a short speech of thanks to

the crew, guides Patti and Miriam and all guests for a wonderful trip. We travelled through the night to reach our endpoint of Cabo San Lucas, arriving there early next morning.

Day 14

Monday 20th March

Cabo San Lucas – London

This morning we arrived in the harbour of Cabo San Lucas and rose for an early breakfast of bagels and a variety of fillings prepared by Josh and Jonno. The taxis arrived at around 7am and so it was time to say farewell to Captain Art and his fantastic crew on board Searcher. We weren't all on the same flights home so at this point we had to say our goodbyes to some of the group too and wish them safe travels. Those of us on the same flight took two taxis to San Jose del Cabo where we had a couple of hours to walk the estuary to look for birds prior to catching our flight. This proved to be a great birding spot within the urban habitat of the town with plenty of species seen. Highlights included Cactus Wren, Osprey, California Scrub Jay, Cinnamon-rumped Seedeater, Pyrrhuloxia and good views of Belding's Yellowthroat (which is endemic to Baja and has a population of just 1,600 individuals). Keen eyed George also spotted a Baja California Slider Turtle basking in the sunshine on the bank of the estuary! We reconvened for a coffee and cake together in a café in the town before our taxis returned to take us to the airport. Once there we checked in and caught our flights home via Los Angeles, still chattering about this fantastic holiday – we couldn't believe it was over already; some were already talking about going back!

This was a very special trip left which left everyone with so many wonderful memories to treasure forever.

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Species lists

Birds

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		March 2023											
Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Brant Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	✓		✓									
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓											
Snow Goose	<i>Anser caerulescens</i>	✓											
Cinnamon Teal	<i>Spatula cyanoptera</i>	✓											
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Spatula discors</i>	✓											
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓											
American Wigeon	<i>Mareca americana</i>	✓											
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓											
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	✓											
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	✓											✓
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>		✓		✓								
Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	✓	✓										
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>		✓										
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	✓											
California Quail	<i>Callipepla californica</i>	✓											
White-throated Swift	<i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>	✓							✓				
Black-chinned Hummingbird	<i>Archilochus alexandri</i>										✓		
Anna's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte anna</i>	✓							✓				
Costa's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte costae</i>								✓		✓	✓	
Allen's Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus sasin</i>	✓											
Rock Dove - I	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓										✓
Eurasian Collared Dove - I	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓											
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	✓								✓			
White-winged Dove	<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>									✓			✓
Clapper Rail	<i>Rallus crepitans</i>					H							
Common Gallinule	<i>Gallinula galeata</i>	✓											✓
American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>	✓											✓
Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	✓											

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		March 2023											
Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	✓				✓							✓
Black-necked Grebe (Eared Grebe)	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>								✓				
Black Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus bachmani</i>		✓	✓								✓	
American Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>			✓						✓		✓	
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		✓										
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	✓											
Snowy Plover	<i>Charadrius nivosus</i>					✓							
Hudsonian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius hudsonicus</i>					✓							
Long-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>	✓			✓	✓							
Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓							
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>					✓							
Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	✓											
Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i>	✓			✓	✓							
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularia</i>	✓								✓			
Willet	<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>	✓	✓			✓							
Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	✓	✓			✓							
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>						Poss						
Laughing Gull	<i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>									✓			
Heermann's Gull - N	<i>Larus heermanni</i>	✓	✓	✓						✓		✓	
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓						
California Gull	<i>Larus californicus</i>	✓											
Western Gull	<i>Larus occidentalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Yellow-footed Gull - N	<i>Larus livens</i>								✓	✓	✓	✓	
American Herring Gull	<i>Larus smithsonianus</i>					✓							
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>					Poss							
Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	
Elegant Tern	<i>Thalasseus elegans</i>	✓		✓	✓								
Forster's Tern	<i>Sterna forsteri</i>	✓											
Scripps's Murrelet - N	<i>Synthliboramphus scrippsi</i>		✓							✓			
Craver's Murrelet - N	<i>Synthliboramphus craveri</i>			✓									
Cassin's Auklet	<i>Ptychoramphus aleuticus</i>		✓	✓									
Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>		✓					✓	✓				

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		March 2023											
Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Red-throated Loon	<i>Gavia stellata</i>		✓										
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>				✓	✓							
Laysan Albatross	<i>Phoebastria immutabilis</i>		✓	✓									
Black Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates melania</i>									✓	✓	✓	
Least Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates microsoma</i>								✓				
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>		✓		✓		✓						
Pink-footed Shearwater	<i>Ardenna creatopus</i>		✓				✓						
Black-vented Shearwater - N	<i>Puffinus opisthomelas</i>		✓	✓									
Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Blue-footed Booby	<i>Sula nebouxii</i>								✓	✓	✓		
Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>						✓						
Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>										✓		
Brandt's Cormorant	<i>Urile penicillatus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓					✓		
Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Nannopterum auritum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
American White Ibis	<i>Eudocimus albus</i>				✓	✓							
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	✓											
Yellow-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>					✓							
Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>	✓				✓							
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	✓	✓			✓				✓	✓	✓	
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓	✓			✓				✓			
Reddish Egret	<i>Egretta rufescens</i>				✓	✓							
Tricolored Heron	<i>Egretta tricolor</i>					✓							
Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	✓				✓							
Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	✓				✓				✓	✓		
Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	✓				✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	✓		✓						✓	✓		
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	✓				✓			✓			✓	
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>		✓			✓							
Gila Woodpecker - N	<i>Melanerpes uropygialis</i>								✓	✓		✓	
Nuttall's Woodpecker - N	<i>Dryobates nuttallii</i>	✓											
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>			Poss									

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		March 2023											
Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			Poss									
Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	✓											
Cassin's Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus vociferans</i>												✓
Ash-throated Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>								✓	✓		✓	✓
Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>					✓			✓		✓	✓	
California Scrub Jay	<i>Aphelocoma californica</i>	✓								✓			
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	✓											
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓		✓						✓	✓	✓	
Phainopepla - N	<i>Phainopepla nitens</i>	✓											
Verdin - N	<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>									✓	✓	✓	
Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>			✓									
Cactus Wren - N	<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>								Poss				✓
Canyon Wren	<i>Catherpes mexicanus</i>									H			
California Gnatcatcher - N	<i>Poliophtila californica</i>									✓		✓	
Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓	
Grey Thrasher - E	<i>Toxostoma cinereum</i>								Poss				
Common Starling - I	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓											
House Sparrow - I	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓											
House Finch	<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>	✓							✓	✓			
Black-throated Sparrow - N	<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>								✓		✓	✓	
White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	✓											
Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>			✓									
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	✓											
California Towhee - N	<i>Melospiza crissalis</i>	✓											
Hooded Oriole	<i>Icterus cucullatus</i>									✓			
Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	✓											
Brewer's Blackbird	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>	✓											
Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	✓	✓										
Belding's Yellowthroat - E	<i>Geothlypis beldingi</i>												✓
Mangrove Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>					✓							
Audubon's Warbler	<i>Setophaga auduboni</i>	✓											
Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>									✓	✓	✓	

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		March 2023											
Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Pyrrhuloxia - N	<i>Cardinalis sinuatus</i>												✓
Cinnamon-rumped Seed eater - E	<i>Sporophila torqueola</i>												✓

Mammals

		March 2023											
Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Guadalupe Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus townsendi</i>			300+									
Californian Sea Lion	<i>Zalophus californianus</i>	100+	100+	100+	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	100+		
Northern Elephant Seal	<i>Mirounga angustirostris</i>			100+									
Common Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		✓	✓									
Gray Whale	<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>	30+		50+	50+								
Blue Whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>						10+		2	2			
Fin Whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>						2			2		✓	
Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	✓	✓	✓			12+	50+	✓	✓		8+	
Long-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus capensis</i>		500+				700+		600+				
Short-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>	300+											
Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
California Ground Squirrel	<i>Otospermophilus beecheyi</i>	✓											
Desert Cottontail Rabbit	<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>	✓											
Greater Bonneted Bat (<i>Detected</i>)	<i>Eumops perotis</i>	✓											

Reptiles

		March 2023											
Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Loggerhead Sea Turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>						✓	Poss					
Green Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>						✓	✓					
Desert Iguana	<i>Dipsosaurus dorsalis</i>					✓							
Zebra-tailed Lizard	<i>Callisaurus draconoides</i>								✓				
Western Fence Lizard	<i>Sceloporus occidentalis</i>	✓											
San Benito Side-blotched Lizard - E	<i>Uta stansburiana stellata</i>												

Common name	Scientific name	March 2023											
		9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Common Side-blotched Lizard	<i>Uta stansburiana</i>												
Orange-throated Whiptail	<i>Aspidoscelis hyperythrus</i>								✓				
Granite Spiny Lizard	<i>Sceloporus orcutti</i>	✓											
Baja California Slider Turtle - E	<i>Trachemys nebulosa</i>												✓
Sea Turtle sp						✓					✓		
Whip-tailed Lizard sp	<i>Aspidoscelis sp</i>			x									

Fish

Common name	Scientific name
Orangeside Triggerfish	<i>Sufflamen verres</i>
Long-spine Porcupinefish	<i>Diodon holocanthus</i>
Whitespotted Boxfish	<i>Ostracion meleagris</i>
Starry Pufferfish	<i>Arothron meleagris</i>
Spotted Sharpnosed Puffer	<i>Canthigaster punctatissima</i>
Threebanded Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon humeralis</i>
Blacknosed Butterflyfish	<i>Johnrandallia nigrirostris</i>
King Angelfish	<i>Holacanthus passer</i>
Cortez Angelfish	<i>Pomacanthus zonipectus</i>
Yellowtail Surgeonfish	<i>Prionurus punctatus</i>
Moorish Idol	<i>Zanclus cornutus</i>
Spotted Hawkfish	<i>Cirrhichthys oxycephalus</i>
Giant Hawkfish	<i>Cirrhitis rivulatus</i>
Cortez Sea Chub	<i>Kyphosus elegans</i>
Mexican Hogfish	<i>Bodianus diplotaenia</i>
Wounded Wrasse	<i>Halichoeres chierchiae</i>
Spinster Wrasse	<i>Halichoeres nicholsi</i>
Cortez Rainbow Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma lucasanum</i>
Bicolour Parrotfish	<i>Cetoscarus bicolor</i>
Blue Parrotfish	<i>Scarus coeruleus</i>
Bumphead Parrotfish	<i>Scarus perrico</i>
Blue-and-gold Snapper	<i>Lutjanus viridis</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Mexican Goatfish	<i>Mulloidichthys dentatus</i>
Panamic Sergeant Major	<i>Abudefduf troschelii</i>
Silverstripe chromis	<i>Chromis alta</i>
Scissortail chromis	<i>Chromis atrilobata</i>
Garibaldi Damselfish	<i>Hypsypops rubicundus</i>
Bumphead Damselfish	<i>Microspathodon bairdii</i>
Giant Damselfish	<i>Microspathodon dorsalis</i>
Cortez Damselfish	<i>Stegastes rectifraenum</i>
Californian Needlefish	<i>Strongylura exilis</i>
Bennett's Flyingfish	<i>Cheilopogon pinnatibarbatus</i>
Large-banded Blenny	<i>Ophioblennius steindachneri</i>
Largemouth Blenny	<i>Labrisomus xanti</i>
Striped Marlin	<i>Kajikia audax</i>
Common Remora	<i>Remora remora</i>
Blue-spotted Cornetfish (Reef Cornetfish)	<i>Fistularia commersonii</i>
Blue Shark	<i>Prionace glauca</i>
Great Hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna mokarran</i>
Smoothtail Mobula	<i>Mobula thurstoni</i>
Yellowtail Jack	<i>Seriola ialandi</i>
Cortez Garden Eel	<i>Heteroconger digueti</i>
Zebra Moray Eel	<i>Gymnomuraena zebra</i>
Blue and Yellow Chromis	<i>Chromis limbaughi</i>
Graybar Grunt	<i>Haemulon sexfasciatum</i>
Chameleon Wrasse	<i>Halichoeres dispilus</i>
Sunset Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma grammaticum</i>
Cortez Round Stingray	<i>Urobatis masculatus</i>
Spotted Sand Bass	<i>Paralabrax maculatofasciatus</i>
Pacific Spotted Scorpionfish	<i>Scorpaena mystes</i>
Bullseye Pufferfish	<i>Sphoeroides annulatus</i>
Chinese Trumpetfish	<i>Aulostomos chinensis</i>
Pelagic Stingray	<i>Pteroplatytrygon violacea</i>
Spotted Eagle Ray	<i>Aetobatus narinari</i>
Barracuda sp.	

Common name	Scientific name
Sardine sp.	

Plants

Common name	Scientific name
Coastal agave	<i>Agave sebastiana</i>
Cedro's cholla	<i>Cylindroptunia cedrosensis</i>
Cedros barrel cactus	<i>Ferocactus chrysacanthus</i>
Palmer's mammillaria	<i>Mammillaria neopalmeri</i>
Crystalline iceplant	<i>Mesembryan themum</i>
Slender-leaved iceplant	<i>Mesembryan nodiflorum</i>
Blue dicks/wild hyacinth	<i>Dipterostemon capitatum</i>
Rock daisy	<i>Perityle emoryi</i>
San Benito tarweed	<i>Hemizonia streetsii</i>
Island bush mallow	<i>Malva pacifica</i>
San Benito liveforever	<i>Dudleya linearis</i>
Red mangrove	<i>Rhizophora mangle</i>
White mangrove	<i>Laguncularia racemosa</i>
Saltgrass	<i>Monanthochloe littoralis</i>
Iodine bush	<i>Allenrolfea occidentalis</i>
Baja California Sur agave	<i>Agave sobria</i>
Organ pipe cactus	<i>Stenocereus thurberi</i>
Cardon	<i>Pachycereus pringlei</i>
Teddybear cholla	<i>Cylindroptunia bigelovi</i>
Ocotillo	<i>Fouquieria splendens</i>
Small-leaf elephant tree	<i>Bursera microphylla</i>
Red-stem elephant tree	<i>Bursera hindsiana</i>
Baja California elephant tree	<i>Pachycormus discolor</i>
Palo blanco	<i>Lysiloma candidum</i>
Baja California rock daisy	<i>Amauria rotundifolia</i>
Sand verbena	<i>Abronia spp.</i>
Old man cactus	<i>Lophocereus schottii</i>
Chainlink/ Baja California cholla	<i>Cylindroptunia cholla</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Adam's tree	<i>Fouquieria diguetii</i>
Jojoba/ goatnut	<i>Simmondsia chinensis</i>
Desert mistletoe	<i>Phoradendron californicum</i>
Saltgrass	<i>Monanthochloe littoralis</i>
Pickleweed	<i>Salicornia spp.</i>
Iodine bush	<i>Allenrolfea occidentalis</i>
Galloping cactus	<i>Stenocereus gummosus</i>
Island prickly pear	<i>Optunia tapona</i>
Western sea purslane	<i>Sesuvium verrucosum</i>
Gulf coulterella	<i>Coulterella capitata</i>
California marina	<i>Marina parryi</i>
Seashore saltgrass	<i>Distichlis spicata</i>
Giant/ wavy barrel cactus	<i>Ferocactus diguetii</i>
White-leaf spurge	<i>Euphorbia leucophylla</i>