

Whales & Dolphins of Monterey Bay

Naturetrek Tour Report

27 August – 4 September 2016



Humpback Whales lunge feeding



Blue Whale fluking



Northern Elephant Seals



Orca

Report & images compiled by Peter Dunn



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Tour Leaders: Peter Dunn & Tom Brereton (leaders) with 16 Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Saturday 27th August

London to San Francisco

Peter and Tom met the all the participants off the plane from London, which landed slightly ahead of time. With the vehicles already pre-hired, we were soon heading south along the US101 towards Monterey. As we travelled along the highway and away from the suburbs of San Francisco, passing through Silicon Valley, we had excellent views of the mountains and hills of the Diablo Range to our left. In the afternoon sunshine, the dry grassy scrub known as chaparral was golden-coloured. Because of the later flight and it getting dark, we took a more direct route to Carmel Valley, via Salinas and over Laureless Grade into the valley.

We arrived at our accommodation in Carmel Valley Lodge about 9pm local time where, after accessing our rooms, some partook in the cold deli supper left for us, before retiring to bed after a long day.

Day 2

Sunday 28th August

Monterey Bay and Carmel Valley

Morning came too soon for some and not early enough for others with body clocks all scrambled, however a fine breakfast of scrambled eggs, toast and cereals was very welcome. Some of the early risers already had added Bewick's Wren to the day score, and American Crow and California Scrub Jay called in the half light.

We set off for Fisherman's Wharf in overcast conditions as the marine layer had moved inland during the night, but that quickly burnt off with warm 22°C sunshine. As we walked along Fisherman's Wharf we had our first good sightings of the large Western Gulls and Sea Otters, from the quay. The coarse barking of California Sea Lions echoed across the harbour while the smells of ripe fish from the fishing boats and the sea lions was ever present!

With all the paperwork organised prior to our arrival, we strolled over to Monterey Bay Whale Watch, picked up our boarding passes and watched the 'Blackfish' slide up to the dock, captained by John Mayer. Greg entertained us with cetacean facts as we waited for deck hands Brit, Will and Brian to get the ship prepared. We were soon invited aboard, stationing ourselves around all sides of the vessel.

We slowly headed out of the harbour past the coastguard pier where the smell and sight of over 200 California Sea Lions was memorable. There was also a good selection of Brandt's Cormorants, a few Black Turnstones, and Heermann's and Western Gulls

Soon we were heading out south-west towards the canyon and after about 20 minutes a sly Minke Whale showed a few times as it headed away, but easier to see was a pod of 13 Risso's Dolphins, some of the older animals being well scarred. Common Guillemots were numerous – many were males with their single offspring in tow. This late in the season, most chicks are almost as big as their fathers and both called continuously.

John then made a heading straight out west for the canyon edge and we suspected he had a goal as he quietly slipped past a couple of distant Blue Whales and we recorded Black-vented, Pink-footed and Sooty Shearwaters as we went. A few Black-footed Albatrosses circled the boat and diminutive Cassin's Auklets and their large cousins, Rhinoceros Auklets were sighted.

Eventually our goal came into sight with a small pod of Orca containing around seven animals including a male called "Liner" with a huge dorsal fin. We watched these animals for about half an hour as they quickly moved through the water, but the lure of Blue Whales beckoned us and we went in search of them. It wasn't long before we found a pair feeding together and these two even put on a 'fluke' show, something not seen very often in Monterey. We also found small groups of Fin Whales feeding in the vicinity and over the next hour we spotted six Blue Whales and 13 Fin Whales. Sabine's Gulls and an Arctic Skua added to the seabird list as we started to make our way back to Monterey Harbour.

We landed around 1.15pm and went straight to Abalonetti's restaurant opposite the whale watch building to enjoy bread bowls of clam chowder or sandwiches.

The afternoon was to be spent driving the 17 Mile Drive, but the amount of traffic entering and difficulty in getting in was abandoned in favour of a mid-week visit. After a brief stop for provisions we arrived back at the hotel at 4.30pm. Following a short comfort stop a small group joined Peter to try and find the endemic Yellow-billed Magpie further down Carmel Valley Road. Mourning Dove and Black Phoebe were seen on the way and we reached the junction with Tassajarra Road where Peter heard some magpies calling. Soon we had seen two birds through the telescope, studying all the features. Also here were a small group of California Quail and a nice stripy Lark Sparrow. We made our way back, stopping at some open chaparral where we saw a good group of Western Bluebirds, two American Kestrels, heard a Nuttall's Woodpecker and saw two more Yellow-billed Magpies.

That evening we dined on steak, potatoes and asparagus with a cheesecake desert, and Tom talked through today's sightings for the checklist, illustrated with some of the images taken during the day. With the first full day completed, most retired to their rooms before 9pm.

Day 3

Monday 29th August

Monterey Bay and Moss Landing

One or two met before breakfast, but the overcast foggy conditions produced little other than Band-tailed Pigeon and hearing Nuttall's Woodpecker and California Towhee. After a fine breakfast we headed north to Fisherman's Wharf and boarded the Blackfish for another day in the water. It was still grey and overcast as we left harbour with the usual visit to the sea lions on the pier, and on the seaward side there was one Surfbird. We headed north-west and today there was more swell giving an exciting bow ride for some. It took about an hour to reach the canyon edge where we found our first Blue Whale which kindly fluked-up for us, followed by a couple of Humpback Whales which did a bit of lunge feeding to an applauding crowd!

We continued heading north and found more Humpback Whales feeding, one doing a sideways lunge. We slowly turned back towards Monterey and found two more Blue Whales and a group of feeding Humpback Whales, and in the distance we could see another Humpback Whale breaching four or five times. For birders it was a little

quiet compared to yesterday but we still saw two Black-footed Albatross feeding on a dead fish and a nice Long-tailed Skua flew past.

Sadly the afternoon sailing was cancelled as the forecast was for the wind to increase and the seas to rise, and indeed it became quite choppy with white horses as we viewed it from land. After eating our packed lunch on the quayside we travelled north to Moss Landing where we had an introduction to one of premiere shorebird habitats in the area. This is also a haven for Sea Otters and we found three females close to the road, two with kits on their chest (one nearly as big as the mother) and further along a large party of 20 males hanging on the tide near the car park on Jetty Road.

After spending a couple of hours here identifying Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Willet, Least and Western Sandpipers and Semi-palmated Plover, we returned to the inn in Carmel Valley to relax and freshen up before a lasagne dinner prepared by Sheri and Jacci.

We completed the checklist for the day and went to bed to prepare for a day on the Big Sur.

Day 4

Tuesday 30th August

Big Sur

We woke to a beautiful clear day and after breakfast we made a short visit to the nearby airfield. Most visible were the clown-like Acorn Woodpeckers and inquisitive California Scrub Jays, and in the seeded grass House Finch and Western Bluebirds were feeding. In a small patch of scrub we saw Spotted and California Towhees and a pair of dainty Oak Titmouse.

As we were about to set off for the Big Sur, we were delayed by a nice mixed flock of birds including diminutive American Bushtits, Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Oak Titmice. This year we had to change plans as the Sobranes fire was still burning and most of the state parks were closed including our annually visited Andrew Molera. We therefore stopped to view Carmel Bay and saw at least four Humpback Whales blowing in the canyon, and again at Bixby Bridge for the traditional group photograph and to see a Peregrine Falcon on its nest. After visiting the deli to collect our lunch we stopped at Grimes Point, a good site for condor. Initially we did not see any although a Golden Eagle high over the hill was a bonus. Yvonne checked the trees around the house and discovered two of these huge scavengers. As we watched in awe of their size, more California Condors started to appear and because they had wing tags, we managed to amass around 13 birds. What a brilliant start.

Eventually we headed off and arrived at a vista, which used to have a whale painted on the road surface, to eat lunch. We then headed past Lucia and Gorda to Ragged Point for a comfort stop. The furthest we travelled was to Piedra Blanca beach near San Simeon to view and photograph the huge Northern Elephant Seals as they lay on the beach. There were around 100 present here (with more on another beach) and in amongst them were some huge males.

It was time to retrace our tracks and we had another stop at Ragged Point for refreshments. We also had good views of Anna's Hummingbird and some Monarch butterflies. Our last stop north was at Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park where we looked up the valley for condors but only saw Turkey Vulture and Red-tailed Hawk, and

there were another four Humpback Whales feeding offshore. A nice sighting here was of a secretive Wrentit. It was then time to sit back and enjoy the beautiful scenery as we made our way back to the inn in warm sunshine.

That evening we enjoyed a nice pork roll dinner and a glass or two of wine, after which we completed the checklist before retiring to bed.

Day 5

Wednesday 31st August

Monterey Bay and 17 Mile Drive

Today was a clear morning but with marine fog towards the coast. We had breakfast and headed to Fisherman's Wharf. We were on the Blackfish again with Captain Scott and headed north-west to look for whales. A moderate swell and wind made for an exciting ride at the front of the boat, but calmer at the rear as we headed for the canyon edge. Almost immediately we came across a small group of Risso's Dolphins which showed well on both sides of the boat, and we started to see one or two Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters. We sailed through some sea fog to come out in blue skies and Humpback Whales. A cow/calf pair stayed around the boat for a while as we slowly headed for more blows in the distance. There were about 20 Humpback Whales feeding over a small area of the canyon and some started sideways lunging as the sea was full of pink krill.

While all this was going on a Blue Whale appeared, then another, and we counted up to four, all showing well. For the birders, five Black-footed Albatrosses were seen including one which flew very close past the boat, and Pomarine Skua was recorded. Eventually we had to start making our way back to the harbour but were distracted by more side-lunging Humpback Whales on the way.

We again ate out packed lunch on the side of the marina and then took a ride around 17 Mile Drive where we stopped to photograph the Lone Cypress, passed by Pebble Beach Golf community, and visited seal rock. We added more Killdeer to the list, had some good views of Surfbird and Black Oystercatcher, and found a pair of White-tailed Kite.

All too soon it was time to head back to the hotel, to relax and prepare for dinner and complete our checklist. We had an early start tomorrow for an 8am boat, so group members retired early after another full Monterey day.

Day 6

Thursday 1st September

Monterey Bay whale watch and free time

The morning was overcast, foggy and damp as we went for breakfast. It continued to be like this as we arrived at Fisherman's Wharf for an 8am sailing on the Sea Wolf, the original whale watch boat. Skippered by Everett, we headed out west and just outside the harbour we came across a young Humpback Whale with a few more further out. We continued west with Humpback Whales breaching in the distance and blowing all around us. We approached an animal with a much more powerful blow. It was a huge Blue Whale and this one 'fluked up', something Monterey Blue Whales rarely do. On the underside of the fluke were two white spots in the shape of a rabbit and this animal was known locally by the name 'bunny' or 'white eyes'. It would travel quite far

underwater and then reappear ahead of us, again fluking after a few shallow dives, much to the appreciation of the passengers on the Sea Wolf.

We saw large mixed flocks of Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters, phalaropes and gulls feeding, and also quite a number of Humpback Whales. There was a pink bloom of krill on the water and we spent nearly 45 minutes watching three to five Humpback Whales regularly lunge feeding; showing their baleen plates and the pink in their mouths. A large Black-footed Albatross passed close by the boat and Arctic Skuas (Parasitic Jaegers) harried the Elegant Terns, whilst a few dowdy Cassin's Auklets bobbed about on the sea. This had been an amazing morning and as it was the last sea trip for the group, we showed our appreciation by handing an envelope containing gratuities to the whale watching centre staff.

Lunch was eaten in the vehicles as we drove to the end of Cannery Row, where most of the group enjoyed an afternoon in Monterey Bay Aquarium whilst others explored the sea front. We headed back to our inn in time to relax and enjoy the amenities before a spaghetti bolognese dinner and checklist.

Day 7

Friday 2nd September

Moss Landing and Elkhorn Slough

We set off after breakfast in overcast fog for our rearranged day to the north. We called at Moss Landing to drop off our lunch requests and then headed to Zmudowski's State Beach, where there is a small freshwater lagoon alongside the sand dunes. To reach the beach we had to drive through huge fields of strawberries, lettuces and artichokes, then we came across this little oasis. The water level was high so no exposed mud, but many Western, Californian and Heermann's Gulls were bathing. A small pool on the left held numerous Snowy and Great Egrets and a juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron, and Greater Yellowlegs fed alongside. After parking, the group's task was to find the Pacific Tree Frogs and once they were shown one, each person found their own to photograph.

We hunted for bird species in the reeds and weed fields and succeeded in finding American Bushtit, Wrentit, Common Yellowthroat, Song Sparrow and Western Marsh Wren. Overhead a group of hirundines were feeding; mainly Barn Swallows with one or two Northern Rough-winged Swallows and Violet-green Swallows. American White Pelicans flew over and a nice Green Heron was found in the reeds.

Soon it was time to move on and we relocated to Moonglow Dairy where there was access to Elkhorn Slough. Driving in, California Ground Squirrels raced across the track into their burrows and a Loggerhead Shrike hunted from a small tree. Blackbirds are one of the targets here but there seemed to be fewer this year and we only saw Red-winged Blackbird and some Brown-headed Cowbirds. On the slurry pond were Northern Shoveler, Cinnamon Teal and a single Spotted Sandpiper. The tide was high and waders were hidden in the vegetation but we could identify Western and Least Sandpipers, Long-billed Curlew, Willet and Marbled Godwit. More American White Pelicans were seen and out in the Slough were a number of Sea Otters, some with kits. We were able to compare the identification features of Western and Clark's Grebes here also. Walking back to the minibuses we found a Pacific-slope Flycatcher, the second of the day, with a small flock of Chestnut-backed Chickadees.

We lunched on the picnic tables of Phil's Snack Shack watching Killdeer and yellowlegs on the pool, Black-crowned Night Herons in the tree, and a Western Osprey flew over. After lunch a short trip to the other end of Moss Landing produced Black-necked Stilt and American Avocet, and then we headed back to Carmel Valley to look for magpies.

We travelled to Tassajarra Road and soon found Yellow-billed Magpies. We initially counted nine but then a Cooper's Hawk flew into the trees, scattering all the birds and we reckoned about 30 magpies! American Kestrel was also seen here, as was Acorn Woodpecker and possible Northern Flicker, whilst one of the group found a few Lark Sparrows. We stopped at a site where Peter had seen California Thrasher in the past and as we alighted, we disturbed a flock of California Quail. With a little persuasion, a thrasher began to sing and after fleeting flight views of four birds, one eventually settled in some bare twigs and sand in the open for all to see. A fitting end to the day!

That evening we dined out at the Fishwife Restaurant at Asilomar, Pacific Grove and enjoyed a 'posh' fish supper for our last night together.

Day 8

Saturday 3rd September

Leave from San Francisco Airport

As our flight home was not until 7.15pm and four of the group were staying on for a few days, we took a trip north of the airport over the Golden Gate Bridge. After breakfast we packed and set off for the last time from our comfortable inn. We headed for San Francisco on Highway 101 which took us straight through the centre of the city. We made a stop for lunch and a break at Mountain View before heading into the city. The undulating streets we knew from movies and TV programmes with names such as Geary, Van Ness and Lombard were photographed from the minibus as we passed through and continued north over the Golden Gate Bridge.

With time ticking on we returned south to a road on the north bank which overlooked the bridge with San Francisco in the background. Today it was very busy but we had excellent views as we drove up and down the road.

We then battled with traffic and 'laid back' Californian drivers to refuel the minibuses and park them in the garage at the airport for the next group. Four of the group then headed back into San Francisco on the BART (Bay Area Regional Transport train) and two headed to Canada for another Naturetrek tour. Everyone said goodbye to Peter who was staying on to lead a new group arriving later that day. Meanwhile Tom escorted the remaining members of the group home.

Day 9

Sunday 4th September

Arrive London

The plane arrived safely and the remaining members of the group said their goodbyes in the baggage reclaim

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The Group at Bixby Bridge

Species Lists

Mammals (✓ = recorded but not counted)

	Common name	Scientific name	August/September							
			27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
1	Western Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus griseus</i>		1		2				
2	Eastern Fox Squirrel	<i>Sciurus niger</i>		1	2					
3	California Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus beecheyi</i>			1	3	✓	10		
4	Botta's Pocket Gopher	<i>Thomomys bottae</i>				1				
5	European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>							2	
6	Northern Elephant Seal	<i>Mirounga angustirostris</i>				130				
7	Northern Fur Seal	<i>Callorhinus ursinus</i>		1						
8	California Sea Lion	<i>Zalophus californianus</i>		100	300		500	✓	✓	
9	Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		✓	60		20	10	✓	
10	Sea Otter	<i>Enhydra lutris</i>		20	30		25	8	40	
11	Mule Deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>		4		2	10			
12	Minke Whale	<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>		1						
13	Blue Whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>		6	6		6	3		
14	Fin Whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>		13						
15	Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>		9	15	10	24	40		
16	Risso's Dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>		12			13			
17	Killer Whale (Orca)	<i>Orcinus orca</i>		7						
18	Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>			5					
19	Dall's Porpoise	<i>Phocoenoides dalli</i>			4			3		

Birds (H= heard only)

1	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		✓	✓		✓	6		4
2	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>			15			2	✓	
3	Cinnamon Teal	<i>Anas cyanoptera</i>							8	
4	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>							120	
5	Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>						1	1	
6	California Quail	<i>Callipepla californica</i>		7	8				25	
7	Black-footed Albatross	<i>Phoebastria nigripes</i>		14	3		8	2		
8	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		1	1		1	1		
9	Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>		4000	3500		2300	✓		
10	Pink-footed Shearwater	<i>Ardenna creatopus</i>		12	9		20	110		
11	Black-vented Shearwater	<i>Puffinus opisthomelas</i>		14	5		2			
12	Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>						10	12	
13	Western Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>			1				1	
14	Clark's Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus clarkii</i>							1	
15	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>			1			7	7	
16	Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>							1	
17	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>			2	1	2	2	3	1
18	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		2	2	1	2	6	✓	1
19	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>		1	1			3	15	
20	American White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>							14	
21	Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>		13	20	15	120	50	50	✓
22	Brandt's Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax penicillatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	850	20	
23	Pelagic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus</i>		10	2		2	10		
24	Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>			16			5	✓	
25	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	1	10	15	✓	✓	15	✓	✓
26	California Condor	<i>Gymnogyps californianus</i>				13				

	Common name	Scientific name	August/September							
			27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
27	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>							1	
28	White-tailed Kite	<i>Elanus leucurus</i>	1				2		1	
29	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>				1				
30	Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>							1	
31	Red-shouldered Hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>		1	1		1	1	1	
32	Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>		1	2	4	6	2	8	✓
33	American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>						3	10	
34	Black Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus bachmani</i>					5	5		
35	American Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>				H				
36	Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>							10	
37	American Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra americana</i>							10	
38	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>			6				2	
39	Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>			12				1	
40	Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>				1	10		3	
41	Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i>	✓		100				100	
42	Whimbrel (American)	<i>Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus</i>		12	2		2			
43	Long-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>			5		1		10	
44	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>			2				8	
45	Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>							2	
46	Wandering Tattler	<i>Tringa incana</i>						1		
47	Willet	<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>			15				40	
48	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>						1	1	
49	Black Turnstone	<i>Arenaria melanocephala</i>		6	4		6	3		
50	Surfbird	<i>Aphriza virgata</i>			1		5			
51	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>			50					
52	Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i>			✓				✓	
53	Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>			✓				✓	
54	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>		300	350		270	500		
55	Red Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>		80	15		100	20		
56	Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>		3						
57	Heermann's Gull	<i>Larus heermanni</i>		30	100	6	✓	80	10	
58	Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>			1		1	6	5	
59	California Gull	<i>Larus californicus</i>			70		150	160	20	
60	Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>			1			1		
61	Western Gull	<i>Larus occidentalis</i>		100	200	✓	✓	500	✓	✓
62	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>						1	1	
63	Elegant Tern	<i>Thalasseus elegans</i>		30	70		12	28	✓	
64	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>		1						
65	Forster's Tern	<i>Sterna forsteri</i>								3
66	Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>					1	1		
67	Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua)	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>		1	3			1		
68	Long-tailed Jaeger (Skua)	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>			1					
69	Common Murre (Guillemot)	<i>Uria aalge</i>		50	1300	1	300	150		
70	Pigeon Guillemot	<i>Cephus columba</i>		2	2		1			
71	Cassin's Auklet	<i>Ptychoramphus aleuticus</i>		8	1		2	4		
72	Rhinoceros Auklet	<i>Cerorhinca monocerata</i>		25			1	4		
73	Rock Dove (Feral)	<i>Columba livia 'feral'</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
74	Band-tailed Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas fasciata</i>		1	3	2	2			
75	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	1	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
76	Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>		10	1	1	1	6	✓	✓
77	Vaux's Swift	<i>Chaetura vauxi</i>				2				

	Common name	Scientific name	August/September							
			27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
78	Anna's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte anna</i>		6	2	6	5	4	5	
79	Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>		4	4		1	3	1	
80	Acorn Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes formicivorus</i>		6		10	6	2	6	✓
81	Nuttall's Woodpecker	<i>Picoides nuttallii</i>		H	H	H			H	
82	Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides villosus</i>				H				
83	American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>		2		3			2	
84	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				3			2	
85	Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>		1					6	
86	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax difficilis</i>							2	
87	Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>							1	
88	Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>		✓						
89	California Scrub Jay	<i>Aphelocoma californica</i>		✓	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
90	Yellow-billed Magpie	<i>Pica nuttalli</i>		5					30	
91	American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
92	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>				4				
93	Oak Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus inornatus</i>		1			1			
94	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	<i>Poecile rufescens</i>	5	✓	H	4	5	1	4	
95	Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>				2			2	
96	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>							2	
97	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		10	5		10	30	50	✓
98	American Bushtit	<i>Psaltriparus minimus</i>	10			10	6		12	
99	Wren	<i>Chamaea fasciata</i>			H	1			1	
100	Marsh Wren	<i>Cistothorus palustris</i>							5	
101	Bewick's Wren	<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>		2		H				
102	Pygmy Nuthatch	<i>Sitta pygmaea</i>						10		
103	Brown Creeper	<i>Certhia americana</i>					1			
104	California Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma redivivum</i>							4	
105	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
106	Western Bluebird	<i>Sialia mexicana</i>		20		5				
107	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>						6	15	
108	House Finch	<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>		✓		12	10	6	✓	✓
109	Orange-crowned Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis celata</i>	1							
110	Townsend's Warbler	<i>Setophaga townsendi</i>			1					
111	Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	20	50		10		10	40	
112	Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>							80	
113	Brewer's Blackbird	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>		20	20	10		30	✓	
114	Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>					20			
115	Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>		1						
116	Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>							10	
117	White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>			3		1		2	
118	Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon)	<i>Junco hyemalis oregonus</i>					6			
119	Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>				1			1	
120	Lark Sparrow	<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>		1					3	
121	Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>				1				
122	California Towhee	<i>Melospiza crissalis</i>				2			1	

Other fauna

Cabbage White, *Pieris rapae*Gray Hairstreak, *Strymon melinus*Western Sulphur, *Colias occidentalis*American Lady, *Vanessa virginiensis*

Lorquin's Admiral, *Limenitis lorquini*

Monarch, *Danaus plexippus*

Woodland Skipper, *Ochlodes sylvanoides*

Common Buckeye, *Junonia coenia*

Blue-eyed Darner, *Rhionaeschna multicolor*

Western Fence Lizard, *Sceloporus occidentalis*

Pelagic Red Crab (Tuna Crab) *Pleuroncodes planipes*

California Sister, *Adelpha bredowii*

Fiery Skipper, *Hylephila phyleus*

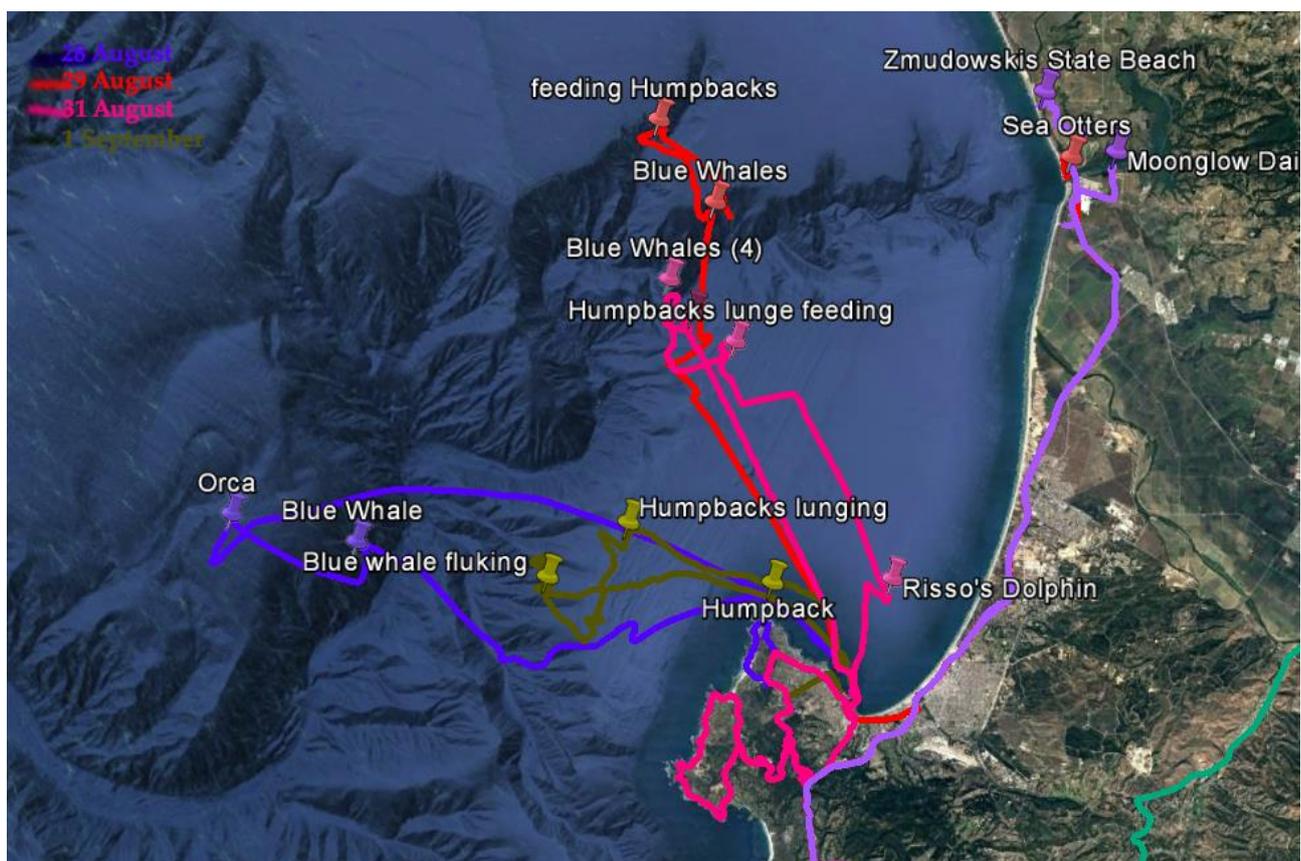
Umber Skipper, *Poanes melane*

Cardinal Meadowhawk, *Sympetrum illotum*

Common Garter Snake, *Thamnophis sirtalis*

Pacific Tree Frog, *Pseudacris regilla*

Map of whale watching tracks



Condor Sighting on 30th August 2016

We were fortunate to coincide with a large gathering of California Condors at a site called Grimes Point and were able to log 13 birds using the wing tags (one juvenile didn't have any tags visible at all). There is a good website which stores information on these wing-tagged birds at <http://www.condorspotter.com/>

The birds we saw are listed below with hatching and home territory information. It was interesting that four birds present were originally from Pinnacles National Park, some 37 miles NE of Big Sur.

Tag Colour	Tag Number	Full Number	Name	Sex	Home Site	Hatch Date
Black	34	534	-	Female	Pinnacles	19-May-09
White	0	787	Sky	Female	Big Sur	16-Apr-15
black	6	606	-	Male	Pinnacles	22-Apr-11
purple	50	650	Zenith	Male	Big Sur	25-Apr-12
black	28	728	-	Female	Pinnacles	20-Mar-14
purple	97	697	Poseidon	Male	Big Sur	30-Apr-13
black	30	330	-	Male	Pinnacles	19-Apr-04
white	70	470	Fuego	Male	Big Sur	12-Apr-08
purple	31	631	Zephyr	Male	Big Sur	21-Jun-11
green	18	718	Apollo	Male	Big Sur	10-Jun-13
green	16	716	Orville	Male	Big Sur	04-Jun-13
white	8?					

