

Whales & Dolphins of Monterey Bay

Naturetrek Tour Report

3 - 11 September 2018



Humpback breaching near the boat



Black-vented Shearwater



Common Dolphin



Humpbacks lunge feeding

Report compiled by Ian Nicholson
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Summary

This tour lived up to, and in fact exceeded everyone's expectations. The whale watching was superb, with Blue Whales seen on the first day, Humpbacks leaping from the water and Common Dolphins playing around the boat. Added to that were the sightings of a remarkable eight California Condors, thousands of seabirds, hundreds of Elephant Seals, lots of cute Sea Otters, as well as the magnificent scenery of central California, giving a holiday which will remain in all our memories for a long time to come.

Day 1

Monday 3rd September

London to San Francisco

The flight from Heathrow was only slightly behind schedule, and as soon as the group had cleared immigration, we loaded up the vehicles and headed for our hotel in Carmel Valley. Traffic was initially heavy, but moving fairly freely, and we made good time, arriving at the hotel after about two hours. The rooms were quickly allocated and most of us had something to eat and drink from the cold buffet which had been left out for us, before heading for bed after a long day travelling.

Day 2

Tuesday 4th September

Monterey Bay and Monterey Headland

We were all up in plenty of time for our 7am breakfast, eagerly anticipating our first day out whale watching in Monterey Bay. It was a misty morning in the Carmel Valley, but as anticipated it cleared later leaving a pleasant sunny day. We were on the road by 8am and on arrival at the harbour we collected our boarding passes from the Discovery Whale Watch office before setting off on our vessel, the "Sur Randy". While still in the harbour we had our first sightings of Sea Otters close to the boat, and as we passed the breakwater we were entertained by the hundreds of Californian Sea Lions resting on the rocks. With them on the breakwater were a Great Blue Heron, a Black Turnstone and numerous Brandt's Cormorants, but it was the sight (and smell) of the sea lions which will remain a lasting memory.

The boat initially headed north towards Point Pinos, and we had a brief stop by the buoy which marks this rocky outcrop as Peter had pointed out two unusually large sea lions lying on the buoy. They were identified as Steller Sea Lions - a fairly unusual sighting here, as they are normally found much further north.

Moving on, we came across our first two Humpback Whales of the trip, which we watched feeding for some time, before moving further west, outside the bay, in search of other species. After a short time, we came across two huge Blue Whales - the largest animals ever known to have existed on earth. We stayed with them for around 40 minutes, during which time they repeatedly dived for food, then remained on the surface for several minutes before diving again. Fortunately for us, they were only staying submerged for about 10 minutes each time - they are able to hold their breath for much longer than this, and can travel huge distances while submerged, which would have made keeping up with them very difficult. Not surprisingly, most of the group had Blue Whales near the top of their "most-wanted-to-see" lists, so to find them on our first day was a massive bonus.

Eventually we had to leave the Blue Whales, but it wasn't long before we came across a large pod of Common Dolphins. Despite the name, they are far from being the most commonly seen dolphin species in these waters, although they are one of the most entertaining as they actually seem to seek out boats, especially moving ones. They frequently came right alongside the boat, riding on the bow wave and in the wake, and leaping acrobatically from the water.

We also saw many species of seabirds this morning, including hundreds of Sooty Shearwaters, several Pink-footed Shearwaters, 30+ Rhinoceros Auklets and numerous Elegant Terns and Brown Pelicans.

On our way back towards Monterey Harbour we came across four more Humpbacks, and also found an Elephant Seal not far from land, to round off our first trip of the week.

Back on dry land, we walked the short distance to Abalonetti's restaurant on the pier where we enjoyed a leisurely lunch. Unusually, Ian was the only one to go for the local speciality of clam chowder served in a sourdough bread bowl, but we all had good appetites after a morning out on the water, and did full justice to the excellent food.

After lunch we returned to the vehicles and then drove slowly round the Monterey Headland, stopping at various places to view the scenery and wildlife, which included Black Oystercatchers, Black Turnstones and several Californian Ground Squirrels which were clearly used to being fed by visitors, as they approach everyone fearlessly, sitting up on their hind legs and begging for food.

By now it was a lovely sunny afternoon, and after calling at a supermarket for beer and wine to accompany our evening meals (the hotel isn't licenced but are happy for us to bring our own) we returned to relax for an hour or so. Some decided on a swim in the pool while others just rested in their rooms before we got together to go over the day's sightings and discuss plans for tomorrow, followed by dinner of chicken, corn-on-the-cob and an excellent vegetarian chilli.

Day 3

Wednesday 5th September

Monterey Bay

Today's plan was very simple - we would be out on the whale-watching boat this morning, returning to the harbour for our picnic lunch, and then out on the boat again in the afternoon. It all worked out beautifully, with some superb views of marine wildlife.

The weather was very similar to yesterday, with a misty morning slowly clearing to give a sunny afternoon, with very light winds. The first interesting sighting of the day was three Wild Turkeys on the roof of Viv's room, which flew down into the car park and then walked leisurely across the road, joining another nine of their companions on the other side.

We arrived at the dock in plenty of time for the 9am sailing and, having watched the usual pelicans and sea lions in the harbour, we set out into the bay. However, we had been going for less than 15 minutes when we came across a small pod of Risso's Dolphins, unusually close to the shore for this species which normally inhabits much deeper water. Having watched them for a while before they moved off (they don't "play" with the boat

like some other dolphin species), we continued on and found a mother-and-calf pair of Humpback Whales which were repeatedly throwing themselves out of the water. No-one understands the reason for this behaviour - it could be a means of communication, or possibly trying to remove parasites, or perhaps it's just fun - but whatever the reason it makes for a fantastic spectacle. It also gave the photographers in the group an opportunity to practice anticipating where the next breach would take place, and then getting that perfect shot - never easy on a moving boat! There were some good seabird sightings on this trip, including a Black-footed Albatross which came fairly close to the boat, and several Black-vented Shearwaters, these being the first sightings of the autumn for this species which breeds further south on islands off Baja California, Monterey Bay being at the northern limit of its wintering range.

It was difficult to drag ourselves away, but all too soon the time had come to head back towards Monterey harbour. However, as the boat crew always say "the trip isn't over until we're tied up at the dock", and, as often happens, they were quite correct. We found more Humpbacks on the way back, which we watched briefly, and then came across more Risso's Dolphins - a much large pod this time - which entertained us before it really was time to get back to dry land.

We were booked on the afternoon trip starting at 1.30, so we had just under an hour to eat our packed lunches. Ruth, Tim and Janet decided to miss the afternoon trip and explore Monterey instead, while the rest of us were back on board in plenty of time to set off into the bay again. This time our captain, Danny, initially headed south towards an area where some very active Humpbacks had been reported by other boats. After about 40 minutes we found a group of Humpbacks feeding very energetically on small fish (probably anchovies) close to the surface. The whales were lunge feeding, taking in huge mouthfuls of water and fish, then expelling the water through their baleen plates. Once again, the photographers had an opportunity to get impressive close-ups of these magnificent whales, which came right up to, and occasionally under the boat.

In the same area there was lots of other activity, with sea lions, pelicans, Elegant Terns and Brandt's Cormorants all joining the feeding frenzy. We saw more Black-vented Shearwaters and a few Pink-footed Shearwaters, plus plenty of Northern Fulmars of the mainly dark Pacific race (which might be elevated to species status shortly). Back at the harbour we met up with the other members of the group who had spent an enjoyable afternoon in Monterey, and made our way back to the hotel with time to relax before doing the checklist and enjoying our evening meal.

Day 4

Thursday 6th September

Big Sur

Another misty morning, but once again the sun broke through later to give a warm afternoon. We set off at 8am to drive the 95 miles or so down the coast to San Simeon, the main target species today being California Condor and Northern Elephant Seal. On the way to our first planned stop at Bixby Bridge we saw two Red-tailed Hawks, a Red-shouldered Hawk and an American Kestrel, setting the tone for an excellent day for raptors. Unfortunately, the parking area at Bixby was occupied by a film crew setting up their equipment, but we had a short stop just after the bridge to admire the view. From here we had distant views of two Peregrines and on looking down to the sea a pod of about eight Bottlenose Dolphins were seen. We carried on to Andrew Molera State Park, which we haven't been able to visit for the last two years, due to forest fires in 2016 and flooding/mud slides in 2017. Some of the park is still closed due to the effects of the flooding, but we had a walk

along one of the trails close to the river, seeing Townsend's Warbler, Willow and Pacific-slope Flycatchers and Oregon Juncos. On the way back to the car park we saw three large birds flying over a nearby ridge which turned out to be two Turkey Vultures and a California Condor, which was totally unexpected, as this is very much at the northern end of the range for condors. Obviously, this was an outstanding start to our day, but it was nothing compared to what was in store for us later.

Moving on from Andrew Molera, our next stop was at Seven Pines which is a well-known spot for viewing condors; however, today the mist and low cloud was against us, so we moved on, but not before seeing two Peregrines and a Red-tailed Hawk. We hadn't gone far before an Osprey was seen by some of the group, and shortly after that Peter pulled over into a gravel turn-out at the roadside as two Condors were circling overhead. They were soaring in and out of the mist, but occasionally came low enough for us to photograph them and to read their wing tag numbers (Green 11, a six-year-old male and Purple 52, a five-year-old male). We watched them for some time before moving on again, but we had only gone a very short distance when another condor appeared very low over the road, causing a further unscheduled stop. This time we didn't need binoculars to see the tag number (Red 68, a 21-year-old male). This was unbelievable - four condors already and it was only 11am!

Once again, we set off, driving fairly slowly in case anything else appeared, but the next few miles were uneventful, although the scenery was spectacular, with stunning coastal views and areas of magnificent redwood forest. We crossed the new bridge, completed in late 2017 to replace one swept away by mud slides, and eventually arrived at Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park where we decided on an early lunch. We hadn't even unpacked the picnic before condor number five glided effortlessly over our heads! We saw some other good birds here including Wilson's Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Lesser Goldfinch, and another, more distant condor. We had a fairly leisurely lunch before setting off to drive the remaining distance to the Elephant Seal haul-out at Piedras Blancas, just north of San Simeon.

On arrival, the car park was fairly busy, but nevertheless, we had good views of these animals on the beach, including some huge males. At this time of year, the seals on the beach are probably all males, both sub-adult and adult, which come here to moult their fur between late June and September. (The females moult at a different time of year, arriving in early April and leaving by the end of May). The moulting animals were in various stages of moult, some being quite tatty and others seeming to have almost completed moulting. We also saw at least two Bottlenose Dolphins just off the beach in the surf, and two Whimbrel and two Black Turnstones were on the rocky shore.

On our way back north, we stopped off at Ragged Point for a drink or an ice cream, and saw two Monarch Butterflies and several Anna's Hummingbirds, before setting off to drive back to Carmel Valley. On the way we saw two further condors, bringing the day's total to an impressive eight. Other than that, the journey was largely uneventful, and we arrived in good time to complete our checklists and go through plans for tomorrow before walking the short distance to the Running Iron pub and restaurant for our evening meal. The food here is excellent and the portions substantial, to say the least, and there was no chance of anyone being hungry after our visit. On leaving the restaurant it was a beautiful starry night and some of us did a little astronomy before retiring after a long but productive day.

Day 5

Friday 7th September

Monterey Bay and Aquarium

We awoke today to a bright sunny morning, which experience tells us sometimes means that there is likely to be mist down on the coast, and this proved to be correct. As we drove to Monterey the mist became thicker, reaching its thickest on the outskirts of town, although at the harbour visibility was much better. We checked in at Discovery Whale Watch and were soon on our way, heading north across the bay in the direction of Moss Landing. We paused briefly to watch two Humpback Whales feeding close to the shore before continuing to an area where a huge feeding frenzy was in progress. Up to seven Humpbacks were lunge-feeding as a group, coming up from below the massive shoals of anchovies, this being repeated over and over. Other Humpbacks were feeding singly or in pairs, and at one time there were probably at least 20 whales all around us. Sea lions, Common Dolphins, Brown Pelicans, Elegant Terns, Brandt's Cormorants and various gulls were also involved, picking up the fish which the whales had missed, while skuas harassed the other seabirds, trying to steal their food. All in all, it was a spectacular sight, and one which will remain in our memories for many years to come.

We stayed with the feeding frenzy for over an hour before moving on, and it wasn't long before the boat was joined by a pod of around 100 Common Dolphins, which as usual, came right alongside, riding the bow wave and the wake.

It had been a fantastic morning, but we eventually had to return to the harbour. This afternoon, although it wasn't actually part of the tour, all the group decided to visit the world-famous Monterey Bay aquarium, which was enjoyed by everyone. It really is well worth a visit, with fascinating exhibits and close up views of some of the rich variety of marine life which inhabits the coastal waters here.

Dinner tonight was at the hotel, lamb shanks and a vegetarian option going down very well.

Day 6

Saturday 8th September

Moss Landing and Moonglow Dairy

It was another bright sunny morning, with a slight chill in the air, as we set off for a day around Moss Landing, about a 40-minute drive from the hotel. We took the scenic route over Laureles Grade, and from the summit we could see that the coast was enveloped in thick mist. However, as we drove further north it cleared somewhat, and by the time we arrived at our first destination, Zmudowski's State Beach (having dropped off the lunch orders at Phil's Snack Shack in Moss Landing), visibility was very good. We drove through intensively farmed areas, growing strawberries, artichokes and salad crops, and arrived at the small car park by the sand dunes, where we met up with Adam and Jane, an English couple who live near San Francisco and who spent the rest of the day with us.

Walking round the freshwater lagoon we found a Common Yellowthroat, a flock of American White Pelicans, three Red-necked Phalaropes, two White-tailed Kites, Song, Savannah and White-crowned Sparrows, and a large flock of Lesser Goldfinches. Further on we searched for the tiny Pacific Tree Frogs which inhabit the rushes here, but it took some time to find one. Eventually Peter found one on a rather distant rush stem and everyone managed in the end to get a view through the telescopes. A little later Jane found another closer one, but unfortunately, there were none right beside the road as there have been in previous years.

As we continued our walk an Osprey flew overhead, a Killdeer was found at the edge of an arable field and two Northern Mockingbirds appeared briefly. A singing Marsh Wren was quite difficult to see, but eventually some of us got a reasonable view, before it was time to return to the cars and move on.

Our next stop was at Jetty Road where we parked at the roadside to check over the flock of waders. The tide was very high, but we found large numbers of Willet and Marbled Godwit along with a few Grey Plover, Least Sandpiper, Whimbrel and Long-billed Curlew. A little further on some of us crossed over the dunes onto the beach and found about seven Snowy Plovers, which is a specially protected species for which an area of the beach has been fenced off as a breeding site. Also on the beach here was a small flock of about 15 Sanderling.

Further on again we parked the vehicles and spent some time watching the Sea Otters which gather here. The otters here are an all-male group which seem to spend most of their time floating around asleep, occasionally making a dive for food. The females and young are elsewhere at this time of the year, either inland up the Elkhorn Slough estuary or occasionally in the harbours here and in Monterey.

At about 12.30 we decided it was time for lunch, so we headed back to Phil's Snack Shack, where our sandwich lunches were ready for us. The sandwiches here have to be seen to be believed - in some cases it is quite impossible to get one's mouth round them due to the huge amount of filling! As we ate we were entertained by a Red-shouldered Hawk, a Belted Kingfisher which seemed surprised to find his favourite post already occupied by the hawk, causing him to veer away at the last second, several Snowy Egrets roosting in a large Eucalyptus tree, a Spotted Sandpiper and two Caspian Terns which flew by.

Our next stop was at Moonglow Dairy, a well-known birding location where the farmer is happy for us to be on his land, provided we do not interfere with his farming operations. From the entrance we drove through fields which held Red-winged, Tri-coloured and Brewer's Blackbirds, Brown-headed Cowbirds and House Finches, before parking in the shade of a Eucalyptus grove. Perched on one of the top branches was a Western Kingbird, and as we set off to walk round one of the slurry pits and down to the estuary, a Wilson's Warbler flitted around in the low bushes. A few waders were on the shore of the estuary, including Long-billed Curlew and Marbled Godwit, and many Red-necked Phalaropes swam in the shallow water, picking insects from the surface. Non-bird interest was provided by Pygmy Blue and Grey Hairstreak butterflies and a stunning Blue-eyed Darner dragonfly. As we walked back to the cars a single Forster's Tern flew by (unusually the only one of the tour), and a Red-shouldered Hawk circled over the cattle pens.

Our final stop of the day was at the opposite end of the Elkhorn Slough estuary, where we found literally hundreds of Red-necked Phalaropes, a handful of Greater Yellowlegs and a few Semipalmated Plovers, as well as all the other waders previously mentioned. Just as we were about to leave, a Northern Harrier was seen hunting alongside the flood bank opposite us, rounding off an excellent day. We said our goodbyes to Adam and Jane, arranging to meet up with them again tomorrow at Monterey, and made our way back to the hotel.

Day 7

Sunday 9th September

Monterey Bay and 17 Mile Drive

Once again it was a clear, sunny morning in Carmel Valley, and once again it became misty as we approached the coast. We met Adam and Jane as planned, and by the time we set off for the final whale-watching trip of the

tour, visibility had improved slightly. We initially headed north across the bay, and it wasn't too long before we found ourselves in the middle of a massive feeding frenzy involving Humpback Whales, California Sea Lions, Terns, Skuas (including a single Long-tailed), Cormorants and even a few Harbour Porpoises - usually a shy species which does not show itself very readily. The sea lions and whales would dive and round up the anchovies, then the sea lions would surface, followed up to about 30 seconds later by the whales. This pattern was repeated numerous times, and it was interesting to try to anticipate where the whales would surface next, in order to be ready to capture a photograph of them lunge feeding on the vast shoals of fish.

On our way back to the harbour we stopped briefly to watch a few more single Humpbacks feeding, and there were also a couple which leapt clear of the water. It was with considerable sadness that we left the boat for the last time, saying our goodbyes to the Discovery Whale Watch team who had looked after us so well. We had been a very fortunate group to see so much whale activity, including breaching, tail and fin slapping, and lunge feeding singly and in groups. We were superbly entertained by the Common Dolphins and were lucky enough to see two Blue Whales on our first trip on the ocean. Incidentally, these two were the only Blue Whales to be seen that week.

We enjoyed our packed lunch on the quayside, before setting off to drive the short distance to the 17 Mile Drive, with its sandy beaches, rocky outcrops and islets and championship-standard golf courses. A few stops on the way round produced two Surfbirds, two Pelagic Cormorants, Whimbrel, a Townsend's Warbler in addition to more common species, while several Mule Deer grazed on the fairways, no doubt to the consternation of the greenkeepers. It costs a minimum of \$495 to play a round at Pebble Beach (more in high season), but the deer get the run of the place for nothing!

Tonight, we were back at the Running Iron for the last evening meal of the holiday, and once again everyone had good platefuls, even those who asked for the smaller portions.

Day 8

Monday 10th September

Carmel Valley and journey to San Francisco

Our final day in California dawned bright and sunny, with virtually no breeze. After breakfast we set off inland up the Carmel Valley, driving through a very different landscape to that to which we had become accustomed. Our first stop was at a place where we have found Yellow-billed Magpies in previous years. This species has a very restricted range, only being found in this part of central California, and although it is not particularly uncommon within this limited range, it is nevertheless sought after.

We were very pleased therefore to see several of them, albeit distantly, almost as soon as we had exited the vehicles. They gradually moved closer and eventually we had decent views of them in flight, on the ground and perched on fences. Also in this area were at least three American Kestrels, several Western Bluebirds, up to 25 California Quails, five Western Meadowlarks and about six Violet-green Swallows. As we were watching the birds, Peter spotted movement on the hillside opposite, which turned out to be three Coyotes, an exciting find, even though they are fairly widespread in this area. They disappeared over a ridge, but re-appeared a little closer soon afterwards, before being lost to sight.

We moved on a short distance, before stopping again to scan around for more birds and mammals, and saw two wild pigs feeding on the hillside opposite the road. The pigs found here are actually hybrids between Eurasian Wild Boars and domestic pigs which have lived wild for many years, and have now become part of the fauna of the area, although they are regarded as a nuisance by many residents due to the damage they do to gardens, crops etc.

Moving on again, we came to a place where we hoped to see California Thrasher, amongst other species. We played the song briefly, and almost immediately one appeared in view, perfectly framed between two large bushes - an excellent sighting of this normally skulking bird. Also here were a Nuttall's Woodpecker, two Wrentits and two Spotted Towhees, making this a very productive stop.

Finally, we arrived at the furthest point of this morning's route, where we hoped to see more Yellow-billed Magpies, and we did find a couple, along with Western Bluebirds, a Red-tailed Hawk and more California Quails.

It was time to retrace our steps back to the hotel to finish packing, to go through our final checklist and then have lunch at the Trailside Café, which was another substantial meal. It seems to be impossible in this area to have a sandwich without also having a mountain of chips and a salad!

After lunch we loaded the luggage into a large pick-up belonging to Miriam, the hotel manager, who had kindly agreed to transport it to the airport for us. Our convoy of three vehicles then headed for San Francisco, the journey being completely uneventful. At the airport we returned the rental vehicles and said our goodbyes to Ruth, Tim and Janet who were continuing their holiday in the USA, and to Peter who was flying to Vancouver to lead another tour. The rest of us boarded our flight to Heathrow, which was more or less on time.

Day 9

Tuesday 11th September

In flight and Heathrow

Our flight landed at Heathrow ahead of schedule, immigration was not particularly busy, and the luggage didn't take long to appear, so we were soon able to say our goodbyes and go our separate ways after a fantastic holiday in California. The wildlife and the landscape were spectacular, and the company was excellent, making for a thoroughly memorable experience.

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Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted)

	Common name	Scientific name	September						
			4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Brush Rabbit	<i>Sylvilagus bachmani</i>					1		1
2	Western Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus griseus</i>					2		
3	California Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus beecheyi</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>							3
5	Steller Sea Lion	<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>	2						
6	California Sea Lion	<i>Zalophus californianus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
7	Northern Elephant Seal	<i>Mirounga angustirostris</i>	1		c150				
8	Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	c5	c6	✓	✓	15+	✓	
9	Sea Otter	<i>Enhydra lutris</i>	c5	c5		3	50+	c25	
10	Blue Whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>	2						
11	Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	c6	25+		30+		c20	
12	Long-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus capensis</i>	600+	c20		100+			
13	Risso's Dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>		c70					
14	Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>			c12				
15	Harbour Porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	2	✓		4		c10	
16	Mule Deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>		✓	1	1	3	3	c9
17	Mexican Free-tailed Bat	<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>					2		

Birds (H = heard only)

1	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓	✓			✓	2	
2	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>					3		
3	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>					✓	20+	
4	California Quail	<i>Callipepla californica</i>							✓
5	Wild Turkey - I	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>		12				2	12
6	Black-footed Albatross	<i>Phoebastria nigripes</i>	1	1					
7	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	20+	20+		25+		20+	
8	Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>	✓	✓		✓	1	✓	
9	Pink-footed Shearwater	<i>Ardenna creatopus</i>	c5	2				2	
10	Black-vented Shearwater	<i>Puffinus opisthomelas</i>		6+		2			
11	Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>				1	8		
12	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>					3		
13	Clark's Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus clarkii</i>					1		
14	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>					2		
15	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	2	1	1		2	1	1
16	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	c5	c5	c5	✓	c6	3	
17	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>					c10	1	
18	American White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>					50+		
19	Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
20	Brandt's Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax penicillatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
21	Pelagic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus</i>						2	
22	Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>		3			✓		
23	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24	California Condor	<i>Gymnogyps californianus</i>			8				
25	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>			1		2		
26	White-tailed Kite	<i>Elanus leucurus</i>					2		
27	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>			2				
28	Northern Harrier	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>			1		1		

	Common name	Scientific name	September						
			4	5	6	7	8	9	10
29	Red-shouldered Hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>			2		3	1	1
30	Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>			c6	1	10+	2	c5
31	American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>					4		
32	Black Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus bachmani</i>	3		4			3	
33	Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>					✓		
34	American Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra americana</i>					2		
35	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>					✓		
36	Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>					✓		
37	Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>					3	1	
38	Snowy Plover	<i>Charadrius nivosus</i>					7		
39	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>			2		2	1	
40	Long-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>					8+		
41	Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i>					✓	2	
42	Black Turnstone	<i>Arenaria melanocephala</i>	1	2	2	1		10+	
43	Surfbird	<i>Calidris virgata</i>						2	
44	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>					c15		
45	Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>					✓		
46	Short-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus griseus</i>					2		
47	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	✓	30+		3	500+	2	
48	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>					1		
49	Willet	<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>					✓	1	
50	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>					6+		
51	Heermann's Gull	<i>Larus heermanni</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
52	Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>		3			1		
53	California Gull	<i>Larus californicus</i>	✓	3	✓	✓	✓	6	
54	Western Gull	<i>Larus occidentalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
55	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>			2		6		
56	Elegant Tern	<i>Thalasseus elegans</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
57	Forster's Tern	<i>Sterna forsteri</i>						1	
58	Pomarine Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	1					1	
59	Parasitic Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	c6	4		c4		c6	
60	Long-tailed Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>		1				1	
61	Common Murre	<i>Uria aalge</i>	✓	✓		✓	1	✓	
62	Pigeon Guillemot	<i>Cephus columba</i>	1	1					
63	Cassin's Auklet	<i>Ptychoramphus aleuticus</i>	2						
64	Rhinoceros Auklet	<i>Cerorhinca monocerata</i>	20+	25+		✓		30+	
65	Rock Dove - I	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
66	Band-tailed Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas fasciata</i>			1				
67	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
68	Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
69	Vaux's Swift	<i>Chaetura vauxi</i>						1	
70	Anna's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte anna</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
71	Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	2	2			1	1H	
72	Acorn Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes formicivorus</i>		1	2	2	6+	2	10+
73	Nuttall's Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates nuttallii</i>			1		2	1H	1
74	Downy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates pubescens</i>					1		
75	Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>			1				1
76	American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>		3	1				c5
77	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			6		2	1	
78	Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	1	1		1	✓	1	✓
79	Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii</i>			1				

	Common name	Scientific name	September						
			4	5	6	7	8	9	10
80	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax difficilis</i>			2				
81	Western Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>					1		
82	Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>			2				✓
83	California Scrub Jay	<i>Aphelocoma californica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
84	Yellow-billed Magpie	<i>Pica nuttalli</i>							c11
85	American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
86	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>			2				
87	Oak Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus inornatus</i>		1			2	1	
88	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	<i>Poecile rufescens</i>			✓		1		1
89	Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>					✓		c8
90	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>					✓		
91	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	1		✓		
92	American Bushtit	<i>Psaltriparus minimus</i>			✓		20+	10+	
93	Wrentit	<i>Chamaea fasciata</i>			H				2
94	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus calendula</i>			1				
95	Marsh Wren	<i>Cistothorus palustris</i>					c3		
96	Bewick's Wren	<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>							H
97	Blue-grey Gnatcatcher	<i>Poliopitila caerulea</i>				1			
98	Pygmy Nuthatch	<i>Sitta pygmaea</i>					1		
99	Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>					2		
100	California Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma redivivum</i>							1
101	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
102	Western Bluebird	<i>Sialia mexicana</i>					1		2
103	Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>			1				
104	House Finch	<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>					✓		4
105	American Goldfinch	<i>Spinus tristis</i>			3		✓		
106	Lesser Goldfinch	<i>Spinus psaltria</i>			1		30+		
107	Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>					2	2	
108	American Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga aestiva</i>			2		1	1	
109	Townsend's Warbler	<i>Setophaga townsendi</i>			4			1	
110	Wilson's Warbler	<i>Cardellina pusilla</i>			4		1		
111	Tricolored Blackbird	<i>Agelaius tricolor</i>					10+		
112	Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>					✓	4	
113	Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>					✓		
114	Brewer's Blackbird	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
115	Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>			1		c4	1	
116	White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>					2		
117	Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>			4		1		2
118	Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>					1		
119	Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>			1		1		3
120	California Towhee	<i>Melospiza crissalis</i>			4		3		2

Butterflies

Western Pygmy-blue, *Brephidium exilis*

Cabbage White, *Pieris rapae*

Monarch, *Danaus plexippus*

Lorquin's Admiral, *Limenitis lorquini*

Gray Hairstreak, *Strymon melinus*

Fiery Skipper, *Hylephila phyleus*

Common Buckeye, *Junonia coenia*

Black Swallowtail, *Papilio polyxenes*

Dragonflies

Common Green Darner, *Anax junius*

Blue-eyed Darner, *Rhionaeschna multicolor*

Cardinal Meadowhawk, *Sympetrum illotum*

Black Saddlebags, *Tramea lacerata*

Other Invertebrates

Honey Bee, *Apis mellifera*

a hairy red fly, *Adejeania vexatrix*

Fork-tailed Bush Katydid, *Scudderia furcata*

Reptiles & Amphibians

Western Fence Lizard, *Sceloporus occidentalis*

Pacific Tree Frog, *Pseudacris regilla*

Fish

Ocean Sunfish, *Mola mola*



Blue Whale and our boat



Happy group after the Blue Whales

These two drone images are courtesy of Discovery Whale Watch/Slater Moore Photography