

Sea of Cortez

& Mexico's Baja California

A Greentours Tour Report

27th February to March 11th 2005

Spirit of Adventure Leader Scott Anderson and Greentours Leader Ian Green

Day 1 February 27th Departure

Some of us flew down from Manchester to join the main flight over to Los Angeles from Heathrow. A totally clear Greenland then fabulous views down onto the pack ice crowding Hudson Bay were highlights of the eleven hour flight. After a break in LA we caught a shuttle flight down to San Diego arriving at about eight in the evening. By nine we were settling in to the Vagabond Inn in Point Lomas just fifty metres from the boat landing.

Day 2 February 28th San Diego River and Cuyamaca

An early morning start down to the San Diego river mouth and the Ocean Drive Athletics Area where a few people were walking their dogs or even being pulled along by their dogs as they stood on skateboards. We'd barely moved from the vehicle when a pair of pretty House Finches were spotted along with our first smart-looking White-crowned Sparrows. A large flock of Brewer's Blackbirds foraged amongst Ring-billed Gulls. Down on the estuary were a number of herons, waders and ducks. The latter were mostly American Wigeon though there were a few pretty Buffleheads. A Brown Pelican flew past and a long way upstream we could see a small group of American White Pelicans. The waders included very many Least Sandpipers and a few Westerns. Willets were also noticeable though not so numerous as Marbled Godwits. Others included a Greater Yellowlegs, a couple of impressive Long-billed Curlews, several Whimbrels, Black-bellied (Grey) Plovers and some Semi-palmated Plovers. Little Blue Herons, Great Blue Herons and Snowy Egrets were easily visible. Distant terns flew away but closer at hand were plentiful Western Gulls and also a Bonaparte's Gull. A beautiful male Anna's Hummingbird proved very obliging though its shocking pinky-red iridescent gorgette only performed fitfully. On the way back to the car we encountered numerous Yellow-rumped Warblers and a Hutton's Vireo.

Back at breakfast by the hotel pool a Merlin flew over followed by a Red-tailed Hawk and later a Red-shouldered Hawk.

Then it was on up to Cuyamaca, a protected area high in the hills east of San Diego. Not protected though from the fire which sadly devastated the place two years previously. The majority of the oak

and pine woodland that covered this rather pleasant mountain landscape had been destroyed. There were signs of regeneration though as the live oaks were already sprouting anew. We made our first stop before the reserve where we checked out the colourful shows of flowers on a roadside cutting – numerous marigolds and just a few each of lupins and California Poppies combined to good effect. House Finches, Oak Titmouse and Western Scrub Jays were seen and on the rocks on a ridge above us were our first Ground Squirrels.

Then it was into the park and a walk towards the old HQ. Red-tailed Hawks soon appeared and then Acorn Woodpeckers though it took us a while to get a good look at them. As we walked down to the HQ Band-tailed Pigeons erupted at intervals from the trees, their relationship to Wood pigeons was clear! Though we'd intended to spend just half an hour around the headquarters a steady stream of new birds and the news that this was some of the least affected forest (from the fire) soon stretched the visit to lunchtime! Spotted Towhees were soon followed by Steller's Jays and then a little feeder produced several Mountain Chickadees with Dark-eyed Juncos. Californian Ground-Squirrels were prominent and down by the stream we found some good birds with Western Bluebirds, Oak Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin and overhead Turkey Vultures. There was even Bewick's Wren and Ruby-crowned Kinglet along the track.

We drove along the 79 to the lake and took our picnic there. There was the exciting sight of a Bald Eagle hunting Coot. It had separated one Coot from the herd and was busy trying to drown it. The Coot though managed to snatch a breath here and there and after another quarter of an hour or so the eagle finally gave up and the Coot sped off to join the herd again! Canvasbacks and Ruddy Ducks were on the water. Afternoon saw us wandering up a (closed!) trail through rather beautiful open grassy areas between woodlands. Things were quite quiet on the bird front apart from the rich song of a Western Meadowlark and lots of Wilson's Snipe. Animals too were not in evidence though we did see tracks of Raccoon and Mule Deer.

On the way back into San Diego we stopped briefly by a pond where Ring-necked Duck and Mallard were seen and California Towhee and Song Sparrow too. Then it was into town and the Brigantine Seafood Restaurant which produced some excellent food before we boarded the Spirit of Adventure at seven-thirty. Scott met us all and sorted us into our cabins before giving us an introductory talk with Mike the captain later giving us a safety talk. We departed around nine-thirty and headed across the harbour to the bait-holding area where the lights allowed us to see the many herons and egrets enjoying a free meal as well as numerous sea-lions also partaking of the largesse! The it was out to sea!

Day 3 March 1st Santos Todos

Most of us were out on deck as dawn approached from the east. Mike had already brought the boat into Ensenada Harbour and we were awaiting Mexican Customs. They duly arrived and whilst we all supped morning cuppas and watched Western, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls as well as a Belted Kingfisher, they rapidly concluded business. So with the sun only just poking above Ensenada's mountainous hinterland we were on our way out of the harbour to Santos Todos. Almost immediately the birding became very good with the highlight a distant Black Skimmer spotted by Scott. Surf Scoters and Western/Clark's Grebes were common and soon the many gulls, which now included a number of Heerman's and a couple of Glaucous-winged Gulls, were joined by Royal

Terns. And these by jaegers – skuas to us Europeans. Several distant birds were seen, close ones were Parasitic (Arctic). Pelagic, Double-crested and Brandt's Cormorants all flew past and there was even a Black Brant on the sea. A good solid, pancake, eggs any style and sausages and all the usual breakfast stuff later we were mooring off Todos Santos. The sky and sea were blue, the wind was light and the islands vari-coloured cliffs were topped by an unusually green vegetation - the result of the heavy rains in the previous weeks. In short the light and situation was idyllic, so we eagerly boarded the skiffs for boat rides along the shore. Guano was obvious from a distance and it was soon apparent that many birds used these cliffs as roosting, feeding and nesting areas. Western Gulls were abundant. Brown Pelicans were a pretty sight in their breeding plumage and the small colonies of Brandt's Cormorants were immaculate in their black green and blue tinged breeding livery, adorned by smoky-blue eyes, white whiskers and fabulous blue gular pouches. Black Oystercatcher also caught the eye. Their uniform black plumage offset by ridiculous lilac-pink legs and a shocking orange-red bill! Whimbrel, American Kestrel and Ravens were also seen. The chief purpose of our visit was to see the colonies of Harbour Seals here and these were numerous. Some laid out on the beaches and others on low rocks but the majority were in the water. These included very many young pups, some of them very tiny, and these and their attendant mothers were understandably a little nervous of us. A gigantic Northern Elephant Seal was hauled out amidst the Harbour Seals on the beach! Other seal-kind here were the Californian Sea-Lions which occupied a guano-splattered rock with pelicans and cormorants. There were several large bulls and they made an impressive sight as they reared up and made sea-lion noises! Eventually it was time to leave this superb place and so we boarded the Spirit and had morning tea and coffee and maybe the odd perhaps chocolatey snack whilst the skiffs were stowed and then we were on our way.

The journey south to San Benitos would take all day and night so the remainder of the day was spent heading south. But there was plenty to entertain us. Within twenty minutes of leaving the island Mike had linked us up with a large pod of dolphins. Around five hundred Common Dolphins (of the Long-beaked persuasion) were around the boat though they were well scattered. Perhaps fifty came to bow-ride or 'stern-ride'. They stayed with us for almost an hour and were a magnificent sight as they coursed through the water ahead of us. Barely had these disappeared when the cry went up – 'spout ahead!'. We soon closed on the whales and found a group of five Gray Whales migrating steadily northward. They surfaced every minute or so and didn't really vary course. One or two showed us their tail flukes as they dived a little deeper. In fact during the rest of the afternoon we encountered Gray Whales at regular intervals with perhaps twenty-five being seen in total. One or two more dolphins as well and even a well-of-shore Californian Sea-Lion. Birdlife was good too with an increasing number of Cassin's Auklets as we moved south. Shearwaters were prominent with many, perhaps a thousand, Black-vented Shearwaters and just a very few Pink-footed Shearwaters. One flock of Fulmar were seen and a little flurry of Grey Phalaropes. Eventually Dan hauled us in for the evening meal at sun set.

Day 4 March 2nd San Benitos

Morning dawned with it feeling pleasantly warm and the island of San Benitos on the horizon in from of us. During the hour it took us to reach the island we saw a mere three birds (until we were within half a mile anyway) but they were Grey Phalarope and two Laysan Albatrosses!

Mike pulled us into the harbour occupied by a number of yellow and red pangas that belonged to the fishermen in the little hamlet. We gradually landed just a few at a time on the beach just yards from the boat. To our amazement the village beach had a large male Elephant Seal lolling about in the water almost as if it were enjoying a hot bath. It entertained us as everyone arrived along with a female and a couple of small babies that were reclining at the back of the beach between two oil cans and a shack!

We all gathered on the hillside above the few houses before walking around the coast a little. The path took us along unusually green hillsides where the local endemic mallow was in flower and also a plentiful and pretty little yellow poppy. The 'out-to-get-you' cholla cactus was shown to all as something to avoid and the altogether more friendly *Mammillaria neopalmeri* adorned tracksides with its hairy little globular cacti and straw-coloured flowers. Ravens and the local San Benitos race of Savannah Sparrow were common. Soon we arrived at a beach populated by many Elephant Seals. Most wee pups, though a few females and the resident bull were present. He was a magnificent beast, all scarred and huge, with an impressive wobbly elephantine nose. The youngsters were scattered hither and thither and whilst most were sleeping or at least immobile there were groups already indulging in mock fighting and in shallow rockpools others practised delicate underwater manoeuvres. The stench was really quite something as they all belched and farted frequently! It was also surprisingly noisy with the youngsters and occasionally the adults emitting a variety of calls ranging from high-pitched squeals of annoyance to deep barks. A pair of Ospreys sat upon a nest atop a rocky pinnacle and on the rocks were Black Turnstone and both Black and American Oystercatchers.

We moved back through the village to another beach where if anything there were more Northern Elephant Seals. These we were pretty much able to wander freely amongst only making sure not to disturb them by blocking off their exits to the sea nor getting closer than a seal's length to the gigantic bulls. One relaxed right on the shore and was well photographed as he had two little pups in front of him. Juri, the local Cassin's Auklet researcher (resident of Pueblo, near Mexico City but at University in Glasgow, UK, Masters from Norwich!), joined us and took us just metres to one of his 'techno nests' which he opened up and lifted out the little grey auklet chick. He told us a little of the biology but seemed a little sad – after the previous year's excellent results this year was going to be an El Niño year and there had been very poor breeding success so he thought he might have to give up and come back the following year!

Whilst most of the group stayed put amongst the seals and shorebirds a group of us walked around the island to the now-abandoned lighthouse perched high on the western end. Right at the start of the walk a male Costa's Hummingbird and a couple of Mockingbirds confirmed that the land avifauna of the island wasn't made up entirely of Savannah Sparrows and Ravens. Shortly afterwards a group of Shorelarks (Horned Larks) were seen at close range – and indeed were encountered several times on the walk. We passed numerous Osprey nests and every little beach had a population of Elephant Seals, some of them quite substantial. We watched as one bull tried to mate with a female who was shall we say less than pleased at the prospect – he was certainly pretty rough and not just to look at! Baby Elephant Seals played in the surf and in rock pools some of which were crowded with them. Just below the lighthouse we watched as a group of five Ravens harassed a pair of Ospreys so much that they eventually managed to steal at least one egg. We left hurriedly in case our presence was having an effect on the altercation. After a brief lunch at the lighthouse we only had time to hurry back to the settlement but still managed Rock Wren,

American Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawk and Peregrine on the way back. A superb barrel cactus, *Ferulocactus fordii*, had beautiful red and orange flowers and there was swathes of a *Dichelostemma* species in flower.

Once back on the boat we made the short journey to East Island where skiff rides gave us forty minutes or so amongst a large mixed colony of Californian Sea Lions and Guadeloupe Fur Seals. The latter are extremely rare (2,500 world population) but are increasing and this colony had only been started up five year's previously. A couple of Northern Elephant Seals lounged on one of the beaches and the rocks had Black Oystercatchers.

Then it was southward bound down the west coast of Baja towards San Ignacio. Immediately we found that Black-vented Shearwaters were abundant. A single Pink-footed Shearwater flew past and there were many gulls. A small group of Common Dolphins came bounding in towards the bow and just as they arrived they 'flushed' a single Rhinoceros Auklet at close range to us. Amazingly the seabirds got even better when a superb Black-footed Albatross sailed in from the horizon and crossed just two hundred metres in front of us! The last word though went with the cetaceans with a group of three powerful-looking Pacific White-sided Dolphins which came in and bow-rode for ten minutes not long before sunset.

Day 5 March 3rd San Ignacio Lagoon

Dawn was getting earlier and earlier and now it was at 5.40. Nearly everybody was already up – obviously anticipating the arrival into San Ignacio. We were already just off the lagoon mouth and Mike was soon searching for the narrow channel through the breaking waves. Pomarine and Arctic Skuas flew past and Surf Scoter too. Brown Pelicans flew along behind the boat and various gulls and terns were in evidence including Elegant Terns. Bottle-nosed Dolphins cruised in to bow-ride though surely the boat was moving slower than they ever swim? Gray Whales started to appear moments later and as we broke through the surf into the lagoon entrance there were blows everywhere. The rest of the journey to the mooring area well into the lagoon gave an indication of the number of whales here. They were never out of sight. Sometimes up to ten would be in view at once. There were a few breaches and also a bit of spy-hopping and not a little waving of flippers and tails in the air. We must have passed more than a hundred in the forty minutes it took to get to the mooring area. Birdlife was pretty good too with numerous Surf Scoters, Black Brants, gulls, terns and cormorants. Both Pacific and Common Loons appeared as did a pair of Western Grebes. White Ibis flew over and once moored we could see that the surrounding shores were covered in birds though largely too distant to make out species. Anything bigger than a duck was discernible though so along with already mentioned species we added Long-billed Curlews, Marbled Godwits, Reddish, Snowy and Great Egrets, Caspian Terns, Eared Grebes etc etc. There was even a Californian Sea Lion on its back with tail fins and flippers stuck up in the air!

It as only seven o'clock but we were moored and the pangas had arrived. The local boatmen loaded everyone up and were soon off to their whales!

The rest of the morning was really quite perfect! The weather was gorgeous with clear blue skies and no wind so the surface of the lagoon was smooth. The whales were abundant and active. Everyone got to see all sorts of Gray Whale behaviour and whilst not quite everyone got to touch a

Gray Whale I think the few who hadn't by the first break had by lunchtime. There were many mother calf pairs of varying degrees of friendliness and some of these approached both pangas and the Spirit very closely. Lots of chin scrubbing and jaw-rubbing went on and even the mothers indulged themselves a bit in this. There were also plenty of animals spy-hopping and even the odd one breaching too. Perhaps as entertaining as any were the groups of males cavorting with single females. One such group provided quite a close up spectacle of the legendary 'pink-floyd' to one startled panga – a six-foot plus bright pink prehensile whale penis that rose up out of the water and curved downwards aiming to get at the female!

It wasn't all whales though. There were regular encounters with Bottlenose Dolphins and even turtles put their heads up occasionally. Local fishermen came past the Spirit and sold about 30lbs of their catch of 'California Halibut' (in fact a large flatfish – they also had Horned Sharks in abundance) to us – later prepared for the evening the meal by Dan. In fact the instant trimming at the stern interested a number of gulls including California, Western and Heerman's and a Magnificent Frigatebird even sailed over, apparently sniffing the wind. Back on the water were groups of very beautiful Surf Scoters, both loons and the odd fly-by of White Ibis and various waders.

This continued all morning until we stopped for lunch around 12.30. Lunch over and the wind had got up so the afternoon's whale-watching proved far less productive – the choppy waters making viewing less easy and the whales too seemed less interested so at 3pm we decided to go and visit the mangroves instead. These were sheltered and offered good birdwatching. There was a scattered flock of Surf Scoter as we headed towards the channel and a Red-breasted Merganser flew over. A large group of Marbled Godwit and Long-billed Curlew stood by the entrance and then in quick succession we had good views of Caspian Tern, Willet and Greater Yellowlegs. Inside the mangroves it was the turn of herons and egrets to excel. There were several Reddish Egrets with one doing the characteristic 'mad-dance' in an effort to catch some presumably thoroughly confused prey. There were also Great and Snowy Egrets and both Great Blue and Tricolored Herons. A single Green Heron gave us good views before sneaking off into the mangroves and a small flock of White Ibis erupted from the shoreline. Then it was time to get back to the Spirit for a relaxed last hour before sun set and before the excellent evening fish meal followed by Scott's fascinating talk on Gray Whales.

Day 6 March 4th San Ignacio Lagoon

Well more of the same only better! The morning dawned really quite unpromising looking with cloudy skies and quite a strong wind. However after only a few minutes and some of Dan's finest pancakes and the wind started to abate. We spent the first two and a half hours of the morning out with the local pangas whale-watching and as conditions steadily got better so did the whale-watching. In the afternoon too we had some extended whalewatching and now the wind had almost stopped and the sun was well and truly out. During the day I think everyone had the most amazing experiences with the Gray Wales. One calf in particular made spectacular progress in the human-whalekind interaction stakes. This little whale, just four weeks old, cavorted and cajoled willing hands to rub and stroke it in turn. At times the little whale-let spun on its axis showing its ventral grooves. At other times it just put its head out of the water and invited us to stroke it. At other times it lay on its side with an eye out of the water and apparently closed in a state of bliss.

For many it even opened its mouth and allowed us to stroke its baleen! All the while the mother stayed nearby often seemingly invisible as her youngster gained all the attention. She wasn't the only mother-calf pair out there and plenty of others met up with us. Some of the mothers were less retiring and even lined up with their progeny for a good scratch. Some of the group not only shied just short of putting their heads inside the baby's mouth but did manage to dislodge some whale lice one of which grabbed onto a finger rather tightly!

Other whales spy hopped at frequent intervals and some breached too. One particularly large whale came in to draw the attention away from the little one and did a pretty good job for 'twas a very large Gray Whale, This whale coursed backwards and forwards under the boats usually upside down which was quite interesting as she stuck out a long way either side of the pangas!

There were also occasional turtles, sealions, Bottlenose Dolphins and lots of birds. Godwits, curlews, Brants, Surf Scoters, terns and gulls flew hither and thither. Several Arctic and Pomarine Skuas were about too.

Mid-morning we went for a visit to the land. We landed on the edge of a wide sand/mud flat and split – one group taking the shore towards the sea, and the rest of us heading for the mangrove mudflats. Beachcombers came across sea hares and Horned Sharks both of which they rescued back into the water. The washed up squids were past it though! Over towards the mangroves Mike found a Chiton inside an old abalone shell. Lots of Royal Terns sat upon the shoreline and as we got to the mangrove channels several Caspian Terns flew about catching little fish. Marbled Godwits, Willets, Long-billed Curlews and Greater Yellowlegs were all seen Then there were Black Brants, a single Lesser Scaup and an abundance of heron species – Reddish Egrets, Tricolored Herons, Little Blue Herons and best of all a superb adult Yellow-crowned Night Heron. As we investigated the mangroves more closely we flushed some Little Green Herons and also saw Mangrove Yellow Warbler and Black Phoebe.

At four o'clock it was time to leave. Mike drove us out to the sea through the narrow and shallow channel with great care and expertise. All the way Gray Whales were blowing – even out beyond the channel. We must have passed between fifty and a hundred in an hour and a half. An adult male Frigatebird flew overhead and there were several Pomarine Skuas and once out into the ocean we saw a few Grey Phalaropes, a Pink-footed Shearwater, several Black-vented Shearwaters and also a Pacific White-sided Dolphin.

Day 7 March 5th Magdalena Bay

We awoke off the northern end of Magdalena Bay. A bit of a misnomer for the day's events as we never entered the bay which lies between the barrier islands and the mainland but instead concentrated on areas offshore.

The first two hours after we awoke were really quite excellent for seabirds. Black-vented Shearwaters were rarely out of sight and we saw occasional Pink-footed Shearwaters too. There were our first Petrels to enjoy. We'd seen about a dozen of the 'double-bouncy-yet-very-light' Blacks when two slightly paler petrels with a much more laboured jerky flight drew our attention – the dark-rumped form of Leaches. Three beautiful Sabine's Gulls flew past and there were also

California Gulls, Magnificent Frigatebirds and even a single Brown Pelican. There were auks too. We saw a number of confusing murrelets, these certainly included Craveri's and may all have been this species. Then there were at least four 'auklets' that all looked like they were Rhinoceros but none were seen well enough to confirm.

A few Common Dolphins came in to play briefly on the bow but generally cetaceans were scarce on the ground. A small group of Humpback Whales sped past us so quickly that Mike didn't even give chase! Then off a headland we saw our first rorqual – briefly! It was almost certainly a Bryde's though inconclusive. Later a turtle also disappeared before identification was certain and so too a flying fish.

The middle part of the day disappeared with nary a sighting of significance – we had left the coastline and headed out to Potato Banks some thirty miles offshore. Sadly a few distant humpback sightings were our only rewards until well in to the evening when Mike spotted some distant Humpbacks breaching. The whale or whales kept on breaching during then next half an hour as we approached but stopped once we were within half a mile. Mike however was patient and after half an hours pottering amongst a couple of Humpbacks all of a sudden they started again. The next hour produced a spectacular show of breaching as a sub-adult repeatedly threw himself into the air right close to the boat – Mike's positioning was immaculate! It was a tremendous show to end the day on!

Day 8 March 6th Round the Cape and into the Sea of Cortez

Morning found the boat with engines cut and apparently drifting in the mirror flat sea. Even before it was light Mike had found a Humpback Whale and had stopped the boat beside it. As most of us got our bearings, cups of tea, bowls of cereals and hastened to the deck the lone Humpback sounded several times right off the bow. Then lots started to happen at once as a Striped Marlin logged off to one side then a couple of Mako Sharks were seen. None of these allowed close approach but the Humpbacks that started breaching off to one side soon drew us close to them. The breaching stopped but we were treated to up-close views of the whales as they came up to breathe with explosive blows followed by a couple of quick breaths then tails up as they again dove. One had an almost pure white tail and the second a solid black tail and the third pretty much didn't show her tail at all. We watched a Townsend's Shearwater cruise past in the distance and over the next hour or two saw Bonaparte's Gull, Black Storm Petrel, Brown Booby and several tight groups of Black-vented Shearwater.

After a while we decided to go off in search of a pod of dolphins, en route stopping at a couple of sun-bathing turtles. These both proved to be Pacific Ridentles and one came right up to the edge of the boat in clear water. Much the same could be said of the dolphins. A large group of dolphins (a surface count produced 190 so in total there was likely to have been 800 or more) was at various times scattered or concentrated around us. Mike cruised back and forth, at first gently through the busy-looking throng and later in fast circles trying to lure them into bow-riding. First we watched transfixed as numerous dolphins (these were Common Dolphins) jumped around us, many with young, and then marvelled at the beauty of them as they came in to bow-ride in the clearest water imaginable. It was like watching them in air! Even when they suddenly swam downward and away it must have been fifty feet or more down before they started to fade. The water was so clear that we

could see needlefish down there too! Amongst all this was masses of California Gulls, the odd Humpback Whale and a single bull sealion who'd caught a large fish. This entertaining creature brought the fish up to the surface and threw it around whilst biting off chunks but was careful to grab the fish again each time before the gulls could get at it. He got well and truly photographed as did many of the mornings characters before we moved on to something else.

Next was a superb adult Red-billed Tropicbird that sat upon the water until we were within metres of it and again after flying a short distance. Then there were more Humpbacks and a brief dalliance with Bottle-nosed Dolphins before we headed off towards Las Frailles taking another superb Dan lunch en route (to follow on from the spectacular Huevos Rancheros produced at breakfast time).

At Las Frailles we landed by the rocky promontory at the end of the beach and immediately set about a mass snorkelling expedition. At least half of the boat's compliment got into the water following a black-clad Scot and a buoyancy-aided Ian into the water. The sight of Brian elegantly ducking down into the deep probably just emphasised the lack of snorkelling skills of at least one of your leaders! Though the surf was a little hazardous and the water there quite turbid once a few metres over the rocks it all cleared nicely and we had plenty of fish to look at. Most common were Sergeant Majors, the often very large Yellowtail Surgeonfish and abundant little striped Cortez Rainbow Wrasse. Brightly coloured King Angelfish were common, Barberfish rather less so. Bright red Coral Hawkfish guarded corals whilst Guineafowl Puffers were quite common. An Octopus was found in shallow water whilst off in deeper water a Jewfish was seen and above myriad Scissortail Damselfish. Flagfin Mojarra was a strikingly marked fish and amongst the always colourful wrasse were Sunset Wrasse and Azure Parrotfish. Mexican Goatfish, Greybar Grunt, blue Cortez Damselfish and blue and yellow Beaubrummel were all seen.

After the briefest of tea and biscuits back at the Spirit we were all off again to some the land based delights of Los Frailles. A short hike up the beach and we were in the unpromising surroundings of a trailer park, though the vegetation was full and green and relatively natural. In fact this proved to be a fabulous place for birds – they were everywhere. White-winged Doves and Northern Mockingbirds were abundant as were orioles. Most were Hooded Orioles including many fine males, but some were the local Scott's, again including some males. Three Gray Thrashers sat atop a large Cardon Cactus and pitapiya cacti offered perches to bright Cardinals and Purple Finches. Ashy-throated Flycatchers and Verdins appeared as did Gila Woodpeckers. Two Xantu's Hummingbirds were a fine find (another endemic) and there were also Western Scrub-Jays, Orange-crowned Warblers and Cactus Wren to enjoy. A White-tailed Antelope-Squirrel ran up a slope bypassing a superb California Quail en route! It was all too much – it seemed that whatever species we wanted to see in the area was here. We decided that we had better at least go and look at another area so we walked down the road. There was in truth much less down here though we still found a large warbler flock comprised mostly of Yellow-rumped Warblers with a few Orange-crowned as well as Green-tailed Towhee. American Kestrels, Common Ground Doves and Killdeer were all new birds down here. There was a fly-by from a Sharp-shinned Hawk and many Black-tailed Jack-Rabbits were seen. Species not mentioned above include California Gnatcatcher, Snowy Plover, Loggerhead Shrike and Barrel Cactuses.

Day 9

March 7th

Punta Colorado & and the San Jose Channel

A large wall of red and white rock rising out of clear blue sea greeted us shortly after dawn. We had breakfast and then took to the skiffs for a short ride to shore. Turkey Vultures, White-throated Swifts and a Peregrine sailed over the ridges above a beautiful desert arroyo. The recent rains had made the plantlife not only green but colourful too and there were many species in flower. Desert Mallow *Sphaeralcea* species were a pretty sight along with yellow Cassias, blue bindweed *Jacquemontia abutiloides* and the stunning little mimosa relative *Calliandra californica*. Scrambling *Cardiospermum corindum* and little *Lycium brevipes* were seen as were the brilliant red tubular flowers of the shrubby tree *Fouquieria diguetii*, known locally as Ocotillo. The cacti too were quite remarkable with the organ-pipe Cactus Cardon or *Pachycerus pringlei* prominent. We admired the graceful columns of *Lemaireocereus thurberi* and rather more hairy-spiky-topped *Lophocereus schottii*. The latter's vernacular name is Old-Man Cactus and it really does have a very hairy 'head'! There was also the scrambling *Opuntia bigelovii* and chunky *Ferocactus townsendianus*. Flaky barked White Elephant Tree (*Pachycormus discolor*) added a touch of surreal to the landscape.

Birdlife was relatively sparse with Black-throated Sparrows and Verdins both abundant. We found a nest of the latter and also the delicate lichen-encrusted nest of a Costas's Hummingbird upon which the female was sat. The tiny nest was but an inch and a half across. We later saw some males of said hummingbird and also a single Xantu's Hummingbird. California Gnatcatcher, the occasional Ash-throated Flycatcher and House Finches made up the rest of the avifauna. In contrast reptiles were prolific especially once the sun had warmed up (which didn't take long!). Most common were Side-blotched Lizards. Two species of whiptail were found – Western and Orange-throated, and also the Baja Spiny Lizard. An impressive Chuckwalla sat in a cliff crevice. No snakes were seen though a snake skeleton was in the arroyo floor. Butterflies were relatively numerous with several skippers, the gulf fritillary look-a-like *Euptoieta hegesia* and a fritillary, the Texas Crescent *Phyciodes texana*.

Then it was back to the boat for a quick cup of tea before going snorkelling. The water was reasonably warm (if you had a wetsuit) and was very clear and the fishlife and corals were exceptional. Large groups of Blue and Gold Snappers cruised between huge coral and seaweed encrusted boulders. Under overhangs lurked Tinsel Squirrelfish and at the far end was a mass of bigger species including Dogtooth Snapper, Yellowtail Snapper, Barred Pargo and both Bumphead and Bluechin Parrotfish. A prize up this end was a superb Zebra Moray. A good warning to those wanting to snorkel in bare feet was a Stone Scorpionfish resting on the sandy bottom by rocks just ten metres from the beach – a very poisonous thing to step on! Beautiful King Angelfish were again abundant and we saw Convict Tang, Finescale, Orange-sided and Blunthead Triggerfishes, plenty of Balloonfish and the beautiful little Spotted Sharpnose Puffer. Rather similar to the latter but much larger was a Pacific Boxfish.

Then it was time to go looking for whales. We chugged out towards open sea as Mike had spotted some dolphin out there and after a little encouragement from Mike the Bottlenose Dolphins put on a fine show with many leaping and cavorting off the stern and some bow-riding in the clear water. Black Storm Petrel appeared as did our first Brown Boobies. Soon Mike took us over to some islets which hosted many boobies, this time both Brown and Blue-footed. Yellow-footed Gulls and Magnificent Frigatebirds adorned the rocks too. Then it was off across the waters towards the San

Jose Channel. Little appeared to be happening and after an hour a sighting of a Hammerhead Shark was greeted with enthusiasm. The blank seas continued into the afternoon (great lunch though!) and things got decidedly sleepy. Eventually Mike announced the sightings of some blows ahead and after ignoring a small rorqual off to one side we closed on a small group of Sperm Whales. These just logged on the surface and two stretched up to look at us as we approached before just disappearing below the surface. We sat there for a few minutes and waited before somebody spotted more Sperm Whales behind us. We trundled over to find another five animals on the surface. Though we were able to get very close to these they also just sat around on the surface. Almost immediately we saw some cetaceans approaching from the north. These came in at a rate of knots. Small but not dolphins – we soon worked out that they were Short-finned Pilot Whales. The frontrunners, including a couple of large-finned males, bore down on the sleepy-looking Sperm Whales and soon it was mayhem as the Sperm Whales seemed to get unsettled by the influx of ‘foreigners’. They didn’t go however and instead ‘pointed themselves’ at the intruders! The pilot whales seemed to go on past without as much as a hello. The Sperm Whales disappeared and we headed off in pursuit of the pilot whales who all of a sudden came up short with another bunch of Sperm Whales, seven this time including a large male. This time the interaction was more intimate as the pilots moved around the Sperm Whales and it all looked a little like ‘whale soup’ in front of us. It was difficult to see what was going on but eventually the two species split and so we again headed south. Distant Sperm Whale spouts lured us on. However some tall blows also kept us hoping for a big rorqual. This we eventually found but too late Mike, had spotted a large group of Sperm Whales including tail-lobbing and breaching animals – a rare sight down here. So the Blue Whale off to one side was passed with an apology to all, we’ll see them later!

The next hour or so until sunset passed as if in a cetacean watching dream! The Sperm Whales stopped the breaching as we approached but still we weren’t prepared for the numbers. There were at least 64 animals. And they were in shallow water – at times less than twenty fathoms. Which made the tail-slapping and breaching behaviour, which started up again late on, all the more remarkable. There were a few large bulls amongst the herd and some tiny calves and they trundled slowly along in the same direction – at times it would have been possible to walk some distance across the bodies lined up together – a truly amazing and for everyone present unique sight! Which made the cry of ‘Killer Whales’ all the more difficult to take! Lunging along the channel was a small group of Killer Whales and so we had the difficult decision – stay where we were or chase the Killers! We chose the later and went after the group which eventually turned into a group of ten including one large male with a very tall fin. Amazingly a Blue Whale appeared in front and then all disappeared under the water – we wondered what was happening. A group of Eared Grebes in front of the boat dived for safety and came hurrying back to the surface! The Blue Whale was bypassed by the Killers who continued on up the channel as darkness fell. What an afternoon!!!

Day 10 March 8th Santa Catalina and the San Jose Channel

At dawn we arrived at Santa Catalina island right out in the middle of the Gulf. After breakfast we moved ashore and set off up an arroyo. The landscape was pristine cactus desert – stunning. All about were tall Cardon cactus (*Pachycereus pringlei*), some reaching upwards of ten metres and some with large creamy flowers near the top. These were popular with Costas’s Hummingbird. The Cacti were varied and largely dominant. Giant Barrel Cacti (*Ferocactus diguetii*) were also common, some a good two metres tall. Large areas of the arroyo bottom were covered in a

'creeping devil' relative *Machaerocereus gummosus* and in just one spot we found the superficially similar *Lophocereus schottii*. A *Mamillaria* was about to burst into flower and we also saw the red fruited *Cochemia poseelgeri*. The round orange-red fruits and large cement-like tuber roots of the Coyote Melon *Ibervillea sonora* inhabited steep slopes. The 'mistletoe' *Phrygilanthus sonora* with black berries parasitised *Cyrtocarpa* trees. On short cliffs grew the bright orange-red flowered *Eucnide aurea*.

Birdlife was noticeable though not varied. Loggerhead Shrikes, Mockingbirds, White-winged Doves and Gila Woodpeckers were all common and favoured perching on top of the Cardon. Verdins and Black-throated Sparrows were common and we also found Ash-throated Flycatchers, Grey Flycatcher, Ladder-backed Woodpecker and American Kestrel as well as the occasional brilliant red Cardinal. Santa Catalina is well-known for its reptiles and has three endemic species and during the morning we came across all three! Commonest and seen by everyone was the bright green-tailed Santa Catalina Side-blotched Lizard. Just the one Santa Catalina Whiptail was found and just a few were lucky enough to see the endemic Rattle-less Rattler!

Butterflies were good here too. Many bright orange-red Gulf Fritillaries were perhaps the highlight. A Monarch also flew past. Orange Sulphurs (like our clouded yellows) were common and so too the superficially similar Mexican Dogface and there were other pierids too. The drab-looking and oddly named Fatal Metalmark was a good find – its brown uppers decorated by two filigree silver lines. Common (?) Hairstreak was just so and there was also an *Everes* species of blue.

A mid-morning snorkel round the rocks was great. Huge numbers of Sergeant-Majors shoaled back and forth and there were huge King Angelfish. Panamic Fanged Blenny's sat amongst the colourful Peacock (or Christmas Tree) Worms on rock faces and on one we saw Redside Blenny.

We took lunch as they packed the pangas up and then headed out across the channel. Though the sun was shining strongly it was now windy and we had a choppy crossing. Forty minutes later though we were in more sheltered water. Of course a whale was soon spotted and we moved over to enjoy. However this whale proved quite a headache for those wanting to be sure of its identity for even after numerous blows and close-up views we weren't too sure what it was! Certainly there was a lot of Blue Whale in it but there were also indications that Fin Whale was involved in the parentage too. Particularly the overall dark colour and the lack of mottling in the forward quarters and most noticeably in the apparently white right-side to the face. It certainly seemed likely that this whale was a hybrid. As we were watching a large group of Common Dolphins came piling through. Later we went off in search of these and found either the same or different group and Mike spent a while getting them to join in bow-riding. This they did with apparent enjoyment and for an hour or so people snapped away at will. Occasional Storm Petrels, both Black and Least, flew past and we saw Brown Boobies too. The sun eventually set over the incredible landscapes to the west.

Day 11 March 9th San Jose Channel

Well, what to say about today. Certainly biological diversity was not part of it – it takes just one sentence to list all the species we saw – Heermann's Gull, Yellow-legged Gull, Least and Black Storm-Petrels, Magnificent Frigatebirds, distant Common Dolphins, a few Manta Rays, some of them cartwheeling, a rather out of place looking Stingray that had presumably been disturbed from

a muddy bed (it was in a great depth of water at the time!), and lastly, a Mexican Dogface butterfly. We didn't land but instead spent all day with just two species of whales which richly rewarded our long vigil with each.

After a brief tilt at a Sperm Whale which surfaced alongside us we headed off to a group of Killer Whales that Mike had spotted. We could see, even from a distance, the same large male that had cruised past us two days previously, but something seemed different- there was another large male and also a number of extra whales – in fact another small pod must have joined up for there were now around 25 individuals including 3 males – one of which joined us late on. The next three and a half hours were an exhausting experience as the whales and Mike between them treated us to an extraordinarily intense and intimate meeting. The whales had killed something. Scott had smelt it as we approached but we knew nothing of it for a while until one of the whales was seen playing with what looked like a red buoy but which turned out to be a set of lungs. Other organs were attached too but it was the 'floaty' lungs that we could easily see. The whale treated it as a toy until eventually it dragged it under and started to eat it before the remains bobbed to the surface again. The Killers came closer and closer to the boat, eventually drifting backwards and forwards under the bow, turning on their backs to look up at us and then bow-riding. Others drifted backwards and forwards along the side of the boat, some stopping to push their heads out of the water and look at us. The views were extraordinary and this continued on and off for the whole morning. Innumerable films were shot and memory cards filled up at unprecedented rates.

Eventually a passing yacht showed an interest and so we decided to leave the Killers in favour of pastures new and after a quite wonderful lunch we moved south only to encounter a large group of Sperm Whales head-on. We spent the next five hours (until dark) with these following them in their steady progress up the channel. Long periods of inactivity were interspersed with wonderful entertainment. As we approached initially the Sperm Whales were breaching. In fact no less than four did so in row! They stopped before we arrived, though we did get to see the occasional breach later. Tail-lobbing of the highest quality followed and a large male gave a good show – and illustrated how much noise could be made in the process. Occasionally the whales dived and flukes were shown. There were about thirty Sperm Whales in total travelling in two main groups. We were worried that they might meet up with the Killers as we approached the area we'd seen them in but the Killer's had gone. Daylight finished with Mike carefully positioning the whales so that they were sunset side of us with orange rain-blows above a tight knit group of ten or so whales – superb!

Maggie's evening cry of 'your leg's naked' to David didn't go unheeded and general merriment was the theme though of course as usual all were exhausted with twelve hours very fresh air up on deck!

Day 12 March 10th Nopolo and Los Islotes

At dawn Mike swiftly crossed from the night's sheltered anchorage to the little settlement of Nopolo at the entrance to a beautiful canyon. Here we landed and split into two groups, one following Scott on a little longer walk and the other staying with me near the little area of fresh water. This is normally a magnet to birdlife but today it was only partly so – the abundance of rain had made the water rather less rare! Nonetheless the trees were full of Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers and there were numerous White-winged Doves and quite a number of gaudy Northern Cardinals.

Almost as bright were several Hooded Orioles – two of the males were quite literally fighting over a female. Hummingbirds were plentiful too with several Xantu's giving much the best views of the trip and quite a good number of Costas's too. Orange-crowned Warbler, Lesser Goldfinch, Pacific-Slope Flycatcher and a superb Canyon Wren were all seen but the biggest bird surprise was way overhead as a pair of Anhingas (AKA Snakebirds or Darters) were seen flying over. Zebra-tailed Lizards scurried into the undergrowth and wet areas attracted numerous large hornets. Butterflies were good with several of the large black-looking Red-spotted Purples, a kind of Swallowtail. Monarchs and their mimic, the Viceroy, were joined by Orange Sulphurs and a white-tipped purplish looking Satyrid.

We boarded the Spirit and by eight-fifteen were cruising down the San Jose Channel looking for cetaceans. It didn't take Mike long to find some. A large (probably six hundred or more) group of feeding Common Dolphins was encountered at close quarters. They were very active making plenty of leaps and splashes and doing lots of bow-riding. The fish they were chasing were of great interest to a large group of birds that followed the dolphin's every move. Brown Pelicans were everywhere and many sat on the water their bills and cheeks bulging with their catch. Numerous Magnificent Frigatebirds rode the airways just above the boat and occasionally plunged down for a tasty morsel. Gulls were plentiful too with many Heermann's and Yellow-footed.

Eventually we left these and headed on south only to catch up with another even larger group of dolphins this one perhaps 2000 strong. Again the action was plentiful and exciting and a lot of film was used!

The next leg failed to produce the hoped for whales but seabirds were excellent. Least Storm-Petrels were quite common and we had our best looks at this little sea bird. Elegant Black Storm-Petrels and even a couple of dark-rumped Leach's Storm-Petrels were seen too. There were a few Craveri's Auklets and a single Black-vented Shearwater. Most unusual was the sudden appearance of numbers of skuas – a hundred or more Arctic Skuas and perhaps ten Pomarines was an impressive sight.

We pulled into Los Islotes after another fabulous lunch from Dan. A crabmeat salad! This was almost the first time we'd encountered other tourists on more than a 'one boat in the distance' sort of way! A local panga driver took us round the island in turn. The low rocks were home to abundant sea lions – there were very many. Large and medium sized males were scattered through the colony. One had made his home on the top of a rocky pinnacle though how he'd got there was a bit of mystery. The sight of one leaping six foot out of the water on to a rocky ledge gave us a clue. There were plenty of pups and plenty of noise. It sounded not unlike being amongst a herd of sheep when the hay's being brought out. It was smelly too though this had as much to do with the copious quantities of guano being deposited on the rest of the small island. The birds were mainly Brown and Blue-footed Boobies along with a few Magnificent Frigatebirds.

Most of us then went for a snorkel with the sea lions. I think its fair to say that most also got into the water with some trepidation as they are big and fast animals. Probably the trepidation was turning to exhilaration as the first sealion swam quickly at one and turned away at the last moment blowing little bubbles and maintaining a rather cheeky looking eye contact. If one was able to twist around quickly enough the sealion would often be turning a quick double circle by one's flippers. It made one feel rather log-like as these elegant swimmers cavorted amongst us! There were

numerous fish in the clear water though most were Panamic Sergeant-Majors. These were clearly also familiar with snorkelers as though reef fish are usually easily approachable these seemed to want to kiss one's goggles! Other fish here included Coral Hawkfish, Orange-sided and Fine-scaled Triggerfishes, the ubiquitous but spectacular King Angelfish, plenty of Panamic Fanged Blennies and several Cortez Chubb.

Then it was on into the evening sunset, coloured quite strongly by on deck Margueritas which were really very tasty! Needless to say little was seen in this passage – a few more Manta Rays, a Mako Shark or two, the odd petrel and some distant dolphins.

Day 13 March 11th Estero San Jose and Departure

We awoke at dawn as we neared Cabo San Lucas, pulling into the harbour by six (seven local time). Customs appeared and so did the pangas that took us and our luggage ashore. It was a good time to depart as long and sad farewells were necessarily short – it's a very 'bonding' experience being on this boat for twelve days and something that the crew and Scott between them promote effortlessly. Cabo seemed incredibly busy and not a little vulgar after such a time away from the rat race. Soon we were in two mini-vans and heading back east along the coast to the nearby town of San Jose Cabo where we visited the estuary. This proved a fine opportunity for close up views of plenty of waterbirds. Ducks were approachable and looked fine in the morning sunshine with Green-winged, Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal the common species. American Coot and Common Gallinule pattered about reedy fringes as did a superb Sora Rail spotted by Chris and Mick. Orange-crowned Warblers and House Finches came down to the water and up in the palms were numerous Hooded Orioles, Gila Woodpeckers and just one Cassin's Kingbird. Back on the water there were plenty of mostly juvenile Snowy Egrets along with Black-crowned Night Herons, Tricolored Egret, Great Egret, Reddish Egrets and single Great Blue Heron. Waders included lots of Black-necked Stilts as well as a few Marbled Godwits, Killdeer and Spotted Sandpipers. Then we were off to airport half an hour to the north and our flight to Los Angeles. All went smoothly and we arrived back into the UK the next afternoon pretty much on time.

Systematic List Number 1 Mammals

The nomenclature for cetaceans in the following list is taken from the Collins ‘Whales and Dolphins: The Ultimate Guide to Marine Mammals’ by Carwardine et al, published in 1998. That for land animals and pinnipeds from the ‘Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mammals by Whitaker et al and published in 1993.

I have given numbers of whales as we saw them – and the figures are very approximate for the ‘commoner’ whales. Mike and the crew were so good at spotting them that they would probably have a different set of figures from us! An indication of abundance is given by the number of days out of 12 a species was seen – i.e. 4/12 indicates that a species was seen on four out of the twelve days.

Itinerary

Day 1	February 28 th	San Diego River Estuary and Cuyamaca National Park. Board Spirit of Adventure in evening
Day 2	March 1 st	Ensenada and Islas Todos Santos
Day 3	March 2 nd	Islas San Benitos
Day 4	March 3 rd	Laguna San Ignacio
Day 5	March 4 th	Laguna San Ignacio
Day 6	March 5 th	Magdalena Bay
Day 7	March 6 st	The Cape and entry into the Sea of Cortez – Los Frailes Bay
Day 8	March 7 th	Sea of Cortez – Punta Colorado and San Jose Channel
Day 9	March 8 th	Sea of Cortez – Islas Santa Catalina and San Jose Channel
Day 10	March 9 th	Sea of Cortez – San Jose Channel
Day 11	March 10 th	Sea of Cortez – Nopolo and Los Islotes
Day 12	March 11 th	Cabo San Lucas and Estero San Jose and Airport

Gray Whale	<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>	Over 200 sightings. A few noted between Todos Santos and San Benitos. Up to 100 were seen each day at San Ignacio Lagoon. Very close encounters (!) with several mother-calf pairs inside the lagoon where both would sometimes approach the skiffs and allow themselves to be touched – one calf even allowing its baleen to be touched! Many forms of behaviour seen – spy-hopping, breaching and tail-lobbing. 3/12
Bryde’s Whale	<i>Balaenoptera edeni</i>	A probable off Magdalena Bay was the only one seen
Blue Whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>	Just one certain sighting in the San Jose channel where we sped right past the animal in pursuit of the Killer Whales there! We spent half an hour getting an up-close look at what was probably a hybrid between Blue Whale and Fin Whale <i>Balaenoptera physalus</i> at the top end of the San Jose Channel
Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	33 sightings (remarkably the same as last time!). 3 off Magdalena Bay. Approx 7 off Magdalena Bay including one close-up repeatedly breaching youngster – spectacular. c.25 in several groups between Cabo San Lucas and San Jose Island. One group were particularly spectacular with lots on going on below the water and on the surface. A single off Cabo San Lucas not long before we docked. 3/12

Sperm Whale	<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>	Amazingly over 105 sightings with a minimum of 75 animals seen! An impressive group of around 75 included bulls, mothers and even tiny calves and these logged almost side by side as we sat by them. Some breached and we saw what was probably 30 of the same breaching, travelling , hunting. All in the San Jose Channel. 2/12
Short-finned Pilot Whale	<i>Globicephala macrorhynchus</i>	A group approx 50 sped down the San Jose Channel providing excellent close-up views
Killer Whale/Orca	<i>Orcinus orca</i>	35 sightings of at least 25 individuals. 10 including one large male sped up the San Jose Channel past the Sperm Whales and 2 days later in another part of the channel we found around 25 animals including three large whales and spent around four hours seeing them at very close quarters. They had recently made a kill – a few organs including the lungs were still to be seen. 2/12
Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	Inshore Form: Seen daily on the Pacific Seaboard especially in and around the San Ignacio Lagoon. Offshore Form: Common in the Sea of Cortez. This much darker and more acrobatic animal was seen frequently in large herds of up to six hundred animals. Great bowrider! 5/12
Pacific White-sided Dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus obliquidens</i>	3 south of Islas San Benitos and 1 off Magdalena Bay. 2/12
Short-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>	We didn't spend so much time differentiating which of the two 'common dolphins' we were seeing this year – just enjoyed them instead! Groups of 500 or more seen on two days in the Sea of Cortez and lower numbers elsewhere. On the last day in the Sea of Cortez we saw a minimum of 2500! 8/12
Long-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus capensis</i>	See above.
California Sea Lion	<i>Zalophus californianus</i>	Noted at a wide variety of localities from San Diego harbour to Los Islotes in the Sea of Cortez where we were able to snorkel with them! 9/12
Gaudaloupe Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus townsendii</i>	c.50 of this globally endangered species entertained us off Islas San Benitos
Northern Elephant Seal	<i>Mirounga angustirostris</i>	A few males, many pups and several females (total 600) still on Islas San Benitos. 1 was seen on Islas Todos Santos. 2/12
Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	c.100 on Todos Santos
Black-tailed Jack Rabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>	6+ at Los Frailles and 4 at Santa Catalina
White-tailed Antelope Squirrel	<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>	1 at Los Frailles
Californian Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus beecheyi</i>	Common around Cuyamaca

Systematic List Number 2 Birds

Nomenclature and taxonomic order follows Sibley (2000) in the National Audubon Society Guide. An indication of abundance is given by the number of days out of 12 a species was seen – i.e. 4\12 indicates that a species was seen on four out of the twelve days.

Day 1	February 28 th	San Diego River Estuary and Cuyamaca National Park. Board Spirit of Adventure in evening
Day 2	March 1 st	Ensenada and Islas Todos Santos
Day 3	March 2 nd	Islas San Benitos
Day 4	March 3 rd	Laguna San Ignacio
Day 5	March 4 th	Laguna San Ignacio
Day 6	March 5 th	Magdalena Bay
Day 7	March 6 st	The Cape and entry into the Sea of Cortez – Los Frailles Bay
Day 8	March 7 th	Sea of Cortez – Punta Colorado and San Jose Channel
Day 9	March 8 th	Sea of Cortez – Islas Santa Catalina and San Jose Channel
Day 10	March 9 th	Sea of Cortez – San Jose Channel
Day 11	March 10 th	Sea of Cortez – Nopolo and Los Islotes
Day 12	March 11 th	Cabo San Lucas and Estero San Jose and Airport

Pacific Loon	<i>Gavia pacifica</i>	Daily in San Ignacio Lagoon. 2/12
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>	AKA Great Northern Diver. Several daily in San Ignacio Lagoon. 2/12
Western Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>	Quite common off Ensenada and also noted in San Ignacio Lagoon. 2/12
Horned Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	1 off Ensenada
Eared Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	AKA Black-necked Grebe. Several at entrance to San Ignacio and a group of 12 were almost mown down by Killer Whales in the San Jose Channel. 2/12
Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	Noted at the San Diego Estuary, Cuyamaca and at Estero San Jose, Cabo. 3/12
Laysan Albatross	<i>Phoebastria immutabilis</i>	2 just north of Islas San Benitos
Black-footed Albatross	<i>Phoebastria nigripes</i>	1 seen early morning on the approach to Laguna San Ignacio
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Only seen off Ensenada
Pink-footed Shearwater	<i>Puffinus creatopus</i>	Uncommon in Pacific waters. A total of 8 birds confirmed. 4/12
Black-vented Shearwater	<i>Puffinus opisthomelas</i>	Common in Pacific waters, also 3 seen in southern Sea of Cortez. 8/12
Townsend's Shearwater	<i>Puffinus auricularis</i>	1 off the Cape region
Black Storm-Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma melania</i>	Locally common in the Sea of Cortez. 6/12
Least Storm-Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma microsoma</i>	Locally common in the San Jose Island area. 3/12
Leach's Storm-Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	2 in Magdalena Bay and 2 in the Sea of Cortez – all dark-rumped forms. 2/12
Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	Widespread. 12/12
American White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>	Noted at the Sand Diego Estuary
Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>	Common in the Sea of Cortez, scarce on the Pacific side. 9/12
Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>	1 north of the Cape

Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	Widespread. 9/12
Brandt's Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax penicillatus</i>	Widespread. 8/12
Anhinga	<i>Anhinga anhinga</i>	2 very high over Nopolo. This is a very unusual record for the area and is significant for the Baja region
Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogastor</i>	Quite frequent in the Sea of Cortez with max daily counts of c.30. 5/12
Blue-footed Booby	<i>Sula nebouxii</i>	More local in the Sea of Cortez – commonest at Los Islotes. 2/12
Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>	Scattered. 3/12
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	Scattered. 4/12
Great Egret	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>	Scattered. 3/12
Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	Locally common. 4/12
Reddish Egret	<i>Egretta rufescens</i>	Scattered. 4/12
Tricolored Heron	<i>Egretta tricolor</i>	Scattered. 3/12
Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	Scattered. 2/12
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Scattered. 3/12
Yellow-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax violacea</i>	1 in mangroves at San Ignacio
White Ibis	<i>Eudocimus albus</i>	20+ each day at San Ignacio. 2/12
White-faced Ibis	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>	20+ at Estero San Jose, Cabo
Brant Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	Widespread on the Pacific seaboard. 4/12
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	San Diego River Estuary
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Estero San Jose, Cabo
American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	San Diego Estuary & Estero San Jose, Cabo. 2/12
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Anas discors</i>	San Diego Estuary & Estero San Jose, Cabo. 2/12
Cinnamon Teal	<i>Anas cyanoptera</i>	Estero San Jose, Cabo
Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>	8 at Cuyamaca
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	c.6 at Cuyamaca
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	1 at San Ignacio Lagoon
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	A scattering of records from the Pacific Seaboard and San Ignacio. 4/12
Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	Noted at the San Diego Estuary and 3 in San Ignacio Lagoon
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	A male in San Ignacio Lagoon
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	Cuyamaca
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	Recorded throughout. 8/12
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	An adult hunting Coot at Cuyamaca
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	A male at Los Frailles
Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	1 at Cuyamaca
Red-shouldered Hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	c.6 over San Diego and Cuyamaca
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	50+ over Cuyamaca and San Diego and also noted at San Benitos and Santa Catalina. 3/12
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Widespread. Particularly common on Islas San Benitos. 7/12
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	Scattered. 4/12
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	1 at Cuyamaca
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	A total of 3 seen. 2/12
California Quail	<i>Callipepla californica</i>	6 at Los Frailles
Sora Rail	<i>Porzana carolina</i>	1 seen at Estero San Jose, Cabo
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Estero San Jose, Cabo
American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>	Scattered. 2/12
Snowy Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	2 at San Ignacio and 2 at Los Frailles. 2/12
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	San Diego River Estuary

Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferous</i>	5 at Los Frailles and several at Estero San Jose, Cabo. 2/12
Black-bellied Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	San Diego River Estuary
Black Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus bachmani</i>	c.10 on Islas Todos Santos and 6+ Islas San Benitos. 2/12
American Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>	A scatter of records. 3/12
Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	Estero San Jose, Cabo
Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i>	San Diego Estuary, common at San Ignacio Lagoon and also noted at Estero San Jose, Cabo. 3/12
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Scattered along Pacific Coast. 4/12
Long-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>	Scattered on the Pacific seaboard. 3/12
Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	1 at San Diego Estuary and both days at San Ignacio Lagoon. 3/12
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	1 at San Ignacio
Willet	<i>Catoptrophorus semipalmatus</i>	Locally common on the Pacific side. 3/12
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularia</i>	1 at Nopolo and several at Estero San Jose, Cabo. 2/12
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Noted at Cuyamaca
Black Turnstone	<i>Aranaria melanocephala</i>	Several on San Benitos
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	3 at San Ignacio
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	San Ignacio and Los Frailles. 2/12
Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i>	San Diego River Estuary and San Ignacio. 2/12
Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	Scattered. 4/12
Red Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicaria</i>	AKA Grey Phalarope. Quite common in Pacific waters down to Magdalena Bay. 4/12
Parasitic Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	AKA Arctic Skua. Noted almost daily on the Pacific seaboard. A large passage of over 100 birds north of Los Islotes in the Sea of Cortez. 4/12
Pomarine Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	AKA Pomarine Skua. Scattered – max daily count was 10 with the passage of Parasitics mentioned above. 3/12
Laughing Gull	<i>Larus aricilla</i>	Scattered. Max daily count 1. 3/12
Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Larus philadelphia</i>	Scattered. Max daily count 5. 3/12
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	Scattered – San Diego and NW Baja only. 3/12
California Gull	<i>Larus californicus</i>	Common on the Pacific seaboard, not seen After Punta Colorado in the Sea of Cortez. 7/12
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Santos Todos
Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>	2 off Ensenada and 10+ Islas San Benitos. 2/12
Western Gull	<i>Larus occidentalis</i>	Common on the Pacific Seaboard. 6/12
Yellow-footed Gull	<i>Larus livens</i>	Endemic to the Gulf of California where common in the Sea of Cortez. 4/12
Heerman's Gull	<i>Larus heermanni</i>	Widespread. Max daily count c.100 around San Benitos and south of. 10/12
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>	4 south of Islas San Benitos
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	?probably this species off Santa Catalina
Forster's Tern	<i>Sterna forsteri</i>	2 off Ensenada
Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>	San Ignacio Lagoon – max daily count 5. 2/12
Royal Tern	<i>Sterna maxima</i>	Common on the Pacific seaboard and 1 in the San Jose Channel. 7/12

Elegant Tern	<i>Sterna elegans</i>	Scattered on both sides of the peninsula. 5/12
Black Skimmer	<i>Rhynchops niger</i>	1 distant bird in Ensenada harbour
Craveri's Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus craveri</i>	4+ Magdalena Bay, otherwise locally common in the Sea of Cortez especially north of Los Islotes. 5/12
Cassin's Auklet	<i>Ptychoramphus aleuticus</i>	Quite common north of San Ignacio on the Pacific Seaboard. 2/12
Rhinoceros Auklet	<i>Cerorhinca monocerata</i>	1 definite seen south of Islas San Benitos and a couple of probables
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	2 at Estero San Jose, Cabo
Band-tailed Pigeon	<i>Columba fasciata</i>	Several at Cuyamaca
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	San Diego and Cuyamaca
White-winged Dove	<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>	Scattered on Sea of Cortez shores. 4/12
Common Ground Dove	<i>Columbina passerina</i>	Scattered on Sea of Cortez shores. 3/12
White-throated Swift	<i>Aeronautes saxatilis</i>	5+ over Punta Colorado
Anna's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte anna</i>	2 males by the San Diego Estuary
Costa's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte costae</i>	A male on Islas San Benitos and widespread on Sea of Cortez shores. 4/12
Xantus' Hummingbird	<i>Hylocharis (Basilinna) xantusii</i>	Noted at Los Frailles, Punta Colorado and several at Nopolo. 3/12
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>	Scattered throughout. 4/12
Acorn Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes formicevorus</i>	Several at Cuyamaca
Gila Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes uropygialis</i>	Quite common on Sea of Cortez shores. 4/12
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides scalaris</i>	2+ at Santa Catalina and heard at Nopolo
Cassin's Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus vociferans</i>	1 at Estero San Jose, Cabo
Pacific Slope Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax difficilis</i>	1 at Nopolo
Gray Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax wrightii</i>	1 at Santa Catalina
Ash-throated Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>	Widespread on Sea of Cortez shores. 4/12
Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	2 at Cuyamaca and 1 at San Ignacio. 2/12
Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i>	1 on Cuyamaca
Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	Scattered throughout. 4/12
Hutton's Vireo	<i>Vireo huttoni</i>	1 at San Diego Rivermouth
Western Scrub Jay	<i>Aphelocoma californica</i>	Common at Cuyamaca. 3+ at Los Frailles. 2/12
Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>	Common at Cuyamaca
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Scattered. 6/12
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	Noted in San Diego
Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	30+ on Islas San Benitos
Oak Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus inornatus</i>	Several at Cuyamaca
Mountain Chickadee	<i>Parus gambeli</i>	Several at Cuyamaca
Verdin	<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>	Quite common on Sea of Cortez shores. 4/12
Bushtit	<i>Psatriparus minimus</i>	Several at San Diego Estuary
White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinesis</i>	4 at Cuyamaca
Bewick's Wren	<i>Thryothorus bewickii</i>	1 at Cuyamaca
Cactus Wren	<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>	2 at Los Frailles
Canyon Wren	<i>Catherpes mexicanus</i>	1 at Nopolo
Rock Wren	<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>	1 at Islas San Benitos
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus calendula</i>	Noted at Cuyamaca
California Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila californica</i>	A male at Los Frailles and a female at Punta Colorado. 2/12
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila caerulea</i>	Nopolo only where common
Western Bluebird	<i>Sialia mexicana</i>	Common at Cuyamaca
Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	?A <i>Catharus</i> thrush was seen at Nopolo but couldn't be sure of species
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	Common at Cuyamaca
Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	Widespread. 7/12

Gray Thrasher	<i>Tozostoma cinereum</i>	3 at Los Frailles
European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Common Cuyamaca, San Diego and Estero San Jose, Cabo. Also noted at Los Frailles. 3/12
Orange-crowned Warbler	<i>Vermivora celata</i>	Scattered on Sea of Cortez shores. 4/12
Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's race)	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	Scattered. 3/12
Mangrove (Yellow) Warbler	<i>Dendroica (petechia) bryanti</i>	1 at San Ignacio
Yellowthroat sp	<i>Geothlypis</i> sp	heard at Estero San Jose, Cabo
Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	Scattered on Sea of Cortez shores. 3/12
Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	Common at Cuyamaca
Green-tailed Towhee	<i>Pipilo chlorurus</i>	1 at Los Frailles
California Towhee	<i>Pipilo crissalis</i>	1 at Cuyamaca
Black-throated Sparrow	<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>	Common at Punta Colorado and Santa Catalina. 2/12
White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	Noted in Cuyamaca and 1 on San Benitos. 2/12
Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>	2 at Santa Catalina
Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	The San Benitos race was seen on that island. Another race seen at San Ignacio. 2/12
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	1 at Cuyamaca
Lark Sparrow	<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>	1 at Cuyamaca and 1 at Los Frailles. 2/12
Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	The Oregon type. Common at Cuyamaca
White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	Cuyamaca
Western Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	2 at Cuyamaca
Brewer's Blackbird	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>	San Diego Estuary
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	A female at Cuyamaca
Hooded Oriole	<i>Icterus cucullatus</i>	Scattered around Sea of Cortez shores. 3/12
Scott's Oriole	<i>Icterus parisorum</i>	3+ at Los Frailles
House Finch	<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	Scattered throughout. 4/12
Purple Finch	<i>Carpodacus purpureus</i>	Noted at Los Frailles
Lesser Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis psaltria</i>	Noted at Nopolo
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Scattered throughout – seems to be spreading! 4/12

Systematic List Number 3 Reptiles

Nomenclature is taken from Amphibians and Reptiles of Baja California by McPeak.

Olive Ridley Turtle	<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>	3 between the Cape and Los Frailes
Common Chuckwalla	<i>Sauromalus ater</i>	1 at Punta Colorado
Baja California Spiny Lizard	<i>Sceloporus zosteromus</i>	2+ at Punta Colorado
Side-blotched Lizard	<i>Uta stansburiana</i>	Common at Punta Colorado
San Benitos Side-blotched Lizard	<i>Uta stellata</i>	Endemic. Seen on San Benitos Island
Santa Catalina Side-blotched Lizard	<i>Uta squamata</i>	Endemic. Very common on Santa Catalina
Orange-throated Whiptail	<i>Cnemidophorus hyperythrus</i>	A juvenile almost certainly this species at Punta Colorado
Western Whiptail	<i>Cnemidophorus tigris</i>	1 at Punta Colorado
Santa Catalina Whiptail	<i>Cnemidophorus catalinensis</i>	Endemic. Just one on Santa Catalina
Rattleless Rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus catalinensis</i>	Endemic. Also known as the Santa Catalina Island Rattlesnake. One seen by some there

Systematic List Number 4 Fish

The following are not in any particular order – the rays and larger ocean fish are first and the reef fish after – these only in vague order! Please note – this is a composite list including species seen on the 2001 trip and the 2005 one. 2005 sightings are annotated with locations.

Scalloped Hammerhead Shark	<i>Sphyrna lewinii</i>	2005. Punta Colorado
Mako Shark		2005 – a scatter of records
Blue Shark	<i>Prionace glauca</i>	
Thresher Shark	<i>Alopias vulpinus</i>	
Horned Shark	<i>Heterodontus francisci</i>	
Spine-tailed Mobula	<i>Mobula japonica</i>	'Manta Ray'. 2005 Santa Catalina
Bullseye Stingray	<i>Urolophus concentricus</i>	
Diamond Stingray	<i>Dasyatis brevis</i>	2005 Punta Colorado
Round Stingray	<i>Urolophus halleri</i>	New in 2005 Punta Colorado
Panamic Green Moray	<i>Gymnothorax castaneus</i>	
Jewel Morey	<i>Morena pinta</i>	
Zebra Morey	<i>Morena cebra</i>	2005 Punta Colorado
Spotted Scorpionfish	<i>Scorpaena guttatus</i>	2005 Punta Colorado
Cortez Garden Eel	<i>Taenicoryes digueti</i>	
Spotted Snake Eel	<i>Myrichthys maculosus</i>	
Whalesucker	<i>Remilegia australis</i>	2005 Santa Catalina
Remora	<i>Remora remora</i>	
Ocean Sunfish	<i>Mola mola</i>	2005 Los Frailles
Slender Sunfish	<i>Ranzania laevis</i>	
Striped Marlin	<i>Tetrapterus audax</i>	2005 Los Frailles
Shortbill Spearfish	<i>Tetrapterus angustirostris</i>	
Dolphin Fish	<i>Coryphaena hippanus</i>	AKA Mahi Mahi or Doradao.
Sharpchin Flyingfish	<i>Fodiator actutus</i>	2005 Santa Catalina
Californian Needlefish	<i>Strongylura exilis</i>	2005 Los Frailles
California Halfbeak	<i>Hyporamphus rosae</i>	
Reef Cornetfish	<i>Fistularia commersonii</i>	Widespread. 2005 ditto
Pilotfish	<i>Naucrates ductor</i>	Seen with turtles and mobulas on several occasions
Schooling Anchovy	???	
Tinsel Squirrelfish	<i>Adioryx suborbiculatis</i>	2005 common
Machete Fish	<i>Elops affinis</i>	AKA Ladyfish.
Amberjack sp	<i>Seriola sp</i>	
Blue and Gold Snapper	<i>Lutjanus viridis</i>	2005 Punta Colorado
Yellow Snapper	<i>Lutjanus argentiventris</i>	2005 Punta Colorado
Pacific Creole Fish	<i>Paranthias colonus</i>	
Dogtooth Snapper	<i>Lutjanus jocu?</i>	
Sawtail Grouper	<i>Mycteroperca prionura</i>	Widespread
Leopard Grouper	<i>Mycteroperca rosacea</i>	Widespread and common
Golden Grouper	<i>Mycteroperca rosacea</i>	
Mexican Goatfish	<i>Mulloidichthys dentatus</i>	2005 widespread
Gold-spotted Jack	<i>Carangoides ferdau</i>	Scattered
Greybar Grunt	<i>Hamulon sexfasciatus</i>	Scattered. 2005 widespread
Barred Pargo	<i>Hoplopagrus guntheri</i>	2005 scattered
Pacific Porgy	<i>Calamus brachyurus</i>	New in 2005 Santa Catalina

Cortez Chubb	<i>Kyphosus elegans</i>	New in 2005 Santa Catalina
Garibaldi Fish	<i>Hypsypops punctipinnis</i>	San Benitos and San Ignacio Lagoon
Cortez Angelfish	<i>Pomecanthus zonipectus</i>	
Clarion Angelfish	<i>Holacanthus clarionensis</i>	
King Angelfish	<i>Holacanthus passer</i>	2005 widespread
Three-banded Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon humeralis</i>	2005 Punta Colorado
Barberfish	<i>Johnrandallia nigrirostris</i>	2005 scattered
Silverstripe Chromis	<i>Chromis alta</i>	
Scissortail Damsel	<i>Chromis atrilobata</i>	2005 common
Cortez Damsel	<i>Eupomacentrus rectifraenum</i>	2005 common
Giant Damsel	<i>Microspathodon dorsalis</i>	A large species with elongate fins. 2005 common
Bumphead Damsel	<i>Microspathodon bairdi</i>	Widespread in low numbers. 2005 Santa Catalina
Panamic Sergeant-Major	<i>Abudefduf troschelii</i>	Widespread and locally abundant. 2005 Los Frailles & Santa Catalina
Coral Hawkfish	<i>Cirrhichthys oxycephalus</i>	Widespread – only common at Los Islotes. 2005 Los Frailles, Santa Catalina
Giant Hawkfish	<i>Cirrhites rivulatus</i>	A few of this beautiful species noted at most sites – its beautiful markings camouflage it very well. 2005 ditto
Mexican Hogfish	<i>Bodianus diplotaenia</i>	A few at most sites. 2005 scattered
Lizard Triplefin	?????	
Cortez Rainbow Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma incasanum</i>	Widespread and abundant. 2005 ditto
Sunset Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma lutescens</i>	Scattered. 2005 Los Frailles
Bicolor Parrotfish	<i>Scarus rubroviolaceus</i>	Noted at most sites in small numbers
Azure Parrotfish	<i>Scarus compressus</i>	Widespread. 2005 Los Frailles
Bluechin Parrotfish	<i>Scarus ghobban</i>	Scattered. 2005 Punta Colorado
Wounded Wrasse	<i>Halichoeres chierchiaie</i>	
Chameleon Wrasse	?????	New in 2005 Santa Catalina
Bumphead Parrotfish	<i>Scarus perrico</i>	Rather scarce – usually one or two with other parrotfish. 2005 Punta Colorado
Flagfin Mojarra	<i>Eucinostomus</i> sp	2005 Los Frailles
Panamic Fanged Blenny	<i>Ophioblennius steindachneri</i>	Widespread. 2005 Santa Catalina
Redside Blenny	<i>Malocotenus hubbsi</i>	Scattered. 2005 Santa Catalina
Redhead Blenny	<i>Elacatinus puncticulatus</i>	Scattered
Large Mouth Blenny	<i>Labrisomus xanti</i>	
Finescale Triggerfish	<i>Balistes polyeo</i>	Scattered. 2005 Punta Colorado
Orangeside Triggerfish	<i>Sufflamen verres</i>	Scattered. 2005 Punta Colorado
Blunthead Triggerfish	<i>Pseudobalistes naufragius</i>	New in 2005 Punta Colorado
Moorish Idol	<i>Zanclus cornutus</i>	New in 2005 Los Frailles
Convict Tang	<i>Acanthurus triostegus</i>	Only noted at first snorkeling site. 2005 Los Frailles
Yellowtail Surgeonfish	<i>Prionurus punctatus</i>	Often in large groups – very common. 2005 ditto
Pacific Boxfish	<i>Ostacion meleagris</i>	2005 Los Frailles & Punta Colorado
Spotted Sharpnose Puffer	<i>Canthigaster punctatissima</i>	2005 Punta Colorado
Balloonfish	<i>Diodon holocanthus</i>	Widespread and very very common. 2005 ditto
Spotted Porcupinefish	<i>Diodon hystrix</i>	
Bullseye Puffer	<i>Sphoeroides annulatus</i>	2005 Los Frailles

Systematic List Number 5

Other Marine Life

Clearly there are huge gaping holes in this list, due to lack of time and literature, and concentrating on other things! Please note – this is copied from the 2001's report and has not been updated so only refers to that year – though in fact most of these species plus some others were seen.

Algae

Feather-boa Kelp
Giant Kelp

Jellyfish

Portuguese-man-of-war *Physalia utriculus*
Moon Jelly *Aurelia labiata*

Corals

Giant Coral *Pavona gigaatea*
Branching Stony Coral *Pocillopora elegans*
Colonial Cup Coral *Tubastraea coccinea*
Yellow Gorgonian

Beach off Santalina Lagoon

Marine Worms

Giant Spiralled Polychaete *Spirobranchus giganteus*

Also known as Christmas tree worm,
these came in bright red, orange or blue.

Hydrozoa

Ostrich Plume Hydroids *Agaophenia diegensis*

Crustaceans

Gooseneck Barnacle *Lepas sp*
Acorn Barnacle *Chthamalus anisopoma*
Humpback Whale Barnacle

Grey Whale Barnacle

Whale Lice

On the Humpback Whales skin around
particularly on the callouses
On Grey Whales, clearly visible whilst
scratching chins, anchored below the top
layers of skin – non parasitic
Could be picked off and examined whilst
communing with Grey Whales – non
parasitic

Blue Spiny Lobster *Panulirus inflatus*
Sally Lightfoot Crab *Grapsus grapsus*

Two or three seen
Very common above the waters edge

Gastropods

Violet Sea Snail *Janintha sp*
Shark Eye *Neverita duplicata*

Pelagic sp,

Bivalves

Pen Shell *Pinna sp*
Oyster *Spondylus sp*
Giant Atlantic Cockle *Dinocardium robustum*
Panamic Pearl Oyster *Pinctada mazatlantica*

Mangroves of
Seen commonly on rocks whilst snorkeling
Beach at San Ignasio Lagoon
Beach, San Jose Island

Nudibranchs

California Sea Hare	<i>Aplysi californica</i>	Several on the beach at San Ignacio
Fringed Elysid	<i>Tridachiella diomeda</i>	
Red-tipped Dorid	<i>Chromodosis sedna</i>	
Tanya's Dorid	<i>Sclerodoris tanya</i>	Rock pool, grey
Baumann's Nudibranch	<i>Chromodoris baumanni</i>	Pretty, red
Slimy Slug	<i>Tambja abdere</i>	Blue and Green, in the caves by the sealions

Cephalopods

Squid	
Veligero Octopus	<i>Octopus veligero</i>
Two-spotted Octopus	<i>Octopus bimaculatus</i>

Sea Stars

Yellow-spotted Star	<i>Pharia pyramidata</i>	Unusual
Tan Star	<i>Phataria unifascialis</i>	Common
Gulf Sunstar	<i>Heliaster kubiniji</i>	One only
Crown of Thorns	<i>Acanthaster ellisii</i>	One only
Bradley's Sea Star	<i>Mithrodia bradleyi</i>	Few, bright red
Gulf Star	<i>Oreaster occidentalis</i>	
Chocolate Chip Sea Star	<i>Nidorellia armata</i>	
Panamic Sea Star	<i>Penytaceraster cumingi</i>	

Sea Urchins

Slate Pencil Urchin	<i>Eucidaris thouarsii</i>	Great fat spines, tucked into crevices
Flower Urchin	<i>Toxopneustes roseus</i>	
Brown Urchin	<i>Tripneustes depressus</i>	Fat, shorter spines, out in open
Crowned Urchin	<i>Centrostephanus coronatus</i>	Very long black spines, tucked in
Giant Sand Dollar	<i>Clypeaster europacificus</i>	Beach San Ignacio Lagoon
Long-slit Keyhole Sandollar	<i>Mellita longifissa</i>	Beach San Ignacio Lagoon