

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY BIRD RECORDS FROM BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO, OCTOBER 1991

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From 9 to 16 October 1991 we visited Baja California, south to Punta Eugenia in northern Baja California Sur. During this period we encountered several notable species, including five previously unreported from the peninsula. Our most surprising discovery was of an Arctic Warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis*) at a remote desert ranch; we have detailed this remarkable record in another note in this issue (Pyle and Howell 1993). Here we discuss other species of interest seen on this trip.

Our itinerary was as follows. 9 October: Tijuana to Ensenada. 10 October: Ensenada to Cataviña, via La Bufadora and Estero de Punta Banda. 11 October: Cataviña to Punta Eugenia, via Guerrero Negro. 12 October: Punta Eugenia to Cataviña, via Guerrero Negro. 13 October: Cataviña to Ensenada, via Rancho San José. 14 October: Ensenada (including pelagic trip) to Laguna Hanson. 15 October: Laguna Hanson to Tijuana. 16 October: Tijuana area. Figure 1 locates place names mentioned in the species accounts.

Ashy Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma homochroa*. On 14 October we saw one 8 km west of Islas de Todos Santos. Other than being a "very rare summer resident" on Islas Los Coronados (Jehl 1977), there are only two other records from Baja California, both in April (Wilbur 1987). The species is a rare autumn to spring visitor off San Diego County (Unitt 1984).

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*. We saw two adults at El Descanso, 9 October, 11 birds flying over Bahía Tortugas, 12 October, and an immature at Laguna Hanson, 15 October. All other specified records from Baja California have been in January and February (Grinnell 1928, Wilbur 1987), and Unitt (1984) noted only three October records for San Diego County.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*. We saw two at Laguna Ojo de Liebre on 12 October and two at the reservoir 8 km south of Ejido Héroes de la Independencia on 15 October. There are only five previous published records from Baja California (Wilbur 1987), but this likely reflects lack of observer coverage rather than true rarity. Baird's Sandpiper is an uncommon to fairly common autumn transient in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*. At Estero de Punta Banda we saw one on 10 October; at Ensenada harbor, four on 10 October and one on 14 October; at Ejido Vizcaino, one on 12 October; at La Pinta Pond (see Palacios and Alfaro 1991), one on 13 October; and at the reservoir 8 km south of Ejido Héroes de la Independencia, 26 on 15 October. All were juveniles. Our observations and records such as "considerable numbers and nine specimens taken" at San José del Cabo (Brewster 1902) indicate that Pectoral Sandpipers are not "rare" transients in Baja California as suggested by Wilbur (1987). The species is an uncommon to fairly common autumn transient in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*. On 10 October we saw one at Estero de Punta Banda. E. Palacios (pers. comm.) saw two at the same site in September 1991. Early in this century, Black Terns were fairly common autumn transients off the Pacific coast of southern California and Baja California (Garrett and Dunn 1981, Grinnell 1928), but today they are uncommon, becoming rare in coastal southern California after September (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

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Vaux's Swift *Chaetura vauxi*. One flying back and forth over the international border fence at Tijuana, 16 October, is the first recorded in autumn for Baja California, there being no published evidence to support Wilbur's (1987) statement "apparently rare fall migrant" (cf. Grinnell 1928). The Tijuana record also appears to be fairly late for Vaux's Swift, the latest autumn date reported by Unitt (1984) for this species in San Diego County being 19 October.

Willow/Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax trailii/alnorum*. Two birds at Bahía Tortugas on 12 October were clearly referable to this pair of very similar species. While one individual was distinctly brownish above and thus probably a northwestern Willow Flycatcher (*E. t. brewsteri*), a fairly common autumn transient in coastal southern California, the second bird was distinctly greener above and had a whiter throat, more typical of other subspecies of the Willow Flycatcher or of the Alder Flycatcher. Both birds were silent. There are no published autumn records of either species from Baja California (cf. Grinnell 1928, Wilbur 1987).

Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus*. We observed a Least Flycatcher at the Highway 1 crossing of the Río El Rosario on 13 October, and Pyle saw another at El Descanso on 15 October. The bold eye ring and wingbars, relatively broad bill, upward flicking of the shortish tail, and full "whit" call were all noted. The only prior report from Baja California is from Isla Guadalupe (Wilbur 1987); the lack of mainland records likely can be attributed to poor observer coverage and to identification problems in the genus *Empidonax*.

Hammond's Flycatcher *Empidonax hammondi*. Howell saw one at Laguna Hanson on 15 October, the first reported in autumn for Baja California (cf. Wilbur 1987). The small narrow bill (mostly dusky below), bright teardrop-shaped eye ring, and relatively long primary projection accentuating the relatively short tail were all noted. Hammond's Flycatcher is an uncommon autumn transient in southern California, mainly in the interior (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia*. We saw one, flying south with Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), at La Bufadora on 10 October. This species has been previously reported only three times from Baja California (Bryant 1891, Howell and Pyle 1990) and is a rare autumn transient in coastal southern California, being reported only occasionally after early October (Garrett and Dunn 1981, Unitt 1984).

Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota*. We saw one with Barn Swallows at Ejido Héroes de la Independencia on 15 October. Cliff Swallows are very rare in southern California after early October (Garrett and Dunn 1981, Unitt 1984), and our observation constitutes the latest record for Baja California.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*. We recorded four individuals: one heard and seen at Cataviña on 13 October, single birds heard flying overhead on 10 October at Estero de Punta Banda and 8 km west of San Telmo de Abajo, and one heard over Ensenada on 14 October. The Cataviña bird was watched in the open by a roadside rain puddle for 15 minutes at ranges down to 6 m. We noted the boldly streaked upperparts, including two paler "braces," the lack of primary projection beyond the tertials, the bold blackish malar stripe and streaking on the underparts, and pink legs. The call, and those of the birds flying over, was a high thin hissing "tsssi" or "tzzzi" (Howell) or "pseeep" (Pyle). There are only two previous records of this species for Mexico (Grinnell 1928, Howell and Webb 1989). Our records in Baja California coincided with an unprecedented invasion of Red-throated Pipits to California in autumn 1991.

Bell's Vireo *Vireo bellii*. We saw a brightly marked individual at Punta Banda on 10 October 1991. Bell's Vireos are rarely noted in migration away from the breeding areas in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981, Unitt 1984) or northern Baja

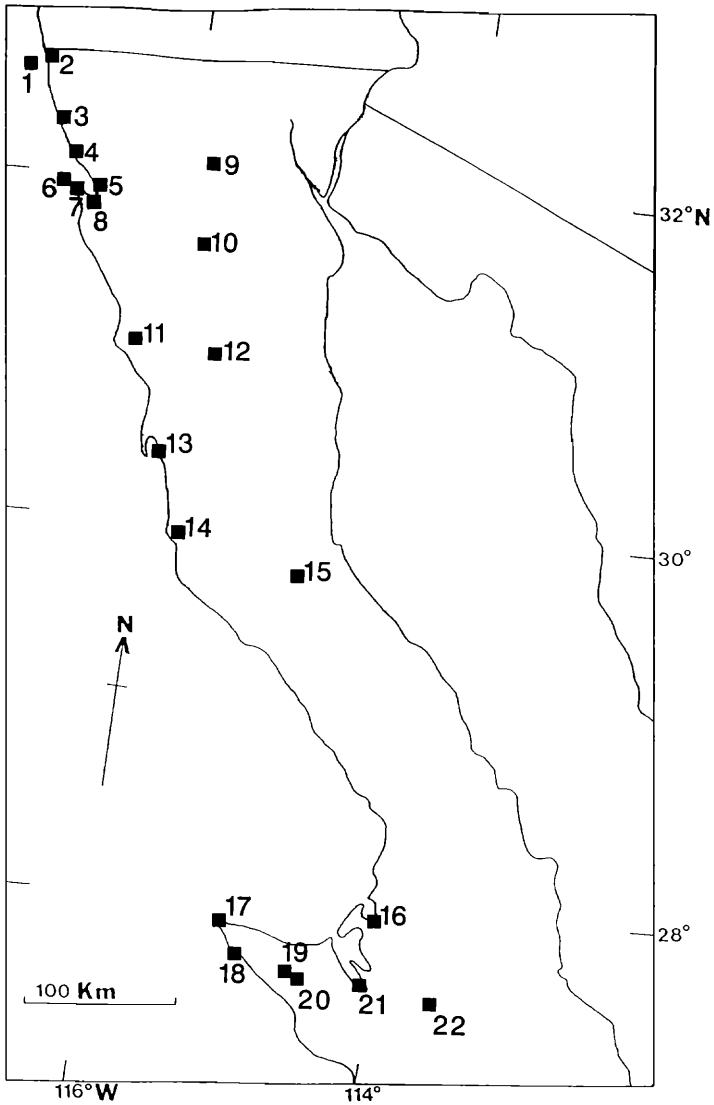


Figure 1. Locations mentioned in the species accounts. 1, Islas Los Coronados; 2, Tijuana; 3, El Descanso; 4, La Salina; 5, Ensenada; 6, Islas de Todos Santos; 7, La Bufadora; 8, Estero de Punta Banda; 9, Laguna Hanson; 10, Ejido Héroes de la Independencia; 11, San Telmo de Abajo; 12, Rancho San José; 13, La Pinta Pond, Bahía San Quintín; 14, Rio El Rosario crossing; 15, Cataviña; 16, Guerrero Negro; 17, Punta Eugenia; 18, Bahía Tortugas; 19, Rancho San Miguel; 20, Rancho Santa Monica; 21, Laguna Ojo de Liebre; 22, Ejido Vizcaino.

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California (Grinnell 1928, Wilbur 1987). The brightness of the individual we saw suggests the possibility of a subspecies other than the gray *V. b. pusillus*, which breeds in northwestern Baja California.

Solitary Vireo *Vireo solitarius*. On 11 October we saw one at Cataviña. The bird's overall gray and white appearance and relatively large bill indicated it was *V. s. plumbeus*. Although neither Grinnell (1928) nor Wilbur (1987) listed this form for Baja California, Keith and Stejskal (1987) reported one at Guerrero Negro in October 1987, and Howell and S. Webb saw one at San José del Cabo on 6 February 1988.

Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*. We saw one at Cataviña on 11 October, the first recorded for Baja California. We watched it for 30 minutes at ranges down to 5 m, at times in the same tree as three Warbling Vireos (*V. gilvus*). The Philadelphia Vireo was slightly smaller than the Warblings, with a rounder head and smaller hooked vireo bill. The crown was grayish, in slight contrast to the olive upperparts, which showed a narrow pale wingbar on the tips of the greater secondary coverts. The face was marked by a broad whitish superciliary and subocular crescent separated by a narrow but distinct dark loreal stripe and dark eyestripe. The throat and underparts were bright pale lemon, slightly paler on the flanks and under tail-coverts, and becoming whitish only on the belly and vent. The Philadelphia Vireo is a rare autumn vagrant in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera*. On 10 October we found a male at La Bufadora, representing the first record of this species in Baja California. The bird fed within 8 to 10 m of us and was unmistakable. It was slightly larger than an adjacent Orange-crowned Warbler (*V. celata*) and had a sharply pointed dark bill. The crown was bright yellow, the rest of the upperparts gray with a bold yellow panel on wing coverts. The bold black mask and black bib were separated by a white moustache, and the rest of the underparts were grayish white. Golden-winged Warblers are rare autumn vagrants in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina*. We saw single birds at Punta Banda on 10 October and at Rancho San José on 13 October. Six other Tennessee Warblers have been reported from Baja California (Howell and Webb in press, Keith and Stejskal 1987, Wilbur 1987); the species is probably a rare but regular transient or vagrant there, as it is in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Lucy's Warbler *Vermivora luciae*. We saw one at a small ranch 12 km east of Bahía Tortugas on 12 October. Lucy's Warbler should be considered a vagrant, not a "transient" (Wilbur 1987) in Baja California away from its summer breeding range in the Río Colorado delta, and there are now four such records from the peninsula (cf. Wilbur 1987). This species is a rare autumn vagrant in coastal southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Nashville Warbler *Vermivora ruficapilla*. Howell saw a brightly marked individual, probably a male, at La Salina on 15 October. This constitutes the first published autumn occurrence for Baja California (cf. Wilbur 1987). Nashville Warblers are notably commoner in spring than in autumn in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981, Unitt 1984).

Magnolia Warbler *Dendroica magnolia*. We saw one at Rancho San Miguel, 122 km by road northwest of Ejido Vizcaino, on 12 October, and Howell saw singles at the Highway 1 crossing of the Río El Rosario on 13 October and at La Salina on 15 October. All birds were seen clearly at close range. The heads were gray with a white eye ring and indistinct short whitish superciliary. The backs were olive, the wings dark gray with two narrow white wingbars. The black tails had bold basal white tail spots so that, when viewed from below, they appeared as white tails boldly tipped black.

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The throat and underparts were yellow, becoming white on the under tail coverts, with a slight gray extension from the nape onto the neck sides. The first two birds were notably dull, with indistinct dusky streaks on the flanks suggesting that they were immature females. The La Salina bird had distinct black back feather centers and bold black flank streaks suggesting it was a male; it also called once, giving a squeaky nasal "nyih." Surprisingly there are no previous published records of Magnolia Warblers from Baja California although the species is a regular autumn vagrant in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*. On 13 October we found a Blackpoll Warbler associating with a small flock of Yellow Warblers (*D. petechia*) at Rancho San José. We watched it for 15 minutes at ranges down to 8 m. It was slightly larger than adjacent Yellow Warblers. The crown, nape, and upperparts were olive with indistinct darker streaking on the back. The face showed a narrow pale lemon superciliary and dark eyestripe suggesting an Orange-crowned Warbler. The dark wings had two distinct narrow white wingbars, and the blackish tail showed distal white tail spots, obvious when the tail was spread. The bright pale lemon throat and chest had indistinct dusky streaks on the chest extending slightly onto the paler flanks; the under tail-coverts were whitish. The bill was dark, the legs flesh-colored. There is only one other specific published record from Baja California, at Punta Banda on 16 October 1987 (Keith and Stejskal 1987). Although the A.O.U. (1983) mentioned this species' occurrence in northern Baja California, the source of that report is unclear (B. L. Monroe, Jr., pers. comm.). Blackpoll Warblers are rare to uncommon autumn vagrants in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Painted Redstart *Myioborus pictus*. On 12 October we found a Painted Redstart at Rancho San Miguel. We watched the bird, at times as close to us as 3 m, feeding actively in the same tree as an Arctic Warbler, a Magnolia Warbler, two Yellow Warblers, an Audubon's Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*) and two Townsend's Warblers (*D. townsendi*)! The head, chest, flanks, and upperparts were black with a striking white panel on the wing coverts, white tertial edges, and a white subocular crescent; the white outer rectrices were often flashed conspicuously as the tail was spread. The belly was bright red. The bird called several times, giving a slightly nasal "sreeu" that suggested a common call of the Pine Siskin (*Carduelis pinus*). This is the first record of this unmistakable species in Baja California. Painted Redstarts are rare autumn vagrants in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*. We saw an immature male at Rancho Santa Monica, 120 km by road northwest of Ejido Vizcaino, on 12 October. The bird's head and back were olive with a narrow pale broken eye ring. The wings and tail were darker, grayish, with contrastingly black greater secondary coverts. The throat and underparts were lemon yellowish, brightest on the under tail coverts. The stout bill was flesh-colored with a dark culmen. There are only two prior published records of this species in Baja California (Keith and Stejskal 1987, Wilbur 1987), the former at Punta Banda on 16 October 1987. Scarlet Tanagers are rare autumn vagrants in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Great-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus mexicanus*. We saw 11 females flying south over Cataviña on 11 October and an immature female (age by dusky iris color) at Rancho San José on 13 October. In addition, P. Unitt (pers. comm.) saw four Great-tailed Grackles at the northeast corner of Bahía San Quintín on 1 December 1986, and R. A. Behrstock (pers. comm.) saw a female at Rancho San José on 28 and 29 November 1990. These are the first records in Baja California away from the Rio Colorado drainage (cf. Wilbur 1987) and suggest that this species' range is still expanding, as has been noted in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

NOTES

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