

WildOceans BAJA CALIFORNIA AND THE SEA OF CORTEZ

26th MARCH – 6th APRIL 2017

A personal species list by Richard Webb

INTRODUCTION

It was a very successful trip with ten species of cetaceans including three Peruvian (Pygmy) Beaked Whales, Dwarf Sperm Whale, Sperm Whale and four Blue Whales, Guadalupe Fur Seal, some good birds including an unexpected Short-tailed Albatross.

ITINERARY

- 26th Post dark departure from San Diego.
27th-28th Sailing south along the coast of Baja with stops on or offshore from Islas Todos Santos and Islas San Benitos.
29th-30th San Ignacio Lagoon.
31st Sailing south through Magdalena Bay.
1st -5th Sea of Cortez with stops/landings including Los Frailes, Islas San Jose, Islas Santa Cristalina and Espiritu Santo,
6th Disembark early morning at Cabo San Lucas

MAMMALS

Numbers quoted are my own personal counts unless indicated otherwise and numbers of dolphins and Humpback Whales in particular are only a small proportion of those seen in total on the tour.

- Grey Whale**
Eschrichtius robustus 27th – two as we headed south along the Pacific coast.
29th & 30th – 40+ per day in San Ignacio Lagoon. Fabulous encounters from the pangas but personally I preferred the views from the Spirit of Adventure with whales breaching close to the boat, rubbing themselves against the boat and giving fabulous views in the clear waters their size being easier to appreciate from the higher viewpoint.
- Blue Whale**
Balaenoptera musculus 27th – one as we headed south along the Pacific coast.
31st – great views of two in Magdalena Bay with one particularly large individual close to the boat for over an hour.
1st – excellent views of another in the Sea of Cortez.
- Fin Whale**
Balaenoptera physalus 4th – two briefly close to the bows of the ship.
- Humpback Whale**
Megaptera novaeangliae Under-recorded but one on the 28th, two on the 31st, 3+ on the 1st, two on the 2nd, 3+ on the 3rd and 3+ on the 5th including several breaching animals some close to the boat.

Sperm Whale <i>Physeter microcephalus</i>	One briefly and distantly on the 2 nd in the Sea of Cortez was re-found on the 3 rd and gave good views as we sailed towards it before diving and subsequently only giving views into the sun.
Dwarf Sperm Whale <i>Kogia simus</i>	One seen briefly but well in the Sea of Cortez on the 2 nd .
Peruvian (Pygmy) Beaked Whale <i>Mesoplodon peruvianus</i>	At least three of this rarely-seen species seen at mid-range in the Sea of Cortez on the 2 nd .
Short-beaked Common Dolphin <i>Delphinus delphis</i>	100s at sea off the Pacific coast on the 27 th .
Long-beaked Common Dolphin <i>Delphinus capensis</i>	100s approaching the southern tip of Baja on the 31 st and in the Sea of Cortez on the 2 nd and 3 rd .
Bottlenose Dolphin <i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	Under-recorded. Inshore form. 6+ on the 29 th and three on the 30 th in San Ignacio Lagoon. Offshore form. 20+ in the Sea of Cortez on the 2 nd .
Harbour Seal <i>Phoco vitulina</i>	Eight on Islas Todos Santos on the 27 th .
California Sealion <i>Zalophus californianus</i>	50+ in San Diego Marina on the 26 th , five at sea on the 27 th , 31 st and 5 th and 50+ at a colony in the Sea of Cortez on the 4 th .
Northern Elephant Seal <i>Mirounga angustirostris</i>	10+ on Islas Todos Santos on the 27 th and 200+ on Islas San Benitos on the 28 th .
Guadalupe Fur Seal <i>Arctocephalus townsendi</i>	A single on Islas San Benitos on the 28 th with two more seen by other members of the group.
Black-tailed Jackrabbit <i>Lepus californicus</i>	Singles at Los Frailes on 1 st and 5 th .
White-tailed Antelope Squirrel <i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>	One at Los Frailes on the 5 th .

SELECTED REPTILES, FISH AND RAYS

Loggerhead Turtle <i>Caretta caretta</i>	Two at sea on the 31 st .
Desert Iguana <i>Dipsosaurus dorsalis</i>	5+ on Islas Santa Catalina on the 3 rd .

Common Chuckwalla
Sauromalus ater

3+ on Islas Santa Catalina on the 3rd.

Santa Catalina Side-blotched Lizard *Uta squamata*

One on Islas Santa Catalina on the 3rd.

Side-blotched Lizard
Uta stansburiana

Small numbers at a number of stops.

Western Whiptail
Cnemidophorus tigris

Small numbers Islas San Benitos.

Catalina Rattlesnake
Crotalus catalinensis

One on Islas Santa Catalina on the 3rd.

Thresher Shark
Alopias vulpinus

One jumping clear of the water in the Sea of Cortez on the 3rd.

Smooth-tailed Mobula
Mobula munkiana

Seen on three days in the Sea of Cortez with dozens jumping close to the boat on the 4th as we toasted them with margaritas in hand!

Spiny-tailed Mobula
Mobula japonica

Smaller numbers of these on two days in the Sea of Cortez but even more spectacular being larger and more acrobatic.

BIRDS

Ab – Abundant. C – common. H – heard. SN – small numbers.

		26th	27th	28th	29th	30th	31st	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pacific Diver	<i>Gavia pacifica</i>		1										
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>		2		6+	3							
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>		2		1	4	5		100s	100s	SN		
Laysan Albatross	<i>Phoebastria immutabilis</i>		6										
Black-footed Albatross	<i>Phoebastria nigripes</i>		8	2									
Short-tailed Albatross	<i>Phoebastria albatrus</i>		1										
Pink-footed Shearwater	<i>Ardenna creatopus</i>		10+	2			SN			SN			
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>						2			1			
Black-vented Shearwater	<i>Puffinus opisthomelas</i>		100s	100s		C	C	C	C			5+	
Black Storm-Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma melania</i>								20+	5+			
Least Storm-Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma microsoma</i>									1			
Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>									2			
Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>						3						
Blue-footed Booby	<i>Sula nebouxii</i>										7		
Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>						3	1	4	1			
Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>		C	C	C		C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Brandt's Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax penicillatus</i>		C	C	C								
Pelagic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus</i>		1+										
Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>		1		SN	1			SN				SN
Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>				1	1		3	C	C	C	C	C
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	20+			6	2						1	1
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	3				2							
Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>					1						1	
Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>					1							
Tricolored Heron	<i>Egretta tricolor</i>					1							
Reddish Egret	<i>Egretta rufescens</i>				1	2+							
Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>												1
Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	10+											
White Ibis	<i>Eudocimus albus</i>				10	3							

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Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>			12	32	SN							
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>			6	10+	SN							
Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	6											
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>					6							
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>				2			SN	SN	SN	SN		
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>			8+	2	2			1	2	2	1	
Crested Caracara	<i>Caracara cheriway</i>								2			2	
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			2	2					1			
California Quail	<i>Callipepla californica</i>							1				H	
Ridgway's Rail	<i>Rallus obsoletus</i>					1							
American Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>			2	2	1							
Black Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus bachmani</i>		3										
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>					5							
Snowy Plover	<i>Charadrius nivosus</i>					4							
Wilson's Plover	<i>Charadrius wilsonia</i>					2							
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>							1					
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		2	1	5	2							
Long-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>				40+	SN							
Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i>		c.20		25	40+						20+	
Black Turnstone	<i>Arenaria melanocephala</i>			10+									
Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>				SN								
Surfbird	<i>Calidris virgata</i>		5										
Stilt Sandpiper	<i>Calidris himantopus</i>					1							
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>				C	C							
Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i>					50+							
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>		3	5			20+						
Grey Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>			100+				SN					
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>							1				1	
Wandering Tattler	<i>Tringa incana</i>											1	
Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>		1						1	5+			
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>				1				5+	10+			
Murrelet sp					5							2	
Craveri's Murrelet	<i>Synthliboramphus craveri</i>						8		1				

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Cassin's Auklet	<i>Ptychoramphus aleuticus</i>		c.10	300+			2						
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>			2			2						
Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus philadelphia</i>		100+										
Heermann's Gull	<i>Larus heermanni</i>			5+	2				C	SN	SN		
Western Gull	<i>Larus occidentalis</i>	C	C	C	C	C	C						
Yellow-footed Gull	<i>Larus livens</i>								C	C	C		
California Gull	<i>Larus californicus</i>				2	C	C	C				C	
Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>			2				1					
Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>		10+	1	10+	SN	SN	SN		2			
Elegant Tern	<i>Thalasseus elegans</i>		5+				SN						
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	SN	SN										
Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			1+				2				1	
Common Ground-Dove	<i>Columbina passerina</i>							2				2	
White-winged Dove	<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>							SN	SN	SN	SN	SN	
Greater Roadrunner	<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>											2	
White-throated Swift	<i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>										5+		
Costa's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte costae</i>							1	3				
Xantus's Hummingbird	<i>Hylocharis xantusii</i>										2		
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>					2							
Gila Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes uropygialis</i>							C	SN	SN	SN	C	
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides scalaris</i>							1		1			
Gilded Flicker	<i>Colaptes chrysoides</i>							1				1	
Grey Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax wrightii</i>								1				
Pacific-slope Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax difficilis</i>									1	1	1	
Ash-throated Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>							5+		5+	1	2	
Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>							1		5+			
Bell's Vireo	<i>Vireo bellii</i>								1				
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>				1	2			5+	SN	SN	SN	
Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>										3		
Verdin	<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>							C	C	1		C	
Canyon Wren	<i>Catherpes mexicanus</i>										H		
Cactus Wren	<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>							4			2	2	

Blue-grey Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila caerulea</i>									1	2		
		26th	27th	28th	29th	30th	31st	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
California Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila californica</i>							3					
Grey Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma cinereum</i>							4				1	
Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>							5+			2	5+	
European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	SN											
Phainopepla	<i>Phainopepla nitens</i>							SN			1	1	
Mangrove Warbler	<i>Setophaga bryanti</i>					2+							
Myrtle Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	1											
MacGillivray's Warbler	<i>Oporonis tolmiei</i>							1				H	
Black-throated Sparrow	<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>							2	2	20			
Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>			Ab									
Western Tanager	<i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>							4			3		
Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>							4			2	2	
Pyrrhuloxia	<i>Cardinalis sinuatus</i>							1				1	
Black-headed Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i>							1				2	
Hooded Oriole	<i>Icterus cucullatus</i>							4				5+	
Scott's Oriole	<i>Icterus parisorum</i>							2				3	
House Finch	<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>							SN	SN	SN	SN	SN	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>			C				2					

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