

2024 Trip to Baja California

Note: Click on [this link](#) to see the full album of photos from this trip. Click on individual photos to see a larger image.

Swimming with a Whale Shark, the largest fish on the planet, occupied a top spot on Linda's Bucket List. Fortunately, that presented no problem as they occur off the coast of Baja California. So, we signed up for a short trip to *the other California* with the prospect of Gray Whales, Whale Sharks, and a smattering of birds to add to our list. Besides, the trip gave us an opportunity to use up some of the United Airline miles that had proved difficult in the past.

Carolyn Whittle, a friend we first met in Cuba years ago, and Leslie Fuller, Linda's cousin, joined us. So, in February, we flew down and met Ken Behrens, our guide.



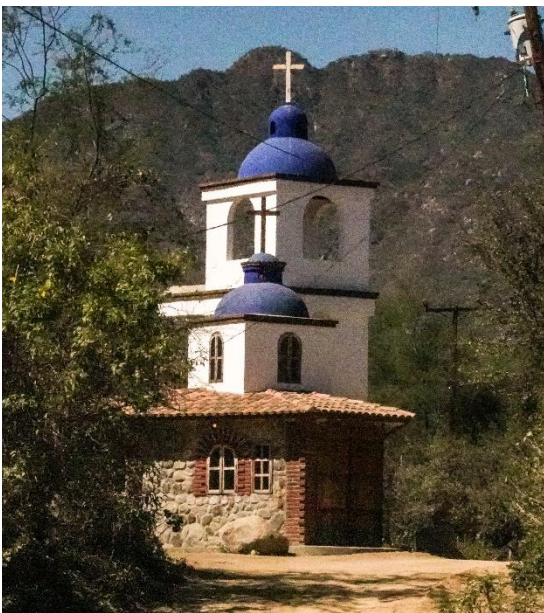
Belding's Yellowthroat

We started on birds before getting to the whales and sharks, picking up lifers quickly thanks to four endemic species found only in Baja. A short hike to a marsh produced this Belding's Yellowthroat, which looks a lot like a Common Yellowthroat, but has a larger black mask.

Later that morning, we saw a Gray Thrasher, a relative of the California Thrasher we have at home. He cooperated nicely, posing on a branch for this photo.



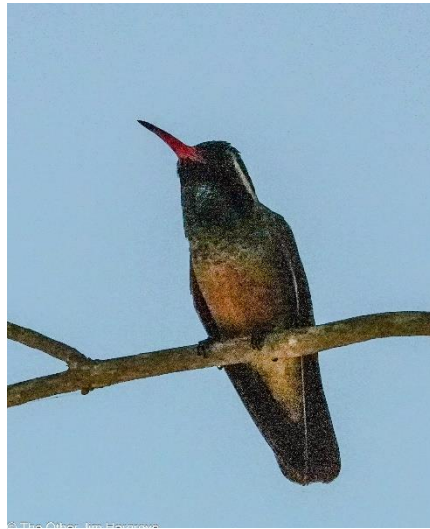
Gray Thrasher on a branch



Small, Cute Church

Linda found this small church, which was closed when we saw it, charming and insisted on a photo.

The next morning, we managed to get several photos of Xantus' Hummingbird, another species found only in Baja. Its plumage is very similar to the White-eared Hummingbird, which fortunately does not occur in Baja. Here are three photos showing the plumage from different angles.



Three Views of Xantus' Hummingbird

We had some special company for lunch, this spectacular Cape Spiny-tailed Iguana.



Cape Spiny-tailed Iguana relaxing on the wall of the café.



San Lucan Robin

Next, we visited a special area, *Reserva de la Biosfera Sierra de la Laguna*, which required special permission. This produced one more endemic, Baird's Junco. Linda also erased a *half bird*, Gray Flycatcher, which Jim had seen, but not Linda.

This San Lucan Robin is considered to be a subspecies of the North American Robin, but it looks quite different and will probably be split before long. Notice the white markings on the face and the pale color of the breast.

Then, finally, it was time to visit the Pacific Ocean, and whales. But first, we had the morning swim with whale sharks. I came down for breakfast, then went back to bed with an episode of Norovirus. Linda went and reported that she swam with a whale shark *very briefly*. The water was too cold.

The next day, we drove from La Paz to San Carlos, arriving there in time for a boat trip to see whales. We saw a few as well as several other birds and other animals. We stumbled onto another lifer, Craveri's Murrelet. However, the best was yet to come on the last full day of the trip. Turns out that the whales are more available in the morning, not the afternoon.

We had heard that they seemed to be interested in boats and humans, something we were able to see for ourselves. Here is the best photo, when a gray whale surfaced between us and another boat.



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Gray Whale at Close Quarters

One final photo, a Herrman's Gull in full breeding plumage. The ones we see around the Bay are almost always in "basic" as opposed to "alternate" plumage, ornithologists preferred verbiage.



Adult Herrman's Gull