

Further observations of birds from Colima and adjacent Jalisco, Mexico

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Se proporcionan observaciones recientes de 25 especies de aves del estado de Colima y partes adyacentes de Jalisco, en el occidente de México. Estos registros incluyen ocho primeros registros para el estado de Colima (*Botaurus lentiginosus*, *Rostrhamus sociabilis*, *Arenaria melanocephala*, *Cypseloides storeri*, *Calypte costae*, *Petrochelidon fulva*, *Parula americana* y *Dendroica dominica*) y cinco para el estado de Jalisco (*Plegadis falcinellus*, *Turdus infuscatus*, *Dendroica pensylvanica*, *D. tigrina* y *Carpodacus cassinii*). Son particularmente notables las extensiones de distribución de *Rostrhamus sociabilis* y *Aramus guarauna*.

Introduction

In western Mexico, the small state of Colima and adjacent areas of the state of Jalisco support a great diversity of birds^{5,10,17}. Here, further observations of 25 species are noted, including supporting data for several records listed without comment by Howell⁶. This paper is based on 65 days of field work: 16–21 December 1995 (Howell, Robert A. Behrstock and Bernie Master), 17 February–1 March 1997 (Howell and Behrstock), 16–19 and 23–27 February 1999 (Howell and Will Russell), 15–26 February 2000 (Howell and Rich Hoyer), 13–24 February 2001 (Parker Backstrom and Daniel Lane), and 13–24 February 2002 (Howell and Lane). Sites mentioned in the species accounts are located and described by Howell^{5,6}.

Records discussed here include eight first state records from Colima (American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*, Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis*, Black Turnstone *Arenaria melanocephala*, White-fronted Swift *Cypseloides storeri*, Costa's Hummingbird *Calypte costae*, Cave Swallow *Petrochelidon fulva*, Northern Parula *Parula americana*, Yellow-throated Warbler *Dendroica dominica*) and five from Jalisco (Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Black Thrush *Turdus infuscatus*, Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica*, Cape May Warbler *D. tigrina*, Cassin's Finch *Carpodacus cassinii*). For the following species, subsequent observations (not detailed here) support the status in the region described by Howell⁶: Common Loon *Gavia immer*, Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxii*, Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*, White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus*, Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus*, Ruddy Crane *Laterallus ruber*, Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Great Swallow-tailed Swift *Panyptila sanctihieronymi*, Olive-sided Flycatcher *Contopus cooperi*, White-throated Flycatcher *Empidonax albigularis*, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus*, Golden-crowned Kinglet *Regulus satrapa*, Aztec Thrush *Zoothera pinicola*, Black-throated Green Warbler *Dendroica virens*, Palm Warbler *D.*



Figure 1. Juan Fernández Petrel *Pterodroma externa*, 5 km off Manzanillo, Colima, 26 February 1999 (Peter Payzant)

palmarum, Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*, Ruddy-breasted Seedeater *Sporophila minuta*, and Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*.

Juan Fernández Petrel *Pterodroma externa*

One seen well and photographed 5 km off Manzanillo, Colima, 26 February 1999 (Fig. 1). The underwings had atypically broad black margins (perhaps accentuated by shading), which may indicate an immature. The nape and back were uniform grey, with no white hind-collar, eliminating White-necked Petrel *P. cervicalis*. Although Juan Fernández Petrels are fairly common over offshore waters^{10,16} this individual was unusually close to the mainland.

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*

One standing in roadside reeds at Manzanillo airport marshes, Colima, on 16 December 1995 was within the mapped winter range for this species¹⁰ but appears to be the first specific record from Colima^{3,17,18}.

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana*

Two were at Laguna Sayula, Jalisco, on 17 February 2002, and two (possibly the same?) flew south over the western edge of Ciudad Colima, Colima, on 23

February 2002. There are few inland records in Mexico, and previous occurrences on the plateau have mainly been in May–October¹⁰.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

At Laguna Zapotlán, Jalisco, two were among 1,500 White-faced Ibis *P. chihi* on 17 February 2001, and one with 500 White-faced Ibis on 16 February 2002. They were carefully studied and had slaty lores with bluish-white margins and brown eyes diagnostic of Glossy and distinct from the numerous White-faced Ibis present. There are no previous records from Jalisco and only one other from western Mexico, in Colima⁵. The spread of this species in Mexico and North America was summarised by Howell & de Montes⁸ and Patten & Lasley¹⁵.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis*

Sixty were at Laguna Zapotlán on 23 February 1999, my only record there in numerous trips. Although common in the tropical lowlands of Mexico, the species is rarely recorded in the interior^{10,19}.

Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis*

This species has spread into north-west Mexico in recent years. At Manzanillo airport marshes at least three (including an adult male and juvenile) were present in February 2000, a single on 14 February 2001, and up to five in February 2002. All field marks were noted on these birds, including the distinctive arch-winged flight shape, large white area at the base of the square-ended tail, and very slender hooked bill; several were watched hunting and eating snails, which they snatched from near the water surface with their feet. Farther north, Snail Kites (up to five together in 2002, pers. obs.) have been seen around San Blas, Nayarit, since January 2000 when found there by Rick Taylor & Narca Moore-Craig (pers. comm.). The nearest record to the south on Mexico's Pacific slope is from eastern Guerrero¹⁰: on 18 April 1988, S. Webb and I observed an adult male and three females/immatures at a small pond beside Highway 200 near the Ometepec junction. The Colima and Nayarit records represent a range expansion of c.700 km and mirror the colonisation of north-west Mexico by Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*, which feeds on the same snails. The marshy savannas of south-east Mexico were plagued by drought and fires during the 1990s (pers. obs.), which may have contributed to the dispersal of these two species.

Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus*

An adult of the nominate subspecies at Laguna Zapotlán, on 16 February 2002, was beyond the south-west limit of the species' known winter range in Mexico¹⁰.

Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni*

A concentration of 60–70 birds (95% light morph) fed over burning sugar cane on the northern outskirts of Ciudad Colima, on 25 February 1999. While this species winters regularly (and increasingly?) in western Mexico, most records from Colima are of singles or small groups.

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*

This species continues to increase at Manzanillo airport marshes, where it first appeared in 1994⁵. High counts in recent years have been six in December 1995, five in February 1997, 8+ in February 1999, 5+ in February 2000, 20 in February 2001 and 12+ in February 2002. In addition, increasing numbers have been found around San Blas, Nayarit, since 2000 (Rick Taylor & Armando Santiago pers. comm.).

King/Clapper Rail *Rallus elegans/longirostris*

Two large rails observed in mangroves at Barra de Navidad, Jalisco, on 13 February 2002, were outside the known range of either taxon. The back was sandy olive-brown with clean-cut blackish feather centres, the neck and chest vinaceous-cinnamon, the black-and-white flank bars narrow and relatively broken (not broad and solid); the bill was orangish and the legs dull orange-flesh. They thus resembled the western *obsoletus* subspecies group, usually treated within Clapper Rail but considered by Olson¹⁴ to be King Rails.

Black Turnstone *Arenaria melanocephala*

One associating loosely with other shorebirds at Manzanillo, on 23 February 2001, was the southernmost recorded in Mexico¹⁰. It fed among stones and shells on mudflats and was viewed in good light to within 100 m, when all field marks were observed—size, shape, bill length, thick dark reddish legs, and plumage. Poor-quality photos of the bird (Fig. 2) reveal its blackish upperparts and chest, eliminating Ruddy Turnstone *A. interpres*, a species familiar to the observers.



Figure 2. Black Turnstone *Arenaria melanocephala*, Manzanillo, Colima, 23 February 2001 (Daniel Lane)

Whip-poor-will *Caprimulgus vociferus*

At the Barranca El Choncho, Jalisco (250 m elevation), a female was flushed from roost and then studied at close range on 15 February 2002. There are few records of this species from the lowlands of western Mexico, where it may be a regular elevational migrant.

White-fronted Swift *Cypseloides [cryptus] storeri*

At Playa de Oro, Colima, two adults (presumably of this taxon) were studied for 45 minutes on 13 February 2002. They were viewed at ranges down to 30 m in excellent early-morning light in association with a group of 20 Chestnut-collared Swift *C. rutilus*, which may have moved down to the coastal lowlands due to snowstorms over the inland mountains. The presumed *storeri* were not obviously larger than the *C. rutilus*, but were notably stockier with a larger and blunter head and a relatively shorter and broader, squared tail—which is in accord with details of the only previous documented sighting of this taxon in life⁹. They flew with bursts of rapid wingbeats alternating with glides on bowed wings, not noticeably different from the flight style of the *C. rutilus* present, though they tended to fly in the upper stratum of the group. They were overall black with a white frontal band that appeared striking in the low-angle morning sun. The white extended between the eyes and seemed narrower over the bill than immediately forward of the eyes (Figs. 3–4). The bold white ‘front’ of the Playa de Oro birds was much more striking than the silvery-white forehead often exhibited by Black Swift *C. niger* and recalled the bright ‘headlights’ of Spot-fronted Swift *C. cherriei*⁷. Whilst similar in shape

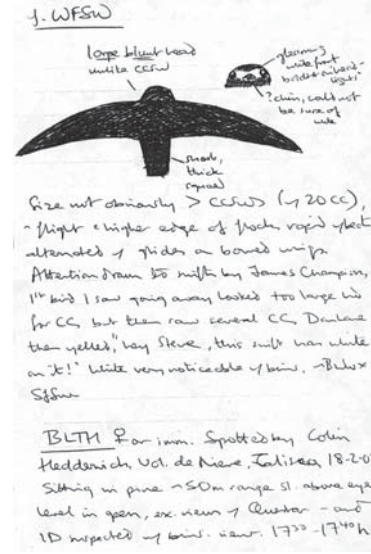


Figure 4. White-fronted Swift *Cypseloides storeri*, Playa de Oro, Colima, 13 February 2002 (Steve N. G. Howell)

to *storeri*, Spot-fronted Swift is unknown north of Costa Rica and has white supraloral spots, not a white front. The face markings of the presumed adult *storeri* were more striking in life than suggested from specimens (Fig. 1 in Navarro *et al.*¹³) and quite different from White-chinned Swift *C. cryptus*, with which *storeri* has been considered conspecific¹⁰.

Chestnut-collared Swift *Cypseloides rutilus*

Records additional to those listed by Howell⁵ are: at Playa de Oro, 80 on 21 February 1997, 10+ on 19 February 1999 and 18 February 2000, 20 on 13 February 2002; and at the Barranca el Choncho, 50 on 18 February 1999. Presumably these are local elevational migrants (cf. White-fronted Swift).

White-collared Swift *Streptoprocne zonaris*

On 18 December 1995 at the Barranca de Beltrán, Jalisco, 120 calling individuals were seen gathering before dusk, presumably to roost. I have heard second-hand reports of other sightings from this locality, suggesting a local resident population (and cf. Howell⁵). An additional regional record is two over San Antonio, Colima, on 20 December 1995.

Lucifer Hummingbird *Calothorax lucifer*

An adult male was at roadside flowers 6 km north of Comala, Colima, on 20 December 1995. The only other Colima record is of an adult male collected in March 1959¹⁷.

Costa's Hummingbird *Calypte costae*

An immature male at roadside flowers 7 km north of Comala on 20 December 1995 constitutes the first

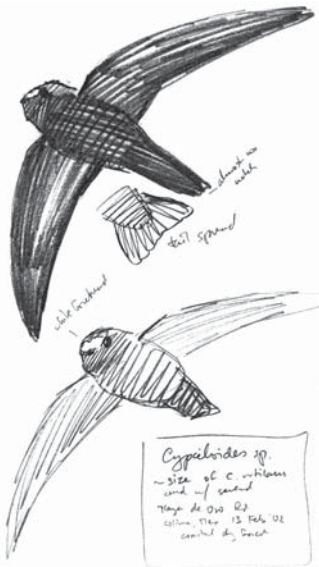


Figure 3. White-fronted Swift *Cypseloides storeri*, Playa de Oro, Colima, 13 February 2002 (Daniel Lane)

state record for Colima. The species was otherwise known south only to southern Nayarit and Jalisco, where it occurs during late October to early January^{1,10}. The Colima bird was studied at close range, and diagnostic features included its small size and short tail, overall dull green and pale grey plumage, broad inner primaries, a central patch of purple throat feathers, and species-specific call note.

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*

A single at Barra de Navidad, on 16 February 2000, is one of the few lowland records available for west-central Mexico¹⁰.

Cave Swallow *Petrochelidon fulva*

On 13 February 2002, at least five flew north-west over Playa de Oro in association with a loose group of Northern Rough-winged Swallows *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*, Tree Swallows *Tachycineta bicolor*, and Chestnut-collared Swifts. They were *Petrochelidon* swallows with a dirty cinnamon throat distinctly but not abruptly separated from the dingy whitish underparts (and clearly lacking the contrasting dark throat patch of Cliff Swallow *P. pyrrhonota*), and a cinnamon forehead and rump. Migrant records of the species are few, although important wintering grounds have been recently identified in El Salvador¹¹. An additional migrant record of note is 40 flying north-west over Yagul, Oaxaca, on 21 March 2000 (Howell and Daniel Lane), also apparently a first state record^{2,10}. The Colima birds may have been forced into the lowlands by prevailing bad weather in the highlands (cf. White-fronted Swift), and, together with the Oaxaca record noted above, indicate northward migration during at least mid-February to late March. Additionally, a single Cave Swallow was reported by Alvaro Jaramillo and Jay Vandergaast among dozens of Northern Rough-winged Swallows and Grey-breasted Martins *Progne chalybea* on the Playa de Oro road on the early date of 13 January 2002⁴.

Black Thrush *Turdus infuscatus*

On 18 February 2002, tour participant Colin Hedderwick spotted 'an odd thrush' perched on an open pine branch at El Floripondio, Jalisco. It proved to be a female/immature Black Thrush, which we studied for ten minutes at c.50 m range with telescopes and binoculars before the bird flew. The following is taken from my field notes. An obvious *Turdus*, clearly smaller and more compact than nearby White-throated Thrushes *T. assimilis*, and less stocky and slightly smaller in direct comparison with an Aztec Thrush. Overall dark warm brown with underparts slightly paler than upperparts, lores slightly darker, throat paler with faint dark streaking; undertail-coverts unmarked; greater coverts and innermost tertial with slightly paler brown tips but not clear-cut or strongly contrasting.

Eyes dark with no discernible orbital ring, bill black, legs and feet dull fleshy yellow, darker in front and dorsally, with paler and yellower hind tarsus and soles. Silent. This is a distinctive but relatively nondescript bird that is rarely kept in cages (I have seen caged males, but not females, in eastern Mexico). Non-breeding thrushes are well-known wanderers, and there is one other vagrant record of Black Thrush in Mexico—an adult male in Morelos, on 8 March 1982¹⁹. The nearest source population to Jalisco is the Sierra Madre del Sur of Guerrero, c.300 km to the south-east.

Northern Parula *Parula americana*

A male at the same site at Playa de Oro, on 17 February 1999 and 16 February 2000 may have been a returning individual. Relative to Tropical Parula *P. pitiayumi* in the same area, it had less extensive yellow on the throat and underparts, distinct white eye-crescents, and a strongly marked slaty and chestnut chest-band. This species is a rare winter migrant in west Mexico and there appear to be no previous records from Colima¹⁰.

Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica*

One at Barra de Navidad, on 13 February 2002 (Fig. 5), was the first state record for Jalisco¹⁰. Similar in size and overall structure to nearby Yellow Warblers *D. petechia*, but held its longer tail more strongly cocked. It had a bright lemon-green cap and upperparts with two bold pale lemon wingbars and white tail-spots. The face and underparts were smoky pale grey becoming white on the belly, with a bold white eye-ring and a trace of chestnut on the flanks.

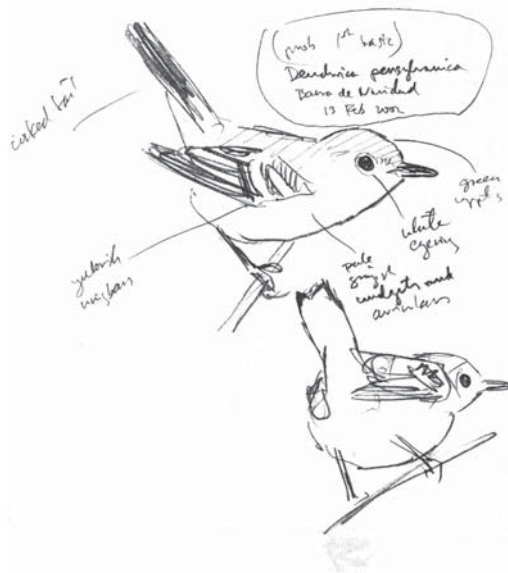


Figure 5. Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica*, Barra de Navidad, Jalisco, 13 February 2002 (Daniel Lane)

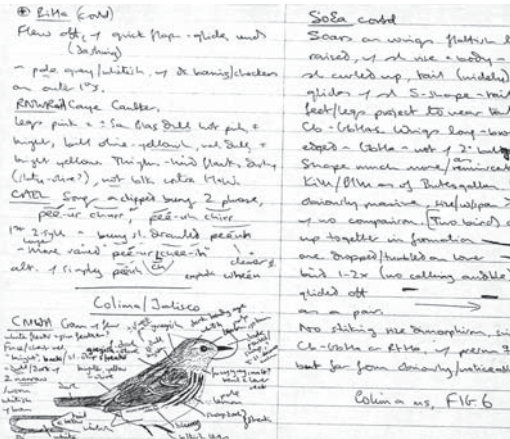


Figure 6. Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina*, Barra de Navidad, Jalisco, 18 February 1997 (Steve N. G. Howell)

Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina*

A female seen daily in a flowering bottlebrush (*Callistemon*) at Barra de Navidad, on 18–21 February 1997, was presumably wintering at the site and constitutes the first state record for Jalisco¹⁰. A small warbler with sharply pointed dark bill, greyish-olive upperparts with a yellow-olive rump and dull whitish wingbars, dingy pale lemon throat and chest with sharp dark chest streaking, and whitish tail-spots (Fig. 6).

Yellow-throated Warbler *Dendroica dominica*

One at Laguna la María, Colima, on 21 February 2001 (Fig. 7) was the first state record for Colima, and apparently of the race *albiflora*. The species has been found wintering in much of western Mexico¹⁰.



Figure 7. Yellow-throated Warbler *Dendroica dominica*, Laguna la María, Colima, 21 February 2001 (Daniel Lane)

Cassin's Finch *Carpodacus cassinii*

An adult male and female/immature were studied at El Floripondio, on 26 February 1997, through a Questar telescope at 200 m range, perched in a pine tree in excellent light, at 07h45–07h50. They were obvious *Carpodacus* finches, between Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* and Pine Siskin *Carduelis pinus* in size (both present for comparison), and had an

almost siskin-like, conical and pointed bill with a straight culmen, as well as a cleft tail. The female was overall grey-brown above, whitish below, with paler wing edgings, a bold whitish supercilium and malar, and fine dusky streaks below that faded out on the lower belly. The male had a rosy-pink face (patterned like the female), chest and rump with an unstreaked whitish belly. This is the southern limit of this species' irruptive winter range and appears to be the first specific record from Jalisco. The 1996/1997 winter was a notable flight year for the species in western North America¹².

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