

Southern California: Fall Coastal Birding Species List | September 28 – October 5, 2025 with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by guides Greg Butcher and Robert Petty. Our clients included Bill and Julie, Holly and Tom, Howard and Lynne, Janet, Jean and Steve, Linda, and Loraine.

We visited the southern coast of California during the height of fall migration. We participated in two boat trips and engaged with sand, mud, wetlands, lakes, California shrub-scrub and oak woodland. We started out in Santa Barbara County with a boat trip to Santa Cruz Island for Island Fox, Island Scrub-Jay, and dolphins (en route). The next day we started at the coast with Snowy Plover and then drove inland for Yellow-billed Magpie. Then we were off through Los Angeles traffic towards San Diego, stopping at Bolsa Chica for an amazing experience with Ridgway's Rail. La Jolla Cove hosted California Sea Lions, Brown Pelicans, and more. After a distant encounter with one or more Roadrunners, we visited the flying raptors at the Animal Behavior Conservancy (or did they visit us?). We didn't see any whales off San Diego, but we enjoyed dozens of dolphins and some seabirds such as Black-vented Shearwater. The Birch Aquarium was a very different intimate nature experience with a map that showed our trip was all within the boundaries of the Southern California Bight. On the last full day, we went almost to Mexico and enjoyed landbirds, marshbirds, and seabirds in the southwestern corner of the USA. We ate lots of American, Mexican, and Italian and ended our last evening with ice cream.

BIRDS: (123)

The eBird link below details the 123 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Southern California: Fall Coastal Birding | September 28 – October 5, 2025 | eBird Trip Report](#)

Following is a list of the mammals we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

Family or Species Common Name: Scientific Name —

MAMMALS: (9)

California Ground Squirrel *Otospermophilus beecheyi* — We saw this species almost every day during the tour, but not on Santa Cruz Island.

Desert Cottontail *Sylvilagus audubonii* — I missed it, but several folks saw a Desert Cottontail on the last full day in the Tijuana River Valley.

Island Fox *Urocyon littoralis* — One of the best encounters of the trip was our time spent with a radio-collared Island Fox on Santa Cruz Island that was obviously not afraid of us. The population bottomed out in 1999, but has been restored by reintroducing captive-bred foxes and by removing the Golden Eagles that were preying on them. The Island Fox is both

the smallest canid in the world and the largest native terrestrial mammal on the Channel Islands. (There are no deer, coyotes, or Mountain Lions on the islands.)

Coyote *Canis latrans* — At Crystal Cove State Park, among the Wrentits and California Gnatcatchers, we saw a Coyote walking through the shrub-scrub, occasionally looking back at us.

Harbor Seal *Phoca vitulina* — We didn't talk about them much because we were more interested in the sea lions, but we had harbor seals both on the boat trip to Santa Cruz Island and on two different days along the San Diego shore.

California Sea Lion *Zalophus californianus* — I think that the sea lions at La Jolla Cove were among the top highlights of the trip. I think a lot of people got videos.

Mule Deer *Odocoileus hemionus* — We saw quite a few Mule Deer while driving the roads. In my van, Janet was usually the one to find them. The large ears are definitive.

Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis* — Most of the dolphins we saw offshore both Santa Barbara and San Diego were Short-beaked Common Dolphins. The pods include a lot of dolphins, and it's fun to watch them swim so quickly towards the boat.

Long-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus capensis* — The last group of dolphins that approached the boat off San Diego were Long-beaked, according to the onboard experts. Long-beaked is a bit smaller and has less contrast than Short-beaked. Some experts don't think that the two Common Dolphins are separate species, just variations of one species.

FISH: (2)

Ocean Sunfish *Mola mola* — We had one of these huge, funny-shaped fish near the boat off San Diego. It is one of the largest bony fishes in the world and can weight between 500 and 2,000 pounds.

Flyingfish, Family Exocoetidae — There are four species of flyingfish in California, so I'm not sure what species we saw off the . Some experts think they "fly" to avoid underwater predators, mostly large fish.