



Huitzil. Revista Mexicana de Ornitología

ISSN: 1870-7459

editor1@huitzil.net.

Sociedad para el Estudio y Conservación de
las Aves en México A.C.
México

Dinets, Vladimir

The first record of *Corvus cryptoleucos* from Baja California Sur, Mexico
Huitzil. Revista Mexicana de Ornitología, vol. 5, núm. 1, junio, 2004, pp. 3- 4
Sociedad para el Estudio y Conservación de las Aves en México A.C.
Xalapa, Veracruz, México

Available in: <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=75650102>

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The first record of *Corvus cryptoleucos* from Baja California Sur, Mexico

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Resumen

Primer registro de *Corvus cryptoleucos* en Baja California Sur, México

Esta nota reporta el primer registro de *Corvus cryptoleucos* en la Península de Baja California. La especie fue reportada sólo previamente presente en México continental y el suroeste de Estados Unidos de Norte América.

Palabras clave: Cuervo llanero, *Corvus cryptoleucos*, Baja California.

Abstract

This note reports the first record of *Corvus cryptoleucos* from Baja California Peninsula. Previously the species was known only from mainland Mexico and southwestern USA.

Keywords: Chihuahuan Raven, *Corvus cryptoleucos*, Baja California.

Résumé

Le premier disque des *Corvus cryptoleucos* de Baja la Californie Sur, Mexique

Cette note rapporte le premier observation de *Corvus cryptoleucos* de Péninsule de Baja California. Précédemment l'espèce a été connue seulement du continent Mexique et Etats-Unis du sud-ouest.

Mots clés: *Corvus cryptoleucos*, Baja California.

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On March 6, 2004, two *Corvus cryptoleucos* were observed at close range (25- 30 m) at the inland edge of Playa Kilometro 28, Baja California Sur (approximately 23°05' N, 109°48' W, halfway between Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo, and within 20 km from the southernmost tip of Baja California Peninsula), in sandy dunes with scattered rocky outcrops and little vegetation. One of the birds was videotaped. The birds were not particularly tame and did not have visible tail wear or other signs of having been in captivity.

The birds were identified as Chihuahuan Raven *C. cryptoleucos*. The author was well familiar with this species, as well as with Common Raven *C. corax*, a somewhat similar bird which is common and widespread throughout the Peninsula, and with American Crow *C. brachyrhynchos*, a smaller corvid which occurs in northern parts of Baja California. The identification was later confirmed using a field guide (National Geographic Society 1999) and other sources (Goodwin 1976, Madge and Burn 1994). Some of the features differentiating *C. cryptoleucos* from other *Corvus* species of the region are clearly visible on the videotape.

Description

Obvious *Corvus*, the size of a Brown-necked Raven *C. ruficollis*, with glossy black plumage and black bare parts. Bases of neck feathers white, looking like irregularly-shaped white spots on windward side. Tail looks wedge-shaped when the bird is perched, and strongly

rounded in flight. Throat feathers slightly elongated. Bill noticeably less massive than in Common Raven, and appears somewhat long for a corvid.

Discussion

The white bases of the neck feathers, together with size differences, bill and tail shape, allowed positive identification of the birds as *C. cryptoleucos* and neither *C. corax* (which is larger, with gray bases of neck feathers, very massive bill and strongly wedged tail) nor *C. brachyrhynchos* (which is smaller, with relatively short bill and almost square tail). The only other *Corvus* species occurring close to the Peninsula, Sinaloa Crow *C. sinaloae*, is even smaller than *C. brachyrhynchos* and has different general appearance.

The Chihuahuan Raven is known from arid regions of southwestern USA, and from Mexico south to Guanajuato and Mexico states, with the northernmost populations being migratory. It occurs in winter along the mainland coast of the Sea of Cortez, approximately 260 km from the southernmost part of the Peninsula (National Geographic Society 1999, Peterson and Chalif 1987). However, it has never been reported from Baja California (Erickson and Howell 2001, Lepage 2004, Wilbur 1987).

Although ship-assisted passage cannot be ruled out, the ability of *Corvus* species to disperse over seas and oceans is well known from their presence on oceanic islands such as Hawaii (Goodwin 1976) and from pelagic observations (Yakhontov 1977).



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Recibido: 9 de enero del 2004; Revisión aceptada: 4 de abril del 2004.

Editor asociado: Rosio Amparan.