

NOTA

**FIRST NESTING RECORDS OF THE AMERICAN AVOCET
(*Recurvirostra americana*) AND WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*)
AT LAGUNA OJO DE LIEBRE, BCS, MÉXICO**

Primer registro de anidación de Avoceta americana (*Recurvirostra americana*) e Ibis blanco (*Eudocimus albus*) en Laguna Ojo de Liebre, BCS, México.

Resumen: El humedal de Guerrero Negro es uno de los sitios de mayor relevancia para las aves acuáticas en México y es un sitio importante para su reproducción. Esta nota describe los primeros registros de anidación de Avoceta americana (*Recurvirostra americana*) e Ibis blanco (*Eudocimus albus*) en este humedal, incrementando con esto a 24 el número de especies cuya anidación se ha registrado en la zona.

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The Guerrero Negro wetland complex (GN hereinafter) is an important breeding area for several species of waterbirds (Bancroft, 1927; Grinnell, 1928; Danemann & Carmona, 2000; Castellanos *et al.*, 2001). Bancroft (1927) recorded the presence of 18 species of reproductive waterbirds at Ojo de Liebre lagoon. Subsequently, two new records were included: the Great Egret, *Ardea alba* (Massey & Palacios, 1994) and the Laughing Gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*; Castellanos *et al.*, 1994). While for the artificial wetland created by Exportadora de Sal (ESSA), Danemann and Carmona (2000) included the record of the Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) and the Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*). Thus 22 species of waterbirds have been registered as breeders in GN.

In this note we report the breeding of two species of waterbirds in Ojo de Liebre lagoon: the American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*) and the White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*). This wetland has an extension of 57,000 ha and is located in the midwestern portion of the Baja California peninsula, within the Sebastian Vizcaíno bay, in northwestern Mexico. Adjacent to this wetland there is an artificial wetland created by ESSA (33,000 ha, Fig. 1). Both wet-

lands are surrounded by the Vizcaíno Desert, and is part of the “El Vizcaino” Biosphere Reserve, a federal protected area (D.O.F., 1988).

As part of a constant monitoring of waterbirds in GN, the Birds Laboratory of the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur and ESSA, we have conducted monthly visits to the study area from 2006 to date. We go through the area in established routes, identifying and counting the birds using 10x binoculars and 15-60x scopes.

On June 24, 2007 we found three nests of American Avocet in ESSA, in the area called Salitales 1-A (S1-A 27° 35'8.18" N, 114° 6'46.23" W). The area is a mud flat with similar characteristics to the natural wetland, widely used by shorebirds (Ayala-Perez *et al.*, 2012). The three nests were close to each other, in an area no greater than 16 m². They consist of small cavities in the ground, with some branches of pickleweed (*Salicornia* spp.) and Iodine Bush (*Allenrolfea occidentalis*) arranged around these. Two of the nests had eggs, one with one egg and another with two. In the area we observed 16 adults, some of whom were displaying a distracting behavior typical of these birds when they are nesting (Robinson *et al.*, 1997).

The American Avocet is a common wintering species in GN (Howell & Webb, 2005), but their numbers are not high. A winter peak of 380 individuals has been observed, with around 60 individuals summering in the area (Carmona

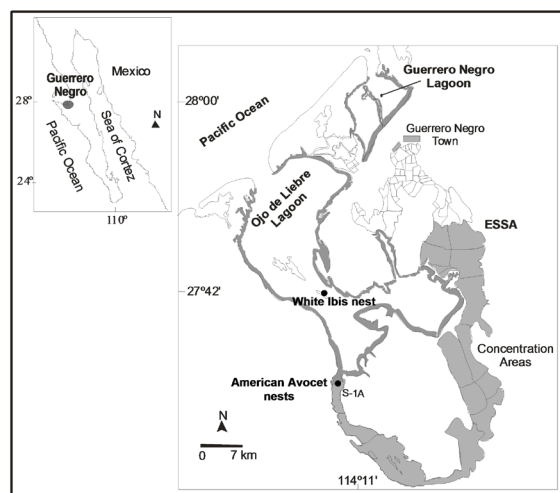


Figure 1. Study Area. Sites are indicated where the nests of American Avocet and White Ibis were observed..

et al., 2011). Until 1998, nesting records of this species in the Baja California peninsula were restricted to the north in San Quintin Bay (Massey & Palacios 1994). The first nesting record of this species is for the summer of 1998 in La Paz, in the southern part of the peninsula, where at least five active nests were observed (Carmona *et al.*, 2000). Guerrero Negro is located between those sites, so there exists the possibility that the species used the area as a breeding ground, but given the little ornithological effort in summer, and the large size of the wetland, it had not been located previously.

With respect to the second record, we sighted a couple of White Ibis each time on July 27, 2010 and July 23, 2011, at Isla Piedra located in the middle of Ojo de Liebre lagoon (27°42'20.70"N, 114° 9'33.18"W), apparently they were nesting. However, these records could not be verified, because there were significant numbers of nests of other birds, such as the Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*) and the Western Gull (*Larus occidentalis*); besides our presence may have disturbed the birds. On May 22, 2012 we again sighted a couple of White Ibis on the same place, this time the nest was observed directly. The nest was located on a scrub of Iodine Bush and pickleweed, and it

was built with the same material. We also observed both parents and two chicks (Fig. 2a and b). Considering that the nearest breeding site to GN is located about 150 km south in Laguna San Ignacio (Massey & Palacios, 1994; Howell & Webb, 2005), this record could signify a northern extension of its breeding range.

The White Ibis in GN is considered a common winter visitor (Howell & Webb, 2005). In 2004 we started to document sporadic observations of juveniles of the species. Since 2008 its sightings have been more common and include adult birds. The White Ibis is a nomadic species with high dispersion after the breeding season, mainly juveniles (Heath *et al.*, 2009). Different studies (Heath, 2009; Frederick *et al.*, 1996) document that the White Ibis is a nomad breeding species adapted to exploit food resources available in a given site. These nomadic tendencies and opportunistic features explain the settlement of a breeding pair in GN because of the available resources in the area.

Guerrero Negro is one of the most important sites for waterbirds in the Baja California peninsula and one of the most relevant in México, both during migration and wintering periods (SEMARNAT, 2008; Carmona *et al.*,



Figure 2. Nest of White Ibis: (a) shows an adult beside the nest, and (b) shows the nest with two chicks.

2011), and integrate also an important breeding area. Although the avifauna of the area is well documented (Page *et al.*, 1997; Carmona *et al.*, 2011), the recording of new species nesting in GN underscores the biological importance of the wetland and requires continuous monitoring.

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