

A MOCKINGBIRD *Mimus polyglottos* (LINNAEUS, 1758) FOUND IN A STOMACH OF A BLUE SHARK *Prionace glauca* (LINNAEUS, 1758)

Un cenizante *Mimus polyglottos* (Linnaeus, 1758) encontrado en el estómago de un tiburón azul *Prionace glauca* (Linnaeus, 1758)

RESUMEN. Un cenizante *Mimus polyglottos* fue encontrado en el estómago de un tiburón azul juvenil *Prionace glauca* capturado cerca de la costa de Bahía Magdalena, Baja California Sur, México. Este pájaro continental es un elemento raro como presa de un tiburón. Esta nota contribuye a enfatizar el papel de *Prionace glauca* como un depredador oportunista y/o carroñero.

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Jaime Rivera, M., S. Hernández Vázquez², F. Galván Magaña³ & E. Leonardo Pérez Lezama. 2015. A Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* (Linnaeus, 1758) found in a stomach of a Blue Shark *Prionace glauca* (Linnaeus, 1758). *CICIMAR Océánides*, 30(2): 53-54.

Blue sharks are one of the most abundant and widely distributed shark species (Carey & Scharold, 1990). The diet of blue sharks is mainly of cephalopods and pelagic fish, however, they appear to be

opportunistic predators, feeding on a variety of prey items including occasional sea birds caught resting on the water (Stevens, 1973; Cortés, 1999). Pelagic teleosts (i.e., cyclopterids and gadids) constitute an important component of the diet of immature males but the occurrence of miscellaneous biological materials like feathers and anthropogenic material indicates that blue sharks consume anything of appropriate size that they find in the water column (Meaghen & Campana, 2003).

On March 22, 2001 a blue shark, *Prionace glauca* was caught offshore Bahía Magdalena (50 km from the coast) at the western coast of Baja California Sur, Mexico. It was a juvenile specimen measuring 121 cm of total length. Two items were found in the shark's stomach: a piece of dolphin as bait and a bird's corpse.

This bird was almost complete. Its left wing was missing; its neck and head were in an advanced digestive state and there were few feathers remaining. The identification was based on the form of the beak, the squared blackish tail, the white outer rectrices that appear as clear sides on the spread tail, and the blackish legs.

The bird is included in the family Mimidae, and was identified as a Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*. Measurements fit the species size; total length: 227 mm; size of the wing without feathers: 62.27 mm; tail: 111.81 mm; tarsus: 26.9 mm; upper mandible: 11.41 mm and lower mandible: 9.72 mm (Figure 1).

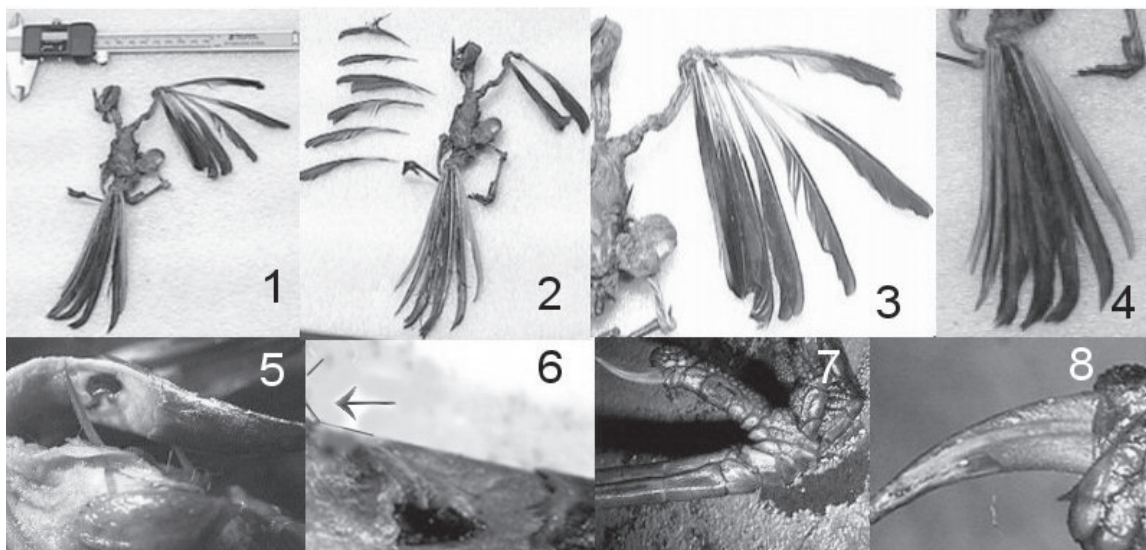


Figure 1. 1. Reconstruction of the bird. 2. Remains of bird. 3. Right wing. 4. Tail and rectrices. 5. Lores and beak. 6. Beak whisker. 7. Tarsus. 8. Middle nail.

Fecha de recepción: 11 de septiembre de 2015

Fecha de aceptación: 14 de octubre de 2015

OBSERVATIONS

The northern mockingbird is a medium-sized songbird measuring about 23 cm (about 9 in.) and weighting about 50 g, with longish legs and tail and a slightly curved bill (Peterson, 1961). The grayish-brown color, two parallel white wing bars and a broad white wing patch, which is easily seen in flight, distinguish this bird from its cousins, the brown thrasher and the catbird (Derrickson & Breitwisch, 1992). The mockingbird is basically a terrestrial bird, but inhabits locations near the Pacific coast in the Northern Hemisphere. It is a resident in Baja California, Isla Socorro, Pacific slope and Isla Guadalupe (Howell & Webb, 1995). This distribution is near the sites where blue shark is caught in Mexico (Sosa – Nishizaky *et al.*, 2002).

Since the mockingbird is not a marine bird its presence in a pelagic shark stomach is very rare. Possibly the bird got lost by a stormy wind and fell; or it was impelled dead into the sea. Probably the shark was attracted by the floating bird and swallowed it. The occurrence of these items as prey in sharks is infrequent and their ingestion must be accidental. Stomachs contents in other shark species have been found to comprise organic and inorganic items such as stones and plastic wrappings (Joyce *et al.*, 2002; Stillwell & Kohler, 1982). Sharks often swallow small floating objects and regurgitate them if they are not palatable, however organic items could be nutritive to sharks although their provenience is not from a marine habitat as in the case of terrestrial birds. This paper contributes to the knowledge of *Prionace glauca* feeding habits, and its role as an opportunistic predator and or carrion feeder in the pelagic ecosystem.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the Instituto Politécnico Nacional for the support received through COFAA, PIFI and EDI.

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