

# LOGBOOK FROM THE SEA OF CORTEZ

Essays on Estero Morúa  
by Gerald A. Cole and Others



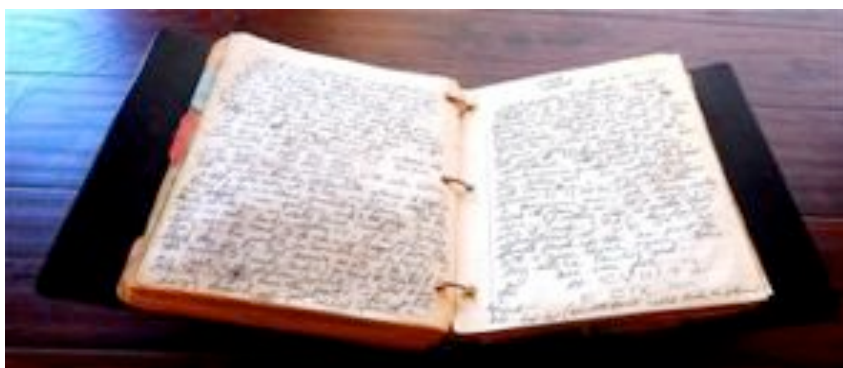
**TOM COLE**



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The Logbook from the Sea of Cortez

# Introduction

The logbook is forty years old and currently some 470 pages long. It spans the years 1975 through the present (2015) and is filled with notes, drawings, and bird data.

My parents bought their one-room beach house at Estero Morúa on the Sea of Cortez in 1975 and in addition to their many other visits, they spent my father's six-month 1977 sabbatical there. During that time and afterwards, he wrote, among other things, a series of essays which are really the core of this book.

## About the Logbook Entries

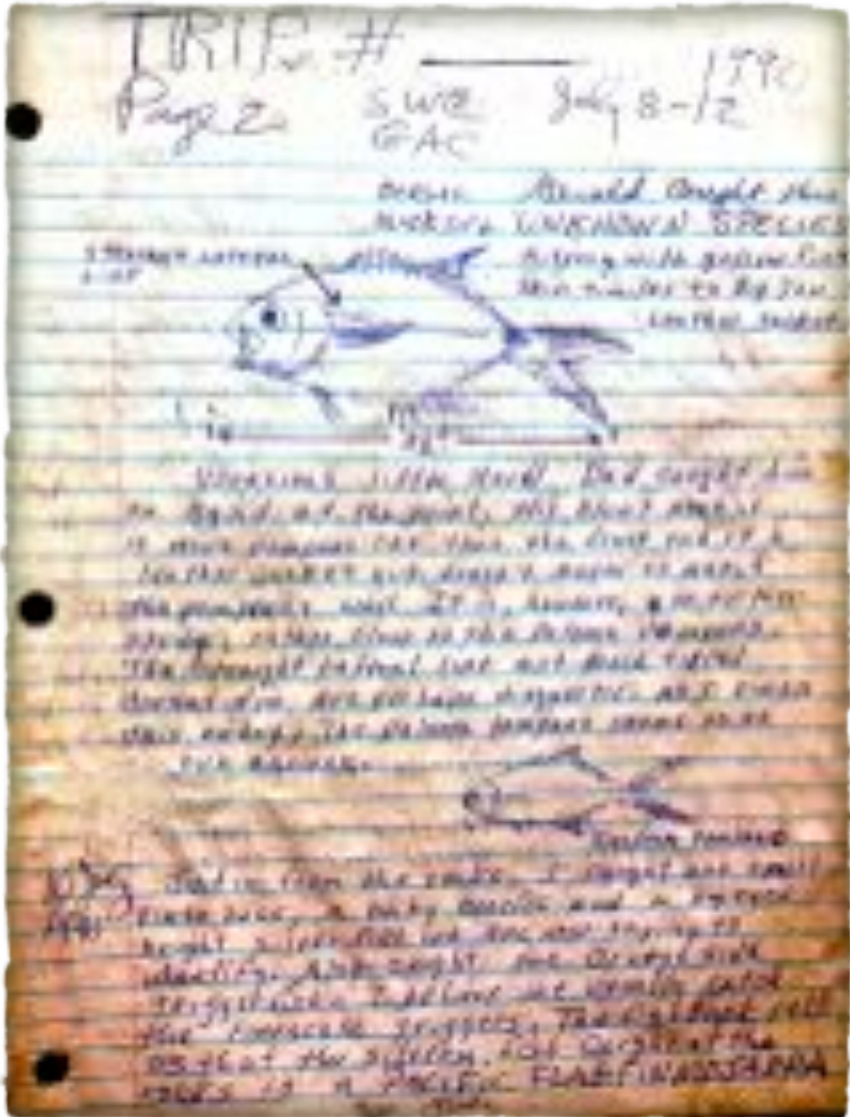
For forty years, each visit to the beach house has been logged in a red, three-ring, looseleaf notebook. Those who came as guests wrote in their observations in the log; those who fished recorded their catches. Throughout the years, all of the goings on of Estero Morúa were dutifully set down in writing along with the sightings of each and every bird species.

Some entries long, short, often scribbled, sometimes serious and sometimes just plain silly are definitely worth the read—and yet others would gain next to nothing by being typed out and printed in a book. It's hard to imagine that such a version could improve upon or even capture the essence of an entry like this one:



Mariana Pickering 3/24/1986

Or this one:



Logbook entry by Steve Cole 7/8/1990

Fortunately, other entries are simply prose and I have typed a number of them up for inclusion in order to give the reader a sense of what the logbook is. In doing so, I have limited the entries to a breezy single page each with the unedited text italicized to distinguish it from the

actual essays. In the table of contents, log entries are also relegated to a subheading.

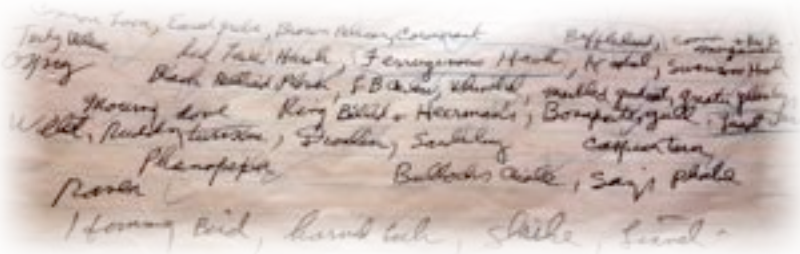
There are some good reasons to keep the journal entries short, but the most important is that I don't want to type them all! Spending too much time in the present on tasks to relive the past can quickly become an effort of diminishing returns.

In other words, I could type out each of the nearly 500 logbook pages but the chore would encroach upon my precious and strictly limited lifespan! It's a shame in a way, though, because could I devote such time to the task, I would emerge with a digitalized corpus that could be sorted through a database in endless ways.

### The Database

This is not to say that I have shirked my self-appointed duties as archivist; I have gone through every journal page and painstakingly entered each of the 3,748 bird records into a database I created for the purpose.

Some of the bird entries were fairly clear...

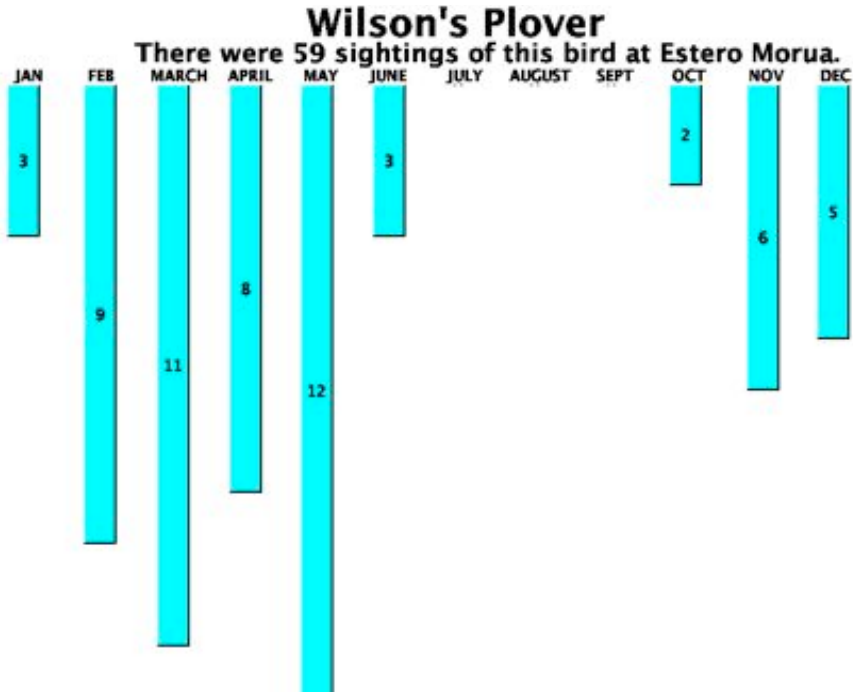


Others not...



But I persevered, and now I can crunch the bird numbers in any way I wish. One click of the mouse can produce a “life bird list” of species seen at the beach.<sup>1</sup>

Another can immediately get me a list of every time a bird species was seen along with any notes that are attached to it, and I can make general reports on all of the birds<sup>2</sup> and even graphs to learn more about sightings:



Here a favorite bird, virtually never seen in the upper forty-eight, is graphed by month.

In entering the birds, I was forced to input all of the dates as well and so it is now easy to make an exact list of all the times our beach house was visited.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See the Appendix 2: Bird Life List for Estero Morúa.

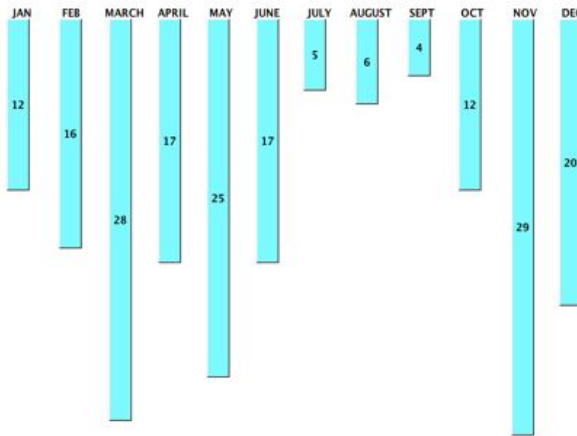
<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 3: Bird Numbers.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 5: The Trips from 1974 to 2014.



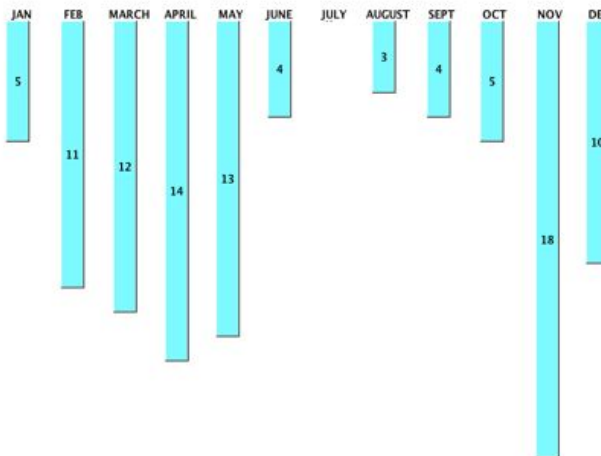
This also means that it is possible to graph all visits by month or year:

### ALL 191 TRIPS TO ESTERO MORUA BY MONTH



What's more, I entered every *person's* name and so I have a record of every time that anyone came.<sup>4</sup> Thus, if I log a person in as a bird, I can get a monthly or yearly graph for all of their visits as well:<sup>5</sup>

### ALL 99 TRIPS BY JEAN COLE FROM 1974 TO 1990



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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 6: Who Went and When.

<sup>5</sup> July's figure of zero trips doesn't mean my mom was never at the beach in that month, only that her arrival there was never in July. Her trips in late June extended into July more than once.

In addition, I have taken the time to scan all of the 470-odd pages of the logbook and add them to the database. I can click on a date and get all of the logbook entries for that visit and read all the details.

I vowed not to type out every logbook page and I intend to keep that promise to myself. However, there are many things left undone in the database version of the log from the Sea of Cortez.

The first is the ongoing job of fixing any mistakes or omissions in order to make the database sorts and views as accurate as possible. Although such accuracy is hardly a life or death concern, it's certainly desirable to have things done right if they can be.

The second task is to expand upon what I have done with dates of visits, birds and people to include perhaps fish (and who caught them), family dogs, coyotes, snakes, porpoises, or even important recurring events such as the running of the sea trout, the schooling of anchovies, the appearance of waterspouts, or perhaps even just the times that the fish were jumping. (There was more than one record of jumping fish and more than one related sketch in the logbook.)

Key events that occurred only once could also be included in this kind of indexing. An example might be the disappointing, Kohoutec-like appearance of Halley's Comet in January of 1986.

At present, the database only includes family members or guests to the beach house. However, I can also include those mentioned in our notes, people like Rubén and Conchita Cruz, Harry and Helga Mottek, Ted Riggins, Fred and Francis Yerger, Ed and Opal Farmer, Chuck and Maryanne Davis, Bill and Phyllis Holmes, and others.

Whatever I decide to do, there will be plenty of new data soon available for my perusal and diversion — and in this digital age, it is a simple matter to make updated editions of this book should I feel it is desirable.



My Parents' Beach Retreat at Estero Morúa

If you, the reader, have come this far, I'm betting you're getting ready to read the essays that follow, and so now I gladly leave you to that endeavor.



# 1. The Saga of the Eros

Gerald A. Cole

My father always enjoyed a tale of unusual and outrageous characters. This is one of them. —TC

We thought it would last forever, but now there isn't much left of an estuary landmark, the Eros. Its stripped hull (for the Eros is/was a boat) lay bleaching and barnacle-covered like some great whale on what was once a lonely shore across the estuary from us.

Occasionally American tourists visited her, and Mexican teenagers enjoyed Sunday outings climbing on her tilted deck. She was an estuary personality. Then, during the 1980s, a Mexican oyster-culturing community moved in and today there isn't much left of the Eros, or Chuck's boat, as we often called her. Parenthetically, there is a second Chuck's boat visible from the heights of our dunes, but that's another story.

More than twenty years have passed since a boat from Sweden arrived laden with goods destined for the free port of Puerto Peñasco. After finding adequate facilities wanting in that harbor, and after riding out several stormy days at anchor there, the Swedish captain decided that another harbor should be sought. So he sailed confidently along the Gulf shore and anchored in the sheltered waters of the first estuary, in sight of our American settlement. Thus, the Eros came to Estero Morúa.



The Eros Stranded on the Beach

It was in spring of 1969 when the Eros arrived; the wooden-ribbed sailing vessel was 82 feet long, two-masted, and equipped with a diesel engine. Made in Denmark 50 years earlier, she carried 100 tons of goods.

Included were cases of 2-cm iron pipe, sewing machines, miscellaneous used items, a bulldozer, diesel engines, and a snowplow! When the Eros captain, Carl Ludwig, was asked why a snowplow was needed for a southwestern market, he replied, "It came with the bulldozer." At that time, there was speculation that much of the cargo was stolen goods.

Captain Ludwig soon rented a house in Puerto Peñasco to store some of the merchandise while he tried to make arrangements in Phoenix with possible buyers. In the meantime, more and more items were being unloaded, with Mexican help, and transported over the sandy road to Puerto Peñasco. But the storehouse, being

16 miles distant from the anchored boat where the Ludwigs lived, was robbed several times. Thus, for six months during unproductive business negotiations, the Eros rode the tides at anchor, rising and falling back into the sand, suffering progressive damage. Finally, Captain Ludwig, by now without funds or the means to obtain any, ran an advertisement in a Phoenix newspaper asking \$10,000 for the "damaged but repairable" Eros.

The ad was answered by a Cave Creek, Arizona entrepreneur, who shouldered Ludwig's problems. He was later to regret this. Chuck, an owner of a beach house at Estero Morúa, had been following the vicissitudes of the Eros with interest. He and his wife, intrepid dreamers, had visions of fascinating blue-water sailing venture once the Eros was returned to its original seaworthy status. Chuck offered to help unloading and restoring the vessel for a half interest, while footing the bill for the undertaking. On this basis he started to help the Ludwigs.

Meanwhile the boat had foundered.

During the next three months, the work progressed. Mr. Gomez, a Mexican helper, and his family were hired and ensconced in a trailer, hauled to the boat-site especially for them. Chuck contributed a 4-wheel drive vehicle, adding to the growing piles of equipment assembled on the bluffs above the estuary beach. The operation, tallied later, cost him \$550 for groceries alone, and a total of \$2,700. In August, with four pumps operating on the Eros, and a BB winch from shore, a great and final attempt to float the ship was made on the highest of tides. Temperatures hung at 115° F and with all hands dripping under a blinding sun, the Eros began to right herself. For a moment it looked as if she might sail free. But a sudden backwash tilted her back to the original position, and it was beyond human power to

right her again. She settled back into the sandy shallows, and in that position she remained for years, a constant reminder of dreams, plans, and money all washed into the relentless waters of the Gulf.

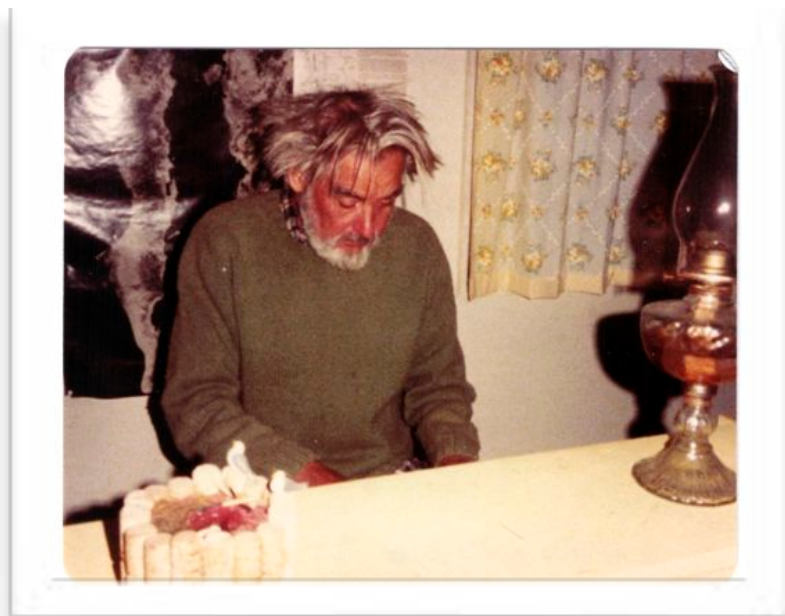


My brother in 1990 with the remains of the Eros

The aftermath of the story follows the same vein of misadventure. Chuck, long-suffering but still generous, offered a spare house, which he owned in Cave Creek, to the stricken Ludwigs until they could obtain employment. With language still a barrier, the Ludwigs assumed he was giving them the house rent-free and Chuck was overwhelmed with grateful kisses from an appreciative Swedish lady. The Ludwigs lived there another year—rent free—(Chuck felt he could not disenchant the lady.). The couple never obtained secure employment, however, and finally decided to return to Sweden. Chuck had lost not only three thousand dollars



in the venture, but the rental money on his house. His net gain was zero or, as he put it, positive in terms of experience.



Chuck was a wonderful piano player. So was my father. Here is my dad playing Chuck's piano at the beach in 1983.

# A. Logbook—K-Rat, Shook Hands, Signed, Disabled Boat

Tom Cole

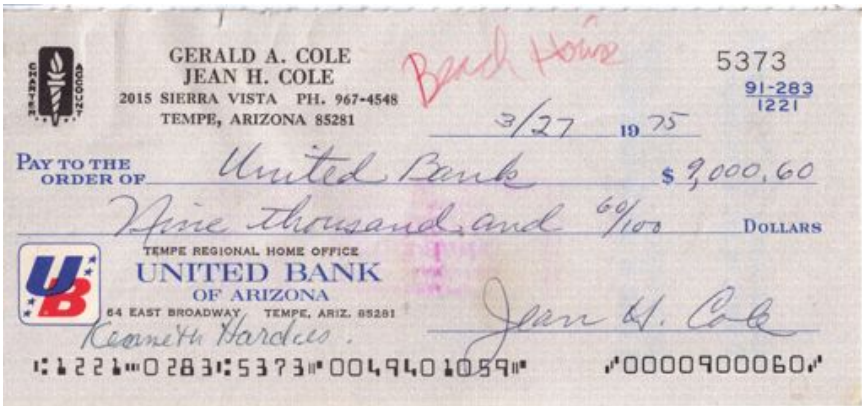
November 28, 1974

*Tom, Dad, Mom. This was the year before we bought the beach house! Thanksgiving. Remarks: Birdlife very abundant. Water would foam from their dives. Sky would darken with the birds. This was the Organ Pipe trip where the big bull kangaroo rat jumped on us while we slept. I thought it might have rabies but Dad said it was just a big bull kangaroo rat. Phainopeplas and loggerhead shrikes were also present there.*

Jean Cole

March 29, 1975

*Signed various papers and shook various hands.*



Check to pay for the beach house

August 29, 1975

*Met three Chinese Mexicans dragging a large disabled boat through the breakers. Had broken down three miles below us. We brought them water and p. butter sandwiches.*

## 2. Shrimp Boats

Gerald A. Cole

This story like the previous one and those that follow on the topic of boats was originally part of a larger essay by my father entitled “Boats of Estero Morúa.” I’ve taken the liberty of dividing up the earlier work into separate essays. —TC

In those open-blue places where people live near water, special kinds of boats have evolved that belong to the particular region. Shaped by something close to natural selection, boats come into being to fit the special needs of fishing village or port people. Probably a scholar of such things could tell where he was, seeing nothing but one of the local craft. Examples are endless: the (fabled) birch-bark canoe of the North woods; the Adirondack guide boat; the taut seal hide kayak of the Eskimo; or the rugged dories of the North Atlantic cod fishermen.

The northern Gulf is no exception. Here, the most abundant and the most colorful of the sea-going vessels is the shrimp boat. Homeport and manufacturing site of many of these hard-working dredgers is Puerto Peñasco; during the 1970s ten to twenty could always be seen there in varying stages of construction. The vessel is 50 to 60 feet long with a high-prowed forward cabin, its leading edge rounded. From the low, wide-decked stern, a vertical mast rises above the deck and, when underway, two booms point backward like dorsal spines on some huge fish. These booms swing out on either side of the boat during trawling, the nets weighted by a heavy otter board. On the flat stern board, prominently displayed, are such names as: Mi Antonia; La Luisa; Ofelia; and Maelena. In the harbor the boats can be seen rocking from side to side, dipping the nets into the sea, cleaning and drying them.

When docked, their bright-colored plastic streamers — blue, green, yellow, pink, red, and orange — fly from mast-top to deck. These are attached at the leading edge of the nets and they wave, carnival fashion, in the breeze over the slippery, fish-strewn decks. The colorful banners are not merely ornamental, but protect the nets from tangling in weeds and rocks as they scour the bottom and scare shrimp up from the sediment to be netted.

From our house we hear the shrimp boats at night, the usual time for trawling. Actually, it is more than a sound; it is a low throb from the engines that is felt all along the shore from Puerto Peñasco to Bahía San Jorge and beyond. Some nights one can count the lights from as many as 48 boats chugging offshore, working the shrimp beds.

Most mornings during the shrimp season, we see a few heading back toward the piers to unload, even though some boats may remain at sea for as long as two weeks, the crew sleeping in the daytime and dredging all night.

When the boats finally return to port, their catch is impressive. The valuable shrimp are picked out immediately as each net haul is dumped on deck; they are then "deheaded", and the abdomens packed in iced compartment below deck.

Other salable fish such as flounder, corvina, and shark are also separated and stored below. The rest of the boat's wide, flat after-deck remains piled high to a depth of 2 or 3 feet with "trash fish" including crab, starfish, and sponges. Unloading is a dual process: one by truck and one by boat. A conveyor belt is set up leading from the deck to a truck bed ashore; the fishermen now change roles, manning huge shovels, and scoop the fish from the deck onto the belt. From here the trash fish are taken to be ground into high-protein meal. The other fish and

shrimp are unloaded by hand; larger fish are tossed onto the deck from below and then from the deck to smaller boats that transport them to shore.

## B. Logbook—Oysters, Hot Foot, Burglars

Jean Cole

August 24, 1975

*Visited the estuary — brought back some oysters. So hot we nearly had heat stroke walking back. Cooked oysters and had a steak. By night there was enough breeze for cool sleeping — slept in the driveway again.*

Tom Cole

September 4, 1976

*For dinner we had charcoal-broiled steaks. Dad built the charcoal bed and soon there was a cracking little blaze which resolved itself into a bed of coals about big enough to toast a marshmallow over. In preparing this handy little grill, he spilt a few embers on the sand. I was unfortunate enough to step on one of these which produced a third degree burn on the arch of my foot — a gurt thing reminiscent of the wounds observed at Hiroshima.*

*Burglars were snooping around the house across the whey. Mom barked once loudly and set off across the dunes to make a citizen's arrest.*

*They owned the house.*

Jean Cole

September 4, 1976

*Comment from Jean: He was right, but we didn't accost them, but checked with neighbor Mason who told us Cecil's wife had died and he sold the house.*

### 3. The Enchanted Village

Tom Cole

Some of the houses up and down the road from ours are hardly ever visited. Some have seen the effects of sun and saltwater spray and the passing of long decades. To me they seem to hint of forgotten stories inscrutable and lost in the persistent amnesia of the years gone by. I could say that those old houses make up something of an “enchanted village,” but when the logbook uses the term, it refers to only one place.

—TC



From inside the Enchanted Village

I don't know exactly why my brother and I always called it “The Enchanted Village.” Oh, I know that the name itself comes from a favorite and mysterious 1950 A.E. Van Vogt science fiction story with the same name, but why we thought the title would aptly fit the old cistern on the dunes is not as easy to say.

Perhaps it was because it seemed somehow steeped in mystery. Was it really a cistern? Who had ever used it? How many endless hours had gone into its meticulous fashioning? Thus, the mysterious aspect of the story at least fit the place, and by the same token, the structure's

seeming abandonment in the sands of time paralleled Van Vogt's vision of a deserted Martian city.

In the actual story, a lost spaceman stumbles across a shining village on the desert sands of Mars where incomprehensible alien music perpetually plays beneath the towering diamond spires and along the tree-lined lanes. Its inhabitants are extinct yet the village itself is sentient and lives on. When the earthling provides samples of food, the village reproduces them for him on the stone floor of the plaza. Yet the effort is too much for the village, and the stone soon begins to crumble as the village tries unsuccessfully to adjust itself and provide an earth-like environment for the human castaway. The village is dying in the effort to save him. In the end, it switches strategy and instead of changing itself, the village alters the *man* who awakes from slumber and says, "I've won! The village has found a way!"

"He wiggled his four-foot tail... Then he waddled out to bask in the sun and listen to the timeless music."



An illustration from a comic book version of "The Enchanted Village" that I bought in London in 1975.



The logbook is filled with references to visits to the Enchanted Village. We liked it there—especially at night when we needed a respite from our sitting places beneath the battery-powered neon lights above the kitchen table and when the customary walk down to the water had grown stale from having already been done the previous three nights. Then, we'd take our flashlights and rum and head out across the dunes for the short walk to the cistern.

The sides were made of good solid concrete. No seawater had been slopped into *that* mix. The top was made of long two-by-fours nailed solidly in place. The Kiva-style entrance was covered by a boxy wooden lid which we would take off to reveal the black interior.



Flying buttresses of concrete and the pathway to the Enchanted Village.

Our flashlights would illuminate the floor of the dry cistern. It was sandy, clean, and uniform except for the scattered bones of mysterious animals that had found their way in — but not out — and had died on the sand as our hero on Mars might have done.

*Logbook: August 4, 1983—There were rib and leg bones lying on the floor. Also black widow webs...*

We found it an easy drop, in those days, to the underground floor where we would all stay for a time

surrounded by cinderblock in the dark, Tut-like enclosure.

Thinner, a little stronger than today, we would then each make a leap to grab the two-by four timbers of the opening above and pull ourselves out. Next was a return walk across the dunes, our flashlights' beams moving back and forth to avoid a stumble or a step on some foraging diamondback.

Later years have found the cistern aging. Its top, once so perfectly constructed, has dried and deteriorated. The shrunken boards that remain are studded with the jutting heads of nails that had once been hammered flush to the rooftop.



The aging Enchanted Village November 9, 2003

But age is part of the feel and charm of our Estero Morúa settlement. I don't begrudge the Enchanted Village's growing old. I'm doing that myself.

My latest clear memory of the place takes some of its charm away, however. I made a 2003 daytime visit to the Enchanted Village and found instead of the clean and even sandy floor, a jumble of rubble.

There was also a somewhat unsettling scene of an interest and a fetish that are foreign to me. I would think it was only kids, yet still I have to say that I much preferred the bleached bones of hapless animals to the dismembered, burned, and firecrackered doll bodies that I found on the floor of the cistern that day.



Weird scene inside the Enchanted Village November 9, 2003

## C. Logbook–Meadowlark, Sand Dollar, Sidewinder!

Boyer Rickel

March 14, 1977

*And then on the top of a bush there was a meadowlark so yellow it would have made a great coffee cup.*

*Sue put a sand dollar in her pocket whereupon Gerald explained how the natives make powdered sugar. Sue was rather upset...But then she found another...and felt better emptying her sugary pocket on the sand...*

*One night it was Jean's 55th birthday. And she still did the cooking and dishwashing and even a good deal of the drinking. Around the birthday campfire Gerald insisted on singing "Miss Otis Regrets" which Jean regretted...*

*Also, I got drunk and dreamed about losing a doubles match with Stan Smith...and an old man with a scruffy beard and a seaman's cap lost his arm which I packed in ice.*

*Jean Cole*

February 3, 1978

*No Campers... Not one!*

Gerald A. Cole

March 20, 1979

*When Jean was helping Christie pick out pretty shells at the NE corner of the house at the ladder some ESP (she says) drove her to lift the boards and there was a 22" horned viper. She came to the beach to find us. With regrets he was dispatched. Scared he'd escape if we tried to catch him.*

## 4. Pangas

Gerald A. Cole

Who hasn't seen these strangely prowed boats out on the water and wondered about them? —TC

The shrimp boats are not, of course, the only fishing boats in the upper Gulf. On a smaller scale, other fishermen ply the shallow waters near the reefs and estuaries using small boats and nets. These craft, called pangas, are also especially adapted for their use. They are about 16 feet long, round-bottomed and especially seaworthy, with rakish bows. They resemble old-fashioned whaleboats except for their flat sterns, which are designed to hold outboard motors. Often holding as many as five men, these boats cruise the shallow waters of the incoming tides near the mouth of Estero Morúa. Some Americans call them "gill-netters." Actually, the men are not setting a gill net in the usual sense, but are throwing out and drawing in a purse seine that captures any fish too large to slip through the mesh openings. The large, wide net is equipped with floats, and the boat circles slowly, the men hauling in the net as they complete the sweep.

The young Mexicans who fish from these boats are capable and versatile, their activities not limited to seining. One afternoon late, walking on the beach, we saw one of these weather-beaten boats running very close to shore on a receding tide. On board were only two men, one operating the engine, the other standing in the bow, poised with spear in hand. As the boat bounced and slapped against the waves, the latter maintained an incredible balance reminding one of the old Viking, or a Melville harpooner. This spearman directed the helmsman, who twisted and turned the boat as the followed a sub-surface quarry unknown to us. The

harpooner hurled his spear once, but missed. The boat veered sharply seaward and maneuvered to herd the prey shoreward. Again the hunter threw his spear with amazing force, this time connecting. With field glasses focused on the action, we saw both men approach the catch with obvious caution and, as they hauled it over the gunwale, we saw why. They had captured a huge ray and were artfully dodging the stinger at the base of its long tail as they brought it aboard. Then, an arm rose, and a knife slashed in the sun. The animal was almost four feet across, a beautiful sleek, brown-gray color, but our sympathy was not with the victim in this instance. We have a healthy respect for the *dasyatids*, as the stingray family members are called, and we never swim here without keeping them in mind.

## D. Logbook—Men o' War, Roosterfish for Lunch!

Mike Hudnall

May 27, 1980

*Memorial day here and this place reminds me of early 60s Sandy Beach when, by the grace of the Coles, I first visited Mexico. The wildlife is great and the house is "perfect."*

Jeff Cole

July 6, 1980

*VW proves quite sandworthy. A cloudy Sunday. A 10-mile run. Oystercatchers mostly immature B. Pelicans, ospreys. Town not hopping much. Fence road now destroyed — compliments Rick Fjeld and Steve Cole. Portuguese Men o' War sighted. Roadrunner snacks steak.*

Gerald A Cole

November 15, 1980

*Saturday some Mexicanos, netters, were pulling in nets down by the campground. I went down to the beach with a crisp 20-peso note, eager to purchase sierra mackerel or other choice piscine bits. To my horror, they were throwing back all the fish, the species looking like leatherjackets (they were farther offshore than I had guessed). They were a little rough on the fish and as I was returning, I looked back to see some gulls had carried a fish up to the shore. I went back and spooked the gulls away finding the fish was still flopping. We had it for lunch. It was something new, a rooster fish *Nematistius pectoralis*, the papagallo, a member of the separate family, *Nematistiidae*. Very small scales. Delicious, sweet white meat.*

## 5. The Canoe

Gerald A. Cole

This is the story of one of the truest treasures at Estero Morúa, an ancient canoe that would better fit in a museum than lie decade after decade on the sand in front of the Davises' house.

I have always imagined that perhaps long, long ago a luckless seafarer had perished, swamped in a squall and his small open vessel had washed up without him upon a distant Baja shore and that centuries passed before a sudden storm or tide set the canoe free to drift to our side of the Gulf of California in 1969. —TC

Besides these contemporary boats, one unusual craft might be mentioned, a part of an earlier Mexican scene. Although old and out-of-place now among modern boats, one of these lies on the beach at Estero Morúa, dry, sand-colored, and weathered. canoe lies on the beach at Estero Morúa, dry, sand-colored, and weathered. Here just above the high water line, is the final resting place of an old dugout. Hewn from a solid log, the boat is about 24 feet long and three feet wide.



The canoe at Estero Morúa December 2004



In 1969, it was found cast up at high tide and dragged to a safe dune by an American, Maryanne,<sup>6</sup> who hoped to repair and refloat it.

After many days of searching up and down the beach, she located the missing pieces of wood that had broken from one side, and The crippled boat still lies there, a reminder of a past boat-building age and, though we can never know with any assurance what Indians worked so laboriously to fashion it, the particular tribes that frequented these coast waters are known. "The entire Gulf shore," says Charles Polzer, historian, "was used for clam and shell fishing for centuries. There are many



I took this, my favorite picture of the canoe, in December of 2008.

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<sup>6</sup> Maryanne was the wife of Chuck from the story "The Saga of the Eros."

shell trails leading far back into the Sierra Madre, so the Gulf was used by the Papago, the Soba, the Tepoca, and the Seri."

## E. Logbook—Heaven Can Wait, Sand Snake!

Ronnie Ryan

February 20, 1981

*Arrived the 13th. Arose each morning at dawn. Took a brisk five-mile run down the beach. Made breakfast for the group while they slept. Washed dishes. Scrubbed floors. Combed beach for biological specimens. To bed at eight. Again rose at dawn etc. etc.*

*Next time I come I'm going to loll around, drink black coffee, smoke cigarettes, let the sweet sun play on my limbs, waste the dear days doing old Saturday Review original Double Crostics, stroll to nearest Sea of Cortez sandy spot and lie by that idyllic shore with a mindless and idiotic smile on my face while unidentifiable (to me) birds wheel about me singing their sweet wild songs and I chant softly, "Heaven can wait. This is paradise."*

Tom Cole

May 24, 1981

*While I was getting the VW going the first day, I ran my hand through the sand and came up with a snake. He was a yellow thing with brown stripes. Drove through the sand like it was water. Thing tried to bite me. I poked a chip of wood at him and he popped it a few times. Aggressive little bastard. He had a little head the same shape as a worm snake's.*

## 6. Chuck's Boat

Gerald A. Cole

Chuck Davis is again the hero of the story. In this one, Poseidon once more is unkind to this luckless adventurer. —TC

Another boat should be discussed. This is visible to the unaided eye as a white spot across the estuary slightly northeast of the most eastern house on the estuary. This once a sailer-motor vessel, is usually known now as Chuck's Boat. It has had a short, violent history at Estero Morúa, when compared to that other relic, the Eros.

A gentleman from Cave Creek, Arizona, took it down to the estuary, planning to sail out to Bird Island with his friend, Chuck. They set forth bravely one morning, their goal the guano-covered islands some miles to the southeast across the waters of the Gulf.



The islands with typical hourglass atmospheric optical phenomenon  
January 18, 2009<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter O. Logbook for more on this phenomenon.

It seemed like a great idea, but fate intervened: the boat began to leak! "No sweat — no hay problema," the men remarked, turning to activate the bilge pump. The pump didn't work. A rumor prevails that the air became blue at that time. Expletives were expressed vehemently and various deities were mentioned and called upon in a crude fashion. The boat was taken to shore and bailed out. But this was just the start of bad luck. The propeller was lost in the gulf waters offshore from Playa de Oro. The men anchored the ill-fated boat and swam ashore with plans to get another boat and return to the bad-luck vessel. This venture was successful, and the boat known now as Chuck's Boat was taken back to Cave Creek for repairs.



Gerald A. Cole with "Chuck's Boat" in 1989

Later the bad-luck boat was hauled south once again to Estero Morúa. It sat for two years on a trailer in Chuck's yard. Meanwhile, with the help of Rubén, Chuck removed the engine. Why? Later, someone "borrowed" a

trailer wheel. Chuck then anchored the boat just west of Seth's house in a tidal pool called Stingray Bay by Tom and Steve. Subsequently, the boat was moved to Ed's house and after a while to Royal's trailer-house on the estuary. It was made fast to a ramada, but as time passed it became obvious that this was dangerous — winds and tidal currents sweeping past caused the boat to put too much of a strain on the upright. It was easy to imagine the collapse of the ramada.

His patience running out now, Chuck gave the boat to Ed and it remained in the tidal marsh west of Ed's house until the summer of 1983. Then one night, unusually high tides swept it clear across the three-mile stretch of estuary and beached it high on the salt fringe between the Sonoran Desert and the muddy flats offshore. It lies there today awaiting some super high tide and unusual wind to lift it and sweep it out to the Gulf. Meanwhile, despite the fact that it was given to Ed, we still know that faraway white spot as "Chuck's Boat."

## F. Logbook—Northern Fulmar, ¡Adiós! Vomit Crade!

Gerald A. Cole

May 27, 1982

*On the beach was a stranded bird which I thought was a gull. I picked him up coming back from running. It was a tube-nosed thing. Whitish — the size of a ring bill or larger. Yellow beak sections with dark borders pink-gray legs... (at first I thought it was an immature herring gull) The wings were OK but feathers were shot. 12 white tail feathers (I took it up to home + and fed it fish and cheese.) White head with some spots near the "ears." No special pattern but I think it was a Fulmar — a new one here. The bird was fairly stubby. Took him back — He flew out over the water + appeared on beach an hour later.*

Tom Cole

November 30, 1982

*Good-bye Mexico, land of many splendors and petty graft. Tom bids you an adiós, an hasta luego, an hasta la vista, a nos vemos, and a te veré pronto.*

Sally Cole

December 31, 1982

*Tom woke the whole house up in the middle of the night yelling "Vomit Crade! Vomit Crade!" at the top of his lungs.*

## 7. Shell Middens

Tom Cole

Not all of this story brings me joy to recount, for in part it tells of an endeavor that was never to be completed. —TC

The white piles of shells you see along the roads and dunes of Estero Morúa were not always deposited naturally by the tides. Often they are the sites of ancient shellfish feasts of the Native Americans who lived at or visited the estuary centuries ago.

You can often see the variation in the harvest and the feast. Most of the midden shells are of the genus *Dosinia*, but there are other varieties as well. The *Murix* shells are an interesting example. They're those decent-sized spiky and spiraled conch-type shells. In the middens, they always have a large hole knocked out of the side where the Indians extracted the meat from inside.



Midden with *Dosinia* shells just off of the road near our house



It was in the 1990s that my dad approached me with the idea of cataloging the midden shells he had collected on the beach. He had a box of *Dosinia* shells with paper notes scotch-taped to them recording the area in which they were found. The surface of the shells were made up of a series of concentric lines — half or three-quarter circles. If I recall correctly, my father said he knew of studies that showed that the variation in the thicknesses of these curved lines was an indication of season. His idea was to scan the concentric circles on the face of each shell to determine what time of year these feasts took place.

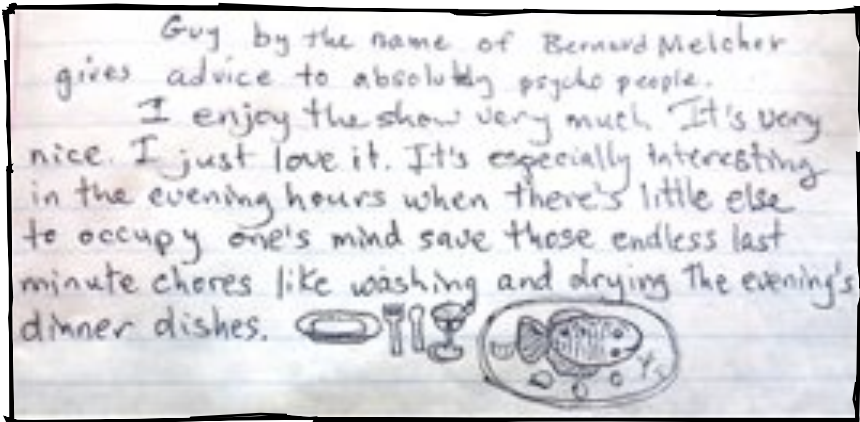
“I’m thinking of some kind of device that could be run across the shell surface to measure and record the lines,” he told me. “Something like a grocery store scanner.”

I’m afraid I wasn’t of much help. I knew of no such device, and eventually I’m sad to say that that project died on the vine. It’s a shame because it was a worthy enterprise and could possibly have shed light on the comings and goings of the indigenous people of a bygone era.

# G. Logbook–Talk Radio, Great Time, Adrift!

Tom Cole

March 17, 1983



Logbook silliness about a radio talk show at the beach.

## Mike and Clover Howeth

February 26, 1984

*Having slept twelve hours a day and eaten steadily the other twelve, this has been a vacation to recover from. J +J introduced us to the pleasures of Panther Piss, gull photographing, and wild Bufo rides. Another great time.*

Jeff Cole

January 3, 1985

*Adrift. Flipping his sailboat, neighbor Bill waited for the breeze to sweep him toward Sta. Rosalía B.C. Tom + Steve fetched the dingy in a valiant effort to save the náufrago...Tom rowing, Steve calling out the beats. People ashore began to panic slightly. Thoughts of calling the Mexican Coast Guard went through our heads as we watched the specks out to sea float southeast. Somehow we decided they'd make it.<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 11, "Shipwrecked at Estero Morúa."

## 8. The Unruly Echinoderms

Gerald A. Cole



*Encope grandis*

As a child in Kentucky, I had a very strong interest in Phylum Echinodermata. That was just because I loved to collect fossil crinoids. I still do.

The sand dollar *Encope grandis* was for many years a part of our beach visit ritual. Family members and guests would write their names and short comments on an *Encope*, date it and put it on the beam in the front patio of our house. The convenient hole in the sand dollar made it easy hang from a nail. Sadly, as the one-hundredth trip was nearing, there remained no longer any room for sand dollars and the practice of hanging them was reluctantly abandoned. They reside to this day in a cardboard box in the closet. —TC

Some animals found in the Gulf waters south of Estero Morúa don't seem to follow the rules. One of the sand dollars and a starfish let us know that we have generalized prematurely about them and their relatives. In most beginning zoology classes it is easily inferred from the assigned textbook and laboratory exercises certain "facts" about the Phylum Echinodermata that are not entirely correct. This marine group includes the sea lilies, sea cucumbers, sea urchins, sand dollars, and various types of starfish (Fish is a bad word for these; let's call them sea stars.). The examples we study in zoology classes lead us to assume they are radially symmetrical animals: if we cut one in half through a central point, the resulting parts will be identical. We assume it is like cutting a pie plate or Frisbee saucer in two parts through the central point; the resultant halves

are always identical, and there seems to be no limit to the directions we can cut. We also see that the echinoderms are constructed in multiples of five; the sea stars usually have five arms or rays, for example.

Some of the Gulf echinoderms live up to such expectations regarding symmetry, if we don't look too carefully. Examples are the sand dollars with the generic names *Mellita* and *Clypeaster*. They are plain flattened discs, a shape that may make them less attractive to beach gleaners, but nonetheless illustrates how the name "sand dollar" was coined (pun) to describe *Mellita* and other discoid species on the East coast, while its counterpart in England was christened "sea biscuit" (might "sea shilling" have been an appropriate name there?). If we don't look too carefully, *Mellita* and *Clypeaster* have the radial symmetry of a dinner plate. We can feel comfortable with *Mellita* and *Clypeaster*.

But what about *Encope grandis*, the sand dollar of "sand dollar beach" east of us on the Gulf? It would never have inspired the names dollar and biscuit. It is a favorite of the Gringos because it hangs nicely on a nail, and it is decorative. There is, however, no silver dollar shape and no radial symmetry. There is only one way it can be sliced to make two equal halves. It is bilaterally symmetrical like those avid sand dollar hunters themselves, who search the sand flats at low tide. If all members of the group we now know as sand dollars had been represented only by this species of *Encope*, no person would have stooped to pick one up, exclaiming, "Wow! A dollar made of calcium carbonate!" Nor would they have said, "Ods Bodkins! What a nice-looking, but flattened biscuit!"

The sand dollars' closest relatives are the sea urchins, globular, spiny things, representatives of which are found cast up on our beach or carried into the estuary by the

tides. A small white spherical skeleton, minus the spines is commonly found. It is fragile; no one has ever carried one home without breaking the little white ball. Sand dollars are really just flattened sea urchins without spines. This leads to digression.

Where did sea urchins get their name? Did they remind someone of street-smart kids, homeless children, waifs? No, the British are responsible for this name; the spiny, prickly echinoderm reminded them of the hedgehog, a primitive mammal of the English countryside. When threatened, it rolls its body into a protective ball, its quills protruding in all directions. The British call this animal an urchin. The step from hedgehog to sea urchin was inevitable. Of course, we would be hard-pressed to explain how the hedgehog acquired the handle, urchin, but this leads to another (irrelevant) observation.

In some of the New England states, Vermont at least, the native porcupine is called hedgehog, an heritage from the old country. The porcupine has nothing to do with the hedgehog; it is a member of the South American branch of the rodents, one of the few South American mammals that invaded North America successfully since the Isthmus of Panama connected the two continents perhaps three million years ago. It has quills or spines — sharp, protective modified hairs like the hedgehog. Speaking of names, were those New Hampshire boys putting us on several years ago when they referred to porcupines as "splinter cats?" But we've strayed from Estero Morúa and our discussion of echinoderms.

The sea star that doesn't seem to follow the rules is *Heliaster kubiniji* here in the Sea of Cortez. As will be revealed later, perhaps past tense should be used when talking about *Heliaster*. It is a tide pool predator, creeping on unwary barnacles, especially — although

this personification is not accurate. It brings to mind the name oystercatcher for one of our resident estuary birds: how winded it must get, running down the fleet-footed oysters of our estuary reefs! Couldn't the "catcher" part of its name be changed?

*Heliaster* is or was a favorite of visitors to the Rocky Point region. We remember campers' children at Sandy Beach (= Norse Beach = Tucson Beach) during the 1960s running back to their campsites from the tide pools to show their parents the prizes they had found and were carrying in buckets. Too often the prizes were allowed to die and the tide pool populations became smaller and scarcer. *Heliaster*, the sun star, was always one of the children's favorites. Maybe was this because it had many rays — not just five — and was appropriately named, sun star. Counting the arms, we usually found 23, not divisible by five unless a decimal point and a figure on its right is permissible. *Heliaster*, apparently didn't read the assigned book for Zoology 101. Maybe it is time for us to go a bit further.

Some more observant individuals might ask, "Why are you knocking the absence of radial symmetry in *Encope*? Just look at the little holes in *Mellita's* test! They make it impossible to cut more than one way through the center of the disc to produce equal halves."

They are correct, of course, but picky, picky. Do you want any living thing to have the perfect radial symmetry of a bicycle wheel? Whoops!! Those picky observant people would point to the hole in the wheel's rim, the hole through which the tire's valve stem protrudes, and ask an embarrassing question: "Tell me any slice except through the hub's center and the valve stem hole that will cut the bike wheel into two equal halves? Radial symmetry — humbug."

A little library research shows us that our friends *Heliaster* and *Encope* are not especially unusual. There is at least one 13-rayed sea star; seven-rayed stars occur in the waters of the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean; members of a genus called *Solaster* have 7 to 14 rays; and other sea stars are constantly six-rayed. The vital internal organs, however, occur in sets of five. What is found on the outside is not so important.

Moreover, the radial symmetry of the echinoderms is not all it's cracked up to be if we compare it to the unlimited ways we can bisect a pie plate. If we can divide a sea star into symmetrical portions by more than three straight lines through the central point, that is very good. Even the disc-like sand dollars aren't perfect when compared to a Frisbee pan. Okay, we know enough now to no longer be disillusioned by our favorites, *Encope* and *Heliaster*. We could have something worse, for there is at least one toxic sea star in the world — not good unless you want to experience nausea and vomiting after handling it. *Acanthaster planci*, looks like a cross between a sea urchin and a sea star. It lives in tropical seas far across the Pacific Ocean; we're safe! Parenthetically, in addition to making people sick, it sports 14 rays!

We're spared such prickly beasts here at Estero Morúa. Those who have snorkeled in the Caribbean West Indies recall the dangers of *Diadema*, a poisonous sea urchin that (like our Sonoran Desert cactus, the jumping cholla) gets you whatever you do! There is another species in the Gulf of California, but it is not found in the northern gulf.

Now, there is something less happy to report. In 1982, a paper appeared in *Science* with the title, "Catastrophic Decline of a Top Carnivore in the Gulf of California Rocky Intertidal Zone." It referred to our favorite sun

star, *Heliaster kubiniji*. The disaster was triggered by unusually strong winds from the south sweeping across the Pacific coast of North America in the winter of 1977-78, bringing warm waters into shallow areas. Water temperatures were almost 4° F higher than the long term average in the summer of 1978 when scientists from the University of Arizona found dead and dying sun stars in the intertidal zone around Puerto Peñasco. A bad bacterial infection was destroying them and within two weeks the *Heliaster* had disappeared. Perhaps the unusually warm surface waters had made the sun stars susceptible to some pathogen which thrived at those higher temperatures. Will it come back some day and once again become "the most common, obvious, and widely distributed shore starfish in the Gulf," as John Steinbeck and E.F. Ricketts described it in 1941? Whatever the facts may be, we can't blame the catastrophe on the campsite children and their collecting forays to nearby tide pools.

Parenthetically, a knowledgeable echinoderm scholar might ask, "What's so unusual about the demise of your *Heliaster*?" In faraway Nova Scotia, unusually warm summer and autumn sea water during 1980-83 indirectly brought about the devastation of a sea urchin. The pathogenic agent in that case was an amoeboid protozoan, a species that successfully invaded the sea urchin tissues when water temperatures were above 50° F (10° C). The disease spread rapidly at temperatures from 60.8° to 64.4° F (16°- 18° C). Canadian marine biologists estimated that 250,000 metric tons of sea urchins perished along 500 km of coastline. That's about 336 lbs per foot of shoreline to us Yankees, who have scorned the metric system.



## H. Logbook—A Porpoise, a Stingray Lost

Tom Cole

June 13, 1986

*A porpoise, which compared with our frail craft looked like an F-15, rocketed around the boat in the waters just before the estuary a ways inward from where we used to fish for sea trout. It was so big and so powerful that it was really quite frightening. After looking in the shallow water for large stingrays all day we found the sight of this superbly evolved creature quite a surprise.*

*The porpoise was not a beige molly coddled "Flipper" quacking like a duck and slapping its forepaws in a pathetic Sidney the Seal imitation, but a jet black, brass-balled denizen of the deep sculpted in hell!*

July 4, 1986

*The Sea is white-capped clean to China and it's windy. All you can see is green water. Bad for boating and worse for fishing, I reckon.*

*Later, I hooked a monster diamond stingray on the point. I fought it for an hour and a half in the blazing sun. When I got it to shore, Steve panicked, tried to hit it with an oar, and broke my line.*

## 9. Tide Pools

Jean Cole

This is a poem written by my mother about the tide pools mentioned in the story the Unruly Echinoderms. —TC

Maybe it's not too late to visit the tide pools,  
maybe you'll come with me.  
We can lie face down on the barnacled rocks  
watching silently in the hot morning sun  
    sea anemones with coral tentacles  
        sweeping still pools,  
    blue-gold limpets moving on the  
        rocky edges of blue water,  
    serpent stars sliding along the  
        clear sandy bottom.  
Alive, restless, they wait the wild rush of  
incoming tide.

                                    Toward noon, the tide will roar  
over rock,  
                                    pools, beach.  
                                    Each in its time, feelers will  
sweep new water  
                                    feeding, mating, renewing  
life.  
                                    We will move up higher on the  
slopes  
                                    toward the sun,  
                                    walk the sandy paths through  
cactus —  
                                    hot, yellow brittle-bush and  
cholla,  
                                    drink at the Club de Pesca  
                                    while the tide rides high.

Later, at sun-down, we will visit the tide pools again.  
Long sun rays throw fiercer colors;  
    anemones wait in stillness and sunset;  
    limpets are darker, move slower at nightfall.  
    The serpent star has lost a feeler; some have died.  
There is a chill in the early evening  
and when I reach for your hand it is cold.

# I. Logbook–Night Fishing, Stingrays, Sargo, Crabs

Tom Cole

November 27, 1987

*Nighttime point fishing. Jan held a stingray down with his boot so that the hook could be removed. Then, released, the stingray lay motionless, the words “Red Wing” stamped boldly on its chest. Steve caught a Sargo and let it go. Tom emerged triumphant over another stingray while Jan did himself proud by proving himself a formidable antagonist when pitted against a bonefish. Tom outwitted a guitar fish strumming up the beach and Jan and he countersunk its mouth with a fillet knife to get out the hook. It bubbled off into deeper water to lick its wounds, painful at it must have been to do with its upper jaw and hard palate neatly excised.*

*Steve made the first cast and hooked a diamond ray as big as a coffee table and was dragged bodily halfway around the point before the line snapped.*

*Crabs were also making their Thanksgiving debut and Brad had fun stirring them up. “Hell, I ain’t afraid of no crab!” — until one caught him good and took most of the bravado out of him.*

## 10. The Stingaree and the Stingeese

Gerald A. Cole

Anyone who stays at Estero Morúa is well aware of the stinging rays and the hazard they present. This article tells most of what you need to know about them. —TC



Stingray at Estero Morúa, March 1992

There are various brotherhoods and fellowships — sisterhoods also, at Estero Morúa. One exclusive club is composed of those people who knew the late José Espinoza. Another has a membership roll on which we are glad to remain unlisted. That is the group of select individuals who have fallen victim to stingrays. No thanks. We are not interested in joining that elite fraternity. Perhaps an American history buff might be eager to pledge, for Captain John Smith was admitted to the Chesapeake Bay chapter in June, 1608.

Turning to the pages of a guide written by Don Thomson and the late Nonie McKibbin, we find there are ten species of rays in the Sea of Cortez. These are

flattened relatives of the sharks, but unlike those streamlined hunters, their teeth are not a threat to us. Somewhere along the top of a long whip-like tail is born a sharp and serrated spike or spine that can be driven into the foot or leg of an unwary human wader. The results are undesirable, for the spine is venomous.

Two species of stingray are seen most often along the sandy shores of our beach. One seems a huge black shadow as it moves with the incoming tide westward along the beach and around the point into the estuary, where it feeds. A few hours later as the tide falls, the rays reverse the pattern and swim back out to the Gulf waters. We then see the pits in the exposed bottom sediments that mark the places where these bottom feeders dislodge worms, mollusks and crustaceans with the flapping of their fins — pectoral fins that are hardly distinguishable from the rest of their flat bodies. This is a stingray belonging to the genus *Dasyatis*; it is the longtail diamond stingray.

The other common ray is far less conspicuous. This is the round stingray, *Urolophus*. It is about the size of a pancake, although the big ones are 15 inches in diameter and have a tail more than nine inches long. Its tail cannot be considered whip-like; it is strong and muscular with a dangerous spine near a little dorsal fin about halfway out from the base. Each day many move into the sandy shallows as the water begins to rise with the incoming tides. This is a dangerous time to wade carelessly out from shore. It is this smaller, camouflaged griddle-cake that is the villain in most stingray incidents at Estero Morúa. Nearly buried in the sand, it is easily overlooked and stepped on by the unwary. The sadder-but-wiser waders can be spotted as they shuffle along, hardly raising their feet. They have learned the consequences of stepping on the posterior third of the round stingray. They

know the muscular tail can snap sideways and drive the venomous spine without mercy.

There are many stories, some almost legendary, about the stingray encounters at the beach. We can contribute little of originality here. Three or four times we have seen waders turn and hop rapidly toward the shore, one foot held high. When asked what's wrong, in all instances the answer was, "I think a crab got me!" A crab wound, however, is delightful when compared to a stingray puncture. Victims of the latter learn the true meaning of pain; they are cold with pain; they shiver with pain; it seems like endless and unbearable pain.

The first time we saw the hopping I-think-a-crab-nailed-me phenomenon was while camping on Sandy Beach, beyond Puerto Peñasco. The victim was our guest, a student on spring break from a small, respected Ohio college. We soon realized that he was in serious trouble and we drove him into Puerto Peñasco for medical attention. The doctor's treatment involved administering a massive dose of drugs that masked the pain. We have since snickered about this, and for many years we recounted the event and said irreverently, "He saw Jesus coming over the dunes on a camel, but he felt no pain."

The medical treatment, unfortunately, had not destroyed the stingray venom. Therefore, when the drugs' effects wore off, the victim experienced more than a day of intense pain.

Since that camping event, we have learned of treatments that can change more than 24 hours (perhaps 48 hours) of pain into an hour or two of discomfort. These methods involve destroying the protein or proteins that compose the venom. The protein is denatured, to borrow the word biochemists use to describe the gross modification of a protein molecule. Occasionally

administering meat tenderizer at the wound site has some effect, but the most effective method involves heat. If the "stingee" is lucky, he or she was stung on the foot or ankle. Sweat stands out on the victim's head. Cooking the venom destructively involves cooking the foot, or so it seems to witnesses and recipients of the treatment. It is worth it, however. Soaking for 30 minutes to an hour and a half may do the trick. Relief is blessedly quick when compared to what Nature had in store for the victim. (As we look back over this paragraph, we are sure a physician would criticize some omissions. He would have used a sterile saline solution to irrigate the wound, a rather serious wound, for the removal of the stinging spine does damage; he would have picked out fragments of the spine's integument, for they are a source of venom; and he would have disinfected the wound before starting to denature the venom à là hot water.)

One experience with the longtail diamond stingray is shared by many people of the fishing clan at Estero Morúa and once it happened to me, although I can't claim membership within that clan. The tide was up in the estuary; the big dasyatids had come in to feed. I spotted one close to shore in a pool just west of Betty Point and cast, in a unskilled manner, the lure and fiddler-crab bait close to it. The big ray struck and then Pandemonium broke loose as it turned and shot away from the shore at top speed. The result was a snapped line and a lost-forever Kastmaster lure. Others have confessed to the same imprudence.



Acme Kastmaster



The stingrays at Estero Morúa are ovoviviparous. Their eggs hatch within the mother's body and she gives birth to well-developed little fish. This method of reproduction is underscored by a story Steve told me. He said he saw a man catch a stingray that commenced to give birth on the sand after it had been landed. The angler immediately started stomping upon the newborns. Steve's anecdote also underscores people's attitude toward the stingray in general. Not one onlooker cried, "Don't be mean to the poor baby rays, don't be unkind!"

They cheered him on.

Another anecdote about the rays at Estero Morúa was told to me by two reliable witnesses. It occurred at the point; the tide was moving in and the usual opportunistic predators were rounding the point to feed during the few short hours before the turn of the tide. A handful of anglers had gathered to try their luck, and leather jackets and yellow-fin croakers were being hauled ashore at an impressive rate. Suddenly, one fisherman experienced a tremendous hit, the reel sung wildly and the rod bent sharply. He had hooked a whopper. Being an expert, he soon assumed control of the situation and began to haul in his prize. He had caught a large round stingray and when his companions saw clearly what he was reeling in, they warned him, "Hey, be careful! You've hooked a stingray!" Or something like that.

"Naw," said the angler. "A stingray has a spine at the tip of its tail. This one doesn't."

He bent over, grabbed the ray just below the end of its tail and, arm outstretched, raised the trophy for all to see. The fish sharply flexed its muscular tail and jammed its more basally-inserted spine into the captor's arm. Blood spurted. The fisherman dropped the ray, tottered and fell, unconscious, to the sand. He had joined that select

fellowship, the club that doesn't have a long impatient waiting list.



Logbook sketch August 6, 1981

# J. Logbook–Loon, Gull

Gerald A. Cole

February 6, 1988

*Loon found desiccated but fairly fresh. Beak narrow and sharp, 2 1/2" long. Total length including beak about 24". White ventrally and underwing surface. Cheeks somewhat mottled, but perhaps best described as white. Back, dorsal wings tail, neck, head grayish brown. Emphasis on gray; feet black.*



February 6, 1988 logbook sketch      November 24, 1989 logbook sketch

November 24, 1989

*Dead gull from the point -- broken wing. Length 19 inches, wing single 24 inches. Gray mantle and black and white wingtips. Head and neck mottled brown. All the rest of him is like an adult California gull or ring-billed except for some dark black near the tips of each tail feather. Total wing spread midbody is 53 inches. Ring formed by black on upper and lower mandible. The California adult is described as having a black and red spot on lower mandible. Legs yellow green.*

*Much like California gull?*

# 11. Shipwrecked at Estero Morúa

## Stephen West Cole

This, one of the longest of the essays in the book, is a favorite of mine not only because I am featured in it but because of its fine writing, attention to detail, and solid tale-telling. Speaking of which, however, I think the characterization of me as a somewhat clueless individual was a trifle overdone. —TC

### Introduction

“Most men slave the whole year long just for the privilege of living for two weeks every summer in a shack by the sea.”

The quotation I assume is the observation of a celebrated author but where I came across it I don't remember and as much Googling as I have done, I still haven't been able to credit the source. I have come to think of the saying as my own and should the absence of authorship persist, I will eventually claim it.

I recall a foreshadowing of the quote's meaning when as a child, through some long-forgotten circumstance, I watched a man preparing for a two-week sojourn at the beach. He was packing a cardboard box with canned food and other supplies. As he was about to add to the box a small bottle of dishwashing liquid, he looked at me with a glad expression and gave the bottle a little pat on the bottom, as if it were a baby. That small gesture joggled my young mind. Here was a man looking forward—with happy expectation no less—to washing dishes. But the meaning of the gesture was not lost on me, for as the “Shack by the Sea” aphorism attests, when it is a matter of self-imposed poverty by the sea, even and especially the menial and mundane, become sublime.

My mother and father's old place on the beach has been rotting away twenty years and more and for weeks I have been living in a world of paint and sawdust, termite killer and roof cement, Clorox and copper wire, construction screws and tile grout, push broom and nails. My object is to make the place once again livable and there is no end to the work. Week after week one loathsome job after the next rears its head and I have awakened every morning looking forward to a day which was to give me nothing but satisfaction.

The decaying cement roof of the annexed bathroom, once the base for two ponderous and leaky water tanks, has finally done what it has been threatening to do for decades. Big chunks of cement have collapsed and the room is filled a foot deep with debris which must be shoveled out. The rubble confirms what I have always suspected. Rubén, once the steward of the beach, had long ago used a dirty dune sand conglomerate containing whole shells to make the cement.

The overall decay of the house has required that I do a thousand things. I have replaced the fractured toilet tank, installed a new faucet for the cold water tap and a new shower head, and glued and grouted the shattered yellow tiles. I have repaired the doors and painted them turquoise with brilliant pink trim (Mexican Baroque) and I have removed the stained ceiling panels and repainted them, patched the roof, rewired the solar lights and pump, dapped and cemented the holes in the cinderblock walls. In the kitchen, I tore out the huge, termite-demolished cabinets over the sink and dragged them to the road for removal.

Looking down the sandy road, I see that the privilege of living in a shack is not universally held so dear. I see it in the contrast between my single solar panel the size of a Monopoly board and a neighbor's multiple panels like

upended tennis courts. In contrast to my simple gas stove and icebox are a neighbor's legions of appliances supplied by inverters from banks of huge high-tech batteries that fill a room—batteries powerful enough to turn a Ferris Wheel. There is a contrast in outlooks when one considers a bucket of fresh water sluiced over one's head after a swim in the sea and the pressurized spray of an outdoor swimmer's shower decorated with an artfully crafted mosaic of palm trees and parrots.

While the introduction of luxury is antipodean to the truth of our, so far anonymous, little aphorism, there seems to remain a peaceful coexistence between those of us who hold diverging outlooks on how much is enough, or whether less is more.

But the following story goes back to a different time and a different place and like most stories it cannot be separated from the two. I ask you to bear in mind that fact can easily be clouded by memory itself, and that the retelling of any tale is a potent fertilizer. I'll end with a more familiar Bartlett's that comes to mind, one whose authorship is not so arcane. Whether it holds true now I don't know, but Estero Morúa was once, "a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone a habitat, a nostalgia, a dream."

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Up on the dunes were the beach houses. There weren't many of them, just a little row that reached east a few hundred yards stopping on the edge of an endless Mexican wilderness of sand and cholla and pristine beaches of the Sea of Cortez. Even then they were old houses. Some of them had tall, crumbling cement garages with vast double doors which opened to reveal the rotting remains of brave little motorboats as old as the houses. I

remember one crafted of wood aging in the dark of a cinderblock boathouse. Out of it thin, copper nails grew like slender green mushrooms. The carcasses of these small, sea-going vessels were all that was left of the halcyon years when the fishing here was as good as any place in the world. The settlement built at the Moruan Estuary in northern Sonora was once the Estero Moruan Sportsman Club. Now it was just Club Estero de Morúa. The early dreamers of the club fished for yellowtail, *totoaba*, groupers, dog snappers, dorados, and mighty sea bass as big as cows. On the decks of these very boats were once spread the bright blue fronds of sailfish. By the mid '70s, however, over fishing had stripped the reefs of the big bass and groupers, and Japanese *longliners* with sixty-mile-long nets had swept up much of everything else.

There were two unrecognized factions among the Estero Moruans -- those who were *José* and those who were *Post-José*. Perhaps it was a source of disappointment to those who were *Post-José* for it was as if you had missed not just the fishing, but a whole era. It might also have been a bit of a blessing. José Espinoza once owned this beach and he was responsible in part that the Estero Morúa group was different from the other American colonies in the area. José ran the place as if he were Stalin and he liked peace and quiet. Even *Post-José* "Estero Moruans" like myself thought twice about letting loose a skyrocket over the beach at night, or even blowing off an M-80 on New Year's Eve. It was as if the ghost of José were still enforcing the rules.

One evening years ago, José's wrath fell on Chuck Davis. The way I heard it was that it started when a happily schnockered Chuck was marching up the sandy road from a party, boisterously singing sea chanteys. José never much liked Chuck. He'd been waiting for

something like this. José let loose the full force of his fiery temper. Though Chuck was a lovable guy, he wasn't anyone to boss around either. But he had to leave and leave that night. José had stuck a big nickel-plated revolver in his face.

Chuck forfeited his membership in the club along with his house. There might have been legal recourse, but that counted for nothing. José had a gun. Happily, it was not long before José dropped dead of a rage-induced heart-attack while chasing some hippies over the dunes. Chuck got his rights back.



José's Grave

There are a lot of stories about José but they are not really mine to tell. I am, after all, *Post- José*. I only know him by apocryphal stories and by his monument which stands in the *estero* alongside the shortcut road through the creosote and ice plants where high tide seldom reaches. It is a wooden cross anchored by a big pedestal



of cement upon which *José Espinoza* is drawn in green paint. The top of the cross is crowned with a neat little arrangement of rusting nails to discourage birds from perching on it. Fishermen found José's monument a convenient rest stop after the three-beer trip across the rough, bladder-jarring roads to Estero Morúa. Sometimes big recreational vehicles braved the rutted trail past the monument and also stopped to perform their ablutions. I'd seen them emptying their septic tanks there as well.

Though the dreams of fishing had faded along with the era of José, the Estero Moruans were still made up of dreamers. One, of course, was the reinstated Chuck Davis. He once dreamed of salvaging the wreck of the *Eros*, and sailing around the world. But it couldn't be done. The mysterious Scandinavian ship still lay rotting far away on the flats. You could walk to the remains across the hard, rippled sand where the wreck, with its vast dark interior, would tower above you, its own damp wind exuding a smell like nutmeg. Once a high tide brought in thousands of small Portuguese man-o-wars so that the belly of the ship resembled an ice cave, its massive wooden ribs shrouded with jellyfish whose stinging tendrils hung down like blue icicles. One night Chuck jokingly offered me a half share of the *Eros* for fifty cents.

He was later to add his own picturesque shipwreck to the landscape. Chuck's boat, *The Maryanne*, was also wrecked in a storm, swept high up over the beach and right into the desert during what must have been a hundred-year tide. It now lay far from the sea amid the creosote and cholla near a lonely road in the wilderness. I hiked out to it one summer.

I could imagine the tide and the wind and the rush of the sea that brought it there, but I as yet could not much imagine myself on the sea.

Chuck's Maryanne was a sturdy 25 foot fibreglasser with an oddly slanting deck and portholes along each side. You could stand up inside it. At the bow, was a marine toilet which I discovered was still being used. Like José's monument, the Maryanne had become a roadside rest area.

Our next-door neighbor, Bill Holmes, also dreamt of the sea. He had a sailboard and a small catamaran which he used to explore the calm waters of the *estero*. It was his fascination with the wind and sails that would soon take him out to sea and my brother and me along with him. He was at the time of the story a tall, *Post-José* man of maybe fifty-five whose healthy tan and full head of brown hair with no grey, exuded nothing but good fortune. Bill was an industrious worker and his house was always neat, but he didn't seem to mind our run-down diggings alongside him. It was his nature to get along with everybody.

One morning a neighbor named George, knowing that Bill's wife was not to arrive until morning, had invited him over for an early dinner. My brother Tom and I got an invite too. George, who had competed in the 1968 Olympics, was revered by my brother Jeff for his innovations to the sport of running. Late that afternoon, the three of us trooped down the road to George's. His wife was a good cook. We had tacos and triggerfish and washed it all down with gin and tonics flavored with yellow slices of fragrant *guayaba*. The house seemed filled with steam from the kitchen.

A little while later Rubén stuck his head in the door. A Mexican citizen, he lived at the beach all year. He drove the big rusty water truck that supplied the twin tanks which topped each of the Americans' houses. Rubén was a cheerful man with a wide, kindly face darkened by the sun, and a ready smile that showed just a

trace of gold. As far as I knew, he'd never bothered to learn one word of English. He had been visiting a neighbor earlier in the day and had been given a good used gas stove. I had helped him load it into his pickup. He was looking forward to going right home and cleaning it up. He was very happy with the stove and used that curious excessive diminutive Mexicans tend to employ: "Muy limpio," he said. "Limpiacito." -- Very clean. Cleany weenie.

Rubén also looked after the place as watchman. Once a rumor came to my father that Rubén was in possession of a pair of deep cycle batteries that had been stolen off his roof. It was only natural that Rubén might be assigned the role of antagonist in this little story of theft, and it was through no fault of his own. While there was always a friendly, easygoing commerce between the American beach house owners and their Mexican hosts, the cultural and language divergence caused it to contain a particle of mistrust. Absent much of the year, the homeowners consigned the security of their holdings to Rubén, not a small task if he were to ever have to go into town, or do anything else, sleep, for instance. Should anything turn up missing it might well induce uncharitable thoughts of the rogueries that result from misplaced confidence. Rubén was not an American. He was not rich. And these houses lay abandoned much of the year.

Now Rubén had come to George's looking for my brother and me. He had found my father's stolen batteries along the road. They were at his house now and we could come and get them anytime it was convenient. We thanked him effusively and said, "*Hasta pronto, Cuñado,*" employing the charming Mexican epithet which means brother-in-law, and is used to address only a friend as it infers that he is sleeping with your sister.

Months later I heard an uncharitable slander that my father got his batteries back only because Rubén couldn't figure out how to rig the six volters into his twelve volt system. A small community is by its nature a nefarious entity, gossipy and unjust, and even if it were true (and I'm sure it wasn't) that Rubén had taken the batteries, and then returned them because they were the wrong voltage, did it not speak to the character of a man unwilling to begrudge us batteries he had no use for?

It was dusk when we left George and from the sandy road we could see a shoal of porpoises moving in toward the beach. The black fins and backs of these little whales broke the surface as they dipped in and out of the copper-colored water like rocking horses. The *estero* was very quiet and as the sky darkened, the sea turned to slate and then the color of lead.

Later that night I went out for a late walk through the cold December night. It was so dark I couldn't even see my feet. It was like wading through ink, and I lost my way and wandered off the sandy road which was our driveway, and stumbled over the little bush-topped hillocks of sand. When I found my way back onto the road again, I stood watching the stars. The milky way was like a frost in the sky and between the stars I could see the mists of space.

Everyone was asleep when I returned to the house. It was very cold and I zipped myself into a sleeping bag on a mattress on the floor. Then the moon rose and its light came through the window and I was dreaming strange dreams that cannot be dreamt anywhere else; I am not the first to note the strangeness of Estero Moruan dreams which all agree have a splashy, polychromatic quality as if they were plagiarized from Gabriel Garcia Márquez. Mine, or my memory of it was unscrupulously lifted almost directly from "the Gabo." In it was a river of

moving sand that dropped like a waterfall into a dry arroyo which reached down from the granite mountains. There in the alluvium, the light of my imaginings and that of the moon, revealed a thin crescent of glittery red garnets, and from the eroded bank of the wash, the exposed ruins of a suit of Spanish armor welded together by rust. Tiny stalactites of green copper dripped from the seams of it, and the bones of the Conquistador, long since fossilized and crumbled to sand, were pouring out of the armor with a sound like rain. Then the dream wandered out toward the sea and washed in and out along the shore with the seaweed and I was in a deep sleep.

Perhaps in all the little houses the same thing was happening. The dreamers were sleeping, and they all dreamed their part of the big dream of the *estero* and their own secret versions of it: Chuck of his Eros and his Maryanne, Bill of his sails and the hissing skin of blue water, Rubén of his tidy new stove and his batteries, and George, in his slumber, of the cheers and glory of a long-ago Olympics.

By noon the next morning, my brother Tom and I were drinking Bohemia beer on the beach. Bohemia comes in a solid bottle of dark amber glass and the neck is wrapped in heavy gold foil. On the label is a picture of the Aztec Emperor, Cuauhtémoc. It is the pinnacle of the brew master's art. John Steinbeck, whose wanderings had led him to explore this gulf, explained that Bohemia was "the best beer in the Western hemisphere."

The air was cold with an offshore breeze that was already starting to make the sea rise. Bill Holmes was out with a new catamaran braving the wind, sailing close to shore. Despite the cold, he was in hog heaven and he grinned as he slid past us, holding the ropes of his sail. The sun was bright in the cold sky. Gulls swirled overhead, and a pair of oystercatchers with beaks like

bright red crayons sauntered down the shore near the water's edge. It was impossible to imagine that in just hours Bill, Tom and I, would be miles at sea considering the possibility that we might be drowned.

It is funny how disaster appears. Only after it has wrought its destruction can one look back and see the signs of its approach. The logical progression of events leading up to it is often invisible until it arrives. Only afterwards does perfect hindsight make the equation obvious. Thus, the nature walker who sees only beauty and not death as he admires a plunging falls from its brink doesn't see the silly, slippery algae on the rocks either. A comical pratfall fall sends him into the river and over the edge. Not once had he considered the possibility of falling in. Death has crept up wearing its customary clown's suit.

It was much that way with Bill Holmes early this morning. Not a hint of trouble anywhere. The sun was bright, the air was brisk and the water inviting. All prospects pleased. But unapparent to him, were some conspiring circumstances this fine day. The first lay with the small catamaran he was sailing. It was new and seaworthy but not his usual craft. For one reason or another, he had borrowed it from a casual acquaintance. It was identical to his own except for its size. This borrowed cat was a little larger. Still, he reasoned, he should be able to handle it.

There was, however, another difference between the two catamarans. Whereas the smaller craft was easily righted by one person should the wind spill it over in the water, the larger craft required the weight of two persons to lift up its long mast. Bill did not know this.

Also conspiring was the wind. It was breezy this morning and this offshore wind was rising. Noting this, Bill wisely steered his boat close to the beach. He knew

that the gulf was an immense wilderness and he had the imagination to understand the potential for danger when the wind was high. He was confident in his skill at sailing, but he was not an arrogant man. He understood what it meant to be blown out to sea.

He steered the boat so close to the beach that he could almost imagine brushing the dry sand with his fingers as he passed. He was consciously careful and prudent, for he respected the gulf, and for the moment, even his human ego was in check. Perhaps he was even being a little more cautious than usual. Maybe he sensed some danger, something foreboding in the wind, even though it could not be named.

All this counted for nothing. As he executed a turn, the wind caught the sail broadside and the boat gently keeled over. One by one, like slowly toppling dominoes, the circumstances of the morning began to lay themselves in place, align themselves in form. There were not many of these toppling circumstances, but not one of them fell to Bill's advantage.

Following a familiar routine, he leaned his weight into the sling of rope to lift the mast out of the water. It cleared the surface a foot, two feet, and rose no farther. Puzzled, he threw his weight into the ropes again and was surprised that the mast still rose no higher. Funny. His own boat was a cinch to turn right-side-up. Just lean back and up she came. This catamaran was a little bigger. It no doubt took more leverage. He tried it once more without success. At this point he stepped off and stood up in the cold water ruminating. The sea was barely past his waist and the shore not twenty feet away. He looked at the beach and a little shore bird looked back at him. If he was in any danger, he sure couldn't see it.

The wind was picking up a little. The mesh platform of the little sailing rig was vertical now and the wind

pushed on it. Bill Holmes's feet slipped on the sandy bottom as the little "sail" began to pull him away from the beach. He climbed back up and tried again. Nothing doing. Now he was angry. He swore a little and tried to bully the thing up and he stubbornly continued until it occurred to him that it was not possible.

This was a two-man cat, and what he was beginning to divine was that he was perhaps a hundred pounds short of righting it. He scanned the shore. A thin line of cinderblock cabins on the dunes. To the east, virgin beach and wilderness a hundred, two hundred miles long. Still an easy swim to shore. That is, if he left the boat right now. But that was exactly what he didn't want to do. It was not his boat. He would have to face the owner. He would have to explain how he had lost it. That he could easily pay for the boat did not figure into this. He was short on confidence, not money. Thus, it was his pride that toppled the last domino in this little collapse of circumstances. The little equation was complete. He clung stubbornly to the capsized boat procrastinating.

In a couple of minutes he was beyond the possibility of swimming to shore and having stupidly discarded his last saving option, he was now left with only one—and that was to float with the wind and watch the beach become a thin, hazy line in the distance.

Chuck Davis' ancient Starcraft rowboat was the only boat around. In the summer there might have been a runabout whose owner could have been whistled up to motor out and get Bill Holmes. But the serviceable boats were locked securely behind the big doors of the old houses, their owners absent. Had this been a San Diego beach, a simple phone call could have sent a powerful helicopter thundering off to hoist the castaway from the sea. But there were no phones at Estero Morúa and had there been, who would one call for help? The Mexican



shrimpers were not out; the season had not yet begun. Puerto Peñasco, the town to the west, was closed in upon itself, sleeping through the off-fishing months of winter. I looked out to the sea for *pangas*, the intrepid sea-going “dories” which plied the gulf pushed by their 65 horse Evinrude outboards. The sea was barren.

The Estero Moruan beach on the edge of the Mexican wilderness, the pristine beach whose allure had enticed the dreamers was about, it seemed, to take a tithe.

My brother and I watched the wind blow Bill Holmes out to sea. He looked across the water at us. He was immersed up to his waist with a foothold on some submerged part of the boat. He raised his hand to us. It was not a frantic gesture, but a poignant one, almost a wave goodbye.

I had looked at Chuck’s old twelve foot Starcraft only the day before and knew that it was missing a pin which attached one oar to the oarlock, but I quickly went and looked at it again. Maybe we could fix it. I was astonished to find that it had already been repaired with a jury-rigged ten penny nail which had been passed through the assembly and crudely hammered over like a hook. Nobody, not even Chuck or Maryanne, knew who the hell had done it.

“We’re in luck,” I told my brother. “It’s rowable.

We dragged the boat scratching across the sand and slid it into the water. By now the wind had taken Bill a quarter of a mile out. The wind seemed to lift the stern as my brother rowed us out into the gulf. He moved the boat with a lazy one-two stroke which irritated me.

“Stop that bullshit and row,” I said. “We’ve got to get that guy.”

Tom paused to take a swig of beer. “Relax,” he said. “We’ll get him.” He put the bottle back between his knees and continued rowing, both oars at a time now, his

back to the horizon. After a while he said, “We getting any nearer?”

“No, “ I said. “He’s *way* out there. Keep going.”

An hour later Tom was still rowing.

All this time the wind had been rising and it pushed the rowboat as it followed Bill far out into the gulf. The beach was a line in the distance with tiny sand-colored squares above it which were the beach houses of Estero Morúa.

“Funny,” Tom said. “I’d think we’d have made more headway.”

“Keep going. We can’t make it back against this wind.”

“You still see him?”

“I see him.”

“We getting any closer?”

“No.”

“Funny we can’t catch him,” my brother said.

The wind was gusting now and it moved us ahead in spurts, sometimes almost plowing us into the swells. I reached under the seat of Chuck’s historic boat to see if there was any flotation left at all. My hand came away stained with the powdery white residue of Styrofoam. The big rectangular blocks of the stuff had weathered away long ago. If the boat were swamped, we’d sink to the bottom. Of course, there were no life jackets or flotation cushions either. The only thing in the boat was Tom’s discarded beer bottle which rolled back and forth on the bottom. I only just realized how much it had been irritating me. I threw it out over the water.

“What’s the matter with you?”

“Shut up.”

In another hour the houses on the beach could hardly be seen at all. The sea surrounded us, a circle of dark blue, angry with whitecaps. Nearby a delicate, undulating

jellyfish rode comfortably by in a swell. It drifted away, placid, indifferent and supreme. I was starting to get a little scared. I did not much want to be drowned. I looked at the ten penny nail holding the oar to the lock. Creaking against the metal, it seemed to be coming loose. Now what looked like a little bird came out of a wave and fluttered across the water. A flying fish. Under different circumstances this would have delighted me.

Then time seemed to speed up and Bill Holmes was closer. The distance between us disappeared and we arrived all at once. The swells looked bigger now. One moment we were looking up at Bill, the next moment down.

“Am I glad to see you guys,” he said, and his relief was catching. “One of you guys get over here and help me right her.”

“Right her?” Tom said.

My brother had been thinking all along that we’d row him back.

Tom stood up and immediately fell overboard. Well, that decided who was going over. He swam to the cat and Bill grabbed him by the scruff of his jacket and pulled him up as the capsized boat hissed up out of the water with a rising swell. Then Bill gave directions.

“Lean back and give it all your weight. We’re going in.” Bill counted to three and they disappeared with a splash and the mast, with its tangled sails sprang up. The little catamaran danced light and lovely on the top of the water, a triangle of sail snapping angrily in the wind. For a moment I was alone, and then their heads bobbed up in the dark water and they climbed aboard.

“Get over here, Steve,” Bill said. “Let that rowboat drift.”

“Let’s tow her,” I said. It seemed foolish at this point to discard one of the boats. We tied a line to the rowboat

and Bill untangled the jib which bellied out in the wind, almost knocking him over.

“Let’s get the mail sail out,” he said.

I knew nothing about sailing, but I knew enough that the wind was too high for us to be playing around with that big sail. Bill had already capsized this boat once with the big sail out. Why risk flipping her again? Maybe we wouldn’t be able to get her right-side-up a second time.

“Goddamnit, Bill. Leave that big sail alone. Look at this wind.”

He thought a moment. “Okay,” he said.

The slack was already going out of the line which connected me and Chuck’s boat to the cat and as it played out it whipped the rowboat’s bow around with a jerk. “We’re sailing,” I said.

Bill sailed with the wind, steering east almost parallel to the distant shore. He was pretty brave about the cold. He had been soaked for two hours, dressed only in a blue windbreaker and shorts. The tugging sail slung the old Starcraft ahead in rushes. Now that it contained only one person, the open boat rode high and whisked across the water in spurts, but from Bill’s vantage aboard the catamaran it was hard to tell if we were making any progress at all. Occasionally he’d cast me an anxious look and holler, “Are we sailing?”

“Yes,” I assured him.

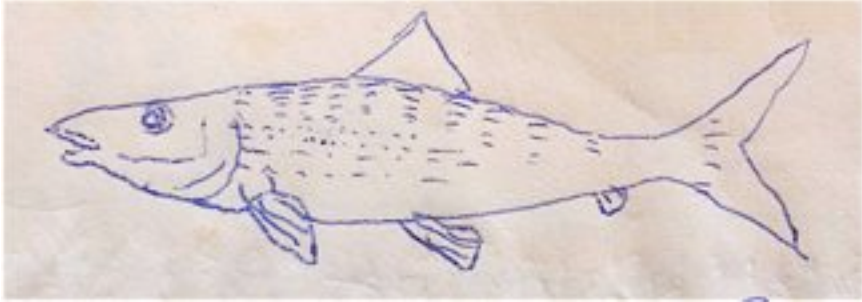
I kept my eye on the shore. Tiny in the distance, two rusty water tanks, each stood on end, were visible along the beach between Estero Morúa and the remote Second Estuary. This was a site of a development which in just a few years would change the character of the area forever. I had never looked at those tall brown tanks with anything but hatred, but now they seemed almost friendly. They were growing larger.

After a while we could see the beach and a small shape rushing down it. Bill's wife Phyllis had gotten wind of the situation and had been watching with binoculars. Now she was chasing along the shore in Bill's Chevy Blazer and behind her Rubén braved the sand in his rattling pickup. We could see that we'd make shore about ten miles east of Estero Morúa. As our progress became apparent, our worry dissolved into a kind of elation which made us grin and wish we had cigars. Perhaps the sensation was an exaggerated sense of relief. Whatever its cause, we sailed in feeling as powerful as whales.

As shipwrecks go, this wasn't much of one. It doesn't rate with the wreck of the Eros, or even the desert beaching of Chuck's Maryanne. The event probably doesn't even merit the heading of *shipwreck* as the ship made a safe landfall. Nevertheless, I still like to use the word when I think of that day. Shipwrecked. It's great for bragging rights.

Bill Holmes has been very generous. He has sometimes recounted the story when Estero Moruans have gathered over Bohemia beer and triggerfish. Moreover, at times he has told the tale with generous embellishments and exaggerations crafted to make my brother and me seem heroic, filled not only with a rare courage, but a sublime, quick-thinking *intelligence*. In any case, the glistening eyes of his listeners on one occasion convinced me that he was well-worth the saving, even though I know he owes as much to an ignorant, ten penny nail.

## K. Logbook—Fun Crabs, a Bonefish, a Sick Booby, Bugs



Bonefish sketch from the logbook July 1990

Gerald A. Cole

July 8, 1990

*Fishing: 9 July at the point: fun crabs and three big jimmies. GAC caught a bonefish (of the Albuladae) and a young, tiny unknown, similar to a pompano. Coming back there was a Brown Booby in trouble. (Lotsa yellow-footed gulls)*

Stephen Cole

July 8, 1990

*A booby was apparently ill. Gerald and I wrestled with him a bit and he pecked at us with his sharp bill.*

*We slept on the driveway as the heat inside would not permit slumber. Bugs crawled over us all night. Mr. Sun at six roused us with his scalding rays.*

## 12. Making Herself at Home Means Leaving Home

Laure Wegner

This is a guest essay that I at first thought might be slightly off-topic. However, the early origins of our Sea of Cortez logbook are described so very well among the pages of this fine 1981 article that I feel it's a good fit here. Besides, it speaks kindly of my mom. It was first published in *Newsday*, a Long Island newspaper.

To fellow homeowners who read this story, it will likely call to mind very similar memories as we, the Coles, were surely not the only to first discover Estero Morúa via Puerto Peñasco's Sandy Beach. —TC

Once when my sister Gretchen was angry at my parents, she rifled their desk to find the adoption papers she imagined would be her ticket back to her true family, where everything would be just fine. I, on the other hand, was convinced that I had my mother's hips and my father's widow's peak. And anyway, when I was 9 years old and someone tried to force me to clean my room or do something else that seemed a crime against nature, I could always run over to the Coles' house.

At my friend Sally Cole's house in plain view of her parents I could ruin my appetite with hot dogs and Wonder Bread, which at my house was considered fluff that didn't provide the nutrients it took to chew it. At the Coles', I could swear, and I could look at pictures of naked people in the National Geographics that were lined up on their brick-and-board bookcases.

Besides five children, the Coles also had, at various times, two dachshunds, snakes, lizards, scorpions, pet rats and pigeons. All these people and beasts were supported by a budget method that Mr. Cole called "checkbook roulette."

Against one aqua wall in their living room was an upright piano that Mr. Cole played by ear. After school,

Sally and I played “Chopsticks” on it and made up nasty little songs like one called “Butterguts” about a boy in our class we hated for liking us. I knew that at my own house such unkindness would not have been tolerated, but at the Coles’ no one ever told us to stop singing.

For all the time I spent eating and singing at the Coles’, I never had a real conversation with either of Sally’s parents when I was little. But finding the home that those two people made was like rediscovering long-lost relatives.

Like many children whose parents have moved away from grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, I picked and adopted my own extended family. I needed them, and it didn’t matter that my mother and father refused to claim them. What I got at the Coles’ was different than what my parents gave me, but I carry it with me the way I do my hips and my hairline.

Those days, my parents and everyone else I knew thought psychology was for lunatics, but the Coles had a more sophisticated attitude. When Richard Speck murdered those nurses, Sally and I were 16 and for months afterwards we slept with butcher knives under our beds with which we planned to fight off homicidal maniacs. Mrs. Cole thought this odd behavior and told Sally that sometimes when people were obsessed with something they feared that really, in a funny kind of way and even secretly from themselves, they wanted it to happen. Unable to admit or even understand that we might want men to visit our bedrooms in the middle of the night, we put the knives back into the silverware drawer and pretended that we were not afraid.

During the four-day Easter vacation, the Coles packed their green van and, along with hundreds of others from Phoenix headed for a beach in Mexico called Rocky Point. Along with their five children, they took one or



two of their kids' friends. All day for those four days, we lay on the sand turning ourselves periodically like pork chops. At dusk we washed our hair with salt water, brushed it in the review mirror of the van and drove to town to drink cerveza and Barcardi with the boys we knew from our high school or some boy we had met on the beach that day. Back at camp, we tottered over the hill and threw up behind the mesquite bushes. We eased our sunburned, nauseated bodies into sleeping bags and closed the bags around our heads, leaving just enough opening so we could breathe the cold, damp ocean air.

Late on Sunday, we were slathered with Noxema, sick to death of each other and ready to go home, but we had to wait for Mrs. Cole. She was just standing by the edge of the ocean, looking. When she finally took her place in the front seat, she said: "Every time I leave here, I'm afraid I'll never get back."

For a few seconds, everyone was quiet, and I realized that until that moment, I had believed that only characters in books said things like that right out loud. It's still one of my favorite poems.

My father taught at the university, and I could take any course for only \$5 tuition. But when Sally started sending away for catalogs for schools in the East, where her parents and their parents had gone to college, I did too. My mother and father talked about what I wanted—and money — and said I could go.

My father and my sister Gretchen drove me to the airport. Later, Gretchen told me that while I was sitting on a plane, heading east wearing a new dress my mother had made me and crying, my father was diving back home, crying, too, for the first time she would remember. That day, I was grateful to them of letting me go, but they knew something I did not: They knew why they had let me leave. I was because they had learned slowly, and

sometimes painfully over the years that I was already gone.

Like all good mothers and fathers, they understood that if parents do their jobs right, their children will grow up to be just like nobody else and they will make themselves at home where they belong.

# L. Logbook– A Mouse, Rubén’s Dog, a Wish

Stephen Cole

March 14, 1994

*Spotted a fat little mouse in the silverware drawer. I loathe him. He will die die DIE!!*

*3 AM Tuesday night. The mouse has licked all the peanut butter off the trap. How I despise him! But I will kill him! Kill, Kill, Kill! I hate him with all my soul and I will not rest until he’s folded in half in the trap.*

*I SHALL BE AVENGED!!! FIREBRANDS! PLUCK OUT HIS NAME AND TURN HIM OUT! TEAR HIM FOR HIS BAD VERSES!*

Tom Cole

December 27, 14, 1994

*One night Rubén’s dog came over and lay down in our bathroom. I gave him some water and food. Later, the dog repaid this kindness by tearing all our garbage open and heaving it in many, many directions.*

*We went to the Enchanted Village, but there was an inch or two of water in it. I gave Sonny a dime and he threw it in and made a wish. (He wished for Barney the Dinosaur.)*

## 13. The Estero Morúa Pharmacy

Gerald A. Cole

I wish to expand upon what my father says in this essay about the creosote bush and its efficacy as a restorative named Chaparral. I took a class for fun once at ASU called the Natural History of Arizona. In part of the class, I learned that the creosote bush protects itself from insects as well as competition from other plants by excreting from its leaves both an insecticide and a defoliant. When its leaves fall to the desert floor, nothing grows and nothing crawls beneath the plant. Thus, I am rather skeptical about the healthfulness of taking doses of Raid® and Agent Orange even though they are viewed as being the natural varieties. —TC

How can anyone stay ill and sickly when living at Estero Morúa? We have medicinal plants to bring about recovery from anything. The Papagos and Pimas knew the universal remedial efficacy of one at least, *Larrea divaricata*. The Papago call it shelai; we call it greasewood, although botanists favor the name creosote bush, and we'll abide by that. We see many of these low bushes on the trip down from Arizona, across the border and through Mexico to the beach house. It grows on the north side of the estuary, the Sonoran mainland, but not on the younger sand dunes where our houses sit. There are at least five species of *Larrea* and perhaps a half dozen interspecific hybrids in the North American and South American deserts, and their twigs and leaves can be brewed up to make a curative (yet bitter) "tea."

The magical substance that the desert Indians use makes up about 5-10% of the dried creosote bush leaf. It is nordihydroguaiaretic acid. Yup, you're correct: there are 20 letters in that word! Please don't ask me to spell it again. Thank whatever powers may be for acronyms. I can remember NDGA, the official acronym for this antioxidant. Beginning in 1943, NDGA derived from the creosote bush was used in food preservation with particular emphasis on fats and oils. About 29 years later,

organic chemists learned to synthesize the molecule, leaving the leaves of *Larrea* as a cure-all for the desert-dwelling Indians.

In 1986, a paper appeared describing 42-64% increases in life spans of mosquitoes fed NDGA. This caused us to prick up our ears and start to examine the published accounts of this twenty-letter acid. At the University of Louisville School of Medicine, more than 300 generations of the yellow-fever mosquito have been raised during the last 30 years. Much, therefore, is known about the life cycles and life spans of both males and females of this insect. When NDGA was added to the diet of these flies, longevity was increased remarkably.

No, just lie back you oldsters among our readers. Be careful. Don't become overly excited! It's too late. The NDGA had no effect in enhancing the life span of the older mosquitoes. If you are not a young adult, forget it.

When it came to light that some creosote bushes are the oldest living organisms in the world, putting the bristle-cone pines to shame, I had a brilliant idea. Surely, the anti-oxidant effects of NDGA put aside, this idea of longevity would appeal to the health food people. Big money to be made! Then, dashing my hopes, Tom told me that *Larrea* leaves already were on the shelves of health food stores. They are labeled "chaparral," from which a "chaparral tea" can be brewed. Tom was correct. Another million bucks lost, and I would not have thought of the name, chaparral. *Chaparral* is a community of plants, a community to which *Larrea* does not belong! Thus, the health food people might find a medicinal herb growing in some pine forest biome and sell it under the heading, "Tundra."

Visiting a health food or nutritional center, I found that Tom was right. Creosote twigs and leaves were for sale. I suggested to the proprietor that the chemist's

ability to synthesize NDGA would be a great boon. Precise amounts of the healthful substance could be taken daily. My proposal was met with horror. Purity is a bad and unmentionable word to the health food addict. Ok, I thought, brew up your chaparral tea complete with road dust, cactus wren droppings and the half a hundred oils produced by the leaves of *Larrea*. Enlightened, I walked from the store past the shelves crowded with cans of lovely maple syrup from upper New England. Their labels proclaimed the absence of preservatives and other additives. Nowhere was it pointed out that maple syrup is sweet because of that dreaded 12-carbon sugar, sucrose! No wonder so few Vermonters live to celebrate their 110th birthday!

But how about some nearby medicine for those of us on the Gulf side of the estuary? We are in luck in the event we run out of shegai. We share the dunes with that sandbinder, *Ephedra*. This low shrub is one of perhaps 45 species found in arid regions from western North America across China and northern India to the Arabian Peninsula. Here we think of it as Mormon tea, but there are other names: Brigham tea, Navajo ephedra, desert tea, and one I hesitate to mention — whorehouse tea. This name stems from the belief that it cures the French pox. Now we can understand why one species of this genus of abundantly branching shrubs, the one that extends as far eastward as Texas, is named *Ephedra antisiphilitica*!

The species of *Ephedra* are a source of ephedrine and at least three closely-related alkaloids. They are of pharmaceutical importance. The Chinese people knew this centuries ago; what is now called *Ephedra sinica* they knew as the medicinal herb, ma huang.

Who could suffer from bronchial asthma with species of *Ephedra* available to relax the bronchial smooth muscle? The other effects are too numerous to list here,

but if you should see someone at the estuary with dilated pupils, rapid heart beat, blood pressure and blood sugar heightened, you might speculate he or she as brewed and partaken of our local *Ephedra*, or perhaps he or she is in love! Who is to say? Whatever the case may be, we at Estero Morúa should be in the best of health and should fear no malady. We have available lots of shegai and ma huang.

M. Logbook—Venus, Jeff is here! CEDO,  
JJ's  
Tom Cole

December 27, 1994

*Dawn found Venus twinkling brightly over our hunched, shivering bodies. Steve came out early and through the Mexican tinieblas espied two dark shapes on the sand over which rose a thin wisp of vapor. From within came a coarse croaking snore and the little struggling sounds of Noodles as she attempted to free herself from the dank, icy tomb that was the evening's bed, but Tom held her fast as she was needed for warmth—and "Perhaps," he thought grimly. "As food later on."*

Stephen Cole

December 27, 1994

*Jeff was here! Jeff did the dishes. Jeff did not argue or fight. Jeff was nice to Sonny. (They collected shells.) It has been a long time, but Jeff is back. We have visited the beach many times without Jeff, but now we are visiting with Jeff. For the past eight years Jeff hasn't been here, but now he is here. He isn't someplace else this time. He's at the same place we are this time. Here. Jeff is here.*

June 7, 1995

*Saturday we went into town. First, we visited the Cedo Museum, where I bought a tide chart. Since we hadn't been there for years, we decided to visit Cholla Bay. It hasn't changed much. We went to the cantina, Club de Pesca alias JJ's. There was a fishing tournament going on... Drank a couple of Pacificos until a boat arrived and the fishermen disgorged their pathetic catch—a few pinto bass (spotted sand bass) some sea trout (corvina) and a pint-sized hammerhead shark, about a foot long. We marveled at the shark's oddly-formed head with its eyes perched almost on the ends of stalks.*



## 14. Say's Bird

Gerald A. Cole

On January 1, 1983 my father wrote in the log: "First bird of 1983: Say's Phoebe. What does this portend?" Here's an essay he wrote about the bird. —TC

Catching up on one's sleep is an important bonus enjoyed when making a visit to the beach house. There is no traffic hum, no blaring music, no overhead jet engines. True, there are times when roaring surf wakes us up after midnight, but that is an enjoyable experience. It takes a few sleepy moments to comprehend, to identify the noise, but then the sleep lost is not important; the wild roar of the breaking waves is exciting and rewarding.

In the springtime, however, something else interrupts the valued slumber. Before dawn on some March day a repetitious, plaintive bird call awakens us. It is the voice of Say's phoebe, one of the breeding birds of the Estero Morúa community. It is the mating season and this flycatcher, no nightingale or skylark by any stretch of imagination, does its best. A flight "song" is part of its vernal rites during the daylight hours, and its mournful notes are usually the last sound we hear at sundown.

We see this bird on almost every visit to the beach, but there is a brief time in late summer, after the young have fledged and have become independent, when it is absent. The dunes seem deserted without it hawking insects from a saltbush sally point, flicking and wagging its black tail. Happily, it returns by the end of September, and we stretch a point and count this species one of the permanent members of our fauna.

It is a remarkable bird when we consider its closest relatives, the black phoebe, also occurring in the Southwest, although but rarely spotted at Estero Morúa,

and the eastern phoebe. Their nests are never found far from water. How does Say's phoebe survive among the dry dunes with no surface water (except for dew) found within miles?

It is wrong, however, to think of this flycatcher as being typical of the dunes and *Atriplex*, the saltbush. In a recently published book on the birds of Arizona's Grand Canyon, the authors underscored Say's phoebe as occurring in a wide variety of habitats (Brown et al., 1987). It is found in the Canyon throughout the year, some pairs beginning to nest on cliff ledges along the Colorado River in April. It appears in most parts of the Park from the river banks to the Kaibab Plateau, at an altitude of more than 8,000 feet (2,440 meters, if you prefer) above the Estero Morúa beach. It is a versatile bird that the Grand Canyon authors consider useless as an "indicator species," typical of one particular Life Zone.

At Estero Morúa, there are no suitable rocky ledges to serve as nesting sites for phoebes. Instead, they build their nests and raise the young broods in carports, ramada and other man-made structures. The most remarkable of these can be seen across the estuary to the north, the white dot that is Chuck's boat. Once we hiked across the estuary at low tide to visit the lonely relic. As we approached the stranded boat, a bird flew out of the cabin. Yes, Say's phoebe had found a satisfactory nesting site.

But back to the mournful pre-dawn and crepuscular calls. Does the bird sing, "phoebe?" Not at all. Not even close. Had European naturalists, by some fluke, come first to North America via the west coast, our three closely related phoebes would not share that name; only the eastern phoebe calls our "fee-bee, fee-bee." Sometimes we think, however, that a Greek scholar could be happy with Say's phoebe's name here at Estero Morúa.

In the early morning, perched on the tip of a saltbush near our porch its soft peach-colored breast is highlighted by the eastern sun. The bird shines — phoibos, radiant.

The scientific name of this bird, however, is especially engaging *Sayornis saya*. The two other phoebes share the generic name, *Sayornis*, Say's bird, but our Estero Morúa resident gets a double dose. Thomas Say was an all around naturalist collecting and describing mollusks (about 30 freshwater clams and snails alone), insects, and crustaceans from the environs of his 19th century native Philadelphia, south to Florida. In addition, he traveled and sampled the fauna in the western United States and Mexico. He brought back specimens of the flycatcher that subsequently was named for him. Is any other bird so bogged down with one man's name? Can any other bird match that? I know but one, Bulwer's Petrel, *Bulweria bulweria*, named for an English clergyman, Rev. James Bulwer. But don't look for it out over the Gulf waters as you walk along the beach — it belongs to the Atlantic. You'll have to be content with Say's bird.

# N. Logbook—Lure Lost, Roofing, Bones, Low Tide, Terns

Stephen Cole

June 7, 1995

*I hooked a huge corvina with my new Krockodile lure. He jumped, the line broke. Good-bye fish and \$3.99 lure. I swore.*

Tom Cole

January 1, 1998

*I went up and patched the roof with tarpaper and many tacks. I fell through the roof twice, once nearly breaking my gosh darned leg. I peered through the hole and saw water arestin' 'top the white ceiling panels.*

Tom Cole

May 19, 1998

*I went to the Enchanted Village. The top was askew and there were some large bones in there. I put the top back on.*

Larry D. Simkins

May 15, 2000

*I have never seen such a low tide. It seemed as if one could have walked across the estero on wet sand. Another remarkable occurrence was the number of different species of terns. I saw six species in the morning (least, common, royal, elegant, Forester's, black, and also a cousin — the black skimmer!*

## 15. This One

Jean Cole

This poem about the Sea of Cortez was first published in the 1972 Summer/Fall issue of West Coast Poetry Review. My parents left to tour Africa and my mother had given me instructions to deal with the editors in the event that they wanted to publish the poem. In those days, phone calls from Africa were out of the question and there was really no way to communicate with them as they traveled across the continent in a Landrover with their friends Dave and Ginny Pratt.

I remember awaiting their return and looking forward to giving my mom the good news that the prestigious publication had accepted her work. —TC

### This One

The beach was wet. Fog sank to ground level  
heavy, like fine rain;  
you could feel it on your hand.  
Squeezed down in the bed roll  
dampness seeped in  
from the drenched canvas top.  
Charcoal still glowed faintly in the sand,  
quiet hung balanced against tide echoes.  
On the dunes the truck faded slowly in mist  
like edges of burned cholla skeletons.

They appeared abruptly — the coyotes,  
warm against the damp.  
Moving silently, shadowy forms slid in swift  
restless sweeps, searching beach, land.

One paused at the dune edge;  
fine droplets clung to thick fur.  
Ears back, head lifted toward the sea  
this one  
sounded blood-colored notes  
animal-hot against the night.

## O. Logbook—Boston Lager, Mirages

Tom Cole

May 15, 2000

*I'd wake deep in the night and pet Noodles, and then reach down and grasp with knobby, sun-browned hand another bottle of Boston Lager. Having prized its top off, I would then pour the contents down my thirsty, beer-starved throat. How Boston Lager dances on the tonsils! And how my parched gullet rejoiced at the cold flowing rush of life nurturing, life sustaining — indeed, life granting Boston Lager! And how its intoxicants would rush to my waiting bloodstream and then extend their hypnotic tendrils into my anxious, pulsing brain thus lulling me off into hallucinogenic seaside slumber once more...*

December 27, 2001

*Now listen, those islands out there are the greatest examples of optical illusion ever. Ya'll know how preposterous it can get. A mirage in the back of the house. The hourglass deal:*



December 27, 2001 logbook sketch

June 26, 2002

*Still, after 27 years, you can stand outside at night under the stars and hear nothing but the sea.*

## 16. Two Fishing Rigs

Tom Cole

Like any other angler, I have a pretty short list of actual fishing skills and techniques. This essay, in part, tells about two or three of them. —TC

The people on the estuary side of the point were well into their fishing when we got there. That isn't to say they'd caught anything.

"Oh, here they come to show us how it's done," I heard one of them say as Jan, Steve, and I walked up.

We'd run into this group before and they were cheerful enough even though we caught lots of fish and they didn't.

It wasn't anything mysterious that made us better fishermen than they; it wasn't anything complicated. They just weren't doing it right. Two simple factors gave us the edge. One of them I learned at a very tender age.

When I was perhaps five years old, I think it was in Canada, my father admonished me, "The fish are in the *water*, not in the *air*!" He said that because I tended to walk around the lake with my bait dangling in the breeze as I searched for a better place to position it. My dad finally got impatient, took my pole, and threw the line out in the water. We left the pole there on the shore, and later, my dad came back alone, hauled in the fish that had taken the bait, and called me over.

A giant, golden-scaled carp lay glistening on the grassy shore.

"I *caught* one!" I cried, even though I hadn't even been there to witness the event. (It was, however, *my* pole.) "I *caught* one! I *caught* one!" I cried joyfully.

It was the biggest fish *I* had ever caught.

Our fellow anglers on the point at Estero Morúa that day didn't dangle the bait in the air, but they did the next

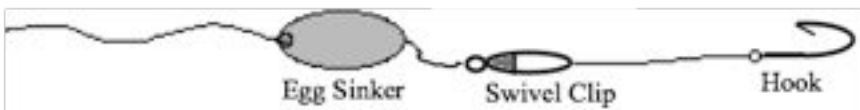
worse thing: they tossed it into the fishless, lapping shallows at the water's edge.

Perhaps I exaggerate. They tossed the line out a little farther than that, but not much. We threw ours well out into the deeper water — not out halfway across the estuary, of course, but far enough so the bait would sink into the deep hollow on the tide-flooded side of the dunes where the fish were. We'd wait. *Tap! Tap! Tap!* would go the rod tip and we'd say, "Hold... hold... *hold...* — *spike him!*" And another yellow-finned croaker would lie gasping on the sand.

For bait, we used leftover raw shrimp we'd bought in town and the other fishermen were, as I recall, doing the same, so that was not a factor in their lucklessness. There were only two things that accounted for our superiority: the aforementioned bait *placement* and the simple yet effective rig we used.

You won't get that tapping of the rod tip if you have a heavy weight on the end of your line. Perhaps I should qualify that: you won't get that tapping if the fish is *aware* of the weight.

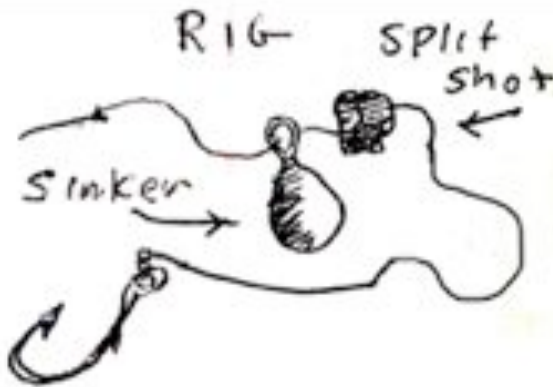
I like to use an egg sinker — you know, the kind shaped liked a little jelly bean and which has a hole drilled through it. I string the line through the sinker and tie on a swivel clip. To the clip I then attach a short length of line with a hook on the end. The clip stops the sinker from sliding down the line to the hook and when the fish bites, the only weight it feels is that of the brass swivel clip as the line pays smoothly through the egg sinker.



Preferred egg sinker rig



The illustration below, is the one drawn in the logbook in March of 1986. It shows the rig we used back then. The rig is a little different in that a bell sinker is used and a split shot takes the place of the swivel clip. The idea is the same, however. The fish will only feel the weight of the small lead split shot as the line slides easily through the sinker's eyelet.



March 9, 1986 logbook sketch

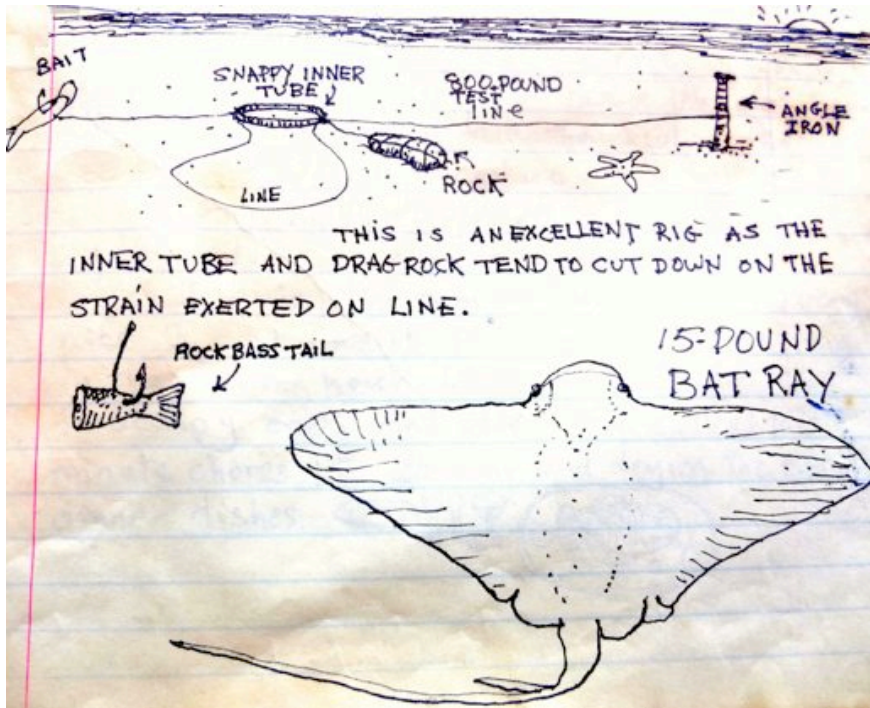
There's another Estero Morúa fishing rig from the logbook. Its function is not to keep the fish from knowing that a line is attached to the bait but to simply keep the fish, whatever its size, from breaking the line.

A strip of stretchy inner tube rubber takes the pressure off of the line when a fish pulls on it. With the rig, one can catch exceedingly large fish and also take advantage of the very low tides of the Sea of Cortez.

My brother Steve invented this rig and perhaps it's best to let him explain it directly from the March 1983 logbook notes:

*I have discovered a new activity which is real sport. Shark fishing. Posts are driven into the sand at low tide, lines and huge hooks are attached, baited. In the morning, collect your lunkers. I just hauled in a 15-*

pound ray. Tonight I bait an immense treble hook with manta wings, attach it to a rope and get me a prowling 8-footer. Here's the rig I used for last night's catch:



March 13, 1983 logbook entry by Steve Cole regarding his capture of a bat ray, *Myliobatis californica*

Perhaps I oversold the effectiveness of the rig when I claimed it could keep a “fish, whatever its size, from breaking the line.” Steve’s logbook entry continues in this way:

*It seems we haven't caught any sharks. I used the wings from the bat ray to bait the hooks. The next morning, one line was torn to shreds but the other was left alone.*

Steve at first had other plans for the bat ray wings that he in the end used to bait the treble hooks. Rubén came by and Steve asked him if the wings were edible. Rubén said they were delicious and indeed a delicacy when fried that tasted like abalone. When Steve offered him the wings, however, Rubén demurred, quickly declining the offer. Perhaps their value as a delicacy had been somewhat overstated as Rubén clearly wanted nothing to do with them and so the bat ray was left for a day or so to steep in a cooler whose ice quickly melted.

“Before long the bat ray was covered with what looked and felt like salamander eggs,” Steve later recounted. “I couldn’t hold the ray high enough to keep that slime from reaching the floor.”



Logbook sketch November 28, 1985

# P. Logbook—A Jog, Eggs, Cholla, Tiny Eggs

Jeff Cole

June 10, 2003

*It's breezy, not hot; birdless, almost. There was a lone whimbrel in the estero, and great blue herons. Jogging E-SE down the beach the sprawl of houses now stretches for more miles than I care to run. About 2.5 miles down there two grackles were behaving like sandpipers upon the flats. Weird.*

Stephen Cole

June 10, 2003

*Walking to the point we found a little clutch of three eggs — gray with spots — about the size of small chicken eggs.*

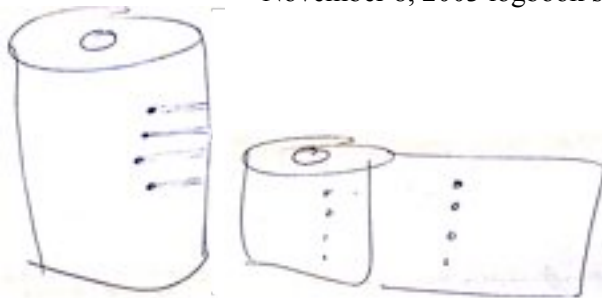
Tom Cole

November 8, 2003

*My God. What a stand of teddy bear cholla on the Caborca road. No coyote could ever cross these horrible lands.*

*Once again the counter by the sink is covered with what appear to be brine shrimp eggs. I cleaned them up only to find a thin layer of fine, silty “eggs” on the counter in the morning. Cross section of paper towels, eggs laid deep inside:*

November 8, 2003 logbook sketch:



*I see more eggs in the morning and I am sad to leave without having solved The Mystery of the Tiny Eggs.*

## 17. Knickknacks

Tom Cole

In 1984, I started using Apple's very first Macintosh. It had 128 K of RAM and no hard drive. Still, it was to become *such* an improvement over my knickknack system! —TC

In the year 1981, I made five trips to Estero Morúa and on the fifth of these, in December, I embarked upon a simple but enjoyable pastime. I would stop by Licores Vásquez in Sonoyta on my return from each beach trip and buy a knickknack to commemorate the visit.



One of the first knickknacks, an onyx watermelon slice on which I scratched the date 1/1/1982.

This was a quite a few years before I created my first database for tracking things (specifically birds) using the now defunct but then powerful Macintosh authoring program HyperCard. (I use LiveCode now.) But even afterwards for years I used the primitive knickknack method to track my travels and I wrote up reports like the following:

*TRIPS TO ESTERO MORÚA RECORDED BY  
KNICKKNACKS*

*Year placed above number of knickknacks bought at Vasquez Liquors in Sonoyta, Mexico. Each knickknack represents one trip to Estero Morúa. I may have forgotten to mark the date on a knickknack once, however. I suspect that a nail file should have been dated as it was found in the box with the other things. Otherwise, I believe the knickknack system is an accurate record of my travels.*

<b>1981</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>1983</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1990</b>
1	5	5	7	1	5	1	4	1	1
<b>1991</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
1	2	2	1	1	0	1	4	1	2

Well, not *that* accurate if you compare it with the current database — *ah*, but it just now proved useful. When I checked the number of trips I had made using the knickknack system, I found that I had docked myself a trip in the database. The reason was that I would often write “*I* came down with Steve...” Instead of, say, “*Tom* came down with Steve...” and so my name was missing actually *more* than once from the digital record. I have corrected these problems. I think.



When this photo of these 57 knickknacks was taken, I had made as many trips to the beach since December of 1981.

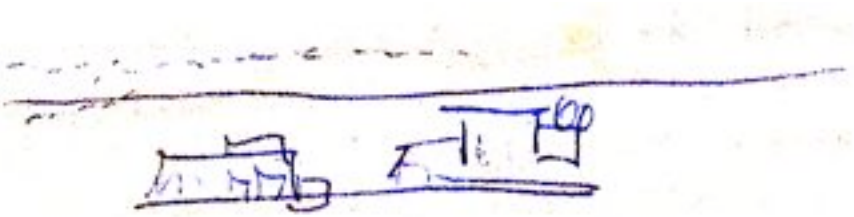
It's still fun to add to the knickknack collection each time I visit the beach, but the database is a better and easier way to count trips.

# Q. Logbook–Cormorants, George Young, Mystery Solved

Tom Cole

November 25, 2004

*There was a string of at least 200 cormorants flying in. Lots of strings of them all the trip.*



Logbook sketch November 25, 2004

Jeff Cole

November 25, 2004

*It was interesting to meet George Young, who, as most of us aging salty-dog runners know, was an icon of the running boom of the 70s. All these years and I didn't know G.Y. was here and worse no one here knew who he was!*

Stephen Cole

August 7, 2005

*The Mystery of the Tiny Eggs has been solved. Termites! Bill uses a preparation called Bora Care which kills the little bastards. These are a different kind of termite. They don't live in the ground. They are airborne beetle termites.*

*Bill took us in his excellent boat to town.*



## 18. A Perfect Storm

Sally Cole

I asked Dr. McDonald in the hospital in Ajo if he ever went across the border and down to the beach. He shook his head and said, “Nothing good ever comes from there. Nothing but trouble.” —TC

My parents had a thing for Thoreau. They dreamed of a house cut off from the crush of town, a place so remote they could live there as he did: lonely, self-sufficient, pared to the bone. By 1984 they had not one but two such places, a cabin in the woods outside of Flagstaff at the end of an uphill road made impossible to navigate by mountain snows. Anyone mad enough to live there in the winter had to walk down a quarter mile over ice and snow, then dig out the car left parked at the bottom. The other house overlooked the Sea of Cortez, it, too, hard to access. The last stretch of road required deflated tires, and even then the odds of getting stuck in the sand must have been 50/50. The house itself had no phone or power. A single solar light hung above the kitchen table.

We kids bought into this worship of remoteness. I remember feeling envy when, in 1977, they announced their plan to live there for a whole six months without TV or newspaper, air or heat—just that pristine stretch of sandy beach and the estuary teeming with oysters and crabs. I was pregnant with my first child then. They sent me a hand-made maternity top from Puerto Peñasco.

I don't think any of us ever imagined a dark side to my parents' dream, the flip side of paradise. That maternity gift seems now an eerie omen of the ordeal I will face there some seven years later when a miscarriage, a miners' strike, and a scary new virus will combine into a perfect storm that will threaten my life.

It was June of 1984. We had packed up the van and were headed west from New Orleans with our two boys,

ages four and almost seven, I a few weeks pregnant with baby number three. Half way down the trail into Carlsbad Caverns, I started to spot. By the time we reached my parents' house in Chandler, I had gotten the message: this pregnancy was not to be. And the trip to the beach house seemed at best ill-advised. "Let's call my doctor," my mother suggested. "He's a great guy." The great guy called back, attempting to allay my fears. "Women have been miscarrying for thousands of years," he said. "It'll just be a heavy period." I was not convinced, and told him why—the lack of a phone, the sandy road, the tiny Mexican beach-side towns, the long stretch of highway from Estero Morúa to the US border and then, beyond that, the thirty-five miles to the nearest hospital in Ajo, Arizona. It was as if he hadn't heard me, and his next words clinched his case: "If you were my daughter, I would tell you to go." Who would send his own daughter into danger? I started to pack.

The trip into Mexico was long but uneventful—the stop-and-go roads through Ajo and beyond, the border bureaucracy, the long stretch of nothingness to the estuary exit, then the treachery of beach-road sand—but the first morning there, I'm not feeling great, so I opt out of beach time and stay in alone. And then it happens. It's as if something pops inside me, and I'm staring at a pool of blood on the floor. I head to the counter for some paper towels to wipe it up, but another splat of blood appears, so I wipe that one up, then turn back to the first. I'm almost there when a third pool forms. Perhaps it's the loss of blood, but my first thoughts are those of an unformed mind. I'm remembering the conveyor belt that gets ahead of Ethel and Lucy. I'm thinking "stuck pig." At the same time I'm grappling with the gap between the prophesy of Great Guy and the fact of blood spots on the floor.

When the family returns I'm flat on my back in the bathroom, a place where I'll stay while my mother heads out with my brother Tom to call the doctor from Rocky Point. In the meantime, my husband and boys keep me company. The hours tick by. After awhile my palms start to tingle, a worrying sign. When my husband asks my biologist father what this might mean, the message comes back, "I don't know." And at this point we've had enough. I struggle into the van behind the boys, and we head for a hospital in the states. On the beach road we meet my mother and Tom, at last returning home from town. Unbelievably, the doctor—having neither met nor examined me, nor witnessed the mop-up of the beach house floor—is sticking to his guns: it's just a heavy period; she'll be fine. But it's clear to everyone that he is wrong. I can hardly raise my head from the seat; there's blood on my feet. My mother takes the two boys and gives us Tom, an extra head and pair of hands (and a Spanish speaker) for whatever the journey might have in store.

The sixty miles through the desert seem endless. I'm staying calm by trying to make out the tiny black dots on the ceiling of the van. It's hard not to contemplate a worst-case outcome, or wonder exactly how much blood I've lost. It's harder still to fathom how a doctor could, over a telephone line, so assuredly proclaim me safe ("If you were my daughter, I would tell you to go").

When we reach the border, I feel instinctively that I'm home free, as if my coming out of Mexico has somehow undone all that happened there. But of course I'm wrong. The man at the border is just a man—with a clipboard, some visa forms and probably a gun. The best he can do is direct us to Ajo, but with a warning that is hard to hear: the miners are on strike there, and Phelps Dodge Corporation, who of course owns the hospital, has closed

it down in an effort to break the union and maintain their profits, whatever the cost. We all know this story from popular song: “St. Peter don’t you call me ‘cause I can’t go/I owe my soul to the company store.” But somehow I never knew that control could extend to an institution so critical to the miners’ lives. The only information not painful to hear is that a single doctor has stayed on there, maintaining a clinic for cases like mine. So we soldier on.

Thirty-five miles is not that far, given how far we’ve come, but I’ve been keeping it together all that time and have only so much stoicism left. If anyone corroborates my greatest fear—that I’m really in trouble, that in fact I could die—I’m going to lose it and, in my panic, maybe trigger more bouts of the bleeding that has slowed since I’ve been lying down. For me it all hinges on the first reaction of that doctor I will soon see—the one who will see me too, an actual patient in the flesh. It’s as if I’m hazarding all on his reaction, as if I’m holding my mental breath. And then at last we’re there, at the dark imposing building looming over the town. We pull up to the door, and the doctor comes out.

It’s as if he’s stepped out of a movie set—“Revenge of the Nerds”—a slight man with glasses and an early-sixties crew cut in need of a trim, hardly the savior I’ve been seeing in my mind. I’m waiting for the dreaded words, “Get her in here, STAT!” But instead he smiles and introduces himself. He’s Dr. McDonald. We tell him our names, then our predicament. “Here it comes,” I think. But he doesn’t flinch. “I think,” he says in the calmest voice imaginable, “it would be best if you get her feet and I’ll get her shoulders. We’ll just put her on this gurney.” He could be discussing the best way to get a mattress through a door, and I’m lulled by that voice, though still wary of what I know could be just an act—a

skill acquired in Bedside Manner 101. Still, he keeps it up. As we enter the hospital he stops in the doorway, “I have to apologize for the state of this room. We’ve been closed now for some time.” “Maybe Great Guy was right,” I think, “and we’re overreacting; it’s just a heavy period.” Why else would he stop to apologize instead of dealing with the crisis at hand? But that line of reasoning ends when they put me on the table and I pass out cold.

When I come to, it’s my husband who’s panicking, but Dr. McDonald doesn’t bat an eye. “Well,” he says, “you left us for a little while,” as if I’d gone to the ladies’ room. Then he gets down to business, using forceps to dig out the embryo so stubbornly clinging to my womb. It turns out, we learn, this is not an ordinary miscarriage. It’s an “incomplete abortion,” in medical parlance. Because the embryo doesn’t dislodge, the body keeps bleeding in an effort to expel it until, theoretically, the woman could be left with the embryo still attached, but herself drained of blood and, in turn, life. “Women have been miscarrying for thousands of years.” And dying too.

Now Dr. McDonald is transferring something into a dish, and I want to see it. “Sometimes, that can help,” he says and lets me look. It’s as if I’m gazing at a piece of rice, except for the shrimp shape so clearly prefiguring a fetus that is not to be. The dish needs no label: “nonviable” is written in that tiny white form. But the doctor is still worried. My blood pressure is dangerously low, and he’s weighing a transfusion. “My blood pressure is always low,” I volunteer, a comment that relieves him. He’ll put me in an ambulance instead, to Tucson or Phoenix, a hundred thirty miles away. I choose Desert Samaritan, the hospital in Mesa where my first child was born. And then we wait. The ambulance has left once

from Ajo that day and is on its way back, still miles away.

In the meantime we talk. Dr. McDonald opens up, revealing his anxiety. He's told all the town's pregnant women to leave, but not all have done so. "If a labor goes wrong, I could lose someone," he says. His facility crippled, the best he could do would be to load up the patient and hope she'd make it to a hospital out of Phelps Dodge's range.

When the ambulance shows up, he loads me into it along with the blood and, even more precious, the Mexican nurse who is his only aide. For hours he'll be staffing that clinic alone. He gives her instructions to withhold the blood unless my pressure drops or the bleeding increases, and we head north, the two men following behind.

From a thirty-year distance, that ride is a blur. I remember the nurse periodically checking my vital signs and the drivers regaling us with ambulance tales, a litany of horrors united by a common theme: what comes out of Mexico is always a disaster. The only story I can recall is that of the man who's been bitten by a rattlesnake. As the ambulance speeds north, his throat begins to close up. The driver holds his fingers up: "We came just this close to doing a trache." When the stories run out, they talk about how tired they are and what they might bring the doctor to eat. Their affection for him fills the air, this unlikely warrior holding down the fort alone. And then we're there.

It's the middle of the night at Desert Sam, the staff pared down to a skeleton crew. The doctor I see spends a long time looking at the grain of rice, then gets out the forceps in search of more tissue that might be inside. My husband is rude, demanding that they give me blood. The doctor says he's waiting till morning when the hospital is

fully staffed. Tom is sleeping in the waiting room. When they wheel me out there, he makes me laugh: “God, I’m trying to sleep, but some guy keeps moaning!” His comic outrage parodies that of my husband who’s seething still over that withheld blood.

In the morning I’m seen by an observant young doctor who examines me and comments, “There’s blood on your feet.” (But little, I garner, inside my body). He recommends surgery—after a transfusion. But still I wait until finally, after ages, a nurse pumps me up with two units of blood. Then I’m ready for the knife, the scraping out of every last remnant of baby number three, “the products of conception,” as the doctor will say. On awaking I rejoice that it’s over at last—except it’s not. I have an infection. The others head home while I stay in the hospital one more night.

When my parents come back with my children in tow, I’m weak but elated because I’m alive. I sleep in my sleeping bag on the floor, a deep healing sleep. Then I keep my appointment with that keen-eyed doctor from Desert Sam. I mention, in passing, the naps I’m enjoying in that sleeping bag. He misreads this as hardship and says what, until now, has been kept under wraps: “You almost lost your life, and now you’re sleeping on the floor!” So it really was a close call, with Dr. McDonald never letting on.

But that’s not the only secret he’s kept—Dr. McDonald—as well as his nurse, the night-shift doctor, and the one who let the first secret out of the bag. Unbeknownst to anyone, I’m keeping it too in a feat of denial that surprises me. A newspaper junkie, I’ve known from the start why they’ve hesitated to give me blood. We’re at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic and the blood bank has opted out of testing their supply. I could be, as I’m healing from my Mexican disaster, infected

with a virus that will kill me in the end, as it will Arthur Ashe, Isaac Asimov, and nameless others transfused, like me, before 1985. To this day, I'm not sure why I guarded this knowledge, holding my breath again for ten long years until at last I dared revel in my sweet dumb luck.

Every Mardi Gras my friend Catherine runs alongside the Coast Guard float, calling out at the top of her lungs for "Dave Foreman!" "Dave Foreman!" He's the one who rescued her during Hurricane Katrina, and her gratitude spills over now and then. I understand this impulse, this deep need to honor those who've pulled us back from the abyss. For thirty years I've remembered his name too, Dr. McDonald's. I always meant to thank him some day, but I never made it back to Ajo. When I Google him now I learn his full name—William H. McDonald—and that he died in 2005. I learn that in 2009 a flag and flagpole were put up in his memory. At least in spirit I can leave it there now—in the once booming copper town of Ajo, Arizona—my overdue tribute: not a bouquet but a scattering of rice.

In the end Phelps Dodge won the miners' strike by hiring on replacement workers and leaving the union men with no jobs, no homes, and only that clinic for their health-care needs. The victory came on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1986, almost three years after the miners first walked off (June 30, 1983), twenty months after my ordeal, and three months after a new baby three arrives, a girl named Kate. To this day she has not been to the beach house.



## R. Logbook—Coffee by Moonlight, Hawkers

Sally Cole

January 17, 2009

*It forgets to get light here in the morning. The stars stay up till almost seven. We make coffee by moonlight. But it is not cold; it's quiet, and only one couple with a dog, are on the beach. We saw Francis Yerger at a distance, but by the time we got over to say hello she was gone.*

*The town is full of shops, restaurants, and fish markets with hawkers harassing us to buy as if it were Bourbon Street. Very annoying.*

Stephen Cole

November 9, 2013

*Border inspectors took my steaks, my Brussels sprouts and my tomato. I bought some Mexican steaks and coliflor in town only to discover my coliflor was not confiscated after all.*

*Cabinet is gone! Totally infested with termites. Doors falling off. Avalanches of termite eggs poured out as I removed it.*

January 27, 2014

*The sea is angry, my friends. Like an old man trying to send back soup in a deli. The bright blue water is today gun metal gray. Waves are crashing, trying to wash out the lower houses.*

## 19. Gilled Denizens

Tom Cole

In a memoir I wrote, *The Sands of Pima Arroyo*, there was a chapter called “Lure Lore.” In it, I lament in the following way about not having told about a freshwater fish I used to catch in Minnesota:

*Oh, how I wish I had time to describe the rock bass and to tell how it had blazing ruby red eyes and hamburger grill flanks and spines that would draw your blood and how it would hit any lure and how it was a fisherman's cosmic last resort, and how we loved and hated it for the finny wonder and the trash fish that it was!*

The following essay leaves me with no such regrets. I have told the tales of enough of Estero Morúa's gilled denizens and I am content. –TC

The Sea of Cortez is teeming with life but the list of fish species recorded in the logbook is not nearly as extensive as the bird list. The Estero Morúa fish list, as it used to be, has shrunk a bit too; giant groupers and sea bass that once abounded are scarce if present at all. It's a shame because the Sportsman's Club was originally established as a fishing club for those who wished to haul those skulking monsters from the rocky shoals beneath the deep water beyond the beach.

While there are more birds than fish in the logbook, many, many fish species have nevertheless been dutifully recorded along with copious notes, and so let me cite the fish I know best and describe them along with a few tales true and tall.

I've made a list. I'll start with the sea trout as it brings to mind perhaps more memories than the others. I'll see where that topic takes me and then turn to another gilled denizen who evokes a similar wealth of recollection. I suspect that I shall have less to say fish by fish as I go down the list, but I regard that as a good, strategic plan for writing as it will serve to keep this essay from going on forever.

## Sea Trout<sup>9</sup>

*Cynoscion parvipinnis* and *Cynoscion xanthurus*

When I was not yet in my teens I remember (though only vaguely) a determined fisherman, a dashing guy, much older than I, perhaps a member of our party on Sandy Beach, whose relentless quest for a sea trout was finally rewarded.

“What do you know about that?” my mother said happily. He kept at it and finally got a fish.”

It was a big one, perhaps two and a half feet long. I remember seeing it lying on the sand. Silvery white. Unadorned. Lightly scaled. Such a fish was beyond any hopes for myself. I thought I could never catch anything so grand.

When my parents bought their house at Estero Morúa, however, we would hurry down to the water when the sea trout started running and we would catch them in great numbers.

They came in on the high tide when the water seemed swollen and dark, wrinkled and pocketed on top and moving in a heavy current around the point and into the estuary. When the conditions were right, it was slaughter. I remember my father departing from the scene with these words:

“I will not participate in this carnage!”

We *were* catching an awful lot of them — but it wasn't that wasteful. In those days we had a Seville <sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The fish we caught that we called “sea trout” were either shortfin corvina, *Cynoscion parvipinnis*, or the larger orangemouth corvina, *Cynoscion xanthurus*, but I'll just call them “sea trout” the way everyone does.

<sup>10</sup> The Seville model was said to be flawed in design and responsible for gassing many people to death.

propane-powered refrigerator in which we'd freeze our catch to take back home. Occasionally we would hook a sea trout as large as the one that I saw on Sandy Beach those long years ago.

Often we would outfish everyone else because in the storeroom behind our house we kept a seine. With it, we would net buckets full of minnows and anchovies that were the perfect bait for sea trout. I remember seeing dark clouds of anchovies coming in towards the estuary. They were long-jawed, rakish animals. So thick were the schools that I could throw a Kastmaster into one, give the line a yank, and reel in the lure with an anchovy impaled upon the treble hook. I also recall small fish that looked like tiny Mini Coopers and totally transparent minnows — like glass cats which we'd net and use for bait as well.



Gerald A. Cole with a sea trout 1985

One time, I remember a group of three or four young guys — campers — who saw that the trout were running. They jumped from their car with their poles, began casting, and were soon hooking and landing sea trout galore. I remember that it gave me a feeling of satisfaction to observe this happy event. I knew they would go home with the trip tagged as a success story deluxe.

Back then, campers were allowed on the beach and Rubén's crowd would go out and collect five dollars for each vehicle. I don't know if they charged for each ATC, but they were fools if they didn't. There were campers that would come in with flatbed trailers loaded with ten or more of them.

Some of the children driving those ATCs all around were no older than four or five years old and I'm not sure if the story I heard about one of them dying in a crash on the sand was true or not, but it might have been. They all drove really fast.

The ATC people were just about the most obnoxious nuisances on God's green earth. What's more, they possessed about as much empathy as a two-year-old does when it's pulling the wings off of a fly. My mom told me she was having her hair cut in Tempe and she mentioned the Mexican beach.

"Well, maybe you saw *us* there," said the hairdresser proudly. "*We're* some of those *ATC* people!" As if that would get her a better tip.

My parents' early log entries often start with words like "Only two campers!" or "Just one camper on the point!" or if they were *really* having luck, "No one here!"

More often, however, there were entries that spoke of two hundred campers and ATCs making doughnuts on the dunes.

“That beach can’t support all those hundreds of people.” I remember my mom saying once. “Shoot, there’s only one outhouse there.”

When I heard things like that or read the entries, I despaired. I thought we’d never be rid of them. Heck, the more vehicles that arrived, the more money our Mexican landlords made. It was hopeless. To my surprise, however, the homeowners persevered and the campers were eventually banished.

During one of the sea trout runs, my dad met me on the beach. “You know, I just went into that outhouse,” he told me. “Someone wrote ‘Fuck the homeowners! This is our beach!’ on the wall. I scratched it out.”

Well, I could empathize with the guys who raced out to the shore to catch the sea trout that time before, but I had no use for the others — especially the ATC people. They had to go and they, too, were finally expelled.

Oh, some ATCs would blaze in from Playa Encanto and once I overheard the Estero Homeowners’ attitude expressed by somebody more or less like this: “Tear your own place up and make a mess of it. That’s fine with us. Just don’t come on down here and think you can do it.”

Once, legend has it, a group of CPAs from New Mexico, who called themselves “The Burn and Bust Society” showed up in force with trailer loads of ATCs and attitude. They were expelled but they didn’t go easy. They vowed to come back and burn everybody’s houses down.

With regard to ATCs, eventually even the Playa Encanto settlement finally saw the light. The vast majority of their homeowners didn’t want their fun ruined by a clueless and obnoxious few. I remember my surprise one day at being able to walk the beach all the way down to Playa Encanto and see no motor vehicles at all. They’re simply not allowed anymore.

But I digress. The other day, my brother told me that five-pound sea trout are now being caught at the beach. This heartens me because I was afraid they'd get fished out — not by anglers like us (no chance of that) — but by commercial fishing.

The John Steinbeck fans among my readers will have noticed that the title of this book is unapologetically stolen from his *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*. *Cannery Row* is my favorite Steinbeck novel and I once heard a sad story of how the waters there in Monterey were fished out and how that part of the ocean never recovered. That's something I feared might happen to Estero Morúa when the sea trout got fished out.

## **Bigjaw Leatherjackets**

### *Oligoplites altus*

Everybody calls them “pompanos” and we have also often incorrectly written “leatherskin” in the thick red logbook when referring to the bigjaw leatherjacket. This scrappy, toothy, spiny marvel appears suddenly in hungry, marauding packs when the tide is coming in and the water is climbing high on the sandy banks of the estuary.

*Jumping fish don't bite.* This is a universal Truth, and I deliberately type the word with a capital T along with the sound of trumpets. *Jumping fish don't bite.* The adage has become a basic cosmic axiom in the angler's world! Mysteriously, however, when one sees a feeding leatherjacket's silvery flashes of fin and scaleless shining flank, one enters an alternate universe as the fish defies the laws of science and nature as we know them: it jumps *and* bites.

Have you ever gone fishing and had more than one fish hit the same lure at the same time? I have. Lots of

times, and it was always a pair or a trio even of voracious bigjaw leatherjackets. I don't claim to have hooked and landed more than one at a time — but I well *may* have and forgotten about it. Such is the strange world of the bigjaw leatherjacket. Such is its characteristic killer instinct.



December of 1985. Left in lefthand picture: Dan Daggett. Center: Tom Cole. Right: Steve Cole. The picture on the right is of me with a leatherjacket, a Kastmaster still hooked on its lower jaw.

They go for Kastmasters, those heavy silver spoons shaped like a flat chip of wood, but they'll hit most any lure — particularly if it's shiny.

One of our favorite bigjaw leatherjacket lures is the Little Cleo, a real off-brand with the image of a topless beauty stamped on its concave inner side. But you could use a crank bait as well and I'll wager even a topwater plug to bag the ravenous and unfastidious bigjaw leatherjacket. The fish are medium sized, but occasionally you'll hook a big one that looks as though it's been taking steroids.

The fish are also scaleless and so you can fry them up right off of the stringer and when they're done, you can lift away the skin in one piece (per side). A poke with a fork and the fish splits neatly in half. One side will reveal



the spine and ribs which you can peel off as clean as a whistle. Oh, and the meat is both white and dark.



Leatherjacket fishing scene from the logbook, November 22, 1988

## **Finescale Triggerfish**

*Balistes polylepsis*

I used to see triggerfish washed up on the shore stiff, dry, and rotted more often than I used to catch them. They seemed to like deeper water and so when we went out in our rowboat *La Llorona*, I had the chance to let my line sink down into the rocks and I'd catch a few that way.

The triggerfish is a stout, heavily muscled, big cheeked, tiny mouthed creature that looks like a cross between a bluegill and a Fab Four submarine. Here's a picture:



June 1986 logbook sketch showing the finescale triggerfish's "trigger"

Its ridiculously small mouth and rather buttony, high-riding eyes give it a look of dummified earnestness. As tiny as that mouth is, however, it is nonetheless packed full of big, crunching teeth. I've always been told that those chompers were for grinding up tough shellfish and I remember being warned that the fish's flesh could be poisonous if it had been eating too much coral. I've eaten triggerfish just the same. I remember once Bill Holmes had a grill and he put our triggerfish on it. I don't know if it was because he was a better cook than I, but they turned out delicious!

The picture above illustrates how the fish got its name. The large dorsal spine when raised is locked into place and no amount of force can push it back into its original resting position. However, there's another, smaller dorsal spine behind it popularly called the "trigger" and when it is pressed, the main spine can then easily be coaxed into lying flat on the animal's back

## **Flounder**

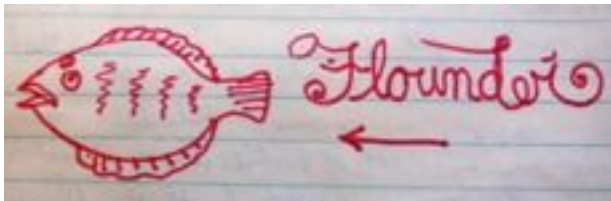
### Various Species

I've always looked upon these fish with a great deal of interest, captivated by them in the way people are when they look upon a carny freak or an automobile wreck. Flounders are just plain weird-looking with their jaws snapping sideways and their eyes scrunched over to one side of the head.

The flounder begins life swimming around like any other fish and then, at least in my opinion, something goes seriously wrong. Oh, you'll read about how the fish undergoes a "remarkable transformation" or perhaps a "fascinating metamorphosis." Yet such talk is euphemistic.

The sad fact is that evolution has unkindly demanded that this fish in its early adolescence acquire a bad case of something I like to call *Quasimodo Syndrome*, and its body becomes grotesquely deformed.

One eye creeps over to the other side of the fish to say howdy to the other one while half of the fish turns, well, fishbelly white in preparation for its becoming the icky, sticky ventral part of the animal that will soon spend all of its time lying flat on the ocean floor. Somewhere along the way, certain parts of the jaws hunch and sidle their way over to the new dorsal area where the crooked, staring eyeballs have been carelessly positioned. When all is done, the fish looks like it's been in a bad accident.



Logbook sketch of a flounder November 1976

Gutting a flounder is easy because the fish possesses next to nothing in the way of guts. Just make a slit in the appropriate place and scoop out the inch-long abdominal cavity. What remains is a huge fish steak.

Only I don't like flounder.

People swear the fish are good to eat, but I've always found them to be mushy and insipid no matter how they were prepared.

## **Mullet**

*Mugil cephalus*

I shall speak kindly of the trusty mullet. I know rather little about these fish except that they are the bony, scaly, sucker-mouthed creatures that I often see in the estuary pools at low tide.

Somehow they remind me of the whitefish of Minnesota that are lousy as sport fish but that are netted and smoked for the dinner table. I'm not sure mullets are anywhere near as good for eating.

I have but one memory of catching a mullet and it's not as trustworthy as it might be.<sup>11</sup> That recollection, just the same, is a part of my reality so I recount it here.

I was casting a spinner and a mullet grabbed it. I reeled him in and found that each of the three tines of the treble hook had pierced the puckering mouth of the fish. I threw him back.

This event, real or imagined, transpired in a place we call Stingray Bay. Located there is a lonely, almost always abandoned house, the most isolated of the Estero Morúa homes. I've seen people there but rarely.

Once, when my dad read a June 6, 1977 reference to Stingray Bay in the logbook, he wrote a note to my brother and me:

*Tom, Steve: Please define, locate and demarcate Stingray Bay. Wo ist?*

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<sup>11</sup> The logbook contains a note that I caught a mullet on June 10, 1977 but whether this was the date of my memory I don't know. Perhaps there are other notes.

To which I replied:

*Stingray Bay is the flat-bottomed, sandy, yet fetid bay near the estero's outermost house... See figure 1.*



Figure 1 from the logbook

I have two favorite pictures of Stingray bay. One is an early one taken well before the digital age which years later I proudly scanned using my fledgling computer stills. It's grainy because I "enhanced" it back then.



Stingray Bay

The other shows the lonely, isolated estero house in the distance.



Lonely house on Stingray Bay

## **Bullseye Puffer**

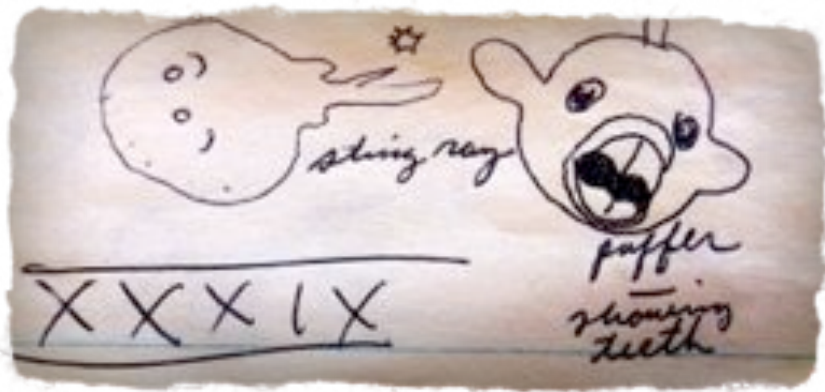
*Sphoeroides annulatus*

The bullseye puffer has more teeth than a dental supply house.<sup>12</sup> And bullseye puffers grind those teeth when you've reeled them up onto the beach. The sound always gives me the willies and I'm never sure if the fish is just milling its incisors to pieces against one another or breaking them on the steel hook in its mouth. Either way, this seems to be the irritating manner in which the animal

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<sup>12</sup> In this digital world, where a simple internet search can expose a lowly plagiarist, I must make a confession. I stole this expression from Harry Harrison's book, *The Stainless Steel Rat Saves the World*.

expresses its displeasure over being hooked and dragged from its happy home.



Puffer and its teeth in part of a March 1978 logbook sketch

Bullseye puffers get their name from the bullseye pattern on the back, but they don't live up to the rest of their name very well. I mean to say that I've never seen one puff up very big. Not the way I've seen other species of blowfish do.

Item: They're poisonous. *Bad* poisonous. Kill your dog. Kill you. My *Gulf of California Fishwatcher's Guide* states:

*Extremely poisonous to eat; viscera, gonads and skin contain a potent toxin (tetrodotoxin).*

I knew someone at the beach who once caught, cooked, and *ate* a bullseye puffer. Fortuitously, he must not have dined on any of the viscera, gonads, or skin because he suffered no ill effects.

"Well, nobody *told* me they were poisonous," he explained somewhat sheepishly.

## Shovelnose Guitarfish

*Rhinobatos productus*

Sand shark, guitar fish, devil's banjo — these are all names that I use *al gusto* to talk about *Rhinobatos productus*, a fish that looks a little like a stingray. I am also proud to say that I am the author of this fine bit of light verse that celebrates the fish. It's part of a June 1977 logbook entry:

### The Devil's Banjo

Has perfect pitch on the sea  
But is temperamental and known to fret.  
Picks its way through the seaweed.  
*Strums* up and down the coast!

Years before my parents bought the beach house, I remember someone picking one up on Sandy Beach and saying, "Look folks, this here's a *shark!*"

Whoever it was had flipped the creature over to reveal the animal's mouth which happens to be on the belly side of the fish.

"Yes, it's a shark all right, but it's a *sand* shark, see? So it ain't no maneater of any kind. Hell, he wouldn't even bite me if I put my finger in his mouth here — *OUCH!*"

That mouth on the underside, with the visible rib cage below, and various ventral orifices above, make the fish a good novelty item for the Mexicans to sell in souvenir shops. That's because the underside looks like a space alien. The alien's "face" is cut out and dried along with the rib cage for sale.





Puerto Peñasco's answer to Roswell

It must have been around 1959 or 1960 that my playmate, Brent Mullen recounted excitedly his experiences at Rocky Point. We were eight or nine years old and it was the first time I had even heard of the place. I listened intently as Brent told of his family trip to the Mexican beach.

He recounted a story of sand sharks there, which he embellished a bit by saying that you could lasso them with a rope and ride them around the water off the beach. In fact, he claimed to have done this himself.

Naturally, I was wildly excited at hearing this, but after a few days had gone by, my then but budding skeptical nature commenced to take its toll upon my youthful credulity. I began to question the veracity of my friend's account, and I confronted him.

"Did you really lasso and ride one of those sand sharks around?" I asked, looking at him narrowly with my head crooked sideways and one eye shut.

"Well," he said. "We *saw* a few."

## Spotted Sand Bass

*Paralabrax maculatofasciatus*

We like to call the spotted sand bass, a *pinto* bass or simply a *rock* bass.<sup>13</sup> The fish and I probably made our first acquaintance on the family's original early sixties trip to Sandy Beach. That was before we spent our summers on the shores of Minnesota's Lake Itasca, the headwaters of the mighty Mississippi. My dad taught sessions at the biology station there for the University of Minnesota. We all returned from Itasca with the visions of largemouth bass still fresh in our minds and afterwards I found myself struck by the spotted sand bass's resemblance to it.



Somewhat fanciful logbook sketch of a pinto bass November 1984

I was young then and it was the morphology that impressed me. It shouldn't have, of course. They were both bass so they might be expected to have similar shapes, but there were really more differences than similarities. The spotted sand bass was *spotted* just for

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<sup>13</sup> It's called *cabrilla de roca* in Spanish, a literal translation.

starters and it was red-eyed and barred. It also was a lot spinier than the largemouth, a lot smaller, and definitely a lot more of what sportsmen would call a trash fish. You could say the spotted sand bass is to Mexico what the yellow perch is to Minnesota. An old postcard from Lake Itasca's gift shop comes to mind. It was a cartoon of a local boonie talking to a fisherman tourist.

Says the tourist hopefully, "How's the fishing?"

"Purdy slow," replies the other. "You should've been here last weekend though. Couldn't throw a line in the water without baggin' a lunker. All fished out now. You could go down to Sucker Creek. Might catch yourself a coupla yaller perch."

There are, similarly, many disappointed references in the logbook to attempts at fishing that culminated in nothing more exciting than the capture of a single intrepid pinto bass.

## **Mexican Needlefish**

*Tylosurus crocodilus*

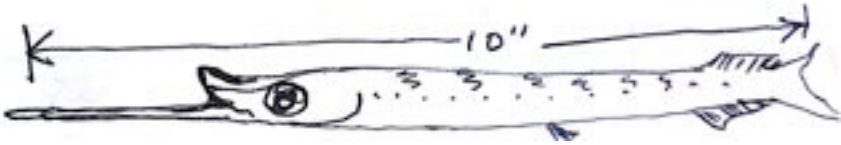
The logbook humor rises to a pretty sophisticated level at times: *Ribs other fish mercilessly!* reads a note describing the Mexican needlefish. There are a number of more serious references to this pointy-nosed creature, some written long ago and some very recently.

The fish to me is an exotic-looking thing, but no clear memories come to mind of my catching one although I see in the logbook that I certainly have.

Steve has told me that he doesn't like catching them for he says that the fishing line get hopelessly entangled around the animal's beak and mouth and it also becomes stuck in its tiny silvery teeth that look like the bristles on some miniature toothbrush.

“The last one I caught was seriously messed up by my efforts to remove the tangled line. I threw him back, but I’m not sure he even survived,” he recounts.

Sometimes in a less than lucid moment, I have confused these fish with the also unusual and similarly exotic California halfbeak, *Hyporhamphus rosae*:



Logbook sketch of a California halfbeak, July 1984

## 20. Open Letter to Club Members

Gerald A. Cole

This letter to the home owners at the beach is part and parcel of the bird list that immediately follows it. Years ago I created a fold-over booklet of both letter and list which I duplicated, and I used to hand it out to anyone interested in Estero Morúa bird lore. —TC

To: Members of Club Estero Morúa

From: Jerry Cole

Date: December 1988

Re: Bird List

Following the late May bird walk of 1988, when checklists of the birds of Estero Morúa were issued to the participants, Duff Smith approached me (menacingly) and exclaimed, "Oh, come off it, Cole! You never saw any Black Oystercatchers or Green Kingfishers here. You exaggerate, you unmentionable!"

He was correct, that sharp-eyed critic. The checklist had three sources: 1.) those species that Jean and I have seen here or nearby; 2.) those birds listed by Alden (1969); and 3.) those birds listed from Puerto Peñasco by Russell and Lamm (1978).<sup>14</sup> The publication of Russell and Lamm dealt largely with rarities. Thus, the report of Clark's Nutcracker is based on skeletal remains found December 1972 near Puerto Peñasco.

Some birds we have seen on the way southward from the border. Examples are the Phainopepla, Mountain Plover, and the Black Vulture. The vulture used to be common near a slaughterhouse at the southern part of

Sonoyta; Alden records it as rare in Puerto

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<sup>14</sup> Alden, Peter (1969). Finding the Birds in Western Mexico, A guide to the State of Sinaloa and Nayarit. The University of Arizona Press. Tucson I-xvi. 1-134 (Puerto Peñasco pp 16-21). Russell, Stephen M. and Donald W. Lamm (1978). *Notes on the distribution of Birds in Sonora, Mexico*. The Wilson Bulletin 90 (1): 129-131.

Peñasco, based on some December records. Red-billed Tropicbirds and the Black Petrel were seen only far offshore on boat trips. Some birds have undergone name changes of importance. For example, the Western Gull listed by Alden was known to us as the yellow-legged race of this species. Now it is recognized as a different species, *Larus livens*, the Yellow-footed Gull. (Oh, boy! A life-lister).

Was Alden too proud to mention *Columba livia*, the Rock Dove (street pigeon to some observers)? Since March 1986, it has been spotted at the Estero — and it spots, too! Ask Bill or Phyllis Holmes.

OK, Duff, does this restore some degree of credibility?

Jerry Cole

# Appendix 1: Bird List 1989<sup>15</sup>

## Loons

(Gaviiformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Common Loon

\_\_\_\_\_ Arctic Loon

\_\_\_\_\_ Red-throated Loon (B)

\_\_\_\_\_ Brown Pelican

\_\_\_\_\_ American White Pelican

\_\_\_\_\_ Brandt's Cormorant (A)

\_\_\_\_\_ Double-crested Cormorant

\_\_\_\_\_ Magnificent Frigatebird

## Grebes

(Podicipediformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Western Grebe

\_\_\_\_\_ Eared Grebe

\_\_\_\_\_ Pied-billed Grebe\*

\_\_\_\_\_ Horned Grebe (B)

## Hérons and their Allies

(Ciconiiformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Great Egret\*

\_\_\_\_\_ Snowy Egret

\_\_\_\_\_ Cattle Egret\*

\_\_\_\_\_ Great Blue Heron

\_\_\_\_\_ Reddish Egret

\_\_\_\_\_ Louisiana Heron (A, B)

\_\_\_\_\_ Little Blue Heron

\_\_\_\_\_ Green Heron

\_\_\_\_\_ Black-crowned Night Heron\*

\_\_\_\_\_ White-faced Ibis\*

\_\_\_\_\_ White Ibis (B)

## Tubenoses

(Procellariiformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Northern Fulmar

\_\_\_\_\_ Black Storm-petrel\*

\_\_\_\_\_ Least Storm-petrel\*

## Pelicans and their Allies

(Pelecaniformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Red-billed Tropicbird

\_\_\_\_\_ Brown Booby

\_\_\_\_\_ Blue-footed Booby

## Waterfowl

(Anseriformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Brant (black)\*

<sup>15</sup> (A) following a name means the bird was included in the list from Puerto Peñasco by Peter Alden (1969). *Finding the Birds in Western Mexico* University of Arizona Press, Tucson. i-xvi, 1-138, but we have not seen it here. (B) refers similarly to birds mentioned by Russell, S.M. & D.W. Lamm (1978. Notes on the distribution of birds in Sonora, Mexico. *The Wilson Bulletin*. 90(1): 123-131. Names followed by an asterisk are those we have seen, but were not listed by Alden.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Pintail
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gadwall
- \_\_\_\_\_ Northern Shoveler
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mallard (A)
- \_\_\_\_\_ American Widgeon (A)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Green-winged Teal
- \_\_\_\_\_ Blue-winged Teal\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lesser Scaup
- \_\_\_\_\_ Common Goldeneye
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bufflehead\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ White-winged Scoter  
(B)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Surf Scoter
- \_\_\_\_\_ Red-breasted Merganser
- \_\_\_\_\_ Common Merganser
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ruddy Duck

**Vultures, Hawks, and Falcons**

(Falconiformes)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Turkey Vulture
- \_\_\_\_\_ Black Vulture
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cooper's Hawk (A)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sharp-shinned Hawk  
(A)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Northern Harrier\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Red-tailed Hawk
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ferruginous Hawk
- \_\_\_\_\_ Swainson's Hawk\* (?)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Eagle sp.\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Osprey
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prairie Falcon

- \_\_\_\_\_ American Kestrel

**Gallinaceous Birds**

(Galliformes)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Gambel's Quail

**Cranes and their Allies**

(Gruiformes)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Sandhill Crane\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sora (A)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Common Moorhen\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ American Coot

**Shorebirds, Gulls, and Alcids**

(Charadriiformes)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Mountain Plover
- \_\_\_\_\_ Black-bellied Plover
- \_\_\_\_\_ Piping Plover (B)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Snowy Plover
- \_\_\_\_\_ Semipalmated Plover
- \_\_\_\_\_ Wilson's Plover
- \_\_\_\_\_ Killdeer
- \_\_\_\_\_ American Oystercatcher
- \_\_\_\_\_ Black Oystercatcher (B)
- \_\_\_\_\_ American Avocet
- \_\_\_\_\_ Black-necked Stilt\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Marbled Godwit
- \_\_\_\_\_ Long-billed Curlew
- \_\_\_\_\_ Whimbrel
- \_\_\_\_\_ Greater Yellowlegs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lesser Yellowlegs



\_\_\_\_\_ Willet  
\_\_\_\_\_ Spotted Sandpiper  
\_\_\_\_\_ Wandering Tattler  
\_\_\_\_\_ Short-billed Dowitcher  
\_\_\_\_\_ Long-billed Dowitcher  
\_\_\_\_\_ Wilson's Phalarope (A)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Red-necked Phalarope\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Northern Phalarope  
\_\_\_\_\_ Common Snipe\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Surfbird  
\_\_\_\_\_ Ruddy Turnstone  
\_\_\_\_\_ Black Turnstone  
\_\_\_\_\_ Pectoral Sandpiper (A)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Red Knot  
\_\_\_\_\_ Dunlin  
\_\_\_\_\_ Sanderling  
\_\_\_\_\_ Baird's Sandpiper (A)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Least Sandpiper  
\_\_\_\_\_ Western Sandpiper  
\_\_\_\_\_ Parasitic Jaeger (B)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Glaucous-winged Gull  
    (A, B)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yellow-footed Gull  
\_\_\_\_\_ Herring Gull  
\_\_\_\_\_ California Gull  
\_\_\_\_\_ Ring-billed gull  
\_\_\_\_\_ Heermann's Gull  
\_\_\_\_\_ Laughing Gull  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bonaparte's Gull  
\_\_\_\_\_ Sabine's Gull (B)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Least Tern

\_\_\_\_\_ Common Tern  
\_\_\_\_\_ Forster's Tern  
\_\_\_\_\_ Elegant Tern  
\_\_\_\_\_ Royal Tern  
\_\_\_\_\_ Caspian Tern  
\_\_\_\_\_ Black Tern  
\_\_\_\_\_ Black Skimmer

### **Pigeons and Doves**

(Columbiformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Rock Dove \*  
\_\_\_\_\_ White-winged Dove  
\_\_\_\_\_ Mourning Dove

### **Cuckoos, Anis, and Roadrunners**

(Cuculiformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Greater Roadrunner\*

### **Owls**

(Strigiformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Great Horned Owl\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Long-eared Owl  
\_\_\_\_\_ Short-eared Owl  
\_\_\_\_\_ Burrowing Owl

### **Goatsuckers**

(Caprimulgiformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Common Poorwill\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Lesser Nighthawk\*

### **Swifts and Hummingbirds**

(Apodiformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Vaux's Swift

\_\_\_\_\_ Anna's Hummingbird (A)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Costa's Humming bird (A)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Rufous Hummingbird\*

### **Kingfishers**

(Coraciiformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Green Kingfisher (B)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Belted Kingfisher

### **Woodpeckers**

(Piciformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Common Flicker  
\_\_\_\_\_ Red Shafted race\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Gilded race\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Gila Woodpecker (A)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Ladder-backed  
\_\_\_\_\_ Woodpecker

### **Perching Birds**

(Passeriformes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Vermilion Flycatcher (A)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Western Kingbird  
\_\_\_\_\_ Cassin's Kingbird  
\_\_\_\_\_ Ash-throated Flycatcher (A)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Black Phoebe\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Say's Phoebe  
\_\_\_\_\_ Empidonax sp.\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Horned Lark  
\_\_\_\_\_ Barn Swallow  
\_\_\_\_\_ Cliff Swallow\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Violet-green Swallow\*

\_\_\_\_\_ Tree Swallow  
\_\_\_\_\_ Northern Rough-winged  
\_\_\_\_\_ Swallow\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Common Raven  
\_\_\_\_\_ Clark's Nutcracker (B)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Verdin  
\_\_\_\_\_ Cactus Wren  
\_\_\_\_\_ Rock Wren  
\_\_\_\_\_ Northern Mockingbird  
\_\_\_\_\_ Sage Thrasher  
\_\_\_\_\_ Curve-billed Thrasher  
\_\_\_\_\_ Le Conte's Thrasher  
\_\_\_\_\_ Mountain Bluebird  
\_\_\_\_\_ Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
\_\_\_\_\_ (A)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Water Pipit  
\_\_\_\_\_ Cedar Waxwing  
\_\_\_\_\_ Phainopepla  
\_\_\_\_\_ Loggerhead Shrike  
\_\_\_\_\_ European Starling  
\_\_\_\_\_ Orange-crowned Warbler  
\_\_\_\_\_ Nashville Warbler\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yellow Warbler (A)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Black-throated Gray  
\_\_\_\_\_ Warbler (A)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Common Yellowthroat\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ MacGillivray's Warbler  
\_\_\_\_\_ (A)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yellow-rumped Warbler  
\_\_\_\_\_ Wilson's Warbler  
\_\_\_\_\_ House Sparrow

- |                                |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| _____ Western Meadowlark*      | _____ Savannah Sparrow           |
| _____ Yellow-headed Blackbird* | _____ Vesper Sparrow (A)         |
| _____ Brewer's Blackbird       | _____ Lark Sparrow               |
| _____ Great-tailed Grackle*    | _____ Black-throated Sparrow*    |
| _____ Brown-headed Cowbird     | _____ Sage Sparrow               |
| _____ Northern Oriole          | _____ Dark-eyed Junco*           |
| _____ (Bullock's)*             | _____ Brewer's Sparrow           |
| _____ Western Tanager*         | _____ Chipping sparrow           |
| _____ Painted Bunting (A)      | _____ White-crowned Sparrow      |
| _____ Lazuli Bunting           | _____ Golden-crowned Sparrow (A) |
| _____ House Finch              | _____ Lincoln's Sparrow (A)      |
| _____ Lesser Gold Finch*       |                                  |

## Appendix 2: Bird Life List for Estero Morúa 169 Species Recorded

1. Brown Pelican,11/28/1974
2. Great Blue Heron,  
11/28/1974
3. Long-billed Curlew,  
11/28/1974
4. Osprey,11/28/1974
5. Ruddy Turnstone,11/28/1974
6. Rufous Hummingbird,  
2/14/1975
7. Loggerhead Shrike,  
2/14/1975
8. American Oystercatcher,  
2/14/1975
9. Willet,2/14/1975
10. Surfbird,2/14/1975
11. Sanderling,2/14/1975
12. Common Raven,2/14/1975
13. Say's Phoebe,2/14/1975
14. Gambel's Quail,2/14/1975
15. Caspian Tern,2/14/1975
16. Herring Gull,2/14/1975
17. Black-bellied Plover,  
2/14/1975
18. Western Meadowlark,  
2/14/1975
19. House Finch,2/14/1975
20. Great-tailed Grackle,  
2/14/1975
21. Western Sandpiper,  
2/14/1975
22. Snowy Egret,2/14/1975
23. Turkey Vulture,2/14/1975
24. Brown Booby,2/14/1975
25. Forster's Tern,2/14/1975
26. Ring-billed Gull,2/14/1975
27. Mountain Bluebird,  
2/14/1975
28. American Kestrel,  
2/14/1975
29. Lark Bunting,2/14/1975
30. Burrowing Owl,2/14/1975
31. Snowy Plover,2/14/1975
32. Dunlin,2/14/1975
33. Black Turnstone,3/29/1975
34. Common Tern,3/29/1975
35. Elegant Tern,3/29/1975
36. Eared Grebe,3/29/1975
37. Heermann's Gull,3/29/1975
38. Common Loon,3/29/1975
39. Bullock's Oriole,3/29/1975
40. Orange-crowned Warbler,  
3/29/1975
41. Double-Crested Cormorant,  
3/29/1975
42. Bufflehead,4/4/1975
43. Common Merganser,  
4/4/1975
44. Red-breasted Merganser,  
4/4/1975
45. Red-tailed Hawk,4/4/1975
46. Ferruginous Hawk,4/4/1975
47. Swainson's Hawk,4/4/1975
48. Whimbrel,4/4/1975
49. Marbled Godwit,4/4/1975
50. Greater Yellowlegs,  
4/4/1975
51. Mourning Dove,4/4/1975
52. Bonaparte's Gull,4/4/1975

53. Least Tern,4/4/1975
54. Phainopepla,4/4/1975
55. Horned Lark,4/4/1975
56. White-winged Dove,  
5/1/1975
57. Wandering Tattler,5/1/1975
58. Inca Dove,5/1/1975
59. Wilson's Plover,5/1/1975
60. House Sparrow,5/1/1975
61. American Avocet,5/1/1975
62. Savannah Sparrow,5/1/1975
63. Spotted Sandpiper,  
5/17/1975
64. American Coot,5/17/1975
65. Great Egret,5/17/1975
66. Western Gull,6/7/1975
67. Long-billed Dowitcher,  
8/15/1975
68. Belted Kingfisher,  
8/29/1975
69. Barn Swallow,9/18/1975
70. Rock Wren,9/18/1975
71. White-crowned Sparrow,  
10/16/1975
72. Verdin,10/16/1975
73. Dark-eyed Junco,  
10/16/1975
74. Northern Harrier,11/7/1975
75. Violet-green Swallow,  
11/7/1975
76. European Starling,  
12/5/1975
77. Great Horned Owl,  
2/13/1976
78. Least Sandpiper,2/13/1976
79. Sage Sparrow,2/13/1976
80. Surf Scoter,3/5/1976
81. Red Knot,3/5/1976
82. Black-chinned  
Hummingbird,3/5/1976
83. Surf Bird,3/26/1976
84. Cliff Swallow,3/26/1976
85. Northern Mockingbird,  
3/26/1976
86. Northern Shoveler,  
5/14/1976
87. California Gull,5/14/1976
88. Northern Rough-winged  
Swallow,5/14/1976
89. Greater Roadrunner,  
9/4/1976
90. Killdeer,11/25/1976
91. Northern Pintail,11/25/1976
92. Pectoral Sandpiper,  
11/25/1976
93. Prairie Falcon,1/13/1977
94. Semipalmated Plover,  
1/13/1977
95. Cinnamon Teal,1/13/1977
96. Black-throated Sparrow,  
2/9/1977
97. Yellow-rumped Warbler,  
2/9/1977
98. Lesser Yellowlegs,  
10/14/1977
99. Lark Sparrow,12/2/1977
100. Arctic Loon,12/2/1977
101. Sandhill Crane,12/2/1977
102. Curve-billed Thrasher,  
12/2/1977
103. Sage Thrasher,2/17/1978
104. Ruddy Duck,3/26/1978
105. Brewer's Sparrow,  
3/26/1978

106. Lesser Nighthawk,  
5/27/1978
107. Cactus Wren,5/27/1978
108. Nashville Warbler,  
9/22/1978
109. Green-winged Teal,  
9/22/1978
110. Black-necked Stilt,  
9/22/1978
111. Wilson's Warbler,  
9/22/1978
112. Brown-headed Cowbird,  
9/22/1978
113. American Pipit,11/3/1978
114. American White Pelican,  
11/22/1978
115. Tropical Mockingbird,  
11/22/1978
116. Northern Flicker,  
12/29/1978
117. Cassin's Kingbird,  
3/20/1979
118. Chipping Sparrow,  
3/20/1979
119. Short-billed Dowitcher,  
4/6/1979
120. Le Conte's Thrasher,  
5/24/1979
121. Common Yellowthroat,  
8/31/1979
122. Black Tern,8/31/1979
123. Black Phoebe,8/31/1979
124. Tree Swallow,8/31/1979
125. Western Grebe,10/26/1979
126. Royal Tern,11/9/1979
127. Merlin,11/21/1979
128. Rough-legged Hawk,  
1/12/1980
129. Harris's Hawk,2/12/1980
130. Brewer's Blackbird,  
4/2/1980
131. Laughing Gull,4/2/1980
132. Green Heron,4/29/1980
133. American Merganser,  
2/13/1981
134. White-throated Sparrow,  
2/13/1981
135. Black-headed Gull,  
4/15/1981
136. Magnificent Frigatebird,  
11/25/1981
137. Northern Fulmar,  
5/27/1982
138. Blue-footed Booby,  
4/1/1983
139. Common Poorwill,  
4/1/1983
140. Gadwall,4/3/1983
141. Long-eared Owl,4/3/1983
142. Lesser Goldfinch,  
11/23/1983
143. Common Goldeneye,  
2/19/1984
144. Cattle Egret,4/17/1984
145. Vaux's Swift,4/17/1984
146. Cedar Waxwing,4/17/1984
147. Yellow-legged Gull,  
6/6/1984
148. Yellow-footed Gull,  
11/22/1984
149. Black Skimmer,3/4/1985
150. Common Nighthawk,  
5/16/1985

151. Peregrine Falcon,  
11/26/1985
152. Little Blue Heron,  
11/26/1985
153. Rock Dove,3/24/1986
154. Western Kingbird,  
4/5/1986
155. Yellow-headed Blackbird,  
4/5/1986
156. Blue-winged Teal,  
3/13/1987
157. Common Snipe,2/2/1988
158. Black-crowned Night-  
Heron,2/2/1988
159. Pied-billed Grebe,  
3/5/1988
160. Short-eared Owl,  
12/30/1988
161. Brant,3/21/1989
162. Ash-throated Flycatcher,  
5/19/1998
163. Dusky Flycatcher,  
5/15/2000
164. Olive-sided Flycatcher,  
5/15/2000
165. Willow Flycatcher,  
5/15/2000
166. Song Sparrow,12/27/2001
167. Reddish Egret,11/1/2002
168. Black-throated Gray  
Warbler,11/29/2003
169. Black-footed Albatross,  
4/2/2014

## Appendix 3: Bird Numbers

### The 169 Species Recorded at Estero Morúa with the Number of Sightings Shown

As you can see in the left hand column, out of 169 species, the Brown Pelican wins the number of sightings contest with the Osprey coming in second place! In all, 3748 birds were recorded not including those recorded as “generic birds.”

#### Sightings

By Greatest Number	Alphabetical
1. Brown Pelican 127	American Avocet 22
2. Osprey 116	American Coot 5
3. Say's Phoebe 112	American Kestrel 36
4. Great Blue Heron 105	American Merganser 1
5. Long-billed Curlew 104	American Oystercatcher 87
6. Willet 100	American Pipit 5
7. Loggerhead Shrike 93	American White Pelican 11
8. Marbled Godwit 88	Arctic Loon 5
9. American Oystercatcher 87	Ash-throated Flycatcher 1
10. Great-tailed Grackle 85	Barn Swallow 23
11. Black-bellied Plover 84	Belted Kingfisher 32
12. Forster's Tern 84	Black Phoebe 4
13. Ruddy Turnstone 83	Black Skimmer 4
14. Heermann's Gull 81	Black Tern 3
15. Ring-billed Gull 74	Black Turnstone 34



16. Double-Crested Cormorant 72	Black-bellied Plover 84
17. Sanderling 70	Black-chinned Hummingbird 3
18. Turkey Vulture 64	Black-crowned Night-Heron 1
19. Red-breasted Merganser 60	Black-footed Albatross 1
20. Brown Booby 59	Black-headed Gull 1
21. Snowy Egret 59	Black-necked Stilt 13
22. Whimbrel 59	Black-throated Gray Warbler 1
23. Wilson's Plover 59	Black-throated Sparrow 4
24. Common Raven 58	Blue-footed Booby 4
25. Gambel's Quail 58	Blue-winged Teal 2
26. Herring Gull 55	Bonaparte's Gull 19
27. House Sparrow 53	Brant 1
28. Long-billed Dowitcher 53	Brewer's Blackbird 3
29. Western Meadowlark 53	Brewer's Sparrow 3
30. Eared Grebe 50	Brown Booby 59
31. Greater Yellowlegs 48	Brown Pelican 127
32. Snowy Plover 48	Brown-headed Cowbird 1
33. Savannah Sparrow 47	Bufflehead 29
34. Dunlin 46	Bullock's Oriole 4
35. Western Gull 46	Burrowing Owl 33
36. Caspian Tern 45	Cactus Wren 28
37. Least Tern 39	California Gull 17
38. Mourning Dove 37	Caspian Tern 45

39. American Kestrel 36	Cassin's Kingbird 3
40. Western Sandpiper 36	Cattle Egret 5
41. Black Turnstone 34	Cedar Waxwing 1
42. Greater Roadrunner 34	Chipping Sparrow 1
43. Burrowing Owl 33	Cinnamon Teal 3
44. Northern Harrier 33	Cliff Swallow 7
45. Belted Kingfisher 32	Common Goldeneye 2
46. Common Loon 30	Common Loon 30
47. Bufflehead 29	Common Merganser 2
48. Cactus Wren 28	Common Nighthawk 2
49. Spotted Sandpiper 27	Common Poorwill 1
50. European Starling 26	Common Raven 58
51. Rock Wren 26	Common Snipe 1
52. Elegant Tern 24	Common Tern 10
53. Surfbird 24	Common Yellowthroat 6
54. Barn Swallow 23	Curve-billed Thrasher 7
55. Wandering Tattler 23	Dark-eyed Junco 2
56. American Avocet 22	Double-Crested Cormorant 72
57. Rock Dove 22	Dunlin 46
58. Least Sandpiper 21	Dusky Flycatcher 1
59. Royal Tern 21	Eared Grebe 50
60. Bonaparte's Gull 19	Elegant Tern 24
61. Verdin 18	European Starling 26
62. California Gull 17	Ferruginous Hawk 8
63. Red Knot 17	Forster's Tern 84

64. White-crowned Sparrow 17	Gadwall 1
65. Great Egret 16	Gambel's Quail 58
66. Yellow-footed Gull 15	Great Blue Heron 105
67. Black-necked Stilt 13	Great Egret 16
68. Horned Lark 13	Great Horned Owl 3
69. House Finch 13	Great-tailed Grackle 85
70. Le Conte's Thrasher 13	Greater Roadrunner 34
71. Red-tailed Hawk 13	Greater Yellowlegs 48
72. American White Pelican 11	Green Heron 3
73. Common Tern 10	Green-winged Teal 2
74. Semipalmated Plover 10	Harris's Hawk 1
75. Violet-green Swallow 10	Heermann's Gull 81
76. Magnificent Frigatebird 9	Herring Gull 55
77. Northern Mockingbird 9	Horned Lark 13
78. Western Grebe 9	House Finch 13
79. Ferruginous Hawk 8	House Sparrow 53
80. Lesser Nighthawk 8	Inca Dove 1
81. Sage Sparrow 8	Killdeer 6
82. Cliff Swallow 7	Lark Bunting 2
83. Curve-billed Thrasher 7	Lark Sparrow 1
84. Northern Rough-winged Swallow 7	Laughing Gull 4
85. Reddish Egret 7	Le Conte's Thrasher 13
86. Yellow-rumped Warbler 7	Least Sandpiper 21
87. Common Yellowthroat 6	Least Tern 39
88. Killdeer 6	Lesser Goldfinch 1

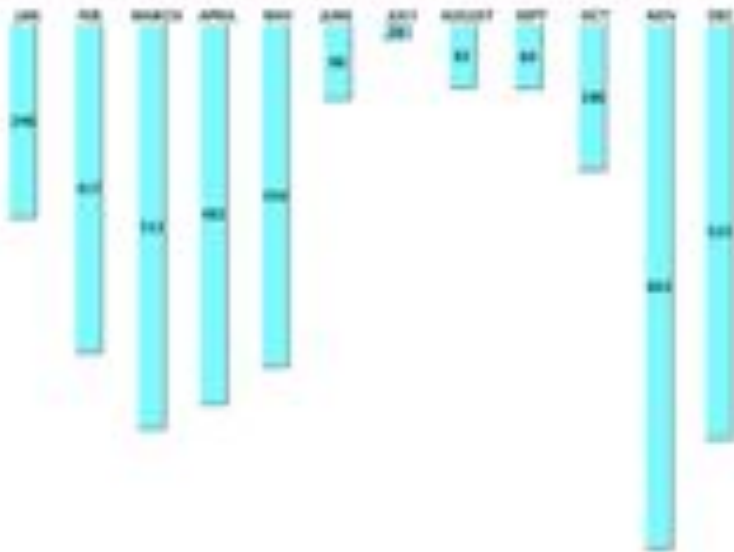
89. Short-billed Dowitcher 6	Lesser Nighthawk 8
90. American Coot 5	Lesser Yellowlegs 1
91. American Pipit 5	Little Blue Heron 1
92. Arctic Loon 5	Loggerhead Shrike 93
93. Cattle Egret 5	Long-billed Curlew 104
94. Prairie Falcon 5	Long-billed Dowitcher 53
95. Swainson's Hawk 5	Long-eared Owl 1
96. Black Phoebe 4	Magnificent Frigatebird 9
97. Black Skimmer 4	Marbled Godwit 88
98. Black-throated Sparrow 4	Merlin 2
99. Blue-footed Booby 4	Mountain Bluebird 1
100. Bullock's Oriole 4	Mourning Dove 37
101. Laughing Gull 4	Nashville Warbler 2
102. Northern Pintail 4	Northern Flicker 2
103. Tree Swallow 4	Northern Fulmar 1
104. Wilson's Warbler 4	Northern Harrier 33
105. Black Tern 3	Northern Mockingbird 9
106. Black-chinned Hummingbird 3	Northern Pintail 4
107. Brewer's Blackbird 3	Northern Rough-winged Swallow 7
108. Brewer's Sparrow 3	Northern Shoveler 1
109. Cassin's Kingbird 3	Olive-sided Flycatcher 1
110. Cinnamon Teal 3	Orange-crowned Warbler 3
111. Great Horned Owl 3	Osprey 116
112. Green Heron 3	Pectoral Sandpiper 1

113. Orange-crowned Warbler 3	Peregrine Falcon 2
114. Sage Thrasher 3	Phainopepla 1
115. Song Sparrow 3	Pied-billed Grebe 1
116. Surf Scoter 3	Prairie Falcon 5
117. Vaux's Swift 3	Red Knot 17
118. Blue-winged Teal 2	Red-breasted Merganser 60
119. Common Goldeneye 2	Red-tailed Hawk 13
120. Common Merganser 2	Reddish Egret 7
121. Common Nighthawk 2	Ring-billed Gull 74
122. Dark-eyed Junco 2	Rock Dove 22
123. Green-winged Teal 2	Rock Wren 26
124. Lark Bunting 2	Rough-legged Hawk 1
125. Merlin 2	Royal Tern 21
126. Nashville Warbler 2	Ruddy Duck 2
127. Northern Flicker 2	Ruddy Turnstone 83
128. Peregrine Falcon 2	Rufous Hummingbird 2
129. Ruddy Duck 2	Sage Sparrow 8
130. Rufous Hummingbird 2	Sage Thrasher 3
131. Surf Bird 2	Sanderling 70
132. White-winged Dove 2	Sandhill Crane 1
133. Yellow-headed Blackbird 2	Savannah Sparrow 47
134. Yellow-legged Gull 2	Say's Phoebe 112
135. American Merganser 1	Semipalmated Plover 10
136. Ash-throated Flycatcher 1	Short-billed Dowitcher 6

137. Black-crowned Night-Heron 1	Short-eared Owl 1
138. Black-footed Albatross 1	Snowy Egret 59
139. Black-headed Gull 1	Snowy Plover 48
140. Black-throated Gray Warbler 1	Song Sparrow 3
141. Brant 1	Spotted Sandpiper 27
142. Brown-headed Cowbird 1	Surf Bird 2
143. Cedar Waxwing 1	Surf Scoter 3
144. Chipping Sparrow 1	Surfbird 24
145. Common Poorwill 1	Swainson's Hawk 5
146. Common Snipe 1	Tree Swallow 4
147. Dusky Flycatcher 1	Tropical Mockingbird 1
148. Gadwall 1	Turkey Vulture 64
149. Harris's Hawk 1	Vaux's Swift 3
150. Inca Dove 1	Verdin 18
151. Lark Sparrow 1	Violet-green Swallow 10
152. Lesser Goldfinch 1	Wandering Tattler 23
153. Lesser Yellowlegs 1	Western Grebe 9
154. Little Blue Heron 1	Western Gull 46
155. Long-eared Owl 1	Western Kingbird 1
156. Mountain Bluebird 1	Western Meadowlark 53
157. Northern Fulmar 1	Western Sandpiper 36
158. Northern Shoveler 1	Whimbrel 59
159. Olive-sided Flycatcher 1	White-crowned Sparrow 17
160. Pectoral Sandpiper 1	White-throated Sparrow 1

161. Phainopepla 1	White-winged Dove 2
162. Pied-billed Grebe 1	Willet 100
163. Rough-legged Hawk 1	Willow Flycatcher 1
164. Sandhill Crane 1	Wilson's Plover 59
165. Short-eared Owl 1	Wilson's Warbler 4
166. Tropical Mockingbird 1	Yellow-footed Gull 15
167. Western Kingbird 1	Yellow-headed Blackbird 2
168. White-throated Sparrow 1	Yellow-legged Gull 2
169. Willow Flycatcher 1	Yellow-rumped Warbler 7

### All 3748 Bird Sightings at Estero Morua by Month



All of the birds by month. This graph does not include the 61 birds recorded as “generic” birds.

## Appendix 4: “Generic” Birds

In the bird numbers that I have included in this book, I have left out those 61 recorded as “generic” birds. It is a common practice to indicate only the *genus* of a bird when more specific identification is impossible. The *Empidonax* genus of flycatchers, for example, includes species that are very similar in appearance and, indeed, many cannot be distinguished except by call or other behavior. Often, a bird watcher will simply write *Empid* in his notes when the species is impossible to determine. In my database, I just enter “Generic Flycatcher” to cover *Empids* and other flycatcher family members.

Here’s an example of how this feature is useful. In 2006, I was at the beach and entered this bird in my database using the generic bird classification:

***Generic Sparrow, 06/24/2002, Estero Morúa, Large and on the rocks at the estuary. Light breast streaking. Pattern on face like lark sparrow but washed out. No white on tail. Pink legs. No notch on tail that I could see. Beak large and part yellowish. Brownish or coffee color. Savannah Sparrow??? Also it runs. And it flies a short distance and alights again and looks at you.***

Two years later, I can compare my records to a different bird in a different place and see and see that my guess of savanna sparrow is likely correct:

***Savannah Sparrow, 12/06/2008, Higley and Ocotillo Roads, These in little flocks that would fly for a short distance and alight in a tree or on the ground. Western variety with spot on the breast.***



I have also added a category called “Generic No Bird” which I use as a place keeper for the few log entries that happen not to have any bird data. That way, the trip can be a part of the bird processor. There is even a “Generic Bird” title that makes it possible to record a bird for posterity when neither family *nor* genus is evident. I made use of that in the case of this bird entry:

*Generic Bird, 5/24/1981, Estero Morúa, There's a flock of unrecognizable birds (big ones) which strings out then crashes together again and again.*

**“Generic” Birds**

1. Generic Eagle, 2/14/1975	21. Generic Bird, 5/24/1981	41. Generic Hummingbird, 12/30/1988
2. Generic Cormorant, 2/14/1975	22. Generic No Bird, 8/6/1982	42. Generic No Bird, 3/20/1990
3. Generic Loon, 2/14/1975	23. Generic Eagle, 11/24/1982	43. Generic No Bird, 4/4/1991
4. Generic No Bird, 4/18/1975	24. Generic No Bird, 3/13/1983	44. Generic Hummingbird, 3/17/1992
5. Generic Swallow, 6/25/1976	25. Generic Hummingbird, 4/1/1983	45. Generic No Bird, 5/26/1992
6. Generic Blackbird, 9/4/1976	26. Generic Hummingbird, 4/3/1983	46. Generic No Bird, 6/17/1992
7. Generic Tern, 9/24/1976	27. Generic No Bird, 3/12/1984	47. Generic No Bird, 11/26/1992
8. Generic Hummingbird, 9/24/1976	28. Generic Hummingbird, 4/17/1984	48. Generic No Bird, 3/13/1993

9. Generic No Bird, 5/25/1977	29. Generic No Bird,7/22/1984	49. Generic No Bird,5/27/1993
10. Generic No Bird,6/8/1977	30. Generic Duck, 11/10/1984	50. Generic No Bird,6/1/1993
11. Generic No Bird,6/23/1977	31. Generic Blackbird, 12/31/1984	51. Generic No Bird,11/25/1993
12. Generic No Bird,3/1/1978	32. Generic Hummingbird, 3/4/1985	52. Generic No Bird,3/14/1994
13. Generic Hummingbird, 4/21/1978	33. Generic Hummingbird, 3/23/1985	53. Generic No Bird,11/23/1995
14. Generic Flycatcher, 9/22/1978	34. Generic No Bird,1/25/1986	54. Generic No Bird,3/8/1996
15. Generic Swallow,11/3/1978	35. Generic No Bird,3/9/1986	55. Generic Tern, 1/1/1998
16. Generic Eagle, 1/12/1979	36. Generic Hummingbird, 3/24/1986	56. Generic Sparrow,06/24/2002
17. Generic Swallow,2/16/1979	37. Generic Sparrow,3/24/1986	57. Generic No Bird,5/24/2003
18. Generic No Bird,7/1/1979	38. Generic Hummingbird, 5/22/1986	58. Generic Bird, 11/29/2003
19. Generic Hawk, 10/26/1979	39. Generic No Bird,5/1/1987	59. Generic No Bird,6/7/2005
20. Generic Hummingbird, 4/29/1980	40. Generic Swallow,5/26/1988	60. Generic No Bird,6/15/2007
		61. Generic No Bird,10/8/2010

## Appendix 5: The Trips from 1974 to 2014

Trip 1,11/28/1974	Trip 64,7/4/1980	Trip 128,3/21/1989
Trip 2,2/14/1975	Trip 65,11/7/1980	Trip 129,11/24/1989
Trip 3,3/29/1975	Trip 66,12/30/1980	Trip 130,2/6/1990
Trip 4,4/4/1975	Trip 67,2/13/1981	Trip 131,3/20/1990
Trip 5,4/18/1975	Trip 68,3/8/1981	Trip 132,7/8/1990
Trip 6,5/1/1975	Trip 69,4/15/1981	Trip 133,11/22/1990
Trip 7,5/17/1975	Trip 70,5/24/1981	Trip 134,4/4/1991
Trip 8,5/23/1975	Trip 71,5/28/1981	Trip 135,11/27/1991
Trip 9,6/7/1975	Trip 72,6/12/1981	Trip 136,1/31/1992
Trip 10,8/15/1975	Trip 73,11/25/1981	Trip 137,2/28/1992
Trip 11,8/29/1975	Trip 74,12/23/1981	Trip 138,3/13/1992
Trip 12,9/18/1975	Trip 75,12/29/1981	Trip 139,3/17/1992
Trip 13,10/16/1975	Trip 76,3/16/1982	Trip 140,5/26/1992
Trip 14,11/7/1975	Trip 77,5/27/1982	Trip 141,6/17/1992
Trip 15,12/5/1975	Trip 78,8/6/1982	Trip 142,11/26/1992
Trip 16,1/30/1976	Trip 79,11/24/1982	Trip 143,4/4/1993
Trip 17,2/13/1976	Trip 80,12/31/1982	Trip 144,5/27/1993
Trip 18,3/5/1976	Trip 81,1/8/1983	Trip 145,6/1/1993
Trip 19,3/26/1976	Trip 82,1/18/1983	Trip 146,11/25/1993
Trip 20,4/9/1976	Trip 83,2/1/1983	Trip 147,3/14/1994
Trip 21,4/14/1976	Trip 84,2/18/1983	Trip 148,5/29/1994
Trip 22,4/23/1976	Trip 85,3/13/1983	Trip 149,12/27/1994
Trip 23,5/14/1976	Trip 86,4/1/1983	Trip 150,6/7/1995
Trip 24,6/25/1976	Trip 87,4/3/1983	Trip 151,11/23/1995
Trip 25,9/4/1976	Trip 88,8/2/1983	Trip 152,3/8/1996
Trip 26,9/24/1976	Trip 89,11/23/1983	Trip 153,2/15/1997
Trip 27,10/15/1976	Trip 90,12/29/1983	Trip 154,1/1/1998
Trip 28,11/25/1976	Trip 91,2/19/1984	Trip 155,5/19/1998
Trip 29,1/13/1977	Trip 92,3/12/1984	Trip 156,8/3/1998
Trip 30,1/27/1977	Trip 93,4/17/1984	Trip 157,12/31/1998
Trip 31,2/9/1977	Trip 94,6/6/1984	Trip 158,5/15/2000
Trip 32,5/25/1977	Trip 95,7/22/1984	Trip 159,12/28/2000
Trip 33,6/8/1977	Trip 96,10/11/1984	Trip 160,12/27/2001
Trip 34,6/23/1977	Trip 97,11/10/1984	Trip 161,06/24/2002
Trip 35,10/14/1977	Trip 98,11/22/1984	Trip 162,11/1/2002
Trip 36,12/2/1977	Trip 99,12/31/1984	Trip 163,12/28/2002
Trip 37,2/3/1978	Trip 100,3/4/1985	Trip 164,5/24/2003
Trip 38,2/17/1978	Trip 101,3/17/1985	Trip 165,6/10/2003
Trip 39,3/1/1978	Trip 102,3/23/1985	Trip 166,11/8/2003
Trip 40,3/26/1978	Trip 103,5/16/1985	Trip 167,11/29/2003
Trip 41,4/21/1978	Trip 104,11/26/1985	Trip 168,10/12/2004
Trip 42,5/23/1978	Trip 105,11/28/1985	Trip 169,11/25/2004
Trip 43,5/27/1978	Trip 106,12/31/1985	Trip 170,12/23/2004
Trip 44,6/1/1978	Trip 107,1/25/1986	Trip 171,3/15/2005
Trip 45,9/22/1978	Trip 108,3/9/1986	Trip 172,6/7/2005
Trip 46,11/3/1978	Trip 109,3/24/1986	Trip 173,12/30/2005
Trip 47,11/22/1978	Trip 110,4/5/1986	Trip 174,10/14/2006
Trip 48,12/29/1978	Trip 111,4/17/1986	Trip 175,6/15/2007
Trip 49,1/12/1979	Trip 112,5/22/1986	Trip 176,12/28/2008
Trip 50,2/16/1979	Trip 113,6/8/1986	Trip 177,01/17/2009
Trip 51,3/20/1979	Trip 114,6/13/1986	Trip 178,03/16/2009
Trip 52,4/6/1979	Trip 115,7/4/1986	Trip 179,10/8/2010
Trip 53,5/24/1979	Trip 116,11/25/1986	Trip 180,10/10/2011
Trip 54,7/1/1979	Trip 117,3/13/1987	Trip 181,10/27/2013
Trip 55,8/31/1979	Trip 118,5/1/1987	Trip 182,11/9/2013
Trip 56,10/26/1979	Trip 119,5/20/1987	Trip 183,1/27/2014
Trip 57,11/9/1979	Trip 120,11/24/1987	Trip 184,2/13/2014
Trip 58,11/21/1979	Trip 121,12/31/1987	Trip 185,3/7/2014
Trip 59,1/12/1980	Trip 122,2/2/1988	Trip 186,3/15/2014
Trip 60,2/12/1980	Trip 123,3/5/1988	Trip 187,4/2/2014
Trip 61,4/2/1980	Trip 124,5/26/1988	Trip 188,5/2/2014
Trip 62,4/29/1980	Trip 125,6/7/1988	Trip 189,5/23/2014
Trip 63,5/27/1980	Trip 126,11/22/1988	Trip 190,10/1/2014
	Trip 127,12/30/1988	Trip 191,10/16/2014

# Appendix 6: Who Went and When

BY GREATEST NUMBER OF TRIPS FIRST AND ALPHABETICALLY SECOND

GERALD COLE 114	4/1/1983	11/7/1975	11/26/1985
TRIPS	4/3/1983	12/5/1975	11/28/1985
11/28/1974	11/23/1983	1/30/1976	12/31/1985
2/14/1975	12/29/1983	2/13/1976	4/5/1986
3/29/1975	2/19/1984	3/5/1976	4/17/1986
4/4/1975	4/17/1984	3/26/1976	5/22/1986
4/18/1975	6/6/1984	4/9/1976	3/13/1987
5/1/1975	10/11/1984	4/23/1976	5/20/1987
5/17/1975	11/22/1984	5/14/1976	11/24/1987
5/23/1975	12/31/1984	6/25/1976	12/31/1987
6/7/1975	3/4/1985	9/4/1976	2/2/1988
8/15/1975	3/17/1985	9/24/1976	3/5/1988
8/29/1975	3/23/1985	10/15/1976	5/26/1988
9/18/1975	5/16/1985	11/25/1976	11/22/1988
10/16/1975	11/26/1985	1/13/1977	12/30/1988
11/7/1975	11/28/1985	1/27/1977	3/21/1989
12/5/1975	12/31/1985	2/9/1977	11/24/1989
1/30/1976	4/5/1986	6/23/1977	2/6/1990
2/13/1976	4/17/1986	10/14/1977	3/20/1990
3/5/1976	5/22/1986	12/2/1977	11/22/1990
3/26/1976	3/13/1987	2/3/1978	
4/23/1976	5/20/1987	2/17/1978	STEVE COLE 84
5/14/1976	11/24/1987	3/26/1978	TRIPS
6/25/1976	12/31/1987	4/21/1978	6/7/1975
9/4/1976	2/2/1988	5/27/1978	11/7/1975
9/24/1976	3/5/1988	9/22/1978	3/26/1976
10/15/1976	5/26/1988	11/3/1978	4/9/1976
11/25/1976	11/22/1988	11/22/1978	5/14/1976
1/13/1977	12/30/1988	12/29/1978	11/25/1976
1/27/1977	3/21/1989	1/12/1979	6/8/1977
2/9/1977	11/24/1989	2/16/1979	6/23/1977
6/23/1977	2/6/1990	3/20/1979	5/27/1978
10/14/1977	3/20/1990	4/6/1979	6/1/1978
12/2/1977	7/8/1990	5/24/1979	11/22/1978
2/3/1978	11/22/1990	8/31/1979	12/29/1978
2/17/1978	4/4/1991	10/26/1979	10/26/1979
3/26/1978	11/27/1991	11/9/1979	11/9/1979
4/21/1978	1/31/1992	11/21/1979	11/21/1979
5/27/1978	2/28/1992	4/2/1980	4/2/1980
9/22/1978	3/13/1992	4/29/1980	5/27/1980
11/3/1978	3/17/1992	5/27/1980	7/4/1980
11/22/1978	5/26/1992	11/7/1980	12/30/1980
12/29/1978	11/26/1992	12/30/1980	2/13/1981
1/12/1979	5/27/1993	4/15/1981	3/8/1981
2/16/1979	12/27/1994	5/28/1981	6/12/1981
3/20/1979	6/7/1995	11/25/1981	11/25/1981
4/6/1979	11/23/1995	5/27/1982	12/23/1981
5/24/1979	3/8/1996	11/24/1982	12/29/1981
8/31/1979	2/15/1997	12/31/1982	3/16/1982
10/26/1979	1/1/1998	1/8/1983	8/6/1982
11/9/1979		2/1/1983	11/24/1982
11/21/1979	JEAN COLE 99	2/18/1983	1/18/1983
2/12/1980	TRIPS	4/1/1983	3/13/1983
4/2/1980	11/28/1974	4/3/1983	8/2/1983
4/29/1980	2/14/1975	11/23/1983	11/23/1983
5/27/1980	3/29/1975	12/29/1983	3/12/1984
11/7/1980	4/4/1975	2/19/1984	7/22/1984
12/30/1980	4/18/1975	4/17/1984	11/10/1984
4/15/1981	5/1/1975	6/6/1984	11/22/1984
5/28/1981	5/17/1975	10/11/1984	12/31/1984
11/25/1981	5/23/1975	11/22/1984	11/28/1985
11/24/1982	6/7/1975	12/31/1984	12/31/1985
12/31/1982	8/15/1975	3/4/1985	3/9/1986
1/8/1983	8/29/1975	3/17/1985	4/5/1986
2/1/1983	9/18/1975	3/23/1985	6/8/1986
2/18/1983	10/16/1975	5/16/1985	6/13/1986

7/4/1986	2/18/1983	11/25/1981	12/31/1982
11/24/1987	3/13/1983	12/31/1984	6/6/1984
6/7/1988	8/2/1983	3/24/1986	01/17/2009
11/22/1988	11/23/1983	12/27/1994	03/16/2009
11/24/1989	12/29/1983	6/10/2003	
2/6/1990	3/12/1984	11/25/2004	
7/8/1990	6/6/1984		<b>MIKE MOONEY 15</b>
11/22/1990	7/22/1984		TRIPS
11/27/1991	11/10/1984	<b>SHERRY COLE 21</b>	8/15/1975
2/28/1992	11/22/1984	TRIPS	9/4/1976
3/17/1992	12/31/1984	11/24/1987	6/23/1977
6/17/1992	11/28/1985	11/22/1988	12/2/1977
11/26/1992	12/31/1985	11/22/1990	2/17/1978
3/13/1993	3/9/1986	11/27/1991	4/21/1978
6/1/1993	4/5/1986	6/17/1992	11/22/1978
11/25/1993	6/8/1986	11/26/1992	2/16/1979
3/14/1994	6/13/1986	3/13/1993	3/20/1979
5/29/1994	7/4/1986	6/1/1993	11/21/1979
12/27/1994	11/24/1987	11/25/1993	5/27/1980
6/7/1995	5/26/1988	5/29/1994	5/28/1981
11/23/1995	6/7/1988	12/27/1994	5/27/1982
3/8/1996	11/22/1988	6/7/1995	12/31/1982
11/1/2002	11/24/1989	11/23/1995	6/6/1984
5/24/2003	11/22/1990	3/8/1996	
6/10/2003	11/27/1991	5/24/2003	<b>WENDY COLE 11</b>
11/29/2003	3/17/1992	11/29/2003	TRIPS
10/12/2004	11/26/1992	3/15/2005	4/9/1976
3/15/2005	5/27/1993	10/14/2006	4/14/1976
6/7/2005	11/25/1993	6/15/2007	2/9/1977
10/14/2006	12/27/1994	10/8/2010	3/1/1978
6/15/2007	11/23/1995	3/15/2014	4/6/1979
10/8/2010	2/15/1997		11/21/1979
10/10/2011	1/1/1998	<b>SONNY COLE 21</b>	12/30/1980
10/27/2013	5/19/1998	TRIPS	4/1/1983
11/9/2013	8/3/1998	11/22/1990	3/23/1985
1/27/2014	12/31/1998	11/27/1991	3/17/1985
2/13/2014	12/28/2000	3/17/1992	3/20/1990
3/7/2014	12/27/2001	6/17/1992	
3/15/2014	6/24/2002	11/26/1992	<b>CHRISTOPHER</b>
4/2/2014	11/1/2002	3/13/1993	<b>MOONEY 10 TRIPS</b>
5/2/2014	12/28/2002	6/1/1993	12/2/1977
	5/24/2003	11/25/1993	2/17/1978
<b>TOM COLE 76</b>	11/8/2003	3/14/1994	6/1/1978
TRIPS	11/25/2004	5/29/1994	11/22/1978
11/28/1974	12/23/2004	6/7/1995	2/16/1979
4/18/1975	12/30/2005	11/23/1995	3/20/1979
9/18/1975	12/28/2008	3/8/1996	5/27/1980
10/16/1975	1/17/2009	5/24/2003	5/28/1981
4/9/1976	3/16/2009	6/10/2003	12/31/1982
5/14/1976	10/10/2011	11/29/2003	6/6/1984
9/4/1976		10/12/2004	
11/25/1976	<b>JEFF COLE 23</b>	3/15/2005	<b>JAN BRADBURY 8</b>
6/8/1977	TRIPS	6/7/2005	TRIPS
6/23/1977	5/25/1977	10/14/2006	11/23/1983
12/29/1978	4/4/1975	6/15/2007	11/22/1984
5/24/1979	5/23/1975		11/28/1985
11/21/1979	8/15/1975	<b>SALLY COLE 17</b>	11/24/1987
5/27/1980	10/16/1975	TRIPS	11/22/1988
12/30/1980	5/14/1976	8/15/1975	11/22/1990
2/13/1981	10/15/1976	9/4/1976	11/26/1992
3/8/1981	2/9/1977	6/23/1977	11/25/1993
6/12/1981	6/8/1977	12/2/1977	
11/25/1981	3/26/1978	2/17/1978	<b>MIKE AND CLOVER</b>
12/29/1981	5/23/1978	4/21/1978	<b>HOWETH 5 TRIPS</b>
3/16/1982	5/27/1978	11/22/1978	2/1/1983
5/27/1982	3/20/1979	2/16/1979	2/19/1984
8/6/1982	11/21/1979	3/20/1979	3/23/1985
11/24/1982	1/12/1980	11/21/1979	1/25/1986
12/31/1982	4/2/1980	5/27/1980	2/2/1988
1/18/1983	7/4/1980	5/28/1981	
		5/27/1982	

BARRY ROSS 5  
TRIPS  
5/14/1976  
12/29/1978  
4/2/1980  
8/6/1982  
11/23/1983

LARRY SIMKINS 5  
TRIPS  
3/9/1986  
6/7/1988  
11/22/1990  
11/27/1991  
5/15/2000

MOLE COLE 4  
TRIPS  
6/25/1976  
2/9/1977  
4/5/1986  
4/4/1991

BOYER RICKEL 4  
TRIPS  
5/23/1975  
2/9/1977  
3/16/1982  
11/24/1982

DON SINGLETON 4  
TRIPS  
3/1/1978  
4/6/1979  
4/1/1983  
3/23/1985

NANCY BRADBURY  
3 TRIPS  
11/22/1990  
11/26/1992  
11/25/1993

SID EMERY 3 TRIPS  
6/8/1977  
7/1/1979  
6/8/1986

RICK FJELD 3  
TRIPS  
10/16/1975  
5/23/1978  
7/4/1980

DAVY MOONEY 3  
TRIPS  
5/28/1981  
12/31/1982  
6/6/1984

LACEY SINGLETON  
3 TRIPS  
3/17/1985  
3/20/1990  
3/17/1992

MIKE AND  
ELIZABETH  
GEDDES 2 TRIPS  
5/24/1979  
10/26/1979

MIKE AND SUE  
HENDERSHOT 2  
TRIPS  
3/5/1988  
3/16/1982

NERIA RYDER 2  
TRIPS  
5/20/1987  
5/26/1988

BILL AND BETSY  
WOOD 2 TRIPS  
12/29/1978  
4/29/1980

CHRIS AND DAWN  
BANAS 1 TRIP  
11/22/1988

STEVEN AND  
MARION  
CAROTHERS 1 TRIP  
12/23/1981

BUD AND EDNA  
CONNER 1 TRIP  
4/6/1979  
BUD AND SHARON  
CONNER 1 TRIP  
3/26/1978

JEANIE CONNER 1  
TRIP  
2/6/1990

DAN AND TRICIA  
DAGGETT 1 TRIP  
11/24/1987

BRUCE DEMING 1  
TRIP  
2/13/1981

RUTH (CUCA)  
EMERY 1 TRIP  
6/8/1986

JOYCE FOSTER 1  
TRIP  
11/7/1975

MARK  
GUGGESBURG 1  
TRIP  
11/24/1987

EDNA VAN SICKLES  
HASCALL 1 TRIP  
10/14/1977

MIKE HUDNALL  
5/27/1980 1 TRIP

ROY JOHNSON 1  
TRIP  
5/16/1985

DENNIS AND LINDA  
KUBLY 1 TRIP  
5/27/1978

EDDIE MOONEY 1  
TRIP  
8/15/1975

G.C. PARK AND  
BARBARA J. PARK 1  
TRIP  
10/11/1984

PAUL, LISA, AND  
MARIANA  
PICKERING 1 TRIP  
3/24/1986

DAVE AND GINNY  
PRATT 1 TRIP  
1/18/1983

PETER RICH 1 TRIP  
1 TRIP  
12/31/1987  
LEO RYAN 1 TRIP  
1/13/1977

RONNIE RYAN 1  
TRIP  
2/13/1981

FRED AND MARY  
SANBORN 1 TRIP  
3/5/1976

RITA SCHULTZ 1  
TRIP  
11/10/1984

JOHN AND DONDA  
THOMASSON 1  
TRIP  
4/2/1980

JAMES AND JAN  
WARD 1 TRIP  
1/11/1979

DENISE AND KATIE  
WOODHOUSE 1  
TRIP  
3/17/1992





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