

FIRST RECORD OF A SEA LION,
ZALOPHUS CALIFORNIANUS, AT
ISLA DEL COCO, COSTA RICA

This note reports the first sighting of a sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*) at Isla del Coco (05°33'N, 87°30'W), Costa Rica, about 730 km northeast of the Galapagos Islands. Isla del Coco is a small (24 km²), isolated, and uninhabited island in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, approximately 500 km SW of the Pacific coast of Costa Rica.

From February to August 1993, marine mammals occurring around the island were recorded as part of a larger field study on dolphin behavior. The sea lion was sighted once, on 10 February 1993 at 1100. The individual was determined to be a young male based on a photograph showing the development of a cranial sagittal crest (Orr *et al.* 1970). The animal was moving north within 10 m of the east coast of Manuelita, an islet 500 m north of Isla del Coco, where the animal was last seen. The nearest sea lion population to Isla del Coco is at the Galapagos Islands (00°N, 91°W), where the Galapagos sea lion (*Z. c. wollebaeki*) breeds (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1984). The California sea lion population (*Z. c. californianus*) migrates primarily to the north (Bartholomew and Hubbs 1952, Orr and Poulter 1965, Mate 1973) and the southernmost record of a possible California sea lion (Gallo-Reynoso and Solorzano-Velasco 1991) is about 1,100 km northwest from Isla del Coco. Thus, I believe that the male observed at Isla del Coco belongs to the subspecies *Z. c. wollebaeki*.

There are oral accounts on the presence of sea lions at Isla del Coco during the past (Weston 1992); however, this is the first documented report of the species on the island, extending their range to 05°33'N. Currently, there are no records of the subspecies *Z. c. wollebaeki* outside the Galapagos Islands. If, as I believe, the individual observed at Isla del Coco belonged to this subspecies, there is the possibility that at least some individuals disperse far from their breeding grounds.

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