

# SOUTHERN MEXICO

15 APRIL – 5 MAY 2007

## TOUR REPORT

**LEADER:** MARK VAN BEIRS

The bird of the tour was the incomparable Nava's Wren, that showed so incredibly well and gave such a magical performance in its appealing limestone habitat. On this third tour through Southern Mexico we visited no fewer than nine different Endemic Bird Areas (as defined by BirdLife International) and amassed an impressive list of 451 species including no fewer than 119 (out of 213) Mexican and Central American specialities. We did especially well with families like wrens (21 out of the 32 Mexican species) and jays (9 out of 24) and came away with an awesome list of exquisite quality birds including Townsend's Shearwater, Least and Galapagos Storm-Petrels, Boat-billed Heron, Black Hawk-Eagle, Collared Forest-Falcon, White-bellied Chachalaca, Highland Guan, Long-tailed Wood-Partridge, Singing Quail, Sabine's Gull, Pheasant Cuckoo, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, Lesser Roadrunner, Pacific Screech-Owl, Central American Pygmy-Owl, Bumblebee Hummingbird, Blue-throated and Russet-crowned Motmots, Mexican Antthrush, Belted and Pileated Flycatchers, Dwarf and Unicoloured Jays, Giant and Sumichrast's Wrens, Blue and Blue-and-white Mockingbirds, Hooded and Black-polled Yellowthroats, Red and Pink-headed Warblers, Rosita's and Orange-breasted Buntings, Blue Seedeater and Sierra Madre Sparrow.

Our very international group – six nationalities – finally got together at our hotel on the southern edge of the great metropolis of Mexico City. Next morning at dawn, at an altitude of 3000m, we were walking around in nearby open pine woodland with a dense ground cover of bunchgrass. There was frost on the ground and as the sun started to warm up things, pot-bellied and endemic Striped Sparrows and several rare and endemic Sierra Madre Sparrows could be studied through the scopes. Our main target had succumbed already and we also found beautiful Western Bluebirds, Violet-green Swallows, a party of noisy Steller's Jays, Yellow-eyed Juncos and Red Crossbills here. In an other patch of denser and older pine forest we heard Strickland's Woodpecker and observed Hammond's and Buff-breasted Flycatchers, Greater Pewee, Mexican Chickadee, Brown Creeper and a flock of migrant Chipping Sparrows. Lower down, in a nice stretch of oak-pine-fir woodland we located White-eared Hummingbird, a female Grey-collared Becard, a party of boisterous Grey-barred Wrens, adorable Crescent-chested Warblers, Rufous-capped Warbler and several exquisite Red Warblers. We then drove through mountain valleys dotted with small villages adorned with picturesque churches and stalls with local produce offering lots of fresh fruit and not very appealing bright red

and bright green sausages. The extensive reedbeds of the Almoloya marshes soon yielded their main prize: the rare and endemic Black-pollled Yellowthroat, but because of the rather windy conditions the birds kept a low profile and mainly scolded at us from within the vegetation. The supporting cast included American Bittern, White-faced ibis, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Harrier, Sora, Song Sparrow and the "Bicoloured" form of Red-winged Blackbird. On our return to base, we made a stop in some evergreen forest, where Grey-breasted Jay, Brown-throated Wren, Hutton's Vireo and Rufous-capped Brush-Finch provided a fitting end to a very rewarding first day in the field!!

On our way to the Botanical gardens of the UNAM (National University), we admired the world famous library. Lots of joggers were enjoying the quiet tracks amongst the beautifully laid out gardens with their splendid display of cacti, yuccas and agaves, but we were drawn to the extensive patch of oak scrub. Birds were everywhere and amongst more widespread species like Broad-billed and Magnificent Hummingbirds, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Greenish Elaenia, Dusky Flycatcher, Bushtit (at the nest), Canyon and Bewick's Wrens, Curve-billed Thrasher, Virginia's and MacGillivray's Warblers, Black-headed and Blue Grosbeaks, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Canyon Towhee and Scott's Oriole we got to grips with endemic Berylline and Violet-crowned Hummingbirds, Rufous-backed Thrush, Hooded Yellowthroat and Abeille's Oriole. After a scrumptious lunch we drove through the huge conurbation of Mexico City – it took less than an hour – and made our way east along a fast toll highway through the dramatic landscape of the altiplano, accompanied by the famous volcanic peak of Popocatepetl and the nearly 6000m high top of the Pico de Orizabal. For once there was no dense fog whilst dropping rather suddenly into the tropical Atlantic lowlands of the state of Veracruz and in late afternoon we rolled into Cordoba, where the shoe shops were still plentiful. We noted several interesting species in the hotel gardens, including Plumbeous Kite, Short-tailed Hawk, Bat Falcon, Clay-coloured Thrush and Yellow-winged Tanager. The excellent margaritas made us feel very welcome here.

Our picnic breakfast, overlooking a limestone hill covered in shade coffee and bits of original forest, was interrupted by White-crowned Parrots, Montezuma Oropendolas and a singing Rusty Sparrow. In this splendid karst habitat consisting of small cliff faces overgrown with vines and creepers and full of cracks and holes we soon found the amazing, rare and endemic Sumichrast's Wren, posing in the open and allowing splendid views. We listened to its glissading trills and saw this gem of a bird creep about and disappear in its favourite habitat. Thicket Tinamous were calling all over the place and we were lucky enough to flush one. Other specialities here included Stripe-throated Hermit and Wedge-tailed Sabrewing amongst a rich array of other species like Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Northern Violaceous and Collared Trogons, Blue-crowned Motmot, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Masked Tityra, Band-backed and Spot-breasted Wrens, Magnolia, Black-throated Green and Golden-crowned Warblers, Grey-crowned Yellowthroat, Scrub, Yellow-throated and Blue-hooded Euphonias, Black-headed Saltator (in rowdy parties), Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Painted and Indigo Buntings. In the afternoon we drove further southeast through the Veracruz lowlands to the town of Tuxtepec and several short stops enlivened the journey with observations of American White Pelican (200 together), Fulvous Whistling Duck, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Osprey, Snail Kite, Northern Crested Caracara, Red-billed Pigeon, Vermilion Flycatcher and Eastern Meadowlarks (involved in some amazing display).

On our first full day in the Sierra de Juarez, we explored all habitats available to us from the lower foothills till the open pine forests at 2400m. Short stops at likely looking places quickly gave us a respectable birdlist including marvels like Aztec Parakeet, Red-lored Parrot, Pheasant Cuckoo (superb!!), Central American Pygmy Owl, Long-billed Starthroat, the tiny Bumblebee Hummingbird (male and female), Mountain Trogon, Keel-billed Toucan, Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, Mexican Antthrush (glimpses only), Yellow-bellied Tyrannulet, Unicoloured Jay, Grey-breasted Wood Wren, Red and Golden-browed Warblers, Red-legged Honeycreeper, White-winged and Crimson-collared Tanagers and Black-cowled Oriole. We also got acquainted with that characteristic Mexican phenomenon of "topes" (speed bumps or sleeping policemen), and it became the major responsibility

of the co-pilot to watch out for these often very unobtrusive, but often high and bone jarring obstacles. No fewer than 96 of these menaces were counted today by the “tope” watcher on duty. On our second full day in the various habitats of the Sierra de Juarez, we concentrated a bit more on the lower and middle reaches. We flushed several Pauraques just before dawn, studied a skulky Rufous-breasted Spinetail in detail, observed the display flight of Slate-coloured Solitaire (and listened to its amazing song) and admired a glorious male Blue-crowned Chlorophonia at minimal distance. Great Black and Grey Hawks, White-bellied Emerald, Olive-backed Euphonia, Painted Bunting and lots of Baltimore Orioles provided more entertainment. On our last morning here, most of us finally had satisfying views of a secretive Mexican Antthrush and in an open patch of scrubby woodland White-naped Brush-Finch, Ruddy Foliage-gleaner and Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush performed extremely well. While we were all standing very quietly waiting for our quarries, a Pheasant Cuckoo suddenly landed only metres away and allowed extreme views. The drive was further enlivened by five Crested Guans feeding along the road next to the minibus giving splendid views. Not much further a sneaky and much appreciated Long-tailed Wood Partridge was walking on the road. We then left the Valle Nacional by crossing a 2800m high pass and our pine forest picnic lunch was interrupted by Brown-backed Solitaire and Red Warbler. A late afternoon stop in a splendid patch of scrubby oak growth in the Oaxaca valley gave us a cracking Ocellated Thrasher and several scratching White-throated Towhees. On our first morning in the Oaxaca area we visited a valley cloaked in dense thorn forest. During the first hour after dawn things were really happening as West Mexican Chachalaca, Dusky Hummingbird, Pileated Flycatcher, Thick-billed Kingbird, Boucard’s Wren, Blue Mockingbird, Grey Silky, Dwarf and Golden Vireos, Bridled Sparrow and Black-vented Oriole all obliged. A nearby small reservoir gave us Ruddy Duck, Spotted Sandpiper (in breeding plumage) and a White-rumped Sandpiper and we also admired a Lesser Roadrunner here. A dense patch of different cacti held an endemic Grey-breasted Woodpecker. At the Yagul ruins a careful watch at the flowering cacti produced two female Beautiful Hummingbirds and in the afternoon we visited the famous archaeological site of Monte Alban, easily the most impressive Aztec ruins in the whole state of Oaxaca. Next morning found us high in the Sierra de Aloapaneca, where predawn we saw a Ringtail cross the road and obtained good looks at a male Mexican Whip-poor-will. Many short stops in the mixed pine-oak zone added goodies like Dwarf Jay (our main target!., magnificent views), Pine Flycatcher, Russet Nightingale-Thrush, many Red Warblers and Collared Towhee. We also heard the barking calls of a Barred Forest-Falcon, but it did not want to play. Next morning we paid another visit to the thorn forest valley, where this time we all had scope views of the very localized Oaxaca Sparrow. A Dwarf Vireo also performed on cue and we then left the Oaxaca valley and crossed the Sierra de Miahuatlan, where short stops in oak-pine woodland gave us a tremendous Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo (what a fantastic bird), Acorn and Hairy Woodpeckers and a Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush. Upon approaching the Pacific coast it became a lot hotter and in a favourite stretch of evergreen forest we found a Ferruginous Pygmy Owl being mobbed by a gaudy Cinnamon-sided Hummingbird. Crane Hawk, parties of White-throated Magpie Jays and several Yellow-winged Caciques were noted in the final descent towards our hotel at Puerto Angel.

Next morning we returned to the subtropical evergreen hill forest of the southern Sierra Madre del Sur, where our main target fell fairly easily. The Blue-capped (or Oaxaca) Hummingbird is endemic to a small part of the state of Oaxaca and we were lucky enough to get great views of a female and rather brief views of a male. Wagler’s Toucanet is one of the recent splits in the Emerald Toucanet complex and is a Mexican endemic confined to the Sierra Madre del Sur. We saw lots this year and they showed ad libidum. A migrant Cooper’s Hawk made a nice appearance and the excellent views of a Happy Wren – a West Mexican endemic, here at the extreme south of its range – made us all smile. Higher up, in the pine-oak zone we only glimpsed a White-throated Jay and although we put in a fair bit of effort we never saw this much wanted species again. An occupied nest of a White-eared Hummingbird and a smart, but sneaky Slaty Vireo provided some consolation. In late afternoon we explored the upper tropical zone where Golden-crowned Emerald, swirling flocks of attractive Cedar Waxwings and a smart Audubon’s Oriole (of the distinctive form *dickeyae*) were noted.

One of the highlights of the tour was our thoroughly enjoyable pelagic trip off Puerto Angel. Our small vessel took us many nautical miles out onto the ocean and the flat seas allowed excellent viewing. It started with small numbers of Brown Boobies, Pink-footed Shearwaters and Franklin's Gulls, but soon quality took over with goodies like Townsend's and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Black and Least Storm-Petrels, a single Galapagos Storm-Petrel, a Red-billed Tropicbird, several Pomarine Jaegers in perfect breeding plumage, a smart Sabine's Gull and good numbers of Black Terns. Impressive, jumping Mobula Rays, pods of Common Bottle-nosed and Striped Dolphins, several obliging Yellow-bellied Sea Snakes and many Green Sea Turtles (including several mating pairs) made the whole outing even more memorable.

In late morning we left Puerto Angel and drove southeast along the coastal road to distant Tehuantepec. Short stops in promising-looking thorn forest soon yielded a smashing selection of much sought after species like Common Black Hawk, a black morph Collared Forest-Falcon, Doubleday's Hummingbird, Citreoline Trogon, Russet-crowned Motmot, Golden-cheeked Woodpecker, Rufous-naped and Banded Wrens, Blue and unbelievably attractive Orange-breasted Buntings and a pair of Sumichrast's Sparrows. At a series of shrimp ponds we found a nice variety of waders which included American Avocet, Stilt Sandpiper and Wilson's Phalarope. Next morning, another visit to this virtually impenetrable thorn forest added Plain-capped Starthroat to the tally and gave us better views of Citreoline Trogon. We then drove along the famous Isthmus of Tehuantepec, where, for once, there was no wind at all. An enormous windmill park testified about the often very windy conditions here. In the foothills above the small town of Tapanatepec we stopped at my favourite spot and within seconds an exquisite Rosita's Bunting appeared in front of us. The whole group stood speechless watching the amazing colours of this very localized endemic. We heard several Lesser Ground Cuckoos here and after some judicious interaction, we were able to admire the subtle facial colours of this striking skulker. A well-groomed Russet-crowned Motmot inspected us at minimal distance and other fine species included Pacific and Orange-fronted Parakeets, Green-fronted Hummingbird, Collared Aracari, Orange-breasted Bunting (many – one can never get enough of this beauty) and Stripe-headed Sparrows. As we were in the main mango growing area of Mexico, we bought a whole bag of these delicious fruits, which Petra prepared so skilfully for our picnic. In late afternoon we arrived at our lodgings in Arriaga, our base for our visit to the Pacific lowlands of Chiapas. Next morning, before dawn, we were waiting under a preferred tree, but rain ruined our chances for Pacific Screech-Owl. Luckily the rain soon abated and half an hour later we had already secured the two main specialities of this area: White-bellied Chachalaca and Giant Wren. In the course of the day we had regular encounters with the largest of the wrens. Meadows and fields held Northern Bobwhite, Lesser Nighthawk, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Rose-throated Becard, good numbers of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Orchard Oriole and Dickcissel. Overhead a steady stream of Franklin's Gulls were making their way north and at a large brackish lagoon we found Reddish Egrets and Least Terns. In the heat of the day we savoured an excellent seafood lunch on the beach and afterwards visited a mangrove area where a young Bare-throated Tiger-Heron and a roost of cute Boat-billed Herons held our attention. A party of Black Skimmers were resting on a nearby sandbank and in late afternoon we saw them performing their impressive skimming in perfect flight formation. Early next morning, we tried for the owl again, and within minutes of arriving we were watching a gorgeous, angry-looking Pacific Screech-Owl. The White-bellied Chachalacas also allowed scope studies and a fetching Laughing Falcon emitted its maniacal laughter. A flowering tree held a good assortment of orioles, including a neat Spot-breasted. On our way to Tuxtla Gutierrez we made another stop in the foothills, where we savoured more views of glorious Rosita's Buntings and observed several Yellow-green Vireos. In the afternoon we visited the famous Sumidero Canyon, the huge, spectacular and deep valley of the Grijalva River, where we enjoyed ourselves with marvels like Flammulated and Belted Flycatchers. An antswarm was attended by perky Red-throated Ant-Tanagers and several extremely confiding and utterly adorable Fan-tailed Warblers. We heard our first Singing Quail and glimpsed it in the dense undergrowth. The following day we returned to the Sumidero Canyon, where, before sunrise, we were listening to the distinctive song of several Buff-collared Nightjars, of which one showed rather briefly. We spent the whole day exploring the

bamboo-cloaked evergreen woodland along the impressive 800m high cliffs. A pair of Black Hawk-Eagles was a real surprise, a male Highland Guan whistled its tune and the views of a delightful male Singing Quail were out of this world. We also appreciated the stunning views of an adorable male Red-breasted Chat, a cracking male Blue Seedeater and a handsome male Bar-winged Oriole. Other interesting species here included Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Emerald Toucanet, Barred Antshrike, Ridgway's Rough-winged Swallow, Plain Wren, Blue-and-white Mockingbird and Yellow-billed Cacique. Migrant warblers were everywhere and we found Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian and Canada amongst several more widespread species.

On the first of May we visited an area of limestone hills at the edge of the El Ocote Reserve on the Atlantic slope. The main reason for going there was to try to get to grips with the rarely-seen and little-known Nava's Wren. On our first tour here – four years ago - we enjoyed magnificent views, but on our last tour we totally failed to connect with this enigmatic species. I was really wondering what Orni, goddess of birders, would have organised for us today. While savouring our picnic breakfast in a spot of fitting habitat, we noted a Black-faced Grosbeak and soon after we heard the distinctive voice of our quarry emanate from a nearby patch of secondary growth. Minutes later we were admiring this jaw dropper of a bird at minimal distance, while it was slowly picking its way along creeper-cloaked little cliff faces. We managed to scope it and obtained dynamite views. It was obvious what the number one in the Bird of the Trip contest was going to be. Thank you, Orni!! In the same area we also saw a cooperative Collared Forest-Falcon, a very localized Long-tailed Sabrewing, Stripe-tailed Hummingbird, White-bellied Wren and a gorgeously showy Orange-billed Sparrow. After this very productive morning, we drove to the attractive town of San Cristobal de las Casas along the fast new highway. In late afternoon we paid a visit to the nearby Huitepec radio tower area, where we were soon scoping up a terrific Blue-throated Motmot. Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Rufous-collared Thrush, Black-capped Swallow, Yellow-throated Brush-Finch and Spotted Towhee also found their way to the ever growing birdlist.

While the sun was trying to get rid of the early morning chill, we were watching good numbers of migrant warblers in a lovely stretch of pine-oak woodland. Black-throated Green Warblers were everywhere and we found Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Rufous-browed Wren and a pair of much sought after Olive Warblers. Eventually, after an appropriate amount of waiting, a delicate Pink-headed Warbler appeared and was much admired. What a dazzling little creature. We also found a pair of rarely encountered Black-capped Siskins here. In the afternoon we visited the Huitepec Reserve, but heavy rain forced us to abandon our plans for staying out late. A small colony of Green Parakeets at an old monastery provided some consolation. Next morning we explored an area of excellent evergreen montane forest, where Amethyst-throated Hummingbird, Rufous-browed Wren, Mountain Thrush, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer and a smashing Grey Fox were found. Loud explosions, sounding like the beginning of a revolution, could be heard all over the sierra, as the famous 5<sup>th</sup> of May festivities had started. Our only flat tyre of the tour required some efficient group cooperation and everyone did a great job. On the last afternoon of the tour, we revisited the Huitepec Reserve and although we heard Bearded Screech-Owl and Mottled Owl just before the rain started, we really felt a bit let down. Orni gives and Orni takes.

The combination of one of the best, pleasurable and entertaining groups I have ever had the honour to lead, a remarkable, high quality birdlist bursting with endemics, delicious margaritas, savoury Mexican food and amazingly spectacular landscapes made this Southern Mexico tour a thoroughly enjoyable experience.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Subspecies names are given where known and/or appropriate, either in a comment or in parentheses.

### TINAMIDAE

Little Tinamou *Crypturellus soui* (H): The distinctive calls were heard in the Sierra de Juarez. The subspecies involved is *meserythrus*.

Thicket Tinamou *Crypturellus cinnamomeus*: We flushed one of these skulkers in the dense coffee growth at Amatlan and also heard the distinctive whistles there and in the Sumidero Canyon (nominate). Tinamous of the genus *Crypturellus* are almost always notoriously difficult to observe. Most species of this family are polygamous, with the smaller males performing the domestic tasks. Their eggs are lustrously coloured.

### PODICIPEDIDAE

Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus*: Several excellent sightings of this diminutive, yellow-eyed grebe. Great looks at a loose group of 25 on the pond at Teotitlan (*brachypterus*).

### PROCELLARIIDAE

Pink-footed Shearwater *Puffinus creatopus*: c30 birds offered great views on our splendid pelagic outing from Puerto Angel. This species breeds on islands off Chile and winters in the northern Pacific Ocean.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*: A single dark morph showed well on our pelagic off Puerto Angel. The nearest breeding colony (c1000 pairs) is situated on San Benedicto, one of the islands of the Revillagigedo archipelago.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*: A single individual of this well-known and widespread species was noted on our Puerto Angel pelagic.

Townsend's Shearwater *Puffinus auricularis*: Only one was noted, rather distantly, on our pelagic trip off Puerto Angel. This Mexican endemic breeds only on one small island off Western Mexico (Socorro in the Islas Revillagigedo) and the total population is c46,000 birds. It is sometimes considered conspecific with Newell's Shearwater *Puffinus newelli*, which breeds in Hawaii. Townsend's Shearwater is treated as **Critical** in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the, often sad, future of the birds of our planet.

### HYDROBATIDAE

Galapagos Storm-Petrel (Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel) *Oceanodroma tethys*: A single bird was noted on our pelagic off Puerto Angel. This species only breeds in the Galapagos Islands, where it is active during the daytime over the colonies.

Black Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma melania*: At least 40 on our pelagic off Puerto Angel. Excellent views of this large storm-petrel with its distinctive flight action.

Least Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma microsoma*: Three individuals of this minute species were noted on our pelagic off Puerto Angel. We had good views of one flying together with a Black Storm-Petrel, making for excellent comparison. Another Mexican endemic breeder.

### PHAETONTIDAE

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaeton aethereus*: A single bird showed rather distantly on our Puerto Angel pelagic (*mesonauta*).

## SULIDAE

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*: Fair numbers of the race *brewsteri* in the Puerto Angel area.

## PELECANIDAE

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*: At least 200 were roosting on a small lake along the highway in the state of Veracruz.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*: Regular observations on the Pacific coast (n nominate).

## PHALACROCORACIDAE

Neotropic Cormorant (Olivaceous Cormorant) *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*: Especially common at Puerto Arista (*mexicanus*).

## ANHINGIDAE

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga*: A single bird was found on the large lagoon at Puerto Arista (*leucogaster*).

## FREGATIDAE

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*: These wonderful and spectacular kleptoparasites with their highly distinctive flight silhouette were a real feature of the Pacific coast. Frigatebirds have the lowest wing-loading (low weight in contrast to large wing area) of all birds, enabling them to be amongst the most nimble of fliers.

## ARDEIDAE

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*: Great views of one along a ditch at the Almoloya marshes on our first day in the field. Always good fun to see a bittern well.

Bare-throated Tiger-Heron *Tigrisoma mexicanum*: Excellent views of an immature bird in a patch of mangrove at Puerto Arista. An appropriate scientific epithet!

Great Blue Heron *Ardeola herodias*: A few observations of this always impressive species in the Veracruz lowlands (n nominate). The specific scientific name *herodias* stems from the Greek word for heron: erodios.

Great Egret *Egretta alba*: Many encounters with the race *egretta*. Now more often put in the genus *Ardea*.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*: The race *brewsteri* was commonly observed at ponds and in wetlands. Yellow lores!!

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*: A single adult bird was found at Puerto Arista. The monotypic genus *Florida* is sometimes used for this species.

Tricoloured Heron (Louisiana Heron) *Egretta tricolor*: Only encountered at Puerto Arista. The adults in breeding attire are really handsome creatures.

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens*: Excellent scope views of this energetic feeder prancing about on the mudflats at Puerto Arista. We saw the dark morph of the western race *dickeyi*.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*: Too many!! First noted in the New World in Surinam in 1877, after which a spectacular expansion over the whole continent followed. The main expansion in Mexico was in the 1960's and by the early 1970's this species was well established all over the Mexican mainland.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens*: A handful of sightings of this attractive species.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: Three were noted at the Almoloya marshes and another two were roosting with the Boat-billed Herons at Puerto Arista (*hoactli*).

Boat-billed Heron *Cochlearius cochlearius*: Great views of a dozen of these unusual-looking birds in a patch of mangrove in the Puerto Arista area. Both gorgeous adults and more subtly-plumaged immatures were scoped.

## THRESKIORNITHIDAE

White Ibis *Eudocimus albus*: Fair numbers showed well in the Puerto Arista area.

White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi*: At least 80 at the Almoloya marshes near Mexico City. Spectacular flight formations. The scientific epithet is derived from the onomatopoeic French name *chihi* for this species, given by Vieillot in 1817.

Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja*: 25 birds were scoped at the other side of the large lagoon at Puerto Arista. The word *ajaja* is a Tupi (Brazilian) Indian name for this species. This is one of many names originally found in Marcgrave (1648). Georg Marcgrave (or Marcgraf), a German doctor and mathematician wrote comprehensively, from first hand knowledge on the birds of the Pernambuco district of Brazil. Over forty scientific names are based on his descriptions.

## CICONIIDAE

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana*: Two of these well known storks were seen in flight in the Puerto Arista area.

## ANATIDAE

Fulvous Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*: Four birds were found on a roadside pond along the highway in the Veracruz lowlands. A widespread species with a pantropical distribution.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis*: Several scattered records involving small numbers. The epithet *autumnalis* (= autumnal) refers to the orange, yellow and brown colours of this species.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*: Regular observations of this attractive North American migrant.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*: Six showed well on a pond near the famous Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*: Two males in non-breeding plumage were scoped at the Teotitlan pond.

## CATHARTIDAE

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*: Many encounters with the race *brasiliensis*. Who's favourite?

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*: Several races may have been seen. It is now fairly well accepted that the American vultures are in fact more closely related to storks. Sibley and Monroe actually merge the 'family' with the *Ciconiidae*. Several of the New World Vultures have an extremely keen sense of smell, unlike most other species of birds.

Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture (Savanna Vulture) *Cathartes burrovianus*: At least three of these savanna-favouring vultures were flying low over the grasslands and fields in the Veracruz lowlands.

## PANDIONIDAE

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*: Four sightings of this widespread piscivore. Recent research has shown that as many as five species may be involved in the Osprey-complex!!! Armchair ticks!!!

## ACCIPITRIDAE

White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus*: A single observation of this lovely and elegant bird of prey at Puerto Arista (*majusculus*).

Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis*: A few showed well in the Veracruz lowlands. Here the race *major*.

Plumbeous Kite *Ictinia plumbea*: In late afternoon, one flew high over our hotel at Cordoba.

Northern Harrier (Hen Harrier) *Circus cyaneus*: We noted two females at the Almoloya marshes and another two in the Veracruz lowlands. The form here is *hudsonius*, which is a potential future split (as Northern Harrier).

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus*: Three sightings of this speedy raptor. Several subspecies occur in the area covered.

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii*: Nice sightings of this northern migrant in the Puerto Angel area and near Tehuantepec.

Crane Hawk *Geranospiza caerulescens*: Two showed well upon our arrival at Puerto Angel. A highly distinctive flight.

Common Black Hawk *Buteogallus anthracinus*: Good views of a single bird near the coast at Puerto Angel.

Great Black Hawk *Buteogallus urubitinga*: A single bird showed well in the lower reaches of the Sierra de Juarez.

Grey Hawk *Buteo nitidus*: Three observations of the race *plagiata*. The genus *Asturina* is sometimes used for this species.

Roadside Hawk *Buteo magirostris*: Ten observations of the race *griseocauda*.

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus*: A single sighting only of this northern migrant.

Short-tailed Hawk *Buteo brachyurus*: Two nice observations of dark morphs (*fuliginosus*).

White-tailed Hawk *Buteo albicaudatus*: Several excellent encounters with this attractive bird of prey (*hypospodius*).

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*: A regularly-encountered raptor (*texanus*).

Black Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus tyrannus*: Good views of a circling pair over evergreen forest in Chiapas. Thin on the ground in Mexico!!

#### FALCONIDAE

Northern Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway*: Regular observations of the carrion-eating "Mexican Eagle". The race involved is *audubonii*. The Crested Caracara complex has recently undergone some changes, with splitting and using a different genus name.

Laughing Falcon *Herpetotheres cachinnans*: Superb scope studies of a calling bird at Puerto Arista. A really handsome bird of prey.

Barred Forest-Falcon *Micrastur ruficollis* (H): We heard the yapping bark in the forest of Cerro San Felipe, but the bird would not cooperate.

Collared Forest-Falcon *Micrastur semitorquatus*: A dark morph individual was well spotted in thorn forest south of Puerto Angel by John. Later we attracted a cracking pale morph bird at the Nava's Wren site and obtained great views (*naso*). Manfred's favourite.

Bat Falcon *Falco ruficularis*: In late afternoon, one flew high over our hotel at Cordoba.

#### CRACIDAE

Plain Chachalaca *Ortalis vetula*: Regular sightings and impressive dawn choruses (nominate).

West Mexican Chachalaca *Ortalis poliocephala*: Excellent views of this Mexican endemic at Teotitlan and also near Tehuantepec.

White-bellied Chachalaca *Ortalis leucogastra*: Cracking scope studies in the dense scrub near Puerto Arista and impressive dawn choruses. A Pacific coast speciality, occurring from Chiapas (Mexico) till Nicaragua. It is one of the distinctive species of the North Central American Pacific slope Endemic Bird Area (EBA 017), defined by BirdLife International in "Endemic Bird Areas of the World - Priorities for Biodiversity Conservation".

Highland Guan (Black Penelopina) *Penelopina nigra*: We had a nice encounter with a male of this attractive species in the Sumidero Canyon. It is treated as **Near-Threatened** in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the future of the birds on our planet.

Crested Guan *Penelope purpurascens*: Splendid eye-ball to eye-ball studies of five birds quietly feeding next to our vehicle in the evergreen forest of the Sierra de Juarez. Simply superb!!

## PHASIANIDAE

(The New World Quails and Wood-Quails are sometimes put in a separate family: the ODONTOPHORIDAE)

Long-tailed Wood-Partridge *Dendrortyx macroura*: Twice, we obtained good views of one of these Mexican endemics crossing the road in the Sierra de Juarez. We also heard its distinctive voice in the southern Sierra Madre del Sur. Marc's favourite.

Spotted Wood-Quail *Odontophorus guttatus* (H): Regularly heard in the Sierra de Juarez, but always too far away.

Singing Quail *Dactylortyx thoracicus*: Amazing close up views of a cracking male in the evergreen forest of the Sumidero Canyon. The bird really posed for us. One of those unforgettable experiences!! We also heard the distinctive whistling song. It occurs from north-eastern Mexico down to Honduras and El Salvador. It scored high in the Bird of the Trip contest.

Northern Bobwhite *Colinus virginianus*: Good views of several in the Puerto Arista area. The race involved is *coyolcos*, in which the handsome male shows a distinctive black head and throat and very rufous underparts.

## RALLIDAE

King Rail *Rallus longirostris* (H): We heard the gruff call emanating from the reedbeds at Almoloya.

Sora *Porzana carolina*: At least two showed well at the Almoloya marshes near Mexico City.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyryla martinica*: A couple showed well on a pond near Arriaga.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: Many of the race *cachinnans* at the Almoloya marshes near Mexico City.

American Coot *Fulica americana*: c20 of the nominate race at the Almoloya marshes near Mexico City and scattered records of singles elsewhere.

## ARAMIDAE

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*: Good views of this peculiar snail-eating bird in the Veracruz lowlands.

## CHARADRIIDAE

Black-bellied Plover (Grey Plover) *Pluvialis squatarola*: Small numbers on the Puerto Arista lagoons. Several were moulting into the spectacular breeding plumage.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*: Just six were noted on the Puerto Arista lagoons.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*: Just a few observations.

## RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*: Regular observations of the nominate race. A maximum of 40 at Puerto Arista.

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana*: Great views of c15 birds on a coastal lagoon near Tehuantepec. Several birds were already in beautiful breeding attire.

## JACANIDAE

Northern Jacana *Jacana spinosa*: Regular excellent observations of adults and of stripy youngsters (nominate). The name jacana is derived from the Tupi (Brazilian) Indian word jasaná, so the right pronunciation should really be 'jasaná'. The Portuguese spelling is jaçaná.

## SCOLOPACIDAE

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*: Small numbers of this northern migrant were noted.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*: Just two were found on a coastal lagoon near Tehuantepec.

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*: Three observations of the nominate race.

- Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*: Regular sightings. Scope studies of a cracking breeding-plumaged bird at the Teotitlan pond.
- Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus*: Six showed well on the Puerto Arista mudflats. This is a recent split from Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*.
- Sanderling *Calidris alba*: A flock of c30 birds flew over the ocean at Puerto Arista.
- Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*: Regular encounters. Most birds were in lovely breeding attire.
- White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*: A single bird showed well on a muddy fringe at the Teotitlan pond. It is a long distance migrant that breeds in northern Canada and winters in southern Chile, Argentina and the Falkland Islands.
- Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*: c15 on a coastal lagoon near Tehuantepec and eight on the Puerto Arista lagoons. Several birds were beginning to show their attractive breeding attire.
- Wilson's Phalarope *Steganopus tricolor*: A bright female and a duller male showed well, eventually, on a coastal lagoon near Tehuantepec.

#### STERCORARIIDAE

- Pomarine Jaeger (Pomarine Skua) *Stercorarius pomarinus*: Cracking views of five on our splendid pelagic off Puerto Angel. Several birds were in perfect breeding plumage and we saw them both in flight and sitting on the water. A real delight.

#### LARIDAE

- Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*: Regular observations.
- Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*: Many impressive migrating flocks of breeding plumaged birds in the Puerto Arista area, involving more than 1000 individuals. These birds were obviously travelling from their wintering haunts off Chile to their nesting grounds in the northern US and central Canada. "Pipizcan" was the name given by Mexican Indians to a sort of gull. The bird is named after John Franklin (1786-1847), a Royal Navy officer and arctic explorer, who made two overland Canadian expeditions. He also led a disastrous expedition to search for the North-West passage, on which every man perished.
- Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*: Good views of one in attractive breeding attire on our pelagic off Puerto Angel. Definitely one of the smartest gulls in existence. It breeds in the high arctic.
- Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*: Just two on the Puerto Arista lagoons (*arenea*).
- Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*: Just a few observations of this widespread species.
- Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*: c15 at Puerto Arista, where we could compare them with the previous species (nominate).
- Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: Eight of the nominate form were noted at Puerto Arista.
- Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*: Several at Puerto Arista (nominate). Tiny!!
- Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*: At least 30, of which many in breeding plumage, off Puerto Angel (*surinamensis*).

#### RYNCHOPIDAE

- Black Skimmer *Rynchops nigra*: Great views of 15 performing beautifully in the Puerto Arista area. A truly bizarre species.

#### COLUMBIDAE

- Rock Dove *Columba livia*: No comment.
- Red-billed Pigeon *Columba flavirostris*: Many excellent views of the nominate race. The bill is mainly yellow!!

Band-tailed Pigeon *Columba fasciata*: Regular sightings of this widespread species (nominate). The New World members of the genus *Columba* are now usually placed in the genus *Patagioenas*.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*: Many excellent sightings of the nominate race. A rather inappropriate scientific name!

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*: Widespread in very small numbers (*marginella*).

Inca Dove *Columbina inca*: This cutie was found everywhere on our route.

Common Ground-Dove *Columbina passerina*: Small numbers all over the place (*pallescens*).

Ruddy Ground-Dove *Columbina talpacoti*: Regular observations. There is no explanation available for the scientific epithet *talpacoti*.

White-tipped Dove *Leptotila verreauxi*: Commonly encountered (*fulviventris*). We all know its mournful song. The bird is named after Jules Pierre Verreaux (1808-1873), a French collector, naturalist and natural history dealer, who also has, amongst others an Eagle, a Coua and a Turaco bearing his name.

Grey-headed Dove *Leptotila plumbeiceps* (H): Audio encounters only near Tuxtla Gutierrez.

White-faced Quail-Dove *Geotrygon albigacies*: Regular audio encounters in the Sierra de Juarez and in the Sierra de Miahuatlan, and rather brief looks for some in the former.

#### PSITTACIDAE

Green Parakeet *Aratinga holochlora*: Excellent scope views of several at a breeding colony in central Chiapas. This Mexican endemic is sometimes seen just across the Texan border.

Pacific Parakeet *Aratinga strenua*: Two showed briefly near Tehuantepec. It is one of the distinctive species of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec Endemic Bird Area (EBA 014) and of the North Central American Pacific slope Endemic Bird Area (EBA 017).

Aztec Parakeet *Aratinga astec*: Excellent views of several in the Sierra de Juarez.

Orange-fronted Parakeet *Aratinga canicularis*: Very good views of several feeding in a brushy field at Puerto Arista (nominate).

Barred Parakeet *Bolborhynchus lineola*: Two were, typically, heard and only briefly seen in swift flight in the middle altitudes of the Sierra de Juarez. Barred Parakeets are usually associated with seeding bamboo and are only irregularly recorded (nominate).

White-crowned Parrot *Pionus senilis*: c15 birds were noted at Amatlan, of which several allowed prolonged scope studies. Splendid.

Red-lore Parrot (Yellow-cheeked Parrot) *Amazona autumnalis*: Exquisite scope views of four in the lower reaches of the Sierra de Juarez.

#### CUCULIDAE

Squirrel Cuckoo *Piaya cayana*: Regular excellent observations.

Striped Cuckoo *Tapera naevia* (H): One was calling in the distance at Tehuantepec.

Pheasant Cuckoo *Dromococcyx phasianellus*: Cracking views, on two occasions, of this much-wanted species in the middle reaches of the Sierra de Juarez. We also heard it in the Sumidero Canyon. This is one of only three parasitic Neotropical cuckoos, laying its eggs mainly in nests of Tyrannid flycatchers.

Lesser Ground-Cuckoo *Morococcyx erythropygus*: Amazing eye-ball to eye-ball views of this magnificent species in the Chiapas foothills (*mexicanus*). What a splendid eye make up his bird has!!

Lesser Roadrunner *Geococcyx velox*: A couple of good sightings of this charismatic bird. Beep beep.

Groove-billed Ani *Crotophaga sulcirostris*: Too many. Everyone saw the groves!!

## STRIGIDAE

Pacific Screech-Owl *Otus cooperi*: Superb looks at one in full glory in the Puerto Arista area. Lovely. The New World members of the genus *Otus* are now usually placed in the genus *Megascops*.

Guatemalan Screech-Owl (Middle American Screech-Owl) *Otus guatemalae* (H): We heard the quiet trill in a patch of bamboo at the Sumidero Canyon (nominate).

Bearded Screech-Owl (Santa Barbara Screech-Owl) *Otus barbarus* (H): An excellent audio encounter on Cerro Huitepec near San Cristobal, but the bird was not cooperative and an impressive thunderstorm forced us to abandon the area. The Bearded Screech-Owl is one of the distinctive species of the North Central American highlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA 018), defined by BirdLife International in "Endemic Bird Areas of the World - Priorities for Biodiversity Conservation". This species is treated as **Near-Threatened** in "Threatened Birds of the World".

Central American Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium griseiceps*: Perfect scope views of an angry-looking bird in the lower reaches of the Sierra de Juarez.

Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium brasilianum*: Several great scope studies of this responsive diurnal owl. We will not forget that call easily and my lips still hurt. The form concerned is sometimes split off as a separate species Ridgway's Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium ridgwayi*, but the grounds for this split are rather shaky.

Mottled Owl *Strix virgata* (H): We heard its distinctive calls at Cerro Huitepec, near San Cristobal, but an approaching thunderstorm ruined it all.

## CAPRIMULGIDAE

Lesser Nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis*: Several showed very well in broad daylight at Puerto Arista.

Pauraque (Common Pauraque) *Nyctidromus albicollis*: A few nice encounters in the Sierra de Juarez.

Buff-collared Nightjar *Caprimulgus ridgwayi*: Frustrating views only of a male in the Sumidero Canyon. A distinctive call. The species is sometimes known as Cookacheea or Tucuchillo.

Mexican Whip-poor-will *Caprimulgus arizonae*: Excellent pre-dawn views of a male and a female on Cerro San Felipe near Oaxaca. We also heard it near San Cristobal.

## APODIDAE

White-collared Swift *Streptoprocne zonaris*: Many excellent encounters with this impressive swift (*mexicana*).

Vaux's Swift *Chaetura vauxi*: Several nice observations of these small swifts.

## TROCHILIDAE

Stripe-throated Hermit *Pygmornis striigularis*: Excellent close up encounters with the race *saturatus* at Amatlan. It was formerly lumped in Little Hermit *P. longuemareus*.

Wedge-tailed Sabrewing *Campylopterus curvipennis*: Two birds showed well at Amatlan.

Long-tailed Sabrewing *Campylopterus excellens*: Perfect scope views of this very restricted range species at the Nava's Wren site. It is sometimes considered as a subspecies of Wedge-tailed Sabrewing. The Long-tailed Sabrewing is one of the distinctive species of the Los Tuxtlas and Uxpanapa Endemic Bird Area (EBA 013). It is treated as **Near-Threatened** in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the future of the birds on our planet.

Canivet's Emerald (Fork-tailed Emerald) *Chlorostilbon canivetii*: Many nice views of the nominate race and a habitual mobber of the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl.

Golden-crowned Emerald *Chlorostilbon auriceps*: Two males showed well in the foothills above Puerto Angel.

Dusky Hummingbird *Cyanthus sordidus*: This Mexican endemic was observed a few times in the Oaxaca area and is one of the distinctive species of the Balsas region and interior Oaxaca Endemic Bird Area (EBA 008), defined by BirdLife International in "Endemic Bird Areas of the World - Priorities for Biodiversity Conservation".

Broad-billed Hummingbird *Cyanthus latirostris*: Quite a few in the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City.

Doubleday's Hummingbird *Cyanthus Doubleday*: Great views of this localized endemic in the thorn forests near Tehuantepec.

White-eared Hummingbird *Basilinna leucotis*: Regularly encountered in the highland pine forests (nominate). Not very obvious at all this year.

White-bellied Emerald *Amazilia candida*: Three nice observations of this rather unexciting-looking hummer.

Azure-crowned Hummingbird *Amazilia cyanocephala*: Great looks at this Central American endemic in the Sierra de Juarez (nominate).

Berylline Hummingbird *Amazilia beryllina*: Regular observations of this Central American endemic. Remember the rufous wing panel!

Rufous-tailed Hummingbird *Amazilia tzacatl*: Several sightings on the Atlantic slope.

Buff-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia yucatanensis*: Several lovely sightings in the Sumidero Canyon (*cerviniventris*).

Cinnamon Hummingbird *Amazilia rutila*: Cracking observations of the race *corrallirostris* in the Puerto Arista area.

Violet-crowned Hummingbird *Amazilia violiceps*: Great views of a single bird in the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City.

Green-fronted Hummingbird *Amazilia viridifrons*: Prolonged scope studies of one in the Isthmus foothills. Gorgeous!!

Cinnamon-sided Hummingbird *Amazilia wagneri*: Exquisite scope views in the foothills above Puerto Angel. A very-restricted range species, that is often considered to be a race of the previous species.

Stripe-tailed Hummingbird *Eupherusa eximia*: Two males showed rather well at the Nava's Wren site. Remember the rufous wing panel!

Blue-capped Hummingbird (Oaxaca Hummingbird) *Eupherusa cyanophrys*: Good looks at a male and a female in the Puerto Angel foothills. Another highly localized hummer that is one of the characteristic species of the Sierra Madre del Sur Endemic Bird Area (EBA 009). This species is treated as **Endangered** in "Threatened Birds of the World".

Amethyst-throated Hummingbird *Lampornis amethystinus*: A female that showed well near San Cristobal was our only observation.

Magnificent Hummingbird (Rivoli's H) *Eugenes fulgens*: Several observations of a really attractive hummer.

Long-billed Starthroat *Helimaster longirostris*: Singles showed beautifully in the Sierra de Juarez.

Plain-capped Starthroat *Helimaster constantii*: Great views in the Tehuantepec scrub and in the Sumidero Canyon.

Beautiful Hummingbird *Calothorax pulcher*: Two females of this Mexican endemic showed well at a flowering *Opuntia* (prickly pear) near Oaxaca. It is one of the distinctive species of the Balsas region and interior Oaxaca Endemic Bird Area (EBA 008).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*: Good views of both males and females of this North American species.

Bumblebee Hummingbird *Selasphorus heloisa*: Lovely observations of a male and a female in the Sierra de Juarez. This Mexican endemic is a truly gorgeous species!!! Petra's favourite.

## TROGONIDAE

Citreoline Trogon *Trogon citreolus*: Great looks at this Mexican endemic in the thorn forests of the Pacific coast (*sumichrasti*). All the members of the pantropical trogon family have an incredibly thin skin and very loosely attached feathers, but only the new world members have a serrated bill.

Northern Violaceous Trogon *Trogon caligatus* : Several excellent scope studies of males and females (*braccatus*).

Mountain Trogon *Trogon mexicanus*: Splendid encounters in the Sierra de Juarez (and elsewhere) of this gorgeous Central American endemic (nominate).

Collared Trogon *Trogon collaris*: This widespread species offered lovely views on several occasions (*puella*).

## MOMOTIDAE

Blue-throated Motmot *Aspatha gularis*: Great scope views of one in the San Cristobal area. It is one of the distinctive species of the North Central American highlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA 018).

Blue-crowned Motmot *Momotus momota*: A single was seen well at the Sumichrast's Wren site and others were heard elsewhere.

Russet-crowned Motmot *Momotus mexicanus*: Breath-taking and prolonged scope studies at Tapanatepec and Puerto Arista (*saturatus*). A truly fabulous bird. One of the local names is "reloj" (watch, clock), because of the rhythmic tail movement.

## ALCEDINIDAE

Ringed Kingfisher *Ceryle torquata*: A couple of observations of this most impressive New World Kingfisher.

Green Kingfisher *Chloroceryle americana*: A single sighting at Puerto Arista.

## RAMPHASTIDAE

Emerald Toucanet *Aulacorhynchus prasinus*: Good looks at one in the Sumidero Canyon (*stenorhabdus*).

Wagler's Toucanet *Aulacorhynchus wagleri*: Many excellent views in the foothills above Puerto Angel. This is a recent split from Emerald Toucanet. It is endemic to the Sierra Madre del Sur in Mexico.

Collared Aracari *Pteroglossus torquatus*: Nice observations in the Tapanatepec foothills.

Keel-billed Toucan *Ramphastos sulfuratus*: Great looks at this impressive beast in the lower reaches of the Sierra de Juarez. A marvellous creature!! The more appropriate name Rainbow-billed Toucan is now more and more often used.

## PICIDAE

Acorn Woodpecker *Melanerpes formicivorus*: Several observations of this well-known social species.

Golden-cheeked Woodpecker *Centurus chrysogenys*: Scope views of a cracking male in Puerto Angel. A Mexican endemic.

Grey-breasted Woodpecker *Centurus hypopolius*: This cactus-dwelling endemic of the Oaxaca area showed beautifully near Teotitlan. It is one of the distinctive species of the Balsas region and interior Oaxaca Endemic Bird Area (EBA 008).

Golden-fronted Woodpecker *Centurus aurifrons*: A very common and vocal lowland woodpecker. The races we observed include *grateloupensis* (Amatlan and the Sierra de Juarez) and *polygrammus* (Isthmus).

Ladder-backed Woodpecker *Picoides scalaris*: Several excellent sightings.

Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus*: Just a few encounters.

Strickland's Woodpecker *Picoides stricklandi* (H): Sadly, we only heard this local endemic at La Cima, near Mexico City. Howell & Webb consider Strickland's Woodpecker as endemic to a tiny area of highland forest in the central volcanic belt near Mexico City, but most authorities still consider Strickland's Woodpecker to include the Arizona Woodpecker and thus ranging from southern Arizona to Mexico City. The bird is named after Hugh Edwin Strickland (1811-1853), British ornithologist and zoologist.

Smoky-brown Woodpecker *Veniliornis fumigatus*: One showed all to briefly in the middle reaches of the Sierra de Juarez.

Golden-olive Woodpecker *Piculus rubiginosus* (H): We only heard this widespread species at the Nava's Wren site.

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*: We heard a couple at La Cima near Mexico City and saw one at Cerro San Felipe near Oaxaca, where the race involved is the red-shafted *cafer*. We also obtained five sightings of the race *mexicanoides* (Guatemalan Flicker) in the highlands south of the Isthmus. The distinctive cinnamon head and narrowly-barred upperparts of the latter race were well studied.

Lineated Woodpecker *Dryocopus lineatus*: Good views of one in the Puerto Arista area. Widespread and well-known.

#### FURNARIIDAE

Rufous-breasted Spinetail *Synallaxis erythrothorax*: Marvellous views of this Central American endemic in the Sierra de Juarez. It played a bit hide and seek at first, but eventually we all had repeated great looks (*furtiva*).

Ruddy Foliage-gleaner *Automolus rubiginosus*: Great looks at this expert skulker in the evergreen forests of the Sierra de Juarez (nominate).

#### DENDROCOLAPTIDAE

(This family is now often considered a subfamily in the Furnariidae)

Olivaceous Woodcreeper *Sittasomus griseicapillus*: Good looks at this tiny woodcreeper at Amatlan (*sylvioides*).

Strong-billed Woodcreeper *Xiphocolaptes promeropirhynchus* (NL): Jim saw a couple on Cerro San Felipe.

Ivory-billed Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus flavigaster*: Many heard and several seen. A typical lowland forest and forest edge woodcreeper.

Spot-crowned Woodcreeper *Lepidocolaptes affinis*: A single bird showed well in the San Cristobal area (nominate).

#### THAMNOPHILIDAE

Barred Antshrike *Thamnophilus doliatus*: Excellent views of this widespread species in the Sumidero Canyon (*intermedius*). Always good fun.

#### FORMICARIIDAE

Mexican Antthrush *Formicarius moniliger*: Good views for most of us in the lower reaches of the Sierra de Juarez. Because of the very dense undergrowth, not everyone managed to see this reticent, rail-like species. This is a recent split from Black-faced Antthrush *F. analis*, based primarily on its very distinctive and different song.

#### TYRANNIDAE

Yellow-bellied Tyrannulet *Ornithion semiflavum*: Great views of this tiny arboreal species in the lower reaches of the Sierra de Juarez.

Northern Beardless Tyrannulet *Camptostoma imberbe*: Several great looks at this unobtrusive tyrannid (nominate).

Greenish Elaenia *Myiopagis viridicata*: Regular excellent observations of this modest flycatcher (*placens/pacifica*).

Yellow-bellied Elaenia *Elaenia flavogaster*: Several observations of this widespread species. A highly characteristic voice (*subpagana*).

Ochre-bellied Flycatcher *Mionectes oleagineus*: A single bird showed well in the evergreen forest at Amatlan (*assimilis*).

Northern Bentbill *Oncostoma cinereigulare* (H): We heard the distinctive voice of this different-looking tyrannid at the Nava's Wren site.

Common Tody-Flycatcher *Todirostrum cinereum*: A single bird was seen at Puerto Arista.

Belted Flycatcher *Xenotriccus callizonus*: Dynamite views of this very distinctive, beautiful, little-known and rare flycatcher at the Sumidero Canyon. Very much appreciated!! It is a rarely seen Central American endemic, which is treated as **Near-Threatened** in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the future of the birds on our planet. It is one of the characteristic species of the North Central American highlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA 018).

Pileated Flycatcher *Xenotriccus mexicanus*: Repeated great views of several birds at Teotitlan. This localized and easy to miss bird is one of the distinctive species of the Balsas region and interior Oaxaca Endemic Bird Area (EBA 008). It is treated as **Near-Threatened** in "Threatened Birds of the World".

Tufted Flycatcher *Mitrephanes phaeocercus*: A single observation in the southern Sierra Madre del Sur.

Olive-sided Flycatcher *Contopus borealis*: Regular sightings of this northern migrant.

Greater Pewee *Contopus pertinax*: Many excellent observations. A distinctive call.

Western Pewee (Western Wood-Pewee) *Contopus sordidulus*: Several sightings of this unobtrusive northern migrant.

Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus*: Good numbers of this winter visitor.

Hammond's Flycatcher *Empidonax hammondii*: A single bird showed well in mixed pine-oak forest near Mexico City.

Dusky Flycatcher *Empidonax oberholseri*: Excellent views of this winter visitor in the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City and on Cerro San Felipe.

Pine Flycatcher *Empidonax affinis*: Good views on Cerro San Felipe (*bairdi*).

Pacific-slope Flycatcher *Empidonax difficilis*: A single bird was identified in the Sumidero Canyon.

Cordilleran Flycatcher *Empidonax occidentalis*: One showed well in limestone forest at Amatlan.

Buff-breasted Flycatcher *Empidonax fulvifrons*: The most distinctive member of a difficult genus!!!! We observed this subtly beautiful species near Mexico City.

Vermilion Flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus*: Many excellent sightings of this lovely species (*mexicanus*). One of the local names in Venezuela is "Hijo del Sol" (= the son of the sun).

Flammulated Attila *Attila flammulatus* (H): We heard its distinctive voice in the Puerto Angel foothills and at the Nava's Wren site. This is a recent split from Bright-rumped Attila *Attila spadiceus*.

Dusky-capped Flycatcher *Myiarchus tuberculifer*: Regular encounters with this distinctive *Myiarchus* Flycatcher.

Ash-throated Flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens*: Regular observations of the nominate race.

Nutting's Flycatcher *Myiarchus nuttingi*: Several fine views of the race *inquietus*. The genus *Myiarchus* is always a bit of a nightmare and its members are usually best identified by voice.

Brown-crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus tyrannulus*: Regular sightings of the race *cooperi*.

- Flammulated Flycatcher *Deltarhynchus flammulatus*: Great looks at a couple of birds in the Sumidero Canyon. Unobtrusive, but luckily its very distinctive call betrays its presence. The lovely genus name refers to the short, but wide bill of this species (delta = the letter Δ and rhunkhos = bill, in Greek). It is the only member of its genus.
- Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus*: Many encounters with the race *derbianus* (Isthmus) and the race *guatimalensis* (Pacific slope). A highly characteristic call!!
- Boat-billed Flycatcher *Megarynchus pitangua*: Regular encounters with the race *mexicanus*. What a bill!!!
- Social Flycatcher *Myiozetetes similis*: Many observations of this vocal species (*texensis*).
- Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher *Myiodynastes luteiventris*: This summer visitor was regularly seen all over the circuit.
- Piratic Flycatcher *Legatus leucophaeus*: A couple of sightings of the race *variegatus* in the Sierra de Juarez.
- Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus*: The famous TK. Regular observations of the race *satrapa*.
- Cassin's Kingbird *Tyrannus vociferans*: Regular sightings in the highlands (nominate).
- Thick-billed Kingbird *Tyrannus crassirostris*: Two birds showed off their main feature at Teotitlan (nominate).
- Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis*: Several were gorging themselves on the rich supply of insects at Puerto Arista.
- Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus*: Three of these northern migrants were feeding together with the previous species.
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus*: c25 of these beauties showed very well in the Puerto Arista area. A real cracker!!
- Fork-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus savana*: A single bird was noted in the Veracruz lowlands (*monachus*).

#### COTINGIDAE

- Grey-collared Becard *Pachyramphus major*: We observed a female in the evergreen forests near Mexico City on our first day out. This much wanted species is restricted to Mexico and northern Central America.
- Rose-throated Becard *Platypsaris aglaiae*: Excellent sightings of a male and a female at Puerto Arista. Always a delightful bird to observe (nominate). We also saw the bulky nest.
- Masked Tityra *Tityra semifasciata*: Regular observations of this widespread species.

#### HIRUNDINIDAE

- Grey-breasted Martin *Progne chalybea*: Small numbers in the lowlands (nominate).
- Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*: A few of these northern migrants were noted in the Veracruz lowlands.
- Mangrove Swallow *Tachycineta albilinea*: Small numbers showed well at several coastal and near-coastal sites.
- Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina*: Excellent views in the highlands near Mexico City, in the Sierra de Juarez and near Oaxaca (nominate).
- Black-capped Swallow *Notiochelidon pileata*: Good views of several in the San Cristobal highlands. It is one of the characteristic species of the North Central American highlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA 018).
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*: Regular encounters.
- Ridgway's Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx ridgwayi*: Good looks at several in the Sumidero Canyon. This species is often considered to be a mere subspecies of Northern Rough-winged Swallow.
- Bank Swallow (Sand Martin) *Riparia riparia*: A few were noted in the Veracruz lowlands.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: Many encounters with this well-known bird, here of the race *erythrogaster*, with its dark vinaceous underparts.

#### CORVIDAE

Steller's Jay *Cyanocitta stelleri*: Several vociferous flocks in the highland pine forests. We saw the race *azteca* near Mexico City, *restricta* near Oaxaca and *ridgwayi* in the Chiapas highlands. The species is named after Georg Wilhelm Steller (1709-1746), German naturalist and explorer in Russian service who took part in Vitus Bering's expedition to Alaska, 1740-1742.

White-throated Magpie-Jay *Calocitta formosa*: Many sightings of this splendid bird in the Pacific lowlands. A bit of a harlequin!! We saw the nominate race in the Oaxaca lowlands and *azurea* in Chiapas.

Green Jay *Cyanocorax luxuosus*: Great looks at this attractive species in the Sierra Madre del Sur and in the Sumidero Canyon (*vividus*).

Brown Jay *Cyanocorax morio*: Many observations of this loud-mouthed species in the Atlantic lowlands. We saw the race *palliatu*s in Amatlan and the Sierra de Juarez and the nominate race in northern Chiapas.

Dwarf Jay *Cyanolyca nana*: Eye-ball to eye-ball looks at this very localized endemic on Cerro San Felipe. At least four birds showed brilliantly. Glorious moments!! This species is treated as **Vulnerable** in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the future of the birds on our planet. It is one of the characteristic species of the Southern Sierra Madre Occidental Endemic Bird Area (EBA 012).

White-throated Jay (Omitemi Jay) *Cyanolyca mirabilis*: One was glimpsed in the southern Sierra Madre del Sur. We tried hard, but the birds just would not play. Frustrating moments. It is one of the distinctive species of the Sierra Madre del Sur Endemic Bird Area (EBA 009) and it is treated as **Vulnerable** in "Threatened Birds of the World".

Western Scrub Jay *Aphelocoma caerulescens*: Several observations of this widespread species near Oaxaca (*sumichrasti*).

Grey-breasted Jay (Mexican Jay) *Aphelocoma ultramarina*: Excellent views of three birds in mixed pine-oak forest near Mexico City.

Unicoloured Jay *Aphelocoma unicolor*: Lovely views of this gorgeous bird in the Sierra de Juarez (*oaxacae*) and near San Cristobal (*unicolor*).

Northern Raven (Common Raven) *Corvus corax*: Several sightings near Oaxaca (*sinuatus*).

#### PARIDAE

Mexican Chickadee *Parus sclateri*: A few sightings in the highlands. We saw the nominate race near Mexico City and the race *rayi* near Oaxaca.

#### AEGITHALIDAE

Bushtit *Psaltriparus minimus*: Several excellent sightings of flocks of the black-eared form in the highlands. A very lively bird. We observed the race *personatus* near Mexico City and *melanotis* near Oaxaca and San Cristobal. Riitta found a nest in the UNAM Botanical gardens.

#### SITTIDAE

White-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis*. A couple of birds at La Cima near Mexico City.

#### CERTHIIDAE

Brown Creeper *Certhia americana*: Two showed well at La Cima near the capital (*alticola*) and another two were seen in the highland forests of Chiapas (*pernigra*).

## TROGLODYTIDAE

- Band-backed Wren *Campylorhynchus zonatus*: Several splendid sightings of this widespread and vocal species.
- Grey-barred Wren *Campylorhynchus megalopterus*: This impressive endemic was observed at length in the pine forests near the capital, in the Sierra de Juarez and on Cerro San Felipe (*nelsoni*). Superb views. It is one of the distinctive species of the Sierra Madre Occidental and trans-Mexican range Endemic Bird Area (EBA 006) and of the Southern Sierra Madre Occidental EBA (EBA 012).
- Giant Wren *Campylorhynchus chiapensis*: Many perfect views of this impressive and vocal bird near Puerto Arista. An appropriate scientific name. This species is endemic to the Chiapas coast and is one of the characteristic species of the North Central American Pacific slope Endemic Bird Area (EBA 017).
- Rufous-naped Wren *Campylorhynchus rufinucha*: Several showed beautifully in the Tehuantepec area (*humilis*).
- Boucard's Wren *Campylorhynchus jocosus*: Several close up observations of this endemic in the Oaxaca area. The specific scientific name *jocosus* stems from the Latin word *iocosus* (merry, humorous) and probably relates to the rather exuberant vocalizations of this species.
- Rock Wren *Salpinctes obsoletus*: Smashing looks at this widespread species at the Monte Alban ruins (nominate).
- Canyon Wren *Catherpes mexicanus*: A single played hide and seek, but eventually showed to some in the UNAM Botanical gardens in Mexico City and we also saw and heard it at the Monte Alban ruins (*mexicanus*).
- Sumichrast's Wren *Hylorchilus sumichrasti*: Magnificent views in the Amatlan karst hills. Marvellous to see it creep about in the nooks and crannies of those large, vine and creeper covered limestone outcrops. A terrific voice too!!! Sumichrast's Wren is endemic to west-central Veracruz, north Oaxaca and extreme east Puebla and its range covers only c6000 km<sup>2</sup>. The bird is named after the Mexican naturalist and field worker Francis Sumichrast (1828-1882). It is treated as **Near-Threatened** in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the future of the birds on our planet. It scored high in the Bird of the Trip contest.
- Nava's Wren *Hylorchilus navai*: Superb views of an incredibly cooperative bird in limestone outcrop habitat in western Chiapas. What a thrilling performance!! We were able to admire its splendidly long bill at very close range. Perfect scope studies!! **The absolute winner of the Bird of the Trip contest** and the favourite species for Riitta, John and Jay. Nava's Wren has a range of only c4000 km<sup>2</sup> in easternmost Veracruz, west Chiapas and east Oaxaca and is restricted to karst outcrops. It is one of the distinctive species of the Los Tuxtlas and Uxpanapa Endemic Bird Area (EBA 013) and is treated as **Vulnerable** in "Threatened Birds of the World".
- Spot-breasted Wren *Thryothorus maculipectus*: Good looks at this skulker in the thorn forest near Amatlan and at the Nava's Wren site. We also heard it commonly in the Sierra de Juarez (*canobrunneus*).
- Happy Wren *Thryothorus felix*: Good looks at this West Mexican speciality in the Puerto Angel foothills.
- Banded Wren *Thryothorus pleurostictus*: Many great sightings of this well-marked bird (*oaxacae*). They were extremely vocal during our visit.
- Plain Wren *Thryothorus modestus*: A single bird showed all too briefly at the Sumidero Canyon (nominate).

- White-bellied Wren *Uropsila leucogastra*: Great looks at this tiny wren at the Nava's Wren site. Endemic to Mexico and extreme northern Central America.
- Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii*: Several sightings in central Mexico (*muriunus*). The bird is named after Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), British naturalist, artist and author, who also has a swan named after him.
- Northern House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*: Regular encounters with this familiar species near Oaxaca.
- Brown-throated House Wren *Troglodytes brunneicollis*: Good views in the pine forests near Mexico City.
- Southern House Wren *Troglodytes musculus*: Regularly recorded south of the Isthmus.
- Rufous-browed Wren *Troglodytes rufociliatus*: Great looks, eventually, at this attractive critter on Cerro Tzontehuitz near San Cristobal. It is one of the distinctive species of the North Central American highlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA 018).
- White-breasted Wood-Wren *Henicorhina leucosticta*: Many heard and a single seen at several foothill sites on the Atlantic slope.
- Grey-breasted Wood-Wren *Henicorhina leucophrys*: Excellent views of this widespread skulker in the Sierra de Juarez and on Cerro San Felipe. We also heard it in the San Cristobal area.

#### SYLVIIDAE

- Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*: A few observations near Mexico City (nominate).
- White-lored Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila albiloris*: Commonly encountered along the Pacific coast (*vanrossemi*). It sure hates Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls!

#### TURDIDAE

- Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis*: Several observations near Mexico City and near San Cristobal. A real beauty!!
- Western Bluebird *Sialia mexicana*: Five or so showed beautifully at La Cima near Mexico City (*australis*). A lovely species.
- Brown-backed Solitaire *Myadestes occidentalis*: A beautiful and remarkable songster, of which we obtained many great views (*deignani* north of the Isthmus and *oberholseri* near San Cristobal). We also found a nest containing three eggs in the Huitepec Reserve.
- Slate-coloured Solitaire *Myadestes unicolor*: Another remarkable songster that allowed great looks in the Sierra de Juarez. We also recorded it at the Nava's Wren site (nominate). A nest with three eggs was found in the Sierra de Juarez.
- Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush *Catharus aurantirostris*: Several excellent encounters with this rather secretive species.
- Russet Nightingale-Thrush *Catharus occidentalis*: Excellent views of this endemic in the highland forests of the Sierra de Juarez and on Cerro San Felipe (nominate).
- Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush (Highland Nightingale-Thrush) *Catharus frantzii*: Several great observations, whereby we were able to appreciate why it is called that way.
- Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush *Catharus mexicanus*: Great looks at close range in the Sierra de Juarez.
- Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*: Regular observations of this northern migrant.
- Black Thrush (Black Robin) *Turdus infuscatus*: A few observations in the highlands. This usually shy and reclusive species is restricted to Mexico and Central America.
- Mountain Thrush (Mountain Robin) *Turdus plebejus*: A few sightings of this drably-attired thrush in the San Cristobal area.
- Clay-coloured Thrush (Clay-coloured Robin) *Turdus grayi*: A commonly-encountered species. Not the most colourful thrush!! Costa Rica's national bird.

- White-throated Thrush *Turdus assimilis*: Regular encounters. The southern populations are more distinctive.
- Rufous-backed Thrush *Turdus rufopalliatu*s: Excellent views of this lovely bird in the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City and in the Oaxaca area (nominate).
- Rufous-collared Thrush *Turdus rufitorques*: Many splendid observations in the San Cristobal area. It is one of the distinctive species of the North Central American highlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA 018).
- American Robin *Turdus migratorius*: Regular in the highland forests.

#### MIMIDAE

- Blue Mockingbird *Melanotis caerulescens*: Several great encounters and perfect scope studies in the Oaxaca area. A bird with character! Red eyes!!
- Blue-and-white Mockingbird *Melanotis hypoleucus*: This species remained rather secretive during our visit, but in the end we all got good views of this characteristic species of the North Central American highlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA 018).
- Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*: A few in Mexico City, in the Oaxaca area and even near Tehuantepec (*leucopterus*).
- Tropical Mockingbird *Mimus gilvus*: A few near San Cristobal, where they were chasing Blue-and-white Mockingbirds (*leucophaeus*).
- Curve-billed Thrasher *Toxostoma curvirostre*: Several excellent encounters with this bird full of personality (nominate).
- Ocellated Thrasher *Toxostoma ocellatum*: This attractive and highly distinctive endemic was scoped in an area of oak scrub near Oaxaca (*villai*). Smashing views!!

#### MOTACILLIDAE

- American Pipit *Anthus rubescens*: A single bird showed well at the Teotitlan pond. A northern migrant.

#### BOMBYCILLIDAE

- Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*: Several fantastic encounters with this gem of a bird. Perfect scope studies of the red waxy bits on the secondaries. Many good sized flocks totalling more than 150 birds in the Puerto Angel foothills.

#### PTILOGONATIDAE

- Grey Silky-Flycatcher (Grey Silky) *Ptilogonys cinereus*: One of the star birds of the highland forests, with just a few observations this year. It is endemic to Mexico and Guatemala. The four species of Silky-Flycatcher are closely related to waxwings and are often merged with them in the Bombycillidae.

#### STURNIDAE

- European Starling (Common Starling) *Sturnus vulgaris*: Ten or so showed well at the Almoloja marshes. Obviously spreading.

#### VIREONIDAE

- Slaty Vireo *Vireo brevipennis*: Petra outdid herself (again) by finding one of these marvels at the White-throated Jay spot in the Sierra Madre del Sur. A pity it got away a bit too quickly. A Mexican endemic.
- Dwarf Vireo *Vireo nelsoni*: A singing bird performed very well in the scrub near Teotitlan. It is endemic to southern central Mexico.

Blue-headed Vireo *Vireo solitarius*: Cassin's and Plumbeous Vireos were formerly lumped in this species, being called Solitary Vireo. A few observations of the nominate race.

Cassin's Vireo *Vireo cassinii*: A single sighting only.

Plumbeous Vireo *Vireo plumbeus*: A single bird was observed at Teotitlan.

Hutton's Vireo *Vireo huttoni*: Good views of several in the highland oak forests (*mexicanus*).

Golden Vireo *Vireo hypochryseus*: Great looks at a pair in the thorn forest at Teotitlan. Rather unusual there.

Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus*: Regular sightings.

Yellow-green Vireo *Vireo flavoviridis*: Several seen very well and many heard in the foothills above Arriaga.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*: A few observation only.

Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo *Vireolanus melitophrys*: Cracking views of a splendidly performing pair in the southern Sierra Madre del Sur (*goldmani*). A truly magnificent jewel of a bird, endemic to Mexico and Guatemala.

Rufous-browed Peppershrike *Cyclarhis gujanensis*: This widespread Neotropical species was heard and briefly seen in the Sumidero Canyon .

#### PARULIDAE

Orange-crowned Warbler *Vermivora celata*: This unobtrusive species was only seen in the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City.

Nashville Warbler *Vermivora ruficapilla*: Regularly recorded throughout the tour.

Virginia's Warbler *Vermivora virginiae*: Two showed well in the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City.

Crescent-chested Warbler *Vermivora superciliosa*: This really smart-looking Mexican and Central American endemic was recorded near Mexico City, in the Sierra de Juarez, on Cerro San Felipe and in the San Cristobal area. A beauty!!!

Northern Parula *Parula americana*: A couple of observations of this northern migrant.

Tropical Parula *Parula pitiayumi*: A single sighting of this little gem. The scientific epithet is a Guarani (Paraguay) Indian name, meaning 'little yellow chest' for this species.

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*: A common lowland warbler, of which we only saw the migratory nominate race.

Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica*: A gorgeous male showed very well in the Sumidero Canyon.

Magnolia Warbler *Dendroica magnolia*: Another fairly common lowland winter visitor, of which several splendid males were recorded.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*: Fairly common in the highlands where all were of the western, yellow-throated form, formerly known as Audubon's Warbler *D. auduboni*.

Townsend's Warbler *Dendroica townsendi*: A few of these very attractive creatures in the highland pine forests.

Black-throated Green Warbler *Dendroica virens*: Regular observations, including some really cracking males. Especially common in the San Cristobal area.

Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca*: Small numbers of gorgeous males in breeding plumage were recorded. What a bird!!!

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*: Quite a few showed off their distinctive creeping behaviour. A gem of a bird.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*: Regular sightings, including several pristine males.

Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis*: A single bird showed at a coastal lagoon near Tehuantepec.

MacGillivray's Warbler *Oporornis tolmiei*: Singles showed very well in the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City and in the Amatlan coffee plantation.

- Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*: A few were noted in the Puerto Arista area.
- Hooded Yellowthroat *Geothlypis nelsoni*: Perfect views of several singing males at the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City. A Mexican endemic of dry brushy scrub and chaparral.
- Black-pollled Yellowthroat *Geothlypis speciosa*: At least three of these rare endemics were seen in the reedbeds of the Almoloya marshes. It was quite windy, so the birds did not want to stay in the open for long. This species is treated as **Endangered** in "Threatened Birds of the World". It is the characteristic species of the Central Mexican marshes Endemic Bird Area (EBA 007).
- Grey-crowned Yellowthroat *Chamaethlypis poliocephala*: Good views of one at Amatlan.
- Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla*: One of the more common migrant warblers.
- Canada Warbler *Wilsonia canadensis*: A male showed particularly well in the Sumidero Canyon.
- Red Warbler *Ergaticus ruber*: Many great looks at this fabulous and glorious endemic in the pine forests of Oaxaca (nominated). A really exquisite and much-wanted species!!!
- Pink-headed Warbler *Ergaticus versicolor*: A single bird showed very well near San Cristobal and was much appreciated. It took a while to get!! Another bird was seen nearby by our ladies. It is one of the distinctive species of the North Central American highlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA 018) and it is treated as **Vulnerable** in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the future of the birds on our planet.
- Slate-throated Redstart (Slate-throated Whitestart) *Myioborus miniatus*: Commonly seen (nominated). These were red-bellied birds, quite different from the yellow-bellied forms in South America.
- Fan-tailed Warbler *Basileuterus lachrymosa*: Magnificent close up looks at this lovely and incredibly confiding species at an ant swarm in the Sumidero Canyon. A stunner of a bird. Endemic to Mexico and northern Central America.
- Golden-crowned Warbler *Basileuterus culicivorus*: Regular encounters with this widespread species.
- Rufous-capped Warbler *Basileuterus rufifrons*: Another attractive warbler which showed well on several occasions.
- Golden-browed Warbler *Basileuterus belli*: Great views of this highland skulker in the Sierra de Juarez, on Cerro San Felipe and in the Sierra de Miahuatlan. Another magnificent species!
- Red-breasted Chat *Granatellus venustus*: Smashing views of this gorgeous endemic at the Sumidero Canyon (nominated). It sure took a while before we managed to connect with this much-wanted cracker of a bird. Jim's favourite. It scored high in the Bird of the Trip contest.

#### PEUCEDRAMIDAE

- Olive Warbler *Peucedramus taeniatus*: Great looks at a smart male and a female in the highland pines near San Cristobal. It has recently been put in its own family, based on very different DNA and voice characteristics.

#### EMBERIZIDAE

- Bananaquit *Coereba flaveola*: Only recorded in the Sierra de Juarez.
- Golden-hooded Tanager *Tangara larvata* (NL): Two were seen by Petra in the lower reaches of the Sierra de Juarez.
- Green Honeycreeper *Chlorophanes spiza*: Perfect scope views of this widespread Neotropical species in the Sierra de Juarez.
- Red-legged Honeycreeper *Cyanerpes cyaneus*: Regular observations of the race *carneipes*. Many great looks at lovely males.
- Blue-crowned Chlorophonia *Chlorophonia occipitalis*: Smashing looks at this really beautiful and stunning species in the Sierra de Juarez. A gorgeous Central American endemic.

Scrub Euphonia *Euphonia affinis*: Many excellent looks. A distinctive call.

Yellow-throated Euphonia *Euphonia hirundinacea*: Especially common in the Sumidero Canyon (nominate).

Blue-hooded Euphonia (Elegant Euphonia) *Euphonia elegantissima*: Several excellent observations of this mistletoe specialist (nominate). A real beauty.

Olive-backed Euphonia *Euphonia gouldi*: We saw a couple in the lower Sierra de Juarez.

Blue-grey Tanager *Thraupis episcopus*: Three were seen in the lower reaches of the Sierra de Juarez.

Yellow-winged Tanager *Thraupis abbas*: Many very good views of this subtly-coloured species. Abbas (Latin) = abbot, for this bird was named after J. Abbott (1751-1840), a US philologist.

Red-crowned Ant-Tanager *Habia rubica*: Great looks at a pair at the Nava's Wren site. Widespread and well-known.

Red-throated Ant-Tanager *Habia fuscicauda*: Several great encounters with this skulker. Especially confiding at the ant swarm in the Sumidero Canyon.

Northern Hepatic Tanager *Piranga hepatica*: Good looks at a male at Teotitlan. Hepatic = liver coloured. Recent genetic research has indicated that the *Piranga* tanagers probably belong with the cardinals.

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra*: A couple of observations.

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana*: A fairly common migrant with several observations of cracking males.

White-winged Tanager *Spermagra leucoptera*: Six observations of this lovely species.

Crimson-collared Tanager *Phlogothraupis sanguinolenta*: Regular in the lower reaches of the Sierra de Juarez and at the Nava's Wren site. Very attractive.

Common Bush-Tanager *Chlorospingus ophthalmicus*: Many in the highland forests. We saw the nominate race in the Sierra de Juarez and *albifrons* above Puerto Angel.

Greyish Saltator *Saltator caeruleus*: A single sighting of this widespread species.

Buff-throated Saltator *Saltator maximus*: A few observations of a widespread bird.

Black-headed Saltator *Saltator atriceps*: Smashing looks at vociferous parties at different spots. A very distinctive voice!!

Black-faced Grosbeak *Caryothraustes poliogaster*: A few at the Nava's Wren site.

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*: We heard it in the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City and saw a male near Puerto Angel.

Yellow Grosbeak *Pheucticus chrysopheplus*: Brief views only of this great bird at the Sumidero Canyon (*aurantiacus*).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*: Regular observations, mainly of handsome males. The bird is named after the Louisiana Territory or Colony, the Mississippi Basin claimed by France and named after King Louis XIV ('Ludovicus'). Covering a much larger area than the present state of Louisiana, it was a Spanish possession from 1763, before being repossessed by the French and sold by Napoleon to the USA in 1803.

Black-headed Grosbeak *Pheucticus melanocephalus*: Regular in the highlands near Mexico City and Oaxaca (nominate).

Blue Bunting *Cyanocompsa parellina*: Excellent views of a female near Puerto Angel (nominate).

Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea*: Repeated good looks at this attractive species. Traditionally put in the monotypic genus *Guiraca*.

Rosita's Bunting (Rose-bellied Bunting) *Passerina rositae*: One of the birds of the trip!! No fewer than seven sightings of this amazing, very-localized bird in the foothills of the Tehuantepec Isthmus. The males are really out of this world and the one that sat only four metres from us was truly exquisite. The bird is named after Rosita Sumichrast, wife of the Mexican naturalist Francis Sumichrast. This endemic species is treated as **Near-Threatened** in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the future

of the birds on our planet. It is one of the characteristic species of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec Endemic Bird Area (EBA 014). It scored very high in the Bird of the Trip contest.

- Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*: A few sightings of this delightful species.
- Orange-breasted Bunting *Passerina leclancherii*: Another unbelievable endemic bunting with an amazing combination of colours (*grandior*). Definitely another mega bird!! Named after C. Léclancher (1804-1857), French explorer and surgeon.
- Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris*: A few observations of brilliant males and bright green females. Always delightful.
- Dickcissel *Spiza americana*: It was a nice surprise to find a male and a female of this northern migrant at Puerto Arista.
- White-naped Brush-Finch *Atlapetes albinucha*: Fair looks at this rather localized Mexican endemic in the Sierra de Juarez. It used to be considered a subspecies of Yellow-throated Brush-Finch *Atlapetes gutteralis*.
- Yellow-throated Brush-Finch *Atlapetes gutteralis*: Excellent views of two in the San Cristobal area. Its range reaches from the Tehuantepec Isthmus till northern Colombia.
- Rufous-capped Brush-Finch *Atlapetes pileatus*: Several encounters with this skulker. It is endemic to the Mexican highlands north of the Isthmus.
- Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch *Atlapetes brunneinucha* (NL): A single bird was noted in the Sierra de Juarez.
- Orange-billed Sparrow *Arremon aurantiirostris*: Fantastic views of one at the Nava's Wren site. Another cracker.
- Olive Sparrow *Arremonops rufivirgatus*: Regular observations of this unobtrusive bird in the Canyon del Sumidero.
- Collared Towhee *Pipilo ocai*: Marvellous looks at Cerro San Felipe. Yet another endemic (*brunnescens*).
- Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus*: Good views of several near San Cristobal.
- Canyon Towhee *Pipilo fuscus*: Common at the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City (nominate).
- White-throated Towhee *Pipilo albicollis*: A common endemic of the Oaxaca area (nominate). It is one of the distinctive species of the Balsas region and interior Oaxaca Endemic Bird Area (EBA 008).
- Blue-black Grassquit *Volatinia jacarina*: Regular observations (*splendens*). Displaying males are lovely to watch.
- Variable Seedeater *Sporophila aurita*: A couple of birds showed well in the lower reaches of the Sierra de Juarez.
- White-collared Seedeater *Sporophila torqueola*: Quite a few in the lowlands (*mutanda*).
- Ruddy-breasted Seedeater *Sporophila minuta*: A few at Puerto Arista showed well.
- Blue Seedeater *Amaurospiza concolor*: A splendid male showed particularly well in the Sumidero Canyon. An excellent observation.
- Yellow-faced Grassquit *Tiaris olivacea*: Good views of a smart-looking male (*intermedia*).
- Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer *Diglossa baritula*: Several birds showed well near San Cristobal. It is endemic to Mexico and northern Central America.
- Bridled Sparrow *Aimophila mystacalis*: Regular sightings of this beautiful endemic in the Oaxaca area. Definitely one of the best-looking sparrows. It is one of the characteristic species of the Balsas region and interior Oaxaca Endemic Bird Area (EBA 008).
- Stripe-headed Sparrow *Aimophila ruficauda*: Several of these striking sparrows were noted in the Tapanatepec foothills (*lawrencii*).
- Sumichrast's Sparrow (Cinnamon-tailed Sparrow) *Aimophila sumichrasti*: Another well marked endemic sparrow which gave great views near Tehuantepec. The bird is named after the Mexican naturalist and field worker Francis Sumichrast (1828-1882) and has a tiny area

of distribution centred on the Pacific slope of the Tehuantepec Isthmus. This species is treated as **Near-Threatened** in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the future of the birds on our planet. It is one of the distinctive species of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec Endemic Bird Area (EBA 014).

Rufous-crowned Sparrow *Aimophila ruficeps*: A single bird showed well in the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City.

Oaxaca Sparrow *Aimophila notosticta*: Two showed well near Oaxaca. Good scope studies of this unobtrusive endemic. It is one of the distinctive species of the Balsas region and interior Oaxaca Endemic Bird Area (EBA 008) and is treated as **Near-Threatened** in "Threatened Birds of the World".

Rusty Sparrow *Aimophila rufescens*: Fine observations of this distinctive sparrow.

Striped Sparrow *Oriturus superciliosus*: This large endemic sparrow was commonly observed at La Cima near Mexico City.

Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerina*: Another common migrant sparrow of the highlands.

Black-chinned Sparrow *Spizella atrogularis* (H): We heard the distinctive song in the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City.(nominate).

Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*: A couple showed at the Almoloya marshes.

Sierra Madre Sparrow *Ammodramus baileyi*: Excellent scope views of four of these rare and extremely-localized endemics in the bunch grass at La Cima near Mexico City. The total range (i.e. suitable habitat) covers only 54 km<sup>2</sup> and the population was estimated at 2500-10000 birds, but is probably a lot less. It is definitely one of the rarest of Mexican birds and is treated as **Endangered** in "Threatened Birds of the World", BirdLife International's magnificent book on the future of the birds on our planet. This sparrow is one of the characteristic species of the Sierra Madre Occidental and trans-Mexican range Endemic Bird Area (EBA 006).

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*: Good numbers of these large dark birds in and near the reedbeds of the Almoloya marshes.

Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolni*: A single skulking migrant in the highlands.

Rufous-collared Sparrow *Zonotrichia capensis*: Commonly encountered in the highlands of Chiapas (*septentrionalis*).

Yellow-eyed Junco *Junco phaeonotus*: A common highland bird with piercing eyes. Make sure you note where you have seen this bird, as the taxonomy of this group is not clear yet.

## ICTERIDAE

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*: Two forms were observed: the widespread and migratory *phoeniceus* and the localized *gubernator*, which lacks the creamy-yellow edge to the red shoulders. The latter form occurs only in highland marshes and is called Bicoloured Blackbird (a future split?).

Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna*: A few near Mexico City, in the Veracruz lowlands and at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. We witnessed some really spectacular display.

Melodious Blackbird *Dives dives*: Regular sightings in the lowlands. A lovely song. This species is still spreading and will probably reach the US soon.

Great-tailed Grackle *Cassidix mexicanus*: Everywhere and extremely common.

Bronzed Cowbird *Molothrus aeneus*: Regular encounters. Red eyes!! Some lovely display was admired.

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*: c50 of these northern migrants were seen at the Almoloya marshes.

Black-cowled Oriole *Icterus prosthemelas*: Three were observed in the Sierra de Juarez.

Bar-winged Oriole *Icterus maculialatus*: We found a single male in the Sumidero Canyon and it showed at close range. A very localized and rarely-encountered species. It is one of the distinctive species of the North Central American highlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA 018).

Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurius*: A few sightings of this endearing species at Puerto Arista (nominate).

Black-vented Oriole *Icterus wagleri*: Several observations of this lovely oriole in the Oaxaca area (nominate).

Audubon's Oriole *Icterus graduacauda*: Great looks at several above Puerto Angel. The form concerned is sometimes split off as a separate species: Dickey's Oriole *Icterus dickeyae*.

Streak-backed Oriole *Icterus pustulatus*: Common along the Pacific coast (*formosus*).

Spot-breasted Oriole *Icterus pectoralis*: Three showed well in the Puerto Arista area.

Altamira Oriole *Icterus gularis*: Several great views of this marvellous species. We saw the race *gularis*.

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*: Repeated encounters with this northern migrant.

Bullock's Oriole *Icterus bullockii*: A single was seen near Mexico City.

Abeille's Oriole (Black-headed Oriole) *Icterus abeillei*: Great views of a male in the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City. Attractive!!

Scott's Oriole *Icterus parisorum*: A male caught our attention in the UNAM Botanical Gardens in Mexico City.

Yellow-billed Cacique *Amblycercus holosericeus*: This secretive species performed nicely in a patch of thick bamboo growth in the Sumidero canyon.

Yellow-winged Cacique *Cacicus melanicterus*: Many splendid looks in the Pacific lowlands. A lovely wispy crest.

Montezuma Oropendola *Psarocolius montezuma*: The larger of the two Mexican oropendolas was regular in the Pacific lowlands. This species is obviously named after Montezuma or Moctezuma Xocoyotzin (1480-1520), Emperor of the Aztecs. He died of wounds inflicted by his own subjects, enraged of his support for the Spanish conquistadores under Cortes.

#### FRINGILLIDAE

House Finch *Carpodacus mexicanus*: Many observations (nominate).

Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*: We saw several in the pines at La Cima near Mexico City.

Pine Siskin *Carduelis pinus*: A few in the pines at La Cima, near Mexico City.

Black-capped Siskin *Carduelis atriceps*: Perfect scope views of a pair at two different locations near San Cristobal. A much better looking bird than usually depicted. It is endemic to the highlands of Chiapas and Guatemala.

Lesser Goldfinch (Dark-backed Goldfinch) *Carduelis psaltria*: A couple of encounters with the nominate race.

#### PASSERIDAE

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Regular, but not really common.

#### MAMMALS

Common Opossum *Didelphis marsupialis* (NL): Jim saw one of these in the forest near San Cristobal

Mexican Cottontail *Sylvilagus cunicularius*: A few encounters.

Mexican Grey Squirrel (Red-bellied S) *Sciurus aureogaster*: Regular observations of this variable species.

Deppe's Squirrel *Sciurus deppei* (NL): This is the small all brown squirrel that was encountered in the forest of the Sierra de Juarez.

Mexican Black Agouti *Dasyprocta mexicana*: One crossed the road in the Sierra de Juarez.

Grey Fox *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*: Magnificent views of a well marked, hunting animal on Cerro Tzontehuitz near San Cristobal.

Ringtail *Bassariscus astutus*: One crossed the road at night near Oaxaca.

Common Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*: Ten or so were seen off Puerto Arista.

Striped Dolphin *Stenella coeruleoalba*: A magnificent pod of c25 showed at close range on our pelagic off Puerto Angel. We first thought they were Pacific White-sided Dolphins *Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*, but their description does not match what we saw.

#### OTHER CREATURES

Green Sea Turtle *Chelonia mydas*: We saw about 30 of these fascinating animals, including several mating pairs.

Yellow-bellied Sea Snake *Pelamis platurus*: Great looks at five on our pelagic off Puerto Angel. A highly venomous, but luckily not aggressive snake.

Green Iguana *Iguana iguana*: Several showed well in the Arriaga area.

Mobula Ray *Mobula sp*: At least five of these impressive rays showed off their jumping prowess on our pelagic off Puerto Angel.