

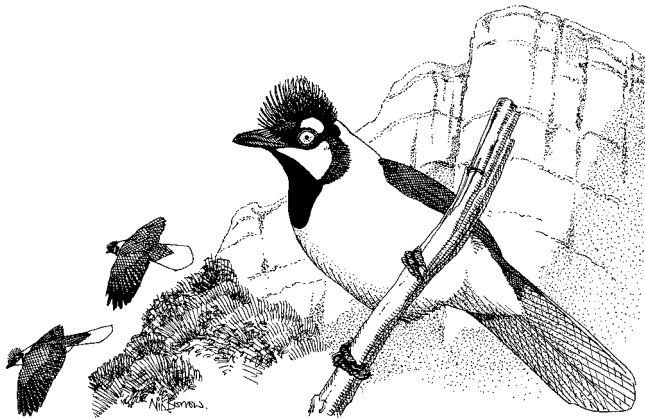
WESTERN MEXICO

Monday 12th March – Monday 26th March 2012 (15 days)
Baja California Pre-Tour Extension from Thursday 8th March (4 days)

Leaders: Pete Morris and assistant

Group Size Limit: 9

Tour Category: Easy for the most part, occasionally Moderate



Tufted Jays (Nik Borrow)

A colourful land of contrasts, Mexico has much to offer both the traveller and the birdwatcher. Friendly, vivacious people have produced a vibrant, modern country, far removed from the old stereotype of sombrero and siesta. Whilst modern tourist resorts fringe many a golden beach, one does not have to go far to find stunning mountain vistas, sleepy backwaters, or tranquil forests. We shall experience both the old and new Mexico as we explore the varied ecosystems of the fascinating western part of this huge country.

The complex geography, with spectacular mountain ranges and isolated deserts, has produced an endemic-rich avifauna which rivals any other part of the Neotropics in terms of the number of endemic birds. Mexico's great ornithological wealth (there are around 100 strict endemics and many more shared only with adjacent parts of the United States and Central America) justifies several visits and this western itinerary is designed to perfectly complement our other Mexico tours,

concentrating on areas holding numerous endemic species that cannot be encountered on the latter. In addition to these exciting endemics, we shall also find a large and colourful avifauna augmented at this season by visitors from the north, whilst at the same time experiencing a great range of different habitats and some truly spectacular scenery. Accommodations, food and roads are mainly of a good standard, making travelling and birding in Mexico a pleasure.

Our journey starts at Mazatlan on the shores of the Gulf of California, where we will look for some species typical of dry deciduous woodland, including Purplish-backed Jay and Elegant Quail, and explore the coast in search of Red-billed Tropicbird and Blue-footed Booby.

Next we will visit the cool pine forests of the spectacular Durango Highway. Foremost amongst the many endemics of this region is the incredible Tufted Jay, and we should also see a host of other superb specialities including Military Macaw, Black-throated

Magpie-Jay, Red Warbler and Red-headed Tanager.

Further south along the pacific coast we shall visit San Blas, long famed for its remarkable ornithological diversity. Here we will see a marvellous variety of wetland and coastal species as well as a sumptuous array of birds in the surrounding forests, including such varied endemics as Mexican Parrotlet, Grey-crowned Woodpecker, Citreoline Trogon, the spectacular Fan-tailed Warbler and Happy Wren, as well as the localized White-throated Flycatcher. Another highlight here will be our adventure by boat through the spectacular mangrove tunnels where we will see prehistoric-looking Boat-billed Herons and Northern Potoos.

Continuing on, we shall explore the forested slopes of the stunning volcanoes near Colima. The open fields, scattered pine woodland and superb montane pine-oak forests are home to a variety of spectacular endemics including Banded Quail, Long-tailed Wood-Partridge, Balsas Screech-Owl, the amazing Eared Poorwill, Grey-collared Becard, Aztec Thrush, Dwarf and Slaty Vireos, Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Grey-barred Wren and Collared Towhee to name but a few.

Continuing south we shall end the tour with a stay at Barra de Navidad where we will search for Lilac-crowned

Parrot, San Blas Jay, the scarce Flammulated Flycatcher, Red-breasted Chat and the gorgeous Orange-breasted Bunting in the thorn forests of the Jalisco coast.

During the optional pre-tour extension we shall explore the southern tip of Baja California, where the deserts and montane forests are home to a number of endemics including Cape Pygmy Owl, the splendid Xantus's Hummingbird, the charismatic Grey Thrasher, San Lucas Robin, the critically endangered Belding's Yellowthroat and Baird's Junco.

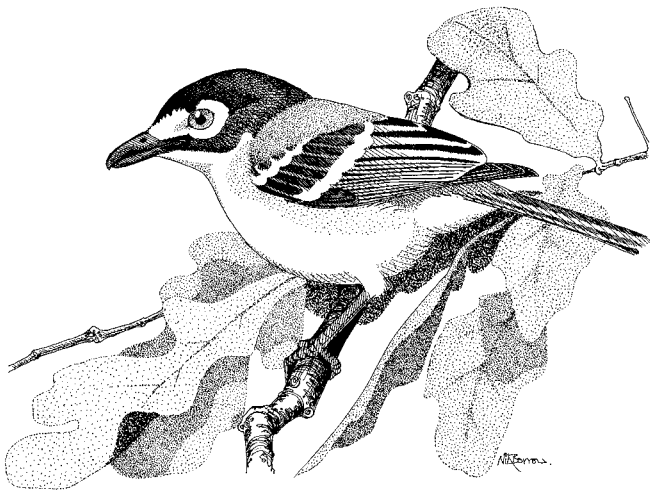
Birdquest has operated tours to western Mexico since 1987.

Itinerary

Day 1 The tour begins this evening at Mazatlan, where we will stay overnight.

Day 2 This morning we will begin the tour by exploring an area of dry thorn scrub on the outskirts of Mazatlan. The raucous voices of Rufous-bellied Chachalacas will emanate from the tall trees while small and showy groups of Black-throated Magpie-Jays and Yellow-winged Caciques inspect the flowering trees. Here we will hope to find two of West Mexico's tougher endemics, the smart Elegant Quails which can sometimes be found foraging near the tracks and gorgeous Purplish-





Black-capped Vireo (Nik Borrow)

backed Jays that creep noisily through the dense vegetation. Other species we may well encounter in this habitat include the near-endemic Broad-billed Hummingbird, Gila Woodpecker, the endemic Sinaloa Crow, Black-throated Grey, Wilson's, Orange-crowned, Nashville and Lucy's Warblers, Mexican Yellow Grosbeak, the attractive Variable Bunting and Streak-backed Oriole, while more widespread species are likely to include Western Cattle Egret, American Kestrel, Northern Crested-Caracara, White-winged Dove, Common Ground-Dove, Vermilion and Brown-crested Flycatchers, Northern Mockingbird, Lark Sparrow, Bronzed and Brown-headed Cowbirds, Great-tailed Grackle. Afterwards we will make a short detour to the coast in order to scan some large rocky islets where Brandt's Cormorants, Brown and Blue-footed Boobies and Red-billed Tropicbirds breed, and while looking for them we are likely to see our first Magnificent Frigatebirds and Brown Pelicans as well as attractive Heermann's Gulls and we may find a lingering Wandering Tattler on the rocks. We will then drive up the spectacular Durango Highway to our base, positioned on the Tropic of

Cancer, for a three nights stay. En route we may well see Turkey and Black Vultures, Harris's and Red-tailed Hawks, White-tailed Kite and the near-endemic Thick-billed Kingbird, whilst the endemic White-naped Swift is not uncommon in this area, although rather unpredictable in its appearance.

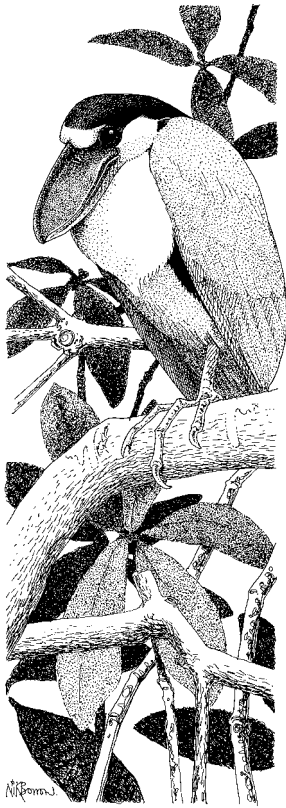
Days 3-4 The focus of our attentions whilst we are in the Sierra Madre Occidental will be Barranca Rancho Liebre, one of western Mexico's most celebrated birding localities. The scenery in this part of the mountains is quite stunning. Pine forest covers the summit ridges whilst far below, in the bottom of the barranca, subtropical woodland flourishes. Sheer cliffs divide the 'northern' pine woodland avifauna from the much more tropical avifauna found lower down, creating a remarkable diversity within a small area. Some species are found only in this unique environment, notably the spectacular Tufted Jay. The sight of a group of these vivid blue, black and white birds bounding noisily through the trees is a matchless birding experience. Also endemic to Mexico's pine forests are the boldly-marked White-striped Woodcreeper, the delightful

Red Warbler, the superb Red-headed Tanager (complete with glistening pink throat) and Rufous-capped Brush-Finch, all of which we should find. A feature of these forests at this time of year are the warbler flocks, which include such species as the stunning Red-faced Warbler, Crescent-chested, Grace's, Olive and Rufous-capped Warblers, and Painted and Slate-throated Redstarts, which mingle with wintering Black-and-white, Yellow-rumped (of the Audubon's form), Townsend's and Hermit Warblers from breeding grounds that lie far to the north. Amongst the many other birds we will hope to find at Barranca Rancho Liebre, or at another nearby barranca at a lower altitude where past felling and grazing have created more open terrain, are Sharp-shinned and Zone-tailed Hawks, Red-billed Pigeon, Mourning Dove, the spectacular Military Macaw, the diminutive Colima Pygmy-Owl, White-eared, Berylline and Rufous Hummingbirds, the near-endemic Violet-crowned and Blue-throated Hummingbirds, Mountain Trogon, the near-endemic Arizona and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, Greater Pewee, Tufted, Least, Hammond's, Cordilleran and Dusky-capped Flycatchers, the near-endemic Pine Flycatcher, Steller's Jay, the near-endemic Brown-throated Wren, the near-endemic Mexican Chickadee, Bridled Titmouse, Brown Creeper, Eastern Bluebird, Brown-backed Solitaire (with its haunting song), Hermit Thrush (of the distinctive greyish western race), White-throated Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and the surprisingly similar Hutton's Vireo, the delightful Black-capped Vireo, Bell's, Cassin's, Plumbeous and Warbling Vireos, smart Scott's, Hooded and Black-vented Orioles, Northern Hepatic-Tanager, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Chipping Sparrow, the secretive Rusty-crowned Ground-Sparrow, Blue Bunting, Spotted Towhee,

the near-endemic Yellow-eyed Junco, Lesser Goldfinch, Black-headed Siskin and Common Raven. If we are fortunate we will see one or two of the more difficult species such as the poorly known Sinaloa Martin or Canyon Wren.

Day 5 An early start will allow us to reach some attractive thorn forest and scrubby growth in the lower foothills of the Sierra Madre Occidental shortly after dawn. Here we will have a second chance to look for many of the birds we were looking for in the thorn forest near to Mazatlan and in addition we may find the elusive Lesser Roadrunner, Nutting's Flycatcher, the endemic Happy Wren, Greyish Saltator, and, with luck, Five-striped Sparrow or the strange Pyrrhuloxia. We will also hope to find the difficult Black-capped Gnatcatcher which may well be present alongside the more common Blue-grey Gnatcatcher. Later we will continue southwards to San Blas for a four nights stay.

Days 6-8 San Blas is a small fishing village turned holiday resort, yet lacking all the brashness of an Acapulco or a Puerto Vallarta. Three rivers, the Rey, Pozo and San Cristobal, enter the sea here, forming seasonal lagoons and mangrove swamps behind the sandy beaches. Beyond the wetlands is the lowland 'jungle' that hems San Blas to the coast. This remarkable area really merits the title 'birder's paradise', for there are few places that can rival its diversity of habitats and birdlife. The shore-line, mangrove-fringed channels and seasonal lagoons harbour huge numbers of waterbirds including such species as Least Grebe, Neotropical Cormorant, Anhinga, Great Blue, Little Blue, Tricoloured and Green Herons, Great, Snowy, Reddish and Cattle Egrets, Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night-



Boat-billed Heron (Nik Borrow)

Hérons, White-faced and White Ibises, Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Common and Great Black-Hawks, Common Gallinule (now split from Common Moorhen of the Old World), American Coot, Killdeer, Grey (or Black-bellied), Wilson's and Semipalmated Plovers, American Oystercatcher, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Northern Jacana, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted, Least, Western and Stilt Sandpipers, Surf-bird, the attractive Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Curlew, Hudsonian Whimbrel, Long-billed Dowitcher, Ring-billed Gull and Laughing Gulls, Caspian Tern, Black Skimmer, the elusive Mangrove Cuckoo, Belted and Green Kingfishers, Mangrove and Barn Swallows, and Northern Waterthrush, whilst near the town or amongst the coastal scrub we should find such West Mexican endemics as

Mexican Parrotlet and Rufous backed Thrush, as well as wintering Northern House Wrens and Willow and White-throated Flycatchers.

Late one afternoon, as the sun descends into the west and the temperature begins to fall, we will travel by boat to the freshwater springs of La Tovara. This will surely rank as one of the highlights of the holiday. At first the mangroves arch over the channel so that we pass through a strangely beautiful tunnel beneath the trees (but one that will seem eerie on our return after dark). With luck we will encounter the little known Rufous-necked Wood-Rail which scrapes a living amongst the mangroves aerial roots. In the open areas near La Tovara we shall look for Bare-throated Tiger-Heron and the rather prehistoric-looking Boat-billed Heron. As we await nightfall we may well see Lesser Nighthawks join the bats overhead. Drifting silently downstream we will catch Pauraques in our spotlight beam and then see the two fiery red pinpoints for which we have been searching – the glaring eyes of a Northern Potoo. Sometimes they stay motionless on a stump until we are quite close, allowing marvellous views of this strange nocturnal bird. We should have the opportunity to watch several of these amazing birds.

Dawn in the tropical forest near San Blas is an exciting time. Some species are easily seen, but others are much more elusive and one never quite knows what will turn up around the next corner. Here we will look for a whole string of goodies including the stunning Elegant (or Coppery-tailed) Trogon, the endemic Citreoline Trogon, the gorgeous Russet-crowned Motmot, the endemic Golden-cheeked Woodpecker, Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, the endemic Sinaloa Wren, the sneaky Orange-billed Nighthawk-Thrush, the superb

Fan-tailed Warbler, Scrub Euphonia (of the distinctive white-vented 'Godman's' form) and with patience, we should track down two of the more secretive and spectacular denizens of these forests, the superb Collared Forest-Falcon and the stunning Rosy Thrush-Tanager. Other more widespread species we are likely to see Osprey, Cooper's, Short-tailed and Grey Hawks, Laughing Falcon, Mourning and White-tipped Doves, Ruddy Ground-Dove, Orange-fronted Parakeet, White-fronted Parrot, Squirrel Cuckoo, Groove-billed Ani, Vaux's Swift, Cinnamon and Black-chinned Hummingbirds, the impressive Lineated and Pale-billed Woodpeckers, Pacific-slope, Social and Boat-billed Flycatchers, Great Kiskadee, Tropical Kingbird, Rose-throated Becard, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Tropical Parula, Yellow and MacGillivray's Warblers, American Redstart, Common and Grey-crowned Yellowthroats, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo and Painted Buntings, Blue-black Grassquit and White-collared Seedeater (the local form a likely split as Cinnamon-rumped Seedeater).

We shall also spend some time in the cool pine-oak forests of Cerro de San Juan, where the many flowers attract treasures such as Calliope Hummingbird and no fewer than three elusive endemic hummingbirds; Mexican Hermit, the diminutive Bumblebee Hummingbird and Mexican Woodnymph (although all three can be tough to find). The rather endearing Buff-breasted Flycatcher favours more open areas, while dense shrubbery holds the endemic Spotted Wren and Rusty Sparrow. Other species of the area include Green Jay, the endemic Grey-crowned Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Bright-rumped Attila, the seldom-seen Grey-collared Becard, Blue Mockingbird, Golden Vireo and the

attractive Flame-coloured Tanager. If we have not seen the species earlier, we shall also visit a barranca which is possibly the best site in the world for seeing the fantastic Military Macaw.

Day 9 After some final birding at San Blas we shall reluctantly leave this special area and drive southwards to Ciudad Guzman for a three nights stay.

Days 10-11 The smoking summits of the perfectly conical Volcan de Fuego and the even higher Volcan de Nieve straddle the Colima-Jalisco state border and form an impressive backdrop to what should be some equally impressive birding. Far below the barren rock fields of the summit zone, the steep slopes are clad in beautiful oak and pine forests which harbour a very exciting array of birds (and even a few Pumas, one of which we were thrilled to observe in 2008!). Driveable tracks allow us easy access to these higher forests and a patchwork of fields, scrub and scattered pines on the lower slope where many northern migrants winter. As the sun's first rays warm the mountain air the raucous yodelling of Long-tailed Wood-Partridges can be heard. By driving slowly along the track, we have a good chance of seeing this stunning endemic before it disappears into the dense underbrush. Plaintive whistles betray the presence of the strikingly-marked endemic Collared Towhee and the beautiful, little known and near-endemic Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo. The exuberant Grey-barred Wren, the secretive Russet Nightingale-Thrush, the beautiful endemic Aztec Thrush (often present in flocks at this season), the immaculate Slaty Vireo, the kinglet-like Dwarf Vireo and Green-striped Brush-Finch are other endemic species we should come across on this interesting mountain, provided we are persistent. Nightbirding is especially



Northern Potoo (Craig Robson)

exciting here as possibilities include Whiskered Screech-Owl, Mountain Pygmy-Owl, the rare and enigmatic Stygian Owl, Mottled and Great Horned Owls, the stunning endemic Eared Poorwill, Mexican Whip-poor-will and Buff-collared Nightjar, and we will hope to see most of these difficult species. Our explorations should also produce the endemic Banded Quail, Band-tailed Pigeon, Green Violetear, Amethyst-throated, Broad-tailed and Magnificent Hummingbirds, White-throated Swift, Acorn and Smoky-brown Woodpeckers, Dusky Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, Grey-breasted Jay, Bushtit (here of the black-eared form), Violet-green Swallow, Grey-breasted Wood-Wren, the delightful near-endemic Grey Silky, Curve-billed Thrasher, Loggerhead Shrike, Swainson's Thrush, American Robin, White-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches, the near-endemic Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, the superb Golden-browed Warbler, Blue-hooded Euphonia, Canyon Towhee, Lincoln's, Clay-coloured and Savannah Sparrows, House Finch, the beautiful Lazuli Bunting and Bullock's Oriole. We are also likely to encounter at least one or two of the more uncommon or secretive birds of the area such as the unobtrusive Grey-collared Becard, the near-

endemic Colima Warbler, the secretive Botteri's Sparrow and Audubon's Oriole (here a likely split: Dickey's Oriole). An exploration of some nearby lakes and marshes one afternoon should turn up such species as American White Pelican, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, the distinctive Mexican Duck (sometimes lumped in Mallard), White-tailed Hawk, Golden-fronted Woodpecker and Marsh Wren. Icterids (American blackbirds) are a real feature of the marshes here and we will be treated to the amazing spectacle of thousands of Yellow-headed Blackbirds sweeping across the marsh in enormous flocks. Among them we should also find Brewer's Blackbird, Bronzed Cowbird and the localized Bicoloured Blackbird (which is sometimes lumped in Red-winged). With luck we will come across one or two of the scarcer species of the area such as Clark's Grebe, Bewick's Wren or the endemic Abeille's (or Black-backed) Oriole.

Day 12 After a final morning on the volcanoes we will head to Colima for an overnight stay. Late in the afternoon we will visit the arid thorn-forest of the Balsas drainage which surrounds the city. As the temperatures cool in the late afternoon we will seek out the well-marked endemic Black-chested

Sparrow. Other species we may encounter include Ash-throated Flycatcher, Rufous-naped Wren, and, with luck, the elusive Lesser Ground-Cuckoo. After dark, our main target is the large and endemic Balsas Screech-Owl. Gruff hooting should reveal its presence and enable us to spotlight this enigmatic species.

Day 13 After some final birding in the Colima area we shall make our way to the pleasant coastal town of Barra de Navidad for a two nights stay. En route we will stop at a power station outflow where we should see Royal, Elegant, Forster's, Common and Black Terns and the attractive white-crowned *brewsteri* subspecies of Brown Booby. Later we will begin our exploration of this area.

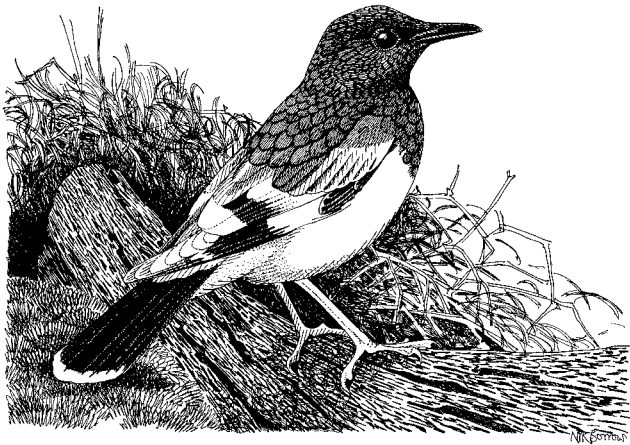
Day 14 The great beaches of the Barra de Navidad area attract many Mexicans trying to escape the smog of Guadalajara and the prices of Acapulco. As with much of Mexico's west coast, a dense thorn forest dominates here, but amongst the rolling hills are deciduous forests and palm forests in the wetter valleys. Our interest will focus on these forests rather than the beaches. Amongst the endemic species likely here are West Mexican Chachalaca, the raucous Lilac-crowned Parrot, the diminutive Golden-crowned Emerald, the secretive Flammulated Flycatcher, San Blas Jay (possible at San Blas, but more common here) and the delightful but skulking Red-breasted Chat. Whilst we search out these specialities we may well encounter more widespread species such as Inca Dove, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Plain-capped Starthroat, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, Greenish Elaenia, Masked Tityra, White-throated Magpie-Jay, White-bellied Wren and Olive and Stripe-headed Sparrows. An extensive area of marshland, ponds and ditches holds a

rich variety of species, most of which we will already have encountered on our travels, although new additions may well include American Wigeon, Northern Harrier, Peregrine, Purple Gallinule, Sora, Orchard Oriole, Red-winged Blackbird and Ruddy-breasted Seedeater. In addition, Limpkin and Snail Kite have recently colonized the area and we will probably hear Ruddy Crake, though the latter can be devilishly hard to see in the tall vegetation.

Day 15 After some early morning birding we shall drive the short distance to Manzanillo airport where the tour ends in the late morning.

Baja California Pre-Tour Extension

Day 1 The extension begins in the early afternoon at Los Cabos airport (near the resort towns of Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo) in southern Baja California. Before we head north we will visit a lagoon at San Jose del Cabo where marshy areas provide a habitat for the impressive endemic Belding's Yellowthroat (which is sometimes accompanied by Common Yellowthroats for comparison). Here we are also likely to encounter a number of other wetland species including Black-necked (or Eared) and Pied-billed Grebes, Brown Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue and Black-crowned Night Herons, Great and Snowy Egrets, Green-winged, Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teals, Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon, Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Redhead, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Common Gallinule (now split from Common Moorhen of the Old World), American Coot, Least Sandpiper and Killdeer, Bonaparte's, California and Western Gulls, smart Caspian, Royal and Elegant Terns and Violet-green and Northern Rough-winged Swallows, whilst adjacent scrub holds

*Aztec Thrush (Nik Borrow)*

species such as White-winged and Mourning Doves, Common Ground-Dove, Gila Woodpecker, Cactus Wren, Northern Mockingbird, introduced European Starlings, Yellow-rumped Warblers (here of the Audubon's form), Clay-coloured, Brewer's and Lark Sparrows Hooded Oriole, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Finch and introduced House Sparrows. At the coast itself, Magnificent Frigatebirds drift overhead, whilst Brandt's Cormorants feed offshore. Afterwards we will drive to Los Barriles for a three nights stay.

Days 2-3 With the sun sparkling off a turquoise sea, rugged coastlines and a cactus-studded desert interior, Baja California epitomizes Western Mexico for many. A 750-mile (1200-kilometre) mountainous finger separating the tranquil Sea of Cortez from the wilder Pacific Ocean, Baja's isolated tip is home to several endemic birds. During our stay here we will explore a variety of habitats. In the lowland desert our prime target will be the endemic

Grey Thrasher, whilst other interesting species we shall look for in this habitat include the delightful California Quail, Elf Owl, the diminutive Costa's Hummingbird, Gilded Flicker, tail-pumping Grey and Ash-throated Flycatchers, the near-endemic California Gnatcatcher, Verdin, Phainopepla, Northern Cardinal, the strange Pyrrhuloxia and the attractive Black-throated Sparrow. If we are fortunate we will also encounter Greater Roadrunner or Grey Vireo. More widespread species likely here include Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Northern Crested-Caracara, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Common Raven, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher and Orange-crowned Warbler.

We shall also explore the isolated Sierra de la Laguna mountains. One of our prime targets here will be the diminutive, endemic Cape Pygmy-Owl (a recent split from Northern). We will also pay close attention to flowering bushes that attract the beautiful Xantus's

Hummingbirds, whilst other species present are likely to include Acorn Woodpecker (the subspecies here has a dark iris), Western Scrub Jay, Northern House Wren, California and Spotted Towhees, Black-throated Grey Warbler, Warbling Vireo (the endemic breeding form here is a possible future split), Western Tanager, Scott's Oriole and the beautiful Lazuli Bunting. At higher altitudes a fair amount of effort will be required if we are to find the two remaining Baja endemics: the interesting San Lucas Robin (which is often lumped in American Robin though looks almost like an Eyebrowed Thrush!) and Baird's Junco (a ghostly version of Yellow-eyed Junco, with which it is often lumped, but from which it differs strongly in vocalizations). We may also find one or two of the less common species such as Western Screech-Owl, Bushtit, White-breasted Nuthatch, Canyon Wren or Rufous-crowned or Black-chinned Sparrow.

Day 4 Today we will continue northwards to the city of La Paz, the administrative capital of Baja California Sur, for an overnight stay. Along the rugged and dramatic coastline to the east, more Magnificent Frigatebirds harass Brown Pelicans in an effort to make them disgorge their catches. Our main reason for coming to La Paz is to see the localized Yellow-footed Gull (a species endemic to the Sea of Cortez and its vicinity), though other species we may well encounter along the coast in the La Paz area include American White Pelican, Tricoloured Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron and dashing Reddish Egrets, White-faced Ibis, Black-

bellied Whistling-Duck, Northern Pintail, Black-necked Stilt, Wilson's, Semipalmated and Grey (or Black-bellied) Plovers, Greater Yellowlegs, Hudsonian Whimbrel, the attractive Marbled Godwit, Willet, Spotted and Western Sandpipers, Laughing, Heermann's, Ring-billed and, with luck, Glaucous-winged Gulls, Black Phoebe and American Pipits, and we will have more chances to catch up with any of the desert species we have not yet seen. Offshore, we may well see both Blue-footed and Brown Boobies.

Day 5 After some final birding around La Paz we shall take a flight across the Gulf of California to Mazatlan, where we meet up with those arriving for the main tour. (This is Day 1 of the main tour.)

Accommodation & Road

Transport: The hotels are of normal Birdquest standard throughout. Road transport is by minibus and roads are mostly good.

Walking: The walking effort is mostly easy, but there are a few harder walks.

Climate: Generally warm or hot, dry and sunny at lower altitudes, but much cooler in upland areas. Whilst overcast weather is quite regular, rain is infrequent at this season. It will be rather humid in some lowland areas.

Bird Photography:

Opportunities are worthwhile.

Part-Tour Option: Subject to space being available, it is possible to take just the Baja California section of the tour. Please contact us for further information.