



This gorgeous Balsas Screech Owl was deservedly voted our bird-of-the-trip! (Pete Morris)

WESTERN MEXICO

17/21 FEBRUARY – 6 MARCH 2016

LEADER: PETE MORRIS

With just the odd tweak here and there, our well-established Western Mexico tour has, over the years, become a very efficient clean-up (or nearly!) of the many regional specialities that this part of Mexico has to offer. This year, we once again recorded around 410 species of birds (exact total taxonomy dependant – 411 using current IOC taxonomy), and again we found a very high propor-



This fantastic Lesser Roadrunner was another firm favourite (Pete Morris)

tion of the special birds (or diamond birds) which is, of course, the main focus of the tour. We also added a couple of new diamond birds to the list, including the very impressive Cinereous Owl, a species that has only recently been 'sussed out'. Highlights amongst the 410+ species seen were many and varied, but special mention should go to the following: the nightbirds which included 13 species of owl seen, another heard, a potoo and four species of nightjar; the delightful Bumblebee Hummingbirds that buzzed around us; the Banded and Elegant Quails; the shy Long-tailed Wood-Partridge that we eventually teased on to the road; brilliant Greater and Lesser Roadrunners, both seen at close range; the amazing variety of endemic jays including the incredible Tufted Jay; stunning Military Macaws; colourful Rosy Thrush-Tanagers; numerous Aztec Thrushes; much appreciated Rufous-necked Wood Rails as well as recently split Aztec and Ridgway's Rails; an amazing variety of North American Wood Warblers, including Olive Warbler; 13 smart species of wrens; a brilliant variety of sparrows including Cassin's (new for the tour) the rare Five-striped and the endemic Black-chested Sparrow; the best vireos in the world and many, many more! All of this was complemented by some great food (rather too much!), three weeks of virtual wall to wall sunshine, and a happy and jovial group that were all well pleased with the numbers of lifers under their belts!

The tour began in Baja California, where those of us participating on the pre-tour extension met up at San José del Cabo airport. After picking up our vehicle, and finding a quick bite to eat, we launched straight into the action with an afternoon visit to the excellent Estero San José. It's always a birdy spot, and although a little bright and warm (it always seems that way after a long journey!), it provided an excellent introduction to our Mexican birding. Our prime target, the endangered and endemic Belding's Yellowthroat, proved pretty easy again, with several giving extremely close views almost alongside Common Yellowthroats. The estero itself held a good selection of North American waterbirds including huge numbers of American Coots and Common Gallinules, and good numbers of wintering ducks were also present including Blue-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck and Lesser Scaup. A few confiding Soras showed well, small numbers of shorebirds included Western Willets, Long-billed Dowitchers and Least Sandpipers and Least, Pied and Black-



The striking and endangered Belding's Yellowthroat showed alongside the rather more common Sora (Pete Morris)



necked (Eared) Grebes were all found. A good variety of herons, including a Reddish Egret, were present and other species included Double-crested Cormorant, Bonaparte's, California and a single Western Gull, Belted Kingfishers, Black Phoebe and a good variety of hungry hirundines. After a pleasant couple of hours, we made our way to our base for the next few nights, and enjoyed our first fine Mexican meal at one of my favourite abodes!

We had plenty of time to find the specialties of Southern Baja California, and set about our task with a pre-dawn visit to the San Antonio de la Sierra. Here we found a tiny Elf Owl in the spotlight, though sadly he didn't sit for as long as we would have liked, though the gorgeous pair of feisty Western



This stunning Western Screech Owl brightened up our first morning in Baja's sierras (Pete Morris)

Screech Owls really did oblige! As the sky lightened from the east, we made our way up into the mountains to embark on a hike to higher altitudes, surprising an unexpected Bobcat as we went. Getting to the starting spot wasn't too straightforward, largely due to damage from the previous autumn's hurricanes, but we eventually set the van free (thanks guys!), parked up, and had a slightly longer walk than anticipated. The main purpose of the hike was to find the endemic Baird's Junco,



The smart Baird's Junco took some effort, but it was worthwhile (Pete Morris)

and this we achieved pretty easily (though the hike wasn't all that easy!), gaining some wonderful views. During the walk, which was conducted under glorious blue skies and with stunning scenery, we found a variety of other goodies including Baja (or Cape) Pygmy-Owls, the endemic local form of Acorn Woodpecker (Baja Woodpecker), Grey and Ash-throated Flycatchers, tiny American Bush-tits, numerous noisy Western Scrub-Jays, a fabulous Canyon Wren, colourful Scott's and Hooded Orioles, Lazuli Buntings, Western Tanagers, and the somewhat drab California Towhee. We also studied the endemic forms of Warbling and Cassin's Vireos, the latter almost like a Blue-headed Vireo! As the sun warmed we descended and birded some shadier areas lower down. Here we found a scurrying group of California Quails, stunning endemic Xantus's Hummingbirds, our first endemic Grey Thrasher, numerous attractive Spotted Towhees and vivid Northern Cardinals. Other species found during the day included our first Gilded Flickers, showy Zone-tailed Hawks and good numbers of wintering warblers, but the wanted San Lucas (American) Robin remained just that, much-wanted! By the time we headed back to base for a feast and an optional Margarita or two we were feeling pretty good, but knew there was a little work to be done.



Baja (or Cape) Pygmy Owl and Xantus's Hummingbird both showed well (Pete Morris)

The following day we could relax a little, and birded some desert close to our hotel. This proved to be excellent (once we had secured access!) and produced the hoped-for desert species including the localized California Gnatcatcher, the rare Grey Vireo, superb male Costa's Hummingbirds, colourful Verdins, noisy Cactus Wrens, our first Brewer's Sparrow and several smart and obliging Black-throated Sparrows, whilst more common species included more Gila and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, Gilded Flickers and Cassin's Kingbirds. The greatest surprise though, was an extremely obliging, and much-appreciated Lark Bunting. Venturing slightly further afield, we found several Phainopeplas, our first Yellow-footed Gull, and, way off shore, groups of Pink-footed Shearwaters, leaping Manta-Rays, breaching Humpback Whales and a pod of Short-finned Pilot Whales. We also stopped to study some groups of dapper Brandt's Cormorants on some rocks along the coast.

One of our party had arrived late due to unfortunate airline problems, so, being good Samaritans, we headed back to the Estero San José so that he too could see the Belding's Yellowthroats. This proved to be easy, and we also found a number of other interesting species including good flocks of Clay-coloured Sparrows, an unexpected Broad-winged Hawk, Solitary Sandpiper, and a very enter-



The desert around Los Barriles yielded many goodies including an unexpected Lark Bunting, brilliant Costa's Hummingbirds and rare Grey Vireos (Pete Morris)

taining Clarke's Grebe as well as most of the species we had seen on our previous visit. Watching a Cooper's Hawk trying to catch a Sora was quite entertaining too!

The following morning we had another look in the lower areas of the San Antonio de la Sierra, beginning the day with a pre-dawn owling session which sadly failed to produced more views of Elf Owls, though did produce two Western Barn Owls and a flyover Great Horned Owl. We then spent some time searching for the pallid San Lucas Robin, and although we managed good flight views of a calling bird, the views were less than satisfactory. We also had great looks at several more lovely Xantus's Hummingbirds, and enjoyed a few other new birds such as a Hermit Thrush, our first MacGillivray's Warbler and more of the regular species seen earlier. After a while, with not much new appearing, we made our way up to La Paz, stopping at a small harbour where we enjoyed close up views of many smart adult Yellow-footed Gulls, Western Gull, Heermann's and Ring-billed Gulls, Brown Pelicans (including one being chased by a dog!), a hand-fed Brown Booby and a few other waterbirds.



Yellow-footed Gulls were easy to see around La Paz (Pete Morris)

The rest of the afternoon was spent checking various wetland areas, including some extensive mudflats close to the airport and the nearby sewage ponds. Here we found a good variety of wetland birds such as Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Cinnamon and Green-winged Teals, American White and White-faced Ibises, a large flock of American White Pelicans, American Avocet, Wilson's Plovers, a few Short-billed (heard calling and watched on the mudflats) and numerous Long-billed Dowitchers, Marbled Godwits, impressive Long-billed Curlews, a few Western Sandpipers, some unexpected (write-in) Dunlins, and a distant flock of Black Skimmers and Forster's Terns, as well as an obliging Mangrove Warbler, a showy Brewer's Sparrow, and 100+ American (or Buff-bellied) Pipits feeding on a flooded field.

After our whistle-stop tour of the La Paz area we boarded our flight to Mexico City, where we had a comfortable overnight stay and met up with the rest of the group. The following morning we had a relatively leisurely start, and took a somewhat delayed flight across to Mazatlan. Having organized, we popped out for a first afternoon just on the outskirts of the city itself. We began on the seafront where we found a couple of American Herring Gulls and a couple of Western Gulls amongst the California and Heermann's Gulls and we then stopped to view some offshore rocks. Here, numerous Brown and Blue-footed Boobies could be scoped on the stacks, as Red-billed Tropicbirds flew about manically, and a large flock of Bonaparte's Gulls fed on some nearby tanks. An estuary held a number of wetland birds including much-appreciated Caspian Terns, Mangrove Swallows and our first Sinaloa Crows, and later, in an area of thorn scrub, we started making in-roads into another set of endemics. Purplish-backed Jays were perhaps the stars of the show, but other interesting species included our first Grey Hawks, Red-billed Pigeons, a feisty Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Thick-billed Kingbirds, Bell's Vireos, Happy and Sinaloa Wrens, colourful Mexican Caciques, Yellow Grosbeak and our first Painted and Varied Buntings.

The following morning we tried an area of thorn forest just outside Mazatlan. Hundreds of Sinaloa Crows flew from their roosts, and more Purplish-backed Jays were found feeding on the rail tracks! Impressive Black-throated Magpie-Jays soon showed up, but more impressive still was a Bobcat (yes another, the second ever on the tour and the second in a week!!) that walked slowly towards us along the track. A pair of Black-capped Gnatcatchers showed well (though were in non-breeding



Western Mexico = jays! Purplish-backed Jay above and Black-throated Magpie Jay (Pete Morris)



plumage), and other goodies included noisy Rufous-bellied Chachalacas, cracking Golden-cheeked Woodpeckers, Nutting's Flycatchers, another Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and, after a bit of a battle, a couple of fine male Elegant Quails showed up.

We then headed for the famous Durango Highway, heading out of the hot lowlands and into the cool, scenic pine-oak forests of the uplands. Having checked into our rustic but very friendly hotel, we made a brief excursion nearby. Here we found a number of goodies including our first Grey Silkies, attractive Golden Vireos, stunning Black-capped Vireos, our first Rufous-capped Warbler, Black-headed Siskins, a pair of Rusty Sparrows and some excellent Rusty-crowned Ground Sparrows. Many of these were enticed in by the call of Colima Pygmy Owl, one of which showed well, and also attracted in were several hummingbirds including Violet-crowned Hummingbirds, Golden-crowned Emeralds and smart Berylline Hummingbirds. All in all it was a good start.



A stunning male Black-capped Vireo along the Durango Highway (Pete Morris)

The following day, we made our eagerly anticipated first visit to the higher reaches of the Durango Highway. Arriving pre-dawn, we soon found a cute Whiskered Screech Owl, and as it became light enough to see, we found a group of Tufted Jays – our most-wanted bird for the morning, but they soon disappeared, leaving us wanting more! As we made our way along an easy track, we also found a number of other excellent birds. The variety of warblers was quite amazing! Colourful gems included Red-faced, Crescent-chested, Grace's, Hermit and Townsend's Warblers and Painted and Slate-throated Whitestarts. and other goodies included gaudy Mountain Trogons, Arizona Woodpecker, the boldly marked White-striped Woodcreeper, the subtle near-endemic Pine Flycatcher, perky Northern Tufted Flycatchers, Hutton's Vireo, Mexican Chickadee, Brown Creeper and musical Brown-backed Solitaires. At an attractive area of flowers, we found several smart Blue-throated Mountain gems amongst the common White-eared Hummingbirds, and a couple of sneaky Russet Nightingale-Thrushes, though it was disappointing to see the forest being logged as we were birding!

Higher still, we explored the recently created Tufted Jay preserve. Although it's a bumpy track to get up there, it's worth it, as the area protects a gorgeous area of forest. Although it was mid-afternoon by now, we still found some great birds. Pride of place went to the beautiful *melanuroides* grey-cheeked race of Red Warbler, though glistening endemic Red-headed Tanagers were much



Mountain Trogon and Tufted Jay were two of the Durango Highway's key birds (Pete Morris)

appreciated, as was an obliging Brown-throated Wren and several Yellow-eyed Juncos. The rest of the afternoon was not overly successful, as we failed to find a site and the weather closed in! We did find another Colima Pygmy Owl, some showy Grey-crowned Woodpeckers and a Bright-rumped Attila, but it was generally quiet.

The following morning saw us exploring areas at lower altitudes. We arrived pre-dawn, and although we failed on what we hoped for, we did gain some good views of a Mottled Owl! We then explored a rather level track, and again it was a productive morning. Magnificent Military Macaws cruised over on numerous occasions, and even showed perched, and other new species included gorgeous Russet-crowned Motmots, Elegant Trogons, flyover White-fronted Amazons, showy Orange-fronted Parakeets, Cinnamon Hummingbird, the sturdy Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, Blue Mockingbird, attractive Rufous-backed Thrushes, colourful Flame-coloured and Western Tanagers and a Blue Grosbeak. Mistletoe attracted Godman's (Scrub) and Elegant Euphonias. Sadly the showy and singing Red-breasted Chat that we found was in immature plumage – still nice, but not the full ticket!

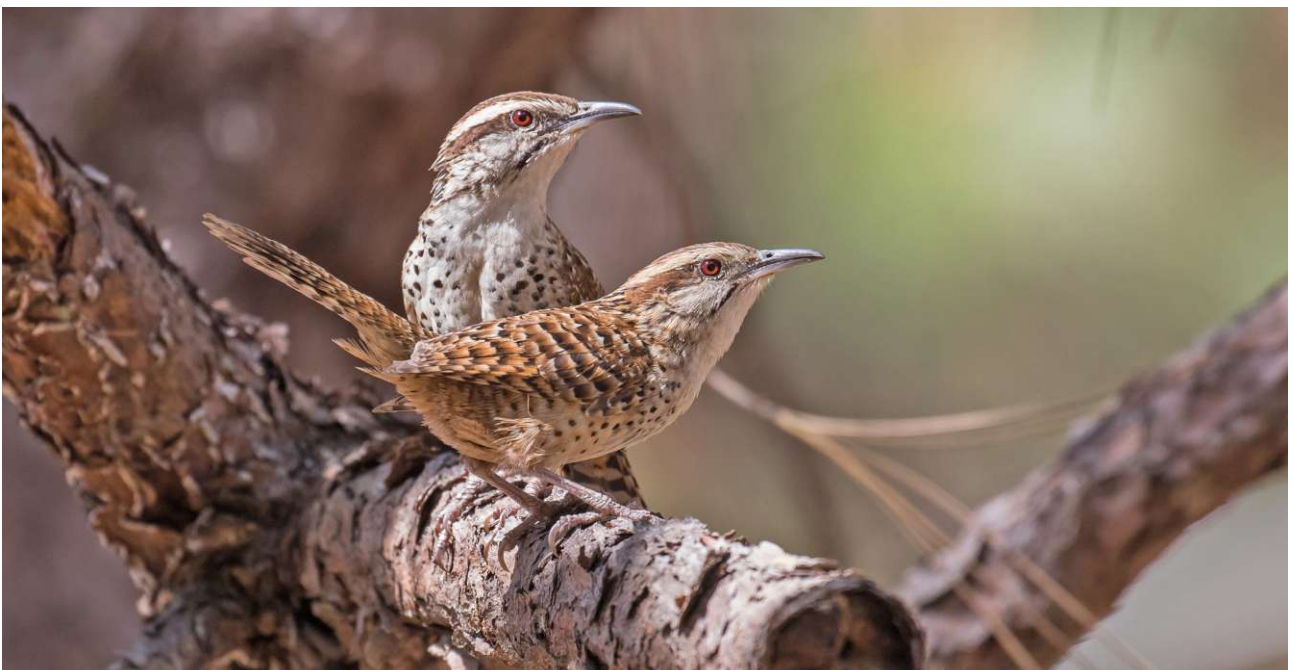
As the temperatures rose, we made our way back to the lodge for lunch and a siesta... or so we thought. Sadly, the break was short-lived as a noisy group of Spotted Wrens chortled outside our rooms! We were soon watching these amorous and entertaining birds, alongside Plumbeous Vireos and Pine Siskins. In the afternoon we went a little further afield along the Durango Highway thanks to a tip-off from a friend. This again proved very worthwhile. Not only did we find the much hoped-for Five-striped Sparrow, which showed very well, but we also had THE best encounter with Lesser Roadrunners (perhaps the northernmost record ever). Cedar Waxwing, Rock and Canyon Wrens and a smart Buff-breasted Flycatcher provided a fitting supporting cast, and for some, there was even a brief Jaguarundi. We also took time to admire the incredible architecture along the new highway which has been quite literally drilled through mountains and across huge chasms on the most



A much-appreciated tip-off helped us add Five-striped Sparrow to our list (Pete Morris)

incredible suspension bridges! We then made our way back for another search for Middle American Screech Owl. Sadly, despite getting close, we ultimately failed, time and impenetrable thorns being against us!

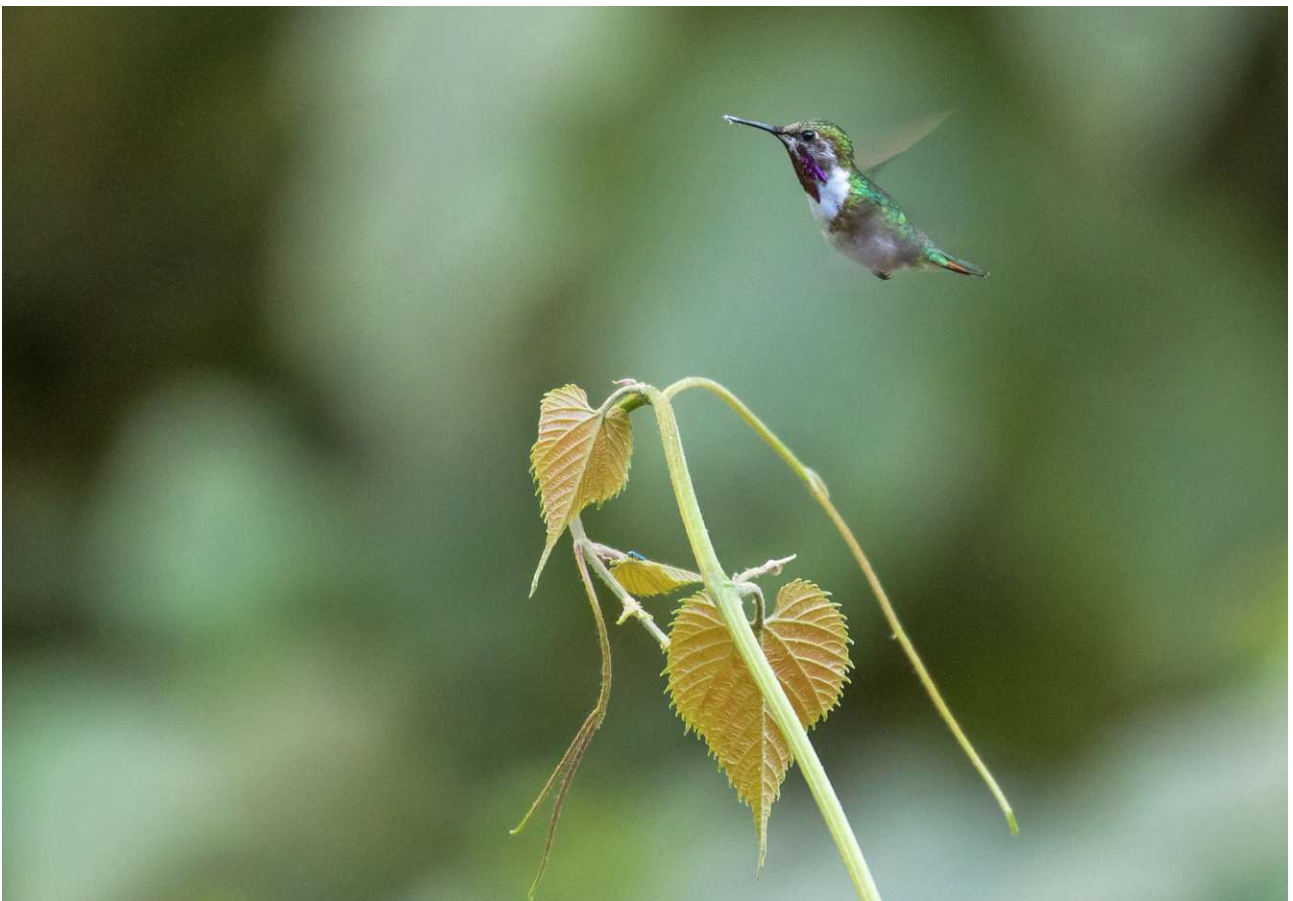
The following day, our last on the Durango Highway, we went high again. Pre-dawn we again heard Whiskered Screech Owl, though little else, but just a little further along the road we were treated to spectacular views of an amazing flock of Tufted Jays that were joined by a few Steller's Jays. A cracking start to the day, we then made our way to the Tufted Jay Preserve once more. Here we were delighted with the views of Golden-browed Warblers and Red-headed Tanagers and found the endemic and very special Green-striped and Rufous-capped Brush-Finches, though both left some wanting more! We also staked out some flowers where we eventually found a tiny female Bumblebee Hummingbird which buzzed around at close range.



This amorous pair of Spotted Wrens were star performers! (Pete Morris)

We'd done pretty well, and now it was time to embark on the rather long and relatively tedious drive to San Blas, although with the nearly completed toll road, it's a quicker and easier journey than it once was! On arrival we were pleased and relieved to see the Pemex station, and having filled up we had an initial exploration of Matanchen Bay. Although not especially productive, we did get a good introduction to the local insects (!!) and found a few goodies including our first White-throated Flycatcher alongside the similar (visually at least) Willow Flycatcher, gorging on the aforementioned vermin!

San Blas was our base for the next few nights, and one could not wish for a better base than our friendly, family-run hotel. With great rooms, a pool and an incredible restaurant, losing weight here was not an option as the cuisine was absolutely superb! However, on our first day, having just descended from the pine oak forests of the Durango Highway, we decided to head straight back to more, this time to the excellent Cerro de San Juan. And for a moment we thought we'd won the lottery as the distinctive hooting of the little-known Cinereous Owl cut across the cool morning air! It was way past dawn, and our pulses were racing as we headed to where the call was coming from, but that was it. Silence and despondency! Fortunately, there was more to entertain us. Striking male Mexican Woodnymphs, another endemic and our prime target here, showed very well indeed. A little higher we added Say's Phoebe and Stripe-headed Sparrows whilst smart Acorn and Pale-billed Woodpeckers entertained. A longish wander through the forests was then strangely quiet, though with perseverance, we did manage to find some goodies amongst the by now more familiar species, including two stunning male Bumblebee Hummingbirds as well as more widespread species such as Vaux's Swift, more Colima Pygmy Owls, Green Jays and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Sadly though, it was pretty hot and dry, and as the forests fell silent, and we polished off our impressive picnic lunch, we took the decision to head back to San Blas. This gave us time to explore another area on the outskirts of San Blas. Here, we began with some superb Ridgway's (formerly Clapper) Rails and continued with a Crane Hawk, a good variety of waders including our first Stilt Sandpipers and a Wilson's Snipe, numerous Cinnamon-rumped Seedeaters, a smart Grey-crowned Yellowthroat, and our first Bare-throated Tiger Heron.



A male Bumblebee Humminbird delighted us at Cerro de San Juan (Pete Morris)



An American Crocodile at San Blas (Pete Morris)

San Blas is noted for its rich bird life due to the variety of habitats present, which vary from open country and scrub to tropical forest, swamps, mangroves and shrimp ponds. We'd explored some of these, but the following morning we headed for a track which weaved in and out of forest patches and took us alongside several swampy areas. Bird activity was high and overall we recorded a good number of species. Perhaps the highlight of the morning was the displaying Bare-throated Tiger Heron which entertained us at length, but other goodies also included Muscovy Duck, Laughing Falcons, subtle Citreoline Trogons, some obliging Mexican Parrotlets, Lineated Woodpeckers, more gorgeous Fan-tailed Warblers, colourful Rose-throated Becards, Greenish Elaenias, another range-restricted White-throated Flycatcher, a fine Blue Bunting and several Painted Buntings. Once back at the vehicles we found more skittish Elegant Quails and a trio of scarce Lucy's Warblers.



The striking Fan-tailed Warbler showed well at several sites (Pete Morris)

After a cracking lunch and a well-earned siesta, we set off that afternoon for an enjoyable boat trip into the mangroves. Once again, it turned out to be a fantastic trip. High on the desired list was the difficult Rufous-necked Wood Rail, and after some diligent searching, we scored with some good views. An excellent variety of waterbirds including some meaningful sightings of Anhingas, our only Limpkin, plenty of bizarre-looking and showy Boat-billed Herons and a Snail Kite, and we also found a daytime Northern Potoo and Lesser Nighthawk, and a Bat Hawk, though sadly, this time, we only managed to hear the Spotted Rail. As the light began to fade, we rounded the trip off with some amazing views of Pauraque and weird-looking Northern Potoos in the spotlight!



Two species that gave us much joy at San Blas: Northern Potoo and Bare-throated Tiger Heron (Pete Morris)

The following day, we visited another forested area, and had another fabulous morning. Top of the highlights were some amazing fluorescent Rosy Thrush-Tanagers that teased us at first and then showed brilliantly! Also here were an impressive group of Crested Guans, endemic San Blas Jays, more Citreoline and colourful Elegant Trogons, more endemic Grey-crowned Woodpeckers, several Red-crowned Ant-Tanagers and even a Mexican Hermit, though the latter was a bit quick for some of the group. In the afternoon we visited another area in an attempt to find the hermit, and although one



Male Rosy Thrush-Tanager gave in eventually; Citreoline Trogons were somewhat more straightforward (Pete Morris)

of the group scored, the rest of us went unrewarded. We did find a nice Louisiana Waterthrush on the way back though! This essentially completed our San Blas birding, and we made our way back to the hotel for one final lavish dinner before leaving our wonderful hospitality behind.

We did in theory have one final morning to bird in the San Blas area, but with unfinished business at Cerro de San Juan, there was little choice other than an early start and a return visit. Fifteen minutes after arriving, we had a stunning Cinereous Owl fixed in the spotlight, and any thoughts of sleep deprivation were consigned to history! We enjoyed a brilliant time with this stunning species, watching a pair at length and listening to their haunting hoots. Magic stuff. We couldn't follow this up with a whip-poor-will, they went quiet before we found them, but we did manage to find a fabulous and much-wanted Collared Forest Falcon, and, after much effort, a smart male Grey-collared Becard. We also had more looks at many of the other goodies and added our only Olivaceous Woodcreeper of the tour.

We then embarked upon the long drive to Ciudad Guzman, but made a longish stop at an interesting wetland. Here we found a our first pair of Mexican Ducks amongst a good variety of other waterfowl, and a large group of Snow Geese, whilst the surrounding open scrub held White-tailed Kites, White-tailed Hawks, a Loggerhead Shrike, Curve-billed Thrashers and Savannah, Lark and Clay-coloured Sparrows. It was time for tea by the time we arrived at Ciudad Guzman, and we could contemplate the few days ahead, exploring the impressive volcanoes that loom over the town.



Nightbirds galore!! Two from Colima's Volcanoes – Whiskered Screech Owl and Stygian Owl (Pete Morris)

As mentioned the main reason for our stay in Ciudad Guzman was to visit the forested slopes of Volcan de Fuego and Volcan de Nieve along less than smooth mountain tracks. Early starts were the order of the day here due to the numerous nightbirds that occur and we were richly rewarded for our not inconsiderable efforts, as a Stygian Owl, a cute pair of Whiskered Screech Owls, Buff-collared Nightjars and very showy Mexican Whip-poor-wills all posed in the spotlight. Beginning at the highest altitudes, we were delighted that a key species, the piebald Aztec Thrush, was present in good numbers, some of which showed well. The vocal Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireos was another major prize. In these higher forests, the flower banks attracted Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercers, and were alive with hummers, including Green Violetears and Rivoli's and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds. Red Warblers (here of the white-eared subspecies) showed well, tiny Golden-crowned Kinglets hid in the giant conifers, Pygmy Nuthatches foraged, noisy Grey-barred Wrens joined mixed flocks, and Grey-breasted Wood Wrens and attractive Collared Towhees sang from the undergrowth. We also managed to track down a smart Mountain Pygmy Owl (once we realised it was in the open at the front of the tree!), found a lone Cordilleran Flycatcher and Hammond's Flycatchers, and enjoyed more Green-striped Brush Finches.

In the lower elevation oak forests some diligent searching revealed West Mexican Chachalacas, the recently split/re-named Transvolcanic Jay, Black-eared Bushtits, the often elusive but stunning Slaty Vireo (two showed superbly) and a much-appreciated and obliging Dwarf Vireo. We also spent the usual sessions playing hide and seek with the ultra-elusive Long-tailed Wood Partridge and, as



The world's best vireos? Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo and Slaty Vireo from Volcan de Fuego. Dwarf Vireo is a little more subtle (Pete Morris)



usual, when we were about to hit the point of despair, three crossed the road for us! The sigh of relief was probably audible in Colima, and that was just me!! On the lightly forested lower slopes we eventually found a group of attractive Banded Quails as well as finding other new species including Calliope Hummingbird and the attractive Black-vented Oriole.

In between the trips to the volcanoes, we spent a little time exploring the marshes around Ciudad Guzman. Here the water levels were high once more, though during a couple of afternoon visits, we found a number of goodies. The main highlight at the marshes were the huge flocks of icterids, which included many thousands of Yellow-headed Blackbirds, as well as smaller numbers of Bicolored (the local form of Red-winged) Blackbirds and Brewer's Blackbirds. We also found a few other goodies including an excellent Aztec Rail a couple of Bewick's Wrens, Marsh Wren, Canyon Towhee and some fine endemic Abeille's Orioles.



The impressive smoking Volcan de Fuego (Pete Morris)

Following our third morning on the volcanoes we made our way up to Colima. This allowed us to visit the nearby La Cumbre that afternoon where we first found some stunning Black-chested Sparrows and an amazing Orange-breasted Bunting as well as vocal Sclater's Wrens. As the sun slipped down, we nibbled on our picnic dinners and, after dusk, began searching for owls. We searched and



The endemic Black-chested Sparrow and the exquisite Orange-breasted Bunting (Pete Morris)



More West Mexican stunners! Golden-browed Warbler, Red-headed Tanager and Audubon's (Dickey's) Oriole (Pete Morris)

searched, and eventually found a pair of the chunky endemic Balsas Screech Owls which showed brilliantly. They had not been easy, but it had been worth it – they eventually became our bird of the trip!

On our final day in the Colima area we still had some unfinished business to do, and hauled ourselves up the volcanoes for one final time. Although the hoped-for poorwills remained silent, we did at least gain some compensation in the form of a pair of Bridled Titmice, and a pair of the attractive Dickey's (Audubon's) Orioles, putting to bed the amusement we'd had with the 'polluted' recording. It had been a good tour of the mountains and of course we'd also gained additional views of many of the species we'd seen previously, but by now it was time to move on to the final leg of our tour!

Our drive to Barra de Navidad was punctuated with a stop at Manzanillo Power Station. Here, flocks of Elegant Terns entertained, as did good numbers of (American) Black Terns and a busy flock of Sanderlings. A nearby estuary held a huge number of wetland birds, including three Red-necked Phalaropes and large numbers of Stilt Sandpipers, and it was then time to make our way to Barra de Navidad and our first margaritas at Ramon's! Wow, he puts some kick in them!

The following morning we visited Barranca El Choncho which once again produced the goodies. Highlights included a pair of perched Lilac-crowned Amazons, the endemic Flammulated Flycatcher, a cute White-bellied Wren, several Olive Sparrows, and a Plain-capped Starthroat, and other interesting species included more San Blas Jays, more Louisiana Waterthrushes, colourful Orange-breasted Buntings and a Least Flycatcher. That afternoon we visited a large area of marshes adjacent to Manzanillo Airport, though sadly, increased drainage and agricultural intensification has rendered them rather less birdy than they once were, and we found little of real substance other than Zone-tailed Hawks, Ringed Kingfisher and some annoying Ruddy Crakes that refused to emerge from the dense vegetation.

We returned the following morning and soon found a superb pair of Spot-breasted Orioles. The Ruddy Crakes again refused to budge and so we made our way to the Playa de Oro Road. Another Flammulated Flycatcher showed well and we were delighted to find some stunning male Red-breasted Chats, concluding yet another successful Western Mexico tour. It had been a great adventure through the land of 'topes' and margaritas! We could once again feel we had done this magnificent birding destination proud. Packed full of endemics, sunshine and great food, that's our Western Mexico tour. Still only recommended for people not on a diet, and who can cope with high volumes of quality birds!



This male Red-breasted Chat provided a fitting finale to the tour (Pete Morris)



The wonderful Cinereous Owl was an unexpected bonus! (Pete Morris)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

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

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

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

Species only seen on the pre-tour extension to Baja California are marked (B)

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

(CR) = Critically Endangered, **(EN)** = Endangered, **(VU)** = Vulnerable, **(NT)** = Near Threatened, **(DD)** = Data Deficient.

For polytypic species, the subspecies seen on the tour, where known, is placed in parentheses at the end of the species comment. Generally, species listed with trinomials are not currently split by the IOC.

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **2016. IOC World Bird List (v 6.2)**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>. Please note, this was the current version when the report checklist was created. Some alternative names are given in parentheses.

All of our checklists are powered by our partner iGoTerra (www.igoterra.com) who provide web and mobile applications for bird and wildlife enthusiasts and businesses. Their suite of services cover observations, rankings, lists, photos and trip management tools.

For the purposes of the tour report, I often refer to the main part of the tour (i.e. not including the Baja extension) as 'the mainland'.

Black-bellied Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis* Seen at La Paz and a few sites on the mainland [*fulgens*].
Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* c75 at the estuary at Las Brisas, Manzanillo.
Snow Goose *Chen caerulescens* c200 seen on the lake at Magdelana, between Tepic and Guadalajara.
Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* Very brief views of 3 along the Lower Singayta Track at San Blas.
Gadwall *Anas strepera* Fairly common on Baja California Sur. Also seen on the estuary at Las Brisas, Manzanillo.
American Wigeon *Anas americana* Fairly common on Baja California Sur. First seen at the Estero San José.
Mexican Duck ♦ *Anas diazi* A pair on the lake at Magdelana, and a pair at the Ciudad Guzman Marshes.
Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* First seen at the Estero San José. Common on the mainland too.
Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera* Fairly common on Baja California Sur. Also at several sites on the mainland [*septentrionalium*].
Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* First seen at the Estero San José and common on the mainland too.
Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* Seen on Baja, at the Estero San José and at La Paz. Also at several sites on the mainland.
Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis* First seen at the La Paz Sewage Works. Plenty on the mainland too.
Redhead *Aythya americana* (B) Plenty seen on Baja. First seen at the Estero San José.
Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (B) Up to 15 seen at the Estero San José.
Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Plenty on Baja, especially at the Estero San José. Also a few near Mazatlan.
Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* First seen on the Estero San José. A few seen on the mainland too [*rubida*].
Rufous-bellied Chachalaca ♦ *Ortalis wagleri* First seen near to Mazatlan, but most common in the San Blas area.
West Mexican Chachalaca ♦ *Ortalis poliocephala* Many in Colima and Jalisco. First seen well on Volcan de Fuego.



West Mexican Chachalacas were seen at several sites (Pete Morris)

Crested Guan *Penelope purpurascens* Great views of 3+ at La Bajada, San Blas and heard at Volcan de Fuego [*purpurascens*].
Long-tailed Wood Partridge ♦ *Dendrortyx macroura* After many attempts, three seen on the road at Volcan de Fuego [*striatus*].
Elegant Quail ♦ *Callipepla douglasii* Seen well at the Escopama Estuary, Mazatlan and again near San Blas. [nominate].

California Quail ♦ *Callipepla californica* (B) Good views of a small group along the San Antonio de la Sierra [*achruster*].
Banded Quail ♦ *Philortyx fasciatus* Seen well on the lower slopes of Volcan de Fuego on two dates.
Pink-footed Shearwater *Ardenna creatopus* (B) (VU) Several groups of passing at distance off Los Barillos.
Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus* Just a few. First at the Estero San José, also seen at Ciudad Guzman Marshes [*bangsi*].
Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* First seen at the Estero San José. Also a few on the mainland [nominate].
Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* Plenty on Baja and a few near Mazatlan [*californicus*].
Clark's Grebe ♦ *Aechmophorus clarki* (B) Great views of 1 at the Estero San José [nominate].



This Clarke's Grebe was very showy at the Estero San José (Pete Morris)

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* A few distantly over the rocks at Mazatlan [*mesonauta*].
Wood Stork *Mycteria americana* Reasonably common, first seen in the Mazatlan area.
American White Ibis *Eudocimus albus* First seen near to La Paz. Also common on the mainland, especially at San Blas.
White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi* First seen at the Estero San José. Also common on the mainland, especially around San Blas.
Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja* First seen near Mazatlan. Also a few around San Blas.
Bare-throated Tiger Heron *Tigrisoma mexicanum* Three seen around San Blas, including a superb displaying adult.
Boat-billed Heron *Cochlearius cochlearius* Particularly superb views at San Blas. Amazing birds [*zeledoni*].
Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* First seen at the Estero San José and several on the mainland [*hoactli*].
Yellow-crowned Night Heron *Nyctanassa violacea* Seen well at La Paz. Also at San Blas, Manzanillo Airport Marshes etc. [*bancrofti*].
Green Heron *Butorides virescens* Two forms seen: *frazari* at La Paz and nominate on the mainland.
Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* First seen at the Estero San José and then fairly common throughout.
Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* First seen on Baja, also widespread in small numbers on the mainland [nominate].
(American) Great Egret *Ardea [alba] egretta* First seen on Baja, also widespread in small numbers on the mainland.



Green Heron - common and widespread, but still a great bird! (Pete Morris)

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens* (B) (NT) One at the Estero San José and another on the mudflats at La Paz.

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor* First seen on Baja and widespread in small numbers on the mainland [*ruficollis*].

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* First seen in La Paz. Also widespread in small numbers on the mainland.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula brewsteri* First seen at the Estero San José. Also widespread on the mainland [*brewsteri*].

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* Good numbers at La Paz. Also at a few sites on the mainland.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* Common on the coasts of Baja and on the mainland [*californicus*].

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* Common on the coasts of Baja and on the mainland.

Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxii* Several distantly on 'Booby Rocks' off Mazatlan Also a few off San Blas [nominate]

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* Seen at La Paz, and distantly on 'Booby Rocks' off Mazatlan [*brewsteri*].

Brandt's Cormorant ♦ *Phalacrocorax penicillatus* (B) Best were the breeding-plumaged birds near Los Barriles.

Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus* Common at several sites on the mainland [*mexicanus*].

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* (B) Some cracking breeding-plumaged birds at Estero San José [*albociliatus*].

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga* Small numbers, mostly at San Blas [*leucogaster*].

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* Perhaps the most common and widespread species on the tour [nominate].

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* Very common on the mainland.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* First seen on Baja and a few seen on the mainland [*carolinensis*].

White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus* Just two seen, the first at the lake at Magdelana [*majusculus*].

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus* First seen at San Antonio de la Sierra, and c8 more seen on the mainland [*velox*-group].

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii* See note.

Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis* A male at San Blas and c20 near Manzanillo Airport Marshes. A recent colonist [*major*].

Crane Hawk *Geranospiza caeruleascens* One at Chachalilla, San Blas, and excellent views of one at Barranca El Choncho [*nigra*].

Common Black Hawk *Buteogallus anthracinus* Just a couple seen around San Blas [nominate].

Roadside Hawk *Rupornis magnirostris* A single seen along the Playa de Oro Road [*griseocauda*].

Harris's Hawk (Bay-winged H) *Parabuteo unicinctus* Just three seen, on the journey to San Blas [*harrisi*].

White-tailed Hawk *Geranoaetus albicaudatus* Great views of two at the lake at Magdelana.



Boat-billed Herons at San Blas, the widespread Brown Pelican and White Ibis (Pete Morris)



Grey Hawk *Buteo plagiatus* Fairly common throughout on the mainland. First seen near to Mazatlan.

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus* One at the Estero San José an unusual record? Also two singles at Cerro de San Juan.

Short-tailed Hawk *Buteo brachyurus* Fairly common and widespread, 9 in total. Dark and light morph adults seen well [*fuliginosus*].

Zone-tailed Hawk *Buteo albonotatus* Several seen well throughout. Spectacular views in the Sierra de la Laguna.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis* Two forms seen: *suttoni* on Baja and *hadropus* on the mainland.

Ruddy Crane ♦ *Laterallus ruber* (H) Heard at Manzanillo Airport Marshes but no luck despite much effort!

Ridgway's Rail ♦ *Rallus obsoletus* (NT) Great views of a pair at San Blas. Split from Clapper Rail [*yumanensis*].

Aztec Rail ♦ (Mexican R) *Rallus tenuirostris* (NT) Excellent views of one at the Ciudad Guzman Marshes. Split from King Rail.

Rufous-necked Wood Rail ♦ *Aramides axillaris* Good views of a pair on the San Blas boat trip.

Sora *Porzana carolina* Seen well at the Estero San José. Also a few encounters (mostly aural) on the mainland.

Spotted Rail ♦ *Pardirallus maculatus* (H) Heard on the boat trip at San Blas, but sadly no luck [*insolitus*].

Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata* First seen at the Estero San José. Fairly common on the mainland [*cachinnans*].

American Coot *Fulica americana* First seen at the Estero San José and fairly common on the mainland [nominate].

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna* One on the boat trip at San Blas was the only one [*dolosus*].



Several Zone-tailed Hawks showed well during the trip (Pete Morris)

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* Seen at La Paz and common at several sites on the mainland [nominate].

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana* A few in the bay at La Paz, and seen at a few sites on the mainland.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* Two in the bay at La Paz and another at San Blas.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* Quite a few around La Paz and a few on the mainland.

Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia* (B) c15 seen superbly in the bay at La Paz [beldingi].

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* First seen at La Paz Sewage Works. Also several on the mainland.

Northern Jacana *Jacana spinosa* A handful seen. First seen at San Blas.

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata* One seen near to Chachalilla, San Blas.

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* (B) A few seen well and heard on the mudflats west of La Paz, close to the airport.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Good numbers on Baja and San Blas amongst others.

Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa* (B) c20 seen on the mudflats at La Paz [nominate].

(Hudsonian) Whimbrel *Numenius [phaeopus] hudsonicus* Seen at several sites. Not yet split by the IOC.

Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus* First seen in the bay at La Paz. A few also on the mainland, including San Blas.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* First seen at La Paz Sewage Works. Several on the mainland too.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* c20 at San Blas were our only ones.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* One at the Estero San José, and another at San Blas. Assumed to be nominate?

(Western) Willet *Tringa [semipalmata] inornata* Seen in the bay at La Paz, and at several sites on the mainland.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* First seen at the Estero San José. Also seen at several sites on the mainland.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* c150 seen at the Manzanillo Power Station outflow [rubida].

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* (B) c6 seen well in the bay at La Paz.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* Seen at Baja and at several sites on the mainland.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* (B) Several seen well on the mudflats west of La Paz – a 'write-in' [pacifica].

Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus* A couple seen at San Blas, and plenty at the estuary at Las Brisas, Manzanillo.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* Three at the estuary at Las Brisas, Manzanillo, were a surprise.

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger* (B) A distant flock in the bay at La Paz were the only ones [nominate].

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* A few at the Estero San José. Plenty on the mainland inc. c200 at Mazatlan.

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla* Seen on Baja and at several sites on the mainland [megalopterus].

Heermann's Gull ♦ *Larus heermanni* (NT) First seen in La Paz. Also great views at Mazatlan, San Blas and Manzanillo.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* First seen in La Paz. Also a few seen around Mazatlan, San Blas etc.



Gulls - everyone's favourites!! Above, Western Gull (left) and Yellow-footed Gull. Below, clockwise from top left: California Gull; Yellow-footed Gull; Heermann's Gull and a 2cy American Herring Gull (Pete Morris)



California Gull *Larus californicus* Common on Baja and the mainland coast. See note.
Western Gull ♦ *Larus occidentalis* A 2cy at Estero San José, two adults in La Paz, and a 4cy and 2cy, on the beach at Mazatlan.
Yellow-footed Gull *Larus livens* (B) First seen (a single adult) at Los Barriles, and then common in La Paz; many smart adults.
American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* Two apparent 2cy birds seen on the beach at Mazatlan.
Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* A few on the mudflats west of La Paz, and one or two others [*vanrossemi*].
Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* First seen at the Escopama Estuary, Mazatlan, and a few at other sites on the mainland.
American Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* Fairly common along the coast, on Baja and on the mainland [nominate].
Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans* (NT) One at Mazatlan, then c50 stunners at the Manzanillo Power Station Outflow.



An aptly-named fishing Elegant Tern at Manzanillo (Pete Morris)

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* One seen in Mazatlan, a couple near San Blas then c30 at the Manzanillo Power Station Outflow.
Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (B) Several seen in the bay at La Paz.
(American) Black Tern *Chlidonias [niger] surinamensis* c200 at the Manzanillo Power Station, and a few others along the coast.
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia* 'feral' Introduced and common!
Band-tailed Pigeon *Patagioenas fasciata* Two forms: *virosae* on Baja and nominate on the mainland.
Red-billed Pigeon ♦ *Patagioenas flavirostris* Fairly common. First seen near Mazatlan (see note).
Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* A recent introduction that seems to have spread rapidly!
Inca Dove *Columbina inca* Quite common but skittish! First seen near Mazatlan.
Common Ground Dove *Columbina passerina* Common on Baja and on the mainland [*pallascens*].
Ruddy Ground Dove *Columbina talpacoti* Seen at San Blas and in Colima and Jalisco. A very dull race [*eluta*].
Ruddy Quail-Dove *Geotrygon montana* (NL) Seen by some briefly on a couple of occasions in the San Blas area.
White-tipped Dove *Leptotila verreauxi* Common at many sites with several great views [*angelica*].
Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* Common on Baja and on the mainland [*carolinensis*-group].
White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica* Common on Baja and on the mainland [*mearnsi*].
Groove-billed Ani *Crotophaga sulcirostris* Common. First seen at the Estero San José.
Lesser Ground Cuckoo ♦ *Morococcyx erythropygus* (H) Sadly, only heard at La Cumbre [*mexicanus*].

Greater Roadrunner *Geococcyx californianus* (B) Two or three seen well on Baja California. A real cracker

Lesser Roadrunner ♦ *Geococcyx velox* See note.

(Mexican) Squirrel Cuckoo *Piaya [cayana] mexicana* Fairly common on the mainland. First seen at Santa Lucia [*mexicana*]

Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba* (B) Two seen well, on roadside signs, on the drive to the Sierra La Laguna [*pratincola*].

Western Screech Owl ♦ *Megascops kennicottii* (B) Brilliant views of a pair along the track to the Sierra La Laguna [*xantus*].

Balsas Screech Owl ♦ *Megascops seductus* (NT) Amazing views of a pair at La Cumbre, Colima. Bird of the trip!!

Whiskered Screech Owl ♦ *Megascops trichopsis* One along the Durango Highway; a brilliant pair at Volcan de Fuego [nominate].

Middle American Screech Owl ♦ *Megascops guatemalae* (H) One heard along the lower Durango Highway, but no luck [*hastatus*].

Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus* Heard, and seen briefly, in the Sierra La Laguna [*elachistus*]. Heard at Volcan de Fuego.

Cinereous (or Mexican Barred) Owl ♦ *Strix sartorii* See note.

Mottled Owl *Strix virgata* One seen well along the Panuco Road, Durango Highway. A few others heard [*squamulata*].

Mountain Pygmy Owl ♦ *Glaucidium gnoma* Great views of one eventually at Volcan de Nieve. A few others heard.

Baja Pygmy Owl ♦ *Glaucidium hoskinsii* (B) One seen very well, and another heard in the Sierra de la Laguna.

Colima Pygmy Owl ♦ *Glaucidium palmarum* Six seen, more heard! First seen along the Santa Lucia, Durango Highway.

Ferruginous Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium brasilianum* A few seen and more heard. First seen at Fracc El Palmar, Mazatlan.

Elf Owl ♦ *Micrathene whitneyi* (B) One was spotlighted at close range in the Sierra de la Laguna, but was a bit skittish [*sanfordi*].

Stygian Owl ♦ *Asio stygius* Brilliant views of one at ckm4.5 at Volcan de Nieve [*lambi*].

Northern Potoo *Nyctibius jamaicensis* c7 seen, some superbly well, on the boat trip at San Blas [*lambi*].

Lesser Nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis* One on Baja, plenty on the mainland e.g. San Blas and Barra de Navidad [*texensis*].

Pauraque *Nyctidromus albicollis* Great views on the San Blas boat trip. Others heard [*yucatanensis*].

Buff-collared Nightjar ♦ *Antrostomus ridgwayi* Good views of two on Volcan de Fuego [nominate].

Mexican Whip-poor-will ♦ *Antrostomus arizonae* Great spotlight views of one on Volcan de Nieve and one on Fuego [nominate].



No - not more nightbirds! Mountain (left) and Colima Pygmy Owls and a Mexican Whip-poor-will (Pete Morris)



Vaux's Swift *Chaetura vauxi* Plenty in the San Blas area, especially at Cerro de San Juan [nominate].

White-throated Swift *Aeronautes saxatalis* Several seen over the Volcanoes [nominate].

Mexican Hermit ♦ *Phaethornis mexicanus* One seen well, but briefly, at La Bajada, and another briefly at a largely inactive lek.

Green Violetear *Colibri thalassinus* Several skulkers at the top of the El Floripondio Road, Volcan de Nieve [nominate].

Golden-crowned Emerald ♦ *Chlorostilbon auriceps* Best were the superb males along the lower Durango Highway.

Broad-billed Hummingbird ♦ *Cynanthus latirostris* Several seen, the first along the Escopama Estuary Road, Mazatlan [*magicus*].

Mexican Woodnymph ♦ *Thalurea ridgwayi* (VU) Brilliant views at Cerro de San Juan, including some fine males.

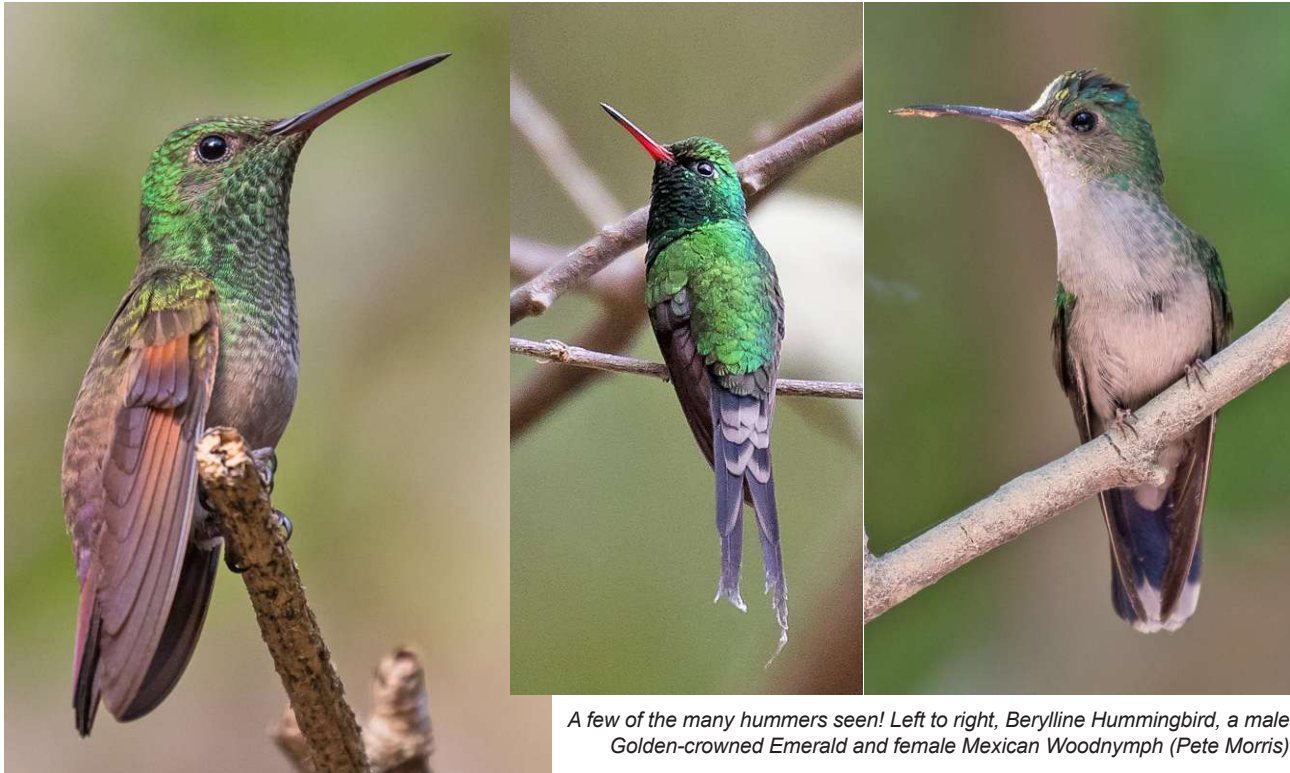
Cinnamon Hummingbird ♦ *Amazilia rutila* Two forms seen: *diluta* in the north and nominate in the south.

Violet-crowned Hummingbird ♦ *Amazilia violiceps* Great views of a few, mostly low down along the Durango Highway [*elliotti*].

Berylline Hummingbird ♦ *Amazilia beryllina* Fairly common, first seen at Santa Lucia, Durango Highway [*viola*].

Blue-throated Mountaingem ♦ *Lampornis clemenciae* Seen very well on the Durango Highway [nominate].

Xantus's Hummingbird ♦ *Basilinna xantusii* (B) Plenty in the Sierra de la Laguna. A cracking endemic.



A few of the many hummers seen! Left to right, Berylline Hummingbird, a male Golden-crowned Emerald and female Mexican Woodnymph (Pete Morris)

White-eared Hummingbird ♦ *Basilinna leucotis* Common at altitude. First seen along the Durango Highway.

Rivoli's Hummingbird ♦ *Eugenes fulgens* A few at Volcan de Nieve. Formerly known as Magnificent Hummingbird [nominate].

Plain-capped Starthroat ♦ *Heliomaster constantii* Great views of a male at Barranca El Choncho [*pinicola*].

Black-chinned Hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri* A few individuals appeared to be this spp. First at Barranca El Choncho.

Costa's Hummingbird ♦ *Calypte costae* (B) Best were the males in the desert just north of Los Barriles.

Bumblebee Hummingbird ♦ *Atthis heloisa* A female along the Durango Highway; stunning males at Cerro de San Juan [*margarethae*].

Broad-tailed Hummingbird ♦ *Selasphorus platycercus* A few seen well on the Durango Highway and the Colima Volcanoes.

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus* Just a few, the first, a male, at Santa Lucia, Durango Highway.

Calliope Hummingbird ♦ *Selasphorus calliope* A few females seen well around the Colima Volcanoes.

Citreoline Trogon ♦ *Trogon citreolus* Quite common. First seen well at San Blas [nominate].

Elegant Trogon *Trogon elegans* Several seen well. First seen along the Panuco Road, Durango Highway [*ambiguus*].

Mountain Trogon ♦ *Trogon mexicanus* Two forms: *clarus* on the Durango Highway and nominate on the Colima Volcanoes.

Green Kingfisher *Chloroceryle americana* A few seen, most of which were around San Blas.

Ringed Kingfisher *Megaceryle torquata* Several seen at the Manzanillo Airport Marshes [nominate].

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon* First seen at the Estero San José. Also good numbers on the mainland.

Russet-crowned Motmot ♦ *Momotus mexicanus* Great views of one along the Panuco Road. A few others at various sites [nominate].

Acorn Woodpecker *Melanerpes formicivorus* One at Cerro de San Juan, and a few around the Colima Volcanoes [nominate].

Acorn (or Baja) Woodpecker ♦ *Melanerpes [formicivorus] angustifrons* (B) Several seen well in Baja's sierras. Not split by IOC.

Golden-cheeked Woodpecker ♦ *Melanerpes chrysogenys* Nominate in the north, *flavinuchus* in the south. Another real corker!

Gila Woodpecker ♦ *Melanerpes uropygialis* Common on Baja. First at the Estero San José. A few on the mainland [*brewsteri*].

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius* Just 3 seen, the first a male at Cerro de San Juan.



Woodpeckers at opposite ends of the size spectrum! The huge Pale-billed Woodpecker (left) and Ladder-backed Woodpecker (Pete Morris)

Ladder-backed Woodpecker *Picoides scalaris* Two forms: *lucasanus* in Baja; *sinaloensis* on the mainland.

Arizona Woodpecker ♦ *Picoides arizonae* A few seen. First seen on the Durango Highway [*fraterculus*].

Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus* A couple seen high up on Volcan de Fuego [*icastus*].

Grey-crowned Woodpecker ♦ *Colaptes auricularis* Heard at several sites. A few seen well, the first along the Durango Highway.

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus* One (Red-shafted) seen briefly on Volcan de Fuego [*mexicanus*].

Gilded Flicker ♦ *Colaptes chrysoides* (B) Quite common on Baja [nominate].

Lineated Woodpecker *Dryocopus lineatus* Just a few noted, the first at San Blas [*scapularis*].

Pale-billed Woodpecker ♦ *Campephilus guatemalensis* Several seen. First seen at Cerro de San Juan [*nelsoni*].

Northern Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway* Widespread throughout the tour in small numbers.

Laughing Falcon *Herpetotheres cachinnans* Great views along the Lower Singayta Track, San Blas. Others heard [*chapmani*].



The impressive Military Macaw and a noisy Laughing Falcon (Pete Morris)

Collared Forest Falcon ◇ *Micrastur semitorquatus* Brilliant views of a pair at Cerro de San Juan. Superb! Others heard [nasal].

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* See note.

Merlin *Falco columbarius* (B) Just one seen, along the track to La Victoria in the Sierra La Laguna [nominate].

Bat Falcon *Falco ruficularis* One hunting at dusk on the San Blas boat trip, and another seen at Barranca El Choncho [potoensis].

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* One seen on the way to the Estero San José. Also 3 seen on the mainland. Form *anatum*?

White-fronted Amazon ◇ *Amazona albifrons* One flew over calling along the Panuco Road, Durango Highway [saltuensis].

Lilac-crowned Amazon ◇ *Amazona finschi* (EN) Just a handful seen, the best a pair at Barranca El Choncho.

Mexican Parrotlet ◇ *Forpus cyanopygius* (NT) c30 along the Lower Singayta Track at San Blas. A few others heard [nominate].

Orange-fronted Parakeet ◇ *Eupsittula canicularis* Seen at several sites. First seen along the Panuco Road [clarae].

Military Macaw ◇ *Ara militaris* (VU) Great views of several along the Panuco Road, Durango Highway. Stunners [mexicanus].

Olivaceous Woodcreeper *Sittasomus griseicapillus* One seen in a mixed flock at Cerro de San Juan [jaliscensis].

Ivory-billed Woodcreeper ◇ *Xiphorhynchus flavigaster* Several. First seen, a breeding pair, along the Panuco Road [mentalis].

White-striped Woodcreeper ◇ *Lepidocolaptes leucogaster* Great views along the Durango Highway. Others heard [umbrosus].

Greenish Elaenia *Myiopagis viridicata* Quite common by voice. First seen along the Lower Singayta Track at San Blas [jaliscensis].

Northern Beardless Tyrannulet *Camptostoma imberbe* Fairly common. First seen at the Escopama Estuary road, Mazatlan.

Black Phoebe *Sayornis nigricans* (B) Six seen on Baja, the first at the Estero San José [semiter].

Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya* A couple seen at La Noria, Cerro de San Juan .

Northern Tufted Flycatcher *Mitrephanes phaeocercus* Fairly common in higher altitude forests [tenuirostris].

Olive-sided Flycatcher *Contopus cooperi* (NT) One at the clearing on Volcan de Nieve, was a write in.

Greater Pewee *Contopus pertinax* Fairly common with a sweet song. First seen along the Durango Highway [nominate].

Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii* A few around San Blas where heard and seen well.

White-throated Flycatcher *Empidonax albigularis* Great views (and heard) of a couple in the San Blas area [timidus].



Empids! Clockwise from top left, Pacific Slope, Buff-breasted, Pine and Cordilleran Flycatchers (Pete Morris)



Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus* One seen very well and heard at Barranca el Choncho.

Hammond's Flycatcher *Empidonax hammondii* A few seen well at altitude. Tiny bill, long wings which are frequently flicked.

American Dusky Flycatcher *Empidonax oberholseri* A few seen. First seen at the Tufted Jay Preserve, Durango Highway.

American Grey Flycatcher *Empidonax wrightii* (B) Several seen well on Baja, first at San Antonio de la Sierra.

Pine Flycatcher ◇ *Empidonax affinis* Three seen well along the Durango Highway, and one at Volcan de Fuego [*pulverius*].

Pacific-slope Flycatcher ◇ *Empidonax difficilis* Two forms: *cineritius* seen on Baja, and nominate on the mainland.

Cordilleran Flycatcher ◇ *Empidonax occidentalis* Just one seen well on Volcan de Fuego [nominate].

Buff-breasted Flycatcher ◇ *Empidonax fulvifrons* One at Puente Baluarte, Durango Highway, another at Cerro de San Juan.

Vermilion Flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus* Several on Baja and on the mainland [*flammeus*].

Social Flycatcher *Myiozetetes similis* Common and widespread from Mazatlan on [*hesperis*].

Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus* Very common. First seen around Mazatlan [*derbianus*].

Boat-billed Flycatcher *Megarynchus pitangua* Heard and seen by some at La Bajada, San Blas [*mexicanus-group*].

Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus* Very common. First seen at Mazatlan [*satrapa*].

Cassin's Kingbird *Tyrannus vociferans* Good numbers at several sites on Baja and the mainland. Often in groups.

Thick-billed Kingbird *Tyrannus crassirostris* Quite common, distinctive voice. First seen near Mazatlan [*pompalis*].

Dusky-capped Flycatcher *Myiarchus tuberculifer* Quite common on the mainland [*olivascens*].

Ash-throated Flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens* Two forms: *pertinax* common on Baja; nominate around Colima.

Nutting's Flycatcher ◇ *Myiarchus nuttingi* See note.

Brown-crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus tyrannulus* A few seen around San Blas and Barra de Navidad [*magister*].



Almost as bad, the *Myiarchus*! Nuttings Flycatcher on the left and Ash-throated Flycatcher (Pete Morris)



Two more top birds! Grey-collared Becard and Flammulated Flycatcher (Pete Morris)

Flammulated Flycatcher ♦ *Deltarhynchus flammulatus* Great views at Barranca El Choncho and at Playa de Oro.

Bright-rumped Attila *Attila spadiceus* Common by voice. First seen along the La Petaca Road, Durango Highway [*pacificus*].

Masked Tityra *Tityra semifasciata* Several seen at various sites. First seen at San Blas [*griseiceps*].

Grey-collared Becard ♦ *Pachyramphus major* After a fair bit of searching, great views of a male at Cerro de San Juan [*uropygialis*].

Rose-throated Becard *Pachyramphus aglaiae albiventris* Plenty seen well after our first at San Blas [*albiventris*].

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus* 3 seen well north of Los Barriles, and 1 by the lake at Magdalena [*mexicanus*].

Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo ♦ *Vireolanius melitophrys* Brilliant views of a pair at Volcan de Nieve. Stunners [*quercinus*].

Slaty Vireo ♦ *Vireo brevipennis* Superb views of a couple on Volcan de Fuego. Another stunner [nominate]!

Bell's Vireo *Vireo bellii* (NT) Good views of several, the first of which was near Mazatlan. Difficult to know which forms.

Black-capped Vireo ♦ *Vireo atricapilla* (VU) Stunning views of at least 3 males near Santa Lucia, Durango Highway. Cracker!

Dwarf Vireo ♦ *Vireo nelsoni* Great views of a singing male on Volcan de Fuego.

Grey Vireo ♦ *Vireo vicinior* (B) Excellent views of a couple in the desert just north of Los Barriles.

Plumbeous Vireo *Vireo plumbeus* A few seen. First seen along the Durango Highway [*plumbeus*-group].

Cassin's Vireo *Vireo cassinii* See note.

Hutton's Vireo ♦ *Vireo huttoni* See note.

Golden Vireo ♦ *Vireo hypochryseus* Common, seen well at a number of sites. First seen at Santa Lucia [nominate].

Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus* See note.

San Blas Jay ♦ *Cyanocorax sanblasianus* Two forms seen well: nominate at La Bajada; *nelsoni* Barra de Navidad. Crackers!

Purplish-backed Jay ♦ *Cyanocorax beecheii* Excellent views of several just north of Mazatlan. Another great jay!

Tufted Jay ♦ *Cyanocorax dickeyi* (NT) Brilliant views particularly of one group on the upper reaches of the Durango Highway.

Green Jay *Cyanocorax luxuosus* Seen at a few sites, first at Cerro de San Juan [*speciosus*].

Black-throated Magpie-Jay ♦ *Calocitta collyiei* Common but spectacular. First seen near to Mazatlan.

White-throated Magpie-Jay *Calocitta formosa* Just one, along the Playa de Oro Road [nominate].

Steller's Jay *Cyanocitta stelleri* A few seen well along the Durango Highway [*diademata*].

Transvolcanic Jay ♦ *Aphelocoma ultramarina* Several seen on Volcan de Fuego. A thin split? [*colimae*].

California Scrub Jay ♦ *Aphelocoma californica* (B) Common on Baja, especially in the Sierra de la Laguna [*hypoleuca*].

Sinaloa Crow ♦ *Corvus sinaloae* Very common until the day we left San Blas. First seen in Mazatlan.

Northern Raven *Corvus corax* Common on Baja and several seen on the mainland [*clarionensis*].

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* A flock of 5 seen well though briefly at the Puente Baluarte, Durango Highway.



Both subspecies of San Blas Jay showed well. This is the southern *nelsoni* (Pete Morris)

Grey Silky-flycatcher ♦ *Ptiliogonys cinereus* Fairly common. First seen at Santa Lucia, Durango Highway.

Phainopepla ♦ *Phainopepla nitens* (B) Several, the first of which were around Los Bariles [*lepida*].

Bridled Titmouse *Baeolophus wollweberi* A pair eventually seen at Volcan de Fuego [nominate].

Mexican Chickadee ♦ *Poecile sclateri* Several seen along the Durango Highway and at the Colima Volcanoes.

Verdin ♦ *Auriparus flaviceps* (B) Fairly common on Baja, with many seen well [*lamprocephalus*].

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* (B) A couple seen in a mixed hirundine flock at the Estero San José [nominate].

Mangrove Swallow *Tachycineta albilinea* Common and widespread in suitable habitat. First seen near Mazatlan.

Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina* First seen in La Paz and also plenty on the mainland [*brachyptera*].

Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis* Common and widespread.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Common and widespread [*erythrogaster*].

American Bushtit *Psaltiriparus minimus* See note.

Golden-crowned Kinglet ♦ *Regulus satrapa* At least three seen at Volcan de Nieve [*aztecus*].

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula* Common and widespread throughout [nominate].

Grey-barred Wren ♦ *Campylorhynchus megalopterus* Fairly common at upper levels on the Colima Volcanoes [nominate].

Sclater's Wren ♦ *Campylorhynchus humilis* Great views of a singing pair at La Cumbre, Colima.

Spotted Wren ♦ *Campylorhynchus gularis* Seen a couple of times, with best views along the Durango Highway.

Cactus Wren *Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus* (B) Common on Baja, with many seen well [*affinis*].

Rock Wren *Salpinctes obsoletus* Great views of one at the Puente Baluarte, Durango Highway [nominate group].

Canyon Wren *Catherpes mexicanus* Two forms seen: [*croizati*] seen on Baja, and nominate on the mainland. Great birds!

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris* A single seen well at the Ciudad Guzman Marshes [*plesius* group].

Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii* Good views of a couple at the Ciudad Guzman Marshes [*eremophilus*].

Happy Wren ♦ *Pheugopedius felix* Pretty common. First seen near to Mazatlan [*pallidus*].

Sinaloa Wren ♦ *Thryophilus sinaloa* Pretty common though not easy to see for all!! First seen near to Mazatlan [nominate].

(Northern) House Wren *Troglodytes [aeson] aeson* One seen in the Sierra La Laguna. A few on the mainland too.

(Brown-throated) House Wren ♦ *Troglodytes [aeson] brunneicollis* First seen, very well, at the Tufted Jay Preserve.

White-bellied Wren ♦ *Uropsila leucogastra* Great views at Barranca El Choncho and at Playa de Oro [*pacifica*].

Grey-breasted Wood Wren *Henicorhina leucophrys* A few heard and a couple seen on the Colima Volcanoes [*pacifica*].

Blue-grey Gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea* Pretty common and widespread [*obscura*-group].

California Gnatcatcher ♦ *Polioptila californica* (B) Several seen well in the desert just north of Los Barriles [*margaritae*].

Black-capped Gnatcatcher ♦ *Polioptila nigriceps* A pair near Mazatlan and a pair along the Durango Highway [nominate].



Canyon Wrens are so full of character! (Pete Morris)

Pygmy Nuthatch ◇ *Sitta pygmaea* Great views along the El Floripondio Road, Volcan de Nieve [*brunnescens*].

White-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis* Several seen along the Durango Highway and on the Colima Volcanoes [*mexicana*].

Brown Creeper *Certhia americana* Pretty common, especially along the Durango Highway [*albescens*].

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* Fairly common on Baja and a few on the mainland.

Grey Thrasher ◇ *Toxostoma cinereum* (B) Several seen well at various sites on Baja. Great songster.

Curve-billed Thrasher *Toxostoma curvirostre* First seen by the lake at Magdalena. A few others seen [*occidentale*].

Blue Mockingbird ◇ *Melanotis caerulescens* Fairly common, first seen at Santa Lucia. Another good songster [nominate].

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (B) A common introduction on Baja these days!

Aztec Thrush ◇ *Ridgwayia pinicola* A few seen well on Volcan de Nieve, and a flock of c50 seen in flight there [*maternalis*].

Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis* Pretty common on the mainland. First seen along the Durango Highway [*fulva*].

Brown-backed Solitaire *Myadestes occidentalis* Common in the highlands with a great jangling song [nominate].

Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush *Catharus aurantirostris* Great views near Santa Lucia; others heard [*melpomene* group].

Russet Nightingale-Thrush ◇ *Catharus occidentalis* Two forms: *lambi* on the Durango Highway; *fulvescens* on the volcanoes.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* One in the Sierra La Laguna. c5 more seen on the mainland. Best at Volcan de Fuego.

White-throated Thrush *Turdus assimilis* Two forms: *calliphthongus*, Durango Highway; *lygrus* at Cerro de San Juan.

Rufous-backed Thrush ◇ *Turdus rufopalliatu*s Small numbers at several sites. First seen along the Panuco Road [nominate].

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* Just a few seen, most of which were at the Tufted Jay Preserve, [*migratorius*-group].

American (San Lucan) Robin ◇ *Turdus [migratorius] confinis* (B) Just a single bird seen in the Sierra de la Laguna.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* A common introduction [nominate].

Olive Warbler ◇ *Peucedramus taeniatus* A few seen and heard. Best views were along the Durango Highway [*jaliscensis*].

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens* (B) c100 at La Paz Sewage Works were the only ones [*rubescens/alticola*].

House Finch *Haemorhous mexicanus* Two forms: *ruberrimus* on Baja; *coccineus* on the mainland.

Lesser Goldfinch *Spinus psaltria* See note.

Pine Siskin *Spinus pinus* c10 seen by the hotel at La Capilla del Taxte, and more seen high up on Volcan de Fuego. [*macropterus*].

Black-headed Siskin ◇ *Spinus notata* Smart, and plenty seen. First seen along the Durango Highway [*forreri*].

Scrub (or Godman's) Euphonia ◇ *Euphonia [affinis] godmani* Distinctive voice. First seen along the Panuco Road.

Elegant Euphonia (Blue-hooded E) *Euphonia elegantissima* See note [nominate].

Louisiana Waterthrush *Parkesia motacilla* Singles seen well near La Bajada and at Barranca El Choncho. Smart birds.

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis* Pretty common. First seen at San Blas.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* Plenty seen on Baja and on the mainland.

Crescent-chested Warbler ◇ *Oreothlypis superciliosa* Two forms: *sodalis* at the Durango; *palliated* around Colima. Smart birds.

Orange-crowned Warbler *Leiothlypis celata* 'Western birds' were common on Baja and at some sites on the mainland.

Lucy's Warbler ◇ *Leiothlypis luciae* Great views of 3+ at the beginning of the Lower Singayta Track at San Blas.

Nashville Warbler *Leiothlypis ruficapilla* Fairly common. First seen near to Mazatlan [ridgway].

Grey-crowned Yellowthroat *Geothlypis poliocephala* Great views near to San Blas and at Barranca El Choncho [nominate].

MacGillivray's Warbler ◇ *Geothlypis tolmiei* Skulkers, but in the end, plenty were seen well.

Belding's Yellowthroat ◇ *Geothlypis beldingi* (B) (EN) Great views on both visits to the Estero San José [nominate].

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* First seen at the Estero San José. Plenty more seen well on the mainland.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* Several towards the end of the trip. First seen at San Blas.

Tropical Parula *Setophaga pitiaumi* Several. First seen along the Durango Highway [pulchra].



The variety of warblers on the tour is tremendous! Louisiana Waterthrush, Red-faced Warbler and Grace's Warbler (Pete Morris)



American Yellow Warbler *Setophaga aestiva* Common towards the end of the trip. First seen at San Blas.

Mangrove Warbler *Setophaga petechia* Two forms seen: *castaneiceps* in La Paz; *rhizophorae* at San Blas.

Audubon's Warbler ◇ *Setophaga auduboni* Fairly common on Baja and throughout the mainland.

Grace's Warbler ◇ *Setophaga graciae* Great views along the Durango Highway, Cerro de San Juan and Colima Volcanoes [*yaegeri*].

Black-throated Grey Warbler *Setophaga nigrescens* Common on Baja and plenty seen on the mainland [nominat].

Townsend's Warbler ◇ *Setophaga townsendi* Regular along the Durango Highway, Cerro de San Juan, and Colima Volcanoes.

Hermit Warbler ◇ *Setophaga occidentalis* A total of eight seen in upland forest, the first along the Durango Highway.

Fan-tailed Warbler ◇ *Basileuterus lachrymosus* Great views of several. First seen along the Durango Highway [*tephrus*].

Rufous-capped Warbler ◇ *Basileuterus rufifrons* Great views of several. First seen near to Santa Lucia [*dugesii*].

Golden-browed Warbler ◇ *Basileuterus belli* A cracker, seen along the Durango Highway and on the Colima Volcanoes.

Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla* Common throughout, though difficult to know which form.

Red-faced Warbler ◇ *Cardellina rubrifrons* Great views of several of these crackers, first on the Durango Highway.

Red Warbler ◇ *Cardellina rubra* See note.



Both forms of the stunning Red Warbler showed well. This is the northern grey-cheeked *melanuroides* (Pete Morris)

Painted Whitestart ◇ *Myioborus pictus* Great views of several on the Durango Highway; a few elsewhere [nominat].

Slate-throated Whitestart *Myioborus miniatus* Common at higher elevations. Often in mixed flocks [nominat].

Yellow-breasted Chat *Icteria virens* A total of 5 noted. First seen near to Mazatlan.

Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* Incredible numbers at the Ciudad Guzman Marshes!

Mexican Cacique ◇ (Yellow-winged C) *Cacicus melanicterus* Common. First seen well near Mazatlan.

Scott's Oriole ◇ *Icterus parisorum* (B) Seen well in the Sierra de la Laguna, at San Antonio de la Sierra.

Audubon's (Dickey's) Oriole ◇ *Icterus [graduacauda] dickeyae* Great views of a pair at Volcan de Fuego [*nayaritensis*].

Bullock's Oriole *Icterus bullockii* Just a couple including one at Volcan de Fuego.

Streak-backed Oriole *Icterus pustulatus* Pretty common and widespread on the mainland [*microstictus*].

Black-backed Oriole ◇ *Icterus abeillei* Brilliant views of c4 including 2+ males at the Ciudad Guzman Marshes.

Spot-breasted Oriole ◇ *Icterus pectoralis* Brilliant views of a pair at Manzanillo Airport Marshes.

Black-vented Oriole ◇ *Icterus wagleri* Scarce. Seen along the Durango Highway and for all on Volcan de Fuego [nominat].

Hooded Oriole ◇ *Icterus cucullatus* Two forms: *trochiloides* common on Baja; *nelsoni* on Volcan de Fuego.

Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurius* Quite a few seen. Common around San Blas and Barra de Navidad.

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus* First seen on Baja, and seen at a few sites on the mainland [*phoeniceus*-group].

Bicolored Blackbird ♦ *Agelaius [phoeniceus] gubernator* Good views of good numbers at the Ciudad Guzman Marshes.

Bronzed Cowbird *Molothrus aeneus* Surprisingly few seen with just a few around the Ciudad Guzman Marshes.

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* Common at many sites on the mainland towards the end of the tour.

Brewer's Blackbird *Euphagus cyanocephalus* Several seen well at the Ciudad Guzman Marshes.

Great-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus mexicanus* Very common. Two forms: *graysoni* in the north, *obscurus* in the south.

Lark Bunting ♦ *Calamospiza melanocorys* (B) Brilliant views of a very confiding bird in the desert north of Los Barriles.

Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii* Quite a few seen on Baja and the mainland.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys* (B) Small numbers seen on Baja [*oriantha*].

Yellow-eyed Junco ♦ *Junco phaeonotus* Several at high elevation. First seen along the Durango Highway [nominate].

Yellow-eyed (Baird's) Junco ♦ *Junco [phaeonotus] bairdi* (B) A pair seen incredibly well, high in the Sierra de la Laguna.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* Several, Estero San José; a few, Ciudad Guzman Marshes [nominate group].

Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerina* First seen in the Sierra de la Laguna. Quite a few on the mainland too.

Clay-coloured Sparrow ♦ *Spizella pallida* First seen in the Sierra de la Laguna. A handful on the mainland too.

Brewer's Sparrow ♦ *Spizella breweri* (B) Singles seen well north of Los Barriles, and close to the airport in La Paz.

Lark Sparrow ♦ *Chondestes grammacus* Seen on Baja and plenty on the mainland [*strigatus*].

Five-striped Sparrow ♦ *Amphispiza quinquestriata* Great views along the Durango Highway [*septentrionalis*].

Black-throated Sparrow ♦ *Amphispiza bilineata* (B) Seen well, first in the desert just north of Los Barriles [*bangsi*].

Stripe-headed Sparrow *Peucaea ruficauda* Common at several sites. First seen at Cerro de San Juan [*acuminata*].

Black-chested Sparrow ♦ *Peucaea humeralis* Great views of a couple of pairs at La Cumbre, Colima.

Cassin's Sparrow ♦ *Peucaea cassinii* See note.



Cassin's Sparrow was wholly unexpected whilst Green-striped Brush Finch was typically furtive (Pete Morris)

Rusty Sparrow ♦ *Aimophila rufescens* Excellent views near Santa Lucia, and at Volcan de Fuego. [nominate].

Collared Towhee ♦ *Pipilo ocai* Several seen well around the Colima Volcanoes. First seen at Volcan de Nieve [*alticola*].

Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus* Two forms seen: *magnirostris* on Baja; *griseipygius* on the Durango Highway.

Canyon Towhee ♦ *Melospiza fusca* Just one seen, at the Ciudad Guzman Marshes [*perpallida*].

California Towhee ♦ *Melospiza crissalis* (B) Many seen well on Baja [*albigula*].

Rusty-crowned Ground Sparrow ♦ *Melospiza kieneri* Excellent views near Santa Lucia, and at Volcan de Fuego [nominate].

Olive Sparrow ♦ *Arremonops rufivirgatus* Great views of a pair at Barranca El Choncho [*sumichrasti*].

Green-striped Brush Finch ♦ *Arremon virenticeps* Great views of a pair on the Durango Highway and again at Volcan de Nieve.

Rufous-capped Brush Finch ♦ *Atlapetes pileatus* Seen along the Durango Highway and on the Colima Volcanoes [*dilutus*].

Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer ♦ *Diglossa baritula* A few seen well at Volcan de Nieve [nominate].

Blue-black Grassquit *Volatinia jacarina* Around a dozen at Fracc El Palmar, Mazatlan, 21/3, were the only ones! [*splendens*].

White-collared (Cinnamon-rumped) Seedeater ♦ *Sporophila [torqueola] torqueola* Particularly common near, Chachalilla.

Rosy Thrush-Tanager ♦ *Rhodinocichla rosea* Brilliant views of a pair and another male at La Bajada, San Blas [*schistacea*].

Flame-coloured Tanager ♦ *Piranga bidentata* First seen well along the Panuco Road. A few others at various sites. [nominate].

Hepatic Tanager ♦ *Piranga hepatica* Quite common. First seen along the Durango Highway [nominate].

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra* Only seen around San Blas and in the Barra de Navidad area [*cooperi*].

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana* First seen in the Sierra de la Laguna. Also a few seen on the mainland.

Red-headed Tanager ♦ *Piranga erythrocephala* A cracker, first seen along the Durango Highway [*candida*].

Red-crowned Ant Tanager *Habia rubica* Quite a few seen well at La Bajada [*rosea*].

Yellow Grosbeak *Pheucticus chrysopheplus* Just a few seen, the first of which was at Fracc El Palmar, Mazatlan [nominate].

Black-headed Grosbeak *Pheucticus melanocephalus* Common at sites on Baja and on the mainland.

Red-breasted Chat ♦ *Granatellus venustus* An imm. male, Panuco Road; 3 stunning males, Playa de Oro Road [nominate].

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis* Two forms seen: *igneus* on Baja; *sinaloensis* on the mainland.

Greyish Saltator *Saltator coerulescens* Quite common and a pleasant songster [*plumbiceps*].

Blue Bunting ♦ *Cyanocompsa parellina* A few seen, first along the Panuco Road [*indigotica*].

Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea* A male at the Estero San José then common on the mainland, first at Santa Lucia.

Lazuli Bunting ♦ *Passerina amoena* Common on Baja and a few also seen on the mainland.

Varied Bunting ♦ *Passerina versicolor* Quite common though can be elusive [*dickeyae*].

Painted Bunting ♦ *Passerina ciris pallidior* (NT) First seen at Fracc El Palmar, Mazatlan. Several others seen [*pallidior*].

Orange-breasted Bunting ♦ *Passerina leclancherii* Just three seen but these included fine views of stunning bright birds [*grandior*].



Rusty-crowned Ground Sparrow - an odd-looking but impressive speciality (Pete Morris)

MAMMALS

Virginia Opossum *Didelphis virginiana* One on the lower section of the Durango Highway.

Collie's Squirrel *Sciurus colliae* I believe the grey and white squirrels in the higher pine-oak forests were this species.

Mexican Fox Squirrel *Sciurus nayaritensis* See Note.

Mexican Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus mexicanus* A small colony seen on the outskirts of Manzanillo.

White-tailed Antelope-Squirrel *Ammospermophilus leucurus* One of these terrestrial beasts on Baja.

Bobcat *Felis rufa* One in the Sierra de la Laguna, then, amazingly, another near Mazatlan! Incredible as it was a write in!

Jaguarundi *Felis yaguarondi* (NL) One for a lucky few at the Puente Baluarte, Durango Highway.

Grey Fox *Urocyon cinereoargenteus* A couple of sightings in the Colima area.

White-nosed Coati *Nasua narica* A couple of brief sightings for some.

Greater Fishing Bat (G Bulldog B) *Noctilio leporinus* A few seen on the San Blas boat trip.

Californian Sealion *Zalophus californianus* One offshore from the Estero San José.

Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae* Many were active distantly offshore at Los Barriles.

Common Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* One offshore from the Estero San José.

Short-finned Pilot Whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus* A pod were seen distantly offshore at Los Barriles.



Another view of the superb Cinereous Owl - the leader's bird of the trip! (Pete Morris)



Greater Roadrunner showed very well on the Baja extension (Pete Morris)

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

The most up to date referenced taxonomic list referred to in the Tour Report is that of the IOC World Bird Names. (Gill, F and Donsker, D Eds). 2014. IOC World Bird Names v4.1. Available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii*

An adult and a young bird seen at the Estero San José. The young bird attempted to catch a Sora! Also several seen well on the mainland including a singing, apparently territorial male, on Volcan de Fuego.

California Gull *Larus californicus*

It is likely that we saw two forms with the large, brutish birds being wintering birds of the larger form *alberta*, and the smaller birds being nominate. There is of course overlap, and thus we can only speculate on the more extreme examples.

Red-billed Pigeon *Patagioenas flavirostris*

It's hard to be certain of subspecies distributions, but we may have seen two forms, with *restricta* being seen in the north, in the Mazatlan area, and the nominate form further south, around San Blas etc.

Lesser Roadrunner *Geococcyx velox*

We enjoyed absolutely brilliant views of two at Puente Baluarte, Durango Highway, and also one briefly running across the road at Volcan de Fuego. Our record along the Durango Highway is about the most northerly ever for this species.

Cinereous (or Mexican Barred) Owl *Strix sartorii*

A pair heard at Cerro de San Juan on our first visit, then outstanding views of a pair near there on our return! Still watching them in daylight was a real trip highlight!! This is a recent split from Barred Owl *S. varia* of North America, and clearly links Barred Owl and Fulvous Owl *S. fulvescens* of Central America.

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

We saw two forms of this widespread species. On Baja, we saw several individuals of the form *peninsularis* the San Lucas Kestrel, whilst on the mainland the nominate form was widespread in small numbers.

Nutting's Flycatcher *Myiarchus nuttingi*

This species was relatively common and widespread, and easily detected by voice. The form concerned, *inquietus*, differs substantially from birds further south, and may well be a separate species.

Cassin's Vireo *Vireo cassinii*

We saw two distinct forms. In the Sierra de la Laguna, at San Antonio de la Sierra, we saw the form *lucasanus*, the San Lucan Vireo, which was quite distinctive, almost like a Blue-headed Vireo. On the mainland we saw a few examples of the nominate form.

Hutton's Vireo *Vireo huttoni*

We saw two forms of this species on the mainland. The form seen along the Durango Highway was most likely *stephensi* whilst on the Colima Volcanoes the form seen was assumed to be *pacificus*. Both of these forms are part of the Interior Hutton's Vireo group.

Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus*

The racial identity of the Warbling Vireos that we saw was far from straightforward! In the Sierra de la Laguna, at San Antonio de la Sierra, we saw singing birds which were most likely of the form *victoriae* though some could have been migrants. This form is colloquially known as Cape Warbling Vireo. On the mainland we saw numerous migrants, most of which are likely to have been in the *swainsoni* group of subspecies – Western Warbling Vireo.



Ridgway's Rail, recently split from Clapper Rail (Pete Morris)

American Bushtit *Psaltiriparus minimus*

We saw two very different forms. On Baja, we saw Grinda's Bushtit [*grindae*] high in the Sierra de la Laguna, at San Antonio de la Sierra. On the mainland we saw Jouy's Bushtit [*julus*] which was common on the Durango Highway and at Volcan de Fuego. This latter form is part of the Black-eared Bushtit.



A few more random goodies! Russet-crowned Motmot, Orange-fronted Parakeet, Golden Vireo and Grey-barred Wren (Pete Morris)



Lesser Goldfinch *Spinus psaltria*

We saw two very different forms. On Baja, we saw *hesperophila* which shows a green back whilst on the mainland we saw the dark-backed *psaltria*.

Elegant Euphonia (Blue-hooded E) *Euphonia elegantissima*

A few seen. The first was a brief male along the upper track from Santa Lucia, Durango Highway. A male seen better along the track from the microwave towers and then great views of a small group along the Panuco Road, Durango Highway, feeding on mistletoe alongside Godman's (Scrub) Euphonias.

Red Warbler *Cardellina rubra*

We saw two very different forms. Along the Durango Highway we saw the lovely Grey-cheeked Red Warbler [*melanauris*], whilst around Colima we saw the fabulous White-cheeked Red Warbler [nominate], several of which were seen well at the top of the El Floripondio Road, Volcan de Nieve.

Cassin's Sparrow *Peucaea cassinii*

See note. A sparrow that flew across in front of the car along the Escopama Estuary road, Mazatlan, turned out to be this species after a bit of investigation! A write-in, it responded well to playback and showed well allowing identification features such as the straight culmen and streaked flanks to be seen. Good photos obtained too!

Mexican Fox Squirrel *Sciurus nayaritensis*

The red-bellied squirrels that we saw seem to be this species, though it is also possible that we saw Mexican Grey Squirrel *S. aureogaster*. Without a decent field guide it is very difficult!



Fieldcraft at its very best, and the Yellow-crowned Night Heron being pursued! (Pete Morris)





APPENDIX 1

TOP 6 BIRDS OF THE MAIN TOUR

- 1st BALSAS SCREECH OWL
- 2nd CINEREOUS OWL
- 3rd LESSER ROADRUNNER
- 4th Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo
- 5th Slaty Vireo
- 6th Collared Forest Falcon

TOP 3 BIRDS OF THE BAJA EXTENSION

- 1st WESTERN SCREECH OWL
- 2nd BAIRD'S JUNCO
- 3rd BELDING'S YELLOWTHROAT



Golden-cheeked Woodpecker, Collared Forest Falcon and the colourful Flame-coloured Tanager (Pete Morris)



Wilson's Plover at La Paz, and one of many fine sunsets, this one at La Cumbre, Colima (Pete Morris)

