



Field Guides Tour Report

Holiday Mexico: Yucatan & Cozumel 2015

Nov 21, 2015 to Nov 30, 2015

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Lesser Roadrunner is one of the specialties of the Yucatan Peninsula -- and this one spread-eagled in the road near Uxmal was certainly obliging! Photo by participant Johanne Charbonneau.

Our Yucatan and Cozumel tour offers a lovely short break "south of the border," ranging across the entire width of the Yucatan peninsula as we visit some of the region's most famous Mayan ruins -- which also contain some of the peninsula's most sought-after birds. The weather was (for the most part) delightful, with little rain and generally pleasant temperatures. And the birding was most enjoyable!

We started the tour on Cozumel, birding primarily along the island's protected western flank. The tangled forest here is short and dense, and the beaches edged with a thin strand of cream-colored sand. Among our targets were a pair of island endemics (the Cozumel Thrasher, sadly, has not been seen by anyone for more than a decade), and both cooperated wonderfully: a glittering male Cozumel Emerald patrolled around a big stand of orange flowers, and a pair of Cozumel Vireos peeped from leafy vegetation along a quiet back road while searching for insect prey. Other good sightings included several singing Yucatan Vireos along the road out to Alberto's (where swat teams of Black Catbirds swept along the roadsides and a tiny Yucatan Woodpecker hammered a tree trunk over our heads), some snazzy Western Spindalis flocks among the fruiting trees, a sleek and wary Mangrove Cuckoo that posed for long minutes in a roadside mangrove, a confiding Caribbean Elaenia, a couple of berry-gobbling White-crowned Pigeons, and a trio of rail species at the island's northernmost point (a pair of Ruddy Crakes that came within yards of us among the mangroves, a half-hidden Sora rummaging for goodies near the parking lot, and a pair of Clapper Rails that strode along the back edge of a puddle, occasionally bursting into song). And who will soon forget the point-blank overwintering warblers that danced through the trees right outside the doors of our rooms?!

A short ferry ride later, and we were on the mainland, starting our exploration of the Yucatan peninsula. First up was the area around Coba, where taller, richer forest and a series of interconnected lakes and cenotes surround the ancient Mayan city. Mixed flock madness was the order of the day here: Hooded, Worm-eating, and Blue-winged warblers consorted with Black-tailed Trogons and Greenish Elaenias among the ruins, a chance stop at an intersection near the lake brought us sparring Altamira Orioles, our first Yellow-winged Tanager, a Bronzed Cowbird, and more Melodious Blackbirds than you could shake a stick at (plus a Purple Gallinule picking through the reed beds below the trees), and a stroll along the entrance road to a remote cenote yielded a lovely male Rose-throated Tanager, a tail-swinging Turquoise-browed Motmot, foraging Canivet's and White-bellied emeralds, a Buff-bellied Hummingbird, an unexpected Red-legged Honeycreeper (normally gone during the winter), and a clown car's worth of noisy Yucatan Jays among the warblers and flycatchers. Olivaceous and Ivory-billed woodcreepers hitched up neighboring trees among the ruins, a Spotted Rail crept through the reeds nearly to our feet (under the boardwalk), and Limpkins paraded along the lake shore.

Then it was off to another ancient city: Chichen Itza this time, with an early morning visit to Punta Laguna, and a stop at Valladolid for a superb lunch at Meson de Marques. The area around the entrance to Punta Laguna was hopping, with a variety of orioles, vireos, warblers, and tanagers (including a pair of Yellow-tailed Orioles and our first gang of yellow-eyed Green ("Inca") Jays), and the trails there yielded more new sightings, including a little gang of Collared Aracaris raiding a fruit tree, a soggy, spread-tailed Squirrel Cuckoo, Green-backed Sparrows hopping along a path, a pair of Gartered Trogons, a confiding trio of Red-throated Ant-Tanagers near the cenote, a wild-eyed Bright-rumped Attila, and another nice mix of warblers. Our visit

to the ruins at Chichen Itza was a tad on the soggy side (!) but the next morning's outing was nicely birdy. A tiny but fierce Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl tooted from a dead snag (while his mate preened nearby), Yellow-winged Tanagers, Masked Tityras, and a Golden-olive Woodpecker gobbled fruits, a mob of "Ridgway's" Northern Rough-winged Swallows perched conveniently on a wire, a White-bellied Wren peeped from viny tangles, and mixed flocks of overwintering warblers and widespread tropical residents kept us entertained.

Another day, another ancient city! From Chichen, we moved on (via another superb lunch, this time at the gorgeous Hacienda Xixim) to Uxmal -- drier still than the previous locations. Though we struggled with nightbirds (darn those nightjars -- and that calling, but elusive screech-owl!), we had some great encounters with other species. A gorgeous male Gray-throated Chat gleamed among the vegetation on a foggy morning, a Lesser Roadrunner stood spread-eagled in the middle of the road, a mixed "juice" of four oriole species (Altamira, Hooded, Black-cowled, and the endemic Orange) flashed colorful semaphores from treetops near the highway, noisy mobs of White-fronted Parrots swirled overhead and gabbled in treetops, a pair of Lined Woodpeckers checked out a conveniently leafless tree, Scrub and Yellow-throated euphonias investigated mistletoe clumps, a surprise Gray-headed Kite soared overhead, and flocks of overwintering warblers -- with a few unexpected Blue-gray Tanagers -- moved among ancient ruins.

We ended the tour on the peninsula's western edge, around the rich Celestun estuary, where waterbirds and landbirds vied for our attention. Among the chief highlights here were the hot pink American Flamingos that spend the winter in the area's rich waters; they'd just begun to arrive, so their numbers were small -- but they were certainly bright! Our boat trip also turned up a trio of endearing American Pygmy Kingfishers, a balletic group of fishing American White Pelicans and a handsome adult Common Black Hawk, and explorations of the nearby mangrove swamp netted us a fistful of visiting shorebirds, some close Boat-billed Herons, a pair of Rufous-necked Wood-Rails stepping carefully along branches, and an early morning chorus from a perched-up Collared Forest-Falcon. In the drier coastal scrub, a male Mexican Shearwater dazzled us (and presumably his perched lady love) with his towering display flight (and his glittering gorget, when he perched as well), a gang of Yucatan Wrens entertained us as they swarmed through a brushy roadside field, White-lored Gnatcatchers flicked through the thorn scrub, a surprise Jabiru (a rare vagrant recorded less than once a decade here) flew overhead, and a calling Yucatan Flycatcher led us on a walkabout on our last birding stop en route to Merida.

Throughout the tour, we enjoyed a touch of culture, with visits to the magnificent ruins of Coba, Chichen Itza and Uxmal -- expertly narrated by Alex and Rodio -- and some fine Yucatecan cuisine. All in all, it was a delightful early winter visit south of the border. Thank you for sharing the adventure with us; I hope to see you all in the field again soon!

--Megan

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Tinamidae (Tinamous)

THICKET TINAMOU (*Crypturellus cinnamomeus*) -- We heard the single hollow call of one from the darkening forest near where we stood on the Be-Ha road, and another from the thick growth along the San Simon road, again as dusk approached. [*]

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) -- Two leapt up out of some hidden puddle along the San Simon road, and winged away over the trees as dusk fell -- briefly interrupting our first search for Barred Antshrike.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*) -- Quite common on one of the little estuaries near the big bridge at Celestun; we saw many flying past our first close group of flamingoes -- and a few dabbling right at their feet.

Cracidae (Guans, Chachalacas, and Curassows)

PLAIN CHACHALACA (*Ortalis vetula*) -- Our best views came along the road to Celestun, when we found a group apparently attempting to see how many could fit on a single branch of an agave plant! We saw a couple of others on a track near Uxmal, feeding on leaves in some bushes along the edge of a power line; we had seen the same birds earlier, walking (and displaying) on the track.

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

BLACK-THROATED BOBWHITE (*Colinus nigrogularis*) -- A covey of eight or so sprang from the roadside grasses as Juan's van passed by on our drive back from our pre-breakfast outing at Celestun. Unfortunately, they rocketed off into the bushes, never to be seen again.

SINGING QUAIL (*Dactylortyx thoracicus*) -- We heard the the ringing song of a bird (or perhaps a pair) from the forest alongside a track near Uxmal as dusk fell. [*]

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) -- A couple of birds floated on Lake Coba each of the days we visited. This species is a winter visitor to the Yucatan peninsula. [b]

Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)

AMERICAN FLAMINGO (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) -- Small groups of these gorgeous, salmon-pink birds fed in the Celestun estuary, sometimes right up to their bellies in the water. By midwinter, the flocks will number some 50,000!

Ciconiidae (Storks)

JABIRU (*Jabiru mycteria*) -- One gliding overhead as we birded along the road to Celestun was certainly a surprise -- this represents the first record in the Celestun area since 2002! The pure white wings and heavy "swallowed a grapefruit" neck help to separate it from the more expected Wood Stork.

WOOD STORK (*Mycteria americana*) -- Regular in ones and twos around Celestun, typically striding along the edges of the mangroves with their beaks in the water.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*) -- Scattered individuals floated effortlessly over the coasts of Cozumel, occasionally circling

with the omnipresent Black Vultures, and others soared over the coast at Celestun. Our biggest group circled ominously low over a huge raft of American Coots, occasionally dropping down to grab (or attempt to grab) something from the surface -- what they were after, we couldn't see!

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – Our best views came on a rainy visit to Lake Coba, where we saw one sitting on a stick protruding from the water -- attempting in vain to dry off. We saw a few others flying over the lake there, and many more around Celestun.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – A single bird flew past high over the north end of Cozumel, its rounded orange gular pouch (and cricked neck) clearly visible as it went by, and we had plenty of others around Celestun.

Anhingidae (Anhingas)

ANHINGA (*Anhinga anhinga*) – Particularly nice views of several in the Celestun estuary (including the snakelike heads and necks of some hunting birds), with others in scattered wetlands in the eastern part of the peninsula as well.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – Quite common around Celestun, where we watched the balletic moves of a big group of them fishing near the boat dock. [b]

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – Even more common than the previous species, with dozens -- including lots of chocolate-colored youngsters -- floating on the Celestun estuary or gliding ponderously overhead.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Particularly common around Celestun, with others in scattered wetlands throughout the tour.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Common, including one that rested surprisingly close to the road around Lake Coba on several of our visits.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – A few along the shores of Cozumel, with others around Celestun -- including one standing on the ruined boardwalk near where we parked to look for Rufous-necked Wood-Rails.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – Small numbers on several days, including a couple near the Cozumel sewage works, one flying over Lake Coba, and others sprinkled over the sand bars and mudbanks of the Celestun estuary. All but one were sporting adult plumage.

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – A couple flew past, showing their white bellies, early on the morning we birded the Cozumel sewage works.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Scattered individuals, including a couple in a field with some skinny horses near Celestun.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – One alternately stretched itself up tall, then crouched low along the edges of Lake Coba, not far from our Purple Gallinule, and we saw others around the Celestun estuary.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – An adult lurked among the mangrove roots near the ruined boardwalk at Celestun, and a wary youngster kept an eye on our boat as we neared the bridge there.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – We spotted a distant bird roosting at the other end of Lake Coba, and had much closer views of others around the Celestun estuary.

BOAT-BILLED HERON (*Cochlearius cochlearius*) – Fine studies of several in a day roost near the Celestun bridge. The huge beak and huge dark eyes of this nocturnal species are distinctive -- as are its all-black underwings (which are typically only seen in flight).

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*) – Quite common around Celestun, where we found both adults and youngsters probing among the mangroves and striding across the sandbars, wielding their distinctively sickle-shaped beaks.

ROSEATE SPOONBILL (*Platalea ajaja*) – Scattered birds around Celestun, typically sweeping their paddle-shaped beaks through the shallow, muddy waters of the estuary's edges; we also saw a handful in flight.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Daily, often in sizable numbers -- as with the big kettles circling over various ruins sites, and the mob gathered on some roadside roadkill en route to Coba. The group congregating atop the observatory at Uxmal was particularly photogenic.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Also daily, though in much smaller numbers than the previous species.

LESSER YELLOW-HEADED VULTURE (*Cathartes burrovianus*) – Our first soared overhead as we explored the area around a roadside cenote, en route to Celestun, and we saw others near the town and estuary there. This vulture, which prefers open country, is darker plumaged than the closely related Turkey Vulture -- and its colorful head is distinctive.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – One sailed over Lake Coba, seen from our vantage point near the "magic tree" -- that wonderful tree full of birds near the intersection -- but they proved far more common along the western coast of the peninsula and over the Celestun estuary.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

GRAY-HEADED KITE (*Leptodon cayanensis*) – One soared over the ruins at Uxmal, seen from our perch along the back wall of one of the temples. Unfortunately, strong backlighting made it tough to see some of its plumage features, but its flight profile is distinctive.

SNAIL KITE (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) – A few folks in Alex's van saw one fly past over the vehicle as we rounded Lake Coba on a soggy late afternoon.

COMMON BLACK HAWK (*Buteogallus anthracinus*) – We saw a youngster from the Celestun bridge, as it circled with some vultures over the estuary, but our best views came as we started our boat trip, when we found an adult perched about 10 feet over the water only yards from the dock.

ROADSIDE HAWK (*Rupornis magnirostris*) – Brief glimpses of a few birds taking flight out of various trees and bushes (or disappearing down roads), with a slightly longer view of one perched on a roadside wire en route to Merida. We heard the high-pitched "weeeeeee" call of this small raptor on several days.

GRAY-LINED HAWK (*Buteo nitidus*) – Those in Alex's boat spotted one perched up along the shore as we headed back to the docks at the end of our boat trip on the Celestun estuary.

SHORT-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo brachyurus*) – Scattered birds with our best views coming at Uxmal, where one soared over the Magician's Temple and along the San Simon road, where one circled with a couple of Black Vultures.

ZONE-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo albonotatus*) – One with a gang of vultures over the mangroves at Celestun showed how well it matched them in

movement and color. When it sailed back and forth over us, though, we could clearly see its feathered head, barred wings and tail, and bright yellow cere.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

RUDDY CRAKE (*Laterallus ruber*) – Two of these tiny rails crept in -- practically to our boot tips -- in some mangroves near the sewage treatment plant on Cozumel. We heard others calling from the reedy marshes there, and flushed a couple of adults with a nearly-grown youngster as we walked back to our vans.

CLAPPER RAIL (YUCATAN) (*Rallus crepitans pallidus*) – One strode around the back edge of a muddy puddle in the mangroves at the end of the road on the northern tip of Cozumel. After a few minutes, it called, and a second one wandered out to join it. This was the third sighting of our three rail morning!

RUFOUS-NECKED WOOD-RAIL (*Aramides axillaris*) – First one and then two crept along the branches of a mangrove island along the main road in to Celestun, seen on our pre-breakfast outing.

GRAY-NECKED WOOD-RAIL (*Aramides cajaneus*) – One along the edge of a roadside pond en route to Celestun was a treat -- though it made us work to get everybody a good look! Once we'd all finally found it skulking in the bushes, it strode right out into the open.

SORA (*Porzana carolina*) – One lurked among the mangrove roots at the end of the road in northern Cozumel, just beyond two feeding Ruddy Turnstones -- good spotting, Sandra!

SPOTTED RAIL (*Pardirallus maculatus*) – An early morning visit to Lake Coba netted us wonderfully close views of one of these handsome rails.

PURPLE GALLINULE (*Porphyrio martinicus*) – One danced among the grackles at the edge of Lake Coba, alternately flashing its red bill, blue shield and white undertail coverts as it foraged in the mud.

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*) – A single close bird chugged across a branch of the Celestun estuary, beyond our first American Flamingoes, its white shield glowing. There were hundreds of more distant birds huddled in two big rafts (looking rather like small dark islands) under the odd onslaught of a gang of marauding frigatebirds -- which seemed to be practicing picking things off the surface of the water.

Aramidae (Limpkin)

LIMPKIN (*Aramus guarauna*) – Best seen around Lake Coba, where a handful of habituated birds allowed close approach and study as they foraged and preened. We saw other, more distant, birds at Punta Laguna.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Dozens striding on long pink legs around the edges of the Celestun estuary, looking dapper among a gang of salmon-colored flamingoes.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – One pattered along the shore north of Alberto's restaurant, seen by most during our mid-morning pit stop. [b]

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – A single bird trotted along the edge of a puddle at the north end of Cozumel, keeping company with the Least and Spotted sandpipers. [b]

Jacaniidae (Jacanas)

NORTHERN JACANA (*Jacana spinosa*) – A trio of adults and a stripe-faced youngster poked along the back edge of a roadside pond strewn with a beautiful fringed water lily en route to Celestun and another youngster strode around in a soggy area of grass near the Coba parking lot.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – Scattered individuals, including one walking along the beach near Alberto's restaurant, and another with the turnstones and Least Sandpipers at Cozumel's north end.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – A couple of wary birds in the pond with the Gray-necked Wood-Rail took flight shortly after we all climbed out of the vans.

WILLET (*Tringa semipalmata*) – One flew past with a flurry of black and white wings as we birded along the road between Celestun and Hotel Xixim.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – A single bird poked and prodded along the edges of a muddy puddle in a Celestun backyard, seen from the road near the bridge.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Two, in sober winter plumage, picked through the detritus around a puddle at the north end of Cozumel, and another checked out the quayside near the ferry terminal.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – Those who "slept in" our last morning saw a good number of these pale shorebirds along the tide line at Hotel Xixim.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – A few scuttled around the edges of a puddle at Cozumel's north end, and we saw others on a muddy puddle in a backyard in Celestun.

WESTERN SANDPIPER (*Calidris mauri*) – One with a handful of Least Sandpipers in a puddle in a Celestun backyard.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Always the most numerous of the Yucatan's gulls, with hundreds seen around the Celestun estuary, and smaller numbers on Cozumel.

ROYAL TERN (*Thalasseus maximus*) – A scattering along the coast at Cozumel (with a few sitting on poles in the harbors), and others on posts in the Celestun estuary.

SANDWICH TERN (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) – A couple flew past as we searched for Clapper Rails on Cozumel's northernmost point, and another sat atop a pole in the Celestun estuary, showing its distinctively pale bill tip nicely. Mustard anyone?

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Regular, particularly around the peninsula's cities and towns. [I]

WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON (*Patagioenas leucocephala*) – A few seen in flight (particularly over Cozumel's sewage works), but our best views came on the outskirts of El Cedral, where we found one foraging in a roadside fruiting tree.

RED-BILLED PIGEON (*Patagioenas flavirostris*) – Especially nice views of several in dead trees along the San Simon road, with others in flight across the drier western part of the peninsula.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Seen from Cozumel to Celestun, always in small numbers.

COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina*) – One walking down the San Simon road allowed good scope study -- until a passing truck flushed it, that is! This species is found primarily in the drier western half of the peninsula.

RUDDY GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina talpacoti*) – Common throughout, with especially nice studies of a few in the trees around Lake Coba, and of a handful foraging in some shaded grass near one of the temples at Uxmal.

WHITE-TIPPED DOVE (*Leptotila verreauxi*) – One trundled around under the trees along the path in to Chichen Itza, seen as we started our tour. This is a largely terrestrial species.

CARIBBEAN DOVE (*Leptotila jamaicensis*) – We heard several calling on Cozumel (a few on the road to Alberto's and others at the island's north end) but never connected with the singers. [*]

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) – Abundant throughout, including many in a roadside milpa (cornfield) near Punta Laguna, big flocks passing overhead in the fog along the San Simon road, and scattered birds on roadside wires.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

SQUIRREL CUCKOO (*Piaya cayana*) – Especially nice views of a very soggy bird drying its tail (which it spread like a fan) in a leafless tree at Punta Laguna, with a second, less disheveled bird over the cenote later in the morning.

MANGROVE CUCKOO (*Coccyzus minor*) – One made a few flashing passes over the road at the north end of Cozumel (showing those peach-colored underparts nicely as it did), then settled into a roadside tree for several minutes, allowing us good scope studies.

LESSER ROADRUNNER (*Geococcyx velox*) – One snuck out onto the San Simon road while we struggled for a look at some calling Barred Antshrikes -- great spotting, Alan! It proceeded to sun itself in the road for a bit before ducking back into cover and climbing a nearby tree. Through the scope, we could all see the unmarked throat and chest which help to distinguish it from its larger cousin.

GROOVE-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) – Seen most days, including a big gang foraging on the pavement of the San Simon road late one afternoon, with particularly close views of a trio in a dead tree near Lake Coba.

Strigidae (Owls)

VERMICULATED SCREECH-OWL (GUATEMALAN) (*Megascops guatemalae thompsoni*) – Arg! We heard the soft trilling call of one along the San Simon road for long minutes -- and from both sides, despite the fact that we never saw it cross the road. Unfortunately, we never found a vantage point to actually see the bird; by the time we finally found an open space to call it to, it had moved off. [*]

GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*) – We heard the deep hoots of this widespread owl while birding at dusk along a track of the Be-Ha road near Uxmal, and a few folks heard another calling in the night at our Uxmal hotel. [*]

FERRUGINOUS PYGMY-OWL (*Glaucidium brasilianum*) – A wide-eyed, tooting pair started our morning at Chichen Itza (thanks to great spotting by Michel and Alex), and another pair capped the same day near Uxmal. We heard the rapid toots of this species on many days.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

LESSER NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles acutipennis*) – Most of the group saw one fly over as we birded along the San Simon road (trying hard to spot a Barred Antshrike) as dusk fell.

COMMON PAURAUQUE (*Nyctidromus albicollis*) – One at the Coba ball field proved fantastically approachable, allowing us to creep most of the way across the grass to get great views. We saw another pointblank bird along a forest track near the San Simon road, while trying to track down our calling Vermiculated Screech-Owl.

Apodidae (Swifts)

VAUX'S SWIFT (*Chaetura vauxi*) – Regular on the first half of the trip, with hundreds circling over the road as we drove towards Coba, and scores of others over the road in to Multun Ha.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

MEXICAN SHEARTAIL (*Doricha eliza*) – We found our first -- a gorgeous male and a drabber female -- along the road up to Hotel Xixim, not far from our first Yucatan Wrens. The female sat in a nearby bush and the male performed for her, climbing way up into the sky and then rocketing earthward and streaking off across the scrubby vegetation in an insanely fast, zigzagging flight line. Don't know if she was impressed, but we certainly were! The two took turns perching in bushes right beside us on the road. We saw others around our Celestun hotel. [E]

COZUMEL EMERALD (*Chlorostilbon forficatus*) – After getting only fleeting glimpses of several along the road to Alberto's, we were rewarded with super views of a close male making repeated visits to "his" patch of carmine flowers along one of the overgrown roads at Las Palmas; he certainly didn't tolerate any other hummers in the area! [E]

CANIVET'S EMERALD (*Chlorostilbon canivetii*) – Our first was a glittering male that checked out some clusters of red-orange flowers hanging in the trees along the Multun Ha road. We also saw a female near the lobby at Hotel Xixim, when she came in and perched near us in response to Alex's pygmy-owl imitation.

WHITE-BELLIED EMERALD (*Amazilia candida*) – One (or more) made repeated visits to some orange mistletoe flowers high in the trees along the Multun Ha road.

BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia yucatanensis*) – One along the Multun Ha road foraged among the mistletoe flowers, and then perched (with its back to us), allowing good scope studies of its rusty tail, green back and bright red bill.

CINNAMON HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia rutila*) – Especially nice views of one perched above the parking lot at Hacienda Chichen; that early morning sunshine made it positively glow!

Trogonidae (Trogons)

BLACK-HEADED TROGON (*Trogon melanocephalus*) – Best seen along the trail to the big pyramid at Coba, when we found a pair plucking fruits from nearby trees.

GARTERED TROGON (*Trogon caligatus*) – A pair near the start of our walk at Punta Laguna flitted back and forth through a tree near the first trail intersection. The finely barred undertail pattern helps to distinguish it from the previous species.

Momotidae (Motmots)

TURQUOISE-BROWED MOTMOT (*Eumomota superciliosa*) – Our first, a bird hunting along the Multun Ha road, gave us pretty good scope views, though it never sat still for very long. We saw others at Punta Laguna, and around Chichen and Uxmal. This is one of the most colorful motmots -- and (in my humble opinion anyway) among the most beautiful!

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – Scattered birds on Cozumel, with others hovering over Lake Coba, but our best views came at the Celestun estuary, where one perched on a wire beside the bridge. This species is a winter visitor to Mexico. [b]

AMERICAN PYGMY KINGFISHER (*Chloroceryle aenea*) – Fabulous views of a pair of these tiny kingfishers in the mangroves near the Ojo de Agua in Celestun, with another perched along the boardwalk trail there.

Ramphastidae (Toucans)

COLLARED ARACARI (*Pteroglossus torquatus*) – At least three (and maybe four) bounced through a big tree over our heads, then dropped into a smaller nearby fruiting tree, grabbing a few mouthfuls each before heading off again.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

YUCATAN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes pygmaeus*) – A couple of active birds near the start of the road down to Alberto's restaurant showed very nicely as they rummaged among fruits and clambered along trunks. This species is smaller than the next, with yellow (rather than red) nasal tufts.

GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes aurifrons*) – Very common around Chichen Itza, with particularly nice studies of one drilling into an orange near the entrance on our pre-breakfast walk. The subspecies found on the Yucatan peninsula and Cozumel (*dubius* and *leei*) have red, rather than gold, nasal tufts.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – A few folks briefly got on one along the road to Alberto's restaurant, but our best views came at Chichen Itza, where a trio chased each other along the trunk of a tree behind one of the cabins at Mayaland.

GOLDEN-OLIVE WOODPECKER (*Colaptes rubiginosus*) – It took more than a little bit of patience -- though being distracted by the pygmy-owls certainly helped pass the time -- but we eventually got nice views of one feeding on fruits in a tree near the Mayaland cabins at Chichen Itza.

LINEATED WOODPECKER (*Dryocopus lineatus*) – A couple of these big woodpeckers drummed along a track near Uxmal as we walked back from the chat spot, then flew in and landed in a tree by our van in response to a taped call.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

COLLARED FOREST-FALCON (*Micrastur semitorquatus*) – We heard one calling along the San Simon road (both morning and evening) and others calling near the Celestun estuary, but the stunner that sat spread-winged in the early morning sunshine at Celestun was the real treat -- particularly when he then climbed up onto an emergent snag and proceeded to shout his challenges to the neighborhood. Wow!

CRESTED CARACARA (*Caracara cheriway*) – One flew past over the Celestun estuary while we birded from the big bridge there.

LAUGHING FALCON (*Herpetotheres cachinnans*) – We heard the distinctive laughing call of this snake-eater as we exited from the Chichen Itza ruins late one afternoon. [*]

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – One shot past the abandoned water park where we made our last afternoon stop on Cozumel, and another sailed over as we birded along the road up to Hotel Xixim. This is a winter visitor to the Yucatan. [b]

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – A big, dark bird played over the Celestun estuary, dive-bombing vultures and streaking after dragonflies. It certainly made flying fast look easy!

Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots)

WHITE-FRONTED PARROT (*Amazona albifrons*) – An early morning pair in a tree top at Punta Laguna gave us opportunity for multiple leisurely scope studies as they rested, and a big, noisy mob of them entertained along the San Simon road on a foggy pre-breakfast outing.

OLIVE-THROATED PARAKEET (*Eupsittula nana*) – Seen all across our tour route, primarily in flight, though we did find a couple of birds perched along a back road near Coba, not far from where we scoped our first Yellow-olive Flycatcher.

Thamnophilidae (Typical Antbirds)

BARRED ANTSHRIKE (*Thamnophilus doliatus*) – We definitely had to work for this one! We had a couple of pairs calling back and forth to each other across the San Simon road on our afternoon's visit there, but only a few folks laid eyes on one of the singers. We had better luck the following morning -- though we did have to scuttle back and forth up and down the road for a while before everybody got a look!

Formicariidae (Antthrushes)

BLACK-FACED ANTTHRUSH (MAYAN) (*Formicarius analis moniliger*) – We heard the loud chipping call of this species as we birded our way towards the biggest pyramid at Coba, but after a few huge, loud groups of general tourists went by, we never heard it again. [*]

Furnariidae (Ovenbirds and Woodcreepers)

OLIVACEOUS WOODCREEPER (*Sittasomus griseicapillus*) – This was the smaller (and less streaked) of the two woodcreepers we saw at Coba; we watched it creeping up a number of trunks near the base of the first pyramid we visited.

IVORY-BILLED WOODCREEPER (*Xiphorhynchus flavigaster*) – And this was the larger one, with extensive white streaking on the throat and chest, and a large, pale bill. We saw one near the first pyramid at Coba, and another at Punta Laguna.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

NORTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANULET (*Camptostoma imberbe*) – A couple of these little flycatchers interacted -- with much spreading of tails and some distinctive dance steps -- along the road to Alberto's restaurant on Cozumel. Unlike most flycatchers, it lacks bristles at the base of its beak -- hence "beardless"!

GREENISH ELAENIA (*Myiopagis viridicata*) – A couple flicked through the trees over the path to the big pyramid at Coba, looking rather uniformly greenish -- and decidedly plain save for a vague dark eye line.

CARIBBEAN ELAENIA (*Elaenia martinica*) – A confiding bird along the road into the Cozumel sewage works was obliging, perching in nearby trees between sallies after insects.

YELLOW-BELLIED ELAENIA (*Elaenia flavogaster*) – Two in the top of the huge spreading Guanacaste tree out in front of our Uxmal hotel were cooperative -- particularly the one that sat right at the edge of the canopy, so that we could easily find it.

NORTHERN BENTBILL (*Oncostoma cinereigulare*) – We heard one calling from roadside vegetation south of Coba one morning, but couldn't entice it in for a look. [*]

YELLOW-OLIVE FLYCATCHER (*Tolmomyias sulphurescens*) – We heard the raspy, rising whistles of this species on many days, but our best views came on an afternoon's outing near Coba, when we found one sitting and preening for long minutes in a clump of leaves in a tree right near the road. Long scope studies ensued!

TROPICAL PEWEE (*Contopus cinereus*) – Very common, particularly on the wires of Cozumel -- and the barbed wire fences around Uxmal. This nonmigratory species has a shorter primary extension (i.e. shorter wings) than do North America's migrant wood-pewees.

LEAST FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax minimus*) – A few scattered across our tour route, with especially nice studies of one hunting near the Magician's Temple at Uxmal. [b]

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – Surprisingly, we could only find a female this year along the road up to Hotel Xixim. She hunted from roadside trees, eventually perching on the telephone wires, where we could clearly see her peachy-pink vent.

BRIGHT-RUMPED ATTLA (*Attila spadiceus*) – After hearing the vaguely maniacal laughter of this big flycatcher on several days, we spotted one along the main trail at Punta Laguna. It showed its heavy, hook-tipped bill and sulfury-colored rump patch well before disappearing into the forest again.

YUCATAN FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus yucatanensis*) – After a bit of a hike along a rough track between Celestun and Merida, we finally connected with one of these peninsula endemics -- the last new bird of the trip. It flew in and perched in a couple of different trees, giving us good chance to study it from nearly all sides.

DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*) – We heard the mournful, descending whistles of this widespread species on several days around Coba and Chichen Itza. [*]

BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*) – One near the top of a tree at Uxmal was conveniently at eye level from our perch on the back ledge of one of the pyramids.

GREAT KISKADEE (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) – Regular from Chichen Itza west to Celestun, with nice comparisons between this and the next species near the Mayaland cabanas on our pre-breakfast walk there.

BOAT-BILLED FLYCATCHER (*Megarynchus pitangua*) – Especially nice looks at a noisy pair near our first pygmy-owls on our pre-breakfast walk at Chichen Itza. This species lacks the rust in wings and tail that the previous species shows.

SOCIAL FLYCATCHER (*Myiozetetes similis*) – Common and widespread, with especially nice studies of many in and around the parking lot (including on the ground) of the Hacienda Chichen.

TROPICAL KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) – Two hunting from the wires along the road to Alberto's restaurant on Cozumel showed especially well.

COUCH'S KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus couchii*) – Regular around Coba, where their emphatic "ka-BREER" call easily separated them from the twittering Tropical Kingbirds. Visually, they're a bit tougher, though this species has a somewhat stubbier bill.

Tityridae (Tityras and Allies)

MASKED TITYRA (*Tityra semifasciata*) – Fabulous views of a pair foraging in fruiting palm trees and bushes right outside our hotel at Chichen Itza, with others higher in the trees at the ruins site.

ROSE-THROATED BECARD (*Pachyrhamphus aglaiae*) – A male over the parking lot at Punta Laguna sat still long enough for everyone to get good looks at his lovely pink throat.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

WHITE-EYED VIREO (*Vireo griseus*) – Very common and widespread -- once we got off Cozumel, they were absolutely EVERYWHERE!

MANGROVE VIREO (*Vireo pallens*) – Our first few, calling from the scruffy growth along the San Simon road, played hard to get, showing only to a few. Fortunately, one near the deep cenote en route to Cozumel was more obliging, flicking from bush to bush along the roadside. And those around the Celestun estuary were even more cooperative!

COZUMEL VIREO (*Vireo bairdi*) – They made us work a bit harder than the Yucatan Vireos did (we had to walk all the way down the road to Alberto's and halfway back as well), but our efforts definitely paid off -- with a pair nearly at eye level foraging right beside the road! The books don't do this honey-colored vireo any justice at all. [E]

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO (*Vireo flavifrons*) – One with a mixed flock along the main track at Coba showed well as it tried to find the "pygmy-owl" (read Alex). [b]

YUCATAN VIREO (*Vireo magister*) – These proved particularly common on Cozumel, singing at regular intervals along the track into Alberto's restaurant, and flitting into view now and again with some of the mixed flocks.

LESSER GREENLET (*Pachysylvia decurtata*) – One of these tiny vireos joined the mob of passerines attracted by Alex's pygmy-owl imitation, perching just below the male Rose-throated Tanager -- and looking pretty nondescript by comparison!

RUFOS-BROWED PEPPERSHRIKE (*Cyclarhis gujanensis*) – A vocal pair along the road to Alberto's eventually showed very nicely (though they led us on a bit of a dance initially), and we saw another well just outside the entrance to Punta Laguna while we waited for the part to open. The subspecies on Cozumel (*insularis*) is quite pale compared to forms found on the Yucatan mainland.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

BROWN JAY (*Psilorhinus morio*) – We heard some calling at Coba, and saw our first somewhat distant birds flying across the road into Multun Ha, and then perching on a bare roadside limb there. Some of the gang had others around our Uxmal hotel while waiting for the group to gather one morning.

GREEN JAY (*Cyanocorax yncas*) – A noisy gang near the entrance to Punta Laguna were cooperative, showing well as they rummaged through the trees. We had another preening in the open behind one of the buildings at Chichen Itza's ball court.

YUCATAN JAY (*Cyanocorax yucatanicus*) – After seeing several big mobs of these social jays flapping (one after another after another) across various highways and byways, we finally got good studies of an inquisitive family group in a tree along the Multun Ha road, with others nicely along the San Simon road and with the oriole "juice" near the Uxmal Resort Maya. What gorgeous birds!

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (RIDGWAY'S) (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis ridgwayi*) – Especially nice views of a good-sized flock perched on wires over the back garden at Hacienda Chichen, showing their distinctively dark-tipped bodies.

MANGROVE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta albilinea*) – Nice studies of perched birds on wires beside the Celestun bridge, with others in flight over the waters on our boat trip.

CAVE SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon fulva*) – Small numbers around some of the temples -- and our hotel -- at Uxmal. Alex says this species regularly nests in restored Mayan structures across the peninsula.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

HOUSE WREN (COZUMEL I.) (*Troglodytes aedon beani*) – One bouncing through the bushes near the Cozumel sewage plant didn't play fair, showing well for some and not at all for others. Currently, Clements still considers this taxa to be a House Wren, though other taxonomists split it as

the Cozumel Wren.

CAROLINA WREN (WHITE-BROWED) (*Thryothorus ludovicianus albinucha*) – One at Punta Laguna eyed us carefully from the bushes just yards away, not far from where we found our first Green-backed Sparrows. Though currently considered (by Clements anyway) to be a Carolina Wren, this taxa looks and sounds quite different, with a far less rusty plumage -- and a shorter, less musical song -- than its northern cousins have.

YUCATAN WREN (*Campylorhynchus yucatanicus*) – Superb studies of a gang of these big, social wrens along the road up to Hotel Xixim, north of Celestun. [E]

SPOT-BREASTED WREN (*Pheugopedius maculipectus*) – These were certainly a challenge to see well! After watching one dart back and forth across the road south of Coba, we had better luck with a pair at Punta Laguna, and others along the Be-Ha road. The loud, rollicking song of this wren was a regular part of the tour soundtrack, particularly in the middle of the tour.

WHITE-BELLIED WREN (*Uropsila leucogastra*) – One in the wilder garden beyond Hacienda Chichen circled around us a few times in the viny tangles, occasionally pausing for a good look around.

Poliptilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliptila caerulea*) – Quite common on Cozumel where one spent the afternoon flycatching from the top of the fountain, and others with mixed flocks around Chichen and Uxmal. The subspecies *cozumelae* is resident on Cozumel; it's dusker on throat and belly than are the migrant races.

WHITE-LORED GNATCATCHER (*Poliptila albiloris*) – A pair flitted through the thorn scrub along the road between Celestun and Hotel Xixim, scolding Alex's "owl" with their thin, whining calls, and we saw others in the same area as our Yucatan Flycatcher.

TROPICAL GNATCATCHER (*Poliptila plumbea*) – Michel spotted one with the big mixed flock boiling along the Multun Ha road.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

WOOD THRUSH (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – We heard the bubbling call of one from the thick vegetation along the track into Alberto's restaurant on Cozumel, and another calling from the woods at Punta Laguna. [*]

CLAY-COLORED THRUSH (*Turdus grayi*) – Small numbers on scattered days, with especially nice studies of a few gobbling berries around the start of the track at Punta Laguna, and others around the fig trees at our Uxmal hotel.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

BLACK CATBIRD (*Melanoptila glabrirostris*) – Almost ridiculously common in parts of Cozumel, including the road down to Alberto's restaurant, which must have had two dozen!

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Also common on Cozumel (including many bouncing along the track to Alberto's restaurant with their Black Catbird cousins), with others along the Be-Ha and San Simon roads.

TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus gilvus*) – Daily, including the ones serenading us in the gardens of our Cozumel hotel.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – We heard the loud chipping of one near the start of the road down to Alberto's restaurant just after climbing out of the vans -- and Sandra may have caught a glimpse of it shooting off into the undergrowth. [b*]

WORM-EATING WARBLER (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) – One twitched through the thick growth along the path back to Coba's big pyramid, part of a mixed group that came in to Alex's pygmy-owl imitation. We watched it investigate a few dead leaf clusters -- a specialty of this species. [b]

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Especially nice views of one sprinting around several puddles on the road to the north end of Cozumel, and of another wagging its way across the treed area in front of one of the pyramids at Coba, plus a few among the mangroves from our boats in the Celestun estuary. [b]

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) – One with a mixed flock at Coba, and another -- seen even better -- with the Rose-throated Tanager flock in a dead tree along the Multun Ha road. [b]

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – Daily, crawling up and down tree trunks and branches in rainforest, mangrove swamps and thorn forest throughout. [b]

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – A few scattered birds, including a few in the reeds near Cozumel's sewage treatment plant, a handful around Lake Coba and a boldly masked male that responded to Alex's pygmy-owl imitation near the Celestun bridge (where we searched for Mangrove Warbler).

HOODED WARBLER (*Setophaga citrina*) – These beauties proved reasonably common throughout the tour, including one dancing back and forth on a branch over our heads at Coba (trying to find that "pygmy-owl") and one near our Bright-rumped Attila at Punta Laguna. [b]

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Common and widespread across much of our tour route, though missing completely from the dry forest around Celestun. [b]

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*) – We had a very drab female in one of the dead trees along the edge of Lake Coba, but our best views came at Hotel Xixim, where we found two (including a fairly bright male) near the main lobby -- first for the site for Alex, after 14 years of birding there! [b]

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – Every day but one, and we probably just missed it that day! [b]

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – Another widespread winter visitor, seen in small numbers every day of the tour -- including one hunting near the fountain at Hotel Villablanca. [b]

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – This habitat generalist is the winter visitor to Mexico (as opposed to the next subspecies, which is resident). We had especially nice looks at some hunting around the fountain at Hotel Villablanca.

YELLOW WARBLER (GOLDEN) (*Setophaga petechia rufivertex*) – Common on Cozumel, where we had good looks at several rufous-capped males along the track to Alberto's restaurant.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulea*) – A male along the road into Alberto's restaurant on Cozumel (not far from the volleyball court) was a bit of eye candy -- and those who arrived early enough on our first day saw another near the tennis court at Hotel Villablanca. [b]

PALM WARBLER (*Setophaga palmarum*) – One on the grounds of Cozumel's Villablanca hotel waggled its way through the grass and across the tennis court, occasionally popping up into the chain-link fence for a look around.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (*Setophaga dominica*) – Regular throughout, but seen particularly well at our Cozumel hotel, where several of them hunted at eye level (or below!) around the fountain in the middle of the garden. What a lovely bird! [b]

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*) – Small numbers on most days of the trip, though missing from the drier west. [b]

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

BLUE-GRAY TANAGER (*Thraupis episcopus*) – One swiveled in a tree outside our Uxmal hotel (good spotting, Sandra!) and another pair flicked through a tree amid the pyramids at the ruins site there. This species is a relatively new arrival to the Yucatan, but its origin is uncertain; they may be arriving from points further south, or they may be the descendants of escaped cage birds.

YELLOW-WINGED TANAGER (*Thraupis abbas*) – One sitting at the top of a leafless tree along Lake Coba showed nicely as we turned the corner towards the cenotes -- leading to a prolonged stop where we found LOTS of other species! Our best views, though, came over one of the Mayaland cabins at Chichen Itza, where a pair gobbled fruit from a tree.

RED-LEGGED HONEYCREEPER (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*) – A female flitting through the trees along the road to the Multun Ha cenote was certainly a surprise; most of these summer breeders have headed south by the time of our tour.

BANANAQUIT (*Coereba flaveola*) – Regular on Cozumel (though in relatively small numbers), particularly around flowering bushes.

YELLOW-FACED GRASSQUIT (*Tiaris olivaceus*) – Regular on Cozumel, including a couple foraging in the short grass right at the start of the track down to Alberto's restaurant.

WESTERN SPINDALIS (*Spindalis zena*) – Particularly nice views of a gang of them in a fruiting tree along the track to Alberto's restaurant. What a snazzy bird!

BLACK-HEADED SALTATOR (*Saltator atriceps*) – Our first was a gang of four noisy birds that flicked across the road south of Coba -- showing nicely their distinctively yellowy-green backs. This species was common across our tour route.

GRAYISH SALTATOR (*Saltator coerulescens*) – A couple at Coba, but better views came on our pre-breakfast walk around Mayaland Chichen, where we found a couple near the pygmy-owls.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

OLIVE SPARROW (*Arremonops rufivirgatus*) – One sang from a brush pile along the edge of the woods near Uxmal Resort Maya.

GREEN-BACKED SPARROW (*Arremonops chloronotus*) – Fine views of several pairs at Punta Laguna, including one hopping around on the trail just past the big spattering of spider monkey poop.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

ROSE-THROATED TANAGER (*Piranga roseogularis*) – Wow! After seeing only yellow-throated females at Coba, we'd kind of given up on seeing a male; fortunately, Alex's pygmy-owl imitation worked magic along the Multun Ha road, where yet another female was accompanied by her mate -- who proceeded to perch out in the open right at the top of a tree!

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*) – Easily the most common of the tour's tanagers, seen every day -- including a few around the outdoor dining area at our hotel in Chichen Itza which have apparently learned to enter the dining room if nobody comes outside!

RED-THROATED ANT-TANAGER (*Habia fuscicauda*) – Our first were a little gang along the pathway at Coba, but our best views came at Punta Laguna, where a trio near the cenote could only have come closer if they'd actually LANDED on somebody!

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – A pair along the road into Alberto's restaurant was largely ignored, as we watched our first Black Catbirds. We saw others around Celestun, including some of among the cabins at Hotel Xixim.

ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – A tree along the San Simon road was well decorated with plenty of youngsters, some showing the telltale traces of pink that indicate young males. Some of the group saw another female/youngster in some branches over the road near Cozumel's sewage treatment plant.

GRAY-THROATED CHAT (*Granatellus sallaiei*) – Wow! A stunning male was a highlight of one pre-breakfast outing at Uxmal; he crept like a mouse through the undergrowth, appearing briefly in random open gaps and posing occasionally on open branches.

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – A little group of winter-dulled birds (showing only the barest hint of blue in their wings and tails) foraged in tall grasses along the roadside near El Cedral's main square, and others foraged among the giant grass stems along the San Simon road.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

MELODIOUS BLACKBIRD (*Dives dives*) – If only we were paid a peso for every one we saw...

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Common throughout, trundling around on various hotel lawns or investigating parking lots and sidewalks.

BRONZED COWBIRD (*Molothrus aeneus*) – A single male in a tree near Lake Coba (with our first Yellow-winged Tanager) showed nicely the red eye and thick neck of this species.

BLACK-COWLED ORIOLE (*Icterus prothemelas*) – A couple with the "juice" of orioles near the entrance to Uxmal Resort Maya sat right up at the top of the trees, giving us great opportunity for study.

HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*) – Daily, including a few in close proximity with the similarly-plumaged Altamira Oriole, allowing good comparison. This smaller species shows more white in the wing.

YELLOW-TAILED ORIOLE (*Icterus mesomelas*) – Two near the edge of the village at Punta Laguna flicked through trees just across the road from us, giving us great views. That completely yellow undertail is distinctive.

ORANGE ORIOLE (*Icterus auratus*) – Our first were a pair with the mob of orioles near Uxmal Resort Maya. Fortunately for those who slept in that morning, we found another vocal pair in the trees around our Uxmal hotel on the morning we left for Celestun. This species is practically an endemic; it just squeaks across the border in the very northeastern tip of Belize.

ALTAMIRA ORIOLE (*Icterus gularis*) – Probably the tour's second most common oriole, with fine studies of a pair of males jousting over a nearby pair of females near Lake Coba. The big orange wedge in the upper wing of this species helps to distinguish it from the smaller Hooded Oriole, and its black back helps to separate it from the Orange Oriole.

YELLOW-BILLED CACIQUE (*Amblycercus holosericeus*) – These expert skulkers certainly lived up to their reputation, creeping back and forth through quivering vegetation nearly at our feet and never showing a feather -- though we certainly all heard their growling calls! Some of the group were facing in the right direction when a pair later crossed (one at a time) a nearby open track.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

SCRUB EUPHONIA (*Euphonia affinis*) – A pair in the trees near a highway intersection south of Coba were cooperative, sitting high in an open tree until everyone had a chance to see them in the scope. The male's dark blue bib helps to separate him from males of the next species.

YELLOW-THROATED EUPHONIA (*Euphonia hirundinacea*) – We heard some (from high in the trees) over the trail at Coba, but didn't see them

until we walked the Multun Ha road -- where a small group bounced through a tree full of flowering mistletoe, and then joined the mob of small passerines attracted by Alex's owl imitation. Males of this species have yellow right up to their chins, with no dark bibs.

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*) – One in a little tree near where we stood in El Cedral looked pretty dull. The origin of Cozumel's Lesser Goldfinches is uncertain; they may be descendants of escaped cage birds.

MAMMALS

YUCATAN SQUIRREL (*Sciurus yucatanensis*) – A few of these tree squirrels scrambled up trees in various spots around Punta Laguna and Chichen. They have rustier colored backs than the gray squirrels found across much of North America.

CENTRAL AMERICAN AGOUTI (*Dasyprocta punctata*) – One scampered across the open ground below a big fig tree at Hacienda Chichen, then disappeared (remarkably silently) into the forest.

NORTHERN RACCOON (*Procyon lotor*) – A gang of them at the north end of Cozumel (a "pygmy" subspecies), with others checking out our parked vans on the road back towards the sewage treatment plant. We saw others around Hotel Xixim -- including one little orphan who'd been adopted by the staff.

WHITE-NOSED COATI (*Nasua narica*) – Doug spotted one crossing road -- its long tail held high -- during our first afternoon's outing on Cozumel.

COLLARED PECCARY (*Tayassu tajacu*) – We heard something crashing off through the woods as we walked the road towards Alberto's restaurant, and a lucky few happened to be facing the right direction when it briefly trotted out into the road a few minutes later.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Holly's poems:

Celestun dump, Cozumel sewage ponds,
Our leaders waved their magic wands,
Conjuring rails, owls, orioles through their scope,
Tempting us to begin hope,
That every species, dove to grassquit,
Would automatically and scientifically split.
Thus our trip list with no trouble
Would instantaneously double.

Coba, Chichen, their huge ball courts
Proved Mayans love of extreme sports.
Two captains and twelve players,
Two leaders and twelve birds.
A game of skill played to the death.
The concept made us pause for breath.
Should we win or lose instead,
Would we be without a head?

We know Chac, the god of rain.
Source of life, all powerful, a superbrain.
But to us, avian pilgrims, modern druids,
Megan and Alex are gods of fluids.

Cerveza, vino, poc chuc, pibil,
Sopa, pollo, meal after meal,
Guacamole, tortillas, flan and mangoes,
Alex and Megan = superheroes!

Jabiru.
Who knew?

Ann and Barb's poem:

To Villa Blanca on Cozumel,
Twelve birders came one day.
One half of them from Canada,
And half from the USA.

Off to Alberto's we did drive
On our first morning fine,
Black Catbirds called from every bush,
And warblers from every vine.

At Lake Coba we did find
Many dark birds on a wire.
So many Melodious Blackbirds there ...
You might as well call it a choir.

Now hummingbirds a favorite are.
Here shiny Emeralds did delight.

There was Cozumel and Canavet's,
And those with bellies white.

(Aside: Not to mention that displaying Sheartail later!)

Coba brought us small white dots
On wren and also rail,
And greetings from a young doorman,
Politeness without fail.

For Punta Laguna we were told:
The wardrobe's not clam-diggers,
And we obeyed implicitly,
Just to avoid those chiggers.

Chichen Itza brought us owls;
That morning pair was quite a score.
But then along our evening drive,
There popped up yet two more.

Friday morning brought the fog.
Along the trail we did not jog.
At the end of the road to our delight,
A juice of orioles came into sight.

Those Saturday grosbeaks in a tree
Did make us all just clap with glee.
Then Alan found us quite a stunner
When he spotted a Lesser Roadrunner.

Pink flamingos and anhinga necks
Were joys for all to see,
But surely the stars of the Celestun trip
Must be those kingfishers three.

We mustn't forget our driver Juan
Who drove us safe each day
On highways, byways, and rough-hewn tracks,
Helping us enjoy our stay.

But now our trip is at an end,
And homeward we are bound.
Many a laugh we all have shared,
And many a bird we found.

And as we go our separate ways
And take leave from friends old and new,
We know we'll all keep birding on.
This is au revoir but not adieu.

Totals for the tour: 202 bird taxa and 5 mammal taxa