



Field Guides Tour Report

Central Mexico & Baja: Birds, Butterflies & Whales 2020

Feb 7, 2020 to Feb 19, 2020

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For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).



A fabulous experience during our tour -- viewing the Monarchs!

The idea for this tour was sparked at one of our Field Guides business meetings when Jesse and I were on the topic of Mexico. Both of us having been blown away by the Monarchs in Central Mexico and Jesse having just visited Baja, we figured, why not do a tour that combines the Monarchs, some of Mexico's rich endemic birdlife, Gray Whales and Whale Sharks all into one incredible tour? So that's what we did.

Day 1 began with some great birds. We escaped Mexico City early before the waves of heavy traffic to visit a site outside the city with Anuar, a research biologist at UNAM, the federal university in Mexico City. Within a few minutes of getting out of the vans we saw our first Sierra Madre Sparrows warming themselves on the tops of the bunch grass! Orale! These remarkable sparrows have a tiny and shrinking distribution around the Central Volcanic Belt. They look like a cross between a Song Sparrow and a Baird's Sparrow, with a bunch of rufous in the wings. After soul-satisfying views we walked into a patch of woods where we had our first encounters with Red Warbler, a cooperative Green-striped Brushfinch (another endemic), Strickland's Woodpecker, Gray Silky-flycatchers and more Elegant Euphonias than we could count. From there, we had lunch and went to bird the UNAM botanical gardens—perhaps the best birding site within Mexico City. The volcanic outcroppings with low xeric vegetation are home to the Hooded Yellowthroat, superficially similar to our Common Yellowthroat, but with a gray, rather than white, border to its dark mask.

The next day we packed up and left Mexico City for a site to look for another yellowthroat: the Black-poll'd Yellowthroat. This Central Mexico endemic lurks in the reedbeds outside Mexico City, its habitat ever threatened by the expanding metropolis. Males have a totally dark hood, and females look like any other female yellowthroat. Within a few minutes of walking a berm along the reedbeds, we saw several. From there, we continued east, stopping for lunch in the picturesque town of Valle de Bravo before arriving at our cabins in the woods near the butterfly reserve.

Our day with the Monarchs was more than we could have ever hoped for. It was quite the climb to reach their roosting site (some of us took horses), but it was worth every calorie we burned. After much panting and sweating, we arrived where the butterflies clung to the ancient Oyamel Firs, a ways down a rugged side trail cleared by our guides the day before. Every day the butterflies choose a slightly different location, seeking a particular microclimate that suits their needs. When we reached the trunks and branches draped in orange, silver and black, an overwhelming sense of peace settled over us. It was just us in a galaxy of sleeping monarchs swaying gently in the morning breeze. As they thawed in the soft morning light, clumps would break loose, shuffling off into the wind. Occasionally, entire branches of monarchs would erupt into flight, filling the forest with the sound of their wings and accompanying the omnipresent chirps of White-eared Hummingbird and the sporadic cackling of Gray-barred Wren. With hearts and minds brimming with lepidopteran joy, we descended to the vans. Along the way we crossed beneath highways of monarchs meandering their way down the mountain.

Some clustered to drink at the puddles along the path, absorbing salts and other mountain minerals, while others paused to nectar on the tall yellow hedges of Senecio and Barkleyanthus that lined the trail.

We left our cozy cabins in the woods to drive across Mexico City to Tepoztlan where we spent the next few days working on some of West Mexico's dry forest avifauna. We visited the ruins of Xochicalco, an impressive archaeological site, and we had the whole place to ourselves! The birding that day was great; we saw West Mexican Chachalacas, Black-chested Sparrows, lots of Myiarchus flycatchers, and heard Lesser Ground-Cuckoo. The next day we birded the oak zone above Tepoztlan and saw Chestnut-sided Shrike-vireo, one of my favorite of all Mexican birds. It posed nicely, allowing us to get it in the scope.

After a morning of travel from Tepoztlan through Mexico City, we flew to Baja, and the city of La Paz. When we touched down, it was like arriving in a completely different country. The plants were different (lots of columnar cacti everywhere), the culture, the food—all had a different flavor. After a much-needed night's rest, we loaded into the vans and crossed the Baja Peninsula to Magdalena Bay, where the Gray Whales come to raise their calves. These magnificent cetaceans spend the summers gorging themselves on polychaete worms off the Alaska Coast, then migrate 6,000 miles to lagoons off the coast of Baja. On our first outing we saw well over 20 whales moving through the entrance of the lagoon. There was a mix of mothers with newborn calves and juveniles from the previous year. It was breathtaking to look out across the horizon and see so many whale spouts! When we arrived at our luxury tent camp, a pod of Bottlenose Dolphins cruised by as if they were welcoming us to the camp. The camping was fabulous. It was like having all the fun parts of camping—being under the stars and away from the city noise—without having to do the work of cooking or setting up.

The next morning, we went out whale watching again, this time with more favorable weather. We had several close encounters with both mothers and calves. It was as if they were showing off for us as they spun around alongside our boat. After a soul-satisfying time with the whales, we crossed back over to La Paz and staged for the next day's activity: swimming with Whale Sharks. These colossal fish converge off the coast of La Paz in the winter where they can be seen fairly close to shore. It took some time before our chartered boat was allowed to leave the harbor (the activity is highly regulated), so we birded a strip of mangroves across from La Paz, which turned out to be great. We saw Mangrove Warbler, and some cool desert lizards. Anticipation soared when we finally left to look for the Whale Sharks. It didn't take long before our captain spotted one. He positioned the panga so that folks who wanted to could jump in and follow the animal as it cruised gracefully near the water's surface. Being next to such an enormous, peaceful animal was truly a humbling experience.

The last leg of the tour was to target some of the Baja endemics at Sierra la Laguna, the mountain range at the tip of the peninsula. We had an early start and drove up a bumpy dirt road to a ranch where we had a delicious breakfast with fresh tortillas hot off the skillet. We then walked a drainage where we saw Gray Thrasher and the San Luca form of Cassin's Vireo, a bird that will probably be split at some point. It's got a lot more yellow than the Cassin's Vireo up north. Before lunch, we stopped at a freshwater wetland with cattails and palms, where we called out a Belding's Yellowthroat, our 4th yellowthroat of the tour! The bird came right out and posed in front of us on a palm frond. Que maravilla!

Before departing for the airport, we visited another wetland near San Jose del Cabo where we scoped a flock of Dowitchers and a slew of other shorebirds—a fine way to wrap up a fine time in Mexico. Jesse and I would like to thank all of you for traveling with us. We look forward to birding with you again!

Saludos,

Micah and Jesse

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

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

BRANT (*Branta bernicla*) – We saw several from our camp at Magdalena Bay. They feed on the eel grass that grows in the lagoon.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Spatula discors*) – Lots were out at the estuary near San Jose del Cabo.

CINNAMON TEAL (*Spatula cyanoptera*)

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*)

GADWALL (*Mareca strepera*)

MEXICAN DUCK (*Anas diazi*) – A few seen in flight at the marsh outside Mexico City.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Anas crecca*)

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

Cracidae (Guans, Chachalacas, and Curassows)

WEST MEXICAN CHACHALACA (*Ortalis poliocephala*) – These noisy squawkers were in the dry forest at Xochicalco. [E]

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

CALIFORNIA QUAIL (*Callipepla californica*) [*]

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [I]

BAND-TAILED PIGEON (*Patagioenas fasciata*) – We saw a huge flock stream over us above Tepoztlan.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

INCA DOVE (*Columbina inca*)

COMMON GROUND DOVE (*Columbina passerina*)

RUDDY GROUND DOVE (*Columbina talpacoti*)

WHITE-TIPPED DOVE (*Leptotila verreauxi*) [*]
WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) – Common around Baja.
MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

GROOVE-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*)
LESSER GROUND-CUCKOO (*Morococcyx erythropygus*) – We heard one at Xochicalco, but it just didn't come into view. [*]
SQUIRREL CUCKOO (*Piaya cayana*) – Seen near Tepoztlan.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

BUFF-COLLARED NIGHTJAR (*Antrorstomus ridgwayi*) – We saw one near Tepoztlan as we waited for owls at dusk.

Apodidae (Swifts)

VAUX'S SWIFT (*Chaetura vauxi*) – We saw lots streaming over the UNAM botanical gardens in Mexico City.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

MEXICAN VIOLETEAR (*Colibri thalassinus*) – We saw several near our cabins at the Monarch reserve.
RIVOLI'S HUMMINGBIRD (*Eugenes fulgens*) – One of the largest hummers in Mexico. We saw a few near the Monarch reserve.
PLAIN-CAPPED STARTHROAT (*Heliomaster constantii*) – We saw this dry forest hummer outside of Tepoztlan.
COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRD (*Calypte costae*) – We saw one at the mangroves across from La Paz.
GOLDEN-CROWNED EMERALD (*Chlorostilbon auriceps*) – This cool West Mexico endemic was seen a couple times near Tepoztlan. [E]
DUSKY HUMMINGBIRD (*Cynanthus sordidus*) – Another West Mexico endemic. We saw a few at Xochicalco. [E]
BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD (*Cynanthus latirostris*) – There aren't many places where you can see both Broad-billed and Dusky Hummingbirds in the same area. We saw both around Tepoztlan.
BERYLLINE HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia beryllina*) – Common in the dry forests of Central Mexico.
VIOLET-CROWNED HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia violiceps*) – Seen around Tepoztlan.
WHITE-EARED HUMMINGBIRD (*Hylocharis leucotis*) – The theme song of the hardwood forests in Central Mexico. We saw lots throughout the tour.
XANTUS'S HUMMINGBIRD (*Hylocharis xantusii*) – Another Mexican endemic! We saw several on our morning of birding at Sierra de la Laguna. [E]

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

COMMON GALLINULE (*Gallinula galeata*)
AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*)

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*) – We scoped a few from our luxury tent camp at Magdalena Bay.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*)
KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*)

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*)
LONG-BILLED CURLEW (*Numenius americanus*)
MARbled GODWIT (*Limosa fedoa*) – We scoped these from our base camp at Magdalena Bay.
LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*)
WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*) – One flew by at the marsh outside Mexico City.
SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*)
GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*)
WILLET (WESTERN) (*Tringa semipalmata inornata*)
LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*)

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – A few were out on the dock at Valle de Bravo.
HEERMANN'S GULL (*Larus heermanni*) – Seen frequently around La Paz. The juvs were chocolate brown.
WESTERN GULL (*Larus occidentalis*) – The most common gull we saw in Baja.
YELLOW-FOOTED GULL (*Larus livens*) – A few were seen around La Paz. This gull is quasi-endemic to the Gulf of California.
CALIFORNIA GULL (*Larus californicus*)
HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*)

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*) – We had magnificent looks at these magnificent birds.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

BRANDT'S CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax penicillatus*) – We saw a couple on our whale shark outing. These are slightly smaller than the Double-crested Cormorant.
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – The most common cormorant we saw around Baja.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*)

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*)

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*)

REDDISH EGRET (*Egretta rufescens*) – We had great looks at this coastal egret right from our camp site in Baja.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*)

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – We all saw this one our last morning of birding the marsh near San Jose del Cabo.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – Lots were out at the marsh near Mexico City.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*)

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Common throughout Baja. They were already nesting on the telephone poles.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

WHITE-TAILED KITE (*Elanus leucurus*) – We had a brief fly-by at the marsh near Mexico City.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus hudsonius*) – One cruised by over the marsh near Mexico City.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*)

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*)

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – This was somewhat surprising. We saw one shoot across the water while we were watching the Gray Whales at Magdalena Bay.

COMMON BLACK HAWK (*Buteogallus anthracinus*) – Some saw one soaring overhead at Xochicalco.

ZONE-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo albonotatus*) – We had our best views of a bird soaring near the road at Sierra la Laguna, Baja.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Fairly common throughout the tour.

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

BARN OWL (*Tyto alba*) – Right before we left for dinner when we arrived in La Paz, we looked up and there was a Barn Owl!

Strigidae (Owls)

WHISKERED SCREECH-OWL (*Megascops trichopsis*) – One swooped in while we were owling at cabins near the Monarch Reserve.

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL (*Aegolius acadicus*) – We heard one do its wailing call at our cabins near the monarch reserve. [E]

Momotidae (Motmots)

RUSSET-CROWNED MOTMOT (*Momotus mexicanus*) – These were at our hotel in Tepoztlan.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

ACORN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) – A few of these were along the road near the Monarch reserve.

GOLDEN-CHEEKED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes chrysogenys*) – Another cool endemic of West Mexico. We saw these well at Xochicalco. [E]

GILA WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes uropygialis*) – Common around Baja.

LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Dryobates scalaris*) – We had our best looks at the UNAM botanical gardens.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (SOUTH MEXICAN) (*Dryobates villosus jardinii*)

STRICKLAND'S WOODPECKER (*Dryobates stricklandi*) – This little woodpecker has a limited distribution along the Central Volcanic Belt. It prefers the high elevation pine-oak forest. We saw a couple just outside Mexico City. [E]

NORTHERN FLICKER (RED-SHAFTED) (*Colaptes auratus mexicanus*)

GILDED FLICKER (*Colaptes chrysoides*) – We called one in at Sierra la Laguna. These tend to nest in columnar cacti.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

CRESTED CARACARA (*Caracara cheriway*)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*)

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – We saw a large female land on a cellphone tower as we were getting ready to leave to see the Whale Sharks.

Furnariidae (Ovenbirds and Woodcreepers)

WHITE-STRIPED WOODCREEPER (*Lepidocolaptes leucogaster*) – I love woodcreepers. We had great looks at this one at our cabins near the Monarchs. [E]

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

NORTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANULET (*Camptostoma imberbe*)

GREENISH ELAENIA (WEST MEXICO) (*Myiopagis viridicata jaliscensis*)

PILEATED FLYCATCHER (*Xenotriccus mexicanus*) – This West Mexico endemic occurs in dry forest on steep slopes. We called one in near Tepoztlan. [E]

TUFTED FLYCATCHER (MEXICAN) (*Mitrephanes phaeocercus phaeocercus*)

GREATER PEWEE (*Contopus pertinax*) – Common throughout Central Mexico.

LEAST FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax minimus*) – Seen in the dry forest near Xochicalco.

HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax hammondi*) – What a great view we had of that bird calling right above us at Tepoztlan!

DUSKY FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax oberholseri*) – The most common Empid in Central Mexico.

PINE FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax affinis*) [*]

PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax difficilis*) – The "Western Flycatcher" we saw in Baja at Sierra la Laguna.

CORDILLERAN FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax occidentalis*) – The "Western Flycatchers" we saw in Central Mexico.

BUFF-BREASTED FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax fulvifrons*) – It was neat to see this bird at the UNAM botanical gardens.

BLACK PHOEBE (*Sayornis nigricans*)

SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*)

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*)

DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*) – Seen well along the road below Xochicalco.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) – Also common at Xochicalco.

NUTTING'S FLYCATCHER (NUTTING'S) (*Myiarchus nuttingi inquietus*) – Yet another Myiarchus at Xochicalco. These are slightly brighter than Ash-throated and have yellow lining their bill.

SOCIAL FLYCATCHER (SOCIAL) (*Myiozetetes similis palliventris*)

TROPICAL KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)

CASSIN'S KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus vociferans*) – The common kingbird of Central Mexico.

THICK-BILLED KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus crassirostris*) – It was cool to see these in the dry forest at Xochicalco.

WESTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus verticalis*)

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

CHESTNUT-SIDED SHRIKE-VIREO (*Vireolanius melitophrys*) – One of the cool, cool birds of Central Mexico. We saw one in the oak forest near Tepoztlan.

GOLDEN VIREO (*Vireo hypochryseus*) – We had great looks at one that came in to scold tape near Tepoztlan. [E]

HUTTON'S VIREO (*Vireo huttoni*) – Heard regularly in the oak forests of Central Mexico. [*]

CASSIN'S VIREO (*Vireo cassinii*) – We came across a few in the dry forests near Tepoztlan.

CASSIN'S VIREO (SAN LUCAS) (*Vireo cassinii lucasanus*) – One of our birding highlights in Baja was seeing this unique subspecies at Sierra la Laguna. It came right in and sang above us! [E]

PLUMBEOUS VIREO (*Vireo plumbeus*)

WARBLING VIREO (*Vireo gilvus*)

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – Seen along the beach near La Paz.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

CALIFORNIA SCRUB-JAY (*Aphelocoma californica*) – We saw these a couple times in Baja. Our best looks were at the beach across from La Paz, while we waited to go see the Whale Sharks.

TRANSVOLCANIC JAY (*Aphelocoma ultramarina*) – Fairly common near the butterfly reserve. [E]

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*)

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

MEXICAN CHICKADEE (*Poecile sclateri*) – These were common in the feeding flocks up at the butterflies.

Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)

VERDIN (*Auriparus flaviceps*) – We saw a pair while we waited to go see the Whale Sharks.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*)

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta thalassina*)

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*)

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

BUSH TIT (MELANOTIS GROUP) (*Psaltriparus minimus melanotis*) – The ones in Central Mexico have a dark mask. We saw a few near Mexico City.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus satrapa*) [*]

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*)

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (INTERIOR WEST) (*Sitta carolinensis mexicana*) – We had outstanding views of a bird near Tepoztlan.

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

BROWN CREEPER (ALBESCENS/ALTICOLA) (*Certhia americana alticola*) [*]

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila caerulea*)

WHITE-LORED GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila albiloris*) – These were in the dry forest at Xochicalco. We had a couple views of the adult males with black caps.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

CANYON WREN (*Catherpes mexicanus*)

HOUSE WREN (NORTHERN) (*Troglodytes aedon parkmanii*)

HOUSE WREN (BROWN-THROATED) (*Troglodytes aedon brunneicollis*) – These were up in the high elevation forests near the butterfly reserve.

MARSH WREN (*Cistothorus palustris*) – We saw quite a few at the marsh near Mexico City.

BEWICK'S WREN (MEXICANUS GROUP) (*Thryomanes bewickii mexicanus*) – Fairly common around Mexico City. We even had them at our hotel in Coyoacan!

GRAY-BARRED WREN (*Campylorhynchus megalopterus*) – One of my favorite birds of Central Mexico! We watched a family group high in the trees near the butterfly reserve. [E]

BOUCARD'S WREN (*Campylorhynchus jocosus*) – The equivalent of Gray-barred Wren at the lower elevations. We saw a pair near Tepoztlan. [E]

CACTUS WREN (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*) – Our third *Campylorhynchus*! We saw several while we were in Baja.

BANDED WREN (*Thryophilus pleurostictus*) – A cool inhabitant of the dry forest of West Mexico. We called one in at Xochicalco.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [I]

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

BLUE MOCKINGBIRD (*Melanotis caerulescens*) – A pair showed quite nicely on the road near the butterfly reserve. [E]

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (CURVIROSTRE GROUP) (*Toxostoma curvirostre curvirostre*) – Fairly common around Tepoztlan.

GRAY THRASHER (*Toxostoma cinereum*) – What a cool bird! We had great views of one singing from the top of a cactus at Sierra de la Laguna.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*)

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialis*) – These were in the clearing near our cabins at the butterfly reserve.

WESTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia mexicana*) – A few were seen near Mexico City.

BROWN-BACKED SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes occidentalis*) – One of my favorite sounds! We saw some right outside Mexico City.

ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH (*Catharus aurantiirostris*) – Heard at dusk near Tepoztlan. [*]

RUSSET NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH (*Catharus occidentalis*) [E]

HERMIT THRUSH (*Catharus guttatus*) – One was feeding on the lawn at our cabins near the butterfly reserve.

WHITE-THROATED THRUSH (WHITE-THROATED) (*Turdus assimilis oaxacae*)

AMERICAN ROBIN (MIGRATORIUS GROUP) (*Turdus migratorius phillipsi*)

RUFOUS-BACKED ROBIN (*Turdus rufopalliatus*) – Seen from the hotel in Tepoztlan.

Ptilionotidae (Silky-flycatchers)

GRAY SILKY-FLYCATCHER (*Ptilionotus cinereus*) – Common throughout Central Mexico. We saw these multiple times throughout the tour.

Peucedramidae (Olive Warbler)

OLIVE WARBLER (*Peucedramus taeniatus*) – We actually saw quite a few up in the pine forests around Central Mexico.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

Eringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

ELEGANT EUPHONIA (*Euphonia elegantissima*) – What a bird! These were all over the place on our first outing near Mexico City. We had great looks at both males and females.

HOUSE FINCH (COMMON) (*Haemorhous mexicanus roseipectus*)

PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*)

BLACK-HEADED SISKIN (*Spinus notatus*) – We had outstanding views of these striking siskins up near the butterfly reserve.

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*)

Passerellidae (New World Sparrows)

STRIPE-HEADED SPARROW (*Peucaea ruficauda*) – We had a few of these in the weedy fields near Xochicalco.

BLACK-CHESTED SPARROW (*Peucaea humeralis*) – One of my favorite Mexican endemics. We had great looks at them near Xochicalco. [E]

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – Seen our first day near Mexico City.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (*Spizella pallida*) – Fairly common in the open fields near Mexico City.

GREEN-STRIPED BRUSHFINCH (*Arremon virenticeps*) – Another cool endemic restricted to Central Mexico's volcanos. We had awesome views of a pair near Mexico City. [E]

YELLOW-EYED JUNCO (*Junco phaeonotus*) – Common throughout the highlands of Central Mexico.

STRIPED SPARROW (*Oriturus superciliosus*) – These are common in the high altitude meadows of Central Mexico. We saw them throughout our time there. [E]

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – We saw a few of these at the marsh near Mexico City.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (BELDING'S) (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*) – A few were out in the halophyte flats near Magdalena Bay.

SIERRA MADRE SPARROW (*Xenospiza baileyi*) – One of the most sought-after species near Mexico City. We saw several our first morning of birding. [I]

SONG SPARROW (MEXICANA GROUP) (*Melospiza melodia mexicana*)

LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*)

RUSTY-CROWNED GROUND-SPARROW (*Melospiza kieneri*) – These can be quite skulky but we had one emerge from the shadows at Xochicalco. [E]

CANYON TOWHEE (*Melospiza fusca*)

RUFOUS-CROWNED SPARROW (*Aimophila ruficeps*) – One sat out on a rock ledge in front of us at the UNAM botanical gardens.
SPOTTED TOWHEE (MACULATUS GROUP) (*Pipilo maculatus oaxacae*) – These have got to be split from the ones in Arizona. They look and sound totally different!

RUFOUS-CAPPED BRUSHFINCH (*Atlapetes pileatus*) – We encountered these a couple times throughout our time in Central Mexico. [E]

Icteriidae (Yellow-breasted Chat)

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT (*Icteria virens*)

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*) – Heard from our tent camp in Baja. [*]

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – We saw these in the high elevation meadows near Mexico City.

BLACK-VENTED ORIOLE (*Icterus wagleri*)

HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*)

STREAK-BACKED ORIOLE (*Icterus pustulatus*) – Seen well near Xochicalco.

BLACK-BACKED ORIOLE (*Icterus abeillei*) – We heard these right from our hotel in downtown Mexico City and saw them near the butterfly reserve. It's a neat looking oriole. [E]

SCOTT'S ORIOLE (*Icterus parisorum*) – We had this species our first and last day of the tour. How about that!

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*)

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) – Common in the agricultural fields outside Mexico City.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*)

CRESCENT-CHESTED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis superciliosa*) – The "Parula" of the Mexican Highlands. We had great looks at one near Tepoztlan.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Leiothlypis celata*)

NASHVILLE WARBLER (*Leiothlypis ruficapilla*)

VIRGINIA'S WARBLER (*Leiothlypis virginiae*) – We saw these in the dry forest near Xochicalco.

MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER (*Geothlypis tolmiei*) – These can be tricky to see, but we happened to have a cooperative bird at the UNAM botanical gardens. [I]

BLACK-POLLED YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis speciosa*) – A very local endemic found in the highlands near Mexico City. We had great looks at several in the reed-beds. [E]

BELDING'S YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis beldingi*) – This yellowthroat is restricted to the marshes at the tip of Baja. We watched an outstandingly cooperative individual at Sierra la Laguna. [E]

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Seen at the marsh near Mexico City and in Baja.

HOODED YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis nelsoni*) – The UNAM botanical garden is the place to see this bird. It likes the weedy vegetation on the volcanic outcrops. [E]

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – Seen from our restaurant in Valle de Bravo.

YELLOW WARBLER (MANGROVE) (*Setophaga petechia castaneiceps*) – This was an unexpected bonus for us as we waited to go see the Whale Sharks near La Paz.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S) (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*)

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (*Setophaga nigrescens*) – Seen in many of the feeding flocks throughout the tour.

TOWNSEND'S WARBLER (*Setophaga townsendi*) – Common at the high elevations of Central Mexico.

HERMIT WARBLER (*Setophaga occidentalis*)

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*) – It was cool to see some of these in the dry forest near Tepoztlan.

RUFOUS-CAPPED WARBLER (RUFIFRONS GROUP) (*Basileuterus rufifrons rufifrons*) – We caught up with this species our final day of birding near Tepoztlan.

GOLDEN-BROWED WARBLER (*Basileuterus belli*) – One of my favorite warblers. We saw them regularly near the butterfly reserve.

WILSON'S WARBLER (*Cardellina pusilla*)

RED WARBLER (*Cardellina rubra*) – Certainly a crowd-pleaser. We saw a few during our time in Central Mexico. [E]

PAINTED REDSTART (*Myioborus pictus*) – Seen in the dry forest near Tepoztlan.

SLATE-THROATED REDSTART (*Myioborus miniatus miniatus*) – The more common Redstart of the tour.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

HEPATIC Tanager (NORTHERN) (*Piranga flava hepatica*) – We scoped a male up in a pine tree near the butterfly reserve.

SUMMER Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)

WESTERN Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)

FLAME-COLORED Tanager (*Piranga bidentata*) – It was neat to see an adult male in the oak forest above Tepoztlan.

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – A few were seen at Sierra la Laguna, Baja.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)

BLUE GROSBEAK (*Passerina caerulea*)

LAZULI BUNTING (*Passerina amoena*)

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*)

VARIED BUNTING (*Passerina versicolor*) – We had a nice adult male in the dry forest near Xochicalco.

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies).

CINNAMON-BELLIED FLOWERPIERCER (*Diglossa baritula baritula*) – We saw a couple of these at the UNAM botanical gardens.

BLUE-BLACK GRASSQUIT (*Volatinia jacarina*)

MAMMALS

MEXICAN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus aureogaster*)

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – A pod came by our campsite near Magdalena Bay.

GRAY WHALE (*Eschrichtius robustus*) – One of the highlights of the tour! We went out twice to Magdalena Bay and saw multiple individuals, mostly mothers with calves.

COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) – I'd never seen so many Coyotes together before. While we were heading out to see the Gray Whales, we saw a pack of 6 of them cruising along the beach.

Herps

MEXICAN SPINY-TAILED IGUANA (*Ctenosaura pectinata*) – We saw a couple on the ruins of Xochicalco.

ZEBRA-TAILED LIZARD (*Callisaurus draconoides*) – It was cool to watch these on the beach in Baja.

TROPICAL TREE LIZARD (*Urosaurus bicarinatus*) – The most common lizard we saw in Central Mexico.

HORRIBLE SPINY LIZARD (*Sceloporus sceloporus horridus*) – These were at Xochicalco.

Other Creatures of Interest

MONARCH BUTTERFLY (*Danaus plexippus*) – Our monarch experience left us utterly speechless. It was truly incredible to be among enormous clusters of them hanging from the branches.

WHALE SHARK (*Rhincodon typus*) – Another cool, cool highlight of the tour. Some of us got in the water and followed it along as it cruised near the surface. [EN]

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 237 bird taxa and 4 mammal taxa