

OAXACA

Jan 22, 2012 to Jan 29, 2012
Megan Crewe and Chris Benesh



We always find time to explore and enjoy the sprawling Zapotec ruins of Monte Alban, that is, after we've explored the surrounding shrubby hillsides for birds like Slaty Vireo and Ocellated Thrasher! (Photo by guide Chris Benesh)

There's nothing like thoughts of a week in the sun to bring out the snowbird in all of us -- and the possibility of adding a few dozen Mexican endemics to the life list to make the prospect even more appealing. From the cool, pine-scented highlands of the big mountains to the dusty switchbacks above Teotitlan del Valle, from the majestic columnar cactus forest around Yagul to the scruffy hillsides along the valley's highways and byways, there were plenty of feathered highlights.

A Oaxaca Sparrow peered at us from some nearby weeds, so close we could almost reach out and touch it. A spotty-breasted Ocellated Thrasher warbled from a small bush, pouring his varied phrases into the warm late-morning air. A pair of Golden Vireos searched for insects (and intruders) as they worked their way through the roadside vegetation. A tiny Northern Pygmy-Owl tooted its challenges to the world, surrounded by an angry mob of warblers, vireos and hummingbirds. Three Long-tailed Wood-Partridges scrambled through a fruiting tree, looking for goodies. A horde of Gray-barred Wrens rooted through bromeliads and mosses on an oak's shaggy branches. Two Strong-billed Woodcreepers flashed back and forth across a logging track and crawled up a host of nearby tree trunks. A tiny Beautiful Hummingbird returned again and again to the same two perches. Two Zone-tailed Hawks rocked over the forest, doing their best "Don't mind me, I'm just a Turkey Vulture" imitations. Boucard's Wrens and Bridled Sparrows both demonstrated their distinctive wing-waving territorial displays. Two Chestnut-capped Brush-Finches forgot themselves (and their typically skulking nature) and climbed up into a tree for a good look around. Aptly-named Red Warblers dazzled against the dark green background of the pine forest.

And, who will soon forget that magical half hour across from the visitor's center at La Cumbre: two Collared Towhees calling from a nearby tree, a mob of Black-headed Siskins nibbling grass seeds, Yellow-eyed Juncos bouncing along the roadside, swirling flocks of Gray Silky-Flycatchers and a male Red Crossbill atop a snag. Or our encounter with that wonderful mixed flock on Cerro San Felipe, when scurrying up the hill after calling Dwarf Jays led to us being surrounded by an ever-changing cast of characters: multiple Dwarf Jays (including one that rested for long minutes in the same spot), a showy male Rose-throated Becard, a surprise Black-backed Oriole, chattering Gray-barred Wrens, a bull-necked Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, raucous Steller's Jays and a shy Hairy Woodpecker.

Of course, it wasn't just the birds that contributed to the week's appeal. Guided tours of the sprawling ruins at Monte Alban, plus the more intimate sites at Yagul and Mitla, gave us a peek into the Zapotec civilization that once ruled the valley. An afternoon in the rug-weaving village of Teotitlan del Valle introduced us to the time-consuming (and labor intensive) process of turning sheep's wool into rugs. And the fine local cuisine -- featuring mescals and moles and squash blossom soup -- ensured that none of us went home hungry. Or thinner! It was good fun sharing the adventures with all of you. Chris and I hope to see you in the field again, somewhere, some day!

-- Megan

For more information about this tour, including future departures, visit our website at www.fieldguides.com. And to see this same triplist online, go to <http://www.fieldguides.com/triplists/oax12LIST.pdf> and you will find the list in its entirety.

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)

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*)

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Anas americana*) – Two waddled across the muddy edge of Presa Piedra Azul, the reservoir above Teotitlan del Valle.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*)

CINNAMON TEAL (*Anas cyanoptera*) – Surprisingly common (for a bird that's not regularly seen on this tour) on the reservoir above Teotitlan del Valle, with most of the males already in their snazzy breeding finery.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – A few floated among the masses of ducks on Presa Piedra Azul.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Anas crecca*)

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

Cracidae (Guans, Chachalacas, and Curassows)

WEST MEXICAN CHACHALACA (*Ortalis poliocephala*) – We were just a LITTLE too close to a trio in a roadside bush when we first spotted them, and they scuttled off up the hill before we could all decant from the bus.

Fortunately, they eventually flapped their awkward way

one by one across the road, giving us reasonably good flight views in the process. [E]

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

LONG-TAILED WOOD-PARTRIDGE (*Dendrortyx macroura*) – A trio searching for fruits in a tree right near our picnic supper spot on Cerro San Felipe were a surprise -- and a highlight of an otherwise quiet evening. [E]

MONTEZUMA QUAIL (*Cyrtonyx montezumae*) – A covey of five scurried up a grassy hillside away from us as we started our walk down the road from the microwave tower. Sadly, they were amazingly quick to disappear!

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LEAST GREBE (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – A few dozen floated on Presa Piedra Azul, vastly outnumbered by the various ducks.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*)

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*)

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*)



Oaxaca Sparrow is an aptly-named bird, and a must-find species on this trip, as its entire range is restricted to the state of Oaxaca. Though generally tough to come by, this bird was very well-behaved, and gave us point-blank views! (Photo by guide Chris Benesh)

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*)

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

WHITE-TAILED KITE (*Elanus leucurus*) – We found two perched up on a distant agave stalk on our first outing to Teotitlan del Valle, then saw others in flight there and along the Pan American highway later in the week.

NORTHERN HARRIER (AMERICAN) (*Circus cyaneus hudsonius*)

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*)

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*)

SHORT-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo brachyurus*) – A dark morph bird circled over Mitla, seen during our ruins tour there.

WHITE-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo albicaudatus*) – A youngster, flapping past the cathedral at Mitla, further interrupted our ruins tour there.

ZONE-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo albonotatus*) – A pair soared back and forth over one of the switchbacks on Cerro San Felipe, showing well their Turkey Vulture-ish flight style, banded tails and bright yellow ceres.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Common throughout, including several truly stunning dark morph birds.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

CRESTED CARACARA (*Caracara cheriway*) – Daily, often in surprising numbers, including a few perched along the road into Teotitlan del Valle.

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*)

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*)

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

SORA (*Porzana carolina*) – One gave its whinnying call from the wet field near the start of the Yagul entrance road, heard by several of the group. [*]

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*)

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*)

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – A few teetered along the edges of Presa Piedra Azul.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*)

WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*) – Two flushed from the gravel bar edging Presa Piedra Azul, seen by a handful of folks as they zigzagged away.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [I]

BAND-TAILED PIGEON (*Patagioenas fasciata*) [*]

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) – Common and widespread all across the Oaxaca Valley.

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

INCA DOVE (*Columbina inca*) – Also common throughout -- and their soft "no hope" calls were a regular part of the tour soundtrack.

COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina*) – A few seen in flight as we drove out of the Yagul ruins site, flashing their reddish wing patches -- and distinguished from the preceding (slightly larger) species by their short, squared tails.



Golden-browed Warblers are denizens of humid montane forests from Mexico south into Honduras; this was one of a small party that delighted the group in an arroyo on Cerro San Felipe. (Photo by tour participant John Catto)

WHITE-TIPPED DOVE (*Leptotila verreauxi*) [*]

Strigidae (Owls)

NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL (MOUNTAIN) (*Glaucidium gnoma gnoma*) – It took a bit of searching -- and some patience -- but eventually all those mobbing passerines led us right to one of these fierce little predators as it tooted from high in a roadside tree. We had long studies from multiple angles, despite the ruckus caused by the passing logging trucks!

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

GREEN VIOLETEAR (*Colibri thalassinus*)

MAGNIFICENT HUMMINGBIRD (*Eugenes fulgens*)

BEAUTIFUL HUMMINGBIRD (*Calothorax pulcher*) – After some searching, we discovered two "favorite perches" of a female (or young male) near the Yagul entrance gate. The bird returned again and again to the same spots, allowing leisurely scope studies. [E]

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus platycercus*) – A young male (or old female) with just a few colored gorget feathers showing in the center of its throat perched for long minutes on a little twig among a stand of purple flowers, allowing us to get good long looks. It was sure tough to find without the scope!

DUSKY HUMMINGBIRD (*Cynanthus sordidus*) – Daily, with particularly good views of several foraging in the red-flowered coral bean trees up the road from Teotitlan del Valle. This is certainly a rather drab hummingbird. [E]

BERYLLINE HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia beryllina*) – One nectaring at a coral bean tree along the road near Presa Piedra Azul gave us good comparisons with the previous species, especially when it perched. The rufous in its secondaries was really visible when the bird was in flight.

WHITE-EARED HUMMINGBIRD (*Hylocharis leucotis*) – Fine views on most days in the mountains, with a delicate little nest found near our picnic lunch spot on Cerro San Felipe. [N]

Trogonidae (Trogons)

MOUNTAIN TROGON (*Trogon mexicanus*) – A lucky few saw one flash past when we had our first close encounter with the Dwarf Jay flock on Cerro San Felipe. The rest just heard it calling repeatedly.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

GRAY-BREASTED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes hypopolius*) – Great views on several days, mostly in the big columnar cacti around Teotitlan del Valle and Yagul, including two not far from our Beautiful Hummingbird. [E]

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus varius*)

LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides scalaris*) – One made repeated forays into a tree near the Monte Alban parking lot, distracting us briefly from our search for Slaty Vireo.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*) – One with the big mixed flock on Cerro San Felipe proved to be a bit shy and retiring, sticking to the more densely foliated parts of the oaks.

NORTHERN FLICKER (RED-SHAFTED) (*Colaptes auratus cafer*) – We heard single birds calling as we birded above Teotitlan del Valle and on the Yuvila road. [*]

Furnariidae (Ovenbirds and Woodcreepers)

STRONG-BILLED WOODCREEPER (*Xiphocolaptes promeropirhynchus*) – Two of these big, long-billed woodpeckers streaked in and proceeded to climb up a number of thick tree trunks all around us on Cerro San Felipe. This species is very uncommon in the humid highland forests east of the Oaxaca Valley.

WHITE-STRIPED WOODCREEPER (*Lepidocolaptes leucogaster*) – One played hide-and-seek in pines along the edges of the road high above Teotitlan del Valle, flicking into view and then out again as it moved through the trees. [E]

SPOT-CROWNED WOODCREEPER (*Lepidocolaptes affinis affinis*)



When not singing, the very local Ocellated Thrasher is a tough bird to find, spending much of its time on the ground on densely vegetated hillsides. Luckily for us, they are born to sing, and they generally prefer to do this from an exposed perch, as this one did above Teotitlan del Valle! (Photo by guide Chris Benesh)

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

NORTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANULET (*Camptostoma imberbe*) [*]

GREENISH ELAENIA (*Myiopagis viridicata*) [*]

PILEATED FLYCATCHER (*Xenotriccus mexicanus*) – One moved through the dry growth around one of the tombs at Monte Alban, eventually popping out onto the low branches of a nearby tree and giving us all good views of its distinctive spiky crest. [E]

TUFTED FLYCATCHER (*Mitrephanes phaeocercus*) – A couple of these handsome cinnamon-colored flycatchers made repeated forays from dead branches in one of the arroyos along the road above Teotitlan del Valle.

GREATER PEWEE (*Contopus pertinax*) – Seen or heard on many days of the tour, including one hunting from high in a pine on the road above Teotitlan del Valle. The whistled "Jose, Jose, Jose Ma-RI-a" song of this species was certainly a regular part of the tour soundtrack.

LEAST FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax minimus*)

HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax hammondi*)

DUSKY FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax oberholseri*)

BLACK PHOEBE (*Sayornis nigricans*) – One hunted along a little stream up the road from Teotitlan del Valle -- at least until that most uncooperative cow and her calf (and the poor guy trying to herd them) came into the picture!

SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*)

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) –

There were plenty of these handsome flycatchers seen during the week, including numerous eye-catching males.

DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*)

– One spent long minutes hunting along the edge of the road above Teotitlan del Valle, regularly perching so we could see its all-brown undertail. This is the smallest of the *Myiarchus* flycatchers found in Oaxaca.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*)

NUTTING'S FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus nuttingi*)

GREAT KISKADEE (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) – Our best looks came near the start of the Yagul entrance road, where we found a pair hunting from small trees around the weedy fields.

TROPICAL KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)

CASSIN'S KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus vociferans*)

THICK-BILLED KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus crassirostris*) – One hunted from a leafless tree along Route 175 late one afternoon, showing well its large beak -- and sounding rather like a dog's squeak toy.

WESTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus verticalis*) – One at Monte Alban perched where we could see its distinctive white outer tail feathers.

Tityridae (Tityras and Allies)

ROSE-THROATED BECARD (*Pachyrhamphus aglaiae*) – A handsome male with the big flock on Cerro San Felipe flaunted his very rosy throat and called as he worked his way through the trees, searching for tidbits.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

Vireonidae (Vireos)

SLATY VIREO (*Vireo brevipennis*) – Arg! A singing bird made several passes back and forth near the parking lot at Monte Alban, but always a layer or three back from the very edge; some folks saw it quite well, while others only saw a shadow slipping through the bushes -- and some didn't see it at all! [E]

CASSIN'S VIREO (*Vireo cassinii*) – One in the scrubby gully we walked en route to the mountains on our final morning gave us brief hopes of a Dwarf Vireo -- until it moved into the open where we could see it more clearly.

BLUE-HEADED VIREO (*Vireo solitarius*)

HUTTON'S VIREO (*Vireo huttoni*)



The Mendoza sisters' rug-weaving demonstration is always a big hit with our groups. Looks like we've had some influence on their designs, too! (Photo by tour participant John Catto)

GOLDEN VIREO (*Vireo hypochryseus*) – Certainly the most cooperative of the endemic vireos, with especially lovely views of a calling pair along the road above Teotitlan del Valle. [E]

WARBLING VIREO (*Vireo gilvus*) – Common in many of the mixed flocks we found throughout the tour.

CHESTNUT-SIDED SHRIKE-VIREO (*Vireolanus melitophrys*) – Our first pair played hard to get, high above the road on Cerro San Felipe. Fortunately, another bird in the Dwarf Jay flock proved a bit more cooperative, giving most folks a good -- though perhaps briefer than desired -- look.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

DWARF JAY (*Cyanolyca nana*) – Yahoo! We definitely had to work for this one -- making multiple trips to their preferred habitat -- but the third time proved the charm, with storming close studies of a whole group of them as they swarmed through trees all around us on Cerro San Felipe, part of a big mixed flock that spent almost 25 minutes with us. [E]

STELLER'S JAY (*Cyanocitta stelleri*)

WESTERN SCRUB-JAY (SUMICHRAST'S) (*Aphelocoma californica sumichrasti*) – Several big noisy mobs of these handsome birds, which are a much darker blue on their back than their counterparts in North America, seen along the road above Teotitlan del Valle.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*)

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – Fairly common around Presa Piedra Azul, particularly over the wide gravel beds at the north end.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – Regular on the first four days of the tour, including good numbers high over the switchbacks above Teotitlan del Valle, but in general far less common than most years.

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

MEXICAN CHICKADEE (*Poecile sclateri*) – Pairs seen on each of our visits to Cerro San Felipe, including a few that came in close to check out our "owl" whistles. This species has quite a hoarse call.

BRIDLED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus wollweberi*)

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta carolinensis*) – A couple clung upside down to branches in the arroyos above Teotitlan del Valle, while others did the same in pines on Cerro San Felipe.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

GRAY-BARRED WREN (*Campylorhynchus megalopterus*) – Common in the highlands, with superb leisurely studies of a big group probing quietly through the mosses and bromeliads on some big trees along the Yuvila road, and some wing-waving interactions among birds in the big wren/jay flock on Cerro San Felipe. [E]

BOUCARD'S WREN (*Campylorhynchus jocosus*) – A trio along the road into Teotitlan del Valle our first morning put on a great show, chortling from nearby cactus, demonstrating their wing-waving territorial display and searching the vegetation for tasty tidbits. [E]

ROCK WREN (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – A pair carefully inspected the cracks of one of the pyramids at Monte Alban.

CANYON WREN (*Catherpes mexicanus*) – One investigating the tiles on the roof of the Mendoza's family compound gave us a loud send-off as we left after our weaving demonstration. We heard the lovely descending song of another echoing from the rocky hillsides around Yagul.

HAPPY WREN (*Pheugopedius felix*) – We heard a pair singing from a nearby hillside while we birded around some farm fields along Route 175N. This species is very rare in Oaxaca's interior valley. [*]

BEWICK'S WREN (*Thryomanes bewickii*) – Though we heard this wren on most days of the tour, we never actually laid



The Gray-barred Wren is a highly arboreal species; groups of them are often seen moving through the canopy, checking clumps of bromeliads for tasty bugs. Dwarf Jays often accompany them, and we always hope to find one of these big mixed jay/wren flocks during our time in the mountains. (Photo by guide Chris Benesh)

eyes on one. [*]

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

HOUSE WREN (BROWN-THROATED) (*Troglodytes aedon brunneicollis*) – One sat on a dead branch in an arroyo above Teotitlan del Valle, swiveling back and forth for long minutes and giving everybody plenty of time to study it in the scopes.

MARSH WREN (*Cistothorus palustris*) – Fabulous views of one singing from bushes nearly at our feet, near the start of the Yagul entrance road. This bird was well south of its normal wintering range.

GRAY-BREASTED WOOD-WREN (*Henicorhina leucophrys*) [*]

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – Easily one of the most widespread passerines in Oaxaca, seen every day in pretty much every habitat. This species breeds in Oaxaca, though numbers are probably supplemented in the winter by migrants from further north.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – Not particularly common this year, but seen in small numbers on most days of the tour.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

BROWN-BACKED SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes occidentalis*) – One skulking bird in a berry bush high on Cerro San Felipe had us hoping for an Aztec Thrush -- until it popped out into the open, and we saw another above Teotitlan del Valle. The wonderfully complex song of this species was a regular part of the highland soundtrack.

ORANGE-BILLED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH (*Catharus aurantirostris*) – One near the friendly donkeys at Pollo Nino showed well for those who happened to be standing next to Chris when it appeared. Some of the group had brief glimpses of another when it flicked into view -- then flew across the path -- on our afternoon's outing along Route 175, and others caught a quick view of one in the gully we walked on our last morning. This one's often tough to get good views of.

RUSSET NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH (*Catharus occidentalis*)

[E]

SWAINSON'S THRUSH (*Catharus ustulatus*) – One in the pine-oak zone above Teotitlan del Valle was a surprise; the species isn't common in the interior valley.

HERMIT THRUSH (*Catharus guttatus*)

CLAY-COLORED THRUSH (*Turdus grayi*) – A couple sitting atop coral bean trees along Route 175 showed nicely one morning.

RUFOUS-BACKED ROBIN (*Turdus rufopalliatus*) – A handful seen on the hotel grounds by some as we waited for the group to assemble one morning. [E]

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) [*]

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*)

OCELLATED THRASHER (*Toxostoma ocellatum*) – Wow!!

We certainly put our time in looking for this one -- and were amply rewarded with superb views of one singing for long minutes in a little shrub right near the road above Teotitlan del Valle. We heard another near the microwave towers, and saw a third as it sang in a gully along Route 175. Spoiled you are! [E]

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (*Toxostoma curvirostre*) – Seen especially well near Yagul, where we found a pair relaxing in an enormous prickly pear cactus.

BLUE MOCKINGBIRD (*Melanotis caerulescens*) – As usual, we heard far more of these than we saw, but we did catch up with one in a scrubby gully along Route 175, when one popped up into a flowering tree early one morning for a sing and a good look around. [E]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)



A pair of endemic Collared Towhees were part of a parade of birds that brought a little magic to a morning at the visitor's center at La Cumbre. (Photo by guide Chris Benesh)

AMERICAN PIPIT (*Anthus rubescens*)

Ptilogonatidae (Silky-flycatchers)

GRAY SILKY-FLYCATCHER (*Ptilogonys cinereus*) – Recorded daily, but best seen across the highway from the visitor's center at La Cumbre, where dozens sat sprinkled in some of the bigger trees.

Peucedramidae (Olive Warbler)

OLIVE WARBLER (*Peucedramus taeniatus*) – After seeing a number of fairly drab females/youngsters, we finally connected with a pumpkin-headed male on our second visit to Cerro San Felipe.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia motacilla*)

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

CRESCENT-CHESTED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis superciliosa*) – Seen in small numbers on each of our days in the high mountains, part of big mixed flocks. The bold white eyebrow of this species is real eye-catcher -- and its name proved to be quite the tongue-twister!

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*)

NASHVILLE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*)

VIRGINIA'S WARBLER (*Oreothlypis virginiae*) – One showed very well as it made repeated visits to the columnar cacti along Yagul's entrance road, and some of the group saw another along the road above Teotitlan del Valle.

MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER (*Geothlypis tolmiei*) – A male at Monte Alban proved far more cooperative than the nearby Slaty Vireo, showing nicely as it foraged in some nearby bushes.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – One in the marshy field near the start of the Yagul entrance road was heard by all and seen by a few about the same time as we found our Marsh Wren.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE) (*Setophaga coronata coronata*)

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S) (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) – If we had a penny for every one we saw...

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (*Setophaga nigrescens*)

TOWNSEND'S WARBLER (*Setophaga townsendi*)

HERMIT WARBLER (*Setophaga occidentalis*)

RUFOUS-CAPPED WARBLER (NORTH MEXICO) (*Basileuterus rufifrons rufifrons*) – A pair rummaging through some roadside bushes near Teotitlan del Valle put on quite a show, approaching to within mere yards of the group as they searched for morsels among the vegetation.

GOLDEN-BROWED WARBLER (*Basileuterus belli*) – Superb studies of several in an arroyo near our picnic lunch spot on Cerro San Felipe. What stunners!

WILSON'S WARBLER (*Cardellina pusilla*)

RED-FACED WARBLER (*Cardellina rubrifrons*) – A couple in with a mixed flock high in the pine-oak zone above Cerro San Felipe showed very well -- eventually.

RED WARBLER (*Cardellina rubra*) – Wow -- talk about eye candy! Nobody seemed to get tired of these, which we found on each of our days in the high mountains. Not surprisingly (given how visible its color makes it), the feathers of this species contain a toxin which renders the bird unpalatable. [E]

PAINTED REDSTART (*Myioborus pictus*)

SLATE-THROATED REDSTART (*Myioborus miniatus miniatus*) – Seen well on three days, including several demonstrating their distinctive spread-tailed foraging style.

Emberizidae (Buntings, Sparrows and Allies)

WHITE-COLLARED SEEDEATER (CINNAMON-RUMPED) (*Sporophila torqueola torqueola*) – Great looks at



Adding to the magic at the La Cumbre visitor's center were several sleek Gray Silky-Flycatchers that posed beautifully in the tree tops. (Photo by guide Chris Benesh)

several of these little stunners -- certainly a far more snazzy subspecies than the one that makes it to south Texas -- in the weedy fields along the Yagul entrance road. [E]

CINNAMON-BELLIED FLOWERPIERCER (*Diglossa baritula baritula*) – A male along the track near our picnic lunch spot on Cerro San Felipe spent long minutes perched low in a tree, allowing us all to get repeated scope studies of his distinctive hook-tipped beak.

CHESTNUT-CAPPED BRUSH-FINCH (CHESTNUT-CAPPED) (*Arremon brunneinucha suttoni*) – A trio along the Yuvila road gave us several minutes of tantalizing glimpses as they crept through some low roadside vegetation. Fortunately, two of them eventually worked their way up into a more open tree for a look around.

COLLARED TOWHEE (*Pipilo ocai*) – A pair foraging on the hillside right across the highway from the visitor's center at La Cumbre gave us some spectacular views in that wonderful early morning sunshine. [E]

SPOTTED TOWHEE (*Pipilo maculatus*)

RUFOUS-CROWNED SPARROW (*Aimophila ruficeps*) – One scratching for seeds on the dusty edge of the road above Teotitlan del Valle showed nicely -- and gave us the chance to compare it with the Oaxaca Sparrow we'd seen earlier in the week.

OAXACA SPARROW (*Aimophila notosticta*) – What a treat to get such great views of this sometimes-skulking bird! As it was, we could nearly have reached out and touched it, and we saw it from just about every conceivable angle. [E]

WHITE-THROATED TOWHEE (*Melospiza albicollis*) – Easily the most common -- and visible -- endemic of the tour, seen on all but the last day. Sometimes, as along the Yagul entrance road, their numbers were pretty impressive! [E]

BRIDLED SPARROW (*Peucaea mystacalis*) – Fine encounters with these handsome sparrows (several of which demonstrated their distinctive wing-waving territorial display) along the road above Teotitlan del Valle. [E]

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*)

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (*Spizella pallida*)

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*) – Including a mob looking rather like ornaments in a Christmas tree along the Yagul entrance road.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW (*Ammodramus savannarum*) – One perched up on a dead weed along the road into Teotitlan del Valle our first morning proved exceptionally cooperative, eventually flying down to the roadside to search for seeds.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*)

YELLOW-EYED JUNCO (*Junco phaeonotus*) – A few near our first parking spot on the Yagul road showed well their staring yellow eyes. The range of this highland species extends into southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

HEPATIC TANAGER (NORTHERN) (*Piranga flava hepatica*) – A male perched up in a leafless tree in the scruffy arroyo we walked on our final morning, showing well his grayish face and dark bill.

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*)

WESTERN TANAGER (*Piranga ludoviciana*) – Small numbers on many days, including several males showing faint traces of their colorful breeding plumage.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)

BLUE GROSBEAK (*Passerina caerulea*)

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – A handful with the mixed flocks along the Yagul entrance road, including one scruffy-looking male already starting to molt into his breeding plumage.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – Two sang from small shrubs along the road into Teotitlan del Valle, sounding like spring.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Particularly common in the city of Oaxaca, where we saw big flocks heading out from their roosts each morning.

BRONZED COWBIRD (*Molothrus aeneus*)

BLACK-VENTED ORIOLE (*Icterus wagleri*) – Satisfyingly common this trip, with great views on several days -- including mobs in the coral bean trees along Route 175.

HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*) – Several in the flowering coral bean trees we visited one morning en route to the mountains, including a couple of handsome adult males.

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE (*Icterus bullockii*)

AUDUBON'S ORIOLE (DICKEY'S) (*Icterus graduacauda dickeyae*) – Our best views came high above Teotitlan del

Valle, when we found two birds working along the roadside, occasionally singing softly. [E]

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (*Icterus galbula*)

BLACK-BACKED ORIOLE (*Icterus abeillei*) – One with the big wren/jay flock on Cerro San Felipe was an unexpected treat. It escaped without most of the group seeing it on our first visit, but proved more accommodating on our second attempt. This Mexican endemic is a recent split from Bullock's Oriole. [E]

SCOTT'S ORIOLE (*Icterus parisorum*)

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

ELEGANT EUPHONIA (*Euphonia elegantissima*) – A male nibbling mistletoe berries -- and showing his snazzy plumage from just about every conceivable angle -- provided a most satisfying encounter.

HOUSE FINCH (COMMON) (*Carpodacus mexicanus roseipectus*) – Common and widespread throughout. Many of the males were surprisingly different from the ones we North Americans are used to seeing, with the red restricted to small, very bright patches on the face and on the rump.

RED CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*) – A raspberry-sherbet male, perched atop a pine snag near the visitor's center at La Cumbre, showed well his distinctive crossed bill.

BLACK-HEADED SISKIN (*Spinus notatus*) – Fine studies of a group of these handsome birds, feeding on weed seeds right across the road from the visitor's center at La Cumbre.

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*)

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

MAMMALS

MEXICAN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus aureogaster*)

HISPID COTTON RAT (*Sigmodon hispidus*) – Several zipped past beside the Yagul entrance road.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

We had only a single reptile on this trip: a West Mexican Coral Snake (*Micrurus distans*) seen as it oozed back into the leaf litter around one of the tombs at Monte Alban.

Totals for the tour: 178 bird taxa and 2 mammal taxa