



Field Guides Tour Report

Oaxaca 2014

Jan 18, 2014 to Jan 25, 2014
Megan Edwards Crewe & Pepe Rojas

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

The state of Oaxaca is home to the greatest avian diversity in Mexico, for several reasons: its mountainous topography, its reach from from the Pacific to the Caribbean coast, and the fact that it is here that the Neotropical and Nearctic zones meet. Based in the picturesque city of Oaxaca, we had the chance to experience this great diversity as we explored and birded different habitats ranging from scrublands and cactus forest all the way to pine and oak forest at higher elevations around this city. As a bonus, the weather was very nice, giving us a break from the extreme conditions some folks were experiencing at home!

We started our tour exploring some of the scrublands around Teotitlan del Valle, where we were rewarded with our first looks at some of the endemics, such as West Mexican Chachalaca, Dusky Hummingbird, Gray-breasted Woodpecker, Boucard's Wren, White-collared Seedeater (Cinnamon-rumped), Oaxaca Sparrow, and White-throated Towhee. At the Piedra Azul reservoir we had several species of ducks and some waders, among which Wilson's Snipe deserves a special mention given its cryptic characteristics. Later in the tour, we went to the higher elevations of La Cumbre to search for species that prefer these more forested habitats, for example Mountain Trogon, Rose-throated Becard, Mexican Chickadee, Bushtit, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet (a VERY unusual bird on this tour!), Russet Nightingale-Thrush, as well as a great variety of warblers including Crescent-chested, Olive, Red-faced, and Red (in addition to many of "our" warblers on their wintering grounds).

We also had the opportunity to visit ruins of the late Zapotec culture at Monte Alban (where we got our first views of an Ocellated Thrasher and a very cooperative Rock Wren) as well as Yagul and Mitla. We tasted the great cuisine of the area, which is acknowledged as one of the best of the world, and of course the smoky and strong mescal. We also learned about the ancient weaving techniques that have been passed down through generations, and some of us brought home a few of those amazing works.

Megan and I had a great time birding with you all. Thanks very much for making this trip such a memorable experience. We look forward to crossing paths some day again on another birding adventure!

--Pepe



*This endemic Gray-breasted Woodpecker posed for some fine views atop a cactus at Mitla.
(Photo by guide Megan Edwards Crewe)*

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*) – We saw this species at the Piedra Azul Reservoir the second time we stopped there.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*) – This species was seen very well at the reservoir both times.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – Interestingly, we only saw females.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Anas crecca*) – Quite a few in the same reservoir.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – Also, few individuals were spotted at the reservoir.

Cracidae (Guans, Chachalacas, and Curassows)

WEST MEXICAN CHACHALACA (*Ortalis poliocephala*) – It was a great trip for Chachalacas. We saw and heard them several times at different locations during our trip. One of the endemics of this tour. [E]

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LEAST GREBE (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – These cuties were seen very well at the Piedra Azul presa.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – We only saw one sitting at one of the ponds near the reservoir during our drive to the switchbacks the second time.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*)

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*)

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*)

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*)

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

WHITE-TAILED KITE (*Elanus leucurus*) – We encountered this lovely bird at different spots during our drives in and out of Oaxaca.

NORTHERN HARRIER (AMERICAN) (*Circus cyaneus hudsonius*) – Only one individual was seen briefly by some folks in Pepe's van our first day when we were driving to the reservoir.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – We had one sighting of this small raptor at the ruins of Monte Alban.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – We saw individuals in adult and juvenile plumage.

WHITE-TAILED HAWK (*Geranoaetus albicaudatus*) – At least one sighting the last day of the tour.

SHORT-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo brachyurus*) – Our first sighting of this species was of a dark morph individual flying to the lower part of the valley. Later we saw another individual around Yagul.

ZONE-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo albonotatus*) – The day before the tour some folks saw this bird around the hotel grounds, and later, while driving into town from one of our outings, we spotted an individual soaring above the buildings.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – We came across several individuals with variable plumage.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*) – At Piedra Azul reservoir they were quite abundant and active.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – We saw at least two at Piedra Azul.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – Ditto.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – Ditto.

WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*) – It is amazing how well this species blends with its surroundings, and we saw these doing just that at the reservoir.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Every day in town we could see quite a few of these birds, perched on every billboard. [I]

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) – "Who-cooks-for-you" was seen quite a few times at different spots.

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – We had some during our hike to Yagul.

INCA DOVE (*Columbina inca*) – I believe Bill is the only one who saw this species.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

GROOVE-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) – During the drive from Mitla to La Cumbre, Carol spotted some by the side of the road.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

GREEN VIOLETEAR (*Colibri thalassinus*) – This hummer was seen around the higher parts of the switchbacks.

MAGNIFICENT HUMMINGBIRD (*Eugenes fulgens*) – It was indeed MAGNIFICO! to see this hummingbird.

BLUE-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Lampornis clemenciae*) – We saw a male briefly during our first outing, and later, on our second time in the area, we saw a female.

BEAUTIFUL HUMMINGBIRD (*Calothorax pulcher*) – Seeing this one it took a little while and some collective effort to finally get it. As usual patience and perseverance paid off. Another of the specialties of the tour! [E]

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus platycercus*) [*]

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) – Seen by some at our stop at Pollo Nino.

DUSKY HUMMINGBIRD (*Cynanthus sordidus*) – This Mexican endemic was seen almost every day in the right habitat. [E]

BERYLLINE HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia beryllina*) – This species, as well as the previous, was one of the common hummers of the trip.

WHITE-EARED HUMMINGBIRD (*Hylocharis leucotis*) – We had fine views of this little gem at the switchbacks area.

Trogonidae (Trogons)

MOUNTAIN TROGON (*Trogon mexicanus*) – Meegs got us on our first pair at La Cumbre during our first outing, and we had dynamite looks at this bird!

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

GREEN KINGFISHER (*Chloroceryle americana*) – At Piedra Azul reservoir, Linda spotted this bird perched near the water.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

GRAY-BREASTED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes hypopolius*) – This endemic woodpecker was very cooperative and we had great views at different locations, but perhaps best and closest at the ruins of Mitla. [E]

LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides scalaris*) – Edgar got us on our first of several to come during the trip.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*) – It was heard by some and seen by others.

NORTHERN FLICKER (RED-SHAFTED) (*Colaptes auratus cafer*) – After our lunch in Yuvila, some of us got the chance to see a very responsive pair.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

CRESTED CARACARA (*Caracara cheriway*) – We saw this species several times, but the best was as we walked to Yagul, where we had great scope views of an individual walking in the fields.

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – We saw several individuals perched at the wires along the road, flying, and even hovering.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – On distant individual was spotted flying by during our outing in Yagul while we waited for the Beautiful Hummingbird.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – One individual above one of the switchbacks was spotted by Linda. It seems to have prey in its talons.

Furnariidae (Ovenbirds and Woodcreepers)

STRONG-BILLED WOODCREEPER (*Xiphocolaptes promeropirhynchus*) – A favorite of many (including yours truly!). We had great luck finding and seeing this species. At least four individuals responded extremely well to the tape and put on with an amazing show! A species that might be split in the future, so stay tuned.

SPOT-CROWNED WOODCREEPER (*Lepidocolaptes affinis affinis*) – During our hike in Yuvila, an individual was part of one of the flocks we encountered along the road. Great views!

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

GREENISH ELAENIA (*Myiopagis viridicata*) – This is a bird we don't always see on this tour, but we saw it nicely during our first outing.

TUFTED FLYCATCHER (*Mitrephanes phaeocercus*) – We saw this species twice on this trip, first around El Jilguero and later in Yuvila, where we had better views (even through the scope!) of a pair.

GREATER PEWEE (*Contopus pertinax*) – We saw our first individual around the spot where we saw the Greenish Elaenia. Later on our outing in Monte Alban we saw another bird and at another spot we heard one more.

HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax hammondii*) – We saw this species only once, during our first outing around Teotitlan del Valle.

DUSKY FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax oberholseri*) – We came across this species several times at different locations.

CORDILLERAN FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax occidentalis*) – We only saw this species once and it was around the Yuvila area. The yellow coloration of its belly was very helpful in separating it from the other Empidonax that occur in the area.

BLACK PHOEBE (*Sayornis nigricans*) – This species was seen twice during our tour.

SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*) – We bumped into several individuals at different locations.

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – Every day and also at different locations including our hotel grounds, where Kathy was able to get a nice photo.

DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*) – One of the three species of Myiarchus flycatchers that we came across during the tour. Remember the mournful call?

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) – This one and the following species can be quite confusing because of their similarities however the subtle differences on the tail and coloration as well as their vocalizations were helpful to tell them apart from each other.

NUTTING'S FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus nuttingi*)

GREAT KISKADEE (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) – The day we saw them at the reservoir, they were very responsive to the playback and put on a nice show.

SOCIAL FLYCATCHER (*Myiozetetes similis*) – We saw one very well concealed bird at the Piedra Azul reservoir.

TROPICAL KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) – Almost every day during the tour.

CASSIN'S KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus vociferans*) – This bird can sometimes be confused with the previous species. However, some of the subtle differences such as the bill, the shallower tail notch and, of course, the vocalizations are extremely helpful to tell them apart.

THICK-BILLED KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus crassirostris*) – We came across this species only once, and it was around the Monte Alban ruins.

WESTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus verticalis*) – Ditto.

Tityridae (Tityras and Allies)

ROSE-THROATED BECARD (*Pachyrhamphus aglaiae*) – We had a brief encounter with only one individual at La Cumbre.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – We saw this bird once during our first outing to Teotitlan de Valle.

Vireonidae (Vireos)

SLATY VIREO (*Vireo brevipennis*) – One of our specialties of the tour, a favorite of many and especially a hard to get too. This bird kept us (your guides!) on our toes until almost the end when a well coordinated joint effort lead us to great views of this little gem. [E]

CASSIN'S VIREO (*Vireo cassinii*) – This species was part of the mixed flocks we encountered along the trip.

HUTTON'S VIREO (*Vireo huttoni*)

GOLDEN VIREO (*Vireo hypochryseus*) – This bird was another of the tour specialties, endemic to Western Mexico and one of Mike's favorites. [E]

WARBLING VIREO (*Vireo gilvus*)

CHESTNUT-SIDED SHRIKE-VIREO (*Vireolanius melitophrys*) [*]

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

STELLER'S JAY (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) – We came across several individuals at La Cumbre.

WESTERN SCRUB-JAY (SUMICHRAST'S) (*Aphelocoma californica sumichrasti*) – We saw this species at the switchbacks.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*)

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – We saw several individuals flying around the reservoir.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – Ditto.

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

MEXICAN CHICKADEE (*Poecile sclateri*) – Seen once at La Cumbre.

BRIDLED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus wollweberi*) – What a gem! We saw it only once.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

BUSHTIT (BLACK-EARED) (*Psaltriparus minimus melanotis*) – The "Black-eared" form of the Bushtits was seen very well twice on this tour.

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

BROWN CREEPER (*Certhia americana*)

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

ROCK WREN (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – We had excellent views of an individual at the ruins of Monte Alban.

CANYON WREN (*Catherpes mexicanus*) [*]

HOUSE WREN (BROWN-THROATED) (*Troglodytes aedon brunneicollis*) –

BEWICK'S WREN (*Thryomanes bewickii*) [*]

GRAY-BARRED WREN (*Campylorhynchus megalopterus*) – Another of our target birds that was seen very well. A favorite of Nancy and Carol. [E]

BOUCARD'S WREN (*Campylorhynchus jocosus*) – Ditto! [E]

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – We saw this bird every day!

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus satrapa*) – What a surprise! This is a bird that we don't normally see on this tour.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*)

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

BROWN-BACKED SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes occidentalis*) – We heard this bird first at La Cumbre. Later we even saw it displaying!

RUSSET NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH (*Catharus occidentalis*) – Another of our specialties that was seen foraging along the road at La Cumbre. [E]

HERMIT THRUSH (*Catharus guttatus*) – Seen along the road at La Cumbre too.

CLAY-COLORED THRUSH (*Turdus grayi*) – Common on the hotel grounds.

RUFIOUS-BACKED ROBIN (*Turdus rufopalliatus*) – Ditto, [E]

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*)

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*)

OCELLATED THRASHER (*Toxostoma ocellatum*) – First we had some views of this specialty at the ruins of Monte Alban. A few days later we had a much better look at a bird around Teotitlan del Valle. [E]

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (*Toxostoma curvirostre*) – This was the common thrasher of the trip.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

AMERICAN PIPIT (*Anthus rubescens*) – We saw some individuals around the Piedra Azul reservoir.

Ptilogonatidae (Silky-flycatchers)

GRAY SILKY-FLYCATCHER (*Ptilogonys cinereus*) – A very good looking bird that we saw almost every day during our tour and a favorite of Linda.

Peucedramidae (Olive Warbler)

OLIVE WARBLER (*Peucedramus taeniatus*) – Studies based on anatomy and DNA suggest that this species is not a warbler. Instead it has been placed in its own family, Peucedramidae. Recent molecular research shows that their closest relatives are the accentors in the old world Prunellidae family.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

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

CRESCENT-CHESTED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis superciliosa*) – This little gem was seen very well. A favorite of Carrie.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*) – The commonest warbler of the trip.

NASHVILLE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*) – We saw this bird only once, around the switchbacks.

VIRGINIA'S WARBLER (*Oreothlypis virginiae*)

MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER (*Geothlypis tolmiei*) – One sighting of this western warbler.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S) (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) – Seen every day.

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (*Setophaga nigrescens*) – Another "western" warbler that we enjoyed seen on its wintering grounds.

TOWNSEND'S WARBLER (*Setophaga townsendi*) – Ditto.

HERMIT WARBLER (*Setophaga occidentalis*) – Ditto.

RUFOUS-CAPPED WARBLER (NORTH MEXICO) (*Basileuterus rufifrons rufifrons*) – Every day.

GOLDEN-BROWED WARBLER (*Basileuterus belli*) – The first thing that came to my mind was "OH MY GOD!!!" Not an endemic or specialty but a wonderful bird to see that was a favorite of some in our group.

WILSON'S WARBLER (*Cardellina pusilla*)

RED-FACED WARBLER (*Cardellina rubrifrons*) – We saw this bird only once during our outing to the switchbacks. We all enjoyed great looks, and it was a favorite of Nancy's.

RED WARBLER (*Cardellina rubra*) – I think that after Slaty Vireo, this one was a favorite of many of our group. A very interesting fact about this species is presence of alkaloids on their feathers, a subject that was studied previously by John P. Dumbacher on the birds of the genus *Pitohui* from New Guinea. He discovered a potent neurotoxin (homobatrachotoxin) in their feathers and in other tissues. This compound was known previously only from poison dart frogs of the genus *Phyllobates*. [E]

PAINTED REDSTART (*Myioborus pictus*) – We saw this bird at the higher elevations of the tour.

SLATE-THROATED REDSTART (*Myioborus miniatus miniatus*)

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

CINNAMON-BELLIED FLOWERPIERCER (*Diglossa baritula baritula*) – Seen briefly by some once.

WHITE-COLLARED SEEDEATER (CINNAMON-RUMPED) (*Sporophila torqueola torqueola*) – We had great looks of this bird the second time on our way to Yagul. [E]

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

CHESTNUT-CAPPED BRUSH-FINCH (CHESTNUT-CAPPED) (*Arremon brunneinucha suttoni*) [*]

RUFOUS-CAPPED BRUSH-FINCH (*Atlapetes pileatus*) – This species, which was also one of our target birds, was not easy to see, and it took several tries to get most of us on it. [E]

COLLARED TOWHEE (*Pipilo ocai*) – Another of the specialties of the trip we were able to see thanks to Joann's spotting. [E]

SPOTTED TOWHEE (*Pipilo maculatus*)

OAXACA SPARROW (*Aimophila notosticta*) – We had great luck with this specialty, with two sightings. [E]

WHITE-THROATED TOWHEE (*Melospiza albicollis*) – Every day for this Oaxacan specialty. [E]

BRIDLED SPARROW (*Peucaea mystacalis*) – This bird is endemic to SW Mexico, and we had the chance to see it twice. What a treat! A favorite of Bill's. [E]

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – Seen mostly in scrubby and dry areas we explored.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (*Spizella pallida*)

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*) – We saw this species several times in its wintering habitat.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*)

YELLOW-EYED JUNCO (*Junco phaeonotus*)

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*)

WESTERN TANAGER (*Piranga ludoviciana*) – This bird's winter plumage is lovely, too!

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – I believe only Nancy saw this one.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) – We saw this bird several times on the tour.

BLUE GROSBEAK (*Passerina caerulea*) – What a nice bird to see--eye candy!

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*)

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – Saw it once during our first outing out of Teotitlan del Valle.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Common, another everyday bird.

BRONZED COWBIRD (*Molothrus aeneus*)

BLACK-VENTED ORIOLE (*Icterus wagleri*) – A nice everyday bird.

ORCHARD ORIOLE (ORCHARD) (*Icterus spurius spurius*) – We saw this species only once.

HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*) – Seen only once at our "orioles" spot.

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE (*Icterus bullockii*) – We saw this one twice at the same spot as the previous species.

SCOTT'S ORIOLE (*Icterus parisorum*) – Only once at the same spot.

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

ELEGANT EUPHONIA (*Euphonia elegantissima*) – What a bird! Another crowd-pleaser that had some fans in the group.

HOUSE FINCH (COMMON) (*Haemorhous mexicanus roseipectus*) – Isn't it a beautiful bird?

BLACK-HEADED SISKIN (*Spinus notatus*) – Seen only once, by Bill.

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*) – Another every day bird.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

MAMMALS

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)

MEXICAN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus aureogaster*)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 158 bird taxa and 2 mammal taxa