



KING VULTURE

MEXICO

Birding the Ruins of the Yucatán with Mark Garland

NOVEMBER 28- DECEMBER 8, 2023



Pack your binoculars and embark on a birding adventure to the environmentally diverse Yucatán Peninsula. Witness native birds soar above the stunning ruins of Hochob, Becán, Chacchoben, Uxmal, and other archaeological sites on this journey through the Maya world. Heads will turn at every point of this expedition as you look for a rainbow array of birds including hummingbirds, parrots, tanagers, flamingos, raptors, and many more. From trail hikes to boat rides, birding enthusiasts will have an opportunity to participate in a variety of outdoor activities while learning about the history of the Maya and the birds that call the Yucatán Peninsula home.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy exceptional birding while visiting the walled city of Becán, once a Maya political, economic, and religious center.
- Watch for target species like the Hook-billed and Gray-headed Kites, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, and the magnificent King Vulture.
- Embark on a boat ride on Bacalar Lagoon, nicknamed the "Lake of Seven Colors."
- Search for avifauna in the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, home to approximately 350 bird species.
- Go birding by boat through the Celestun marshes and mangroves, home to herons, cormorants, frigatebirds, and flocks of flamingos.



UXMAL BY MAURIZIO COSTANZO



GREEN JAY BY ALEXANDER DZIB

ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

NOV 28 - COZUMEL

Arrive at the Cozumel International Airport on the island of Cozumel, Mexico. After clearing customs and immigration, you will be met and transferred to the hotel. Attend an orientation meeting and have dinner at the hotel. *Overnight at Casa Mexicana. (D)*

NOV 29 - COZUMEL

After breakfast, transfer to San Gervasio, a Maya site on the north side of the island that was once the administrative seat for the entire island. San Gervasio is a pre-Columbian name meaning “flat rock in the place of the swallows;” within the forest here, watch for Yucatan Vireo, Cozumel Vireo, Yucatan Woodpecker, Cozumel Emerald, Green-breasted Mango, Caribbean Dove, Cozumel Wren, and Black Catbird. Eat lunch at a local restaurant. Spend the rest of the afternoon exploring and birding the southern end of the island. Return to the hotel with time to freshen up before a presentation on “The Birds of Cozumel,” followed by dinner. *Overnight at Casa Mexicana. (BLD)*

NOV 30 - CHETUMAL

Start the day birding the hotel gardens, and after breakfast, take the ferry to Playa del Carmen on the mainland. Continue south through Sian Ka’an, a Biosphere Reserve and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Situated along the coast, this reserve is a mix of tropical forest, savanna, and mangrove with an impressive bird list numbering over 300 species. Potential sightings here include Scaled Pigeon, Yucatan (Yellow-lored) Parrot, Wedge-tailed Sabrewing, Yucatan (Ridgway’s) Rough-winged Swallow, Gray-throated Chat, Orange Oriole, and Rose-throated

Tanager. Also look for wildlife such as howler and spider monkeys, tapirs, crocodiles, margays, and ocelots. Have lunch in the nearby town of Felipe Carrillo Puerto. In the afternoon, bird the temples and surrounding forest of Chacchoben and watch for Red-lored Parrot, Brown Jay, Spot-breasted Wren, Black-headed Trogon, and Red-throated Ant-Tanager, among others. Continue to your hotel for check-in and dinner. *Overnight at Hotel Fiesta Inn. (BLD)*

DEC 1 - CHETUMAL

After breakfast, take a boat ride on Bacalar Lagoon—known as the “Lake of Seven Colors” due to its many shades of blue. While on the water, look for Roseate Spoonbill, Limpkin, Snail Kite, Neotropic Cormorant, Northern Jacana, Red-billed Pigeon, Ringed Kingfisher, White-fronted Parrot, and Mangrove Swallow. Back on land, visit the colonial fort of San Felipe for sightseeing and more birding. Have lunch at a local restaurant. Enjoy free time in the afternoon to relax or bird the gardens around the hotel. In the evening, listen to a presentation on the “Birds of the Yucatan,” followed by dinner at the hotel. *Overnight at Hotel Fiesta Inn. (BLD)*

DEC 2 - XPUJIL

After breakfast, head inland toward Xpujil, stopping en route at the Noh Bec Lagoon to bird a community-owned reserve. Target species here include Brown-hooded Parrot, Royal Flycatcher, Green Kingfisher, Stub-tailed Spadebill, Collared Trogon, and Blue Ground Dove. Stop in Xpujil for lunch, followed by a visit to Becán, a site that was once the political, economic, and religious center for an area known today as Rio Bec. One distinguishing characteristic of the ruins at Becán is the presence of moats and protective walls surrounding the city, features not commonly found in Maya architecture.

The pyramids and temples in Becán were built in clusters around three main plazas and also include a small but well-preserved ball court. Some buildings still have remnants of the detailed facades that once graced their walls, giving insight into what the city must have looked like at its peak. A variety of warblers, tanagers, hummingbirds, and raptors can be seen here. Check in at the hotel this afternoon, with time for birding around the hotel's gardens. Keep your eyes open for Crested Guan, Great Curassow, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, and Thicket Tinamou. *Overnight at Chicanna Ecovillage Resort. (BLD)*

DEC 3 - XPUJIL

Rise early with a boxed breakfast for a field trip to Calakmul Biosphere Reserve. Calakmul is within the largest contiguous tract of tropical forest outside the Amazon Basin—Mesoamerica's 35-million-acre Mayan Forest—and provides refuge for many rare and endangered species. The Maya ruins here feel like the set of an Indiana Jones movie, half-buried in a thick tangle of jungle with massive pyramids towering above the canopy. From these ancient vantage points, look for soaring raptors, such as the magnificent King Vulture, the symbol for Calakmul. The roads in and out offer a good chance for large gamebirds such as Ocellated Turkey, Crested Guan, and Great Curassow—all relatively common here. Possibilities along forested trails include Thicket Tinamou, Gartered Trogon, Collared Aracari, Keel-billed Toucan, Black-faced Antthrush, various woodcreepers, Northern Bentbill, Eye-ringed Flatbill, Bright-rumped Attila, Green Jay, White-bellied Wren, and many neotropical migrants during the winter months. Have a picnic lunch on site before returning to the hotel for more birding in the nearby gardens. Dinner at the hotel. *Overnight at Chicanna Ecovillage Resort. (BLD)*

DEC 4 - UXMAL

After early morning birding, breakfast and check-out, proceed to the small but interesting Maya ruins at Hochob. Hochob is an excellent example of the Chenes architectural style, which flourished from about AD 100 to 1000 and is distinguished by smaller courtyards and ceremonial platforms and a lack of large pyramids. Birding the drier woodland in and around Hochob may produce Yucatan Bobwhite, Lesser Roadrunner, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Yucatan Woodpecker, Turquoise-browed Motmot, and Fork-tailed Flycatcher. Enjoy a picnic lunch on site and then continue the drive north to Uxmal. Arrive at the hotel with time for birding the grounds before dinner. *Overnight at Hotel Maya Uxmal. (BLD)*



DEC 5 - UXMAL

Morning visit to Uxmal. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is one of the most impressive and important Maya archaeological sites in the Yucatan. Typical of the Puuc style, the buildings are low horizontal structures with courtyards that are richly decorated with detailed sculptures made from thousands of perfectly polished stones. The ruins are clustered into 15 groups that spread north to south, and highlights include the Pyramid of the Magician with its Plaza of the Birds, the Ball Court, the Governor's Palace, and the Great Pyramid. In the afternoon, bird the grounds of Hacienda Yunku before returning to the hotel for dinner and a lecture on "Birding in the Yucatan." *Overnight at Hotel Maya Uxmal. (BLD)*

DEC 6 - HUNUCMA

Begin the day with early morning birding, then have breakfast and check out. Depart for Hunucma, with a roadside stop for birding in the Chunchucmil community, where you may see Lesser Roadrunner, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Northern Jacana, Squirrel Cuckoo, Caribbean Dove, and Blue-black Grassquit, among others. Upon arrival, have lunch and check in at your hotel. There will be a chance to seek out some species

that are endemic to the north coast, such as Yucatan Wren and Mexican Sheartail, as well as other species like Yucatan Bobwhite, Yucatan Woodpecker, Black Catbird, White-lored Gnatcatcher, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Mangrove Warbler, and Common Tody-Flycatcher. Next, listen to a lecture on local flamingo conservation efforts. Dinner at the hotel. *Overnight at Hotel Don Gonzalo. (BLD)*

DEC 7 - MÉRIDA

Early morning birding. After breakfast, take a boat ride down the Rio Celestún. Targets today include flamingos (November-February), the elusive Rufous-necked Wood-Rail, Lesson's Motmot, Common Black Hawk, Yellow-tailed Oriole, Boat-billed Heron, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, and others. After lunch in town, transfer to Mérida and check in at the hotel. Enjoy a farewell dinner this evening. *Overnight at Hotel Casa Balam. (BLD)*

DEC 8 - DEPART

After breakfast, transfer to the Mérida International Airport for return flights home. (B)

LAND PRICING

\$3,895 for Nature Forward Members*

*If you are not a member of Nature Forward, please join at natureforward.org/membership before registering on the trip.

Price includes accommodations, meals, entrance fees, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, private transportation unless otherwise noted in itinerary, non-alcoholic beverages with meals, expert birding naturalist guide for duration of program and carbon offset

Price does not include International airfare, gratuities, and items of a personal nature are not included

THE FINE PRINT

A \$500 per person deposit and enrollment form is due to secure your reservation. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Non-refundable final payments are due no later than 95 days prior to departure.

For More Information Contact:

Pam Oves 301-652-9188 X-16

pam.oves@natureforward.org

ADDITIONAL NOTES

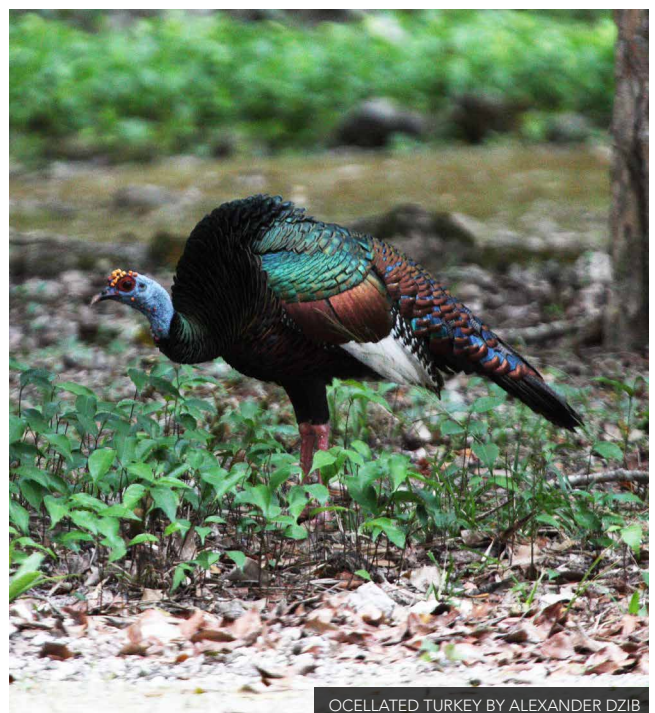
Participants should be in good physical condition and able to walk unassisted for several hours per day. Binoculars are needed for this program. We recommend wide angle binoculars, something within the range of 7x35, 8x40 or even 10x50 with good light gathering characteristics. Although light and comfortable, pocket binoculars don't work as well in low light conditions.



GARTERED TROGON BY ALEXANDER DZIB



YUCATAN WOODPECKER BY ALEXANDER DZIB



OCELLATED TURKEY BY ALEXANDER DZIB



Flamingos by Penny Jarret