



Pink-headed Warbler. Photo by Greg Lavaty

Guatemala: Lake Atitlan, Tikal and the Petén

Suggested Itinerary

Birding Guatemala's Lake Atitlan, Tikal and the Petén

Guatemala is a fantastic country with a diversity of rich habitats for birds, from montane cloud forest to lowland forest. This tour specifically focuses on the highlands of the Chiapas-Guatemala Highlands Endemic Bird Area and the Yucatan Endemic Bird Area. As the names imply, there are unique species of birds to be found in this land of the Maya. The itinerary incorporates the best montane and lowland birding opportunities in this scenic country, and allows us to experience the wonderful and colorful living culture of the Maya. We will make time to visit Mayan markets, learn a bit about Guatemalan people and their Mayan culture and also visit the world renowned and beautiful Lake Atitlan. We also have the opportunity to bird in famous and important Mayan archeological sites, largely in the Petén region of the north.

Many of the great birds we will be seeking are restricted to the highlands centered in southern



Lake Atitlan. Photo by WikiCommons.



Resplendent Quetzal. Photo by Luis Búrban.

Guatemala, but also reaching to adjacent Chiapas, Mexico, and El Salvador and Honduras. They include the **Highland Guan, Ocellated Quail, Fulvous Owl, Black-capped Swallow, Bushy-crested Jay, Rufous-browed Wren, Black and Rufous-collared robins, Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Pink-headed Warbler, Azure-rumped Tanager, Bar-winged Oriole, and Black-capped Siskin** among others. There will be an option for those who are physically fit to endure a steep and difficult hike up a volcano in search of **the rare but spectacular Horned Guan**. Guatemala is a land of **many motmots** where we may encounter **Tody, Blue-crowned, Turquoise-browed and the local Blue-throated**—that's a lot of motmots! We will not lack for great birding, scenery, food, world-class coffee, or cultural experiences.

Hummingbirds will make an impression with a great diversity of shapes and colors. Some areas have recently begun to keep hummingbird feeders, so species that were once quite difficult to find are now much more reliable. These include the **Rufous Sabrewing, Violet Sabrewing, the showy Black-crested Coquette, Green-throated Mountain-gem, Azure-crowned, Blue-**

tailed, Amethyst-throated, Garnet-throated, Sparkling-tailed, Wine-throated as well as tiny and local Emerald-chinned hummingbirds! We will have a great chance to see leisurely observe many of these little gems.

Located in the Yucatan Peninsula (including parts of Mexico, Guatemala and Belize), the Petén is a lowland area best known as the heart of the Maya people. This is where the big and elaborate “Classical Maya Period” cities like Tikal are found. There is extensive lowland tropical forest habitat in the Petén, as well as large lakes

and watercourses. A shorter forest type, in seasonally flooded lower areas is known as “Tintal Forest” (or “bajos” by the locals) and it holds some specialties, such as **Yucatan Jay, Yucatan Woodpecker and Rose-throated Tanager**. In the varied mix of tropical birds of the Petén, which includes **Keel-billed Toucans, Collared Aracaris, Squirrel Cuckoos, Northern Royal Flycatchers** to name a few, and there are other species only in this region including **Ocellated Turkey, Yellow-lored Parrot, Gray-throated Chat, and Yucatan Nightjar**. The **Orange-breasted Falcon** is widespread but very rare, except in Tikal where a pair tends to nest annually on the large temples. Also nesting here are the **Ridgway’s Rough-winged Swallows**, often considered a distinct and endemic species. Thus the lowlands of the Petén is a hotspot for biodiversity with many sought-after endemic birds.

Part of the focus of this tour will also be to enjoy, study and learn about **North American birds in their wintering areas**. Guatemala is vital to northern migrants, including those from the eastern and western U.S. and Canada. You may see a **Western Tanager hobnobbing with a Baltimore Oriole, a Louisiana Waterthrush with a Townsend’s Warbler, or a Hammond’s Flycatcher near a Least** allowing for great opportunities to hone your identification skills! It is a superb place to learn about their wintering ecology, which can be very different from their breeding and migration habitats and behaviors. Seeing “our” birds in a different perspective adds immensely to a fuller understanding of their lives, and also how these birds unite people across borders. Our shared struggle to conserve these migratory birds becomes obvious and immediate, and through birding



Turquoise-browed Motmot. Photo by John Sterling.

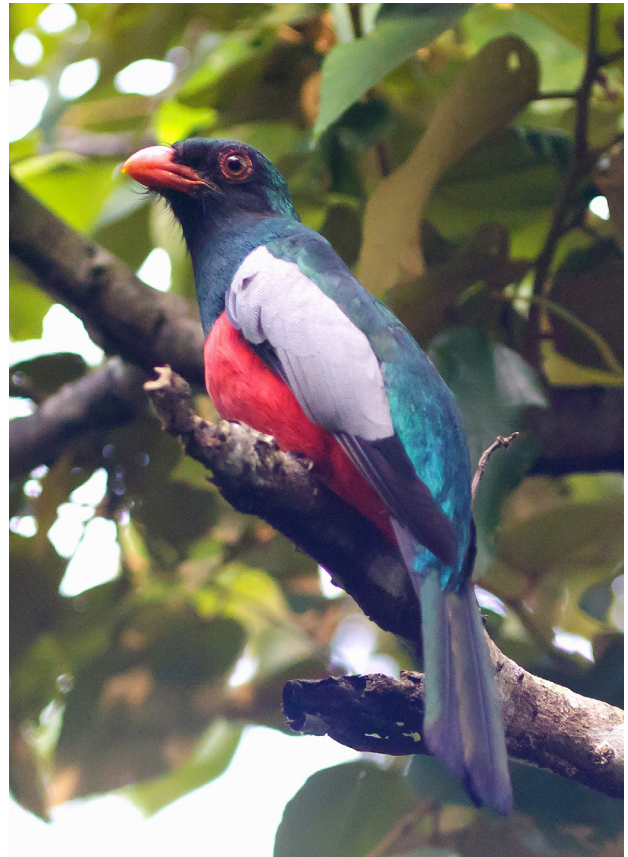
tourism we take a small step to making a statement of the value of bird habitat as a business opportunity. As shade grown coffee has made an impact in migrant bird conservation, so will birding tourism.

This itinerary incorporates something special, and that is the opportunity to make you a partner in helping international conservation. **The National Audubon Society, Asociación Vivamos Mejor and Wildlife Conservation Society-Guatemala**, have teamed up to train local people to become birding and nature guides. Along with our primary tour leader, we will have their local guiding help throughout this trip, and in turn are helping them make a living while protecting a healthy and diverse ecosystem. Birders who choose to take these tours in order to see and enjoy the natural riches will have a direct economic impact on the local people resulting in preservation of local habitats that maintain a healthy, viable ecotourism industry.

The Birding Sites We Visit

Antigua and Guatemala City

The tour begins near Antigua in an interesting and birdy area, which is approximately 45 minutes drive from Guatemala City. Here one finds a mix of dry valleys and good highland forest (oaks and pines but also wet cloud forest). These highland forests harbor some of the special birds of the trip including: **White-breasted Hawk** (sometimes considered a subspecies of the Sharp-shinned Hawk), **Highland Guan**, **Pacific Parakeet**, **Rufous Sabrewing**, **Green-throated Mountain-Gem**, **Amethyst-throated Hummingbird**, **Blue-throated Motmot**, “**Guatemalan**” **Northern Flicker**, **Gray-collared Becard**, **Black-capped Swallow**, **Bushy-crested Jay**, **Rufous-browed Wren**, **Black and Rufous-collared robins/thrushes**, **Blue-and-white Mockingbird**, **Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo**, **Hooded Grosbeak**, and **Bar-winged**



Slaty-tailed Trogon. Photo by John Sterling.

Oriole. Birds of a more widespread range that are found here include some stunners like **Mountain (Northern) Pygmy-Owl, Azure-crowned Hummingbird, Collared and Mountain trogons, Emerald Toucanet, Band-backed Wren, Brown-backed Solitaire, Gray Silky-flycatcher, Crescent-chested, Red-faced, Chestnut-capped** (the southern form of Rufous-capped Warbler), **Golden-browed, and Hermit warblers, Slate-throated Redstart, Flame-colored and White-winged tanagers, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch, and Black-vented Oriole.**

We will stay in Antigua, Guatemala's colonial capital until 1773 when it was destroyed by an earthquake. Antigua was once the cultural center of Central America, and now with its considerable charm, Spanish colonial architecture, and colorful Maya culture, it is a center for tourism. It is known for its silver and ceramics, and of course its coffee.

Lake Atitlan

Lake Atitlan has sometimes been called the most beautiful lake in the world. It is just above 5000 feet in elevation, nestled in the mountains. It seems that everywhere you look you see a volcanic peak! As you travel across the lake you see local fishermen in their dugouts pushing themselves along with poles through the reed beds along the shallow shores of the lake. **Birds may include migratory ducks, such as Lesser Scaup** among others. We also may find the fantastic **Sparkling-tailed hummingbird** and maybe the **Slender Sheartail** (rare) along with **Golden-olive Woodpecker, Band-backed Wren, Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Rufous-collared Robin, Slate-**

Asociación Vivamos Mejor

Asociación Vivamos Mejor (AVM) is a private nonprofit development organization committed to improving the quality of life of rural communities, mainly in the department of Sololá, Guatemala. We focus on Sustainable Watersheds and Resiliency to Climate Change as a strategy for promoting sustainable development.

Wildlife Conservation Society

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) started working in Guatemala in 1992 with the mission of conserving the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) as one of Mesoamerica's most important wildlife conservation areas. Our guiding principle is strengthening national and local capacities through accompaniment of technicians, students, and national experts, and also strengthening of Guatemalan Civil Society. To conserve the MBR, WCS-Guatemala works in four areas: 1) Biological investigation and monitoring; 2) Social development and the sustainable management of natural resources by rural communities; 3) Protection and prevention of forest fires; and 4) Governance, including the financial sustainability of the MBR.

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White-winged Tanager. Photo by Luis Búrbanco.

throated Redstart, Black-vented Oriole, Black-headed Siskin, Rusty and Rufous-collared sparrows. A local rarity is the pretty **Belted Flycatcher**, which we will try hard to find. We will stay at and visit various sites both in the southern and northern shores of the lake. Some areas are dry forest, while others are wetter or higher elevation. Pine-Oak forests dominate the higher reaches, while drier deciduous habitats are found

lower down. Some of the areas we are visiting are well established; others are in the development phase where involvement of locals through birding tourism is not only employing people, but also helping to determine which species of birds are in each area.

The Atitlan area also offers us access to the highlands, where **the Horned Guan is the real star of the show** for those who are fit and strong enough to hike up the San Pedro Volcano. This fantastic bird is nowhere easy to see, and it won't be easy for us either. **It is by no means a sure thing even after the walk.** We will climb the steep slopes of the San Pedro Volcano, trying to keep the pace reasonable; but there is no way to get around the fact that it is a long climb beginning at a reasonably high altitude very early in the morning. But if we are successful, it will all seem worthwhile. **For those who would rather take it easy, we will offer a less strenuous option** on this day, perhaps going to the same volcano but only hiking up for part of the way.

Finca Los Andes is located not too distant from Lake Atitlan, on the flanks of Volcan Atitlan. This is a coffee and tea farm, run by a family with a commitment to nature. Los Andes has a great set of trails in highland and cloud forest above the tea-growing areas. They have been monitoring and managing (with nest boxes) **a population of Resplendent Quetzal** here, and this is one of the key species we will be looking for. It is a wonderful site to see other highland species, in particular the rare and local **Azure-rumped Tanager, Emerald Toucanets, Tody Motmots and deep forest species like Scaled Antpitta and Spotted Nightingale-Thrush.** Although it has been on the birding circuit for a few years, there are still possible surprises at Los Andes Private Reserve.

Physical Requirements & Pace

In order to maximize birding both Belize and the Petén of Guatemala in such a short amount of time, **there will be some days with several hours on the road** traveling between sites, a few one night stays at hotels or lodges, and some early mornings to get us into the birding areas when activity is high. There are post-lunch rests during low bird activity and late afternoon birding when activity picks up again. **Most of the hiking, especially in the dense forest habitats, is slow and easy**, where we listen carefully for birds; however, most of the terrain is limestone, so **a good pair of boots and a walking stick is recommended** for potentially slippery areas and for those who are not sure-footed. In the highlands, **there are slopes to walk up and down** in order to bird the areas appropriately. For longer resting periods, **you may want to take a folding stool**; standing and waiting for birds can often tire one out more than walking. To get around on the lake, **we often take boats** (“lanchas” as they are known here) from one village to another. This is a quick and efficient way to move around. One does not expect swells, but if it is windy there can be a wind chop which makes for a bouncier ride. The boats are loud, but they are quick, and allow us to avoid windy mountain roads in order to move around.

There are options for more difficult hikes in both the Petén and the Atitlan area, including climbing up some of the ruins, a hike to the Waka Peru site in the Paso Caballos area, and the strenuous hike up Volcan San Pedro to view the Horned Guan. **The optional Horned Guan Hike is quite strenuous** and even when you are in its habitat it can be difficult to find. In order to get to the area at a good and early time, this day may involve a very early start. You need to be prepared to walk up a steep grade, a relentless steep grade with very few switchbacks. This can be tough on knees, particularly on the way down. The climb is several miles in length and it takes several hours! The plan is keep the pace as relaxed as possible, but even taken slowly, this is a tough hike due to the slope, the dusty nature of the trails and the elevation (starting at 6000 feet elevation). This is not a walk to be tried by all of us. **For those who want to skip the hike, we shall offer some great birding lower down**, in some very diverse forest.

In general, **the highlands are variable in temperature, so layers are best**. Weather in the Petén can be warm, especially from the late spring to early fall and mosquitos can be present depending upon the time of day, location and season. **Bring a lightweight hat, long-sleeved shirt, pants and insect repellent for comfort**. Depending upon the season, rain can be frequent, so come prepared with **a small collapsible umbrella and waterproof protection for camera gear** and other sensitive electronic equipment.



White-throated Magpie-Jay.
Photo by Alvaro Jaramillo.

Finca Los Tarrales

Located not too distant from Lake Atitlan, on the flanks of Volcan Atitlan. At the lodge one may enjoy great looks at **Spot-breasted Oriole**, **White-throated Magpie-Jay**, **Orange-fronted** and **Orange-chinned parakeets**, **Highland Guan**, the handsome **Long-tailed Manakin**, perhaps the cute **Tody Motmot**, and the attractive **White-eared Ground-Sparrow**, as well as many wintering Neotropical migrants (especially numerous **Tennessee Warblers** and **Western Tanagers**). This is a private reserve, and offers shade grown coffee habitats with many bird species, as well as older forests higher up the slopes from the lodge.

Paso Caballos

Paso Caballos is a Maya Q'eqch'í community (pop. around 1500) located in a fantastic access point to Laguna del Tigre National Park. This community has signed agreements with the government and Wildlife Conservation Society-Guatemala (WCS), to control agricultural fires, impact on the land, and regulation of migration of people from the outside, and prohibition of cattle in the area. In return, the government and WCS provide technical assistance, education, health and educational infrastructure. As such, the local community is invested in trying to promote ecotourism in their region and some members are being trained as bird guides by the National Audubon Society and WCS.

This is an extremely rich and rewarding area to go birding. On the way to Paso Caballos, we pass grasslands and “bajos”. In the grasslands, we can easily spot **Vermilion** and **Fork-tailed flycatchers** and may spot a skulking **Bare-throated Tiger Heron**. In the stretch of road next to the bajos, we will hear and possibly see the **White-bellied** and **Spot-breasted wrens**, **Yucatan Jay** and **Yellow-billed Cacique**. Access to



Ocellated Turkey. Photo by John Sterling.



Horned Guan. Photo by Alvaro Jaramillo.

the Guacamayas Research Station—where we will stay overnight—is by boat along the San Pedro River, as is the trip farther on to the Waka Peru archaeological site. The wetland habitats along the riverbanks are more extensive than in nearby areas frequented by birders. **Along the river, we may see Amazon and Green kingfishers, Mangrove Swallows and Black-collared Hawk.** Despite serious deforestation in the western Petén, the area of Laguna del Tigre National Park near Paso Caballos and Waka Peru is an area of fantastic lowland tropical forest, a place where a **Crested Guan** may call from the trees, or where a **Great Curassow** may walk across the trail. Jaguars are here, although difficult to see. At least **eight species of woodcreepers** are found here, as well as huge **Lineated and Pale-billed woodpeckers, several species of trogons, Blue-crowned Motmot and a myriad of wintering migratory warblers and tropical flycatchers.** But **the prize**

bird is the fantastic Scarlet Macaw, not common in the Petén, yet this is one of the best areas to find it at certain times of the year.

Yaxhá

This is an important archaeological site and is considered the third largest ancient Mayan city in the region after Tikal and Uaxactún. Although first described in 1904 and mapped in the 1970s, restoration of the site did not begin until the 1980s. The city comprised more than 500 structures, including nine temple pyramids. Nearly as important and large as Tikal, fewer structures are excavated here, giving the impression that you are discovering the site as you visit! There are no crowds as in Tikal, so **the birding is much more intimate and the solitude is certainly advantageous for birding.** On the quiet trails, you may run across one of the **four species of tinamou—Great, Little, Slaty-breasted and Thicket**—or perhaps the hard-to-find **Pheasant Cuckoo.** Goodies like **trogons, toucans and Blue-Crowned**

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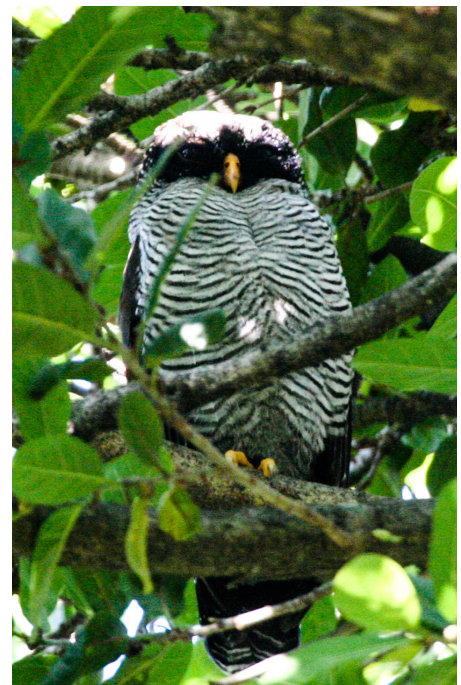
Yucatan Jay. Photo by John Sterling.

and Tody motmots may be found here. In the mornings or evenings, from the top of the pyramids one can see a **great flight of parrots, with flocks of Red-lored, White-fronted, White-crowned and the less common, Mealy parrots.**

Tikal

Birding Tikal is magical. You will be at the premier site of classical period Maya, one of the most mystical and important cultural sites in the Americas and a UNESCO World Heritage Site! Some of the pyramids are over 200 feet tall, and yes, you can climb them.

During your climb, you may get close views of Yucatan Black Howler Monkeys, Keel-billed Toucans, Montezuma Oropendolas, Laughing Falcons or maybe a White Hawk soaring overhead. **The unique Ocellated Turkey**, one of the most fantastically plumaged American birds, is common here. Tikal is now an historical site, but imagine that at one time about 90,000 people lived there. This city was the most important in the region, and its political and military influence extended through a large region of Central America. It certainly is one of the most spectacular Mayan sites. This is a wonder of the world, but fortunately for naturalists, there is forest with many birds and so much other wildlife among the ruins in Tikal. Picture mornings with **flocks of parrots flying by and stopping to sit in big emergent tree. They could be Olive-throated (Aztec) Parakeet, Brown-hooded, White-crowned, White-fronted, Red-lored, or perhaps Mealy parrots.** There is amazing diversity here including **tinamous, motmots, aracaris, jacamars, puffbirds, leaftossers, anthrushes, and the odd Northern Royal Flycatcher.** One specialty is the **Orange-breasted Falcon**, a rare tropical falcon that over time



Black-and-white Owl. Photo by Alvaro Jaramillo.



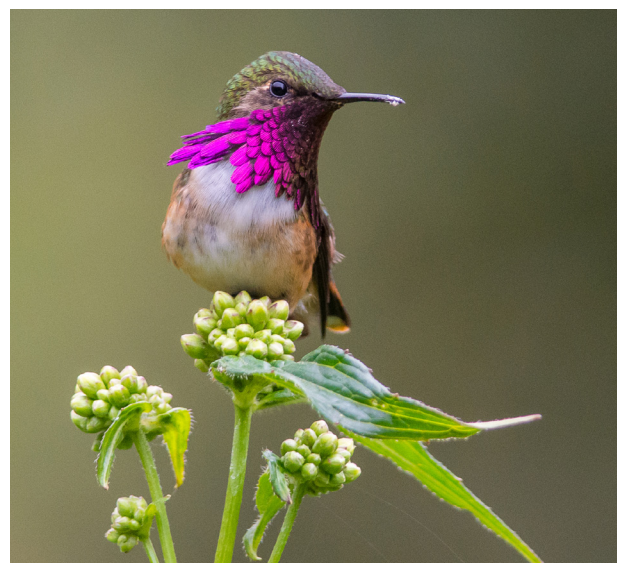
Yellow-winged Tanager. Photo by Luis Búrban.

has chosen to nest in one of the Mayan Temples. These fantastic raptors are not only gorgeous; they are rare and endangered. They require large tracts of forest to find food, and cliffs (or temples) to nest on. We will concentrate on finding a wide variety of birds while here, specifically the **Orange-breasted Falcon**, and of course

we will take time to learn about the site, the Maya and the history of this amazing place. An experienced archaeological guide will accompany us.

Uaxactún

Uaxactún is a relatively small archeological site of astronomical importance located in the middle of the Maya Biosphere Reserve, less than one hour north of Tikal. Although few tourists venture past Tikal, this area promises to have some interesting species due to its distinct habitat compared to Tikal. Many of the trails around the village and ruins through primary forest are **void of humans and yield tropical goodies such as oropendolas, toucans, trogons, and woodpeckers.** The quiet trails are also good for seeking out tough birds, like the **Mexican (Black-faced) Antthrush, Barred Forest Falcon, Blue-black Grosbeak and White-collared Manakin.** Apart from primary and second growth woodlands both within a few minutes of the village and ruins, there is a short tinal forest slightly farther afield, with specialties such as the **Yucatan Jay, Rose-throated Tanager and Gray-throated Chat.** We will also spend



Wine-throated Hummingbird. Photo by Luis Búrban.

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some time with residents of Uaxactún who will tell us the history and current operation of this community-based forestry concession where they harvest the Xate palm, gum, allspice and wood. The local village depends on the ecological value and, thus, the conservation of the forest.

Itinerary for Guatemala

Day 1 – ARRIVAL IN GUATEMALA CITY.

Please book flights to arrive into Guatemala City by 2:30 p.m. Staff will be waiting for you at the airport in Guatemala City. From there we will transfer you to beautiful and historic Antigua approximately an hour away depending on traffic. Overnight in Antigua.

Day 2 - ANTIGUA GUATEMALA TO LOS ANDES PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE. We begin the morning with a visit to Finca El Pilar, a private reserve with great pine-oak forest and **excellent trails for birding**. We will visit the **hummingbird feeders** and walk the trails looking for species such as **Black-capped Swallow, Blue-throated Motmot, Bar-winged Oriole, Hooded Grosbeak and Pacific Parakeets**. A fantastic and relatively common species here is the awesome **Gray Silky-Flycatcher**. The feeders



"Guatemalan" Junco. Photo by Alvaro Jaramillo.

host **Azure-crowned, Berylline and White-eared hummingbirds as well as Rufous Sabrewing, and Green-throated Mountain-Gem**. In the afternoon, we will travel west to Finca Los Andes. If time permits **we will bird near the lodge**. For those who are energetic, **post-dinner owling** is a possibility. Overnight in Finca Los Andes.



Tufted Flycatcher. Photo by John Sterling.

Day 3 – LOS TARRALES PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE. Los Tarrales has an **exceptional bird list**, with birds from lowland to highland

habitats, and good access to various types of forest. The abundance of **migratory birds here including Swainson's Thrush, Tennessee, Magnolia, Black-and-white warblers, Western Tanager and Orchard Oriole** are impressive. It is a good place for **raptors as well**, including the **Black Hawk-Eagle**, and sometimes the gorgeous **Black-and-white Owl**. Morning and evening is great for commuting parrots with **four species of parakeets and parrots** typically seen. Today most of us will be birding the lower and upper trails at Los Tarrales, working on finding some **great diversity of birds here**. We will look for displaying **Long-tailed Manakins**. During lunch we will take some time to enjoy the **feeders where Orchard, Altamira, Spot-breasted and Baltimore orioles** come to feed along with **Rufous-naped Wrens and Yellow-throated Euphonias**. Night at Los Tarrales.

Day 4 – LOS TARRALES – LAKE ATITLAN BIRDING. We begin with an early morning breakfast and will **look for bird species near the lodge** we may not have found yet, perhaps the unique Highland Guan? After lunch at Los Tarrales, we board the bus and **head to Lake Atitlan where we will board a boat to get to the town of Santiago Atitlan**. This evening near our lodging at Santiago Atitlan, we will have **opportunities to see a few new species**. If we are lucky, we may find the uncommon **Slender Sheartail hummingbird or the unique looking Prevost's Ground-Sparrow**. Santiago Atitlan is a hub of Mayan culture and there may be an opportunity to meet some locals who are part of the Audubon bird-tourism initiative. Overnight at Santiago Atitlan.

Day 5 – PARQUE MIRADOR DEL REY TEPEPUL. This is a **3500-hectare park**, mostly forest with a wide altitudinal range. Although new to the bird-tourism scene, **this park has great birds, including the Yellow-naped Parrot, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, and the gorgeous Azure-rumped Tanager**, and perhaps even the rare and **spectacular Resplendent Quetzal**. In the afternoon, we will take a boat to San Juan La Laguna. Overnight in San Juan La Laguna.



Violet Sabrewing. Photo by Luis Búrbanco



Orange-breasted Falcon. Photo by John Sterling.

Day 6 – VOLCAN SAN PEDRO HORNED GUAN. The hike to try and find the Horned Guan is a very **difficult one**, on a single dirt track that becomes steep at times. We will **divide into two groups**, each with a guide, a faster paced group and a slower paced group. The slower paced group will look for birds lower down on the **slopes of the volcano**, and will not climb to the Horned

Guan habitat. For those who do continue, this is a very difficult and strenuous hike, not for everyone. As well, **climbing to the habitat is by no means a guarantee**, the guan is rare and local, and you may not see it even once you are up there! **Great birds can be seen on the hike**, and in the lower slopes **Belted Flycatcher has been found**, as well as **Lesser Roadrunner**. On the climb one may find **Emerald Toucanet, Mountain Trogon, Mountain Elaenia, the incomparable Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, and rarely seen Black-throated Jay** among others. Depending on the number of fast paced versus slower paced birders, we may be able to have the slow paced birders visit another birding or cultural site in the area after lunch. Overnight in San Juan La Laguna.

Day 7 – PARQUE TZANKUJIL TO PANAJACHEL. In the morning we will **take a boat to Parque Tzankujil**, which has some very good dry forest. **Various species of birds are seen here** and not in wetter forest sites in the area. This area could give us a chance to find the showy **Sparkling-tailed Hummingbird**. This is a great spot for **wintering warblers, resident orioles including the Bar-winged, Bushy-crested Jay and even the skulking Blue-and-white Mockingbird**. We will bird the morning here, have lunch and then will transfer to Panajachel. Panajachel is a bustling, tourist hub where you can do some afternoon shopping or relax and take in views of the Lake. On this evening, we may be able to entertain members of the local community involved in Audubon's bird tourism initiative. Overnight in Panajachel.

Day 8 – CORAZON DEL BOSQUE AND HIGHLANDS ON WAY BACK TO GUATEMALA CITY. Corazon del Bosque is a **superb little reserve**; here one is higher up than Pana in the oak-pine forest zone. **The star bird at Corazon del Bosque is the gorgeous and uncommon Pink-headed Warbler.** As we look for the warbler we may see **Mountain Trogon, Spotted Woodcreeper, Yellowish Flycatcher, Rufous-browed Wren, Olive Warbler, Crescent-chested Warbler, White-naped Brush-Finch and the local form of the Yellow-eyed Junco** which many consider a separate species: the **“Guatemalan Junco.”** We will have lunch on the road as we travel back to Guatemala City this afternoon. Overnight in Guatemala City.

Day 9 – FLIGHT TO FLORES AND PASO CABALLOS. This morning we shall transfer early to Guatemala City Airport to take a morning flight Flores in Guatemala’s Petén region. Upon arrival we shall travel to Paso Caballos. This is a new area being explored and established as a birding destination. The area is **home to over 260 species of birds, including the Scarlet Macaw.** To access the Biological Station we shall be transported by boat on a 20-minute trip along the San Pedro River. **An optional night trip on the river may allow for some night birding, as well as observations of the Morrelet’s Crocodile.** Overnight at Las Guacamayas Biological Station.

Day 10 – PASO CABALLOS. Within Laguna del Tigre National Park, **we will bird the Guacamayas Biological Station,** and may have an opportunity to **visit El Peru archaeological site.** **Great, Thicket and Little tinamous** may be heard in the forest, and with luck we could find one of these skulkers. Tropical specialties abound here, such as **Collared Aracari, Keel-billed Toucan, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, White-whiskered Puffbird,** as well as **good populations of parrots, forest dwelling flycatchers, Red-capped Manakin and plenty of other resident and migrant land birds.** Overnight at Las Guacamayas Biological Station.

Day 11 – PASO CABALLOS TO YAXHÁ. Not as well-known as Tikal, Yaxhá is an important archaeological site, which is gaining prominence as researchers delve deeper into its history. The area is part of the Yaxhá-Nakúm-Naranjo National Park which protects the archaeological sites as well as a large expanse of forest. Here, **large flocks of several species of parrots** move through the area early and late in the day, including **Red-lore, White-fronted, White-crowned, and (less often) Mealy.** The nearby lake provides habitat for **waterbirds as well as shorebirds** during migration; in open savanna along the shores of the lake, we may find **Yellow-**

tailed Orioles. In the forests of Yaxhá, we can find a diversity of **woodcreepers, Slaty-tailed, Gartered and Black-headed trogons, hummingbirds and tanagers.** Overnight in Yaxhá, El Sombrero Ecolodge.

Day 12 – YAXHÁ BIRDING. We will **continue to explore the forest, savanna and archaeological sites of Yaxhá,** seeking species that have eluded us thus far. **Night birding is an option.** Overnight in Yaxhá, El Sombrero Ecolodge

Day 13 – YAXHÁ TO TIKAL. This morning we leave Yaxhá early and we will make our way to Tikal. **This is the most famous Maya site,** due to its size and the number of large pyramids. To say that Tikal is awesome is an understatement, not only for the historical significance, but the expanse of forest and the trail system that allows great access. We will have the opportunity to visit **jungle trails and climb pyramids and temples at Tikal while enjoying birds,** such as the **Montezuma Oropendola and parrots,** fly by over the vast expanse of forest. Here we may find the rare and gorgeous **Orange-breasted Falcon,** the superb **Ocellated Turkey** and a great many other tropical species, and maybe **even a mammal or two!** Our local guide will also be able to interpret the archeology and history we will see while birding. There will be **optional owling this evening** near our lodge. This is a memorable and magical day! To bird among the temples of Tikal is awe inspiring, to think about the environment, the people who built this city, the civilization that once was here and to see how the forest has reigned over this ruin until re-discovered is all amazing. Overnight in Tikal.

Day 14 – TIKAL TO UAXACTÚN. Today, there are two options: some of **you may want to spend the day roaming Tikal,** taking pictures, meditating or birding at your own pace. Others, who want to continue the adventure can leave on an early ride to Uaxactun. **For those going to Uaxactun, the pace will be slightly quicker** as we may need to walk a bit to get to the area where the Yucatan Jay has been spotted in the mornings. For the remainder of the morning, we will hike the forest trails around the town and ruins to perhaps get **a second look at some species we missed,** or better looks at species that have eluded us during the trip. We will enjoy lunch in the town and a brief cultural tour from a member of the local forestry concession association. Following lunch, in the shade of the forest, we can visit the ruins and then return to Tikal to meet up with the group for a final dinner surrounded by the tropical forests of the Petén. Overnight in Tikal.

Audubon International Alliances Program

Guatemala

Suggested Itinerary

Day 15 – FLORES – GUATEMALA CITY.

We have a **short time to bird before departure** today and perhaps we shall have time to bird at a site known as Cerro Cahuí where some species may be different from those in Tikal such as the **Gray-throated Chat**. We will have lunch on the shores of Lake Petén Itza enjoying the scenery there. We then transfer to Flores Airport and return to Guatemala City. Night in Guatemala City.

Day 16 – FLY OUT OF GUATEMALA.

Transfer to Guatemala City Airport to take your flight home.

