

## LEGACYLINE NEWSLETTER – December 2011

This past weekend our twentieth year of full-time guiding gave way to the 2012 calendar of birding tours. Like an avid reader turning the pages of a beloved book, the power of a compelling story continues to pull me happily forward. Feeling that the final chapters are closer than one would like has led Legacy Tours to introduce a greater mix of one-time adventures [custom tours] and comfortable Heritage-Style destinations. During the past twelve months I guided for nine custom parties... evenly split between focused Mexico birders with specific target lists and parties of various sizes, all of like-minded travelers influenced by factors such as season, destination, peripheral activities, etc. Legacy offered just four open birding trips this year, three in Mexico and one in Honduras.

As with past years Mexico was the setting for our greatest successes and our principal frustrations. All participants of a July [rainy season] custom tour enjoyed excellent views of Tamaulipas Pygmy-Owl, Bearded Wood-Partridge, and Tuxtla Quail-Dove among the more than 400 species recorded. Those that follow available information on Mexican avifauna will appreciate my satisfaction in seeing these three birds within a one-week period. As for disappointments, Mexican Naval authorities thwarted a long-planned sailing to the Revillagigidos Islands when permission to land was unilaterally refused. Seeing the Clarion Wren [Mexico's most remote endemic bird] from the vessel was little consolation for not being allowed to set foot on the islands.

We have made Mexico 'our patch' for the past fifteen years, though the past two years have seen us elect not to guide in the northern states of Mexico. The country continues to be a source fabulous opportunities for Legacy Tours; my year list in Mexico ended at 851, not bad considering one-third of the country is off-limits to birders until the drug-wars end. This year our tours visited such rich destinations as the Mayan ruins sites of Calakmul, Yaxchilan, and Bonampak; the biosphere reserves of El Triunfo, Monte Azules, and Sian Ka'an; and endemic bird zones [IBA's] like Sierra Madre del Sur, Oaxaca Highlands, Trans-volcanic Belt, Cozumel Island, Sierra los Tuxtlas, and Isthmus of Tehuantepec. With nearly 100 endemic birds Mexico continues to be a major destination of choice for birders.

### RAINY SEASON BIRDING – Central Mexico Targets During July

A highly successful target birding trip this past July confirmed for me that certain key species are best [only] seen during the rainy season. I plan to run a route that has Bearded Wood-Partridge and White-fronted Swift as the central focus, and others birds as targets both before and after the two key species. The Partridge is responsive only after the heavy rains have begun, and the swifts return to their nesting waterfalls only after the rivers have become sufficiently inundated. Two days for each species should be enough, with an added day required to travel between Veracruz and Michoacán states. With just five or six days required for the two major targets I can offer optional add-on days on each side of the swift and the partridge. Though Veracruz City is the logical jump-off point for the Partridge three added pre-tour days would allow for Tuxtla Quail-Dove, Long-tailed Sabrewing, and the important Sierra Los Tuxtlas subspecies/forms of brush-finch, bush-tanager, and saltator. In addition, the Trans-volcanic Belt endemic species that occur near Mexico City and can be picked up following our study of the

swift. These birds include Strickland's Woodpecker, Ultramarine Jay, Black-poll'd Yellowthroat, and Sierra Madres Sparrow. I would like to hear from you if you can get on-board with the core task of seeing the White-fronted Swift and the Bearded Wood-Partridge, and for if July works to chase these birds...

### UPCOMING TOURS

During 2012 we will be in Peru twice, and in 2013 we plan to be in Sri Lanka twice, and to return to Taiwan. Four of these trips will be organized in the more comfortable Heritage-Style format. However, to make sure that I don't get too soft as I celebrate my sixtieth birthday I plan to raft the Rio Platano Reserve in Honduras under the guidance of Robert Gallardo – a rafting trip through the richest primary forest remaining in Central America. For the adventuresome soul there are few places so close to home where it seems that nothing has been changed by the influences of the past 100 years! I am expecting (OK, hoping) to see Baird's Tapir and Jaguar during this adventure. Come join me during July 2013; Robert says I can only take seven with me...

### APPRECIATION

Several years back a fellow guide remarked that he was amazed Legacy Tours could be a successful one-man operation for so many years. I heard this as a compliment for our programs and our commitment to clients. I also said a silent *thank you* to so many wonderful people that have supported our activities, and encouraged the selection of our destinations. We regularly receive communications that references the generous words from a past tour participant. It seems especially true at year-end to express our gratitude for your choosing Legacy Tours for your birding activities.

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