

## LEGACYLINE NEWSLETTER – AUG 2011

As May turned into June Mexico's seasonal rains remained a distant hope; yet less than one month later I returned to a saturated landscape – verdant and alive! I found myself muttering from Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities; “It was the best of times; it was the worst of times ...it was the spring of hope; it was the winter of despair”. How can two visits to the same region be so unlike in such a brief period of time? One window was parched and hot – the hottest I have ever felt in Mexico, while the other was a series of fresh and fruitful days. Targets for both trips were the difficult birds of Veracruz State; while the first endeavor failed even to hear a Bearded Wood-Partridge, had two brief flight views of Tuxtla Quail-Dove, and missed Spectacled Owl, just one month later – once the life-giving rains had breathed their indiscriminant fullness - a male partridge was taped-in to within ten yards; a quail-dove likewise to within fifteen yards, and the owl's day-roost was revealed to us by a noisy chick begging for food.

As good as winter birding is in Mexico – and believe me it is great – the surest way to see the most difficult birds is to decide that it is a *summer task*; for instance the July birding party saw Thicket Tinamou, Bearded Wood-Partridge, Maroon-fronted Parrot, Tuxtla Quail-Dove, Tamaulipas Pygmy-Owl, Fulvous Owl, Tawny-collared Nightjar, Long-tailed Sabrewing, Blue-capped Hummingbird, Dwarf and Slaty vireos, White-throated and Dwarf jays, Sumichrast's Wren, Ocellated Thrasher, Aztec Thrush, Altamira and Hooded yellowthroats, and Worthen's and Oaxaca sparrows all in their *first attempts* at the bird! A few others took a second attempt – like Long-tailed Wood-Partridge and Pileated Flycatcher – and hummingbirds were a lot of work. And to be fair, Chestnut-sided Shrike Vireo and Hooded Grosbeak were not among the 438 species [52 AOU Endemics] listed on the daily logs.

I can continue on about the success of a particular trip, or the sweetness of being so close to such special birds, but the heart of this message resides is the fact that birds live the equivalent of a lifetime each and every year -- two new sets of wardrobe per year, an all-consuming adolescent rush of hormones every spring, and the annual defining of a home, the raising of young, and the sending them forth into the world. Birds have build-in triggers that close one chapter as they open the next; in Mexico RAIN is the nesting-trigger. When the seasonal rains burst forth – as early as March or as late as June – even those species considered most difficult to observe shout out their presence. Indeed while tourists choose Mexico for the winter sun [December through March] the fullness of Mexico is reserved for birders. As different as London is from Paris in the Dickens novel, so dissimilar is the landscape of dry-season birding [December through April] versus that of the rainy season [June through August].

## TWO TOURS WITH TWO SPACES EACH

As sometimes happens TWO spaces each have recently become available for two of our *Open Birding Tours* this winter. If one of these tours is right for you please let me know ASAP, and I will get the pertinent information into your hands to make a good decision.

MAYAN RUINS & RAINFOREST BIRDING: February 14<sup>TH</sup> – 25<sup>TH</sup> ... one of the most exciting parts of Mexico: includes the Mayan archeological sites of Calakmul, Bonampak, Yaxchilan, Palenque, & the Lacandon Reserve! Eleven days of tinamous, antbirds, woodcreepers, cracids, & macaws. Tour begins & ends in Villahermosa.

EL TRIUNFO BIOSPHERE: March 10<sup>TH</sup> - 18<sup>TH</sup> ... the breathtaking home of the Horned Guan, one of the worlds most prized birds. Nine-day tour begins & ends in Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas ... our twelfth consecutive year with permits to this unique and magical destination.

Tap into the web site for more information... <http://www.legacy-tours.com/>

## TWO GREAT REFERENCES

In GUATEMALA skilled guides are learning more-and-more about finding and consistently relocating the better birds for clients. One company that is currently doing a great job is <http://www.guatemalanature.com/>

Birds like Pink-headed Warbler, Wine-throated Hummingbird, Rufous Sabrewing, and Azure-rumped Tanager are all serious targets. They understand flexibility and working around your schedule and interests. Why not contact Bitty Ramirez-Portilla directly to learn more at - [bitty@guatemalanature.com](mailto:bitty@guatemalanature.com)

In HONDURAS there is just one 'best option', Robert Gallardo. He is an American ex-patriot living there. Birding came to him as a second love – butterflies were first – but he has thrown himself into the Honduran birding scene so much so that his peerless knowledge lets you find the better target species... like my lifer Ocellated Quail last June! He knows how to find those birds one should look for in Honduras - Honduran Emerald, Green-breasted Mountain-gem, Red-throated Parakeet, Bushy-crested Jay, Great Swallow-tailed Swift, Keel-billed Motmot, Lovely Cotinga, and others... Best of all Robert has an adventure route that rivals the experience of the El Triunfo Biosphere – a rafting/camping trip through the richest primary forest in all of Central America. For venturesome souls there are few places where the daily experience today is exactly like that of a traveler visiting more a century ago! I think folks could talk me into organizing a small group to travel with Robert into the headwaters of Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve. Maybe I am not too old to do so... if he promises Baird's Tapir, Jaguar, & Harpy Eagle. You can also contact Robert directly at - [rgallardo32@gmail.com](mailto:rgallardo32@gmail.com) or learn more about his activities in Honduras at <http://www.birdsofhonduras.com/>

## MEXICO YEAR LIST

As of July 31<sup>st</sup> my 2011 year list is at 788 birds, with the 800<sup>th</sup> likely being recorded while guiding on Cozumel Island later this month. Though the days of 900 species in a calendar year have been put on-hold until the US and Mexico can solve the security issues along the border, during the first seven months of this year I saw ALL of the mainland endemics of Mexico while guiding for clients. Though the border zone is indeed too risky for birders, over ninety percent of the country is welcoming and respectful of tourists. Mexico is a big country, and most of it continues to be safe...

## APPRECIATION

We pinch ourselves almost daily to check if we are dreaming concerning our good fortune and the board support of our programs. Legacy is successful only because you continue to tell others that our programs have value. For this kindness we are so very grateful, and wish to once again say, thank you.

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