**Birds of Oaxaca, Mexico**

 **Mark Pretti Nature Tours, L.L.C.**

The following birds were seen on our Dec. 3 - 13, 2024 trip to beautiful Oaxaca, Mexico. The few species that were “Heard only” are marked with an H. Please note that, as always, a few birds may have been just brief glimpses, fly-bys, or seen by just a few people. The location codes I used are as follows;

T – the Teotitlan del Valle area, including the grassy scrub below town, the small riparian area below town, and the reservoir above town – seasonally dry interior valley scrub (with columnar cactus, agave, Bursera, Acacias, and tree morning glory)

N – the Sierra Norte, high above Oaxaca city (this area is sometimes referred to as La Cumbre, Cerro San Felipe, or the Sierra Juarez) – Madrean evergreen woodland (pines, oak, madrone, alder, fir, and salvia)

B – Biguera, northwest of the city, the quiet road with the gate at the bottom where we heard a distant Ocellated Thrasher and struggled to see the slaty vireo – semideciduous foothill scrub

M – Monte Alban – seasonally dry interior valley scrub

Y – Yagul – INTACT interior valley scrub with Myrtillocactus, Bursera, Opuntia, Euphorbias, etc.

S – the Sierra Madre del Sur – this includes the Hotel Puesta del Sol (PDS), the Bumblebee Hummingbird spot (which is at Km 158, almost where the pine and oak forest stops), the side-of-the-road spot where we had lunch, and La Soledad (where we had a patch of rain / cloud forest).

C – the coffee growing area including El Azulillo Rd. and Finca El Pacifico – broadleaf tropical evergreen forest (this could be thought of as rainforest…..but with a dry season)

R/RCL – Rancho Cerro Largo área, including the Ventanilla Road and the dirt road “across the street” – Tropical Deciduous Forest (TDF)

RC – Rio Colotepec river mouth just to the east of Puerto Escondido

LM – Laguna Manialtepec – Mangrove Estuary with a freshwater river

**ANSERIFORMES**

Anatidae – while the summer rains in Oaxaca (and probably elsewhere in Mexico) were obviously good for the plants, butterflies, and people, it made for very few ducks this year.

\_\_\_Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

A widespread wintering bird from Mexico to northern South America, seen at the ponds below and above T and at the RC. A classic “dabbler” as are all members of this genus.

\_\_\_Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

A handful of males and females at the T reservoir. A little “eruptive” in Oaxaca, seen some years and not seen others. Like many migratory waterfowl, they have much wintering habitat further north along both coasts of Mexico, so they often don’t need to come as far south as Oaxaca. A diving duck.

\_\_\_\_ Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

At this latitude, we were way too far south for Greater Scaup, so the ID of these birds (even the plainish females we saw at the T reservoir) is easy. Not to common this far south as they have so much wintering habitat available further north along north coasts.

**GALLIFORMES**

Cracidae

\_H\_West Mexican Chachalaca *Ortalis poliocephala*

Endemic in the coastal TDF from Jalisco to Oaxaca. We heard a small group at Finca El Pacifico but no luck. They are usually around Cerro Largo but might be becoming more rare with all the construction. Chachalacas are lowland neotropical birds in which NO two species ever overlap……because they are too much alike ecologically and exhibit “mutual exclusion” in terms of range. There are three species of Chachalaca on the Pacific slope of Mexico and only one species on the Gulf Slope…….which says a lot about biogeographic differences between the two coasts.

**PODICIPEDIFORMES**

Podicipedidae
\_\_\_Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus*

Several were seen at the Teotitlan reservoir where they are resident breeders. Widespread in the neotropics on bodies of still and (mostly) fresh water. Good to know.

*\_\_\_\_* Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

This widespread bird (which breeds in the western US and Canada) was seen at the T reservoir (of course in winter plumage). Much more common in coastal estuaries, we see them in the interior every 4 or 5 years or so.

**COLUMBIFORMES**
Columbidae
\_\_\_Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*

One of several world birds seen on the trip, always near people. The “purebreds” that you see in places like India are gorgeous. The amazing navigational abilities of pigeons have been extensively studied, and it has been discovered that they have an extensive “tool kit” which includes sight, smell, and sensitivity to magnetic fields.

\_\_\_Red-billed Pigeon *Patagioenas flavirostris*

A “canopy” bird and a lowland cousin of the montane Band-tailed Pigeon. They are usually perched conspicuously in the tops of the mangroves at LM, but we just had brief fly-bys there. They probably roost in the mangroves at night. The beak is mostly whitish with just a little red at the base.

\_\_\_Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*
\_\_\_White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*
\_\_\_Inca Dove *Columbina inca*

These three widespread birds were seen and heard throughout the Oaxaca Valley………. and many Inca Doves as well as some white-wingeds were seen near the coast. All are birds of edges and open country, and none were seen “in the forest”.

\_\_\_Ruddy Ground-Dove *Columbina talpacoti*

This widespread species is found in the lowlands of Mexico and Central and South America. It can be common………except along our route where we saw it only at the RC in the dry scrub in the late afternoon where there were some perched females and a drinking male.

*\_\_\_*Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocta*

Several in Chacalapa on the radio tower and a few at LM in the parking area. I first saw this species in far northern Mexico in about 2001. They’ve slowly worked their way south since but have not become widely established in Oaxaca and remain uncommon there.

\_\_\_White-tipped Dove *Leptotila verreauxi*

A widespread bird found from south Texas to northern Argentina, and therefore very good to know. We heard a few in the coffee and on the dirt side road near RCL in the distance where we had a quick fly-by (which is often how this bird is seen in Mexico). They are one of many forest-floor-clean-up crew critters, looking for fallen seeds and fruits.

**CUCULIFORMES**

Cuculidae

\_\_\_Groove-billed Ani *Crotophaga sulcirostris*

An omnivorous (mostly invertebrates and fruit) “social cuckoo” that feeds and breeds in family groups. Several groups were seen at Ventanilla and a few in the mangroves at LM. Widespread in the Mexican and Central American lowlands and often in second growth and on edges, sometimes following livestock for flushed insects.

Neomorphinae

\_H\_Lesser Ground-Cuckoo *Morococcyx erythropygus*

A near endemic to west Mexican TDF, we heard multiple birds (I’m guessing 6 individuals, a new record) near RCL but, as if often the caser, no luck. They used to occur on the grounds at RCL (pre house cat and construction), but it’s at least good to know that they are still around. They’re terrestrial like their larger cousins, the roadrunners.

\_\_\_Mangrove Cuckoo *Coccyzus minor*

We had very good luck with a bird at LM where it’s been off and on for a number of years. Very similar to the Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos and with the same taste for caterpillars. In addition to the mangroves they can be found inland in the TDF. Mostly found in Middle America and the Caribbean.

**CAPRIMULGIFORMES**

Caprimulgidae (Nighthawks and Nightjars)
\_H\_Mexican Whip-poor-will *Caprimulgus arizonae*

A few of us heard this near endemic bird of the highlands at PDS. A little unusual to hear it calling in the winter but at this latitude, who knows? They might even be breeding.

**APODIFORMES**

Apodidae (Swifts)
\_\_\_\_ White-collared Swift *Streptoprocne zonaris*

One of the most widespread swifts in tropical America, we had pretty good views of groups flying high above the coffee forest at Azulillo. The white collar can be seen from long distances in good light, but the best field mark is the near constant soaring……which is not surprising as this bird has a 20-inch wingspan.

\_\_\_Vaux's Swift *Chaetura vauxi*

A few of these small swifts were foraging over the coffee at Azulillo and a few over the mangroves at LM. These were probably resident birds, but they may have been migrants. They almost never glide and instead flap rapidly, which is a good field mark in Mexico.

Trochilidae
\_\_\_Mexican Violet-ear *Colibri thalassinus*

We had pretty good views of one these monomorphic birds in the S below PDS – a male on his display perch. A result of the two-way split of the Green Violetear, this new species has a blue belly…..and isn’t so “green”. Males “sing”’ from their perches in the mountain forests where they sit and “click” most of the day to attract females.

\_\_\_Blue-capped Hummingbird - M *Eupherusa cyanophrys*

I think this uncommon bird was the only species we found that occurs ONLY in Oaxaca, and only “in the coffee” on the Pacific slope. Very good views of a female foraging on Moussonia flowers at La Soledad.

\_\_\_Dusky Hummingbird *Phaeoptila sordida*

Interior valley endemic, seen several times near T, B, Yagul, and the Hotel Azucenas. The tail-wagging is helpful in the ID……as is the “raccoon mask” and the red in the bill. Otherwise, it’s a rather dull and dark bird. Until recently, this species was in the same genus as the similar (in plumage and tail-wagging) Broad-billed and Turquoise-crowned Hummingbirds of the west coast.

\_\_\_Turquoise-crowned Hummingbird *Cynanthus latirostris doubledayi*

This “new” Mexican-endemic (a result of a split from the near-endemic Broad-billed Hummingbird) was seen well at almost every owl-toot near RCL. It’s a tail-wagger and almost always comes to the owl-toot. Only found on the Pacific slope and mostly in the TDF. Often nectaring on a vinaceous morning glory with the pinkish bracts (which only flowers in the dry season, later in January). Interestingly, this species is in the same genus as the Golden-crowned Emerald (a west Mexican endemic that we didn’t see and which used to be in the genus Chlorostilbon). These birds are VERY different in shape, size, and plumage.

\_\_\_White-eared Hummingbird  *Hylocharis eliciae*

One of the most common and widespread hummers in the Sierra Madre of Mexico…..but not easy to see in Oaxaca. We had brief looks at a few males on our walk in the high mountains of the N and then very good views of a perched male in the S below PDS.

\_\_\_Cinnamon Hummingbird *Amazilia rutila*

A well-named, bi-coastal lowland bird seen well near RCK and at the RC at a pygmy-owl toot. Unmistakable and easy to ID.

\_\_\_Berylline Hummingbird *Amazilia beryllina*

Common and widespread at mid-elevations throughout Mexico, we saw them best at Biguera in the tree morning glories but also near T and in the foothills at the Oaxaca Sparrow spot. Green and rust.

\_\_\_Blue-throated Mountain-gem (Hummingbird) *Lampornis clemenciae*

A territorial male was seen well at the Colibri Restaurant in the N. We sometimes call it “Mr/Mrs. Squeaky” because of its frequently given, shrill, loud, single note which we heard well as it came to the feeders. A Madrean bird…..with a new name.

\_\_\_Amethyst-throated Mountain-gem (Hummingbird) *Lampornis amethystinus*

A southern cousin of the previous species, we had good views of a perched male at Km 158 (the logged out spot) where, fortunately, it’s been for many years. It also has a new name. Both of these species have southern cousins in Central America that have long been called mountain-gems, thus the name change.

\_\_\_Rivoli’s (Magnificent) Hummingbird *Eugenes fulgens*

A large hummer of the high Sierra Madre of Mexico, we saw a female briefly at the Oaxaca Sparrow spot (its lower limit) and also nectaring (again briefly) on the giant thistle below PDS. The widespread Magnificent Hummingbird has been split into this species, found from southern AZ to northern Nicaragua, and the Talamanca Hummingbird of the Chiriqui Highlands of Costa Rica and Panama. There are genetic, plumage, size, and behavioral differences.

\_\_\_Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*

A wintering generalist found in pretty much every habitat in Oaxaca from sea level to 9000 feet. Seen in several places – Teotitlan, Biguera, Yagul, Puesta Del Sol, and RCL.

\_\_\_Bumblebee Hummingbird - M *Atthis heloisa*

Endemic to the mountains north of the isthmus. It was awesome to see several birds so well in the Southern Sierra at our first stop below PDS…….but not so awesome that I can no longer hear this species. Endemic to the Sierra Madre north of the Isthmus, it has a “replacement cousin” in the mountains south of the Isthmus.

\_\_\_Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus*

The northernmost breeding hummingbird in the world, we had a female at her southern limit (wintering only) at PDS. The rusty flanks and the dark spot on the throat are key to the ID in that area.

**GRUIFORMES**Rallidae
\_\_\_Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica*

Always a crowd pleaser, we had nice views of an adult in the freshwater marsh at LM. Widespread in the neotropics.

\_\_\_Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata*

A widespread resident throughout the Americas and very common in some neotropical wetlands, we saw a trio in the riparian area below T and a few immatures at LM. Good to know.

\_\_\_American Coot *Fulica Americana*

Widespread, but mostly in North America (it just ranges into Colombia). Seen at the reservoir at T.

**CHARADRIFORMES**Charadriidae
\_\_\_Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

Several of these fairly common wintering birds at RC and LM. Very good to know as it’s usually the most common of the 6 plovers possible on this route.

\_\_\_Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*

A few of these wintering birds were seen at the reservoir above T. Further south you can find resident Killdeer in South America.

\_\_\_Collared Plover *Charadrius collaris*

A solitary, non-migratory plover of the neotropics from beaches in southern Mexico to beaches in Amazonia and south to the Pantanal. They stay in the same bright and clean plumage all year. Very nice views on the beach at LM where we had a perfect comparison with the Semipalmateds.

Recurvirostridae
\_\_\_Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*

Several wintering birds at the RC and at LM in the freshwater. Some breed further north in central Mexico, and there is a resident South American population as well. This species can be very helpful (as we saw) when in the presence of both Lesser and Greater Yellowegs as they are pretty much the same size at Greater and larger than Lesser.

Scolopacidae (Shorebirds)
\_\_\_Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

A boreal bog breeder in southern Canada and Alaska, it has an enormous wintering range, covering ALL of Mexico and Central and South America. A loner at the RC where we could compare them with nearby shorebirds (like Black-necked stilts – they’re almost the same size).

\_\_\_Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

This species also has an enormous wintering range from the southern U.S to southern South America. We saw them at several wet spots……..which is typical – T, Rio Tonameca, RC, and LM. It’s the ONLY shorebird I know of that routinely perches on things like rocks, sticks, and boats……..which is a good field mark, at least on its wintering grounds.

\_\_\_Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

A high Arctic breeder that travels thousands of miles to winter in Mexico (and as far south as northern Chile !). A few were seen inland at the T reservoir and many along the coast at RC and LM.

Jacanidae
\_\_\_Northern Jacana *Jacana spinosa*

In their freshwater marshy element at Laguna Manialtepec where we saw them very well. Their extra-long toes enable them to walk on matted aquatic vegetation without competitors. Zha-sah-nah is the correct pronunciation of this word from theunwritten Tupi-Guarani language group of South America. The spelling is from Portuguese

Laridae
Larinae
\_\_\_Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*

Usually the only gull on our route, as was the case this time. Widespread from the southern US to northern South America. Without sandbars to haul out on, we had only fly-bys at the RC river mouth.

Sterninae
\_\_\_Elegant Tern *Thalassius elegans*

This species breeds only in the Gulf of California off the eastern coast of Baja, and almost exclusively on one island, Isla Raza. They winter north to California (and also breed in the San Diego area……with a top-secret population along San Francisco Bay) and south to northern Chile. We had a nice comparison at LM with Royal terns. Narrow, yellowish-orange beak.

\_\_\_Sandwich Tern *Thalassius sandvicensis*

A resident in the Atlantic and Caribbean Oceans, some cross the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the winter to spend time on Mexico’s Pacific coast (where they presumably have less competition). Some were seen as fly-bys at the RC and perched birds at LM – black bill with a yellow tip

\_\_\_Royal Tern *Thalassius maxima*

THE most common coastal tern in all of tropical America. We had a small group our last morning at RCL and then more at the RC and LM. Large reddish-orange beak (though this can vary and sometimes look more yellowish or more red).

**PHAETHONTIFORMES**Phaethontidae
\_\_\_Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*

Circling (but ONLY in the afternoon) the offshore rock at Cerro Largo where there have always been anywhere from a few to a dozen flying birds. In the scope you could see the long central tail feathers and the black wing tips, as well as the unique flight pattern. Found in several tropical oceans, they are a plunge-diver, much like a booby. Oddly, their closest relatives are the flightless Kagu of New Caledonia and the Sunbittern of tropical America.

**CICONIFORMES**Ciconiidae (Storks)
\_\_\_\_ Wood Stork *Mycteria Americana*

Several of these very widespread birds at the LM – flying and perched. Uncommon along our route where there isn’t much nesting habitat and only limited foraging habitat.

**SULIFORMES**Fregatidae
\_\_\_Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*

Many near the coast (RCL, RC, and LM), a world bird and the ONLY family of seabirds that exhibits sexual dimorphism. Unlike most water birds they are NOT waterproof and never land on water…..as they get waterlogged and can’t take off. They hunt by “pirating” terns to steal their fish, plucking baby sea turtles form the beach, plucking food from the ocean surface, and catching flying fish in the air.

Sulidae – Boobies
\_\_\_Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

THE booby on the offshore rock at Cerro Largo, widespread in the world’s warm oceans. It’s a plunge-diver. There used to be 100’s on the rock, but each year there have been less – “The Seabird’s Cry” is an excellent book that explains much about seabird declines worldwide.

Phalacrocoracidae
\_\_\_Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

The only one in west Mexico at this latitude, seen along the coast where there were some at RCL, at the RC, and some at LM. We had a close perched bird at LM showing the white V-shaped border at the base of the bill.

Anhingidae (Anhingas / Darters)
\_\_\_\_ Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga*

One of only four species of “darters” in the world, this one has all of the Americas to itself. Several males and females were seen at LM, mostly drying out which they do a lot as they don’t produce preen oil…..which would make them too buoyant when diving for fish.

**PELECANIFORMES**Pelecanidae
\_\_\_Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*

One of only two diving pelicans on Earth (out of 8 species), the other being the Peruvian Pelican. Along the coast and at RCL.

Ardeidae
\_\_\_Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

Among the many waders we saw, this is one of the only wintering ones in Oaxaca whereas almost all of the others are regional residents. Seen at the T reservoir and on the coast at the RC and LM. Found only in North America (with rare records in Colombia and Ecuador) it has a “replacement” (the Cocoi Heron) in South America and one in the Old World (Gray Heron).

\_\_\_Great Egret *Ardea alba*

A world bird seen at T, RC, and LM. I find it interesting in that they seem to never get dirty.

\_\_\_Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens*

This species is almost always found in coastal areas and rarely inland. They have a unique hunting strategy of “chasing” small fish in shallow water……as opposed to the sit, wait, and strike method used by most waders. Seen at LM, in bad light it can be confidently identified by its foraging behavior.

\_\_\_Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor*
\_\_\_Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*
\_\_\_Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*
\_\_\_Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
\_\_\_Green Heron *Butorides virescens*
\_\_\_Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nyctanassa violacea*

Almost all of these waders were seen at either the Colotepec River mouth or the Manialtepec mangrove estuary. All are residents in Mexico. We also had Great, Little Blue (rare in the valley), Western Cattle, and Snowy Egrets in the interior valley near T.

\_\_\_Bare-throated Tiger-Heron *Tigrisoma mexicanum*

One of three species of Tiger-herons in the neotropics, We had just one slightly hidden bird at LM where we usually see more. Unlike many other waders, they are solitary hunters and nesters, prefer quiet sheltered spots with trees, and are often active at night.

Threskiornithidae
\_\_\_White Ibis *Eudocimus albus*

Several of these widespread resident birds at LM in the freshwater section. Though they do some “sight hunting” (often on mudflats for crabs), this group of waders is often more of a “hunt by feel” bird, probing below the surface with special touch and chemoreceptors in the bill.

**CATHARTIFORMES**Cathartidae
\_\_\_Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*
\_\_\_Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Both common in the lowlands of the Oaxaca Valley and the coast and less common in the high mountains (where the thermals aren’t as strong). We saw both in most lowland locations. While the Turkey Vulture finds most of its food by smell, the Black is a sight forager. We had several scoped birds of each species showing the differences in nostril size which reflects olfactory capabilities. In the Oaxaca Valley, both are fairly regular in terms of “wake-up time” on most winter days, taking off from the night roost right around 9 AM.

**ACCIPITRIFORMES**Pandionidae
\_\_\_Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Quite a few perched at the LM estuary and a surprise above T our first morning. They head north just about the time Common Black Hawk eggs are hatching, thus avoiding increased competition for fish. A world bird that breeds on all continents….except the most fish-rich continent of all, South America (where it’s only found in the winter).

Accipitrinae
\_?\_Double-toothed Kite *Harpagus bidentatus*

We had a quick glimpse of a small gray-backed raptor with black-and-white tail bands at Azulillo. It was most likely this small, forest-based, widespread lowland bird. It’s famous for following troops of monkeys which flush large arboreal arthropods that it tries to then catch.

\_\_\_Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Close to its southern wintering limit in the Oaxaca Valley, we had nice views of a soaring adult male above Yagul. Generally uncommon in the valley, I imagine that they may have been more common hundreds of years ago when there were extensive wetlands scattered throughout the area.

\_\_\_Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii*

We saw what I’m pretty sure was a near-adult in the Norfolk Island Pine at the Hotel Azucenas and a soaring immature (brown and with streaks down the front) at B. Also one “hunting” the botanic garden…….which I’d do too if I was an Accipiter. Finally an unidentified juvenile Accipiter in the agricultural fields below Yagul.

\_\_\_Common Black-Hawk *Buteogallus anthracinus*

This species lives up to its name at LM where we saw several. We also saw a soaring bird in the afternoon at Ventanilla. They eat mostly fish from the surface but also small iguanas, snakes, and squirrels. At this latitude, they are close to being a mangrove obligate.

\_\_\_Roadside Hawk *Rupornis magnirostris*

Along with the Short-tailed hawk, this is one of the most widespread raptors in the neotropics and good to know (the striking yellow iris is a good field mark). We had a distant adult at LM on a fence post near the beach. Found from sea level to almost 9000 feet in the Andes, this generalist feeder occurs in many habitat types, but usually those with edges and some adjacent open space.

\_\_\_White-tailed Hawk *Geranoaetus albicaudatus*

A bird of lowland tropical savannas, this species is widespread but patchily distributed (as is its preferred habitat) from coastal Texas to northern Argentina. We had outstanding views of a soaring adult at Monte Alban. Quite striking up close.

\_\_\_Gray Hawk *Buteo plagiatus*

Widespread from southern Arizona to Costa Rica, we had a streaky immature (with a thin white rump band) on the way to Puerto Escondido. A bit of generalist feeder (they eat many lizards as well as large arthropods, some rodents, and the occasional bird) in the lowlands of Mexico and Central America.

\_\_\_Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus*

We had brief views of a wintering juvenile at Finca El Pacifico. While most broad-wingeds winter in South America, some winter in the evergreen forests of southern Mexico and Central America.

\_\_\_Short-tailed Hawk *Buteo brachyurus*

We had good looks at a soaring dark morph at Ventanilla and on the highway to Puerto Escondido. One of the most widespread raptors in the neotropics, they hunt canopy birds “from the soar”……..which explains the behavior and posture (looking down) that you usually see.

\_\_\_Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Widespread from Canada to western Panama, and fairly common in the Oaxaca valley where it has good habitat. Elsewhere in the state, there’s too much forest for this species, and it’s uncommon. We had an adult resident (no belly band) soaring at Monte Alban and several immatures near T. Of course ALL were in the Oaxaca Valley.

**STRIGIFORMES**Strigidae
\_\_\_Northern (Mountain) Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium gnoma*

One of several “temperate” birds that follows the mixed conifer forest down from the southern Alaska to Nicaragua…….where the pines end. Seen well in the N where even it (while calling to defend its territory) wasn’t attracting any mobbing songbirds.

\_\_\_Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium brasilianum*

We had good views of a pair at Ventanilla. The pygmy-owls mostly eat small songbirds, and, as we saw on a few occasions, their call can attract them…….especially in the TDF in the dry season This is the most widespread pygmy-owl in the Americas and the most commonly and easily seen……therefore good to know.

**TROGONIFORMES**Trogonidae
\_\_\_Citreoline Trogon - M *Trogon citreolus*

West Mexican TDF endemic. A trio was seen well at Ventanilla. Like all trogons, it’s a “hover plucker” that, because of its very small feet and leg muscles, has to sit still, swoop up, do a precision stall, and pluck food before dropping away. Usually in territorial pairs.

\_\_\_Mountain Trogon *Trogon mexicanus*

A female was seen poorly and very briefly in the N. We heard some calling males in the S but no luck. Another pine forest bird that ranges south to Nicaragua. In most of the Sierra Madre it’s the ONLY trogon found high in the mixed conifer forest.

**CORACIFORMES**Alcedinidae
\_\_\_Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon*

The only migratory kingfisher in the neotropics. Seen at LM where it’s fairly common in the winter.

\_\_\_Ringed Kingfisher *Ceryle torquatus*

A widespread resident in the neotropics, they are often common at LM where we saw several, including a nicely perched male. The largest kingfisher in the New World with a large range from Texas to Tierra del Fuego.

\_\_\_Green Kingfisher *Chloroceryle Americana*

One from the bridge on the Rio Tonameca and several at LM. Almost as widespread as the Ringed Kingfisher and good to know. They often hunt in the shallow backwaters where the larger kingfishers can’t go……and of course they hunt smaller prey, thus avoiding competition.

**PICIFORMES**
Picidae
\_\_\_Acorn Woodpecker *Melanerpes formicivorus*

A few of these widespread birds were seen at the magic afternoon spot in the N (which is the only place we usually see them on our route). Familiar to many of us in the western US in oak forest, once you cross the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, they occur in a patchy distribution (just like the oaks) and end with an isolated population in central Colombia.

\_\_\_Golden-cheeked Woodpecker *Melanerpes chrysogenys*
\_\_\_Gray-breasted Woodpecker *Melanerpes hypopolius*

These two species are endemic to Mexico but don’t overlap in range. The Gray-breasted is an interior valley bird (seen well below T, at the botanic garden, and at Yagul) while the Golden-cheeked replaces it in the west Mexican TDF (seen well near RCL at Ventanilla). Very good views of both. Both are often associated with columnar cacti which they use for nectar, fruit, and nesting.

\_\_\_Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*

The only “wintering” woodpecker along our route, we saw one in the pines in the S near PDS. We also saw their sap wells on a Little Hands tree.

\_\_\_Ladder-backed Woodpecker *Dryobates scalaris*

Uncommon in Oaxaca (mostly in the drier interior) where it’s close to its southern limit, we had one near T and one at the magic afternoon spot in the N.

\_\_\_Hairy Woodpecker *Dryobates villosus*

We saw the dark breasted race in both the N and the S in the mixed conifer forest. A resident to the mountains of far western Panama.

**FALCONIFORMES**Falconidae
\_\_\_Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway*

Widespread in open and arid areas throughout much of tropical America, we saw several in the Oaxaca Valley (T and Yagul) and several along the coast (but NONE in the mountains). It’s the northernmost of an interesting group of nine neotropical falcons that don’t look or behave like “typical” falcons that we see in the US (pointy wingtips, broad shoulders, fast flying). Unlike most falcons which do no nest-building, this species constructs a large stick nest. Falcons evolved in South America (while it was an island for almost 90 million years) and are most closely related to parrots.

\_\_\_American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

A well-named and widespread bird (found throughout the Americas all the way to Southern Chile), we had several at T and also at Biguera. They prefer open country so are completely absent from places like Amazonia and Andean cloud forest.

\_\_\_Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

This is the 22nd year that this species has been seen on the offshore rock at Cerro Largo. As they mate for life (we usually see a pair and dis so on our last morning), I imagine that these are mated pairs spending the winter together. We also saw some Gray-breasted Martins (its usual prey) flying over the sea. I’ve seen many thousands of Gray-breasted Martins, and the offshore rock at RCL is one of the ONLY places I’ve ever seen them perched on a “natural” substrate.

**PSITTACIFORMES**Psittacidae
\_\_\_Orange-fronted Parakeet *Aratinga canicularis*

A TDF specialist found from West Mexico to northwest Costa Rica. It almost always nests in termitaries, and the Nasutitermes termites that make the large termitaries we saw in the TDF have a range that overlaps perfectly with that of the parakeet. Like many of their parakeet cousins, they often fly low to or through the canopy……which makes them harder to catch for bird-eating raptors. Very nice views at Azulillo. Like all parrots, they mate for life.

\_\_\_White-fronted Parrot *Amazona albifrons*

Widespread on both slopes, we had fly-bys in the late afternoon at Ventanilla and several excellent views of perched birds at LM. They are unusual in that they are one of the few **dimorphic** Amazona parrots in the Americas. It’s just the male that has red on the wing. “Baby Bird” is a Mealy Parrot, the largest member of this genus.

**PASSERIFORMES**Suborder Tyranni (suboscines)Furnariidae (Ovenbirds)
Dendrocolaptinae
\_\_\_Ivory-billed Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus flavigaster*

Nice views of this bicoastal lowland forest bird at Azulillo. It’s one of the northernmost of the 50 species of woodcreepers in the neotropics. They are ALL secondary cavity nesters. The ancestors of the Furnaridae crossed from “tropical” Antarctica to South America many millions of years ago (like the ancestors of ratites, tinamous, and New World parrots).

Tityridae (Tityras and Becards)
\_\_\_Masked Tityra *Tityra semifasciata*

The most widespread and common of the three Tityras, we had nice views of amles and females at Azulillo where they often feed of the fruits of female Gumbo Limbo trees.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)
\_\_\_Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet *Camptostoma imberbe*

Multiple views at B and near RCL, This, the northernmost of the MANY non-flycatching flycatchers in the neotropics, is usually found in dry forests. Its name has it all – range, anatomy, foraging behavior, size, and taxonomy.

\_\_\_Greenish Elaenia *Myiopagis viridicata*

A few brief but clear views of this widespread bird “in the coffee” at Soledad. Like almost all other elaenias, it has a small bill for eating small fruits and gleaning arthropods. It almost never flycatches and has NO wingbars (most other elaenias have them). Good to know.

\_\_\_Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*
\_\_\_Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus*
\_?\_Hammond's Flycatcher *Empidonax hammondii*
\_\_\_Western Flycatcher *Empidonax difficilis*

While Oaxaca is the world capital for Empidonax flycatchers in the winter, it’s tough to see (and identify!!) them all on this trip. In Oaxaca, they tend to segregate by either habitat or elevation, and that’s pretty much how we experienced the few that we saw. We had several westerns “in the coffee” on the Pacific slope. Several Leasts in the coastal TDF near RCL. A lone Willow came to the owl-toot in the marshy area at the RC (still the only place we see it on our route as it’s a coastal bird in Mexico). And I’m pretty sure that we were watching a Hammond’s Flycatcher in the N near the cabanas. The take-home message (at least for me) in identifying Empids is that you often can’t make a definitive ID…..but you can sure learn a lot about vocalizations, ranges, migratory patterns, and habitat preferences. For me, my most important ID tools in Oaxaca are my calendar and my map (especially a habitat map).

\_\_\_Black Phoebe *Sayornis nigricans*

A widespread resident from the western U.S. to northern Argentina, usually seen only at “wet spots” - near T at the reservoir.

\_\_\_Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya*

At its southern limit (and there only in the winter), we had good views below T in the open scrub, which is its preferred habitat structure. It breeds as far north as southern Alaska.

\_\_\_Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*

A surprise in the weedy agricultural fields below Yagul, just south of its usual southern wintering limit. A first for me in Mexico, so my brain was relying on past experience and jumping to the wrong conclusions (Ash-throated Flycatcher, Gray Flycatcher. Fortunately it stayed around and gave us good views.

 \_\_\_Vermilion Flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus*

In **open** areas, like the Oaxaca valley (T, Yagul). We saw many males and females. Though this species has made the 600-mile do-or-die crossing to the Galapagos (where that group has now been split as a new species), it is absent from one of tropical America’s most bird-rich countries, Costa Rica……which tells you that in the recent past Costa Rica was “all forest” with not enough edges. It hunts more by “pouncing” on insects on the ground than flycatching in the air.

\_\_\_Ash-throated Flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens*
\_\_\_Dusky-capped Flycatcher *Myiarchus tuberculifer*
\_\_\_Brown-crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus tyrannulus*

It’s mostly about voice, range, and habitat with the dozen or so species of Myiarchus flycatchers in tropical America. We had Ash-throated in the interior valley below T and at Yagul where it has the open country it prefers (and is close to its southern winter limit) and also some in the TDF near RCL; a lone Dusky-capped in the heavily wooded drainage at B; and many Brown-crested in the TDF near RCL (with rust in the tail and a “whup” call note) All eat Bursera (and other) fruits, and all nest in tree cavities.

\_\_\_Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus*

Widespread in the lowlands and seen in the Oaxaca valley and near the coast (including in the coffee), this is a bold and noisy edge species with rust in the wing. Often (and especially in Oaxaca) found near people. They are omnivorous, eating fruit, invertebrates, and small vertebrates.

\_\_\_Social Flycatcher *Myiozetetes similes*

Usually in pairs, we saw some well at the T reservoir, in the botanic garden. below Yagul, at the RC (many at the owl-toot), and at LM. Though this bird is widespread and looks exactly the same in South America, its voice is very different there. It’s part of the Kiskadee look-alike complex of about 12 species found in tropical America. Good to know.

\_\_\_Boat-billed Flycatcher *Megarynchus pitangua*

We had nice views of a pair of these widespread rainforest birds at Azulillo. This and the above two species are good to know as they are the most widespread of the Kiskadee-look-alike complex of about a dozen birds. They have similar diets, but the Boat-billed just eats LARGER fruits and arthropods.

\_\_\_Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus*
\_\_\_Cassin's Kingbird *Tyrannus vociferans*
\_\_\_Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis*
\_\_\_Thick-billed Kingbird *Tyrannus crassirostris*

They are a bit of a challenge, but the advantage we have in Oaxaca is that all four can be seen repeatedly and compared fairly easily. We saw only Tropicals in the Pacific lowlands (and many in the interior valley – no black in the tail and with a fork at the tail tip); several Westerns in the Oaxaca Valley at T and at Yagul at the fruiting fig tree – black tail with a pale breast; Cassin’s was the most common in the arid scrub outside Oaxaca City near B and Yagul – dark blue-gray head and breast, making the white chin stand out; and a Thick-billed perched high in a snag at LM (a TDF bird found mainly in west Mexico) – it has a blackish cap.

\_\_\_Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus*

A bird that breeds in the Texas/Oklahome area and winters in Middle America along the coasts, we had nice views of a perched bird in the afternoon at RC and a quick fly-by at LM. Technically, it’s a kingbird, making for 5 species in Oaxaca.

Suborder PASSERES (OSCINES)

Vireonidae – There are no less than 12 species of vireo possible along this route !!
\_\_\_Slaty Vireo – M *Vireo brevipennis*

A challenging and difficult to see bird at any time of year, but especially in the winter. We had a semi-responsive bird at Biguera, and a few of us had brief views. Frustrating.

\_\_\_Mangrove Vireo *Vireo pallens*

This is the ONLY songbird that breeds at LM where the salty mangrove leaves are not very attractive to the leaf browsing insects that vireos feed on. This insect shortage is balanced out by the fact that this bird has virtually NO competition during its breeding season. Pretty good views there

\_\_\_Bell's Vireo *Vireo atricapilla*

A few brief but clear views of this skulky wintering bird in the scrub near RCL with mobbing flocks at the owl toots.

\_\_\_Cassin's Vireo *Vireo cassinii*

We may have seen one of these wintering birds near the riparian area below T, and I’m pretty confident that we saw one in the TDF near RCL our last morning.. Way back when, the Solitary Vireo was split into three species – Cassin’s (west coast), Plumbeous (interior west), and Blue-headed (eastern US). In Oaxaca they winter together and could all be seen in the same tree! I want a very good look in good light to make an ID of these in Oaxaca where, in the winter, they almost never vocalize.

\_\_\_Blue-headed Vireo *Vireo solitarius*

Very similar to the previous species, I want a very good look to make a confident ID. We had just heading down the S at the small side-of-the-road house.

\_\_\_\_ Hutton's Vireo *Vireo huttoni*

An oak forest obligate throughout it’s range, it’s in its heaven in the Sierra madre where there are no less than 120 species of oaks. Seen briefly in the N by a few folks with a small mixed flock. We also heard one give a bit of song which isn’t uncommon for this species in the dead of winter. It’s the ONLY non-migratory vireo in the US and Canada, having figured out how to make a living eating arthropods in the winter when there aren’t many available…….but there’s also much less competition.

\_\_\_Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus*

Wintering in the mountains, valley, and the coast where they often feed on Bursera and other fruits. Seen in several locations including Monte Alban and in the S.

\_\_\_Golden Vireo – M *Vireo hypochryseus*

Pretty good views of this west Mexican endemic in a thicket at B and possibly one in bad light at Azulillo. It can look a bit like a female Wilson’s Warbler, so it’s good to know the subtle field marks – pale bill, slightly bushy crown, and yellow supercilium (on an already yellow bird).

Corvidae
\_\_\_Steller's Jay *Cyanocitta stelleri*

We saw the interior race, with a white eyebrow and forehead spot, in the S at the Little Hands tree (where it’s one of at least 20 species I’ve seen nectaring there). This subspecies is often shy and not easy to see well. It’s another bird that follows the pines to Nicaragua. A newly published study is recommending a species split between this and the race found along the Pacific Coast of the western US.

\_\_\_White-throated Magpie-Jay *Calocitta Formosa*

A beautiful cooperatively breeding TDF specialist heard and seen very well on the coast near RCL. They occur in a band of TDF from Puerto Vallarta to northwest Costa Rica. They often travel with groups of Yellow-winged Caciques as we saw on our last morning at RCL`.

\_\_\_Dwarf Jay – M *Cyanolyca nanus*

Seen on less than 20% of our visits, we were lucky in the N where we had pretty good views of this species (the smallest Corvid in the world) traveling with their buddies, the Gray-barred wrens. It couldn’t have been more obvious as to how these two species DON’T compete for food as they travel together.

\_\_\_Common Raven *Corvus corax*

The largest Corvid in the world and close to its southern limit in Oaxaca, Eric saw one and we all heard it below T our first morning and we had a

Hirundinidae
\_\_\_Gray-breasted Martin *Progne chalybea*

Close-up views of several perched in Chacalapa where they have a night roost. Also at RCL (on the pyramid rock where the Peregrine Falcons hunt in the early morning) and at LM where we had my FIRST EVER wild breeding group – singing, perched on a natural substrate, and in natural tree cavities !!. A good bird to know as it’s very widespread in the neotropics. It seems to be the swallow most likely associated with people……and until about five years ago, I had NEVER seen it perched on a natural substrate.

\_\_\_Mangrove Swallow *Tachycineta albilinea*

Several foraging and perched birds at LM and an odd trio over the dry agricultural fields on the highway to Escondido. Like their cousins, the Violet-green and Tree Swallows, they nest in tree cavities. They often hunt low, very close to the water, especially if there are Northern Rough-winged Swallows around…….as the Rough-wingeds tend to hunt higher up.

\_\_\_Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina*

We had several small foraging groups at T, Monte Alban, and Yagul. They breed further north in Mexico as well as in the US. Numbers and locations vary as they move a bit nomadically with “crops” of aerial plankton.

\_\_\_Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

Several birds near T and with the Violet-greens at Monte Alban In Oaxaca at this time of year there are both resident birds and wintering migrants.

\_\_\_Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

We saw a loner of this world bird below T in the valley disturbed scrub our first morning and a few at LM. A “must know” bird.

Troglodytidae
\_\_\_Gray-barred Wren - M *Campylorhynchus megalopterus*

Never very common in southern Mexico’s mountains, but fortunately they travel in family groups and make enough noise to make them reasonably conspicuous if they’re nearby. Very good views in he N where they were working the nooks and crannies of “chunky” barked branches.

\_\_\_Russet-naped Wren *Campylorhynchus humilis*

In Oaxaca, this species is found only in the Pacific coast TDF where we saw several family groups, mainly near RCL. They are cooperative breeders and range south to northwest Costa Rica…….where the TDF ends.

\_\_\_Boucard's Wren *Campylorhynchus jocosus*

Endemic to Mexico, this species is found only in the interior valley of Oaxaca and adjacent Guerrero and Puebla. A pair was seen very well near T and a loner at Biguera. Like all of the members of their genus, they construct a football-shaped nest of grasses which we saw in a few valley spots.

\_H\_Canyon Wren *Catherpes mexicanus*

A lone bird was heard briefly at Yagul, which has the “cliff faces” and rocks that this species (well-known from the western US) needs.

\_\_\_Happy Wren – M *Thryothorus feli*

An understory skulker endemic to west Mexico, we heard one at B and then had excellent views of a pair at Azulillo……where they’ve been for many years. It’s one of MANY small, skulky, boldly-singing wrens in the neotropics.

\_\_\_Banded Wren *Thryothorus pleurostictus*

Endemic to the Pacific coast TDF from southern Mexico to northwest Costa Rica, this skulky bird can be hard to see. A few of us had good views at Ventanilla and Azulillo.

\_\_\_Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii*

At its southern limit in the Oaxaca Valley, we had one near T and one in the Botanic Garden. I think they may breed all year in the Oaxaca Valley as we always hear them singing in December and January (something they NEVER do in my yard).

\_\_H\_Gray-breasted Wood-Wren *Henicorhina leucophrys*

Always skulky and hard to see, we heard one in the N and another in the S at the Bumblebee Hummer spot…..where it’s been for many years. It ranges south to the Andes of Peru and is one of the most common understory birds, at least by voce, in montane Central and South America.

Polioptilidae
\_\_\_Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea*

Common as both a resident and wintering bird in the Oaxaca Valley and down to the coffee area (but no further), we saw several at places like T, B, Yagul, and Azulillo, but almost every sighting was of single birds.

\_\_\_White-lored Gnatcatcher *Polioptila albiloris*

A TDF bird of the Pacific slope where it replaces the more widespread Blue-gray. We saw a few pairs near RCL at some owl-toots. The male has a conspicuous black cap. This resident neotropical species is almost always in mated-for-life year-round pairs.

Regulidae (Kinglets)
\_\_\_Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*

This widespread bird is at its southern wintering limit in Oaxaca where we saw several fast-moving birds in the N, usually with mixed flocks.

Turdidae
\_\_\_Brown-backed Solitaire *Myadestes occidentalis*

Easy to hear its beautiful song, but not so easy to see. We had unusually good views of a bird perched in the open at PDS. A Madrean fixture, this is a ground-nester that follows the pines to Nicaragua.

\_\_\_Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush *Catharus aurantiirostris*

We heard this very skulky bird at the Oaxaca Sparrow spot in the dense vegetation but no luck. It occurs at lower elevations than the following species, thus avoiding competition.

\_\_\_Russet Nightingale-Thrush - M *Catharus occidentalis*

Endemic to the Sierra madre north of the Isthmus, we had nice views of a this mostly terrestrial species in the N working the road edge. It has several skulky cousins throughout the neotropics and can be tough to see.

\_\_\_Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*

Wintering widely from southern Mexico to northern South America, we had a lone bird at La Soledad in the “drugstore” tree with a few other species. On our route it’s almost always found only in the coffee. I believe that the ones that winter in southern Mexico are ones that breed in the western US.

\_\_\_Rufous-backed Robin – M *Turdus rufopalliatus*

Except for the few that show up in southern Arizona as rarities, this is a Mexican endemic, mostly occurring in West Mexican TDF (which penetrates the interior in the Oaxaca Valley). We saw a few feeding on Guamuchil fruits at RC and some feeding on figs when we arrived at LM.

\_\_\_\_ American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

One of several “every bird is rare somewhere” birds that we saw. A “normal” one and an almost pure white one in the S near PDS. At its southern limit in the mountains of Oaxaca.

Mimidae
\_\_\_Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*

Widespread, but only NORTH of the Isthmus, we saw resident birds in the valley near T and at Yagul. In the winter in the Oaxaca Valley, they were feeding on hackberry, Bursera, and Myrtillocactus fruits.

\_\_H\_Ocellated Thrasher – M *Toxostoma ocellatum*

Very skulky and difficult to see, especially in the winter months, I’m pretty sure we finally heard one at upper B as we were leaving. It’s a Oaxaca Valley endemic.

\_\_\_Curve-billed Thrasher *Toxostoma curvirostre*

At its southern limit in the Oaxaca valley where it likes the open arid scrub, often near people. We saw several well near T and Yagul. They mate for life and have year-round territories as well as a bold “contact/pair-bond-reinforcement/territorial call” that is frequently given near dusk.

\_H\_Blue Mockingbird *Melanotis caerulescens*

Though large and with a bold and conspicuous song, this is a very shy and hard to see bird. We heard several in the densely vegetated canyons in the N and at B where there have been several pairs for many years. Endemic north of the Isthmus, its close cousin, the Blue-and-white Mockingbird, is endemic south of the Isthmus.

Ptilogonatidae
\_\_\_Gray Silky-flycatcher *Ptilogonys cinereus*

A mountain breeder that sometimes winters down slope in the Oaxaca valley (especially if there is fruit to be had), they were a little scarce this year, but we saw them well in the southern mountains near PDS in the Little Hands tree nectaring. Along with species like Greater Pewee and Tufted Flycatcher, it’s an iconic Madrean bird. It mostly eats small fruits and also easy-to-catch insects. As we saw, nectar is a seasonal delicacy for them when the Little Hands Tree is in bloom.

Passeridae
\_\_\_House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Ok, a common (but not on our route) world bird, but still striking, with many colorful cousins in the Old World. One of the most clever and adaptable birds in the world. Recent steep declines in places like the UK are puzzling. Seen mostly at the Hotel Azucenas and Chacalapa.

Peucedramidae
\_\_\_Olive Warbler *Peucudramus taeniatus*

Monotypic to family, we briefly saw a “pumpkin-headed” male in the N where it’s a pine-needle gleaning specialist. It’s another of the birds that follow the pines to Nicaragua. The call note, the lack of fecal sacks in nestlings, and DNA make it unique.

Fringillidae
Fringillinae
\_\_\_House Finch *Carpodacus mexicanus*

We saw the southern Mexican race with the bright, (usually) restricted red on the head and rump – T, B, and Yagul. It’s at its southern limit in Oaxaca. One of the few birds singing, and presumably breeding, in the Oaxaca valley in the winter months.

\_\_\_Black-headed Siskin *Spinus notate*

This bird can be a bit elusive in December when many montane sunflowers are still in bloom (and not in seed). A single adult male was seen briefly in the N at the magic afternoon spot. Widespread in the Sierra Madre, they wander with the sunflower and Salvia seed crops. If you like siskins / goldfinches, head to South America.

\_\_\_Lesser Goldfinch *Spinus psaltria*

Another widespread bird found from the US to Ecuador (where it’s uncommon), the “black-backed” race was seen throughout the Oaxaca valley – T, B, Yagul, Hotel Azucenas – and the lower N.

Euphoninae
\_\_\_Scrub Euphonia *Euphonia affinis*

I LOVE learning new things, and this was one, as I had mistakenly thought that the West Mexican Euphonia was the one found on the Pacific coast of Oaxaca. But it turns out that the sneaky Scrub Euphonia crosses the Isthmus to occupy the coastal TDF.

\_\_\_Elegant Euphonia *Euphonia elegantissima*

Like many of their cousins, this species wanders nomadically with the mistletoe fruit crop. We had brief but unmistakable views of one in the N in the Little Hands Tree. It’s the northernmost of the euphonias, found up to southern Sonora. In addition to being perhaps the only bird in the world with ALL of the vowels in its name, euphonias are famous for being the top seed disperser of mistletoe fruits throughout the neotropics.

Emberizidae
\_\_\_Chestnut-capped Brushfinch *Arremon brunneinucha*

We had good views of a pair of these hard to see birds at the compost pile at PDS. Brushfinches are towhee-like Andean sparrows. This is THE most widespread species found from southern Mexico to at least Peru. It’s almost identical to the Collared Towhee and the one most likely to be seen in the S.

\_\_\_Olive Sparrow *Arremonops rufivirgatus*

This understory bird occurs in three separate populations in Mexico. A few folks saw the southwest Mexico race at an owl toot in the TDF near RCL. Unlike our temperate grassland sparrows, this and several other forest-based tropical sparrows don’t have the streaking and browns and golds.

\_\_\_White-throated Towhee - M *Melozone albicollis*

Another valley endemic seen in many valley and foothill locations. They mate for life and hold year-round territories. We saw many and heard their various calls, including the “I haven’t laid eyes on you for 2 minutes and missed you so much” series of greeting squeaks.

\_\_\_Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculates*

Pretty skulky in the mountains, we heard them in several spots in the N and S and had some brief views in the S.

\_\_\_Collared Towhee - M *Pipilo ocai*

A very colorful cousin of the Green-tailed Towhee, we had challenging views at the Colibri restaurant where there has been a territorial pair for at least 20 years and then one in the open at a feeder up the road. This understory endemic occurs in several isolated mountain populations in southern Mexico.

\_\_\_Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerina*

A few of these wintering birds were seen in the N at various spots with open edges.

\_\_\_Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*

A gorgeous sparrow wintering in the Oaxaca valley where it’s close to its southern limit. Several were seen very well below Yagul. Uncommon this winter……which hopefully means that they found good feeding areas farther north and didn’t have to come this far south.

\_\_\_Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii*

A winter bird usually found in rather moist locations throughout most of the state. As a migrant and wintering bird, this species is often found in spots with a rather moist, green, understory……which is also their preferred breeding habitat. Non-flocking, we saw one below Yagul and another at PDS at the compost pile.

\_\_\_Yellow-eyed Junco *Junco phaeonotus*

A resident Madrean sparrow seen well in the N and in the S near PDS. They used to be common around the hotel at PDS but less so in recent years.

\_\_\_Common Chlorospingus *Chlorospingus ophthalmicus*

This arboreal, fruit-eating sparrow is the most widespread of an Andean group of birds and comes in many “flavors”, with no less than three distinct subspecies in Mexico. We had good views of a few small groups in the S at our first two stops. Brownihs on top with a white spot behind the eye.

Icteriidae
\_\_\_Yellow-breasted Chat *Icteria virens*

Brief views of a skulky bird in the cattail at RC. This species, long thought to be different from true wood-warblers, has been determined (especially with genetics) to be unique enough to warrant its own family. Last year I saw one eating the Pseudomyrmex ants that live on the bullhorn Acacia, which is unusual for a songbird.

Icteridae - Mexico and Northern Central America are the epicenter for diversity of the blackbirds (orioles, blackbirds, oropendulas, caciques, meadowlarks, grackles). As the orioles are fairly similar in size and behavior, you’d expect there to be some habitat specialization, and that’s usually what we see in terms of certain species in certain places………though this year the orioles were scarce and elusive.

\_\_\_Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*

Good numbers of this widespread species in the cattails at RC where the species is getting close to its southern limit.

\_\_\_Great-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus mexicanus*

Common and widespread in the lowland areas, especially in the beach towns near RCL…….but still a beautiful bird. Seen at El Tule, Ventanilla, RC, and LM on the coast. They were “commuting” every day through the RCL property.

\_\_\_Bronzed Cowbird *Molothrus aeneus*

Rather patchy in Oaxaca (mostly because they flock in disturbed areas) we had commuters fly-by at Ventanilla and some perched birds in Chacalapa. These parasitic birds focus on other blackbirds as nest hosts for their eggs.

\_\_\_Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*

We had a large group of wintering birds (mostly females and a few males) at the RC. Uncommon on our route where we see it perhaps every second year……and almost only at that same spot. These birds have been known to parasitize over 220 species.

\_\_\_Altamira Oriole *Icterus gularis*

Nice views at Ventanilla of a monomorphic pair.

\_\_\_Streak-backed Oriole *Icterus pustulatus*

A near endemic to Mexico (they just cross the border into Guatemala), we had good views at Ventanilla, in the TDF near RCL, and at RC. They have a distinctive chatter (which is usually helpful in separating them from the similar Altamira Oriole). They are one of the few resident orioles in Mexico that is dimorphic.

\_\_\_Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*

A wintering adult male in the S near the Little hands Tree.

\_\_\_Bullock's Oriole *Icterus bullockii*

A few of these wintering birds were seen at the magic afternoon spot in the N and also in the Little Hands Tree in the S.

\_\_\_Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurious*

The smallest of the orioles, we had some good views of males nectaring on legume flowers in Chacalapa and several at RC and in the mangroves at LM. They often form flocks of their own kind in winter…….which we saw.

\_\_\_Black-vented Oriole *Icterus wagleri*

A monomorphic resident that is almost always in pairs. Usually fairly common, we saw several this year in the Oaxaca valley, including a few immatures.

\_\_\_Audubon's Oriole *Icterus graduacauda*

Nice views of a singing immature and a bright adult “in the coffee” at Azulilo, often the only place we see it. It occurs in two separate populations in Mexico – northeast and southwest.

\_\_\_Scott's Oriole *Icterus parisorum*

We heard the sweet and bold song of this widespread Madrean bird in the Little Hands Tree in the S but no luck as it didn’t budge.

\_\_\_Yellow-winged Cacique - M *Cacicus melanicterus*

Another west Mexican endemic, they build “extra-large” pendulous nests and often travel with magpie-jays (as we saw briefly at Ventanilla). Seen on the Ventanilla road, briefly in Chacalapa, and at LM. They often use a “jaws of life” maneuver (unique to Icterids) to pry open a dead curled leaf, presumably for arthropods hidden within.

Parulidae
\_\_\_Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*

Very nice views of this wintering water edge bird in the mangroves at LM. It usually occurs on still water and has an off-white supercilium. The Louisiana Waterthrush has a bright white supercilium and is often on moving streams.

\_\_\_Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*

A bark-foraging specialist usually seen in moist woodlands, we saw several, including at several spots in the N.

\_\_\_Tennessee Warbler *Oreothlypis peregrina*
\_\_\_Orange-crowned Warbler *Oreothlypis celata*

These two cousins are widespread wintering warblers in southern Mexico. We saw the Orange-crowned in the N at the Oaxaca Sparrow spot, at B, and below Yagul and several Tennessees near PDS nectaring in the Little Hands Tree. Nectar feeding in Tennessee Warblers is a regular foraging behavior on their tropical winter grounds.

\_\_\_Nashville Warbler *Oreothlypis ruficapilla*

Widespread in Mexico in the winter and we saw them in many places – valley, mountains, coast.

\_\_\_Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

Usually only seen in the cattails at RC, a few of us had brief views there.

\_\_\_MacGillivray's Warbler *Geothlypis tolmiei*

A few brief views (typical for this species) in the valley and in the S at the bumblebee hummer spot. This bird is always in understory thickets – on its breeding grounds, while in migration, and on its wintering grounds.

\_\_\_American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*

Like the Black-and-White Warbler, this is usually fairly common in the coffee zone, but this year we had just a brief view of a male at Azulillo.

\_\_\_Northern Parula *Setophaga americana*

Some nice views in the TDF near RCL, particularly at one of the owl toots. Wintering, like most of the warblers we saw.

\_\_\_Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia*

This species winters primarily on the coasts of Mexico and Central America. Fairly common near RCL and into the mangroves, we had quite a few in the TDF there. There are no less than 30 subspecies of Yellow Warbler in the Americas (including many Caribbean islands)

\_\_\_Yellow-rumped Warbler *Setophaga coronata*

A wintering bird that is fairly common in the valley and at Puesta Del Sol…….but nowhere else. We saw many, all of the Audubon’s race, and they were especially abundant in the Little Hands Tree.

\_\_\_Townsend's Warbler *Setophaga townsendi*

Widespread in the winter around Oaxaca City, including the valley and the mountains. We saw them in the N and the S (in the Little Hands Tree). They’re usually in the pines.

\_\_\_Hermit Warbler *Setophaga occidentalis*

Wintering in the mixed conifer of the Sierra, often traveling with Townsend’s. We had several in the N working the pines with a mixed flock.

\_\_\_Rufous-capped Warbler *Basileuterus rufifrons*

A widespread monomorphic, non-migratory warbler that likes low scrub. We had very nice views at the Oaxaca Sparrow spot and then brief views at B. They are usually in dry scrub like that found in the Oaxaca Valley. What had been a subspecies found further south (across the Isthmus) has been split as a separate species, the Chestnut-capped Warbler.

\_\_\_Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*

The “everywhere” bird (except in the coastal TDF) ……though they seemed much less common this year. The female is important to know as she looks much like the endemic Golden Vireo of the Pacific slope. Seen near T and in the N and S.

\_\_\_Red Warbler – M *Cardellina ruber*

Endemic north of the Isthmus, a gorgeous bird seen in the pine forest in the N and then very well in the S at Km 158. Like almost all resident neotropical warblers, it’s monomorphic……but unlike many, it nests on the ground. Who would guess that this resident, ground-nesting, Madrean bird’s closest cousin is the migratory, tree-nesting Wilson’s Warbler?

\_\_\_Slate-throated Redstart *Myioborus miniatus*

A bit scarce this year, but we had some brief views in the N with some mixed flocks and better views at the PDS compost. Like the other four warblers of the Sierra Madre that have red on them, it, too, nests on the ground. This is one of only two (of the roughly 12) species of “redstart” that has red on it. All of the others have yellow bellies. But ALL have white outer tail feathers…..so a better name would be Whitestart.

Cardinalidae
\_\_\_Red-crowned Ant-Tanager *Habia rubica*

This widespread species occurs in three separate populations, and each of those is in one of the three “Great American Rainforest” patches – Atlantic Forest of Brazil, Amazonia, and southern Mexico to Central America. Uncommon on our route, we had pretty good views of a skulky male at Azulillo. Though it’s not a true tanager, they do occasionally follow army ants.

\_\_\_Hepatic Tanager *Piranga flava*\_\_\_Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra*
\_\_\_Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana*

Though we’re used to calling them tanagers, these three species are dimorphic, mostly migratory, and have very sweet songs…..which is very different from most true tanagers……but very much like cardinals and grosbeaks. We saw Westerns in several places in the valley, mountains (especially in the Little Hands Tree), and coast, and a migratory female Summer at Biguera, and a resident pair of Hepatics in the N.

\_\_\_Red-headed Tanager – M *Piranga erythrocephala*

A few folks had brief views of this montane Mexican endemic at Km 158 in the S. Uncommon but regular at that elevation. The male is unmistakable while the female is subtle and can be confusing.

\_\_\_Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*

Close to its southern limit in Oaxaca, we had a male at Ventanilla and a female at an owl toot in the coastal TDF. This is different race than the ones found in the eastern and southwestern US.

\_\_\_Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

We saw multiple females and an immature male at the magic afternoon spot in the N working a seeding tree. Also a female in the disturbed valley scrub below T.

\_\_\_Black-headed Grosbeak *Pheucticus melanocephalus*

This bird (wintering in Oaxaca) was seen breifly in the N at the magic afternoon spot. Widespread as a winter bird in Mexico, the Black-headed Grosbeak is one of the few birds known to eat adult monarch butterflies…..but I think this is only during the winter (when the toxins in the monarchs may be at low levels).

\_\_\_Blue Bunting *Cyanocompsa parellina*

A resident breeder in the lowlands of both coasts of Mexico, we had pretty good views of females at owl toots near RCL. One of MANY understory skulkers.

\_\_\_Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea*

Several males below Yagul in the weedy fields. We often see them in corn milpas, and I have to think that the diversity of the “milpa” system (corn, beans, squash, and many native annuals), as well as the organic nature of much of the farming in the Oaxaca valley, play a big role in providing foraging opportunities for many seed eating birds……..as well as shrikes, flycatchers, kestrels, etc.

\_\_\_Lazuli Bunting *Passerina amoena*

Uncommon in the Oaxaca Valley in the winter where the species is at its southern limit, we had a female (buffy unstreaked breast and pale wing bar) below Yagul.

\_\_\_Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris*

While this migrant used to be fairly common in the TDF near RCL, it’s become rare. We had a female at an owl-toot in the TDF thickets near RCL and a nice male in the scrub at the RC. I don’t know what the present status is, but there used to be a legal capture for the pet trade program in Mexico.

\_\_\_Orange-breasted Bunting - M *Passerina leclancherii*

Good views of mostly females and a few very bright males near RCL, mostly at the owl-toots. Endemic to the west Mexican TDF.

Thraupidae
\_\_\_Blue-gray Tanager *Thraupis episcopus*

Probably the most widespread of the roughly 400 species of tanagers in tropical America, it’s rare on our route. We had one at Chacalapa in the morning…..which remains the ONLY place I’ve seen it on our route. Very common further south in many lowland areas.

\_\_\_Red-legged Honeycreeper *Cyanerpes cyaneus*

The most widespread on the honeycreepers, this is your starter bird. Eric had one at Azulillo. They are often quite social and in groups outside the breeding season.

\_\_\_Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer *Diglossa baritula*

One of only two flowerpiercers found outside of the Andes (and the only one north of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec), a male of this understory skulker was seen briefly near PDS where they forage in the Salvias. The curved upper bill is used to hold the base of a tubular flower in place, while the sharp lower bill pierces the flower base.

\_\_\_Cinnamon-rumped Seedeater - M *Sporophila torqueola*

Based on range, plumage, vocal, and genetic differences, the widespread White-collared Seedeater has been split into two species. The Cinnamon-rumped Seedeater is found in west Mexico from Sonora to Oaxaca. The Morelet’s Seedeater is found on the Gulf and Caribbean slopes of Mexico and Central America. We saw a lone female in the Oaxaca Valley near T (letting us known that the valley drains to the Pacific) and some males and females foraging before heading to the night roost in the cattail marsh at the RC. It’s one of several West Mexican species that can reach the interior valley by following the Rios Verde and Atoyac.

\_\_\_Ruddy-breasted Seedeater *Sporophila minuta*

This very widespread tanager (well into southern South America) was seen at the RC working grass seeds. They’re similar to the previous species but with an orangish bill and faint wingbars.

**Other interesting critters included;**

Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana)* – several seen basking at LM. Bright green, fast, edible, and insectivorous when young, they eventually (if they don’t get eaten) “outgrow” their predators and become large, slow, and vegetarian.

Spiny-tailed Iguana (C*tenosaura pectinate)* – this regional endemic was seen by a few folks at RCL. It has two replacement cousins – one in far northwest Mexico and the other on the Gulf slope.

House Gecko – heard mostly at RCL. Now found worldwide, house geckos are native to the Old World, mostly Asia. In my experience in the last five years or so, they’ve gone from being common to now quite uncommon in some places.

Mexican Mud Turtle (*Kinosternon integrum)* – seen near T at the riparian area and at the dam.

Gray sac-winged Bat  (*Balantiopteryx plicata)* – these were the bats seen in the work area at Finca El Pacifico……..where there has been a colony for at least 20 years.

Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvagus floridanus)*  - seen briefly near T and then well in the road at Yagul. Much more than an “eastern” US animal, this rabbit is a resident all the way south to western Venezuela. Like most other lagomorphs it’s an important prey item for felids, canids, raptors, Mexican beaded lizards, and snakes.

Mexican Red-bellied Squirrel - we saw this fairly widespread and multi-morph mammal (they’re all black on the Gulf Slope and have a white belly in Chiapas) at RCL eating seeds and at Biguera (where it didn’t have the red belly).

And some of the more showy butterflies (at least the highlights that I remember);

Giant Swallowtail
Magnificent/Avocado Swallowtail
Mexican Dartwhite
Dainty Sulphur
Monarch (non-migratory)
Malachite
Blomfield’s Beauty
White Morpho
Blue Morpho
Crimson Patch
Julia
Mexican Silverspot
Erato Heliconian
Tiger Heliconian
Mexican Heliconian
Zebra Longwing
Common Buckeye
Anna’s 88
Guatemalan Cracker
Rusty-tipped Page
Two-barred Flasher
Banded Peacock
White Peacock
Long-tailed Skipper sp.