

Yucatán Peninsula & Cozumel Island

15-29 March 2014

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Chichén Itzá

This report covers a fortnight holiday spent on the Yucatán Peninsula and Cozumel Island. The reader is made aware the fact this was not a trip fully devoted to birding, although birding was indeed given a fair amount of time. This year, northern migrants seemed to have begun the journey back towards breeding grounds a bit earlier than normal, possibly following a drier winter than usual.

Sites visited

When planning the trip itinerary, I made sure to allow myself the possibility in getting all species endemic to Yucatán and Cozumel. However, chances for Ocellated Turkey was purposely omitted as a drive to Calakmul, where it is easily seen, was considered too time-consuming (the species does, however, occur in Sian Ka'an Reserve so it is indeed possible to get it e.g. along Vigia Chico Road.) Also, any hope in getting Cozumel Thrasher must reasonably be considered being zero – sadly it has to be assumed it is now extinct. Finally, the *ruta de los cenotes* was not visited at all during the trip, however this is indeed an area most birders do include as almost mandatory during a Yucatán tour.

In view of the above, choice of sites to be visited were more or less solely based on the information in Steve Howell's excellent, and essential, "Where to watch birds in Mexico". However, a few trip reports were also consulted for the same reason, both from private and commercial tours.

Cobá (Howell, pages 287-289): One morning spent in Cobá area. First walking the lakeside and the housing area immediately northeast of the ruins, then continuing towards some nearby *cenotes* (follow the road around the

southern shore of the lake, and then head west following the signs to the *cenotes*), with stops roughly after 2 kilometres (called “Cobá km 2 site” in the species list, we pulled the car off slightly beyond a road sign where the text has been completely wiped out), and also at the entrance to and around the *cenotes* Choo-ha and Tankach-ha. There is a minor admission fee to the *cenotes*.

Felipe Carillo Puerto (Howell, pages 289-292): Drove out on the Vigia Chico Road in late afternoon and staying there until about eight o’clock in the evening, driving roughly 25 kilometres along the road from the end of the tarmac in the village. On the following morning we drove only a short stretch on the road (probably no more than two kilometers), then parked the car and walked the road for a few hours. Where FCP is mentioned in the species list below, it actually means Vigia Chico Road (no birds of interest was seen in town anyway).

Laguna Ocom: A site chosen by our guide, well signed from the road to Valladolid. After leaving the highway on to the dirt road for the lake, take the first left, signed for Sijil Nooh Ha, and you will end up in a recreation area with some lakeside *cabañas*. At the far left, a trail takes off that will lead you to the dirt road, and on the last stretch back to the recreation area, another trail, less well maintained, takes off to the right. A small admission fee is charged.

Muyil: Another area chosen by Luis Ku. Here we birded the inhabited area west of the highway, a dirt road only a few hundred metres south of the entrance to the ruins (this road leading to a *laguna*), and also the area of the ruins (entrance fee charged).

Río Lagartos (Howell, pages 292-296): Boat ride on the lagoon, or Ría Lagartos, as it is named. Most land birding south of San Felipe, to about Km 23 (this is called San Felipe area in the species list below), and also in the Ganadería San Salvador (or San Salvador Ranch) area (dirt track) along the road to Las Coloradas.

When driving to Río Lagartos, make sure you avoid entering the town of Tizimin, or you may find yourself driving the one way streets there for hours. Instead, shortly before reaching Tizimin, follow the signs left to Merida, and at the next intersection keep straight on to Río Lagartos (this is clearly signed).

Chichén Itzá (Howell, pages 296-298): This is a site you would not want to miss - not for the birds, though, but for the ruins. They are amazing! Entrance fee was 188 pesos.

Cozumel Island (Howell, page 308-313): As the entrance road to the San Gervasio ruins was closed when I had my early morning outing, I opted for the nearby area described in Howell’s book, located at km 6.8 along the Cross-Island Highway. The birding here was superb, yielding all gettable Cozumel endemics!

Further on along the Cross-Island Highway, right where it makes a 90 degree turn to the right (coming from the aforementioned site or the San Gervasio ruins), there is a small pond to the right (and according to Howell’s book there should be one to the left as well). Regardless, viewing the right one is possible only from the Highway (not much traffic, so should be fairly safe), but visibility is limited. Any other access to it appears impossible (same goes for the other pond), seemingly the result of denser and higher vegetation now as compared to when the book was written.

However, we found a pool of water just before Km 33, which was quite productive, although it appeared to be rapidly getting dried out for the season.

Punta Celarain, the lighthouse in the southeastern corner of the island, is rather signed Punta Sur from the Highway. The area here has now been developed into an Ecological Park, with an admission fee of USD 12. Apart from the possibility of seeing terns on the islet just offshore, the area is probably not worth a visit.

On page 310 in Howell’s book is described an area to the north of the island’s main town, San Miguel. I spent a few morning hours in the area, but rather than walking the grid named “Bello Caribe” in the site description, I drove a few hundred metres further towards the Sewage Plant, and pulled off to the left at an obvious opening in the forest, this opening is easily found as there is a large, blank, white sign there. I parked by the sign and got access to an area of dirt tracks and small marshy spots. I also briefly birded at the Sewage Plant itself after asking permission from the staff there.

Itinerary

March 15: Travel day from Gothenburg, arriving Cancun airport 16.30 in the afternoon, travel by ADO bus directly to Playa del Carmen for a three nights stay.

March 16: Slow day in Playa del Carmen

March 17: Went to Xcaret, an activity park where you can swim with dolphins (which we did), swim and/or ride a boat in *cenote* canals, etcetera etcetera. There are also some animals kept in captivity here, such as jaguar, puma and tapir.

March 18: Early morning departure from Playa del Carmen with our bird guide Luis Ku. Drove directly to Cobá lake for morning birding, by noon we headed on to Felipe Carillo Puerto where, after having a few hours of siesta, we birded Vigia Chico Road to about eight in the evening.

March 19: Morning birding on Vigia Chico Road. Breakfast at the hotel, followed by birding at Laguna Ocom, then headed on to Tulum arriving there in mid afternoon.

March 20: Birding Muyil till about 10, and arrived Playa del Carmen around noon. Ferry to Cozumel Island for a three nights stay.

March 21: Birding Km 6.8 site from dawn till about 8.30. Otherwise a slow day, primarily beaching.

March 22: Snorkelling trip in the morning. Drove around the island.

March 23: Left Cozumel at noon. Driving to Piste (Chichén Itzá).

March 24: Visited the ruins. Drove to Río Lagartos, where we had a nighttime crocodile tour.

March 25: Boat birding trip in the morning. Drove to Las Coloradas for some beaching in the afternoon.

March 26: Land birding in the morning (San Felipe area and San Salvador ranch). Driving to Cancún, via *cenote* Dzitnup for a swim, for a three nights stay in Zona Hotelera.

March 27: Beaching in the morning. Afternoon drive to Playa del Carmen to return the rental car and do some shopping. Going back by bus was a bit time-consuming, but in no way problematic.

March 28: Day visit to Isla Mujeres, having a very relaxed and enjoyable day there.

March 29: Going back home.

Literature and recordings

A guide to the Birds of Mexico and Central America (Howell & Webb)

Where to watch Birds in Mexico (Howell)

Birds of Mexico, MP3 (Boesman)

In addition, I brought Birds of Belize (Jones), which covers most of the species recorded on Yucatán Peninsula and contains lots of useful information, and National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of Western North America (Dunn & Alderfer) due to its more detailed coverage of waders and gulls in particular.

From Mr Luis Ku Quiñones, I received a newly published 14-page laminated fold-out guide covering 225 of the species found in the three states comprising Yucatán Peninsula and Cozumel Island, namely Quintana Roo, Campeche and Yucatán. I also got the opportunity to buy a book hot off the press, *Sal a Pajarear Yucatán*, a field guide in Spanish written by the legendary Barbara MacKinnon H, who has vast knowledge of Yucatán birds and their distribution, and is also very much involved in the training of bird guides in the region. It is a photographic guide covering 408 species.

Guiding

I had decided at an early stage to hire bird guides to increase chances of getting the desired species. My choice fell on Mr Luis Ku Quiñones for the birding Cobá, Felipe Carillo Puerto and Muyil, and Mr Diego Nuñez for the days in Río Lagartos.

Luis is available at www.motmotbird.com, and is highly recommended – he knows where to find your birds! Luis suggested a two and a half day itinerary covering Cobá, Felipe Carillo Puerto area and Muyil, including one evening for night birding. It proved to be very productive.

Diego is reached at www.riolagartosnaturetours.com, and we bought a package that included two nights at Posada Diego & Matilde, one nighttime crocodile tour, one boat birding trip and one land birding trip. This was great value for money, and the *posada* was a nice place to stay. Diego has excellent knowledge of the area and where the birds are, and spending a few outings with him will not leave you disappointed. Río Lagartos, by the

way, is a small village, so even if the *posada* is not situated on the waterfront, it is only minutes to walk. And being a small village, some planning with regards to evening meals is recommended, as you may find them closing quite early.

Accommodation

I will not get into too much detail about accommodation, but at least for Felipe Carillo Puerto, I would strongly suggest you to stay at Hotel El Faisan y El Venado (mentioned in Howell's site guide). We paid a total of 900 pesos for two doubles here – rooms were quite small, but nice and clean. The restaurant at the hotel serves excellent food, and we had all meals here, breakfast, lunch and evening dinner.

In Tulum, we stayed at Hotel Chilam Balam (800 pesos for two doubles) but there are many other options here as this is a popular tourist destination (and as a result of that, an international airport is to be opened within the next couple of years).

For the other villages and towns we stayed in (see itinerary), finding accommodation should not pose much of a problem. If you do not want to stay in the Zona Hotelera of Chichén Itzá, you may wish to stay in Hotel Chichén Itzá in Piste, a small village close to the ruins – this hotel has a restaurant, swimming pool and a small garden.

Rental cars

We had a rental car on three separate occasions. First during the days of birding with Luis Ku, and as Luis had recommended me to hire a 4WD, I did so through Avis in Playa del Carmen. When I was to collect the car, it proved they could not supply a 4WD until the following day, which was too late as we were to leave very early in the morning. So I had to settle with a standard car, and it worked out well as a 4WD was never really necessary. However, driving the Vigia Chico road with an ordinary car in wet conditions may prove difficult. It is suggested you double-check with the car rental company shortly beforehand that you will get the kind of vehicle you have chosen.

The second car we rented from Avis on Cozumel Island. Here too, it proved they could not supply the type of car we had booked (a mini, opted for since we were not to drive any great distances with our bags, but primarily for doing outings while on the island). Instead we received a small convertible, which was ok as such, but the quality of it was so bad not even Rent-a-wreck would hand out such lousy vehicle – it simply was the worst car I have ever been supplied with from any rental office anywhere. We returned it the following day, demanding and also getting a decent car.

Finally, after returning to the mainland, we rented a car for the rest of the trip from Sixt, no issues here. It should be mentioned that you may in fact not need to book anything beforehand (unless you require a 4WD or any other special car), but can do so on the spot, at least in Playa del Carmen and, especially so, on Cozumel Island (and probably around Km 9 in Zona Hotelera, Cancún too).

Miscellaneous

I thought I should mention that in Cancún Zona Hotelera, USD is the preferred currency – we got some horrendous rates of exchange to Mexican pesos on some occasions. On Cozumel Island USD works equally well as Mexican pesos, not surprising considering the many cruising ships that stop by here. Rate of exchange here is at a normal level, and you are not ripped off like in Cancún.

The Zona Hotelera of Cancún is more or less completely built up for tourism. Thus, the waterfront is lined up with hotels, many of them all-inclusive ones and therefore effectively preventing non-stayers from entering the premises. Some, though, will at least grant you access to the beach. We stayed in Km 9 area, which is where the party is going – bars/discos with extremely loud music were all packed with people. We probably would have enjoyed this had we been 25 years younger. Nothing is genuine in this area, it is all about partying and consuming. Playa del Carmen is, albeit a bit touristic, a far better place to spend a few relaxed days (but avoid the hotels along Avenida 5 in PdC if you want a quiet night).

Mexico has lately gained reputation as being a violent and unsafe country. While this is certainly true in some parts of the country, it should not deter anyone from travelling the Yucatán Peninsula. We did not experience any issues whatsoever with regards to safety – common sense is about all it takes.

Species list

The trip yielded a total of 223 bird species. I have tried, as thoroughly as possible, to mention the subspecies observed for each species. Also, brief notes are given on distribution for endemics or near-endemics. Some of the scientific names may not be completely up to date.

Thicket Tinamou *Crypturellus cinnamomeus*

Recorded along FCP, with 5 at dusk when night birding was about to commence, and 3 or 4 the following morning.

Ssp: *goldmani*

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis*

On Cozumel, 2 adults with 6 downy youngs in the km 33 pool and 2 at the sewage plant, and a flock of about 40 in San Felipe area near Río Lagartos.

Ssp: nominate *autumnalis*

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

About 30 in the km 33 pool on Cozumel, 15+ during the Ría Lagartos boat ride, singles in the San Felipe area.

Monotypic.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

~30 Muyil *laguna*.

Monotypic.

Plain Chachalaca *Ortalis vetula*

2 Playa del Carmen, 6 (adults with chicks) Xcaret, and several FCP.

Ssp: *pallidiventris*

Great Curassow *Crax rubra*

1 male FCP. Great bird to see, and unexpected as well.

Ssp: *rubra*

Black-throated Bobwhite *Colinus nigrogularis*



1 San Felipe area. Also known as Yucatan Bobwhite.

Ssp: *caboti*. Occurs in Yucatán Peninsula, Belize, northern Guatemala, and Mosquitia area of eastern Honduras and northern Nicaragua.

Singing Quail *Dactylortyx thoracicus*

1 distant bird heard from the entrance to the *cenotes* outside Cobá.

Ssp: *sharpei*. Disjunct range from northeastern Mexico to Honduras.

Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus*

Only 1 seen, in Cobá.

Ssp: *brachypterus*

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

Like preceding species, the only record was of 1 in Cobá.

Ssp: *podiceps*

American Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*



36 in Ría Lagartos.

Monotypic. Until recently treated as a race of Greater Flamingo, *Ph. roseus*.

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana*

2 Ría Lagartos, and ~10 San Felipe area.

Monotypic.

Roseate Spoonbill *Ajaia ajaja*

8 on Cozumel (km 33 pool and Punta Sur), and about 10 Ría Lagartos.

Monotypic.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

1 was seen perched in a bush in San Felipe area.

Monotypic.



Bare-throated Tiger-Heron



Boat-billed Heron

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

10+ Ría Lagartos, 1 San Felipe area.

Ssp: both migratory *herodias* and resident *occidentalis* were seen. The latter primarily occurs in a white phase known as “Great White Heron”, and two of these were seen in Ría Lagartos.

Great Egret *Casmerodius albus*

Recorded six days.

Ssp: *egretta*

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor*

Fairly common in Ría Lagartos.

Ssp: *ruficollis*

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*

Observed in Cobá, on Cozumel, in San Felipe area and, where fairly common, in Ría Lagartos.

Monotypic.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*

Common in Ría Lagartos area, otherwise recorded only on Cozumel Island.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Surprisingly few seen, only 6 at the sewage plant on Cozumel, and 2 in Ría Lagartos.

Ssp: *ibis*

Green Heron *Butorides virescens*

10+ Ría Lagartos, otherwise few records.

Ssp: nominate *virescens*. Often regarded as being conspecific with Striated Heron, *B.striatus*.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nyctanassa violacea*

2 during the boat ride in Ría Lagartos.

Ssp: nominate *violacea*

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

1 in Ría Lagartos.

Ssp: *hoactli*

Boat-billed Heron *Cochlearius cochlearius*

1 adult seen during the nighttime crocodile tour in Ría Lagartos, and also 2 adults with 2 nestlings near San Felipe.

Ssp: *phillipsi*

Bare-throated Tiger-Heron *Tigrisoma mexicanum*

In Ría Lagartos, 1 adult plus a nest with 3 nestlings seen, also 1 adult in san Felipe area.
Monotypic.

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

About 50 in Ría Lagartos.
Monotypic.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*

Recorded most days.
Ssp: *carolinensis*

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*



Readily seen in coastal areas.
Monotypic.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Common in Río Lagartos area, also 1 seen on Isla Mujeres.
Ssp: probably all *auritus*

Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

Common Ría Lagartos, only other record was of 1 in Cobá.
Ssp: *mexicanus*

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Common.
Ssp: *aura*, it is however possible some were *septentrionalis*.



Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture



Roadside Hawk

Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture *Cathartes burrovianus*

3 San Felipe area.

Ssp: nominate *burrovianus*

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*

Common.

Monotypic.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

1 north of Tulum, and 5-6 in Ría Lagartos.

Ssp: migratory *carolinensis* and resident *ridgwayi* seen, the latter a distinctive race also known as Caribbean Osprey.

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus*

2 at Laguna Ocom and 1 “Bello Caribe” on Cozumel. So incredibly elegant!

Ssp: *forficatus*

Common Black Hawk *Buteogallus anthracinus*



2 during the boat ride on Ría Lagartos, and 1 in the outskirts of Ría Lagartos town.

Ssp: nominate *anthracinus*

Roadside Hawk *Buteo magnirostris*

Singles seen in FCP, Muyil and during the drive from Chichén Itzá to Río Lagartos.

Ssp: *conspicuosus*

Gray Hawk *Buteo plagiatus*

1 near Cobá, 1 near Felipe Carrillo Puerto town, 1 FCP, 1 Laguna Ocom, and 1 between Tulúm and Playa del Carmen.

Monotypic. Here treated as a species separate from *B.nitidus*, Gray-lined Hawk.

Zone-tailed Hawk *Buteo albonotatus*

1 of this Turkey Vulture-mimic above Ganadería San Salvador.

Monotypic.

White-tailed Hawk *Buteo albicaudatus*



1 San Felipe area.

Ssp: *hypospodius*

Northern Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway*

About half a dozen seen in Río Lagartos area.

Monotypic.

Laughing Falcon *Herpetotheres cachinnans*

2 heard FCP.

Ssp: *chapamni*

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

1 Cobá.

Ssp: nominate *columbarius*

Bat Falcon *Falco ruficularis*

1 Chichén Itzá.

Ssp: *petoensis*

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*

1 adult plus a pair with 4 downy young in Cobá, 3 San Felipe area.

Ssp: *dolosus*

Ruddy Crake *Laterallus ruber*

1 Cobá, and 2 “Bello Caribe” on Cozumel.

Monotypic.

Sora *Porzana carolina*

1 Cobá.

Monotypic.



Ruddy Crake



Sora

Spotted Rail *Pardirallus maculatus*

1 in Cobá. It was close but never came into view.

Ssp: *insolitus*

Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata*

2 in a pond at Playa Palancar, Cozumel.

Ssp: *cachinnans*. New World birds recently split from Old World Common Moorhen, *G.chloropus*.

American Coot *Fulica americana*

5 or 6 in the km 33 pool on Cozumel.

Ssp: *americana*

Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

4 during the boat ride on Ría Lagartos.

Monotypic.

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*

2 at the km 33 pool on Cozumel.

Ssp: nominate *mexicanus*

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

3 Ría Lagartos.

Monotypic.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferous*

1 in San Felipe area was the only record.

Ssp: *vociferous*

Northern Jacana *Jacana spinosa*

2 in the km 33 pool on Cozumel.

Ssp: *gymnostoma*

Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa*

1 in mudflats in Río Lagartos town.

Ssp: nominate *fedoa*

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

Only 3 seen, all in Ría Lagartos.

Monotypic.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

1 during the boat ride in Ría Lagartos, and 2 in a mudflat area in Río Lagartos town.

Monotypic.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

2 alongside the Greater in Río Lagartos town, giving excellent opportunities for comparison.

Monotypic.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*

A single individual in the km 33 pond on Cozumel.

Ssp: *solitaria*

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*

About 25 in Ría Lagartos.

Ssp: *semipalmatus*, which breeds in eastern North America. Its western counterpart, *inornatus*, may prove to be a separate species.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Observed in Playa del Carmen and Ría Lagartos.

Monotypic.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

4 in the mudflats in Río Lagartos town.

Monotypic.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Easily seen on beaches and even on beachline streets. Thus more of a “city bird” here.

Ssp: *morinella*

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger*

Fairly common in Río Lagartos. Always a treat to see.

Ssp: nominate *niger*

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

2 Ría Lagartos.

Ssp: *aranea*

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

1 Río Lagartos harbour.

Monotypic.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*

About 15 in Ría Lagartos.

Monotypic.

Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*

4 or 5 Ría Lagartos.

Ssp: nominate *antillarum*

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus*



Common.

Ssp: *maxima*

Cabot's Tern *Thalasseus acutiflavus*

25+ in Ría Lagartos.

Ssp: nominate *acutiflavus*. Together with ssp *eurygnatha*, known also as Cayenne Tern, now regarded as a species separate from Old World *T.sandvicensis*, Sandwich Tern.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*

Common.

Ssp: *megaloptera*

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

2 Ría Lagartos and 5 Las Coloradas. Increasingly regular in this area.

Ssp: *graellsii*.

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*

5 at Las Coloradas, conveniently together with the Lesser Black-backs.

Monotypic. Previously included in Herring Gull, *L.argentatus*.

Feral Rock Pigeon *Columbia livia*

Seen.

Domesticated.

Common Ground-Dove *Columbina passerine*

Recorded five days, in small numbers only.

Ssp: *pallescens*

Ruddy Ground-Dove *Columbina talpacoti*

Recorded seven days.

Ssp: *rufipennis*

White-crowned Pigeon *Patagioenas leucocephala*

Two records from Cozumel of this handsome pigeon: 2 at the km 6.8 site, and 1 at “Bello Caribe”.

Monotypic. Occurs on islands in the West Indies, from Bahamas to Antigua, on Florida Keys, and on islands off Yucatan and Central America.

Red-billed Pigeon *Patagioenas flavirostris*

Small numbers in FCP and Muyil.

Ssp: nominate *flavirostris*

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common.

Introduced, and rapidly expanding.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*

Regular throughout.

Ssp: *asiatica*

White-tipped Dove *Leptotila verreauxi*

Recorded in Cobá, FCP, Muyil and San Felipe area, as always mostly heard.

Ssp: *fulviventris*

Gray-headed Dove *Leptotila plumbeiceps*

1, possibly 2, in Muyil. Slowly expanding its range northwards on Yucatan Peninsula.

Ssp: *plumbeiceps*

Caribbean Dove *Leptotila jamaicensis*

The song of this dove filled the air at the km 6.8 site and “Bello Caribe” on Cozumel.

Ssp: *gaumeri*, which furthermore occurs on the islands of Holbox and Mujeres, parts of Yucatan Peninsula, northeastern Belize and Honduran islands Barbareta, Roatán and Little Hog. Other ssp inhabit Jamaica, Cayman Islands and San Andres Island off Nicaragua. This is the complete range of the species.

Aztec Parakeet *Aratinga astec*

Fairly common.

Ssp: nominate *astec*, which together with *vicinalis* is now regarded a species separate from Olive-throated Parakeet, *A.nana*.

White-fronted Amazon *Amazona albifrons*

1 Cobá km 2 site, 4 Muyil, 2 during the Ría Lagartos boat trip, and 2 San Felipe area.

Ssp: *nana*

Yucatan Amazon *Amazona xantholora*

5 FCP.

Monotypic. Yucatan endemic, also known as Yellow-lored Amazon.

Mangrove Cuckoo *Coccyzus minor*

On Cozumel, 1 at the km 6.8 site and 2 at “Bello Caribe”, and 1 during the Ría Lagartos boat trip.

Monotypic.

Squirrel Cuckoo *Piaya cayana*

2 Cobá km 2 site, 1 Laguna Ocom, and 2 Muyil.

Ssp: *thermophila*

Groove-billed Ani *Crotophaga sulcirostris*

Seen in Cobá, FCP, and in the northern parts of the peninsula.

Monotypic.

Pheasant Cuckoo *Dromococcyx phasianellus*

1 at the entrance road to the *cenotes* near Cobá, 1 Laguna Ocom, 1 Chichén Itzá, and 1 *cenote* Dzitnup, all heard only.

Monotypic.

Guatemalan Screech-Owl *Otus guatemalae*

1 FCP.

Ssp: *thompsoni*. Resident in western Mexico, and from eastern Mexico to northern Nicaragua, and has been included in *O.vermiculatus* from further south.

Mottled Owl *Strix virgata*

2 FCP.

Ssp: *centralis*

Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium brasilianum*

1 Xcaret, 1 FCP, 1 Chichén Itzá, and 1 *cenote* Dzitnup.

Ssp: *ridgwayi*. North and Central American populations are sometimes treated as a separate species, Ridgway's Pygmy-Owl.

Northern Potoo *Nyctibius jamaicensis*

3-4 heard FCP.

Ssp: *mexicanus*. Hearing these critters, it is surprising they were ever regarded as conspecific with *N.griseus*, Common Potoo.

Lesser Nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis*

Seen on Cozumel Island only, with 1 in San Miguel town and 3 at "Bello Caribe".

Ssp: *micromeris*

Yucatan Poorwill *Nyctiphrynus yucatanicus*

At least 2 FCP.

Monotypic. Endemic to Yucatan Peninsula.

Yucatan Nightjar *Caprimulgu badius*

4 or 5 FCP.

Monotypic. Endemic to Yucatan Peninsula and Cozumel Island.

Vaux's Swift *Chaetura vauxi*

On Cozumel, morning movements of small flocks seen at the km 6.8 site and "Bello Caribe", other records 1 at Cobá km 2, and 2 at Muyil.

Ssp: *gaumeri*, which has been considered a separate species. Last word on southern and eastern Mexican swift taxonomy is probably not said.

Wedge-tailed Sabrewing *Campylopterus curvipennis*

1 Chichén Itzá.

Ssp: *yucatanensis*. Present from southeastern Mexico to Belize and northern Guatemala, also eastern Honduras.

Green-breasted Mango *Anthracothorax prevostii*

2 at the km 6.8 site on Cozumel.

Ssp: nominate *prevostii*

Canivet's Emerald *Chlorostilbon canivetii*

1 at the *cenotes* entrance outside Cobá, 1 FCP, and 1 Chichén Itzá.

Ssp: nominate *canivetii*

Cozumel Emerald *Chlorostilbon forficatus*

1 at the km 6.8 site on Cozumel.

Monotypic. Endemic to Cozumel Island, although sometimes regarded a ssp of preceding species.

Buff-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia yucatanensis*

2 in the *cenotes* area outside Cobá were the only ones seen.

Ssp: nominate *yucatanensis*

Cinnamon Hummingbird *Amazilia rutila*

1 Playa del Carmen, 3 Chichén Itzá, and 2 in Río Lagartos.

Ssp: *corallirostris*

White-bellied Emerald *Amazilia candida*

1 Cobá, and 2 Laguna Ocom.

Ssp: nominate *candida*

Mexican Sheartail *Doricha eliza*

2 females and 2 juveniles in Río Lagartos, and 1 stunning male at San Salvador ranch. A much desired species!

Monotypic. Mexican endemic restricted to central Veracruz and northern coast of Yucatán Peninsula.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*

2 in Cobá area, and 4-5 Chichén Itzá.

Monotypic.

Black-headed Trogon *Trogon melanocephalus*

1 Cobá km 2 site, 1 FCP, and 3-4 Muyil.

Monotypic.

Gartered Trogon *Trogon caligatus*

2-4 FCP, 4 Laguna Ocom, and 1 Muyil. Previously known as Northern Violaceous Trogon.

Ssp: *sallaei*

Collared Trogon *Trogon collaris*

1 Muyil.

Ssp: *puella*

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*

5 or 6 during the boat ride on Ría Lagartos.

Monotypic.

Turquoise-browed Motmot *Eumomota superciliosa*



Easily seen in suitable habitat, highest daily number in Xcaret where about a dozen seen and heard.

Ssp: nominate *superciliosa*. Occurs from southern Mexico to Costa Rica.

Blue-diademed Motmot *Momotus lessonii*

2 FCP.

Ssp: *exiguus*. Previously included in *M.momota*, Blue-crowned Motmot.

Collared Aracari *Pteroglossus torquatus*

1 FCP.

Ssp: *ertythrzonus*

Keel-billed Toucan *Ramphastos sulfuratus*

1 FCP. Personally, I prefer this spectacular species be named Rainbow-billed Toucan.

Ssp: nominate *sulfuratus*

Yucatan Woodpecker *Melanerpes pygmaeus*

Fairly common on Cozumel, while only two mainland records of 1 in Cobá area, and 1 in Muyil.

Ssp: nominate *pygmaeus* on Cozumel Island, mainland birds are *rubricomus*. Ranges Yucatán Peninsula to central Belize, Cozumel Island, and Guanaja Island off Honduras.

Golden-fronted Woodpecker *Melanerpes aurifrons*

Recorded eight days.

Ssp: *dubius*. Nominat should perhaps be regarded a separate species, other races then becoming Velasquez's Wood pecker, *M.santacruzii*.

Golden-olive Woodpecker *Piculus rubiginosus*

1 FCP.

Ssp: *yucatanensis*

Pale-billed Woodpecker *Campephilus guatemalensis*

2 FCP.

Ssp: nominate *guatemalensis*



Yucatan Woodpecker



Pale-billed Woodpecker

Olivaceous Woodcreeper *Sittasomus griseicapillus*

2 Cobá km 2 site, and 2 FCP.

Ssp: *gracileus*

Northern Barred Woodcreeper *Dendrocolaptes sanctithomae*

1 Muyil.

Ssp: nominate *sanctithomae*

Ivory-billed Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus flavigaster*

2 FCP and 2 Muyil.

Ssp: *yucatanensis*

Barred Antshrike *Thamnophilus doliatus*

1 FCP.

Ssp: *intermedius*

Mexican Antthrush *Formicarius moniliger*

1 FCP, and 1 Laguna Ocom.

Ssp: *pallidus*. Ranges along Caribbean slope from southern Veracruz to northwestern Honduras.

Masked Tityra *Tityra semifasciata*

2 Cobá km 2 site, 4 FCP, 1 Muyil, and 1 Chichén Itzá.

Ssp: *deses*

Black-crowned Tityra *Tityra inquisitor*

2 FCP.

Ssp: *fraserii*

Rose-throated Becard *Pachyramphus aglaiae*



2 Cobá km 2 site, 4 FCP.

Ssp: *yucatanensis*

Greenish Elaenia *Myiopagis viridicata*

1 Cobá km 2 site.

Ssp: *placens*

Caribbean Elaenia *Elaenia martinica*

1 “Bello Caribe” on Cozumel Island.

Ssp: *remota*. Breeds on Caribbean islands only, possibly slowly expanding to coastal Quintana Roo, where at least it occurs during the winter months.

Yellow-bellied Elaenia *Elaenia flavogaster*

1 Cobá, 1 Laguna Ocom, 2 Muyil.

Ssp: *subpagana*

Northern Beardless Tyrannulet *Camptostoma imberbe*

1 Cobá km 2 site.

Ssp: nominate *imberbe*

Northern Bentbill *Oncostoma cinereigulae*

1 Muyil.

Monotypic.

Eye-ringed Flatbill *Rhynchocyclus brevirostris*

1 Cobá km 2 site.

Ssp: nominate *brevirostris*

Yellow-olive Flycatcher *Tolmomyias sulphurescens*

1 Cobá cenotes entrance, 1 FCP, and 1 Chichén Itzá.

Ssp: *cinereiceps*

Royal Flycatcher *Onychorhynchus coronatus*

1 FCP and 1 Muyil.

Ssp: *mexicanus*

Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus*

2 FCP.

Monotypic.

Olive-sided Flycatcher *Contopus cooperi*

1 FCP. A major rarity on most of Yucatán Peninsula (the species winter in the extreme southern parts), this is probably only the second record in the northern half of the peninsula.

Monotypic.

Tropical Pewee *Contopus cinereus*

1 Cobá, 1 FCP, 1 Muyil.

Ssp: *brachytarsus*

Vermilion Flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus*

4-5 San Felipe area.

Ssp: *blatteus*

Social Flycatcher *Myiozetetes similis*

Common.

Ssp: *texensis*

Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus*

Readily seen.

Ssp: *guatemalensis*

Boat-billed Flycatcher *Megarynchus pitangua*

2 Cobá km 2 site, 2 Muyil, and 10+ FCP.

Ssp: *mexicanus*

Tropical Kingbirds *Tyrannus melancholicus*

Common.

Ssp: *satrapa*

Couch's Kingbird *Tyrannus couchii*

Not uncommon, recorded Cobá, FCP, Laguna Ocom, Muyil, Ría Lagartos and San Felipe area.

Monotypic. Occurs from southern Texas through eastern Mexico to Belize and northern Guatemala.



Tropical (left) and Couch's Kingbirds. Note the slightly shorter and thicker bill of Couch's.

Yucatan Flycatcher *Myiarchus yucatanensis*

1 FCP, 1 Muyil, and 3 km 6.8 site on Cozumel.

Ssp: *yucatanensis* on mainland, *lanyoni* on Cozumel. Endemic to Yucatán Peninsula and Cozumel Island.

Dusky-capped Flycatcher *Miyarchus tuberculifer*

2 at the *cenotes* outside Cobá, 1 FCP, 1 Laguna Ocom, 2 or 3 Muyil, and 1 km 6.8 site on Cozumel.

Ssp: *platyrhynchus*

Brown-crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus tyrannulus*

1 Hotel Chichén Itzá in Piste, 1 Chichén Itzá, 1 during the boat trip on Ría Lagartos, and, on Cozumel, 1 at the km 6.8 site and 1 at “Bello Caribe”.

Ssp: *cooperi* on the mainland, and *cozumelae* on Cozumel.

Bright-rumped Attila *Attila spadiceus*

1 FCP.

Ssp: *gaumeri*

Rufous-browed Peppershrike *Cyclarhis gujanensis*

1 FCP, 2 Muyil, and 2 at the km 6.8 site on Cozumel.

Ssp: *yucatanensis* on the mainland, and the distinctly pale *insularis* on Cozumel.

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*

Recorded five days.

Ssp: *noveboracensis* and/or *griseus*

Mangrove Vireo *Vireo pallens*

1 Xcaret and 1 Ganadería San Salvador, neither in mangrove habitat.

Ssp: *salvini*

Cozumel Vireo *Vireo bairdi*

2 at the km 6.8 site on Cozumel.

Monotypic. Endemic to Cozumel Island.

Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*

1 *cenote* Choo-ha outside Cobá.

Monotypic.

Yucatan Vireo *Vireo magister*

2 Muyil and, on Cozumel, 3 at the km 6.8 site and 2 “Bello Caribe”.

Ssp: nominate *magister*. The species breeds in eastern parts of Yucatan Peninsula, including islands off Belize and northern Honduras, and Grand Cayman.

Lesser Greenlet *Hylophilus decurtatus*

Observed in Cobá area, FCP and Muyil.

Ssp: *phillipsi*

Green Jay *Cyanocorax yncas*

2 Cobá area, 1 between Felipe Carillo Puerto and Tulum, 2 Muyil and 1 Ría Lagartos.

Ssp: *maya*. Birds in Mexico and Central America possibly constitute a separate species from South American populations.

Brown Jay *Psilorhinus morio*

Recorded in fair numbers in Cobá area, FCP and Muyil.

Ssp: *vociferous*

Yucatan Jay *Cyanocorax yucatanicus*



Fairly common.

Ssp: nominate *yucatanicus*. Endemic to Yucatan Peninsula.

Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia*

10+ in San Felipe area.

Ssp: nominate *riparia*

Mangrove Swallow *Tachycineta albilinea*

2 Laguna Ocom and 1 Río Lagartos.

Monotypic.

Purple Martin *Progne subis*

20+ Cobá and 2 Río Lagartos.

Ssp: probably *subis*, although *hesperia* cannot be ruled out with certainty.

Gray-breasted Martin *Progne chalybea*

1 Playa del Carmen.

Ssp: nominate *chalybea*

Ridgway's Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx ridgwayi*

1 cenote Tankach-ha outside Cobá.

Ssp: nominate *ridgwayi*. Occurs from southern Veracruz to eastern Guatemala, however is sometimes included in Northern Rough-winged Swallow, *S.serripennis*.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Recorded five days.

Ssp: *erythrogaster*

Yucatan Wren *Campylorhynchus yucatanicus*



A total of seven individuals recorded in San Felipe area and Ganadería San Salvador.
Monotypic. Endemic to northern Yucatan Peninsula.

White-browed Wren *Thryothorus albinucha*

2 at the *cenotes* outside Cobá, 1 FCP and 1 Muyil.

Ssp: nominate *albinucha*. Occurs in Yucatan Peninsula including northern Belize and northern Guatemala, and spottily also in central Guatemala and western Nicaragua. Often subsumed, probably correctly so, in Carolina Wren, *T.ludovicianus*.

Spot-breasted Wren *Thryothorus maculipectus*

1 Cobá area, 3-4 FCP and 1 Laguna Ocom.

Ssp: *canobrunneus*

White-bellied Wren *Uropsial leucogastra*

1 FCP and 1 Muyil. Great song.

Ssp: probably *brachyura*. Breeds in eastern and western Mexico, Belize, northern Guatemala and locally in northern Honduras.

Cozumel Wren *Troglodytes beani*

2 km 6.8 site, and 2 “Bello Caribe”.

Monotypic. Endemic to Cozumel Island.

Long-billed Gnatwren *Ramphocaenus melanurus*

1 FCP.

Ssp: *ardeleo*

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Poiloptila caerulea*

5-6 recorded on Cozumel Island, and 2 Ganadería San Salvador.

Ssp: *cozumelae* and *deppei* respectively

Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*

Two records on Cozumel Island, one each at the km 6.8 site and “Bello Caribe”.
Monotypic.

Black Catbird *Melanoptila grabirostris*

Numerous on Cozumel Island and 2 FCP.
Monotypic. Endemic to Yucatan Peninsula.

Tropical Mockingbird *Mimus gilvus*



Common.

Ssp: *leucophaeus*

Clay-colored Thrush *Turdus grayi*

Quite common in Cobá, FCP, Muyil and Chichén Itzá.

Ssp: *lanyoni*, birds seen in Chichén Itzá are probably *yucatanensis*

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*

1 Muyil, several on Cozumel Island, and 1 during the boat trip in Ría Lagartos.

Ssp: birds of all three subspecies groups were seen. Some individuals on Cozumel Island were *rufivertex* “Golden” (of the *petechia* group), the one in Ría Lagartos was *bryanti* “Mangrove” (of the *erithachorides* ssp group) while mainland and many Cozumel Island birds were “Yellow” (*aestiva* group) of uncertain ssp. These groups are variably treated as one (the treatment adopted here), two or three species.

Magnolia Warbler *Dendroica magnolia*

Easily found in Cobá, FCP and Muyil.

Monotypic.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*

Recorded five days, in small numbers only.

Ssp: nominate *coronata*

Black-throated Green Warbler *Dendroica virens*

Singles in Cobá, FCP, Laguna Ocom, “Bello Caribe” and Chichén Itzá.

Monotypic.

Yellow-throated Warbler *Dendroica dominica*

1 Playa del Carmen, 2 Muyil, 1 Hotel Barracuda on Cozumel Island, 1 Chichén Itzá.

Ssp: *albilora*

Palm Warbler *Dendroica palmarum*

1 Muyil and 3 at the sewage plant on Cozumel Island.

Ssp: nominate *palmarum*

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*

1 Cobá, 1 Laguna Ocom, and 2 Muyil.

Monotypic.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*

1 FCP, 1 Laguna Ocom, 2 Muyil and, on Cozumel Island, 1 at the km 6.8 site and 1 “Bello Caribe”.

Monotypic.

Worm-eating Warbler *Hermitheros vermivorum*

1 Muyil.

Monotypic.

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*

1 Muyil.

Ssp: probably *aurocapilla*, possibly *furvior*

Louisiana Waterthrush *Seiurus motacilla*

2 Muyil.

Monotypic.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

1 Muyil and 1 at the km 6.8 site on Cozumel Island.

Ssp: nominate *trichas*

Gray-crowned Yellowthroat *Geothlypis poliocephala*



2 Cobá, 1 San Felipe area, and 1 Ganadería San Salvador.

Ssp: *palpebralis*

Yellow-billed Cacique *Amblycercus holosericeus*

1 FCP.

Ssp: nominate *holosericeus*

Orange Oriole *Icterus auratus*

Surprisingly few seen, 2 Playa del Carmen and 2 Ganadería San Salvador were the only ones. In my opinion, Yucatan Oriole would be a better name.

Monotypic. Endemic to Yucatan Peninsula.

Yellow-tailed Oriole *Icterus mesomelas*

1 at the km 2 site outside Cobá.

Ssp: nominate *mesomelas*

Altamira Oriole *Icterus gularis*

Readily seen in suitable habitat.

Ssp: *yucatanensis*

Hooded Oriole *Icterus cucullatus*

Slightly more numerous than preceding species.

Ssp: *igneus*

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*

2 in Cobá were the only ones seen.

Monotypic.

Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurious*

Recorded five days.

Monotypic.

Black-cowled Oriole *Icterus prothemelas*

2 at the km 2 site outside Cobá.

Ssp: nominate *prothemelas*. Does not include Caribbean islands forms, which are now split to several separate species.

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*

Common in Río Lagartos area.

Ssp: *pallidulus*

Melodious Blackbird *Dives dives*

Common and vocally conspicuous.

Monotypic. Occurs from eastern Mexico to northwestern Costa Rica.

Great-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus mexicanus*



Abundant.

Ssp: *loweryi*

Bronzed Cowbird *Molothrus aeneus*

Recorded four days in fair numbers.

Ssp: nominate *aeneus*

Bananaquit *Coereba flaveola*

Recorded on Cozumel Island only, with 12 at the km 6.8m site and 1 near Punta Sur.

Ssp: *caboti*

Blue-black Grassquit *Volatinia jacarina*

A handful seen in San Felipe area were surprisingly the only ones recorded.

Ssp: *splendens*

White-collared Seedeater *Sporophila torqueola*

1 FCP, 2 at the sewage plant on Cozumel, and 1 San Felipe area.

Ssp: *moreletti*, which together with *sharpei* and *mutanda* races are sometimes treated as a separate species, Cinnamon-rumped Seedeater.

Yellow-faced Grassquit *Tiaris olivaceus*

2 Cobá, and, on Cozumel, 6-7 at the km 6.8 site, and 1 at the sewage plant.

Ssp: Cozumel birds are *intermedius*, mainland birds *pusillus*

Green-backed Sparrow *Arremonops chloronotus*

5-6 FCP, 1 Laguna Ocom and 1 Muyil.

Ssp: nominate *chloronotus*. Occurs on Caribbean slope in southeastern Mexico, Belize, northern and central Guatemala and locally in northern Honduras.

Blue-gray Tanager *Thraupis episcopus*

2 Muyil. Has expanded its range considerably northwards on Yucatan Peninsula since the publication of the Howell & Webb field guide.

Ssp: *cana*

Yellow-winged Tanager *Thraupis abbas*

3 Cobá and 3 Hotel Chichén Itzá, Pisté.

Monotypic. Ranges from eastern Mexico to southern Honduras.

Red-legged Honeycreeper *Cyanerpes cyaneus*

2 Muyil.

Ssp: *carneipes*

Scrub Euphonia *Euphonia affinis*

1 FCP, 1 Muyil and 1 San Felipe area.

Ssp: nominate *affinis*. Breeds from western Mexico to northwestern Costa Rica.

Yellow-throated Euphonia *Euphonia hirundinacea*

~15 Cobá, and singles FCP.

Ssp: nominate *hirundinacea*. Ranges from eastern Mexico to western Panama.

Red-crowned Ant-Tanager *Habia rubica*

1 Muyil.

Ssp: *nelsoni*

Red-throated Ant-Tanager *Habia fuscicauda*

2 FCP, 6-7 Laguna Ocom, and ~10 Muyil.

Ssp: *insularis*

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra*

1 Xcaret and 1 Muyil were the only ones seen.

Ssp: nominate *rubra*

Rose-throated Tanager *Piranga roseogularis*

Only one seen, a male at Laguna Ocom.

Ssp: *tincta*. Endemic to Yucatan Peninsula (does not occur in the northwestern parts) and islands of Cozumel and Mujeres.

Western Spindalis *Spindalis zena*

Two females and one stunning male at the km 6.8 site on Cozumel.

Ssp: *benedicti*, endemic to Cozumel, with other races in Bahamas, Cuba, Isle of Pines and Grand Cayman, these islands comprising the full range of the species.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

1 at the entrance to the *cenotes* outside Cobá.

Monotypic.

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*

One superb male FCP.

Ssp: *flammiger*

Black-headed Saltator *Saltator atriceps*

2 Cobá and 2 Muyil.

Ssp: *raptor*

Grayish Saltator *Saltator coerulescens*

3 Cobá.

Ssp: *yucatanensis*

Blue Bunting *Cyanocompsa parellina*

1 smart male at Muyil.

Ssp: nominate *parellina*

Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea*



A pair at Muyil.

Ssp: nominate *caerulea*

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*

About 10 FCP, 1 during the drive from Chichén Itzá to Río Lagartos and 1 San Felipe area.

Monotypic.



Smile!