

# Yucatan Peninsula



## Mexico



12<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2000





|                             |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Sunday, 13 <sup>th</sup>    | Cancun golf course<br>Open area south of Punta Laguna<br>Punta Laguna | 6:00-9:30<br>14:00-15:00<br>15:00-17:00 |
| Monday, 14 <sup>th</sup>    | Coba<br>Track between Tulum & Felipe<br>Carillo Puerto                | 6:00-12:00<br>15:00-16:40               |
| Tuesday, 15 <sup>th</sup>   | Vigia Chico road  | 6:00-18:30                              |
| Wednesday, 16 <sup>th</sup> | Vigia Chico road<br>Chichen Itza hotel area                           | 6:00-10:15<br>14:30-18:00               |
| Thursday, 17 <sup>th</sup>  | Chichen Itza hotel area<br>Chichen Itza ruins<br>San Felipe           | 6:00-8:30<br>8:30-11:00<br>15:30-18:00  |
| Friday, 18 <sup>th</sup>    | San Felipe<br>Los Colorados road<br>Rio Logartos                      | 6:00-7:30<br>7:30-15:00<br>15:00-18:00  |
| Saturday, 19 <sup>th</sup>  | Puerto Morelos<br>Botanical Garden                                    | 7:30-9:00<br>9:15-12:00                 |

# YUCATAN PENINSULA, MEXICO

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## Introduction

The Yucatan Peninsular of Mexico is situated in the South-east of the country, and broadly comprises the provinces of Quintana Roo and Yucatan. The area covered is larger and more spaced out than seems on the map, so driving distance was taken into account when planning the itinerary. Cancun can now be reached on a reasonably priced package - we booked in December and paid £350 each for flights and 7 nights hotel (room only), which was at the Hotel Laguna Verde. Most of the Yucatan and Quintana Roo area comprises low to medium height thorn forest (with smatterings of equatorial forest for good measure), with some of the more reasonable sites (including locations of hotels) being near Mayan archaeological sites. To vary the birds and habitat, the area to the North of the peninsular was also covered - there is a mixture of open and semi-open scrub, with semi-desert and coastal sand here.



The practicalities of the trip meant picking a car up at the resort, staying the first and last nights in the pre-booked hotel, and checking into hotels as we arrived at the various sites. This was not a problem in reality, as all had plenty of rooms available for low to reasonable prices, with the standard of accommodation ranging from basic (but clean and habitable) to very comfortable. The food in the restaurants attached to these hotels was also very good and reasonably priced.

The Mexicans we came across were all very friendly and helpful, despite only a minority speaking more than a word or two of English. We spoke no Spanish, but the odd word or phrase and flailing arms normally got the message over. Outside of the relatively affluent (and unreal) Cancun, the majority of Mexican standard of living is very 3<sup>rd</sup> world, with many of the families living in small, poorly made houses (although the prerequisite TV is usually present!). We didn't put much trust in local food and water but bread and prepacked meats and cheeses did for birding on the hoof food, and large bottles of water were readily available.

Dawn birding started at 6 o'clock in the morning, and ended with dusk at 6pm. The weather throughout was very hot, but usually with a cooling easterly wind. Travelling between sites, which usually lasted a couple of hours, was done over midday - a doubly sensible move since birds were less obvious and the potholes and *topes* (speed ramps) were better seen in daylight. Mosquitoes were present in small numbers, as were large biting flies. Jungle formula seemed to keep the former at bay, although there is a small risk of malaria, so prophylaxis is sensible (once weekly chloroquine over the counter is recommended).

## Hotels

|   |  |                         |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| <b>Cancun</b>   | Laguna Verde                           | Part of package         |
| This is in one of the best spots for birders in Cancun - adjacent to the Pok Ta Pok golf course   |  |                         |
| <b>Coba</b>   | Villa Archaeologica (Club Med)         | 40 per double per night |
| Realistically, the only place to stay in Coba. Very comfortable. Swimming pool  |  |                         |
| <b>Felipe Puerto</b>  | <b>Carillo</b> Hotel Faysand el Venado | 10 per double per night |
| There are 3 hotels in town - this is by far the best. We also checked one of the other hotels, which was quite grotty and even more expensive                             |  |                         |
| <b>Chichen Itza</b>   | Villa Archaeologica (Club Med)         | 50 per double per night |
| A mirror of Coba - one of 3 hotels near the ruins, with excellent gardens for birding to hand. Any of these are preferable to the town itself for location. Swimming pool |  |                         |
| <b>San Felipe</b>   | Hotel San Felipe de Jesus              | 18 per double per night |
| Basic but clean, with the added benefit of balconies which provide excellent birding over the channel. A similar standard of hotel is in Rio Logartos                     |  |                         |

## References

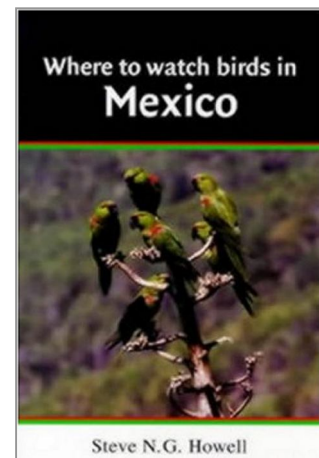
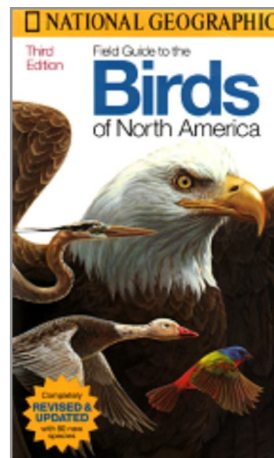
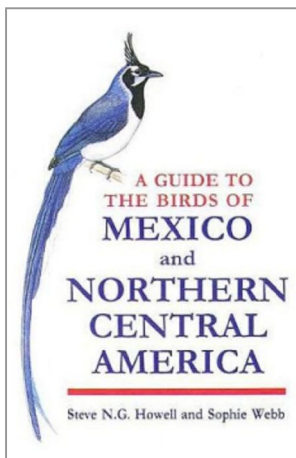
**Howell and Webb:** "A guide to the birds of Mexico and Northern Central America" published by Oxford Press.

**Peterson and Chalif:** "Mexican Birds", published by Houghton Mifflin

**National Geographic's:** " Field Guide to the birds of North America" (Third Edition), published by National Geographic

**Howell:** "Where to watch birds in Mexico" published by Helm

**Insight Pocket Maps:** Yucatan Peninsular, published by APA Publications



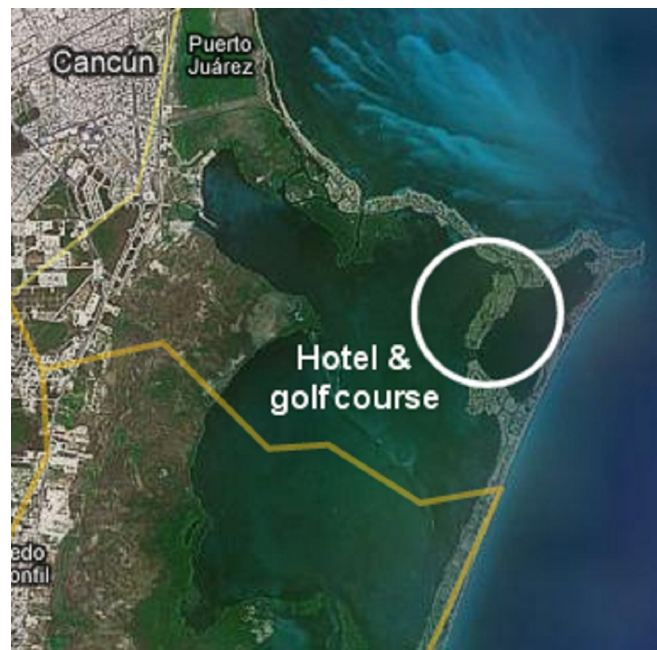
## Driving

The car was booked with Hertz (via the USA) from the UK - this was the best deal that included insurance with no excess. Most car hire companies will only hire a car with a £1000 excess (or 10% of the value of the car) - not a good idea when you see the state of Mexican roads and driving (although the latter was not as bad as we expected - with care!). Final costs will include hire, collision damage waiver (CDW), excess waiver if available, tax (10%), and any fuel due. Our total for an intermediate compact Chrysler Neon was £480 for the week. It seemed likely that we were given a rather battered car because we had no excess - it wasn't a bad idea, anyway, since I'm sure we added a few bumps and scratches of our own, which tended not to show. If there is an excess and the car is unmarked, I would guess that on return it would get a thorough once over for new marks. The roads were in better condition than expected. The new toll road from Cancun has a limit of 110km/hr, but only has exits from Valladolid, Chichen Itza, and Merida. The cost was £12 to Valladolid, and £2.50 from Valladolid to Chichen Itza. Route 307 South from Cancun also looks good, and may be the best way to get to Coba. The lesser roads have plenty of potholes to worry about, but the greatest danger came from the *topes*. These speed ramps are in almost all inhabited areas, and can be a chassis breaker due to their varying heights and often unexpected (as well as unmarked) occurrence. Petrol stations are few and far between - good maps show where they are. The car we had was big enough to hold four of us, a holdall and backpack each in the boot, and assorted optics and tripods.

## SITES

### Pok Ta Pok golf course

As usual with golf courses abroad, this area was very good for birds - and right next to the hotel as a bonus. Between the fairways were scattered clumps of trees, with one side of the course adjoining the lagoon. The bushes and trees on the perimeter of the golf course were lower and quite dense, sheltering all sorts of local and migrant birds. Wood warblers (presumably on passage in most cases) were in the latter areas as well as flycatchers and hummingbirds. The trees scattered throughout the centre of the course were good for woodpeckers, hummingbirds, and more wood warblers. The greens and fairways also held a small selection of birds, in particular Ground & White-winged Doves, sparrows, and grackles.



The main lagoon in the centre of the hotel area is extensive - perhaps 10km in length - and seems in the main devoid of birds (motorised watersports are held on here). Those that did appear included Frigatebirds, Ospreys, cormorants and pelicans overhead, in reasonably regular but small numbers. The strong winds perhaps kept some of the passerines under cover of the bushes. Species such as Bananaquit and Common Tody Flycatcher were unexpected, and again kept to the denser areas of vegetation.



## Punta Laguna



Punta Laguna is about 20km north of Coba, and is found by leaving Coba, and taking the 2<sup>nd</sup> exit from the triangular junction 1km from the village (the left turn goes to Valladolid, the right to Tulum). A ramshackle sign, matching huts / homes, and requisite tope signal the precarious left turn into this haven reserved primarily for Spider & Howler Monkeys. It comprises a tract of thick woodland situated next to a reed-fringed and rather quiet lake. A guide is needed (£1), mainly to show the Spider Monkeys and birds, but is just as important so find the way back through the many tracks that branch through the forest. The

first part of the walk was through a "living" area with domestic pigs roaming, but a Turquoise-browed Motmot didn't mind the smell. The birds within the forest had to be worked for, but plenty of (mainly) wood warblers were seen, and the first of what turned out to be a handful of Ivory-billed Woodcreepers (for the week). One of the best sites was that of a small group of Spider Monkeys swinging across the track in front of us - one almost didn't make it!

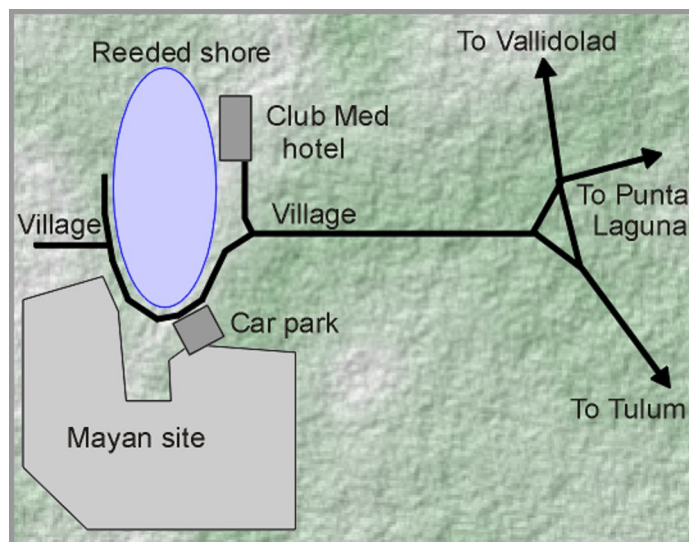
Before reaching Punta Laguna, we stopped at an open area with scattered trees about 12km north of Coba. Although most of the birds were seen elsewhere during the week, many were new at the time, and seemed to keep on appearing the longer we stayed. The stop was initially made to identify a large bird of prey (probably another common vulture), but then a pair of Hooded Orioles was spotted in an open tree. These were the first of many orioles (for the site and for the trip). Scanning further, particularly on the opposite side of the road, found one or two favourite areas for birds. One bush in particular contained Hooded & Yellow-backed Orioles, Green Jays, Summer Tanager, and later Black-headed Saltator and Ladder-backed Woodpecker.

We returned to the clearing for another half hour before leaving the road for a hotel in Coba. More Hooded Orioles appeared, along with a noisy group of Yucatan Jays, and a late flypast of (White-lored) Parrots from all directions.

## Coba

The area was pencilled in for the lake in front of the Club Med hotel for Crakes, and the forests surrounding the Mayan ruins next to the lake. The birding divided itself into three parts - in and around the hotel gardens at first light; the village area on the opposite side of the lake to the hotel; and the forests in the vicinity of the ruins. Birding straight out of the hotel was excellent, with birds everywhere. On the water itself were grebes, and some late cormorants, following on from the impressive sight of a large crocodile meandering slowly across the centre of the expanse of water.

The reed fringed western edge held Limpkin, with a Northern Jacana on the exposed edge. The trees around the hotel were alive with birds early on, dominated by a large group of mixed orioles, Social Flycatcher, and Ground-Doves. An overgrown bushy area





adjacent to the hotel should have had more potential, but did hold Spot-breasted Wren and Bananaquit. A Bat Falcon was perched at the top of the hotel mast, with a further selection of Orioles below.

The village on the opposite shore was excellent for wandering around, with a good mixture of birds. Small finch flocks were mainly drab juvenile Seedeaters, although they were found to contain a distinctive female Blue Grosbeak. The reeds were unfortunately devoid of Crakes, but a couple of Grey-crowned Yellowthroats showed well. The end of the track at the west of the village was overgrown, but had hummingbirds passing through, and the only Green-backed Sparrows of the trip. Within the village itself, white blurs of birds turned out to be boring feral pigeons, but the first Squirrel Cuckoo of the week was just below what may have been breeding boxes for the pigeons.

The Mayan ruins needed time and effort, and a good deal of wandering off the tracks into the depths of the trees. Videoing the birds here offered an extra challenge, since not only did its use cost £2, but no tripods are allowed in Mayan ruin sites. There were certainly some birds around the more semi-open ground holding the actual ruins but the real neotropical forest birds such as motmots, trogons and becards had to be looked for in the thicker mixed woodland, with necks more than often painfully craned upwards towards the canopy. How we didn't get lost I'll never know! Overall, a better site than at first predicted, with an excellent contrast in habitats and birds.



### Vigia Chico road

From the reports we had read and listened to, this seemed to be one of the best sites on the Yucatan peninsular, so we decided to stay two nights. Before reaching Felipe Carillo Puerto for a hotel, we stopped off at a track about 50km South of Tulum. This is a fairly rough track, which meets one of the entrances to the Sian Ka'an Biosphere reserve after about 1km, and was picked particularly for its Orange Orioles (which I didn't identify positively). The track is straight and seemingly quiet, but did have a (noisy) nesting colony of Social Flycatchers, hordes of Tree Swallows presumably migrating over, and a small variety of mixed birds just inside the open gate to the reserve. The area around the gates to the reserve entrance is also a good spot for birds (eg, orioles and Couch's Kingbird). About half way between the road and the reserve, we took a sidetrack to the South. This was a good move - a short way along was an ant colony, with attendant Red-throated Ant-Tanagers and single Grey Headed Tanager. This track led to a clearing, which seemed quiet at first, but following a Squirrel Cuckoo into the forest found Peppershrike and more orioles.



The Vigia Chico road starts at the town of Felipe Carillo Puerto, stemming five blocks from the easterly bound road from the centre. It is a compacted rock and sandy track, which eventually meets the coast at Vigia Chico after about 50km. We took a full day to cover the first 25km or so. The first kilometre is bounded by the outskirts of the town - rough dwellings and partly worked plots, but quickly gives way to forest. As usual with forest birding, a lot of time and patience was needed to see the birds. The books say it is best to look in the *milpas* (agricultural plots) early in the day, but these weren't particularly exciting on the first day, although one of the worked orchards was excellent on the second day. We also found three small lagoons along the track, but these had next to no birds, no critters, and next to no interest. The best birds were found by stopping the car when we saw or heard something of interest, and barging into the forest edge for more. One small patch of forest (next to a *milpa*) contained a very active and varied bird party, including both Tityras, Peppershrike, Blue-winged Warbler, Rose-throated Becard, Green Jay, White-bellied Wren, and Canivet's Emerald & Wedge-tailed Sabrewing. It was also a good day for Woodpeckers, with Ladderback, Smokey-brown, Yucatan, four Lineated and hosts of Golden-fronted. The last Lineated was at dusk, dust bathing in the open road. Some good one-off memories were had - millions of ants crossing the track under the greedy eyes of a pair of Yucatan Jays; a solitary Keel-billed Toucan flying low and briefly over the tree tops; some brilliant trogons perching in the open; and a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl perched directly above us.



The second morning, the plan was to drive the track first light to look for Ocellated Turkey, etc. Apart from a few wandering dogs and annoying vans, we drew a blank. After stopping once or twice and collecting woodcreeper and antshrike, we found a mini-mangrove / pools next to the track. Infested with mosquitoes (which kept their distance), it was also infested with birds. Many warbler species and Social Flycatchers were here, but a Pygmy-Owl tape intended to attract passerines brought in a real Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. Predictably, plenty of waterthrushes were here with the Social Flycatchers going ballistic over the tape.

On the journey back along the track to Felipe Carillo Puerto, we found an excellent *milpa*. As usual, a couple of small birds at the trackside caught our notice, and we limboed the wooden gate at what looked like a good spot. The orchard itself held Canivet's Emerald, plenty of Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, Seedeaters, and the best Rose-throated Becard so far. Birds of prey started to appear overhead at 9:15am. Mainly common vultures, two Great Black-Hawks joined in, and then the prize of up to three King Vultures soared over. We had looked at these in the books, but considering their rarity, didn't dream of seeing them. A Short-tailed Hawk then flew in low over the trees and joined the throng, with a Grey Hawk calling from a nearby tree. This was the best BOP watching so far.

### Chichen Itza

The hotel gardens were covered in the first afternoon and first two hours of the next morning, followed by the ruins. Although the latter was the reason for visiting the area, the former turned out to hold the best of the birds - in particular the gardens of the Hotel

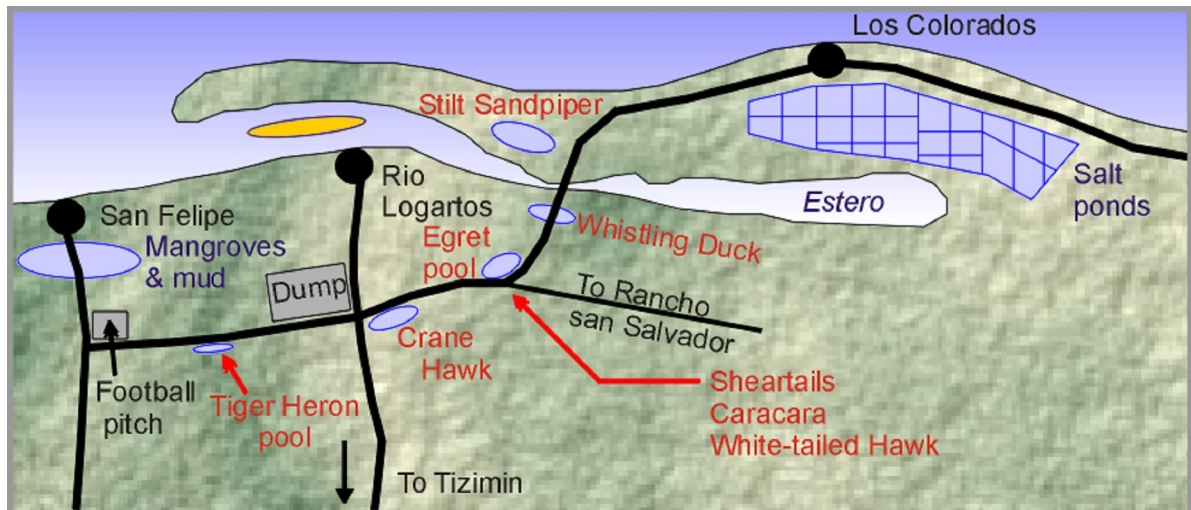


Hacienda. We hadn't even booked into the hotel before discovering the potential of the gardens, which had mixed palm and seeding fruit trees with few leaves predominating - better visibility. Yellow-winged Tanager was an early tick, but many different orioles and warblers were on show. Not many new trip birds were seen on the afternoon, but the variety and proximity made up. The birding ended close to dusk with many small horned bats flying past from the ruins area.



The plan for the following morning was to fill in time around the gardens until the ruins opened at 8am. These were relatively disappointing bird-wise, but, after an early mist, and three Collared Aracaris in the palms of the Club Med, the species in the hotel gardens mounted as the sun broke through. Birds of the morning had to be a final total of seven Aracaris, and also a single Lineated Woodpecker just outside the grounds of the Hacienda. After larking about at the ruins (Grey-breasted Martin and Cave Swallows at eye level from the top of the pyramid), we took one of the tracks from the pyramid which led to a rather impressive grotto. The edges of the woods were covered, with three different wrens, Yellow-green Vireo, and Masked Tityras seen.

### Rio Logartos / San Felipe / Los Colorados area



The plan following Chichen Itza was to head straight for San Felipe, on the northern coast, for a hotel, and put in a few hours at the coastal port of Rio Logartos. The problem was that the road from Tizimin to Rio Logartos quickly turns from forest to more open low scrub and fields, which proved superb country for raptors. It was also the start of Vermilion Flycatcher territory. A lagoon and separate small pool on the journey were also productive. The first (crocodile) lagoon produced Black-necked Stilts and Sora, whilst the pool (Blue-winged Teal originally stopped the car) attracted Indigo Bunting and an almost touchable Scrub Euphonia.

Entering San Felipe, finding a hotel was put off further by some enticing mangrove swamps surrounding tidal mud flats on the south edge of town. It was littered with waders, our first Mangrove Swallows, more Vermillion Flycatchers, and the ridiculous sight of what was probably a feral Muscovy Duck trying to land with dignity on the mud. San Felipe is a small town based on its fishing boats, and a haven for Laughing (and one rogue Bonaparte's) Gulls and Frigatebirds. The day ended spectacularly from the hotel balcony, with hundreds of herons and egrets passing over the water's edge to roost further East in semi-darkness.



One group contained a line of over 100 Tricoloured Herons.

The last day in the Rio Logartos to Los Colorados strip was probably the best of the week, with a totally new avifauna and much easier birding (as compared with the neck-breaking forest work). The morning birding started where it had finished - in semi-darkness on the hotel balcony. The tide was out, leaving plenty of mud for Yellow-crowned Night & Green Herons, along with other egrets. Small numbers of American White Pelicans were fishing in the channel. The mangrove swamps and exposed mud were as good again, with most of yesterday's waders, Belted Kingfisher finally putting in an appearance, and flyovers of White Pelican, ibis, cormorants and waders.

We then aimed for the crossroads, immediately South of Rio Logartos, which signalled the start of the Los Colorados road - the specific target was Lesser Roadrunner, but the road from San Felipe to the crossroads was too lively. A pool next to the road signalled great birding after we had stopped for a static Roadside Hawk. It was only metres from the pool which contained Bare-throated Tiger-Heron and Belted Kingfisher. We stayed here for over half an hour - there were plenty of flypast raptors (Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture amongst Turkey Vulture, Hook-billed Kite, Crane Hawk). This is also where we started to see the first hummers of the day, although only female Ruby-throated Hummingbird was definitely identified.

Roadrunners were absent on the Rio Logartos road, so we stopped after 8km from the crossroads, next to a heron infested lagoon. The track which stemmed from this parking spot (to Rancho San Salvador) was where we saw our first positive Mexican Sheartails (all females), and the odd Rubythroat and Cinnamon. Find of the day (and trip?) was a female Sheartail on its single egg. The nest was placed on a cactus branch - the egg the size of a small fingernail. BOP's here were Crested Caracara, White-tailed Hawks, and a single Short-tailed Hawk.



On the east side of Los Colorados was an expanse of salt ponds, which in the right light have an amazing pink colour. The wind was strong, but dotted around were groups of waders. These included the first of two long awaited waders - Snowy Plover. The second was Stilt Sandpiper, which was eventually tracked down on a shallow pool 100m or so to the north of the road.

Another unsuccessful search for Roadrunners found us in Rio Logartos, another fishing village with a semi-enclosed sea front, with a length of tree covered islands offshore. On exposed sandspits in the channel were collections of birds, including

Skimmers, Long-billed Curlew, gulls, terns, etc. We escaped the many Flamingo touts, but did end up chatting to Diego Martinez, who showed us an impressive collection of his

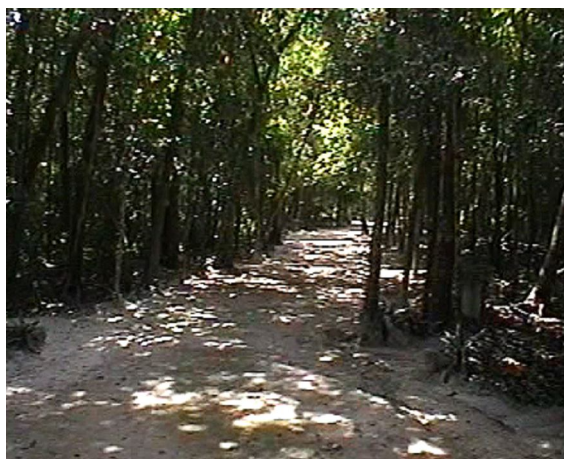


own lists of birds in the area. We were going to allow him to take us on a boat trip, but lack of time persuaded us to drop in to the rubbish tip next to the crossroads (recommended by Diego). Looking around the dump for the last 1 hours of daylight found many Yucatan Wrens & Bobwhites, and two Lesser Roadrunners legging it away at an incredible (and funny) speed. A Laughing Falcon at the edge of the pool here was a lot paler than expected.

### **Jardin Botanico Dr. Alfredo Barrera M.**

A deserved lie in got us to the gates of the Botanical Gardens at 7:30am, but the English-less gardener wouldn't let us in, so we went to the seafront east of Puerto Morelos instead. The area covered was low coastal scrub, bounded by trees and mangrove pools, and was a good move, with long awaited Scissor-tailed Flycatcher along with male Blue Grosbeak & Common Tody Flycatcher. If the gardener had been more accommodating, we would have missed out!

We finally entered the gardens at 9:15. It was reminiscent of our earlier forest birding, but on a smaller scale and with lower tree canopies - not as painful. Just as much patience was needed, however. The gardens were not as impressive as we had expected - a week's solid birding and its toll might have contributed! The local speciality of Yucatan Vireo did appear on a few occasions. Laugh of the morning was adding Moorhen as one of the last species to the trip list. Additional interesting birds in the gardens were Black-capped Tityra, Hooded Warbler, Squirrel Cuckoo and Bright-rumped Attila.



## SPECIES SEEN

### Least Grebe

*Tachybaptus dominicus*

Only one bird seen, about 20 metres from the Club Med shoreline at Coba

### Pied-billed Grebe

*Podylimbus podiceps*

The only site where these were seen was at Coba, with most of the 12 birds in one large group

### American White Pelican

*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

Two groups of 5 & 8 birds were seen flying to roost over the mangroves of San Felipe on the evening of 17<sup>th</sup>, with a line of 20 over the mangroves and 6 off Rio Logartos on 18<sup>th</sup>

### Brown Pelican

*Pelecanus occidentalis*

Cancun lagoon (3 on 13<sup>th</sup>), San Felipe (4 on 17<sup>th</sup>, 20 on 18<sup>th</sup>), Puerto Morelos (3 on 19<sup>th</sup>)



### Double-crested Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax auritus*

Cancun lagoon (3), Coba lagoon (3), San Felipe (5 on sea), Rio Logartos (20 on sea), Puerto Morelos (1 over sea)

### Neotropic Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

5 landed on the lagoon at Coba, 1 over San Felipe mangroves, 40 on the sea off Rio Logartos

### Anhinga

*Anhinga anhinga*

5 birds flew in singles over the mangroves of San Felipe

### Magnificent Frigatebird

*Fregata magnificens*

200+ flew over Cancun lagoon on the first day, 40 were hawking fishing boats at San Felipe seafront, 3 perched on a boat off Rio Logartos, 2 off Los Colorados beach

### Great Blue Heron

*Ardea herodias*

3 on Coba lagoon, and singles at San Felipe on both days

### Great Egret

*Ardea alba*

Lots of birds seen at the end of the week at the North of the peninsular - 100+ past San Felipe on the first evening, ~40 off Rio Logartos on the sea, ~70 on a pool next to the Los Colorados road, and 2 on marsh south of Cancun

### Reddish Egret

*Egretta rufescens*

The only birds seen were ~10 amongst the hundreds of herons and egrets flying to roost from the hotel balcony at San Felipe

### Tricoloured Heron

*Egretta tricolor*

The most common heron in the San Felipe flypast - among the 250+ birds were large groups, one with ~100 birds. An extra 10 were on the pool next to Los Colorados road, and a single bird on the marshy lagoon east of Puerto Morelos

### Little Blue Heron

*Egretta caerulea*

Highest concentration was 10 on a pool next to the Los Colorados road, with 1 next to Cancun golf course, a white phase bird in the reeds of Coba lagoon, 1 in a lagoon North of Tizimin, 2 at San Felipe

### Snowy Egret

*Egretta thula*

~40 were flying past San Felipe, 10 to roost over San Felipe mangroves, and ~30 on the pool next to Los Colorados road

### Cattle Egret

*Bubulcus ibis*

Groups of 12 (journey - 14<sup>th</sup>) and ~50 (journey - 17<sup>th</sup>). Singles on Vigia Chico road and Chichen Itza

### Green Heron

*Butorides virescens*

1 perched on a tree on the edge of Cancun golf course, 1 at Rio Logartos, 2 on the



exposed tidal mud at San Felipe, 1 on the marshes south of Cancun

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea*

6 birds were seen in the half light of dawn on the tidal mud in front of the hotel at San Felipe



**Bare-throated Tiger Heron** *Tigrisoma mexicanum*

A juvenile bird was on a small pool between San Felipe and the crossroads just South of Rio Logartos, and a second juvenile bird was in front of the mangroves at Rio Logartos

**Wood Stork** *Mycteria americana*

~15 birds were on the pool beside the Los Colorados road

**White Ibis** *Eudocimus albus*

On the first evening at the San Felipe mangroves, 12 birds flew overhead. 40 were seen in the Rio Logartos to Los Colorados area on the 18<sup>th</sup>, with 8 on a hotel pitch and putt course in Cancun on 19<sup>th</sup>

**Caribbean Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber*

A group of 7 birds flew over the Vigia Chico road on 16<sup>th</sup>

**Black-bellied Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna autumnalis*

An impressive collection of ~100 birds were on one of the shallow lagoons next to the Los Colorados road, with some birds presumably displaying to each other



**Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors*

Three groups of bird were seen - 8 in a small pool next to the Tizimin to Rio Logartos road, 3 in the shallow lagoon on the opposite side of the Los Colorados road to the Whistling Ducks, and 6 birds on a pool in the mangroves East of Puerto Morelos

**Black Vulture** *Coragyps atratus*

Very common - seen on most days in good numbers

**Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura*

Very common - seen on most days in good numbers

**Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture** *Cathartes burrovianus*

The only birds seen were in the Rio Logartos area. From a distance, they are very similar to Turkey Vultures, with an almost identical wing pattern and jizz. Only closer views show the yellow, instead of pink, skin around the face. Because of the difficulty in identifying each bird, not much attention was paid to subsequent birds, but at least 10, and probably many more, were seen throughout the 18<sup>th</sup>

**King Vulture** *Sarcoramphus papa*

Perhaps the surprise of the trip - an unexpected and rare bird. The first was seen soaring over the Vigia Chico road while searching through the common vultures (a couple of Great Black-Hawks had already been seen amongst them). A further 2 birds were seen in the same thermals above one of the orchards off the road. They are impressive not only because of their rarity value, but also the distinctive shape and wing patterns next to their mundane mainly black cousins

**Osprey** *Pandion heliaetus*

2 over the Cancun lagoon, 4 on the journey to and around San Felipe on 17<sup>th</sup>, and 1 bird over San Felipe on the 18<sup>th</sup>

**Hook-billed Kite***Chondrohierax uncinatus*

A pair of birds was seen briefly flying away on the journey to Rio Logartos, not too many miles South of the town. They were identified mainly on their distinctive pinched in wing shape. A single bird was seen the next day over the San Felipe to Rio Logartos road - the long hooked bill could also be seen clearly on this individual

**Crane Hawk***Geranospiza caerulescens*

A bird over the San Felipe to Rio Logartos road was initially thought to be another Hook-billed Kite (it was shortly after the last of those seen), but closer views showed the shorter bill and orange legs. A second bird was perched on a dead tree next to a pool just East of the Rio Logartos crossroads, and the orange legs could again be clearly seen

**Common Black-Hawk***Buteogallus anthracinus*

Surprisingly, only 2 were seen. The first was amongst soaring Vultures shortly after leaving Cancun for the toll road on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The second was above the Vigia Chico road on the 15<sup>th</sup>

**Great Black-Hawk***Buteogallus urubitinga*

2 birds were seen within a short time of each other amongst vultures over the orchard off the Vigia Chico road, and another 2 singles were over the Los Colorados road

**Roadside Hawk***Buteo magnirostris*

The first bird was perched in dead trees next to the Vigia Chico road on 15<sup>th</sup>, staying put as we passed it and allowing close approach using the car as a hide. A second bird was perched in an open tree next to the pool containing the Tiger Heron on the San Felipe to Rio Logartos road. It was stopping for this bird that found the pool and the variety of birds surrounding it

**Grey Hawk***Buteo nitidus*

2 birds were along the Vigia Chico road. A further 3 birds were seen in the Vigia Chico road area the next morning, and 1 bird was seen on the journey from Tizimin to San Felipe (again perched near the roadside)

**Short-tailed Hawk***Buteo brachyurus*

1 flew in to the vultures over the orchard off the Vigia Chico road, and a second flew over the Los Colorados road

**White-tailed Hawk***Buteo albicaudatus*

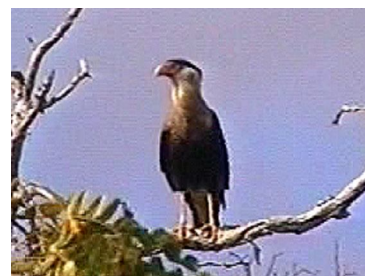
Up to 4 separate birds were seen over the Rio Logartos road. All adults, the single black tail band is striking against the white underparts

**Red-tailed Hawk***Buteo jamaicensis*

The Peterson field guide states that this species is absent in the Yucatan peninsular, so the appearance of 5 individuals, 4 of which were adults, was a surprise. 4 were on the road from Tizimin to Rio Logartos, with one devouring an Iguana, the 5<sup>th</sup> bird being seen circling over the Los Colorados road

**Crested Caracara***Caracara cheriway*

A single bird was seen briefly in flight on the journey from Tizimin to San Felipe on 17<sup>th</sup>, and a further 4 birds were much more obliging next to the Los Colorados road, with 3 perched close to in dead trees

**Laughing Falcon***Herpetotheres cachinnans*

A single bird was perched briefly on a small dead tree next to the rubbish dump at the Rio Logartos crossroads, before flying off. The supposed buff underparts and crown were very much whiter than expected, as was the large size

**American Kestrel***Falco sparverius*

2 separate females were seen on the road from Tizimin to Rio Logartos



**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*

A female was perched in a tree in the centre of the Cancun golf course on the first morning

**Bat Falcon** *Falco ruficularis*

The first decent bird of the trip, surprisingly seen perched on the airport buildings as we entered the arrivals lounge. A second bird was perched at the very top of the mast on the Club Med Hotel at Coba early morning, and 2 separate birds were on dead trees in the vicinity of an otherwise quiet pool from the Vigia Chico road

**Peregrine falcon** *Falco peregrinus*

A single bird was perched next to the mudflats of the San Felipe mangroves

**Plain Chachalaca** *Ortalis vetula*

4 birds were found in bushes next to the airport while waiting for the bus to leave for the hotels. We thought this would be the first sighting of many, but the only subsequent bird was in a tree near San Felipe on the last full day of the trip

**Black-throated Bobwhite** *Colinus nigrogularis*

The first probable group was no more than a blur of wings as they flew off into the scrub near the Vigia Chico road on 17<sup>th</sup>. The first discernable birds were seen behind the rubbish dump at the Rio Logartos crossroads late the next afternoon. The first mixed group of males and females was quite approachable, with a final total of ~80 birds, most of which were running away under cover of the low scrub

**Limpkin** *Aramus guarauna*

3 birds were on Coba lagoon - 2 together at the western (reedy) end, and a single bird flying along the edge of the opposite shore

**Sora** *Porzana carolina*

Surprisingly, the only crane seen was a male Sora, feeding along the edge of the larger pool by the side of the Tizimin to Rio Logartos road

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

One of the last new species to be seen on the trip - at least 10 birds were on the shallow lagoons to the south of Cancun

**American Coot** *Fulica americana*

The greatest numbers (in the hundreds) were on the shallow lagoons to the South of Cancun, with an additional 6 on a shallow lagoon beside the Los Colorados road, and a (first) single bird close in on Coba lagoon

**Northern Jacana** *Jacana spinosa*

The only bird seen was a juvenile feeding close in for a short time on the hotel shore of Coba lagoon

**American Oystercatcher** *Himantopus palliatus*

2 birds were together on one of the exposed sandbars in the Rio Logartos channel

**Black-necked Stilt** *Himantopus mexicanus*

A common bird in the Rio Logartos area, with ~100 birds on the San Felipe mangroves, and a further ~70 on the egret infested lagoon 8km East of the crossroads. The only other birds seen were 3 on the lagoon next to the Tizimin to Rio Logartos road

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

Greatest numbers were on the San Felipe mangroves, where there were probably ~100 birds. The only other sighting was of a single bird on the shore of the Cancun lagoon

**Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus*

~25 birds were in the above mixed flock at the salt ponds

**Wilson's Plover** *Charadrius wilsonia*

4 birds were resting in the mixed wader flock at the Los Colorados salt ponds

**Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus*

3 birds were together and a single at two pools next to the Vigia Chico road

**Snowy (Kentish) Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*

~10 birds were amongst a mixed flock of waders (together) on some exposed mud in the

salt pond complex east of Los Colorados

**Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus*

8 birds were roosting on the exposed mud of the mangroves at San Felipe on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and a further 5 were on lagoons next to the Los Colorados road on the 18<sup>th</sup>

**Long-billed Curlew** *Numenius americanus*

1 bird was seen - on the outside of a mixed gull and tern flock on some exposed mud in the channel at Rio Logartos. The length of the bill on this bird has to be seen to be believed!

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius*

This species was seen intermittently, with all birds in non-breeding plumage. 1 was on the shore of Cancun lagoon, 2 in the San Felipe area on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and 5 separate birds were at various points along the Los Colorados road on the 18<sup>th</sup>

**Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria*

1 bird was on the lagoon next to the Tizimin to Rio Logartos road, with a further 4 birds on lagoons along the Los Colorados road

**Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca*

~20 birds were near the road on the mangroves of San Felipe on 17<sup>th</sup>. As with Lesser Yellowlegs, they were not specifically looked for on the following day

**Willet** *Catoptrophorus semipalmata*

Most of the 50 or so birds present on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> at San Felipe mangroves were close in

**Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes*

~10 birds were seen on the first day at the San Felipe mangroves. They were probably also there on the second day, but not looked for. A further 10 birds were on the shallow lagoon next to Los Colorados

**Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

Up to 20 birds were at the Rio Logartos seafront, with a lot of the birds perched in and around the fishing boats. ~40 birds were on the seafront at Los Colorados

**Knot** *Calidris canutus*

~35 birds were on the seafront at Los Colorados

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba*

The only location where these were seen for definite was in the Los Colorados area, where ~100 were on the salt ponds in one large group, and further small parties were with Turnstones on the seafront

**Western Sandpiper** *Calidris mauri*

The most common stint, with ~30 birds on the exposed mud at San Felipe mangroves, and larger numbers at the salt ponds (~50) and shallow lagoon (~100) near Los Colorados

**Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla*

5 birds were feeding in the scum on the edge of the Los Colorados salt ponds, and ~100 were on the shallow lagoon to the west of the village

**Stilt Sandpiper** *Calidris himantopus*

Another of those long awaited species. A pool to the west of Los Colorados seemed to have plenty of waders. Closer inspection found a single winter plumaged Stilt Sandpiper feeding with a small group of Dowitchers and a couple of hundred mixed stints

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*

2 birds were amongst Laughing Gulls on Los Colorados seafront

**American Herring Gull** *Larus smithsonianus*

2 birds were on the Rio Logartos seafront with large numbers of Laughing Gulls, and ~15 on the Los Colorados seafront

**Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia*

A single winter plumaged bird amongst the Laughing Gulls on the Rio Logartos seafront was something of a surprise, since it is probably further South than the usual wintering range

**Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla*

After a lone bird perched on a post in the lagoon at Cancun, up to 250 were in the Rio Logartos to Los Colorados area

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*

~30 birds were with other gulls and terns on one of the Los Colorados salt ponds



**Forster's Tern***Sterna forsteri*

A group of 6 non-breeding birds were amongst other seabirds on some exposed mud in the Rio Logartos channel

**Royal Tern***Sterna maximus*

~10 birds were in the Rio Logartos seafront area, with a further ~30 birds in the centre of one of the Los Colorados salt ponds

**Sandwich Tern***Sterna sandvicensis*

3 birds were with the mixed seabirds in the Rio Logartos channel, with 1 flying past, and a single bird was perched outside the McDonald's beside Cancun lagoon

**Black Skimmer***Rynchops niger*

2 of the exposed islands of mud in the Rio Logartos channel held groups of Skimmers. Unfortunately, they were a little distant, but the total number was ~50 birds

**Red-billed Pigeon***Columba flavirostris*

Only 2 distant birds were seen - in the clearing on the road to Punta Laguna

**Zenaida Dove***Zenaida aurita*

Only a few birds were present at the North of the Yucatan peninsular - 2 from the San Felipe hotel balcony at dusk, 2 along the Rio Logartos to Los Colorados road, and 2 at the Los Colorados seafront

**White-winged Dove***Zenaida asiatica*

This was easily the commonest and most regular of the larger pigeons and doves. 15 were on the golf course at Cancun, 20 in the Rio Logartos to Los Colorados area on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 8 in the Chichen Itza area, and 5 at San Felipe on the 17<sup>th</sup>

**Common Ground-Dove***Columbina passerina*

Ground-Doves were easily the most common dove seen. Up to 10 Common Ground-Doves were seen on most days, with perhaps up to 100 in the Rio Logartos / Los Colorados area on the 18<sup>th</sup>

**Ruddy Ground-Dove***Columbina talpacoti*

With so many Ground-Doves seen, checking each group of birds for species was quickly abandoned. Up to a dozen were seen on the first couple of days, and perhaps ~50 in the Chichen Itza area. However, the numbers for both species after the first part of the trip could almost be regarded as interchangeable

**Olive-throated Parakeet***Aratinga nana*

Many sightings of parrots and parakeets were made, but these were easily separated by their long tails. Good views of the birds (including the olive chest) were only actually seen on the last morning, at the mangroves East of Puerto Morelos, when 2 birds landed in a close tree. Others were at Cancun golf course (4), journey to Coba (20), clearing south of Punta Laguna (1), Coba (2), Vigia Chico road (12 on 15<sup>th</sup>, 5 on 16<sup>th</sup>), and the Los Colorados road (2)

**White-fronted Parrot***Amazona albifrons*

Where possible, Parrots were checked to see if they were Yucatan (better separated by the dark ear coverts than the yellow lores or amount of red in the wing). This was made difficult by the fact that a lot of the sightings were fast fly-by. However, we saw nothing to suggest that the Parrots we could identify were anything other than this species. Journey from Cancun to Coba (18), Vigia Chico road (4 on 15<sup>th</sup>, 5 on 16<sup>th</sup>), Chichen Itza (2 on 16<sup>th</sup>, 10 on 17<sup>th</sup>), Los Colorados road (2)



**Squirrel Cuckoo***Piaya cayana*

These birds in the flesh are every bit as impressive as in the books, and were seen in more than reasonable numbers - Coba area (3), Vigia Chico road (2), Botanical Gardens (1). All these birds were in singles

**Groove-billed Ani***Crotophaga sulcirostris*

Both species of Ani are superficially similar until the bills are seen well, but this is probably the only one that occurs in the Yucatan. Nevertheless, all were checked and confirmed as Groove-billed, and all were in groups of at least a pair of birds. Cancun to Punta Laguna (2), Coba lagoon area (6), Vigia Chico road (25), Chichen Itza area (20), Chichen Itza to San Felipe (1), San Felipe (10), Los Colorados road (10), Puerto Morelos (3)

**Lesser Roadrunner***Geococcyx velox*

The main objective on the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> was to drive the Los Colorados road early for sunning Roadrunners, but other good birds on the way put this back a while. This was probably not the reason for missing the birds (if there were any to be seen from the car). Mid-afternoon, a local birder put us on to the rubbish dump area, but added that they showed in the morning. After a long search, an individual legged it from its hiding place in a bush (while I was filming Yucatan Wren). A second bird was seen just before dusk (briefly) legging it just as fast and giving briefer views.

**Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl***Glaucidium brasilianum*

The first of two birds was seen along the track just over 6km along the Vigia Chico road, perched out in the open on a horizontal branch. The second was lured by a tape intended to attract warblers. Shortly after starting the tape, what seemed like an echo was heard, and the bird actually put in a prolonged appearance after about 10 minutes. A group of Social Flycatchers were more than unhappy at its presence

**Vaux's Swift***Chaetura vauxi*

Parties of birds were seen every day, with a minimum of 3 and maximum of ~70+. They were all presumed Vaux's (as opposed to Chimney) mainly due to the distribution patterns. The latter migrate from South to North America via the West Indies, and this usually between April and May

**Wedge-tailed Sabrewing***Campylopterus curvipennis*

3 separate females were seen along the Vigia Chico road, although one seemed to be in the company of another bird (by call) - presumably a male? 2 were perching birds which allowed close views, showing long sleek body, whitish front, and greenish back

**Green-breasted Mango***Anthracothorax prevostii*

Separate singles of male and female were on Cancun golf course on the first day. The female at first looked to have a light breast, but the thin dark streak was seen when it turned. The male is very impressive, seeming all dark glossy green with a darker area on the breast

**Canivet's Emerald***Chlorostilbon canivetii*

The Vigia Chico road was the best place to see these birds, with 5 seen over the two days there. Females are quite distinctive, but it is the males which are particularly impressive, showing a very deep forked tail if seen reasonably well

**Buff-bellied Hummingbird***Amazilia yucatanensis*

Another very distinctive hummer even when seen briefly - the light coloured belly is very easy to see contrasting with the darker chest. 1 was at Coba and another on the Vigia Chico road

**Cinnamon Hummingbird***Amazilia rutila*

Easily the most common hummingbird seen, and very distinctive with its orange breast



even on brief fly pasts. Cancun golf course (4), Coba (1), Vigia Chico road (4), Chichen Itza area (7), Rio Logartos (1), Los Colorados road (2), Puerto Morelos mangroves (1)

**White-bellied Emerald**

*Amazilia candida*

2 birds were seen, the first at Coba, the second on the last morning at the Botanical Gardens

**Mexican Sheartail**

*Doricha eliza*

The place to see these magnificent birds is on the North coast area. After struggling a bit initially on the 18<sup>th</sup> on the road from San Felipe to the Rio Logartos crossroads, the first positive identification was the unbelievable sight of a female on a single egg, with the tiny nest perched on a cactus leaf (in a clearing opposite the lagoon 8km along the Los Colorados road from the crossroads). A further 7 birds (all female) were seen along the Los Colorados road. Late afternoon, while searching for the roadrunners behind the rubbish dump, another 2 females were seen, as well as a superb male perched and showing the spectacular shape and colours



**Ruby-throated Hummingbird**

*Archilochus colubris*

2 females were seen - either side of the Rio Logartos crossroads while looking for Sheartails. The females look superficially similar to Sheartails, the best distinguishing feature being the straight bill

**Black-headed Trogon**

*Trogon melanocephalus*

Both species of trogon seen were stunning, as much for the eery way they slowly look around as their colours. The first in the woods at Coba ruins was present on two occasions, with a further 3 on the Vigia Chico road perched out in the open



**Violaceous Trogon**

*Trogon violaceus*

Superficially like the Black-headed Trogon, the tail pattern of this species was easy to see as being different to the above, and with a different coloured eye ring. The bird in the forest at Coba ruins had to be worked for, but the second on the Vigia Chico road was perched over the road out in the open

**Belted Kingfisher**

*Megaceryle alcyon*

Kingfishers were expected to be more common than the reality. There was plenty of suitable habitat and perching posts, but it took till the San Felipe mangroves and pool between San Felipe and Rio Logartos crossroads on the last full day to see 2 females

**Blue-crowned Motmot**

*Momotus momota*

2 separate birds were seen in the woods of the Coba ruins. With the black crown over turquoise eyebrows, and black face mask, this species is possibly even more stunning than Turquoise-browed

**Turquoise-browed Motmot**

*Eumomota superciliosa*

3 separate birds were seen - 1 at Punta Laguna, 1 in the grounds of the Hotel Hacienda (Chichen Itza), and a 3<sup>rd</sup> in the ruins area of Chichen Itza. Only 2 of the 3 had full racquets on the tail



**Collared Aracari**

*Pteroglossus torquatus*

3 birds were feeding on large berries in the grounds of the Club Med Hotel just after

dawn on the 17<sup>th</sup>. A further group of 3 and close single bird were seen shortly after in the horse paddock behind the Hotel Hacienda

**Keel-billed Toucan** *Rhamphastos sulfuratus*

Although only seen very briefly, the sight of a single bird flying low over the trees of the Vigia Chico road was striking

**Yucatan Woodpecker** *Melanerpes pygmaeus*

As with the above, this bird was fairly obvious once seen - the size was more that of a Great Spotted Woodpecker, with much smaller and finer bill than Golden-fronted. Also, with good views, the yellow completely surrounding the bill can be seen. Singles were seen at Cancun golf course, Coba woods, Vigia Chico road, and the Botanical Gardens

**Golden-fronted Woodpecker** *Melanerpes aurifrons*

Very much the common Woodpecker of the area, with up to 4 in one tree. Although superficially similar to Yucatan Woodpecker in colour, the overall size (similar to Red-fronted of North America) and also length of bill make it easy to separate with a little experience. The Yucatan subspecies *dubius* has red lores, which in the main hides the "golden front". Coba (5), Vigia Chico road (20), Chichen Itza (40), Rio Logartos area (4)

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** *Shryapicus varius*

A single over-wintering bird was seen on Cancun golf course

**Ladder-backed Woodpecker** *Picoides scalaris*

Easily picked out by its small size and pied appearance. Road from Cancun to Coba (1), Vigia Chico road (2), Rio Logartos (1)

**Smoky-brown Woodpecker** *Veniliornis fumigatus*

Only 1 bird was seen, on the Vigia Chico road. Although it doesn't look much in the books, the rich chocolate brown and red cap of this species render it more exciting in real life

**Lineated Woodpecker** *Dryocopus lineatus*

A total of 4 birds were seen along the Vigia Chico road on the 15<sup>th</sup>, with the last bird dusting itself in the road as dusk approached. A much closer and more obliging bird was in the dead tree at the entrance to the Hotel Hacienda at Chichen Itza on the 17<sup>th</sup>

**Tawny-winged Woodcreeper** *Dendrocincla anabatina*

Although the plain Woodcreepers look superficially similar, they didn't present too much difficulty. It is in the same order of size as Ruddy, but the bicoloured wings are quite obvious, as is the distinctive eye-stripe. 1 was seen next to the first Mayan ruins at Coba

**Ruddy Woodcreeper** *Dendrocincla homochroa*

Unfortunately, both birds seen were very brief, but the size and overall uniform red-brown appearance are evident. 1 was amongst the Ant-Tanagers before the clearing on the Tulum to Felipe Carrillo Puerto road, the second beside the Vigia Chico road

**Olivaceous Woodcreeper** *Sittasomus griseicapillus*

This bird is much smaller than the above two, and has a plain grey-brown head, which contrasts with the more red-brown wings. 2 were in the woods of the Coba ruins

**Ivory-billed Woodcreeper** *Xiphorhynchus flavigaster*

This was the first woodcreeper species seen, and was picked up on call by a guide in the woodland of Puerto Laguna. Subsequent birds were at Coba forest (3) and the Vigia Chico road (2)

**Barred Antshrike** *Thamnophilus doliatus*

Although a male was hoped for, the single female next to the Vigia Chico road was almost as good, with the staring white eye the most obvious feature. Unfortunately, the bird remained hidden amongst leaves for most of its short stay

**Greenish Elaenia** *Myiopagis viridicata*

2 birds were seen on the Vigia Chico road

**Caribbean Elaenia** *Elaenia martinica*

The elaenias are not particularly exciting, but do seem to have a distinctive (narrow) head shape as compared with other flycatchers. 1 was seen in front of the Coba Club Med hotel

**Common Tody-Flycatcher** *Todirostrum cinereum*

This was one of the surprises of the trip, and is a stunning little bird, with a very neotropical jizz. The first was seen very early on the first day, in the first corner of bushes searched at the edge of the Cancun golf course. A second bird was in the Botanical Gardens on the last morning



**Yellow-olive Flycatcher***Tolomyias sulphureus*

A calling bird at first unidentified was found to be this species when looking at video evidence. The dark eye, which originally through a spanner in the works for this bird, may indicate a juvenile

**Least Flycatcher***Empidonax minimus*

Coba (1), Vigia Chico road (1)

**Tropical Pewee***Contopus cinereus*

1 bird on the track stop between Tulum and Felipe Carillo Puerto and 2 birds on the Vigia Chico road were separated from the very similar Eastern Wood-pewee on call (one of which was heard at the latter site). More birds were probably overlooked

**Vermilion Flycatcher***Pyrocephalus rubinus*

The best place to see these birds is on the North coast, where they are fairly common and very easy to see. 4 birds were seen on the road from Tizimin to Rio Logartos, 9 sightings on the two days at San Felipe mangroves (although some will have been of the same birds), and a further 6 birds in the Rio Logartos / Los Colorados area

**Social Flycatcher***Myiozetetes similis*

By far the most common of the three yellow and brown flycatchers, and very distinctive due to their small size and narrower, shorter bill. They live up to their name, with almost all birds in noisy groups of up to 12 birds (Vigia Chico road, where they were plainly unhappy at a Pygmy-Owl tape). A nesting colony was found at the track stop between Tulum and Felipe Carillo Puerto. Cancun golf course (2), road from Cancun to Coba (1), track between Tulum and Felipe Carillo Puerto (4+), Coba Club Med hotel (6), Vigia Chico road (28), Chichen Itza area (45)

**Great Kiskadee***Pitangus sulphuratus*

Best separated from Boat-billed Flycatcher by the rufous wings. Cancun golf course (group of 3), Vigia Chico road (4), road from Chichen Itza to Rio Logartos (3), Los Colorados road (3)

**Boat-billed Flycatcher***Megarynchus pitangua*

Although the bill can be seen to be much larger than that of Great Kiskadee when observed well, we found the most reliable feature to be the plain brown back. Vigia Chico road (4), Chichen Itza area (8), Botanical Gardens (2)

**Tropical Kingbird***Tyrannus melancholicus*

The first grey and yellow Kingbirds were identified as Tropical. Subsequently, it was obvious that Couch's was more common than we had at first thought. Since the best distinguishing feature of the latter is its shorter and more thickly based bill, not all birds were split. Approximate numbers were therefore Cancun golf course (5), road from Cancun to Coba (24), Vigia Chico road (10), Rio Logartos / Los Colorados area (9), Puerto Morelos (2)

**Couch's Kingbird***Tyrannus couchii*

Due to the similarities between this and Tropical Kingbird, the first positive identification was made on the track stop between Tulum and Felipe Carillo Puerto. Many birds were subsequently specifically identified, but there were probably more of this species than the numbers suggest. Vigia Chico road (4), Chichen Itza (1), San Felipe (1), Los Colorados road (2), Botanical Gardens (4)

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher***Tyrannus forficatus*

A long awaited species since my first trip to Florida Keys in 1992. A lone bird was perched in the open in front of the mangroves east of Puerto Morelos. It was presumably

an adult female by its long tail and lack of colour (until flight, when it showed rust coloured axillary area). From a distance, a passing glance likens them to mockingbirds - how many more were missed due to the abundance of the latter birds?

**Yucatan Flycatcher**

*Myiarchus yucatanensis*

As with the two above species, separating this from Dusky-capped Flycatcher is difficult. Because of this, many of these birds were passed over if they could not be seen well. However, singles at Vigia Chico road and Chichen Itza clearly had rusty edged secondaries, and white edged tertials. Another bird at the Botanical Gardens seemed to have more rust edged tertials, which would indicate Dusky-capped Flycatcher, but wasn't seen well enough to confirm this

**Brown-crested Flycatcher**

*Myiarchus tyrannulus*

Since the distinction between this species and Great Crested Flycatcher is very subtle, and distinctive field marks could not be seen, we unashamedly identified the 2 larger flycatchers seen as Brown-crested due to the extreme rarity of Great Crested in the area. Both birds were at Chichen Itza

**Bright-rumped Attila**

*Attila spadiceus*

1 was close in at the Coba Mayan ruins, and the other a little more distant at the Botanical Gardens

**Masked Tityra**

*Tityra semifasciata*

2 very smart males were seen, one perched in the open briefly next to the Vigia Chico road, and the second at the top of a tree in the woods of the Chichen Itza ruins

**Black-crowned Tityra**

*Tityra inquisitor*

As with the above, these birds are often in mixed parties - single females were seen on the Vigia Chico road and in the Botanical Gardens

**Rose-throated Becard**

*Pachyramphus aglaiae*

This is one of those species where the colouring on the female is vastly different from the male, but is equally as impressive. They usually occurred in mixed bird parties - Coba woods (1 male and 2 females), Vigia Chico road (1 male and 2 females), Chichen Itza (1 female)

**Tree Swallow**

*Tachycineta bicolor*

The greatest concentration of these over-wintering birds was over the track between Tulum and Felipe Carillo Puerto. There were ~200 birds (mixed in with smaller numbers of Vaux's Swift), and their direction of flight indicated that they might have begun migration. Smaller numbers of birds were in the Rio Logartos area (~30) and the Vigia Chico road (2)

**Mangrove Swallow**

*Tachycineta albilinea*

The North of the peninsular was the place for these, with ~75 birds over the San Felipe mangroves, and a further ~60 feeding over the Los Colorados salt ponds

**Purple Martin**

*Progne subis*

The same difficulties arose with this bird as the above species. Single females were among the hordes of *hirundines* over the Tulum - Felipe Carillo Puerto track and Chichen Itza hotels, with a superb male on wires next to a Grey-breasted Martin at the San Felipe mangroves

**Grey-breasted Martin**

*Progne chalybea*

The lack of grey collar and nasal area (as compared with female Purple Martin) are not as easy to see in flight as expected, so the odd Martins seen earlier in the week were not specifically identified. 4 birds at eye level from the Chichen Itza pyramid were this species, and a single bird at the San Felipe mangroves obligingly perched on a wire next to a male Purple Martin

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow**

*Stelgidopteryx serripennis ridgwayi*

3 birds of the Ridgeway's subspecies were hawking for some time over the lagoon at Punta Laguna, and a single bird was over the lagoon at Coba

**Cave Swallow**

*Petrochelidon fulva*

Although Cliff Swallows are only a casual migrant through the Yucatan area, the ~50 birds over the Chichen Itza hotels could be identified as Cave Swallows by their obvious clean throats

**American Pipit**

*Anthus rubescens*

1 bird at the Los Colorados salt ponds

**Yucatan Wren***Campylorhynchus yucatanicus*

After a fruitless search along the Los Colorados road for these (where it was obvious that a closer look would have been needed anyway), at least 4 birds were behind the rubbish dump at the Rio Logartos crossroads. It was while filming these that the first roadrunner appeared

**Spot-breasted Wren***Thryothorus maculipectus*

This wren seems to have a reputation as being difficult to see, but we saw 3 birds very well - overgrown scrub adjacent to Coba Club Med (1), woods of Chichen Itza ruins (2)

**White-browed (Carolina) Wren***Thryothorus ludovicianus albinucha*

This Yucatan & Guatemala subspecies was seen twice - 1 bird at Coba and 1 at Chichen Itza

**(Southern) House Wren***Troglodytes aedon musculus*

1 bird was seen reasonably well in the undergrowth and low branches of the Botanical Gardens

**White-bellied Wren***Uropsila leucogastra*

Vigia Chico road (2 separate birds), Chichen Itza woods (1 near Spot-breasted Wren)

**Grey Catbird***Demetella carolinensis*

Seen regularly in small numbers - Cancun golf course (2), Coba woods (3), Vigia Chico road (6), Chichen Itza (2), Botanical Gardens (2)

**Black Catbird***Melanoptila glabirostris*

As with Grey catbird, seen regularly throughout the week - Tulum to Felipe Carillo Puerto track (1), Vigia Chico road (5), Chichen Itza (2), Botanical Gardens (1)

**Tropical Mockingbird***Mimus gilvus*

Despite the lack of Northern Mockingbird, the two species are easy to separate anyway, with the Tropical birds having much less white in the wings. They are very common, being seen on every day in numbers up to ~50. We found on the last day that Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is superficially similar when looked at quickly and from a distance

**Wood Thrush***Catharus mustelina*

4 were in Coba woods and 1 in the Botanical Gardens, all typically rooting around on the ground under cover of the trees

**Clay-coloured Robin***Turdus grayi*

Coba (2), Vigia Chico road (1), Chichen Itza (6), Rio Logartos (2)

**Blue-grey Gnatcatcher***Polioptila caerulea*

Vigia Chico road (2), Chichen Itza (5), Rio Logartos (2), Los Colorados road (4)

**Tropical Gnatcatcher***Polioptila plumbea*

2 birds were seen, a female on the Vigia Chico road, and breeding plumaged male at the Botanical Gardens. The eye stripe is obviously large on both sexes (as compared to Caribbean)

**Green Jay***Cyanocorax yncas*

"Oriole bush" in clearing south of Punta Laguna (1), track off Tulum to Felipe Carillo Puerto road (1), Vigia Chico road (6)

**Brown Jay***Cyanocorax morio*

These turned out to be a very noisy and quite unattractive bird, as well as being larger than expected. Despite their noise levels, they were very difficult to approach. Vigia Chico road (30), Botanical Gardens (6)

**Yucatan Jay***Cyanocorax yucatanicus*

A startling bird when seen in close up - the best views were of 2 juveniles pacing the bushes around a vast line of ants working their way over the Vigia Chico road. Other birds were at the clearing South of Punta Laguna (15 in one group), track off Tulum to Felipe Carillo Puerto road (2), Vigia Chico road (2 birds displaying), Puerto Morelos mangroves (3)





**White-eyed Vireo** *Vireo griseus*

A common bird, seen on almost every day, with up to 20 each day

**Mangrove Vireo** *Vireo pallens*

2 birds were in the Rio Logartos area - 1 opposite the San Felipe to Rio Logartos crossroads pool, and 1 in bush next to the Los Colorados road

**Yellow-throated Vireo** *Vireo flavifrons*

A single bird was in the gardens of the Hotel Hacienda, Chichen Itza

**Yellow-green Vireo** *Vireo flavoviridis*

2 separate birds were in the woods within the Chichen Itza ruin site, and a third was singing at the Botanical Gardens

**Yucatan Vireo** *Vireo magister*

3 of these rather drab vireos were in the Botanical Gardens

**Lesser Greenlet** *Hylophilus decurtatus*

A single bird was in the first clearing along the Vigia Chico road, and up to 3 birds were in the Botanical Gardens

**Rufous-browed Peppershrike** *Cyclarhis gujanensis*

1 bird was in the woods beyond the corner of the clearing, found when walking the track between Tulum and Felipe Carillo Puerto. 2 birds were in one of the bird parties next to the Vigia Chico road

**Scrub Euphonia** *Euphonia affinis*

Coba Woods (3), track off Tulum to Felipe Carillo Puerto road (1 male), Vigia Chico road (1 male), Chichen Itza hotel gardens (2 pairs building nests), Chichen Itza (2 more males), pool next to Tizimin to Rio Logartos road (1 very close singing male), Botanical Gardens (1 male)

**Yellow-throated Euphonia** *Euphonia hirundinacea*

2 males were seen, 1 singing in the woods at Coba, the other next to the Vigia Chico road

**Blue-winged Warbler** *Vermivora pinus*

2 separate males were in the trees next to the Vigia Chico road

**Northern Parula** *Parula americana*

Cancun golf course (3), Vigia Chico road (3), Chichen Itza (4), San Felipe (1), Los Colorados road (5)

**Yellow Warbler** *Dendroica petechia aestiva*

Due to the presence of the "Mangrove Warbler" subspecies, only males were positively identified. Cancun golf course (1), Chichen Itza (2)

**"Mangrove Warbler"** *Dendroica petechia erithachorides*

Cancun golf course (1), San Felipe mangroves (4)

**Magnolia Warbler** *Dendroica magnolia*

The most common wood warbler seen, with up to 12 birds every day

**Black-throated Green Warbler** *Dendroica virens*

Punta Laguna (4), Coba (3), Chichen Itza (5), Botanical Gardens (1)

**Blackburnian Warbler** *Dendroica fusca*

6 birds were at Chichen Itza, around the hotel gardens and woods surrounding the ruins

**Palm Warbler** *Dendroica palmarum*


Cancun golf course (5), Punta Laguna (1), Coba (1), track from Tulum to Felipe Carillo Puerto road (2), Vigia Chico road (1), Los Colorados road (2), Botanical Gardens (5)

**Black-and -White Warbler** *Mniotilta varia*

Cancun golf course (1), Punta Laguna woods (5), Vigia Chico road (3), Chichen Itza (4)

**American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla*

Most of the birds were females. Cancun golf course (2), Punta Laguna (5), Coba (1), Vigia Chico road (16), Chichen Itza (4), Botanical Gardens (2)

|  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <b>Ovenbird</b>  | <i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i>    |
| Singles were at Coba ruins woods, Rio Logartos, and the Botanical Gardens  |                               |
| <b>Northern Waterthrush</b>  | <i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i> |
| Coba ruins (1), Vigia Chico pools at 25km (6), Los Colorados road (2), Botanical Gardens (6)   |                               |
| <b>Common Yellowthroat</b>   | <i>Geothlypis trichas</i>     |
| Cancun golf course (1), Coba (1), Vigia Chico road (4 males), road from Tizimin to Rio Logartos (1), San Felipe mangroves (2), Puerto Morelos (1)  |                               |
| <b>Grey-crowned Yellowthroat</b>   | <i>Geothlypis poiocephala</i> |
| 2 males and a female were in reeds on the southern shore of Coba lagoon  |                               |
| <b>Hooded Warbler</b>  | <i>Wilsonia citrina</i>       |
| 3 males in stunning plumage were seen - 2 in the woods at Coba, and 1 in the Botanical Gardens   |                               |
| <b>Grey-throated Chat</b>  | <i>Granatellus sallaei</i>    |
| A single female was seen in dense bush in an overgrown area behind the church at Chichen Itza. Despite its elusive nature, the characteristics could be seen well, including the constant fanning of the tail. A pair of Koati Mundis was foraging close by while searching for the bird   |                               |
| <b>Bananaquit</b>  | <i>Coereba flaveola</i>       |
| 2 singles were seen - 1 on Cancun golf course, and another in the overgrown scrub bushy area adjacent to the Coba Club Med hotel   |                               |
| <b>Grey-headed Tanager</b>   | <i>Eucometis penicillata</i>  |
| A single bird was skulking in trees with Ant-Tanagers off the track between Tulum and Felipe Carillo Puerto  |                               |
| <b>Red-crowned Ant-Tanager</b>   | <i>Habia rubica</i>           |
| Only 2 identified females / juveniles were seen, among the Red-crowned Ant-Tanager flock in Coba woods   |                               |
| <b>Red-throated Ant-Tanager</b>  | <i>Habia fuscicauda</i>       |
| Although males were present, all the birds I saw were females (or juveniles?). They were always in groups in the understorey, and often picked up on call. The buff coloured throat of this species is usually obvious. Cancun to Coba (1), Coba woods (10), off the track between Tulum and Felipe Carillo Puerto (2 with Grey-headed Tanager and obvious ant swarm), Botanical Gardens (3), Vigia Chico road (2) |                               |
| <b>Rose-throated Tanager</b>   | <i>Piranga roseogularis</i>   |
| A pair was off the Vigia Chico road, above the track at 6.4km  |                               |
| <b>Summer Tanager</b>  | <i>Piranga rubra</i>          |
| Clearing south of Punta Laguna (1 male), Vigia Chico road (1 male and 1 female), Chichen Itza (1 male and 3 females), Botanical Gardens (2 females)  |                               |
|   |                               |
| <b>Yellow-winged Tanager</b>   | <i>Thraupis abbas</i>         |
| A total of up to 6 birds were in the trees in front of the hotels at Chichen Itza  |                               |
| <b>Blue-black Grassquit</b>  | <i>Volantinia jacarina</i>    |
| Unfortunately, no black males were seen, so some time was taken before this species was definitely identified. Most birds were in small flocks of what were probably juvenile birds, with smaller numbers of juvenile Yellow-faced Grassquits mixed in. Chichen Itza (3), Los Colorados road (20)  |                               |
| <b>White-collared Seedeater</b>  | <i>Sporophila torqueola</i>   |
| Only the first bird seen, in the village area next to the Coba Club Med hotel, was a male. Small flocks were then seen on the opposite shore of the lake (10) and the Vigia Chico road (6)   |                               |
| <b>Yellow-faced Grassquit</b>  | <i>Tiaris olivaceus</i>       |
| Thankfully, the first 2 birds seen, in the grounds of the Hotel Hacienda at Chichen Itza, were both males. Subsequent birds numbered ~50 juveniles around 8km east of the Rio  |                               |

Logartos crossroads, on the Los Colorados road

**Green-backed Sparrow** *Arremonops chloronotus*

2 birds were seen well near the village on the shore of the Coba lagoon, showing black head stripes and pure grey base to the head (Yucatan Olive Sparrows have darker stripes than in other areas, and a buff-grey base colour to the head)

**Song Sparrow** *Melospiza melodia*

Despite the reported scarcity of this species in this area, an individual on Cancun golf course fitted the description and past American experience exactly, particularly the central and side eye stripes, and flecking on the breast meeting to form a dark area in the centre. A further group of 5 birds were very similar, but noticeably smaller - who knows?

**Greyish Saltator** *Saltator coerulescens*

The only birds seen were 2 in the woods of Coba, among a bird party including Black-headed Saltator, Becards, etc

**Black-headed Saltator** *Saltator atriceps*

Road from Cancun to Coba (group of 8), Coba (1), Vigia Chico road (12), Chichen Itza (5)

**Northern Cardinal** *Cardinalis cardinalis*

3 males were seen - 2 at Vigia Chico, and 1 on the Los Colorados road

**Blue Grosbeak** *Passerina caerulea*

A female was among the Seedeaters next to the southern shore of Lake Coba, and an almost breeding plumaged male in the mangroves East of Puerto Morelos

**Indigo Bunting** *Passerina cyanea*

All the birds seen were mainly brown, with some having a hint of blue on the tail and flight feathers - Chichen Itza (2), Tizimin to Rio Logartos road (6)

**Painted Bunting** *Passerina ciris*

A full coloured male was in the small pool area between San Felipe and Rio Logartos crossroads

**Red-winged Blackbird** *Agelaius phoeniceus*

The area to see these birds was around the San Felipe mangroves. Some birds were in and around the mud and trees, but ~100-200 were flying over late afternoon on the first day and morning of the second

**Melodious Blackbird** *Dives dives*

Seen every day except the last full day, with numbers from 10 to 200 (latter in large flocks flying to roost late afternoon over San Felipe mangroves)

**Great-tailed Grackle** *Quiscalus mexicanus*

From this being the first bird seen (from the aeroplane window), it was present every day in numbers from 10 to many (when counting stopped). The equivalent of our whole crow family!



**Altamira Oriole** *Icterus gularis*

When on their own, the larger size compared to Hooded was not always evident, but the orange upper wingbar could usually be seen. Clearing south of Punta Laguna (1), track off Tulum to Felipe Carillo Puerto road (1), Coba Club Med hotel (4 early morning), Chichen Itza (12), Los Colorados road (1)





**Hooded Oriole***Icterus cucullatus*

The most common oriole seen - birds were found every day of the trip. Clearing South of Punta Laguna (7), track off Tulum to Felipe Carillo Puerto road (2), Coba (20 outside hotel early morning), Vigia Chico road (4), Chichen Itza (18), San Felipe mangroves (4), Puerto Morelos mangroves (4)

**Orchard Oriole***Icterus spurius*

Coba Club Med hotel (15 early morning), Los Colorados road (4), Puerto Morelos mangroves (3)

**Yellow-billed Cacique***Amblycercus holosericeus*

Surprisingly, the only birds seen were a party of ~20 birds in the woods of the Coba ruins

**Yellow-backed Oriole***Icterus chrysater*

1 bird was in the clearing south of Punta Laguna, along with Hooded Orioles, as well as other species of birds. 1 was at the gate of Sian Ka'an reserve, along the track off the Tulum to Felipe Carillo Puerto road, and 2 further birds were outside the Coba Club Med hotel early morning

**TOTAL SPECIES = 208**