

BIRD TREKS

HONDURAS

Biological, Cultural & Historical Riches

Dates Thursday, 27 January through Friday, 4 February 2011: 9 days & 8 nights.
Copan Ruinas Extension, Friday, 4 February through Monday, 7 February 2011:
3 additional days for the extension.



Bat Falcon -- Robert Gallardo

HONDURAS is a land of stunning beauty and stark contrasts. It is a place where in some aspects time has stood still, where mountains meet the sea, where ancient civilizations once thrived, and where one can still be immersed in large expanses of untrammelled wilderness.

The nearly forgotten stigmas of the Banana Republic and the Contra Affair are how some people associate their knowledge of this country, but they are relatively unaware of the biological, cultural and historical riches that are found here.

Honduras is about the size of Tennessee and is part of northern MesoAmerica, sandwiched between Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. It is 83% mountainous, with the highest peak rising to 9000 feet. More than 100 declared protected areas of many sizes dot the countryside and it has the highest percentage of forest cover of any other Central America country. The Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve alone is larger than all of Costa Rica's reserves combined! It is not uncommon to have a whole national park to one self, and we rarely if ever encounter another organized tour group.

The flora and fauna are highly diverse, as there are many major ecosystems that range from coastal mangrove estuaries, vast wetlands, and lowland rainforest to cloud forests, vast pine/oak forests, and rain shadow valleys harboring arid thorn scrub forest.

All of the mega fauna of the isthmus are found here, and in some places **Jaguar** and **Tapir** are quite abundant, but secretive. Although Honduras has recorded 740 species of birds (but expects at least another 70) and one known endemic (**Honduran Emerald**), it offers some spectacular bird watching in its diverse and accessible habitats. Some species that are easier to see here than elsewhere in their range include the **Keel-billed** and **Blue-throated Motmots**, **Lovely Cotinga**, **Fulvous Owl (!)**, **White-breasted Hawk**, **Guatemalan Screech-Owl**, **Great Swallow-tailed Swift**, **Speckled Mourner**, and **White-vented Euphonia**, to name a few.

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This tour is designed to take you into many of the major ecosystems, where you will encounter a wide array of species. The first part of the tour goes along north central Honduras, where you will first visit the historical Lancetilla Botanical Gardens. The gardens were founded in 1925 by William Popenoe of the United Fruit Company, initially as a research station for testing different varieties of bananas. Since Popenoe was a plant biologist, he also experimented with fruits and plants from all over the world. We will bird part of the entrance road and a section of reserve behind the gardens.

After Lancetilla we travel to Olanchito, gateway to the Aguan Valley's arid thorn scrub forest and home to the endemic **Honduran Emerald**. We will visit the newly decreed 4000-acre **Honduran Emerald Reserve**, the country's only designated area for this critically endangered species. Finding the Emerald is usually not a problem, as it is the most abundant local hummingbird, having carved out a niche, feeding on a variety of cacti, Euphorbia, and bromeliad flowers. Being there, you will almost think that you are in Arizona's desert environment. The isolated population of the **White-bellied Wren** is common here. It is currently under investigation pertaining to its species status.

After Olanchito we will be indulged by our three-night stay at the luxurious Lodge at Pico Bonito. It is nestled at the base of 250,000-acre Pico Bonito National Park, which has contiguous forest cover from sea level to over 8000 feet. During the rainy season, **Resplendent Quetzal**, **White-winged Tanager**, **Common Bush-Tanager**, **Green-breasted Mountain-Gem**, and other cloud forest denizens regularly migrate down slope and can at times be found here. We will hike the lodge trails through lowland rain forest in search of keynote species such as the prized **Keel-billed Motmot**. The observation tower by the river regularly produces the breath-taking **Lovely Cotinga** that often sits atop the emergent trees. During our stay we will also visit the 30,000-acre Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge, a coastal mangrove estuary. We take a short train ride to reach the reserve. Then we take a two-hour boat ride in search of mammals, reptiles, and birds.

The final part of the main tour is in the scenic Lake Yojoa area. This is the country's largest natural lake that covers some 50 square miles and actually sits in a volcanic depression. It is also one of the wettest places in Honduras due to the position of the mountains that surround it. The towering Santa Barbara National Park covers some 30,000 acres and sits to the west, with 40,000-acre Cerro Azul Meambar National Park to the east. The various forested habitats combined with the wetlands make this one of the most avian rich areas in the country and contains well over 460 species. Ten of Honduras' Rallidae (crakes and rails) family members are found here. We will stay three nights in the cabins of Agua Azul along the north shore.

The extension to Copan Ruinas is a must for those wishing to see one of the best known of all Maya archaeological sites. Its well-preserved carved glyphs found on stelae, walls, stairways, and other structures tell the history of Copan and have been interpreted by top scholars from around the world. You will take a guided tour of the site. The birding in Copan is also good and the area harbors over 400 species. Copan has a wide variety of forested habitats and sits close to the continental divide, so it shares both Pacific and Caribbean slope elements. We will stay three nights at the newly built La Chorchá Lodge, located on the grounds of the Enchanted Wings Nature Center, built and operated by your in-country guide, **Robert Gallardo**. We will bird two different sites and hope to encounter some interior specialties.

[Detailed itinerary begins on page 3]

HONDURAS Biological, Cultural & Historical Riches

27 January to 4 February 2011, with the Copan Ruinas Extension through 7 February

Day 1 - Arrival in Honduras Today the journey and birding begins. Upon arrival we will drive to the coastal city of Tela where we will spend one night at the Maya Vista Hotel. It is built on a hill and overlooks the Caribbean. Birds frequently seen at eye level from the different levels of the hotel include **Pale-vented Pigeon**, **Yellow-winged** and **Blue-gray Tanagers**, **Melodious Blackbird**, **Yellow-throated Warbler**, and **Clay-colored Thrush**. We will enjoy a nice seafood dinner by the beach

Day 2 - Lancetilla Botanical Gardens to Olanchito This morning we will enjoy the full splendor of the Neotropics and witness a plethora of birds that are associated with lowland rain forests. During our visit to Lancetilla we will bird along the powerline road (perhaps synonymous with Panama's Pipeline Road). A slow 400-foot stroll along this side road often produces 60-80 species! Notable birds include **Great Antshrike**, **Scaly-breasted Hummingbird**, **Tawny-winged Woodcreeper**, **Olivaceous Piculet**, **Yellow-bellied Tyrannulet**, and **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**. Other species typically found there or elsewhere in the gardens include **Smoky-brown Woodpecker**, **Cocoa Woodcreeper**, **Black-headed Trogon** and **White-collared Manakin**. After lunch we will drive to Olanchito, crossing the lower eastern section of the Nombre de Dios mountain range, host to the splendid Pico Bonito National Park. We will have a home style dinner tonight.



Keel-billed Motmot - - Robert Gallardo

Day 3 - Olanchito, Honduran Emerald Reserve to Pico Bonito This morning we will rise early and travel an hour to the reserve. We will first bird along the entrance road in search of the **Honduran Emerald**, then later along a trail through the scrub forest. Other noteworthy species found there include **White-lored Gnatcatcher**, **Lesser Roadrunner**, and **Lesser Ground-Cuckoo**. We will scan some open fields for the **Double-striped Thick-Knee**. Looking up often produces **King Vulture**, **Plumbeous Kite**, **Hook-billed Kite**, and other raptors. We will have lunch at a private home near the reserve. After checking out we will return to the north coast for our three-night stay at the Lodge at Pico Bonito. We may have time to go up to the tower to begin looking for the lovely **Lovely Cotinga**.

Day 4 - Lodge at Pico Bonito We will devote the entire day to birding the lodge's trail system, towers, and decks. We will search for many forest-dwelling species that include **Slaty-breasted** and **Little Tinamous**, **Violet-headed Hummingbird**, **Tawny-crowned**

[Day 4 continues on page 4]

Greenlet, Green Shrike-Vireo, Black-throated Shrike-Tanager, Tody Motmot, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, and our first shot at Keel-billed Motmot. Overlooks often produce White Hawk, Black Hawk-Eagle, and at times Ornate and Black-and-white Hawk-Eagles. Edge species we will be on the lookout for include Great Potoo, Guatemalan Screech-Owl, and White-vented Euphonia. The afternoon can be spent birding the lower lodge grounds and perhaps searching again for the cotinga. Many species of parrots, toucan, flycatchers, orioles, and hummingbirds can be found around the pool.

Day 5 - Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge This morning we will go to the coastal reserve. Along our short banana train ride we will scan the marshes for Wood Stork, White-tailed Kite, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Laughing Falcon, and Red-lored Parrot. We will then board a boat and cruise slowly through the mangrove estuary that is comprised of three different species of mangroves, plus other hardwood trees. Mantled Howler and White-faced Capuchin Monkeys are fairly common here. Crocodile and Caiman numbers are also plentiful. The metallic blue Common Morpho and Shining Morpho butterflies are a welcome sighting amidst the green foliage. Birds frequently seen here include Sungrebe, Western Slaty Antshrike, Boat-billed Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, and an assortment of kingfishers. If we're lucky we will spot the secretive Agami Heron, of which there is a small population in the reserve. Gray-headed Kites are frequently seen soaring the skies. We will have lunch at the lodge, then spend the afternoon relaxing, birding the trails, or exploring the lower grounds.

Day 6 - Lodge at Pico Bonito to Lake Yojoa This morning we will bird the lodge area once more in search of species we may have missed over the past two days. The loop trail always reveals different birds each day and one never knows what may turn up. Other sought after species include Pheasant Cuckoo, Tawny-faced Quail, Crested Owl, Bicolored Hawk, Solitary Eagle, Yellow-eared Toucanet, and Black-faced Antthrush. After lunch and checkout we will head toward San Pedro Sula, then south to Lake Yojoa, where we will spend the next three nights. If we arrive early enough we will bird around the hotel grounds.

Day 7 - Cerro Azul Meambar National Park This morning we will go to the nearby Cerro Azul Meambar National Park, where we will have access to mid-elevation rainforest at 3000 feet. At times there are fruiting wild figs near the visitor center that attract toucans, tanagers, thrushes, and the lovely Blue-crowned Chlorophonia. Hummingbird feeders attract a variety of species including the giant Violet Sabrewing, White-bellied Emerald, and Long-billed Starthroat. For the past several years the spectacular Black-crested Coquette has made a seasonal residence here. We will bird one or two of the trails in search of Plain Antvireo, Barred Woodcreeper, Golden-crowned Warbler, Long-billed Gnatwren, and Stripe-tailed Hummingbird. We will also bird part of the entrance road in search of a few key species such as Rufous-breasted Spinetail, Prevost's Ground-Sparrow, and Green-backed Sparrow. We will have lunch in the southern corner of the lake that overlooks the wetlands where we can enjoy the waterfowl and scenery. The afternoon will be spent birding the hotel grounds or relaxing.

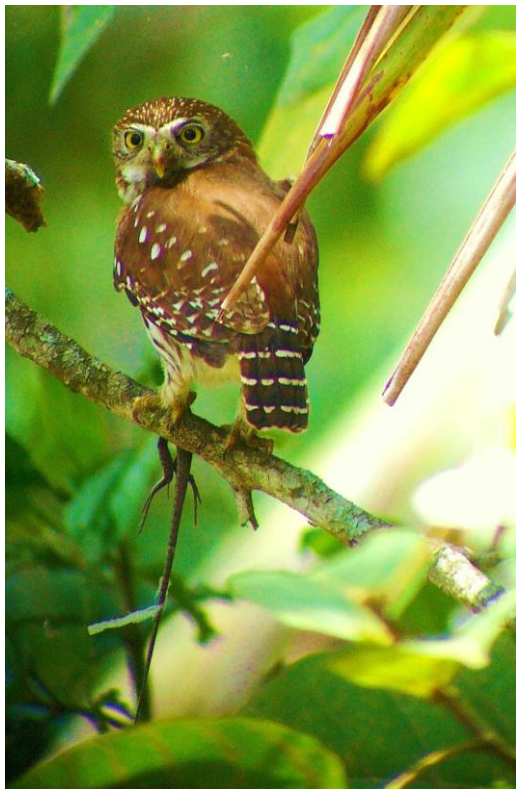
Day 8 - Los Naranjos Archaeological Site After breakfast we will go to the nearby Los Naranjos archaeological site that is thought not to be of Maya origin. Very little excavation has been done, but there is a small museum with some pottery on display. The area is certainly filled with birds. There is a gravel trail and an elevated boardwalk where we will go in search of Rufous-naped Wren, Rufous-and-white Wren, Sungrebe, Muscovy Duck, Striped Cuckoo, Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, and a host of migrant wood warblers. After lunch we will take a short boat ride along the north shore. We will also spend more time in search of crakes and rails at the hotel.

[Day 9 begins on page 5]

Day 9 - Lake Yojoa to San Pedro Sula. **COPAN RUINAS EXTENSION BEGINS**

After breakfast we will make the short trip back to San Pedro Sula for those not going on to Copan Ruins. The rest of the group will continue on for a three-hour drive to Copan Ruins in extreme western Honduras. We should arrive there by about noon. After getting settled into the lodge we can relax a bit and look for some birds on the grounds. The hotel was named after the large variety of orioles that are found in Copan. Found here are 8 of the 10 species in Honduras. Common on the grounds are the **Spot-breasted, Streak-backed, and Altamira Orioles**. Also found at the lodge are **Rufous-naped Wren, Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Blue-crowned and Turquoise-browed Motmots, Salvin's Emerald, Cinnamon Hummingbird, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Rufous-capped Warbler, and saltators**. We will dine at the Hacienda San Lucas that overlooks Copan Valley and the back side of the ruins. We can relax and birdwatch from the terrace and perhaps see passing parrots, parakeets, motmots, and other birds.

Day 10 - Birding in Copan, Archaeological Site This morning we will go out early into the nearby foothills by 4WD vehicle and traverse a mountain, gaining nearly 2000 feet in elevation. We begin with farmland and pass into scrub, broadleaf forest, and pine/oak forest, revealing a wide array of species. A typical morning of birding usually produces 70 to 85 species of birds. We will be on the lookout for **Crested Bobwhite, Gray-crowned Yellowthroat, Plain Wren, Azure-crowned Hummingbird, Bushy-crested Jay, Yellow-backed Oriole, Emerald Toucanet, Brown-backed Solitaire, Ruddy Foliage-Gleaner, Grace's Warbler, Olive Warbler, Red-throated Parakeet, Blue-hooded Euphonia**, and many more. After lunch we will visit the Copan Ruins archaeological site, where we will receive a guided tour through the main plaza. We can also visit the sculpture museum that houses a replica of the Rosalila temple. Bring your binocs, as very good birds can be seen here.



Ferruginous Pygmy Owl - - Robert Gallardo

Day 11 - Birding in Copan Today we will bird a different area of Copan. The exact location will depend upon current road and trail conditions. The site, however, will be one of the various broadleaf forests found around Copan. We will look for **Wine-throated Hummingbird, Green-throated Mountain-Gem, Nightingale Wren, Brown-capped Vireo, Slate-colored Solitaire, Spectacled Foliage-Gleaner, Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge, Royal Flycatcher**, and many more. We can spend the rest of the afternoon getting to know Copan, or just relaxing.

Day 12 - Copan Ruinas to San Pedro Sula, International Departures After breakfast we will make the trip back to San Pedro Sula for your international departures. It will have been an **incredible 12-day Adventure in HONDURAS!**

[Important details on page 6]

Leaders This trip will be led by **Robert Gallardo**, a long time resident of Copan. Robert has been birding Honduras diligently for more than 15 years, so he knows its birds and habitats very well. We will have you in the right place at the right time for the best birding opportunities and an action-packed, worry-free tour. **Bob Schutsky** will co-lead the tour. Robert invited me to Honduras last year to introduce me to the birds and people of Honduras. I had a wonderful time, and I feel certain that you will also.

Price The main tour fee is \$2955 per person based upon double occupancy and a minimum of 4 participants. Single accommodations are available for an extra charge of \$475. The fee for the Copan Extension is \$845 per person, double occupancy. Single supplement is an extra \$245. Our maximum number of participants is twelve.

Includes Expert guide service, lodging for ten nights (plus 3 additional nights for the extension), **ALL meals**, entrance fees and permits, and all ground transportation within Honduras. **ALL tips** are also included in the tour fee, except for anything that you may wish to give to your tour leader(s) and boat captain.

Does not include cost of airfare to and from San Pedro Sula, Honduras, or your airport departure tax. BIRD TREKS will, upon request, help you obtain the best airfare. Also not included are the cost of alcoholic beverages and items of a personal nature.

Deposit A \$700 deposit will assure your reservation on the tour. The balance is payable 27 Octoberber 2010. Honduras is a spectacular birding destination. Send your deposit soon to insure your reservation on the tour and to obtain the best possible airfare.

Extra Services We offer the services of our exclusive BIRD TREKS travel agent, **Lori Heathcote**, in arranging your air travel. Lori has 25 years of experience in the travel industry and is a veteran birder. Contact her at Bailey Travel, **1-800-224-5399**, or e-mail Lori at **lori@baileytravel.com**. By dealing with Lori you have the security of a 24-hour toll-free telephone number in case of any travel emergency. She can also assist you with all pre- and post-tour travel plans. There may be a service fee.



Bare-throated Tiger-Heron -- Karen Enriquez

Refund & Cancellation Policy With written notice more than 90 days prior to the first day of the tour, 100% of your deposit will be refunded, minus a \$100 service fee. With 30-90 days notice, you will receive a 50% refund of the full cost of the tour. No refund can be made with less than 30 days notice. You will receive a full refund if you provide a replacement for your spot on the tour. No partial refund can be given once a tour begins. We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect your investment. Contact Access America at **1-800-284-8300** and mention **BIRD TREKS (ACCAM # F021096)**. You can apply by phone or via the Internet at **www.accessamerica.com**.

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