

# BIRD TREKS

## The Birds & Natural History of **EL TRIUNFO, MEXICO**

Thursday, 29 March to Saturday, 7 April 2012: 10 days & 9 nights

Harboring about ten percent of Earth's biodiversity, Mexico is one of the most biologically rich countries in the world. During this birding and natural history adventure, we'll explore and learn about much of that richness as we travel through what is one of the last great wilderness areas in Mexico, the **El Triunfo Biosphere Reserve**. Though somewhat rigorous, the tour to El Triunfo stands as one of the greatest natural history adventures that I've personally ever experienced. The week that we'll spend hiking in and enjoying the cloud forests of southern Mexico will be highlighted by some of the **best birding in the world**, as well as by the warm hospitality of our Mexican hosts.

Our trip begins in Tuxtla Gutierrez, where we'll spend a morning enjoying the tropical deciduous forest and great scenery of **Sumidero Canyon**. Here we'll look for dry forest specialists such as White-throated Magpie-Jay, Nutting's Flycatcher, White-lored Gnatcatcher, Streak-backed Oriole, Banded Wren, and the rare Belted Flycatcher. From Tuxtla we'll head south to the **small town of Jaltenango**, our take-off point for El Triunfo. We'll spend six unforgettable days birding, hiking, and enjoying the **El Triunfo Biosphere Reserve**. Amidst the towering, epiphyte-laden trees, we'll have chances to see Resplendent Quetzal, Emerald Toucanet, Black-throated and Unicolored Jays, Mountain and Black Thrushes, Green-throated Mountain-Gem, Yellow-throated and Chestnut-capped Brush-Finches, Spotted and Ruddy-capped Nightingale-thrushes, Blue-throated Motmot, Highland Guan, Fulvous Owl, and the rare prize of the area, the **Horned Guan**.



Highland Guan - - *Misty Vaughn*

From the high elevation ridges, we'll descend for three days through pristine forests, stopping to camp at lovely spots where we'll likely find White-eared Ground-Sparrow, Long-tailed Manakin, Cabanis' Tanager, Rufous Sabrewing, Rufous-and-white Wren, White-winged Tanager, perhaps the rare Prevost's Ground-Sparrow, and many others. We'll conclude our adventure in **Tapachula** at a comfortable hotel with grounds that are home to Giant Wren, White-bellied Chachalaca, Orange-chinned Parakeet, and Pacific Screech-Owl. While this trip is highly exhilarating in terms of the natural wonders we'll experience, it is physically challenging, with hikes of 4-8 miles and tent camping for 3-6 nights.

The tour will be led by naturalist and bird guide **Mark Pretti**. The tour fee will be approximately \$2800 per person, double occupancy, and includes all lodging, meals, and transportation from Tuxtla Gutierrez to Tapachula, Chiapas. Group size is limited to eight participants.

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## Birding and Natural History in **EL TRIUNFO, Chiapas, Mexico**

29 March - 7 April 2012

**Day 1 Arrival in Tuxtla Gutierrez** After arriving at the airport, we'll transfer to the Best Western Palmareca Hotel & Suites in Tuxtla Gutierrez, where we'll have dinner and spend the night. The ride will take about 45 minutes. The hotel has a free shuttle service arranged at a small desk in the airport lobby. If the shuttle is not available, you'll need to take a taxi. Just before you exit the airport, there is a counter on the right where you buy your taxi ticket that costs about 250 pesos (about \$20-25 US for the taxi, not per person). Prior to the trip, after I have everyone's flight arrival times, I'll let you know what to expect in terms of getting to the hotel.



**Blue-throated Motmot**

-- *Misty Vaughn*

**Day 2 Tuxtla Gutierrez to Jaltenango** After a 6 AM breakfast at the hotel, we'll visit Sumidero Canyon, a spectacular area where the Rio Grijalva cuts through a massive limestone dome. Between spectacular views of the 3000-foot deep canyon, we'll look for a suite of dry tropical forest birds including **Banded Wren, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Nutting's Flycatcher, Streak-backed Oriole, Russet-crowned Motmot, Blue-and-white Mockingbird**, the rare **Belted Flycatcher** and **Slender Sheartail**, and several other species. The tropical deciduous forest at Sumidero is punctuated with islands of semi-deciduous forest where species such as **Eye-ringed Flatbill, Spot-breasted Wren, and Lesser Greenlet** can be found. We'll return to the hotel for lunch and to retrieve our bags before we make the 3-4 hour drive to Jaltenango, where we'll spend the night at the Hotel El Triunfo. We'll make a few stops along the way, including at the Rio Acatengo, where kingfishers, flycatchers, orioles, and other birds are possible.

**Day 3 Jaltenango to El Triunfo** After breakfast at 5:45 AM, we'll depart for Finca Prusia and the trail to El Triunfo. To get to the trailhead, we'll travel for about four hours in a large pick-up truck with wooden bench seats on a reasonably smooth dirt road. Along the way the habitat progresses from fairly cut-over to quite intact, and the birds, which are numerous

*[Day 3 continues on page 3]*

along the route, become more and more interesting. **Azure-crowned Hummingbird, Green Parakeet, Blue-headed Vireo, Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, White-winged Tanager, Chestnut-collared Swift, Laughing Falcon, and Black-headed Saltator** are some of the birds we'll look for on the drive. We'll have a simple picnic lunch at the trailhead and begin walking up the mountain between 12:00 and 12:30 PM. Our hike will begin at the upper end of Finca Prusia, a large coffee farm established as a German coffee hacienda in the late 1800s. We begin walking at about 4500 feet and will ascend to 6500 feet at the El Triunfo camp. Our walk is about eight miles along a good trail that climbs moderately. We'll be inside shady forest almost the entire way and should enjoy some good birding. We'll look for **Brown-capped Vireo, Blue-crowned Motmot, Gartered Trogon, Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren,** and others along the way. We'll spend three nights camping at El Triunfo. Though we might not know until we arrive, there is a possibility of sleeping in the basic dorm that has one large room with 7-8 mattresses. A new feature in the dorm in 2009 was reliable hot showers in the late afternoon and early evening.

**Days 4-6 El Triunfo Area** From our base camp at El Triunfo, we'll take various forest trails and enjoy the open meadow-like area of the camp as we search for the special birds of the region. In addition to looking for the northernmost race of the **Resplendent Quetzal** (this is the one with the longest tail covert feathers), we'll also be looking for the 'pavon' or **Horned Guan**, one of the world's rarest and most spectacular cracids. Other cloud forest specialties we hope to find include **Blue-throated Motmot** with its haunting call and soft colors, **Highland Guan, Spotted and Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrushes, White-faced Quail-Dove, Cinnamon-bellied Flower-piercer, Rufous-browed and Gray-breasted Wrens, Spotted and Spot-crowned Woodcreepers, Black and Mountain Thrushes, Yellow Grosbeak, Yellowish Flycatcher, Black-throated and Unicolored Jays, Flame-colored Tanager, Spectacled and Ruddy Foliage-gleaners, White-naped and Chestnut-capped Brush-Finches,** and many other species. We've had good luck in finding many of the area's hummingbirds, including **Wine-throated, Magnificent, White-eared, Emerald-chinned, Violet Sabrewing, Black-crested Coquette, Sparkling-tailed Woodstar, Green-throated Mountain-gem, and Green Violetear.** The ambiance at El Triunfo is unforgettable. With almost no human-made noises except our voices, we'll be immersed in a world of wonderful quiet punctuated by the sweet caroling of **Yellow Grosbeaks,** the high whistle and striking wing-rattle of the **Highland Guan,** and the flutelike song of **Brown-backed Solitaires.** Our hosts will prepare tasty meals and provide us with warm hospitality.

**Day 6 El Triunfo to Cañada Honda** After breakfast and a short walk near camp, we'll leave El Triunfo and begin the gradual hike down to 4800 feet to Cañada Honda. This six-mile walk takes us out of the cloud forest, through a zone of pines and cypress, where we'll have one our few chances to see **Grace's, Olive, and Hermit Warblers** and **Hepatic Tanager,** and finally to our camp at Cañada Honda. At this cozy spot, we'll be surrounded by great forest with **White-eared Ground-Sparrows, Rufous-and-white Wrens,** and the local star, **Azure-rumped Tanager,** which is fairly common. Along the way we'll look for **Blue-throated Motmot, Green Shrike-Vireo, Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser, Rufous Sabrewing,** and others. You'll have the option of a cold stream bath before falling asleep to the sound of running water and possibly the calls of a **Black-and-White** or **Mottled Owl.**

*[Day 7 begins on page 4]*

**Day 7 Cañada Honda to Limonal** After breakfast, we'll spend time birding around Cañada Honda before starting a leisurely walk down to El Limonal, our next campsite. This hike is only about four miles and will take us through magnificent oak and sweetgum forests. Our campsite is located adjacent to a **Long-tailed Manakin** lek and is also a great spot for three fine motmot species (**Tody, Blue-crowned, Turquoise-browed**) and the endemic **Blue-tailed Hummingbird**. Our camp at Limonal is at about 3300 feet, and we'll have a basic cool water shower available.



Cabanis' Tanager - - Misty Vaughn

**Day 8 Limonal to Paval** We'll continue our downhill hike for about six miles from Limonal to Paval, a small coffee drying platform located at about 1400 feet. As we hike down we'll enter the rich evergreen tropical zone. Some of the many species we might see include **Turquoise-browed Motmot, Gartered and Collared Trogons, Ivory-billed and Streak-headed Woodcreepers, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Piratic Flycatcher, Rufous-breasted Spinetail, Blackburnian Warbler, Tropical Pewee, Orange-fronted Parakeet, Yellow-naped Parrot, the rare Prevost's Ground-Sparrow, Spot-breasted Oriole, Eastern Kingbird,** and many more. The climate will be significantly warmer here so the cool shower will feel particularly good.

**Day 9 Paval to Tapachula** After breakfast we'll spend a little time around Paval, savoring our last moments on the edge of the wilderness, before walking about one mile to where the truck will pick us up for the trip to Mapastepec, where we'll have lunch. After lunch we'll drive for an hour to the Hotel Loma Real in Tapachula, arriving between 2 and 2:30 PM. This comfortable hotel has good habitat and is a reliable spot for **Giant Wren**, one of the most range-restricted birds in the world, **Pacific Screech-Owl**, which sometimes day-roosts in the mango trees, and **White-bellied Chachalaca**, another west Mexican endemic. The hotel's restaurant is excellent and serves tasty and creative food.

**Day 10 Departure for Home** After some birding followed by breakfast, we'll take taxis or a van to the Tapachula Airport, about 25 minutes from the hotel. As of March 2009, there were two flights out of Tapachula, one at 6:40 AM and the other at 1:30 PM. Please make the arrangements that work best for you, and I'll make sure that you get to the airport for your flight. We have just completed an incredible tour, in a very special part of Mexico, **EL TRIUNFO!**

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[Important details on page 5]

**Extra Services** We offer the services of our exclusive Bird Treks travel agent, **Lori Heathcote**, in arranging your air travel. Lori has 26 years of experience in the travel industry and is a veteran birder. Contact her through Bailey Travel at **1-800-224-5399**, or you can e-mail her 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 many of your pre- and post-tour travel plans. There may be a fee for these services.

- **Trip Payment and Cancellation Policy**

In November, you will receive a trip information packet with release and personal information forms which need to be mailed to me with the payment for the trip, a check for approximately \$2800 made out to Mark Pretti, by January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012:

Mark Pretti  
2915 Keeling Road  
Hereford, AZ 85615

Cancellation Policy - Cancellation prior to 75 days before departure will result in a full refund, less a \$50 processing fee. There are no refunds for cancellation less than 75 days from departure unless a replacement can be found, upon which you will receive a full refund, less the \$50 fee. We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a tour. Contact Access America and mention **BIRD TREKS ( ACCAM # F021096 )**. You can apply via the Internet at **www.accessamerica.com**, or by phone at **1-800-284-8300**. You should also consider a medical policy for travelers.

- **RESPONSIBILITY:** Mark Pretti Nature Tours and its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motor coach, boat, or airplane and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Mark Pretti Nature Tours and its Agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

*[Bird list begins on page 6]*

**Birding List** - Among the 300 or so species of birds possible on the El Triunfo Tour are the following highlights that have been seen on past tours. As usual, some are common, some less common, and some fairly rare. On past tours, we've seen about 250 species.

Thicket Tinamou	Cinnamon Hummingbird
King Vulture	Azure-crowned Hummingbird
White Hawk	Berylline Hummingbird
Great Black-Hawk	Green-throated Mountain-Gem
Gray Hawk	Magnificent Hummingbird
Roadside Hawk	Plain-capped Starthroat
Broad-winged Hawk	Wine-throated Hummingbird
Short-tailed Hawk	Gartered Trogon
Swainson's Hawk	Mountain Trogon
Northern Caracara	Collared Trogon
Laughing Falcon	Resplendent Quetzal
Barred Forest-Falcon	Ringed Kingfisher
Plain Chachalaca	Amazon Kingfisher
White-bellied Chachalaca	Tody Motmot
Highland Guan	Blue-throated Motmot
Horned Guan	Russet-crowned Motmot
Great Curassow	Blue-crowned Motmot
Northern Bobwhite	Turquoise-browed Motmot
Northern Jacana	Emerald Toucanet
Band-tailed Pigeon	Collared Aracari
Red-billed Pigeon	Acorn Woodpecker
White-tipped Dove	Golden-fronted Woodpecker
White-faced Quail-Dove	Golden-olive Woodpecker
Ruddy Quail-Dove	Lineated Woodpecker
Green Parakeet	Pale-billed Woodpecker
Orange-fronted Parakeet	Rufous-breasted Spinetail
Orange-chinned Parakeet	Scaly-throated (Spectacled) Foliage-gleaner
White-fronted Parrot	Ruddy Foliage-gleaner
Yellow-naped Parrot	Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser
Red-lore Parrot	Olivaceous Woodcreeper
Mealy Parrot	Ivory-billed Woodcreeper
Squirrel Cuckoo	Spotted Woodcreeper
Groove-billed Ani	Streak-headed Woodcreeper
Striped Cuckoo	Spot-crowned Woodcreeper
Pheasant Cuckoo - heard only	Barred Antshrike
Pacific Screech-Owl	Long-tailed Manakin
Fulvous Owl	Paltry Tyrannulet
Mottled Owl	Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet
Black-and-White Owl	Ochre-bellied Flycatcher
Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl	Northern Bentbill
Common Pauraque	Eye-ringed Flatbill
Chestnut-collared Swift	Common Tody-Flycatcher
White-collared Swift	Yellow-olive Flycatcher
Vaux's Swift	Tufted Flycatcher
Rufous Sabrewing	Belted Flycatcher
Violet Sabrewing	Western Wood-Pewee
Green Violetear	Tropical Pewee
Black-crested Coquette	Least Flycatcher
Emerald-chinned Hummingbird	Hammond's Flycatcher
Canivet's Emerald	Cordilleran Flycatcher
White-eared Hummingbird	Yellowish Flycatcher

Vermilion Flycatcher  
Bright-rumped Attila  
Nutting's Flycatcher  
Brown-crested Flycatcher  
Great Kiskadee  
Boat-billed Flycatcher  
Social Flycatcher  
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher  
Piratic Flycatcher  
Tropical Kingbird  
Couch's Kingbird  
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  
Fork-tailed Flycatcher  
Gray-collared Becard  
Rose-throated Becard  
Masked Tityra  
Gray-breasted Martin  
Black-capped Swallow  
Gray Silky-flycatcher  
Cedar Waxwing  
Giant Wren  
Rufous-naped Wren  
Spot-breasted Wren  
Banded Wren  
Rufous-and-white Wren  
Plain Wren  
Rufous-browed Wren  
Gray-breasted Wood-Wren  
Tropical Mockingbird  
Blue-and-white Mockingbird  
Brown-backed Solitaire  
Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush  
Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush  
Spotted Nightingale-Thrush  
Swainson's Thrush  
Black Thrush  
Mountain Thrush  
Clay-colored Thrush  
White-throated Thrush  
Long-billed Gnatwren  
White-throated Magpie-Jay  
Green Jay  
Black-throated Jay  
Unicolored Jay  
Plumbeous Vireo  
Cassin's Vireo  
Blue-headed Vireo  
Brown-capped Vireo  
Yellow-green Vireo  
Green Shrike-Vireo  
Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo  
Lesser Greenlet  
Rufous-browed Peppershrike

Hooded Grosbeak  
Tennessee Warbler  
Crescent-chested Warbler  
Magnolia Warbler  
Black-throated Green Warbler  
Townsend's Warbler  
Hermit Warbler  
Black-and-white Warbler  
American Redstart  
Ovenbird  
Northern Waterthrush  
Gray-crowned Yellowthroat  
Slate-throated Redstart  
Fan-tailed Warbler  
Golden-crowned Warbler  
Rufous-capped (Chestnut-capped) Warbler  
Golden-browed Warbler  
Common Bush-Tanager  
Red-crowned Ant-Tanager  
Red-throated Ant-Tanager  
Flame-colored Tanager  
White-winged Tanager  
Blue-gray Tanager  
Yellow-winged Tanager  
Scrub Euphonia  
Yellow-throated Euphonia  
Elegant Euphonia  
Blue-crowned Chlorophonia  
Azure-rumped Tanager  
Red-legged Honeycreeper  
Blue-black Grassquit  
White-collared Seedeater  
White-naped Brush-Finch  
Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch  
Olive Sparrow  
Prevost's Ground-Sparrow  
White-eared Ground-Sparrow  
Rufous-collared Sparrow  
Grayish Saltator  
Black-headed Saltator  
Yellow Grosbeak  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
Indigo Bunting  
Painted Bunting  
Melodious Blackbird  
Spot-breasted Oriole  
Altamira Oriole  
Streak-backed Oriole  
Black-vented Oriole  
Bar-winged Oriole  
Yellow-billed Cacique  
Yellow-winged Cacique

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