

GUATEMALA

BIRDS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OF CENTRAL AMERICA



Gray-necked Wood Rail
(Lemuel Valle)

Saturday December 1st – Saturday December 15th 2012

Leaders: Steve Duffield and local guides

Group size: 8

Birds: 300-350

Guatemala is a small country located in Central America and relatively unknown to birdwatchers. Within the country's boundaries are several important areas for birds including the humid Atlantic slope forests and the cooler Highlands west of Guatemala City. Your tour takes in several important areas including Corazon Del Bosque for the beautiful Pink-headed Warbler. Los Torrales is an eco-run farm with abundant birdlife including the rare Black-crested Coquette and near-threatened Horned Guan. Los Andes is an old coffee plantation with remnant forest attractive to Resplendent Quetzal and Azure-rumped Tanager. Monterrico is on the Pacific Ocean coast and has extensive mangrove swamps attracting Sungrebe and

Mangrove Cuckoo. The finale of the tour takes place in El Peten and the Mayan ruins of Tikal and Aquateca, the latter only accessible by boat. This incredible place has over 3000 structures of Mayan origin, 800 hundred species of tree and over 500 species of bird. We also have a chance of encountering mammals including Tapir, Peccary and Jaguars.

Day 1: We have a flight to Guatemala City, the lively capital of Guatemala. On arrival, we have a short transfer to Cabana Suiza situated in the foothills above the city.

Day 2: Cabana Suiza offers a good introduction to the birdlife of Guatemala. Feeders have White-eared, Azure-crowned and Magnificent Hummingbirds, Green-throated Mountain Gem and Rufous Sabrewing. Scrubby areas attract Blue-and-White Mockingbird and Blue-throated Motmot. After breakfast, we travel to Corazon des Basque, an area of pines and scrub traversed by trails holding Pink-headed Warbler, Black-capped Swallow, Yellow-throated Brush Finch and wintering warblers from further north. Transfer to Los Torrales, a remote, eco-friendly hacienda for three nights.

Days 3-4: Los Torrales has several nature trails where we should locate Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Collared Aracari, Pacific Parakeet, Violet Sabrewing, Rufous-naped and Spot-breasted Wrens, Willow and Dusky-capped Flycatchers, White-throated Magpie Jay and Altamira and Spot-breasted Orioles. On another trail with marsh and pond habitats we may find White-breasted Chacalaca, Vaux's Swift, Orange-chinned Parakeets, Yellow-olive Flycatcher and Beryline Hummingbirds.

Los Torrales has an impressive bird list of over 200 species and we hope to connect with three specialties: King Vulture, Black-crested Coquette and the spectacular Long-tailed Mannikin. On Day 4 we visit another area of Los Torrales where the trails may reveal Sparking-tailed Woodstar, Grey-silky Flycatcher, Bushy-crested Jay and wintering Wilson's and Worm-eating Warblers. Our main interest is locating the highly endangered Horned Guan. On our return to the hacienda, the grounds may have the beautiful Painted Redstart, Prevost's Ground Sparrow and Ruddy-capped Nightingale Thrush.

Day 5: A final morning birding at Los Torrales followed by a transfer to Los Andes, a remote coffee plantation situated near forests and waterfalls. The gardens here attract Red-billed Pigeon, Red-throated Parakeet, Greyish Saltator, Blue-tailed Hummingbird, Painted Bunting and Red-legged Honeycreeper. We have a two-night stay at Los Andes.

Day 6: An early start today as we join the Quetzal Trail beyond the extensive tea and coffee plantations. On the forest edge, we may find Highland Guan and Blue-crowned Motmot. Our main target is Resplendent Quetzal which occurs in reasonable numbers along with the little

known and rare Azure-rumped Tanager. Feeding flocks within the forest attract Smokey-brown Woodpecker, Collared Trogon, Yellowish Flycatcher, Slate-coloured Solitaire and Spectacled Foliage Gleaners. On the forest floor, we may encounter Ruddy Quail Dove, Rufous-white-Wren and Spotted Nightingale Thrush. At higher elevations, we may see Ruddy and Spotted Woodcreepers, Rose-throated Becard, Golden-crowned Warbler and the elusive White-bellied Wren.

Day 7: We start the day by walking down the Waterfall Trail traversing fast-flowing streams and forest. Orange-fronted and Pacific Parakeets, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, warblers and vireos abound in the lichen and fern-filled trees. After lunch, we travel to Monterrico on the border with El Salvador. The road passes through prime cattle country with Crested Caracara and Roadside Hawks. Before we arrive at Monterrico, a shallow coastal lagoon may have Laughing Gull, Royal Tern and Black Skimmers. Night in Monterrico.

Day 8: Our main interest today is taking a boat through the extensive mangrove systems of Monterrico. Interesting species include Least Grebe, Boat-billed Heron, Bare-throated Tiger Heron, Sungrebe,

Roseate Spoonbill, Mississippi Kite, Amazon and American Pygmy Kingfishers, Northern Potoo, Mangrove and Squirrel Cuckoos and Mangrove Warbler. Later in the day, we transfer to Guatemala City and an internal flight to Flores and El Peten, the largest tropical rain forest in Central America. Night in Flores.

Day 9: Today we travel to Chiminos along the Rio de la Pasion. En route to Saxahaye, we pass through secondary forest holding Laughing Falcon, Plumbeous Kite, Short-billed Pigeon, Red-lored Parrot, Vermillion, Scissor-tailed and Fork-tailed Flycatchers and Groove-billed Ani. Along the river, we should see Limpkin, Grey-necked Wood Rail, Striped Cuckoo, Yellow-tailed Oriole and a wide range of herons and egrets. On arrival at Chiminos Lodge, the balcony offers us Violaceous and Black-headed Trogons, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird and wintering North American warblers. Later in the day, we walk along the nature trail looking for Stripe-throated Hermit, Sepia-capped and Dusky Flycatchers, Spot-breasted Wren and White-bellied Wood Wren. Night at Chiminos.

Day 10: After breakfast, we go by boat to Aquateca, a pristine archaeological site set in primary forest. Riverside vegetation attracts Plain Chacalaca, Mangrove Vireo and noisy parties of White-crowned Parrots. Marshes at Aquateca often have wintering ducks, Kentucky and Hooded Warblers, Grey-headed Tanager and Barred Antshrikes. In the ruins of Aquateca we may see Brown-hooded Parrot, Cinnamon Becard, Black-faced Shrike Tanager and White-throated Thrush. After lunch, we travel back along the river to Saxahaye and transfer to the world-famous Mayan ruins of Tikal. Our



Horned Guan (Benedicto Grijalva)

hotel is literally situated in the centre of the park, a fitting finale to our Guatemalan tour.

Days 11-12: We have almost two full days exploring the delights of Tikal. Birds abound in the ruins and include scarce species, notably Great Curassow, Bat and Orange-breasted Falcons and Dusky Antbirds. In addition, we should locate Great Black Hawk, Black Hawk Eagle, Keel-billed Toucan, Black-cheeked and Chestnut-coloured Woodpeckers, Long-

tailed Hermit, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Plain Antvireo, Montezuma's Oropendola and a wide range of hummingbirds, tanagers and warblers. On the afternoon of Day 12 we travel to Flores and on to Guatemala City for our final night in Guatemala.

Day 13: Transfer to the international airport for the flight back to Europe. Arrival is on the following morning.

Ground Price: £2635

***Air Fare: £700**

Total tour price: £3335

Tour Price Guatemala/Guatemala: £2635

Single room: £250

Deposit: £350

*please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights on pages 5 and 71

This holiday is fully inclusive of flights, accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance and items of a personal nature. Security fee of US\$10 for the internal flight and US\$50 for the international flight from Guatemala City and any relevant fuel surcharges.

Good accommodation with en-suite facilities. The lodge at Chiminos is situated in a jungle environment with generators for power. Evening meals feature Guatemalan cuisine. Packed lunches provided.

Transport is by minibus and boat. Short walks along generally flat ground, although some archaeological sites are on hill tops.