Guatemala

Highlands & Horned Guan Sun 25th Feb–Wed 7th March 2018



Trip photos (clockwise from top left): Resplendent Quetzal • Pink-headed Warbler • Prevost's Ground Sparrow • Lesser Ground Cuckoo • Blue-throated Motmot • Cinnamon Hummingbird. © tour leader Fernando Enrique Navarrete/Limosa Holidays

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Report compiled by tour leader: Fernando Enrique Navarrete

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With: David Bush, Lesley Coley, Alan Crosland, Gareth Jenkins, Alan Rosney, Mike Wheeler and Anne & John Wilson.

Our inaugural trip to Guatemala can be considered a huge success. We managed to find nearly all our target birds, including most of the regional endemics. Birds such as Horned Guan, Pink-headed Warbler, Resplendent Quetzal, Azure-rumped Tanager, Belted Flycatcher, Blue-throated Motmot, Mountain Trogon and Mottled Owl just to name a few. This allows Guatemala to claim its place as one of the best birding destinations in Central America. This fascinating country, with a list of over 750 species, has so many things to offer... Not just the birding but also an incredible diversity of habitats, from the dry forest of the Motagua Valley, to the cloud forest of Biotopo del Quetzal and from beautiful Lake Atitlan to some spectacular volcanoes. Not to forget the incredibly diverse culture with more than 20 languages spoken in the country, the lovely food and some of the friendliest people you'll ever meet.

Top 5 bird as voted for by participants:

- 1- Resplendent Quetzal
- 2- Pink-headed Warbler
- 3- Horned Guan
- 4- Russet-crowned Motmot
- 5- Lesser Ground-Cuckoo

Day 1

After an uneventful flight from Madrid, the group arrived nearly an hour ahead of schedule. With luggage collection completed, we headed to the arrivals hall, where our local guide, Maynor and our driver, Moisés, were waiting for us. Skirting Guatemala in the late evening traffic with ease, we arrived at our destination, Antigua Guatemala, just in time to enjoy some of the multiple parades that you can find at this time of the year. We visited a local restaurant where we enjoyed a lovely and copious dinner - big portions will become a common feature on the trip - then we headed back to our hotel for a deserved rest.

Day 2

With a promising weather forecast for the next week, we awoke to a clear morning. After a splendid breakfast at the hotel, joined by our first Azure-crowned Hummingbird of the trip, we left the charming city of Antigua behind and we headed straight for the pine-oak forest on the upper part of Finca El Pilar, a private reserve just outside of Antigua with a very well maintained network of trails. We spent the first couple of hours at a clearing in the forest, overlooking Antigua and the active ash-blowing volcano Fuego. Bird activity was great, with Grey Silky Flycatchers, Rufous-collared Thrushes, Black-capped Swallows, Eastern Bluebirds, and Townsend's, Tennessee and Wilson's Warblers all over the place. Other birds that we noted around this area included Steller's Jay, Bushy-crested Jay, "Guatemalan" Flicker (a local race of Northern Flicker), Acorn Woodpecker, White-eared Hummingbird, great views of several Black-cowled Orioles, Hammond's Flycatcher, Black-headed Siskin and brief views of a Blue-and-white Mockingbird. On the way down to the hummingbird feeders, we lucked into a couple of Collared Trogons and a singing Brown-backed Solitaire. Once we reached the feeders, we had to wait only for a few seconds until we found our main target, the Rufous Sabrewing. A regional endemic, it is found only in a narrow strip from Chiapas, Mexico to El Salvador. Other hummingbirds included Berylline, Azure-crowned and Rivoli's. A short walk further up the trail produced Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, Greenthroated Mountaingem, Golden-browed Warbler and a singing Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo.

At lunchtime, we headed back to Antigua, where we had another lovely meal, this time including the famous "pepian", one of the most well-known Guatemalan recipes. After a short siesta, Maynor gave us a tour around Antigua. This town is the old capital of Guatemala and is now a world heritage site with its quaint cobbled streets and Spanish colonial style. Maynor's knowledge of the history of the town and its people was much appreciated by all, although he was interrupted several times when a Pacific Parakeet, Inca Dove or Peregrine Falcon flew above us!

Day 3

Reluctantly we left our hotel and the wonderful town of Antigua and we hit the road towards our next destination,

Rincon Suizo. This area is covered by pine-oak-alder forest and resembles European or North American forests. But once you observe the composition of some of the mixed-species flocks, you realize that you are indeed in Central America! After the best breakfast of the trip, we took one of the trails and headed into the reserve. Our principal target here, the stunning Pink-headed Warbler, was located quickly. This near-endemic bird can only be found in Chiapas, Mexico and in Guatemala and Rincon Suizo is one of the best places in the world to see it. These birds were part of a mixed flock with several species of Nearctic migrants, as well as resident species. Birds such as Townsend's, Nashville and Crescent-chested Warblers, Slate-throated Redstart, Tufted Flycatcher, Bushtit and Brown Creeper were all enjoyed. Other birds seen during our walk, included Mountain Trogon, Band-tailed Pigeon, White-naped Brushfinch and Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush. Before heading back to our vehicle, we stopped at a small meadow with very tall thistles where we had excellent views of several Amethyst-throated Hummingbirds and Mexican Violetears amongst other commoner species like Rivoli's and White-eared Hummingbirds.

We spent the rest of the day at Fuentes Georginas, a public hot springs within an area of cloud forest. We birded the entrance road looking for some of the specialties of this threatened habitat. After a couple of hours of searching we ended up with a nice list of birds, including Unicoloured Jay, Northern Emerald Toucanet, Garnet-throated Hummingbird, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, Olive Warbler and Common Bush Tanager. A couple of Highland Guans tricked us despite our effort to attract them to an open spot and they were noted as heard only. We went to bed early, because an early start was required the next day if we wanted to see one of the rarest birds in the world.

Day 4

Today was a very special day, our best chance to see the enigmatic and prehistoric-looking Horned Guan. These turkey-sized birds, restricted to the highlands of Guatemala and Chiapas, live in cloud forest at an altitude of 2,000-3,000 meters. This habitat is severely fragmented and most populations are isolated from each other. That's the reason why this bird is listed as Endangered and is considered one of the rarest birds in the world.

We woke up very early and loaded our modified pick-up trucks in the middle of the night. On the way up, several Mexican Whip-poor-wills were filling the air with their calls and one of them even flew across in front of us. We reached the edge of the cloud forest at dawn and we started walking slowly but steadily. Several birds were noted before we reached the guan site, including the range-restricted and cloud forest specialist Black-throated Jay, a lifer for most of the group. Other birds on the way up were Swainson's Hawk, Swainson's Thrush, Barred Forest Falcon, Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Yellowish Flycatcher and a very noisy group of Singing Quails.

Once we reached the place, we focused our efforts on an extensive patch of Devil's Finger Tree, the guan's favourite food. Some people in the group were giving up when Benedicto found a bird sitting on top of a bare tree. The bird stayed there for a couple of minutes, allowing good, although brief, scope views for everyone. Yes! What an amazing bird and what an incredible sighting! After this amazing encounter, we headed back in a more relaxed mood, stopping at a clearing in the forest where we had the best views ever of a very cooperative Pinkheaded Warbler, which allowed unbelievable photo opportunities for the photographers of the group. Other birds on the way down included Red-tailed Hawk, Crescent-chested Warbler, Spotted Towhee, Hammond's Flycatcher, Greater Pewee and Rufous-collared Robin.

After lunch we were on the move again. This time headed towards the Pacific lowlands, a completely different habitat with a new array of birds. Our destination, Los Tarrales, is one of the best birding destinations in the country, with over 350 species recorded inside this private reserve, which preserves primary rainforest and runs coffee and exotic flower plantations. Strategic stops on route produced interesting birds such as Roadside Hawk, Grey Hawk, Northern Caracara, American Kestrel, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Velasquez's Woodpecker and several species of egrets and herons. It was incredibly birdy when we arrived at the site. With an hour and a half of light before sunset, we decided to go for a walk around the cabins. Without walking half a mile we ended up with the longest list of the trip so far! Birds such as Yellow-naped Parrot, Orange-fronted and Orange-chinned Parakeets, White-bellied Chachalaca, Crested Guan, Highland Guan, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Spot-breasted and Altamira Orioles, Tropical Pewee and several species of tanagers, most of them new additions to our list. But if the birds are good at Los Tarrales, the food is even better, right folks? We discussed the plan for the upcoming days and we went to bed for a well-deserved rest.

Day 5

Today we took our picnic lunches with us and we boarded several 4x4 vehicles before dawn. The plan was to be at the right spot, an area of primary rain forest with fruiting Cecropia trees, at first light. The timing was just perfect, since a few minutes after we arrived we managed to find our target bird: Azure-rumped Tanager. This localized tanager only found in Chiapas and Guatemala is typically found in higher parts of the reserve and

Cecropia trees are their most important food source. Other birds found around this patch of Cecropias were Collared Trogon, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, White-winged Tanager, Painted Bunting and Long-billed Starthroat amongst many others. We drove further into the reserve to an area of shade-grown coffee known as La Isla. Shade-grown coffee is the most important economic resource at Los Tarrales. Nearly 60 Maya Kaqchiquel families live within the reserve and work on these plantations. Here we did enjoy quite a few new and unique species, including several Long-tailed Manakins, amazing scope views of a White Hawk, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Gartered Trogon and Blue-tailed Hummingbird, while in the sky a pair of Black Hawk-Eagles was chased by a dark morph Short-tailed Hawk. Finally, our local guide led us to a specific patch of flowering trees with very tiny flowers. These flowers were the feeding grounds of one of the smallest hummingbirds in Guatemala, the Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, a species endemic to northern Central America. Here we also enjoyed great views of the beautiful Green Shrike-Vireo, a bird far more often heard than seen. Another highlight of the morning was a Mottled Owl at its day roost, spotted by our local guide.

Instead of taking a siesta after lunch, most of the intrepid members of the group spent a couple of hours around the feeders, watching Rufous-backed Wrens, Spot-breasted and Altamira Orioles, Yellow-winged Tanagers, Velasquez's Woodpeckers and some very tame Agoutis. After that we went for a relaxed walk around the flower plantations and the secondary forest in the lowest part of the reserve. The bird activity here was fantastic and we added lots of new species to our list for a total of nearly 100 species on the day. Some of the birds we saw included Least Grebe, Green Kingfisher, Lineated Woodpecker, Collared Araçari, Violet Sabrewing, Long-billed Starthroat, Lesson's Motmot, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and both species of saltators. And after a long but very successful day we returned to our cabins.

Day 6

An excellent cup of farm-produced coffee preceded our morning walk along an area of lowland forest, huge bamboo stands or "tarrales" and coffee plantations. This habitat is home to a huge diversity of birds and by the time we were back for breakfast, we had recorded more than 50 species. The raptor activity was great with several species taking advantage of the thermals, including three species of vultures, including a King Vulture, Gray, Short-tailed and Broad-winged Hawks and a lone Crested Caracara. The bushes and trees were also full of birds, with White-winged Tanager, Masked Tityra, Greenish Elaenia, the first Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher of the season, excellent views of a pair of the elusive Rufous-breasted Spinetail, Turquoise-browed Motmot and a nice selection of warblers and flycatchers. Flyovers included Orange-chinned Parakeet, Orange-fronted Parakeet and Yellow-naped Parrot.

We left Los Tarrales after breakfast and we took the scenic road towards our next destination, Lake Atitlan. Lake Atitlán is renowned as one of the most beautiful lakes in the world, and is Guatemala's most important national and international tourist attraction. We first stopped at San Lucas Toliman, where we couldn't find our main target, the Slender Sheartail. Instead of that, we added to our list a nice selection of ducks and waterbirds. Good numbers of Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck and Lesser Scaup, smaller numbers of Ruddy Duck, Pied-billed Grebe and Neotropic Cormorant where found on the water. The reeds and bushes near the lake were home to several Common Yellowthroats, Black Phoebe, Yellow-breasted Chat, Willow Flycatcher and a very cooperative Sora.

We eventually arrived at our hotel at Santiago de Atitlán, by the shore of the lake, where we enjoyed a fantastic meal and after a short siesta we headed out again. This was our first visit to Rey Tepepul, an area of tropical forest overlooking the lake. The weather conditions were very bad, with dense fog a very low temperatures, so the bird activity was very poor. We only managed to find a couple of Northern Emerald Toucanets, a few Brownbacked Solitaires and some warblers. So we decided to go back to the hotel and bird the gardens instead. This proved to be the right move since the gardens were full of birds and in just half an hour many great birds were seen, including superb views of a male Blue-throated Motmot singing from an exposed branch, Azure-crowned and Beryline Hummingbirds, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Greater Pewee, Grayish Saltator, Yellow-breasted Chat and a couple of Prevost's Ground-Sparrows, another regional endemic, which performed extremely well for us.

Day 7

Today we had a more relaxed day. Our plan was to bird the lower parts of Cerro Paquisis in the morning and then later in the afternoon, take a boat trip around the lake. Unfortunately, the windy conditions made the boat ride across the lake a bit bumpy. Once we arrive at San Cristobal, we loaded our modified pick-up trucks and we drove 20 minutes to Cerro Paquisis. The first thing we saw when we arrived was a huge flock of several hundred Violet-green Swallows, followed by a couple of Rusty Sparrow and a secretive Cabanis's Wren singing from the bushes, which eventually provided good views. But the best encounter we had was of a Singing Quail that we flushed and which flew directly towards Gareth's head, almost hitting him! To this day, Gareth swears that he could see the madness of the bird in its eyes... After this near-death experience, we focused our efforts on our

main target here: Belted Flycatcher. This is another regional endemic, a secretive bird found in semiarid slopes and pine-oak forest. It took a bit of finding but eventually some people managed to get brief views of the bird before it disappeared. Other birds seen in the area were Gray Silky Flycatcher, our only Tropical Mockingbird of the trip, Steller's Jay, Bushy-crested Jay, Black-capped Swallow, Black-vented Oriole and several warbler sand tanagers amongst others.

After another fantastic lunch and a good siesta, we boarded our boat for a relaxed ride along Lake Atitlan's shore, focusing our effort on a sheltered bay known as Bahía de Santiago. The views from the boat were absolutely gorgeous with three volcanoes surrounding us and reflected on the clear waters of the lake. The reeds along the shores were full of egret and herons; Green Heron was the most common, but we also found good numbers of Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron and Tricolored Heron. Common and Purple Gallinules, American Coot and Laughing Gull were also noted, while the sky was full of hundreds or even thousands of Vaux's Swifts and Violet-green, Barn and Northern Rough-winged Swallows, all hawking insects. A couple of unexpected finds were two uncommon winter visitors, a Belted Kingfisher and a big flock of American Wigeon.

Day 8

First thing in the morning we visited Rey Tepepul for the second time. This time it wasn't foggy but it was very windy, which made finding birds a bit harder than usual. Even under these adverse conditions, our intrepid group descended into the forest looking for a more sheltered place. We found a nice patch of fruiting trees where we spent time looking at a pair of Northern Emerald Toucanets, several Swainson's Thurshes, Brown-backed Solitaire and our first Mountain Elaenia of the trip. The surrounding bushes produced Mexican Violetear, Green-throated Mountaingem, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Rufous-capped Warbler, when suddenly we heard a mournful whistle emerging from the canopy. We played the tape and there it was! A Blue-crowned Chlorophonia right in front of us! The bird didn't stay long but provided excellent views for most people. After this amazing encounter, we headed back to the viewpoint overlooking the lake. We were taking pictures of a Cedar Waxwing, an uncommon winter visitor, when two birds flew across and landed on the trees in front of us. They were male and female Elegant Euphonia to Alan's delight and Manynor's relief! Another fantastic sighting was a calling Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge that we managed to call in, allowing good although brief views.

Our Guatemalan adventure continued with a longish drive to the Motagua Valley. We made a quick stop at Parque Regional Cayala in Guatemala City in order to get better views of the wood-partridge, since this is probably the best place in the world to see it. It didn't take long before we heard a bird calling that eventually showed very well in the open. Other birds noted were Bushy-crested Jay, Cabanis's Wren, Rufous-capped Warbler and the only MacGillivray's Warbler of the trip. After a couple of hours we arrived at our hotel, where most people spent the rest of the afternoon in the swimming pool, surrounded by Inca Doves, White-throated Magpie-Jays, Groove-billed Anis and Streak-backed Orioles.

Day 9

The middle valley of the Motagua river is the hottest and driest region of Central America. Located on the "rain shadow" side of the Sierra de las Minas, very little precipitation reaches the Motagua valley. And with that said, the first thing we had when we stepped out of our rooms was rain! We couldn't believe it! Fortunately the rain didn't last very long and by the time we arrived to Reserva Heloderma, the sky was clear and the acacia trees, cacti and spiny bushes were teeming with birds. There are several bird species specialized on the thorn scrub and dry forest and we found nearly all of them, birds such as Russet-crowned Motmot, one of the group's favourite, the elusive Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, the local race "aurantiacus" of Yellow Grosbeak, Nutting's Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, White-lored Gnatcatcher and Streak-backed Oriole. We had also excellent views of Turquoise-browed Motmot, while a flying White-fronted Parrot was a nice addition to our list. This reserve was created to protect the last remaining individuals of the endangered and endemic Guatemalan Beaded Lizard. This close relative of the Gila Monster, is one of the two venomous lizards in the world and is restricted to the Motagua valley. In the visitor center, our local guide showed us a juvenile and a full adult lizard. He also told us about the biology and current population of the species and all the effort that many people have put to protect these amazing creatures. On the way back to the car we found a singing male Elegant Trogon, which provided good 'scope views for the whole group.

Our next destination was the cloud forest of the central highlands, where a totally different set of birds was waiting for us. Biotopo del Quetzal is one of the most important cloud forest reserves in Guatemala. It covers 1,150 hectares of primary cloud forest between 1,500-2,300 m. We took one of the two main trails in the reserve and spent an hour watching birds, including Unicoloured Jay, Highland Guan, Green-throated Mountaingem, Grey-breasted Wood Wren, Northern Waterthrush and Common Bush Tanager. Suddenly, Aaron came running and with a big smile on his face. He had found a pair of Resplendent Quetzals near the car park! The next 10-15

minutes were, for most people, the highlight of the trip. Male and female Resplendent Quetzal feeding just a few meters away from us, providing the best views you can imagine. Some people even mentioned that the bird was too close to take pictures with a big lens... Who could have asked for a better end to the day? Back in our fantastic hotel, we enjoyed a group of 15-20 noisy Chestnut-headed Oropendolas going to roost.

Day 10

We woke up early and loaded the bus for our last morning of birding in Guatemala. This time we visited Ranchitos del Quetzal, a private reserve, family-owned in its third generation. The reserve covers 40 hectares of cloud forest and a well-maintained network of trails. The first thing that we found when we arrived was a small bird, hopping around in front of the main gate. Using a torch we managed to identify it as a Gould's Nightingale-Thrush, one of the specialities of the area. A couple of minutes later, we heard a distinctive call coming from the dense canopy, a Barred Forest Falcon! We played the tape just once and the bird flew across and landed on a tree in front of us. We all enjoyed great views of this bird, then realized that there was a second bird a few meters away! We didn't have to walk very far from the car park to find the birds. In the first 200m of the trail we found very interesting species such as Unicoloured jay, Violet Sabrewing, Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush, a female Collared Trogon hunting a huge moth, Brown-capped Vireo, Paltry Tyrannulet, a singing Slate-coloured Solitaire, Spot-crowned Woodcreeper and a nice selection of warblers, including Hermit, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white and Slate-throated Whitestart.

Unfortunately, it was time to say goodbye to this wonderful place and head back to Guatemala City in order to take our flight to London via Madrid. Packed and ready, we loaded the van for the drive back to Guatemala City, with a couple of "comfort stops" on route that produced our last new bird of the trip, a nice Stripe-headed Sparrow. We arrived at the airport in good time for our flight home and, having said our goodbyes, we made our way to the departure gates.

Thanks to all party members for such good humor, enthusiasm and some exceptional birding skills too! I look forward to seeing everyone on another Limosa Holiday in the very near future!

Annotated List of Birds Recorded (Total bird species – 250)

American Wigeon Anas americana

A flock of 35-40 birds seen at Lake Atitlan.

Blue-winged Teal Spatula discors

Common at Lake Atitlan.

Ring-necked Duck Aythya collaris

Common at Lake Atitlan.

Lesser Scaup Aythya affinis

The most numerous duck at Lake Atitlan.

Ruddy Duck Oxyura jamaicensis

Three birds seen near San Lucas Tolimán.

White-bellied Chachalaca Ortalis leucogastra

Common, and noisy, around our cabins at Los Tarrales.

Crested Guan Penelope purpurascens

One bird in our first afternoon at Los Tarrales.

Highland Guan Penelopina nigra

Heard on three dates and seen extremely well at Los Tarrales, two males, and Biotopo del Quetzal, one male.

Horned Guan Oreophasis derbianus

One of the highlights of the trip. After an early start and a beautiful hike through the cloud forest, we managed to find an adult bird perched on a bare tree, providing good 'scope views.

Buffy-crowned Wood Partridge Dendrortyx leucophrys

A tricky species to find. We saw one at Mirador Rey Tepepul and later in the day, we had amazing views of another bird at Parque Ecológico Cayalá.

Singing Quail Dactylortyx thoracicus

One almost collided with Gareth's head near Cerro Paguisis - a very close encounter! Heard on several dates.

Least Grebe Tachybaptus dominicus

Three birds in one of the small ponds at Los Tarrales.

Pied-billed Grebe Podilymbus podiceps

Several birds near San Lucas Tolimán.

Neotropic Cormorant Phalacrocorax brasilianus

One bird near San Lucas Tolimán.

Green Heron Butorides virescens

Common at Lake Atitlan.

Western Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis

Seen on route on most days.

Great Blue Heron Ardea herodias

Small numbers around Lake Atitlan.

Great Egret Ardea alba

Seen around Lake Atitlan and Motagua river.

Little Blue Heron Egretta caerulea

Small numbers at Lake Atitlan

Tricoloured Heron Egretta tricolor

Small numbers at Lake Atitlan

Snowy Egret Egretta thula

Seen on most lakes and rivers.

Turkey Vulture Cathartes aura

Very common. Seen daily.

Black Vulture Coragyps atratus

Very common. Seen daily.

King Vulture Sarcoramphus papa

One bird seen at Los Tarrales

Black Hawk-Eagle Spizaetus tyrannus

Amazing views of two birds on the slopes of Atitlan volcano. One of them, probably the male, being chased by a Short-tailed Hawk.

Sharp-shinned Hawk Accipiter striatus

One bird in the dry forest.

Mississippi Kite Ictinia mississippiensis

Five birds migrating north. Firsts of the season.

Roadside Hawk Rupornis magnirostris

Several birds seen along the road...

White Hawk Pseudastur albicollis

Excellent views of one bird perched on a bare branch at Los Tarrales.

Grey Hawk Buteo plagiatus

Several noted along on route and at Los Tarrales.

Broad-winged Hawk Buteo platypterus

One bird at Los Tarrales.

Short-tailed Hawk Buteo brachyurus

The most common "Buteo". Seen on several dates.

Swainson's Hawk Buteo swainsoni

One bird seen during our "Horned Guan Hike"

Red-tailed Hawk Buteo jamaicensis

Seen on several dates. Mostly in pairs.

Sora Porzana carolina

Excellent prolonged views of one bird near San Lucas Tolimán.

Purple Gallinule Porphyrio martinicus

Common in reedbeds around Lake Atitlan.

Common Gallinule Gallinula galeata

Common in reedbeds around Lake Atitlan.

American Coot Fulica americana

Very common at Lake Atitlan.

Spotted Sandpiper Actitis macularius

Several seen at Lake Atitlan.

Least Sandpiper Calidris minutilla

One bird during our boat trip around Lake Atitlan.

Laughing Gull Larus atricilla

The only gull of the trip. Common at Lake Atitlan.

Band-tailed Pigeon Patagioenas fasciata

Common. Seen on forest at higher elevations, especially pine-oak forest.

Red-billed Pigeon Patagioenas flavirostris

Common at Los Tarrales and the Central Highlands.

Inca Dove Columbina inca

Very common. Seen on most days.

Common Ground Dove Columbina passerine

Seen on several dates.

Ruddy Ground Dove Columbina talpacoti

Two birds seen near our hotel in the Motagua Valley.

White-tipped Dove Leptotila verreauxi

Seen or heard on most days.

White-faced Quail-Dove Zentrygon albifacies

Lesley had a close encounter with one of these secretive birds.

Mourning Dove Zenaida macroura

One bird seen at Reserva Heloderma and another one in Guatemala City.

White-winged Dove Zenaida asiatica

Very common. Seen daily.

Groove-billed Ani Crotophaga sulcirostris

A common birds in the Motagua Valley.

Lesser Ground Cuckoo Morococcyx erythropygus

Superb close encounter with one these skulkers near the Heloderma visitor centre. Several birds heard.

Squirrel Cuckoo Piaya cayana

Small numbers seen at Los Tarrales, Cerro Paquisis and Reserva Heloderma.

Mottled Owl Strix virgata

It took a bit of finding but we managed to get good views of a roosting bird in a bamboo stand at Los Tarrales.

Ferruginous Pygmy Owl Glaucidium brasilianum

It's diagnostic call became a common feature during the trip, with several birds heard and at least a couple seen at Los Tarrales and Reserva Heloderma.

Lesser Nighthawk Chordeiles acutipennis

Seen at dusk near our cabins at Los Tarrales.

Pauraque Nyctidromus albicollis

Heard only, near Los Tarrales and Santiago Atitlán.

Mexican Whip-poor-will Antrostomus arizonae

Mostly heard, but one bird was seen on the drive to the "Horned Guan hike"

White-collared Swift Streptoprocne zonaris

Big flocks seen at Los Tarrales and the Central Highlands.

Vaux's Swift Chaetura vauxi

Common, seen almost daily.

Rufous Sabrewing Campylopterus rufus

Another regional endemic. This large hummingbird was seen extremely well around the hummingbird feeders at Finca El Pilar, where it was fairly common. Another bird seen near Cerro Paquisis.

Violet Sabrewing Campylopterus hemileucurus

Seen at Los Tarrales and Ranchitos del Quetzal.

Mexican Violetear Colibri thalassinus

One bird around Rincon Suizo, several birds at Fuentes Georginas and during the "Horned Guan hike", including a very tame individual that we could almost touch and one bird near Rey Tepepul.

Emerald-chinned Hummingbird Abeillia abeillei

We had good views of this seldom seen species in the upper part of Los Tarrales.

Canivet's Emerald Chlorostilbon canivetii

A couple of birds at Reserva Heloderma.

Cinnamon Hummingbird Amazilia rutile

Very common around our cabins in Los Tarrales, also seen in the dry forest.

Azure-crowned Hummingbird Amazilia cyanocephala

One of the most widespread hummingbirds, seen on five dates.

Berylline Hummingbird Amazilia beryllina

Common near the feeders at Finca El Pilar.

Blue-tailed Hummingbird Amazilia cyanura

The most common hummingbird in the upper part of Los Tarrales and around Lake Atitlan.

Amethyst-throated Mountaingem Lampornis amethystinus

Small numbers of this beautiful hummingbird were seen around Rincon Suizo and Fuentes Georginas.

Green-throated Mountaingem Lampornis viridipallens

Another regional endemic hummer, noted on four dates.

White-eared Hummingbird Basilinna leucotis

A common resident of the pine-oak forest. Seen very well at Finca El Pilar and Rincon Suizo.

Garnet-throated Hummingbird Lamprolaima rhami

Small numbers of this range restricted species were seen in the cloud forest near Fuentes Georginas.

Rivoli's Hummingbird Eugenes fulgens

Common in the pine-oak forest. Seen on three dates.

Long-billed Starthroat Heliomaster longirostris

A couple of birds seen at Los Tarrales.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird Archilochus colubris

Several females seen on three dates.

Resplendent Quetzal Pharomachrus mocinno

Considered bird of the trip by many and national bird of Guatemala. We had amazing close views of a pair feeding on their favorite "aguacatillo" tree for several minutes, allowing excellent photo opportunities. It doesn't get much better than that!

Gartered Trogon Trogon caligatus

Cracking views of a male calling in the upper part of Los Tarrales.

Elegant Trogon Trogon elegans

A male seen just outside of the Heloderma visitor centre.

Mountain Trogon Trogon mexicanus

Male and female near Rincón Suizo.

Collared Trogon Trogon collaris

The most widespread trogon. Noted on 4 dates.

Green Kingfisher Chloroceryle Americana

A bird seen at Los Tarrales.

Belted Kingfisher Megaceryle alcyon

This migratory kingfisher was seen during or boat trip around Lake Atitlan.

Blue-throated Motmot Aspatha gularis

A male was seen perched on a bare tree for more than 10 minutes. Calling and providing excellent photo opportunities. Heard on several dates

Russet-crowned Motmot Momotus mexicanus

This mostly Mexican species has a small isolated population in the Motagua Valley, where we saw at least three different birds.

Lesson's Motmot Momotus lessonii

The most widespread motmot, seen on several dates.

Turquoise-browed Motmot Eumomota superciliosa

Single birds seen at Los Tarrales and Reserva Heloderma.

Emerald Toucanet Aulacorhynchus prasinus

Surprisingly common, with a total of 7 birds on 4 dates.

Collared Aracari Pteroglossus torquatus

A small flock noted at Los Tarrales.

Acorn Woodpecker Melanerpes formicivorus

Common in the pine-oak forest, where several birds were noted.

Golden-fronted Woodpecker Melanerpes aurifrons

The most widespread woodpecker, seen daily.

Hairy Woodpecker Leuconotopicus villosus

Seen at Rincon Suizo and during the "Horned Guan Hike".

Golden-olive Woodpecker Colaptes rubiginosus

Seen in the upper part of Finca El Pilar, Los Tarrales and Santiago de Atitlán.

Northern Flicker Colaptes auratus

This distinctive Guatemalan race was common in the pine-oak forest and around Lake Atitlan, with birds seen on 4 dates.

Lineated Woodpecker Dryocopus lineatus

Small number at Los Tarrales.

Northern Crested Caracara Caracara cheriway

Single birds were noted on four dates, mosty along the Pacific Slope.

Barred Forest Falcon Micrastur ruficollis

This secretive and difficult to see raptor was noted during the "Horned Guan Hike" and at Ranchitos del Quetzal, where to birds provided excellent views.

Collared Forest Falcon Micrastur semitorquatus

Heard on three dates but only seen once.

American Kestrel Falco sparverius

One bird perched on a post on the way to Los Tarrales.

Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus

One bird seen from the main square in Antigua.

Orange-chinned Parakeet Brotogeris jugularis

Common, and very noisy, at Los Tarrales.

White-fronted Amazon Amazona albifrons

One bird at Reserva Heloderma.

Yellow-naped Amazon Amazona auropalliata

Common at Los Tarrales.

Orange-fronted Parakeet Eupsittula canicularis

Several noisy flocks at Los Tarrales and the Motagua valley.

Pacific Parakeet Psittacara strenuous

Seen in Antigua, Los Tarrales and Rey Tepepul.

Rufous-breasted Spinetail Synallaxis erythrothorax

Very secretive. Two birds provided good views at Los Tarrales.

Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner Anabacerthia variegaticeps

One bird near Rey Tepepul.

Ivory-billed Woodcreeper Xiphorhynchus flavigaster

A couple of birds at Los Tarrales.

Spot-crowned Woodcreeper Lepidocolaptes affinis

Several were noted during the "Horned Guan Hike" and also at Ranchitos del Quetzal.

Barred Antshrike Thamnophilus doliatus

Seen well in the upper part of Los Tarrales and heard on a couple of dates.

Greenish Elaenia Myiopagis viridicata

One bird seen during our last morning at Los Tarrales.

Yellow-bellied Elaenia Elaenia flavogaster

A couple of birds seen in the upper part of Los Tarrales.

Mountain Elaenia Elaenia frantzii

Excellent views of several birds near Rey Tepepul.

Northern Beardless Tyrannulet Camptostoma imberbe

Seen in Los Tarrales and the dry forest.

Paltry Tyrannulet Zimmerius vilissimus

One seen near Cerro Paquisis and a couple of birds providing great views in the central highlands.

Common Tody-Flycatcher Todirostrum cinereum

Noted on three dates.

Stub-tailed Spadebill Platyrinchus cancrominus

One bird seen during one of our walks around Los Tarrales.

Belted Flycatcher Xenotriccus callizonus

This range-restricted species was briefly seen at Cerro Paquisis.

Black Phoebe Savornis nigricans

Common around Lake Atitlan.

Northern Tufted Flycatcher Mitrephanes phaeocercus

Seen in a mixed-especies flock at Rincon Suizo.

Greater Pewee Contopus pertinax

A common species of the pine-oak forest. Noted on four dates.

Tropical Pewee Contopus cinereus

Several birds seen at Los Tarrales.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher Empidonax flaviventris

One of the most common flycatchers around Los Tarrales.

Willow Flycatcher Empidonax traillii

One bird seen well and heard near San Lucas Tolimán.

Least Flycatcher Empidonax minimus

Small numbers recorded on four dates.

Hammond's Flycatcher Empidonax hammondii

Fairly common in the pine-oak forest of Finca El Pilar, Rincón Suizo and Cerro Paquisis.

Yellowish Flycatcher Empidonax flavescens

Seen during the "Horned Guan Hike"

Social Flycatcher Myiozetetes similis

Very common. Seen daily.

Great Kiskadee Pitangus sulphuratus

Very common. Seen daily.

Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher Myiodynastes luteiventris

According to our local guide, we found the first bird of the season for Los Tarrales.

Boat-billed Flycatcher Megarynchus pitangua

Common. Seen almost daily.

Tropical Kingbird Tyrannus melancholicus

Common. Seen almost daily.

Western Kingbird Tyrannus verticalis

Small numbers recorded on three dates.

Dusky-capped Flycatcher Myiarchus tuberculifer

Great views of several birds near Finca El Pilar, Los Tarrales and Cerro Paquisis.

Ash-throated Flycatcher Myiarchus cinerascens

Two or three birds seen and heard in the dry forest.

Nutting's Flycatcher Myiarchus nuttingi

Two birds seen and hear in front of the Reserva Heloderma visitor centre.

Great Crested Flycatcher Myiarchus crinitus

One bird seen at Reserva Heloderma

Brown-crested Flycatcher Myiarchus tyrannulus

Seen on both days at Los Tarrales

Long-tailed Manakin Chiroxiphia linearis

Good views of at least 5-6 birds. Including adult males, young males and females.

Masked Tityra Tityra semifasciata

Several birds seen at Los Tarrales.

Rose-throated Becard Pachyramphus aglaiae

Two males seen in the lower part of Finca El Pilar and a few more noted at Los Tarrales.

Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo Vireolanius melitophrys

Only heard, very close, near the hummingbird feeders of Finca El Pilar.

Green Shrike-Vireo Vireolanius pulchellus

Excellent views of this beautiful bird while looking for hummingbirds in the upper part of Los Tarrales.

Plumbeous Vireo Vireo plumbeus

One bird at Los Tarrales.

Blue-headed Vireo Vireo solitarius

Several birds seen in the pine-oak forest near Finca El Pilar.

Hutton's Vireo Vireo huttoni

Single birds een on the first two days of the trip.

Warbling Vireo Vireo gilvus

Seen near Fuentes Georginas and Los Tarrales.

Brown-capped Vireo Vireo leucophrys

Great views of two birds at Ranchitos del Quetzal.

Black-throated Jav Cvanolyca pumelo

A cloud forest specialist and a bird that eludes most visitors. A small flock was noted during the "Horned Guan Hike"

Bushy-crested Jay Cyanocorax melanocyaneus

A rather common regional endemic. Noted on five dates.

White-throated Magpie-Jay Calocitta Formosa

Common in the Pacific Slope, especially Los Tarrales. Also noted in the dry forest.

Unicoloured Jay Aphelocoma unicolor

Another attractive range-restricted species. We had very close encounters with them near Fuentes Georginas, Biotopo del Quetzal and Ranchitos del Quetzal.

Steller's Jay Cyanocitta stelleri

Seen at higher elevations in the pine-oak forest of Finca El Pilar and Rincón Suizo.

Cedar Waxwing Bombycilla cedrorum

An uncommon winter visitor, absent some years. We found one in a flock of silky-flycatcher at Rey Tepepul.

Grey Silky-flycatcher Ptiliogonys cinereus

Fairly common in pine-oak forest. Good numbers noted at Finca El Pilar, Rey Tepepul and Cerro Paquisis.

Violet-green Swallow Tachycineta thalassina

A huge flock with several hundred birds seen at Cerro Paquisis and smaller numbers around Lake Atitlan.

Grey-breasted Martin Progne chalybea

A few birds seen by some members of the group along the Motagua river.

Black-capped Swallow Notiochelidon pileata

Very common regional endemic. Seen on five dates.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow Stelgidopteryx serripennis

The most widespread swallow. Seen daily.

Barn Swallow Hirundo rustica

Common around Lake Atitlan and Motagua Valley.

Band-backed Wren Campylorhynchus zonatus

Small flocks were seen on four dates.

Rufous-backed Wren Campylorhynchus capistratus

Good views on the bird feeders at Los Tarrales and around Lake Atitlan.

Spot-breasted Wren Pheugopedius maculipectus

One bird was seen at Los Tarrales.

Cabanis's Wren Cantorchilus modestus

More often seen than heard, although we managed to get good views near Cerro Paquisis.

House Wren Troglodytes aedon

Common. Seen on most days.

Rufous-browed Wren Troglodytes rufociliatus

Heard only. Two birds singing in the pine-oak forest near Rincon Suizo.

White-breasted Wood Wren Henicorhina leucosticte

Heard only. One bird at Fuentes Georginas.

Grey-breasted Wood Wren Henicorhina leucophrys

Cracking views of this little skulker at Biotopo del Quetzal.

Blue-grey Gnatcatcher Polioptila caerulea

Seen on both days at Los Tarrales. Usually in mixed flocks.

White-lored Gnatcatcher Polioptila albiloris

A dry forest especialist. At least two pais seen well at Reserva Heloderma.

Bushtit Psaltriparus minimus

Several birds noted as part of a mixed flock with warblers and vireos at Rincon Suizo.

Brown Creeper Certhia Americana

A couple of birds notes as part of a mixed flock at Rincon Suizo.

Tropical Mockingbird Mimus gilvus

Surprisingly scarce, with only one bird noted on the way back from Cerro Paquisis.

Blue-and-white Mockingbird Melanotis hypoleucus

Briefly seen in our first stop at Finca El Pilar. Heard on three more dates.

Eastern Bluebird Sialia sialis

Very common on the upper elevations of Finca El Pilar.

Brown-backed Solitaire Myadestes occidentalis

Soundtrack of the trip. Seen or heard almost daily.

Slate-coloured Solitaire Myadestes unicolor

One bird heard and seen at Ranchitos del Quetzal in the central highlands.

Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush Catharus frantzii

We had a very close encounter with one of these birds along one of the tracks near Rincon Suizo.

Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush Catharus mexicanus

Great views of several birds in our last morning of the trip.

Gould's Nightingale-Thrush Catharus dryas

One bird seen from the main gate at Ranchitos del Quetzal.

Swainson's Thrush Catharus ustulatus

Common along the Pacific Slope, with good numbers noted at Los Tarrales and Cerro Paquisis.

Mountain Thrush Turdus plebejus

One bird seen by some members of the group near Fuentes Georginas.

Clay-coloured Thrush *Turdus grayi*One of the most common birds in Guate

One of the most common birds in Guatemala. Seen daily.

White-throated Thrush Turdus assimilis

Seen on both days at Los Tarrales, where it was a common sighting.

Rufous-collared Thrush Turdus rufitorques

Regional endemic. Usually found in high elevations forest.

House Sparrow Passer domesticus

Common. Seen daily.

Olive Warbler Peucedramus taeniatus

One bird seen during the "Horned Guan Hike"

Lesser Goldfinch Spinus psaltria

A fairly common birds around Lake Atitlan. Seen on three dates.

Black-headed Siskin Spinus notatus

Small numbers seen at Finca El Pilar, Lake Atitlan and Cerro Paquisis.

Yellow-throated Euphonia Euphonia hirundinacea

Small numbers noted on 4 dates, more numerous at Los Tarrales.

Elegant Euphonia Euphonia elegantissima

It took a bit of finding, but eventually we managed to find a male and a female at Rey Tepepul for Alan's delight. Phewww...

Blue-crowned Chlorophonia Chlorophonia occipitalis

Although the bird showed extremely well, only a few were able to see due to the dense vegetation.

Ovenbird Seiurus aurocapilla

A very cooperative bird seen along one of the tracks in Los Tarrales.

Louisiana Waterthrush Parkesia motacilla

One bird seen near a small creek at Los Tarrales.

Northern Waterthrush Parkesia noveboracensis

Great views of a foraging bird at Biotopo del Quetzal.

Black-and-white Warbler Mniotilta varia

A personal favorite, small numbers of this attractive warbler showed very well on four dates.

Crescent-chested Warbler Oreothlypis superciliosa

Commonly heard in the pine-oak forest, with very nice views of several birds in the Fuentes Georginas area.

Tennessee Warbler Leiothlypis peregrine

Very common warbler. Seen daily.

Nashville Warbler Leiothlypis ruficapilla

Not as common as Tennessee Warbler, but noted on five dates.

MacGillivray's Warbler Geothlypis tolmiei

Surprisingly scarce this year, with only one bird seen at Parque Ecológico Cayalá.

Common Yellowthroat Geothlypis trichas

Several birds noted in the reed beds around Lake Atitlan.

Magnolia Warbler Setophaga magnolia

Small numbers seen on both days in Los Tarrales.

American Yellow Warbler Setophaga aestiva

Small numbers noted on five dates.

Audubon's Warbler Setophaga auduboni

Only one bird seen on the way back from the "Horned Guan Hike"

Townsend's Warbler Setophaga townsendi

The most common warbler of the trip. Seen everywhere, except in the central highlands.

Hermit Warbler Setophaga occidentalis

One or two birds seen at Ranchitos del Quetzal.

Black-throated Green Warbler Setophaga virens

Recorded on three dates, but was very common in the central highlands.

Rufous-capped Warbler Basileuterus rufifrons

Seen near Rey Tepepul and Parque Ecológico Cayalá in Guatemala City.

Golden-browed Warbler Basileuterus belli

One bird seen near the hummingbird feeders of Finca El Pilar and single birds at Fuentes Georginas and during the "Horned Guan Hike".

Golden-crowned Warbler Basileuterus culicivorus

Only one birds noted at Finca El Pilar.

Wilson's Warbler Cardellina pusilla

Very common. Seen daily

Pink-headed Warbler Cardellina versicolor

One of the group's favorite and one of the highlights of the trip. Several birds were seen at Rincon Suizo. But the star of the show was an extremely cooperative male on the way back from the "Horned Guan Hike", which entertained us for 20 minutes at a very close range. Providing excellent photo opportunities.

Slate-throated Whitestart Myioborus miniatus

Another common resident warbler, noted on five dates.

Yellow-breasted Chat Icteria virens

One bird showed well near San Lucas Toliman and another bird was seen at Parque Ecológico Cayalá.

Chestnut-headed Oropendola Psarocolius wagleri

We were lucky enough to have a roost of these noisy birds in front of our cabins in the central highlands.

Yellow-billed Cacique Amblycercus holosericeus

One bird heard and briefly seen at Los Tarrales.

Altamira Oriole Icterus gularis

A common bird during the second half of the trip. Especially in Los Tarrales and the Motagua Valley.

Streak-backed Oriole Icterus pustulatus

At least half a dozen birds were seen at Reserva Heloderma.

Baltimore Oriole Icterus galbula

A common winter visitor. Noted on five dates.

Spot-breasted Oriole Icterus pectoralis

We only saw it at Los Tarrales, where it was fairly common.

Black-vented Oriole Icterus wagleri

The counterpart of Black-cowled Oriole on the Pacific Slope. We had good views of this colorful bird at Finca El Pilar and Cerro Paquisis.

Orchard Oriole Icterus spurius

Very common at Los Tarrales and the dry forest.

Bronzed Cowbird Molothrus aeneus

Huge numbers around Lake Atitlan and single birds near Rincon Suizo and Motagua Valley.

Melodious Blackbird Dives dives

A common bird in Los Tarrales.

Great-tailed Grackle Quiscalus mexicanus

They were everywhere! Seen daily.

Rufous-collared Sparrow Zonotrichia capensis

This attractive "American sparrow" was recorded on five dates.

Stripe-headed Sparrow Peucaea ruficauda

Aaron managed to find one in our last birding stop! Pheewww...

Rusty Sparrow Aimophila rufescens

We had a very close encounter with a couple of birds near Cerro Paquisis.

Spotted Towhee Pipilo maculatus

One bird seen on the way back from the "Horned Guan Hike".

Prevost's Ground Sparrow Melozone biarcuata

A "garden bird" for us in Posada de Santiago, where a pair showed amazingly well.

Chestnut-capped Brushfinch Arremon brunneinucha

One bird at Finca El Pilar.

White-naped Brushfinch Atlapetes albinucha

A pair was seen at Rincon Suizo.

Common Bush Tanager Chlorospingus flavopectus

A common bird of the cloud forest. Noted on four dates.

Blue-grey Tanager Thraupis episcopus

Common. Recorded on most habitats, including towns. Noted on five dates.

Yellow-winged Tanager Thraupis abbas

Even more common and ubiquitous than the previous species. Noted almost daily.

Cabanis's Tanager Tangara cabanisi

A very rare bird, restricted to Chiapas and Guatemala and another highlight of the trip. We had excellent and prolonged views of three birds preening and feeding on the Cecropia trees.

Red-legged Honeycreeper Cyanerpes cyaneus

Fairly common at Los Tarrales.

Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer Diglossa baritula

Eventually, the whole group had good views of the birds at Fuentes Georginas. Also seen during the "Horned Guan Hike".

Black-headed Saltator Saltator atriceps

Fairly common at Los Tarrales.

Greyish Saltator Saltator coerulescens

Uncommon at Los Tarrales.

Blue-black Grassquit Volatinia jacarina

One bird at Posada Santiago.

White-collared Seedeater Sporophila torqueola

Fairly common on the Pacific Slope, especially at Los Tarrales.

Summer Tanager Piranga rubra

Seen on both days in Los Tarrales

Western Tanager Piranga Iudoviciana

The most common *Piranga* tanager. Noted seven dates.

White-winged Tanager Piranga leucoptera

Good views of several birds at Los Tarrales.

Yellow Grosbeak Pheucticus chrysopeplus

The local race "aurantiacus" was fairly common

Rose-breasted Grosbeak Pheucticus Iudovicianus

A common winter visitor, noted on the first six days of the trip.

Blue Grosbeak Passerina caerulea

A single bird was observed at Finca El Pilar.

Indigo Bunting Passerina cyanea

Small numbers seen on four dates.

Painted Bunting Passerina ciris

A couple of birds were seen at Los Tarrales and one at Posada de Santiago.

Mammals

Deppe's Squirrel Sciurus deppei Mexican Grey Squirrel Sciurus aureogaster Variegated Squirrel Sciurus variegatoides Central American Agouti Dasyprocta punctata Long-tailed Weasel Mustela frenata White-tailed Deer Odocoileus virginianus

Reptiles

Brown Basilik Basiliscus vittatus Guatemalan Beaded Lizard Heloderma horridum charlesbogerti House Gecko Hemidactylus mabouia