

# **BARRANCA DEL COBRE**

**(MEXICO'S COPPER CANYON)**

**OCTOBER 9-17, 2010**

**Leader: Brian Gibbons**

**Compiled by: Brian Gibbons**

**VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS, INC.  
2525 WALLINGWOOD DRIVE, SUITE 1003  
AUSTIN, TX 78746  
WWW.VENTBIRD.COM**

**Barranca del Cobre**  
**October 9-17, 2010**

**Leader: Brian Gibbons**

*The sweltering lowlands of Sinaloa, the Sierra Madre Occidental, and the Central Mexican Plateau all hosted a great variety of birds that we endeavored to see on our tour of Copper Canyon. Starting in Parque Sinaloa in a bustling Los Mochis, we found our first western Mexican endemics. The raucous Black-throated Magpie-Jay, squeaky Mexican Parrotlets, Broad-billed and Violet-crowned hummingbirds, Plain-capped Starthroat, and a furtive but Happy Wren were some of the great birds we saw on our first morning. After our visit to the park, we moved up the El Fuerte river valley to the town of El Fuerte. The town's newly refurbished facades and paint were still fresh—this after being designated a Puebla Magica (magical town) and receiving federal funds to give this historic town a facelift. We took a brief tour of the town and moved on to the river where birds were common. Ospreys cruised up and down stream, vigilant for that daydreaming fish. Also along the river we watched Great Kiskadees, Social Flycatchers, and Green and Belted kingfishers.*

*Cruising up and down the road near El Fuerte eventually produced a few views of the handsome endemic, Elegant Quail. A little ways into the thorn forest we enticed a Russet-crowned Motmot to come out for excellent views. A Sinaloa Wren also came in for a look. In an oxbow near Ocolome we saw a couple of Northern Jacanas trotting on the lilies. An agitated group of songbirds was mobbing a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. A couple of male Rose-throated Becards actively disputed their territorial boundaries. We heard Rufous-bellied Chachalacas a few times, but we never could track them down. Lucy's Warblers were easy to find with a bit of pishing. Four species of orioles brightened the list from the El Fuerte area: Streak-backed, Orchard, Hooded, and Black-vented. On our final morning in the lowlands we watched the river one last time; a pair of Common Black-Hawks was doing the same. The trees around the train station hosted a variety of birds with the Rufous-backed Robin being the most exciting.*

*The scenery is spectacular during the first leg of the train journey up the Sierra Madre Occidental aboard the Chihuahua al Pacifico. Soaring cliffs, mountain streams, exceptional vistas, canyons, a waterfall, amazing engineering, and the thorn forest ceding to oaks and pines are to be expected. Finally we reached the cooler climes of the mountains at Bahuichivo. Paraiso del Oso was superb. We found the Berylline Hummingbird in the courtyard as expected.*

*The next day we traveled out to Cerro Gallegos, birding along the way, finding a few flocks and a distant Military Macaw. We were rewarded with a spectacular view of Urique Canyon, a delicious fajita lunch, and a White-eared Hummingbird. Some of the birds in the various flocks we found were Brown-backed Solitaire, Crescent-chested Warbler, Red-faced Warbler, Bridled Titmouse, Mexican Chickadee, Tufted Flycatcher, Yellow-eyed Junco, and Hermit Warbler. We had some luck with the owls, a few folks saw the Whiskered Screech-Owl, and everybody saw the mountain form of the Northern Pygmy-Owl.*

*On our second evening at the Paraiso del Oso we were treated to a rumbling thunderstorm. The next morning a weedy corn field out back was alive with birds; Lincoln's Sparrows were everywhere, and Lesser Goldfinches, an out of place Marsh Wren, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting, and a very obliging Buff-breasted Flycatcher were all there.*

*The Bahuichivo station wasn't as birdy as the El Fuerte station, but we enjoyed our lunch and were amazed by the almost timely arrival of our train! Higher still we traveled into Tarahumara country and the pine forest around Creel. The Copper Canyon Lodge is set in a charming little valley with amazing birds right outside. Great atmosphere and wonderful food are also easy to find. The stream passing in front of the lodge hosted a pair of American Dippers, and the male was often singing. We heard our main quarry for this stop on our first evening, but we wouldn't have scope views until the morning. We found them—an entire family of five Eared Quetzals—the bird of the trip. We enjoyed scope views of the female, male, and juvenile. After the family group moved upstream, we continued downstream, to Cascada Cusarare. This beautiful waterfall is where we enjoyed our sack lunch and the warm sun or cool shade, whichever way you were inclined. The return hikers enjoyed a juvenile Mountain Trogon that was hanging out with a juvenile Eared Quetzal.*

*During our final birding morning, we enjoyed exceptional views of the highland Mexican endemic, Striped Sparrow, just outside of the lodge gate. A quick stop at scenic Lago Arareco added a couple of species. As we cruised out of the mountains, we dropped into the central Mexican plateau and its grasslands, grain fields, and apple orchards. Casa Carolina hosted us for a wonderful lunch, and in Chihuahua we learned of Pancho Villa's exploits on the battlefield and in love. Our final sighting was a late evening Peregrine zipping past Chihuahua.*

## **ITINERARY**

**October 9** - Arrival in Los Mochis, trip introduction and dinner.

**October 10** – Parque Sinaloa, Los Mochis, Sinaloa; Drive to El Fuerte, afternoon town tour and birding along the El Fuerte River until dusk.

**October 11** – Birding the El Fuerte River Valley (Brand Ranch and Ocolome) and Miguel Hidalgo Reservoir.

**October 12** – Birding at the El Fuerte River and around the El Fuerte Train Station, train to Bahuichivo and transfer to Paraiso del Oso in Cerocahui. Quick town tour in Cerocahui and evening birding around the grounds and Arroyo Ranchito behind Paraiso del Oso

**October 13** – Van to Cerro Gallegos and the Urique canyon overlook birding along the way. We had lunch at the overlook with the afternoon free.

**October 14** – Birding behind the Paraiso del Oso along the canyon trail into Arroyo Ranchito. Transfer to Bahuichivo where we took the train to Creel and a van on to Cabanas Canon del Cobre. Evening Quetzal watch, heard the birds but didn't see them.

**October 15** – Birding hike to Cascada Cusarare, Lunch at the falls. Afternoon return to Quetzal spot for some folks.

**October 16** – Birding around the lodge. Quick stop at Lago Arareco. Lunch at Casa Carolina in Guerrero, and on to Chihuahua and the Pancho Villa Museum.

**October 17** – Departures for points north

## **KEY**

underlined = unusual or especially memorable observations

**boldfaced** = Mexican endemics and near-endemics

Location codes:

Lowlands refers to Los Mochis and El Fuerte areas

EF = El Fuerte and the river valley up to Presa Miguel Hidalgo

PDO = Paraiso del Oso

CC = Cascada Cusarare

**BIRDLIST:** During our explorations of the Copper Canyon we saw and heard 175 species of birds

Black-bellied Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) – EF

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos diazi*) – Lowlands and near Guerrero

Ring-necked Duck – Lago Arareco

**Rufous-bellied Chachalaca** (*Ortalis wagleri*) – Frustratingly heard only a few times EF

**Elegant Quail** (*Callipepla douglasii*) – Seen well EF

Montezuma Quail (*Cyrtonyx montezumae*) – Heard only behind the Cabanas Canon del Cobre, a first for me on this tour

Least Grebe (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – EF, Nancy spotted them

Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – EF

Bare-throated Tiger- Heron (*Tigrisoma mexicanum*) – Terry spotted one creeping in high veg along the river EF

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) – Seen several times

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) – EF and near Guerrero

Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) – A couple near Guerrero

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) – EF

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) – flyby at EF

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) – Seen almost every day

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) – Seen every day

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Common at EF

Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) – One near Guerrero

Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) – A couple singles in the mountains

Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) – A few seen in the lowlands

Common Black-Hawk (*Buteogallus anthracinus*) – Good looks along the EF river

Gray Hawk (*Asturina nitida*) – Parque Sinaloa and EF

Zone-tailed Hawk (*Buteo albonotatus*) – Great looks at the Miguel Hidalgo dam

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Fairly common in the mountains

Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) – Common in lowlands

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) – Seen almost everyday

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) – A single zipped past us along the EF river

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) – One zipped past in the evening in Chihuahua

American Coot (*Fulica americana*) – Near Guerrero

Northern Jacana (*Jacana spinosa*) – A couple nice adults at Ocolome

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*) – Common along the EF river, also at PDO

Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) – A single, Presa Miguel Hidalgo, Nancy spotted

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) – Seen daily

Red-billed Pigeon (*Patagioenas flavirostris*) – Lowlands, mostly flybys

Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*) – A couple singles in the mountains  
 Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – EF and along the road to Chihuahua  
 White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) – Common in lowlands and around Chihuahua  
 Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) – Common seen almost daily  
 Inca Dove (*Columbina inca*) – Common in the lowlands and at PDO  
 Common Ground-Dove (*Columbina passerina*) – EF  
 Ruddy Ground-Dove (*Columbina talpacoti*) – Common in the lowlands  
 Military Macaw (*Ara militaris*) – A distant flyby for a few folks, Cerro Gallegos  
**Mexican Parrotlet** (*Forpus cyanopygius*) – Great scope looks at Parque Sinaloa, EF too  
 Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) – Quick look at a distant bird  
 Groove-billed Ani (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) – EF  
 Whiskered Screech-Owl (*Megascops trichopsis*) – One morning they came out, PDO  
Mountain Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*) – Scope views at PDO  
 Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum*) – Scope view at Ocolome  
 Lesser Nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*) – Flying around EF at dusk  
 White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) – Cerro Gallegos  
 Broad-billed hummingbird (*Cyanthus latirostris*) – Common in the lowlands  
White-eared Hummingbird (*Hylocharis leucotis*) – Several brief sightings Mtns  
 Violet-crowned Hummingbird (*Agrytria violiceps*) – Common in lowlands  
Berylline Hummingbird (*Saucerottia beryllina*) – PDO feeders  
Magnificent Hummingbird (*Eugenes fulgens*) – Brief look at Divisadero hotel  
 Plain-capped Starthroat (*Helioaster constantii*) – Parque Sinaloa and EF  
 Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*) – PDO feeders  
Mountain Trogon (*Trogon mexicanus*) – A few folks saw an immature bird CC  
**Eared Quetzal** (*Euptilotis neoxenus*) – CC scope views for everyone  
Russet-crowned Motmot (*Momotus mexicanus*) – Good looks at a very cooperative bird in the thorn  
     forest of the Brand Ranch  
 Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*) – Lowlands and mtns  
 Green Kingfisher (*Chloroceryle americana*) – Good looks at EF  
 Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) – PDO, Bahuichivo  
 Gila Woodpecker (*Melanerpes uropygialis*) – Lowlands  
 Red-naped Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*) – PDO and mountains  
 Ladder-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides scalaris*) – EF  
 Arizona Woodpecker (*Picoides arizonae*) – HO Cerro Gallegos  
 Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) – “Red-shafted” Mountains  
 Gilded Flicker (*Colaptes chrysoides*) – EF  
 Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet (*Camptostoma imberbe*) – EF  
Tufted Flycatcher (*Mitrephanes phaeocercus*) – Cerro Gallegos  
 Hammond’s Flycatcher (*Empidonax hammondii*) – PDO and surroundings  
 Buff-breasted Flycatcher (*Empidonax fulvifrons*) – Scope views behind PDO  
 Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*) – Seen daily  
 Say’s Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) – Mountains  
 Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – EF and around CC  
 Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*) – Brand Ranch  
 Nutting’s Flycatcher (*Myiarchus nuttingi*) – Brand Ranch  
 Brown-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*) – Parque Sinaloa  
 Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) – Lowlands  
 Social Flycatcher (*Myiozetetes similis*) – EF

Cassin's Kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*) – Seen well near Creel  
 Thick-billed Kingbird (*Tyrannus crassirostris*) – EF  
 Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) – Common in lowlands  
 Rose-throated Becard (*Pachyramphus aglaiae*) – Good looks at Ocolome, EF  
 Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – PDO  
 Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*) – Lowlands  
 Plumbeous Vireo (*Vireo plumbeus*) – EF  
 Hutton's Vireo (*Vireo huttoni*) – Cerro Gallegos, PDO  
 Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) – Common in the higher mountains  
**Black-throated Magpie-Jay** (*Calocitta colliei*) – Parque Sinaloa and EF  
 Mexican Jay (*Aphelocoma ultramarina*) – Tough to get a good look PDO  
 Sinaloa Crow (*Corvus sinaloae*) – Common EF  
 Chihuahuan Raven (*Corvus cryptoleucus*) – One bird near Guerrero  
 Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) – Common in mountains  
 Violet-Green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – PDO  
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – Parque Sinaloa  
 Mexican Chickadee (*Poecile scalaris*) – Mesa de Arturo and CC  
 Bridled Titmouse (*Baeolophus wollweberi*) – Cerro Gallegos  
 Verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*) – Parque Sinaloa  
 Bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*) – Some with a flock at Cerro Gallegos and CC  
 White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) – Mountains  
 Pygmy Nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*) – HO Lago Arareco  
 Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*) – Mountains  
 Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – PDO and mountains  
 Canyon Wren (*Catherpes mexicanus*) – PDO and Mountains  
**Happy Wren** (*Thryothorus felix*) – Great looks Parque Sinaloa, EF  
**Sinaloa Wren** (*Thryothorus sinaloa*) – EF  
 Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) – HO CC  
 House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) – PDO, CC  
 Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*) – PDO an odd location for a migrant  
 American Dipper (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – CC  
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*) – Common in the mountains  
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Polyoptila caerulea*) – EF  
**Black-capped Gnatcatcher** (*Polyoptila nigriceps*) – Brand Ranch  
 Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*) – Near Creel  
Brown-backed Solitaire (*Myadestes occidentalis*) – Heard well and seen too  
 Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) – PDO  
**Rufous-backed Robin** (*Turdus rufopalliatus*) – EF train station  
 American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) – CC  
 Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Common in lowlands  
 Curve-billed Thrasher (*Toxostoma curvirostre*) – Seen everyday  
 European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Los Mochis  
 Olive Warbler (*Peucedramus taeniatus*) – Good looks at a pair, Cerro Gallegos  
 Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*) – Common lowlands  
 Nashville Warbler (*Vermivora ruficapilla*) – EF  
 Lucy's Warbler (*Vermivora luciae*) – EF  
Crescent-chested Warbler (*Parula superciliosa*) – Nice looks at Cerro Gallegos  
 Tropical Parula (*Parula pitiayumi*) – One female at EF

Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) – Lowlands  
 Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*) – EF  
 Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*) – Cerro Gallegos  
 Hermit Warbler (*Dendroica occidentalis*) – A couple at Cerro Gallegos  
 Grace's Warbler (*Dendroica graciae*) – Cerro Gallegos  
 MacGillivray's Warbler (*Oporornis tolmiei*) – Good looks in the lowlands  
 Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) – EF  
 Wilson's Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*) – EF  
Red-faced Warbler (*Cardellina rubrifrons*) – One fidgety bird, Cerro Gallegos  
Painted Redstart (*Myioborus pictus*) – Heard and glimpsed Cerro Gallegos  
 Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*) – A couple singles, EF  
 Grayish Saltator (*Saltator coerulescens*) – EF  
 White-collared Seedeater (*Sporophila torqueola*) – The “cinnamon-rumped” form of western Mexico  
     seen at EF mostly very dull females  
 Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*) – Good looks at the Brand Ranch  
 Canyon Towhee (*Pipilo fuscus*) – Seen Daily  
 Rufous-crowned Sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps*) – Good looks at Cerro Gallegos  
**Striped Sparrow** (*Oriturus superciliosus*) – Great looks near CC  
 Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) – Mountains  
 Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) – Unusual migrant at PDO  
 Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*) – EF area  
 Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolnii*) – PDO, common after the thunderstorm  
 White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) – EF  
 Yellow-eyed Junco (*Junco phaeonotus*) – Cerro Gallegos and CC  
 Hepatic Tanager (*Piranga flava*) – PDO  
 Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) – Lowlands  
 Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) – Lowlands  
 Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – EF  
 Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) – Parque Sinaloa  
 Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*) – PDO  
 Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*) – PDO  
Varied Bunting (*Passerina versicolor*) – EF  
 Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) – EF  
 Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) – Mostly HO flyovers at the EF train station  
 Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – EF  
 Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) – Terry spotted one near Guerrero  
 Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) – Along the road near Guerrero  
 Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Common Lowlands and Chihuahua area  
 Cowbird sp (*Molothrus* sp) – Spotted in EF just as the train was leaving  
Black-vented Oriole (*Icterus wagleri*) – EF area a couple sightings  
 Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*) – EF  
Streak-backed Oriole (*Icterus pustulatus*) – Lowlands  
 Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*) – EF  
 Scott's Oriole (*Icterus parisorum*) – 3 birds at PDO were unusual  
 House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) – Common, seen daily  
 Lesser Goldfinch (*Carduelis psaltria*) – EF, PDO and mountains  
 House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) – Common around towns

**OTHER FAUNA**

Rock Squirrel  
Antelope Jackrabbit  
Mexican Gray Squirrel  
Abert's Squirrel  
Chipmunk sp.  
Canyon Tree Frog