

HONDURAS: COPAN
ARCHAEOLOGY AND BIRDS
FEBRUARY 15–20, 2013

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TOUR REPORT
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By Brian Gibbons

Copan, Honduras, at the eastern edge of the Mayan Kingdom, is the perfect place to blend birding and archaeology. The first king of Copan indeed had two birds in his name: K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' [Great sun first Quetzal (K'uk') Macaw (Mo')]. While we would see neither of these as wild individuals, we did see over 100 species of great birds. The Xukpi (Mayan for motmot) took center stage with exceptional views of both the Blue-crowned Motmot and the stunning Turquoise-browed Motmot.

On our first morning we eased into our archaeology lesson at El Puente, an outlying farming community that supplied food for the Mayan Metropolis of Copan. There we saw a small pyramid and some housing units that had been excavated. All around the ruins we noted the first great birds of the trip—Masked Tityras, Turquoise-browed Motmots, warblers, and orioles. After another hour in the bus we arrived at the beautiful historic Hacienda San Lucas overlooking the town of Copan Ruinas and the archaeological site itself. We enjoyed a fantastic lunch and took a leisurely afternoon to familiarize ourselves with our wonderful surroundings and their birds. David Sedat, 24-year veteran of Mayan research and excavation at Copan, lectured us on the first king of Copan, K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', and the exciting, dangerous, and frustrating discovery of his tomb. We peppered David with questions during and after his presentation.

The next morning found us birding the beautiful forest surrounding the ruins. We found a few birds before we met Fito for a thorough and educational tour of the ruins; Laughing Falcon in the scope was my favorite. Fito navigated us through 5 centuries of Mayan culture, excellently weaving a tale of religion, politics, and domestic life of the Mayans. We had to interrupt him once to observe a courting pair of Common Black-Hawks calling over the Copan River. On the way to our excellent picnic lunch we found a very cooperative Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. The free-flying, but not wild Scarlet Macaws were a sight to behold. Next we walked around the sculpture museum, where a full-size replica of Temple Rosalila stood, surrounded by some of the more spectacular carvings that were moved indoors to preserve them.

With warming weather after an anomalous cool front, we headed to the mountains to seek a variety of birds. Bushy-crested Jay was the main target, which fell easily on our first stop in the pine-oak habitat where it dwells. A noisy flock of the jays was accompanied by Yellow-backed Orioles and Black-headed Saltators. Elegant Euphonias

with their sharp, light-blue caps were fairly common among the mistletoe clumps in the oak trees. Other birds we encountered included Barred Antshrike, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, White-fronted Parrot, Gartered Trogon, Azure-crowned and White-eared hummingbirds, Golden-olive Woodpecker (after a long battle of cat and mouse), Rufous-naped Wren, Rusty Sparrow (excellent looks along the road), and many North American warblers that were down for the winter.

The next morning we visited the Sepulturas site, residential area of the elite class and connected to the main Copan site by an elevated walkway called a Sacbe. The younger forest here hosted many North American birds including warblers, vireos, flycatchers, and a few beautiful male Painted Buntings. Northern Bentbill and Yellow-olive Flycatcher were two of the many tropical flycatchers we caught a glimpse of. A pair of Rufous-browed Peppershrikes put on a show for us in the morning sun. In various areas of the site, Yobani instructed us on the purposes of other buildings and structures. We also made a run into the small town of Copan Ruinas to visit an excellent photographic exhibit created of prints that were made from glass plate negatives by three Harvard Peabody Museum photographers in the late nineteenth century. We also toured the archaeological museum that had some great pieces of jade, obsidian, and pottery unearthed from the sites in the valley.

After another wonderful day watching the sun fade away, we had our final dinner at Hacienda San Lucas. The next morning, on the way to San Pedro Sula, we saw some migrant Swallow-tailed Kites heading north.

Copan 2013 Field List Locations

16 February 2013 Transfer from San Pedro Sula to Hacienda San Lucas

17 February 2013 Birding main Copan Ruins, then an excellent tour of the ruins with Fito and then the Sculpture museum some folks made it out to Los Sapos in the afternoon

18 February 2013 Birding in the pine-oak forest of the mountains along the La Laguna San Francisco road, grounds of Hacienda San Lucas in the afternoon

19 February 2013 Sepulturas site in the morning, then photo exhibit and history museums in town, afternoon Hacienda San Lucas grounds

Abbreviations:

HO – Heard Only

HSL – Hacienda San Lucas and grounds

CR – Copan Ruinas, the town and surrounding areas including the river

EP – El Puente archaeological site

LL – La Laguna San Francisco road

Guans, Chachalacas & Curassows	Cracidae	
Plain Chachalaca	<i>Ortalisvetula</i>	HSL
Hérons, Egrets and Bitterns	Ardeidae	
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	CR
Snowy Egret	<i>Egrettathula</i>	CR
Little Blue Heron	<i>Egrettacaerulea</i>	CR
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	CR
New World Vultures	Cathartidae	
Black Vulture	<i>Coragypsatratus</i>	Common seen daily
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	Common seen daily
Hawks, Eagles and Kites	Accipitridae	
Swallow-tailed Kite	<i>Elanoidesforficatus</i>	Highway to San Pedro Sula, migrants
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	
(White-breasted Hawk)	<i>Accipiter striatus (chionogaster)</i>	A quick flyby in the mtns, LL
Common Black-Hawk	<i>Buteogallusanthracinus</i>	At the main Copan Ruins, pair displaying
Roadside Hawk	<i>Buteomagnirostris</i>	EP, CR
Gray Hawk	<i>Buteoplagiatus</i>	EP
Short-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteobrachyurus</i>	LL
Plovers and Lapwings	Charadriidae	
Killdeer	<i>Charadriusvociferus</i>	River
Sandpipers and Allies	Scolopacidae	
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitismacularius</i>	River
Pigeons and Doves	Columbidae	
Rock Pigeon (I)	<i>Columba livia</i>	Towns
Red-billed Pigeon	<i>Patagioenasflavirostris</i>	HSL
White-winged Dove	<i>Zenaidaasiatica</i>	Open country
Inca Dove	<i>Columbinainca</i>	Open country
Ruddy Ground-Dove	<i>Columbinatalpacoti</i>	Open country
White-tipped Dove	<i>Leptotilaverreauxi</i>	HSL
Cuckoos	Cuculidae	
Squirrel Cuckoo	<i>Piayacayana</i>	HSL, LL
Groove-billed Ani	<i>Crotophagasulcirostris</i>	Open country
Owls	Strigidae	
Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl	<i>Glaucidiumbrasilianum</i>	HSL, Ruins
Hummingbirds	Trochilidae	
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	<i>Archilochuscolubris</i>	LL, female
Canivet's Emerald	<i>Chlorostilboncanivetii</i>	HSL, LL
(Salvin's Emerald)	<i>(Chlorostilboncanivetiiisalvinii)</i>	
Azure-crowned	<i>Amaziliacyanocephala</i>	LL

Hummingbird		
Cinnamon Hummingbird	<i>Amaziliarutila</i>	EP, HSL
White-eared Hummingbird	<i>Hylocharisleucotis</i>	LL
Trogons	Trogonidae	
Gartered Trogon	<i>Trogon caligatus</i>	LL
Motmots	Momotidae	
Blue-crowned Motmot	<i>Momotusmomota (coeruliceps)</i>	Exceptional looks at these guys HSL
Turquoise-browed Motmot	<i>Eumomotasuperciliosa</i>	Exceptional looks at these guys HSL
Kingfishers	Alcedinidae	
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megacerylealcyon</i>	River
Woodpeckers	Picidae	
Golden-fronted Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpesaurifrons</i>	The common woodpecker
Golden-olive Woodpecker	<i>Colaptesrubiginosus</i>	Finally he sat LL
Lineated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopuslineatus</i>	HO, LL
Falcons and Caracaras	Falconidae	
Laughing Falcon	<i>Herpetotherescachinnans</i>	Good looks at the ruins
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	Open country
Parrots	Psittacidae	
Olive-throated Parakeet	<i>Aratinga nana</i>	HSL
White-crowned Parrot	<i>Pionussenilis</i>	Ruins
White-fronted Parrot	<i>Amazonaalbifrons</i>	LL, HSL
Typical Antbirds	Thamnophilidae	
Barred Antshrike	<i>Thamnophilusdoliatus</i>	LL, nice male finally came out
Ovenbirds and Woodcreepers	Furnariidae	
Strong-billed Woodcreeper	<i>Xiphocolaptespromeropirhynchus</i>	Excellent find the in the pines, LL
Tyrant Flycatchers	Tyrannidae	
Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet	<i>Camptostomaimberbe</i>	Sepulturas ruins
Northern Bentbill	<i>Oncostomacinereigulare</i>	Sepulturas ruins
Ochre-bellied Flycatcher	<i>Mionectesoleagineus</i>	Sepulturas ruins
Yellow-olive Flycatcher	<i>Tolmomyiassulphurescens</i>	Sepulturas ruins
Tropical Pewee	<i>Contopuscinereus</i>	EP, Sepulturas ruins
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	<i>Empidonaxflaviventris</i>	Ruins
Least Flycatcher	<i>Empidonaxminimus</i>	HSL
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchustuberculifer</i>	Common in wooded ruins and LL
Great Crested Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchuscristatus</i>	EP, Copan ruins
Great Kiskadee	<i>Pitangussulphuratus</i>	Common EP first, HSL, LL
Boat-billed Flycatcher	<i>Megarynychuspitangua</i>	HSL, LL, ruins
Social Flycatcher	<i>Myiozetetes similis</i>	EP, ruins around Copan
Tropical Kingbird	<i>Tyrannusmelancholicus</i>	Common in open country
Western Kingbird	<i>Tyrannusverticalis</i>	LL
Becards, Tityras & Allies	Tityridae	
Rose-throated Becard	<i>Pachyramphusaglaiae</i>	HSL, LL
Masked Tityra	<i>Tityrasemifasciata</i>	EP first, ruins and LL
Vireos	Vireonidae	
Yellow-throated Vireo	<i>Vireo flavifrons</i>	Copan ruins
Warbling Vireo	<i>Vireo gilvus</i>	Copan ruins, LL
Philadelphia Vireo	<i>Vireo philadelphicus</i>	LL
Lesser Greenlet	<i>Hylophilusdecurtatus</i>	HO, Copan ruins
Rufous-browed	<i>Cyclarhisgujanensis</i>	Copan ruins and great looks at Sepulturas

Peppershrike		
Crows, Jays and Magpies	Corvidae	
White-throated Magpie-Jay	<i>Calocittaformosa</i>	Feeder junkies at HSL
Brown Jay	<i>Psilorhinusmorio</i>	EP, Copan ruins
Bushy-crested Jay	<i>Cyanocoraxmelanocyaneus</i>	LL a nice flock in the oaks
Swallows	Hirundinidae	
Gray-breasted Martin	<i>Prognechalybea</i>	Open country, and over ruins
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryxserripennis</i>	Over the river
Wrens	Troglodytidae	
(Southern) House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	LL
Rufous-naped Wren	<i>Campylorhynchusrufinucha</i>	LL and Sepulturas ruins
Spot-breasted Wren	<i>Pheugopediusmaculipectus</i>	HO, LL
Plain Wren	<i>Cantorchilusmodestus</i>	Good looks at the Sepulturas ruins
Thrushes and Allies	Turdidae	
Clay-colored Thrush	<i>Turdusgrayi</i>	Common in wooded areas
Gray Catbird	<i>Dumetellacarolinensis</i>	LL
New World Warblers	Parulidae	
Ovenbird	<i>Seiurusaurocapilla</i>	Sepulturas ruins
Black-and-white Warbler	<i>Mniotiltavaria</i>	Daily in the woods and ruin areas
Tennessee Warbler	<i>Oreothlypisperegrina</i>	LL
MacGillivray's Warbler	<i>Geothlypistolmiei</i>	Sepulturas ruins
Kentucky Warbler	<i>Geothlypisformosa</i>	Sepulturas ruins
Hooded Warbler	<i>Setophagacitrina</i>	Copan main ruins
American Redstart	<i>Setophagaruticilla</i>	Daily in the woods and ruin areas
Magnolia Warbler	<i>Setophaga magnolia</i>	Daily in the woods and ruin areas
Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophagapetechia</i>	Daily in the woods and ruin areas
Chestnut-sided Warbler	<i>Setophagapensylvanica</i>	Copan ruins
Grace's Warbler	<i>Setophagagraciae</i>	LL
Black-throated Green Warbler	<i>Setophagavirens</i>	LL, Copan ruins
Rufous-capped Warbler	<i>Basileuterusrufifrons</i>	Copan ruins
Wilson's Warbler	<i>Cardellinapusilla</i>	LL
Slate-throated Redstart	<i>Myioborusminiatus</i>	LL, in the pines
Yellow-breasted Chat	<i>Icteriavirens</i>	Sepulturas ruins
Tanagers and Allies	Thraupidae	
Blue-gray Tanager	<i>Thraupisepiscopus</i>	Copan ruins, glimpsed by a couple folks
Genus IncertaeSedis	Genus IncertaeSedis	
Grayish Saltator	<i>Saltatorcoerulescens</i>	LL
Black-headed Saltator	<i>Saltatoratriceps</i>	LL, HSL
Buntings, Sparrows and Allies	Emberizidae	
Blue-black Grassquit	<i>Volatiniajacarina</i>	Sepulturas ruins
White-collared Seedeater	<i>Sporophilatorqueola</i>	LL, open fields lower down
Rusty Sparrow	<i>Aimophilarufescens</i>	LL, finally in the road
Cardinals and Allies	Cardinalidae	
Hepatic Tanager	<i>Pirangaflava</i>	LL, a single female, brief look
Summer Tanager	<i>Pirangarubra</i>	Sepulturas ruins
Red-throated Ant-Tanager	<i>Habiafuscicauda</i>	HO, Copan ruins
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticusludovicianus</i>	San Pedro Sula hotel, ruins
Blue Grosbeak	<i>Passerinacaerulea</i>	LL, open fields lower down

Indigo Bunting	<i>Passerina cyanea</i>	LL, open fields lower down
Painted Bunting	<i>Passerina ciris</i>	Sepulturas ruins, a couple nice males
Troupials and Allies	Icteridae	
Melodious Blackbird	<i>Dives dives</i>	HSL grounds
Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	Open country
Orchard Oriole	<i>Icterus spurius</i>	EP
Yellow-backed Oriole	<i>Icterus chrysater</i>	LL, with Bushy-crested Jays
Streak-backed Oriole	<i>Icterus pustulatus</i>	EP, HSL and other ruins
Spot-breasted Oriole	<i>Icterus pectoralis</i>	EP
Altamira Oriole	<i>Icterus gularis</i>	EP and Copan area
Baltimore Oriole	<i>Icterus galbula</i>	EP and Copan area
Chestnut-headed Oropendola	<i>Psarocolius wagleri</i>	A quick flyby flock in the mtns, LL
Montezuma Oropendola	<i>Psarocolius montezuma</i>	HSL on the grounds
Siskins, Crossbills and Allies	Fringillidae	
Scrub Euphonia	<i>Euphonia affinis</i>	Sepulturas ruins
Yellow-throated Euphonia	<i>Euphonia hirundinacea</i>	Seen daily
Elegant Euphonia	<i>Euphonia elegantissima</i>	Excellent looks at males and females, LL
Old World Sparrows	Passeridae	
House Sparrow (I)	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Around towns
MAMMALS		
Squirrels, Prairie Dogs & Marmot	Sciuridae	
Variiegated Squirrel	<i>Sciurus variegatoides</i>	HSL and ruins