

SHORT WEST MEXICO
January 10-16, 2009 (Tour 1)
January 19-25, 2009 (Tour 2)
February 27 – March 5, 2009 (Tour 3)

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THE SIERRA MADRE
January 16-19, 2009

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Western Mexico has one of the highest rates of endemism in North America and the foothill region of the Sierra Madre Occidental is one of the better areas to observe a good cross-section of Mexican species. Short West Mexico is designed to be a comfortable and inexpensive introduction to the West Mexican avifauna, and its reduced length should make it compatible with working schedules. The accommodations at Rancho Primavera are comfortable and the food is delicious.

Our trip will focus on at least three distinct habitat types. We will explore coastal areas for herons, shorebirds, and waterfowl. Mangrove swamps here will have their own unique suite of land birds. The most unique habitat type is the West Mexican thorn forest, and many of the endemic species that we will be seeking most ardently make their homes here. This dry forest type can be surprisingly difficult to bird, and is home to a number of secretive and inconspicuous species. However, with endemic species like Citreoline Trogon and Red-breasted Chat to tempt us, persistence is sure to pay off. The ranch itself is set in the foothills, where thorn forest gives way to pine forest and one begins to see species such as Acorn Woodpeckers and Grace's Warblers, as well as specialties like Military Macaw and various hummingbirds. Over the course of the week we expect our bird list to top 230 species, of which better than 20 will be Mexican endemics and 60 or more will be lifers for those who have not previous ventured "south of the border".

For those looking to extend their stay in Mexico, a short tour to the higher elevations of the Sierra Madre from Tour 1 or Tour 2 promises a few days of spectacular birding in which participants will enjoy a suite of birds not possible at Rancho Primavera. The Long-tailed Wood-Partridge might creep out onto the road while Mountain Trogons call from fir trees. The higher elevations and moister habitats means we can add another ten Mexican endemics as well as a host of other fantastic birds like Chestnut-sided Shrike –Vireo. Our base for these explorations would be the charming colonial town of San Sebastian del Oeste.

“Short West Mexico” Tour 3 can be taken in conjunction with our “Northwest Mexico: Mazatlan and the Sierra Madre” tour, February 21-27, 2009. This tour seeks some of its most exotic and localized birds, in particular the storied Tufted Jay and Sierra Madre Sparrow. Please contact the VENT office for more.

SHORT WEST MEXICO

Day 1: Arrival in Mexico. Flights into Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico (PVR) should be scheduled to arrive before 2:00 PM. Once everyone is together, we will travel as a group to Rancho Primavera (about 1 hour) with time for a bit of afternoon birding. We plan to depart from the airport no later than 3:00 PM. For those unable to arrive at this time or miss the transfer, you will need to take a taxi to Rancho Primavera in El Tuito; the fare will run around \$100.

NIGHT: Rancho Primavera, El Tuito

Days 2-6: Rancho Primavera and environs. We will be staying at Rancho Primavera which is a superlative lodge in the foothill town of El Tuito. The accommodations are comfortable and the food has received rave reviews, so we are confident you will enjoy your stay here. Best of all, the good birding begins right outside your door. A sampling of the West Mexican species that are likely right around the lodge includes: Collared Forest-Falcon, Red-billed Pigeon, Orange-fronted Parakeet, Squirrel Cuckoo, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Mottled Owl, Russet-crowned Motmot, Berylline and Cinnamon Hummingbirds, Golden-cheeked Woodpecker, Masked Tityra, San Blas Jay, Happy and Sinaloa wrens, Rufous-backed Robin, Blue Mockingbird, Golden Vireo, Stripe-headed Sparrow, Black-vented and Streak-backed orioles, and Yellow-winged Cacique. More familiar species from the southern United States such as Great Kiskadee, Dusky-capped and Vermilion flycatchers, and Thick-billed Kingbird, will be present as well. Rare species such as Sparkling-tailed Woodstar, Military Macaw, and Rosy Thrush-Tanager have even been seen here.

Rancho Primavera will serve as our base camp, but our birding will not be limited to the grounds. We will divide our time among a number of nearby birding locales which we will explore over the course of the week. Nearby Bioto Road is good for additional species such as West Mexican Chachalaca, Pale-billed and Lineated woodpeckers, Rose-throated Becard, Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, Rufous-capped Warbler, and Red-crowned Ant-Tanager. La Bascula is a foothill location, and its higher elevation may have Black-headed Siskins, White-striped Woodcreepers, and Gray-crowned Woodpeckers among other species. At Cajon de Pena Reservoir we will search for thorn forest birds such as Orange-breasted Bunting, as well as aquatic species, perhaps including Bare-throated Tiger-Heron. Some of our time will be spent in the lowlands, where agricultural fields and thorn forest give way to mangrove swamps and coastal estuaries. In the lowlands we may find raptors such as Common Black-Hawk and Gray Hawk, and possibly even the rare Lesser Ground-Cuckoo. The mangrove swamps play host to "Mangrove" Yellow Warblers and the furtive Rufous-necked Wood-Rail. Laguna de Quelele is renowned for its huge flocks of whistling-ducks (mostly Black-bellied) and should have a variety of other waterfowl, herons, and shorebirds. Wintering shorebirds and herons will be abundant and we will spend time working through some of the identification challenges.

Some of the other species we may see during our week of exploration include: Crane Hawk, Laughing Falcon, Mexican Parrotlet, Lilac-crowned Parrot, Mexican Woodnymph, Elegant Trogon, Russet-crowned Motmot, Nutting's Flycatcher, Black-throated Magpie-Jay, White-throated Robin, and Grayish Saltator. The West Mexican thorn forest hosts some very special birds that will require extra efforts to try and see. Among the secretive thorn forest birds that we will be trying for are: Citreoline Trogon, Plain-capped Starthroat, Flammulated Flycatcher, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, and Red-breasted Chat.

NIGHTS: Rancho Primavera, El Tuito

Day 7: Departure for home. After a final morning of birding and group breakfast, you will be transported to the Puerto Vallarta airport for return flights to the USA. You should plan your flights to depart no earlier than 12:00 Noon.

SIERRA MADRE PRE/POST-TRIP

Nestled in a valley just 40 miles from Puerto Vallarta, San Sebastian del Oeste is stuck in a colonial era. Narrow cobbled streets and a charming square are remnants of a previous time, one that made it a silver-mining boom-town. Much quieter now, San Sebastian, surrounded by corn and agave fields is a perfect base for our explorations of the Sierra Madre Occidental which looms to the east. Hacienda Jalisco is a charming hacienda that was used as offices for the mining companies 150 years ago. The gardens, orchards, and woods that surround the hacienda, and the creek that runs through the grounds, are a great place to see some of our first birds of the Sierra. Over the next couple days we will enjoy some spectacular mountain birding. Birds that we will endeavor to see are: Long-tailed Wood-Partridge (always a challenge), Lesser Roadrunner, Mountain Trogon, Mexican Woodnymph, Bumblebee Hummingbird, Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Aztec Thrush, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, Flame-colored Tanager, Red Warbler (rare), Green-striped Brushfinch and many more. Roving the pine fir and oak woodlands are large flocks of wintering North American birds including Bullock's and Scott's orioles; Townsend's, Hermit and Red-faced warblers; and Black-headed Grosbeaks. Crescent-chested Warbler, Red-headed Tanager, Slate-throated Redstart and Gray-collared Becards regularly join these mixed flocks. At the flower banks higher up we hope to find Blue-throated, Magnificent and Amethyst-throated hummers. This is also the foraging area of the Flowerpiercer. We should see at least ten additional Mexican endemics on this extension as well as a variety of montane birds that will not be present at the lower elevations of the Short West Mexico tour. We will also have ample time to wander the cobbled streets and to purchase some of the locally-grown organic coffee, it's wonderful

January 16, Day 1: Continue from Short West Mexico I; or Arrival in Mexico prior to Short West Mexico II. For those arriving Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico (PVR), flights should be scheduled to arrive no later than 2:00 PM with departure from the airport no later than 3:00 PM for our drive to San Sebastian del Oeste, about 1.5 hours. Once in our comfortable hotel we will bird around the grounds, relax and perhaps stroll through town.

NIGHT: Hotel Real de San Sebastian, San Sebastian del Oeste

January 17, Day 2: All day birding in the surrounding mountains. Today we will spend the entire day birding the amazing road up to La Bufa radio towers. This road will take us through dry oak habitat where Red-faced Warblers are common, Long-tailed Wood-Partridges creep and Berylline Hummingbirds chatter. As we wind further up we will get into pines and finally fir habitats. We will have a picnic lunch near a drainage that will be alive with hummingbirds and hopefully a Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer will come through "stealing" nectar from these plants. When we get to the highest stretches of the road we might be lucky enough to encounter a mixed species flock of thrushes, American Robin and the unique Aztec Thrush is possible. Other species we should encounter include Mountain Trogon, Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo and two species of sneaky brush-finches, the small Rufous-capped and the very stealthy Green-striped.

NIGHT: Hotel Real de San Sebastian, San Sebastian del Oeste

January 18, Day 3: Mountain birding in the morning and town tour in the afternoon. This morning we will clean up any possible loose ends from our previous day's outing. The huge flocks of birds can be daunting and everyone seeing every bird is not the usual case. We will make a special effort to find the endemic Mexican Woodnymph and a displaying male Bumblebee Hummingbird. In the afternoon we will tour town and have a chance to purchase some of the rich locally grown organic coffee.

NIGHT: Hotel Real de San Sebastian, San Sebastian del Oeste

January 19, Day 4: Morning birding and departure / continuation on Short West Mexico. We will probably stay close to Hacienda Jalisco this morning enjoying the myriad of birds that are close at hand in the hacienda's gardens orchards and surrounding woods. For those departing participants, you should plan your flights to depart no earlier than 12:00 Noon.

TOUR SIZE: Each tour will be limited to 6 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Tours 1 & 2 and the Sierra Madre - **Brian Gibbons**; Tour 3 – **Bob Sundstrom**

Brian Gibbons was born and raised in Dallas, Texas. He took an interest in all things wild at a young age, but has specialized in birds since age 10. Brian graduated from Stephen F. Austin State University in east Texas with a B.S. in biology. Since that time he has worked on a variety of field ornithology research projects, from the Bering Sea and the midnight sun of the North Slope of Alaska to the Dominican Republic. From 1998 to 2000 he was an observer for the Migration Over the Gulf Project sponsored by a Minerals Management Service grant and administered by Louisiana State University. The project involved placing observers on oil and gas platforms throughout the Gulf of Mexico. The goal was to assess the impact of these platforms on the several hundred million trans-Gulf migrants that pass through the region in both spring and fall. More recently he has worked with the Smithsonian Institution in Jamaica, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba as part of a team researching West Nile Virus, and assessing the role of migratory birds in the dispersal of the virus. Recreational birding and travel have taken him to The Great Wall in China, Machu Picchu in Peru, and the Himalayas in Nepal. One of his primary birding mentors was the late Al Valentine, a bird bander, who helped to instill a love of handling birds and learning from them. For many years Brian's field research has involved banding. His most amazing recoveries were a female Wilson's Warbler that had been banded in Alaska and was captured by Brian in Colorado, and a Sooty Tern that perished after a hurricane on the Texas coast; it had plied the Gulf of Mexico and the oceans of the world for 24 years.

Bob Sundstrom has led VENT tours since 1989 to destinations including Hawaii, Mexico, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, Iceland, Papua New Guinea, the Southwest Pacific islands, Antarctica, the Bering Sea, and many destinations throughout North America. Bob takes a strong interest in both the natural and cultural settings of his tours. He earned his doctorate at the University of Washington. Bob and his wife Sally live in the rural Scatter Creek Valley south of Olympia, Washington. Bob lived in Seattle for more than two decades, continues to teach birding workshops, and leads a program of short, regional tours that begin in the Seattle area. During two seasons of work in the Pribilof Islands, he helped chronicle the occurrence of North American bird rarities. A skilled birder with a special interest in bird song, Bob has served on the boards of several nature and conservation organizations, is a member of the Washington State Bird Records Committee, and is a co-author of *The National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Pacific Northwest*. When not on tour, Bob keeps busy as the lead writer for the daily public radio program *BirdNote*. *BirdNote* is archived at www.birdnote.org.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the Short West Mexico tours are **\$2035** per person in double occupancy from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico and includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 7 and accommodations as stated in the itinerary. The fee for the Sierra Madre tour is **\$995** per person in double occupancy from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico and includes all meals from lunch on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 4 and accommodations as stated in the itinerary. All tours include ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Puerto Vallarta and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for the Short West Mexico tour is **\$320**; the single supplement for the Sierra Madre tour is **\$135**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. Single accommodations will be granted on a first-come first-serve basis and cannot be guaranteed at Rancho Primavera due to the limited number of rooms available. You will be refunded the single supplement if you are in a shared room.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for the Short West Mexico tour is **\$300** per person; and **\$300** per person for the Sierra Madre tour. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 90 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 90 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less **\$125** per person is refundable. If cancellation is made between 90 and 70 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 70 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. *We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself.*

If you cancel:

90 days or more before departure date
Between 90 and 70 days before departure
Fewer than 70 days before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$125.
No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded.
No refund available.

TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE: Application forms for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. We **strongly recommend** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available however stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of insurance soon after registering. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

ACCOMMODATION: *Rancho Primavera* is a private ranch located at 2000 feet elevations and surrounded by mountains with nearby habitat choices ranging from the Pacific Ocean coast and mangroves through lowland scrub; arid and moist deciduous forest; pine-oak woodland; and a nearby reservoir. The lodge-house itself, although not lavish as some of the other Puerto Vallarta resorts, is a far cry from rustic with comfortable high-ceilinged rooms, large beds, and traditional Mexican tile rest rooms for each room.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

BAGGAGE: Please limit your luggage to one suitcase or duffel and one carry-on bag. As a precaution, we suggest you pack a change of clothes, your binoculars, medication, toiletries, walking shoes, and documents in the carry-on bag. Laundry service is available at Rancho Primavera

BIRDING ETIQUETTE: To make the tour most enjoyable for yourself, other participants, and your leader, it is important to use plain common sense and show proper etiquette while in the field. Birds tend to be shy. Loud noises and bright colors can scare them. We encourage clothing with earth tones. Try to avoid colors like oranges, yellows, and reds. Always keep your voice down. Shouting is not conducive to extended looks at a given species. When looking through the spotting scope, always wait your turn and look briefly the first time so that others may have the opportunity to get a look. If you are a smoker, please do so at a distance.

CLIMATE: At this time of year we can expect mild temperatures which can range from the mid 40's at night, to the high 80's during the day. Rain is very rare during the dry season, December – May.

CLOTHING: Dress will be casual. Participants should bring lightweight, cool, well-ventilated clothing. Many people now prefer designer field shirts that most outdoor stores and mail order companies are carrying. A typical shirt is usually long-sleeved and buttoned down the center. The material is lightweight and usually of earth tones or pastel coloration. Mesh for ventilation is a standard feature as are several pockets for personal effects. Nights and mornings may be fairly chilly though, so be sure to bring a sweater, sweatshirt, or lightweight jacket. Mosquitoes will certainly be a nuisance at some sites so lightweight long pants and long-sleeved shirts will be preferable and some may want to pack mosquito netting just in case. Rancho Primavera is known for its biting midges as well, so bug spray may help with them too – sandals and shorts are not recommended. Bring a hat to provide shade from the sun, and sunglasses will also be indispensable. Heavy hiking boots are not necessary, but you will want to have a light hiking boot or shoe. For down time or during periods around towns or hotels, sandals or other open toed shoes are a good idea if you prefer them. You should also bring a bathing suit.

CURRENCY: Mexican Peso; U.S. dollars are best exchanged before your arrival to Mexico as you may not have much of an opportunity to exchange money at the airport or at other points during the trip. Large amounts of cash are not easily exchanged in Mexico. You would probably get a better rate of exchange in Mexico, but keep in mind that, once again, money is easier exchanged in the USA where there are several banks in the airport where money can be exchanged. All places visited on this tour accept US Dollars; Pesos are not a necessity as shopping opportunities are very limited

DOCUMENTS: Travel into Mexico for citizens of the United States requires a passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure. Non United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions. Additionally, a tourist card, which may be filled out aboard your flight to Mexico, is required. Both the passport and the tourist card must be carried with you while in Mexico.

EQUIPMENT: You will want to have sunglasses and sunscreen first and foremost. You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). Other important travel items include a flashlight, travel alarm clock, water bottle. A camera is highly recommended as there is much to see. As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Earplugs may be necessary for dogs, roosters, and donkeys.

HEALTH: When traveling, becoming seriously ill is never expected nor anticipated, but is always a possibility, especially when in a foreign country. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B. Hepatitis A is a disease of contaminated food and water. Hepatitis B is a disease transmitted through unsanitary needles and contaminated

blood. Hepatitis vaccinations are standard travel precautions. Traveling in western Mexico does not necessarily mean your chance for exposure is greater or less than anywhere else. You should also know your blood type!

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. Standard travel items include such stand-bys as aspirin/Advil/Tylenol as well as Pepto Bristol and Imodium. Sunscreen is a necessity on this tour! Your leaders will always let you know when it is or is not appropriate to drink the local water. In places where it is not appropriate, bottle or purified water will be provided.

INSECT PROTECTION: Mosquitoes and chiggers and ticks can be a problem and insect repellent is strongly recommended.

A Note About Chiggers: This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world's tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of the world's species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids, however, through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger's digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body's natural process of reabsorbing it that typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, like around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees, and elbows. Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking, or standing in particular, in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique commonly employed by many.
- Apply a cream-style insect repellent, such as "Cutters" to your body from the waist down BEFORE putting on your clothing.
- Spray your pants and socks with a spray repellent such as "Cutters" or "Off." Repellants with high concentrations of DEET (70-100%) are most effective. You do not need to apply these to you skin, only to clothing. (Be careful as DEET will damage plastics and lens coatings). Repel Permanone is an odorless aerosol insecticide that offers perhaps the best defense against chiggers. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online. It should only be applied to clothes and allowed to dry before you dress. Never apply Permanone directly to the skin. Permethrin is known to be a highly toxic chemical to insects. It is the active ingredient in Permanone, but is present in a small amount (0.5%).
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

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By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products.

MISC:

Departure tax - \$28 USD as of January, 2008 and included in the cost of your air ticket
Electricity - 110 volts; US two pin (flat) plugs are usual
Language - Spanish is the official language
Time - Central Standard Time

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com which specializes in ornithology books.

Field guides:

- Howell, Steve N.G. and Sophie Webb. 1995. *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford. **This is the main field guide for the area**, and is far more than a simple field guide in size (2 inches thick). In addition to exceptionally good plates, it is a trove of information on distribution (the only Mexico field guide with range maps), vocalizations, subspecies, and natural history information.

Also, United States field guides will be useful as well since the Mexico guides do not show the common species from the U.S.A. that may occur in Mexico as wintering birds or migrants. Two of the best options are:

- National Geographic Society. 1999. *A Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Washington D.C.
- Sibley, David S. 2000. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY.

Birds and General Nature:

- Edwards, Ernest D. *Finding Birds in Mexico*. Sweet Briar, VA: Ernest P. Edwards, 1976. The website www.amazon.com lists this book, with a 1985 Supplement.
- Howell, Steve N.G. 1999. *A Bird-finding Guide to Mexico*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY. Site guide to some of the areas we'll visit.
- Leopold, A.S. *Wildlife in Mexico*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959. Detailed volume on the mammals and other wildlife of Mexico.
- Pesman, Walter M. *Meet Flora Mexicana*. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Press, 1962. An introductory guide for the amateur botanist. Out of print, but available on www.abebooks.com.
- Sutton, George M. *Mexican Birds: First Impressions*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951. Out of print, but try www.abebooks.com.
- Wauer, Roland H. *Birder's Mexico* (Number Twelve: The Louise Lindsey Merrick Natural Environment Series). College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1999. Originally published under the title *A Naturalist's Mexico* as a hardback in 1992 with color photographs, this paperback edition features black-and-white photos.

History and Culture:

- Lumholtz, Carl. *Unknown Mexico: Explorations in the Sierra Madres and Other Regions, 1890-1898*. Dover, 1987. Reprint of the 1902 edition.
- Parkes, Henry Banford. *A History of Mexico*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1969. A truly outstanding book. Original edition published in 1938; available on www.abebooks.com.
- Ruiz, Ramón Eduardo. *Triumphs and Tragedies, A History of the Mexican People*. Norton Press, 1992. Hard to find.

Recordings: These will be helpful in learning the vocalizations of some of the birds of the region. According to Buteo Books “John William Hardy and his colleagues have produced a remarkable inventory of bird song recordings over the years. Regrettably, production has ceased and many of the cassettes are no longer available.” However, Buteo Books multimedia section (<http://www.buteobooks.com/cat99-00/multimedia.html>) does sell bird song recordings, including some of the ARA works. Also consult the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for other bird recordings (http://www.birds.cornell.edu/lab_cds.html).

- Coffey, Ben and Lula. Songs of Mexican Birds. Gainesville, ARA Records, ARA 13 (two cassettes).
- Davis, L. Irby. Mexican Bird Songs. Houghton Mifflin, 1958.
- Delaney, Dale. Bird Songs of Belize, Guatemala and Mexico. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 1992.
- Hardy, John W. Voices of Neotropical Birds. Gainesville: J.W. Hardy, 1975.
- Keller, Geoffrey A. Bird Songs of Southeastern Arizona and Southern Texas. Sora Record Company, 1988.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume 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. VENT 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. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect April 10, 2008 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. 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. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.