February 17-March 3, 2019

Resplendent Quetzal

Guatemala
Highlands and Petén Extension

Tour Leaders: Kenn Kaufman, Rob Ripma, Maynor Ovando, German Cholotio
February 17-March 3, 2019
**February 17 - Arrival in Guatemala**

We had a variety of arrival times throughout the afternoon, and everyone was transferred to our hotel in Antigua Guatemala upon their arrival. The group gathered for a welcome dinner and retired early to get ready for our first day of birding.

**February 18 – Antigua Guatemala, Cerro San Cristobal, and Finca El Pilar**

The first stop of the day was at Cerro San Cristobal, just a short distance outside of Antigua. Here we had our first looks at some of our target species such as Bushy-crested Jay, Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Elegant Euphonia, and Bar-winged Oriole in addition to seeing many more common species. It was a nice opportunity to get familiar with a variety of the common birds. After breakfast at Restaurante Cerro San Cristobal, the rest of the morning was spent birding at Finca El Pilar. It was getting hot, but the hummingbird feeders were still active. Our group had wonderful views of Rivoli’s, Violet-crowned, and Berylline Hummingbirds, and Rufous Sabrewing.

After lunch back in Antigua and a short siesta, we headed out to check out the incredible sites in this amazing town. Antigua is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has a wonderful mix of interesting architecture and cultural experiences. A trip to Guatemala isn’t complete without exploring this wonderful place! After dinner in town, we settled back into the hotel for the night and prepared to move on to our next destination the following morning.

**February 19 - Tecpán and Drive to Huehuetenango**

We loaded up the vans quickly in the morning and made our way to our first stop at Rincón Suizo in the Tecpán area. It was still rather chilly when we arrived, so we had breakfast at Rincón Suizo before hitting the trails to look for the specialty species that call this pine forest home. Highlights for the morning included Mountain Trogon, Guatemalan Tyrannulet, better looks at Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Gray Silky-flycatcher, Olive Warbler, Hooded Grosbeak, and Crescent-chested and Red-faced Warblers. Although we had a brief view of a Pink-headed Warbler at the start of our hike, it took until we were nearing the end of our time in this beautiful forest to get everyone a great view of this spectacular warbler.
**February 19 – Continued**

Due to unexpected road construction and traffic, our drive to Huehuetenango took much longer than expected, so we weren’t left with time to look for birds on our way into town. After a quick dinner, everyone headed to bed in order to leave early the next morning to go looking for Goldman’s Warbler.

![Goldman’s Warbler](image)

**February 20 – Todos Santos Cuchumatanes**

The group met early for breakfast and then left for Todos Santos Cuchumatanes to search for Goldman’s Warbler. Although this is still considered a subspecies of Yellow-rumped Warbler, many people believe this will be considered a distinct species in the future. It is geographically isolated from other Yellow-rumped Warbler populations and looks quite different than the others.

As we approached the park, we stopped to pick up our local guide for the day, Esteban Matias. Esteban knows this area extremely well and was a valuable resource for our group throughout our time here. It didn’t take long to find the Goldman’s Warblers once we were in appropriate habitat. Diversity is low in this area and the main target is the Goldman’s, but the Guatemalan subspecies of Yellow-eyed Junco was another highlight for the group.

[Image of Goldman’s Warbler]
February 21 – Fuentes Georginas

We left Las Cumbres very early so that we could arrive at Fuentes Georginas well before sunrise to try for some night birds. It didn’t take long after we arrived to hear our first Mexican Whip-poor-wills and Fulvous Owls. German eventually found one of the many whip-poor-wills perched, and the whole group got good views! A little while later, a Fulvous Owl came in right over our heads and perched in the open for a minute or so before flying off. Our morning was off to a wonderful start!

We continued to bird along the road since the gate for Fuentes Georginas wasn’t open yet. There were many wonderful birds to see here, and our highlights before entering the property included Unicolored Jay, Rufous-collared Robin, Golden-browed Warbler, Cinnamon Flowerpiercer and fantastic views of Pink-headed Warbler.

The gate to Fuentes Georginas was finally open so we moved on to bird their property. As we walked along the hot springs, Maynor got extremely excited and hurried to get the scope on the bird he had just found. It was a Horned Guan! The guan was extremely cooperative and allowed everyone to have fantastic scope views. This was one of the biggest targets for the trip, and seeing it at this location meant that we wouldn’t have to make an extremely difficult hike near Lake Atitlán to find it.
February 21 – Continued

Another highlight at Fuentes Georginas was seeing multiple Blue-throated Motmots. These birds put on quite the show and were a huge hit with everyone. Once we finished birding here, we returned to Las Cumbres to pack up and have breakfast before heading on to Lake Atitlán. We were again delayed by traffic on this drive but eventually arrived at Posado Santiago on the shores of the lake.

February 22 – Cerro Paquisis, San Juan La Laguna, and Posado Santiago

Although we didn’t have to make the hike up Cerro Paquisis for Horned Guan, we still wanted to start our day at the base of this volcano, so we took a boat there shortly after sunrise. This area is a good place to look for the tough-to-see Belted Flycatcher. Although we searched and searched and heard the bird many times, only a few people got brief views of this skulky little flycatcher. We also spent time attempting to track down some Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridges that were very vocal, but they too proved elusive. While looking for these species, we did have nice views of Hooded Grosbeak, Greater Pewee, and Rusty Sparrow among other more common species.

We went back to our boat to make our way to San Juan La Laguna for lunch and to explore this colorful village. In addition to a wonderful cultural experience, we also had fantastic views of a Red-legged Honeycreeper right in town.
February 22 – Continued

Upon arrival back at Pasado Santiago, some of the group chose to go into Santiago Atitlán to visit Saint James the Apostle Catholic Church where Father Stanley Rother was murdered. He is now beatified and could soon become a saint. This was quite an interesting excursion since one of our participants was extremely knowledgeable about Father Stan and provided us with great background for this interesting historical site we were visiting. We spend our last hours of daylight looking for some birds on the hotel grounds before ending the day with a drink in the hotel bar that sits right on Lake Atitlán.

February 23 – Mirador Rey Tepepul, IMAP, Los Tarrales

Not far from Pasado Santiago is a wonderful birding area called Mirador Rey Tepepul. This area is a subtropical humid forest and home to the very species that was our target this morning, the Resplendent Quetzal. We took our time on the narrow and sometimes slippery trail but were rewarded with quite the show from seven Resplendent Quetzals! Other highlights along the way included Gray Silky-flycatcher, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, and Chestnut-capped Brushfinch. And just as we arrived back at the entrance to the trail, a Northern Emerald-Toucanet come in close for awesome views.

After a stop back at Pasado Santiago for breakfast and to pick up our luggage, we made another birding stop along the shores of Lake Atitlán at IMAP. We were here in hopes of seeing a Slender Sheartail but we unfortunately couldn’t find one, so we headed on to our next lodge, Los Tarrales.

After lunch at the lodge, we hiked one of their trails for a couple hours in the late afternoon. Highlights during our first few hours at Los Tarrales included White-bellied Chachalaca, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Spot-breasted Oriole, and Yellow-winged Tanager.

SabrewingNatureTours.com
February 24 – Los Tarrales

Early this morning, we loaded into Los Tarrales’s four-wheel drive vehicles for our drive up to an area called La Isla on their property. Along the way, we made a couple of stops when it seemed that there was a lot of bird activity. During one of the stops, we located a few Long-tailed Manakins. Although it took a while to get the group on them since they were buried deep in the foliage, everyone ended up with a view of this cool little bird.

Farther up the road, we stopped for breakfast and then decided to hike a bit. It wasn’t long before we heard a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. As with the manakins before, it took us a long time to find this individual, but once we did, we had wonderful views for the whole group! On our way back to the vehicles, we kept an eye on the sky and found some fantastic raptors including Black Hawk-Eagle, White Hawk, and King Vulture. Additional highlights this morning included Spotted Wood-Quail, Long-billed Starthroat, Barred Antshrike, Green Shrike-Vireo, White-winged Tanager, and one of the species that Los Tarrales is famous for, Azure-rumped Tanager. This tanager has a very restricted range in Guatemala and southern Mexico, and Los Tarrales is one of the easiest places to see this bird.

After lunch and a siesta, we headed back out for another hike. Although we found many species during the hike, a pair of Collared Forest-Falcons entertained everyone and were the stars of the afternoon!

February 25 – Los Tarrales and Return to Guatemala City. Extension Group – Flight to Flores

We hit the trails at Los Tarrales one more time before it was time to leave this wonderful lodge. Highlights along the Rinconada Trail this morning included Inca Dove, Green-breasted Mango, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Gray Hawk, Mottled Owl, and Lineated Woodpecker. After breakfast, we started our trip back to Guatemala City. We enjoyed a farewell lunch near the airport as a large group, and then we parted ways. The group continuing on the extension went to the airport for our flight to Flores in the northern part of Guatemala while the rest of the group checked into their hotel to relax before their flights the next day.

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February 26 – Drive to Estación Biológica Las Guacamayas and Birding on Property

It was an early start from our hotel in Flores, and we started our birding at the bridge over Lago Petén Itzá. We quickly added a number of new species for the trip including Limpkin, Snail Kite, Laughing and Bat Falcons, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Mangrove Swallow. A short way up the road, we added our first Ladder-backed Woodpecker as well. Other highlights along the route were Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Zone-tailed Hawk, Wood Stork, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, and Gray-crowned Yellowthroat. We arrived at Paso Caballos and quickly loaded into the boats for the 20-minute trip along the river to our lodge.

Upon arrival at Estación Biológica Las Guacamayas, we added several species at their feeders before lunch. New species included White-necked Jacobin, Long-billed Hermit, Wedge-tailed Sabrewing, White-bellied Emerald, and Green-backed Sparrow.

In the late afternoon, we hiked out to the lodge’s observation tower. Along the way we found several interesting species including Pale-vented Pigeon, Pheasant Cuckoo, Black-faced Antthrush, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Eye-ringed Flatbill, Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher, and Montezuma Oropendola. From the tower, we enjoyed drinks and appetizers while birding and watching a beautiful sunset. As it got dark, we heard both Common Pauraque and Black-and-white Owl. We hiked back to the lodge in the dark and enjoyed a wonderful dinner upon our return.

February 27 – Estación Biológica Las Guacamayas, Río Sacluc, and Waka’ Perú

We boarded one of the lodge’s boats early in the morning and made our way to Río Sacluc. This area has a number of interesting species, and we found nearly all of them - including the highly sought-after Agami Heron! Other highlights included Russet-naped Wood-Rail, American Pygmy Kingfisher, and Yucatan Woodpecker.

From Río Sacluc we continued on to Waka’ Perú for a short hike. As we approached the trail, we noticed some birds soaring above us. It turned out to be two King Vultures right over our heads! Although the day was heating up, there were still some birds to be found along the trail. Highlights included Black-headed and Gartered Trogons, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Tawny-winged Woodcreeper, Northern Bentbill, Stub-tailed Spadebill, Red-crowned and Red-throated Ant-Tanagers, and Gray-headed Tanager. On the way back to the lodge, we had a Double-toothed Kite soaring over the river. Just as we were getting ready to have lunch, another group at the lodge told us that they had just seen a White-whiskered Puffbird behind one of the main buildings. It didn't take us long to find it, and it stuck around for some wonderful views!
February 27 – Continued

In the afternoon, we took another short hike. Although the birding was a bit slower this afternoon than it had been in the morning, we found a Tody Motmot that was a huge hit with the group! After dinner, we went back out on the river to see what night birds we might be able to find. The first species we came across was a beautiful Stiped Owl! In addition to the Stiped Owl, we also saw a Black-and-white Owl and a Common Pauraque.

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February 28 – Waka’ Perú, Flores, Tikal National Park

By design, this morning was left free in order to target any species that might have been missed so far. As a group, we decided to go back to Waka’ Perú to search for Scarlet Macaws. This is one of the last nesting areas for this species in Guatemala and something that the group really hoped to see. While on the boat on the way to the trail, some Boat-billed Herons were spotted along the riverbank adding much excitement to the trip.

The birding was good along the Waka’ Perú trail, but the macaws were not being cooperative. Just after we had turned around to start the hike back to the boat, our local guide from the lodge found a pair of Scarlet Macaws! After getting our fill of the macaws, we continued back toward to boat. Along the way, we found a couple of rather cooperative Pheasant Cuckoos!

We had breakfast back at the lodge and then started the long and bumpy trip back to Flores. We didn’t make any birding stops along the way since it was a hot and sunny day with little activity. During our stop for lunch, we had a surprising Franklin’s Gull from the restaurant on Flores Island. Once we arrived at Tikal National Park, we checked into our hotel, Jungle Lodge, and birded around the parking area for the national park. Ocellated Turkeys are extremely common here, and everyone enjoyed seeing our first ones of the trip. We also found an extremely cooperative Royal Flycatcher that allowed us to observe it for a long time!
March 1 – Tikal National Park

It was an early start today as we met up at 4:45am to look for some of the special nocturnal species that can be found along the old airstrip. Although the birds preferred to stay hidden this morning, we did hear a lot including Yucatan Poorwill, Middle American Screech-Owl, and both Barred and Collared Forest-Falcons. Once dawn broke, the bird activity picked up. Highlights for the next hour included Ruddy Quail-Dove, Mangrove Vireo, and Gray-throated Chat.

We returned to the lodge for breakfast and then got ready to do a birding and cultural tour of the remarkable Tikal archeological site. Tikal is one of the major sites of the ancient Mayan civilization, inhabited from the 6th century B.C. to the 10th century A.D. Lucky for us, our cultural guide was also into birding because it’s easy to get distracted with the incredible birds around! Just past the entrance gate, a pair of Slaty-tailed Trogons was putting on a show. We spent the rest of the morning exploring the incredible sites in the park and looking at whatever birds crossed our path. We took a nice break for lunch before heading back out to explore more of this enormous park.

One of the most sought-after birds at Tikal are the Orange-breasted Falcons that nest atop one of the temples. It took us until the afternoon, but we finally found one perched in a tree near the temple they nest in. Later, we observed them hunting while we were sitting at the top of a temple!

We returned to our lodge happily exhausted after having covered miles on foot exploring this special place.
March 2 – Tikal National Park and Travel to Guatemala City

We took the opportunity to sleep in just a bit after such a physically challenging day yesterday. After breakfast, we took another walk around the parking area and old airstrip, looking for a few species that we had not yet seen in the area. We spent a wonderful 2.5 hours walking around this area. Some of the highlights for the morning included extremely cooperative Ocellated Turkeys, Blue Ground Dove, King Vulture, White-necked Puffbird, Ruddy Woodcreeper, close views of Red-capped and White-collared Manakins, Worm-eating Warbler, and Rose-throated Tanager.

From here, we drove back to Flores where we relaxed until our evening flight back to Guatemala City for everyone’s return flights to the United States on the following day.