



Bridled Sparrow

Mexico

Oaxaca Adventure with Tucson Bird Alliance

Tour Leader: Rob Ripma

January 8-18, 2026

January 20: Arrival in Huatulco - Transfer to Hotel

Since everyone arrived by midday, we started our birding this afternoon with a visit to Canal de Tangolunda. It was a great introduction to the common birds of the area, and we found a few of the specialties! Some highlights included Turquoise-crowned Hummingbird, Citreoline Trogon, and Orange-breasted Bunting. We also enjoyed watching several Scissor-tailed Flycatchers!

We returned to town, had a fabulous welcome dinner, and got some rest so we were ready for the first full day of the tour.



Orange-breasted Bunting

January 21: Huatulco - Transfer to Juchitan de Zaragoza

We started very early this morning in search of owls in Huatulco National Park. A Middle American Screech-Owl responded but didn't come in but a group of Mottled Owls was extremely cooperative with four individuals surrounding us!

As the sun came up, more and more birds became active, and we had a wonderful morning full of birds! Highlights included Turquoise-crowned Hummingbird, Russet-crowned Motmot, Golden-cheeked Woodpecker, Flammulated Flycatcher, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Yellow-winged Cacique, and Orchard, Streak-backed, Spot-breasted, and Altamira Orioles.

It was time to start on our way east to Tehuantepec. After a few hours long drive and a lunch stop, we arrived at Playa Santa Maria Xadani to look for shorebirds. There were a good number of birds around and we added many new species to our list including Collared Plover, Hudsonian Whim-

brel, Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Dowitcher, Ruddy Turnstone, Baird's Sandpiper, and more. We headed back to the hotel to settle in and get ready for another day of birding.



White-throated Magpie-Jay



Russet-crowned Motmot

January 22: Ojo de Agua - Transfer to Huatulco

We got an early start as we headed to Ojo de Agua for a morning of birding. The weather was beautiful but windy on our arrival, which certainly made the birding more difficult. Even with the wind, we did well with highlights including West Mexican Chachalaca, Plain-capped Starthroat, Citreoline Trogon, White-lored Gnatcatcher, Stripe-headed Sparrow, and Orange-breasted and Rose-bellied Buntings.

After a late breakfast in town, we headed back towards Huatulco. After checking into the hotel, we headed back to Huatulco National Park for more birding. It didn't take long before we heard Red-breasted Chat, but it took a lot of work to get everyone on them. In the end almost everyone ended up with good views of the beautiful bird. A bit farther along, we heard a Lesser Ground-Cuckoo calling from close by. This very skulky species can be tough to find and it took a while before we finally found it. Once we did, everyone had fantastic, extended views of it! As it approached dusk, we heard a Colima Pygmy-Owl, but we were unable to find it.

As the day ended, we had been seeing reports of windy and rough seas that might cause problems for our pelagic the following day. Unfortunately, the harbor was closed by authorities and our pelagic was canceled. We would have to come up with a new plan for the morning.

January 23: Pelagic Tour - Transfer to Finca Don Gabriel

With the pelagic canceled, we decided our best option was to spend another morning birding in Huatulco National Park. We enjoyed a couple of hours just after sunrise birding along the Sendero Sicaruu and Laguna el Zanate. The lagoon was loaded with waders and other waterbirds including Northern Jacana, Least Grebe, Wood Stork, and Roseate Spoonbill. Along the trail we found a variety of birds including Mexican Squirrel-Cuckoo, Golden-cheeked Woodpecker, Collared Forest-Falcon, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Vermilion Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Grasshopper Sparrow, and eight species of warblers.

After a couple of hours drive to our next hotel, Finca Don Gabriel, we checked into our rooms. Some people continued birding around the property while others took a short rest. Those that kept birding found some new birds for the trip including Zone-tailed Hawk, Masked Tityra, Western Tanager, and Red-legged Honeycreeper. After our short break, we headed out to bird around Café Pluma “Oro del Sur.” The birding was a bit slow this afternoon, but we did find a few good birds including Short-tailed Hawk, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, and Greenish Elaenia. We enjoyed an amazing homemade dinner at Café Pluma before heading back to our hotel for the night.

January 24: Pluma de Oro - Transfer to Cabañas Puesta del Sol

Our day started back where it ended at Café Pluma in hopes of seeing the Red-headed Tanagers that they are famous for and we were not disappointed! After some patience, everyone enjoyed wonderful views of this species. Other highlights here included Blue-capped Hummingbird, White-throated Thrush, Audubon’s Oriole, Rufous-capped Warbler, Slate-throated Redstart, and Flame-colored Tanager. We enjoyed another amazing homecooked meal before starting on our way up to higher elevations.

After arriving at Cabañas Puesta del Sol in San Jose del Pacifico, we had lunch and then spent the afternoon birding the hotel grounds. Birding was a bit slow, but we did find Garnet-throated Hummingbird, Bushtit, Bullock’s Oriole, and Townsend’s Warbler among other more common species.

January 25: San Jose del Pacifico

We had a full day to explore and find all the species that we were looking for at this higher elevation. Our day started early but it took a little while to warm up enough for the birds to get really active. Once they did, we picked up new species very quickly and started to find most of our targets. Highlights included Bumblebee and White-eared Hummingbirds, Blue Mockingbird, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, Crescent-chested Warbler, and our first Red Warblers of the trip. As we continued birding, we kept adding new species such as Russet Nightingale-Thrush and Gray Silky-flycatcher. We again spent the late afternoon birding around the hotel grounds, but it was unfortunately slow again.

January 26: San Jose del Pacifico - Transfer to Oaxaca

We still had most of the morning to bird before we needed to start our drive to Oaxaca so we headed to Camino El Manzanal-Miramar to see what we could find. It turned out to be a great morning! Highlights included Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Hammond's Flycatcher, Gray Silky-flycatcher, Red Crossbill, Black-headed Siskin, Black-vented Oriole, Hepatic Tanager, and Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer. After breakfast at our hotel, it was time to start on our way to Oaxaca. Along the way we made a stop at a wonderful restaurant, Azucena Zapoteca, that serves amazing food and has a fantastic gift shop full of amazing local artwork.



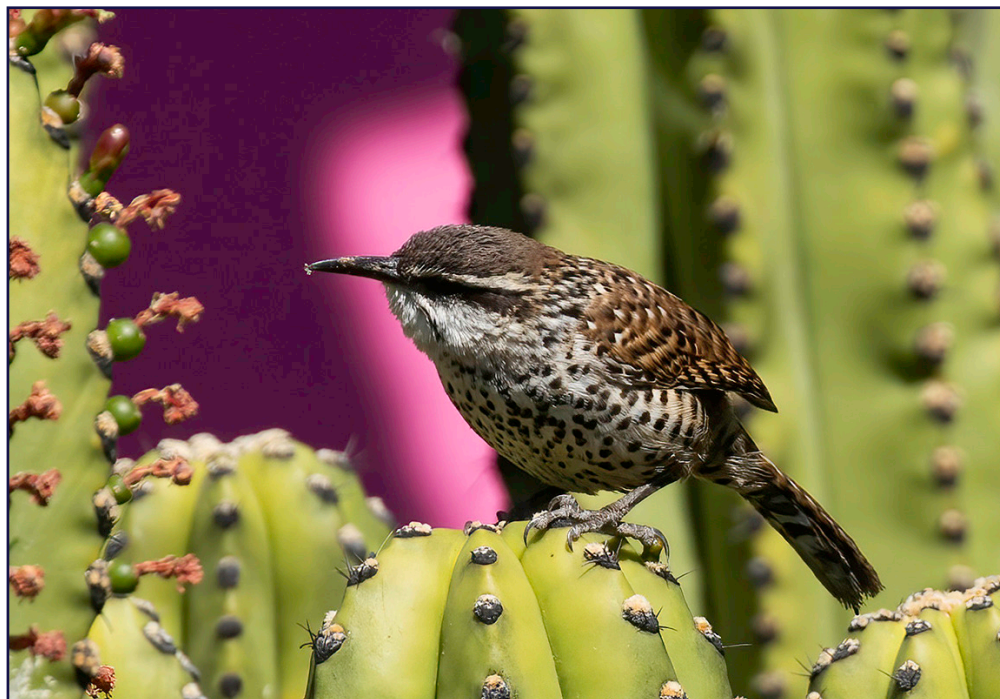
Gray Silky-flycatcher

After a brief restroom stop at a gas station where we saw our first White-throated Towhee of the trip, we arrived in Oaxaca in the late afternoon and got settled into our hotel before heading out to a great dinner in the culinary capital of Mexico.

January 27: Presa Piedra Azul, Arroyo El Jilguero, Rancho Zapata, and Yagul Archaeological Site

After an early start due to the hour drive to our first birding spot, we arrived and got right to birding! Our first stop included some excellent habitat around a small reservoir where we quickly added Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks, Dusky Hummingbird, Green Kingfisher, Least Flycatcher, Say's Phoebe, Nutting's Flycatcher, Violet-green Swallow, Bridled Sparrow, and Hooded Oriole.

We continued farther up the road adding a few more species including Tufted Flycatcher, Greater Pewee, and Hermit Warbler. We arrived at Rancho Zapata for lunch and after ordering, birded around their property. There are many specialties that can be found here, and we did well both seeing and photographing many of them including Beautiful and Dusky Hummingbirds, Gray-breasted Woodpecker, and Boucard's Wren.



Boucard's Wren



Gray-breasted Woodpecker

We made an afternoon stop at Yagul Archaeological site, but the birding was extremely slow. We did see Ash-throated and Nutting's Flycatchers and Loggerhead Shrike. The highlight though was a snake that had caught a lizard that we were able to watch for a long time!

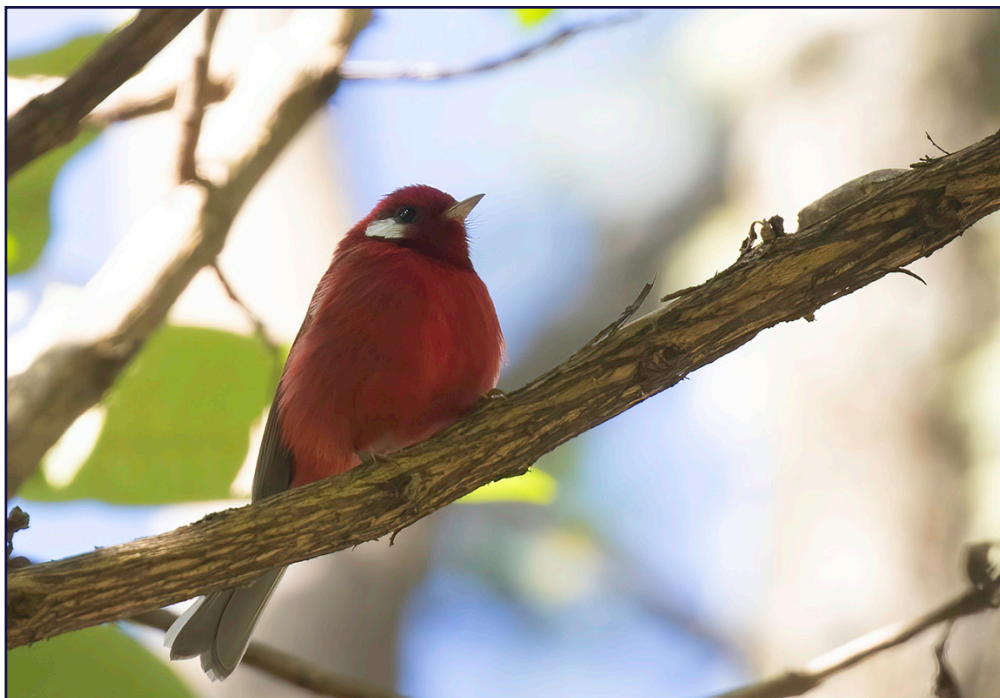
January 28: Monte Alban and Mezcal Experience

Our day started at the ecological trail at famous archeological site, Monte Alban. It was a cold start to the morning, so it took a bit of time before the birds got active. Eventually we found three of our main targets here Golden, Slaty, and Dwarf Vireos. Other highlights for the morning included White-throated Swift, Berylline Hummingbird, Gray Flycatcher, and White-throated Towhee.

Our afternoon was dedicated to a mezcal experience at Don Agave. We enjoyed an excellent lunch and then a wonderful tour teaching us all about how mezcal is grown and made. The experience ended with a mezcal tasting before we headed back to Oaxaca where we enjoyed another delicious dinner.

January 29: La Cumbre Ixtepeji and Ex-Hacienda Aranjuez

Our final day took us back to higher elevations. The forest in this area is beautiful, and everyone enjoyed our time here. We didn't see a ton of species, but we had some big highlights including Dwarf Jay, Mexican Chickadee, Gray-barred Wren, Olive Warbler, more looks at the incredible Red Warbler, and Golden-browed Warbler.



Red Warbler

Next, we headed to brunch at Restaurante Colibrí which is also a great birding spot. Their hummingbird feeders attract Rivoli's Hummingbird and Blue-throated Mountain-gem, and they are also

putting our food for Collared Towhee and Rufous-capped Brushfinch. They serve excellent food and fantastic coffee and hot chocolate. This is a must stop spot in the area!

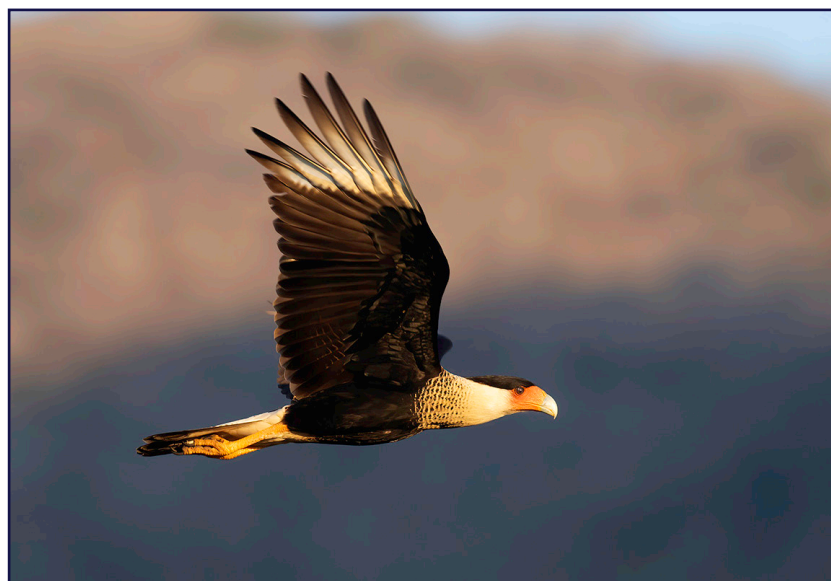
In the afternoon, some of the group took a walk around Oaxaca to see the historical sites and do some shopping before we had an amazing farewell dinner at Restaurante Catedral.

January 30: Departure from Oaxaca

Overall, we had a very successful trip and found most of the top targets of this amazing region. We ended the trip with 249 species. Thanks to Maynor Ovando from Birding Expeditions for his expert guidance and to Alexis Stark from Tucson Bird Alliance, who was an excellent ambassador for the organization on this fundraising tour.



Collared Plover



Crested Caracara