



Birding in Guatemala by Debbie Sturdivant Jordan



# GUATEMALA

## BIRDING GUATEMALA'S HIGHLANDS AND LAKE ATITLÁN with John Beavers

April 4 - 14, 2018

### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Bird the lower and upper trails at Los Trrales, with the goal of seeing the Long-tailed Manakin's impressive courtship display.
- Visit Corazon del Bosque Reserve for the chance to see Mountain Trogon, Spotted Woodcreeper, White-naped Brush-Finch, and with luck, the uncommon Pink-headed Warbler.
- Learn about the ancient and modern Maya while visiting the Aguateca archaeological site.
- Explore San Juan Laguna, a village known for its many women's cooperatives, and meet some of the entrepreneurs who weave traditional textiles there.
- Visit Asociación Vivamos Mejor (AVM), a private nonprofit development organization committed to improving the quality of life of rural communities surrounding Lake Atitlán.

*holbrook.travel/flyway-gt18*

*Supporting Audubon and its partners in advancing sustainable development in bird hot-spots*

**Holbrook Travel** is a supporting partner in Audubon and its partners' conservation work in Latin America and in the Caribbean. One key aspect of that work is the strengthening of **bird-based tourism** as a conservation and sustainable development tool. The tours developed from this initiative are designed to help protect key target areas along the flyways for migratory and local species. Initial sites are located in **Belize, Colombia, Guatemala, Paraguay and the Bahamas.**

These areas were selected by intersecting bird hot-spots with key **Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs)** where Audubon and their partners (Belize Audubon, Patrimonio Natural, Calidris, WCS, Vivamos Mejor, Guyra Paraguay and the Bahamas National Trust) are carrying out vital conservation work. By overlaying conservation work with the economic support that bird-based tourism brings, this program **strengthens local communities and the long-term conservation** of these areas.

Participants on these tours have a direct economic impact on local people and communities, help preserve IBAs, and nurture an emerging ecotourism industry. By visiting these sites with our trained guides, you **help protect threatened habitats** by supporting local conservation and local communities that benefit from tourism.

# WHAT MAKES FLYWAY EXPEDITIONS DIFFERENT?



## UNIQUE ITINERARIES

These birding itineraries are unique in that they are designed to help strengthen and support tourism in bird hot-spots and support conservation and local economic development. The initial program is focusing on nine sites in Belize, Guatemala, Paraguay and the Bahamas. The project is helping communities, local tour operators, and tourism boards attract bird watching tourists to the selected destinations and associated businesses. Participants will see the conservation activities first-hand and engage with the local community during their tours.



## EXTENSIVE GUIDE TRAINING

Birding guides selected for the tours have taken part in comprehensive guide training in alliance with expert guides, local tourism authorities, and Audubon's local conservation partners. Guides are provided advanced levels of training which include bird identification, biology, ecology, and conservation alongside guiding ethics, group management, marketing, and business, plus basic English language where needed. Tours connect advanced regional guides with local guides to increase knowledge and capacity.



## SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

The National Audubon Society project provides local guiding businesses with access to equipment, including binoculars, scopes, and guidebooks; improves trails and associated infrastructure; and offers basic business support such as marketing and customer service training. Participants on the tours will benefit from these improvements and help support the important economic incentive to promote conservation.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Travelers will learn about targeted environmental education and outreach programs carried out by Audubon and its partners. These include programs at local schools, using local birdlife as a hook to engage youth, and courses for adult, community, and women's groups, and alternative livelihood programs. Tours may include a talk with community members or a school visit where participants can exchange their passion for birding.



## BIRD CONSERVATION

With greater local awareness and appreciation for ecosystems, the program supports priority endemic bird species including the critically endangered Scarlet Macaw, Resplendent Quetzal and Bahama Oriole, plus migrant species that rely on key migratory flyways like the Piping Plover, Wood Thrush and Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and other wildlife including the Jaguar, Maned Wolf and Rock Iguana.

*Photos by Greg Basco, Christa Dillabaugh, Pelin Karaca, and Martin Van Lokven*

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

*Supporting Audubon and its partners in advancing sustainable development in bird hot-spots*

This bird-based tourism initiative is a key conservation tool being implemented by the National Audubon Society that links poverty reduction and economic development directly with nature conservation. By building capacity within communities, especially on the edge of protected areas or Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas, and working with tour operators and local organizations to drive an interested market to support the initiative, we all can make a vast difference for conservation and reduce the loss of habitat and birds. Holbrook Travel is a proud supporter of this work, having pioneered conservation, local guide training, and community outreach in Costa Rica. Together, we aim to create a network of community-based birding destinations across the hemisphere that offer skilled local birding guides, improved site interpretation and lodging, and related goods and services tailored to the birding community.

# Birding Guatemala's Highlands and Lake Atitlán

Guatemala is a richly diverse cultural center and a lush and vibrant paradise for birders. Set in the heart of Central America, it is one of the New World's prime migratory corridors. See firsthand many of the species Audubon hopes to protect through its ongoing conservation efforts. Experience National Audubon's Asociación Vivamos Mejor program based in Panajachel on Lake Atitlán, including a training program for Guatemalans to become birding and nature guides. Under their guidance, you'll explore a variety of habitats, seek out rare and endemic species, and meet with locals who are part of the Audubon bird-tourism initiative in Santiago Atitlán, a hub of Maya culture. Birders who choose to take this tour will enjoy the vast, natural riches while supporting the community and protecting a diverse ecosystem.

## ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER



Altamira Oriole by Alexander Daib

### APRIL 4 - ANTIGUA

Arrive at La Aurora International Airport in **Guatemala City**, Guatemala. \*Please schedule your flight to arrive no later than 2:00 pm. You will meet our local representative outside the airport after clearing immigration and customs and transfer to Antigua, about an hour away depending on traffic. This evening enjoy a welcome talk on your upcoming journey. *Overnight at Hotel Posada Don Rodrigo. (D)*

### APRIL 5 - LOS ANDES PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE

After breakfast, travel to **Finca El Pilar**, a private reserve with great pine oak forest and excellent trails for birding. Walk the trails looking for various species and visit the hummingbird feeders. In the afternoon, we continue to **Finca Los Andes**, at the southern slopes of the Atitlán Volcano. The cloud forest that lies between the tea gardens and the coffee fields are abundant in wildlife, especially birds, among them the elusive Resplendent Quetzal. Los Andes is also home to the rare Cabanis's Tanager, also known as the Azure-rumped Tanager. This small, blue, exquisite bird's highly localized habitat is shared by hundreds of local and migrating species, including a host of hummingbirds, orioles, flycatchers, trogons and motmots. Sixty percent of the reserve is original forest, most of it along the slopes of the dormant volcano. In 2001, Los Andes was declared a private nature reserve, and it is a founding member of Guatemala's Association of Private Nature Reserves. The Reserve works closely with the residents to promote self sufficiency, health and education. Present programs for conservation include artificial nests for the Quetzals. The reserve has a reforestation program approved by INAB (The National Forestry Institute), as well as eucalyptus forests planted for firewood. Coffee and quinine prunings also supply lumber and firewood. Financial and technical assistance are provided to buy and install efficient wood burning stoves in the workers' houses. Los Andes has its own hydroelectric plant, which generates all the power used on the estate. *Overnight at Finca Los Andes. (BLD)*

### APRIL 6 - FINCA LOS ANDES

Today we will continue with birding at the reserve. The local residents are being trained as guides to provide them with an alternate source of income and hunting has been prohibited. Hummingbird feeders at the lodge may attract the Blue-tailed Hummingbird as well as Violet and Rufous Sabrewings. The rarer Wine-throated Hummingbird may also appear. We will drive in pickup trucks up to the higher forest above the tea plantations where a nice set of trails may allow us to find the Resplendent Quetzal. Tody Motmots and Emerald Toucanets, as well as deep forest species such as Singing Quail, Spotted Nightingale Thrush and Scaled Antpitta, are also present. Tonight after dinner, there will be an optional walk for owling. *Overnight at Finca Los Andes. (BLD)*

### APRIL 7 - LOS TARRALES RESERVE

Enjoy early morning birding around the lodge followed by breakfast. Afterwards we transfer to **Finca Los Tarrales**, located not too far from Finca Los Andes, on the flanks of the same mountain. However, the elevation and humidity profile differ and so does the bird life, with birds from lowland to highland habitats, and good access to various types of forest. Los Tarrales ranges in altitude from 700 to 3,500 m (2,300 to 11,500 ft) and is home to diverse wildlife, including more than 340 bird species. The reserve is part of the Atitlán Important Bird Area, and harbors 21 regional endemic bird species, including Horned Guan, Highland Guan, Azure-rumped Tanager, and Blue-tailed Hummingbird. The abundance of migratory birds here, including Swainson's Thrush, Tennessee, Magnolia, and Black-and-white Warblers, Western Tanager, and Orchard Oriole, is impressive. It is a good place for raptors as well, including the Black Hawk Eagle, and sometimes the gorgeous Black-and-white Owl. Morning and evening are great for commuting parrots, with four species of parakeets and parrots typically seen. During the two days we have here, we will be birding the lower and upper trails, working on finding some great diversity of birds. We will look for displaying Long-tailed Manakins. During lunch we will take some time to enjoy the feeders where Orchard, Altamira, Spot-breasted and Baltimore Orioles come to feed along with Rufous-naped Wrens and Yellow-throated Euphonias. *Overnight at Finca Los Tarrales. (BLD)*

### APRIL 8 - LOS TARRALES RESERVE

Continue birding in the Los Tarrales Private Reserve. The reserve is private and self sustained; costs for its conservation covered from income in the zone from multiple uses (coffee, ornamentals, and honey) and through providing tourism services. Sixty Maya Kaqchikel families live within the protected area, working in production of coffee and ornamentals, as forest rangers, and in tourism. Several enthusiastic and knowledgeable local guides show the bird and wildlife and explain the production of coffee and ornamental plants. Los Tarrales is providing social services for

the people living within the protected area. A private primary school is run in order to ensure the children's education. Classes in nature, science, and conservation are included in the educational program. *Overnight at Finca Los Tarrales. (BLD)*

### APRIL 9 - SANTIAGO, LAKE ATITLÁN

Following birding in the morning, we transfer to the town of **Santiago Atitlán** in time for lunch. In the afternoon, we will have opportunities to see a few new species. If we are lucky, we may find the uncommon Slender Sheartail hummingbird or the unique looking Prevost's Ground Sparrow. Santiago Atitlán is a hub of Maya culture and there may be an opportunity to meet some locals who are part of the Audubon bird tourism initiative. The National Audubon Society has partnered with Asociación Vivamos Mejor (AVM), a private nonprofit development organization committed to improving the quality of life of rural communities surrounding Lake Atitlán. AVM focuses on Sustainable Watersheds and Resiliency to Climate Change as a strategy for promoting sustainable development. Along with our primary group leader, at each location we will be having a local guide involved in the project. *Overnight at Hotel Bambú. (BLD)*

### APRIL 10 - SAN JUAN LA LAGUNA

This morning we enjoy birding at **Parque Mirador del Rey Tepepul**, a 3,500-hectare park, mostly forest with a wide altitudinal range. Although new to the bird tourism scene, this park has great birds, including the Yellow-naped Parrot, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, and the Azure-rumped Tanager. In the afternoon, we transfer to **San Juan La Laguna**. San Juan La Laguna is a wonderful village with an incredible number of women's cooperatives and women's groups. The groups do fine weaving of textiles on the traditional back strap loom and to a lesser degree the Spanish floor loom. The village is also a hub for the use of natural dyed fabric. This afternoon we will have time to explore the village. *Overnight at Eco Hotel Uxlabil Atitlán. (BLD)*

### APRIL 11 - SAN JUAN LA LAGUNA

Bird tourism is also new to the San Juan La Laguna area. We will seek out the rare and gorgeous Belted Flycatcher along the lower slopes of the volcano. We may also come across the Lesser Roadrunner and other dry forest species, such as Prevost's Ground Sparrow. Participants who are in excellent shape can try the hike to **Volcán San Pedro**. The hike to find the Horned Guan is very difficult and strenuous, and not for everyone, nor a guarantee to see the rare guan. *Overnight at Eco Hotel Uxlabil Atitlán. (BLD)*

### APRIL 12 - PANAJACHEL

In the morning we will take a boat to Parque Tzankujil to **San Marcos La Laguna**, which has some very good dry forest. Various species of birds are seen here and not in wetter forest sites in the area. This area could give us a chance to find the showy Sparkling-tailed Hummingbird. This is a great spot for wintering warblers, resident orioles including the Bar-winged Oriole, the Bushy-crested Jay, and even the skulking Blue-and-white Mockingbird. We will bird the morning here, have lunch and then will transfer to **Panajachel**. This afternoon is free to enjoy some shopping or relax and take in views of Lake Atitlán from our hotel. Before dinner we will meet a representative of Asociación Vivamos Mejor and learn more about their work with local communities surrounding Lake Atitlán. *Overnight at Hotel Posada Don Rodrigo. (BLD)*

## FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ENROLL:

Visit [holbrook.travel/flyway-gt18](http://holbrook.travel/flyway-gt18) or contact Debbie Sturdivant Jordan at 866-748-6146 or [debbie@holbrooktravel.com](mailto:debbie@holbrooktravel.com)

### APRIL 13 - GUATEMALA CITY

This morning we will visit **Corazon del Bosque**, a reserve located higher up in the oak pine forest zone. The star bird at Corazon del Bosque is the gorgeous and uncommon Pink-headed Warbler. As we look for the warbler we may see Mountain Trogon, Spotted Woodcreeper, Yellowish Flycatcher, Rufous-browed Wren, Olive Warbler, Crescent-chested Warbler, White-naped Brush Finch and the local form of the Yellow-eyed Junco, which many consider a separate species: the Guatemalan Junco. After our visit, we will head back to Guatemala City and enjoy lunch at a local restaurant en route. We arrive in Guatemala City in the late afternoon. Refresh, then enjoy our Farewell Dinner at the hotel. *Overnight at Hotel Radisson. (BLD)*

### APRIL 14 - DEPART

Transfer to Guatemala City Airport to take your flight home. Breakfast will be available depending on your flight time. (B)

## MEET YOUR LEADER



**JOHN BEAVERS** is Vice President and Executive Director of the International Alliances Program for the National Audubon Society, and oversees international conservation efforts, including strategic development, managing major initiatives, and strengthening partnerships in the Americas. Before joining Audubon,

John lived in Guatemala for 16 years and worked for The Nature Conservancy where he served as the Country Director for Guatemala, Director for Central America and the Associate Director of Conservation Programs for Latin America.

## PROGRAM PRICING

### \$2,550 (10 participants)

Cost includes accommodations, activities, and meals as indicated in the itinerary, in-country transportation, full-time guide, part-time apprentice guides, and a donation to National Audubon to support the program.

Does not include international airfare or gratuities.

## THE FINE PRINT

Price is based on double occupancy; for a single room throughout the trip add \$325 per person. A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form is due by December 05, 2017 to secure your reservation. This deposit is refundable until January 22, 2018 excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Non-refundable final payment is due no later than January 22, 2018. Travel/trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. For more information call Travel Insured at 800-243-3174 or visit [travelinsured.com](http://travelinsured.com). Holbrook Travel's agency number is 15849.