

Bird List for 2004 IFO Neotropical Avian Ecology Workshop
 Instructor: John Arvin • May 14-22, 2004 • Northeastern Mexico

TINAMOUS	
Thicket Tinamou	Heard daily in numbers, but we never even got close to seeing one, that that was no surprise.
GREBES	
Pied-billed Grebe	Several were seen on the irrigation canal near Cd. Mante.
CORMORANTS	
Neotropic Cormorant	Several were seen on the irrigation canal near Cd. Mante, and along the Rio Frio.
BITTERN & HERONS	
Least Bittern	One was heard singing persistantly from the marsh near Cd. Mante
Great Egret	Mostly seen along the irrigation canal near Mante.
Cattle Egret	Small numbers were seen daily attending grazing animals in open areas.
Green Heron	A few in high alternate (breeding) color were seen along the irrigation canal near Mante.
Boat-billed Heron	After much neck-craning I think all of us got nice looks at a single Boat-billed Heron. Our boatman said another was on a nest with a chick.
IBIS & SPOONBILLS	
Roseate Spoonbill	A single flying bird was seen along the highway not far from Matamoros.
AMERICAN VULTURES	
Black Vulture	Black Vultures were seen daily and usually in large numbers except on days with poor soaring weather.
Turkey Vulture	Turkey Vultures were seen daily, but in much smaller numbers than the previous species.
DUCKS & GEESE	
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	A few pairs were seen in the lowlands below Gomez Farias.
Muscovy Duck	This goose-sized tropical duck was seen especially well on the boat trip on the Rio Frio where perhaps 20 birds flushed ahead of the boat.
KITES, EAGLES, HAWKS, & ALLIES	
Gray Hawk	Small numbers were seen almost daily, especially around clearings in the mountain forest.
Harris' Hawk	Only recorded along the highway in arid lowlands.
Roadside Hawk	Small numbers were seen in the tropical lowlands in semi-cleared areas.
Short-tailed Hawk	Soaring birds (this is one of the most aerial of the Buteos and is rarely observed perched) were observed on several days, including virtually every time we visited the lookout platform at Rancho del Cielo.
FALCONS & CARACARAS	
Collared Forest-Falcon	One individual was heard in the vicinity of the corn fields near Rancho del Cielo but a "missing persons report" terminated our attempts to see it.
Crested Caracara	Seen primarily along the highway en route to El Cielo.

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Laughing Falcon	A single bird flew by in the valley below Gomez Farias on our first morning there. This is one of only three or four times that I have seen this species in the region where it is right on the bitter edge of its range.
Bat Falcon	
CURRASOWS & GUANS	
Plain Chachalaca	Abundant and noisy at all elevations and vegetation zones visited.
Crested Guan	Alas, a single bird perched below eye level as we were coming down the rough road from Alta Cima dropped off its perch before most of us could see it.
QUAILS	
Northern Bobwhite	Heard frequently in the mosaic of pastures and second growth tropical deciduous woodlands in the lowlands; a single male was seen near Cd. Mante.
Singing Quail	The far-carrying song was heard at all elevations visited in the Sierra, but our only encounter was a covey flushed as we were walking down the road below Rancho del Cielo on our last morning there.
RAILS	
Common Moorhen	
SUNGREBES	
Sungrebe	This tropical aquatic species reaches its absolute northern limit on the Rio Sabinas. We saw one nicely from a boat on the Rio Frio, the next river south of the Sabinas. This species seems to forage on insects plucked from overhanging vegetation and does not dive to feed or to evade possible predators. It was most interesting to see it actually leave the water and walk up the bank to escape our view.
PLOVERS & LAPWINGS	
Killdeer	One or two seen in open areas.
AVOCETS & STILTS	
Black-necked Stilt	Seen only at roadside ponds and ditches.
JACANAS	
Northern Jacana	Several adults in high breeding color were seen walking on floating vegetation in the irrigation canal near Mante; the females of this species are polygynous, mating with several males and laying clutches of eggs for each male to incubate and to tend the young upon hatching.
GULLS & TERNS	
Laughing Gull	Only seen over agricultural fields near the border.
PIGEONS AND DOVES	
Rock Dove	Semi-domestic birds were common in towns and villages.
Red-billed Pigeon	from 10 to 60 birds were seen daily and singing males were common even in the center of Gomez Farias.
Eurasian Collared-Dove	This recent invader has become quite common in sorghum growing areas near the border.

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White-winged Dove	Primarily seen in drier districts along the highway.
Mourning Dove	Not a common bird in the forested areas of El Cielo but a few were seen in agricultural areas near Mante.
Inca Dove	Common in villages
Common Ground-Dove	Common in drier areas of thorn forest and pasture/second growth in the lowlands.
Blue Ground-Dove	A male was heard counter singing with a more distant bird at 1100 m. in humid oak forest above Ocampo.
White-tipped Dove	Quite common both in the tropical forest and in the cloud forest; those seen were usually walking in roads.
PARROTS & MACAWS	
Green Parakeet	One fly-by flock of about 20 were seen in the low Sierra de Cucharas in the vicinity of Chamal, the 100 year old American agricultural colony in the region. This species was abundant a few decades ago and several hundred birds per day would have been the norm. As the amount of intact habitat is almost the same the cage bird trade would appear to be the entire cause of this precipitous decline.
Military Macaw	A single unseen pair was heard flying over against the mountainside. This species is globally endangered but significant numbers remain in the El Cielo Reserve,. However, except for their annual presence in the town of Jaumave in winter where probably the entire population of the region gathers to feed on pecans, they inhabit remote areas that are very difficult of access.
White-crowned Parrot	The is the currently the only species of parrot that retains its population numbers at historical levels. The reason for this is not entirely clear, but White-crowned Parrots are rarely seen in captivity.
Red-crowned Parrot	This species, an endemic to northeastern Mexico, is critically endangered. It was abundant as recently as the 1970s, but the cage bird traffic has all but eliminated it. JA heard a single flying bird at the Rio Frio.
Red-lored Parrot	We had nice looks at one bird and saw several pairs in flight. This species is now the only Amazona parrot likely to be seen in the El Cielo area and it has declined significantly from former levels.
CUCKOOS, ANIS, & ROADRUNNERS	
Mangrove Cuckoo	This species remain inegmatic. It was encountered in late spring and summer by the ornithologists who first explored the region, and birds in breeding condition were collected, but I never saw one until May of 2002. We found a couple of territorial birds on the lower slopes of the Sierra Madre just west of Ocampo, but found nothing that sheds any light on their distribution or phenology.
Squirrel Cuckoo	We encountered several individuals. This species is in the process of extending its range northward (as are many, if not most of the species in the region), and I anticipate a record in southern Texas shortly.
Greater Roadrunner	Other than highway side birds we saw one in an isolated area of thorn forest near the Rio Frio.
Groove-billed Ani	Common observed in open areas in the lowlands.
OWLS	
Vermiculated Screech-Owl	One was heard at night at Rancho del Cielo.
Tamaulipas Pygmy-Owl	This species, one of those endemic to northeastern Mexico, was found commonly in humid oak forest above Ocampo and especially in cloud forest at Rancho del Cielo.
Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl	Almost every time we imitated this species to draw in birds to mob it we also drew in the owl itself for numerous great looks.

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Mottled Owl	Green Jays conveniently led us to a bird trying to get a little rest in one of the trees right in the middle of the Rancho del Cielo compound. We were serenaded by these birds every night we were there.
NIGHTJARS	
Common Nighthawk	Only seen flying over agricultural fields early in the morning close to the border.
Common Pauraque	Very distantly hear on our only night excursion; this species, very common in south Texas, is unaccountably uncommon in southern Tamaulipas.
SWIFTS	
Vaux's Swift	A few Vaux's Swifts were seen flying above the Rio Frio. This resident population is without doubt specifically distinct from the highly migratory population found in the Pacific Northwest.
White-throated Swift	
HUMMINGBIRDS	
Wedge-tailed Sabrewing	The most common hummingbird encountered. What this large species lacks in visual appeal it makes up for with its incredibly complex song.
Broad-billed Hummingbird	An adult male was seen by some.
Azure-crowned Hummingbird	We had nice looks at a couple of birds coming to a feeder in Alta Cima. Not a brilliant species but probably the most common hummer in subtropical elevations.
Buff-bellied Hummingbird	We saw Buff-bellieds at all elevations we were able to get to from the tropical lowlands to subhumid oak woodland at 1500 m.
Amethyst-throated Hummingbird	A single male came to the feeder at "The Keep" but never seemed to be there when anyone went to look for it.
Bumblebee Hummingbird	A single female was seen at 1400 m. in humid oak forest above Ocampo. This species breeds in pine-oak forest at higher elevations but occurs at cloud forest elevations during the non breeding season.
TROGONS	
Mountain Trogon	Common and in full song at Rancho del Cielo at 1300 m.
Elegant Trogon	Common and in full song below 1000 m.
MOTMOTS	
Blue-crowned Motmot	Very conspicuous (compared to other seasons when seeing even one can be a challenge)
KINGFISHERS	
Ringed Kingfisher	One seen along an irrigation canal near Cd. Mante
Amazon Kingfisher	Very nice looks at a pair along the Rio Frio.
Green Kingfisher	Seen numerous times, primarily due to a family group of about 6 birds that fished around the tilapia ponds and the nearby Rio Frio.
WOODPECKERS	
Acorn Woodpecker	seen (or only heard?) in oak woodland above Ocampo.

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Golden-fronted Woodpecker	Very common around Gomez Farias and below in tropical deciduous and tropical thorn forest but absent above the base of the mountains; one or two were among the mixed bag of birds that were habituated to feeding on the insects attracted to the street light in front of our hotel.
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	several were seen out on the coastal plain near Cd. Mante.
Smoky-brown Woodpecker	A couple of encounters with single birds in forests on the mountainside.
Bronze-winged Woodpecker	This is a very attractive woodpecker, the northernmost of a large genus of green woodpeckers that inhabit the canopy of tropical forest.
Lineated Woodpecker	Our primary encounter was with a female in a nest hole beside the Rio Frio.
Pale-billed Woodpecker	A pair frequented a dead snag just outside "The Keep" at Rancho del Cielo.
WOODCREEPERS	
Olivaceous Woodcreeper	Various participants saw a couple of these small woodcreepers.
Ivory-billed Woodcreeper	We heard the loud Canyon Wren-like song of this large woodcreeper far more than we saw it, but they are fairly common in both tropical and cloud forest.
ANTBIRDS	
Barred Antshrike	This is the northernmost antbird, the "tip of the tropical iceberg" as Julian put it; we saw a male in dense secondary vegetation in an old clearing, just the kind of habitat this species prefers.
TYRANT FLYCATCHERS	
Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet	This tiny flycatcher was most numerous in scrubby vegetation on the coastal plain near Cd. Mante.
Greater Pewee	This species (singing "Go-mez Fah-ree-as") was scattered around the oak forest and cloud forest at the upper elevations we reached.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	A single migrant was seen on the mountainside above Gomez Farias.
Least Flycatcher	Again, a single migrant was seen.
Black Phoebe	Singles were seen along the irrigation canal near Cd. Mante and at the Laguna San Ysidro "tourist mecca" on the edge of the desert west of the Sierra Madre Oriental.
Vermilion Flycatcher	Very common at the Laguna San Ysidro mentioned above, including four fledglings following a brilliant male parent.
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	Common in tropical forest and oak/cloud forest at higher elevations.
Great Kiskadee	Actually seen only at the irrigation canal near Cd. Mante, though usually common around GF.
Boat-billed Flycatcher	Most common in tropical forest on the lower slopes of the Sierra, but there was also a pair or two around the hotel.
Social Flycatcher	Common and widespread in open areas of the lowlands.
Couch's Kingbird	also.
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Only seen along the highway from the border south to near Cd. Victoria.
BIRDS OF UNCERTAIN AFFINITIES	
Gray-collared Becard	A pair or two was seen in the oak forest above Ocampo and in the cloud forest at Rancho del Cielo.
Rose-throated Becard	Several pairs were seen around nests; the nest at La Florida being anomalous in that it was supported by a branch rather than hanging from the tip of one in the fashion of those of Altamira Orioles.
Masked Tityra	Fairly common in pairs in tropical forest along the lower slopes of the mountains.

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VIREOS	
Hutton's Vireo	A pair was seen in the drier oak forest just before the descent to the western slope of the Sierra.
Brown-capped Vireo	Farily common in oak forest and cloud forest.
Yellow-green Vireo	going on.
Rufous-browed Peppershrike	This distinctive species, formerly considered to be in a family of its own, is now classed with the vireos.
JAYS, MAGPIES, & CROWS	
Green Jay	Common at all elevations, but somewhat sneaky during the breeding season like all jays.
Brown Jay	Common in lowlands, but does not extend much above the level of Gomez Farias.
Tamaulipas Crow	A few pairs were scattered around the lowlands below Gomez Farias; formerly abundant in the region this northeastern Mexican endemic species has undergone a severe reduction in population and range in recent years.
Chihuahuan Raven	A few paris were seen along the highway in arid country en route to southern Tamaulipas.
Common Raven	A single bird was seen in the highlands near Alta Cima.
SWALLOWS	
Purple Martin	
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	One or two were seen near road cuts above Ocampo where they were doubtless nesting.
Barn Swallow	A number of Barn Swallows, probably migrants were in open country en route to Ocampo.
TITMICE AND CHICKADEES	
Black-crested Titmouse	Heard several places in tropical deciduous forest and seen near Ocampo in that vegetation type and in the oak forest above it.
WRENS	
Canyon Wren	Seen on the rocky mountainside above Gomez Farias and around the stone walls at Rancho del Cielo.
Spot-breasted Wren	Very common in the dense brush of sucesional growth and the understory of both tropical and cloud forest.
Carolina Wren	Heard frequently and finally seen in mountainside tropical deciduous forest.
Bewick's Wren	One bird was seen in a brush fence at the edge of the desert west of the Sierra Madre.
White-bellied Wren	Frio.
GNATCATCHERS	
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Somewhat to my surprise two or three Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were seen in tropical deciduous forest and montane oak forest , both east and west respectively, of Ocampo. I have not heard of them being recorded as breeders (they are abundant in winter) in the El Cielo Reserve proper and they are not on the checklist.
THRUSHES	
Brown-backed Solitaire	Common from about 700 m. upward. The highly complex song is a marvel to hear.
Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush	Uncooperative in understory of drier oak woodland above Ocampo.
Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush	Abundant and noisy in the understory of cloud forest at Rancho del Cielo. When I returned home I found out that while we were watching nightingale-thrushes in Mexico the first record for North America north of the border popped up right in McAllen. It is still present though I haven't seen it.

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Clay-colored Robin	One of the few neotropical species that I would call truly abundant in the El Cielo region. A cracking good singer too.
White-throated Robin	Pretty common at higher elevations but much less visible than the preceding.
MOCKINGBIRDS & THRASHERS	
Northern Mockingbird	Absent away from the open country along the highway.
Long-billed Thrasher	We found these in old clearings in the cloud forest that had dense second growth.
Curve-billed Thrasher	Not really an El Cielo species; we encountered several west of the Sierra at the edge of the desert.
Blue Mockingbird	Really a blue thrasher. This attractive species is furtive and difficult to see well, but we did all eventually see it well with perseverance.
WOOD WARBLERS	
Crescent-chested Warbler	Common in montane oak forest but hard to get good looks at as it sticks to the high canopy.
Tropical Parula	Very common in tropical deciduous forest on the lower slopes.
Gray-crowned Yellowthroat	This species is not a "yellowthroat" in the true sense (genus <i>Geothlypis</i>), but a very different sort of bird with a warbly grosbeak-like song and a long, lanky build.
Wilson's Warbler	A single late migrant was seen by some; this is an abundant wintering species in the region.
Fan-tailed Warbler	A real beauty. This species is a faithful follower of army ants when these are raiding, a phenomenon that we unfortunately did not get to witness.
Golden-crowned Warbler	A common understory species both in tropical and cloud forest.
Rufous-capped Warbler	Another common species, this one in dense secondary vegetation on the Sierra slopes.
TANAGERS	
Red-throated Ant-Tanager	We had nice looks at a pair in dense tropical deciduous/thorn forest transition.
Flame-colored Tanager	Common in montane oak and cloud forest.
White-winged Tanager	Probably not a true <i>Piranga</i> tanager (which are thought to be more closely related to the <i>Cardina</i> Grosbeaks than to tanagers anyway), differing in several respects, especially vocally.
Yellow-winged Tanager	A subtle beauty.
Scrub Euphonia	A pair or two of this tiny species was seen. It is less common than the next as it prefers drier regions.
Yellow-throated Euphonia	The common and widespread Euphonia of tropical deciduous and lower cloud forest.
Elegant Euphonia	Elegant indeed; we saw a nice pair of these in the drier (comparatively speaking) oak forest.
EMBERIZID FINCHES	
Blue-black Grassquit	A tiny open country species with an interesting little flight display when it sings.
White-collared Seedeater	Another tiny bird mostly seen at some distance.
Yellow-faced Grassquit	"Mr. X" some call males if they are seen face on, as the brilliant yellow brow and malar form an "X" from a direct front view.
Rufous-capped Brush-Finch	A single pair was in residence around the compound at Rancho del Cielo; this species is much less common than formerly and it may be a matter of altitudinal withdrawal to higher elevations as the climate warms.
Olive Sparrow	Fairly common in dense vegetation inside or outside of forest.

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CARDINALS & GROSBEAKS	
Black-headed Saltator	A noisy, gregarious species that is totally unlike all the other saltators and probably isn't one.
Crimson-collared Grosbeak	A real beauty. This species is endemic to northeastern Mexico.
Northern Cardinal	One or two were found in tropical deciduous forest. This temperate species reaches its ecological limits in the El Cielo area where it is rare.
Blue Bunting	Navy blue with sky blue highlights, the males are real beauties.
Blue Grosbeak	A single bird was seen in open country.
BLACKBIRDS & ORIOLES	
Red-winged Blackbird	Roadside birds near the border.
Eastern Meadowlark	The only meadowlark that reaches the tropics, breeding on down into South America.
Melodious Blackbird	Common around villages and towns with tropical vegetation.
Great-tailed Grackle	Common around villages and farming country.
Bronzed Cowbird	All too common around any break in the forest, including the small clearing at Rancho del Cielo
Hooded Oriole	Pairs here and there.
Altamira Oriole	This large and showy species had nests hanging from wires and the tips of limbs all through the lowlands.
Audubon's Oriole	Rather quiet and inconspicuous during our stay, this species is more notable during the non breeding season when it forms the nucleus for mixed species flocks.
FRINGILLID & CARDUELID FINCHES	
Hooded Grosbeak	compound.
OLD WORLD SPARROWS	
House Sparrow	Noted in the larger towns.