

Mexico

Yucatan Extension

19th March to 25th March 2023 (7 days)

Trip Report



Cozumel Vireo by Bobby Wilcox

Trip report compiled by Tour Leader: Bobby Wilcox

Tour Summary



Yucatan Jay by Bobby Wilcox

Day 1 - March 20: After staggered arrivals, Spring Break chaos and a minor ferry mishap we were finally all assembled on Cozumel Island, eager to commence our birding adventure. We were greeted at dawn by a chorus of regionally endemic Black Catbirds, followed quickly by excellent views of island endemic Cozumel Vireo and the locally endemic subspecies of Caribbean Elaenia. Amidst the constant singing of Yucatan Vireos, we scored amazing looks at a very close perched Cozumel Emerald, some lovely White-fronted Parrots, and a pair of Yucatan Woodpeckers.

The short road to our lunch restaurant proved to be another hotspot and we managed great looks at two more endemic Cozumel subspecies, House Wren, and Rufous-browed Peppershrike. In the afternoon we focused on wetland birding with some of the highlights including Northern Jacana, some recently hatched Least Grebes riding on their parent's back and shockingly good looks at a pair of skulking Ruddy Crakes.

Day 2 - March 21: While waiting for the ferry we got our final looks at Cozumel Vireo as well as our first Summer Tanager and Magnolia Warbler. On the boat ride we enjoyed massive schools of flying fish shimmering as they glided over the surface of the water. After a long drive to the north coast, we spent the afternoon birding the coastal scrub forest near Ria Lagartos National Park. We quickly ticked our two target endemics, the large and rowdy Yucatan Wren and elegant Mexican Sheartail. Some of the other highlights of our walk through the mesquite and cactus scrub included Yucatán Flycatcher, Mangrove Vireo and Altamira Oriole, accompanied by the cheery song of the local, shaggy-crested variety of Northern Cardinal.

Day 3 - March 22: Back in the scrub forest this morning we got great looks at near endemics like Orange Oriole and Yucatan Jay as well as some more common stunners like Turquoise-browed Motmot, Vermilion Flycatcher and Grey-crowned Yellowthroat. The rest of the morning was spent in the salt pans of Reserva de la Biosfera Ría Lagartos amongst hordes of excellent water-loving birds of dizzying variety. The undisputed highlight was large groups of gaudy American Flamingos engaged in elegant courtship dances. Some of the other highlights included Snowy and Wilson's Plovers, tiny Least Terns carrying fish to hungry chicks and some shorebird ID practice.

Day 4 - March 23: From our base in the Yucatan capital of Merida, we stuck out early for the spectacular Mayan archaeological site of Uxmal. Birding the nearby forest proved quite productive with excellent looks at Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, a female Rose-throated Becard building a nest, gorgeous Painted, Indigo and Blue Buntings and Gartered Trogon, as well as fleeting but satisfactory looks at the very shy and skulky Grey-throated Chat. During our fact-filled tour of the architectural wonders of Uxmal we managed to sneak in a few new trip birds including Orchard and Black-cowled Oriole and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Before returning to Merida for a well-deserved siesta we popped into a patch of forest along the highway and found a cooperative pair of the range-restricted endemic Yucatan Gnatcatcher.



Cozumel Emerald by Bobby Wilcox



Rose-throated Tanager by Bobby Wilcox

Day 5 - March 24: We had two main targets in the dry forest around Merida this morning and we struck gold with both, getting outstanding walk-away looks at a Lesser Roadrunner and seeing a Yucatan Bobwhite both walking and then flying right past us once it realized it was walking towards a bunch of humans. At the coastal mangrove estuaries in Progreso we got amazing looks at a gorgeous Mangrove Warbler and a pair of noisy Clapper Rails. Our afternoon session in the lowland tropical forest near Coba proved to be some of the best birding of the trip. We ran into multiple mixed flocks which included a dizzying variety of species like Northern Bentbill, White-bellied Emerald, Buff-breasted Hummingbird, and Rose-throated Tanager.

Day 6 - March 25: We started off the morning birding around the lake in between our hotel and the Coba archaeological site and quickly added a handful of new trip birds including Brown Jay, Snail Kite, and Cliff Swallow, as well as a Yellow-winged Tanager building a nest. Amidst the ruins we also had great success with numerous mixed

flocks producing Eye-ringed Flat bill, Lesson's Motmot and Red-throated Ant-Tanager. Magnificent Black-headed Trogons provided constant company throughout the morning, and we closed out our visit with walk-away looks at Keel-billed Toucan and Middle American Screech Owl. On our way back to Cancun we picked up one final trip bird with a Red-billed Pigeon down a random side road. Thanks to a great group for a great trip!



American Flamingos by Bobby Wilcox

Annotated List of species recorded

For the species list and more photos, please see the eBird Trip Report: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/116178>

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