

'CASUALLY' BIRDING THE YUCATAN PENINSULA – 9th-23rd August 2022

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Laura standing in front of the spectacular Chichén Itzá

The Trip:

I should start this trip report by making it clear that (as my wife kept telling me) this was not by any means a birding trip, it was actually our honeymoon – I thought it would be useful to other birders travelling to the area to read, to know what species to look out for with limited birding time!

Between 9th-23rd August 2022, my new wife Laura and I visited Mexico for our honeymoon, staying at the El Dorado Seaside Suites, on the east coast of the Yucatan peninsula. We had the most amazing time, relaxing on the sunbeds on the beach was a large part of the trip however, I also spent a fair bit of my time birding around the resort, and photographing the local wildlife – sometimes from the sunbed!

Flying direct into Cancun from Newcastle with TUI was a bonus for us, living only half an hour from the airport. We did not hire a car, as we were staying in an all-inclusive TUI resort, so all transfers were included. We did a few excursions during our stay, which I will go into more detail on below. The weather was changeable, going from 35-degree heat for the majority of the time, to torrential tropical downpours which we experienced on a few occasions.

I'll not go into any further detail here about the 'holiday' side of the trip, as this report is specifically about the wildlife, especially the birding. Although I would love to have taken my DSLR on the trip, it really wasn't practical, so I opted for my Zeiss bins, and a Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ200 bridge camera, that I have to say, I was very impressed with. I must admit, for a lot of the birds on the first few days especially, it was very much a case of 'photograph the bird first, and ID later in the room'!

The Birds:

Having never been to Mexico before, I was incredibly intrigued as to what I might see, just by birding around the resort, and on any excursions that were available. I did also however, book a half-day trip with a company called 'Birding With Steven' on the 17th August, which again, I will go into detail on below.

Before the trip, I bought the trusty Howell and Webb guide, which I used every day, and would highly recommend to anyone who is visiting the area for the first time. Having been to Florida three times when I was younger, I was vaguely familiar with the commoner species, but had no real idea about what to expect from the birds of Mexico, and set myself a target of seeing, what I thought was an ambitious, 50 new birds. I had read several trips reports of the area before we went – most were from dedicated birding trips, but they were still of use. I familiarised myself with the species that other birders had described as 'common and widespread' thinking that at least some knowledge would be better than none!

DAY-BY-DAY ACCOUNT (lifers shown in **red**):

9th August:

Arriving at Cancun Airport (which was an absolute nightmare to get through), we eventually found our coach for the transfer to the resort. We waited here a while, which gave me a chance to get the bins out for the first time. I got two lifers before we left the airport, a **Tropical Kingbird** was flycatching from the nearby palm trees, and the ever-present **Great-tailed Grackles** were obvious in the coach park – I found that the Grackles were absolutely everywhere, seemingly present in all habitats throughout our stay. When we got going, numerous unidentified small birds were seen from the coach on the way to the resort, but I did manage to positively ID several **Turkey Vultures**, as well as **Eurasian Collared Dove**, and several **Feral/Rock Pigeons** on the roadside.

As we arrived at the first drop-off point, I managed to see a few more species. A small group of **Cave Swallows** circled around the reception area, as did another **Turkey Vulture**, and several more **Grackles** were present. As we pulled away, a brightly-coloured bird flew across the road in front of us, and perched on a nearby palm tree – this was my first **Great Kiskadee** of the trip, a species that turned out to be very common around our resort. It was late when we arrived at our resort, so there was nothing more of note seen.



Great Kiskadee – very common in most habitats



Great-tailed Grackle – the commonest bird!

10th August:

Our first full day in Mexico, and thanks to the jetlag, I was wide awake at 5am, so decided to try and get to grips with the local birds, and I sat on our balcony for an hour. Only a handful of birds were seen, including several more **Great Kiskadees** in the palm trees, as well as a family party of **Hooded Orioles**, which again turned out to be a daily occurrence around the resort. A close **Melodious Blackbird** was singing in a nearby tree too, which I eventually got good views of. Once Laura was up, we headed to the beach for our breakfast, taking my bins and camera along. The birding was brilliant from the breakfast table – we immediately had several **Magnificent Frigatebirds** overhead,

which despite being common throughout the trip on the coast, were always impressive and most welcome. A few more 'familiar' birds were also seen including **Brown Pelican**, **Laughing Gulls**, **Osprey**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Sanderling** and **Sandwich Terns**, again all seen daily from here. Getting to grips with the resort, and exploring the bars and restaurants didn't produce anything new for the rest of the day!



Male Hooded Oriole



The friendly resort Osprey

11th August:

Similarly to the day before, I couldn't sleep and was up and about early. This time, I decided to have a wander around to see if I could find any more habitat on the boundaries of the resort. Although I didn't find any on this day, I could hear lots of activity behind a large row of trees next to our apartment, which sounded like marsh/swamp-type habitat, but I couldn't find a way in at this point. Instead, I headed to the beach again, and there was a notable passage of hirundines heading south over the resort. The majority of the birds were **Cave Swallows**, but there was also a good number of **Purple Martins** going over, as well as several lingering **Vaux's Swifts**, and the occasional **Barn Swallow**. These species were all seen pretty regularly after this. The regular beach birds were also seen over breakfast, being joined by a **Least Sandpiper** which I saw on and off over the duration of the trip with the Turnstones. A **Snowy Egret** was seen here for the first time on the trip.



Snowy Egret on the coastline at the resort



Spiny-tailed Iguana on the grass beside the reception

12th August:

I again set off on my morning walk, this time with a goal in mind. This day of the honeymoon was something of a 'breakthrough' day in terms of the local birding, as during my morning walk, I managed to find a way to view the wetland that backed onto our resort, that I had been hearing over the previous few days. Going beyond the apartments, the treeline opened up to reveal a viewpoint overlooking a swamp – it didn't have much water in, but it was full of bare trees, and immediately, birds were evident. In the trees beside the viewpoint, three **Tropical**

Kingbirds were flycatching, as well as a **Great Kiskadee**. Looking out from the viewpoint, I picked up two adult **American White Ibis** flying over the swamp, which circled before landing out of sight. From here, I also came across my first **Tropical Mockingbirds** of the trip, as a family party of four were feeding on the seaweed that had been dumped. Elated that I had managed to find this habitat, I walked on to find another viewpoint, which overlooked a gated-off forest area which was not part of the resort. From here, I picked up several new species including **White-winged Doves** sitting at the tops of the trees, a stunning **Lineated Woodpecker**, a flock of 10 **Olive-throated Parakeets** flew through, and I picked up a distant adult **Yucatan Jay** which I had been keen to see, as they are endemic to the region. Generally, the birds were distant from here, but a brilliant bit of habitat. Wandering slowly back to the apartment, I was stopped in my tracks by a pair of **Golden-fronted Woodpeckers**, that posed nicely for photos. I was excited to explore my 'new patch' further, but honeymoon duties called, and we headed for breakfast, again seeing the usual suspects from the beach.



Golden-fronted Woodpecker outside the apartment



Tropical Mockingbird on the seaweed pile at the resort

13th August:

Keen to get back to the viewpoints I'd found the day before, after breakfast I left Laura on the sunbed, and headed out for more exploring. The birding was similar to the day before, but it felt exciting as new birds seemed to be coming and going all the time, especially from the forest area. Whilst photographing a **Great Kiskadee**, a larger bird flew over my head, landing briefly in a distant tree, before vanishing. I managed to fire off some record shots, and on consulting my bird guide, it turned out to be a **Scaled Pigeon**, not a species I'd expected to see, so that was most welcome. A juvenile **American White Ibis** showed very well here for a while, allowing me to photograph it. Walking back towards the apartments, I called in again at the swamp viewpoint, which was very productive. Two **Tricoloured Herons** were fishing here, as was a **Green Heron** very close to the viewpoint, seemingly undisturbed by my presence. Both species posed nicely for photos, before I headed back to the sunbeds! When I got to the beach, I had a scan through the regular roost of gulls and terns, and picked up two **Royal Terns** on a nearby raft, which were the first of the trip, as was a single **Great Blue Heron**, which was seen subsequently on most days after that.



Juvenile American White Ibis



One of two stunning Tricoloured Herons

14th August:

On the 14th, we opted for something different, and had booked an excursion to go to the world-famous Chichén Itzá, one of the seven wonders of the modern world. We got picked up from the resort at 5am, and set off on the 2.5hr drive. Other than lots of **Turkey Vultures** and **Great-tailed Grackles**, I couldn't see anything different from the coach, although most of the drive was done in the dark. On arrival, Chichén Itzá was quiet, which was the intention of the excursion to beat the queues, and the worst of the heat. A **Tropical Mockingbird** was in the car park when we arrived – I had read several reports that Bat Falcons have been seen regularly here on the radio masts, but I didn't find any unfortunately.

The tour itself was great, we spent an hour with the guide who talked us through the history of the site, and then we were given a 'free' hour during which we were allowed to wander the site ourselves, before meeting back at the coach later. I took the opportunity to check out the local birds, of which there were actually surprisingly few, despite good areas of habitat. Maybe it was the heat, or the volume of people, but I still managed a few new birds. Several **Bronzed Cowbirds** were feeding on the ground with the ever-present **Great-tailed Grackles**, and in the trees higher up, **Great Kiskadees** were common. I managed to get my eye on a **Blue-gray Tanager** that was feeding high up in a nearby tree, which was a new one on me. We kept seeing more of the same for the next half an hour, so we decided to head back to the coach. As we reached the visitor centre, I could hear a very soft ticking call. Trying to place the call, I got my eye on something that I was delighted to see – "there's a Hummingbird!" I shouted, as a **Cinnamon Hummingbird** darted across the path, before hovering and landing nearby. This was my first ever Hummingbird species, so I was elated to have managed to connect with one!

Back to the coach, and we headed off for some lunch to a small Mayan village about an hour from Chichén Itzá called Yalcobá. We had some lunch, before having a wander round the village. The birding was very busy, one of the first birds I saw was a **Ruddy Ground Dove** on a nearby overhead wire, very bonny little birds. I then saw a further two in a nearby tree, which posed nicely for photos. I had some nice looks at five **Groove-billed Ani** here too, which I initially presumed were more **Grackles**, but when they called it was much different, and encouraged me to take a second look. As we wandered round, I picked up another species that turned out to be very common around the village, and a species that I had read about – **Social Flycatcher**. Very similar in colour to the Great Kiskadee, but smaller and very 'busy' like a typical Flycatcher. The only other addition to my list here was a single **Tropical Pewee** that was flycatching from a length of barbed wire, this turned out to be my only encounter with this species on the trip. After having a swim in a nearby cenote, we headed back to the resort, arriving back about 6pm. It's a great day out to Chichén Itzá, and well worth doing, but it's a long day!



Ruddy Ground Dove – lovely little bird, one of my favourites of the trip



Bronzed Cowbird

15th August:

The next day was a recovery day from the excursion to Chichén Itzá, so consisted of sitting on the sunbeds, and watching the regular seabirds. Nothing new was added on this day, but the **Frigatebirds** and the friendly **Osprey** kept me entertained. Two **Royal Terns** were with the regular roost of gulls and terns.



Pair of Royal Terns



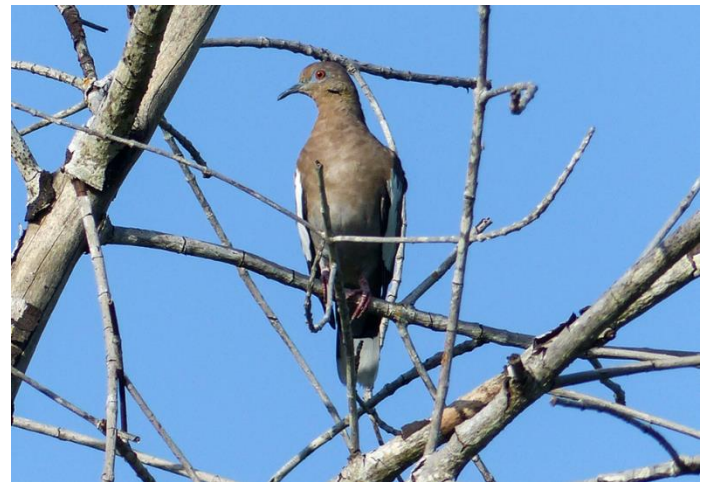
Magnificent Frigatebird – remarkable birds, and very common!

16th August:

Another fairly quiet day, as I knew I had a long day ahead of me on the 17th for my guided bird trip day. Similar birding to the day before, but I did have another wander round the swamp behind the resort. A surprise **Little Blue Heron** flew over my head, and landed nearby on the beach, the only sighting here of the trip. Other than that, it was much the same species-wise, but a **White-winged Dove** showed very well in the grounds of the resort, and using my experience from the 14th, I located a **Social Flycatcher** near one of the viewpoints amongst the **Great Kiskadees**.



Little Blue Heron on the shoreline



White-winged Dove



Adult Laughing Gull



Juvenile Laughing Gull

17th August:

This was the day I had been looking forward to the most, I booked to go out on a half-day trip with a company called Birding With Steven, a fantastic local bird and archaeological guide who runs several different tours – I went on the tour called 'Mayan Sites'. As I mentioned previously, I had set myself a target of seeing 50 new species throughout

the trip, which I thought was ambitious – the trip with Steven was mind-blowing, and that target was well and truly smashed on this day alone. I'll go into details on some species below, and some I will just mention briefly, as there's lots to get through!



Olive-throated Parakeet – a regular sighting at Chunyaxché

I was picked up at the resort at 5am, and Steven explained that it was just him and I on the trip that day, and what the plan was. After a breakfast stop for a baguette and coffee, we drove for around half an hour to our first stop. Steven explained that we would be doing our birding around an archaeological site called Zona Arqueológica de Muyil, starting in the morning by walking round the nearby village, and entering the official site in the afternoon to avoid the worst of the heat. We arrived at the nearby village of Chunyaxché while it was still dark, parked up and stood beside the car listening to the dawn chorus. It sounded as if there were birds everywhere, **Melodious Blackbirds** were common here, their distinctive song surrounded us. **Olive-throated Parakeets** were very obvious too, and as the first light started to break, we saw several large flocks of these birds flying around. Soon after first light, I got my first lifer of the day, and it was a spectacular one – a **Turquoise-browed Motmot**, a species high up on my target list. It posed brilliantly on an overhead wire for a short while, allowing for stunning scope views. Whilst watching it, a **Bat Falcon** glided overhead, carrying prey, before landing on a nearby radio mast. Two male **White-tipped Doves** were singing also, one of which was seen well.



Turquoise-browed Motmot – wow!



One of two White-tipped Doves

Over the next few minutes, the light started to improve, and several more species became visible. A pair of **Scaled Pigeons** sat in a nearby tree, which allowed me good scope views, following my unsatisfactory views of this species at the resort a few days earlier. A **Red-billed Pigeon** flew overhead, as did a flock of 20+ **Little Blue Herons**. Another lifer followed, and it was another spectacular species, in the form of a pair of **Collared Aracari** feeding near the path. We started to walk further into the village, through an avenue of trees, where lots of different species were on offer. Remarkably similar to the plumage of the Great Kiskadee, a **Boat-billed Flycatcher** showed well here briefly, this was my only sighting of this species on the trip. Other additions to my list here were **Clay-colored Thrush**, **Ladder-backed Woodpecker** and **Yellow-throated Euphonia**. We reached a clearing amongst a dense area of woodland, and we picked up the first **Yellow-green Vireo** and **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** – both of which turned out to be fairly common here, **Social Flycatchers** were very common too. A large patch of pink Salvia was attractive to Hummingbirds, and to my delight, we saw several here – **White-bellied Emerald** was the most numerous with at least four birds seen, but Steven also picked up a single **Wedge-tailed Sabrewing** that visited briefly. There was also a singing male **Spot-breasted Wren** here, which we got nice views of in the end. A further two **Turquoise-browed**

Motmots showed nicely too, **Ruddy Ground Doves** were evident here, with several on show and flying around, as were **White-winged Doves**. A pair of **Bronzed Cowbirds** were seen briefly.



Social Flycatcher – common once you’ve got your eye in with them!



Boat-billed Flycatcher – very similar to Great Kiskadee, but much rarer

Steven then picked up another target of mine on call, a **Yucatan Woodpecker** pair which eventually showed well in the scope, another endemic to the region. This endemic was quickly followed by another, when I picked up an Oriole sp. which was soon confirmed as a male **Orange Oriole**, another of my target species ticked off. We concentrated on Orioles for a short while, as they were very common here (especially **Hooded Oriole**). Steven told me there were six species found in this area, before promptly showing me both **Altamira Oriole** and **Black-cowled Oriole** in quick succession. We also saw the first of many **Cinnamon-bellied Saltators** here, and also a single of their less common cousin, **Black-headed Saltator**. Interestingly, the only two **Black Vultures** I saw on the trip were seen here.



The endemic Orange Oriole



Cinnamon-bellied Saltator

The next hour of birding was extraordinary, and I saw two species that I will remember first setting eyes on for a long time... We were just about to turn back along the path and head into a different area of the village, when I got my eye on a flock of raptors migrating fairly low overhead. Despite having never seen them before, when I lifted my bins, I knew exactly what they were. “**Swallow-tailed Kites!**” I said excitedly, as the flock of 14 of these incredible birds glided effortlessly over our heads heading south. Steven was equally excited, and he explained to me that this species does not breed here, they are only passage migrants, and this flock was the first he had seen that season. Tremendous stuff – surely it couldn’t get better than that? Well, in my view, about 5 mins later, it did!

We set off along another path into some deeper woodland, before we stopped quickly after hearing a frog-like croak – Steven then told me it was the call of a **Keel-billed Toucan**. I could not recall any of the trip reports that I’d read containing sightings of Toucans, so despite reading about them in Howell and Webb, I had not expected to see any. Steven told me he only sees these birds very rarely here, and that getting any visuals of them would be unlikely. He proceeded to use a bit of playback, and it became evident that there were in fact two birds present. Moments later, one of the birds exploded out of a nearby tree, flying over our heads and perching up in full view for a few seconds,

showing off its extraordinary bill, before disappearing. Incredible, bird of the trip! A **Lineated Woodpecker** showed very well here too, as did a pair of **Blue-gray Tanagers**, three **Groove-billed Ani** and a **Red-eyed Vireo** was seen. We also got lovely views of a **Squirrel Cuckoo** in the same area shortly afterwards.



One of a pair of Blue-gray Tanagers

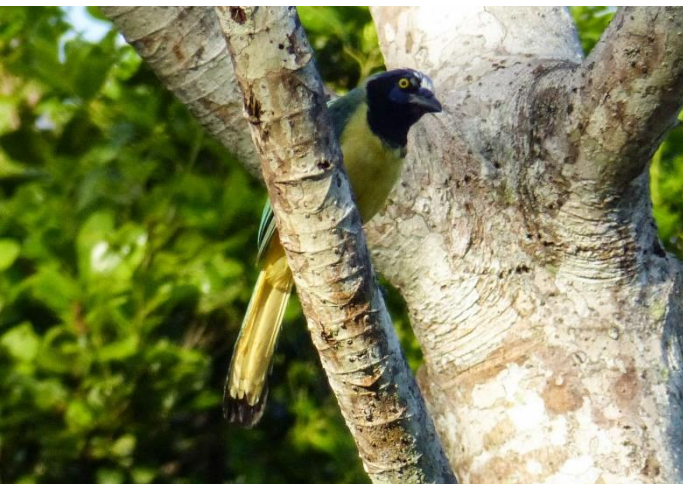


Lineated Woodpecker



Black-headed Trogon

Moving further along the path resulted in a few more new birds being seen. The best of these were a pair of **Black Catbirds** which Steven said were rare here. We also connected with **Black-headed Trogon** and **Gartered Trogon**, the former ending up being fairly common in the area, and a party of four **Green Jays** showed nicely just off the path. As time was marching on, we decided to head slowly back to the car, before heading to our next destination. On our way back, we picked up several more species including a **Yellow-olive Flycatcher**, and a pair of **Masked Tityra**. Interestingly, we had seen a large number of Kingbirds, which I presumed to be all **Tropical Kingbird** however, Steven told me that **Couch's Kingbird** also occurs here, but they are only safely separable on call. Just as we reached the car, we heard and saw one! The call was distinctive, but rarely heard, hence why we had not picked up any previously, as all the others had been silent. As we arrived back at the car, another flock of migrating **Swallow-tailed Kites** glided overhead, two more **White-bellied Emeralds** were seen fleetingly and several large flocks of **Vaux's Swifts** and **Purple Martins** were heading south. A pair of **Collared Aracari** were beside the car too. Satisfied with our haul here, and with the heat of the sun intensifying, we decided to move on to the next site.



Green Jay



Masked Tityra

The next destination was just over the road from Chunyaxché, an archaeological site called Zona Arqueológica de Muyil. Steven paid for our entry, and we had a slow walk through the trees near the visitor centre. This site was good to visit second, as the cover of the trees gave some relief from the heat of the mid-morning sun. More or less as soon as we'd entered the site, we stopped at Steven began whistling a call – I didn't know what to expect, but I soon found out, as almost instantly, a **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl** flew in and landed just metres away from us. Steven explained that these birds are active through the day, but it amazed me no less! We left the Owl in peace, and we had only taken a few steps away from it, when I got my eye on a Woodcreeper sp. flying over the path and landing on the side of a nearby tree. It was massive compared to Eurasian Treecreeper, and I was soon told it was an **Ivory-billed Woodcreeper**. It showed well but briefly, and frustratingly too quick for the camera. I would've loved a shot of it, as they are brilliant looking birds. We moved further into the reserve, passing two Howler Monkeys sleeping in a tree just off the main path! A **Black-headed Trogon** was also calling as we left the car park, which we saw briefly. **Olive-throated Parakeets** were again common here.



Ferruginous Pygmy Owl – the first bird we saw here!

I must admit, I felt like a real amateur at this site, as the trick to it really was knowing the calls of all the small birds, and Steven was the master of it. He has an amazing knowledge of the vocals of the species found here, which without this skill, I would have stood no chance. The commonest bird we saw here was **Red-throated Ant-Tanager** – several of these birds were seen, often close to the path. Steven also picked up a single **Red-crowned Ant-Tanager**, which is much more unusual to see here than the former. Another **Ivory-billed Woodcreeper** was seen, which was closely followed by



Red-throated Ant-Tanager

another species, a pair of **Olivaceous Woodcreepers**, another attractive little bird. A very elusive **Long-billed Gnatwren** was singing in the undergrowth, which showed briefly in the end. We moved further through, and came to a marshy area, with pretty dodgy boardwalks that kept giving way underfoot. Here, the air was just full of bird calls, it really was a mind-blowing moment, as there were clearly lots of different species calling here, and I recognised none. The first bird I saw, I actually did recognise as we'd seen one earlier – a **Squirrel Cuckoo**. In no less than a minute, I had five new birds! Singles of **Lesser Greenlet**, **Greenish Elaenia**, **Eye-ringed Flatbill**, **Northern Bentbill** and **Rose-throated Becard** were all present in a small area here, in a tight feeding flock. Most of the views were obscured in the canopy, but I did get excellent looks at the **Northern Bentbill** which came down to eye-level on one occasion. Several **Clay-colored Thrushes** were flying around here, and a very noisy group of **Yucatan Jays** made listening for calls rather difficult. A second **Lesser Greenlet** was seen pretty well, and a handful more **Yellow-olive Flycatchers**. Moving slightly further in, we stopped for a second time at a small pool surrounded by forest, and once again, Steven began whistling a call. He didn't tell me what he was looking for here, and began scanning the canopy in the opposite direction. Seconds later, as if by magic, a Kingfisher flew past me and landed in full view not 20ft away. "Kingfisher!!" I whispered to Steven, who turned and smiled, as if he knew exactly what was going to happen! As I photographed it, he told me it was an **American Pygmy Kingfisher** – a serious contender for bird of the trip.



American Pygmy Kingfisher – wow!

We left the Kingfisher in peace, and moved into an open clearing. I got my eye on another species that I recognised, a **Worm-eating Warbler** showing very well just off the path – Steven said this was the first he'd seen of the 'autumn'. I had wondered whether I would see any New World warblers on the trip, and Steven said that this bird was right on cue, as the middle of August is the time when the first few species start heading to their wintering grounds. Walking on, we reached a very tall tower which visitors are allowed to climb. Steven and I went up to the top of it, and the views over the nearby lagoon were excellent. The first birds we saw from here were two **Double-crested Cormorants**, and several **Turkey Vultures** were overhead. We were admiring these, until Steven picked up on a more unusual species amongst them – a **Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture** which I was happy to connect with, as I had read, they were possible in the area. It was turning out to be a good day for raptors, which got even better when I got my eye on a flock of six **Swallow-tailed Kites** circling over the lagoon at eye-level. Amazingly, they slowly drifted our way, getting closer and closer, before they were literally metres over our heads. They circled over the tower for a few minutes, before drifting off south, affording absolutely stunning views – sensational stuff!



Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture



Swallow-tailed Kite – sensational!

We had reached the furthest point of the reserve, so we started heading back along a different track to take us back to the main road. The overhanging bushes were busy with bird calls as we walked back, and Steven found a **White-bellied Wren** singing just off the path, which was very elusive but showed well on one occasion. Several **Clay-colored Thrushes** were flying across the road regularly here, and a male **Hooded Oriole** was seen briefly. Just before we reached the end of the road, there was a hive of activity, with several small birds feeding in a tight flock. They were tough to get any decent views of in the canopy, but we got good looks at a **Lesser Greenlet** here, before Steven got on another new species for me, and it was another New World warbler that I had always wanted to see, and recognised instantly – a stunning **Black-and-white Warbler**! He again relayed to me that mid-August is an exciting time of year, as a lot of migrants are coming through the Yucatan peninsula at this time. The Black-and-white Warbler was the first Steven had seen of the season, so I felt very lucky to have connected with it. The final lifer of the day came shortly after we got back in the car to head back to the resort, a single **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** flew overhead as we stopped at some traffic lights in a town called Tulum. Steven dropped me back at the reception of the resort at 2pm, after a fantastic day of birding. If you are ever staying on the east coast of the Yucatan peninsula and have an interest in birds (or archaeology), then a day out with Steven is an absolute must!



Black-and-white Warbler – stunner!

18th August:

With the thrill of yesterday inspiring me to get back out around the resort, after we'd been for breakfast, I left Laura on the sunbed, and headed for the swamp again with the hope of maybe coming across some migrant passerines following success from the day before. A pair of **Golden-fronted Woodpeckers** were waiting for me on arrival, as were a party of four **Tropical Mockingbirds**. I headed for the best viewpoint that overlooked the swamp habitat, and got my eye on a very close **Green Heron**, presumably the bird from earlier in the week that I saw in the same location. As I was photographing the Heron, a soft ticking call caught my attention in the trees just over the water from the viewpoint. Lifting my bins, I got on an elusive small passerine, that gradually made its way to the water's edge, before showing in full view – **Northern Waterthrush**! It didn't hang around, but it gave me hope that I might come across a few more New World warblers before the end of the trip. A **Spotted Sandpiper** dropped in to the swamp briefly. Moving back towards the apartment, I stopped in at another viewpoint, and very quickly located two

more small passerines moving quickly through the trees above the water. To my surprise on lifting my bins, I was met with a full view of another **Black-and-white Warbler**, and another very elusive bird. I initially couldn't get a full view of the other bird, but after a few seconds, I got a glimpse of very bright yellow, surely another New World warbler sp. Then, just for a second, it showed in full view. The colours were incredible, like nothing I'd ever seen before – it was a **Prothonotary Warbler**! What a fantastic little bird, that absolutely made my day, surely one of the best of all the Nearctic passerines... Neither of the birds hung around for long, and they both flew off together deeper into the vegetation, not to be seen again.



Green Heron



Great-tailed Grackle

19th August:

The next day was largely much of the same, without the excitement of any colourful warblers. A **Least Tern** was fishing in the resort bay briefly on the morning, which was the only one I saw on the trip. Another species of note was a pair of **Couch's Kingbirds** that I picked up on call around the swamp viewpoint, thanks to Steven for his tips on picking up this species. I also heard **Tropical Kingbirds** in the same area, so these two species are often both present, but impossible to separate without vocals. A family party of **Hooded Orioles** showed very well here for a short time.



One of two Couch's Kingbirds at the resort



Hooded Oriole

The remainder of the holiday:

Following on from the excitement of the previous few days, the rest of the trip, from a birding point of view, was relatively quiet, with no more lifers for me. I had hoped for more warblers coming through, but alas I didn't see any more. There was still lots to look at however, with the resort's regulars putting on a good show every day. A special mention has to go to a flock of four **Swallow-tailed Kites** that went over the resort on the 22nd, always a pleasure to see this species. All in all, Mexican birding is magnificent. I'll certainly be back – if you ever get the chance to go, do it! I got a total of 73 new birds over the course of the two weeks, 48 of which came on the trip out with Steven, well and truly smashing my target of 50!



Lineated Woodpecker at the resort



Great Blue Heron (photo by Laura!)



Magnificent Frigatebirds – superb!



Striped Basilisk



Juvenile Green Iguana



Spiny-tailed Iguana

CLASSIFIED LIST

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*

A handful of birds seen at the airport on the 9th.

Scaled Pigeon *Patagioenas speciosa*

One seen at the resort on the 13th, and two seen at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Red-billed Pigeon *Patagioenas flavirostris*

Two seen briefly flying over at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Fairly common, seen in small numbers on most days.

Ruddy Ground Dove *Columbina talpacoti*

Seen in small numbers at several sites. Three seen at Yalcobá on the 14th, and seen in good numbers (10+) at Chunyaxché on the 17th. Occasional sightings around the resort.

White-tipped Dove *Leptotila verreauxi*

Two singing birds at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*

Fairly common, seen most days around the resort. Also, a single bird seen at Yalcobá on the 14th, and several seen at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Groove-billed Ani *Crotophaga sulcirostris*

Five birds seen at Yalcobá on the 14th, and three seen at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Squirrel Cuckoo *Piaya cayana*

Cracking birds, seen well on two occasions, both on the 17th. One in the morning at Chunyaxché, and one in the afternoon at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil.

Vaux's Swift *Chaetura vauxi*

Numerous, and seen around the resort most days. Flocks of 10-15 seen migrating over at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Wedge-tailed Sabrewing *Pampa curvipennis*

One seen briefly at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Cinnamon Hummingbird *Amazilia rutila*

One at Chichén Itzá on the 14th.

White-bellied Emerald *Chlorestes candida*

Four confirmed to be seen at Chunyaxché on the 17th. A few other Hummingbirds were seen here and thought to be this species, but we couldn't confirm them in time.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Common on the beach at the resort throughout the trip.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

1-2 birds seen a handful of times on the beach at the resort, but not daily.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

One was seen on and off with the Turnstone flock from the beach at the resort during our stay.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

One seen on the swamp behind the resort on the 18th.

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*

Common on the beach at the resort throughout the trip.

Least Tern *Sternula antillarum*

One seen from the beach at the resort on the 19th.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus*

Seen on several dates from the beach at the resort.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Common on the beach at the resort throughout the trip.

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*

Seen in good numbers daily from the beach at the resort.

Double-crested Cormorant *Nannopterum auritum*

Two at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*

Not common, but generally singles seen most days from the beach at the resort.

Great Blue Heron *Ardea Herodias*

A single bird seen on the shoreline at the resort on most days.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*

A single bird seen on the shoreline at the resort on most days.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*

One was on the shore at the resort on the 16th, and 20+ birds flew over Chunyaxché on the morning of the 17th.

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor*

Seen in small numbers (3-4) most days on the swamp behind the resort.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens*

One was seen on the swamp behind the resort on a few occasions throughout our stay.

American White Ibis *Eudocimus albus*

Two adults flew over the resort on the 12th. Juveniles were seen on the swamp behind the resort on several dates.

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*

Two confirmed on a roadside post at Chunyaxché on the 17th. Possibly more seen, but all the fly-by vultures I saw well were Turkey Vultures.

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Common and widespread.

Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture *Cathartes burrovianus*

A single bird seen at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

A single bird seen daily around the beach at the resort.

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus*

One of the highlights of the trip. Seen migrating over both Chunyaxché and Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th, with 26 birds seen in total. A further 4 birds were seen at the resort on the 22nd.

Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium brasilianum*

A single bird seen and heard at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Black-headed Trogon *Trogon melanocephalus*

Fairly common at Chunyaxché on the 17th, and two birds were seen and heard at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the same date.

Gartered Trogon *Trogon caligatus*

Two birds at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Turquoise-browed Motmot *Eumomota superciliosa*

Remarkable birds, and probably my most wanted of the trip. Three were seen well at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

American Pygmy Kingfisher *Chloroceryle aenea*

One of the highlights of the trip – a single bird seen at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Collared Aracari *Pteroglossus torquatus*

Another highlight, six at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Keel-billed Toucan *Ramphastos sulfuratus*

Bird of the trip for me, a vocal pair were seen well briefly at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Yucatan Woodpecker *Melanerpes pygmaeus*

A sought-after endemic. Two seen at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Golden-fronted Woodpecker *Melanerpes aurifrons*

The commonest Woodpecker of the trip, seen daily around the resort.

Ladder-backed Woodpecker *Dryobates scalaris*

One seen at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Lineated Woodpecker *Dryocopus lineatus*

Impressive birds, and very vocal, seen a few times. At least two birds seen on a number of occasions at the resort, and at least four birds around Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Bat Falcon *Falco ruficularis*

One seen carrying prey at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Olive-throated Parakeet *Eupsittula nana*

Very numerous around both Chunyaxché and Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th, and a few flocks seen flying over the resort on several dates.

Olivaceous Woodcreeper *Sittasomus griseicapillus*

Two at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Ivory-billed Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus flavigaster*

Two at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Masked Tityra *Tityra semifasciata*

Two at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Rose-throated Becard *Pachyramphus aglaiae*

One at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Northern Bentbill *Oncostoma cinereigulare*

One at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Eye-ringed Flatbill *Rhynchocyclus brevirostris*

One at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Yellow-olive Flycatcher *Tolmomyias sulphurescens*

Small numbers (5-6) seen at both Chunyaxché and Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Greenish Elaenia *Myiopagis viridicata*

One at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Tropical Pewee *Contopus cinereus*

One at Yalcobá on the 14th.

Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus*

Very common and vocal, seen daily.

Boat-billed Flycatcher *Megarynchus pitangua*

One seen at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Social Flycatcher *Myiozetetes similis*

Fairly common, seen at most locations. Very common at Chunyaxché on the 17th, and seen occasionally around the resort.

Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher *Myiodynastes luteiventris*

At least six seen at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus*

Common and widespread, seen daily around the resort.

Couch's Kingbird *Tyrannus couchii*

One at Chunyaxché on the 17th, and two at the resort on 19th.

Lesser Greenlet *Pachysylvia decurtate*

Three at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*

One at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Yellow-green Vireo *Vireo flavoviridis*

Fairly common (10+) at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Green Jay *Cyanocorax yncas*

Four at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Yucatan Jay *Cyanocorax yucatanicus*

Endemic, pretty common and widespread. Seen on a number of dates at the resort, and common around Chunyaxché and Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

One seen flying over the car at Tulum on the 17th.

Purple Martin *Progne subis*

Common and widespread.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Seen regularly, in small numbers.

Cave Swallow *Petrochelidon fulva*

Common and widespread.

Long-billed Gnatwren *Ramphocaenus melanurus*

Two at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Spot-breasted Wren *Pheugopedius maculipectus*

One at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

White-bellied Wren *Uropsila leucogastra*

Singing male seen at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Black Catbird *Melanoptila glabrirostris*

Two seen at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Tropical Mockingbird *Mimus gilvus*

Common and widespread, seen daily at the resort.

Clay-colored Thrush *Turdus grayi*

Fairly common at both Chunyaxché and Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Yellow-throated Euphonia *Euphonia hirundinacea*

Two at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Black-cowled Oriole *Icterus prothemelas*

Two at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Hooded Oriole *Icterus cucullatus*

By far the commonest Oriole, seen daily around the resort.

Orange Oriole *Icterus auratus*

Endemic to the region. Six were seen at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Altamira Oriole *Icterus gularis*

One at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Bronzed Cowbird *Molothrus aeneus*

10+ at Chichén Itzá on the 14th, and two at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Melodious Blackbird *Dives dives*

Fairly common, with a loud and distinctive song. Seen and heard daily around the resort, and very numerous at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Great-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus mexicanus*

The commonest bird of the trip, seen daily in all habitats.

Worm-eating Warbler *Helmitheros vermivorum*

A single bird seen at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*

A single bird seen at the swamp behind the resort on the 18th.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*

Seen on two occasions, one at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th, and another seen at the swamp behind the resort on the 18th.

Prothonotary Warbler *Protonotaria citrea*

A single bird seen at the swamp behind the resort on the 18th.

Red-crowned Ant-Tanager *Habia rubica*

One at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Red-throated Ant-Tanager *Habia fuscicauda*

Fairly common at Zona Arqueológica de Muyil on the 17th.

Blue-gray Tanager *Thraupis episcopus*

Seen on two occasions, one at Chichén Itzá on the 14th, and two birds seen together at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Black-headed Saltator *Saltator atriceps*

Six at Chunyaxché on the 17th.

Cinnamon-bellied Saltator *Saltator grandis*

Fairly numerous (10+) at Chunyaxché on the 17th.