

A photograph of a lush green forest landscape. The foreground is filled with dense, vibrant green foliage and trees. In the background, a clear blue sky is visible, with some distant hills or mountains. A prominent tree with large, bright green leaves is on the left side. A large, gnarled tree trunk is on the right side. A central text box with a green background and a red border contains the title and subtitle.

BIRDING IN MEXICO
ECOTOURISM FOR CONSERVATION

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SAN BLAS EXCURSION



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**OPTION 3: 3-NIGHT COASTAL,
MOUNTAIN & PACIFIC OFFSHORE ISLETS
SAN BLAS EXCURSION:**

A. DETAILED SCHEDULE FOR OPTION 3, DAY #1:

PRIVATE PICK-UP IN PV, SCENIC DRIVE TO SAN BLAS, TROPICAL BIRDING FOR ENDEMIC, INDIGENOUS & MIGRATORY BIRDS AT CAMINO AL COCODRILARIO / CROCODILE FARM ROAD, MATANCHÉN & SPOTLIGHTED WATERBORNE BIRDING SAFARI IN SEARCH OF NORTHERN POTOOS ON THE RIO LA TOVERA

1. Meet at 6:00 a.m. sharp for a full day of exciting birding at San Blas, Nayarit

—Our exciting adventure begins in Puerto Vallarta where Birding in Mexico will cheerfully pick you up at either your hotel or a prearranged meeting point—usually the parking lot for **Walmart / Sam's Club** off of Francisco Medina Ascencio—near the **Liverpool Galleria**—then whisk you away to high adventure as we begin a scenic 3-hour drive to San Blas.

Timings are approximate. Please be punctual. Casual birding en route as we watch for endemic **Sinaloa Crows at roadside, a species that does not occur in Puerto Vallarta. We will have one comfort stop en route and another, with snacks, upon reaching our first great birding destination. Remember to **set your clocks back 1-hour** as well, knowing that San Blas is in the State of Nayarit which is one hour behind Puerto Vallarta (except for Nuevo Vallarta, Bucerías, Cruz de Huanacastle & Punta Mita which remain on "PV time" year round, most of which is located in the State of Jalisco).*

2. 6:30 - 9:00 a.m

—We start our day with a welcome snack and participant introductions, followed by a lively description of your tour's logistics, replete with a display map, so you can get your bearings, as we take Highway #200 north 158 kms from Puerto Vallarta to San Blas, passing Bucerías, Sayulita, and Rincón de Guayabitos en route, then after leaving the main Pan American Highway at Las Vargas we will transit colloquial Zacualpan, Playa de los Cocos, and Matanchén where we will partake in a comfort stop that includes sampling the region's famous, freshly baked banana bread, before visiting our

first birding destination—**Camino al Cocodrilaro / Crocodile Farm Road**, which offers easy birding where a rich assortment of 247 species of resident, migratory and endemic birds have been recorded.

3. 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

—Birding sites at **Camino al Cocodrilaro / Crocodile Farm Road & the nearby sweet water wetlands of Laguna Matanchén**—are easily accessible via this gravel route leading from Matanchén Bay a few kilometers inland through an easily accessible array of microhabitats—**flooded freshwater marshes, coconut plantations and eventually Sinaloa Thorn and tropical forest** in some lightly rolling foothills—before reaching the crocodile farm, proper. We will not enter the crocodile farm on this occasion because it won't be open during our timeframe and is not very productive from a birding standpoint, though birding is usually quite good at the farm's unpaved parking area, which is located on a promontory overlooking it near the road's terminus.

This route offers excellent birding. Here we will have our first up close opportunities to glass aquatic specialties such as **Bare-throated Tiger-Heron; Black-bellied Whistling-Duck; Limpkin; Black-necked Stilt and Northern Jacana; Wood Stork; Anhinga; Roseate Spoonbill, White and White-faced ibis; Common Black Hawk, Snail Kite and Crane Hawk**, in addition to a mixture of common and specialty species of open woodlands, including **Cinnamon Hummingbird; Groove-billed Ani; Willow (winter) and Vermilion flycatchers; Lucy's Warbler and Northern Waterthrushes (both winter); Stripe-headed Sparrow; Painted Bunting (winter); Blue-black Grassquit; Ruddy-breasted and Cinna-**



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mon-rumped Seedeaters, etc. in the flooded ciénegas and scrubby woodlands we will explore during the initial two kilometers of this thoroughfare.

Lucky birders have even sighted **Laughing Falcons** on occasion in the nearby Coconut Plantations lining the main highway bordering Matanchén Bay.

The last kilometer of Camino al Cocodrilaro / Crocodile Farm Road passes through the edges of a banana plantation to enter well developed Sinaloan Thorn Forest, Palm Forest and Tropical forest, home to **Rufous-bellied Chachalaca; Gray and Short-tailed hawks; Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl; Citreoline Trogon; Russet-crowned Motmot; Golden-cheeked, Gila, Pale-billed and Lineated woodpeckers; Collared Forest-Falcon, Crested Caracara and Bat Falcon; Mexican Parrotlet and Orange-fronted Parakeet; Ivory-billed Woodcreeper; Masked Tityra, Rose-throated Becard, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, Greenish Elaenia, Pacific-slope, Dusky-capped, Nutting's,**

Brown-crested, Social, Boat-billed and Sulphur-bellied (spring & summer only) flycatchers, Bright-rumped Attila, Great Kiskadee, Tropical and Thick-billed kingbirds; Golden, Black-capped, Bell's, Warbling (the last three winter) and Yellow-green (spring & summer) vireos; Sinaloa Crow, Black-throated Magpie-Jay, Green and San Blas jays; Happy and Sinaloa wrens; Rufous-backed Robin; Scrub (Goldman's) Euphonia; Rosy Thrush-Tanager; Yellow-winged Cacique, Black-vented, Hooded and Streak-backed orioles; MacGillivray's Warbler; Red-crowned Ant-Tanager, Red-breasted Chat, Blue and Varied buntings and Grayish Saltator, etc.

4. 11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

—With the heat coming on we will travel the last 12 km to our air conditioned San Blas hotel of choice for checkin—the inviting **Hotel Garza Canela**—which literally means the **“Boat-billed Heron Hotel!”** Along the route, we may stop at an overview affording views of some **enormous American Crocodiles**, some in excess of 3.6 m / 12' in length.

5. 12:45 - 2:00p.m.

— **Lunch at our Hotel Restaurant or in Town, followed by a nice relaxing Mexican-style mid-day siesta** — Following check-in we will give you a chance to freshen up in your room, followed by lunch at our hotel or a nearby restaurant in town, then an inviting 2-hour siesta.

Depending on our hunger level and the **Garza Canela's Restaurante el Delphin's opening hours, which usually opens its doors at 1:00p.m., we will either have lunch on site or in town.*

The Garza Canela's fine, air-conditioned restaurant, serves up delicious regional and international dishes and you can have your choice, though their opening hours do not always sync with "birding hours," which is why we will always have alternate meal options in town.

In the event we decide to enjoy lunch in San Blas, there are many wonderful choices to pick from, but one of our personal favorites is **Restaurante Wala Wala**, which serves up wonderfully fresh seafood dishes—including Lobster in season—and is popular with locals and foreigners, alike!

6. 4:00 - 7:30p.m.

— **Following our Siesta, We will partake in an enjoyable and exciting Spotlitged Waterborne Safari** to get up close and personal with San Blas' phenomenally interesting **Northern Potoos of the Rio La Tovera when they are active—at night!**

To do this, we will meet our birder-boatman — **Chencho** — at the **Rio San Cristobal muelle (dock)** to take advantage of the cooler temperatures of the late afternoon and early evening hours, as we explore the rich birdlife inhabiting the **brackish mangroves and flooded freshwater savanna of the Rio La Tovera, with a sunset visit to La Tovera Springs, followed by nocturnal birding, then dinner in town.**

**In the event Chencho is not available, fret not, for we have other skilled boatmen that can rise to the occasion, but Chencho is our favorite and has become an institution in his own right where waterborne birding tours exploring the Rio's La Tovera and San Cristobal are concerned.*

During this excellent, water-borne birding excursion through one of the best preserved and intact Red Mangrove forests in Mexico, we will follow the Rio La Tovera to La Tovera Springs and back, where the star bird is the bizarre looking **Northern Potoo**. These very interesting nocturnal, neotropical birds, reach their northernmost outpost on the Pacific coast of Mexico in this vary ecosystem, where they are common... though you wouldn't know it by birding the area during daylight hours! That's why we board the pangas at dusk in order to explore the mangroves at night!

**Complimentary refreshments and snacks will come with us on the this waterborne journey.*

Northern Potoos aside, these crepuscular hours, are the best time to seek out a wide variety of exciting birds and other animals which are either actively feeding at the end of the day, returning to their roost sites, or emerging for their nighttime activities...

Commonly seen during the first several kilometers of our waterborne journey on the Rio La Tovera's brackish mangrove channels are **Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Boat-billed Heron, Green Heron, Rufous-bellied Chachalaca, Osprey, Common Black Hawk, Green Kingfisher, Red-billed Pigeon, White-winged Dove, Mangrove Swallow, Yellow-winged Cacicque, Northern Waterthrush and the chestnut-headed form of the Yellow Warbler, known colloquially as the "Mangrove Warbler," etc.**

After several kilometers of **under-the-canopy-birding**, the mangrove forest opens up where **three recreations of indigenous**

Uto-Aztecans (Huichol and Cora) stilted fishing huts come into view along with several large natural snags and adjacent coconut palms, all used as perching and roosting sites by various **Ardeids (herons and egrets), Rufous-bellied Chachalacas, vultures (Black & Turkey vultures) and raptors (such as Snail Kites, and occasionally Collared Forest-Falcon, etc.), Lesser Nighthawks and Red-billed Pigeons.**

From this point the Rio La Tovera continues to eventually grade into an enchanting **floating habitat of emergent freshwater grasses** — with **flurries of lively Social Flycatchers and Tropical Kingbirds fluttering all around at dusk**—before entering a dramatic riparian forest, on approach to **La Tovera Springs.**

We access the springs by passing through a culvert under a part of **Camino al Cocodrilaro / Crocodile Farm Road** which we birded this morning. Seasonally, a pair of **Black Phoebes** can often be seen roosting or nesting under this culvert if we quietly pass through, and we will.

Frequently seen aquatic birds inhabiting these sweet water wetlands, include **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Purple and Common gallinules, Limpkin, Northern Jacana, Wood Stork, Anhinga, Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned night-herons, Roseate Spoonbill, White Ibis, Snail Kite** and others.

As the sun gently sets behind us, we have the chance to see flurries of **Great, Snowy and Cattle egrets returning to their roosting or nesting sites (seasonally dependent)** backed by densely forested foothills, coming to a hidden lagoon near La Tovera Springs, where they adorn select overhanging trees, sometimes covering them completely, resembling snow on a holiday postcard... a sight that is especially memorable in the moonlight's soft luminescence.

Upon reaching La Tovera Springs we will have a brief comfort stop, utilizing the pres-



ence of its convenient though rustic restrooms (paper will be handed out) ahead of the return, **nocturnal part of our journey** as we retrace our route to search for San Blas' famed **Northern Potoos**, in addition to **Common Pauraque, Lesser Nighthawk, Mottled Owl**, and occasional **American Crocodiles**, large and small, all of which emerge at night to hunt in and above the channels of this enchanting watery wonderland.

Immediately after returning to the muelle at the Rio San Cristobal Bridge, we will head into San Blas for a late dinner at one of its inviting seafood restaurants (because the Garza Canela's Restaurante el Delfin closes about the time we finish our nocturnal outing), followed by a well earned rest.

It is our hope that you will drift into a satisfying slumber tonight with visions of today's Birding in Mexico's lovely natural sights and colorful avian discoveries dancing in your head, surrounded by the serenity of your comfortable Garza Canela quarters.

End of our first day's services.

B. DETAILED SCHEDULE FOR OPTION 3, DAY #2:

RUFIOUS-NECKED WOOD-RAILS OF MATANCHÉN BAY, A WATERBORNE BIRDING SAFARI ON THE RIO SAN CRISTOBAL & LARGE FOREST EAGLES & TROPICAL FOREST BIRDING EXPEDITON TO TERRACERÍA LA PALMA-TECUITATA, NEAR SAN BLAS:

1. 6:30 - 8:00 a.m.

—**Rufous-necked Wood-Rails of Matanchén Bay and Waterborne Birding Safari on the Rio San Cristobal.**

This morning is devoted to the pursuit of another of San Blas' star birding attractions—the **Rufous-necked Wood-Rail**.

This skulky but very attractive Rallid, is notoriously difficult to see and most birders never lay eyes on one in their lives. The San Blas region is by far the best area in Mexico to see this furtive will-o-the-wisp.

Never fear! Since the 1990s Greg R. Homel has discovered two very reliable places where they can, with patience, be ethically called into the open using playback during the early morning hours at **Matanchén Bay**. He has even managed to get them to come right into the open or even under the vehicle with the ethical use of this technique!

**With our spirits high, we'll try our luck this morning while bringing a boxed breakfast, coffee and juices on this outing, while consuming them in the comfort of our vehicle, which we will use as a mobile blind to see these shy and special birds.*

Frequently encountered birds here include the following species, in season: **Snowy and Great egrets, Green, Little Blue, Great Blue and Tricolored herons, Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned night-herons; Heermann's, California, Herring and Ring-billed gulls (mostly winter); Royal, Caspian and Least (summer) terns; Brown Pelican and Magnificent Frigatebird; Rufous-necked Wood-Rail; Osprey, Crane and Common Black hawks; Roseate Spoonbill and White Ibis; Willet and Whimbrel (both winter); Belted (winter) and Green kingfishers; Mangrove Swallow; Yellow-winged**

Cacique; Sinaloa Crow; Northern Water-thrush (winter) and the chestnut-headed "Mangrove Warbler" form of Yellow Warbler, etc.

We will devote one hour to this endeavor then re-board our panga at the nearby muelle under the Rio San Cristobal bridge in order to explore the Rio La Tovar's much larger cousin, the Rio San Cristobal, in relaxing comfort, which can also be productive for **Rufous-necked Wood-Rails** (but not nearly as reliably as at Matanchén Bay), especially at low tide, in addition to a plethora of other exciting denizens of the Red Mangrove ecosystem.

Birds aside some **very large American Crocodiles** regularly sun themselves at a reliable location on the banks of this river, about an hour or so upstream, often providing us with excellent photographic opportunities.

2. 8:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

—Following our hopefully successful quest for the Rufous-necked Wood-Rail we will load up on some more **freshly baked banana bread**, partake in a **quick comfort stop** at the local **Ecotourism Consortium's headquarters at Matanchan**, before boarding our panga at the Rio San Cristobal bridge, for a 3-4-hour birding foray on the Rio San Cristobal.

**The pace is relaxing, but remember, there are no comfort stops on this boating excursion once you board the panga. In the event of an emergency we can get you to shore at a few widely spread portages created by local fishermen, but the substrate is likely to be muddy, so please make sure to utilize the available comfort stop at Matanchén ahead of our exploration of the Rio San Cristobal while limiting your intake of diuretics such as coffee.*

Commonly encountered birds of note inhabiting the first part of this route are similar to those found at Matanchén Bay, but we will now be open air and able to get quite close to observe many of them. As we continue into the mangrove ecosystem there will likely be other tantalizing species, including but not limited to **Muscovy duck; Limpkin; Black-necked Stilt, American Oystercatcher, Black Skimmer; Wood Stork; Anhinga, and Snail Kite, etc.**

3. 12:30 - 13:30 p.m.

—Upon our return to the dock, we will enjoy Lunch and a cheerful checklist party at San Blas, either at an open-air, palapa-style seafood restaurant or an enclosed restaurant with fans ahead of a short siesta.

**Timing may vary; restrooms are available at our restaurant of choice.*

4. 13:30 - 14:00 p.m.

—**Short Siesta and recharge at the Garza Canela.**

5. 14:00 - 17:00 p.m.

—**Large forest eagles** in the vicinity of San Blas take advantage of thermals of warm air rising from the tropical lowlands to help carry them aloft over the forested peaks inland from San Blas.

In the vicinity of the colloquial mountain town of Ticuitata, elevation 248 m / 815', a small, isolated but regularly encountered population of two species of hawk-eagles has been discovered within an easy 45-minute drive from San Blas, and we will take advantage of this exciting chance to spot one of them this afternoon when warm thermals are most likely to keep them aloft, giving us improved chances of a sighting. Occasionally, they have been known to fly directly overhead at close range!

Sometimes they come in closely, at others they appear in the distance, and of course there are times they don't appear at all. This fact only adds to the excitement and intrigue of raptor watching, because you

never quite know what you may get! We will be prepared for any contingency with our binoculars and an excellent spotting scope at the ready!

Our destination of choice is a recently discovered, well-forested montane birding hotspot with good vantage points to search for these exciting raptors and other highland species. It is located only 15 minutes beyond Tecuitata—a gravel road known as Terracería La Palma-Tecuitata, which will bring us to an elevation of 415 m / 1360'.

Again, both **Black-and-White and Black hawk-eagles** have been regularly sighted and photographed in this area. As many as 19 species of interesting raptors have been seen in the vicinity of the surrounding promontories, including: **Hook-billed Kite, Sharp-shinned, Coopers, Crain, Common Black, Great Black, Gray, Broad-winged, Short-tailed, Swainson's (migration), Zone-tailed and Red-tailed hawks, in addition to Collared Forest-Falcon, Crested Caracara, Laughing, Bat and Peregrine falcons, American Kestrel, etc.**

Raptor watching and general birding for the following montane specialties, will keep us more than entertained for a 2-3 hour timeframe before sundown:

Thicket Tinamou; Rufous-bellied Chachalaca and Crested Guan; Elegant Quail; Red-billed Pigeon, Ruddy Quail-Dove and White-tipped Dove; Groove-billed Ani and Squirrel Cuckoo; up to a dozen hummingbird varieties—highlighted by Mexican Hermit, Plain-capped Starthroat, Golden-crowned Emerald, Mexican Woodnymph, Berylline and Violet-crowned varieties—Colima and Ferruginous pygmy-owls; Citreoline and Elegant trogons; Russet-crowned Motmot; Golden-cheeked, Gila, Ladder-backed, Pale-billed and Lineated woodpeckers; Mexican Parrotlet (winter), Orange-fronted Parakeet, Lilac-crowned and White-fronted Parrots; Ivory-billed Woodcreeper; Masked Tityra and Rose-throated Becard; Greeni-



sh Elaenia, Greater Pewee, Tufted, Pacific-slope (winter), Cordilleran, Vermilion, Dusky-capped, Ash-throated (winter), Nutting's, Brown-crested, Flammulated, Social, Boat-billed, and Sulphur-bellied (summer) flycatchers; Bright-rumped Attila; Great Kiskadee, Tropical and Thick-billed kingbirds; Golden, Black-capped (winter), Bell's (winter), Cassin's (winter), Plumbeous, Warbling (winter) and Yellow-green (summer) vireos; Black-throated Magpie-Jay, Green and San Blas jays; Sinaloa Crow; Black-capped Gnatcatcher; Happy and Sinaloa wrens; Blue Mockingbird; Brown-backed Solitaire, Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Swainson's and White-throated thrushes, American and Rufous-backed robins; Scrub (Goldman's) Euphonia; Rosy Thrush-Tanager; Stripe-headed Sparrow; Rusty-crowned Ground-Sparrow; Yellow-winged Cacique and six oriole species—punctuated by Black-vented, Orchard (winter), Hooded, Streak-backed and Bullock's (winter) varieties—more than two dozen warblers—

including wintering Louisiana Water-thrush, MacGillivray's, Black-throated Gray and resident Fan-tailed Warbler and Tropical Parula; Blue-black Grassquit, Cinnamon-rumped Seedeater and Grayish Saltator, etc.

6. 17:30 - 18:30 p.m.

—On our sunset drive back to San Blas, we will keep an eye out for emerging nocturnal species such as **Common Pauraque, Buff-collared Nightjar and Mottled Owl**, etc.

7. 18:30 - 19:30 p.m.

—Dinner and checklist party at either Restaurante Delfín or a restaurant in town, followed by our second night at the cozy Garza Canela in San Blas.

End of second day's services.

C. DETAILED SCHEDULE FOR OPTION 3, DAY #3:

BIRDING THE LOFTY HIGHLANDS & “HUMMINGBIRD FLOWERING FORESTS” OF THE SIERRA SAN JUAN BIOSPHERE RESERVE WITH LUNCH IN TEPIC AND A SEARCH FOR THE MILITARY MACAWS OF MIRIDOR DEL AGUILA

1. 6:00a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

—Early departure for a day-long highland adventure to the lofty, bird-rich peaks of the Sierra San Juan Biosphere Reserve, Miridor del Aguila’s precipitous roadside cliffs, and a stop in the State Capitol of Tepic for a delicious lunch and a possible swing by **Parque Ecologico**, which is home to specialties like the **Mexican Duck, Least Grebe, Limpkin and Aztec Rail**, which, with the exception of the Limpkin, are all harder to see in San Blas than here, in addition to a relatively recently discovered population of visually striking **Spotted Rails**.

**Boxed breakfasts will be distributed to all participants en route. Coffee and juices will also be available in the lobby and while on the morning’s expedition. Bottled purified water and soft drinks will be on hand, as well.*

This isolated massif harboring the extinct volcano known as Cerro de San Juan (2116 m / 6942’) and nearby Cerro Alto (2204 m / 7232’), is so biodiverse that in 2003 it was declared a National Biosphere Reserve by the Mexican Government, covering roughly 200 square kilometers. Luckily this wilderness area is readily accessible by road from San Blas.

You’ll be the envy of less intrepid birders after visiting the relatively remote and seldom reached Sierra de San Juan Biosphere Reserve, as only a minority of San Blas’ birding visitors reach this lovely place, and going there is a little like stepping back in time.

The reserve is home to the gamut of highland regional birds, from **Crested Guans** to, **Tufted Flycatchers, Crescent-chested Warblers, Flame-colored and Hepatic tanagers**, and a constellation of colorful hummingbirds, of which the endemic

Mexican Woodnymph is the most coveted. When flower banks are present from October-January, we stand excellent chances of seeing this limited range specialty bird, in addition to up to 21 additional species.

When you enter the biosphere reserve you’ll be transported to another time, a more natural time, when nature reigned and people and their habitat alterations were confined to small insular bastions.

Gone will be the now all too familiar industrial mango plantations that have chewed away at the formerly pristine low to middle-elevation Sinaloan Thorn, Palm and montane Tropical Forests of the lowlands and intermediary slopes outside the reserve’s boundaries. In fact, the reserve preserves at least seven bird-rich vegetation communities, each stratified according to elevation, and is a disjunct extension of the nearby Sierra Madre Occidental, making it one of the most exciting birding destinations in western Mexico.

As we ascend toward Rancho La Noria—the center of our birding activities here—and nearby Cerro Alto, we will traverse an incredible array of floristic communities abounding with indigenous, endemic and migratory birds.

*Birding is especially productive here in the early morning hours, hence the timing of our expedition, and by comparison the afternoon can seem surprisingly quiet at these higher elevations.

Commonly encountered specialties found in the upper reaches of the palm, deciduous and evergreen tropical forests that cloak the intermediate slopes we will be birding include: **Crested Guan; Squirrel Cuckoo; Buff-collared Nightjar; Mexican Hermit, Plain-capped Starthroat, Gol-**

den-crowned Emerald, Mexican Woodnymph, Broad-billed, Cinnamon and Violet-crowned hummingbirds; Hook-billed Kite, Great Black-Hawk, Harris', White-tailed, Gray, and Short-tailed hawks; Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and Mottled Owl; Citreoline & Elegant trogons; Russet-crowned Motmot; Golden-cheeked, Gila, Pale-billed and Lineated woodpeckers; Collared Forest-Falcon, Crested Caracara and Bat Falcon; Lilac-crowned and White-fronted parrots, Mexican Parrotlet and Orange-fronted Parakeet; Ivory-billed Woodcreeper; Masked Tityra, Gray-collared and Rose-throated Becards, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, Greenish Elaenia, Pacific-slope (winter), Vermilion, Dusky-capped, Nutting's, Brown-crested, Social, Boat-billed and Sulphur-bellied flycatchers (summer), Bright-rumped Attila, Great Kiskadee, Tropical and Thick-billed kingbirds; Golden, Black-capped, Bell's, Warbling (the last three during winter) and Yellow-green vireos; Sinaloa Crow, Black-throated Magpie-Jay, Green, San Blas and Purplish-backed jays; Black-capped Gnatcatcher; Happy and Sinaloa wrens; Blue Mockingbird; Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Rufous-backed Robin; Scrub (Goldman's) Euphonia; Rosy Thrush-Tanager; Rusty-crowned Ground-Sparrow, Stripe-headed and Olive sparrows; Yellow-winged Cacique, Black-vented, Hooded and Streak-backed orioles; Golden-browed and Golden-crowned, Lucy's, MacGillivray's, Black-throated Gray (the last three during winter), Fan-tailed and Rufous-capped warblers; Red-crowned Ant-Tanager, Yellow Grosbeak, Red-breasted Chat, Blue, Varied and Painted (winter) buntings; Blue-black Grassquit; Ruddy-breasted and Cinnamon-rumped Seedeater, and Grayish Saltator, etc.

Where this forest grades into higher elevation **Encinal (Pine-Oak-Juniper Woodland)** and higher elevation evergreen coniferous forest consisting of pines and fir, additional birds complete the amazing biodiversity all the way to the highest peaks

of the Sierra San Juan Biosphere Reserve—such as Cerro Alto, namesake Cerro de San Juan and other rises at or above Rancho La Noria.

All may be visited today and are home dream specialities like the **Long-tailed Wood-Partridge and Singing Quail; Ruddy Quail-Dove; Eared Poorwill and Mexican Whip-Poor-Will; Chestnut-collared, White-naped and Greater Swallow-tailed swifts; Blue-throated Mountain-gem, Rivoli's, Bumblebee, Broad-tailed, Calliope (winter), Berylline, and White-eared hummingbirds; Zone-tailed and Red-tailed hawks; Flammulated Owl, Whiskered Screech-Owl, Northern (Mountain) and Colima pygmy-owls, Barred (Cinereous), Stygian and Northern Saw-whet owls; Northern Flicker, Acorn, Hairy, Arizona and Gray-crowned woodpeckers; Military Macaw; White-striped and Olivaceous woodcreepers; Greater Pewee, Tufted, Pine, Cordilleran and Buff-breasted flycatchers; Bridled Titmouse; Bushtit (black-eared form); Spotted Wren; Eastern Bluebird, Brown-backed Solitaire, Russet Nightingale-Thrush and Aztec Thrush; Gray Silky-flycatcher; Olive Warbler; Elegant Euphonia; Black-headed Siskin; Green-striped and Rufous-capped brushfinches, Yellow-eyed Junco and Rusty Sparrow; Audubon's (Dickey's) Oriole; Tropical Parula, Crescent-chested, Grace's, Townsend's, Hermit and Red-faced warblers (the last three in winter), Painted and Slate-throated redstarts; Hepatic, Flame-colored and Red-headed tanagers, etc.**

2. 12:30 - 13:45 p.m.

—As the morning birding wanes Lunch will be at either Rancho La Noria, Tepic or the nearby town of Miridor del Aguila, each of which offers good Restaurants that serve up a Variety of Regional Dishes.

Here the specialty is **Borrego—or Lamb—** which is tender and delicious, but a variety of more familiar Mexican dishes will also be on offer. Have your choice!

If time is not an object we may swing by **Tepic's Bird Rich Parque Ecologico**, which is home to specialties like the **Mexican Duck, Least Grebe, Limpkin and Aztec Rail**, in addition to a relatively recently discovered population of visually striking **Spotted Rails**.

3. 14:00 - 14:30p.m.

—Satiated by lunch we will head for a roadside pullout that's now famous in birding circles—if a bit noisy due to traffic that includes downshifting trucks—**Mirador del Aguila**, which has proven to be one of the best spots in Nayarit, and Mexico for that matter, to observe majestic flocks of shimmering **Military macaws** displaying their sometimes surprisingly colorful plumage of greens, reds and blues as they wheel against a rugged backdrop of dizzying canyons and rocky outcroppings!

Other interesting species, especially **Bat Falcons, and Black-throated Magpie-Jays, etc.** also occur, so the sky's the limit! Literally!

**Please excuse the possibly offensive olfactory stimulation here from the equally visually offensive presence of trash dumped over the roadside parking area by a few inconsiderate souls who lack respect for themselves, nature and others. Attempts are being made to remove this, but the destination is still a worthy stop because of the incredible birding opportunities possible here!*



4. 4:30 - 5:30p.m.

—Return to San Blas for Dinner, keeping an eye out for crepuscular and nocturnal birds—especially **Common Pauraque**—en route.

5. 5:30 - 6:30p.m.

—Dinner & checklist party at either the **Restaurante Delfín** or a nearby **Restaurant in San Blas**, followed by our third overnight at the Garza Canela.

End of third day's services.

D. DETAILED SCHEDULE FOR OPTION 3, DAY #4:

PACIFIC BOATING EXCURSION TO SEE THE RED-BILLED TROPICBIRDS, BOOBIES & TROPICAL TERNS OF SAN BLAS' GUANO-ENCRUSTED OFFSHORE ISLANDS, FOLLOWED BY LUNCH, A SHORT SIESTA AND RETURN TO PUERTO VALLARTA

1. 6:00 - 10:00 a.m.

—An early departure will be essential to success on today's outing, and to ensure calm seas and mild temps, as sea conditions are always better in the morning hours—before the barometric pressure rises, creating swell-generating winds!

**Boxed lunches are included and will be dutifully prepared by the Hotel Garza Canela's Restaurante Delfin ahead of our departure, and we will pick them up in the lobby on departure, along with available coffee, tea, fresh juices and continental breakfast items.*

Though most local birding excursions omit San Blas' offshore birding opportunities, probably out of time considerations, this excursion offers the wonderful opportunity to view and photograph **select neotropical and pan-tropical seabirds of the eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean**, at San Blas' nearby, **guano-stained islets**, highlighted by a visit to two rocky islets just offshore from **Faro del Isla del Rey**, and **Roca Elefante**—a towering rocky sea stack in the shape of an elephant's head—located just 1.5 and 14 nautical miles, respectively, outside San Blas' small fishing harbor.

Seasonally, the closest of these islets are usually adorned by **Heermann's Gull, Brown Noddy (summer), Bridled Tern (summer), Royal and Elegant (migration) terns, Brown Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird, Blue-footed and Brown boobies, etc., and even nesting Gray-breasted Martins**, and towering Roca Elefante, which is located farther offshore, houses these and a small population of **Red-billed Tropicbirds**.

An amazing **63 species of birds**—many migratory, and not all of them marine—have been recorded here, so the possibili-

ties fuel the imagination!

There is always the chance to spot **Least and Black storm-petrels** in the waters near **Roca Elefante**, in addition to the seasonal possibilities of breaching **Hump-backed Whales (winter) and Pacific Bottle-nosed Dolphins, giant Manta Rays, and possibly even Olive Ridley Sea Turtles** during this morning's outing.

2. 11:00a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

—Take this time to Freshen up and Pack in your Room before ahead of enjoying our Seafood Lunch and Checklist Party at San Blas.

3. 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.

— **Celebratory Seafood Lunch and Checklist Party in San Blas**

4. 2:00-5:00 p.m.

—**Checkout of the Garza Canela, followed by a Scenic Return to San Blas before Sunset, with Possible Impromptu Birding Stops en route.**

End of Birding in Mexico's Services.

Thanks for adventure traveling with Birding in Mexico. We sincerely hope you enjoyed your chosen excursion and hope to see you again on another exciting adventure to visit one of Mexico's most biodiverse destinations! Have a happy and safe trip home!

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