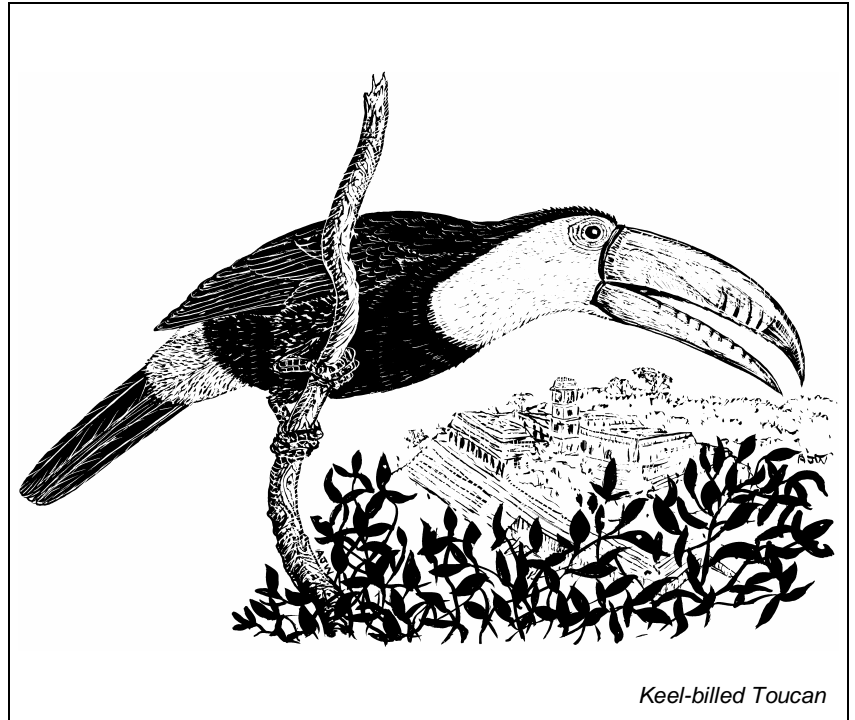
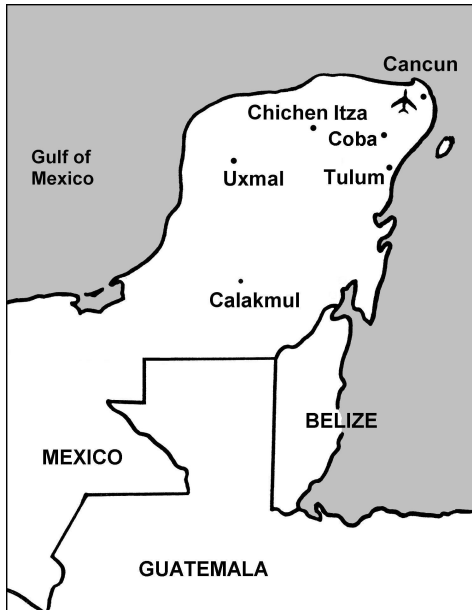


# THE YUCATAN, MEXICO

*endemic birds of the Yucatan Peninsula in the vicinity of five spectacular Mayan sites*



*Keel-billed Toucan*

There's so much more to the Yucatan Peninsula than the famous coastal resorts of Cancun and Playa del Carmen. The region's lush tropical forests, coastal wetlands, dry thorn scrub and beautiful beaches combine to make the Yucatan a premier bird-tour destination. The beauty of it all is that some of the best preserved habitats are found alongside some of the most spectacular archaeological sites in the New World. Hidden in the forests are countless Mayan cities and temples. On this tour we present you with a wonderful opportunity to visit the World Heritage Site at Chichen Itza, as well as Tulum, Coba, Uxmal and Calakmul.

The Yucatan is a region of high endemism and many bird species found here occur nowhere else in the world. Black Catbirds and Rose-throated Tanagers share the coastal mangroves with wintering American wood warblers. In the scrub of the arid northwest resident specialities include Yucatan Bobwhite, Lesser Roadrunner, Yucatan Wren and the tiny Mexican Sheartail hummingbird. Ocellated Turkeys still frequent the forests around Calakmul, as do Great Curassows and the arboreal Crested Guan. Other endemics we hope to find include the Yucatan Woodpecker, Yucatan Flycatcher and the gorgeous Grey-throated Chat. All in all this trip produces a wonderful mix of colourful North American migrants, typical Mexican birds and exotic rainforest species. It is not surprising to learn that we can expect to see over 250 species.

Our journey begins on the Caribbean coast at Tulum where turquoise seas meet sandy beaches. The tour then heads south-west to Calakmul, which lies deep in the rainforest near the Guatemalan border. Following the Ruta Maya we venture north to the shores of the Gulf of Mexico and the beautifully preserved structures at Uxmal. Finally we will then head back east to spend the final three nights at Chichen Itza. In each location we stay at hotels situated close to the archaeological sites, enabling us to make the most of our visits before the heat of the day.

## ITINERARY

### TULUM AND COBA

On arrival at Cancun we will transfer to Tulum, our base for the first three nights. This is the only place on the low lying Yucatan Peninsula with coastal cliffs. The picturesque remains of a once great Mayan city sit on these cliffs, overlooking the turquoise Caribbean. Over these beautiful waters rise Magnificent Frigatebirds, Brown Pelicans and aptly named Royal Terns. The coastal mangroves here are perhaps the best place to find the endemic Black Catbird. Fruiting trees attract several at a time as well as Plain Chachalaca, Caribbean Elaenia and Rose-throated Tanager. Around the ruins we will search for Orange Orioles and

Ridgeway's Rough-winged Swallows. The mangroves also harbour Yucatan Vireos and a host of North American warblers.

From Tulum we will visit the Mayan city of Coba. Here we will have a fantastic introduction to the forest birds of the Yucatan, as well as seeing a selection of well preserved temples, ball courts and stelae. At Coba Lake there are kingfishers, Anhinga, Ruddy Crake and Limpkin. There are also plenty of Morelet's Crocodiles and various turtles to watch. Three sets of excavated ruins are connected by wide forest trails. Some of the more common birds include Least Grebe, Ruddy Woodcreeper, Cinnamon Hummingbird,

Hooded Oriole, Limpkin, Black-headed Trogon, Groove-billed Ani, Common Yellowthroat and Melodious Blackbird.

### **CALAKMUL**

The largest and one of the most important of the Mayan sites, rivalling the magnificent Tikal in size, Calakmul was discovered as recently as 1931 by Cyrus Lundell.

Calakmul now stands deep in the jungle close to the Guatemalan border. We spend four nights here to give us plenty of time to explore the archaeological site and the surrounding forest. Large numbers of confiding Yucatan Black Howler Monkeys and Central American Spider Monkeys inhabit the impressive rainforest. Alarm calls from Ocellated Turkeys sometimes betrays the presence of a large cat. Staff at the reserves visitor centre always seem to have regular sightings of Jaguar to report!

Birdlife is abundant along the forest trails which lead to the former city's magnificent temples. Army ant swarms cross the tracks, attracting a host of birds including Mexican Anthrush, Northern Barred and Ruddy Woodcreepers, Ovenbirds and Grey-breasted Chats. The raucous sounds of Keel-billed Toucans echo around the forest whilst Bat Falcons hunt from the tops of the ancient structures. A feature of this site is the good numbers of large birds to be found such as Ocellated Turkeys, Great Curassows and Crested Guans. Thicket Tinamous occur close to our very comfortable jungle lodge, whilst Wood Thrushes, Indigo Buntings and Hooded Warblers come to drink at a woodland pool.

Nearby we can visit a bat cave to watch the evening departure of thousands of Mexican Free-tailed Bats. Overhead hundreds of White-faced Parrots fly to roost whilst on one occasion a Collared Forest Falcon was attracted by this bonanza of fast food.

### **UXMAL**

On day eight we will head towards our next Mayan site, Uxmal, our base for the next four nights. As at all the sites, there is good birding in the hotel gardens at Uxmal. Hundreds of pairs of Cave Swallows nest in the ruins and Turquoise-browed Motmots can easily be observed.

The forest holds a good selection of Yucatan specialities including Yucatan Flycatcher, Yucatan Bobwhite, White-browed Wren and Blue Bunting. Also found here are Common Pauraque, Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Green Jay, Scrub Euphonia, Plain Chachalaca, Black-cowled and Altamira Orioles, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Yellow-billed Cacique, Singing Quail and Olive Sparrow.

We shall take a boat trip in the coastal mangroves at Rio Celestun. Birds we can expect include Common Black Hawk, Magnificent Frigatebirds, American Pygmy Kingfisher, thousands of American Flamingos, Anhinga, Roseate Spoonbill, Boat-billed Heron, Tricoloured Heron and Reddish Egret. Amongst the passerines will be Northern Waterthrush, Mangrove Warbler and Mangrove Vireo.

### **CHICHEN ITZA**

On day 12 we will move on to Chichen Itza in central Yucatan, our base for the final three nights. This is perhaps the most celebrated Mayan site and one of the most spectacular with its towering El Castillo pyramid and huge ball court. In the quiet corners of the ruins and in the gardens of our hotel where there are palms and fruit trees, birds are abundant, especially early and late in the day.

We hope to see Grey Hawk, Bat Falcon, Vaux's Swift, Cave Swallow, Collared Aracari, Masked Tityra, Lineated Woodpecker and Yellow-winged Tanager. Some of the

special birds here include Wedge-tailed Sabrewing, Canivet's Emerald, Yucatan Jay and the beautiful Orange Oriole. Yellow-throated Warbler, Blue-crowned and Turquoise-browed Motmots and Hooded and Altamira Orioles can all be seen in the hotel grounds.

Whilst at Chichen Itza we will make a day trip to the coast at Rio Lagartos, where there is a mixture of coastal lagoons, mangrove swamps and dune scrub. Here we can expect to see a long list of exciting birds including Brown and American White Pelicans, Roseate Spoonbill, Black Skimmer, Laughing Falcon, Crested Caracara, Yucatan Woodpecker and Vermilion Flycatcher. Specialities include the Yucatan Bobwhite, Lesser Roadrunner, Yucatan Wren and an endemic hummingbird, the Mexican Sheartail.

After some final birding on the last morning we will drive to Cancun, arriving in good time for our flight home.

### **PACE**

Breakfast will usually be taken at 7am. On other days it will be later, to give us time to do a pre-breakfast walk. Due to the high mid-day temperatures we plan to do morning and late afternoon excursions, with time off in-between to siesta. This is made all the easier as our hotels are very close to the birding sites. Basic fitness is all that is required. The Yucatan is very flat, and there will be little uphill walking.

### **ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD**

Full-board accommodation is provided, with three nights at the Hotel Don Diego de la Selva, Tulum, four nights at the Hotel Puerta, Calakmul, four nights at the Hacienda Uxmal, and three nights at the Hacienda Chichen Resort, Chichen Itza. All accommodation is of a good standard and all rooms have en suite bathrooms. Lunches will normally be at the hotel, but at Calakmul we will take a picnic or eat in a restaurant.

### **PRICE INCLUDES .....**

All birdwatching excursions with expert leaders, full-board accommodation (starting with dinner on 10<sup>th</sup>, ending with breakfast on 24<sup>th</sup>), soft drinks at meal times, local transport by mini-bus, boat trip, site entrance fees, international flights and airport taxes.

### **WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED**

Travel insurance. Personal items, alcoholic drinks, laundry.

### **INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS**

Return flights are from both Manchester and London Gatwick, using the charter services of a major airline. Outbound flight departs mid-morning; return flight arrives back early morning.

<b>15 nights</b> including one overnight flight:	<b>10<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> November 2014</b>
<b>Principal leader:</b>	<b>John McLoughlin</b>
<b>Maximum group size:</b>	<b>8 clients with one leader or 12 clients with two leaders</b>
<b>Cost with discount (if you book before 28<sup>th</sup> July 2014):</b>	<b>£3590 per person sharing</b>
<b>Full Cost:</b>	<b>£3740 per person sharing</b>
<b>Single supplement:</b>	<b>£590</b>
<b>Deposit:</b>	<b>£600</b>