

El Cielo and NE Mexico Birding Trip July 1 – 7, 2019

Come join us for a wondrous trip to see as many northeast Mexico bird species as possible while visiting some very different and breathtaking habitats. Rene Valdes, our expert guide who is based in Monterrey, MX, has planned this specialized trip just for GCBO. Joining us will be GCBO's Executive Director, Martin Hagne, for this fairly fast paced birding trip. We will travel down to El Cielo Biosphere Reserve in southern Tamaulipas, visiting the northern most cloud forest in North America. We will also be covering both the high mountainous elevations and the dryer grassland areas of Nuevo Leon and Coahuila states.



Day 0: Afternoon flight arrivals to Monterrey with an overnight at a hotel in Monterrey.

Day 1: Early morning departure to Gomez Farias town (El Cielo), drive may take about 5 hrs. Lunch in Gomez Farias and check-in at hotel. In the afternoon, we will be birding the lowlands (La Florida and Bocatoma) where we will take a boat trip along a river (main target Sungrebe and Amazon Kingfisher). At a close location we may also visit some agricultural areas to look for Aplomado Falcon, Tamaulipas Crow, and Double-striped Thick-Knee. Overnight at Casa de Piedra Bed & Breakfast in Gomez Farias. *(any of the nights around Gomez Farias may include searches for Tawny-collared Nightjar).*



Day 2: Birding El Cielo. Drive uphill (using a local 4x4 truck with benches) from Gomez Farias to Altacima, birding with several stops along the road, and then some walks around Altacima. Lunch at Altacima. We will continue driving uphill, again making lots of birding stops, to arrive near San Jose village, where we will stay in cabins which are clean and safe. This is a very birdy area.

Day 3: Birding El Cielo. We will be birding around the cabins and doing some walks to San Jose Village. By mid morning we will start driving downhill, with again some stops around Altacima for more wonderful birding. We will plan to arrive back to Gomez Farias in the afternoon with the possibility of birding at night to look for Tawny-collared Nightjar and Owls. Overnight at Casa de Piedra B&B in Gomez Farias.

Day 4: Birding El Cielo. We will bird the Gomez Farias-El Azteca road in the morning. This is the best place to see Thicket Tinamou and sometimes Great Curassow. The road ends at a very good location to look for the endemic Altamira Yellowthroat. We will come back to Gomez Farias to have lunch and check out from our rooms. We will then start our drive back to Monterrey (5 hrs), and overnight at a hotel in Monterrey.



Day 5: Today we will be birding the desert and montane forest which will be a long day. We will have an early departure to a Chihuahuan desert locality (1.5 hrs drive) to look for Worthen's Sparrow, but we will also explore the area for more desert specialities. We will move to the montane forest of the 'Sierra Madre Oriental' and look for pine forest target species including Hooded Yellowthroat, Colima Warbler, Pine Flycatcher, Russet Nightingale-Thrush and others. We will continue our journey driving into the Cumbres de Monterrey National Park in the afternoon/evening until we arrive at our final destination, a complex of cabins (mesa del oso) at 8000 ft surrounded by excellent pine forest and passing by (4x4 road) one of the nesting cliffs of Maroon-fronted Parrots. Overnight at cabins (possibilities for night birding for owls).



Day 6: We will bird the montane forest of the 'Cumbres de Monterrey' National Park in the morning including the trails around the cabins and the nesting cliff and make a few other stops on the way to Monterrey which we will reach by mid-morning. **PM** flight departures.



8 people (max)

All Inclusive Cost:

\$1,258.00 per person - Double Occupancy

\$1,418.00 per person - Single Occupancy (in Monterey hotel only, cabins will be shared)

Includes:

- Lodging: 2 nights in Monterey hotel, 2 nights at Gomez Farias BnB, 1 night in San Jose cabins, 1 night in Mesa del Oso cabins. (Double occupancy all nights)
- Meals: all meals are included, beverages (alcohol with moderation, ie. one beer/meal), snacks, and box lunches if any
- Entrances Fees: parks/preserves entrances fees
- Local Transportation: 15 passenger Ford Transit, 4x4 vehicle in Gomez Farias, fuel, and toll roads fees
- Boat Trip: river boat ride at Bocatoma - El Cielo
- All Tips: bellboys, restaurants, boat driver, and any other tips during the trip
- Guide Fees: including local guide in El Cielo

IMPORTANT TRIP INFORMATION:

This trip can be somewhat strenuous and is heavily focused on birdwatching. We do also soak in the culture as we travel, but no cultural stops/sites are planned. It will be long days with early wake ups, and a few nights with late owl watching. It is geared to get as many bird species as possible, and therefore not necessarily always a "leisurely" trip. It will also include quite a bit of driving to get to as many habitats as possible, including narrow dirt mountain roads. The Monterrey to Gomez Farias drive is 5 hour or so. The drive up the mounting at El Cielo is by converted 4x4 pickup trucks with benches in the

bed. It can be rather bumpy. There will be quite a bit of walking, including on uneven dirt roads, some going uphill.

Therefore this trip is not recommended for anyone with major back or leg issues, or other serious medical conditions, as it can be rather strenuous.

The lodging in Monterrey is by nice modern hotels. The Bed and Breakfast in Gomez Farias is an old and beautiful hacienda style built by rock. It does not have AC but the normally cool nights are comfortable. The cabins at El Cielo and Valle de Oso, are clean but somewhat rustic with small and rustic bathrooms, sometimes with cold water only. In some we will share open sleeping rooms divided by gender.

Our meals will be delicious! They are a mix of new restaurants and small rural and sometimes rustic places.... but always with delicious wonderful local flavorful food!

Rene Valdes is a field ornithologist specializing in endangered species conservation and research, and a Mexican birder for many years. He is based in Monterrey, and performs wildlife surveys, leads birding tours, and does wildlife photography. Rene guides custom birding trips in Monterrey and adjacent areas, west Mexico tours in Mazatlán-Durango and the San Blas area, one of the best birding sites in Mexico. When not birding (rarely happens), Rene reviews eBird records and hotspots for many states in Mexico, organizes the eBird-Mexico and Mexico Rare Bird Alert Facebook groups, compiles rare records from north Mexico for North American Birds, and coordinates the Breeding Bird Survey program for the northeastern states of Mexico. He is recently working as Citizen Science Project Manager for BirdsEye Birding apps (www.birdseyebirding.com), assisting with text and image editing, as well as collaborating with their many partners on new and improved citizen science projects.

