

Río de Rapaces

The Veracruz River of Raptors is the most important flyway in the world for migratory raptors. With an average of five million raptors each fall, visitors can witness up to 35 raptor species, with sightings of 100,000 to 500,000 birds a day during the fall and spring peak periods.

LOCATION: Coastal plain of central Veracruz. Raptors are monitored throughout the fall from the following three locations: Cardel, Chichicaxtle and La Mancha. There will be a fourth location in Cansaburro, where Pronatura Veracruz will soon build a bird observatory.



SIZE: The Veracruz River of Raptors is best thought of as a route along the central coast of Veracruz through which the migrants fly, roost, and feed.

HABITAT: Central Veracruz is a geographic bottleneck formed at the intersection of the eastern slope of the Sierra Madre Oriental and the Central Volcanic Belt. These two mountain systems reduce the coastal lowlands to a very narrow area where migrants concentrate in order to find conditions favorable for soaring. Due to its significant altitude variation, this area has a rich diversity of habitats. There are 19 vegetation zones, many of which provide important stopover habitat for migratory birds.

BIRDS: This geographic bottleneck contains a rich diversity of birds. There are 465 species found in this region, 220 of which are neotropical migrants. Some of the raptor species seen in largest numbers during fall migration include the Turkey Vulture (2,000,000 on average), Broad-winged Hawk (1,700,000 on average) and Swainson's Hawk (1,200,000 on average). Other species include the Gray Hawk, and Golden and Bald Eagles. The bottleneck landscape also causes other bird species to funnel through this area, such as the American White Pelican, Wood Stork, Anhinga and many species of songbirds.

CONSERVATION: Pronatura Veracruz has conducted monitoring at Cardel and Chichicaxtle since 1991, thus making this the longest continuously running monitoring station in Latin America. Part of the monitoring now includes a raptor banding station at La Mancha—the only such station in Mexico. Pronatura Veracruz also runs environmental education programs in six different communities. Ecotourism is being used as a means of providing an incentive for local habitat protection. There are virtually no protected areas in this region where 75% of the diverse natural habitats have

been converted into agriculture and pastures. The remaining areas of forest and native vegetation are increasingly under pressure from agricultural development. At Cansa-burro, Pronatura has a 6 ha (15 acre) reserve in a unique coastal dune system. The first bird observatory in Mexico will be constructed here, with a special focus on bird migration, and with a conservation program that will involve other community landholders and organizations. Pronatura Veracruz is taking steps in order to establish a bird sanctuary of around 600 ha (1482 acres).



BROAD-WINGED HAWK

WAYNE NICHOLAS



Site Partner:

Pronatura Veracruz

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Diego Rivera 49.
Frac. Coapexpan.
C.P. 91070.
Xalapa, Veracruz, México

WEBSITE:

www.pronaturaveracruz.org