



2022 Guatemala Birding

March 5-16 Includes Tikal

Specially designed for Gulf Coast Birding Observatory



JB
Journeys



Resplendent Quetzal R.Cahill

This is your opportunity to bird Guatemala in areas not offered by other bird tour companies, guided by Guatemala's top birder, **John Cahill**.

But this is not just about birds and a list. You will have the chance to visit Tropical Forest Forever Fund's (TFFF) newest project, a reforestation program at Community Cloud Forest Conservation. CCFC is an environmental education program located near Cobán in central Guatemala. You will stay at the CCFC Center, a totally

off-the-grid facility and a marvel in engineering. You will witness the wonderful work being done there, which includes the reforestation of the winter home of many birds you see in Texas, such as Golden-cheeked and Golden-winged Warbler.

In addition to fabulous birds (including the near mythical **Resplendent Quetzal**), Guatemala offers you an amazing cultural history and conservation success stories. For instance, some of your birding will be done in private reserves set up specifically for migrating birds. This gives Texas birders the possibility of seeing a number of familiar birds in their winter homes.

Your trip ends in **Tikal**, perhaps the greatest of the Mayan cities, filled with ancient ruins and great birds. A local cultural guide will add to the experience. As you walk among pyramids, you should look for Keel-billed Toucan, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Ocellated Turkey, Tody Motmot, several species of parrots, and raptors like the rare **Orange-breasted Falcon**. You may also see some cool mammals like Coatis, Agoutis, and Spider and Black Howler Monkeys.



John Cahill, only in his mid-20s and already the top birder in Guatemala, is your guide. One comment from a prior tour refers to John as "the best bird guide ever." He is a birding rockstar and seems to know everyone in the country! [Read about John's Big Year here](#).

John will be assisted by his father **Rob Cahill**. The Cahill Family runs [Community Cloud Forest Conservation](#), which focuses on environmental education for the local Mayan school population based on Cornell Lab of Ornithology's BirdSleuth program. They also run a leadership training program for girls and young women in sustainable agro-ecology, nutrition, cooking, health and family planning, career and educational options, birding and eco-tourism, and other life-skills, with the goal of helping them stay in school and continue their education. The ultimate goal of agro-ecology is re-forestation of the cloud forest. GCBO's Tropical Forest Forever Fund recently made a donation to help with their work.

In addition to a donation to GCBO, a half-acre of cloud forest will be restored, which will offset your in-country carbon footprint while enhancing bird habitat. This tour is an excellent example of sustainable tourism.

2022 Guatemala Birding

Mar 5, Sat (Day 1) – Plan to arrive Guatemala City around 12 noon. You will be met by your guides and head to lunch for an orientation, then drive about 1.5 hours northeast, descending into the dry Motagua Valley. Time permitting, we will do a little birding in the thorn forest until sunset.

Overnight at Hotel Camino Largo in El Rancho. (D)



Stripe-headed Sparrow J Cahill

Mar 6, Sun (Day 2): Motagua Valley – We depart early to the Heloderma thorn-forest preserve located about one hour east of El Rancho. We will hike the trails, getting into both *bosque espinoso* (thorn-forest) and *bosque seco* (dry forest), two endangered habitat types restricted to the Motagua Valley. Targets for this area include White-lored Gnatcatcher, Russet-crowned Motmot, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Streak-backed Oriole, Stripe-headed Sparrow, Elegant Trogon, and, with some luck, Yellow Grosbeak and Banded Wren. Returning to El Rancho, we will make a couple more stops in the thorn-forest. After sunset there are chances of picking up both Middle American and **Pacific Screech-Owls**, as well as Buff-collared Nightjar.

Overnight at Hotel Camino Largo in El Rancho (B,L,D)

Mar 7, Mon (Day 3) – We pack up and depart early for the Salamá Valley, where we will bird the lower Pantin Road for the morning. This gravel road will take us from the scrublands of Salamá all the way up to the cloud forest, going through several habitat types, but we will focus on the lower (and drier) portion of the route. Targets include Cassin’s Kingbird, Crested Bobwhite, Botteri’s Sparrow, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Lesser Nighthawk, and Ash-throated Flycatcher. As we gain elevation, we may encounter



Red Crossbill, female
J Cahill

Great Swallow-tailed Swift, Red Crossbill (type 11, or Central American), the lovely **Slender Sheartail**, Plumbeous Vireo, and an assortment of wood-warblers.

A short drive takes us to La Posada del Quetzal, a hotel located in the Corredor del Bosque Nuboso. Targets for the afternoon at the Posada include Olive Warbler, Brown-backed Solitaire, **Black-capped Swallow**, Spotted Woodcreeper, Hooded Grosbeak, Black-headed Siskin, Yellowish Flycatcher and more.

Overnight at Posada del Quetzal (B,L,D)

Mar 8, Tues (Day 4): Ranchitos del Quetzal – Early departure to Los Ranchitos del Quetzal (5 minute drive) to look for Azure-hooded Jay, Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush, Eye-ringed Flatbill and Barred Forest-Falcon at dawn.



Azure-hooded Jay *J.Cahill*

Later in the morning we will try for Resplendent Quetzal and other cloud forest species in the Los Ranchitos nature preserve.

In the afternoon we will bird the trails at the Biotopo del Quetzal. Targets for the cloud forest include Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner, Rufous-browed Wren, Spotted Nightingale-Thrush, Unicolored Jay, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Tufted Flycatcher, American Dipper, Black Thrush, etc.

Overnight at Posada del Quetzal (B,L,D)



Mar 9, Wed (Day 5): We depart early once again to Los Ranchitos for another shot at some of the more difficult cloud forest species. From Ranchitos we will drive some fifteen minutes to the Chicoy wetlands and upper Pantin Road. Targets for the pine-oak forest of upper Pantin include Belted Flycatcher, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, White-eared Hummingbird, Gray-collared Becard, Painted Redstart, Gray Silky-flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo, Guatemalan Tyrannulet, and with some luck Maroon-chested Ground Dove. The upper

Pantin Road has some of the very best Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat in all of Guatemala, earlier in the year they are very common in this area. Mid March is a bit late but we may still catch up with one or two Golden-cheeks.

After birding the Pantin Road we will continue to the CCFC Center. In the afternoon we will have some time to bird the grounds and surrounding cloud forest.

Overnight at the CCFC Center (B,L,D)

Mar 10, Thurs (Day 6): Today you’ll have a chance to sleep a bit later than previous days, as birding will take place in the vicinity of CCFC Center, including the mountaintop village of Satex. Targets include **Guatemalan Pygmy-Owl**, **Bushy-crested Jay**, Brown-capped Vireo,



Guatemalan Pygmy-Owl

J Cahill

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Golden-winged Warbler, **Ocellated Quail**, Spotted Nightingale-Thrush, Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser, and **Blue-throated Motmot**. There will be time to tour the grounds and learn about the projects that take place here, including environmental education and reforestation.

Overnight at the CCFC Center (B,L,D)

Mar 11, Fri (Day 7): Laguna Chichoj – After some light birding and breakfast at CCFC we will drive forty minutes to Laguna Chichoj in San Cristobal, Verapaz. Targets include White-throated Flycatcher, Spotted Rail, Ruddy Crake, Limpkin, and an assortment of wood-warblers.

In the afternoon we will return to CCFC to regroup and get a little more birding in.

Overnight at the CCFC Center (B,L,D)

Mar 12, Sat (Day 8): Finca las Nubes and Chajbaoc

We leave early for an hour drive to Chajbaoc private reserve. Targets here include Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge, **White-faced Ground-Sparrow**, Mottled Owl, **Guatemalan Tyrannulet**, and **White-breasted Hawk**.

Later in the morning we continue driving for forty-five minutes to Finca Las Nubes. Located in the Caribbean foothills north of Coban, this private nature preserve dedicated to sustainable forestry and bird conservation boasts an impressive bird list with over 300 species recorded. We will walk at an easy birding pace for a couple of kilometers, the trail takes us into the dense rainforest. Target species for Las Nubes include Stripe-tailed Hummingbird, Red-crowned Ant-Tanager, Red-capped and White-collared Manakin, Stub-tailed Spadebill, Plain Xenops, Dusky Antbird, Black-faced Antthrush. In the afternoon we will continue north to the Petén, stopping at El Rosario National Park.

Overnight at Hotel Campestre in Santa Ana. (B,L,D)

Mar 13, Sun (Day 9): The morning will be spent birding the nance savanna surrounding Santa Ana. Here we will have chances of spotting **Black-throated Bobwhite**, **Black Catbird**, Olive Sparrow, Ladder-backed Woodpecker. From Santa Ana a two hour drive takes us into Tikal

After checking into our rooms, we will get out and bird the *bosque bajo* (low forest) along Tikal's famous abandoned airstrip. Targets include **Rose-throated Tanager**, **Yucatan Flycatcher**, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, **Gray-throated Chat**, White-bellied Wren, **Green-backed Sparrow**, Blue Bunting, Thicket Tinamou, Black-and-white Owl, **Yucatan Poorwill**, and many more.

Overnight at Jungle Lodge. (B,L,D)

Mar 14, Mon: Tikal - We will have a full day birding the Tikal Archeological Site. The day will be spent touring the antiquities and birding the *bosque alto* (rainforest) of Tikal. We will look for Purple-crowned Fairy, **Wedge-tailed Sabrewing**, Red-lore, Mealy, White-crowned and White-fronted parrots, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Gray-headed Tanager, **Black-throated Shrike-Tanager**, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, **Ocellated Turkey**, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, and the rare **Orange-breasted Falcon**

Overnight at Jungle Lodge. (B,L,D)



*Orange-breasted Falcon
J Cahill*

March 15, Tues: Tikal to El Remate - We will take an early walk down the abandoned airstrip to give some of the more difficult specialties a second chance. Around midday we will leave Tikal and head to El Remate where we will check in to La Casa de Don David, located on the shores of Lake Petén Itzá. Later in the afternoon we will bird the lakeshore ending up at Las Orquídeas for the final dinner of the trip.

Overnight at Casa de don David (B,L,D)

Mar 16, Wed: Departure – Very early this morning, we'll leave for Flores airport, and the flight from Flores to Guatemala City is included. You should schedule your international departure for 12 noon or later. (B)

NOTE: The order and sites visited may vary due to weather, road conditions and other factors beyond our control.
Hotels listed are valid as of printing but may change.

NOTE REGARDING LODGING: We have selected local lodging near birding sites. **All have private hot water bathrooms.** Camino Largo and Posada del Quetzal are local inns. The CCFC Center is totally off-the-grid with composting toilets, an experience in itself. Wifi is limited in each. The Hotel Campestre is a small inn, but rooms have AC and there is a pool. In Tikal, the Jungle Lodge runs on a generator with power only mornings and afternoons. The swimming pool can be refreshing after warm jungle days. Casa de Don David is a quaint tourist hotel.

SUGGESTED FLIGHTS: United Airlines offers nonstop flights between Houston IAH and Guatemala City GUA.

NOTE – flight from Flores to Guatemala City IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE. The flight on 16 March departs Flores around 7:30 am. You'll need to collect baggage in Guatemala City and re-check on United.

This is the suggested itinerary for you.

- 05 March 9:35 am – depart IAH on UA 1751 12:35 – arrive GUA
- 16 March 12:30 pm – depart GUA on UA 1903 4:30 pm – arrive IAH (*Schedules as of time of publication*)

COST FOR MAIN TOUR:

- \$3975 per person in double occupancy with minimum 6 participants. (maximum 10).
- Single \$440. Singles are limited. *Rooms are either a smaller room or a double at single rate.*
- To confirm your spot, please complete the reservation form on-line.
- Deposit \$750 to hold space; final payment will due November 5, 2022.
- Cancellation policy–Deposit is non-refundable after 30 days. From 120 to 90 days (Nov 5-Dec 5, 2021) prior to departure, 25% penalty. Inside 90 days – non-refundable. Name changes may be allowed.
- No refunds for unused parts of tour.

INCLUDED:

- Transportation as listed by van or jeep
- One-way flight Flores-Guatemala City
- 11 nights lodging with taxes included
- Services of local bilingual guides
- Entry fees to parks, etc
- Meals as listed
- Basic gratuities for hotels, meals, & driver
- Carbon offset for in-country tour
- Donation to GCBO

NOT INCLUDED:

- International airfare
- Drinks
- Gratuities to local guides*(See suggestions)
- Travel Insurance (highly recommended)
- Personal expenses

**Suggested tipping for guides:*

- John, your lead guide: \$10-15 per person/per day
- Local guide in Tikal: \$10-15 per person