



Mass Audubon
Natural History Travel



Up-close at Tikal by Laura Hare

Guatemala: Birds, Jungles, Ancient Cultures

Leader: Sue MacCallum
February 22–29, 2020

Guatemala, a country at the heart of the Maya world, is known for its vibrant indigenous culture, ancient Maya sites, and natural treasures waiting to be discovered.

*Optional Extension: February 29–
March 3, 2020*

This trip combines some of Guatemala's best birding sites with visits to archaeological ruins to examine how human history and natural resources have intersected throughout the centuries. Enjoy birding in famous and important Maya archaeological sites, largely in the Petén and Tikal regions of the north. Under the leadership of Mass Audubon and expert local guides, you'll have the chance to explore lowland tropical forest, savanna, a Ramsar wetland, river systems, and more, seeking out rare and endemic species while meeting with residents along the way.



Great Curassow by Dave Larson



Scarlet Macaw, via Holbrook Travel

ABOUT THIS TRIP

FOCUS: Birds. Our days will be filled with birding, without neglecting opportunities to observe other fauna, flora, and cultural highlights.

PACE AND COMFORT: Relaxing pace compared to other birding trips! Full days of birding. Transportation will be in a small bus; walks and birding will be on easy-to-moderate trails (distances up to 2.5 miles).

LODGING: Good, comfortable jungle lodges with birding right on the grounds, private rooms and bathrooms, excellent local food.

WEATHER: Generally warm (75-85F), humid, occasional rainfall.

ITINERARY: Depending on weather, local conditions, bird reports, and other factors, we may change the itinerary to maximize traveler safety and birding opportunities.

BIRDS: Several rarely seen and highly sought-after birds among a list that should approach 250 species (plus good chances to see some mammals).

SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS

- Great Tinamou
- Horned Guan (Endangered)
- Great Curassow (Vulnerable)
- Pheasant Cuckoo
- Rufous Sabrewing
- Blue-tailed Hummingbird
- Blue-throated Goldentail
- Sungrebe
- Agami Heron (Vulnerable)
- Black Hawk-Eagle
- Ornate Hawk-Eagle (Near-threatened)
- Slaty-tailed Trogon
- Lesson's Motmot
- Rufous-tailed Jacamar
- Pale-billed Woodpecker
- Orange-breasted Falcon (Near-threatened)
- Scarlet Macaw
- White-collared Manakin
- Azure-rumped Tanager (Endangered)



El Sombrero Ecolodge

Day-to-Day Itinerary – Main Trip

DAY 1, February 22: Arrive in Guatemala City

Please plan your flights to arrive at La Aurora International Airport in Guatemala City, Guatemala by 4:30 pm. Our local guide and driver will meet us there and take us to the hotel. We'll have our first dinner together and then go over our tour logistics and the plan for Day Two. **Overnight:** Hotel Radisson | (D)

Day 2, February 23: Laguna Yaxhá

This morning, we'll take an early-morning flight to Flores in the Petén region. We'll bird along our 2-hour drive to Yaxhá. Although not yet as well-known as Tikal, Yaxhá is an important archaeological site, which is gaining in prominence as researchers learn more about its rich history.

This area, the Yaxhá-Nakum-Naranjo National Park, protects archaeological sites, as well as a large expanse of forest. Here, large flocks of mixed parrot species move through the area at the beginning and the end of each day, including Red-shouldered, White-fronted, White-crowned, and, sometimes, Mealy Parrot. The nearby lake provides habitat for waterbirds as well as shorebirds during migration. In the open savanna along the shores of the lake, we may find Yellow-tailed Orioles. In the forests of Yaxhá, we can find Slaty-tailed, Gartered, and Black-headed Trogon and a diversity of woodcreepers, hummingbirds, and tanagers. After lunch, we'll head to our lodge to check in. **Overnight:** El Sombrero Ecolodge | (BLD)



Tikal by René Laubach

Day 3, February 24: Laguna Yaxhá

The ancient Maya city of Yaxhá comprised more than 500 structures, including nine temple pyramids. There are fewer crowds than at Tikal, making it more ideal for birding. On the quiet trails, we'll keep an eye out for the four species of Tinamou (Great, Little, Slaty-breasted, and Thicket) and the hard-to-find Pheasant Cuckoo. For those who wish, there will be an optional bird walk to search for nocturnal species. **Overnight:** El Sombrero Ecolodge | (BLD)

Day 4, February 25: Tikal

We'll start our day early with some birding around the lodge in search of Ocellated Turkey, Great Curassow, Rose-throated Tanager, Keel-billed Toucan, White-necked Puffbird, Yucatan Jay, Slaty-tailed Trogon, White-collared Manakin, Gray-throated Chat, Orange-breasted Falcon, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, and White Hawk.

After breakfast, we'll head to Tikal National Park. Archaeologists unearthed thousands of structures once swallowed by the Petén region's dense tropical jungle, and the city remains a testament to the masterful engineering of the Maya. We'll explore jungle trails, and climb to the top of the pyramids and temples to watch brilliantly colored parrots fly over the vast jungle canopy.

In the afternoon, we'll visit the Tikal Museum (Museo Sylvanus G. Morley) to view the exquisite ceramics and artifacts excavated at Tikal. In the evening, there will be optional owling near our lodge. **Overnight:** Jungle Lodge Hotel | (BLD)



Keel-billed Toucan by Dave Larson



Montezuma Oropendola, via Holbrook Travel

Day 5, February 26: Laguna del Tigre National Park

This morning, we'll drive about 3 hours to Paso Caballos, a Maya Q'eqchi' community sited at a gateway to Laguna del Tigre National Park. This community has signed agreements with the government and Wildlife Conservation Society Guatemala (WCS) for responsible land management in exchange for government and WCS assistance. As such, **the local community is invested in ecotourism** and some members are being trained as bird guides by the National Audubon Society and Wildlife Conservation Society.

Laguna del Tigre National Park is one of the most important wetlands protected by the Ramsar Convention in Guatemala: 48,000 hectares and more than 3000 species of flora make up one of the most biodiverse ecosystems of the region. In El Perú site, WCS Guatemala has established a field station where the field team performs security activities, monitoring the reproductive success of the Scarlet Macaw, and wildlife management.

Las Guacamayas is a 20-minute boat trip along the San Pedro River, with birding along the way for birds like Sungrebes and Agami Herons.

This area is growing as a birding destination, and is home to over 260 species of birds. It is one of the very few remaining nesting sites for Scarlet Macaw left in Guatemala. Other highlights include Gray-headed Kite, White-whiskered Puffbird, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, White-collared Manakin, and Yellow-billed Cacique.

In the evening, we'll have an optional trip on the Sacluc River for some nocturnal birding, search for Morelet's crocodile, various bat species, and more. **Overnight:** Las Guacamayas Biological Station | (BLD)

Day 6, February 27: Laguna del Tigre National Park

Today, we will bird Las Guacamayas Biological Station and visit El Perú archaeological site. Despite devastating clearcutting in the western Petén, the area of Laguna del Tigre National Park and El Perú (Waká) is a rich lowland tropical forest, where Crested Guans call from the trees and Great Curassows occasionally stroll across the trail. At least eight species of woodcreepers are found here, as well as huge Lineated and Pale-billed Woodpecker, Lesson's Motmot, several species of trogons, and myriad wintering migratory warblers and tropical flycatchers. **Overnight:** Las Guacamayas Biological Station | (BLD)

Day 7, February 28: Guatemala City

This morning, we will continue birding at Las Guacamayas Biological Station. We will return to our lodge for lunch and then check out from our rooms. Early this evening, we'll have our farewell dinner at a local restaurant on the lake. After dinner, it will be off to the airport for our flight back to Guatemala City. **Overnight:** Hotel Radisson | (BLD)

Day 8, February 29: Journey Home

For those returning home, we'll bring you to the Guatemala City airport. For those who are going on the Highland Extension, you will be transferred to Finca los Tarrales. (B)

Day-to-Day Itinerary – Highlands Extension

Day 9, February 29: Los Tarrales Reserve

After breakfast, we'll head to Finca Los Tarrales. Los Tarrales Reserve ranges from the lowlands at 2500 ft to the top of the volcano at almost 10,000 feet, providing different bird habitats. **More than 330 bird species have been recorded in Los Tarrales.**

The reserve is part of the Atitlán Important Bird Area, and harbors 21 regional endemic bird species, including Horned Guan, Highland Guan, Azure-rumped Tanager, and Blue-tailed Hummingbird. There is also an impressive abundance of migratory birds here, including Swainson's Thrush, Tennessee, Magnolia, and Black-and-white Warbler, Western Tanager, and Orchard Oriole. It is a good place for raptors as well, including the Black Hawk-Eagle, and sometimes the gorgeous Black-and-white Owl. Morning and evening are great for commuting parrots, with four species of parakeets and parrots typically seen.

We'll eat lunch in full view of the lodge's wonderful fruit feeders with hopes of observing as many of the regular visitors as possible: Yellow-throated and Scrub Euphonia, Yellow-winged and Blue-gray Tanager, Spot-breasted, Altamira, and Baltimore Oriole, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Rufous-naped Wren, Black-headed Saltator, Summer Tanager, Red-legged Honeycreeper, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, White-bellied Chachalaca, Lesson's Motmot, Melodious Blackbird, and others.

Overnight: Finca Los Tarrales | (LD)

Day 10, March 1: Los Tarrales Reserve

We'll bird the La Rinconada trail (3/4-mile loop) through a shade-coffee plantation. The trail offers views over the canopy of Inga trees, which are visited by foraging tanagers (White-winged, Western, Yellow-winged), and several nectar-feeding birds like Baltimore Oriole, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and several hummingbirds like Blue-tailed and Ruby-throated Hummingbird, White-bellied Emerald, and Blue-throated Goldentail. Dense patches of secondary growth scrub are the habitat of White-eared Ground-Sparrow, Rufous-capped Warbler, and Cabanis's Wren. Long-tailed Manakins can be seen year-round.

Los Tarrales is private and self-sustaining; costs are covered from income selling coffee, ornamental plants, honey, and tourism. Sixty Maya Kaqchikel families live within the protected area, working in agricultural production, as forest rangers, and in tourism. **Overnight:** Finca Los Tarrales | (BLD)

Day 11, March 2: Los Tarrales Reserve

After breakfast, we'll bird the lodge grounds, then head to Antigua to visit Finca El Pilar, a private reserve with white pine, oak, and cypress forest and excellent trails for birding. The former farm has been rededicated to conservation: reforestation, security patrols to protect wild orchids, birds, and to prevent illegal harvesting. The farm also provides water to the surrounding communities. Rich with bird species, we'll start birding in the parking lot, then bird along a 1.8-mile nature trail /dirt road. (Please note that the trail has several steep stairways with handrails.)

We'll take time to visit some of the many hummingbird feeders where we'll look for the regional endemics Rufous Sabrewing and Green-throated Mountain-gem in addition to Rivoli's, White-eared, Azure-crowned, Berylline, and Blue-tailed Hummingbird, Violet Sabrewing, and Mexican Violetear. After lunch we'll head to our hotel. You'll be on your own tonight to explore Antigua and try the local cuisine. **Overnight:** Finca Los Tarrales | (BLD)

Day 12, March 3: Homeward Bound

After breakfast, we'll return to Guatemala City, about an hour away depending on traffic.



Ruddy Woodcreeper by Bill Gette

Mass Audubon Naturalist



Sue MacCallum is the Director of Mass Audubon's South Shore Sanctuaries in Marshfield. During her 20 years with Mass Audubon, she has coordinated and led natural history and birding trips to many North American hot spots.

Her international trips include many visits to Costa Rica, Ecuador, and the Galápagos Islands, as well as the Amazon Basin in Peru. These trips to the neotropics have sparked her fascination with tropical ecology, which she enjoys sharing.

Local Guide



Pablo Najarro Polanco has been guiding tours since 1999, strengthening his skills and knowledge through Audubon ecotourism guide training programs. For the last 8 years, Pablo has lead cultural and bird groups in Central America, but his main hobby is watching and teaching about birds. In his quest to fulfill his dream of teaching all Guatemalan people about birds, he created the first bird club in the country: Petén Birders Club. Pablo, his wife, Lili, and two children, Pablito and Cesar Adrian, share a love of birds and often go birding together.

Main Tour Price: \$3700 per person, double occupancy. Single supplement: \$700 (*single rooms are very limited*). Price based on a minimum of 10 travelers. If the group does not reach the minimum, additional small group supplement fee (~\$300) may be added.

Price Includes:

- All meals and accommodations as shown in the itinerary
- Services of Mass Audubon naturalist leader
- Local guides and naturalists
- All excursions and entrance fees
- Extensive trip preparation notes and bird checklist
- Transportation within Guatemala, including flight to and from Flores
- Medical evacuation insurance
- Carbon offset credits for your international flights
- All tips and gratuities (*included if we have the minimum of 10*)

Price Excludes:

- International airfare
- Passport and visa fees; trip cancellation insurance
- Airport taxes; excess baggage charges
- Items of a personal nature, including alcoholic beverages, laundry, and telephone calls; other items not specifically mentioned as included.

Highlands Extension Price: \$2095 per person, double occupancy. Single supplement: \$200 (*single rooms are very limited*).

Price Includes:

- All meals and accommodations as shown in the itinerary
- Services of Mass Audubon naturalist leader (with a minimum of 8 travelers)
- Local guides and naturalists
- All excursions and entrance fees
- Extensive trip preparation notes and bird checklist
- Transportation within Guatemala
- Medical evacuation insurance
- Carbon offset credits for your international flights
- All tips and gratuities (*included if we have the minimum of 6*)

Exclusions: same as main trip.

HOW TO BOOK

Email or call us at travel@massaudubon.org or 800-289-9504 to reserve your place.

APPLICATIONS, RESERVATIONS, DEPOSITS

Early applications are strongly encouraged. Trip rosters usually must be finalized four months before departure! **All applications must be accompanied by a completed reservation form and \$500 deposit.** Deposits can be by check or credit card (Visa or MasterCard). We reserve the right to decline your application. In the case of questionable health, we reserve the right to require a physician's certification to affirm you are capable of the activities. Final payment is due 90 days before the departure date. **Final payment must be by check or money order.**

RATES: All tour prices are based on double occupancy. If you would like us to find you a roommate, we will do our best, but cannot guarantee a share. If we cannot find a share, you will need to pay the single supplement. All forms and fares are accurate at the time of publication (May 2019) but are subject to change at any time prior to departure. It is our policy to only pass on the actual amount of any increases in airfares or land costs such as those increases due to the devaluation of the dollar. Rarely, a price increase may be called for if the group falls below the minimum, as listed in the itinerary.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS: A U.S. passport valid for at least six months beyond the trip's departure date is required.

FLIGHTS: You, the traveler, are responsible for booking and paying for your own international flights. Once you reserve your space, we will provide you with suggested flights and tell you which flights our staff will take. You may book flights directly with the airline, online, or with a travel agent. Please be aware that most tickets are non-refundable, therefore you should not book your flight arrangements until you have checked with us to be sure the tour has the minimum number of participants for the trip to go. We ask that you provide us with your flight details.

TRIP INSURANCE: A brochure and application for optional trip cancellation, illness, and baggage insurance will be sent to you upon registration. We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself. See insuremytrip.com.

PHOTOS: Mass Audubon reserves the right to make use of any photographs taken on the tour. We guarantee that no photos of a compromising nature will be used. If you have questions or concerns, please contact us.

CANCELLATION POLICY: If you need to change your booking, you must inform us immediately in writing. All cancellations must be done in writing and are effective upon receipt in the Massachusetts Audubon Travel Office. Cancellations received up to 121 days prior to departure will be refunded deposits less a \$300 per person fee. For cancellations between 120 and 90 days prior to departure, no deposits will be refunded, but any payment balance will. There are no refunds for cancellations 90 days or less from departure. We strongly urge all travelers to purchase trip cancellation insurance. You will be sent information from the Massachusetts Audubon Society upon receipt of your deposit.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY: Although every precaution is taken to safeguard you and your belongings, group travel trips by their nature involve a certain amount of risk. Trip participants should understand that the domestic and international trips sponsored/operated by Massachusetts Audubon Society (Mass Audubon Tours)—hereafter

collectively M.A.S.—involve known and unknown risks. M.A.S. assumes no responsibility for injuries, death, financial losses or damage to clients' property caused by or occurring during participation in any of the travel trips sponsored/operated by M.A.S. Trip participants must assume responsibility for having sufficient skill and fitness to participate in the trips and activities offered or sponsored by M.A.S. Trip participants must also certify that they have no medical, mental or physical conditions which could interfere with their abilities to participate in the activities and/or trips they are participating in and they must assume and bear the cost of all risks that may be created, directly or indirectly, by any such condition. It is the responsibility of trip participants to have in place adequate insurance to cover any injury, damage or emergency transportation costs related to their travel and/or participation in trip activities and/or to bear the costs of such injury, damage or emergency transportation costs. Because of the risks associated with the travel trips sponsored by M.A.S. we urge all trip participants to supplement their own insurance with travel or vacation or emergency response types of insurance. M.A.S. requires that all trip participants acknowledge and assume these risks by reading and signing an M.A.S. Release and Waiver and Assumption of Risk contract prior to departure.

CONDITIONS OF TRAVEL: Travelers will be provided with an itinerary and trip preparation information. It is expected that travelers will read this information prior to trip departure. Travelers will be responsible for completing an application reservation form, including the personal information and a release of liability (see attached). Travelers will be expected to abide by the terms set for in the invoice. During the tour, travelers are asked to respect and follow the directions of their guide and leader.





Blue-crowned Motmot, courtesy Holbrook Travel