

Texas Ornithological Society

2025 Guatemala Birding

Feb 9 – 20



JB
Journeys

See the Golden-cheeked Warbler and other Texas migrants in their winter territory!

Join TOS for this unique birding tour to beautiful Guatemala. This itinerary offers the opportunity to bird 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. Your participation in our tour benefits both **Texas Ornithological Society** and **Community Cloud Forest Conservation (CCFC)**, an environmental education program located near Cobán in central Guatemala. You will stay at the CCFC Center and see for yourself the work being done by the Cahill family, among which is the reforestation of the winter home of the **Golden-cheeked Warbler** and other threatened migrant birds.



Guatemala offers you an amazing history of birding and conservation. First, begin birding the area of Tecpán, where **Dr. Alexander Skutch** began his studies of birds and plants. Here you may see several range-restricted birds such as Blue-throated Motmot, Black-capped Siskin, and what is possibly the most beautiful of all warblers, the Pink-headed Warbler.

Then work your way to the cloud forest, and search for the near mythical **Resplendent Quetzal**. Visit several private reserves set up specifically for migrating birds. This area also gives Texas birders the possibility to see the **Golden-cheeked Warbler** on its wintering grounds in the very cloud forest where the species was first described back in 1860! You will spend three nights and days at CCFC's environmental center, an off-the-grid structure and a marvel in engineering.

The tour ends in **Tikal**, perhaps the greatest of the Mayan cities, where information about Maya culture and history will add to the experience. There are more amazing birds to see here as you walk among pyramids, like Keel-billed Toucan, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Ocellated Turkey, Tody Motmot, several species of parrots, and raptors including the rare Orange-breasted Falcon. It is also possible to see some cool mammals like Coatis, Agoutis, and Spider and Black Howler Monkeys.



John Cahill, the top birder in Guatemala, is your lead guide and he will be assisted by a local guide. Only in his 20s, John is part of the new generation of birders. Comments from prior tours refer 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.](#)

You will have a chance to meet other members of the Cahill family while staying at the campus of [Community Cloud Forest Conservation](#), operated by Tara & Rob Cahill. CCFC 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 from the surrounding Mayan communities in sustainable agro-ecology, nutrition, cooking, health and family planning, career and educational options, eco-tourism, and other life-skills, with the goal of helping them stay in school and continue their education. A further benefit of agro-ecology is re-forestation of the cloud forest.

In addition to donations to both organizations, a half-acre cloud forest restoration will be dedicated in the name of [Texas Ornithological Society](#), thus offsetting our in-country carbon output while enhancing bird habitat. This tour is an excellent example of sustainable tourism.

Christine Turnbull of the TOS board will escort the group. In previous lives, she served the US Peace Corps in Honduras and El Salvador, where she worked in Natural Resources and Environmental Education working in and with local communities. She was able to visit cultural heritage and birding sites in Guatemala. While employed by Mass Audubon, she led trips to Peru, Costa Rica, Cuba, and many other destinations. Travel, culture, and birds are tops on her list.

Day 1, Feb 9, Sun: : Arrive Guatemala City mid-day. Transfer from Guatemala City to Antigua, approximately 1.5-2 hours. Once all have arrived, you'll meet with John for dinner and go over the schedule. 3 nights in Antigua. (D)

Day 2, Feb 10, Mon: Tecpán – This day will be spent birding at Caleras Chichavac Private Reserve and Rincon Suizo's Private Reserve. Overnight in Antigua.(B,L,D)

Bar-winged Oriole, Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Rufous Sabrewing, Slender Sheartail, Sparkling-tailed Hummingbird, Belted Flycatcher, Black-throated Jay, Red-faced Warbler, Garnet-throated Hummingbird, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, Black-capped Siskin, Pink-headed Warbler, Mountain Trogon, Rufous-browed Wren, Blue-throated Motmot, Mountain Thrush, Hooded Grosbeak



Day 3, Feb 11, Tue: Finca el Pilar & Antigua - This morning you will bird Finca el Pilar, just south of Antigua. The finca is a haven for nature lovers, with more than 10 kilometers of trails through forests filled with towering cypress, oak, and white pine trees and home to several regional endemic species.

Greater Pewee, Gray Silky-flycatcher, Black-capped Swallows, Hammond's Flycatchers, lack-capped Swallows, Blue-throated Motmot, Tufted Flycatcher, Flame-colored Tanager, Hooded Grosbeak, White-eared Ground-Sparrow, Red-faced Warbler, Slate-throated Redstart, Blue-headed and Hutton's vireo, regional endemic Green-throated Mountain-gem, Rivoli's, White-eared, Azure-crowned, and Berylline hummingbirds, Violet Sabrewing, Mexican Violetear.

After lunch, you have the opportunity for a walking tour of the beautiful colonial city of Antigua with a local historian. The tour focuses on the city's history, cultural trends, and restoration efforts. You'll visit the City Hall Palace, Palace of the Captain's General, the Cathedral with its majestic ruins, and the best museums in town at Paseo de los Museos in the Santo Domingo Hotel complex. Overnight in Antigua.(B,L,D)

Day 4, Feb 12, Wed: Granados – It's an early departure with breakfast on the road as you head to Granados in the Motagua Valley. Lunch in the cloud forest and arrive at Posada del Quetzal late afternoon. Total drive time approximately 4-5 hours, with birding stops along the way. 2 nights Posada del Quetzal. (B,L,D)

White-lored Gnatcatcher, Russet-crowned and Turquoise-browed Motmots, Streak-backed Oriole, Stripe-headed Sparrow, Orange-fronted Parakeet, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Buff-collared Nightjar, Crested Bobwhite, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Varied Bunting

Day 5, Feb 13, Thu: Cloud Forest Birding – Morning birding at Los Ranchitos Private Reserve about ½ hour away. Afternoon birding in pine-oak forest at Rio Escondido Private Reserve, which was created to protect migrating birds, such as the Golden-cheeked Warbler. Overnight Posada del Quetzal (B,L,D)

Resplendent Quetzal, Unicolored Jay, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Azure-hooded Jay, Black-headed and Spotted Nightingale-Thrush, Violet Sabrewing, Highland Guan, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Painted Redstart, Golden-cheeked Warbler

Day 6, Feb 14, Fri: Rubel Chaim/CCFC Center – Morning birding at Los Ranchitos again. Afternoon drive to the CCFC agro-ecology center, approximately 1-1.5 hours. Bird around the Center, where you stay 3 nights.(B,L,D)



Belted Flycatcher, Golden-cheeked Warbler, Guatemalan Pygmy-Owl, Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, Bushy-crested Jay, Brown-capped Vireo, Golden-winged Warbler, Ocellated Quail

Day 7, Feb 15, Sat: Laguna Chichoj – Rest morning at the Center. Afternoon birding Laguna Chichoj. (B,L,D)

Golden-cheeked Warbler, Bushy-crested Jay, Ocellated Quail, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser, Ruddy Crake, Spotted Rail, Limpkin, Spot-breasted Oriole, White-throated Flycatcher, Gray-crowned Yellowthroat.

Day 8, Feb 16, Sun: Rubel Chaim – Morning birding the cloud forests above the agro-ecology center. Afternoon free for touring the agro-ecology center campus. Overnight CCFC Center. (B,L,D)

Golden-cheeked Warbler, Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, Ocellated Quail, Resplendent Quetzal, Rose-throated Becard, Crimson-collared Tanager, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Green-throated Mountain-Gem, Flame-colored Tanager.

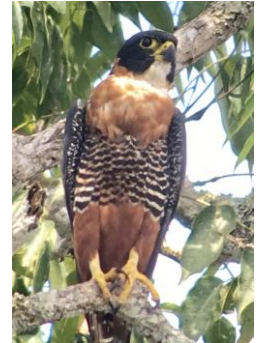
Day 9, Feb 17, Mon: Cloud Forest to Rain Forest – This is the longest day of driving, with a total of 7-8 hours, broken up with stops for birding. Morning birding Chajbaoc Private Reserve and in pine forest at Las Victorias National Park. Afternoon birding in the rain forest in the Rosario National Park. Late afternoon/early evening, you arrive in Tikal, the fabulous Mayan city, for 2 nights at Jungle Lodge at the ruins. (B,L,D)

Scaled Antpitta, Mottled Owl, Yellow-backed Oriole, Emerald Toucanet, Slate-colored Solitaire, Slate-throated Redstart, Rusty Sparrow, Lesson's Motmot, Grace's Warbler, Black-capped Swallow, Collared Trogon, Black-collared Hawk, Black-crowned Tityra, Olive-backed Euphonia, Golden-hooded Tanager, White-whiskered Puffbird



Day 10, Feb 18, Tue Tikal – Full day birding the archeological site in Tikal National Park, including the famous abandoned airstrip. In addition to birding. One night you'll look for owls. Overnight Jungle Lodge. (B,L,D)

Ocellated Turkey, Black-throated Shrike-Tanager, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Yellow-bellied Tyrannulet, Gray-headed Tanager, Tawny-winged Woodcreeper, Red-capped Manakin, Orange-breasted Falcon, Gray-necked Wood-Rail, Giant Cowbird, Montezuma Oropendola, Black-cowled Oriole, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Purple-crowned Fairy, Brown-hooded Parrot, Boat-billed Heron, White-bellied Emerald, Blue Bunting



Day 11, Feb 19, Wed: Tikal to El Remate - A last morning of birding before the drive to El Remate on the shore of late Peten Itza, the drive about 1-1.5 hours. There may be time for some afternoon and evening birding around the grounds of our hotel, which offers a great place for a sunset! Overnight Casa de don David. (B,L,D)

Day 12, Feb 20, Thu: Departure – Very early this morning, you'll leave for Flores airport, and the flight from Flores to Guatemala City is included, which departs Flores around 8:00 am, arriving Guatemala City at 9:00 am. 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.*

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LODGING: We have selected a variety of lodging close to birding sites to reduce driving time

- Hotel in Antigua tba
- Posada del Quetzal is a simple, local inn in the cloud forest of central Guatemala.
- CCFC Center is off-the-grid with composting toilets.
- Jungle Lodge or Tikal Inn in Tikal runs on a generator with power only mornings and afternoons.
- Casa de Don David is a quaint tourist hotel.

NOTE: All hotels have hot water showers but may not have hot water in the sink. Also, they may not have washcloths; if you are used to using one, we suggest you bring your own along with a Ziplock bag to carry it. Washer/dryer available at CCFC at a fee.

NOTE REGARDING WIFI: As you are traveling in remote areas, Wifi can be difficult. However, in Antigua and CCFC both have good wifi. Posada del Quetzal, Jungle Lodge or Tikal Inn, and Don David have wifi, mostly in main buildings. In case of emergency, you can give your loved ones contact at JB Journeys who can get in touch with your guides.

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COST:

- \$4,995 per person in double occupancy for TOS members with minimum 8 participants.
- With minimum 6, \$5,495.
- Non-members plus \$100 which includes a 1-year membership.
- Single \$395. Singles are very limited. *Rooms are either a smaller room or a double at single rate.*
- Minimum 6 to operate, maximum 10 participants.
- To confirm your spot, please [complete the reservation form on-line.](#)
- Deposit \$1000 to hold space; final payment will due Nov 10, 2024
- **Cancellation:** After 30 days, deposit is non-refundable. Once paid in full, from 90-60 days prior to departure, 50% penalty. Inside 60 days – non-refundable. Name changes may be allowed. There is no refund for unused parts of the tour. ***Travel insurance** to include trip cancellation coverage in addition to medical coverage and medical evacuation is required. Your tour leader will request proof of insurance.***

INCLUDED:

Transportation as listed by van
Local flight, Flores to Guatemala City, Feb 20
11 nights lodging with taxes included
Services of local bilingual bird guide(s)
Escorted by Christine Turnbull of TOS
Entry fees to parks, etc
Meals as listed
Basic gratuities for hotels, meals, & driver
Carbon offset for in-country tour
Donation to TOS & CCFC

NOT INCLUDED:

International airfare (into/out of Guatemala City)
Drinks
Gratuities to local guides*(See suggestions)
Travel Insurance – **required ****
Personal expenses
**Suggested tipping for guides:*
John Cahill your lead guide: \$15-20 per person/per day.
Second local guide we suggest \$10-15 per person/per day.

TRAVEL INSURANCE is required for this trip with Texas Ornithological Society. Please start here at [TravelGuard](#) but feel free to look elsewhere, like [Squaremouth](#), a comparison tool. We recommend trip cancellation coverage as well as comprehensive medical coverage that includes medical evacuation. MedEvac can be purchased separately as you'll see in TravelGuard's offerings.

Also, if you are paying for your trip by credit card, check with the card company to see if they cover any insurance for travelers.

NOTE REGARDING FLIGHTS: The itinerary is based on flights arriving Guatemala City airport by early afternoon on Day 1 where you will be met by our driver for the 1-2 hour drive to Antigua. United, American, and Delta (among others) flights arrive by 1 PM. Later arrivals may incur an additional transfer fee. If you prefer to arrive a day early, we can arrange an overnight and pick up to meet the others on arrival day, at additional cost. The tour ends in Flores, the airport serving Tikal, and the flight from Flores to Guatemala City on Day 12 is included in your fee. You should plan your international departure flights from Guatemala at or after 12 noon. You will need to collect any checked bags and re-check for the international flight.