

# WINTER BIRDING IN MAYAN MEXICO

The ruins are great,  
the accommodations  
first-rate and the  
birding is spectacular

by John Alcock

THE YUCATÁN IS a peninsula that curves northward into the sea, as though twisting away from Mexico to assert its independence. This fact of geography is not surprising, for the Yucatán carves out a separate world that is bonded to a unique history. As you journey through the region, ancient cities seem to rise up, with tower-

ing pyramids and temples that demonstrate a mastery of engineering and mathematics. Here the intricate hand-carved monuments are more than clues to an anthropological story—they are exquisite works of art inspired by a religious vision of the cosmos. This is the land of the Maya, an ancient civilization that flourished between 200 and 700 A.D.

In the winter months, the Yucatán is also a birder's paradise. During a two-week trip around the peninsula and into the neighboring region of Chiapas, birders should be able to spot 200–300 species at the archaeological ruins and on connecting roads. Because many birds inhabit areas in and around the ruins, you can walk along ancient paths and explore some of the greatest archaeological finds on the conti-

nent, while parrots, hummingbirds, toucans, and trogons fly overhead. Motmots, jacamars and Jabirus live here, and side trips from the ruins will take you to thousands of flamingos breeding near the coast.

The Yucatán is bounded by the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean, and by the foothills of the central mountains of Chiapas, Guatemala, and Belize. The habitat zones include sandy beaches, often backed by narrow strips of palm trees, behind which are lagoons and mangrove swamps. Inland, there is arid scrub woodland growing on a base of fossilized coral reef in the north, and dry scrub gradually moving toward humid, more luxuriant growth in the lowland in the south.

## ENVIRONS OF MÉRIDA

Mérida is connected to its port, Pro-

greso, 22 miles away, by a main boulevard which becomes highway 261. On the right, about 10 miles from the city center, a side road leads 4 miles east to the archaeological zone of Dzibilchaltún. At the entrance to the zone a small museum contains artifacts which offer the visitor a clear picture of everyday life during the pre-Columbian era. Less of the ruins have been cleared and restored than in the better-known preserves. The principal features are the *cenote*, a limestone sinkhole that was a main source of water for the ancient community, and the Temple of the Seven Dolls, at the far end of a quarter-mile section of cobblestone Mayan road. Birders should explore paths that lead through the scrub to the left of the temple. Continue down these paths until you come upon an abandoned sisal field at the end of the park. From across a low stone wall the loud repetitious *che-che-che-che-che* of a Mangrove Vireo may greet you. Keep alert for the vocalizer, similar to a White-eyed Vireo, but unlikely to be confused with it. Just past the temple a grassy track leads off to the left. Down it you may find a pepper-shrike or a Turquoise-browed Motmot. Don't worry if you miss them; you'll have additional chances at Uxmal and Chichén Itzá.

Back on highway 261 heading north about a mile or two before Progreso, the road to Yukalpetén takes off to the left, through mangroves. Along it will be all the possible egrets and herons, some shorebirds, probably a Green Kingfisher, and overhead innumerable Mangrove Swallows. Go out to the coast east of Progreso and look in the scrubby vegetation just inland from the beach for Yucatan Wrens and Mexican Sheartails.

During the winter you can find about 20,000 flamingos 60 miles west of Mérida on the edge of the Parque Natural del Flamenco. You can see some of these graceful crea-

tures from the bridge into Celestún, where boatmen will be vying eagerly to take visitors out for a closer look at flocks feeding on the shores of the Celestún estuary. Be aware that at times the boats approach too near the birds and disturb them in attempts to make them fly for photographers. The Nature Conservancy works with the Mexican Government at this refuge and at Río Lagartos, where the flamingos breed. The Rufous-necked Wood-Rail is a local specialty here. Be sure to look for it.

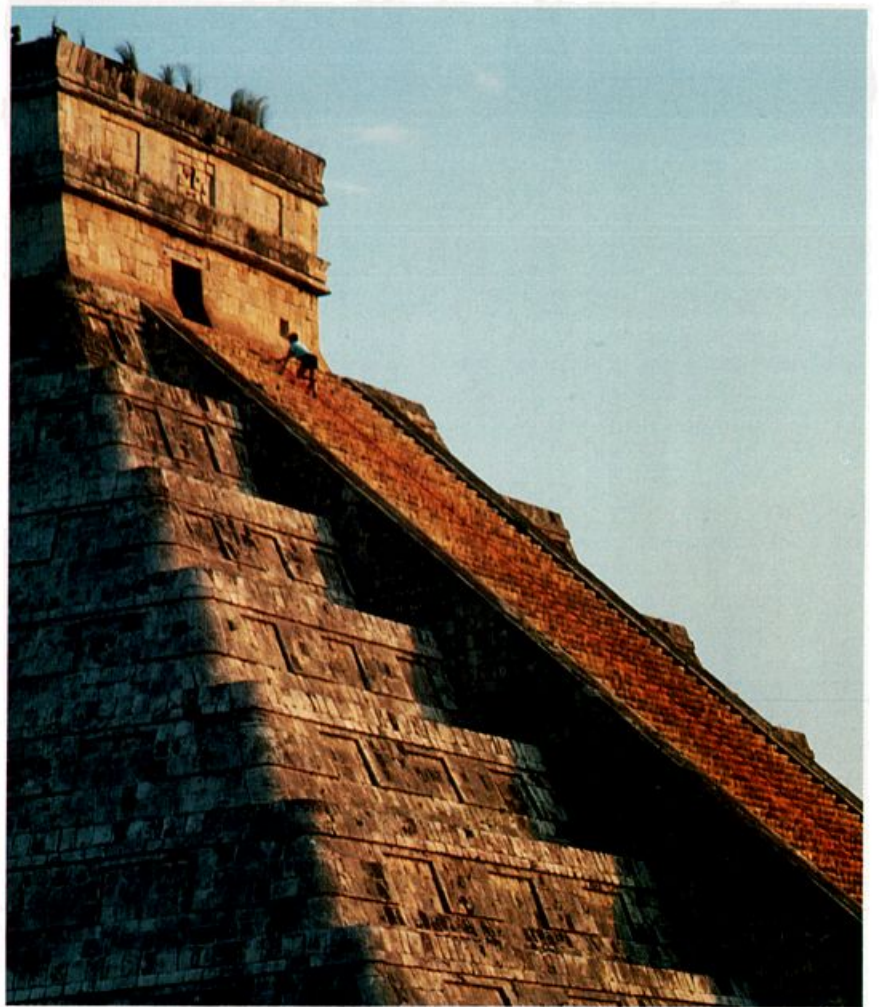
### CHICHÉN ITZÁ

An inspiring Post-Classic Mayan ceremonial city, Chichén Itzá lies on the road from Mérida to Cancun. Chichén Itzá is an elegant birding place, and one of the best-known of all the Mayan ruins.

In early morning you'll discover along the road that leads from the back gate of the archaeological zone to the hotels a true birding "hot-spot". The observer is almost sure to see such striking Mexican species as Yucatan Jay, White-fronted Parrot, Collared Aracari, Squirrel Cuckoo, Masked Tityra, Melodious Blackbird, and Yellow-throated Euphonia in addition to various migrants from eastern North America.

The grounds of Hacienda Chichén, one of the hotels, offers its guests even more highly concentrated birding. Although only a couple of acres in extent, its flowering trees and shrubs and its privacy ensure better looks at the birds than can be obtained on the road outside. Often Fork-tailed Emeralds, Buff-bellied and Cinnamon hummingbirds can be found here.

The tourist buses begin to disgorge passengers at Chichén Itzá at about 10 A.M. and most leave by 3:30 P.M. In the hours before the bulk of the tourists arrive and after they leave, explore the area away from the ballcourt and the *cenote sagrado* (the sacred well into whose depths the Mayan priests threw their



**The Great Pyramid on the grounds of the Mayan ceremonial city of Chichén Itzá is one of the most famous ruins in the New World. Not only is the city itself spectacular, but bird watching in and around the grounds is fantastic, especially for the early birder. Photograph/Mexican Ministry of Tourism.**

sacrificial offerings, which included both prisoners of war and semi-volunteer teenagers). This northern sector of the park should prove productive. The open area near the *observatorio* usually has a Gray-crowned Yellowthroat. Around its perimeter, numerous paths into the scrub have the advantage of being out of the scope of the average visitor. Reconnoitering may add White-bellied Wren, Spot-breasted Wren, and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl to your list.

While at Chichén Itzá see the *luz y sonido* (light and sound) show based on Mayan mythology. It is presented under the stars in the Plaza de Armas in front of the Great Pyramid and heightens one's sense of continuity with the past.

### UXMAL

Situated 60 miles south of Mérida, Uxmal is another great Mayan monument that attracts large numbers of visitors. Although in general the habitat and the birds are the same as those of Chichén Itzá, around its older section known as the "Northern Zone", Uxmal has a section once cleared that is covered in grassy weeds, and a sprinkling of small thorn trees. The old road into the ruins is now blocked at its far end and thus unused. It meets the highway a quarter mile before the present turn off to the park. To the right along this lane, a fence marks the boundary of the weedy area; to the left is a dense scrub thicket. The setting seems designed for watching birds, especially grosbeaks, buntings,



## GETTING AROUND THE YUCATÁN

In stark contrast to the dizzying mountainous heights of the rest of Mexico, the Yucatán sprawls out with resolute flatness. This makes for easier travel, both behind the wheel and on foot. Because most of the region is near sea level, you don't have to worry about fatigue from high altitudes.

However, while several major archaeological sites, such as Chichén Itzá and Uxmal, are well cleared and easily accessible, walking can be difficult through some of the less excavated ruins near the jungle. Many of these rugged sites offer top birding, so it's worth it to tough it out if you can. Prepare yourself with mosquito repellent and sturdy shoes.

Driving is the best way for birders to get around. Most major American car rental agencies have offices in Mérida, including Avis, Hertz, and National. Economy rentals cost about \$250 per week, with some companies tacking on mileage fees. Be sure to make arrangements well in advance, as cars, particularly those with air conditioning, often sell out.

Although tour buses galore leave Mérida for Uxmal for Chichén Itzá, and from Cancún to Chichén Itzá and Tulúm, they can be ruled out for the birder. Buses, including local transport, are apt to be crowded, slow, uncomfortable, and difficult for people who do not speak Spanish. Only from Villahermosa to Palenque would most visitors find them marginally acceptable.

### AKUMAL, COBÁ AND TULÚM

**LOCATION:** All 60-70 miles south-southwest of Cancún. Rte 307 south.

**DATES OF STRUCTURES:** From 600 A.D.

**MAJOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

**El Castillo (Tulúm):** Temple to Snake Goddess Kukulcan. Steep climb for view of Caribbean.



Map of Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico showing important archaeological sites.

**Mayan Highways (Cobá):** System of *sabes*, ancient wide roads, for center of commerce.

**Pyramid of the Descending God (Cobá):** Tallest pyramid in northern Yucatán at 138 feet. Contains stone stelae carved to depict Mayan stories.

### PALENQUE

**LOCATION:** 95 miles southeast of Villahermosa. 325 miles from Mérida.

**DATES OF STRUCTURES:** 500 to 700 A.D.

**MAJOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

**Temple of Inscription:** Stairs lead more than 70 feet down to royal tomb of Mayan leader buried during seventh century A.D. beneath pyramid.

**Palace:** Complex set of buildings and courtyards. Masterful friezes.

### UXMAL

**LOCATION:** Rte. 261, 60 miles south of Mérida.

**DATES OF STRUCTURES:** 600 to 900 A.D.

**MAJOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

**Palace of the Governor:** 20,000 hand-carved stones in geometric friezes.

**Pyramid of the Magician:** Steep climb to 3-room sanctuary for stunning view.

**Nunnery Quadrangle:** Four buildings with large-scale mosaics.

### MÉRIDA AND ENVIRONS

#### DZIBILCHALTÚN

**LOCATION:** 10 miles north of Mérida on Rte 261. Then 4 miles east down a marked side road.

**DATES OF STRUCTURES:** 800 BC.

**MAJOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

**Temple of Seven Dolls:** Seven clay dolls were found during excavation of the temple. They were probably used in ceremonies to ward off illness.

Cenote Community well

#### CHICHÉN ITZÁ

**LOCATION:** Rte. 180 East, 75 miles from Mérida.

**DATES OF STRUCTURES:** Northern Zone: Post 900 A.D.

Southern Zone: 600 to 900 A.D.

**MAJOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

**Temple of Kukulán:** Pyramid with 365 steps for days of the year and 18 terraces for the months in the Mayan calendar. Atop is temple to snake goddess that creates optical illusion two days a year.

**Group of Thousand Columns:** Courtyards, platforms and terraces with carving of warriors.

**Sacred Cenote:** Enormous limestone well, sometimes used for human sacrifices.

**El Caracol:** Spiral stairway to observatory of ancient star gazers.

**Nunnery:** Named by Spaniards. You'll enter through mouth of stone monster.



and sparrows. There should also be Black-headed and Grayish saltators, Painted Buntings, Olive and Green-backed sparrows, Blue-black and Yellow-faced grassquits, and White-collared Seedeaters. Also, here be on the lookout for Lesser Roadrunners.

Great Kiskadee, Social and Boat-billed flycatchers are present at Uxmal, as are Brown-crested and Dusky-capped flycatchers. You're almost guaranteed to see the Turquoise-browed Motmot, and you may find the Blue-crowned. Look for Black-throated Bobwhites, and Cave Swallows and especially Gray-throated Chats here. The bobwhites are usually found in an open copse cleared of underbrush inside the front boundary of the park. The swallows roost in the dark vaulted rooms of the buildings around the "Nuns Quadrangle". They can be heard squeaking inside and are usually seen at dusk hawking insects.

#### **AKUMAL, TULÚM, AND COBÁ**

Many vacationers at Cancún make a day-long excursion 70 miles south to the walled ruins of Tulúm, an important Mayan center up to the time of the conquest. It has now surpassed Chichén Itzá as the most visited site. Although interesting architecturally, the preserve has little for the birder.

On the other hand, highway 307 from Cancún has some attractive locales. On the left side of the highway, a little past Puerto Morelos, is an arboretum that provides a winter home for many North American migrants. They can be seen along a comfortable loop trail. Farther on, 65 miles from Cancún, is Akumal, a small private development with houses strung along a narrow strip between the beach and mangroves. Akumal has a hotel as do two nearby similar developments, Aventural and Chemuyil. Permission can be obtained from the Akumal hotel or from the real-estate office at the gate house, to walk the road that runs alongside the swamp



The reclusive Bare-throated Tiger-Heron (*Tigrisoma mexicanum*) should be watched for along vegetated waterways and lagoon edges. Photograph/P. Alden/VIREO.



Another bird that might be found around Chichén Itzá is the disjointed-looking Squirrel Cuckoo (*Piaya cayana*). Photograph/G. Dremeaux/VIREO.



You know you're in the tropics when there are toucans around, and at Chichén Itzá the Collared Aracari (*Pteroglossus torquatus*) may be found. Photograph/J. Dunning/VIREO.



The jewel-like tanagers are among the highlights of any birding experience, and Red-legged Honeycreepers (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*) can be seen in proper forest habitat around the Yucatán. Photograph/J. Dunning/VIREO.



Coastally around the Yucatán you may encounter spectacular flocks of Greater (American) Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*). Photograph/M. P. Kahl/VIREO.





The walled, coastal ruins at Tulum provide a convenient swimming stop on your birding route. Photograph/Mexican Ministry of Tourism.

and ends at a small lagoon, which often has a Bare-throated Tiger-Heron at its coral edge. There snorkelers find multicolored tropical fish in the crystal-clear water. Noisy Plain Chalacacs greet you on a before breakfast hike, while flocks of parrots and a toucan or two fly over the swamp. You have a good chance of hearing and seeing a Black Catbird in the bushes beside the road. You also can enter the Lagoon from the main highway on a lane through government land.

Directly across from the road into Akumal, a rocky track runs into the scrub. Walk up it to find Red-billed Pigeons, White-winged and White-tipped doves, Rose-throated Tanager, White-bellied Emerald and Cinnamon hummingbirds, and Blue Buntings. Violaceous Trogons are probable. Continue on this trail until you reach a partly cleared area. Here you will encounter a cluster of three or four one-room houses with thatched roofs supported on circular walls of closely set, uncaulked poles. This design is pre-Columbian in origin. Inside the families speak a Mayan language. The Spanish taught in school is used only with the "outside world".

The ruins at Cobá, 25 miles inland from Tulum, are inviting

because very little of the park has been cleared. The great pyramid is cleaned of trees only on two sides. Looking out from its top, reputedly the highest point in Quintana Roo, one sees tree-surrounded pyramids in every direction.

Two lakes adjoining the park have Least Grebes and Olivaceous Cormorants. Spotted Rails have recently been found here but you'll need lots of patience and good luck to find them. To the right of the entrance gate is a lesser pyramid and beyond that a ruined temple on the edge of a high bank that drops off precipitously to one of the lakes. From the top of the rubble one can look into and over the trees on the bank and have a good chance of "pishing" up a mixed flock of small birds in the canopy.

#### PALENQUE

For birders, Palenque is a fabulous place. In winter one can expect to see well in excess of 150 species in a couple of days. A third of these could also be found in the arid northern region of the Yucatán. Some of these will be migrants from eastern North America. But 40% or more will be restricted in range to the humid lowlands of eastern Mexico and Central America.

To reach Palenque from Mérida



Another gem of the tropical treetops is the Golden-hooded (Masked) Tanager (*Tangara larvata*), widespread in the lowland forests from southern Mexico to the Pacific coast of Colombia and Ecuador. Photograph/J. Dunning/VIREO.



The Crimson-collared Tanager (*Ramphocelus sanguinolentus*) is widespread in dense lowland scrub from southeastern Mexico to the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. Photograph/J. Dunning/VIREO.



The striking Scarlet-rumped Tanager (*Ramphocelus passerinii*) can be found in semiopen, cultivated areas or at the forest edge. Photograph/J. Dunning/VIREO.

one option is to fly to Villahermosa and drive the 90 miles to the ruins. The alternative is to drive the entire 325 miles distance. The road to Palenque runs through wetlands with exciting birding possibilities. You can leave Chichén Itzá, Uxmal, or Mérida after lunch and make an overnight stop in Campeche (120 miles from Mérida). Beyond Escárcega the watery ditches that border the road for miles and miles support an amazingly rich complement of bird life. There will be a Snail Kite on nearly every fence post, many night-herons, Amazon and Ringed kingfishers, Crested Caracaras, Fork-tailed Flycatchers, jacanas, Limpkins, Least and Pied-billed grebes, and as the *piece de resistance* a Jabiru, Black-collared Hawk or Pinnated Bittern. Also this is often the best place to see Aplomado Falcons. Since the road stretches flat and straight for miles and has little traffic, you need not hesitate to pull over, stop, and admire your favorites close-up and for as much time as you choose.

An alternate, 100 miles longer, runs via Campeche, Ciudad del Carmen, and Villahermosa with an overnight stop in Carmen. Take the ferry from Carmen in the morning. Between Carmen and Villahermosa there will certainly be Ospreys, Great and Common black-hawks, Roadside and Black-collared hawks, Snail Kites, and Bat and Laughing falcons. This is a line-up sure to please every raptor fancier.

The archaeological zone of Palenque is situated about one-third of the way up a wooded hillside, about five miles outside of town. The cleared area with its temples covers about 20 acres.

Remember that Palenque is probably the best birding site in Mexico in winter. It's a place birders should plan to spend a good deal of time. Whatever you do, DON'T neglect the vocalizations coming from the birds deep in the bushes along the

roadsides. Be aware that Northern Bentbills and Dusky Antbirds can be found here and you'll be wise to familiarize yourself with their calls and short notes for even though this is the best place to find them, knowledge of their habitats and behaviors will

make the job considerably easier.

The road goes to the ruins and has forest on one side for awhile and then forest on both sides. Bird along both sides. While birding the cleared areas around the main buildings of the ruins and along the edge

## A FEW TIPS

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### COST FACTORS

Favorable exchange rates help the dollar go a long way on the Yucatán, though not quite so far in Cancún's glittering resort region, where modern development demands its price. However, most birders will choose to start out in Mérida, the largest of the Southern cities, and capital of the Yucatán state. Here, only the most expensive meals would total \$50 for two people. More often you will spend closer to \$25, while rural dinners run from \$10 to \$15 for a couple.

Luxury hotels in Mérida range from \$55 to \$85 per night for double rooms. In smaller locales, comfortable and moderate first-class double rooms can be had for \$30 to \$50, and spartan budget lodgings for less than \$20.

There are direct flights from Miami to Mérida on AeroMexico (800-237-6639) and Mexicana Airlines (800-237-6639) which are priced at approximately \$170 round trip. These airlines also offer connecting flights to Mérida and Villahermosa from Mexico City and Cancún. From Cancún to Mérida, a round trip ticket is about \$95; from Mexico City to Mérida, about \$215 and from Mérida to Villahermosa, \$110.

### TOURIST CARD

To enter Mexico, you'll need a tourist card. To obtain one, you'll have to show proof of citizenship at the border or (before your trip) at a Mexican Consulate office or Mexico Tourism offices in the United States. For information, contact the Mexican Consulate at one of its 40 offices in the United States, or call the Mexican Embassy, the Consular Section, in Washington, D.C. at 202-293-1710.

### THE WATER

It is true that you should be careful about tap water. Don't drink it. Apply similar caution to ice-cubes and roadside food prepared with vegetables and utensils that may have been washed with impure water. If you cannot buy bottled water, purify tap water yourself by boiling or with iodine, *yodo*, purchased at the farmacia.

There are no mandatory immunizations required for traveling in Mexico. However, some physicians recommend vaccinations against typhoid, hepatitis, and diphteria. For more information, call the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia at 404-639-2572.

### YUCATECAN CUISINE

Don't expect tacos and chili in the Yucatán. Even the food diverges from the Mexican standards. Be sure to try the local favorites: *cochinita pibil*, pork rolled in banana leaves, *panuchos*, open-faced tortilla with pickled chicken and onions, and *papdzul*, tortillas with eggs. Coffee usually comes with the meal or after it, so if you want a shot of caffeine before you start on your morning huevos, you'll have to ask. In restaurants, tipping is customary at 10 to 15 percent.

Liquor is likely to be expensive because much of it is imported, and wine making is generally not a Mexican forté. However, the local beer is to be prized. *Carta Clara*, *Montejo* and *Leon Negro*, are excellent.

For Yucatán cuisine in a casual atmosphere, try Los Almendros, in Mérida at Calle 59 No. 434, or for a more upscale experience, Le Gourmet, which is a converted mansion with a piano bar: Ponce Perez 109 27-1970.

## WHERE TO STAY

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### HOTELS IN MÉRIDA AND ENVIRONS

*The Holiday Inn* (in the U.S.: 800-465-4329) in Mérida is a deluxe colonial-style hotel with an international clientele and all the conveniences you could desire. Fine dining, a pool, and tennis courts create a sleek setting for about \$85 a night. *El Castellano* (99-23-0100) is a large, first class hotel with a hacienda-style lobby, restaurant, bar and pool. Rates are about \$55 a night. A simpler, but charming alternative is the *Hotel Colón* (99-23-4355), about \$25. After you see the flamingos at Celestun, you'll find the *Hotel Guierrez*, a modest sea-front hotel that also serves fine, inexpensive seafood, about \$10 per night.

### HOTELS NEAR CHICHÉN ITZÁ

*The Hacienda Chichén* (99-24-8722), formerly a hacienda during the last century, is a modest and reasonable hotel with a restaurant, bar, pool, and excellent gardens for birdwatching, all at the edge of the ruins. Ceiling fans whirl above. Doubles cost about \$50. *The Mayaland* (99-24-8722), somewhat of a luxury hotel, spreads out with large, old-fashioned rooms, lush gardens, and a pool. Also near the ancient city, its rooms run about \$50. *The Dolores Alba* (99-21-3745), a bit further from the ruins is a less-luxurious but charming country house with 18 rooms, each with a private terrace. You'll find a dining room and pool, though only some air conditioning for about \$15.

### HOTELS IN UXMAL

*The Hacienda Uxmal* (99-24-7142) has earned a loyal following with its colonial atmosphere, gardens, pool, and restaurants. If you're without a reservation, arrive by 1 p.m. Doubles cost about \$55. *The New Villa Arqueológica* (in U.S.: 800-258-2633) is a Club Med creation, complete with a pool, tennis courts, and a French restaurant. Rates range from \$60 and up. *The Misión Inn Uxmal* (992-23-9500) offers 50 modern rooms with amenities; \$50 per night.

### HOTELS IN PALENQUE

The first class *Chan Kah* hotel (934-5-0318/0014) is nestled in the tropics, complete with a stream-fed pool and fan-cooled cottages; about \$45 for a double. *Natutun Viva*, (934-5-0100) is a more modest alternative offering comfortable rooms a restaurant, bar, and crafts shop, gardens, and a disco; \$25 per night.

### HOTELS NEAR AND AROUND COBÁ, TULUM, AND AKUMAL

In Cobá you'll find only one hotel at the ruins, the *Villa Arqueológica*, which is set in the midst of the jungle. This Club Med outpost, offers a good restaurant, pool, and tennis for those who want to be near the unexcavated ruins. This spot is about 26 miles from Tulum. In Akumal another lovely hotel is *Club Akumal Caribe* (U.S.: 800-351-1622), a deluxe resort with a fine restaurant; about \$80 per night.

of the forest, many of the birds vocalizing will only be heard. You will have to go into the rainforest to glimpse them.

The main periods of bird activity along the edges of the forest are in the early morning and evening. During the day you'll have to go into the forest interior.

From a low mound behind the park's museum you'll have a "window" through the trees looking out

to the plain below. From here you can watch swifts swooping at eye-level. This is also an excellent vantage from which to observe small foragers such as the Red-legged Honeycreeper and the gorgeous Masked Tanager.

In January part of the glory of Palenque for birders is its "hummingbird trees". *Spathodea campanulata*, locally called "tulipan", is a favorite ornamental tree in southern Mexico and is usually 20-25 feet

high. When in bloom, it is covered with masses of large orange blossoms. Next to the museum is a group which attracts dozens of hummingbirds. A half-dozen species may be present at one time, including the exquisite Violet Sabrewing, the commonly-occurring Rufous-tailed Mango, and the Green-breasted Mango. Specialties here are White-bellied Emerald and, of course, everyone hopes to see a Purple-crowned Fairy.

In front of the hotel nearest the ruins is another group of "tulipanes" complete with hummingbirds. In the morning or late afternoon the trees and bushes along the road should be searched for tody-flycatchers, Montezuma and Chestnut-headed oropendolas, Barred and Great antshrikes, Buff-throated Saltator, and Olive-backed and Yellow-throated euphonias. Crimson-collared and Scarlet-rumped tanagers can be found along here also.

One of the best places to bird is the trail behind the Temple of the Inscriptions. Facing the temple in the open plaza this trail starts near the left rear corner of the Temple. The trail goes immediately into the rainforest and seems to go on forever. Great birds can be found all along it including four species of trogons, woodcreepers, and Nightingale Wren. Working this trail for a couple of hours in the early morning should also yield Little Tinamou, Tody Motmot, Black-faced Antwren, Golden-olive Woodpecker, and Lowland Wood-Wren.

We have mentioned only a few of the many birds that can be found in the Yucatán on a birding holiday. Do your homework before going. Take a good field guide. Learn the vocalizations. You'll return home having had a terrific time seeing new birds and having gained a first-hand knowledge of the extraordinary achievements of the ancient Mayans. ■

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