

# MEXICO: YUCATÁN BIRDING & MAYAN RUINS

## MARCH 7-16, 2020

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*An easy escape from late winter, the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico provides warm dry weather, Yucatán endemics and a variety of woodland, wetland and open country birds. This tour presents Mexico at her very best—a striking combination of colorful tropical birds in a variety of sunny habitats set amidst the backdrop of magnificent Mayan ruins. The primary biomes include Celestún, the cenote-pocked limestone of scrubby Yucatán, and the rich dry forests around Uxmal and Chichén Itzá provide an excellent introduction to the tropics.*

*Since the 19<sup>th</sup>-century explorers Stevens and Catherwood captivated the West with their “Incidents of Travel in the Yucatán” and tales of lost cities in the “jungle,” our ideas about the Maya have undergone several radical transformations. While the reasons leading to the Mayan collapse are still not entirely clear, an even greater mystery to emerge is how they managed to sustain 2 million people for such a long period of time—maybe centuries. More important from the conservation standpoint is how they succeeded in doing so with no known loss in biodiversity! This achievement easily parallels those in architecture, astronomy, mathematics, and writing for which they are better known, but clearly exceeds any of them in terms of its relevance to present day Yucatán and anyone interested in wildlife conservation.*

*Starting in the ancient colonial city of Mérida we will explore the northern peninsula over our week of birding. First, we will wind our way west to coastal scrub and mangrove forests near Celestún. The most famous birds of Celestún are its American Flamingos which gather in the thousands in the river near town, we will take a boat trip to get an amazing view of these elegant birds. We will glide among the American Flamingos in the estuary at Celestún and cruise down the mangrove channels, the rich aquatic habitats of the Yucatán. Rufous-necked Wood-Rail, American Pygmy Kingfisher and Boat-billed Herons are all possible from our boat. In the fields and scrub surrounding town we will search*



Turquoise-browed Motmot © Brian Gibbons



for Mexican Sheartail, Black-throated Bobwhite, and Yucatan Wren. Neotropical migrants will be starting their return to breeding areas and we should see a good variety in their sharpest plumage. Uxmal one of the most important sites of the ancient Maya Civilization is our next stop. Birds will never be far from our minds, but we will take time with Alphonso Escobedo as he regales us with tales of the ancient inhabitants of this spectacular pyramid complex. In the evenings we will make an effort to see the night birds of the region, Yucatan Poorwill, Yucatan Nightjar, and Middle American Screech-Owl. The more forested

hills of this region host a variety of birds we haven't encountered yet. Yucatan Jay and Gray-throated Chat head the list of exciting finds for us in this region.

Our final birding and archaeological site will be the equally famous Chichén Itzá, we will wander among the ruins and bird the nearby forests for new birds. Turquoise-browed Motmot, Orange Oriole and the striking Blue Bunting will be residents of Chichén Itzá, and we will endeavor to find them among more than 100 species that are possible this time of year.

If participants wish to explore Mérida, they should plan on spending extra time in this wonderful colonial city before or after our tour, as we have not budgeted time for this activity.

**March 7, Day 1: Arrival into Mérida.** Upon arrival in Mérida (airport code MID), you will be met outside the baggage claim area by a representative of our ground agent and transferred to the hotel where a room has been reserved in your name. For those that have arrived early in the day, we will have our first group meeting at 6:30 p.m. for a brief orientation followed by dinner. For those arriving late this evening we will meet the following morning at 6:00 a.m. for breakfast and an early departure for birding our way to Celestún.

NIGHT: Casa del Balam, Mérida



American Flamingo © Jorge Montejo





Rufous-necked Wood-Rail © Brian Gibbons

**March 8, Day 2: Transfer to Celestún birding en route.** As we leave the city behind, we will find ourselves surrounded by arid fields and the scrubby woodland that typify the northern Yucatán Peninsula. Celestún gives its name to a long, sheltered, mangrove-fringed estuary that is renowned as the winter home of thousands of American Flamingos, the pinkest of all flamingos. But the estuary, beaches, mangroves, and marshes of this 146,000-acre reserve are also home to many other aquatic species including frigatebirds, pelicans, cormorants, herons, ibises, spoonbills, hawks, gulls, terns, shorebirds, rails, and kingfishers.

NIGHT: Hotel Xixim, Celestún

**March 9, Day 3: Celestún area birding and boat trip for American Flamingos.** We will have two full days to explore a variety of

terrestrial and aquatic habitats in the Celestún area. At low tide in the estuary, we will be on the lookout for another area specialty, the Rufous-necked Wood-Rail. We will also explore dunes and marshes south of town which can produce Mangrove Cuckoo and Mangrove Warbler as well as a variety of terns and shorebirds. Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures and Crested Caracaras are often seen quartering these habitats, and we may discover a Zone-tailed Hawk disguising itself among the commoner Turkey Vultures. Further inland, freshwater pools and sinkholes may produce Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Ruddy Crake, and the diminutive Common Tody-Flycatcher.

NIGHT: Hotel Xixim, Celestún

**March 10, Day 4: Celestún area birding.** A highlight will be a boat trip along the Celestún estuary to get good views of the American Flamingos that glow almost crimson in the mid-afternoon sun. We will also explore quiet mangrove channels for Boat-billed Heron and Bare-throated Tiger-Heron. While cruising these quiet backwaters we should find American Pygmy Kingfishers and other avian delights among the mangroves. If our timing is right, the mangrove islands may be alive with nesting egrets, cormorants, displaying Magnificent Frigatebirds, and loafing Brown Pelicans. Expect some great photo opportunities!



Russet-naped Wood-Rail © Brian Gibbons

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NIGHTS: Hotel Xixim, Celestún

**March 11, Day 5: Celestún area birding and transfer to Uxmal.**

Our final morning birding the Celestún area will have us tracking down our last targets in the thorny coastal scrub. Yucatan Wren, Mexican Sheartail, White-lored Gnatcatcher, and Black-throated Bobwhites will be our main targets if we've not yet tracked them down. Then we will make our way to Uxmal area which lies amongst rolling hills, the highest relief on the whole Peninsula, known as the Puuc region. Other smaller, but no less beautiful Mayan sites, such as Kabah, Labná, and Sayil nestle among the heavily forested hills and are less visited by tourists, and all bear the exquisite, Puuc architectural style.



**Yellow-lored Parrot © Michael O'Brien**

NIGHT: Hacienda Uxmal, Uxmal

**March 12, Day 6: Birding Uxmal area and touring the ruins.** We will drive south to Sayil for a quiet morning's birding away from busy Uxmal. Sayil is a small, enchanting site, and the architecture is no less spectacular than that at Uxmal. We will do our best to find other regional specialties such as Rose-throated Tanager, Yucatan Woodpecker and Gray-throated Chat, and some VENT trips here have turned up surprises such as Ocellated Turkey, Singing Quail, and Pheasant Cuckoo. Other specialties should include Turquoise-browed Motmot, (Ridgway's) Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Cave Swallow, and White-browed and White-bellied wrens. Time permitting, we will also stop off at the nearby site of Labná on our way back to Uxmal. After lunch we will tour the ruins at Uxmal with excellent interpretation by Alfonso Escobedo. One evening we will seek the Yucatan Nightjar and Poorwill a couple of scarce regional endemics.

NIGHT: Hacienda Uxmal, Uxmal



**American Pygmy Kingfisher © Brian Gibbons**

**March 13, Day 7: Birding Uxmal area and transfer to Chichén Itzá.** Our second morning will find us exploring the forests around the ruins before heading to our final birding destination of Chichén Itzá. We will be birding along the way and may even stop at other archaeological sites for a little shade and some birds.

NIGHT: The Lodge at Chichén Itzá, Chichén Itzá





Yucatan Jay (Immature) © Brian Gibbons

**March 14, Day 8:** One afternoon, we will enjoy Alfonso's knowledge as he leads us through our final major archaeological site. In the surrounding woods we will follow the screeching calls of the Yucatan Jay to catch site of this stunning regional endemic. Both the Turquoise-browed and Lesson's motmots call this site home and we will track them down if we haven't enjoyed these beautiful birds already.

NIGHT: The Lodge at Chichén Itzá, Chichén Itzá

**March 15, Day 9:** Today we will hike around the woods surrounding our hotel in hopes of finding every last bird before heading to Mérida for our final checklist session and group dinner.

NIGHT: Casa del Balam, Mérida

**March 16, Day 10: Departures for home.** You can schedule your departure for anytime today. Transfers will be provided.

**EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS:** Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group

rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

**TOUR LEADER:** Brian Gibbons & Local Leaders



**Brian Gibbons** grew up in suburban Dallas where he began exploring the wild world in local creeks and parks. Chasing butterflies and any animal that was unfortunate enough to cross paths with the Gibbons boys occupied his childhood. A wooden bird feeder kit sparked a flame that was stoked by a gift of the *Golden Guide* and family camping trips to Texas state parks. More than twenty-five years ago Brian attended two VENT camps for young birders. Birds are now his primary interest, but all things wild continue to captivate him. After college, Brian undertook a variety of field biology research jobs that have taken him to the Caribbean, the Bering Sea, and the land of the midnight sun, arctic Alaska. He enjoys working with kids, hoping to spark environmental awareness through birds. For many years Brian's field research has involved bird banding. His most amazing recoveries were a female Wilson's Warbler that had been banded in Alaska and was captured by

Brian in Colorado, and a Sooty Tern that perished after a hurricane on the Texas coast; it had plied the Gulf of Mexico and the oceans of the world for 24 years. Brian's recreational bird-seeking has taken him to Machu Picchu in Peru, the Great Wall in China, the plains of East Africa, and the Himalayas in Nepal. Brian leads birding trips in the United States, Central America, the Caribbean, and Europe. As well as being a fanatical birder, he loves capturing birds with photography. He lives in Tucson, Arizona with his wife, Lacrechia Johnson, and their son, Grayson.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for the tour is **\$4995** per person in double occupancy from Merida, Mexico. This includes all meals from Dinner on Day 1 to Breakfast on Day 10, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Merida and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special

gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$925**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

**EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES:** In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

**FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. If you would like to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard, Visa, or American Express at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com)) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

**PAYMENTS:** All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard, Visa, American Express), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days (October 8, 2019) prior to the tour departure date.

**CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:** Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also apply to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For your protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

**If you cancel:**

180 days or more before departure date

179 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

**Your refund will be:**

Your deposit minus \$500\*

No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded

No refund available

\*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where you, the customer, are not at fault and have not cancelled in violation of the terms and conditions of any of the contract for transportation or travel services, all sums paid to VENT for services not received by you will be promptly refunded by VENT to you unless you otherwise advise VENT in writing.

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

**TRAVEL INSURANCE:** To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Resolutions as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™**. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most highly regarded travel insurance programs available.

Critical benefits of **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance** include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation and rescue services** from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; comprehensive travel insurance for **trip cancellation/interruption**, primary medical expense coverage, and much more. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available but must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other security events, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause (must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit). Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: [ripcordrescuetravelinsurance.com/ventbird](http://ripcordrescuetravelinsurance.com/ventbird); or click the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. *Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be responsible for any air ticket penalties.*

**BAGGAGE:** Please limit your luggage to one suitcase or duffel and one carry-on bag. As a precaution, we suggest you pack a change of clothes, your binoculars, medication, toiletries, walking shoes, and documents in the carry-on bag. Laundry service is available at hotels for a fee.

**BIRDING ETIQUETTE:** To make the tour most enjoyable for yourself, other participants, and your leader, it is important to use plain common sense and show proper etiquette while in the field. Birds tend to be shy. Loud noises and bright colors can scare them. We encourage clothing with earth tones. Try to avoid colors like oranges, yellows, and reds. Always keep your voice down. Shouting is not conducive to extended looks at a given species. When looking through the spotting scope, always wait your turn and look briefly the first time so that others may have the opportunity to get a look. If you are a smoker, please do so at a distance.

**CLIMATE:** At this time of year we can expect mild temperatures which can range from the low 70s at night to the mid-90s during the day. Rain is rare during the dry season, December-May.

**CLOTHING:** Dress will be casual. Participants should bring lightweight, cool, well-ventilated clothing. Many people now prefer designer field shirts that most outdoor stores and mail order companies are carrying. A typical shirt is usually long-sleeved and buttoned down the center. The material is lightweight and usually of earth tones or pastel coloration. Mesh for ventilation is a standard feature as are several pockets for personal effects. Mosquitoes may be a nuisance at some sites so lightweight long pants and long-sleeved shirts will be preferable and some may want to pack mosquito netting just in case. Bring a hat to provide shade from the sun, and sunglasses will also be indispensable. Heavy hiking boots are not necessary, but you will want to have a light hiking boot or shoe. For down time or during periods around towns or hotels, sandals or other open toed shoes are a good idea if you prefer them. You should also bring a bathing suit. There will be a pool available at some hotels.

**CURRENCY:** Mexican Peso; U.S. dollars are best exchanged before your arrival to Mexico as you may not have much of an opportunity to exchange money at the airport or at other points during the trip. Large amounts of cash are not easily exchanged in Mexico. You would probably get a better rate of exchange in Mexico, but keep in mind that, once again, money is easily exchanged in the USA where there are several banks in the airport where money can be exchanged. Some places visited on this tour accept US Dollars.

**CONDITIONS:** Travel Will be aboard a comfortable airconditioned Coaster-type bus. Hotels and lodges will all be airconditioned. Expect early breakfasts and birding outings (perhaps as early as 5 am), lunch around 1pm (afternoon break possible on a few afternoons) and dinners around 7 pm. We will do some night birding on occasion. An umbrella might be a good idea for sun protection during our afternoon ruin visits.

**INTERNET ACCESS:** Expect Wi-Fi to be available in common areas at all lodges and hotels.

**DOCUMENTS:** Travel into Mexico for citizens of the United States requires a passport valid for the full duration of your time in the country. Non-United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions. Additionally, a tourist card, which may be filled out aboard your flight to Mexico, is required. Both your passport and tourist card must be carried with you while in Mexico.

**EQUIPMENT:** You will want to have sunglasses and sunscreen first and foremost. You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, extra digital storage media, etc.). Other important travel items include a flashlight or headlamp, travel alarm clock, and water bottle. A camera is highly recommended as there is much to see. As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Earplugs may be necessary for dogs, roosters, and donkeys.

**HEALTH:** When traveling, becoming seriously ill is never expected nor anticipated, but is always a possibility, especially when in a foreign country. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B. Hepatitis A is a disease of contaminated food and water. Hepatitis B is a disease transmitted through unsanitary needles and contaminated blood. Hepatitis vaccinations are standard travel precautions. Traveling in western Mexico does not necessarily mean your chance for exposure is greater or less than anywhere else. You should also know your blood type!

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or you can check their website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel). Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html) (click on travel health).

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. Standard travel items include such stand-bys as aspirin/Advil/Tylenol as well as Pepto Bristol and Imodium. Sunscreen is a necessity on this tour! Your leader will always let you know when it is or is not appropriate to drink the local water. In places where it is not appropriate, bottle or purified water will be provided.

**Zika Virus** – This tour visits an area or areas where Zika virus is known to occur or could occur; however, we believe the risk to VENT travelers is extremely low. The Zika virus is a mosquito-borne infection transmitted by mosquitos of the genus *Aedes*, and is related to other tropical diseases: Dengue, Yellow Fever, and West Nile virus. This type of mosquito bites during the day and typically is found in areas of dense human habitation where sanitation and drainage of standing water is poor. Zika virus presents the greatest threat to women of childbearing



age. For others who become infected, the effects are usually nonexistent to mild, although some people exhibit symptoms such as mild fever, rashes, joint and muscle pain, and red eyes. If infected, the best treatment is plenty of rest, nourishment, and other supportive care. There is no vaccine to prevent or cure the disease; however, Zika virus is not contagious and, therefore, cannot be transmitted through air, food, or water.

Your safety is our highest priority, and we want to emphasize that the best way to avoid Zika virus (and other mosquito-borne diseases), is to take appropriate precautions in avoiding mosquito bites:

- Stay informed about the Zika virus
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, socks and shoes, and a hat\*
- Use effective insect repellents (those containing DEET) and reapply regularly

**\*We strongly recommend the use of Insect Shield® clothing.** Insect Shield is a process by which clothing is treated with an EPA-approved formula of the insect repellent permethrin. Such clothing is highly repellent to insects and provides durable and long-lasting protection, even after dozens of washings. Outdoor wear with Insect Shield protection includes name brands such as Ex Officio and Tilley, and can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores such as REI and from a variety of online retailers. In lieu of Insect Shield clothing, you should consider treating your clothes with permethrin, which has the same effect, and that can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores and from a variety of online retailers.

For the latest information and news about Zika virus, please visit the website of the CDC:

<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/>

**INSECT PROTECTION:** Mosquitoes, chiggers, biting midges, and ticks can be a problem and insect repellent is strongly recommended.

**A Note About Chiggers:** This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world's tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of the world's species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids, however, through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger's digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body's natural process of reabsorbing it that typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, like around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees, and elbows.

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking, or standing in particular, in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique commonly employed by many.
- Apply a cream-style insect repellent, such as "Cutter" to your body from the waist down BEFORE putting on your clothing.
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.
- Spray your pants and socks with a spray repellent such as "Cutter" or "OFF!" Repellants with high concentrations of DEET (70-100%) are most effective. You do not need to apply these to your skin, only to clothing. (Be careful as DEET will damage plastics and lens coatings). Repel Permanone is an odorless aerosol insecticide that offers perhaps the best defense against chiggers. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online. It should only be applied to clothes and allowed to dry before you

dress. Never apply Permanone directly to the skin. Permethrin is known to be a highly toxic chemical to insects. It is the active ingredient in Permanone, but is present in a small amount (0.5%).

By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products.

**SUGGESTED READING:** A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) which has a wide selection; [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) and [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com) which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

#### **Field guides:**

- Howell, Steve N.G. and Sophie Webb. 1995. *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford. **This is the main field guide for the area**, and is far more than a simple field guide in size (2 inches thick). In addition to exceptionally good plates, it is a trove of information on distribution (the only Mexico field guide with range maps), vocalizations, subspecies, and natural history information.
- The Cornell Lab. Merlin Bird ID. This exciting new app has created a simple Yucatan Peninsula field guide with photos and sounds of all the birds we will encounter. Download the app and the Mexico: Yucatan Peninsula Bird Pack.

Also, United States field guides will be useful as well since the Mexico guides do not show the common species from the U.S.A. that may occur in Mexico as wintering birds or migrants. Two of the best options are:

- Dunn, Jon L. and Jonathan Alderfer. *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. Washington D.C.
- Sibley, David S. 2014. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY.

#### **Birds and General Nature:**

- Edwards, Ernest D. *Finding Birds in Mexico*. Sweet Briar, VA: Ernest P. Edwards, 1976. The website [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) lists this book, with a 1985 Supplement.
- Howell, Steve N.G. 1999. *A Bird-finding Guide to Mexico*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY. Site guide to some of the areas we'll visit.
- Leopold, A.S. *Wildlife in Mexico*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959. Detailed volume on the mammals and other wildlife of Mexico.
- Pesman, Walter M. *Meet Flora Mexicana*. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Press, 1962. An introductory guide for the amateur botanist. Out of print, but available on [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com).
- Sutton, George M. *Mexican Birds: First Impressions*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951. Out of print, but try [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com).

#### **History and Culture:**

- Parkes, Henry Banford. *A History of Mexico*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1969. A truly outstanding book. Original edition published in 1938; available on [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com).
- Ruiz, Ramón Eduardo. *Triumphs and Tragedies, A History of the Mexican People*. Norton Press, 1992. Hard to find.

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect July 11, 2019 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.

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