



The Veracruz River of Raptors © Pronatura Veracruz; Ferruginous Pygmy Owl © Pronatura Veracruz; Laughing Falcon © Pronatura Veracruz

# VERACRUZ RIVER OF RAPTORS

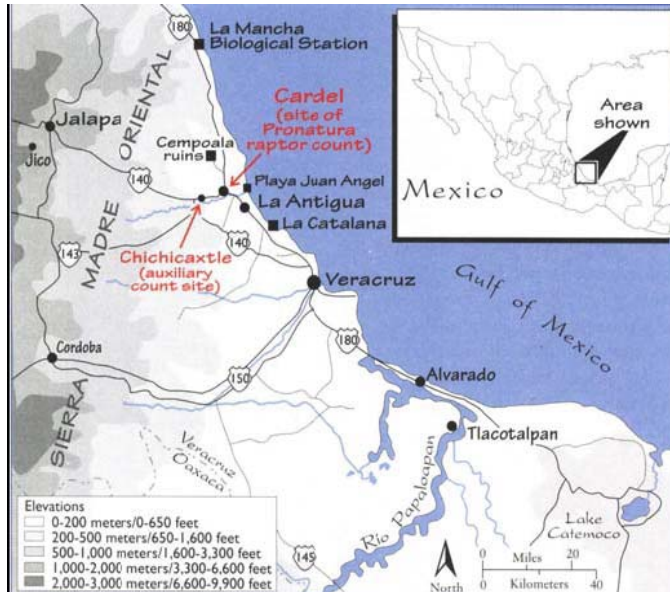
## September 25- October 3, 2009

The Pronatura Veracruz River of Raptors tour witnesses the greatest migration spectacle in the world. Every fall, in central Mexico's historic port city of Veracruz, along the Gulf of Mexico, well over five million migrating raptors are counted from over 25 species. On a good day, over 100,000 migrant raptors and vultures can be seen, while during a Big Day, over 500,000 have been counted! Passerine and waterbird migration is estimated 10 million daytime migrants, and over 540 bird species are known to Veracruz, including over 25 endemics. In addition, butterfly and dragonfly migration is estimated at over one million individuals per day. Also included are visits to local archaeological sites, including La Antigua and Cempoala, where Hernan Cortez had his first Spanish colony and initial contact with the local Indians, and side trips to lowland forests and coastal lagoons.

## ITINERARY

### Days 1-4 (September 25-28)

The tour begins with your afternoon or evening arrival in Veracruz International Airport (time depending on flight schedules). These first four days will be based out of Cardel, where we will concentrate on the raptor migration. Each morning we will also visit one of the surrounding lowland dry thorn-forest sites, coastal lagoons, and/or beaches—often all included at the same site. We also include a delightful river boat-trip, ending at sunset.



Birding highlights may include many of the local raptor species such as Grey Hawk, Roadside Hawk, Hook-billed Kite, Great and Common Black Hawk, and Aplomado Falcon. Additionally, other local species provide a great introduction to tropical birding with species that include Altamira Oriole, the very local Rufous-naped Wren, Black-headed Trogon, Rose-throated Becard, Black-headed Saltator; all five kingfisher species, Montezuma Oropendola, Aztec Parakeet, and Masked Tityra. At each of the sites we will also hope for a spectacular passerine and waterbird migration. Additionally, the butterfly and dragonfly migration can be

spectacular as well. We can expect excellent local seafood from the Gulf of Mexico, deliciously flavored, Mexican-style...quite a bit different than what you may expect from your local Mexican restaurant in the US!

### Days 5 and 6 (September 29-30)

For two nights we will be based out of Xalapa, just a short ride up the mountains from Cardel. This colonial city is quite pleasant, with beautiful architecture, a pleasant climate, and very fine Mexican cuisine, quite different than the coast. Here we will be visiting several sites in the surrounding cloud forest and pine-oak forest, including shade-coffee plantations, a beautiful waterfall, and a spectacular 2000-foot canyon. The habitat of the higher elevations supports many endemic species as well as excellent birding of migrants and other residents, especially of mixed warbler-flocks. We will hope to see endemics such as the Blue Mockingbird, Red Warbler, Brown-backed Solitaire, Grey Silky, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, and Rufous-capped Brushfinch, among others.

### Days 7-9 (October 1-3)

We will return to Cardel for more of the raptor migration, hoping to catch one of the big days, if we haven't already. We will continue to visit the surrounding habitat, including slightly different habitat at a local reserve, and also in tropical savannah where we hope to see specialties such as Double-striped Thick-knee and Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture. We will also visit an extensive wetland and lagoon system where we may see Mangrove Swallow, Black-collared Hawk, and Pinnated Bittern. We will then finish the tour with our last night in the festive port city of



## GENERAL INFORMATION

### About the Outfitter and Trip Leaders

Pronatura is a Mexican non-profit organization whose mission is the conservation of flora, fauna and priority ecosystems promoting society's development in harmony with nature. Your trip leaders include:

- **Eduardo Martinez** has been working with Pronatura Veracruz since 1998 on a variety of bird research projects, including the Veracruz River of Raptors hawk migration monitoring as coordinator and as participant and leader of the Cansaburro Raptor Banding Station project. Eduardo is originally from Tuxpan, Veracruz along the north-central coast of the state, where he studied biology at the University of Veracruz-Tuxpan campus.

Eduardo has always been interested in nature and learning in the field, and now he is one of leading bird and plant lovers of the area. He is a founding member of our local birding club, COAX (Club de Observadores de Aves de Veracruz). Eduardo is also an active member of a local orchid club, and on outings and when bird activity is slow, spends equal time looking at plants.

Eduardo worked as a field biologist at the Institute of Ecology in Xalapa on an interesting project called Biocafe, where the diversity of coffee plantations is being monitored. He is the birding identification leader instructor for Pronatura's community development workshops as part of Tourism for Conservation projects in the state of Veracruz.

- **David Mehlman** is currently the Director of The Nature Conservancy's Migratory Bird Program, based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He holds a PhD from the University of New Mexico, which he obtained in 1995, an MS from Florida State University, and a BA from Bowdoin College.

Dave has been an avid birder for many years and has conducted field work and traveled to see birds in numerous parts of the U.S. and throughout the Western Hemisphere. He has published several papers in both scientific and popular journals on birds, bird conservation, and ecology. Dave has worked for the Conservancy for over 15 years in a variety of positions in the Maryland Field Office, Worldwide Office, International Program, and Migratory Bird Program. He is fluent in both English and Spanish.

**Group Size:** The group size is limited to 10 guests.

### Weather and Tour Conditions

Weather along the coastal birding sites can be quite hot and humid during the daytime hours with temperatures reaching into the high eighties and up to 90-95° F during this time of year. In the highlands outside of Xalapa the weather is quite cooler and less humid where daytime temperatures could dip down to the cool 50's at this time of year. As the VRR occurs at the end of the rainy season we will not encounter rain every day and when it does rain it often lasts for only a portion of the day. Tropical storms and even hurricanes are also a possibility at this time

of year, but the Yucatan peninsula usually shields Veracruz from the worst effects of such storms.

Our VRR birding tours include a variety of conditions and a diverse itinerary. Tour participants should be prepared for a moderate amount of physical activity, early morning activities, and full days. Our daily activities generally include an early breakfast before going for a relatively short drive into the field for several hours of birding. When in Cardel for the raptor migration, we then return for mid-day hawk-migration watching and lunch. In the afternoon, we generally return to the field after the hawks slow down. When in the mountains near Xalapa, we often stay out in the field for the entire day. Dinner is then in a restaurant near the hotel, when we usually compile our bird list. Meals are often in restaurants, but we sometimes take pack lunches or breakfasts into the field. The conditions at each site vary but generally we walk on good roads or trails, without much elevation change. We generally rest often and/or we are near the vehicle where one can rest and find refreshments.

The pace of the entire group varies from tour to tour, but we always attempt to cater to the group's different interest level and abilities. We also include several visits to cultural and/or archaeological sites within the itinerary in order to enrich the tour experience. Weather conditions can vary considerably. Tour participant should be prepared for very warm weather along the coast, and milder conditions in the mountains, to possibly cold and rainy conditions in the higher elevations. Participants are encouraged to bring with them binoculars and appropriate bird field guides, and a spotting scope if they have one—the field guides and scopes can always be left behind at the hotels if desired.

The majority of the residents of this part of Mexico speak little to no English. The Pronatura Veracruz tour guides all speak fluent English and Spanish; therefore participants will not need to speak Spanish. In general the people of Veracruz can be characterized as being exceptionally friendly and will appreciate even the most rudimentary attempts to communicate in Spanish with them.

### **Immunizations/Health**

Generally this area of Mexico and Veracruz where we will be traveling is free from most serious "tropical" diseases, but we recommend that you consult your local CDC (Center for Disease Control) concerning recommended immunizations and/or preventative regimes for travel in south-central eastern Mexico. Up to date tetanus is recommended. For the very cautious, especially those who might be unusually susceptible or otherwise at risk, cholera and typhoid vaccinations along with gamma globulin shots might be advisable.

In order to avoid digestive and intestinal problems, purified water will be available throughout the tour. One should avoid consumption of all tap water, including while brushing your teeth. Additionally, standard precautions should be taken when ordering and eating meals. However, all restaurants where we visit during the tours have been inspected for sanitary conditions by PV staff, and these are restaurants where we have been going to for years. Keep in mind that the Mexicans also do not drink the tap water, so generally all drinking water and ice served at restaurants is purified.

## COST AND RESERVATIONS

	<b>Double</b>	<b>Single</b>
<b>Deposit</b>	\$ 645.00	\$ 712.00
<b>Final Payment</b>	\$ 1,505.00	\$ 1,663.00
<b>Suggested tax-deductible contribution to <u>The Nature Conservancy</u></b>	<u>\$ 300.00</u>	<u>\$ 300.00</u>
<b>Total</b>	\$2,450.00	\$2,675.00

Above costs are all-inclusive from Veracruz International Airport, but do not include international air travel from and to the participant's home city. Included are in-country transportation in an air-conditioned van with driver, local guide, hotels in Veracruz and on extension, all meals, snacks, and tips at meals, entrance fees, and a boat trip. Not included are alcoholic drinks, personal items, and extra optional tips for hotels, drivers, and guides. The trip is dependent on a minimum number of participants; in the event of trip cancellation, participants will receive a full refund.

Meals include breakfast, lunch and dinner on all full days during tour. For the arrival and departure days of the tour, meals will not be provided for those participants arriving into Veracruz via Houston—(with approximate arrival time at about 10:30 pm and departure time at about 07:30 am). In cases where the complete tour will be arriving or departing at different hours, meals will be provided accordingly, however an additional charge to the tour will be assessed accordingly in those cases. Individuals that decide on their own to arrive or depart at different hours will not be provided separate meals. Meals do not include alcoholic beverages, any meals outside of normal meal times, room service, and any snacks and refreshments unless provided for by PV. Primarily meals are taken in local restaurants, however at times pack lunches or breakfasts may be taken in the field.

Unless otherwise requested, participants will be expected to lodge in double occupancy hotel rooms with two beds. If a roommate is not specifically requested, a suitable roommate will be assigned. If a roommate is unavailable, the participant will be assigned a single room, and a Single Supplement Surcharge will be assessed. If a tour participant specifically requests a Single Room Supplement, a \$250.00 charge will be applied and a single room will be provided throughout the tour.

### **Registration, Deposits and Final Payment**

In order to reserve a tour, a deposit of \$645.00 (\$712.00 for singles) must be made 90 days prior to the tour departure date. The balance of payment, \$1,505.00 (\$1,663.00 for singles) is due 30 days prior to tour departure date.

### **Registration Payment**

Pronatura Veracruz, based out of Mexico, has partnered with a Pennsylvania non-profit to be able to receive checks at a U.S. address, increasing the security and timeliness of the payment process.

## When making the reservation, please take these 2 steps:

(1) Send a short email to Jorge Barrios, Tour Coordinator for Pronatura Veracruz, letting him know that you are sending in a check to register for the “River of Raptors” trip. His email is: [pvecotours@prodigy.net.mx](mailto:pvecotours@prodigy.net.mx)

Please include the following in your email:

- (1) Your full name
- (2) Mailing address
- (3) Email address
- (4) Phone number

Jorge will then send you your pre-trip packet by email, with further information about the upcoming trip.

(2) Please send the check, payable to “Pronatura A.C.”, to:  
The Veracruz Project  
P.O. Box 73  
Kempton, PA 19529-0073

**\*\*\*Please be sure to write “River of Raptors” on the memo line of the check.**

**The contribution to The Nature Conservancy** should be sent when the final payment is made. You will receive confirmation by mail from The Conservancy when you send in this suggested tax-deductible donation. Please send this check, made out to “The Nature Conservancy” to:

The Nature Conservancy  
821 SE 14<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Portland OR, 97214

### Refund Policy

Refunds are made according to the following policy:

- Cancellations made by tour participant 60 days before tour departure date will have 100% of deposit and any other balance payments refunded, minus a \$50 administrative fee.
- Cancellations made by tour participant within 30-60 days will have 50% of deposit returned and full refund of any balance payments received.
- Cancellations made by tour participant within 7-30 days: the deposit is not refundable, but any other balance payments will be refunded.
- Cancellations made by tour participant 7 days or fewer prior to departure date will have 50% of total tour cost refunded.

The above amounts of non-refundable monies are to cover certain fixed-cost services such as vehicle rental, hotel deposits, guide fees, administrative fees, and other services.

### **Tour Cancellation and Itinerary Changes**

All itinerary activities are subject to change based on local conditions. PV reserves the right to cancel, change alter and/or rearrange any specific scheduled itinerary activity, or the complete itinerary, based on the judgment of PV staff concerning local conditions, keeping in mind at all times the safety of our guests. It is understood that as the Mexican based tour and service provider PV has a special insight and knowledge in the host country and reserves the right to make all decisions that may effect the safety and health of our foreign visitors whether they be paying quests or guide, staff, management or owners of foreign-based tour operations.

### **Trip Insurance**

We strongly recommend the purchase of trip insurance in order to safeguard against any losses due to tour cancellation due to illness, weather, or accident. For those participants with medical concerns, trip insurance would cover any medical emergencies up to a medical evacuation. Please check with your current insurance policy and/or you may contact PV or your travel agent for more information.

**If you have additional question, please contact:**

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