



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

Join the

VERACRUZ RIVER OF RAPTORS (VRR-9 Days)

With Pronatura's bilingual expert birding guides

September or October 2012

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, an average of four and a half million raptors from over 25 species migrating south are counted in Pronatura monitoring stations! On a good day, over 100,000 migrant raptors and vultures can cover the skies; while during a Big Day, over 500,000 have been counted! Passerine and water bird migration is also staggering, with an estimated 10 million daytime migrants. Overall, 540 bird species inhabit central Veracruz, including over 25 endemics. In addition, butterfly and dragonfly migration occurs with over one million individuals per day! Also included in the tour 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

The tour begins with your afternoon or evening arrival at Veracruz International Airport (time depending on flight schedules). These days our base will be the town 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 water bird 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, and quite a bit different from what you may expect from your local Mexican restaurant in the US!

Days 5 and 6

For two nights, we will stay in the capital city 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 from 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

We will return to Cardel for more of the raptor migration, hoping to catch one of the big days, if we have not already. We will continue to visit the surrounding habitat, including slightly different habitat at a local reserve and 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 Veracruz, where our favorite hotel is located on the main square, active every day of the week with outdoor cafes, live music, and dancing. The tour ends with morning or mid-day flight out of Veracruz International Airport.

VERACRUZ RIVER OF RAPTORS

& Los Tuxtlas Rainforest (Catemaco Extension VRR-12 Days)

October 2012

Days 9-10

After breakfast we will travel south through abundant wetland habitats, stopping for Yellow-headed Vulture, Limpkin and other notable birds. Arrive to Catemaco mid-day and enjoy birding on outskirts of Los Tuxtlas forest. We will check into our hotel and enjoy local birding and an evening along the lakeshore. The following day after some early birding around the hotel for orioles, tanagers, White Hawk and other forest birds, including Bat Falcon in Los Tuxtlas Forest Reserve. We will take a mid-day trip on Sontecomapan Lagoon in a guided boat to find Pygmy Kingfisher and Bare-throated Tiger Heron.

Days 11-12

The next morning on our way back to Veracruz, we will stop for birding at the Highlands of Los Tuxtlas to find Ornate Hawk-eagle, Tuxtla Quail dove, Yellowish Flycatcher and Long-tailed Sabrewing. After arriving in Veracruz we will enjoy an evening downtown. The last day will give our farewells to the Pronatura personnel who will take us to the airport for our flight back home.

Veracruz River of Raptors – Fall Migration Count 2009

Turkey Vulture	1,887,889
Osprey	3195
Swallow-tailed Kite	197
Mississippi Kite	185694
Hook-billed Kite	187
Northern Harrier	341
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2465
Cooper's Hawk	2143
Gray Hawk	666
Harris Hawk	
Red-shouldered Hawk	15
Broad-winged Hawk	1,463,883
Swainson's Hawk	943,429
Zone-tailed Hawk	302
Red-tailed Hawk	225
American Hawk	3,289
Merlin	157
Peregrine Falcon	837
Unknown Raptor	33,095
Total	4,528,013



GENERAL INFORMATION

Pronatura is a Mexican non-profit organization whose mission is the conservation of flora, fauna and priority ecosystems, and promoting society's development in harmony with nature. We have several years experience of conducting birding, nature appreciation and cultural tours in Veracruz. Our trip packages will include:

- Specialized birding guides
- A representative-leader from the organization will also accompany the trip.

Group Size: The group size is limited to 8-10 guests. For groups greater than 10, a minimum of 14 guests will be required in order to optimize transportation sitting space.

Weather and Tour Conditions:

Check current weather updates link at <http://www.windfinder.com/weatherforecast/veracruz>

Weather along the coastal birding sites can be quite hot and humid during the daytime hours with temperatures in the high eighties, reaching up to 90-95° F during this time of year. In the highlands outside of Xalapa, the weather is cooler and less humid; 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 prepare 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 prepare for a variety of climates: very warm weather along the coast, milder conditions in the mountains, possible 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 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.

US Immigration New Regulations for American Citizens traveling Overseas

ENTRY/EXIT REQUIREMENTS: For the latest entry requirements into Mexico.

Visas for foreigners (INM): In accordance with dispositions by the National Immigration Institute, in order to enter Mexico, US citizens should show any US official ID. Passports are not required, but we recommend carry your passport with you.

US citizens must bear in mind the requirements set by the US government for re-entry. These dispositions can be found at:

http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html

All Americans traveling by air outside of the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed-loop cruises), including ferry service, on June 1, 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea may present government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization). Starting June 1, 2009, all travelers must present a [Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative \(WHTI\) compliant document](#) such as a passport or a passport card for entry to the United States. Passport cards and enhanced driver's licenses are sufficient for entry into the United States.

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. Having an up-to-date tetanus shot 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 we visit during the tours are verified to assure correct sanitary conditions by PV staff. 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 VRR

Cost per person: 2,000 USD

Registration, Deposits and Final Payment

In order to reserve a tour, a deposit of 30% of total tour cost must be made 90 days prior to tour departure date. The balance of payment is due 30 days prior to tour departure date.

Deposit and final payments can be made with a check or wire transfer - we cannot accept credit card payment.

Check payment: send checks payable to Pronatura Veracruz A.C. and mail to:

The Veracruz Project
P.O. Box 73
Kempton, PA 19529-0073

Please be sure to write "Pronatura tours" on the memo line of the check.

The contribution for conservation to **Pronatura Veracruz A.C.** should be sent when the final payment is made. Please send a check made out to the "The Veracruz Project" address above.

RESERVATIONS:

Please complete the Registration & Participant Release and Indemnity Agreement included at the end of this brochure (page 9) and email to: emartinez@pronaturaveracruz.org and eperesbarbosa@pronaturaveracruz.org

In the same email, please let us know amount and date your reservation deposit check was sent. Participants will receive the pre-trip package information once participants sent us this information.

NOTE: This information material is for exclusive use of Pronatura and the Organization Partner to promote the VRR environmental education and conservation efforts of Pronatura and its partner organizations conservation efforts in Latin America.

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.

For more information and any other inquiry regarding this tour contact:

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**SEE NEXT PAGE (9) FOR THE RESERVATION AND PARTICIPANT RELEASE AND
INDEMNITY AGREEMENT TO BE SENT TOGETHER WITH
YOUR RESERVATION CHECK DEPOSIT. THANK YOU!**

Pronatura Veracruz Hawk-Watching Excursion Registration Form & Participant Release and Indemnity Agreement

I am willingly participating in a birding tour in the state of Veracruz, Mexico between October 10 and 18th of 2010, and I acknowledge that there are inherent dangers and risks that may occur with this expedition, known or unknown, relating but not limited to: travel in remote areas by means of aircraft, boat, automobile and other conveyances, without the means of rapid evacuation or medical facilities; nature walks or hikes, swimming, use of camera and birding equipment, accidents and/or illness, and acts of nature, man, or God.

I recognize and agree that I am taking part in this trip at my own risk. I acknowledge that Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association and Pronatura make no warranty or representation, express or implied, regarding the conditions that may be encountered during the trip, and/or the safety of any means of transportation during the trip, and that Hawk Mountain and Pronatura will have no liability for any defect or dangerous conditions pertaining thereto.

I further certify that I am in good health and able to and have taken any precautions recommended by my physician or trip leaders.

In consideration of the right to participate in this expedition, I hereby release Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association and Pronatura A.C. and their agents, associates, related parties, directors, and staff, from all responsibilities for damages, injuries, losses, or delays due to any reason whatsoever and hereby assume all risks and dangers in connection with this trip.

I have read the itinerary and related information pertaining to this trip and I am aware of the terms and conditions of the trip involving refunds and cancellations, responsibility and liability.

Printed Name in Full: _____

Signature

Date

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ **Email:** _____

(If a couple is registering, please have both sign document)