



Cayuga Bird Club

NEWSLETTER

ESTABLISHED 1914

MAY 2006

Mayan Maya: A natural history trip to the Yucatan Peninsula, Part 1

BY MEENA HARIBAL

A high school friend of mine once invited me to her father's library where there were stacks of *National Geographic* magazines and told me that I could borrow them to read if I wanted. One of the issues had a fascinating article on Mayan ruins in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. Even now the picture of the Piramides at Chichen Itza is in my mind as portrayed in *National Geographic*. Since then, I have always wanted to visit this Mayan "Maya." Until I came to the United States, Yucatan was an illusion, a magical place to me. Then in late fall 2005, I missed seeing dragonflies and wanted to go to a place where I could find them. Since I didn't need a VISA to visit Mexico, which meant that I could plan a trip at the last minute, I decided the time had come for me to visit the Yucatan. At 5.30 P.M. on December 20, after a day of running errands and being afraid I wouldn't make my trip at all, I picked up my

In Sanskrit, the word "Maya" means illusion or magic.

bag and headed to Philadelphia to catch an early morning flight to Cancun.

I was interested in spending time looking for birds, butterflies, and dragonflies and in recording nature sounds, taking pictures, and visiting historical places. I did not want to be bound by schedules. I had no goal of seeing all the birds that are found on the peninsula. Moreover, I forgot Howell's bird finding book (a blessing), though I did have some trip reports from the internet about where to go, advice from my colleague Eduardo Inigo-Elias about where not to go, and a general idea of the places I wanted to visit.

DECEMBER 21-22:

CANCUN, PUERTO MORELOS, JARDIN BOTANICO

I arrived in Cancun at about 11.00 A.M. Except for a few Great-tailed Grackles, an Osprey, and maybe a couple of Magnificent Frigate birds I didn't find anything exciting there. The next day before daybreak, I headed south to the Puerto Morelos area. When I reached Jardin Botanico de Marrin, I found that it was closed until 9.00 A.M. So I headed to the junction of the road to Central Vallarta. Just past the junction, the road turned to dirt with tons of potholes, and all the potholes were covered with rain water making it impossible to

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Meena Haribal

Piramides at Chichen Itza, the Mayan ruin featured in National Geographic that inspired the trip. During the equinox the sun looks as if it is climbing the stairs during sunrise and sunset. An hour before sunset a wavy shadow appears on the western steps that looks like the body of a snake moving down the steps, and at the end of these steps is a snake head, adding to the effect. Thousands of people visit Chichen Itza on the equinox to observe this phenomenon.

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The Cayuga Bird Club meets on the second Monday of each month, September through June, at 7:30 P.M. in the Auditorium of the Johnson Center on Sapsucker Woods Road. All programs and field trips are free and open to the public. Membership costs \$10/year, payable in September. To join, send a check (made out to "Cayuga Bird Club") to Cayuga Bird Club Treasurer, c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.

Bird club members receive the Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter monthly from September through June. Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information above. Of particular interest are articles about local bird sightings, bird behavior, or birding hot spots, as well as original poetry, art, and photos.

Chickadee illustration on page one by Karen Confer.

Visit the Cayuga Bird Club website at:
WWW.BIRDS.CORNELL.EDU/CAYUGABIRDCUB

From the President

What I have always enjoyed about our birding community, and what makes it so special, is the camaraderie and joy we share and exhibit when new migrants start dribbling in. There are neither rules nor manuals to follow. Yet I am just amazed at how we all become so excited: emails start flying about, we feel an increasingly deep sense of urgency to find the new arrivals, and as the excitement of discovery builds, so does our sharing.

A wonderful example of this excitement occurred during a recent birding outing I took with Bob McGuire, Susan Danskin, and Dave Nutter over the beautiful Easter weekend. We were at Van Dorn Spoor Road when we spotted a "ploverish" looking bird. We observed this bird for more than an hour, referring to our field guides many times, but we were stumped for an identification. We called Tim Lenz, whom we had seen earlier with Mike Harvey, Shan Bitterman, and Scott Haber, and we told them what we were seeing and where we were. Within half an hour, they showed up to help. After another hour of looking and photographing, our group needed to move on, but first we called Jay McGowen and asked him to alert others to our find. Jay promptly sent a post to the Cayugabirds-L elist.

On our drive back to Ithaca, we spotted Sandy Podulka and family and stopped to tell them what we had seen. They in turn excitedly told us about a bittern that they saw on the wildlife drive, which we then tried, unsuccessfully, to find.

The next day Dave Nutter posted a message to the elist about the plover we all had studied on Van Dorn Spoor Road, and Mike Harvey posted wonderful sketches and photographs. I am on "pins and needles" waiting to hear what others will say about our mysterious plover.

My point in all of this is to show the incredible networking that occurs within our birding community. We are all so excited to find new migrants that we just can't wait to tell others when, where, and what we saw. I am proud to be a part of this birding community and am thankful for all that it has taught me through the years of sharing.

I hope you can find some time to bird, as more migrants are showing up everyday. Why not get out there and join the excitement?



Events Calendar

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
MAY. 5 7:30–9:00 P.M. MAY 6 6:30–8:00 A.M.	Sound Identification Workshop Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Jesse Ellis	This workshop will consist of an evening lecture focusing on sound identification of local birds followed by an early morning walk at Sapsucker Woods to practice the techniques learned. Space is limited. See page 4 for details.
MAY. 8 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speakers: G. Birdsall, L. Clougherty, A. Mitchell, and M. Williams	Gladys Birdsall, Linda Clougherty, Ann Mitchell, and Meredith Williams will share their January 2005 adventures during a trip to Costa Rica in their presentation, “¡Es Pequeño, pero que Diversidad! A Travelogue from a Trip to Costa Rica.” See page 6 for details.
MAY. 14 Sunday 7:00 A.M.	Field Trip: Hawthorn Orchard Leader: Chris Tessaglia-Hymes Meet: Equestrian Center	Join Chris for a morning filled with great views of great migrants at Chris’s former “secret spot,” now known as the Hawthorn Orchard. Located in East Ithaca, this site is an annual spring magnet to neotropical migrants. Meet in the back parking lot of the Oxley Equestrian Center on Pine Tree Road near East Hill Plaza.
MAY 19–21	Field Trip: Presque Isle Leader: Linda Clougherty Meet: Johnson Center*	This trip, which will focus on finding spring migrants, will leave Ithaca at 4:00 P.M. on Friday and return by late afternoon Sunday, spending two nights in a local hotel. The trip is limited to eight Cayuga Bird Club members. Call Linda at 539-7546 for information and to sign-up.
MAY. 21 Sunday 7:00 A.M.	Field Trip: Hawthorn Orchard Leader: C. Tessaglia-Hymes Meet: Equestrian Center	Join Chris for another morning of birding at the Hawthorn Orchard. See May 14 trip details above for directions.
MAY 22 Monday	Newsletter deadline	Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information on page 2.
MAY 27 Saturday 7:00 A.M.	Field Trip: Local birds Leader: Laura Stenzler Meet: Johnson Center*	Join Laura for this half-day trip to find local birds. Contact her at 539-6893 or at <lms9@cornell.edu> with any questions.
JUNE 12 Monday 6:00 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Myers Park	The annual dish-to-pass dinner will be held at Myers Park in Lansing (off Route 34B) in the first pavilion on the right, near the birding kiosk. Bring a generous dish to share, something to drink, and your own table setting. A few tablecloths also are needed. There will be a very brief business meeting before dinner. Don’t forget to bring your binoculars.

*Meet for field trips in the front parking lot.

NIGHT FLIGHT CALL WORKSHOP

Chris Tessaglia-Hymes will lead a night flight call workshop atop Mount Pleasant. Listen to night migrants using amplification while watching spectrograms. Learn to identify or classify the more easily identifiable migrant flight notes by sound and sight. The date for this event will fall sometime between May 12 and May 21, to be determined by weather

conditions and migration timing. Participants will be notified 8–24 hours before the workshop, which will begin at 9:00 P.M. and possibly run through midnight or later, depending on interest and the intensity of the migration.

NOTE: Space is limited. Contact Deirdre Anderson at 272-1713 or at <dpa@cbord.com> to sign up. 🐦

MINUTES: CAYUGA BIRD CLUB MEETING

APRIL 10, 2006

BY DEIRDRE ANDERSON

President Deirdre Anderson welcomed visitors and thanked Fair Gouldin for bringing cookies. Bobbi Monroe volunteered to bring cookies next month.

Recent sightings included Bohemian Waxwings, towhees, snipe, and Long-tailed Ducks.

OLD BUSINESS

- Deirdre again invited volunteers for the club secretary positions but received no response.
- The brochure still needs updating, in coordination with the web site and newsletter.
- Linda Clougherty reported that the Purple Martin houses for Myers Park have been delivered to Steve Colt, the Lansing Recreation Director, and the work to put them up has been scheduled.
- Deirdre reported about insurance from the Stock Insurance Company. The club now has liability as well as auto insurance, which allows us to continue with field trips while protecting the officers. The insurance costs \$350 a year. Thank you to Carol Schmidt for suggesting we contact Don Kompf for help getting insurance.
- The club voted unanimously to change the club's status to 501(c)(3).


NEW BUSINESS

- Mark Chao is doing a fundraiser for the Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT). On May 20 and 21 he will visit as many local FLLT preserves as possible, counting bird species and pledging \$1 to FLLT for each species seen. He expects to see around 100 species. Deirdre proposed that the Cayuga Bird Club support this generous endeavor through a pledge or a flat rate donation. The club voted unanimously to pledge \$1 per species seen.
- Bob McGuire announced new plans for Salt Point, the 30 acre parcel of land just across Salmon Creek from Myers Park, which is owned by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). After forty years of benign neglect, the heavily-rutted, trash-strewn property has come under the control of the Town of Lansing, and a management plan is being drawn up to guide its transformation into a wildlife preserve. The plan features a non-motorized boat launch and a single road along the railroad tracks leading to a parking area and overlook in the northeast corner. The current spider web of roads will be re-vegetated, and a loop walking trail will be established. Eventually the preserve will be linked

with Myers Park by a footbridge. A small group of residents and Town officials have been working for two years to forge an agreement with the DEC and to secure funding to begin the work. The project is expected to take several years because much of the effort will fall to volunteers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS


- Deirdre reviewed upcoming trips and workshops listed in the Events Calendar.
- Five people have signed up for Jesse Ellis's Sound Identification Workshop on May 5 and 6, which is limited to 20 participants.
- Five people have signed up for Chris Tessaglia-Hymes's night flight call workshop to be arranged in mid-May, which is limited to 10 participants.

Susan Danskin read the basin bird list. Then Deirdre introduced Stephen Kress, the evening's speaker, who presented "It's Spring! How, When and Why Do Birds Sing?" 

SOUND IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP

Jesse Ellis, Ph.D. candidate at Cornell University, will lead a two-day workshop on effective methods all birders can employ to learn to identify birds by song. The workshop will start with a lecture from 7:30–9:00 P.M. in the Johnson Center auditorium on Friday, May 5. This lecture will focus on two primary methods for learning bird songs: tracking down unknowns and using recordings. Each of these has its own benefits and drawbacks. The uses and dangers of mnemonics will also be discussed. Jesse will use Raven (a computer software program developed at the Lab of Ornithology) to analyze and visualize some of the more challenging sounds encountered in this region.

The workshop will continue the next morning, Saturday, May 6. Participants will meet in the Johnson Center parking lot for a walk through Sapsucker Woods from 6:30–8:00 A.M. to practice some of the techniques learned the night before and to identify new bird songs.

NOTE: Space is limited. Contact Meena Haribal at 277-3536 or at <mmh3@cornell.edu> to sign up. 

FIELD TRIP REPORT: ITHACA AREA, APRIL 15

BY GLADYS BIRDSALL

Thirteen people joined me at Stewart Park as the fog rolled in. Participants included Camille Faraday, Linda Clougherty, Leslie Morning Sky, Asher Hockett, Jane McLarty, Vilasini Mills, Ann Mitchell, Nancy Loor, Kwang Yul and Sung Ok Kim, Harry Ellsworth, Larry Newman, and Tim Schaffer.

At Stewart Park there were Common Mergansers, Mallards, and Canada Geese. Two cormorants flew over and other regulars were also there including robins, a Downey Woodpecker, grackles, starlings, House Sparrows, two White-breasted Nuthatches, and several House Finches and goldfinches.

The sun was trying to poke through as we headed for Burdick Hill Road (thanks to a tip from Ann and Leslie), the highlight of our trip. There were several new birders with us, and we had awesome looks at some grassland birds. Through our scopes we saw meadowlarks singing away, a bluebird pair at a nest box, Chipping Sparrows, and a Vesper Sparrow. The vesper and chippies were along the roadside and stayed there the whole time we were there. The vesper was a life bird for most everyone. Out in the field we saw a Northern Harrier sitting on a mound. It flew, and then we saw another one flying with it. A kestrel sat atop a distant pole but was back lit a bit too much to see the coloration very well. Several

Tree Swallows were flying about, and at least three people saw a Barn Swallow fly by. Asher spotted five Common Loons flying north up high, which was pretty exciting. A Broad-winged Hawk circled almost right over us, and we got excellent looks as it spiraled up. We heard and saw a Northern Flicker, Song Sparrows, and we saw several Turkey Vultures (the vultures also were heading north). Just as we were leaving, Camille spotted another small bird in a young tree right next to us. It was a Savannah Sparrow. He sat there singing away, and we were able to get the scopes on it for nice long viewing, a real treat.

We then traveled over to Comstock Knoll in hopes of seeing a Pine or Palm warbler. It seemed fairly quiet by that time. Ann and I believe we heard a Pine warbler in a distant pine, up high, as compared to the Chipping Sparrows and Juncos we knew we were hearing. We saw and heard House Finches and phoebes, and a Red-tailed Hawk soared overhead. We walked over to Beebe Lake where there were Canada Geese and Mallards that we observed from the overlook right across the street from Comstock.

It was a beautiful morning, and thanks to all who joined the trip. 🐦

FIELD TRIP REPORT: ITHACA AREA, APRIL 18

BY MEENA HARIBAL

When about twelve of us gathered for this trip, the weather was balmy and nice. So we decided to head to Dryden Lake. We didn't see many species of birds here, but we saw a drab all brown female diving duck that we thought was probably a Lesser Scaup. It was choppy and windy so we did not get great looks. Then we found a female Long-tailed Duck, which everyone got a chance to see through the scope, though to some it was just a black and white head bobbing in the choppy water. A flock of more than nine Common Mergansers paraded in front of our scopes. Some of us also saw Horned Grebes and Ring-necked Ducks.

Then we heard a loud call of dripping, then splattering, then lots of water falling, as a Great Gray rain storm rolled in. We planned to bird by car, but soon someone suggested that we go to one of the diners that Steve and Susie Fast are always talking about while we waited for the Great Gray to fly away. We

ended up at Queen Diner, and after an hour or so we were ready to brave Great Grey if it returned.

We headed to the George Road pond where we found a Pectoral Sandpiper, several Green-winged Teals, and a few Wood Ducks. Many meadowlarks were singing. Other birds found there included Tree Swallows, Red-winged Blackbirds, and grackles.

As I crossed the road following the group to our cars, I was stopped by a Dryden police officer. He wanted to know what kind of birds we were looking at and if there are rarer birds showing up. I told him what we had seen and how there had been a Eurasian Teal there among other birds in past years. He wished us a good day and drove away. The group was relieved to see that I was not going to be detained.

At this point some participants had to leave, but the rest of the group headed to Neimi Road and the airport. We found nothing unusual there except an insistent Red-breasted Nuthatch. 🐦

BIRDSONG RECORDING WORKSHOP REPORT

BY ASHER HOCKETT

In early April Meena Haribal arranged a Birdsong Recording Workshop that included a lecture at the Johnson Center and a field trip to Connecticut Hill. Greg Budney, Curator of the Macaulay Library (ML), began the lecture with a history of the sound recordings held by the ML, indicating that from the beginning the collection had been a citizen science effort. He was eager to impress upon workshop participants that diligent efforts by folks like us to capture bird sounds easily could fill the immense gap in knowledge regarding bird communication and behavior.

Next Martha Fischer, Michael Anderson, and Russ Charif discussed microphones, recorders, and analysis software. We learned about microphone designs, different applications for different types of microphones, and how critical the microphone is for achieving quality recordings. A variety of equipment was on display—ranging from shotgun microphones, compact flash (as in digital camera “film”), and digital gadgets to a dated Nagra analog reel-to-reel tape recorder. Mike explained the different technologies and the advantages and disadvantages of each, explaining them in-depth. He ticked off the qualities of each recorder and finally, describing it as “sexy”, rested his eyes on the \$4,000 Sound Devices 744t hard disk/compact flash recorder. It’s funny how most of the “sexy” equipment was expensive!

Russ intrigued us with the sound sonograms using sound analysis software such as Raven, software developed by ML. His demo gave us a clear sense of how these programs work and what they offer in terms of expanding understanding of vocal behavior. His cogent explanations got all of us of exited and primed for collecting with analysis in mind. (Never mind that nearly everyone wanted to listen to juncos and Pine Warblers, thanks to a recent discussion on Cayugabirds-L.) We all got a free trial copy, and I have been playing with it ever since.

The following morning at 5:00 A.M.(!!), we met at the Johnson Center, where Meena led us to a table covered with gadgets: Mini Discs, a DAT (digital audio tape) recorder. Martha, with her Fostex no-moving-parts and new to the lab digital marvel, gave us some tips on managing the gear in the field. Having come to collecting sounds as a by-product of working at the lab, she infused her instructions with an insuppressible glee.

Next we headed to Connecticut Hill. Dumping ourselves out in the crispness, we hung, strapped, and otherwise accommodated the trappings of sound collecting. Fumbling with knobs and switches, we radiated haphazardly, each of us lost in a new

world of sound. I spent much time with my eyes closed. Every breath, breeze, cough, mumbling about wires and knobs became a sonogram in the making. We wandered, led by the microphones, to find and record sparrows, geese, cowbirds, Purple Finches, robins, crows, and lots of juncos. At 10:00 A.M., as if by magic, we all found ourselves, a bit dazed, back at the cars. I believe all of us would say that we were in a different world that morning.

Lang Elliot met us and listened to some playback. Bob McGuire managed to record what he referred to as a Purple Finch hawk alarm call. Others had great Yellow-bellied Sapsucker drumming and a neat Brown-headed Cowbird gurgle.

Back at the lab we agreed to meet later to listen to and analyze our recordings. At this follow-up meeting our enthusiasm was still there. As we listened and watched, Meena made it clear that you don’t need expensive equipment to capture sounds. Inexpensive gear still will get you enough for identification, and it sure beats singing and whistling and otherwise imitating birds to your co-birders! I fear there will be some serious converts to audio birding among us, so keep your ears open! 🐦

April Speaker Profile: Gladys Birdsall, Linda Clougherty, Ann Mitchell, and Meredith Williams

Gladys Birdsall, Linda Clougherty, and Ann Mitchell, as long-time Cayuga Bird Club members, have contributed many hours to club activities including each chairing the club’s Field Trip and Speaker committee at various times (Ann is the current chair). In addition Gladys has served as club Vice President and President, and Linda has served as club Secretary. Meredith Williams is a birder by default who enjoys a good adventure, especially when she is capturing it through her camera. All are avid birders who enjoy birding in exotic locations.

The idea of a trip to Costa Rica quickly caught the imaginations of these four women. Over several months a self-guided trip, planned as a group, was carefully laid out. The planning was as much fun as the trip, providing an opportunity to delve into all aspects of the country—bird life, terrain, lodging, and transportation.

Join them as they share, through Ann’s and Meredith’s photos, some of the immense diversity they discovered on their trip to Costa Rica. And bring your binoculars! 🐦

Big Day Fundraiser for Finger Lakes Land Trust

BY MARK CHAO

My five years in Ithaca probably have been the richest and happiest of my life, in major part because of birds and birders. I often remind myself how blessed I am to live in such a big-hearted birding community, ever willing to share its collective knowledge and dedicated to preservation of natural habitats.

This spring, inspired by the generosity of others, I am going to do a fundraiser for the Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT). On May 20 and 21, I will visit as many local FLLT preserves as possible, counting bird species and pledging \$1 to FLLT for each species seen. (I expect to see around 100 species.) I also will count moments of special inspiration or pleasure, each worth some arbitrarily-assigned incremental donation from me.

In their April meeting The Cayuga Bird Club pledged \$1 per species seen, for which I am very grateful. Please consider adding your support to this effort. You can help in any of several ways:

- Pledge per species and/or per "moment."
- Pledge a flat amount.
- Pledge to match some percentage of the contributions of others. (One donor has promised to match ten percent of the total of other pledges.)

Or you can collect pledges for your own "big-weekend" count on Land Trust properties or make your own contributions apart from my fundraiser, as I know many of you do already.

All money raised will go to the FLLT. I hope that all of you who love our local preserves and the birds living there will consider contributing within your means, especially if you have never given to the FLLT before. For more details on the land trust, visit their web site at <www.fllt.org>.

Please contact me at 257-3348 or at <markchao@imt.org> if you would like to make a pledge or if you have any questions. Thank you! 🐦

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tell how deep they were. I turned back but then saw a couple of cars going that way. I waited and watched them. The potholes did not seem very deep, so I decided to give it a try. After driving about five minutes, I came to a shrubby area where I found my first Mangrove Vireo behaving crazily like a wren. It seemed to be screaming right in my face, but actually it was defending territory from another vireo a few meters behind me. Anis and Orange Orioles were singing in nearby trees. Barred Antshrikes were twittering in the bushes. Further down the road I came across a flock of Yucatan Jays with some young. They were going crazy about something. So I looked around to find a Laughing Falcon sitting right in front of me. I waited hopefully with my microphone pointing to him. Eventually the falcon left the spot without a word.



Meena Haribal
Juvenile Yucatan Jay Cyanocorax yucatanicus, endemic to the Yucatan peninsula, at Puerto Morelos.

Then the jays showed interest in something on the ground. Each of them would go down and come up. Youngsters with yellow bills were begging for food. I later investigated the spot and found a puddle of water; perhaps the jays were bathing or drinking.

During the raucous of jays, other birds such as Orange Orioles, Great-tailed Grackles, Melodious Blackbirds, and Mangrove Vireos visited the spot to check out the commotion. Nearby there was a larger puddle with several species of dragonflies.

I chatted with a local woman who told me about how the surrounding habitat was being converted to hotels and how some wildlife had already disappeared. Some of the locals are resisting hotel infiltration into additional pristine areas. The woman also told me about damage from hurricane Wilma and how local people were coping.

I then headed to Jardin Botanico. The trees there looked strange because most of them lost their canopy in hurricane Wilma and were growing new leaves. They seemed topless. I was told that the birds had become more scarce since the hurricane. Nevertheless, I came across mixed hunting parties of birds. One party included

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Red-crowned Anttanagers, Green Jays, Black-cowled Orioles, Red-browed Peppershrikes, and Ivory-billed Woodcreepers. Black-cowled Orioles were the group leaders and produced a variety of alarm calls at my arrival. After some time, one male, perhaps the alpha male, sang a beautiful mocking song. Another flock consisted of mostly migrants and included several Magnolia, Black-and-White, and Black-throated Green warblers; Gray Catbirds; and Common Yellowthroats. This place was also good for several species of butterflies and dragonflies.

After returning to the airport to track down my luggage, which failed to arrive with me the day before, I decided to head to Felipe Carrillo Puerto (FCP). I arrived at FCP at about 4.30 P.M., and as I had not planned anything, I did not know where to stay. Then I remembered a friend mentioning that he had stayed in Hotel La Casona. So I started looking for that. After going around the town several times, with different people pointing me in different directions (one of them was right, but I missed seeing the hotel), I finally found two female policias. After some discussion between them and a phone call to someone else, they directed me to the right place.

Since it was still light out after I registered at the hotel, I went to figure out how to get to Sian Ka-an Biosphere Preserve. I decided to stop before getting to the preserve as it was getting dark and I had found a spot with a fair amount of activity in the surrounding bushes. I listened and watched. For some reason the spot appeared to be a 'peeing' ground for local machos, or maybe my presence generated the behavior. Two different cars came full of people who all peed right in the road, fortunately not facing me. They could have just walked a little closer to a bush or taken a side road, but they preferred the main road. After the second car, I was a bit nervous, so I headed back to the hotel and decided to go out early in the morning when most such people would be fast asleep.

Throughout the trip typically I was up up by 4.30 A.M. I headed out a few miles off of main highways onto side roads. Not much was heard before sunrise. Some days were cold, and on those days birds were really slow. I recorded until almost 8.00 A.M. but kept my recorder handy most of the time, as some birds called at other times, too. I continued birding through most of the afternoon if I was not visiting any historical places. Otherwise I birded

until 1.00 P.M. or so and then went sightseeing for the rest of the afternoon. I would have loved to go out at night to look for owls and whatever else might be up, but I did not feel comfortable doing that, so I relied on the early mornings to see or hear nocturnal creatures. For the first couple of days every third bird I saw was a Magnolia Warbler. Many of them seemed to be angry with me and would chip loudly in front of my microphone. Every tenth bird, or in some places fifth bird, was a White-eyed Vireo.

DECEMBER 23:

SIAN KA-AN BIOSPHERE PRESERVE

On my third morning in Mexico, I drove about 2 km on the dirt road I had found the day before, while it was still dark, and waited for birds to wake up. I heard nothing except insects, so I drove a little further. As it was getting light, I started hearing birds. First a bunch of jays woke up and made some noises; next a Motmot woke up. Far away a Collared Forest-Falcon moaned. Next flycatchers woke up, and a Euphonia sang his high-pitched song. Descendants of *Gallus murghi* had been up for quite some time before any other birds. I could also hear traffic noise from highway 302 that was steadily increasing, which I found annoying. In the next half hour the forest became alive with activity.

At about 9.00 A.M., I encountered a couple of trucks with lots of people. Unfortunately, they stopped nearby and started cutting trees and transferring cut logs on to a truck. So that was the end of my recording. I changed to watching birds and taking pictures. A Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl landed on a bare tree and curiously watched me move around with my furry microphone. This bothered some nearby birds who started giving alarm calls. A Rufous Hummingbird was brave enough to buzz around the owl like a bee, rest, and then attack again! In between, a couple of times he went to the nectar of what I think was a *Clerodendron* sp. There were quite a few butterflies on *Stachyterpeta* flowers and dragonflies in the clearings. I spent time chasing them to get pictures. Then when I looked at the time, it was almost noon! I headed back and stopped somewhere far from the woodcutters to have my lunch. While I ate, the Orange Orioles, several species of flycatchers, and Greyish and Black-throated Saltators landed nearby and sang. A White-browed Wren, cousin of our Carolina Wren, sang his "thik hai thik hai, thik hai thik" song (meaning "I am fine

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I am fine I am fine" in Hindi). So I spent the next couple of hours recording them and watching them. It was getting hot, and the birds were becoming scarce. I decided that I would head back to the hotel, relax, and then come back later in the evening.

Back at the hotel I checked the map and decided instead to visit some ruins in Xcintoil. The road to Xcintoil was quite nicely wooded, and when I arrived at the village, I found a tiny church of historic interest. I was glad I visited this place because I discovered a dirt road that had several lakes along it. I decided to visit this place the next day.

DECEMBER 24:

XCINTOIL AND LAGUNA OCUM

I returned to the Xcintoil road well before daylight and waited. First I heard a call that sounded like a Roadside Hawk, but it could have been an imitating jay. Then a flycatcher woke up. He sang continuously for quite some time. Later I identified this bird as a Tropical Pewee. Woodpeckers were drumming nearby while a pair of Ivory-billed Woodcreepers foraged. Then I heard some movements in the nearby bushes. I saw a wren with a white throat first, but then I saw a wren with a long bill. I was confused until I realized that two different wrens were in the bush: a White-breasted Wren and a Long-billed Gnatwren. The wrens started singing as though they were competing with each other. A Rufous-tailed Hummingbird buzzed around. Soon a Lineated Woodpecker announced its presence by drumming on a nearby tree. As if in response to him, a Chestnut-colored Woodpecker flew over my head. I could hear his heavy wing beats. A little ahead was a flock of warblers, which included a Grey-throated Chat. There were Pale-vented Pigeons cooing; Thicket Tinamous wooing; Violaceous Trogons tattling; and parrots, jays, orioles, and anis calling almost all at the same time.

A pair of Blue Buntings and a Collared Seedeater were busy eating seeds from a roadside plant. It seemed like the Blue Buntings were getting ready to nest. The male sang often from different perches. I also saw in the same area a Yucatan Woodpecker, a Lineated Woodpecker, and a probable Yucatan Flycatcher (I have yet to confirm this bird's song).



Meena Haribal

Great Pondhawk (male) Erythemis vesiculosa, basking in Sian Ka-an Biosphere Preserve.

I found an interesting way to distinguish various doves. The Orange Doves or Short-billed Pigeons sound as if they are complaining angrily: "Whooo took the booot." The Pale-vented Doves sound like they are playfully complaining: "Who took the boot... took the boot... took the boot." The Caribbean Doves sing very sadly: "took the boooooot," and the Pale-tipped Doves sing with even more melancholy: "boooooot, boooooot." In the evening back at the hotel when hundreds of grackles were coming into roost and creating a great deal of noise, the Ruddy Ground-Dove cooed to his female, "coo coo coo coo," while shaking his head and body, while the female sat passively and listened to him.

Later in the afternoon I went to Laguna Occum to look for dragonflies. I found six species of dragonflies and a Lizard whose head pattern was very similar to that of a Lineated Woodpecker's face pattern. The bird activity was much slower in the afternoon. I did come across a mixed flock of hummingbirds, orioles, saltators, Blue Grosbeaks, and Indigo Buntings whose young were begging. I wonder if the young were raised here or if the whole family migrated here. 🐦

To listen to the sounds of the birds mentioned in this article, visit <xeno-canto.org> and search for haribal. See future issues of the Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter to read about the rest of Meena's trip to the Yucatan.

American Bittern seen from the wildlife drive at Mon-tezuma National Wildlife Refuge, April 18, 2006.

Marie Read



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Macaw, Meredith Williams



NEXT MEETING MAY 8

GLADYS BIRDSALL, LINDA CLOUGHERTY,
ANN MITCHELL, AND MEREDITH WILLIAMS,
FEATURED SPEAKERS

“¡ES PEQUEÑO, PERO QUE DIVERSIDAD! A
TRAVELOGUE FROM A TRIP TO COSTA RICA”

SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS

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