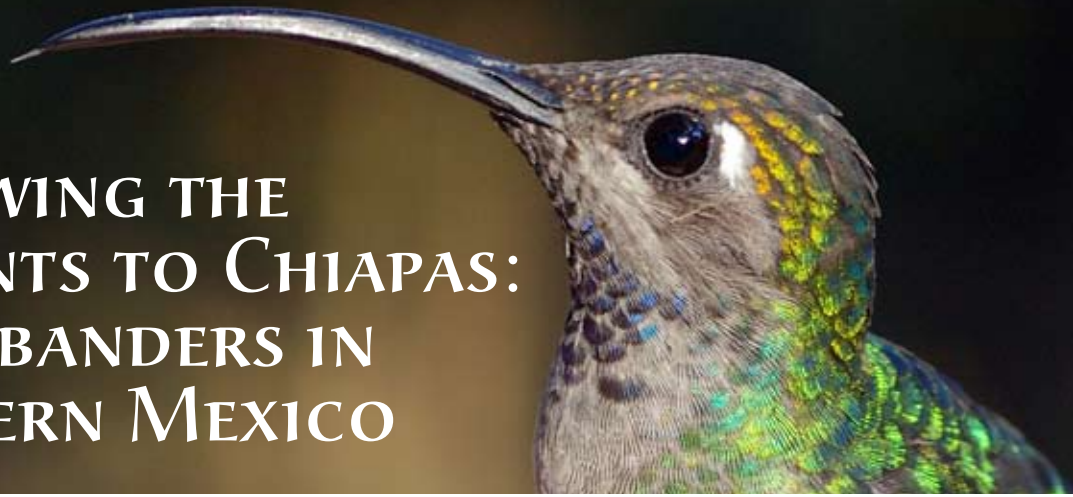


FOLLOWING THE MIGRANTS TO CHIAPAS: BBBO BANDERS IN SOUTHERN MEXICO



The alarm rang at about 3 a.m. on January 4, 2008. Our plane left Rochester at 6:00 and we wanted to arrive at the airport by about 4:30 a.m. Even though it was 20°F outside, I wore a light fleece. We would not be needing heavy coats where we were heading. Thirteen hours and more than 3,000 miles later, Mark Deutschlander and I arrived at Tuxtla Gutierrez in Chiapas, Mexico.

We had two days to spend in Tuxtla, which is the capital city of Chiapas, before heading out to the field. Because this was Mark's first trip to Chiapas, I wanted to show him around my adopted hometown. The first place we visited in Tuxtla was the Zoologia Miguel Alvarez Torres, or ZOOMAT. The zoo was an important place to start the trip because all the animals are from the state of Chiapas!

It was also important to start there because this is one of the best birding locations in the city. We were greeted by a number of over-wintering species before we even got into the zoo proper: Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Black-and-white Warbler, and a variety of *Dendroica* warblers. We also saw a number of resident species and a troop of spider monkeys. There was one bird which will remain unresolved for us. We may have seen the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler. The bird was in a mixed flock and stayed for several minutes. We both saw the key field marks of the sharp, dark eye-line and the black on the back and crown. We remain uncertain because, while this species is found in the nearby city of San Cristobal, it is not often sighted in Tuxtla due to differences in elevation.



San Cristobal is about 3-4,000 feet higher in elevation than Tuxtla. The mystery is made even more delicious because this is a species of concern for our conservation partners in Chiapas.

We did eventually enter the zoo and Mark was able to see the wide array of animals from Chiapas in natural surroundings. Later that night we went to Las Pichanchas, a favorite restaurant of my wife Doris. This restaurant offers Chiapaneco food and professional dancers performing traditional dances. It was a great opportunity to see and taste some of the rich culture of Chiapas.

The birding was so good at the zoo that we went back for a few hours the following morning and found even more warblers. Mark was able to see the Russet-crowned Motmot. We had to tear ourselves away from the zoo too soon as our friend Omar Gordillo came to pick us up to buy supplies that we would carry to the schools on the coast.

Monday morning finally arrived. We made our way downtown to meet Omar at the federal office building. Omar works for Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (CONANP). We met with a number of my friends and colleagues there before we headed out for the coast. We made the four hour trip with Luis Alvarez, one of the young conservation biologists working for CONANP. We were met at the coast by Rafa Paredes, another of the exceptional young biologists working for CONANP.

The coastal watersheds of Chiapas represent one of the most biodiverse areas on earth. The state of Chiapas has a surface area of 28,000 square miles, about half the size of New York. Chiapas and the neighboring state of Oaxaca are the most biodiverse states in Mexico, and Mexico is the 4th most biodiverse country on Earth.

The diversity of bird species alone is incredible. The list of bird species occurring in Chiapas is between 700 and 1,000 species, depending on whom you read! In addition

Mexican field assistant Raphael Paredes admires an Ochre-bellied Flycatcher (left), and a female Violet Saberwing (above), photos by John Waud. Next page: a scene from the Novillero River (John Waud) and a Turquoise-crowned Motmot (Mark Deutschlander).

to a wide range of Neotropical migrants which over-winter or are transient there, many resident/endemic species can be seen. A few of these include the Resplendent Quetzal, Giant Wren, White-bellied Chacalaca, Horned Guan, Scarlet Macaw, Military Macaw, Azure-rumped Tanager, and the Harpy Eagle. The other groups of flora and fauna are equally diverse.

The coastal watersheds are the crown jewel of diversity in Chiapas. There are fourteen rivers which connect El Triunfo (a cloud forest) with La Encrucijada (a mangrove swamp) Biosphere Reserves. The total area is just under 2 million acres. Because of the diversity found here, there is a consortium of eight international and Mexican conservation organizations working to preserve and restore this area. The project that Mark and I went to Chiapas to work on—the use of bird species as indicators of riparian zone function—is a part of the larger conservation effort.

We banded in the Novillero watershed, which is about 100 miles from the border with Guatemala. This was the first time we worked in this watershed. For the past four years, we have been working in the Coapa watershed, to the northwest of the Novillero. Our banding protocol was modeled on the system used at BBBO.

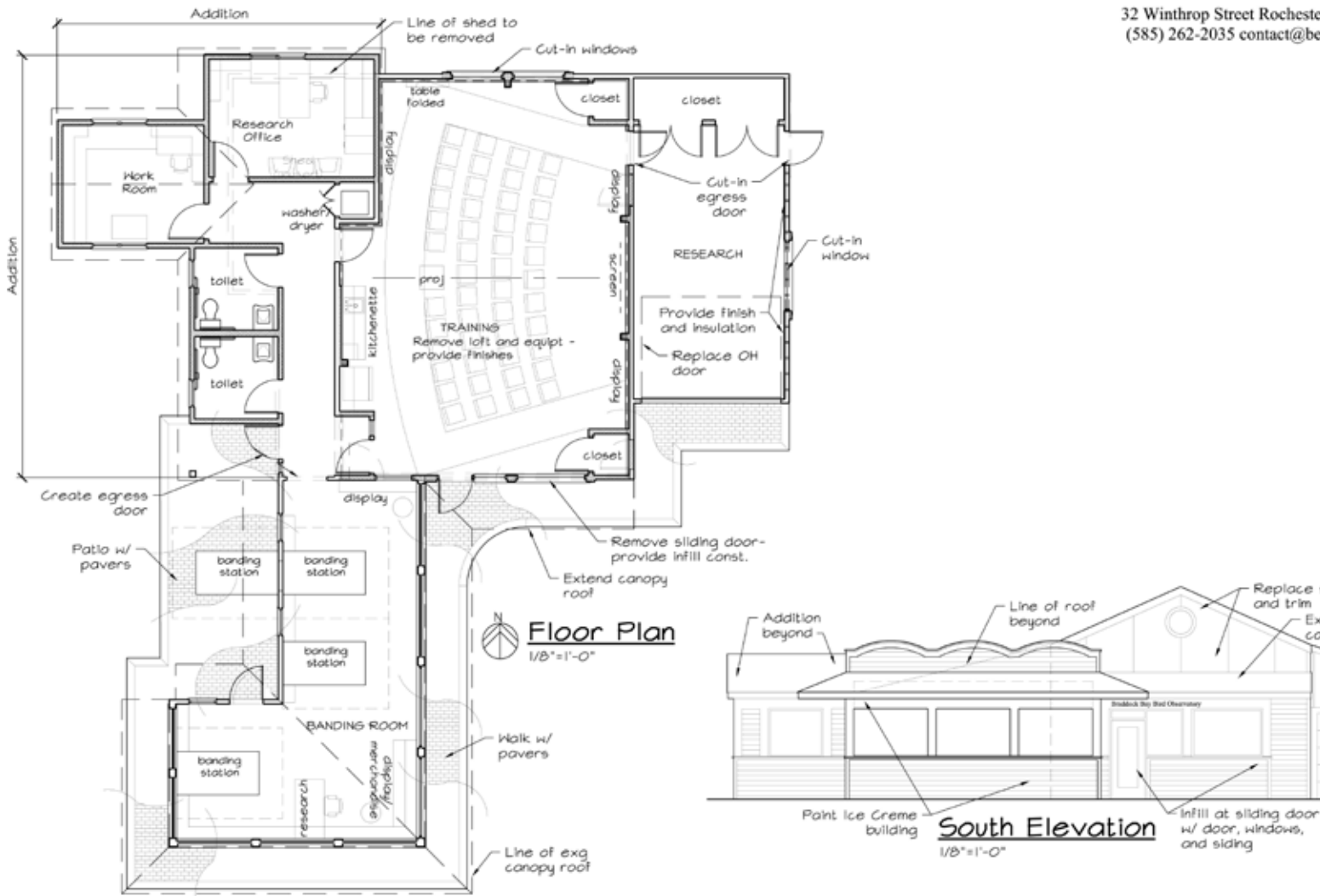
We had an excellent week and banded more than 80 birds. The species we banded included White-tipped Dove, Groove-billed Ani, Blue-crowned Motmot, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher (the dominant species banded), Yellow-olive Flycatcher, Royal Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Rose-throated Becard, Swainson's Thrush (the first bird Mark banded in Chiapas), White-throated Thrush, Tennessee Warbler, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, Green Kingfisher, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Long-tailed Manakin, Warbling Vireo, Clay-colored Robin, Black-and-white Warbler, Kentucky



Warbler, and Painted Bunting. We also had Violet Sabrewing, Cinnamon Hummingbird, and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in the nets, but not banded.

Other birds seen at the banding station included Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Grey Hawk, Common Ground-Dove, Yellow-naped Parrot, Squirrel Cuckoo, Emerald Toucanet, Common Tody Flycatcher, Social Flycatcher, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Red-eyed Vireo, Plumbeous Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Rufous-capped Warbler, Western Tanager, Great-tailed Grackle, Baltimore Oriole, Altamira Oriole, Orchard Oriole, Neotropic Cormorant, Great Egret, Cattle Egret,





Braddock Bay Banding Observatory

October 16, 2007

Snowy Egret, Zone-tailed Hawk, Spotted Sandpiper, and Great Kiskadee.

On Thursday, Omar gave Mark a tour of La Encrucijada Biosphere Reserve while Rafa, Luis, and I maintained the banding site. They had a great day with many terrific sightings. By far the best sighting of the trip, and here I am a little envious, they saw the rare Agami Heron.

On Friday, Omar, Rafa, and Mark worked at the banding station, while I delivered supplies to the schools in the Coapa watershed with Luis. This is part of a project that Doris started when we lived in Chiapas. It was great to see friends there and to provide the much-needed supplies to the students and teachers.

The birds banded and seen were interesting by comparison to those found in the Coapa watershed. We banded proportionately fewer migrants (even though they were all around us). The Ochre-bellied Flycatcher was the dominant species banded, as opposed to the Clay-colored Robin in the Coapa. Mark and I spent the weekend back in Tuxtla and nearby San Cristobal. Mark met many of

my friends and colleagues from the Tuxtla office of the Nature Conservancy (TNC). We did manage to work in a little birding in San Cristobal where we spotted more overwintering warblers (both eastern and western) before we had to return to the cold north.

Omar, Luis, Rafa, and the TNC staff are working everyday to preserve this important part of the world. For the past 8+ years I have had the privilege of working with the conservation team there. Because we lived in Chiapas for a year, Doris and I count many of the people in this part of Mexico as close friends. I was very happy to be able to introduce Mark to Chiapas and to our friends. BBBO has become an important part of the conservation effort in the coastal watershed of Chiapas. As the conservation work there continues, Mark, Doris, and I will continue to share the story with all of you.

- John Waud ♦

Next page: A White-throated Thrush banded in Chiapas, Mexico. Photo by John Waud.

NEW RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER RENOVATIONS TO “BOATHOUSE” PLANNED

Braddock Bay Bird Observatory is excited to announce plans to renovate the “boathouse” where we currently work. By remodeling the existing structure, the new laboratory and classroom space will allow BBBO to invite school and other large groups to observe and learn about our work with migratory birds.

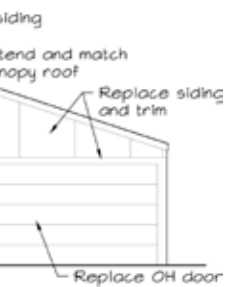
Our current facility is not conducive to the educational aspect of our mission because it lacks running water, toilet facilities (other than a portable toilet), and heat. In addition to sanitary facilities, heat, and better lighting, the new facility will include professional education displays and multi-media tools for teaching about bird migration.

We have been working with John Page of Bero Architects on preliminary designs for the renovation of the boathouse, to help us develop a budget, and to obtain the necessary municipal approvals for the project. We are committed to doing so in a manner that is both environmentally friendly and consistent with our mission, which includes helping the public better understand and recognize the value of natural areas in Western New York. It is our intention to develop a facility that will better help us fulfill that mission.

We are currently in the midst of a very successful capital campaign that has helped us raise the funds necessary to preserve, protect and restore the land around the banding facility, and to purchase a house in the neighborhood to provide lodging for our volunteers. The next logical step in the process is to upgrade our facility and we will continue the capital campaign to raise the funds necessary to complete this exciting renovation project.

Anyone with questions about the project or with interest in supporting the capital campaign for the renovation can contact Matt Belanger, the chair of the BBBO Development Committee, by phone at (585) 241-9772 or (585) 727-7659, or by e-mail at mbelanger@faraci.com. Donations may be sent to BBBO, P.O. Box 12876, Rochester, New York 14612.

Preliminary architectural schematic of proposed renovations. Design by Bero Architecture.



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