Birds of the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico: An update on the status and distribution of selected species

BARBARA MACKINNON H. • CALLE 13A #98 X 18 Y 20, ITZIMNÁ, MÉRIDA, YUCATÁN 97100 • (BARBARAMACKINNONDE@GMAIL.COM)
JILL L. DEPPE • EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, LIFE SCIENCE BUILDING 2070 • 600 LINCOLN AVENUE, CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS 61920 • (JLDEPPE@EIU.EDU)
ANTONIO CELIS-MURILLO • ILLINOIS NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN • 1816 SOUTH OAK STREET, CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS 61820 • (CELISMU1@ILLINOIS.EDU)

Adult male White-winged Tanager at Central Vallarta, Puerto Morelos, Quintana Roo, 19 April 2008—one of many species recorded with increasing frequency in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, which is comprised of the states of Yucatán, Quintana Roo, and Campeche. ***Photograph by Tom Murray.***

Abstract

This paper provides information on the status and distribution of 51 species of birds and two hybrids in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. Of these, 20 are year-round tropical residents, two are intra-tropical migratory species (summer residents in Mexico), and 26 are Nearctic–Neotropical migrants; a Eurasian shorebird and two vagrant gull species are also included. These records extend the distributional ranges of many species, confirm species' presences in areas where their occurrence was poorly understood, confirm the breeding activity of two species, Jabiru (*Jabiru mycteria*) and Piratic Flycatcher (*Legatus leucophaius*), in the northern part of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, and contribute information for determining the relative abundance and seasonal occurrence of many species. Some of this information has been presented in abbreviated form in *North American Birds* (in the regional report for Mexico), but detailed documentation has not been previously published, though some supporting material has been available on personal websites.

Several factors have contributed to increased detection of bird species in the Yucatan Peninsula: intensive point-counts and surveys conducted during migration periods; large-scale projects involving mist-netting and acoustic recording across a broad range of vegetation types; expansion of scientific research and birding activities into areas previously visited infrequently; and the promotion of birding tourism and training of bird guides in the region.

Background

Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, which includes the states of Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo, is a region of high bird biodiversity, with a combination of year-round residents, summer populations of intra-tropical migrants, winter and transient populations of Nearctic–Neotropical migratory species, and numerous records of species considered vagrants. The avifauna of the Yucatan Peninsula is relatively well known (Paynter 1955, Lynch et al. 1985, Lynch 1989, Lopez Ornat et al. 1989, Lopez Ornat and Lynch 1990, Lynch 1991, Lopez Ornat and Ramon 1992, Greenberg 1992, Howell and Webb 1995, MacKinnon and Acosta Aburto 2003, Chablé-Santos et al. 2007, Chablé-Santos et al. 2008), but knowledge of many species' spatial and temporal distributions and abundances in the region continues to grow due to the expanding number of ornithologists and birders there,

more comprehensive documentation and dissemination of tropical resident species' vocalizations (e.g., Celis-Murillo et al. 2008, MacKinnon et al. 2009), and more temporally intensive studies during periods of high species turnover, in particular fall and spring migration (Mills and Rogers 1990, Deppe and Rotenberry 2005, 2008).

Based on distributional maps and descriptions of ranges provided in recent literature (e. g., Curson et al. 1994, Howell and Webb 1995, Rising 1996, Dunn and Garrett 1997, Van Perlo 2006), as well as other sources (e.g., the Mexico regional reports in *North American Birds*, and the *Birds of North America Online* accounts, <www.bna.cornell.edu>), noteworthy records have been identified and compiled for 51 resident, migratory, and exotic species, as well as two hybrids in the Yucatan Peninsula. These distributional records are noteworthy for one or more reasons: (1) they extend the known distributional range of the species, (2) they confirm the presence of a species in an area where its occurrence was uncertain or unknown, (3) they confirm breeding activity where breeding was previously unconfirmed or unsuspected, and/or (4) they contribute information toward determining the relative abundance and/or seasonal occurrence of the species in the region. Records are typically annotated to indicate their significance for the Yucatan Peninsula and for individual states but also for specific reserves within the peninsula for which species lists are regularly compiled and updated (MacKinnon 1986, 1992, 1995, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2009).

Species accounts

Identification of birds from photographs discussed herein has been confirmed variously by Steve N. G. Howell, Peter Pyle, Héctor Gómez de Silva, and other ornithologists with expertise in bird identification. When feasible, documentary photographs that support these records are reproduced herein; other supporting images have already been published in *North American Birds*, and still others are in the possession of the senior author, as are some of the referenced audiotapes and videotapes. Many of these records are presented herein for the first time, but when records have been previously noted in the literature, the relevant publications (including brief notations in *North American Birds*) are cross-referenced, for convenience of researchers. In the species accounts that follow, "Yucatán" indicates the state of Yucatán, whereas the region is denoted as Yucatan Peninsula, without the accent mark.

Figure 1. Adult Snow Goose at the Ría Celestún Biosphere Reserve, Yucatán, 14 January 2008. ***Photograph by Henry Dzib.***

Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*)

A fairly common winter visitor in coastal lowlands south to Sonora and northern Veracruz and uncommon in Sinaloa, Snow Goose has only recently been verified in the Yucatan Peninsula states, though it has been documented previously in Belize (Howell and Webb 1995).

Jorge Correa Sandoval and Jesús García Barrón (1993) include Snow Goose as part of the avifauna of the Ría Celestún area of Yucatán but without specific documentation. A white-morph Snow Goose appeared in the Ría Celestún Biosphere Reserve 23 December 2007 through 17 January 2008, seen by many observers and finally photographed by Henry Dzib on 14 January (Figure 1; Gómez de Silva 2008c), providing a first state record. During the next autumn, in Quintana Roo, an adult white-morph Snow Goose was found along the coast between Isla Cancún and Puerto Juarez (21.175194° N, 86.811028° W); it was present there at least 18-21 November 2008. Hiram Gayosso and Juan Gussy discovered the bird, the first documented for Quintana Roo, while conducting a bird survey in the area. Gayosso photographed bird as it foraged on wild plants and dune cover in a wetland area that was being converted to a golf course (Figure 2). In the two days preceding the bird's appearance at the site, a cold front moved through the area, and winds were still northerly on the day of the bird's discovery. On the other side of the peninsula, Francisco Cutz saw an adult white-morph

Figure 2. Adult Snow Goose along the coast between Isla Cancún and Puerto Juarez, Quintana Roo, 18 November 2008. ***Photograph by Hiram Gayosso.***

Snow Goose, possibly the same individual, at the inner end of the estuary in Celestún, Yucatán on 28 November 2008, but it was not photographed (Gómez de Silva 2009a).

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*)

In Mexico, Ross's Goose is regularly recorded wintering in Chihuahua, Durango, and Zacatecas (Howell and Webb 1995). The population of Ross's Goose has increased since the 1980s, and the species has greatly expanded its wintering range in the central and eastern United States in recent decades, so extralimital individuals in Mexico may be expected. One at Lagunas de Chametla, Baja California Sur 6-23 November 2004 (Erickson et al. 2005), for instance, furnished the first verified record for that state.