

## Colima birding localities

by Jesper Bay Jacobsen

[www.naturewatch.dk](http://www.naturewatch.dk)

2012-2014

### Species highlights

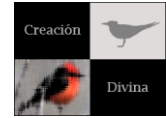
The species highlights mentioned in this document are only based on my own observations. As I register more species of interest, I will add these to the highlight section here below and comment on them in the main text. Therefore pay attention to the update date to know if you have the latest version.

<b>MANZANILLO AREA</b>	
Las Hadas Golf Course	Waterbirds from ducks to spoonbills and some shorebirds, Elegant Tern, Ringed Kingfisher, Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, tyrant-flycatchers and much more.
Elegant Tern Corner	Elegant Tern, Brown Boobies and other close-to-shore birds.
Laguna de Manzanillo (Valle de las Garzas)	Waterbirds from ducks to spoonbills and many shorebirds, Gulls, Terns, Ringed Kingfisher and much more.
Campos Road	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Zone-tailed Hawk, Tropical and Thick-billed Kingbirds, gulls, terns, Whimbrel, and other large coastal birds.
Chandiablo	San Blas Jay, Orange-breasted Bunting and more.
La Boquita	Shorebirds, gulls, terns and probably mangrove inhabitants and more.
Campo Verde - Rio Las Humedades	Lucy's Warbler, farmland birds, hawks, tyrant-flycatchers, tanagers, buntings, orioles.
<b>COAST NORTH OF MANZANILLO</b>	
Isla Navidad	San Blas Jay
Playa de Oro (Howell 7.1)	Flammulated Flycatcher, Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Red-breasted Chat, Citreoline Trogon, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Laughing Falcon, Orange-breasted Bunting, Olive Sparrow, thorn forest species.
Manzanillo Airport Marshes (Howell 7.2)	Waterbirds from ducks to spoonbills, Snail Kite, Spotted Rail, Spot-breasted Oriole, Ruddy-breasted Seedeater.
<b>COAST SOUTH OF MANZANILLO</b>	
Salinas de Cuyutlán - Los Reyes	Waterbirds from ducks to spoonbills, shorebirds



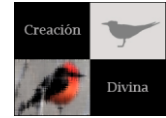
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El Tortugario - Estero Palo Verde	Waterbirds from ducks to spoonbills, mangrove species, Green, Belted and Ringed Kingfishers, Snail Kite, N. Jacana, Purple Gallinule
Boca de Pascuales	Gulls, terns, close-to-shore birds
El Chupadero	Waterbirds from ducks to spoonbills, mangrove species, Green, Belted and Ringed Kingfishers, Snail Kite, N. Jacana, Purple Gallinule
<b>COLIMA CITY AND VICINITY</b>	
La Cumbre (Howell 7.10)	Balsa Screech-Owl, Colima and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls, Citreoline Trogon, Rufous-naped Wren, Black-chested Sparrow, Orange-breasted Bunting, general thorn forest species.
El Peregrino, Colima University	Dickcissels and other night roost species in reed beds, tyrant-flycatchers, warblers, sparrows, buntings.
Parque Ecológica La Campana	Lucy's Warbler, tyrant-flycatchers, buntings, general thorn forest species.
<b>VOLCANIC SLOPE</b>	
Laguna la María (Howell 7.9)	Some ducks and shorebirds, woodpeckers, tyrant-flycatchers, thrushes, warblers, orioles, buntings
Barranca de Agua ,Amphi-theater (Howell 7.9)	woodpeckers, tyrant-flycatchers, thrushes, warblers, orioles, buntings
Barranca Suchitlán	Long-billed Hermit, Cinnamon Hummingbird
<b>NORTHWESTERN HIGHLAND</b>	
El Salto, Minatitlán	



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## ***MANZANILLO AREA***

### **Public Transportation**

The system of city buses in Manzanillo works well, and you will easily find one that suits your needs. However, most visitors will probably only need the number 6 that passes by the hotel zone and runs all the way passing the harbor and ending close to downtown.

The intercity buses that you will need to visit localities north of Manzanillo, you can take from the central bus station or from the Santiago bus station depending on where you stay.

The central bus station is where you arrive to or leave from Manzanillo (Central Station).

The Santiago bus station is more like a bus stop with a ticket office in the north end of town (Santiago station). If you get on a bus from Santiago I think they prefer that you buy the ticket at the office and not on the bus, though it should be possible too.

### **Las Hadas Golf Course**

2013-04-19

#### [Map](#)

I had a client who stayed at Las Hadas and did go to the golf course one morning to birdwatch, and when accidentally seeing his species list some time after on ebird, I almost fell from the chair by surprise and excitement. 3 Masked Ducks!

Very close by in a pond on the course during daylight. He thought that was a common Mexican observation, so hadn't seen it needful to inform me...

Unfortunately it was some time after, but I didn't really have the opportunity to leave at that moment either, so it was not until like 2 months later that I finally could try my own luck with the ducks.

The habitat is definitely suited for the species with a lot of man-made ponds and canals with floating plants covering many of them.

Unfortunately I did not find the ducks, but the area was loaded with all other kinds of water and land birds and therefore is worthwhile with or without Masked Ducks.

#### Access

The area of course is private so you can't just walk in and start birdwatching like you wish.

Well, actually it is possible to walk in several places but I strongly recommend that you use the official entrance that will be from Blv. Miguel de la Madrid (where the google marker is). Here you tell the guard that you are going to talk to the manager of the golf course (El gerente del campo de golf). This entrance is not only to the golf course but also to some of the other hotels. It is marked with a big sign saying: Barceló.

You find the manager in the offices at the bottom of the road on the right side behind the tennis courts. But just ask. You will have no problem passing the guards. They are just there for the looks.

Tell the manager that you have heard that the golf course is an excellent place to watch birds, and ask if you can do so.

And assure him well that you will be careful: It is a golf course and they use it, and they're not all of them playing the Majors...some hit it far off, and it can hurt.

That perspective could probably soon be a hint for further access, so act wisely.

The course is open from 7 am to 7 pm.



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### Access with public transportation

At least bus number 6 passes by between Santiago and downtown.

### Notes on birding

When you pass by on the boulevard you don't get the impression that the very open area should hold many birds, but when you start walking along the different paths, along the canals and lakes, then they reveal themselves one by one.

You will not necessarily see very rare species but a big variety should be guaranteed: Ducks, grebes, cormorants, pelicans, herons, shorebirds, doves, kingfishers, parrots, swallows, tons of tyrant-flycatchers, seedeaters, orioles, saltators and troupials. Search my observation from Las Hadas on ebird to see my complete observations.

My best species are Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, Solitary Sandpiper and a splendid Yellow-headed Parrot. Definitely my re-compensation for the none-present Masked Ducks.

Be sure that you ask permission to visit both sides of the entrance road. The right/north side is larger but also has more people passing by. I like the area toward the back the best, close to the hillside where all the good canals and ponds are.

The left/south side is thus smaller but also more natural with less disturbance.

On this side there is both a long canal with a lot of vegetation (so good for the duck), and a long stretch of trees with scrub with a lot of potential. Had my parrot here.

So. Not a spot you plan to drive for. You will see the same species elsewhere most places along the coast. But if you are staying in Manzanillo and feel for an easy intense morning of birding then this is a good place to go.

## **Elegant Tern corner**

2014-11-02

### [Map](#)

In December 2013 and again in February 2014 I discovered a large group of Elegant Terns coming in to forage at the corner of the beach just outside the Las Hadas Golf Course. I counted 80 and 100 respectively and curiously enough it was a pure flock with no Royals mix in, or only a few.

Apparently they were foraging on a specific small fish; so I was told. This of course could mean that their presence is not to be expected all year around depending on the behavior and movements of the fish.

### Access

You can access the corner of the beach both by walking along it from the hotel area, or you can access it from inside the golf course. If you intend to take photos I recommend that you enter the golf course because it makes it possible to get up above the birds and thereby avoiding the bright background of the sky if standing low on the beach. Remember to ask permission.

## **Laguna de Manzanillo (Valle de las Garzas)**

2014-11-02

### [Map \(north\)](#) [Map \(south\)](#)

On the inland side along the Boulevard Costero Miguel de la Madrid south of Las Hadas you find



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one of the best localities for waterbirds in and around Manzanillo.

Most birders visiting Manzanillo probably know the observation spot at the southern end of the lagoon since you pass by it following the natural flow of movement from one end of the town to the other. With open water and normally good bird activity close to the road, and a very convenient parking space just next to it, most birders, with time to spare, will feel inclined to make a stop, I expect.

However, observing from the southern end it soon becomes evident that there are many birds at the far north end of the lagoon that are practically impossible to identify because of the large distance. I had gotten the impression that there were no other access to the lagoon, but one day when I was standing at the southern end, I spotted a large group of birds far away that, by their way of flying, looked very much like Black Terns. I was very excited but also frustrated since I wouldn't identify them with certainty, being unfamiliar with the species in this area. It could be something else. Therefore, despite the information that I had received about no other access points, I decided to test this fact, in hope that, as most often is the case in Mexico, there would be a little more to it than that.

The next day I took off exploring the northeast corner that looked good on the map, but no luck. There were short trails but nothing that allowed for access to the water surface; it stayed well hidden behind the mangrove and scrub fringe.

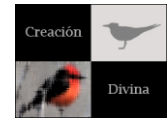
Despite heavy thunder clouds roaring from the nearby hills I decided to continue hoping, they would stay away at least until my mission was accomplished or aborted naturally by a negative result. I continued walking along the road Av. las Gaviotas for a kilometer or so, and got to the intersection at the northwest corner. The south-going road Zamora took its way up over a bridge, but below and along it, there was a short dead-end street with some greenery at the far end. And bingo! Access on foot along the drainage channel and following it for some 500 meters, I reached the north end of the lagoon with full access and loads of birds...!

### Access

As already mentioned, you can park right at the southern end of the lagoon and bird from there. At the northern end you can park along the small dead-end street. There are a few houses, and I'm sure it is safe to park it there, with all standard precautions applying of course. I put the marker on the north map where the small street begins. There is 24 hours access to the area, but no street light once you enter the area, so if you intend to start or end in the dark I suggest that you bring a flashlight.

You start birding right away after reaching the channel. To enter the trail along it, you have to penetrate the scrubby vegetation, which at first seems rather impenetrable, but after a short while the trail opens up and you can walk easily.

**CROCODILE WARNING:** At all my visits the water level in the channel has been about 1 meter below walking level and the bank being rather steep, it is most likely that you won't have any problems with crocodiles. But they are here! They swim in the channel or rest on the floating vegetation or further out in the open you can find them sunning on exposed sand bars. Most of them are small, but bigger ones can appear, like [this one](#). When this one slid into the water and started swimming in my direction, I decided to move away from the bank, until I was sure it was not me, it had intended as its next meal. I have no idea how big a crocodile has to be before it will consider attacking an adult human. Probably depends on general food availability, though, and with all the nice birds present I expect the risk to be very low, but better safe than sorry - so warning hereby given.



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### Access with public transportation

Bus number 7 and 7a run along Av. Elias Zamora, and you should get off at the crossing with Av. las Gaviotas. There are other buses passing by as well, but at the moment I can't remember their numbers.

### Notes on birding

Be aware that my experience with the birds in the area is restricted to visits during the months Dec-Mar and August. Migrant species mentioned should therefore not be expected if visiting during the summer months. And vice versa, you might be able to find some local breeding birds on the locality that I have not recorded.

Visiting the south end you will mostly see larger birds, egrets, cormorants, ducks and few flying gulls and terns. Some will be rather close but you will probably soon realize that most birds stay farther away - at the north end.

At the north end you will see the same species as in the south and much more. Especially shorebirds can show good numbers with Jacanas, SB Dowitchers, Lesser Yellowlegs, Least, Western, Spotted and Stilt Sandpipers, BN Stilts and A Avocet among the most numerous species. BW Teals and N Shovelers are the most numerous ducks and normally both Whistling-Ducks are present too. AW Pelicans, Anhingas, R Spoonbills and N Cormorants also dominate including a significant number of A Coots and very large numbers of C Callinules. The herons are normally present with the 8 most common species: Great Blue, Great, Snowy, Little Blue, Tricolored, Cattle, Green and Black-crowned Night-Heron. Ringed Kingfisher is present all year it appears, but gulls and terns are more sporadic. I've had Laughing, Heermann, Ring-billed and California Gulls but only Laughing can be considered regular.

Caspian Tern is always there, as the only stable tern species. With this group season means a lot I think, because in early August I one day had 7 different species, Caspian, Gull-billed, Forster's, Black, Least, Royal and Elegant. At other seasons I've only had Caspian and Gull-billed.

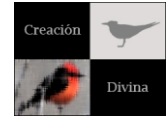
The local wintering Ospreys normally give a swing overhead when you arrive otherwise raptors are scarce except the two vultures. Roadside and Gray Hawk, Crested Caracara and the visually impossible but very twilight-acoustic Collared Forest-Falcon are the other raptors I've had. A falcon of one or the other kind could easily be expected though.

Among the smaller birds Mangrove Swallow can probably be expected all year, as can Vermilion Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee and Tropical Kingbirds. I've also had small numbers of the common Blue-black Grassquit, both Seedeaters, Stripe-headed Sparrows, Happy and Sinaloa Wrens, but since all of these are much commoner elsewhere in the local area you probably will focus on the water birds when deciding to make a visit. A few Lesser Nighthawks come out at dusk but no owls to my knowledge.

At both the north and south end you will have the best light in the morning, but since many birds seem to use the lake as a night roost, you will find the birding better in the afternoon when the birds come in, rather than moving out to pursue their daily activities. At the north end you still have good light on a good part of the area, and the afternoon visit at the north end is therefore my favorite.

A scope is highly recommended since the birds are spread out over a large area and though some shorebirds like dowitchers and yellowlegs tend to come close most of the birds keep a safe distance.

The hope at a locality like this of course is to find something interesting among the migrants and



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wintering birds, but what makes it very special on its own terms is that you have it all to yourself! Though the city surrounds the lake and you can hear the noise from various activities from out there, the mangrove blocks for impulsive access by the locals, and since there is nothing in there other than 'boring' nature no-one seems to bother doing the 500 meters walk just for fun.

## Campos road

2013-04-20

### Map

The big old(!) power plant that is constantly in mind when you are in Manzanillo because of the polluted smoke it sends out in an endless flow, marks the beginning of this locality.

Actually all the road south from Manzanillo downtown toward the power plant is good for birding bordering the lagoon on one side and frequent good scrub on the other. But still, I like to separate the two parts since there is a special feeling to Campos rd.

The first time I went there I only went to the outflow in front of the plant, but when going back I got a chance to look ahead along the road and it just stroke me that there was something magical about it. A long straight isolated road vibrating in the afternoon heat. This would have to be the place find a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher... And what do you know!? The first time I had a chance to investigate it properly, not one but three Scissor-tailed Flycatchers welcomed me from the telephone wires above the road! I loved it.

The road used to be the old road leading all the way to Cuyutlán further south on the coast of Colima, but it was cut off some years ago to give way to a new broad entrance to the lagoon, therefore the road is now a dead end. The map version on google maps is wrong, but you see it easily on the satellite version.

Soon after the power plant constructions stop and fields begin. Mostly cattle and coco nuts. Z-gas has a storage facility there on the seaside of the road and at the end a newly build very large gas facility which is part of the new Guadalajara-gas pipeline project has been constructed.

When you reach the end of the road, you can climb the dike to see for yourself that there is water on the other side or you can turn left or right.

Left takes you around the border of the new gas facility toward the lagoon, but only a few 100 meters until it becomes a dead end.

Right takes you to the beach side and a drivable pier from where you have an excellent view of the coast.

### Access with public transportation

You should grab a bus going to Los Campos. Number 9 or 11 as I recall it, but ask downtown and they'll tell you where to find it. The bus ends at the power plant, so to explore further along the Campos road you'll have to walk.

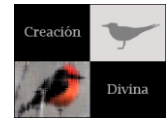
### Notes on birding

When birding this road, you should also remember to visit the outflow in front of the power plant. On the beach side you find roosting and foraging herons, gulls, terns, pelicans and shorebirds.

Along the road itself you will probably not find many birds though Tropical Kingbird is numerous and Zone-tailed Hawk seems to be regular.

But hopefully you find that one bird that makes it worth the while.





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Of course you should watch the wires while moving along, and in general be alert of things and movements.

The good thing about this road is that there is very little disturbance, so if someone scares away the birds it will probably be you.

Most terrain along the road is private property so you cannot explore into the area, but especially on the first open stretch there is a scrubby belt on the seaside of the road where anything could be found.

At the end of the road it is also worth exploring the scrub both on the inside and the outside.

The pier at the end of the road on the ocean side looks very useful for watching seabirds.

The big cement blocks would serve well both against the wind and the sun. Unfortunately it is not the most logical spot on the coast to do this activity, but one day I'll give it try.

## Chandiablo

2013-04-20

### [Map](#)

No a real site but a single visit gave some nice birds, and especially San Blas Jay which is not always that easy to find in Colima. This is then a place to try look for it, if you still miss it.

Chandiablo is a village in the hills above Manzanillo and the exit from the highway around Manzanillo is well-marked so you should find it easily.

A river passes by the village and the whole area is worth exploring more.

### [Access with public transportation](#)

Surely some second class bus goes to Chandiablo, but you have to ask from where to take it. Will probably be from the northern part of the city, Santiago.

## La Boquita

2013-04-20

### [Map](#) , [highway entrance](#)

La boquita is the outflow of the northern most lagoon system in Manzanillo.

To get there you have to go to the small village called El Naranjo, on the highway north of Manzanillo, see highway entrance.

You can bird along the road to the lagoon which has good vegetation and you will probably find most of the more common species in the area.

### [Access with public transportation](#)

There are some hotels along the access road, but whether or not public buses serve these is a big question.

At least you can get to El Naranjo which is served by a variety of busses, ask. From there you can walk the 3-4 kilometers toward the lagoon opening.

I have not tried it, but another option is to enter from the other side. If you go all the way to the north end of Miramar beach, that is la boquita, then you find a bridge crossing the outflow. It leads to a hotel on the other side, but should be possible to use. That would make the walk from public transportation a lot shorter.

I don't know if the bridge is guarded to keep the mob out, but if so, you can probably explain your



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simple need. The Mexicans are normally very flexible in such situations.

### Notes on birding

The birds of interest at this site of course are water birds.

The lagoon is in general fringed by dense mangrove but exactly where I put the Google marker you find an opening and from there you have a good look toward open flats on both sides where gulls, terns and shorebirds forage and roost. Probably best in the afternoon. You can park easily here. Ruddy-necked Wood-Rail and Amazon Kingfishers apparently have been seen from here, and I managed to get my first Black Skimmers and A. Oystercatcher for Colima during my first visit. Elegant Tern and Long-billed Curlew were interesting too among the good numbers of Whimbrels and Willets.

Even though few people swim in the lagoon they tend to stay on the other side and the disturbance is minimal which is also the case with the small boats coming in for the night to dock on the inside of the lagoon mouth.

Of course the motors scare the birds, but only temporarily and they soon settle again. Very helpful if you are looking for new stuff to have the bag shaken up like that once in a while. And of course a pain in the butt if you are trying to count...

In general a good small site that should be visited frequently to check for new stuff.

From the obs point, the Google marker, a path continues if you cross a small flow of water. And on the map it looks like it could be interesting to explore. Not sure if there are crocodiles in this lagoon.

## **Campo Verde - Río Las Humedades**

2014-11-04

[Map - Campo Verde](#) , [Map - Punta de Agua](#)

This locality is a mix of open farmland and dry arroyo habitat with access to patches of thorn forests in the adjacent low hills.

It begins at Campo Verde on the northeast side of the highway and continues until the small village of Punta de Agua along the highway to Minatitlán.

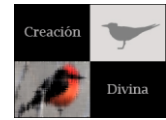
In practice it consists of three parts:

The first part being paved runs behind the small community named Campo Verde, where you find a school and fenced off housing, to the relatively new Technological University of Manzanillo. It is open farmland of a shrubby and extensively cultivated nature.

Continuing passed the university the road becomes dirt and here begins a 2 kilometers stretch of fields, mostly chili. The road and the side roads are bordered by large shade giving trees.

After passing all the cultivated fields you reach a drier and more open part that leads to the river Río Los Humedades. Outside the rainy season it dries up completely except for a few small pools, and you can walk along it for some kilometers until you reach the village Punta de Agua which makes for a natural boundary of the locality.

If you start from the Campo Verde side directions are obvious. If you start from Punta de Agua you should head down through the village toward the river and find a crossing. This too ought to be obvious since the village is lying on a slope. You can drive the whole stretch, which is about 5-6 kilometers, but walking is recommended. You can buy groceries in Punta de Agua if you're in need.



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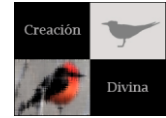
### Access with public transportation

From the Campo Verde side you can take bus no. 7A which runs on from downtown, continuing on Av. Zamora, and Av. Manzanillo and ends at the university. From the Punta de Agua side you will have to take a second class bus from the central station going to Minatitlán.

### Notes on birding

Most of the species you'll find here, you can find elsewhere, but the easy and mostly undisturbed walking is pleasant, both in the morning and the afternoon. The mix of habitats along the route provides a good variety, and especially along the cultivated fields there can be many birds.

My complete species list



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## ***COAST NORTH OF MANZANILLO***

### **Isla Navidad**

2013-04-21

#### [Map](#)

Isla Navidad is a peninsula at the far north corner of Colima sheltering the bay of Barra de Navidad from the ocean. Looking at the map border between Jalisco and Colima one sees it has a peculiar flow. Apparently it follows the river Marabasco but reaching the peninsula it seems to follow other rules since the tip of the peninsula belongs to Jalisco.

Have to have it verified somewhere since it looks pretty strange.

There is no direct access to Isla Navidad from Colima. You have to follow the Puerto Vallarta highway north out of the state passing Cihuatlán and short after take your turn off. It is well-signed. You are still in Jalisco until you pass a narrow bridge along the road. Crossing that and you are in Colima again.

But according to the map you leave Colima again when you climb the rocky hills at the bottom. The marina thus is also in Jalisco, but the village on the bay side, Colimilla, is Colima.

To enter the area you have to pass a big guarded entrance that looks like the entrance to a resort of some kind. But it is open to everybody so don't hesitate.

Most of the area consists of a golf course and there are a few lakes with wild ducks and so. It is apparently also possible to drive along the beach for some kilometers.

#### Access by public transportation

Ask at the bus station for Isla Navidad, and you will easily find your route.

#### Notes on birding

My birding experience is very brief but I want to include the site because we had San Blas Jays on the golf course. Again, if you miss it on your Colima list this is another chance to get it.

And then I got aware that Spot-breasted Oriole is being seen frequently in these years in Barra de Navidad just across the border in Jalisco, and it could therefore be interesting to try for it on this side of the bay, in Colima. The species has not been recorded regularly from Colima in many years.

### **Manzanillo Airport Marsh (Howell 7.1)**

2012-03-20

#### [Map](#)

The flat lowland north of the hills of Playa de Oro.

A large part has been claimed for agriculture, chili, coconuts etc, but there is still a healthy part of the marshes left north of the road stretching all the way to the hills.

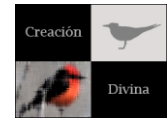
The first 3-4 kilometers you walk along the road through fields and plantation, and after that, the last 2 kilometers the marsh shows up.

The airport marks the end of the road, thus there is no access to the beach from here.

#### Access with bus or taxi

It is the same bus that serves Playa de Oro, therefore see notes under that locality.

The bus does not serve the airport, so you have to get off at the highway junction and walk. This is



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not too bad since there is good habitat just around there before the plantations begin.

The bus price for traveling from Manzanillo to the get off is 25 pesos.

At the airport there is no public transportation other than the rather expensive airport shuttles which run at 430 peso one way to Manzanillo.

A cheaper solution therefore is to have one of these shuttles to drop you off at a small village, Chivirín?, about a kilometer north of the highway junction, from where you then take the bus. This costs 100 pesos. Remember to signal the bus!

### Notes on birding

The whole length of the road from the highway to the airport is worth birding, but the best part is the last 2 kilometers after the plantations.

To enjoy the best of the site you should enter the marsh area itself which lies on the left after the plantations. There is a dirt road entrance which is rather obvious, flagged by a single winged gate that has long ago lost its original purpose of existing.

In the moment of writing endless rows of dead cut-over trees and bushes were occupying a large part of the drier parties. If they are still there, remember to check them out, since they are like magnets to smaller birds.

(**March 2013:** The dead trees are no longer there. In fact the whole area between the palm trees and the access to the area has been cleared for cultivation. Nor is it possible to approach the wetter parts of the area. It has been fenced off and a new irrigation channel has been constructed which hinders access. Makes the whole area less interesting.)

The ponds mentioned by Howell, just after the marsh, are not what they probably were when he wrote his book.

No doubt they are housing many birds, more than you see, but since all the dikes but the main one are overgrown, they are difficult to access and the viewing is poor. White-winged Dove seems to rule this place.

The caimans are still there, but nowadays I think it will be difficult find numbers of Collared Sandpipers resting on the dikes as Howell mentions.

(**March 2013:** The ponds look the same but the hermit living at the bottom of the main road apparently has lost it a little. He approached on his motorbike while we were slowly walking down toward his building. And his comment was that we should come directly to him to ask permission to enter the area. I explained that that was what we were doing since there is only one way to go, so what was the problem. He's comment was that he had seen me stop for a while on the way, so it was clear to him that I did not come with good intentions. He's last comment was that the good guys were welcome but the bad ones could go to...He's whole attitude was somewhat hostile so it is not recommended to go there. The positive thing is that Spotted Rail can be heard from the highway, and that the ponds look as boring birding-wise as last time.)

## **Playa de Oro (Howell site 7.2)**

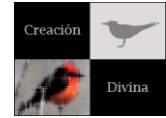
2012-03-20

### [Map](#)

One of the best birdwatching localities in Colima.

It consists of a group of hills covered with thorn forest lying between Manzanillo city and the airport. Toward the back land they are directly connected to the more or less unspoiled, and unexplored?, wilderness of the Manititlán mountains – a nationally protected area.

The lower parts of the highway side is used for plantations, coconuts, mangos etc, but soon, within



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500 meters you start rising and continue to walk through dense forest along the cobbled dirt road until you hit the beach in about 5-6 kilometers. Midway you reach the 'summit' and start descending.

The vegetation is more humid on the coastal side of the hills.

The beach is wonderfully unspoiled, a few old ruins at the beginning but otherwise pure natural. Mostly because it is lying adjacent to the airport thus is part of the most critical part of the flyway zone when the planes land and take off. It is a VERY small airport though, so it is not that likely that you get annoyed by the few planes passing overhead during your stay.

You can walk along the coast in both directions. Nice sandy beach.

To the south you see the big rocky rock Peña Blanca lying two kilometers from shore, housing many seabirds, Red-billed Tropicbirds amongst.

If you walk until you are just in front of rock, you will find the access road from another entry point closer to Manzanillo. It connects with the highway just north of the small village called El Naranjo. So instead of having to double back along the Playa de Oro road you can make it a round-tour. But, in the moment of writing only if you're willing to walk, because halfway up the hills the Peña Blanca road has been washed away. Probably by the hurricane last year. Construction work was ongoing though, so probably only a question of time before it reopens. (**March 2013**: No news on whether or not the Peña Blanca road is open)

#### Access with bus

To get there by bus you have to take a second class bus from Manzanillo Central Station or if you come from the Jalisco / Barra de Navidad / Puerto Vallarta side from the respective bus stations / stops as suited.

These buses pass by about every half hour and are called Coordinados. They stop if you give signal, otherwise they just pass by even if you look like you really would like a ride...

From Manzanillo central station, you take these buses from platform number 20. You don't have to buy the ticket beforehand but be sure the chauffeur doesn't cheat you. The correct price for the ride should be around 20 pesos.

The trip takes about 40 minutes, moving slowly through Manzanillo.

Be aware that when coming from Manzanillo there will be no signs whatsoever along the road indicating that you are reaching Playa de Oro.

Be sure to tell the driver to let you off at the road, but also keep an eye on the kilometer marks along the road to make sure yourself. The road starts about midway between kilometer 30 and 31.

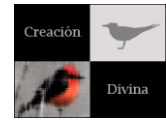
Coming from north indeed there is a green sign saying Playa de Oro 7 Km, as mentioned by Howell, but it has to be a new one since it is not present on the Google Map from 2009 ;-)

#### Access with taxi

If you want to grab a taxi to make things easier and faster, my guess is that you will have to pay about 300 pesos for the trip from Manzanillo. Estimated from the price of a single trip between the airport and Manzanillo which costs 430 peso (not the regular yellow taxis, but a special shuttle service).

#### Note on the birds

The birding seems to be good from start to finish. Of course with more activity in the morning. Also



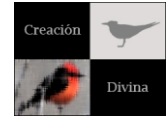
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at the top of the hills, the vegetation is drier and things seemed more quite.

Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Red-breasted Chat and Flammulated Flycatcher is the famous trio you would want to find, but I still can't tell you how or where exactly...

Peña Blanca can be checked fairly easy with a scope from the beach. If they are present it is no problem to identify the Tropicbirds, but since the sun is against most of the day it can be difficult to get good views for identification of the boobies, gulls and terns at the distance.

The low area behind the beach between the two roads holds a few ponds between the cacti and plantations. Worth checking.



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## ***COAST SOUTH OF MANZANILLO***

### **Salinas de Cuyutlán – Los Reyes, Armería**

2013-04-20, update 2014-12-08

#### **Entrance, Exit, Bridge**

At the north end of the southernmost of the Cuyutlán lagoons you find a large area of natural salt flats with the classic salt herb vegetation. The area is actively used to produce salt but is also good for water birds.

The entrance I know is from the small village Los Reyes along the free highway between Armería and Manzanillo. I put the Google marker on the entrance map exactly where to enter. There is no signs on site to tell that you have found the right spot. It is a narrow dirt track below road level on your left side when you come from Armería - just at the beginning of the village.

After a few hundred meters there is a gate and, have I found out later, it is closed for vehicle access between June/July and March because of the risk of getting stuck in the mud during the rainy season.

You can enter on foot, and though the sun might affect you - shade is difficult to find, it is possible to reach some of the good flats within the first two kilometers.

Of course you can leave the area again via Los Reyes, but you can also do a round trip, meaning that you leave the area on the coastal side near Cuyutlán. If you do this, be aware that when you leave the area, through a black gate, you enter directly at the exit into/from the toll highway near Cuyutlán. See the exit map. To go to Manzanillo you turn to the right, for Colima/Cuyutlán you turn left. There are no signs, so be sure to remember it.

When inside the area and you want to drive toward the Cuyutlán exit you should be heading toward the marker on the bridge map. There are no signs in the area and a lot of tracks zigzagging in and out between each other, and though the area is not that big, you could probably lose orientation. In general you should follow the main tracks that lead toward the southwest in a large gentle curve when coming from the entrance spot. The bridge is a very modest elevation in the landscape at most and you won't see it from a distance. Therefore you should try to focus on the main track. But since the area is a working area and other people use it as a shortcut between the two lagoon sides, eventually you will meet someone who can help you, if you need it.

#### **Access with public transportation**

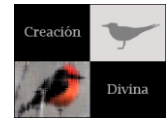
Any bus serving the free highway on that stretch will do, ask at the bus stations for Los Reyes. But once in the area you should be prepared for quite a walk. Lot of sun and no shade mostly. If lucky you could get a ride with one of the salt farmers.

#### **Notes on birding**

In the salt herbs you find Savannah Sparrows, otherwise shorebirds and other waterbirds are the target.

The birding experience is very dependent on the weather. If it is too dry the birds will gather around the permanent water edges or more likely move on, but if the air and soil is moist you can have plovers spread out over large flats. Black-bellied, Snowy, Wilson and Semi-palmated, but also the two common west coast stints can be numerous.





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One spot that seems to be permanently good is the bridge crossing you see on the bridge map. There always seems to be water there which attracts both larger and smaller shorebirds as well as other water birds. Reddish Egret is frequent here as is Mangrove Swallow. Gull-billed and Least Tern are two interesting species you also can see. One could speculate whether they are breeding here or not...

Curlews, Yellowlegs, Phalaropes, Stilt Sandpipers are some of the bigger shorebirds to expect but the place could attract anything.

Looking at the map there seem to be other good spots to check out, but I haven't had the time yet.

## **El Tortugario Cuyutlán– Estero Palo Verde, Armería**

2013-04-20

[Map](#), [web](#)

Lying on the coast south of Cuyutlán facing the ocean on one side, and the estuary Palo Verde on the other side. The site is an official tourist attraction and therefore easy to find, you just follow the signs when reaching Cuyutlán.

The main purpose of the sanctuary is to protect and breed 3 species of sea turtles. They also have crocodiles in captivity.

Every Saturday they release a new batch of young turtles which is an activity open to the public. But the area also serves as a picnic spot where to eat your own food. They also have a swimming pool.

On the inland side they offer boat trips around the estuary and through the mangrove. The trips have a slight educational touch but none of the assistants are experts on birds, which is the general case for all the staff. Turtles have first priority. Price in March 2013 20 pesos per person, but have to say that I'm not sure if is the official price. You also have to pay to enter the Sanctuary.

### Access with public transportation

Second class buses will take you to Cuyutlán, ask. But to get the last 3 kilometers from Cuyutlán is another story. Here you have to walk or hitch a ride or pay a taxi.

### Notes on birding

The water birds are the same you will see at El Chupadero further south; just that Snail Kite, Northern Jacana and the Gallinules are not as numerous here at El Tortugario.

Though the boat trip is much cheaper, 20 pesos per person, it is also much shorter, so in general you will have better chances of seeing more species at El Chupadero. Also the boats are larger – disturbing more.

There is a nice walk through the mangrove though, where you can find a quite spot and wait for whatever shows up. Once had both Fan-tailed Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat together. Northern Waterthrush is classic as is American Redstart and Pacific Slope Flycatcher in the winter season. Both Green and Ringed Kingfishers are common just around the boat landing at the end of the boardwalk.

On land there isn't much to come for around El Tortugario. The Ruddy-breasted Seedeater is



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common though if you stray a little among the palm trees.

In the morning or during windy days you might have your luck on the ocean side with a little seabird watching. In the afternoon the light is against.

Brown Boobies always seem to pass by in numbers. Otherwise Franklin's Gull, Least, Elegant, Gull-billed and Black Terns and Parasitic Jaeger are some of the more unusual species I have seen from there.

On the estuary side you have a good chance of practicing you Royal / Caspian Tern skills since both are present over the water, where also the frigatebirds come down to bath and drink. Nice show.

## Boca de Pascuales, Armería

2013-04-20

### [Map](#)

This is the mouth of the river Armería, one of the largest rivers in Colima. You can park exactly where I put the marker and then walk to the opening. The turmoils when the river water meets the ocean apparently is something that attracts many and large fish, thus also fishermen.

The good thing is that it doesn't look like if the birds mind that – perhaps rather the contrary!

### Access by public transportation

Again I'm in unknown territory, but you should make your way to Tecomán and from there I'm pretty sure there will be a connection to Boca de Pascuales. Perhaps not that difficult to get a ride with someone either.

### Notes on birding

The birds of interest are gulls and terns but also herons, cormorants and shorebirds.

They all come to fish if the fishes are around, otherwise it also serves as a roosting site.

The bait fish that the fishermen use to catch the larger ones seem to be attractive prey to especially the Royal Terns.

The daily variety of gulls and terns in Colima is not that big, but this site is probably a good candidate if something special should be found. I had a few Elegant Terns.

And also THE large flock of Neotropic Cormorants that lives on this coast (also seen frequently from El Tortugario) comes by, and who knows if a patient lucky soul could find a Double-crested or something even better among them. Here a small fraction of the 700 that was present that day.

Not sure if it is possible to travel up the river by boat, but could be worth asking.

## El Chupadero, Tecomán

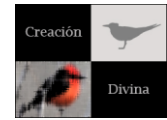
2013-04-18

### [Map](#)

An isolated wetland system on the border to Michoacán - Designated Ramsar Site.

The access is from the ocean side, like the Tortugario at Cuyutlán a bit further up the coast.

Heading south-east out of Tecomán toward Michoacán (Playa Azul is signed for) you pass Cerro de Ortega and further on you will see the sign for El Chupadero. From there you just follow the road to the end. This means that when you first reach the beach you take a left turn and go all the way to the



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bottom, passing a turtle sanctuary some 500 meters before.

The local fishermen have started 'eco-tourism' activities to supply their income. The government has spend a good sum on facilities like toilets and restaurant and a huge palapa from where everybody can enjoy their self-brought food or the food bought in the restaurant (simple local seafood, whole-fried fish).

The few activities include self-pedaled boats and more interestingly, boat tours up the estuary. The price is 100 pesos per person, max. 5. Got name and phone number of the boat man but can't find it now. But ask around, he should be easy to locate – older man.

#### Access with public transportation

I am not sure if it is possible to reach this place at all by public transportation. You have to go to Tecomán or Cerro de Ortega and ask from there. It is too far to walk.

#### Notes on birding

You will find the same big variety of water birds as you see at estero Palo Verde.

But what makes it different is the huge amount of water lilies covering a great part of the open surface which is just perfect for the Northern Jacana. I estimated about a hundred in one afternoon, but you also see good numbers of Common and Purple Gallinules.

After doing the trip I realized that the latter is a serious candidate to being the most beautiful bird in the world. Truly amazing combination of colors as it walks around in t he afternoon sun.

Otherwise Snail Kite, Ibises, N. Cormorant, most of the herons, probably also possible to find Boat-billed, Anhinga, both grebes etc, is what you will see.

You should be sure though that he takes you as far south as possible, closest to the Michoacán border because that's the best part, both for birds and crocodiles.

He suggested it himself so you probably don't have to think about it, but always good to be aware. Before getting there you pass through a long mangrove tunnel. We saw different Kingfishers along that stretch but nothing else of interest.

According to the boat man there are many ducks in the estuary during winter. We only saw Blue-winged Teals in March.

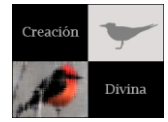
Morning or afternoon of course is the best time to go.

A trip is about 2-3 hours depending on the situation and your needs.

The boat man told us that twice a week he would take the people working at the Turtle Sanctuary just up the road on a round-trip in the estuary where they would count birds.

The person in charge was not present when we were there, but it could be interesting to talk to him about his observations, so stop by and ask before you go to the boat landing.

According to the volunteers that were present that day he does speak English. The boat man does not!



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## ***COLIMA CITY AND VICINITY***

### **Public Transportation**

To get around in Colima without a car you need to take the bus or a taxi. Or walk...

Unlike most places in Mexico a system with combis /colectivos, does not really exist. Shared taxi is a concept used around here though. You can board an occupied taxi if the driver is willing. But it is my impression that we still pay the same price as when you have the taxi for yourself, so not really a benefit except for the driver.

First class buses, long distance, arrive at Central Foránea, map, on the south side of town, by the Guadalajara freeway. The only first class bus station.

There are two second class stations: One situated together with the first class station. I still haven't found out which destinations they serve, but probably rural areas to the south.

The other one, the most important in terms of bird watching sites, is Central Rojos, map, near the center of town. From here you take buses in all directions out of Colima City.

They seem to run regularly without problems. And as always they are cheap but slow.

City busses, looking very much like the second class ones, serve the city with several regular routes, and you pay 5 pesos each time you board a bus. No zone-system, or card systems available that I'm aware of.

The taxis are plenty and run by a zone system. To get around within the center core of the city you pay about 15 pesos for a ride of 1-2 km. To get from one end to the other of the city the price is about the double. Pay attention to rush hours, especially between 13-14, when it can be almost impossible to find an available taxi.

No meter is used in the taxi, so you better agree the price before starting.

### **La Cumbre, Colima City, Colima (Howell site 7.10)**

2012-02-29

#### [Map](#)

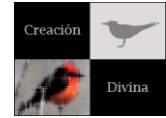
The famous hill just south-west of Colima City where to see Balsas Screech-Owl, Colima Pygmy-Owl and Buff-collared Nightjar among others.

From the highway you can drive or walk up the access road as you please, night and day. At the top you have an excellent view overlooking the city and the volcanoes to the north, and the village of Piscila, the river and rolling hills to the south. At the top you find the closed, but guarded? antenna area and the unfinished temple of the Virgin of Guadalupe. And a launching ramp for paragliders. Both delta and parachute types use it.

At the bottom of the access road the lady living there sometimes serves food and cold beer.

This site is heavily used by the local Colimenses for exercising, and after having fulfilled their cumbersome deeds some of them find it very reasonable to reward themselves with a full belly before heading back to town. Otherwise there is nothing, and you should not count on being able to by anything when coming down.

The road, as is most of the roads in Colima is cobbled, and the climb is straight forward, but winding. Beside this road there is a system of narrow natural paths you can use, short cutting the distance, but with a steeper climb as the consequence. I haven't tried them yet because I always



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bring my photo gear (zero bird photos if too narrow). The joggers seem to prefer them though, making the pain more painful, but for a shorter period.

### Access

From Central Rojos you take the second class bus toward Los Tepames. It runs daily following this schedule: 700,900,1030,1200,1330,1500,1630, 1800, 2000 and 2130.

It costs 10-15 pesos and the trip takes about 15 minutes. You just ask to be dropped off at La Cumbre, and then you start climbing.

The return leaves Los Tepames at: 700, 900, 1030, 1200, 1330, 1500, 1700, 1800 and 2000.

I am not sure about the exact times when it passes by La Cumbre, but the latest apparently passes about 2020-2030. The last time I wanted to go back I waited at that hour, but without the bus showing up before I got a ride back to town.

Both times I've been up there until now, I've got a ride back, but since I haven't had success during these two visits it is probably necessary to expand the time frame visiting. Later in the evening or earlier in the morning.

This makes taking the bus impossible so the alternative is taking a taxi.

I did this the last time to get up there, but not early enough, and from where I live in the center of the city, zone-based payment system, I paid 80 pesos.

Getting back later than the latest bus might be the tricky part. It is completely dark, and though the traffic is rather heavy even in the evening, it is not very likely that anybody would stop in the darkness in the middle of nowhere for someone invisible trying to attract their attention with a waving flashlight.

Without the luck of getting a ride from a car leaving La Cumbre itself, I would probably have had to walk back the last time.

A scary thought. Even though the city looks so close when you stand atop, it is still about 10 km to where the 'civilization' begins. Adding such a walk to the exercises already done climbing the hill would be too much, and the road being very winding and with heavy traffic too dangerous as well.

So the best strategy probably is to take a taxi up there very early in the morning, and then return during the daylight hours by bus or hitching a ride.

## **El Peregrino, Colima University, Colima City**

2012-03-01

### Map

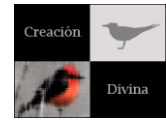
On the south-west side of Colima city, along the highway to Manzanillo, and close to the highway leading to La Cumbre, you find a small lake on the property of Colima University, UCOL, called el Peregrino.

The site is used for the students to practice in the field. Has a large deer-hold of various species.

The lake probably has seen better days according to some observations on [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org), but it still has some relevance as a night roost for many species.

It is about 100 x 100 meters but almost completely covered by reeds.

### Access



Updated on 2014-12-08

You don't need access to the property itself to visit this place. Actually the best way to bird it is from the exit ramp of the highway.

You take a bus or taxi to the traffic circle where also begins the road toward La Cumbre.

It is about 2 km from the center of town, so it is possible to walk there as well.

From here you walk up the exit ramp of the highway which also connects with the circle. In about 300 meters you find the lake on your left.

There are a few places where you can sit more or less comfortably behind the guardrails to feel safer.

If you want access to the property itself, it is possible. Walking down the exit ramp, you should take the first road on your right. It is below level so it does not connect with the ramp itself. Follow it some 100 meters and you will find a gate signed El Peregrino. It is guarded during opening hours, so you just ask if you can get permission to enter. He probably says that you have to ask some of the staff in the office which is inside the property, and then lets you in.

The lake is fenced off though, in the case you might want to enter the property to get closer looks. And this is because there are crocodiles in the lake. I've seen one of about 1 and a half meters length.

#### Notes on the birding

What appears to be a resident flock of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks probably will be the first bird life you notice when arriving. But because of the dense reeds you won't see them until they take flight. And during the day time this is most likely to be the highlight of the day if you visit then.

The best time is in the afternoon when all the night roosters start to arrive. Snowy and Cattle Egrets, White-faced Ibises, Grackles, Red-winged Blackbirds (common type), Bronzed Cowbirds and Dickcissels have been the most noticeably.

Of course it depends on the time of year how much and what you will see. The Dickcissels to me have been the best experience so far. And a foraging Merlin.

Other raptors have been Gray and Broad-winged Hawks and a suspected Bat Falcon coming by to take advantage of the rush-hour turmoil as the birds come in.

A night trip to listen for rails might be a bit optimistic since there apparently are no sightings of such away from the coast (and then only King Rail), other than Sora. But I still think it could be worth trying.

Birding the property itself can be rewarding with different passerines and hummingbirds, but since it is not a public place it is not easy to get around. Fenced off, hostile vegetation and lots of mosquitoes too.

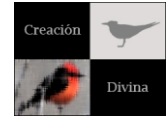
And since you won't see anything that you can't find at other sites around Colima City I recommend that you leave it be.

## **Parque Ecológico La Campana, Colima City**

2012-06-23

### [Map](#)

When I first came to Colima most naturally I bought a map to get to know the place better, and the first thing I noticed was a huge green spot at the northeast corner of the city. Cool, I thought. And



Updated on 2014-12-08

better than just being a green spot, it did not have a name attached to it like you would expect if it had been an official park. It had to be a wild area!

I had just moved to an overpriced apartment very close by, and I soon was on my way.

With no knowledge of the place I used my instinct and finally ended up at the end of a small street called Amado Nervo at the south-west corner of the area.

It looked very promising. The river Colima was flowing quietly below big shady trees and the scrub land residents at the end of the road had cattle, turkeys and chickens amongst.

The city definitely ended temporarily at this point, and after talking with one of the residents, I understood that the area was free to access via the cattle gate next to his property, but he also told me that the area was a protected archeological site. The official site of the ruins 'La Campana' with entrance on Av. Tecnológico, was only revealing a part of the ruins, thus the entire green spot I had seen on the map had been protected for later excavations. Or at least protected to avoid making irreversible mistakes based on bad development decisions.

So I entered via the cattle gate and started exploring.

And what I found was a pristine thorn forest with a rim of tropical moist and dense vegetation along the river Colima. An excellent birding locality.

The name, Parque Ecológico La Campana, is not an official name, but has been created in a visionary manner to raise awareness of the area.

Not by me, but by a local group of people that I met later on. Los amigos del parque la campana had for a long time been working on a project with the aim to create an official park in the protected area. Not a traditional city park, but a park where the natural vegetation should be preserved on its own conditions with the intention to create a base for ecological and educational activities within the city.

A good and needed initiative.

### Access

The area is limited by arroyo Pereira to the northwest, El Tercer Anillo Periférico to the northeast, the Río Colima toward the southeast and Av. Tecnológico toward the southwest.

You can find entrances, cattle gates, to the area on all four sides, but the easiest way to enter is at the end of Amado Nervo, see map, or from the parking lot at the Ex-comercial Mexicana on Av. Tecnológico. You just enter via the cattle gates or jump the fence.

To get there by bus you can take the city bus number 22 if you go counter clockwise on el segundo anillo, Av. Tecnológico, or number 21 if you go in the opposite direction. To connect with these, ask!

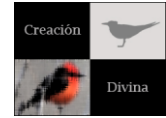
### Notes on birding

From a Colima perspective the species you find in the park do not differ from species you can find elsewhere in the state, but what makes it attractive is that it holds a high percentage of endemic species. Of the 117 species we have registered in the area until now 13 are true endemic. Taking the small size of the area into consideration, about one square kilometer, and the easy access, it is a very valuable locality from an endemic perspective.

Check out the species list on [ebird](#):

Both I and the amigos de la campana, headed by Von Peacock, started out in late 2011 to visit the area. Therefore, at the moment of writing it has still not been covered a whole year.





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But since we have made records all through the spring months I feel rather confident that we have registered all or most of the species breeding in the area, and the species list as it looks now probably has reached its natural potential. Of course it will keep growing as stray birds will pass by.

Because of the dense scrub that covers the area, it can be a challenge to get to see the birds well, but that is probably also why it is so attractive to a large number of small birds. Passerines like buntings and finches that prefer to forage on the ground with easy access to a quick hide are very numerous in the winter season. And among the northern migrants that spend the winter here the Nashville Warbler and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher are the most numerous. Lucy's Warbler also seems to be an expected species, though in small numbers.

Allow 3-4 hours to visit the park. This gives you enough time to do a complete circuit around the area in a slow enough pace to patiently find and see the birds. Especially the small birds have a tendency to fly off if you approach too quickly, and are not easy to relocate.

Since it is not a popular place to the public you'll find that you have the area more or less to yourself, and with a myriad of paths crisscrossing the whole area you can easily deviate as you please.

In the winter months a trip as mentioned will result in a species list around 50-60 species.

The list of endemics we have seen until now, May 2012, is as follows (Clements spring 2011):

West Mexican Chachalaca

Banded Quail

Mexican Parrotlet

Golden-cheeked Woodpecker

Flammulated Flycatcher (1 record)

Golden Vireo

Happy Wren

Sinaloa Wren

Black-capped Gnatcatcher (1 record)

Rufous-backed Robin

Blue Mockingbird

Rusty-crowned Ground-Sparrow

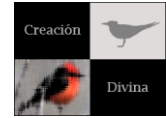
Orange-breasted Bunting

*Yellow-winged Cacique* (has spread to Guatemala, thus not a true endemic)

**(March 2013:** Nothing new on the status of the area. No progress seems to be happening. A visit in January 2013 revealed basically the area is still intact but more fencing inside the area and more cattle are putting more pressure on the vegetation. Also the water that flew from the big water tank has stopped doing so, making this area less interesting for many birds.)



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## ***VOLCANIC SLOPE***

### **Laguna la Maria (Howell site 7.9)**

2012-02-29

#### [Map](#)

Crater lake below the volcano, volcán de fuego, on the border to Jalisco.  
Works as a privately owned camping ground with cabins, rooms, restaurant and more.

Email for more information and reservations: [evelenorozco@hotmail.com](mailto:evelenorozco@hotmail.com)  
You have to pay 10 pesos per person to get access to the ground – all day.

If you wish to spend the night there:

Cabins run at:

1200 pesos a night for 8 person

900 pesos for 6 persons

750 pesos for 4 persons

Rooms are available at

600 pesos for 5 persons

350 pesos for 2 persons

Camping costs 50 pesos a night per person.

#### Access without a car:

You can reach this site by second class bus from Central Rojos.

You catch a bus heading for Zapotitlán (on the Jalisco site of the northern volcanic slope).  
In general the second class buses which serve the Comala – San Antonio road, which is where you want to go, run like this:

Many departures from Colima to Comala throughout the day and evening,

Less but still frequent departures from Colima to Suchitlán throughout the day and evening,

Fewer departures from Colima to Cofradía de Suchitlán throughout the day and evening,

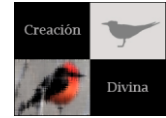
and finally the one you need, 3 daily departures from Colima to Zapotitlán: 715 am, 1415 and 1725.

The return leaves from Zapotitlán at 615 am and 1415. They are called the blue ones, los azules, because of the color of the buses, but you can't always count on it, so you have to look for Zapotitlán. Ask for that or laguna la Maria and everybody knows.

So the only option if you go there on a day trip, is to leave at 715 in the morning and return at about 1500 which is when I estimate that the returning bus passes by la laguna crossing.

Not much time to enjoy the birding since you don't arrive at the get off until 830, why you might want alternatives.

A taxi from Colima to the lake probably costs about 200 pesos. The bus about 30 pesos from Colima to the get off.



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A cheaper approach would be to take one of the more frequent buses to Suchitlán or Cofradía and from there take a taxi the rest of the way.

But you still need to plan for your return trip if you want to stay later than 1500.

Hitchhiking is possible. I've done it without problems. But in the evening the traffic is scarce so one might not always be lucky.

Another idea could be to knock on someone's door in La Becerrera at the other side of the laguna crossroad, and pay them to drive you down to Cofradía or Sutchilán. But I have no idea if anybody would be willing to do that.

Therefore the best idea is to spend the night up there without having to stress it.

The birding quality more than justifies that solution. It is truly brilliant.

Just remember to stay away during weekends or you'll have to share the place with many, pero muchos, local Mexicans who use it intensively as a one day retreat. With loud music and what else comes with noisy activities on a perfect day in the countryside...

Remember that the access road from the highway to the entrance of the site, about 1 km also is excellent for birding. A stretch you have to walk anyway if you don't arrive in car or taxi.

## **Barranca de Agua + Amphi-theater (Howell site 7.9)**

2012-02-29

[Map B del A.](#)

[Map Amphi-theater](#)

### Access

These two localities are actually just stretches of the road leading to laguna la Maria.

To get there by bus you take the same one as for laguna la Maria. To Zapotitlán.

To reach Barranca del Agua you should get off at la Hacienda San Antonio and then you can walk back.

The amphi-theater is before that, on your right hand, at a sharp left turn after coming clear of a winding stretch with dense tropical and shady forest, which is where you want to go after getting off at the theater.

Of course it is not a real amphi-theater but the stone construction reminds of it. But it is facing a large shrine, so maybe it has served some kind of religious event or show earlier on. The site is also known as el Jacal de San Antonio, after the restaurant that once were there. The sign is still there but it appears that the restaurant is permanently closed now. Or perhaps seasonal.

### Notes on birding

"The cobbled road up the hill" that Howell mentions probably is still there, at least the brick pillars and the entrances are, but the site looks completely overgrown and impossible to penetrate.

(**March 2013:** The pillars have been cleaned and restored and the road up cleared, but it is obviously private land so I advice no to use it.).

A good little site track you should try, is when you walk back toward Colima and comes to the sharp right bend, a few hundred meters from the theater, within the shaded forest stretch, there in the curve, passing behind the guardrails, and walking down 20 meters, you find a cattle gate, and on the other side a 100 meter long track up the hill.

It is a private property I know, or community-owned, an old orchard, but the birding has been excellent with both woodcreepers, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Rusty-crowned Ground-Sparrows,



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Tufted Flycatcher, Masked Tityras, Green Jays to mention a few. Yes you can see them from the road as well, but here you get aside and just on the other side of the gate you find yourself standing like in a big hall below the canopies, and can observe the lively bird activity that takes place. I like it.

## **Barranca Suchitlán, Suchitlán, Comala Municipality**

2013-04-19

### [Map](#)

Probably all the barrancas running down the volcanic slope have excellent birding, but the access is often impossible – physically or by ownership.

But at the back edge of Suchitlán you find a narrow 50 meter deep canyon with easy access. You can park in the same street where the descend begins (exactly where the google marker is).

There is probably running water all year round through the canyon which makes it very green and interesting from a birders view.

My reason for visiting was first of all a report about a Long-billed Hermit seen here. Apparently the barrancas around Suchitlán have a good reputation when it comes to finding this species.

But Barranca Suchitlán probably is more promising than others in this respect because of all the banana trees. In fact the entire upper far slope is a banana grove.

It doesn't take long to reach the bottom and the top on the other side, it is easily done in 15 minutes, but to find a Hermit you should probably prepare yourself with some patience. I didn't on this single scouting trip.

Birding-wise the place is definitely worth visiting though even if you do not look for the Hermit.

Just be aware of this biting black insect that apparently only is found in the moist parts of the barrancas on the slope around Suchitlán. Never seen them further down nor higher up.

You easily see them, nothing like the jejenes of San Blas, but they are difficult to avoid. They are about 2 mm's long and like to attack your face or your hands, and if you are sensible as I am, you end up with a lot of bites, and they hurt! Not in the moment, but afterward, and the fingers swell up if you start to scratch them. That is probably the main reason I haven't been more eager to try for the Hermit.

Also, it is possible to spend the night on the far slope of the canyon.

At the top among the banana palms local people, in the name of eco-tourism, have already build one two-bed cabin and another is on the way, March 2013.

The cabin looked surprisingly comfortably, good standard hotel style and quality and was something like 300 pesos a night as I recall it. The only drawback is that there is no way to access with a vehicle. Even from the far side you would have to park some distance away. Therefore you need to prepare your gear for a short hike.

The same local people sell water and refreshments next to the 'camp' during the day.

### [Access with public transportation](#)

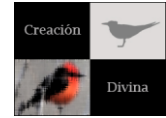
Go to Suchitlán with the same buses that will take you to Laguna la María for which see.

### [Notes on birding](#)



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I guess I already said what is to be said on the birding.



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## ***NORTHWESTERN HIGHLAND***

### **El Salto, Minatitlán**

2012-03-20

#### [Map](#)

A tourist site in the heart of the Minatitlán County some 60 kilometers from Colima City. Swimming pools, camp site and a natural river flowing in a narrow rocky riverbed. The vegetation is mature mixed oak-forest.

Since most parts of these mountains are private land and the access and birding in general is difficult because of the winding road, a site like this with public access is an opportunity to explore the area. Of course, in terms of as little disturbance as possible, it should be visited on a week day.

#### Access with public transportation

I am not sure if it is possible to reach this place all the way by bus. You probably have to go to nearby Minatitlán and then walk or get a ride the last 3-4 km. Perhaps you can get a taxi, but would doubt it.

From Colima it is possible to get to Minatitlán by bus, from Central Rojo, map, but you must probably count on at least a 2 hours journey.

#### Notes on birding

The area is definitely worth exploring, virgin forests and being connected with the better-known Biosfera de Minantlán, only IBA of Colima (actually part of Jalisco). But since the area is so difficult to access, topography, distance and limited access to private land, it requires some determination and planning to get the best out of it.