

HONDURAS: COPAN AND COTINGAS



*March 1-9, 2012
with Bill Gette*



Travel with the Massachusetts Audubon Society
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ITINERARY: HONDURAS

March 1 ~ Arrival to Honduras and Copan Ruins

Plan to arrive at San Pedro Sula, Honduras' second largest city, by midday. After passing through Immigration and Customs at Ramón Villeda Morales International Airport, we will meet our local guide. From the airport, we will have a three-hour drive to our lodge, Hacienda San Lucas, located in western Honduras. During our drive, we will travel southwest through the countryside and make several stops along the way to view the tropical landscape. We should see common roadside birds such as Tropical Kingbird, Roadside Hawk, Blue-gray Tanager, and Tropical Mockingbird. In area wetlands, we expect to see a good variety of species, including Little Blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, Black-necked Stilt, Northern Jacana, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, and Ringed Kingfisher. We will arrive at Copán Ruinas by late afternoon and receive a warm welcome with a sunset cocktail at Hacienda San Lucas nestled in the hills above the tranquil Copán Valley.

Lodging: Hacienda San Lucas (D). This Hacienda is a 100-year-old family-owned retreat uniquely situated directly above the Maya ruins and modern day village of Copán, and is renowned for traditional Mayan cuisine and dinner. (Visit <http://www.haciendasanlucas.com>)



March 2 - Copan Ruins Archaeological Site

We have planned an early arrival at the Copán Ruins Archaeological Site to maximize our birding opportunities. We will spend the entire morning exploring this world-renowned area. Copán is the site of a major Maya kingdom of the Classic Era. Copán is recognized as one of the finest Maya sites due to the dramatic quantity and quality of its stelae (commemorative stones and pillars), sculptures, and altars. The high relief used when carving these monuments makes the figures and hieroglyphs very visible. In addition, the ruins at Copán are home to a remarkably well preserved example of a Classic Mayan ball court and the longest inscribed text in the New World, the famous Hieroglyphic Stairway of Structure 10L-26. The nearby forests and nature trail system leading into the main acropolis will provide us with our first views of the ruins as well as some very productive birding. A fine picnic lunch will be catered by Hacienda San Lucas at the archaeological park. As we walk through the archeological site, we will have wonderful opportunities to see birds, including Blue-crowned Motmot, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Great Kiskadee, and Montezuma Oropendola. Afterward, depending on the weather, quality of birding, we will have a couple of hours to explore the lovely cobble-stoned village of Copán and view the photographic exhibit, Fragile Memories: Images of Archaeology and Community at Copán, 1891-1900. Return to Hacienda in the late afternoon. *Lodging: Hacienda San Lucas (B, L, D).*

March 3 ~ Birding the La Laguna highlands

After breakfast, we will travel by four-wheel-drive vehicles into the pine highlands of the La Laguna-San Francisco Road area near Copán. The road ascends through several distinct habitats, including farm fields, scrub vegetation, broadleaf forest, and conifer forest. In the farm fields and along the road, we should expect to see Blue-black Grassquit, White-collared Seedeater, Blue Grosbeak, Groove-billed Ani, Boat-billed Flycatcher, and Gray-crowned Yellowthroat. In the forests and along the forest edges, we will look for Yellow-winged Tanager, Barred Antshrike, White-breasted Wood-Wren, Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, Emerald Toucanet, and the spectacular White-throated Magpie-Jay. We will return to Hacienda San Lucas for lunch and a rest period.

After lunch, we will visit the Macaw Mountain Bird Park and Nature Reserve, a sanctuary that cares for and rehabilitates many species of birds. We will have a guided tour through the animal care facility and get unusual close-up looks at a wonderful variety of toucans, toucanets, owls, parrots, and macaws. We will also explore the reserve's nine-acre sanctuary that protects an old growth, riparian forest of mahogany, gumbo limbo ("tourist trees"), Spanish cedar, and fig. We will use the reserve's elevated trails and observation decks to get spectacular views into the forest canopy and across the park's pristine river, year-round freshwater springs, huge boulders, and sloping canyon walls. We expect to see a good variety of resident birds, such as Red-billed Pigeon, Orange-fronted Parakeet, Collared Aracari, Keel-billed Toucan, and Yellow-throated Euphonia, plus a good number of Neotropical migrants (e.g., Bay-breasted, Magnolia, and Chestnut-sided warblers).

Lodging: Hacienda San Lucas (B, L, D).

March 4 ~ Travel to Pico Bonito

Birding before breakfast at Hacienda San Lucas, then after bidding our hostess farewell, we will depart for a full day's drive to Pico Bonito. Stops will include seaside lunch at Tela, and birding in the area. Upon our arrival, you can choose to rest or go on a bird walk in the vicinity of the lodge. The bird list for the Lodge at Pico Bonito is a birder's dream - over 300 species have been observed there. If you like hummingbirds, tanagers, motmots, and wood-warblers, you'll love Pico Bonito. This evening, we will enjoy a relaxing dinner in the lodge's spacious dining area with views of the rain forest-covered peaks of the towering Nombre de Dios Mountain range.

Lodging: Lodge at Pico Bonito (B,L,D).

(Visit <http://www.picobonito.com>)



March 5 ~ Birding Pico Bonito National Park

We'll start early this morning by meeting our guide on the front deck of the restaurant for a selection of fruit, muffins, coffee, and juice. You can be sure that we will see many species of birds during breakfast. Accompanied by our guide, we will then ascend the lodge's primary observation tower, a great place to look for the hard-to-see birds of the forest canopy. Over the next three hours, we will bird very productive areas of tropical secondary and gallery forest and plantation areas along the Rio Coloradito. Along this route, the diversity of bird species is amazing. We have excellent chances of seeing the magnificent Lovely Cotinga, Masked and Black-crowned tityras, three species of motomots (Blue-crowned, Turquoise-browed, and Tody), Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, four species of trogons (Black-headed, Violaceous, Collared, and Slaty-tailed), Royal Flycatcher, three species of honeycreepers (Green, Shining, and Red-legged), and up to 16 species of hummingbirds.

After lunch and some time to relax, we'll join our guide once again for an afternoon of birding along the lodge's Loop Trail and into Pico Bonito National Park. The trail passes through secondary tropical wet forest and ultimately loops back through spectacular primary rainforest. Our hike will take us through a mosaic of microhabitats that contain diverse tropical flora and fauna. The dense forest habitat is where we hope to find Crested Owl, Great Curassow, as many as three species of tinamous (Great, Little, and Slaty-breasted), Highland and Crested guans, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Green Shrike-Vireo, and Black-throated Shrike-Tanager. We also expect to see mixed flocks of passerines following army ant swarms. These flocks often include Buff-throated Foliage Gleaner, Plain Xenops, Rufous Mourner, Rufous Piha, and several species of tanagers. In the forest and in forest light gaps, we also hope to find Black-faced Grosbeak, Blue-black Grosbeak, and Common Bush-Tanager. Five euphonia species (including Blue-crowned Chlorophonia), five motmot species, and five trogon species, and a host of tanagers have been observed along this trail. We will return to the lodge before dark for a relaxing dinner in the restaurant. *Lodging: Lodge at Pico Bonito (B,L,D).*

March 6 ~ Birds and Wildlife of Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge/Manatee Reserve

After an early breakfast, we will depart for the Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge located 15 miles from La Ceiba on the Caribbean coast. This sanctuary encompasses just over 35,000 acres of tropical wet and mangrove forests and has an extensive network of natural canals and coastal inlets. The refuge checklists note over 350 species of birds and 35 species of mammals. Highlight bird species for Cuero y Salado include Least Grebe, Anhinga, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Reddish Egret, the very secretive Agami Heron, Jabiru (a huge stork), Muscovy Duck, Hook-billed Kite, and American Pygmy Kingfisher. We will also be on the lookout for Mantled Howler Monkey, Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth, and Central American Agouti. Undoubtedly, the refuge's most famous inhabitant is the elusive and endangered West Indian Manatee, with a population of about 50 individuals.

To get to the refuge, we will drive to the railroad-era village of La Union. Here, we will board a small motorized train that travels along an historic narrow-gauge railway. The railway leads through pastures and coconut plantations to the refuge headquarters that is located near the mouth of the Salado River. Stepping off the train and into a small motorized skiff, we will then explore the bird- and wildlife-rich waterways of the refuge. With luck, we will find a Boat-billed Heron rookery and see as many as five species of kingfishers.

We will return to Pico Bonito for lunch. During the afternoon, we will have an opportunity to enjoy a guided tour of the lodge's butterfly farm. The lodge's facility breeds dozens of species of colorful tropical butterflies for export to collectors and butterfly houses within the country and around the world. Our tour will take us through the plant nurseries, larva house, and adult enclosure for a complete understanding of the ecology of these colorful insects. We will also visit the lodge's serpentarium. The serpentarium and the adjacent Green Iguana breeding facility are great places to see and learn about Honduras' diverse reptilian fauna. In the company of one of the lodge's guides, we will be able to safely view some of Honduras' most beautiful and dangerous snakes. Pico Bonito opened these facilities with a focus on educating both the local population and visitors about the myths and truths concerning these frequently misunderstood animals.

Lodging: Lodge at Pico Bonito (B,L,D).



March 7 ~ Cayos Cochinos Marine Sanctuary, a part of the Mesoamerican barrier reef system

After breakfast, we will head east for a 40-minute drive to the Garifuna village of Sambo Creek, located on the Caribbean coast approximately 10 miles east of La Ceiba. Here, we will meet our boat captain and take a one-hour cruise to Cochinos Cays Marine Reserve (*Reserva Marinas Cayos Cochinos*), an isolated archipelago of 15 small islands and cays (keys).

The Cochinos Cays are part of the second largest coral reef system in the world, designated the Meso-American Barrier Reef. When we arrive at the cays, we will enjoy a brief orientation about the reserve and its early history as a Smithsonian Institution research center. We then can enjoy snorkeling at several locations around the archipelago looking for the brightly colored fish and magnificent coral formations. We will also take a short hike into one of the larger islands where we may be able to spot the endemic "Pink Boa," a distinct and beautiful form of the mainland Boa Constrictor. After our hike, we will visit some of the other cays, enjoy more snorkeling, and finish our morning adventure with a delicious Garifuna lunch on the white sand beach of Cayo Chachahuate. Note: The lodge will provide snorkeling gear, coral and reef fish guide books, and a light morning snack.

During our island adventure, we should see a good variety of seabirds, including Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Pelican, Brown Booby, Royal Tern, Sandwich Tern, and several species of shorebirds. We will return to the lodge by 4:00 p.m. for a relaxing dinner followed by a night hike with our knowledgeable guides. We'll search for nocturnal rainforest mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects. We'll be looking for several species of tree frogs, Kinkajous, several species of bats, and a large number of beetles and moths that are attracted to a nightlight. *Lodging: Lodge at Pico Bonito (B,L,D).*

March 8 ~ Day of Birding the Rio Aguan valley's dry forest habitat- home to Honduras' Endemic Honduran Emerald hummingbird

We will start very early this morning for a 2 ½-hour scenic drive eastward along Honduras' north coast. Near Trujillo, we'll turn south and enter the dry forest habitat of the Rio Aguan Valley. In this area, the thick broad-leafed forests give way to pine and then to open, almost desert-like, tropical dry forest. It is within this unique, highly endangered habitat characterized by cacti, Lesser Roadrunners, and hot sun that Honduras' only endemic bird species, the brilliant green Honduran Emerald, makes its home.

Rarely receiving more than 30 inches of rain per year, the Honduran Emerald's habitat formerly encompassed much of the Rio Aguan Valley, a once pristine plain of nearly 1,800 square miles. Today, due to decades of unchecked cattle ranching, the hummingbird's dry forest range is limited to a few small, isolated islands of habitat. Recent efforts by Pico Bonito National Park and international conservation organizations have succeeded in preserving important parts of the bird's habitat.

Our chances of seeing the Honduran Emerald are very good. While this is a highly endangered hummingbird, the Honduran Emerald is relatively common within its remaining native habitat and can often be photographed at a close distance. Some of the other species we may see along the way include Hook-billed Kite, Thicket Tinamou, Double-striped Thick-knee, White-fronted Parrot (Amazon), Lesser Roadrunner, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Nutting's Flycatcher, Long-tailed Manakin, White-lored Gnatcatcher, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Banded Wren, White-bellied Wren, Stripe-headed Sparrow, and Altamira Oriole.

We will enjoy lunch at a traditional family-owned hacienda near the town of Olanchito and return to Pico Bonito Lodge by 5:00 p.m. for dinner. *Lodging: Lodge at Pico Bonito (B,L,D).*

March 9 ~ Departure for Home

Sadly, we will have to say goodbye to our lodge and guides today and transfer via a local flight back to San Pedro Sula for our flights home. If you wish to stay longer in Honduras and snorkel at Roatan, do let us know. We can provide you with some recommendations for lodging and activities.



About Your Guide: Bill Gette



Bill Gette is the Sanctuary Director of Mass Audubon's Joppa Flats Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary in Newburyport. Bill, a skilled teacher and field naturalist, has been leading domestic and international natural history expeditions for the Society since 1986. He has led very successful programs throughout the United States and to Canada, Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Belize, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, Brazil, Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, and Antarctica. He led a Mass Audubon group to Bhutan in April 2008. Bill has taken a leadership role in bird research and public education about birds and bird conservation. He will be joined in leading this program with skilled local naturalists and guides

TERMS & CONDITIONS OF TRAVEL

PRICE: \$3500 per person, double occupancy. Single supplement is \$600.00.

This cost is based on a minimum of 10 persons.

Price Includes:

- All accommodations
- All meals as noted in itinerary
- Group airport transfers
- Van and bus travel within Honduras
- Park and preserve entrance fees
- Services of local naturalist guide and driver
- All tips and gratuities to guides and drivers
- In country flight on March 9
- Medical Evacuation Insurance

Does Not Include:

- Personal items, bar beverages, optional activities
- Passport fees, laundry, phone calls, or gift items.
- International airfare or airport departure tax

Travel Arrangements: You, the traveler, are responsible for booking and paying for your own

international flights. The trip begins and ends in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. Once you reserve your space on the trip, we will provide you with suggested flights and tell you which flights our leaders will take. You may book flights directly with the airline, online, or with a travel agent. American Airlines, Delta, and Continental all fly to Honduras. Please be aware that most tickets are non-refundable, therefore you should not book your flight arrangements until you have checked with us to be sure the tour has the minimum number of participants for the trip to go. Once your flight details, please let us know so we can be sure to meet you at the airport upon your arrival.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

APPLICATIONS, RESERVATIONS, DEPOSITS: Early applications are strongly encouraged. Trip rosters usually must be finalized 4 months before departure! All applications must be accompanied by a completed reservation form and a \$500 deposit. Deposits can be by check or credit card (Visa or MasterCard). We reserve the right to decline your application. In the case of questionable health, we reserve the right to require a physician's certification to affirm you are capable of the activities. Final payment is due 90 days before the departure date. Final payment must be by check or money order.

RATES: All tour prices are based on double occupancy. If you would like us to find you a roommate, we will do our best, but cannot guarantee a share. If we cannot find a share, you will need to pay the single supplement. All forms and fares are accurate at the time of publication, May 2011, but are subject to change at any time prior to departure. It is our policy to only pass on the actual amount of any increases in airfares or land costs such as those increases due to the devaluation of the dollar. Rarely, a price increase may be called for if the group falls below the minimum, as listed in the itinerary.

FLIGHTS: You, the traveler, are responsible for booking and paying for your own international flights. Once you reserve your space, we will provide you with suggested flights and tell you which flights our leaders will take. You may book flights directly with the airline, online, or with a travel agent. Please be aware that most tickets are non-refundable, therefore you should not book your flight arrangements until you have checked with us to be sure the tour has the minimum number of participants for the trip to go. We ask that you provide us with your flight details so we can be sure to meet you at the airport upon your arrival.

PHOTOS: Mass Audubon reserves the right to make use of any photograph taken on the tour. We guarantee that no photos of a comprising nature will be used. If you have questions or concerns, please contact us.

TRIP INSURANCE: A brochure and application for optional trip cancellation, illness and baggage insurance will be sent to you upon registrations. We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself. Mass Audubon does provide Medical Evacuation Coverage as part of the tour price.

CANCELLATION Policy: If you need to change your booking, you must inform us immediately in writing. All cancellations must be done in writing and are effective upon receipt in the Massachusetts Audubon Travel Office. Cancellations received up to 121 days prior to departure will be refunded deposits less a \$300 per person fee. For cancellations between 120 and 90 days prior to departure, all deposits will not be refunded. There are no refunds for cancellations 90 days or less from departure. We strongly urge all travelers to purchase trip cancellation insurance. You will be sent information from the Massachusetts Audubon Society upon receipt of your deposit.

Your Responsibility: Although every precaution is taken to safeguard you and your belongings, group travel trips by their nature involve a certain amount of risk. Trip participants should understand that the domestic and international trips sponsored/operated by Massachusetts Audubon Society (Mass Audubon Tours) - hereafter collectively "M.A.S." - involve known and unknown risks. M.A.S. assumes no responsibility for injuries, death, financial losses or damage to clients' property caused by or occurring during participation in any of the travel trips sponsored/operated by M.A.S. Trip participants must assume responsibility for having sufficient skill and fitness to participate in the trips and activities offered or sponsored by M.A.S. Trip participants must also certify that they have no medical, mental or physical conditions which could interfere with their abilities to participate in the activities and/or trips they are participating in and they must assume and bear the cost of all risks that may be created, directly or indirectly, by any such condition. It is the responsibility of trip participants to have in place adequate insurance to cover any injury, damage or emergency transportation costs related to their travel and/or participation in trip activities and/or to bear the costs of such injury, damage or emergency transportation costs. Because of the risks associated with the travel trips sponsored by M.A.S. we urge all trip participants to supplement their own insurance with travel or vacation or emergency response types of insurance. M.A.S. requires that all trip participants acknowledge and assume these risks by reading and signing an M.A.S. Release and Waiver and Assumption of Risk contract prior to departure.

CONDITIONS OF TRAVEL: Travelers will be provided with an itinerary and trip preparation information. It is expected that travelers will read this information prior to trip departure. Travelers will be responsible for completing an application reservation form, including the personal information and a release of liability. (see attached) Travelers will be expected to abide by the terms set for in the invoice. During the tour, travelers are asked to respect and follow the directions of their guide and leader.

RESERVATION /APPLICATION FORM (2 SIDES)**Tour to:** _____ **Travel dates:** _____**Passenger 1 Name as shown as passport:** _____Nickname for Name tag: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____**Passport number (1)** (for international trips): _____ Expiration date: _____**Passenger 2 Name as shown as passport:** _____Nickname for Name tag: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____**Passport number (2)** (for international trips): _____ Expiration date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Phone: Home: _____ Work: _____ Cell: _____

Email address: _____

Room Preferences

____ I request single accommodations where available and will pay the single supplement.

____ I would like to be assigned a roommate. If one is not available, I will pay the single supplement.

Personal Information:

____ I/We are non-smokers. (If you are a smoker(s), please check here ____ and note that smoking is limited to outdoors in non-group spaces)

____ I have a food allergy (Yes / No). If Yes, please list: _____

____ I prefer a special diet (Yes / No). If Yes, please list: _____

____ I am allergic to medications, insects other: List _____

(you are required to carry your own Epi-pen and necessary medications)

____ Is there anything else we should know about your health that might impact your ability to participate comfortably on this trips? Please describe: _____

Deposit: Please find my enclosed **check** _____ or please **charge** _____ my credit card for the deposit:

VISA MC Card # _____ Exp. _____

Checks should be made payable to "Massachusetts Audubon Society"

Signature: _____

TURN OVER

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY, PLEASE NOTIFY:

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Phone: Work/Daytime: _____ Home or Cell: _____

Release and Assumption of Risk

I would like to participate in the birding and nature tour named above (the "Tour") organized by Massachusetts Audubon Society, Inc. ("Mass Audubon"). I am aware that participation in a Mass Audubon tour involves risk, including, but not limited to, the hazards of living in and traveling over unpredictable terrain often in remote areas without adequate medical facilities, exposure to disease and infection, being subject to the forces of nature, and travel by airplane and motor vehicle.

In addition, I understand and acknowledge that, if I participate in the Tour, one or more of the risks described above or set forth here could result in or cause bodily injury or death to me or damage to personal property of mine: Physical exertion, Travel by foot, plane, train, auto, vans, bus, boat or other conveyance, Consumption of food and beverages, Civil unrest, terrorism, banditry, or criminal activity, High altitude, Inadequate medical facilities or service.

I acknowledge that I have received and read carefully information describing the Tour, including, but not limited to, the Terms and Conditions and the paragraph in the Terms and Conditions entitled "Your Responsibility". I acknowledge that the enjoyment and excitement of touring is derived, at least in part, from the inherent risks incurred by travel and activity beyond the accepted safety and routine of life at home or work, and that part of the reason I have decided to participate in the Tour is to experience this enjoyment and excitement. I further acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to discuss with my medical provider the medical risks involved in the Tour. I have also had the opportunity to research the Tour and to understand fully the risks involved.

Therefore, notwithstanding the risks of participating in the Tour set forth and as described above, and in consideration of Mass Audubon permitting me to participate in the Tour:

- (1) I agree to assume and accept all risks associated with this tour; and
- (2) I hereby release and forever discharge and covenant and agree not to sue, and agree to indemnify and hold harmless, Mass Audubon and its Directors, Officers, Employees and agents (collectively the "Releasees"), and each of the releasees from and against and in regard to any and all Claims, demands, actions suits, losses, costs, damages, and expenses and any and all liabilities and obligations, which I shall or may have against the Releasees or any one or more of them arising out of, or in connection with, my participation on the tour.

I agree that this release and Assumption of Risk shall be (a) binding upon me and my heirs, executors, legal representatives, successors, and assigns, and (b) deemed a contract made under seal under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and shall be governed by, and construed and enforced in accordance with, the internal laws of said Commonwealth without regard to its principles of conflict of laws.

I have carefully read, understand, and voluntarily sign this release and assumption of Risk.

Signed: _____ Date: _____