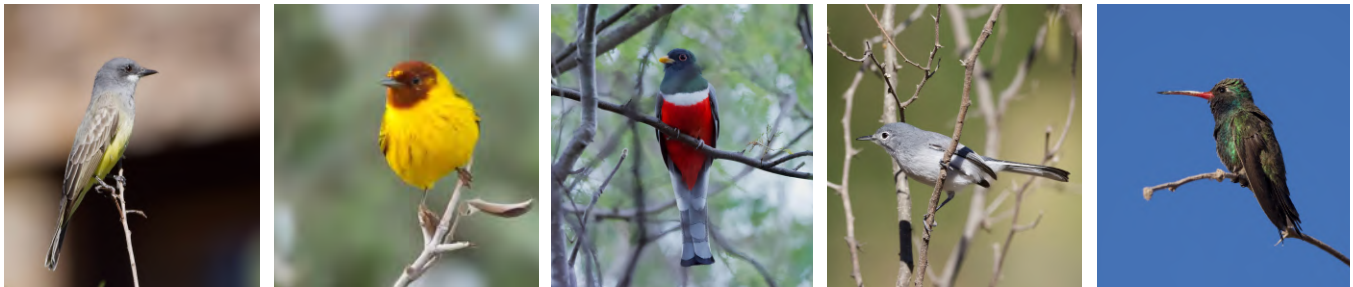


# Alamos, Mexico | Nov. 29 – Dec. 7, 2023 Trip Report | by client Christine Jenkins



**Guides David and Carlos, with clients Christine, Bonnie, Leslie, Gary, Pat, Nancy, and Bob.**

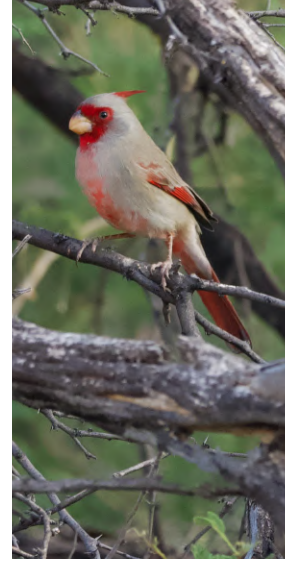


## **Wed., Nov. 29 Arrivals | Tucson**

Our journey began as the guests arrived at Sheraton 4 Points in Tucson, AZ. We had dinner at the hotel to meet everyone we would be birding with. Vernie Aikins, from the Naturalist Journeys office, was there to give us our cool Tour Species List.

## **Thurs., Nov. 30 Mexico Crossing | Rio Bambuto | Hermosillo**

This was our first full day with our lead guide, David McKay, and others. We had breakfast at the hotel in Tucson before we headed off to Mexico. At 10:00 am, we made our first birding stop at Rio Bambuto in Imuris, Mexico. There was a nice little river with wild horses under a man-made bridge of tree logs to cross. We observed 21 species to start off our adventure. Lunch was at a big restaurant called Elba; it was nice and quick with friendly service. Soon after, we were back on the road headed to Hermosillo. We stopped off of HWY 15 to do some



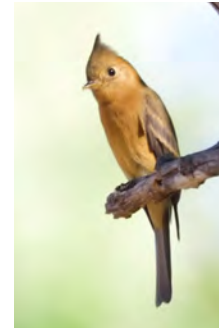
desert birding, and observed another 19 species. The Greater Roadrunner was a favorite for most, with the Crested Caracara as the second favorite delight. We made it to our hotel for the night in Hermosillo, where we stayed at The Holiday Inn. We had time to freshen up and relax before dinner at the hotel restaurant La Tinto, where we finally got to meet our second guide Carlos Gonzalez. Our food was superb; one of our guests ordered the chocolate cake, and it was the most spectacular, unique piece of cake we have ever seen.

## **Fri., Dec. 1                      Hermosillo | Empalme | Alamos**

We woke up to an enormous buffet breakfast downstairs at our hotel. It offered traditional Mexican dishes in addition to ordinary eggs, coffee, and juices. When it was time, we hit the road to do some birding on our way to Alamos, Mexico. Our first stop was at the ponds at Parque Metropolitano with desert plants all around the area. At this location we documented 52 species including Cinnamon Teal, 73 Black-necked Stilts, a bunch of Long-billed Dowitchers, Least Sandpipers, and lots of Yellow-headed Blackbirds. This made us hungry for lunch, so David took us to a cute seafood restaurant nearby. After lunch, we headed off to a cove in Empalme, Sonora, Mexico, where we found Brown Pelicans, Black-bellied Plovers, Forster's Terns, Laughing Gulls, and Black Skimmers—35 species in all. Afterwards, we jumped back into the van to head to Alamos so we would get there in time for dinner. When we made it to our hotel, El Pedregal in Alamos, MX, we were greeted by the family doggies and everyone was escorted to their luxury cabins. We had plenty of time to settle into our quarters and change clothes before our private dinner. Our first meal there was a Mexican-style Buffet with homemade food and complementing wine. The restaurant was in downtown Alamos and offered tacos, beans, and Mexican rice with enchiladas and chili rellenos, plus beer and homemade Jamaica Tea.

## **Sat., Dec. 2                      Alamos | La Aduana**

This morning, we enjoyed a homemade buffet-style breakfast before we went out birding. We couldn't help not birding, hearing all the birds waking up around the property. Rufous-bellied Chachalacas were the loudest, for sure. They are cute yet big, playful birds. We headed out for the morning to do some birding down the road from El Pedregal. Hummingbirds, flycatchers and warblers were abundant. By far, the favorite for the group was the Streak-backed Oriole. We then headed out to the town to La Aduana. A nice gentleman at the church gave a



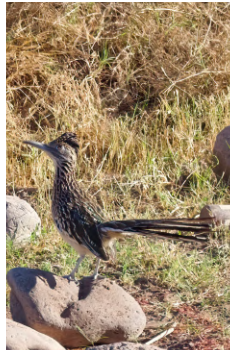
talk to our group on the history of the town. It was once a major silver mining town, but now less than 300 people live in the area. There were a few tables where street vendors had curios for sale. We could hear the Mexican Parrotlets calling in a large tree with goats around it on the side of the road and a Lesser Roadrunner gallivanting around. In all, we observed 28 species on this sojourn.

Next, we went to downtown Alamos to see more of the town, as well as some of the artwork around town. We then headed to Luz Del Sol for lunch. As we walked the pebble streets to the restaurant, there was a horse-drawn carriage and dogs along the way. We stepped into the cute, small courtyard. It was like an oasis, with homemade Mexican food, fresh salads and artwork all over the walls! After lunch, we walked around the town a little more. We saw a large building with a big mural out front, and they were putting up artwork inside the courtyard for an event coming up called Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who is the patron saint of Mexico. After lunch, we were off to El Pedregal for a rest and some more bird watching. One of the guests even found Sonoran Spiny-tailed Iguanas, and there were butterflies eating the oranges that were set out for the birds. This property was a great habitat with so many native plants around the property.

Before dinner, David and Carlos took us outside the property on a trail above the hotel, at Parque La Colorada, where we got to see our first Elegant Trogon of the trip—a beautiful male that gave us a fabulous view, after being a little shy at first. At this point, everyone was hungry, so we headed to downtown Alamos to Charisma Restaurante for some Italian food. It had a great ambience with homemade food and freshly made margaritas. As we headed back to our cabins, a Great Horned Owl greeted us from up in one of the big trees by the driveway.

## **Sun., Dec. 3                      Alamos | Alamos Outskirts | Rio Cuchujaqui**

This day started with a quick homemade breakfast from the lovely cook at El Pedregal. We had fruit, coffee, and many other items to choose from. We also saw some White-tailed Deer around the property this morning. After breakfast, we headed out for some birding off a road in Alamos. There, we had Elegant Quail, Rufous-bellied Chachalaca, and many others for a total of 19 species to start the day. Our second stop of the morning rewarded

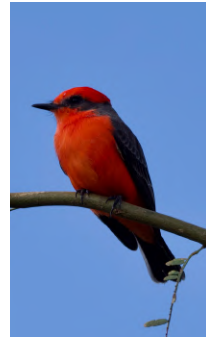


us with 60 species, such as a Plain-capped Starthroat, 3 different species of hawks, as well as a cute little Tufted Flycatcher and Sinaloa Wren. Even a Cinnamon-rumped Seedeater joined in the fun. From there, we followed a nice dirt road with a stream along one side and trees and shrubs along the mountain side, where we observed an abundance of butterflies and dragonflies among the blooming flowers. On our way back to town, we went up a road that took us to the top of Alamos. The views were amazing, and we could see all around the town! There were even big colorful letters on top that spelled out Alamos. Of course, we were birding up and down the mountain from the small viewing spot. We got 4 species, one being the Five-striped Sparrow. We then had lunch at the Agave Café at the Hacienda de los Santos. This Spanish-style building was big; it had two restaurants, a chapel, a gift shop, and a hotel once you crossed over the bridge into the courtyard. After eating, we found the Mexican Parrotlets in a big fig tree in the middle of the courtyard, running around eating up all the figs. They had figs all over their faces! We even had eight species of birds just right by our table. After lunch, we did a little shopping as we strolled through the hotel onto the pebble streets, where a local woman and her husband were selling some handmade needlework.

Afterwards, off to the river we went—Rio Cuchujaqui, which is a tributary river of the Fuerte river. Here, we got our first Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, another male Elegant Trogon, and some Social Flycatchers, for a total of 21 species for the afternoon. Now it was time to rest and freshen up at El Pedregal. Walking back to our cabins, we found the herb and vegetable garden that the resort maintains for their meals. Dinner was another private homemade Mexican meal at El Mezquite. With the fireplace going, our waiter, Jorgi, had our seats ready and our wine being poured. Each plate had chili rellenos, enchiladas, tostadas, steak, and Mexican rice. You won't go hungry in Alamos. Dessert was a bread pudding cake with ice cream.

## **Mon., Dec. 4                      La Aduana | Rancho El Divisadero | Alamos**

We had another amazing breakfast before we headed out. We went back to La Aduana, but this time we drove past the town a little until we reached the end of the dirt road to start hiking up the canyon. Right away, we found a male Elegant Trogon sitting just a little off the trail. A little bit down the trail, in a big fig tree, was the resting place for another male Elegant Trogon. We had a lot of Black-throated Magpie-Jays calling all around us.



With a group of more than ten, they were getting loud and raucous. This area had native trees, shrubs, and big fig trees all around us, in addition to a few cacti and some blooming flowers, which had dragonflies in abundance.

As we headed through the riverbed, we found a Hooded Oriole, Black-throated Gray Warblers, and caught a sneak peak at a Rufous-backed Robin. We then came upon some trees called *Bursera Fagaroides*; the bark was so thin that it was like paper. When we heard the call of a Squirrel Cuckoo, everyone got excited but, unfortunately, he did not want to hang around with us. Instead, we were gifted with a Happy Wren, which was camera shy at first, but called a lot to entertain us. He finally found a spot out from the leaves and showed us how small he was, with his black-and-white-striped face and chestnut upper body. We headed back out to find tons of butterflies at a mud hole, as well as some other interesting bugs. Right before we got back to the van, we had 12 Elegant Quail running through the shrubs. This location afforded us 38 species for our efforts of morning birding. Since we all thought Luz Del Sol was so delicious the first time, we went back again for lunch.

Afterwards, we headed out to Rancho El Divisadero for another 25 species, with a Violet-crowned Hummingbird giving us a show at one stop. The owner of the ranch ended up taking us to the top of the biggest building, where they have gatherings, and he talked to us about the history of the area. We could see the whole view of the property from up there. On the ranch, we saw a water fountain and old tools hanging in the cooking area where the owner grinds the items to be cooked. The ranch even has a stream that goes around the property, with butterflies flying around and Sandpipers, Blue-winged Teals, and Great Egret. Walking down the property, the stream runs into some ponds, where we saw Vesper Sparrow and Lazuli Bunting. For our last evening in Alamos, David McKay, our main guide for the trip, brought us to his Spanish-style home, which had a luxury pool and fine art all around the property. He cooked us a divine meal with red peppers, asparagus, noodles, chicken, and vanilla ice cream with fruit.



**Tues., Dec. 5**

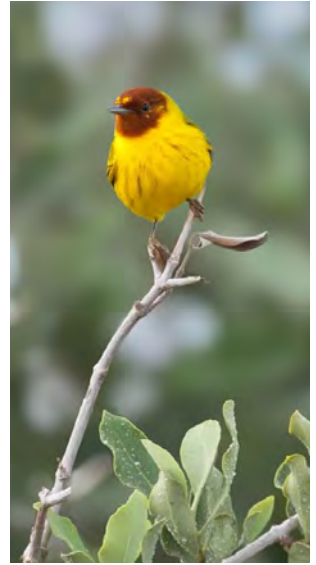
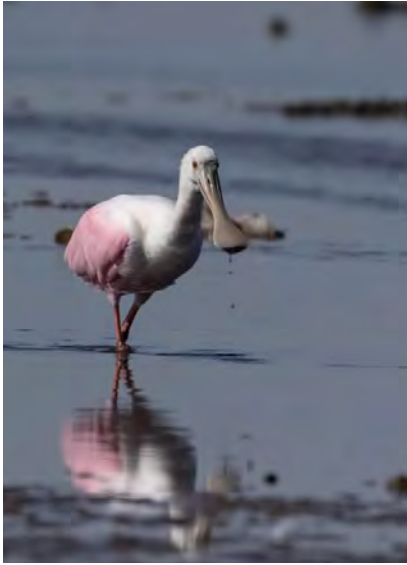
**Puerto de Oro | Bahía del Tobari | Guaymas | Sea of Cortez**

After breakfast and a quick goodbye to the property's doggies, we were off to do some birding on our way to San Carlos, Mexico. On our first stop, we had 41 species at Parque Puerto de Oro. The favorites of the first stop were the Bare-throated Tiger-Heron and Gray Hawk. The best unplanned stop was on the side of the road, in a farm field with 600+ Long-billed Curlews, 200+ Ring-billed Gulls, 180+ Western Cattle Egrets, 32 White-faced Ibis and 400+ Great-tailed Grackles as well as a few other species! Next up, we found the shore at Bahía del Tobari, where we got to see Roseate Spoonbills, Reddish Egret, American White Pelicans, Blue-footed Booby and many gulls, terns, and American Oystercatchers. We had an astonishing 43 species in just one hour! We did more birding as we kept heading northwest to San Carlos. We made it to another shoreline of the Sea of Cortez, with a mangrove jungle at the ocean's edge, where we had a picnic. After the picnic, we were off to Guaymas, Mexico, to Marina de Miramar for another 28 species before dinner. As we were checking into our hotel rooms in San Carlos, we were gifted with an amazing sunset. We stayed at a beautiful 3-story hotel with a large pool and spa on the edge of the Sea of Cortez; birds flew all around. Dinner was right on the beach, where we sat outside listening to the waves crash.

**Wed., Dec. 6**

**San Carlos | El Soldado | Marina Seca San Carlos**

We had a wonderful sunrise as we headed to breakfast, with a quick stop on the side of the road to listen for birds. After breakfast, we went about a block down the road and found a pond with six Groove-billed Anis, each with very cute personalities, and 27 other species to start our San Carlos birding. Next up was Estero "El Soldado" with 45 species. While walking along the mangroves, we found a juvenile White Ibis and a (Mangrove) Yellow Warbler. We took a turn to walk down to the end of the road, and found the Sea of Cortez in our view with the mangroves on our left side, and saw Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins playing just offshore. Birds were everywhere, flying around and feeding in the waves. With the sand between our toes, we headed along the beach, finding terns, gulls, and pelicans along the way. We made one other quick stop for birds before lunch at Marina Seca in San Carlos, where we observed Wilson's Snipe as the most populous bird at this stop. Lunch was at Mariscos El Rey; they had the largest lemonades I have ever seen to go along with the fish tacos.



We only had two more stops before our day was over in San Carlos. The first stop was at a new development with two large ponds, where we saw a Sora swimming across one of the ponds and six other Soras around the area. We also had a Sharp-shinned Hawk soaring across the pond with Bell's Vireo and Marsh Wrens singing, while the Northern Rough-winged Swallows were feeding on tons of bugs. To end the evening, we headed through Aquaje La Manga, northwest of San Carlos, which was adorned by lots of murals of art throughout the town. We got back to San Carlos just in time for our last sunset on the Sea of Cortez. Dinner's location was fitting for our group of birders. Its name was Colibri, which in Spanish means Hummingbird. It was a great evening with friends enjoying pizza, appetizers, and desserts.

## **Thurs., Dec. 7                      San Carlos | Tucson**

As our trip came to an end, we had our last sunrise to watch the birds wake up before we left back to the States. This morning brought us 11 species, including Yellow-footed Gull, Magnificent Frigatebird, Blue-footed Booby, with Double-crested Cormorants and Brown Pelicans flying all around to send us off. We made it to Tucson for our last evening as a group and dinner at El Charro Mexican food.

*Photos: Alamos Sign (Christine Jenkins – CJ), Cassin's Kingbird (Patricia Wheeler – PW), Yellow Warbler (Mangrove) (PW), Elegant Trogon (PW), Black-capped Gnatcatcher (PW), Broad-billed Hummingbird (PW), Scenic (CJ), Pyrrhuloxia (PW), Scenic (CJ), Black-capped Gnatcatcher (PW), Tufted Flycatcher (PW), Mexican Parrotlet (PW), Bare-throated Tiger-Heron (PW), Greater Roadrunner (PW), Group Birding (CJ), Sunset (CJ), Brown Pelican (CJ), Rufous-bellied Chachalaca (CJ), Vermilion Flycatcher (PW), Streak-backed Oriole (CJ), White Ibis (CJ), Roseate Spoonbill (CJ), Brown Pelican (CJ), Yellow Warbler (Mangrove) (CJ)*