

Arrival

During the previous 7 years I have been in China teaching English during July. My age of 71.5 now excludes me from teaching in most Chinese cities. So I am free to be useful elsewhere. This trip was to serve at a school in Guatemala in Central America.

During much of June I was again serving as an election judge for Jefferson County during this primary election season. Candidates for the November election are chosen in this primary election, mostly for local and state offices. The mail ballot system was used again. After quality control (which I did for the elections last Fall), voting ballots were mailed to registered voters of the Democratic and the Republican parties. Other parties did not need a vote to select their candidates. Voters who were not members of those two main parties did not vote this time. Voters had a choice to return their ballots by mail or place them in one of many boxes scattered around the county. Or they could visit a limited number of places and vote in person. My role this June was to ride in a truck with a person of a different party and visit the boxes and bring the voted ballots back to our headquarters each day. Then we loaded the ballots into trays, maintaining a uniform orientation of the ballots in



the trays. After that the ballots are sorted by a large machine, which I helped operate last Fall. Most days needed only about 2.5 hours of my time for the trip to the four different ballot drop boxes. On June 28, the official voting day, I arrived for work again at 7:50 AM. We visited the boxes in the morning and in the afternoon. Finally, on a third trip of the day, we closed the boxes at the official 7:00 PM ending time and returned to headquarters with the final ballots. After arranging the ballots into the trays I was able to go home after 8 PM. The photo is of all of the people that had an official role in the Jefferson County mail ballot processing. There were six of us men that visited the boxes to get the ballots and we all wore the bright yellow vests. I did not know that the others took theirs off for the photo, so I am the only one in

bright yellow. In the background are the flat-topped mountains east of Golden Colorado. My home is on the other side of them.

The flight from Denver to Guatemala had a plane change in Houston. We arrived at gate E14 (United Airlines) and we went to the adjacent E15 for the next flight. Then there was an announcement that the air conditioning on that next plane needed to be fixed and that would take an hour or more. So everyone was sent to a replacement plane at gate E1, a very long distance away. The pilots did not like the status of some of the cockpit instruments in that plane, so we were sent to gate E4 and waited for a new plane to arrive from storage in a hanger. Eventually our flight to Guatemala continued, just a little late. The baggage claim process was extra slow, but nothing was lost during the confusion at Houston.

We rented a van which was just barely large enough for the 5 of us and our baggage. The trip to our destination city, San Cristobal, was along the Central American Highway, Route 1, the main highway through Central America. The rugged terrain was responsible for an abundance of curves which slowed our travel. The trip took about 4 hours. I could see some volcanoes in the distance. I got a view of Lake Atitlan, which Gail and I visited on a previous trip. Then we crossed over the highest point on this highway, locally called Alaska because it is cold up there, about 3 kilometers above sea level. It was dark when we arrived at the school where we would be working. Dinner was served in the home of Timo, the leader (principal, headmaster) of the school.



The sign is in Spanish. The school name is John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church. The bottom word means Welcome. It was then Sunday morning. I explored the campus and photographed the bird types.



The Rufous-collared Sparrows start singing at about 5:05 AM when the night darkness starts to end.



The house where we stayed and van.



The newer school building being fixed.



Headmaster's home, from our house.



Timo's family and others.



Timo's daughters and wife.



Tablecloth of typical local weaving.



The kitchen stove uses a wood fire, but it was dark at the time of this photo.



They also have a gas stove and oven, a microwave oven and an electric toaster.

Breakfast and dinner were always served with this host family. Many lunches were served in a nearby building with about a hundred students, eating the same food as the students.

Later Sunday morning we went south to visit the Georginas Hot Springs high in the mountains. As



we drove up the mountain slope we passed many fields where vegetables were being harvested in large quantities for various markets. The rich volcanic soil and available water enabled having crops throughout the year. The photo is of the nearby Santa Maria volcano, with top at 3772 meters above sea level. A vegetable farm is in the foreground and a very deep valley in between.



Another vegetable farm.



Carrots are being washed and bagged.



Many types of vegetables are grown.



Steam rises from a hot springs vent.



People enjoying the hot springs pools.



View from parking lot.



Some trees had red flowers.



Flower in hand.



Black-capped Swallow

I could hear birds in the dense forest trees but the only birds that I saw were the swallows at the parking lot and some Black Vultures in the valley.

In the afternoon we went to the village of Chuixchimal near Tonicapán for the dedication of a new school building. A banner showed the proposed school buildings and the photos showed the current progress. Notice the colors and style of the dresses. These people are descendents of the former Mayan civilization. During the dedication there was a rain shower and people moved to shelter.



Proposed future school buildings.



Present first floor of school.



New wing on right.



Dedication speakers



Audience



During rain



Audience clothing.



New rooms.

Then we walked to the nearby Smyrna Church for worship and presentations by several groups.



Smyrna Methodist Church, Chuixchimal



Then a dinner was served in the church building and in the new school room. Afterwards I showed some 2100 year old coins to three young men who were otherwise doing nothing. My written coin descriptions were in Spanish. They started inviting their friends to see the coins and soon there was a large crowd examining the coins and taking photos of them. They had never seen or held coins of the types used by Jesus.



We drove back to our house in the dark, ending a very interesting Sunday.

Ed Holroyd, 8 July 2016



Rufous-collared Robin



Eastern Bluebird



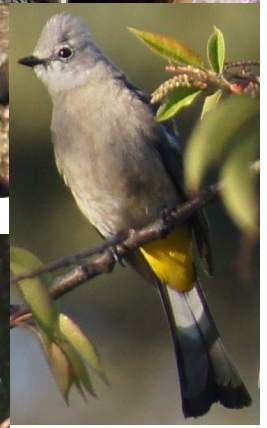
Lesser Goldfinch



Black-headed Siskin



Black-headed Siskin



Gray Silky-flycatcher