



ORIOLE BIRDING

www.oriolebirding.com

oriolebirding@gmail.com

+44 [0] 1656 711152



TOUR REPORT PANAMA 2013

Weather

Just like on our recent tour to The Gambia, we found that the wet season was late leaving Panama and we actually had rain every day, though only on our second day at The Lodge did it cause us any problems as an intense tropical storm raised the river by four feet in half an hour! The rest of the time temperatures were pleasant, in the early to mid twenties, rising to the early thirties on our day in the Pacific Lowlands. As usual, the coolest area was the cloud forest at Altos del Maria, where jackets were worn and the temperature dipped well under 20C in the misty conditions.

General

Despite the flight issues at both ends of the tour due to a combination of technical issues and weather, the tour was a great success and we recorded our best ever species count. This was due in part to the varied itinerary and superb local guides, but also to the enthusiasm of our small group of six participants allowing everyone the best possible chance to see all the birds on offer.

Monday 2nd December

The group was due to meet in Amsterdam for the 1120 KLM flight direct to Panama City, and while the connections from Heathrow, Cardiff, Manchester and Aberdeen all arrived with plenty of time to make the flight, Ashley's flight from Norwich was delayed by five hours due to a technical fault with the plane and he had to overnight in Amsterdam. The group flew out as planned and were met by the Canopy Tower driver Lorenzo, who transferred them the one hour journey to the tower in time for dinner. Everyone retired early after a long day and full of anticipation for their first taste of birding in Panama tomorrow.

Tuesday 3rd December

Our guide Carlos Bethancourt met the group on the observation deck at 0615 for coffee and pre-breakfast birding, and the usual selection of tanagers, honeycreepers, parrots and Keel-billed Toucans were all easily seen from this spectacular vantage point. After breakfast, Carlos took the group down Semaphore Hill to the start of the Plantation Trail, where they would spend the whole morning. Here the group did well with Trogons in particular, noting Black-tailed, Slaty-tailed and Black-throated, the latter the only example seen during the trip. Rufous and Broad-billed Motmots, White-necked and White-whiskered Puffbirds, Cinammon and Crimson-crested Woodpeckers, Fasciated Antshrike, White-flanked Antwren, Plain-brown, Northern Barred and Cocoa Woodcreepers, Plain Xenops, Olivaceous Flatbill, Ruddy-tailed and Acadian Flycatchers, Red-capped Manikin, White-breasted Wood-Wren, Black & White Warbler and Scarlet-rumped Cacique were among the highlights noted during the walk.

After lunch back at the tower, the group took a trip down to Miraflores Locks to view the Panama Canal and visit the museum. This had been originally scheduled for later in the tour, but in Ashley's continued absence, it seemed to make sense to rearrange it to today. A few birds were also seen here, and as well as the usual Magnificent Frigatebirds, Laughing Gull, Brown Pelican, Osprey, Great Egret and Clay-coloured Robin, other sightings included Saffron Finch, Fork-tailed Flycatcher and American Kestrel.

Ashley finally joined the group at 1930 for dinner following an arduous two hour transfer through the traffic of Panama City.

Wednesday 4th December

We met at 0615 on the observation deck, enjoying the sunrise over the rainforest and a continuous stream of great birds, often extremely close and at eye level. Bay-headed, Golden-hooded and Summer Tanager, 3+ Blue Dacnis, 2 Mealy Parrot, Scaled Pigeon, 2 Keel-billed Toucan, Bay-breasted and Magnolia Warblers, Yellow-margined Flycatcher, White-shouldered Tanager, 3 Scarlet-rumped Cacique, Black-breasted Puffbird, Fulvous-vented Euphonia and both Blue-chested and Snowy-bellied Hummingbirds were seen. Blue Cotinga was perhaps the highlight, with brilliant views of a male and probably at least two other individuals almost throughout the session, though a pair of Squirrel Cuckoo also showed incredibly well, often approaching to within a few feet of the deck. Purple-crowned Fairy visited the blooms of a flowering emergent tree, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift was seen well overhead and the oft heard but seldom seen Green Shrike-Vireo gave some superb

views in an adjacent tree. It was with great reluctance that we retreated downstairs for breakfast, but more good birds awaited on our morning tour!

We set off down Semaphore Hill Road at around 0830, and almost straight away bumped into a feeding flock high in a large tree. Black and White Warbler, Olivaceous Flatbill, Yellow-throated Vireo, Great Crested Flycatcher, Plain Xenops, White-shouldered Tanager, Green Shrike-Vireo, Squirrel Cuckoo, Chestnut-sided Warbler and Shining Honeycreeper were amazingly all seen in the same tree! Our plans were soon abandoned by mutual consent though, as we got word that another group had just found an antswarm on Pipeline Road and seen the near-mythical Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo! A vehicle was scrambled and we were off, arriving half an hour later at the spot where the bird had been seen. We enjoyed a fabulous session here, despite not finding the cuckoo. We didn't find an antswarm to speak of, though plenty of antbird activity suggested that they were probably somewhere in the vicinity nearby. Bicoloured, Spotted and Ocellated Antbirds, the latter being the largest, rarest and most elusive member of its family to be found here, were all seen well. A Little Tinamou was a great spot by John, and we all got superb views before it slinked away into the undergrowth. White-tailed and Salty-tailed Trogons, Keel-billed and Chestnut-mandibled Toucans, 2 Blue-headed Parrots, 5 Red-crowned Ant-Tanagers, 2 Western Slaty Antshrike, Dot-winged Antwren, Black-bellied Wren, Blue-crowned Manakin, Northern Barred, Plain Brown and Cocoa Woodcreepers, Cinammon Woodpecker, 4 Greater Ani, Double-toothed Kite, Crane Hawk, King Vulture, Violet-bellied Hummingbird and Grey-headed Tanager were among the other species noted. The drive back past the Ammo Dump yielded two new birds as a distant Wood Stork was seen circling over the canal and a fine Bat Falcon was scoped as it perched on a roadside pylon.

After lunch back at the tower, we took some well earned 'hammock time' for an hour or so, meeting up again at 1500 for our afternoon tour. White-vented Plumeleteer was seen at the hummingbird feeders, along with the dazzling Violet-bellied Hummingbird. The traffic lights at the Rio Chagres bridge provided an opportunity to add Southern Rough-winged and Mangrove Swallows and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird to the list on the way to the Ammo Dump Ponds where we would spend the remainder of the day. This was a spectacularly good area, and new birds just kept coming one after the other. The all very similar looking Social and Rusty-margined Flycatchers and Great Kiskadee allowed us to study them as they fed along the fencelines and we also saw Tropical House Wren, Buff-throated Saltator, Black-striped Sparrow and Crimson-backed Tanager by peering through the chain link fence! Pale-vented Pigeon, White-tipped Dove, Yellow-crowned Euphonia, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Greater Ani, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Southern Beardless Tyrannulet, Panama Flycatcher, Green Shrike-Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler, immature Grey Hawk, Yellow-headed Caracara, Barred Antshrike and Buff-breasted Wren were all seen in or over the small area of trees by the entrance to the Ammo Dump, and we spent about an hour here just standing in one spot being pointed from bird to bird by Carlos! Special mention must go to the superb Yellow-backed Oriole which perched beautifully in the open, and a cracking adult Snail Kite which we scoped as it sat low down in a tree overhanging the water. Moving around to the track on the canal side, Royal Tern and Variable Seedeater were seen and the Snail Kite flew right past us giving stunning views. The ponds themselves added more interest, with an adult Rufescent Tiger-Heron, several Wattled Jacana, American Purple Gallinule, Great Egret, Lesser Kiskadee, Smooth-billed Ani, Yellow-crowned Euphonia and at least 20 Red-ored Parrots going to roost. Three Northern Waterthrush emerged to feed in the trackside ditches as dusk began to fall and we had good but distant views of a Grey-necked Wood Rail standing on the verge. It was almost dark by the time we returned to the tower, but we still managed one final new bird as a Blue-crowned Motmot flew up from the road and landed in a tree by the entrance to Semaphore Hill. Carlos put his flashlight on the bird, transforming it into a dazzling beast with wonderful bright blue head markings! A great way to end a memorable day.



Squirrel Cuckoo

Thursday 5th December

We met at 0600 for breakfast, squeezing in a quick 20 minutes on the observation deck before our morning session at Pipeline Road. The two iconic birds of Canopy Tower, the Blue Cotinga and Green Shrike-Vireo, were seen again, along with Keel-billed Toucan, 10 Mealy Parrot, 2 Red-lored Parrots, 2 Eastern Wood-Pewee, Magnolia Warbler, Fulvous-vented Euphonia, Western Slaty Antshrike, Squirrel Cuckoo and Summer Tanager.

We spent the whole morning birding at Pipeline Road as far as about 5km into the forest. It was actually very quiet to start with, though we still saw one or two very good birds rather than a big rush of new sightings. A Great Tinamou crossed the road and then showed in the adjacent undergrowth – we had been very lucky indeed to see both Tinamous on the same trip! Black-faced Antthrush, a bird previously heard only, gave superb views thanks again to the persistence of Carlos and his excellent whistled mimicry of its call. While crouching at the side of the track looking for this bird, an American Pygmy Kingfisher flew in and perched close to us, allowing everyone to get great views. 3 Purple-throated Fruitcrow showed high overhead and we also noted Cinammon and Crimson-crested Woodpeckers, Cocoa and Plain-brown Woodcreepers. Dot-winged and Checker-throated Antwrens, 2 Song Wrens, 2 Black-tailed Trogon, White-tailed Trogon, Tropical Gnatcatcher and Southern Bentbill. A Thrush-like Schiffornis showed very briefly but quite well, close to the path. At the far end, we found the antswarm at last and now spent about an hour enjoying prolonged and excellent views of the antbirds and woodcreepers and a White-whiskered Puffbird. The views we had of the normally elusive Ocellated Antbird were truly superb, and two Chestnut-backed Antbirds appeared briefly by the side of the track before crossing over and disappearing – they were our only sightings of this species on the tour. Black-striped Woodcreeper, Long-billed Hermit and 3 Song Wrens were also seen, though we had to tear ourselves away to avoid being late for lunch. A juvenile Rufescent Tiger-Heron flew up from the track on the way back, giving superb views as it perched in a palm.

Our afternoon tour saw the hottest weather so far, as the temperature crept into the thirties and felt very humid under the cloudy skies. Old Gamboa Road was our destination, and we started with a White-necked Puffbird by the parking area and went on to quickly add Yellow Warbler, Variable Seedeater, Thick-billed Seed-Finch, Tennessee Warbler, Thick-billed Euphonia, Great Kiskadee and Crimson-backed & Blue-Grey Tanagers. Yellow Tyrannulet, Northern Waterthrush and Red-crowned Woodpecker were seen in bushes along the reed edge, and as we walked towards the ponds we had great views of a perched Ochre-bellied Flycatcher. The same tree held a stunning Prothonotary Warbler, Golden-fronted Greenlet and White-shouldered Tanager. The ponds were productive, with three Boat-billed Herons including one on a nest, and plenty of activity from Rusty-margined and Social Flycatchers and Lesser Kiskadee. A Yellow Warbler also showed well and two Masked Tityra were in the trees above us. Ringed and Amazon Kingfishers were both seen perched, and plenty of Grey-breasted Martins and Southern Rough-winged Swallows were feeding over the water. The walk along the old road through the regenerating forest was fairly quiet, but new birds included Dusky Antbird and Rufous-breasted Wren. A cracking adult Bay-breasted Warbler, Black-bellied Wren, Fulvous-vented Euphonia and Red-throated Ant-Tanager were also seen. Back at the

vehicle, as dusk began to fall, a Collared Forest-Falcon flashed across the path and then a Capped Heron flew over us, rounding off the day in style.



Violet-bellied Hummingbird

Friday 6th December

Our pre-breakfast observation included great views of the Magnolia Warbler again in its usual tree, 6 Keel-billed Toucans, 6 Scaled Pigeon, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Purple-crowned Fairy, Cinammon Woodpecker, 2 Golden-hooded Tanagers and a brief Swainson's Thrush.

Gamboa resort area would be our destination for our final morning at the tower, and we weren't disappointed! Superb views of Mangrove Swallow perched on the bridge as we crossed, and both Black-throated Mango and Collared Aracari seen as we approached the resort, kicked things off. Parking by the nursery, we quickly added our first Southern Lapwing and saw Plain Wren, Summer Tanager [a stunning male], Yellow-headed Caracara [scoped at close range], Panama Flycatcher and Ruddy Ground-Dove. At some nearby bird tables, Flame-rumped Tanager and Red-legged Honeycreeper were both new birds, and we also got great views of Cinammon and Red-crowned Woodpeckers, Buff-throated Saltator, Crimson-backed Tanager and both Baltimore and Orchard Orioles side by side in the same tree. Black-throated Mango and a brief Lineated Woodpecker were seen in the surrounding trees with Snowy Egret and Royal Tern over the Chagres river. By the ponds, we heard but failed to see White-throated Crake but did add Violaceous Trogon and found an active feeding flock containing Magnolia Warbler, Paltry Tyrannulet, Yellow-Olive Flycatcher, Forest Elaenia, Lesser Greenlet and Cinammon Becard. A Rosy Thrush-Tanager was the undoubted highlight, singing explosively from cover before perching in view and preening for a good five minutes – what a stunner! Finally we viewed the Rio Chagres from the marina area, and added Common Moorhen, two Blue-winged Teal, Pied-billed Grebe, Anhinga, Little Blue Heron and also saw Wattled Jacana, Brown Pelican and got excellent views of a Keel-billed Toucan.

After lunch we were collected at 1330 for our transfer west to Canopy Lodge, a journey which took about 2hrs through often torrential rain. On arrival, we were met by lodge manager Tino and our new guide, Eliecer Rodriguez Madrid, for an introduction to the facility and of course to view the fruit feeders in the bird-rich gardens! Due to the continuing rain not many birds came down but Crimson-backed and Flame-rumped Tanagers, Snowy-bellied and Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds, Grey-headed Chachalaca [10+], Collared Aracari [6+], Bananaquit, Orange-billed Sparrow, Bay Wren, Black-chested Jay, Thick-billed Euphonia and two flyover Orange-chinned Parakeets were all seen before we had gone out birding! A Violet-headed Hummingbird which visited the Verbena flowers during our introductory talk was the only one seen on the whole trip.

With not much daylight left, Eliecer took us for a short walk up the road to the Canopy Adventure trail and Chorro El Macho waterfall. At least 50 Chestnut-headed Oropendolas and a few Black-chested Jays were gathering in the valley pre-roost and we had superb views of a pair of Keel-billed Toucans displaying. Three Rufous-capped Warblers were seen in the roadside trees and a White Hawk flew over the road. We couldn't find the White-tipped Sicklebill that sometimes roosts by the waterfall, but instead had great views of two Buff-rumped Warblers in the stream bed beneath the waterfall.

Saturday 7th December

After breakfast this morning we took a short trip back to Chorro El Macho as we wanted to check the forest streams here for Sunbittern. We weren't lucky, but we did see the two Buff-rumped Warblers again and a Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer. Our main area for the morning would be La Mesa, and a roadside stop to check some gardens proved productive as we added Yellow-faced Grassquit, White-lined Tanager, Yellow-bellied Elaenia and Stripe-throated Hermit as well as further views of Baltimore Oriole and Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer. Reaching the Las Minas trail, we picked up an Olive-striped Flycatcher in the trees around the parking spot and as we walked up the trail, quickly found Spotted Woodcreeper, Silver-throated Tanager, Dusky-faced Tanager, Plain Xenops, Rufous-capped Warbler and Golden-collared Manakin. Great views of Black and White Warbler and Yellow-throated Vireo were then followed up by one of the tour highlights, fabulous views of a Black-crowned Antpitta which Eliecer called in from the dense undergrowth – he even told us which branch it would perch on! Reaching an open area of high altitude grassland at around 900 metres, we added another speciality in the form of Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch, and also saw two Eastern Meadowlark perched on top of a small tree. As the trail entered the forest again, Violet-crowned Woodnymph, Tufted Flycatcher and two Hepatic Tanagers were found. The walk back along the trail was punctuated by the call of the Orange-bellied Trogon – our last Trogon species and just reward for the fact that Eliecer had been whistling it since we first arrived at the site! We enjoyed great views of this lovely bird, and then bumped into another feeding flock with close ups of Silver-throated Tanager, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Tawny-capped Euphonia and Bay-headed Tanager to round off the morning. A Streaked Saltator seen from the vehicle on our way back down to Canopy Lodge for lunch was our only sighting of the tour.

Heavy rain stopped play after lunch, as a tropical downpour lasting over an hour raised the water level in the river by several feet, turning it into a raging brown torrent that looked very close to overtopping the garden wall! Nevertheless, the feeders proved productive and we watched Grey-headed Chachalaca, Collared Aracari, Tennessee Warbler, Buff-throated Saltator, Rufous-tailed and Snowy-bellied Hummingbirds, Bananaquit, Summer Tanager, House Wren, Rufous Motmot, Orange-billed Sparrow, Chestnut-headed Oropendola and Black-chested Jay from the shelter of the verandah.

The rain eventually eased, and we decided to take a chance and drive the short distance to Cara Iguana. Here we met a chap sheltering under a bin bag that promptly showed us the roosting place of an adult and juvenile Spectacled Owl. Miraculously, it was viewable from the road allowing us to watch from the vehicle and shelter from the rain – the first time Eliecer had seen it there! Red-crowned Ant-Tanager, Rufous and White Wren and Barred Antshrike were also noted, and then Eliecer pulled another ace from the pack by finding a Tody Motmot perched in a bush by the road giving us all prolonged telescope views despite the very low light. On the drive back to the lodge, we got cracking views of an Osprey perched in the top of a dead tree, which was duly mobbed by two Bat Falcons! Despite the challenging conditions, another very successful day.



Black-crowned Antpitta and Silver-throated Tanager

Sunday 8th December

Altos del Maria, an area of cloud forest East of the El Valle crater, was our destination for the whole day today. With the area owned by a wealthy entrepreneur, who is selling off blocks of the land as lots which are then partly deforested and built upon by wealthy Panamanians from the city, the future of the area looks bleak. It does, however, mean that in the meantime there is good access to otherwise impenetrable forest, and with development having moved on little since last year, if at all, perhaps the credit crunch will save it for a bit longer! Definitely only for 4x4 vehicles, the steep access roads are not for the faint-hearted, though it still took less than an hour to reach the area from El Valle. We stopped first of all just short of the entrance to the main area, to bird a wooded valley where we found a good feeding flock. Blackburnian, Canada and Black-throated Green Warblers were added in quick succession, and the same flock also held Black and Yellow Tanager, Spotted Barbtail, Common Bush-Tanager, Red-faced Spinetail, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Ochraceous Wren, Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher and Plain Antvireo. Grey-breasted Wood-Wren was seen with a bit more effort, and two Blue-headed Parrots flew in and landed in the trees above us. Passing through the security gates, we stopped next to check a favoured resting area for Snowcap, perhaps the top target bird of this area. It didn't take long to locate two birds, which we watched for some time as they frequently returned to the same perches allowing everyone eventually to get excellent views despite their dazzling fast movements – they really do make a Goldcrest look like a snail! A Broad-billed Motmot was perched nearby giving its mournful call, and as we headed off up the hill into the forest we encountered yet another feeding flock. Pale-vented Thrush, Blackburnian and Canada Warblers and plenty of Silver-throated and Common Bush Tanagers were seen, along with two superb Blue-throated Toucanets feeding quietly in the canopy. Spotted Woodcreeper, Brown Violet-Ear, Tufted Flycatcher, Bay-headed Tanager, White-throated Spadebill, another Snowcap, two more toucanets, White-ruffed Manakin female and a Broad-winged Hawk were also seen along the walk. The highlight though was another hummingbird, the bizarre White-tipped Sicklebill, which appeared at a Heliconia flower before perching on view under some leaves for several minutes allowing us to scope and photograph this sought-after species. Driving further on, we stopped again to check an area for Streak-chested Antpitta which we missed while at the tower. The bird could be heard calling almost immediately as we got out of the vehicle, and Eliecer whistled it to within a few feet of the track where it perched in full view and called, allowing everyone to get on it with the scope – magic! By now it was feeling like lunchtime, so we returned to the vehicles and descended to the landscaped lake area to have lunch at one of the picnic gazebos overlooking the water. Spotted Sandpiper, Osprey, Green and Belted Kingfisher, Short-tailed Hawk and Green Heron were seen as we sat down for lunch, with the meal itself punctuated by Mourning Warbler, Yellow-bellied and Lesser Elaenia and Red-crowned Woodpecker. After lunch we walked around the lake, picking up Social Flycatchers, Paltry Tyrannulet, Blackburnian Warbler, two Golden-hooded Tanagers, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Dusky-capped Flycatcher and both Chestnut-sided and Tennessee Warblers. An adult Green Heron perched in a tree gave superb views, as did the Osprey, and the Belted Kingfisher was flying about calling loudly. In the dense forest beyond the lake, it was rather quiet but we did see Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher and get sketchy views of the extremely difficult Scaly-breasted Wren. On the other side of the lake, a Lineated Woodpecker excavating a hole gave much better views, as did a calling Bright-rumped Atilla. Broad-winged Hawk, Yellow-Olive Flycatcher, Violet-crowned Woodnymph [perched] and a distant Long-tailed Tyrant were also noted before we reached the vehicles. Eliecer had two more stops lined up, the first specifically to connect with the rare Dull-mantled Antbird, which we did, and the second at the Castillo where a number of flowering trees proved attractive to hummingbirds. At least two Green-crowned Brilliants were seen, as well as Green Hermit, Bananaquit, Yellow-faced Grassquit [male] and Thick-billed, Yellow-crowned and Tawny-capped Euphonias.



Blue-throated Toucanet and White-tipped Sicklebill



Streak-chested Antpitta

Monday 9th December

A full day in the Pacific lowlands today meant about a 90 minute drive from El Valle to our first destination, the network of ricefields at Juan Hombron. This proved an absolutely brilliant location, and we were lucky that cloud kept the worst of heat off at this often stifling hot place. The tactic was to walk sections of the track, with Eliecer periodically going back for the bus. Our first stop added new birds right away with the first Groove-billed Ani, Yellow-crowned Parrot, Plain-breasted Ground-Dove, Striped Cuckoo, Sapphire-throated Hummingbird, Blue-black Grassquit and a brief Rufous-browed Peppershrike all seen. A Garden Emerald was perched in a dead tree and a Philadelphia Vireo appeared briefly in the same view, while Scrub Greenlet tantalised us with sketchy views in deep cover. Barred Antshrike, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Variable Seedeater and Yellow Warbler were more familiar species which showed well, and yet another female manakin – this time a Lance-tailed – was added to the list.

Next up was a flooded rice paddy which was proving particularly attractive to waders, and positioned conveniently so that it could be scanned with telescopes from the shade of adjacent trees whilst enjoying a coffee! 30+ Greater Yellowlegs, 20+ Lesser Yellowlegs, 10+ Solitary Sandpipers, Spotted Sandpiper, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper and many Little Blue Herons and Snowy Egrets were present, and three difficult peeps which refused to show well enough to be identified eventually flew and landed much closer, adding themselves to our list as Least Sandpipers. Two Savannah Hawks circled over, Crested Caracara was noted and we had quite superb views of Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture walking about on the track.

Moving further towards the coast, we picked up a nice Grey Kingbird on the wires and had superb views of a perched Brown-throated Parakeet, before happening upon a large field of rice being harvested with combines. The subsequent melee caused by fleeing insects, birds and mammals from the cutter meant a number of herons and raptors had gathered to take advantage, and we spent about half an hour enjoying a remarkable spectacle. No fewer than five Peregrines were stooping and tussling right in front of us, occasionally grabbing a prey item [once a Sora Rail, according to Eliecer!!] and flying off to feed. Two stunning Savannah Hawks were also chancing their arm, and a Common Black-Hawk circled right over our heads. Crested and Yellow-headed Caracara were also taking

advantage of the bounty, with the larger former species proving particularly aggressive. 35 Glossy Ibis and 3 Wood Storks flying over were also noted, as well as many Great and Snowy Egrets.

Things were starting to warm up weather wise, and our next stop to look for the endemic Vereguan Mango was sadly unsuccessful, though we did see Scaly-breasted Hummingbird which Eliecer said was actually rarer! The drive towards the coast added more waterbirds as various ponds held Wattled Jacana, Southern Lapwing and Great Egret, while we also saw Tropical Mockingbird and the spectacular Fork-tailed Flycatcher. It was very hot at the beach, but we managed to take a short look along the coastal track and add a few more species. Two Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were skulking in the bushes and both Straight-billed Woodcreeper and Rufous-browed Peppershrike gave themselves up rather easily – the former sitting on a stump outside our parked vehicle before Eliecer even had chance to whistle it in! A Common Black-Hawk showed superbly, and a female American Kestrel was perched in a pole. Finally, from the beach, we saw 3 Gull-billed Terns, 1 Common Tern, Neotropic Cormorant, Brown Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird, Willet, Laughing Gull and American Oystercatcher. Lunching at Rauls beach hut in nearby Santa Clara, we didn't add much bird-wise other than Hudsonian Whimbrel on the beach, but after lunch we had superb views of Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl nearby before heading back towards El Valle. Here we spent some time visiting the local market before returning to the Lodge about 1700.



Straight-billed Woodcreeper

Tuesday 10th December

An absolute stormer of a final morning with some totally out of the blue sightings coupled with a brilliant session enjoying shorebirds in Panama Bay on the way back to Tocumen airport. Our flight wasn't until 1855, so we had plenty of time to chill out this morning and get ourselves packed, enjoying a later breakfast before talking a walk back to Chorro El Macho. Around the lodge, we had great views of Orange-billed Sparrow and Red-crowned Ant-Tanager, the latter a new species for some of the group that had missed it before. The walk to the Canopy Adventure trails yielded Bay Wren, Chestnut-sided and Bay-breasted Warblers and female Violet-crowned Woodnymph, and at the falls we found a small feeding flock containing Eye-ringed Flatbill, Spot-crowned Antwreio, Tawny-capped Euphonia and Plain Xenops. The first star bird then appeared in the form of a cracking Louisiana Waterthrush feeding really close by in the stream – a real case of 'when you see one, you'll know!'. Heading to the swimming pool to check the river again for Sunbittern, we bumped into Eliecer who was checking the area for an Army Ant swarm that he had been keeping tabs on during our stay. He hadn't found the ants and said that they had left the nest, but he left us to check the river while he went off to check another area 'just in case'. We saw little other than a Bronze-tailed Plumeteer, but then Eliecer came running back exclaiming that he'd found the ants, and just seen a Rufous-Vented Ground-Cuckoo! Being perhaps the iconic bird of the Neotropics and a species we were all desperate to see, there was a spring in our step as we scaled the steps to the ridge where Eliecer had seen the bird. Straight away he was on it again, and those who were quick saw it before it slinked back into the undergrowth out of view. It was a tense wait for the rest of us, and this was an

extremely difficult location as we were perched on logs and branches looking down into a heavily vegetated slope where only tiny windows of light allowed the forest floor to be visible. Over the next half an hour, various tantalising glimpses of the bird were achieved, sometimes just a wing, or a long tail disappearing – all very frustrating. Eventually though the bird paused in the open allowing its bill and crest to be seen, and later a second bird with a yellow bill [adult] appeared and gave better views although still always just a few seconds at a time. Six out of seven of us saw the bird to varying degrees, before we had to accept defeat and head back for an early lunch ready for Lorenzo to collect us at 12 noon.

We said our goodbyes and were on our way by 1220, taking about 2hrs to reach Panama City and our final birding destination at Costa del Este. With the tide out, huge swathes of exposed mud and a tidal creek were simply busting with thousands of shorebirds and we cleaned up good and proper! Six Black Skimmer, Cocoi Heron, Great Blue Heron, Little Blue Heron, two Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Snowy Egret, Great Egret, Brown Pelican, Laughing and Franklin's Gulls, Neotropic Cormorants, Osprey, three Gull-billed Terns, Spotted Sandpiper, thousands of Western Sandpipers, two [that we could positively identify!] Semipalmated Sandpipers, 50+ Black-necked Stilts, 1 Lesser Yellowlegs, 1 Greater Yellowlegs, hundreds of Willet, Hudsonian Whimbrel, thousands of Short-billed Dowitchers, 1 Wilsons Plover, hundreds of Semipalmated Plovers, 50+ Marbled Godwit [only one close] and hundreds of Grey Plovers rounded off what had been a brilliant week in a quite breathtaking manner. Lorenzo transferred us the short distance from here to Tocumen [where we saw two Fork-tailed Flycatchers and a Saffron Finch] and after a prolonged check in process, we boarded the flight back to Amsterdam on schedule. We arrived at 1100 the following day and said our goodbyes as we all had various different connections to catch back to UK airports.

Systematic List

1. Great Tinamou
2. Little Tinamou
3. Black-bellied Whistling Duck
4. Blue-winged Teal
5. Grey-headed Chachalaca
6. Pied-billed Grebe
7. Wood Stork
8. Magnificent Frigatebird
9. Neotropical Cormorant
10. Anhinga
11. Brown Pelican
12. Rufescent Tiger-Heron
13. Great Blue Heron
14. Cocoi Heron
15. Great White Egret
16. Snowy Egret
17. Little Blue Heron
18. Cattle Egret
19. Green Heron
20. Boat-billed Heron
21. Capped Heron
22. Yellow-crowned Night Heron
23. Glossy Ibis
24. Black Vulture
25. Turkey Vulture
26. Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture
27. King Vulture
28. Osprey
29. Grey-headed Kite
30. White-tailed Kite
31. Snail Kite
32. Double-toothed Kite

33. Crane Hawk
34. Common Black Hawk
35. Savannah Hawk
36. White Hawk
37. Broad-winged Hawk
38. Grey Hawk
39. Short-tailed Hawk
40. Crested Caracara
41. Yellow-headed Caracara
42. American Kestrel
43. Bat Falcon
44. Peregrine
45. Collared Forest-Falcon
46. White-throated Crake [H]
47. Grey-necked Wood-Rail
48. American Purple Gallinule
49. Common Moorhen
50. Southern Lapwing
51. Wattled Jacana
52. Grey Plover
53. Wilson's Plover
54. Semipalmated Plover
55. American Oystercatcher
56. Black-necked Stilt
57. Spotted Sandpiper
58. Solitary Sandpiper
59. Greater Yellowlegs
60. Lesser Yellowlegs
61. Willet
62. Hudsonian Whimbrel
63. Marbled Godwit
64. Semipalmated Sandpiper
65. Western Sandpiper
66. Least Sandpiper
67. Pectoral Sandpiper
68. Short-billed Dowitcher
69. Laughing Gull
70. Franklin's Gull
71. Gull-billed Tern
72. Common Tern
73. Royal Tern
74. Black Skimmer
75. Pale-vented Pigeon
76. Scaled Pigeon
77. Plain-breasted Ground-dove
78. Ruddy Ground-dove
79. White-tipped Dove
80. Grey-chested Dove
81. Brown-throated Parakeet
82. Orange-chinned Parakeet
83. Blue-headed Parrot
84. Mealy Amazon
85. Red-lored Amazon
86. Yellow-crowned Parrot
87. Squirrel Cuckoo
88. Striped Cuckoo
89. Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo
90. Greater Ani
91. Groove-billed Ani
92. Smooth-billed Ani

93. Spectacled Owl
94. Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl
95. Band-rumped Swift
96. Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift
97. Green Hermit
98. Long-billed Hermit
99. Stripe-throated Hermit
100. White-tipped Sicklebill
101. White-necked Jacobin
102. Brown Violet-ear
103. Garden Emerald
104. Violet-crowned Woodnymph
105. Violet-bellied Hummingbird
106. Violet-headed Hummingbird
107. Scaly-breasted Hummingbird
108. Sapphire-throated Hummingbird
109. Blue-chested Hummingbird
110. Snowy-bellied Hummingbird
111. Rufous-tailed Hummingbird
112. Snowcap
113. White-vented Plumeleteer
114. Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer
115. Purple-crowned Fairy
116. Black-throated Mango
117. Green-crowned Brilliant
118. Slaty-tailed Trogon
119. Black-tailed Trogon
120. White-tailed Trogon
121. Gartered Trogon
122. Black-throated Trogon
123. Orange-bellied Trogon
124. Tody Motmot
125. Rufous Motmot
126. Broad-billed Motmot
127. Blue-crowned Motmot
128. Ringed Kingfisher
129. Belted Kingfisher
130. Amazon Kingfisher
131. American Pygmy Kingfisher
132. Green Kingfisher
133. Black-breasted Puffbird
134. White-necked Puffbird
135. Pied Puffbird
136. White-whiskered Puffbird
137. Blue-throated Toucanet
138. Collared Aracari
139. Keel-billed Toucan
140. Chestnut-mandibled Toucan
141. Red-crowned Woodpecker
142. Cinammon Woodpecker
143. Lineated Woodpecker
144. Crimson-crested Woodpecker
145. Red-faced Spinetail
146. Spotted Barbtail
147. Plain Xenops
148. Plain Brown Woodcreeper
149. Wedge-billed Woodcreeper
150. Northern Barred Woodcreeper
151. Cocoa Woodcreeper
152. Black-striped Woodcreeper

153. Spotted Woodcreeper
154. Straight-billed Woodcreeper
155. Fasciated Antshrike
156. Barred Antshrike
157. Western Slaty Antshrike
158. Plain Antvireo
159. Spot-crowned Antvireo
160. Checker-throated Antwren
161. Dot-winged Antwren
162. White-flanked Antwren
163. Dusky Antbird
164. Chestnut-backed Antbird
165. Dull-mantled Antbird
166. Spotted Antbird
167. Bicoloured Antbird
168. Ocellated Antbird
169. Black-faced Antthrush
170. Black-crowned Antpitta
171. Streak-chested Antpitta
172. Southern Beardless Tyrannulet
173. Yellow Tyrannulet
174. Forest Elaenia
175. Yellow-bellied Elaenia
176. Lesser Elaenia
177. Olive-striped Flycatcher
178. Ochre-bellied Flycatcher
179. Paltry Tyrannulet
180. Southern Bentbill
181. Common Tody-Flycatcher
182. Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher
183. Olivaceous Flatbill
184. Yellow-Olive Flycatcher
185. Yellow-margined Flycatcher
186. White-throated Spadebill
187. Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher
188. Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher
189. Tufted Flycatcher
190. Eastern Wood-Pewee
191. Acadian Flycatcher
192. Long-tailed Tyrant
193. Bright-rumped Atilla
194. Dusky-capped Flycatcher
195. Panama Flycatcher
196. Great Crested Flycatcher
197. Great Kiskadee
198. Lesser Kiskadee
199. Boat-billed Flycatcher
200. Rusty-margined Flycatcher
201. Social Flycatcher
202. Streaked Flycatcher
203. Tropical Kingbird
204. Grey Kingbird
205. Fork-tailed Flycatcher
206. Thrush-like Schiffornis
207. Cinammon Becard
208. Masked Tityra
209. Purple-throated Fruitcrow
210. Golden-collared Manakin
211. White-ruffed Manakin
212. Lance-tailed Manakin

213. Blue-crowned Manakin
214. Red-capped Manakin
215. Yellow-throated Vireo
216. Philadelphia Vireo
217. Scrub Greenlet
218. Golden-fronted Greenlet
219. Lesser Greenlet
220. Green Shrike-vireo
221. Rufous-browed Peppershrike
222. Black-chested Jay
223. Grey-breasted Martin
224. Mangrove Swallow
225. Southern Rough-winged Swallow
226. Barn Swallow
227. Scaly-breasted Wren
228. Black-bellied Wren
229. Rufous and White Wren
230. Bay Wren
231. Rufous-breasted Wren
232. Buff-breasted Wren
233. Plain Wren
234. House Wren
235. Ochraceous Wren
236. White-breasted Wood-wren
237. Grey-breasted Wood-wren
238. Song Wren
239. Tropical Gnatcatcher
240. Swainson's Thrush
241. Pale-vented thrush
242. Clay-coloured Robin
243. Tropical Mockingbird
244. Tennessee Warbler
245. Yellow Warbler
246. Chestnut-sided Warbler
247. Blackburnian Warbler
248. Bay-breasted Warbler
249. Black and White Warbler
250. Prothonotary Warbler
251. Magnolia Warbler
252. Black-throated Green Warbler
253. Northern Waterthrush
254. Louisiana Waterthrush
255. Mourning Warbler
256. Canada Warbler
257. Buff-rumped Warbler
258. Rufous-capped Warbler
259. Bananaquit
260. Black and Yellow Tanager
261. Rosy Thrush-Tanager
262. Grey-headed Tanager
263. Common Bush Tanager
264. Dusky-faced Tanager
265. White-shouldered Tanager
266. White-lined Tanager
267. Crimson-backed Tanager
268. Flame-rumped Tanager
269. Blue-grey Tanager
270. Palm Tanager
271. Golden-hooded Tanager
272. Plain-coloured Tanager

273. Bay-headed Tanager
274. Silver-throated Tanager
275. Blue Dacnis
276. Green Honeycreeper
277. Red-legged Honeycreeper
278. Shining Honeycreeper
279. Streaked Saltator
280. Buff-throated Saltator
281. Blue-black Grassquit
282. Variable Seedeater
283. Thick-billed Seed-finch
284. Yellow-faced Grassquit
285. Saffron Finch
286. Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch
287. Orange-billed Sparrow
288. Black-striped Sparrow
289. Hepatic Tanager
290. Summer Tanager
291. Red-crowned Ant-Tanager
292. Red-throated Ant-Tanager
293. Eastern Meadowlark
294. Great-tailed Grackle
295. Yellow-backed Oriole
296. Yellow-tailed Oriole
297. Baltimore Oriole
298. Orchard Oriole
299. Scarlet-rumped Cacique
300. Chestnut-headed Oropendola
301. Yellow-crowned Euphonia
302. Thick-billed Euphonia
303. Fulvous-vented Euphonia
304. Tawny-capped Euphonia