



TOUR REPORT
COLOMBIA
20TH FEBRUARY – 8TH MARCH 2025

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THURSDAY 20TH FEBRUARY

A travelling day for us all today as we set off from London, Manchester and Norwich, mostly via Paris, and on to Bogota, Colombia's capital, where we would rendezvous late evening. The immigration was somewhat painful but thankfully our hotel was only minutes away in the airport complex so we were soon checked in and bedded in for the night.

FRIDAY 21ST FEBRUARY – *Calm and overcast with some rain in the afternoon, 17C*

We rose at 6am for an excellent buffet breakfast before hopping on our pre-arranged transport and making the quick trip back to the domestic departures terminal at Bogota airport. **Great Thrush** and **Eared Dove** were two of our first birds seen, but it was not until our arrival in Pereira, after a one hour flight, that we kicked our list off in earnest. Just waiting for the driver to pick us up outside the terminal we saw our first **Black Vulture, Saffron Finch, Shiny Cowbird, Tropical Kingbird, Blue and White Swallow** and **Ruddy Ground-Dove** – all super-common Neotropical birds that would become familiar to us over the next two weeks. We headed off with our driver Andreas and were soon on the outskirts of the city of Pereira, en route to Otun Quimbaya national park where we would be birding in the afternoon. What was supposed to be a quick stop in a suburban supermarket for water turned into a half hour birding session in the car park where we notched 19 species – **Bare-faced Ibis, Peregrine, Vermillion Flycatcher, Golden Tanager, Roadside Hawk, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Yellow-headed Caracara, American Yellow Warbler, Black-billed Thrush, Blue-necked Tanager** and two lovely **Spectacled Parrotlet** were some of the highlights!

Soon we reached the village of La Florida where we stopped for lunch,, notching more good birds such as **Acorn Woodpecker, Blackburnian Warbler, Thick-billed Euphonia** (trying to get inside our bus!), **Bronze-winged Parrot** and a feast of a lunch of typical Colombian fayre. We were then met by a local park guide, and three 4x4 trucks, to continue on along the rough track into Otun Quimbaya. We stopped first on a bridge over the river, to look for Torrent Duck. We couldn't spot one but we did see a wealth of other birds such as **Blackish Pewee, Torrent Tyrannulet, Summer Tanager, Black and White Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Golden-faced Tyrannulet, Flame-rumped and Bay-headed Tanagers**, and the superb **Black-winged Saltator**. A **Grey-breasted Wood-wren** showed really well beside our parking spot and our first **Slate-throated Whitestart** flitted around in the same spot too. We were still in the sort of fairly open habitat, bordered by some fields and secondary growth forest, that make for relatively easy birding though most of the species involved are widespread – nonetheless it raced our list up to over 70 species for the day as we saw more birds such as **Palm Tanager, Blue-grey Tanager, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee** and **Smooth-billed Ani**.

Deeper into the park now and we made another stop in an open area by a few houses, one of which was belting out incredibly loud music through a huge amp to nobody in particular! The birds didn't seem to mind though and we had great views of **Andean Motmot** and **Broad-winged Hawk** here, plus a large fruiting tree kept us entertained for some while as it was full of small birds. **Fawn-breasted, Bay-headed, Blue-necked, Palm, Blue-grey, Black-capped** and **Golden Tanagers** were seen along with the dazzling **Blue-naped Chlorophonia, Green Honeycreeper** and more **Thick-billed Euphonias**. The star bird though was also our top target for the afternoon – a **Red-ruffed Fruitcrow**. This enormous cotinga, which looks like a Black Woodpecker in flight, is one of the Neotropics most sought-after birds and it is not easy to see anywhere – Otun Quimbaya is perhaps the best place in the World to find it and we had a good scope view before it slunk away. Some hummingbirds were noted here too including **Green Hermit, Western Emerald, Andean Emerald** and **Steely-vented Hummingbird**. We soon reached the reserve centre, along with the sadly now abandoned lodge that pre-Covid accommodated birders right in the heart of the action. We met one of the rangers who

insisted we watch a short film about the reserve before letting us wander around, but his friendly manner meant we were quite happy to do so! The lawn was being used as a feeding ground for a flock of **Bare-faced Ibis** and despite the rain now coming down harder, the trees around gave some superb views of the endemic **Cauca Guan** which seemed fairly common here. A **Canada Warbler** flitted around at close range and we saw **Yellow-bellied Seedeater**, **Southern Lapwing**, and another **Red-ruffed Fruitcrow** which showed much better, perching in the open up above us.



Cauca Guan

As we would be returning here to bird again tomorrow, we decided now to head back down to the river and try again for **Torrent Duck** – this time getting good views of a young female feeding in the torrent of water, and occasionally perching up on the rocks in between bouts of vanishing dipper-like beneath the flowing river surface. Another **Andean Motmot** perched beautifully for us and a female **White-necked Jacobin** was added. Finally back in La Florida, what was meant to just be a short stop to transfer back from the trucks to the minibus, yielded a wealth of new birds just in the edge of a rough grassy area with a few bushes. **Yellow-faced Grassquit**, **Blue-black Grassquit**, **Tropical Mockingbird**, **Pale-vented Pigeon**, **Scrub Tanager**, **Yellow-bellied Elaenia**, **Common Tody-flycatcher** and **Blue-headed Parrot** were all seen. Two stand out birds though were a pair of **Spot-breasted Woodpeckers** which were foraging away at eye level and a cracking **Mourning Warbler** – always one of the lesser-seen American migrants and especially as this one was a male. We headed back through Pereira, and out towards our overnight hotel with a stop for dinner en route. We eventually reached our digs for the night a little before 9pm – a long day!



Female Torrent Duck

SATURDAY 22ND FEBRUARY – *Calm and overcast with some heavy rain, 16C*

We rose early as would be the norm for the whole trip, and headed back to Otun Quimbaya reserve again for a full morning exploring the park by 4x4 and with the help of the park ranger. We started off just beyond La Florida at the bridge over the river where we had seen the **Torrent Duck** yesterday evening, and today we were lucky with two pairs of birds present and showing really well. A **White-capped Dipper** was also added, so an altogether worthwhile quick stop! Our plan was to head deeper into the park to the 'El Cedral' area to try for Hooded Antpitta and **Stiles's Tapaculo** – unfortunately neither of these birds played ball for us today though with the antpitta a total no-show and the tapaculo heard only. However, it didn't stop us enjoying some superb birding! We kicked off with a **Sickle-winged Guan** and several **Cauca Guan** around the furthest parking spot and then as we made our way back the way we had come one foot, we ran into our first big mixed species flock. It was hard to know where to look as birds came thick and fast and within moments we had logged **Three-striped Warbler**, **Lineated Foliage-gleaner**, **Olive-backed Woodcreeper**, **Red-faced Spinetail**, **Marble-faced Bristle-tyrant** and the similar **Variegated Bristle-tyrant** (told by its chestnut wing bars), **White-winged Becard**, **Rufous-breasted Flycatcher** and dazzling **Blackburnian** and **Canada Warblers**.



Red-ruffed Fruitcrow

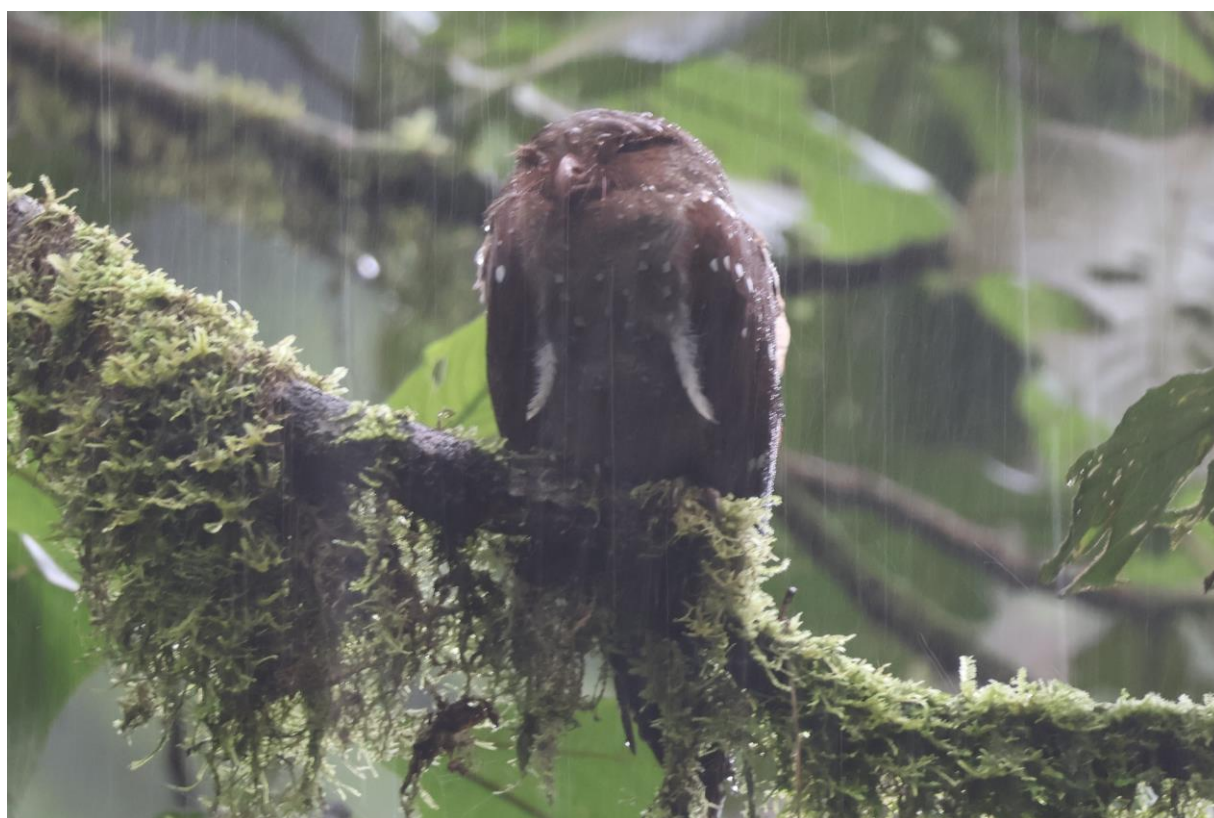
The rest of the walk was more quality than quantity as we enjoyed some really good views of some nice birds – three **Southern Emerald Toucanets** were croaking away above us but they dropped down uncharacteristically low and gave super views, at the same moment as a pair of **Speckle-faced Parrots** appeared in front of us. **Red-ruffed Fruitcrow** was on offer throughout the day – this is just an incredible place to connect with this normally difficult cotinga. We probably had ten individual sightings through the day with some really amazing point blank views at times – what a truly spectacular bird! Other highlights were **Golden-olive woodpecker**, **White-booted Racket-tail** and **Speckled Hummingbird** before the heavens really opened and we were forced back to the trucks.

We stopped to check one more spot for the Hooded Antpitta and while we drew a blank, we did hear a **Moustached Antpitta** calling fairly distantly off the trail. Bryan our local guide then called us over as he'd spotted something perched above the track – it was only an **Oilbird**! This most amazing of Neotropical prizes, the World's only nocturnal frugivore and a bird which normally roosts communally in caves, was the last thing we expected to see sat right out in the open on a mossy branch above the trail! We had amazing views of it but the rain just got so hard that we had to give in – the **Oilbird** looked absolutely drenched too!

We had a stop at the edge of the park by the big fruiting tree where we had seen a lot of tanagers yesterday, hoping that the endemic Multicoloured might show up. It didn't, but again we were spoilt for choice with loads of different birds feeding in the same tree including a lovely pair of **Red-headed Barbets**, the **Green Hermit** again showing very well, and a brief **White-throated Daggerbill**. A little further on we saw another three **Red-ruffed Fruitcrows**, **Acadian Flycatcher**, **Collared Trogon**, better views of **Three-striped Warbler** and a nice **Rusty-naped Greenlet** in a small mixed flock. It had been a great morning and now it was time to head into the town for lunch and to rejoin our minibus.

A short exploration of the small area of damp grass and scattered bushes at the edge of the town was really birdy and we soon saw **Mourning Warbler**, **Yellow-bellied Elaenia**, **Black-capped Tanager**,

lots of **Scrub Tanagers**, **Summer Tanager**, **Grey Seedeater**, **Red-crowned Woodpecker**, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, **Streaked Saltator** and another pair of the superb looking **Black-winged Saltator**. A **White-throated Crane** was lured into the open so that everyone could see it and we also picked up the lovely **Bran-coloured Flycatcher**, Slaty Spinetail and a nice perched **Blue-headed Parrot**. From here we had a two hour drive to our next base in Manizales, so we set off just before 4pm back through Pereira and north to Chinchincha. Here we had a stop for fuel and there happened to be a few trees and bushes adjacent to the petrol station that were full of birds! Best of all here was a superb pair of the near-endemic **Bar-crested Antshrike**, but we also added **Carib Grackle** and **Rufous-tailed Hummingbird** and saw **Common Tody-flycatcher**, **American Yellow Warbler**, **Western Emerald**, **Buff-necked Ibis** and **Bay-headed Tanager**. We completed the rest of the drive to Manizales, arriving at our hotel in the town at about 6.30pm.



Oilbird!

SUNDAY 23RD FEBRUARY – *Calm and sunny, overcast with light rain later. 15C*

An exciting day in store for us today as we headed to the fabulous Rio Blanco reserve, only a short drive from our base in Manizales. We arrived at around 6am and spent an hour or so birding around the lodge while we waited for the 'Antpitta Safari' to begin – we would be visiting a series of feeding stations for different antpitta species, all run to a strict timetable! As dawn was breaking the bird list for the kicked off with some nice birds in the forest just around the parking area with close views of a pair of **Andean Motmots**, our first **Montane Woodcreeper** and **Azara's Spinetail**, and some new hummingbirds including **Tourmaline Sunangel** and **Lesser Violetear**. **Masked** and **White-sided Flowerpiercers** were around and **Grey-browed Brush Finch** was by the corn feeder. **Brown-bellied Swallows** were around the lodge buildings with the more common **Blue and White Swallows**, which were perching on the corrugated roof. Eventually about 30-40 people had amassed on site ready for the start of the day – we would all head off in different directions to bird and then periodically convene at the various viewing shelters for the antpittas. We started up at the top of the hill, picking up our first mixed feeding flock with **Southern Emerald Toucanets** and **Blue-winged Mountain-**

tanagers, Blue-capped Tanager, Beryl-spangled Tanager and Blue and Black Tanager noted. In a more open area we enjoyed spectacular views down to the city of Manizales and our first birding on the trip in warm sunshine! Another roving flock held **Capped Conebill, Black-billed Peppershrike, Brown-capped Vireo** and **Superciliaried Hemispingus**. A superb **Golden-fronted Redstart** was a gorgeous endemic and we went on to see four or five during the course of the day. Down below us, a **Rufous-crowned Tody-flycatcher** gave excellent views. As we headed back to the first antpitta, a flock of a dozen **Golden-plumed Parakeets** swirled in noisily and landed in the trees above us. Debris was raining down onto a couple of parked cars as they stripped nuts from the canopy before they all headed off as quickly as they had come – a really beautiful parrot and not an easy one to see well.



Green and Black Fruiteater

0800 then and it was time to meet 'Raul', the **Green and Black Fruiteater** who appeared on the calling of his name by park ranger Matteo! The fruiteater came down and virtually fed from his hand but this was only the support act – it was 'Pancho' that the packed out viewing shelter had really come to see. This beautiful **Chestnut-crowned Antpitta** bounded into view on stilt-like legs, first appearing nervous at the number of people, but eventually after some soothing words from Matteo it jumped up onto the well-placed mossy branch for his earthworm snack. Certainly a different way to see a bird, but without these feeding stations and the relentless hard work that goes into setting them up, many of these forest denizens would never make it onto peoples lists. Just to put the tin lid on it, an **Ash-coloured Tapaculo** scuttled across while we waited too! Another hour or so of birding on the trails now added some more mixed flocks – the whole place was really just so birdy that we seemed to never go more than a hundred yards without encountering one. This time we saw **Lacrimose Mountain-tanager, Sharpe's Wren, Mountain Wren, White-tailed Tyrannulet, Plushcap, Pearled Treerunner** and **Slaty Brushfinch** amongst others. The rare **Pale-footed Swallow** was seen and heard overhead, too.

At 0930 the next antpitta was on offer and this time a small one of the family *grallaricula* – the **Slate-crowned Antpitta**. 'Nana' was waiting for us close to the feeder as we arrived, and once Matteo had

placed the worms she came out of the shadows, wiggling characteristically from side to side like many other members of this genus often do. Great views again of the this one, though a little briefer than normal perhaps due to a **Grey-browed Brush-finch** coming in and flushing it off. Birding our way back down the hill we saw our first **Andean Guans** beside the trail and spent more time sifting mixed flocks trying to add new species. The fabulous **Grass-green Tanager** was one of these – a big brute for a tanager, more akin to the larger mountain tanagers, with bright red legs and bill and impossibly green plumage. Down at the lodge, the hummingbird feeders were alive with birds and we quickly added **Long-tailed Sylph**, **Buff-tailed Coronet**, **Bronzy Inca**, **Speckled Hummingbird**, **White-bellied Woodstar**, **Andean Emerald**, **Collared Inca**, **Sparkling Violetear** and **Fawn-breasted Brilliant**! The morning had flown by but wasn't quite over, as our final antpitta date was just behind the lodge at 1130. This was the endemic **Brown-banded Antpitta**, a large and fairly nondescript species hardly ever seen by any birders away from the Rio Blanco feeder! The bird was so keen it was already sitting on the log as we entered the shelter and performed beautifully for us – now it was lunchtime!



Slate-crowned Antpitta

We were very lucky with the weather today because it poured with rain while we enjoyed lunch (and coffee!) but cleared again as soon as we were ready to set off. We headed back up the hill and walked further on into the reserve after lunch, with more excellent birding composed of mixed flocks. **Grass-green Tanager** was difficult to get everyone on to but by the end of the session we had all had good views. **Golden-fronted Redstart**, **Plushcap**, **Black-capped**, **Black-eared** and **Oleaginous Hemispingus**, another better view of **Black-billed Peppershrike** and a couple of new furnarids – the **Streaked Xenops** and bizarre-looking **Streaked Tuftedcheek** with its cotton-wool chops – were some of the highlights. We had a go at a couple of tapaculos, with everyone seeing **Blackish Tapaculo** and most people getting a glimpse of **Spillman's Tapaculo** too. This family are never easy to see, always frequenting dark, damp overhangs. Further up the trail we walked right underneath a **Masked Trogon** and then watched a **Crimson-mantled Woodpecker** bathing in the middle of the track. Jorge then got very excited as a **Red-hooded Tanager** appeared – we could see why! What a bird! He then

followed this up by turning round and spotting a **Common Potoo** roosting out in the open, which was even a surprise for local guide Matteo! Just superb birding and difficult species kept being pulled out of the bag, with the tricky **Buff-breasted Mountain-tanager** being the next to add itself to the list. **Russet-crowned Warbler**, **Rufous Wren** and **Capped Conebill** were also seen along this upper trail, but then we were stopped in our tracks by a plaintive whistle coming from up ahead, seemingly close to the trail. As we approached we realised it was a **Bicoloured Antpitta** and it was mega close! Ashley and Jorge saw the bird but getting the group onto it proved more difficult. Even with the aid of the thermal camera we only occasionally saw tiny glimpses of it through the dense undergrowth. It eventually bounded across a gap and one of the group laid binoculars on it, but in the end we had to accept defeat. After a short stop back at the hummingbird feeders, we headed down to the reserve entrance and made one last stop there in the sunshine, by the reservoir. A **White-capped Dipper** showed well and we had great views of **White-throated Daggerbill** at the flowers there. A delightful **Chestnut-bellied Chat-tyrant** gave everyone a good view after we had tried and failed for it earlier in the day, so that was a good way to round things off. We had to leave this amazing reserve at closing time, 4pm, and then make our way back to Manizales. With it being Sunday, everything would close early so we had a quick wash and brush up and then it was straight out for an early dinner, and bed!



Brown-banded Antpitta

MONDAY 24TH FEBRUARY – *Overcast with rain most of the day, 10C*

A very different day today would see us go for quality rather than quantity as we headed east of Manizales and into the paramo on the north-west side of Nevada del Ruiz volcano (famous for a catastrophic eruption in 1985 that killed over 20,000 people). We would be targeting some very

special birds, many with limited range or endemic, and this would take us up to over 4000m elevation. Our first stop was about forty minutes east of the city at a laguna where a convenient viewing platform allowed us to scan the water for ducks. The rather smart **Andean Duck** was seen, plus a couple of **Andean Teal**. In the paramo scrub below us, we could hear the calls of at least two **Tawny Antpittas**, but despite luring one pretty close to us, only Jorge managed to glimpse it. **Brown-backed Chat-tyrant**, **Stout-billed Cincloides** and **Grass Wren** were all far more obliging, however. Continuing on we took a mountain track up to the visitor centre for Los Nevados National Park, and our target here would be the endemic **Buffy Helmetcrest**. As this spot represents one of the best sites to see it, we were not alone and there were a lot of photographers here! Thankfully there was plenty of room for everyone and the helmetcrest showed well, often feeding at tiny flowers just a few feet away – a truly spectacular looking bird. Paramo Tapaculo was heard here, and we added **Plumbeous Sierra-finch** too.



Buffy Helmetcrest

Next we descended around 1km in elevation back down to a hotel centred around a series of geothermal baths, called Termas del Ruiz. The hotel grounds were well laid out for hummingbirds and we enjoyed a brilliant hour at the upper viewing platform. **Shining Sunbeam** was the most common hummer, but we saw **Buff-winged Starfrontlet**, the enormous **Great Sapphirewing**, both **Tyrian** and **Viridian Metaltails**, **Golden-breasted Puffleg** and the spectacular **Rainbow-bearded Thornbill**. Some fruit feeders attracted a variety of other birds, including both **Lacrimose** and **Scarlet-bellied Mountain-tanagers**, and the superb **Golden-crowned Tanager** was seen well in the surrounding bushes. As we walked back up for lunch, the clouds had lifted just enough to see the mountain ridge above us, and by a combination of pure luck and diligent scanning at the right moment, an **Andean Condor** sailed along the ridge, the light glinting off its white neck ruff and silvery upperwings – we only had a tiny chance to see this mega bird, so it really was a bonus.

After a tremendous lunch and a couple of cups of Coca tea to help with the effect of the altitude, we took a short walk just outside the hotel to look for the near-endemic **Black-thighed Puffleg**. We

found the bird quite easily and had superb views, plus added **White-banded Tyrannulet** and **Paramo Seedeater** to boot. From here we wound our way back down the mountain as we wanted to try some more spots for Tawny Antpitta, but it was raining really heavily now and this made things a bit tricky for us. We decided in the end to just give the same spot a try where we had heard it in the morning, but after half an hour in the rain trying and getting no response, we eventually admitted defeat and headed back to the van. Most of us had already got back in when Jorge ran over to say the antpitta had started calling really close, so we bundled out again! This time we were in luck, and the **Tawny Antpitta** climbed up into a bush where we could see it calling away on its long stilt-like legs. Our fifth antpitta seen in two days was not bad going!



Grey-breasted Mountain-Toucan

We then continued to Hacienda el Bosque where we would be spending the night, checking in to the delightful accommodation (a series of very well appointed wooden cabins on an open hillside, around a modern main building which serves the meals) before heading down to their feeding station for the last hour of the day. The big ticket here is the **Grey-breasted Mountain-Toucan**, and we didn't have to wait long to see it as it was already sat in the trees waiting for us as we arrived. The bird was shy though, and it sat partly hidden for about 45 minutes before it eventually came down and took a few grapes, quickly joined by a second bird, and then they were gone. Thankfully the supporting cast was superb – **Blue-capped Tanager**, **Slaty Brushfinch**, **Sickle-winged Guan**, **Buff-winged Starfrontlet**, **White-bellied Woodstar**, another **Black-thighed Puffleg** and even better a spectacular **Sword-billed Hummingbird** which made two quick visits to the feeder while we were

there. Other birds of note included **Superciliaried Hemispingus**, **Pearled Treerunner**, **Golden-fronted Redstart** and a lovely **White-throated Quail-dove** which ruled the roost on the corn! We enjoyed a leisurely hour then before dinner, and a quick owling session after which produced a calling **Rufous-banded Owl** in the distance.



White-throated Quail-Dove

TUESDAY 25TH FEBRUARY – *Overcast with light rain, 12C*

We woke to heavy rain this morning and this combined with half the group struggling with bad stomachs meant we bailed on the pre-breakfast walk and just met at 0700 for breakfast. Another group of photographers had arrived as day visitors too so once again we knew the 'antpitta safari' we had in store would be busy! Hacienda el Bosque is an amazing place – the owners are farmers who have cattle, trout farming and crops, on a huge finca extending way up into the hillside. The owners son has chosen to diversify by adding birding to their income stream and has built a small lodge with a few new wooden cabins set around the main restaurant building, all beautifully appointed. The birding set up here has been going five years, when the owners took a local guide around the estate for 25 days to establish what birds they had in the pockets of forest which they had protected on the farms hillsides. They found 7 species of antpitta here, and they have managed to habituate two – the others being too inaccessible on steep forested slopes. One of these two though is the delightful **Crescent-faced Antpitta**, perhaps one of the most beautiful of this magnificent family, and Hacienda el Bosque just might now be the easiest place in the World to see it.

We started off though with the hide for **Equatorial Antpitta**, one of the rufous antpitta splits found in both Colombia and neighbouring Ecuador. The bird came straight in as we arrived, and bounded around the feeding area on its gangly long legs. A superb little bird! **Grey-browed Brush Finch** was also coming, though this was periodically seen off with a water pistol so it didn't stop the antpitta coming in! Almost uniquely to any other antpitta feeding sites, at Hacienda el Bosque they have



Crescent-faced Antpitta

numerous other birds which come to be fed at the same sites too – **White-browed Spinetail**, a gorgeous little wren-like bird, was one of them. As we hiked back up the hill to the road we saw a pair of **Rufous-breasted Chat-tyrants**, before heading down to the second feeding site for the **Crescent-faced Antpitta**. This one took a longer wait, but the feeding station was bouncing with **Slaty Brush-finches**, **Mountain Wren** and a **Yellow-bellied Chat-tyrant** that would feed from the owners hand! All the while he was calling the name of the antpitta and eventually the rather shy bird came and perched at the edge of the arena, but hidden from view for most of us. A tense wait and some well-placed mealworms later and the delightful bird popped into our view – wow!



White-browed Spinetail

We rounded off our morning with another visit to the fruit feeding station where we had been yesterday afternoon. A similar spread of species was noted including the Grey-breasted Mountain-toucan again, and the full suite of hummingbirds including **Black-thighed Puffleg**, **Buff-winged Starfrontlet**, **White-bellied Emerald** and a couple of **Sword-billed Hummingbirds**. There were superb views of **Golden-fronted Redstart** and **Black-crested Warbler** too, plus the gorgeous **Plushcap**, a **White-banded Tyrannulet** and **Black Flowerpiercer**. Our time at this fantastic reserve had come to an end and now it was time to embark on the long drive North-west to Montezuma. We stopped for lunch en route, and then a second stop for fuel gave us chance to stretch our legs and birdwatch at this new, much warmer, lower elevation. We added two new species – **Olive-grey Saltator** and **Yellow Oriole**, which was building a nest – but saw a selection of other common lowland birds too. Eventually we reached the coffee-growing town of Puerto Rico, and here we left our driver Andreas and were met by three 4x4 vehicles for the final journey onward to Montezuma Lodge. We bumped and splashed our way for several kilometres up into the hills, eventually reaching the lodge at 6.30 for dinner. An amazing place which you can scarcely believe is where it is – we couldn't wait to get stuck in tomorrow!



Sword-billed Hummingbird

WEDNESDAY 26TH FEBRUARY – *Calm day, sunny start then in misty cloud. 18C*

Dawn saw us rendezvous in the open-air restaurant overlooking the feeders and as day broke we already started to add new birds to our list – **White-booted Racket-tail**, **Green Thorntail**, **Green-crowned Brilliant**, **Purple-throated Woodstar**, **Black-cheeked Woodpecker** and **Crimson-backed Tanager** all being seen from the breakfast table, all capped off with the sought-after **Rufous-gaped Hillstar**! Our original plan was to bird a bit around the lodge to start off, but as it was not only dry but threatening sunshine, our local guide Fernando suggested we make the most of it and drive directly up the Montezuma 'road' for about 5km to look for some of the higher elevation choco specialities, and then spend the morning birding our way down. A rather exciting bumpy ride up in

the 4x4s brought us eventually to a spectacular open area overlooking the surrounding forested mountains which were shrouded in low cloud. The birds – well they were just spectacular! We smashed out a load of choco specials right away from the dazzling **Purplish-mantled Tanager** to the tame **Choco Brushfinch**. With a 360 degree view we were able to scan above and below us picking out new species – **Smoke-coloured Pewee**, **Swallow-tailed Kite**, **Handsome Flycatcher**, **Dusky Chlorospingus**, **Black-chinned Mountain-tanager** and **Bluish Flowerpiercer** were all added from this vantage point – which was bathed in warm sunshine for the first time this trip! A hummingbird feeder was attracting lots of **Velvet-Purple Coronets** and among them was the occasional **Empress Brilliant**, **Violet-tailed Sylph** and **Greenish Puffleg**. Perhaps the highlight here was a pair of **Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia** below us – what a truly dazzling bird the male is!



Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia

We then started walking down the road we had driven up, birding slowly on the way with the 4x4 vehicles periodically catching us up for refreshments. The endemic **Gold-ringed Tanager** was seen easily and we had 4-5 excellent views as this species likes to perch on the top of bare branches! **Fulvous-dotted Treerunner**, some overhead **Scaly-naped Amazons** and a great view of the lovely **Rufous Spinetail** were had and then a classic moment of not knowing which way to look! Fernando spotted a male **Orange-breasted Fruiteater** perched in the open in the crown of a nearby tree and while we were scoping it a **Glistening-green Tanager** appeared in the same tree – drawing lots of ‘oohs and aahs’! Each time we moved a little further downhill we seemed to leave one species behind and gain a new one, with furnarids suddenly appearing – **Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner**, **Scaly-throated Foliage Gleaner** and the very smart **Uniform Treehunter** all appearing in quick succession. The last of the mega endemic tanagers to see here was the **Black and Gold Tanager**, and after one sketchy view, we all had a longer better view of one which popped into view during another loose mixed flock. A beautiful young male **Barred Fruiteater**, a bird we had missed yesterday, then crossed the track low in front of us and perched for scope views – bonkers birding!



Gold-ringed Tanager

The final action before lunch was to visit a wooden tower where some hummingbird feeders offered more point-blank views of many of the species we had seen earlier. In the dark undergrowth below, a **South American Leaf-tosser** was working on the muddy bank beneath the trees and opposite, we had good views of the rare **Bicoloured Antvireo**. Lunch had originally meant to be back at the lodge but with the weather still holding, Fernando had summoned it to be brought 4km up the mountain to us by quad bike and so we enjoyed a hot lunch in the field! This allowed us to maximise the day and keep birding through the early afternoon, and the activity level was still pretty good.

Flycatchers seemed to appear at the next level and in quick succession we saw **Ornate Flycatcher**, **Handsome Flycatcher**, **Flavescent Flycatcher** and **Golden-bellied Flycatcher**. A superb male **Yellow-collared Chlorophonia** was seen well in the canopy above, along with a **Yellow-breasted Antwren** and brief views of a **Rufous-browed Tyrannulet**. **Bronze-olive Pygmy-tyrant** was also seen and the delightful **Black-throated Tody-tyrant** showed much better, perching several times close to the trail. All these birds kept coming and with Fernando's help as well and a nice small group everyone was getting decent views of all the birds. Jorge picked out a cracking **Indigo Flowerpiercer** – a really good bird – and just as that had moved out of view Fernando casually says '**Ochre-breasted Antpitta**' and points one out sitting 20ft away at eye level!! This gorgeous little *grallaricula* sat wiggling its rear end for a full minute in the open before dashing back into the dark depths of the forest.

As always there are a few 'heard only's' and these included some pearlers like Toucan Barbet and Golden-headed Quetzal, as well as a fairly distant Yellow-breasted Antpitta. We were more lucky though with a **Highland Tinamou** which slinked across the trail, pausing just long enough for most of the group to see it. We tried in several spots for the endemic **Tatama Tapaculo**, with only one of the group managing a view, plus we heard but didn't see the Narina Tapaculo too. The afternoon was wearing on now so we returned to the lodge for a coffee and sit down overlooking the feeders to enjoy some more views of the hummingbirds. **Crowned Woodnymph** and **Tennessee Warbler** were new and so was the noisy **Ringed Kingfisher** that flew in to inspect the fish ponds. We used the last

hour of light to take a final short walk up through the grounds, noting masses more new birds for the day rocketing our total to 100 species. **Black-chested Jay**, **Plumbeous Pigeon** and the superb **Blackish Rail** were a couple more new ones, plus we had great views of the endemic **Greyish Piculet** and delightful emerald green **Western Emerald**. An absolutely top days birding!



Ochre-breasted Antpitta

THURSDAY 27TH FEBRUARY – *Sunny start with rain later, 15C*

Our second full day at Montezuma would see us head higher up the mountain, to the army base at the summit. We took breakfast with us, setting off in the trucks at 5.30am and arriving at the top ninety minutes later. We were lucky with the weather which was beautiful and clear, and the sun was shining as we enjoyed breakfast from the viewing platform looking across the spectacular view below. What's more, there were good birds right around us including the endemic **Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer** which immediately came once we had filled up the sugar feeders. A similar spread of hummingbirds to yesterday was seen, and other nice birds around this summit area included **Smoky Bush-tyrant** and a brief **Flammulated Treehunter**. We then moved back down hill a couple of hundred metres in the vehicles to another platform, and while we birdwatched Fernando was trying carious calls to see if he got any response. He suddenly announced '**Ocellated Tapaculo**' and everyone's ears pricked up! There are some birds which create a tangible excitement in the group when their very name gets mentioned and this one really was a big ticket. We could hear it responding but it was distant, but Fernando was confident and we gathered on the platform so we could all get a view into the dense, dark tangle below where we hoped the red and black spotted monster might appear. After a tense wait the tapaculo popped up briefly – naked eye views only with no time to raise bins. Then it moved around us, always deep inside, before eventually settling on a perch where we could see almost all of the bird. Everyone eventually got good views, especially after it crossed the road into better light for us – just mega! Amazingly we then got **Narino Tapaculo** in exactly the same spot and even more amazingly everyone saw it!



Ocellated Tapaculo

Walking downhill it was clear that the activity level was generally quite low compared to yesterday but we continued to pick off some really good quality. A pair of **Grass-green Tanagers**, a species we had already seen on the trip but not especially well, flew in and landed right beside us at eye level. Then a **Munchique Wood-wren** began calling and Fernando managed to coax a pair into full view for us (another range-restricted endemic) and a little further on, we had good views of the noisy **Powerful Woodpecker**. **Gold-ringed Tanager**, **Dusky Chlorospingus** and **Green and Black Fruiteater** were also seen.

Reaching an area of taller forest dominated by dense tangles of hanging mosses and vines, we stopped to try for the endemic **Chami Antpitta**. We persisted for a while but didn't get a response, so we summoned the vehicles and stopped for coffee. Revitalised, we decided to give the antpitta one more try and this time we got an almost immediate response. The usual tense wait followed and then the bird shot in quite high up and perched in the open – another beautiful antpitta formerly of the rufous complex. A little further downhill, we ran into a small group of **Tanager Finch** – an amazing looking black, red and white bird again with a very narrow range at a specific altitude along the choco region of the western Andes and within that range, only really accessible at a handful of sites.

Lunch was enjoyed at yet another wooden platform and once we'd replenished the sugar feeders the hummingbirds piled in – **Empress Brilliant**, **Velvet-Purple Coronet**, **Violet-tailed Sylph**, **Greenish Puffleg**, **Rufous-gaped Hillstar** and **Buff-tailed Coronet**. The afternoon then was largely rather quite and we had to try pretty hard to dig birds out – **Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant**, **Sharpe's Wren**, **Spotted Barbtail**, **Streaked Tuftedcheek**, **Rufous-headed Pygmy-tyrant** and a superb **Lanceolated Monklet** being the pick of the bunch. One of the vehicles also had an **Ochre-breasted Antpitta** hop across the trail and perch up next to the car! The rain started to fall quite heavily by about 3pm so we got back into the trucks and headed down towards the lodge, though there was one more stop – an impromptu bail-out when Fernando heard **Crested Ant Tanager** while we were driving! Looking

up into the trees in the belting rain was not easy and the birds were elusive too, but eventually everyone managed a view of this endemic. We reached the lodge around 4pm, and took a long break, ready for an owling session later. This was curtailed by rain, but we gave it a go anyway – there was nothing doing tonight, however.

FRIDAY 28TH FEBRUARY – *Largely overcast with some breeze, 17C*

Today was a long travelling day as we said goodbye to Montezuma Lodge and loaded our gear into the trucks for the hour long ride back into the town of Puerto Rico. Here we reconnected with our driver Andreas and started the five hour drive south towards the city of Cali. There were several stops on the way for coffee, lunch and fuel, and we did see a few birds such as **Spectacled Parrotlet**, **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** and one or two other common roadside birds. Eventually we reached the fabled birding spot of KM18 and turned off onto a rough road up to the small private reserve of La Florida. Here we had a date with one of the most spectacular birds to be seen on the whole tour – the endemic **Multicoloured Tanager**. The bird was already coming to the bananas as we arrived and we had five or six great views of two or three different birds. An incredible, small and brightly coloured tanager that really trumps all the others – and that is saying something! Of course there were many other great birds to be seen too such as **Black-capped Tanager**, **Golden-naped Tanager**, **Saffron-crowned Tanager**, **Black-winged Saltator**, **Acorn Woodpecker**, **Red-headed Barbet** and **Green Honeycreeper**.



Multicoloured Tanager

We were then ushered a short distance to a hide where sometimes shy forest birds such as Tinamous and Wood-quails show up. We waited half an hour without seeing anything and then a **Chestnut-capped Brush-finch** appeared, followed by two **Little Tinamous** which showed superbly and were oblivious to the watching crowd! A small party of **Chestnut Wood-Quails** then appeared – a beautifully coloured endemic which was a bit too shy to come right down to the corn but still gave us good views among the dark shadows of the undergrowth. They had some incredible numbers of

hummingbirds visiting their feeders here too – all species we had seen before apart from **Brown Violet-ear**, but it was quite a sight to see hordes of birds around the feeders! We had time for one more session at the banana feeders with more views of the **Multicoloured Tanager**, washed down with a cup of local coffee and then a chance to finally spend a bit of money in the artisan shop! Thankfully now we were only twenty minutes from our delightful accommodation at Finca La Lolita where we settled in and enjoyed a fabulous home-cooked meal before retiring early – we had a mega early start tomorrow!

SATURDAY 1ST MARCH – *Sunny spells and breezy, 18C*

It was a very early start today as we left the accommodation at 4.15am to make the hour long drive to Dona Dora where we would be going to visit a lek of **Andean Cock-of-the-Rock** at dawn. It was still dark when we arrived, and set off on the 500m hike down the rather slippery steep path to the viewing shelter. Everyone made it down unscathed and even as we approached the blind, we could hear the bizarre loud calls of the birds displaying. We then enjoyed a mesmerising hour with six males lekking at touching distance outside the blind, completely oblivious to us. We were extremely lucky that a female was in attendance – not only is the female rarely seen but of course, her very presence ramps up the lek several notches and the males were going absolutely nuts! The alpha male had the prime perch which was the one closest to the hide, and eventually after sending some time watching the performers carefully, she flew up to the alpha's perch and mated with him before flying off. That pretty much ended proceedings and the males all dissipated, other than for a brief reappearance from two of them. So we set off on the steep hike back up which took us rather longer than it had taken coming down! We did stop for a while at the halfway point though and did some birding as there were several **Ornate Flycatchers**, **Yellow-throated Chlorospingus**, **Buff-rumped Warbler** and **Canada Warbler** attracted by a moth sheet. Two **Slaty-capped Flycatchers** were around too and the chunky **Ochre-breasted Tanager** which was new for us.



Andean Cock-of-the-Rock

Back up at the restaurant we sat and watched the fruit feeders for a bit, where another array of tanagers were coming but also another big trip target for us – the fantastic-looking **Toucan Barbet**. A pair was nesting in the base of a tree stump and also regularly visiting the feeders, so we had great views! The dazzling **Glistening-Green Tanager**, **White-lined Tanager**, **Rufous-throated Tanager** and **Silver-throated Tanager** were also in attendance plus we saw **Golden-hooded Tanager** in the trees above. A hearty breakfast was served overlooking the forest, washed down with the local coffee which was excellent. We then took a walk along the road for a couple of hours, to see what else we could find.



Toucan Barbet

A **Tropical Parula** was singing right outside the restaurant as we set off, and we soon picked up our first decent raptors of the trip as first a brief **White-rumped Hawk** drifted over and then a pair of **Barred Hawk** circled low over calling. We had done particularly poorly so far for woodcreepers, but we added a new one now picking up the tiny **Wedge-billed Woodcreeper**. Some loose mixed flocks held more **Yellow-throated Chlorospingus**, **Slate-throated Redstart**, **Canada Warbler**, **Choco Brushfinch**, **Golden-faced Tyrannulet**, **Scrub Tanager** and a **Black-headed Tody-flycatcher**. We also managed to finally see the **Andean Solitaire**, which we had been hearing on and off for the last week! Further up the hill some photographers had located a roosting female **Lyre-tailed Nightjar** on the rock face beside the road, so we enjoyed point blank views of that before starting to wind our way back down. A pair of **Sooty-headed Wrens** and a **Purplish-mantled Tanager** were the other highlights of the walk in the warm sunshine. Another quick look at the feeders gave more close views of the **Toucan Barbet**, before we rejoined Andreas and the bus for the hour long drive back to KM18.

A fullsome lunch with super views down the valley left as all feeling like we didn't really need to eat anything else today! Once back at the digs, we took a siesta for an hour or so after the very early start, and then met for a short walk along the road outside the property. A pair of **Whiskered Wrens** showed well, as did a party of three **Red-faced Spinetails**. We also saw **Steely-vented Hummingbird**, **Spectacled Parrotlet** and a few other common birds before a thunderstorm coming in over Cali saw us retreat to the lodge. Some folk carried on birding noting **Rusty Flowerpiercer**, **Andean Motmot** and **Metallic-green Tanager** in the gardens, while others focussed on packing ready for the flights tomorrow.

SUNDAY 2ND MARCH – *Hot, sunny and breezy. 25C*

A travelling day today saw us depart the finca at the ungodly hour of 5am to make the 75 minute journey across the city of Cali to the airport, where we would be catching a flight firstly to Bogota and then on to Santa Marta on the Caribbean coast in the north of the country. It was a good job we had left plenty of time, because at the bag drop we were informed that our first flight was delayed meaning we would not make the connection in Bogota – but that they would put us on the earlier flight. Great service from Avianca who just sorted everything for us at the desk and gave us new boarding passes – the only catch was the flight was already boarding and we still had to get through security! Thankfully this was swift, although Jorge had his tripod confiscated which was all a bit of a pain! Nevertheless provisions were swiftly made to return it to him at a later date, and we boarded the flight and were on our way! Two hours in Bogota dragged a bit but soon we were on the second flight and touching down in the sultry heat of Santa Marta.

Three 4x4 trucks met us outside the airport and whisked us off to an area of saline lagoons and shore about 25 minutes drive south, where we hoped to add some waterbirds to our list. **Brown Pelicans**, **Great Egrets** and **Magnificent Frigatebirds** were super common and a walk out onto the litter-strewn beach (not the nicest birding spot) added a **Least Sandpiper** on a muddy pool and a small selection of beach waders distant on the shore – **Grey Plover**, **Turnstone**, **Willet**, **Sanderling** and **Semipalmated Plover**. Several **Royal Terns** flew past close and some of the group saw a **Caspian Tern** too. A surprise offshore was a **Pomarine Skua** – a moulting bird looking pretty messy but showing really bulky structure, huge wing flashes and white uppertail coverts. At a second stop a bit further along the highway, we were able to walk down a bank off the road and scope a roost of about 300 **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, with the odd **Sanderling**, **Willet**, **Least Sandpiper** and **Semipalmated Plover** mixed in. We added **Laughing Gull**, **Common Ground-Dove**, **Black-necked Stilt** and **Lesser Yellowlegs** too before it was time to head up into the foothills of the Santa Marta mountains, and the backpackers town of Minca. We checked in at our comfortable hotel and enjoyed a new hummingbird at the feeders – the **White-vented Plumeleteer**. Then, another early night!

MONDAY 3RD MARCH – *Warm and overcast day, 20C*

We headed out for a pre-breakfast excursion from our base in Minca this morning, only a short drive away to a track where we had seen **Military Macaws** leaving a roost on our recce trip in 2019. We couldn't quite remember the exact location and the drivers didn't know it either, but we knew we were in roughly the right spot and anywhere with a vista, and plenty of palm trees, would give us a chance. It turned out that the birding here was generally really good and we added a wealth of new birds, the best being a pair of **Black-backed Antshrikes** which eventually showed well – the spectacular male was well worth the effort! There were several lowland species here such as **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**, **Boat-billed Flycatcher**, **Plain Xenops**, **Orange-chinned Parakeet** and **Yellow-Olive Flatbill**. We also saw **Scaled Pigeon**, the tiny **Coppery Emerald**, **Lance-tailed Manakin**, **Swallow Tanager** and **Yellow-backed Oriole**. American migrant passerines were represented by lots of

Tennessee Warblers, plus our first **American Redstart**, **Yellow-throated Vireo** and **Baltimore Oriole**. Eventually, we did also see some macaws, with four pairs seen in flight distantly, giving their loud and raucous calls which seemed to travel for miles. It was atmospheric watching a silhouetted pair of **Military Macaws** flying against the rising mist over the forested Santa Marta mountains.

Back at the lodge for breakfast, we sat on the verandah with a beautiful view up the valley behind us and the same four hummingbird species visiting the species – plus **Black-throated Mango** for some. **Pale-breasted Thrush**, **Bicoloured Wren** and **Whooping Motmot** were a trio of new birds visiting the bird table just below our breakfast table! We then loaded our gear into the trucks and set off up the road towards El Dorado – greatly improved since our last visit being concreted now all the way up to Mountain Lodge, which would be our lunch stop. There were several birding stops on the way though – the first was to look for **Sierra Nevada Brush-Finch** which we did eventually all see, but it was very elusive on the bamboo-clad slope below us. An **Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush** was more obliging, eventually perching in the open after a game of cat and mouse. Crested Guan was new for us here and the superb endemic **Black-headed Tanager** showed up too. In the bamboo below the road, we also had excellent views of a pair of **White-lored Warblers** – yet another endemic.



Bay-headed Tanager

At the next stop, we tried for **Santa Marta Antbird** and had immediate success with a bird responding and showing well in the bamboo close to the road. A **Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner** was seen poorly (one to try again for in the coming days) and two **Lined Quail-Dove** flew across the road with an audible clatter. With that we reached Mountain Lodge, a lovely spot with a hummingbird verandah overlooking a well-planted garden with a vista down the valley. We ended up spending well over two hours here either side of lunch, with the star of the show being the elusive **Santa Marta Blossomcrown** which eventually showed well. **Lazuline Sabrewing**, **Santa Marta Brushfinch**, **Rusty Flowerpiercer**, **Crimson-backed Tanager** and more views of the endemic **Black-headed**

Tanager (a bit closer this time!) were some of the other highlights, but all were trumped by cracking scope views of a pair of **Solitary Eagles** soaring over the hillside. Their amazingly distinctive wing shape, ash-grey upperwings and bold tail band could be easily seen as they circled against the forest.

From here it was another half hour on to El Dorado, where we left the trucks and loaded the luggage into a tuk-tuk before going on foot ourselves for the last 500m up to the lodge. Completely rebuilt since our last visit, the new lodge and luxury cabins are now perched up on the ridge with a just incredible view all the way down to the Caribbean coast where we had been yesterday. The walk up through the forest produced **Crimson-crested Woodpecker**, **Slaty Antwren** and a lovely **White-tipped Quetzal** perched high above us, while the endemic **Santa Marta Woodstar** was waiting for us at the feeders outside the restaurant. A great first day exploring the Santa Marta range and several of the key endemics already ticked off!

TUESDAY 4TH MARCH – *Cloudy day, light winds. 15C*

A big day for us today as we headed up the fabled San Lorenzo ridge, though this of course meant a horribly early start! We met at 4am and walked down to meet the trucks, ready for the arduous 90 minute drive up the mountain which is essentially akin to driving up a dry river bed, bouncing over huge boulders and bumping over rocks making for an uncomfortable ride. The rewards – several endemic birds that can pretty much only be seen at this location, starting with the endangered **Santa Marta Parakeet** which gathers briefly in the trees along the ridge at dawn before departing down the valley. Sadly, it was thick cloud at the top as we stood and had our al fresco breakfast, and we could hear the parakeets swirling about in a flock of about ten birds but it was hard to see them. Eventually a group landed in the treetops not too far away and we all managed some silhouetted scope views. Then we wandered round to the viewing tower to meet one of the rangers who was going to try and call/feed the Santa Marta Antpitta for us. Sadly despite being seen yesterday it was a no-show today, which was disappointing. Other good birds abounded though and we had close views of **Santa Marta Brush-finch**, **Black-cheeked Mountain-Tanager** (formerly Santa Marta), **Tyrian Metaltail** and **Scarlet-fronted Parakeet**. A pair of **White-tipped Quetzals** gave brilliant views from the tower, as they were prospecting a nest box in a dead tree close by.



Black-cheeked Mountain-Tanager

A short walk then produced some excellent birding as we first of all got good views of **Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant** in a palm above us, and then a pair of endemic **Hermit Wood-wrens** – like Grey-breasted but with a much shorter tail. Further down we had a stroke of real luck as a **Sierra Nevada Antpitta** popped up beside the trail and posed long enough for us all to get a clear view before it crossed the path and disappeared – another endemic and our 9th antpitta seen on the trip! A small mixed flock then appeared and we found two more endemics in the gorgeous **Golden-crowned Redstart** and **Santa Marta Warbler** – the latter looking like a miniature version of the mountain-tanager. Two endemic spinetails showed well – **Rusty-headed Spinetail** and **Streak-capped Spinetail**, and we had several **Mountain Elaenia** and **White-throated Tyrannulet** which was common. We eventually rejoined the trucks and started the journey down, which we did in sections and walking a couple of sections. It was really quite for birds lower down though, and we saw very little else before our return to the lodge. **Black and White Warbler**, **Blue-capped Tanager**, **Montane Woodcreeper**, **Montane Foliage-gleaner** and the distinctive Santa Marta race of **Cinnamon Flycatcher** were all noted though.

After lunch (with **Blue-naped Chlorophonia** at the feeders) we took a two hour siesta after our very early start. We then reconvened for a walk down to the old lodge to check the hummingbird feeders there. Our target was the endemic **White-tailed Starfrontlet** and after a half hour wait one appeared – what a stunning bird! Several **Band-tailed Guans** were about and as we walked slowly back through the forest we picked up some nice **Black-chested Jays**, another couple of **Montane Foliage-gleaners**, **Southern Emerald Toucanet**, **White-lored Warbler** and as we neared the lodge, a female **White-tipped Quetzal**. She ended up moving ahead of us all the way up to the cabins where she was picking moths off from around the lights. **Golden-breasted Fruiteater** was seen poorly, in flight a few times in the canopy – one to try for again tomorrow. An after dinner owling session around the lodge proved fruitful, as we heard two **Mottled Owls** close by on the trail, and Jorge and one of the group at the front saw an **Ocelot** run up the track ahead of us!! We then heard the **Santa Marta Screech Owl** calling down around the lower cabins, and so headed down there, eventually getting amazing point blank views of a beautiful rufous morph bird.

WEDNESDAY 5TH MARCH – *Calm and overcast, 21C*

The big news overnight was very big indeed. The near-mythical **Santa Marta Sabrewing**, the virtually un-gettable of the Santa Marta endemics and a bird that went missing presumed extinct for 60 years up until 2010 (and again for a spell up until 2022), had been seen and photographed at Mountain House. Now on hearing this news we cast our minds back to our visit to that place two days ago, and the single male Sabrewing which was visiting the feeders on and off that day. Surely, there had to be a chance it was the same bird?! We hastily went back through photos and videos and sure enough found evidence that the bird we had seen did indeed have a blue tail, and not the coppery red tail of Lazuline (which we had assumed the bird to be at the time). It then begun to sink in that we had seen one of the rarest, poorest known and most endangered birds in the World! Our plan for the morning was reshuffled a bit, so we would return to Mountain House to try and see the bird again. We had already planned to bird our way downslope in the morning, so that fitted in nicely. We set off from the lodge on foot, with a plan to try for one or two specialities on the way down. The vehicles came with us and one of the drivers was actually the owner of Mountain House and knew some good birding spots. First we stopped at a spot he said was good for the **Santa Marta Tapaculo**, and sure enough the bird responded immediately and gave super views, being our best tapaculo views of the whole trip (and we'd tried for a few!!). In almost the same spot, he suggested we try for **Rusty-breasted Antpitta**. This tiny *grallaricula* is widespread but terribly difficult to see – but again we got an instant response. The bird was quite far down the slope below us though and a tense half hour ensued before it eventually started moving and coming up the slope towards us. Even the

thermal was of little help as the bird moved ninja-like undetected. Eventually one of the group got on it and then we saw it fly right up to the edge of the road. It then hopped down and sat on a rock in full view giving everyone brief but excellent views. We then watched it climb up high into the mid-canopy, something none of us had ever seen any antpitta do before. It then crossed the road, sat once more in the open, and then was gone. Our tenth antpitta of the tour!!



Solitary Eagles and Santa Marta

Back in the truck and down a little lower, we tried a spot for the endemic **Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner**. We had only managed poor views previously, and were keen to improve. A bird responded right away and this time came in really close, sitting in view inside a tangle and giving everyone a clear view. We had done well – now it was time to stake out the Mountain House feeders! We arrived to find a small crowd on the verandah, but there had been no sign of the mega. We spent around two hours birding seeing lots of great birds, many being repeats from previously such as **Bicoloured Wren, Crimson-backed Tanager, Sierra Nevada Brush-finch, Yellow-backed Oriole, Black-headed Tanager** and the superb **Solitary Eagles** which had now increased to three and gave several close fly-bys, plus were seen talon-grappling in mid air! In fact raptors really were the order of the day from this super watchpoint – we had three elegant **Swallow-tailed Kites**, great views of **Plumbeous Kite** and a **Bat Flacon** which whizzed by and then sat on a distant dead tree for ages. Perhaps best of all though, was a massive eagle which drifted through – pale underneath with some barring to the remiges, a long tail and neck, bulging secondaries and soaring with a dihedral wing shape. It was an immature **Black and Chestnut Eagle** – not a common bird at all. The Sabrewing, sadly, did not show up today.

Heading back towards El Dorado we walked some of the trail and noted a few repeats, and then eventually stopped at the old lodge to visit the hummingbird feeders again. The **White-tailed Starfrontlet** performed well, but we were particularly keen to see **Lazuline Sabrewing** to compare to the Santa Marta and see how easy that coppery red tail was to see in the field. Thankfully one showed well and the answer was, that the tail was blindingly obvious and left us in no doubt about

the bird we had seen two days ago at Mountain Lodge! Walking back up to the lodge from here we saw **Southern Emerald Toucanet**, a lovely close female **Masked Trogon** and a **Golden-olive Woodpecker** to round off a very enjoyable day. Another short owling session after dark produced superb views of **Mottled Owl** close to the lodge.



Santa Marta Sabrewing

THURSDAY 6TH MARCH – *Hot and sunny, 35C*

We were to depart El Dorado today and start making our way slowly down towards the Caribbean coast and Tayrona National Park. We had one or two scores to settle en route though! A quick final look at the hummingbird feeders produced the female **Santa Marta Woodstar** again and great views of the endemic **Rufous-headed Spinetail**. We then worked our way down to the parking area, finally getting decent views of the **Golden-breasted Fruiteater** which had eluded us so far! We then took the trucks and headed downhill to Mountain House for a quick check to see if the Santa Marta Sabrewing had showed up again. We learned that it had been seen late on yesterday, so decided to give it half an hour. Luckily for us the bird came in and gave brilliant views – it was so cool to see it again knowing this time what we were looking at!

From here we continued down towards Minca, making a couple of short stops to try and find **Golden-winged Sparrow**. At the second stop we did really well, enjoying close views of **Chestnut-capped Warbler**, a pair of **Pale-eyed Pygmy-tyrants** and a superb **Rufous and White Wren**. While trying to get on the wren, the **Golden-winged Sparrow** appeared too! With this the last of our targets bagged up we made one more short stop to check some flowering shrubs – scoring great views of the **Santa Marta Blossomcrown** – and then continued to Minca where we would have lunch at La Casona, the place we had slept three nights ago. This proved a good move as we had a superb **Keel-billed Toucan** from the verandah, as well as the usual dazzling assortment of hummingbirds. A superb lunch followed, and then it was just one hour to drive down into the sultry heat of the lowlands and Tayrona National Park.

Our hotel overlooked a dried-up river bed but there were still some small pools which enabled us to add **Solitary Sandpiper** and **Green Kingfisher**. There were lots of **Social Flycatchers** around now that we were in the lowlands and we saw **Panama Flycatcher**, **Red-crowned Woodpecker** and **Northern Waterthrush** too. We only had about an hour and a half of daylight left so took a short walk with a local as escort, down along the main river. We didn't see a huge amount but got good views of **Orange-chinned Parakeets** and added **Streak-headed Woodcreeper** and **Trinidad Euphonia** to the list.

FRIDAY 7TH MARCH – *Hot and dry, 30C*

Our warmest birding of the trip as we entered the adjacent Tayrona National Park and were joined by a local guide for the morning. We hoped to find the endemic Blue-billed Curassow but despite trying all morning we were not lucky. We did, however, enjoyed a really nice list of other birds many of which were new for us. Taking a trail through the forest we found **Prothonotary Warbler**, **Buff-breasted Wren**, **Glaucous Tanager** and **Plain-brown Woodcreeper** before reaching the shoreline. **Little Blue Heron**, **Greater Ani** and **Royal Tern** were seen here, plus lovely views along the coast. Driving to a second trail we found lekking **Lance-tailed Manakins** and had great views of three males, plus saw a female **White-bearded Manakin** too. There were a few monkeys about, with Red Howlers always audible, several Capuchin Monkeys clambering about and great views of the delightful and diminutive **Cotton-top Tamarins**. We then headed to a small lodge where we had an excellent breakfast before birding a little bit around their grounds. A magnificent **Blue and Yellow Macaw** flew in and landed in the canopy of a big tree eating a large fruit. The same trees held **Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet**, **Red-eyed Vireo** and the dazzling **Orange-crowned Oriole**, but it was the sudden flurry of raptors that really stole the show. Among the hordes of Black and Turkey Vultures we picked out a big bird of prey which we initially thought could be Solitary Eagle again, until we realised that was not found this low down. A big, mainly back bird of prey with very broad-based wings and a short tail with clear white band – it was a **Great Black Hawk**. A **Double-toothed Kite** then joined the thermal, with its distinctive silhouette of forward-thrust wings, and then a pair of accipiter type raptors, very pale underneath but finely barred, light grey above and with barred tail – **Grey-lined Hawks**. Throw in a superb view of a **Short-tailed Hawk**, an **Osprey** and several **Magnificent Frigatebird** drifting over and it was a great half hour! There was then time to walk one final track where we found **Chestnut-sided Warbler** and a **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**, before it was time to head back to the park gate. A young **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** in the trees there plus an **Amazon Kingfisher** on the way back to Santa Marta Airport proved to be our last additions to a whopping 460+ species haul. We enjoyed a smooth transit back to Bogota and after a couple of hours at the Movich Hotel to shower, re-pack and rest ready for the flight, we finally departed this amazing birding country just before midnight.



Tanager Finch

Colombia 2025

[illegible]

		DAY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		■	■								■					
GALLIFORMES: Cracidae																	
Colombian Chachalaca	<i>Ortalis columbiana</i>									■							
Band-tailed Guan	<i>Penelope argyrotis</i>												■	■	■		
Crested Guan	<i>Penelope purpurascens</i>												■				■
Andean Guan	<i>Penelope montagnii</i>			■	■												
Cauca Guan	<i>Penelope perspicax</i>		■	■													
Sickle-winged Guan	<i>Chamaepetes goudotii</i>			■	■	■	■										
GALLIFORMES: Odontophoridae																	
Black-fronted Wood-Quail	<i>Odontophorus atrifrons</i>															H	
Chestnut Wood-Quail	<i>Odontophorus hyperythrus</i>									■							
GRUIFORMES: Rallidae																	
White-throated Crake	<i>Laterallus albigularis</i>			■													
Blackish Rail	<i>Pardirallus nigricans</i>							■									
CHARADRIIFORMES: Recurvirostridae																	
Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus maxicanus</i>											■					
CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae																	
Southern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus chilensis</i>		■	■		■	■					■					
Black-bellied Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>											■					
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>											■					
CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae																	
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>											■					
Solitary Sandpiper	<i>Tringa solitaria</i>															■	
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularia</i>											■				■	
Willet	<i>Catoptrophorus semipalmatus</i>											■					
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>											■					■
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>											■					■

		DAY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
APODIFORMES: Trochilidae																	
Sword-billed Hummingbird	<i>Ensifera ensifera</i>				■	■											
White-whiskered Hermit	<i>Phaethornis yaruqui</i>										■						
Green Hermit	<i>Phaethornis guy</i>	■	■							■	■						
Western Long-tailed Hermit	<i>Phaethornis longirostris</i>												■				
Pale-bellied Hermit	<i>Phaethornis anthophilus</i>																■
Green-fronted Lancebill	<i>Doryfera ludovicae</i>							■									
White-throated Daggerbill	<i>Schistes albogularis</i>		■	■													
Lazuline Sabrewing	<i>Campylopterus falcatus</i>												■	■	■		
Santa Marta Sabrewing	<i>Campylopterus phainopeplus</i>												■			■	
Great Sapphirewing	<i>Pterophanes cyanopterus</i>				■												
White-necked Jacobin	<i>Florisuga mellivora</i>	■						■	■	■	■	■	■			■	
Brown Violet-ear	<i>Colibri delphinae</i>									■	■		■	■	■	■	
Sparkling Violet-ear	<i>Colibri coruscans</i>			■	■	■							■	■	■	■	
Lesser Violet-ear	<i>Colibri cyanotus</i>			■									■			■	
Black-throated Mango	<i>Anthracothorax nigricollis</i>												■			■	
Western Emerald	<i>Chlorostilbon melanorhynchus</i>	■	■					■									
Coppery Emerald	<i>Chlorostilbon russatus</i>												■				
Violet-crowned Wood-nymph	<i>Thalurania colombica</i>							■		■	■		■	■	■	■	
Shining-green Hummingbird	<i>Lepidopyga goudoti</i>																■
White-chinned Sapphire	<i>Hylocharis cyanus</i>																■
Rufous-tailed Hummingbird	<i>Amazilia tzacatl</i>		■					■	■	■		■	■			■	■
Andean Emerald	<i>Agyrtria franciae</i>	■		■				■	■	■							
Steely-vented Hummingbird	<i>Saucerottia saucerottei</i>	■						■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	
Santa Marta Blossomcrown	<i>Anthocephala floriceps</i>												■			■	
White-vented Plumeleteer	<i>Chalybura buffonii</i>											■	■			■	
Speckled Hummingbird	<i>Adelomyia melanogenys</i>		■	■						■							

[illegible]

[illegible]

		DAY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Yellow-olive Flycatcher	<i>Tolmomyias sulphurescens</i>												■				
Bran-coloured Flycatcher	<i>Myiophobus fasciatus</i>			■													
Flavescent Flycatcher	<i>Myiophobus flavicans</i>							■									
Cinnamon Flycatcher	<i>Pyrrhomyias cinnamomea</i>			■	■			■	■		■			■			
Ornate Flycatcher	<i>Myiotriccus ornatus</i>							■			■						
Handsome Flycatcher	<i>Nephelomyias pulcher</i>							■									
Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>				■												
Smoke-colored Pewee	<i>Contopus fumigatus</i>							■									
Eastern Wood-Pewee	<i>Contopus virens</i>	■															
Acadian Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax virescens</i>		■								■		■				
Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	■	■	■				■	■								
Vermilion Flycatcher	<i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i>	■								■							
Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant	<i>Ochthoeca diadema</i>					■											
Chestnut-bellied Chat-Tyrant	<i>Ochthoeca cinnamomeiventris</i>			■													
Rufous-breasted Chat-Tyrant	<i>Ochthoeca rufipectoralis</i>					■											
Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant	<i>Ochthoeca fumicolor</i>				■												
Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant	<i>Myiotheretes striaticollis</i>													■			
Smoky Bush-Tyrant	<i>Myiotheretes fumigatus</i>								■								
Cattle Tyrant	<i>Machetornis rixosus</i>	■	■			■				■							
Panama Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus panamensis</i>															■	■
Pale-edged Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cephalotes</i>			■													
Brown-crested Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus tyrannulus</i>												■				
Great Kiskadee	<i>Pitangus sulphuratus</i>	■	■			■											
Boat-billed Flycatcher	<i>Megarynchus pitangua</i>												■				
Rusty-margined Flycatcher	<i>Myiozetetes cayanensis</i>	■				■	■	■			■						
Social Flycatcher	<i>Myiozetetes similis</i>															■	■
Golden-bellied Flycatcher	<i>Myiodynastes hemichrysus</i>		■					■			■		■			■	

		DAY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Streaked Flycatcher	<i>Myiodynastes maculates</i>												■				■
Tropical Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>		■	■	■		■			■	■	■	■		■	■	■
Fork-tailed Flycatcher	<i>Tyrannus savanna</i>		■				■			■							
Barred Becard	<i>Pachyramphus versicolor</i>				■												
White-winged Becard	<i>Pachyramphus polychopterus</i>			■				■									
Masked Tityra	<i>Tityra semifasciata</i>															■	
PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae																	
Brown-chested Martin	<i>Progne tapera</i>											■					■
Gray-breasted Martin	<i>Progne chalybea</i>		■														
Blue-and-white Swallow	<i>Notiochelidon cyanoleuca</i>		■	■	■		■		■	■							
Brown-bellied Swallow	<i>Notiochelidon murina</i>				■	■			■								
Pale-footed Swallow	<i>Notiochelidon flavipes</i>				■												
Southern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx ruficollis</i>		■	■				■	■		■		■			■	■
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>						■										■
PASSERIFORMES: Troglodytidae																	
Sooty-headed Wren	<i>Pheugopedius spadix</i>										■						
Bicolored Wren	<i>Campylorhynchus griseus</i>												■		■	■	■
Sharpe's Wren	<i>Cinnycerthia olivascens</i>				■				■								
Rufous Wren	<i>Cinnycerthia unirufa</i>				■												
Whiskered Wren	<i>Thryothorus mystacalis</i>						H				■						
Rufous-and-white Wren	<i>Thryothorus rufalbus</i>															■	
Buff-breasted Wren	<i>Thryothorus leucotis</i>																■
House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>		■	■		■		■	■								
Mountain Wren	<i>Troglodytes solstitialis</i>					■											
Grass Wren	<i>Cistothorus platensis</i>					■	■										
Gray-breasted Wood-Wren	<i>Henicorhina leucophrys</i>		■	H	■			■	■				■		■		
Munchique Wood-wren	<i>Henicorhina negreti</i>								■								

		DAY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Blue-capped Tanager	<i>Thraupis cyanocephala</i>				■	■			■					■			
Palm Tanager	<i>Thraupis palmarum</i>		■	■			■			■	■					■	■
Rufous-throated Tanager	<i>Ixothraupis rufigula</i>							■			■						
Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager	<i>Anisognathus lacrymosus</i>				■	■	■										
Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager	<i>Anisognathus igniventris</i>					■											
Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager	<i>Anisognathus somptuosus</i>				■					■							
Black-cheeked Montain-tanager	<i>Anisognathus melanogenys</i>													■			
Black-chinned Mountain-tanager	<i>Anisognathus notabilis</i>							■									
Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager	<i>Dubusia taeniata</i>				■												
Fawn-breasted Tanager	<i>Pipraeidea melanonota</i>		■														
Multicolored Tanager	<i>Chlorochrysa nitidissima</i>									■							
Saffron-crowned Tanager	<i>Tangara xanthocephala</i>				■			■		■							
Golden Tanager	<i>Tangara arthus</i>		■	■				■		■	■						
Bay-headed Tanager	<i>Tangara gyrola</i>		■	■									■	■	■	■	
Scrub Tanager	<i>Tangara vitriolina</i>		■	■						■	■						
Golden-naped Tanager	<i>Tangara ruficervix</i>									■							
Metallic-green Tanager	<i>Tangara labradorides</i>										■						
Blue-necked Tanager	<i>Tangara cyanicollis</i>		■	■				■			■						
Blue and Black Tanager	<i>Tangara vassorii</i>				■												
Golden-hooded Tanager	<i>Tangara larvata</i>										■						
Beryl-spangled Tanager	<i>Tangara nigroviridis</i>				■												
Silver-throated Tanager	<i>Tangara icterocephala</i>							■	■	■	■						
Black-capped Tanager	<i>Stilpnia heinei</i>		■	■	■					■			■				
Black-headed Tanager	<i>Stilpnia cyanoptera</i>												■		■	■	
Blue Dacnis	<i>Dacnis cayana</i>												■				
Green Honeycreeper	<i>Chlorophanes spiza</i>		■	■				■		■	■						
Swallow Tanager	<i>Tersina viridis</i>												■		■	■	

		DAY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Plushcap	<i>Catamblyrhynchus diadema</i>				■		■										
PASSERIFORMES: Emberizidae																	
Plumbeous Sierra-Finch	<i>Phrygilus unicolor</i>				■												
Blue-black Grassquit	<i>Volatinia jacarina</i>		■										■				
Gray Seedeater	<i>Sporophila intermedia</i>		■	■												■	
Yellow-bellied Seedeater	<i>Sporophila nigricollis</i>		■	■				■					■			■	
Paramo Seedeater	<i>Catamenia homochroa</i>					■	■										
Yellow-faced Grassquit	<i>Tiaris olivacea</i>		■	■							■						
Rusty Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa sittoides</i>										■		■		■	■	
White-sided Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa albilatera</i>			■	■	■	■						■	■	■	■	
Glossy Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa lafresnayii</i>				■												
Black Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa humeralis</i>					■	■							■			
Bluish Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa caerulescens</i>						■										
Indigo Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa indigotica</i>						■										
Masked Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossopsis cyanea</i>			■	■	■		■									
Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer	<i>Diglossa gloriosissima</i>							■									
Saffron Finch	<i>Sicalis flaveola</i>		■	■			■			■	■						
Tanager Finch	<i>Oreothraupis arremonops</i>								■								
Northern Slaty Brush-finch	<i>Atlapetes schistaceus</i>			■	■	■											
Sierra Nevada Brush-finch	<i>Arremon basilicus</i>												■	■	■		
White-naped Brush-finch	<i>Atlapetes albinucha</i>				■												
Choco Brush-finch	<i>Atlapetes crassus</i>							■			■						
Santa Marta Brush-Finch	<i>Atlapetes melanocephalus</i>												■	■	■	■	
Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch	<i>Buarremon brunneinucha</i>			H						■							
Grey-browed Brush-finch	<i>Arremon assimilis</i>			■	■	■											
Golden-winged Sparrow	<i>Arremon schlegeli</i>															■	
Rufous-collared Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>		■		■	■							■	■	■	■	

[illegible]