Eagle-Eye Tours



Panama Trip Report - January 2024

Link: Panama Trip Report - January 2024

Guides: Ernesto Carman and Paz Angulo Irola

Day 1. Arrival

We met in the evening for a welcome dinner and to discuss the exciting days ahead.

Day 2. Cerro Azul

We departed after breakfast to Cerro Azul, a gated community within Chagres National Park and which has plentiful habitat on the close mountains overlooking Panama City. At our first stop we found Golden-hooded Tanager, Yellow-faced Grassquit, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Gray-headed Chachalaca and Black-and-white Warbler, but the wind was certainly keeping bird activity down. Nonetheless we enjoyed a walk learning about many species of orchids and plant-insect relationships as well as many colorful butterflies such as an Orange-banded Sister and the neon Morpho Cypris.



Orchid (Prostechea sima) © Ernesto Carman

As we drove along we spotted a troop of White-faced Capuchin Monkeys foraging along the road and as we watched them we also saw a great selection of birds including White-ruffed Manakin, Hepatic Tanager, a large flock of Carmiol's Tanagers, Masked Tityra, both Blue and Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Plain-colored Tanager and even Keel-billed Toucans!



Hepatic Tanager © Ernesto Carman

Our next stop was a special one as we arrived at Linda and Jerry Harrison's house to enjoy the incredible bird feeders they have been maintaining for over twelve years now. We were greeted by

our hosts who proudly began pointing the different birds that were feeding just a couple meters from us; in the end we tallied nine different hummingbird species including Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, Long-billed Hermit, Crowned Woodnymph, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and we even had repeated, spectacular views of the rare and near endemic Violet-capped Hummingbird. Jerry and Linda also prepared lunch for us which we enjoyed as we watched the birds and kept gathering lifers nonstop as Bay-headed and Crimson-backed Tanagers and Thick-billed and Fulvous-vented Euphonias fed on bananas. And how to forget the honeycreeper trifecta, with Red-legged, Green and Shining Honeycreepers coming in so close we could not focus on them!



Bay-headed Tanager © Ernesto Carman



Crimson-backed Tanager © Ernesto Carman



Fulvous-vented Euphonia © Ernesto Carman



Green Honeycreeper © Ernesto Carman



Red-legged Honeycreeper © Ernesto Carman



Shining Honeycreeper © Ernesto Carman

We also saw two new mammals for our trip, the Central American Agouti and the small Geoffroy's Tamarin Monkey. After such a busy feeding frenzy we bid farewell and began driving back towards Panama City but made a quick stop at a pond and had Least Grebe, Tropical Mockingbird, Social and Rusty-margined Flycatchers, and very good views of a female Rufous-crested Coquette perching just in front of us on a chain-link fence.



Geoffroy's Tamarin © Ernesto Carman

Day 3. Riande, Chepo, Llano-Cartí Road, Tortí

Today we started our day in the hotel parking lot to enjoy the spectacle of hundreds of Orchard and Baltimore Orioles leaving the communal roost where they gather to sleep during the nonbreeding season. We also saw Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Black-throated Mango, Orange-chinned Parakeet and Yellow-crowned Parrots. After breakfast we began heading east and made a quick stop along some cattle farms and saw Yellow-crowned and Southern Beardless Tyrannulet, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, Great Egret, Plain-breasted Ground-Dove and the gorgeous Spot-breasted Woodpecker. From here we worked our way along the Llano-Cartí road and found Black-cheeked Woodpecker, White-shouldered Tanager, Lesser Greenlet, Velvety Manakin, Magnolia Warbler, Mistletoe Tyrannulet and large flocks of Tawny-crested Tanagers. After a satisfying picnic we continued east along the Panamerican highway to the village of Tortí where we would spend the following three nights. After settling in our rooms we gathered at the restaurant to watch the hummingbirds at the feeders and have a cold beer as we did. We finished our day with Black-throated Mango, White-necked Jacobin, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, Sapphire-throated Hummingbird and Long-billed Starthroat at the feeders as well as Red-lored Parrot and Whooping Motmot, all of this right at the hotel!



Sapphire-throated Hummingbird © Ernesto Carman



Long-billed Starthroat © Ernesto Carman

Day 4. San Francisco Reserve and Tortí River

After an early breakfast we drove towards a private reserve run by the Franciscan church which protects a large amount of habitat because it also provides potable water to several villages in the area. We made a brief stop at a little pond along the roadside where we saw Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Wattled Jacana, Green Heron and Red-breasted Meadowlark. Once at the reserve we marveled over the gorgeous forest covering the hillside with the gigantic Cuipo trees (Canavillesia) emerging from the canopy somewhat resembling baobob trees. We very quickly began spotting new birds left and right with birds such as Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Neotropic Cormorant, Tropical Royal Flycatcher, Black-crowned and Masked Tityra, Lesser Kiskadee, several species of woodpeckers including Black-cheeked, Cinnamon, Spot-breasted, as well as the minute Olivaceous Piculet and the large Crimson-crested Woodpecker. As the day warmed up we began spotting soaring raptors including Double-toothed Kite, Short-tailed, Broad-winged, Zone-tailed, Gray-lined and Savanna Hawk as well as an immature King Vulture.



Birding Reserva San Francisco © Ernesto Carman

After lunch and a siesta we walked along the banks of the Tortí River and the birding could not have been any busier! As we got off the bus we were greeted by a pair of Barred Puffbirds, singing their lethargic wolf whistle and puffing up as they did! We also had Ringed and Amazon Kingfishers, Spotted and Solitary Sandpiper, Pacific Antwren, Gray-capped Flycatcher and Giant Cowbirds, but cthe most exciting moment occurred when we had the opportunity to watch various species of birds coming down to the edge of the river to bathe, many of which you rarely see on the ground! Crimson-backed and Blue-gray Tanagers, Mourning, Yellow and Prothonotary Warblers, Yellow-billed Cacique and a pair of Yellow-tailed Orioles. Before heading back to the hotel we also managed, after a bit of quiet searching, to get good scope views of the shy Black-chested Jays.



Amazon Kingfisher © Ernesto Carman



Barred Puffbird © Ernesto Carman



Birding Rio Torti © Ernesto Carman

Day 5. El Salto and Yaviza

Today was our day to go to the Darien province and to make the best of it we left our hotel before dawn. We arrived at our birding destination, El Salto road, just after sunrise and enjoyed a picnic breakfast with organic, shade-grown coffee from Café Cristina! After caffeinating we began birding and immediately began spotting species such as White-necked Puffbird, Gray-cheeked Nunlet, Crested Oropendola, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Yellow-backed Oriole, Black-tailed Trogon, Forest Elaenia and an obliging Crane Hawk that we watched sticking its long, red legs into tree holes in search of its food. The road dead ends at the Chucunaque river and here we walked a side trail along the river which, despite the heat, was quite productive. We encountered a couple mixed species flocks and saw Olivaceous Piculet, White-browed Gnatcatcher, Ochre-lored Flatbill, Blackpoll Warbler, White-eared Conebill and, as we were preparing our picnic lunch a Black Hawk-Eagle flew low right over the canopy!



Crane Hawk © Ernesto Carman



Gray-cheeked Nunlet © Ernesto Carman

After lunch we drove back to the main road, the Panamerican Highway, and drove to the end of the Panamerican Highway at the Darien Gap in Yaviza before working our way back to Tortí.



Black-tailed Trogon © Ernesto Carman

Day 6. Tortí and the Miraflores Locks

At sunrise we gathered for some early birding around the hotel and had our usual hummingbirds at the feeders as well as good views of Streaked Flycatcher, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet and Whooping

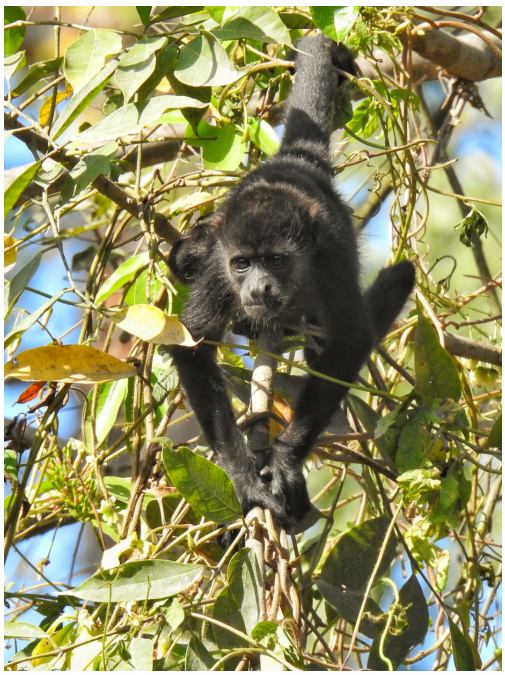
Motmot. After breakfast we packed the bus and made our way back west towards Panama City, stopping for a few birds along the way including a Merlin and Fork-tailed Flycatcher. After lunch we visited the visitor center at the Miraflores Locks where we had the chance to learn more about the canal and watch ships go through the locks up-close-and-personal! While we did so, we were also birding and saw Yellow-headed Caracara, Osprey, Bat Falcon, Brown Pelican and Magnificent Frigatebird. From here we drove to Gamboa Rainforest Resort, our home for the next three nights. Later that evening we watched birds from the balcony of the bar while enjoying a cold beer and cocktail and we saw Snail Kite, Red-lored Parrot and a male Flame-rumped Tanager with his incredibly contrasting yellow rump and black body.



Snail Kite © Ernesto Carman

Day 7. Pipeline Road and Ammo Dump Ponds

Before breakfast we birded the hotel grounds which were hopping with birds! A large flock of twelve Keel-billed Toucans were moving back and forth in the trees, giving us fantastic views in the early morning sun, as well as Collared Aracari, Great Kiskadee, Summer Tanager, Cinnamon Becard, Blue Dacnis and Gray-headed Chachalacas. After breakfast we made the short drive to one of the most famous birding sites in the Neotropics, the Pipeline Road, and it certainly did not fail to deliver! As soon as we got off the bus to begin our walk we spotted a Slaty-tailed Trogon and Broad-billed Motmot perching in the open as Central American Agoutis ran back and forth on the road and Mantled Howler Monkeys foraged overhead. As we continued on we encountered one mixed species flock after another and with each one came new species we had not seen before including Dot-winged and White-flanked Antwrens, Checker-throated Stipplethroat, Black-crowned Antshrike, Spotted Antbird, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, White-whiskered Puffbird and White-tailed Trogon. We also had amazing views of some hard to spot species such as Song Wren, Red-capped and Velvety Manakin and probably best of all, a Great Jacamar!



Mantled Howler Monkey © Ernesto Carman

On our drive back to lunch we spotted some Greater Anis and a Rufescent Tiger-Heron at the edge of the Ammo Dump pond. After lunch we revisited these ponds and the edge of the Chagres River and had more Rufescent Tiger-Herons, Wattled Jacanas, Lesser and Greater Kiskadee, Snail Kite, Osprey, Pale-vented Pigeon, Lineated Woodpecker, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, a very vocal Yellow-rumped Cacique, Purple Gallinule and a pair of secretive Buff-breasted Wrens.



Purple Gallinule © Ernesto Carman

After revising our bird list and having a fulfilling dinner we went for a night drive to see what we

could find and it was productive indeed! We started off with a couple Common Pauraques on the road and a couple Capybaras feeding in the pond. Along the Pipeline Road we heard Crested Owl and Great Potoo, two Brown-throated Three-toed Sloths, and a Great Tinamou sleeping on a horizontal limb along the roadside. On our return we spotted a Short-tailed Nighthawk perched up in a strangler fig in the middle of Gamboa!



Great Tinamou © Ernesto Carman

Day 8. Rainforest Discovery Center and Boat tour on the Panama Canal

After our usual early flurry of toucans and aracaris we visited the Rainforest Discovery Center where we had a good look at a leaf-cutter ant nest and watched as the workers threw away the used compost after growing the fungus on it. We encountered several mixed species flocks which provided us with excellent views of several antwrens including the tiny Moustached Antwren, Dot-winged and White-flanked as well as better views of Checker-throated Stipplethroat. We also had much better views of the flashy Cinnamon Woodpecker feeding from the balsa tree flowers, Broad-billed Motmot, Black-crowned Antshrike and outstanding views of a family of Fasciated Antshrikes foraging only a couple meters in front of us. At the hummingbird feeders we saw Long-billed Hermit, White-necked Jacobin, Blue-chested Hummingbird and the flashy Violet-bellied Hummingbird.



Violet-bellied Hummingbird © Ernesto Carman

After lunch we were set for our boat tour and first we went out on the Panama Canal and birded along some of the backwaters and saw Greater Anis foraging along the shore and carrying food back to five recently fledged young. Soon a large container ship came through and we cruised alongside it to get a sense of the size of such a vessel, and this was not one of the largest that go through the canal! After having fun around the ship we headed up the Chagres River and had fantastic birding in the late afternoon with many egrets and herons including Striated, Green, Little-blue and Tricolored, Purple and Common Gallinules, dozens of Wattled Jacanas, Snail Kites, Blue-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup and a pair of Pied-billed Grebes.

Day 9. Pipeline Road and Panamá Viejo

After breakfast we returned to the Pipeline Road once again and the morning was a bit cooler than the previous days, which was directly reflected in the increased bird activity. We were immediately greeted by both Mealy and Red-lored Parrots which were certainly audible even without the hearing aids! As we continued along the road through the gorgeous forest we spotted Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Scarlet-rumped Cacique, a female Blue Cotinga, Choco Elaenia, a cooperative male Red-capped Manakin with his head glowing in the sun, and we even had fantastic scope views of the world's smallest passerine, the minute Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant. Before turning back to the bus we had a male Black-tailed Trogon singing from the canopy. After lunch we headed back to Panama City and drove through Casco Viejo, an older section of Panama which has been tidied-up and many of the old buildings restored. We made one last birding stop along the coast to watch shorebirds, a must-see spectacle since the Bay of Panama is one of the most important sites for migratory shorebirds in the western hemisphere, a Ramsar Wetland of international importance. When we arrived the tide was beginning to come in and cover the extensive mudflats, pushing the birds closer to us, giving us a better opportunity to see them closer. Among the thousands of birds were Short-billed Dowitcher, Willet, Whimbrel, Least Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Black-necked Stilt, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, hundreds of Neotropic Cormorants and Laughing Gulls, an assortment of egrets and herons including Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Night-herons and the elegant Cocoi Heron. In the trees above us we had Northern Scrub-Flycatcher and the Mangrove subspecies of Yellow

Warbler with its reddish-brown head. From here we returned to our hotel for our farewell dinner and wrapped-up an awesome tour of Panama. **Day 10. Departure**



Our Panama birding tour group 2024

Species list for Panama January 2024