

## Panama Trip Report (Mar 2 - 11, 2024)

[Link: Panama Trip Report \(Mar 2 - 11, 2024\)](#)

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**Written by Alexander Alvarado** **Day 1: Arrival** We met each other at the Restaurant in Hotel Riande at 6:30 pm where we enjoyed dinner and discussed the itinerary and instructions for next day! **Day 2: Cerro Azul** We had breakfast at the restaurant at 6:30 am and then we had time to explore the gardens of the hotel, where we had our first taste of the tropics with **Yellow-crowned Parrots** out in the parking lot feeding on the palm trees. We had other nice birds including **Thick-billed Euphonias, Red-crowned Woodpeckers, Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds and Pale-vented Pigeon**. We left the hotel around 7:30 am on the way to Cerro Azul, and it took about 45 minutes to reach the upper parts of the mountain. As soon as we arrived, we explored the edges of the road and it was very active with several flocks of birds throughout the mountain. Some of the most striking species were **Bay-headed Tanager and Shining Honeycreeper**, and flocks of different Tanagers present along the trails. We also had the opportunity to observe some raptors including **Plumbeous Kite, Short-tailed Hawk, Mississippi Kite, Black Hawk Eagle and Swallow-tailed Kite**.



*Swallow-tailed Kite © Alex Alvarado*

We enjoyed lunch in a typical restaurant located in the foothills of Cerro Azul and afterwards we explored the road that heads into Chagres National Park with a stop in the mirador over the Panama City. Other highlights included **King Vulture** plus several hummingbirds including **White-necked Jacobin, Violet bellied Hummingbird and Snowy-bellied Hummingbird**.



*White-necked Jacobin © Alex Alvarado*

We drove back to Panama City with a stop at the lagoon on the way down, where we had some great birds including **Yellow-crowned Euphonia**, **Streaked Saltator**, **Common Tody Flycatcher** and **Keel-billed Toucan** among others. We arrived at the hotel around 4:00 pm for a rest before checklist and dinner. **Day 3: Birding Pan-American Highway** We started our day with an early breakfast at the hotel and then loaded up the bus. We drove 45 minutes to our first stop, Chepo Road, that boasts a diverse number of birds due to its open areas and forested patches. Some of the highlights included **Smooth-billed Ani**, **Golden-collared Manakin**, **Isthmian Wren**, **Blue-throated Sapphire** and **Wattled Jacana**. We had also our first views of the very common **Yellow-headed Caracara**. The activity was slow so we decided to move towards the road of San Blas where we explored forest edges and got some mammals including **Mantled Howler Monkey**. We also had some good looks of **Masked Tityra**, **Black-capped Pygmy Tyrant**, **Violet-crowned Woodnymph**, **Bat Falcon** and **Broad-winged Hawk**. We enjoyed a picnic lunch on the edge of the road and then we moved towards Torti.



*Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant © Alex Alvarado*

The Pan-American highway leads into semi-deciduous forest and it boasts a great number of birds and wildlife so we had several stops with good sightings such as **Fulvous-vented Euphonia**, **Panama Flycatcher**, **Yellow-bellied Elaenia**, **Black-tailed Trogon**, **Pied-Puffbird**, **Black-headed Tody Flycatcher** and many more. We also had time to spot some monkeys on the way and enjoy the scenery which is amazing at this time of the year with all the tabebuia rosaceas blooming everywhere. We reached the hotel around 5:30 pm and settled our dinner and our checklists. **Day 4: Reserva San Francisco** We started our day with an early breakfast at 6:00 am. The hummingbirds at the restaurant area were very active and we had some **Black-throated Mangoes** and **Snow-bellied Hummingbirds** delighting us while we were enjoying breakfast. We had our first stop in the outskirts of Torti in the lagoon area. The cattle fields gave us some spectacular views of the striking flashings of red in **Red-breasted Meadowlark**. Big flocks of **Black bellied Whistling Ducks** were on the shores of the lagoon and the marvelous **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** was one of the highlights on the field fences. **Savannah Hawk** was preparing nesting material on the erythrina trees right next to main highway, and big flocks of migrants **Orchard** and **Baltimore Orioles** were present on these Gualiqueme trees as they provide food for honeycreepers, hummingbirds and lots of tanagers at this time of the year. Other highlights here were **Crimson Crested Woodpecker** and **Grey-cowled Woodrail**.



*Red-breasted Meadowlark © Alex Alvarado*

We continued our way to Reserva San Francisco which is located a few minutes from the Hotel. As soon as we got out the bus we had a **Barred Antshrike** skulking in the Heliconias (beef steak heliconia). The stunning views of **Blue Dacnis** on top of cedar it was a great addition to the number of birds in the area! As we walked the main path through the reserve we spotted and enjoyed **Yellow-bellied Seedeater** and the widely range spread **Slaty-tailed Trogon**. On our way up into the hills, we had some interesting birds including **Broad-billed Motmot**, **Rusty-winged Antwren**, **Fasciated Antshrike**, **Red-capped Manakin** among many others. We spent time looking for one of our main targets, Barred Puffbird, but did not have success in the forest until we came out to the open and had 3 individuals calling each other.. We enjoyed one in the scope while a flock of **Dusky faced Tanagers** and **Olivaceous Piculet** provided great views to the group.



*Barred Puffbird © Alex Alvarado*



We returned to the Hotel for lunch and a rest, before going back to the reserve in search of more wildlife. We walked a different trail where we enjoyed **Black-cheeked Woodpecker**, a juvenile **Double-toothed kite**, and the very elusive and skulky **Black-crowned Antshrike**. We were trying to change location when a group of **Golden-headed and Golden-collared Manakins** put a show on the edge of the main road! The surroundings of the administration buildings have a small lagoon where we enjoyed a massive flock of breeding Cattle Egrets and we had time to enjoy some Spectacled Caymans outside the water. We had dinner scheduled for 6:00 pm and then went back to the forest looking for Owls.



*Cattle Egret © Alex Alvarado*

We had a **Barn Owl**, **Common Pauraque**, **Rufous Nightjar** with baby, and heard some other owls including **Crested Owl**, **Mottled Owl** and **Great Potoo**. We ended up our day with Kinkajous foraging the canopy! **Day 5: El Salto Road at Darien** We made a very early departure (4:00 am) to the Darien area, also known as El Paso Road. We took a packed breakfast and drove for two hours and thirty minutes towards east. The habitat here is a mix of deciduous forest with Teka plantations. This place boasts a huge diversity of wildlife and its home for numerous flocks of birds. We arrived early morning and had some good activity around the Chucunaque River. Our first stop gave us some good views of **Black-tailed Trogons**, **Purple-throated Fruitcrow**, **Ochre-lored Flatbill**, **Dusky-capped and Rusty Margined Flycatchers**, big flocks of **Mealy Parrots** were also present. We walked the trails that go down the river and got some great views of **Red-rumped Woodpecker**, and the very melodic **Bright-rumped Attila**. A very shy **Gray-chested Dove** flew as we explored the trail among many enjoying many birds.



*Purple-throated Fruitcrow © Alex Alvarado*



*Black-tailed Trogon © Alex Alvarado*

We went back for breakfast and found a **Gray-lined Hawk** perched on the edge of the river. We were able to spend some time watching it through the scope. A flashing electric blue color flew across and I called a **Blue Cotinga**, but it disappeared in the forest. A few minutes later we had a female and later a stunning looking male perched on a Cuipo Tree. We also had time to enjoy the multicolored **Keel-billed Toucans**, which were hopping in the canopy forest. In terms of raptors, this was our best day as we had some amazing birds including **Gray-headed Kite, Plumbeous Kite, Double-toothed Kite, Black-hawk Eagle, Black-and-White Hawk Eagle, Roadside Hawk and King Vultures!** The extreme levels of humidity were out of mind but we still resisted and

walked the main road in search of more birds, those Cuipo Trees are incredible source of food for lots birds and we had other good sightings such as: **Pied and White-necked Puffbirds, White-crowned, Brown-hooded, Blue-headed and Red-lored Parrots plus the Chestnut-fronted Macaws** which are seen along the canopy forest., we also heard several times but it did not cooperate the very nice looking **Gray-cheeked Nunlet**, at the end of the trail we were prized with a flock of **Black-chested Jays** which gave us very good looks! We drove 30 minutes to Yaviza for lunch at a typical restaurant and afterwards on our way back we had a stop for birds in the open fields where we enjoyed a couple of **Pied Water-Tyrants, Ruddy-breasted Seedeaters and Crimson-crested Woodpeckers!** We were back at the hotel and had a siesta before checklist and dinner.



*Pied Water-Tyrant © Alex Alvarado*

**Day 6: Torti and transfer to Gamboa Rainforest Resort** Our last day in Torti was one of the best days in the entire trip. We had scheduled breakfast for 6:00 am and afterwards, we drove 5 minutes to our first stop in direction to Rio Torti. We explored the savannahs and got some wonderful birds including **Black-crowned Tityra**, the resident **American Kestrel, Eastern Meadowlark, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird and Band-rumped Swifts**. We heard a **Collared Forest Falcon** in the woods and called it but we had no luck. While trying to spot it, we found a Gray-lined Hawk perched above the canopy forest. Our scenery was filled with **Fork-tailed Flycatchers**, which came to the orange trees next to the group! We also had the best looks of **Blue-headed Parrots and Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet**. We were so busy with all the birds but we had to reach the edges of Rio Torti.





*Fork-tailed Flycatcher © Alex Alvarado*

As we got there, we spotted **Little Blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, Snowy Egret. A Greater Yellowlegs** was sharing the menu along the edge of the river with **Spotted and Solitary Sandpiper**. Somehow I was confused with the call of **Whopping Motmot and Striped Owl**, so we crossed the river and got the motmot, but this provided a flock of 4 **Spot-breasted Woodpeckers** in the bare branches of a dead tree! A green heron flew over the ponds and **Purple Gallinule** sitting on top of a bush gave us amazing views. I was scanning the forest edge when I saw a black and white silhouette and I called the group to look for this skulky but amazing beauty, a **Great Antshrike**. The fiery red eye on this bird with sunshine of the morning was probably the best sighting we had! We walked back to the main road and heard some antshrikes calls, we spotted and saw very well **Black and Barred Antshrikes** on the tall grass along the river, **White-shoulder Tanager** was displaying so well when **Barred Puffbirds** started calling, there were 2 individuals posing on the cecropia trees, everyone got excited with such amazing birds! That wasn't complete; Our way out provided **Woodcreepers, Pacific Antwren, Dusky Antbird, Isthmian Wren, White-eared Conebill and a Crane Hawk** which flew low enough to see its patterns!





*Barred Antshrike © Alex Alvarado*

We didn't want to stop but we had to make our way to Panama City and chase more birds on route! So we could get in time to Gamboa Lodge! We enjoyed lunch in typical Fonda on the way to Panama City and afterwards we reach the Summit Ponds where we had some highlights including; **Boat-billed Heron, Green Kingfisher, Common Black Hawk** and the unforgettable dance of **Golden-collared Manakins**, the bamboos at entrance road provided dozens of seedeaters including **Yellow-bellied, Variable, and Thick Billed Seed-finch** and of course the spectacular **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks!** We arrived to Gamboa Lodge and made our check in around 5:00 pm We did checklist and dinner after 6:00 pm, some participants decided to go out on a night hike where we enjoyed **Red-eyed tree frog, Great Tinamou, Virginia Opossum and heard Tropical Screech Owls!**

**Day 7: Pipeline Road and Gamboa Lodge** We started early morning at 6:15 in the parking lot, the hotel boasts in its surroundings dozens of birds moving along the forests so we were able to enjoy many of these along the driveways and parking lot, a big flock of about 20 **Keel-billed Toucans** flew across the entrance road while we were enjoying great views of **Piratic Flycatcher., Slaty tailed Trogons** were cooperating so well on the forest edge, **Gartered Trogon, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis** posed for us so well, **Whooping Motmots** and many other birds were very active on the fruiting fig trees.



*Keel-billed Toucan © Alex Alvarado*

We were heading back for breakfast when we found **Eastern Kingbird** perched on the top of a tabebuia tree, our short hike ended up with a **Three toed Sloth** resting on the bare branches in front of the lobby. We had breakfast at 7:00 am and afterwards we moved to Pipeline Road located 10 minutes from the hotel, along the way we were distracted by herons on the Ammo ponds with good sightings of **Rufescent Tiger Heron** devouring a fish while we were enjoying such sighting, other herons present in here were **Striated Heron**, **Fasciated Tiger Heron** and **Black-crowned Night-Heron**, after these birds we approached the fantastic pipeline road which provided amazing birding throughout the morning, we were just starting to explore the jungle when a **White-whiskered Puffbird** came to perch in front of us, a few minutes later we heard **Broad-billed Motmot** but it didn't react to my broadcast, but we had the most cooperative **Black-crowned Antshrike** for the tour, it perched so close that we could have lots of time for digiscoping and pictures!!!



*Fasciated Tiger-Heron © Alex Alvarado*

A few meters down the road we encountered a mix flock with nice creatures including: **Chestnut-backed Antbird, White-bellied Antbird, Dot-winged and White-flanked Antwren, Plain Xenops, Checker-throated Stipplethroat and Spotted Antbird!** We were overwhelmed with such sightings so we went back and just a few minutes later we had a **Black-throated Trogon** perched on the edge of the road. We had another good bird on the same spot, a **Black breasted Puffbird**. This last one closed the puffbirds list for the trip! Our way back to the bus was very productive as we had **Rufous Motmot**, plus **Scarlet-rumped Cacique, Green Shrike Vireo** and probably the best sighting - **Song Wrens** feeding on the edge of the road with very close views! We enjoyed **Plain-brown Woodcreeper** and **Black-throated Wrens** to end our fantastic morning on this majestic jungle.





*Black-crowned Antshrike © Alex Alvarado*

We came back for lunch and siesta to the hotel. Later in the afternoon, we went back exploring the woods, this time on the entrance road. The ammo ponds are a big attraction for birds and this time we made a quick stop exploring the area. Juvenile **Rufescent Tiger Herons**, **Southern Lapwings**, **Variable Seedeater** and the chorus of **Greater Ani** were part of our sighting. **Purple Gallinule** and studies in the scope of **Striated Heron** were the highlights. We explored the entrance road again and we found flocks of birds as soon as we started walking, including the amazing **White-tailed Trogon** perched in front of the group delighting us a while. **Forest Elaenia**, **Choco Elaenia**, **Southern Beardless Tyrannulet** and **Yellow winged Flatbill** were just a few of the many others! We were scouting the woods and found a few more **Black-crowned Antshrikes**, which had been very common along the forest edges. The striking behavior of the **Scarlet Rumped Cacique** delighted us near the end of the hike, as we watched it weaving its nest. We came back to the hotel for checklist and dinner at 6:30 pm. **Day 8: Discovery Center and Ammo Ponds** We started our day in the parking lot with flocks of birds very early in the morning. One of the nice birds we got was a **Yellow Tyrannulet** and **Crested Caracara** which we missed previously. We had time to enjoy the magnificent **Cinnamon Becard** in the scope and we had a blast with dozens of toucan moving around the forest canopy. We returned to the restaurant for breakfast and then we headed to the jungles of Pipeline road. An unexpected bird called our attention while driving to the pristine jungles. Along the shoreline of Ammo ponds we saw the exquisite **White-throated Crake** exploring the edges of the marshes. There were 5 individuals in total, including juveniles. Our morning was giving us some very good sights.



*Crested Caracara © Alex Alvarado*

After exploring the surroundings and getting some herons, egrets and jacanas we drove straight to **Discovery Center** into the jungles. As soon as we got there we had some great looks of **Cinnamon Woodpeckers** in the canopy, followed by great sightings of **Purple-throated Fruitcrows** which were feeding on the edge of the trail system. We continued exploring the forest and heard some **Slate-colored Grosbeaks**, but they refused to show their beauty to us. We reached the observation tower and as soon as we got there we had terrific looks of **Blue Cotinga and Hook-billed Kites** soaring over the jungle. We had some other good birds including **Scaled Pigeon** that flew over and **Blue Dacnis**, plus a few Puffbirds calling into the forest. We decided to go to the hummingbird feeders and we were greeted with dozens of **White-necked Jacobins, Long-billed Hermits** and the stunning looking **Violet-bellied Hummingbird**. After some time enjoying the hummers, we headed back to the bus where Misael our driver was waiting for us. But..... our best sightings of the trip were just coming up. We located a flock of antbirds devouring leftovers from the army ants and we got amazing views of **Bicolored Antbird, Spotted Antbird, Ocellated Antbird, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Plain-brown Woodcreeper, Ruddy Woodcreeper, Northern-barred Woodcreeper, Rufous Motmot, White-whiskered Puffbird, Song Wren, Grey-headed Tanager and Checker-throated Stipplethroat**. We spent about an hour enjoying their behaviors and we got our best photos of these birds.



*Spotted Antbird © Alex Alvarado*

On our way out, we saw another flock of nice birds including **Olivaceous Flatbill**, **Moustached Antwren**, **Black-striped Woodcreeper** and **Velvety Manakin** among many others during this fantastic morning in this outstanding forest! We went for lunch at Restaurant El Cayman and afterwards had a siesta before taking our boat ride on Chagres Lake and Panama canal. Our tour along the shores of Lake Chagres was full of many species, but most of them we already encountered throughout the trip, including **Tricolored Heron**, **Neotropic Cormorant**, **Yellow-rumped Cacique**, **Pale-vented Pigeon**, **Wattled Jacana** and **Mangrove Swallows** among others. One of the best observations we had was **Snail Kite** that was perched on a dry fallen tree over the lake. We also had the opportunity to see **Greater Ani**.





After navigating the lake for approximately 1 hour and a half, we returned to the port and then went to the hotel for dinner. After dinner we had the opportunity to explore the forests that surround the pipeline road. We searched for some owls, but it was very slow. We could hear a **Crested Owl** and we found **Three-toed Sloth**, but nothing else! We stopped at the lagoons to explore the edges of these wetlands a little bit, and found some caimans. On the way back to the hotel we had the opportunity to observe some Gray-headed Chachalacas roosting on a fig tree in the surroundings of Gamboa Village. **Day 9: Birding Parque Metropolitano and Casco Viejo** After breakfast we headed towards the Metropolitan park, which is located approximately 30 minutes from the Gamboa Resort. As it was Sunday the traffic route was completely clear, so it took us very little time to reach this area. When we arrived at the Metropolitan park we noticed that because it was a holiday it was full of many local people walking up and down the trails, so it was a bit noisy. Even so, we managed to have the opportunity to enjoy many species that we had not seen during the trip, including **Dusky Antbirds**, who were cooperating very well. We were also able to see the melodic **Rufous-breasted Wrens** and the very noisy **Red-throated Anttanagers** that we had not seen on route. We heard a **Red-capped Manakin**, and then on the way down we had the opportunity to see one the smaller species of flycatchers that exists in the area, **Southern Bentbill**, and it was very pleasant to be able to observe it up close. On the way out from the forest, we had the opportunity to find a flock of **White-shouldered Tanagers**. Among them, there were other species including **Olivaceous Woodcreeper**, a female **Red-legged Honeycreeper** and all these species were interacting with some **Blue-gray Tanagers** and flycatchers.



*Blue-gray Tanagers © Alex Alvarado*

We then headed towards the center of the city to visit the old part of Panama (casco Viejo). Here, we had the opportunity to explore the shores of the beach and we had many birds, which were new for the group including **Whimbrel**, **Willet**, **Laughing Gull** and **White Ibis** among others.



*White Ibis © Alex Alvarado*

After enjoying our lunch, we had the opportunity to take a tour to Miraflores locks at the Canal, so people could have the opportunity to learn how this mega structure works. After visiting the Miraflores locks, we returned to the hotel to pack up and prepare for the next day, but on the way we had some briefly looks of **Brown Pelicans** and also **Royal and Sandwich Tern** flying over the main highway that leads to eastern Panama. We had farewell dinner and summarized our checklist that evening. **Day 10: Flight home** [Panama Birding Tour species list \(Mar 2024\)](#)