

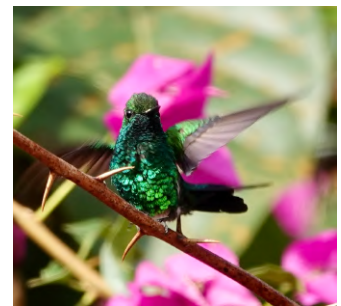
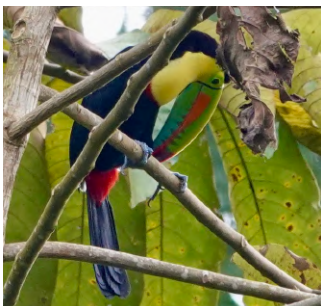
# Panama: Birds & Mammals

## March 9-17, 2024 | Trip Report

### by Robert Gallardo



With Naturalist Journeys guide Robert Gallardo, local guides Jorge and Tino, and participants Jan, Norman, Kathy, Kathleen, Andrew, Harriet, Gary, Susan, Tony, and Julie.



### Panama: Where Two Worlds Meet

Historically, Panama is mostly known for its man-made Canal, which connects world commerce. However, the most impressive levels of biodiversity in Central America occur in this small Central American country. This is due to the fact that it is connected to South America. It is a mixing ground of two continents. When North America finally joined with South America some 4.5-10 million years ago, it created a land bridge that would later be coined as the 'Great American Biotic Interchange.' In one manner or another, floral and faunal elements from both continents were then able to cross over. At 29,000mi<sup>2</sup>, Panama is slightly smaller than the state of



South Carolina, but boasts 1,000 species of birds, 255 species of mammals, 10,000 vascular plants and over 1,800 species of butterflies. In fact, the word 'Panama,' is derived from an indigenous language meaning 'many butterflies.'

## Sat., Mar. 9 Arrivals | Panama City | Canopy Lodge

Today the adventure began for the ten guests. Everyone had arrived a day early, so by 10:00 we were able to get going to the Canopy Lodge. We travelled across the dry landscape, paralleling the Pacific coastline. We reached our turnoff to Valle and climbed the slopes of the old, extinct volcano.

We reached the town of Valle which sits inside an ancient volcanic crater. These cool, humid highlands were welcomed by everyone. We arrived at the Canopy Lodge in time for lunch before getting checked into our rooms. We were met by Tino who would be our excellent local guide for the next four days. In the afternoon, we did a short walk on the grounds and were greeted by numerous species that would be seen almost daily on the main fruit feeder. Gray-headed Chachalacas and Chestnut-headed Oropendolas usually dominated the main feeder and were often accompanied by a one-eyed Rufous Motmot, this latter bird being present there year after year. We got our first looks at Squirrel Cuckoo which would be a frequent sighting during much of the trip. The handsome Black-chested Jays would also show up frequently on the main feeder or the feeders behind the dining area. The multi-colored Gray-cowled Wood-Rail would also be a constant companion which foraged beneath the main fruit feeder, feed at the feeder behind the dining area, or be seen bathing in the creek below the bridge. The Green Kingfisher was seen almost daily as well, perched atop rocks in the creek below.

On the other side of the bridge we explored a garden trail. A Fasciated Antshrike called within the bushes and taunted us, remaining out of view, but we would catch up to it later. A cooperative pair of Chestnut-capped Warbler foraged next to us and we got great views of this resident bird. Not far above our heads, a Long-billed Starthroat perched in plain view. It was likely feeding on the orange-colored *Erythrina* blossoms high above. In a wet thicket we also saw a perched Rufous-breasted Hermit, the only sighting of the trip. The tiny, yet handsome, Violet-headed Hummingbird fed on purple Porterweed flowers and we would see it many times while there. We also found Snowy-bellied Hummingbird and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird. A pair of the diminutive Common Tody-Flycatcher was near a pond, the same place where they nested the previous year. A familiar sound above us caught





Tino's attention. It was a male Crested Oropendola making its crackling sound. It ruffled its wings and raised its crest when emitting these unique sounds. Many species of tanagers would also be an integral part of the trip. On this first day we saw the Palm Tanager, Golden-hooded Tanager, Plain-colored Tanager, and Crimson-backed Tanager. It was an excellent way to start the journey.

## Sun., Mar. 10                      Canopy Lodge area | Las Minas | Cara Iguana

We woke to a cool, breezy morning and were greeted with fresh hot coffee. The raucous calls of the Gray-cowled Wood-Rail echoed down by the creek. A pair of Dusky-faced Tanager wandered by the dining area and would be seen daily. After breakfast, we did a short walk along the road to see what was stirring. Lodge staff had planted some Porterweed with the hopes of attracting a special bird. Each year we would see the spectacular Rufous-crested Coquette around the same area, but it would usually remain high in the trees where we would need a scope to see it. This year, however, it would be lured down to ground level and we got close-up views. What a spectacular bird! As we continued, we found a pair of Slaty-tailed Trogons that were feeding on wild figs. Another stunner then showed up, a pair of Spot-crowned Barbets. We got great, extended views of this handsome bird. In a nearby field, a group of Collared Aracaris were seen perched on some *Cecropia* trees. A Keel-billed Toucan was heard calling and was spotted perched nearby against the forest backdrop. High on a ridge, Robert spotted a perched Bat Falcon and would be the only sighting of the trip. Many Blue-headed Parrots zoomed back and forth, being blown by the winds. A cooperative Plain Xenops came into view and we would see several of these tiny ovenbirds during the trip. A male Tawny-capped Euphonia also came into a nearby fig and we would be afforded many sightings during the next few days. Some dazzling tanagers came in to others figs and included Bay-headed Tanager, Silver-throated Tanager, and many Tawny-crested Tanagers. The lower foothills of this area provide us with a wonderful show of this amazingly diverse family of birds.

We then drove up the hill a bit to a site that is usually quite productive. Today was no exception. Adjacent to a chicken breeding facility we saw Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Yellow-faced Grassquit, and Smooth-billed Ani. A pair of the handsome White-lined Tanager flew in and landed in plain view. It would be the only sighting of the trip. We walked up a side road where we found the handsome Golden-collared Manakin. A Crowned Woodnymph popped in and briefly fed on a large, red hot lips blossom. Tino heard that a mixed flock was approaching and would turn out to be a humungous flock. Some species that were foraging in the understory and mid-level included Russet Antshrike, Plain Antwreio, and a large flock of Tawny-crested Tanagers. Higher up, and feeding on figs, were many tanagers including Silver-throated, Bay-headed, Golden-hooded, and the spectacular Emerald. An additional



stunner was the Scarlet-thighed Dacnis which foraged particularly low, and we were afforded superb views of the male. What an incredible morning it was and a great way to start the trip. We spotted the first Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth and would see at least six more on the remainder of the trip.

We returned to the Lodge for lunch and a little down time. In the afternoon, we headed out to the edge of town to explore some drier forest. Upon arrival, we were greeted with several Garden Emeralds that all hung out around a giant pink Bougainvillea. A Peregrine Falcon soared overhead, seeming to scan the cliff faces of the surrounding caldera. A Scrub Greenlet was also foraging in the Bougainvillea and came out into plain view. A pair of Dusky-capped Flycatchers foraged high in the subcanopy as well as a Panama Flycatcher, a close relative of the Dusky. We heard the telltale bouncing sound of a cute bird, the Barred Antshrike. Both a male and female appeared then flew across the road into a bush where we got good views. Another very vocal bird that appeared was a Rufous-breasted Wren and we got great views of it as well. Creeping along a shallow, overgrown ditch was a White-bellied Antbird that foraged in the leaf litter. At the lodge we heard numerous Yellow-crowned Euphonias, but all were high in the surrounding canopy. A male came into a leafless *Cecropia* tree where we got scope views. A pair of Red-legged Honeycreepers also came in and perched in a nearby orange tree, adding a bit of color to our collage of birds. We got a brief view of a Streaked Saltator in the same orange tree. One last bird we got brief views of was a female Rosy Thrush-Tanager. This skulking species inhabits dense undergrowth everywhere and can often be difficult to see well. After this productive afternoon we returned to the Lodge before doing our checklist and having dinner.

While having dinner, Tino let us know that on the fruit feeder there was a Gray Four-eyed Opossum. Our first good mammal. After dinner, we did a short night walk into the lodge gardens. Greeting us right at the bridge was a Tropical Screech-Owl and we got great views of it. Our first full day at this site was incredible.

## **Mon., Mar. 11                      Candelaria | Las Mozas**

Today we would head out and experience a whole new set of birds. Not far from the lodge is a small plateau where there are remnant patches of wet broadleaf forest amidst chicken farms, a growing number of houses, and agricultural plots. We stopped along the road and found a Chestnut-backed Antbird which flew across a small opening. A Green Hermit was also foraging nearby, visiting blooming Heliconias and Acanthas. A male Spot-crowned Antwren also appeared and we got splendid views of it. Our first White-flanked Antwren of the trip also made a brief appearance. Calling from deep within the forest was a Broad-billed Motmot and an extended search was in vain. We would, however, catch up with it later. We also found our first Spotted Woodcreeper, a species common to this highland area. We continued on to another part of the plateau which we have never visited on





previous tours. We ventured past a small agricultural plot where numerous Southern Lapwings were present. Just as we were entering the forest, a lovely Rufous-and-white Wren appeared, and we got excellent views. We also saw our first Lineated Woodpecker (spotted by Jan) and another White-bellied Antbird. We walked deeper into the patch of forest and soon Tino heard something familiar. It was a Black-crowned Antpitta, and was a species we had never detected on previous trips. With a lot of patience, one appeared twice and we got brief, but good views of this spectacular species. We also saw our first Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth and would see at least four more on the trip. It was another outstanding morning in Panama. We returned to the hotel for lunch and a little R&R.

Immediately after lunch, many of us were ready to head back out when Tino heard something go zipping by the dining area. It was a White-tipped Sicklebill that had been visiting a large *Heliconia* behind the rooms. This enigmatic bird has a unique bill and to find one anywhere is always a prize sighting. We all rushed over to the plant and voila, there it was. It feeds on nectar by perching on the plant and inserting its hooked bill deep into the inflorescence. Wowza!

We loaded the vehicles and drove to a nearby site called Las Mozas. It was a warm afternoon and we usually don't expect to encounter many birds, but we went there to see a really special bird. Off in the distance we spotted a soaring White Hawk as well as a Zone-tailed Hawk. Deep within a shady slough was a young Rufescent Tiger-Heron. A bit further up, we arrived at the spot where a pair of Spectacled Owls had been nesting. Through the scope we could see the two adults and an immature that still had some downy feathers on its head. Such a great bird. On the way back to the cars a male Rosy Thrush-Tanager made a brief appearance as well as a Long-billed Gnatwren. It was a fabulous way to end the day.

We made our way back to the Lodge for some downtime before doing our checklist and having dinner.

## **Tues., Mar. 12                      Altos de Maria**

After a good nights' rest, we were ready for the next days' adventure. We were going to another part of the volcanic rim in search of yet more species. We loaded into several trucks with a packed lunch and scopes and would be gone for a good part of the day. We climbed the steep mountain and as soon as we reached some humid rainforest we stopped. It was a steep, winding road so finding a good spot for all four trucks was tricky. Right off the bat appeared two Tufted Flycatchers that fed in plain sight. Tino then heard the faint call of a highland specialty; the Spotted Barbtail. In appearance, it looks like a small woodcreeper and does belong to the same family. We got brief views as it crept up a small tree that grew from below then it flew off. A few Common

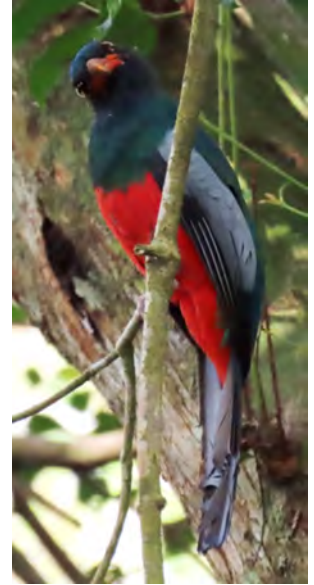


Chlorospingus came through and we would have multiple sightings of this ‘common’ bird during the day. A Gray-breasted Wood-Wren called in the dark understory, but Tino worked his magic and we got great views of this otherwise shy bird. A flock of birds was moving up the ravine so we got ready to see which species were present. There were more chlorospingus, Silver-throated Tanagers and another brilliant species, a Black-and-yellow Tanager. The male of this regionally endemic bird is black and yellow, being reminiscent of a Prothonotary Warbler. We got brief views of a male and several females, but would catch up to them later in the day. Tino also spotted a tiny hummingbird nest high up in a *Cecropia*. In no time we would ascertain to whom it belonged to; a Green Thorntail. The female was hunkered down in the nest but we got scope views of it. A bird we missed the other day showed up right in front of us; a Broad-billed Motmot.

We headed further up the hill and entered into a large, private residential area known as “Altos de Maria.” It is a dream, schemed up by a wealthy Panamanian who sells lots to whomever wishes to live in a far-fetched place. At least the lots don’t seem to be selling like hotcakes and there is still a lot of old forest remaining. We continued on to a second gate and parked. Just off the side of the road Tino spotted the tiny Snowcap hummingbird male, which was foraging and perching high in the subcanopy. We got scope views of this splendid bird. An Ochraceous Wren also appeared but would remain mostly hidden amidst the thick, epiphyte-covered branches. A male Hepatic Tanager appeared low in a clearing and we got brief, but good look at it. We walked up the hill a bit and down one of the paved side roads. A Bicolored Antbird popped out of the understory then disappeared quickly, but we would catch up to it later. Calling from deep within the forest was a prized bird; a Purplish-backed Quail-Dove. We had never seen or heard this secretive species on any trip. Robert made sure everyone was in a good position in case it came in, and it did. Robert was able to get one photo before it disappeared. We were all ecstatic at this sighting, but we weren’t finished yet.

Just up the road a bit a small mixed flock was making its way down the hill. More chlorospingus were present as well as several Black-and-yellow Tanagers. A male darted out suddenly in pursuit of an insect and came right toward us then swooped back up into the forest. What a show!! Harriet spotted something on the ground in a partial clearing. It ended up being an Ochraceous Wren and we got a great look at it. A White-vented Euphonia fed on some mistletoe as well. Not far away, some Northern Emerald Toucanets were calling. We waited a bit then four of them came in and landed directly above us. We were afforded scope views of this colorful blue-throated form. This incredible morning would be one of the highlights of the trip.





We broke for lunch and drove to a lovely spot that was nearby. Some covered picnic benches that overlooked an artificial lagoon were quite welcomed. Our lunch break didn't last long before we started detecting yet more birds that were new for the trip. A group of four Rusty-margined Flycatchers were making a huge raucous and a pair of Common Black-Hawks rose out of the marsh. After lunch, we walked part of a nature trail that lead into the nearby forest. It was that time of day when the birding was slow, but we always have to look to see what's stirring. Before entering the forest, we spotted a pair of the adorable Long-tailed Tyrant on a snag. Inside the forest we heard a Yellow-eared Toucanet calling high in the subcanopy. It would never come into view. A cooperative female Northern Black-throated Trogon foraged alongside the trail, allowing for scope views. A Northern Schiffornis was also quite cooperative, and we were able to see this understory species.

We called it a day and made our back to the Lodge for a short break before our checklist and dinner. Our last full day at the Canopy Lodge was nothing less than spectacular.

### **Wed., Mar. 13                      Canopy Lodge | Drive to Canopy Tower**

We woke this morning to cool air and geared up to head out to our next lodging destination. Before leaving, a handsome Orange-billed Sparrow came wandering into the dining area to bid us farewell. We got a group picture on the bridge and said 'bye' to our terrific guide Tino. What wonderful birds and mammals we encountered while there. We loaded up the van and made the descent down the mountain.

After reaching the lowlands, Robert spotted an interesting bird perched down in a field so we stopped the bus. We found a pair of Fork-tailed Flycatchers sallying out for insects, as well as a pair of soaring Wood Storks, Short-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, and another Peregrine Falcon. We finished the drive along the Pacific coast and reached Soberania National Park where the Canopy Tower is located. Upon arrival, we were met and greeted by Tatiana who is in charge of operations there. We also met Jorge Pineda who would be our local guide during our stay there. We had lunch then an orientation to the Tower before getting checked into our rooms.

After a bit of rest and time for it to cool down a bit, we had an afternoon walk. We started at the feeders placed along an elevated platform. There, a nice assortment of hummingbirds came and went. We saw White-necked Jacobin, Long-billed Hermit, Stripe-throated Hermit, Blue-chested Hummingbird, Violet-bellied Hummingbird, and White-vented Plumeleteer. It can often take awhile to sort through some of the more similar-appearing species



and confusing females. Some maintenance staff pointed out that there was a pair of Slaty-tailed Trogons beginning to dig out a nest in an arboreal territory. Both the male and female took turns burrowing.

We began our walk down Semaphore Hill to see what was stirring. This year was exceptionally dry which makes life difficult for all fauna. We spotted a Plain-brown Woodcreeper which is a fairly common denizen of these forests. We also came across a very confident White-whiskered Puffbird perched low to the ground on a vine. We were able to shoot a few pictures. Jorge checked out a regular roosting site for an owl, and they were there. A pair of the handsome Black-and-white Owls was buried deep in the understory of some tall shrubs, but we got to see them through the scope. A few White-shouldered Tanagers also appeared to end the afternoon. On the nearby ridgeline we had our first sighting of the Geoffroy's Tamarin. The small troop moved swiftly through the treetops, and we would see them numerous times from atop the Tower. It was a nice beginning to a new area. The Bird Mobile came down to pick us up and whisk us back up the hill.

While we were having dinner, Jorge let us know that a mammal was feeding on a banana set out by the staff. It was a Central American Woolly Opossum. This is a lovely, cinnamon-colored species, and we would see a few more during the trip. A Kinkajou also showed up two nights in a row to dine on the bananas.

## **Thurs., Mar. 14                      Metropolitan Park | Summit Park**

We woke up at the crack of dawn to the sounds of Mantled Howler monkeys nearby. Their sounds reverberate through the forest canopy and tell us it's time to get up. We did some early morning bird watching from the roof before breakfast. A pair of Scaled Pigeons was perched off in the distance and a lovely Purple-crowned Fairy was foraging on some canopy-level flowers. From deep within the forest we could hear a very sweet melody. It belonged to the Slate-colored Grosbeak, a stunning black bird with a red bill and white throat that inhabits the canopy. We spotted it, and through the scope were able to watch it sing. A Fulvous-vented Euphonia also came by and we got good looks at it. Several Green Shrike-Vireos called just out of sight and taunted us, remaining out of view, but we would catch up to it soon enough. Another common denizen of the canopy was calling, but is often very hard to see well. It was a Brown-capped Tyrannulet, but today we got great views as it perched atop a small tree close to the tower. We were just about ready to call it a morning when another guide at the Tower spotted something spectacular. It was a male Blue Cotinga perched only about 100ft away. There were many large Melastome trees loaded with thousands of tiny, purple fruits and were attracting a lot of birds. Without a doubt,





this cotinga was there for the feast. A lone White-nosed Coati also showed up a couple of times to dine in the canopy.

After breakfast we departed for Metropolitan Park which is on the outskirts of Panama City. Upon arriving there, we found a park staff corralling a Common Opossum that was heading across the lawn toward the busy road. He succeeded in getting it to go back to the forest. This place is always hopping with birds and today was no exception. A mixed flock was nearby where we got good looks at the tiny Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, Golden-fronted Greenlet, and Yellow-olive Flatbill. There were several handsome male White-shouldered Tanagers descending to a small ditch where they were bathing and drinking. It was fun to see them so close. Up the trail a bit we also saw an Olivaceous Woodcreeper, creeping along. Calling from deep within the bamboo thickets were a couple of Lance-tailed Manakins, and would be amongst the few Heard Only birds of the trip. A bit further we noticed something skulking in the brush alongside the trail. It was a female Dusky Antbird foraging alone. We heard another sweet song coming from within the dense forest. It belonged to the Blue-black Grosbeak and soon both sexes appeared in front of us, foraging alongside the road. Close by, we also noted a male Red-throated Ant-Tanager before it vanished into the woods. Also close by was a handsome female Fasciated Antshrike that was foraging and a Black-bellied Wren behind her. It seemed to be a small mixed flock. As they moved on, Jorge noticed some movement on the ground under the brush. It was a female Rosy Thrush-Tanager tossing leaves and foraging. We got brief glimpses before it disappeared. On the way back to the parking lot a handsome male Gartered Trogon posed nicely for pictures.

We began the return trip back to the Tower, but decided to stop at a small wetland near one of the locks on the Canal. It was a mangrove tidal flat where numerous birds were seen. Species feeding in the mudflats included a Whimbrel, several White Ibis, one Willet, a Little Blue Heron, and several Yellow-crowned Night-Herons. A lone Ringed Kingfisher and Green Kingfisher were hunting in some deeper pools. We returned to the Tower in time for another tasty lunch and some R&R.

In mid afternoon we headed out to the nearby Summit Gardens. Being a weekday, it was quiet there with very few visitors. Several Piratic Flycatchers greeted us by the front gate. While we were having an ice cream break, a pair of Panama Flycatchers foraged in a nearby planter. A male Garden Emerald fed on the Lantana blossoms. Right above it, a pair of Common Tody-Flycatchers were mating and it was quite the show. In a nearby leguminous tree a Lesser Nighthawk was found resting high on a day roost. We continued down a path and found Masked Tityras near the Harpy Eagle enclosure. The mighty bird, Panama's national bird, was in a smaller enclosure for



maintenance reasons. In a nearby stand of palms, several Common Tent-making Bats were resting. A pair of the elegant Slaty-tailed Trogons put on a show and were plucking ripe figs from a nearby tree. Further down yet was a snazzy male White-winged Becard that was near its nest. We were making our way to the Jaguar exhibit when we noticed a black-colored raptor fly low over the trees. It ended up being a Crane Hawk which is always a great sighting anywhere. Several Golden-collared Manakin females were feeding on Melastome fruits and we waited for the colorful male to appear, but he didn't. Suddenly, someone spotted a large woodpecker in a huge tree. It was a pair of the stately Crimson-crested Woodpeckers and we got nice views before they vanished. 'Whooping' in the distance was a Whooping Motmot, a species split off from the Blue-crowned. It came in close and did its single 'whooping' vocalization. What a wonderful bird to see. It was getting late so we decided to call it a day. Near the gate we got brief views of two Yellow-rumped Caciques.

We returned to the Tower and met to do our checklist before having another tasty meal. It was yet another incredible day in Panama, but we weren't quite finished.

We did a night drive down Semaphore Hill and someone asked to join us. Jonathan takes photos for the three lodges and he was equipped with night vision goggles. Starting out, he got a tiny heat reading. It was a sleeping female Violet-bellied Hummingbird!! We spotted one, then two, and then three Nine-banded Armadillos. Julie loved that. Then, Jonathan was getting a larger reading. It turned out to be a Rothschild's Porcupine, somewhat curled up in the thick sub-canopy vegetation. Now, how cool was that? We heard a Great Potoo calling far away and couldn't catch up to it. A second sleeping hummingbird was found. It was a female White-necked Jacobin. We saw another two-toed sloth as well. On the way back up, a second porcupine was spotted high up on the side of a tree. As we approached, it disappeared to the back side of the tree. This incredible day was now complete.

## **Fri., Mar. 15                      Pipeline Road | Plantation Trail**

Every day we venture out to a different place to search for the wide variety of fauna that Panama possesses. Any bird watching visit to this country must include a morning at the famous Pipeline Road. We headed out after an early breakfast, taking advantage of the cooler morning hours.

As we were entering the forest, Robert noticed a silhouette just inside the forest at eye level. The search image formed told him it was something good, and it was. It was a Northern Tamandua. We were able to watch it feed as it tore apart small branches in search of prey that it licked up with its sticky tongue. What a fabulous encounter.

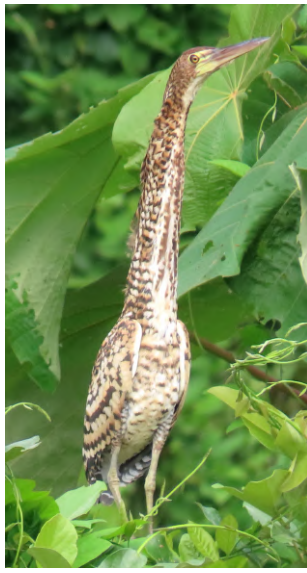




We continued down the road and didn't get far when we encountered more birds. A pair of Yellow-throated Toucans was feeding on Gumbo Limbo fruits right above our heads, completing the list of toucans for the trip at five species. Several Purple-throated Fruitcrows also came in, including a regal male with a purple throat. A Northern Barred Woodcreeper was spotted climbing up a gigantic tree and would be the only sighting of the trip. Jorge also pointed out to us a Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift nest that was attached half way up another big tree. In Panama, as elsewhere, people have different beliefs or superstitions after seeing small, black birds mysteriously 'emerge' from trees.

A ways up the road we parked and began to walk in. It didn't take long when we encountered some birds feeding on figs. A gorgeous male White-tailed Trogon perched in plain sight for close-up scope views. A male Northern Black-throated Trogon and Rufous Motmot had also joined the feast.

Jorge heard a call that belonged to the one of the tiniest flycatchers in the New World. It was a Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, whose cricket-like call taunted us from the canopy of a small tree. With patience, we spotted it and everyone got a great view. A bit further another tell-tale call echoed in the canopy. It was a pair of Black-breasted Puffbird and we were able to get scope views of them. Jorge had a nice surprise waiting for us. It was a nesting Common Potoo and the female had just hatched a chick. The adorable downy chick was on its 'nest' and the female was nearby. As Jorge went to get one of the cars and bring snacks, he left it as homework to see who could find the female first. Harriet got it. We had some snacks and cold drinks then continued up the access road. Another Crimson-crested Woodpecker was seen as well as Brown-hooded Parrots flying by. Yet another exciting find was a nesting Gray-headed Kite. No one was around when we arrived at the spot and soon we heard one of the adults calling not far away. It then flew to the nest with breakfast and began tearing pieces of meat for the downy chick. What a great sighting. Robert then spotted a Double-toothed Kite soaring over the canopy, adding to the list of raptors. Nearby, we came across a busy mixed flock that was taking place at mid-level and the understory. We saw Olivaceous Flatbill, White-flanked Antwren, Dot-winged Antwren, Checker-throated Stipplethroat, and Spot-crowned Antwren. The morning was slowing down a bit, but we would continue to see some more interesting species. High up in a sparsely-leaved legume Jorge spotted a Gray (Choco) Elaenia. In the forest understory we spotted a lovely Bicolored Antbird which had escaped everyone the other day. Further down slope a couple of birds were foraging in the leaf litter. It ended up being a pair of Song Wren which looks more like an antbird. They began their whimsical duetting song and came in for a spectacular view. This was the first



time in four trips that we were able to see this bird well. As we were finishing our walk we got great views of a pair of Gray-headed Tanagers and brief looks at a lone Black-tailed Trogon.

We hopped in the truck and began our way out. We saw more Howler Monkeys draped over branches high in the trees. We suddenly came across a small mixed flock foraging low in the understory. A stunning Cinnamon Woodpecker was seen at eye level as well as a pair of Fasciated Antshrikes and Lesser Greenlet. What fun! Just as we were leaving the forest, near the Tamandua spot, Kathleen spotted a White-whiskered Puffbird perched alongside the road. It was so cooperative and allowed for some outstanding photo opportunities. Pipeline Road rarely disappoints a bird watcher. We returned to the hotel and had another delicious lunch and some R&R.

In the late afternoon a few of us decided to check out a different trail. At the front gate below the Tower was a path called Plantation Trail. On the weekends it is a super busy place with hikers and bikers, but today it was quiet. In the parking lot we found some more Geoffroy's Tamarins scurrying through the sub-canopy. Just a little ways down the trail we ran into a few birds whose behavior was that of those attending army ants. At first glance we couldn't see any visible army ants but did see a little swarm of tiny ants. It was enough to attract a male and female Spotted Antbird, a Chestnut-backed Antbird, and a female Black-crowned Antshrike. The absolutely adorable male Spotted Antbird literally posed for some great photo opportunities. A bit further down the trail we heard a Slaty-backed Forest-Falcon calling from across a ravine. It was so close, yet so far, and never came into view. But just hearing its call reverberating in the forest was magical.

We ended yet another outstanding day in Panama.

## Sat., Mar. 16 **Chagres River & Canal Boat Ride**

Today was our last full day in Panama and we embarked on another adventure. We headed to the nearby Chagres River where it empties into the Canal. We were assigned our boat and off we went. We first headed down the Canal to some backwater areas. We saw some Mangrove Swallows and Gray-breasted Martins along the way. We exited the canal and found Wattled Jacanas, some with young, foraging atop water hyacinth. Several pairs of Limpkins were also present. We saw small numbers of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, often times seeing their orange bills sticking up over the water hyacinth. Two small flocks of the giant Greater Anis were observed foraging high in the trees. A nice surprise was a family of Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, consisting of the parents and two black downy chicks. Orange-colored *Erythrina* trees were blooming, whose nectar often attracts birds. A small flock of



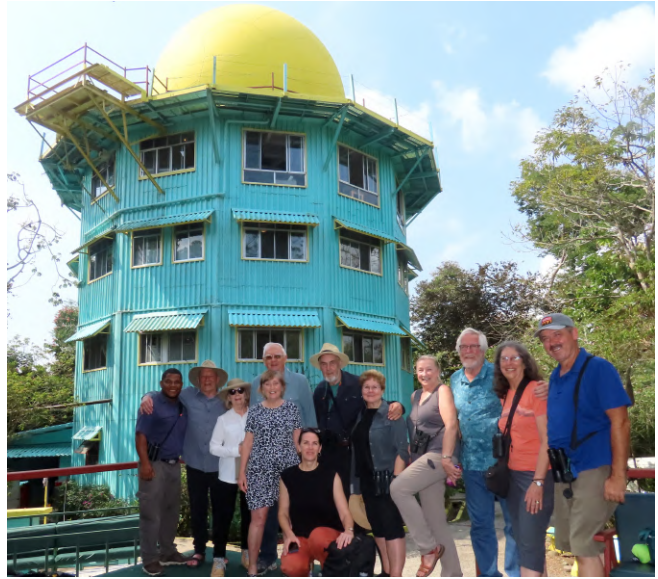


Red-lored Parrots were seen in one of those trees. We watched as one parrot picked individual flowers and lifted them up to drink the nectar. That was cool. Down another side channel we saw six Proboscis Bats lined up on the underside of a tree. We saw more Howler monkeys on various, small islets, all of which were apparently released there. We re-entered the main Canal and found ourselves next to giant cargo ship which towered high above us. We went up the Chagres River a little ways and found two Snail Kites, much fewer than the previous years. Something was definitely going awry with their population. We found another immature Rufescent Tiger-Heron and many other species of long-legged waders. There were a surprisingly large number of Purple Gallinules and it was fun seeing them pop in and out of the water lilies. Many Anhingas were also observed, some drying their wings. One last bird we were looking for was a Lesser Kiskadee, and a pair was seen in the same spot as the previous years.

We made our way back to the dock and drove to the nearby Gamboa resort. Jorge had worked there previously so we had access to the grounds. Just a couple of days ago some other Tower guests saw an Agami Heron in a secluded slough, so we thought we'd check it out. We first stopped to look for another forest denizen. Down a trail and up in a hollow were two Western Night Monkeys and we got excellent views of the one who had its head sticking out. By the parking lot we encountered a flock of attractive Yellow-backed Orioles, the only species of oriole seen on the trip. We went to the slough and the heron wasn't around, but we did get brief glimpses of a Great Tinamou that was foraging in the thick underbrush.

We hopped back into the Bird Mobile and just after some road construction Jan and Jorge spotted something in the bamboo at the same time. It was a Black Hawk-Eagle!! We stopped to admire this fine predator and we got stunning views. It is very rare to find them perched, anywhere. We triumphantly returned to the Tower and had lunch.

In the late afternoon we climbed to the viewing platform to enjoy the last bird activity of the day. One of the fruiting Melastomes was attracting a nice variety of fruit feeding birds. A beautiful male Velvety Manakin showed up, a pair of Green Honeycreeper, then a male Shining Honeycreeper, this last one being new for the trip. A colorful Black-cheeked Woodpecker also came in, but to feed on the bananas. It was a nice way to end the day.



We did the checklist one final time and recapped many wonderful moments during the trip. Everyone had a special bird, or two, or moments they enjoyed. We recorded 275 species of birds and twenty mammals.

## Sun., Mar. 17 Departures

We woke again this morning to the sounds of the howler monkeys. We did some final bird watching from the roof before breakfast and it was worth it. The Green Shrike-Vireo had been taunting us the entire time and had remained hidden in the forest canopy. Today, however, we got some wonderful views as one came close to the Tower. A neon bird we saw the other day returned; a male Blue Cotinga. This time it was much closer and everyone got scope views. Suddenly, it flew right toward the Tower, perhaps being attracted by Robert's bright blue shirt. These birds are vision-oriented. It was a phenomenal way to end the trip to Panama. We got another group pictures and said our 'good-byes' to Jorge and the staff at the Canopy Tower then departed.

We quickly reached Panama City where we all went our separate ways. We hope to see each again someday.

*Photos: Group (Robert Gallardo - RG), Keel-billed Toucan (AS), Scarlet-thighed Dacnis (RG), Tawney-capped Euphonia (AS), Garden Emerald (AS), Black-chested Jay (RG), Golden-hooded Tanager (AS), Agouti (AS), Basilisk (AS), Rufous-crested Coquette (AS), Female Lampeto Metalmark (RG), Lantana Scrub-Hairstreak (RG), Red-legged Honeycreeper (AS), Crimson-backed Tanager (RG), Thick-billed Euphonia (RG), Group (RG), Immature Spectacled Owl (RG), Three-toed Sloth (AS), Long-tailed Tyrant (AS), Northern Emerald Toucanet (RG), Green Honeycreeper (AS), Coati (RG), Slaty-tailed Trogon (RG), Broad-billed Motmot (RG), Two-toed Sloth (AS), Gartered Trogon (AS), Golden-headed Tanager (AS), Lesser Nighthawk (AS), Slaty-tailed Trogon -(AS), Whooping Motmot (AS), Kinkajou (AS), Black-tailed Trogon (AS), Common Potoo chick (RG), Nesting Gray-headed Kite (RG), White-tailed Trogon (AS), Cinnamon Woodpecker (RG), White-faced Capuchin (AS), White-whiskered Puffbird (AS), American Crocodile (AS), Red-lored Parrot (AS), Immature Rufescent Tiger-Heron (RG) Young Crocodile (RG), Western Night Monkey (AS), Black Hawk-Eagle (AS), Geoffroy's Tamarin (AS), Violet-bellied Hummingbird (RG), Black-cheeked Woodpecker (RG), Masked Tityra (AS), White-necked Jacobin (AS), Blue Cotinga (RG)*