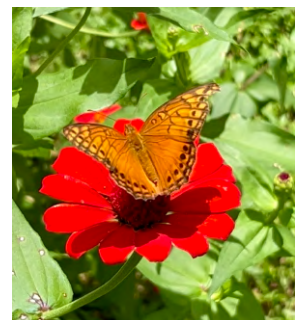
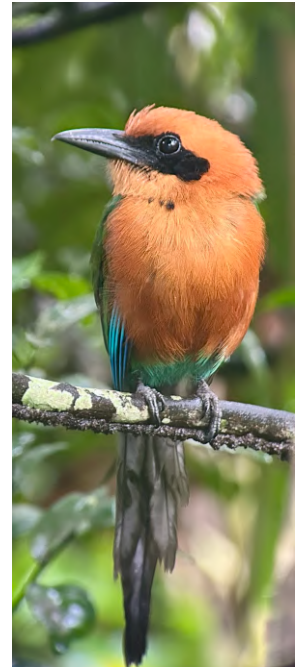


Panama: Three Great Lodges | July 7 – 18, 2024 | Trip Report | by Dave Mehlman



Guides: Igua Jimenez (Canopy Camp & Tower), Eliecer Rodriguez (Canopy Lodge), and Dave Mehlman with participants: Charlotte, Gina, Jim, Kara, Michael, Sharon, and Richard



Sat., July 6 Arrivals in Panama City

Everyone gradually made their way to the Riande Hotel close to Panama City's Tocumen International Airport at various times, with some arriving the prior day for a bit of extra time in Panama. The group met for its first welcome dinner in the Riande's restaurant in the evening, except for Sharon and Richard, who got in a little too late. We got to know each other a little bit and discussed general plans for the tour and the next day. We then all turned in for the night in preparation for the start of our great adventure the next day.



Sun., July 7 Lake Bayano | Tortí | Canopy Camp

We met our amazing local guide, Fidelino “Igua” Jiménez, along with his colleagues Gregorio and Daniel from Canopy Family, in the morning after breakfast at the Riande Hotel. After loading our gear into the van and truck, off we went, headed east to the wilds of Darién Province. This trip was long enough to allow for stops on the way and our first stop was at the Lake Bayano Bridge, where we parked at one end of the bridge and walked across, birding along the way. This stop got us off to a roaring start as we spotted a Bat Falcon perched atop the bridge girders and a Common Black Hawk in the nearby trees. A few Cocoli Herons were sprinkled about the shoreline of the lake while the roadside trees held Palm and Plain-colored Tanager, Orange-chinned Parakeet, and Common Tody-Flycatcher.

Continuing our way along the Panamerican Highway, we made a quick stop after Igua spotted some Mantled Howler Monkeys in the trees, and then continued to lunch at the Portal Avicar Restaurant in the town of Tortí. In addition to delicious food, the restaurant featured hummingbird and fruit feeders to add some “eye candy” to the food. Alternating eating and watching, we had a great show from many Black-throated Mangos, supplemented by White-necked Jacobin and Rufous-tailed, Scaly-breasted, and Sapphire-throated Hummingbirds. A sharp-eyed diner noticed a Whooping Motmot perched in the trees to provide a noticeable bit of excitement to the meal!

After lunch, we continued our way east on the Panamerican, which in western Panama Province was in remarkably bad condition, until we got to Darién Province, at which point the highway miraculously improved. This helped speed the trip up and we arrived in good order at Canopy Camp in mid-afternoon, with plenty of time to get a short briefing on the Camp from Abel, settle into our tents, watch the feeder display around the dining/lounge area, admire the profusion of butterflies foraging on all the flowers, and take a short birding walk on the grounds. Some of the hummingbirds seen, which proved to be regulars every day at the Camp, included White-vented Plumbeater, Pale-bellied Hermit, and Sapphire-throated and Blue-chested Hummingbird. A few of the butterflies we identified today and during our stay included Julia Heliconian, Tiger Longwing, Sara Longwing, Mexican Fritillary, Sapho Longwing, White and Banded Peacock, and Starry Night Cracker. The walk, though late in the day, was quite pleasant and easy as we strolled through the Camp down to the vulture feeding blind. Highlights included Spot-crowned Barbet, Collared Aracari, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Cinnamon Becard, and Plumbeous Kite. The vulture blind had nothing but the usual Black Vultures present, though we were encouraged to return often since sometimes a King Vulture came in to “rule



the roost.” After concluding the walk, we had a bit of free time before reuniting in the lounge area for our first daily checklist followed by an excellent dinner and discussion of plans for the following day.

Mon., July 8 Canopy Camp | El Salto Road | Yaviza Wetland

We started the day with the filling breakfast at the Camp and then collected our gear for our morning excursion. We spent the morning along the quiet El Salto Road, either walking or using the Camp’s birdmobile to move to other spots along the road. We were accompanied today by Oscar Fría, one of the Camp’s several excellent guides, who helped spot many things for us. The highlights were many, way too many to mention them all, but included sightings of a troop of Geoffroy’s Tamarins, a very elegant primate, in addition to howling Mantled Howler Monkeys. The avian component really came through, aided by Igua and Oscar’s incredible spotting ability; some of the more interesting finds included Double-banded Graytail, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, a calling Gray-cheeked Nunlet (which refused to be seen!), Red-rumped Woodpecker, Pied and White-necked Puffbird, Black-tailed Trogon, and Crested and Chestnut-headed Oropendola. However, the major highlight of the day was a King Vulture perched in a tall tree, completely dwarfing the accompanying Black Vultures. On our way out, we also added Squirrel Cuckoo to our growing bird list. Arriving back at the camp, we had time to stow our gear before lunch and then an early afternoon rest period.

We reconvened in mid-afternoon and headed out for another excursion, this time toward the south/southeast on the Panamerican Highway. Our first stop was at a small wetland right next to the highway where, after a great deal of effort and coaxing, everyone was able to get at least a short glimpse of a Black-capped Donacobius, one of the most elegant of tropical American birds. In addition to this bird, the site yielded a perched Striped Cuckoo (a species more often heard than seen), Black-crowned Tityra, and Ringed Kingfisher.

Pushing further down the highway, we arrived at the site known locally as the Yaviza Wetland, where we got out of the minivan, put on our rubber boots, and enjoyed a leisurely walk down an old, but very wet, road which allowed views out over an extensive wetland. This very productive walk added many species to our list, including Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Purple Gallinule, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Muscovy Duck, Capped Heron, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Pied Water-Tyrant, and Ruddy-breasted Seedeater. Finishing our walk, we gladly took off our rubber boots and changed into regular shoes, then climbed back in the van and headed back to camp after enjoying a totally delightful field day in the Darién. We then had another great dinner, did our daily checklist, and turned in for the evening.



Tues., July 9 Canopy Camp | Gonzalez Farm | Quebrada Félix

Today was one of the most interesting and eagerly anticipated days of the entire tour: our trek to attempt to see a Harpy Eagle. We began with a very early breakfast in the darkness, then gathered our gear and loaded the van. We drove to the end of the Panamerican Highway at the town of Yaviza on the banks of the Chucunaque River. At the town dock, we found our two boats ready and waiting, so we carefully climbed on board and set off on the adventure. The river was flowing fast and furious due to upstream rains, so we only spent about 15 minutes in the boats and we arrived at the Gonzalez Family Farm on the opposite bank, tied up, and then carefully clambered out of the boats. Greeted by members of the family, we made introductions and then were introduced to the horses who would carry us on most of the trip to the Harpy nest site. Alas, there were 8 of us but only 5 horses, so Jim, Gina, and Dave volunteered to start walking while everyone else loaded up on a “trusty steed”, helped by many strong arms and a small mounting platform. Once ready, we all set out, either on horse or on foot.

The walkers, who ended up walking between $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the distance, found it tough going between the heat, humidity, and at times very deep mud. Nevertheless, we carried on and managed to find a few birds, including Great Antshrike, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, White-browed Gnatcatcher, and a fly-by Laughing Falcon. At last, the horses, who had turned around after delivering the first load, came back and picked up the walkers to ride the rest of the way.

Arriving at the nest observation site, high on a small ridge bordering beautiful forest on one side and cleared pasture on the other, everyone dismounted and the guides set up the scopes on the nest and the adult birds. Although we maintained a very respectful distance so as not to disturb the birds, both the nest and the magnificent eagles were easily visible through the scopes, allowing views as long as anyone wanted and some opportunities to try digiscoping. While at the site and admiring the views, we also got to enjoy some Blue Dacnises and Golden-hooded Tanagers moving through the area as part of a small flock. By mid-morning, we all had our fill and we began the trip back, though not before a few Swallow-tailed Kites flew overhead to provide an exclamation point on the morning. As on the outbound trip, the first group of 5 of us road all the way back and the remaining three set off on foot until the horses could return and pick us up.

Arriving back at the Farm homestead, we all dismounted and enjoyed a cool drink, while we admired some of the family’s pets, such as a few Gray-headed Chachalacas and a Kinkajou. After all was finished, we said



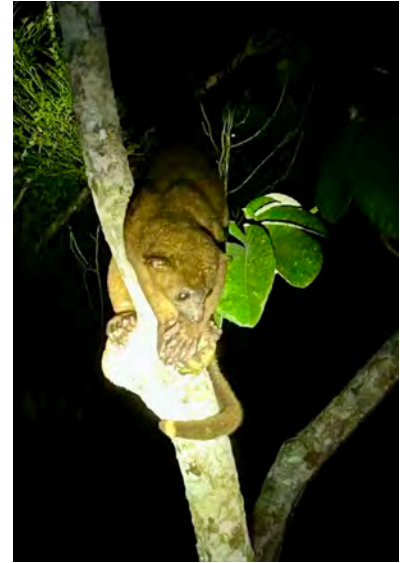
goodbye and retraced our multi-modal transportation journey, using the boats to get back to Yaviza and then finding our van to return to Canopy Camp in time for lunch. Lunch was then enjoyed, as usual, in the dining area, after which we had a rest period during the heat of the early afternoon. Reconvening in mid-afternoon, we set out again in the birdmobile, this time for the nearby site of Quebrada Félix. However, no sooner had we arrived along this rather pastoral road and started birding, but very dark clouds and thunder rolled in. Deciding that it was too risky to continue given the oncoming storm, we turned right around and headed back as the rain started to fall. Arriving back at the camp a bit wetter than we started, we had time to dry off, change into new clothes, and then reconvene for our daily checklist, discussion of plans for the following day, and dinner.

Wed., July 10 Canopy Camp | Chucunaque River | Nuevo Vigía | Quebrada Félix

We started the day with a more normal breakfast time, then loaded our gear (including rubber boots!) for our morning outing. We used the van to drive to the small community of La Peñita on the banks of the Río Chucunaque (much further upstream than where we were the previous day). Arriving at the town “waterfront,” we got into two boats for a very pleasant trip up the Río Chucunaque to the Río Tuquesa and on to the Emberá community of Nuevo Vigía. This was a great birding boat trip with many highlights, including Red-rumped, Crimson-crested, and Lineated Woodpecker; loads of Mangrove Swallows over the water; Yellow-rumped Cacique; Crimson-backed Tanager; and Buff-throated Saltator to name a few. Arriving at the community, which was quite active with people coming and going, we scrambled up the bank and took a brief rest in the shade of a palm-thatch hut to get ready for the morning hike.

Spending almost 3 hours on a local trail through the forests to an old oxbow lake, we had an excellent morning of birding, albeit having to fend off numerous mosquitoes along the way. Though warm and humid, the trail was quite flat and well-maintained, allowing for great views of many species. The entire walk yielded many good birds, including a very noisy Green Ibis; a nicely behaved Gray-breasted Nunlet; Golden-green Woodpecker; Rufous-breasted and Pale-bellied Hermit; Band-tailed Barbthroat; Northern Barred Woodcreeper; and Green-and-rufous Kingfisher. The latter was a primary “birding target” of the walk and the bird completely delivered the goods, perching on a dead branch over the pond and allowing for numerous views and photos.

Returning from our walk at mid-day, we eagerly sought out the shade of the hut for a break and picnic lunch with cool drinks, a welcome relief from the heat and humidity of the morning, though all agreed it was superb



walk. After lunch, about half the group went out on a last short hike to the other nearby pond. Although in early afternoon it was quiet, bird-wise, we were able to add American Pygmy Kingfisher to our bird list at the second pond, along with Lesser Kiskadee and Wattled Jacana. After this group returned to the hut, we collected our gear, boarded back into the boats, and retraced our steps down the Tuquesa and Chucunaque rivers to La Peñita. Docking there, we carefully walked out of the boats and found our van, then drove back to the Camp for a rest.

In the late afternoon, a few hardy folks went out with Iguá for a second try at Quebrada Félix, this time encountering better weather which allowed us to go much further down the road than we had made it the previous day. This proved to be a fun afternoon outing, with various stops along the road producing a pair of male Blue Ground-Doves, 2 Barred Puffbirds, Great and Barred Antshrike, and Piratic Flycatcher. Toward the end of the afternoon, we reached a part of the area where a vast amount of forest had been completely cleared, apparently for new rice fields. Oddly, despite this apparent habitat destruction, the fields had numerous Great Egrets and Southern Lapwings and we spotted a Savannah Hawk flying away and a far-off perching American Kestrel; the latter two were the only ones of the tour. At the close of the afternoon, we returned to the Camp to clean up, then the entire group convened for the daily bird list (a long one today!) and dinner. Since it was our last night at the Camp, most also settled their bills for expenses incurred during the stay, then we turned in for final packing and a night's rest.

Thur., July 11 Canopy Camp | Reserva San Francisco | Tortí | Canopy Tower

Much to our dismay, this was our final morning at Canopy Camp. Nevertheless, a small group took advantage of the remaining time and went for a short walk on the entrance road to see what could be found. The group was rewarded with great views of Cinnamon Woodpecker, a male Blue Cotinga, Yellow-throated and Keel-billed Toucan, Black-tailed and Gartered Trogon, and a (stunning!) Brown-capped Tyrannulet. An excellent birding finish to our wonderful days at Canopy Camp. Returning to Camp, we enjoyed our breakfast there while the staff kindly rounded up our big bags. We then loaded into our van for the long trip that would end at the Canopy Tower.

Given the amount of time we had, birding along the way was appropriate, so our first stop on our way back to Panama City was the San Francisco Reserve outside the town of Tortí. Although this stop had great habitat, the birding was a bit slow for whatever reason. We did glimpse a Gray-lined Hawk (unexpectedly, the only one of



the tour), Cinnamon and White-winged Becard, and Yellow-winged Flatbill. In addition, we heard a Russet-winged Schiffornis, but it could not be lured out of its dark understory to be seen. Finishing here, we returned to Tortí for our second lunch of the tour at the Portal Avicar Restaurant. Enjoying the great food there, we also enjoyed the hummingbird traffic as we had before. After lunch, we essentially traveled non-stop to and around Panama City and arrived at our next destination, the famous Canopy Tower, right around 5:00 PM. After arrival, we unloaded, went to our assigned rooms on various levels of the tower, then reconvened for an introduction to the tower, our daily checklist, and then a wonderful buffet dinner. As we ate, a Kinkajou came looking for banana handouts at one of the windows, as they typically do, so we all rushed over and had nice looks at this arboreal raccoon relative. After that, it was off to our first night in the Tower.

Fri., July 12 Canopy Tower | Pipeline Road | Ammo Dump Ponds

Many of us started the day as the sun rose by climbing onto the roof of the Tower to admire the surrounding views (360°!)—one of the most famous canopy views in the Americas. After this morning inspiration, we ducked back down the ladder for an excellent breakfast in the dining area. We then gathered our gear and climbed into the Tinamu birdmobile for a morning outing along Pipeline Road in the old Canal Zone, one of Panama’s legendary rainforest birding roads.

We spent the entire morning exploring parts of this road, mostly in the general vicinity of the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center which we would visit later in the tour. While the quantity of birds was perhaps not so high, the quality was superb. Among the exciting species seen were Crane Hawk, Broad-billed Motmot, Great Jacamar, Fasciated and Black-crowned Antshrike, Checker-throated Stipplethroat, Spotted Antbird (incredibly good views of this one!), Streak-chested Antpitta, Black-striped Woodcreeper, and females of Red-capped and Velvety Manakin—wow!! In addition to the birds, Central American Agoutis were often seen, scampering about—a sure sign of undisturbed forest not subjected to much human pressure. As this truly excellent morning came to a close, we reluctantly climbed back aboard the bird mobile to return. A quick stop along the entrance road to the Tower yielded a Western Olivaceous Flatbill and Rufous Motmot to our list for the day.

Returning to the tower, we took off our field gear and then went upstairs to the dining room for a lunch, followed by a rest during the heat of the day. Reconvening in mid-afternoon, we headed out for our afternoon outing at the well-known birding site called Ammo Dump Ponds. This site, right alongside Gatún Lake, had an

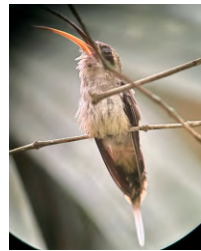
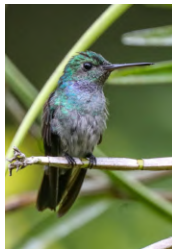


interesting mixture of lawns, second growth, and wetlands and produced an equally interesting mix of birds including Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Black-crowned Tityra, Scrub Greenlet, Yellow-tailed Oriole, and several Tropical Mockingbirds. Upon conclusion of this peaceful afternoon walk, we returned to the tower, reconvened for the daily checklist, followed by another super buffet dinner.

Sat., July 13 Canopy Tower | Gatún Lake | Gamboa Rainforest Lodge

Today began, as usual, with breakfast in the dining room and with early risers enjoying the view from the roof or the dining room windows. After breakfast, we collected our gear and loaded in the van for the short trip to the Gamboa boat dock, where we boarded our small excursion boat for a trip into Gatún Lake and the Panama Canal. Our three-hour tour explored the west entrance of the Culebra Cut, some of the north shore of the eastern end of the Lake, and a bit of the lower Chagres River where it enters the canal at Gamboa. Given this was the height of the rainy season, water levels were pretty high and therefore we saw few herons, egrets, kingfishers, and similar species, but a very enjoyable trip was had. As might be expected in the Canal, we periodically had to stay close to shore as enormous container ships passed by with their big wakes, but this provided more time to scan the shore for birds and wildlife! A few of the fun bird species noted included Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Pelican, Limpkin, and Snail Kite. Mammals proved interesting, too, with our only sighting of Lesser Capybara of the tour being a small group foraging right on the banks of the Cut and a group of Proboscis Bats roosting on the underside of a tree at the edge of the water. As we ended our tour and approached the Gamboa dock, a light rain was falling to put a nice end to a beautiful morning out on the lake. Returning to the tower, we took a short break and then enjoyed our usual great lunch in the dining room followed by a short break.

Most of the group reassembled in mid-afternoon for our second outing of the day, this time to Gamboa Rainforest Lodge and its road and trail system. The Lodge's grounds are ideal for birding with relatively flat, easy trails and wide roads with only a little traffic. With Igua's expert help, we added some great birds to our list for the day and trip, including Slaty-tailed and Northern Black-throated Trogon, many Ochre-bellied Flycatchers feeding in a fruit tree, Yellow-winged Flatbill, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, Yellow-backed Oriole, Flame-rumped Tanager (here the Lemon-rumped form), and, in a find that amazed all of us on the spot, a singing Rosy Thrush-Tanager. This latter bird was one of the highlights of the tour and was truly a testimonial to Igua's ability to pick individual birds out of almost nowhere—he was even able to get a scope on it and we enjoyed lengthy views of the bird singing away.

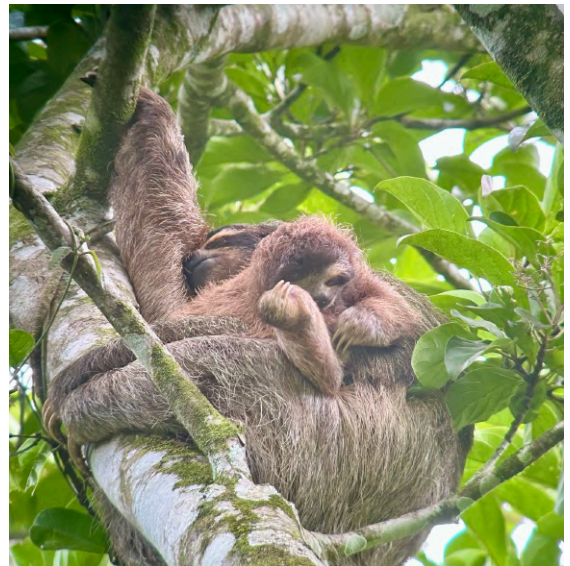


On our way back from this nice outing, Igua pulled the van over to the side of the paved road at a certain spot and began searching the trees intently. Sure enough, after a bit he spotted what we had stopped for: a roosting Great Potoo fixed on a large branch in a tree high above our heads! A definite favorite of everyone, we enjoyed great views of it through the scope. While observing, we also noticed a pair of Double-toothed Kites high in a tree on the other side of the road. Upon further inspection, they proved to be building a nest providing a double bonus bird sighting at this spot! In high spirits after this fun afternoon, we returned to the Tower to freshen up, then met again for our daily checklist, review of the next day's plans, and another very tasty dinner.

Sun., July 14 Canopy Tower | Panama Rainforest Discovery Center | Summit Ponds | night prow!

After our usual tasty breakfast in the Tower dining room, we grabbed our gear for the morning and loaded up in the van. Our destination for the morning was back out to Pipeline Road, but specifically to the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center to explore the trails, visitor center, tower, and pond. This was a great morning of birding with numerous species, many new to the list, found on our several hours there. The various trails we walked between sites were quite productive; among the unique highlights were a Great Tinamou glimpsed by a few, Green Shrike-Vireo, Long-billed Gnatwren, and many species of antbirds. Among the latter group, always a must-see in the neotropics, were Dot-winged and Moustached Antwren, Chestnut-backed and Dusky Antbird, and Black-faced Anthrush. We made the climb up the sturdy tower to the canopy platform (32 m above the ground!) and saw many butterflies (particularly sisters), Black-breasted Puffbird, Mealy Parrot, Blue Cotinga, and Scaled Pigeon.

A walk to the pond on site (Lago Calamita) resulted in Capped Heron, Purple and Common Gallinule, Yellow-tailed Oriole, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, and a couple of Snail Kites. We concluded our morning at the Center by spending some time at the Visitor Center watching their hummingbird feeders and noting a rather large number of bats flying around underneath the deck! Among the visitors to the feeders were Blue-chested and Violet-bellied Hummingbird, White-necked Jacobin, and Long-billed Hermit, accompanied in the surrounding trees by Fasciated Antshrike, Broad-billed Motmot, and some Squirrel Cuckoos. Finishing up here, we returned to the van, drove back to the Tower, and enjoyed another great lunch followed by a short rest.



Meeting up in mid-afternoon, about half the group went out for our final afternoon expedition from the tower, our destination being the nearby birding site known as Summit Ponds. In the ponds themselves, Iguá spotted a Boat-billed Heron concealing itself in the shoreline shrubbery and we had short glimpses of an American Pygmy Kingfisher lurking in the trees along with perching Amazon and Green Kingfishers; the latter was the first of the tour. While looking for birds, Geoffroy's Tamarins, White-faced Capuchins, and Mantled Howlers provided a mammalian component to the fauna. We extended our walk down an old road for some forest birding and, after a lot of effort on Iguá's part, finally got a decent look at an Orange-billed Sparrow, along with Jet Antbird, Slaty-tailed Trogon, and Whooping Motmot. The group then returned to the Tower for dinner and the checklist. After dark, a small, but very dedicated, group went out with Iguá in the small birdmobile to look for wildlife in the dark, but, perhaps due to the wetness, only saw some sloths, a Forest Rabbit, and bats.

Mon., July 15 Canopy Tower | Canopy Lodge

Alas, today was our last morning at the Tower; however, we started it in style with everyone on the roof of the tower to enjoy probably our best early morning weather during our days there. As the sun rose and highlighted the trees and the fog lying in low-lying areas, we enjoyed an extremely nice bit of time birding, wildlife-watching, and enjoying freshly made coffee. As we scanned the 360° view, we spotted a perching Semiplumbeous Hawk, a nearby Black-breasted Puffbird, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Olivaceous Woodcreeper (the only one of the tour), Lesser Greenlet, White-browed Gnatcatcher, and Brown-capped Tyrannulet. After this fabulous start to the day, we enjoyed our last Tower breakfast, said our good-byes to Iguá and the Tower staff, and then climbed into the very comfortable Canopy Lodge van driven by Eduard. And off we went on the roughly 3-hour drive to the Canopy Lodge via the Centennial Bridge over the Canal, along the coast near Coronado, and up into the mountains near Anton Valley (El Valle de Anton). Arriving at the lovely lodge, we were welcomed by the staff and our guide for the rest of the tour, Eliécer "Ele" Rodríguez, put our gear into our rooms, and then enjoyed a lovely lunch in the open air dining room.

After a brief break to get reorganized after the switch in lodges, we reconvened in mid-afternoon for a walk on the Lodge grounds and along the nearby paved road. With Ele's excellent skills and some very nice weather, we admired our new surroundings and some great birds, too! Highlights included Black-chested Jay (which were regulars at the lodge feeding stations), a small flock of Spot-crowned Barbets, Yellow-olive Flatbill, Rufous-breasted and Bay Wren (heard only, as is typical of these species), many Chestnut-headed Oropendolas, Golden-hooded and Bay-headed Tanager, and another Rosy Thrush-Tanager (heard only). After finishing this birding tour of the Lodge grounds, we walked up the paved road to the Chorro Macho Trail, also on Canopy Family



property, and walked across the creek and into the woods a short distance. Arriving at a carefully selected spot, Ele showed us a roosting Mottled Owl (our first owl of the tour!)—a fun highlight for the day. We then returned to the Lodge for a brief break, then reconvened for our daily checklist, dinner, and discussion of plans for the following day.

Tues., July 16 Canopy Lodge | La Mesa & Las Minas Road | Fundación EVACC | Las Mozas

The first of our two field days at the Lodge began with a fine breakfast in the openair dining area accompanied by some nice birding at the fruit and hummingbird feeders near the porch. A few lucky observers saw Dusky-faced Tanagers here, along with Black-chested Jays coming to eat rice, Rufous Motmots gorging themselves on bananas, and a brief appearance by a Gray-cowled Wood-Rail. After breakfast, we gathered our gear and met Ele on the porch to start our field trip. Interruptions quickly occurred, however, as a Bay Wren foraged in the shrubs near the bridge and a Buff-rumped Warbler checked out the riverside rocks (a tough life, indeed, for the birder at Canopy Lodge!). The river itself proved a reliable site for sunning Common Basilisks, who were almost always to be seen on rocks in or near the water.

We started driving up the road to explore some higher elevation habitat, getting great looks at a Violet-headed Hummingbird foraging amongst the Verbena right by the side of the road. A bit further up the road, we stopped and did some roadside birding at a productive spot. This area yielded a Spot-crowned Antwreio, a pair of Checker-throated Stipplethroats, Tawny-crested Tanager, and a big group of Collared Aracaris. We then continued our way up the mountain, arriving at a relatively flat area called, appropriately enough, La Mesa. At this point, somewhat to our dismay, the clouds descended on us shrouding the area and surrounding vegetation in a mist, which got variably lighter and heavier as the morning went on. Undeterred, we got on all our rain gear and set out for a lovely hour-and-a-half walk around La Mesa and on the gravel road to Las Minas.

The site was one of the most interesting and productive birding areas of the tour, with many interesting and new birds found during the morning. A sampling of these included several Spotted Woodcreepers; a pair of well-behaved, perching, Bronze-tailed Plumeleeters; Crowned Woodnymph; Green Hermit; White-flanked and Slaty Antwren; White-ruffed and Golden-collared Manakin; Sepia-capped Flycatcher; several Tawny-capped Euphonias; and Silver-throated Tanager. Since the morning was not yet over, we continued on the road along



the mesa to make one more road stop; fortunately, the clouds had lifted at this point providing much better viewing conditions. This stop proved equally productive with its mix of open habitats, forests, and second growth. Highlights here included Lineated Woodpecker, Barred Antshrike, Thick-billed and Tawny-capped Euphonia, a heard-only Black-striped Sparrow, Chestnut-capped Warbler, and Streaked Saltator. As we ended our birding at this last stop for the morning, the consensus of the group seemed to be that it had been, despite the clouds, one of the best single morning birding trips of the entire tour! Climbing on board the van, we returned to the Lodge for lunch and a short rest.

For our afternoon outing, we headed downhill into the town of Valle de Anton, though not before getting a glimpse of a Green Kingfisher flying rapidly up the creek at the Lodge. Our first stop was a short tour of the El Valle Amphibian Conservation Center (EVACC) Foundation headquarters on the grounds of the Hotel Campestre, just outside of the town proper. We received a fascinating tour of the small facilities from a docent, who introduced us to the work of the Foundation in captively propagating endangered and threatened species of frogs in Panama, focusing on the extremely rare Golden Frog, now confined to captivity. After finishing our frog tour, we next made a short visit to the town market in the center where we had an opportunity to stock up on arts and handicrafts for anyone inclined to do so. We ended the day with a birding trip to the area very near town known as Las Mozas, where we walked in some very open forest to see what could be found. Ele, who knew the area well, first led us to a special spot where we had stunning views of a fledged Spectacled Owl; its parents were nearby, but were much warier and hard to observe. Owls in daytime are always a highlight and a special treat, and this one was no exception as it stared first at us, then away, with its dark eyes surrounded by its white fluffy natal feathers. After this treat, we continued birding in the relatively quiet woods, eventually digging up Isthmian and Rufous-and-white Wren, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and Buff-throated and Streaked Saltator. After finishing birding, we returned to the lodge for dinner, our daily checklist, and a review of plans for the following day.

Wed., July 17 Canopy Lodge | Mata Ahogado | El Hato | Cara Iguana

We began today with a tasty breakfast at the Lodge, collected our field gear, and then departed for a morning of birding around the small town of Mata Ahogado, to the east and a bit higher than Valle de Anton. We spent a very pleasant few hours making stops in and around this town, including an extended visit to a house with a variety of fruit and hummingbird feeders. Highlights this morning included several views of Black-striped Sparrow, Lesson's Motmot, Black-throated Saltator, Barred Antshrike, Garden Emerald, and Lesser and Yellow-



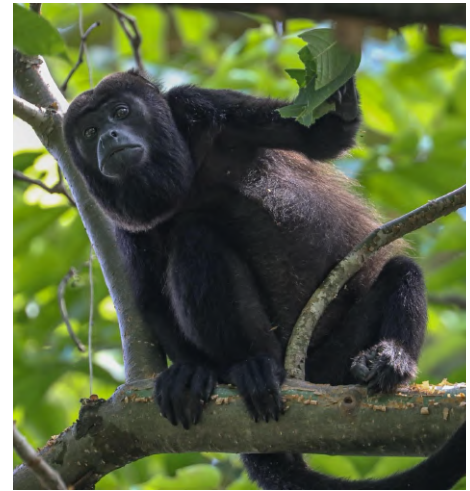
bellied Elaenia. Heading back to the Lodge, we stopped in Valle de Anton at a place known locally as El Hato, to try to find a few more species for our list. Ele noticed several Blue-and-white Swallows perched on a phone line in the distance, allowing us to tick that one off, and the group fortuitously spotted a Long-billed Starthroat perching in a tree, another addition to the list. Returning to the Lodge, we enjoyed another great lunch in the dining area and then some free time before departing on our afternoon outing.

As we gathered for the afternoon, a light rain fell, so we decided to postpone our departure and spend a bit of time watching the large flowering heliconia by the Lodge which was occasionally known to be visited by a White-tipped Sicklebill, a species most of us were very interesting in seeing. We stationed ourselves on the bench across from the Heliconia and watched carefully. Alas, the only appearances that were made were from a Rufous-tailed Hummingbird and a Long-billed Gnatwren, not the objects of our quest. So, since the rain had eased, we headed out for our final outing of the trip, this time to a place called Cara Iguana, a rural area at the edge of town and very near the volcano of the same name. This area, very easy to bird from its wide roads (alas, apparently soon to be lined with large houses) and scattered trees, was an enjoyable last place to spend the time. We encountered Squirrel Cuckoo, Lineated Woodpecker, Masked Tityra, Piratic Flycatcher, Yellow-crowned and Thick-billed Euphonia, and Lesser Goldfinch, among other things such as a Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth.

We then returned to the lodge and began the process of organizing our gear ahead of departure the next day. As we gathered for dinner, a Central American Woolly Opossum appeared and tried to break into its version of Fort Knox: the cage full of bananas! Although it could not get in, it did not give up which allowed us to get great views and photos of this interesting marsupial. We then gathered for our final checklist and dinner and then took the time to settle our final bills incurred at the Lodge, before turning in for our final night.

Thur., July 18 Departures

We enjoyed our last breakfast at the Lodge, then did final organizing of our gear, everyone kind of reluctant to leave. Just before departing, we received a very nice surprise when the Canopy Staff gave everyone on the tour a certificate for membership in the TLC (Tower, Lodge, Camp) Club, signed by Raúl Arias de Para himself! Final photos were taken and we all bade a fond farewell to the Lodge Staff and thanked them for their wonderful hospitality during our stay. We then found Eduard with the van again and commenced the 3-hour drive to



Panama City, with most being dropped off at Tocumen Airport for their flights home and a few staying on for one final night in Panama.

Photos: Group Photo (Dave Mehlman - DM), Blue-gray Tanager (DM), Mexican Fritillary (DM), Geoffrey's Tamarin (Gina Wainscott - GW), Rufous Motmot (DM), Scenic (Jim Mathews - JM), Tiger Longwing (DM), Slaty-tailed Trogon (DM), Roadside Hawk (DM), Geoffroy's Tamarin (DM), Golden-snouted Sootywing (DM), King Vulture (KB), Yaviza Boat (GW), Group at Harpy Eagle nest (DM), Gray-cheeked Nunlet (KB), Harpy Eagle (KB), Sister on binoculars (DM), Selfie (GW), Green-and-rufous Kingfisher (GW), White Peacock (DM), Kinkajou (DM), Owl Butterfly (DM), Broad-billed Motmot (DM), Velvety Manakin (DM), Molpe Metalmark (DM), Canopy Tower sunrise (DM), Western Night Monkeys (DM), Slaty-tailed Trogon (DM), Discovery Center Tower (DM), Snail Kite (DM), Blue-chested Hummingbird (KB), Black-breasted Puffbird (DM), Long-billed Hermit (DM), Common Basilisk (DM), Birding Las Minas road (DM), Bronze-tailed Plumeleeter (DM), Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth (DM), Birding Las Mozas (DM), Spectacled Owl (DM), Buff-throated Saltator (DM), Red-legged Honeycreeper (DM), Thick-billed Euphonia (KB), group with monkey (KB), Keel-billed Toucan (KB), White-vented Plumeleeter (KB), group in boat (KB), Geoffroy's Tamarin (KB), White-faced Capuchin (KB), Magnificent Frigatebirds on buoy (KB), Mantled Howler Monkey (KB)