

Western Panama: Tranquilo Bay with Canopy Lodge Extension | Species Report February 1-11, 2024 | with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by Greg Butcher with guide Roger Morales, and participants Carla, Carol, Cassie, Chris, Marlene, Nissa, Pam, Peter, and Susan

At Tranquilo Bay, we were led by local guide Roger Morales, with trip participants Carla, Pam, Susan, Carol, Marlene, Chris, Nissa, Cassie, and Peter. We had surprisingly wet weather for the "dry" season in the middle of a "drought", but the rain only interfered with the birding on one morning. (We had a few wet boat rides, but dried out quickly back at the lodge.) The birding sites from Tranquilo Bay are wonderfully diverse, and we accumulated a good list, including 16 species of flycatchers, 12 hummingbird species, 15 tanagers, 13 warblers, 3 trogons, 4 toucans (including a toucanet and an aracari), Snowy Cotinga (a local specialty), Nicaraguan Seed-Finch (another specialty for Panama), and a surprise Red-footed Booby.

At Canopy Lodge, our guides were Tino Sanchez and Eliecer Rodriguez. Pam, Susan, Nissa, and Chris continued with us. Some highlights there included Crested and Spectacled Owls, 11 hummingbird species, 11 flycatcher species, a puffbird, a barbet, and 16 tanagers. The highlight of the trip for me (Greg) was a 3-minute view of a Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo, a species I had been dreaming about since 1979!

Thanks to the guides, the hosts, and the participants for a wonderful trip, and you're welcome to Panama for the rain we inadvertently brought with us. I hope to return next year.

BIRDS

The eBird link below details the 279 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Panama: Tranquilo Bay with Canopy Lodge Extension | February 1 – 11, 2024 | eBird Trip Report](#)

MAMMALS: — (11)

Gray Four-eyed Opossum *Philander opossum* — We saw this species on our evening walk at the base of the stairs leading to the lodge.

Derby's Woolly Opossum *Caluromys derbianus* — This species was a regular visitor to the fruit feeders on the lodge porch. I recorded it on 4 different days.

West Indian Manatee *Trichechus manatus* — What a surprise! There, floating along the surface (for quite a long time!) of the Changuinola River was a full-sized manatee!

Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth *Bradypus variegatus* — On the first day, we saw 8 three-toed sloths on the Tranquilo Bay grounds. We had at least one three-toed sloth on 5 different days.

Hoffmann's Toe-toed Sloth *Choloepus hoffmanni* — Not nearly as common as the three-toed sloth, we saw this species on the last day in the Caribbean, at Green Acres Chocolate Farm, and on our first day at Canopy Lodge.

Central American Agouti *Dasyprocta punctata* — We didn't see this species on the Caribbean side, but we saw it every day under the birdfeeder at Canopy Lodge.

Red-tailed Squirrel *Sciurus granatensis* – Jay saw this species during our boat ride down Changuinola Canal, then we all saw it on two different days of expeditions from Canopy Lodge.

White-throated Capuchin *Cebus capucinus* – Capuchins were probably the mammal highlight of the trip. A troupe of capuchins visited the porch every day to take their bananas. A momma with her baby on her back seemed to be the most popular.

Mantled Howler Monkey *Alouatta palliata* – We weren't surprised to hear howlers, but we were very lucky to see some along the Punta Robalo Road. They are usually found in dense forest, but were seen here in wet savannah.

Panamanian Night Monkey *Aotus zonalis* – This species is much less frequent on the porch than the Capuchins, and it usually comes later at night. I (Greg) got lucky one night and saw several individuals coming in for bananas.

Crab-eating Raccoon *Procyon cancrivorus* – This species looks a lot like our Common Raccoon, but has dark feet rather than white. Of course, there are plenty of crabs in the mangroves below the lodge, but that didn't keep at least two individuals from visiting the lodge porch for fruit on at least four occasions.

Lesser White-lined Bat *Saccopteryx leptura* – Every day, the outside of one of the cabins near the lodge hosted a group of these bats. We could visit them whenever we wanted to, and we could be happy they weren't on the inside.

Common Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* – I really enjoy Tranquilo Bay because it's the only place I've ever commuted by boat on a daily basis. Getting a chance to see dolphins is a major plus! We only had this species on one day, but it was a thrill!

Water Buffalo *Bubalus bubalis* – OK, this species is no more native to Panama than all the cows, horses, goats, sheep, chickens, etc. that we saw, but it was more surprising! There was quite a herd that we saw every day along the Punta Robalo Road. It was very impressive to see such huge animals wallow successfully through the mud.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS: — (17)

Green Iguana *Iguana iguana* – We saw several iguanas. One large one was seen frequently on a limb near the lodge.

Green Basilisk *Basiliscus plumifrons* – We saw this species on two days, once on the mainland and once along Changuinola Canal.

Brown Basilisk *Basiliscus vittatus* – We also saw this species on three days, once on the Tranquilo Bay grounds, along the Changuinola Canal, and on our last day at Canopy Lodge.

Middle American Ameiva *Holcosus festivus* – Cassie and Peter had good looks at this species on the Tranquilo Bay grounds, and then many of us saw it near Canopy Lodge.

Ground Anole *Norops humilis* – We saw this species at Green Acres Chocolate Farm.

Border or Slender Anole *Anolis limifrons* – This anole was seen on three days: on the Tranquilo Bay grounds, at Isla Popa, and at Green Acres Chocolate Farm.

Asian House Gecko *Hemidactylus frenatus* – They were in all the buildings at Tranquilo Bay, with some at Canopy Lodge as well.

Tiger or Tropical Rat Snake *Spilotes pullatus* – Green Acres Chocolate Farm hosted this large snake.

Red-bellied Litter-Snake *Rhadinaea decorata* – This was a small snake found on the Tranquilo Bay grounds.

Bird or Puffing Snake *Phrynonax poecilonotus* – This large snake was found along Changuinola Canal.

Striped Rocket Frog *Allobates talamancae* – This species was heard or seen on three different days on the Tranquilo Bay grounds.

Green Climbing or Evergreen Toad *Incilius coniferous* – Only birds have standardized common names, so when looking up amphibians, it is common to find a variety of common (and scientific) names. This toad was also found at Tranquilo Bay, on two different days.

Smoky Jungle or Savage Bullfrog *Leptodactylus pentadactylus* – I'm not sure what's "Evergreen" about the toad or "Savage" about this bullfrog, but both were found on two days at Tranquilo Bay.

Strawberry Poison Dart Frog *Oophaga pumilio* – I think we finally found one that could be described as strawberry-colored, but the amazing thing about this species is the wide variety of colors we found on three different days.

Green-and-black Poison Dart Frog *Dendrobates auratus* – Then on the last day, at Green Acres Chocolate Farm, we

found this different species of poison dart frog.

Red-eyed Tree Frog *Agalychnis callidryas* — We only found this attractive frog on one day at Tranquilo Bay.

Valliant's Frog *Lithobates vaillanti* — We finally realized that this species isn't named for its character, but for a person. We found it along the Changuinola Canal.

FISHES:

Manta Ray *Mobula alfredi* — While snorkeling one afternoon near Tranquilo Bay, several of us encountered a close-up large Manta Ray!

Many species of reef fish — There may have been up to 20 species of reef fish on our two days of snorkeling, but we didn't have time to sort them all out to species. They included surgeonfish, parrotfish, needlefish, grunts, wrasses, damselfly fishes, butterfly fishes, snappers, and barracudas. They were swimming among several types of corals, sponges (purple and green!), feather-duster worms, sea urchins, and sea cucumbers. "The garden", on the first afternoon of snorkeling, was especially productive.