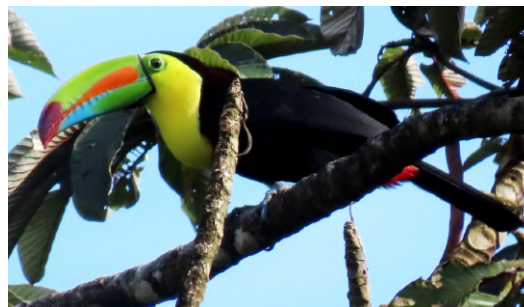


Panama: Birds & Mammals | Feb. 28-March 8, 2025 | Trip Report | by Robert Gallardo

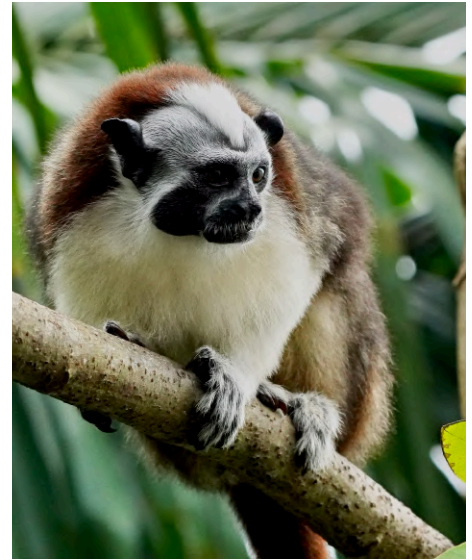


With Naturalist Journeys guide Robert Gallardo, local guides Danilo Sr. and Alexis, and participants Michelle, Art, Karen, Rick, Glenn, Jane, Linda, Sherri & Chuck.



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 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 29,000 mi², Panama is slightly smaller than the state of South Carolina, but boasts over 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.'

Friday February 28 Arrivals | Panama City | Canopy Lodge

Today the adventure began for the nine guests. Everyone had arrived at least a day early, so by 8:00am we were able to get going to the Canopy Lodge. We travelled across the dry landscape, paralleling the Pacific coastline. Just before our turnoff to Valle we made a quick stop at a gas station. On a patch of grass we found our first pair of Southern Lapwing. Atop a sign we also got our first Palm Tanager and Gray-breasted Martins. Robert spotted something cross the highway and it turned out to be a Fork-tailed Flycatcher. It didn't take long to see that it landed in a nest on a crossbar on a utility pole. Nice! We continued on our way and soon 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 and were met by Danilo Sr. who would be our excellent local guide for the next four days. We relaxed a bit and enjoyed the fruit feeders where we got our first glimpses of the Rufous Motmot, Gray-headed Chachalaca, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, and Thick-billed Euphonia. A pair of the special Dusky-faced Tanagers also made their first appearance. A gaudy Gray-cowled Wood-Rail foraged on scraps below. Showing up on the feeder and Porterweed flowers were Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, Violet-headed Hummingbird, and White-vented Plumeleteer. It didn't take long for a group of the marauding Black-chested Jays to come in and dominate the fruit feeder. A surprise visitor to the feeder was a pair of Streaked Saltators which are often hard to see well on the trip. Danilo went to check if another very special hummingbird was present nearby, and it was. A set of blooming *Heliconia* plants are key to attract the White-tipped Sicklebill, and it was perched on some sticks right in front of the plant. We enjoyed it to the fullest. We had lunch then checked in to our rooms before going out in the afternoon.

We started with a short walk on the lodge grounds and found a Common Tody-Flycatcher, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, and handsome Golden-hooded Tanagers near the ponds. Robert spotted a Long-billed Starthroat perched high on a twig where it likely took off to feed on some nearby Coral Tree blossoms. Seen soaring fairly low overhead was the majestic Black Hawk-Eagle and a Short-tailed Hawk. We began to walk up the road a bit and found a stunning male Green Honeycreeper in a wild fig tree. A lone Keel-billed Toucan also appeared and foraged



in a nearby Cecropia. Another special bird we really wanted to see was the tiny, yet spectacular, Rufous-crested Coquette. And there it was. Perched high on a tiny twig was a male which came and went as it foraged on unknown flowers. We hung around a Porterweed patch hoping it would show up but it didn't. However, a male Crowned Woodnymph and Blue-chested Hummingbird did make an appearance. A dazzling Green-celled Cattleheart swallowtail butterfly also came in to feed on the Porterweed. We continued to the nearby canopy zipline facility and found a few Tawny-crested Tanagers sitting in some nearby bushes. The male has a peculiar gold-colored mohawk. We walked down and up some trails to look for and find a pair of Mottled Owls on a day roost. It's always great to see owls in the daytime. Right below them a Long-billed Gnatwren came bopping in and we got decent looks. Something else we wanted to see there along the creek was the Sunbittern. It wasn't at its usual haunts but Danilo had one last spot to search. He wandered down a trail and at a crossing he flushed one up. It flew up to where we were and we got extended views of it. It is such a handsome bird. We returned to the road and on our way down found a lone Bananaquit feeding on nectar from an ornamental banana plant.

We returned to the lodge and had a bit of downtime before having dinner and doing our species checklist. Our first full day in Panama was off to a wonderful start.

Saturday March 1 | Caballero | La Cruz

This morning we woke to cloudy and rainy skies. We had breakfast, boarded the vehicles, and went up to the area where we wanted to look for birds. It began to rain hard so we decided to head back into the valley and look for better weather. On the other side of Valle we visited a private property in an area known as Caballero and the weather was much nicer there. Near the front gate we got brief looks at a pair of Gray-headed Tanager and a Squirrel Cuckoo. A fruiting *Ficus* tree was attracting a lot of birds and we got to see a lone Collared Aracari, Plain-colored Tanager, Yellow-crowned Euphonias, and Great Kiskadees. We continued down the trail and found a very cooperative Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet that was building a nest inside the inflorescence of a large, white aster. A bit further we encountered a Dusky-capped Flycatcher and a pair of the resident Chestnut-capped Warblers. We saw our first Red-legged Honeycreepers which included both males and females. A Lesson's Motmot was spotted perched in the shady understory and we were afforded scope views. In the open areas, butterflies abounded and we saw both the White and Banded Peacocks and a lovely Sky-blue Hairstreak. Danilo went down a little path to see if a special bird was present, and it was. A Spectacled Owl was on a day roost and we were ecstatic to see such a large owl.



We returned to the lodge for a tasty lunch and a little downtime. Robert and a few others continued looking for birds in the forest adjacent to the restaurant and found a female Fasciated Antshrike and male Blue-black Grosbeak. Some more nice additions.

Rather than attempting to go back into the mountains (which still had blackened skies) we decided to head in the opposite direction again. We took a route called La Cruz where Robert had never been to before. But it was worth the try, and it paid off. We stopped atop the mountain at a grassy pass to look for a pair of birds not usually seen on this trip. One was the Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch, and we saw two. It was a Lifer for everyone. A few Crested Bobwhites also crossed the road and a Lesser Elaenia was seen perched in a lone pine tree. A Yellow-rumped Warbler was spotted in a distant shrub as well as a soaring Osprey. We descended the mountain into some semi-deciduous forest and pulled off when we saw bird activity. It turned out to be a bonanza stop. A nearby Scaled Pigeon was calling and was the start to a frenzy. A Garden Emerald was spotted, along with a Boat-billed Flycatcher, Streaked Flycatcher, and Yellow-green Vireo. Lined up on a single branch were many Blue Dacnis and Red-legged Honeycreepers, converting it into a Christmas tree. A pair of the handsome Yellow-backed Orioles also came in to inspect the commotion. A male Hepatic Tanager and Yellow-bellied Elaenia joined the show. A small group of Yellow-faced Grassquits wrapped up the incredible list for that stop. We went a bit further down and made one last stop. A Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl was found which made for a double-owl day. Two Scrub Greenlets appeared and some Yellow-crowned Euphonias were seen feeding on mistletoe. We finally caught up to a perched Blue-headed Parrot atop a leafless tree. Before heading out, a pair of the cute Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet showed up. We definitely took advantage of the better weather going in the opposite direction today.

We returned to the lodge for a short break before doing our checklist and dinner.

Sunday March 2 | Finca Candelaria | Las Minas

Each day afield brings nice surprises and today was no exception. The rainy weather passed which allowed us to head back up into the mountains. Our destination this morning was a private farm called Candelaria which retained a nice-sized chunk of rainforest. Upon arriving, we were greeted by a handsome and abiding male Flame-rumped Tanager right at the gate. A little ways in we spotted two Smooth-billed Anis sitting atop stakes in a radish field. We entered the forest and it was fairly quiet at first. A Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and Crowned Woodnymph were spotted feeding on giant, red hot lips flowers. A small flock of Red-crowned Ant-Tanagers came and slipped away into the thickets. We would get better views later on. Danilo kept his ears peeled for any signs of the Black-crowned Antpitta. This was one of the best places to find this prized bird. We ended up missing it there, but would catch up to one soon enough. Eventually, the upper story began to warm up, and with it, the insect life. This cued



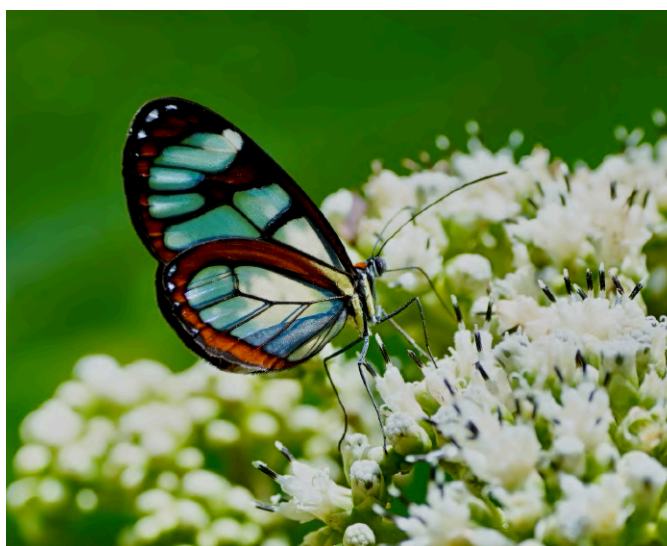
the many insect-eating species to get on the move. We had at least one or two flocks or kept following the same one along the loop trail. Nonetheless, the action really picked up and we encountered many species including Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher, Olive-striped Flycatcher, Sepia-capped Flycatcher, Russet Antshrike, Plain Antvireo, Spot-crowned Antvireo, White-flanked Antwren, and Checker-throated Stipplethroat. We got multiple chances at viewing many of these. A lone Spotted Antbird was also encountered. We saw our first furnarids for the trip which included Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Spotted Woodcreeper, and Plain Xenops. At one point, we heard Glenn say, "Hey look, a snake." Laid out right in front of him was a small, grayish eyelash viper atop a palm leaf. It was a great sighting and we all photographed this venomous snake. We reached the end of the loop trail, but we weren't quite finished. Some commotion in a nearby tree drew our attention. It was a fruiting fig, and there we saw many Bay-headed Tanagers, Silver-throated Tanagers and a male White-ruffed Manakin. What a way to end the morning.

We returned to the lodge for lunch and a bit of downtime. In the afternoon we returned to the mountains to see what else we could find. It didn't take long to get to a trail in the Las Minas area. Robert spotted something perched a long ways off. It ended up being a Merlin which is uncommon for that area. He also spotted numerous Swallow-tailed Kites flying over a distant ridge. Our first Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth of the trip was seen in a distant tree. We entered the forest and first came across a spectacular bird. It was a lone Emerald Tanager, and we were afforded really great looks at it. The next find was an elegant male Collared Trogon. At one point it grabbed a giant cricket which took awhile to devour. We came across a second Broad-billed Motmot, after having seen a first one this morning. Our first Northern Emerald Toucanet of the trip also appeared. This is the blue-throated form. A Rufous-breasted Wren was seen foraging in a thick tangle and showed itself nicely. Several Tawny-capped Euphonias were also observed. At the end of the walk Danilo spotted a sleeping Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth tucked up in the subcanopy of a nearby tree. We returned to the van and found a lone Gray-capped Flycatcher sitting atop utility wires. Robert spotted a quiet Piratic Flycatcher tucked into a fig tree. Their emphatic whistle usually gives away their presence. We started heading back to the lodge but stopped to check out a certain tree. Danilo was hoping to find some roosting Tropical Screech-Owls and voila, they were there. There was a pair of the gray and rufous morphs together. We ended another day with a 'bang.'

Upon reaching the lodge we took a well-deserved rest before doing our checklist and dinner.

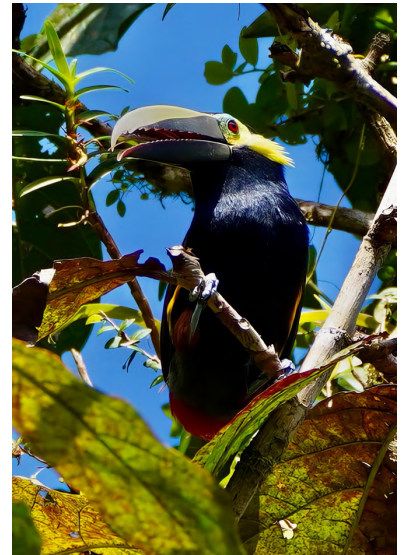
Monday March 3 | Altos de Maria

After a good night's rest we were ready for the next day's 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 scope 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 three trucks was tricky. Right off the bat appeared two Tufted Flycatchers that fed in plain sight. A female Collared Trogon also came out and perched right above the road. The day was off to a wonderful start. A Dull-mantled Antbird called from a nearby ravine and eventually came up so we could see it. Danilo pointed out a large, mossy, globular nest off to the side of the road. It belonged to a Red-faced Spinetail and it was still being worked on. Sure enough, the owners came and went, adding more moss to it. This was the best look we have gotten of this otherwise canopy-dwelling species. A 'zippp-zippp' sound caught our attention. It belonged to the tiny Ochraceous Wren, a close relative of the House Wren. It is an endemic species to southern Central America. It was foraging in some mossy clusters along a large snag and we were able to see it. A few Common Chlorospingus also came in, along with a male Golden-winged Warbler and female Blackburnian Warbler. Another male White-ruffed Manakin zipped in for a brief look then disappeared. One spectacular bird we were still missing was the Black-and-yellow Tanager and we eventually saw a couple of females. With patience and searching, a handsome male appeared and would be the only sighting of the trip.

We continued up the mountain and entered a gated community. We saw a couple of Broad-winged Hawks which likely overwinter there. We also saw our first Mistletoe Tyrannulet, of which we heard many during the day. A male Shining Honeycreeper also made an appearance. We walked along a paved road that meandered through the remaining forest, amidst lots earmarked for sale, with impending destruction in the future. We made our way to a visitor center and found a migrant Philadelphia Vireo. Nearby, we walked a trail in search of the Black-crowned Antpitta that we missed earlier. It took a bit of time and patience, but one did come in and Glenn was able to snap off one photo of this elusive bird. We had a nice picnic lunch where we were parked and enjoyed the cool mountain air. An Eye-ringed Flatbill appeared, which is a good sighting anywhere. We backtracked a bit and walked down a paved path that led into the forest. It was fairly quiet, but we did see a Spotted Barbtail and a few colorful butterflies. Continuing up a dirt road we found several Northern Emerald Toucanets feeding in a fruiting tree. In another tree we found several Scarlet-thighed Dacnis which almost escaped us this trip. We were getting ready to leave and made one final stop near a secondary gate. A certain tree was just starting to produce fruits and is known to attract toucans. We waited patiently for a few minutes and there was no sign of anything moving. Suddenly, Robert spotted something dash across a clearing into some tall trees. The silhouette looked good for Yellow-eared Toucanet, and it was. The brilliantly colored male appeared and began its song-and-dance-clacking routine. What a show! It was an absolutely spectacular way to end our visit to this area and would be a trip highlight for many.



We returned to the lodge for a bit of R&R. We did our species checklist then had dinner. Afterwards, we went for a short night walk in the gardens. We saw a variety of insect life, including a sleeping Owl's-eye Butterfly. Around the marsh were several species of frogs and giant cane toads. A sleeping White-tipped Dove was also spotted as well as a pair of Gray-cowled Wood-Rail perched above a pond.

Tuesday March 4 | Canopy Lodge | Drive to Canopy Tower | Semaphore Hill

We woke this morning to cool air and geared up to head out to our next lodging destination. Right when we were ready to leave, Danilo heard some commotion behind the hotel. We went to see what was going on and a Black Hawk-Eagle appeared. It perched nearby, but only briefly, then flew into the woods. We searched for it, but it was buried inside. The jays and toucans were relentless. We also got a brief look at a Rufous-and-white Wren behind the restaurant before leaving. We said 'bye' to Danilo and the beautiful Valle area.

It didn't take long to reach the main highway and we decided to stop to try and get a better view of the nesting Fork-tailed Flycatcher. It was there, and it posed nicely on a nearby tree for us. In the nearby field we also got to see a Panama Flycatcher and two more Smooth-billed Anis.

We continued down the highway and reached the Canopy Tower before noon. We were met by the manager, Tatiana, and Alexis, who would be our expert local guide while there. We had a chance to get to know a few more hummingbirds at the feeders and included White-necked Jacobin, Long-billed Hermit, and Violet-bellied Hummingbird. The male of this last species is small, but dazzling. We got checked into our rooms then had lunch and a bit of downtime. Since we were in the low-lying Pacific lowlands, it was much warmer and the bird activity doesn't pick up until much later.

We started a walk down Semaphore Hill and it didn't take long to find a great sighting. A female Double-toothed Kite was perched on a snag in plain sight and we were afforded scope views. A bit further down the hill we encountered a lone Western Olivaceous Flatbill. The Neotropics has a prolific amount of flycatchers and we would continue to add more species while there. Alexis pointed out a pair of Lesser White-lined Bats on a day roost. They were tucked up in the dark fork of large branches. We also came across a lone, male Dusky Antbird that was foraging in the understory. We ran into an army ant swarm that was at the very edge of the road and it led down a steep slope into the wooded ravine. We got brief looks at a Spotted Antbird and Bicolored Antbird. A Plain-brown Woodcreeper and Northern Barred Woodcreeper were readily visible as they perched higher up, waiting for fleeing arthropods. We saw a small group of White-nosed Coatis as they crossed the road, one by



one. A pair of the noisy Scarlet-rumped Cacique made an appearance and we would get many views of this common yet colorful bird. High up in the canopy we spotted a male and female White-browed Gnatcatcher. We reached the bottom of the hill and the lodge's birdmobile showed up to give us a ride back up. Part way up we spotted a White Hawk that was following a troop of White-faced Capuchins. High up we spotted hundreds of Turkey Vultures that were migrating back to North America. Some one million vultures make this migration twice a year. Mixed in were also a few scattered Swainson's Hawks.

Our arrival day was coming to an end. We had a bit of a rest then did our checklist and dinner. Staff had put out some bananas and a Kinkajou came in to dine. It was a fantastic way to end another day in Panama.

Wednesday March 5 | 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. Before leaving, we spotted a pair of Brown-hooded Parrots in the nearby trees. A few Red-lored Parrots and the larger Mealy Parrots were also seen. High up in a tree appeared something tiny, but brightly colored. It was the diminutive Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher.

After spotting those excellent birds, we departed for Metropolitan Park which is on the outskirts of Panama City. Upon arriving there, we found a park staff who pointed out a three-toed sloth. It was a male, and showed the tell-tale markings on its back. It was fun to just watch as it slowly moved around and took its time deciding if it could, or not, pass from one branch to another. It did. We headed down a path and it didn't take long to bump into a flock of birds. The tiny Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher, Forest Elaenia, and Greenish Elaenia were spotted. A singing Slate-colored Seedeater caught our attention and took a few minutes to find. A small flock of White-shouldered Tanagers was also foraging higher up and we saw several of the stunning males. Heading back toward the main trail, we found a Golden-fronted Greenlet and this has been the only place on this tour where we have seen this species. A couple more Squirrel Cuckoos graced us with their presence. I don't think one could ever get tired of this bird! Alexis spotted a male Northern Black-throated Trogon sitting quietly just inside the forest. Another terrific sighting. We reached a covered rest area and stopped to scan the surrounding forest and understory. Something tiny was moving nearby and it ended up being a Southern Bentbill. It is often a 'Heard Only' bird and is quite common, but often difficult to actually see. This one foraged at close range and we got many clear looks at it. A beautiful song caught our attention and it belonged to a Black-bellied Wren. With a little patience, this stunning wren came into view. Another bird we heard whistling at different spots there was the colorful Lance-tailed Manakin. Although common, it can also be quite difficult to see as it usually remains within deep cover.



Again, with patience, a lovely male made an appearance before disappearing into the woods. On our way down the hill we found an Olivaceous Woodcreeper, adding a sixth species to our list.

After this very successful morning, we returned to the tower for lunch and some R&R. The bananas the staff puts out attracted a troop of the Geoffroy's Tamarin, a small and attractive primate. This is the northernmost species of tamarin and it ranges no further north than central Panama.

In the afternoon we headed out to the nearby Summit Gardens. It was closed to the general public as yesterday Carnival ended, but we had permission to go in. We had the whole place to ourselves. It was quite warm so the bird activity was slow. We observed many of the more common flycatchers which allowed for more identification practice. A male Black-throated Mango was spotted feeding on some flowers. A pair of Crested Caracaras came zooming by and landed in a nearby tree. Near the Harpy Eagle exhibit Alexis found two separate Common Tent-making Bats under some folded palm fronds. Some sweet gurgles and whistles caught our attention. They belonged to the Yellow-rumped Cacique, and a few were seen foraging amidst bromeliads. A pair of male Masked Tityras was briefly seen and surprisingly would be the only ones of the trip. Alexis spotted a male Blue Cotinga high in a tree above us, but it disappeared. We would catch up to it later on. We departed the gardens and Robert spotted a Bat Falcon perched atop a dead palm tree. We stopped to enjoy it.

We returned to the tower and had enough time to freshen up a bit before doing our checklist and dinner. After dinner, we did a night drive that would take us down Semaphore Hill. Alexis drove while Erik (another lodge guide) and Robert looked for wildlife. Not long after departing, Robert spotted a Central American Tree Boa as it was descending a very large tree. A bit further Robert spotted some large eyeshine down in the wooded ravine. It belonged to a White-tailed Deer which are actually difficult to see in the region. We reached the bridge and found a Savage's Thin-toed Frog by the waters' edge. It will excrete a white substance in defense if handled. We turned around at the lodge gate down by the road and almost immediately after, Erik spotted two Rothschild's Porcupines that were descending a nearby tree. They disappeared quickly into the thick understory. This small species is endemic to Panama and seeing one is always a real treat. Continuing up the road, we found a Kinkajou and then a third porcupine. This porcupine, however, was just sitting still on a fairly low branch right over the road. We got wonderful looks of this special mammal. We returned to the tower after this very successful excursion and called it a day.



Thursday March 6 Pipeline Road | Ammo Dump Ponds

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.

Along the entrance road Alexis spotted a Great Tinamou walking in the forest understory. We were glad to take this 'heard only' bird off that list. A bit further, Robert spotted the first Black-breasted Puffbird sitting atop a high branch. We reached the main gate where we parked and started our walk. There was no one else there yet. Just past the gate we found what would be the rarest bird of the trip: a Speckled Mourner. It was low and close to the road and we got wonderful views of it. It was calling to boot. A bird that is usually frequently seen is the Black-cheeked Woodpecker, but we hadn't seen one until today. One was near a nest hole and everyone got scope views. During this walk we had great looks at two pairs of Fasciated Antshrikes which are normally hard to see well. One of the pairs even had a low-lying nest right next to the road and both parents were bringing in food items. That was really nice and would be another trip highlight. It didn't take long until we started hearing the tell-tale calls of the Purple-throated Fruitcrow. It's not really a crow at all, but belongs to the cotinga family. It didn't take long for a few to appear above us, including a nice male with its purple throat. As we were walking, Sherri spotted a bird high above us. It was a female White-tailed Trogon and would be the only one seen on the trip. A bit further, Alexis heard and spotted a female White-whiskered Puffbird calling from deep within the forest. We all got scope views of this ornate bird. One species we were missing was the gaudy Yellow-throated Toucan and we got to see it as well. Its yelping calls reverberated throughout the surrounding forests. A lone Yellow-winged Flatbill appeared, adding to our growing list of flycatchers. Another bird many wanted to see while in Panama is the stunning Cinnamon Woodpecker. We heard one in the forest below the tower yesterday, but it was far away. Today, our luck changed. One appeared high on an exposed snag and we got scope views of it. Although we saw some while in Valle, we saw another male Spot-crowned Antwren and it was seen at close range. A female lurked further back in the forest. Another new bird was the Dot-winged Antwren when we saw two males and a female. Another Spotted Antbird and two Bicolored Antbirds were seen, even though no army ants were present. A pair of Gray-headed Tanagers heard the commotion and came in to investigate. What a show of birds! Migrating Turkey Vultures poured across the sky and near them was a lone King Vulture. Then, a small flock of Mississippi Kites went by. Sensory overload for sure. To 'cap' off the morning was a pair of adult, male Red-capped Manakins that were doing the 'dance' at a lek in the subcanopy. We made our way back to the birdmobile and returned to the tower for lunch and some rest.



In the late afternoon we went out again and the Ammo Dump ponds was our destination. Right when we were getting close, Robert spotted something inside the forest close to the road. We stopped and backtracked a bit. It ended up being a male Collared Forest-Falcon of all things. Nice! We reached the spot and literally had non-stop action the entire time. It was partly cloudy and cool which helped immensely. The tree-filled marsh was buzzing with birds. Hummingbirds were visiting different flowering trees and included a brief sighting of a Purple-crowned Fairy. Male and female Black-throated Mangos were seen on and off. A Brown-capped Tyrannulet showed up in a small, bare tree and we got good looks of this otherwise canopy-dwelling species. A Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet followed suit. A Prothonotary Warbler skulked inside the swamp. We got our first, and only, view of a Buff-breasted Wren that was foraging in the wetland. Then, a pair of Barred Antshrikes made an appearance and performed right in front of us. What more could we want? A skulking Striated Heron was also seen. As we approached a lagoon, a Lesser Kiskadee was spotted sitting atop a fence; to add to the list of confusing, yellow-breasted flycatchers. A Lineated Woodpecker was also spotted. A few Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were also seen in the back of a vegetated pond. We then visited a separate marsh nearby and found a beautiful subadult Rufescent Tiger-Heron. To top off the day's list was a Common Tody-Flycatcher that was beginning to build a nest. The day was almost overwhelming as we recorded over 110 species.

We returned to the tower and called it a day. A well-deserved and rewarding one at that.

Friday March 7 Chagres River & Canal Boat Ride | Tower

Today was our last full day in Panama and we ready to embark on another adventure. But before we could get out of the parking lot we got distracted by more birds. A pair of Slaty-tailed Trogons was there and like last year, had nested in an arboreal termitary. A pair of Scarlet-rumped Caciques also had nesting on their minds. They would rush out into the nearby forest and the female would come back with a strand of palm fiber. He stood guard overhead while she began to weave a basket nest at the tip of a palm frond. She was just beginning and we could watch her up close as she carefully wove the fibers and attach it to the palm. They are Earth's amazing master builders.

We headed to the nearby Chagres River where it empties into the Canal to take a boat and explore waterways. Right before getting on the boat, Robert spotted several distant Black-crowned Tityras. We were assigned our boat and off we went. Mangrove Swallows were flitting about, catching insects. Numerous Purple Gallinules were basking in the sun atop the water lilies. Wattled Jacanas foraged atop floating vegetation. A male and female



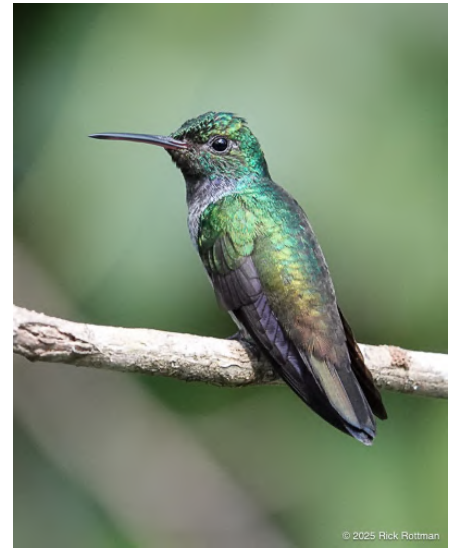
Anhinga were spotted. Numerous wading birds were observed and included Snowy Egret, Tricolored Heron, and Little Blue Heron. A lone Least Grebe was diving in open water; an unusual sighting for that spot. We watched a Yellow-headed Caracara as it tried to eat a fairly large peacock bass. It was the best look we had of this falcon. We spotted our first Snail Kite perched on a buoy and it looked like a female. As we were getting ready to leave the river, Robert spotted something deep within a marsh. Atop a bush, part of a large Boa Constrictor was visible. It likely preyed upon the large Green Iguanas which were common there. We entered the Canal and shipping lane. It was busy that day and we saw a small cruise ship and fuel tankers. World commerce at work. We reached a calm backwater area and explored the edges of small islands. We began to see Limpkins and saw many this year. In the nearby forest we could hear a White-bellied Antbird calling, taunting us. After seeing a couple of small Crocodiles, we spotted a huge one partially out of the water. Our boat driver thought it had a nest nearby. We saw our first group of Greater Anis and then more. A few were particularly close and we got great looks of them. Alexis spotted a Gray-lined Hawk perched high in a tree. More Snail Kites inhabited those backwaters and we enjoyed watching a female pluck an apple snail out of the water and ate it right in front of us. Our time was up for the morning, but it was a rewarding boat ride. We returned to the dock and headed back to the tower.

After lunch, we decided to remain at the tower and see what we could find on the viewing platform. It was a lovely late afternoon. We could see thousands of Turkey Vultures migrating close to the Pacific coast. Planes maneuvered around them. A pair of the handsome Lesser Swallow-tailed Swifts flew by for a brief look. We also got better looks at many Short-tailed Swifts. One bird that often taunts visitors to the region is the Green Shrike-Vireo; a loud and small, green bird that lives primarily in the forest canopy. It is usually very difficult to see well. The tower, however, provides an excellent chance at seeing it up close. And we did. One came in and we were afforded many clear views of this prized bird. It was a great 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. The staff had set up a barbecue on the parking lot deck and we enjoyed one final feast. Afterwards, Robert gave a presentation on the birds and butterflies of Honduras.

Saturday March 8 Tower | Departures

We rose early to do some final birding atop the tower and we were hoping to catch a few more new birds. Alexis spotted a distant Crimson-crested Woodpecker atop a dead snag. A lovely male Green Honeycreeper graced us with its presence. Another Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher was seen, but this one was at eye level. What a cutie! One bird we really wanted to see was the Blue Cotinga and the window to spot one was closing fast as the sun



was getting higher. Alexis then spotted one, and it was a loooong way off. Only a few people got to see the blue dot. Then, just as we were about to give up, Alexis spotted three, and were also far, but closer. One last, closer, cotinga was spotted and everyone got to see it. It was a wonderful way to end the morning, and the trip.

We recorded a total of 284 birds which was a new record for this trip.

We said our 'good-byes' and departed the tower. We quickly reached Panama City where we all went our separate ways. We hope to see each again someday.

Favorite Sightings of the Trip

Arthur-The pair of Fasciated Antshrikes with the nest. Crimson-backed Tanager.

Karen-Red-capped Manakins on lek. Cinnamon Woodpecker.

Sherri-Yellow-eared Toucanet. White-tailed Trogon.

Rick-Red-capped Manakin. Bay-headed Tanager. Harpy Eagle.

Jane-Seeing a Black Vulture on the ground. Turkey Vultures kettling in migration. Yellow-eared Toucanet.

Michelle-Crimson-backed Tanager. Saffron Finch.

Glenn-Nesting Fasciated Antshrikes. Male Three-toed Sloth at Summit Park.

Linda-Blue Dacnis and Red-legged Honeycreeper lineup at La Cruz. Yellow-eared Toucanet. Nesting Fasciated Antshrikes. Tropical Kingbirds.

Chuck-Sunbittern. Yellow-eared Toucanet.

Alexis-Seeing everyone with a happy humor. Watching Yellow-headed Caracara eating the fish.

Robert-Yellow-eared Toucanet.

Photos: Group (Glenn Perelson - GP), Keel-billed Toucan (Robert Gallardo - RG), Barred Antshrike (GP), Howler Monkey (GP), Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl (Rick Rottman - RR), Silver-throated Tanager (RG), Pale Owl-Butterfly (GP), Geoffrey's Tamarin (GP), Black-chested Jay (RG), Spectacled Owl (GP), Blue Dacnis (GP), Eyelash Viper (GP), Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet (GP), Two-toed Sloth (RG), Group Birding (GP), Diasia Clearwing (GP), Yellow-eared Toucanet (GP), Broad-billed Motmot (GP), Coati (GP), Yellow-headed Caracara (GP), Orange-chinned Parakeet (GP), Red-crowned Woodpecker (GP), Howler Monkey (GP), Wader (GP), Ani (GP), Blue-chested Hummingbird (RR), Black Vulture (RR)