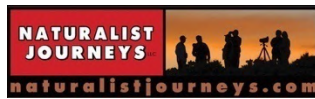


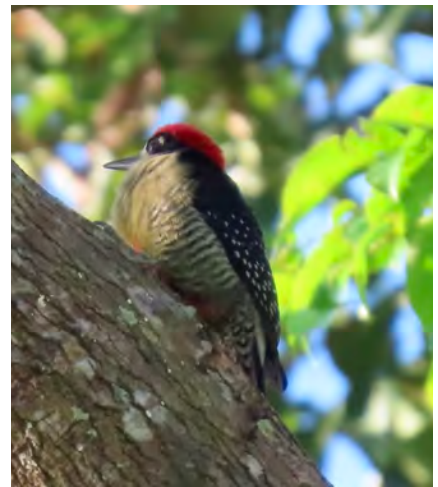
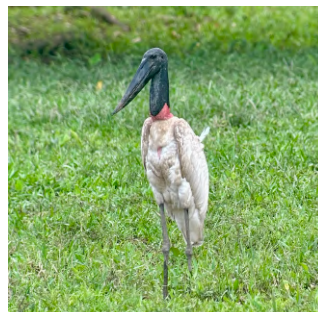
Western Panama: Tranquilo Bay | Jan. 18—25, 2025

| Trip Report by Dave Mehlman

Mt. Totumas Post-Tour Extension: Jan. 25 – 29, 2025

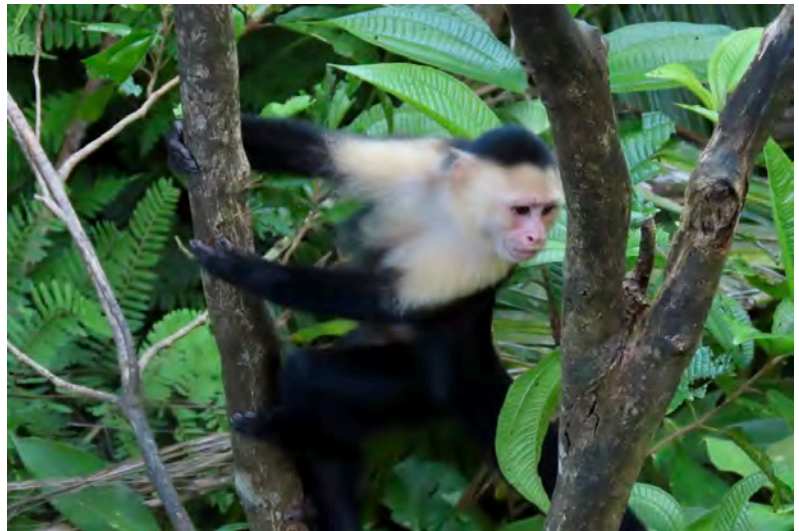


Guides: Rogers Morales, Reinaldo Rodriguez, and Dave Mehlman, with
participants: Eileen, Ellyn, Jeff, Kathleen, Mark, Merri, Paul, Susan, and Tim



Sat., Jan. 18 Flight to Bocas del Toro | Tranquilo Bay Lodge

Everyone having arrived the night before or earlier, we informally gathered in the Radisson's dining room for breakfast, before completing our final packing and getting our gear down to the lobby. Right on time, a bus driver appeared to take us to the nearby Marcos Gelabert Airport (the former Albrook Field). At the airport, we checked in with Air Panama for our flight to Bocas del Toro, then waited until boarding. After the 1-hour flight, we landed in Bocas del Toro town, where we were met by our two boat captains from Tranquilo Bay, Gustavo and Alvaro. After a quick transfer with our bags to a small boat dock, we loaded into two boats for our first Tranquilo Bay trip: the 30-minute ride to the Tranquilo Bay dock. Arriving at the dock, we tied up and were welcomed into paradise!



Climbing up the stairs to the main building's porch and dining room, we immediately plunged into birding and wildlife watching, with numerous Tennessee and Prothonotary Warblers, Bananaquits, and a Black-cheeked Woodpecker close by eating fruit, Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds drinking at the feeders, and a pair of Crab-eating Raccoons high in a nearby tree—a small taste of what was to come! This was immediately followed by a real taste as we sat down to our first excellent lunch at Tranquilo Bay. We then were assigned our rooms and took a bit of time off to orient ourselves and get unpacked. Meeting up later in the afternoon, we met local guides Rogers and Patricia and set off for a short walk around the grounds of the lodge. We quickly leaned into learning the local birds with the expert assistance of both Rogers and Patricia, finding Red-lore Amazon, Blue-headed Parrot, White-vented Euphonia, Golden-collared Manakin, and the only Blue-chested Hummingbird of the tour. A small pond along a trail revealed a Spectacled Caiman giving us the eyeball as Short-billed and Pale-vented Pigeons called from the surrounding trees. As the afternoon grew to a close, most of us climbed up to the top of the observation tower to enjoy our first Tranquilo Bay afternoon. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was there to greet us—a fellow traveler from North America, along with a Common Black Hawk perched in a far away tree.

We then climbed down from the tower, took a short break, then met in the dining room for our first daily checklist of the tour and a fabulous dinner, plus a review of plans for the following day. After that, it was back to our rooms in the dark to rest for tomorrow.

Sun., Jan. 19 Punta Róbal Road | Palo Seco Protective Forest | Continental Divide Road

We were up for an early breakfast today, eating before sunrise so as to get an early start. After eating, we met on the boat dock and divided ourselves among the two boats for the trip across the bay to the tiny town of Punta Róbal on the mainland. We arrived at the “dock” and carefully got out of the boat and onto shore; most promptly went to use the nearby bathroom, having indulged in the coffee quite liberally! On our way across the water, we saw numerous Whimbrels, apparently roosting for the night in the mangroves, along with ubiquitous Magnificent Frigatebirds and some Royal Terns and a Spotted Sandpiper on the dock pilings.

Alas, a miscommunication had occurred, so the expected bus was not present to pick us up. While we waited for its arrival, we began a birding walk along the road leading to Punta Róbal which proved to be very productive. Some highlights (and there were many!) included Gray-breasted Martin, Yellow-headed Caracara, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Keel-billed Toucan, Buff-throated Saltator, Scarlet-rumped, White-lined, and Golden-hooded



Tanager, Gray-capped Flycatcher, and Olive-crowned Yellowthroat. These were supplemented by calling Mantled Howler Monkey, Little Tinamou, and White-throated Crake. After about an hour, the bus appeared, so we got on board and slowly cruised down the road to the main highway, birding as we went. The wetlands along the road, although heavily grazed by Water Buffalo, produced many neat birds such as Green Ibis, Northern Jaçana, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Muscovy Duck, Southern Lapwing, and Red-breasted Meadowlark.

Arriving at the highway, we turned east and began our road trip along the base of the mountains and then up into the Cordillera. A pit stop at the Quick Shop in Rambalá yielded the all-important House Sparrow for our list (as well as much relief). We then began to climb through the foothills and up higher and higher until we were driving on some very windy roads through thick forest. A stop at the bridge over the Quebrada Verrugosa was extremely good to us, turning up Collared Aracari, Keel-billed Toucan, Emerald Tanager, an amazingly cooperative perched Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer (the only one of the tour), several Dusky-faced Tanagers, a pair of Black-headed Tody-Tyrants, and a Wedge-billed Woodcreeper.

About mid-day, we arrived at the continental divide and turned off the highway onto a small paved road that led (eventually) to some radio towers. Finding a nice spot, we pulled over, tables and chairs were set out, and we enjoyed a great picnic lunch surrounded by the beauty of the Cordillera Talamanca. After lunch, we mixed walking on the road and driving to do more birding along the divide, eventually reaching the towers. Some of the great finds at this elevation were a totally unexpected fly-over Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Bat Falcon, Tropical Parula, Slate-throated Redstart, and Blue-and-white Swallow. Finishing our birding up here, we turned around and gradually made our way back down to the coast, stopping a few times along the way. One stop yielded a Lattice-tailed Trogon and another an incredible view of a soaring Barred Hawk right overhead. We eventually returned to Punta Róbal, boarded our boats, and returned to Tranquilo Bay after this most excellent day on the mainland. After a brief break, we met for the daily checklist and discussion of plans for the following day, followed by another fine dinner.

Mon., Jan. 20 Isla Popa | Tranquilo Bay Lodge

Today was a bit later start, since we had a shorter trip, so we all met for breakfast and then re-assembled on the dock where the relatively new double-decker pontoon boat was waiting for us. Climbing on board, we started off and were soon at our morning's destination: nearby Isla Popa. Entering a lovely, mangrove-lined canal, we immediately scrambled up to the top deck and commenced birding. Amid a lovely morning (and the usual hordes of fly-over Red-lored Amazons and Montezuma Oropendolas), we spotted Scaled Pigeon and Common Black Hawk perched in the trees and heard calling Green Ibis and the double-knock of a Pale-billed Woodpecker.

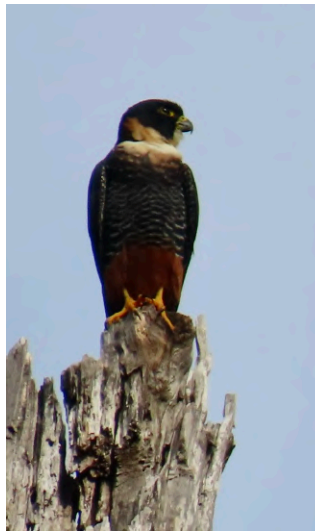


Edging closer to the mangroves, we heard and then saw the distinctive local breeding subspecies of Yellow Warbler, the Mangrove Warbler, and we found some Green Kingfishers. We also saw both Yellow-throated and Keel-billed Toucans and had the super luck of spotting a pair of Mangrove Cuckoos (outstanding in their mangroves!).

At mid-morning, we pulled up to a small dock and got off to take a short walk on the island itself. During the walk, we heard Summer Tanager, White-browed Gnatcatcher, and a distant Laughing Falcon, while Rogers and Patricia conducted a diligent search for frogs. They had some success and were able to show us one of the local color variants of the Strawberry Poison Dart Frog, part of the remarkable evolutionary story that has played out in the Bocas del Toro archipelago. Continuing our herptile quest, we also had great views of a Slender Anole. However, birds were not forgotten, as we spotted Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, and Tennessee Warblers and heard a Bay Wren (which Mark and Dave finally spotted after the group had moved on). We finished the walk by hiking up a small hill to a local house, where careful searching revealed the major find of the morning: a perched male Snowy Cotinga! As we admired this amazing bird through the scopes, we also found a Broad-winged Hawk and a Yellow-headed Caracara. We finished our time on Isla Popa and then climbed down to the boat dock and re-boarded the pontoon boat. As we headed back to Tranquilo Bay, a light rain fell, but we had had such an enjoyable morning that no one minded. Arriving back at the Isla Bastimentos boat dock, we unloaded, then had a brief break before lunch. Unfortunately, it rained steadily the rest of the afternoon, so we basically took the afternoon off. Some went swimming and snorkeling (in the rain!) and some rested and caught up on some reading. Reconvening at the end of the afternoon, we went over our checklist for the day and had another great dinner.

Tues., Jan. 21 Buena Esperanza | Tranquilo Bay Lodge

Up again at a reasonable hour, we enjoyed breakfast in the dining room and then reconvened on the boat dock. Today, we were off to the area known as Buena Esperanza on the mainland, an area now accessible to visits from Tranquilo Bay due to the construction of a brand new road into the area to service some small coastal communities. Landing at the community dock, we climbed up to the small town where we were met by our bus driver. We then commenced an excellent morning of birding along this new road, alternately walking and driving, indeed having one of the most productive birding mornings of the entire tour. The combination of a paved road with little traffic, alternating patches of forest and field, and great weather led to ideal viewing conditions. Some of the highlights during the morning included Black-striped Sparrow, Chestnut-headed and Montezuma Oropendola, Yellow-crowned Euphonia, a pair of Dot-winged Antwrens, Black-crowned Antshrike,



Red-throated Ant-Tanager, Pale-billed Woodpecker, a Bat Falcon posing incredibly nicely in a dead tree, and a familiar, but unexpected at the location, Yellow-rumped Warbler.

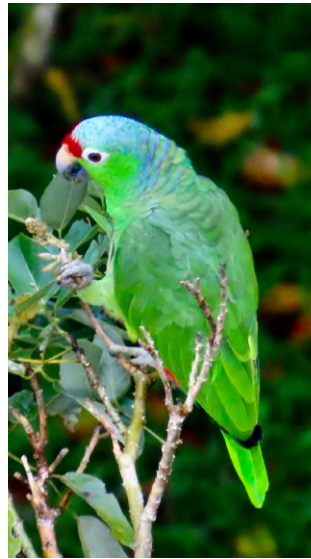
As it got later in the morning, a light rain began to fall, but we kept going further on the road, with some birding and others remaining on the bus. We continued to find great things, perhaps best of all a pair of Kinkajous running through the treetops! This was a real highlight as these mammals are seldom seen in the daytime. Avian additions to our list included Long-tailed Tyrant, Piratic Flycatcher, Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, Short-tailed Hawk, and incredible views of three Pied Puffbirds perched on the same branch. We finally reached the end of the morning and turned the bus around, arriving back at the mainland boat dock. We then boarded the boats in a light rain, preparing ourselves for a wet return trip. Arriving safely at Tranquilo Bay, we got off, returned to our rooms to change clothes, and then enjoyed a well-deserved lunch. After lunch, most took the afternoon off to enjoy the surroundings, but a few die-hards went out with Rogers for an afternoon walk. The highlight of this walk was watching the amazing amount of bird traffic coming and going from a fruiting fig tree, including Golden-collared and Red-capped Manakin, Lesser Greenlet, Tennessee Warbler, and White-crowned Pigeon. A brief walk in the forest also yielded nice views of a Band-tailed Barbthroat and a Crowned Woodnymph.

In the evening, we met in the dining room for our daily checklist, then enjoyed another great dinner, before heading off for another night in the rainforest.

Wed., Jan. 22 Snyder Canal | Changuinola River | Swan Caye (Bird Island)

We were up for an early breakfast today—one of the most anticipated field trips of the tour! After eating breakfast in the darkness, we assembled on the boat dock as dawn broke, ready to go. We loaded up in the small motor boats and headed off to the west, past Bocas del Toro town, to the entrance of the old Snyder Canal (Panama's OTHER canal!!). This canal was dug in 1903 to provide a short cut for boats carrying bananas down the Changuinola River to reach the port of Almirante. Although long abandoned, the canal is still open for small boats and provides an extraordinary wildlife viewing experience. When we arrived at the canal entrance, we met the double-decker pontoon boat, which had been driven out earlier in the morning due to its slow speed. We then transferred from the smaller boats to the large boat and our journey commenced.

This trip was easily the highlight of our time at Tranquilo Bay and we enjoyed almost a full day on the Canal, slowly moving along, spotting birds and wildlife along the way, with a few "rest" stops scattered about on the limited dry land available. There were so many highlights and great experiences that it is hard to pick out the best or most memorable. New birds found during the morning included calling Gray-cowled Wood-Rails,



Nicaraguan Seed-Finch, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift, Squirrel Cuckoo, Olive-backed Euphonia, Blue-black Grosbeak, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Short-tailed Nighthawk, and several Three-wattled Bellbirds, which were noisily calling from the treetops and finally spotted, thanks to Rogers' keen eyesight. In addition to birds, we found Green Iguana and Green and Brown Basilisk, to add to our reptilian list. In late morning, we arrived at the canal mouth into the wide Changuinola River and we turned upstream to revel in this dramatic water- and landscape. Given the different surroundings, the birds dramatically changed composition, too, and we quickly spotted Royal Tern, Laughing Gull, Tricolored Heron, Snail Kite, Anhinga, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, and a few Blue-winged Teal. As if all of this was not enough, a Peregrine Falcon flew over to put a raptorial cherry on everything!

About mid-day, we tied up along the river bank and enjoyed a picnic lunch on the boat under the shade of trees, with a plank available for those who wished or needed to "check out the facilities." After lunch, we continued in the boat a bit more upriver, finding Eastern and Red-breasted Meadowlark in the riverside grazing lands stocked full of water buffalo. We also dug up some Black-necked Stilts, Southern Lapwing, Limpkins, Crested Caracara, and Purple Gallinule. The boat was then turned around and we motored downriver to the mouth of the Changuinola, where we slowly eased onto a sandbar at the mouth and took a short walk. Unfortunately (for us), there were a lot of fishermen working the beach, so few birds were to be found, with the notable exception of a few Collared Plovers at the water's edge. Finishing here, we began our return trip back through the canal to the bay, continuing to bird and look for wildlife along the way.

Upon reaching the bay, we realized that sea conditions were suitable for the trip out to Swan Caye (Bird Island). However, we first had to transfer back into the smaller boats and have the pontoon boat negotiate the crossing of the canal bar at dead low tide—no small feat! As we all sat in the small boats, we admired the hard work of the Tranquilo Bay crew to literally push the pontoon boat over the bar—at one point, Yoel had to swim after one of the small boats after he had helped get the pontoon boat unstuck! Truly, service above and beyond the call of duty. The bar crossing complete, with everything and everybody transferred and in place, the small boats headed out to sea to visit the Caye while the pontoon boat started its slow journey back to the Lodge.

The crossing to the Caye was tolerable, though the ocean swell was enough to create a bit of an up and down ride. Arriving at the Caye itself, we were treated to the dramatic and amazing experience of hundreds of Redbilled Tropicbirds swooping around the cliff face, screaming their heads and tails out. These were accompanied by many Brown Boobies coming and going from their nest sites, while Magnificent Frigatebirds and Black Vultures stationed themselves in mid-air high overhead, looking for opportunity. Our sharp-eyed guides also



pointed out to us the single pair of Red-footed Boobies that were nesting (and had been nesting for several years), a species normally rare in Panama that had taken up residence. After getting our fill of this fascinating spectacle (and being tossed around in the waters), we headed back to the lodge, passing the pontoon boat on our way in. Returning, we had a bit of free time, then met again for our usual daily checklist, followed by an excellent dinner in the dining room.

Thur., Jan. 23 Fortuna Forest Reserve | Valle de las Minas | Palo Seco Protective Forest | Punta Róbal Road

Today was designated for another trip to the mainland, so we were up early in the pre-dawn darkness for breakfast, then gathered on the dock to load in the boats for another run to Punta Róbal. Upon landing at the dock, we were met by our bus and we piled on board, our objective today to head straight up into the mountains. We made a quick stop in Rambalá to get snacks and take a break (and add the all-important House Sparrow to our daily list!), then drove up into the mountains, making our first stop on the Palo Seco side of the divide at a roadside pull-off. Under cloudy skies, we commenced birding and had a great morning, finding Grayrumped Swift, Rufous-winged Woodcreeper, Hepatic Tanager, Sulphur-winged Parakeet, Mistletoe Tyrannulet, White-collared Swift, and a Red-tailed Squirrel. Continuing up and over the continental divide, we stopped at the Fortuna Dam visitor center for a quick look around, picking up a Great Black Hawk after using the facilities.

Continuing on our mountain transect, we began to descend the Pacific Slope and arrived at the small community of Valle de las Minas. At this spot, we were in a very interesting, though completely non-native, habitat of mostly pine trees. However, the birds did not seem to mind, as we enjoyed a pair of White Hawks cruising around and found Yellow-bellied Siskin, Black-throated Green Warbler, Spotted Woodcreeper, and a White-tailed Emerald. At that point, our morning was pretty much done, so we traveled down the road a bit further and enjoyed a picnic lunch at an outside table of Restaurante El Nispero.

After lunch, we turned around and began our journey back to Punta Róbal. A quick stop along the road produced a lovely Chestnut-capped Warbler, but our main goal on the way back was the Continental Divide road, to give that productive area another try. A stop or two along the divide road revealed low quantity, but very high quality of birds; a particular star was an excellent appearance of a Blue-and-gold Tanager, a hard-to-find species that is one of the Talamanca endemics found only in Panamá and Costa Rica. Also about were Tawny-capped Euphonia, White-bellied Mountain-Gem, Crowned Woodnymph, and Silver-throated Tanager. Descending further, we stopped again in Rambalá for the bathrooms, then made a quick excursion further to

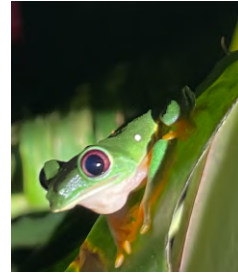
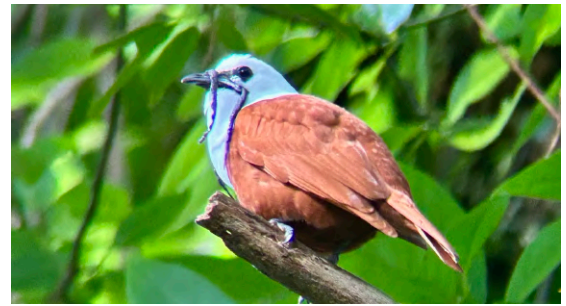


explore some roadside wetlands. This short trip turned up a pair of Lesser Yellowlegs, new for the tour bird list. We then finished our journey to Punta Rábalo, though as we neared the town, the bus came to a screeching stop due to a large white bird standing in a pasture: a Jabiru! One of the mega birds of the tour, this particular Jabiru was actually one of the offspring of the first pair of this species to nest in Panama in decades, a development which Rogers had been following closely. We therefore piled out of the bus and spent some time observing this dramatic bird; while we watched, it caught an eel on one of its probes into the mud and ate it right on the spot. After enjoying this amazing sighting, we returned to the dock, got on board the boats, and returned to Tranquilo Bay with a light rain falling. We then had a brief break to dry out, before concluding the day with our checklist and a lovely dinner.

Fri., Jan. 24 Tranquilo Bay Lodge

Today was our last day at Tranquilo Bay, so we started with something special: sunrise on the top of the observation tower. Most in the group made the climb up and we proceeded to enjoy the fabulous view and enjoy the morning bird and wildlife show. A light rain did little to dampen our spirits as we spotted both Masked and Black-crowned Tityra (the latter new for the tour), White-crowned and Short-billed Pigeon, Blue Dacnis, Plain-colored Tanager, and fly-by Red-lored Amazons and Blue-headed Parrots. Meanwhile, of course, a sloth or two foraged in the nearby trees, oblivious to our presence. After our morning show was over, we descended the tower and then enjoyed a well-earned breakfast in the dining room. After breakfast, most in the group gathered for a final walk around the Tranquilo Bay property with Rogers. Our first fun sighting was a Brown Vine Snake hanging out over the porch stairs, apparently waiting for something tasty to fly its way. Early in the walk, we had very nice views of a Chestnut-backed Antbird, a species more easily heard than seen, and enjoyed nice views of Golden-collared Manakin and a pair of Dot-winged Antwrens. Continuing on the trails, we arrived at the “hummingbird stream”, though not much was stirring except for a Crowned Woodnymph and another Swamp Eel, perhaps due to the rain. As we left that site, a very lucky few in the group glimpsed the magical Purple-crowned Fairy hovering briefly over the water; the rest of the group had to “console” themselves with great views of a foraging Band-tailed Barbthroat! A final stop at the fruiting fig tree was quite productive, with the usual complement of Red-capped Manakin, Clay-colored Thrush, Tawny-crested Tanager, and White-vented Euphonia feasting on the fruit, this time complemented by a Green Honeycreeper, new for the tour.

After the walk was over, we enjoyed our final Tranquilo Bay lunch in the dining room and then indulged ourselves in a free afternoon. Many took advantage of the free time to do a little swimming and/or snorkeling off the dock, a final chance to enjoy our island paradise. At the end of the afternoon, we met for our final daily checklist of the tour, a review of departure plans for the next day, and a lovely farewell dinner. After that, it was off to our cabins to pack and rest up for the trip home or the extension trip.

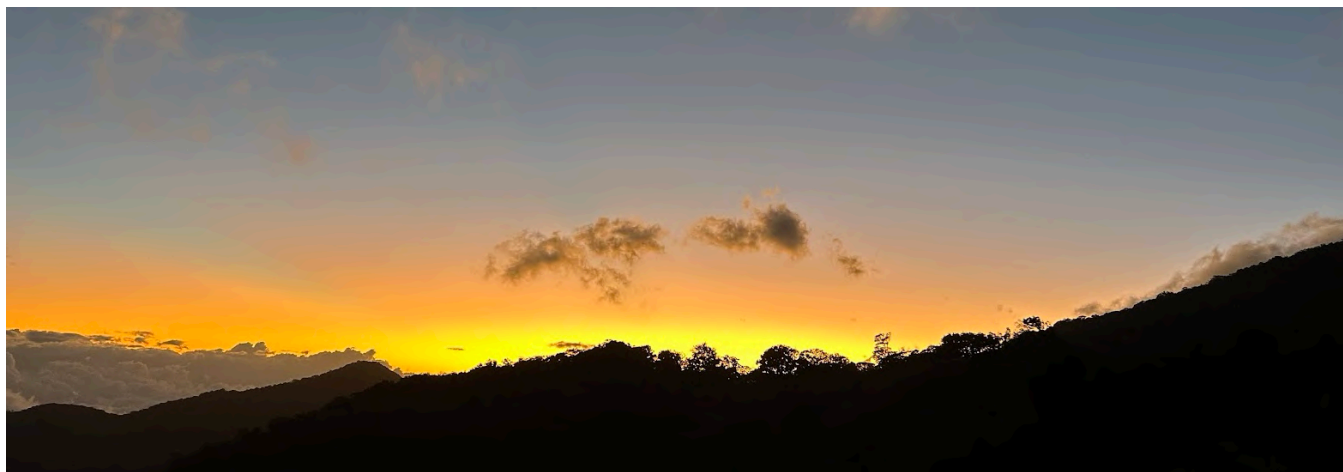


Sat., Jan. 25 Departures from Tranquilo Bay | Mt. Totumas extension

Today marked the end of the main tour and the beginning of the extension. Therefore, our group split into two pieces at the start of the day. Susan, Paul, and Tim had a later breakfast, then a bit of free time before being taken by the Tranquilo Bay boat back to Bocas del Toro town to catch the Air Panama flight back to Panama City Albrook and from there to either Tocumen airport or a local hotel.

The remainder of the group had an earlier breakfast, then assembled down on the dock, our baggage having been collected by the Lodge crew already. We boarded our boat for one final trip to Punta Róbal, where we were met by another bus ready to pick us up. All the bags were put on board the bus, we climbed on board, and off we went for a trip up and over the continental divide all the way to the Panamerican Highway and our second lodge in the western mountains. Stopping only for bathroom breaks (though the stop at Fortuna Dam allowed us to do a little birding, including a re-sighting of the Lesson's Motmot that had been glimpsed earlier in the tour), we eventually arrived in the town of Volcán in the early afternoon (though not before spotting a soaring Swallow-tailed Kite along the road). Arriving at the designated meeting point, we transferred ourselves and our gear into two pickup trucks and then began driving up into the mountains to the Mt. Totumas Cloudforest Lodge.

We soon arrived at our mountain digs, located amid the splendor of the Talamanca Mountains. As we disembarked from the trucks, the surroundings and the bird feeder traffic were too much to resist, so we commenced viewing, spotting birds, and taking photographs. After a short while, we sat down to the first of many excellent Mt. Totumas meals, slating our by-now epic hunger. After lunch, Jeff gave us an overview of the Lodge itself and our daily routine while there and we grabbed our rooms, all right there in the Bellbird Lodge right next to the dining room. We had a free afternoon to get acclimated, but most spent some time watching the feeders to start gaining knowledge of the local avifauna. The hummingbird traffic was the best of the tour, by a long shot, with the larger Violet Sabrewings and Talamanca Hummingbirds competing with the numerous Lesser Violetears for a sip. Periodically sneaking their way in and out were smaller species such as Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, White-throated Mountain-Gem, and the diminutive Magenta-throated Woodstar and Scintillant Hummingbird. As if this show was not enough, the birds at the fruit feeders grabbed for attention, particularly a male Red-headed Barbet, which was accompanied by Silver-throated Tanagers and Common Chlorospinguses. At the end of the day, we gathered for our checklist and enjoyed an excellent dinner courtesy of Alma and crew—a rewarding end to a long day of travel.



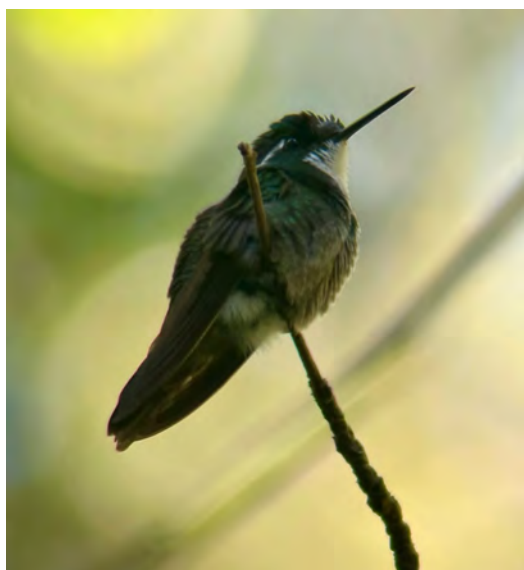
Sun., Jan. 26 Mt. Totumas: Big Tree, Anciano, Roble trails

There being no need for an early start at this high elevation location, we had a leisurely breakfast and then met local guide Reinaldo for an extensive morning walk around the grounds of Mt. Totumas, taking a very long loop hike on the Big Tree and Anciano trails. The atmosphere was literally exhilarating, with the winds coming over the divide pushing the legendary bajareque (a high elevation mist composed of clouds) rapidly by and wind whistling through the treetops. We soon recognized both Reinaldo's extraordinary bird-finding ability AND the great diversity of species to be found in these nearby forests. A few of the highlights included a Spot-crowned Woodcreeper at its nest cavity (singing, in fact!), Yellowish Flycatcher, Brown-capped Vireo, a furtive Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, and an Eye-ringed Flatbill. Finishing our walk, very satisfied, we had a short break, then lunch, and then another break to enjoy the surroundings.

After lunch, some in the group went out for another hike with Reinaldo, this time on the somewhat challenging Roble loop. Although the hiking was tough, the birds continued to amaze us, with Reinaldo helping find excellent views of a singing Three-wattled Bellbird and several Resplendent Quetzals, at least one with full tail streamers! Other goodies encountered during the afternoon included Crested and Black Guan, a calling Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl that defied our efforts to find it, Golden-crowned Warbler, Yellow-thighed Brush-Finch, and a Coati. We returned from the walk tired, but very happy, and enjoyed some free time watching the feeder traffic and relaxing before doing our daily checklist and feasting on another wonderful dinner in the dining room.

Mon., Jan. 27 Mt. Totumas Lodge | lower elevations of road to Volcán | Roble, Quetzal trails

Most of us noted the continuous wind overnight, which while creating a great deal of noise, was not anything to worry about. We enjoyed our comfortable breakfast and then gathered our gear for a morning excursion to lower elevations. Jeff, Reinaldo, and Dave consulted and determined that although it was windy, there was a high likelihood of less wind at lower elevations, so we all piled into 2 trucks and down we went! Indeed, after descending and passing some cattle pasture and a dairy, we found some degree of shelter from the wind and commenced birding along the road. The sun warmed our spirits as we enjoyed new species to us including Blue-and-white Swallow, White-collared and Vaux's Swift, Northern Emerald Toucanet, Bay-headed Tanager, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Red-faced Spinetail, Speckled Tanager, and Elegant Euphonia. Most extraordinary of all was a pair of King Vultures soaring overhead with the Black and Turkey Vultures; although it is always a treat to see this species anywhere, it turned out that this was only the third or fourth time they had EVER BEEN SEEN on a field trip from Mt. Totumas! This special sighting more than made up for the furtive sighting of an Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, our second such poor sighting of a nightingale-thrush species in as many days.



We returned to the lodge in late morning, unsuccessfully looking for American Dipper and Torrent Tyrannulet along the flowing stream below the lodge (though we did find a Yellow-faced Grassquit to add to our list). Returning to the Lodge, we enjoyed lunch, followed by a short break. In the afternoon, Reinaldo came by again and took a small group on another birding hike, this time on the Roble and Quetzal trails. We continued to enjoy the lovely forests in the area and rounded out our bird list even more, spotting Wilson's and Black-and-white Warbler, Swallow-tailed Kite, Slaty Antwren, and Yellow-bellied Siskin. We all met at the end of the day for our checklist and then Jeff gave a fascinating presentation on the results of his efforts to use game cameras to document trail activity. It was quite amazing to see all the action (non-human, in particular!) on the same trails upon which we had recently been walking. After that, another fine dinner and an excellent night's rest.

Tues., Jan. 28 Mt. Totumas: Cascade, Puma, Big Tree, Roble trails and Lodge access road

We began the day, our final one at Mt. Totumas and the final one of the entire tour, with a lovely breakfast at the Lodge, though the winds continued to blow pretty strongly, albeit with mostly sunny skies. Due to the wind, Jeff and Reinaldo thought it advisable to abandon our preliminary plans for a road trip to explore the higher elevations near Mt. Totumas and stick to more trail walks. So, most of the group met Reinaldo after breakfast and we set out for the morning, exploring the Cascade, Upper Cascade, Puma, and Big Tree trails; some of this hike was downhill in hopes that we would have a bit more shelter from the winds. This hike turned out to go through some lovely forest and went by the largest trees we had encountered on the tour: a series of giant Mexican Elms, which had never been logged, even when the forests around Mt. Totumas had been high-graded many years ago. Nestled in deep, wet ravines, these forest giants reached high into the canopy with crowns almost impossible to see from the ground. We found lots of impressive birds on the hike, too, including Brown-capped Vireo, Golden-winged, Black-throated Green, and Blackburnian Warbler, Collared Trogon, Streaked Xenops, and a pair of incredible Flame-throated Warblers. Upon our return from the walk, we enjoyed our last lunch at the Lodge and a brief rest.

After lunch, many in the group attended an interesting coffee tour, getting an introduction to how Mt. Totumas produces its award-winning specialty coffee, including the different cherry fermentation techniques the Lodge experiments with. After the coffee tour, a few remaining die-hards met Reinaldo for one last hike on the grounds, always in search of new and interesting things. Although we covered some of the same trails as previously visited, we had a fantastic final outing, finding several new species such as Dark Pewee and Dusky-capped Flycatcher. However, the most amazing moment occurred when, in a very short period of time, a Yellow-

winged Vireo, multiple Black-cheeked Warblers, and a Purple-crowned Fairy all appeared in the same spot in rapid succession! For most in the group, all were lifers!! With that fabulous sighting, we ended our walk, returned to the lodge, and had our final daily checklist and dinner.

Wed., Jan. 29 Departures from David

Alas, today was departure day, so we left in the two trucks in the pre-dawn darkness, one slightly earlier and the other slightly later. After about 2 hours driving, we arrived safely at the airport in David, where we checked into our flights and waited in the airport to travel onward. However, never missing a chance to add birds to the tour list, several of us in the waiting room noticed a pair of Fork-tailed Flycatchers hanging out around the airport, thus adding another species to the list for the tour!

Photos: Group (David MehlmanRogers Morales - RDM), Prothonotary Warbler (Susan Robinson - SR), Jabiru (David Mehlman - DM), Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth (DM), Black-cheeked Woodpecker (SR), Spectacled Caiman (SR), Red-ored Parrot Amazon (DM), White-faced Capuchin (SR), Tranquilo Bay (DM), Terns in the bay (SR), Group Birding (SR), Yellow-throated Toucan (SR), Bananaquit (SR), Golden-hooded Tanager (SR), Scenic (DM), Bat Falcon (SR), Rufous-tailed Hummingbird (SR), Collared Plover (DM), Red-ored Parrot Amazon (SR), Swan Caye (DM), Tranquilo Bay sunset (DM), Prepona (DM), Brown Vine Snake (SR), Mt. Totumas bajareque (DM), Three-wattled Bellbird (DM), Red-eyed Treefrog (SR), Golden-bellied Flycatcher (DM), Sunset (DM), White-throated Mountain Gem (DM), Final group at Dinner (SR)