

# Panama: Birds & Mammals | Feb. 20 – 28, 2026

## Trip Report by Robert Gallardo



With Naturalist Journeys guide Robert Gallardo, local guides Eliecer at Canopy Lodge and Alexis at Canopy Tower, and participants Dennis, Kimberly, Philip, Janet, Mitch, Barbara, Roger and Donna.



### 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 29,000mi<sup>2</sup>, 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 20 Arrivals | Panama City | Canopy Lodge**

Today the adventure began for the eight guests. Everyone had arrived at least a day early, so by the next morning we were able to get going to the Canopy Lodge. We travelled across the dry landscape, paralleling the Pacific coastline. We slowed down at a large, open field where alfalfa is grown and found a patch that was recently harvested. Two beautiful Savannah Hawks were walking on the ground. We soon reached our turnoff to Valle and climbed the slopes of the old, extinct volcano. As we reached the high point in the highway the habitat began to change and it quickly changed from deciduous forest to a verdant evergreen forest.

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 Eliecer 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, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, and Thick-billed Euphonia. 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. Showing up on the feeder and Porterweed flowers were Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, Violet-headed Hummingbird, and Crowned Woodnymph. A pair of the special Dusky-faced Tanagers also made their first appearance. Eliecer 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. We found our first Common Squirrel Cuckoo of the trip and we would see more at different sites. A Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth was spotted by Eliecer tucked away inside a tree. The first, of many, Brown-throated Three-toed Sloths was also found. Back at the lodge we enjoyed seeing a female Green Kingfisher perched low in the bushes that lined the creek. Eliecer told us that Keel-billed Toucans had begun to show up at the feeder and voila, a pair came in. Deserving respect, all birds departed and gave them plenty of space. A pair of Bay Wrens foraged in a nearby row of shrubs, allowing for great views. A male Tawny-capped Euphonia, Crimson-backed Tanager, Blue-gray Tanager, and Buff-



throated Saltator were also observed at the feeders. It was a great introduction to this wonderful corner of Panama.

We 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, February 21 Canopy Lodge & Vicinity**

Our first day afield was about to begin and today we would ease into this tropical wonderland. Robert arrived at the dining area right before breakfast and heard a familiar sound. It was a disyllabic whistle of the Sunbittern and was originating nearby. He peeked over the retaining wall and it was right there! He was sure to gather each participant as they arrived for breakfast to see this stunning bird. What a way to start the day! After breakfast, we checked out the fruit feeder for a bit. A Mistletoe Tyrannulet was seen in a nearby tree. Several Collared Aracaris came in to join the marauding crew of birds that fed on the bananas and cracked corn. The stunning Orange-billed Sparrow showed up in the nearby bushes where we could get a good look at it. We took a short stroll into the back garden by the natural pools to see what was stirring. An assortment of flycatchers seen included a Yellow-olive Flatbill, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, and the similar Panama Flycatcher. We spotted a lovely Purple-crowned Fairy working the wild cashew blossoms then it quickly disappeared. Eliecer climbed the stairs up into the tree house to see if a mammal was still there. It was. We took turns going up in groups to see an Andean Porcupine (formerly Rothschild's) resting atop the open window shutter. What a treat!

We began to walk up the road a bit and found a Bay-headed Tanager and female Green Honeycreeper. A Rufous-breasted Wren was foraging in a row of trees and we were afforded good looks of it. Pairs of Blue-headed Parrots flew up the canyon and a lone Scaled Pigeon was spotted perched on a far ridgeline. A majestic Black Hawk-Eagle lifted out of the nearby trees and eventually soared away. We stopped at a small Porterweed garden that was set up the lodge to attract/lure in a very special bird. The tiny Rufous-crested Coquette usually takes a high perch from where it flies off to feed on any number of nectar sources. It was, in fact, perched high in a tree across the street. We waited patiently for it to descend, watching some nice butterflies in the meantime. The stunning hummingbird actually came down twice and flitted all around us, inspecting many blooms on each visit. What a special bird. Violet-headed and Blue-chested Hummingbirds came in as well. Up by the canopy zipline entrance we enjoyed seeing some Tawny-crested Tanagers that fed on bananas the staff had put out.

We returned to the lodge for a nice lunch and a break. In the afternoon we went to a nearby property called 'Las Mozas.' It was a beautiful deciduous forest with some big trees and a small wetland. A Short-tailed Hawk was



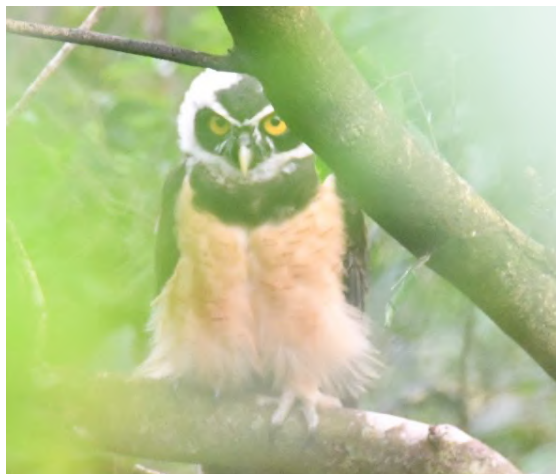
spotted soaring away. It didn't take long to find a handsome Lesson's Motmot who emitted its tell-tale 'hoot-hoot' call. A very special bird that inhabits these forests is the Rosy Thrush-Tanager which has both a brilliantly colored male and female. We heard one calling from within the thick forest and it took a bit of searching to see bits and pieces of the pink-colored male. A Northern Plain-Xenops, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Yellow-crowned Euphonia, and Southern Beardless Tyrannulet were observed as well. Numerous Rufous-and-white Wrens were emitting their flute-like calls and we got brief looks of these skulking birds. Year after year, a pair of Spectacled Owls nest in these woods and this year was no different. We were told that they had three chicks this year. Eliecer disappeared into the woods to find the roost and found one. We made our way down a narrow trail and were able to see an immature that still had downy feathers on its head. It looked kind of comical. On the way back to the van a male Golden-collared Manakin popped out right in front of us. An attractive male American Redstart was foraging alone and a cute Three-toed Sloth with baby was found. Our visit to this special forest had ended and we returned to the lodge.

Kimberly showed us some Great Fruit-eating Bats that were roosting high in the eave of one of the units. They were tucked in there close together. We had a nice rest before doing our checklist and dinner.

## **Sunday, February 22 Finca Candelaria | Las Minas**

Each day afield brings nice surprises and today was no exception. After breakfast, we drove to a new spot just up the road that the lodge has set up and is called the 'Toucan' feeding station. Right after parking we were able to see a Rufous Mourner. A nice start. It was a short walk to the feeders and they had a covered viewing area that looked over a small clearing surrounded by forest. Eliecer put out the bananas on the feeders and watched as the show began. Numerous hummingbirds were visiting the nectar feeders and purple Porterweed including the Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and numerous Crowned Woodnymphs. A Gray-chested Dove and two Gray-cowled Wood-Rails were seen skulking along the edge of the forest. A wide range of colorful birds came and went to feed on the bananas including several Collared Aracaris, the stunning Rufous Motmot, male and female Flame-rumped Tanagers, as well as male and female Tawny-capped Euphonias. A male Crested Oropendola landed in a nearby tree and performed its display a couple times. It is quite similar to that of the Montezuma, but the Crested emits a different sound. The star of the show, however, was the Geoffroy's Tamarin. Robert spotted them in the distant trees and it didn't take long for them to make their way to the feeders. Five in all came and fed right next to us. Talk about some special moments! We stayed awhile waiting for another special bird but would catch up to it at a later time.

We headed up the road a bit to visit another private property called 'Candelaria.' It is mostly an agricultural plot with a large chunk of rainforest set aside. Along the main road we found a handsome Silver-throated Tanager.



After entering the gate we came across numerous pairs of Southern Lapwings; a common denizen of open areas. We entered the rainforest and a Black-faced Antthrush was calling nearby but remained hidden. It would be another bird we could catch up with later. After walking a bit we encountered a lovely female Collared Trogon. This is the orange-bellied form that occurs in the region. A bit further we could see that a fairly large mixed feeding flock was on the move. We could see activity both in the subcanopy as well as the dense understorey foliage. It took a lot of concentration to discern between the wide range of moving objects but we did see Russet Antshrike, Plain Antvireo, Spot-crowned Antvireo, Checker-throated Stipplethroat, White-flanked Antwren, Lesser Greenlet, a female Spotted Antbird, Tawny-faced Gnatwren, a few Red-crowned Ant-Tanagers, Spotted Woodcreeper, and a Golden-winged Warbler. We walked slowly along as they moved and enjoyed this spectacular feeding frenzy until they disappeared. On our way out some participants found a female Canada Warbler. We started back to the lodge and Robert spotted a Ringed Kingfisher perched close to the road over a gorge with a stream far below. It's not often one gets to look down on one of these giant birds.

We had lunch then a couple of hours of rest before setting out for the afternoon's activity. We returned to the same area but stopped alongside the road at an overlook. A lone Rufous-and-white Wren was foraging atop a wood pile in plain sight. A Roadside Hawk perched atop a large, leafless tree was also seen as well as a lone male Scarlet-thighed Tanager inside a clump of mistletoe. We reached a place called 'Las Minas' and found a Lineated Woodpecker flying across the road. It landed in a distant tree and after getting out and setting up the scope we could see it was perched alongside its partner. Nice! A few Southern Rough-winged Swallows went zooming by. We walked up a short road which is typically filled with birds in the morning hours. It was fairly quiet at this time of day. Up toward the turnaround spot we did find a lone Black-and-yellow Tanager which is a good sighting anywhere. A little flock was moving down a ravine but we could only discern an Eye-ringed Flatbill. Down another slope we heard some Song Wrens singing and we waited to see if they would appear. One did, and just as it was coming into view a dog appeared right below it and scared the wren away. Yikes! We shoed the dog off and the wren thankfully reappeared. We walked back to the van and flushed up a Barred Forest-Falcon that was sitting low in the woods. We could not relocate it.

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

## Monday, February 23 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 scopes and would be gone for a good part of the day. We climbed the steep mountain and as soon as we reached some humid rainforest we stopped. It was a steep, winding road so finding a good spot for all three trucks was tricky. Right off the bat appeared a Tufted Flycatcher that fed in plain sight. A Gray-breasted Wood-Wren was seen



skulking in the thick vegetation and the tiny Ochraceous Wren was spotted in a nearby tree. That spot is usually quite active but not on that day. It was windy and cold. We were just about ready to depart when Robert spotted a Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant foraging right beside the road. We were afforded good looks of this otherwise elusive bird.

We reached the gate that led into this highland community where lots are offered to build houses. We got part way in when suddenly one of the trucks was having mechanical problems. We looked at the engine and saw that a big hose clamp that led to the turbo had snapped. A couple zip ties were found but didn't hold up. So, we piled into two cars and went on our way. We reached yet another gate and parked and walked in from there. A mixed flock was foraging in the nearby trees and included many Common Chlorospingus. This is one of the most abundant species in the cloud forests of Central America. Some had even descended to the large lawn to forage which seemed a bit curious. Robert then spotted a Red-faced Spinetail, being a highland specialty. Another flock on the other side of the road was noticed and in it were Blackburnian Warbler, Hepatic Tanager, Silver-throated Tanager, and Russet Antshrike. We continued on and found a fruiting tree that was starting to attract some birds. A lone Northern Emerald Toucanet appeared and we were delighted to see this blue-throated form. It fed on the fruits for some time. An adorable male White-ruffed Manakin also showed up, along with an Olive-striped Flycatcher. The lodge sent up a replacement vehicle and they had caught up with us. We continued up toward the visitor's center where we found a Yellow-bellied Elaenia. Eliecer wanted to check out a spot nearby that had a fruiting tree to see it was attracting birds. We did just that and there was nothing there. We returned to the center and had a nice lunch at a spot that overlooks a small lagoon. It was such a peaceful place. We then went for a walk along a paved path that led into the surrounding forest. A male and female Lineated Woodpecker were working on a nest hole next to the path. We entered the forest and it was quiet. A Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher was spotted in the dark forest understory and we also got brief looks at a Rufous-browed Tyrannulet higher up. We then suddenly came across a pair of Collared Trogons perched close to the trail. We weren't sure what they were doing on a tree but may have been inspecting a possible nest hole. Further along we found a male Graceful Black-throated Trogon that was being a bit shy. We would get much better looks in a few more days. We walked back to the cars and returned to the fruiting tree we checked out earlier. Voila. A female Yellow-eared Toucanet was there feeding on the ripe, red berries. She seemed unconcerned of our presence and we watched her feed. Eliecer continued scouring the thick vegetation and found a male tucked away on the back side of the same tree. He eventually moved to a better spot and we got great views of this stunning bird. This is the hardest toucan to find in the region and we were ecstatic to have seen them so well.



Counting our blessings, we returned to the lodge. We had some downtime before having our final dinner at this wonderful destination.

## **Tuesday, February 24 Canopy Lodge | Drive to Canopy Tower | Semaphore Hill**

We woke this morning to another cool day. Again, Robert arrived at the restaurant before the participants and found a Fasciated Tiger-Heron in the creek by the bridge. This denizen haunts clean-flowing rivers with a spotted distribution in Central America. It remained long enough for some to see and was a 'first' for his trips to Panama. Today, we would head back toward Panama City but wanted to look for a couple more birds before heading out. We drove to the nearby feeding station and Eliecer found a pair of Tropical Screech-Owls on a day roost right alongside the road. We got settled in at the station and watched all the birds come in. On special species we wanted to see was the Spot-crowned Barbet and our patience paid off. Both a male and female came to gorge themselves on bananas and we enjoyed these colorful birds. The rain started to come down hard and all of the birds fled for cover. After lightening up a bit we made a dash to the van and back to the Lodge. We packed and said 'bye' to this special place.

We reached the main highway along the coast and stopped at a pullout. We were searching for the Fork-tailed Flycatcher which was known to haunt this spot. Robert spotted one perched in a distant field and it disappeared before it could be seen in the scope. As we approached Panama City we passed over the Centenario Bridge that spanned the canal. Taking a turnoff, we reached Soberania National Park in no time at all. We reached Semaphore Hill which leads up to the Canopy Tower; the old radar station converted into a premiere 'lodge-in-the-sky.' The winding road passes through a tall and spectacular broadleaf forest filled with birds and other wildlife. Tatiana, the manager, met us up arrival as well as Alexis, our expert local guide. We were shown to our rooms, scattered on the different levels, then had a brief orientation.

In the late afternoon we planned on taking a walk down Semaphore Hill. On the grounds itself were some feeders that were filled with numerous White-necked Jacobins, a splendid Violet-bellied Hummingbird, and a tailless Long-billed Hermit. We started walking down the hill and Alexis showed us two Lesser White-lined Bats on the underside of a large branch high above us. A high-pitched sound nearby caught his attention. It belonged to the Red-capped Manakin and we got great views of the cute male. We saw a little bird coming and going across the road. It was a Southern Bentbill making nest. What luck! Through a break in the canopy we saw a few migrating Mississippi Kites soaring by as well as a lone Swainson's Hawk. Seemed a bit early to see them but there they were. A perched Purple-crowned Fairy was spotted as well as a male Black-throat Mango. What



flowers did they find in the canopy? Donna spotted a Red-crested Amazon that was feeding on seed pods in the mid-story. Great sighting! A handsome male Fasciated Antshrike and a male Black-crowned Antshrike were spotted foraging in the thick vegetation. A male Dot-winged Antwren appeared and began to perform a courting display for a nearby colorful female. It was fun to see. One of the most abundant woodcreepers found in these woods is the Plain-brown and today we saw the first one. A male and female White-browed Gnatcatchers were spotted foraging high near the subcanopy. One of the very few tanagers in the region that forage together in small flocks is the White-shouldered and today we saw our first ones. Toward the end of the walk we observed several Mantled Howlers sitting high in a tree along the close ridgeline. In the heat of the day they were more intent on relaxing. The lodge's open-air truck arrived to pick us up and take us back. Most of us went up to the upper deck where we had sweeping views of the rolling hills, a small section of the canal, and Panama City in the distance. Many colorful butterflies of all sizes zipped to and fro, many of them showing hilltopping behavior. Both the Band-rumped Swift and Short-tailed Swifts zoomed past. A handsome Plumbeous Kite came soaring past, low enough to see its rufous wingtips. Another raptor was spotted a bit further away and it turned out to be a Hook-billed Kite. The lodge, and surroundings, is a great place to see a nice variety of birds of prey. In the nearby canopy we spotted the tiny Brown-capped Tyrannulet; a member of the flycatcher family. Alexis spotted something foraging amidst a thick tangle and it turned out to be a Green Shrike-Vireo. This is one of those canopy-dwelling birds that is heard far more often than seen. A few more stunning and colorful species showed up that included the Fulvous-vented Euphonia, Blue Dacnis, and Shining Honeycreeper. They were all headed to a nearby fruiting Melastome tree below us. There, they were joined by a female Velvety Manakin and two Golden-hooded Tanagers. What a collage of colors!

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 near the restaurant window and tonight it attracted a Derby's Woolly Opossum. It was a fantastic way to end another day in Panama.

## **Wednesday, February 25      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 departing for today's destination, we did some viewing atop the roof. A few Red-crested Parrots and the larger Mealy Parrots were seen flying by. A lone Yellow-backed Oriole appeared and emitted its beautiful song for all to enjoy.

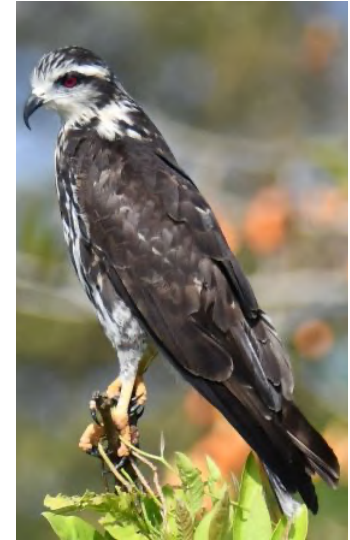
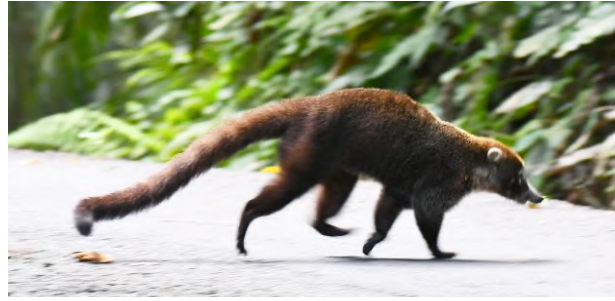
We loaded a van and drove to the Metropolitan Park; a large natural area on the outskirts of the city. It didn't take long before we began to see a nice assortment of birds. A high-pitched chatter was coming from a viny tangle. It belonged to the male Slate-colored Seedeater; a handsome seedeater. We saw some seeding



bamboos; a favorite food source of this species. A small flock was foraging in the trees all around us. We found a Yellow-margined Flatbill, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, and Golden-fronted Greenlet. We also got to enjoy another small flock of White-shouldered Tanagers and included a male that was foraging near ground level. Robert spotted a pair of the stunning Streaked Flycatchers foraging high in the canopy. A stately male White-winged Becard appeared and not long after that a female was found. We could hear many Lance-tailed Manakins emitting different vocalizations and we really wanted to see one of these colorful birds. We approached a more secluded patch of forest and with patience were able to spot one. Some raspy sounds were coming from a thicket, and they belonged to the Red-throated Ant-Tanager. The colorful male and a pair of females foraged close by, allowing for great views. A female Dusky Antbird was also spotted in the nearby vegetation. A park employee ahead of us was signaling that he was seeing a bird, so we got there as quickly as possible. A male and female Graceful Black-throated Trogon was foraging for bugs in the subcanopy, often perching in plain sight. A bit further up the trail we encountered a handsome male Gartered Violaceous Trogon. It didn't take long until it was joined by a male Graceful Black-throated and it was a great way to end the morning.

We returned to the Tower in time for lunch and some downtime. In the afternoon, some of us headed out to the nearby Summit Gardens. It was the last few days of school vacation and the place was packed with families. In a grove of trees near the main gate we found a Prothonotary Warbler which seemed odd for this spot. A male Northern Yellow Warbler and Pale-vented Pigeon were also found nearby. Each year we find numerous Piratic Flycatchers at this park, and this year was no exception. We heard and/or saw many while there. A Crested Caracara was found in a nest in a tall palm. A pair of Masked Tityra were seen inspecting a tree cavity and as well as two Red-lore Amazons. Love was in the air. Toward the back part of the garden we spotted an old, lone Coatimundi foraging in the trash bins. It found a large slice of pizza. Score! At a large, flowering Balsa tree we found numerous Yellow-rumped Caciques and a Scarlet-rumped Cacique nectaring from flowers. It was picturesque.

We returned to the Tower for dinner and were treated to a Kinkajou that came in to feed on the banana. Tonight was our schedule night drive so we boarded the truck and started heading down the hill. Alexis and Robert both had spotlights and searched all levels of the forest; from the ground upwards. There wasn't much stirring, but Alexis did find a Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth moving slowly up a nearby tree. This species tends to be more active at night. Down a bit further he knew of a favorite perch of a 'great' bird; the Great Potoo. Atop a tall snag we could see this large member of the Potoo family. It was a fantastic way to end the day.



## Thursday, February 26 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.

We stopped just before the main entrance to Pipeline to see what was stirring. By a canal access gate we found four Whooping Motmots whooping it up, literally. There must have been some courtship rituals being performed as they were very vocal and one had a leaf in its beak. This last habit can be noted in many motmot species during the early breeding season. An immature Gray-lined Hawk was perched in the subcanopy of a giant Balsa tree. A White-tailed Trogon and perched right above the road. What luck! Then, another trogon appeared. It was a male Slaty-tailed Trogon. Calling from the nearby forest was a pair of White-bellied Antbirds and with some patience we were able to observe both of them foraging along the ground. The canal area is home to four different species of Puffbirds and we really wanted to see one. As luck would have it, Alexis heard one calling just ahead of us. The giant White-necked Puffbird was perched high in a leafless tree and we were afforded scope views. We drove into the reserve a bit to see what else we could find. A second Puffbird was present; this time it was the Black-breasted. Another prized bird was calling nearby and the high-pitched, three-note whistle belonged to the Cinnamon Woodpecker. The perched bird was spotted and we got scope views of this beauty. Further up the road we heard a Streak-chested Antpitta calling and it was close. Unfortunately, two separate groups of people walked into the forest to look for it and scared it off. Calling nearby was a Purple-throated Fruitcrow, emitting its whimsical whistles. Robert puckered his lips and imitated the calls. In less than a minute a male Fruitcrow came in and landed right above everyone. Bravo! Everyone enjoyed this special bird, being a member of the cotinga family.

We started to drive further up the road when we came across some people photographing birds. We were about to witness one of the quintessential experiences of the Neotropics: an army ant swarm. Following army ant swarms is a long list of birds that seize arthropods that flee from the ants. This ranges from obligate army ant followers to warblers, tanagers, nunbirds, falcons, and many more. We all stood at the edge of the road and enjoyed the spectacle. Four Gray-headed Tanagers, several Bicolored Antbirds, and three Greater Anis were foraging non-stop. It seemed strange to see an Ani at an antswarm, but there they were. Several Plain-brown Woodcreepers and one Cocoa Woodcreeper were busy as well. A handsome Northern Barred-Woodcreeper and two Wedge-billed Woodcreepers briefly joined in. A person that was there before us said there were a couple Ocellated Antbirds so we thought it best to just wait and see if they would return. And they did. Two of them perched low on some saplings, clinging to the main branch. We were between them and the leading from



of the ant swarm. We were afforded long looks at the most colorful antbird in Central America. But the show wasn't over yet. A pair of White-whiskered Puffbirds also made a brief appearance as well as a female Spotted Antbird. Robert was scanning deeper inside the forest when he saw something walking. It was a Black-faced Antthrush; the same species we heard at Candelaria days earlier. This time we got to see one. Out of nowhere came a troop of White-faced Capuchins and that kept us entertained for awhile. Just when we thought we had found everything, Kimberly spotted a roosting Common Potoo perched atop a snag through a window in the forest. More great spotting! The last bird we saw there was a male Graceful Black-throated Trogon and perched very low, allowing a really good look at this handsome species.

Lunch time was approaching so we made the return drive back to the Tower. After that exciting morning it was time for a little R&R. In the late afternoon we went out again and the Ammo Dump ponds was our destination. Upon arriving there, Alexis showed us a nesting Rufescent Tiger-Heron up in a small Balsa tree. A few Purple Gallinules and Wattled Jacanas were foraging on the wet grass. It was wet because of the unusual rains, and it began to rain on us! We took shelter beneath a stand of trees and waited for it to subside. It did, and we continued our visit. We heard a White-throated Crake rattling away inside the marsh. A male and female Barred Antshrike appeared as well as an American Pygmy Kingfisher. What luck to see this tiny kingfisher so close. Many of the migrant Baltimore Orioles perched atop nearby trees to dry themselves. Or at least attempt to do so. A Spectacled Caiman was partially submerged in the marsh. A Lesser Kiskadee, Buff-breasted Wren, and a Plain-colored Tanager were spotted before the rains returned. It appeared the rains would not cease so we called for a lodge van to come and pick us up.

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

## **Friday, February 27 Chagres River & Canal Boat Ride | Gamboa Resort**

Today was our last full day in Panama and we were ready to embark on another adventure. We headed to the nearby Chagres River where it empties into the Canal to take a boat and explore waterways. Right after boarding the boat we found some Mangrove Swallows. We began to see Green Iguanas and would see many, of all sizes, during the boat ride. We went straight into the channel and passed by a large freighter. We left the channel and entered a quiet bay. We found our first Smooth-billed Ani and Limpkin. Snail Kites began to appear and we would see many during the outing. We found our first group of Proboscis Bats clinging in the shade of a large tree. A baby American Crocodile was found sunning itself atop a small, floating log, partially hidden against the bank. Further along we came across four Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures; a species we had not seen on previous trips. For some odd reason, we don't see many kingfishers on this boat trip, and today was no exception. We did



see a female Ringed Kingfisher though. At an isolated island we saw a lone White-faced Capuchin waiting for visitors with the hopes of receiving a banana handout. At another spot we found Mantled Howlers eating the blooms of orange Coral Trees. We went to another secluded bay and visited an active Chestnut-headed Oropendola colony. We watched them come and go, probably as they fed chicks. Female Giant Cowbirds were present, inspecting potential nests to potentially parasitize. During the return trip Alexis spotted a pair of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks sitting amongst a small group of Black Vultures on an elevated bank. Close to them was a Solitary Sandpiper. We returned to the dock and started heading back to the tower. Robert had Alexis stop the truck to inspect a bird soaring low overhead. It was a Peregrine Falcon.

We had lunch then enjoyed some down time. In the late afternoon we drove to the nearby Gamboa Resort to see if we could find a special denizen of the forest. We parked and strolled down a quiet trail. Kimberly spotted a Whooping Motmot perched high up in a Ficus tree. This particular motmot feeds a lot on fruits. We got scope views of a Black-cheeked Woodpecker and another male Slaty-tailed Trogon. Calling nearby was a Yellow-throated Toucan and as if by magic, two came in and perched nearby. We were able to see all the toucan species that occur in Panama. A pair of Olivaceous Woodcreepers was spotted as they crept up the trees. We heard something calling from the thick vegetation by the trail and Alexis said it was a Jet Antbird. A new antbird! With a little patience, we were able to observe this nearly all-black species. Alexis had a spot where, for many years, the Western Night Monkey had a day roost. We stepped into the forest and checked, and there it was. Through the scope we could see this special, nocturnal mammal. At one point, a young one poked its head out then disappeared. It was a special mammal for sure. We got back to truck and started heading back to the lodge. Along the way, Robert spotted a Crane Hawk perched right above the road. We stopped to get a better look at it but it flew deeper into the surrounding forest.

We had a little rest before having our farewell dinner. We completed the checklist one final time and recapped many wonderful moments during the trip. Everyone had a special bird, or two, or moments they enjoyed. Afterwards, Robert gave a presentation on the birds and butterflies of Honduras.

## **Saturday, February 28                      Tower | Departures**

This morning we all said our 'good-byes' and a few of us departed to catch early flights. We hoped to see each other again someday, somewhere.



## **Favorite Sightings of the Trip**

**Roger**-Graceful Black-throated Trogon, Silver-throated Tanager and Collared Aracaris. The Toucan feeder at the Canopy Lodge and the swimming hole there. Pipeline Road and army ant swarm. Geoffroy's Tamarin. Altos de Maria area.

**Donna**-Crimson-backed Tanager and the Red-lored Amazon she found along Semaphore Hill. Army ant swarm along Pipeline Road. Toucan feeding station at Canopy Lodge. View from atop the Canopy Tower.

**Dennis**-Night Monkey and Ghost Skipper.

**Kimberly**-Sunbittern. Army ant swarm and the suite of antbirds on Pipeline Road.

**Phil**-Black-chested Jay. Toucan feeders at Canopy Lodge and the elevation there.

**Janet**-Seeing the Sunbittern in flight. Rufous-crested Coquette, Stripe-throated Hermit, and Yellow-eared Toucanets.

**Mitch**-Spectacled Owl and all motmots. Pipeline Road was wonderful.

**Barbara**-Ocellated Antbirds on Pipeline Road. Toucan feeders at Canopy Lodge.

**Alexis**-Ocellated Antbirds. The moment when Kimberly found the Common Potoo.

**Robert**-Jet Antbird and Tawny-faced Gnatwren (Lifers). Seeing the Ocellated Antbirds again and getting a crackin' photo. Helping everyone see the birds and wildlife.

*Photos: Group (Robert Gallardo - RG), Keel-billed Toucan (Dennis Deck - DD), Geoffroy's Tamarin (RG), Shining Honeycreeper (RG), Blue-gray Tanager (DD), Thick-billed Euphonia (DD), Central American Agouti (DD), Crested Oropendola (RG), Variable Crescent (DD), Blue-chested Hummingbird (RG), Spectacled Owl (DD), Red-crested Woodpecker (DD), Collared Aracari (DD), Three-toed Sloth with baby (RG), Group Birding (RG), Yellow-eared Toucanet (RG), Red-lored Amazon (DD), Black-breasted Puffbird (DD), Ocellated Antbird (DD), Black-throated Trogon (RG), White-nosed Coati (DD), Speckled Caiman (DD), Snail Kite immature (DD), White-faced Capuchin (RG), Mantled Howler Monkey (RG), Baby Crocodile (RG), Western Night Monkey (DD), Dryas Julia (DD)*