Panama Birds & Mammals | April 4–11, 2026
Trip Report by Chris Harbard

Guide Chris Harbard with local guide Alexis 'Alex' at Canopy Tower and Danilo 'Dani' Rodriguez Jr at Canopy Lodge. Our clients included Steph, Curt, Heather, Mark, Jean and Sanabelle.

Friday April 3 Arrival

Five guests arrived at Riande Airport Hotel at the end of the day, and met with Chris who was watching the afternoon migration from a position by the pool. We ordered food and drinks and got to know one another while watching vultures and hawks flying to their roosts.

Saturday April 4 Canopy Tower | Birdmobile | Gamboa

Early next morning we were outside again for a pre-breakfast watch. Chris had been staying at the hotel for a few days already and had seen 55 bird species just from the hotel. Among the common birds there was the fabulously attractive Thick-billed Euphonia and we also watched several hundred Black and Turkey Vultures fly over, plus many Broad-winged and Swainson's Hawks. A Yellow-crowned Amazon flew past and Mark spotted a Fork-tailed Flycatcher flying over, the only one of the trip. At 11am we left the hotel to pick up our one missing guest from a hotel in town, then heading north to Canopy Tower, a fairly short journey away.

We soon reached Canopy Tower and met with Tatiana, the manager, who introduced us to Alexis (Alex to us) who would be our local guide. We were shown to our rooms and then joined up on floor three of the tower to have lunch. All of our meals would be at the tower, where they provided us with wonderful breakfasts, lunches and dinners. After lunch we were able to explore, climbing the steep stairs to the outside platform of the tower which, as its name suggests, looks out on the canopy of the trees around with an amazing view right across to the Panama Canal and beyond. Just outside the tower was a platform with hummingbird feeders and several of us gathered there before our afternoon trip. We were told to expect eight species of hummingbirds and were not disappointed. Our two photographers, Steph and Sanabelle were in seventh heaven with so many subjects to focus on! White-necked Jacobins were the most numerous with Violet-bellied Hummingbird coming a close second, with their brilliantly colorful males. One of the feeders can be viewed live – the Panama Hummingbird Feeder Cam at explore.org.

We boarded one of the Birdmobiles owned by Canopy Tower. It was an open-air vehicle with seating for all – a wonderful way to experience the habitat around us as we traveled. After a short distance driving down the driveway we stopped when Alex spotted some monkeys. Our first Mantled Howler Monkeys, and one of them had a baby. We watched them jumping through the trees for some time, trying to get photographs. We moved a little way down the road and stopped for a special bird Alex knew about. That morning a pair of Crested Owls had been found roosting in a tree along the entrance road, and as luck would have it, they were still there. Rarely seen, they peered down at us from their perch in a tree. Alex got the scope on them and we had great views but photographs were tricky because of branches in the way. One more stop was by a bridge where Mark spotted a Broad-billed Motmot, sitting on a branch. There were trogons calling nearby but not visible. We continued along our way towards the town of Gamboa, crossing the Chagres River. By the bridge we saw Mangrove and Southern Rough-winged Swallows, as well as some Black Spiny Iguanas, sitting in the sun on rocks.

Our destination was a BnB owned by Canopy Family, which had feeders out. Along the way we spotted some Southern Lapwings close to the road, and stopped for a quick look. The feeders were filled with fruit, and there were some hummingbird feeders too. The fruit was attracting tanagers, and we say Blue-gray, Palm, Plain-colored and Crimson-backed, as well as Clay-colored Thrushes and a Red-crowned Woodpecker. In trees close by there were Blue Dacnis and Masked Tityra and a Central American Agouti sauntered across the lawn while a Yellow-headed Gecko decided to taste the bananas on offer. On the way back we stopped by an open area where a Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture was lazily flying around. In some trees were several Orange-chinned Parakeets, almost invisible amongst the green leaves while on some grass we saw a couple of Giant Cowbirds. Alex decided to take us to one more place, and we passed the turning to Canopy Tower, going a little way further then pulling in. Alex got his scope out and positioned it towards a tree that towered above us on the

other side of the road – all we could see were branches. “Take a look” he said. So, we looked down the scope and on one of the branches was a gray lump which looked just like part of the tree. “Great Potoo” exclaimed Alex and we realized we were looking at a roosting nightbird which looks a bit like an owl … and a lot like a tree! Some black birds flew into a nearby bush and these were Scarlet-rumped Caciques then a larger bird with a huge beak flew into another tree … a Keel-billed Toucan! What a great way to end the day. Back at the tower, it was time for a short break before going through the day’s species list and then it was time for dinner, with one more surprise. While we enjoyed the lovely food one of the staff was shining a torch out into the surrounding trees and he called us to see some carefully positioned fruit which was being enjoyed by a Central American Woolly Opossum giving us short but good views. It was time for bed and dreams of what might await us tomorrow.

Sunday April 5 Tower watch | Pipeline Road | Ammo Dump Ponds

The nice thing about Canopy Tower is that it takes your birding to another level … literally. Sunrise was around 6am and soon after the group began to emerge for early coffee. The stairway to the upper deck was open and the birds were singing. Coffee was waiting outside for us, making an amazingly civilized start to the day. Breakfast was not until 7.30, so we had lots of time to enjoy the dawn birds. Alex appeared with his scope and was able to tell us what we were hearing. Cooing from a Short-billed Pigeon, three repeated notes from a Green Shrike-Vireo and loud squawks from Mealy Amazons. A couple of Keel-billed Toucans flew into a tree down below us, and then a larger toucan – Yellow-throated – appeared and landed right by the tower giving us extraordinary views. Cameras were clicking – what a bird!!! A few migrating birds were seen around the tower, Summer and Scarlet Tanagers, an Eastern Kingbird, and then suddenly Alex spotted some distant raptors taking advantage of the warming air. At least 1,000 Mississippi Kites were leaving their roost and circling upwards to continue their long journey north to North America. Other sightings included Fulvous-vented Euphonia, White-browed Gnatcatcher and a couple of Brown-hooded Parrots. All before breakfast!!!

After more coffee and a lovely breakfast, we were ready to venture out to the legendary Pipeline Road. About fifteen minutes from Canopy Tower, it is inside the Soberania National Park. The road was constructed during World War II as part of a pipeline which was never completed. Now overgrown by rainforest it forms an amazing trail into a wildlife haven, especially well-known for its bird diversity with about 450 bird species recorded in the area. We climbed into the ‘Birdmobile’ with Alex’s son Adrian joining us as a second guide and before we even reached the main highway Alex had seen something and stopped the van. “Black-faced Antthush flew in front of the van”, he whispered loudly, gesturing into the vegetation by the side of the road. We waited quietly until he gestured with his laser pointer … “Just to the right” he said, and we peered into the shadows, where sure enough a small dark bird with a cocked tail was walking. We could see its contrasting black face as it quietly and

quickly walked along, disappearing into the darkness. Antthrushes are notoriously difficult to see and this was a lucky sighting.

We crossed the river again and drove through Gamboa, seeing some Southern Lapwings next to the road. Suddenly the roadway became more of a track … the famous Pipeline Road! As we drove along the trees closed in and once again Alex stopped suddenly … walking along the nearby forest floor was a large brown chicken, or so it looked. This was a Great Tinamou, which seem untroubled by our presence. Tinamous are usually heard but not seen, so this was a real treat to have one so close. We drove further along the road and then pulled into the side – time to disembark and start walking. Tall forest trees stretched up to the sky and several bird vocalizations could be heard. Birding in tropical rainforest can be difficult as you can hear the birds but seeing them is another matter. There may also be considerable stretches where you hear and see little. All the time you hope to encounter a mixed flock, or even better a marching band of army ants, with lots of birds in attendance, but this is a matter of pure luck.

One of the birds we could hear was a calling White-tailed Trogon and so we searched hard to see it, while Alex tried to call it in. Suddenly he spotted it, through countless leaves and branches. A few of us saw it briefly and then it moved. He found it again and tried to get the scope on it … but it moved again. This was typical forest birding and most of us got a glimpse. Further along the road, a woodpecker flew into a tree, and Alex identified it as a Cinnamon Woodpecker. This gorgeously-colored bird climbed up a tree trunk and showed well. Climbing in a similar way was a tiny bird, not a woodpecker, but a woodcreeper – a Wedge-billed Woodcreeper and a small bird further along the trail was a Dot-winged Antwren, accompanied by a larger Black-crowned Antshrike.

We reached a junction where the road forked off to the Discovery Tower, somewhere we would be visiting in a couple of days. On the other side of the main trail, low down, another bird was calling which Alex told us was a Streak-breasted Antpitta. Now antpittas are notoriously shy but even so, Alex gestured for us to be quiet and to follow him. A narrow path led off the trail and we tried not to make branches snap as we walked along. Alex was scanning into the trees and suddenly froze. He aligned his scope carefully and quietly then gestured for us to look. One by one we peered down at a mass of vegetation, and there, in the middle was a small brown bird with a streaked breast, facing right. We could see its beak open as we heard the song … it was the antpitta!!! How Alex saw it, and why it stayed motionless for so long is a mystery, but it meant we were all able to get a view of a bird that most birders only hear.

There was a bridge over a small stream and we decided to inspect a small pool to the side. On the far side was a muddy patch where a small American Crocodile was sitting, sunning itself, smiling! Continuing a little further

down the road there was another Spotted Antbird, but nothing else new so we turned around slowly started to make our way back to the van. Along the way a rustling beside the trail was revealed to be a Middle American Ameiva, a delightful long-tailed lizard with a gold stripe down its back. A small mixed bird flock came close and at last we saw (rather than heard) a Moustached Antwren, Southern Bentbill and also a Checker-throated Stipplethroat. After a morning of seeing many antbirds, and few ants, we headed back to the Canopy Tower for lunch. Afterwards a few of us watched hummingbirds at the feeders, while others rested, before venturing out again to the Ammo Dump Ponds in nearby Gamboa.

During World War II the US army built a series of ponds which could be used to provide easy access to water in case of fires. The ponds remain and are a great place for wildlife and so we parked next to them and got the scope out. At the back of the ponds, in some trees were some Gray-headed Chachalacas, large pheasant-like birds with long tails. A few long-tailed black birds resembled the Great-tailed Grackles which were so common, but Alex said to look closely at them as there were Greater Anis, obvious once you saw the large lump on top of their gray bills. We walked up towards a forbidding fence which surrounded some buildings. We could see down to a wetland beside the fence where there were several Rufescent Tiger-Herons, Purple Gallinules, and way at the back a huge Ringed Kingfisher. There was lots of activity in the trees by the wet area on the other side of the road and an ID challenge was eventually overcome with the very similar Lesser Kiskadee, and both Social and Rusty-margined Flycatchers all present. A pair of Barred Antshrikes perched on the fence around the road and gave us amazing views showing off their crests and differing plumages. Back by the van, we looked for a Ruddy-breasted Seedeater in the grass by the main road and found it, also spotting a Lesser Capybara (the second largest rodent in the world). Then Alex heard a White-throated Crake giving its chattering whinny from the long grass. “Watch the open patches” he told us, and we did. The bird was clearly moving and Alex would say “there” but we saw nothing. Eventually he pointed out a larger bare patch and said “Watch that … it will appear there”. So we did … and it did, briefly but giving us all nice views of what is a very difficult bird to see. We continued to hear it for a while but never glimpsed it again. We got back in the van and headed back to the Canopy Tower very happy with the 59 species we had seen and heard there. We went through the species list before dinner, and enjoyed a wonderful Easter meal of Chicken Curry with Coconut Rice, followed by Easter Cake. Once again, a staff member was checking the trees with a torch and this time called us to a window to show us a Kinkajou, a nocturnal, arboreal relative of the raccoons which is found throughout Central America and parts of South America.

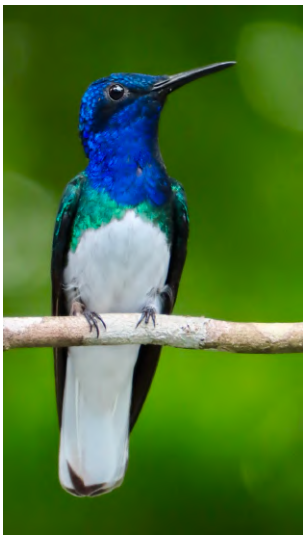
Monday April 6 Chagres River | Monkey Islands | Summit Ponds

This morning began with a short watch from the top of the tower at first light, before breakfast. Blue Dacnis and Green Honeycreepers were on show, together with a few parrots and a Short-billed Pigeon. After breakfast we drove to the Chagres River where we boarded a boat which would take us out exploring for the morning. The plan was to start along the Chagres River, then head out into Lake Gatu n to visit some islands. The river banks were well vegetated with mats of floating plants in many places. Purple Gallinules shone brightly in the sun with their long yellow legs, red bills and purple and green plumage, their long toes enabling them to walk across without sinking. High up in a large tree overhanging the river Alex spotted a Whooping Motmot, which eventually gave us lovely views. Suddenly Chris exclaimed "There's a croc!" … and close to the boat floated a Croc … a cream-colored left-hand one, with the word Croc clearly visible. We laughed and hope to see a real live one soon. Little Blue Herons were seen perched on the bank and on a floating boom nearby. A couple of small brown birds were visible as well, and these turned out to be Spotted Sandpipers.

We continued down the river looking at the Wattled Jacanas in the riverside vegetation. As we leisurely progressed down the river, we saw several more heron species including Tricolored, Striated and Green. Overhead there were Black and Turkey Vultures, and an Osprey appeared briefly. Bird songs and calls could be heard from the riverside forest – an Isthmian Wren, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Black-faced Antthrush, and Green Shrike-Vireo were all heard but not seen. Tropical and Social Flycatchers and Lesser Kiskadees were seen, as was a Keel-billed Toucan and a couple of Yellow-headed Caracaras high in a tree. We turned and headed b ack to where the river passes under the road bridge before turning away from the Culebra Cut, part of the narrow Panama Canal.

On the far bank of the river, we steered towards a muddy area where the boatman had spotted a real American Crocodile, motionless on the bank next to a log, with its mouth wide open. Bizarrely it had a large leaf in its mouth, which led to the suggestion that it was stuffed and staged there but it did actually move to prove otherwise. Continuing along river close to the south shore for a while the boatman then steered us towards a large tree leaning over the water and as we got close, he pointed out a line of small dark shapes under the trunk. There were Proboscis bats – small pointy-nosed bats which like to roost clinging to the underside of trees close to the water. Exploring further we found a tree with large hanging nests, a colony of Chestnut-headed Oropendolas. These large relatives of orioles and blackbirds have long yellow tails and large, long whitish beaks. They are noisy and their hanging, woven nests can be up to three feet long, suspended from a branch.

Our main reason for exploring this part of the river, up to where it enters Lake Gatun, was to visit the so-called monkey islands, where several monkey species have been released. The first we stopped by had Mantled



Howler Monkeys, which approached quite close to the boat, hoping for some kind of food. All black, with a long prehensile tail, they waited in vain for a tidbit. At the next island a cluster of other boats showed us where the monkeys were, and we could see a group of White-faced Capuchins which allowed us to approach. The last island we visited held Geoffroy's Tamarins which were quite fearless and even jumped onto our boat much to Sanabelle's delight! We also found a Hoffman's Two-toes Sloth up high in a tree nearby. As we explored the islands we saw several Snail Kites, with their amazingly hooked beaks, designed specifically for extracting apple snails from their shells. Soon it was time to return, and as we disembarked the boat a Yellow-headed Carcara sat and watched us. Back at Canopy Tower it was time for lunch and a relax, or a watch from the tower, until our afternoon excursion.

Tower watchers enjoyed several Band-rumped and Short-tailed Swifts flying around, with the usual Palm Tanagers plus a couple of Plain-colored Tanagers. We boarded the birdmobile and headed to the Summit Ponds to the east of the Culebra Cut. Turning off the main road, we crossed a railway line with grassy areas beside it and found Variable and Yellow-bellied Seedeaters feeding there. A little further on was a parking area, where we stopped. Alex told us that this was a good area for wide range of birds and we immediately noticed a couple of Bay-breasted Warblers and a pair of Piratic Flycatchers. Alex found a Golden-fronted Greenlet, and then signaled for us to listen. We could hear a repeated sound coming from a tangle of vegetation and Alex whispered that it was Jet Antbird, a localized species which we had hoped to see and eventually we had views of this black, skulking bird. On some high wires running along the road-side we saw a Gartered Violaceous Trogon and then a little further on a Slaty-tailed Trogon was first heard, then seen. A couple of Ruddy-breasted Wrens were singing from some bushes, and we also heard Black-bellied and Rufous-and-white Wrens. At the end of the road there were ponds on either side and we scanned for kingfishers, finding a pair of small Green Kingfishers, as well as a couple of Solitary Sandpipers. A shape at the edge of one pond revealed itself in the scope as a Boat-billed Heron. Walking back along the road we found a Masked Tityra high up and a beautiful little Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher. We suddenly became aware of several birds making quite a noise, high in a tree … something had clearly disturbed them. White-shouldered and Golden-hooded Tanagers, several Bay-breasted Warblers and a few other species were mobbing what turned out to be a Green Parrot Snake which was high in the tree. Back at the birdmobile Alex found a Collared Aracari at nest, and ad adult was poking its head out of the nest hole, right by us. We had amazing views of this lovely bird which seen entirely unperturbed by our presence. Back at Canopy Tower it was soon time to do the species list before dinner. Tomorrow was to be an early start!

Tuesday April 7 Discovery Tower | Pipeline Road | Gamboa Rainforest Reserve

This morning we rose early and boarded the birdmobile to drive down the Pipeline Road for a dawn visit to the Discovery Tower. We arrived at the parking lot just before 6:30 and were soon climbing the 174 steps up to the observation deck at the top of the 32 meter (105 feet) tower. A bright, still morning greeted us, and we stood looking out across an ocean of green with many avian sounds floating up to us. A movement below proved to be a delightful pair of Dot-winged Antwrens, a black male and a bright rufous female, gleaning the leaves for insects. The familiar song of a Green Shrike-Vireo drifted up from below and with the scope a large black bird perched on a distant tree was identified as a Crane Hawk. The view from the tower was amazing, with trees as far as the eyes could see. Some covered in dense leaves, other less so. There was some activity in a close tree, a bird flew in and perched on a bare branch - a Black-breasted Puffbird. The in the tree next to it another bird arrived and perched on the trunk - a Cinnamon Woodpecker! In two other directions there were toucans, Yellow-throated and Keel-billed. It was sometimes difficult to know where to look. A distant tree down below was large with some bare branches, and lots of different birds perched there. Suddenly a bright black-and-yellow bird appeared - a Yellow-backed Oriole, delightful but distant. Then it flew and came closer, until we had lovely views.

Alex suddenly exclaimed excitedly “Look at this tree over here … near the top on the left … there is a Tayra!!” We could see movement, and a dark shape. “It is an arboreal mustelid” he explained. “Like a weasel with long body and tail … we rarely see them.” We kept watching and could make it out as it ran along branches. We would see a head, and then the tail, and very occasionally most of the body. Incredibly Steph, always ready with her camera, managed to get a great shot of it. Watching from the top of the tower we could see birds flying past, some close others too far away to identify and as some parrots flew by, they called, and were immediately ID’d as Blue-headed by Alex. Then Alex called out “Blue Cotinga, female” and pointed to a brownish bird flying over. “Two more ..” he said. Brief flight views, but what we wanted was a perched male. Alex spotted one a long way off which did not stay long enough to get the scope on it. We kept waiting and hoping, and then suddenly there was one perched in the Crane Hawk tree. The scope was positioned and we were all able to watch this incredibly beautiful, bright turquoise-blue bird.

After a couple of hours, activity was lessening and so we climbed down, making our way back to the Parking lot where our packed breakfast awaited us. At the bottom of the tower a Great Tinamou was glimpsed by some of us, and as we wandered back there was plenty to see along the trail. There were Gray-headed and White-shouldered Tanagers, Slate-colored Grosbeak was glimpsed and heard, a skulking Spot-crowed Antvireo

performed for us and a lovely male Slate-colored Seedeater was spotted near the parking lot. Back at the van we got out our packed breakfast which we were more than ready for. Nearby was an information center and observation deck with hummingbird feeders … and hot coffee!! Under this deck we were shown some roosting Common Big-eared Bats. White-necked Jacobin was the predominant hummer at the feeders and we could hear a Pheasant Cuckoo but sadly we were unable to see it. With plenty of birding time left, we drove further along Pipeline Road as far as the small bridge we had been at the day before. From here we walked further along the road to see what we could find, new birds included Song Wren which we saw (another five species of wren were only heard), Chestnut-backed Antbird and some beautiful Red-capped Manakins. Back at the van it was time to head back to Canopy Tower for lunch.

Our afternoon excursion was a trip to the Gamboa Rainforest Reserve. As we climbed from our van Alex called out that there was a Flame-rumped Tanager on a wire near us and we just had time to see its bright black-and yellow plumage before it vanished. Almost immediately a Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher popped up and tried to play hard-to-get, thankfully failing. That was two new birds in a matter of minutes! Walking along the road a bird called from the vegetation close by, and Alex managed to coax a lovely Bicolored Antbird into view. While watching it a brown bird flew onto a nearby tree trunk, not a woodpecker but a wood creeper, a Northern Barred Woodcreeper. Another two new birds!! For an afternoon outing the birds were very lively, and the trend continued. Checking out a warbler in a tree, two other new birds were seen, Cinnamon and White-winged Becards. We followed the Chunga trail in a loop, and just as we started along it, we could hear clicking noises. Then suddenly a brilliant rose-pink bird hopped into view – a usually skulking Rosy Thrush-Tanager – what a beauty! Again, Stephanie was able to snap a quick shot! The clicking noise we had heard earlier could still be heard and Alex soon pointed out the source – displaying Golden-collared Manakins. These beautiful birds gather in groups to display to females, and hit their wings together to make a snapping sound while hopping from a perch. Alex then took us to a special tree which was the daytime sleeping place for some Western Night Monkeys. These delightful nocturnal creatures are difficult to see during the day but we were in luck as a couple of them were sitting at an opening in the tree. Returning to the trail we found a gorgeous Graceful Black-throated Trogon and passing a pool near to the van we found a cute American Pygmy Kingfisher. Back at Canopy Tower we did the species list and enjoyed another wonderful dinner, accompanied by a special loaf of bread, baked to look like a porcupine! In the dining area there was a small bat flying around which was identified as a Little Mastiff Bat. After dinner we went on a night drive seeing several Common Pauraques around Gamboa.

Wednesday April 8 Canopy Tower | Canopy Lodge | Feeders

We got up early on the last morning to enjoy one last watch from the top of the Canopy Tower before breakfast. Blue Dacnis and Green and Red-legged Honeycreepers were joined by a pair of Shining Honeycreepers, a new species for the trip! A bright male Scralet Tanager was joined by a female and a Gray-headed Kite was also seen along with many more familiar favorites. We had packed our bags early, so after breakfast we were ready to board the minivan and bid farewell to Canopy Tower. Having said our goodbyes to Alex, Tatiana and the team we headed south to our next stop - Canopy Lodge! The drive was mainly along freeways, with little chance of birding but we did add Rock Pigeon as we drove through the town of El Valle, just before getting to Canopy Lodge! We were greeted by the manager and her staff and shown to our rooms. Along the way to then a patch of heliconia plants was pointed out to us. This was where to watch for the White-tipped Sicklebill, a scarce hummingbird which is difficult to see – the lodge is the best place in the area to watch for it. Having settled in, we met up by the al fresco dining area where a large fruit feeding tray offers treats for birds and other creature. Sanabelle perched on a corner chair and this became her go-to seat while we were at the lodge – perfect to both watch and take photos. There was some hummingbird activity at the feeders and flowers with Snowy-bellied and Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds while at the fruit feeder were Black-chested jay, Thick-billed Euphonias, Dusky-faced Tanager and Buff-throated Saltator. There were flower beds which attracted butterflies and a river running past, with a Green Kingfisher perched above it. Chris photographed a selection of butterflies while the rest watched the feeders or explored before lunch. The fruit feeder can be watched live online – go to the Panama Fruit Feeder Cam on explore.org. Our lunchtime meal was a delicious gazpacho salad, beef steak with rice and vegetables, and carrot cake.

After lunch our guide, Danilo (Dani) Jr, took us for a short walk down the road. Just outside the lodge entrance was a series of flowering bushes, and here we found a lovely little hummingbird – a Rufous-crested Coquette. Rusty-margined and Social Flycatchers were seen along the road and similar-looking Turkey Vulture and Zone-tailed Hawk both flew over. Despite careful searching we failed to find a roosting Tropical Screech-Owl in nearby trees. Back by the lodge we found a couple of Buff-rumped Warblers were hopping from rock to rock along the river. We now relaxed and sat to watch the fruit and hummingbird feeders which were becoming more active in the late afternoon. A Gray-headed Chachalaca was the biggest bird there, and it was joined by several Black-chested Jays. A Violet-headed Hummingbird was seen briefly and some noisy birds in bushes close to us were eventually identified as Bay Wrens. A Rufous Motmot showed its liking for fruit and a lovely little Red-tailed Squirrel sat feeding for a considerable time. On the ground in front of the feeder a bird with a brightly colored bill appeared – an Orange-billed Sparrow. With its green back, white-striped black head and amazing beak, it

was certainly a good-looking sparrow! There was time for a break before gathering before dinner for the species list. Dinner was green salad, chicken with rice and cauliflower, and chocolate cake.

Thursday April 9 Toucan feeders | La Mesa | Mata Ahogado

A feeder watch before breakfast produced close views of Chestnut-headed Oropendola, with more views of Rufous Motmot, Bay Wren and Orange-billed Sparrow. Several Dusky-faced Tanagers were trying to get to the breakfast food as it was put out. After breakfast we headed up the road a little way to the entrance of the Canopy Adventure zip line, where we gained early entrance to enable up to explore the trails and bridges to a local waterfall. We were hoping we might see Sunbittern but sadly not, however we traversed several narrow rope bridges and enjoyed the waterfall. Further up the road we visited some bird feeders, where we could sit in comfort. These feeders were amazing and the fruit there brought in several new birds for us - Tawny-capped Euphonia, Spot-crowned Barbet and the delightful Tawny-crested Tanager. Great views were also had of Collared Aracari, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Red-crowned Ant-Tanager and many others. Flowers below us attracted many familiar hummingbirds as well as a Crowned Woodnymph, which was new, and the rarest bird of all appeared at a muddy area at the bottom of a slope – a Uniform Crake. This secretive species is difficult to see and we were lucky to get good views of it out in the open and not long after it disappeared its larger cousin, the Gray-cowled Woodrail showed up nearby.

We left the feeders are drove further up the road to an area called La Mesa, parking and walking along the road. In the trees by the side of the road there was some bird activity, and now we were higher we found some new species, notably Bay-headed and Silver-throated Tanagers and also our first Bananaquit. Suddenly a Swallow-tailed Kite flew over, a migrant on its way north – what a beautiful bird! Further along Dani spotted a trogon which eventually showed itself – it was a male Collared Trogon, the last of the trogon species that we might see. On a fence by the trogon tree were a couple of small birds which turned out to be Yellow-faced Grassquits. As we started to walk back to the van a bird was spotted flying fast towards us – a Bat Falcon which swooped down and passed just above our heads. Once again Steph managed to snatch a shot and it looked like it had caught a dragonfly. There was one target bird which Dani was trying hard to find for us, and eventually he heard one close by. Hearing it was not difficult, but seeing it was nigh to impossible. This was a Northern Emerald Toucanet, which most of us glimpsed but nobody saw well. Back to the Lodge for lunch which was coleslaw salad plus pork chop with potatoes and peas, and creamed spinach.

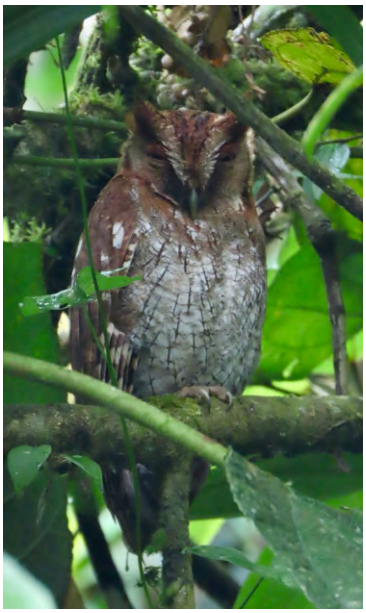
After lunch we took a break then drove to Mata Ahogado, stopping at a couple of locations on the way, right by the main road where Dani tried to entice out a Tody Motmot, sadly it was not to be, even though one was heard

replying to Dani's tape. We reached Mata Ahogado and parked. Right by the van was a fairly bare tree, with leaves just starting to grow. Near the top of it was a lump which in the binoculars became a Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth, not very well hidden but getting an unobstructed angle for a photo was a challenge. We took a trail which followed as stream which was bordered by some water cress beds where we saw a Northern Waterthrush. In the trees lining the stream we spotted another sloth, this time a Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth. Looking through the scope at it you could see that its fur was greenish on its back, due to algae which grow on it. We explored along the trail and saw another Northern waterthrush and some Buff-rumped Warblers. Walking back we found a lovely Chestnut-capped Warbler which reminded us of the Rufous-capped Warblers which can be found in Arizona. Back by the van there were lots of flowers which were attracting some hummingbirds, and Dani soon spotted a Garden Emerald, a new one for us. Back at the Lodge we gathered for the species list and then enjoyed a dinner of sea bass with rice and key lemon pie.

Friday April 10 Camino La Mesa | Sendero Las Minas | Frogs

Today was unusual – it was overcast, and looked like it might rain so we all packed our rain gear just in case. After breakfast we drove up the road from the lodge and stopped by where the feeders are. Dani suggested we stay in the van while he checks for a roosting owl. In moment he returned and told us he had found it. There in the thick foliage right by the road he had found a roosting Tropical Screech Owl. We all got good views of it and Dani explained that this partner of this one, a rufous-phase bird, was of the gray phase. We continued upwards to look at another part of the Camino La Mesa. Where we parked the van, we noticed a bird of prey sitting on a branch – a gorgeous Double-toothed Kite which posed for photographs. For a short while we had to shelter as some rain came down, but it soon stopped. Walking up the road Dani saw a male Black-throated Mango, an unusual hummingbird. Several tanagers were seen, including Silver-throated, Plain-colored, Golden-hooded, Crimson-backed and Tawny-crested and a lovely Streaked Saltator was new. The sky still looked threatening, and we decided to move to another location, Sendero Las Minas. The trail we took led us through some forest and up to an exposed open area. In the forest were many new species for us - Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Slaty Antwren, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant and Blue-black Grosbeak. In the open area the best bird was Thick-billed Seed-Finch.

Back at the lodge, lunch was Chicken with pasta and eggplant, with fruit. After a break, during which we all managed to see the White-tipped Sicklebill at last. We drove down to the town of El Valle and visited the Golden Frog Conservation building where we learned about the plight of this tiny creature, and saw several captive specimens at the information center, as well as many other interesting amphibians. From there we went to visit El Valle Market where there was a wide range of fruit and vegetables as well as goods on display from local



artisans, with a chance to contribute to the local economy which many of us took advantage of. Back at the lodge, Steph and Sanabelle decided to walk up the hill to the bird feeders we had visited the previous morning which others watched the feeders, relaxed or considered packing ready for our departure tomorrow. After the species list we said goodbye to our guide, Dani. Our final dinner was meat with rice and lentils, then pineapple upside-down cake and Chris provided farewell drinks for all. While we were finishing Heather got up from the table and suddenly let out a shriek. There on the ground, quite close, a long, thin red-and-black banded snake was slithering and wriggling. It turned out to me a Many-banded Coral Snake, one of the more venomous species in the area with a neurotoxin which could certainly put you in hospital (we later found out). Everyone kept their distance and the staff encouraged it to move away.

Saturday April 11 Departure

The last morning some of us were up early to look at the feeders before breakfast. Soon it was time to leave and we said farewell to Steph, who was continuing her adventure by visiting the Canopy Camp where she hoped to see Harpy Eagle (she did!). The rest of us hopped into the van for the drive back to Panama City where some were dropped at the Riande Hotel, with Chris continuing to the airport for his flight back.

Photos: Group (Chris Harbard - CH), White-vented Plumeleteer (CH), Watching hummingbirds (CH), Mantled Howler Monkey (CH), Blue-gray Tanager (CH), Central American Agouti (CH), Crimson-backed Tanager (CH), Canopy Tower (Jean Hengesbaugh - JH), Yellow-throated Toucan (CH), Spotted Antbird (CH), American Crocodile (CH), White-necked Jacobin (CH), Barred Antshrike (CH), Collared Aracari (CH), Keel-billed Toucan (Stephanie Weems - SW), Blue Dacnis (CH), Black-breasted Puffbird (SW), Bicolored Antbird (CH), Red-crowned Woodpecker (CH), Black-chested Jay (CH), Tawny-crested Tanager (CH), Collared Trogon (CH), Tropical Screech Owl (CH), Rufous-tailed Jacamar (SW)