

Colombia: Birds & Nature in the Coffee Region

Jan. 23 – Feb. 3, 2023 | by Dave Mehlman



Guides: Manuel Espejo and Dave Mehlman with participants: Bill, Bob, George, Kelly, Laura, Les, Rory, Susan, Thomas and Wavell



Mon., Jan. 23

Arrival in Pereira

Rory, Susan, Wavell and Dave all arrived the evening before and were picked up at the convenient Pereira airport by Jhonnys, our driver for the trip, and transferred to the comfortable Sonesta Hotel Pereira for an early night. Les arrived early in the morning after an overnight flight, and all gathered for a late breakfast at the Sonesta buffet, followed by a walk around the grounds of the hotel led by Dave. The hotel is situated on the edge of town and was partially surrounded by some bits of forest and agricultural fields, so the birding was reasonably productive. Highlights included Spectacled Parrotlet, a Cattle Tyrant, Blue-necked Tanager, Yellow-backed Oriole, and a Streaked Saltator. After this nice walk, we gathered for an informal lunch in the Sonesta's dining room, then took the afternoon off until Bob, George, Kelly, Laura, and Thomas arrived mid-afternoon after their flight from Miami. Unfortunately, Bill was delayed getting this flight until the following day. After getting everyone checked in, we all reconvened for another short walk around the grounds of the hotel, mostly so the "newbies" could get caught up on our growing bird list. The biggest highlight of the afternoon walk was a perched Laughing Falcon, the only one of the tour. We found most of the things seen earlier in the day but were able to add Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Bar-crested Antshrike, Blue-headed Parrot and Smooth-billed Ani to our list (the latter at close enough range to admire the "smooth" bills through the scope). We concluded the day with welcome drinks at the poolside bar, followed by our first dinner together. Toward the end of dinner, our local guide Manuel Espejo appeared, having literally just concluded another tour the same day. We then reviewed plans for the following day before turning in for the evening.



Tues., Jan. 24 Hacienda Venecia | Hotel Matisses

We began our first full day of the tour by opening the buffet breakfast at the Sonesta at 6:00 a.m., then loaded our gear into the bus for our Eje Cafetero adventure. Our first stop was a working coffee farm, Hacienda Venecia, near the town of Manizales, which has been in operation for over 100 years. Starting off with our first bird walk of the tour, we explored the grounds of the hacienda and the nearby road getting a great introduction to the common and not-so-common species of the Colombian Coffee Region, aka “the Eje”. These included Thick-billed Euphonia, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Bronze-winged Parrot, and our first of many Andean Motmots. The hacienda also maintains fruit and hummingbird feeders, which allowed close observation of some typical species such as Steely-vented Hummingbird; White-necked Jacobin; Crimson-backed, Flame-rumped, Summer and Scrub Tanagers; and Yellow Oriole. The highlight bird of the morning, however, was a Long-billed Starthroat that perched on the phone lines for great scope views and photographs—it was the only one of the tour. Following this lovely morning, we enjoyed a great lunch on the porch of the guest house followed by a short introduction to the world of coffee including a tour of the coffee production facilities from Juan Pablo, one of the owners of the hacienda. We learned about the origin of coffee, its production in Colombia and the various steps involved in producing that perfect cup. As part of the tour, we visited the hacienda’s bodega, full of 40 kg green coffee bags ready for export. After the tour wrapped up, we got on the bus again and traveled to our destination for the next several days: the Matisses Hotel & Spa outside the small town of Santa Rosa de Cabal. After settling into our rooms at this comfortable hotel surrounded by greenery, we went just down the road to the Hacienda Santa Clara for dinner on their porch. After negotiating the ordering process with Manuel’s help (and the sometimes-odd English translations of menu items!) we enjoyed our meal, then returned to Matisses for a rest in anticipation of an early start the following day.

Wed., Jan. 25 El Cortaderal | Termales San Vicente | Hotel Matisses

Today we visited some of the high elevations (10,000 ft +) on the slopes of the Nevado del Ruiz volcano complex above Santa Rosa. Due to long travel times over bad roads that are typical of the Colombian Andes, we planned an early start today, with breakfast at Matisses at 4:00 a.m. and departure a bit after 4:30. Our transportation today, due to road quality, was in four 4x4 jeeps. Our primary goal was to try to find the very rare and range-restricted Indigo-winged (or Fuertes’s) Parrot, though we were certain to encounter many other high elevation



(but below treeline) species along the way. We spent close to six hours total at this high elevation, birding along the roads among forest fragments and, unfortunately, a great deal of cattle pasture. Although no Indigo-winged Parrots showed themselves during our visit, our walks and explorations turned up a large number of high elevation species in between mixed-species flocks, the open pastures and individual flyovers. Highlights included Golden-plumed Parakeet and Scaly-naped Parrot flying over; Brown-bellied Swallows and a Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant in the open areas, and, with the flocks, such treats as Golden-faced Redstart, Scarlet-bellied, Hooded, and Lachrimose Mountain-Tanagers, White-banded Tyrannulet, Mountain Wren, and Black-crested Warbler, to name a few. A lucky few heard and glimpsed a very furtive Paramo Tapaculo (though this description could be applied to all tapaculos, LOL!). Some hummingbirds were in the forest too, including Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tyrian Metaltail and Tourmaline Sunangel. The end of the morning reached, we headed back down the mountain for lunch, making a brief stop on the entrance road to the Termales San Vicente en-route. This stop was brief, but productive, yielding Gray-hooded Bush-Tanager, Slaty Brushfinch, Azara's Spinetail, and several Black-capped Hemispingus. We finally straggled into lunch at Don Lolo in early afternoon, famished but full of great bird sightings! Returning to the Matisses in late afternoon, we rested a bit with some birding on the grounds. This was followed by dinner in downtown Santa Rosa at the Italian Pizza & Salad and then a well-deserved rest.

Thurs., Jan. 26 Otún-Quimbaya Flora & Fauna Sanctuary | Hotel Matisses

Today's visit involved a bit less travel than the day before, so we had the "luxury" of a 5:00 a.m. breakfast and were loaded and underway within 45 minutes. Our destination today was the famed Otún-Quimbaya Flora & Fauna Sanctuary less than an hour away. Our first stop, at one of the bridges crossing the Otún River, which gives the sanctuary its name, yielded some aquatic specialists including White-capped Dipper (the South American representative of the Cinclidae), Torrent Tyrannulet and Black Phoebe. Continuing our drive, we stopped at the Casahotel Kumanday in the small town of La Florida for a bathroom break. Those not bathrooming continued birding, of course, and found a handsome Black-winged Saltator along with Blue-necked Tanagers on the hotel's grounds. After arriving at the actual Sanctuary, we soon encountered many Red-ruffed Fruitcrows while driving, stopping once or twice for close observation and photographs. Otún-Quimbaya is



legendary for the commonness of this species, which is typically hard to find elsewhere throughout its range. We spent several hours in the reserve, birding the lightly traveled road and encountering a great diversity of birds. Some of the highlights were Cauca Guan (a rare and local endemic, this is its stronghold in the world), Spotted Barbtail, Moustached Puffbird, Crested Ant-Tanager, Ashy-throated Chlorospingus, Montane Foliage-Gleaner and Golden-crowned Warbler to name a few. About midday, we took a break and drove back to the Casahotel Kumanday for a nice lunch in its small, outdoor restaurant. After lunch, we returned to the Sanctuary for more exploration. A short walk down a road to the river turned up more things including Marbled and Variegated Bristle-Tyrants, Rufous-naped Greenlet, Green Jay and a Broad-winged Hawk (here on its wintering range). As the afternoon drew to a close, we headed back with a final stop at one more bridge over the Otún River. This time, we lucked out and had long and beautiful observations of a pair of Torrent Ducks resting and swimming in the river plus another White-capped Dipper—a fabulous close-out to an awesome day! After returning to the Matisses, we met up late in the afternoon, did our usual checklist and then headed the short distance down the road to the Hacienda Santa Clara for dinner.

Fri., Jan. 27

UTP Botanical Garden | Hotel Matisses

Today was planned to be a slower day to give everyone a rest. Unfortunately, a few in the group had picked up some kind of intestinal bug and had to sit out part or all of the day. After breakfast at an incredibly late 7:00 a.m. (!), we loaded the bus and went to the Botanical Garden of the Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira (UTP), with special thanks to Manuel who had obtained permission to enter the previous day. This was a pleasant and easy site to bird, with not too many people around. Though pretty quiet bird-wise, we found some very good birds on the grounds and in the adjoining more forested arboretum. Highlights included two antbird species found nowhere else on the tour, Parker's Antbird and Plain Antvireo, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Yellow-bellied Siskin, and a Red-faced Spinetail. We also heard, for the only time on the tour, Colombian Red Howler Monkeys sounding off. This was followed by lunch at Carmela Horno + Cocina, after which we returned to the Matisses mid-afternoon for rest and recuperation. Those who felt up to it later in the evening returned to the Italian Pizza & Salad in Santa Rosa for dinner.

Sat., Jan. 28

Hotel Matisses | Hotel Santa Clara | Tinamú Birding Lodge

Today we enjoyed a cultural interlude, with all those interested learning how to shop for and prepare a Sancocho de Gallina, perhaps the classic Colombian dish of the Eje Cafetero. Our first stop was to the Hacienda



Santa Clara, where we would do the cooking. Arriving early, we enjoyed coffee while observing the avian traffic at the fruit feeders. Among the visitors putting on a show for us were Black-capped, Bay-headed, Scrub, and Flame-rumped Tanagers; Thick-billed and Orange-bellied Euphonias; Green Honeycreeper, Andean Motmot and Black-winged Saltator. In the bushes nearby, we saw familiar migrants from the north including Canada and Blackburnian Warblers, while several Red-faced Spinetails kibbited about urgent spinetail issues. After this enjoyable bit of birding, most of the group got on the bus and traveled to bustling downtown Santa Rosa to visit the Central Market for shopping. Santa Rosa is interesting in that it still holds onto some older traditions, one of them being a large central market where, apparently, one could buy just about anything needed for one's self or home. The mercado is divided into zones: there is one for fruits, another for vegetables, household goods, electronics, chicken, beef, pork (including a great deal of the famous chorizo for which Santa Rosa is known), and herbs. The latter booths seemed to have a cure (or promise of a cure) for essentially any problem known. In any case, we shopped for all the ingredients needed for the sancocho, including pollo criollo (raised on a farm), and learned about all the different fruits and vegetables available. Many of the fruits, in particular, are not found in the U.S. such as lulo, maracuyá, pitahaya and granadilla. Upon return to Santa Clara, some donned the aprons and hair nets provided and jumped into the kitchen, under the watchful eye of the chef, to prepare the meal. Meanwhile, the multi-talented Manuel prepared all the different fruits into a Colombian fruit sampler platter so we could try as many as we wished. The birds continued flocking to the feeders, providing a "visual appetizer," if such a thing is possible. Around midday, the sancocho, which had been stewing in a large pot over a wood fire, was deemed ready, and we all sat down and feasted—what a great treat and culinary adventure!

After lunch, we returned to the Matisses to round up our belongings, settle our bills and load the bus to travel to the next site. An hour later we arrived at our destination for the next few days: the Tinamú Birding Lodge outside the town of Manizales. Tinamú is at a slightly lower elevation than where we had been, so it was comfortably warm. We checked into our rooms and most convened on the porch of the main building to enjoy the traffic at the bird feeders. It was immediately apparent that we would have great fun birding there, as the hummingbird feeders buzzed with Black-throated Mango, White-necked Jacobin, Steely-vented Hummingbird and a few White-vented Plumeleteers. The fruit feeders meanwhile, were equally distracting with lots of Thick-billed Euphonias, the usual Palm and Blue-gray Tanagers and occasional appearances by a Spot-breasted Woodpecker and a Guira Tanager. All this was accompanied by happy hour, after which we did our checklist, and then dinner on the porch served family style. A tranquil end to another fun day in the Eje Cafetero.



Sun., Jan. 29

Rio Blanco Nature Reserve | Tinamú Birding Lodge

Up at the by now usual hour of 5:00 a.m., we had breakfast at Tinamú then boarded our bus for the trip into and across Manizales to the Rio Blanco Nature Reserve outside of town. This Reserve is a well-known and legendary birding site and exists to protect the watershed for Manizales. Our first stop was the main lodge area where those who needed it used the facilities, then we quickly hustled on a short trail behind the building to our first antpitta appointment of the day. Rio Blanco has developed a system whereby several species of antpittas can be seen by visiting specific feeding sites at specific times. The birds are fed at the same time every day and quickly become habituated. We settled ourselves as best we could along the trail with a view of the feeding area and then the local guides began to call the bird. Sure enough, after a bit of a wait, a lovely Bicolored Antpitta popped into view to gobble up its assigned ration of worms and grubs for the day. These species have great personalities and are extremely hard to find, much less see well, outside of feeding stations. After our “early morning appointment,” we returned to the lodge for some hummingbird feeder watching and photography. The action was good with at least eight species found including the common and bold Buff-tailed Coronet, Sparkling Violetear, Long-tailed Sylph and a few tiny White-bellied Woodstars trying to squeeze in a drink among the larger species.

After enjoying the show, we got back on the bus to explore more of the reserve a bit higher up on the road, and to get into place for our next antpitta appointment. The road birding at Rio Blanco is superlative and our efforts yielded some great birds for the day such as Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Black-crested Warbler, Plushcap, Streak-headed Antbird, Sharpe’s Wren, Capped Conebill and perhaps the rarest bird of the tour, Masked Saltator. At around 8:30 a.m., we took a birding break to walk another short trail to the next antpitta feeding station, where again the guide began to call. This time, a very bold and cooperative Chestnut-crowned Antpitta hopped up and voraciously consumed all offerings, accompanied by a fledged, but apparently still dependent, young bird.

After this appointment concluded, we traveled a bit higher and walked the road some more. Stumbling onto a mixed species flock, we found Beryl-spangled, Blue-and-black, Metallic-green and Blue-capped Tanagers as well as Montane Woodcreeper, White-tailed Tyrannulet and a Masked Trogon, while a Hook-billed Kite flew over—almost too much to keep up with! Finishing our walk, we returned to the lodge for bathrooms, a picnic lunch (hand prepared by Manuel!), more feeder-watching and our final antpitta appointment. The hummingbird feeders yielded additional species such as Bronzy Inca and Lesser Violetear, the flowering shrubs yielded White-

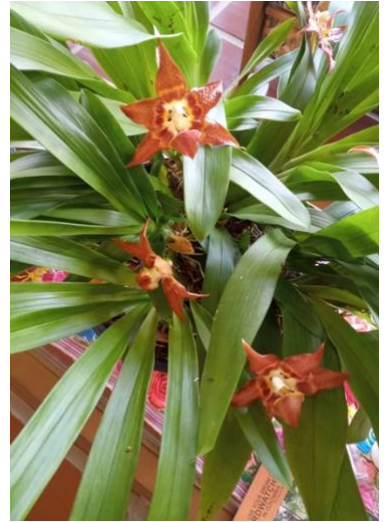


sided Flowerpiercer, and the fruit feeders attracted Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, Slaty and Gray-browed Brushfinch and a White-tailed Hawk soared overhead. At about 11:30 a.m. we assembled at another feeding site right next to the lodge and, after much calling, a rather furtive Brown-banded Antpitta made an appearance to receive its daily tribute of worms.

After lunch, we continued our explorations of Rio Blanco with more walking on the roads. The forests continued to yield goodies, including Lachrimose Mountain-Tanager, Pearled Treerunner, Barred Becard and many ubiquitous Blackburnian Warblers. Closing in on the end of the day, we headed down the mountain for a final stop by the reserve's entrance gate where it promptly started to rain lightly (pretty much the only rain of the trip!). Fortunately, we were able to stand on the balcony of the administration building watching the flowering shrubs in hopes that a White-throated (or Choco) Daggerbill would appear. Sure enough, with a bit of waiting, a male daggerbill was found several times foraging in the flowers and appeared often enough for everyone to eventually get a look at it, occasionally through the scope. With that very fun conclusion to the day, we left Rio Blanco with bulging bird lists and headed back to Tinamú Lodge for a rest, the checklist and dinner on the porch. While dining, a Common Pauraque serenaded us from the deepening shadows.

Mon., Jan. 30 Finca La Romelia | Tinamú Birding Lodge

Today was a slightly easier day with a luxuriously late 6:00 a.m. breakfast, after which we loaded into the bus and traveled to the nearby Finca La Romelia. This private estate, owned by a man known to all as Chorizo, has citrus plantations, lots of birds and a very extensive orchid collection containing species from all over Colombia. We started our visit here at the top of the entrance road and, then birded our way to the hacienda. Though this road was steep and gravelly, the finca provided 4x4 jeep transport for those who desired it. While we didn't see one of the main species targets here, Ultramarine Grosbeak, the walk down the road allowed us to find and see many very fun birds. A sampling included Grayish Piculet (banging away at some tree limbs for an extended time, allowing great scope views of this Cauca Valley endemic), Large-billed Seed-Finch, Dull-colored Grassquit, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Speckle-breasted Wren, Jet Antbird (hanging out in tall bamboo clumps), Guira Tanager and Cocoa Woodcreeper. Emerging from a dense bamboo thicket we discovered a table set in the woods with coffee, juice and breakfast snacks—what a treat!



Arriving at the hacienda, we were welcomed with more juice and coffee for those needing a refresher, then settled down to admire the feeder traffic. Hummers included Black-throated Mango, White-necked Jacobin and White-vented Plumeleteer, while the fruit attracted the by-now-usual things such as Red-crowned Woodpecker, Crimson-backed and Summer Tanagers and Andean Motmot. Toward the end of the morning, we toured the orchid collection, admiring the incredible variety of orchids that Colombia has to offer. We finished off the morning with a lovely lunch on the hacienda's patio and then piled into the jeeps for the ride back up the hill to our bus. Returning to Tinamú, we took a brief break before reconvening in late afternoon for a walk on some of the trails around the lodge, which we had not done yet. This relatively short walk added some local specialties including lekking Green Hermit, a male Golden-collared Manakin, Streak-headed Woodcreeper and several Gray-headed Doves (an isolated population of this species occurs here in the Cauca Valley, separated by a great distance from other populations in Mexico and Central America). Then we then gathered for happy hour, the bird checklist, and our final dinner at Tinamú.

Tues., Jan. 31 Tinamú Birding Lodge | Hotel Termales del Ruiz

After a decadently late breakfast (7:00 a.m.!), those interested took another walk on the grounds of Tinamú to see what more we could find. We saw many of the things we'd found the day before, including great looks again at Golden-collared Manakin and Gray-headed Dove, but also added Cocoa and Streak-headed Woodcreepers, White-winged Becard, Chivi Vireo and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Returning from the walk, we had some free time to pack our things, settle our bills and have a final lunch at the Lodge. We left Tinamú a bit after 1:00 p.m., making our way through Manizales, dropping Les's boot off for repair, and then began our long, windy climb up the road on the Nevado del Ruiz to our destination for the next two nights: the Hotel Termales del Ruiz. Arriving at Termales about 4:00 p.m., everyone got settled into their nice rooms, albeit a bit small, and then reconvened for a very late afternoon visit to the feeders on the hotel grounds. Given the fact that we were now at considerably higher elevation than previously (about 11,000 ft), we quickly added new species to our trip list. The hummingbird feeders were surrounded by feisty Shining Sunbeams with their rainbow-colored backs, complemented by Great Sapphirewing, Golden-breasted Puffleg, Buff-winged Starfrontlet and Tyrian Metaltail. The nearby fruit feeders attracted Pale-naped Brushfinch and Scarlet-bellied and Lachrimose Mountain-Tanagers, while the trees around the grounds harbored Superciliaried Hemispingus, Glossy Flowerpiercer and a Grass Wren. As darkness descended, we retreated into our rooms to get organized, then had dinner in the hotel's dining room with its great views out over the city of Manizales, lights twinkling in the distance. Truly, a unique place combining the birding and lodging experience!



Wed., Feb. 1

Los Nevados del Ruiz National Natural Park | Hotel Termales del Ruiz

We started the day with a short birding walk around the hotel's grounds and on the adjacent roads. Although cool and a bit cloudy, we found a few good things, including great views of Rainbow-bearded Thornbill (a spectacular hummer when seen in good light; it does not come to the feeders), Black-thighed Puffleg, Black-crested Warbler and a pair of Grass Wrens. In addition, we heard a close by Paramo Tapaculo singing, but could not lure it out of its hiding place. Returning to the hotel, we enjoyed a nice breakfast in the dining room, watching the steam rise all around us from the hot springs. After breakfast, we got our warm weather gear together and loaded up in the bus for a morning excursion to the highest elevations of the tour, above treeline on the Nevado del Ruiz in the habitat known as páramo. Our first stop after making our way up the road was the Brisas Visitor Center of the Nevados National Park, at an elevation of 13,500 ft. Those who needed them used the bathrooms here while we scoured the roadside shrubs and flowers for high elevation species. After some time, we got views of a Buffy Helmetcrest foraging in the shrubs, a high priority species for birders in Colombia and one who's entire range in the world is the Nevado del Ruiz páramo. A little exploration of this area and some patience yielded other high elevation species including Plumbeous Sierra-Finch, Andean Tit-Spinetail, a pair of Black-chested Buzzard-Eagles, Band-tailed Seedeater and Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant. A stop while heading back down the road for photos of the volcano yielded a Viridian Metaltail, and another stop looking over a wet pasture revealed a pair of Andean Teal resting. A stop at the lovely high elevation lake of Laguna Negra revealed an Andean Duck swimming in the lake, and a walk nearby turned up a Stout-billed Cincloides. Continued birding was made difficult by a lot of road construction (repaving) in the area so, getting a bit hungry, we headed back to the Hotel Termales for a badly needed lunch in the dining room.

Most of the group met up in mid-afternoon for another walk around the Hotel's grounds and on the surrounding road. Rainbow-bearded Thornbills continued to put on a show for the group and we lucked onto a mixed-species flock. Chasing the flock around yielded Scarlet-bellied, Lachrimose and Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanagers, Pearled Treerunner, Superciliaried Hemispingus and several lovely Blue-backed Conebills. A quick visit to the feeder area after the walk revealed many species seen before, except that this time a few Andean Guans had joined the feeding frenzy at the fruit. We brought a close to this dramatic high-elevation day with our checklist review and dinner in the Termales' dining room.



Thurs., Feb. 2

Hotel Termales del Ruíz | Hacienda El Bosque | Pereira

After our final breakfast at the Hotel Termales, we packed, settled outstanding bills and loaded the bus to return to Pereira. However, our first item of business was to spend the morning at the Hacienda El Bosque, a developing birding and ecolodge destination outside Manizales. Arriving on the grounds of the hacienda, we visited its primary hummingbird feeding station. Though many of the species here were similar to what we had been seeing, we greatly enjoyed the regular visits of a Sword-billed Hummingbird as it came to the feeders. Meanwhile, a constant stream of Masked and Black Flowerpiercers relentlessly tried to steal nectar from the same feeders! El Bosque also maintains an antpitta feeding station and, at the appointed time, we all moved to the antpitta side of the station and waited while the local guides began their calling. After what seemed like an agonizing wait, a very elegant Crescent-faced Antpitta materialized out of the forest to delight us observers and presumably nourish itself on the insect offerings. While all this was going on, Wavell spotted a bird perched in a tree far across the valley; with the scope, this proved to be a Red-crested Cotinga, though it flew away before all in the group had a chance to see it well.

After enjoying the show at this station, we moved a bit down the road to the fruit feeding station for more goodies. Hacienda staff put out imported Chilean grapes which are avidly consumed by the local Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucans, providing excellent views and photo ops of this very handsome toucan (apparently, it was only after lots of experimentation that they found out that ONLY imported Chilean grapes would do for the toucans, nothing else!). Meanwhile, bits of fruit on the ground and some seed attracted a few other good birds including White-throated Quail-Dove and Gray-browed Brushfinch. After a while, some grew restless and started exploring the immediate area, turning up a wonderful Barred Fruiteater in the process! A quick return to the original hummingbird station yielded more of the same, except that a Purple-backed Thornbill was found intermittently foraging among a flowering tree (another species that does not come to feeders much, at least here). Stomachs rumbling, we got in our bus and drove the short distance up to the main dining building, a very lovely and brand new, glass-walled room set among the Andes, for lunch. A classic Colombian meal was served with frijoles, rice and a big chicharrón, accompanied by juice—just what a bunch of hungry birders needed! After lunch, we admired the setting and the newly constructed guest cabins, then boarded our bus again for the several-hour drive back to the Sonesta Hotel Pereira. We stopped in Manizales along the way to pick up Les's repaired shoe and arrived at the Sonesta in late afternoon. After a bit of relaxation, we met by the pool bar for a happy hour, the final checklist of the main tour and an overview of departure plans for those leaving the next



day. This was followed by our final dinner of the main tour and then some good-byes and/or preparation for future travel for those on the extension.

Fri., Feb. 3 Departures

Rory, Thomas and Les left today at a wide variety of times from early to late, each having their own private transport to the Pereira airport. The remaining crew had breakfast at 6:00 a.m., then loaded their gear into the bus to continue the extension.

Cali Post-Tour Extension

Fri., Feb. 3 Pereira | Parque Nacional de la Uva | Cali

After breakfast at 6:00 a.m., we loaded the bus and were underway by 7:00 for Cali via the long, flat, and fairly wide Cauca Valley. We programmed one stop on the trip down at the Parque Nacional de la Uva, a recreational park devoted to all things grape. Despite the potentially kitschy theme, this park has become a well-known birding stop for groups traveling in the Cauca Valley between Cali and the Eje Cafetero, primarily because it's a reliable spot to find Ruby-topaz Hummingbird. The park has an aloe plantation which, when in flower, attracts hummingbirds to feed, including the Ruby-topaz. We arrived at the park about 8:00 a.m. and made a quick bathroom stop before heading out for a 2½ hour walk around the grounds. The grape arbors held a few birds including Vermilion Flycatcher, Spectacled Parrotlet and some foraging Limpkins. We got to the aloe field and spent some time watching and waiting and as advertised, both a male and a female Ruby-topaz Hummingbird intermittently came to forage in the flowers. These were complemented by the more common Rufous-tailed Hummingbird. After this success, since it was a very nice day with light cloud cover, we walked around the edge of the park, which is bounded by a small stream and some still fairly intact dry forest. The forest turned up some surprising things such as Apical Flycatcher (a Cauca and Magdalena Valley dry forest endemic), Yellow Oriole, Jet Antbird, Bar-crested Antshrike and Yellow-olive Flycatcher. A few in the group saw a Ringed Kingfisher fly up the creek. We ended this satisfying stop in late morning and continued our journey south on the highway, stopping for lunch in Salerno, before arriving at the lovely Movich Casa del Alférez Hotel in Cali around 4:30 p.m. Each room had a small balcony looking out into the tree branches. After a while, we reconvened for happy hour and the bird checklist in the bar, followed by dinner in the downstairs restaurant.



Sat., Feb. 4 Avistamiento de Aves Doña Dora | Cali

After a 6:00 a.m. breakfast at our hotel, we loaded into the van for a full day in the Western Cordillera. Our destination today was the Descanso Doña Dora, a by-now very well-known site for birders on the legendary old road to Buenaventura. This site is on the western slope of the Cordillera overlooking the Anchicayá Valley and the area is part of the Chocó Ecosystem, a zone of very high biodiversity (and, generally, very high rainfall). Doña Dora, named after its proprietress, has a great setup of hummingbird and fruit feeders, provides food and lodging and is a major birding attraction in this area. Unfortunately, the weekend traffic out of Cali slowed us down (it seemed like every single person in the city was headed to the hills!), so it took nearly two hours to get there. However, once we arrived, we settled right in to watch the show. The hummingbird feeders were active with many species new to our tour. Green Thorntail were particularly numerous, feeding regularly despite their small size. Also regularly occurring were Crowned Woodnymph, Brown Violetear, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, Empress Brilliant, Velvet-purple Coronet, and the intriguing Rufous-gaped Hillstar. The action was fast and furious, but most of the group switched from the hummingbirds to the fruit feeders, which were equally busy! The definite star of the show at the fruit feeders at Doña Dora is the Toucan Barbet, a truly wonderful species only found in the Chocó forests of Colombia and Ecuador. Along with Toucan Barbets were an array of other species, most new for the tour. Highlights included Silver-throated and Rufous-throated Tanagers, Tricolored and Black-headed Brushfinches and Crimson-rumped Toucanet, along with familiar faces such as Red-headed Barbet and Orange-bellied Euphonia. At one point, a Canada Warbler cruised by, as if jealous of all these beautiful native species. After a while, we took a “break” from the feeders for a walk up the road outside the Descanso. This is a great road for birding as it’s cut into a slope, providing great views on one side out into the tree canopy and the river valley far below. The old Buenaventura Road did not disappoint, and we found such great things as Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Chocó Tyrannulet, Uniform Treehunter and a pair of Golden-collared Honeycreepers. While walking, Manuel was very careful to point out the myriad micro-orchids found on the tree limbs (including several flowering *Lepanthes filamentosa*), which stunned us all, and later found a blooming, epiphytic bladderwort (*Utricularia* sp). The biodiversity here is truly stunning.



All this bird and plant diversity left us famished, so we enjoyed a very tasty lunch at Doña Dora; many got to eat on the outside tables with full views of the feeders! After lunch, we enjoyed a bit more feeder watching, which was enlivened by several Black-chinned Mountain-Tanagers, and then went for another short walk. We had a tip that Lyre-tailed Nightjar could be found on a rock ledge up the road but, alas, we could not find it (or it was out and about). While heading out, we noticed Common Tody-Flycatcher and Red-faced Spinetail nests right across the street from Doña Dora, which was quite interesting. Our final walk did add a few more things, including Yellow-throated Chlorospingus, Rufous-browed Peppershrike and a Broad-winged Hawk. At the end of the afternoon, we climbed back aboard the bus and returned to the Movich Hotel for a bit of a rest, happy hour and bird list in the patio bar, and another nice dinner.

Sun., Feb. 5

La Florida Bosque de las Aves | Araucana Lodge | La Minga Ecolodge | Cali

Our final field day of the extension began with our usual 6:00 a.m. breakfast, and we were soon underway for another day in the Western Cordillera, this time a bit north of where we had been the day before. Navigating through and out of Cali, we again encountered the weekend traffic, but by 7:30 we had arrived at our destination for the morning: La Florida Bosque de las Aves, another privately owned reserve catering to birders and photographers. La Florida provided a wonderful place to watch and photograph birds at the various feeders, with great views of many familiar species supplemented with a few new ones. Golden-naped, Saffron-crowned and Multicolored Tanagers were regular at the feeders, along with more Red-headed Barbets, Andean Motmots, Acorn Woodpeckers, Black-winged Saltators and Crimson-rumped Toucanets. Watching the trees surrounding the feeders, we were able to pick out Montane Foliage-Gleaner, Montane Woodcreeper, Barred Becard and a well-hidden Chestnut-breasted Wren. Mid-morning, we were all distracted when a Sickle-winged Guan came down to feed at the quail feeding area (the quail, however, did not appear for us). Kelly went up the trail with one of the staff of La Florida and came back down with a Common Potoo sighting, the only one of the entire tour. Then we set out for a short visit to the Araucana Lodge, a very nice facility recently opened in this area. Dave and Bill toured the lodge and the grounds with Chris, the owner, while most of the group enjoyed more time feeder watching. Suitably impressed, we left here to continue to our final destination for the day: La Minga Ecolodge in the mountains west of the town of Dapa. Arriving here a bit after 1:00 p.m., our first order of business was lunch (though it was very, very hard not to watch birds too!). After lunch, we spent some time enjoying the feeders at La Minga, which revealed a mix of familiar and new species. Some of the new things included Rusty Flowerpiercer (enjoying a bath!), Green Jay, Booted Racket-tail and Bronzy Inca. Meanwhile, the Multicolored Tanagers were constantly feeding at bananas, providing multiple opportunities for enjoying both sexes of this incredible (and aptly named) tanager. After having had our fill, we departed mid-afternoon for our final trip out of the Andes and back to Cali. We completed the day with our usual bird list and happy hour, followed by dinner and a review of the airport pickup plans for the following day.

Mon., Feb. 6 Departures

Everyone departed today at various times, full of memories and images, either in our minds or in electronic format. George, Laura and Dave had the last flights out, so they enjoyed a leisurely morning at the hotel, then drove straight to the Cali airport with Manuel and Jhonnys, where we had a final lunch together.

Photo Credits: Group at Coffee Plantation (Laura Bakken - LB), Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager (George Bakken - GB), Shining Sunbeam (Wavell Fogleman - WF), Red-headed Barbet (GB), Birding Hacienda Venecia (David Mehlman - DM), Steely-vented Hummingbird (GB), Coffee Bag (DM), Summer Tanager male (GB), Volcanic View (GB), Tiny Pink Orchids (GB), Tree Fern (GB), Saffron Finch & Blue-gray Tanager (GB), Andean Motmot (GB), Tyrian Metaltail (GB), Tarantula Friend (LB), Group Birding (DM), Summer Tanager female (GB), Bay-headed Tanager (GB), Antpitta Vigil (DM), Santa Rosa Market (DM), view of Manizales (GB), Slaty Brushfinch (GB), Lesser Violetear (GB), Birders at Finca Romelia (GB), Orchid Tour - x2 (GB), Orchid guide (GB), Termales del Ruiz Hotel (DM), Orange Orchid (GB), Birders at Nevados del Ruiz (GB), Frailejon Flowers (WF), Frailejones "Big Monks" (GB), Golden-breasted Puffleg (GB), Masked Flowerpiercer (GB), Hacienda El Bosque (GB), White-throated Quail-Dove (GB), Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan (GB), Sparkling Violetear (GB), Parque de la Uva Scenic (LB), Green Honeycreeper (DM), Saffron-crowned Tanager (DM), Silver-throated Tanager (GB), Crimson-rumped Toucanet (GB), Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager (GB), Multi-colored Tanager male (DM), Long-tailed Sylph (DM), Golden-naped Tanager (DM)