

Western Panama: Tranquilo Bay | April 9 – 20, 2023 | Trip Report | by Dave Mehlman



With local guides Roger Morales, Reinaldo Rodriguez, Naturalist Journeys' guide Dave Mehlman and participants: Dick, Jim, Larry, Linda, Liz D., Liz S., Pam, and Steve

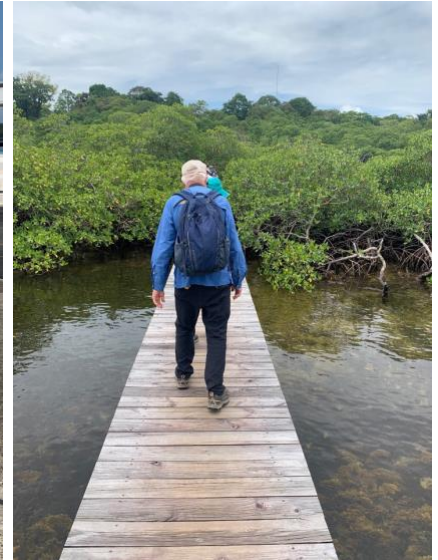


Sun., Apr. 9

Flight to Bocas del Toro | Boat to Tranquilo Bay Tranquilo Birding

Dick, Pam, Liz's D. and S., Jim, and Dave had all arrived the day before (or earlier), so we all were up early (at Dave's insistence!), checked out of the Radisson Panama Canal, and then opened their breakfast buffet at 6:00am to be ready for the anticipated early pick-up. However, it soon emerged that a small communication error had occurred, so we enjoyed a little early birding from the entrance of the Radisson (seeing our only Yellow-crowned Parrots of the tour) until our airport pick-up showed at 7:30am. The driver took us to the nearby Albrook Panama City Airport, where we entered the gates, had our passports checked, and then were taken to a hangar where our charter flight was to depart from. Meanwhile, Larry, Linda, and Steve were picked up from the Canopy Tower, where they had spent a few early days, and met the rest of us at the hangar—at last, our group was fully complete!

After a short wait in the comfortable, but small, waiting room we loaded up into our Cessna Caravan and took off for the one-hour flight to the small town of Bocas del Toro (aka, Bocas Town) on Isla Colón, with good views of the Panama Canal, Central Cordillera, and Caribbean coast along the way. We were met at the Bocas airport (right in town!) by Jay and Yoel from Tranquilo Bay Lodge and driven to a nearby restaurant to get into 2 boats to take us to the Lodge. The boat ride from Isla Colón, where Bocas Town is, to Isla Bastimentos, where the



Lodge is, took about 30 minutes; Yoel pointed out a fly-by Pomarine Jaeger on the way, though it was hard for most to spot. Upon arrival at the Tranquilo Bay dock, we were met by Roger, the Lodge guide, and then we took our first walk onto the island through the lovely fringing mangrove forest and up the steep steps to the beautiful main building of the lodge. Essentially immediately after arriving at Tranquilo Bay, we knew we were in for an awesome journey, as the very first wildlife sighting was a mother Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth with a baby slowly climbing down a palm to rest!

After our first of many flavorful lunches at Tranquilo Bay, we returned to our rooms for a brief respite from the mid-day heat and to get organized for the week ahead. We met again in late afternoon for the first of many walks around the Lodge, led by the ever-ready Roger. This walk was our first introduction to our new temporary home for the next few days and we had a wonderful time! To start off, we noticed the White-lined Bats day-roosting on the side of Larry's cabin. It also became immediately apparent that the many *Miconia* shrubs that had been carefully planted on the grounds were chock full of berries and, consequently, berry-eating birds. Birds included migrants, most in full breeding plumage at this time of year, including Red-eyed Vireo (probably the most common migrant), Tennessee Warbler (giving the vireos a run for the money as most common), Scarlet Tanager, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Baltimore Oriole. Equally of interest were numerous resident species, too numerous to fully mention, such as Shining Honeycreeper (apparently addicted to *Miconia* fruit), Red-capped Manakin, Clay-colored Thrush, and White-vented Euphonia. Meanwhile, Short-billed Pigeons sang incessantly from the trees and Roger pointed out a few White-crowned Pigeons, which are only present for a short time of the year. We finished the afternoon with a walk up the very tall observation tower, providing great vistas over Tranquilo Bay and the surrounding islands and mainland, plus we could look directly down into the tree canopy. From the tower, we noted Masked Tityra, Plain-colored Tanager, White-necked Jacobin, a few Green Honeycreepers, and Blue-headed Parrots flying by. Wow, what a start to the tour! After finishing our walk, we had a bit of free time, then walked to the dining room for cold Balboas (for some), our pre-dinner checklist session, discussion of plans for tomorrow, and a great dinner. By this time, of course, it was dark so we ended by walking back to the cabins with the aid of our flashlights for a rest in anticipation of tomorrow.



Mon., Apr. 10

Punta Róbal Road | Palo Seco Protection Forest Fortuna Forest Reserve

We had an early breakfast today in order to get an early start in the boats. After eating, we went down to the dock and loaded into the 2 boats for the 45-minute trip to the mainland at Punta Róbal. Arriving at the dock there, we noted Royal and Sandwich Terns perched on the pylons and met Amado, our bus driver for the mainland-based parts of the tour. We loaded on the bus to explore the road from Punta Róbal inland, which traverses through some coastal wetland and low elevation forest habitats. By driving and stopping intermittently, we scored a variety of species including waterbirds (Green Ibis, Northern Jacana, Southern Lapwing, egrets, herons) and numerous landbirds such as Gray-headed Chachalaca, Buff-throated Saltator, Cinnamon-bellied and Morelet's Seedeater, Yellow-headed Caracara, and a Squirrel Cuckoo. A stop further inland with more forest and less wetlands yielded a small kettle of Swainson's Hawk, Streak-headed and Cocoa Woodcreeper, Keel-billed Toucan, Gartered Trogon, and a Canada Warbler.

After a stop further inland at the Super Centro El Economico, we started to climb up into the mountains. While on the road, we noticed a sloth crossing the road, so Roger kindly got out and performed a sloth rescue to much applause. We gained about 2400 feet in elevation and stopped in the Palo Seco Protection Forest for some of our first mountain birding. Swallow-tailed Kites flew overhead for a great view of this wonderful raptor and we picked out new and interesting species such as Spotted and Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis (kind of poorly named, most of us thought, for a blue-and-black bird!), Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, and Alfaro's Pygmy-Squirrel.

We then continued on up into the mountains, reaching the continental divide at an elevation of about 3540 feet. Here, we turned off on a side road that runs more-or-less along the crest and had a picnic lunch, spotting a young Nine-banded Armadillo foraging beside the road on the way in. After lunch, we walked and rode for about 2 hours along this crest road in search of more high elevation species. Some of our more-interesting finds included Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Silver-throated Tanager, Mistletoe Tyrannulet, Common Chlorospingus, and an Olive-sided Flycatcher. About mid-afternoon, we decided to turn around and start our return trip, knowing that more stops would be made on the way for birds. Descending the mountain, we mostly spotted species we had found previously, though another visit to the Super Centro yielded an unexpected Black-crowned Night-Heron perched in a tall tree in the ponds out back. Arriving at the boat dock in late afternoon, we noted that a



few Neotropical Cormorants had joined the terns before saying “hasta la próxima” to Amado and boarding our boats for the return trip to Isla Bastimentos. We arrived back at the dock, had a bit of time to freshen up, then reconvened back in the dining room for the checklist, dinner, and review of plans for the day, before heading off to the cabins, tired but very happy.

Tues., Apr. 11 Isla Popa | Tranquilo Bay Trails

After a bit of rain overnight (fortunately for us, this seemed to be the pattern for most of our time at Tranquilo Bay), we had breakfast at a reasonable 6:30am and were greatly amused by the White-faced Capuchins that came to grab bananas from the front porch. A little bit of porch birding also yielded an Olive-sided Flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo, and some Tawny-crowned Tanagers—not a bad porch list! We then got ready for a morning excursion to Isla Popa and all met down on the dock to board the boats. After a short boat ride, we spent almost 2 hours exploring the mangroves through various channels on Isla Popa. The mangroves were very birdy—we had decent views of Snowy Cotinga, one of the main specialties we looked for here, but also Black-crowned Tityra, Green and Ringed Kingfisher, Yellow-throated Toucan, Pale-billed Woodpecker, a flock of Plumbeous Kites, Olive-throated Parakeet, and some Eastern Kingbirds. We also had the very neat experience of watching several small Spotted Eagle Rays “flying” under water near the boat; though these were small, this species can get up to 500 pounds! With that great start, we landed the boats for a brief walk on terra firme, finding Slaty-tailed Trogon, Prothonotary Warbler, Green Honeycreeper, and the Isla Popa form of Strawberry Poison Dart Frog. We then got back in the boats to return to the Lodge, followed by a bit of spare time, then lunch in the dining room.

After a post-lunch siesta, we reunited in late afternoon for another walk on the Lodge grounds, continuing to be amazed by the avian diversity so close to our cabins. This afternoon, we had excellent views of both Red-capped and Golden-collared Manakin and added numerous species to our checklist, including Bronzy Hermit, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, White-browed Gnatcatcher, Stripe-throated Hermit, and Crowned Woodnymph. Before dusk, we gathered again in our dining room to do our daily checklist, discuss plans for the following day, and enjoy another wonderful dinner. As we left dinner in the dark, it turned out that a small band of Panamanian Night Monkeys had appeared on the deck to consume some bananas that Jay put out for them. What a great send-off for the evening!



Wed., Apr. 12 Schneider Canal | Changuinola River | Bird Island

We were up early for breakfast to get a start on this day, one of the best of the tour in everyone's opinion. Loading in the boats, we headed back in the direction of Isla Colón and Bocas town and entered the Schneider Canal. This Canal was built long ago when the Bocas del Toro region was a major exporter of bananas to provide a shortcut for boats between the Changuinola River and the old port of Almirante. Although no longer used by ships, the canal stays open with no maintenance due to tidal and river flow. The canal provided almost constant fantastic birding with fairly easy viewing from the boats. Mangrove Swallows were around as Montezuma Oropendolas flew overhead and Great Kiskadees swooped from tree to tree. A quick stop on the shore yielded Canebrake Wren (a restricted-range species only found on the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama), Nicaraguan and Thick-billed Seed-Finch, Lineated Woodpecker, and Keel-billed Toucan. It also provided a "rest stop" for those willing to "hide" behind a large tree!

The birds continued to come all morning long: Swallow-tailed Kite, Bay Wren, Green and American Pygmy Kingfisher, White-lined Tanager, Bay Wren, and a Common Black Hawk were some of the highlights. In mid-morning, we pulled up at a small dock along the canal with a genuine outhouse, which provided another opportunity to stretch our legs and use the facilities. We also made a short stop on land and found several individuals of another variant of the Strawberry Poison Dart Frog and admired this living example of rapid evolution wandering around at our feet.

In late morning, we began to approach the Changuinola River and the canal began to widen, providing more marshy habitat. Here, we found Gray-crowned Yellowthroat, Northern Jacana, and Bare-throated Tiger-Heron and heard the ever-elusive White-throated Crake calling. We finally emerged into the Changuinola River main channel about 11:30am, and began to head slowly upriver, scanning the sandbars and mudflats as we went. Careful scanning by all turned up lots of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, Black-necked Stilt, Semipalmated Plover, and a Limpkin while a bunch of Osprey soared overhead looking for a meal. At one point, we spied a Snail Kite foraging low over the river edge searching for its namesake prey. A bit after noon, we pulled over to the riverbank, tied the boats up, and then a great picnic lunch was set up for us, complete with chairs under the shade trees! This was one of the best field lunch locations most of us had ever seen, comfortable, shady, with a wonderful view out over the river. After lunch, we walked around this area a bit,



flushing a Common Pauraque in the process, and spotting Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Boat-billed Flycatcher, and a pair of adult Northern Tropical Pewees feeding some fledglings.

We then got back in the boats and slowly proceeded downriver to the river mouth. Birds along the way included Glossy Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Pectoral Sandpiper, Purple Gallinule, and Barn and Bank Swallows. We landed at the river mouth for a short walk around the beach at that point, though we did not linger since clearly some local fisherman had established a temporary camp there. We dug up some good birds here, too, including Semipalmated and Collared Plover, Sanderling, and Least, Western, and Spotted Sandpiper. We then headed back down the canal to the bay, exiting the canal at about 4:00pm. At that point in the day, it was decided that the winds had subsided enough that we could make the run out to Bird Island, so we turned our boats toward the ocean and began a bit of a bumpy ride into the ocean swells. Bird Island itself turned out to be fantastic, another one of the tour highlights for many, with oodles of Red-billed Tropicbirds, Magnificent Frigatebirds, and Brown Boobies flying around, the tropicbirds screaming madly. With a bit of help from Roger and Jay, we picked out 2 Red-footed Boobies among the crowd and got poor looks at an early arriving Brown Noddy.

However, the day was getting late, so after having had our fill here, we began the boat ride back, traveling the direct route across the ocean side of Isla Colón. As luck would have it, right in the middle of the open water, we encountered a mating pair of Hawksbill Sea Turtles! This was probably a once-in-a-lifetime sighting for all of us and we pondered the odds of having ended up in the same spot in the ocean at the same time as 2 passionate turtles. After this sight, we continued on back to Tranquilo Bay, tied up, then went briefly to our rooms, before returning to the dining room for our usual ritual of happy hour, checklist, next day's plans, and dinner. A great end to a marvelous day.

Thurs., Apr. 13 Green Acres Coffee Farm | Tranquilo Bay

Since we had less travel scheduled for today, we had breakfast at 6:30am, then met at the boat dock in an hour for the relatively short ride to the Green Acres Chocolate Farm on the nearby mainland. After arriving, we got off and walked up the small hill to the Farm house where we were greeted by owner Gary. After that, we spent about 2.5 hours birding the trails around the Farm, which proved to be quite productive, as we found quite a few things not seen elsewhere on the tour. Especially interesting were several Double-toothed Kites, which perched reasonably well for us in the canopy, but we also found Black-crowned Antshrike, Long-billed Hermit, Mealy Parrot, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, and Black-chested Jay. We also heard our first (and only) Mantled Howler Monkeys of the tour and found a few amphibians. Most colorful were the Green-and-black Poison Frog Dart Frogs while most noisy were Talamanca Rocket Frogs. After our walk, we were treated to a refreshing drink by Gary and his staff at the house and then



heard a bit about his work with local communities in the area and had an opportunity to buy some of the Farm's chocolate products. Oddly, there was no actual demonstration nor presentation on the chocolate-making process itself.

We then went back to the boats and returned to Tranquilo Bay Lodge, noting a fly-by Merlin on the way. After returning and unloading our field gear, we had lunch in the dining room, then took a siesta for the early afternoon. Meeting up with Roger later in the day, we went for another walk on the Lodge trails to see what we could find. As had been the case, the migrants were out and about in great numbers, with Tennessee Warblers, Swainson's Thrush, Scarlet and Summer Tanager, and an American Redstart doing their best to fatten up for the journey to North America. The residents showed well, too, with Short-billed, Pale-vented, and White-crowned Pigeons calling and flying over, Green and Shining Honeycreepers doing damage to the *Miconia* berries, Buff-throated Saltator, and Barn Swallows and Chestnut-collared Swifts flying over. That ended the day, followed by our dinner routine and then a return to our cabins for the night.

Fri., Apr. 14 Punta Róbalo Road | Fortuna Forest Reserve and Dam

As today was another mainland travel day, we were up early for breakfast, with a few in the group noting a calling Mottled Owl in the pre-dawn darkness. After breakfast, we assembled at the boat dock for another ride across the bay to Punta Róbalo, where we were met again by Amado. Loading into his bus, we proceeded along the road to the main highway and headed to the mountains. Since our intent was to go further up and over the mountains and down a bit on the Pacific side, we did not spend much time birding the lowlands, except to spot a Gray-cowled Wood-Rail wandering around in the marshes! We stopped at a few places on the way up, including our favorite the Super Centro, and added Yellow-crowned Euphonia, Gray-capped Flycatcher, and Chestnut-headed Oropendola to the list. We arrived at our first main stop for the morning, the Fortuna Dam and Reservoir, only to have a light shower start. However, we did note Gray-breasted Martin and Rufous-collared Sparrow before finding some shelter in the lee of the administration building. As the skies cleared a bit, we enjoyed some decent birding, with several Scarlet-thighed Dacnis coming in and out of the trees, accompanied by Thick-billed Euphonia, Mountain Elaenia, and White-throated and Clay-colored Thrushes. Meanwhile, Blue-and-white Swallows dipped and dived overhead—a nice treat.

Continuing along toward the divide and further up, we stopped along the road at a point Roger thought looked good; indeed, he was correct! Some higher elevation species were present providing decent views, including Elegant Euphonia, Silver-throated and Bay-headed Tanager, and Northern Emerald Toucanet while a Red-tailed



Hawk of the resident Central American subspecies and White-collared Swifts flew overhead. Although we heard some far-off Prong-billed Barbets, we were unable to lay eyes on them, unfortunately. We continued on a bit farther, this time beginning to descend well into the Pacific side of the divide, in hopes of finding some additional species. This second stop was also excellent; highlights here included the orange-bellied form of Collared Trogon, Rufous-and-white and Isthmian Wren, Acorn Woodpecker, Flame-colored and Carmiol's Tanager (the latter actually incubating at a nest by the side of the road!), Golden-olive Woodpecker, and Garden Emerald. We also had a picnic lunch at this spot.

At this point in the day, it was late enough that we had to turn around and make our way back down, of course with stops on the way. After a stop at the Fortuna Dam to use the facilities, we again visited the side road running along the divide where we had been the previous day. This site yielded some very good birds for us, more higher elevation species, such as Black-bellied Hummingbird, Black-faced Grosbeak, White-throated Spadebill, and Great Black and Short-tailed Hawk. Nearing the coast on our trip back, we stopped along the road to Punta Robalo for a bit of additional birding, finding Red-legged Honeycreeper, Gray-capped Flycatcher, and more Black-bellied Whistling Ducks. Arriving at the dock, we transferred ourselves and our gear to the boats, then headed back to Tranquilo Bay Lodge. After a short break, we met again for dinner and our usual checklist and plan review routine. After that, off to our rooms to rest another peaceful night.

Sat., Apr. 15

Tranquilo Bay Trails | Free Afternoon

Today was designed as a slower-paced day, since it was our last full day at Tranquilo Bay and most of us had a long travel day scheduled for the following day. We had a relatively late breakfast, then all went out with Roger for one last walk on the Tranquilo Bay trails, focusing on the stream with the famed hummingbird pool. On this walk, we continued to see by-now familiar birds (e.g., Montezuma Oropendola, Red-lore Parrot, Golden-collared Manakin), but also added some great new birds for our list, including Blue-black Grosbeak, Dot-winged and White-flanked Antwren, and many more. Despite a vigil on the wet benches at the hummingbird pool, little showed except for a cooperative Crowned Woodnymph. Of special interest on this walk, we passed through an area that has several individuals of the bright orange variant of Strawberry Poison Dart Frog, only found in Isla Bastimentos. We returned for lunch, then had a free afternoon to pack and organize our things for the trips coming tomorrow and do a little last-minute solo birding and wildlife-watching. We concluded the day with our last Tranquilo Bay Balboas, final checklist session of the main tour, then a farewell dinner.



Sun., Apr. 16

Departures from Tranquilo Bay | Flight to Panama City Mt. Totumas Post-Tour Extension: drive to Mt. Totumas

Today was the day to begin their trip home for some and to start the extension for others. Jim, Liz, and Pam were headed today to Panama City to spend the night before their flight back to the U.S. the next day. So, they had a fairly leisurely breakfast, then boarded the boat which took them back to Bocas town to catch the commercial Air Panama flight back to Panama City's Albrook Field. After arrival, they were picked up and then headed off into town to enjoy the Radisson and surroundings until their flight.

The extension group consisted of Larry, Linda, Steve, Dick, Liz, and Dave. Due to the long day ahead of them, they had a very early breakfast, then (with some help) got all their gear and luggage into a boat and headed back to Punta Rábalo for one last time. Amado was there to meet us, as usual, so we transferred the bags to the bus and began the long drive to the town of Volcan, all the way over on the Pacific side of the Cordillera de Talamanca. Continuing on up and over the mountains, we arrived at the Pan-American Highway and headed west (Costa Rica). We eventually turned north off the Panamericana near David and arrived in the pretty little mountain town of Volcán just in time for lunch. Amado, who is from Volcán, suggested we eat at Fanny's Bistro, which was quite enjoyable (and produced a perched Long-billed Starthroat across the street). After lunch, we were met by 2 drivers with 4-wheel drive trucks to take us up the final leg of the journey to Mt. Totumas Cloud Forest Lodge which took a few hours. Upon arrival, we were met by Jeff, one of the owners, and moved into our rooms right in the main building, the Bellbird Lodge. After unpacking a bit and settling in, we all headed right to the patio outside the lodge to enjoy the view and the avian treats! The view of the high peaks of the Talamanca more or less behind us and the Pacific slope far below us was spectacular. The hummingbird feeders were hopping with activity—particularly numerous and feisty were Violet Sabrewing, Talamanca Hummingbird, and Lesser Violetear, while Snowy-bellied Hummingbird and Green-crowned Brilliant kept right at it trying to get a sip. Meanwhile, Slaty Flowerpiercers foraged in the flowering shrubs nearby and flocks of Band-tailed Pigeons cruised overhead—marvelous! As we watched, Jeff came over and ID'd some birds for us and later so did Reinaldo, our local guide. After going over details for the next day, we relaxed, then had a lovely dinner cooked by Alma before retiring to our comfortable rooms for the night.



Mon., Apr. 17 Mt. Totumas Trails

At the elevation of Mt. Totumas and with the climate, breakfast was at a leisurely (by Tranquilo Bay standards!) 7:00am. So, early risers checked out the scenery, birds, and moths in the morning. The moths were there because Jeff had left his sodium vapor light going all night and the variety of moth and moth-like things attracted to it was astounding! An incredible variety of sizes, shapes, colors, etc. could be seen very easily—who knows how many were undescribed species? Meanwhile, careful listeners could hear several Mantled Howler Monkey troops sounding off at various distances while a few Spotted Wood-Quail joined in the morning chorus.

After breakfast, we met up with Reinaldo for a morning hike on the Mt. Totumas property trails. We headed out on a semi-loop hike on the Victory and Roble trails, pursuing the birds as we found them. Indeed, we found birds! Too many to list them all, some of the highlights this morning were Three-wattled Bellbird (heard more easily than seen and, when seen, often at a long distance but easily viewable in the scope), Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher (Reinaldo knew of a nest right along the trail, so incredible looks were had of this lovely species feeding young and removing fecal sacs—Dave was very excited to see the latter for some inexplicable reason!), Sulphur-winged Parakeet, Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Black-faced Solitaire, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Olivaceous Piculet, and both Hairy and Acorn Woodpeckers (to remind us of species connections with North America). Essentially, the forest trails at Mt. Totumas were the gift that kept on giving and, thanks to Reinaldo's keen eye, little was missed. We then returned to Bellbird Lodge for lunch and a short rest. We reunited again in the late afternoon for a combination of walks around the property and some quality time by the feeders to try to pick up the less frequent hummingbird visitors. On this walk, we began to get more comfortable with more common species at Mt. Totumas, such as Flame-colored Tanager (which were both apparently everywhere and quite vocal), Blue-and-white Swallow, Yellow-faced Grassquit, Swainson's Thrush, and Slate-throated Redstart, as well as the more infrequently seen species like Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, Common Chlorospingus, and White-throated Thrush. At the feeders, we rapidly fine-tuned our eyes to pick out some of the smaller and less aggressive species like Scintillant Hummingbird, Magenta-throated Woodstar, and Stripe-tailed Hummingbird—what a fun observing challenge! After concluding our walk and feeder stint, we met late in the day for our checklist review and then another fabulous dinner, before retiring for the night.

Tues., Apr. 18 Mt. Totumas: High Elevation Birding

We started the day with our normal excellent breakfast, then got our gear and jumped in the back of one of the Lodge's trucks for a day exploring higher elevations around Mt. Totumas Lodge on the back roads. Despite the rough roads, slow going, and bumpy ride on wooden planks in the back of the truck, we reached over 7,300 feet



on the morning's trip, enjoying some different habitats and birds as we went, not to mention great views everywhere. As with it seems like every outing at Mt. Totumas, there were way too many fabulous birds to mention, but some of the highlights included Resplendent Quetzal, Yellow-thighed Brush-Finch, Black-cheeked Warbler, a pair of Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, and the amazing Flame-throated Warbler. After this incredible morning birding, we turned around and retraced our bumpy ride down from the heights, arriving back at the lodge where we enjoyed another nourishing lunch.

After lunch, we gathered to meet Reinaldo for an afternoon walk on the Lodge trails. While waiting, we studied the feeder traffic and noticed a different hummingbird: a Blue-throated Goldentail! This is an unusual species here and was confirmed by Jeff, who estimated that it was only the second record in 10-15 years at the Lodge!! While waiting, we also got great views of a Wilson's Warbler foraging in the shrubs. After this fun start, we walked again on the Roble Trail in search of familiar and new species. Some of the new additions to the list this afternoon included Lesson's Motmot, Crested Guan, Broad-winged Hawk, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Smoky-brown Woodpecker. Another fun afternoon at Mt. Totumas! After returning, we rested a bit, then assembled in the dining room for a presentation by Jeff of some of his trail-cam videos from the property. Many of these were amazing, documenting intermittent Jaguar use and relatively frequent Mountain Lion occurrence, among other animals. In at least one video, the cats were seen soon after some human hikers passed by! Made us all wonder what had been watching us while we were out birding...hmmm. He also showed us a very amusing cell phone video of a Baird's Tapir literally running into some hikers on the nearby trails...we could only hope. After the show, we had dinner and turned in after another great day.

Wed., Apr. 19

Mt. Totumas: Lower Elevation Birding

After breakfast, we got our gear together, piled back in the truck with Jeff and Reinaldo and headed out along the road to explore some sites at lower elevations than the Lodge. A stop at the Rio Colorado Road crossing allowed us to see 2 aquatic-obligate birds of the area: Torrent Tyrannulet and American Dipper—both are always a treat to see anywhere they are found. Other good finds included Dark Pewee, Elegant and Spot-crowned Euphonia, Brown-capped Vireo, and an Olive-sided Flycatcher. Continuing down, we made an extended roadside stop near a dairy farm (which, oddly, did not seem to have any cows!). Birding along the road and the adjacent fields and forests yielded great sightings, including Silver-throated, Bay-headed, and Speckled Tanager; Streak-headed and Spot-crowned Woodcreeper; Long-billed Starthroat; Red-faced Spinetail; and a Tropical



Parula. After this great morning full of new birds and habitats, we returned uphill to the Lodge for our lunch and a brief rest. After the siesta, we took our final walk with Reinaldo on the Lodge trails in search of a final new birds for our list. Probably the best bird, in terms of the species and the fact that we saw it well, was a very vocal Central American Pygmy-Owl, which Reinaldo finally found after much looking. We were able to get great views of it in the scopes and through binoculars and cameras—it's always a highlight to see one of these miniature owls in full view! Other new or infrequently seen species included Streaked Saltator, Ochraceous Wren, Resplendent Quetzal, and Three-wattled Bellbird. Unfortunately, we heard a Red-headed Barbet but could not find it. After that, we returned to the lodge for time to pack and get organized for our trip tomorrow and then had our final checklist session and dinner.

Thurs., Apr. 20 Departures from David

Unfortunately (for us), today was departure day and time to return home. We were up early for breakfast and our two drivers arrived with their trucks right on time before 6:00am. We put all our bags into the trucks, loaded up, and headed off to David airport, about 2 hours away. No problems were encountered on the trip and we all checked in successfully for our Copa flight to Panama City and then connections to different parts of the U.S. We said good-bye one last time and farewell to the beautiful Panamanian countryside and that ended this great tour.

Group Birding (David Mehlman - DM), Keel-billed Toucan (NJ Stock), Mantled Howler Monkey (NJ Stock), Boarding the charter flight (DM), Tranquilo Bay boardwalk (DM), Squirrel Cuckoo (NJ Stock), Tranquilo Bay boat docks (DM), Mother Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth and young (DM), Lunch Break (DM), Red-capped Manakin (NJ Stock), Fire-star Orchid (DM), Brown Basilisk (DM), White-faced Capuchin (NJ Stock), Strawberry Poison Dart Frog (DT - Dick Theile), Scarlet-thighed Dacnis (DT), Snyder Canal (DM), Birding by Boat (DM), Enjoying time on the water (DM), Bird Island (DM), Green Acres Coffee Farm (DM), Dick & Liz Kayaking (DM), Tranquilo Bay Dock (DM), Montezuma Oropendola (DT), Tranquilo Bay Sunrise (DM), Extension group at lunch (DM), Green-crowned Brilliant (DM), Vicina Clearwing (DM), Violet Sabrewing (DM), Snowy-bellied Hummingbird (DM), Totumas Moths (DM) Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher (DM), Flame-colored Tanager (DM), Ready to bird Totumas (DM), Birding Totumas (DM), Costa Rican Pygmy Owl (DM) Magenta-throated Woodstar (DM), Golden-browed Chlorophonia (DM), View from Mt. Totumas Lodge (DM), Group Birding (DM)