



This Rosy Thrush-Tanager showed off, not a typical behavior for this species!

Panama

Canopy Lodge, Tower, and Camp

Tour Leader: Rob Ripma
September 14 - October 1, 2021

September 14 – Arrival and Transfer to Canopy Tower

The group met in the Atlanta Airport and arrived in Panama City in the afternoon. Following a short transit to El Valley de Anton, we arrived at Canopy Lodge where we would be based the next 6 nights. We met up with Eliecer Rodriguez, our Canopy Family guide for the duration of the trip. An introduction to the property gave us the opportunity to become familiar with many of the common birds of the area including Crimson-backed Tanager, Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, Black-chested Jay, and Thick-billed Euphonia. The group went to bed eager for our first full day of birding!

Snowy-bellied Hummingbird



September 15 – Canopy Lodge, Canopy Adventure, La Zamia, Cara Iguana

The morning started out birding the Canopy Lodge grounds where we enjoyed Buff-rumped Warblers singing from the creek, Green Kingfishers on the small ponds, a group of Keel-billed Toucans, and Fasciated Antshrike. We then headed up the road to Canopy Adventure where we encountered our first mixed-species flock of trip that included birds such as Spot-crowned Antwren, Dot-winged Antwren, Chestnut-capped Warbler, Yellow-olive and Olive-striped Flycatchers, and Blackburnian Warblers. Before lunch, we birded La Zamia which yielded a close encounter with Lesson's Motmot, Squirrel Cuckoo, a group of Yellow-bellied Seedeaters, and two Southern Lapwings in the field at the police station.

September 15– Continued

Our afternoon was spent birding Cara Iguana. We started out trying to track down Lance-tailed Manakins. Calls and brief views were had of these birds (which would be improved on in a few days). We walked down the trail, and up a very steep hill, for an incredibly cooperative Tody Motmot as well as Broad-billed Motmot. We stopped to watch several lines of leafcutter ants crossing the trail as well. It was a great first full day of birding!



Spot-crowned Antwireo

September 16 – Canopy Lodge, Las Minas, Camino a Mata Ahogado

Following breakfast, we visited Las Minas trail. The birding was great as we started off with a large group of Southern Lapwings near the chicken farms, Swallow-tailed Kites flew overhead, mixed flocks lined the trail, and a Collared Trogon showed off right above us. In the clearing between patches of forest, a pair of Wedge-tailed Grassfinches put on quite a show for us. As we entered the next patch of forest, we enjoyed a flock of more sneaky species including Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, Spotted Barbtail, Checker-throated Stipplethroat, Slaty Antwren, and more. Shortly after this, we found two gorgeous Central American Montane Tiger Beetles, earning this location the nickname of “Tiger Beetle Trail” for the remainder of the trip.

Shortly after lunch, we received word that a Mottled Owl was found roosting up the road. Here, we saw not only the owl but also our first Dusky and Chestnut-backed Antbirds as well as White-vented Plumeteer. From there, we visited the road to Mata Ahogado. While we walked a lot of the road, most of our time was spent looking at one field edge where we had a nice mix of White-lined, Flame-rumped, Crimson-backed, Blue-Gray, Palm, and Golden-hooded Tanagers, Bran-colored Flycatcher, and Masked Tityras.

Wedge-tailed Grassfinch



September 17 – La Hincada, Carretera a Juan Hombrón, Santa Clara, El Chirú

Our third full day was spent birding down along the Pacific coast where we would add many new birds for the trip! Our first stop at La Hincada yielded species including White-tailed Kite, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Crested Oropendola, and more. Next, we visited Juan Hombrón Road where we saw a whopping 96 species! Highlights from this location were a few groups of Crested Bobwhites on the road, Pearl Kite, Savanna Hawk, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Veraguan Mango, Pale-breasted Spinetail, and ended with attempting to get scope views of Tiger Beetles! Lunch at a beach house was wonderful. The scenery was beautiful and the large number of Magnificent Frigatebirds and pair of Blue-footed Boobies made it even better! We continued to bird around the Santa Clara area, enjoying more of the species we had seen throughout the morning. We returned in time to enjoy more of the species commonly found around Canopy Lodge before going to bed after a long and birdy day!

September 18 – Road to Altos del Maria, Casa Anton

We started the day by heading up a bit higher in elevation on the road to Altos del María. Here we were able to encounter a new set of species for the trip. These included hummingbirds such as Green Thorntail, Garden Emerald, Snowcap, and Violet-headed Hummingbirds, White Hawks, a Bat Falcon, Russet Antshrike, a very loud and striking Dull-mantled Antbird, Tufted Flycatcher, and Ochraceous Wren. We came across a large flock of mixed euphonias, warblers, and tanagers about halfway through the morning which contained our first White-vented Euphonias, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, and many more Blackburnian Warblers.

That afternoon, we visited a private property that the Canopy Family has permission to bird. Right away we were treated to awesome views of an adult and young Spectacled Owl! Not long after that encounter, we were looking at a wide-open view of the elusive and rarely-seen-well Rosy Thrush-Tanager. A short amount of time and short distance covered provided two trip highlight birds!

September 19 – Finca Candelario

This morning was spent birding Finca Candelario, a private property that the Canopy Family has permission to bird. It didn't take long for us to realize just how great this spot was going to be. Almost immediately upon entering the trail, we had an open view of White-bellied Antbird. Not much further down the trail, while watching a Black-faced Antthrush sitting up on a log, Eliecer noted that he heard a Black-crowned Antpitta back where we'd come from. However, the bird was sitting in the trail just behind us and allowed for an incredible and rare encounter with this sneaky species. A feeding flock down the trail provided Barred Forest-Falcon, our first Forest-Falcon of the trip! Upon returning to the parking lot, we hit a large mixed-species flock in the trees around the car!

The afternoon was spent briefly birding another part of the same property. Highlights there included a large flock of Canada Warblers and an enormous leafcutter ant colony. The rain started and we turned in early.

Black-crowned Antpitta



September 20 – La Mesa, Las Minas, Canopy Adventure, Transfer to Canopy Tower

Following breakfast, we headed up to La Mesa in hopes of adding a few new species that we hadn't come across yet in the Canopy Lodge region. We found and staked out the perfect heliconia flower for a White-tipped Sicklebill to visit. As we waited, a flock of Black-faced Grosbeaks passed through the treetops above us, a Gray-headed Kite roosted downhill, and many close Keel-billed Toucans flew around. After a while of waiting, the White-tipped Sicklebill made an appearance! As we headed back to the car, a buzzer-beater style visit from a Northern Emerald-Toucanet wrapped up the species we had targeted for the day! We made one last short walk around Las Minas/Tiger-Beetle Trail before heading to the Lodge to pack up and transport to Canopy Tower!

Spectacled Owls



September 21 – Canopy Tower, Semaphore Hill Road, Camino de Cruces, Ammo Dump Ponds

Our first morning at Canopy Tower was spent birding from the top of the tower and Semaphore Hill Road, the road leading up to the tower. This allowed us to enjoy and learn many of the common birds of the area. From Great Tinamous singing to point-blank Cinnamon Woodpecker to great looks at a Golden-crowned Spadebill, it was an excellent morning. Following lunch, we visited Camino de Cruces in an attempt to find the endemic

September 21 - Continued

Yellow-green Tyrannulet. While the tyrannulet didn't cooperate, we still added Forest Elaenia and Gray-lined Hawk to the trip list. Our drive back from the park added two great mammals for the trip, Lesser Capybara and Panamanian Night-Monkey!

On our way back to the tower, we visited the Ammo Dump Ponds, a site that quickly became a group favorite. Wattled Jacanas walked down the road, White-throated Crakes called from the marsh, Magnificent Frigatebirds hunted the Panama Canal, and Rufescent Tiger-Heron made an appearance. A wide variety of swallow hunted above where we picked out Mangrove Swallows, a new species for the trip.

Lesser Capybara



Red-capped Manakin

Fulvous-vented Euphonia



September 22 – Cerro Jefe, Cerro Azul, Costa del Este

A 4:30 breakfast may not have been easy, but it would prove to be well worth it as we departed early for Cerro Azul, a private community situated north of the east side of Panama City. On this day, we were joined by Carlos Bethancourt. Our first stop at Cerro Jefe provided many awesome birds such as Speckled, Rufous-winged, Emerald, and a group of Black-and-yellow Tanagers, Green and Shining Honeycreepers, and the Panama-endemic Stripe-cheeked Woodpecker!

While heading to our lunch location, we came across a large frenzy of hummingbird in the treetops consisting of 7 species and highlighted by brief looks at Rufous-crested Coquette. For lunch, the Harrison's house proved to be a hummingbird haven. The Harrisons were incredibly welcoming and loved to talk and share their immense knowledge about the birds, butterflies, and moths of the area. After a great time with them, we departed back for Canopy Tower. Once we made it to Panama City, we stopped to bird the coast for migrant shorebirds. While we saw a great diversity of shorebirds and waterbirds, the real stars of the show were the nearly fifteen thousand Western Sandpipers!

September 23 – Pipeline Road, Gamboa Rainforest Resort

Most birders have one place in mind when they think of Panama, the famous Pipeline Road. Today was the day to bird this location! We loaded up the open-air Bird Mobile and drove the short drive to Gamboa where the road starts. Very quickly we started seeing great bird! Red-throated Ant-Tanagers, Scaly-throated Leaf-tosser, Purple-throated Fruitcrows, Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, Pied Puffbirds, Moustached Antwren, and wide-open Streak-chested Antpitta highlighted our morning there. We heard Slaty-backed Forest-Falcons, a pair of birds that would later have quite a bit of time devoted to them to finally see them. An exciting 82 species morning on the road called for a good lunch and rest. However, one more stop along Semaphore Hill Road allowed us to see a roosting Black-and-white Owl!

Purple-throated Fruitcrow



Following lunch, we visited the Gamboa Rainforest Resort. Immediately upon getting out of the car, we watched a Crane Hawk sitting in a dead tree in the parking lot, saw Black-crowned Tityra, both Scarlet and Yellow-rumped Caciques, and Violet-bellied Hummingbird. A walk around the property gave us the opportunity to see Whooping Motmot, Buff-breasted Wrens, and hear Little Tinamou up close.

September 24 – Rainforest Discovery Center, Pipeline Road

The morning was spent birding the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center. A very cool tower gave us a great view over the canopy of the rainforest where we were met with a flock of Scaled Pigeons, a mixed tanager flock, and three Blue Cotingas! We heard an Ocellated Antbird and headed down the tower to search for the ant swarm that tends to be present with that species. While it continued to elude us, we had a very close and cooperative White-whiskered Puffbird. Following this, we birded around Pipeline Road for a short amount of time. We had a point-blank Great Tinamou on the side of the road thinking it was hiding from us, more Great Jacamars, Black-striped Woodcreeper, and Speckled Mourner!

For the afternoon, we birded further down Pipeline Road than we had done yet. We hoped to add a few final species for this region before continuing to Canopy Camp the next day. A pair of Black-bellied Wrens gave their crazy call right in front of us, several good mixed flocks, and finally tracking down those elusive Slaty-backed Forest Falcons highlighted our last afternoon in this area! We went owling following dinner and were treated to Crested Owl, Choco Screech-Owl, a Great Tinamou sleeping in a tree, and Middle American Woolly Opossum!

White-whiskered Puffbird



September 25 – Bayano Lake Bridge, Puente del Rio Mono, Tortí, Canopy Camp

An early morning departure gave us an opportunity to bird our way out towards the Canopy Camp. A quick stop at Bayano Lake Bridge yielded our first Cocoli Heron of the trip. Puente del Rio Mono, a pull-off on the side of the road gave us a great new set of birds including Rusty-winged Antwren, Tropical Parula, White-eared Conebill, Red-rumped Woodpecker, and more! After putting in our orders for lunch, we birded the area around Tortí. This nice walk along the river held some fun birds for us including Olivaceous Piculet, a very cooperative Yellow-rumped Cacique, and White-winged Becard. We had lunch, transferred our gear to the van headed to the Camp, and the food for the week was loaded up. From there, we headed to Canopy Camp!

After settling in, we birded the premises of the camp in the afternoon and were able to see a lot of the specialty birds of the area very quickly! Gray-cheeked Nunlets near the vulture blind, Double-banded Graytails near the solar panels, and White-headed Wren right by the common area had us very excited for our next few nights in this area!

September 26 – Canopy Camp, Camino a El Salto, Matusagarati – Finca de Arroz

Our day started birding El Salto Road, an area loaded with birds. Very quickly we began seeing amazing species such as Rufous-breasted Hermit, a family of Red-throated Caracara showing off, Mississippi Kites streaming overhead, and a few great looking adult King Vultures! 91 species along this road had us very excited!

Little did we know that the afternoon was going to be one of the best sessions of birding of the trip with more birds than we could hardly count. Canopy Family has access to bird a private Rice Farm. Immediately upon arriving we enjoyed a Pied Water-Tyrant and a brief Aplomado Falcon. However, as we rounded the next corner, the sheer number of birds blew us away. Over 1,000 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks and nearly 10,000 Cattle Egrets filled the fields around us. Yellow-hooded Blackbirds and Red-breasted Meadowlarks sat in the tops of the bushes and Black-capped Donacobius and Dickcissels hunted the grasses. On our way out, a Mourning Dove was a lifer for Oscar, one of the guides from Canopy Camp, as they're not common in the Darien. An Upland Sandpiper glowed in our headlights to the surprise of everyone in the group! As we scanned for nightjars, a Barn Owl flew right past the car, Common Nighthawks flew around us, a few Common Pauraque flew past, a single White-tailed Nightjar, and even a Common Potoo came in to sit on a snag by us!

Red-billed Scythebill



September 27 – Reserva Hidrológica Filo de Tallo, Sansón Abajo, Yaviza forest, Yaviza wetlands

Our first stop of the day was to bird Filo de Tallo hydrological reserve. We birded the trails through the woods of this property. It was fun to witness migration in action as we started down the trail and saw Veery, Gray-cheeked, and Swainson's Thrushes together, none of which we had seen yet on the trip so they must have arrived in the night before. We had a great hike with species such as Bright-rumped Attila, Royal Flycatcher, Golden-headed Manakin and more!

We decided to stop and bird Sanson Abajo on the way back and just as we got out of the van to walk up the steep hill to the birding location, another Canopy Family vehicle happened to pull in! The 4x4 would be able to drive up the hill that the van couldn't and we gladly took the offer for a ride up, and it's a great thing we did! In a very short time, we found ourselves enjoying the striking Barred Puffbird, the crazy Red-billed Scythebill, and our first Rufous-tailed Jacamar of the trip!

Following lunch, we birded stops along the Pan-American Highway for a few of the target birds there. Right away at our first stop, we had eyes on two Dusky-backed Jacamars, a bird with a very restricted range as well as seven Choco Sirystes. In the town of Yaviza, we got to take pictures with the sign for the end of the Pan-American Highway before the Darien Gap. A large group of Black Oropendolas flew over the town too! A quick stop at the Yaviza Wetlands provided Black-throated Mango, Capped Heron, and another Fork-tailed Flycatcher.

September 28 – Rio Chucunaque, Yaviza Wetlands

A chartered dugout canoe allowed us to bird down the Rio Chucunaque to add new species for the trip! We quickly added Green Ibis for the trip list. We had great looks at many species along the water's edge including Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, Capped Heron, Black-collared and Great Black Hawks, Black Oropendola, and more! Overall, it was a great morning and nice to be on the water birding in a way we hadn't yet.

The afternoon was spent revisiting the Yaviza Wetlands where we had a few target species to try for. A striking Spot-breasted Woodpecker sat up on a snag for us, Pearl Kite showed off, a Mourning Warbler in the open stole the show for a bit, great scope views were had of Striped Cuckoo. The obvious highlight for the day was when all the sudden, sounds of excitement came from Rob and Eliecer that resembled the words "RUBY TOPAZ". We were able to scope the striking male Ruby-topaz Hummingbird and enjoy it as it hunted the small white flowers in the wetlands. This was a lifer for everyone, including Eliecer! It was a great bird to end a great day of birding!

White-necked Puffbird



September 29 – Harpy Eagle Expedition

Today was the big day! The Darien region and Canopy Camp draw many birders for many reasons but one of the main ones being the opportunity to visit Harpy Eagle nesting locations.

An early breakfast had us ready to go right on schedule. We first drove (our first mode of transportation) for a while down to the port where we would meet Jiro and get into the dugout canoes (our second mode of transportation). A short canoe ride down the Rio Chucunaque brought us to a village where we would prepare for our third mode of transportation, horseback riding. The village horses ready for us that would be led by residents of the village. The trail was muddy enough that without the right size rubber boots, the trail would be nearly impossible. With the correct size rubber boots, the trail would be very difficult still. After nearly an hour and a half on horseback, we tied up the horses and proceeded to begin the hiking portion (our fourth and final mode of transportation). A long uphill hike leveled off and we found ourselves in a clearing with benches and a sign stating the rules for viewing the nest. The initial view was merely a few crest feathers sticking out of the nest but the nesting female eventually put on quite the show, hopping out onto one of open branches and perching, preening, and vocalizing for us. It couldn't have been a better reward for the effort we had put in so far. After a long time of viewing such an incredible bird, it was time to repeat the process all over again. However, once we returned to the port and went to drive back to Canopy Camp, the road had been torn up for construction and would have required a long wait for it to be open again to drive out. Thankfully, the Canopy Family sent another vehicle and we simply walked around the construction and found ourselves on our way back! We returned mid-afternoon and enjoyed a nice rest before dinner.

Harpy Eagle



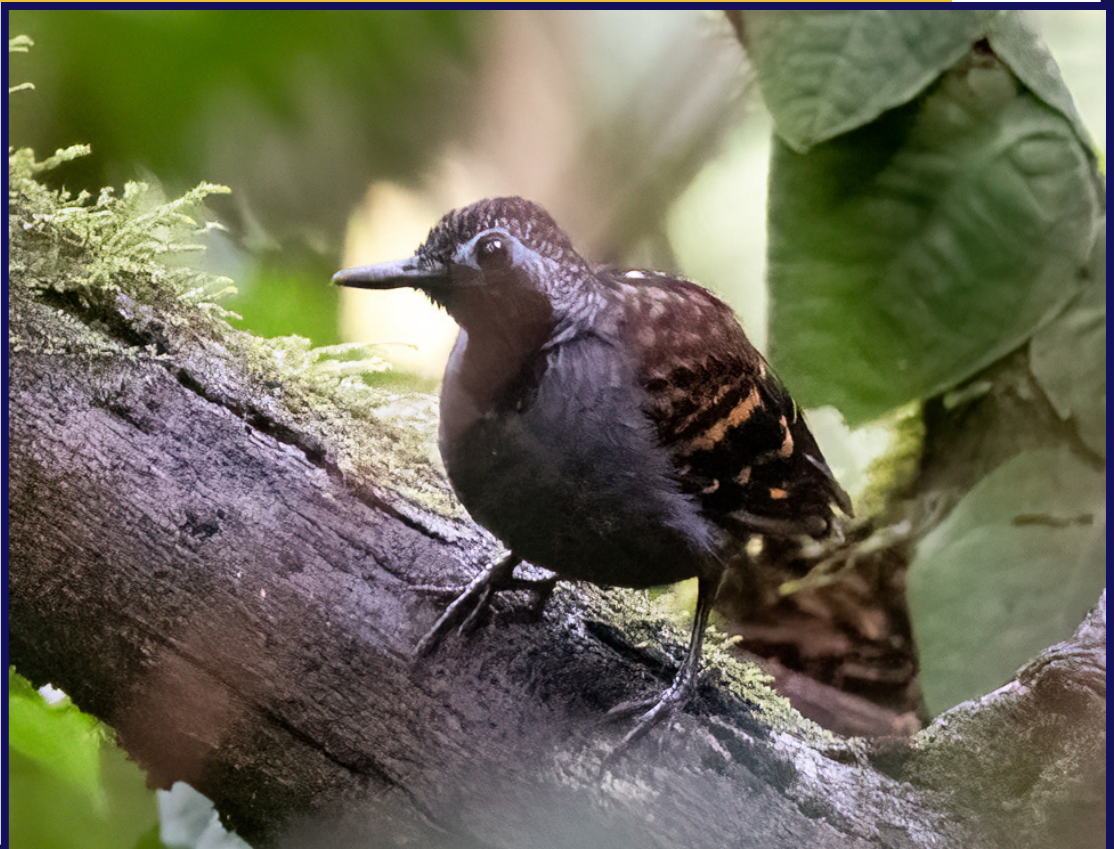
Rio Chucunaque

September 30 – Reserva San Francisco

After breakfast, we departed Canopy Camp to make our way back towards Panama City to be ready for our flight home the next day. On our way to Tortí, we received a call about Great Curassows visiting the feed that a nearby home had put out for their chickens and turkeys. Minutes later, we pulled up to the house and enjoyed this incredible species with great views. Following the curassows, we stopped and birded Reserva San Francisco. This large reserve of wonderful forest would be our last birding stop of the trip. Almost immediately after getting out of the van, we had eyes on our first new trip bird of the stop, Yellow-green Tyrannulet. After tossing rubber boots back and forth across the creek, we continued up the trail. Not long after, a vocalization from a Wing-banded Antbird left the group in shock due to the rarity and cryptic nature of the species. Next thing we knew, the bird was showing off with excellent views for us, leaving everyone, including Eliecer, speechless. As we continued the trail following such an exciting encounter, we were treated to species such as Great Jacamar, One-colored Becard, White-eared Conebill, and Sulphur-rumped Tanagers.

Once we arrived at the hotel in Panama City, we had to get our COVID-19 tests to return home the next day. When we got out of the car at the testing facilities, a kettle of nearly a thousand raptors circled overhead containing primarily Mississippi Kites along with Broad-winged Hawks, and a few Swainson's Hawks, our final new species of the trip!

Wing-banded Antbird



October 1 - Departure

The group departed mid-morning, returning to Atlanta around dinner time. The final species total for the trip was 451 species, an excellent total for a great trip! Thanks to everyone involved, participants and Canopy Family, for helping to make this such an amazing trip!

Blue-crowned Manakin



Black-faced Anthrush

White-headed Wren



Bay-headed Tanager

Royal Flycatcher



Crested Oropendola