

# Bird & Mammal Trip Report

## Colombia (January-May 2023)



*Rob Jansen*  
photography



# Introduction

## About us

We are two enthusiastic nature lovers who travel the world together to search for stunning birds, fascinating mammals and incredible nature. Our world travel started in October 2021 in Chile, where we bought a car to drive through South-America in search of birds and mammals for about 2-3 years.

**Rob Jansen** is a biologist and wildlife photographer, and thus has a lot of knowledge about species and ecology. He's enthusiastic about all that's in nature, but mainly photographs birds and mammals.

**Romy Jansen-Houtzager** is a marketing professional. Our social media accounts, the look and feel of this report and the website are her work. In the field, she is an excellent spotter and very patient (give me some of her patience ...and hurry!).



**Rob** with a **Common Woolly Monkey**



**Romy** with a **Shining Sunbeam**

## Information and how to use this trip report

This trip report covers the country Colombia. We understand that this trip report covers way too many locations to visit during one holiday. As we visited less known regions, and recent reports on independent birding with good coordinates were surprisingly few for such a well birded country, we still wanted to write about all the locations we visited. It might serve as an inspiration for where to go to, or you can skip ahead to the region you are plan to visit and just read that part ☺

We travelled Colombia from the 24<sup>th</sup> of January – 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2023. For all photos of our Colombia trip, comments, compliments, any specific questions, visit and/or contact us via our website. We would love to hear from you!

 [www.robjansenphotography.com/colombia](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/colombia)

 [www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography](https://www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography)

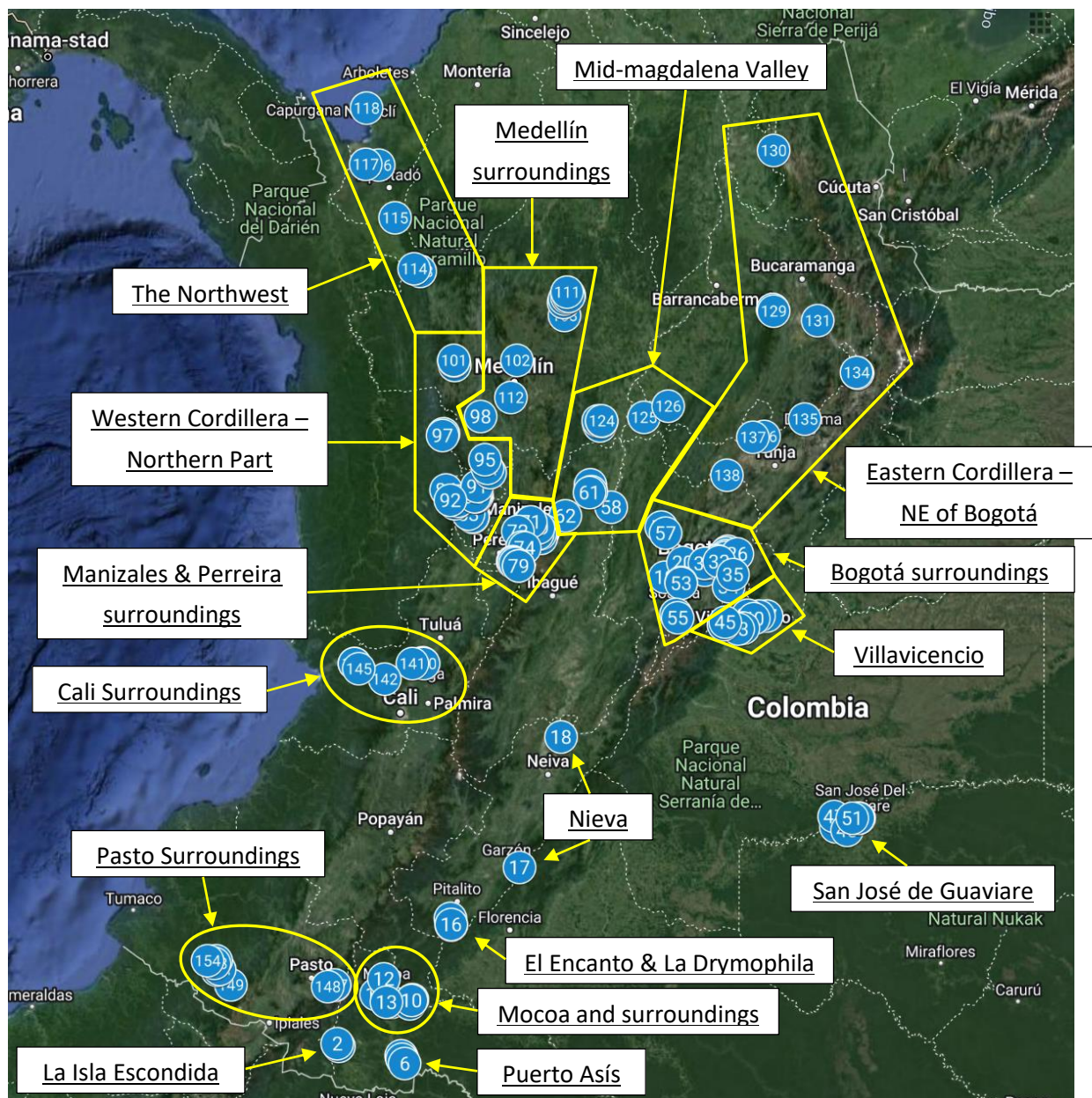
Species are highlighted in this trip report: **blue for birds**, **red for mammals** and **green for herpetofauna**. Target species which we missed at a specific spot are written in *italic*. This gives you an idea which species to pay extra attention to. All observations made by us in Colombia can be

found on Observation.org. We observed a total of about 1008 bird species and 62 mammal species in Colombia. Click here for the: [total bird list](#), [total mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#).

For more trip reports see our website: [www.robjansenphotography.com/trip-reports](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/trip-reports)

## Map and specific locations

After bird- & mammalwatching large parts of Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru & Ecuador (see previous trip reports), we decided to cross to Colombia for our last new country in South-America during our world travel. The map underneath shows the regions and places we visited in Colombia. You can click on the heading to go to that specific section in this trip report if you are only planning on visiting a certain part of the country during your vacation.





We made a [map in Google My Maps](#) with pointers of interesting trails and places and specific bird and mammal locations. You can view this map, download the points and add them to your own map (click on the three dots above the legend and download the KML file and drag this to your own map), or add them in the app 'Maps.me'. Maps.me has most walking trails on it and is usable offline. Route navigation by car doesn't always work great and it's better to use Google Maps for that purpose.

## Weather and timing

We visited Colombia as part of our world travel from the 24<sup>th</sup> of January – 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2023. The weather was generally quite nice and we lost surprisingly few days due to rain. Most time lost was in the Chocó Region, which is known for high rainfall all year round, but which we also visited mostly during the beginning of the rainy season. Temperatures depended heavily on altitude, so layers are key. All with all not a bad time to visit Colombia, although towards the end we noticed the forest got really quiet already very early in the morning. Breeding season had clearly started when we birded the Chocó lowland west of Cali and Pasto and we had to work quite hard to encounter a flock. The main tourist season seemed to come to an end during the month March and it was way easier to get reservations or just show up somewhere. We got most target species, both mammals and birds, so this 'shoulder season' between February-April was an excellent time for us to visit.

## Transportation

Our transportation in Colombia was of course our Toyota 4Runner SR5 4.0 2010 (2WD) called 'Forrest'. We bought this car in Santiago (Chile) and got it converted so that we could sleep in it as well. Our 2WD did well in Colombia and we only had trouble getting up slippery hills a few times. Main roads are generally really good, but gravel roads are very often quite bumpy. On these you want high clearance/good shock absorbers. At locations where this is the case we mentioned it in the text. Generally a simple sedan 2WD will do fine in Colombia, but a 4x4 is recommended if your budget allows. If it doesn't allow for that, you might have to hire a local 4x4 taxi for the occasions that it rained hard and roads are too slippery.



Our loyal friend Forrest



Forrest crossing the river on two boats



## Safety

Most of our family and friends weren't very keen on us visiting Colombia, and the countries' past might make people hesitant about birding here. However, the country is amazing and we felt safe in most areas. It's always good to get the most recent updates from locals, as the safety situation can change quickly. Popular birding/mammal watching areas can suddenly become off limits even to Colombians who aren't local there. We camped in the wild at most places we visited, but most of the time there are many cheap options to stay near the birding areas. The many military posts (south: Putumayo; southwest: Nariño and northwest Antioquia) might be a little intimidating, but the soldiers were all very friendly and interested. Common sense, especially around cities, and some up-to-date local knowledge and you should be fine!

## Literature

- Hilty, S.L. (2021). Birds of Colombia. Lynx and Birdlife International Field Guides. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. *One of the best birds guides I've ever seen! The format is a bit different (drawings next to text on same page). The drawings are superb and the information is detailed, with focus and separate maps for many ssp. that might become future splits. Amazing book, definitely a must have!*
- [All Birds Colombia - A Sunbird](#) app. *Not a great app, but it is handy to have information on all the species on your mobile as the bird book is quite big. Annoyingly there are species missing and many sounds are not from Colombia.*
- [Birdwatching in Colombia](#) app. *Not worth the money, just a very mediocre trip report in an app-format. Lots of info is out-dated and many of the maps don't make sense even when you are at the location. Even though it's an app, they don't use coordinates, which would have made it a bit better.*
- Merlin app for the birds sound. *Just amazing that this app is free. Most species have the sounds in there, and it will suffice.*
- BirdNet app for recording the bird sounds. *If you don't know all the sounds, BirdNet can give a possible ID. It helped us a few times when we were frustratingly searching for a bird we heard deep inside the shrubs. A sure ID of a bird from BirdNet saved us some time here and there ;)*
- iOverlander app for camping places. *This app gives nice information on where to camp or buy stuff.*

## Equipment

**Photography:** Sony A9 II + 200-600mm + 1.4x converter + Sony 24-105mm, GoPro Hero 9

**Binoculars and telescope:** Swarovski EL 8x32 WB, Eden 8x32 XP, Swarovski 65HD + 25-50mm

**Heat scope/Thermal imager:** Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V ([lahouxbirding.com](http://lahouxbirding.com)). A great heat scope from a company in The Netherlands. I owned other brands, but we are super happy with the sharpness, modes and light weight of this heat scope! More here: [robjansenphotography.com/lahouxbirding](http://robjansenphotography.com/lahouxbirding)

**Spotlighting:** Fenix HT18 Long Distance Flashlight (powerful, very focussed and my preferred choice for open areas), Fenix TK35 2018-edition (less powerful and focussed than the HT18, but still very strong and nice for spotlighting), Fenix FD41 Focus Flashlight.

## Use of cell phones in Colombia

We bought two Claro SIM cards in Colombia at a Claro shop for 10kCOP each. Charging credit could be done at other stores (somehow not in the Claro store). Via the MMI-code \*611# it was easy to convert the credit to data. Signal coverage was surprisingly good, even at more remote locations.

## Paying in Colombia

A bit surprising to us was that paying in Colombia can often be done with debit/credit cards. Still, this is not the case everywhere, so be sure to bring enough Colombian Pesos too. Banco Davivienda and BBVA were two banks that didn't charge us a fee for a withdrawal. Banco Davivienda had the highest limit per withdrawal (300k - 2kkCOP per withdrawal, depending on the location of the ATM. Best is to go to the bank itself).

## Water-to-Go

To reduce plastic usage on our travels we bought Water-to-Go water bottles. Read about our experience with Water-to-Go on our website: [www.robjansenphotography.com/water-to-go](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/water-to-go). The bottle and filters are not too expensive, and you will have your investment back within one holiday. If you order with the voucher **RJANSEN15** you will get **15% discount** as well! Check the website here: [www.watertogousa.com](http://www.watertogousa.com) (United States of America, Canada), [www.watertogo.eu](http://www.watertogo.eu) (United Kingdom) or [www.watertogo.shop](http://www.watertogo.shop) (most countries in the EU).



# Visited sites

## La Isla Escondida

0.6542, -77.0738

**Visited dates:** 26-30 January 2023

This lodge is located on an island, and can only be reached on foot. Reservations can be made [via the website](#) or directly with the owner Jurgen (+57 305 3908876). The nearest town is Orito. We stayed in Hotel Sapay (0.66641, -76.86873) for only 40kCOP for a room with a cold shower and ventilator. We ate a couple of times at a local restaurant named Pizzarela Orito (0.664522, -76.871097). This one is very recommended and the typical Patacones (fried and flattened plantain pancakes) with different savoury toppings were fantastic, and of course we always love the Guanabana juice!

The trail entrance towards La Isla Escondida is about 45 minutes away from Orito ([0.635064, -77.059271](#)). The entrance trail was quite muddy, even though it hadn't rained much. Romy even got stuck a couple of times and couldn't get loose without Rob's help. The lodge itself is basic but quite nice. There are 5 rooms upstairs; with cold showers and mosquito nets above the beds (it is really noisy, so bring earplugs). Breakfast was very basic (bread with spreads), but Jurgen's lunches and dinners were outstanding!

As we already birded multiple foothill forest locations in Ecuador (Reserva Maycu, Rio Bigal, Wild Samuco), we had just a couple of remaining targets left for this location.

The first morning we sat on the deck at 05.45, watching the few *Heliconia* flowers. Precisely at 06.00 the **Buff-tailed Sicklebill** showed up and hung around for 5 minutes. A bit later a **Pale-tailed Barbthroat** came to the same flowers. Every morning these two birds came around this time, with the Barbthroat returning a couple of times during the day (but not the Sicklebill!). Other birds commonly observed around the lodge are **Lined Forest-falcon** (before 06.00), **Black-and-white Tody-flycatcher**, **Lemon-browed Flycatcher** (nesting in the Oropendola nests) and **Ecuadorian Tyrannulet** (common in the mixed flocks). **Black-mantled Tamarins** (*ssp. grellsi*) were seen multiple days from the lodge too, and one morning we found a **Black Agouti**. Just 100-150m into the purple trail is where we got a response from **Collared Puffbird**, but it wouldn't come closer.

We were able to share guide Bryan with another guest, and it was a great experience for us to bird with other English speaking people again. The first morning was spent on the yellow trail, followed by the purple trail towards towers 3 and 2, after which we went back to the lodge. Bryan was very good with his sounds, and we observed many good species this morning. It started with **Green Manakin** (which we encountered quite often the next few days) pretty soon into the yellow trail. At the intersection (0.655413, -77.076448) we went right when we heard **Fulvous Antshrike** around the

open area 200m in. At this same place we observed **Gould's Jewelfront** and **Striolated Manakin**. Walking back to the intersection and continuing on the purple trail Bryan lured in some **Grey Antbirds** (0.654908, -77.076788). A flock of Antbirds brought **White-flanked Antwren**, **Foothill Stipplethroat** and **Dusky-throated Antshrike**. Another flock yielded **White-throated Woodpecker**, **Fulvous Shrike-tanager** and **Spectacled Bristle-tyrant**. **Ecuadorian Piedtail** and **Greyish Mourner** were observed too, and were surprisingly commonly observed the next few days.

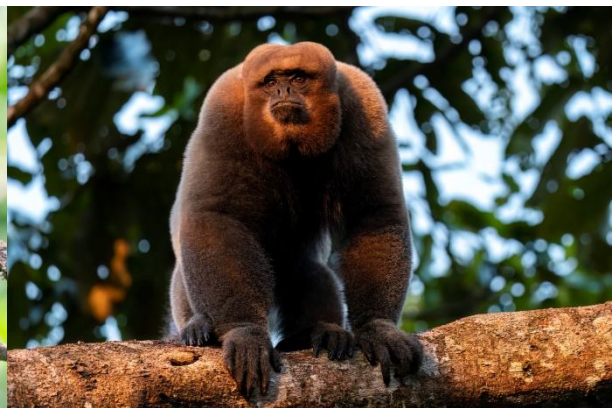
On tower 3 (about 6m high) we observed 2 species we had missed along the Napo River in Ecuador: **Spangled Cotinga** and **White-browed Purpleuft**.

We visited tower 2 (25m high) one afternoon, but it was really quiet as all the days we were at La Isla Escondida it was very hot and sunny (quite rare). We did hear **Pavonine Quetzal**, which is more often heard around tower 2. One can overnight in this tower, which seems pretty awesome!

We visited tower 1 on two different mornings. The first time we were there after breakfast, and it was already (again) too hot and sunny. On the way we did encounter **Salvin's Curassow** (HO). The sweat bees are terrible and ruin the joy of birding. Still we observed a couple of **Spot-fronted Swifts**, **White-fronted Nunbird** and both **Spangled Cotinga** and **White-browed Purpleufts**! On the other morning we went up at 06.00, but still we didn't observe much. However, we did get a **Common Woolly Monkey** very close by, up to 7m!! An amazing experience!



**White-fronted Nunbird**



**Common Woolly Monkey**

The last full day we went with Bryan towards Nuevo Mundo, a 4km walk via the orange and blue trail. This trail should be very good for birding normally, but didn't yield us much. On the orange trail we were able to see **Rusty-belted Tapaculo**. Along the blue trail we heard **Black Antbird**. Farther on the trail, along the river, we heard **Coppery-chested Jacamar**. We tried for **Foothill Schiffornis**, **Chestnut-headed Crake** and **South-American Leaf Tosser**, but failed to find any of those. As it was already very warm when we arrived at the house at Nuevo Mundo, even the **Golden-winged Tody-flycatchers** wouldn't show, which are supposed to be common there.



All three nights we went spotlighting for 1-2 hours, but because the trails are quite muddy it involves a lot of looking down. We observed **Foothill Screech-owl**  $\pm 200\text{m}$  into the yellow trail (observed there every night), and **Crested Owl** one night at this location too. One night we walked until the intersection, and encountered **Kinkajou** just before that.

**Band-bellied Owls** were calling every night around the lodge, mainly on the blue (entrance) trail. On the open part in front of the lodge is where we finally observed our first **Lowland Paca** of our world travel! Walking a loop via the orange trail, going back via the blue trail, we observed another **Lowland Paca** and 2 more **Kinkajous**. **Nocturnal Curassows** were heard quite often, but we never got close enough to the sounds to try and see them.

**Foothill Screech-owl****Olive Oropendola**

## Puerto Asís

**Visited dates:** 31 January – 1 February 2023

We visited several places around Puerto Asís, which can be visited all in one day if you are short on time. We didn't like the town itself too much, as it was quite busy and chaotic.

### Amazon Birds

[0.543629, -76.529133](#)

There is no sign and the driveway is very small, so pay attention to the coordinates. The main attraction of this reserve are the **Western Pygmy Marmosets**, which are more or less guaranteed! Contact Fleyder Muriel (+57 318 3559 655, Spanish) to plan your visit. We paid 15kCOP p.p. for the trail entrance and 100kCOP for the guide for one morning (06.30-12.00).

We planned our visit quite last minute and Fleyder wasn't available, but his sister Yolima was. She was very nice, but seemingly less experienced than her brother. We met up at 06.30 and went straight towards the Pygmy Marmosets. Specific trees with many holes in them indicated the presence of the Marmosets, and it didn't take long to see a couple of them. They do feed them regularly, but they don't seem dependent on that (as we didn't even see them taking the fruit the

whole morning). We then went into the forest to search for some other primates. We encountered **Colombian Red Howlers**, **Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkeys** and **Lesson's Saddle-back Tamarins**, but all quite high up in the trees. We heard Titi Monkeys calling, but our guide didn't take any initiative to find them. Due to a misunderstanding we thought she mentioned before that they are easily found in the garden, but this turned out to be the Squirrel Monkeys. Both **Medem's Titi/Colombian Black-handed Titi** (most common) and **Lucifer Titi/Yellow-handed Titi** (less common) occur here, so there is no way to be sure which of the two species it was. **Miller's Saki** is supposed to occur here too, but according to Fleyder they are quite rare.

**Western Pygmy Marmoset juvenile****Western Pygmy Marmoset**

## Kofan Centro Ecoturistico

[0.55577, -76.53698](#)

The entrance to Kofan is located just a couple of 100 metres farther down the road from Amazon Birds towards the west. This small reserve (only a couple of hectares) is a good option if you want to see **Spix's Night Monkey**. One can reserve via WhatsApp (+57 322 4225 925, Spanish). The fee is 18kCOP p.p. for the short trail. There is a clear sign at the tree with the roost of the Night Monkeys, but one of the employees walked with us to show it. We went around 11.00 and the sun came from behind the tree hollow, which is located at a height of about  $\pm 7$ m. We decided to take a celebratory beer at the restaurant, where **Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkeys** and **Lesson's Saddle-back Tamarins** passed by. They also have a habituated Woolly Monkey at the restaurant. This animal is a rescue from captivity, but comes back to the restaurant every time they try to release it into the forest.

**Spix's Night Monkey****Lesson's Saddle-back Tamarin**



There are cabins available if one wants to overnight out of town. There is a swimming pool too, which might make this a nice destination when travelling with a family.

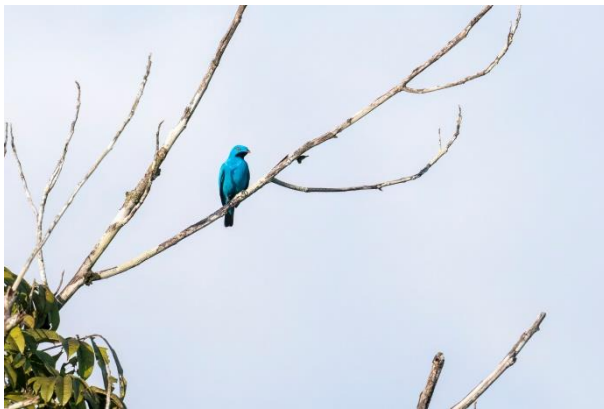
## Puerto Asís

[0.50198, -76.50212](#)

In NE Ecuador we missed some targets along the Napo River, and we were able to catch up with a few around Puerto Asís. We turned right from the main road (0.524189, -76.524139) and drove a bit farther along the road (until [0.523113, -76.529755](#)). We walked a couple of 100m along the road to the west and then back to our car and quickly observed our target: a stunning male **Plum-throated Cotinga**. Other birds we observed despite it being a hot afternoon were **Scarlet-crowned Barbet** and **Riparian Parrotlet**.

Southwest of town we drove the road towards the river ([0.488183, -76.507237](#)). Policemen had a checkpoint just before that and warned us robberies happen along the road relatively often. We still continued and in next to no time encountered 4 **Horned Screamers** from the safety of our car.

We then checked several points around town for **Large-billed Seed Finches**, as they have been observed there. Many of the points were quite sketchy and didn't look like great habitat. Still, keep an eye open when birding around Puerto Asís, you never know :).



**Plum-throated Cotinga**



**Horned Screamer**

## Miraflores/Piamonte

[1.02917, -76.43983](#)

**Visited dates:** 5-7 February 2023

The Caqueta Titi is described as a species as recently as 2010! The distribution of this highly endangered primate is north of the Rio Caqueta, and probably less than 250 individuals are left. We contacted Gerlando (+57 311 229 1904) and Alexis (+57 310 515 4256), two enthusiastic guys that have heart for nature. Some Spanish is required, as they don't speak any English. We slept in our roof

top tent in the garage of Gerlando's house, but he can also easily arrange a hotel for you in Miraflores. Be sure to ask about the safety situation here, as the area can be unsafe from time to time! To get to Miraflores you have two options:

1. Coming from the north (Florencia) it's  $\pm 3.5$  hours with a high clearance vehicle to get to Miraflores.
2. Coming from the south (Villagarzón) you have to drive for  $\pm 1$ h from the main road (1.006076, -76.612586) towards the river at El Jauno ([0.99318, -76.46341](#)). You can park your car there and cross on foot (and take a motortaxi after that), or you can take the side road 100m before that on your right and cross with a car. Depending on the water level you have to take 1 or 2 ferries, which are nothing more than 2 canoes bound together with some planks across them. The river was low, so we had to take 2 ferries and paid 2 x 60kCOP to cross the river, one way.

Miraflores is a very small town, but has a bakery and some restaurants, the latter only being open in the weekend. Both guerrilla and (Mexican) cartel groups are present in the region, so don't drive at night and don't leave town after 18.00 to be on the safe side. We met up with Gerlando in the afternoon ([1.029171, -76.439837](#)), set up our car/tent in the garage and determined the plan. The next morning we left at 05.40, all three of us on his motorbike towards the entrance of the trail ([1.021166, -76.445376](#)). There we waited till it got a little less dark and Alexis met up with us. Already at 06.10 we heard the first **Caqueta Titi Monkeys** calling from near the main road. We walked further and waited in an open field, and at least 6 family groups were calling around us. We were eager to run towards the one across the fields that seemed to be on the border of the forest, but Alexis and Gerlando waited passively at the place we were at. It turned out that they were quite (over)confident that a group would start calling nearby, and that we would be able to see that more habituated group. As one of the last groups they did start calling not far from us, but despite our efforts we couldn't see them. The plan changed from standing and waiting to intensive searching along the borders of the forests. Following the clear path we crossed some fences and came at a body of black water. Some circles in the water turned out to be a **Neotropical Otter**! We got some great views of this animal, which we didn't expect to find here. We walked for hours and many kilometres, but only encountered **Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkeys** and **Lesson's Saddle-back Tamarins** primate-wise. Bird-wise we also encountered **Rufous-headed Woodpecker** (HO) and **Horned Screamer**. We heard many groups of Titi Monkeys, but couldn't get views of them that morning. After some chocolate milk with white cheese (yes, that's a thing in the whole of Colombia; try it at least once!) at Finca Mirasol, we went back to Miraflores.

There are many good birds to be seen around Miraflores, but we only had 1 clear target: a beautiful bird we had missed along the Napo River in Ecuador. We decided to leave the car and get on the back of the two motorcycles for a 40 minute ride towards the finca. This was quite an adventure and it might be better to take a 4x4 towards there if you have enough space to take the guide. Between the many showers we were able to get some nice views of a male **Black-necked Red-cotinga** at a place that is used as a lek in the morning. While sheltering from the rain in the house, the guides spotted 2 **Miller's Sakis** in the trees.

Back at the trail for the monkeys around 16.00 we got lucky real fast! Gerlando almost immediately spotted 2 **Caqueta Titi Monkeys** in the bamboo. Not much later we found another individual further up the trail. **Orange-fronted Plushcrows** and a male **Plum-throated Cotinga** made for a perfect ending of the day.

The next morning we went out one more time to search for the Titis, and found a group of 2. For some reason they weren't calling as much as the day before. This group was quite shy as well, and getting good views (let alone good photos), was harder than we thought. One day might enough if you are short on time, but we recommend 2 days if you want to have a high chance of seeing this species.



**Black-necked Red-cotinga**



**Caqueta Titi Monkey**

## Mocoa and surroundings

**RN Dondé se Oculta el Sol**

[1.00669, -76.66197](#)

**Visited dates:** 2-5 February 2023

This reserve is only a couple of years old, but is going to be a prime destination for primate-lovers for sure! No less than 8 primate species have been observed in the reserve. We contacted Corentin (+57 313 5362852), one of the guides at the reserve, well before our arrival. He was very helpful and gave lots of information on other places and assured us that there would be someone to guide us, despite our very flexible way of traveling. The afternoon we arrived we went out with our Spanish speaking guide, Camilo. The official guide fee was 150kCOP per day here.

That afternoon we didn't encounter any primates, which was not surprising given the scorching temperatures. The next morning we waited on the hill above the main building around 06.00-07.00, as a family group of Lucifer Titis/Yellow-handed Titis had been calling there often in the morning ( $\pm 5$  out of 7 days per week). We did hear Titis and got very quick glimpses of one of the individuals after



climbing the steep trail uphill. The hands seem more greyish, and we weren't sure which species it was as hybrids occur in the reserve. From 07.00-12.00 we walked in the forest, and encountered **Tufted Capuchin/Black-capped Capuchin, Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkeys** and **Lesson's Saddle-back Tamarins**. They know a roost for **Spix's Night Monkey**, but they weren't using it when we took a look. We also encountered 2 **South-American Coatis**. We set out again in the afternoon and went around the reserve to focus on the forest edges. At the hotel 'Portal el Sol', located at the other end of the reserve, we encountered a group of Squirrel Monkeys and Tamarins and noted a dark-looking monkey. Not long after we were looking at 3 **Colombian Black-handed Titis**, with clear dark black hands! At the hotel they had found a small **Boa Constrictor**! We encountered a very dark brown **Linneus' Two-toed Sloth** in the forest, but no more primates that afternoon.

**Linneus' Two-toed Sloth****Tufted Capuchin/Black-capped Capuchin**

We repeated this strategy on the second full day, but only heard Titis calling far away. We ran down the hill, went around it and tried to search for one of the many groups that were calling. We were practically standing below one of the groups when it started raining. After taking shelter in the house we went out again, going around the reserve for the edges of the forest again and towards the hotel. We entered the forest from that side and after a couple of hours we were standing under a fruiting tree with 3 **Miller's Sakis**! As more often observed by others; the subadult and female fled while the male stayed behind. They were quite skittish, but we got some awesome views of this awesome primate! With our second target down, we returned the way we came and found two more family groups of **Colombian Black-handed Titis**.

In the afternoon we walked the hill above the main building again, walked around the hill, but didn't find our last target. The options then were: 1. staying there to see if they would show up; 2. Going inside the forest (but it was very dark); 3. Go around the forest edges again. We chose the last option as it seemed as the most active one and we wanted to search for some herpetofauna at the swamp near the hotel just after dark anyways. We only encountered 2 Black-handed Titis again, and then got a text from someone that he had seen Yellow-handed Titis for 5 minutes above the main building, before they went back into the forest. He even had some great pictures to proof it! :o Wrong choice... Herpetofauna searching gave **Brown-banded Water Snake (*Helicops angulatus*)**, **Reticulated Tree Frog (*Dendropsophus reticulatus*)**, and ***Dendropsophus manonegra*** as consolation prizes, even

though we couldn't find the *Ecuadorian Poison Frog (Ameerega bilinguis)*, which is normally easily found.



**Miller's Saki**  
f



**Colombian Black-handed Titi**

The next morning we started at 06.00 again above the main building. It didn't take long before we noted movement and half an hour later we had clear views of some white/cream-colored **Yellow-handed Titis/Lucifer Titis**! Just in time, as the dark clouds poured out the rain right when we came down the hill.

The last primate that one could potentially see at the reserve is **Western Pygmy Marmoset**. However, the species is not often seen and Amazon Birds in Puerto Asís is a way more reliable option. We camped at the reserve, and besides the hotel on the other side of the reserve there is also a more basic cabin near the main building. We really loved the reserve and would definitely recommend visiting. Try to avoid the weekends, as locals come over to enjoy the big swimming pool with beers and (loud) music. They only go to the waterfalls and are only allowed in after 09.00, so you would still be able to search primates if you can't avoid the weekend.



**Dendropsophus manonegra**



**Boa Constrictor**

## Trampolin de las Aves

[1.07139, -76.74639](#)

**Visited dates:** 7-8 February 2023

As there had been a landslide on a mayor road north of Pasto, most traffic now took the road from Mocoa to Pasto. Traffic was regulated by going east one day and west the next. This is why we went up the 7<sup>th</sup>, camped near the little restaurant 'Filo de Hambre' and went down back to Mocoa the next day. As it was incredibly busy we didn't do any roadside birding and focussed on our one main target: **White-rimmed Brushfinch**. This bird can be found right next (east) of the restaurant, about 2km before that (km 111) and of course by searching the roadside shrubs. We got splendid views of 2 of them, even though there were many people around and trucks with loudly running engines behind us. We did continue for about 2km after the restaurant, but during an exceptional sunny and warm afternoon there were barely any birds active.

To make the long drive up worth your while (it took us 3-4h each way, partly due to heavy traffic) you might want to do some roadside birding and search for **Red-bellied Grackle** (e), **Green-backed Hillstar** or **Black-collared Jay**. You might even see **White-chinned Swift** fly by.

## Campucana

[1.20472, -76.68166](#)

**Visited dates:** 8-9 February 2023

Campucana is a well-known trail about 30 minutes' drive from Mocoa. The trail starts on the right side of a gate (1.204722, -76.681667). You can park on the right side of road, but because many motors park there we would recommend parking it up the hill (1.202482, -76.681222) by taking the side road on the left about 550m before the trail. The trail starts by going down steeply via some cement plates. At the lowest point you take the bridge to cross the stream (1.208706, -76.682221) and from there you just have to follow the trail and can't get lost. We walked the first 6km of the trail twice, once from 09.30 – 14.00 and the next morning from 06.00 – 12.30. We found the trail to becoming more interesting after a little camp about 3km in. The first 3km are quite open and some forest on the sides has been cut down (which does make for good viewpoints).

The main target on the trail is **Black Tinamou**. The first day we only heard it distantly, but the second morning we heard it way more clearly. We even flushed one that was on the side of the trail and got pretty good views as it followed the trail as it flew off. **Chestnut Wood-quails** (e) were heard often early in the second morning. We got our best views of a small group foraging on the side of the trail in the middle of the day far into the trail. Other good birds seen were **Blue-rumped Manakin** (1.2117, -76.7034), **Ecuadorian Piedtail** and **Orange-billed Sparrows ssp. spectabilis**. We heard **Olive Finch** along the stream just before the Manakin. **Ecuadorian Tyrannulets** were present in more than one flock. This is often named as one of the best trails to bird in Colombia, but we found it too quiet on both days to deserve that title. Good birds that can be found here and might be some of your targets



are amongst others *White-streaked Antvireo*, *Coppery-chested Jacamar*, *Short-billed Chlorospingus*, *Black-streaked Puffbird* and *Western Striolated Puffbird* (higher parts of the trail only).

## El Encanto & La Drymophila

1.72028, -76.1193

**Visited dates:** 9-13 February 2023

El Encanto is a birding lodge which is gaining more and more popularity, and we cannot recommend it enough either! It is located near Palestina and easily reached via a (mostly) paved road. The last 2km from Palestina are a bit steep, so make sure you have a car with some power. The lodge is located at a lower altitude than the reserve and in drier habitat. The surrounding 5ha of land is an organic coffee farm. The hummingbird feeders and verbena around the lodge attract a variety of hummingbirds, depending on the time of year. We observed *Red-billed Emerald*, *Western Emerald*, *Steely-vented Hummingbird*, *Rufous-tailed Hummingbird*, *Shining-green Hummingbird* (ssp. *goudoti*, which is bluer up front) and *White-vented Plumeleteer*. In the months September until the beginning of December even *Fiery Topaz* and male *Rufous-vented Whitetips* come to the feeders. *Pale-bellied Hermit* was around some hanging flowers near the banana feeders. The banana feeders attract an array of beautiful birds, including *Scrub Tanager*, *Bronze-green Euphonia*, *Thick-billed Euphonia*, *Velvet-fronted Euphonia* (e) and even the occasional *Tolima Dove* (e). Some seasons it also attracts *Golden-eared Tanagers*. At the feeders next to the grass we observed *Red-tailed Squirrel* during the day and 2 light-coloured *Culpeos/Andean Foxes* at night, eating from the left-over bananas on the grass.

Walking around the lodge might yield all kinds of birds; *Olivaceous Piculet*, *Bronze-winged Parrot* and even occasionally *Spot-winged Parrotlets*. The real stars around are *Dusky-headed Brushfinch* (e) and *Apical Flycatcher* (e). The last one was quite easy to find with Michaels help, as it often nests around the lodge and calls frequently. The Brushfinch was more of a challenge, but the mother of the family (Melida) knows the call very well and alerted us when she heard it! And that might be the strongest point of this lodge; the whole family is into it and gives their all. They are all so sweet and welcoming, helping wherever they can to make your stay perfect and get you your targets. The food is excellent too (thank you Angela!!)

If that all wasn't good enough, there is lots to be seen in the cloud forest reserve about 20-25 minutes away from El Encanto: La Drymophila (1.66162, -76.1094). If you have a powerful car (we did it with our 2WD, but a 4x4 is preferred) you can drive up there yourself, otherwise they can hire a car for you if you let them know in advance. The first morning we went up around 05.40 to be in the first hide at 06.30. *Chestnut-capped Brushfinches* were plenty, and *Tolima Doves* (e) showed up often too. *Schwart's Antthrush*, the real target that is often seen from this hide, was calling, but didn't

show. It took 3 mornings before we got a glimpse of one crossing the path for 5 seconds, far behind the feeder. All three days we stayed in the hide until 08.00, after which we went to the hummingbird feeders. The cast here changes too depending on the time of year, and we saw **White-booted Rackettail**, **Gorgeted Woodstar**, **Crowned Woodnymph**, **Lesser Violetear**, **Sparkling Violetear**, **Bronzy Inca**, **Short-tailed Emerald**, **Rufous-vented Whitetip** (females reside here the whole year) and even a stunning male **Tolima Blossomcrown** (e).



**Tolima Dove**



**Tolima Blossomcrown male**

While we were eating breakfast brought up by Michael, the father of the family (Antonio) was already calling 'Rob' the **White-bellied Antpitta** at the second hide. **Chestnut Wood-quails** show up here sometimes. At 09.00 we went to the last hide, where Hooded Antpitta 'Mike' is the last and main star of the reserve. The first morning we had nothing, the second morning we only heard it. On their advice we decided to go to the observation tower, and only later found out that no less than 2 Antpittas had given a great show for father Antonio for 5-10 minutes. Nervously we sat down a third morning and got nice views of 2 **Hooded Antpittas**! Unfortunately and a big downer is that the hide only gives room for about 8 people, so we were rushed out after 2 minutes to make room for the next group of birders.



**White-bellied Antpitta 'Rob'**

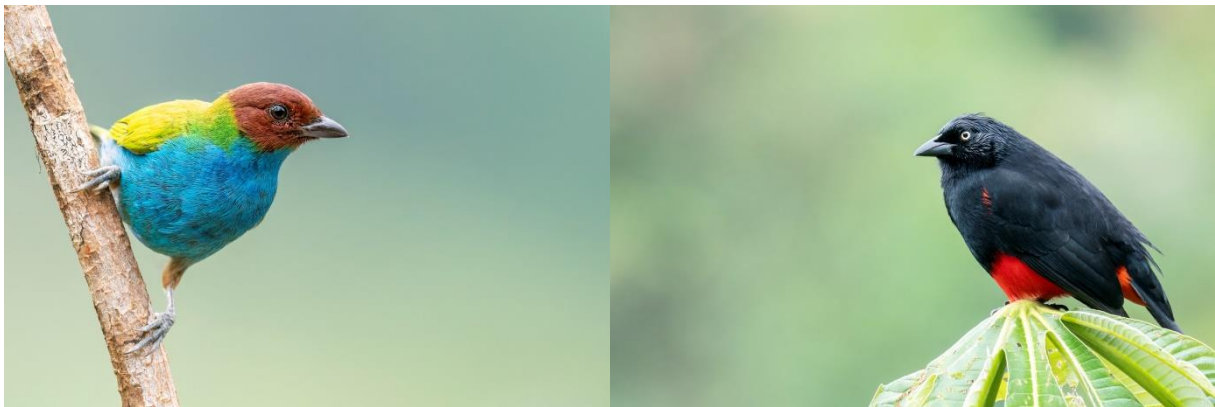


**Hooded Antpitta 'Mike'**

Other birds that can be observed in the reserve are **Maroon-tailed Parakeets** (soon to be split as **Huila Parakeet** (e)), **Black-chested Fruiteater**, **Yellow-throated Spadebill** and **Golden-winged Manakin**.

Just before the Drosophila Reserve there is a path to a 5 story high observation tower ([1.66786, -76.10662](#)). The entrance fee is 10kCOP p.p. There is a little shop beneath it to order drinks and snacks. A great initiative that preserves another piece of forest and gives another landowner some income by (eco-)tourism. We observed **Pale-edged Flycatcher**, **Flame-faced Tanager**, **Rufous-rumped Antwren** (HO) and many other birds from the thirds floor (just above the trees but not too high). Our main targets: **Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia** and **Blue-naped Chlorophonia** didn't show.

To get most of the targets you have to visit both El Encanto and La Drymophila and we would recommend at least 2 nights/2 days.



**Bay-headed Tanager**

**Red-bellied Grackle**

## Nieva

### PRN Cerro Paramo de Miraflores

[2.15125, -75.533193](#)

**Visited dates:** 14-15 February 2023

We saw many observations in eBird of **Spectacled Prickletail**, **East Andean Antbird**, **Dusky-headed Brushfinch**, **Tolima Dove**, **Tolima Blossomcrown** and our main target: Magdalena Tapaculo. We couldn't find much information about this park on where to bird, how to get there etc. But if there are a reasonable amount of bird lists, then birders should be able to get there easily we figured. We drove from the city of Garzón towards Sendero Interpretes Ambientales Huila. The road is quite steep and a powerful car is necessary, a 4x4 is recommended for the last 1.5km, which were very crappy. When we arrived at the beginning of the interpretational trail the forest behind it seemed very good. Quickly we found a flock with **Rufous-breasted Flycatcher** (quite common here), **Short-billed Bush Chlorospingus** and **Yellow-throated Chlorospingus**. A little stream about 100m in



seemed like the perfect place for our main target **Magdalena Tapaculo**. Only the next morning did we get a short response, but nothing up close and certainly no chances of viewing one. We continued the main trail but very quickly it got quite open with secondary habitat and along a loud roaring stream. We did observe **Dusky-headed Brushfinch** (e) and **Rufous-crowned Tody-flycatchers** in some shrubs along the path. We followed multiple paths leading off from it, but didn't get into any good forest at all, making us wonder where all those birders got their specialties like Prickletails... In conclusion: not worth the drive unless you have better information on where to bird exactly. The targets are easier at other locations anyway.



Scorpion with young on the back



Dusky-headed Brushfinch

## Desierto Tatacoa

[3.258806, -75.176132](#)

Visited dates: 15-16 February 2023

As it was kind of on route for us towards Bogotá, we paid a visit to the famous Tatacoa Desert. The road from Nieva is very good and the views of the eroded red part of the desert are stunning. Bird-wise we observed nothing worth mentioning, except for the always beautiful **Bicoloured Wrens** building a nest in the cacti. We camped along the road a bit north of there (3.258806, -75.176132), and there we found a **Nine-banded Armadillo** at night, scurrying loudly between the shrubs.



Desierto Tatacoa



Desierto Tatacoa

## Bogotá surroundings

### Parque Natural Chicaque

[4.60702, -74.30325](#)

**Visited dates:** 16-17 February & 7-8 March 2023

PN Chicaque is conveniently located southwest of Bogota. We drove towards the gate (4.607001, -74.303235) and hoped to see our biggest target for this location already at the hummingbird feeders at restaurant Alboloco next to the parking lot. Unfortunately the feeders weren't attracting any hummers both days we were there. There are possibilities to camp, glamp and rent a room in the refugio. As we weren't allowed to sleep in our car on the parking lot we just slept in front of the gate. This is where we found **Moustached Brushfinch** (e). We went in again at opening time (08.00-17.00). We went through the gates and right behind it we got our big target feeding on some flowers: **Golden-bellied Starfrontlet** (e)! Activity was good and we got views of both **Blackish Tapaculo** and **Rufous Spinetail** in the bamboo right after the entrance. We walked down the stairs up to where the Sendero Ecologico begins and got a nice mixed flock over our head, with in there **Black-eared Hemispingus**, **Black-capped Hemispingus** and **Tourmaline Sunangel**. For a second we thought we saw another specialty of this park; **Black Inca** (e), but this turned out to be a **Collared Inca** after all. Trying to lure birds closer we played the sound of an **Andean Pygmy Owl**. No birds came closer, but a Pygmy Owl did respond.

All the way down at the first open patch we got great views of both **Ashy-throated Chlorospingus** as well as **Brown-billed Scythebill**. After a drink in the refugio we walked the steep hill up again via the road.



**Ashy-throated Chlorospingus**



**Brown-billed Scythebill**

We read the nice trip report from Venkat on Mammalwatching.com and they went to Chicaque too and found 2 really rare Brown Hairy Dwarf Porcupines while spotlighting in this park. That was enough reason for us to go back for a night, and this time we stayed inside the park at the refugio. We reserved via WhatsApp (+57 318 3506147, Spanish) and paid on arrival. Again the feeders weren't attracting any hummingbirds on arrival and when we left. It might be the wrong season.. We walked the steep road down again and waited till dark. Right when the clock hit 18.00, it started to



rain. We waited it out a bit but decided to go anyways at 18.45. We spotlighted the same trail as where Venkat found the Porcupines. This trail is the first part of the route going back towards the entrance (starting: 4.614363, -74.310868), going through the forest for about 600m, passing a little stream and then coming to another open patch again (4.611607, -74.310216). Even though it kept raining more or less the 2.5 hours we spotlighted and searched with our thermal scope, we did pick up some nice things. We had at least 13 **Colombian Night Monkeys/Lemurine Night Monkeys** divided over 4 groups, most of them spotted with the Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V thermal scope. We also found 3 **Kinkajous** and many birds, including a sleeping **White-tipped Sicklebill** in a tree next to the stream. As it started raining more heavily and it was also getting really windy, we decided to call it a night 21.30 and get up again at 03.30. It was dry, but the raindrops falling from the leaves still made a lot of noise. Chances of hearing something rustling in the trees was low, so we had to rely on the thermal camera mostly. We again searched the same trail for about 2.5h but only found 4 more Night Monkeys, **White-throated Screech-owl** (HO) and **Barred Forest-falcon** (HO). We were sad that we didn't get the **Brown Hairy Dwarf Porcupine**, but at least we tried.

## Parque de la Florida

[4.72997, -74.14812](#)

**Visited date:** 19 February 2023

We weren't sure if we actually wanted to visit this park near the airport in Bogotá. We heard some stories of people getting robbed, and in theory all the targets can be found somewhere else. However, it is an easy place to get multiple targets and as it was Sunday we figured it must be safer as more people are around. We went there around 09.00 and a guard walked with us to the water. He talked a lot, so we were glad that he didn't stay the whole time. He did advice against visiting the part outside the park for **Apolinar's Wren**, as very recently a guide and his clients had been robbed there. Parque La Florida seemed safe to us, with just one guarded entrance. There is no need to go in very early to get the targets, so maybe stick to more conventional hours than the usual 06.00 am ;-)



**Andean Duck**



**Bogota Rail**

As soon as we came to the waterfront we already heard **Bogota Rail** (e) while observing the **Andean**



**Duck** ssp. *andina* and **Blue-winged Teals**. It didn't take long before we had great views of a Rail walking along the vegetation and crossing from one patch to the other. We then observed **Silvery-throated Spinetails** (e) going through the vegetation. For a moment we thought we found another target, **Subtropical Doradito**, but this yellow bird turned around and turned out to be a **Mourning Warble** going through the reeds. We observed 2 **Spot-flanked Gallinules** while walking towards the observation hide. There we tried in vain for the Doradito and the **Apolinar's Wren**, which are sometimes seen there. We spotted multiple **Brazilian Cavies** (endemic ssp. *anolaimae*), which are believed to be of feral origin.

## Hummingbirds Observatory

[4.66438, -73.96438](#)

**Visited date:** 20 February 2023

One can reserve for the Hummingbirds Observatory via the website. Entrance is 30kCOP p.p. for 3 hours. We reserved only one day in advance, but didn't get a confirmation that day so we contacted Victoria via WhatsApp (+573118513112, Spanish/English). She confirmed that we were even able to come on Monday, even though they are normally only open from Tuesday-Saturday, 09.00-16.00h. Even though Victoria speaks perfect English, all the information sent to us, like directions, were in Spanish. The road from the Via la Calera (entrance at 4.677731, -73.993805) towards the observatory wasn't great, but can be done by any car.

The observatory is known to be a good place for **Blue-throated Starfrontlet** (e). We observed multiple individuals, including some stunning males of this gorgeous species! The feeders itself are nothing special, and absolutely not made for photographers. **Longuemare's Sunangel**, **Glowing Puffleg**, **Black-tailed Trainbearer**, **White-bellied Woodstar** and **Sword-billed Hummingbird** all showed up regularly. The only no-show target was **Coppery-bellied Puffleg** (e), which is observed regularly too at the feeders.



Longuemare's Sunangel



Blue-throated Starfrontlet

## Vía hacia RN Cárpato/BioAndina

4.82461, -73.76729

Visited dates: 20-21 February 2023

The road to BioAndina (4.77805, -73.77694) is often birded for specialties like **Ochre-breasted Brushfinch** (e) and **Flame-winged Parakeet/Brown-breasted Parakeet** (e). The bridge and surrounding shrubs at the beginning of the road (4.824611, -73.76729) should be good for the Brushfinch, but we weren't able to find it. We did observe **Black-billed Mountain-toucan**, **Superciliated Hemispingus**, **Mountain Elaenia**, a female **Blue-throated Starfrontlet** (e) and **Longuemare's Sunangels**.

We also birded the roadside a bit higher up (4.808512, -73.778617) until about 800m farther (4.804795, -73.783691). We encountered a group of **Brown-breasted Parakeets** (e) flying from tree to tree, loudly calling. A **Golden-headed Quetzal** called too and we got stunning views of an individual. In the small lake along the road we found **Andean Teals**.

The gate at Bosque Guajira Lodge was closed and we couldn't find anybody at the place where there should be hummingbird feeders (4.78991, -73.77731), which also attract **Blue-throated Starfrontlet**.

We continued along this road and got views of both **Muisca Antpitta** (e) as well as **Pale-bellied Tapaculo** (e). A nice road, but we don't think it's worth driving all the way north for, as all the targets can be found at other places.

We drove the extra 11km from the entrance road of BioAndina towards La Vega, as **Crested Spinetail** had been observed there (4.80673, -73.68882). These are not rare per se, but we wouldn't come to another place in our travel where we would be able to find them. We parked the car on the left side of the road and walked about 100m and already encountered 2 Spinetails. While observing those, a bird with an orange head hopped in a tree, followed by another: **Ochre-breasted Brushfinches** (e)!



**Brown-breasted Parakeets**



**Crested Spinetail**

On our way towards the next location, one of our most remarkable mammal sightings happened, all that whilst drinking a cappuccino outside a roadside cafeteria (4.82346, -73.93604). Rob was searching some things up on his phone when he heard a lot of screams coming from inside the building. Romy said she saw something small and brown, like a squirrel, running into the restaurant. Not much later a dog comes barking in, goes into the building and started chasing something around. After the employees finally got the dog behind a gate they themselves started chasing the animal. We went inside and the employee also said that something like a squirrel had entered the kitchen and that they were trying to catch it. We went back to our table and after 5 minutes the employees rolled a generator towards the door. I stood up, walked over there and looked surprised. They said the animal didn't want to leave the generator. I crouched to get a look at whatever was down there, and then I saw it was definitely not a squirrel, but a Weasel! A very small weasel (about the size of a Least Weasel), with very small ears, a dark brown back and tail (all the same colour, we didn't see a black tip), a cream-coloured belly with a sharp demarcation between them. Right when I quickly wanted to grab my mobile phone to get a record shot of this animal, it went out on the street, and jumped around the corner towards the petrol station. I followed the creature, but of course it was gone and couldn't be found again. We contacted Hector Ramírez-Chaves, one of the lead mammal scientists in the country, and he assured me that it was a **Long-tailed Weasel** due to the distribution. He also said that it was most likely a juvenile, which tend to be smaller (same size as Colombian Weasel) and darker (like CW). This shows that mammal sightings can even happen when you least expect them!

## NP Chingaza – Piedras Gordas

[4.73663, -73.84234](#)

**Visited dates:** 21-24 February 2023

We birded the road towards NP Chingaza, but also visited the National Park itself. If you are just into birds you can see all the targets outside the park, and we would definitely recommend staying out of the park! If you are a mammalwatcher you might want to visit the park, but be prepared (or better: get someone to prepare it for you).

### Outside the NP

To get to the road leading up to the park, take the turnoff at the east of La Calera ([4.72325, -73.95523](#)). The park is signposted from there. We parked along the road ([4.72818, -73.90347](#)) and had a flock right away, including **Golden-fronted Redstart** (our 2000<sup>th</sup> bird species of our travel through South-America!). We walked the road for a couple of 100m and observed **Muisca Antpitta** (e) and **Pale-bellied Tapaculo** (e) by sound and got nice views of 4 **Silvery-throated Spinetails** (e).



**Coppery-bellied Puffleg****Silvery-throated Spinetail**

Birding a bit farther up the road (from [4.7243, -73.89497](#) to [4.73023, -73.89196](#)) also yielded the Antpitta and Tapaculo. Besides that we got to see **Brown-breasted Parakeet** (e), **Black-chested Mountain Tanager**, **Buff-breasted Mountain Tanager** and **Coppery-bellied Puffleg** (e), besides the many **Glowing Pufflegs**.

Even higher up (from [4.74722, -73.85536](#)) we got to see multiple **Bronze-tailed Thornbills** (e) and **White-chinned Thistletail**. **Green-bearded Helmetcrest** (e) should be possible here too.

We spotlighted the road from the NP entrance down in the hope of seeing a **Western Mountain Coati** or **Little Red Brocket**, but saw no mammals at all. We did see **Band-winged Nightjar** and finally got to see (instead of just hear) **Rufous-banded Owl**!

### Inside the NP

This has to be the most bureaucratic park we have ever encountered! Reservations have to be made 15 days in advance via the [website](#). Contrary to the advice of some contacts, we only found this out when we arrived at the entrance. As it was very clear they didn't want to help us at the gate we went to the office the next morning in La Calera ([4.721272, -73.964746](#)). Good chance you have to come here too to watch a couple of videos of the park, even if you have an official (local) guide and a reservation.

At the office they had to move heaven and earth to be able to give us a permit on the spot, because normally they need at least 3 days for all the paper work. We had to go to the bank and pay 141kCOP for the one-time entrance ticket, valid for 4 days. After we deposited the money in the bank we had to pay for insurance too. How this was any different from our normal travel insurance they couldn't explain, but we were already happy they helped us on the spot and paid the 56kCOP total for 4 days. Which paperwork they talked about before wasn't clear to us, because in the end we only got 3 handwritten entrance tickets, two for ourselves and one for the car. After watching 3 non-informative Spanish-spoken videos about National Parks, plastic etc., we were on our way after 3 hours of arranging everything. The woman from the park then rattled off many more rules, of which we got 50% because of how fast she talked despite our many requests of speaking slowly.

Happily we drove to the park, entered through the gate ([4.73663, -73.84234](#)) and scanned all the mountain sides for our big target; **Spectacled Bear**. Without finding one we arrived at the camping area at Monterredondo ([4.62852, -73.72457](#)). We asked the owner of the camping/albergue if we could just sleep in our motorhome. He was more than fine with it, even asked the park officials, and that was it. Lying in bed at 21.00 at night suddenly there were two other officials who didn't agree with this. Apparently we were not allowed to sleep in our motorhome (which we understood, but we thought that applied only along the road or in the wild in the park). Turned out we had to camp, despite the freezing temperatures and the campsite being about 5-10m from the place where our car was parked. Rules and zonation; very important things apparently. After some discussion with the park officials we ended up renting a room for 50kCOP at the albergue. The next morning we drove away at 06.00 to go to Laguna Chingaza ([4.52959, -73.75775](#)) as people has seen Bears both days before that. We didn't see any Bears, but did see many **White-tailed Deers**. Arriving at the lake we came to a guarded gate, and it after asking permission to enter the lake area it turned out we weren't even allowed to go beyond the camping area. In short: we could only drive on the road between the entrance 'Piedras Gordas' and the camping area 'Monterredondo'. We were not allowed to get out of the car, couldn't walk any trails without a guide and couldn't do any night drives either. The two miscommunications were enough for them to make us leave the park. They even tried to let us pay a fine and make it a formal process.. Needless to say we weren't really feeling like staying either and focussed the rest of our time outside the park again. If you really want to visit the park and try to see Spectacled Bears, our advice would be to hire a guide like Rob Smith from [Wild About Colombia](#). Rob is super friendly and has tons of experience with searching for mammals like Bears as well as dealing with bureaucratic parks like this.

On the positive site we did encounter **Bronze-tailed Thornbill** (e) and **Green-bearded Helmetcrest** (e) (the last one at [4.71423, -73.81502](#) and at [4.53927, -73.76242](#)). At the second coordinates we also observed **White-chinned Thistletail** (ssp. *fuliginosa*) and **Grass Wren** (Paramo ssp. *aequatorialis*). At the small trail near the camping area ([4.62902, -73.72364](#)) we observed the stunning **Black-headed Hemispingus** and **Rufous-browed Conebill**.



**White-chinned Thistletail**



**Black-headed Hemispingus**

## NP Sumapaz

[4.29028, -74.20671](#)

Visited dates: 6-7 March 2023

As we were still missing some páramo species, we went to NP Sumapaz. Luckily after our experience at NP Chingaza there is no official entrance here and you don't need any permission/reservation. We first made a stop before the lakes (4.3110, -74.2085) and found 3 **Green-bearded Helmetcrests** (e). We then went to the lakes, where the NP has places ribbons along the roadside to prevent people from going down to the lake edges. As there is no one checking this, we saw it as an invitation to the better birding sites and went down to the lake edge ([4.29028, -74.20671](#)). There we observed **Apolinar's Wren** (e), **Andean Teal**, **(Northern) Tawny Antpitta** (common in the NP, singing on top of rocks/bushes at sunrise), **Paramo Pipits** (on the west side of the lake) and a **Bogota Rail** ((e), coming out of the taller green patch of grass within the marsh).



**Green-bearded Helmetcrest**



**(Northern) Tawny Antpitta**

**Brazilian Cavies** (endemic ssp. *anolaimae*), were grazing in the edges of the marsh. While camping on the parking spot at night we heard **Noble Snipes** flying above our head and one **Jameson's Snipe** on the other side of the lake. In the morning we went down again to the lake's edge and flushed a Noble Snipe and got stunning views!



**Noble Snipe**



**Apolinar's Wren**

We then continued towards the military post (we parked 100m before that, [4.26133, -74.18956](#)). Here we encountered multiple **Chestnut-winged Cinclodes** and **Apolinar's Wrens** (e) on the side of



the road. Our main target was the **Red-rumped Bush-tyrant**, which is often seen between the parking spot and 100/200 south of the military post. We walked and scanned all the tree tops for quite a while, but couldn't find this bird. We also couldn't find **Plain-capped Ground-Tyrant**, which is regularly seen in the park.

## Cerro Seco

[4.5617, -74.16293](#)

**Visited date:** 7 March 2023

We wanted to have an easy place to tick off the only South-American Lark species. We would advise taking a taxi here, or make sure you have insurance on your rental vehicle, just in case ;-). The area we drove through felt a bit sketchy, but in the end it felt fine enough to leave our car for 0.5-1h at the end of a dead end street ([4.5617, -74.16293](#)). We walked the steep hill up along the fence and flushed a group of **Grassland Yellow-finches**. We walked towards a spot where we knew the Larks had been seen and soon found multiple **(Colombian) Horned Larks** (*ssp. peregrina* (e)) on some sandy hills ([4.5579, -74.163](#)). A **White-tailed Kite** flew over our heads as we went back to the car again. We didn't feel unsafe on top of the hill, and in hindsight I would have taken my camera with me too.

## Laguna el Tabacal

[5.02813, -74.32789](#)

**Visited dates:** 14-15 March 2023

Not too far from Bogotá there is a small nature reserve with some short trails, but with some interesting species. We arrived late in the afternoon in the drizzling rain, but decided to walk the roadside after passing the entrance to Laguna el Tabacal ([5.02813, -74.32789](#)). **Orange-billed Sparrow** and **Band-backed Wren** were observed right along the road after the entrance. A bit farther we heard our first **(Colombian) Speckled Wren** and **Stripe-breasted Spinetail** (5.027948, -74.328766). The latter took quite some time to get mediocre looks of, but at least we got to see it eventually. A **Red-rumped Woodpecker** flew in the trees above the road.

The guard was fine with us camping in our car on the parking lot opposite to the entrance. There is also an official camping ground there. The next morning we were allowed to enter at 06.00 (normal opening hour is at 09.00, but birders are allowed in earlier). The entrance fee is 6000COP p.p. **Ruddy Quail-doves** walked on the open grass and these turned out to be quite common during the rest of the day. We first continued straight on the main path which ends up at the lagoon. Both **Pied-billed Grebe** and **Least Grebe** were common on the lagoon. The path to the left, where the bamboo borders the road outside the park, is where we found **Black-headed Brushfinch** (e) later that day. We continued on the path to the right along the lakeside and followed that to the mirador/viewpoint. About 100m before the viewpoint is a trail that goes to the right. This trail 'Sendero el Mohan' begins/ends up near the entrance of the reserve (5.028195, -74.327738). This trail is where you want

to spend most of your time. This is where we found **Blue-lored Antbird**, **Jet Antbird** (both near 5.029429, -74.325203), **Rosy Thrush-tanager** (HO) and **Grey-throated Warbler** (HO). It took another round before we finally found **Rusty-breasted Antpitta** (5.029858, -74.325050), hopping through the vines, not being vocal at all. Other interesting birds were **Black-bellied Wren**, **Long-billed Gnatwren** and **White-throated Spadebill** (HO). In the afternoon we did this loop for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time. This time we again heard the Thrush-tanagers, but also finally found a **Moustached Puffbird** near the shortcut that goes from the birding trail towards the lake (5.028543, -74.326546).

**Least Grebe****Rusty-breasted Antpitta**

On the way to Laguna el Tabacal we made a quick stop at Jardin Encantado ([4.97869, -74.293584](#)). The admission fee to the garden was 22kCOP p.p. We had never seen a garden with so many hummingbird feeders, and there must have been about 50 of them. These in turn attracted a multitude of hummingbirds, including many **Indigo-capped Hummingbirds** (e), **Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds** and **Black-throated Mangos**. Fewer in number but also present were **White-bellied Woodstar**, **White-vented Plumeleteer**, **Lesser Violetear** and **White-necked Jacobin**. Not really a well set up garden, but a nice quick stop if you still want some good looks at the endemic.

## Villavicencio

When driving back from Villavicencio to Bogotá over the Ruta 40, buy some freshly made Arepas filled with cheese (4.371661, -73.899750). They were making them by the 100s at a stand outside when we passed by. From all the Arepas we had in Colombia these were some of the best ones! You only pass this place going from Villavicencio back to Bogotá, not in the other direction.

### Cumeral

[4.27099, -73.48544](#)

**Visited dates:** 24-25 February 2023

The main reason for us to go to the Villavicencio region were two special primates. A couple month before our visit we got into contact with a biology student, Margarita Niño (+57 301 7686410,

Spanish). We notified her again a day before that we would be in the region and she was available as a guide right away! We paid 150kCOP for the afternoon and morning that she guided us.

We picked Margarita up in Cumeral and went to the finca of her father, about 30 minutes east of Cumeral ([4.28177, -73.43882](#)). The road on the farm has to be driven with a high clearance vehicle. Driving along the forest edge Margarita was already looking out of the window. I asked her if she often sees the primates we were searching for, and she replied they often sleep at the exact spot we were passing. We stopped the car and got out to check if we could find them. After 15 minutes of walking around in the forest we saw our first **Ornate Titi Monkey** (e) jumping from tree to tree! It was followed by a couple of others, including one that carried a baby. They crawled up high into the tree and started to curl their tails around each other. An adorable sight! It was surprisingly hard to see them huddled together high up in the trees. We were able to distinguish 5 long tails, which meant that including the baby this was a group of 6!



**Ornate Titi Monkey**



**Ornate Titi Monkey with young**

A night walk yielded only some common nocturnal birds. We camped on the open field and got a local Colombian breakfast from the father the next morning after our search for the monkeys. This 'search' was very easy, as we knew where they slept! Already at 05.55 the Titis began to call, and not much later we encountered a group of 4. Some more groups were calling from farther away. When this group went down the hill, we decided to check the spot where we had them the afternoon before. It turned out that the group was still there and we got amazing views of the youngster!



**Brumback's Night Monkeys**



**Brumback's Night Monkeys**



We then went back to Cumeral, to Reserva El Manantial ([4.28214, -73.50318](#)). We paid 50kCOP for entrance to the reserve. This farmer, José Alfredo (+57 317 3692 987), had two groups of **Brumback's Night Monkeys** living on his property, of which he knew the roost of one at the moment. We got incredible looks at a family of 3 and we even came back later that day to take some more pictures and get another glimpse of these stunning mammals!

## Restrepo

[4.25881, -73.56035](#)

**Visited dates:** 25-27 February 2023

We walked what we think is called 'Sendero Ecológico' west of Restrepo the 26<sup>th</sup> of February. We parked the car on the side of the road (4.29177, -73.59461) and walked to the little lagoon from there ([4.28882, -73.59395](#)). We tried for **Moustached Puffbird**, but didn't get a response. Some common species were observed, like **Scaled Piculet**, **Rufous-and-white Wren** and **Burnished-buff Tanager** (Rufous-crowned, cayana group). We found **Band-tailed Guan** in a tree opposite of the lagoon and then found another main target foraging low in the grass on the open field; **Sooty-capped Hermit**. In a patch of forest along the roadside beyond our parking lot we found **White-vented Plumeleteer** (endemic ssp. *caeruleogaster*). We then went back to try again for the Puffbird along the stream near the parking lot, but only encountered more Plumeleteers and a very different looking ssp. from **Pectoral Sparrow** (Yellow-mandibled, ssp. *axillaris*).

The last morning we tried again for **Masked Cardinal** at a small lagoon ([4.25759, -73.54674](#)). We already searched along the road for this species two afternoons before, but dipped. This time Romy spotted 2 individuals on the little stone wall along the lagoon. Other nice birds were the many many **Scarlet Ibises**, **Roseate Spoonbills** and **Great Egrets** roosting in the trees, making it something like a late Christmas tree.



Common Tody-flycatcher



Scarlet Ibis

## Bosque Bavaria & Buenavista

4.17507, -73.64185

Visited date: 4 March 2023

We didn't have many remaining (realistic) targets left, but we had some time to kill before our next appointment. We drove onto the dirt road (4.175073, -73.641860) and parked the car. The road through this forest starts around 450m altitude and climbs up in 3km towards 900m. We started walking up the hill and found it to be a bit quiet. Only a bit higher up we encountered **Spot-winged Antbird**, **Northern Slaty Antshrike** and **Dusky Antbird**. Seeing **Yellow-billed Nunbirds** and **White-chinned Jacamar** was a real treat! This is also as northerly as one can see the **Red-stained Woodpecker**. Another bird that we expected to add to our list, but failed, was **Spectacled Thrush**, which is supposed to be quite common. We also hoped to see **Colombian Squirrel Monkey** (which are supposed to be common here according to the Birdwatching in Colombia app), but only encountered 2 **Tufted Capuchins/Black-capped Capuchins**.

We walked the road on the other side of the river (4.177753, -73.636566) with the hope of seeing **Ornate Titi Monkeys** another time. We heard them but weren't able to see them.

In the afternoon we walked the site mentioned as 'Piedra del Amor' (4.17162, -73.67519) in the Birdwatching in Colombia app, but this site disappointed big time. There is barely good forest left and there are many sketchy homes along the road. We didn't feel particularly at ease walking there with our gear and decided to turn around after a kilometre or two. We did see a group of 20+ (**Colombian Squirrel Monkeys** (*ssp. albigena*))! Then suddenly a **Tayra** crossed the road, only to be chased off by some local dogs.



Yellow-billed Nunbird



Colombian Squirrel Monkey

## Refugio del Tororoi

4.22757, -73.78776

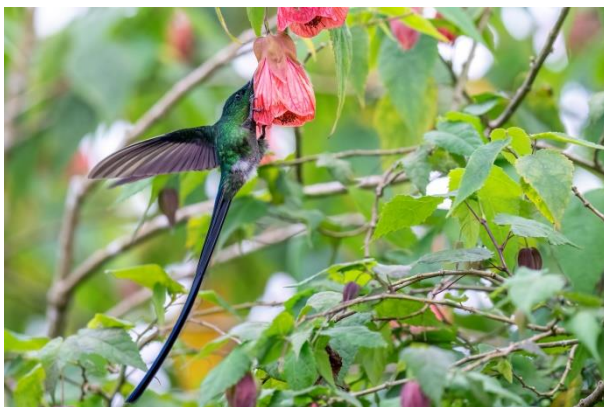
Visited dates: 5-6 March 2023

We contacted Yersson Herrera (+57 300 4259 029 or [enderolaherreria@gmail.com](mailto:enderolaherreria@gmail.com), Spanish/English) a couple of weeks up front and reserved for the 6<sup>th</sup>. We were allowed to camp for free at the reserve

in our motorhome and bring our own food, which would make the costs 64kCOP per person for entrance and another 80kCOP total for his guiding. We birded part of the road up to the reserve to tick off some species. The first one, **Spectacled Thrush**, went easily found here. The Hummingbird proved to be harder than we thought. In two hours of walking the road we encountered 2 hummers that seemed to be the one, but they just quickly foraged and went on. Only while driving up further we suddenly noticed two hummers sitting in a tree on the left side of the road ([4.207965, -73.801796](#)), and these turned out to be **Green-bellied Hummingbirds** (ne). They seemed to return to that same perch every time after doing a round. We also observed more Spectacled Thrushes there and **Pale-breasted Spinetails**. We then drove farther up the road, but 1.5km before the reserve we couldn't make it up the hill anymore. Our (2WD) car was too heavy for the muddy/slippery and steep roads. We probably would have made it if the ground would have been dry, but as this is cloud forest habitat, don't count on it.

We went out at night into the forest for **Stygian Owl**, but were only able to hear a couple and see a shadow fly from a tree. We also heard **Rufous-banded Owl** and back down at the car **White-throated Screech-owls**.

The next morning we started birding at 06.00 and walked from the house up towards the forest. **Ochre-breasted Brushfinch** (e) was heard pretty quickly and turned out to be relatively common around here. **Emerald-bellied Puffleg** was seen foraging on some flowers outside the forest. Mixed flocks brought **Slaty Brushfinch**, **Sharpe's Wren**, **Streaked Tuftedcheek**, **Black-capped Tyrannulet** and many more nice birdies. We finally managed to observe **Black-collared Jay** (*ssp. armillata*). Inside the forest we observed **Rufous-headed Pygmy-tyrant**, **Sickle-winged Guan**, **Lined Quail-dove** (HO) and **Brown-breasted Parakeet/Flame-winged Parakeet** (e, HO). Yersson heard **Slate-crowned Antpitta**, and we were able to get stunning views of this small and elusive bird! **Cundinamarca Antpitta** (e) was also heard in the forest, but was later seen shortly but very well at the feeder near the house. A really cool greyish Antpitta, definitely something different!



Long-tailed Sylph male



Cundinamarca Antpitta



## San José de Guaviare

[2.57144, -72.63841](#)

Our main reason to come to San José de Guaviare were three species of primates: White-chested Titi (*Cheracebus lugens*), Mottle-faced Tamarin and Golden-backed Uakari. The road from Villavicencio to San José de Guaviare is surprisingly good and it took us about 5 hours to get there. Any car can make it, only the 'Via a Cerro Azul'-road is a bit bumpy, so high clearance is recommended. We observed multiple **Horned Screamers** along the road while driving to and from San José.

### Cerro Azul

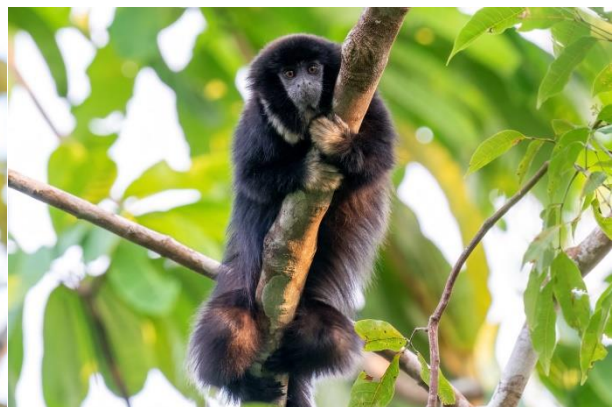
**Visited dates:** 27 February – 2 March 2023

Thanks to Rob Smith from [Wild About Colombia](#) we got a local contact, Wilmer, to search for these primates. Unfortunately Wilmer was not available on the dates we were in Guaviare, but he in turn was so friendly to forward the number of Cerro Azul where they normally search for the primates. The flipside was that this place demanded we would have a guide with us, besides the local guide that one needs at Cerro Azul itself (so that would mean at least two guides for some reason...). We got in contact with another local guide, Marcel. We made a deal, but then Marcel left us hanging the day before we were arriving without giving us any good reason. In the end Cerro Azul seemed to allow us to search for the primates with just the local guide.

A bit nervously we arrived at the spot, not knowing if they would actually allow us to go search or would have changed their minds after all. It turned out that a local guide Alex was ready and available for two days. Happily he received us, we agreed on a time for the next morning and he left us camping at Cerro Azul. We went for a walk on our own and shortly after encountered two different groups of **White-chested Titis**! Happy that we pocketed our first target, we did some spotlighting, but only observed **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl**, **Common Potoo** and **Great Potoo**.



**White-chested Titi** with young



**White-chested Titi**

The next morning we were ready at 06.00. We crossed a big field and just before we entered the forest a **Lowland Tapir** crossed the field in front of us. How Alex walking in front of us missed this gigantic animal is a mystery, but it didn't bode for a sharp guide to search for primates. We walked

the trail going through some good quality forest with high trees. The first morning we got to observe **Colombian Red Howlers**, **Humbolt's Squirrel Monkeys**, **Tufted Capuchins/Black-capped Capuchins** and many **Common Woolly Monkeys**. It turned out that the latter was the most common primate around here, both in absolute number of individuals and sightings. The only bird of note we encountered was a **Great Jacamar**. As we couldn't find the Uakari, we decided to walk the edge of the farmland/forest edge to search for the Tamarins. We didn't find those, but we did encounter some more **White-chested Titis**. We repeated the walk through the forest again in the afternoon and the next morning, but didn't encounter the Uakaris. Alex is a very nice man, but he wasn't really needed for the 1,5km trail, nor did he have binoculars or seemed to spot something very quickly. We decided to pay him for his time (150kCOP per day) and (against the official rules) went out into the forest on our own that afternoon. We were happy we did so, as only 400m into the forest Rob spotted a monkey quickly running across some branches which seemed to have a small tail. Not sure if it was another Capuchin we were mistaking again or indeed an Uakari, another appeared and it was clear as day we found **Golden-backed Uakaris**! Alex had told us they don't move a lot and are in small groups of about 2-3, with a maximum of 6. This is why we were surprised to have more than 20 individuals running and swinging along the branches above us. The group was widespread, but only moved a couple of 100m within the 1.5h we were able to observe them. They communicated the whole time by giving small calls; 'kips', almost Capuchin-like. They were pretty skittish and rarely sat still long enough for a photo if they saw me standing there with the camera. Only by standing inside the shrubs and finding small windows towards fruiting trees and big trees used as highways, we were able to get some nice photos of these spectacular primates! An amazing experience! To search for these primates we would definitely recommend contacting Rob Smith from [Wild About Colombia](#).



**Golden-backed Uakari**



**Golden-backed Uakari**

## Via a Cerro Azul/Surrounding land

[2.49633, -72.84931](#)

**Visited date:** 2 March 2023

We drove this road to Cerro Azul, where they had the trail for the Golden-backed Uakari. Already on this road we observed **Common Woolly Monkeys** high up in the trees in some remnant forests.

**White-chested Titis** can be observed along this road too, as well as **Mottle-faced Tamarins**. While we were camping at Cerro Azul, the owner of the land went to San José on his motorbike. After a couple of minutes he returned with a big smile, and said he observed the Tamarins crossing the street. We quickly grabbed our stuff, jumped on the back of the motorcycle and the three of us raced towards the spot (green line in map). Arriving there the Tamarins where nowhere to be found and we only found some more Woolly Monkeys.

We went with our local guide Alex to his house, as that should be a good area for the Tamarins too. He had seen them in a couple of spots. That is how we walked around for a couple of hours without a result. We also walked past a spot where he had seen them on two consecutive days the week before. This small road turned out to be a public one, and therefore we considered it our best option. To get there we turned south from the 'Via a Cerro Azul' (2.519256, -72.855098, [T in map](#)). We drove over a small dirt road, crossing two sketchy bridges (especially the first one), which our guide insisted were driven by other vehicles like ours. We stopped and parked before the third bridge (2.504124, -72.852286, [P in map](#)), as Alex had indicated that was not a safe one to cross (even though it looked fine). From there we walked farther along that road until we entered the forest (2.499658, -72.851511, [yellow line in map](#)). It didn't take long before we observed some **Colombian Red Howlers** and also a **Paradise Jacamar**! About two-thirds in we heard some rustling and jumping of smaller primates, and then we observed our first **Mottle-faced Tamarin**, loudly calling on the other side of the path. These turned out to be two different groups that were on either side of the path. In total we observed at least 10 different individuals. They sometimes crossed the path to intimidate the other group, making scary faces with their tongue bend up (like little devils) and made almost cat-like faces with their teeth out. We totally understand why the locals call them 'Los Diablitos' (the devils). We were able to observe them for about an hour, till they reached the end of the forest and both continued in opposite directions around the corner along the forest edges.



**Mottle-faced Tamarin**



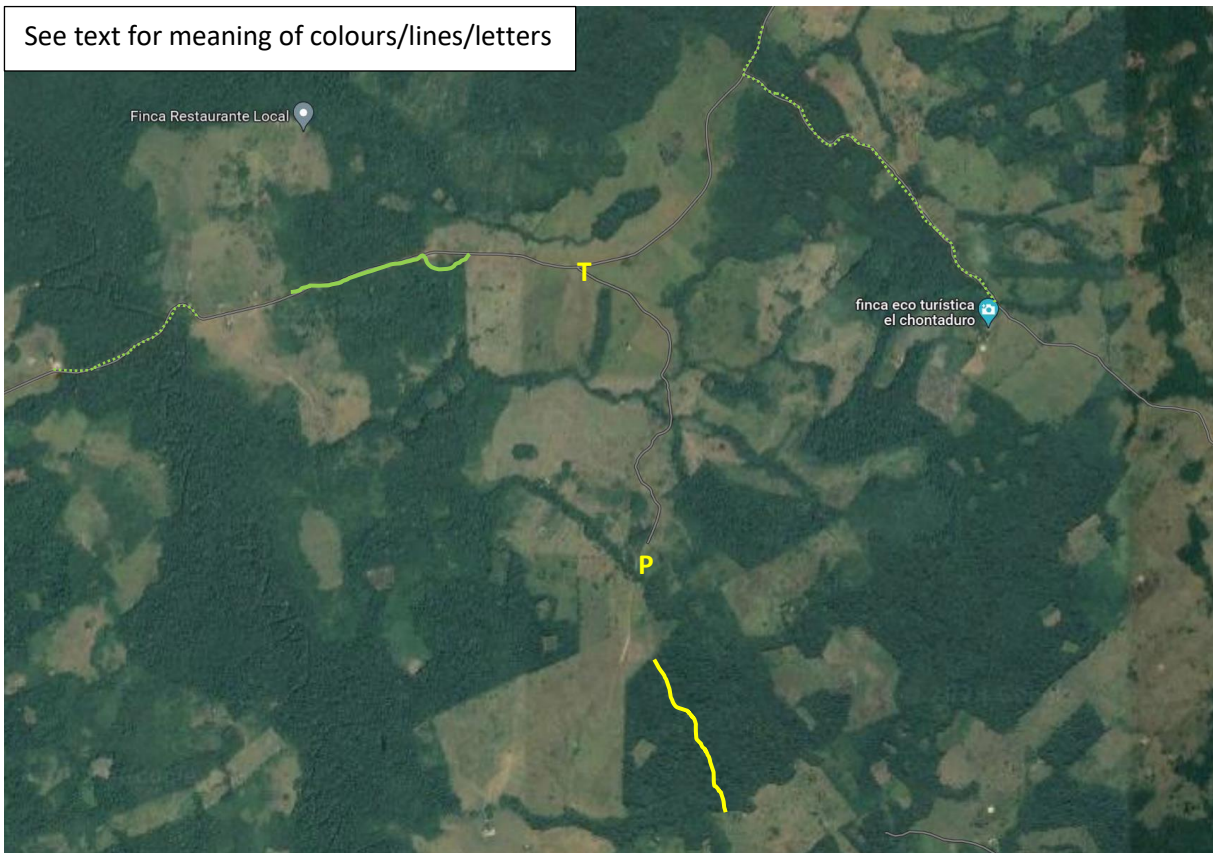
**Mottle-faced Tamarin**

We asked around Guaviare, and it seems like this region has the best densities of this species and that it is most commonly observed in the surrounding forests. Any road that passes good forest edges (with well-connected forest) should be good (easily accessible ones are indicated with green dashes in the map). To give an indication we made the map below:



**Mottle-faced Tamarin****Mottle-faced Tamarin**

See text for meaning of colours/lines/letters



## Raudal Guayabero

[2.57943, -72.86611](#)

**Visited date:** 2 March 2023

We made a quick stop at Bocas del Raudal. One can do many activities here, including a boat tour to see the Dolphins. However, these **Amazon River Dolphins** can already be seen from the little harbour. While watching the Dolphins there were ample opportunities to add egrets and herons to the day list, as well as **Large-billed Terns** and a **Yellow-billed Tern**.

## Nueva Tolima/Serrania de la Lindosa

[2.46227, -72.75454](#)

Visited date: 2 March 2023

The road between Via a Cerro Azul and Nueva Tolima is not very good. It is better to visit from Ruta 75 (2.53622, -72.63095). We visited this place shortly, not for the rock paintings it is known for, but to target one bird species. We arrived around 11.30 and were able to go directly to the lek site. We arrived there after a 15 minute climb/walk during which we observed **Red-breasted Meadowlark** and a **King Vulture**. Even though it was the middle of the day, we got to see 2 **Guinean Cock-of-the-Rock** males! To not seem total culture bastards, we did continue to the paintings. The highlight however was the viewpoint before that, where you could get a nice view of the surrounding land and could heard **White-chested Titis** calling loudly from the forest.



Amazon River Dolphin



Guinean Cock-of-the-Rock

## Verada Playa Guio/Buena Vista

[2.57073, -72.66228](#)

Visited dates: 3-4 March 2023

We first visited the Buena Vista road that comes from Guaviare ([2.569536, -72.650358](#)). The road itself is ok to drive, but we were unpleasantly surprised by the amount of houses and secondary forest/agricultural land along the road. We parked the car ([2.570633, -72.658300](#)) and soon heard **Cinnamon Attila**. We hoped for **Blackish-grey Antshrike**, **Velvet-fronted Grackles** or **Cocoa Thrush**, but only got to see **Black-fronted Nunbirds**, **Many-banded Aracaris** and surprisingly **Olive-grey Saltators** (not regularly ranging until here).

We decided to drive to the area 'Playa Guio' ([2.57095, -72.71047](#)), recommended in the app 'Birdwatching in Colombia'. But again we were unpleasantly surprised by the out-dated/incorrect information. The gate towards Laguna Negra was closed and the trail to the Guaviare River was non-existent. You had to take a small boat crossing for the only trail that could be walked. As it started to rain we decided to skip on doing that.

# Mid-Magdalena Valley

## Victoria/RN Bellavista

[5.32677, -74.92391](#)

Visited dates: 16-17 March 2023

On our way to Victoria/RN Bellavista we shortly birded near the town of Honda. We parked the car behind the gate ([5.1996051, -74.7562702](#)) and walked along the roadside. Within 2 hours of birding we picked up nice species like **Dwarf Cuckoo**, **Fulvous-crowned Scrub-flycatcher**, **Northern Mouse-colored Tyrannulet**, **Black-faced Grassquit**, **Russet-throated Puffbird** and **Northern White-fringed Antwren**. Other possible targets here are **White-eared Conebill** and **Pileated Finch**.

It's best to get to Victoria from the east via Ruta 45, as that is a paved road. We came from the south, via Mariquita, and that road was not very good. It is driveable with a high clearance 2WD, but after the rain it took quite some time. We first continued to the bridge 'Puente Samana-Victoria', where we parked the car at the restaurant on the left side after the bridge ([5.3912872, -74.9292895](#)). Already from the parking lot we observed **White-mantled Barbet** (e) and a pair of **Bay Wrens**. The main reason to come here was the story that Tody Motmot could be observed near the bridge, especially on the trail that starts on the right side of the road just before the bridge ([5.3908760, -74.9284530](#)). Maybe it was the heavy rains from the days before, but the river was making so much noise that we barely heard any bird song. **Dusky-faced Tanagers** were common here, and a **Tawny-crested Tanager** followed them. In a fruiting tree we observed a female **White-bearded Manakin** and a female **White-bibbed Manakin** (e). The unpaved road ends after 200m and we then continued on the trail going into the forest, parallel to the river. We didn't particularly enjoy the trail with all the noise coming from the river, but still observed **Black Antshrike** (HO) and **White-tailed Trogon**. This forest should be good for **Magdalena Antbird** (e) too, but hearing such a call would be nearly impossible while we were there. We camped at the end of the dirt road and tried again for the **Tody Motmot** in the morning, but only **Rufous Motmot** was observed.

We then went to RN Bellavista ([5.326776, -74.923916](#)) and walked the gravel road into the forest. We observed a female **Fulvous-vented Euphonia** high up in the trees right when we walked in. It was pretty quiet in the forest, but we still had multiple small flocks of **Sooty Ant-tanagers** (e) going by. We walked towards the rescue centre, but the calls of all the parrots made us turn around. It was on the way back that we finally heard and then observed a male **White-bibbed Manakin** (e), feeding high up in a Cecropia tree ([5.329652, -74.921486](#)). We then walked the road going to the right, going a bit up. Besides more Ant-tanagers, **Bay-breasted Warblers** and **Ochre-bellied Flycatchers** we suddenly noticed something bigger going through the branches. It didn't take long to realise we were looking at a rare **White-footed Tamarin**! The species was drawn on one of the many small signs in the reserve, but we hadn't heard of anyone actually seeing them here. The Tamarin was quite shy



and sneaked through the branches. We only observed one, but as silent as it moved there might have been more of them.

We then drove 2.5km towards Victoria and parked on the side of the road ([5.319127, -74.934297](#)). This is where we observed **Thick-billed Seed-finch** singing from some high bare branches far in the field. Two male **Velvet-fronted Euphonias** (e) were calling to each other from the wires. We walked the roadside for a while, playing the tape of **Beautiful Woodpecker** (e). Once we were almost back at the car, one responded from a tree next to the road and we got some good views.

On our way to Manizales we made a quick stop at Padua ([5.128674, -75.143946](#)). 300m/0.5h of walking along the road brought in two pairs of **Yellow-headed Brushfinches** (e). Not really a location to recommend habitat-wise, but an easy stop if you are on route and have some time left.



**White-footed Tamarin**



**Beautiful Woodpecker**

## Reserva Natural Cañon del Rio Claro

[5.90096, -74.85693](#)

**Visited dates:** 26-28 April 2023

Roads are good towards the reserve, just follow Ruta 60 from Medellin (about 2-3h) or from the east (45min from Ruta 45). We showed up at RN Cañon del Rio Claro without a reservation, and this was no problem at all. The price for camping was 45kCOP p.p. for 1 night or 80kCOP for 2 nights. The camping site is big and quite nice and a lot cheaper than any of the rooms. You can still order meals at the restaurant/main area or eat in the restaurant just outside the gate.

**Barred Puffbird** and **Cinnamon Woodpecker** were commonly heard in the reserve, and we had a pair of Puffbirds calling right above the camping area. Walking the main road towards the lodge we encountered **Pacific Antwren** and **Marbled Wood-quail** (HO).

The two afternoons and one morning we were here we focussed mainly on the Mulata Trail, which starts on the right side before the bridge when driving in ([5.894702, -74.85872](#)). The path was quite

muddy and you have to wade through a stream, so bring wellingtons. Both afternoons were really hot and we only went as far as just after the stream. Bird activity was inversely proportional to the temperature, and we didn't see much those afternoons. Still we observed **Black-tailed Flycatcher** and a **Spectacled Owl** that we disturbed from taking a bath in the stream. We also found **Varied White-fronted Capuchins** (e) (first afternoon) and **White-footed Tamarins** (e) (second day multiple times, including the afternoon). **Red-tailed Squirrels** were active all day too.

The morning was considerably better and yielded most of the targets. Already at the entrance of the path we heard **Antioquia Bristle-tyrant** (e) in a flock, but with the bright clouds it was impossible to be certain that we also observed it high up in the tree. The first part of the trail was quiet and we only found **Olivaceous Flatbill** and **Northern Barred-Woodcreeper** 100m into the trail. When coming near the river we found **White-whiskered Puffbirds**. A **Magdalena Antbird** was calling along the stream, clearly audible while descending down to the stream. When coming to the river you have to walk upstream for about 50m before the trail continues again. Along this part is where we heard **Bicolored Antbird**. After the stream the trail goes up steeply and this should be a good place for the Bristle-tyrant. We did find a tree busy with birds, but the most exciting one was **Yellow-tufted Dacnis**. After this part the trail climbs gradually again. We connected with **Grey-cheeked Nunlet** a bit higher up (5.888835, -74.861839). **Slate-headed Tody-flycatchers** were around this spot both on our way up and back down. We had a **Grey-headed Kite** flying in the tree above this spot on our way back. A bit higher still we came at the lekking site of **Golden-headed Manakin** (5.888551, -74.861618). In the 100m behind this point is where we observed **Red-rumped Woodpecker**, **Dusky Antbird**, **Checker-throated Antwren** and **Thick-billed Seed-finch**.



**Antioquia Bristle-tyrant**



**Slaty-winged Foliage-gleaner**

Higher up we came to a clearing, which for us was the best point of the trail (5.887773, -74.862724). Scanning from here we observed **Blue Cotinga**, **Scarlet-browed Tanager**, **Dot-winged Antwrens** and **White-mantled Barbet** (e). Higher up still the path got worse, but still we encountered birds like **Black-capped Antshrike**, **Band-backed Wren** and **Black-faced Antthrush** (HO), but no **Black Oropendola** or **Saffron-headed Parrots** as hoped. Just behind the top is another possibility to scan some trees on the left side for these species and the Cotinga.

On our way back it was almost noon and temperatures had risen again. When coming to the river we took the Spectacled Owl's example and went for a dip in the deeper parts. Just when we got used to the colder water a flock of birds came by. Birding never stops, so I ran out of the water to grab my binos and the first bird I observed was a **Slaty-winged Foliage-gleaner**. With the aid of playback we also lured in 2 **Antioquia Bristle-tyrants** (e). I managed to get some pictures before they flew off again. And that is how we got our last main targets of the reserve while still standing butt-naked in the stream.

The first night we went to the Oilbird Cave (5.886938, -74.85272), which is about 20 minutes walking from the lodge. Walking there we spotted a **Neotropical Otter** eating a fish in the river! The **Oilbirds** left the cave around 18.10/18.15. An amazing spectacle to watch, especially with the thermal camera. You can even swim across the river and climb into the cave during the day with the aid of the ropes.

We spotlighted both nights, and especially the first night was productive. That first night we spotlighted back from the Oilbird Cave, but only found some bats on the part towards the lodge. Back on the broader road from the lodge to the camping we observed a relaxed **Kinkajou** resting in a tree. About halfway between the lodge and the bridge we heard **Choco Screech-owl**. Between the bridge and the camping area we found **Brown-eared Woolly Opossum** (both nights, different places) and **Northern Black-eared Opossum**. The second night we went for a specific tree in the middle of the camping ground which had big fruits in it, and immediately we found **Kinkajou** and 3 **Grey-handed Night Monkeys**.



**Kinkajou**



**Brown-eared Woolly Opossum**

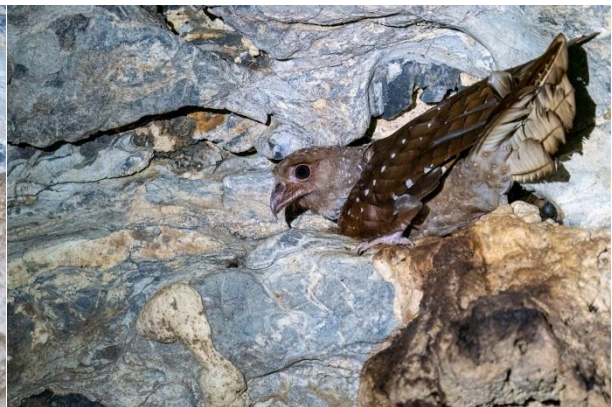
#### **Aquitania Road**

The last morning we birded a bit northwest of the reserve (the forest at [5.929437, -74.867821](#) and parts of the open areas around). The road towards there is quite bumpy and we only found **Sooty-headed Tyrannulet**, **Southern Bentbill** and **Thick-billed Seed-finch** as interesting species. We explored the first part of the road towards the **Black Oropendola** colony near El Prodigio, but the state of the road was so bad that we didn't want to drive 24km on that road up and down.



**Oilbird Cave – Hotel el Condor**

We then continued eastwards to Hotel el Condor ([5.921272, -74.8363](#)). We paid 9000COP p.p. and walked towards the cave that held the Oilbirds. For this, walk down the path on the left side of the parking lot. At the last house, pass through the fence on the right side (5.922089, -74.837941) and continue straight until you reach the stream. This is where we observed **One-colored Becard**. You then have to follow the stream until the entrance of the cave (5.929513, -74.838696). We would advise to put on rubber boots and take these off before going into the cave itself. If you walk on hiking boots, plan on them getting soaked from the beginning to make your life easier. No need skipping stones at the beginning of the stream, as you are knee-deep in the water when inside the cave. You have to walk about 100m into the cave, and then you will hear the **Oilbirds**. The sound is deafening! The ground is covered with faeces including the many palm seeds (which try hard to sprout in the pitch black cave). We also encountered a decapitated **spine rat spec.** besides some big spiders and some bats.

**Oilbird****Oilbird****ProAves Reserve – El Paujil**[6.0534, -74.26759](#)**Visited dates:** 28-30 April 2023

We came from the west on Ruta 60, which was a happy coincidence as the road eastwards was closed. We took the turnoff (5.9544, -74.47539) and followed this road for  $\pm 2$  hours until we reached the town Puerto Pinzón (6.066772, -74.268547). The road is not terrible, but not great either. Doable with any saloon car, although there were some slippery parts after the heavy rains on the way back. On the way to Puerto Pinzón we observed **Northern Screamers** (6.037094, -74.346835) and **Large-billed Seed-finch**. Continue straight in town until the turnoff, where you go right (6.067013, -74.265778). From here on the state of the road is a bit less nice, high clearance is a must and a 4x4 is advised after rain. You can only drive until the gate ([6.0534, -74.26759](#)). Park there, as the road down is very steep and maybe more importantly; missing in some places. If you stay in the lodge, coordinate with the ranger to get your luggage down by motorcycle (or per boat from town if the river is high enough and the group is big). The walk down to the lodge takes about 15-20min.

**Northern Screamers****Rufous Piha**

We arrived late and camped a bit farther alongside the road. The ranger Elkin got word of us being there within half an hour and then came by on his motorcycle to greet us and welcome us. The next morning we walked down and played the tape of **Black-billed Flycatcher** at the bridge. The bird responded quickly, flew in and then disappeared again. We tried again a couple of times that day for longer views, but it wouldn't come back. At the lodge we were greeted with coffee and breakfast while we were waiting for **Blue-billed Curassows** (e) that are fed rice between 06.00-06.30. They arrived around 07.30, and it turned out they came and left throughout the day. No need to wait at the lodge the best time of the day.. While waiting we had **Varied White-fronted Capuchins** (e) coming by the river and they came again by the lodge in the afternoon. **Red-tailed Squirrel** was seen around the lodge too. Elkin walked with us the whole morning and first showed us the roost of **Grey-handed Night Monkey** (e) (6.050944, -74.261058). A bit farther down that trail should be good for **Black Antshrike**, but we didn't try for this one as we had already seen it well before.

We then went to Sendero Loma Pataco (entrance at 6.050257, -74.263747) and walked until the bench (6.047361, -74.264161). The more open part with ferns should be good for **Russet-crowned Crane**. Elkin knew his birds and the spot; while sitting on this bench for an hour we recorded **Russet-winged Schiffornis**, **Rufous Piha**, **Bare-crowned Antbird** and **Bicolored Antbird**. **Rufous Mourner** should be possible at this spot too. On the way back to the main road we observed **Orange-crowned Oriole** high in the shrubs.

**Bicolored Antbird****Blue-billed Curassow**



We then walked back to the lodge and observed 2 male **Blue-billed Curassows** (e) in the tree, making their impressively low sound. Not much farther we suddenly heard a crashing sound and then we saw 3 **Variegated Spider-monkeys** going through the trees. Elkin says he normally never sees them on the road towards the lodge. They probably came down for the many fruits in the trees. Normally they should be searched for along the main road past the gate. They can be seen from far away from the mirador too according to the guide.

We then took the trail behind the lodge, going over the bridge and along the river. Not much later we had 2 **Northern Barred-woodcreepers** above our head (6.048152, -74.262047). The other stake-out for this species should be in the first bend of the road going down from the gate. 100m farther along the path should be a good place for **Black-billed Flycatcher**.

In the afternoon we sat in the observation tower, opposite of the Sendero Loma Pataco entrance. From there we observed a group of 10 **Colombian Red Howlers** far away in trees above the entrance road. We possibly heard 2 **Saffron-headed Parrots** fly over, but Merlin didn't load quickly enough to lure them down to the ground and they were too high up to be absolutely sure. **Blue-and-yellow Macaws** can be seen flying overhead as well.

We heard **Marbled Wood-quail** around dusk again near the lodge. Around 18.45 we heard **Choco Screech-owl calling** two times, but didn't manage to get views of it. Spotlighting back to our camping spot we heard **Stygian Owl** and **Black-and-white Owl**, but we didn't see any mammals on the way up. At our tent we thought we heard an owl calling, but this turned out to be another **Varied White-fronted Capuchin**. It called owl-like and did this until the rains started at 20.15.



**Variegated Spider-monkey**



**Varied White-fronted Capuchin**

More to the east on Ruta 60 is a cocoa farm, Finca San Luis (5.6981, -74.0526), where we did a cocoa/chocolate tour in English with Alejandro (+57 315 3557 170). A really nice tour, and we also got to see the endemic ssp *flaveolus* of **White-bearded Manakin**.



# Manizales/Pereira

## Nevado del Ruiz

[4.93363, -75.35002](#)

Visited dates: 18-19 March 2023

We drove up the mountain early morning via the good paved road and parked ([5.0042, -75.3265](#)) after a few km for some roadside birding. We walked the road up for about 1.2km and observed species like **Paramo Tapaculo** (e, quite common all up the mountain), **White-browed Spinetail** (HO) and **Black-breasted Puffleg** (ne). It took a second round on the afternoon of the 19<sup>th</sup> to finally find **Black-backed Bush-tanager** in a mixed flock with **Blue-backed Conebill** and **Golden-fronted Redstart**.

We then made a stop at La Laguna Negra ([4.98041, -75.335445](#)), where we observed quite a lot of **Stout-billed Cinclodes**. This place and the wetlands about 800m before the Laguna are a good place for **Noble Snipe**. As we had seen that species south of Bogotá we didn't put any effort in finding one here.

We then walked a gravel road going southwest from the main road ([4.971588, -75.34377](#)), as this should be a good road for the endemic and localised **Rufous-fronted Parakeet** (e). We did this again the 19<sup>th</sup> on our way down, but dipped both times. We did observe **Andean Tit-spinetail** and **(Western) Andean Siskin** very close by.



**Andean Tit-spinetail**



**(Western) Andean Siskin**

The 'Las Brisas' entrance of the NP Nevado de Ruiz ([4.933632, -75.350027](#)) is supposedly the best spot for **Buffy Helmetcrest** (e) and others describe this species as 'easily seen' here. We had a hard time finding one the first afternoon, but the fact that we were there in the weekend and therefore together with big crowds, didn't help. The next morning it was a bit easier, but not as easy as expected from other trip reports. We did have a very obliging **(Western) Tawny Antpitta** here in the morning foraging on the side of the road. **Andean Tit-spinetail** was quite common here too. In the morning you have to walk up the gravel road if the barrier is down (which it normally is until 07.30). Continuing a bit farther after the turn-off towards the NP entrance there is a good place for **Plain-**

**capped Ground-tyrant** (4.9382, -75.3442). Walking back from the turn-off towards the lookout with the wooden ruins we encountered **White-chinned Thistletail**. Just before we closed the doors from our car we heard and then saw a group of **Rufous-fronted Parakeets** (e) fly over in the distance late in the afternoon.



**Western Tawny Antpitta**



**Plain-capped Ground-tyrant**

At our camping spot ([4.96887, -75.35178](#)) a (**Western**) **Tawny Antpitta** called almost all day. We observed a group of (**Western**) **Andean Siskin** here and encountered **Buffy-helmetcrest** along the road twice.

We visited Hotel Thermales for a day ([4.97043, -75.37819](#)). Driving this road to/from the hotel early morning should be good for the Parakeet too. The day entrance fee to the Thermales is 50kCOP p.p. and includes coffee, the baths and the hummingbird feeders. During the couple of hours we watched the feeders, they attracted many **Shining Sunbeam**, **Buff-winged Starfrontlet**, **Great Sapphirewing**, **Golden-breasted Puffleg** (e), twice a **Black-thighed Puffleg** (ne) and once a **Rainbow-bearded Thornbill**. The road going down from the hotel should be good for **White-browed Spinetail**, **Stile's Tapaculo** and **Crescent-faced Antpitta** (at the shrine/cave, which is a 30 minutes' walk from the hotel). Due to heavy rains we didn't bird this road and couldn't drive it either with our 2WD after the rains had gone.



**Golden-bellied Puffleg**



**Black-capped Tyrannulet**

## Hacienda el Bosque

5.02421, -75.36963

**Visited date:** 20 March 2023

There weren't many possible targets left for us at Hacienda el Bosque, but one target did make us reserve with Juan (+57 321 811 6189, Spanish/English). He responded quickly, but didn't seem keen on having us after we didn't book anything extra like breakfast or lunch. It felt like he was fonder of big birding groups, as he even suggested multiple times that we could better not come if we thought it was too expensive (which we never mentioned). As we did want to see that specialty we took the high road and just paid the 235kCOP. The price is 80kCOP p.p. and 75kCOP total per group for a Spanish speaking guide, even though it is shared with all the others groups. Hacienda el Bosque is definitely aiming for easy birding, as arrival time is from 06.45, followed by breakfast or coffee. Birding only starts from 07.30, but started off greatly with a pair of **White-capped Tanagers**! We then went to the **Equatorial Antpitta** feeder. The feeder is set up for a large public, which was necessary as there were close to 20 (!) people. It took quite some time, but after a while it came to the feeder and showed really well. During the wait we heard **White-browed Spinetail**. We then continued to the main attraction, but not before we observed a **Paramo Seedeater** and the many hummers at the hummingbird feeders. We just focussed on the Antpitta feeder as we didn't want to miss it. About 1.5h later we were getting nervous. Even though 2 **Barred Fruiteaters** made for a nice distraction, we didn't come for them. But then at 10.20 it happened, and one of the most beautiful Antpittas hopped into view; a **Crescent-faced Antpitta**!! It got scared off by the Fruiteaters, but it was nice to know it was around. It took some more time but then it came back and posed really well. An amazing show from an amazing bird!



**Barred Fruiteater**



**Crescent-faced Antpitta**

We then continued to the next feeding place, where **Grey-breasted Mountain-toucans**, **Hooded Mountain Tanagers** and **Sickle-winged Guan** came to eat grapes. **Red-tailed Squirrel** (*S. granatensis* for now according to lead mammal scientist Héctor E. Ramírez-Chaves, but it will most likely be split in the near future) also came to these feeders. **Black-billed Mountain-toucan** comes too sometimes. A feeder on the ground attracted **White-throated Quail-dove** and some Brushfinches. The hummingbird feeders attracted **Sword-billed Hummingbird**, **Tourmaline Sunangel**, **Buff-winged**



**Starfrontlet, Tyrian Metaltail, Sparkling Violetear, Lesser Violetear, Mountain Velvetbreast** and one time a **Black-thighed Puffleg**.



**White-throated Quail-dove**



**Grey-breasted Mountain-toucan**

## Reserva Rio Blanco

**5.06638, -75.44878**

**Visited date:** 21 March 2023

Rio Blanco is a nature reserve owned by the water company Aguas de Manizales. This private area **cannot** be visited without a reservation! Be sure to reserve via WhatsApp (+57 312 226 1116, Spanish/English) or email ([reservarioblanco@aguasdemanizales.com](mailto:reservarioblanco@aguasdemanizales.com)). They are a bit slow to answer, but we contacted them about a week before. We paid the 87.300COP per person, and we would have to pay the price for a private guide when we arrived: full day Spanish guide 120kCOP or English guide 138kCOP. Arriving at the gate (5.066381, -75.448785) at 06.45 they first didn't want to let us in as our names were not on the list (even when showing the payment, reservation etc.), but they made some calls and we got cleared. When we arrived at the cabins (5.07339, -75.43786) it turned out we got a Spanish speaking guide instead of an English speaking one, and we had to share it with the rest of the group too. The guide was also just stationed at the reserve and didn't seem to know many territories of birds. So far for targeting some specials we hoped for.

Birding starts at the cabins with some feeders that attracted **Long-tailed Sylph, Speckled Hummingbird, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Buff-tailed Coronet, Tourmaline Sunangel, Collared Inca** and **Brown Inca**. A **Choco Daggerbill/White-throated Daggerbill** showed up in the garden during lunch! But the main reason to go to Rio Blanco are the 4 (!) Antpitta feeders. Around 7.10 we went to the first feeder and it didn't take long before **Bicolored Antpitta** showed up. After that the guide and some group members went for breakfast, so again we lost good birding time. After that we did some roadside birding which yielded **Black-billed Mountain Toucan** (quite common here), **Dusky Piha** and we heard **Ash-colored Tapaculo**. Around 08.30 we arrived at the **Chestnut-crowned Antpitta** feeder. These beauties gave away a great show and the set-up of the feeder was quite nice as well. Walking farther uphill we encountered **Purple-backed Thornbills** feeding high up in a tree. A mixed flock

included some nice birds like **Capped Conebill**, **Black-capped Hemispingus** and **Grass-green Tanagers**.



**Chestnut-crowned Antpitta**



**Slate-crowned Antpitta**

At the third feeder we had to wait 0.5h before the first **Slate-crowned Antpitta** responded. It took 1.5h before we left without seeing it. We observed **Black-collared Jays** and a **Flammulated Treehunter** on the road, when the Antpitta suddenly sounded very close by. The guide Carlos was not giving up quickly and was able to lure it in and we were finally able to see the little fellow. After this we walked back down to the cabins for the 4<sup>th</sup> and last feeder; the endemic **Brown-banded Antpitta** (e). Also here we had to wait for almost 1.5h before it finally showed up! We booked a full day of birding, but this involved mostly the guide playing Andean Pygmy Owl in the hope that other birds would take a closer look. Needless to say we didn't see anything of note. On our way out of the reserve we tried at a spot which should be good for **Red-hooded Tanager** (5.068561, -75.439905). Unfortunately it rained and we didn't see any. Check this place in the morning when driving up.



**Bicolored Antpitta**



**Brown-banded Antpitta**

We camped 100m in front of the gate and spotlighted the public road for about 1.5h at night. This turned out to be quite productive, especially thanks to the Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V thermal scope. Rob didn't pick out anything with the flashlight, but Romy found one **Lemurine Night Monkey/Colombian Night Monkey** (besides quite some **Sickle-winged Guans**) in (different) Cecropia trees. We thought we had seen an **Olinguito**, but after better inspection on a bigger screen this

turned out to be a small-sized **Kinkajou** after all with a fluffy-looking tail (hopefully they will discover a Kinkajito one day). Just before we wanted to turn around Romy spotted a faint dot next to the road. Walking up there we first couldn't find it, but finally not obscured by many leaves it was clearly something. This turned out to be a **Stump-tailed Porcupine** in a small tree eating the bark (5.069672, -75.454721, directly south of the road, 20cm in diameter, brown bark). It was amazingly well camouflaged and had almost the same colour as the tree, including the yellow patches of the parts where he already chewed off the bark. Looking at this tree it seems that the Porcupine visits regularly, as the whole tree missed pieces of bark, including older marks. Well worth to check this specific tree if you spotlight here.

**Stump-tailed Porcupine****Stump-tailed Porcupine**

## Vereda Rio Claro

[4.99763, -75.54882](#)

**Visited date:** 22 March 2023

We thought about making a quick stop here for the endemic **Turquoise Dacnis** (e), which is regularly seen here. This short stop turned into almost 2 hours, and still we didn't find it. We did see many species of Tanager, **Crimson-rumped Toucanets** and **Greyish Piculet** (e).

## Santa Rosa de Cabal/Finca Cortaderal

[4.855944, -75.484395](#)

**Visited dates:** 22-24 March 2023

Finca Cortaderal is located uphill from the town of Santa Rosa de Cabal. The road towards is pretty ok, until the turn-off with Thermales San Vicent, after which there were some bad parts with deep holes. A high clearance vehicle is recommended.

We made the first stop at the first sign of the Fuertes' Parrot ([4.86029, -75.50723](#)), which is practically the only forest of considerable size before you reach the forests at Finca Cortaderal. Birding the road yielded a female **Swallow-tailed Nightjar**, which we flushed just before the bridge. Just after the bridge we encountered **Rufous-headed Pygmy-tyrants** on both sides of the road.



Spotlighting here only yielded **Rufous-banded Owl**. In the morning we had a **Smoky Bush-tyrant** calling near the sign.



**Greyish Piculet**



**Swallow-tailed Nightjar**

We then continued towards the hotspot for the Fuertes' Parrot. Here we decided to walk the road for about 2.5km before we turned around. **Golden-plumed Parakeet**, **Speckle-faced Parrot** and **Mealy Parrot** were all quite abundant, but the main target still eluded us. During the walk we observed **Caraculated Caracara** and heard **Ash-colored Tapaculo**, **Bicolored Antpitta** and **Chestnut-naped Antpitta**. We spoke to the owners of the farm and they said the parrots often come through the valley, flying from tree to tree in the early morning (05.30-07.00) and again in the afternoon (16.00-18.00). It was nice to know that the lazy option was actually the best option for a change, so we set camp at a good lookout point ([4.855944, -75.484395](#)). With the telescope ready we scanned all the trees, but it wasn't until almost midday that a flock of **Fuertes' Parrots** flew loudly in some trees up the hill on the right side. We were able to get some good scope views of them, but we still hoped for good photo opportunities of this stunning Parrot. In the afternoon it started to rain and we only saw a group of 8 landing shortly in the same trees before flying off to the other side of the valley. In the morning the drizzle didn't make for a nice wait either, and after waiting another 1.5h until 07.00 without any Parrots we decided to go to the next place. We ran into a Danish person that (with an NGO and money donated by Lego) bought 700ha of land to reforest and protect this beautiful area. They are going to sell 'stocks' of the land and buy new land again with the revenue. It should be possible to stay at the finca in the near future.

## NP Otún Quibaya

[4.72987, -75.57976](#)

**Visited dates:** 24-26 March 2023

NP Otún was very different from what we imagined and it was very nice to bird a small road in such lush forest without much traffic. We made a first stop ([4.73832, -75.59207](#)) just before La Suizza and soon picked up **White-naped Brushfinch** and **Parker's Antbird** (HO). In a short while we also found

**Crested Ant-tangers** (low in the shrubs) and **Multicolored Tanagers** (e) in mixed flocks. **Cauca Guan** (e) and **Red-ruffed Fruitcrow** were abundant, as everywhere in Otún.

The next stop was near the NP Headquarters/hotel ([4.72988, -75.579769](#)). In the shrubs along the roadside just before the gate we observed **Whiskered Wren** and **Orange-billed Nightingale-thrush**. Others have found **Chestnut Wood-quail**, **Stiles's Tapaculo** and **Rusty-winged Barbtail** on the B-trail by birding it before the NP rangers arrived (so before 08.00). As we were not staying at the hotel it was impossible to get on the trails unnoticed (let alone climb over the fence), so we were happy that we had already seen the Wood-quail before and found the other targets along the road.

We took a small side parking as home base ([4.721491, -75.565305](#)). Walking a bit back to the lodge we heard **Stiles's Tapaculo** (e) and managed to lure it within view. Walking past our car the fog came in and getting ID on birds was getting harder. We weren't sure if the bird we were looking at was a Barbtail, so we used playback to see if it would come. That bird didn't respond, but another one came right in, which was clearly a **Rusty-winged Barbtail**!

The next morning we started walking from our car at 05.30 and heard **Colombian Screech-owl** within a couple of 100m just before it started to get light. Around 06.45 we suddenly heard a familiar call: **Hooded Antpitta** (e, [4.713332, -75.555153](#))!! It did respond to playback, but we weren't able to lure it into views. The forest floor was so wet that we should have put on boots; then we might have been able to climb a bit uphill towards the Antpitta. Luckily we had awesome views of this stunner at El Encanto. We tried again the second morning around 06.15, but it was hard to distinguish the sound from the chorus of other bird songs. We also tried shortly at the known stake-out ([4.705435, -75.540186](#)), but were probably too late time-wise.



**Red-ruffed Fruitcrow**



**Rusty-winged Barbtail**

At a grassy patch ([4.708430, -75.547722](#)) we heard **Blackish Rail**. Just before we reached El Cedral another flock yielded **Rusty-winged Barbtail**, besides **Variegated Bristle-tyrant**, **Ashy-headed Tyrannulet** and more **Multicolored Tanagers**. When we turned around Rob noticed a big black shape coming out of the shrubs, and for a few seconds we were staring at a **Mountain Tapir** crossing the road, not to be found after that again. At the little stream on the left side we observed **Chestnut-**

**breasted Wren**. After the worst 'coffee' in Colombia at El Cedral we turned around focussing on finding **Tyrannine Woodcreeper** and **Bronze-olive Pygmy-tyrant**, which are quite often found here. We thought we heard the latter, but after some crawling in the shrubs these turned out to be **Spotted Barbtail**. One can stay in El Cedral ([4.70393, -75.53744](#)) in a dorm, with cold showers in a shared bathroom, which is 65kCOP p.p. including breakfast (+57 323 5091 882).



**Cauca Guan**



**Mountain Tapir**

Both afternoons and evenings we stayed here it rained quite a lot, which impeded a lot of spotlighting. The landslide about 1.5km before the end (El Cedral) didn't help either for spotlighting from the car, especially because the last part is supposed to be best for mammals. We didn't pick up anything at night with our spotlight from the car. Only one of the two nights a **Colombian Screech-owl** called from far away.

## Western Cordillera – Northern part

### Apía

[5.11366, -75.92957](#)

**Visited dates:** 26-27 March 2023

We thought about making a quick stop, but this turned out to become a bit longer than expected. We drove up a small road (starting at [5.096218, -75.928797](#)), which luckily was just not too slippery for our heavy car to get up. We parked the car ([5.11366, -75.92957](#)) and walked uphill. My notes were a little bit vague, so we continued on the main road and whacked our way downslope, surprised to find a normal path (which we backtracked in order to give the better description^^). The actual entrance to the trail is on the left side of the road ([5.11472, -75.928628](#)), going up some stairs and between some ruins over a small bridge. We observed **Yellow-headed Brushfinch** (e) along the road at the entrance of the trail. Continue until you see a couple of benches and a big observation tower ([5.117686, -75.929353](#)). Down the slope there is a lek of **Yellow-headed Manakin**. We played the tape up the hill and got an immediate response (HO), so we thought this one was going to be easy. Arriving at the actual lek we didn't hear anything for a while, and we got one response (calls



and mechanical wing sound) from down the slope. Later that afternoon we heard nothing at all. This made us stay the night.

We had **Mottled Owl** (HO) at the parking. In the morning we only heard the call of the Manakin once in 1.5 hours. We played the tape once before leaving and suddenly a **Yellow-headed Manakin** came flying in, looped around our head loudly calling and then disappeared again. **Grey-headed Dove** has found by others in this place as well.

A few kilometres after Apía we made a stop on the side of the road ([5.141275, -75.961702](#)). The tree on the right side of the road is called 'the holy tree' by some. This is *the* spot for **Turquoise Dacnis** (e) and probably most birders will add this species to their list over here. Sure enough it took about 10-15 minutes before we found 2 males at eye-level in the tree next to the road.

## Santa Cecilia

[5.11366, -75.92957](#)

**Visited date:** 27 March 2023

Driving towards Santa Cecilia we had already seen a few jeeps loaded with 20 guys in and on top of the jeep, carrying things that looked like weapons and sticks. We found the area to have a bit of a different vibe, although locals said it was safe and that only farther down the road it isn't safe anymore. Still, be sure to consult with someone before heading off to Santa Cecilia. There are a couple of places to stay in Santa Cecilia, with Hotel Piedras the only one having a secure parking place for a car.

As we had some time to spare before our next location we headed to Santa Cecilia for the day. Ross Gallardy (2017) visited this place as well, but somehow we only read his notes on Gito and not 'Área de Manejo Especial Etnico del Alto Amurru'. We wished we would have read it though, as we weren't sure where to go exactly. We parked our car at the gas station (5.343254, -76.150736). We then walked down the dirt road and crossed the river over the suspension bridge. We followed the trail to the left alongside the river and encountered **White-capped Dipper** and a **Spotted Sandpiper** in full breeding plumage. There wasn't a sign with a Baudo Oropendola on it as mentioned in Ross' report, and I guess a guide would be handy if you wish to see more than just the Oropendola. We did contact Blas (+57 315 7165 482), but he wasn't very responsive and he told us he didn't know many English bird names. Therefore we just focussed on the Oropendola in the area just after the bridge. They are often seen in the early morning (06.00-08.00), and a local said they often rest in some trees after coming from the mountain. We ran into a local that lived up the hill and actually knew the bird (and also works with Blas). He invited us to sit at his house to shelter from the pouring rain. Even during the rain some Oropendolas flew by, but the rain was so thick that it was impossible to tell (even from a picture) if it was not the **Chestnut-headed Oropendola** that occurs here too. Then

finally after 4 hours of waiting we had a beautiful **Baudo Oropendola** (e) fly over our heads; the pink cheeks even visible with the bare eye. We later spotted another one resting in a palm far away.

## Montezuma Lodge

[5.23033, -76.0836](#)

**Visited dates:** 28 March – 1 April 2023

Montezuma Lodge ([5.230336, -76.083607](#)) is a well-known lodge and a popular birding destination. For this reason it was high on our wish list and we were happy that we were able to arrange something with this lovely family. The 8.4km entrance road (starting at [5.25224, -76.05072](#)) was in ok condition and at parts it had some slippery muddy parts, but nothing very serious. We did some birding on the few forest parts that were left along the roadside and observed our first **Western Pygmy Squirrel** as well as **Moustached Puffbird** and **White-throated Daggerbill/Choco Daggerbill**. Most of the good birds are found along the road after the lodge however, so it's not worth birding just the entrance road if not staying at the lodge.



**Turquoise Dacnis**



**Green-bellied Thorntail**

The lodge and rooms itself are fairly basic (big white rooms with 2 beds, an open-ceiling bathroom with an electric shower and barely any decoration), but it is the location and the family that runs it that make this place fantastic. Reserve with Liseth Tapasco via WhatsApp (+57 315 3690 309, Spanish/English). Prices have gone up big time since Ross Gallardy (2017) visited, but if your budget allows, we would recommend at least 3 nights here to give yourself 2 full days on the Montezuma road.

As they operate within the National Park Tatamá, a guide is mandatory when birding the famous Montezuma road that lies after the lodge (guiding is 50USD per day). Our bird guide was Yesennia, often praised to be the best bird guide there. It was very nice to have a female guide for a change, and we were super happy with her company; she speaks English and knows all the birds very well! The 13km long road up to the top of Montezuma is in bad shape and a 4x4 is needed to get to the top, which takes  $\pm 1.5$ h ([5.2541, -76.1179](#)). If you have a driver, then take your own car up. If you

don't, then you can hire a car and driver from Montezuma Lodge (87USD per full day or 57USD for dropping you off and you can walk back down to the lodge). The birding after this involves walking down the road and focussing on different altitudes. Depending on how many days you have, the weather and your targets you can walk the road within 1 day or split it up. We walked down until about halfway on the first day. The second day we walked up and down 4.5km to save on a car. The 3<sup>rd</sup> day we got dropped 1km before the top and walked all the way down to the lodge, but weather was foggy/rainy without many birds.

**Rufous-naped Hillstar****Western Pygmy-squirrel**

On the third morning we had **Rufescent Screech-owl** (HO) when driving up to the top. Breakfast was enjoyed at the top near some feeders at which **Dusky Starfrontlet** (e) sometimes shows up. **Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer** (e) was around and is seen most days. **Crab-eating Fox** is often around too, as it knows there are left-overs from breakfast. Walking down we picked up **Munchique Wood-wren** (e) and **Tatama Tapaculo** (e). We couldn't find **Tanager Finch**, **White-faced Nunbird** or **Greater Scythebill** (the latter two being rare here). A bit lower down we encountered **Gold-ringed Tanager** (e), and we ended that first day with 18 individuals (including a group of 8).

**Gold-ringed Tanager****Choco Brushfinch**

Again a bit lower, number of bird species and individuals went up. On the first day and morning of the third day we encountered many good species, like **Tyrannine Woodcreeper**, **Yellow-breasted Anpitta**, **Chami Antpitta** (e), **Purplish-mantled Tanager**, **Dusky Chlorospingus**, **Choco Brushfinch**,



**Black-chinned Mountain-tanager, Black Solitaire, Bronze-olive Pygmy-tyrant, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia, Indigo Flowerpiercer (ne), Uniform Treehunter, Pacific Tuftedcheek, Beautiful Jay, Orange-breasted fruit-eater, Fulvous-dotted Treerunner and Glistening-green Tanager.**

The second day and afternoon of the third day we focused on species of lower elevation, including **Yellow-collared Chlorophonia, Choco Warbler (ne), Fulvous-breasted Flatbill, Club-winged Manakin, Golden-winged Manakin, Crested Ant-tanager (e), Toucan Barbet, Slaty Antwren, Rufous-breasted Antthrush (HO), Rusty-winged Barbtail, Rufous-throated Tanager and Multicolored Tanager (e).** We missed out on **Choco Vireo (ne)** at this altitude.



**Moustached Puffbird**



**Munchique Wood-wren**

## **Mistrató**

**5.37361, -75.89078**

**Visited dates:** 2-3 April 2023

### **Mirador Alto La Linda**

As we had missed Tanager Finch and White-faced Nunbird at Montezuma we had some back-up places we wanted to visit. The first one was a trail west and above Mistrató. Most of the habitat is quite degraded up to 2000m, but there is an interesting trail with some good species above that altitude. However, cattle/horses have trampled the path and we didn't particularly enjoy the walk as you are more often looking down at the trail than up at the birds. Be sure to bring boots. It might be nice birding for a morning when combined with the next place (Bird's Home Mistrató).

To get to the trail, drive 'calle 5' out of town, and go up the steep hill (5.289887, -75.888756). Most of the steep road going up is concrete, so any car with some power should be able to drive this part. Only higher up at the turnoff (5.279372, -75.891202) it gets trickier. Our 2WD car made it to the beginning of the trail (5.28456, -75.89844), but it was a bit slippery and we had to use our snow chains to get away from the parking place after it had rained at night. We recommend only going up with a 4x4. You can walk from the beginning of the trail, or even drive farther up the hill (only in a 4x4) and park where it gets more interesting (5.284996, -75.904534). From there you can only walk, and you have to follow the sign 'Sendero La Linda'. After a couple of 100m you end up at an

observation tower (like the ones at Montezuma and Apía), which is a good spot for **Yellow-headed Brushfinch** (e). Continue straight, climbing up the hill on the terrible path. You will get into a little canyon, with just before the end a sign stating this is a reserve (5.289682, -75.911882). Exactly at this point is where we observed 2 **White-faced Nunbirds**. Here we took the upper trail on the right side of the sign, up to the part where it goes down again. Here we encountered **Munchique Wood-wren** (e), **Purplish-mantled Tanager** and **Barred Fruiteater**. Only later we heard that the place for **Tanager Finch** is reached by continuing through the canyon (so to the left at the sign), walking over the wooden beams until you reach antennas. This should be the spot for the Finches. **Gold-ringed Tanager** should be possible here too.



**White-faced Nunbird**



**Purplish-mantled Tanager**

### **Bird's Home Mistrató**

Continuing on the gravel road north of Mistrató, you will reach Bird's Home Mistrató after about 12km ([5.373616, -75.890783](#)). It's a very simple house, with two rooms for guests (1 bunk bed and 1 double bed, shared bathroom). Even though it's very basic, the hosts are very nice people and the place is nice for photography and doing something different than the normal birding circuit. To reserve you can contact Arnulfo Sanches (+57 317 3625 489). He speaks some very basic English, but knows all the English bird names and is enthusiastic as well. Day visits are possible too (15kCOP p.p.) for just watching the feeders. We didn't reserve and were still welcomed with open arms, coffee, cheese etc. The house looks out over a beautiful valley, which is the background for the feeders. The hummingbird feeders attract most of the same species as in Montezuma, but the set-up is better for photography. In order of abundance during our visit: **Velvet-purple Coronet**, **Purple-throated Woodstar**, **Violet-tailed Sylp**, **Buff-tailed Coronet**, **Empress Brilliant**, **Collared Inca**, **Brown Inca**, **Andean Emerald**, **White-necked Jacobin**, **Fawn-breasted Brilliant**, **White-booted Racket-tail**, **(Green-)Crowned Woodnymph**, **Greenish Puffleg**, **Lesser Violetear**, **Purple-bibbed Whitetip** and **Speckled Hummingbird**. **Western Emerald** also came to the *Verbana*.

The banana feeders attracted a variety of Tanagers, including **Black-and-gold Tanager** (e). **Scarlet-fronted Parakeets** flew by, as do **Yellow-eared Parrots** (e) sometimes. We were lucky enough that one of the owners recognised the call of an **Ornate Hawk-eagle** that flew over the house and later

through the valley. We also heard **Barred Hawk** calling from the valley, which is observed a bit more often here than the former. Another special heard often from the house (but rarely seen) is **Cloud-forest Pygmy-owl**.



**Velvet-purple Coronet**



**Black-and-gold Tanager**

Some roadside birding close to the house yielded **Scaled Fruiteater** (HO) and **Orange-breasted Fruiteater**. Thanks to a tip from Arnulfo, we observed **White-headed Wren** on the opposite side of the valley (5.383459, -75.891365). This place and farther towards San Antonio de Chami is a good place for **Choco Toucan**, which can already be heard from the house.

## Jardín

[5.59626, -75.82142](#)

**Visited dates:** 3-6 April 2023

We drove to Jardín from the south (Riosucio). It is paved for the first part and they are busy with the next couple of kilometres. We drove the road with our 2WD high clearance vehicle, but some parts were quite muddy and a bit slippery. This was on a sunny day, so most likely on rainy days it's even worse. We recommend only driving this road with a 4x4, unless you know the state of the road has improved or you have a high clearance powerful 2WD and decent driving experience on these kinds of roads. The road coming from the north of Jardín is paved, but gets worse after Jardín. This part however is not as bad as the southern part and can be driven with a high clearance, powerful 2WD. Otherwise you could opt for hiring a 4x4 taxi to bring you to Alto de Ventanas and Mirador el Roble.

### Mirador el Roble

We already had Mirador el Roble ([5.49257, -75.779221](#)) on our map to visit. The main reason was to see the **Chami Antpitta** and **Chestnut-naped Antpitta** that both come to a feeder about 1km north of the house and another couple of 100m into the forest (60kCOP p.p., including watching the feeders at the house all day). At the feeding site we had a flock with amongst them **White-browed Spinetail**. Make sure to scan for **Chestnut-crested Cotinga** just north of the restaurant, as some birders have seen it there.



The main reason to come here changed when we heard about a Northern Oncilla coming almost daily to the house. This cat is seldom seen in the wild, let alone reliably found somewhere, so this was the chance of a lifetime. One can stay at Mirador el Roble, but a reservation made over WhatsApp with Lucia is advised also for day visits (+57 314 6837 549). The room itself is basic (curtain for a door for example) and the bathroom is shared. However, the drive from Jardín takes about 1.5h and is not very pleasant.



**White-capped Tanager**



**Acorn Woodpecker**

We didn't have a reservation and had one of the most awkward welcomes of our trip. Upon asking if we were allowed to watch the hummingbird feeders and wait for the Oncilla they looked like we asked if they saw purple cows flying by regularly or just every now and then. We tried to get some information on where exactly and how often the Oncilla showed up, and if he was coming more often at certain hours of the day. The only clear information we got is that it came up that morning at 08.00. Even though **Yellow-eared Parrots** flew by regularly that afternoon, we and the camera were only ready for that moment that the cat would come. We sat there from 12.00-18.00, and then decided to walk down the steep entrance road towards our car that we had parked below. While Romy was making dinner, Lucia came down and gave a thumb up. We of course gave thumbs up back, but soon it became clear that the cat had come! We ran up the hill towards the house, and the **Northern Oncilla** was still there, sneaking up on another tourist with a camera. We were able to get some pictures despite the light vanishing quickly, before Lucia finally gave a fish head and off it went.

The next morning we were up at 06.00 again and hoped for the cat to arrive early. We were glad to have the company of Rob Smith from WildColombia, who coincidentally came up with a client. Already enthusiastic about Rob over email and WhatsApp, we are even more so after meeting him in real life. He is really good company and he also made sure we were looked after coffee-wise. We would definitely recommend going with him if you want a guided tour.

We were a bit hesitant to go to the Antpitta feeders the first day around 08.00, in fear that the cat would show up during that 1 hour that we would be away. Luckily the cat decided to come around

11.40, at 12.10 and again at 12.45. Every time it would sneak up, trying to find out who was holding some food. After a while the owner would come up with a fish head, and when coming closer this Oncilla transformed from a cute little cat into a wild aggressive murder machine, raking those claws towards the food while growling. It was fed a fish head every time it showed up, and after the third it apparently had enough for the day. We stayed another morning and again the Oncilla showed up, this day at 09.40, 10.00 and 10.15. The day before we made a nice set-up with another guest, as the garden itself was not very pretty for photography. By holding the fish above the set-up we were able to get some nice photographs of this rarely seen wild cat.



Northern Oncilla



Northern Oncilla

Interesting birds that showed up during our wait here are **White-capped Tanager**, **Acorn Woodpecker**, **Tawny-breasted Tinamou** (HO) and **Black-billed Mountain-toucan** (HO). There was also a **Red-tailed Squirrel** that sometimes went through the shrubs. The owners claim that **Olinguito** comes to the house in the evening to get a banana, but the video showed a **Kinkajou** to both us and Rob Smith. We waited 2 nights from 19.00-20.30 without a sign of either.



Slaty Brushfinch



Chami Antpitta

#### Alto de Ventanas

After the exciting Oncilla sightings we birded higher up on the mountain, an area known as Alto de Ventanas. This is where ProAves has the Yellow-eared Parrot reserve (RNA Loro Orejiamarillo). We found the views of the parrots very good near the restaurant 1km north of Mirador el Roble. If you



don't want to drive that far, you can watch them fly by at an open area with some palms ([5.530045, -75.804099](#)). We also observed them closer by while driving down to Jardín. We still had some other bird targets left and birded one afternoon and one (rainy) morning at the top and down towards Jardín. We finally encountered our main target **Tanager Finch** on a part where the hillside is fairly steep (5.540422, -75.799103). **Ocellated Tapaculo** was heard and shortly seen farther down (5.543540, -75.803726). Romy then saw something crossing the street and luckily Rob was just in time to see it was a dark brown/olive-looking **Western Mountain Coati**. It also looked a tad smaller than the other (lowland) coati species we had seen during our travel. Unfortunately it wasn't followed by any group members and we didn't get a picture. Other interesting birds we observed here are **Striped Treehunter** (HO), **Crimson-mantled Woodpecker** and **Chami Antpitta** (HO). We hoped to finally have an encounter with **Red-hooded Tanager**, but we had clearly already spent all our luck with the Oncilla.

**Chestnut-naped Antpitta****Tanager Finch**

Driving down to Jardín we encountered a group of **Red-bellied Grackles** (e) near the big stream (5.573074, -75.772984). This bridge should be good for **Torrent Duck** too.

**Andean Cock-of-the-Rock****Andean Cock-of-the-Rock**

#### Jardín de Rocas – Andean Cock-of-the-Rock reserve

Just south of Jardín is a small reserve with a big **Andean Cock-of-the-Rock** lek ([5.596267, -75.821426](#)). If you come by car, leave it up the hill in front of the bridge. The entrance to the reserve



is 12kCOP p.p., and when we were there it was only open from 15.00-17.00. Come as early as possible, as it gets pretty crowded. Even if you have seen this species or other leks, we can really recommend this one. You are more or less inside the lek and the birds are quite habituated to humans standing close by.

## ProAves Reserve - Las Tangares

[5.82003, -76.17694](#)

**Visited dates:** 6-8 April 2023

Las Tangaras is another famous birding spot with many similar birds to Montezuma. I think that we would opt for going to Montezuma if budget allows in your vacation. If budget is limited or you like to (only) do independent birding, then Las Tangares might be a better option for you. We encountered most of the same species here, except for some good ones that mainly occur higher up on the road at Montezuma. That said, we don't see much added value in visiting both places, especially because both places take some time to get to during a vacation.

There is a lodge from ProAves along the main road (outside the reserve). The road leading up to the reserve is in excellent condition and driveable with any car. At the top ([5.820031, -76.176948](#)) there are some hummingbird feeders, but the gate was locked when we were there. As the Empress Brilliant even tried to find food in our ears, we assumed that the feeders were empty, so we set up our own feeders. These attracted **Purple-bibbed Whitetip**, **Empress Brilliant**, **Violet-tailed Sylph** and **Velvet-purple Coronet**. The top is a great place to try for **Cloud-forest Pygmy-owl**, which we heard down the slope at the beautiful viewpoint. Here we also had **Barred Parakeets** flying by. Very early morning we heard both **Rufous-fronted Wood-quails** as well as **Chestnut Wood-quails**. A mixed flock at the top brought **Black-and-gold Tanager** (e), **Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia** and **Rufous-crested Tanager**.



**Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia**



**Orange-breasted Fruiteater**

In the morning we walked the trail, which starts 2.3km down from the top. The road towards here is not as good as the road up, but still pretty great for a gravel road. At the entrance of the trail ([5.8065, -76.181676](#)) there is a cattle-gate that has to be opened and closed. The first part of the trail goes

through some open pasture, where we observed **White-headed Wren**, **Black-chinned Mountain-tanager** and another **Black-and-Gold Tanager** (these turned out to be quite common). Around the first sheltered bench (5.80993, -76.184191) we heard **Tatama Tapaculo** (e). **Nariño Tapaculo** (e) and **Yellow-breasted Antpitta** were fairly commonly heard along the whole trail. Around the second shelter (5.812721, -76.186316) we heard 2 more **Cloud-forest Pygmy-owls**. We gladly used the shelters, as it was very foggy and raining until 08.30 or so.

After passing the waterfall the trail ascends up to the top via a small path over a landslide (not for the faint-hearted). During the ascent we had great views of a male **Orange-breasted Fruiteater**. The last shelter at the top (5.812774, -76.189463) is where we encountered **Uniform Antshrike**. This should also be the location for **Gold-ringed Tanager** (e), but it seems that going up early and straight to the top gives a better chance for this species.

With every mixed flock we paid extra attention to Choco Vireo, but due to the fog it was very hard to ID any birds sometimes. We thought that we heard it at the second shelter, but couldn't be 100% sure. Luckily a very responsive **Choco Vireo** (ne) perched at eye-level near the landslide and we got very good views of this canopy-dweller. **Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner** was present in every flock. Other good birds were **Dusky Bush Tanager** (e), **Pacific Tuftedcheek** and **Glistening-green Tanager**.

Driving back to the main road we saw the entrance of a trail  $\pm 500\text{m}$  before the top, but we didn't notice the sign on our way up because of its orientation. This trail starts already at a higher altitude and might therefore be interesting for birders searching for Gold-ringed Tanager.



**Choco Vireo**



**Purple-bibbed Whitetip female**

## ProAves Reserve – Urrao/Colibri del Sol Reserva

[6.42683, -76.08798](#)

**Visited date:** 9 April 2023

We drove the 60AN06 towards Urrao, and this paved road was generally in good state. After Urrao the road towards Terminal el Chuscal ([6.392729, -76.077745](#)) is a bit bumpy, but anybody with some driving skills should be able to drive this without a 4x4. On the way back we drove the Via Caicedo

going east. This is a gravel road, but in pretty good condition, and it seems that they are busy paving more and more. We ran into construction which closed the road from 07.00-17.00, but with some pleading and 1.5h waiting we got permission to drive through the road construction and we were on our way again. ProAves should have the latest information, so ask about this when you reserve (+57 323 4343 487). We already reserved weeks in advance, but they were very slow to reply. They were also not keen on us paying our day visit (50kCOP p.p.) in cash at the lodge itself, but the rangers do have day tickets, so in the end it wasn't a problem.

Terminal el Chuscal is the starting point of the trail towards the ProAves reserve 'Colibri del Sol'. Local Chivas already arrive here at 06.00/06.30, and use the parking to turn (so park on the grass if you have your own car). The farmer let us camp here and we were off in the morning at 05.00. We got a bit lost in the first couple of kilometres through pasture, as the trail was a bit hard to follow in the dark. The trail until the bridge is in maps.me, but just in case we share some waypoints. From the Terminal, continue straight until you arrive at the river, where you cross the bridge (6.399109, -76.07826). From there you go straight through a cattle gate and follow the path as it bends right along the vegetation. Then you cross a little stream (6.401857, -76.078312), turn right afterwards and go left uphill after 50m at the large solitary pine. Make your way to the next gate (6.405951, -76.077171) and the next (6.409013, -76.076689), after which you follow the path straight past the concrete bunker towards a sign for the Colibrí del Sol next to a little gulley (6.414376, -76.076943). Don't cross the bridge (6.415462, -76.077063), but continue straight along the river and take the path uphill (6.417449, -76.079316). At the top, go through the gate and turn right along the fence towards the entrance of the reserve (6.420957, -76.081726). From there it was rather straightforward towards the lodge ([6.426836, -76.08798](#)).

There used to be a feeder for the endemic Antpitta near the lodge, but they don't have it anymore. The guide says they are not working on luring a new one, and that they want to make the birds (including hummingbirds) less dependent on feeders. It sounded like a personal philosophy, more than from ProAves, but still not hopeful for future birders. Luckily we heard multiple individuals and got great views of **Urrao Antpitta** (e) on the trail towards the lodge (6.424120, -76.086517). Arriving at the lodge we paid the fee and then were suddenly told the trail towards the páramo is closed since October 2022 and not about to open any time soon. This because Colombian tourists went everywhere in the páramo and it needs to recover. Of course we were very unhappy to only hear about this when we were there, even though we asked multiple times whether the hummingbird feeders up at the páramo were filled up regularly via WhatsApp. We decided to disobey and went through the gate and up the hill anyway. This 2h walk is tough, but the path is clear (except for the first small pasture, where the path begins again at the right hand side at the top). On the way up we heard **Tawny-breasted Tinamou**. Arriving at the first feeders (6.436653, -76.088658) there were no feeders. Climbing farther up we heard **Paramillo Tapaculo** (e) and it quickly came sneaking towards the path for some nice views. Unfortunately the same was true for the second feeders (6.437950, -76.088104), and unfortunately the sugar water we brought ourselves just for this event didn't attract



any hummingbird. We focussed on any flowering plants and we quickly found **Glowing Puffleg** (endemic ssp. *paramillo*), **Viridian Metaltail**, **Tyrian Metaltail** and **Sparkling Violetear**. Not long after we had one hummingbird with a golden-green rump, the right size and the right bill size, foraging at some flowers with its back to us: **Dusky Starfrontlet** (e)!! Unfortunately it went away and despite 2 hours of waiting we didn't see another individual again. We went farther up the páramo and encountered **Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercers** and (female) **Purple-backed Thornbills**. **Black-throated Flowerpiercer** (possible split) should be here too, but we didn't have much time left. There were very little flowers around and after it started to rain we decided to go down again as we still had a long walk back to our car.

**Urrao Antpitta****Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer**

Even though we had our targets, we were very frustrated that there weren't any feeders at the páramo. Others had the Starfrontlets very easily and with great views at the feeders, and called them 'common'. This is of course what we had hoped for as well, instead of a quick and crappy view. Make sure to ask ProAves about the páramo and feeder situation before going here. If the feeders are regularly filled, it is very possible to get all the targets in one day, weather dependent. Otherwise you might want to give yourself a bit more time and stay 1-2 nights in the lodge. If the páramo trail is closed, another option is to reach it from the other side. For this, follow the trail in maps me (going over the bridge). The ranger said this trail is even tougher than the one in the reserve, so if you are adventurous enough, you might even want to camp in the pasture or at the top of the páramo (there is a camping sign on the trail in maps.me).

## Medellín and surroundings

### Bolombolo – Roadside 60AN06

[5.96648, -75.860436](#)

**Visited date:** 8 April 2023

A well-known stop, conveniently located (nearly) on route from Medellin towards Urrao/Las Tangares and or Jardín. The place to stop here is at the 3km marker (5.96648, -75.860436); park your

car on the side of the road with blinkers on. As we arrived on a hot Eastern Sunday it took a bit more time than we expected, but in the end we found **Antioquia Wren** (e) 50m before the sign. **Apical Flycatcher** (e) flew from the shrubs above the marker to the other side of the road. We didn't try for **Greyish Piculet** (e), as we had seen this species before. We did walk the roadside a bit up and down and also found some migrant warblers and a **Slate-headed Tody-flycatcher**.

## San Pedro de los Milagros

[6.43826, -75.55276](#)

**Visited date:** 10 April 2023

We made our way to San Pedro de los Milagros, but took a 'shortcut' from San Jerónimo via el Tambo. Wrong choice, as the road is in very bad condition and took hours. It's best to come from Medellín via the 62AN18. We arrived at the Finca Sagrado Corazón de Jesús (6.440983, -75.551063) and asked for permission to bird the trail. A woman said we had to get a permit to get into the reserve. Luckily an older man said there was no need for that, as we were already there and we knew where to go. To be sure you have permission, contact either Ana (+57 304 3837 600, Spanish/English) or Broder (+57 304 5331 066, Spanish).

We parked the car at the side of the road and walked down the path (beginning at [6.438263, -75.55276](#)). We came to the damp vegetated gully, but no sign of our main target during the midst of the hot afternoon. We continued and walked over different pastures along the edges of the vegetation, but found nothing. Coming back around 17.00 at the gully we observed a **Black-throated Flowerpiercer** (a possible split), and not much later **Antioquia Brushfinch** (e) going through the vegetation. It didn't respond to sound and it seemed to be just a lucky coincidence that we saw it.



**Antioquia Wren**



**Antioquia Brushfinch**

## ProAves – Piha Reserve

[6.43826, -75.55276](#)

Visited dates: 11-14 April 2023

The road up to the Piha Reserve is paved and in good condition. Some stops on the way at lower altitudes can be rewarding. We walked the road and found **Tody Motmot** with the aid of our Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V thermal scope (at [6.813055, -75.147850](#)), and only 50m farther **Yellow-browed Shrike-vireo** (ne). On our way back to Medellín we birded again in the early morning and also found **Black-faced Antthrush** and **Yellow-tufted Dacnis** at this location.

On the way up we tried several spots (1. [6.922609, -75.160498](#); 2. [6.95391, -75.146925](#); 3. [6.969658, -75.128525](#)) for **Magdalena Antbird** (e), but only heard it at the second spot during the middle of the day. On the way back we went to these places again early in the morning and heard it at the third spot and finally laid eyes on it at the 2<sup>nd</sup> spot. At the third spot we also observed **Ruddy Foliage-gleaner**.



**Tropical Screech-owl**



**Tody Motmot**

Arriving at the Piha Reserve we parked our car near the entrance of the trail system ([6.98373, -75.11118](#)). The first afternoon we walked the roadside towards the marsh ([6.992333, -75.115017](#)). Here we heard **Russet-crowned Crane**, but no **Blackish Rail** or **White-throated Crane** as others did. At night we searched at the marsh for **White-tailed Nightjar**, but dipped. Just after the lodge we observed **Pale-footed Tamarin** (e). The only bird of note we observed along the roadside was **White-crowned Manakin** (ssp. *Colombian*, e), which seemed to have a lek down slope ([6.988531, -75.111176](#)). It took some walking down the slope to actually see one.

The next morning we went up the trail, following the red signs towards the ridge, which starts when going uphill to the right ([6.978534, -75.114048](#), no sign here). In the forest we heard **South-American Leaftosser**. The ridge should be good for the main target here; **Chestnut-capped Piha**. We walked a bit past a territory mentioned by other birders ([6.981431, -75.120442](#)), but we couldn't find it. We did find a **Sharpbill** (HO, Romy actually observed it) at this spot. In the better forest on the ridge we observed **Golden-breasted Fruiteater**. Other birds of note are **Sooty-headed Wren** (ne), **Parker's**



**Antbird** (e, female in a mixed flock) and **Uniform Antshrike**. On our way back we took the turn-off to the waterfall, which eventually ends in front of the lodge.

At the lodge (6.98464, -75.11196) are feeders where many of the more common hummers show up. **Black-headed Brushfinch** comes to the corn on the ground early morning and late afternoon. More interestingly is that **Pale-footed Tamarins** show up almost daily at the banana feeders. **Central American Agouti** and **Lowland Paca** are supposed to show up regularly too, but there was probably too much noise from the company we were with for them to show up. We also observed **Andean Squirrel** in the garden, besides some rodents spec. coming to the corn. Walking at night from the lodge towards our parked car (so towards Medellín), there is a roadside cliff on the right side of the road. This is the nesting site of a **Lyre-tailed Nightjar**.



**Pale-footed Tamarin**



**Andean Squirrel**

As we still missed our main targets we went to the end of the trail. There is a place to park in the corner of the road ([7.011099, -75.127483](#)). From here we heard **Russet-crowned Crakes** coming from different directions, and we managed to actually see one. At night we camped at this spot and observed both **Stygian Owl** and **Mottled Owl**.



**Stygian Owl**



**Mottled Owl**

From the left side of the parking is a trail going up, first through an open area with mainly ferns (and a forested valley on the right side). After a while the trail gets to some forest, comparable to the

forest on the ridge mentioned above. Here we had a mixed flock, including **Rufous-browed Tyrannulet**! A little bit farther the trail borders a valley (7.006246, -75.129730). This is where we heard in the afternoon and observed the following morning no less than 3 **Chestnut-capped Pihas** (e)! We walked the trail a bit farther, as it goes down and into higher forest. As it was already really sunny and warm we turned around and didn't explore any further.



**Lyre-tailed Nightjar with chick**



**Chestnut-capped Piha**

## Medellín - Parque Ecologico La Romera

[6.12676, -75.60097](#)

**Visited date:** 19 April 2023

As we weren't happy with our crappy sighting of the Yellow-headed Manakin that we had before, we decided to visit Parque Ecologico La Romera, south of Medellín. We arrived at 06.30 at the gate (6.126767, -75.600977), which was closed. The road leading up to the gate is a bit small and there is no designated parking space, so we were happy we avoided the weekend and were able to park it 200m before the gate. This stretch of road next to the deep gully is the place for the Manakin. It didn't take very long before we had a male **Yellow-headed Manakin** (ne) in a tree just above the road. What an incredible bird! We heard one more calling from deep in the gully. Others come here too for **Red-bellied Grackle** (e) and **Stiles's Tapaculo** (e). The former was seen within 400m after the gate, and the latter was heard quite often walking up the road. We walked the road up the hill in search of **Andean Squirrel**, of which there are quite some observations here on iNaturalist, but we couldn't find one.

# The Northwest

## Reserva La Bonga

[7.18554, -76.37587](#)

Visited dates: 21-22 April 2023

We arrived and met our guide William Blan on April the 20th at the hotel ([7.209456, -76.421699](#)) near La Bonga. We contacted his brother Carlos first, who got off to a great start as he replied in English (with Google Translate, but still; it's something many guides don't even try). Unfortunately he didn't reply anymore after that and as we were short on time we contacted William, who was available on very short notice.

The hotel costs about 45kCOP for a double room, no food included. The hotel is a secure location to store the car when going to the Reserva for 1 or more days. The next morning the four of us (William took his little dog with him for some reason..) left at 06.30, and soon we wished we left earlier as it was getting hot quickly. We walked along the main road to the entrance of the trail ([7.204867, -76.413801](#)). During the first  $\pm 1.5$ km that we walked through pastures we observed **Yellow-throated Toucan** and **Keel-billed Toucan**. We then reached some nice forest where we found **Chestnut-backed Antbird**, **Golden-collared Manakin** (both common) and **Black-headed Tody-flycatcher**. It rapidly turned out that William didn't actually know any English names except for a few common ones, and that he didn't even know many sounds or all the Latin names. After getting lost halfway we really got our doubts, but that detour was rewarded once a flock came through which included a **Blue-whiskered Tanager**.



Blue-whiskered Tanager



Tooth-billed Hummingbird

A **Dwarf Squirrel spec.** could have been a nice addition to our Colombian mammal list, but it remains unclear even with pictures whether the species here is indeed **Central American Dwarf Squirrel** or another **Western Dwarf Squirrel**. William recognized the sound of a frog, which turned out to be a small endemic poison frog; **Andinobates victimatus**. Nice birds that we encountered walking up to the farm were **Black-capped Pygmy-tyrant**, **Thicket Antpitta** (HO, but common) and **Brown-capped Tyrannulet** (HO). After crossing another pasture we suddenly heard a hummingbird loudly calling



next to the path, and this turned out to be a **Tooth-billed Hummingbird** (7.193000, -76.387581). It was there too when we returned the next day (maybe a lek?). At the exact same place we observed **White-whiskered Hermit** and multiple **Stripe-throated Hermits**. Just before we reached the farm we heard **Southern Bentbill**.

The farm house (7.185541, -76.375888) had a room with 2 beds ready for us, and the elderly woman made us some lunch. We mainly walked around the very wet pasture (you need boots here), but with the heat there was little activity. Two **Mirthle Warblers** in a fruiting tree next to the house were a big surprise (rare in Colombia), and **Rufous-winged Tanager** and **Spot-crowned Barbet** were present in the same tree. In a tree far up on the hill Romy spotted some movement. Then we noticed a black shape moving through the tree, and these turned out to be **Brown-headed Spider-monkeys!** Spotlighting at night only showed a Potoo spec far away (*Long-tailed Potoo ssp. chocoensis* should be there, but Common and Great Potoo too). A mammal seen through the thermal scope on the other side of the field was obviously gone when we finally reached that side of the field.

The next morning we heard **Rufous-fronted Wood-quail** from the house. We went up the little hill, until a flattish part (7.18592, -76.36872). On the way there we encountered **Spot-crowned Antwreos**, **Checker-throated Antwren**, **Tawny-faced Gnatwren**, **White-ruffed Manakin**, **Velvety Manakin** and some good species like **Baudo Guan** (ne) and **Lita Woodpecker**. At the top we encountered the awesome looking **Lemon-spectacled Tanagers**. A flock came through and we then heard and subsequently observed **Double-banded Greytail**. Rob got another great bird, **Scarlet-and-white Tanager**, which Romy unfortunately missed. On the way back to the house we observed **Black-striped Woodcreeper** and heard both **Choco Trogon** and **Black-headed Antthrush**. A **Purple-crowned Fairy** flew all the way down from the canopy to get a closer look at us and a **King Vulture** flew overhead when we reached the pasture. After a quick lunch we walked back to our car. It was quiet along the way, but we still added **White-whiskered Puffbird** to the list of new species. Just after we left the forest we again observed **Double-banded Greytails** a tree in the pasture.



**Double-banded Greytail**



**Lemon-spectacled Tanager**

## Vereda Remigios – Chigorodó

[7.63922, -76.58926](#)

Visited date: 23 April 2023

It's a  $\pm 1.5$ h drive from the previous location till here. There is now a paramilitary toll station on the road towards the birding spot (7000COP per car). You have to get permission from the house at the end of the road (7.637, -76.60129). You can drive a bit towards (and through) the river and park the car on the other side (7.6419, -76.59368). There is only one target here, but it's a good one. **Dusky-backed Jacamar** (ne) has multiple territories here and with the help of William to get us to the location we quickly encountered two (7.639105, -76.589073). **Collared Aracari** (*ssp. sanguineus*; Stripe-billed Aracari), **Caribbean Hornero** and **Pied Puffbird** were encountered along the way. On the way back we made another stop to search for **Northern Royal Flycatcher**, but couldn't find it. We did encounter a group of **Cotton-top Tamarins** (e)! William helped us to safely park our car for the night and get a hotel, and after a beer we said goodbye again. He is a very nice guy and does all the right things a guide should do, but doesn't know the English bird names and sounds well enough in our opinion. If you just want a guide to get you safely to the right places, he is definitely a good one! If you want a birding guide, maybe it's better to go with his brother Carlos.

## Bocas del Atrato

[8.08811, -76.83676](#)

Visited date: 23 April 2023

Waking up early and driving to Turbo we had heavy rains the whole morning, and they didn't stop when we arrived at the harbour ([8.081932, -76.722122](#)). Turbo itself is a bit dodgy, but there is secure parking at the harbour. We had already reserved our tickets with TIPAL S.A.S. per WhatsApp (+57 313 7169 910) and we were able to pay for them at the counter (20kCOP tickets + 5000COP harbour fee p.p.). The boat left at 11.00 and we arrived in front of the hotel ([8.088119, -76.836761](#)) in Bocas del Atrato around 11.30. William was so nice to make sure Nelson was expecting us. Nelson doesn't have a phone, but you can reserve him by sending a WhatsApp to his sister-in-law; Luz Enith (+57 310 380 9647/+57 313 6856 524). We asked for Nelson at the house on the left side of the hotel and Nelson quickly came down and arranged a small canoe. He then took us to a small canal through the mangroves, starting just before the village. Two male **Black Antshrikes** were easily lured in at the beginning of the canal. At the end we first heard the **Sooty-capped Puffbird** (e) and it took a while to find it as it was high up in a tree. A **Cinnamon Woodpecker** called and flew in the same tree not long after we finally found the Puffbird. On the way back we observed another 2 Puffbirds and heard a couple farther away. After 2 hours we were back at the hotel. We paid 60kCOP to Nelson as he didn't have a fixed price in mind and we had read that amount in a report from Joshua. We wanted to walk the boardwalk behind the hotel for the remaining time, but that plan was abandoned right away when we saw the terrible state the boardwalk, or what remained of it, was in. It would have been better to fill up our total time going through the mangroves with Nelson. No other option now than

to buy some ice-cream and wait for the boat back, which normally arrives at 15.30-16.00. Our boat back was another one than we took on our way to Bocas, so just wave at any reasonable boat that comes by around that time to make sure you get back to Turbo (again 20kCOP p.p.). On the way we observed **Brown Pelican**, **Magnificent Frigatebird** and **Royal Terns**.



**Sooty-capped Puffbird**



**Dusky-backed Jacamar**

## Necoclí - Marimondo

[8.56011, -76.82536](#)

**Visited dates:** 24-25 April 2023

We were able to arrange things at this location thanks to contacts via the Colombian Neotropical Primate Conservation. We had agreed to meet our guide William (+57 311 7076 683, Spanish) at his house (8.55507, -76.82395). The road from Necoclí is good in the beginning but turns from asphalt into a road with some very deep potholes and slippery mud-parts. We would advise to get here with a 4x4. After we picked up William we continued to the house of Don Pedro and Enelda, the president of the community ([8.560111, -76.825363](#)). We camped in the garden, but they also have a room for two people and can cook all the meals you need. Even though it was already the end of the morning, we decided to go into the forest and start searching for primates. It didn't take long before we heard **Colombian Red Howlers**, and while setting course in that direction we encountered a solitary **Colombian White-faced Capuchin**. A bit later we encountered **Red-tailed Squirrel** and also heard a Tamarin. Then we saw movement and clapped eyes on a group of **Brown-headed Spider-monkeys**. Right when we got underneath the group we spotted a bunch of **Cotton-top Tamarins**. It was very hard to decide which to photograph at any time. Unfortunately the Tamarins left pretty quickly to a very wet and muddy part of the forest, so we focussed on the Spider-monkeys. We observed them grooming each other, foraging and just simply playing, amazing! Then this group set out as well and we counted 13 of them, including youngsters. Some more searching through the forest only yielded more Capuchins. Non-mammal-wise we encountered the amazing-looking **Keel-billed Toucan** and **Yellow-bellied Poison Frog** (*Andinobates fulguritus*). With the heat we were exhausted, and the promise of an easy boat trip the next morning made us decide to rest the remaining part of the afternoon. William said that they usually charge 80kCOP a day as a local guide.



**Keel-billed Toucan****Cotton-top Tamarin**

At night we camped near a mango tree, which was the only flat part where our car could stand on their property. It was not the best decision... not so much that the mangos were falling due to ripeness, but because there were at least 50 bats foraging in and around this one tree. Some of them ate the fruits from the palm next to it, and these have lots of seeds in them. Although they were amazing to watch, it wasn't as much fun to clean the whole tent the morning after.

During the months May-September they might be able to arrange with the other community that you can search at night for marine turtles that come to nest on the beach.

**Brown-headed Spider-monkeys****Colombian Red Howler**

The next morning we went out on a boat with another guide, Ornellio. Finally a guide in Colombia that showed up well before the agreed meeting time of 06.00! We went out on a small canoe from a local farmer (20kCOP) and went onto a big lake. There we observed some nice birds like **Azure Gallinule** (very rare here in the northwest!), **Osprey**, **Great Blue Heron**, **Green Heron** and **Tricolored Heron**, the last three all new for our South-America list. We did see **Colombian White-fronted Capuchin** very often during the 3 hours that we were on the boat. We also observed one big group of **Colombian Red Howlers** and a group of **Cotton-top Tamarins**. But primate watching from the lake turned out to be different from what William had promised the afternoon before. The monkeys were all far away, the boat was an unstable canoe and for photography it didn't help that the guide often went the opposite direction of what we asked. We would have rather gone for another walk and try

for better pictures that way. It is just as easy to encounter a group in the forest and most likely they will be closer with better picture opportunities. Luckily we suddenly saw a **Northern Tamandua** resting belly-flat in a tree, which made the whole boat ride suddenly all worth it after all!

**Colombian White-fronted Capuchin****Northern Tamandua**

On the way back to Necoclí we observed some nice birds like **Dickcissel**, **Slate-colored Seedeater**, **Orange-crowned Oriole**, **Ash-throated Crake** (HO) and **Northern Screamer**.

## Eastern Cordillera (NE of Bogotá)

### ProAves – Cerulean Warbler Reserve

[6.86136, -73.38434](#)

**Visited date:** 1 May 2023

It was a long drive from Paujil, especially because Maps.me and Google Maps both send us from Ruta 45 via El Carmen towards San Vicente. Locals said the road was fine, but they clearly hadn't been on the part after El Carmen. As if that was not enough the heavy rains made the road a bit slippery and the visibility minimal. Do yourself a favour and approach San Vicente from the north!

After San Vicente we drove up the very steep road towards the reserve. The first part was fine as this was steep, but paved. 500m before the lodge we came to a part where the car wouldn't get up anymore as it was too slippery. No chance to turn, so we had to back up slowly for 400m.. Letting go of the brake slowly and braking right away to back up slowly and not slide off to the side. Slipping intentionally while driving forward again to make the car turn a bit for the curves in the road, and then again going backwards. This process took an hour for 400m, as the car was slipping the whole time. Even locals left their motorcycles down this part as it only got worse higher up. They made videos of us to back up their statement to the local government to do something about this road. Overnight the road dried up considerably and we would have made it up easily. Locals were busy fixing the worst parts too, so this might be a rare occasion. Still, better to be safe and drive up with a 4x4 if it has rained big time.



We camped along a side road and walked towards the reserve the next morning around 05.30. It took us 25min to reach the start of the trail ([6.8631, -73.38422](#)). Ross Gallardy's report has an excellent map and description. Maps.me also has the trail in there, so that makes it even easier to follow. It took us 35min to get to the start of the Lengerke Trail ([6.85263, -73.38107](#)). We ran into the ranger going up and he asked if we already went by the lodge. We told him we didn't but would later on. Apparently you should go by the lodge first, as they only open the gate towards the feeders in the forest after you paid. We only found this out when standing for a closed gate, and we thought the feeders were not in use anymore. Only back at the lodge he made clear people sometimes left without paying, and that is why they don't want to open that gate anymore without having received the money first... if only he would have told us, we could have paid him on the spot walking up. The forest feeders (small side trail at 6.85328, -73.38100) are the spot for **Black Inca** (e). The Wood-quails don't come to the feeder anymore (just pigeons) and they stopped feeding them consequently.

We were luckily able to continue the trail into the forest. There we observed **White-bellied Antpitta** on the path and heard it more often, as well as **Highland Tinamou** (HO). Romy heard **Gorgeted Wood-quails** (e) far away and played the sound. Immediately a couple started to call about 100m away from us. We waited for 0.5h to see if they would cross the path, which they didn't.

Older trip reports often refer to 5 benches for reference, but most of these are gone. Only bench 2 and 4 remain, but will soon die of old age too. This is important for the small side trail just before bench 2 (6.846203, -73.375015), which should be good for **Yellow-throated Spadebill** and **Parker's Antbird**. A bit higher up we did see **Parker's Antbird** foraging and a passing flock brought **Rufous-rumped Antwren** as best species. Thanks to an eBird list with good coordinates, we heard **Pavonine Cuckoo** in response to playback (6.848456, -73.375748). Again a bit farther up the trail we got an immediate response from a pair of **Gorgeted Wood-quails** (e) nearby. We stood still and heard them scurrying through the shrubs close by. It took me a second to realize I had the head of a male and female in my binos while scanning through those shrubs. Just after the 4<sup>th</sup> bench (6.850771, -73.372551) we got great views of **Magdalena Tapaculo** (e). We went to the sign of the Spectacled Bear and decided to turn around as activity had died out. Just after turning around we observed **Black Inca** (e) foraging on some flowers. **Mountain Grackles** (e) have been observed higher up (2000m+), but you have to be there early; around sunrise. The best area should be high up (5km after the start of the trail) according to the ranger. As it already took us an hour from our camping spot to the entrance of the trail, we didn't fancy getting up that early and walking the slippery cobblestone path in the forest in the dark for 5km!

Back at the lodge we informed about the hummingbird feeder for **Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird** (e) 1km to the west. The ranger told us that has been gone too for a long time now, as the endemic didn't show up anymore.

We then walked the main road back to our car. Right at the spot where Ross had **Niceforo's Wren** (e) we observed a pair too, after already hearing it early in the morning. A bit farther down we had



**Black-headed Brushfinch** (e) in a gully (6.862007, -73.387779). A **Black Hawk-eagle** flew high overhead. In a fruiting tree we observed a pair of **Yellow-legged Thrushes**.



**Bicolored Wren**



**Magdalena Tapaculo**

## ProAves – Recurve-billed Bushbird Reserve

[8.20354, -73.3813](#)

**Visited dates:** 3-4 May 2023

As the Recurve-billed Bushbird north of Bucaramanga is not very reliable anymore we decided to drive the 6h from San Vicente to Ocaña. ProAves has a reserve but this can only be entered with a guide. This means paying 50kCOP p.p. entrance fee plus 150k guiding fee for a Spanish speaking guide, which made it too expensive for us. The target birds can be found outside the reserve too, so that saves money and planning. We parked the car near the stand (8.203548, -73.381305) and walked the trail mentioned by Ross Gallardy. Along the road and trail we encountered multiple **Moustached Brushfinches** (e). 100m into the trail we heard **Orange-billed Nightingale-thrush**, and after some taping we got great views too. The next morning we heard **Golden-winged Sparrow** here. Right where the trail starts to descend is where we heard a **Recurve-billed Bushbird** (ne) from down below in the valley. It wouldn't come closer and we didn't want to tape too long so we continued farther down. Walking down we heard **Black-fronted Wood-quail** calling from not too far away, but we couldn't locate it. At one moment we were trying to see the **Grey-throated Warbler** (e) that was creeping in the dense vegetation, when a **Chestnut-bellied Thrush** flew in a tree behind. Right then we heard **Klages's Antbird** in the bamboo behind us and just when we had that one in the binos a juvenile **Black Hawk-eagle** landed in the tree above us. It flew off after a minute and we ran down the trail to see where it landed. During the run we observed **Black-headed Tanager**. Romy found the Eagle back and while taking pictures we heard some woodpecker-like chisling in the bamboo next to the trail. Then we heard some cracking of bamboo and realised we were hearing a **Recurve-billed Bushbird** doing what it does best! We were able to get some decent views of a female hopping through the bamboo, but it was already too dark around 17.30 to get any pictures of it in the dense bamboo. Most of our targets here in less than 5 minutes (albeit after 1.5h of searching before that). To finish the afternoon we walked a bit farther and observed **Stripe-breasted Spinetails** in the dense vegetation. The next morning was way less birdy and we didn't manage to find another Bushbird.

**Grey-throated Warbler****Striped Hog-nosed Skunk**

Although it was windy we still did some spotlighting. We first went up the steep sandy road along the reserve (Ross has a great map in his report). Here we found nothing so we continued along the main road. Romy found two **Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloths** with the Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V thermal camera. Walking up to the first we finally had a **Striped Hog-nosed Skunk** crossing the road, a species we already thought we would see way earlier during our trip.

## Chicamocha Canyon

[6.76902, -73.00749](#)

**Visited dates:** 7-8 May 2023

We went paragliding in the Chicamocha Canyon, about 1-1.5h south of Bucuramanga. **White-tipped Swifts** were common and on the way back to Bucuramanga we observed **Venezuelan Troupials**. It's unsure if the birds in this region are totally wild or descendants from freed cage-birds.

## Soatá

[6.33039, -72.66491](#)

**Visited date:** 12 May 2023

Soatá is quite far from the main birding route, and might not be worth it for everyone. It is however one of the best places in Colombia to see the endemic Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird and Niceforo's Wren. We first tried the spot mentioned in the Birdwatching book (6.33789, -72.67703), but it didn't yield anything (as quite often is the case in our experience with the book). There were few flowers on the Yatago trees, and no hummingbirds around.

We continued driving the road down towards hotel Finca La Costa which should have feeders. We came there to find the gate locked, but right then a local birder showed up and took us to a small shop a bit farther down the road ([6.326136, -72.668489](#)). The owners Manuel and Elsa are lovely people and are happy with birdwatchers coming by to watch their 3 feeders. We had 3 **Chestnut-bellied Hummingbirds** (e) in no-time. The place is free to visit and we even got free ice cream from

Elsa. Of course we made a donation towards keeping the feeders up. It's best to drive here from the paved road (6.331239, -72.667157) as the road we drove was a bit bumpy at times.



**Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird**



**Indigo-capped Hummingbird**

We also went to Finca Mangomacho ([6.330392, -72.664919](#)) after the local birder arranged permission. A 4x4 or powerful 2WD is needed for the steep part going down (and back up). Otherwise park it along the road and walk this short distance to the finca. There are over 30 feeders and these attracted at least 30 **Chestnut-bellied Hummingbirds**, besides many **White-bellied Woodstar**, **Indigo-capped Hummingbird** (e), **Black-throated Mango** and **Sparkling Violetear**.

## Vereda el Carmen

[5.93909, -73.11177](#)

**Visited dates:** 12-13 May 2023

We drove up from the town Duitama to this finca via a mostly paved road (5.93909, -73.11177). As the owners Margarita and Marina were gone, we asked the neighbour if we could walk the pastures behind the finca. Right when we asked this we already heard Rusty-faced Parrots next to the road. Walking up we had a flock of **Mountain Grackles** (e) flying away. After following them we couldn't find the parrots and it already got dark.



**Rusty-faced Parrot**



**(Colombian) mountain Grackle**



We camped in front of the finca (probably one would even be allowed to pitch a tent in the garage) and went into the field at 06.15 the next morning. We heard multiple flocks of **Rusty-faced Parrots** (ne) and managed to get good views higher up in the pasture. They seem to like the solitary *quercus* trees in the field. Most flocks that past in the hour we were there passed the points higher up (5.939122, -73.109322). We also had two flocks of **Mountain Grackles** in the morning in this part of the field, as well as a presumed **Andean Squirrel**. There are many more great birds around, but as we had our targets we rapidly moved on to the next spot.

## Reserva Privada Rogitama

5.79534, -73.45722

Visited date: 13 May 2023

We reserved our visit up front with Awad Neme (+57 312 3968 810, Spanish/English). The last part of the road is a bit rough, but should be doable with any sedan. The main reason for us to come here were the hummingbird feeders, which attract **Black Inca** (e) and **Lazuline Sabrewing**. We saw multiple of both during our 4 hour visit. We also observed, in order of abundance, **White-bellied Woodstar**, **Sparkling Violetear**, **Lesser Violetear**, **Longuemare's Sunangel**, **Buff-tailed Coronet** and **Short-tailed Emerald**.



**Black Inca**



**Lazuline Sabrewing**

**Brown Hairy Dwarf Porcupine** (e) has been observed multiple times in the near region, and it would surprise me if the species wouldn't occur in the reserve too. Awad was amazed by the technology of thermal cameras and offered us to stay for free (room and food) in exchange for us searching at night with the heat scope and helping them collect more data on wildlife in the reserve besides camera traps. We were pressed for time, but I would urge any mammal watcher with the right equipment and time to contact Awad and work something out together ☺.

## RN Los Tucanes

5.78814, -73.55086

Visited date: 13 May 2023

This is one of the places where the endemic **Brown Hairy Dwarf Porcupine** has been observed. I noticed three observations in this region on iNaturalist. We chose to go to RN Los Tucanes as it seemed there were sufficient roads to cover at night around this reserve too. We were welcomed at the reserve and paid the fee (20kCOP p.p.). One can stay at the reserve too (+57 310 628 9194 or rnlosyataros@gmail.com). There are many roads leading to the reserve. Be sure to navigate here via the small village Gachantivá, as the other roads are sometimes in terrible state.

The owners said they had seen the porcupine twice; once high in a tree and once on the ground when the dogs tried to get it. There has been a project with camera traps in the reserve, and most camera traps have recordings of the Porcupine. These cameras have been quite close to the ground, which broadened our search area from the canopy to the forest floor. It has been observed at the Mirador; at the big boulder just around the corner of the first path to the right; down at the stairs; at the Maria shrine and one other place. We had high hopes after hearing this. We searched for 3 hours at night in the reserve; we went to the Mirador and took the first path going down directly after it, went right after we got down the stairs, and went a bit past the shrine. We also walked the path going to the left when coming down the stairs. We did see bite marks on one of the hand rails next to the trail (1m from the ground), which were really similar to the bite marks of the Stump-tailed Porcupine we had seen earlier this trip. However, we failed to see a Porcupine. We did see **Brown-eared Woolly Opossum**, but no other mammals. We also searched for one hour along the road 2km from this reserve, but again without results.



**Apolinar's Wren**



**Yellow-hooded Blackbird**

## Laguna de Fuquene

**5.46701, -73.77078**

**Visited dates:** 13-14 May 2023

According to the birdwatching book this should be the easiest place for **Apolinar's Wren** (e). We had seen the species south of Bogotá, but wanted to try for the other ssp. which has more buffy flanks. We tried near the place where the species should be easy (5.467018, -73.770782) but didn't find any Wrens in the afternoon and morning. We tried a couple of places around the lake, and eventually found a couple on the north side. This did involve walking quite far on a long dyke after asking

permission from a farmer (5.490413, -73.709713). Maybe a boat trip would make this place more pleasant, but we wouldn't recommend going here during a vacation.

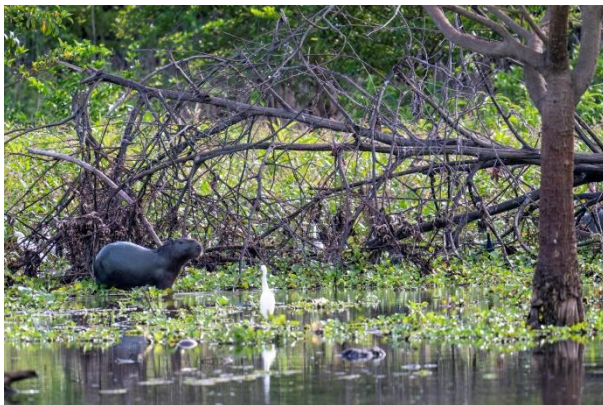
## Cali surroundings

### Laguna de Sonso

[3.88221, -76.3511](#)

**Visited date:** 16 May 2023

We heard you have to reserve to visit this laguna, so we did (via +57 316 4164 628, Spanish). They told us the latest admission time was 14.00. So we hurried to be there in time, but after driving the bumpy entrance road we encountered nobody at the 'reserve' (3.882218, -76.351106). We parked the car and walked the dyke. You can go either way, but passing the farm will probably be the most interesting. Water levels were very low and we only observed some common birds. We added **Fulvous Whistling-duck** as a new species for our Colombia list, but **Cinnamon Teals**, **Black-necked Stilts** and **Osprey** were nice to see too. We tried many ways, but couldn't reach the observation tower. There is no signage and only after our visit we saw on Google Maps how the trail was supposed to go (enter via 3.8735340, -76.352041). We couldn't find any Lesser Capybaras near the laguna. We decided to drive the other road going to the left before the entrance to the reserve (3.883290, -76.349064) and ended up at the Centro de Educación ([3.8796528, -76.3469902](#)). This is where we observed one **Lesser Capybara** on the other side of the water.



**Lesser Capybara**



**Colombian Chachalaca**

### Bosque de Yotoco

[3.8751, -76.43591](#)

**Visited dates:** 16-17 May 2023

We reserved our visit with Valentin (+57 315 4714 758, Spanish) and were allowed to sleep in our car on their property (40kCOP total, including entree fee). As the reserve is located along the main



highway it is very busy and noisy the whole night long, and it wasn't a very pleasant night. Late in the afternoon we observed **Colombian Howler Monkeys** in the big tree near the entrance. They sleep here every night according to the ranger. We spotlighted the trail behind the lodge going up from 18.30 to 21.30. The ranger can show you the trail, which starts at a bench and then goes steeply uphill. After two more benches the trail splits. Here you go right and follow it all the way up, where it goes left and back down again towards the third bench. Then you go straight, thus making an '8' loop when coming back to the lodge. We hoped to spot a **Northern Naked-tailed Armadillo**, but didn't find one. They should be fairly common, but we found spotlighting quite hard on the narrow and mostly steep trail. They supposedly even come around the lodge every now and then. We did find multiple **Kinkajou** and **Lemurine Night Monkeys**, the last one also coming near the lodge at the beginning of the evening. Ask the ranger where exactly.

## Loboguerrero

[3.7468, -76.67401](#)

**Visited date:** 17 May 2023

We visited this place in the morning in the hope of finding a **Ruby Topaz Hummingbird**. The last month there were fewer sightings on eBird, and most of the bromeliads weren't blooming yet. It seems that the number of individuals present fluctuates during the season. The first hummingbird we encountered was an even better one; **Blue-headed Sapphire** (ne). After this we only encountered a couple of **Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds**. Other nice species seen were **Ultramarine Grosbeak** (isolated populations in this region of Colombia), **Northern Mouse-colored Tyrannulet** (common) and **Orange-crowned Euphonia** (be careful with **Orange-bellied Euphonia**, which we also observed here). We decided to bird for a short time after San Cipriano on the 19<sup>th</sup> in the late afternoon. There was a lot more activity, but most were still Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds. However, we did observe **Steely-vented Hummingbird**, **Black-throated Mango**, **Purple-throated Woodstar** and one male **Ruby Topaz Hummingbird**. This one was only seen because we followed a **Roadside Hawk** and checked every hummer that was harassing the Hawk. Unfortunately we couldn't get closer to the patch where the Topaz was residing despite several (unwise) attempts to get there through spiny bushes and tall grass. We had 2 **Hook-billed Kites** (light morph) fly over our heads this afternoon too.

## San Cipriano

[3.83656, -76.89608](#)

**Visited dates:** 17-19 May 2023

As the Anchicayá Valley behind Doña Dora was still off-limits due to the safety situation, visiting San Cipriano was a must for us to get some lowland Chocó species. We drove to Córdoba and parked the car at the Bongo Hotel ([3.87655, -76.92928](#), 2 full days/Wed-Fri; 45kCOP). We then took the famous 'brujitas' to San Cipriano, which are basically market stalls on train tracks, propelled forward by a motorcycle. You can get tickets at the office (3.876106, -76.928688). These are 18kCOP p.p. two-way.

We walked through the village, paid 5000COP p.p. entrance to the reserve and continued to the hostel. We stayed at a hostel (3.837951, -76.897184) opposite of Hotel David and paid 80kCOP per night for a basic room with ventilator and cold shower. It was quite noisy due to a party the first night and it was a mystery to us how so many mosquitos came in the room. Only the second day we discovered there was no glass in the top part of the windows, so we filled these with cardboard and luckily the second night was a bit better. We would 100% avoid the weekends here, as we already got annoyed with the big groups of tourist while birding the main trail on Thursday and Friday.

There is only one main trail out of the village, and a couple of side trails that can easily be followed. A guide is not necessary per se, but as there are some very good species that can only be seen at a couple of places (mainly due to many lowland locations not being reachable and/or safe), we decided to hire a guide. We hired Never Santiago as a guide (+57 314 7220 698, Spanish, house at 3.83656, -76.89608) for 200kCOP per day. His communication was far from optimal via WhatsApp. We had to go to his house and ask family to call him to confirm. It wasn't until late evening he finally confirmed the time and meeting point for the next morning. Luckily he made up for the bad communication by being on time that morning and knowing his birds very well. His pronunciation of the English names was good, and he knew some fun facts about the birds we saw. Besides birds he showed us some other interesting stuff like herpetofauna. All with all, good company the first day. We went walking at 06.00 and followed the main trail out of the village and then walked the Sendero del Amor. We had many good birds on this part, including many targets, mostly because Never knew the sounds and nesting sites; **Five-colored Barbet** (ne), fly-overs from **Rose-faced Parrots**, **Stub-tailed Antbird**, **Black-breasted Puffbird**, **Western Woodhaunter**, **Pacific Flatbill**, **Sapayoa** (ne), **Band-tailed Barbthroat**, **White-tipped Sicklebill** and **Choco Trogon**. Back on the main trail near the food stands (open during the weekends only) we had mixed flocks that included **Blue-whiskered Tanager**, **Scarlet-browed Tanager**, **Slate-throated Gnatcatcher**, **Lemon-spectacled Tanager**, **Rufous Piha**, **Black-striped Woodcreeper** and much more.



**Black-breasted Puffbird**



**Sapayoa**

Never knew that the area around the market stalls was a good site for **Pallid Dove**, and after some searching he suddenly found one on a nest. Then the male came with little sticks and handed them over to the female, who was in charge of modelling the nest.

**Band-tailed Barbthroat****Pallid Dove**

This area is also where we waited a long time for **Black-tipped Cotinga**. These apparently show up there often after 10.00, but for us only one female showed up around 12.30. The waiting time was filled looking at the **White-ringed Flycatchers**, which were not uncommon in the whole area of San Cipriano. The second day we had a female **Blue Cotinga** on this spot. Walking back towards his house for lunch we heard **Berlepsch's Tinamou**. We tried to lure it towards us in the forest, but it went far around us, never to be seen.

In the afternoon we walked along the main path and finally got to see **Choco Toucan**. Never showed a stake-out for **Choco Screech-owl**, but seemed surprised and very happy when we actually found it at eye-level. At dusk we waited on a specific spot and heard the Screech-owl and not much later **Choco Poorwill**, which we eventually got decent views of. Spotlighting back towards the village yielded 2 **Crested Owls** (HO) and a **Western Lowland Olingo**.

**White-whiskered Puffbird****Choco Screech-owl**

The second day was way less interesting and not worth hiring Never. Although we were at his house at the agreed time (05.40) he just came out of bed and took his time to get ready. We then went to visit the exact same spots from the day before, mostly to check stake-outs of species we had missed. Most of the time he walked far in front of us and didn't seem to try very hard anymore for the target species we had left. Based on our experience we would only hire him for one day to visit all the stake-outs and go there yourself the day after if you weren't successful the first day.



**Fer-de-lance - *Bothrops asper*****Rufous Motmot**

Nevertheless (no pun intended) we observed **Uniform Crake** (HO, apparently better chances of seeing it at night), **Streak-chested Antpitta**, **Grey-and-gold Tanager**, **Brown-capped Tyrannulet** and **Black-headed Antthrush** (HO). A couple of **Rose-faced Parrots** flew over again, but this time landed in a tree just within our sight. We were able to get some far-way but recognizable looks of this awesome Parrot. We then went on to try at a spot for **Saffron-headed Parrot** (ne) and had 4 of them fly over far away when we arrived at the open field. We waited there for a couple of hours, but unfortunately they didn't come back. As it got very warm, were disappointed in the guide the second morning and only got a few birds the afternoon before, we decided to cut our visit short. This turned out to be a good decision: just when we got on the highway back to Cali it started pouring like it can only do in tropical countries... lucky us!

## Km18 - Bosque de Las Aves

**3.52827, -76.61705**

**Visited date:** 20 May 2023

We only went here very shortly, as we didn't know the time for the **Scaled Antpitta** feeder. Apparently they already feed it at 06.00, but it does come back every now and then. As it was just before 07.00 we didn't fancy paying 80kCOP p.p. for the Tanager feeders, which weren't attracting many birds because of the rain. We did see **Multicolored Tanager** (e) real quick. We tried in vain for **Scaled Fruiteater** and **Cloud-forest Pygmy-owl** on the entrance road, but quickly drove to Doña Dora. There are also places along the road which might be interesting.

## Doña Dora

**3.53467, -76.75355**

**Visited date:** 20 May 2023

We were surprised that Doña Dora seemed nothing more than a roadside restaurant. We paid 25kCOP p.p. and walked through the restaurant towards the back. There we were welcomed by many feeders for hummingbird and tanagers. A **Black-headed Brushfinch** (e) hopped on the ground behind the feeders. We went up to the second floor and enjoyed the eye-level view of the tree.

**Common Tody-flycatcher** and **Red-faced Spinetail** were hopping through that tree most of the time. A **Uniform Treehunter** gave amazing views twice during the morning.



**Black-headed Brushfinch**



**Uniform Treehunter**

A whole range of Tanagers came to the feeders, including **Glistening-green Tanager**, **Grey-and-gold Tanager** and **Rufous-winged Tanager**. **Crimson-rumped Toucanets** came in for the berries in the trees. The main attraction of Doña Dora are the **Toucan Barbets**, which are easily seen here. They placed multiple dead trees in their property (yes, placed; tied them to other trees). These trees are used as nesting site by the **Toucan Barbets**, and consequently you can observe them going in and out of the nesting site from a couple of metres distance. Combine these beautiful birds with good and cheap coffee (1000COP) and delicious empanadas stuffed with cheese and banana (3000COP) and you'll be set for a morning! Try to avoid weekends, as it gets quite busy with birders from Cali.



**Crimson-rumped Toucanet**



**Toucan Barbet**

## Pasto surroundings

### Páramo de Bordoncillo

1.14677, -77.09981

Visited date: 24 May 2023

We parked our car on the pull-out next to the road (1.14677, -77.09981) and walked through the gate and past the farm. Immediately the farmer came out to ask what we wanted and demanded 20kCOP p.p. for going up to the Páramo. Not the 10kCOP that others had paid per group for parking their car on his land and going up, and we weren't even sure if he owned the land beyond his farm. Anyways, he was clear it was take it or leave it, so up we went. Some workers at the first antennae mumbled something about another trail towards the second antennae and not having to pay, but we weren't totally sure what they meant.

It was really foggy, which seems to be the default weather here. The climb up wasn't that long and bad, but the altitude turned it into a longer hike than we expected. Along the way we encountered **Paramo Seedeater**, **Golden-breasted Puffleg** and **Paramo Tapaculo** (HO). About 200m before we arrived to the antennae we heard **Chestnut-bellied Cotinga**. We got glimpses of the colour through the mist. We encountered fresh feeding evidence of **Spectacled Bear**. We then continued past the first set of antennae (1.15532, -77.09911) and walked both the path going to the left as well as the path going to the right, which continues to the second set of antennae. We encountered some nice birds like **Rainbow-bearded Thornbill**, **White-chinned Thistletail** and another **Chestnut-bellied Cotinga**. Towards the second antennae we found more fresh feeding evidence from the Bear. Unfortunately we couldn't find the Bear itself even though the fog had lifted and we could oversee most of the surrounding fields and páramo. We walked back the way we came and encountered a group of **Agile Tit-tyrants** next to the path. Then (most likely the same as the first) Cotinga flew in and perched pretty well and allowed us to get great views. We didn't search actively for the other target here, **Masked Mountain-tanager**, as we had already seen it in south Ecuador.



Chestnut-bellied Cotinga



Agile Tit-tyrant



## Laguna de Cocha

[1.13802, -77.15386](#)

**Visited date:** 24 May 2023

This very touristic place is probably best visited outside of the weekends and holidays. The place felt a bit like the Colombian version of the quant town Giethoorn in the Netherlands, a popular tourist destination as well. However, we were here for some birds of course. Thanks to Ross Gallardy's coordinates in his eBird list we soon found both **Subtropical Doradito** and heard **Ecuadorian Rail** (1.138025, -77.153862).



**Subtropical Doradito**



**White-chinned Thistletail (Páramo de Bordoncillo)**

We added **Andean Gull** and **Andean Coot/Slate-colored Coot** to the Colombia list at the end of the road. We then went back to the spot from Ross and saw the Rail walking through the vegetation only 4-5m from the road! We got decent looks of this Rail, which for us was surprisingly smaller than his cousin from Bogotá.

## Reserva Natural La Planada

[1.15813, -77.97594](#)

**Visited dates:** 24-25 & 27-28 May 2023

The drive up from the main road is pretty straightforward. There is a sign at the road pointing towards the left (1.191043, -77.972769). After the church you have to turn right (1.180131, -77.969988) and follow this road all the way to the reserve (1.15391, -77.97976). The road is gravel all the way, but steep and bumpy, so a powerful high clearance 2WD or a 4x4 is advised. We didn't reserve but were welcomed just as friendly late afternoon by Guillero Cantillo. He already works there since the foundation bought the 3000ha farm around 1980, and he saw to the whole regeneration process of the forest since then.

It's possible to stay at the reserve and they can prepare all the meals too. We camped in our motorhome and just had to pay the entrance fee once (20kCOP p.p.). The next morning one of the indigenous rangers was waiting at our car, because apparently you have to be accompanied all the

time. Quite a nuisance to have someone follow you all the time, even when you just bird the main road... Our main target here was Hoary Puffleg, which should be 'muy común' according to Guillero. On account of his recommendations, we focussed on the main road past the lodge, mainly on the first 200m towards the little stream. This is where the Puffleg should be hanging around often. We tried here for 2-3 hours, but we couldn't find it. We did finally manage to observe **Bronze-olive Pygmy-tyrant**. Both **Orange-crested Flycatcher** and **Flavescent Flycatcher** occur here, but we only observed the latter.

We then walked the main road towards the mirador. As there was no fog we could see the whole plain land (hence the name 'La Planada') that was once pasture, as well as the surrounding mountains, as far as Ecuador. This should be the point where **Plate-billed Mountain-toucan** often pass early in the morning, but we didn't even hear them. We walked a bit more on the main road down and then turned back around to the station, but didn't see any Pufflegs. **Violet-tailed Sylph** was common, and we observed **Bronzy Inca**, **Purple-eared Fairy** and **White-booted Racket-tail**. **Dark-backed Wood-quails** should be commonly heard in the reserve too, but we only heard them on our last morning. Tanagers were abundant, with **Rufous-throated Tanager** and **Glistening-green Tanager** being the most interesting. A small flock brought some Chocó endemics like **Dusky Chlorospingus**, **Black-billed Peppershrike** and **Fulvous-dotted Treerunner**. **Choco Brushfinch** was quite common, as was **Nariño Tapaculo** (HO).



**Brown Inca**



**Green-and-black Fruiteater**

Guillero was watching a nest while we were standing 100m away. He suddenly said we had to come and we started running. Arriving excited I didn't know where to look and the "allá allá allá" wasn't very precise either. I just saw a hummer of the right size with puffs flying away from a branch farther within the forest. Then it started raining heavily. Later in the afternoon we went back to the patch and within 5 minutes we did finally get a short glimpse of a **Hoary Puffleg** (ne) in the shrubs. We weren't too happy with our sightings, so we tried again for another morning when we returned from the other lower reserves (see below). Unfortunately we didn't see it on that morning either. It seems that chances are lower this time of year.

We did a one hour nightwalk the first night, which resulted in nothing. We decided to come back to try another night. In 2 hours we observed **Derby's Woolly Opossum**, **Andean White-eared Opossum** and **Stump-tailed Porcupine**, mostly thanks to the Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V thermal camera.

## Reserva Natural Río Nambí

[1.28301, -78.09305](#)

**Visited date:** 26 May 2023

Early morning we left La Planada and drove within 1h towards Río Nambí. We parked at the few houses opposite to the entrance of the trail ([1.28301, -78.093055](#)). We had contacted Cristian Florez-Pai (+57 318 3474 182), and he in turn referred us to his colleague Mauricio (+57 318 6215 130). We couldn't reach him, so we just went into the reserve. The trail can be pretty wet and slippery at times, so bring rubber boots.

Right at the entrance we heard **Choco Tapaculo**. Not far into the path we encountered a soldier who asked a few questions and then let us continue. Walking in the forest we soon encountered **Tooth-billed Hummingbird** feeding on some flowers and then a flock of **Choco Warblers**. We thought we heard **Yellow-green Tanager**, but couldn't find them in the trees above us with the harsh light. We then came to a locked gate (1.284602, -78.089566), where the reserve really starts. We had to climb around and hoped to find someone at the lodge. As seemed to be in all the Chocó reserves this time of year, it was pretty quiet in the forest. The happier we were with some **Dark-backed Wood-quails** calling near the path and one even crossing it! We heard **Rufous-breasted Antthrush** a couple of times and once a **Plain-backed Antpitta**. **Maroon-tailed Parakeet** (ssp. Chocó) was observed two times during the morning, but we only observed them flying over. There are some shelters along the path and one had feeders, but we only observed a stunning male **Purple-bibbed Whitetip** on these. Besides a flock of 4 Choco Warblers crossing the path we didn't encounter much until the open field just before the lodge. There we finally observed **Moss-backed Tanagers** (ne), besides **Rufous-throated Tanagers**, a possible **Choco Vireo**, **Indigo Flowerpiercer** (ne) and **Golden-collared Honeycreeper**. At the lodge ([1.286096, -78.074502](#)) we observed **Green-fronted Lancebill**, which was nesting underneath the balcony.



Dusky Pigeon



Green-fronted Lancebill



The feeders attracted **Bronzy Inca**, **Velvet-purple Coronet** and **Empress Brilliant**. We hoped for a **Long-wattled Umbrellabird**, which should often be around the lodge, but came up empty handed. We walked the loop trail ( $\pm 1$ km), but that wasn't really enjoyable as the trail is not well maintained and some bridges were missing. On the way back we only heard **Toucan Barbets**. Then we suddenly heard some screaming. These turned out to be from **Colombian White-fronted Capuchins**. Then just before the gate we had a mini flock low in the forest that included **Fulvous-breasted Flatbill** and **Rufous-rumped Antwrens**. We observed two squirrels during our walk; **Western Dwarf Squirrel** and **Red-tailed Squirrel**.

## Junin/ProAves – Reserva El Pangán

[1.3629, -78.105](#)

Visited date: 26 May 2023

As it was still dry we drove to the small hamlet of Junín, where we took a right turn, drove past the army checkpoint and all the way uphill (1.3629, -78.105). There we parked the car and took the muddy and wet trail going into the forest on the right side of the parking. 20m into the trail we already had our binos on a male **Esmeraldas Antbird** (our 1000th species in Colombia!). In the trees we observed some **Toucan Barbets** and **Orange-breasted Fruiteaters**. The trail was too wet, so we continued on the road towards Barbacoas. After a couple of 100m we encountered our main target; **Rufous-brown Solitaire**! Walking the road back to Junín we encountered many **Moss-backed Tanagers**, which seem pretty common here.



**Esmeraldas Antbird**



**Moss-backed Tanager**

We slept in one of the two hotels in Junín, and TorreEifel Hotel was pretty decent for such a town (60kCOP p.n.). Most foreigners reserve the room with a bit bigger bed she said (90kCOP p.n.).

We had contacted ProAves about the reserve El Pangán, as this is a good place for **Long-wattled Umbrellabird** and some other specialties. They said a guide was mandatory and that the trails were very difficult. There was no map in the Birdwatching in Colombia app, but they also mentioned the steep descend and crossing a river, which could be high in the rainy season (this period of the year). We figured we would just try to walk it (start here: [1.34124, -78.112796](#)) as far as possible and just

see how it would go. The weather decided differently the next day as it was pouring near Junín. Plans changed and we decided to drive down to Reserva La Nutria.

## Reserva Awá La Nutria

[1.359292, -78.176253](#)

**Visited date:** 27 May 2023

As we drove down to Reserva La Nutria the weather cleared. We parked the car and walked the trail behind it (1.359292, -78.176253), taking the right trail after coming to a communal area. We followed the wooden path and almost immediately found a flock with **Choco Warblers**. We heard **Rufous-breasted Anthrush** calling far away into the forest. The first flock produced **Ochre-breasted Tanager**, and this species was seen multiple times during this morning. A bigger flock yielded **Emerald Tanager**, **Yellow-green Tanagers** (ne) and more **Choco Warblers**. We then ran into some indigenous locals and got a speech about how foreigners have to reserve and be accompanied all the time, that they have accommodation and food and what other ways they had for making money of foreigners. Anyway, we were allowed to continue alone, but if you want to reserve or stay here, call Wilmer Bisbicus (+57 313 5151 075, Spanish).



**Ochre-breasted Tanager**



**Purple Quail-dove**

We then took a path towards the left, going uphill (1.3609, -78.180825). We heard **Choco Tapaculo**, **Ochre-breasted Antpitta** and a bit higher up **Black-headed Anthrush**, all too far away to reach them through the vegetation. Around the highest point (1.358912, -78.181207) we observed a **Double-toothed Kite** in a palm. We took the trail behind the highest point and observed **Choco Trogon** and **Slaty-capped Shrike-vireo** (ssp. Pale-legged, HO). We then ran into a flock, which included **Scarlet-and-white Tanager**, **Grey-and-cold Tanager** and finally our biggest target showed up: **Golden-chested Tanager** (ne)! With our main target in the pocket we decided to return via the route we came, as it didn't seem this trail was heading back to the parking. This turned out to be a good choice as this way we ran into **Golden-chested Tanager** two more times, one of them mixed with a group of **Yellow-green Tanagers**. A really tricky bird, as they sluggishly followed the mixed flocks and didn't move for long times. As I walked back down a bit to get a better angle I suddenly heard a low hoowing-sound, repeated every few seconds. We scanned the forest floor, and just when I saw the

**Purple Quail-dove** (ne) sitting openly on a bare branch, it flew away. We were able to find it back and took some record shots of the most stunning dove we have ever seen! We then went back to our car, drove back to El Pangán, only to find out it was still raining over there. A good choice to visit La Nutria, and definitely a good option when birding this region!

## You made it! Thank you for reading 😊

For all photos of our Colombia trip, comments, compliments, any specific questions, visit and/or contact us via our website. We would love to hear from you!

 [www.robjansenphotography.com/colombia](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/colombia)

 [www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography](https://www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography)

All observations made by us in Colombia can be found on Observation.org. We observed a total of about 1008 bird species and 62 mammal species in Colombia. Click here for the: [total bird list](#), [total mammal list](#) or the total species list.

| Our Top 10 | Birds                      | Mammals                  |
|------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1          | Crescent-faced Antpitta    | Cotton-top Tamarin       |
| 2          | Purple Quail-dove          | Northern Oncilla         |
| 3          | Green-bearded Helmetcrest  | Golden-backed Uakari     |
| 4          | Toucan Barbet              | Western Pygmy Marmoset   |
| 5          | Blue-throated Starfrontlet | Stump-tailed Porcupine   |
| 6          | Black-necked Red-cotinga   | Miller's Saki            |
| 7          | Gold-ringed Tanager        | Mountain Tapir           |
| 8          | Hooded Antpitta            | Variegated Spider Monkey |
| 9          | Fuertes's Parrot           | Long-tailed Weasel       |
| 10         | Stygian Owl                | Brumback's Night Monkeys |

## Purchasing Photos

If you like my pictures, you are in luck: they are for sale! For publication, presswork or just as artwork in your office or at home. A great memory of those great species you've seen during that trip! We donate 10% of our profits to WWF. My photos can be used for free for conservation or educational purposes after consultation. Have a look on my website and/or contact us via the website for the possibilities if you are interested: [www.robjansenphotography.com/shop](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/shop)





**Northern Oncilla**



**Golden-backed Uakari**



**Violet-tailed Sylph**



**Purple-throated Woodstar**



**Central American Agouti**



**Crab-eating Fox**



**Hooded Antpitta**



**Grey-breasted Mountain-toucan**



**Common Woolly Monkey**



**Ecuadorian Squirrel Monkey**



**Velvet-purple Coronet**



**Bogota Rail**