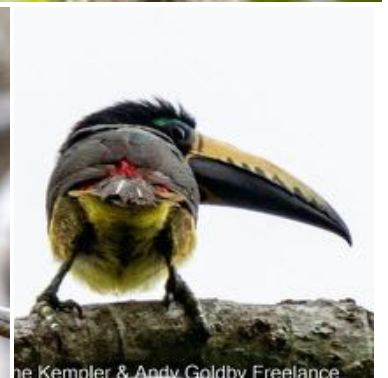


Colombia Trip Report – January 2023

Here is a report from our recent trip to Colombia which was organised by Rob Smith from Wild About Colombia. The trip was mammal focused, but with some birding thrown in. Rob guided us for most of our holiday, together with local guides at most locations. We are wildlife generalists – we like everything – mammals, birds, reptiles etc, and Andy is a keen photographer. Most of the photos were taken with a Sony alpha 6600 mirrorless camera with 200-600mm lens. We aren't list keepers – for us, the quality of individual sightings is far more important than the number of species we see. I haven't included specific details of each site we visited to view the wildlife, as Rob has spent many years building up his business, and I don't think it would be fair to disclose all that on the internet. I would have no hesitation in highly recommending Rob and his team – we had a fabulous trip.

6 January: Overnight flight from London to Bogota landing at 3:30am on 7th. We then had another domestic flight to San Jose del Guaviare, arriving at around 7:30am. Unfortunately we arrived to absolutely torrential rain so we chose to spend the morning relaxing and catching up on some sleep in our hotel until lunch.

In the afternoon we did a walk through some secondary forest near a river and saw some good birds, a dozen or so family groups of **Colombian red howler monkeys**, some **tufted capuchins**, and an **Amazon Dwarf Squirrel**.



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Little Cuckoo, White-eared Jacamar, Amazon Kingfisher, Lettered Aracari



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8 January: After a 6am breakfast we drove towards Cerro Azul stopping on the way to watch various birds. We also had a great sighting of some **collared titi monkeys**. We arrived at Cerro Azul in time for a late morning walk in the forest again seeing some good birds, and also a large group of **Common woolly monkeys** with lots of babies as well as a mixed group of **Humboldt squirrel monkeys** and **tufted capuchins**.

After lunch at the park HQ we trekked up the escarpment to look at some 12000 year old rock paintings and crawl through a cave full of a number of bat species. The sun set as we walk back to park HQ (for dinner) lighting up the escarpment in a golden light. It was a fabulous day!



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White-eyed Parakeet, Double-toothed Kite, Collared Trogon, Collared Puffbird, Golden-headed Manakin, Sunbittern, Chestnut-fronted Macaw



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Common Vampire Bat, Silky Short-tailed Bat



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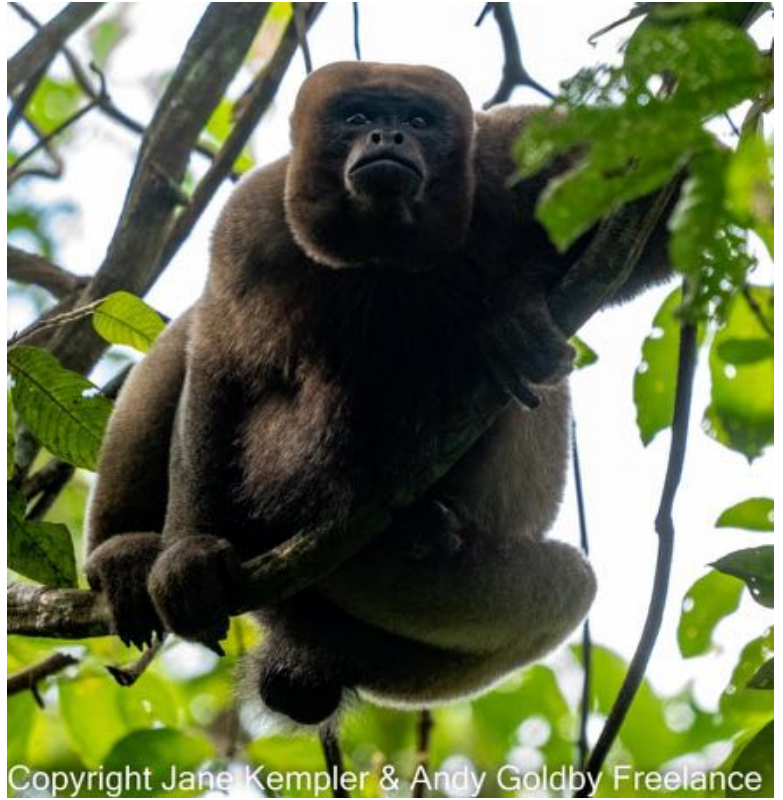


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9 January: Another 6am start this time for a walk in the forest to search for **Golden-backed Uakari** ... which we found, this time along with more **Common woolly monkeys** and **Tufted capuchin**. Then across to another farm to look for a different type of tamarin (failed) before getting on a boat a short distance away to see some **Orinoco pink river dolphins**. There were a decent number of water birds on the river, including lots of **Large-billed terns** that were diving into the water to fish. We then drove back to San Jose del Guaviare with more sightings of **Common Woolly Monkey** and **Collared Titi** on the way.



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Amazon Tree Boa



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Whistling Heron

10 January: We had a lie in until 6:30am then drove all morning to the next hotel in Vista Hermosa. After a quick lunch we drove along a bumpy road to a small village where we changed cars and continued, fording a river before heading up the valley. Leaving the jeep we then walked a further 2 km or so to see some **ornate titi monkeys**, a **Colombian woolly monkey**, an empty harpy eagle nest and a bunch of birds including various Raptors, a pygmy owl and a new bird for the guides (**pink throated becard**). We both found the walk to be fairly tough going – the heat and humidity had gone up a notch since yesterday and the terrain was steep and slippery under foot, however, it was totally worth the effort to see the monkeys.



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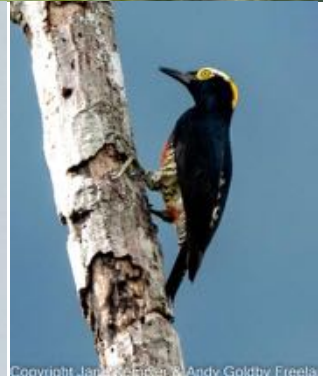
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Pink-throated Becard, Greater Yellow-headed Vulture, Yellow-tufted Woodpecker



Chestnut-eared Aracari, White Hawk, Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Amazon Kingfisher, Scarlet Ibis

11 January: We woke up to rain but headed out to the same village as yesterday anyway. On the way we spotted a **giant anteater** in a farmer's field and a **Colombian red howler monkey** looking very glum sheltering from the weather. After breakfast we switched cars again to cross the river then donned our ponchos to hike to a **harpy eagle** nest. Conditions were similar to yesterday – hot, humid and slippery! It tipped down just before we got there so we took shelter in a house and had a cup of local lemon tea.

When it cleared we continued to the nest tree and found the juvenile (one year old) trying to get dry. We watched her for about an hour then just as we were about to leave we spotted one of the parents coming in with dinner (a monkey limb). The adult bird delivered lunch to the chick on the next tree over from where the juvenile was perched. The adult called to the juvenile to come and get her lunch, but the juvenile was demanding a full delivery service right to her. There was a long struggle of wills between the two birds while they called to each other, but eventually the juvenile gave way and flew over to get her lunch. It was fabulous to watch the interaction between the two birds. We all decided that the harpy eagles were honorary mammals!

On the way back the sun came out and we came across a large group of **Colombian woolly monkeys** who were not pleased to see us and were very vocal. Back at the village we had a late lunch before the heavens opened once again making the river crossing by jeep too dangerous so we took a footbridge further up the river instead.



White-throated Toucan



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12 January: This was our last day in this region ... basically a transfer back to Bogota with a few coffee stops enroute and lunch at our local guide's lodge, Rancho Camana. We had a couple of hours there watching birds at his feeders and also saw a family of **Brumback's night monkeys** roosting in a large clump of bamboo.



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Glittering-throated Emerald, Saffron Finch, Burnished-Buff Tanager, Oriole Blackbird, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Blue-grey Tanager, Scaled Piculet



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13 January: Another travel day. We had a lie in at the hotel then headed to the airport where we were delayed for a couple of hours. We eventually arrived at the lodge around 5pm ... too late to go to the local reserve but we did go owl hunting after dark with Rob's new thermal scope.



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Ferruginous Pygmy Owl



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14 January: We spent a full day in Donde se Oculta el Sol where in the morning we had some great sightings of the **Miller's Saki** monkey before our lunch break (during which we had an amazing thunderstorm and torrential rain). When the rain cleared up we went back out into the forest but it was understandably very quiet so despite some grade 1 scrambling we only got a fleeting glance of some **Lesson's Saddle-back Tamarin**.



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Black Vulture, Palm Tanager, Red-capped Cardinal, Lesson's Saddle-back Tamarin, Amazon Kingfisher

January 15: In the morning we went looking for the Black-handed Titis (failed) but saw some **Lesson's Saddle-back Tamarin**. Then we had a car transfer as far as a river which we crossed in a long boat with other passengers and 4 motorbikes. After lunch we went out with a local guide to look for the **Caqueta Titi** (very rare) and caught some brief sightings but no photos (plenty of bird photos though).



Chestnut Woodpecker, Lineated Woodpecker, Lettered Aracari, Black-tailed Tityra, Scarlet-crowned Barbet, Swallow-winged Puffbird

January 16: We went out again in the early morning to look for the **Caqueta Titis** and after hearing them call we found a couple of different groups in the forest and even managed to get a few photos. After that we got the boat back across the river, had a local lunch of steamed piranha and drove to Puerto Asis via a stop at a Centro Ecoturistico Kofan to look for **Spix's night monkeys**. A group of extremely habituated **Lesson's Saddle-back Tamarin** also showed up, together with a couple of **Squirrel Monkeys**.

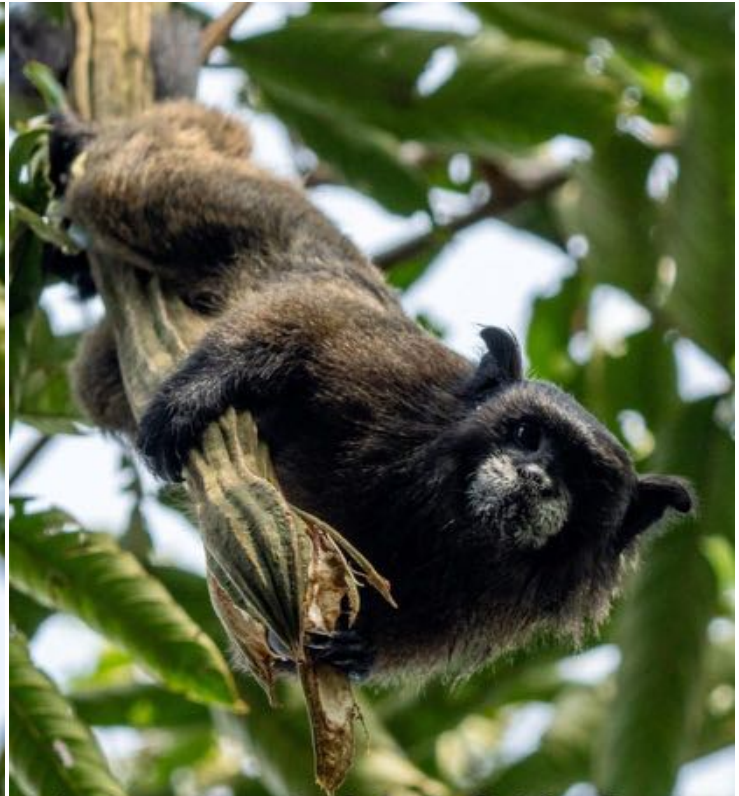


Bare-faced Ibis, Dusky-headed Parakeet, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Laughing Falcon





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January 17: We were due to go looking for a different species of Titi monkey, but our flight was changed from the afternoon to 9:30am so we had to head straight to the airport. As it turned out the flight was delayed by an hour or two but we still had time in Bogota when we landed to go to a small nature reserve and look at the water birds.



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Pied-billed Grebe, Andean Siskin, Yellow-hooded Blackbird, Spot-flanked Gallinule, Bogota Rail

January 18: In the morning we popped into Wild About Colombia's office to collect our cold weather clothes then headed up into the mountains peaking at 3700m and collecting our guide (Betty) enroute. The rest of the day was spent searching for Andean Bears in the mountains. The scenery was spectacular but although we found evidence of

the bears (footprints and the remains of their meals) they eluded us. We did, however, see our first **White-tailed Deer** of the trip.

Our home for the next few days is a basic lodge in the middle of the national park at 3000m with no wifi, phone signal, towels, ensuite or proper heating. However, it was comfortable enough and the food was decent.



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January 19: We were up at 5:30am for a quick breakfast then out on the road looking for wildlife. After trying a few locations we eventually found a large male **Andean bear** (albeit in the distance) that was foraging. It disappeared as the day warmed up but we saw him again in the early afternoon before the weather closed in. After the rain we didn't see any more bears but we did run into a very friendly male **white-tailed deer** as well as a couple of Andean guan on the road on the way back.



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January 20: An even earlier alarm than yesterday for breakfast and then a quick departure just after sunrise. Driving along the road Rob spotted a **Little Red Brocket** which stared at us for ages. Despite us having been told it was very rare and elusive, it was very relaxed, and Andy and Rob were able to creep closer with their cameras. Then we saw a **mountain coati** run across the road. However, for us the stars of the day were 3 different **Andean bear** sightings including a brilliant sighting of a mum and cub. It was an excellent day of mammal watching!



Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Bronze-tailed Thornbill, Andean Guan

January 21: Another early breakfast but today the skies were clear and as soon as the sun rose over the mountains it warmed up quickly so there was little wildlife about other than the **white tailed deer** grazing in the grounds of the

lodge. After lunch though it clouded over and cooled down significantly. We saw two **Andean condors** circling, coincidentally over condor point, and soon after that our local guide found another **Andean bear** and cub that we watched for an hour or so as they made their way across the hillside. Another great day!



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Rufous-browed Conebill



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January 22: This was our last morning in the park so we drove slowly towards the exit stopping at various viewpoints to look for any wildlife. It was a chilly 3 degrees Celsius so much of the wildlife was still sensibly tucked up in bed. We didn't see any bears but we did find a few **white-tailed deer** as well as lots of birds including a **black-chested buzzard-eagle**, a few hummingbirds and a **scarlet-breasted mountain tanager**.



White-browed Spinetail, Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanager, Purple-backed Thornbill, Plain-coloured Seedeater, Shining Sunbeam, Black-chested Buzzard-eagle, Glowing Puffleg

January 23: We had a morning flight from Bogota to Pereira, which was slightly more eventful than expected. We were about 5 metres above the runway at Pereira when the pilot had to abort the landing due to stronger than expected cross winds. There was a queue of planes waiting to take off at Pereira that were given priority over our landing, and we didn't have enough fuel to circle for enough time for them all to take off, so we were re-routed to Cali, where we sat on the tarmac for an hour or so while we refuelled. We then had a short flight back to Pereira where we landed about 2 hours later than planned. We drove to a small village for a late lunch before transferring to an open-topped jeep for the drive through Otun Quimbaya reserve to our lodge. We headed out at about 4pm with a combination of walking and driving, before heading back for a late dinner at 8pm. It was fairly quiet and we didn't see anything of note. We headed out again after dinner and found the eye-shine of a small arboreal mammal which we believe was an **Olinguito** based on its behaviour and the photos we got.



Cauca Guan

January 24: We headed out for a short walk early in the morning for a spot of birding. When we returned we checked the small camera trap that we left behind the lodge the previous evening and saw that a **Mountain Tapir** had been past the previous night at around 11:30pm, around 20 minutes after we got back from our night drive! So we planned to get back a bit earlier today and then to stake out the back of the lodge. We headed off for a late afternoon/dusk walk (no mammals and a couple of good birds) and returned to the lodge for an early dinner. We then headed out for a night drive, which was much more productive than the previous day, possibly due to some afternoon rain. It was quiet to start with, but we then spotted some eye-shine in the same tree as yesterday's **Olinguito**. This time there were three pairs of eyes in the same tree, which we believe were all Olinguito, however we can't say definitively as we were distracted by some noise and movement in nearby trees, which turned out to be a family of **Lemurine Night Monkeys**. They were frustrating for a while but eventually gave us a good show! We found a **Kinkajou** which escaped into the treetops before we could get a photo, but while we were paused also spotted 2 roosting **Colombian Red Howler Monkeys** tucked up in the very top of the tallest trees. We got back to the lodge around 10pm and checked out the back just as a large male **Mountain Tapir** was passing through. He was very relaxed and not bothered at all by our presence or the torches. It was a brilliant experience to get such a close look at an amazing mammal.



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Sickle-winged Guan, Andean Motmot, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Canada Warbler, Cauca Guan



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January 25: Another hour or so birding walk in the morning before breakfast then most of the day was spent relaxing. In the late afternoon we went out for another walk, back for dinner and then out for a night drive with lots of guan, **Lemurine night monkeys**, frogs, Rufescent screech owl, an unidentified rodent and a lovely sighting of a **kinkajou**. The tapir had been at the lodge again while we were out but for a shorter time than yesterday.



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Rufescent Screech-Owl, Moustached Antpitta, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow



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January 26: Today was a travel day so we had a slightly later breakfast, a quick walk to check for birds then rode the jeep back to town before a transfer to a nice lodge for the afternoon and night. Once at the lodge we spent the rest of the morning watching finches, woodpeckers and tanagers in the gardens, as well as a **Red-tailed Squirrel** that was raiding the feeders.



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Steely-vented Hummingbird, Acorn Woodpecker, Thick-billed Euphonia



Red-crowned Woodpecker, Scrub Tanager, Saffron Finch, Tropical Parula, Red-tailed Squirrel

January 27: We had time for breakfast at the lodge watching the birds then said goodbye to Rob for a few days before the three hour drive to Montezuma lodge. Here we spent the afternoon watching the hummingbirds and doing a quick nature walk along the birding road with Joel, our local guide. The Hummingbird feeders resulted in a LOT of photos...



White-necked Jacobin, Crowned Woodnymph, Silver-throated Tanager, Summer Tanager, Rufous-gaped Hillstar, 88 Butterfly



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Scrub Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager



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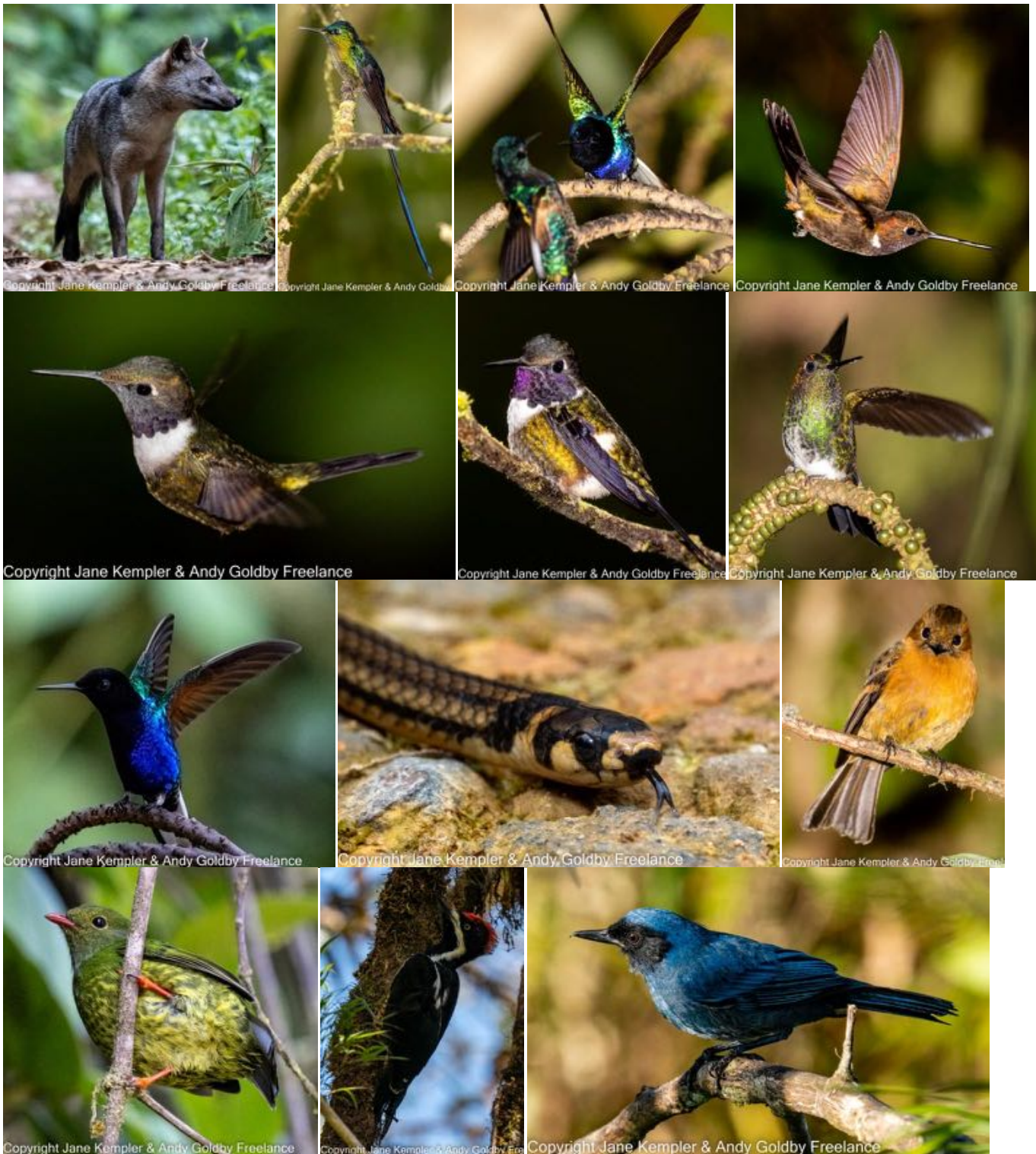
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Anolis Antonii

January 28: After a 5am alarm we grabbed some coffee and drove the very bumpy track to the top of the mountain. From there we slowly walked and drove down stopping at the various feeders to watch the hummingbirds as well as various other endemic birds. Our driver also spotted a **crab-eating Fox** for us that was following the car down the road as we reached the lower slopes.



Crab-eating Fox, Violet-tailed Sylph, Velvet-purple Coronet, Brown Inca, Purple-throated Woodstar x2, Greenish Puffleg, Velvet-purple Coronet, Black-headed Centipede Snake, Cinnamon Flycatcher, Green-and-black Fruitcrow, Powerful Woodpecker, Masked Flowerpiercer



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Velvet-purple Coronet, Great Thrush, Empress Brilliant vs Collared Inca, Collared Inca , Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer, Tourmaline Sunangel, Tyrian Metaltail



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January 29: Another 5am wake up with aching legs...It turns out that walking continuously downhill, without doing any uphill tightens the calf muscles! Driving about halfway up the mountain we continued the walk down looking for birds but we stopped at lunchtime for a break back at the lodge. We spent the afternoon by the feeders and then headed out just before it got dark to look for mammals. We found one **olinguito** plus a lizard and lots of great bugs for the macro lens.



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Purple-throated Woodstar, Gold-ringed Tanager, Masked Trogon, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Green Thorntail, Golden-winged Manakin



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Western Dwarf Squirrel

January 30: Unfortunately our flights were early so it was another 5am departure for the 3 hour drive to Pereira, a two hour check in then a 40 minute flight to Medellin where we had a 4 home layover before the next leg to Santa Marta. We eventually got to the hotel at 6:30pm after a long day of travelling.

January 31: We had a slight lie in today as we were picked up at 6:30am for a walk in Tayrona National Park. We had special permission to enter before the usual 8am opening so it was really quiet for the first hour or so (after that it got very busy, with a steady stream of noisy tourists who were completely clueless that they were surrounded by wildlife – on the plus side the high volume of people means the primates are very habituated and don't seem the least bothered by people, most of who don't even notice that they are there) and we were lucky enough to find 3 groups of the **Cotton-top tamarin** and get good sightings of all three. Despite the heat (30+c) we choose not to

lounge on the beaches with the other tourists and continued walking to see lots of birds and some **Santa Marta White-fronted Capuchins**. After a late lunch we returned to the hotel and walked along the river as it cooled down.



Common Black Hawk, Brown Basalisk, Tropical Parula, Black Vulture, Royal Tern, Broad-winged Hawk, Lineated Woodpecker





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Red-tailed Squirrel



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February 1: Today we were picked up at an even earlier time of 4:30am as we had a 2 hour drive to Camarones. Here we spent a couple of hours looking for birds in the scrub desert. After this we had breakfast at the local guide's mum's house before moving to some feeders to photograph the Vermilion cardinal and some other birds. Then we got on a small boat with another couple and their guide to sail across the lagoon to see a flock of American flamingos (pink adults and grey juveniles) before returning for a late lunch and the 2 hour drive back to the lodge.



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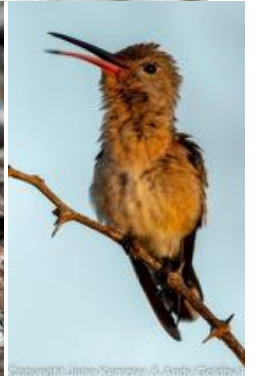
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Osprey, American Flamingo, White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Scaled Dove, Buffy Hummingbird, Pileated Finch, Vermilion Cardinal, Orinoco Saltator, Streaked Saltator, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant, Russet-throated Puffbird, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Coppery Emerald, Black-striped Sparrow

February 2: Another travel day. We just had time for a quick breakfast before heading to the airport only to find our flight back to Medellin was delayed by 90 minutes. Once landed we met up with Rob again and drove to Rio Claro. Just before entering the park we saw one of the **White-footed tamarins** running along a wire but didn't see any in the actual park. We did a gentle evening walk then went along the river to watch the oil birds heading out of their cave (like bats). We also saw some interesting insect life, and there was an unidentified rodent that got away. After dinner we did a very productive night walk along the entrance road and found a few hummingbird nests, a couple of **kinkajou**, **common opossum**, **brown-eared woolly opossum**, **grey-handed night monkeys** as well as some roosting birds, and some rather large spiders (including a tarantula, who unfortunately didn't want to come out of his hole for a photo).



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Brown-eared Woolly Opossum



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Oilbird



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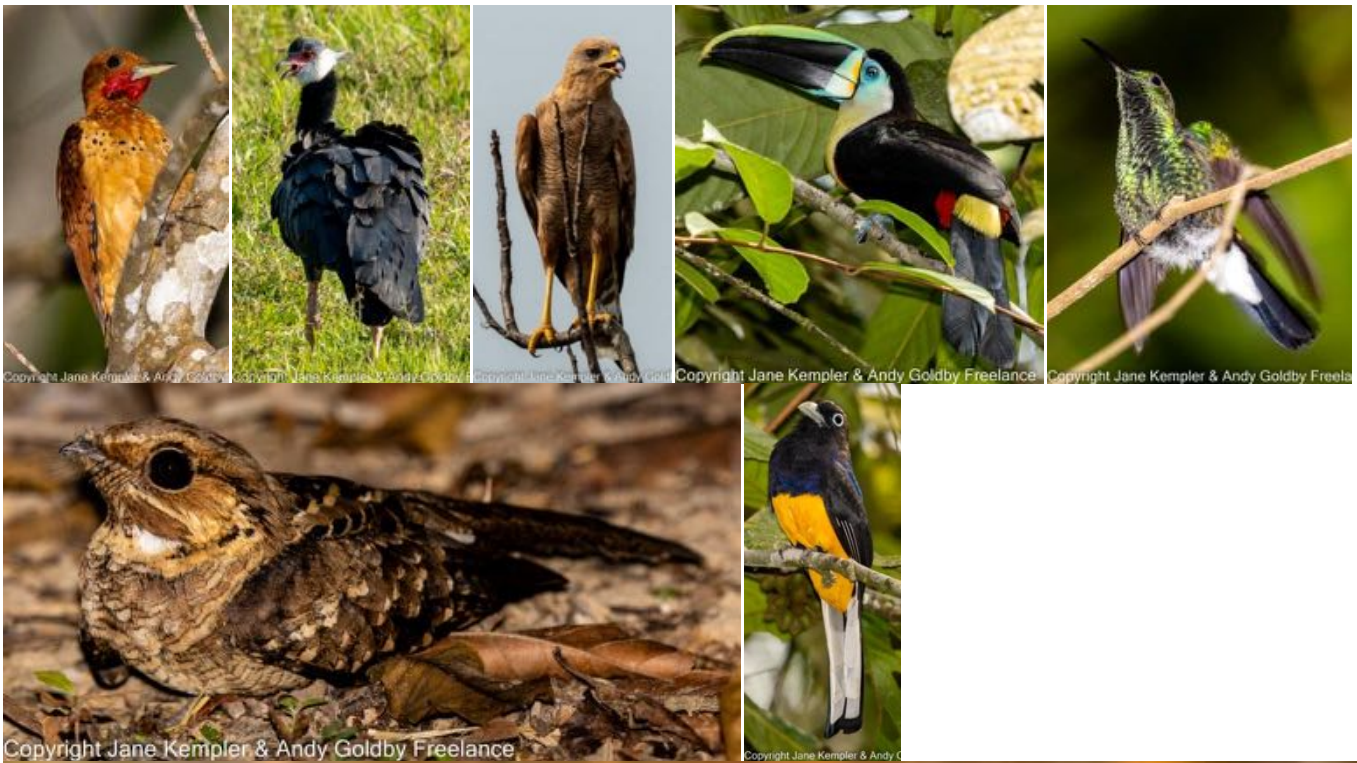


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February 3: We had a quick walk before breakfast then another after eating. It was fairly quiet on both but we did see some nice trogons while we ate breakfast and a beautiful toucan whilst we had lunch. In the afternoon we drove to El Paujil reserve and did a quick walk on a ridge looking in vain for spider monkeys. After dinner we did a quick night walk, setting up the camera trap and seeing nightjars and a **brown-eared woolly opossum**.

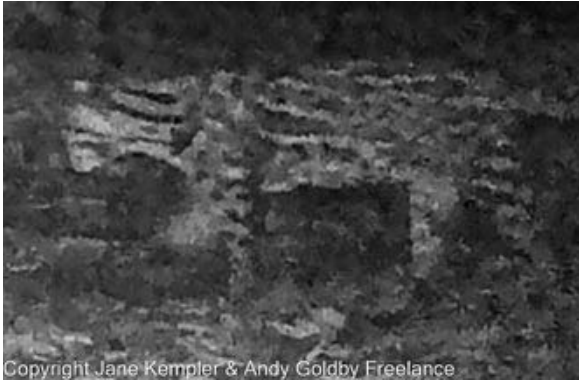


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Cinnamon Wookpecker, Northern Screamer, Savanna Hawk, Citron-throated Toucan, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Common Pauraque, White-tailed Trogon, Yellow-headed Gecko

February 4: Our plan today was to try to find the Brown spider monkeys. We had a brief sighting of them, but when we tried to follow them for a photo they eluded us. We did however manage some views of the **Varied White-fronted Capuchin**, over breakfast, and then again in the afternoon on our walk. The night walk was also very quiet although the camera trap did capture an ocelot walking along the road (we didn't see it though).



Ocelot, Spectacled Caiman



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Spectacled Caiman, Blue-billed Curassow, Red-throated Caracara, Roadside Hawk, Shining-green Hummingbird, Blue-billed Curassow

February 5: Today we asked Elkin (one of the rangers) to take his motorbike to the ridge to look for the **Brown spider monkeys** whilst we scanned from the bird tower. He spotted them so we rushed to the top and spent a couple of hours following them along the ridge trying to get photos. On the way back we stopped at the **Grey-handed Night Monkey** roosting site for a quick look. After lunch we just chilled as the rush up the ridge had rather taken it out of us. We had brief sightings of **night monkey** and **brown-eared woolly opossum** on our night walk, but apart from that it was pretty quiet.



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February 6: After an early breakfast, which was interrupted by a group of **Varied White-fronted Capuchins** crossing the river, we did the final steep climb up to the ridge where we picked up the car and drove back to Rio Claro. On the way we found a pair of Blue-and-yellow Macaws nesting in a tree, and also a group of **Colombian Red Howler Monkeys**. When we arrived we headed off to have another look for the **White-footed tamarins**. This time we were in luck and had some good sightings along a dusty road. On the way back from dinner we had a good sighting of a **common opossum** then just as we were retiring for the night there was a huge thunderstorm with lots of thunder and lightning that killed the power at the hotel.



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Orange-winged Parrot, Yellow-headed Vulture, Blue-and-yellow Macaw, Colombian Red Howler Monkey, White-footed Tamarin



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February 7: Our last day started with a final brief birding walk before breakfast then it was all about the travel back to Medellin, then home.



Orange-chinned Parakeet, Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Blue-headed Parrot, Bicoloured Wren, Yellow-rumped Cacique

For those who care around the numbers...we took 17,429 photos, which included:

- 286 species of birds
- 38 species of mammals
- 14 species of reptiles
- And there were many other birds & reptiles as well as a few mammals that got away without being committed to 'card'!
- We're still working on the IDs of the frogs...