

# Panama, March 2025

William Henri Lewis - [williamhenrilewis@gmail.com](mailto:williamhenrilewis@gmail.com)



## **Introduction**

With some time off of work this past March, I was bouncing back and forth between a few places trying to organize a trip focused on mammalwatching. After going through a few ideas, I eventually landed on Panama. It had a good mix of clean-up from some species I had missed on a previous trip to Costa Rica, and a good variety of new and exciting species that would be worth looking for. The promise of good diving in the area enticed my Dad to want to join as well, and so we put together an itinerary that mixed the two and allowed for good opportunities to search out plenty of mammals. Primarily, we followed the well-beaten path of many a mammalwatcher before us, spending most of our time between the Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton and the town of Gamboa and surrounding forests. For diving, we visited the town of Santa Catalina on the Pacific Coast, which also gave us access to a day trip to nearby Coiba Island. Outside of our stay at Canopy Lodge, we were primarily self-guided for the trip, which worked out very well for us in terms of finding and identifying most species.

I did also look into visiting Barro Colorado Island as part of this trip, and contacted some of the researchers who work there about joining whatever bat-netting might be ongoing while we were there. This didn't end up working out, but it sounded like there was potential for it to be possible in the future (and definitely potential to see some great species). For our time in Gamboa, we had originally wanted to stay at the popular Canopy Tower, but found too late that there would not be availability for the dates we wanted to be there. Instead, we stayed at the Gamboa Rainforest Reserve closer to the center of town, which provided a good central base on its own.

## **Itinerary**

March 15th: Land early morning at Tocumen Airport; drive to Canopy Lodge, El Valle de Anton

March 15th-17th: Stay Canopy Lodge

March 17th: Drive El Valle de Anton to Santa Catalina on Pacific Coast

March 18th: Dive at Coiba Island

March 19th: Explore Coiba Island

March 20th: Drive Santa Catalina to Gamboa

March 20th to 23rd: Stay Gamboa Rainforest Reserve

March 23rd: Drive to Tocumen, flight home

## Panama City and Surroundings

After a redeye flight directly from my home in Denver, CO to Tocumen Airport in Panama City, I was understandably pretty tired, and grabbed what sleep I could in the airport chairs while waiting for my Dad to arrive. After an hour or so of waiting (and not much sleeping) he did, and we picked up our rental car and left. We first stopped in Old Panama City, as we had some time to kill (it was still about 7am at this point) and wanted to see some sights and grab a meal. We saw lots of birds by walking along the waterfront in this area of town, where there are large flats with the low tide, but no mammals to be seen.



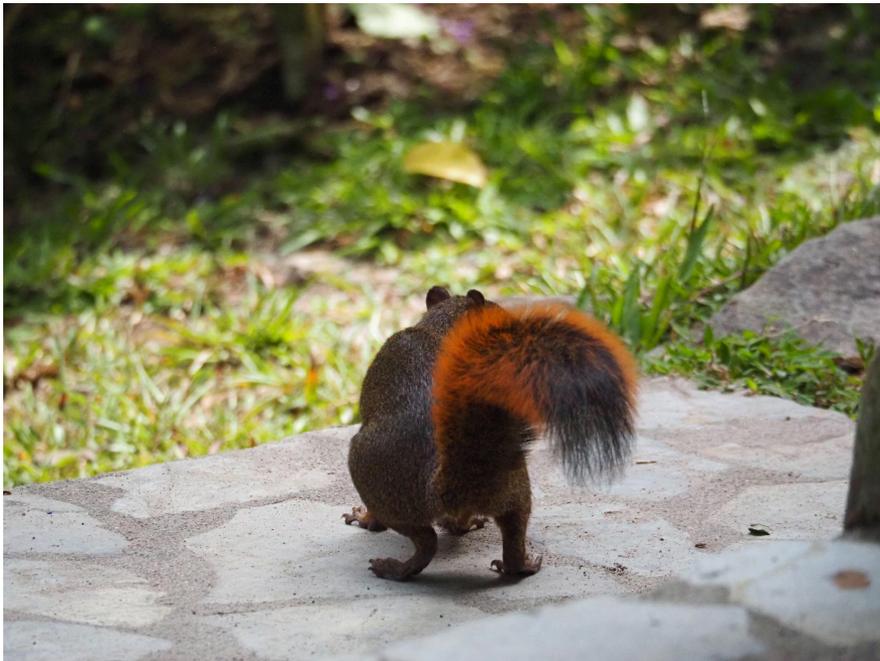
Tricolored Heron; Panama City

After our stop in town we continued along to make a stop at Miraflores Locks, where my Dad wanted to see the canal in action and I hoped to see the **Central American Red Brocket Deer (*Mazama temama*)** that others had reported in the past. We struck out on that front, I think largely due to the timing of our visit - we arrived in the mid-morning, between 9 and 10am, whereas most other successful sightings seemed to be from later in the afternoon. We didn't have all day to wait, as we still had a long drive to the Canopy Lodge ahead of us, so moved on without anything found.

## Canopy Lodge

It took a little longer than expected to drive to the Canopy Lodge, as we took the scenic route - one which, it turned out, was not the right way to go. Instead of driving straight on the main highways, we opted to cut over the mountains to gain some extra scenery and a higher possibility of some interesting species running across the road in front of us. This worked out for a while, with some great views along the way and a few places to stop at overlooks, but after a little while we ran into security gates on the road. As it turns out, between these mountain roads and El Valle de Anton itself there are a number of private communities who do not take too kindly in having strangers pass through. So, instead we had to backtrack, and ended up on the main roads anyway.

After this debacle we finally got ourselves to the Canopy Lodge, which is a very nice spot. If you haven't already read the plenty of other reports from people visiting, it is situated at a high-elevation area within the mountains above the town of El Valle de Anton, and so offers a different habitat from that of the thick rainforest in much of the rest of the country. It is part of the 'Canopy' family of locations in Panama, which also includes Canopy Tower in Gamboa and Canopy Camp in Darien National Park. The owner, Raúl Arias de Para, actually lives in El Valle and joined us at the lodge for dinner both nights we were there. I did my best to talk up mammalwatching to him, which he seemed excited to hear about, and may have convinced him that it was worth investing in a thermal for lodge use by showing him mine. Besides him, the only other guests at the lodge were a guided tour group of about 10 who were largely off on their own, and one older couple who we would go on outings with.



Red-tailed Squirrel (*Sciururs granatensis*); Canopy Lodge

We arrived during lunch, and after dropping our luggage and getting a quick orientation, quickly found our first mammal of the trip - a **Red-tailed Squirrel (*Sciurus granatensis*)** running across the path towards the bird feeders. After lunch, we had our first outing with the Canopy guides, where we walked up and down the main road in front of the lodge. The older couple who would have joined us had already spent several days at the lodge, and were feeling tired, so decided not to go out that afternoon. Instead, it was just my Dad and I with the guide, which let us have a little more direction. Most of the guides at the lodge are trained primarily for birders, and so we had to push through a bit of the bird spotting along the route (which they were many species on), and eventually got to a spot that our guide said was good for seeing **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth (*Bradypus variegatus*)**. Sure enough, as we came out into the Canopy Adventure zipline/swimming hole area we quickly found a juvenile sloth on the ground going to the bathroom. This was a very cool sight, as we got to watch the sloth slowly climb down and then back up the tree after doing its business. From there, we walked through some more paths in the forest, where our guide said he had previously seen Paca, but only spotted some more Red-tailed Squirrels and a second Three-toed sloth high above the main road. Afterwards we returned to the Lodge, where we spotted our first **Central American Agouti (*Dasyprocta punctata*)** of the trip underneath the feeders.



Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth (*Bradypus variegatus*); Canopy Lodge

After spending some time watching the feeders with nothing else new coming by, we had dinner, took a rest, and got ready to spend some time walking around after dark. My Dad wasn't up for it, and we hadn't signed up to have a guided walk, so I spent this night walking on my

own around the lodge property. My first find, on the trail between the bridge and the entrance gate, was a large bat with thick white facial lines night-roosting in the thick overstory above the path. I found it with my thermal and it flew as soon as I turned on the light, but based on the size and thickness of the facial lines I believe this was a **Great Fruit-eating Bat (*Artibeus lituratus*)**. Our guide confirmed the next day that several individuals of this species tend to roost in that area during the day, so I am fairly certain this species is the one I saw. From there I continued down the trail which runs between and parallel to the creek and the main road, hoping to find a Yapok swimming below. Instead, the only species present in this area was a lone **Nine-banded Armadillo (*Dasybus novemcinctus*)** which crashed through the brush with amazingly loud noises. Upon returning to the feeders at the lodge, I found some bats, almost certainly **Orange Nectar Bats (*Lonchophylla robusta*)** visiting the Hummingbird feeders. At this point I was feeling extremely tired after not sleeping much from my redeye the night before, and so decided to turn in, but not before checking the far side of the lodge that I had not yet visited. This turned out to be the best decision I could have made, because as soon as I put my thermal on the creek I noticed one particularly hot rock that seemed to be moving upstream. A **Yapok/Water Opossum (*Chironectes minimus*)**!! I had good views of it as it swam upstream against the current before eventually disappearing from view. This was around 10:15pm, and I couldn't have been more ecstatic. With this newfound energy I returned to the feeders out front, where I found a **Southern Opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*)** feeding on the fruit there as well. After that, it was finally time to turn in, and I called it a night.



Water Opossum/Yapok (*Chironectes minimus*); Canopy Lodge

The next morning the lodge guide took my Dad and I along with the other older couple to a higher-elevation area nearby where there promised to be some additional bird species. The guide mentioned that this was also a good place to look for **Pygmy Squirrels (*Microsciurus sp.*)**, which other reports have also mentioned in this area. The morning walk only produced a few more Three-toed Sloths on the mammal side of things, and apparently some good birds as well. After returning to the lodge we found more Red-tailed Squirrels and an Agouti at the feeders, as well as the first (and only) **Variegated Squirrel (*Sciurus variegatus*)** of the trip.



Variegated Squirrel (*Sciurus variegatus*); Canopy Lodge

After lunch, it was just my Dad and I again (this time with a new guide), and so we wanted to make a concerted effort to look for the local Pygmy Squirrels. We walked two different trails for over three hours, with our guide doing playback of a Pygmy Squirrel call that he had recorded, but only saw More Red-tailed Squirrels, a couple Sloths, and an Eyelash Viper which was pretty cool. And then, finally, after all of this searching along the trails where the guides knew to look, we came across a Pygmy Squirrel high above us in the canopy right next to the roadside. The guides at Canopy Lodge have historically called this population **Western Pygmy Squirrel (*Microsciurus mimulus*)**, but a recent split means that that species is no longer known in Panama. Instead, the previous subspecies *M. boquetensis*, *M. similis*, and *M. isthmus* are now all the present individuals in the country. From the research that I could put together, it seems both *M. similis* and *M. isthmus* live primarily closer to the Colombian border in the Darien area, meaning that this *M. mimulus* complex species should likely be *M. boquetensis*. I feel fairly comfortable with this designation, but if anyone else knows more about the current status of *Microsciurus* taxonomy please let me know.



*Microsciurus sp.*, possibly *Microsciurus boquetensis*; Canopy Lodge

After we got back to the lodge later in the day, I was able to talk to some of the guides about organizing with the guards for me to walk the main road after dark instead of just within the property. This took a little bit of organizing, but wasn't too difficult to arrange. In the end, though, I found the lodge property to be more productive than just walking up and down the street. Shortly after dinner, as I left the group to start my walk, I almost immediately found a **Dark Four-eyed Opossum (*Philander melanurus*)** sitting on the feeder eating the leftover fruits. A great start to the night! Walking up the road, I found something moving just above me in a tree, but it disappeared before I got a good view of it. It was the size perhaps of a large rat, but I didn't see more than the movement of branches as it ran deeper into the brush. Coming back down the road added a Nine-banded Armadillo, which was likely the same individual as the night before as it went into the same patch of forest as where I had seen it previously. After this walk didn't produce much, I went back to walking the trail between the stream and the road, which worked out much better! High up a tree in the open patch of forest where you can see below into the river, I found my first **Quichua Porcupine (*Coendou quichua*)** looking back down upon me! It posed very nicely for me, and was still in the tree later in the night as I walked back through the same open patch. As I walked farther up the same trail, I then came across a large rat that was frozen in a tree, which turned out to be a **Watson's Climbing Rat (*Tylomys watsoni*)**. I was ecstatic with how many species I had found so far, but the night wasn't done yet - as I crossed the bridge back to the main lodge area, I looked down into the stream and once again had great views of the Yapok swimming up it! Two sightings in as many nights, really not bad for that species! This time it was about 11pm that I spotted it, and it was once again moving quickly away before disappearing. I walked back over to the feeders and once again saw the Four-eyed Opossum there, as well as the Orange Nectar Bats visiting the feeder. I waited awhile to see if I could get a quality picture of them, but no such luck. I did one more walk on the main road, seeing no mammals, and decided it was time to turn in (and that there wasn't much else left to look for anyway!)



Quichua Porcupine (*Couendou quichua*); Canopy Lodge

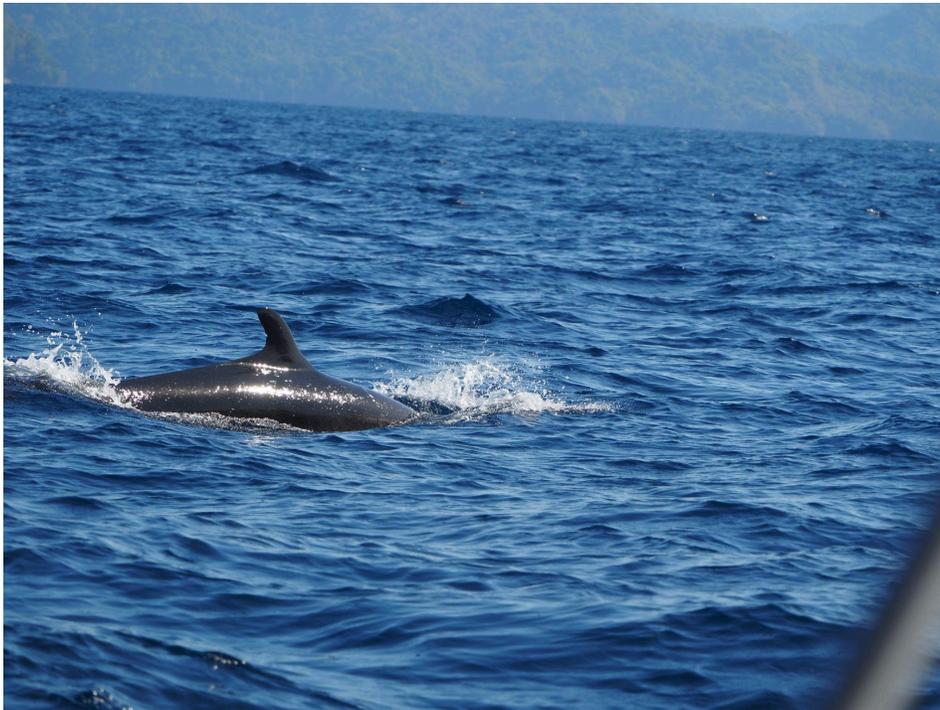
The next morning would be the day we were heading out, so no excursions were booked with the lodge, but they pointed us in the direction of a local trail up to a nice view where they had apparently seen **Tayra** (*Eira barbara*) in the past. We walked this loop, which was an incredible slick path on the way down, but without much luck in seeing anything. After this, we turned back down the hill towards town and began our long drive to Santa Catalina.

## Santa Catalina/Coiba Island



An Island off of Coiba Island

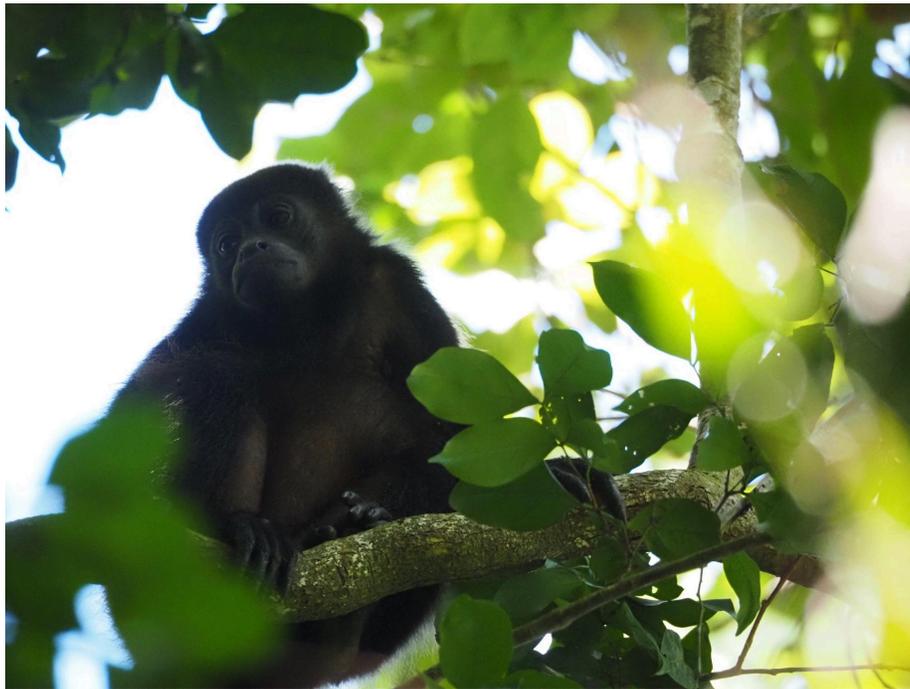
We mostly visited Santa Catalina to do a bit of diving while we had the opportunity, but it also gave us the opportunity to visit Coiba Island and make an attempt to see the endemic **Coiba Agouti (*Dasyprocta coibae*)** and Coiba Island Howler Monkey subspecies. We stayed at Hotel Santa Catalina in town, which was a very nice spot and we really enjoyed our time there. After our long day of driving, we relaxed at the hotel and prepared ourselves for diving the next morning in the town ‘center’. I say ‘center’ because, in all, Santa Catalina is not more than two dirt roads connected to each other with lots of restaurants and dive shops along them. It is a very popular space for divers and surfers alike, and as such there are a great number of people from all over the world in town. On our diving day, we went towards Coiba Island and dove just off of some rocks in the nearby marine reserve. We saw lots of good fish but not the Whale Sharks we had hoped for. On the boat trip out, however, we spotted a pod of what turned out to be **False Killer Whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*)** near the shore of the island. Apparently these are not commonly spotted (and everyone and their mother wants to identify them as ‘Pilot Whales’ for some unknown reason), so this was a great find.



False Killer Whale (*Pseudorca crassidens*); Off Coiba Island

No other mammals that day, but the next day we went out to Coiba Island with a local guide who had been recommended to us from our hotel, Javier. It turned out Javier was originally from LA, and had come down to Panama several years ago and never looked back. Most people who booked him seemed to do so as a bird guide, but he knew his mammals (and the island) well

enough. The small boat ride, with just Javier, his boat captain, my Dad and I took a good couple of hours to reach our first port. We stopped just South of the former Penal colony on the island, where there is a trail leading to some Hot Springs. We walked the trail, and I made the mistake of saying ‘Sure, I’ll look at whatever we can find’ on our way in. This resulted in us spending far more time than I had intended looking for some of the endemic birds, which were cool enough but certainly not what we came for. The walk was further postponed when we found out Javier’s water bottle had spilled inside his bag, and we had to stop and get it cleaned out. We saw several tracks of the Agouti on our walk up the trail, and heard a few distant Howler Monkeys, but didn’t see anything on the way. Our walk back resulted in some **Central American Capuchin Monkeys (*Cebus capucinus*)**, as well as more birds. From there, seeing my chances diminishing before my eyes, I asked Javier ‘Where’s the best place to see Agoutis?’, which resulted in a trip up to the visitors center for the island. Along the boat ride we saw a pod of **Pantropical Spotted Dolphins (*Stenella attenuata*)** near the visitor center harbor. At the center, we took some time to look at the exhibits, but I could not find any Agoutis around the grounds. We walked the trail up towards a viewpoint above the visitors center, and managed to find a troupe of the **Coiba Island Howler Monkeys (*Alouatta palliata coibensis*)** hanging out along the path. Unfortunately, by the time we got down the hill it was time for us to go, so I had to say goodbye to Coiba without finding my Agoutis. I expressed this disappointment to Javier before we left him back in town, to which he said ‘Don’t worry, you’ll see plenty of Agoutis when you go to Gamboa next’. Somehow not realizing that they are two completely different species... I don’t know if I can recommend Javier as a great guide for Coiba, but if you just want someone who can get you on a boat and take you to the island, he can certainly do that.



Coiba Island Howler Monkey (*Alouatta palliata coibensis*); Coiba Island

After the Coiba ordeal, our next morning would be our last in Santa Catalina, as we drove back to Gamboa for our final three nights in Panama. It was a fairly long drive, so we left earlier in the day and were able to arrive in Gamboa early enough in the afternoon.

## Gamboa

We stayed three nights in the town of Gamboa, all of the local Gamboa Rainforest Reserve. We had initially wanted to spend this time at the Canopy Tower, but the timing didn't work out for that to happen. The resort ended up being a very nice alternative in the end, giving us a little more freedom and ability to explore the local environments. They also allowed us to sign up for some of their guided night drives and related activities, which we did in hopes of drawing some more species.

After arriving from Santa Catalina in the mid-afternoon, we got situated in our room and decided to go walk around some of the resort grounds to see what we could find. Quickly we spotted a Central American Agouti next to the walkway in front of the lobby, and proceeded to see many more as we walked up the road. From the main hotel area, we walked past the sloth sanctuary and up to near where the aerial tram departs from, where there are some trails. Along the way, we saw a group of **Mantled Howler Monkeys (*Alouatta palliata*)** in a tree behind the hotel. Using iNaturalist, I had identified a spot along the trails where there seemed to be a current and active roost of **Panamanian Night Monkeys (*Aotus zonalis*)**. We walked over to this area, and luckily we ran into a guided bird group who had just seen the roost. They pointed us in the right direction - thankfully, because I'm not sure I would have found it otherwise - and we were easily able to see the three monkey heads sticking out at us. After this, we walked the trails a bit more, but only found another troop of Howler Monkeys.



Panamanian Night Monkeys (*Aotus zonalis*); Gamboa Rainforest Reserve

That evening we decided to go out on one of the Rainforest Reserve's guided night drives which they offer to see what they might be able to track down. This was a little crowded, and a little touristy, but still produced some good species. Our first was a herd of **Collared Peccary** (*Dicotyles tajacu*) hanging out amongst the old houses attached to the resort. Just past these houses, we found our first **Hoffman's Two-toed Sloths** (*Choloepus hoffmanni*) of the trip, as there were two very near each other in the trees. Finally, as we got to the gate into the reserve property, we saw our first (and only) **Lesser Capybara** (*Hydrochoerus isthmius*) of the trip in the tall grass by the riverbank. It seems this species has decreased significantly in numbers in recent years, and it takes a little bit of effort to be able to track them down. That being said, just after dark at the water by the reserve seems to be as good a place as any to look. After this, we turned back towards the reserve, not seeing anything more than the peccaries again and a few birds along the way.



Lesser Capybara (*Hydrochoerus isthmus*); Gamboa Rainforest Reserve

After we got back, my Dad decided to turn in, and I went out walking along a few of the reserve trails to see what other species I could track down. Right at the hotel, in the small greenery between the walkway to our rooms and the road into the hotel, we saw a Nine-banded Armadillo which was being quite loud as it crashed through the underbrush. Afterwards, alongside the road towards the Night Monkey roost, I found a night-roosting **Pacific Tent-making Bat (*Uroderma convexum*)** hanging from a branch. There were many other bats flying fast right past and in front of me the whole time I walked, but I didn't see any others well enough to identify. After coming back, I went out to walk the La Laguna trail to see what else I could track down, I saw a couple more Armadillos, the same group of Peccaries that had moved deeper into the woods, and a small animal with spots that made me jump as I briefly thought it was a Cat. Until I saw that it had no tail, at least - a **Lowland Paca (*Cuniculus paca*)**.



Pacific Tent-making Bat (*Uroderma convexum*); Gamboa Rainforest Reserve

The next morning we decided to head towards Pipeline Road to walk around and see what we could find. We parked right at the start of the road, and walked the length down to the Rainforest Discovery Center. In hindsight, I might have just driven this section, as it was a long and hot walk back. On the walk out, though, we ran into a large group of American tourists who had been bussed in from Panama City to walk some of the road. This was incredibly annoying to follow behind, but we were able to see a **Northern Tamandua** (*Tamandua mexicana*) (briefly with poor views) and a Three-toed Sloth that their guide pointed out. We also saw several Agoutis on the walk. After arriving at the discovery center, we checked out the area under the visitor center's deck where there is a colony of **Seba's Short-tailed Bats** (*Carollia perspicillata*) living. There were also a few **Merriam's Long-tongued Bats** (*Glossophaga mutica*) intermixed with the group. Next, we went over to their observation tower, where we found some **Greater White-lined Bats** (*Saccopteryx bilineata*) roosting in the corners. There was also a man on top of the tower who I talked to for a while, and had claimed to have walked the entirety of Pipeline road. He said along this walk he had seen a Jaguar and multiple Giant Anteaters, but was very jealous when I told him we had seen a Tamandua, which he called the 'much rarer anteater species'. Not sure how legitimate this all was, but an interesting person to talk to nonetheless.



Yellow-throated Toucan; Panama Rainforest Discovery Center

After the discovery center we walked back to the car, not seeing much else besides the same Three-toed Sloth which was still there, and then returned to the car. Back at the hotel, walking around a bit produced another Pacific Tent-making Bat, this time roosting inside an old cabana next to the pool area. Looking around in other buildings and under the pool deck didn't turn up anything else. That night, we signed up for an after-dark boat trip out into the Chagres River to see what we could find. I had hopes of potentially finding a Central American River Otter, but after asking our guide he said he had only ever seen them once while running that trip. It was mostly focused on looking for Crocodiles and Caiman in the marsh, but as we headed out at dusk we saw many **Fishing Bats** (*Noctilio sp.*) flying above the water. The guide said these were Greater Fishing Bats, but I am not entirely sure on species - it's likely that it was a mix of both Greater and Lesser. We also saw a Howler Monkey screaming from a branch above the water, a truly scary sound to hear out of the darkness. Not much else from the boat tour, so we then went on to walk Pipeline Road again after dark to see what it would produce. My Dad came along this time, for what was unfortunately not a very productive trip up the road. We had one **Gabb's Cottontail** (*Sylvilagus gabbi*) run across our path as we drove up the road (this time parking past the discovery center, at the point where vehicles are no longer allowed), and later saw another deeper into the forest. Near where we parked we found a **Southern Opossum** (*Didelphis marsupialis*) frozen still in a tree, getting good views. There were also plenty of Bats flying through the forest, but I was unable to find any at night roosts to identify. On the way out,

we saw a Two-toed sloth from across the pond near the road entrance, and the same group of Collared Peccaries were around on the way into the hotel.



Spectacled Caiman (Left) and American Crocodile (Right); Gamboa Rainforest Reserve

The next day we went to Semaphore Hill Road at the Canopy Tower and walked the road up to the Tower and back. From the parking lot, this is a somewhat steep route that takes a bit of time to go up, but was definitely worth it. We were hoping to find Geoffrey's Tamarins here, as well as spend time checking culverts and other places for any roosting bats. We first looked under the bridge near the start of the road, where we were able to find a few Greater White-lined Bats and many Merriam's Long-tongued Bats. Checking each of the culverts as we went up the hill, I would say close to half of them had at least some bats within them. Most of these were **Common Big-eared Bats (*Micronycteris microtis*)**, with some Merriam's Long-tongued and Seba's Short Tailed Bats mixed in as well. Besides all the bats, we also saw a few Red-tailed Squirrels while walking, but not the Tamarins that we had hoped for. We talked to one couple staying at the Canopy Tower and asked if they had seen any while staying there, and they said the only individuals they had come across were at the feeders by the tower. We drove afterwards through the town of Gamboa to see if we might catch a troop there, but no such luck.



Common Big-eared Bat (*Micronycteris microtis*); Semaphore Hill Road

After we decided to drive to Pipeline road and walk, this time starting at the endpoint for vehicles and going farther. Right at the parking area we found troops of both **Mantled Howler Monkeys** (*Alouatta palliata*) and **White-faced Capuchin Monkeys** (*Cebus capucinus*) crossing the road, which gave us lots of great views. We also saw lots of Agoutis along the path, and our only pair of **White-nosed Coatis** (*Nasua narica*) which ran in front of us quickly while we walked down from the Radio Hill trail (which also has great views at the top). After this walk we went back to the hotel and got ready for our early departure to get back home the next morning.

Even despite an early morning, I was not dissuaded from doing a night walk up Semaphore Hill Road, and I'm immensely glad I did! This ended up being by far the best night of the trip, and probably one of the best of my mammalwatching career. Again as I headed out just after dark I ran into the same group of Collared Peccaries within the hotel grounds, and then made my way to the bottom of Semaphore Hill. Shortly after starting to walk up the road I found a pair of **Quichua Porcupines** (*Couendou quichua*) in the canopy above me with my thermal. As I watched them a small rat, which ended up being a **Bicolored Arboreal Rice Rat** (*Oecomys bicolor*), started running back and forth on the branches in front of me, giving great views. Continuing a little farther up the road a larger rat was sitting deeper into the forest, which appeared to be a **Tome's Spiny Rat** (*Proechimys semispinosus*). Another seemingly Bicolored Arboreal Rice Rat was sitting on a leaf just opposite the Spiny Rat.



Quichua Porcupine (*Couendou quichua*); Semaphore Hill Road

I continued from there towards the top of the hill, finding three more independent Andean Porcupines along the way with my thermal. I also came across a Lowland Paca that stopped just long enough for me to get a good look, but not long enough for a picture. Towards the top I found another seemingly Tome's Spiny Rat off the trail, at the very top, I shined my light at a spot found with my thermal thinking it was nothing, only to find the face of a 'Kinkalingo' looking back at me. It disappeared into the canopy before I was able to get a good enough look to confirm it as either species, sadly, and so I am left wondering. Both species are common visitors of the Canopy Tower feeding stations after dark, and I was right next to the Canopy Tower by this point, so it could have been either one. While looking around, I also found a **Nine-banded Armadillo** (*Dasyus novemcinctus*) crashing through the underbrush. I heard more crashing on the way down the hill, this time from far above me. I waited to see if I could get a good view, only to find a Tamandua climb down a tree right next to me and walk parallel to the road, and later along the road, for about 15 minutes. When it finally departed back towards the forest it left me right next to another rice rat sitting on the concrete, the one a *Transandiomys* species. Looking at the coloration compared to the options in Panama, I believe this is a **Talamancan Rice Rat** (*Transandiomys talamancae*). Continuing down I passed a second Armadillo, what looked like another Paca, and a second Tamandua walking along the road. Finally, upon reaching the bottom, I found a group of about four Tome's Spiny Rats sitting silently right next to the trail, and another Andean Porcupine in the trees just before the parking lot. What a night!



Northern Tamandua (*Tamandua mexicana*); Semaphore Hill Road

After this I drove back to the hotel as it was pretty late and we still had an early flight in the morning, but didn't see much. The next day we woke up, drove straight to Tocumen airport in Panama City, and flew home, without seeing anything else. Altogether a really great trip, with over 30 species seen and some beautiful spots visited. I would definitely recommend Panama as a country, as it has lots of great natural areas and some incredible guides who really know what they're doing. Feel free to ask any questions about my trip, the species I came across, or my itinerary as I'm happy to talk it over with anyone trying to plan their own trips!

# Individual Species Accounts

## DIDELPHIDAE

Yapok/Water Opossum (*Chironectes minimus*)



Seen both nights at Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton. This is a pretty rare species, which I was lucky to get good views of on multiple days. Both times it was seen in the river that runs through the Canopy Lodge property, once at 10:15pm past the main hotel buildings and once at 11pm from the bridge to the main part of the lodge.

Common Opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*)



One seen at Canopy Lodge feeding on fruit from the feeding station well after dark. Another seen along Pipeline road in Gamboa frozen on a branch while on a night walk.

Dark Four-eyed Opossum (*Philander melanurus*)

One seen at Canopy Lodge feeding on fruit from the feeding station shortly after dinner, with a crowd still gathered in the main area. Seen returned to the same station multiple other times through the night.

## DASYPODIDAE

Nine-banded Armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*)



Seen very commonly at most locations. Seen both nights at Canopy Lodge near the main road outside the property, as well as on the ground of Gamboa Rainforest Reserve and along Semaphore Hill Road (both multiple sightings).

## BRADYPODIDAE

Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth (*Bradypus variegatus*)



Very common at Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton. Seen on excursions along the main road and at higher elevations each day, with multiple sightings every day. Can be stationary and difficult to spot amidst the canopy without an experienced guide. One was also seen along Pipeline Road in Gamboa, thanks to the spotting of a local guide.

## CHOLOEPODIDAE

Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth (*Choloepus hoffmanni*)



Common in and around Gamboa, primarily at night. A couple individuals were seen in Gamboa Rainforest Reserve on a night drive, and one other was spotted near the entrance to Pipeline road after dark.

## MYRMECOPHAGIDAE

Northern Tamandua (*Tamandua mexicana*)



Brief views of one individual along Pipeline Road in Gamboa, with help from a local guide who spotted the individual. Two other individuals were seen with much better views on Semaphore Hill Road on a night walk, walking along the road in search of food.

## AOTIDAE

### Panamanian Night Monkey (*Aotus zonalis*)



One group of three individuals were found in a known roost hole on trails near Gamboa Rainforest Reserve, in the direction of the Aerial Tram beginning point. Roost hole located via iNaturalist, and pointed out with help from a local guide.

## ATELIDAE

### Mantled Howler (*Alouatta palliata*)



Common in and around Gamboa, troops were seen near Gamboa Rainforest Reserve, along trails by the aerial tramway, and along the Chagres River after dark. A troop was also seen on Pipeline road during the day crossing over the road by jumping between branches. A troop representing the Coiba Island subspecies (*Alouatta palliata coibensis*, left picture) was seen on Coiba Island, on the trail leading directly up to a viewpoint from the visitor's center.

## CEBIDAE

### White-faced Capuchin (*Cebus capucinus*)



Multiple troops were seen along Pipeline Road in Gamboa during midday, moving through trees and over the road. A troop was also spotted on Coiba Island, along the trail leading towards the Hot Springs.

## LEPORIDAE

### Central American Tapeti (*Sylvilagus gabbi*)

Two individuals were spotted separately along Pipeline Road after dark. One was seen while driving in, the other while on foot farther down the road and disappeared into the thick brush.

## CAVIIDAE

### Lesser Capybara (*Hydrochoerus isthmius*)



One individual of the species was seen while on a night drive with Gamboa Rainforest Resort, in the grasses right by their entrance gate and between the river and the main road. This once common species has become slightly more difficult to find in recent years.

## CUNICULIDAE

### Lowland Paca (*Cuniculus paca*)

One probable individual seen on the La Seguna trail at Gamboa Rainforest Resort after dark. One-two others were spotted on Semaphore Hill Road while on a night walk.

## DASYPROCTIDAE

### Central American Agouti (*Dasyprocta punctata*)



Exceedingly common, this is likely the most commonly seen species of the trip. Several individuals were seen visiting the bird feeders at the Canopy Lodge regularly during the day. At Gamboa Rainforest Reserve, they were very common on the paths around the hotel, and could typically be found sleeping along them after dark. Also very common on Pipeline Road, where 10+ individuals were seen on most daytime walks.

## ERETHIZONTIDAE

Quichua Porcupine (*Coendou quichua*)



One individual was seen at Canopy Lodge, high in a tree between the stream and where the path runs parallel to the stream and the road. Another six were spotted using my thermal during one night walk along Semaphore Hill Road in Gamboa after dark, all high in the canopy, ranging from the bottom to near the top of the hill.

## ECHIMYIDAE

Tome's Spiny Rat (*Proechimys semispinosus*)



Several individuals seen while on a night walk up Semaphore Hill Road, ranging from the bottom to near the top of the hill. A group of three individuals was seen just before the bridge leading up the hill to Canopy Tower.

## SCIURIDAE

### Panamanian Dwarf Squirrel (*Microsciurus boquetensis*)



One individual was seen after much effort searching at a high-elevation location above El Valle de Anton. This population of dwarf squirrels has historically been called *M. mimulus*, but after recent splits, I believe *M. boquetensis* is the new local species in the area. If anyone knows more than me, please let me know.

Red-tailed Squirrel (*Sciurus granatensis*)



Very commonly seen, especially in and around Canopy Lodge. Individuals visited the bird feeders there very often during the day, and could also be found on walks in the surrounding forest habitats. Some were also seen along Semaphore Hill Road near Gamboa during the day.

Variegated Squirrel (*S. variegatoides*)



One individual was seen visiting the bird feeders at Canopy Lodge during midday. This was the only individual of the species spotted during the entirety of the trip.

## CRICETIDAE

### Bicolored Arboreal Rice Rat (*Oecomys bicolor*)



One and perhaps a second of what seem to be this species were seen on a night walk up Semaphore Hill Road near Gamboa. One climbed very clearly through my light and gave great views of its appearance.

### Talamancan Rice Rat (*Transandinomys talamancae*)



One individual that I believe is of this species was seen walking along Semaphore Hill Road near Gamboa after dark. It looks very good for this genus, and is differentiated here from the other *Transandinomys* species in Panama due to the much darker coloration of that species. If anyone knows more about this species' identification, please let me know.

Watson's Climbing Rat (*Tylomys watsoni*)



One individual of the species was found on the trail alongside the stream at Canopy Lodge near El Valle de Anton. It posed very well in the light, and remained still for much of the night as I walked past its position.

**EMBALLONURIDAE**

Greater Sac-winged (White-lined) Bat (*Saccopteryx bilineata*)



Several bats of this species were roosting in the corners of the Observation Tower at Panama Discovery Center in Gamboa. Very visible on the way up to the top, roosted in the metal alongside the stairs. Several more of the species were present under the bridge on Semaphore Hill Road, leading up to the Canopy Tower.

## NOCTILIONIDAE

### Bulldog Bat (*Noctilio sp.*)

Several of these fishing bats were out hunting over the Chagres river, as visible from the small port within Gamboa Rainforest Reserve. Our guide thought these might be Greater Bulldog Bats, but I could not be sure - it's likely there may have been a mixture out hunting. They were active just after dusk, and died down later into the night.

## PHYLLOSTOMIDAE

### Seba's Short-tailed Bat (*Carollia perspicillata*)



Many bats of this species were seen roosting underneath the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center's visitor center's deck, and were very active as we viewed them. A few more were present in culverts under Semaphore Hill Road near Gamboa.

## Merriam's Long-tongued Bat (*Glossophaga mutica*)



Several bats of this species were seen present underneath the bridge to Semaphore Hill Road leading towards the Canopy Tower. A few more were present in culverts also under the road, further along towards the top. And more yet were present under the deck at the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center's visitor center's deck along Pipeline Road.

## Orange Nectar Bat (*Lonchophylla robusta*)

A few bats of this species would visit the hummingbird feeders at Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton after dark each night. They were present not long after nightfall, and remained for a good while. Their visits were often quick, and I found it very difficult to get any quality images of the visiting bats.

## Common Big-eared Bat (*Micronycteris microtis*)



Several bats of this species roosted in multiple different culverts under Semaphore Hill Road leading up to the Canopy Tower near Gamboa. They were common in most of the culverts that had bats, and were typically in groups of several individuals.

## Great Fruit-eating Bat (*Artibeus lituratus*)

One individual seen on a night walk at Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton. It briefly landed amongst the thick brush near the entrance from the parking area, and flew off as soon as I saw it. Identified on the basis of size and the vibrancy of the facial stripes, as well as the knowledge of local guides.

## Pacific Tent-making Bat (*Uroderma convexum*)



One individual found night-roosting along the side of the road at Gamboa Rainforest Reserve well into the night. Another was found in an abandoned cabana building next to the pool at the Reserve, day-roosting on the ceiling.

## PROCYONIDAE

### White-nosed Coati (*Nasua narica*)



Two individuals were very briefly seen along Pipeline Road near Gamboa. They crossed quickly on the trail leading from Radio Hill as we hiked down. Another couple had spotted another individual later that day a little closer on the road, at the point where vehicles are no longer allowed.

## TAYASSUIDAE

Collared Peccary (*Dicotyles tajacu*)



One group was seen multiple times in the same area, along the old condo-style houses within the Gamboa Rainforest Reserve just after dark. Usually present grazing on the lawns, often late into the night.

## DELPHINIDAE

### Pantropical Spotted Dolphin (*Stenella attenuata*)



A pod of several of this species was spotted near Coiba Island, while traveling along the coast from the Hot Springs trail towards the visitor's center. The pod was seen not far from the visitor's center, in a cove just before where no other boats were at the time.

### False Killer Whale (*Pseudorca crassidens*)



A pod of many individuals of this species was seen while going out with a diving boat near Coiba Island. They traveled near the boat for a little while, and we got good views of many different individuals. Locals say they are not often spotted while out on the water, so we were very lucky to come across this pod. Very commonly misidentified locally at 'Pilot whales', a sign in the Coiba Island visitor's center even had a picture of this species labeled as *Globicephala* sp.

## Stuff We Missed

All in all, we did very well on this trip, and were able to find a number of great rarities and a few others that I hoped we would see. Despite that, there were definitely a few things that we looked for or which I had hoped for that we missed out on. One major miss that I hadn't expected going in was Coiba Agouti during our trip out to Coiba Island. I believed this species was fairly common, and our guide made it sound like it wouldn't be too difficult to see, so I had fully expected we would be able to find one during our outing. That didn't end up happening, though, and our guide seemed less than excited about continuing the search as the day went on. So, definitely a species to go back for, probably with a different guide in tow to look with. At the Canopy Lodge, we didn't have much that we missed out on. The two that I worried would be difficult, Water Opossum and Dwarf Squirrel, ended up both being spotted, which was really a treat. There is potential here for things like Olingo or Kinkajou, or for Geoffroy's Tamarin during the day, but I didn't try too hard at this location. We also walked a trail that our guides had seen Tayra on before, but that was also a bit of a longshot to try and see. In Gamboa, there were a couple species that I had really hoped to get where he did not get lucky. Namely, the Geoffroy's Tamarins and Northern Olingo were both ones where I thought we had good potential but did not see. The Olingo I may have had eyes on, as one individual on Semaphore Hill road was either this species or a Kinkajou, but I didn't see it well enough to confirm. I think both of these species would have been likely had I stayed at the Canopy Tower, as they are reported as frequent visitors to the feeding stations there, but that didn't work out this time. There are also a number of other bat species in the area that could have showed up at a night-roost or elsewhere, but did not this time around. Rarities such as the cats that exist here would also have been great finds, but I wasn't holding my breath for those sightings to happen.

## Acknowledgements

I have to start out by acknowledging all our great guides we had while in Panama, who helped immensely in finding so many of our amazing species. The Canopy guides especially are really top notch, and were great in their expertise of looking for the mammals we hoped to find. Beyond that, I must thank everyone who wrote a report on mammalwatching.com from Panama, as I used so many of them as I was planning our stops. Especially thanks to Jon Hall, Alex Meyer, and the Traveling Zoologists, who all had great information of what was around to look for. I also have to give a big thanks to Jon Hall and Jose Gabriel Martinez Fonseca for their help with identifying some of my species, as I was definitely a little caught up as I went through. And finally, thanks to my Dad for coming along and for organizing so much of the logistics - it saved me a real hassle.