

Colombia 2019

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In January/February 2019, we conducted a botanical field trip to Colombia based on Medellín. With 15 people in the group and a botanical focus, mammal watching was largely opportunistic or limited to the night time when we were staying close to good habitat. Despite this, I managed to see about 50 species, with the aquatic rodents being my favourites.

Sites visited

Medellín: 5 nights. In contrast to its bad reputation, Medellín is a surprisingly clean, modern and safe city. We stayed at the Ibis Hotel which has some green areas around where I did some bat-detecting at night. *Didelphis marsupialis* is common and *Cerdocyon thous* is also colonizing the city. The mountains around the city have quite a bit of forest left and camera-trapping has recorded such species as Northern Oncilla, Puma, Mountain Paca, and Northern Naked-tailed Armadillo, but ask locals about safety before venturing out to look for these.

Río Blanco: 4 nights. This is a well known birdwatching site near the city of Manizales (some 6 hours from Medellín) with secondary/disturbed forest at 2700-2900 m easily accessible from the lodge (nice rooms and the food is ok). I put up some rodent traps on the trail right behind the lodge (30% trapping success using oats, peanut butter and bananas as bait), set up a bat net across the road some 400 m down from the lodge (careful, there is some traffic until 9 pm), and walked around with the thermal scope. Other species seen closer to the lodge but not by me include Mountain Coati (seen the night prior to our visit). The local guides said that by following the road for a couple of hours, one reaches better forest where Little Red Brocket Deer has been seen.

El Cairo: 3 nights. This is a very pleasant little town in the western cordillera from which a number of reserves lying at around 1700-2300 m on the water divide of the western cordillera can be reached. These harbour some really nice and very wet cloud forest habitats. Birding is fantastic and I assume that mammals are excellent as well, but because we stayed in town, I was unable to trap rodents or catch bats. Olinguito, Colombian Weasel (*Mustela felipei*), Puma, and Jaguar have been recorded in the reserves. The reserves and logistics for visitors are managed by Fundación Serraniagua, who did a really good job. No small mammal surveys have been conducted yet and I assume that they would be happy to support anybody willing to survey the reserves. We made day visits to the two best known reserves: Galápagos (along the road to the Chocó lowlands, do not go beyond San José del Palmar at 1100 m) and Cerro El Inglés.

Coquí: 4 nights. This little village is located in an idyllic position on the Pacific Ocean about 30 minutes by boat south of Nuquí (daily flights from Medellín). The village itself is inhabited by about 150 people of African descent, further inland there are native American Embera communities. Habitats include extensive mangrove forests, fields and secondary forest on flat ground, and well-preserved tropical lowland forest on steep slopes. There has long been intensive hunting and species such as tapirs and spider monkeys are unknown to the local hunters. We stayed for 4 nights at a very nice small lodge at the northern end of the bay (fantastic food) where together with a mammalogy student from Medellín we did some trapping (4% success rate) and bat-netting close to the accommodation. The trails were too steep to allow lengthy forest walks, so I used the thermal scope from the beach and on short trails next to the lodge.

San Miguel: 1 night. This reserve protects some secondary and primary montane forest at 1900-2500 m in the headwaters of the Medellín valley. It is a 1 hour drive from the city center, followed by a 6 km walk to the reserve where there is basic accommodation. Because we only stayed one night and had to carry all our stuff, I did not bring rodent traps or the bat net. Larger mammals known from the reserve include Mountain Coati, Olinguito, Stump-tailed Porcupine, Jaguarundi, and Puma.

Species recorded

Note: Rodents were not collected, hence determinations are tentative for some species. Bat determinations of species not caught are based on a combination of a bat detector (Echo Meter Touch 2) and visual observations (mostly using the thermal scope). Bats in the hand were determined using Diaz *et al.* (2016) Clave de identificación de los murciélagos de Sudamérica.

Andean White-eared Opossum (*Didelphis pernigra*): One seen at night at Río Blanco.

Tschudi's Slender Opossum (*Marmosops impavidus*): One seen with the heat scope at San Miguel. A common species in the forest relicts around Medellín.

Lesser Sac-winged Bat (*Saccopterys leptura*): Several found roosting in a disused building at Coquí, where also bat-detected and seen flying around at dusk.

Greater Sac-winged Bat (*Saccopterys bilineata*): Bat-detected and seen flying around at dusk at Coquí.

Greater Bulldog Bat (*Noctilio leporinus*): Bat-detected at Coquí.

Bogotá Fruit-eating Bat (*Dermanura bogotensis*): Seen at San Miguel. One of the most common bats in the Medellín valley.

Pygmy Fruit-eating Bat (*Dermanura phaeotis*): Five caught at Coquí.

Rosenberg's Fruit-eating Bat (*Dermanura rosenbergi*): One caught at Coquí.

Northern Little Yellow-eared Bat (*Vampyressa thuyone*): One photographed at a night roost under an Araceae leaf at Coquí.

(Melissa's Yellow-Eared Bat (*Vampyressa melissa*): A *Vampyressa* caught at Coquí at sea level was keyed to this species which usually occurs above 1000 m elevation. Tissue was taken for genetic analysis.)

Silky Short-tailed Bat (*Carollia brevicauda*): One caught at Río Blanco. About a dozen found roosting in the disused station building at Cerro El Inglés near El Cairo. Six caught at Coquí.

Chestnut Short-tailed Bat (*Carollia castanea*): Commonly caught at Coquí.

Seba's Short-tailed Bat (*Carollia perspicillata*): The most commonly caught bat at Coquí.

Aratathomas's Yellow-shouldered Bat (*Sturnira aratathomasi*): One caught at Río Blanco.

Hairy Yellow-shouldered Bat (*Sturnira erythromos*): One roosting among the Short-tailed Bats in the disused station building at Cerro El Inglés near El Cairo. Also presumably this species seen in Medellín.

Highland Yellow-shouldered Bat (*Sturnira ludovici*): One caught at Río Blanco.

Anoura aequatoris: A bat caught at 2650 m at Río Blanco corresponds to this taxon, which is sometimes treated as a subspecies of *A. caudifer*.

Commissari's Long-tongued Bat (*Glossophaga commissarisi*): Two caught at Coquí.

Pallas's Long-tongued Bat (*Glossophaga soricina*): One caught at Coquí.

Humboldt's Big-eared Brown Bat (*Histiotus humboldti*): One caught at Río Blanco, where *H. montanus* is also known to occur.

Hairy-legged Myotis (*Myotis keaysi*): Netted and bat-recorded at Río Blanco.

Black Myotis (*Myotis nigricans*): Bat-detected at El Cairo and Coquí, where also commonly seen and one caught in a net.

Riparian Myotis (*Myotis riparius*): Bat-detected and seen in the mangroves at Coquí.

Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*): Bat-detected and seen with the thermal scope at Río Blanco and San Miguel.

Velvety Free-tailed Bat (*Molossus molossus*): Bat-detected at El Cairo village and at Coquí.

Bonda Mastiff Bat (*Molossus bondae*): Bat detected and seen in the mangroves at Coquí.

Black Bonneted Bat (*Eumops auripendulus*): Bat detected and seen in the mangroves at Coquí.

Geoffroy's Tamarin (*Saguinus geoffroyi*): Seen by others of the group at Coquí.

Panamanian Night Monkey (*Aotus zonalis*): Two seen at night with the thermal scope at Coquí. Slipped away rather swiftly once I put the light on them.

Olinguito (*Bassaricyon neblina*): One seen at night at Río Blanco. Also known from El Cairo and San Miguel.

Crab-eating Raccoon (*Procyon cancrivorus*): One seen high in a tree at Coquí at night.

Mountain Coati (*Nasuella olivacea*): One seen by others in the group at Galápagos reserve near El Cairo. Also known from Río Blanco and San Miguel.

White-nosed Coati (*Nasua narica*): Seen by others of the group at Coquí. One of the most commonly hunted animals at Coquí, along with paca and agouti.

(Puma (*Puma concolor*): Tracks seen at Cerro El Inglés near El Cairo, where commonly recorded in camera traps.)

Common Bottlenosed Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*): a pod seen distantly from the beach at Coquí. The local fishermen also were also familiar with Spinner and Striped Dolphins as well as with Sperm and Humpback Whales, the latter coming for calving from May to October when they are a big tourist attraction.

Stump-tailed Porcupine (*Coendou rufescens*): Seen twice at night at Río Blanco. Also known from El Cairo, San Miguel and quite common in forest remnants around the city of Medellín, where it is often killed on roads.

Quichua Porcupine (*Coendou quichua*): One seen with the thermal scope in the mangroves at Coquí, but it moved away before we could get close.

Red-tailed Squirrel (*Sciurus granatensis*): Up to three visiting the bird feeders at Río Blanco and also seen in the forest there. One seen at Coquí and one at San Miguel. According to my Colombian colleagues, recent molecular studies suggest that three cryptic species are involved. Also, there are some 4 new *Microsciurus*-species around.

Southern Spiny Pocket Mouse (*Heteromys australis*): One seen at night at Coquí.

Armoured Rat (*Hoplomys gymnurus*): One seen at night in backwater swamp at Coquí.

Crab-eating Rat (*Ichthyomys hydrobates*): One seen by me and up to two by other group members at night in a little stream behind the lodge at Coquí. According to the literature, this species occurs above 1000 m, but it was seen very well and has been collected at sea level at Bahía Solano the the north of Coquí. One of those montane taxa that reach low elevations in the Chocó (see under Delicate Pygmy Rice Rat).

Montane Fish-eating Rat (*Neusticomys monticolus*): One seen in a stream close to the station building at San Miguel.

Western Colombian Rice Rat (*Nephelomys pectoralis*): Two caught at Río Blanco.

Long-furred Arboreal Rice Rat (*Oecomys trinitatis*): One seen at night in the mangroves at Coquí.

Long-whiskered Rice Rat (*Transandinomys bolivaris*): Two caught at Coquí.

Talamancan Rice Rat (*Transandinomys talamancae*): One caught at Coquí. It had a huge bot fly larva in its side which emerged while we were handling the animal.

White-footed Rice Rat (*Handleyomys intectus*): One caught at Río Blanco.

Dusky Rice Rat (*Melanomys caliginosus*): The most commonly caught rodent at Río Blanco where I also saw two crossing trails. One seen at San Miguel with the thermal scope.

Colombian Forest Mouse (*Chilomys instans*): Two caught at Río Blanco.

Broad-footed Climbing Mouse (*Rhipidomys latimanus*): One caught at Río Blanco. Probably also this species seen at night at Coquí, but it remained partly hidden by the vegetation.

Popayán Oldfield Mouse (*Thomasomys popayanus*): One caught at Río Blanco.

(Delicate Pygmy Rice Rat (*Oligoryzomys delicatus*): A mouse seen very well at close range at Coquí looked just like an *Oligoryzomys*, but no species of the genus is known from such low elevations in the Chocó region. However, many Andean species reach lower elevations in the Chocó than elsewhere in their ranges and this species actually reaches sea level in northern Colombia.)

House Mouse (*Mus musculus*): Two caught and one seen around the buildings at Coquí.