

VENEZUELA (CARACAS TO MÉRIDA)

4 – 18 September 2004

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Participants – Clive Hurley, Eleanor Hurley, Gruff Dodd, Sara Dodd

Guide – David Ascanio (Birding in Venezuela) - david@birding-venezuela.com or gioconda@birding-venezuela.com

Introduction

We had originally intended to visit Venezuela in July 2003, but civic unrest resulting in a UK government advice warning not to travel meant we had to cancel our plans. By then, however, we had made contact with David Ascanio of Birding in Venezuela, agreed costs and received a draft itinerary, so when we decided to make another attempt at visiting this wonderful country in September 2004, most of the arrangements were already in place.

The trip proved well worth the wait, and definitely ranks as one of the best we have ever made. We saw a wonderful cross-section of Venezuelan habitats and scenery, enjoyed great food and nice hotels and thoroughly enjoyed our time with David and our driver Carlos. As for the birds, we recorded well over 400 species, many of them Venezuelan endemics and near-endemics, including some extremely rare and difficult species.

Highlights included such fantastic species as Scallop-breasted Antpitta, a bird so rare and little-known that David believes that only a few dozen other birders worldwide have seen this species. Other major successes included Helmeted Curassow, Plain-flanked Rail, Rusty-flanked Crane, Handsome Fruiteater, Great Antpitta, Mérida and Caracas Tapaculos, Rufous-cheeked Tanager and Tocuyo Sparrow. We can't wait to return to Venezuela to do some more birding!

Acknowledgements

We owe enormous thanks to all the team at Birding in Venezuela:

- Our guide, David Ascanio, who was truly outstanding - without him we would probably have struggled to see a fraction of the species we saw. With my poor eyesight I am especially grateful for his unending patience and skills in putting me onto birds;
- Our driver, Carlos Sanchez, who was superb, a great driver who was excellent company

throughout the trip, and really added to our enjoyment;

- Gioconda Motta in the office who dealt quickly and efficiently with the administration of our trip, and
- David and Carlos' families, for managing without them while they showed us around their fabulous country

Getting there

Yet again, we had to run the gauntlet of airline ineptitude and inefficiency to actually go ahead with our trip. We initially booked our flights to Caracas with KLM, paying in full at the time of booking. Two months later we heard a rumour that this flight had been cancelled. We contacted KLM via the booking agent, Opodo, who confirmed this – they also confirmed that they weren't planning on informing us until August, which I find almost unbelievable given that we were flying on 4 September 2004!

We therefore rebooked with Lufthansa, again paying in full, on the assumption that we would soon obtain a full refund from KLM, given that we were not at fault. Stupid assumption - it took nearly three months to obtain our refund, and only then because, tiring of Opodo's inactivity / lack of urgency, I contacted KLM's customer complaints department myself and made a fuss.

Sara and I eventually flew from London Heathrow (LHR) via Frankfurt (FRA) to Caracas (CCS) with Lufthansa. Clive and Eleanor flew from Edinburgh and we met up in Frankfurt. Incidentally, make sure you allow enough time for your connection at Frankfurt – the terminals are quite far apart, and it took about half an hour for us to get from one to another.

The new flights were booked on-line through Airline Network (<http://www.airline-network.co.uk>, tel 0800 747727) and cost GBP 476 each including taxes.

The flight times were as follows:

Outwards: Depart LHR 04.09.04 06:30, arrive FRA 04.09.04 08:55
 Depart FRA 04.09.04 10:20, arrive CCS 04.09.04 14:30

Return: Depart CCS 18.09.04 16:35, arrive FRA 19.09.04 08:15
 Depart FRA 19.09.04 09:45, arrive LHR 19.09.04 10:25

Our airline problems weren't quite over, however – when in Mérida, David phoned Lufthansa to reconfirm our seats on the return flights from Caracas, and was surprised to find that Sara and I weren't on the flight! A couple of urgent calls and he thankfully managed to get us reinstated, but it was still a nasty scare. My contempt for airlines in general continues unabated!

Please note that Caracas' Simón Bolívar International Airport is not actually located in Caracas, but

in the coastal town of Maiquetía, 26 km away on the other side of the Coastal Cordillera. See the section on “Health, safety and annoyances” for more information on getting away from the airport.

You should also note that you may be asked to pay a departure tax when you check in on departure. We didn't really understand how this worked (and neither does David!) – Sara and I (who booked through Opodo) were told that the tax had already been paid on our tickets, whereas Clive and Eleanor, who were on the same flight but who had booked through a different booking agency, were told they had to pay a fee of about GBP 10 each. Best keep some Bolivars in case you are required to pay this fee (there is a 24 hour exchange booth at the airport).

Travelling around

All ground arrangements were made through Birding in Venezuela, who organised a large and very comfortable minivan complete with driver. Carlos has been working with David for many years, is familiar with all the birding sites, and the eccentricities of visiting birders. He takes security very seriously, and made sure we and our gear were safe at all times.

Our route took us westwards from Caracas to Maracay, then north to Tucacas on the coast of Falcón state. From there we headed into the Andes at Sanare, then down to Barinas at the junction of the Andes and Llanos, before heading up to Santo Domingo and over the Andes to Mérida, from where we flew back to Caracas.

The roads were good smooth tar along the whole route we travelled, and I would have been happy to self-drive this route – the roads were certainly much better than those I have driven on in Mexico and Jamaica, although David told us that not all the main Venezuelan birding sites have such good access, especially those in the south east of the country. There was certainly no need for 4WD on our route.

If you choose to self-drive, you should be aware that in the event of you having a road accident, you should under no circumstances move either vehicle until the police arrive, no matter how badly you may be blocking traffic. Failure to obtain a Traffic Police Accident Report before moving your vehicle will result in your insurance being invalidated.

Be careful of crazy local drivers, drunk drivers etc, especially after dark, and be aware that car-jacking is increasingly becoming a problem in Caracas, especially targeted at expensive 4x4's.

Our flight back from Mérida (MRD) to Caracas was with Santa Barbara Airlines (website - <http://www.reservaciones.com/airlines/santabarbara.shtml>). These were booked for us by Birding in Venezuela, so I don't know the cost, but they are currently selling similar tickets on-line for c. USD 130 – certainly a better option than the long drive back to Caracas. The flight was very smooth and efficient, although David told us that he had booked us onto the early afternoon flight rather than the evening flight, as the latter is often cancelled because of fog.

Bird Guide

We were extremely fortunate on this trip to secure the guiding services of David Ascanio, one of Venezuela's foremost ornithologists and bird guides. He is a hugely experienced field ornithologist, guiding both individuals and tour groups (VENT etc) not only in all areas of Venezuela but also in neighbouring countries - the Guianas, Trinidad & Tobago and northern Brazil. During his time in the field he has been heavily involved in the rediscovery of two species, Tepui Tinamou and Plain-flanked Rail, and has collected a huge amount of additional data, field observations and sound recordings in respect of other rare and endangered birds.

His fieldcraft and ability to get us onto the birds he found meant that we saw many many more birds than we could have hoped to have seen on our own. I was particularly impressed by his enthusiasm for trying to show us rare and difficult birds – there was certainly no desire to pad out the list with easy birds at the expense of the difficult stuff. Given my terrible eyesight I would regularly wince when he announced that our next target would be a rail, tapaculo, antpitta, antthrush or some other megaskulker, but we would almost invariably succeed in seeing the bird.

In addition to his birding ability David, with the assistance of Carlos and Gioconda, also smoothly and efficiently took care of all the ground arrangements, being especially attentive to our comfort and safety. He speaks excellent English, and was very happy to discuss with us other aspects of Venezuelan life – sport, culture, politics, economics etc, which made the sometimes long drives much more enjoyable.

In summary, I cannot recommend David highly enough as a guide and ground agent, and look forward eagerly to having the opportunity to bird with him again before very long. To contact David, see e-mail addresses at the top of this report.

Costs & Money

The local currency is the Bolivar (VEB) and the official exchange rate at the time of our visit was GBP 1 = VEB 3,320, but with a rapidly falling exchange rate this has already risen to GBP 1 = VEB 3,725 by December 2004. However, the situation is more complex than this - there are currently extremely strict restrictions in place on the ownership of foreign currency and this has created a flourishing black market for foreign exchange, with US Dollars (USD) in especially high demand. This is in stark contrast to the section in my 2001 version of the Lonely Planet guide to Venezuela, which states "There is no black market for currency" – clearly things have changed considerably since that edition was written.

It is therefore possible to obtain as much as 15% over the official exchange rate from such sources.

However, great care should be taken before entering into such transactions, and I would recommend against changing money with total strangers– there is a serious risk that you will be robbed or defrauded. You should also avoid changing too much money, as you may have difficulty in changing back any excess Bolivars at the end of your trip. I usually ensure that I take cash USD in small bills, and change them as and when I need to, and this approach worked especially well in Venezuela.

Credit cards are widely accepted, and there are many ATM machines in the main towns. However, we were strongly warned against using these unless totally avoidable. Credit card fraud is rife, and cloning of credit and debit cards is also a major problem. At the same time, you should avoid carrying large sums in cash in major towns and cities as petty crime such as mugging and pickpocketing is also a serious problem – see “Health, safety and annoyances”

Our arrangement with Birding in Venezuela was on a fully inclusive basis – we paid them a total of USD 2,020 per person, which covered all guiding, road and air transportation, accommodation, food and soft drinks.

Venezuela probably has the cheapest petrol anywhere in the world – during our visit a litre of petrol cost c. VEB 70 – c. GBP 0.02!! Food and accommodation was also very cheap by European standards. We didn’t pay for the rooms directly, so I am not sure of the exact cost, but double rooms in both the Hotel Moruco (Santo Domingo) and Hotel Bristol (Barinas) are currently (Dec 04) being advertised on the internet for c. VEB 35,000 (GBP 10), which is superb value. Restaurant meals were also very reasonably priced, and a good meal could usually be had for USD 5 – 10 per head.

The total cost of the trip is estimated at GBP 3,325 for 2 people (GBP 1,662 each), made up as follows:

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|---|-----------|
| ➤ International flights - | GBP 980 |
| ➤ Ground arrangements (incl. guiding) - | GBP 2,245 |
| ➤ Fuel & incidentals (est.) - | GBP 100 |

Accommodation and food

We stayed at the following places:

04.09.04 Hotel Byblos, Avenida Las Delicias, Maracay. Tel +58 (0) 243 242 0311, fax +58 (0) 243 242 0068, e-mail byblosreserevent@cantv.net

Comfortable 3-star hotel, ideally situated for trips to Henri Pittier N.P.

05.09.04 Hotel Byblos, Maracay

06.09.04 Hotel Byblos, Maracay

07.09.04 Posada La Arboleda, near Tucacas. Tel +58 (0) 259 881 5027 or +58 (0) 484 5252, e-mail e_vetencourt@hotmail.com

This is a lovely farm turned lodge, catering for birders and other naturalists, a few kilometres inland from the coastal town of Tucacas, in the extreme south east of Falcón state. It even has a small open-air swimming pool!

08.09.04 Posada La Arboleda, Tucacas

09.09.04 Posada El Cerrito, Calle Providencia Sector El Cerrito, Sanare. Tel +58 (0) 414 550 4077, e-mail posadaelcerrito_sanare@hotmail.com

I really liked this place – comfortable and rustic, with rooms set around a paved courtyard. Government-owned

10.09.04 Posada El Cerrito, Sanare

11.09.04 Hotel Bristol, Avenida 23 de enero, Barinas. Tel +58 (0) 273 532 1425, fax +58 (0) 273 552 0229, e-mail hotelbristol@cantv.net

Unfortunately, our budget for this trip couldn't stretch to staying at one of the famous expensive Llanos ranches (Hato Piñero, Hato El Cedral etc). However, this very comfortable and modern hotel in the town of Barinas proved to be a very good base for exploring an excellent birding road south east to and beyond the town of San Silvestre.

12.09.04 Hotel Bristol, Barinas

13.09.04 Hotel Moruco, Santo Domingo. Tel +58 (0) 274 898 8155, fax +58 (0) 274 898 8225, website <http://www.venaventours.com/hotelmoruco/>

Lovely government-owned lodge, above the village of Santo Domingo. Beautifully set out, fantastic setting – could have stayed here for a month!

14.09.04 Hotel Moruco, Santo Domingo

15.09.04 Hotel Belensate, Urbanización La Hacienda, Mérida. Tel +58 (0) 74 266 3722, fax +58 (0) 74 266 1255, e-mail reservaciones@hotelbelensate.com, website <http://www.hotelbelensate.com/>

More expensive than the other places we stayed, at c. VEB 70,000 per double room per night, but worth the extra cost. The hotel is a converted sugarcane farmhouse, with rooms set in a series of small courtyards, around a central area with bar, terrace and large open air swimming pool.

16.09.04 Hotel Belensate, Mérida

17.09.04 Hotel La Floresta, Avenida Ávila Sur, Plaza Altamira, Caracas. Tel +58 (0) 212

263 1955, fax +58 (0) 212 267 7519, e-mail hotellafloresta@cantv.net

Very comfortable hotel in east central Caracas, in a “safe” part of the city. I even felt comfortable wandering around after dark in this area.

Red tape

Minimal. We passed through a few roadblocks, but were just waved through. Keep your passport with you at all times, as you may be required to show it at checkpoints, especially at the entrance to Henri Pittier National Park, which are manned by police looking for smugglers

Weather

I found the climate very comfortable throughout, although some of the others found it a little cold at times – David and Carlos obviously preferred the weather warmer! We had some rain just about every day during the first week, although it was drier in the Andes. This was rarely a problem, however, and the only time it rained heavily was on the morning of 8.9.04 when a hurricane passed along the central and eastern Venezuelan coast. This temporarily disrupted our birding, but for no more than a few hours, and it quickly cleared.

The biggest weather-related problem was that the Venezuelan authorities, concerned about possible loss of life due to the approaching hurricane, restricted access to all beaches on 8.9.04 preventing our planned visit to Morrocoy National Park to look for Plain-flanked Rail. This was obviously pretty worrying as this is the stronghold of that species, but David once again came up with the goods, and managed to find us this bird at nearby Chichiriviche.

Health, safety & annoyances

Before visiting we made sure we were up to date with the usual jabs – tetanus, polio, typhoid, yellow fever, hepatitis, meningitis and diphtheria. A valid Yellow Fever Certificate is currently required for entry into Venezuela.

Malaria is present in parts of Venezuela, but is restricted to rural areas, primarily in the states of Amazonas, Bolivar and Delta Amacuro, with a lower risk in parts of Apure, Barinas, Sucre and Táchira. We decided not to take anti-malarial prophylactics – we would only be spending a short

period of time in Barinas state, north of the area normally affected by this disease, and furthermore the strain of malaria occurring in this area, *Plasmodium vivax*, is relatively mild. I usually suffer annoying side-effects from anti-malarials such as sickness and headaches, and I therefore decided to take my chances given the relatively low risk, and concentrate instead on not getting bitten.

There were plenty of biting insects around in some places, although insect repellent kept most of them at bay. I did, however, get comprehensively bitten by chiggers while wandering around the lawns at Posada La Arboleda – my first chiggers experience, and not one I'm eager to repeat in a hurry – the bites itched so badly that they prevented me sleeping some nights. These are at their worst in grassy areas with livestock, and we religiously avoided walking through such areas subsequently!

The road from Santo Domingo to Mérida through the Mucubaji Pass and Páramo de Águila area reaches an altitude of 4,000 metres, and there is therefore a risk of altitude sickness (*soroche*) – this can happen anywhere above 2,500 metres, but becomes a major risk above 3,500 metres. Just because you've never suffered from it previously means nothing – you could still suffer the next time you ascend to this kind of altitude. Furthermore, the problem is worse at night, because your oxygen intake decreases further while you sleep.

Consequently, it is important to acclimatise before spending any time at this height, especially an overnight stay. Ascend slowly, don't smoke, drink plenty of water, but avoid alcohol and stimulants such as caffeine. If you start feeling ill, descend a few hundred metres until the symptoms start to clear up. Don't try to overcome the problem by taking medication – it might cure the symptoms, but not the cause.

There is a nice hotel at Las Tapias, down from Mucubaji Lagoon, but David told us that tour groups who stayed there in the past after driving straight from Barinas often suffered from altitude sickness. Consequently the best approach is probably to stay at least one night at the superb Hotel Moruco at Santo Domingo before venturing higher. We spent some time birding this area, and suffered no side effects, despite Eleanor and Sara having experienced altitude sickness at just 3,000 metres in Chile.

See <http://www.high-altitude-medicine.com/AMS.html> - avoid for an excellent summary of the risks of Altitude Sickness.

Our main concerns from a health and safety viewpoint were, sadly, human-related. Street crime such as mugging, often armed, is high and on the rise, and you should be very careful in urban areas even in daylight. We avoided walking around in such places wherever possible, and completely avoided it after dark. Dress down, and avoid displays of wealth – we kept our binoculars, cameras etc hidden when booking into hotels – and avoid using mobile phones on the street. If you choose to stay the night in Caracas itself, try to pick a hotel in the safer districts of Chacao, La Castellana or Altamira.

You should be especially careful when arriving at Caracas airport, as attacks and scams on tourists are a big problem. Be especially wary of taking taxis from the airport as attacks by taxi drivers (bogus and genuine) are common. A fleet of official black Ford Explorer taxis operate from outside the arrivals area, and are generally considered the safest option of getting away from the airport, but the UK Foreign Office website details one attack on a tourist by the driver of one of these vehicles.

Your best bet would be to hire a car at the airport, or arrange to be met here, perhaps in conjunction with the hotel where you will be staying the first night. However, even then you should be very careful. David told us that a new scam is for thieves to copy the names from the cards held up by such representatives in the arrival area, take the tourists away by taxi, and then mug them. We actually met a German tourist in Mérida who had suffered exactly this experience, and lost all his documents, money, luggage etc. David provided us with a password in advance, and requested that we ask him to confirm this on meeting – a very sensible precaution.

Finally, it is important to appreciate that the political situation in Venezuela has been extremely volatile in recent years, and this may affect your travel plans, although the atmosphere seems to have calmed down since the August 2004 presidential indictment referendum. You will see political graffiti absolutely everywhere across the country. Street demonstrations have been a major problem in recent years, and often turned violent with several deaths. You should avoid such demonstrations at all costs, and be aware of the disruptions that could occur as a result of these.

You should certainly not be put off visiting Venezuela by what may appear to be a long list of security issues – we had a fantastic time here, and can't wait to return, but it is always sensible to take basic safety precautions, here probably more than many other countries. The bulk of these problems seem to be most prevalent in the large cities, which of course are usually avoided by birders.

Before travelling, check out the UK Foreign Office website - <http://www.fco.gov.uk> - invaluable for pre-trip planning, and should be monitored regularly in the lead up to a trip. It is also possible, via this website, to subscribe to a free e-mail update service which keeps you informed of developments as they occur

References:

Books:

- Birds of Venezuela – Steven Hilty. Published by Helm – ISBN 0-7136-6418-5. Superb book.
- Where to watch birds in South America – Nigel Wheatley. Published by Helm - ISBN 0-7136-390-1. Very good background info, which encouraged me to consider Venezuela in the first place
- Venezuela - Lonely Planet – Krzysztof Dydyński – ISBN 1-86450-219-3

Maps:

- Kevin Healey's Travel Map of Venezuela – International Travel Maps - 1:1,750,000. ISBN [0921463596](#)

Itinerary

Sites visited were as follows:

- 04.09.04 Arrive Caracas. Drive to Maracay
- 05.09.04 Henri Pittier National Park (Rancho Grande including the Andy Field Trail)
Late afternoon birding around Maracay
- 06.09.04 Henri Pittier National Park (Choroni Road)
Museum Trail at La Sabaneta, (La Fundacion)
Choroni
- 07.09.04 Henri Pittier National Park (Rancho Grande, including Pico Guacamayo Trail)
Drive to Tucacas
Posada La Arboleda, Tucacas
- 08.09.04 Cerro Chichiriviche
Tucacas
Posada La Arboleda, Tucacas
Cuare
Chichiriviche
- 09.09.04 Cerro La Misión
Drive to Sanare via San Pablo Marsh
Sanare
- 10.09.04 Yacambú
Scrub area north of Sanare
Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon)
Baragua (old road from Barquisimeto towards Maracaibo)
- 11.09.04 Yacambú
Drive to Barinas via Quibor & Acarigua
- 12.09.04 Road south east from San Silvestre, Hato Santa Maria
- 13.09.04 Drive to Santo Domingo via Altamira
Santo Domingo
Mucubaji Lagoon
Las Tapias
- 14.09.04 San Isidro Quarry

- Presa del Complejo
Santo Domingo
Páramo de Águila
- 15.09.04 Hotel Moruco, Santo Domingo
Drive to Mérida
La Pedregosa (outskirts of Mérida)
- 16.09.04 Pico Humboldt Trail, La Mucuy
- 17.09.04 San Eusebio
Flight to Caracas
- 18.09.04 El Ávila
Flight home

Details of these sites are given in the Daily Account section.

Daily account

Saturday 4 September 2004

Having arrived on time and got through the airport without any hold-ups, we quickly met up with David and Carlos, and were soon on our way to Maracay. This is a 2.5 hour drive, so there was no time to stop for birding en route, but the views of the forested Cordillera de la Costa along the way gave us a taste of the birding to come at Henri Pittier N.P. tomorrow.

As we arrived in Maracay we did some birding from the van, picking up some of the commoner open-country species, the best of which was a CATTLE TYRANT and a fly-by FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER. Eleanor also saw a small flock of YELLOW-HOODED BLACKBIRDS as we approached the city, but the rest of us didn't manage to get on to them, which was a shame as we didn't see this species elsewhere.

Birds recorded

Maracay - Smooth-billed Ani, Fork-tailed Palm-Swift, Cattle Tyrant, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Brown-chested Martin, Shiny Cowbird, Yellow-hooded Blackbird (EH only)

Sunday 5 September 2004

Today we would be birding the Henri Pittier National Park, one of the most famous birding sites in South America, and a place I have wanted to visit for years. There are two roads leading into the park from Maracay, both climbing the Cordillera de la Costa before descending the northerly slope to the Caribbean. The Rancho Grande Road heads out of Maracay to the north west and passes Rancho Grande Biological Station (on your right), before turning north in the village of Aporite and reaching the coast at El Playón, where it goes east along the coast as far as the village of Cuyagua. The second route, known as the Choroní Road, heads almost directly northwards from Maracay, before descending to the small seaside town of Choroní.

We left Maracay before dawn and arrived at Rancho Grande by first light. There is a small pull-off and picnic area on the left at the entrance to the biological research station, where we started birding while Carlos set up breakfast. Over the course of a couple of hours birding, mixed with a stand-up breakfast, we built up an excellent list of species without moving from this one spot – RED-CROWNED and GOLDEN-OLIVE WOODPECKERS, GROOVE-BILLED TOUCANET, CRESTED SPINETAIL, BUFF-FRONTED FOLIAGE-GLEANER, MONTANE WOODCREEPER, OLIVACEOUS WOODCREEPER, CHESTNUT-CROWNED BECARD, CINNAMON FLYCATCHER, OLIVE-STRIPED FLYCATCHER, SLATY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER, RUFOUS-LORED TYRANNULET, SMOKE-COLORED PEWEE, GREEN HONEYCREEPER, ORANGE-BELLIED EUPHONIA, FULVOUS-HEADED TANAGER, GOLDEN TANAGER, FAWN-BREASTED TANAGER, BLUE-WINGED MOUNTAIN-TANAGER, PALM TANAGER, BAY-HEADED TANAGER, SPECKLED TANAGER, BLUE-GRAY TANAGERS, BROWN-CAPPED VIREO, SLATE-THROATED REDSTART and BANANAQUIT. Most of the birds were seen in small feeding flocks as they fed in the canopy of nearby trees and bushes – *Cecropia* trees seemed especially attractive to tanagers and other species.

Activity eventually quietened down somewhat, but the station had not yet opened, so having finished breakfast we spent some time birding the other side of the road just down from the entrance gate, seeing YELLOW-BELLIED SEEDEATER, LONG-TAILED SYLPH, YELLOW-OLIVE FLYCATCHER and WHITE-FRONTED TYRANNULET in roadside vegetation, and an OSPREY overhead. David heard a Handsome Fruiteater calling nearby, but we were unable to locate it.

The gates should have opened by now, so David walked up to the station to fetch the key, and we drove up to the main building. As we arrived a number of the endemic BLOOD-EARED PARAKEETS flew into some nearby trees and gave very good views, while WHITE-TIPPED DOVES and YELLOW-BELLIED SEEADEATERS fed on the ground. The station building is a multi-storey affair, with a flat roof, from which you can scan the canopy.

Bird feeders stocked with fruit attracted a good range of birds for fantastic close-up views and

excellent photo opportunities – species seen here included GROOVE-BILLED TOUCANET, ORANGE-BELLIED EUPHONIA, GOLDEN TANAGER, SPECKLED TANAGER and BLUE-GRAY TANAGER. GOLDEN-CROWNED FLYCATCHER and BOAT-BILLED FLYCATCHER were seen in nearby trees while a small group of RED-BILLED PARROTS flew noisily over.

From the station we set out to walk the Andy Field Trail, a loop trail a couple of miles long through excellent forest. Walking slowly along the trail produced PALE-BREASTED THRUSH, WHITE-TIPPED QUETZAL and SMOKY-BROWN WOODPECKER, before we came across our first mixed-species feeding flock. Despite it being a fairly narrow trail, the viewing was reasonably good, and we enjoyed good views of COCOA and STRONG-BILLED WOODCREEPERS, MONTANE FOLIAGE-GLEANER and STREAKED XENOPS.

A further mixed flock of COMMON BUSH-TANAGERS and THREE-STRIPED WARBLERS were also seen, before we found another Venezuelan endemic, a stunning male HANDSOME FRUITEATER perched out in full view above the trail, followed by a female bird further along. An OLIVACEOUS WOODCREEPER was seen nearby, then David heard a BLACK-FACED ANTTHRUSH calling nearby. We crouched down to scan a patch of forest floor while David got to work with his i-pod, but the bird refused to come into view. A NORTHERN SHORT-TAILED ANTTHRUSH proved to be much more co-operative, however, and approached quite close giving good views.

As we continued our ascent a pair of GRAY SKUNKS ran across the trail, before we came across yet another endemic species, a GUTTULATED FOLIAGE-GLEANER, in the company of a RED-BILLED SCYTHEBILL, while a VENEZUELAN WOOD-QUAIL called in the distance.

As the trail started to descend we saw more GROOVE-BILLED TOUCANETS and a GRAY-BREASTED WOOD-WREN, before coming across a family group of three HANDSOME FRUITEATERS – this can be a difficult species to find, so we were very lucky to see as many as we did.

Back at the biological station a further stint at the bird feeders added several new species. VIOLET-FRONTED BRILLIANT and VIOLET-CHESTED HUMMINGBIRD came to sugar water, while WHITE-LINED TANAGER, SILVER-BEAKED TANAGER, BAY-HEADED TANAGER, PALE-BREASTED THRUSH, BANANAQUITS and BUFF-THROATED SALTATOR found the papaya particularly appealing. A RUFIOUS-LORED TYRANNULET, our second of the morning, was found in a small tree on the way back to the main road – this can be a tricky species to find so we were very fortunate to see two of these endemic birds in a morning.

On reaching the road we turned left and walked for a way downhill back towards Maracay, scanning the roadside vegetation. A flowering bush attracted WEDGE-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD and LONG-TAILED SYLPH, a MOUSTACHED PUFFBIRD perched on a bare branch was a good find, and a YELLOW-BACKED ORIOLE flew into a roadside tree. RED-EYED VIREO and BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHER were seen before a SHORT-TAILED HAWK glided overhead.

Returning towards the picnic area a mixed species flock produced a number of new species – GOLDEN-CROWNED WARBLER, STRIPE-BREASTED SPINETAIL, FOREST ELAENIA,

GOLDEN-FRONTED GREENLET and STREAKED SALTATOR, with COMMON TODY-FLYCATCHER added further along.

It was now mid-afternoon, and we decided to return in the direction of Maracay. A brief stop at the entrance gate added STREAKED FLYCATCHER to the list, but an annoying barking dog put paid to any real birding here, so we pressed on to Maracay.

Some roadside birding in town proved quite productive – CARIB GRACKLES were seen much better than yesterday's birds, and a group of large trees set back from the roadside produced an ORIOLE BLACKBIRD and an ORANGE WINGED PARROT with FORK-TAILED PALM-SWIFTS hawking overhead. SAFFRON FINCHES, SHINY COWBIRDS and SMOOTH-BILLED ANIS were seen in an adjacent grassy area, before a small flock of BROWN-THROATED PARAKEETS flew in to join the parrot. With no more than perhaps an hour of daylight remaining it started to rain heavily so we decided to beat a retreat to the hotel, stopping at a supermarket en route to buy tomorrow's lunch.

Birds recorded

Henri Pittier N.P. (Rancho Grande) – h Venezuelan Wood-Quail, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Groove-billed Toucanet, h Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Moustached Puffbird, White-tipped Quetzal, h Squirrel Cuckoo, Blood-eared Parakeet, h Lilac-tailed Parrotlet, Red-billed Parrot, Violet-fronted Brilliant, Violet-chested Hummingbird, Long-tailed Sylph, Wedge-billed Hummingbird, White-tipped Dove, Osprey, Short-tailed Hawk, Olive-striped Flycatcher, Slaty-capped Flycatcher, Common Tody-Flycatcher, White-fronted Tyrannulet, Forest Elaenia, Rufous-lore Tyrannulet, Yellow-olive Flycatcher, Cinnamon Flycatcher, Smoke-colored Pewee, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Golden-crowned Flycatcher, Streaked Flycatcher, Chestnut-crowned Becard, Handsome Fruiteater, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, Crested Spinetail, Guttulated Foliage-gleaner, Montane Foliage-gleaner, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, Streaked Xenops, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Montane Woodcreeper, Red-billed Scythebill, h Black-faced Antthrush, Northern Short-tailed Antthrush, h Plain-backed Antpitta, Red-eyed Vireo, Brown-capped Vireo, Golden-fronted Greenlet, Pale-breasted Thrush, Grey-breasted Wood-Wren, Slate-throated Redstart, Golden-crowned Warbler, Three-striped Warbler, Bananaquit, Common Bush-Tanager, Fulvous-headed Tanager, White-lined Tanager, Silver-beaked Tanager, Blue-grey Tanager, Palm Tanager, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, Fawn-breasted Tanager, Orange-bellied Euphonia, Golden Tanager, Speckled Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, Green Honeycreeper, Yellow-bellied Seedeater, Buff-throated Saltator, Streaked Saltator, Yellow-backed Oriole

Maracay – Smooth-billed Ani, Brown-throated Parakeet, Orange-winged Parrot, Fork-tailed Palm-Swift, Saffron Finch, Oriole Blackbird, Carib Grackle, Shiny Cowbird

Monday 6 September 2004

Today we tried the eastern road into Henri Pittier N.P., known as the Choroni Road, and with it still dark we arrived at a pull-off and picnic area on the right hand side of the road near Pico Palmarito, in the hope of finding some nightjars. We wandered off down the road, spotlighting the trees and bushes, but with no luck. Some monkeys were starting to move around, and when we heard some strange noises from a tree above our heads, we swung the spotlight up hoping to get a look at some of these. To our surprise, the spotlight landed on a fantastic HELMETED CURASSOW, which stayed put and gave outstanding views – we had not even considered the possibility of seeing such a rare and elusive bird! What a start to the day!

Back at the van, some birds hawking overhead proved to be SHORT-TAILED NIGHTHAWKS, and as it started getting light we picked out the first GLOSSY-BLACK THRUSHES feeding in the roadside *Cecropias*. A GOLDEN-BREASTED FRUITEATER called nearby, but couldn't be tracked down, while a few WHITE-COLLARED SWIFTS flew overhead.

We enjoyed a quick breakfast as it got light, then spent some time working the *Cecropias*, finding GROOVE-BILLED TOUCANET, BLUE-CAPPED TANAGER, MONTANE FOLIAGE-GLEANER, BLUE-WINGED MOUNTAIN-TANAGER, GOLDEN TANAGER, BERYL-SPANGLED TANAGER, GOLDEN-OLIVE WOODPECKER, INCA JAY, YELLOW-BELLIED SISKIN, COMMON BUSH-TANAGER and MONTANE WOODCREEPER.

We then walked down the road for a while, birding the roadside vegetation, recording SPECKLED HUMMINGBIRD, BAND-TAILED PIGEON, GOLDEN-TAILED SAPPHIRE, THREE-STRIPED WARBLER, LONG-TAILED SYLPH, COLLARED TROGON and MOUSTACHED PUFFBIRD. A GOLDEN-BREASTED FRUITEATER was eventually tracked down, and BROWN-THROATED PARAKEETS, BLOOD-EARED PARAKEETS, RED-BILLED PARROTS and VAUX'S SWIFTS flew past.

David heard a SCHWARTZ'S ANTTHRUSH calling from a little way down the slope, so we walked into the jungle to try to track it down. It took a while of standing very still and quietly, but we eventually enjoyed superb views of a pair of these birds feeding quietly on the ground. Back on the road we found VIOLET-FRONTED BRILLIANT, BOOTED RACKET-TAIL and VIOLET-CHESTED HUMMINGBIRD among numerous GOLDEN-TAILED SAPPHIRES around a group of fruiting bushes.

A small group of the fantastically named OLEAGINOUS HEMISPINGUS were found, followed by CHESTNUT-CAPPED BRUSH-FINCH, COMMON BUSH-TANAGER, THREE-STRIPED WARBLER and SLATY-THROATED REDSTART. An ANDEAN SOLITAIRE in a roadside tree was a very good find – I still have vivid memories of chasing these birds for hours through foggy Ecuadorian rainforest before eventually getting a decent view.

SMOKY-BROWN WOODPECKER, COLLARED TROGON, BUFF-THROATED FOLIAGE-GLEANER and WHITE-NECKED THRUSH were also added, as well as a second ANDEAN SOLITAIRE before it was time to move on.

Having crossed the top of the Cordillera de la Costa we descended the northerly slope, arriving at a

small village called La Fundacion. Here we located an area called La Sabaneta near the river, where a trail called the Museum Trail led across the river (BLACK PHOEBES) and through some good lowland forest.

It wasn't long before we were adding new species to our list – several RUFIOUS-BREASTED WRENS skulked around in the thick vegetation, but were eventually seen, while RUFIOUS-AND-WHITE WREN, HOUSE WREN, YELLOW-OLIVE FLYCATCHER, PLAIN ANTVIREO and FLAVESCENT WARBLER were much more obliging. Further stops along the trail produced WHITE-VENTED PLUMELETEER, FOREST ELAENIA, PLAIN-BROWN WOODCREEPER, WHITE-LINED TANAGER, STREAKED SALTATOR, TROPICAL PARULA and PURPLE HONEYCREEPER.

A RUFIOUS-TAILED JACAMAR perched over our heads, and SILVER-BEAKED TANAGERS, BARRED ANTSHRIKE, THICK-BILLED EUPHONIA and another FLAVESCENT WARBLER were seen before we heard on of our main target birds at this site, a LANCE-TAILED MANAKIN. David got to work with thee tape, but the bird proved were unobliging, calling back from thick cover, before whizzing over our heads at great speed, and disappearing into more undergrowth. We eventually accepted that we would have to be happy with these flight views for now, and wandered back along the trail.

By now it had started getting very hot, and bird activity had died down somewhat, but we managed to add a few new birds. A brief scramble up a steep slope produced SCALED PICULET, PALE-EYED PYGMY-TYRANT, more views of the RUFIOUS-TAILED JACAMAR and good views of RUFIOUS-WINGED ANTWREN, while David and Clive also managed to see a GUIRA TANAGER. Back on the trail we added SOUTHERN BEARDLESS TYRANULET, SOCIAL FLYCATCHER and a noisy flock of CRESTED OROPENDOLAS before arriving back at the car ready for lunch.

From here we continued northwards to the seaside town of Choroni, where we were greeted by MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS overhead. We parked along the beach access road, and wandered off into a camping area among dry scrubby woodland on the right hand side of this road. First up here were a flock of GREEN-RUMPED PARROTLETS, followed by SOCIAL FLYCATCHER and a COPPER-RUMPED HUMMINGBIRD. One of our main targets here was the range-restricted GLAUCOUS TANAGER and it wasn't long before we found one in the top of a nearby palm tree, although views were a little distant. Other birds seen in this area included STREAK-HEADED WOODCREEPER, BANANAQUIT, and CATTLE TYRANT.

Sara had wandered down to the beach to look around, so we followed after her, getting good views of CARIB GRACKLES, SCALED DOVE and TROPICAL GNATCATCHER en route, and BROWN PELICAN and ROYAL TERN on and over the sea. Having enjoyed a cold drink, we returned to the van to return to Maracay, but as we skirted an area of sea front, David spotted a BROWN BOOBY flying past over the sea. We jumped out of the van, and before long another flew past, giving good views, while SPOTTED SANDPIPER and COMMON SAND-MARTIN were also seen nearby.

Passing back through the mountains we still had time for a couple of brief roadside stops when we

saw something interesting, which proved to be quite productive. In this way we added SHORT-TAILED HAWK, BLUE-TAILED EMERALD, BURNISHED-BUFF TANAGER, LESSER ELAENIA, SOUTHERN BEARDLESS TYRANNULET, LESSER GOLDFINCH, SILVER-BEAKED TANAGER and BAY-HEADED TANAGER before we finally ran out of time.

Birds recorded

Henri Pittier N.P. (Choroni Road) - Helmeted Curassow, Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Groove-billed Toucanet, Moustached Puffbird, Collared Trogon, Brown-throated Parakeet, Blood-eared Parakeet, h Scarlet-fronted Parakeet, Red-billed Parrot, White-collared Swift, Vaux's Swift, Blue-tailed Emerald, Golden-tailed Sapphire, Speckled Hummingbird, Violet-fronted Brilliant, Violet-chested Hummingbird, Booted Racket-tail, Long-tailed Sylph, Short-tailed Nighthawk, Band-tailed Pigeon, Short-tailed Hawk, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Southern Beardless Tyrannulet, Lesser Elaenia, Golden-breasted Fruiteater, Montane Foliage-gleaner, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Montane Woodcreeper, Schwartz's Antthrush, Inca Jay, Andean Solitaire, Glossy-black Thrush, White-necked Thrush, Yellow-bellied Siskin, Lesser Goldfinch, Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch, Slate-throated Redstart, Three-striped Warbler, Common Bush-Tanager, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Silver-beaked Tanager, Blue-capped Tanager, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, Golden Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, Burnished-buff Tanager, Beryl-spangled Tanager

Museum Trail, La Sabaneta, La Fundacion – Scaled Piculet, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, White-vented Plumeleater, Southern Beardless Tyrannulet, Forest Elaenia, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, Yellow-olive Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Social Flycatcher, Lance-tailed Manakin, Barred Antshrike, Plain Antvireo, Rufous-winged Antwren, Plain-brown Woodcreeper, Rufous-breasted Wren, Rufous-and-white Wren, House Wren, Tropical Parula, Flavescent Warbler, White-lined Tanager, Silver-beaked Tanager, Guira Tanager (DA & CH only), Thick-billed Euphonia, Purple Honeycreeper, Streaked Saltator, Crested Oropendola

Choroni – Green-rumped Parrotlet, Copper-rumped Hummingbird, Scaled Dove, Spotted Sandpiper, Royal Tern, Brown Booby, Brown Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird, Cattle Tyrant, Social Flycatcher, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Tropical Gnatcatcher, Common Sand-Martin, Bananaquit, Glaucous Tanager, Carib Grackle

Tuesday 7 September 2004

This morning we started again at Rancho Grande trying to find a few species that had eluded us thus far. We started before dawn again trying to tape in a FOOTHILL SCREECH-OWL – sadly, although one called back fairly close, it wouldn't come into view. Having enjoyed good news of a WHITE-NECKED THRUSH, we started trying to call into sight a GREY-THROATED LEAFTOSSER that was calling nearby. It took a tough scramble up a steep muddy slope to get into a good location, but the bird obliged very quickly, and was soon followed by a SOUTHERN NIGHTINGALE-WREN.

Our other main target along this road this morning was the endemic Rufous-cheeked Tanager, so we set off along the road northwards to try to find some of these birds. Both GROOVE-BILLED TOUCANETS and BLOOD-EARED PARAKEETS were much in evidence this morning, while a WHITE-TIPPED QUETZAL gave good views, and MARBLE-FACED BRISTLE-TYRANT and SLATY ANTWREN were new for the trip. More WHITE-NECKED THRUSHES and a GREY-BREASTED WOOD-WREN were also seen, before we turned around and headed back towards the car.

Suddenly a small group of birds were seen feeding in a roadside tree, and to our delight they proved to be RUFOUS-CHEEKED TANAGERS, a lovely bird that gave excellent views. VAUX'S SWIFTS and GREY-RUMPED SWIFTS were both seen feeding low overhead on the way back to the van, where we drove up to the Rancho Grande Biological Station. Birds around the feeder here were very much as yesterday, with GREEN HONEYCREEPER, RED-CROWNED WOODPECKER, PALM TANAGER, BLUE-WINGED MOUNTAIN-TANAGER, ORANGE-BELLIED EUPHONIA, BAY-HEADED TANAGER and BLUE-GREY TANAGER all seen here.

A Red Howler Monkey gave fantastic views sitting on a bare branch of a tree behind the station, before clambering down to join the rest of his group, while a few WHITE-TIPPED SWIFTS flew in and out of their nests beneath the eaves of the building, although it was difficult to get good views of these birds.

From the station, we set out to climb the Pico Guacamayo Trail, in the hope of finding a SCALLOP-BREASTED ANTPITTA. This is an extremely rare and localised bird, endemic to a handful of sites in Northern Venezuela. Hilty describes it as “rare or possibly quite local, few records and certainly not often seen” and states that its voice is “unknown”. David believes that no more than perhaps a few dozen birders have seen this bird to date, but earlier a colleague of his, Carlos Vereá, made the first ever recording and rediscovered the species after many years of search by many scientists. In late 2003 David found a second pair, which is much more accessible than the ones seen by Mr. Vereá, and since then he has succeeded in showing the bird to six small groups of overseas birders.

We therefore set off in optimistic but apprehensive mood, having been warned by David that we faced a tiring and difficult walk to get to the best area. He certainly wasn't exaggerating – it had rained heavily the night before, and the narrow trail was in very poor condition – steep, extremely slippery with lots of tree roots and crumbling edges, often obscured by overhanging vegetation, and with many treefalls. At one point the trail gave way beneath my foot, and I slipped over the edge, saving myself by grabbing hold of some vines and hauling myself back up, and in another spot the zig-zagging trail was made totally impassable by a huge tree fall, and we had to clamber up the slope, hauling ourselves up hand over hand using overhead vines to find the trail again. Eleanor was finding it especially tough going, as she had hurt her hand before starting the trip, and couldn't grip anything with it.

We made a couple of birding stops along the way, enjoying fabulous views of a group of BAND-TAILED GUANS, and seeing some SLATE-THROATED REDSTARTS, but it was mostly as much as we could do to just keep climbing. I remember, at one rest stop, asking David how far we had come, hoping we would say half way, or at least a third of the way. He just looked at us

sympathetically, and then told us that we had come perhaps 10% of the way!

Eventually after perhaps an hour and a half of climbing, we reached the right area, and having got our breath back and cooled down somewhat, we got into position. David explained that he would play a brief burst of the tape, the bird would probably come in for one brief look at us, and then disappear and not return. This was therefore a one-shot deal, and we needed to remain totally still and quiet throughout if we were to have a chance of seeing the bird.

He hit the tape, and a few seconds later there it was, a fantastic SCALLOP-BREADED ANTPITTA perched on a small branch perhaps 5 metres away from us. It stayed put for maybe 20 seconds, flew down and past us, worked its way around in a circle, and disappeared back the way it had come, not to be seen again.

What a moment!! This is what these trips are all about for me – the slog, the sweat and the effort, all gloriously repaid by a magical sighting such as this. It's always nice to see good birds straight after getting out of the car, but somehow the more effort that you have to put in, the more satisfaction you get from finally seeing the bird. Had David explained to us exactly how tough the trail would be, I doubt very much if we would have gone ahead with the climb – I will be forever grateful that he did not, as I would not have missed this for the world!

Absolutely elated, we quietly left the area, and worked our way back down the mountain, which suddenly didn't seem anything like as bad as it had on the way up. We were running very late, due to the poor state of the trail, and so didn't make any birding stops on the way back down, other than briefly for a VIOLET-HEADED HUMMINGBIRD that unfortunately only David and I saw.

By the time we arrived back at Maracay, it was nearly 14:00, having told Sara we would be back for her by 12:00. She wasn't exactly pleased at our lateness, but she's used to my abysmal timekeeping by now, so took it in good spirits, although frustratingly she didn't seem to want to listen to a blow by blow account of our morning, nor was she terribly impressed by the pictures of the antpitta in the book – I just can't understand non-birders sometimes!!

Our destination tonight was a farm, near the town of Tucacas in the south east of Falcón state, and the drive took us along the seashore at Boca de Aroa, where we saw some common shorebirds. By the time we arrived at the Posada La Arboleda it was early evening, but we had time for some brief birding around the lodge, seeing YELLOW-BELLIED ELAENIA, YELLOW-HEADED CARACARA, CRESTED CARACARA, ORIOLE BLACKBIRD AND ORANGE-CROWNED ORIOLE.

There was a huge visible migration of FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHERS going on, with hundreds of birds streaming overhead. A RUSSET-THROATED PUFFBIRD was calling behind the cabins, but couldn't be seen, while CHESTNUT-FRONTED MACAW, TRINIDAD EUPHONIA and YELLOW-CROWNED PARROT were also seen. A couple of calling WHISTLING HERONS eventually flew into sight, although by now the light was very poor, and an excellent day ended with a number of LESSER NIGHTHAWKS hawking overhead.

Birds recorded

Henri Pittier N.P. (Rancho Grande) – Red-crowned Woodpecker, Groove-billed Toucanet, White-tipped Quetzal, Blood-eared Parakeet, h Foothill Screech-Owl, Grey-rumped Swift, Vaux's Swift, White-tipped Swift, Marble-faced Bristle-Tyrant, Slaty Antwren, Grey-throated Leaf-tosser, White-necked Thrush, Grey-breasted Wood-Wren, Southern Nightingale-Wren, Blue-grey Tanager, Palm Tanager, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, Rufous-cheeked Tanager, Green Honeycreeper

Henri Pittier N.P. (Pico Guacamayo Trail) – Band-tailed Guan, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Scallop-breasted Antpitta, Slate-throated Redstart

Maracay - Saffron Finch

Boca de Aroa - Scaled Dove, Neotropic Cormorant, Snowy Egret, Magnificent Frigatebird, Carib Grackle

Posada La Arboleda, Tucacas – h Russet-throated Puffbird, Greater Ani, h Chestnut-fronted Macaw, h Yellow-crowned Parrot, Lesser Nighthawk, Pale-vented Pigeon, Southern Lapwing, Crested Caracara, Yellow-headed Caracara, Whistling Heron, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Brown-chested Martin, h Trinidad Euphonia, Orange-crowned Oriole, Oriole Blackbird

Wednesday 8 September 2004

This morning we started birding at Cerro Chichiriviche in the Morrocoy National Park, along the road which heads east from the main Tucacas – Coro road towards Morrocoy. We parked on the right, where a wide track heads off left into some scrub. The first bird we saw after we got out of the van was a CARIBBEAN HORNERO, although it was flighty and only showed briefly. This was swiftly followed by SCRUB GREENLET and BLACK-FACED GRASSQUIT before we finally got good views of LANCE-TAILED MANAKIN, all the more satisfying after the frustration at La Sabaneta.

We walked back westwards along the road, adding the first of several NORTHERN WHITE-FRINGED ANTWERNS and BLUE GRAY TANAGERS, as well as getting excellent views of a GLAUCOUS TANAGER, showing much better than the bird at Choroni. Some YELLOW-CROWNED PARROTS flew over, while other birds seen along this stretch of road included ROADSIDE HAWK, BROWN-CHESTED MARTINS, CRESTED OROPENDOLAS, WHITE-LINED TANAGER, GREAT KISKADEE, SILVER-BEAKER TANAGER and RUSTY-MARGINED FLYCATCHER.

On the way back, we added LESSON'S SEEDEATER and FUSCOUS FLYCATCHER, and finally got a look at some of the RUFOUS-VENTED CHACHALACA that had been calling raucously ever since we got out of the van. We next staked out a patch of bushes that David has previously found to be a good spot for BLACK-BACKED ANTSHRIKE, and soon found the bird, as well as BLUE-TAILED EMERALD, while David also saw a PALE-BELLIED HERMIT that unfortunately eluded

the rest of us.

From here we walked up the side track, which climbed steeply at first, before levelling out at the top. Several COMMON GROUND DOVES flushed from the path ahead of us, and we also saw RUFIOUS-TAILED JACAMAR, SAFFRON FINCH and AMERICAN REDSTART. David continued our masterclass on small featureless flycatchers, adding SOUTHERN BEARDLESS TYRANNULET, MOUSE-COLOURED TYRANNULET and NORTHERN SCRUB-FLYCATCHER to the list, as well as BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHER and TROPICAL GNATCATCHER.

A pair of excellent BLACK-CRESTED ANTSHRIKES flew in and showed well, and STREAKED SALTATOR, PLAIN THORNBIRD and STRAIGHT-BILLED WOODCREEPERS put in an appearance. A WHITE-BELLIED ANTBIRD proved rather more elusive, but was eventually tracked down and showed well and a CARIBBEAN HORNERO finally performed, first perched in a bare tree, and then flying over our heads to land on the track.

Some heavy clouds had now rolled in, and with heavy rain looming we beat a retreat back to the van, stopping briefly twice for RUFIOUS-BREASTED WREN and BLACK-STRIPED SPARROW, and arriving back at the van just as the heavens opened. A hurricane had been brushing the coast of Venezuela for the past 24 hours, and while the centre of the storm was far to the east, over Isla de Margarita, rainstorms were reaching as far west as Tucacas. It clearly wasn't going to stop raining for a while, so we started driving back westwards as far as the park entrance. A brief stop here added a group of stunning SCARLET IBIS to our list, as well as VERMILION FLYCATCHER. Most excitingly, a PLAIN-FLANKED RAIL was heard calling from the mangroves on the other side of the lagoon, but it was too far away for us to have any realistic chance of seeing it.

A very wet and bedraggled-looking COMMON BLACK-HAWK was seen in a dead tree, and a further along we came across a mixed feeding flock of wading birds including TRICOLORED HERON, REDDISH EGRET, WILLET, SPOTTED SANDPIPER, GREATER YELLOWLEGS, LESSER YELLOWLEGS and GREY PLOVER. NEOTROPIC CORMORANT, HUDSONIAN WHIMBREL and SNOWY EGRETS were also seen here, while a small group of WHITE-WINGED SWALLOWS perched on the fenceline, and some COLLARED PLOVERS fed along the nearby shoreline.

We made a couple of stops in the rain at the edge of the mangroves hoping for Plain-flanked Rail, but with no luck, so we made our way back to the Morrocoy N.P.. By the time we got there the rain had stopped, so we drove down to the park entrance intending to look for Plain-flanked Rail, but to our concern we were told that public access to the park was not being permitted as the government was concerned about the effects of the encroaching hurricane on public safety. This was a major blow, as this area is probably the most reliable for this rare endemic species, but we would have to try again later.

We therefore decided to return to the lodge for a rest and to sit out the midday heat, but as we turned off the road towards the farm, we stopped briefly to investigate some ponds on both sides of the road. The best bird seen here was a PIED WATER-TYRANT, while we also added RINGED KINGFISHER, SOLITARY SANDPIPER, WATTLED JACANA, AMERICAN PURPLE

GALLINULE, OSPREY and GREAT EGRET to our trip list.

When we got back to the lodge, we spent some time wandering around the grounds, picking up some nice birds such as PIED WATER-TYRANT, WHITE-TIPPED DOVE, RUSSET-THROATED PUFFBIRD, BLACK-CROWNED TITYRA, GREYISH SALTATOR and RUDDY GROUND-DOVE. We also saw a strange woodcreeper that looked like a Black-banded Woodcreeper, but we didn't really see it well enough to be sure, and a large raptor glided over but disappeared into the trees before we could identify it. In hindsight, this little walk was probably a bad idea, as I managed to pick up a whole load of chiggers which drove me crazy over the next couple of weeks – I was extremely wary of walking around in grass thereafter!!

By now it was late morning and it had got pretty hot, so Eleanor decided to join Sara in relaxing on the terrace, while David got down to some work. Clive and I decided that we fancied some more birding, however, so we wandered slowly back along the farm entrance road. We hadn't really expected to see much at all at this time of day, but it turned out to be a very productive walk. First bird we found was the raptor that had glided over earlier, as it perched in a trackside tree, and it proved to be a CRANE HAWK.

Arriving at the end of the track we turned and walked the short distance to the tar road, seeing BANANAQUIT, STRAIGHT-BILLED WOODCREEPER, ORIOLE BLACKBIRD and a flock of GREEN-RUMPED PARROTLETS on the way. This road was a little busy, however, so we returned past the farm entrance road where we found a flock of HOODED TANAGERS feeding actively in a small tree, and giving great views.

We continued along this main track, which was tree-lined but ran between open pasture, and added BLUE-GREY TANAGERS, PLAIN THORNBIRD and TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD, before a strange bird flew across the track, and landed in small tree. Fortunately, it gave excellent views and was soon identified as a DWARF CUCKOO. When we got back to the farm David told us that this was possibly a first record of this species for Falcón state, which appears to be confirmed by the data and distribution maps in Hilty – fortunately the views it gave were superb, and there was no possibility of a mistaken identification.

Several GROOVE-BILLED ANIS were feeding in the fields, and a BARE-EYED DOVE flew by showing its distinctive white wing crescents, while SMALL-BILLED ELAENIA and RUFOUS-BROWED PEPPERSHRIKE were seen in trackside bushes. We then came across another flock of birds that we initially thought were more Hooded Tanagers, but they were too small, and we eventually realised that they were WHITE-EARED CONEBILLS.

The track eventually passed a couple of small overgrown ponds – a BARE-FACED IBIS was perched up on a post, a PIED WATER-TYRANT flitted around, and STRIATED HERON, AMERICAN PURPLE GALLINULE and WATTLED JACANA were also seen here.

Heading back towards the farm, we added some extra birds to our list - COMMON TODY-FLYCATCHER, GREYISH SALTATOR, GREY KINGBIRD, YELLOW ORIOLE, YELLOW-BELLIED ELAENIA, BARRED ANTSHRIKE and CARIBBEAN HORNERO, as well as a SAVANNA HAWK perched on a fence line, and arrived back in time for lunch.

Mid-afternoon, we returned again to Morrocoy N.P. hoping to look for Plain-flanked Rails, accompanied this time not just by Sara, who fancied a trip out, but also by a young Venezuelan kid who was a keen birder, and his mother. Frustratingly, they still weren't permitting access to the lagoons – this was getting serious as we would be leaving the Morrocoy area tomorrow morning, and we would have no other chances of finding this bird.

We therefore decided to visit the northern side of the Morrocoy N.P., reached by driving north from Tucacas, past the Morrocoy road, and then turning right (east) along the northern edge of the Golfete de Cuare towards the seaside village of Chichiriviche. A stop at a viewing tower along this road was quite productive, producing hundreds of AMERICAN FLAMINGO, as well as BROWN PELICAN, SCARLET IBIS, GREAT BLUE HERON and MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD. The highlight for me, however, were a number of LARGE-BILLED TERNS, including one that flew past very close, giving great views of its wing pattern and huge bill – very satisfying having dipped this one in Ecuador.

Further along, we made a roadside stop on finding a large group of shorebirds, which included WESTERN SANDPIPER, LEAST SANDPIPER, COLLARED PLOVER, SEMIPALMATED PLOVER, GREATER YELLOWLEGS, LESSER YELLOWLEGS, SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER and BLACK-WINGED STILTS, as well as REDDISH EGRET and both SCARLET and WHITE IBIS, while both BARE-EYED DOVE and ZONE-TAILED HAWK flew over.

With time getting on we made a number of brief stops in the mangroves to play back the tape for Plain-flanked Rail, but saw only one flock of BICOLORED CONEBILLS. We eventually arrived in the town of Chichiriviche, and turned right into an area of mangroves for one last try for the rail. The habitat looked terrible here, with a great deal of rubbish around the place, some dumped into the mangroves, and the water looked filthy, but we tried the tape anyway. A bird responded immediately, and very soon, the Venezuelan kid saw something moving among the dense mangrove roots.

David, Clive and Eleanor quickly managed to get onto the bird – everyone except me! I just couldn't get onto it at all, not even movement, which was incredibly frustrating as the bird made its way across in front of us, and disappeared from sight. It continued calling, but didn't seem to want to put in a return appearance. I was gutted at missing such a rare and difficult bird, especially with daylight fading fast, but luckily David wasn't ready to give up yet. Deciding that this bird wasn't likely to reappear, we walked about 100 metres further along, settled in position on a pile of rubble, and tried again.

Once more, a bird called immediately, and walked across in front of us, but thankfully this time I managed to get onto it quite early, and got excellent views of the PLAIN-FLANKED RAIL creeping unobtrusively among the mangrove roots. This was a dark-phased bird, and so looked very different from the illustration in Hilty – it also showed some white markings on the side of the neck, which David believes is a result of inbreeding in what is a very small world population of this bird.

The exhilaration I experienced yesterday on seeing the Scallop-breasted Antpitta was repeated, but this time mixed in with a huge dose of relief – I had really thought I was going to dip this one, but David's experience and professionalism saw me right. BLACK-FACED GRASSQUIT and

YELLOW-HEADED CARACARA were also seen here before darkness fell and we made our way happily back to the farm.

Birds recorded

Cerro Chichiriviche – Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Yellow-crowned Parrot, Pale-bellied Hermit (DA only), Blue-tailed Emerald, Common Ground-Dove, Plain-flanked Rail, Hudsonian Whimbrel, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper (not GD), Willet, Grey Plover, Collared Plover, Common Black-Hawk, Roadside Hawk, Neotropic Cormorant, Tricolored Heron, Reddish Egret, Snowy Egret, Scarlet Ibis, Southern Beardless Tyrannulet, Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, Fuscous Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Social Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Lance-tailed Manakin, Black-crested Antshrike, Black-backed Antshrike, Northern White-fringed Antwren, White-bellied Antbird, Caribbean Hornero, Plain Thornbird, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Scrub Greenlet, Rufous-breasted Wren, Tropical Gnatcatcher, White-winged Swallow, Brown-chested Martin, Black-striped Sparrow, American Redstart, White-lined Tanager, Silver-beaked Tanager, Blue-grey Tanager, Glaucous Tanager, Saffron Finch, Streaked Saltator, Crested Oropendola, Lesson's Seedeater, Black-faced Grassquit

Tucacas – Ringed Kingfisher, American Purple Gallinule, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Wattled Jacana, Osprey, Great Egret, Pied Water-Tyrant

Posada La Arboleda, Tucacas – Russet-throated Puffbird, Dwarf Cuckoo, Groove-billed Ani, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Bare-eyed Pigeon, Ruddy Ground-Dove, White-tipped Dove, American Purple Gallinule, Wattled Jacana, Crane Hawk, Savanna Hawk, Roadside Hawk, Crested Caracara, Striated Heron, Bare-faced Ibis, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Small-billed Elaenia, Vermilion Flycatcher, Pied Water-Tyrant, Grey Kingbird, Black-crowned Tityra, Barred Antshrike, Caribbean Hornero, Plain Thornbird, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Tropical Mockingbird, Bananaquit, White-eared Conebill, Hooded Tanager, Blue-grey Tanager, Saffron Finch, Greyish Saltator, Yellow Oriole, Oriole Blackbird

Cayo Punta Brava – Osprey, Brown Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird

Cuare – Bare-eyed Pigeon, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Short-billed Dowitcher, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Black-necked Stilt, Semipalmated Plover, Collared Plover, Large-billed Tern, Zone-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, Reddish Egret, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, American Flamingo, White Ibis, Scarlet Ibis, Brown Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird

Chichiriviche – Plain-flanked Rail, Yellow-headed Caracara, Bicolored Conebill, Black-faced Grassquit

Thursday 9 September 2004

We would spend this morning birding at a site called Cerro La Misión, not far from Tucacas before heading south into the Andes. As usual, first light saw us in the field watching our first birds of the day, including WATTLED JACANA, SOUTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW and some YELLOW-RUMPED CACIQUES. The habitat here is open farmland with scattered trees, and we started birding around a small farm at the side of the road. TROPICAL PEWEE and STRIPE-BACKED WREN were added to our list, before a small group of RED-AND-GREEN MACAWS flew past and a KING VULTURE glided by against a distant hill.

A drumming woodpecker was tracked down and identified as a CRIMSON-CRESTED WOODPECKER, while CINEREOUS BECARD was seen alongside a couple of hummingbirds – WHITE-VENTED PLUMELETER and GLITTERING-THROATED EMERALD. RED-RUMPED WOODPECKER and BLACK-TAILED TITYRA were also seen, before we decided to walk a little way along the road to see what else we could find.

Walking slowly and scanning the trees ahead proved a good strategy, with us seeing a host of new birds - TROPICAL GNATCATCHER, SMALL-BILLED ELAENIA, TROPICAL PARULA, BLUE-GRAY TANAGER, GREY SEEDEATER, PLAIN THORNBIRD, SOOTY-HEADED TYRANNULET, STREAK-HEADED WOODCREEPER, RUSTY-MARGINED FLYCATCHER, SQUIRREL CUCKOO, AMERICAN REDSTART, YELLOW-BELLIED ELAENIA, PALM TANAGER, GREEN-RUMPED PARROTTLET and TRINIDAD EUPHONIA.

We eventually arrived back at the van, and with it being late morning, we returned slowly back down the track towards Tucacas, seeing SAVANNA HAWK and EASTERN MEADOWLARK from the vehicle. We hadn't got far however before David spotted a pair of DOUBLE-STRIPED THICK-KNEES in a roadside field, and we got out again for a good look.

Some YELLOW-CROWNED PARROTS flew overhead and YELLOW WARBLER and another CRIMSON-CRESTED WOODPECKER were seen in trees over our heads. Another stop and a short walk a little further along added LESSER KISKADEE, COMMON TODY FLYCATCHER, GREY-BREASTED MARTIN and SLATY-HEADED TODY-FLYCATCHER to our list, followed by a LIMPKIN and a group of HOODED TANAGERS, which Eleanor was especially pleased to see, having missed them yesterday.

A final stop near the end of the track added RUSSET-THROATED PUFFBIRD and GREYISH SALTATOR, and a pair of GREY-NECKED WOOD-RAILS dashed into the road in front of the van, then back into the roadside vegetation. We returned to Tucacas, where David and I were dropped off to visit a cybercafe, while the others returned to the farm to collect Sara and check out. While we waited for them to return, we got great views of a CATTLE TYRANT as it fed on bugs along a nearby windowsill, as well as several CARIB GRACKLES and SHINY COWBIRDS.

When the others returned we returned south along the shore of Boca de Aroa, then turned inland to head west towards Barquisimeto. We soon turned off this road, however, to go northwards to visit San Pablo Marsh, a key location for the endangered endemic Rusty-flanked Crane. Unfortunately, as we arrived at the best location for this bird, we could see a group of men washing their truck using water from the lake – surely they would have scared away the birds.

We spent a little time in the area, seeing YELLOW-HEADED CARACARA, BLACK-CAPPED DONACOBIOUS and WATTLED JACANA, but while we heard one RUSTY-FLANKED CRAKE calling, it was some distance away and didn't seem inclined to come closer, so we eventually decided to press on. Before we left, however, we managed to find a superb HORNED SCREAMER, and got good scope views, and also added GREY KINGBIRD, WATTLED JACANA, LEAST GREBE and WOOD STORK. Retracing our steps, we made one final stop as we left the marsh to watch a nice BAT FALCON in a nearby tree.

We continued west to Barquisimeto and turned south towards the Andean town of Sanare, stopping once in the hills south of Sanare to watch a WHITE-TAILED HAWK that glided by. We eventually arrived in Sanare late afternoon, with just enough daylight left to enjoy the LESSER GOLDFINCHES, TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD and flocks of BLUE-AND-WHITE SWALLOWS around our hotel, before darkness fell.

Birds recorded

Cerro La Misión – Red-rumped Woodpecker, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Russet-throated Puffbird, Squirrel Cuckoo, Groove-billed Ani, Red-and-green Macaw, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Yellow-crowned Parrot, Pauraque (DA only), Glittering-throated Emerald, White-vented Plumeleater, Limpkin, Grey-necked Wood-Rail, Wattled Jacana, Double-striped Thick-knee, Savanna Hawk, American Kestrel, King Vulture, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Sooty-headed Tyrannulet, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Small-billed Elaenia, Tropical Pewee, Vermilion Flycatcher, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Social Flycatcher, Lesser Kiskadee, Great Kiskadee, Cinereous Becard, Black-tailed Tityra, Plain Thornbird, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Stripe-backed Wren, Tropical Gnatcatcher, Grey-breasted Martin, Southern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Tropical Parula, Yellow Warbler, American Redstart, Bananaquit, Hooded Tanager, Silver-beaked Tanager, Blue-grey Tanager, Palm Tanager, Trinidad Euphonia, Grey Seedeater, Greyish Saltator, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Eastern Meadowlark

Tucacas - Cattle Tyrant, Carib Grackle, Shiny Cowbird

Boca de Aroa - Spotted Sandpiper, Tricolored Heron, Great Egret, Brown Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird

San Pablo Marsh – Horned Screamer, Green Kingfisher, h Rusty-flanked Crake, Wattled Jacana, Crested Caracara, Yellow-headed Caracara, Bat Falcon, Least Grebe, Striated Heron, Wood Stork, Grey Kingbird, Black-capped Donacobius

Sanare – White-tailed Hawk, Tropical Mockingbird, Blue-and-white Swallow, Lesser Goldfinch

Friday 10 September 2004

Every day in Venezuela seemed to bring its own critical target bird, and today was no exception – we would start the day in Yacambú National Park looking for the endemic Great Antpitta. This is a

very shy and elusive bird, and we arrived at dawn to stake out a favourite area of the park. It didn't take long before a bird started calling right by the roadside, but despite strenuous efforts by David it stayed just out of sight in thick forest, despite coming as close to us as a few metres on one occasion. SMOKY-BROWN WOODPECKER and YELLOW-BILLED TOUCANET provided some compensation, but we would have just one more opportunity tomorrow morning to try again for the antpitta.

Given that we would now need to spend tomorrow morning at this location, there followed some rapid reconsideration of our options, and we decided to head into the scrub area north of Sanare to try to look for some of our other target birds. First bird targeted was TOCUYO SPARROW - a short walk into some thorn scrub soon produced a calling bird, and it didn't take long for us to get excellent views of a pair of these smart birds, as well as YELLOW-BACKED ORIOLE.

Back at the roadside, and a much easier and shorter walk along a wide sandy path followed by some Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl impersonations produced a good flock of birds centred on some tall bushes. Standing and waiting produced a whole series of new birds –PILEATED FINCH, ULTRAMARINE GROSBEAK, PEARLY-VENTED TODY-TYRANT, SOUTHERN BEARDLESS TYRANNULET, MOUSE-COLOURED TYRANNULET and SCRUB GREENLET.

We walked about a kilometre down this path, but didn't add much in the midday heat, however when we got back to the road David heard a ROSY THRUSH-TANAGER singing nearby. We scrambled down a small slope, and scanned the bushes below, soon adding a pair of these very smart birds, as well as a NORTHERN WHITE-FRINGED ANTWREN.

It was now lunchtime, so we returned to Sanare to collect Sara from the hotel. Having watched a BICOLORED WREN in a field next to the hotel, we drove back up into Yacambú NP, to have a picnic on the shore of Santa Crucita Lagoon. This was another reliable spot for Rusty-flanked Crane, so while Sara, Carlos and David set up lunch the rest of us set to scanning the reedy edges of the lagoon. CARIBBEAN COOT, COMMON MOORHEN, WATTLED JACANA and GREY-NECKED WOOD-RAILS produced false alarms, before I saw a small bird emerging from a patch of reeds. A quick look in the scope, and there it was – a cracking RUSTY-FLANKED CRAKE, which was soon joined by another, and gave very good views for a few minutes before retreating to the cover of the reeds.

OLIVACEOUS CORMORANT and ORIOLE BLACKBIRD were seen while we ate lunch, and a STEELY-VENTED HUMMINGBIRD visited a nearby tree. Having finished lunch we took a short stroll along the road which surrounds the lake adding a number of species – these started with LONG-TAILED ANTBIRD, and was followed by AMERICAN REDSTART, BLOOD-EARED PARAKEET, CRESTED SPINETAIL, FULVOUS-HEADED TANAGER, BLUE-NECKED TANAGER, WHITE-WINGED TANAGER, SCALE-CRESTED PYGMY-TYRANT, MASKED TROGON, TRINIDAD EUPHONIA and RUSSET-BACKED OROPENDOLA.

With the clock ticking on, and with temperatures having hopefully cooled at lower elevations, we drove north again, this time to Barquisimeto, then along the old road from there towards Maracaibo, through an area of semi-desert known as Baragua. It was still hot down here, and birding was initially slow, although we did manage to add TAWNY-CRESTED PYGMY-TYRANT, GREEN-

RUMPED PARROTLET and HARRIS'S HAWK. A little further along, a red bird flashed by in front of the van, prompting some rapid braking and equally rapid piling out of the vehicle, to get good views of a VERMILION CARDINAL perched nearby.

From here the birding pace picked up very rapidly – David soon found a small group of PALE-HEADED JACAMARS and a very smart WHITE-WHISKERED SPINETAIL. He also got brief views of a BUFFY HUMMINGBIRD that whizzed by, but the rest of us didn't get onto it. With daylight fading, we enjoyed views of YELLOW ORIOLE, EARED DOVE and WHITE-TIPPED DOVE, before finding another target bird, a cracking TROUPIAL. With darkness falling, a group of LESSER NIGHTHAWKS hawked overhead as we drove back to Sanare.

Birds recorded

Yacambú – Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Yellow-billed Toucanet, h Great Antpitta

North of Sanare – Yellow-headed Caracara, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant, Southern Beardless Tyrannulet, Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet, Northern White-fringed Antwren, Scrub Greenlet, Tropical Mockingbird, Tocuyo Sparrow, Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Pileated Finch, Ultramarine Grosbeak, Yellow-backed Oriole

Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) – h Little Tinamou, Masked Trogon, Blood-eared Parakeet, Steely-vented Hummingbird, Rusty-flanked Crake, Grey-necked Wood-Rail, Common Moorhen, Caribbean Coot, Wattled Jacana, Neotropic Cormorant, h Euler's Flycatcher, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Lesser Kiskadee, Long-tailed Antbird, Crested Spinetail, American Redstart, Fulvous-headed Tanager, White-winged Tanager, Silver-beaked Tanager, Blue-grey Tanager, Trinidad Euphonia, Golden Tanager, Blue-necked Tanager, Russet-backed Oropendola, Oriole Blackbird

Sanare – Bicolored Wren, Tropical Gnatcatcher, Blue-and-white Swallow, Lesser Goldfinch

Baragua – h Crested Bobwhite, Pale-headed Jacamar, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Buffy Hummingbird (DA only), h Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Lesser Nighthawk, Eared Dove, Scaled Dove, Common Ground-Dove, White-tipped Dove, Harris's Hawk, Tawny-crowned Pygmy-Tyrant, White-whiskered Spinetail, Vermilion Cardinal, Yellow Oriole, Troupial

Saturday 11 September 2004

When we had arrived at the Great Antpitta stakeout at Yacambú at dawn yesterday, one bird was already singing in a roadside tree, but then moved away into the forest. We therefore decided to get there a little earlier this morning, in order to get into position in case to chose the same song perch. It was therefore still almost dark when we arrived, and it wasn't long before a bird started singing from trees on the other side of the road.

A short but anxious wait followed, until a GREAT ANTPITTA suddenly appeared for a split-second on a bare branch by the side of the road, flew down equally briefly onto a patch of bare ground, then

flew across the road and disappeared in the same direction that the bird had been heard yesterday. We got just the very briefest of views, in very poor light, but with a species this rare you have to take what you can get, and we were satisfied to have got even this glimpse of such a difficult bird.

Electing not to go chasing into the forest after the bird we instead strolled slowly down the road as the light steadily improved. A SLATY-BACKED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH sang from the forest but could not be seen, while tanagers were much in evidence – SAFFRON-CROWNED TANAGER was new, and we also saw COMMON BUSH-TANAGER, GOLDEN TANAGER and BERYL-SPANGLED TANAGER here.

Other birds seen on this short walk included SPECKLED HUMMINGBIRD, BLACK-CAPPED TYRANNULET, RUSSET-BACKED OROPENDOLA, GOLDEN-WINGED MANAKIN, WHITE-THROATED TYRANNULET, BROWN-CAPPED VIREO and BRONZY INCA, as well as side-by-side ANDEAN EMERALD TOUCANET and YELLOW-BILLED TOUCANET.

We returned to our Sanare hotel mid-morning, again seeing BICOLORED WREN in the field next door, checked out, and started on the drive towards Barinas where we would stay for the next 2 nights. We still needed a few desert scrub species, however, so we made a short stop in a suitable patch of scrub near Quibor. A short walk produced the hoped-for ORINOCAN SALTATOR, as well as FERRUGINOUS PYGMY-OWL, SOUTHERN BEARDLESS TYRANNULET, TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD and BICOLORED WREN. Sadly, there was no sign of our other target birds (Buffy Hummingbird or Slender-billed Tyrannulet), and it was now getting very hot, so we decided to press on.

We continued down to Barquisimeto, where we enjoyed an excellent lunch, then turned south to Araure, then south east through Guanare towards Barinas. Late afternoon, we made a final birding stop for the day in an area of fields with trees at Acarigua, on the edge of the Llanos, with our main target bird the endemic White-bearded Flycatcher.

A pool of rainwater in the middle of a farm track was proving very attractive to birds, and we added LINED SEEDEATER and YELLOW-BROWED SPARROW to our list, as well as a number of EARED DOVES, SCALED DOVES, COMMON GROUND-DOVES, RUDDY GROUND-DOVES and SAFFRON FINCHES, before being distracted by a YELLOW-CHINNED SPINETAIL in the hedgerow.

David then heard a couple of WHITE-BEARDED FLYCATCHERS calling from a tall tree, and we soon got great views of these birds. Better was to come, however – we had also added AMERICAN PURPLE GALLINULE, RED-CROWNED WOODPECKER, PLAIN THORNBIRD, LESSER GOLDFINCH, TROUPIAL and COCOA THRUSH when David got us onto a GOLDEN-WINGED SPARROW, a difficult and much sought-after species, which showed very well. We finished off here with a STRIPE-BACKED WREN, before returning to the vehicle to complete our journey to Barinas.

Birds recorded

Yacambú – h Grey-fronted Dove, Andean Emerald Toucanet, Yellow-billed Toucanet, Speckled Hummingbird, Bronzy Inca, Black-capped Tyrannulet, White-throated Tyrannulet, Golden-winged Manakin, Great Antpitta, Brown-capped Vireo, h Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, h Grey-breasted Wood-Wren, Common Bush-Tanager, Golden Tanager, Saffron-crowned Tanager, Beryl-spangled Tanager, Russet-backed Oropendola

Sanare - Bicolored Wren, Blue-and-white Swallow

Quibor - Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Southern Beardless Tyrannulet, Tropical Mockingbird, Bicolored Wren, Orinocan Saltator

Acarigua - Red-crowned Woodpecker, h Orange-chinned Parakeet, Eared Dove, Scaled Dove, Common Ground-Dove, Ruddy Ground-Dove, American Purple Gallinule, White-bearded Flycatcher, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Plain Thornbird, Cocoa Thrush, Stripe-backed Wren, Lesser Goldfinch, Yellow-browed Sparrow, Golden-winged Sparrow, Blue-grey Tanager, Saffron Finch, Lined Seedeater, Troupial

Sunday 12 September 2004

A change of scenery today as we headed into the Llanos for the day. Unfortunately, neither our budget nor our timetable would permit a stay in one of the expensive ecolodges such as Hato Piñero or Hato El Cedral, so we instead concentrated on the road down through Sal Silvestre and into the High Llanos beyond, including a visit to a new ranch, Hato Santa Maria.

It was drizzling lightly when we arrived here at dawn, and we enjoyed views of perched HARRIS'S HAWK and WHITE-TAILED HAWK, while Carlos prepared breakfast. Some YELLOW-CROWNED PARROTS flew over, followed by small groups of SCARLET IBIS, CHESTNUT-FRONTED MACAWS, YELLOW-RUMPED CACIQUES and BARE-FACED IBISES. A small walk up the road resulted in a GREEN IBIS perched in a tree, as well as COMMON TODY-FLYCATCHER, SMALL-BILLED ELAENIA, NORTHERN SCRUB-FLYCATCHER and RUDDY GROUND-DOVE.

A couple of WHISTLING HERONS flew in and landed nearby giving excellent views. Also in the open fields were SMOOTH-BILLED ANIS and EASTERN MEADOWLARKS, with TROUPIAL, GREYISH SALTATOR, ORIOLE BLACKBIRD and EARED DOVE also in the area, and a WHITE-TAILED KITE hovered overhead.

A short drive and another walk later and we added YELLOW-BROWED SPARROW and LINED SEEDEATER to the list, before finding a PLAIN-BREASTED GROUND-DOVE was also identified among the more common RUDDY GROUND-DOVES, and a small flock of colourful RED-BREASTED BLACKBIRDS perched on a fence line.

Our raptor list continued to grow, with AMERICAN KESTREL, SAVANNA HAWK and ROADSIDE HAWK added, with BLUE-BLACK GRASSQUIT, WHITE-COLLARED SWIFT,

WHITE-WINGED BECARD and a flock of ORANGE-CHINNED PARAKEETS also seen. We had now reached the entrance road to Hato Santa Maria, and we birded the area adding SQUIRREL CUCKOO and BARE-EYED THRUSH while David was still trying by mobile phone to arrange access for us to this ranch.

They wanted to charge us quite a hefty fee for entry to the area, but David eventually persuaded them to let us in for nothing as he would also be scouting the area as a possible venue to bring future birding trips, possibly involving an overnight stay.

Having checked that the road was also passable after recent heavy rains, we set off for the ranch. Our first stop was in an area with some standing water near the road, where a group of GREATER ANIS were perched on a fenceline. We mooched around the area for a while adding PALE-VENTED PIGEON, DWARF CUCKOO, RED-CROWNED WOODPECKER, RUSSET-THROATED PUFFBIRD, YELLOW-CHINNED SPINETAIL, SAFFRON FINCH, STRIPED WOODCREEPER and PLAIN THORNBIRD before a small group of HOATZIN showed up and gave great views – an outstanding bird.

The road then passed between some open wet fields with water-filled ditches running on both sides of the road. This area was good for PIED WATER-TYRANTS with several seen, although no White-vented Marsh-Tyrant yet. A patch of tall grass produced both GREY SEEDEATER and a flock of RUDDY-BREASTED SEEDEATER, as well as SMALL-BILLED ELAENIA and NORTHERN SCRUB-FLYCATCHER in adjacent bushes and SOUTHERN LAPWING in the fields.

A CAPPED HERON flew over the road and landed in the middle of a small side track, and a BUFF-NECKED IBIS was scoped in a nearby field. A little further along we crossed a small stream, which produced an AMAZON KINGFISHER, with a KING VULTURE perched on a nearby palm tree and GREY KINGBIRD on the fence line.

A series of roadside ponds was good for waterbirds, with both WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCK and BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK, as well as COCOI HERON, BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON and WATTLED JACANA. Also here were our first CAPYBARAS, which we watched for some time grazing and swimming across the ponds, as well as a few CAYMANS.

As we approached the ranch house we saw GREY SEEDEATER and YELLOW-CHINNED SPINETAIL in scrub, a few HORNED SCREAMERS in the fields, STRIATED HERON and the first of a series of RUFESCENT TIGER-HERONS – this bird was especially common along the last kilometre to the ranch house, with three or four birds seen.

Arriving at the ranch house, we parked up, and David made our introductions to the owners, who graciously gave us a tour of the facilities. A RED-CAPPED CARDINAL fed on the ground near the parking area, and a walk around the grounds produced a small group of SHARP-TAILED IBISES in some tall trees near the house. We eventually bid our farewells to these kind people and returned back down the entrance road – birds seen were much as on the way in, although HOUSE WREN and LESSER YELLOW-HEADED VULTURE were new.

Arriving back at San Silvestre, we paused at a flowering bush to watch a GLITTERING-THROATED EMERALD, and the drive out of town towards Barinas finally produced a WHITE-VENTED MARSH-TYRANT, as well as both LAUGHING FALCON and APLOMADO FALCON.

We made our way back to Barinas, making one last stop near the village of Torunos, where we took a brief walk along a farm track, where we found some YELLOW-RUMPED CACIQUES and a LINEATED WOODPECKER, before heading off for the hotel after a full day in the field.

Birds recorded

Hato Santa Maria, San Silvestre – Horned Screamer, White-faced Whistling-Duck, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Russet-throated Puffbird, Ringed Kingfisher, Amazon Kingfisher, Dwarf Cuckoo, Squirrel Cuckoo, Hoatzin, Greater Ani, Smooth-billed Ani, Chestnut-fronted Macaw, Brown-throated Parakeet, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Yellow-crowned Parrot, White-collared Swift, Glittering-throated Emerald, Pale-vented Pigeon, Eared Dove, Scaled Dove, Plain-breasted Ground-Dove, Ruddy Ground-Dove, American Purple Gallinule, Wattled Jacana, Southern Lapwing, White-tailed Kite, Savanna Hawk, Harris's Hawk, Roadside Hawk, White-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, Yellow-headed Caracara, Laughing Falcon, American Kestrel, Aplomado Falcon, Whistling Heron, Striated Heron, Snowy Egret, Capped Heron, Cooi Heron, Great Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Scarlet Ibis, Bare-faced Ibis, Sharp-tailed Ibis, Buff-necked Ibis, Green Ibis, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, King Vulture, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, Small-billed Elaenia, Pied Water-Tyrant, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, Grey Kingbird, Lesser Kiskadee, White-winged Becard, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Plain Thornbird, Striped Woodcreeper, Bare-eyed Thrush, Tropical Mockingbird, House Wren, Yellow-browed Sparrow, Red-capped Cardinal, Blue-grey Tanager, Saffron Finch, Blue-black Grassquit, Grey Seedeater, Lined Seedeater, Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, Greyish Saltator, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Troupial, Oriole Blackbird, Red-breasted Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark

Torunos – Lineated Woodpecker, Yellow-rumped Cacique

Monday 13 September 2004

We made an early start from Barinas today, heading up into the Andes towards the village of Santo Domingo. Before we got there, however, we took a detour along the road towards Calderas, making a stop near a small group of houses in the hills near the village of Altamira. The change in altitude immediately became apparent as we recorded a number of new species – a WHITE-BROWED ANTBIRD was chased down, and some time birding the roadside produced RUFOUS-BREASTED WREN, CRESTED OROPENDOLA and THICK-BILLED EUPHONIA.

A strange becard confused us for a while before David decided that it was a CHESTNUT-CROWNED BECARD, and this was swiftly followed by a small group of SWALLOW TANAGERS, always nice birds. Some further time birding here produced some great birds - RED-

LEGGED HONEYCREEPER, WHITE-BEARDED HERMIT, BANANAQUIT, SILVER-BEAKED TANAGER, GOLDEN-TAILED SAPPHIRE, BLACK-THROATED MANGO, YELLOW-BELLIED ELAENIA, PALE-BREASTED SPINETAIL, WHITE-LINED TANAGER and GREY SEEDEATER, as well as the more widespread LESSER GOLDFINCH, SAFFRON FINCH and SCALED DOVE.

We drove downhill for a while to an area where the forest was thicker, adding BAY-HEADED TANAGER, BLUE-NECKED TANAGER, PALE-BREASTED THRUSH, WHITE-VENTED PLUMELETEER, STREAKED FLYCATCHER, RED-EYED VIREO, BROWN-CAPPED VIREO and a superb WHITE-RUFFED MANAKIN, with WHITE-COLLARED SWIFT and BLUE-HEADED PARROT overhead.

A little further along, Eleanor took a nasty fall on a slimy patch of concrete, so we decided to pack in the birding for now and proceed to Santo Domingo. Arriving at this Andean village, we stopped where the road crosses the river just south of town, and quickly found a TORRENT TYRANNULET followed by a pair of superb TORRENT DUCKS, as well as a MOUNTAIN ELAENIA in some nearby bushes.

Having enjoyed such great views of these birds, we continued to our hotel, the superb Hotel Moruco at an altitude of 2,250 metres, where we would stay for the next two nights. We spent some time relaxing around the hotel, enjoying the BLACK PHOEBES, RUFOUS-COLLARED SPARROWS and BROWN-BELLIED SWALLOWS, and ate lunch, before deciding to make a brief visit to the higher altitude area at Laguna Mucubaji.

This area is at an altitude of c. 3,650 metres, and as Eleanor and Sara had a few problems at this sort of altitude in Chile, they decided to stay behind and acclimatise overnight, while David, Clive and I set out for some more birding. The páramo scenery around the lagoon was stunning and ideal for hiking, although the high altitude meant that we had to take it easy. It didn't take long to find a few ANDEAN TEAL of the subspecies *altipetens* – an race endemic to this part of Venezuela and adjacent Colombia which is a possible split (Mérida Teal), so high on our want list. GREAT THRUSH, PLUMBEOUS SIERRA-FINCH, OLIVACEOUS CORMORANT, GREATER YELLOWLEGS, BROWN-BACKED CHAT-TYRANT, SOUTHERN LAPWING and CLIFF SWALLOW were added on, over and around the lagoon, before we started our descent back towards Santo Domingo.

We stopped en route at a roadside hotel, the Hotel Los Frailes, near the village of Las Tapias, and birded the garden for a while. Birding was pretty slow, and initially we added only SPARKING VIOLETEAR and TYRIAN METALTAIL to our list, although GREAT THRUSHES were everywhere. We walked a short way down the entrance road, and took the side road up the hill, but added only BLUE-BACKED CONEBILL here – a Mérida Tapaculo was calling but couldn't be enticed into view.

We drove back to the main road, but stopped again a few hundred metres downhill at a pull-off on the left, and from here walked down the side trail. This walk added WHITE-SIDED FLOWERPIERCER, BAND-TAILED PIGEON, BLUE-BLACK GRASSQUIT, YELLOW-BELLIED SEEDEATER and eventually MÉRIDA TAPACULO, while a CHESTNUT-CROWNED

ANTPITTA called nearby but too far away to see. Back at the car a PLAIN-BREASTED HAWK was seen flying along a nearby hillside and landing in a tree.

We returned back to the hotel, but as we went through the village of Las Tapias, David spotted some bird activity in a group of roadside bushes, so we pulled over for a look. This proved to be a very good move, as there was a superb mixed feeding flock moving through the vegetation, and we quickly found some very sought-after species including GREY-CAPPED HEMISPINGUS, WHITE-FRONTED REDSTART, ORANGE-THROATED SUNANGEL, LACRIMOSE MOUNTAIN-TANAGER, SUPERCILIARIED HEMISPINGUS, BLUISH FLOWERPIERCER, as well as STEELY-VENTED HUMMINGBIRD.

Birds recorded

Altamira – h Little Tinamou, White-collared Swift, Blue-headed Parrot, White-bearded Hermit, Black-throated Mango, Golden-tailed Sapphire, White-vented Plumeleteer, Scaled Dove, Short-tailed Hawk, Golden-faced Tyrannulet (DA only), Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Black Phoebe, Streaked Flycatcher, Chestnut-crowned Becard, White-ruffed Manakin, White-browed Antbird, Pale-breasted Spinetail, Red-eyed Vireo, Brown-capped Vireo, Pale-breasted Thrush, Rufous-breasted Wren, Lesser Goldfinch, Bananaquit, White-lined Tanager, Silver-beaked Tanager, Blue-grey Tanager, Thick-billed Euphonia, Bay-headed Tanager, Blue-necked Tanager, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Swallow Tanager, Saffron Finch, Grey Seedeater, Crested Oropendola

Santo Domingo – Torrent Duck, Mountain Elaenia, Torrent Tyrannulet, Black Phoebe, Brown-bellied Swallow, Rufous-collared Sparrow

Mucubaji Lagoon – Andean Teal, Greater Yellowlegs, Southern Lapwing, Neotropic Cormorant, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Great Thrush, Brown-bellied Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch

Las Tapias – Sparkling Violet-ear, Steely-vented Hummingbird, Orange-throated Sunangel, Tyrian Metaltail, Band-tailed Pigeon, Plain-breasted Hawk, h Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, Mérida Tapaculo, Great Thrush, White-fronted Redstart, Blue-backed Conebill, Superciliaried Hemispingus, Grey-capped Hemispingus, Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager, Blue-black Grassquit, Yellow-bellied Seedeater, White-sided Flowerpiercer, Bluish Flowerpiercer

Tuesday 14 September 2004

We started this morning by dropping in altitude down the road to Barinas, then turning right to San Isidro Quarry. We arrived at dawn, before work commenced, and made our way across the slope through the quarry workings, watching CLIFF FLYCATCHER en route, before picking up the old road on the other side. We hadn't walked far along this track before David found one of the birds of the trip, a BLACK-BILLED MOUNTAIN-TOUCAN. This is a very uncommon and localised bird in Venezuela, and was actually a lifer for David, which puts it into context somewhat!

GREY-RUMPED SWIFTS flew low overhead and THREE-STRIPED WARBLER were seen before we stumbled across a LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH, a bird I've missed on previous trips to North America, and which was therefore very satisfying. A little further along, we heard the sound of ANDEAN COCK-OF-THE ROCKS calling, and were soon enjoying excellent views of these special birds. RED-RUFFED FRUITCROWS were also present, as well as RUSSET-BACKED OROPENDOLAS and SUBTROPICAL CACIQUES, and we spent some time watching these excellent birds as they fed in tall fruiting trees all around us.

Walking back towards the van, a LINED QUAIL-DOVE flushed from the side of the track and a SPECKLED HUMMINGBIRD was seen briefly, before we came across a pair of male GOLDEN-WINGED MANAKINS displaying back to back on a small branch – fantastic little birds. RED-HEADED BARBET, BAND-TAILED PIGEON and ANDEAN EMERALD TOUCANET were also seen before we arrived back at the quarry, where work had now started, but nobody seemed to mind us walking back through the area to return to our vehicle.

David had expected it to take far longer for us to find our main target birds here, so we now had a little spare time on our hands. We returned towards Santo Domingo, turning right where there is a sign to Presa Del Complejo dam, parking in the car park at the end, and walking out along the path to the viewpoint overlooking the dam. A fly-past BLUE-AND-BLACK TANAGER was the best bird here, with WHISKERED WREN also heard, and back at the main road we got very good views of a STREAK-THROATED BUSH-TYRANT.

Another stop at the river near Santo Domingo, a little further downstream than where we saw the Torrent Ducks produced WHITE-BACKED DIPPER and AZARA'S SPINETAIL, before we returned to the hotel for lunch.

After lunch, and having all acclimatised overnight to the higher altitude, we decided to make a visit to the high páramo area of Páramo de Águila with a short but select list of target birds to search for. The first stop we made proved to be inspired – the first bird we found was a MÉRIDA FLOWERPIERCER, swiftly followed by PÁRAMO PIPIT, BROWN-BACKED CHAT-TYRANT, PLAIN-COLOURED SEEDEATER, BAR-WINGED CINCLODES, BEARDED HELMETCREST and a pair of MÉRIDA WRENS. Unfortunately, I couldn't get onto a pair of ANDEAN SISKINS that proved quite flighty, but in the space of perhaps 30 minutes we had already found the majority of our targets.

We pressed on to the top of the pass, where we stopped for a comfort break and some great photo opportunities in the brilliant sunshine. While we wandered around here, David found us an ANDEAN TIT-SPINETAIL in the low vegetation. We drove a little further down the other side of the pass, making a brief stop near a small pond that held a pair of ANDEAN TEAL, and the nearby low scrub produced OCHRE-BROWED THISTLETAIL. Just one target bird left, and the very next stop duly produced the hoped-for STREAK-BACKED CANASTERO, shortly before the light started to fade.

There is something very special about this sort of high-altitude birding, especially when you are fortunate enough to enjoy such stunning weather, and this afternoon ranks as one of my favourite experiences of the whole trip.

Birds recorded

San Isidro Quarry – Red-headed Barbet, Andean Emerald Toucanet, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, h Saffron-headed Parrot, Grey-rumped Swift, Speckled Hummingbird, Ruddy Pigeon, Band-tailed Pigeon, Lined Quail-Dove, Cliff Flycatcher, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Golden-winged Manakin, Louisiana Waterthrush, Three-striped Warbler, Russet-backed Oropendola, Subtropical Cacique

Presa del Complejo – Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant, h Whiskered Wren, Blue-and-black Tanager

Santo Domingo - White-tailed Kite, Mountain Elaenia, Black Phoebe, Azara's Spinetail, White-backed Dipper, Brown-bellied Swallow, Barn Swallow, Rufous-collared Sparrow

Páramo de Águila – Andean Teal, Bearded Helmetcrest, Eared Dove, Southern Lapwing, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Bar-winged Cinclodes, Andean Tit-Spinetail, Ochre-browed Thistletail, Streak-backed Canastero, Mérida Wren, Páramo Pipit, Rufous-collared Sparrow, Plain-colored Seedeater, Mérida Flowerpiercer, Andean Siskin (not GD)

Wednesday 15 September 2004

We started this morning birding the grounds of the Hotel Moruco, focusing especially on a ravine at the southern boundary of the front garden (on the left hand side, looking down towards the main road). We clambered up onto the bank under some bushes, and found a relatively open area between the trees down the slope below us, and waited to see what came along.

This tactic proved extremely successful, and in the space of an hour or so, we added such superb species as CHESTNUT-CROWNED ANTPITTA, BLACK-CRESTED WARBLER, MÉRIDA TAPACULO, WHISKERED WREN, CHESNUT-CAPPED BRUSH-FINCH and SLATY NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH, all of which gave excellent views – much easier than trying to chase these species through thick scrub! EASTERN MEADOWLARK, SPARKLING VIOLETEAR and WHITE-TAILED KITE were also seen in the gardens as well as the more common birds seen previously such as BROWN-BELLIED SWALLOW.

Having eaten breakfast, we found ourselves at something of a loose end. The original plan had been to bird the páramo this morning, but we had been so successful yesterday afternoon that we decided instead to press on to Mérida. We made brief stops at Hotel Los Frailes, again seeing only TYRIAN METALTAIL and SPARKLING VIOLETEAR, and at Mucubaji Lagoon to enjoy the visible migration of hirundines coming over the pass, and add PURPLE MARTIN to our trip list.

From there, we pressed on non-stop to Mérida, arriving at our lovely hotel late morning, and spending some time relaxing in the grounds. Mid afternoon David suggested some more birding, and we visited the suburb of La Pedregosa, where we found a road that led right up into the mountains and into good forest, although David explained that there was very much more development along this road than he had found previously. It appeared to be a very affluent part of

the city, with a number of large new houses built in previously forested areas.

We took a narrow muddy track into forest, seeing THREE-STRIPED WARBLER, RUSSET-CROWNED WARBLER and OLEAGINOUS HEMISPINGUS, but little else, so returned to the road, where we saw BLACK-CAPPED TYRANNULET. We walked back down the road, slowly followed by Carlos in the van, finding a number of birds including RUSTY FLOWERPIERCER, BANANAQUIT, BLACK-CAPPED TANAGER, BLACK-HEADED TANAGER, AZARA'S SPINETAIL, BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER and GOLDEN-RUMPED EUPHONIA before the light finally faded.

Birds recorded

Hotel Moruco, Santo Domingo – Sparkling Violet-ear, Eared Dove, White-tailed Kite, Social Flycatcher, Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, Mérida Tapaculo, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, Great Thrush, Tropical Mockingbird, Whiskered Wren, Brown-bellied Swallow, Rufous-collared Sparrow, Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch, Black-crested Warbler, Eastern Meadowlark

Las Tapias - Sparkling Violet-ear, Tyrian Metaltail, Great Thrush

Mucubaji Pass – Purple Martin, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow

La Pedregosa, Mérida – Black-capped Tyrannulet, Black Phoebe, Azara's Spinetail, Black-and-white Warbler, Russet-crowned Warbler, Three-striped Warbler, Bananaquit, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Blue-grey Tanager, Golden-rumped Euphonia, Black-capped Tanager, Black-headed Tanager, Rusty Flowerpiercer

Thursday 16 September 2004

David had today arranged for someone to show Sara around Mérida for the day while the rest of us birded the world famous Pico Humboldt Trail, near La Mucuy. It was extremely cold while we ate breakfast at the trailhead, accompanied by a group of INCA JAYS, but it soon warmed up as we climbed the very steep first part of the trail, and it wasn't long before we were shedding layers.

The first bird seen along the trail was a very good one, a MÉRIDA SUNANGEL, which gave close-up views, and was followed shortly afterwards by a GOLDEN-FRONTED STARFRONTLET. In the same area we flushed a BARRED FOREST-FALCON, although getting a decent look at it proved to be a frustrating business, and we eventually had to settle for a number of flight views as it dashed overhead.

A small group of WHITE-HEADED PARROTS and a few BAND-TAILED GUANS were seen as we continued the climb, and a call David didn't recognise eventually proved to be BLACK-COLLARED JAYS. COLLARED INCA and MONTANE WOODCREEPER were seen, before we came across our first group of the endemic WHITE-FRONTED REDSTARTS, very charismatic birds, which proved to be quite common along this trail.

These were followed by a MASKED FLOWERPIERCER, BAND-TAILED PIGEON, RUFOUS SPINETAIL, BLUE-CAPPED TANAGER, BERYL-SPANGLED TANAGER, THREE-STRIPED WARBLER and RUSSET-CROWNED WARBLER, but a GREEN-AND-BLACK FRUITEATER proved to be far less obliging, giving only very poor views. Shortly afterwards, however, we flushed a GOLDEN-HEADED QUETZAL which was much more co-operative and showed beautifully for some time, before moving on.

We also added SAFFRON-HEADED PARROT to the list, before deciding it was time to turn around and head back. We found this trail pretty tough going, possibly because it came at the end of a fairly strenuous trip, and we hadn't even got close to the area recommended as best by Wheatley.

On the way back down we added SPECKLED HUMMINGBIRD, SUPERCILIARIED HEMISPINGUS and COMMON BUSH-TANAGER to our list, the latter species looking very different from those seen in the Cordillera de la Costa. One of the birds we had been looking for along this trail was the endemic GREY-NAPED ANTPITTA, and although we heard a few both on the way up and back down, we were unsuccessful at persuading one to show itself. We did however manage to get views of a calling SLATE-CROWNED ANTPITTA, although Clive and I were a little frustrated, having scrambled down a steep slope to try to see this bird, when it flew up and landed just a few feet from Eleanor who had decided to stay up on the path!

Further along David and I got good views of a CHESTNUT-BELLIED THRUSH, but unfortunately it had disappeared by the time Clive and Eleanor caught up with us. ANDEAN EMERALD TOUCANET was also seen on the way down, before we eventually arrived back at the van with legs aching badly from the steep descent. Carlos had prepared a superb late picnic lunch for us, and after eating we enjoyed good views of BLACK PHOEBE, RUFOUS-COLLARED SPARROW and BLUE-NECKED TANAGER around the picnic area.

From here we returned to Mérida, where we met up with Sara who had enjoyed an excellent day's sightseeing around the city in the company of her guide, Pedro, including a trip to the top of Pico Espejo on the world's longest and highest cable car ride (the teleférico). Both Sara and Eleanor were now ready for some shopping, so we set off for a large indoor market for a while before returning to the hotel to relax.

Birds recorded

Pico Humboldt Trail, La Mucuy – Band-tailed Guan, Andean Emerald Toucanet, Golden-headed Quetzal, Saffron-headed Parrot, White-headed Parrot, Speckled Hummingbird, Collared Inca, Golden-bellied Starfrontlet. Mérida Sunangel, Band-tailed Pigeon, Barred Forest-Falcon, Black Phoebe, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Rufous Spinetail, Montane Woodcreeper, h Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, h Grey-naped Antpitta, Slate-crowned Antpitta, h Mérida Tapaculo, Black-collared Jay, Inca Jay, Chestnut-bellied Thrush, Tropical Mockingbird, Grey-breasted Wood-Wren, Rufous-collared Sparrow, White-fronted Redstart, Russet-crowned Warbler, Three-striped Warbler, Common Bush-Tanager, Superciliaried Hemispingus, Blue-capped Tanager, Blue-necked Tanager, Beryl-spangled Tanager, Masked Flowerpiercer

Friday 17 September 2004

We had a morning available for birding today, before taking an early afternoon flight back to Caracas. We decided to target the endemic Rose-headed Parakeet, so we drove south west out of Mérida, then turned north west a little way down the western slope of the Andes to the village of San Eusebio. David had just told us that we were now in the right area for these birds, when he suddenly spotted a large group of parakeets in the top of a large tree. Carlos duly slammed on the brakes, we all piled out (me in my bare feet as I hadn't had time to put on my boots!), and enjoyed excellent views of a flock of ROSE-HEADED PARAKEETS. Juts 15 minutes after first light and we had already bagged our main target bird!

We parked up and set off for a leisurely stroll along the road. We found a BRONZY INCA, before finally getting good views of a VENEZUELAN TYRANULET, a bird that had constantly eluded us over the last two weeks. A surprisingly smart bird, and well worth the wait. Birding was a little slow this morning, and although we also added ORANGE-BELLIED EUPHONIA, BAND-TAILED GUAN and HOOK-BILLED KITE, not much else was seen until just before we were due to head back to Mérida, we came across a good mixed feeding flock.

We enjoyed good views of MONTANE FOLIAGE-GLEANER, VARIEGATED BRISTLE-TYRANT, MONTANE WOODCREEPER, WHITE-WINGED TANAGER and STREAKED XENOPS, but prize of the bunch was a pair of BARRED BECARDS, a species that had eluded me on a previous trip to Ecuador, and which was a very welcome sighting.

Time to return to our hotel for lunch, during which we added RUFIOUS-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD, then over to the airport where we bid Carlos a fond farewell before taking an uneventful and efficient flight back to Caracas, and a transfer to our hotel for our last night in Venezuela.

Birds recorded

San Eusebio – Band-tailed Guan, Rose-headed Parakeet, Bronzy Inca, Hook-billed Kite, h Slaty-capped Flycatcher, Venezuelan Tyrannulet, Variegated Bristly-Tyrant, Barred Becard, Montane Foliage-gleaner, Streaked Xenops, Montane Woodcreeper, White-winged Tanager, Orange-bellied Euphonia

Hotel Belensate, Mérida - Rufous-tailed Hummingbird

Saturday 18 September 2004

Our last morning was to be spent at El Ávila, in the Cordillera de la Costa north-east of Caracas. David was targeting two localised endemic species, Black-throated Spinetail and Caracas Tapaculo, but the first bird seen on arrival was a very nice OCHRE-BREASTED BRUSH-FINCH feeding around a picnic table.

We added BLACK-CAPPED TANAGER and AMERICAN REDSTART before a small flock of spinetails flew across the road and showed well in the scrub on the other – BLACK-THROATED SPINETAILS! One down and one to go, and we felt lucky, so we scrambled down a nearby slope, found a suitable open clearing, and tried the CARACAS TAPACULO tape. A bird responded almost immediately, flew in, and gave excellent views as it almost walked over our feet – very nice.

We birded the road and tracks for a couple of hours more, adding GLOSSY-BLACK THRUSH, THREE-STRIPED WARBLER, COMMON BUSH-TANAGER, WHITE-THROATED TYRANNULET, SPECKLED HUMMINGBIRD, BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER, DOUBLE-TOOTHED KITE and GREEN VIOLET-EAR, but we were all pretty tired by now, and found the steep roads hard going. The last potential lifer was a PALE-EDGED FLYCATCHER that called from down the slope, but unfortunately didn't show, before it was time to pack away the bins for another trip, and head for the airport. Definitely one of the best trips we have ever done, and are all eager to return to Venezuela for some more birding in David and Carlos's company very soon.

Birds recorded

El Ávila – h Golden-olive Woodpecker, Green Violet-ear, Speckled Hummingbird, Double-toothed Kite, White-throated Tyrannulet, h Pale-edged Flycatcher, Black-throated Spinetail, h Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, Caracas Tapaculo, Glossy-black Thrush, Rufous-collared Sparrow, Ochre-breasted Brush-Finch, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Three-striped Warbler, Common Bush-Tanager, Black-capped Tanager

Species List

The letter 'h' denotes that the bird was heard but not seen.

1. **Rufous-vented Chachalaca** (*Ortalis ruficauda*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
2. **Band-tailed Guan** (*Penelope argyrotis*) Henri Pittier (Pico Guacamayo Trail) 07.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09, San Eusebio 17.09
3. **Helmeted Curassow** (*Pauxi pauxi*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
4. **Horned Screamer** (*Anhima cornuta*) San Pablo Marsh 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
5. **White-faced Whistling-Duck** (*Dendrocygna viduata*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
6. **Black-bellied (Red-billed) Whistling-Duck** (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09

7. **Torrent Duck** (*Merganetta armata*) Santo Domingo 13.09
8. **Andean Teal** (*Anas (flavirostris) altipetens*) Mucubaji Lagoon 13.09, Páramo de Águila 14.09
9. **Scaled Piculet** (*Picumnus squamulatus*) La Sabaneta 06.09
10. **Red-crowned Woodpecker** (*Melanerpes rubricapillus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
11. **Smoky-brown Woodpecker** (*Veniliornis fumigatus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
12. **Red-rumped Woodpecker** (*Veniliornis kirkii*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
13. **Golden-olive Woodpecker** (*Piculus rubiginosus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, h El Ávila 18.09
14. **Lineated Woodpecker** (*Dryocopus lineatus*) Torunos 12.09
15. **Crimson-crested Woodpecker** (*Campephilus melanoleucos*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
16. **Red-headed Barbet** (*Eubucco bourcierii*) San Isidro 14.09
17. **Andean Emerald Toucanet** (*Aulacorhynchus albivitta*) Yacambú 11.09, San Isidro 14.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
18. **Yellow-billed Toucanet** (*Aulacorhynchus calorhynchus*) Yacambú 10.09, Yacambú 11.09
19. **Groove-billed Toucanet** (*Aulacorhynchus sulcatus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
20. **Black-billed Mountain-Toucan** (*Andigena nigrirostris*) San Isidro 14.09
21. **Pale-headed Jacamar** (*Brachygalba goeringi*) Baragua 10.09
22. **Rufous-tailed Jacamar** (*Galbula ruficauda*) h Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, La Sabaneta 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
23. **Russet-throated Puffbird** (*Hypnelus ruficollis*) h Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
24. **Moustached Puffbird** (*Malacoptila mystacalis*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
25. **White-tipped Quetzal** (*Pharomachrus fulgidus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
26. **Golden-headed Quetzal** (*Pharomachrus auriceps*) Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09

27. **Collared Trogon** (*Trogon collaris*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
28. **Masked Trogon** (*Trogon personatus*) Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
29. **Ringed Kingfisher** (*Megaceryle torquata*) Tucacas 08.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
30. **Amazon Kingfisher** (*Chloroceryle amazona*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
31. **Green Kingfisher** (*Chloroceryle americana*) San Pablo Marsh 09.09
32. **Dwarf Cuckoo** (*Coccyzus pumilus*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
33. **Squirrel Cuckoo** (*Piaya cayana*) h Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
34. **Hoatzin** (*Opisthocomus hoazin*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
35. **Greater Ani** (*Crotophaga major*) Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
36. **Smooth-billed Ani** (*Crotophaga ani*) Maracay 04.09, Maracay 05.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
37. **Groove-billed Ani** (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09
38. **Red-and-green Macaw** (*Ara chloropterus*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
39. **Chestnut-fronted Macaw** (*Ara severa*) h Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
40. **Brown-throated Parakeet** (*Aratinga pertinax*) Maracay 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
41. **Blood-eared (Red-eared) Parakeet** (*Pyrrhura hoematotis*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
42. **Rose-headed Parakeet** (*Pyrrhura rhodocephala*) San Eusebio 17.09
43. **Green-rumped Parrotlet** (*Forpus passerinus*) Choroni 06.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Baragua 10.09
44. **Orange-chinned Parakeet** (*Brotogeris jugularis*) h Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
45. **Saffron-headed Parrot** (*Pionopsitta pyralia*) h San Isidro 14.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
46. **Blue-headed Parrot** (*Pionus menstruus*) Altamira 13.09
47. **Red-billed Parrot** (*Pionus sordidus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09

48. **White-headed Parrot** (*Pionus seniloides*) Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
49. **Yellow-crowned Parrot** (*Amazona ochrocephala*) h Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
50. **Orange-winged Parrot** (*Amazona amazonica*) Maracay 05.09
51. **White-collared Swift** (*Streptoprocne zonaris*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09, Altamira 13.09
52. **Grey-rumped Swift** (*Chaetura cinereiventris*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09, San Isidro 14.09
53. **Vaux's Swift** (*Chaetura vauxi*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
54. **White-tipped Swift** (*Aeronautes montivagus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
55. **Fork-tailed Palm-Swift** (*Tachornis squamata*) Maracay 04.09, Maracay 05.09
56. **White-bearded Hermit** (*Phaethornis hispidus*) Altamira 13.09
57. **Green Violet-ear** (*Colibri thalassinus*) El Ávila 18.09
58. **Sparkling Violet-ear** (*Colibri coruscans*) Las Tapias 13.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09, Las Tapias 15.09
59. **Black-throated Mango** (*Anthracothorax nigricollis*) Altamira 13.09
60. **Violet-headed Hummingbird** (*Klais guimeti*) Henri Pittier (Pico Guacamayo Trail) 07.09
61. **Blue-tailed Emerald** (*Chlorostilbon mellisugus*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
62. **Golden-tailed Sapphire** (*Chrysuronia oenone*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Altamira 13.09
63. **Glittering-throated Emerald** (*Amazilia fimbriata*) Cerro La Misión 09.09, San Silvestre 12.09
64. **Steely-vented Hummingbird** (*Amazilia saucerrottei*) Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, Las Tapias 13.09
65. **Copper-rumped Hummingbird** (*Amazilia tobaci*) Choroni 06.09
66. **Rufous-tailed Hummingbird** (*Amazilia tzacatl*) Hotel Belensate, Mérida 17.09
67. **White-vented Plumeleteer** (*Chalybura buffonii*) La Sabaneta 06.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Altamira 13.09

68. **Speckled Hummingbird** (*Adelomyia melanogenys*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Yacambú 11.09, San Isidro 14.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09, El Ávila 18.09
69. **Violet-fronted Brilliant** (*Heliodoxa leadbeateri*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
70. **Violet-chested Hummingbird** (*Sternoclyta cyanopectus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
71. **Bronzy Inca** (*Coeligena coeligena*) Yacambú 11.09, San Eusebio 17.09
72. **Collared Inca** (*Coeligena torquata*) Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
73. **Golden-bellied Starfrontlet** (*Coeligena bonapartei*) Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
74. **Orange-throated Sunangel** (*Heliangelus mavors*) Las Tapias 13.09
75. **Mérida Sunangel** (*Heliangelus spencei*) Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
76. **Booted Racket-tail** (*Ocreatus underwoodii*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
77. **Tyrian Metaltail** (*Metallura tyrianthina*) Las Tapias 13.09, Las Tapias 15.09
78. **Bearded Helmetcrest** (*Oxygogon guerinii*) Páramo de Águila 14.09
79. **Long-tailed Sylph** (*Agelaiocercus kingi*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
80. **Wedge-billed Hummingbird** (*Augastes geoffroyi*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
81. **Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl** (*Glaucidium brasilianum*) h Baragua 10.09, Quibor 11.09
82. **Short-tailed Nighthawk** (*Lurocalis semitorquatus*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
83. **Lesser Nighthawk** (*Chordeiles acutipennis*) Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Baragua 10.09
84. **Bare-eyed Pigeon** (*Columba corensis*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cuare 08.09
85. **Feral Pigeon** (*Columba livia*) Urban areas
86. **Band-tailed Pigeon** (*Columba fasciata*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Las Tapias 13.09, San Isidro 14.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
87. **Pale-vented Pigeon** (*Columba cayennensis*) Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
88. **Eared Dove** (*Zenaida auriculata*) Baragua 10.09, Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09, Páramo de Águila 14.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09
89. **Scaled Dove** (*Columbina squammata*) Choroni 06.09, Boca de Aroa 07.09, Baragua 10.09, Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09, Altamira 13.09

90. **Common Ground-Dove** (*Columbina passerina*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Baragua 10.09, Acarigua 11.09
91. **Plain-breasted Ground-Dove** (*Columbina minuta*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
92. **Ruddy Ground-Dove** (*Columbina talpacoti*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
93. **White-tipped Dove** (*Leptotila verreauxi*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Baragua 10.09
94. **Lined Quail-Dove** (*Geotrygon linearis*) San Isidro 14.09
95. **Limpkin** (*Aramus guarauna*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
96. **Rusty-flanked Crake** (*Laterallus levraudi*) h San Pablo Marsh 09.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
97. **Plain-flanked Rail** (*Rallus wetmorei*) h Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Chichiriviche 08.09
98. **Grey-necked Wood-Rail** (*Aramides cajanea*) Cerro La Misión 09.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
99. **American Purple Gallinule** (*Porphyrio martinicus*) Tucacas 08.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
100. **Common Moorhen** (*Gallinula chloropus*) Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
101. **Caribbean Coot** (*Fulica caribaea*) Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
102. **Hudsonian Whimbrel** (*Numenius (phaeopus) hudsonicus*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
103. **Greater Yellowlegs** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Cuare 08.09, Mucubaji Lagoon 13.09
104. **Lesser Yellowlegs** (*Tringa flavipes*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Cuare 08.09
105. **Solitary Sandpiper** (*Tringa solitaria*) Tucacas 08.09
106. **Spotted Sandpiper** (*Tringa macularia*) Choroni 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Tucacas 08.09, Boca de Aroa 09.09
107. **Willet** (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
108. **Short-billed Dowitcher** (*Limnodromus griseus*) Cuare 08.09
109. **Western Sandpiper** (*Calidris mauri*) Cuare 08.09
110. **Least Sandpiper** (*Calidris minutilla*) Cuare 08.09
111. **Wattled Jacana** (*Jacana jacana*) Tucacas 08.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La

Misión 09.09, San Pablo Marsh 09.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09

112. **Double-striped Thick-knee** (*Burhinus bistriatus*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
113. **Black-necked Stilt** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) Cuare 08.09
114. **Grey Plover** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
115. **Semipalmated Plover** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) Cuare 08.09
116. **Collared Plover** (*Charadrius collaris*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Cuare 08.09
117. **Southern Lapwing** (*Vanellus chilensis*) Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09, Mucubaji Lagoon 13.09, Páramo de Águila 14.09
118. **Royal Tern** (*Sterna maxima*) Choroní 06.09
119. **Large-billed Tern** (*Phaetusa simplex*) Cuare 08.09
120. **Osprey** (*Pandion haliaetus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Tucacas 08.09, Cayo Punta Brava 08.09
121. **Hook-billed Kite** (*Chondrohierax uncinatus*) San Eusebio 17.09
122. **White-tailed Kite** (*Elanus leucurus*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09, Hotel Moruco 14.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09
123. **Double-toothed Kite** (*Harpagus bidentatus*) El Ávila 18.09
124. **Plain-breasted Hawk** (*Accipiter ventralis*) Las Tapias 13.09
125. **Crane-Hawk** (*Geranospiza caerulescens*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09
126. **Common Black-Hawk** (*Buteogallus anthracinus*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
127. **Savanna Hawk** (*Buteogallus meridionalis*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
128. **Harris's Hawk** (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) Baragua 10.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
129. **Roadside Hawk** (*Buteo magnirostris*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
130. **Short-tailed Hawk** (*Buteo brachyurus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroní Road) 06.09, Altamira 13.09
131. **White-tailed Hawk** (*Buteo albicaudatus*) n of Sanare 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
132. **Zone-tailed Hawk** (*Buteo albonotatus*) Cuare 08.09

133. **Crested Caracara** (*Polyborus cheriway*) Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cuare 08.09, San Pablo Marsh 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
134. **Yellow-headed Caracara** (*Milvago chimachima*) Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Chichiriviche 08.09, San Pablo Marsh 09.09, N of Sanare 10.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
135. **Laughing Falcon** (*Herpetotheres cachinnans*) San Silvestre 12.09
136. **Barred Forest-Falcon** (*Micrastur ruficollis*) Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
137. **American Kestrel** (*Falco sparverius*) Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
138. **Applomado Falcon** (*Falco femoralis*) San Silvestre 12.09
139. **Bat Falcon** (*Falco rufigularis*) San Pablo Marsh 09.09
140. **Least Grebe** (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) San Pablo Marsh 09.09
141. **Brown Booby** (*Sula leucogaster*) Choroní 06.09
142. **Neotropic Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) Boca de Aroa 07.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, Mucubají Lagoon 13.09
143. **Whistling Heron** (*Syrigma sibilatrix*) Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
144. **Striated Heron** (*Butorides striatus*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, San Pablo Marsh 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
145. **Tricolored Heron** (*Egretta tricolor*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Boca de Aroa 09.09
146. **Reddish Egret** (*Egretta rufescens*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Cuare 08.09
147. **Snowy Egret** (*Egretta thula*) Boca de Aroa 07.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
148. **Capped Heron** (*Pilherodius pileatus*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
149. **Great Blue Heron** (*Ardea herodias*) Cuare 08.09
150. **Cocoi Heron** (*Ardea cocoi*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
151. **Great (American) Egret** (*Casmerodius albus*) Tucacas 08.09, Cuare 08.09, Boca de Aroa 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
152. **Common Cattle-Egret** (*Bubulcus ibis*) Common in all lowland areas
153. **Black-crowned Night-Heron** (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
154. **Rufescent Tiger-Heron** (*Tigrisoma lineatum*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
155. **American Flamingo** (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) Cuare 08.09

156. **White Ibis** (*Eudocimus albus*) Cuare 08.09
157. **Scarlet Ibis** (*Eudocimus ruber*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Cuare 08.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
158. **Bare-faced (Whispering) Ibis** (*Phimosus infuscatus*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
159. **Sharp-tailed Ibis** (*Cercibis oxycerca*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
160. **Buff-necked Ibis** (*Theristicus caudatus*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
161. **Green Ibis** (*Mesembrinibis cayennensis*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
162. **Brown Pelican** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) Choroni 06.09, Cayo Punta Brava 08.09, Cuare 08.09, Boca de Aroa 09.09
163. **Black Vulture** (*Coragyps atratus*) common and widespread
164. **Turkey Vulture** (*Cathartes aura*) common and widespread
165. **Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture** (*Cathartes burrovianus*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
166. **King Vulture** (*Sarcoramphus papa*) Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
167. **Wood Stork** (*Mycteria americana*) San Pablo Marsh 09.09
168. **Magnificent Frigatebird** (*Fregata magnificens*) Choroni 06.09, Boca de Aroa 07.09, Cayo Punta Brava 08.09, Cuare 08.09, Boca de Aroa 09.09
169. **Olive-striped Flycatcher** (*Mionectes olivaceus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
170. **Slaty-capped Flycatcher** (*Leptopogon superciliaris*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, h San Eusebio 17.09
171. **Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant** (*Hemitriccus margaritaceiventer*) N of Sanare 10.09
172. **Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher** (*Todirostrum sylvia*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
173. **Common Tody-Flycatcher** (*Todirostrum cinereum*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
174. **White-fronted Tyrannulet** (*Phyllomyias zeledoni*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
175. **Sooty-headed Tyrannulet** (*Phyllomyias griseiceps*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
176. **Black-capped Tyrannulet** (*Phyllomyias nigrocapillus*) Yacambú 11.09, La Pedregosa 15.09
177. **Venezuelan Tyrannulet** (*Zimmerius improbus*) San Eusebio 17.09

178. **Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet** (*Camptostoma obsoletum*) La Sabaneta 06.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, N of Sanare 10.09, Quibor 11.09
179. **Mouse-colored Tyrannulet** (*Phaeomyias murina*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, N of Sanare 10.09
180. **Northern Scrub-Flycatcher** (*Sublegatus arenarum*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
181. **Forest Elaenia** (*Myiopagis gaimardii*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, La Sabaneta 06.09
182. **Yellow-bellied Elaenia** (*Elaenia flavogaster*) Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Altamira 13.09
183. **Small-billed Elaenia** (*Elaenia parvirostris*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
184. **Lesser Elaenia** (*Elaenia chiriquensis*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
185. **Mountain Elaenia** (*Elaenia frantzii*) Santo Domingo 13.09, Santo Domingo 14.09
186. **White-throated Tyrannulet** (*Mecocerculus leucophrys*) Yacambú 11.09, El Ávila 18.09
187. **Torrent Tyrannulet** (*Serpophaga cinerea*) Santo Domingo 13.09
188. **Tawny-crowned Pygmy-Tyrant** (*Euscarthmus meloryphus*) Baragua 10.09
189. **Marble-faced Bristle-Tyrant** (*Phylloscartes ophthalmicus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
190. **Variiegated Bristle-Tyrant** (*Phylloscartes poecilotis*) San Eusebio 17.09
191. **Rufous-lored Tyrannulet** (*Phylloscartes flaviventris*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
192. **Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant** (*Lophotriccus pileatus*) Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
193. **Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant** (*Atalotriccus pilaris*) La Sabaneta 06.09
194. **Yellow-olive Flycatcher** (*Tolmomyias sulphurescens*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, La Sabaneta 06.09
195. **Cinnamon Flycatcher** (*Pyrrhomyias cinnamomea*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
196. **Cliff Flycatcher** (*Hirundinea ferruginea*) San Isidro 14.09
197. **Fuscous Flycatcher** (*Cnemotriccus fuscatus*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
198. **Smoke-colored Pewee** (*Contopus fumigatus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09

199. **Tropical Pewee** (*Contopus cinereus*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
200. **Black Phoebe** (*Sayornis nigricans*) La Sabaneta 06.09, Altamira 13.09, Hotel Moruco 13.09, Hotel Moruco 14.09, La Pedregosa 15.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
201. **Vermilion Flycatcher** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09
202. **Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant** (*Ochthoeca fumicolor*) Mucubaji Lagoon 13.09, Páramo de Águila 14.09
203. **Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant** (*Myiotheretes striaticollis*) Presa del Complejo 14.09
204. **Pied Water-Tyrant** (*Fluvicola pica*) Tucacas 08.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
205. **White-headed Marsh-Tyrant** (*Arundinicola leucocephala*) San Silvestre 12.09
206. **Cattle Tyrant** (*Machetornis rixosus*) Maracay 04.09, Choroní 06.09, Tucacas 09.09
207. **Brown-crested Flycatcher** (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
208. **Tropical Kingbird** (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) Abundant – seen almost every day
209. **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** (*Tyrannus savana*) Maracay 04.09, Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
210. **Grey Kingbird** (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, San Pablo Marsh 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
211. **Boat-billed Flycatcher** (*Megarynchus pitangua*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
212. **Golden-crowned Flycatcher** (*Myiodynastes chrysocephalus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
213. **Streaked Flycatcher** (*Myiodynastes maculatus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Altamira 13.09
214. **Rusty-margined Flycatcher** (*Myiozetetes cayanensis*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09
215. **Social Flycatcher** (*Myiozetetes similis*) La Sabaneta 06.09, Choroní 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09
216. **Lesser Kiskadee** (*Philohydor lictor*) Cerro La Misión 09.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
217. **Great Kiskadee** (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09

218. **White-bearded Flycatcher** (*Phelpsia inornata*) Acarigua 11.09
219. **Barred Becard** (*Pachyramphus versicolor*) San Eusebio 17.09
220. **Chestnut-crowned Becard** (*Pachyramphus castaneus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Altamira 13.09
221. **White-winged Becard** (*Pachyramphus polychopterus*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
222. **Cinereous Becard** (*Pachyramphus rufus*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
223. **Black-tailed Tityra** (*Tityra cayana*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
224. **Black-crowned Tityra** (*Tityra inquisitor*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09
225. **Green-and-black Fruiteater** (*Pipreola riefferii*) Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
226. **Golden-breasted Fruiteater** (*Pipreola aureopectus*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
227. **Handsome Fruiteater** (*Pipreola formosa*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
228. **Red-ruffed Fruitcrow** (*Pyroderus scutatus*) San Isidro 14.09
229. **Andean Cock-of-the-rock** (*Rupicola peruviana*) San Isidro 14.09
230. **Lance-tailed Manakin** (*Chiroxiphia lanceolata*) La Sabaneta 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
231. **Golden-winged Manakin** (*Masius chrysopterus*) Yacambú 11.09, San Isidro 14.09
232. **White-ruffed Manakin** (*Corapipo leucorrhoea*) Altamira 13.09
233. **Black-crested Antshrike** (*Sakesphorus canadensis*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
234. **Black-backed Antshrike** (*Sakesphorus melanonotus*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
235. **Barred Antshrike** (*Thamnophilus doliatus*) La Sabaneta 06.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09
236. **Plain Antwreio** (*Dysithamnus mentalis*) La Sabaneta 06.09
237. **Slaty Antwren** (*Myrmotherula schisticolor*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
238. **Rufous-winged Antwren** (*Herpsilochmus rufimarginatus*) La Sabaneta 06.09
239. **Northern White-fringed Antwren** (*Formicivora intermedia*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, N of Sanare 10.09
240. **Long-tailed Antbird** (*Drymophila caudata*) Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
241. **White-browed Antbird** (*Myrmoborus leucophrys*) Altamira 13.09

242. **White-bellied Antbird** (*Myrmeciza longipes*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
243. **Bar-winged Cinclodes** (*Cinclodes fuscus*) Páramo de Águila 14.09
244. **Caribbean Hornero** (*Furnarius longirostris*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09
245. **Andean Tit-Spinetail** (*Leptasthenura andicola*) Páramo de Águila 14.09
246. **Ochre-browed Thistletail** (*Schizoeaca coryi*) Páramo de Águila 14.09
247. **Azara's Spinetail** (*Synallaxis azarae*) Santo Domingo 14.09, La Pedregosa 15.09
248. **Pale-breasted Spinetail** (*Synallaxis albescens*) Altamira 13.09
249. **Rufous Spinetail** (*Synallaxis unirufa*) Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
250. **Black-throated Spinetail** (*Synallaxis castanea*) El Ávila 18.09
251. **Stripe-breasted Spinetail** (*Synallaxis cinnamomea*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
252. **White-whiskered Spinetail** (*Synallaxis candei*) Baragua 10.09
253. **Crested Spinetail** (*Cranioleuca subcristata*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
254. **Yellow-chinned Spinetail** (*Certhiaxis cinnamomea*) Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
255. **Streak-backed Canastero** (*Asthenes wyatti*) Páramo de Águila 14.09
256. **Plain Thornbird** (*Phacellodomus rufifrons*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
257. **Guttulated Foliage-gleaner** (*Syndactyla guttulata*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
258. **Montane Foliage-gleaner** (*Anabacerthia striaticollis*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, San Eusebio 17.09
259. **Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner** (*Philydor rufus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
260. **Grey-throated Leaf-tosser** (*Sclerurus albigularis*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
261. **Streaked Xenops** (*Xenops rutilans*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, San Eusebio 17.09
262. **Plain-brown Woodcreeper** (*Dendrocincla fuliginosa*) La Sabaneta 06.09
263. **Olivaceous Woodcreeper** (*Sittasomus griseicapillus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09

264. **Strong-billed Woodcreeper** (*Xiphocolaptes promeropirhynchus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
265. **Straight-billed Woodcreeper** (*Xiphorhynchus picus*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09
266. **Striped Woodcreeper** (*Xiphorhynchus obsoletus*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
267. **Cocoa Woodcreeper** (*Xiphorhynchus susurrans*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
268. **Streak-headed Woodcreeper** (*Lepidocolaptes souleyetii*) Choroni 06.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09
269. **Montane Woodcreeper** (*Lepidocolaptes lachrymiger*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09, San Eusebio 17.09
270. **Red-billed Scythebill** (*Campylorhamphus trochilirostris*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
271. **Northern Short-tailed Antthrush** (*Chamaeza campanisona*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
272. **Schwartz's Antthrush** (*Chamaeza turdina*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
273. **Great Antpitta** (*Grallaria excelsa*) h Yacambú 10.09, Yacambú 11.09
274. **Chestnut-crowned Antpitta** (*Grallaria ruficapilla*) h Las Tapias 13.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09, h Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09, h El Ávila 18.09
275. **Slate-crowned Antpitta** (*Grallaricula nana*) Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
276. **Scallop-breasted Antpitta** (*Grallaricula loricata*) Henri Pittier (Pico Guacamayo Trail) 07.09
277. **Mérida Tapaculo** (*Scytalopus meridanus*) Las Tapias 13.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09, h Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
278. **Caracas Tapaculo** (*Scytalopus caracae*) El Ávila 18.09
279. **Rufous-browed Peppershrike** (*Cyclarhis gujanensis*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09
280. **Red-eyed Vireo** (*Vireo olivaceus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Altamira 13.09
281. **Brown-capped Vireo** (*Vireo leucophrys*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Yacambú 11.09, Altamira 13.09
282. **Golden-fronted Greenlet** (*Hylophilus aurantiifrons*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
283. **Scrub Greenlet** (*Hylophilus flavipes*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, N of Sanare 10.09

284. **Black-collared Jay** (*Cyanolyca armillata*) Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
285. **Inca Jay** (*Cyanocorax yncas*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
286. **White-backed Dipper** (*Cinclus leucocephalus*) Santo Domingo 14.09
287. **Andean Solitaire** (*Myadestes ralloides*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
288. **Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush** (*Catharus fuscater*) h Yacambú 11.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09
289. **Great Thrush** (*Turdus fuscater*) Mucubaji Lagoon 13.09, Las Tapias 13.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09, Las Tapias 15.09
290. **Glossy-black Thrush** (*Turdus serranus*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, El Ávila 18.09
291. **Chestnut-bellied Thrush** (*Turdus fulviventris*) Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
292. **Pale-breasted Thrush** (*Turdus leucomelas*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Altamira 13.09
293. **Cocoa Thrush** (*Turdus fumigatus*) Acarigua 11.09
294. **Bare-eyed Thrush** (*Turdus nudigenis*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
295. **White-necked Thrush** (*Turdus albicollis*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
296. **Tropical Mockingbird** (*Mimus gilvus*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Sanare 09.09, N of Sanare 10.09, Quibor 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
297. **Black-capped Donacobius** (*Donacobius atricapillus*) San Pablo Marsh 09.09
298. **Bicolored Wren** (*Campylorhynchus griseus*) Sanare 10.09, Sanare 11.09, Quibor 11.09
299. **Stripe-backed Wren** (*Campylorhynchus nuchalis*) Cerro La Misión 09.09, Acarigua 11.09
300. **Mérida Wren** (*Cistothorus meridae*) Páramo de Águila 14.09
301. **Whiskered Wren** (*Thryothorus mystacalis*) h Presa del Complejo 14.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09
302. **Rufous-breasted Wren** (*Thryothorus rutilus*) La Sabaneta 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Altamira 13.09
303. **Rufous-and-white Wren** (*Thryothorus rufalbus*) La Sabaneta 06.09
304. **House Wren** (*Troglodytes aedon*) La Sabaneta 06.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
305. **Grey-breasted Wood-Wren** (*Henicorhina leucophrys*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09,

Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09, h Yacambú 11.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09

306. **Southern Nightingale-Wren** (*Microcerculus marginatus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
307. **Tropical Gnatcatcher** (*Polioptila plumbea*) Choroni 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Sanare 10.09
308. **White-winged Swallow** (*Tachycineta albiventer*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
309. **Brown-chested Martin** (*Phaeoprogne tapera*) Maracay 04.09, Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
310. **Purple Martin** (*Progne subis*) Mucubaji Pass 15.09
311. **Grey-breasted Martin** (*Progne chalybea*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
312. **Brown-bellied Swallow** (*Notiochelidon murina*) Hotel Moruco 13.09, Mucubaji Lagoon 13.09, Hotel Moruco 14.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09
313. **Blue-and-white Swallow** (*Notiochelidon cyanoleuca*) Sanare 09.09, Sanare 10.09, Sanare 11.09
314. **Southern Rough-winged Swallow** (*Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
315. **Common Sand-Martin** (*Riparia riparia*) Choroni 06.09
316. **Barn Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*) Cerro La Misión 09.09, Mucubaji Lagoon 13.09, Hotel Moruco 14.09, Mucubaji Pass 15.09
317. **Cliff Swallow** (*Hirundo pyrrhonota*) Mucubaji Lagoon 13.09, Mucubaji Pass 15.09
318. **Páramo Pipit** (*Anthus bogotensis*) Páramo de Águila 14.09
319. **Yellow-bellied Siskin** (*Carduelis xanthogastra*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
320. **Lesser Goldfinch** (*Carduelis psaltria*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Sanare 09.09, Sanare 10.09, Acarigua 11.09, Altamira 13.09
321. **Rufous-collared Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia capensis*) Hotel Moruco 13.09, Hotel Moruco 14.09, Páramo de Águila 14.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09, El Ávila 18.09
322. **Yellow-browed Sparrow** (*Ammodramus aurifrons*) Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
323. **Golden-winged Sparrow** (*Arremon schlegeli*) Acarigua 11.09
324. **Tocuyo Sparrow** (*Arremonops tocuyensis*) N of Sanare 10.09
325. **Black-striped Sparrow** (*Arremonops conirostris*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
326. **Ochre-breasted Brush-Finch** (*Atlapetes semirufus*) El Ávila 18.09

327. **Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch** (*Atlapetes brunneinucha*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09
328. **Red-capped Cardinal** (*Paroaria gularis*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
329. **Tropical Parula** (*Parula pitiayumi*) La Sabaneta 06.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09
330. **Black-and-white Warbler** (*Mniotilta varia*) La Pedregosa 15.09, El Ávila 18.09
331. **Yellow Warbler** (*Dendroica aestiva*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
332. **Louisiana Waterthrush** (*Seiurus motacilla*) San Isidro 14.09
333. **American Redstart** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, El Ávila 18.09
334. **Slate-throated Redstart** (*Myioborus miniatus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Henri Pittier (Pico Guacamayo Trail) 07.09
335. **White-fronted Redstart** (*Myioborus albifrons*) Las Tapias 13.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
336. **Black-crested Warbler** (*Basileuterus nigrocristatus*) Hotel Moruco 15.09
337. **Russet-crowned Warbler** (*Basileuterus coronatus*) La Pedregosa 15.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
338. **Golden-crowned Warbler** (*Basileuterus culicivorus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
339. **Three-striped Warbler** (*Basileuterus tristriatus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, San Isidro 14.09, La Pedregosa 15.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09, El Ávila 18.09
340. **Flavescent Warbler** (*Basileuterus flaveolus*) La Sabaneta 06.09
341. **Bananaquit** (*Coereba flaveola*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Choroni 06.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Altamira 13.09, La Pedregosa 15.09
342. **White-eared Conebill** (*Conirostrum leucogenys*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09
343. **Bicolored Conebill** (*Conirostrum bicolor*) Chichiriviche 08.09
344. **Blue-backed Conebill** (*Conirostrum sitticolor*) Las Tapias 13.09
345. **Common Bush-Tanager** (*Chlorospingus ophthalmicus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Yacambú 11.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09, El Ávila 18.09
346. **Superciliaried Hemispingus** (*Hemispingus superciliaris*) Las Tapias 13.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09

347. **Grey-capped Hemispingus** (*Hemispingus reyi*) Las Tapias 13.09
348. **Oleaginous Hemispingus** (*Hemispingus frontalis*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, La Pedregosa 15.09
349. **Fulvous-headed Tanager** (*Thlypopsis fulviceps*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
350. **Hooded Tanager** (*Nemosia pileata*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09
351. **Rosy Thrush-Tanager** (*Rhodinocichla rosea*) N of Sanare 10.09
352. **White-lined Tanager** (*Tachyphonus rufus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, La Sabaneta 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Altamira 13.09
353. **White-winged Tanager** (*Piranga leucoptera*) Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, San Eusebio 17.09
354. **Silver-beaked Tanager** (*Ramphocelus carbo*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, La Sabaneta 06.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, Altamira 13.09
355. **Blue-grey Tanager** (*Thraupis episcopus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09, Altamira 13.09, La Pedregosa 15.09
356. **Glaucous Tanager** (*Thraupis glaucocolpa*) Choroni 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
357. **Palm Tanager** (*Thraupis palmarum*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09
358. **Blue-capped Tanager** (*Thraupis cyanocephala*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
359. **Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager** (*Anisognathus lacrymosus*) Las Tapias 13.09
360. **Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager** (*Anisognathus somptuosus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
361. **Fawn-breasted Tanager** (*Pipraeidea melanonota*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
362. **Trinidad Euphonia** (*Euphonia trinitatis*) h Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
363. **Thick-billed Euphonia** (*Euphonia laniirostris*) La Sabaneta 06.09, Altamira 13.09
364. **Golden-rumped Euphonia** (*Euphonia cyanocephala*) La Pedregosa 15.09
365. **Orange-bellied Euphonia** (*Euphonia xanthogaster*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09,

Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09, San Eusebio 17.09

366. **Golden Tanager** (*Tangara arthus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, Yacambú 11.09
367. **Saffron-crowned Tanager** (*Tangara xanthocephala*) Yacambú 11.09
368. **Speckled Tanager** (*Tangara guttata*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
369. **Bay-headed Tanager** (*Tangara gyrola*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09, Altamira 13.09
370. **Burnished-buff Tanager** (*Tangara cayana*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
371. **Rufous-cheeked Tanager** (*Tangara rufigenis*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
372. **Blue-necked Tanager** (*Tangara cyanicollis*) Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, Altamira 13.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
373. **Beryl-spangled Tanager** (*Tangara nigroviridis*) Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09, Yacambú 11.09, Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
374. **Blue-and-black Tanager** (*Tangara vassorii*) Presa del Complejo 14.09
375. **Black-capped Tanager** (*Tangara heinei*) La Pedregosa 15.09, El Ávila 18.09
376. **Black-headed Tanager** (*Tangara cyanoptera*) La Pedregosa 15.09
377. **Green Honeycreeper** (*Chlorophanes spiza*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
378. **Purple Honeycreeper** (*Cyanerpes caeruleus*) La Sabaneta 06.09
379. **Red-legged Honeycreeper** (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*) Altamira 13.09
380. **Swallow Tanager** (*Tersina viridis*) Altamira 13.09
381. **Pileated Finch** (*Coryphospingus pileatus*) N of Sanare 10.09
382. **Plumbeous Sierra-Finch** (*Phrygilus unicolor*) Mucubaji Lagoon 13.09
383. **Saffron Finch** (*Sicalis flaveola*) Maracay 05.09, Maracay 07.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09, Altamira 13.09
384. **Blue-black Grassquit** (*Volatinia jacarina*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09, Las Tapias 13.09
385. **Grey Seedeater** (*Sporophila intermedia*) Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09, Altamira 13.09
386. **Lesson's Seedeater** (*Sporophila bouvronides*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09

387. **Lined Seedeater** (*Sporophila lineola*) Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
388. **Yellow-bellied Seedeater** (*Sporophila nigricollis*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, Las Tapias 13.09
389. **Ruddy-breasted Seedeater** (*Sporophila minuta*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
390. **Large-billed Seed-Finch** (*Oryzoborus crassirostris*) One seen but detail of locality held back at David Ascanio's request, due to harassment of this species by trappers for the cagebird trade
391. **Thick-billed (Lesser) Seed-Finch** (*Oryzoborus angolensis*) One seen but detail of locality again held back at David Ascanio's request, for the same reason as above
392. **Plain-colored Seedeater** (*Catamenia inornata*) Páramo de Águila 14.09
393. **Black-faced Grassquit** (*Tiaris bicolor*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Chichiriviche 08.09
394. **Rusty Flower-piercer** (*Diglossa sittoides*) La Pedregosa 15.09
395. **White-sided Flower-piercer** (*Diglossa albilatera*) Las Tapias 13.09
396. **Mérida Flower-piercer** (*Diglossa gloriosa*) Páramo de Águila 14.09
397. **Bluish Flower-piercer** (*Diglossopsis caerulescens*) Las Tapias 13.09
398. **Masked Flower-piercer** (*Diglossopsis cyanea*) Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09
399. **Vermilion Cardinal** (*Cardinalis phoeniceus*) Baragua 10.09
400. **Buff-throated Saltator** (*Saltator maximus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
401. **Greyish Saltator** (*Saltator coerulescens*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
402. **Orinocan Saltator** (*Saltator orenocensis*) Quibor 11.09
403. **Streaked Saltator** (*Saltator striatipectus*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, La Sabaneta 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
404. **Ultramarine Grosbeak** (*Cyanocompsa brissonii*) N of Sanare 10.09
405. **Crested Oropendola** (*Psarocolius decumanus*) La Sabaneta 06.09, Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09, Altamira 13.09
406. **Russet-backed Oropendola** (*Psarocolius angustifrons*) Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, Yacambú 11.09, San Isidro 14.09
407. **Yellow-rumped Cacique** (*Cacicus cela*) Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09, Torunos 12.09
408. **Subtropical Cacique** (*Cacicus uropygialis*) San Isidro 14.09

409. **Yellow-backed Oriole** (*Icterus chrysater*) Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09, N of Sanare 10.09
410. **Yellow Oriole** (*Icterus nigrogularis*) Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Baragua 10.09
411. **Orange-crowned Oriole** (*Icterus auricapillus*) Posada La Arboleda 07.09
412. **Troupial** (*Icterus icterus*) Baragua 10.09, Acarigua 11.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
413. **Oriole Blackbird** (*Gymnomystax mexicanus*) Maracay 05.09, Posada La Arboleda 07.09, Posada La Arboleda 08.09, Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09
414. **Red-breasted Blackbird** (*Leistes militaris*) Hato Santa Maria 12.09
415. **Eastern Meadowlark** (*Sturnella magna*) Cerro La Misión 09.09, Hato Santa Maria 12.09, Hotel Moruco 15.09
416. **Carib Grackle** (*Quiscalus lugubris*) Maracay 05.09, Choroni 06.09, Boca de Aroa 07.09, Tucacas 09.09
417. **Shiny Cowbird** (*Molothrus bonariensis*) Maracay 04.09, Maracay 05.09, Tucacas 09.09

The following birds were heard but not seen:

1. **Little Tinamou** (*Crypturellus soui*) h Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09, h Altamira 13.09
2. **Crested Bobwhite** (*Colinus cristatus*) h Baragua 10.09
3. **Venezuelan Wood-Quail** (*Odontophorus columbianus*) h Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
4. **Scarlet-fronted Parakeet** (*Aratinga wagleri*) h Henri Pittier (Choroni Road) 06.09
5. **Lilac-tailed Parrotlet** (*Touit batavica*) extremely distant flight views of some calling birds Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
6. **Foothill (Roraima) Screech-Owl** (*Otus roraimae*) h Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 07.09
7. **Grey-fronted Dove** (*Leptotila rufaxilla*) h Acarigua 11.09
8. **Euler's Flycatcher** (*Lathrotriccus eulerei*) h Yacambú (Santa Crucita Lagoon) 10.09
9. **Pale-edged Flycatcher** (*Myiarchus cephalotes*) h El Ávila 18.09
10. **Black-faced Antthrush** (*Formicarius analis*) h Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09
11. **Plain-backed Antpitta** (*Grallaria haplonota*) h Henri Pittier (Rancho Grande) 05.09

12. **Grey-naped Antpitta** (*Grallaria griseonucha*) h Pico Humboldt Trail 16.09

Finally, the following birds were seen by one or more of David, Clive or Eleanor, but not by myself:

1. **Pale-bellied Hermit** (*Phaethornis anthophilus*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
2. **Buffy Hummingbird** (*Leucippus fallax*) Baragua 10.09
3. **Pauraque** (*Nyctidromus albicollis*) Cerro La Misión 09.09
4. **Ruddy Pigeon** (*Columba subvinacea*) San Isidro 14.09
5. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** (*Calidris pusilla*) Cerro Chichiriviche 08.09
6. **Golden-faced Tyrannulet** (*Zimmerius chrysops*) Altamira 13.09
7. **Andean Siskin** (*Carduelis spinescens*) Páramo de Águila 14.09
8. **Guira Tanager** (*Hemithraupis guira*) La Sabaneta 06.09
9. **Yellow-hooded Blackbird** (*Agelaius icterocephalus*) Maracay 04.09