

Northern Colombia
The Santa Marta Mountains & The Caribbean

15-22 January 2011

Tour leader: Nick Athanas

Report and photos by Nick Athanas

Photo right: The undescribed screech-owl endemic to the Santa Marta mountains.



While I have guided custom tours over the last few years in Colombia, this was our first set-departure tour, and it will be the first of many. It was a very smooth-running and easy tour with a great group of people. Flying into Barranquilla, I was surprised to see so much water during what should be a dry time of year. Whole areas south of the city had been inundated and there were lakes where there used to be farms, and cow pastures. Like other parts of the world, there had been tragic floods recently, and many local residents had been left homeless. Luckily, the rain stopped just before our tour and we enjoyed nice weather and good birding. The high water levels meant fewer shorebirds and waterbirds than normal, but the landbirds were very cooperative and we had a nice haul of Guajira and Santa Marta endemics.

Our tour started in the bustling industrial town of Barranquilla, which was playing host to an international junior tennis tournament, the Copa Barranquilla 2011, and our hotel was jam packed with hopeful and very fit young people carrying around oddly-shaped duffel bags full of gear. No chance for us to see any matches as we started our tour early next morning at a university campus on the outskirts of Barranquilla, waiting for the endemic Chestnut-winged Chachalacas to wake up. It didn't take long before we were enjoying views of a small flock perched up in front of a stadium. After looking at a few other birds like Bicolored Wren and Trinidad Euphonia, we drove back through the city and crossed the mighty Magdalena River, the longest in Colombia, to Salamanca Island, a narrow strip of land between the Caribbean sea and a vast system of freshwater lakes and marshes called Ciénaga Grande. We stopped at the national park HQ where a pair of Russet-throated Puffbirds were waiting for us, then birded some nearby mangroves, where we were accompanied by amazing hordes of Prothonotary Warblers; there were so many of them around that it was tough to filter through them all to find some of the other birds we were looking for! We had our first Black-crested Antshrikes here, as well as some mangrove-loving flycatchers like Panama Flycatcher and Northern Scrub-Flycatcher. There were a few Bicolored Conebills hiding amongst all the Prothonotaries, and a male Sapphire-throated Hummingbird put in a brief appearance.

We headed west along the island with it's abundance of waterbirds (we'd have more time to stop on the way back) and skirted the northern edge of the Santa Marta mountains. We stopped for lunch at a restaurant next to a river that had a nesting Common Black-Hawk, and had our first experience of the absurdly large portions that many Colombian restaurants serve. After lunch, we headed into the deserts of the Guajira Peninsula of far northern Colombia. Water levels at the Los Flamencos (Flamingoes)



Sanctuary were very high, and we saw just a single American Flamingo as well as a few other waterbirds like Roseate Spoonbill and Reddish Egret. In the cooler afternoon hours, we birded arid scrub near the reserve, finding our first Buffy Hummingbirds and White-whiskered Spinetails; in a departure for the usual situation, the hummer is very dull but the spinetail is absolutely beautiful! We also had some other neat birds like the very pretty White-fringed Antwren, Slender-billed Tyrannulet, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, and Red-billed Emerald. At dusk, we drove to the city of Riohacha where we spend the night and had a nice dinner at a seafood restaurant with the typical mountainous portions.

Next morning, we birded the desert scrub and woodland around the town of Camarones, starting off with the beautiful Orinoco Saltator and then quickly striking paydirt with the often difficult Chestnut Piculet. This cute little woodpecker was easy today and we saw at least five. Later in the morning, we finally got a glowing male Vermilion Cardinal (photo left), some weird looking Bare-eyed Pigeons, the scarce Glaucous Tanager, a few Rufous-vented Chachalacas that ran across the track in front of us, a little flock of Green-rumped Parrotlets, and others.



Chestnut Piculet

After another seafood feast, we drove back east to Tayrona National Park. Checking in to a nearby resort hotel proved to be a saga, but while I was dealing with it the rest of the group had Blue-and-yellow Macaws fly over and found an Orange-crowned Oriole. We finally made it to the park with a couple of hours of daylight left, in time to find a few birds like Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, and Yellow-breasted Flycatcher. We did find a Lance-tailed Manakin as it was getting dark, but definitely needed a better look at it.

We didn't have to worry – we were back in the park early next morning and heard the odd sounds of lekking manakins almost as soon as we got out of the van. We had to get a bit muddy crossing a stream, but it was well worth it, as we watched two male Lance-tailed Manakins leap-frogging over each other nonstop in a dizzying display for the rather bored-looking female perched nearby. Over and over they performed for her, but maybe she couldn't make up her mind, or was just teasing them because she could. We were certainly more impressed than she was, but those two guys probably

don't care that they won "bird of the trip" accolades. We saw a bunch of other nice birds including Gray-necked Wood-Rail, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Western Slaty-Antshrike, White-bellied Antbird, and Southern Bentbill, but it was a mammal that really made the morning – the very handsome Cotton-top Tamarin. This small monkey is endemic to northern Colombia and is considered one of the 25 most endangered primates in the world. Tayrona is THE place to see it, but we were very lucky considering how little time we had there.



Cotton-top Tamarin at Tayrona NP

We left Tayrona and started driving up into the foothills of the Santa Marta mountains, stopping at a stakeout for Black-backed Antshrike which showed brilliantly. We had lunch in the town of Minca at La Casona, a small hacienda that is being converted into a hotel by an old friend of mine, Miles McMullen, who used to live in Ecuador. The hotel should be open soon, and they already have humming feeders up, attracting a nice variety including Black-throated Mango, White-vented Plumeleteer, and Steely-vented Hummingbird. Miles gave us info on where to look for the rare Santa Marta Sabrewing that had been seen a few times recently on a nearby trail, and enduring the scorching heat, we gave it a try. Luck was with us today as we found it right where Miles said – a female, but we saw it well and it was a lifer for everyone. We also got a handsome Whooping Motmot (recently split from Blue-crowned) as well as a Rufous-capped Warbler. From Minca, we switched to 4WD vehicles for the very rough ride up to the lodge. A short stop en route got us the gaudy Golden-winged Sparrow, but after that we pretty much headed straight for the lodge, hoping to get there in time to see the antpitta. We arrived with plenty of time, only to learn from the lodge hosts that the antpitta had been very stubborn lately, and wasn't coming very often. We tried anyway, with no luck, but got our first Santa Marta Brush-Finches. There was still plenty of time – we were not going to give up on an antpitta without a fight!

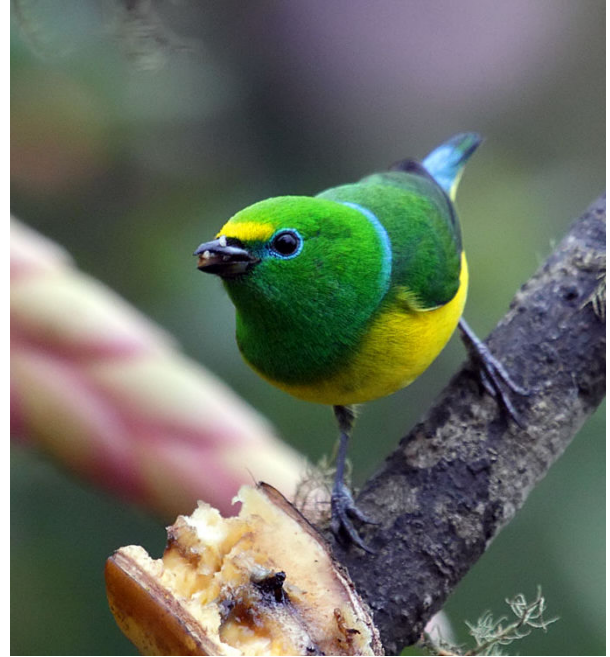
Next morning we rose very early and drove to the top of the ridge above the lodge. It's only about seven miles away but it takes an hour to get there! Many of the Santa Marta endemics are found in the stunted forest up here, but we were disappointed to find that the ridge was fogged in, and we were taunted by the soft whistles of a Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant calling invisibly nearby. The fog finally cleared but the bird was gone and we never had it close again. Fortunately there was good flock activity, and we enjoyed good views of target birds like Rusty-headed and Streak-capped Spinetails, Yellow-crowned Redstart (photo right), Santa Marta Warbler, and Black-cheeked Mountain-Tanager. A



Plushcap was a nice surprise and a very welcome sighting to some of the group who had missed it on previous trips in the Andes. We played around with Brown-rumped Tapaculo which some of the group saw reasonably well, but the Rufous Antpitta tricked us and ran across the road behind us while most of the group was looking in a gap off the road. We'd have another chance in a couple of days, so we headed down the road looking for other birds. A male White-tipped Quetzal was naturally a big hit, and we had some nice views of Emerald Toucanet, Golden-breasted Fruiteater, Blue-capped Tanager, and others, before returning to the lodge in time to watch the hummer feeders and the compost pile behind the lodge. Now watching a compost pile may not sound like much fun, but when a pair of Black-fronted Wood-Quail turned up, it suddenly became very popular and chairs were put out! See a video of it at this link: <http://bit.ly/eY7usX>. It also brought in Stripe-headed Brush-Finch, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, and Gray-breasted Wood-Wren. But admittedly, watching hummer feeders is more fun, and the male White-tailed Starfrontlet was hard to beat, even though the female Santa Marta Woodstar was perhaps a rarer bird. A new banana feeder also brought in a little flock of colorful Blue-naped Chlorophonias which everyone was trying to photograph. We decided not to feed the antpitta this afternoon, hoping it would be especially hungry tomorrow morning.



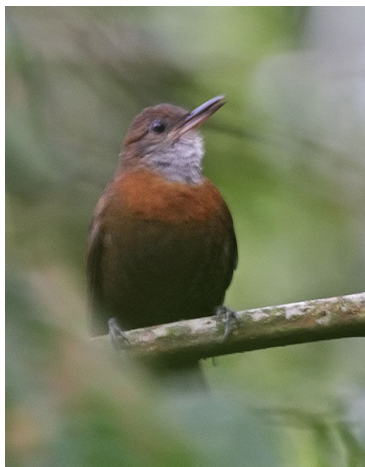
Two Black-fronted Wood-Quails feed out of the compost pile behind El Dorado Lodge.



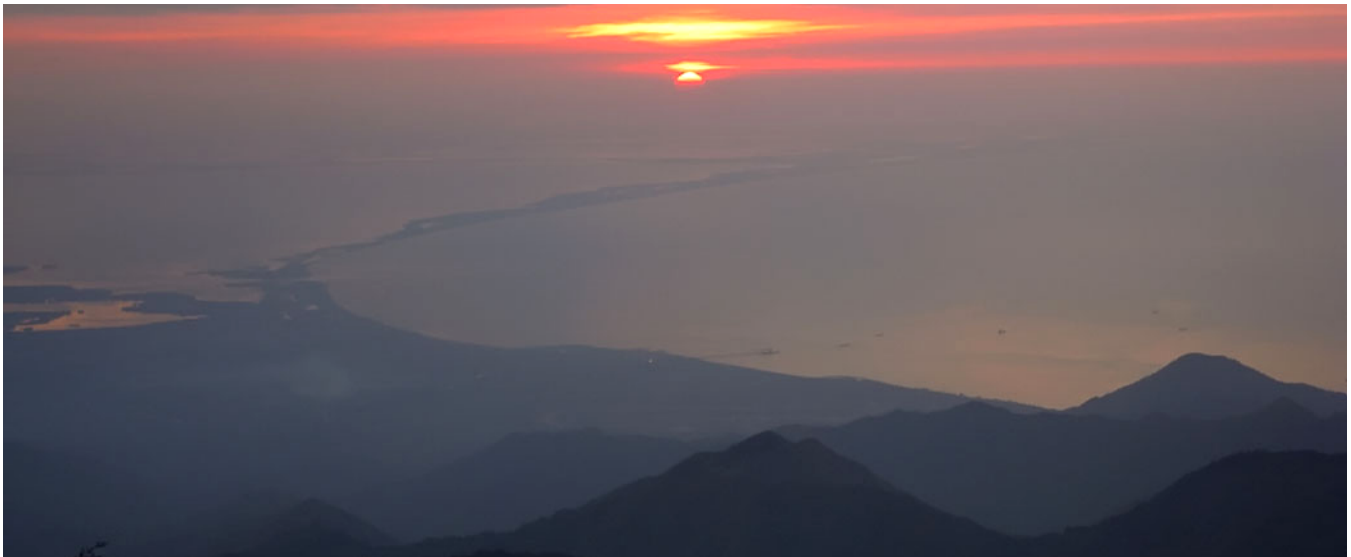
Two visitors to the feeders at El Dorado Lodge – a female Santa Marta Woodstar and a male Blue-naped Chlorophonia.

After dinner and the bird list, we went after the new soon-to-be-described screech-owl – check out the photo on the cover page. We got one calling back to us right behind the lodge, but it took close to half an hour to finally spot it in the dense undergrowth, but it was well worth it. Then a Mottled Owl started singing, and a few of us went after it and eventually got great views of one right by the road.

Next morning, we finally won a round against the Santa Marta Antpitta; after a few minutes waiting at the worm feeder after breakfast, one came hopping through, glanced at the feeder for a few seconds, and ran off into the bushes. It didn't eat anything, but I had no doubt it would be back later to scoff up those worms when no one was looking. We all had seen it well, so we headed off down the road looking for other things. It didn't take long to get a pair of spritely White-lored Warblers, and shortly afterwards we had a very responsive Gray-throated Leaf-tosser near the road. We kept leisurely down the road for the rest of the morning and some of the afternoon, finding our target endemics, Santa Marta Tapaculo and Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner, as well as other goodies like Rusty-breasted Antpitta, Groove-billed Toucanet, Coppery Emerald, and Black-hooded Tanager. We returned to the lodge in late afternoon to have some more time at the feeders and to just relax and enjoy the stunning views. The sunset over the Caribbean was truly unforgettable tonight!



A Gray-throated Leaf-tosser perches up near the road, and a Santa Marta Brush-Finch at the lodge feeders.



The view at sunset from El Dorado Lodge. The long strip of land is Salamanca Island.

We still needed a few birds from the higher elevations, so we once again endured the rough ride to the top of the ridge, but it was well worth it when two Rufous Antpittas were hopping around in the road on the way up; the race in the Santa Martas is likely to be split in the future as another endemic. It was beautifully clear morning, and we stopped briefly at a viewpoint to admire and photograph (below) the distant snow-covered 19,000 ft. summits of Pico Cristóbal Colón and Pico Simón Bolívar, the highest mountains in Colombia. While we were enjoying the magnificent view, a flock of five Santa Marta Parakeets screeched into a nearby tree; four of them must not have liked the look of us, because they flew away immediately, but luckily one hung around for everyone to get scope views. After a bit more birding up there (and better views of Brown-rumped Tapaculo), we returned to the lodge to check out, and started heading back down the mountains. A few quick stops on the way down got us a few new ones like Golden-olive Woodpecker and Rufous-breasted Wren, and we had another nice lunch at La

Casona in Minca before driving back to Barranquilla. After stopping a few times on Salamanca Island to have a look at the terns, shorebirds, herons, ducks, and other waterbirds, we arrived in the city shortly before dark. We celebrated a successful end to the tour by having a feast at a fantastic Cuban seafood restaurant just down the street from the hotel.





El Dorado Lodge

BIRD LIST

This list includes all the bird species that were recorded by at least one of the group, including the leader. Taxonomy and nomenclature follow: **Clements, James F. *The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World. Sixth Edition, 2007, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press***, including all updates through December 2010.

I have included annotations for many of the species, and all of the regional endemics and specialties.

Totals:

264 bird species seen
14 heard only

Abbreviations:

H=Heard only
(I)=Introduced species
(E)=Species endemic to Colombia
(smE)=Species endemic to the Santa Marta Mountains.

TINAMOUS

H Gray Tinamou

One was heard while we were calling in Mottled Owls at El Dorado.

DUCKS

Blue-winged Teal

Large numbers in the wetlands at Salamanca. A migrant to/from North America.

White-cheeked Pintail

A few small flocks at Salamanca.

GUANS, CHACHALACAS

Chestnut-winged Chachalaca (E)

Several seen on the first morning at a university campus near Barranquilla.

TINAMIDAE

Tinamus tao

ANATIDAE

Anas discors

A migrant to/from North America.

Anas bahamensis

CRACIDAE

Ortalis garrula

Rufous-vented Chachalaca

Three birds ran across the track in front of us at Camarones.

Band-tailed Guan

Seen a few times in the Santa Martas; they roosted near the lodge.

Sickle-winged Guan

Those in the front vehicle saw one on the side of the road as we drove down the top of the ridge.

NEW WORLD QUAIL**Black-fronted Wood-Quail**

Two birds came in to feed in the compost pile one afternoon at El Dorado Lodge - now THAT is the way to see wood-quail!

FLAMINGOS**American Flamingo**

Just a single flamingo in the reserve of the same name on the afternoon that we arrived at Camarones.

FRIGATEBIRDS**Magnificent Frigatebird****CORMORANTS AND SHAGS****Neotropic Cormorant****PELICANS****Brown Pelican****HERONS, EGRETS, AND BITTERNS****Fasciated Tiger-Heron**

A juvenile flushed off a stream as we were driving back down the mountains on the last full day.

Great Blue Heron

Surprisingly large numbers of them this year both at Salamanca and Los Flamencos. Usually they are outnumbered by Cocoli, but this year it was reversed.

Cocoli Heron**Great Egret****Snowy Egret****Little Blue Heron****Tricolored Heron****Reddish Egret****Cattle Egret****Striated Heron****IBISES AND SPOONBILLS****White Ibis****Roseate Spoonbill****NEW WORLD VULTURES****Black Vulture****Turkey Vulture****Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture****OSPREY****Osprey****HAWKS, EAGLES, AND KITES****Hook-billed Kite**

Probably guide-only. I scoped a very distant one at the restaurant we stopped at en route to Camarones.

White-tailed Kite**Snail Kite****Black-collared Hawk**

One bird was soaring over the mangroves at Isla de Salamanca.

Ortalis ruficauda***Penelope argyrotis colombiana******Chamaepetes goudotii sanctaemarthae*****ODONTOPHORIDAE*****Odontophorus atrifrons atrifrons*****PHOENICOPTERIDAE*****Phoenicopterus ruber*****FREGATIDAE*****Fregata magnificens*****PHALACROCORACIDAE*****Phalacrocorax brasilianus*****PELECANIDAE*****Pelecanus occidentalis*****ARDEIDAE*****Tigrisoma fasciatum******Ardea herodias******Ardea cocoi******Ardea alba******Egretta thula******Egretta caerulea******Egretta tricolor******Egretta rufescens******Bubulcus ibis******Butorides striata*****THRESKIORNITHIDAE*****Eudocimus albus******Platalea ajaja*****CATHARTIDAE*****Coragyps atratus******Cathartes aura******Cathartes burrovianus*****PANDIONIDAE*****Pandion haliaetus*****ACCIPITRIDAE*****Chondrohierax uncinatus******Elanus leucurus******Rostrhamus sociabilis******Busarellus nigricollis***

Common Black-Hawk
Harris's Hawk
Roadside Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Gray Hawk

FALCONS AND CARACARAS

Crested Caracara
Yellow-headed Caracara

RAILS, GALLINULES, AND COOTS

Gray-necked Wood-Rail

Two sauntered across the road in front of us at Tayrona.

Purple Gallinule

LIMPKIN

Limpkin

A single seen from the van not far from Camarones.

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS

Southern Lapwing
Black-bellied (Gray) Plover

STILTS AND AVOCETS

Black-necked Stilt

JACANAS

Wattled Jacana

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES

Spotted Sandpiper
Greater Yellowlegs
Willet

Lesser Yellowlegs

Whimbrel

Ruddy Turnstone

GULLS

Laughing Gull
Franklin's Gull
Lesser Black-backed Gull

We scoped a single bird at dusk at Los Flamencos, which looked to be a third-winter bird. A rare vagrant to South America, but it has been seen fairly regularly here since 2008.

TERNS

Gull-billed Tern
Caspian Tern
Royal Tern
Sandwich Tern

SKIMMERS

Black Skimmer

Ray saw one at Isla de Salamanca the first day we drove through it.

PIGEONS AND DOVES

Rock Pigeon (I)
Pale-vented Pigeon
Bare-eyed Pigeon

After seeing dozens of them flying by south of Camarones, we finally got a bird perched in the scope, so we could all see it's weird donut-shaped eyering.

Buteogallus anthracinus
Parabuteo unicinctus
Buteo magnirostris
Buteo platypterus
Buteo nitidus

FALCONIDAE

Caracara cheriway
Milvago chimachima

RALLIDAE

Aramides cajanea

Porphyrio martinica

ARAMIDAE

Aramus guarauna

CHARADRIIDAE

Vanellus chilensis
Pluvialis squatarola

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Himantopus mexicanus

JACANIDAE

Jacana jacana

SCOLOPACIDAE

Actitis macularius
Tringa melanoleuca
Tringa semipalmata
Tringa flavipes
Numenius phaeopus
Arenaria interpres

LARIDAE: LARINAE

Leucophaeus atricilla
Leucophaeus pipixcan
Larus fuscus

LARIDAE: STERNINAE

Gelochelidon nilotica
Hydroprogne caspia
Thalasseus maximus
Thalasseus sandvicensis

LARIDAE: RYNCHOPINAE

Rynchops niger

COLUMBIDAE

Columba livia
Patagioenas cayennensis
Patagioenas corensis

Band-tailed Pigeon
Eared Dove
Common Ground-Dove

H Ruddy Ground-Dove
Scaled Dove

We saw several of these cute relatives of the Inca Dove at Camarones.

White-tipped Dove
Lined Quail-Dove

Great luck with this shy species, as we had a pair feeding in the road about a kilometer below the lodge, then another bird in the road up near the top of the ridge on our second visit.

PARROTS

Santa Marta Parakeet (smE)

I thought we were going to miss this one when there was no sign of it on our first visit to the higher forest. Luckily we had a flock fly in and perch just shortly after we arrived after our second bone-jarring ride to the top.

Scarlet-fronted Parakeet

We only saw a single bird perched near the top of the ridge, but we saw several large flocks flying around lower down the mountain.

Brown-throated Parakeet

A common bird in the dry lowland areas, and our best views came from around Camarones.

Blue-and-yellow Macaw

The rest of the group saw a pair flew over the Mendihuaca Resort while I was dealing with the check-in hassles.

Green-rumped Parrotlet

A small flock disappeared into a tree near Camarones, and after a few minutes we finally found where two of them had perched for good scope views.

Orange-chinned Parakeet

Red-billed Parrot

Flight views only on a few occasions in the Santa Martas.

Scaly-naped Parrot

We saw a single bird perched early on our first morning in the upper parts of the El Dorado reserve.

CUCKOOS

Squirrel Cuckoo

H Striped Cuckoo

Greater Ani

A small flock was present in the mangroves at Isla de Salamanca.

Groove-billed Ani

OWLS

"Santa Marta" Screech-Owl (smE)

Excellent close views for those who went owling near El Dorado. This bird is in the process of being described as a new species.

Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl

Common in the desert scrub around Camarones. Imitating their toots is the easiest way to find many of the birds there, and eventually some of the owls come in too!

Mottled Owl

Three individuals (I suspect two adults and a juvenile) were calling just up the road from El Dorado lodge. We saw two of them, one of them very well, perched surprisingly low next to the road.

NIGHTJARS AND ALLIES

Band-winged Nightjar

The lead car flushed a few of these up off the road on both of our early-morning rides up to the top of the ridge at El Dorado.

Patagioenas fasciata
Zenaida auriculata
Columbina passerina
Columbina talpacoti
Columbina squammata

Leptotila verreauxi
Geotrygon linearis

PSITTACIDAE

Pyrrhura viridicata

Aratinga wagleri

Aratinga pertinax

Ara ararauna

Forpus passerinus

Brotogeris jugularis

Pionus sordidus saturatus

Amazona mercenaria

CUCULIDAE

Piaya cayana

Tapera naevia

Crotophaga major

Crotophaga sulcirostris

STRIGIDAE

Megascops sp. nov.

Glaucidium brasilianum

Ciccaba virgata

CAPRIMULGIDAE

Caprimulgus longirostris

SWIFTS

White-collared Swift

HUMMINGBIRDS

White-necked Jacobin

Brown Violetear

A single bird was visiting the feeders at El Dorado.

Green Violetear

Sparkling Violetear

Black-throated Mango

Blossomcrown (E)

Roger had a brief view of a bird that I believe was this species in a flowering bush by the side of the road. I only had glimpse of it shooting away, but it looked and sounded right. Unfortunately it did not come back. This bird is endemic to Colombia, but not to the Santa Martas.

Tyrian Metaltail

White-tailed Starfrontlet (smE)

This used to be a tough bird to see well, but now a male comes regularly to the feeders at the lodge. We also saw a couple of females higher up the mountain.

Mountain Velvetbreast

We saw a few females near the top of the ridge at El Dorado, where one seemed fascinated by the brake lights of one of the pickups!

Santa Marta Woodstar (smE)

A female came into the feeders several times one afternoon at El Dorado.

Red-billed Emerald

Several seen near Camarones.

Coppery Emerald

We saw one male feeding in roadside flowers a few kms below El Dorado Lodge.

Lazuline Sabrewing

A male briefly visited the El Dorado feeders the first afternoon.

Santa Marta Sabrewing (smE)

A female seen well near Minca, which we found thanks to the detailed directions from Miles. A rare bird which apparently makes local migrations that are still poorly known, but it seems to come downslope during the dry season. This was a lifer for all including me.

White-vented Plumeteer

A common visitor to the feeders at La Casona in Minca.

Violet-crowned Woodnymph

Perhaps the most common hummer in the region, but it stays away from the desert.

Buffy Hummingbird

Not the most beautiful hummer out there, and it's sandy colors match the desert it lives in. We saw several around Camarones.

Steely-vented Hummingbird

The most common hummer at the La Casona feeders.

Rufous-tailed Hummingbird

A few were visiting the La Casona feeders.

Sapphire-throated Hummingbird

A single male flew in and perched a few times near us in the mangroves at Salamanca, but unfortunately did not hang around long.

TROGONS

White-tipped Quetzal

A stunning male responded well along the side of the road fairly high up in the Santa Martas.

APODIDAE

Streptoprocne zonaris

TROCHILIDAE

Florisuga mellivora

Colibri delphinae

Colibri thalassinus

Colibri coruscans

Anthracothorax nigricollis

Anthocephala floriceps floriceps

Metallura tyrianthina

Coeligena phalerata

Lafresnaya lafresnayi liriopae

Chaetocercus astreans

Chlorostilbon gibsoni nitens

Chlorostilbon russatus

Campylopterus falcatus

Campylopterus phainopeplus

Chalybura buffonii

Thalurania colombica

Leucippus fallax

Amazilia saucerrottei

Amazilia tzacatl

Lepidopygia coeruleogularis

TROGONIDAE

Pharomachrus fulgidus festatus

MOTMOTS

Whooping (Blue-crowned) Motmot

We had one at the sabrewing spot near Minca. Formerly called Blue-crowned Motmot, but that name is now reserved for the birds from Mexico to Costa Rica after the recent five-way split.

H Broad-billed Motmot

KINGFISHERS

Ringed Kingfisher

Green Kingfisher

PUFFBIRDS

Russet-throated Puffbird

Everyone loved this one! A pair was perched at the park HQ at Isla de Salamance, and we had a few more around Camaromes, though not as well.

JACAMARS

Rufous-tailed Jacamar

TOUCANS

Emerald (Santa Marta) Toucanet

We had two nice views at El Dorado, including one in a fruiting tree at the lodge. Formerly considered a separate species endemic to the Santa Martas, and I hope it will be again!

Groove-billed (Yellow-billed) Toucanet

This one replaces the previous at lower elevations in the mountains, with much more yellow on the beak and green undertail coverts.

Collared Aracari

A small flock near Minca on our way up the mountains.

H Keel-billed Toucan

WOODPECKERS

Chestnut Piculet

It had been a major South American nemesis bird for me... The curse was finally broken in dramatic fashion as we had about five birds in our morning around Camarones!

Red-crowned Woodpecker

A common bird in the lowland areas.

Smoky-brown Woodpecker

Roger had one up on the ridge while the rest of us were trying to see a tapaculo.

H Red-rumped Woodpecker

Golden-olive Woodpecker

H Lineated Woodpecker

Crimson-crested Woodpecker

One male showed well in Tayrona.

OVENBIRDS

Gray-throated Leaf-tosser

A great response near the side of the road not far below El Dorado Lodge, perching up so that everyone could see it well.

Pale-legged Hornero

They were shy and mostly stayed out of sight, but some of the group had it near Camarones.

Pale-breasted Spinetail

A single bird flew up into a tree in response to playback on our last morning in the foothills.

Rusty-headed Spinetail (smE)

A very common voice in the higher elevations, but sometimes hard to see. I think just about everyone had a good look in the end.

White-whiskered Spinetail

This is the coolest spinetail by far! It's common in the desert scrub and we all saw it well near Camarones.

MOMOTIDAE

Momotus subrufescens

Electron platyrhynchum

ALCEDINIDAE

Megaceryle torquata

Chloroceryle americana

BUCCONIDAE

Hypnelus ruficollis ruficollis

GALBULIDAE

Galbula ruficauda

RAMPHASTIDAE

Aulacorhynchus prasinus lautus

Aulacorhynchus sulcatus calorhynchus

Pteroglossus torquatus

Ramphastos sulfuratus

PICIDAE

Picumnus cinnamomeus

Melanerpes rubricapillus

Picoides fumigatus

Veniliornis kirkii

Colaptes rubiginosus alleni

Dryocopus lineatus

Campephilus melanoleucos

FURNARIIDAE: FURNARIINAE

Sclerurus albigularis propinquus

Furnarius leucopus longirostris

Synallaxis albescens

Synallaxis fuscorufa

Synallaxis candei

Streak-capped Spinetail (smE?)

Nice views of this arboreal spinetail in mixed flocks near the ridgetop. There is one odd record from the Sierra de Perijá in Venezuela, but until there are more sightings I like to consider it a Santa Marta endemic.

Yellow-chinned Spinetail

A pair in the mangroves at Salamanca.

Montane Foliage-gleaner**Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner (smE)**

With a bit of work we finally saw this well a few kilometers below the lodge, and heard it again near Minca. Recently split from Ruddy Foliage-gleaner, though it does not seem to be particularly closely related to that species.

WOODCREEPERS**Plain-brown Woodcreeper****Strong-billed Woodcreeper**

A pair of these hulking woodcreepers were probing bromeliads next to the road near the top of the ridge.

Straight-billed Woodcreeper**Cocoa Woodcreeper**

We had a few in Tayrona.

Streak-headed Woodcreeper**Montane Woodcreeper****TYPICAL ANTBIRDS****Black-crested Antshrike**

A very handsome bird! They were easy to see in the dry woodland around Camarones and in the mangroves.

Barred Antshrike**Western Slaty-Antshrike****Black-backed Antshrike**

A pair at point-blank range in the foothills below Minca. A rather scarce and local species restricted to N Colombia and NW Venezuela.

Slaty Antwren**White-fringed Antwren**

This pretty antwren was common around Camarones.

Long-tailed Antbird

A few of us saw one in a roadside thicket in the middle elevations.

White-bellied Antbird

It was common by voice at Tayrona, but it took a while to find a responsive pair. Got it in the end.

ANTPITTAS**Santa Marta Antpitta (smE)**

One bird seen at the worm feeder on our second morning at El Dorado.

Rufous Antpitta

Most missed it the first trip to the top of the ridge, but those who went back up two days later had great views of two birds hopping around in the road at dawn. There are apparently several splits coming our way in what is now considered Rufous Antpitta, and this one should be one of them.

Rusty-breasted Antpitta

Great views of one singing bird right next to the road in the middle elevations below the reserve.

TAPACULOS**Santa Marta Tapaculo (smE)**

Typical tapaculo behavior - those who were looking in the right place at the right time had a decent look.

Cranioleuca hellmayri***Certhiaxis cinnamomeus******Anabacerthia striaticollis anxia******Automolus rufipectus*****FURNARIIDAE: DENDROCOLAPTINAE*****Dendrocincla fuliginosa******Xiphocolaptes promeropirhynchus sanctaemartae******Dendroplex picus******Xiphorhynchus susurrans******Lepidocolaptes souleyetii******Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger sanctaemartae*****THAMNOPHILIDAE*****Sakesphorus canadensis******Thamnophilus doliatus******Thamnophilus atrinucha******Thamnophilus melanonotus******Myrmotherula schisticolor******Formicivora grisea intermedia******Drymophila caudata******Myrmeciza longipes*****GRALLARIIDAE*****Grallaria bangsi******Grallaria rufula spatiator******Grallaricula f. ferrugineipectus*****RHINOCRYPTIDAE*****Scytalopus sanctaemartae***

Brown-rumped Tapaculo (smE)

Replaces the previous in the higher elevations. We had to try a few times, but I think everyone got it in the end.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS**Brown-capped Tyrannulet**

A pair responded well to playback in Tayrona.

Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet**White-throated Tyrannulet****Mouse-colored Tyrannulet****Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet****Forest Elaenia****Greenish Elaenia****Yellow-bellied Elaenia****Mountain Elaenia**

Some of the group had a brief view in the higher elevations.

Olive-striped Flycatcher**Ochre-bellied Flycatcher****H Sepia-capped Flycatcher****Northern Scrub-Flycatcher****Slender-billed Tyrannulet**

This species is endemic to the deserts of northern Colombia and NW Venezuela. They were common and easy to see around Camarones.

Pale-tipped Tyrannulet

We had a single bird respond well near Camarones, where it is outnumbered by the similar Slender-billed.

Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant

One bird seen around Camarones, with others heard in the foothills.

Southern Bentbill

One came in at Tayrona, probably responding to my playback of Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, which did not come in...

Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant**Black-throated Tody-Tyrant**

One in a little marsh just outside of Camarones.

H Common Tody-Flycatcher**Yellow-breasted (Ochre-lored) Flycatcher****Cinnamon Flycatcher**

A rather distinctive-looking endemic subspecies to the Santa Martas.

Vermilion Flycatcher**Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant****H Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant (smE)**

Lost in the fog on our first morning up top, and never close on our second. Too bad...

Pied Water-Tyrant

One in a little marsh just outside of Camarones.

Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant

One seen in the higher elevations. To me it's song sounds a little different from that of the Andean races, but probably not different enough to suggest a split.

Cattle Tyrant**H Dusky-capped Flycatcher****Panama Flycatcher**

One in the mangroves at Salamanca.

H Great Crested Flycatcher**Brown-crested Flycatcher****Great Kiskadee****Scytalopus latebricola****TYRANNIDAE****Ornithion brunneicapillus****Camptostoma obsoletum****Mecocerculus leucophrys****Phaeomyias murina****Tyrannulus elatus****Myiopagis gaimardii****Myiopagis viridicata****Elaenia flavogaster****Elaenia frantzii browni****Mionectes olivaceus galbinus****Mionectes oleagineus****Leptopogon amaurocephalus****Sublegatus arenarum****Inezia tenuirostris****Inezia caudata****Atalotriccus pilaris****Oncostoma olivaceum****Hemitriccus margaritaceiventer****Hemitriccus granadensis lehmanni****Todirostrum cinereum****Tolmomyias flaviventris aurulentus****Pyrrhomyias cinnamomeus assimilis****Pyrocephalus rubinus****Myiotheretes striaticollis****Myiotheretes pernix****Fluvicola pica****Ochthoeca diadema jesupi****Machetornis rixosa****Myiarchus tuberculifer****Myiarchus panamensis****Myiarchus crinitus****Myiarchus tyrannulus****Pitangus sulphuratus**

Boat-billed Flycatcher
Social Flycatcher
Golden-crowned Flycatcher
Streaked Flycatcher
Tropical Kingbird
Gray Kingbird

A pair interrupted our lunch on the beach at Los Flamencos.

COTINGAS

Golden-breasted Fruiteater

We saw several in mixed species flocks in the middle elevations.

MANAKINS

White-bearded Manakin

Lance-tailed Manakin

This got the vote for "bird of the trip" thanks to the amazing lekking display of two males that we got to see at close range in Tayrona.

TITYRAS AND ALLIES

H Cinereous Becard

VIREOS

Brown-capped Vireo

Scrub Greenlet

One bird came in to playback near Camarones.

CROWS, JAYS, AND MAGPIES

Black-chested Jay

Very handsome! A small flock was seen at the base of the mountains.

SWALLOWS

Blue-and-white Swallow

Southern Rough-winged Swallow

Gray-breasted Martin

Cliff Swallow

WRENS

Bicolored Wren

First seen at the university, and then a few more times in the lowland areas.

Rufous-breasted Wren

We saw this very pretty wren in some roadside scrub in the foothills.

Rufous-and-white Wren

One singing bird was seen in Tayrona NP, where it is outnumbered by the next species.

Buff-breasted Wren

First seen near Camarones, but they were ridiculously common and easy to see at Tayrona.

House Wren

Gray-breasted Wood-Wren (lower)

Gray-breasted Wood-Wren (upper)

Two subspecies occur in the Santa Marta range. The one occurring in the higher elevations sounds a little different to me, and I wonder if it might better be treated as a distinct species.

GNATCATCHERS

Tropical Gnatcatcher

THRUSHES AND ALLIES

H Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush

Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush

One was visiting the compost pile behind El Dorado Lodge.

Yellow-legged Thrush

One male was spotted singing in the top of a tree at the middle elevations.

Megarynchus pitangua

Myiozetetes similis

Myiodynastes chrysocephalus

Myiodynastes maculatus

Tyrannus melancholicus

Tyrannus dominicensis

COTINGIDAE

Pipreola aureopectus decora

PIPRIDAE

Manacus manacus

Chiroxiphia lanceolata

TITYRIDAE

Pachyramphus rufus

VIREONIDAE

Vireo leucophrys

Hylophilus flavipes

CORVIDAE

Cyanocorax affinis

HIRUNDINIDAE

Pygochelidon cyanoleuca

Stelgidopteryx ruficollis

Progne chalybea

Petrochelidon pyrrhonota

TROGLODYTIDAE

Campylorhynchus griseus

Pheugopedius rutilus laetus

Thryophilus rufalbus

Cantorchilus leucotis

Troglodytes aedon atopus

Henicorhina leucophrys bangsi

Henicorhina leucophrys anachoreta

Troglodytes aedon atopus

Henicorhina leucophrys bangsi

Henicorhina leucophrys anachoreta

POLIOPTILIDAE

Polioptila plumbea

TURDIDAE

Catharus aurantirostris sierrae

Catharus fuscater sanctaemartae

Turdus flavipes

Pale-breasted Thrush

Black-hooded Thrush

A family was feeding in a fruiting tree next to El Dorado Lodge one afternoon.

Great Thrush

White-necked Thrush

MOCKINGBIRDS

Tropical Mockingbird

NEW WORLD WARBLERS

Tennessee Warbler

Tropical Parula

Yellow Warbler

Blackburnian Warbler

Black-and-white Warbler

American Redstart

Prothonotary Warbler

Huge numbers of these spend the winter in the mangroves of northern Colombia.

Northern Waterthrush

Slate-throated Redstart

Yellow-crowned Redstart (smE)

A common endemic of the higher elevations.

White-lored Warbler (smE)

Endemic to middle elevations of the Santa Martas. We had our best looks along the road just below the lodge.

Rufous-capped Warbler

Santa Marta Warbler (smE)

This is the least common of the three endemic wood-warblers, and only occurs at higher elevations. We saw it well on two occasions on our first trip up to the top of the ridge.

BANANAQUIT

Bananaquit

TANAGERS AND ALLIES

Bicolored Conebill

There were at least three birds in the mangroves at Salamanca, though they were often hard to pick out among the hordes of Prothonotary Warblers that were always around.

Plushcap

We saw single bird moving with a mixed flock in a bamboo patch in the higher elevations of the mountains.

Gray-headed Tanager

White-lined Tanager

Crimson-backed Tanager

A striking species, and quite common at Tayrona and the lower elevations of the Santa Martas.

Blue-gray Tanager

Glaucous Tanager

A very similar species to Blue-gray Tanager, but with a gray head. It is scarce in drier habitats of far northern Colombia and Northern Venezuela. We chased one around for a while south of Camarones and finally everyone had a nice view.

Palm Tanager

Blue-capped Tanager

At least two in mixed flocks not far above El Dorado Lodge.

Black-cheeked Mountain-Tanager (smE)

We saw lots of them on our first visit to the higher elevations. Sometimes called Santa Marta Mountain-Tanager. A proposal to lump this species with Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager A. lacrymosus of the Andes was emphatically rejected by the SACC.

Turdus leucomelas

Turdus olivater sanctaemartae

Turdus fuscater cacozelus

Turdus albicollis

MIMIDAE

Mimus gilvus

PARULIDAE

Oreothlypis peregrina

Parula pitiayumi

Dendroica petechia

Dendroica fusca

Mniotilta varia

Setophaga ruticilla

Protonotaria citrea

Parkesia noveboracensis

Myioborus miniatus sanctaemartae

Myioborus flavivertex

Basileuterus conspicillatus

Basileuterus rufifrons

Basileuterus basilicus

COEREBIDAE

Coereba flaveola

THRAUPIDAE

Conirostrum bicolor

Catamblyrhynchus diadema

Eucometis penicillata

Tachyphonus rufus

Ramphocelus dimidiatus

Thraupis episcopus

Thraupis glaucocolpa

Thraupis palmarum

Thraupis cyanocephala margaritae

Anisognathus melanogenys

Bay-headed Tanager
Black-capped Tanager
Black-headed Tanager

Tangara gyrola
Tangara heinei
Tangara cyanoptera

This distinctive Tangara was highly desired by some of the group, but it wasn't until very late in the trip that we finally got a pair moving with a mixed species flock in the foothills.

Swallow Tanager
Streaked Saltator
Grayish Saltator
Orinocan Saltator

Tersina viridis griseescens
Saltator striatipectus
Saltator coerulescens
Saltator orenocensis

A beautiful bird restricted to drier parts of northern South America - we saw several of them during our morning of birding around Camarones.

Buff-throated Saltator

Saltator maximus

SPARROWS, SEEDEATERS

EMBERIZIDAE

Blue-black Grassquit
Gray Seedeater

Volatinia jacarina
Sporophila intermedia

A few at our lunch stop on the first day and at the Mendihuaca.

Thick-billed Seed-Finch
Dull-colored Grassquit

Oryzoborus funereus
Tiaris obscurus

Close views of an especially dull (but singing) bird a few km below El Dorado.

Black-faced Grassquit

Tiaris bicolor

A single bird at Camarones, though the appearance of our first White-fringed Antwren at the same time caused most of the group to miss it. I admit I would have picked the antwren under those circumstances too!

Rusty Flowerpiercer

Diglossa sittoides

A male was working the flowers at the little shop with the big stereo not far from the lodge.

White-sided Flowerpiercer

Diglossa albilatera

Constantly in the flower bushes around El Dorado lodge.

Santa Marta Brush-Finch (smE)

Atlapetes melanocephalus

Probably the easiest of the Santa Marta endemics to see. We saw them just about everywhere, and one was even visiting the banana feeder at the lodge.

Pileated Finch

Coryphospingus pileatus

Golden-winged Sparrow

Arremon schlegeli

A gorgeous sparrow that is uncommon and local in northern Colombia and Venezuela. We nailed one in the coffee plantations above Minca.

Stripe-headed Brush-Finch

Arremon torquatus basilicus

*One was coming in the compost pile behind El Dorado Lodge, which was fortunate since we didn't see it elsewhere. A recent paper splits *A. torquatus* into no fewer than eight species, and it appears to be on its way to being accepted by the checklist committee. That will make it another Santa Marta endemic species, but I don't know what the new English name will be.*

Rufous-collared Sparrow

Zonotrichia capensis

CARDINALS AND ALLIES

CARDINALIDAE

Summer Tanager

Piranga rubra

Vermilion Cardinal

Cardinalis phoeniceus

Good views of a male south of Camarones, and Ray also saw a female. It's pretty similar to the Northern Cardinal of North America, but has a black bill. It's restricted to deserts of northern Colombia and northern Venezuela.

Golden-bellied Grosbeak

Pheucticus chrysogaster

Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Pheucticus ludovicianus

TROUPIALS AND ALLIES

ICTERIDAE

Great-tailed Grackle

Quiscalus mexicanus

Carib Grackle

Quiscalus lugubris

Like a miniature Great-tailed Grackle. They were common around Camarones.

Yellow-backed Oriole

Two birds were feeding in a flowering tree along the side of the road a few kms below El Dorado.

Orange-crowned Oriole

Some of the group saw one at the Mendihuaca and at Tayrona.

Venezuelan Troupial

Two birds flew by at our lunch stop en route to Camarones, but most did not see it.

Yellow Oriole

Crested Oropendola

SISKINS, EUPHONIAS

Trinidad Euphonia

A pair near "Chachalaca University" on our first morning, and also heard near Camarones.

Thick-billed Euphonia

Blue-naped Chlorophonia

These beautiful little birds now come into banana feeders at El Dorado lodge, making them super-easy to see. This is a fairly distinctive subspecies endemic to the Santa Martas, with a yellow forehead and a green (not blue) back.

Lesser Goldfinch

Icterus chrysater

Icterus auricapillus

Icterus icterus

Icterus nigrogularis

Psarocolius decumanus

FRINGILLIDAE

Euphonia trinitatis

Euphonia laniirostris

Chlorophonia cyanea psittacina

Spinus psaltria

MAMMAL LIST

Venezuelan Red Howler *Alouatta seniculus*

Cottontop Tamarin *Saguinus oedipus*

Red-tailed Squirrel *Sciurus granatensis*

Central American Agouti *Dasyprocta punctata*