

Trip Report: Caracas and Parque Nacional El Ávila, Venezuela

(20th – 25th April, 2015)



This visit to Caracas represented my first opportunity since 2009 to put our copy of Hilty's 'Birds of Venezuela' to good use whilst re-familiarizing myself with the local birdlife. Due to work commitments and security constraints in Caracas my birding activities were, however, limited to fleeting opportunities from the office balcony, plus an excellent morning with Phil Gunson and our driver Lucas at Los Venados in PN El Ávila for some 'real' (and safe) birding.



*Painted Parakeets (Hilty's "Venezuelan Parakeet", *Pyrrhura emma*); with Phil [both at Los Venados, PN El Ávila]:*

The extended dry-season in the Caracas region had left the city and lower reaches of El Ávila rather dry. Nonetheless, the trees behind the office in Las Mercedes proved to be quite birdy, and it was certainly a pleasure to share my sightings there with colleagues whilst we enjoyed an occasional *café marron*. Our dawn through mid-morning visit on Saturday to Los Venados on the flanks of El Ávila was a relaxed and productive conclusion – we encountered 43 species, representing the bulk of my week's total of 57 species. Highlights at Los Venados included best-ever, close-up views of a half dozen Painted Parakeets (the endemic subspecies that is split by Hilty as Venezuelan Parakeet) and several lovely tanagers feeding at low fruiting bushes. Of course, in order to minimize risks I had brought only binoculars and a point and shoot camera with me, so I was unable to capture photographs that do full justice to these special parakeets!



Los Venados, PN El Ávila

1. Bird Trip List¹

Confirmed personal sightings only for DJS – excludes birds heard only unless otherwise indicated. As field guide I used Hilty's 'Birds of Venezuela'. Birds in the trip list are identified as per 'The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World', Cornell, 2007 with updates through December 2010 (online version 6.5). Locations as follows:

O = Office balcony, Las Mercedes, at an altitude of ~ 900m ASL, early-mornings and late-afternoons of April 20th-24th

LV = Los Venados, PN El Ávila at an altitude of ~ 1400m ASL, from dawn to mid-morning of April 25th

GALLIFORMES: Cracidae

Rufous-vented Chachalaca, *Ortalis ruficauda* [O; LV] *:

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Cathartidae

Black Vulture, *Coragyps atratus* [O]:

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae

Roadside Hawk, *Buteo magnirostris* [O]:

COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae

Ruddy Pigeon, *Patagioenas subvinacea* [LV]:

Ruddy Ground-Dove, *Columbina talpacoti* [O; LV]:

PSITTACIFORMES: Psittacidae

Chestnut-fronted Macaw, *Ara severus* [O]:

Blue-and-yellow Macaw, *Ara ararauna* [O]:

Painted ("Venezuelan") Parakeet, *Pyrrhura picta emma* [LV] *:

Green-rumped Parrotlet, *Forpus passerinus* [O]:

APODIFORMES: Trochilidae

Violet-fronted Brilliant, *Heliodoxa leadbeateri* [LV]:

Glittering-throated Emerald, *Amazilia fimbriata* [O]:

PICIFORMES: Ramphastidae

Groove-billed Toucanet, *Aulacorhynchus sulcatus* **E** [LV]:

PICIFORMES: Picidae

Red-crowned Woodpecker, *Melanerpes rubricapillus* [O; LV]:

Golden-olive Woodpecker, *Colaptes rubiginosus* [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Furnariidae

Crested Spinetail, *Cranioleuca subcristata* [O; LV]:

Plain Xenops, *Xenops minutus* [LV]:

Olivaceous Woodcreeper, *Sittasomus griseicapillus* [LV]:

Montane Woodcreeper, *Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger* [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Thamnophilidae

Barred Antshrike, *Thamnophilus doliatus* [O]:

PASSERIFORMES: Formicariidae

Short-tailed Antthrush, *Chamaeza campanisona* **beard only** [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Tyrannidae

Yellow-bellied Elaenia, *Elaenia flavogaster* [O]:

Common Tody-Flycatcher, *Todirostrum cinereum* [O]:

Yellow-olive Flycatcher, *Tolmomyias sulphurescens* [O] *:

Bran-colored Flycatcher, *Myiophobus fasciatus* [O]:

Dusky-capped Flycatcher, *Myiarchus tuberculifer* [LV]:

Pale-edged Flycatcher, *Myiarchus cephalotes* [LV]:

¹ **First sighting ever for DJS**; **E** = Venezuela endemic species; * = photo available

Great Kiskadee, *Pitangus sulphuratus* [O]:
Social Flycatcher, *Myiozetetes similis* [O]:
Tropical Kingbird, *Tyrannus melancholicus* [O; LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Tityridae
Chestnut-crowned Becard, *Pachyramphus castaneus* [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Vireonidae
Brown-capped Vireo, *Vireo leucophrys* [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae
Green (“Inca”) Jay, *Cyanocorax yncas guatimalensis* [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae
Blue-and-white Swallow, *Pygochelidon cyanoleuca* [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Polioptilidae
Long-billed Gnatwren, *Ramphocaenus melanurus* *heard only* [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae
Yellow-legged Thrush, *Turdus flavipes* [LV]:
Pale-breasted Thrush, *Turdus leucomelas* [LV]:
Spectacled Thrush, *Turdus nudigenis* [O; LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Parulidae
Tropical Parula, *Parula pitiayumi* [O; LV]:
Blackpoll Warbler, *Dendroica striata* [LV]:
American Redstart, *Setophaga ruticilla* [LV]:
Slate-throated Redstart (“Whitestart”), *Myioborus miniatus* [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Coerebidae
Bananaquit, *Coereba flaveola* [O; LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Thraupidae
Fulvous-headed Tanager, *Thlypopsis fulviceps* [LV]:
Blue-gray Tanager, *Thraupis episcopus* [O; LV]:
Blue-capped Tanager, *Thraupis cyanocephala* [LV]:
Speckled Tanager, *Tangara guttata* [LV]:
Bay-headed Tanager, *Tangara gyrola* [LV]:
Black-headed Tanager, *Tangara cyanoptera* [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Emberizidae
Greyish Saltator, *Saltator coerulescens* [O; LV]:
Yellow-bellied Seedeater, *Sporophila nigricollis* [O]:
Ochre-breasted Brush-Finch, *Atlapetes semirufus* [LV]:
Rufous-collared Sparrow, *Zonotrichia capensis* [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Cardinalidae
Hepatic Tanager, *Piranga flava* [LV]:
White-winged Tanager, *Piranga leucoptera* [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Icteridae
Shiny Cowbird, *Molothrus bonariensis* [O; LV]:
Crested Oropendola, *Psarocolius decumanus* *heard only* [LV]:

PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae
Lesser Goldfinch, *Spinus psaltria* [LV]:

Total 57 confirmed species for the trip (including 1 Venezuelan endemic as per <http://avibase.bsc-eoc.org> and 3 heard only), of which none were ‘lifers’ for DJS.