

Trip Report: Western-Central Panama
(Including day trips around El Valle de Antón)
October 31st – November 4th 2012

During this, my second, visit to Panama I spent four nights at the Canopy Lodge¹ in El Valle de Antón which lies within a large, verdant bowl formed by an extinct volcano. The region is located some 2 hours drive west of the Panama Canal and enjoys a pleasant climate thanks to the altitude of ~600m ASL. Onsite birding in the extensive gardens is enhanced by the opportunity for relaxed viewing of species attracted to several feeding tables laden with ample supplies of bananas, as well as several hummingbird feeders that attract hummingbirds by day, and tiny Orange Nectar Bats by night. Small streams run through the grounds attracting bathing tanagers and warblers in the middle of the day, whilst a strongly flowing, boulder strewn river borders the lodge and provides a constant background soundtrack.



Panama Flycatcher [near Juan Hombron in the Pacific lowlands]

The lodge's location provides easy access (~15 to 60 minutes drive in a lodge 4WD or minibus) to a variety of birding habitat between sea level and ~1,100m ASL, with some of the nearer sites also being eminently accessible on foot from the lodge. The combination of very good accommodation, food and enthusiastic guests, together with on-site birding around the lodge grounds and guided trips to four nearby sites made for a highly enjoyable and relaxing long weekend.

¹ Canopy Lodge is part of the Canopy Tower family (see www.canopytower.com) that includes the Canopy Tower near to the canal where I stayed during my previous trip.

In addition to dawn and dusk birding around the lodge grounds, I participated in three days worth of trips with 3 fellow guests and a guide from the lodge. Our first full day was spent exploring a variety of lowlands habitats along the Pacific coast, the second day was split between a morning and afternoon on two different mid-altitude 4WD tracks less than 15 minutes drive from the lodge, and the final day was spent searching for higher altitude forest specialties some 45 minutes drive from the lodge. We experienced occasional rain on all three days, but this was not a major impediment to our birding, although on the final day our lunch break was significantly extended when an impressive thunderstorm caused flooding of the small rivers flowing through the upper elevation forest that we were visiting.



Red-crowned Ant-Tanager [Canopy Lodge]

Although I only saw 22 lifers amongst the total of 179 bird species identified during my trip, these did include highlights such as: Black-crowned Antpitta seen hopping around in the dark and mossy forest at Altos del María; a pair of endemic Veraguan Mango's feeding at flowering trees near to the Pacific coast; a Panama Flycatcher also seen near to the Pacific coast (I must admit to taking particular pleasure in seeing species named after the place being visited!); and a male Snowcap seen feeding high in a tree and then perched at eye level at Altos del María. Other interesting species seen included a pair of Tody Motmots (just before a rain storm along the El Mecano Road) and White-tipped Sicklebills (on two occasions - one at a night-time roost perch beside the El Macho Cascada at Canopy Adventure and another clinging to low flowers where it was feeding at Altos del María). Several of the regions target species eluded me, or we did not have time to visit their habitat during these three days. In fact there is a week's worth of standard tours on the regular schedule run by the lodge, including additional mid- and upper-elevation locations and the Caribbean slope, so there remains much for me to see in the area. A return trip in pursuit of the Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo, Orange-breasted Trogon and a whole host of Caribbean slope specialities is clearly justified! Mammal sightings included three species of squirrel and the Orange Nectar Bats that visited the lodge's hummingbird feeders around (our) dinnertime each evening. Reptile sightings included several Basilisk Lizards and a snake biting the tail off a lizard as it fled up a tree!



Straight-billed Woodcreeper [near Juan Hombron in the Pacific lowlands]; Clay-colored Thrush [Canopy Lodge]



Tufted Flycatcher [Altos del María]; Rufous Motmot [Canopy Lodge]



Rufous-capped Warbler [Canopy Lodge]



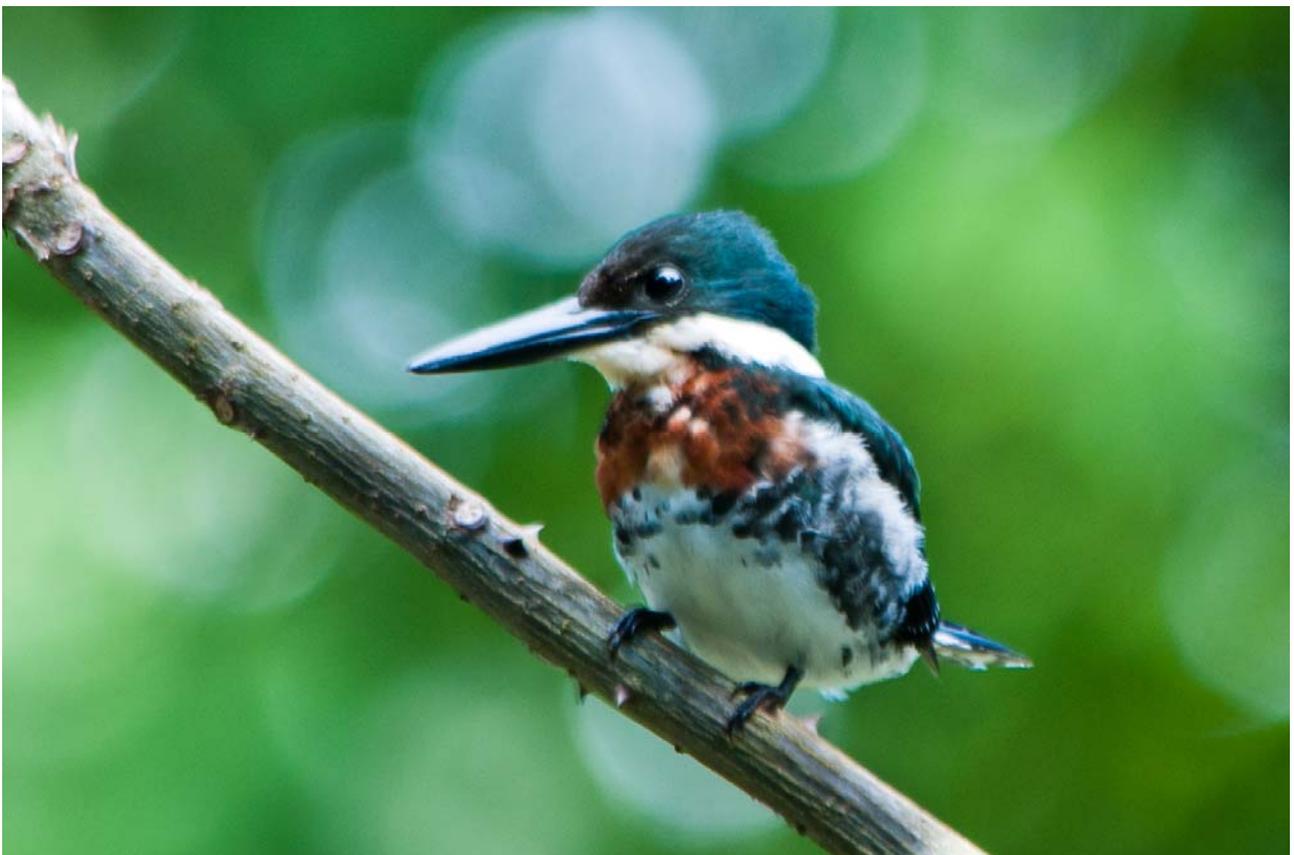
Scaly-crested Pygmy-Tyrant; Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer [both along Las Minas Trail]



Veraguan mango (male & female) [near Juan Hombron in the Pacific lowlands]



Thick-billed Euphonia [Canopy Lodge]



Green Kingfisher [Canopy Lodge]

1. Bird Trip List²

Confirmed personal sightings only for DJS – excludes birds heard only unless otherwise indicated. As field guide I used ‘The Birds of Panama: A Field Guide’ by George R. Angehr and Robert Dean, 2010 - which contained all of the species encountered. Some names have been updated since this guide was published, so 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 where species seen in sequence of travel:

CL = Canopy Lodge (at ca. 600m altitude) near to the town of El Valle de Antón, including sightings around the lodge gardens, at the fruit feeder tables and along the river running through the property (principally late-afternoon on October 31st, plus early-morning and lunch time on November 2nd). Weather was a mixture of sunshine, cloud and occasional rain.

PL = Pacific lowlands around Juan Hombron, Playa Santa Clara and El Chiru (all near sea level), including dry Pacific forest, flooded rice fields and nearby beaches (full day on November 1st). Predominantly dry and sunny weather.

LMT = Las Minas Trail (a 10 minute drive up the road from the Canopy Lodge, at ca. 800m altitude), including cloud forest and open grassland (morning of November 2nd). Early-morning mist followed by predominantly dry and sunny weather.

EMR = El Mecano Road (a 20 minute drive from the Canopy Lodge to the far side of El Valle de Antón at ca. 700m altitude), including forest patches and open grassland (afternoon of November 2nd). Heavy rain storms interrupted our birding late in the day!

CA = Canopy Adventure (a 5 minute drive up the road from the Canopy Lodge, at ca. 650m altitude) near to the Cascada El Macho (dusk on November 2nd). A successful ‘one-bird mission’ to see a roosting White-tipped Sicklebill before complete darkness and heavy rain descended upon us.

AdM = Altos del María (a ~45 minute drive from the Canopy Lodge, at ca. 900 to 1,100m altitude), including mainly birding from very quiet roads through the primary and secondary cloud forest (full day on November 3rd). Early-morning mist gave way to a dry and sunny morning, before extremely heavy rain suspended our birding for a couple of hours during the middle of the day.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) [PL]:

Gray-headed Chachalaca (*Ortalis cinereiceps*) **heard only** [EMR]:

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) [PL]:

Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) [PL]:

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*) [PL]:

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) [PL]:

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) [PL]:

Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) [PL]:

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) [PL]:

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*) [PL]:

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) [PL]:

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) [AdM]:

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) [PL]:

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) [AdM]:

Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture (*Cathartes burrovianus*) [PL]:

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) [PL; AdM]:

White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*) [PL]:

White Hawk (*Leucopternis albicollis*) [LMT; AdM]:

Savanna Hawk (*Buteogallus meridionalis*) [PL]:

Roadside Hawk (*Buteo magnirostris*) **heard only** [PL]:

Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) [LMT; AdM]:

Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) [PL]:

Yellow-headed Caracara (*Milvago chimachima*) [PL]:

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) [PL]:

Aplomado Falcon (*Falco femoralis*) [PL]:

Bat Falcon (*Falco rufigularis*) [LMT]:

Southern Lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*) [PL]:

Wattled Jacana (*Jacana jacana*) [PL]:

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) [PL]:

² **First sighting ever for DJS**; **E** = Panama endemic species; * = photo available

Willet (*Tringa semipalmata*) [PL]:
Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*) [AdM]:
Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) [PL]:
Laughing Gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) [PL]:
Royal Tern (*Thalasseus maximus*) [PL]:
Elegant Tern (*Thalasseus elegans*) [PL]:
Plain-breasted Ground-Dove (*Columbina minuta*) [PL]:
Ruddy Ground-Dove (*Columbina talpacoti*) [PL]:
White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*) [PL; AdM]:
Brown-throated Parakeet (*Aratinga pertinax*) [PL]:
Orange-chinned Parakeet (*Brotogeris jugularis*) [PL; CL; AdM]:
Blue-headed Parrot (*Pionus menstruus*) [AdM]:
Yellow-crowned Parrot (*Amazona ochrocephala*) [PL]:
Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) [PL]:
Squirrel Cuckoo (*Piaya cayana*) [AdM]:
Groove-billed Ani (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) [PL]:
Mottled Owl (*Ciccaba virgata*) **beard only** [CL]:
White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*) [LMT]:
Green Hermit (*Phaethornis guy*) [AdM]:
Stripe-throated Hermit (*Phaethornis striigularis*) [AdM]:
White-tipped Sicklebill (*Eutoxeres aquila*) * [CA; AdM]:
White-necked Jacobin (*Florisuga mellivora*) [AdM]:
Veraguan Mango (*Anthracoceros veraguensis*) * [PL]:
Garden Emerald (*Chlorostilbon assimilis*) [EMR]:
Green Thorntail (*Discosura conversii*) [LMT]:
Violet-crowned Woodnymph (*Thalurania colombica*) [CL; LMT; AdM]:
Sapphire-throated Hummingbird (*Lepidopygia coeruleogularis*) [PL]:
Snowy-bellied Hummingbird (*Amazilia edward*) * [CL; PL]:
Rufous-tailed Hummingbird (*Amazilia tzacatl*) [CL; AdM]:
Blue-chested Hummingbird (*Polyerata amabilis*) [AdM]:
Bronze-tailed Plumeleater (*Chalybura urochrysis*) * [LMT; AdM]:
Green-crowned Brilliant (*Heliodoxa jacula*) [AdM]:
Snowcap (*Microchera albocoronata*) * [AdM]:
Rufous Motmot (*Baryphengus martii*) * [CL]:
Tody Motmot (*Hylomanes momotula*) [EMR]:
Whooping Motmot (*Momotus subrufescens*) [PL]:
Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*) [PL]:
Green Kingfisher (*Chloroceryle americana*) * [CL; AdM]:
Emerald Toucanet (*Aulacorhynchus prasinus caeruleogularis*) [LMT; AdM]: Blue-throated split not recognized by Clements.
Keel-billed Toucan (*Ramphastos sulphuratus*) [LMT; EMR; AdM]:
Red-crowned Woodpecker (*Melanerpes rubricapillus*) * [CL; EMR]:
Red-faced Spinetail (*Cranioleuca erythropus*) [AdM]:
Spotted Barbtail (*Premnoplex brunnescens*) [AdM]:
Plain Xenops (*Xenops minutus*) [LMT]:
Straight-billed Woodcreeper (*Dendroplex picus*) * [PL]: Clements recognizes *Dendroplex p.* rather than *Xiphorhynchus p.*
Cocoa Woodcreeper (*Xiphorhynchus susurrans*) [CL]:
Spotted Woodcreeper (*Xiphorhynchus erythropygius*) [LMT; AdM]:
Brown-billed Scythebill (*Campylorhynchus pusillus*) [AdM]:
Barred Antshrike (*Thamnophilus doliatus*) [PL]:
Russet Antshrike (*Thamnisteres anabatinus*) [AdM]:
Plain Antwireo (*Dysithamnus mentalis*) [LMT; AdM]:
Spot-crowned Antwireo (*Dysithamnus puncticeps*) [LMT; AdM]:
Checker-throated Antwren (*Epinecrophyllos fulviventris*) [LMT]: Clements recognizes *Epinecrophyllos f.* rather than *Myrmotherula f.*
Chestnut-backed Antbird (*Myrmeciza exsul*) [LMT; AdM]:
Bicolored Antbird (*Gymnophythis leucaspis*) * [AdM]:
Black-faced Antthrush (*Formicarius analis*) **beard only** [LMT]:
Black-crowned Antpitta (*Pittasoma michleri*) [AdM]:
Mouse-colored Tyrannulet (*Phaeomyias murina*) [PL]:
Yellow-bellied Elaenia (*Elaenia flavogaster*) [PL]:
Olive-striped Flycatcher (*Mionectes olivaceus*) [LMT; CL]:
Rufous-browed Tyrannulet (*Phylloscartes superciliosus*) [AdM]:

Paltry Tyrannulet (*Zimmerius vilissimus*) [AdM]:
 Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant (*Lophotriccus pileatus*) * [LMT; AdM]:
 Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant (*Atalotriccus pilaris*) [PL]: Clements recognizes *Atalotriccus p.* rather than *Lophotriccus p.*
 Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher (*Poecilotriccus sylvia*) [PL]:
 Common Tody-Flycatcher (*Todirostrum cinereum*) [PL; AdM]:
 Yellow-margined Flycatcher (*Tolmomyias assimilis*) [EMR]:
 White-throated Spadebill (*Platyrinchus mystaceus*) [AdM]:
 Bran-colored Flycatcher (*Myiobius fasciatus*) [AdM]: Clements recognizes *M. fasciatus* rather than *M. tricandus*.
 Tufted Flycatcher (*Mitrephanes phaeocercus*) * [LMT; AdM]:
 Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*) [AdM]:
 Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*) [CL; PL; LMT; AdM]:
 Tropical Pewee (*Contopus cinereus*) [AdM]:
 Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*) [LMT]:
 Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*) [AdM]:
 Panama Flycatcher (*Myiarchus panamensis*) * [PL]:
 Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) [PL]:
 Social Flycatcher (*Myiozetetes similis*) [CL; PL; AdM]:
 Boat-billed Flycatcher (*Megarynchus pitangua*) [PL]:
 Streaked Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes maculatus*) [PL]:
 Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) [PL; AdM]:
 Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) [PL]:
 Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*) [PL]:
 White-ruffed Manakin (*Corapipo altera*) [LMT]:
 Lance-tailed Manakin (*Chiroxiphia laneolata*) [PL; EMR]:
 Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*) [LMT]:
 Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) [EMR]:
 Black-chested Jay (*Cyanocorax affinis*) [LMT; EMR; AdM]:
 Mangrove Swallow (*Tachycineta albilinea*) [PL]:
 Southern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*) [EMR]:
 Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) [PL]:
 Gray-breasted Martin (*Progne chalybea*) [PL]:
 Rufous-and-white Wren (*Thryothorus rufalbus*) **beard only** [LMT]:
 House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) [PL; CL]:
 Rufous-breasted Wren (*Thryothorus rutilus*) [EMR]:
 White-breasted Wood-Wren (*Henicorbina leucosticta*) [EMR]:
 Gray-breasted Wood-Wren (*Henicorbina leucophrys*) [LMT; AdM]:
 Scaly-breasted Wren (*Microcerculus marginatus*) [AdM]:
 Tawny-faced Gnatwren (*Microbates cinereiventris*) [LMT]:
 Long-billed Gnatwren (*Ramphocaenus melanurus*) [LMT]:
 Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*) [LMT; AdM]:
 Pale-vented Thrush (*Turdus obsoletus*) [LMT; AdM]:
 Clay-colored Thrush (*Turdus grayi*) * [CL; PL]:
 Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) [AdM]:
 Tennessee Warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*) [CL; PL; EMR; AdM]:
 Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) [PL]:
 Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Dendroica pensylvanica*) [AdM]:
 Blackburnian Warbler (*Dendroica fusca*) [AdM]:
 Bay-breasted Warbler (*Dendroica castanea*) [LMT; AdM]:
 Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*) [EMR; AdM]:
 Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) * [PL; CL]:
 Mourning Warbler (*Oporornis philadelphia*) [AdM]:
 Canada Warbler (*Wilsonia canadensis*) [LMT; AdM]:
 Rufous-capped Warbler (*Basileuterus rufifrons*) * [CL; LMT; EMR; AdM]:
 Common Bush-Tanager (*Chlorospingus ophthalmicus*) [AdM]:
 Black-and-yellow Tanager (*Chrysothlypis chrysomelas*) [AdM]:
 Dusky-faced Tanager (*Mitrospingus cassinii*) [LMT]:
 Tawny-crested Tanager (*Tachyphonus delatrii*) [LMT; AdM]:
 Crimson-backed Tanager (*Ramphocelus dimidiatus*) * [CL]:
 Flame-rumped Tanager (*Ramphocelus flammigerus*) * [CL; AdM]:
 Blue-gray Tanager (*Thraupis episcopus*) * [CL; PL; AdM]:
 Palm Tanager (*Thraupis palmarum*) * [CL]:

Silver-throated Tanager (*Tangara icterocephala*) [LMT; AdM]:
Golden-hooded Tanager (*Tangara larvata*) [CL; AdM]:
Green Honeycreeper (*Chlorophanes spiza*) [AdM]:
Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*) [CL; LMT; AdM]:
Streaked Saltator (*Saltator striatipectus*) [PL; EMR]:
Buff-throated Saltator (*Saltator maximus*) * [CL; AdM]:
Blue-black Grassquit (*Volatina jacarina*) [PL]:
Variable Seedeater (*Sporophila corvina*) [PL; LMT; AdM]:
Thick-billed Seed-Finch (*Oryzoborus funereus*) [EMR]:
Yellow-faced Grassquit (*Tiaris olivaceus*) * [LMT]:
Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch (*Arremon brunneinucha*) [LMT]:
Black-striped Sparrow (*Arremonops conirostris*) * [LMT]:
Hepatic Tanager (*Piranga flava*) [LMT; AdM]:
Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) [PL; EMR; AdM]:
Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) [AdM]:
Red-crowned Ant-Tanager (*Habia rubica*) * [CL; LMT]:
Red-throated Ant-Tanager (*Habia fuscicauda*) [EMR]:
Black-faced Grosbeak (*Caryothraustes poiliogaster*) [AdM]:
Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*) * [PL]:
Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) [PL]:
Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*) [PL]:
Chestnut-headed Oropendola (*Psarocolius wagleri*) [AdM]:
Yellow-crowned Euphonia (*Euphonia luteicapilla*) [AdM]:
Thick-billed Euphonia (*Euphonia lanirostris*) * [CL]:
Elegant Euphonia (*Euphonia elegantissima*) [AdM]:
Fulvous-vented Euphonia (*Euphonia fulvicrissa*) [CL]:
Tawny-capped Euphonia (*Euphonia anaeae*) [LMT; AdM]:
Lesser Goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*) [PL]:

Combined total: 179 (174 seen, 5 heard only), with 22 of these confirmed as “first time ever” species for DJS

2. Mammal Trip List

Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth (*Bradypus variegatus*) [AdM]:
Red-tailed Squirrel (*Sciurus granatensis*) [CL]:
Variiegated Squirrel (*Sciurus variegatoides*) [PL]:
Central American Dwarf Squirrel (Western Pygmy Squirrel) (*microsciurus alfari*) [AdM]:
Orange Nectar Bat (*Lonchophylla robusta*) [CL]:

3. Reptile Trip List

Basilisk Lizard (*Basiliscus basiliscus*) [CL]:
Giant Ameiva (Green Ameiva or South American Ground Lizard) (*Ameiva ameiva*) [PL]:
Cane Toad (*Bufo marinus*) [AdM]: