

# COLOMBIA WESTERN AND CENTRAL CORDILLERA TOUR

March 5 - 18, 2012

## Day 1 (03/04/12): Peñas Blancas, Farallones National Park

The first day of the trip was a magical experience for all. Kitri, Ricardo, John and Jeanne enjoyed a buffet of magnificent proportions at the hotel, while Eduardo had breakfast with my father at our house near Cristo Rey. We met Jose Luna, of Mapalina Birding Tours, and our driver, Hassan. The group was excited about our hike to an Andean cock-of-the-rock lek that has been active for more than 50 years. We stopped to pick up Eduardo and were entertained for a while with a tour of the garden at my father's house. After some coca tea, we headed up the mountain towards Farallones National Park, stopping along the way for great looks at the endemic Colombian chachalaca. We were greeted by Paola, Alex and their daughter as soon as we arrived. Our guides were once loggers in the park but traded in their chainsaws for binoculars. They are now fervent conservationists and we certainly enjoyed hearing about the interesting history of Peñas Blancas from them.

We began our hike along a dirt road with not much activity, but as soon as we got close to the Pichinde River into some areas with forest, we noticed that many of the trees around us were in fruit. The show began! Golden tanager, golden-olive woodpecker, black-billed peppershrike, montane woodcreeper, saffron-crowned tanager, and scrub tanager. Soon enough we saw our second endemic species of the day, crested ant-tanager. We crossed the river and headed up the hill through some cow pastures. We stopped for a picnic half way up the hill, under a tree with a great views. "Gato tochero", a combination of rice, chicken, beef, plantain and potato wrapped in a banana leaf, and drank "aguapanela", a delicious drink with fruit and brown-sugar, very typical in Colombia.

We rested for a little bit and then realized that the scope and tripod Jose was carrying was left by the river. Jose, very worried, ran down the hill to retrieve it as we began our ascent. Another hour and a half later we arrived at the lek, greeted by amazing vocalizations by the birds we were in search for. We were lucky, usually they don't arrive until later in the day, but they arrived early to greet us. We spent about an hour enjoying at least 15 individuals at the lek, one of the most exciting birding experiences I have had to date. We hiked back to the vehicle very content, learning about the history of the area from Alex and Paola.



Andean Cock-of-the-Rock



Picnic of "gato trochero" on our hike up to the lek in Peñas Blancas

## Colombian Chachalaca

Cattle Egret  
Black Vulture  
Ruddy Ground-Dove  
Smooth-billed Ani  
Common Potoo  
White-collared Swift  
Greenish Puffleg  
Highland Motmot  
Red-headed Barbet  
Black-billed Mountain-Toucan  
Golden-olive Woodpecker  
Montane Foliage-gleaner  
Cattle Tyrant  
Smoke-coloured Pewee  
Black Phoebe  
Andean Cock-of-the-rock  
Black-billed Peppershrike  
Blue-and-white Swallow

House Wren  
Black-billed Thrush  
Great Thrush  
Blue-gray Tanager  
Blue-capped Tanager  
Golden Tanager  
Scrub Tanager  
Golden-naped Tanager  
Metallic-green Tanager  
Green Honeycreeper  
Rufous-collared Sparrow  
Crested Ant Tanager  
Blackburnian Warbler  
Canada Warbler  
Slate-throated Redstart  
Russet-crowned Warbler  
Russet-backed Oropendola  
Shiny Cowbird  
Orange-bellied Euphonia

## Day 2 (03/05/12) Cali Botanical Garden and Eduardo Carvajal's house

We were up early and headed to meet Fermin, one of the caretakers at the botanical garden. We parked the van and birded along the Cali River, enjoying good views of great kiskadee and rusty-margined flycatcher. Then we saw some migratory species such as blackburnian, Canada, and black-and-white warbler. A highlight of the morning was the near endemic spectacled parrotlet. We spent a few hours touring the garden and then headed back to the hotel for showers and some rest. We had a late lunch at La Sebastiana, the "causa peruana" that was served was up to Peruvian standards, as Eduardo enjoyed it. After lunch we headed up the hill to my friend Eduardo Carvajal's (fotorata@yahoo.com) house, near km 18. He served us Colombian fruit, including "chontaduro", a fruit from a palm tree that is a very typical snack of people in Cali. The activity at his feeders was low, but we took advantage of his beautiful patio and garden to catch up on our bird list and enjoy the afternoon. I dropped off the group at the hotel and headed back down to Cali to pick up Stu and Hilary. We arrived at the hotel at around 9:30, in time to get cleaned up and rest a bit.



Scrub Tanager

Golden-headed Quetzal H  
Gray-breasted Wood-Wren  
**Colombian Chachalaca**  
Black Vulture  
Broad-winged Hawk  
Yellow-headed Caracara  
Southern Lapwing  
Rock Pigeon  
Ruddy Ground-Dove  
Spectacled Parrotlet  
Squirrel Cuckoo  
Smooth-billed Ani  
Highland Motmot  
Smoky-brown Woodpecker  
Azara's Spinetail  
Streak-headed Woodcreeper  
Mountain Elaenia  
Olive-striped Flycatcher  
Black Phoebe

Vermilion Flycatcher  
Great Kiskadee  
Social Flycatcher  
Rusty-margined Flycatcher  
Blue-and-white Swallow  
House Wren  
Blue-gray Tanager  
Palm Tanager  
Scrub Tanager  
Streaked Saltator  
Saffron Finch  
Rufous-collared Sparrow  
Hepatic Tanager  
Yellow Warbler  
Blackburnian Warbler  
Black-and-white Warbler  
Canada Warbler  
Three-striped Warbler

### **Day 3 (03/06/12) Finca La Araucana, Bichacue Yath Reserve, Jaime's Andean Cock-of-the-rock Lek**

An early breakfast at the hotel had us on the road by 6:00 am en route to Finca La Araucana, a property that has been in my family for over 50 years and named after a humongous monkey puzzle tree (native to Chile) that my grandfather planted for my grandmother when he bought the property. We first met our guide Anderson Muñoz. We began birding from the balcony, acquainting ourselves with many of the species the Andes have to offer. Finca La Araucana produces organic sprouts and vegetables for local restaurants and has an amazing balcony in which to relax and enjoy the birds. We began birding immediately as coffee was served. It was a great introduction to Andean tanagers and hummingbirds, and birding from the balcony was quite relaxing. Flame-rumped (endemic), golden, white-lined, blue-necked, hepatic, and summer tanagers fed with green honeycreeper, a large group of crimson-rumped toucanet, and bananaquit among others. After a few hours on the balcony we headed to a field near the house where we called in bar-crested antshrike, observed acorn woodpecker, black-billed peppershrike and saffron-crowned tanager. We did a short tour of the organic garden and then headed to the Bichacue Yath Reserve in La Leonera.

We stopped along the Felidia River, where white-capped dipper did a short appearance. The reserve, also known as Tomas' garden, is a very special place adorned with ceramic sculptures of gnomes, fairies and goblins. Moss grows everywhere, and a tour of the reserve yielded species such as bay-headed tanager, chestnut-breasted chlorophonia, American redstart, and beryl-spangled tanager. We had "tamales" for lunch, and enjoyed some locally harvested honey for desert. After spending some time with Tomas and his wife, we headed up the hill towards Jaime's house, near El Pato. We met at his house at the top of the hill and hiked down towards the Cali River, where we were greeted by a very loud group of Andean Cock-of-the-rock. The experience was magical, as we were able to observe a female amongst a group of about eight males at the lek. We enjoyed the show for about an hour and then hiked up the hill, where we were invited to enjoy some coffee, "hojaldras" (fried dough), and magnificent views of the western Andes and the Cauca Valley below. Very content and excited about the day, we headed to the hotel for dinner and list-making.



Barred Antshrike



The crew at Finca La Araucana

Scarlet-fronted Parakeet H  
 Gray-breasted Wood-Wren H  
 Andean Solitaire  
**Colombian Chachalaca**  
 Cattle Egret  
 Roadside Hawk  
 Southern Lapwing  
 Rock Pigeon  
 Band-tailed Pigeon  
 Ruddy Ground-Dove  
 Squirrel Cuckoo  
 Green Hermit  
 Steely-vented Hummingbird  
 Rufous-tailed Hummingbird  
 Purple-throated Woodstar  
 Highland Motmot  
 Red-headed Barbet  
 Crimson-rumped Toucanet  
 Acorn Woodpecker  
 Golden-olive Woodpecker  
 Slaty Spinetail  
 Red-faced Spinetail  
 Bar-crested Antshrike  
 Golden-faced Tyrannulet  
 Black Phoebe  
 Great Kiskadee  
 Tropical Kingbird  
 Andean Cock-of-the-rock  
 Blue-and-white Swallow

White-capped Dipper  
 Swainson's Thrush  
 Black-billed Thrush  
 White-lined Tanager  
 Flame-rumped Tanager  
 Blue-gray Tanager  
 Palm Tanager  
 Golden Tanager  
 Saffron-crowned Tanager  
 Bay-headed Tanager  
 Scrub Tanager  
 Metallic-green Tanager  
 Blue-necked Tanager  
 Beryl-spangled Tanager  
 Green Honeycreeper  
 Rusty Flowerpiercer  
 Bananaquit  
 Yellow-faced Grassquit  
 Streaked Saltator  
 Black-winged Saltator  
 Saffron Finch  
 Yellow-bellied Seedeater  
 Rufous-collared Sparrow  
 Hepatic Tanager  
 Summer Tanager  
 Tropical Parula  
 Blackburnian Warbler  
 Canada Warbler  
 Slate-throated Redstart

American Redstart  
 Russet-backed Oropendola  
 Shiny Cowbird  
 Thick-billed Euphonia  
 Orange-bellied Euphonia  
 Chestnut-vented Chlorophonia



Slate-throated Whitestart

## Day 4 (03/07/12) Bosque de San Antonio and Km 18

We had an early breakfast and headed to the Bosque de San Antonio, a protected reserve in a cloud forest overlooking Cali. The drive up the hill took us through vacation homes and fragmented forest, so we parked where the pristine forest begins. Our first bird of the day was barred becard, we had great views of both males and females. We began our hike up the hill, our target being the beautiful and endemic multicolored tanager. It did not take long to run into a mixed foraging group, which included a great variety of tanagers, including our first view of blue-capped tanager and blue-winged mountain-tanager. Then, out of nowhere appeared the bird of the day. Scaled fruiteater, two individuals who stuck around for a long enough time



Scaled Fruiteater

for the entire group to get great views. Excitement was in the air, this was a lifer for the entire group. We continued up the hill, reaching the top for great views of the Cauca Valley below. Content with a great morning of birding we headed down the hill for lunch at the Embajada de Ginebra for the much anticipated “sancocho de gallina” (chicken soup with yucca and plantain) accompanied by a frosty cold Poker beer and lemonade made with “aguapanela”, the sugary tea made from chunks of brown sugar. As we arrived, the appetizers started to hit the table. First, “patacones” (fried green plantain), followed by “hojaldras” (fried dough), and complemented beautifully with a choice of “hogao” (sautéed onions and tomatoes) or “aji” (onion, cilantro and chile topping). Then we feasted on sancocho, one of Colombia’s most typical dishes. During lunch we observed fawn-breasted brilliant, white-necked jacobin and tawny-bellied hermit.

Highland Tinamou H  
**Chestnut Wood-Quail H**  
Chestnut-breasted Wren H  
Colombian Chachalaca  
Sickle-winged Guan  
Black Vulture  
Southern Lapwing  
Rock Pigeon  
Band-tailed Pigeon  
Eared Dove  
Scarlet-fronted Parakeet  
White-collared Swift  
Tawny-bellied Hermit  
White-necked Jacobin  
Black-throated Mango  
Andean Emerald  
Steely-vented Hummingbird  
Fawn-breasted Brilliant  
Bronzy Inca  
Blue-headed Sapphire  
Long-tailed Sylph  
Wedge-billed Hummingbird  
Highland Motmot

Emerald Toucanet  
Golden-olive Woodpecker  
Azara’s Spinetail  
Red-faced Spinetail  
Montane Woodcreeper  
Uniform Antshrike  
Plain Antvireo  
**Nariño Tapaculo**  
Golden-faced Tyrannulet  
Golden-crowned Flycatcher  
Tropical Kingbird  
Green-and-black Fruiteater  
Scaled Fruiteater  
Barred Becard  
Brown-capped Vireo  
Gray-breasted Wood-Wren  
Andean Solitaire  
Swainson’s Thrush  
Black-billed Thrush  
Great Thrush  
Dusky Bush-tanager  
Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager  
Flame-rumped Tanager

Blue-gray Tanager  
Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager  
Golden Tanager  
Saffron-crowned Tanager  
Metallic-green Tanager  
Beryl-spangled Tanager  
Blue-and-black Tanager  
Green Honeycreeper  
White-sided Flowerpiercer  
Bananaquit  
Yellow-faced Grassquit  
Yellow-bellied Seedeater  
Rufous-collared Sparrow  
Summer Tanager  
Blackburnian Warbler  
Black-and-white Warbler  
Slate-throated Redstart  
Russet-crowned Warbler  
Three-striped Warbler  
Orange-bellied Euphonia  
Yellow-bellied Siskin

We went back to the hotel for our first siesta of the trip, a few hours to relax after a very nice lunch. We sent our driver home to get some well-needed rest since we planned on birding near the hotel. The highlights of the afternoon were sickle-winged guan and emerald toucanet, and it was fun to call in plain ant-vireo so everyone could get good looks. We all went home to the hotel content with a great day of birding. Dinner and rest was on our minds.

### Day 5 (03/08/12) Km18 and the San Antonio Forest

One of the slowest mornings of the trip thus far, bird activity was very low. Some of us joked that it may be due to the solar storm that was hitting today and all over the news. The highlight of the morning was yellow-throated brush-finch, and Raul's feeders yielded a few species of tanagers and a new hummingbird for the trip, bronzy inca. We dropped off Jeanne at the hotel as she wanted to take care of John, and continued to the Bosque de San Antonio for another try at multicolored tanager. Again, activity was very low but the morning was saved by great views of golden-headed quetzal, three individuals. The group spent the afternoon with my father visiting tea plantations and a coffee farm, not sure about the details but everybody returned to the hotel extremely happy and excited. Then we had dinner and early bedtime because we needed to prepare for the longest travel day of the tour.



Golden-fronted Whitestart

Chestnut-vented Chlorophonia  
 Black Vulture  
 Roadside Hawk  
 Southern Lapwing  
 Eared Dove  
 White-tipped Dove  
 Scarlet-fronted Parakeet  
 White-necked Jacobin  
 Brown Violetear  
 Black-throated Mango  
 Speckled Hummingbird  
 Fawn-breasted Brilliant  
 Buff-tailed Coronet  
 Bronzy Inca  
 Booted Racket-tail  
 Long-tailed Sylph  
 Purple-throated Woodstar  
 Golden-headed Quetzal  
 Highland Motmot  
 Red-headed Barbet  
 Emerald Toucanet  
 Smoky-brown Woodpecker

Azara's Spinetail  
 Plain Xenops  
 Montane Woodcreeper  
 Plain Antvireo  
 Nariño Tapaculo  
 Cinnamon Flycatcher  
 Bright-rumped Attila  
 Golden-crowned Flycatcher  
 Tropical Kingbird  
 Green-and-black Fruiteater  
 Barred Becard  
 Brown-capped Vireo  
 Black-billed Peppershrike  
 Blue-and-white Swallow  
 Gray-breasted Wood-Wren  
 Black-billed Thrush  
 Flame-rumped Tanager  
 Blue-gray Tanager  
 Blue-capped Tanager  
 Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager  
 Golden Tanager  
 Saffron-crowned Tanager

Scrub Tanager  
 Golden-naped Tanager  
 Metallic-green Tanager  
 Beryl-spangled Tanager  
 Green Honeycreeper  
 Rusty Flowerpiercer  
 Bananaquit  
 Yellow-faced Grassquit  
 Streaked Saltator  
 Saffron Finch  
 Yellow-throated Brush-Finch  
 Rufous-collared Sparrow  
 Summer Tanager  
 Tropical Parula  
 Blackburnian Warbler  
 Slate-throated Redstart  
 Three-striped Warbler  
 Shiny Cowbird



The San Antonio Forest

### Day 6 (03/10/12) San Cirpiano

To my surprise, the group was ready to roll at our departure time of 4:00 am, to head towards the Choco bioregion in the Pacific lowlands of Colombia. We were on the road for a few hours as there was a lot of construction, and we arrived in Cordoba at 6:30 a.m. This morning we met Richard Johnston, our local guide for the next few days. Richard works for Calidris, a local non-profit organization that supports conservation of shorebirds in Colombia. Cordoba was named after the engineer that built the railroad to Cali. Waiting on the railroad were the “brujitas” (little witches, motorcycle-powered wooden carts that ride on the railroad), our vehicle into the next great birding spot of the trip. We could not help ourselves, so we birded for a while and got to know blue-headed parrot and dusky pigeon. We met Arley, a young boy that showed interest in birds and visited with us throughout the day. We loaded up the “brujitas”, some of the group with worried expressions, and off we went. We all enjoyed the ride, consisting of spectacular scenery, a bit of adrenaline, and a few stops for birding.

As we arrived in the town of San Cipriano, we had good views of lemon-rumped tanager and golden-hooded tanager. Crested oropendola were very active near town where build nests hanging from palm trees. We crossed town and started up the trail. We saw our first group of tawny-crested tanager on our way out of town, a species that is very noisy and tends to travel in large groups of males and females. Then we saw the bird of the day, black-breasted puffbird. We had great views, as this bird perches very still. Then the search was on for antbirds, not without first getting a great but demanding view of bay wren. The day included stub-tailed and immaculate antbird. Stub-tailed antbird gave us some extremely close-up good looks. On our way to the swimming hole we were delighted by listening to white-bearded manakin, and then a relaxing rest on the edge of one of the most pristine tropical rivers in the world. After swimming we took a short walk to the “love waterfall”, and everybody had a great look at rufous motmot. Hunger was in the air, so we headed back to town for a

delicious fish “sancocho” served with fried sierra. It began to get hot, so we loaded up the “brujitas” for another exhilarating ride. The drive over the hill and into the Cauca Valley was accompanied by a storm of biblical proportions. A short stop at the Sonso Lagoon yielded a good number of water birds. We arrived in Buga in time for showers and a nice dinner at the hotel.



Riding the “Brujita” in San Cipriano



Stub-tailed Antbird



Rufous Motmot



White-bearded Manakin H  
 Black-bellied Whistling-Duck  
 Fulvous Whistling-Duck  
 Cinnamon Teal  
 Anhinga  
 Cocoi Heron  
 Great Egret  
 Snowy Egret  
 Cattle Egret  
 Black-crowned Night-Heron  
 Bare-faced Ibis  
 Black Vulture  
 Swallow-tailed Kite  
 Snail Kite  
 Yellow-headed Caracara  
 White-throated Crake  
 Common Gallinule  
 American Coot  
 Southern Lapwing  
 Black-necked Stilt  
 Rock Pigeon  
 Ruddy Pigeon  
 Eared Dove  
 Ruddy Ground-Dove

Spectacled Parrotlet  
 Blue-headed Parrot  
 Smooth-billed Ani  
 Greater Ani  
 Chestnut-collared Swift  
 White-collared Swift  
 Purple-crowned Fairy  
 Rufous Motmot  
 Amazon Kingfisher  
 Ringed Kingfisher  
 Black-breasted Puffbird  
 Red-crowned Woodpecker  
 Cinnamon Woodpecker  
 Lineated Woodpecker  
 Cocoa Woodcreeper  
 Wedge-billed Woodcreeper  
 Western-slaty Antshrike  
 Pacific Antwren  
 Stubbed-tailed Antbird  
 Immaculate Antbird  
 Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet  
 Cattle Tyrant  
 Common Tody-Flycatcher

Sulfur-rumped Flycatcher  
 Rusty-margined Flycatcher  
 White-ringed Flycatcher  
 Tropical Kingbird  
 Rufous Piha  
 Cinnamon Beccard  
 Gray-breasted Martin  
 Blue-and-white Swallow  
 Southern Rough-winged Swallow  
 Slate-throated Gnatcatcher  
 Golden-hooded Tanager  
 Dusky-faced Tanager  
 Tawny-crested Tanager  
 Lemon-rumped Tanager  
 Blue-gray Tanager  
 Palm Tanager  
 Red-legged Honeycreeper  
 Bananaquit  
 Buff-throated Saltator  
 Tropical Parula  
 Chestnut-headed Oropendola  
 Orange-bellied Euphonia

### Day 6 (3/11/12) Sonso Lagoon and El Vinculo

The hotel served us some amazing local grape juice with breakfast. The start of a perfect day, we arrived to the Sonso Lagoon just as the light was getting good. We enjoyed viewing some of the same aquatic species from the day before, and had a great show by numerous individuals of snail kite. Purple gallinule, common moorhen, black-bellied whistling duck, greater ani, striated heron, cocoi heron, limpkin, bare-faced ibis, Amazon and green kingfisher graced our presence.

Our target birds for the day: apical flycatcher and grayish piculet. We arrived at the main entrance of the lagoon and enjoyed seeing spectacled parrotlet. I began playing for apical flycatcher, and within ten minutes the entire group had seen the bird. Excited, we continued on the muddy trail under tropical dry forest next to the wetlands of the lagoon. We reached the observation tower and the access to it was flooded, so we continued on the trail. Soon we heard jet antbird and called it in so the entire group was able to see it. Excited, the group continued trying for grayish piculet to no avail. We hoped to see it on the walk back to the rig, but had no luck so we decided to do a quick stop at El Vinculo reserve near Buga. At the end of the morning Ricardo treated us to a dance with a Colombian gal who was very enthusiastic about shaking it with our happy birder. Within ten minutes of arriving at El Vinculo we had great views of grayish piculet. After some high-fiving, very content, we headed to the hotel with enough time for some cold "cervezas" in the pool. After pool time and packing, we visited "La Milagrosa", the main church in Buga. Then off to Pereira to pick up Sergio Ocampo, our guide for the next five days. We met him and then headed to Otun-Quimbaya Sanctuary and arrived in time for a nice meal.



**Grayish Piculet**



**Jet Antbird**



**Entrance to Sonso Lagoon**



**Apical Flycatcher**

White-throated Crake H  
 Bar-crested Antshrike H  
 Black-bellied Whistling-Duck  
 Fulvous Whistling-Duck  
 Blue-winged Teal  
 Neotropic Cormorant  
 Cocoi Heron  
 Great Egret  
 Cattle Egret  
 Striated Heron  
 Black-crowned Night-Heron  
 Glossy Ibis  
 Bare-faced Ibis  
 Black Vulture  
 Snail Kite  
 Crested Caracara  
 Yellow-headed Caracara  
 Limpkin  
 Purple Gallinule  
 Common Gallinule  
 American Coot  
 Southern Lapwing  
 Black-necked Stilt  
 Wattled Jacana  
 Lesser Yellowlegs

Greater Yellowlegs  
 Solitary Sandpiper  
 Spotted Sandpiper  
 Rock Pigeon  
 Eared Dove  
 Ruddy Ground-Dove  
 Spectacled Parrotlet  
 Blue-headed Parrot Little  
 Cuckoo  
 Striped Cuckoo  
 Smooth-billed Ani  
 Greater Ani  
 Common Parauque  
 Black-throated Mango  
 Amazon Kingfisher  
 Ringed Kingfisher  
**Grayish Piculet**  
 Red-crowned Woodpecker  
 Spot-breasted Woodpecker  
 Lineated Woodpecker  
 Cocoa Woodcreeper  
 Jet Antbird  
**Apical Flycatcher**  
 Common Tody-Flycatcher  
 Vermilion Flycatcher

Pied Water-Tyrant  
 Great Kiskadee  
 Rusty-margined Flycatcher  
 Eastern Kingbird  
 Tropical Kingbird  
 Barn Swallow  
 Blue-and-white Swallow  
 Southern Rough-winged Swallow  
 House Wren  
 Black-billed Thrush  
 Blue-gray Tanager  
 Bananaquit  
 Saffron Finch Yellow-bellied  
 Seedeater  
 Tropical Parula  
 Yellow Warbler  
 Blackburnian Warbler  
 Northern Waterthrush  
 Yellow Oriole  
 Shiny Cowbird  
 Thick-billed Euphonia

**Day 7 (3/12/12) Otun-Quimbaya Sanctuary**

Our breakfast this day was accompanied by a square “arepa” (typical Colombian corn tortilla that come in many shapes and sizes). I had to comment to the cook that I had never eaten a square “arepa”. I like to support this lodge because it is run by the community, and they do an excellent job. Our first bird of the day was golden-olive woodpecker, observed poking his head out of a nest at about eye level. We also observed montane woodcreeper and then headed to search for birds in an open area behind the hotel. Soon enough, Cauca guan appeared. This endemic was thought to be extinct until the Otun-Quimbaya population was discovered in 1990. We crossed the soccer field and took a short trail to the road, where we had delightful views of fawn-breasted tanager, black-capped tanager and scrub tanager. Once we hit the road we had the first of numerous views of red-ruffed fruitcrow, one of the largest cotingas in the world. We walked on the road for a few kilometers, stopping where we had views of the Otun River to look for torrent duck.

Hassan picked us up after a while and we headed to the trout hatchery at the end of the road to. We arrived hoping to see the ducks at the bridge, but only observed torrent tyrannulet. We hike on a trail along the river and enjoyed the scenery. We returned to the parking area and birded for a while, seeing cinnamon flycatcher, greenish puffleg, and the endemic multicolored tanager, one of my favorite birds in Colombia. After trying out the local trout cakes with arepa we headed back to the hotel for lunch and a nap.

During lunch we met Diana, who works for the National Park. She is learning about bird tourism so asked if she could come along with us on the afternoon hike. The group enjoyed her company, and we heard chestnut wood-quail but were not able to see it. We finally saw our first trogon of the trip, with great views of male and female collared trogon that Kitri spotted along the trail. To end the day we had some nice views of a juvenile, male summer tanager and an incredible show of a feeding Cauca guan. We had dinner early and went on the hunt for Colombian screech-owl after dinner. We had no luck so we went to bed looking forward to the next day.



**Fawn-breasted Tanager**



**Red-ruffed Fruitcrow**



**Cauca Guan**

- |                            |                           |                          |                         |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Chestnut Wood-Quail        | Booted Racket-tail        | Blue-and-white Swallow   | Blackburnian Warbler    |
| Emerald Toucanet           | White-bellied Woodstar    | Whiskered Wren           | Black-and-white Warbler |
| Crimson-mantled Woodpecker | Collared Trogon           | House Wren               | Canada Warbler          |
| Spotted Barbtail           | Highland Motmot           | White-capped Dipper      | Slate-throated Redstart |
| Gray-breasted Wood-Wren    | Golden-olive Woodpecker   | Black-billed Thrush      | American Redstart       |
| Chestnut-breasted Wren     | Azara's Spinetail         | Flame-rumped Tanager     | Cerulean Warbler        |
| Andean Solitaire           | Red-faced Spinetail       | Blue-gray Tanager        | Orange-bellied Euphonia |
| Cauca Guan                 | Tyrannine Woodcreeper     | Palm Tanager             | Lesser Goldfinch        |
| Roadside Hawk              | Golden-faced Tyrannulet   | Fawn-breasted Tanager    |                         |
| Southern Lapwing           | Common Tody-Flycatcher    | Multicolored Tanager     |                         |
| Pale-vented Pigeon         | Cinnamon Flycatcher       | Golden Tanager           |                         |
| Eared Dove                 | Black Phoebe              | Saffron-crowned Tanager  |                         |
| Scarlet-fronted Parakeet   | Slaty-backed Chat-tyrant  | Scrub Tanager            |                         |
| Bronze-winged Parrot       | Dusky-capped Flycatcher   | Golden-naped Tanager     |                         |
| Speckled-faced Parrot      | Pale-edged Flycatcher     | Metallic-green Tanager   |                         |
| Squirrel Cuckoo            | Golden-crowned Flycatcher | Blue-necked Tanager      |                         |
| Common Parauque            | Tropical Kingbird         | Black-capped Tanager     |                         |
| Chestnut-collared Swift    | Red-ruffed Fruitcrow      | Black-winged Saltator    |                         |
| Green Hermit               | White-winged Beccard      | Yellow-bellied Seedeater |                         |
| Blue-tailed Emerald        | Red-eyed Vireo            | Rufous-collared Sparrow  |                         |
| Andean Emerald             | Black-billed Peppershrike | Summer Tanager           |                         |
| Greenish Puffleg           | Green Jay                 | Tropical Parula          |                         |



**Masked Trogon**

## Day 8 (03/12/12) Otun-Quimbaya Sanctuary to Manizales

The morning was spent birding along a road that would take us to the trout hatchery where torrent duck had been observed on Sergios last visit. The highlight of the morning was a group of white-capped tanager flying overhead, and later we got another first for the trip, strong-billed woodcreeper. The rest of the morning we were able to observe torrent tyrannulet along the river but still no signs of torrent duck. Unfortunately, as we arrived at one of our last possible places we were swarmed by wasps and had to make a quick exit. Tired from a long morning some of the group returned to the hotel while the rest of us went on a short hike on a nearby trail that would give us a few access points to the river. With no luck, we returned to the hotel for lunch and hoped to catch the duck on our drive down to Pereira.

Since we had plenty of space, we gave a couple a ride down to Pereira. She is a biology teacher and he works for the British embassy, and Hilary and Stu had a good time talking to them. As we descended, all eyes were on the river below us for any signs of torrent duck. After about 45 minutes, when I was just beginning to give up hope, two ducks appeared! An immature male seemed to be fighting for turf with an adult male. Boy did they give us a show! We watched the show for about twenty minutes until they



Near the Otun River



Long-tailed Sylph



Torrent Duck

were both out of our view. I think the group enjoyed sharing the experience with our hitchhikers. On our way from Pereira to Manizales we stopped at a lake to bird from the road, and were able to add some new species to our trip list. Hilary had been wondering about grebes the entire trip, and she was delighted to be able to see least and pied-billed. We also saw masked duck, and another first for the trip, hook-billed kite. Satisfied with the quick stop, we headed to Manizales for a short city tour before heading up to Rio Blanco. We all enjoyed stopping at the Plaza Bolivar to take pictures of the statue overlooking the plaza, which was a nice addition to the tour. The impressive statue, a symbol of freedom and liberation, depicts Simon Bolivar's body with the head of a condor. We arrived at Rio Blanco in time to meet the staff and have one of the best dinners of the trip: "ajiaco". Ajiaco is a typical soup from the central and eastern cordillera, made with chicken, three types of potatoes and garnished with cream and capers. We all agreed it was the best way to end a great day of birding. After completing our list, the excitement of the whole group about the antpitta feeders we would visit the next morning was evident. We said our goodnights excited about what the next day would bring.

Short-tailed Nighthawk H	Squirrel Cuckoo	Green Jay
Chestnut-crowned Antpitta H	Green Hermit	Blue-and-white Swallow
Bicolored Antpitta H	Speckled Hummingbird	Southern Rough-winged Swallow
Ocellated Tapaculo H	Buff-tailed Coronet	Whiskered Wren
Spillman's Tapaculo H	Tourmaline Sunangel	House Wren
Slaty-backed Chat-tyrant H	Wedge-billed Hummingbird	Gray-breasted Wood-Wren
Golden-crowned Flycatcher H	Collared Trogon	White-capped Dipper
Summer Tanager H	Highland Motmot	Andean Solitaire
Torrent Duck	Ringed Kingfisher	White-capped Tanager
Masked Duck	Emerald Toucanet	Blue-gray Tanager
Cauca Guan	Golden-olive Woodpecker	Scrub Tanager
Least Grebe	Crimson-mantled Woodpecker	Blue-necked Tanager
Pied-billed Grebe	Azara's Spinetail	Black-capped Tanager
Great Egret	Montane Foliage-gleaner	Blue-black Grassquit
Snowy Egret	Strong-billed Woodcreeper	Yellow-faced Grassquit
Cattle Egret	Great Antshrike	Yellow-bellied Seed eater
Striated Heron	Plain Antvireo	Black-and-white Seed eater
Bare-faced Ibis	Torrent Tyrannulet	Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch
Black Vulture	Rufous-breasted Flycatcher	Rufous-collared Sparrow
Hook-billed Kite	Cattle Tyrant	Tropical Parula
Roadside Hawk	Marble-faced Bristle-tyrant	Blackburnian Warbler
Crested Caracara	Golden-faced Tyrannulet	Canada Warbler
Southern Lapwing	Common Tody-Flycatcher	Slate-throated Redstart
Rock Pigeon	Black Phoebe	Three-striped Warbler
Pale-vented Pigeon	Vermilion Flycatcher	Shiny Cowbird
Eared Dove	Pied Water-Tyrant	Lesser Goldfinch
Ruddy Ground-Dove	Great Kiskadee	
White-tipped Dove	Tropical Kingbird	
Scarlet-fronted Parakeet	Red-ruffed Fruitcrow	
Bronze-winged Parrot	White-winged Beccard	

## Day 9 (03/13/12) Rio Blanco

We had an early breakfast and birded around the lodge, anxiously awaiting the 7 a.m. antpitta feeding time. A few of the folks in the group had expressed interest in a long hike so they set off on a hike with one of the local guides Alberio. The rest of us set off on our antpitta adventure accompanied by a couple visiting from Utah. Our stop at the first feeder yielded impressive views of chestnut-naped antpitta, chestnut-crowned antpitta and the endemic brown-banded antpitta. Also, to our delight, green-and-black fruiteater made an appearance, as well as another first for the trip, chestnut-capped brush-finch. Oh, and how could we forget another first of the trip, slaty-backed nightingale-thrush. John and I were both ecstatic about the photographic opportunities at the feeders.

We then headed to the second feeder to observe the squirmy bicolored antpitta, another endemic. The show was short but again the bird was cooperative and we all had great views and John and I were able to get some great shots. High-fives were common on our walk to the next feeder. On our way we got to see crimson-mantled woodpecker and took some time calling for grass-green tanager to no avail. Our last feeder of the day has been set up to view slate-crowned antpitta, which we had to be more patient with but finally made its debut. Not as long of a show as we hoped for but at this point we could not complain. Five antpittas in less than two hours, two of them endemic!

Extremely content, we headed back to the lodge for lunch. John, Hilary and I walked back at a slower pace and were rewarded by the appearance of black-billed mountain toucan. One of Eduardo's target bird, he unfortunately missed it as he had gone into town to take care of emails and phoning home. John and I waited patiently for about 30 minutes watching the toucan feed and poop, until we finally had an open view for great photo opportunities. We arrived for lunch to meet the group that had been on the hike to talk about the fun adventures had by all.

For lunch we enjoyed "frijoles verdes", a Colombian specialty where the beans used are fresh, never dried. We then had a nice siesta before a hike down the hill to look for other specialties. Some of the group decided to stay back to enjoy the afternoon at the lodge, but I was pleasantly surprised to find that Stu and Kitri were up for the hike. After all, they had just been on a six hour hike in the morning. That is what I like to call hardcore!

The afternoon was slow in terms of bird activity, so we took advantage of the situation and took time to enjoy the botanical wonders we encountered along the hike. Some of us got to see rufous wren, but the bird was not very responsive to playback. As we arrived to the aqueduct at the bottom of the hill, we all agreed it was a great hike and watched three individuals of white-capped dipper scaling the small dam. Eduardo mentioned he had never seen this species in this behavior, so he was delighted to be able to experience this. Hassan picked us up and we headed up the hill for list-making and dinner.



**Endemic Brown-banded Antpitta**



**Bicolored Antpitta**



**Chestnut-naped Antpitta**



**Slate-crowned Antpitta**



**Chestnut-crowned Antpitta**

Azara's Spinetail H  
Flammulated Treehunter H  
Spillman's Tapaculo H  
Brown-capped Vireo H  
Grass-green Tanager H  
Mountain Cacique H  
Black Vulture  
Turkey Vulture  
Broad-winged Hawk  
Band-tailed Pigeon  
Eared Dove  
Chestnut-collared Swift  
White-collared Swift  
Green Violetear  
Speckled Hummingbird  
Buff-tailed Coronet  
Tourmaline Sunangel  
Booted Racket-tail  
Long-tailed Sylph  
Wedge-billed Hummingbird  
White-bellied Woodstar

Golden-headed Quetzal  
Highland Motmot  
Emerald Toucanet  
Black-billed Mountain-Toucan  
Crimson-mantled Woodpecker  
Powerful Woodpecker  
Montane Woodcreeper  
Chestnut-crowned Antpitta  
Bicolored Antpitta  
Chestnut-naped Antpitta  
Slate-crowned Antpitta  
Brown-banded Antpitta  
Rufous-breasted Flycatcher  
Golden-faced Tyrannulet  
Cinnamon Flycatcher  
Rufous-breasted Chat-Tyrant  
Green-and-black Fruiteater  
Black-collared Jay  
Blue-and-white Swallow  
White-capped Dipper  
Slaty-backed Nightingale Thrush

Black-billed Thrush  
Great Thrush  
Black-eared Hemispingus  
Common Bush-Tanager  
Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager  
Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager  
Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager  
Beryl-spangled Tanager  
Blue-and-black Tanager  
White-sided Flowerpiercer  
Masked Flowerpiercer  
Stripe-headed Brush-Finch  
Rufous-collared Sparrow  
Blackburnian Warbler  
Black-and-white Warbler  
Slate-throated Redstart  
Golden-fronted Redstart  
Lesser Goldfinch

## Day 9 (03/14/12) Rio Blanco, Manizales City Tour, The Landslide and Termales del Otoño

We decided to visit one of the antpitta feeders so that the folks that missed the show would have an opportunity of this magical experience. After breakfast we began our walk to the feeders and heard one of the main targets at Rio Blanco: masked saltator. This was one of our main targets, and we could hear it atop a large tree very close to the lodge. We spent about 15 minutes trying to decipher its location when all of the sudden it flew and perched atop a tree with direct views. Alas, the entire group was able to observe what Eduardo said was his number one bird of the trip.

We headed to the feeder for another impressive show of chestnut-naped and chestnut-headed antpitta. We then headed to the reserve ranger house for some coffee and to learn about "tejo" the Colombian national sport. It can be compared to horseshoes, but the object of the game is to throw a steel puck at a mud pit in hopes of exploding firecrackers. Alberio, our guide, grew up playing the game and was a national champion at one point. We also observed a lot of commotion; the aqueduct system was heavily damaged by the last rainy season, at one point leaving Manizales without water service for 17 consecutive days. Mules were being loaded with "guadua" and engineers discussed the plan of the day to repair the damages. Considering the traffic on the main trail, we decided to take a less travelled trail down the hill. On the way down we tried for powerful woodpecker with no luck, but we had great views of tyrannine woodcreeper, an uncommon bird. Then we got another view of masked saltator, but we agreed it was a BVD (better view desired) situation. We headed back to the lodge for lunch and then began our descent to Manizales.



**Black-billed Mountain-Toucan**

The group had expressed interest in purchasing some coffee and souvenirs, so we spent the afternoon at “El Cable”, the trendy sector of town. We had coffee at Juan Valdez, visited a bookstore, a bike shop and a supermarket as we enjoyed people watching in the area. We were all looking forward to the hot springs at our next hotel so we headed up the hill. Sergio and I had a surprise for the group, we took a small detour to visit the sewer treatment plant where we had gotten news that a pair of lyre-tailed nightjars was roosting in the machine room. After viewing a huge landslide that almost took out the plant, we headed down to the machine room for close-up views of the male and female nightjars. Then off to the hotel for a few hours of soaking in the hot springs before a pasta feast to prepare for the long awaited trip up to the “paramo”, where the plan was to reach 14,000 feet in search of bearded helmetcrest and tawny antpitta. The paramo is a high elevation ecosystem that is magical in its own way, a landscape that captivates in terms of botanical and avian specialties.



**Green-and-black Fruiteater**

Rusty-faced Parrot H	Collared Inca	Brown-capped Vireo
Flammulated Treehunter H	Tourmaline Sunangel	Brown-bellied Swallow
Ocellated Tapaculo H	Long-tailed Sylph	Blue-and-white Swallow
Spillman’s Tapaculo H	White-bellied Woodstar	White-capped Dipper
Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher H	Masked Trogon	Swainson’s Thrush
Black-billed Peppershrike H	Highland Motmot	Great Thrush
Buff-breasted Mountain Tanager H	Emerald Toucanet	Glossy-black Thrush
Grass-green Tanager H	Yellow-vented Woodpecker	Superciliaried Hemispingus
Sickle-winged Guan	Golden-olive Woodpecker	Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager
Cattle Egret	Crimson-mantled Woodpecker	Lacrimose Mountain-Tanager
Black Vulture	Azara’s Spinetail	Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager
Turkey Vulture	Pearled Treerunner	Beryl-spangled Tanager
Broad-winged Hawk	Streaked Xenops	Blue-and-black Tanager
Crested Caracara	Montane Woodcreeper	White-sided Flowerpiercer
Southern Lapwing	Tyrannine Woodcreeper	Masked Flowerpiercer
Rock Pigeon	Bicolored Antpitta	Masked Saltator
Ruddy Ground-Dove	Chestnut-naped Antpitta	Slaty Brush-Finch
Bronze-winged Parrot	Brown-banded Antpitta	Rufous-collared Sparrow
Lyre-tailed Nightjar	Mountain Elaenia	Red-hooded Tanager
Chestnut-collared Swift	Cinnamon Flycatcher	Summer Tanager
White-collared Swift	Black Phoebe	Blackburnian Warbler
Green Violetear	Pale-edged Flycatcher	Black-and-white Warbler
Speckled Hummingbird	Tropical Kingbird	Golden-fronted Redstart
Buff-tailed Coronet	Green-and-black Fruiteater	Lesser Goldfinch





At the sewer plant

## Day 10 (03/15/12) Nevados National Park

We had a nice breakfast at the hotel after a great night of relaxing hot springs. We did not have to wake up so early on this day so Kitri and Hilary were happy about this. We headed up the hill slowly to acclimate to the high elevations we were about to endure. Our first stop yielded paramo and plain-colored seedeater, and black-crested warbler. But the show was just about to begin. Another short stop where tawny antpitta was vocalizing gave us another impressive show. Our third stop was a random run in with a delightful mixed flock. Close up views of scarlet-bellied mountain-tanager, golden-fronted whitestart, viridian metaltail, golden-breasted puffleg, and capped conebill among others. Our second stop and we were well on our way to checking of our target species for the day.

Our next stop was through a small canyon that coincided with the appearance of “frailejon”, the emblematic “paramo” species of Colombia. It was great fun to see Stu with a humongous grin on his face as he enjoyed the botanical wonders this ecosystem has to offer. The rest of us got excellent views of pale-naped brush-finch and brown-backed chat-tyrant.

Our next stop was a station with views of a small glacial lagoon where we enjoyed views of ruddy duck and sipped on some coca tea to help with the altitude. We snacked and loaded up the bus to our next stop. We arrived at a small roadside restaurant with some flowering senecio plants surrounding it. This was perfect habitat for bearded helmetcrest. Hilary was the first to point out a female bearded helmetcrest, and the show was on! We all had great close-up views of both male and female. With our list of targets almost complete, we took our time enjoying the incredible views of the “paramo” ecosystem. Stu took great care in photographing every new plant he saw, and we all waited patiently enjoying how happy he was. Like a kid in Disneyland!

Our last stop was at the entrance to the park where we enjoyed hot chocolate, visited with the park personnel and checked off two more species on our list: Andean-tit spinetail and white-chinned thistletail. Content with our “paramo” experience, we headed down the hill anxiously awaiting a soak in the hot springs before dinner. Dinner was delightful, remembering the experience of visiting such a unique ecosystem!



**Frailejon in Paramo Ecosystem**



**Tawny Antpitta**

Paramo Tapaculo H  
 Ruddy Duck  
 Cattle Egret  
 Black Vulture  
 Rock Pigeon  
 Eared Dove  
 Golden-breasted Puffleg  
 Bearded Helmetcrest  
 Viridian Metaltail  
 Highland Motmot  
 Stout-billed Cinclodes  
 Andean Tit-Spinetail  
 White-chinned Thistletail  
 Pearled Treerunner  
 Tawny Antpitta  
 White-throated Tyrannulet  
 Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant  
 Brown-bellied Swallow  
 Sedge Wren  
 Great Thrush  
 Superciliaried Hemispingus

Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager  
 Blue-and-black Tanager  
 Blue-backed Conebill  
 Black Flowerpiercer  
 Plain-colored Seedeater  
 Paramo Seedeater  
 Pale-naped Brush-Finch  
 Rufous-collared Sparrow  
 Golden-fronted Redstart  
 Black-crested Warbler



**Stripe-headed Brush-finch**



Pale-naped Brush-finch



Andean Titi-spinetail

### Day 11 (03/16/12) Gondola ride and drive to Cali

On our travel day back to Cali we spent the morning doing a short city tour of Manizales, riding a gondola from the bus station to the downtown area. The group enjoyed walking around and experiencing the movement in the center of the city, as well as some delicious snacks at “La Suiza”, the most famous bakery and pastry shop of the city. The drive to Cali was uneventful, except for the incredibly loud cicadas during our lunch stop.



Lunch with Francois



Dolmetsch Arboretum

### Day 12 (03/17/12) Dolmetsch Arboretum

Today we were lucky enough to have been invited for lunch with Francois Dolmetsch (owner) and Alvaro Calonje (creator and director) at the Dolmetsch Arboretum. We arrived in time to do a pre-lunch tour of the newest portion of the garden, which is home to over 2,200 species of plants from all around the world. After our walk we spent some time drinking wine and chatting with Francois in his very nice living room. It was interesting for the group to hear his stories and learn about his musical career and fascination with Colombia for the past 40 years.

After a few bottles of wine, we enjoyed an incredible spread set out by Alvaro consisting of breads, cheeses, olives, organic vegetables, and a variety of Middle Eastern dishes. For dessert we had birthday cake, as we were celebrating Jeanne’s birthday a day early. We all agreed it was a great way to end the tour!

After coffee and dessert we enjoyed another walk in the garden and had the privilege of visiting the cactus portion of the garden. As we were getting ready to leave the arboretum a convoy of military personnel arrived at the gates of the arboretum and caught us a bit by surprise. After a few hellos the ladies in the group were getting their pictures taken with the studly men in uniform. We later found out that they had come to the arboretum to pick up some plants that my father had given them for the nearby military base.

## Day 13 (03/18/12) Free Day in Cali and Salsa Dancing!

John and Jeanne were the first to leave Colombia with great memories. The rest of the group enjoyed a free day in Cali to explore nearby museums and shops, anxiously awaiting our night of salsa dancing! We had the best pizza in Cali for dinner before heading to my friend Ronny's house for a taste of "aguardiente" (firewater flavored with anis). Then on to Saperoco, one of the best salsa clubs in town. We arrived a little early by Colombian standards, but it was fun to watch the place get filled up as the night progressed. We were also met by my friend Hernan, so there was plenty of dancing going on. We were excited when we got word that the club would stay open until 6 am, but in actuality none of us were able to make it to closing time.



Dolmetsch Arboretum



Salsa Dancing with Ronny and Hernan