

**HOLIDAY SEASON IN PANAMA:
NEW YEAR AT PANAMA'S
CANOPY TOWER**

DECEMBER 27, 2009 – JANUARY 3, 2010

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It is no secret that Panama is one of the premier birding destinations in the Neotropics. Even less a secret is the Canopy Tower, a premier birding destination near Panama City. One quickly becomes aware of its fame by the numerous magazine covers featuring the Canopy Tower that are found framed and hung around the dining area of the Tower itself. There are good reasons for so many magazines wishing to do a cover story about the Canopy Tower, one being its ideal location within the Soberania National Park, offering spectacular birding opportunities. Although its close proximity to various other birding locations is a plus, there is nothing like waking up to the dawn chorus and walking up atop the Tower to gaze upon the numerous tropical birds flying over the forest canopy, with views of the Panama Canal and Panama City skyline to remind us that this birding location is unique.

So it is no wonder that our New Year tour starts atop the Canopy Tower early in the morning where we enjoy a cup of coffee or tea while watching the sun rise over the forest canopy. In no time we exchange our warm drinks for our binoculars as the canopy comes alive with various species of birds. Our tour began with Red-shouldered Parrots flying in the early morning sunlight and perching in a tree as we all looked on. Shortly after, a Scaled Pigeon demanded our attention as it conspicuously sat out on an open branch. Soon after admiring the pigeon's bright red bill and its breast feathers with white central spots and prominent black edging—giving it a scaled appearance—our attention was refocused on a pair of Keel-billed Toucans that had alighted in an adjacent tree. These two toucans began croaking, calling, and bobbing their multicolored bills and heads, tossing them from side to side in unison. A Green Shrike-Vireo soon diverted our attention as it began singing in a densely leafed tree just next to the Tower. After a few minutes of its tirelessly repeated three-note call, it pleased us all by hopping out on an exposed branch. We quickly focused our binoculars to admire its bright grass-green plumage and conspicuous blue band on the hind neck. It turned to show off its bright yellow throat as it continued calling before hopping back inside the canopy. As Short-tailed Hawks and a Zone-tailed Hawk took advantage of the early morning thermals and Mealy Parrots circled the Tower, a Purple-crowned Fairy hummingbird fed on a flowering vine atop the canopy near the Tower. And to think this was all taking place before we'd even had breakfast.

It is no wonder birds and birders alike flock to Panama for the holidays. It never ceases to amaze me what surprises await those who join a "Holiday Season in Panama" tour. One of the highlights

of our tour was the Yellow-Green Tyrannulet, which is found only in central and eastern Panama. We came across this Panamanian endemic in an area of second-growth woodland in the Bayano Lowlands. A pair was seen with a mixed flock and gave each of us very accommodating views as they fed in the low trees just above us. Another very special species seen in the same flock was the White-eared Conebill. We saw a pair feeding, gleaning in the terminal foliage and branches just above our heads. Also on the same trail we saw a Black Antshrike. This species, found only in eastern Panama and northern Colombia, was not shy at all as it fed beside the trail. Another memorable highlight was the Blue Cotinga perched in the canopy, seen from the Discovery Center Tower at Pipeline Road. It was an added bonus to the incredible views as we watched the sun set on the forest canopy. No less than five species of parrots circled the Tower and perched in the surrounding trees, including the Brown-hooded Parrot and Blue-headed Parrot, whose colors stood out in the evening sunlight as Blue Dacnis, Green Honeycreeper, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and Golden-hooded Tanager moved through the branches nearby.

I must not fail to mention the Great Potoo we saw on a day perch. We watched as it sat motionless, high in the tree, looking like an extension of the snag it sat on. Another night bird we saw perched by day was a pair of Spectacled Owls. These large, beautiful owls were very much aware of us as we gazed at them in awe and wonder. A memorable moment was provided by a pair of Red-capped Manakins along the entrance road to the Canopy Tower. We all looked on as they flew rapidly from perch to perch before remaining motionless on a low branch beside the road. We also had a great view of a Blue-capped Manakin that responded to playback, and flew in and sat at eye level while we were birding along Pipeline Road. These are just a few of the many memorable moments we experienced.

Of course, among the various species of hummingbirds, four species of trogons, four species of puffbirds, and various species of tanagers and antbirds, I could go on and on mentioning the thrill and enjoyment we experienced watching these tropical marvels. I am sure those on our "Holiday Season in Panama" tours will fondly recall these and many more moments as they reminisce about the wonderful time they had birding Panama. So next winter, when the cold climate has sent the birds south for warmer weather, I suggest you join a VENT tour to the Canopy Tower and witness for yourself why so many magazines write about this premier birding destination of the Tropics. I'm sure you will agree that its fame is well-deserved

Itinerary

- December 27, 2009- Canopy Lodge Pre-trip participants transfer to Canopy Tower, while rest of group arrives at Canopy Tower. Birding from Tower.
- December 28, 2009- Early morning birding from Tower, after breakfast birding along Semaphore Hill. Afternoon spent birding at Carmen's house and Ammo Dump Ponds.
- December 29, 2009- Day Trip to Bayano lowlands and evening birding from Tower.
- December 30, 2009- Day birding at Pipeline Road and Discovery Center.
- December 31, 2009- Day Trip to Caribbean side of Panama and Achiote Road, returned by trans-continental train ride back to Pacific. Some witnessed fireworks display atop Tower.
- January 1, 2010- Pre-breakfast birding from Canopy Tower, after breakfast birding along Plantation Road. Afternoon birding was spent at Summit Pond plus a Night Ride for Owls and Mammals.
- January 2, 2010- Morning birding at Parque Natural Metropolitano (Metro Park), afternoon birding at Tower and Mira Flores Locks.
- January 3, 2010- Departures for home.

Bird List

Tinamous

Great Tinamou
Little Tinamou

Ducks, Geese, & Swans

Muscovy Duck
Blue-winged Teal

Guans & Chachalacas

Gray-headed Chachalaca

Tinamidae

Tinamus major
Crypturelius soui

Anatidae

Cairina moschata
Anas discors

Cracidae

Ortalis cinereiceps

Grebes

Crested bobwhite

Pelicans

Brown Pelican

Cormorants

Neotropic cormorant

Frigatebirds

Magnificent Frigatebird

Hérons, Egrets, & bitterns

Rufescent Tiger-Heron

Great Blue Heron

Great Egret

Snowy Egret

Little Blue Heron

Tricolored Heron

Cattle Egret

Green Heron

Boat-billed Heron

Storks

Wood Stork

New World Vultures

Black Vulture

Turkey Vulture

King Vulture

Hawks, Eagles, & Kites

Osprey

Gray-headed Kite

White-tailed Kite

Snail Kite

Crane Hawk

White Hawk

Savanna Hawk

Gray Hawk

Short-tailed Hawk

Zone-tailed Hawk

Black Hawk-Eagle

Podicipedidae

Colinus cristatus

Pelecanidae

Pelecanus occidentalis

Phalacrocoracidae

Phalacrocorax brasilianus

Fregatidae

Fregata magnificens

Ardeidae

Tigrisoma lineatum

Ardea herodias

Ardea alba

Egretta thula

Egretta caerulea

Egretta tricolor

Bubulcus ibis

Butorides virescens

Cochlearius cochlearius

Ciconiidae

Mycteria americana

Cathartidae

Coragyps atratus

Cathartes aura

Sarcoramphus papa

Accipitridae

Pandion haliaetus

Leptodon cayanensis

Elanus leucurus

Rostrhamus sociabilis

Rostrhamus sociabilis

Leucopternis albicollis

Buteogallus meridionalis

Buteo nitidus

Buteo brachyurus

Buteo albonotatus

Spizaetus tyrannus

Falcons & Caracaras

Salty-backed Forest-Falcon (h)
Collared Forest-Falcon
Crested Caracara
Yellow-headed Caracara
Bat Falcon

Rails, Gallinules, & Coots

White-throated Crake
Gray-necked Wood-Rail
Purple Gallinule
Common Moorhen

Plovers & Lapwings

Southern Lapwing

Jacanas

Wattled Jacana

Sandpipers & allies

Spotted Sandpiper
Whimbrel

Gulls & Terns

Laughing Gull
Black Tern
Royal Tern

Doves & Pigeons

Rock Pigeon
Pale-vented Pigeon
Scaled Pigeon
Short-billed Pigeon
Ruddy Ground-Dove
White-tipped Dove
Gray-chested Dove

Parrots, Macaws, & Allies

Orange-chinned Parakeet
Brown-hooded Parrot
Blue-headed Parrot
Red-lore Parrot
Mealy Parrot
Yellow-crowned Parrot

Falconidae

Micrastur mirandollei
Micrastur semitorquatus
Caracara cheriway
Milvago chimachima
Falco ruficularis

Rallidae

Laterallus albigularis
Aramides cajanea
Porphyrio martinica
Gallinula chloropus

Charadriidae

Vanellus chilensis

Jacanidae

Jacana jacana

Scolopacidae

Actitis macularius
Numenius phaeopus

Laridae

Larus atricilla
Chlidonias niger
Thalasseus maxima

Columbidae

Columba livia
Patagioenas cayennensis
Patagioenas speciosa
Patagioenas nigrirostris
Columbina talpacoti
Leptotila verreauxi
Leptotila cassini

Psittacidae

Brotogeris jugularis
Pionopsitta haematotis
Pionus menstruus
Amazona autumnalis
Amazona farinosa
Amazona ochrocephala

Cuckoos

Squirrel Cuckoo
Greater Ani
Smooth-billed Ani

Typical Owls

Crested Owl
Spectacled Owl
Mottled Owl

Potoos

Great Potoo

Swifts

Vaux's Swift
Short-tailed Swift
Band-rumped Swift
Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift

Hummingbirds

Western Long-tailed Hermit
Stripe-throated Hermit
White-necked Jacobin
Black-throated Mango
Violet-crowned Woodnymph
Violet-bellied Hummingbird
Blue-chested Hummingbird
Snowy-bellied Hummingbird
Rufous-tailed Hummingbird
White-vented Plumeleteer
Purple-crowned Fairy

Trogons

White-tailed Trogon
Black-throated Trogon
Black-tailed Trogon
Slaty-tailed Trogon

Motmots

Blue-crowned Motmot
Rufous Motmot
Broad-billed Motmot

Kingfishers

Amazon Kingfisher

Cuculidae

Piaya cayana
Crotophaga major
Crotophaga ani

Strigidae

Lophostrix cristata
Pulsatrix perspicillata
Ciccaba virgata

Nyctibiidae

Nyctibiidae grandis

Apodidae

Chaetura vauxi
Chaetura brachyura
Chaetura spinicaudus
Panyptila cayennensis

Trochilidae

Phaethornis longirostris
Phaethornis striigularis
Florisuga mellivora
Anthracothorax nigricollis
Thalurania colombica
Damophila Julie
Amazilia (Polyerata) amabilis
Amazilia (Saucerottia) edward
Amazilia tzacatl
Chalybura buffonii
Heliothryx barroti

Trogonidae

Trogon viridis
Trogon rufus
Trogon melanurus
Trogon massena

Momotidae

Momotus momota
Baryphthengus martii
Electron platyrhynchum

Alcedinidae

Chloroceryle amazona

Green Kingfisher
American Pygmy Kingfisher

Puffbirds

White-necked Puffbird
Black-breasted Puffbird
Pied Puffbird
White-whiskered Puffbird

Toucans

Collared Aracari
Keel-billed Toucan
Chestnut-mandibled Toucan

Woodpeckers & Allies

Black-cheeked Woodpecker
Red-crowned Woodpecker
Cinnamon Woodpecker
Lineated Woodpecker
Crimson-crested Woodpecker

Ovenbirds & Woodcreepers

Plain Xenops
Plain-brown Woodcreeper
Olivaceous Woodcreeper
Northern Barred-Woodcreeper
Straight-billed Woodcreeper
Cocoa Woodcreeper
Streak-headed Woodcreeper

Typical Antbirds

Fasciated Antshrike
Black Antshrike
Western Slaty-Antshrike
Checker-throated Antwren
White-flanked Antwren
Slaty Antwren
Rufous-winged Antwren
Dot-winged Antwren
Dusky Antbird
White-bellied Antbird
Spotted Antbird
Bicolored Antbird

Chloroceryle americana
Chloroceryle aenea

Bucconidae

Notharchus macrorhynchos
Notharchus pectoralis
Notharchus tectus
Malacoptila panamensis

Ramphastidae

Pteroglossus torquatus
Ramphastos sulfuratus
Ramphastos swainsonii

Picidae

Melanerpes pucherani
Melanerpes rubricapillus
Celeus loricatus
Dryocopus lineatus
Campephilus melanoleucos

Furnariidae

Xenops minutus
Dendrocincla fuliginosa
Sittasomus griseicapillus
Dendrocolaptes sanctithomae
Xiphorhynchus picus
Xiphorhynchus susurrans
Lepidocolaptes souleyeii

Thamnophilidae

Cymbilaimus lineatus
Thamnophilus nigriceps
Thamnophilus antrinuch
Myrmotherula fulviventris
Myrmotherula axillaries
Myrmotheruia schisticolor
Herpsiliochmus rufimarginalus
Microrhophias quixensis
Cercomacra tyrannina
Myrmeciza longipes
Hylophylax naevioides
Gymnopithys leucaspis

Antthrushes & Antpittas

Black-faced Antthrush
Streak-chested Antpitta

Tyrant Flycatchers

Brown-capped Tyrannulet
Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet
Forest Elaenia
Yellow-bellied Elaenia
Yellow-green Tyrannulet
Paltry Tyrannulet
Southern Bentbill
Common Tody-Flycatcher
Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher
Olivaceous Flatbill
White-throated Spadebill
Golden-crowned Spadebill
Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher
Dusky-capped Flycatcher
Great-crested Flycatcher
Lesser Kiskadee
Great Kiskadee
Boat-billed Flycatcher
Rusty-margined Flycatcher
Social Flycatcher
Streaked Flycatcher
Tropical Kingbird
Fork-tailed Flycatcher

Genera incertae sedis

Cinnamon Becard
Masked Tityra
Black-crowned Tityra

Cotingas

Blue Cotinga
Purple-throated Fruitcrow

Manakins

Golden-collared Manakin
Blue-crowned Manakin
Red-capped Manakin

Formicariidae

Formicarius analis
Hylopezus analis

Tyrannidae

Ornithion brunneicapillus
Camptostoma obsoletum
Myiopagis gaimardii
Elaenia flavogaster
Phylloscartes flavovirens
Zimmerius villssimus
Oncostoma olivaceum
Todiostrostrum cinereum
Todiostrostrum nigriceps
Rhynchocyclus olivaceus
Platyrrinchus mystaceus
Platyrrinchus coronatus
Terenotriccus erythrurus
Myiarchus tuberculifer
Myiarchus crinitus
Pitangus lictor
Pitangus sulphuratus
Megarynchus pitangua
Myiozetetes cayanensis
Myiozetetes similis
Myiodynastes maculatus
Tyrannus melancholicus
Tyrannus savanna

Pachyramphus cinnamomeus
Tityra semifasciata
Tityra inquisitor

Contingidae

Continga natteririi
Querula purpurata

Pipridae

Manacus vitellinus
Pipra coronata
Pipra mentails

Vireos & Allies

Scrub Greenlet
Golden-fronted Greenlet
Lesser Greenlet
Green Shrike-Vireo
Rufous-browed Peppershrike

Swallows

Gray-breasted Martin
Southern Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow

Wrens

Black-bellied Wren
Bay Wren
Rufous-breasted Wren
Rufous-and-White Wren
House Wren
White-breasted Wood-Wren
Song Wren

Old World Warblers

Long-billed Gnatwren
Tropical Gnatcatcher

Thrushes & Allies

Clay-colored Robin

Mockingbirds & Thrashers

Tropical Mockingbird

New World Warblers

Tennessee Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler
Prothonotary Warbler
Northern Warbler

Genus incertae sedis

Bananaquit

Tanagers & Allies

Rosy Thrush-Tanager
Gray-headed Tanager

Vireonidae

Hylophilus flavipes
Manaacus viteliinus
Hylophilus decurtatus
Vireolanlus pulchellus
Cyclarhis gujanensis

Hirundinidae

Progne chalybea
Stelgidopteryx ruficollis
Hirundo rustica

Troglodytidae

Thryothorus fasciatoventris
Thryothorus nigricapillus
Thryothorus rutilus
Thryothorus rufalbus
Troglodytes aedon
Henicorhina leucosticta
Cyphorhinus phaeocephalus

Sylviidae

Ramphocaenus melanurus
Polioptila plumbea

Turdidae

Turdus grayi

Mimidae

Mimus gilvus

Parulidae

Vermivora peregrina
Dendroica petechia
Dendroica pensylvanica
Dendroica castanea
Protonotaria cilrea
Seiurus noveboracensis

Coereba flaveola

Thraupidae

Rhodinocichia rosea
Eucometis penicillata

White-shouldered Tanager
Red-crowned Ant-Tanager
Red-throated Ant-Tanager
Hepatic Tanager
Summer Tanager
Crimson-backed Tanager
Flame-rumped Tanager
Blue-gray Tanager
Palm Tanager
White-eared conebill
Plain-colored Tanager
Golden-hooded Tanager
Scarlet-thighed Dacnis
Blue Dacnis
Green Honeycreeper
Shining Honeycreeper
Red-legged Honeycreeper

Buntings, Sparrows, & Allies

Blue-black Grassquit
Variable Seedeater

Thick-billed Seed-Finch
Saffron Finch
Orange-billed sparrow
Black-striped Sparrow

Saltators & Cardinals

Buff-throated Saltator
Black-headed Saltator
Slate-colored Grosbeak
Blue-black Grosbeak

Troupials & Allies

Great-tailed Grackle
Yellow-backed Oriole
Yellow-tailed Oriole
Baltimore Oriole
Yellow-billed Cacique
Yellow-rumped Cacique
Scarlet-rumped Cacique
Chestnut-headed Oropendola

Siskins, Crossbills, & Allies

Yellow-crowned Euphonia
Thick-billed Euphonia

Tachyphonus luctuosus
Habia rubica
Habia fuscicauda
Piranga flava
Piranga rubra
Ramphocelus dimidiatus
Ramphocelus flammigerus
Thraupis episcopus
Thraupis palmarum
Conirostrum leucogenys
Tanagara inornata
Tanagara larvata
Dacnis venusta
Dacnis cayana
Chlorophanes spiza
Cyanerpes lucidus
Cyanerpes cyaneus

Emberizidae

Volatinia jacarina
Sporophila (corvine)
americana
Oryzoborus funereus
Sicalis flaveola
Arremon aurantiirostris
Arremon conirostris

Cardinalidae

Saltator maximus
Saltator atriceps
Saltator grossus
Cyanocompsa cyanoides

Icteridae

Quiscalus mexicanus
Icterus chrysater
Icterus mesomelas
Icterus galbula
Amblycercus holosericeus
Cacicus cela
Cacicus uropygialis
Psarocolius wagleri

Fringillidae

Euphonia luteicapilla
Euphonia laniirostris

Fulvous-vented Euphonia
Lesser Goldfinch

Euphonia fulvicrissa
Carduelis psaltria

Old world Sparrows

House Sparrow

Passeridae

Passer domesticus

Mammal List

Opossums

Common Opossum

Didelphidae

Didelphidae marsupialis

Sloths

Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth

Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth

Megalonychidae & Bradypodidae

Choloepus hoffmanni

Bradypus variegates

Armadillos

Nine-banded Armadillo

Dasypodidae

Dasypus novemcinctus

Tamarins

Geoffroy's Tamarin

Caliitrichidae

Saguinis geofftoyi

New World Monkeys

White-throated Capuchin

Mantled Howler Monkey

Cebidae

Cebus capucinus

Alouatta palliata

Squirrels

Variegated Squirrel

Scluridae

Sciurus variegatoides

Capybara

Capybara

Hydrochaeridae

Hydrochaeris hydrochaeris

Agoutis

Central American Agouti

Dasyproctidae

Dasyprocta punctata

Raccoons & Allies

White-nosed Coatimundi

Olingo

Nasua narica

Bassaricyon gabbii

Neotropical Fruit Bats

Tent-making Bat

Stenodermatinae

Uroderma bilobatum

Porcupines

Rothschild's porcupine

Erethizontidae

Coendou rothschildi