

PANAMA: EL VALLE'S CANOPY LODGE EXTENSION

FEBRUARY 10 – 15, 2007

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EL VALLE DE SAN ANTON

10–15 February 2006

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Compiled by: Marshall J. Iliff

The Canopy Lodge at El Valle was certainly a comfortable and relaxing place, and especially welcome after a week of hard-core birding at the Canopy Tower. We all took full advantage of the veranda, cold drinks, spacious rooms, and riverside setting to relax and recuperate fully from the previous week's exertion. But this didn't mean we stopped birding! From the veranda, with drinks in hand, we watched feeders swarming with birds, including several species of tanagers: White-lined, Crimson-backed, Flame-rumped (we all wish they'd call this one Lemon-rumped officially), and Dusky-faced, along with Chestnut-headed Oropendolas, Thick-billed Euphonias, Tennessee Warblers, and even the odd Rufous Motmot.

We didn't spend all our time on the veranda. On our first and last days we explored the forest trails of nearby El Chorro, where hikes along the rushing stream produced such specialties as Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Violet-crowned Woodnymph, a roosting Mottled Owl, and others. A highlight from our first day's walk was a Black-faced Antthrush, looking every bit like a rail as it crept stealthily along the forest floor. The grand finale for that walk was the stunning Sunbittern that we startled from beside a small pool. It posed in the open for a minute or more while we enjoyed scope looks.

On other days we ventured somewhat farther afield. The Cariguana Trail was a good diversion after our shopping excursion to the Sunday market. Danilo knew where a Tropical Screech-Owl was roosting (lucky for us, since I doubt any of us would have spotted it!), which made for a major highlight. Other birds up the trail included an amazing Mourning Warbler behaving as if he were defending a summer territory, and a showy Blue-crowned Motmot. In the lowlands of El Chirú on another day we found a variety of other new species, including Brown-throated Parakeet, Lesser Elaenia, and a surprise Veraguan Mango. This large, purple-tailed hummingbird is one of Panama's few endemics, and occurs here at the extreme eastern end of its range. It was a great surprise.

The day at Altas del Maria is always one of my favorites. This year the birding got good as soon as we crested out onto the ridge. Fruiting trees caused us to pull off, and immediately we noticed Pale-vented Thrushes, a rarely seen species on this tour, feeding in the trees around us. Adding color and zest were at least three Orange-bellied Trogons. A bit further along, magic with the iPod produced two showy Yellow-eared Toucanets that, like the toucans, seemed to want to show off their bright colors. A bit further along we found a flowering tree that was attracting Snowcaps. Although the tiny but striking males were coming in at regular intervals, they were so small and fast-moving that it took quite a while for everyone to get a good look. But patience paid off, and while searching we scored Song Wren and several other species. Alas, a calling Brown-billed Scythebill would not show itself for the group.

Continuing down the road, we made a stop for Dull-mantled Antbird and, although the bird did not cooperate immediately for the entire group, many of us had several good looks. Declared hopeless and "one of the most difficult birds ever" by some of us, persistence paid off, and before long we were all congratulating ourselves on the good looks we had at a bird that surely knows how to hide when it wants to!

Taking a break from the rushed morning, we settled down for some lunch, but the birds would not leave us alone! A showy pair of Tufted Flycatchers sallied forth over our lunch tables. A Plain Antvireo calling nearby begged us to tape it into view, and so we obliged. Later, a super-responsive Red-faced Spinetail put on a show—this species is a rarity here and was only discovered in the region a few years ago! The grand finale here turned out to be one of the more difficult Central American hummingbirds—the White-tipped Sicklebill. But who would believe that this species is normally hard-to-find? The one we saw, spotted by one of our drivers, sat obligingly in a *Heliconia* patch, giving us scope views for some 30 minutes! Close up photos and killer looks were had by all. Unfortunately, our access to Altas del Maria was possible due to construction roads that have been put in for an upcoming development. The forest is being razed there quickly, and our feelings about the fine birds we found were soured somewhat by the knowledge that their habitat will soon be fragmented, if not gone.

By the morning of our final day one target remained—the incomparable, but elusive, Tody Motmot. Several of us set out on a quest to roust out this one last bird. Our hike took us up the somewhat steep trails of El Chorro, but with persistent whistling, and whistling, and whistling, Danilo finally got a response and quickly put the group onto the bird. After eluding us for days the little devil put on a spectacular show in our last hour, sitting still at eye level for more than ten minutes while we admired him in the scope and tried for the perfect photo. A fitting end to another great week at El Valle.

Day 1, 10 February: Morning departure from Canopy Tower for El Valle with opportunistic birding en route (Savanna Hawk!). Feeder watching and late morning walk around El Valle trails. Afternoon walk along interior forest trails at El Chorro.

Day 3, 11 February: Morning on La Mesa, where persistent drizzle (and sometimes rain!) slowed our birding pace somewhat. After lunch we visited the Sunday market downtown, and, laden with local arts and crafts, we continued our birding at the Cariguana Trail, where a roosting Tropical Screech-Owl was the highlight.

Day 4, 12 February: Very special morning at the only recently accessible area of Altas del Maria. This higher elevation area has only been recently explored (with the building of new roads into the area) and has yielded a wealth of species previously unknown from the area. We spent a full day afield in this area.

Day 5, 13 February: We headed out early for the lowland area of El Chirú (hot, windy), adding substantially to our bird list. In the afternoon some of us returned to La Mesa, where we hiked the Cerro Gaital trail all the way up to the lookout, with some nice birding en route.

Day 6, 14 February: We greeted the morning on Raul's porch where we continued to find new birds. Final birdwalks around the El Valle/El Chorro trails yielded some additional new species, including the culmination of a long search for Tody Motmot, before we departed for the Country Inn and Suites. Final dinner at Alberto's on the Amador Causeway.

Day 7, 15 February: Departure for home.

The below list includes all species seen by our group during the tour 10–14 Feb 2007. Locations are listed for as many species as was practical, and I give some general comments on the abundance of each species on the tour. Dates are listed only when the date seen is not clear from the location (e.g., all Altas del Maria sightings will be from 12 Feb). Special highlights are in ALL CAPS; rare or unusual species are underlined. References to the Panama book are of course Robert S. Ridgely and John A. Gwynn's 1989 A Guide to the Birds of Panama, 2nd edition. Nomenclature follows the AOU 7th edition and supplements through August 2006.

AM' Altas del Maria; CT' Canopy Tower; EC' El Chirú; EV' El Valle; M' Mesa; Rd' Road; *' not seen/heard on Canopy Tower or Chiriquí trips; **' not seen or heard on Canopy Tower trip

***Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna autumnalis* – EV; out of place at the small El Valle pond 13 Feb

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* – EC, Rd

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* – EC

Great Egret *Ardea alba* – EC, EV, Rd

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* – EV; one at small pond 10 Feb

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* – EV; one at small pond 13 Feb

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* – EV, AM, EC, Rd; two flew past AM

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* – All

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* – All; the subspecies here, *ruficollis*, looks quite different from those in the United States

Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture *Cathartes burrovianus* – EC

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* – Rd

GRAY-HEADED KITE *Leptodon cayanensis* – AM; nice low flyover at AM

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus* – AM

Pearl Kite *Gampsonyx swainsonii* – EC, Rd

Savanna Hawk *Buteogallus urubitinga* – EC, Rd
Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo ridgwayi* – EV, M, AM, EC
***Gray Hawk** *Buteo nitidus* – EV
Short-tailed Hawk *Buteo brachyurus* – CT, AM
 (h) **Collared Forest-Falcon** *Micrastur semitorquatus* – CT
Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway* – EC
Yellow-headed Caracara *Milvago chimachima* – EC, Rd
***American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius* – EC; at airport nearby; presumably of the South American subspecies *isabellinus*, which has been expanding its range into Panama in recent years. Compared to American birds, it has brighter plumage, an unspotted breast, and a mostly unmarked back.
Bat Falcon *Falco ruficularis* – AM
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* – EC; at airport nearby
Gray-necked Wood-Rail *Aramides cajanea* – EV
SUNBITTERN *Eurypyga helias* – EV
Wattled Jacana *Jacana jacana* – EV; two at small pond 14 Feb
Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* – Rd
Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* – EC, Rd
***Scaled Pigeon** *Patagioenas speciosa* – CT, M, AM
 (h) **Short-billed Pigeon** *Patagioenas nigrirostris* – CT; one heard morning of 10 Feb was my 1st ever from the CT
Ruddy Ground-Dove *Columbina talpacoti* – M, EV, EC
White-tipped Dove *Leptotila verreauxi* – EV, M, EC
Gray-chested Dove *Leptotila cassini* – EV; Cariguana Trail
****Brown-throated Parakeet** *Aratinga pertinax* – EC; this form, *ocularis*, has sometimes been treated as a separate species (Veraguan Parakeet) according to the Panama book
Orange-chinned Parakeet *Brotogeris jugularis* – EV, AM
***Brown-hooded Parrot** *Pionopsitta haematotis* – AM
Blue-headed Parrot *Pionus menstruus* – M, AM
Red-lore Parrot *Amazona autumnalis* – CT
***YELLOW-CROWNED PARROT** *Amazona ochrocephala* – EC; my first good look at this species in Panama!
Squirrel Cuckoo *Piaya cayana* – AM
Smooth-billed Ani *Crotophaga ani* – M
***Groove-billed Ani** *Crotophaga sulcirostris* – EC; the only place I have seen this species in Panama
***TROPICAL SCREECH-OWL** *Megascops choliba* – EV; a rufous morph roosting at Cariguana; great views!
***Mottled Owl** *Ciccaba virgata* – EV; one roosting cryptically at El Chorro
Band-rumped Swift *Chaetura spinicaudus* – AM –
Green Hermit *Phaethornis guy* – EV, M, AM
Stripe-throated Hermit *Phaethornis striigularis* – EV, M, AM
***WHITE-TIPPED SICKLEBILL** *Eutoxeres aquila* – AM; amazing point-blank scope looks at a perched bird for 30+ minutes!
White-necked Jacobin *Florisuga mellivora* – EV
****VERAGUAN MANGO** *Anthracothorax veraguensis* – EC; Panama endemic; one female at El Chirú was subtle, but the green central breast stripe eliminated Black-throated Mango. A great bird!
***Violet-headed Hummingbird** *Klais guimeti* – EV, AM
****Garden Emerald** *Chlorostilbon assimilis* – EC
Violet-crowned Woodnymph *Thalurania colombica* – M; stunning
Sapphire-throated Hummingbird *Lepidopyga coeruleogularis* – EC
***Blue-chested Hummingbird** *Amazilia amabilis* – EV
Snowy-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia edward* – EV, AM, EC ; almost a Panama endemic, this species just barely sneaks into se. Costa Rica
Rufous-tailed Hummingbird *Amazilia tzacatl* – EV, EC, M; on nest at La Mesa
***SNOWCAP** *Elvira cupreiceps* – AM; a tiny but wonderful hummingbird; scarce in Panama
***White-vented Plumeleteer** *Microchera albocoronata* – EV
****Green-crowned Brilliant** *Heliodoxa jacula* – M; brief looks, but a rare bird for the area
****Long-billed Starthroat** *Heliomaster longirostris* – EV; flycatching over the stream
****ORANGE-BELLIED TROGON** *Trogon rufus* – AM, M; was its belly really orange?

***TODY MOTMOT** *Hylomanes momotula* – EV; the culmination of a long and difficult search was long scope looks at this diminutive motmot, that is rare throughout its range

Blue-crowned Motmot *Momotus momota* – EV; Cariguana Trail

Rufous Motmot *Baryphthengus martii* – EV, M; on the feeders

Green Kingfisher *Chloroceryle americana* – EV

****EMERALD TOUCANET** *Aulacorhynchus prasinus* – M; This widespread species may be split by the AOU in the future; the form we saw was *caeruleogularis* (Blue-throated Toucanet). In a 15 Jul 2003 supplement, Clements split Emerald Toucanet into 7 species: Wagler's Toucanet (highlands of sw. Mexico), Emerald Toucanet (e. Mexico to El Salvador), Blue-throated (Costa Rica and w. Panama), and Violet-throated (e. Panama to Colombia), plus three others in South America.

***YELLOW-EARED TOUCANET** *Selenidera spectabilis* – AM; great looks

Keel-billed Toucan *Ramphastos sulfuratus* – CT, M, EV

Chestnut-mandibled Toucan *Ramphastos swainsonii* – CT, AM

Black-cheeked Woodpecker *Melanerpes chrysauchen* – AM

Red-crowned Woodpecker *Melanerpes rubricapillus* – EV

***RED-FACED SPINETAIL** *Cranioleuca erythropis* – AM; one of the recently discovered species of AM

***SPOTTED BARBTAIL** *Premnoplex brunnescens* – AM; one of the recently discovered species of AM

Plain Xenops *Xenops minutus* – EV

Cocoa Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus susurrans* – EV

***Spotted Woodcreeper** *Xiphorhynchus erythropygius* – EV, M, AM

***Brown-billed Scythebill** *Campylorhamphus pusillus* – AM; heard only for most; one of the recently discovered species of AM

***Great Antshrike** *Taraba major* – EV

Barred Antshrike *Thamnophilus doliatus* – EC, EV

***Russet Antshrike** *Thamnistes anabatinus* – EV; one of the recently discovered species of AM

***Plain Antvireo** *Dysithamnus mentalis* – AM

(h)**White-bellied Antbird** *Myrmeciza longipes* – AM (h)

***DULL-MANTLED ANTBIRD** *Myrmeciza laemosticta* – AM; great looks had by all, after considerable effort!

Bicolored Antbird *Gymnopithys leucaspis* – M, AM; seen by Nubs

Black-faced Antthrush *Formicarius analis* – EV, AM (h); great looks at El CHorro

* (h)**Black-crowned Antpitta** *Pittasoma michleri* – AM (h); one of the recently discovered species of AM

Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet *Camptostoma obsoletum* – EC, EV

Yellow-bellied Elaenia *Elaenia flavogaster* – EC

****Lesser Elaenia** *Elaenia chiriquensis* – EC

***Olive-striped Flycatcher** *Mionectes olivaceus* – M, EV, EC

****Ochre-bellied Flycatcher** *Mionectes oleagineus* – EV, AM, EC

Paltry Tyrannulet *Zimmerius vilissimus* – EV, AM

(h)**Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant** *Lophotriccus pileatus* – M (h), AM (h)

Common Tody-Flycatcher *Todirostrum cinereum* – EC

***Eye-ringed Flatbill** *Rhynchocyclus brevirostris* – EV; on our final walk

****Tufted Flycatcher** *Mitrephanes phaeocercus* – AM; one of the recently discovered species of AM; interestingly, the piping song of birds from Costa Rica south is totally unlike the song in Mexico and probably represents a species-level difference. The subspecies we saw was presumably *viduus* of central Panama.

(h)**Acadian Flycatcher** *Empidonax virescens* – EV (h)

Dusky-capped Flycatcher *Myiarchus tuberculifer* – CT, EV, AM; this is subspecies *nigricapillus*, different from the subspecies *olivaceus* which reaches the U.S.A. in Arizona

Panama Flycatcher *Myiarchus panamensis* – EC, EV; one at Raul's place was unusual in EV itself

Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus* – EC

Boat-billed Flycatcher *Megarynchus pitangua* – AM, EC, EV

Social Flycatcher *Myiozetetes similis* – EV, M, EC

Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus* – Rd, M, AM, EC

Fork-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus savana* – EC

***Thrush-like Schiffornis** *Schiffornis turdina* – M, AM

Golden-collared Manakin *Manacus vitellinus* – EV, M, AM

White-ruffed Manakin *Corapipo altera* – M

Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons* – AM

Yellow-green Vireo *Vireo flavoviridis* – EC, EV
Scrub Greenlet *Hylophilus flavipes* – EC
Lesser Greenlet *Hylophilus decurtatus* – AM
Green Shrike-Vireo *Vireolanius pulchellus* – CT, AM (h); seen well from CT on our first morning
Black-chested Jay *Cyanocorax affinis* – EC
Gray-breasted Martin *Progne chalybea* – Rd, EV, EC, M
Southern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis* – EV, M
Bay Wren *Thryothorus nigricapillus* – EV
Rufous-breasted Wren *Thryothorus rutilus* – EV
****Rufous-and-white Wren** *Thryothorus rufalbus* – EV
Plain Wren *Thryothorus modestus* – M
House Wren *Troglodytes aedon* – EV; this subspecies *inquietus* is very different from U.S.A. House Wrens, both in song and appearance. Some authors split birds south of southern Mexico as Southern House Wren (*T. musculus*), though the AOU has not adopted this.
****Ochraceous Wren** *Troglodytes ochraceus* – M, AM; one of the recently discovered species of AM
(h) **White-breasted Wood-Wren** *Henicorhina leucosticta* – EV
(h) ****Gray-breasted Wood-Wren** *Henicorhina leucophrys* – M, AM
(h) **Scaly-breasted Wren** *Microcerculus marginatus* – AM, M
Song Wren *Cyphorhinus phaeocephalus* – AM
***Tawny-faced Gnatwren** *Microbates cinereiventris* – M
Long-billed Gnatwren *Ramphocaenus melanurus* – CT, EV, M, AM
****Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush** *Catharus aurantiirostris* – EV
***Gray-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* – EV; very rare in winter north of South America, we saw one well at El Chorro 10 Feb.
***Pale-vented Thrush** *Turdus obsoletus* – AM; one of the recently discovered species of AM
Clay-colored Robin *Turdus grayi* – EV, EC, M
Tropical Mockingbird *Mimus gilvus* – Rd
Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera* – M, AM
Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina* – EV, M, AM
Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* – EC
Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica* – M, AM
****Black-throated Green Warbler** *Dendroica virens* – AM, M
Bay-breasted Warbler *Dendroica castanea* – AM
Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* – M, AM
***Louisiana Waterthrush** *Seiurus motacilla* – EV
****Mourning Warbler** *Oporornis philadelphia* – EV, M, AM
Rufous-capped Warbler *Basileuterus rufifrons* – EV, M
Bananaquit *Coereba flaveola* – EV, M, AM
****Common Bush-Tanager** *Chlorospingus ophthalmicus* – M, AM; the central Panama subspecies (*punctulatus*) that we saw is restricted to Veraguas and Coclé is characterised by its spotted, yellow throat
***BLACK-AND-YELLOW TANAGER** *Chrysothlypis chrysomelas* – AM; beautiful
***Dusky-faced Tanager** *Mitrospingus cassinii* – EV, AM
***Tawny-crested Tanager** *Tachyphonus delatrii* – M, AM
White-lined Tanager *Tachyphonus rufus* – EV
Red-crowned Ant-Tanager *Habia rubica* – EV, M
Hepatic Tanager *Piranga flava* – AM, M; Panamanian birds are of the subspecies *testacea*, which is allied with the *lutea* group of South America rather than the *hepatica* group of the U.S.A. and northern Central America. This is a very likely future split. Panamanian birds differ from USA birds in having a different multi-noted call and lacking the grayish ear patch. If split, these may be known as Highland Hepatic-Tanager.
Crimson-backed Tanager *Ramphocelus dimidiatus* – EV
Flame-rumped Tanager *Ramphocelus flammigerus* – EV
Blue-gray Tanager *Thraupis episcopus* – EV, EC
Palm Tanager *Thraupis palmarum* – EV, EC
Plain-colored Tanager *Tangara inornata* – EV
***Emerald Tanager** *Tangara florida* – AM; seen by Judy only
****Silver-throated Tanager** *Tangara icterocephala* – M, AM

Bay-headed Tanager *Tangara gyrola* – EV
Golden-hooded Tanager *Tangara larvata* – EV, M
Green Honeycreeper *Chlorophanes spiza* – EV, M, AM
Red-legged Honeycreeper *Cyanerpes cyaneus* – EV, EC
Blue-black Grassquit *Volatinia jacarina* – EC
Variable Seedeater *Sporophila americana* – EV, M, EC; many subspecies occur, the ones in western Chiriquí (*hoffmanni*) which we saw have a dark throat, unlike Canal Zone *hicksii*.
Ruddy-breasted Seedeater *Sporophila minuta* – EC
Thick-billed Seed-Finch *Oryzoborus funereus* – EV
Yellow-faced Grassquit *Tiaris olivaceus* – EV, M, AM
****Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch** *Buarremon brunneinucha* – M, AM (h); brief looks
***Orange-billed Sparrow** *Arremon aurantirostris* – EV
Black-striped Sparrow *Arremonops conirostris* – EV
Streaked Saltator *Saltator striatipectus* – EV, EC
Buff-throated Saltator *Saltator maximus* – EV, M, EC
Slate-colored Grosbeak *Saltator grossus* – AM (h)
****Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* – EC, EV
Blue-black Grosbeak *Cyanocopsa cyanooides* – EV
****Eastern Meadowlark** *Sturnella magna* – EC
Great-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus mexicanus* – Rd, EV, EC
Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula* – EC
Yellow-billed Cacique *Amblycercus holosericeus* – AM; great looks
Chestnut-headed Oropendola *Psarocolius wagleri* – EV, AM; on the feeders
Yellow-crowned Euphonia *Euphonia luteicapilla* – EV, EC
Thick-billed Euphonia *Euphonia lanirostris* – EV, M
***Tawny-capped Euphonia** *Euphonia anae* – M, AM

LEADER ONLY

Western Slaty-Antshrike *Thamnophilus atrinucha* – EV
Spot-crowned Antvireo *Dysithamnus puncticeps* – AM
***White-throated Spadebill** *Platyrinchus mystaceus* – M
Yellow-margined Flycatcher *Tolmomyias assimilis* – AM
Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus* – AM
Bright-rumped Attila *Attila spadiceus* – AM
***Rufous-browed Peppershrike** *Cyclarhis gujanensis* – EC
***American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla* – EV
Rosy Thrush-Tanager *Rhodinocichla rosea* – EV
Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra* – AM

MAMMALS

Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth *Bradypus variegatus* – EV
Mantled Howler Monkey *Alouatta pallidata* – CT, EV (h)
Variagated Squirrel *Sciurus variegatoides* – EC
Red-tailed Squirrel *Sciurus granatensis* – EV
Western/Alfaro's Pygmy Squirrel *Microsciurus mimulus/alfari* – EV; Judy spotted this one near the forest feeders; these two species are nearly impossible to tell apart, but the foothill location and lack of white behind the ears may favor Western Pygmy Squirrel.

HERPS etc.

Striped Basilisk – EV; several seen along creeks at EV
Anolis lizard sp. – EV; several anoles seen, may have involved several species
Treefrog sp. – EV; treefrogs heard nightly; ID to species is pending