

BIRDS & BUTTERFLIES IN PANAMA

AUGUST 1 – 13, 2009

PANAMA'S CANOPY TOWER

AUGUST 1 – 8, 2009

EL VALLE'S CANOPY LODGE EXTENSION

AUGUST 8 – 13, 2009

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Exciting rainforest birding and butterflying around the one-of-a-kind Canopy Tower ecolodge with visits to the famous Pipeline Road and the Panama Canal.

As one of the premier natural history destinations in the Neotropics, Central Panama offers a superior combination of tropical forest habitats, fine accommodations and cuisine, the historic Panama Canal, and superb birding. Whether you are an experienced traveler or visiting the Tropics for the first time, you will find this tour an absolute delight. Unlike our other Canopy Tower tours, the scope of this trip extends beyond birding to emphasize observation and identification of the region's diversity of butterflies. To allow time for butterflying, our tour will move at a relaxed pace, visiting fewer sites than our other Panama tours, but spending more time at each.

Our base for exploration is the exciting Canopy Tower, one of the most unique and enjoyable ecotourism lodges anywhere. Perched above Soberania National Park, the tower offers great birding literally right out your window, with chances for viewing such eye-catchers as Chestnut-mandibled Toucan, Blue Cotinga, and Green Shrike-Vireo, as well as many other colorful tropical birds.

A number of other nearby birding areas range from wetlands with Rufescent Tiger-Heron, White-throated Crake, and a profusion of orioles, tanagers, and hummingbirds, to the famous Pipeline Road with its suite of deeper forest species including trogons, motmots, parrots, flycatchers, and antbirds.

Although all outings may seek both birds and butterflies, in general, mornings will center on birding while the midday hours are best for butterflying. Central Panama is home to hundreds of tropical butterflies and we will have no problem entertaining ourselves as we observe a rich collection of swallowtails, sulphurs, hairstreaks, metalmarks, heliconians, sisters, leafwings, satyrs, owl-butterflies, and the spectacular morphos. Although butterflying in Central America is still in its infancy, the publication of several new field guides has made the challenging task of Neotropical butterfly identification a little easier.

Our time in the field may also produce an excellent list of tropical mammals with sloths, howler and capuchin monkeys, Geoffroy's Tamarin, Capybara, Kinkajou, and Lesser Anteater among the possibilities.

Good accommodations and cuisine; all nights at one location; easy walking; warm and humid climate with thunderstorms possible.

PANAMA'S CANOPY TOWER

AUGUST 1 – 8, 2009

August 1, Day 1: Arrival in Panama City and Transfer to the Canopy Tower. Participants are encouraged to fly to Panama City on either American Airlines Flight 959 from Miami or Continental Airlines Flight 888 from Houston, which are both scheduled to arrive in the evening. Passengers on either flight will be met at the airport and transferred to the Canopy Tower, which is about 45 minutes away. For those not on either of these flights, private transfers can be arranged for an additional fee.

NIGHT: Canopy Tower Ecolodge & Nature Observatory, Gamboa

August 2, Day 2: Canopy Tower and Entrance Road. An early start this morning (6:00 am) will find us on top of the Tower enjoying a cup of coffee or tea while watching the sunrise over the forested hillsides. The predawn chorus often includes the strange barks and moans of forest-falcons, the haunting calls of a tinamou, or the last hoots of an owl. As the light hits the treetops, the forest really begins to come alive. Birds begin singing and actively foraging, many of them close and often below us. Species regularly seen from here include incredible Keel-billed and Chestnut-mandibled toucans, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Masked Tityra, and the stunning Slate-colored Grosbeak. Fruiting cecropias often harbor a nice variety of tanagers, including Plain-colored, White-shouldered, and Palm, Fulvous-vented Euphonia, and gorgeous Green Honeycreepers. We'll also keep a sharp eye out for two of the true prizes of the tree tops, the spectacular Blue Cotinga (increasingly scarce) and the brilliant Green Shrike-vireo. We've had good luck seeing cotingas here (about half of our trips), often at close range, and the shrike-vireo, whose monotonous titmouse-like song can be heard in many areas of the tropics, can perhaps be viewed best here at the Tower. It can be hard to tear oneself away from the show to go inside for breakfast. Fortunately, the dining room has panoramic windows that will allow us to keep an eye out even while eating!

After breakfast we'll begin working our way down the one-mile entrance road. As we descend Semaphore Hill, a host of new birds will greet us. Broad-billed and Rufous motmots, various trogons, Chestnut-backed Antbird, and Blue-crowned and Red-capped manakins are among the many possibilities. Ant swarms are sometimes encountered along this road as well, with a variety of attendant antbirds and woodcreepers possible. As we head back to the Canopy Tower, butterfly activity should be reaching its peak. Verbena bushes at the base of the tower attract a wide variety of butterflies including Green Flasher and Dimorphic Skipper. But the real show is back on the Tower where we'll have the rare opportunity to view a number of canopy-associated butterflies perching at eye-level. Some of the gems we'll hope to see here include Imperial Sunstreak, Regal Greatstreak, Square-tipped Fiestamark, Orion Cecropian, and several species of sisters.

In the mid-afternoon we will make a short excursion to some nice wetlands where we'll seek out a whole new group of birds. Tiny White-throated Crakes dart about the marsh. Wattled Jacanas and Purple Gallinules walk on the floating vegetation. Greater Anis are often seen atop the brushy tangles, while Lesser Kiskadees prefer perches closer to the water. Sometimes a Capybara strolls by, and Rufescent Tiger-Herons are regular. A careful check of the shoreline might reveal a skulking Gray-necked Wood-Rail or a gorgeous American Pygmy-Kingfisher hiding in the shadows. The open field and edge habitats surrounding the marsh can be good for Squirrel Cuckoo, Barred Antshrike, Black-striped Sparrow, and Yellow-billed Cacique, in addition to a variety of raptors, hummingbirds, parrots, and flycatchers. In this open habitat, we may see a selection of new butterflies such as Bordered Patch, Banded and White Peacocks, Variable Cracker, Veined White-Skipper, and Mimosa Skipper.

NIGHT: Canopy Tower Ecolodge & Nature Observatory, Gamboa

August 3, Day 3: Pipeline Road. Beginning just beyond the old Canal Zone town of Gamboa, Pipeline Road winds for miles through the forests and foothills of Soberania National Park. The combination of rich primary and secondary forests; clear, beautiful streams; lack of traffic (the road dead ends); and abundant birdlife make this arguably the most famous birding road in the world. One never knows quite what to expect here, but there will certainly be much to see. Perhaps we'll find a fruiting matchwood tree with three species of toucans and several trogons feeding in it. Maybe it will be a Black-breasted Puffbird or Broad-billed Motmot perched motionless at eye level, or a noisy troop of Purple-throated Fruitcrows working the forest edge. We may locate a lek of spectacular Golden-collared Manakins displaying on sunlit patches of the forest floor. The wild frenzy of wing snapping and jumping is truly an amazing sight. Fruiting cecropias lure honeycreepers, tanagers, and dacnis to their fruiting spikes. We'll always be on the alert for a foraging ant swarm with its attendant antbirds (the Spotted, Bicolored, and perhaps the stunning Ocellated) and woodcreepers (Northern Barred and Plain-brown among the possibilities). Other than the Darien, the very remote frontier zone between Panama and Colombia, Pipeline road is the best area we've found in the Neotropics for locating ant swarms. Surely the whirl of activity around a swarm is one of the most exciting phenomena of the bird world. As the voracious ants march along the forest floor seeking smaller terrestrial prey, the birds pursue larger, more mobile insects and other arthropods. Because the birds are so intent on feeding, it is often possible to get very close views of them.

Some of the other birds we may encounter in the Pipeline Road area are Black Hawk-Eagle, Blue-headed and Mealy parrots, Slaty-tailed and Black-throated trogons, Rufous Motmot, Great Jacamar, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Scaly-throated Leaf-tosser, Fasciated and Western-Slaty antshrikes, Spot-crowned Antvireo, Streak-chested Antpitta (secretive), Brownish Flycatcher (Twistwing), and Chestnut-headed Oropendola. Butterflying at Pipeline can also be extremely interesting with the many possible highlights including Pink-checked Cattleheart, Blue-winged Sheenmark, Ofella Crescent, Mexican Bluewing, Northern Crackerlet, Heart-spotted and Cyndo heliconians, All-blue Morpho, Penelea Satyr, Black-and-yellow Prestonian, Gold-snouted Scallopwing, and Dusted Spurwing.

We'll return to the Canopy Tower for lunch, siesta, and, of course, a quick check atop the tower to see what surprises await us. We will also likely spend some time watching the hummingbird feeders around the base of the tower. While there is much seasonal variation, up to eight species are possible here. Among the more regular visitors are the stunning White-necked Jacobin, Long-billed Hermit, the incomparable Violet-bellied Hummingbird, Blue-chested Hummingbird, Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, and White-vented Plumeleteer.

In the afternoon, we'll visit a private residence in the small town of Gamboa. Feeders here may produce a dazzling variety of tanagers (Crimson-backed, Flame-rumped, Blue-gray, and Palm) and honeycreepers (Red-legged and Green), as well as other species.

NIGHT: Canopy Tower Ecolodge & Nature Observatory, Gamboa

August 4, Day 4: Gamboa and Summit Gardens. Much of the morning will be spent walking along Old Gamboa Road. The trail here leads through more open country and thus yields a different variety of birds. Jet Antbird; Rufous-breasted, Buff-breasted, and Plain wrens; Lance-tailed Manakin; and Rosy Thrush-Tanager are among the many possibilities. The nearby police academy ponds often produce Boat-billed Heron, kingfishers, Southern Rough-winged Swallow, Lesser Kiskadee, and Rusty-margined Flycatcher. More common open country species such as Orange-chinned Parakeet, Red-crowned Woodpecker, and Buff-throated and Streaked saltators should also be in evidence. Butterflies to look for include Chiapas Stripe-streak, Anius Scintillant, Erato Heliconian, Pale-banded Crescent, Narrow Banded-Skipper, and White-tailed Longtail.

In the afternoon we'll visit Summit Gardens, a beautiful botanical garden and zoo, which may host a variety of edge species. One of the highlights of a visit to Summit Gardens will be up-close views of Panama's national bird, the Harpy Eagle, albeit in captivity. A small butterfly garden at this facility often hosts a variety of interesting skippers such as Common Glasswing, Pasture Brown-Skipper, and Fiery Skipper.

NIGHT: Canopy Tower Ecolodge & Nature Observatory, Gamboa

August 5, Day 5: Metropolitan Natural Park. The entire morning will be devoted to the drier forests of the Metropolitan Natural Park area. The avifauna here is quite different from that around the Canopy Tower. Among the many possibilities are Gray-headed Chachalaca, Pheasant Cuckoo (scarce and seasonal), Blue-crowned Motmot, White-necked Puffbird, Lineated Woodpecker, Fasciated Antshrike, White-bellied and Dusky antbirds, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, Lance-tailed Manakin, Golden-fronted Greenlet, Rufous-breasted and Rufous-and-white wrens, Long-billed Gnatwren, and Crimson-backed Tanager. In addition, we'll spend some time searching for two of the real specialty birds of this area: the endemic Yellow-green Tyrannulet (rare) and the magnificent Rosy Thrush-Tanager, both of which can be found in this park. Among the many butterflies we should see here, several blooming trees may attract some truly spectacular gems such as Variable and Emerald-patched cattlehearts, Mexican Cycadian, Red-bordered Pixie, and Two-eyed Eighty-eight.

On our return from Metro Park, we'll stop at the Panama City waterfront where extensive mudflats attract a variety of shorebirds including Collared Plover, Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, Short-billed Dowitcher, and hundreds of Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers.

NIGHT: Canopy Tower Ecolodge & Nature Observatory, Gamboa

August 6, Day 6: Pipeline Road. There is no way to see all of what Pipeline Road has to offer in just one morning, so today we'll return for another visit to this magnificent place. We will likely explore different sections of the road and no doubt find a different assortment of birds and butterflies.

Our afternoon plans will be somewhat flexible depending upon which species we are missing. We may choose to walk along Plantation Road just below the Tower. The forests here harbor a good variety of species including such possibilities as Black-throated and Slaty-tailed trogon, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Rufous Motmot, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Checker-throated and White-flanked Antwren, White-necked Puffbird, and Blue-black Grosbeak.

NIGHT: Canopy Tower Ecolodge & Nature Observatory, Gamboa

August 7, Day 7: Gamboa Resort and Miraflores Locks. This morning we'll visit Gamboa Resort, a beautiful facility along the Chagres River. A stroll through the lush grounds and adjacent marsh may produce a stunning array of species such as Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Cocoli Heron, Yellow-headed Caracara, Purple Gallinule, Southern Lapwing, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Great Antshrike, Rusty-margined and Piratic flycatchers, and Yellow-tailed Oriole. Butterflies among the gardens there may include Thoas Swallowtail, White Angled-Sulphur, Orange-barred Sulphur, Orange-patched Crescent, and Queen.

In the afternoon we will head to the Miraflores Locks to watch a ship transit the locks and spend time in the newly built visitor center.

NIGHT: Canopy Tower Ecolodge & Nature Observatory, Gamboa

August 8, Day 8: Departure for Home or Begin Extension. Participants not continuing on our El Valle's Canopy Lodge Extension will be provided with group transfers from the Canopy Tower to the airport in time for various morning flights home.

EL VALLE'S CANOPY LODGE EXTENSION AUGUST 8 – 13, 2009

August 8, Day 1: Canopy Tower to El Valle. We'll depart the Canopy Tower some time this morning, arriving at the charming El Valle de Antón and Canopy Lodge in time for lunch. At nearly 2000 feet, the climate is cooler here and less humid than in the lowlands, but still dominated by dry Pacific weather. The three forested peaks of

Cerro Gaital Natural Monument loom over the valley and impart a sense of tranquility. Everywhere around the town are lovely landscaped gardens, colorful with flowers and shaded by open groves of trees, while nearby hill-sides are covered in secondary forest. Birds and butterflies are abundant in this patchwork of habitats. We will make our way through the bustling little town en route to the Canopy Lodge, our home for the next four nights.

The Canopy Lodge's guestrooms offer large comfortable beds, private baths (doubles only), and tasteful interior decoration. The grounds meanwhile, are a birder's paradise! The gardens and walkways are often loaded with birds. In fact, it is not uncommon to record 60 species from the property alone in a single visit. Greatly enhancing the delightful setting are feeding stations that attract hordes of birds every morning and afternoon. This is indeed an incredible way to bird. And, as the day warms up, the grounds can be alive with butterflies on the flowering plants and at the butterfly feeder. For added effect, a beautiful clear stream tumbles past the open-air dining room.

After a tasty lunch we will spend the remainder of the afternoon exploring the expansive grounds, paying close attention to the feeders and flowering bushes. We may see Gray-headed Chachalaca, White-tipped Dove, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Black-chested Jay, Bananaquit, Blue-gray and White-lined tanagers, Black-striped Sparrow, Buff-throated Saltator, Chestnut-headed Oropendola (a colony of which nests on the hillside above), Orange-flushed Eyemark, Creamy Crescent, Orange Mapwing, Yellow-bordered Owl-Butterfly, and Split-banded Owllet.

Your introduction to El Valle will conclude this evening with a delicious meal.

NIGHT: Canopy Lodge, El Valle de Antón

August 9, Day 2: Canopy Lodge, La Mesa and Cariguana. Today we will begin exploring out from the lodge, but not before spending the first hour after breakfast working the lodge grounds another time. Though birding is good here throughout the day, it is these early morning hours when activity is at its peak. Predictably, the birding will be extraordinary. Freshly stocked feeding trays brim with birds. Red-legged Honeycreepers and Thick-billed Euphonias dance through the bushes and onto the feeding trays, looking all the world like living jewels. Clay-colored Robins appear by the dozens, seemingly everywhere, and Black-chested Jays survey the scene imperiously from exposed snags. Even the Rufous Motmot visits the feeders. Surely one of Panama's most glorious birds, it appears with a flourish, brandishing an impossibly burnt orange breast and belly.

A procession of tanagers appears like clockwork. First come the soft Blue-grays, followed by the velvety Flame-rumped and Crimson-backed. Then come the rest: White-lined, Palm, and the odd olive and black Dusky-faced. Even the Red-crowned Ant-Tanager has overcome its distrust of open space and ventures forth from the nearby forest.

Wandering through the flower-lined walkways can produce a good variety of hummingbirds. Rufous-tailed is the most common, but many others are seen almost as often. Radiating metallic colors in the morning light, these feathered sprites appear from out of nowhere, often bearing angelic names as beautiful as the birds themselves. Possibilities include Green Hermit, Green Thorntail, White-vented Plumeleteer, Snowy-bellied and Violet-headed hummingbirds, Purple-crowned Fairy, Violet-crowned Woodnymph, Garden Emerald, and Stripe-throated Hermit.

Remarkably, the rarely seen Rufous-crested Coquette occurs in the garden on a somewhat regular basis. This diminutive bird is not found on any other VENT tour aside from the Canopy Lodge.

From El Valle, a country road leads a short distance up through scattered farms and forest to the back side of three tall peaks, a flat area known locally as "La Mesa," where we will spend the remainder of the morning. At 2800 feet, this area sits below the crest of the Continental Divide. For much of the year, it is brushed by clouds passing over from the Caribbean slope. The frequent misting creates a super moist environment, where the remaining forests are fantastically sculpted and laden with epiphytes that shade the dense understory.

Birds & Butterflies in Panama, Page 6

This area is home to some fantastic foothill birds not found in the forests below or in the Canal Zone. Among these, tanagers are the dominant group, with potential for gems like Emerald, Bay-headed, Golden-hooded, Flame-rumped, Tawny-crested, and Silver-throated. But up here, there is a seemingly endless supply of birds of all kinds. We'll naturally look at whatever we come across, which likely will be a lot. A good representation of the birds of this elevation includes Bat Falcon, Lineated Woodpecker, Keel-billed Toucan, Blue-throated Toucanet, Orange-bellied Trogon, Spotted Woodcreeper, Paltry Tyrannulet, Tawny-capped Euphonia and Scarlet-thighed Tanager. On a sunny morning, butterflying at La Mesa can be excellent. Highlights may include Cloaked Scintillant, Sara Heliconian, Clara's Crescent, Stub-tailed Morpho, Rusty-spotted and Blue-gray satyrs, Two-barred Flasher, and Spineless Silverdrop.

Following lunch at the lodge and an afternoon break, we'll head across the narrow valley to the other side of El Valle and a trip to Cariguana. Literally translated to "Iguana's Face," this area is said to be named for the appearance of a nearby mountain. To us, the main interest here is the birds, and the afternoon is a prime time to look for a number of special species. A gradually ascending gravel road skirts a large patch of dense forest where the fabulous Tody Motmot resides. We'll try to locate it, in addition to such other dandies as Blue-crowned Motmot, Lance-tailed Manakin, Yellow Tyrannulet, White-bellied Antbird, Rufous-and-white Wren, and Yellow-crowned Euphonia.

NIGHT: Canopy Lodge, El Valle de Antón

August 10, Day 3: Altos del Maria. This morning we'll load up in four-wheel drive vehicles for a trip across the mountains to Altos del Maria, a remnant cloud-forest habitat at 3000 feet. Altos del Maria, literally translated to "Highlands of Maria," represents the altitudinal highpoint of the trip, and because it sits on the Caribbean slope, gives us chances for a number of species not possible elsewhere on our route.

Strategic stops at a number of locations will expose us to several impressive stretches of forest. Birds are typically plentiful, but we will focus our efforts on finding more challenging species like Orange-bellied Trogon, Brown-billed Scythebill, Rufous-browed Tyrannulet, Dull-mantled Antbird, Ochraceous and Rufous-and-white wrens, and the special local subspecies of Common Bush-Tanager. The greatest potential prize of this location is the stunning Black-crowned Antpitta. Though secretive and sometimes difficult to see, we have a decent chance of finding one of these spectacular ground dwellers. Along the way, we may find a number of interesting butterflies such as Lagora Eyemark, Common Morpho, Westwood's and Blue-topped satyrs, Variable Prestonian, and Radiant Brown-Skipper.

NIGHT: Canopy Lodge, El Valle de Antón

August 11, Day 4: El Chiru & La Zamia Trail. We will depart around 6:00 am to head for the dry Pacific lowlands around the small community of El Chiru. Many of the species here will be new for us, with some highly sought birds among the many possibilities. Savannah Hawk, Aplomado Falcon, Pearl Kite, Crested Caracara, Crested Bobwhite, Brown-throated Parakeet, Sapphire-throated Hummingbird, Veraguan Mango, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, and Rufous-browed Peppershrike will all be targeted. In this lowland area, we may see a number of new butterflies such as Banded Orange Heliconian, Mexican Fritillary, and Common Brown-Skipper.

We will likely spend the afternoon walking a forest trail at La Zamia, a forest patch on the west side of El Valle. Sometimes moving a short distance can make a big difference in habitat and birdlife. Though only 15 minutes from the lodge, this location may provide our best opportunity to find Blue-crowned Motmot and Black-faced Anthrush, among the more common species. Time-permitting, a final afternoon on the lodge grounds will put us back in the company of some old friends and possibly some new acquaintances. Orange-chinned Parakeet, Social Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Barred Antshrike, and Palm Tanager are all expected.

NIGHT: Canopy Lodge, El Valle de Antón

August 12, Day 5: El Valle and Return to Panama City. Just above El Valle lies “The Canopy Adventure,” a private reserve that protects tall tropical moist forest along a clear foothill stream dominated by a 200 foot high waterfall. The goal of the preserve is to provide much-needed employment for the local population, which would otherwise be cutting the forests for fuel and agriculture. The refuge currently employs ten young men to safeguard its treasures.

On this final morning at El Valle, we’ll work sections of the entire property, from the lodge grounds all the way to the Canopy Adventure. There are always so many birds around El Valle that each outing is sure to produce something new for the trip. Some distinct possibilities are White Hawk, Blue-headed Parrot, Collared Aracari, Green-crowned Brilliant, Bay Wren, Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Streaked Saltator, and Orange-billed Sparrow. The forest above the lodge will give us another chance for the Tody Motmot, found locally here, but typically elusive. Some very interesting forest butterflies can be seen in this area including Satyr Eyemark, Black-bordered Tegosa, Helvina Daiph, Common Ur-Satyr, Round-spotted and Virginia’s ticlears, and Broad-tipped Clearwing.

After a final delicious meal at the Canopy Lodge, we will transfer to our hotel in Panama City, where we’ll enjoy a farewell dinner and spend our last evening together.

NIGHT: Country Inn and Suites Canal, Panama City

August 13, Day 6: Departure for Home. Participants will be provided with transfers to the airport in time for morning or early afternoon flights home.

TOUR SIZE: Each section will be limited to 7 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Michael O’Brien

Michael O’Brien is a freelance artist, author, and environmental consultant living in Cape May, New Jersey. He has traveled extensively throughout North and Central America and has a passionate interest in migration, bird vocalizations, and field identification. At home in Cape May, Michael serves as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops, writes a monthly ID column and photo quiz (see www.birdcapemay.org), and, for many years, conducted a fall songbird migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America’s 100 Most Wanted Birds*. His illustrations have been widely published in books and field guides, including the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and the new *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America*. Michael also has an intense interest in butterflies and leads several “Birds & Butterflies” tours with his wife, Louise Zemaitis.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for Panama’s Canopy Tower is **\$2195** per person in double occupancy from Panama City, Panama for occupying a standard guestroom (Canopy Room) at the Canopy Tower. This includes all meals, seven nights shared accommodations in one of the five Canopy Rooms (see ACCOMMODATIONS section below), ground transportation during the tour, tipping, park entrance fees, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Panama City and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The fee for Panama’s Canopy Tower is **\$2395** per person in double occupancy from Panama City, Panama for occupying a premium room at the Canopy Tower. This includes all meals, shared accommodations for seven nights in either the Blue Cotinga Suite or Harpy Eagle Suite (see CANOPY TOWER ACCOMMODATIONS section below), ground transportation during the tour, tipping, park entrance fees, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Panama City and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged

The fee for Panama's Canopy Tower is **\$2445** per person in single occupancy from Panama City, Panama for occupying a standard double (Canopy) guestroom at the Canopy Tower. This includes all meals, single accommodations for seven nights in a Canopy Room with a private bath (see CANOPY TOWER ACCOMMODATIONS section below), ground transportation during the tour, tipping, park entrance fees, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Panama City and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged. Due to the limited number of rooms at the Canopy Tower, we reserve the right to ask you to share or to occupy a single room with a shared bath (see below). If so, you will be credited appropriately.

The fee for Panama's Canopy Tower is **\$1995** per person in single occupancy from Panama City, Panama for occupying a single room at the Canopy Tower. This includes all meals, single accommodations for seven nights in a single room with a shared bath (see CANOPY TOWER ACCOMMODATIONS section below), ground transportation during the tour, tipping, park entrance fees, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Panama City and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The fee for the El Valle's Canopy Lodge Extension is **\$1545** per person in double occupancy from Panama City, Panama. This includes all meals, all lodging as described in the tour itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, tipping, park entrance fees, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Panama City and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for the El Valle's Canopy Lodge Extension is **\$200** for occupying a standard double room with a private bath for four nights at the Canopy Lodge (see CANOPY LODGE ACCOMMODATIONS section below) and a single room for one night at the Country Inn and Suites Canal. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The fee for the El Valle's Canopy Lodge Extension is **\$1445** per person in single occupancy from Panama City, Panama for occupying a single room with a shared bath for four nights at the Canopy Lodge. This includes all meals, single accommodations for three nights in a single room with a shared bath at the Canopy Lodge (see CANOPY LODGE ACCOMMODATIONS section below), a single room with a private bath for one night at the Country Inn and Suites Canal, ground transportation during the tour, tipping, park entrance fees, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Panama City and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

CANOPY TOWER ACCOMMODATIONS: The Canopy Tower has a total of 2 suites (Blue Cotinga and Harpy Eagle), five standard double guestrooms (Canopy Rooms) and 5 single rooms with a shared bath. Both suites and all Canopy Rooms have private bathrooms. All rooms will be pre-reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. You will be advised of your specific room assignment at the time of your registration.

Please also note that since there is no elevator, all guests will climb 3 to 4 flights of stairs to reach their rooms, the dining area and observation deck.

CANOPY LODGE ACCOMMODATIONS: The Canopy Lodge has a total of 8 standard double guestrooms and 2 pairs of single rooms each sharing a connecting bath. Based on room availability, singles have a choice of

paying a supplement to occupy a standard double guest room with a private bath or a paying a discounted tour fee to occupy a single room with a shared bath. The single rooms, which are in a separate building from the main lodge, are considerably smaller and less fancy than the doubles. All rooms will be pre-reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. You will be advised of room availability and your specific room assignment at the time of your registration.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person per tour part. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation Penalties and Refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less \$300 per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. *We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.*

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$300.
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider.** Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. **Contact Travel Insured International prior to registration for details.** Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

BAGGAGE: In case your checked luggage is delayed, it's recommended that you pack all documents, medications, a change of clothes, your binoculars, and toiletry items in a carry-on bag.

CLIMATE: The climate in the Canal Zone of Central Panama is usually warm, with mornings in the 70s and afternoons in the 80s. Conditions at midday can be humid and very warm, with temperatures reaching into the lower 90s. Rainstorms may occur at any time of year, but are more likely during the rainy season, which runs from May into early December, when a shower of some sort is expected almost daily. Generally, the weather in Central Panama is mild and pleasant, with our activities corresponding to the cooler parts of the day and heightened bird activity.

The climate in the El Valle region is considerably cooler than that of the Canal Zone. Mornings and evenings are cooler while midday temperatures usually do not exceed the low 80s. Clouds and overcast skies frequently prevail in higher areas, leading to damp conditions.

CLOTHING: As is the case for all our tropical tours, lightweight field clothing is the norm for Panama. This includes several pair of lightweight field pants, along with cool and comfortable long-sleeved shirts. A hat and sunscreen are recommended for protection from the sun.

Dark-colored or neutral clothing is suggested, as white or bright colors may frighten secretive birds. Lightweight and comfortable walking shoes are recommended, since some days we will spend a good bit of time on foot. Waterproof boots are essential as the trails can be muddy. A small umbrella and/or rain gear are essential as well.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at the Canopy Tower. Because the clothes are sent out to Panama City to be cleaned, expect items to be returned with 48 hours. Laundry service at the Canopy Lodge is handled in house. Expect items to be returned within 24 to 36 hours.

CURRENCY: The U.S. Dollar is the official currency of Panama. VISA and American Express are most commonly used, but MasterCard and Diners Club are also accepted.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Panama is required. Visas are not required for entry by United States citizens. At the time of departure, a tourist entry card must be purchased from the airline on which you travel into Panama (\$5.00 US-subject to change without notice). Non-United States citizens should check with their local Panamanian consulate/embassy for instructions.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra digital storage media or film, etc.). As a precaution, it's a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope; but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

HEALTH: No vaccinations are required for entry into Panama. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

In general, it is always a good idea to consult your doctor before taking any immunizations. Health requirements change frequently and often vary from district to district within a country. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta advises that there is some risk of malaria in parts of the country. The areas visited on this tour are not at risk. The CDC is recommending precautions for travelers going out of these main areas. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (877) FYI-TRIP. You can check the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

Your tetanus, Polio, and yellow fever vaccinations should be current. The water is drinkable in Panama and the food is safe. Please do check with your doctor for your own personal needs and prescription drugs (which may or may not be available on tour).

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all

medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

INSECT PROTECTION: As chiggers can be a problem in some areas, we recommend you come prepared with a good repellent. Some of the name brand manufacturers (Cutter's and Off) produce a variety of products you will find useful. Pump-action dispensers are generally preferable to sprays, while lotions and sticks are especially good for quick and easy application to sensitive areas on the face, or when out in the field. Topsy gel is useful in reducing irritation from chigger bites or nettle stings (cortisone creams are now available without a prescription) Some people recommend sprinkling sulphur, which is available at both lodges, on your socks as a chigger deterrent.

A Note About Chiggers: This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world's tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of the world's species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids, however, through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger's digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body's natural process of reabsorbing it that typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, like around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees, and elbows.

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking, or standing in particular, in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique commonly employed by many.
- Apply a cream-style insect repellent, such as "Cutters" to your body from the waist down BEFORE putting on your clothing.
- Spray your pants and socks with a spray repellent such as "Cutters" or "Off." Repellants with high concentrations of DEET (70-100%) are most effective. You do not need to apply these to you skin, only to clothing. (Be careful as DEET will damage plastics and lens coatings). Repel Permanone is an odorless aerosol insecticide that offers perhaps the best defense against chiggers. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online. It should only be applied to clothes and allowed to dry before you dress. Never apply Permanone directly to the skin. Permethrin is known to be a highly toxic chemical to insects. It is the active ingredient in Permanone, but is present in a small amount (0.5%).
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products. Sulphur is available for use at the Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge.

MISC:
Departure Tax - US \$20 (included in the price of your air ticket)
Electricity - 120 volts; plugs are the flat 2-pin American type.
Language - The official language is Spanish, but English is spoken.
Time - Eastern Standard Time

SUGGESTED READING: Our website at www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from the

Birds & Butterflies in Panama, Page 12

store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com, or www.buteobooks.com, which specializes in ornithology books.

Field Guides:

Ridgely, Robert S. and John Gwynne. *A Guide to the Birds of Panama*. (Second Edition). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. This excellent field guide is highly recommended as your primary reference book on the birds. No other field guides are really necessary.

Emmons, Louise H. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals: A Field Guide*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Background Reading:

Chapman, Frank. *My Tropical Air Castle*. New York: Appleton and Company, 1929. Fun reading by an early ornithologist in Panama. Out of print; try www.abebooks.com.

Chapman, Frank. *Life in an Air Castle*. New York: Appleton-Century Co, 1938. Out of print; try www.abebooks.com.

Forsyth, Adrian and Ken Miyata. *Tropical Nature*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1987. Excellent introduction to many fascinating aspects of the tropical rainforest.

Hilty, Steven. 1994. *Birds of Tropical America*. Shelbourne, VT: Chapters Publishing, 1994. Subtitle: "A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity."

Kricher, John C. *A Neotropical Companion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. An excellent introduction to the rainforest.

McCullough, David. *A Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999. An excellent history of the construction of the Panama Canal.

Richards, Paul W. *The Tropical Rain Forest: An Ecological Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. (Second Edition.) A more scientific review of the botanical structure of rainforests.

Gradwohl, Judy and Russell Greenberg. "The Formation of Antwren Flocks on Barro Colorado Island, Panama." *Auk* 97 (April 1980).

Munn, Charles A. and John W. Terborgh. "Multi-species Territoriality in Neotropical Foraging Flocks." *Condor* 81 (1979): 338-347.

Reference:

Croat, Thomas B. *Flora of Barro Colorado Island*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978. A massive technical manual, but the best plant book available for the region.

Hilty, Steven L. and William L. Brown. *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986. An excellent field guide that has most of the birds of Panama in it; perhaps useful as an additional reference book.

Ridgely, Robert S., and Guy Tudor. *Birds of South America Volume I, The Oscine Passerines: Jays, Swallows, Wrens, Thrushes and Allies, Vireos, Wood-warblers, Tanagers, Icterids and Finches*. Austin: The University of Texas, 1989. Very useful reference, with range maps and illustrations of many species not previously illustrated.

Ridgely, Robert S., and Guy Tudor. *Birds of South America Volume II, The Suboscine Passerines: Ovenbirds and Woodcreepers, Antbirds, Gnateaters, and Tapaculos, Tyrant Flycatchers, Manakins and Cotingas*. Austin: The University of Texas, 1994. Very useful reference, with range maps and illustrations of many species not previously illustrated.

TIPPING: As noted in our itineraries, tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on November 24, 2008 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.