

Panama - Mammals of the Canopy Tower

Naturetrek Tour Report

7 - 16 May 2014

Report compiled by Jenn Sinasac



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Day 1

Wednesday 7th May

Arrival Day...we met as a group and transferred to the Canopy Tower in the afternoon, and prepared for our upcoming days of searching for mammals, as well as birds, reptiles, butterflies and more.

Day 2

Thursday 8th May

Observation Deck, Semaphore Hill and Summit Gardens

This morning we were up at dawn and met on the observation deck. With a hot drink in hand, we scanned the treetops (at eye level) and saw some notable birds, including Keel-billed Toucan, Blue Dacnis, and the very colourful Golden-hooded Tanager. Our first mammals, a troop of squirrel-sized Geoffroy's Tamarins, Panama's smallest primates, came by the tower at close view! We were off to a good start! After a delicious buffet breakfast, we met at the hummingbird feeders, where Long-billed Hermit, White-necked Jacobin, White-vented Plumeleteer, Blue-chested and Violet-bellied Hummingbirds zoomed by and fed at the feeders and garden flowers. This morning we slowly walked with Alex down the road leading away from the tower. In the dense rainforest, we came across our first of two sloths for the trip, a Brown-throated three-toed Sloth (as we quickly found out, both species are very common in Panama!), and a White-nosed Coati, a relative of the racoon. At the bottom of the hill, we found Lesser White-lined Bats under the bridge. We also admired the lovely suite of birds along the road, including Black-crowned Antshrike, Broad-billed Motmot and Crimson-crested Woodpecker.

This afternoon we visited Summit Gardens, a municipal park hosting a botanical gardens and wildlife refuge just a few minutes from the tower. Our first stop was the large palms beside the entrance, where we found Common Tent-making Bats roosting underneath the large fronds. In the park we met Panama, a Harpy Eagle, and the tapirs in their enclosure. In addition to some of the mammals we met who live at the park, we also saw a Red-tailed Squirrel and Central American Agouti, a medium-sized forest rodent. We returned back to the tower in time to freshen up before dinner.

Day 3

Friday 9th May

Pipeline Road, Chagres River and Night Drive

We were up early with the roar of Mantled Howler Monkeys outside of the tower.

Today we headed out after breakfast to the world famous Pipeline Road, not only a popular birding destination but it is a great place to see mammals and other rainforest creatures. This morning we came across troops of Mantled Howlers and White-faced Capuchins, as well as Red-tailed Squirrel and Central American Agouti. Some of the notable birds Alex pointed out to us included Great Tinamou, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Golden-collared Manakin, Scarlet-rumped Cacique and Dot-winged Antwren. A Green Parrot Snake was another nice highlight from this morning!

After lunch and a rest, we returned to Gamboa, this time to explore the grounds of the Gamboa Rainforest Resort and the edges of the Chagres River. Here we searched for our target mammal along the river edges, the Lesser Capybara, to no avail. We didn't add any new mammals this afternoon, but Collared Aracari, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Wattled Jacana, Long-billed Starthroat, Buff-throated Saltator, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, as well as Spectacled Caiman and Central American Whiptail Lizard. Later, after dark, we boarded the open air vehicle for our first of three exciting night drives of the tour, and tonight we saw both Hoffmann's Two-toed and Brown-throated three-toed Sloths, as well as Western Night Monkeys.

Day 4

Saturday 10th May

Metropolitan Natural Park, Miraflores Locks and Night Drive

This morning we were up and ready early, as we were off to Metropolitan Natural Park, a large protected dry forest in Panama City. This forest is home to many mammals and birds; many of them dry forest specialties. In the park we encountered a group of Geoffroy's Tamarins, Brown-throated three-toed Sloth, Variegated and Red-tailed squirrels, and Central American Agouti. Notable birds this morning were Double-toothed Kite, Orange-chinned Parakeets, Rosy Thrush-Tanager, Squirrel Cuckoo and a rare Pheasant Cuckoo!

After lunch we visited the Miraflores Locks at the Panama Canal, one of the world's most impressive engineering feats! While we watched a large container ship pass through the locks, Alex spotted a Lesser Capybara in the distance on the banks of a pond, an exciting sight since we had missed it in Gamboa. Various waterbirds and seabirds loitered around the locks, following the ships through to the Pacific Ocean. We browsed the history of the canal through the 4-floor museum, and headed back to the Canopy Tower when the building closed.

This evening we once again searched for eye shine along Semaphore Hill road on our second night drive. We encountered the Western Night Monkeys again, and added a new mammal for our list, a Central American Woolly Opossum.

Day 5

Sunday 11th May

Boat Trip on Gatun Lake, Panama Rainforest Discovery Center and Night Drive

We started off the day with a fantastic morning boat ride on the Chagres River, Panama Canal and into the shallow waters of Gatun Lake, a great place to look for mammals. We came across troops of Mantled Howlers, White-faced Capuchins and Geoffroy's Tamarins.

The bird life on the river and lake was particularly great - Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Boat-billed Heron, Snowy Egret, Purple Gallinule, Grey-necked Wood-Rail and Limpkin were among many water birds we saw well, and we loved the Snail Kites hunting for apple snails in the quiet bays of the lake. Both Spectacled Caiman and American Crocodile were seen, as well as Green Iguana, Common Slider and Common Basilisk or 'Jesus Christ Lizard', great reptilian finds. Our last mammal (and a new one) for the morning was the tiny and well-camouflaged Proboscis Bat - a dozen of them were found roosting on the underside of a fallen log over the water. It was a memorable morning and a favourite trip amongst many of us!

Later this afternoon we made our way back to Pipeline Road, and enjoyed the tranquillity and wildlife of the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center. From the 32-metre tall tower, we soaked in the expanse of the rain forest canopy, and watched the Red-lore and Mealy Parrots, Black-mandibled Toucan, and Blue Cotinga at comfortable eye-level viewing. At the visitor's centre, we watched dozens of fast-flying hummingbirds at the feeders - Crowned Woodnymph, White-necked Jacobin, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird and the tiny Stripe-throated Hermit were a joy to watch. We were treated to a lovely picnic dinner as dusk approached and from there, slowly made our way back to the tower at night in search of nocturnal mammals and wildlife. It was quiet tonight, but we did come across both species of sloth.

Day 6

Monday 12th May

San Lorenzo National Park

Today, we ventured to the Caribbean side of Panama, to San Lorenzo National Park, a protected forest rich in natural and cultural history along the banks of the Caribbean Sea. Continuing our search for mammals, we came across more troops of monkeys, including Mantled Howlers and White-faced Capuchins along the forest trails. A family of White-nosed Coati, another Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth, Red-tailed Squirrel and Central American Agouti were also seen during our day. The birding here was also particularly good, and we picked up a number of new species for the list around Gatun, including; Savanna Hawk, White-tailed and Black-throated trogons, Rufous Motmot, Yellow-bellied Seedeater and Crested Oropendola.

At lunch we rested and enjoyed the scenic vistas of the Caribbean from Fort San Lorenzo. To finish off a great full day, we made our way back to the Canopy Tower by train on the historic Panama Canal Railway, a beautiful ride through Gatun Lake at dusk.

Day 7

Tuesday 13th May

Barro Colorado Island

We enjoyed another full day, this time to Barro Colorado Island, a world famous tropical research station. After a 45-minute boat ride to Gatun Lake along the Panama Canal, we arrived at the station and had an orientation with our guide for the day. This large island holds incredible biodiversity on all levels, from the soil to the treetops.

We walked the trails with our guides and came across more Mantled Howlers, White-faced Capuchins and Geoffroy's Tamarins. Variegated Squirrel and Central American Agouti were also seen back at the station. Another highlight of the day was on the forest floor; Green-and-black Poison Dart Frogs were admired at close range, showing off their striking warning colouration. We found some other island specialties, in particular Crested Guan, a large, turkey-like forest bird.

By mid-afternoon, we embarked on the boat to head back to the Canopy Tower, where we had some time to relax and enjoy the canopy surroundings before dinner.

Day 8

Wednesday 14th May

Observation Deck, Transfer to Canopy Lodge, Canopy Lodge gardens and Canopy Adventure

This morning was more leisurely, as we enjoyed the dawn and morning activity on the observation deck at the Canopy Tower. As the sun came up, we watched Keel-billed Toucans and the enjoyable array of tanagers and honeycreepers as they fed energetically on the Cecropia fruits. After breakfast, we packed our bags and said our goodbyes to the Canopy Tower, then travelled 2 hours west of the Panama Canal to the picturesque foothills of El Valle de Anton. We arrived at the Canopy Lodge just in time for lunch.

After lunch, there was plenty of time to explore the gardens at the lodge, starting with the platform fruit feeders, which attracted not only a wide variety of birds, but also Red-tailed Squirrel and Central American Agouti took advantage of the offerings. Crimson-backed, Blue-grey and Flame-rumped Tanagers, and Thick-billed and Fulvous-vented Euphonias came in to feed. A Green Kingfisher flew back and forth along the river passing through the property, and Common Basilisks basked on the rocks in the river. This afternoon we took a walk to the Canopy Adventure, and along the trails we found a new mammal - a Rufous Tree Rat, curled up in the entrance of its tree cavity. As dusk approached, we arrived back at the lodge in time for cocktails, dinner and enjoyed the cool evening air.

Day 9

Thursday 15th May

La Zamia Trail and El Valle Reptile Exhibits

This morning, eager and ready for our last full day in Panama, we were up early and had a nice hot breakfast on the open-air veranda. We headed out shortly after to La Zamia trail, in search of more mammals and other wildlife. We came across Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth, Lesser White-lined Bats, Variegated and Red-tailed Squirrels and Central American Agouti, all common in the area, and two new mammals for the trip, Western Pygmy Squirrel and Nine-banded Armadillo! Notable birds on our walk this morning included White Hawk,

Southern Lapwing, Blue-headed Parrot, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Garden Emerald, Spotted Woodcreeper and Rufous-capped Warbler.

In the afternoon, it rained, so we changed our plans and visited the El Valle Serpentarium, to meet some of the interesting reptiles that can be found in Panama. While it can be difficult to encounter these shy, often nocturnal animals, we were able to see some more beautiful creatures of the American tropics.

Day 10

Friday 16th May

Departure

This morning was open for us to enjoy the natural surroundings, wildlife and tranquillity of the Canopy Lodge and El Valle de Anton. We watched the activity at the feeders and along the stream, explored the grounds and after a delicious lunch, headed back to Panama City to catch our return flight home.

Searching for mammals in Neotropical environments can be challenging, but very rewarding. We finished the trip with 18 species of mammals, 133 species of birds, and 10 species of reptiles and amphibians seen! Among the mammal and wildlife sightings, we enjoyed great company, good weather, excellent food and a fantastic trip overall. Thanks to you all!

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Species List

Mammals

	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	Central American Woolly Opossum	<i>Caluromys derbianus</i>
2	Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth	<i>Choloepus hoffmanni</i>
3	Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth	<i>Bradypus variegatus</i>
4	Nine-banded Armadillo	<i>Dasybus novemcinctus</i>
5	Proboscis Bat	<i>Rhynchonycteris naso</i>
6	Lesser White-lined Bat	<i>Saccopteryx leptura</i>
7	Common Tent-making Bat	<i>Uroderma bilobatum</i>
8	Geoffroy's Tamarin	<i>Sanguinus geoffroyi</i>
9	Western Night Monkey	<i>Aotus zonalis</i>
10	White-faced Capuchin	<i>Cebus capucinus</i>
11	Mantled Howler	<i>Alouatta palliate</i>
12	Variiegated Squirrel	<i>Sciurus variegatoides</i>
13	Red-tailed Squirrel	<i>Sciurus granatensis</i>
14	Western Pygmy Squirrel	<i>Microsciurus mimulus</i>
15	Rufous Tree Rat	<i>Diplomys labilis</i>
16	Lesser Capybara	<i>Hydrochoerus isthmius</i>
17	Central American Agouti	<i>Dasyprocta punctata</i>
18	White-nosed Coati	<i>Nasua narica</i>

Birds

	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	Great Tinamou	<i>Tinamus major</i>
2	Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i>
3	Grey-headed Chachalaca	<i>Ortalis cinereiceps</i>
4	Crested Guan	<i>Penelope purpurascens</i>
5	Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>
6	Neotropic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i>
7	Anhinga	<i>Anhinga anhinga</i>
8	Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>
9	Rufescent Tiger-Heron	<i>Tigrisoma lineatum</i>
10	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
11	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>
12	Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>
13	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
14	Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>
15	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>
16	Boat-billed Heron	<i>Cochlearius cochlearius</i>
17	Black Vulture	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>
18	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>
19	Grey-headed Kite	<i>Leptodon cayanensis</i>

20	Swallow-tailed Kite	<i>Elanoides forficatus</i>
21	Snail Kite	<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis</i>
22	Double-toothed Kite	<i>Harpagus bidentatus</i>
23	Savannah Hawk	<i>Buteogallus meridionalis</i>
24	White Hawk	<i>Pseudastur albicollis</i>
25	Grey-lined Hawk	<i>Buteo nitidus</i>
26	Short-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo brachyurus</i>
27	Black Hawk-Eagle	<i>Spizaetus tyrannus</i>
28	Grey-necked Wood-Rail	<i>Aramides cajaneus</i>
29	Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio martinicus</i>
30	Common Gallinule	<i>Gallinula galeata</i>
31	Limpkin	<i>Aramus guarana</i>
32	Southern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus chilensis</i>
33	Wattled Jacana	<i>Jacana jacana</i>
34	Laughing Gull	<i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>
35	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
36	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
37	Pale-vented Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas cayennensis</i>
38	Scaled Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas speciosa</i>
39	Ruddy Ground-Dove	<i>Columbina talpacoti</i>
40	White-tipped Dove	<i>Leptotila verreauxi</i>
41	Squirrel Cuckoo	<i>Piaya cayana</i>
42	Pheasant Cuckoo	<i>Dromococcyx phasianellus</i>
43	Greater Ani	<i>Crotophaga major</i>
44	Groove-billed Ani	<i>Crotophaga sulcirostris</i>
45	Spectacled Owl	<i>Pulsatrix perspicillata</i>
46	Common Pauraque	<i>Nyctidromus albicollis</i>
47	Band-rumped Swift	<i>Chaetura spinicaudus</i>
48	White-necked Jacobin	<i>Florisuga mellivora</i>
49	Long-billed Hermit	<i>Phaethornis longirostris</i>
50	Stripe-throated Hermit	<i>Phaethornis striigularis</i>
51	Purple-crowned Fairy	<i>Heliothryx barroti</i>
52	Long-billed Starthroat	<i>Helioaster longirostris</i>
53	Garden Emerald	<i>Chlorostilbon assimilis</i>
54	Violet-headed Hummingbird	<i>Klais guimeti</i>
55	White-vented Plumeleteer	<i>Chalybura buffonii</i>
56	Crowned Woodnymph	<i>Thalurania colombica</i>
57	Blue-chested Hummingbird	<i>Amazilia amabilis</i>
58	Snowy-bellied Hummingbird	<i>Amazilia edward</i>
59	Rufous-tailed Hummingbird	<i>Amazilia tzacatl</i>
60	Violet-bellied Hummingbird	<i>Damophila julie</i>
61	Slaty-tailed Trogon	<i>Trogon massena</i>
62	White-tailed Trogon	<i>Trogon chionurus</i>
63	Black-throated Trogon	<i>Trogon rufus</i>

64	Whooping Motmot	<i>Momotus subrufescens</i>
65	Rufous Motmot	<i>Baryphthengus martii</i>
66	Broad-billed Motmot	<i>Electron platyrhynchum</i>
67	Ringed Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle torquata</i>
68	Green Kingfisher	<i>Chloroceryle americana</i>
69	White-whiskered Puffbird	<i>Malacoptila panamensis</i>
70	Collared Aracari	<i>Pteroglossus torquatus</i>
71	Keel-billed Toucan	<i>Ramphastos sulfuratus</i>
72	Black-mandibled Toucan	<i>Ramphastos ambiguus</i>
73	Red-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes rubricapillus</i>
74	Cinnamon Woodpecker	<i>Celeus loricatus</i>
75	Lineated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus lineatus</i>
76	Crimson-crested Woodpecker	<i>Campephilus melanoleucos</i>
77	Yellow-headed Caracara	<i>Milvago chimachima</i>
78	Orange-chinned Parakeet	<i>Brotogeris jugularis</i>
79	Blue-headed Parrot	<i>Pionus menstruus</i>
80	Red-lored Parrot	<i>Amazona autumnalis</i>
81	Mealy Parrot	<i>Amazona farinosa</i>
82	Black-crowned Antshrike	<i>Thamnophilus atrinucha</i>
83	Dot-winged Antwren	<i>Micorbopias quixensis</i>
84	Black-faced Antthrush	<i>Formicarius analis</i>
85	Northern Barred-Woodcreeper	<i>Dendrocolaptes sanctithomae</i>
86	Cocoa Woodcreeper	<i>Xiphorhynchus susurrans</i>
87	Spotted Woodcreeper	<i>Dendroplex erythropygius</i>
88	Lesser Elaenia	<i>Elaenia chiriquensis</i>
89	Southern Bentbill	<i>Oncostoma olivaceum</i>
90	Eastern Wood-Pewee	<i>Contopus virens</i>
91	Great Kiskadee	<i>Pitangus sulphuratus</i>
92	Boat-billed Flycatcher	<i>Megarynchus pitangua</i>
93	Rusty-margined Flycatcher	<i>Myiozetetes cayanensis</i>
94	Tropical Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>
95	Eastern Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>
96	Purple-throated Fruitcrow	<i>Quercula purpurata</i>
97	Blue Cotinga	<i>Cotinga nattererii</i>
98	Red-capped Manakin	<i>Ceratopipra mentalis</i>
99	Golden-collared Manakin	<i>Manacus vitellinus</i>
100	Lesser Greenlet	<i>Hylophilus decurtatus</i>
101	Black-chested Jay	<i>Cyanocorax affinis</i>
102	Grey-breasted Martin	<i>Progne chalybea</i>
103	Mangrove Swallow	<i>Tachycineta albilinea</i>
104	Southern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx ruficollis</i>
105	House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
106	Bay Wren	<i>Cantorchilus nigricapillus</i>
107	White-breasted Wood-Wren	<i>Henicorbina leucosticta</i>

108	Clay-coloured Thrush	<i>Turdus grayi</i>
109	Rufous-capped Warbler	<i>Basileuterus rufifrons</i>
110	Bananaquit	<i>Coereba flaveola</i>
111	Rosy Thrush-Tanager	<i>Rhodinocichla rosea</i>
112	White-shouldered Tanager	<i>Tachyphonus luctuosus</i>
113	White-lined Tanager	<i>Tachyphonus rufus</i>
114	Crimson-backed Tanager	<i>Ramphocelus dimidiatus</i>
115	Flame-rumped Tanager	<i>Ramphocelus flammigerus</i>
116	Blue-grey Tanager	<i>Thraupis episcopus</i>
117	Palm Tanager	<i>Thraupis palmarum</i>
118	Golden-hooded Tanager	<i>Tangara larvata</i>
119	Blue Dacnis	<i>Dacnis cayana</i>
120	Green Honeycreeper	<i>Chlorophanes spiza</i>
121	Red-legged Honeycreeper	<i>Cyanerpes cyaneus</i>
122	Buff-throated Saltator	<i>Saltator maximus</i>
123	Yellow-bellied Seedeater	<i>Sporophila nigricollis</i>
124	Yellow-faced Grassquit	<i>Tiaris olivaceus</i>
125	Red-throated Ant-Tanager	<i>Habia fuscicauda</i>
126	Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>
127	Giant Cowbird	<i>Molothrus oryzivorus</i>
128	Scarlet-rumped Cacique	<i>Cacicus uropygialis</i>
129	Yellow-rumped Cacique	<i>Cacicus cela</i>
130	Crested Oropendola	<i>Psarocolius decumanus</i>
131	Chestnut-headed Oropendola	<i>Psarocolius wagleri</i>
132	Thick-billed Euphonia	<i>Euphonia laniirostris</i>
133	Fulvous-vented Euphonia	<i>Euphonia fulvicrissa</i>

Reptiles & Amphibians

	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	Spectacled Caiman	<i>Caiman crocodilus</i>
2	American Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus acutus</i>
3	Common Basilisk	<i>Basiliscus basiliscus</i>
4	Green Iguana	<i>Iguana iguana</i>
5	Central American Whiptail Lizard	<i>Ameiva festiva</i>
6	Parrot Snake	<i>Leptophis abaetulla</i>
7	Central American Coral Snake	<i>Micrurus nigrocinctus</i>
8	Common Slider	<i>Trachemys scripta</i>
9	Talamanca Rocket Frog	<i>Allobates talamancae</i>
10	Green-and-black Poison Dart Frog	<i>Dendrobates auratus</i>