



*Snowy-bellied Hummingbird was one of the favorite birds of the trip!*

## Panama *Canopy Tower*

Tour Leader: Tyler Ficker and Jorge Pineda

September 8-15, 2025

## Monday, 9/8 - Canopy Tower and Semaphore Hill

Upon arriving at the tower, we had lunch and got straight to birding! When we first went to the top of the tower, we were met with many of the regular species, including Keel-billed Toucan, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Blue Dacnis, and Green Shrike-Vireo. Shortly after, we witnessed a spectacular migration of over 6,000 Mississippi Kites! Mixed in were a few Plumbeous, Hook-billed, and Swallow-tailed Kites. A small group of Wood Storks also wandered around, riding the thermals. In the afternoon, we made a short trip down Semaphore Hill Rd, the road leading up to the tower, to look for a roosting Choco Screech-Owl. On our way, a small flock allowed for great views of Spotted Antbird, White-Whiskered Puffbird, and even a Black-faced Antthrush! The rest of the group arrived that evening, ready to kick off our first full day the next morning! During dinner, we got to see a Kinkajou and a Central American Woolly Opossum coming to eat bananas outside the dining room window.

## Tuesday, 9/9 - Canopy Tower, Semaphore Hill, Summit Park

Our morning started atop Canopy Tower, enjoying many of the species that are typically hard to see as they move through the tall forest canopy. Cinnamon Woodpecker, Black-breasted Puffbird, Scaled Pigeon, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, and several tanager species provided great eye-level looks. Following breakfast, we birded along Semaphore Hill

Road in search of species utilizing the forest understory. Here we enjoyed Velvety and Red-capped Manakins, a pair of Crimson-crested Woodpeckers, and a flock of White-shouldered Tanagers with Black-and-white Warbler, Canada Warbler, and American Redstart mixed in! A Black Hawk-Eagle and a Magnificent Frigatebird soared overhead in a kettle of Black Vultures on our way up the hill.

Heavy midday rain during our break was just what we needed to kick off the afternoon with lots of bird activity. We visited Summit Park and were met with many new species for the trip. The first tree inside the park yielded 20 species of flycatchers, tanagers, and more! Following



*Choco Screech-Owl*

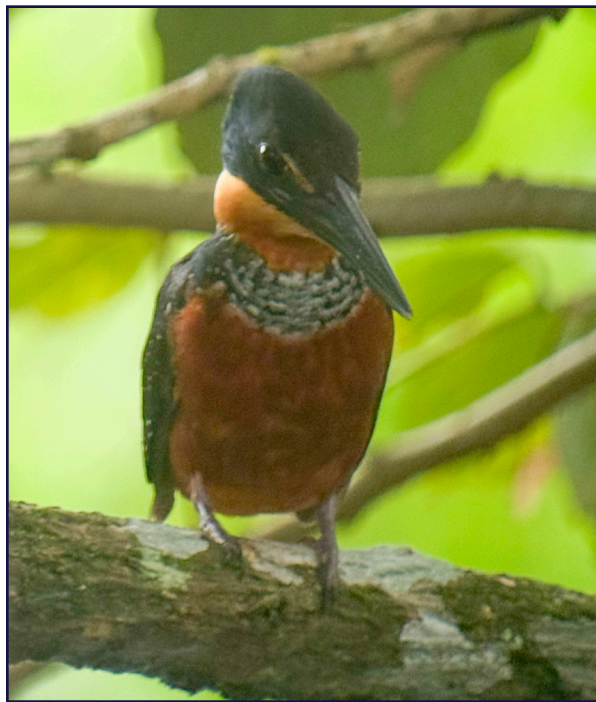


the rainstorm, there was a significant push of migrating Cliff Swallows, Barn Swallows, and Common Nighthawks as well. As we continued through the park, we had great looks at both Crested and Yellow-headed Caracaras, Golden-fronted Greenlet, and Slate-colored Seedeater. We visited the enclosure where we saw Panama's national bird, the Harpy Eagle, in captivity.

### **Wednesday, 9/10 - Rainforest Discovery Center, Pipeline Road, and Ammo Dump Ponds**

We started the day birding at the tower overlooking the forest canopy at the Rainforest Discovery Center. Immediately upon reaching the top, a new trip bird appeared. A Crane Hawk and a Double-toothed Kite roosted in the treetops. Collared Aracaris, Yellow-throated Toucan, and Keel-billed Toucans foraged on fruiting trees and were briefly joined by a pair of Blue Cotingas. Black-tailed Trogon, Northern Barred Woodcreeper, and Scarlet-rumped Cacique also put on a good show. As we returned to the parking lot, a mixed flock yielded incredible looks at Moustached Antwren along with Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher, Chestnut-backed Antbird, and Western Olivaceous Flatbill. We briefly birded along Pipeline Road before returning to the Rainforest Discovery Center for lunch, during which we experienced a very heavy rainfall that resulted in us heading back to Canopy Tower a little early.

In the afternoon, we returned to Gamboa to visit the Ammo Dump Ponds. A short walk from the car at this little wetland site quickly provided many great species, including Snail Kite, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Purple Gallinule, Southern Lapwing, Wattled Jacana, and more! We were fortunate enough to come across a Green-and-rufous Kingfisher, the rarest of the kingfishers in Panama! As we were getting ready to leave, a White-throated Crake put on an incredible show for the group, providing wide-open views, which can be very atypical for this tiny rail species. That night, we took a quick drive in the open-bed truck down Semaphore Hill Road in search of nocturnal wildlife. The highlight of the night was certainly a mother and baby Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth!



*Green-and-rufous Kingfisher*



*Blue Cotinga*

## Thursday, 9/11 - Camino de Cruces and Sandero La Chunga

Birding started atop Canopy Tower before breakfast again. The highlight of the morning undoubtedly came when we had just sat down for breakfast, when we heard “BLUE COTINGA JUST LANDED NEXT TO THE DECK” shouted from upstairs. We quickly went back up top to see an incredibly close juvenile Blue Cotinga perched in a nearby Cecropia tree.

Following breakfast, we headed out for Camino de Cruces. However, we didn’t make it far from the tower before we were met with the next bout of excitement, as THREE Black-and-white Owls

were roosting right above the road! We spent time scoping and photographing these beautiful owls before continuing to our originally planned location. Once we arrived at Camino de Cruces, we were met with warmer and more humid weather than we had experienced yet. It didn’t stop us from adding some great birds to our trip list, such as Gray-headed Kite, White-bellied Antbird, Black-bellied Wren, and Red-throated Ant-Tanager.

The afternoon was spent birding along the Chagres River on the La Chunga trail in Gamboa. As we got out of the van, a group of Gray-headed Chachalacas served as the welcoming committee. A few Greater Anis were a great addition to the trip list as they followed around a few Keel-billed and Yellow-throated Toucans. A Little Tinamou and a Streak-chested Antpitta called very close along the roadside but never showed themselves, despite a lot of effort and patience from the group. As it got later, we enjoyed watching large groups of Red-lored Amazons heading to their communal roost sites, and Little Blue Herons congregated along the Chagres. A Flame-rumped Tanager landed on a wire over the van to see us off for the evening.



*Black-and-white Owl*

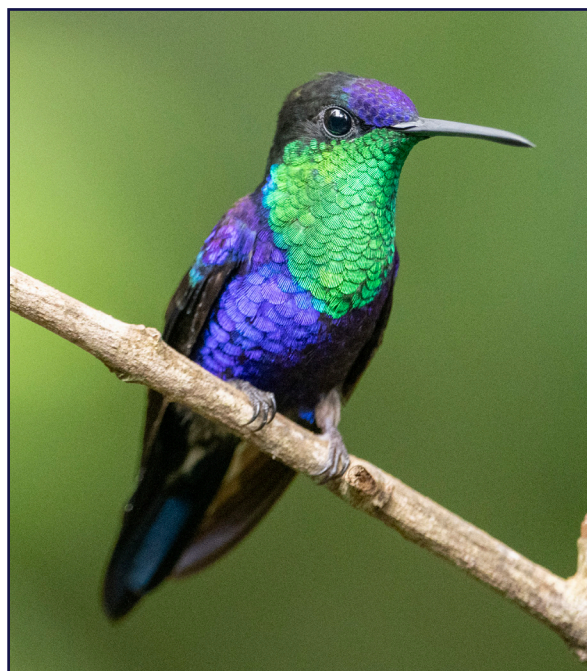


## Friday, 9/12 - Cerro Azul and Panama Viejo

The morning started very early with a 5:00 a.m. breakfast so that we could spend the day at Cerro Azul, a gated neighborhood at a higher elevation than we had been birding. This allowed us to add many new species to the trip list. Our first stop was “The Hummingbird House”, a private residence owned by friends of The Canopy Family who graciously allow birding groups to visit and enjoy their spectacular hummingbird feeder setup. We enjoyed at least 60 hummingbirds of 10 species, with Green Hermit, Crowned Woodnymph, and Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer being new for the trip list! Shining Honeycreepers and Bay-headed Tanagers visited their fruit feeders as well. A Bat Falcon was roosting in one of the dead trees in their front yard, too! We birded our way around the community and enjoyed a mixed flock consisting of Rufous-winged Tanager, Summer Tanager, Bananaquit, and quite a few Blackburnian Warblers. The most popular answer to the question “What was the bird of the day?” was the incredibly cooperative White Hawk that allowed for excellent scope views! As we headed to one final site before making our way back, we finally crossed paths with a flock of Emerald Tanagers, one of the target species in the area.



*White Hawk*



*Crowned Woodnymph*

On our way back to the tower, we visited a coastal site called Panama Viejo. This location provided us with access to scope a large mudflat during low tide, yielding a diverse range of waterbird species. Thousands of Western Sandpipers were scattered across the flats, with Black-bellied Plovers, Short-billed Dowitchers, and Whimbrels mixed in. Hundreds of Neotropic Cormorants, Magnificent Frigatebirds, and Brown Pelicans came in to roost. New wading bird species included Cocoi Heron, Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Night-Herons, and a

Roseate Spoonbill! It was a long day, but it was worth it, as many great species were added to the trip list!

## **Saturday, 9/13 - Canopy Tower, Old Gamboa Road, Gamboa Rainforest Reserve Marina**

A beautiful morning atop Canopy Tower may not have included any new trip birds, but it was a great morning nonetheless. We spent our morning birding along the Old Gamboa Road at Summit Ponds. Right away, we enjoyed Lineated Woodpecker, Buff-breasted Wrens, and Tropical Kingbird babies in a nest! In the short stretch of road between the parking area and the start of the trail, we had great looks at Fasciated Antshrike, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Thick-billed Seed-Finch, and Southern Rough-winged Swallow. The ponds at the start of the trail hosted a mother Boat-billed Heron on a nest, and we could even see the young peeking out from under her! Once on the trail, we quickly added many of the target species for the site, such as Greenish Elaenia, Yellow-backed Oriole, Jet Antbird, and Olivaceous Woodcreeper. At the end of the trail, we were treated to incredibly close and prolonged views of American Pygmy Kingfisher.



*Boat-billed Heron*

That afternoon, we visited the marina at the Gamboa Rainforest Reserve. This site is right along the Chagres River and can be great for water-loving species. In the parking lot, we were greeted by a noisy juvenile Snail Kite. Lesser Kiskadees chased each other around the water's edge, and Mangrove Swallows roosted on top of many of the boats nearby. Greater Anis foraged in the vegetation on the edge of the water with two Smooth-billed Anis hanging around them! We enjoyed an excellent encounter with an adult and juvenile Rufescent Tiger-Heron. The adult caught and ate a vine snake right in front of the group and the juvenile fearlessly walked right up to the group before joining the adult. A Whooping Motmot made a quick appearance there as well! On our way back to the car, we watched two adult Purple Gallinules feeding with three very young chicks.



## Sunday, 9/14 - Pipeline Road and Miraflores Locks

After an early breakfast, we returned to the famous Pipeline Road to see what deep forest species we could add to the trip list. On the drive into the forest, we spotted a Great Tinamou hunkered down just off the road, providing the first visuals we had on the species all week. Once we started walking, we heard a very close Streak-chested Antpitta, which unfortunately would not make an appearance. Shortly after, a pair of Semiplumbeous Hawks put on a fantastic showing. A few mixed species flocks helped to boost our trip list a bit with species such as Bicolored Antbird and White-flanked Antwren. On our way out, a Double-toothed Kite was hunting as it followed a group of White-faced Capuchin monkeys.

In the afternoon, we visited the Miraflores Locks of the Panama Canal. The visit started off with an excellent IMAX movie about the history and construction of the canal and ended with a visit to the locks themselves to watch ships passing through as they made their way towards the Pacific Ocean. We ended the night with our final meal as a group and shared our highlights of the week.

## Monday, 9/15 - Canopy Tower and Departure

Our final morning was spent on top of Canopy Tower before heading to the airport. While we didn't see any new species for the trip, it was a beautiful morning full of great birds. We had fantastic looks at Slaty-tailed Trogon, Golden-hooded Tanager, and an adult male Blue Cotinga that landed very close to the tower. Following breakfast, we made our way to Panama City to catch our flight. At the airport, we added Western Cattle-Egret and Roadside Hawk, bringing our final total to 260 species! Thank you to the incredible team at Canopy Tower and the wonderful group of participants for making this trip a success.

