

# Colombia Trip

## June 2-13, 2014

### Day -2(June 1, 2014): San Francisco to Barranquilla

We are off on another birding expedition, to the Santa Marta area of Colombia. As is our wont, we arrived a day before the actual start of the trip and are now camped out in the Hotel Barranquilla Plaza, a nice enough spot in an industrial part of town, at least that is what it looks like in Google Street View.

Our trip so far has been uneventful. We left home about 6:00 pm on 6/1, managed to make it to the airport in plenty of time despite a major wreck on the Bay Bridge that snarled traffic. Flew first to Las Vegas (yes, that's right), where we caught a red eye flight to Panama City. Six hours later, (now 6/2) we had three hours to kill in the Panama airport, where there wasn't much to see except an impressive thunderstorm. We discovered that there are two classes of Priority Pass cards, which get you into some airport clubs. The Copa Club, very near our gate, only accepts "black" cards, not mine, which has a gold "Select" on one end, marking it as a perk from American Express. We were able to get into a different club where we had time to relax a bit before heading on to Barranquilla. The final leg was the shortest, a one hour flight, but we spent an extra 30 minutes on the tarmac waiting our turn to take off.

We were met by the tour group's driver, Virgilio, holding a sign with our names on it, something we like to see. A 45 minute ride thru some pretty dreary part of town got us to the hotel, where we have an air-conditioned room with access to the internet.

Time to study the birds some more.

After some time getting cleaned up and resting, Linda and I headed for the lobby to get our free "welcome drink." Linda spotted some parrots flying nearby. This set us off on an hour-long walk thru the neighborhood in search of a better view. Along the way, we tallied about a dozen common birds. Maybe the best was an unexpected pair of Bicolored Wrens in a tree near the hotel. This is definitely not their usual habitat.



We got turned around on the walk as right angle intersections seem to be a rarity in the area. Ultimately, we asked directions in our halting Spanish and were told it was "right around the corner." Now, we have memorized its appearance, which is quite distinctive.

We tried to go to the luxury restaurant on the 26<sup>th</sup> floor, but discovered it was closed. We learned that today is a national holiday, and many places are closed. One that was not was the McDonald's nearby, which needed someone to direct traffic into the drive-thru lane.

We met Marilyn Nasatir, another member of our group, who

joined us for dinner in the café in the hotel, which was open. Got to bed about 9:00 after entering today's birding tally.

### June 2, 2014: Day 0: Barranquilla Plaza Hotel

We planned to visit a museum in the area, Museo del Caribe, which we were assured was open. I had checked on the internet earlier and found an obscure note stating that the Museo was closed on the day following a national holiday. Sure enough, the museum was closed.

We met Vicki Gutgesell, another member of the tour, who planned to go to the zoo. We passed up that in favor of a Botanical Garden. The hotel staff had never heard of the place, and after some investigation they told us it was not a safe part of town.

So, we set off on another jaunt around the area. Marilyn's travel alarm had died and she wanted to buy another if possible. We traipsed to a nearby mall, which could have been dropped into the Bay Area without anyone knowing it was from a foreign country except for the signs, which were in (easily interpreted) Spanish.



We found no alarm clocks in the mall despite spending some time in the search. As the mall was air conditioned and the climate here resembles Houston, we delayed heading back for quite a while. However, ultimately, we fell back on Plan B, which calls for us to wake Marilyn up on time.

In return for this service, she took a picture of us in front of yet another huge tree. This appears to be a strangler fig that has completely consumed the host. The square object in the foreground is one of a series of lights to illuminate

the tree at night, so it must be famous.

Dwayne and Marj, two more members of our group showed up in the lobby. They had a tough trip and arrived late, so planned to spend the day resting.

I had planned to spend the rest of the day relaxing by the pool. It was closed for cleaning, a job that required hours of work. Linda commented that standing in the water was not the worst task one could have in Barranquilla. Perhaps that was the explanation. After a light lunch, I retired to the room where I watched Brazil rout Panama in a *futbol* match. The commentary was in Spanish, of course, which means that I understood only a few words. One was GOOOOOOOOAL! The number of O's doesn't begin to capture the full impact. It was an amazing feat of breath control, especially as it occurred four times.

By the time the match was over, the pool was finally clean enough, so I joined Linda downstairs, where I met Jerry and Mitch, the final two members of our group.

Dinner at 6:00. We just have time to claim our free drink which we missed yesterday because the bar was closed.

## June 4, 2014: Birding our way to Minca

We had a nice breakfast before setting out. The meal is included in the room, and is interesting. Both days, the buffet included soup, basically chicken stock with potatoes in it. Yesterday it had poached eggs. Today, it had pieces of chicken. I liked it both times, accompanied by several interesting roll-like objects made from almost everything except flour.

At 7:00 we hit the road in a nice air-conditioned bus for Minca, our first stop, where we will spend two nights. We drove to the *Colegio San Juan*, a private university in the city. Much of the area was covered in second growth forest, which fortunately consisted of native vegetation. As a result, it served as an island in the middle of the city for the native birds. Our target was the Chestnut-winged Chachalaca, a chicken-sized bird that starts the day by calling from the top of a tree. We saw several of these shy birds very well. We kept seeing new species and delayed our departure until we had more or less seen everything.



Then we headed out the highway toward Minca, a small village in the foothills of the Santa Marta range. We detoured by driving, then walking down “Kilometer 4 Road,” a mostly dirt track into some marshy habitat. Mark Pretti, our guide for the trip, promised a look at a Rufous-throated Puffbird. Puffbirds are usually very hard to see well, but this one is the exception to the rule. We had many great looks, and managed a good photo of one of them.

Just to prove that we aren’t fixated on birds, we took time out to look at a Crested Basilisk Lizard, a female

without a crest, and a Rainbow Whiptail. Here is a shot of the Basilisk. Notice the huge feet. This is the lizard we have all seen in nature films walking on water. It’s colorful slang name, Jesus Christ Lizard. We selected this photo to show the feet. Notice that she has lost her tail and is growing a new one.



It was blisteringly hot along the road. We walked from one spot of shade to another. The expected water birds were mostly absent. We saw no ducks — well, there were two Northern Screamers, which are technically ducks, but don’t look like it, but many egrets and herons. A surprise was a Long-winged Harrier that flew by. It was a long way from home, and a lifer for Mark. We had seen one in Venezuela in 1999, and Brazil in 1985. (Computers are great for coming up with info like that.)

Mark promised us that today was the hottest we would be on the trip. We hope he is right.

After a couple of hours, we returned to the bus and drove two hours to Minca. We checked into the Minca Hotel, our stop for the next two nights. There, we delighted in the hummingbird

feeders on the deck. The White-vented Plumleteer turned out to be a lifer for us, but most of the excitement was for a Pale-bellied Hermit that visited the feeder, unusual for Hermits.



Our favorite bird was one we had seen before, Keel-billed Toucan. A pair flew past several times and perched in a large tree visible from the deck. He practically begged me to take a picture of him showing his incredible bill.

After dinner, we coaxed Mark into dealing with the day's list, which tallied about 70 species, including four lifers.

The internet is up and down here. I'll send this off whenever I can.

### June 5, 2014: Road above Minca

Today, we explored the area above the village of Minca, first taking the Sendero to Pozo Azul. I never learned what a Pozo is, and we didn't see much that was azul, so I have no idea why trail was called that. It led to a small waterfall thru some nice forest.

As far as I was concerned, the bird of the morning was a Stripe-throated Hermit, a kind of hummingbird that Linda had seen in Belize, but which was new for me. Erasing a "half bird" is always a cause for celebration. The bird was at a lek, displaying in hopes of attracting a female.

The insects were as interesting as the birds. I photographed the dragonfly shown at left. I thought it looked familiar and found the picture shown at right, which I took in the Orinoco delta in 2006. Can you see the difference? It's subtle, but notice that the first couple of segments of the abdomen are different, and the male appendages are different colors. Very similar dragonflies, though.







We also saw a “helicopter damselfly.” This is a large damselfly that presents an optical illusion when flying. It looks as if the wings are going around like a helicopter, but they are actually beating in the normal way for a damselfly. Mark said that the one we saw, which was about 3-4 inches long, was not the largest one in South America, but it was long enough. It perched long enough for a photo. My attempts to capture video of the flight were ineffective, but we suspect that you will find one on YouTube. My connection here is much too slow.

We spent the afternoon walking along a different section of the main road. The road cuts thru some secondary growth as well as some grassy areas. We wound up with an additional new species in the afternoon, a Thick-billed Seed-finch. It was interesting only because we had searched for it several times in the past without success.

We did have a chance to get a great photo of a Rufous-tailed Jacamar, a widespread bird that we have seen several times before.

Tomorrow, after spending the morning birding along the road some more, we will head to a new lodge at a higher elevation, where everything should be different.

## June 6, 2014: On the Road Again

Corrections and amplifications:

- As two of you notified me, “Puzo” means “well,” or “spring,” or something like that. That leaves only the *azul* portion of the *Pozo Azul* name open to question. I suppose “Blue Hole” might be a good translation. We never saw anything like that on the trail.
- I said the road was a dirt track. Actually, was paved once and some of the pavement remains. It is not the worst road we have been on — the Sani Pass road from South Africa to Lesotho holds that record — but it is on the short list.

The main traffic on the road consists of motorcycle traffic, operating as a taxi service. This requires quite a bit of skill. We have some four-wheel-drive vehicles to ferry us back and forth.

Today, we drove up to the same spot as yesterday, but walked all the way back to the lodge, taking about 4 hours for the trip. We stumbled onto a fruiting tree when we were “just walking back to the lodge” and wound up postponing lunch for fifteen minutes. By the end of the day, we had added 30 new species to the trip list, which now stands at 133.

After lunch, we drove a long way on the road, reaching El Dorado Lodge, at an elevation of 6500 feet, after two hours and 20 miles, where we a new slate of hummingbirds awaited us.





Our most exciting find of the day was the Rose-breasted Thrush-tanager, a seldom observed species. Indeed, the field guide says, "Seldom observed, even with playback." Mark decided to give it a try anyway. After all, "seldom" is not the same as "never." *Orni*, the capricious goddess of birding, smiled on us, and we had a 5-star view of this very difficult bird. We were even able to get a photo of the male singing.

This is an amazing bit of luck.

We also had a fun day photographing insects. We saw two "Assassin Bugs," which are a kind of "True Bug." Assassin bugs grab and hold other insects then insert their proboscis into the prey and suck the life out of it. Mark told us they can inflict a painful bite if handled improperly. The second one of these we saw was a colorful immature one, whose picture is included below.

The other interesting insect was an amazing butterfly that I nicknamed the Goliath Skipper. Mark pointed out that the antennae on the bug have small hooks at the tips, which you can barely see in the photograph. Most skippers are small, not even an inch in size. This guy was about 3" long and very heavy. When we get a better internet connection, I plan to see if I can get an ID by asking for help from the experts. Anyway, here's the photo:



On our way to El Dorado Lodge, we stopped to look for a Blossomcrown, a very local hummingbird, and the reason many people come to this place. I had a poor look, a silhouette only, at a lek. We hope to do better tomorrow.

We also saw a Red Howler Monkey, a big male that seemed to be looking right at the telescope.

After dinner, we stepped out onto the balcony of the second story and managed a brief glimpse of a Lemurine Night Monkey, who leaped to a small branch and took off as soon as we lit him

up. A Crab-eating Fox came to visit shortly after. We didn't get a good picture and hope that he returns tomorrow.

## June 7, 2014: Chasing Endemics

Today was devoted to chasing down some of the special birds of the area, particularly the



Blossomcrown. First, though, we had breakfast. This meant we passed by the windows of the dining area, which were covered with moths attracted to the lights. Santa Marta Brush Finches and Social Flycatchers feasted on these. Linda snapped photos like mad before the birds took all the interesting ones. This moth was my favorite. Notice that its head is at the bottom of the photo. The top is designed to fool predators. Maybe that is why it lasted long enough for Linda to get this picture.

After breakfast, we walked down the road to the lek we visited yesterday afternoon. This was supposed to take about an hour, but actually took more than two hours as we kept finding fruiting trees that demanded attention.

When we finally got to the lek, we were rewarded with some stunning looks at this very local hummingbird. Unfortunately, even with three males (maybe 4, we weren't sure) competing at the lek we couldn't get a decent photo. Too many branches got in the way. We still gave it 5-stars.

Satisfied, we piled into the vehicles, which had trailed us down the road, and returned to the lodge for lunch.

In the afternoon, we hiked a bit more than a kilometer to a *mirador*, that is a viewpoint. There, we tried with very limited success to see a Rusty-headed Spinetail. We did manage to get a brief look — Linda better than I — and ticked it off, but definitely put into the BVD (Better View Desired) category.

On the way back, we coaxed a Gray-throated Leaf-tosser, another notoriously shy bird, into letting us see him. I actually spotted the bird first when he flew to an exposed perch where he sang and displayed by flicking his tail with each note.

At night, we tried to spot the Santa Marta Screech Owl, which is such a new split that it doesn't have a scientific name yet. We heard two and tried to track them down, but without success. Instead, we returned to the lodge and found a Cecropia tree nearby harboring at least four Lemurine Night Monkeys. Tonight, they ignored the spotlight, so we had wonderful looks at these small monkeys. We saw their cousins with Granny and Flo in Panama, but that was at a roost in the daytime.

I tried to take a photo, but the camera said, "You've got to be kidding!"

We waited for the Crab-eating Fox to show up and take the food put out for him. By 8:30 we gave up, confident that the food would be gone by morning. Tomorrow we start earlier than usual.



Just to show that we are equal opportunity ecotourists, we have included a photo of a reptile, some species of Anole that we saw on a shrub near the lodge.

### June 8, 2014: View from the Top

We got up at 4:20 this morning so we could leave the lodge by 5:00 for a drive up to higher elevation. First, though, we had the now standard round of photos at the dining room windows. My favorite was this fabulous huge beetle, which I think is some species of Stag Beetle. This is not the best photo of the lot, but it shows the size thanks to the strategically placed Swiss Army Knife.



The drive up to 8000' elevation was on a road that I previously had in second place behind the Sani Pass Road for the title of "Worst road we have ever been over." Now, we think it is a virtual tie. The trip took about an hour and a half, with two stops for birds seen on the way. Linda spotted the best of these, a Lined Quail-dove on the road. We had a great view, but no one else did thanks to our position in the front vehicle. We didn't get out, so maybe the rest don't know what they missed.



We wound up with six lifers for the trip, our best day so far. Most of these lifers are named "Santa Marta something," which gives you an idea of what this place is like. Several of these were *skulkers*, who prefer to stay hidden in the undergrowth rather than letting you have a good look at them. As a result, the only photo worth sharing is of a non-lifer, Emerald Toucanet, who posed at the top of a tree and did a sort of dance.

After lunch, the fog rolled in, proving that we are really in the middle of a cloud forest. We are supposed to go on another bird walk this afternoon, but as I write, that seems dubious. The internet is cooperating right now, so I think I'll wrap this up and send it out.

BTW, the food left for the fox was still there this morning.

### June 9, 2014: Back on the Road

After my last note, the skies opened, effectively raining out the afternoon's birding. We did manage to wander around for an hour late in the afternoon, and had our best view yet of a White-



tipped Quetzal, and spectacular looks at a pair of Gray-breasted Wood Wrens, but we had seen both already on this trip and earlier.



Today, we left after breakfast and hopped into the 4WD vehicles for a trip up the mountain. The plan was to drive up and walk down. Now, I have mentioned this road before, but today I came prepared and took a few photos to show you what I mean. Here's one of the bad spots on the road. Jerry and Marilyn, members of our group are provided to give you some scale on the rocks in the road that the trucks have to navigate around. During this exercise, they tilt about 20-30 degrees. I wanted a picture of one of the trucks doing it and tried to convey my wishes to the drivers. At least

they were polite and didn't laugh at my risible Spanish. However, my use of *las trucas*, instead of *los carros*, left them bewildered. Later, I explained that in Texas the vehicles were definitely *trucas*. At any rate, I don't have any such photo.



Sometimes, the road is paved. This is an improvement, but still leaves something to be desired. When we get to one of these stretches, the drivers lean out the window to make sure they are on the two strips of concrete. What this picture doesn't show is the precipitous drop after the flat part. There was only so much I could get into one photo.

However, we made it safely to our starting point and proceeded back down the hill, collecting some nice new birds on the way, and one interesting spider. I know you were hoping I would include a spider photo. Here it is. This beauty is related to our Spiny Orbweaver, *Gasteracantha cancriformis*, which I have photographed several times. She is about 1/4" (about 6mm). This photo shows her ventral view, that is, she is hanging upside down on the line. The lovely yellow and black contrasts nicely with the red and black legs, don't you think?



Back at the lodge, we saw a lovely male Black-capped Tanager feeding on some rotten bananas, which provided a nice opportunity for a photograph.

I'll close with that. Tomorrow we have to pack as we will spend the day traveling to Playa Roca, the final stop on our brief tour. We'll have some chances for birding, but we will be mostly just traveling.

### June 10, 2014: El Dorado to Playa La Roca

We were too tired last night to pack, so we set the alarm for 4:45 and hit the sack. When the alarm went off, I flipped the light switch by the bed. Nothing happened. Power was out for the entire lodge. Linda had the bright idea of using our headlamps to pack, which helped enormously. It turned out to be fairly easy. Then, we headed to the dining area, where we had a cold breakfast before setting out.



We stopped several times on the way looking for a few endemic birds that had eluded us. One of these, Santa Marta Tapaculo surprised us and came out of the undergrowth for superb views. In more than 40 years of birding, we have seen precisely **TWO** Tapaculos, notoriously difficult birds. I was the first one to spot this bird, so it immediately went to the top of the list for favorite bird of the trip. We were even able to note a small white mark on the bird's forehead, something not illustrated or mentioned in the field guide. Everyone in the group had excellent views of the bird.



We arrived at Playa La Roca, a beach resort on the Caribbean, about 3:00 pm. After settling into our rooms, we drove a short distance down the road to a dirt track leading into some second growth forest. There, we had fabulous views of White-bellied Antbird, which Linda spotted first. The bird rewarded us with a rare repeated 5-star view. Previously, we had seen one well in Panama when we visited the Englemans in 1997. We saw this bird, a male, singing, but I was unable to get the camera to focus on it through the sticks in the foreground.

We also saw a female Lance-tailed Manakin, which was on our BVD (Better View Desired) list from the same Panama Visit. She cooperated enough for a good photo.

Notice her black toenails on orange-red feet.

## June 11, 2014: Guajira Peninsula and Gaviotas Road Again

Up early, we hit the road at 5:30, ate breakfast in the bus, and drove one hour to the [Guajira Peninsula](#). This is a narrow piece of Colombia sticking up into the Caribbean Sea. It has a completely different climate and ecosystem from the mountains we have visited on the rest of the trip. We had a good highway most of the way, two lane, but paved without potholes. We turned off onto a dirt track (paved occasionally) that veered away from the highway, ending eventually at a small town on the ocean shore.



We started seeing new birds immediately, many of which we had seen in Venezuela in 1999 in similar habitat. However, after 17 years we didn't always remember what they looked like. (I'm sure that surprises you.) For instance, one of the first birds was a stunning Black-crested Antshrike, a bird we have seen several times, most recently in 2006 in Suriname. However, this was the first time we managed to photograph one. Quite an interesting bird.



Another specialty of this area is the cute Green-rumped Parrotlet. As the name implies, this is a small parrot. We saw several flocks of them flying around before locating one posing for a photo. About 5 inches tall, brilliant green with the little bit of bright blue on the wings, just visible in this photo, we were delighted to see him again.

We proceeded down the dirt track, managing only a single certified lifer, a lovely Chestnut Piculet, a small bird the stuck to the scrub where the camera had trouble focusing. We had another sort of lifer, Caribbean Hornero, which is considered a sub-species by most experts today, but a separate species by the IOC taxonomy I have started using.

At the beach, it was like old home week, with many birds familiar from the Texas coast, such as a flock of Laughing Gulls and Royal Terns. The most interesting

sighting, I thought, was two Reddish Egrets, one a white morph, the other dark. I was surprised to find them so far south, but Mark said they are probably resident in the area somewhere.

We had a delicious lunch of some kind of snapper with coconut rice and a nice salad. I decided to live dangerously and eat the salads, which taste great, despite the old rule to avoid unpeeled vegetables. So far, I have survived OK.



After lunch, we made another pass at the Gaviotas Road, where we went yesterday. This time we started earlier and went farther. We did add some stuff to the list, including the *male* Lance-tailed Manakin that eluded us yesterday, but it was mostly the same birds as yesterday.



Playa La Roca, where we are staying is interesting. (The *playa* is right outside; we have no idea what to make of *la roca*.) It appears to be a luxury resort, but not quite finished. There is no hot water, for example. The bungalows are beautifully laid out — ours would easily sleep two parents and four kids — but lack some standard items, such as a place to hang a roll of *papel higienico* by the toilet. The wall is stone, covered in stucco, so it is hard to retrofit. The bathroom is on the left in the photo, with the colorful circular wall items.

The bed, btw, is the largest we have had on the trip thus far. It is cozier than we are used to. There are actually three bunk beds like the one shown in the photo.

The food and service are superb, and my cursory examination of the area as we drove around leads me to believe that it is the best around. The lack of hot water is not as much of a problem as you might think. We are usually so hot and sweaty by the end of the day that cold water feels pretty good.

Tomorrow we start heading home. We are going to hit Gaviotas Road yet again, mainly I suspect, from lack of any good alternative. Then, we will have another great lunch and head back to Barranquilla. Enough for now. Looks like the power just went out.

### June 12, 2014: Back to Barranquilla

The power outage was brief. Still, it was a strange experience. I sat all alone at a long table in the dining area in virtually total darkness save for the light from my computer screen. To my amazement, the internet connection stayed up the entire time. The connection, totally unprotected, ran at the fastest speed of any on the trip. Mark had warned us that there would likely be no WiFi at this spot, so the improvement from last year was a delightful surprise..

We had the option of sleeping in this morning, as breakfast was at the civilized hour of 6:30. Of course, we had to get up early anyway to pack for the trip back to Barranquilla. Linda suggested putting out hiking boots into a separate bag and wearing sandals in the bus for the 3-4 hour trip, a great idea.

First, though, we had one final morning birding trip. We returned for the third time to the Gaviotas Road in search of anything new. Surprisingly, we added 6-7 birds to our “trip list,” but none were lifers. We searched in vain for the Trinidad Euphonia, the one possibility for a new species. Mark heard them calling, but got no response from a recording. I spotted a pair of Euphonias, but they turned out to be Thick-billed Euphonias, a bird we have seen many times.





We did manage to get a good photo of this lovely male Gartered Trogon. We saw a pair yesterday, but obscuring leaves prevented the camera from focusing on the bird. BTW, you can tell that this is the male of the pair by the nice yellow eye ring. Females have a broken, light blue one.

We returned to the lodge about 11:00, leaving time for a quick shower before meeting for our final bird list before another wonderful lunch. Every meal here, except breakfast, has featured fish in some form. The best was some grilled mackerel we had for our first dinner, though some preferred the snapper we had for lunch on day 2. We also had an interesting pasta with seafood (mostly shrimp and squid) that night. Today's final offering at lunch was *Rabalo*, translated as "some kind of fish." It was baked with a light coconut sauce, served whole, with something that looked like mashed potatoes but

wasn't, and a great salad of avocado, fruit and greens. We ate with full abandon, forgetting the old adage to avoid any unpeeled vegetables, and suffered no ill effects. We have had excellent food throughout the trip. Ironically, the best hotel, Plaza Barranquilla, had the least interesting offerings (IMHO) except for a nice breakfast buffet.

After lunch, we set off for the big city. Our route, on a good coastal road, provided two opportunities for wildlife viewing. First, we pulled over to check out a collection of water birds in a small impoundment along the highway. We added Caspian Gull, a truly worldwide species to the trip list and picked up Black-necked Stilt for those, like me, who had missed it earlier.

About 30 minutes from the outskirts of Barranquilla, we stopped at *Parque Nacional de Isla Salamanca*, mainly for a rest stop. However, Virgilio, our driver, pointed out a mammal in its daytime roost, a tree near the *baños*. It looked like a large gray and white rat. Virgilio called it a possum, but it was definitely a rodent, based on its teeth and lack of a prehensile tale. We have not yet identified it. For once, FSOG (Five Seconds On Google) proved inadequate, though I did learn that the park is home to 30 different species of mammals according to one entry.

Mark had seen a Sapphire-throated Hummingbird at the site in the past, and managed to conjure up one last lifer by playing a recording of the call of a Ferruginous Pygmy-owl. The hummingbirds came to attack the owl and provided us with enough of a view for a tick. We were unable to get a view of the bird's gorget in full sunlight and had to be content with noting a slight purplish hue.

After claiming our welcome drink at the bar, we adjourned to the café for a farewell dinner. Despite several hints, I was not asked to relate the story of [The Incident At Cooper Bay](#). If you haven't heard it, you can find it on our web site, [Hargrove.org](http://Hargrove.org). Last time I checked, if you google "incident at cooper bay," you'll get a direct link.

Linda, as usual, had a long list of favorite birds. The rest of us made do with a few memorable ones.

Here's a picture of the whole gang after our last dinner:



From the left: Jim, Marilyn, Jerry, Mitch, Vicki, Dwayne, Marjie, Linda, Mark.

This proved to be a typical Mark Pretti trip: lots of birds (230 seen with several more heard), fun mini-lectures on seed dispersal and protection by plants in the area, predator avoidance behavior, bird and plant distribution, insects, and much more. We like this combination even though it produces fewer lifers than an all-out birding blitz. That can wait until we return to Africa, a continent underrepresented in our travels to date.

Stay tuned.

### **Postscript: Favorite birds of the trip (note the plural)**

Mark: (usually hard birds to see)

- Long-winged Harrier, his only lifer
- Rose-breasted Thrush-tanager

- Scaled Piculet, usually hard to see
- Black-fronted Wood-quail
- White-tipped Quetzal, because he wanted to see it in a telescope
- Gray-throated Leaf-tosser
- White-rumped Hawk
- Blue-naped Chlorophonia
- Honorable mention to all the little flycatchers (leader birds in Linda's view)

Linda:

- Best endemic: Santa Marta Mountain-tanager
- Best regional endemic: White-tipped Quetzal
- Best Voice: Crested Oropendula, with Gray-breasted Wood-wren a close second
- Best Barranquilla Bird: Bicolored Wren, seen near the hotel
- Best Guajira (desert) bird: Chestnut Piculet
- Best Hummer: Male and Female Crowned Woodnymph
- Most Colorful: Blue-naped Chlorophonia
- Best view of Raptor: Roadside Hawk (Jim is incredulous!)
- Best Black-and-white bird: White-fringed Antwren

Jim:

- Rose-breasted Thrush-tanager, which he noted to Mark would be the bird of the trip, but...
- Santa Marta Tapaculo, because any tapaculo that cooperative should be on the list, and because no one else mentioned it.

Dwayne:

- Chestnut Piculet, usually hard to see
- Black-crested Antshrike
- Black-throated Wood-quail
- House Sparrow, a rare occurrence in Colombia

Marj:

- Northern Screamer

Vicki:

- Russet-throated Puffbird and
- White-necked Puffbird, because she got photos of both
- Crested Caracara
- Male Swallow Tanager
- Crimson-backed Tanager
- White-whiskered Spinetail
- Black-crested Antshrike

- Rufous-tailed Jacamar
- But wait...there's more
- White-fringed Antwren
- White-necked Jacobin

Mitch:

- Gray-lined Hawk
- White-rumped Hawk
- Crimson-backed Tanager
- Rose-breasted Thrush-tanager

Marilyn:

- Russet-throated Puffbird
- Blue-naped Chlorophonia
- White-fringed Antwren
- Lance-tailed Manakin
- Black-crested Antshrike
- Pied Water Tyrant

Jerry:

- Gray-breasted Wood Wren
- White-throated Puffbird
- White-tipped Quetzal, He heard someone say, "Oh, my god," then realized he had said it himself.

### **Post-postscript: First and Last Colombian Birds**

Our last bird seen in Colombia was the same as our first, a Western Cattle Egret feeding in the grass beside the runway as we took off.