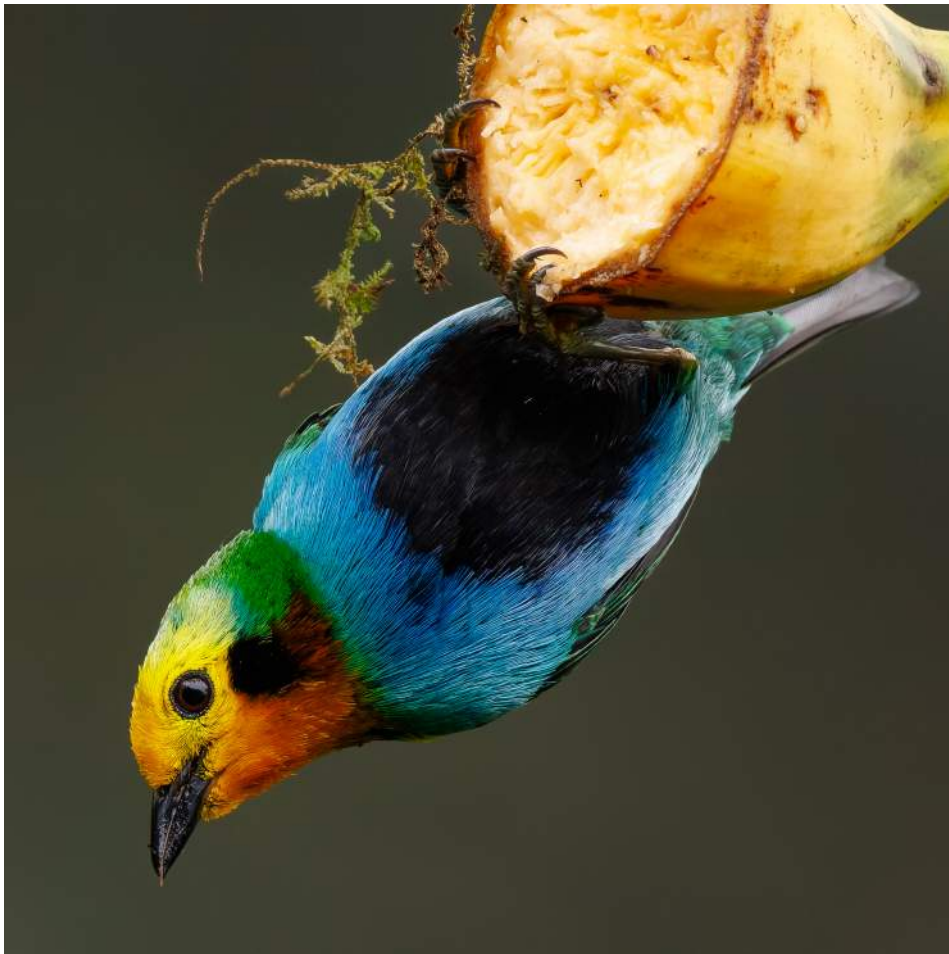


Multi-Colored Tanager Tour



November 26 - December 6 2025

We had an extremely enjoyable trip to Colombia and saw some amazing birds. The five of us were looked after very well by our guide Ramon and driver Johann, aided and abetted by local guides in each of our destinations. The weather varied a lot, but although we had a fair bit of rain it was usually in the afternoon or evening and mostly did not impact on the success of the trip. Despite being only a few degrees north of the equator it was generally a comfortable temperature, due in part to most of the places we visited being more than 1300m above sea level. Definitely more call for thin fleeces and lightweight waterproofs rather than shorts and T-shirts.



Vermilion Flycatcher



Wedge-tailed Grass-finch

Thursday 27th. We travelled from London Heathrow or Edinburgh and met up at various stages of our journeys. By the time we reached Pereira and met Ramon we had a complete team. After a quick coffee and cake we set off in our very spacious minibus to our first birding area. Cauquita Forest Reserve is a small patch of tropical dry forest in an upscale gated residential development. A small lake yielded our first few birds: Spectacled Parrotlet, Vermilion Flycatcher, Shiny Cowbird, Least Grebe, Wattled Jacana, Fork-tailed Flycatcher and Meadowlark. In some rough ground between houses we found Ultramarine Grosbeak, a lifer for Ramon. And most of the rest of us too! By the time we reached the actual forest there was a fine drizzle in the air which intensified through the rest of the afternoon. We saw Osprey, Blue-headed Parrot, Blackburnian Warbler, Great Crested Flycatcher and a young Common Potoo, immobile on a stump of a branch, blinking off the rain. Blue-necked, Scrub, Guira, Palm and Blue-Gray were a good start to the Tanager list. By now we were all a bit cold and wet, and happy to retire to a roadside cafe for lunch. Then we drove to our first night's accommodation, Casa Hotel Kumanday in the outskirts of Pereira. After some excellent soup and completion of the day's checklist we were ready for some sleep.



Common Potoo





Smooth-billed Ani



Red-ruffed Fruit Crow



Bare-faced Ibis

Friday 28th. Our first full day. We met at 5.30am, some of us disappointed to find no wake-up coffee available. We travelled in two 4WDs up a steep and bumpy track into the 1000 hectare Otún Quimbaya Reserve, designated to protect the Otún river basin which supplies Pereira with drinking water. First stop was a bridge over the river, from which we got good views of male and female Torrent Ducks, and White-capped Dippers. It was a pleasant dry morning, with some wisps of low cloud drifting in and out. Ramon found us three Guan species: Cauca, Wattled and Sickled-winged, as well as Andean Motmot, Collared Trogon, Slaty-capped, Cinnamon and Bran-coloured Flycatchers, Olive-backed and Streak-headed Woodcreepers. There was even a Multi-colored Tanager, seen by Claire. Another star of the show was Red-ruffed Fruit Crow, generally rare but often seen in this specific reserve.

We had the first of many picnic breakfasts off the bonnet of one of the cars, whilst watching Slate-throated Whitestarts, Bronze-winged Parrots and Metallic Green Tanager.

On the way back down we had even better views of the fruit crows from the jeep, as well as Smooth-billed Ani, Acorn and Red-crowned Woodpeckers.

Lunch was at Casa Kumanday, and some time to check out the feeders. At one point there were six Tanager species at the same time: Blue-gray, Palm, Summer, Flame-rumped, Scrub and Golden, with a White-bellied Woodstar zooming about like an oversize bumble bee.

Next, off to a wetland area at Camaguadua, created for a hydro scheme. Lots of waterbirds including Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers, Bare-faced Ibis, a small flock of Blue-winged Teal, Black-necked Stilt, Snowy and Great Egrets, Pied-billed Grebe. Also a difficult-to-see White-throated Crake under a bush, a Lineated Woodpecker, Green Kingfisher and Rusty-margined Flycatcher. After an ice cream, we left to drive to our next hotel, the rather grand looking Recinto del Pensamiento at Manizales. Quite a contrast to the rustic charm of the previous night. The checklist was completed in the posh steak restaurant across the car park, where we indulged in beers, juices and cocktails according to preference.



Sparkling Violetear



Brown-banded Antpitta



Southern Emerald-Toucanet



Chestnut-crowned Antpitta



Buff-tailed Coronet



Crimson-mantled Woodpecker

Saturday 29th. Up at 6, and drove up to Rio Blanco Reserve at 2600m. Straight out of the minibus we were confronted by a bewildering array of hummingbirds buzzing around the feeders (and us!). Gradually we sorted them out into Collared and Bronzy Incas, Speckled, Tourmaline Sunangel, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Sparkling and Green Violetears, Buff-tailed Coronet and Long-tailed Sylph. Plus White-sided and Masked Flowerpiercers. By this time we were ready for breakfast: scrambled eggs and cheese plus long-awaited coffee. A short distance up the road was a feeding station for Chestnut-crowned Antpitta. Pancho the Antpitta duly obliged and many photos were taken. Then further up the hill to see Nana the Slate-crowned Antpitta for more photos. After lunch, which we had back in the reserve centre, we saw Antpitta Number 3, Bojo the Brown-banded, though most of his worms were stolen by an equally tame Slaty-backed Nightingale-thrush. We also spent some time in the forest, where we saw spectacular Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Masked Saltator, Lacrymose and Blue-winged Mountain Tanagers, Montane Woodcreeper and Red-hooded Tanager, the last another lifer for Ramon. By now it was about 3pm and the rain started. One final stop to watch White-capped Dippers on the edge of a small reservoir, then back to the Recinto. More fine food, drink and checklist

Sunday 30th. Up at 6, a beautiful blue sky morning. Drove about an hour to Hacienda el Bosque, 3300m, a private reserve established on a dairy farm. First off, breakfast in a modern glass walled restaurant, plenty of coffee and then a good choice of hot food with Shining Sunbeams flitting about outside. A short distance away was a feeding station, where Christian our local guide called up first a White-browed Spinetail which he fed by hand. Then Gray-browed Brushfinch, which hopped around on the ground by our feet. Then the main event, an Equatorial Antpitta. Returning up the path to the minibus we also had good views of a Grass Wren.



Grass Wren



White-browed Spinetail

At the next feeding station, the Antpitta didn't come, apparently he'd not been seen for a couple of weeks. But we were more than compensated by a spectacular Barred Fruit Eater which gave ridiculously close views. Also to be seen were Northern Slaty Brushfinch, Mountain Wren and Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant.



Equatorial Antpitta



Barred Fruit-Eater



Tourmaline Sunangel



Masked Flowerpiercer



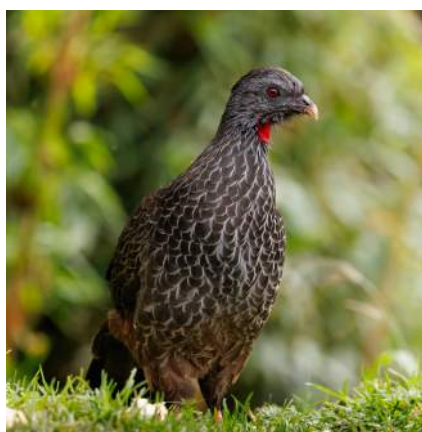
Shining Sunbeam



Buff-winged Starfrontlet



Grey-breasted Mountain-Toucan



Andean Guan



Blue-winged Mountain Tanager

Next we visited some hummingbird feeders. The usual initial confusion and gradual understanding! We saw Shining Sunbeam, Tourmaline Sunangel, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Sparkling Violetear and twice, briefly, a Sword-billed Hummingbird. There were also Flowerpiercers: Masked, Black and White-sided. Many more photos were taken.

Finally, there was a well set up feeding station with fruit that brought Sickie-winged and Andean Guans, Grey-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Blue-capped Tanager, White-throated Quail-Dove, Blue-winged Mountain Tanager. After this sensory overload we went back to the restaurant for lunch and more coffee.

Then a drive to our next destination, but on the way, Laguna Negra at 3800m had 2 Andean Teal and 3 Andean Duck. Cloud and fine drizzle. Our hotel, Termales del Ruiz at 3500m, had a wonderful smell of sulphur from the hot springs. Even better, it had a beautifully laid out hummingbird garden with flowering plants and sugar feeders. 90% were Shining Sunbeams, but new species for the trip included Great Sapphirewing, Golden-breasted Puffleg, Tyrian Metaltail and Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, this last the most difficult to see. And also Glossy Flowerpiercer, Pale-naped Brushfinch and Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanager. A short walk down the entrance track gained us Buff-banded Mountain Tanager, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, White-banded Tyrannulet and Blue-



Lacrymose Mountain Tanager



Rainbow-bearded Thornbill



Golden-breasted Puffleg

backed Conebill. After all this we needed a long soak in the thermal pool which was absolutely marvellous. We then had a very good dinner, some of the best food so far

Monday 1st. There was coffee ready to go when we got up at 6. Nothing new in the garden, but a stunning Tawny Antpitta and Crowned Chat-Tyrant at a feeding station only 100m walk from the hotel.

After breakfast, drove up to the National Park Centre at 4200m. Fairly quickly saw Pale-naped Brushfinch, Plumbeous Sierra Finch, White-chinned Thistletail, Stout-billed Cinclodes and Viridian Metaltail. But Buffy Helmetcrest, our main target, was only seen by some of the group. And one of Colombia's one hundred Andean Condors flew over, to the joy of Ramon and some of the group and the despair of those who missed it.





Crowned Chat-Tyrant



Tawny Antpitta



Pale-naped Brushfinch

All too soon we ran out of time and left for the next place. We had lunch on the second floor of an unusual restaurant in Manizales with an artificial tree going through it. On slowly to Pueblo Rico which we finally reached at 6.30pm. Here we swapped over



Montezuma Rainforest Lodge

to two 4WDs again for the last bit of our journey up to Montezuma Rainforest Lodge at 2300m. Arrived in the rain, ready for dinner. We had a very friendly welcome, large rooms and showers with just about enough hot water. It rained very hard overnight.

Tuesday 2nd. Up at 5.20, coffee, then up the hill in the 4WDs. An extremely rough track which took great skill by our drivers. Progress was halted part way by a landslip, but our hosts worked extremely hard to get it cleared and we reached the top of the track in about 2 hours. We had a great picnic breakfast in the purpose made wooden shelter, and found ourselves surrounded by birds coming to the sugar feeders. We saw Dusky Starfrontlet, Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer and Munchique Wren, plus Violet-tailed Sylph and Collared Inca. Three young soldiers from the military base at the top were keen to chat.



Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer



Munchique Wren



Dusky Starfrontlet

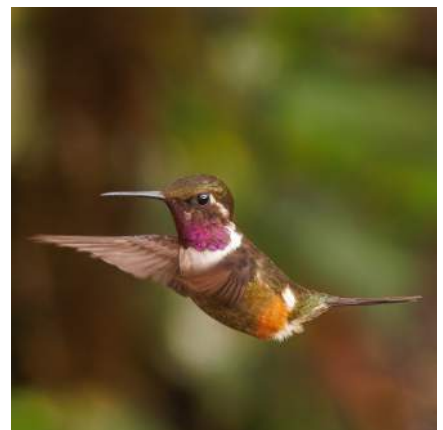
We made our way down by a mix of walking and riding. There were regular wooden shelters with seating, and most had a hummingbird feeder nearby, with Rusty-gaped Hillstar, Greenish Puffleg, Velvet-purple Coronet, Empress Brilliant, Purple-throated Woodstar and Brown Inca. Good morning light, but slowly the clouds came in and by 2pm it was raining. We had a superb hot packed lunch, brought up specially by motorbike from the lodge, sitting in one of the shelters. More spectacular birds included Gold-ringed Tanager and Chesnut-bellied Chlorophonia.



Gold-ringed Tanager



Violet-tailed Sylph



Purple-throated Woodstar

When the weather really closed in, and visibility was particularly poor, we came across a mixed flock of Toucan Barbets, Black and Gold & Glistening Green Tanagers, Pacific Tufted-Cheek, Black and Green Fruiteater. Frustrating to see them in such poor light!

We got back to the lodge with about an hour's light left. Yet more birds on the feeders, including Rufous-tailed and Steel-vented Hummingbirds, Andean Emerald, Booted Racket-tail, Green Thorntail, White-necked Jacobin, Purple-bibbed White-tip. Silver-throated Tanager, Black-cheeked Woodpecker and Andean Motmot. Just down the drive was a tree with a Greyish Piculet hole in it. You could just see its head poking out. And Wedge-billed Woodcreeper close by. Another delicious dinner, and checklists, then bed. More heavy rain overnight, and we missed an Armadillo, seen only by Ramon.

Wednesday 3rd. Just like yesterday, up at 5.20 and up the track in the 4WDs. This time we only went half way, so as to concentrate on the lower altitude specialists. Breakfast, then first bird of the day was a White-faced Nunbird, good view but distant. Some Scaly-naped Amazons flew over, squawking. Choco Brushfinches came for crumbs from the vehicles. A Purplish-mantled Tanager bathed in a puddle on the track. We saw Sharpe's Wren, Lanceolated Monklet, Moustached Puffird, Tawny-bellied Hermit, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Black and Gold Tanager. There was good morning light again. We saw a Narino Tapaculo, very hard to follow, dark brown against the forest floor. A Yellow-breasted Antpitta came to a tape, and crossed the road (very fast) in front of us, three times!

Another great hot packed lunch, got back to the lodge at 3pm, more time to check out the feeders.



Orange-breasted Fruit-eater



Ornate Flycatcher



Masked Trogon



Green Thorntail



Andean Emerald



We saw Bananaquit, Hepatic Tanager, Russet-backed and Chestnut-headed Oropendola, A superb Pasta Bolognese for dinner, and checklist. Looked for armadillos, but to no avail.



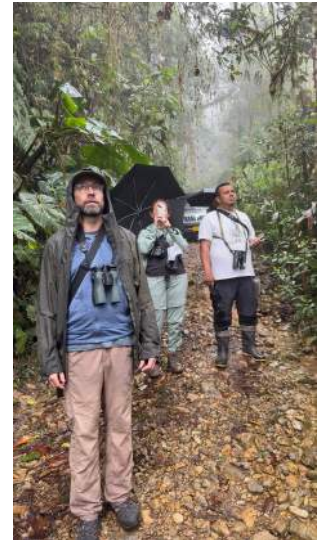
Purplish-mantled Tanager



Rufous-tailed Hummingbird



Andean Motmot



Thursday 4th. Woke to extremely noisy heavy rain on the roof.



Russet-backed Oropendola

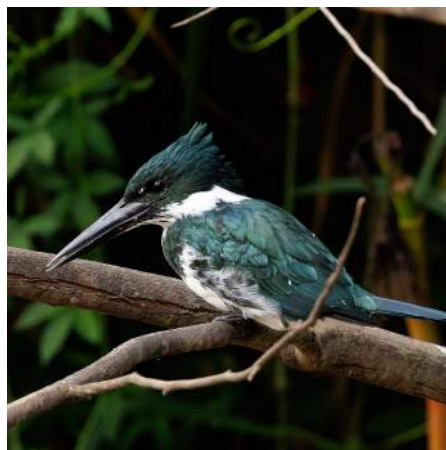


Tayra

The light was very poor, but we managed a few new birds around the lodge, including Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Northern Waterthrush, Western Emerald and Golden-faced Tyrannulet. A Tayra came to the feeders. On our way down to Pueblo Rico there was a big landslip being repaired. We swapped back to our minibus and set off, having seen Ruddy-breasted and Yellow-bellied Seedeaters across the road. It was a long drive. At one point we stopped at a toll booth, right opposite a small pond with Cinnamon Teal and Comb Duck. We arrived at Sonos Lagoon at 1.30 for lunch, then walked a trail along the edge of the lagoon to a viewing point looking over a wetland. The big trees held Lineated Woodpecker, Blue-headed Parrot, Spectacled Parrotlet, Ringed and Amazon Kingfisher, Neotropical Cormorant and Anhinga. At the viewpoint were Snail Kite, Pinnated Bittern, Glossy Ibis, Cocoi Heron, Purple Gallinule, White-faced and Fulvous Whistling Ducks, and many more. It was noticeably warmer, with a lot more flying insects, some of them evidently keen on human flesh. The one time on the whole trip when we felt the need for insect repellent!



Snail Kite



Amazon Kingfisher



Spectacled Parrotlet

On to our next destination, Araucana Lodge outside Cali. We didn't arrive until 7pm, because of a protest on the road. Very upmarket lodge with huge bedrooms and lovely food.

Fr 5. Up for breakfast at 5.50, then off to La Florida, Bosque de las Aves. This was a very well run bird garden with multiple feeding stations for different species. The perches all looked fresh, and the food was replenished frequently. The main area had a good assortment of tanagers: Golden, Golden-naped, Black-capped, Saffron-headed, Flame-backed, White-lined and Multicolored, with Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Andean Motmot, Colombian Chachalaca and Green Hermit. A dry



Golden Tanager



Golden-naped Tanager



Saffron-headed Tanager

morning with sunshine, pleasantly warm. We spent quite a while here, with delicious coffee.

Then there were the hummingbird feeders. Instead of the traditional red design, they used large syringes to feed the sugar water, which directed the birds along narrow approach routes making photography of birds hovering much easier. Here we saw Brown Violetear, Bronzy Inca, Booted Racket-tail, Long-Tailed Sylph, Speckled, Green-fronted Lancebill, Purple-throated Woodstar and White-necked Jacobin. More memory cards were filled and batteries depleted.



Green-fronted Lancebill



Brown Violetear



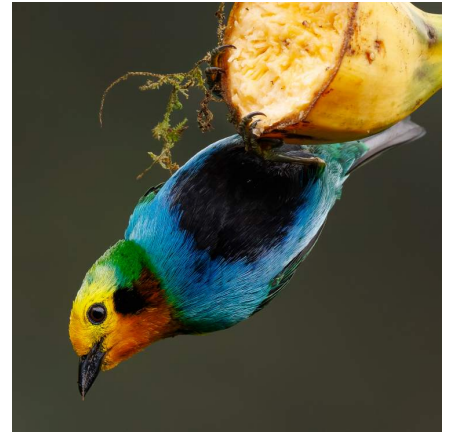
Booted Racket-tail



Scrub Tanager



Flame-backed Tanager



Multi-coloured Tanager



Chestnut-capped Brushfinch



Chestnut Wood-Quail



Little Tinamou

After lunch down at the farmhouse, at 2pm we went up to another area of the garden where we had extremely close views of Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, followed by Chestnut Wood-Quail and then Little Tinamou. All on a beautifully constructed, natural-looking stage set with logs encrusted with moss and lichen. The tinamous even brought a juvenile with them.

We returned to Araucana, just as it started to drizzle, but managed to see Black-throated Mango on the garden feeders. Then it was time for dinner, and to pack for our return to the UK the following day.



Toucan Barbet



Red-headed Barbet



Bananaquit



Silver-throated Tanager



Glistening Green Tanager



Green Honeycreeper

Sa 6. Woke to Chachalacas calling. Up at 5.45, drove up the Old Buenaventura Road for about an hour to Doña Dora's Bird garden/restaurant. Fruit feeding station at the back, away from the road, and sugar feeders on the roof. We saw White-lined, Flame-rumped, Silver-throated, Golden, Rufous-throated and Glistening Green Tanagers, Spot-crowned and Red-headed Barbets, a White-tipped Sicklebill, (caught by Dora after flying into the kitchen), Green Hermit, Crowned Woodnymph, Purple-bibbed White-tip, Brown Inca, Andean Emerald.

After a coffee we walked up the road for a short distance and added Barred Hawk, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Bay-headed Tanager, Northern Plain Xenops and an immaculate Canada Warbler. Easy walking on smooth tarmac and almost no traffic. Back at Doña Dora's, Red-rumped Cacique and Slate-coloured Saltator were near the feeders. One final delicious lunch then we left for the airport, where we finished the checklist.



What a fabulous trip! So many birds in just 10 days. I saw 303 species, but some saw more, I know I missed a few. Our 10 days were well spent, but as with most trips like this, there were so many more places to visit and birds to see.

