

Venezuela: Llanos; Henri Pittier and Morrocoy.

November 2012



Participants

Mike Powell (Cardiff), John Martin and Rich Andrews (Bristol). Other tour members: Liz Hall, Antony O'Mahoney, Mike and Pat Freeman (first week); Phil and Sally Underwood, Vic and Margaret Lunn (whole tour); Julian and Frances Green (second week). Leader: Alejandro Nagy.

Introduction

We were looking for a South America trip in the late autumn of 2012 and none of us had the time to organise our own tour. Additionally, with most of the Cardiff/Bristol crew unable (or unwilling) to go there would only be three of us, making a private tour prohibitively expensive. We opted for the Naturetrek Llanos - Henri Pittier tour with an extra three days in Morrocoy NP at the end (the start of their back-to-back 'Venezuela, off the beaten track' tour). We felt this was pretty good value at £2360 all in. We were able to fly from Bristol via Paris with Air France at no extra cost, which was easier from the point of view of driving and parking at the airport.

Naturetrek's pre-tour information was very helpful and the arrangements generally went smoothly. Alejandro ('Alex') was a top bloke, extremely relaxed with a mischievous sense of humour and a really good birder who knew nearly all the calls and worked hard for us the whole trip. This included going to fetch us beers and rum in the one place they were not available, and generally looking after us well. Occasionally he was so relaxed we would have liked to have upped the pace, and sometimes we did not really know what we were going to do next, or when.

The Llanos is a world famous wetland rather like the Pantanal in Brazil, which floods during the wet season. With the onset of the dry season the waters drop and isolated creeks and pools concentrate the birds in the remaining wet patches. Hato Piñero is now a government-owned (formerly private) cattle ranch in the northern Llanos, which offers birding packages and comfortable accommodation. Besides its extensive wetlands, Hato Piñero also has significant areas of intact deciduous forest, which supports species such as White-fringed Antwren, Pale-tipped Inezia, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant and Red-billed Scythebill. Gallery forests and other forest patches hold Rusty-backed Spinetail, Scarlet Macaw, Russet-throated (Two-banded) Puffbird and White-bearded Flycatcher. Night

Yellow-knobbed Curassow, Hato Piñero; White-tipped Quetzal, Choroní Road (JPM)

Venezuela: Llanos; Henri Pittier and Morocoy. November 2012

excursions at Piñero are a major attraction with a possibility of big cats as well as night birds. Over 300 species of birds have been recorded on the 800 square kilometre ranch and we managed 157 in our four day/three night stay.

Henri Pittier National Park is an isolated area of high quality sub-tropical forest in the coastal cordillera, a mountain chain running parallel with the Caribbean coast of Venezuela. Forest is present from sea-level to almost 8,000 feet and supports a wide range of habitats and consequently has an extremely diverse bird list (almost 600 species!). This exceptional level of species diversity includes a number which are Venezuelan endemics such as the Blood-eared Parakeet, Groove-billed Toucanet, Rufous-cheeked Tanager and Handsome Fruiteater.

Further west along the coast is Morocoy National Park. This area has only recently begun to feature in standard birding tours. The area protects saline coastal lagoons, mangroves, dry coastal scrub and coral cays. The rediscovery here of the threatened Plain-flanked Rail firmly put it on the birding map. Nearby wetlands a few km inland hold the endemic Rusty-flanked Crake and slightly more humid limestone forests provide habitat for Red-and-Green Macaw, and a host of other birds.

Itinerary

10 November

We used the Silver Parking at Bristol Airport and checked the bags through to Caracas at sparrow's chuff for our 0650 flight. The connection in Paris was easy and we arrived at Caracas at about 4pm local time, about four hours ahead of the rest of the group. There was no sign of our guide or anyone to meet us. After a few calls on a borrowed mobile we contacted Alex, stuck in traffic but not expecting us this early due to a mix-up that we never really got to the bottom of. Advised not to bird near the airport we repaired to a cafe for some food and a couple of beers, for which an apologetic Naturetrek later picked up the tab. Eventually Alex and driver arrived as, some while later, did the rest of the group. It was then a two and a half hour drive to Posada El Limón in Maracay arriving late and crashing out in our rooms.

11 November

Despite the lack of sleep we were birding in the hotel garden from first light at 0530, during breakfast and right until we left at 0815. It was really quite birdy with at least 28 species including Blue-grey, Silver-beaked, Burnished-buff and Palm tanagers, Greyish Saltator, Trinidad Euphonia, Bare-eyed and Pale-breasted thrushes, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Yellow-crowned Parrot, Brown-throated Parakeet and for some our first Chestnut-fronted Macaws. Some noisy Rufous-vented Chachalacas were surprisingly elusive. Several hummingbirds were zipping around but we only identified Glittering-throated Emerald. An Osprey flying over to the south was apparently a migrant. The drive to the Llanos was enlivened by a few roadside birds including our first Carib Grackles, Grey-breasted Martin and Roadside Hawk. Finally we arrived at the entrance to Hato Piñero ranch and immediately began to see typical Llanos birds such as Buff-necked Ibis, Whistling Heron, Savanna Hawk, Northern Caracara and, as we neared the ranch our first Yellow-knobbed Curassows wandering around under the trees. We checked in and then had a welcome lunch. The ranch has recently been acquired from its previous owners by the government but despite some worrying reports on the internet it is still a working cattle ranch and the bird life is still prolific. Judging by the numbers of curassows (we saw 72 one day!) rumours that hunting would be allowed have thankfully

not proved correct. The food and accommodation was of a good standard but there seemed to have been few recent visitors, judging by the visitor's book.

After lunch our siesta time was spent watching the Yellow-knobbed Curassows near the lodge before we set off at 3:30pm on a slow drive in the ranch's open-topped truck, complete with a huge cooler box full of ice-cold drinks, to some nearby wetland areas. A fantastic sight awaited us with shallow pools chock with herons, ibis, ducks and waders with Spectacled Caiman basking on the banks and a huge gathering of Black Vultures round the carcass of a cow. In the midst of this was a massive Horned Screamer. Nearby were eye-catching Scarlet Ibis with a scatter of more sombre Rufescent Tiger-herons. Passerines included White-headed Marsh-tyrant, Pied Water-tyrant, Yellow-chinned Spinetail and smart Red-breasted Blackbirds. As the light began to fade two Double-striped Thick-knees were seen in a drier grassland area and they began calling as darkness fell. We stayed out spotlighting and saw good numbers of Pauraque, Lesser Nighthawk and a single Great Horned Owl.

12 November

Full day at Hato Piñero with a 0530 start, returning for lunch at 1140 when bird activity had slowed down and it was really hot. Mike braved the lunch time heat and was rewarded with the only Pearl Kite of the trip. The afternoon session was from 1430 to 1940 with more spotlighting but sadly no cats. Driving a different route in morning and afternoon the day's highlights included Capped Heron, 6 Jabiru including a pair at the nest, 7 King Vulture, a distant Laughing Falcon, 3 Aplomado Falcons, Slender-billed Kite, Crested Bobwhite, Black-collared Hawk fishing at a modest sized pool, 3 fabulous Sunbitterns skulking round the same pool, noisy Scarlet Macaws, Hoatzins, Rufous-tailed Jacamar and several Crab-eating (Savanna) Foxes. Passerines included White-bearded Flycatcher, Stripe-backed Wren, Hooded Tanager and a gorgeous Venezuelan Troupial. Spotlighting produced a rufous morph Tropical Screech-owl, 2 Great Horned Owls, many Pauraques, a Great Potoo sat on a stump and our only Boat-billed Herons of the trip.

13 November

Another early start produced the Bat Falcons round the ranch as dawn broke, then dust bathing Bicolored Wrens by the track as we drove out. We explored an area of gallery forest on foot for much of the morning, starting with Red-billed Scythbill, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Black-crested Antshrike, American Pygmy Kingfisher and Rusty-backed Spinetail, but then hit a quiet spell. A pair of Russet-throated (Two-banded) Puffbirds and a Southern Tamandua livened things up but a calling only Red-rumped Woodpecker would not show and bird activity really slowed. Persistence paid off eventually when we located a feeding flock round an ant swarm that included four species of woodcreeper, Cocoa and Bare-eyed thrushes, Slaty-headed Tody-flycatcher and Yellow-olive Flatbill. The afternoon session began with a Bicolored Hawk near the ranch, a large Chicken Snake or Yellow Rat-snake *Spilotes pullatus* in one of the outbuildings then a calling Red-legged Tinamou in a dense thicket. We eventually made it to another large bird-filled wetland area where Collared Plover was new, two snipe had us puzzling over their identification and a White-tailed Nightjar was calling as darkness fell but was not seen. More Lesser Nighthawk, Pauraque, the same Great Potoo and the same Great Horned Owl were spot-lighting highlights on the way back.

14 November

Our last morning at Hato Piñero was spent at yet another wetland area near the lodge and checking out some patches of dry woodland. Black Skimmer, White-winged Swallow and Orange-chinned Parakeets were seen round a lake. The dry woodland produced Pale-eyed Pygmy-tyrant (a local

Venezuela: Llanos; Henri Pittier and Morocco. November 2012

speciality) and Pale-tipped Inezia but we could only hear the hoped-for Lance-tailed Manakin. At 1100 we said our goodbyes and set off for Maracay again. The heavy traffic meant the journey was particularly slow and we didn't arrive at El Limon until after dark. A few White-tailed Kites en route were the best birds of the afternoon. With hindsight it would have been worth spending a bit more time at Hato Piñero before leaving.

The full list for our stay at the ranch was as follows (numbers being days seen out of 4, and the highest daily count recorded, H = heard only):

Red-legged Tinamou 1, H	Neotropic Cormorant 3, 5	Anhinga 3, 3
Horned Screamer 2, 2	White-faced Whistling-duck 3, 40	Black-bellied Whistling-duck 3, 120
Muscovy Duck 1, 12	Blue-winged Teal 1, 8	Rufescent Tiger-Heron 3, 5
Cocoi Heron 3, 6	Great Egret 4, 30	Snowy Egret 3, 2
Little Blue Heron 4, 15	Cattle Egret 4, 250	Striated Heron 4, 6
Whistling Heron 3, 8	Capped Heron 2, 2	Black-crowned Night-Heron 2, 6
Boat-billed Heron 1, 3	Buff-necked Ibis 4, 75	Sharp-tailed Ibis 4, 4
Green Ibis 2, 3	Bare-faced Ibis 4, 150	White Ibis 1, 2
Scarlet Ibis 3, 50	Glossy Ibis 3, 8	Roseate Spoonbill 3, 1
Wood Stork 1, 4	Jabiru 4, 6	King Vulture 3, 7
Black Vulture 4, 300+	Turkey Vulture 4, 50+	Osprey 1, 1
Snail Kite 2, 2	Slender-billed Kite (JPM) 1, 1	Crane Hawk 1, 1
Bicoloured Hawk 1, 1	Savanna Hawk 4, 6	Black-collared Hawk 2, 1
Roadside Hawk 4, 10	White-tailed Hawk 1, 1	Pearl Kite (MCP) 1, 1
Northern Crested Caracara 4, 8	Yellow-headed Caracara 4, 60	Laughing Falcon 1, 1
Aplomado Falcon 4, 3	Bat Falcon 2, 2	Rufous-vented Chachalaca 4, 20
Yellow-knobbed Curassow 4, 72	Crested Bobwhite 1, 5	Grey-necked Wood-Rail 2, 10
Purple Gallinule 1, 2	Sunbittern 2, 3	Limpkin 3, 1
Double-striped Thick-knee 2, 2	Southern Lapwing 4, 10	Collared Plover 1, 5
Black-necked Stilt 1, 6	Wattled Jacana 3, 30	Solitary Sandpiper 3, 6
Spotted Sandpiper 3, 3	Least Sandpiper 1, 3	South American Snipe 1, 2
Black Skimmer 1, 2	Pale-vented Pigeon 4, 10	Eared Dove 2, 12
Common Ground-Dove 2, 2	Ruddy Ground-Dove 4, 10	Scaled Dove 4, 8
Blue Ground-Dove 1, 2	White-tipped Dove 3, 10	Scarlet Macaw 3, 12
Chestnut-fronted Macaw 4, 3	Brown-throated Parakeet 4, 40	Green-rumped Parrotlet 4, 7
Orange-chinned Parakeet 2, 2	Yellow-crowned Parrot 4, 30	Squirrel Cuckoo 1, 3
Greater Ani 2, 3	Groove-billed Ani 4, 20	Hoatzin 2, 17
Tropical Screech-Owl 1, 2	Great Horned Owl 3, 2	Great Potoo 2, 1
Lesser Nighthawk 2, 9+	Pauraque 3, 16	White-tailed Nightjar 1, H
Short-tailed Swift 1, 2	Ruby-topaz Hummingbird 1, 1	Ringed Kingfisher 4, 6
American Pygmy Kingfisher 1, 1	Rufous-tailed Jacamar 2, 2	Russet-throated Puffbird 1, 2
Lineated Woodpecker 3, 1	Red-crowned Woodpecker 2, 4	Red-rumped Woodpecker 1, H
Crimson-crested Woodpecker 1, 1	Yellow-chinned Spinetail 3, 6	Rusty-backed Spinetail 1, 3
Plain Thornbird 3, 4	Plain-brown Woodcreeper 1, 1	Olivaceous Woodcreeper 1, 1
Strong-billed Woodcreeper 1, 1	Straight-billed Woodcreeper 1, 1	Streak-headed Woodcreeper 1, 2
Red-billed Scythebill 1, 2	Black-crested Antshrike 2, 3	Northern White-fringed Antwren 2, 1
Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet 2, 2	Yellow-bellied Elaenia 3, 2	Pale-tipped Inezia 2, 2
Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant 1, 1	Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher 1, 2	Common Tody-Flycatcher 4, 2
Yellow-olive Flatbill 2, 1	Vermilion Flycatcher 2, 1	Pied Water-Tyrant 3, 2
White-headed Marsh-Tyrant 3, 2	Brown-crested Flycatcher 4, 3	Great Kiskadee 4, 20
Lesser Kiskadee 2, 1	White-bearded Flycatcher 1, 2	Social Flycatcher 3, 3
Rusty-margined Flycatcher 3, 2	Tropical Kingbird 4, 5	Grey Kingbird 3, 3
Fork-tailed Flycatcher 3, 6	Lance-tailed Manakin 1, H	Rufous-browed Peppershrike 1, H
Scrub Greenlet 1, 2	White-winged Swallow 2, 2	Bicoloured Wren 1, 2
Stripe-backed Wren 1, 3	Buff-breasted Wren 3, 2	House Wren 4, 2
Tropical Gnatcatcher 1, 1	Bare-eyed Thrush 1, 1	Cocoa Thrush 1, 1
Tropical Mockingbird 3, 4	Yellow Warbler 4, 1	Bananaquit 3, 2

Venezuela: Llanos; Henri Pittier and Moroccoy. November 2012

Chestnut-vented Conebill 1, 1	Hooded Tanager 1, 4	Blue-grey Tanager 4, 15
Greyish Saltator 1, 1	Red-capped Cardinal 1, 4	Blue-black Grassquit 1, 2
Grey Seedeater 1, 6	Yellow-bellied Seedeater 2, 1	Saffron Finch 4, 50
Grassland Sparrow 1, 1	Yellow-browed Sparrow 1, 1	Red-breasted Blackbird 2, 15
Venezuelan Troupial 2, 2	Yellow-rumped Cacique 2, 15	Crested Oropendola 4, 40
Venezuelan Red Howler Monkey 1, H	Weeping Capuchin 1, 10	Crab-eating Fox 2, 5
White-tailed Deer 4, 30	Capybara 4, 80+	Forest Rabbit (Tapeti) 2, 1
Southern Opossum 1, 1	Southern Tamandua 1, 1	
Green Iguana 3, 1	Spectacled Caiman	CommonTegu

15 November

From the Posada El Limon in Maracay we set off to the famous Henri Pittier NP after an early breakfast. The Ocumare Road entrance to the NP is close to the hotel and we were soon birding an open area near the Rancho Grande Biological Station at c.1,100 m in semi-deciduous forest near the top of the Portachuelo Pass, which is one of the most studied migratory routes in the Neotropics. Typically, when all but our leader were unfamiliar with the site's birds, we immediately hit the biggest bird wave of our three days at the NP, which included Groove-billed Toucanet, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Chestnut-capped Becard, Golden Tanager (rather different to those in the Ecuadorian cloud forest), Bay-headed Tanager, Collared Trogon, Slaty-capped Flycatcher, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, Plain Xenops, Smoky-brown Woodpecker and others that got away before we could get Alex onto them. We walked slowly along the road adding more new birds to the list including Long-tailed Sylph, Bronzy Inca, Speckled Hummingbird, Violet-fronted Brilliant, Common Bush-tanager, Handsome Fruiteater, Cocoa Woodcreeper and Yellow-bellied Siskin (the last John's 4000th species). A Tayra, a large pale-headed mustelid, ran down a waterfall that was bridged by the road and was an unexpected highlight. Small numbers of Black Vulture and an Osprey moved south across the pass, despite it being so late in the season. A singing Black-faced Antthrush came a little closer to the iPod and Mike somehow spotted it low down on a log where it remained for several minutes. While watching it both Grey-headed Tanager and White-necked Thrush appeared alongside it. A Plain-backed Antpitta was calling but too distant to have a chance of seeing. Clouds had been building up all morning and it began to rain, eventually so heavily that we headed down to the coast at Ocumare.

The rain was only light on the coast and soon stopped. The dry scrub behind the beach at El Playon produced Oriole Blackbird, Streaked and Greyish saltators, Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet, Yellow Oriole, Russet-throated (Two-banded) Puffbird, Black-faced Grassquit, White-lined and Glaucous tanagers, the last usefully alongside the ubiquitous Blue-grey. Offshore there were Brown Booby, Brown Pelican, Royal Tern, Laughing Gull and Magnificent Frigatebird. After coffee in Ocumare we tried for Fasciated Tiger-heron on the river but the afternoon rains had swollen it to a torrent so we gave up. Instead we tried for owls and managed views of Ferruginous Pygmy-owl.

16 November

We made another early start to beat the traffic across town and get to the Choróní road for shortly after first light. Around the high point of the pass, at 1,600m, Ochre-breasted Brush-finch, Inca Jay, Three-striped Warbler and Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth started the morning well. We gradually made our way down the coastal slope for the rest of the morning, mainly on foot with some short stretches in the minibus. Some of the birding was hard work but we added some notable species

including two splendid White-tipped Quetzals. Other species included Beryl-spangled, Black-capped, Speckled and Rufous-cheeked (endemic) tanagers, Blue-winged Mountain-tanager, White-throated Tyrannulet and Slate-throated Whitestart. Two Schwarz's Antthrushes were heard but not seen. For our lunch we descended into a more lowland cultivated area where a blooming Malaysian Apple Tree attracted numerous hummers. White-vented Plumeteer dominated but there were also Sooty-headed Hermit, Glittering-throated Emerald, Copper-rumped Hummingbird and Long-billed Starthroat. Large flocks of Scarlet-fronted Parakeets zoomed up and down the valley and we had good views of our only Guira Tanager of the trip. We finally reached the coast in the evening and added Zone-tailed Hawk, Common Black-hawk and Orange-winged Parrot. A cold beer by the Caribbean ended another great day.

17 November

For some of the participants this was the last day of their tour. We all started at the Rancho Grande Biological Station, a fabulous bit of 1930s architecture in the midst of the forest, planned as an exclusive hotel but not completed and now distinctly faded. The lower levels are home to colonies of swifts and the terraces on the upper levels, where the biological station staff work, offer great views. The staff stocked up a bird feeder which attracted tanagers and Groove-billed Toucanet. Wedge-billed Hummingbird was seen briefly at some low flowers in the garden. Flocks of Blood-eared Parakeet were zipping in and out of some fruiting trees along with various tanagers including White-winged. Venezuelan Tyrannulet, previously only heard, was finally seen as were Crested Spinetail, Cinnamon Flycatcher, Smoke-coloured Pewee and Brown-capped Vireo. A Southern Nightingale-wren gave its superb song near the steps of the building but we could not see it. All the others on the tour either returned to the hotel for a well-earned rest or headed back for their flights. We remained for much of the day and eventually took a trail behind the station which produced Black-banded Woodcreeper, Plain Antwren and Slaty Antwren. An Ornate Hawk-eagle was calling, and we would probably have seen it had we still been on the terrace. Great Black-hawks were new for the trip though. In late afternoon we tried the Fasciated Tiger-heron site along the river and this time found it and had decent scope views in the last of the light before it started to rain and we returned to the hotel.

Our full list for The Henri Pittier area was as follows (numbers being days seen out of 3, and the highest daily count recorded, H = heard only):

Brown Booby 1, 10	Brown Pelican 2, 12	Magnificent Frigatebird 2, 6
Fasciated Tiger-Heron 1, 1	Black Vulture 3, 25	Turkey Vulture 1, 10
Osprey 1, 2	Common Black-Hawk 1, 2	Great Black-Hawk 1, 3
Roadside Hawk 1, 2	Broad-winged Hawk 2, 1	White-tailed Hawk 1, 1
Ornate Hawk-Eagle 1, H	Northern Crested Caracara 1, 1	Yellow-headed Caracara 1, 4
American Kestrel 1, 1	Rufous-vented Chachalaca 1, 2	Spotted Sandpiper 1, 1
Whimbrel 1, 1	Laughing Gull 1, 2	Royal Tern 1, 3
Common Ground-Dove 1, 1	Ruddy Ground-Dove 1, 5	Scaled Dove 1, 2
White-tipped Dove 1, 1	Chestnut-fronted Macaw 2, 6	Scarlet-fronted Parakeet 2, 250
Blood-eared Parakeet 1, 40	Green-rumped Parrotlet 1, 1	Blue-headed Parrot 1, 3
Red-billed Parrot 2, 45	Orange-winged Parrot 1, 2	Smooth-billed Ani 1, 2
Groove-billed Ani 1, 1	Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl 1, 1	White-collared Swift 2, 6
Grey-rumped Swift 1, 5	White-tipped Swift 2, 30	Sooty-capped Hermit 1, 1
Glittering-throated Emerald 2, 3	Wedge-billed Hummingbird 1, 1	Copper-rumped Hummingbird 1, 1
White-vented Plumeteer 1, 15	Speckled Hummingbird 1, 1	Violet-fronted Brilliant 1, 2
Long-tailed Sylph 2, 4	Long-billed Starthroat 1, 1	White-tipped Quetzal 1, 2
Collared Trogon 2, 3	Green Kingfisher 1, 1	Rufous-tailed Jacamar 1, 2
Russet-throated Puffbird 1, 2	Groove-billed Toucanet 3, 3	Golden-olive Woodpecker 2, 2

Venezuela: Llanos; Henri Pittier and Morocoy. November 2012

Red-crowned Woodpecker 2, 4	Smoky-brown Woodpecker 1, 1	Crested Spinetail 1, 2
Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner 1, 2	Plain Xenops 1, 1	Olivaceous Woodcreeper 2, 2
Black-banded Woodcreeper 1, 1	Cocoa [Buff-throated] Woodcreeper 1, 1	Streak-headed Woodcreeper 2, 1
Plain Antwreio 1, 3	Slaty Antwren 1, 2	Northern White-fringed Antwren 1, 1
Black-faced Antthrush 2, 1	Schwartz's Antthrush 1, H	Short-tailed Antthrush 1, H
Plain-backed Antpitta 2, H	Venezuelan Tyrannulet 2, 1	Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet 1, 1
Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet 1, 1	White-throated Tyrannulet 1, 2	Olive-striped Flycatcher 1, 1
Slaty-capped Flycatcher 1, 2	Yellow-olive Flatbill 1, 1	Cinnamon Flycatcher 1, 2
Smoke-coloured Pewee 1, 1	Black Phoebe 1, 2	Cattle Tyrant 1, 2
Dusky-capped Flycatcher 1, 2	Brown-crested Flycatcher 1, 1	Great Kiskadee 1, 1
Boat-billed Flycatcher 2, 2	Social Flycatcher 2, 2	Rusty-margined Flycatcher 1, 2
Golden-crowned Flycatcher 1, 2	Tropical Kingbird 2, 4	Chestnut-crowned Becard 1, 1
Handsome Fruiteater 2, 1	Rufous-browed Peppershrike 1, 1	Brown-capped Vireo 1, 1
Scrub Greenlet 1, 1	Golden-fronted Greenlet 1, 3	Inca Jay 1, 3
Grey-breasted Martin 1, 1	Whiskered Wren 1, H	Rufous-breasted Wren 2, H
Buff-breasted Wren 1, 1	House Wren 1, 1	Grey-breasted Wood-Wren 3, 2
Southern Nightingale Wren 3, H	Long-billed Gnatwren 1, 1	Tropical Gnatcatcher 1, 1
Bare-eyed Thrush 2, 2	Pale-breasted Thrush 2, 5	White-necked Thrush 1, 2
Tropical Mockingbird 2, 6	Tropical Parula 3, 3	Yellow Warbler 1, 1
Black-and-white Warbler 1, 1	American Redstart 3, 2	Northern Waterthrush 2, 6
Slate-throated Whitestart 3, 5	Three-striped Warbler 1, 3	Golden-crowned Warbler 2, 2
Bananaquit 1, 3	Common Bush-Tanager 3, 6	Guira Tanager 1, 1
Grey-headed Tanager 2, 1	White-lined Tanager 2, 6	Summer Tanager 2, 1
White-winged Tanager 1, 1	Silver-beaked Tanager 1, 8	Blue-grey Tanager 3, 10
Glaucous Tanager 2, 4	Palm Tanager 2, 3	Blue-capped Tanager 1, 8
Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager 2, 18	Thick-billed Euphonia 1, 2	Orange-bellied Euphonia 2, 3
Trinidad Euphonia 2, 1	Golden Tanager 3, 4	Rufous-cheeked Tanager 1, 2
Beryl-spangled Tanager 1, 9	Black-capped Tanager 1, 3	Speckled Tanager 2, 3
Bay-headed Tanager 3, 4	Green Honeycreeper 1, 3	Purple Honeycreeper 2, 1
Greyish Saltator 1, 2	Buff-throated Saltator 1, 1	Streaked Saltator 1, 1
Black-faced Grassquit 2, 6	Ochre-breasted Brush-Finch 1, 2	Carib Grackle 1, 10
Yellow Oriole 1, 2	Oriole Blackbird 1, 2	Crested Oropendola 1, 10
Yellow-bellied Siskin 1, 2	Lesser Goldfinch 1, 1	
Red-tailed Squirrel 1, 2	Red-rumped Agouti 1, 1	Tayra 1, 1
Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth 1, 2		

18 November

A somewhat leisurely start for once saw us birding at Posada El Limon until 0800, adding White-necked Jacobin and Thick-billed Euphonia to our yard list. We then drove to Morrocoy NP with its coastal lagoons and mangrove swamps. It was already hot but we headed straight for the mangroves where we quietly assembled to view a small patch and played the raucous calls of Plain-flanked Rail on the iPod. It soon responded and we had great views of this highly localised endemic. We then headed for the drier scrub and wooded hillside of Cerro Chichiriviche nearby. Despite the late hour many new birds were added here in an excellent session including Blue-tailed Emerald, Scaled Piculet, Caribbean Hornero, Barred, Black-crested and the endemic Black-backed antshrikes, White-bellied Antbird, Rufous-winged Antwren, Pearly-vented Pygmy-tyrant and Fuscous Flycatcher. Back in the mangroves and lagoons there were many herons, ibis, Caribbean Flamingos, wildfowl and waders. Overhead as dusk fell birds were streaming in to roost in the mangroves including many

Orange-winged Parrots and Crested Oropendolas. We stayed at the excellent Posada Baliyu guest house by the coast in Tucacas.



Plain-flanked Rail, Morocoy NP, Rich Andrews.

19 November

After breakfast we headed inland to an area of wetland and pastures with scattered trees and woodland patches near Las Lapas. Our destination was a small wetland where Rusty-flanked Crake is regularly found. After several false starts we found the right road but our way was blocked by deep mud. We walked the last half mile or so only to find the grasslands surrounding the lake had not been grazed and were waist high. Picking our way through this we saw Grey-lined Hawk, Short-tailed Hawk, Striped Cuckoo, Ruddy-breasted Seedeater and Tawny-crowned Pygmy-tyrant. Alex went on ahead and eventually located the pool and reported he had heard the crake. By now it was getting very hot but the crake luckily responded well to the iPod and showed several times at close range on the edge of the vegetation-clogged pool. Well pleased but hot and thirsty we retired to the van where iced drinks were awaiting. Less mobile members of the party struggled back and Mike took them cold water. They managed to thumb a lift back along the road on the back of a cattle truck! Revived by drinks we carried on birding the area and added White-eared Conebill, Ochre-ored Flatbill, Trinidad Euphonia and the northern dry zone form of Russet-throated Puffbird, supposedly with a single breast band but more like one-and-a-bit. This species has been split again in the latest IOC list but birds here looked somewhat intermediate in appearance.

After our packed lunch we headed back to the coast where a marshy area had Yellow-hooded Blackbird, Least Grebe and Green Heron. Water birds on a large lagoon included a flock of 13 Lesser Scaup, a scarce visitor to Venezuela. We ended up in a different area of mangroves and lagoons as dusk fell where there were 29 White-cheeked Pintail amongst the mixed wildfowl, waders and Caribbean Flamingos. The mangroves held Bicolored Conebill and once again flights of water birds and parrots going to roost made a fine spectacle.

20 November

Venezuela: Llanos; Henri Pittier and Morocco. November 2012

Our last morning saw us head for Cerro La Mission after our early breakfast. The area has a forested ridge and hillside with open pastures and scattered tall palms on the other side of a quiet track. It proved to be an excellent morning's birding with Red-and-green Macaws a highlight, over 30 being seen and clearly favouring the huge palms, which we had not seen elsewhere. The mixture of habitats produced a good diversity of forest edge and open country birds including Rufous-breasted Hermit, Eastern Meadowlark, Yellow-hooded Blackbird (at a small marsh), Orange-crowned Oriole, Masked Yellowthroat, Large-billed Seedfinch, Lance-tailed Manakin (at last – a male), Cinereous Becard, Bran-coloured Flycatcher, Forest Elaenia, Cocoa Woodcreeper and, a fitting end to the trip, a superb White Hawk soaring over the ridge.

For us that was the end of the trip and we were driven back to Caracas, via the hotel, for the 1945 flight home that evening, arriving in Bristol at 1625 on 21st.

The list for the last three days of the trip was as follows:

Little Tinamou, 1, H	Least Grebe, 1, 1	Brown Pelican, 2, 5
Neotropic Cormorant, 2, 500	Magnificent Frigatebird, 3, 200	Horned Screamer, 2, H
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, 2, 25	White-cheeked Pintail, 1, 29	Blue-winged Teal, 1, 250
Lesser Scaup, 1, 13	American Flamingo, 2, 500	Rufescent Tiger-Heron, 1, 1
Great Blue Heron, 1, 1	Great Egret, 3, 10	Snowy Egret, 3, 100
Little Blue Heron, 3, 2	Reddish Egret, 1, 15	Tricoloured Heron, 2, 20
Cattle Egret, 2, 120	Green Heron, 1, 1	Striated Heron, 2, 6
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, 1, 1	Bare-faced Ibis, 2, 25	White Ibis, 1, 1
Scarlet Ibis, 2, 100	Glossy Ibis, 1, 1	Roseate Spoonbill, 1, 1
King Vulture, 1, 2	Black Vulture, 3, n	Turkey Vulture, 3, n
Osprey, 1, 1	White-tailed Kite, 1, 1	Crane Hawk, 1, 1
White Hawk, 1, 1	Savanna Hawk, 1, 2	Common Black-Hawk, 1, 3
Black-collared Hawk, 1, 3	Grey-lined Hawk, 2, 2	Roadside Hawk, 1, 1
Broad-winged Hawk, 1, 1	Short-tailed Hawk, 1, 1	Zone-tailed Hawk, 3, 4
Northern Crested Caracara, 2, 5	Yellow-headed Caracara, 2, 4	Laughing Falcon, 1, 1
American Kestrel, 1, 3	Rufous-vented Chachalaca, 1, H	Rusty-flanked Crake, 1, 1
Plain-flanked Rail, 1, 2	Purple Gallinule, 1, 15	Limpkin, 1, 1
Double-striped Thick-knee, 1, 2	Southern Lapwing, 2, 4	Semipalmated Plover, 1, 7
Black-necked Stilt, 3, 100	Wattled Jacana, 1, 50	Greater Yellowlegs, 2, 5
Lesser Yellowlegs, 2, 50	Solitary Sandpiper, 1, 3	Willet, 2, 1
Spotted Sandpiper, 2, 3	Whimbrel, 2, 1	Semipalmated Sandpiper, 1, 40
Least Sandpiper, 1, 1	Stilt Sandpiper, 1, 23	Royal Tern, 1, 3
Feral/Rock Pigeon, 3, n	Pale-vented Pigeon, 3, 3	Eared Dove, 1, 1
Ruddy Ground-Dove, 2, 3	Scaled Dove, 1, 5	Red-and-green Macaw, 1, 30
Chestnut-fronted Macaw, 3, 4	Brown-throated Parakeet, 1, 2	Green-rumped Parrotlet, 2, 30
Orange-chinned Parakeet, 2, 4	Yellow-crowned Parrot, 2, 2	Orange-winged Parrot, 2, 250
Squirrel Cuckoo, 1, 1	Smooth-billed Ani, 1, 2	Groove-billed Ani, 3, 20
Striped Cuckoo, 1, 1	Grey-rumped Swift, 1, 5	Neotropical Palm-Swift, 1, 1
Rufous-breasted Hermit, 1, 1	White-necked Jacobin, 1, 1	Blue-tailed Emerald, 1, 1
Glittering-throated Emerald, 3, 4	Amazon Kingfisher, 1, 1	Russet-throated Puffbird, 1, 1
Scaled Piculet, 2, 3	Lineated Woodpecker, 1, 1	Red-crowned Woodpecker, 2, 2
Red-rumped Woodpecker, 1, H	Crimson-crested Woodpecker, 2, 2	Caribbean Hornero, 2, 1
Pale-breasted Spinetail, 1, H	Plain Thornbird, 2, 2	Straight-billed Woodcreeper, 1, 1
Cocoa [Buff-throated] Woodcreeper, 1, 1	Streak-headed Woodcreeper, 1, 2	Black-crested Antshrike, 2, 3
Black-backed Antshrike, 1, 2	Barred Antshrike, 1, 2	Rufous-winged Antwren, 1, 1
Northern White-fringed Antwren, 2, 4	White-bellied Antbird, 1, 2	Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet, 1, 1
Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet, 1, 1	Forest Elaenia, 1, 1	Yellow-bellied Elaenia, 1, 1
Pale-tipped Inezia, 1, 1	Yellow Tyrannulet, 2, 1	Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, 1, 1
Tawny-crowned Pygmy-Tyrant, 1, 1	Common Tody-Flycatcher, 2, 2	Ochre-lored Flatbill, 1, 2
Bran-coloured Flycatcher, 1, 1	Tropical Pewee, 1, 1	Fuscous Flycatcher, 1, 1
Vermilion Flycatcher, 3, 3	Cattle Tyrant, 1, 1	Pied Water-Tyrant, 2, 6
Great Kiskadee, 3, 2	Lesser Kiskadee, 1, 1	Social Flycatcher, 1, 1
Rusty-margined Flycatcher, 2, 5	Tropical Kingbird, 3, 5	Grey Kingbird, 1, 2

Venezuela: Llanos; Henri Pittier and Morocco. November 2012

Cinereous Becard, 1, 2	Black-crowned Tityra, 1, 1	Lance-tailed Manakin, 2, 1
Scrub Greenlet, 2, 6	Golden-fronted Greenlet, 2, 4	Grey-breasted Martin, 2, 30
White-winged Swallow, 2, 2	Blue-and-white Swallow, 1, 12	Southern Rough-winged Swallow, 1, 60
Black-capped Donacobius, 1, 4	Buff-breasted Wren, 1, 2	House Wren, 3, 1
Tropical Gnatcatcher, 1, 1	Bare-eyed Thrush, 1, 2	Tropical Mockingbird, 3, 6
Yellow Warbler, 2, 2	Northern Waterthrush, 1, 1	Masked Yellowthroat, 1, 2
Bananaquit, 1, 1	White-eared Conebill, 1, 3	Bicoloured Conebill, 1, 1
Hooded Tanager, 2, 6	White-lined Tanager, 1, 2	Silver-beaked Tanager, 3, 10
Blue-grey Tanager, 3, 30	Palm Tanager, 2, 1	Thick-billed Euphonia, 2, 3
Trinidad Euphonia, 1, 1	Burnished-buff Tanager, 1, 2	Purple Honeycreeper, 1, 1
Greyish Saltator, 1, 2	Streaked Saltator, 1, 1	Blue-black Grassquit, 1, 2
Large-billed Seedfinch, 1, 1	Grey Seedeater, 2, 5	Yellow-bellied Seedeater, 1, 2
Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, 2, 4	Saffron Finch, 2, 3	Black-striped Sparrow, 1, 1
Yellow-hooded Blackbird, 2, 5	Eastern Meadowlark, 1, 5	Carib Grackle, 2, 10
Shiny Cowbird, 1, 10	Yellow Oriole, 1, 1	Orange-crowned Oriole, 1, 1
Oriole Blackbird, 2, 1	Yellow-rumped Cacique, 1, 3	Crested Oropendola, 2, 100

In all a very enjoyable and successful trip with 330 species recorded.

Mike Powell (Cardiff), John Martin and Rich Andrews (Bristol), March 2013.