



## **COLOMBIA: SANTA MARTA - TRIP REPORT Nov 9-17, 2013**

**By Adrian Binns**

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### **Day 1 / Nov 10 - Universidad de Barranquilla; Salamaca wetlands; Care Rd**

With much anticipation we embarked upon our tour of Columbia in search of specialties and endemics of the Santa Marta region. This was Wildside's first foray into the country famous for tremendous avian diversity, with more than 1900 species, including 76 endemics representing a wide array of bird families and habitats. Guided by South American expert birder Edison Buenano, we were excited for an amazing experience in this premier birding destination.

Most of the group had arrived more than a day ago, and spent time admiring Cartagena's World Heritage sites. Now everyone was ready to discover the birds and habitats of the Santa Marta region. We began our tour in the lowland tropical scrub forest that is part of the Universidad de Barranquilla, where we were delighted to find a couple of Chestnut-winged Chachalacas, Columbian endemics. As we watched them feeding in the upper canopy of dense vegetation, a pair of Trinidad Euphonias landed on nearby bare branches, and Saffron Finches foraged in low shrubs.

The habitat hosted plenty of activity to keep us busy. The first of many Yellow Orioles foraged in treetops, and a tropical House Wren sang throughout our visit. The diminutive Sapphire-throated Hummingbird perched long enough for us see its subtle throat color. We watched two Mississippi Kites circling overhead, and saw Ringed Kingfisher and Yellow-headed Caracara fly by. JLo admired the oversized bills of Boat-billed Flycatchers, that contrasted with similar looking Great Kiskadees. Mike found a Rufous-tailed Jacamar perched with its bill pointing upwards, waiting for an insect to come within range. Two Russet-throated Puffbirds, also patient hunters, were located in a bare shrub, along with a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Noisy Brown-throated Parakeets flew above us in small flocks. We enjoyed good looks of a juvenile Streaked Saltator along with many Grayish Saltators. A highlight was seeing two Chestnut Piculets greeting each other with their crests up.

Our next lowland stop was the wetlands at Isla Salamaca where we walked along a muddy dirt road past houses in a small village. Our attention was momentarily diverted by the sight of a few local men bathing and brushing their teeth in ponds in the front of their houses. There was plenty of avian activity to keep us busy for two and a half hours. Striped-backed Wrens announcing their arrival singing loudly as they landed in a palm tree. Soon we were watching an even larger wren, the Bicolored Wren. A Black-collared Hawk soared amongst Turkey and Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures over our heads. A Straight-billed Woodcreeper flew back and forth from an open hedgerow to its nest in the top of concrete light pole.

A Spotted Sandpiper and Greater Yellowlegs pecked along the shoreline of a pond, while Blue-winged Teal and Common Gallinule rested along the reeds. Green and Striated Herons were observed stalking fish. Amongst the water hyacinth there was a White-faced Whistling Duck, Purple Gallinule, many Wattled Jacanas, and an assortment of herons and egrets including Cocoi Heron. Raucous calls announced the presence of Limpkins, heard more often than seen. We enjoyed excellent views of marsh-loving flycatchers White-headed Marsh Tyrant and Pied Water Tyrant. We were pleasantly surprised to see a pair of Northern Screamers atop a shrub, while scanning for Snail Kites perched on fenceposts. We noticed a Lesser Nighthawk roosting in the tree above our shady rest stop, ere we took a break from the relentless tropical sun. Amazon and Green

Kingfishers chased each other across the wetlands, where Large-billed Terns flew back and forth in search of food.

A Green-rumped Parrotlet posed nicely for us along the road, as Cattle Tyrants and Scaled Doves rested in the shade. Millie found a beautiful Spot-breasted Woodpecker flying to a bare Palm, and a pair of Yellow-chinned Spinetails were seen fleetingly as they darted across a farmstead. While we boarded the bus, Edison drew our attention to a Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird in a flower patch. We watched it nectaring and compared it to the Sapphire-throated Hummingbird we had seen earlier in the day.

Following a delicious fish lunch at "Las Acacias" restaurant adjacent to the Tayrona park, we continued driving east. Along the way, we traversed numerous small villages marked by humble roadside shops and villagers walking about. We saw a few Kogi men, from the indigenous tribe that lives in the Sierra Nevada mountains of Colombia. They were dressed in traditional white garb, and had likely come out of the mountains to shop.

Driving along, we spotted Fulvous Whistling Duck and a dozen Pectoral Sandpiper in roadside wetlands. We reached an area of dry scrub forest on the Care Road, and spent the last birding hour of the day there. A Pale-legged Hornero, with its beautiful rust and pale color, was flying back and forth across the road probably heading to a nest. We also watched a White-whiskered Spinetail moving around actively, eventually realizing that it was probably tending a nest too.

Pale-tipped Tyrannulet, Bananaquits, Tropical Gnatcatchers, Blackburnian and Blackpoll Warblers were flitting around trees. We got good looks at a pair of Red-billed Emeralds and a female Shining-green Hummingbird. A flock of 50 or more Dickcissels flew over, first noted by their call. As we were walking back to the bus we heard Crested Bobwhites calling but could not locate them.

It was just after dark when we checked into the Ma Ziruma hotel for a brief overnight stay. While we were working on the day's birding checklist, Hal walked outside and encountered a Barn Owl. It hissed then flew into the night, apparently unfazed by the local music and fireworks in celebration of tomorrow's national holiday, Colombia's Independence Day.

## **Day 2 / Nov 11 - Ma Ziruma; Camarones; Los Flamencos Lagoon; Minca**

We arose early to get a head start on the oppressive heat typical of most tropical tours. We would eat breakfast before birding, but those needing a morning fix were befuddled by the poor instant coffee set out, in a country famed for its delicious brews! (Perhaps they save all the coffee beans for trade to North America?!). Around the hotel grounds, we found a variety of interesting birds, including a Pale-breasted Thrush seen amongst common Cattle Tyrant, Great Kiskadee, Social Flycatcher, Tropical Kingbird and Bicolored Wrens. Gray-breasted Martins hawked insects overhead, and the first of several flocks of Blue-headed Parrots took to the skies from their treetop perches. The parking area was the place to be, with Green-rumped Parrotlets, Shinning Green Hummingbird, a brilliantly colored Prothonotary Warbler Palm and Blue-gray Tanagers, Yellow-bellied Elaenias, Venezuelan Flycatcher, Vermillion Flycatcher and a couple of flyby Yellow-rumped Caciques.

We left the Ma Ziruma for the ride to Camarones. Along the way, we spotted a few Pectoral Sandpipers and a scavenging Crested Caracara in a small wetland adjacent to a toll booth. We reached our destination, an abandoned acacia-lined road that led to Camarones, where we spent a pleasant 3 hours birding slowly along the 3 km stretch. The acacias provided welcome dappled shade and a good breeze relieved us from heat and humidity.

Small flocks of Bare-eyed Pigeons flew overhead, as we got our first views of White-tipped Dove and a Tropical Mockingbird. A pair of obliging White-fringed Antwrens worked their way through the acacias at eye-level, making it easy for us to follow them. In contrast, Lesson's Seedeaters proved surprisingly difficult to track down. A male-female pair of Black-crested Antshrike moved in sight, the female showing most satisfyingly.

We spent time with a number of small flycatchers including Northern Scrub Flycatcher, Scrub Greenlet, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrannulet and Slender-billed Inezia (Tyrannulet). It took some work for all of us to see them, but our efforts were rewarded with good looks. A Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl responded to our imitation, which also attracted other species, including White-whiskered Spinetail and Chestnut Piculets, which we'd seen before. We tracked down a Buff-breasted Wren following its ear-piercing call. Streaked and Grayish Saltators were sighted often during the outing, but we had only a fleeting glimpse of an Orinoco Saltator that had been calling before it darted across the road. Our glimpse of Glaucous Tanager was equally fleeting. Several North American migrants were skulking in the shrubbery, including Prothonotary and Blackpoll Warblers, Red-eyed Vireo and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

Vermillion Flycatcher and Groove-billed Anis were found in dry open scrub habitat that fanned out from the road. A pair of Pied Water Tyrants were constructing their nest on the stem of an aquatic plant in a seasonal water pool. A Solitary Sandpiper fed in the shallow water, while an Amazon Kingfisher perched waiting for the right moment to strike an unsuspecting fish. Southern Lapwing and Greater Yellowlegs stalked through wet grasses around the edges.

Our bus retrieved us at the end of the road and took us to "Los Flamencos," a good-sized lagoon with a fair amount of terns and shorebirds. Despite the name, we saw just one sub-adult Flamingo close to the road. We walked out across the sand for better views of Black Skimmers and Caspian, Royal, Sandwich, Gull-billed and Least Terns. One Common Tern was picked out of the group. Most of the shorebirds were Western Willets content to doze in the water, accompanied by one Short-billed Dowitcher. A handful of sleeping Sanderlings clustered a little further away, near a couple dozen Semipalmated Plovers, and Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers. Oddly, there were only 2 gulls - an expected Laughing and an uncommon American Herring. A Reddish Egret was the only bird expending energy in the midday heat, prancing along the shallow edges of the lagoon, attempting to stir up some fish.

Feeling the heat ourselves, we moved on to the nearby village to have lunch at the beachfront restaurant "Vina del Mar." We ate ceviche, drank cold drinks and watched sparkling waves of the Caribbean Ocean roll gently onto the sand. Magnificent Frigatebirds and Brown Pelicans floated effortlessly over the shoreline and a Bat Falcon was spotted cruising by. A lone Carib Grackle stayed in the shade of a tree, searching the thicker branches for something to eat.

From Camarones, the drive westwards to Santa Marta took nearly three hours. We stopped briefly to enjoy the fruits of a roadside lemonade stand, and use restroom facilities before beginning the climb into the Sierra Nevada Mountains. We reached our destination, Hotel La Minca, elevation 2000 feet, with enough time left in the day to relax in front of the feeders buzzing with Steely-vented Hummingbird, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, White-necked Jacobin and White-vented Plumeleteers.

### **Day 3 / Nov 12 - Minca to El Dorado**

Daybreak found us relaxing with coffee on the hotel porch, still mesmerized by hummingbird activity at the feeders. White-necked Jacobins dominated, while Steely-vented, Rufous-tailed and White-vented Plumeleteer waited on the outskirts until new sugar water was provided, before they vied for their turn. A Rufous-breasted Hermit made several passes along the row of 5 feeders pausing briefly at one or two of them. A Long-billed Starthroat showed for a second, bringing our tally to six species of hummers at Minca. A small group of Orange-chinned Parakeets left their roosts and took to the skies, joining White-collared and Band-rumped Swifts. Amongst the trees and shrubs surrounding the porch we watched Yellow-bellied Elaenias, Keel-billed Toucan, Rufous-capped Warbler, Yellow Warbler and the first of 4 or 5 American Redstarts we would see today.

Before departing La Minca we spent a little time birding the parking area, picking up White-rumped Hawk, Sooty-headed Tyrannulet, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Tropical Pewee, Panamanian Flycatcher and several female Cinereous Becards.

The bus could climb no higher, so we transferred into four 4-wheel drive Land Cruisers, and began our journey up the Sierra Nevada mountains of Santa Marta. Our first stop was for an unexpected roosting Black-and-white Owl, a new bird for everyone, and a major crowd-pleaser. At our next stop, we got out and spent the morning walking a stretch of the road which was quite birdy. A calling male Barred Antshrike raised its crest in display; Rufous-breasted Wrens and Rufous-and-white Wren were also conspicuous. We watched a pair of Collared Aracaris deftly pick fruit from a cecropia tree. Millie picked out a distant Olive-sided Flycatcher that was seen well in the scope. Stunning Crimson-backed Tanagers captured our attention multiple times, causing some of our group to miss a fast Golden-winged Sparrow. Smaller birds included a female White-bearded Manakin, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Sepia-capped Flycatcher, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, Golden-fronted Greenlet and Thick-billed Euphonias, all of which we saw extremely well.

Through openings in the tree-lined road, we could look across the valleys below and pick out several soaring raptors - Turkey Vultures and a juvenile Gray-lined Hawk. A male Gartered Trogon darted across the hillside and landed in full view, distant but well-seen in the scope. John spotted a large bird in a thick set of roadside vines - it turned out to be two Crested Guans, and we wondered if they had a nest there. Peter watched a Streaked Flycatcher land on a perch in full view for all of us to see. Less cooperative were Western Slaty Antshrike, heard but not seen, and a Scaled Piculet that disappeared as quickly as it appeared.

Higher up the mountain we stopped for our first of about two dozen regional endemics, the Santa Marta Foliage-Gleaner. It taunted us with its loud call, then provided quick looks when it flew over the road, flashing its rusty tail. While focusing on that species, we heard the wonderful, drawn out song of the Santa Marta Tapaculo, ringing out from dense vegetation some distance away. Edison assured us that we would see that target later.

Lunch beckoned about 7 km further up the mountain, reached after a storied journey. The rough road took its toll on one of the Land Cruisers, which conked out at a particularly vertical, boulder-strewn stretch. A hammer, wrench, phone call and patience eventually solved the problem, but split the group, leaving some of us lagging behind, while the lead group ate their boxed lunch and wondered about the mishap. John and Jill opted to walk the final stretch while John, Pam, Hal and Diane stretched their legs and did some roadside birding, seeing Mountain Elaenia and some Yellow-backed Orioles.

Finally we were all together again at La Tienda, with tales of our vehicle adventure. It was summed up by one of the driver's T-shirts, which said "It's a Long Story"! Meanwhile, the earlier arrivals had seen Pale-bellied Hermit and Green Violetears on the hummingbird feeders, Bay-headed Tanagers and Blue-naped Chlorophonias on a platform feeder, and Blossomcrown, Rusty Flowerpiercer and White-sided Flowerpiercer on some flowers. The later group chomped their potato salad boxed lunch quickly, as they had some catching up to do! Millie found a male Crimson-crested Woodpecker, a nice forest sighting, and Hal spotted a Santa Marta Toucanet just as the first drops of rain appeared.

Our caravan of Land Cruisers continued on the rough road, bouncing over rocks and boulders. Our goal was El Dorado, the flagship reserve of ProAves Foundation, protecting 1600 acres of subtropical to montane forest habitat, hosting the highest concentration of continental, range-restricted bird species in the world. Set at 6,000 feet elevation on the humid northern slope of the Sierra Nevada mountains, El Dorado's rustic eco-lodge provides exceptional facilities overlooking the Caribbean Ocean and the city of Santa Marta, a 2 hour drive away. We settled into our lovely cabins with stellar views, and spent the remainder of the afternoon feeder watching.

The lodge featured two main feeding stations with 9 hummingbird feeders and a platform with bananas to entice fruit-eaters like Blue-naped Chlorophonia, Bay-headed Tanager, Blue-capped Tanager and Black-capped Tanager. The hummer activity was frenetic, with dozens of Green Violetears and Violet-crowned Woodnymphs vying for a favorite perch or portal. Sparkling Violetears and Lazuline Sabrewings stood out because of their larger size, while endemic White-tailed Starfrontlets were easily spotted flashing their white tails while they zipped around shrubs. Amongst these jewels, a diminutive Santa Marta Woodstar bravely worked her way to a favourite feeder to snatch a drink. Several Santa Marta Brush-Finches showed well, making quick forays to the banana tray, and taking seed from the nearby compost heap.

A 40-minute soaking rain did not seem to curtail the avian activity, but gave us a slight break. After it let up, we watched several pairs of Sickie-winged and Band-tailed Guans foraging in the trees adjacent to the main building. Clouds cleared out as the sun began to set, providing stunning views across the forest and out to sea. Lights twinkled from ships anchored off the coast, adding to the evening serenity.

#### **Day 4 / Nov 13 - El Dorado**

We were awoken this morning at 5:20 am by a rogue car alarm. It had nearly as much variety as the dawn chorus, but none of the charm, especially at that hour! Unfortunately, the overnight hours were no fun for about half the group, which was afflicted with crippling Montezuma's revenge. A number of folks opted to stay in while others explored the grounds and nearby trails.

The feeders were just as active this morning, bringing a new species to our list, a Tyrian Metaltail. A fresh batch of bananas attracted tanagers and chlorophonias. At the compost heap, a family of Black-faced Wood-Quail paraded in to search for an easy morning meal. Above the compost, a male Masked Trogon sat motionlessly, and we soon located his mate well below him. In the vicinity, they were joined briefly by White-ored Warblers, Black-hooded Thrush and two Sierra Nevada Brush Finches.

For those feeling up to it, we began the day by walking up the road for some roadside birding. Gray-breasted Wood Wrens were heard often, and we located a pair of Strong-billed Woodcreepers and a Montane Foliage-Gleaner some distance away in the trees. We flushed a Lined Quail-Dove which vanished quickly. The area seemed rather quiet, and the diminished group decided to drive a little farther up the mountain to try their luck there. Two Land Cruisers transported them up, where they enjoyed a mixed flock with excellent sightings of the foliage-gleaner, Black-throated Tody-Tyrannit, Black-capped Tyrannulet, White-ored Warbler, Santa Marta Toucanet, Streak-capped Spinetail, Montane Woodcreeper and Brown-capped Vireo. A Golden-breasted Fruiteater was seen fleetingly.

By the end of lunch, more clouds rolled in and the drizzle turned to heavier showers. Those not feeling well appreciated the downtime, while Jill, Millie and Peter joined Edison for an afternoon exploration, driving down the hill. The rain made for difficult birding, and they were unable to locate the calling Santa Marta Tapaculo. We retired for the evening, hoping tomorrow would bring better health and weather!

#### **Day 5 / Nov 14 - El Dorado**

At daybreak some of us could hear the Santa Marta Screech Owl and Spectacled Owl calling a few times. It was wonderful to see everyone together at breakfast, hopeful that the worst health issues had passed. Following breakfast we headed by Land Cruiser a little ways down the hill to bird along the road. It was a beautiful morning, and birds were enjoyed in good light conditions. We began with several calling Streak-capped Spinetails alerting us to a mixed flock that included Olive-striped Flycatcher, Golden-crowned Flycatcher, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, and Montane Foliage-Gleaner. A pair of Golden-Olive Woodpeckers worked a moss-covered, dead tree-trunk close to the group. A male and female Golden-bellied Grosbeak showed exceptionally well, foraging quietly in a fruiting tree. Even from a distance a Cinnamon Flycatcher stood out.

Our next flock contained a Golden-breasted Fruiteater, Brown-capped Vireo, White-ored Warbler, Slate-throated Whitestart, Bay-headed Tanagers, Blackburnian Warbler and Black-and-white Warbler. Spotted Barbtail and Gray-throated Leaf-tosser were heard. We took a break for juice and snacks before John found a Santa Marta Toucanet, then we huddled around an opening on the forest slope in the hopes of seeing a Santa Marta Tapaculo. For half an hour we waited patiently, seeing it fly by and disappear, then go by again in the opposite direction. Such a small, dark bird is not easy to see, even when they are relatively close, and only Bill, Betty and Genenieve got a look at it. I returned to the lodge with half the group while Edison continued further down the hill with the others. One of the drivers knew a spot where a male Santa Marta Woodstar perched and sure enough it was there. Even in the scope it looked small! There were unsatisfactory views of a

Plain Xenops but good ones of Collared Aracari, Yellow-bellied Seedeater and male and female White-lined Tanagers.

After lunch, afternoon rain rolled in again, requiring some quick decisions. A few decided to watch the ever-active feeder set-up, while Pete and Millie braved the elements and accompanied Edison back down the hill. Diane, Hal and I kept watch at the compost heap where Sierra Nevada Brush Finches were joined by Santa Marta Brush Finch, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren and a Central American Agouti snuffling for scraps. Above the compost Sickle-winged and Band-tailed Guans made their regular late afternoon appearance. Those who ventured down the hill were rewarded with Santa Marta Antbird, Pale-breasted Thrush, Yellow-legged Thrush and Black-headed Tanager.

## **Day 6 / Nov 15 - El Dorado**

This morning our goal was to be on the San Lorenzo Ridge by dawn. Coffee and tea were ready for us at 4 am, and we scrambled into the Land Cruisers for the rough 10 km, one and a half-hour journey up the mountain over bedrock and through streams. This time, when the red vehicle broke down again, there was no time to waste, so the 3 of us squeezed into the other 3 vehicles and we continued on. On the way, the lead vehicle encountered a Crab-eating Fox roaming the road. Our efforts were rewarded with exquisite views from the ridge at daybreak. Looking towards the sunrise, the valley below was blanketed in clouds, ringed by glacier-capped peaks of the Sierra Nevada mountains, rising 18,000 feet. The clear sky turned a lovely deep blue then shades of orange as the sun rose before us.

The sunrise experience was enhanced by a variety of ridge top birds. We enjoyed a dozen Santa Marta Parakeets that exploded out of a palm tree when we stepped out of the vehicles. We were able to track them down further along the road, feeding in a eucalyptus grove. Next, we focused our attention on a Great Thrush before returning to the vehicles for a picnic breakfast of ham and cheese, yoghurt, eggs and coffee. We spent the next 4 hours walking along the ridge admiring the views and the lush vegetation that featured an understory of bamboo and moss-covered trees with epiphytes that were favored by Tyrian Metaltails. We heard Brown-rumped Tapaculo a number of times, but only Diane saw one flying between the vehicles while we ate breakfast. Yellow-crowned Whitestarts, Santa Marta Brush Finch, Santa Marta Mountain Tanagers and metaltails were the species most often encountered. We found multiple mixed flocks showing a pair of Rufous-capped Spinetails, a White-throated Tyrannulet, Golden-bellied Grosbeak, and brief looks at a Santa Marta Warbler. After several sightings, everyone was able to see the Yellow-bellied Chat. We had excellent views of a Montane Woodcreeper, heard a Santa Marta Antpitta call just once. A Santa Marta Bush Tyrant posed nicely at the top of a bare snag.

We returned to the vehicle for a mid-morning snack and drink. While we were doing well with the endemics, Edison wanted to make sure we got to see the Santa Marta Warbler. We backtracked down a former trail to find a flock with Streak-capped Spinetails, watched a Santa Marta Mountain Tanager bathing in a puddle, and saw a Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush shoot across the road. Edison tracked down a Santa Marta Warbler half-hiding in a roadside shrub; it showed itself in bits and pieces to about half the group at a time. Pieced all together, we could say the whole bird was seen!

After a lovely morning, we descended back down to the lodge for lunch. Clouds rolled in as expected during the midday hours, but we were pleasantly surprised that it did not rain in the afternoon. Most of the group joined the afternoon session, heading uphill to look for the White-tipped Quetzal. Once we were positioned in a prime spot, there was a Strong-billed Woodcreeper vocalizing and a small party of Santa Marta Toucanets foraging in the canopy. After patiently waiting to locate a quetzal that was heard once, one called from a different location and soon we were able to pinpoint not one but two birds. One of them flew close, perching above other which made the group extremely happy to see this stunning forest bird.

After dinner, most of the group assembled in the dining area to go owling. Millie came running in from outside to tell us she had Night Monkeys in the cecropia next to the building. We were able to see two of them as they worked their way across the branches and away into the night. The excitement continued when a Santa Marta Screech Owl was spotted sitting on a branch overhanging the road - a marvelous ending to a wonderful day.

## **Day 7 / Nov 18 - El Dorado to Minca and onto Barranquilla**

This morning we said goodbye to the memorable El Dorado after breakfast, and began the return to Barranquilla. Driving down the mountain, we made numerous stops that produced a variety of birds, namely Black-headed Tanager, Olive-striped Flycatcher, Mountain Elaenia, the gorgeous Crimson-backed Tanager, the same Black-and-white Owl we first saw on our way up, Rufous-and-white Wren, Black-backed Antshrike, Yellow-green Vireo and Orange-chinned Parakeet. Neotropical migrants included Baltimore Oriole, Summer Tanager, Tennessee, Black-and-white and Blackburnian Warbler, along with a Broad-winged Hawk.

We lunched in Santa Marta at "La Langosta" where the seafood platter was wonderful, topped off by delicious brownie and ice cream! Leaving Santa Marta for the last time we headed west on the coastal road that crosses the causeway between Santa Marta and Barranquilla. Salt pans of various sizes dotted both sides of the road for a good portion of the stretch. After passing by an American Flamingo, Whimbrel and several large groups of terns we pulled over where we could. Along a line of telegraph poles an Osprey chomped on a Red Snapper, and an Aplomado Falcon rested on a wire. Another stop produced a half dozen White-rumped Sandpipers, difficult to see as they foraged in grasses along the edge of the road. Further along, a dozen Roseate Spoonbills and twice as many Snowy Egrets were in a feeding frenzy in one of the lagoons. We ended our birding with a flock of White-cheeked Pintails, much to the delight of many for whom it was a life bird.

After checking into our Barranquilla hotel, and freshening up, we drove a short distance to an excellent Cuban restaurant for our final meal of the trip. In spite of the big lunch, many found room for another full, delicious meal! We toasted our success and enjoyed re-living trip highlights, including 296 total birds, 19 Santa Marta's endemics, 6 mammals, 40 plus butterflies and 11 reptiles.