

ENDEMIC TOUR COLOMBIA

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Guíde: Pablo Flórez

Introduction

We present you a brief report of a “Colombian Endemic Tour”, that Trogon Trips realized between the 4th and the 31st of July 2008, with notes and the most interesting species seen in each site.

We have focused on visiting the best sites for endemic and special birds in Colombia. All fitted in an efficient but strict scheme and easy access areas.

The tour was guided by Colombian guide Pablo Flórez. Participants were two US and one British birder. The latter only joined the part between the 6th and the 24th of July.

The tour started in the Perija Mountains. Then it continued into the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta with the highest endemic concentration in South-America. Further onto the dry scrub in Guajira, the Mid-Magdalena valley, the Nechí watersheds, the Western Andes, The Central Andes and finally the Eastern Andes.

Totally **599** species were recorded (incl. 25 only heard). Among them **38** endemic species (+ 2 only heard), **19** near-endemics and further **90** species with a restricted distribution, threatened or specialties which are difficult to see in other countries.

We didn't have any delays. No road blocks, landslides, etc... During our trip we used 4x4's in each region. Also included was a local flight and once we used a night bus to move from the coast to the centre of the country. In a few occasions we used public transport without losing birding time.

The weather was fine for most of the time. There were no landslides and during the trip we could every day bird from morning till evening. Perhaps we had too sunny weather, which has affected the bird activity. We had a few windy days, especially in the paramo, which also affected the birding.

Perija Mountains

The little explored Perija Mountains borders Colombia with Venezuela. Although it is very interesting for birding, the area is hardly visited. The mountains were affected for many years by illegal crops and armed groups.

Only in 2006 the Colombian army brought peace back to the area. We are one of the first tours to enter these mountains.

We visited a quiet area called “Sabana Rubia”, which can be reached from the town of Manaure along a dirt road. Birding is possible between 400 and 3300 m asl.

We started the tour after participants arrived in the morning in Valledupar. The afternoon was dedicated to the foothills between 800-1600 m asl. We encountered **Coppery Emeralds** (once), **Black-hooded Thrush**, **Black-headed Tanager**, **Golden-breasted Fruiteater** and **Black-mandibled Toucan**. The next day we concentrated on the higher parts between 2200 and 3200 m asl. In this area we found the endemic **Perija Metaltail**, **Slaty Finch**, **Stygian Owl** (never seen on a tour before) and **Longuemare's Sunangel**. We were unlucky in our efforts to find the rare **Perija Thistletail** and only heard **Black-fronted Wood-Quail**.

Among the other, good birds were **Whiskered Wren, Yellow-breasted Brush-Finch, Bronzy Inca, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Mountain Wren, Red-crested Cotinga, Rufous Spinetail, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush** and **Hooded Tanager**. In the afternoon we had awesome views of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

The next day we birded the lower foothills. The mayor trophy were the incredible views of a couple of **Rosy Thrush-Tanagers** for a long time. Other birds were **Lance-tailed Manakin, Rufous-breasted Wren, Golden-crowned Warbler** and **Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush**.

Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta

Our 4x4 picked us up at 5:00 a.m. at our hotel in Santa Marta. We traveled approx. 1.5 hr before starting our first observations. The first endemics were **Santa Marta Brush-finch** and **White-lored Warbler**. After this we had **Grey-throated Leaf-tosser** close by his nest, **Blue-naped Chlorophonia**, and a brief visit of a **Blossomcrown**. Later on we had excellent views of **Santa Marta Mountain-tanager, Yellow-crowned Whitestart, Santa Marta Antpitta, Streak-capped Spinetail, Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant (E), Brown-rumped Tapaculo, Rusty-headed Spinetail** and **Golden-breasted Fruiteater**.

The next day started with a couple of **White-tipped Quetzals** close to the lodge. Later we had close and good views of a group of **Santa Marta Parakeets** and a female **White-tailed Starfrontlet (E)**. In the evening the only new one was a quick view of a **Black-backed Thornbill**. Also now we only heard the near-endemic **Black-fronted Wood-Quail** and **Band-tailed Guan**.

On the third day of our visit in the Santa Marta Mountains, we walked down along the road to bird the lower parts of the mountains. 3 hours later our 4x4 brought us even lower. Finally at 17:30 hr we reached the foothill village of Minca at 600 m asl.. Birds we added this day were **Santa Marta Tapaculo, Black-headed Tanager, Keel-billed Toucan, Bicoloured Wren, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush** and **Yellow-legged Thrush**. We installed us in a hostel along the Minca River and enjoyed our evening meal in the nice restaurant Bururake.

Minca and the Santuario de los Flamencos

Next day we spend 5 hours birding around Minca. Best bird was a cooperative male **Rosy Thrush-tanager**, followed by a **Golden-winged Sparrow, White-bearded Manakin, Rufous-&-white Wren, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, One-coloured Becard, Scrub** and **Golden-fronted Greenlets** and **Keel-billed Toucan**. At 11:30 we travelled further. We searched in vein for **Black-backed Anthrike** in a site were it is usually common. Then continued straight to El Santuario de los Flamencos, which is located in Guajira (3 hrs from Minca).

At 15:30 hr we were in the desertlike scrubs looking for the near-endemics. In a short time we found in chronological order **Bare-eyed Pigeon, White-whiskered Spinetail, Slender-billed Inezia, Scrub Greenlet, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, Caribbean (Pale-legged) Hornero, Orinoco Saltator**. In a salt lake was a small group of **Caribbean Flamingos** among many other shorebirds.

Santuario Los Flamencos.

Next day we continued our search for near-endemics in the dry scrubs. We were rewarded with **Buffy Hummingbird, Pileated Finch, Glaucous Tanager, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Vermilion Cardinal** and **Russet-throated Puffbird**. Despite our intensive searches, we didn't find **Chestnut Piculet** or **Tocuyo Sparrow**. At night we took the comfortable bus from Santa Marta to Puerto Boyaca, which is at 1 hour from our next birding site.

Cañon del Rio Claro (400 m)

This site in the Mid-Magdalena valley has a ecosystem with good forest and plenty of good birds. We spend 2,5 days in the El Refugio lodge in the heard of the reserve. Birds found here were **Sooty Ant-tanager, Antioquia Bristle-tyrant** (with excellent views for all), **Citron-throated Toucan, Bentbill, Striped Manakin, Barred Puffbird, Oilbirds, Olivaceous Flatbill, Rufous Motmot, White-vented, Dusky-faced, Tawny-crowned** and **Lemon-rumped Tanagers, both Plumeteers, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Black-faced Dacnis, Spectacled Parrotlet, Chestnut-headed Oropendolas, Grey Hawks, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Bay Wren** and **Blue-crowned Manakin**.

On our trip towards Medellin, we stopped for breakfast at the nice restaurant “El Palacio de los frijoles”. Apart from the food for us, there was also a nice bird feeder. Common species on the feeders were **Scrub Tanager**, **Flame-rumped Tanager** but also a couple of **Beautiful Woodpeckers!** Another stop towards Anori gave us a couple of **Bar-crested Anthrike**.

Chestnut-capped Piha Reserve (1300-1800 asl)

Piha reserve is about 3,5 hrs northeast of Medellin. This relative new reserve of the Proaves Foundation is really very interesting for birders and was one of the favorites sites.

Here we found several highly wanted endemics as **Black-and-gold Tanager**, **Multi-coloured Tanager**, **Purplish-mantled Tanagers**, **Red-bellied Grackle**, the recent discovered **Chestnut-capped Piha**, **Parker's Antbird**, **Stiles Tapaculo**. Further **Moustached Puffbird**, **Sooty-headed Wren**, **Golden-winged Manakin**, **Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant**, **White-throated Spadebill**, **Golden-breasted Fruiteater**, **Rufous-naped Greenlet**, **Black-billed Peppershrike** and **Wing-barred Piprites**.

Jardín

Jardín is one of the most beautiful towns of Antioquia. Just above the town, one can watch birds between 1900-3000 m asl. We spend a full day and 2 nights here.

Most special bird here is the critically endangered **Yellow-eared Parrot**. We had views of 4 flocks (Jeffrey saw a flock with more than 70 birds). A couple of **Chestnut-crested Cotinga** were feeding at only 5 m from us!! Then only Harold and the guide had precious views of 3-4 **Tanager-Finches**, who responded from the bushes. Other birds we encountered here were **White-capped Tanagers**, **Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant**, **Golden-fronted Whitestart**, **Purplish-mantled Tanager**, **Mountain Cacique**, **Saffron-crowned Tanager**, **Hooded, Blue-winged, Lacrimose** and **Buff-breasted Mountain-tanager**. **Grey-hooded Bush-tanager** and **Rufous-crowned Tody-tyrant**. From Jardín we travelled in our 4 x 4 to the Río Blanco reserve (3,5 hrs) in the Central Andes.

Río Blanco (2200-2800 asl).

Best birds in Río Blanco were **Brown-banded Antpitta**, **Rusty-faced Parrot**, **White-capped, Red-hooded Tanager**, **Black-billed Mountain-Toucan**, **Black-collared Jay** and a cooperative pair of **Ocellated Tapaculo!** Other birds were **Ash-coloured Tapaculo**, **Crimson-mantled Woodpecker**, **Tyrannine Woodcreeper**, **Barred Fruiteater**, **Sharpe's Wrens**, **Slaty-backed, Chat-Tyrant**, **Smoky Bush-Tyrant**, **Black-eared Hemispingus**, **Chestnut-crowned Antpitta**, **Long-tailed Sylph**, **Bronzy Inca**, **Fawn-breasted Brilliant**, **Plushcap** and **Scaly-naped Parrots**.

Paramo NP Los Nevados (3200-4000 asl)

Our morning in the páramo was difficult due to strong and cold winds. Nevertheless some of us could see **Bearded Helmetcrest** and **Rufous-fronted Parakeets**. Other birds we saw were **Mountain Avocetbill**, **Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle**, **Tawny Antpitta**, **Paramo Seed eater**, **Andean Tit-Spintail**, **White-chinned Thistletail** and **Plumbeous Sierra-Finch**.

Otún-Quimbaya

We stayed in the Suiza settlement close to Otun-Quimbaya Sanctuary. In the morning we observed **Cauca Guan**, **Red-ruffed Fruitcrow**, **Black-winged Saltator**, **Chestnut-breasted Wren**, **Torrent Duck**. We could only hear **Chestnut Wood-Quail**.

From the Otun in the Central Andes we moved back to the Western Andes. This time we spend time on the wet Western Slope.

Pueblo Rico (1300-1900 asl)

This site is really impressive. This was probably the best site of the trip. We spend 1,5 day here and in that time we had incredible views of **Gold-ringed** and **Black-&-gold Tanager**. Also **Crested Ant-tanager**, (only **Harold** and **Pablo**) **Purplish-mantled**, **Glistening-green**, **Scarlet-and-white**, **Rufous-throated**, **Black-**

chinned Mountain, Metallic-green, Silver-throated, Flame-faced, Flame-rumped and Yellow-throated Bush-Tanager, Golden-chested Tanager (the latter was only seen by the 2 guides).

Other good birds were **Munchique Wood-Wren, Toucan Barbet, Black Solitaire, Bicoloured Antvireo, Fulvous-dotted Treerunner, Yellow-breasted Antpitta, Tanager-Finch, Yellow-collared and Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia, Indigo Flowerpiercer, Sooty-headed Wren, Tricoloured Brush-Finch, Cock-of-the-Rock, Bronze-olive Pygmy-Tyrant, Golden-collared Manakin, and Club-winged Manakin** (the latter was only heard).

We could record as well a new species of *Scytalopus Tapaculo* apart from **Nariño and Choco Tapaculo**.

One of the best birds was definitely the Orange-breasted Falcon, while it was perched at 15 meters.

Some good hummingbirds were **Empress Brilliant, White-tailed Hillstar, Brow Inca, Velvet-purple Coronet, Violet-tailed Sylph**.





Clarita Botero (1300-1800 asl)

We spend the night in Ibagué city and the next morning went up to Clarita Botero area, which is a small reserve with a bit of secondary scrub at the edges of the city. Despite that we had here also a strong wind, we could find our main targets: **Tolima Dove** and **Yellow-headed Brush-Finch**. Only Pablo could see a **Blossomcrown**, but this bird was well seen by the other in Santa Marta.

Mana Dulce (400 m a.s.l)

After the morning in Clarita Botero, we travelled to the foothills of the Eastern Andes. In the private reserve Mana Dulce, we could find typical birds of dry forests. It didn't take long to get good views of the only 2 endemics of the reserve: the **Velvet-fronted Euphonia** and **Apical Flycatcher**. Then we focused on Pheasant Cuckoo, which was recorded here often, but apparently it wasn't calling this time of the year.

But we could find **Dwarf Cuckoo**, **Pale-eyed Pygmy-tyrant**, **Pale-bellied Hermit** and **White-eared Conebill**. Good antbirds here were **White-bellied**, **Jet Antbird** and even **Western Slaty Antshrike**.

At 11.00 our fast KIA arrived, which we would use for the last 5 days.

Laguna Pedropalo (2000 asl)

2 hrs from Mana Dulce we stopped at our first site in the Eastern Andes. We saw **Black Inca**, **Silvery-throated Spinetail**, **Ash-browed Spinetail**, **Moustached Brush-Finch**, **Flame-faced Tanager**. From here we continued to the Fuquene Lake, where we arrived quiet late and spend the night in a really nice hotel.

Laguna de Fuquene (2700 asl)

We started the day with good views of **Apolinar's Wren** and could see as well **Spot-flanked Gallinule**, **Least Bittern** and **Sora**. But the Bogota Rail didn't come out despite it was so close.

Around 10:00 a.m. we decided to move on to Soata. We made some stops on the beautiful paramo "La Rusia" for a bite with **Rufous-browed Conebill**, **Plain-coloured Seedeater** and **Sedge Wren** among others.

Soatá (2100 m a.s.l)

We met Oswaldo Cortes in Soata. He is a specialist in birds of the Eastern Andes and has made many studies in Soata esp. about Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird.

We woke up early and moved to higher elevations. Within minutes after the first stop we had our target birds: a group of Mountain Grackles, who gave a splendid show.

Other birds, despite heavy wind and sunny whether were **Silvery-throated Spinetail**, **Matorral Tapaculo**, **Orange-throated Sunangel**, **Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager**, **Golden-bellied Starfrontlet**, **Purple-backed Thornbill**, **Mountain Velvetbreast**, **Mountain Cacique**, **Black-headed Hemispingus**.

In the afternoon we visited some coffee plantations and open areas around Soata. Oswaldo knew where he had to look for the specialties. We saw plenty of **Chestnut-bellied Hummingbirds** and one **Indigo-capped Hummingbird**. Also could we see a few times **Nicéforo's Wren**.

The next day we returned back towards Bogota and made a stop on Rogitama.

Rogitama Biodiversidad (2700 asl)

This small reserve is very interesting for observing close by many species of hummingbirds with a very limited range.

Roberto Chavarro (the owner) has planted many flowers around the house and in a few minutes after arrival we saw **Black Inca, Lazuline Sabrewing, Short-tailed Emerald** and **Longuemare's Sunangel**.

Also they showed as a roost of a couple of **Tropical Screech-Owls**.

In the evening we worked a bit to get views of **Matorral Tapaculo, Yellow-breasted Brush-Finch, Moustached Brush-Finch, Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager** and **Oleaginous Hemispingus**.

In the evening we saw a couple of **White-throated Screech-owls**.

Guasca (2800-3000 asl)

The last birding site of the trip was the private reserve, located at the edges of the Chingaza NP.

Best trophy here was **Brown-breasted Parakeet**. Other good birds were **Coppery-bellied** and **Glowing Puffleg, Purple-backed Thornbill, Rufous Antpitta, Andean Guan, Black-chested Mountain-Tanager** and **White-capped Tanager**.

Then we continued on to Bogota.

The next day most participants left in the early morning.