

## **April 2008: NE-Colombia birding trip**

*including Santa Marta Mountains,  
Mid Magdalena valley and the Eastern Andes*



Santa Marta Antpitta (*Grallaria bangsi*)  
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## Intro

This trip was just dedicated to the Santa Marta mountains, the Magdalena valley, 1 site in the C-Andes and the Eastern Andes.

Participants were

- Paul and Jill Rendell, loyal British customers, who have already joined 3 times previously! (Rumours are spreading that they are interested in a 5th time.)
- Halsey Bradford, a Canadian birder and
- Ray Ziarno, a birder from the US.

In the beginning when we started organising tours, we have perhaps put too much attention on the numbers of species seen on a trip. But now concentration is more put on the wish list of the participants.

April is a bit a bizarre month. It is the end of the dry season, so showers can be expected. On the other hand it is the month when most species are vocal as they prepare for nesting. And indeed we saw some magnificent displaying, heard many singing and saw many birds building nests. But some species are then also difficult to spot. We had less fruit-eating species as normal. While the Santa Marta mountains were excellent, the Eastern Andes was a bit silent and wet.

## Description

First we went to Cuchilla San Lorenzo (Santa Marta mountains). We spend our first day mainly on the lower slopes (we had anyhow 3 days). And exactly as the previous trip we started with **Rusty-breasted Antpitta** (always an impressive start). Then a bit later the first endemics: **Santa Marta Brush-Finch (E)** and **White-lored Warbler (E)**. We saw as well **Lined Quail-Dove (NE)**. Only a few participants saw it now, but everyone obtained good views at some point during the next 3 days.

The birding went very good. After 2 days we had nearly all resident highland endemics apart from **Santa Marta Parakeet**. And even on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day we only heard them.

We could add an even rarer bird: a male **Black-backed Thornbill (E)** at 50 meters from our lodge. Not the most handsome, but many birders would be happy if they had it on their list.

And on top of that we had very, very good views of the endemics.

**Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant (E)** (picture) came complete in the open on top of a bush.

**Santa Marta Warbler (E)** (took us a small effort), males of **White-tailed Starfrontlets (E)** and **Santa Marta Antpitta (E)**.

The latter we saw 5 !!! times in the open (no playback required) and was my very first Antpitta that I ever could digiscope.

Then followed some more easy endemics: **Rusty-headed Spinetail (E)**, **Brown-rumped Tapaculo (E)**, **Yellow-crowned Whitestart (E)** and **Santa Marta Mountain-Tanager (E)**.

Further the range restricted species: **Streak-capped Spinetail (NE)**, **Band-tailed Guan (NE)**, **White-tipped Quetzal (NE)**, **Golden-breasted Fruiteater (NE)**, **Golden-bellied Grosbeak**, **Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush**, **Red-billed & Scaly-naped Parrots**.



The disadvantage of seeing so many good endemics on a short time, made me worrying a bit: "What now?", "How can I keep them interested?" But actually this is a luxury problem. We could spend our attention now on the more difficult semi-endemics, which are to my opinion much better birds: **Black-fronted Wood-Quail (NE)** and **Grey-throated Warbler (NE)**. The first one was seen only by me and Paul and the latter only by me.

Minca was our next stop. It lies at m asl and is used as a base to see the specialities up to 1000 meter asl. We had some singing **Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrushes** (picture), **Coppery Emeralds**. **Santa Marta Tapaculo (E)** was finally seen. **Golden-winged Sparrow** was seen a few times. Migration time has started and Minca is a good place to see them: several **Northern Orioles** and a few **Eastern Kingbirds**.



Guajira was quite productive. After breakfast with the waders (picture), we started looking for birds in the dry scrub. **Vermillion Cardinal (NE)** was seen many times, as well as the other specialities: **Northern Scrub-Flycatcher**, **Slender-billed Inezia**, **White-whiskered Spinetail**, **Glaucous Tanager**, **Vermillion Cardinal** and **Orinocan Saltator**. At a dry waterhole, 2 **Long-winged Harriers** were seen; an uncommon record in that area.



At last we could add **Chestnut Piculet** and an even rarer encounter: 2 male **Hooded Warblers** (new record for Guajira).

The "mataratonas" were still in bloom and at same spot as on previous trip, we found a few **Ruby-Topaz Hummingbirds**. This time the light was better and everyone enjoyed nice views of this male bird. Another good bird was **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, also a rare migrant (first for me in Colombia).

The next birding place was in the Quinchas mountains, a ridge a bit separated from the Eastern Andes. Basically you can find here species similar as on the other side of the Magdalena valley (Rio Claro). But some are a bit easier seen here, such as: **Beautiful Woodpecker (E)**, **White-mantled Barbet (E)**, **Striped Manakin**, **(Southern) Bentbill**, **Citron-throated Toucan (NE)** and **Fulvous-vented Euphonia**.

We spend 3 nights in Rio Claro. Despite rains elsewhere, we had nice weather and could enjoy the clear water of the Rio Claro and its cañon. We used the cabañas in the canon, with splendid views. It is quite nice to wake up with a **Collared Araçari** in the tree in front of you. Halsey had even a **Black-chested Jay** that landed on this mosquito net. Unfortunately we could not enjoy it fully as we had to start our birding. We found following species: **Sooty Ant-tanager (E)**, **Barred Puffbird**, **Cinnamon Woodpecker**, **Chestnut-backed Antbird**, **Blue-crowned Manakin**, both **White-vented** and **Bronze-tailed Plumeteer**, **Orange-billed Sparrow** and plenty of **Tawny-crested** and **Dusky-faced Tanagers** as well as **Slate-coloured Grosbeak**.



Ray, who was resting near a creek, had a memorable experience with an **oilbird**. It landed (in the middle of the day) next to him on a log and sat there for 5 minutes before it took off again.

While we were waiting at dusk for the **oilbirds** to come out in mass, **Sand-coloured Nighthawks** flew by.

We only spend a short morning in Juntas (Ibague).

Halsey was concentrated looking at **Yellow-headed Brush-Finch (E)** and a passing horse with milk can pushed him into the ravine. Luckily without any injuries. A bit later he had even closer views of the Brush-Finch.

There were several **Blossomcrowns (E)** active in the small red flowers.

The afternoon we birded in Mana Dulce, a reserve in the higher parts of the Magdalena valley (400 m asl). We found all specialities quite easily: **Velvet-fronted Euphonia**, **Jet** and **White-bellied Antbirds** and **Western Slaty Antshrike**. **Pheasant Cuckoo** was also now only heard.

At Fuquene's lake we had **Noble Snipe**, **Spot-flanked Gallinule (NE)**, **Apolinar's Wren (E)** and a **Sora**.

The Yatago flowers were blooming in Soata and several **Chestnut-bellied Hummingbirds (E)** were found.

Excellent views of **Apical Flycatcher (E)**.

The Onzaga road near Soata produced **Mountain Caciques**, **Longuemare's Sunangel (NE)**, **Rusty-faced Parrots**, **Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager**, **Capped Conebill**.

We also found some **Scarlet Tanagers**. Usually we are quite happy to see this species on a trip. But this was the fourth time on this trip.

Rogitama Biodiversidad is an impressive botanical garden with plenty of flowers. Esp. Abutilon (Malvaceae - Mallow family) is abundant and it attracts many species of hummingbirds. Esp. **Black Inca (E)** enjoys this shady environment. This time we found also many **Lazuline Sabrewing**. The males are very beautiful.

A **Plain-breasted Hawk** dived in to try for a Black Inca, but the latter was too alert.

The BioAndina reserve close to the Chingaza National Park has some very basic accommodation. But everyone forgot this the next day when we started birding.

Many small flowers were in bloom and we saw some excellent hummingbirds: **Short-tailed Emerald**, **Glowing** and **Coppery-bellied Puffleg**, **Bronze-tailed Thornbill** and **Tyrian Metaltail**.

An **Ash-coloured Tapaculo** was active in the bushes near the lodge. He is quite different from all the *Scytalopus* Tapaculo's, which have all the same shape and behavior. This species has an obvious longer tail and is seen higher in bushes. Besides it regularly follows mixed species flocks.

Mixed flocks contained **Mountain Caciques**, **Bluish** and **Masked Flowerpiercers**, **Rufous-browed Conebill (E)**, **Hooded** and **Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanagers**, **Hemispinguses** such as **Superciliaried**, **Black-capped** and the rare **Black-headed**.

Only Jill and me were lucky enough to see **Rufous Antpitta**.

A flock of **White-capped Tanagers** was spotted and we had good views through the telescope. But best of all were the endemics **Brown-breasted Parakeets (E)** who landed in a tree closeby. We could walk underneath the tree and watch them feeding at only a few meters distance.



On the way to Bogota we stopped at a marsh with many **Andean Ducks**. We found them as well the next day in Humedal La Conejera. The Humedal gave us as well the expected but brief views of **Bogota Rail (E)**. Further more **Spot-flanked Gallinules (NE)** and **Silvery-throated Spinetail (E)**.

In Monterredondo we had only very short views of a flying over **Cundinamarca Antpitta (E)**. Paul could see better a walking in **Blackish Tapaculo**.

A couple of **Powerful Woodpecker** were calling and could be seen briefly in the mist.

In between the showers and fog, we had some mixed flocks with **Green-and-black Fruiteater**, **Pearled Treerunner**, the **Ochre-breasted Brush-Finch** that everyone needed, a lonely **Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager**, **Golden-fronted Whitestart**, **Black-crested Warbler**, **Common** and **Grey-hooded Bush-Tanager**.

Paul - having a sanitary stop - could see as well a **White-throated Quail-Dove**.

The trip ended with 423 species seen. Among them are 23 endemics.

Halsey Bradford: *"Thank you. It was a very good trip. I have a few comments on the list - I will send you these next week. Best wishes to Juanita."*

Ray Ziarno: *"...and I feel very good about the birding trip with you, in general! ... Thanks again for your help, the birding trip efforts, ..."*

## Full list

- Little Tinamou
- Speckled Chachalaca
- Band-tailed Guan
- Andean Guan
- Sickle-winged Guan
- Crested Bobwhite
- **Black-fronted Wood-Quail (NE)**
- Andean Duck
- **Torrent Duck**
- Blue-winged Teal
- Scaled Piculet
- Olivaceous Piculet
- **Chestnut Piculet (NE)**
- Acorn Woodpecker
- **Beautiful Woodpecker (E)**
- Red-crowned Woodpecker
- Red-rumped Woodpecker
- Golden-olive Woodpecker
- Crimson-mantled Woodpecker
- Cinnamon Woodpecker
- **Powerful Woodpecker**
- Crimson-crested Woodpecker
- **White-mantled Barbet (E)**
- Emerald Toucanet
- Collared Araçari
- Keel-billed Toucan
- **Citron-throated Toucan (NE)**
- Chestnut-mandibled Toucan
- **Black-billed Mountain-Toucan (NE)**
- Rufous-tailed Jacamar
- Barred Puffbird
- Russet-throated Puffbird
- **White-tipped Quetzal (NE)**
- White-tailed Trogon
- Masked Trogon
- Violaceous Trogon
- Broad-billed Motmot
- Blue-crowned Motmot
- Highland Motmot
- Ringed Kingfisher
- Green Kingfisher
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo
- Squirrel Cuckoo
- Greater Ani
- Smooth-billed Ani
- Groove-billed Ani
- Striped Cuckoo
- Pheasant Cuckoo (H only)
- Scarlet-fronted Parakeet
- Brown-throated Parakeet
- Santa Marta Parakeet (H only)
- **Brown-breasted Parakeet (E)**
- Green-rumped Parrotlet

- Spectacled Parrotlet
- Orange-chinned Parakeet
- **Rusty-faced Parrot (NE)**
- Blue-headed Parrot
- Red-billed Parrot
- Speckle-faced Parrot
- White-collared Swift
- Chestnut-collared Swift
- **White-tipped Swift (NE)**
- Rufous-breasted Hermit
- Stripe-throated Hermit
- Pale-bellied Hermit
- Western Long-tailed Hermit
- Lazuline Sabrewing
- Brown Violet-ear
- Green Violet-ear
- Sparkling Violet-ear
- Black-throated Mango
- Blue-tailed Emerald
- **Red-billed Emerald (NE)**
- **Coppery Emerald (NE)**
- **Short-tailed Emerald (NE)**
- Blue-crowned Woodnymph
- Blue-chested Hummingbird
- **Shining-green Hummingbird**
- Andean Emerald
- Steely-vented Hummingbird
- Rufous-tailed Hummingbird
- **Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird (E)**
- White-vented Plumeleteer
- Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer
- **Blossomcrown (E)**
- **Fawn-breasted Brilliant**
- Mountain Velvetbreast
- **Black Inca (E)**
- Collared Inca
- **White-tailed Starfrontlet (E)**
- Buff-tailed Coronet
- **Longuemare's Sunangel (NE)**
- Glowing Puffleg
- **Coppery-bellied Puffleg (NE)**
- Ruby-topaz Hummingbird
- Booted Racket-tail
- Long-tailed Sylph
- **Black-backed Thornbill (E)**
- Tyrian Metaltail
- **Bronze-tailed Thornbill (NE)**
- White-bellied Woodstar
- Tropical Screech-owl
- White-throated Screech-owl (H only)
- Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl
- Oilbird
- Common Potoo
- Pauraque
- Sand-coloured Nighthawk
- Scaled Pigeon
- **Bare-eyed Pigeon (NE)**
- Band-tailed Pigeon
- Pale-vented Pigeon
- Eared Dove
- Scaled Dove
- Common Ground-Dove
- Ruddy Ground-Dove
- Blue Ground-Dove
- White-tipped Dove
- **Lined Quail-Dove (NE)**
- White-throated Quail-Dove
- White-throated Crake (H only)
- **Bogota Rail (E)**
- Grey-necked Wood-Rail
- Common Moorhen
- **Spot-flanked Gallinule (NE)**
- American Coot
- Noble Snipe
- Whimbrel
- Greater Yellowlegs
- Lesser Yellowlegs
- Solitary Sandpiper
- Spotted Sandpiper
- Willet
- Least Sandpiper
- Wattled Jacana
- American Oystercatcher
- Semipalmated Plover
- Southern Lapwing
- Black Skimmer
- Laughing Gull
- Caspian Tern
- Royal Tern
- Osprey
- Swallow-tailed Kite
- White-tailed Kite
- Double-toothed Kite
- Plain-breasted Hawk
- Semicollared Hawk
- Long-winged Harrier
- **Solitary Eagle**
- Grey Hawk
- Roadside Hawk
- **White-rumped Hawk**
- Short-tailed Hawk
- Black Hawk-Eagle
- Crested Caracara
- Yellow-headed Caracara
- Laughing Falcon
- American Kestrel
- Bat Falcon
- Peregrine Falcon
- Least Grebe
- Pied-billed Grebe
- Neotropic Cormorant
- Reddish Egret
- Little Blue Heron
- Snowy Egret
- Capped Heron
- Great Blue Heron
- Cooi Heron
- Great Egret
- Cattle Egret
- Green Heron
- Black-crowned Night-Heron
- Fasciated Tiger-Heron
- Least Bittern
- Whispering Ibis
- Roseate Spoonbill
- Brown Pelican
- Black Vulture
- Turkey Vulture
- Magnificent Frigatebird
- Streak-necked Flycatcher
- Olive-striped Flycatcher
- Ochre-bellied Flycatcher
- Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant
- Black-throated Tody-Tyrant
- Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher
- Common Tody-Flycatcher
- Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher
- Sooty-headed Tyrannulet
- Black-capped Tyrannulet
- Golden-faced Tyrannulet
- Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet
- Yellow Tyrannulet
- **Northern Scrub-Flycatcher (NE)**
- Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet
- Yellow-bellied Elaenia
- Fuscous Flycatcher
- Mountain Elaenia
- White-throated Tyrannulet
- White-banded Tyrannulet
- Torrent Tyrannulet
- **Slender-billed Inezia (NE)**
- Marble-faced Bristle-Tyrant
- Variegated Bristle-Tyrant
- Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant
- Pale-eyed Pygmy-tyrant
- **Bentbill**
- Olivaceous Flatbill
- Yellow-olive Flycatcher
- Cinnamon Flycatcher
- Olive-sided Flycatcher
- Smoke-coloured Pewee
- Eastern Wood-Pewee
- Black Phoebe
- Vermillion Flycatcher
- Yellow-bellied Chat-tyrant
- Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant
- Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant
- **Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant (E)**
- Smoky Bush-Tyrant
- Pied Water-Tyrant
- Long-tailed Tyrant
- Cattle Tyrant
- Bright-rumped Attila
- Dusky-capped Flycatcher
- Panama Flycatcher
- Pale-edged Flycatcher
- **Apical Flycatcher (E)**
- Great Crested Flycatcher
- Brown-crested Flycatcher
- Tropical Kingbird
- Fork-tailed Flycatcher
- Eastern Kingbird
- Grey Kingbird
- Boat-billed Flycatcher
- Streaked Flycatcher
- Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher
- Rusty-margined Flycatcher
- Social Flycatcher
- Piratic Flycatcher
- Lesser Kiskadee
- Great Kiskadee
- Cinnamon Becard
- One-coloured Becard
- Masked Tityra
- Green-and-black Fruiteater
- **Golden-breasted Fruiteater (NE)**
- Blue-crowned Manakin
- **Lance-tailed Manakin (NE)**
- White-bearded Manakin
- **Striped Manakin**
- Black-crested Antshrike
- **Black-backed Antshrike (NE)**
- Barred Antshrike
- **Western Slaty Antshrike (NE)**
- Plain Antwren
- Slaty Antwren
- Dot-winged Antwren
- White-fringed Antwren

- Long-tailed Antbird
- Dusky Antbird
- **Jet Antbird (NE)**
- **White-bellied Antbird (NE)**
- Chestnut-backed Antbird
- Azara's Spinetail
- Pale-breasted Spinetail
- **Silvery-throated Spinetail (E)**
- **Rusty-headed Spinetail (E)**
- **White-whiskered Spinetail (NE)**
- **Ash-browed Spinetail (NE)**
- **Streak-capped Spinetail (NE)**
- Pearled Treerunner
- Montane Foliage-gleaner
- Ruddy Foliage-gleaner
- Plain Xenops
- Streaked Xenops
- Plain-brown Woodcreeper
- Wedge-billed Woodcreeper
- Strong-billed Woodcreeper
- Straight-billed Woodcreeper
- Cocoa Woodcreeper
- Streak-headed Woodcreeper
- Montane Woodcreeper
- Red-billed Scythebill
- Black-faced Antthrush
- **Cundinamarca Antpitta (E)**
- **Santa Marta Antpitta (E)**
- Chestnut-crowned Antpitta
- Rufous Antpitta
- **Rusty-breasted Antpitta**
- Unicoloured Tapaculo
- **Santa Marta Tapaculo (E)**
- **Brown-rumped Tapaculo (E)**
- **Matorral Tapaculo (E)**
- **Ash-coloured Tapaculo**
- Rufous-browed Peppershrike
- Black-billed Peppershrike
- Yellow-browed Shrike-Vireo (H only)
- Red-eyed Vireo
- Brown-capped Vireo
- Golden-fronted Greenlet
- Scrub Greenlet
- Black-chested Jay
- Green Jay
- White-capped Dipper
- Andean Solitaire
- **Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush**
- **Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush**
- Grey-cheeked Thrush
- Swainson's Thrush
- Yellow-legged Thrush
- Great Thrush
- Glossy-black Thrush
- Black-hooded Thrush
- Pale-breasted Thrush
- Black-billed Thrush
- White-necked Thrush
- Tropical Mockingbird
- Bicoloured Wren
- Band-backed Wren
- **Apolinar's Wren (E)**
- Black-bellied Wren
- Whiskered Wren
- Rufous-breasted Wren
- Speckle-breasted Wren
- Bay Wren
- Buff-breasted Wren
- Rufous-and-white Wren
- **Niceforo's Wren (H only) (E)**
- House Wren
- Mountain Wren
- White-breasted Wood-Wren
- Grey-breasted Wood-Wren
- Southern Nightingale-wren
- Long-billed Gnatwren
- Tropical Gnatcatcher
- Grey-breasted Martin
- Brown-bellied Swallow
- Blue-and-white Swallow
- White-thighed Swallow
- Southern Rough-winged Swallow
- Barn Swallow
- Andean Siskin
- Lesser Goldfinch
- Rufous-collared Sparrow
- Orange-billed Sparrow
- **Golden-winged Sparrow**
- Black-striped Sparrow
- Pale-naped Brush-Finch
- **Santa Marta Brush-Finch (E)**
- Yellow-headed Brush-Finch
- Moustached Brush-Finch
- Slaty Brush-Finch
- Ochre-breasted Brush-Finch
- Tennessee Warbler
- Tropical Parula
- Yellow Warbler
- Blackburnian Warbler
- Bay-breasted Warbler
- Blackpoll Warbler
- American Redstart
- Northern Waterthrush
- Mourning Warbler
- Canada Warbler
- Slate-throated Whitestart
- Golden-fronted Whitestart
- **Yellow-crowned Whitestart (E)**
- Black-crested Warbler
- **Santa Marta Warbler (E)**
- **Grey-throated Warbler (NE)**
- **White-lored Warbler (E)**
- **Hooded Warbler**
- **Chestnut-sided Warbler**
- Golden-crowned Warbler
- Rufous-capped Warbler
- Buff-rumped Warbler
- Bananaquit
- **White-eared Conebill**
- **Rufous-browed Conebill (NE)**
- Capped Conebill
- Common Bush-Tanager
- Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager
- Grey-hooded Bush-Tanager
- Superciliaried Hemispingus
- Black-capped Hemispingus
- **Black-headed Hemispingus**
- Yellow-backed Tanager
- **Rosy Thrush-Tanager (H only)**
- Dusky-faced Tanager
- Grey-headed Tanager
- White-shouldered Tanager
- Tawny-crested Tanager
- White-lined Tanager
- **Sooty Ant-Tanager (E)**
- Summer Tanager
- Scarlet Tanager
- Crimson-backed Tanager
- Blue-grey Tanager
- Glaucous Tanager
- Palm Tanager
- Blue-capped Tanager
- Hooded Mountain-Tanager
- **Santa Marta Mountain-Tanager (E)**
- Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager
- Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager
- **White-capped Tanager**
- Fawn-breasted Tanager
- **Velvet-fronted Euphonia (E)**
- Thick-billed Euphonia
- Fulvous-vented Euphonia
- Plain-coloured Tanager
- Golden Tanager
- Speckled Tanager
- Bay-headed Tanager
- Scrub Tanager
- Metallic-green Tanager
- Blue-necked Tanager
- Golden-hooded Tanager
- Beryl-spangled Tanager
- Blue-and-black Tanager
- Black-capped Tanager
- Black-headed Tanager
- Black-faced Dacnis
- Blue Dacnis
- Green Honeycreeper
- Swallow Tanager
- **Pileated Finch (NE)**
- Saffron Finch
- Grassland Yellow-Finch
- Blue-black Grassquit
- Grey Seedeater
- Yellow-bellied Seedeater
- Ruddy-breasted Seedeater
- Yellow-faced Grassquit
- Black-faced Grassquit
- Rusty Flowerpiercer
- White-sided Flowerpiercer
- Glossy Flowerpiercer
- Black Flowerpiercer
- Bluish Flowerpiercer
- Masked Flowerpiercer
- Golden-bellied Grosbeak
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- **Vermilion Cardinal (NE)**
- Slate-coloured Grosbeak
- Buff-throated Saltator
- Greyish Saltator
- **Orinocan Saltator (NE)**
- Streaked Saltator
- Blue-black Grosbeak
- Crested Oropendola
- Chestnut-headed Oropendola
- Yellow-rumped Cacique
- Mountain Cacique
- Yellow-backed Oriole
- Yellow Oriole
- **Orange-crowned Oriole (NE)**
- Northern Oriole
- Yellow-hooded Blackbird
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Great-tailed Grackle
- Shiny Cowbird