



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Panama

Bocas del Toro

1st October to 8th October 2023 (8 days)



Three-wattled Bellbird by Forrest Rowland

Our tour is spent on the idyllic Bocas del Toro archipelago, at the aptly named Tranquilo Bay Lodge, enjoying the staggering scenery and some equally incredible birding. Here we will focus on Caribbean lowland and mid-elevation species as well as hopefully connecting with the river of raptors that move through this area at this time of year. Thrilling birding, quality lodges and a relaxed pace make this tour perfect for anyone who has yet to experience the exciting avifauna of Central America or for those who have an appetite for a repeat taste!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...**MAIN ITINERARY**

Day 1	Arrival in Tranquilo Bay
Day 2	Palo Seco Protection Forest, Bocas Lowlands
Day 3	Bird Tranquilo Bay Trails
Day 4	San San Pond Sak Wetlands
Day 5	Isla Popa & Tranquilo Bay
Day 6	Fortuna Forest Reserve – Bocas Highland Birding
Day 7	Chocolate Farm and Tranquilo Bay
Day 8	Depart Tranquilo Bay

TOUR ROUTE MAP...

TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1: Arrival in Tranquilo Bay. A representative from the lodge will meet you at the airport in Bocas Town and assist you with your entry into Bocas del Toro. Located on the island of Bastimentos, our owner built and managed lodge, straddles a network of distinct ecosystems comprising lush Caribbean lowland forest and the turquoise blue of the Caribbean Sea. The very comfortable rooms of the lodge are based near a 100-foot-high bird tower, allowing unimpeded views of the surrounding mangroves, gardens and forests. Late evenings spent atop this bird tower can be very productive with up to three species of nighthawks foraging at close quarters as well as several species of parrots moving towards their night roosts.



Grey-necked Wood Rail by Adam Riley

Upon arrival at our lodge, you will leisurely settle into your cabana. Once you are settled in, you have the choice between a guided hike, watching for wildlife, or a leisurely afternoon kayak and snorkelling session, searching out water life above and below the surface.

Day 2: Palo Seco Protection Forest, Bocas Lowlands. Palo Seco Protection Forest encompasses 167,000 hectares and is one of the most vital areas of La Amistad Biosphere Reserve. This incredible area consists of wet Atlantic forest, foothills, and watersheds and is a hotbed for restricted range species and altitudinal migrants such as Three-wattled Bellbird, Blue and Snowy Cotingas, Chestnut-colored and Cinnamon Woodpeckers, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Crimson-colored, Speckled, Emerald and Silver-throated Tanagers, Lattice-tailed Trogon, Bronze-tailed Plumleteer, Green Hermit, Slaty Spinetail, Dull-mantled Antbird and both Band-backed and Black-throated Wren. We will also make every effort to find the elusive Lanceolated Monklet.



**Black-cheeked Woodpecker
by Adam Riley**

More widespread lowland specialties that we may find include Brown Jay, White-crowned Parrot, White-collared Seedeater, Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, Cinnamon and White-winged Becards, Long-billed Gnatwren, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Black-and-yellow Tanager, Buff-rumped Warbler, Torrent Tyranulet, Crimson-fronted Parakeet and Red-fronted Parrotlet. Mammal sightings in the area regularly include Mantled Howler Monkey, Red Brocket and various squirrel species.

Day 3: Bird Tranquilo Bay Trails. Today we will have breakfast at leisure and then regroup for birding the lodge's trails. The lodge grounds include cover 200 acres with



several kilometres of forested trails covering different habitats. This forest, and its edge are home to many of Isla Bastimentos most sought after species including multiple raptors, Montezuma Oropendola, Red-lored Amazon, hummingbirds, tityras, woodpeckers, honeycreepers, tanagers, pigeons, antbirds, manakins, seedeaters, and herons, and, in season Three-wattled Bellbirds. White-faced Capuchins, Three and Two-toed Sloths, Green Iguanas, basilisk lizards, butterflies and poison dart frogs are also common on these trails.

After dinner, we will try to spot some of the local nocturnal residents such as the Common Potoo, a number of owls, Western Night Monkey, Four-eyed Opossum, Woolly Opossum, Crab-eating Raccoon, Spectacled Caiman and bats.

Day 4: San San Pond Sak Wetlands. San San Pond Sak Wetlands is a designated Ramsar site, as well as, part of the La Amistad UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. This is an excellent site to find many lowland bird species as well as northern and altitudinal migrants, raptors and shorebirds.

All six species of kingfishers known to the Americas can be found here, and we will be watching closely for regional endemics like the sparsely distributed Nicaraguan Seed Finch, White-collared Manakin, Olive-backed Euphonia, Black-cowled Oriole, Canebrake Wren and Three-wattled Bellbird, whilst scarcer species include Masked Duck, Least Bittern and Bare-throated Tiger Heron.

Fruiting trees and scrubby edges may produce Scarlet-rumped and Golden-hooded Tanagers, Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, Red-breasted Blackbird, Buff-throated Saltator, Groove-billed Ani, Squirrel Cuckoo, Olive-throated Parakeets, Streaked and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, and the minute Common, Black-headed and Slaty-headed Tody-Flycatchers. With luck, mammal sightings might produce Mantled Howler Monkey, Crab-eating Raccoon, White-nosed Coati, Neotropical River Otter, West Indian Manatee and Bottlenose Dolphin. We will enjoy a picnic lunch on Soroopta Beach, an important



Snowy Cotinga by Adam Riley



Nicaraguan Seed Finch
by Adam Riley

site for migrating and resident shorebirds, and also a nesting ground for Leatherback and Hawksbill Turtles. This vibrant river mouth and beachfront could turn up Wilson's, Collared and Semipalmated Plovers, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Least, Pectoral and Semipalmated Sandpipers, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, four species of tern and Roseate Spoonbill. In the afternoon, sea conditions permitting, we will pass just two miles offshore to a breath-taking rookery and reserve known as Swan's Caye, for beautiful close-up looks at Panama's only known breeding colony of Red-billed Tropicbirds, as well as, Brown Booby and Magnificent Frigatebird.



Day 5: Isla Popa & Tranquilo Bay. Each of the islands in the Bocas del Toro archipelago have their own interesting wildlife and unique species. Isla Popa is the second largest island in the chain, and has more species of birds and mammals due to its close proximity to the mainland. A leisurely boat ride of around two kilometres will bring us to a dense gallery forest surrounded by rich mangrove lagoons of nearby Isla Popa. We will bird this phenomenal area by boat; peacefully enjoying flights of Keel-billed and Black-mandibled Toucans, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Brown-hooded Parrot, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Golden-hooded Tanager, Plumbeous and Swallow-tailed Kites, Pale-billed and Lineated Woodpeckers, Mangrove Cuckoo, American Pygmy Kingfisher, and with a little luck; a male Snowy Cotinga. This mangrove lagoon has some beautiful Turtle Sea Grass where we can have good looks at sponges, starfish, urchins and Upside-down Jellyfish.



Keel-billed Toucan by Adam Riley

This afternoon, we'll have more time to bird the trails of Tranquilo Bay, looking for any species we may have missed on Day 3.

Day 6: Fortuna Forest Reserve – Bocas Highland Birding. After an early morning breakfast, we will depart around 6:00AM for the scenic 50-minute boat ride to Chiriquí Grande. We will weave our way through a labyrinth of mangrove islets as we watch Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Pelicans, Brown Booby, terns and kingfishers feeding at first light.

After passing through Split Hill, the closest point of the mainland in the entire archipelago, we will enter Chiriquí Lagoon. Across the lagoon sits the town of Chiriquí Grande, established as a port town on the doorstep of the highest mountain range in the country. Here we find the road that crosses the isthmus to the Continental Divide. Depending on conditions, we normally start at the top of the Western Caribbean Slope and bird our way down, back through the Palo Seco Forest Reserve.



Bare-necked Umbrellabird by Forrest Rowland

Altitude changes rapidly in this area contributing to a great diversity of species. This area hosts some of the rarest and most spectacular species in the country such as Bare-necked Umbrellabird, Three-wattled Bellbird, Azure-hooded Jay, Lattice-tailed and White tailed Trogons, Snowy and Blue Cotingas, Black-bellied Hummingbird, Yellow-throated and Ashy-throated Bush Tanagers, Yellow-eared Toucanet, Brown Jay, White-crowned Parrot and many more.



While birding at the highest altitudes, the vistas are incredible, as large steep forested valleys fall away to the Caribbean Sea. Several creeks and rivers provide great vantage points for hummingbirds such as Long-billed Starthroat, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Bronzy Hermit, Green-breasted Mango, White-tailed Emerald and Violet Sabrewing. After descending from the cloud forest of the Talamanca Mountains, and passing through the low humid forest and wetlands, we will board the boat for a sunset cruise back to Tranquilo Bay.



Blue Cotinga by Adam Riley

Day 7: Chocolate Farm and Tranquilo

Bay. This morning, we will deploy by boat on a 20-minute passage across Dolphin Bay for the Green Acres Cacao Plantation, home of Green Acres Chocolate. Guided by Robert and Julie, the owners and operators of this organic farm, we will trek their stunning tropical gardens as Robert presents us with extensive information about shade grown organic cacao production. It is here where one of the rarest strains of cacao plant in the world, the Criollo is grown. Highly prized and noted for its intense richness, this variety of bean in its purest form makes up only 5% of the world's total crop. Details of his modest, but extraordinary chocolate manufacturing techniques including growth, of the trees, a step-by-step process of how chocolate is made from bean to bar, and a superb sample of the farm's product.

The wildlife viewing here is spectacular. We will easily find the Green-and-black Poison Dart Frog, some incredible tropical insects, and on occasion an Ocelot that was reintroduced here. A wide variety of avifauna includes Pale-billed Woodpecker, Keel-billed Toucan, Black-chested Jay, Scarlet-rumped Tanager, hummingbirds, parakeets, and various raptors.



American Pygmy Kingfisher by Adam Riley

We will move onto another mainland farm for a late picnic lunch followed by a little light hiking in search of raptors, tanagers, manakins, hummingbirds, trogons, toucans, woodcreepers, motmots and tinamous. With a little luck might also see howler monkeys and several species of amphibians as we follow a spring fed creek beneath the forest canopy.

After dinner, for those interested in nature's most incredible oddities, we will take a night time kayak in search of the bioluminescence (fire flies of the sea). These marine invertebrates lie on the ocean floor, upon shallow sandy grass flats, and illuminate in the presence of light. A quick on/off of the flashlight



activates a chain reaction, which can rapidly spread over 100 feet, lighting up all the marine life in its path. There is no need to worry about finding our way home in the dark, there is another species creating bioluminescence that will leave a glow in the dark trail as we proceed. This species is present throughout the water column and illuminates with every stroke of your paddle.



Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth by George L. Armistead

Day 8: Depart Tranquilo Bay. All good things must come to an end. After another morning around the lodge, we will depart on a short flight from Bocas del Toro to Panama City International Airport where the tour will conclude.



FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 8;
- All lodgings during the tour;
- All ground transportation;
- All national park and other reserve entrance fees;
- All local guiding services;
- Non-alcoholic beverages;
- At Tranquilo Bay - wine, Panamanian beer and rum at dinner.

This excludes:

- Any airfares;
- Tips for local guides and services;
- Top shelf alcoholic beverages;
- Private airport transfers;
- Accommodation and services in Panama City;
- Special gratuities; and
- Any optional activities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tippling: As noted above, gratuities are NOT included on this tour.

Please Note:

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- It can be hot with harsh sun, so please come prepared with hats and sun cream for protection.
- Humidity levels are high throughout the lowlands.



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- Mosquitoes and tiny bloodsucking flies can be numerous at times and it's advisable to pack a good supply of DEET or another effective insect repellent.
 - There are some long days in the field taking advantage of available habitat, but overall the tour pace is relaxed and the walking is easy.
 - Accommodation is very comfortable and a variety of western and local cuisines is available.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **any** airfares. The tour departs from Panama City with a flight to Bocas del Toro on day 1. The tour will conclude after a midday, internal flight from Bocas del Toro to Panama City on day 8.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Tocumen International Airport, Panama City (IATA: PTY) is the main port of entry and departure from Panama and is equally well serviced by international carriers. **Please DO NOT book your international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

