

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours

# CASA MARIA & HATO PIÑERO

February 8-16, 2009



**Aplomado Falcon**

*Falco femoralis*

Photo: D. Ascanio

Leader: David Ascanio

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In northern Venezuela lies a series of mountains running parallel to the coast. These mountains are the coastal cordillera and host one of the richest cloud forest in the world. Given the difference in elevation, this region also offers various life zones, from sea level up to 6000 feet. Our destination to explore this rich ecosystem was Casa Maria, a small lodge contiguous to one of the largest tracks of recovered cloud forest in Venezuela: The Palmichal reserve. Two days were devoted to enjoy an area rich in tanagers, hummingbirds, flycatchers and warblers. Every morning we started our day with views of woodcreepers, tanagers and flycatchers coming to feed on moth over the small butterfly house, while potoos and nighthawks called every night. To explore the forest surrounding Casa Maria we arranged two outings a day, not longer than 2 to 3 hours, and still got an amazing number of bird species.



Our second location was Hato Piñero, a ranch located in a region unique to the continent and occupying a third of Venezuela's territory, dominated by flatlands with watercourses draining into the large Orinoco river. There, grasslands dominate the landscape while patches of tropical dry forest and gallery forest breaks the homogeneity of the region. This is the land where large concentrations of birds can be seen and a viable population of wild cats remains. Here we spent more days, and visited the roads leading to every corner of the ranch. Again, we arranged relaxed outings, not longer than 3 hours, and still saw most of what you expect to see in a regular birding tour.

Among the highlights of the tour many agreed that Aplomado Falcon, Horned Screamer, Blue-naped Chlorophonia, Green-and-rufous Kingfisher and Agami Heron were among the favorite ones. Also, a Gian River Otter in Caño San Gerónimo (Hato Piñero) was the first record for the ranch. This was our second R&E trip to Venezuela. In contrast to other regular tours we spent less time in the field but plan the outings in the most bird-productive sites of each location. If you see the birdlist below you'll notice that we still had an impressive list of species!



I want to thanks Gertrudis Gamarra for sharing his knowledge of the avifauna of Piñero, and Norbert Flauger for taking us into the wild areas surrounding Casa Maria. I hope to see you again in another R&E adventure somewhere in the tropics of America.

For an up-dated taxonomy of the birds of the neotropical region, please visit the South American Classification Committee (SACC) <<http://www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCBaseline.html>>. Also, for seeing several of the videos taken on this tour, please visit the Internet Bird Collection at <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/users/david-ascanio>.



## **The Birdlist.**

The birdlist follows the taxonomy and nomenclature of *Birds of Venezuela* by S. Hilty (2003) and include some recent taxonomic changes. As some of these changes have been inserted in the birdlist I have placed in brackets the name given in the field guide. As mentioned before, for further information regarding the current accepted taxonomy of the birds in the neotropical region please visit the South American Classification Committee (SACC) at: <http://www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCBaseline.html>

### ***Tinamidae***

**Red-legged Tinamou.** *Crypturellus erythropus*. Heard in Hato Piñero.

### ***Pelecanidae***

**Brown Pelican.** *Pelecanus occidentalis*. Various individuals along the Caribbean coast.

### ***Phalacrocoracidae***

**Neotropic Cormorant.** *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*. Various individuals in Hato Piñero.

### ***Anhimidae***

**Anhinga.** *Anhinga anhinga*. Pairs and individuals in Hato Piñero.

### ***Fregatidae***

**Magnificent Frigatebird.** *Fregata magnificens*. Scattered sights along the Caribbean sea.

### ***Ardeidae***

**Whistling Heron.** *Syrigma sibilatrix*. Several pairs along the roads inside Hato Piñero. Certainly one of the most beautiful herons in Venezuela.

**Capped Heron.** *Pilherodius pileatus*. Great views of a pair in a drying pond contiguous to forest, in Hato Piñero.

**Cocoi Heron.** *Ardea cocoi*. Various individuals in rivers, channels and ponds. Always near water.

**Great Egret.** *Ardea alba*. Daily views, but not numerous.

**Little Blue Heron.** *Egretta caerulea*. Seen mostly in Hato Piñero. Common.

**Snowy Egret.** *Egretta thula*. Individuals or pairs mostly in the east side of the ranch.

**Cattle Egret.** *Bubulcus ibis*. Numerous. Daily views.

**Streated Heron.** *Butorides striatus*. 3 individuals along Caño Matajei.

**Agami Heron.** *Agamia agami*. Astonishing views of a single individual along Caño Matajei. We appreciate the fishing techniques of this species, as we located our boat very close to it and remained there for various minutes.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron.** *Nycticorax nycticorax*. Juveniles and adults in Hato Piñero.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron.** *Nyctanassa violacea*. Scattered individuals along the gallery forest of Hato Piñero.

**Boat-billed Heron.** *Cochlearius cochlearius*. Great views in the optional night outing, in Hato Piñero.

**Rufescent Tiger Heron.** *Tigrisoma lineatum*. Superb views of juveniles and adults in Hato Piñero.

### ***Threskiornithidae***

Hato Piñero is a superb place for enjoying and learning ibis identification in Venezuela. In the ranch we were able to observe at length every one of the six ibis species to occur in the country.

**Buff-necked Ibis.** *Theristicus caudatus*. This ibis avoids direct contact with water and is usually heard at dawn from the roosting sites. We enjoyed close views of it while they were searching for arthropods in the fields with native grasses.

**Sharp-tailed Ibis.** *Cercibis oxycerca*. Pairs were seen usually before dawn as they were flying to the roost site. This is the one with a voice like a french ambulance!

**Green Ibis.** *Mesembrinibis cayennensis*. Daily views. Always neat water, in wet grounds with mud. This short legged ibis can be difficult to see in the rainy season but as we were in the dry season we reported more than 26 individuals, including a pair in a open wet grassland.

**Bare-faced Ibis.** *Phimosus infuscatus*. The least conspicuous of the ibis given its dull plumaje and pale face colors. Several were seen.

**White Ibis.** *Eudocimus albus*. Only one individual was seen along a group of juvenile and adult Scarlet Ibis.

**Scarlet Ibis.** *Eudocimus ruber*. Gorgeous, simply gorgeous! Every day we were welcomed to the ranch with the bright colors of this ibis.

**Glossy Ibis.** *Plegadis falcinellus*. A pair in the west side of the ranch.

**Roseate Spoonbill.** *Ajaia ajaja*. Loose groups in various wetlands in Hato Piñero.

### ***Ciconiidae***

**Wood Stork.** *Mycteria americana*. Concentrations up to 20 individuals in ponds along the road of the ranch.

**Jabiru.** *Jabiru mycteria*. Pairs and subadults were enjoyed feeding on eel, fish and small reptiles in drying ponds at sides of the road inside the ranch.

### ***Anhimidae***

**Horned Screamer.** *Anhima cornuta*. What a view. We enjoyed close views of this weird species, the closest resemblance to a unicorn in the Americas!

### ***Anatidae***

**White-faced Whistling-Duck.** *Dendrocygna viduata*. About two dozens were seen mostly in Laguna Los Cerritos, in the ranch.

**Black-bellied Whistling-Duck.** *Dendrocygna autumnalis*. More than 400 individuals wer flying around laguna Los Cerritos, in the ranch.

**Muscovy Duck.** *Cairina moschata*. Single individuals and small groups up to 4 inndividuals were observed in the ranch and in the vicinity of it.

### ***Cathartidae***

**Black Vulture.** *Coragyps atratus*. Daily views.

**Turkey Vulture.** *Cathartes aura*. Daily views, mostly of the North America race *septentrionalis*. In fact, only one individual of the resident race *ruficollis* was seen with certainty.

**Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture.** *Cathartes burrovianus*. Only one individual was seen soaring low over dry grasses in the southern road of the ranch.

**King Vulture.** *Sarcoramphus papa*. Daily views of individuals soaring over forest and semi open areas of the ranch.

### ***Accipitridae***

**Osprey.** *Pandion haliaetus*. A pair in a wetland along the road to the ranch.

**Snail Kite.** *Rostrhamus sociabilis*. A single individual in Laguna Los Cerritos.

**Crane Hawk.** *Geranospiza caerulescens*. Various individuals along the road to the ranch and an additional sight at the ranch. The contrasting crescent pale patches on the wings are one of the best field marks for the species identification.

**Great Black-Hawk.** *Buteogallus urubitinga*. Pair in Caño San Gerónimo, in Piñero.

**Savanna Hawk.** *Buteogallus meridionalis*. Pairs hunting for lizards and small rodents in farmland fires along the road to the ranch. An additional pair was seen in the ranch.

**Black-collared Hawk.** *Busarellus nigricollis*. Fine studies of a pair in the southern road of the ranch. Great photos of it!

**Roadside Hawk.** *Buteo magnirostris*. Daily views. Common and widespread.

**Gray Hawk.** *Buteo nitidus*. A pair in the hills surrounding Casa Maria.

**White-tailed Hawk.** *Buteo albicaudatus*. Rare in the ranch. A pair was seen near the main house.

**Zone-tailed Hawk.** *Buteo albonotatus*. 3 individuals were reported in the ranch, all of it soaring with vultures.

**Ornate Hawk-Eagle.** *Spizaetus ornatus*. Heard in Palmichal, Carabobo.

Unfortunately, this species was soaring over the reserve in a cloudy day so we could not see it.

### ***Falconidae***

**Crested Caracara.** *Caracara cheriway*. Various pairs along the road to the ranch.

**Yellow-headed Caracara.** *Milvago chimachima*. Common and widespread. This species perches on top of the cattle and capybaras to feed on ticks and other ectoparasites.

**Laughing Falcon.** *Herpetotheres cachinnans*. A single individual was seen twice in the forest edge of Matajei, in Piñero.

**American Kestrel.** *Falco sparverius*. Mostly seen outside the ranch. A common species.

**Aplomado Falcon.** *Falco femoralis*. Hato Piñero is probably one of the best sites for seeing this falcon in Venezuela. We enjoyed two pairs flying over the grasslands and a male perched on a fence post in our last morning outing.

**Bat Falcon.** *Falco rufigularis*. A pair flying over the lodge in Piñero.

### ***Cracidae***

**Rufous-vented Chachalaca.** *Ortalis ruficauda*. The explosive call of this bird was enjoyed every morning, with the male saying *Guatemala!*, and the female responding *Puerto Rico!*

**Yellow-knobbed Curassow.** *Crax daubentoni*. An healthy population of this threatened species survive well inside the boundaries of the ranch. We were able to see dozens of it every day.

### ***Opisthocomidae***

**Hoatzin.** *Opisthocomus hoazin*. Fine studies in Caño San Gerónimo and in Samán Gacho. Currently believed to be related with a sub-saharan species, The Turaco.

### ***Aramidae***

**Limpkin.** *Aramus guarauna*. The melancholic calls for this species were heard every morning. In fact, the local name derives from the voice of it: *Carrao* (Read as *Karraoo!*). We saw few individuals feeding on *Pomacea* snails in the small ponds and channels.

### ***Rallidae***

**Gray-necked Wood-Rail.** *Aramides cajanea*. Many individuals were seen along the road west of the ranch. We also enjoyed its voice given in duet *Shirley-coca!*, *shirley-coca!*

### ***Eurypygidae***

**Sunbittern.** *Eurypyga helias*. Daily views. We spent some time learning about some behavior aspects of this species from hunting insects in muddy grounds to chasing other individuals by opening the wings while showing the wonderful rosette design on it.

### ***Jacanidae***

**Wattled Jacana.** *Jacana jacana*. Daily views near the wetlands.

### ***Recurvirostridae***

**Black-necked Stilt.** *Himantopus mexicanus*. 5 individuals were seen along the road to the ranch.

### ***Charadriidae***

**Southern Lapwing.** *Vanellus chilensis*. Daily views.

### ***Scolopacidae***

**Spotted Sandpiper.** *Actitis macularia*. A single individual was seen on a pond at sides of the paved road that accesses the ranch.

**Solitary Sandpiper.** *Tringa solitaria*. Only isolated individuals were seen this time. Most of the individuals of this species should be in wetter country, in the southern part of the llanos.

**Lesser Yellowlegs.** *Tringa flavipes*. A single individual was seen on a pond at side of the paved road that access the ranch.

**Least Sandpiper.** *Calidris minutilla*. Commoner than all previous *Scolopacidae*. This one was seen in the road south of the ranch.

### ***Laridae***

**Large-billed Tern.** *Phaetusa simplex*. 1 individual flying distant. Seen in the ranch.

### ***Columbidae***

**Pale-vented Pigeon.** *Patagioenas (Columba) cayennensis*. Various individuals perched and flying in forested areas inside the ranch and outside of it.

**Eared Dove.** *Zenaida auriculata*. Once heavily hunted by sport hunters, the species has recovered in the last 20 years and in Piñero we observed several dozens of it.

**Common Ground-Dove.** *Columbina passerina*. Common in forest edge and scrubby vegetation.

**Ruddy Ground-Dove.** *Columbina talpacoti*. Common and widespread.

**Scaled Dove.** *Scardafella squammata*. Common and widespread.



**Blue Ground-Dove.** *Claravis pretiosa*. Without a doubt the most beautiful of the ground doves in Venezuela. We enjoyed views of various individuals in male and female plumage.

**White-tipped Dove.** *Leptotila verreauxi*. Easy to see in Piñero given the large tracks of forest. Usually shy otherwise. We noticed some of the field marks of the *Leptotila* doves, including the short legs.

### *Psittacidae*

**Scarlet Macaw.** *Ara macao*. Great views of several pairs and groups of about 30 individuals flying and perched birds, and several scoped! Having these wonderful macaws flying virtually everywhere while we were inside the ranch explained why is so important the conservation of large tracks of dry forest in the plains of Venezuela.

**Chestnut-fronted Macaw.** *Ara severa*. Scarce in the ranch. Only two individuals seen well.

**Scarlet-fronted Parakeet.** *Aratinga wagleri*. Mainly pairs or small groups flying over Casa Maria. This species have an interesting migration pattern across the valleys of the coastal cordillera in Venezuela. If you were to come in the rainy season you'll have experience flocks of about 40 to 50 individuals!

**Brown-throated Parakeet.** *Aratinga pertinax*. Pairs or trios flying. A common species in the lowlands of Venezuela.

**Green-rumped Parrotlet.** *Forpus passerinus*. Seen in both locations, Casa Maria and Hato Piñero.

**Orange-chinned Parakeet.** *Brotogeris jugularis*. This species is apparently declining in the Llanos, and one of the reasons is the egg-eating behavior by the Capuchin Monkeys. In this trip we got to see 6 individuals.

**Lilac-tailed Parrotlet.** *Touit batavica*. Only recorded flying well above Palmichal and Casa Maria.

**Blue-headed Parrot.** *Pionus menstruus*. Flocks flying over Casa Maria every morning and evening. We also had a view of one individual perched atop a dead branch near Palmichal.

**Red-billed Parrot.** *Pionus sordidus*. Rare near Casa María. Only one pair scoped.

**Yellow-crowned Parrot.** *Amazona ochrocephala*. Few individuals

**Orange-winged Parrot.** *Amazona amazonica*. This species radiates across the Andes and the coastal cordillera in Venezuela. Only a pair was seen in Casa María.

### *Cuculidae*

**Squirrel Cuckoo.** *Piaya cayana*. One individual in Casa María and additional two in the ranch.

**Greater Ani.** *Crotophaga major*. Only one individual in a pond along the paved road reaching the ranch but none in San Gerónimo. A local migrant?

**Smooth-billed Ani.** *Crotophaga ani*. Common in grasslands and open areas. Not numerous at the ranch.

**Groove-billed Ani.** *Crotophaga sulcirostris*. Found in scrubby vegetation and dry forest edge. Common in Piñero.

**Striped Cuckoo.** *Tapera naevia*. One individual heard in Aguirre, near Casa María.

### *Strigidae*

**Tropical Screech-Owl.** *Otus choliba*. One individual in the optional night outing to Los Cerritos.



**Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl.** *Glaucidium brasilianum*. Great views of a single individual near Casa María, attracting a lot of hummingbirds and tanagers!

### *Nyctibidae*

**Great Potoo.** *Nyctibius grandis*. One individual scoped in Hato Piñero.

### *Caprimulgidae*

**Short-tailed Nighthawk.** *Lurocalis semitorquatus*. Great views (Also heard) of a pair flying over Casa María at dawn.

**Pauraque.** *Nyctidromus albicollis*. One individual seen in the optional night outing to los Cerritos.

### *Apodidae*

**Gray-rumped Swift.** *Chaetura cinereiventris*. Various individual flying over Palmichal.

**Neotropical palm-Swift.** *Tachornis squamata*. A single individual was flying around the native *Copernicia* palm trees in the road west inside the ranch.

### *Trochilidae*

**Sooty-capped Hermit.** *Phaethornis augusti*. 2 individuals along the road between Casa María and Palmichal. In both situations the individuals gleaned some flowers at the edge of the forest and perched in the vicinity of it. Since this hermit also gleans in spider webs in walls of houses it is locally known as *Limpiacasa* (House cleaner).

**Ruby Topaz Hummingbird.** *Chrysolampis mosquitus*. Two females and a juvenile male were seen foraging in the flowers of a Salado tree, in the main house of the ranch.

**Violet-headed Hummingbird.** *Klais guimeti*. This diminutive hummingbird was seen briefly in Palmichal.

**Blue-tailed Emerald.** *Chlorostilbon mellisugus*. A male in Piñero, feeding of flowers of a scrubby area.

**Glittering-throated Emerald.** *Amazilia fimbriata*. Incredible views of individuals singing at dawn in Casa María.

**Copper-rumped Hummingbird.** *Amazilia tobaci*. Heard in Aguirre (Voice resembles as if it was saying *Erika!*). Also seen in Hato Piñero.

**White-vented Plumeleteer.** *Chalybura buffonii*. A male visited Casa María in both mornings.

**Violet-fronted Brilliant.** *Heliodoxa leadbeateri*. A male in San Isidro forest, near Casa María.

**Violet-chested Hummingbird.** *Sternoclyta cyanopectus*. **ENDEMIC.** Great views of a male in la Neblina farm.

### *Trogonidae*

**Collared Trogon.** *Trogon collaris*. First heard above Casa María and later seen and scoped in Palmichal.

### *Cerylidae*

**Ringed Kingfisher.** *Megaceryle torquata*. Various individuals in Hato Piñero. This is the largest kingfisher in Venezuela.

**Amazon Kingfisher.** *Chloroceryle amazona*. Seen mainly along the Caño San Gerónimo.

**Green Kingfisher.** *Chloroceryle americana*. Only a pair in San Gerónimo.

**Green-and-rufous Kingfisher.** *Chloroceryle inda*. Great views of a female perched on a twig in shady areas of the gallery forest in San Gerónimo.

**American Pygmy Kingfisher.** *Chloroceryle aenea*. We saw 10 individuals altogether in two days!

### *Galbulidae*

**Rufous-tailed Jacamar.** *Galbula ruficauda*. Always enjoyed by everyone, pairs of this species were appreciated in both Casa María and Hato Piñero.

### *Bucconidae*

**Russet-throated Puffbird.** *Hypnelus ruficollis*. Seen in Casa María and Hato Piñero. The heavy bill of this puffbird is to catch large insects and to break the shell of it. This puffbird is about to be split in two species, so keep an eye on it!

### *Picidae*

**Scaled Piculet.** *Picumnus squamulatus*. A single individual of this diminutive woodpecker was seen above Casa María.

**Red-crowned Woodpecker.** *Melanerpes rubricapillus*. The commonest woodpecker in urban areas in Venezuela. Many individuals seen.

**Red-rumped Woodpecker.** *Veniliornis kirkii*. A pair was seen in Hato Piñero, in dry forest.

**Spot-breasted Woodpecker.** *Chrysoptilus punctigula*. This species have a preference for gallery forest, although it may be found feeding on grasslands to hunt for insects.

**Lineated Woodpecker.** *Dryocopus lineatus*. A pair in the farm above Casa María.

**Crimson-crested Woodpecker.** *Campephilus melanoleucos*. A pair near Casa María.

### *Furnariidae*

What is known today as *Furnariidae* recently involved two families: The Ovenbirds (*Furnariidae*) and the woodcreepers (*Dendrocolaptidae*). Although there have been a historic controversy (For almost 100 years!) whether if they should be treated as one or two separate families, DNA sequence published in 2002 have revealed that both must be considered as one family, reverting all the species into the *Furnariidae*. The proposal for accepting this change was made in September 2004, and the SACC committee accepted it.

**Pale-breasted Spinetail.** *Synallaxis albescens*. One individual along the road leading from Casa María to Palmichal. Seen well by everyone!

**Stripe-breasted Spinetail.** *Synallaxis cinnamomea*. A skulky pair in Palmichal.

**Crested Spinetail.** *Cranioleuca subcristata*. A pair nesting in Casa María. Unlike the previous species, this is an arboreal one.

**Rusty-backed Spinetail.** *Cranioleuca vulpina*. A pair in the gallery forest of Hato Piñero, quite responsive to playback! Keep an eye to this species as it may be split in two species in the near future.

**Yellow-chinned Spinetail.** *Certhiaxis cinnamomea*. A pair was observed near a wetland. This species is fond to floating vegetation.

**Plain Thornbird.** *Phacellodomus inornatus*. Several families working in the large hanging nests built in posts and heavy branches, hanging from the *Saman* trees. These nests are also used as nesting site by some seedeaters and by the national bird of Venezuela, the Troupial.

**Plain Xenops.** *Xenops minutus*. One individual with a feeding flock in the farm above Casa María.

**Plain-brown Woodcreeper.** *Dendrocincla fuliginosa*. Great views of a single individual visiting Casa María to feed on moths and insects attracted by the night light bulb.

**Olivaceous Woodcreeper.** *Sittasomus griseicapillus*. An individual was seen above Casa María. This species is likely to be split into two species, the central america & andes form as one species, and the amazonian & guianan form as a second species.

**Black-banded Woodcreeper.** *Dendrocolaptes picumnus*. Great views of a single individual visiting the light bulb mentioned with the Plain-brown Woodcreeper.

**Cocoa Woodcreeper.** *Xiphorhynchus susurrans*. An individual seen in the farm above Casa Maria. Formerly considered one species with Buff-throated Woodcreeper, *Xiphorhynchus guttatus*.

**Straight-billed Woodcreeper.** *Xiphorhynchus picus*. Single individuals in Hato Piñero. The race seen was *phalara*, which might be treated as a separate species in the future.

**Streak-headed Woodcreeper.** *Lepidocolaptes souleyetii*. A pair of individuals seen while in Casa María area. The distinctive field mark is the thin and slightly curved bill.

### ***Thamnophilidae***

**Great Antshrike.** *Taraba major*. Daily views in Casa María. This skulky species was seen well by all tour participants when it visited the screen covering the light bulb to digest some of the small moths hanging there from the previous night.

**Black-crested Antshrike.** *Sakesphorus canadensis*. A single individual was enjoyed in Caño San Gerónimo, Hato Piñero. The specific name *canadensis* is a mistake during the description of the species.

**Barred Antshrike.** *Thamnophilus doliatus*. A Pair in hato Piñero.

**(Northern) White-fringed Antwren.** *Formicivora intermedia*. Various pairs were seen in Hato Piñero. Although Hilty followed Ridgely in treating this a two separate species (Andean foothills, plains of Colombia and Venezuela and mountains N of Venezuela as one species, and the guianas as a second species), the SACC is waiting for a formal proposal to accept it.

**White-bellied Antbird.** *Myrmeciza longipes*. Heard in the gallery forest of Hato Piñero.

### ***Formicariidae***

The following genus was originally treated in the previous family. The antthrushes (*Formicarius* and *Chamaeza*) are today treated as a separate family, while the antpittas (*Grallaria*, *Grallaricula*, *Hylopezus* and other genera) have been placed into a separate family, the *Grallaridae*.

**Black-faced Antthrush.** *Formicarius analis*. One individual was heard in the farm above Casa Maria.

### ***Pipridae***

**Wire-tailed Manakin.** *Pipra filicauda*. One female was seen briefly in the farm above Casa María.

### ***Tyrannidae***

The Tyrant-Flycatchers are one of the best examples of speciation in the neotropics. For the visitor to the neotropics it can be both frustrating and exciting to see a number of these

species coming after the whistle of the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. In our tour we managed to see and learn how to identify 36 of it as Casa María and Hato Pinero are one of the best places to learn about this confusing family.

**Sooty-headed Tyrannulet.** *Phyllomyias griseiceps*. A pair above Casa Maria. The short bill is a diagnostic field mark.

**Forest Elaenia.** *Myiopagis gaimardii*. One individual was seen twice in Canoabo. This is one of the hardest-to-identify Tyrannidae in Venezuela due to the lack of a distinctive field mark.

**Yellow-bellied Elaenia.** *Elaenia flavogaster*. This one was seen various times in Casa Maria and in Piñero. The split crest when excited is one of the main field marks.

**Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet.** *Camptostoma obsoletum*. The little one to tell the other birds when a pygmy tyrant is in the vicinity. In fact, we nicknamed it *Mr. hyperactive!* Many seen well.

**Mouse-colored Tyrannulet.** *Phaeomyias murina*. Another easy to misidentify species due to the lack of strong plumage contrasts. The distinctive eyebrow is one of the best ways to tell it apart from other species. Seen in Canoabo and Hato Piñero.

**Venezuelan Tyrannulet.** *Zimmerius improbus*. Previously considered one species with Paltry Tyrannulet (*Z. vilissimus*), this one is basically restricted to Venezuela as is also found only in N Colombia. Heard in Palmichal.

**Marble-faced Bristle-Tyrant.** *Pogonotriccus ophthalmicus*. A pair was seen by some in Palmichal.

**Slaty-capped Flycatcher.** *Leptopogon superciliaris*. Heard along the road between Casa Maria and Palmichal. The ear patch is the distinctive field mark.

**Olive-striped Flycatcher.** *Mionectes olivaceus*. One individual in the road mentioned above feeding on berries of a tree. Usually found in the canopy.

**Northern Scrub-Flycatcher.** *Sublegatus arenarum*. The resemblance with the *Myiarchus* usually drives to a wrong identification. A pair of it was seen well in Hato Piñero, and all tour participants noticed the distinctive short bill.

**Pale-tipped Tyrannulet (Inezia).** *Inezia caudata*. Great studies of various individuals in Hato Piñero. The name *Inezia* is waiting for formal proposal to be recognize by the SACC.

**Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant.** *Lophotriccus pilaris*. Good views of “angry” individuals approaching after the whistle of the Pygmy Owl, in Hato Piñero.

**Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher.** *Poecilotriccus sylvia*. Heard in Hato Piñero.

**Common Tody-Flycatcher.** *Todirostrum cinereum*. Seen several times, in Casa Maria, Canoabo and Piñero. Quite conspicuous and vocal despite its small size.

**Yellow-olive (Flatbill) Flycatcher.** *Tolmomyias sulphurescens*. This one is another easy to misidentify in the field. It was seen various times in Casa María, and good studies of the bill were taken. The old common name “flatbill” was resurrected by the Ridgely & Greenfield in *Birds of Ecuador* but unfortunately it have not been accepted by the SACC.

**Yellow-breasted (Flatbill) Flycatcher.** *Tolmomyias flaviventris*. Pairs were seen in Hato Piñero.

**White-throated Spadebill.** *Platyrinchus mystaceus*. What a species with a broad bill! One individual was seen fairly well in Caño San Gerónimo, in Piñero.

**Tropical Pewee.** *Contopus cinereus*. 1 individual near Casa Maria, behaving as a classic *Contopus*. It was sallying from a perch to catch an insect and returning to the same site.

**Vermilion Flycatcher.** *Pyrocephalus rubinus*. A conspicuous and easy to identify bird. 3 individuals were seen in Hato Piñero.

**Pied Water-Tyrant.** *Fluvicola pica*. Daily encounters around the lodge. This species is fond to areas close to water and in the llanos visits gardens of houses with water ditches.

**White-headed Marsh-Tyrant.** *Arundinicola leucocephala*. Various pairs were seen in Piñero. Like the previous species, fond to areas with water and floating vegetation.

**Cattle Tyrant.** *Machetornis rixosus*. Two pairs in grassland and pastures in the vicinity of the biological station.

**Rusty-margined Flycatcher.** *Myiozetetes cayanensis*. Regularly seen in Casa Maria and Hato Piñero. The “yellow-breasted” flycatchers are hard to tell apart. In the case of this species the mournful and melancholic whistle is one of the key field marks.

**Social Flycatcher.** *Myiozetetes similis*. Many pairs in Casa Maria and Piñero. This one looks like a *bleached out* Rusty-margined Flycatcher. The voice also differs, being sharp and short.

**White-bearded Flycatcher.** *Phelpsia inornata*. After a good search we located a pair of this near-endemic species of Venezuela. The short bill and the prominent and immaculate white beard and eyebrow tells it apart from other similar species.

**Great Kiskadee.** *Pitangus sulphuratus*. Common and widespread. Several seen throughout the trip. The prominent bill and the reddish wings are diagnostic.

**Lesser Kiskadee.** *Pitangus (Philohydor) lictor*. A miniature of the Great Kiskadee with thinner bill, preferring areas near water. 4 pairs were seen in Caño San Gerónimo.

**Streaked Flycatcher.** *Myiodynastes maculatus*. Daily views of individuals of the resident race *difficilis* were seen in the vicinity of Casa Maria.

**Boat-billed Flycatcher.** *Megarynchus pitangua*. A single individual was seen twice in Casa Maria. Certainly a bird attached to a bill!

**Tropical Kingbird.** *Tyrannus melancholicus*. Common and widespread. Further studies are needed to determine if this species have a local migration.

**Gray Kingbird.** *Tyrannus dominicensis*. Two pairs were seen in Piñero. Unmistakable.

**Fork-tailed Flycatcher.** *Tyrannus savana*. The breeding behavior of this flycatcher in Venezuela is still a mystery. About 8 individuals were seen and heard in Hato Piñero.

**Dusky-capped Flycatcher.** *Myiarchus tuberculifer*. Two pairs in the gallery forest of Hato Piñero.

**Pale-edged Flycatcher.** *Myiarchus cephalotes*. A replacement of Dusky-capped Flycatcher in the highlands. 2 individuals were seen well above Casa Maria.

**Short-crested Flycatcher.** *Myiarchus ferox*. There is a regular individual at the entrance of the main house in Piñero, and we saw it well. Best told by voice.

**Brown-crested Flycatcher.** *Myiarchus tyrannulus*. Several pairs were seen and heard in Hato Piñero. It is similar to the previous species but larger and with rufous edges at the tail.

### ***Tityridae***

Studies published in 1989 and 1990 concluded that *Tityra*, *Schiffornis* and *Pchyrampus* formed a distinct group, separated from the rest of *Tyrannidae*. In September 2007 Prum proposed to adopt the family *Tityridae*, being accepted by the SACC. In Hilty's field guide these species were treated as *incerta sedis*, meaning that they appeared to be related with the tyrant flycatchers but of uncertain affinity.

**Chestnut-crowned Becard.** *Pachyrampus castaneus*. A pair giving its sad and soft whistle was seen around Casa Maria.

**White-winged Becard.** *Pachyramphus polychopterus*. Quite dimorphic, the female can be confused as a separate species from the male. We managed to see a pair in Hato Piñero.

### *Hirundidae*

**White-winged Swallow.** *Tachycineta albiventer*. A pair in Los Cerritos wetland. The conspicuous white patches revealed the age (Adult) of both individuals.

**Gray-breasted Martin.** *Progne chalybea*. We saw few individuals in Casa Maria and Hato Piñero.

**Southern Rough-winged Swallow.** *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*. We enjoyed few individuals on the road above Casa Maria. In the mountains this species have a preference to feed in the vicinity of narrow streams.

**Barn Swallow.** *Hirundo rustica*. Groups of about 20 individuals or less flying over open grasslands in Piñero.

### *Troglodytidae*

**Black-capped Donacobius.** *Donacobius atricapillus*. What a bird with a personality! In fact, it is usually hard to forget the first encounter with this species. In our trip we observe 10 individuals in a single day and enjoyed much of the display of it while moves the tail side ways as the body goes up and down, showing at the same time the conspicuous orange cheeks.

**Bicolored Wren.** *Campylorhynchus griseus*. Another flamboyant wren given its size and unique voice. A pair was seen along the road west of the ranch.

**Stripe-backed Wren.** *Campylorhynchus nuchalis*. A small family group of 4 individuals was seen bringing nesting material and basically taking over the top part of a nest structure of the Plain Thornbird.

**Whiskered Wren.** *Thryothorus mystacalis*. This species was formerly treated as one with Moustached Wren (*Thryothorus genibarbis*). We heard one pair in the San Isidro forest, above Casa Maria.

**Rufous-breasted Wren.** *Thryothorus rutilus*. This species was first heard in Casa Maria and later seen in the farm above Casa Maria.

**Buff-breasted Wren.** *Thryothorus leucotis*. Heard in Hato Piñero. Another species likely to be split in the future, from the races occurring in the Amazon basin.

**Rufous-and-white Wren.** *Thryothorus rufalbus*. A pair was seen nesting in Casa Maria. This species has a relaxed and suit song.

**House Wren.** *Troglodytes aedon*. Common in populated areas and scrubby vegetation.

**(Southern) Nightingale Wren.** *Microcerculus marginatus*. What a bird. We located a single individual perched and giving its penetrating and high frequency song. This individual was perched for such long time that we were able to enjoy with the scope!

### *Poliophtilidae*

**Tropical Gnatcatcher.** *Poliophtila plumbea*. Many pairs were seen in Hato Piñero. Despite its small size, this species is conspicuous as it perches in open areas, calling regularly while wagging the tail.

### *Turdidae*

**Pale-breasted Thrush.** *Turdus leucomelas*. Pairs were seen regularly in Casa Maria.

**Bare-eyed Thrush.** *Turdus nudigenis*. A single individual was seen in Casa María.

### **Mimidae**

**Tropical Mockingbird.** *Mimus gilvus*. Various pairs in Hato Piñero. Although the North American relative of this species is known for its capacity to mimic other species song the Tropical Mockingbird is not the equivalent of it in the neotropics. Look at the end of this birdlist to find more out about it!

### **Vireonidae**

**Brown-capped Vireo.** *Vireo leucophrys*. A pair was seen well above Casa María.

**Red-eyed Vireo.** *Vireo olivaceus*. The individual seen in Casa María is presumably of the North American (migrant) race *olivaceus*.

**Scrub Greenlet.** *Hylophilus flavipes*. One individual was seen in scrubby vegetation in Hato Piñero. The eye color of this species varies from pale to dark, and the one we saw had pale eyes.

**Golden-fronted Greenlet.** *Hylophilus aurantiifrons*. Two pairs were seen near Casa María. In the mountains this species likes to follow feeding flocks as they search for insects from the midstorey to subcanopy.

**Rufous-browed Peppershrike.** *Cyclarhis gujanensis*. A great view of an individual coming to feed on moths in Casa María.

### **Thraupidae**

**Chestnut-vented Conebill.** *Conirostrum speciosum*. Only a couple in Hato Piñero. This species is usually found in pairs or small groups and this time it was difficult to locate.

**Guira Tanager.** *Hemithraupis guira*. Pairs and small flocks (family group?) near Casa María.

**Hooded Tanager.** *Nemosia pileata*. Small groups were seen in Casa María.

**Gray-headed Tanager.** *Eucometis penicillata*. This is one of the army ant specialists, meaning that feeds almost exclusively on arthropods chased by army ants. Every morning we had a pair coming to the light bulb of Casa María to feed on small moth.

**White-lined Tanager.** *Tachyphonus rufus*. Common in Casa María. This species is so dimorphic that it was once believed to be two separate species!

**Summer Tanager.** *Piranga rubra*. A pair was seen in Casa María. The pale bill and the crested-shaped nape were distinctive field marks.

**Silver-beaked Tanager.** *Ramphocelus carbo*. Common in Casa María, rare in Piñero.

**Blue Gray Tanager.** *Thraupis episcopus*. Common and widespread.

**Glaucous Tanager.** *Thraupis glaucocolpa*. Easily confused with the previous species we saw this one in Hato Piñero. One or two individuals came to the feeder, loaded otherwise with Blue Gray Tanager and Red-crowned Woodpecker.

**Palm Tanager.** *Thraupis palmarum*. Daily views although not numerous. Casa María.

**Speckled Tanager.** *Tangara guttata*. 4 individuals were seen along the road between Casa María and Palmichal.

**Bay-headed Tanager.** *Tangara gyrola*. Commoner than the previous species, about 8 individuals were seen around Casa María.

**Burnished-buff Tanager.** *Tangara cayana*. This is probably the most widespread *Tangara* in the lowlands in northern Venezuela. We had daily views in Casa María and Hato Piñero.

**Blue-necked Tanager.** *Tangara cyanicollis*. What a beauty! Seen twice near Casa María coming after the whistle of the pygmy-owl.

**Black-headed Tanager.** *Tangara cyanoptera*. A pair was seen in the farm above Casa María. Keep an eye of this species, as the race occurring in the Andes and northern Venezuela (*Cyanoptera*) might be treated as a separate species in the near future.



### *Incertae sedis*

Species with an uncertain taxonomic position and sharing a historic controversy whether they should be treated as a *Thraupidae* or to *Emberizidae*.

**Red-capped Cardinal.** *Paroaria gularis*. (Named **Masked Cardinal** *Paroaria nigrocincta* in *Birds of Northern South America*). Pairs and groups of up to four individuals were seen in Hato Piñero. The race to occur in the Orinoco watershed have been proposed to be treated as a separate species but for the moment it remains as one species.

**Black-faced Grassquit.** *Tiaris bicolor*. This species is only found across the Caribbean region. We had nice views of it in Hotel Ole Caribe, close to the Caracas airport.

**Bananaquit.** *Coereba flaveola*. Daily views of individuals feeding on fruit and nectar. This conspicuous species may well be split in more than 3 species sometime in the future!

### *Emberizidae*

**Black-striped Sparrow.** *Arremonops conirostris*. A pair of this nice looking sparrow was seen in the farm above Casa María.

**Yellow-browed Sparrow.** *Ammodramus aurifrons*. Common in the south side of Hato Piñero.

**(Southern) Grayish Saltator.** *Saltator coerulescens*. Common around Casa María, preferring fairly open areas.

**Buff-throated Saltator.** *Saltator maximus*. 1 individual in the farm above Casa María. A forest species saltator.

**Saffron Finch.** *Sicalis flaveola*. Common in Hato Piñero. Several adult and juveniles were seen in the ranch.

**Blue-black Grassquit.** *Volatinia jacarina*. Only a female was seen in Aguirre. Although normally common and widespread the weather may have affected the density of the species in northern Venezuela.

**Gray Seedeater.** *Sporophila intermedia*. Common in Hato Piñero. Some of these individuals were of the race *insularis*, treated as a separate species in *Birds of Northern South America* as **Ring-necked Seedeater**, *Sporophila insularis*.

**Yellow-bellied Seedeater.** *Sporophila nigricollis*. A male in Casa María.

### *Parulidae*

**Tennessee Warbler.** *Vermivora peregrina*. 1 individual was seen along the road between Casa María and Palmichal.

**Tropical Parula.** *Parula pitiayumi*. Common around Casa María.

**Yellow Warbler.** *Dendroica aestiva*. Various sightings. One near the airport and more individuals in Hato Piñero.

**Blackburnian Warbler.** *Dendroica fusca*. An adult male in the vicinity of Casa María.

**Cerulean Warbler.** *Dendroica cerulea*. For the third consecutive year we are finding that Palmichal is a key wintering area for this species. In this year we saw a pair and a male in one day and a half. In the wintering grounds this species likes to follow mixed species feeding flocks.

**American Redstart.** *Setophaga ruticilla*. Seen around Casa María.

**Prothonotary Warbler.** *Protonotaria citrea*. Rare in Venezuela. One individual was seen foraging low in the gallery forest of Caño San Gerónimo.

**Northern Waterthrush.** *Seiurus noveboracensis*. More than five individuals were seen in Caño San Gerónimo as well.

**Golden-crowned Warbler.** *Basileuterus culicivorus*. Various pairs were seen around Casa María.

### *Icteridae*

**Red-breasted Blackbird.** *Sturnella militaris*. Two groups were seen along the road to Mata Carmelera, in Piñero.

**Carib Grackle.** *Quiscalus lugubris*. This species was observed several times along the roads inside and outside Hato Piñero.

**Shiny Cowbird.** *Molothrus bonariensis*. More than forty individuals were observed in a single flock in Hato Piñero.

**Giant Cowbird.** *Molothrus oryzivora*. One individual in Casa María.

**Yellow Oriole.** *Icterus nigrogularis*. This one was seen various times in Hotel Ole Caribe and in Hato Piñero.

**Orange-crowned Oriole.** *Icterus auricapillus*. One individual was scoped in the farm above Casa Maria.

**Venezuelan Troupial.** *Icterus icterus*. We had daily views in Hato Piñero and is quite vocal this time of the year. This is the national bird of Venezuela.

**Yellow-rumped Cacique.** *Cacicus cela*. Various groups were seen in Hato Piñero. This is the mockingbird in Venezuela. By listening a male in a nesting colony we could perceive the voices of Lineated Woodpecker and Gray-necked Wood-Rail in the repertoire of it!

**Crested Oropendola.** *Psarocolius decumanus*. This one is commoner than the next species as it tolerates more open areas. Many were seen in Casa Maria and the large flock we see every year in Piñero was absent this time.

**Russet-backed Oropendola.** *Psarocolius angustifrons*. Seen in Casa Maria. Prefers more forested areas in contrast to the previous species.

### *Fringillidae*

**Lesser Goldfinch.** *Carduelis psaltria*. 3 individuals were seen along the road between Casa Maria and Palmichal.

**Trinidad Euphonia.** *Euphonia trinitatis*. A pair in Hato Piñero. The validity of this species maybe questioned in the future because of its resemblance with the widespread amazonian species Purple-throated Euphonia, *Euphonia chlorotica*.

**Thick-billed Euphonia.** *Euphonia laniirostris*. Various seen in Casa Maria. The thick bill is the main field mark for field identification.

**Orange-bellied Euphonia.** *Euphonia xanthogaster*. A pair in Palmichal. This is the commonest *Euphonia* in forested areas in northern Venezuela.

**Blue-naped Chlorophonia.** *Chlorophonia cyanea*. A big thank you goes to Norbert for finding this species to us. We had nice views of a small group foraging in berries of a small tree (*Pehria compacta*) in Casa Maria.

## LIST OF MAMMALS AND REPTILES.

**Red-tailed Squirrel.** *Sciurus granatensis*. Hato Piñero.

**Crab-eating Fox.** *Cerdocyon thous*. Hato Piñero.

**White-lipped Peccary.** *Tayassu pecari*. Hato Piñero.

**Brazilian Rabbit.** *Sylvilagus brasiliensis*. Hato Piñero.

**Red-rumped Agouti.** *Dasyprocta leporina*. Hato Piñero.

**Little Brown Bat. (Molossidae).** Hato Piñero.

**Capybara.** *Hydrochaeris hydrochaeris*. Hato Piñero.

**Nine-banded Armadillo.** *Dasyus novemcinctus*. Hato Piñero.

**White-tailed Deer.** *Odocoileus virginianus*. Hato Piñero.

**Weeping Capuchin Monkey.** *Cebus olivaceus*. Hato Piñero.

**Red-howler Monkey.** *Alouatta seniculus*. Hato Piñero.

**Giant River Otter.** *Pteronura brasiliensis*. Hato Piñero. Our sight was the first record ever for the ranch!

**Iguana.** *Iguana iguana*. Hato Piñero.

**Spectacled Cayman.** *Cayman crocodilus*. Hato Piñero.

**Llanos Side-necked Turtle.** *Podocemis vogli*. Hato Piñero.