

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours

CASA MARIA & HATO PIÑERO

February 1-9, 2012



LEADERS: DAVID ASCANIO & DESIREE STARKE

COMPILED BY DAVID ASCANIO

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Our 2012 R&E Casa María-Hato Piñero tour started in an unusual but exciting way with views of six species of *Psittacidae*¹ and a blast of Rufous-vented Chachalaca singing loudly. Yet we were still in Caracas and the tour was about to star.

After loading our van we took the highway west to Canoabo and onto Casa María. Here we were once more warmly welcomed with a feast of tanagers, woodcreepers, tyrant flycatchers and an amazing black-and-white owl calling at night. While in Casa María we also visited Finca La Neblina (The mist farm) and the Palmichal reserve. Feeding flocks in La Neblina rewarded us with views of guira, bay-headed, palm, blue-gray, golden, speckled, burnished-buff, blue-necked, gray-headed, white-lined and silver-beaked tanagers! Also, wonderful endemics Handsome Fruiteater (male) and Rufous-cheeked Tanager allowed extended views in Palmichal. At night we observed planets and constellations while we were served great meals with superb desserts plus good wine or German beer to later have Norbert giving us his special 3D slide show.

After a couple of mornings in Casa Maria we left the coastal cordillera and drove south towards the vast plains of the Orinoco river. Our destination was the famed Hato Piñero. This ranch was founded more than 50 years ago by the Branger family and concerns arose when it was sold more than two years ago to the government. Happily I can report that up to our visit the manager appointed by the government have not only preserved the natural habitats but has supported conservation greatly along to promote tourism and research within the boundaries. We hope it will continue that way!

Hato Piñero provided an impressive mix of birds, mammals and one of the best tracks of dry forest anywhere in the neotropics. Here, we enjoyed 11 species of egrets and herons, 7 species of ibises and 14 species of birds of prey. Our picnic dinner allowed views of a tapir and other nightlife including nightjars and nocturnal herons. Every morning we were delighted with the dawn chorus of Buff-necked Ibis and scarlet macaws flying around the compound. This ranch is certainly a photographer paradise.

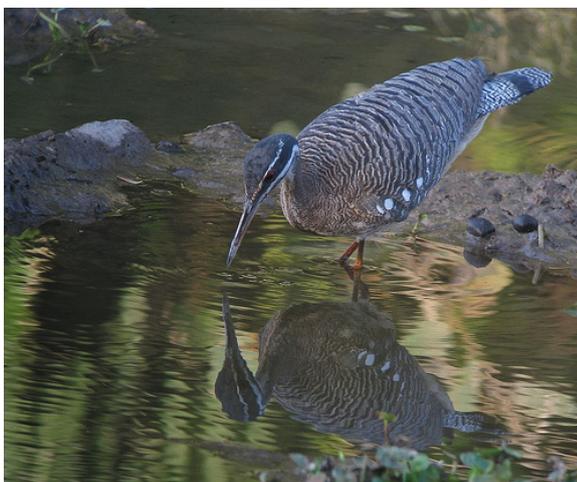
Of large selection of R&E tours I am sure you agree with me that our Casa Maria & Hato Piñero tour ranks among the best we offer. I am sure you now understand why I love birding in my country so much...and really hope to see you again in other neotropical destination. For the time being this tour is over!

To enjoy some of the photos please go to:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/davidascanio/sets/72157629525001366/>

or, goto www.flickr.com and type "david ascanio" to search the photos.

¹ Blue-and-yellow Macaw (introduced), Chestnut-fronted Macaw, Scarlet-fronted Parakeet, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Blue-headed Parrot and Orange-winged Parrot.



THE BIRDLIST

The birdlist follows Hilty, S (2003) *Birds of Venezuela*. Accompanying the species name I wrote in brackets some taxonomical changes and also commented anything relevant that was published after Hilty's guide was released.

The species denoted with an asterisk (*) were observed in Casa Maria feeding at the screen protecting the light bulb placed to attract insects at night. Total: 24 species.

Tinamidae

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

Pelecanidae

Brown Pelican. *Pelecanus occidentalis*. Participants arriving early in the day saw scattered individuals along the coast.

Phalacrocoracidae

Neotropic Cormorant. *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*. We saw several individuals in Hato Piñero including a roost in Puente Benjamín.

Anhimidae

Anhinga. *Anhinga anhinga*. Few pairs were observed in Hato Piñero.

Fregatidae

Magnificent Frigatebird. *Fregata magnificens*. Participants arriving early in the day saw scattered individuals along the coast.

Ardeidae

Whistling Heron. *Syrigma sibilatrix*. Daily views of pairs in Hato Piñero. This certainly ranks among the most beautiful herons in Venezuela.

Cocoi Heron. *Ardea cocoi*. Seen daily in Piñero.

Great Egret. *Ardea alba*. Seen near Casa María but numerous in Hato Piñero.

Little Blue Heron. *Egretta caerulea*. 1 to 3 individuals were seen every day in Hato Piñero.

Snowy Egret. *Egretta thula*. We saw a single individual in Los Cerritos, Hato Piñero.

Cattle Egret. *Bubulcus ibis*. Several dozens were seen in all lowland locations.

Black-crowned Night-Heron. *Nycticorax nycticorax*. We enjoyed views of individuals in juvenile and adult plumage in Hato Piñero.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. *Nyctanassa violacea*. A single individual was found in Hato Piñero.

Boat-billed Heron. *Cochlearius cochlearius*. 4 juvenile were observed near Saman Gacho, in Hato Piñero.

Rufescent Tiger Heron. *Tigrisoma lineatum*. We had superb views of juveniles and adults in Hato Piñero. It is fascinating to see how this species remains quiet over small wetlands when fishing thus waiting for the moment to hit the bill against the water to catch the prey.

Striated Heron. *Butorides striatus*. I cannot recall seeing this species this year but posted in the birdlist because it sounds practically impossible to miss it in the llanos. Did I overlooked at it or did I forget calling this one at the night birdlist?

Capped Heron. *Pilherodius pileatus*. A photogenic pair was enjoyed in Casa María.

Threskiornithidae

Hato Piñero is a superb place for enjoying and learning about the ibises in Venezuela. In this ranch we were able to observe all six species to occur in the country.

Buff-necked Ibis. *Theristicus caudatus*. Unlike most other ibises, this species avoids direct contact with water. We enjoyed close views of several individuals searching for arthropods in the fields with native grasses surrounding the lodge.

Sharp-tailed Ibis. *Cercibis oxycerca*. Two pairs were seen daily near the guest house.

Green Ibis. *Mesembrinibis cayennensis*. This species remains lonely or in loose pairs and prefer areas either inside or close to forest. Also, unlike the Buff-necked Ibis this species is usually close to water in wet grasslands or muddy grounds. Only 4 individuals were seen in Hato Piñero.

Glossy Ibis. *Plegadis falcinellus*. A pair was observed south of the airstrip of Hato Piñero.

Bare-faced Ibis. *Phimosus infuscatus*. The least conspicuous of all the ibis given its dull plumage and pale face colors. We saw more than 40 individuals in Hato Piñero.

White Ibis. *Eudocimus albus*. Few individuals were seen mainly along the road to El Banco in Piñero.

Scarlet Ibis. *Eudocimus ruber*. We were rewarded with great views of this astonishing species roosting in Puente Benjamín. We managed to count over 200 individuals!

White Ibis. *Eudocimus albus*. A single individual was found foraging along with a group of Scarlet Ibis.

Roseate Spoonbill. *Ajaia ajaja*. A loose group was observed in a small wetland along the road inside Hato Piñero.

Ciconiidae

Wood Stork. *Mycteria americana*. Various individuals were seen daily in Hato Piñero.

Jabiru. *Jabiru mycteria*. Few individuals (including juveniles) were observed in the borrow pits of Hato Piñero.

Anhimidae

Horned Screamer. *Anhima cornuta*. The closest resemblance to a unicorn in the Americas! A pair was observed in Laguna Los Cerritos, in Hato Piñero.

Anatidae

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck. *Dendrocygna autumnalis*. In 2009 we observed more than 400 individuals flying around laguna Los Cerritos in Piñero. In contrast, in 2010 only 14 individuals were observed in the same location and in 2011 we reported seeing more than 500 individuals. This year our count surpassed the 2000 individuals!

White-faced Whistling-Duck. *Dendrocygna viduata*. An uncommon species in Hato Piñero. We observed less than 10 individuals.

Muscovy Duck. *Cairina moschata*. We enjoyed a couple of groups of 3 individuals each in Hato Piñero.

Cathartidae

Black Vulture. *Coragyps atratus*. Daily views.

Turkey Vulture. *Cathartes aura*. All of the sights were of individuals of the North America migrant race (*septentrionalis*).

King Vulture. *Sarcoramphus papa*. We enjoyed views of 6 individuals while we were in Hato Piñero. Interesting enough, in this tour we saw more king vultures than bananaquits!

Accipitridae

White-tailed Kite. *Elanus leucurus*. This species was observed along the road to Hato Piñero.

Crane Hawk. *Geranospiza caerulescens*. This species was observed twisting the tarsi between cracks and inspecting holes on the wall near the main house as it was searching for bats and other prey.

Great Black-Hawk. *Buteogallus urubitinga*. A single individual was observed soaring over Palmichal. Later seen again in Hato Piñero.

Savanna Hawk. *Buteogallus meridionalis*. Several individuals were observed in Hato Piñero.

Black-collared Hawk. *Busarellus nigricollis*. Various pairs were enjoyed along the west road of the ranch.

Roadside Hawk. *Buteo magnirostris*. Daily views. This is arguably the most common and widespread bird of prey in northern Venezuela. It was seen almost daily.

Broad-winged Hawk. *Buteo platypterus*. A single individual was seen from Casa María.

Gray Hawk. *Buteo nitidus*. Amy reported seeing this one along the road to Casa María.

White-tailed Hawk. *Buteo albicaudatus*. A single individual was seen in Hato Piñero.

Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle. *Spizaetus melanoleucus*. A single individual was seen near Casa María. We enjoyed great studies of it!

Falconidae

Crested Caracara. *Caracara cheriway*. This species was seen almost daily.

Yellow-headed Caracara. *Milvago chimachima*. This species is as common as the previous one but usually more numerous than it.

Laughing Falcon. *Herpetotheres cachinnans*. A pair was seen in Hato Piñero.

American Kestrel. *Falco sparverius*. Seen near the main house in Hato Piñero.

Aplomado Falcon. *Falco femoralis*. Hato Piñero is probably the best location to see this falcon in Venezuela. We enjoyed daily views of it.

Odontophoridae

Crested Bobwhite. *Colinus cristatus*. A small (family?) group was found along the road to Laguna Grande, in Hato Piñero.

Cracidae

Rufous-vented Chachalaca. *Ortalis ruficauda*. Daily views in both locations: Casa Maria and Hato Piñero.

Yellow-knobbed Curassow. *Crax daubentoni*. We enjoyed daily views of this almost extinct species outside Hato Piñero. We reported more than 50 individuals each day.

Opisthocomidae

Hoatzin. *Opisthocomus hoazin*. While observing this species we learned aspects of the natural history of one of the most fascinating bird species in our planet. The Hoatzin is an herbivorous species having a long crop that function as a rumen to allow digest its diet. It was first thought to be related with the Tinamidae and consequently believed to be related with the Cracidae, Rallidae, Otididae, Pteroclididae, Columbidae, Colidae, Cariamidae, Cracidae and Cuculidae. It is now believed to be a very old lineage with a long lonely evolutionary history and no close living relatives. Its taxonomical position has been greatly debated and remains unclear.

Aramidae

Limpkin. *Aramus guarauna*. The melancholic calls of this species were heard at Piñero. We saw a pair feeding on *Pomacea* snails in a small pond at side of the road.

Rallidae

Gray-necked Wood-Rail. *Aramides cajanea*. Many individuals were seen walking along the roads of the ranch.

Eurypygidae

Sunbittern. *Eurypyga helias*. We enjoyed daily views of this astonishing species in Hato Piñero. It is definitive a favorite among the birders visiting the ranch.

Jacanidae

Wattled Jacana. *Jacana jacana*. We had daily views in the wetlands of Hato Piñero.

Recurvirostridae

Black-necked Stilt. *Himantopus mexicanus*. 30 individuals were seen in Los Cerritos in Hato Piñero.

Burhinidae

Double-striped Thick-Knee. *Burhinus bistriatus*. 6 individuals were enjoyed at the optional night outing in Hato Piñero.

Charadriidae

Southern Lapwing. *Vanellus chilensis*. Daily views in Hato Piñero.

Laridae

Large-billed Tern. *Phaetusa simplex*. A sporadic visitor to Hato Piñero.

Scolopacidae

Spotted Sandpiper. *Actitis macularia*. We observed 3 individuals in Laguna Los Cerritos, Hato Piñero.

Solitary Sandpiper. *Tringa solitaria*. A single individual was seen in Laguna Los Cerritos, Hato Piñero.

Lesser Yellowlegs. *Tringa flavipes*. A pair was observed in Laguna Los Cerritos. Hato Piñero.

Least Sandpiper. *Calidris minutilla*. A pair was observed walking along the muddy bank of Laguna Los Cerritos in Hato Piñero.

Columbidae

Rock Pigeon. *Columba livia*. Several were observed near the airport, in every town visited and in the surroundings of the hotel in Caracas.

Pale-vented Pigeon. *Patagioenas (Columba) cayennensis*. Daily views of individuals perched or flying in forested areas inside the ranch and around Casa María.

Eared Dove. *Zenaida auriculata*. Once heavily hunted as a game bird this species has recovered in the last 20 years. In Hato Piñero we observed several dozens of it.

Common Ground-Dove. *Columbina passerina*. This is a common species in forest edge and scrubby vegetation. It was seen along the highway to Casa María and in Hato Piñero.

Ruddy Ground-Dove. *Columbina talpacoti*. This species was common and widespread in Casa María and in Hato Piñero.

Scaled Dove. *Scardafella squammata*. This is a common and widespread species in northern Venezuela. Seen daily in both locations.

Blue Ground-Dove. *Claravis pretiosa*. A male was flushed in Hato Piñero. Seen by Dan and Amy.

White-tipped Dove. *Leptotila verreauxi*. Scattered individuals were seen near Casa María and Hato Piñero.

Psittacidae

Scarlet Macaw. *Ara macao*. Seen daily in Hato Piñero. Having these wonderful macaws flying free in the ranch explains the importance to protect large tracks of dry forest in the plains of Venezuela (food source).

Blue-and-yellow Macaw. *Ara ararauna*. Although introduced in Caracas, the expansion of this population suggest it has succeeded breeding in the city. 8 individuals were observed.

Chestnut-fronted Macaw. *Ara severa*. First seen in Caracas and later a pair was found in Hato Piñero.

Scarlet-fronted Parakeet. *Aratinga wagleri*. Two flocks were observed flying from Casa María.

Brown-throated Parakeet. *Aratinga pertinax*. This is a common species in the lowlands of Venezuela. We saw it almost every day in Hato Piñero.

Painted (Venezuelan) Parakeet. *Pyrrhura picta (emma)*. Two flocks (18 and 30 individuals) were enjoyed and scope near Casa María. This species has an interesting taxonomic history. First described as a full species (*P.emma*) it was later considered to be a race of Maroon-faced Parakeet (*P.leucotis*). More recently, various authors re-elevated it to species rank and named it Venezuelan Parakeet (*P.emma*). Later, in 2007 Stotz (<http://www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCprop306.html>) had recommended to remove the race *emma* from *leucotis* meaning that it was not related to Maroon-faced Parakeet but to Painted Parakeet. That last suggestion passed in the SACC with some observations as members of the committee suggested to elevate the

race *emma* to species rank. So, for the time being let's call it Painted Parakeet, but bear in mind that in the short term this whole group might be reshuffled again!

Green-rumped Parrotlet. *Forpus passerinus*. Small flocks were seen in Casa María and Hato Piñero.

Orange-chinned Parakeet. *Brotogeris jugularis*. This species is apparently declining in the Llanos (plains). One of the apparent reasons is the egg-eating behavior of the Capuchin Monkeys. In this trip we saw only 2 individuals.

Blue-headed Parrot. *Pionus menstruus*. We observed pairs flying over Caracas and Casa María.

Red-billed Parrot. *Pionus sordidus*. 3 individuals were observed in palmichal reserve.

Yellow-crowned Parrot. *Amazona ochrocephala*. A common species in Hato Piñero. It was seen daily.

Orange-winged Parrot. *Amazona amazonica*. This species radiates across the Andes and the coastal cordillera in Venezuela. Various pairs were observed in Caracas and in Casa María.

Cuculidae

Squirrel Cuckoo. *Piaya cayana*. One pair was observed in Casa María.

Smooth-billed Ani. *Crotophaga ani*. Seen frequently along the roads crossing the llanos.

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

Strigidae

Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. *Glaucidium brasilianum*. Heard frequently in Casa María and individual seen.

Mottled Owl. *Strix virgata*. Heard in Casa María.

Black-and-white Owl. *Ciccaba nigrolineata*. Norbert deserves a big THANK YOU for keeping an eye on this incredible owl and for calling us to enjoy it while perched near the light bulb.

Nyctibidae

Great Potoo. *Nyctibius grandis*. Two individuals were scoped in Hato Piñero.

Common Potoo. *Nyctibius griseus*. This one was also seen well in Hato Piñero.

Caprimulgidae

Short-tailed Nighthawk. *Lurocalis semitorquatus*. Seen twice at dawn in Casa María.

Pauraque. *Nyctidromus albicollis*. Various individuals were seen in the optional night outing in Hato Piñero.

Apodidae

Vaux's Swift. *Chaetura vauxi*. Not sure of this one was the species seen near Casa María. It is indeed the commonest one but lack of proper light did not allow for a proper identification.

Fork-tailed Palm-Swift. *Tachornis squamata*. Six individuals were seen near Caracas.

Trochilidae

Sooty-capped Hermit. *Phaethornis augusti*. This was the hermit seen along the road between Casa María and Palmichal. Since this species also gleans in spider webs in walls of houses it is locally known as *Limpiacasa* (House cleaner).

Stripe-throated Hermit. *Phaethornis striigularis*. An individual was observed near Casa María.

Ruby Topaz. *Chrysolampis mosquitus*. A female was observed in Hato Piñero.

Violet-fronted Brilliant. *Heliodoxa leadbeateri*. Nice views of a male in Finca La Neblina.

Violet-chested Hummingbird. *Sternoclyta cyanopectus*. A male was seen in Palmichal, near Casa María.

Glittering-throated Emerald. *Amazilia fimbriata*. We had daily views of this species while in Casa María and in Hato Piñero.

White-vented Plumeleteer. *Chalybura buffonii*. A male was enjoyed from Casa María in both mornings. We managed to get great photos of it!

Golden-tailed Sapphire. *Chrysuronia oenone*. Few individuals were observed foraging at a flowering *Erythryna sp.* from Casa María.

Trogonidae

Collared Trogon. *Trogon collaris*. This beautiful trogon was scoped above Casa María.

Cerylidae

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

Amazon Kingfisher. *Chloroceryle amazona*. Pairs were observed in Hato Piñero.

Galbulidae

The jacamars are insectivorous species restricted to the neotropic. They are usually found in pairs or in loose groups. In appearance they show resemblances with the old world bee-eaters but are not related with it. That represents a good example of convergent evolution where two unrelated species acquire similar biological traits.

Rufous-tailed Jacamar. *Galbula ruficauda*. This is a never-to-forget species. We enjoyed pairs near Casa Maria and along the road above it.

Ramphastidae

Groove-billed Toucanet. *Aulacorhynchus squamulatus*. We observed a pair in Casa Maria. A new species for the bird inventory of the guest house!

Picidae

Red-crowned Woodpecker. *Melanerpes rubricapillus*. Pairs were seen almost everyday!

Golden-olive Woodpecker. *Colaptes rubiginosus*. A single male was observed in Finca La Neblina.

Lineated Woodpecker. *Dryocopus lineatus*. Five individuals were observed in Hato Piñero with two pairs nesting.

Crimson-crested Woodpecker. *Campephilus melanoleucos*. A pair was observed in Hato Piñero.

Furnariidae

What is known today as the *Furnariidae* formerly 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 thus reverting all the species into

the *Furnariidae*. The proposal for this change was made in September 2004 and was accepted by the SACC committee.

Pale-breasted Spinetail. *Synallaxis albescens*. One pair was seen well along the road from la Neblina to Casa María.

Stripe-breasted Spinetail. *Synallaxis cinnamomea*. A pair was enjoyed near Casa María.

Crested Spinetail. *Cranioleuca subcristata*. Two pairs were nesting in Casa María. Unlike the previous two species this is an arboreal one.

Yellow-chinned Spinetail. *Certhiaxis cinnamomea*. Various pairs were observed in wetlands near the main house of Hato Piñero.

Plain Thornbird. *Phacellodomus inornatus*. Few individuals were observed searching for arthropods on the ground and on branches of the Saman trees. This is the species that builds the large hanging nests in telephone poles and branches of the Saman trees. The nest is also used as breeding site by some seedeaters and by the national bird of Venezuela, the Venezuelan Troupial.

Streaked Xenops. *Xenops rutilans*. One individual was seen near Casa María.

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

Olivaceous Woodcreeper. *Sittasomus griseicapillus*. This interesting species was heard Casa María. It is likely it will be split into two or three species and the one we heard will be placed with the population occurring in Central America and northern Venezuela.

Strong-billed Woodcreeper. *Xiphocolaptes promeropirhynchus*. Heard in Casa María.

(*) **Black-banded Woodcreeper.** *Dendrocolaptes picumnus*. We had great studies of a single individual visiting the light bulb in Casa María.

(*) **Cocoa Woodcreeper.** *Xiphorhynchus susurrans*. An individual was seen visiting the light bulb in Casa María. This species was formerly a race of Buff-throated Woodcreeper, *Xiphorhynchus guttatus*.

Straight-billed Woodcreeper. *Dendroplex (Xiphorhynchus) picus*. Various individuals were observed in Hato Piñero. The race we saw (*phalara*) might be treated as a separate species in the future.

(*) **Streak-headed Woodcreeper.** *Lepidocolaptes souleyetii*. A single individual was seen while in Casa María area. The distinctive field mark for field identification is the slightly curved bill.

Thamnophilidae

Thamnophilidae, along with *Formicariidae* and *Grallaridae*, were formerly treated as a single family. Nowadays, *Thamnophilidae* comprises only the small passerine while the other two families comprises the antthrushes and the antpittas.

(*) **Barred Antshrike.** *Thamnophilus doliatus*. A pair was frequently seen in Casa María.

(Northern) **White-fringed Antwren.** *Formicivora intermedia*. A male was enjoyed in scrubby vegetation in Hato Piñero. Although Hilty (2003) followed Ridgely (in Birds of South America) in treating this as a separate species (calling it Northern White-fringed Antwren) the SAAC has not formally accepted it. Vocal differences between the populations E and W of the Essequibo river suggest that the taxonomic division proposed by Ridgely might be accepted in the near future.

Pipridae

Manakins are the quintessence of neotropical birds. Arranged with wonderful plumages, the males of this family display in selected arenas (technically named *lek*) to attract the females, which usually have duller plumage.

Wire-tailed Manakin. *Pipra filicauda*. We only heard a male some 4 km above Casa María.

Tyrannidae

The Tyrant-Flycatchers are one of the best representative of speciation in the neotropics. For the visitor to Venezuela it can be both frustrating and exciting to see a number of these species approaching after the whistle of the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. In our tour we managed to see more than 30 species. Casa María and Hato Piñero are one of the best destinations in northern Venezuela to learn about this confusing family.

Sooty-headed Tyrannulet. *Phyllomyias griseiceps*. Only heard in Casa María.

Yellow-bellied Elaenia. *Elaenia flavogaster*. A single individual was seen in Hato Piñero.

Forest Elaenia. *Myiopagis gaimardii*. One individual was seen coming to the light bulb in Casa María.

Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet. *Camptostoma obsoletum*. This is the little one to tell the other birds when a pygmy owl is in the vicinity. I usually nickname it *Mr. hyperactive!* Many were seen well in Hato Piñero.

(*) **Olive-striped Flycatcher.** *Mionectes olivaceus*. A single individual was observed from Casa María.

Slaty-capped Flycatcher. *Leptopogon superciliaris*. We observed two individuals around the light bulb of Casa María. The ear patch is one of the distinctive field marks.

Northern Scrub-Flycatcher. *Sublegatus arenarum*. The resemblance of this species with a *Myiarchus* flycatcher usually drives the observer to an erroneous identification. Two pairs were seen in Hato Piñero. We noticed the distinctive short bill in comparison with the *Myiarchus* flycatcher bill size.

Pale-tipped Tyrannulet (Inezia). *Inezia caudata*. We enjoyed great views of two pairs in Hato Piñero. The common name *Inezia* is waiting for formal recognition by the SACC (South America Classification Committee).

Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant. *Lophotriccus pileatus*. Heard in Palmichal.

Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant. *Lophotriccus pilaris*. Seen twice in Hato Piñero.

Common Tody-Flycatcher. *Todirostrum cinereum*. This species was seen several times in Casa María and in Hato Piñero. Notice that this diminutive tody-flycatcher has a conspicuous voice despite its small size.

Yellow-olive Flycatcher (Flatbill). *Tolmomyias sulphurescens*. A single individual was observed twice in Casa María.

Yellow-breasted Flycatcher (Ochre-lored Flatbill). *Tolmomyias flaviventris*. A pair was observed in Casa María.

Smoke-colored Pewee. *Contopus fumigatus*. Two pairs were seen in the vicinity of Casa María.

Tropical Pewee. *Contopus cinereus*. A pair was observed perched atop a dead branch near Casa María.

Vermilion Flycatcher. *Pyrocephalus rubinus*. This one is a conspicuous and easy to identify bird. Two pairs were seen in Hato Piñero.

Pied Water-Tyrant. *Fluvicola pica*. We enjoyed daily encounters around the main house in Hato Piñero. This species is fond to areas close to water and visits gardens of houses with ditches.

White-headed Marsh-Tyrant. *Arundinicola leucocephala*. A single individual was seen twice in Piñero. Like the previous species it is fond to areas with water and floating vegetation.

Cattle Tyrant. *Machetornis rixosus*. A pair was enjoyed three times in grassland in the vicinity of the biological station.

The genus *Myiarchus* comprises one of the most difficult-to-identify birds in the field. We were able to learn the field marks and voice of three species out of a genus containing of 22 species!

Dusky-capped Flycatcher. *Myiarchus tuberculifer*. A single individual was seen in the first morning in Hato Piñero.

Short-crested Flycatcher. *Myiarchus ferox*. A pair was observed near the biological station in Hato Piñero.

Pale-edged Flycatcher. *Myiarchus cephalotes*. A single individual was seen in Finca La Neblina.

Brown-crested Flycatcher. *Myiarchus tyrannulus*. Seen in Hato Piñero.

The following seven species have been considered by some taxonomists to be an example of adaptive radiation suggesting a rapidly multiplying lineage from a single ancestor.

(*) **Rusty-margined Flycatcher.** *Myiozetetes cayanensis*. This one was regularly seen in Casa Maria and in Hato Piñero. The *yellow-breasted* flycatchers are hard to tell apart unless habitat, habits and song are known. In the case of this species the mournful and melancholic whistle is one of the key field marks.

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

White-bearded Flycatcher. *Phelopsia inornata*. After a good search we located a pair near along the road west of the ranch. This is a 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*. This one was common and widespread in both locations. Several were seen throughout the trip. The prominent bill and the reddish wings are diagnostic.

Lesser Kiskadee. *Pitangus (Philohydor) lictor*. It is basically a miniature of the Great Kiskadee having with thinner bill and preferring areas near water. A pair was seen twice in the ponds near the biological station of Hato Piñero.

(*) **Boat-billed Flycatcher.** *Megarynchus pitangua*. This large billed species was found in Casa Maria. It seems like a bird attached to a huge bill!

(*) **Tropical Kingbird.** *Tyrannus melancholicus*. This species was common and widespread as it was seen daily. Further studies are needed to determine the local migration pattern across Venezuela.

Gray Kingbird. *Tyrannus dominicensis*. Three individuals were seen in Piñero. Unmistakable.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher. *Tyrannus savana*. The breeding behavior of this flycatcher in Venezuela remains as a mystery as no nest has been reported as yet. We know that two populations occur in the llanos and that might explain why (although no nest record) it have been reported to occur year round in this vast region.

Tityridae

Studies published in 1989 and 1990 concluded that *Tityra*, *Schiffornis* and *Pachyramphus* formed a distinct group, separated from the rest of *Tyrannidae*. In September 2007 R. O. Prum proposed to adopt the family *Tityridae*, being later 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.

Black-crowned Tityra. *Tityra inquisitor*. A female was observed at edge of tropical dry forest in Hato Piñero.

Cinereous Becard. *Pachyramphus rufus*. A pair was observed near Casa María.

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

Cotingidae

Handsome Fruiteater. *Pipreola formosa*. We had astonishing views (in the scope!) of this remarkably beautiful fruiteater. A Venezuela endemic!

Hirundidae

Blue-and-white Swallow. *Pygochelidon cyanoleuca*. Various individuals were seen in Caracas.

Gray-breasted Martin. *Progne chalybea*. Several individuals were observed on route to Casa Maria and in Hato Piñero.

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

White-winged Swallow. *Tachycineta albiventer*. About 6 individuals were observed in Laguna Los Cerritos (we saw only one individual in the 2011 tour).

Cliff Swallow. *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*. A small flock of 10 to 12 were observed in the road beyond Los Arenales.

Barn Swallow. *Hirundo rustica*. Hundreds were seen beyond Los Arenales in Hato Piñero. In contrast, only one individual was observed flying over open grasslands in the 2011 tour.

Troglodytidae

Bicolored Wren. *Campylorhynchus griseus*. Various pairs were seen along the road west of Hato Piñero.

Stripe-backed Wren. *Campylorhynchus nuchalis*. Various pairs were seen near the biological station of Piñero.

Rufous-breasted Wren. *Thryothorus rutilus*. One individual came to the light bulb in Casa Maria.

(*) **Rufous-and-white Wren.** *Thryothorus rufalbus*. Three individuals were seen near Casa Maria. This species has a diagnostic soft and suit song.

Buff-breasted Wren. *Cantorchilus leucotis*. Heard in Hato Piñero.

(*) **House Wren.** *Troglodytes aedon*. This one was common in populated areas and in scrubby vegetation. It was seen in both locations.

Poliophtilidae

Long-billed Gnatwren. *Ramphocaenus melanurus*. Astonishing views of a single individual from the hotel garden in Caracas!

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

Turdidae

(*) **Pale-breasted Thrush.** *Turdus leucomelas*. Pairs or trios were seen regularly in Casa Maria. Also seen (less numerous) in Hato Piñero.

(*) **Spectacled (Bare-eyed) Thrush.** *Turdus nudigenis*. Three pairs were seen in Casa María.

Mimidae

Tropical Mockingbird. *Mimus gilvus*. Various pairs were observed in Hato Piñero. Although the North American relative of this species is known for its capacity to mimic other species song its neotropical counterpart has a less diverse repertoire. Look at the end of this birdlist (Yellow-rumped Cacique) to find more out about the “mockingbird” in northern South America!

Vireonidae

(*) **Brown-capped Vireo.** *Vireo leucophrys*. Various individuals were seen in La Neblina farm.

Scrub Greenlet. *Hylophilus flavipes*. One individual was observed in Hato Piñero.

(*) **Golden-fronted Greenlet.** *Hylophilus aurantiifrons*. A pair was seen near Casa María.

(*) **Rufous-browed Peppershrike.** *Cyclarhis gujanensis*. We enjoyed a great view of an individual coming to feed on moths in Casa Maria bulb light.

Thraupidae

Chestnut-vented Conebill. *Conirostrum speciosum*. We saw two pairs in Hato Piñero. The individuals responded very well to the whistle of the pygmy owl!

Hooded Tanager. *Nemosia pileata*. A small family group was seen in two consecutive days responding to the whistle of the pygmy owl in Hato Piñero.

Guira Tanager. *Hemithraupis guira*. In Casa Maria we enjoyed views of this astonishing species. The male has a contrasting black mask with a mix of orange and yellow on the breast.

(*) **Gray-headed Tanager.** *Eucometis penicillata*. This is an army ant specialist 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 arthropods.

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

(*) **Silver-beaked Tanager.** *Ramphocelus carbo*. This species was common in Casa María.

(*) **Blue-gray Tanager.** *Thraupis episcopus*. This one was common, widespread, and numerous in both locations.

(*) **Palm Tanager.** *Thraupis palmarum*. Daily views in Casa Maria although not numerous.

Golden Tanager. *Tangara arthus*. A single individual was observed near Palmichal. This is one of the most beautiful *Tangara* tanagers in Venezuela showing rich mustard-yellow breast and black ear patches.

Speckled Tanager. *Tangara guttata*. Two pairs were seen along the road leading from Casa María to Palmichal.

Bay-headed Tanager. *Tangara gyrola*. About 6 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 enjoyed daily views in Casa María and in Hato Piñero.

Blue-necked Tanager. *Tangara cyanicollis*. What a beauty! Seen once in Casa María coming to the light bulb.

Rufous-cheeked Tanager. *Tangara rufigenis*. A real surprise and a favorite for the trip. This Venezuela endemic was enjoyed in our short visit to Palmichal.

Green Honeycreeper. *Chlorophanes spiza*. A male was observed near Casa María.

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* Restall et al). Four individuals were seen in Hato Piñero. The race to occur in the Orinoco is proposed to be treated as a separate species but for the moment it remains as a race of Red-capped Cardinal.

Bananaquit. *Coereba flaveola*. We enjoyed 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

Southern Grayish Saltator. *Saltator coerulescens*. Three pairs were seen in Caracas.

Streaked Saltator. *Saltator striatipectus*. Two pairs were enjoyed in Caracas in the gardens of the hotel.

Buff-throated Saltator. *Saltator maximus*. Two pairs were foraging close Casa María in a patch of secondary growth.

Saffron Finch. *Sicalis flaveola*. This is a common species in Hato Piñero. Several adult and juveniles were seen in Hato Piñero.

Pileated Finch. *Coryphospingus pileatus*. We enjoyed three individuals foraging in the northern scrubby vegetation of Hato Piñero. This species is named Gray Pileated Finch in Hilty (1993).

Blue-black Grassquit. *Volatinia jacarina*. 2 adult individuals were seen along the road to Hato Piñero.

Black-faced Grassquit. *Tiaris bicolor*. A pair was observed in the gardens of the hotel in Caracas.

Gray Seedeater. *Sporophila intermedia*. This is a fairly common species 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*. 4 adult individuals were seen along the road between Casa María and Palmichal.

Lesser Seed-Finch. *Oryzoborus angolensis*. Named by some taxonomists **Chestnut-bellied Seed-Finch**. Two individuals were singing near Finca La Neblina. We observed it throughout the scope.

Yellow-browed Sparrow. *Ammodramus aurifrons*. A single individual was singing (phone call like song!) in Hato Piñero.

Cardinalidae

Summer Tanager. *Piranga rubra*. A pair was seen in Casa María. The pale bill and the crested-shaped nape were distinctive field marks. Notice that taxonomic studies have demonstrated that the *Piranga* are now placed with the *Cardinalidae*. Therefore, these are not anymore tanagers but cardinals!

Ultramarine Grosbeak. *Cyanocompsa brissonii*. We all enjoy amazing views of this scarce grosbeak in Caracas.

Parulidae

Tennessee Warbler. *Vermivora peregrina*. Various individuals were seen in Casa María.

Tropical Parula. *Parula pitiayumi*. This species was fairly common in 2009. In the years 2010, 2011 and this year we observed only one to two individual in Casa María.

Yellow Warbler. *Dendroica aestiva*. Various individuals were observed in Hato Piñero.

Blackburnian Warbler. *Dendroica fusca*. Unlike previous years, this time we found three individuals along the road to Finca La Neblina. This species migrates mostly to the Andes.

American Redstart. *Setophaga ruticilla*. Three pairs were seen around Casa María.

Slate-throated Whitestart (Redstart). *Myioborus miniatus*. A very active individual was enjoyed foraging with the mixed species feeding flock at the forest edge below Casa María.

(*) Golden-crowned Warbler. *Basileuterus culicivorus*. A pair was seen daily in Casa María.

Icteridae

Red-breasted Blackbird. *Sturnella militaris*. In 2011 we tried hard to find this species in Hato Piñero but failed. This year we enjoyed views of a group containing about 10 individuals.

Carib Grackle. *Quiscalus lugubris*. This species was observed almost every day.

Shiny Cowbird. *Molothrus bonariensis*. Several individuals were seen moving along with the Carib Grackle.

Giant Cowbird. *Molothrus oryzivora*. We observed a pair flying above Casa María.

Yellow Oriole. *Icterus nigrogularis*. Three individuals were observed in Hato Piñero.

Venezuelan Troupial. *Icterus icterus*. We enjoy daily views in Hato Piñero. This is the national bird of Venezuela.

Yellow-rumped Cacique. *Cacicus cela*. Various groups were seen in Hato Piñero. This is the one that replaces the Northern Mockingbird habits to imitate other bird songs in Venezuela. By listening a male in a nesting colony we could perceive the voices of Lineated Woodpecker and Gray-necked Wood-Rail as part or 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 in Hato Piñero. Unlike in the last year, this time we saw many dozens in Piñero and even a couple of nests near Bosque de los Caballos.

Russet-backed Oropendola. *Psarocolius angustifrons*. A pair was seen in La Neblina farm, above Casa Maria. This species prefers more forested areas than the previous species.

Fringillidae

Lesser Goldfinch. *Carduelis psaltria*. About 2 individuals were seen along the road between Casa Maria and Palmichal.

Trinidad Euphonia. *Euphonia trinitatis*. Two pairs were spotted 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 lanirostris*. Various individuals were seen in Casa Maria. The thick bill is the main field mark for identification.

Blue-naped Chlorophonia. *Chlorophonia cyanea*. We all enjoyed amazing views of various individuals coming to feed on small berries of a tree in Casa Maria.

Other species list.

Tapir. *Tapirus terrestris*. Great views of an adult in Hato Piñero.

Lesser Anteater (Tamandua). *Tamandua tetradactyla*.

Three-toed Sloth. *Bradypus trydactyla*. Casa Maria.

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

Crab-eating Fox (Common Zorro). *Cerdocyon thous*. Hato Piñero.

Little Brown Bat. (Molossidae). Hato Piñero. This one was a common species around the main house.

Bulldog Fishing Bat. *Noctilio leporinus*. Hato Piñero.

Fruit-eating Bat. *Artibeus sp.*

Capybara. *Hydrochaeris hydrochaeris*. Hato Piñero.

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

Weeping Capuchin Monkey. *Cebus olivaceus*. Hato Piñero and Casa Maria.

Green Iguana. *Iguana iguana*. Hato Piñero.

Spectacled Cayman. *Cayman crocodilus*. Hato Piñero.

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

Common House Geckoo. *Hemidactylus frenatus*. Hato Piñero.

Tree Frog. *Hyla sp.*

Red-bellied Piranha. *Pygocentrus nattereri*.

Guabina fish , Mud fish or Dog fish. *Amia calva*.

Army Ants. *Ecitoninae*.

Orb-weaver Spider. *Araneidae*.