



**Sunrise Birding LLC  
COLOMBIA  
MITÚ**

**April 21 – May 2, 2022  
TRIP REPORT  
Leader: Diego Calderon**

Photos: Bar-bellied Woodcreeper (GK), Spangled Cotinga (DC), Fiery Topaz (GK)  
GK=Georges Kleinbaum  
DC=Diego Calderon





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www.sunrisebirding.com

# COLOMBIA MITÚ TRIP REPORT

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By Diego Calderon

So here we are again with me guiding another Sunrise Birding trip after all this pandemic craziness... This was a great and enjoyable trip that, basically after delaying it a couple of times after pandemic lock down, we eventually got our crew together and did again this drooling tour. It was a great success in several aspects, and we recorded **323 species including a few Colombian endemics (in the Andes) and a load of the regional Negro/Orinoco rivers white-sand forests EBA goodies.**

Our top birds of the trip as voted by all participants were the following jewels:

- **Fiery Topaz** earned the first place as top bird of the trip as we got the most amazing spectacle of a male iridescence extravaganza catching insects with a black/red waters river as perfect background.
- **Chestnut-crested Antbird** was second as we got amazing views of this Neotropical mega, in the scope, and for a prolonged period of time. What a bird!
- Place number 3 was shared by the unmatched **Guianan Cock-of-the-rock** male and female at nest we got after a long hike, the **Sparkling Violetear** that was a common suspect at high elevation feeders, and the unrivaled high-quality views we got of the monster super rare **Bar-bellied Woodcreeper** that responded to my tape at the white sand forests (scope views and videos singing even!)
- The 4<sup>th</sup> place is shared between several species: **Green-bearded Helmetcrest** (amazing views of this cool Colombian endemic), **White-capped Dipper** (one of the Neotropical Andes superlatives!), **Spangled Cotinga** (superb views, more than once of this electric bird), **Burrowing Owl** (several individuals posing next to the road), **White-plumed Antbird** (a Neotropical army-ants swarm follower unbeatable species), **Saffron-crested Tyrant-Manakin** (amazing displays showing yellow crown!), **Great Sapphirewing** (crazy views of this crazy huge helicopter-hummer), and **Beryl-spangled Tanager** (superb canopy views through the scope).
- And finally, 3 superb individuals we got of **Red-necked Woodpecker** near Mitú, great scope views of a few **Blue-capped Tanagers** in the highlands, and a small flock of **Kawall's Parrots** that was a lifer for me all share the 5<sup>th</sup> place.

Of course, and as always, a few SPECIAL MENTIONS gotta be done: Both Greater and Lesser Fishing/Bulldog Bats fishing at the Vaupés River, an obliging Musician Wren serenading us in the scope, the most overwhelming “sparkling” termites erupting during their nuptial flight against the sunset with Oropendola madness preying on them accounts no doubt for one of the most touching views I’ve ever had in nature!; my hardboiled-egg-blowing techniques hopefully everyone got to learn, and birding with Florencio and Miguel in the lowlands that as always is an absolute delight!

I must thank all the clients that came on this trip, for waiting for so long thanks to Covid until we finally could do this trip but also for their great energy and vibe in the field and helping to find the birds and sharing some nice swimming in Mitú. And of course, these trips would not be possible without our trusty local operators, fixers and local guides including Jovani, Marbeluz and David, as well as Miguel, Agripino and Daniel, and of course Mónica, Ingrid, Victoria and others that made us feel at home... see you on 2023 for another amazing Mitú + some E Andes trip with Sunrise Birding and here you are below our daily detailed log.

THANKS MUCH! 🙏👏🍷

Diego Calderón-Franco

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-An eBird trip report with this same narrative, plus all checklists and media for several species (thanks Georges!), can be found at <https://ebird.org/tripreport/52977>

**APRIL 22** got us having early breakfast at Chiguazá, a local little reserve in the Sumapaz National Park, where one of our crew had to sign the local Hilty & Brown 1986 BIRDS OF COLOMBIA copy as his father Michel Kleinbaum was one of the main illustrators. We then continued to the paramo where we soon nailed down Green-bearded Helmetcrest joined by the usual brown-jobs like Many-striped Canastero and Andean Tit-Spinetail. A few Andean Ducks and Andean Teals before lunch at a local new place where I almost got a lifer thanks to our driver Jovani as he pointed a couple of Streak-throated Bush-Tyrants in the power lines thinking they were Red-rumped Bush-Tyrants (my nemesis bird!... been in Sumapaz around 50ish times at least). We later birded a Polylepis forest where White-capped Dippers entertained us before returning to our nice Bogotá hotel for a hearty dinner.



On **APRIL 23** morning we flew to Mitú and before lunch we were walking along the Vaupés River malecón nailing our first Silver-beaked Tanagers and the local Amazonian white-shouldered version of Blue-gray Tanagers. After lunch we birded the road to Urania all the way to the Mituseño bridge having a blast of an intro to the Amazon (first time in the Amazon for 80%+ of our clients!) with the fanciest Red-fan Parrots ([instagram.com/p/CdGsklJIVS2](https://www.instagram.com/p/CdGsklJIVS2)), omnipresent Swallow-winged Puffbirds, an electric-rechargeable Spangled Cotinga and an impossible to find Citron-bellied Attila that was left for a later visit to the white-sand forests.



We left very early on **APRIL 24** to reach Puente Lata area in the main road just after break of dawn to be welcomed by a hawking Fiery Topaz male that was flabbergastingly flying against the dark waters of the river. A **Yellow-crowned Manakin** (GK) young male was repeatedly coming to feed on fruit eye-level from the bridge, and plenty of parrots and parakeets were noisily flying around. A mixed-flock gave us scope views of the neat monotypic Chestnut-winged Hookbill that is the only *Ancistrops* there is. Rain came and while we sheltered and had lunch, some Yellow-browed Sparrows as well as Chestnut-bellied Seedeaters and Seedfinches serenaded; we also went into a local house kitchen to see first-hand how casava bread was made. It kept raining so we returned to town, and nearby the airport we got us another monotypic cool cool species: Point-tailed Palmcreeper, *Berlepschia rikeri*.

Our first visit to the unique white-sand forests was on **APRIL 25** when we visited Mitú Cachivera that is Miguel's community (Miguel is our main local guide, and you can actually meet him here: <https://youtu.be/IAaNcPQeXsA> - also Florencio makes a short appearance). At the community main central area, we were delighted by a couple of Dusky-billed Parrotlets posing for several minutes in the scope that is not an everyday sighting and a single delicious

White-banded Swallow. The white-sand received us with a load of cool orchids, including vanilla, while we nailed down Citron-bellied Attila and Spot-backed Antwren. A friendly Short-Nosed Groundsnake made an appearance while a non-expected Spotted Puffbird was found by Miguel. We got fresh warm lunch at Caño Sangre creek delivered personally on motobike by Mónica and Ingrid from our Hotel Brasilia and after a rest and some swimming we went to enjoy the most incredible displays by Saffron-crested Tyrant-Manakin and our second cool snake of the day: a cool type of *Chironius* sp. Vine Snake. We stop again at one of the miraculous white-sand gaps returning home and found us amazing White-browed Purpletufts showing the purple tufts! And a lovely Plumbeous Euphonia male singing its heart out.



We had quite a delay on **APRIL 26** as we were leaving town, dozens of Mealy Parrots and **Red-bellied Macaws** (GK) were flying and making ruckus around town. We had to stop to enjoy the show and scanning carefully every single Mealy Parrot that flew by or perched nearby, finally Miguel found a couple without an eye ring: my lifer Kawall's Parrot, an ex-Brazilian endemic recently found in Mitú by local birders.

We finally reached Cerrito Verde and started our hike towards the cock-of-the-rock area joined by a troop of tamarin monkeys and we got distracted by we-can't-complain birds like Yellow-billed Jacamar, Imeri Warbling-Antbird, Amazonian Grosbeak and the like. We eventually reached the Guianan Cock-of-the-rock boulders area where a female was sitting on a nest and we could see a single male in the lekking area; even we gave it like 1,5 hours more patiently waiting there no more

Rupicola action was seen so we return to hotel for a well-deserved lunch, shower, and little siesta. Late afternoon we visited a new place made by friends in Mitú outskirts where a sort of canopy platform was built on a neat cabin, and we could get cool views of Olive Oropendolas as well as Bat Falcons and perched Greater Yellow-headed Vultures. We also went owling nearby without much luck besides a flying-by Common Pauraque.

I was very excited to go birding the great trails at Pueblo Nuevo, with Florencio another local great guide, on **APRIL 27**. We started with an amazing sunrise just rightly fitting for a Sunrise Birding trip and headed into the trail to start amassing cool goodies. Our first stop delivered scope views of the mega Black Bushbird and the mega mega Chestnut-crested Antbird and a very obliging Black-headed Antbird, along with great views of Yellow-browed Antbird. Further into the trail, Musician Wren and Neopipo posed for the scopes and cameras, and a Pavonine Quetzal showed himself. We all got back to the local community creek for lunch adding White-fronted Nunbird and White-necked Puffbird, but we were not able to locate a Collared Puffbird

singing way up in the canopy. After lunch and some rain ( = siesta & swimming time! ) we did another trail nearby but the soft constant rain and the afternoon being kinda darkish prevented us from adding any more birds (but a distant heard only Yellow-throated Antwren) so we returned to hotel. Even the afternoon was almost bird-less, this was a great 100+ species day!

Another white-sand forests day for **APRIL 28** so I was quite happy as usual when I visit the Bocatoma trail that it is like going to the beach: sandals or water shoes (I'm barefoot most of the time!), white sand and water all over, and tiny orchids galore on the most amazing deep-red-tinted black water creeks are the rule... well, and we saw a Red-billed Ground-Cuckoo in this trail a few years ago. We started with some open area birding and at the white sand we got the most obliging, easy, and friendly, White-eyed Tody-Tyrant that I have ever witnessed entertaining us for several minutes while a couple of Bronzy Jacamars were inquisitively looking at us all the time. Fishing with some prospective playback I got a monster Bar-bellied Woodcreeper responding to tape and posing for the whole group like I never had before. Later, we got some army ants providing us good views of **White-plumed Antbird** (GK) and Striped Woodcreepers and a cool lifer for me: Spot-throated Woodcreeper. We secured views of a pair of Rusty-breasted Nunlets and a gang of the much sought-after Azure-naped Jay and went back to town for a traditional fish and agouti lunch at a typical restaurant. After a rest, we visited again the Urania/Mituseño bridge where we got cool Black Caracaras anting or dust bathing, Moriche Orioles and singing Golden-bellied (better named White-lored) Euphonia.



The morning of **APRIL 29** we spent it birding in the **Bocatoma road** (DC), and we were greeted by a trio of Red-necked Woodpeckers, Mouse-colored Antshrike and a Great Jacamar. The morning was a bit warm and slow, but we did have nice views of Black-eared Fairy, Dusky-throated and Cinereus Antshrikes, a Rufous-tailed Xenops and Screaming Pihas. We had been birding for almost a week in Mitú and finally the Orinoco Piculet showed up traveling with a mixed flock for our relieve while Dusky-capped Greenlet was persistently calling in the canopy. Paradise Tanagers were a cool encounter also. Our last afternoon we decided to visit again Mitú Cachivera white-sand to try to fill some gaps, so relatively quick after lunch, we got there and it really paid as we catch up with Brown-banded Puffbird, Purple-breasted Cotinga, Slender-billed Xenops, Short-billed Honeycreeper and, OK, a Drab Water Tyrant also. We stayed after dark for some owling getting close views of Blackish Nightjar and a flyby Short-tailed Nighthawk.



As we repeated white sand the previous afternoon, for our last morning, **APRIL 30**, we had planned to visit again Pueblo Nuevo with Florencio to try to catch up on Collared Puffbird and some other terra firme specialties. We tape-recorded a Gray-breasted Crake in a marshy area near the road while having our picnic breakfast and Southern Lapwings posed for the photographers while a bunch of Yellow-tufted Woodpeckers were very active and noisy in the background. We went into the trail and finally got our only Black-faced Antbird of the trip; further in we added Spot-backed Antbird and Pearly Antshrike after some bushwacking. Black-throated Trogon gave us a show and a Gray-legged Tinamou made us invest some 15/20ish minutes trying to see it with no success. No response by the puffbirds, so a Short-billed Leaf-tosser was our last bird on that trail that morning. We came back to hotel for a quick shower and packing our bags and after a quick lunch and goodbyes we were seating at the airport waiting for our flight back to Bogotá... a flight, that never showed up so back to hotel, leave our stuff and we ended up that afternoon birding again on the Vaupés River malecón and indeed adding some birds to our trip list being a cool looking Scaled Pigeon our favorite.



The day finished with an amazing sunset and hundreds of Olive Oropendolas catching flying ants while their nuptial flight which we could see sparkling and dazzling from the other shore of the river with the most amazing orange sky behind... what a gift we got as a perk for not having a flight back to Bogota that day.

**MAY 01** got us catching a morning flight from Mitú to Bogotá what meant we missed birding in Chingaza National Park; anyways, as planned we visited our superb Spanish restaurant in the highlands for a really scrumptious lunch. We were close to our afternoon birding destination, the magnificent Observatorio de Colibríes ([instagram.com/observatoriodecolibríes](https://www.instagram.com/observatoriodecolibríes)), that even it does not open on Sundays if you are friends with the owner, she might give you a little help ☺. We enjoyed a couple of hours filled with very special amazing hummingbirds: a couple of near-endemic species, the Blue-throated Starfrontlet and the Coppery-bellied Puffleg were coming to the best afternoon shining light perches; a couple of extra-terrestrial species showed up several times leaving everyone in awe: the crazy Sword-billed Hummingbird and the humongous Great Sapphirewing; and some other “more normal” hummers were all over the place like Black-tailed and Green-tailed Trainbearers, Tyrian Metaltail, Amethyst-throated Sunangel, among eleven species we recorded that day. Mountain Caciques, Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanagers and a Plain-breasted (Sharp-shinned) Hawk were also recorded in the gardens.

For our last day of the trip, we went to Chicaque park. It was **MAY 02** and we suffered some Bogota traffic giving us the chance to add some urban species to our trip list (Bare-faced Ibis, White-tailed Kite, and Carib Grackle). Upon arrival, and even before breakfast, the Golden-bellied Starfrontlet, our main target, was already in the bag. We birded the park entrance and even it was quite slow we got Cinnamon Flycatchers and eventually a Black Inca was seen by some of us. Hiking down the main road of the park, we saw some Blue-capped Tanagers and a Southern Emerald Toucanet entertained us all. Two sturdy 4x4s picked us up and we reached the lower part where the “refugio” is located and we birded for almost a couple of hours there from the main balcony. Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant, Metallic-green Tanager and Beryl-spangled Tanager were all seen well in the scope while White-tipped Swifts fluttered in the cliffs around. We came back to main restaurant for a great lunch, checklist and finally drove an hour to the airport so everyone could catch flights.



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