

COSTA RICA AND PANAMA 2014 (January 8th to February 10th)

After a long trip in Central America in 2012, there was still one country I wanted to visit: Panama. So I returned to Costa Rica to try again to see a Mexican Porcupine, then I went to Panama.

As often I used Jon Hall trip reports.

Sites visited:

COSTA RICA

ALAJUELA CITY

4 Variegated Squirrels in a park.

SANTA ROSA NATIONAL PARK

Eastern Cottontail, 10+ White tailed deers, 1 Central American Agouti, 1 Nine banded Armadillo, 3 Mantled Howlers and more heard.

MONTEVERDE

1 Olingo seen as in 2012 raiding the feeders at the Hummingbird gallery (at 15h50 and 17h).

But I came back at this place for the Mexican Porcupine and I was lucky this time. As I was at Monteverde Reserve I phoned to Hidden Valley where Jon Hall saw one, they immediately told me they had just seen one 10mn ago and in full daylight. I rushed there and was led to a tree where a Mexican Porcupine was sleeping outside a cavity. I stayed there several minutes. The Porcupine looked at me and disappeared in the cavity. Half an hour later I got the same scenario as the following morning. What a sighting. In the private reserve I also saw 10 White faced Capuchins, 9 White nosed Coatis and several Red tailed squirrels.

At the entrance of the town and exactly at the same place as in 2012 there was a Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth, but this time it was a female with a young.

As

I did a night walk from Monteverde reserve to the town but I didn't see anything.

PLAYA GRANDE

A disappointing place without any Leatherback Tturtle. I only saw Mantled Howlers and 3 Northern Raccoons.

MANUEL ANTONIO NATIONAL PARK

A lot of White faced Capuchins, 4 diurnal Northern Raccoons always ready to grab tourists' bags , 10+ Mantled Howlers, 7 Brown-throated Three toed sloths, 4 White tailed deers and best of all 5 Squirrel Monkeys.

TORTUGUERO NATIONAL PARK

As in 2012 I hired a kayak and spent 3 mornings mammalwatching and birdwatching. It is a very disturbed place plenty of tourists and all sorts of boats. I saw only 1 Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth, White faced capuchins, Mantled Howlers and Central American Spider monkeys. In fact you have better chance to see something really unusual along the stretch of river where public boats give access to Tortuguero village. And one my last morning as I was leaving Tortuguero I got a Baird's Tapir crossing the river in front of the boat. But an Eyelash Viper in the village is also a good souvenir.

CAHUITA NATIONAL PARK

Again a very disturbed place and also not very secured. But Sloths are plentiful. Each day I saw several Three-toed and Two-toed(including a female with a baby) Sloths, Mantled Howlers, White faced Capuchins, Central American Agoutis and diurnal Northern Raccoons behaving like at Manuel Antonio.

PANAMA

PARQUE METROPOLITANO IN PANAMA CITY

Several Mantled Howlers, 4 Geoffroy's Tamarins, 1 Central American Agouti, 1 White tailed deer, several White faced Capuchins, 1 Brown throated Two-toed Sloth. Not a place I recommend, with a lot of noisy traffic around.

CANOPY TOWER LODGE

I stayed 3 nights there, not that I like this kind of place, but because it seemed to be the best place to see several interesting species. Nevertheless I must recognize the food was the best of my trip and the staff very helpful.

I walked independently as I liked and saw a lot of Mantled Howlers and White faced Capuchins, daily several Two Toed and Three Toed Sloths, 3 different groups of Geoffroy's Tamarins (4,3 and 3), a lot of White nosed Coatis including a group of 12. As a Rotschild's Porcupine had been seen 1 or 2 days ago in a box for owl I gently knocked at all the trees with a cavity (natural or owlbox) but didn't see any Porcupine. Nevertheless I got 2 West Night Monkeys at the last cavity. A very nice reward.

During the 2 night drives and with the local guides (really good) I got 7 Common Opossums, 2 Central American Woolly Opossums, 1 Kinkajou, 3 Forest Rabbits, 1 Nine banded Armadillo, 1 West Night Monkey glimpsed, 2 Pacas (1 heard, 1 seen), 2 males Rotschild's Porcupines and several Two-toed and Three-toeds sloths.

I also spent 1 night in a local cheaper house in Gamboa village (MATEO BED AND BREAKFAST). When I arrived MATEO, the owner, was feeding 5 Geoffroy's Tamarins that I saw again a few hours later. A practice I don't like.

I went 3 times (twice early morning and one late afternoon until night) to Gamboa Resort where Jon HALL saw Lesser Capybaras. There is or was a group of more than 20 visible at any time of the day, but I saw only 3 shy ones once early morning, thanks of the eyes of Mark RISTOW. I was looking for them around the river but they are in a pond in the middle of the lawn between the river and the swimming pool. MATEO thought they were hunted. And even the guides of Canopy tower who went there on a previous day with a tourist didn't see any. In fact they are at least 2 other places where they are often 1 or 2. Same, they are often seen at the bridge near Gamboa. I got also a Neotropical Otter in the river.

BRUGIERE Dominique

brugiere.dom@sfr.fr