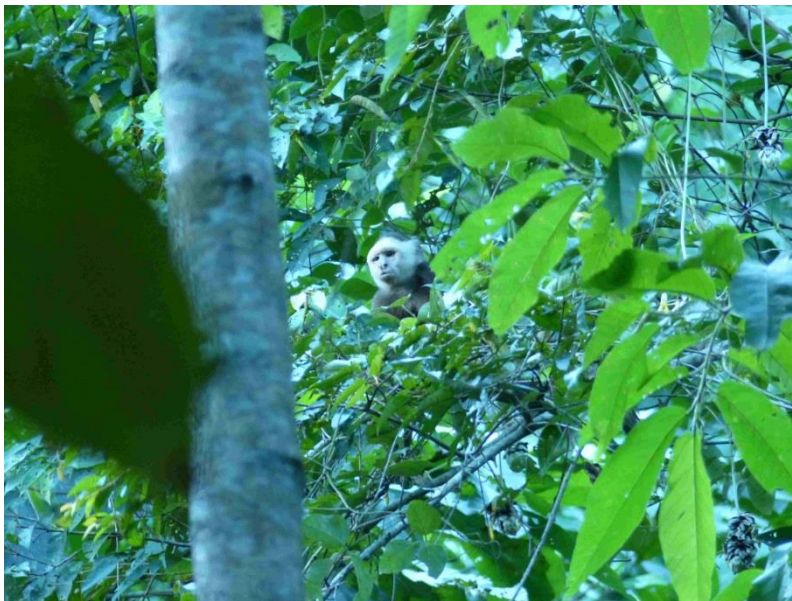


Colombia: 17 – 26 November 2014

I visited Colombia for the first time for 10 days in November 2014. The key specie was Cotton-top Tamarin in Tayrona NP and I planned my trip around that. I included the area around Minca as it is in the vicinity and it would give me a chance of seeing what might be a new species of night monkey endemic to that region. My first stop however was in El Paujil Reserve about 7-8 hours south of Bogota. Nigel Marven's series "Wild Colombia" inspired me to visit.

El Paujil Reserve: 17 – 21 November

It is a bit complicated to get there as there is no airport nearby. First you need to take a 5 hour bus to the town of Puerto Buyaca. In Puerto Buyaca I switched bus for Puerto Pinzon, which is a ride of 1.5 hours. In Puerto Pinzon the journey continued by boat for 40 minutes or so. On that short trip I saw my first species of the trip, a group of **White-throated Capuchins**. They are plentiful and I would find several groups every day on all tracks.

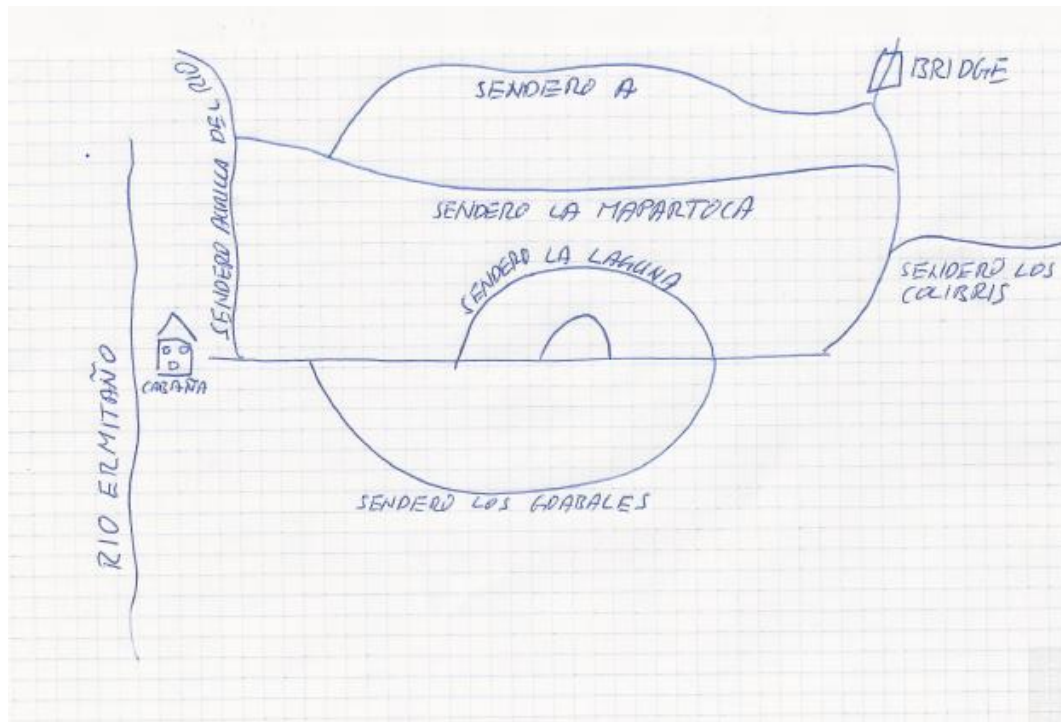


The reserve is a ProAves reserve set up to protect the endangered Blue-billed Curassow, so you need to book accommodation and food with them directly under www.proaves.org. They were a bit slow in replying, but after a few reminders it worked. November is the end of the rainy season and the birders had not yet arrived bar 2 of them, so I had the place almost to myself. I got my own tree-hut with a wonderful view over the rainforest. They cook great food as well and you can choose to eat whenever you like. And they sell cold beer.



Lovely Tree Hut

There are no guides available, so you need to bring one if needed. However, using the map below, drawn by the son of the hosts, Kevin, should suffice. The place is small and there are not too many tracks and the hosts are helpful in explaining where wildlife can be found or even showing it to you.



I booked for 4 nights as I really wanted to see my target monkey species, the spider and night monkey. I saw all of them the first day and could have moved on, which I did not. 4 days was too long for me however.

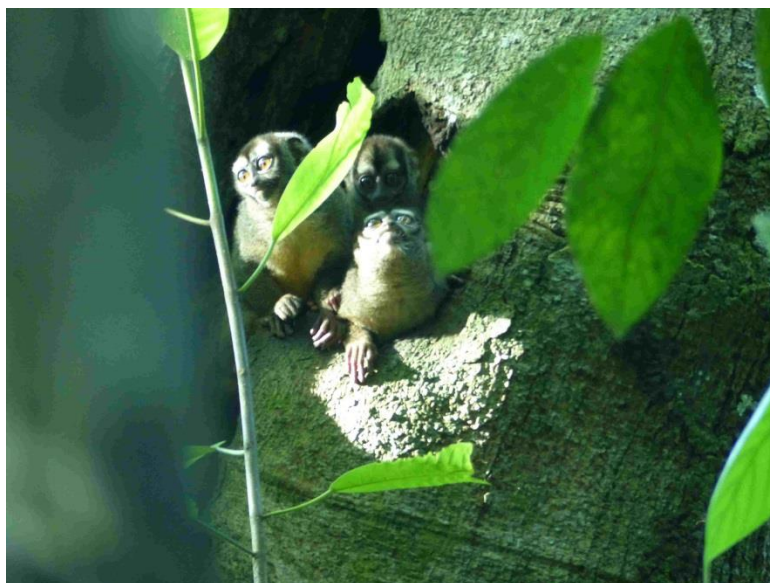
One of my key species was the **Variiegated Spider Monkey**, which you see very well in the area of "Sendero A" on the map above. I saw it on most days early in the afternoon and to get there you need to walk in dry riverbeds. This might be a problem in the rainy season as the river gets flooded quite fast and it would be a very wet story walking there. It rained for the whole night once and the creeks were flooded. This was also one of the reason I stayed a little longer to have time waiting out bad weather. But the riverbeds cleared fast and the next day it was almost dry again and good for walking even without rubber boots.

Once they were also swinging in the trees by the river.



Variiegated Spider Monkey

My second target species was the **Grey-handed Night Monkey**. As usual it is nice to find them during day time sitting and peeping out from a hollow tree. The trick is to know which, which I did not. But Kevin did and he volunteered without me asking him of being my guide for the day. They had however moved, but he asked his father Jose, the caretaker of the reserve, and he knew of another tree on the other side of the river. So we crossed the fast flowing river in a boat, which took 30 seconds, and walked for 5 minutes and there a family of 3 prying out of their hollow tree trunk.



Grey-handed Night Monkey

Red-tailed Squirrels were relative common and I spotted a few. They really liked the fruiting tall palm tree in the garden. Close to my room I was lucky to see 1 **Western Dwarf Squirrel** once.

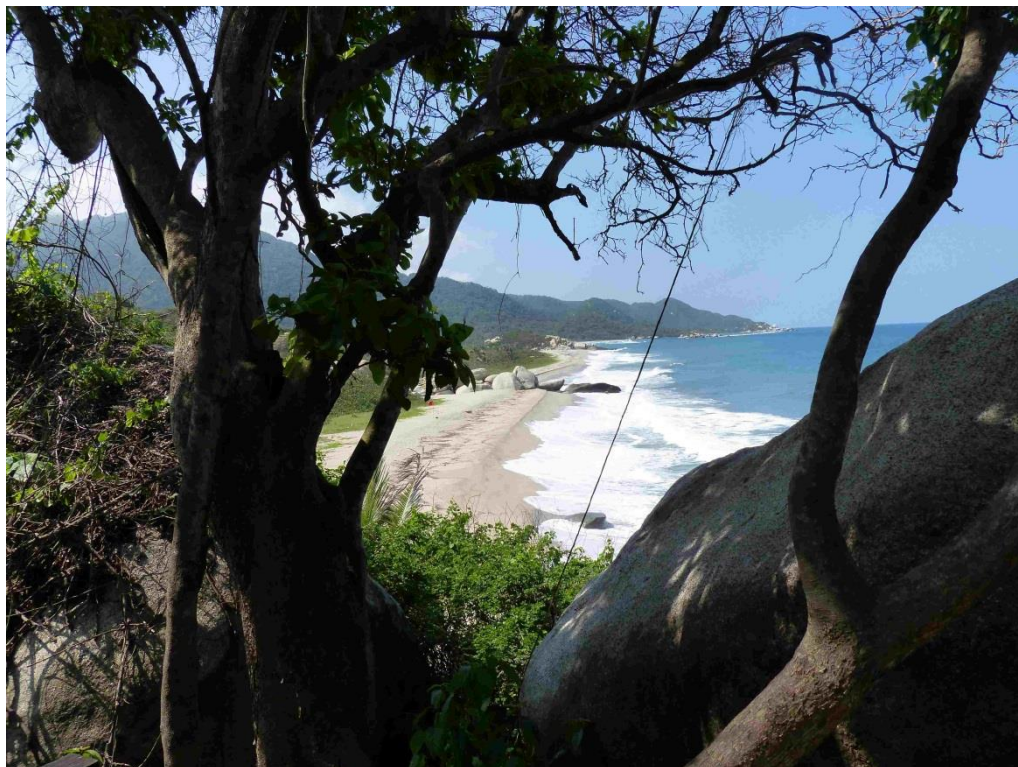
I was told that an *Oncilla* comes to the rubbish bin every night so obviously I sat there for several hours each night. On the first night I saw something approaching in the torchlight, which could very well have been one, but it was too far away to tell for sure.

The travel back to Bogota was a bit of a nightmare. It took 2 hour longer to get to Bogota then the trip down. There were not many taxis waiting at the bus station and there were about 2 hours waiting time for one and I had a flight to Santa Marta 2 hour later. I would have missed it if it was not for a young girl standing in the line at the top of the queue offering me a ride with her. I found in general that the Colombian people were very nice and hospitable.

Tayrona NP: 22 – 24 November

I planned my whole trip around the Cotton-top Tamarins, as I really wanted to see them and Tayrona NP is the place to look. The park is only a short bus ride from Santa Marta and inside the park I stayed in Arrecifes, which is about a 2 hour walk from the entrance. If you have a lot of luggage you don't have to carry it as horsemen are offering their service.

Arrecifes is a lovely place, as is the whole coastline, situated close to a wonderful, if dangerous, beach. You should not swim here the signs will advise you due to undercurrents. I was not there for swimming however so it did not matter much. It looked tempting though.



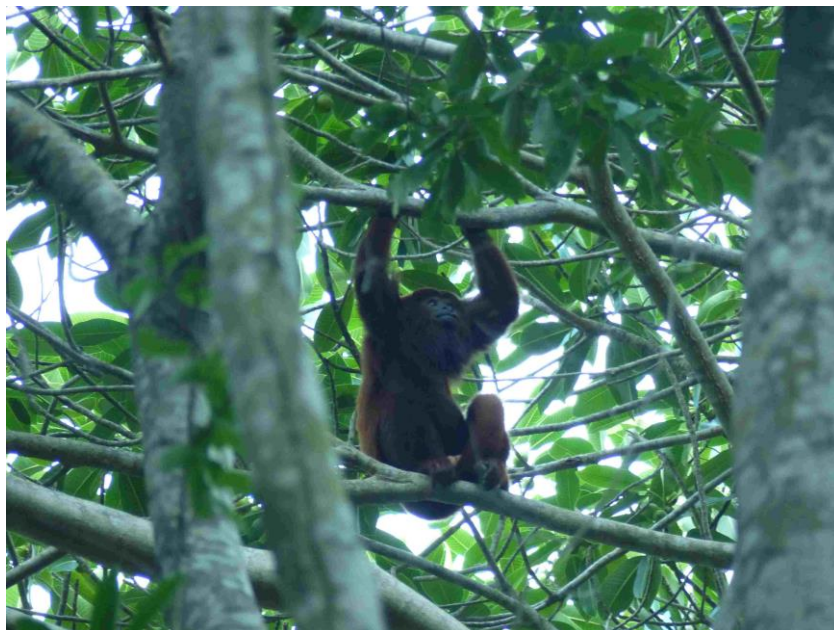
Tayrona National Park

On the first morning I wanted to reach El Pueblito, which is a 3-4 hour walk one way from Arrecifes. There should be a high possibility of seeing some Red Colombian Howler Monkeys there, and getting closer I could sure here them. But I never got that far. A group of **Cotton-top Tamarins**, not far above the camping of Al Cabo on the path to El Pueblito, shifted my attention. I would see a 2nd group the same morning in the area.



Cotton-top Tamarin

The area around Arrecifes is not bad either for the Tamarins and I would see them on each walk. On one afternoon just behind the lodge I was lucky to see the species that eluded me in El Paujil Reserve, **Red Colombian Howler Monkeys** in a group of 4.



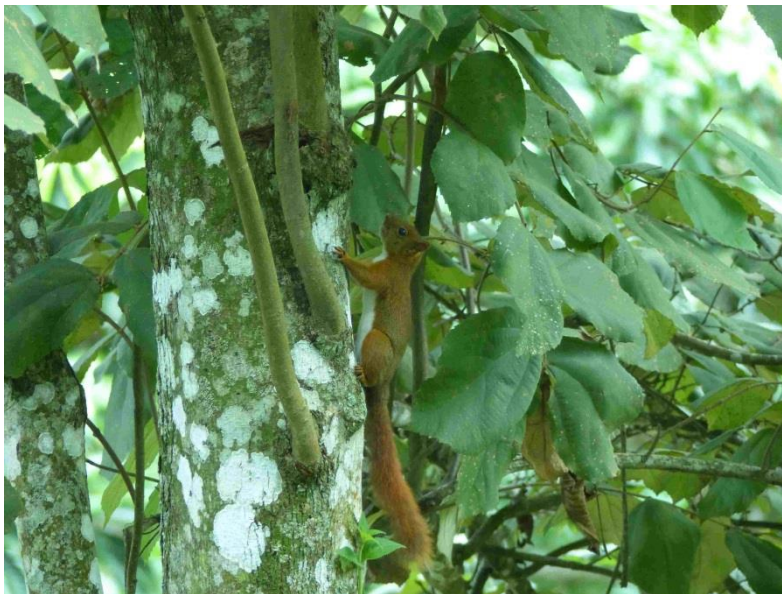
In the garden of the lodge Red-tailed Squirrels were easily spotted.

Minca: 25 – 26 November

My last stop was in Minca, about 1 hour by bus from Santa Marta. I hoped to find what Nigel Marven called Santa Marta Night Monkey, which should be a new species and endemic to the region. From information I have been able to find this species is in need of a taxonomic revision. Currently it belongs to the Grey-handed Night Monkey species so I won't include it in my mammal list as a separate species.

I did not know of any mammal guide in the region when I came there, but the lovely hosts of Emerald Green Guest House in Minca – emeraldgreenhostel@gmail.com - knew of one guy called Sebastian and they tried to get in touch with him, which took a few hours. But late in the late afternoon they did and in the early evening we went looking for them. Sebastian, a biologist turned photographer, took me to his place a bit above the town of Minca. Supposedly they come at the same time every evening and that night was no different. I got a few swift looks of a group of 3. Unfortunately we only saw them after they had left their hole and they were very busy as they always seems to be once out of their sleeping site. Do they come elsewhere?

According to Sebastian there are quite a few mammals in the area and on my way to El Dorado the next day I saw several Red-tailed Squirrels, a group of Colombian Red Howler Monkeys and a Tayra crossing the road. He is a great guy and speaks English very well. You can reach him on faunaldelasierra@hotmail.com.



Red-tailed Squirrel

A lovely, if short, mammal watching trip was over.

All the best

Torbjörn Lundqvist

Mammal list

El Paujil Reserve: ELP

Tayrona NP: TNP

Minca: MIN

Species	Latin	Spotting site
Colombian Red Howler Monkey	<i>Alouatta seniculus juara</i>	TNP, MIN
Variiegated Spider Monkey	<i>Ateles hybridus</i>	ELP
Cotton-top Tamarin	<i>Saguinus oedipus</i>	TNP

Red-tailed Squirrel	<i>Sciurus granatensis</i>	TNP, MIN, ELP
Grey-handed Night Monkey	<i>Aotus griseimembra</i>	ELP, MIN
Western Dwarf Squirrel	<i>Microsciurus mimulus</i>	ELP
White-throated Capuchin	<i>Cebus capucinus</i>	ELP
Tayra	<i>Eira barbara</i>	MIN