

Panama 5/9 – 12/9 2015

I had a week of vacation still to spend, so we decided to go to the relative mammal wise unknown Panama after reading a few good trip reports here on Mammalwatchin.com (where else). I had 6 days at hand so I decided to stay in the excellent Canopy Tower, only 30-40 minutes from Panama City. there are quite a few tours you can arrange from there and a good number of interesting species.

Canopy Tower runs a very efficient organization. You eat and sleep well and there is a lot to see even around the tower itself. You can either chose to go with one of their guides or go by yourself. They will drive you to anywhere you want and you can explore the area for yourself for only a few USD. It is great to explore new areas for yourself even if that means that you may miss a bit. Had Alex as a guide for a few of the excursions and he was excellent.

Canopy Tower

The Tower itself is at the top of a rainforest covered hill with a beautiful view over the rainforest canopy, the Panama Canal and Panama City in the very distance. It is a great way to start the morning with a cup of coffee on the roof top enjoying the sunrise over the canopy and the call of the Howler Monkeys.

You don't really have to leave the tower itself to see some mammals. The **Brown-throated 3-toed Sloth** is omnipresent and I saw him every time looking out of the window.



A few times troops of **Geoffroy's Tamarins**



and **Mantled Howler Monkeys** passed by feeding in the trees nearby. They hang out bananas to motivate the Tamarins to get closer. On the day of departure a **Northern Tamandua** climbed around the lodge mastering the barbed wire expertly.



The best was however at night. One of the trees just outside the dining room was fruiting at the time. Each night around 19, at least 2 **Kinkajous**



and a few **Western Night Monkeys** came feeding and they hung around for quite some time.



It was great to be able to alternate drinking wine with filming and photographing the creatures being quite comfortable. Once a **Central American Woolly Opossum** came for a visit and, on most nights, **Hoffman's 2-toed Sloths** could be seen as well. Great to see all at eye level! Inside the Tower many bats flew around, but I have no clue which species and the guides could not help with the identification as they have a few different species in the tower itself.

Semaphore Hill Road

The Semaphore Hill Rd is the windy road leading up to Canopy Tower. Great to walk down on, less great to walk up. Walked there 4 times during the day, once with a guide. The 4 trips on foot produced 1 troop of Geoffroy's Tamarins, 1 troop of Mantled Howler Monkeys, 1 to 3 **Central American Agoutis** on each walk and one **Red-tailed Squirrel**. Under a bridge at the end of the road (seen from the Tower perspective and there is only one), some Chestnut Sac-winged Bat bats are roosting.

The night walks, which we did by ourselves, were quite productive as well. Walked on 3 nights which produced 1 **nine-banded Armadillo**, 1 troop of Western Night Monkeys, 1 Central American Woolly Opossum and on all walks 1-2 Hoffman's 2-toed Sloth. 2 small mice chased each other on one occasion on the road, but they were too mobile for identification (and would probably still have been so if less mobile).



The Tower offers night drives, but only if they can fill the truck with at least 4 people, which was unfortunately not the case at our time of visit.

According to Alex, the best time to see Olingo and Kinkajou is from December to March during the flowering season.

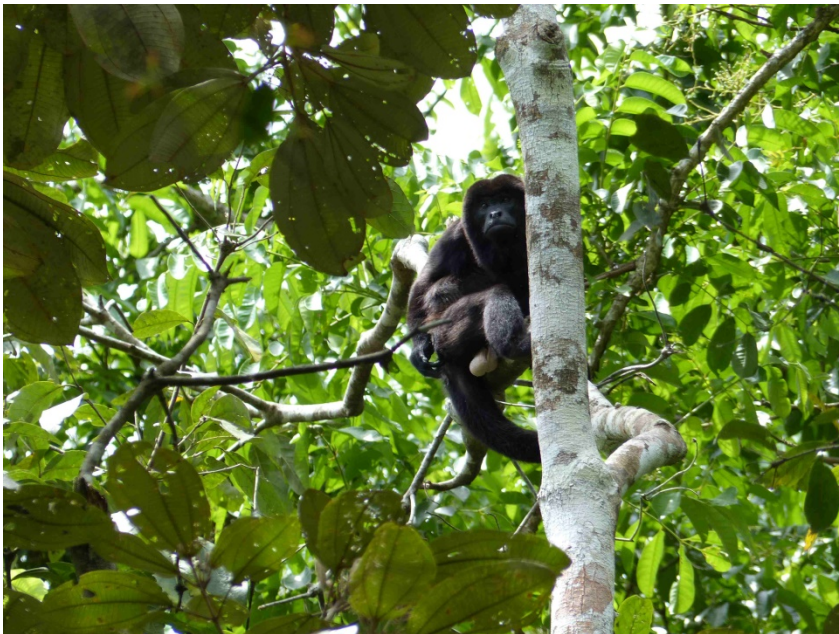
Plantation Road

Plantation Rd is just to the left in the beginning of Semaphore Hill Road by the parking lot. Walked there twice, once in the morning and once in the afternoon for a few hours each time, and once with a guide and once alone. This produced 1 troop of Geoffroy's Tamarins (in the morning without guide) and 2 **Central American Woolly Opossums** sitting in their day roost during an afternoon walk.



Pipeline Road (Soberania NP)

Made 2 half day tours there, once with a guide and once alone and both in the morning. The Pipeline Rd is world renowned for its birding, but it is also very good for some mammals. Mantled Howler Monkeys abound and on both occasions we found one Red-tailed squirrel and once also a **Variegated Squirrel**.



Once, when natured called, I went into the bush and scared a **Tayra**. He was as surprised as I was and ran swiftly away. A group just before us had spotted a Northern Tamandua, but when we came one minute later it was gone.

Went to the Rainforest Discovery Center once also which got a nice Canopy Tower. The short walks they have did not produced any mammaly apart from a troop of the omnipresent Mantled Howler Monkeys.

My guide has never seen Geoffroy's Tamarins along the Pipeline Road, so this is not the place to look for them.

Gatun Lake – boat ride

Canopy Tower drove us down to the Gamboa harbor and from there we took a private tour in a boat for 4 hours. There is no need to bring a guide as the boats man knows perfectly where the mammals are and seems to spot them well.

Close to the harbor, on the mouth of Chagres river, we spotted our first Northern Tamandua walking on the ground in the reed. It is also possible to spot Lesser Capybaras here too. We did not.

It is a very nice ride on the Panama canal cruising past the big ships, but I got a very ambivalent feeling about the mammal watching, especially the Geoffroy's Tamarins. The Gatun Lake itself produced the only **White-faced Capuchins** of the trip as well as a few troops of Mantled Howler Monkeys and some roosting **Long-nosed Bat** under a log. There are plenty of Geoffroy's Tamarins which are fed by the boats from Gamboa Rainforest Resort. The Tamarins seems to be trapped on small islands and are just waiting for the boats to show up with fruits. On one island, not bigger than 40*40 meters, one single Tamarin was screaming. Not a pretty sight at all.

There is an outside chance of seeing Black Spider Monkeys during the boat trip, but they are rarely seen according the boats man, and the Manatees, that used to be around, has not been seen for many years according to Alex. The tour is also nice for American Crocodiles and various lizards and turtles.

Gamboa Rainforest Resort

Although the building may not win a price as the most stylish hotel, the hotel ground is not bad for mammals. Went there on two afternoons mainly for seeing **Capybaras**.



On the lawn, just below the swimming pool, there is a small “swamp”, maybe 30*30m. The capybaras are said to hang out there in the wet season when it is filled with water. There were plenty of them there with babies. We also managed to destroy the filming for a TV-team which came late afternoon wanting to capture some footage. By that time they were already in the swamp which is filled with bushes. Went there once with Alex and he also found me a family of Western Night Monkeys inside the bamboo forest. The grass field also teems with Central American Agoutis, as does the village of Gamboa itself. The lawns are full of them. Alex told us that the hotel grounds also should be good for Pacas in the night (my excuse is that I was quite busy drinking wine and looking for Kinkajous and Night Monkeys and I have seen them elsewhere).

A good trip was over

Cheers

Tobi

Central American Agouti	<i>Dasyprocta punctata</i>
Brown-throated 3-toed Sloth	<i>Bradypus variegatus</i>
Hoffman's 2-toed Sloth	<i>Choloepus hoffmanni</i>
White-nosed Coati	<i>Nasua narica</i>
Greater Dog-like Bat	<i>Peropteryx kappleri</i>
Geoffroy's Tamarin	<i>Saguinus geoffroyi</i>
Northern Tamandua	<i>Tamandua mexicana</i>
Variegated Squirrel	<i>Sciurus variegatoides</i>
White-faced Capuchin	<i>Cebus albifrons</i>
Mantled Howler Monkey	<i>Alouatta palliata</i>
Central American Woolly Opossum	<i>Caluromys derbianus</i>
Kinkajou	<i>Potos flavus</i>
Western Night Monkey	<i>Aotus zonalis</i>
Red-tailed Squirrel	<i>Sciurus granatensis</i>
Lesser capybara	<i>Hydrochoerus isthmius</i>
Tayra	<i>Eira barbara</i>
9-banded Armadillo	<i>Dasypus novemcinctus</i>
Long-nosed bat	<i>Rhynchonycteris naso</i>
Chestnut Sac-winged Bat	<i>Cormura brevirostris</i>