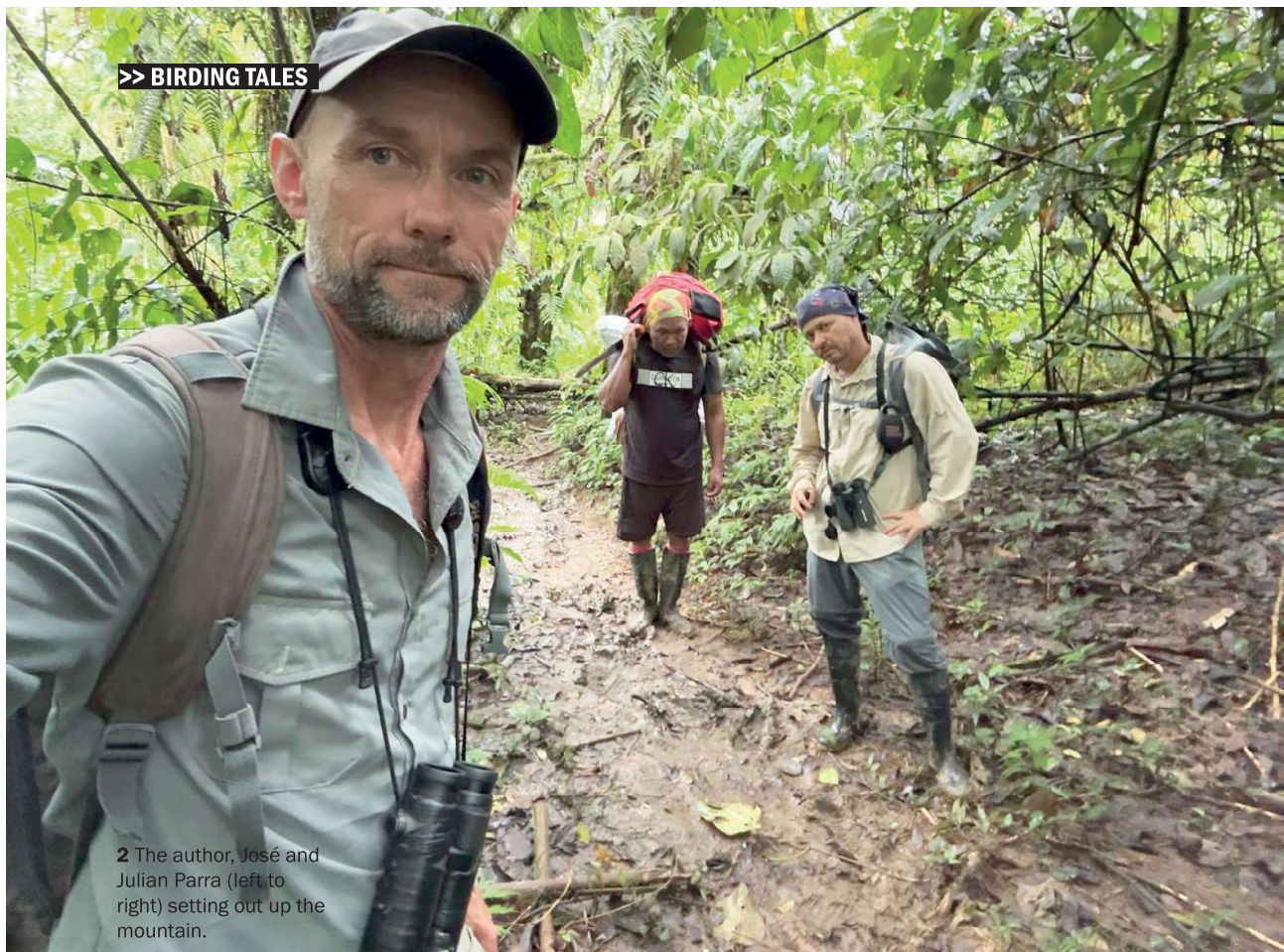


Exploring Cerro Mecana in the Colombian Chocó

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The Colombian Chocó is an excellent birding destination. But for those who venture off the beaten track—here at Cerro Mecana, on the Pacific coast near Bahía Solano—particularly impressive rewards may await.

1 Cerro Mecana: camp at sunrise
on the final day (Julian Parra/
Sapayoa Nature Tours).



2 The author, José and Julian Parra (left to right) setting out up the mountain.

Even after three birding trips to Colombia during 2020–23, I still had some 160 potential lifers left in the country, including some endemics. Avid birders know how addictive this country can be... And so I decided to return for a 40-day trip in November–December 2025. It was mostly a road trip, starting in Cartagena on the Caribbean coast, driving south along the Cordillera Occidental to dpto. Antioquia, down to the Manizales area (Caldas) and back north along the Cordillera Oriental, to Llanos de Arauca, Serranía del Perijá and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountains. After this epic adventure, I was back in Cartagena, ready for the last leg of the trip: five days in the Chocó.

The Chocó region stretches from northern Ecuador to the Panama border, extending along the Pacific coast and Pacific-slope foothills. Dpto. Chocó is also one of the 32 Colombian departments and comprises the northern half of the geographical Chocó. The climate is hot, humid and very rainy all year. Mostly covered with pristine rainforest, this biodiversity hotspot has very high endemism among birds and other taxa.

Checking eBird to confirm where my target

species had been seen, and bearing in mind that I had previously visited the southern Colombian Chocó, I decided to head for Bahía Solano, north dpto. Chocó. Besides the usual Chocó specialities, I spotted that eBird records for Cerro Mecana, a coastal mountain 7 km northnortheast of Bahía Solano, during 2021–24 included several species normally restricted to the Darién highlands, 150 km further north, on the Colombia–Panama border. These were Russet-crowned Quail-Dove *Zentrygon goldmani* (Near Threatened), Pirre Hummingbird *Goldmania bella* (Near Threatened), Speckled Antshrike *Xenornis setifrons* (Near Threatened; formerly called ‘Spiny-faced Antshrike’ by some authorities), Varied Solitaire *Myadestes coloratus* (Near Threatened) and Pirre Chlorospingus *Chlorospingus inornatus*. Reaching 1,118 m altitude, Cerro Mecana is the only mountain above 1,000 m in north dpto. Chocó. These two reasons were enough to give me an appetite for climbing up there—and seeing what I could find.

I got in touch with Julian Parra of Sapayoa Nature Tours, who is the main local bird guide; he kindly organised a three-day trek up Cerro