



November 20,2019

Daniel Arias
Vice President
The Canopy Family
Panama City, Panama

Dear Mr. Arias:

My group of 10 participants just returned from a magical trip to Canopy Camp Darien and Canopy Tower. The facilities were wonderful and the incredibly welcoming staff saw to our every need. The kitchen staff took great care to ensure that the vegetarian and gluten-free diets were thoughtfully prepared and, following a random comment about my allergy to pineapple, they always offered an alternative to that as well.

I've never before written a letter like this for any guide on any of our annual trips, but Eliecer Rodriguez, our primary guide on both portions of the trip, was truly exceptional, one of the finest bird guides I have ever worked with. Our group included both experienced and novice birders, a couple of which were oblivious to general behavior guidelines. Eli could be working hard to locate a bird for the group, while these two ladies were looking elsewhere and not paying any attention, calling out for example, 'little yellow bird with wingbars in the tall tree – what is it?'. While our experienced birders rolled their eyes, Eli would always very patiently take a moment to quickly locate and identify the invariable Tropical Kingbird or Rusty-margined Flycatcher and not miss a beat on locating the target species bird for the rest of us.

Because of Eli, we observed a very high number of antbirds (10+), a group that is notoriously difficult to find. He was so familiar with their identification by sound that he quickly located them and then was able to whistle their calls, attracting them to the edge of the thicket in which they were hidden.

On the day we visited the Harpy Eagle nest, a very muddy slog, Eli helped our oldest participant, an 80-year-old woman, navigate the muddy terrain, holding her hand and helping her to balance on the slippery slopes.

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Further, Eli is expert at digiscoping using only his hands to hold the various cell phones of everyone, getting the formerly impossible images and oh-so-patiently taking one phone after another so each person went home with their 'own' photos.

Thanks to his sharp eyes, we even watched a Great Tinamou foraging beneath dense vegetation along Pipeline Road, a species that I have heard on many occasions, but had never before seen.

Near the end of our final outing of our final day, along the Chagras River, he found an Ornate Hawk-eagle feeding in a tree. It was only because Eli scanned not just the landscape in front of the group, but also checked the areas behind us, that this bird was found. Were it not for his sharp eyes, we never would have seen the most exciting bird of the trip (in my opinion), a totally unexpected treat.

It was such a pleasure to work with Eliecer, one of the finest guides I've ever met! I hope I get to work with him again in the future on another trip to Panama.

Thank you for managing a truly exceptional tour company in this beautiful country!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gail Garber". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gail Garber
Executive Director