



ROCKJUMPER

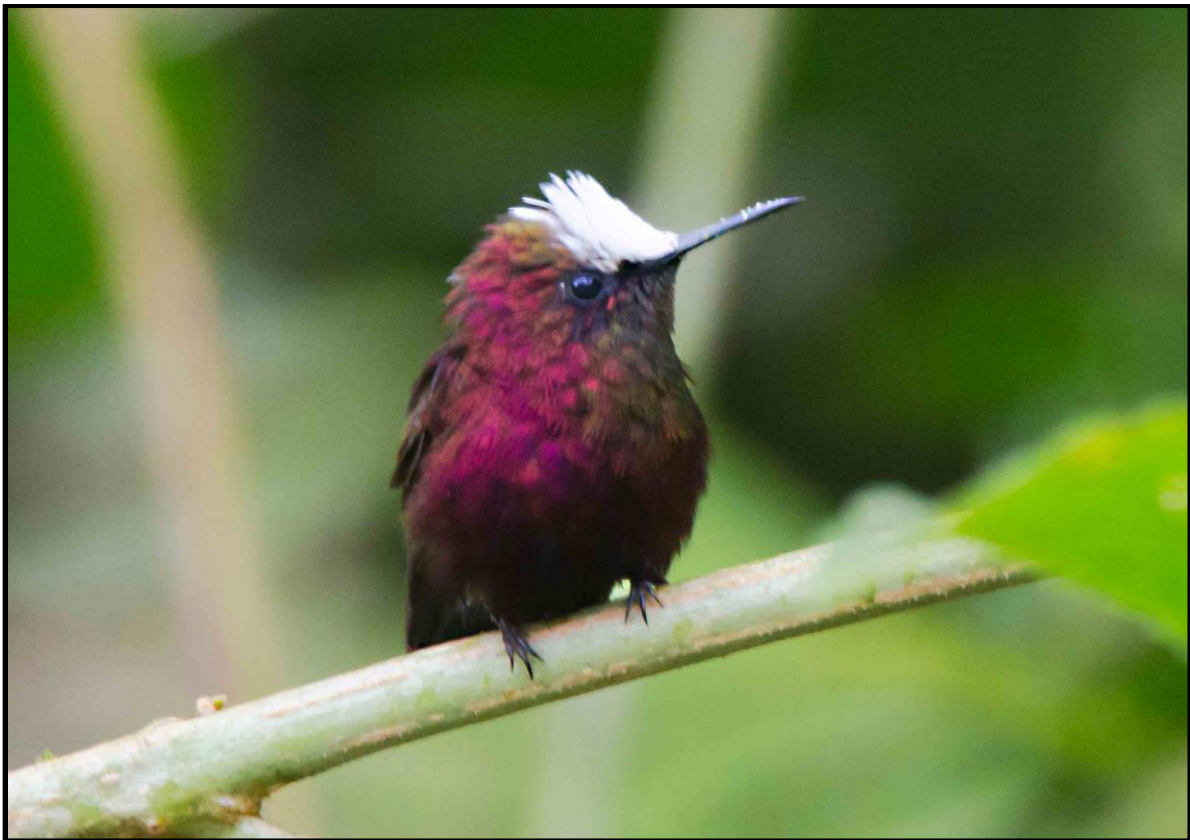
Worldwide Birding Adventures

Costa Rica

Cloud Forest & Quetzals

Trip Report

12th to 26th October 2016



Snowcap by Forrest Rowland

Trip report compiled by Tour Leader: Forrest D. Rowland

Rockjumper Birding Tours



Tour Summary

Tour Leaders: Forrest Rowland and Richard Garrigues

Tour Participants: Kevin Bailey, Susan Bailey, Joel Beyer, Kathy Beyer, Kathy Keef, Connie Lintz, John Maginness, Tim Pendill, Leith Woodall and Peter Woodall

Top 10 Tour Highlights (as voted by participants):

1. Resplendent Quetzal
2. Turquoise Cotinga
3. Scarlet Macaw
4. Turquoise-browed Motmot
5. Ornate Hawk-Eagle
6. Lesser Ground Cuckoo
7. Yellow-eared Toucanet
8. Long-tailed Manakin
9. Fiery-billed Aracari
10. Keel-billed Toucan

Honourable mentions go to: Snowcap, Red-capped Manakin, Baird's Trogon, and Black-crested Coquette

Top 5 Pre-Tour Highlights (as voted by participants):

1. Sunbittern
2. Snowcap
3. Green Thorntail
4. Zeledon's Antbird
5. Dull-mantled Antbird

Tour Intro:

The tiny Central American nation of Costa Rica has, since the revolution in the mid-1950's, evolved from a banana and pineapple republic (though those two exports are still integral in their economy) into a country whose main product and brand is tourism. It benefits from a superb infrastructure to service numerous visitors from all over the globe, catering to the complete myriad of interests that travellers abroad might want to indulge. If you want a relaxing beach vacation at a fancy resort, it can be found. If you want a backcountry trek fully-outfitted to the top of the highest peak in the country, Mt. Chirripo (3820masl/12533fasl) that can just as easily be arranged! Eco-tourism was an early interest in Costa Rica, which became perhaps the first Latin American country to truly embrace the potential of this specific type of tourism. In kind, avitourism was quickly accepted, promoted, and an astonishing variety of lodges, parks, well-maintained trails, even hanging bridges and scenic viewpoints are scattered across the country through every imaginable habitat to provide for it.

It took little time for travelling birders to discover that this small gem had become far more than just a tiny tropical nook. With over 850 species, it is easy to understand why! The backbone of the country



is formed by a towering, beautiful mountain range clad in oaks and bromeliads, where the cloud forests are home to exotic species including the Resplendent Quetzal, Black Guan, Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Golden-browed Chlorophonia and Spangle-cheeked Tanager. A wide variety of habitats, that included Caribbean humid forest and the northern Pacific lowland scrub, were explored on our tour.

We enjoyed many striking species of trogons, toucans, motmots, hummingbirds and migrant warblers, among many other spectacular birds, as we surveyed the best birding locations from the Caribbean to the Pacific, North to South. Thrilling birding, quality lodges, and an easy pace made this tour perfect for those who had yet to experience neotropical birding. With some forty-odd country and regional endemics to seek out, Costa Rica harbours more than enough speciality species to have appeased the more hardcore lister, and plenty of ease-of-birding to maintain a relatively relaxed pace. This was one tour to satiate any appetite, and that's not a pun referring to the consistently delicious cuisine that we enjoyed from beginning to end.

Tour Summary:

As a company, this was our second Costa Rican adventure. With a bit of additional knowledge from last year's foray, scouting, and a few minor tweaks to the initial itinerary, we maximised our exposure to each unique habitat, and the denizens calling each home. Given last year's outstanding success, despite being the first run, we found that the preceding had set a hard act to follow. With some persistence, attention to detail, and a good dose of serendipity in the field, we managed to surpass last year's tour, if by a nose. Having Richard Garrigues, the author of the most recent field guide to Costa Rican avifauna, never hurts! His overall botanical, zoological, and historical knowledge was appreciated by all. That's not to mention the obvious experience he brought with his ornithological expertise.

In 14 days of birding, we saw a whopping 483 species, recording over 500 total! A fabulous trip tally, especially considering how much time we spent in deep forest habitats at various elevations. Add to that 13 species of mammals, 23 species of reptiles and amphibians, and one can rightly conclude that we had an impressively productive time in Costa Rica, by any standard. Among tour highlights that didn't qualify for the Top 10 were beautiful Northern Tufted Flycatchers, Chestnut-colored Woodpeckers at eye-level, Black-bellied Hummingbirds showing off their bizarre flat-top hairdos, Black-breasted Wood Quail singing right before our eyes, Spotted Wood Quail pumping their crests in full view, Ornate Hawk-Eagle perched right next to the parking lot for so long that we were distracted by a Yellow-bellied Tyrannulet, bizarre Brown-billed Scythebill zooming in at eye-level, Scarlet and Great Green Macaws cruising by in perfect evening light, mistletoe full Elegant Euphonia and Golden-browed Chlorophonias, crippling views of Orange-collared and Red-capped Manakin, and three separate antswarms allowing stellar looks at some of the most sought-after species in the neotropics. Costa Rica surpassed all expectations by even including a young-of-the-year Margay at our feet!



**Black-bellied Hummingbird
by Forrest Rowland**



Detailed Description of Our Tour



Scintillant Hummingbird by Forrest Rowland

Cinchona and Virgen del Socorro (800-1800 masl):

Our tour convened at the airport-convenient Hotel Robledal, where the grounds host a nice array of widespread Central Valley and Pacific Slope species. Tour participants who arrived early might've enjoyed views of Rufous-backed Wren, Hoffman's Woodpecker, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Rose-throated Becard, a few species of doves and parrots, or the odd waterbird. Given that these species could all be encountered later on in the tour, we started out on the first full day of the tour, for La Selva Research Station - but not in a hurry, as our route up and over the continental divide passed several wonderful sites in the general area known as La Cinchona.

Heading up and out of the Central Valley, we skirted the flanks of Vulcan Poas and took a brief

comfort stop at a conveniently located eatery that happens to host a fine hummingbird garden. Our first stop of the tour yielded up Violet Sabrewing, Volcano Hummingbird, Scintillant Hummingbird, Purple-throated Mountaingem, and the recently-split Admirable (Magnificent) Hummingbird, with a few passerines thrown in to boot. Not a bad start at all! While the town of La Cinchona was swept away in an earthquake decades before (Yikes!), the quaint Mirador La Cinchona restaurant remained, and was our first official birding stop of the tour after passing many Eastern Meadowlark, Finsch's Parakeets, Red-billed Pigeon, Clay-colored Thrush, Melodious Blackbirds, and Great-tailed Grackles en route.

Situated just over the divide, on the Caribbean slope, Mirador attracts several species confined to this slope in Costa Rica. While Green Hermit and Violet Sabrewing are widespread at elevation, White-bellied Mountaingem and Coppery-headed Emerald were our first endemics of the tour. Green Thorntail put in an appearance at the feeders, hovering just centimetres above a participant's head. Meanwhile, fruit feeding stations (now numerous in Costa Rica) attracted some amazing colour! Silver-throated, Blue-throated and Passerini's Tanagers, Bananaquit, and Baltimore Oriole, provided our first eye-popping feeding experience. We were also treated to our first, but far from last, raptor migration spectacle of the tour. Riding the thermals forming just off from the parking lot, dozens of Broad-winged Hawks were forming kettles to begin their day's journey south!

After enjoying some garden birds here, and a brief stop at the lovely Cascadas La Paz (where we picked up Torrent Tyrannulets), we continued to the morning's main birding destination: Virgen del Socorro. Located at about 1000m elevation in the upper foothills,



Baltimore Oriole by Forrest Rowland



this site allows some unique access to a hard-to-reach elevation on the Caribbean Slope, with corresponding interesting species. A few of the first species to greet us at this site were Broad-winged and Short-tailed Hawks, a migrant Olive-sided Flycatcher, and our first Tropical Kingbird of the tour.



Coppery-headed Emerald
by Forrest Rowland

Two Bat Falcons were perched in the distance, but mixed flock activity downhill caught our attention. Shortly after strolling down towards the bridge, discussing elements of the nearby subtropical vegetation, we were interrupted by the substantial mixed flock moving through the nearby understory. It was an overload! We managed to pick out Red-faced Spinetail, Slate-throated Whitestarts, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and several Chestnut-sided, Tennessee and Wilsons' Warblers, and Tropical Parula. Exciting to have both migrants and residents mingling in massive bird parties! That was just the beginning. Soon we were inundated with the above-mentioned species, with the addition of American Redstarts, Blackburnian and Mourning Warbler, Buff-throated Saltator, Yellow-olive Flatbill, Silver-throated, Bay-headed, Blue-gray, Passerini's, Crimson-collared, and both the scarce Emerald and Speckled Tanagers!! It was a fine introduction into just how exciting mixed flocks can be.

Then a downpour ensued, which we sheltered ourselves from beneath a convenient road crew tent, before heading back to the vehicle after the rain had ceased. Of course, we can't forget the lovely scope views of White Hawk that we enjoyed on the walk back to the bus.

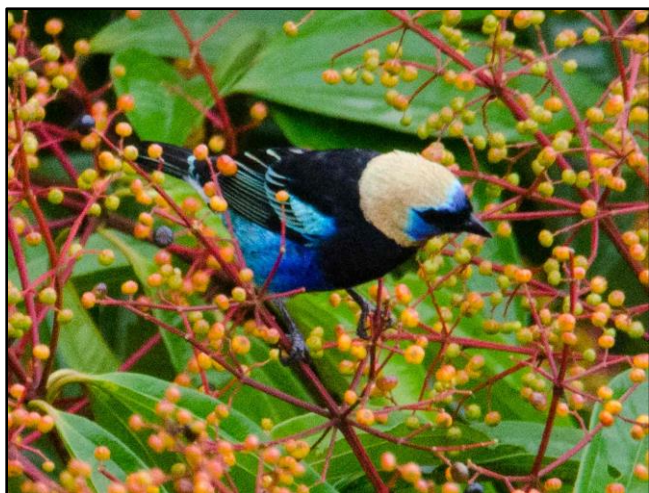
Keeping time in mind, we made but one brief stop at Laguna San Miguel, after a lunch stop that yielded our first views of the gorgeous Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, raucous Great Green Macaws, and nicely perched White-crowned Parrots. Now, this large pond's open water was of little interest, save for an itinerant Green Heron skulking in the weeds. The main area of interest happened to be the wet meadow adjacent to the pond, where we found Olive-crowned and Gray-crowned Yellowthroats, Thick-billed Seed Finch, Variable and White-collared Seedeaters, Blue-black Grassquit, and our only White-throated Flycatcher of the tour, amongst others.

La Selva OTS Research Station (45 masl): We had one afternoon, one full day, and most of the following afternoon to explore the maze of outstanding trails through the myriad of habitats on the vast property protected in this 6 square mile preserve. Obviously not having enough time to cover the whole area, we focused on the nearer trails that transected both secondary and primary forests. That is, when we could finally pull ourselves away from the unbelievable riot of activity taking place right around the main buildings!



White-bellied Mountaingem
by Forrest Rowland





Golden-hooded Tanager by Forrest Rowland

Rufous-winged Woodpecker, and Pale-billed Woodpeckers were all seen within 50m or so of reception. Whoa!

The timing of this tour is perfect for peak raptor migration. For the experienced hawk watcher, raptor migration in Costa Rica is mind-boggling. For the uninitiated, what we witness tends to leave some participants dumbfounded. Hundreds and hundreds of vultures and hawks littered the sky, streaming from one tornado-ing kettle of soaring migrants to the next, spanning West-to-East, horizon to horizon. Accurately estimating the number of birds on a heavy day is nearly impossible, though training in how to count large groups, and experience, help. We estimated about 150 to 200 birds crossing every 2 to 3 minutes, when the flight was heaviest. Spectacular! Other birds were clearly in full migration, as we encountered several flocks of mixed Swallows and Chimney Swifts, numbering in the hundreds, as well. This phenomenon, though obviously occurring in Spring, is not nearly so concentrated during the northward passage. Autumn is a very special time on the Caribbean slope of Costa Rica!

The habitats beyond the reception are all accessed via wide, evenly paved trails that accommodate a big group wonderfully. We spent at least two hours just on the entrance road alone, it was so productive. Given our accommodations right on the property, just a short drive away, we had one dry night to get in some night birding and frogging. While the primary forest has some special species, we spent most of our time at the edge between secondary and primary forests - to maximise our exposure to all possible species. Having been established some 25 years prior, the trails are all well-travelled by researchers, meaning that the wildlife is very accustomed to human presence. This made for some of the most incredible and bizarre encounters with utterly tame Crested Guans that one literally walks around, and Collared Peccary that walk towards, rather than away from you, when encountered on the trail! Mammal and Herp diversity are just as impressive as bird diversity here, and we were lucky enough to encounter troops of both Howler and Spider Monkeys, a number of Collared Peccary, one Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth, and several Agoutis in our short time there, as well as several species of frogs and one Drab Cat-eyed Snake, as well!



Grey Hawk by Forrest Rowland





Yellowish Flycatcher by Forrest Rowland

Black-cowled Oriole, Plain-colored Tanager, Red-throated Ant Tanager, and great views of the difficult canopy-dwelling Black-headed Tody Tyrant. Perhaps a highlight of our time here was getting the “hat trick” of puffbirds!!! We managed to see all three species of puffbirds here in one day: White-necked, Pied, and White-whiskered, with great looks at each.

Braulio Carrillo and El Tapir (450 masl): We added one full day’s birding to our itinerary this year for this day. Getting access to the Caribbean foothill forests around Braulio Carrillo is a real treat. While there is much overlap with the Arenal area, some species are more readily found here and the more exposure to this, the most bird-rich microhabitat in the country, the better! We began with a visit to Rainforest Adventures (Sky Tram) abutting Braulio Carrillo NP. This iconic site is known, primarily, as THE place in Costa Rica to see Bare-necked Umbrellabird. Sorely, we missed it by only a few minutes! Knowing it was by no means guaranteed (and downright unlikely on any visit) we moved into the forest in search of other species more easily found here. In short order, we were rewarded with point-blank views of a singing Northern Schiffornis! An understory mixed flock unlike any other followed shortly thereafter. For whatever reason, this flock was moving slowly, if at all, allowing spectacular looks at each member of the ranks. Streak-crowned Antwreio, Checker-throated Antwren, Tawny-faced Gnatwren, Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher, and Carmiol’s Tanager were far-and-away the highlights of the flock, given that lengthy, open views of each were enjoyed. Just a bit further up the trail, we had our first Great Tinamou of the tour and White-crowned Manakins. The best experience, personally, was having a male and female Spotted Antbird overhead in full view, singing away merrily. One of the most ornate birds of the bunch.

After a successful visit here, we headed for a picnic lunch beneath howler monkeys at Braulio Carrillo NP headquarters. Rain was beginning to fall, so we headed over to nearby El Tapir gardens to watch hummingbirds. And hummingbirds abounded! Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and Black-crested Coquettes were mere distractions from the (at

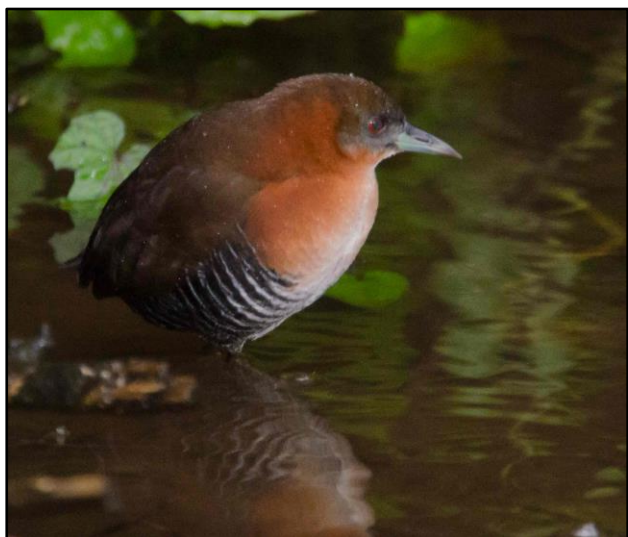
Too long to list here in its entirety, the staggering list of birds we enjoyed at this famous site included those mentioned above plus Grey-headed Kite, Vermiculated Screech Owl, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swifts, Bronzy, Stripe-throated, and Long-billed Hermits, Blue-chested Hummingbird, Slaty-tailed and Gartered Trogons, Rufous and Broad-billed Motmots, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Keel-billed and Yellow-throated (Black-mandibled) Toucans, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Great Green Macaw, Olive-throated and Orange-chinned Parakeets, Red-lored Amazon, Northern Barred Woodcreeper, Fasciated Antshrike, Eye-ringed Flatbill, Long-tailed Tyrant, Bright-rumped Attila, White-collared Manakin, Cinnamon Becard, Stripe-breasted and Black-throated Wrens, Long-billed Gnatwren, Northern Waterthrush, Buff-rumped Warbler,



**Russet-naped Wood Rail
by Forrest Rowland**



least) 5 gorgeous Snowcaps that were coming to the flowering porterweed. Awesome!



White-throated Crake by Forrest Rowland

Between bouts of drizzle, a mixed flock of tanagers came through that included the scarce and colourful Black-and-yellow Tanager, as well as more Speckled Tanagers than we could count. But it was an antswarm, and its star attendee, that stole the show. A short walk into the forest from the clearing put us in a great position for several looks at the incomparable Ocellated Antbird. One of the largest members of the Antbird crew, this stunning, noisy, species' bright blue orbital skin glows in the forest gloom, and the camouflage provided by those amazing black spots becomes a beautiful adornment through the binoculars. Being an antswarm obligate, one must be fortunate enough to stumble upon an antswarm to have a good chance of seeing this impressive bird. This was the first of three massive antswarms we would encounter, all with their own

unique constituents.

Cataratas del Toro (1600 masl): This hole-in-the-wall site has only recently been appreciated for how productive a birding site it can be. Off the beaten path a bit, but still easily accessible, the owners of this large property have developed a nice loop trail through fabulous mid-elevation forest. The trails give access to several viewpoints looking out over the beautiful Toro Waterfalls and the newly founded Juan Castro Blanco National Park, one of the country's largest. Of course, one has to peel him/herself away from the remarkable show at the hummingbird garden, which is quite possibly the best in the country! At the feeding area alone, we noted 9 species of hummingbirds, including Green Hermit, Green Thorntail, Brown Violetear, Black-bellied Hummingbird, and White-bellied Mountaingem. A short walk along the loop trail had us come across two separate, huge, mixed flocks. Unfortunately, most of the flock birds were just far enough away to be difficult to observe, so we had to settle for Orange-bellied Trogon, Ochraceous Wren, Slaty-backed Nightingale Thrush, Chestnut-capped Brush Finch, and Sooty-faced Finch as recompense. Which we gladly did!

Arenal Observatory Lodge and surrounds (250 to 550 masl): Spanning from drier lowland to more humid foothill elevation, the habitats around Arenal Volcano and Lake Arenal, a bit West of Sarapiquí and La Selva, are home to a wide variety of species ranging from more lowland affinity species to true Caribbean foothill specialists. That makes this area one of the most diverse birding hubs in the country!



Birding Arenal by Forrest Rowland





Margay by Forrest Rowland

Sendero Bogarin. Though it doesn't host a huge variety of species, this stop is special, as being THE place to see White-throated and Uniform Crakes. We saw 5 separate White-throated Crakes, including two little black fluffballs running along behind their parents! Uniform Crake was only a brief glimpse, but additionally, and to our surprise, a Russet-naped Wood Rail came out right before our eyes! The fruit "feeders" here were busy too, despite the afternoon drizzle. Gray-headed Chachalacas, Greyish Saltator, and Black-headed Saltator were new for the trip, as was an itinerant male Barred Antshrike that came hopping through the bushes of his own accord. The owner of the tiny establishment was good enough to show us one of the Red-eyed Leaf Frogs, resident in his garden. Great to see this little icon of the country!

Given Arenal Observatory lodge's extensive gardens are complete with an absurd number of porterweed (i.e. natural hummingbird feeder) hedges, some of our bird sightings came from right around the lodge and spa. Blue-throated Goldentail, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, and Violet-headed Hummingbird were among the more numerous hummers visiting the porterweed. The fruit feeder out on the deck was a hit, as a female Great Curassow was attending with her young! Eye-level views of nearly a dozen Red-legged Honeycreepers, Green Honeycreeper, Golden-hooded Tanager, White-ruffed Manakin, Black-cowled Oriole, and Montezuma Oropendolas were enjoyed from the deck, as well as creeping around to spend time with a young Margay, whose mother has long called this property home. This was her third kitten birthed in the past few years here. A gorgeous creature rarely seen! Other fine species seen well here included Crimson-collared Tanager, Russet Antshrike, Gartered Trogon, Orange-billed Sparrow, and Yellow-throated and the gorgeous Tawny-capped Euphonia.

One afternoon's visit to the tangled vegetation and tall forests near Lake Arenal was very productive. A lone Keel-billed Motmot greeted us as soon as we stepped out of the vehicle! This was followed up shortly thereafter with a nice mixed flock, before digging into some sought-after antbirds. Luckily, a pair of Dull-mantled Antbirds came right out onto the

We were based at the scenic, very comfortable, Arenal Observatory Lodge & Spa. The gardens and trails here are worth a full day's efforts, and the view of the perfectly conical Vulcan Arenal, at dawn, is worth the visit alone. However, we did allow some important time for lower-elevation sites near the Lake, and higher-elevation birding at Sky Trek Sky Tram Arenal, the latter of which has some of the best birds anywhere. Throw a semi-tame Margay into the mix, add some delicious dining, and a beautiful pool (which the Aussies, at least, quality-tested), and this site was definitely one of the tour's best stops!

But before reaching our destination, we made a brief stop at a seldom-visited stakeout,



Dull-mantled Antbird by Forrest Rowland



road where we walked, the male displaying his vividly white mantle shield (normally hidden from view) for photos! While Bare-crowned Antbirds never are, and never would be, as obliging as their Dull-mantled cousins, with persistence, the group was rewarded with views of the bizarrely-adorned male (several participants exclaiming “look at his blue head!” when they got a view) or rusty female.



Resplendent Quetzal by Forrest Rowland

view, for nearly a minute, facing this way and that, just 20 feet overhead. It was amazing! But not as amazing as the juvenile Ornate Hawk Eagle that greeted our arrival by spending about 10 minutes perched over the parking lot. Yep, the parking lot!!!

Monteverde area (900 – 1700 masl): The name Monteverde, along with the word zipline, has become synonymous with Costa Rica over the years. The interesting area, founded by Quakers who immigrated to their area in protest of the reinstatement of the U.S. Draft in the 50s, is the western region of a vast area of over 70,000 hectares of pristine lower-to-mid-elevation cloud forest that spans from here to the northeast, beyond Vulcan Arenal. Settled as a dairy farming area, the farmed area stayed relatively small, while most of the private properties owned by the Quakers remained untouched forest. The interesting culture and the intact forest attracted the attention of tourists and birders alike. This became one of the first cloud forest areas to ever be studied by foreign ornithologists, in all of Latin America. It is, one could say, the type specimen, and is correspondingly well-known in the world of researchers and nature enthusiasts

Our morning visit to the trails at Sky Trek was as good as, or better than, expected. Though birding is restricted to narrow forest trails, the birds were active in flocks nearly all morning, and the suspension bridges and scenic viewpoint platform give great access to canopy species seldom seen anywhere. While no single visit to this site will ever yield all of the hoped-for species, we were lucky enough to come across several of them. While Thicket Antpitta stayed, for the most part, buried in the tangles (entirely expected for that species), we had stunning views of Black-headed Nightingale Thrush, Dusky Antbird, Northern Nightingale Wren, and Song Wren - all skulkers! Other mid and understory flock birds that we encountered included Yellow-billed Cacique, Tawny-crowned Greenlet, Eastern Woodhaunter, Buff-throated Foliage Gleaner, and the rare Brown-billed Scythebill. At the lookout, we saw Black-and-Yellow Tanager, Purple-crowned Fairy, and a pair of Black-cheeked Woodpeckers building a nest. Just above the viewpoint, I heard some rustling overhead that sounded distinctly toucan-esque. Sure enough, three Yellow-eared Toucanets were right above us! With some manoeuvring, we got in line with a male that decided to hop out in full



Red-eyed Treefrog by Forrest Rowland



alike.



Black Guan by Clayton Burne

afternoon off. That being said, there simply wasn't an afternoon on the tour what wasn't impressively productive, so few chose to rest. The weather upon our arrival at Santa Elena was fairly abysmal. The following day was gorgeous!

While most visitors to Monteverde come seeking Quetzals (well, we were too of course), we had the opportunity to see those magnificent birds later in the tour at Savegre. We focused on the awesome list of endemic and scarce birds that are more easily found here than at lower, or higher elevations. That being said, we saw two male Resplendent Quetzals in short order, at eye-level, showing ridiculously well! So well, in fact, that we didn't really bother to hunt them down later in the tour. Saturated views allowed us to relax on the "Star Bird" (it IS on the cover the itinerary and checklist, after all) and seek out others. The other wanted birds of our time here were Black Guan (awesome, relaxed view), Black-breasted Wood Quail (at arm's reach...literally...then singing right before our eyes), Stripe-tailed Hummingbird, Lesson's Motmot, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Prong-billed Barbet (great views of this localised endemic!), Blue-throated Toucanet (several good views), Spotted Barbtail, Streak-breasted Treehunter, Lineated Foliage Gleaner, Grey-throated Leaf-tossers (we had to walk *around* them to continue up the trail!), Plain Antvireo, Yellowish Flycatcher, Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Long-tailed Manakin (incomparable), Slaty-backed Nightingale Thrush, Orange-billed Nightingale Thrush, Black-faced Solitaire, White-throated Thrush, Golden-winged Warbler, Black-eared Warbler, Philadelphia Vireo, Collared Whitestart, White-eared Ground Sparrow (surprisingly lovely), and White-naped Brush Finch. Again, a highlight of this area was encountering an antswarm. Bird behaviour at its most opportunistic, antswams attract an astonishing array of species! We had easy views of Ruddy and Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Kentucky Warbler, Rufous-and-White Wren, White-breasted Wood Wren, Rufous-

We spent one afternoon birding the continental divide, at the renowned Santa Elena Reserve, which is increasingly less-visited as focus has shifted east towards the other reserves. It was a perfect introduction to cloud forest birding – rainy but active! We spent the following day between the two, perhaps, best-known forest reserves here: Curicancha and Monteverde Cloudforest Reserve. The elevation range between the two allows access to the various transition zones accessible here, and by adding a visit to the Finca Ecologica, situated below the town of Santa Elena, on our final morning here, we were even able to enjoy some of the Pacific foothill forest specialists too!!! Our game plan allowed for relaxed birding, a bit of down time after lunch, and the option for some guests, this being our mid-point in the tour, to relax if they desired an



Tricolored Heron by Forrest Rowland



breasted Wren, and several of the aforementioned species right at this spot! And seeing the swarming behaviour of the ants, and the creatures fleeing their impending doom is utterly fascinating! After enjoying loads of birds, delicious pizza, homemade ice cream, and some sunny weather, it was onward and downward to the coast.



Turquoise-browed Motmot
by Forrest Rowland

Finca Ensenada area (8 masl): This was the only site we visited in the dry forest and scrub of north-west Costa Rica, a habitat which extends all the way up into Mexico, becoming more arid as one heads north. Here, at Ensenada, we were at the southern terminus of this particular deciduous-type forest, which was incredibly lush and green during the time of our tour. Any time from January to July, and one would have found the lush, viney forests, damp meadows, and tall grass, brown and all but barren!

As it was, we visited at a wonderful time of the year, with lots of bird activity! We spent a little time birding the fields before spending a bit of time birding the coastal estuaries and salt pans in the area, focusing more on the forest edge areas. With only one afternoon and the following morning at our disposal, we birded our way through decent habitat towards our lodgings right on the Gulf of Nicoya, before bedding down. We began at dawn, looking out over the Gulf, and worked our way to the salt pans at high tide for optimal shorebirding, spending some time at blooming mistletoe for hummers and forested corridors for other dry forest specials. Again, migration was very evidently in full swing. The birding was fabulous!

Pelicans, Frigatebirds, Ibis, Storks, Spoonbills, and a very decent variety of shorebirds were noted. Grey (Black-bellied), American Golden, Semipalmated, and Wilson's Plovers, Lesser

Yellowlegs, Western Willet, Spotted Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Surfbird, Sanderling, Semipalmated, Western, Least, and Stilt Sandpipers were in good numbers. Around the lodge, and the forest edges, we picked up two Pacific Screech Owls, Black-headed Trogon, White-fronted and Yellow-naped Amazons, Green-breasted Mango, Canivet's Emerald, Cinnamon Hummingbird, and Plain-capped Starthroat were hitting the blooming mistletoe in a number of trees, gorgeous Turquoise-browed Motmots were on display, and we managed to call in a ton of birds using a Ferruginous Pygmy Owl loop tape. Nutting's and Brown-crested Flycatchers, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, Yellow-olive Flatbill, White-lored Gnatcatcher, Northern Scrub Flycatcher, Spot-breasted and Streak-breasted Oriole, and Banded Wrens all came roaring in to see what the fuss was about!

One of our best encounters in this area occurred when Richard and I both looked at each other, and simultaneously asked, "Did you do that?", when we heard the rolling call of Lesser Ground Cuckoo! We sprang into action, heading directly towards the sound. The bird continued to respond and move straight towards us, finally popping in for fabulous looks. This normally



Orange-collared Manakin
by Forrest Rowland



skulking species can be quite responsive this time of year, as was the case for us with this particular individual. Double-striped Thick-knee was another highlight, as they can be difficult to encounter in the tall grass.



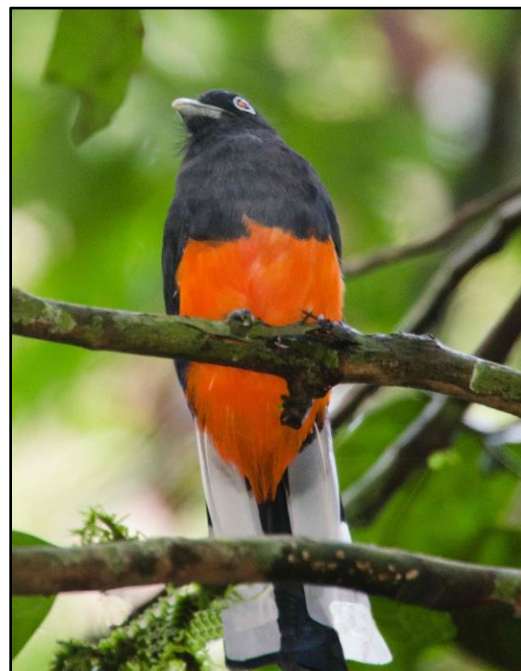
Red-capped Manakin by Forrest Rowland

Villa Lapas, Carara NP, and the Rio Tarcoles (0 – 100 masl): Carara National Park is considered one of the best, if not THE best, birding destination in the country. That declaration is certainly subjective, given that it is what one wants to see. Baird's Trogon, Orange-collared Manakin, Riverside Wren, Costa Rican Swift, Fiery-billed Aracari, Streak-chested and Spot-crowned Euphonia are a few of the regularly encountered birds here, and all endemic. The fascinating and convenient thing about Carara is that it comprises the northern terminus of a very small strip of humid, Pacific lowland, microhabitat that extends from here south, just across the Panamanian border. This lush habitat is home to some 400 species of birds, many of which are unique to this band of habitat, some being restricted to only Costa Rica

and adjacent Panama, others just downright gorgeous to behold. No matter the description or quality of the avifauna of Carara that one reads about, the experience of walking the National Park's well-maintained trails is thrilling. Mixed flocks join mixed flocks; while monkeys troop around overhead. Tinamous elicit their haunting, tremulous whistles as one walks slowly through the dappled shade of the deep forest. Antpittas scamper in the trail before our eyes. It's magical!

By dedicating several hours to exploring this iconic park, complemented by time spent near our wonderful lodgings at Villa Lapas. Set right amidst some of the forest habitat that Carara National Park protects, Villa Lapas has great birding right on the grounds and a property line that extends two kilometres up the hills behind the lodge where we spent one early morning birding. The defining northern limit to this habitat is the Rio Tarcoles, the third largest drainage in Costa Rica, which runs from the slopes of the volcanoes circling the Central Valley down into the Pacific Ocean. Famed for its massive (both in size of individuals and number of individuals) American Crocodile population, the mighty Rio Tarcoles is also a feature of the landscape that deserves some quality birding time. We spent one afternoon leisurely cruising the mangroves and estuary near the Rio Tarcoles delta, viewing an entirely different variety of wildlife than that protected within the National Park.

Though the endemics listed above were certainly a few of the avian highlights of our time here, we saw much, much more. Along the Rio Tarcoles, we had great studies of Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbills, and several other species of herons, waders, and shorebirds. The mangroves here are very rich in speciation (all 5 species of mangrove trees occur here!) and corresponding birdlife. Mangrove specialists such as Yellow-naped Amazon, Mangrove Hummingbird, Mangrove



Baird's Trogon by Forrest Rowland



Vireo, Panamanian Flycatcher, Northern Scrub Flycatcher, and Common (Mangrove) Black Hawk. Sight-of-the-afternoon honours undoubtedly went to the numerous flocks of Scarlet Macaws, returning to the mangroves to roost, glowing red, yellow, and blue in the perfect evening light. Quite a spectacle to behold, these Macaws have a stable, even expanding population in this special part of Central America.

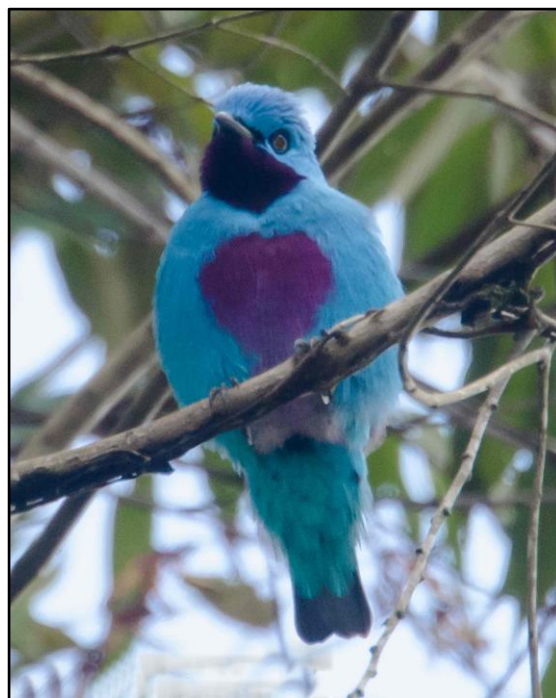


Bicolored Antbird by Forrest Rowland

Black-faced Antthrush, Chestnut-backed and Bicolored Antbirds dancing in and out of view for several minutes, before finally sitting stalk-still for killer looks at antswarms; Streak-chested Antpittas allowing some fine views despite its terrestrial nature, and numerous flocks streaming through the forest, hosting dozens of species like Tawny-crowned and Lesser Greenlet, White-shouldered Tanager, Slaty-headed Tody Flycatcher, Northern Bentbill, Golden-crowned Spadebill, Stub-tailed Spadebill, White-winged Becard, and so forth. The parade was nearly continuous. At one point, having spent two hours birding, we realised that we had advanced a mere 300 meters of trail. Truly outstanding, enjoyable and awesome birding! Throw in a White Hawk perched at eye-level above Villa Lapas, and some views of Scarlet Macaws below us with the forested mountains as a backdrop, and one couldn't really ask for more.

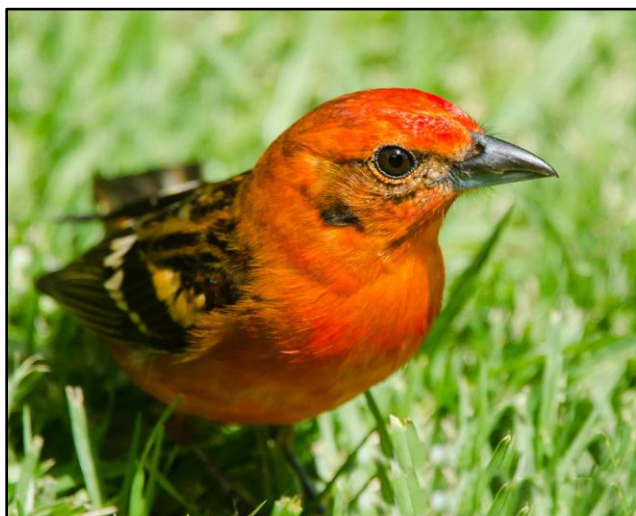
San Isidro del Valle de General (600-800 masl): En route from Carara, up the Cordillera Central del Talamanca, one needs head south a bit, then east, through mostly disturbed foothill habitats of the populated mountain valley of San Isidro del Valle de General. Along the coast, en route, we were gladly distracted by a few very nice birds, like Southern Lapwing, Northern Jacana, King Vulture, graceful White-tailed Kite, endearing Pearl Kite, and stumbling dumb-luck into some Plain-breasted Ground Doves. We had a lot of ground to cover as we made our way to San Gerardo de Dota, high in the Talamanca Range, with little time to spare. However, knowing that there were several lovely species of hummingbirds possible in the habitats traversed today, I had my eyes open for a very special kind of tree.

Villa Lapas and Carara National Park yielded up a ridiculous cadre of great birds, many seen under exceptionally memorable circumstances. No one can forget the Great Tinamou that, rather than running off in the underbrush, quietly scooted off the trail just enough to feel safe; the Spectacled Owl that practically lives above the Villa Lapas pool area; the Stripe-throated Hermit on lek a mere 6 inches off the ground; stunning Red-capped Manakin males that just happened to be sitting perfectly in the open on more than one occasion; White-whiskered Puffbird as a wirebird; a male Black-hooded Antshrike pumping its tail in song on a low vine above us; Tawny-winged and Long-tailed Woodcreepers,



Turquoise Cotinga by Forrest Rowland





Flame-colored Tanager by Forrest Rowland

enhanced by Fiery-billed Aracari, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Green Honeycreeper, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Bay-headed Tanager, and Speckled Tanagers all coming in for a visit! But we couldn't dawdle, it was already approaching mid-afternoon and we still had a two-hour drive, and a very special bird to find yet.

We stopped briefly at the ministry and university buildings, in the town of San Isidro del Valle de General. Our local guide, Richard, had to make a quick drop-off of his field guide for a friend. A friend who had advised us that the impossibly blue, mind-numbingly blue, indescribably blue, Turquoise Cotinga (Blue Cotinga already taken...) had been frequenting nearby trees. We hadn't even gotten to the parking spot when I spotted something that urged me to ask, "So, where are these supposed to be hanging out?" Richard replied, "Anywhere." I screamed, "Stop the bus!" We all piled out to find *TWO* vibrant males perched, displaying/singing right over the road! While last year's views were adequate, though distant, I knew immediately that this encounter would rank in the top 5 of the whole tour. The birds were relatively low, in full view and close enough for fine photos. It was an amazing score!!! On to the mountains...

Savegre, Miriam's, and the Cerro de la Muerte (2200 – 3200 masl): Costa Rica is known for its diversity, despite its very small size. Nothing showcases this more than the drive from the Pacific Coast near Carara, up over the highest point on the entire Panamerican Highway (over 10,000 feet!), then down into the unforgettably scenic San Gerardo de Dota valley. Granted, some of the most dramatic points of the drive were done in the rain, or dark, or both; we did get to retrace our steps at more opportune times to enjoy the best points. The visiting birder to the area around Cerro de la Muerte has a few obligatory stops. The only lodgings, for the most part, are in the San Gerardo de Dota Valley. This happens to be the place in the country for the high mountain endemic bird species all dutiful birders are seeking! Other musts



Sooty-capped Bush Tanager by Forrest Rowland



include visits above the treeline to the Cerro de la Muerte (mountain of death) to see the endemic Volcano Junco and Treeline Wren; Georgina's eatery for the jaw-dropping Fiery-throated, Volcano, and Admirable (Magnificent) Hummingbird, Miriam's Café to enjoy ridiculously-close views of a staggering diversity of species coming to fruit feeders, and either the Providencia or KM 66 roads for forest species that don't occur down in the valley, or at the mountaintop, but in-between. We had time to do all of the above!



Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher
by Forrest Rowland

Afternoon storms are a very common thing so high in the mountains of Central America, at any season. So it was amazing that we found ourselves with great weather the entirety of our time here! This meant we had two exceptionally beautiful mornings to seek out the many star birds of the region, and an afternoon to explore. Indeed, many of the target species one hopes for around San Gerardo do Dota are endemic to only the Cordillera de Talamanca, making them unique to Costa Rica, and only a very small portion of adjacent Panama. We focused our efforts on the birds that can only be found in the habitats in which we currently found ourselves, allowing the other more widespread species to fall into place as they would. The plan worked!

While some hours were spent around the very gardens of the lovely Savegre Mountain Resort where we were lodging, we ventured out on a few trails in the general area and spent much time along the main road, enjoying some leisure photography time at the famous, Miriam's Café, where Acorn Woodpeckers, Flame-colored Tanagers, Sooty-headed (Bush Tanagers) Chlorospingus, Large-footed Finch, Yellow-thighed Finch, Wilson's Warblers, and others, come in to the eye-level fruit feeding station to gorge themselves on the bananas, papaya, and other fruits on offer. Tropical Mockingbird happened to be amongst the "others", which is a huge surprise! This species is usually no higher than a few metres above sea level. Quite lost, indeed! Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher is, personally, a favourite bird. With soft plumage

transitioning from subtle greys to lemon yellow and glowing white, this handsome species was one of the very first to greet us in the morning at Savegre! Slaty Flowerpiercer, Flame-throated and Black-throated Green Warblers, Rufous-collared Sparrow, Acorn Woodpecker, and the endemic Sulphur-winged Parakeet were all species common in the garden. Though possible, but not always present, Yellow-bellied Siskin, Elegant Euphonia, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Mountain Thrush, Black-capped Flycatcher, Yellow-winged Vireo, Spangle-cheeked Tanager, and Red-headed Barbet were right there! Hummingbirds were certainly in evidence as well. From smallest to largest, Volcano Hummingbird, Scintillant Hummingbird (on a nest!), Stripe-tailed Hummingbird, Gray-tailed Mountaingem, Green Violetear, and Admirable Hummingbird are all quite numerous!

Many of the prize species inhabiting the valley are scarce, skulking, or outright rare. Expecting an exertion of time and energy on such birds, one can imagine my surprise that with relatively little effort, Spotted Wood



Timberline Wren by Forrest Rowland



Quail, Ruddy-capped and Black-billed Nightingale Thrushes, Timberline Wren, and one of my favourite birds – Black-and-Yellow Phainoptila – all cooperated! Wrenthrush and Silvery-fronted Tapaculo proved a bit more difficult, as is their nature, but the stellar views we had of the gorgeous Wood-Quail made up for it! Seeing that amazingly-patterned, ornate species staring at us, pumping its orange crest, was most memorable. All things being equal, Wrenthrush and the other skulkers of the valley played along nicely.



Spangle-cheeked Tanager by Forrest Rowland

Most other great birds encountered in the valley came through in mixed flocks. Centred around roaming groups of Ruddy Treerunners, the Buffy Tuftedcheek, Streak-crowned Woodcreepers, Flame-throated Warblers, Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, Yellow-winged Vireos, Mistletoe Tyrannulets, Collared Whitestarts, and Black-cheeked Warblers were common amongst flocks. Dark Pewee, Black-capped Flycatcher, Mountain Elaenia, and Hairy Woodpecker being loners, we encountered only a few of each. One Ochraceous Pewee was a real shocker! Rarely encountered on a tour, or any other time for that matter, one appeared to be following a complex mixed flock with some 15 other species, including Streaked Xenops! But some of the most exciting forest birding was on our final day, as we made our way back to San Jose, down the spine of the Central Cordillera. A brief stop at Providencia road was thwarted (as was every experience I've had there) by rain. Nearby, the KM 66

road was, somehow, completely dry! We spent a good 40 minutes or so here, before we really came across some excitement. As birds began to amass near us, due to some judicious use of a Costa Rican Pygmy Owl playback, I noticed some colour, downslope, below eye-level, on the periphery. Black-and-Yellow (Silky) Phainoptila!!! This gorgeous, enigmatic, bird had thus far been absent from our forays. Dozens of warblers, more Tuftedcheek, and first-responder Fiery-capped Hummingbirds swarmed us! This was only shortly after venturing up Cerro Buenavista, where we not only found Volcano Junco on a nest, Timberline Wrens, and the rare Peg-billed Finch, but also found a viewpoint from which we could see both coasts. Stunning! A normal visit to this particular site involves windbreakers, gloves, umbrellas, and a sense of mild regret. But today it was gorgeous and clear.

Thus was our luck throughout the tour. While most participants must admit to a wariness to travel to Costa Rica in the (cue spooky atmospheric music) rainy season, the proof, as they say, is in the pudding. While we did experience a few rainy afternoons, the weather was generally agreeable and the birding, constantly wonderful. This continued right up to our last, memorable day at the highest drivable point in Central America.

Special Thanks go to: the wonderful group of adventurous, helpful, and enthusiastic participants who joined us for our “rainy season” tour. This particular congregation of nature-loving disciples ran the gambit from hardcore birder to ecology-lover-extraordinaire. All came together nicely, helped each other, and made it a wonderful time. I hope to see you all again soon! And, of course, a huge thanks to Mr Richard Garrigues. Thoughtful, knowledgeable, and a clear expert on all things Costa Rican, it was an honour and pleasure to share the leadership, yet again, with my awesome co-leader. To all of the above, I hope to be travelling with you again. On behalf of Rockjumper, our very warmest regards, and we look forward to hearing your feedback on this tour, and facilitating your avian fantasies on the next.



Costa Rica Trip List

BIRDS 506 (483 seen, 23 heard)

Tinamous Tinamidae

Great Tinamou, ssp. *fuscipennis*

National Park

***Thicket Tinamou**

A highlight of the tour! Great views at Carara

Ducks, Geese, Swans Anatidae

Black-bellied Whistling Duck

Muscovy Duck

Blue-winged Teal

One wild bird on Rio Tarcoles

Chachalacas, Curassows & Guans Cracidae

Gray-headed Chachalaca

Crested Guan

Black Guan - NE

Great Curassow

fruit feeder at Arenal.

Two family groups near Arenal

Numerous at La Selva and Arenal

One beauty near Monteverde

Spectacular! A female with young coming to a

New World Quail Odontophoridae

***Crested Bobwhite**

***Black-eared Wood Quail**

Black-breasted Wood-Quail - NE

adults duetting in full view!

Spotted Wood-Quail

trail near Savegre!!

Finca Ecologica; a covey at our feet, with two

Stellar encounter with a covey not 10 feet off the

Grebes Podicipidae

Least Grebe

Seen on the Pre-tour

Storks Ciconiidae

Wood Stork

Ensenada and Tarcoles

Ibises, Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

American White Ibis

Roseate Spoonbill

Ensenada and Tarcoles

Ensenada and Tarcoles

Hérons, Bitterns Ardeidae

Bare-throated Tiger Heron

Fasciated Tiger Heron

Boat-billed Heron

Black-crowned Night Heron

Yellow-crowned Night Heron

Green Heron

[Western] Cattle Egret

La Selva and Tarcoles

Right off the road at Arenal!

Several on roost; Tarcoles

Ensenada and Tarcoles

Ensenada and Tarcoles



Great Blue Heron	
[Western] Great Egret	
Tricolored Heron	<i>Ensenada and Tarcoles</i>
Little Blue Heron	<i>Ensenada and Tarcoles</i>
Snowy Egret	<i>Ensenada and Tarcoles</i>

Pelicans Pelecanidae

Brown Pelican	<i>Ensenada and Tarcoles</i>
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Frigatebirds Fregatidae

Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Ensenada and Tarcoles</i>
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Cormorants, Shags Phalacrocoracidae

Neotropic Cormorant	
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Anhingas, Darters Anhingidae

Anhinga	<i>One at La Selva</i>
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New World Vultures Cathartidae

Turkey Vulture	<i>Literally, thousands seen during peak migration spectacle. Breathtaking kettles filled the skies for nearly two days!</i>
Black Vulture	
King Vulture	<i>One soaring near Dominical!</i>

Osprey Pandionidae

Western Osprey	
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Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae

White-tailed Kite	<i>One en route near Dominical</i>
Pearl Kite	<i>One en route at Paquita</i>
Grey-headed Kite	<i>Calling adult came in to playback at La Selva!</i>
Ornate Hawk-Eagle – NT	<i>Amazingly, a juvenile flew in to perch at the Sky Trek/Sky Tram parking lot at Arenal!!!</i>
*Double-toothed Kite	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>One at Arenal</i>
Mississippi Kite	<i>A few migrating over La Selva</i>
Great Black Hawk	<i>Soaring at Ensenada</i>
Common Black Hawk	<i>Mangrove specialist at Tarcoles</i>
Roadside Hawk	
White Hawk	<i>Stellar views near Cinchona and Villa Lapas!</i>
Grey Hawk	
Broad-winged Hawk	<i>Hundreds and hundreds seen during a peak migration event!</i>
Short-tailed Hawk	
Swainson's Hawk	<i>Hundreds tallied during a peak migration event!</i>
Zone-tailed Hawk	<i>A few seen at scattered sites</i>
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>A couple seen in the highlands</i>



Rails, Crakes & Coots Rallidae

White-throated Crake

Great looks of several birds at Bogarin!

Russet-naped Wood Rail

*Spectacular views of a few of this recently-split**species*

*Grey-cowled Wood Rail

Common Gallinule

Thick-knees Burhinidae

Double-striped Thick-knee

*One standing tall, roadise, near Ensenada***Stilts, Avocets Recurvirostridae**

Black-necked Stilt

*Ensenada and Tarcoles***Plovers Charadriidae**

Southern Lapwing

Two near Quepos

Grey Plover

Ensenada

Semipalmated Plover

Ensenada

Wilson's Plover

*Ensenada***Jacanas Jacanidae**

Northern Jacana

Sandpipers, Snipes Scolopacidae

Short-billed Dowitcher

Ensenada

Whimbrel

Ensenada and Tarcoles

Lesser Yellowlegs

Ensenada

Greater Yellowlegs

Ensenada

Willet ("Western")

Ensenada and Tarcoles

Spotted Sandpiper

Ruddy Turnstone

Ensenada

Surfbird

Ensenada

Sanderling

Ensenada

Semipalmated Sandpiper

Ensenada and Tarcoles

Western Sandpiper

Ensenada and Tarcoles

Least Sandpiper

Tarcoles

Stilt Sandpiper

*Ensenada***Terns, Skimmers Laridae**

Caspian Tern

*One at Ensenada seen by a few guests***Pigeons, Doves Columbidae**

Common (Rock) Pigeon

Band-tailed Pigeon

Highlands

Pale-vented Pigeon

Arenal and Paquita

Red-billed Pigeon

Ruddy Pigeon

Highlands

Short-billed Pigeon



White-winged Dove

Inca Dove

Common Ground Dove

Ensenada and Tarcoles

Plain-breasted Ground Dove

Seen en route near Dominical

Ruddy Ground Dove

Blue Ground Dove

One on the Rio Tarcoles

White-tipped Dove

***Chiriqui Quail-Dove - NE**

Cuckoos Cuculidae

Groove-billed Ani

Lesser Ground Cuckoo

One magnificent individual tee'd up for views at

Ensenada!

Squirrel Cuckoo

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

One at La Selva

Owls Strigidae

Pacific Screech Owl

the lodge

A cooperative pair at Ensenada resides right at

***Tropical Screech Owl**

***Bare-shanked Screech Owl - NE**

Vermiculated Screech Owl

Gorgeous looks at La Selva!

***Mottled Owl**

Spectacled Owl

A pair at Villa Lapas

Ferruginous Pygmy Owl

Nightjars Caprimulgidae

Common Nighthawk

Pauraque

Swifts Apodidae

Chestnut-collared Swift

A few at Carara

White-collared Swift

Costa Rican Swift - E

above Villa Lapas

Grey-rumped Swift

Chimney Swift

One migratory flock at La Selva

Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift

A few above La Selva

Hummingbirds Trochilidae

Bronzy Hermit

Great views at La Selva!

Band-tailed Barbthroat

Used the same perch as the previous species!

Green Hermit

Stripe-throated Hermit

Lots of fine views

Long-billed Hermit

Seen on a night roost!

Green-fronted Lancebill

On the Pre-Tour to Rancho Naturalista

Scaly-breasted Hummingbird

Violet Sabrewing

Highlands

White-necked Jacobin

On the Pre-Tour



Brown Violetear	<i>Cataratas del Toro</i>
Green (Lesser) Violetear	<i>Highlands</i>
Green-breasted Mango	<i>Tarcoles</i>
Violet-headed Hummingbird	
Black-crested Coquette	<i>One at El Tapir Gardens</i>
White-crested Coquette - NE	<i>Briefest of views of a male near San Isidro</i>
Green Thorntail	<i>Cinchona and Cataratas del Toro</i>
Canivet's Emerald	<i>Ensenada</i>
Garden Emerald - NE	<i>Two at a flowering Inga near San Isidro</i>
Fiery-throated Hummingbird - NE	<i>One at Georgina's, and more on Providencia Rd</i>
Coppery-headed Emerald – E	<i>Cataratas del Toro and Monteverde</i>
Stripe-tailed Hummingbird – NE	<i>Monteverde</i>
Black-bellied Hummingbird – NE	<i>Cataratas del Toro</i>
Crowned Woodnymph	<i>La Selva and Arenal</i>
Blue-throated Sapphire	
Cinnamon Hummingbird	<i>Ensenada</i>
Rufous-tailed Hummingbird	
Blue-chested Hummingbird	<i>La Selva</i>
Mangrove Hummingbird – E	<i>Great views at Tarcoles</i>
Steely-vented Hummingbird	
Snowy-bellied Hummingbird – NE	<i>A few near San Isidro</i>
Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer	<i>La Selva area</i>
Snowcap – NE	<i>Several at El Tapir!</i>
White-bellied Mountaingem – NE	<i>Cinchona and Cataratas del Toro</i>
Purple-throated Mountaingem – NE	<i>Cataratas del Toro and Monteverde</i>
Gray-tailed Mountaingem – E	<i>Savegre</i>
Green-crowned Brilliant	
Magnificent Hummingbird	
Purple-crowned Fairy	
Plain-capped Starthroat	<i>Monteverde</i>
Magenta-throated Woodstar	<i>Arenal and Monteverde</i>
Long-billed Starthroat	<i>Villa Lapas</i>
Volcano Hummingbird – NE	<i>two ssp. seen: flammula and torridus</i>
Scintillant Hummingbird – NE	<i>Savegre</i>

Trogon Trogonidae

Resplendent Quetzal	<i>2 gorgeous males seen at eye-level!</i>
Slaty-tailed Trogon	
Black-headed Trogon	<i>Ensenada</i>
Baird's Trogon – E, NT	<i>fabulous views at Carara!</i>
Gartered Trogon	
Black-throated Trogon	<i>A female at La Selva</i>
Collared Trogon	
Collared "Orange-bellied" Trogon – NE	<i>aurantiventris ssp. often considered full species</i>

Kingfishers Alcedinidae

American Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>flyby only at Tarcoles</i>
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Green Kingfisher
 Belted Kingfisher
 Ringed Kingfisher
 Amazon Kingfisher

Motmots Momotidae

Lesson's Motmot *numerous*
 Rufous Motmot *La Selva*
 Keel-billed Motmot *Stellar looks at this rare bird near Arenal!*
 Broad-billed Motmot *numerous*
 Turquoise-browed Motmot *Perhaps the most stunning member of the clan; a*
few seen very well at Ensenada and Carara

Jacamars Galbulidae

Rufous-tailed Jacamar

Puffbirds Bucconidae

White-necked Puffbird *We had all three species in one day at La Selva!*
 Pied Puffbird
 White-whiskered Puffbird

Typical Barbets Capitonidae

Red-headed Barbet *A surprise male at Savegre!*

Toucan Barbets Semnornithidae

Prong-billed Barbet - E *Stellar views of a family group at Monteverde!*

Toucans Ramphastidae

Blue-throated Toucanet - NE *highlands*
 Collared Aracari
 Fiery-billed Aracari - E *Great looks this year!*
 Yellow-eared Toucanet *ridiculous views near Arenal*
 Keel-billed Toucan
 Black-mandibled Toucan

Woodpeckers Picidae

Olivaceous Piculet *One near Arenal*
 Acorn Woodpecker *Always a pleasure!*
 Black-cheeked Woodpecker
 Red-crowned Woodpecker *A pair at our lunch stop near San Isidro*
 Hoffman's Woodpecker
 *Hairy Woodpecker
 Smoky-brown Woodpecker *finally tracked down at Monteverde*
 Rufous-winged Woodpecker *magnificent views at La Selva*
 Golden-olive Woodpecker
 Chestnut-colored Woodpecker *a beauty! La Selva*
 Lineated Woodpecker
 Pale-billed Woodpecker *a few of this lovely, huge woodpecker seen*



Caracaras, Falcons Falconidae

Northern Crested Caracara
 Yellow-headed Caracara
 Laughing Falcon
 Collared Forest Falcon
 American Kestrel
 Bat Falcon
 Peregrine Falcon

great views!
an, unfortunately, brief flyby
one near Monteverde
distant views near Cinchona
One soaring low near Dominical

Parrots Psittacidae

Great Green Macaw - En
 Scarlet Macaw
 Olive-throated Parakeet
 Orange-fronted Parakeet
 Finsch's (Crimson-fronted) Parakeet
 Sulphur-winged Parakeet
 Orange-chinned Parakeet
 Brown-hooded Parrot
 White-crowned Parrot
 White-fronted Amazon
 Red-lored Amazon
 Yellow-naped Amazon - Vu
 Northern Mealy Amazon

Several fabulous flybys near La Selva
numerous at Tarcoles and Villa Lapas
a few at La Selva
near Monteverde and Ensenada

great views of several flocks at Savegre!

great perched scope views, as well as flybys

numerous around Monteverde

Ensenada and Tarcoles
guatemalae ssp. Recently Split; Carara

Ovenbirds Furnariidae

*Pale-breasted Spinetail
 Red-faced Spinetail
 Spotted Barbtail
 Ruddy Treerunner - NE
 Buffy Tuftedcheek - NE
 Lineated Foliage Gleaner
 Streak-breasted Treehunter – NE
 Buff-throated Foliage Gleaner
 Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser
 Gray-throated Leaf-tosser
us, until we were within 2m of them!
 Plain Xenops
 Streaked Xenops
 Plain-brown Woodcreeper
 Tawny-winged Woodcreeper
 Ruddy Woodcreeper
 Long-tailed Woodcreeper – NT
 Olivaceous Woodcreeper
 Wedge-billed Woodcreeper
 Northern Barred Woodcreeper
 Cocoa Woodcreeper
 Spotted Woodcreeper

mid-elevation forests
views of this furtive species at a few sites
in highland mixed flocks
in highland mixed flocks
seen at Cinchona
quick views of this shy species at Monteverde!
one seen well near Arenal, several heard
unbelievable views of pair on the Pre-Tour
a pair simply would not get off the path in front of

One in flock at Savegre
On the Pre-Tour
Two at a great antswarm in Carara!
Three attending an antswarm near Monteverde!
ssp. typical seen at Carara near antswarm
ssp. sylvioides

La Selva, Arenal, and Carara

mid-elevation forests



Streak-headed Woodcreeper
Spot-crowned Woodcreeper
Brown-billed Scythebill

Savegre area
an obliging bird flew right in near Arenal

Antbirds Thamnophilidae

Fasciated Antshrike

La Selva

*Great Antshrike

Barred Antshrike

Villa Lapas

Black-hooded Antshrike – E

several at Carara

*Black-crowned Antshrike

Russet Antshrike

Arenal

Plain Antvireo

Monteverde

Streak-crowned Antvireo

several great encounters

Checker-throated Antwren

good looks near Braulio Carrillo

Slaty Antwren

an outstanding display right at our knees!

Dusky Antbird

Arenal

Bare-crowned Antbird

a pair of these amazing birds near Arenal!

Dull-mantled Antbird

jaw-dropping experience with a pair at Arenal

Chestnut-backed Antbird

Carara

Zeledon's Antbird

On the Pre-Tour

Bicolored Antbird

smashing views at Carara at antswarm

Spotted Antbird

unbeatable views near Braulio Carrillo

Ocellated Antbird

THE best antbird on Earth, in this author's

opinion; we had a family group of 3 displaying spectacularly at an antswarm near Braulio

Antthrushes Formicariidae

Black-faced Antthrush

spp. hoffmanni at Carara attending swarm

Antpittas Grallaridae

Streak-chested Antpitta

fine looks at Carara

Thicket Antpitta

glimpses in deep shadow and cover near Arenal

Tapaculos Rhinocryptidae

Silvery-fronted Tapaculo - NE

glimpses only near Savegre

Tyrant Flycatchers Tyrannidae

Rough-legged Tyrannulet

On the Pre-Tour

Greenish Elaenia

Yellow-bellied Elaenia

Mountain Elaenia

highlands

Yellow-bellied Tyrannulet

one near Arenal; very rarely encountered!

Northern Beardless Tyrannulet

Ensenada

Torrent Tyrannulet

near Cinchona at the waterfall

Mistletoe Tyrannulet

Olive-striped Flycatcher

Ochre-bellied Flycatcher

Slaty-capped Flycatcher



*Sepia-capped Flycatcher	
Northern Scrub Flycatcher	<i>Ensenada</i>
Northern Bentbill	<i>great looks at Carara</i>
Scale-crested Pygmy Tyrant	
Slaty-headed Tody-Flycatcher	<i>Carara</i>
Common Tody-Flycatcher	
Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher	<i>La Selva</i>
Eye-ringed Flatbill	
Yellow-olive Flatbill	<i>Ensenada</i>
*Yellow-margined Flatbill	
Stub-tailed Spadebill	<i>great looks of a pair at Carara</i>
White-throated Spadebill	<i>uncooperative, unfortunately at Cararas</i>
Golden-crowned Spadebill	<i>great experience as we watched confiding birds at</i>
<i>close range; Carara</i>	
Tawny-chested Flycatcher – NE, Vu	<i>one of the specialities on the Pre-Tour, seen well!</i>
Black Phoebe	
Northern Tufted Flycatcher	<i>beautiful, numerous, in highlands</i>
Olive-sided Flycatcher – NT	
Dark Pewee - NE	<i>Savegre</i>
Ochraceous Pewee – NE	<i>Savegre; fine looks at this rare species!</i>
Western Wood Pewee	
Eastern Wood Pewee	
Tropical Pewee	
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	
Acadian Flycatcher	<i>One at Cinchona</i>
White-throated Flycatcher	<i>at a wetland near Cinchona</i>
Yellowish Flycatcher	<i>highlands</i>
Black-capped Flycatcher – NE	<i>Savegre</i>
Long-tailed Tyrant	<i>La Selva</i>
Social Flycatcher	
Grey-capped Flycatcher	
Great Kiskadee	
White-ringed Flycatcher	<i>several at La Selva</i>
Golden-bellied Flycatcher - NE	<i>Monteverde</i>
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher	<i>several migrants</i>
Streaked Flycatcher	
Boat-billed Flycatcher	
Tropical Kingbird	
Rufous Mourner	
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	
Panamanian Flycatcher	<i>Tarcoles mangroves</i>
Nutting's Flycatcher	<i>Ensenada</i>
Great-crested Flycatcher	
Brown-crested Flycatcher	
Bright-rumped Attila	<i>views at La Selva</i>



Cotingas Cotingidae

Turquoise Cotinga – NE, Vu
***Three-wattled Bellbird**

A stunner! Seen at a stakeout in San Isidro

Manakins Pipridae

White-ruffed Manakin
Blue-crowned Manakin
White-collared Manakin
Orange-collared Manakin - E
Long-tailed Manakin
White-crowned Manakin
Red-capped Manakin

Sky Trek Arenal

Villa Lapas

Great bird!!! Seen well at Carara

One of the best birds of the tour; near Monteverde

near Braulio Carrillo

Stunning close views at Carara

Tityras, Becards Tityridae

Sulphur-rumped Myiobius
Black-crowned Tityra
Masked Tityra
Northern Schiffornis
Cinnamon Becard
White-winged Becard
***Rose-throated Becard**

mixed flocks at Arenal

Carara

great looks near Braulio!

Vireos, Greenlets Vireonidae

Rufous-browed Peppershrike
***Green Shrike-Vireo**
***Mangrove Vireo**
Yellow-throated Vireo
Yellow-winged Vireo – NE
Brown-capped Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Yellow-green vireo
Tawny-crowned Greenlet
Lesser Greenlet

poor views near Savegre

Savegre

Savegre

one near Monteverde

lowland mixed flocks

Crows, Jays Corvidae

Brown Jay
White-throated Magpie-Jay

delightful birds

Silky Flycatchers Ptiligonatidae

Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher - NE
at exceptionally close range; Savegre
Black-and-Yellow Phainoptila - NE
morning of our tour at Providencia

Several of these indescribably beautiful birds seen

One of the prize birds of the tour seen on the final



Swallows, Martins Hirundinidae

Sand Martin/Bank Swallow
 Mangrove Swallow
 Grey-breasted Martin
 Blue-and-white Swallow
 Southern Rough-winged Swallow
 Barn Swallow
 Cliff Swallow

Wrens Troglodytidae

Band-backed Wren *La Selva*
 Rufous-backed (naped) Wren
 Black-throated Wren *La Selva*
 Rufous-breasted Wren *ssp. hyperythrus; Carara and Villa Lapas*
 Banded Wren *great views at Ensenada*
 Rufous-and-White Wren *Carara NP; ssp. castananota*
 Cabanis's Wren *newly split from Plain Wren*
 Riverside Wren - NE *Villa Lapas*
 Bay Wren *near Arenal*
 Stripe-breasted Wren *La Selva and Arenal*
 (Southern) House Wren
 Ochraceous Wren – NE *highlands*
 Timberline Wren – E *near treeline near Cerro de la Muerte*
 White-breasted Wood Wren
 Grey-breasted Wood Wren
 Northern Nightingale Wren *amazing views of this drab songster at Arenal*
 Song Wren *very responsive pair near Arenal put on a show!*

Gnatcatchers Polioptilidae

Tawny-faced Gnatwren *two pairs were seen near Arenal!*
 Long-billed Gnatwren
 White-lored Gnatcatcher *Ensenada*
 Tropical Gnatcatcher

Mockingbirds, Thrashers Mimidae

Tropical Mockingbird *only at La Fortuna and near Cartago*

Thrushes Turdidae

Black-faced Solitaire *a singing bird not 4 meters from us!*
 Black-billed Nightingale Thrush - NE *Savegre*
 Orange-billed Nightingale Thrush *near Monteverde*
 Slaty-backed Nightingale Thrush
 Ruddy-capped Nightingale Thrush *highlands*
 Black-headed Nightingale Thrush *Arenal and mid-elevations*
 Swainson's Thrush
 Sooty Thrush – NE *Savegre area*
 Mountain Thrush *Highlands*



Clay-colored Thrush
White-throated Thrush

ssp. cnephosus

Old World Sparrows Passeridae

House Sparrow

Passer domesticus

Finches Fringillidae

Yellow-bellied Siskin

Savegre area

Scrub Euphonia

Ensenada; ssp. affinis

Yellow-crowned Euphonia

Yellow-throated Euphonia

Thick-billed Euphonia

bathing in a bromeliad at Villa Lapas

Elegant Euphonia

gorgeous views at Savegre!

Spot-crowned Euphonia – NE

Carara NP and Villa Lapas

Olive-backed Euphonia

Tawny-capped Euphonia

Arenal

Golden-browed Chlorophonia – NE

great looks at Savegre!!

New World Warblers Parulidae

Louisiana Waterthrush

Pre-Tour

Northern Waterthrush

Golden-winged Warbler – Vu

highlands

Black-and-White Warbler

Prothonotary Warbler

Ensenada and Tarcoles

Flame-throated Warbler – NE

Savegre area

Tennessee Warbler

Grey-crowned Yellowthroat

near Monteverde

Mourning Warbler

near Arenal

Kentucky Warbler

La Selva

Olive-crowned Yellowthroat

American Redstart

Tropical Parula

Bay-breasted Warbler

Blackburnian Warbler

American Yellow Warbler

Mangrove Warbler

Mangroves near Cocorocas and Tarcoles

Chestnut-sided Warbler

Townsend's Warbler

rare; one near Savegre

Black-throated Green Warbler

Buff-rumped Warbler

Rufous-capped Warbler

Black-cheeked Warbler – NE

mixed flocks near Savegre

Golden-crowned Warbler

culicivorus and godmani ssp.

Black-eared (Costa Rican) Warbler – NE

several near Monteverde

Canada Warbler

a few seen

Wilson's Warbler

Slate-throated Whitestart



Collared Whitestart – NE*a common delight in the highlands!***Family Uncertain Incertae Sedis****Wrenthrush – E***nice looks at this interesting species**we worked with a few individuals to earn some***Oropendolas, Orioles & Blackbirds Icteridae****Eastern Meadowlark****Yellow-billed Cacique***one skulking bird showed well near Arenal***Chestnut-headed Oropendola****Montezuma Oropendola****Scarlet-rumped Cacique***La Selva***Streak-backed Oriole***Ensenada***Baltimore Oriole****Spot-breasted Oriole***Ensenada***Black-cowled Oriole****Melodious Blackbird***now-common expansión species***Great-tailed Grackle****Bananaquit Coerebidae****Bananaquit****New World Sparrows & Allies Emberizidae****Rufous-collared Sparrow****Volcano Junco – E***only at Cerro de la Muerte***Stripe-headed Sparrow****White-eared Ground Sparrow***gorgeous! Leucotis ssp.****Olive Sparrow****Black-striped Sparrow***Arenal and Villa Lapas area***Orange-billed Sparrow****Chestnut-capped Brush Finch***highlands***Sooty-faced Finch – NE***great looks on the Pre-Tour and for a few at**Cataratas del Toro!***Large-footed Finch – NE***Savegre area***White-naped Brush Finch***Savegre area***Yellow-thighed Finch – NE***Savegre Area***Common Bush Tanager (Chlorospingus)****Sooty-capped Bush Tanager (Chlorospingus) - NE***Highlands***Tanagers and Allies Thraupidae****Dusky-faced Tanager***La Selva***White-shouldered Tanager***Villa Lapas and Carara NP***Crimson-collared Tanager***Cinchona and Arenal***Passerini's Tanager****Cherrie's Tanager – NE***a few along the road***Blue-grey Tanager****Palm Tanager**

Plain-colored Tanager	<i>La Selva</i>
Emerald Tanager	<i>La Selva and Arenal</i>
Silver-throated Tanager	<i>highlands</i>
Speckled Tanager	<i>seen well at Cinchona and near San Isidro</i>
Bay-headed Tanager	
Golden-hooded Tanager	
Spangle-cheeked Tanager – NE	<i>a few in flocks at Savegre</i>
Scarlet-thighed Dacnis	
Blue Dacnis	
Shining Honeycreeper	
Red-legged Honeycreeper	<i>at fruit feeders at Arenal!</i>
Green Honeycreeper	<i>many amazing views</i>
Black-and-Yellow Tanager – NE	<i>fine views at El Tapir</i>
Slaty Flowerpiercer – NE	
Peg-billed Finch – NE	<i>a responsive bird at Cerro de la Muerte allowed</i>
<i>great looks at the differences between it and the previous species!</i>	
Blue-black Grassquit	
Variable Seedeater	
White-collared Seedeater	
Thick-billed Seed Finch	
Yellow-faced Grassquit	<i>highlands</i>

Grosbeaks, Saltators & Allies Cardinalidae

Flame-colored Tanager	<i>Savegre area</i>
Summer Tanager	
Scarlet Tanager	
Tooth-billed (Hepatic) Tanager	<i>near Arenal</i>
Red-throated Ant Tanager	<i>La Selva</i>
Carmiol's Tanager	<i>Arenal area</i>
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	
Slate-colored Grosbeak	<i>glimpsed, after hearing it sing</i>
Black-headed Saltator	<i>Arenal area</i>
Buff-throated Saltator	<i>ssp. magnoides and intermedius</i>
Greyish Saltator	<i>ssp. brevicaudus</i>
Blue-black Grosbeak	<i>several run-ins with these lovely birds!</i>

Mammals

Margay	<i>Leopardus wiedii</i>
White-nosed Coati	<i>Nasua narica</i>
Collared Peccary	<i>Pecari tajacu</i>
Virginia Possum	<i>Didelphia virginiana</i>
Eastern Cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus floridanus</i>
Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth	<i>Choloepus hoffmanni</i>
Mantled Howler Monkey	<i>Alouatta palliata</i>
Geoffrey's Spider Monkey	<i>Ateles geoffreyi</i>



White-throated Capuchin	<i>Cebus capucinus</i>
Central American Agouti	<i>Dasyprocta punctata</i>
Central American Dwarf Squirrel	<i>Microsciurus alfari</i>
Red-tailed Squirrel	<i>Sciurus granatensis</i>
Variegated Squirrel	<i>Sciurus variegatoides</i>

Reptiles and Amphibians

Cane Toad	<i>Rhinella marina</i>
Rainforest Frog	<i>Lithobates vaillantii</i>
Green and Black Poison Frog	<i>Dendrobates auratus</i>
Strawberry Poison Frog	<i>Oophaga pumilio</i>
Small-headed Treefrog	<i>Dendropsophus microcephalus</i>
Climbing Treefrog	<i>Smilisca baudinii</i>
Masked Treefrog	<i>Smilisca phaeota</i>
Red-eyed Treefrog	<i>Agalychnis callidryas</i>
Smoky Jungle Frog	<i>Leptodactylus pentadactylus</i>
American Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus acutus</i>
Drab Cat-eyed Snake	<i>Imantodes inornatus</i>
Central American Lyre Snake	<i>Trimorphodon quadruplex</i>
Common House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>
Neotropical Green Anole	<i>Anolis biporcatus</i>
Bighead Anole	<i>Anolis capito</i>
Ground Anole	<i>Anolis humilis</i>
Dry Forest Anole	<i>Anolis cupreus</i>
Common Basilisk	<i>Basiliscus basiliscus</i>
Oaxacan Spinytail Lizard	<i>Ctenosaura similis</i>
Green Iguana	<i>Iguana iguana</i>
Middle American Ameiva	<i>Ameiva festiva</i>
Rainbow Ameiva	<i>Ameiva undulata</i>
Black Wood Turtle	<i>Rhinoclemmys funerea</i>

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