

Christmas in Costa Rica | Species List

December 22 – 29, 2023 | with Naturalist Journeys



With guides Johan Fernandez and Steve Shunk, and participants Gail, Jack, Jeannine, Jim, Ken, Lizzy, Pam, Phoenix, Taylor, Tina, and Tricia

What a way to spend the holiday! Our group enjoyed their Christmas break over eight days in the heart of Costa Rica, birding at three different elevations—from the Talamanca Mountains to the Caribbean lowlands. Our adventures included an early morning with Resplendent Quetzals; a boat ride on the Sarapiquí River; an aerial tram ride in Braulio Carillo National Park; and a demonstration and taste of freshly made Costa Rican chocolate.

We found a total of 254 bird species, with many highlights. The quetzals were the bird-of-the-trip for many folks, but we were easily distracted by 24 hummingbird species and 24 different flycatchers. We had stunning looks at a pair of White Hawks at the La Selva Biological Station and up-close experiences with Montezuma Oropendolas on 6 out of 8 days. Other species seen on nearly every day of the trip included three Neotropical migrants that breed in North America: Baltimore Oriole, Tennessee Warbler, and Summer Tanager. Two tropical species seen daily included a Blue-gray Tanager and Clay-colored Thrush (the Costa Rican national bird).

Beyond the birds, we enjoyed some amazing experiences with mammals and other non-avian species. An evening surprise with Baird's tapirs was matched by our daylight encounter with these amazing animals the next morning—almost close enough to touch! Some of the group caught a glimpse of the elusive tayra, and we found three sloths, including one with a youngster in tow. We saw three species of tent-making bats and a rarely encountered Talamanca small-eared shrew. A large spectacled caiman was the biggest herpetile of the trip, but we also saw several red-eyed tree frogs and both the 'blue jeans' and green-and-black poison dart frogs.

Below is a link to the master eBird trip report, followed by lists of other wildlife highlights. Browse the eBird trip lists at your leisure and peruse the other wildlife lists with baited breath, and then join us again next December for Christmas in Costa Rica!



BIRD REPORT

Click the link that follows to access the master trip report on eBird. Once you have pulled up the report, you will first see the list of 254 species we encountered, in taxonomic order. Clicking on any species will take you to the eBird reference page for that bird. Clicking the green icons to the right will show you the different checklists where each species was encountered, and these listings link to the checklists themselves. Back on the main page, you can access the complete set of 37 checklists from the tour by clicking the blue box at the top.

MAMMALS

Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth *Bradypus variegatus*—Our only 3-toed sloth was seen climbing around low in the canopy at Tapirus lodge—it turned out to be a mother with a very young sloth pup!

Hoffmann's Toe-toed Sloth *Choloepus hoffmanni*—We saw two 2-toed sloths. The first was found by our bus driver while we waited for the end of a road-bike race that occupied the highway; the second was at Pierella Ecological Gardens, where we had a few other mammalian highlights.

Variiegated Squirrel *Sciurus variegatoides*—This was the common squirrel at lower elevations, including San Jose and the Caribbean lowlands.

Red-tailed Squirrel *Sciurus granatensis*—Common squirrel at high elevations, in the Talamanca mountains.

Proboscis Bat *Rhynchonycteris naso*—A large camp of 'long-nosed bats' was seen at La Selva Bio Station.

Honduran White Tent-making Bat *Ectophylla alba*—One of three tent-making bat species seen at Pierella Ecological Garden—four amazingly cute little white puffballs.

Common Tent-making Bat *Uroderma bilobatum*—Two individuals, also seen at Pierella Ecological Garden, tucked into their folded banana-leaf shelter.

Great Fruit-eating Bat *Artibeus lituratus*—Two more tent-makers, also at Pierella Garden.

Mantled Howler Monkey *Alouatta palliata*—We heard howlers at several locations in the Caribbean region, including daily hauntings at Selva Verde. We also saw a few monkeys, including individuals on the Sarapiquí boat ride and a mother and baby at La Selva Bio Station—the baby of which, incidentally, suffered from a bot fly parasite; and as if that wasn't disturbing enough, the fly was near the end of its cycle and could be seen through the scope pushing its way out of the swollen cyst on the baby's back!

White-nosed Coati *Nasua narica*—We saw many coatis in the Caribbean flats, including critters at the feeding station at Selva Verde Lodge and several among the tapirs at Braulio Carillo Park/Tapirus Lodge.

Talamanca Small-eared Shrew *Cryptotis gracilis*—This amazing puffy little mammal was scurrying helplessly along the road just below the Savegre Lodge. We eventually cornered and carefully captured it so that everyone could get an up-close look at a critter that most people never see and none of us were likely to see again. Its long snout helped us with the ID, and its tiny eyes and ears were so small that we couldn't even see them. Adorable.

Coyote *Canis latrans*—We enjoyed a coyote chorus when we drove to nearly 10,000 feet in the Talamancas to look for owls and nightjars.

Tayra *Eira Barbara*—A few members of the group were lucky enough to spot this elusive Neotropical mustelid at the La Selva Bio Station.

Baird's Tapir *Tapirus bairdii*—Wow! What an amazing couple of encounters we had at the aptly named Tapirus Lodge. First, while watching a Common Blunt-headed Tree Snake below the comedor—in the middle of



dinner—one of the staff shouted (quietly) “tapir, tapir”, and we all rushed to the opposite side of the deck to see an adult and juvenile making their nightly feeding round; they were right below us, and we could hear them munching on leaves. As if that wasn’t enough, the staff alerted us the next morning—as we packed for our departure—of two tapirs (possibly the same two) feeding right next to the staff quarters. The adult of these two came so close we could have pet the thing, arguably a poor survival strategy for this very meaty forest mammal.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Emerald Swift *Sceloporus malachiticus*—The common lizard at higher elevations, especially around Savagre Lodge.

Green Iguana *Iguana iguana*—Several large individuals seen in the Caribbean lowlands.

Green Basilisk *Basiliscus plumifrons*—Fairly common in the Caribbean region, with mostly females seen and at fairly close range.

Middle American Ameiva *Holcosus festivus*—Seen a couple of times in the lowlands.

Neotropical Green Anole *Anolis biporcatus*—One seen and photographed at La Selva Bio Station.

Border Anole *Anolis limifrons*—One seen and photographed at Pierrela Eco Gardens.

Common Blunt-headed Tree Snake *Imantodes cenchoa*—One found by staff at Tapirus Lodge and seen well by all as described above during the first tapir encounter.

Black River Turtle *Rhinoclemmys funereal*—Seen on the Sarapiquí River from the bridge at La Selva Bio Station.

Blue jeans (Strawberry) poison dart frog *Oophaga pumilio*—Seen well before hiding well at Pierella Eco Gardens.

Green-and-black poison dart frog *Dendrobates auratus*—Also seen at Pierella Eco Gardens.

Red-eyed Tree Frog *Agalychnis callidryas*—Several seen around the pond at Selva Verde Lodge and another guarding an egg mass near the tram at Tapirus Lodge.

Spectacled Caiman *Caiman crocodilus*—One large individual seen during the Sarapiquí boat trip.

OTHER NOTABLE FAUNA—IDs made with support from iNaturalist

Narrow Stingless Bee *Tetragonisca angustula*

Orchid bee *Eulaema polychrome*

Yellow-banded Polybia Wasp *Polybia occidentalis*

Sapho longwing *Heliconius sapho leuce*

Silver-plated Skipper *Corra coryna*

Two-barred Flasher *Astraptes fulgerator*

Crimson Patch *Chlosyne janais*

Frosted Flasher *Telegonus alardus*

Pale-banded Crescent *Anthanassa tulcis*

Pluto Sphinx *Xylophanes pluto*

Owl-eyed moth *Automeris postalbida*

Orion Cecropian *Historis odius*

True bug nymphs Subfamily Coreinae

Polyphagous beetle *Veturius sp.*

Python Millipede *Nyssodesmus python*

Leaf-cutter ants *Atta/Acromyrmex sp.*

Common Walking Stick Insect Family Diapheromeridae

Large Mantid *Tauromantis championi*