

# Christmas in Costa Rica

## Species List | December 22 – 29, 2025

### with Naturalist Journeys



**Compiled by Naturalist Journeys tour host Stephen Grace with local guide Johan Fernandez. Our 11 clients included Amy, Deb, Ron, Beth, Ann R, Anne H, Frank, Zita, Balint, Elena and Dave.**

Naturalist Journeys' Christmas in Costa Rica tour unfolded as a classic transect across one of the most compressed biodiversity gradients on Earth—moving in just a week from the warm, human-shaped landscapes of the Central Valley to cool and dripping cloud forest, wind-scoured páramo, and the steamy Caribbean lowlands, before finishing in the mountains of Braulio Carrillo. The itinerary was not simply a change of scenery; it was a progressive change of worlds, each habitat with its own voices, its own plant communities, and its own cast of birds.

We began in the Central Valley at Hotel Bougainvillea, where a ten-acre botanical garden provided an ideal introduction to Costa Rica. In a country where the journey often begins the moment you arrive, the garden immediately delivered: **Lesson's Motmot** with its pendulum tail and saturated colors; a day-roosting **Mottled Owl** tucked into bamboo; **Crested Caracara**, a conspicuous tropical falcon; and a close encounter with a **Bicolored Hawk**, an uncommon raptor in these well-birded gardens. **Baltimore Orioles** and **Summer Tanagers**—migrants glowing like embers in the greenery—added flashes of color, alongside everyday anchors that would soon feel familiar, including **Great Kiskadee**, **Tropical Kingbird**, and **Rufous-collared Sparrow**. **Clay-colored Thrushes**—Costa Rica's national bird—appeared as well, unassuming in plumage but deeply woven into the country's cultural identity.

Flowering patches of vervain drew in the relentlessly territorial **Rufous-tailed Hummingbird**, the “default” lowland hummer we came to recognize almost everywhere warm. Even in this cultivated refuge, the tour's theme was already clear: Costa Rica's biodiversity is not confined to distant national parks—it is woven into gardens, hedgerows, and small pockets of habitat embedded in daily life.

From the Central Valley we climbed into the Talamanca Mountains, and the shift was immediate. The air cooled, epiphytes thickened on branches, and the bird community changed as if someone had turned a page. On the ascent, hummingbird diversity began to build—**Stripe-tailed Hummingbird**, jewel-like **Scintillant Hummingbird**, and a brief appearance by **Green Thorntail** hinting at what lay ahead. One particularly meaningful highlight was **Coppery-headed Emerald**, the only bird endemic to Costa Rica recorded on the tour. While many of the highland species we encountered are Talamanca endemics shared with western Panama, this hummingbird is found nowhere else on Earth—a reminder that true national endemism persists even within Costa Rica's broader biogeographic connections.

At feeders and flowering shrubs, a distinctly highland assemblage took over: **Fiery-throated Hummingbird** dominating with bold confidence, joined by **White-throated Mountain-gem** and **Talamanca Hummingbird**, both endemic to the Costa Rica–Panama highlands. Mixed flocks swept through mossy limbs, bringing specialties such as **Ruddy Treerunner** and the glowing, improbable **Golden-browed Chlorophonia**. On the forest floor, **Buff-breasted Wood-Partridge** and **Spotted Wood-Quail** stepped quietly into view, while scratch-and-scrape birds like **Large-footed Finch** worked the leaf litter. **Sooty-capped Chlorospingus** were common, while **Common Chlorospingus** proved far more elusive. One of the most evocative voices of the habitat was **Black-faced Solitaire**, its ethereal song drifting through the fog and helping define the mood and mystery of the cloud forest.

But the highlands carried a promise that pulled us forward each morning: the **Resplendent Quetzal**. At first it was distant—scope views of a male with tail coverts streaming behind him, a hint of crimson belly, then gone. The cloud forest is a place where visibility is often momentary, and that early glimpse only sharpened our focus. Christmas morning finally delivered what everyone wished for: satisfying views of a male quetzal perched in clear light, his green crest delicate, his tail coverts trailing well beyond his body, followed by flight—transforming him into something almost unreal. A female appeared as well, subtler but luminous, moving into sunlight and carrying fruit away in a flurry of activity. These were not merely sightings, but encounters that permanently tether a species to a place in memory.

We pushed even higher into the páramo, the alpine world above the forest where cold, wind, and exposure shape a landscape of low shrubs, bunch grasses, and stark horizons. In the tropics, this realm exists not by latitude but by elevation. The birds reflected that severity and specialization. **Volcano Junco**, a Talamanca highland endemic, appeared compact and dark with piercing yellow eyes, perfectly suited to open, high country. **Volcano Hummingbirds** were seen away from feeders, foraging naturally in the wild—tiny, resilient lives at the roof of the continent. Even in challenging weather, the páramo felt essential, a reminder that in Costa Rica biodiversity is stacked in layers—vertical rather than horizontal.

Dropping back down into the Savegre Valley, night birding added another regional specialty: **Dusky Nightjar**, yet another species restricted to the Costa Rica–western Panama highlands, reinforcing how distinct this montane avifauna is from the lowlands below.

From those cool heights we descended toward the Caribbean slope, and the transition was dramatic—temperature rising, humidity thickening, and the green deepening into layered rainforest. The lowland Caribbean forests of Sarapiquí and La Selva brought a new soundtrack: the bubbling, mechanical weirdness of **Montezuma Oropendola**, the harsh nasal calls of **Mealy Amazon**, and the overlapping voices of a forest that rarely sleeps.

At Selva Verde and La Selva Biological Station, immersion replaced motion. Here we encountered **Rufous Motmot** and **Broad-billed Motmot**, along with a rich suite of manakins—**White-ruffed Manakin**, **Red-capped Manakin**, and **White-collared Manakin**—the sharp snaps and explosive leaping displays of the latter animating the understory. A **Crested Guan**, large and deliberate, embodied a distinctly prehistoric presence of the lowland rainforest.

A classic lowland flycatcher assemblage followed—**Boat-billed**, **Social**, and **Gray-capped Flycatchers**—along with hummingbirds entirely different from those of the highlands, including **Long-billed Hermit**

and **Purple-crowned Fairy**. Frugivores stole attention as well: **Yellow-throated** and **Keel-billed Toucans**, their impossibly oversized bills glowing in the light, and **Collared Aracari** feeding noisily in fruiting trees.

River time added another layer. On the Sarapiquí River we found **Bare-throated Tiger-Heron**, **Green Heron**, **Little Blue Heron**, **Green Ibis**, and drying **Anhinga**, while kingfishers punctuated the banks—**Green**, **Amazon**, and the crow-sized **Ringed Kingfisher**. **Mangrove Swallows** skimmed the surface, and **Russet-naped Wood-Rail**, with its vivid red legs, appeared openly along the riverbank. Twilight brought drama as **Bat Falcons** sliced the sky while **Scarlet Macaws** screamed overhead, the birds engaging in what appeared to be an aerial confrontation before separating into the darkening canopy.

The lowlands were also where the tour's rarest headline bird—the **Great Green Macaw**—was finally seen well. We heard them twice and watched them power past in flight, building the kind of anticipation that makes success meaningful. On the tour's final full day, one landed on a visible perch, and we watched this magnificent bird—one of the rarest parrots on Earth—glowing in full light atop a tall tree, a moment of collective awe.

Another standout came overhead, as **King Vultures** soared high in a blue sky above the unbroken green canopy of La Selva Biological Station, their bold black-and-white wings flashing far above the forest.

That sighting joined other lowland highlights: multiple species of woodcreepers, **Slaty-tailed Trogon**, prolonged views of **American Pygmy Kingfisher**, and an unbroken stream of tanagers and honeycreepers that turned every feeder stop into a living palette—**Scarlet-rumped**, **Crimson-collared**, **Blue-gray**, and **Palm Tanagers**, alongside **Red-legged** and **Green Honeycreepers**. **Shining Honeycreepers** were also observed foraging away from feeders.

We ended with a final shift back into the mountains at Braulio Carrillo, where wet slopes and elevation once again reshuffled the bird community. Hummingbirds such as **Crowned Woodnymph**, **Blue-chested Hummingbird**, **Violet-headed Hummingbird**, and **Snowcap** signaled our arrival in montane rainforest. On our final morning, additions like **Emerald Tanager** and **Gartered Violaceous Trogon** rounded out the list, before the **Laughing Falcon** delivered a perfect coda—perched and cackling into the canopy as if offering an irreverent benediction for a week defined by birds, diverse landscapes, and shared attention.

By journey's end, we tallied **247 species across 29 checklists**, representing **50 bird families**, including **one Costa Rica endemic** and a remarkable concentration of **regional montane specialists** and **Talamanca highland endemics**—species shaped by long isolation in the high country, where cloud forest and páramo function like tropical sky islands.

Just as important, the tour stitched together habitats in a way that made ecological sense: Central Valley gardens as an entry point, cloud forest as a realm of endemism and near-mythic birds, páramo as the roof of the tropics, Caribbean lowlands as raw abundance, and Braulio Carrillo as a final reminder that in Costa Rica, mountains and rainforest are bursting with life. The birds did what they do best: they gave us a shared language, a reason to look outward together, and moments that will replay—bright, alive, and unpinable—long after the trip is over.

**BIRDS: 247 species were recorded, of which 1 was Endemic, 36 were Regional Endemics, 2 were Introduced, 13 were Heard Only, and 2 were Guide Only.**

The eBird link below details the 247 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

## [Christmas in Costa Rica | 22–29 Dec 2025 | eBird Trip Report](#)

Following is a list of the birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and other taxa we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

### **BIRDS: (247)**

**E** = Endemic; **RE** = Regional Endemic; **I** = Introduced; **H** = Heard Only; **G** = Guide Only; **CR** = Critically Endangered

### **TINAMOUS — Tinamidae**

**Great Tinamou** *Tinamus major* — (**H**) Ancient lineage related to flightless birds; powerful runners that rely on camouflage rather than flight. Heard at Tapirus Lodge.

### **DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS — Anatidae**

**Muscovy Duck** *Cairina moschata* — A large, forest-associated duck native to the Americas, notable for perching and nesting in trees. It is the only duck species domesticated independently by Indigenous peoples of the Neotropics. Wild birds persist in Costa Rica despite widespread domestication elsewhere. One seen flying along the river at Selva Verde.

### **GUANS, CHACHALACAS AND CURASSOWS — Cracidae**

**Black Guan** *Chamaepetes unicolor* — (**RE**) Cloud-forest specialist closely tied to intact montane forest. Seen in Savegre Valley.

**Crested Guan** *Penelope purpurascens* — Large canopy frugivore and important seed disperser in lowland rainforest. Observed at La Selva.

**Gray-headed Chachalaca** *Oreortyx cinereiceps* — Social and extremely vocal; often heard well before it is seen. Seen at Hotel Bougainvillea, and common at feeders at Pierella Ecological Garden and Selva Verde.

### **NEW WORLD QUAIL — Odontophoridae**

**Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge** *Dendrortyx leucophrys* — Secretive ground bird of foothill and montane forest, typically detected by voice. Observed at Paraíso de Quetzales.

**Spotted Wood-Quail** *Odontophorus guttatus* — Highly sought-after species that moves quietly in family groups through dense understory. Seen in the open at Savegre near the female quetzal.

### **PIGEONS AND DOVES — Columbidae**

**Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia* — (**I**) Introduced species closely associated with urban environments.

**Pale-vented Pigeon** *Patagioenas cayennensis* — Common lowland pigeon often perched conspicuously in treetops. Observed at Selva Verde.

**Red-billed Pigeon** *Patagioenas flavirostris* — Large canopy pigeon with a deep, booming call. Seen at Bougainvillea.

**Band-tailed Pigeon** *Patagioenas fasciata* — (**G**) Montane species associated with fruiting trees in cloud forest. Only Johan got eyes on this species.

**Ruddy Pigeon** *Patagioenas subvinacea* — (**H**) Forest-dependent pigeon more often heard than seen.

**Short-billed Pigeon** *Patagioenas nigrirostris* — Fast-flying canopy species often detected by wing noise. Observed perched at La Selva.

**Inca Dove** *Columbina inca* — Small dove with distinctive scaly plumage; tolerant of human-altered habitats. Seen on the grounds of Bougainvillea.

**Ruddy Ground Dove** *Columbina talpacoti* — Open-country dove common in warm lowlands. Observed at La Selva.

**Ruddy Quail-Dove** *Geotrygon montana* — Shy forest-floor specialist with rich rufous tones. One appeared beneath the feeders at Selva Verde.

**Olive-backed Quail-Dove** *Leptotrygon veraguensis* — Secretive deep-forest species rarely seen well. Observed at Tapirus Lodge.

**White-tipped Dove** *Leptotila verreauxi* — Edge and garden species with a whistled song. Seen at La Selva and Selva Verde.

**White-winged Dove** *Zenaida asiatica* — Often associated with open and semi-arid habitats. Common at Hotel Bougainvillea.

#### **CUCKOOS AND ALLIES— Cuculidae**

**Groove-billed Ani** *Crotophaga sulcirostris* — Social insect-eater frequently associated with cattle and open fields. One bird observed from van on road from La Selva toward Tapirus Lodge—Ruta Nacional Primaria 4.

**Common Squirrel-Cuckoo** *Piaya cayana* — A large, agile cuckoo of forest edges and canopy to midstory, often seen bounding through branches with quick, squirrel-like movements. Observed at La Selva.

#### **NIGHTJARS — Caprimulgidae**

**Common Pauraque** *Nyctidromus albicollis* — Ground-roosting nightjar whose eyeshine often reveals its presence. One bird observed day roosting at Pierella Ecological Garden.

**Dusky Nightjar** *Antrostomus saturatus* — **(RE)** Montane species restricted to the Costa Rica–western Panama highlands. Seen just after dusk along road in upper Savegre Valley.

#### **SWIFTS — Apodidae**

**White-collared Swift** *Streptoprocne zonaris* — Large, powerful flier. Observed boomeranging across the sky at Savegre Valley and La Selva.

**Gray-rumped Swift** *Chaetura cinereiventris* — Small, fast-moving swift commonly seen over rivers and forest edges. Recorded at La Selva.

#### **HUMMINGBIRDS — Trochilidae**

**White-necked Jacobin** *Florisuga mellivora* — Large, striking hummingbird of lowland forest edges and gardens. Observed at feeders at Pierella.

**Band-tailed Barbthroat** *Threnetes ruckeri* — A long-billed hummingbird of the forest understory, typically associated with shaded edges and humid lowland rainforest. Observed during a morning walk at Selva Verde.

**Long-billed Hermit** *Phaethornis longirostris* — A classic member of the hermit lineage, distinguished by its long, strongly decurved bill. A traplining species that follows regular nectar routes through the rainforest understory rather than defending fixed feeding territories. Seen at La Selva.

**Green-fronted Lancebill** *Doryfera ludovicae* — Streamside specialist with a straight, dagger-like bill. Observed in Savegre Valley near to the road nectaring on flowers with long, red corollas.

**Lesser Violetear** *Colibri cyanotus* — Aggressive hummingbird of high country, often dominating flower patches, seen flaring its “ears” (auricular feathers) and heard constantly clicking. Ubiquitous at high-elevation feeders.

**Purple-crowned Fairy** *Heliathryx barroti* — Elegant lowland species with gemlike upperparts and snow-white underparts. Slow, butterfly-like flight. Seen at La Selva. Faries are real!

**Green-breasted Mango** *Anthracothorax prevostii* — Large, bold hummingbird of open lowland habitats. Seen at feeders at Pierella.

**Green Thorntail** *Discosura conversii* — Tiny species with white rump band and long, spiky tail on male. Observed first day of tour nectaring on Purple Vervain.

**Talamanca Hummingbird** *Eugenes spectabilis* — **(RE)** A large hummingbird of the highlands of Costa Rica and western Panama. Common at feeders and regularly encountered in montane forest and forest edges. Formerly included within the Magnificent Hummingbird complex, it was split from Rivoli's Hummingbird (*Eugenes fulgens*), familiar to many birders in the southwestern United States.

**Fiery-throated Hummingbird** *Panterpe insignis* — **(RE)** A cloud-forest hummingbird of Costa Rica and western Panama, known for its iridescent throat that flashes fiery orange-red with gold and violet highlights depending on the light. Common in the high country on our tour, where it dominated feeders.

**White-throated Mountain-gem** *Lampornis castaneiventris* — **(RE)** Montane hummingbird strongly associated with cloud forest edges. Common at high-country feeders, and one male became our regular friend at Trogon Lodge.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird** *Archilochus colubris* — Long-distance migrant wintering in lowland Costa Rica. Seen at Bougainvillea.

**Volcano Hummingbird** *Selasphorus flammula* — **(RE)** One of Costa Rica's smallest birds, restricted to high elevations including páramo and upper montane forest in Costa Rica and western Panama. Seen at feeders in the high country, encountered in the wild while searching for Volcano Junco on a misty mountaintop, and observed nesting at Trogon Lodge.

**Scintillant Hummingbird** *Selasphorus scintilla* — **(RE)** Another contender for the title of Costa Rica's smallest bird. A tiny, fast-moving highland species often overlooked due to its size and subdued presence. Observed nectaring on Purple Vervain during our first walk in the high country.

**Violet-headed Hummingbird** *Klais guimeti* — Small species with a shimmering violet crown. Seen at Tapirus Lodge.

**Crowned Woodnymph** *Thalurania colombica* — Common forest hummingbird with forked tail and striking emerald and violet plumage. Observed at Tapirus Lodge.

**Snowcap** *Microchera albocoronata* — **(RE)** Minute rainforest jewel; males unmistakable with white crown. A female observed at Tapirus.

**Coppery-headed Emerald** *Microchera cupreiceps* — **(E)** One of two hummingbirds endemic to Costa Rica, confined to foothill and mid-elevation forest. Observed nectaring on Purple Vervain our first day. Our only Costa Rican endemic recorded during the tour.

**Stripe-tailed Hummingbird** *Eupherusa eximia* — Highland species with bold white tail pattern. Observed nectaring on Purple Vervain on our first day; also seen on Savegre Valley hike.

**Scaly-breasted Hummingbird** *Phaeochroa cuvierii* — A large, relatively dull-plumaged hummingbird typically associated with the midstory and canopy, where it feeds on nectar and insects. One individual perched in plain view at Pierella, offering excellent looks.

**Blue-vented Hummingbird** *Saucerottia hoffmanni* — Common Pacific-slope hummingbird tolerant of disturbed habitats. Seen at Bougainvillea being chased by Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds.

**Rufous-tailed Hummingbird** *Amazilia tzacatl* — Abundant, territorial generalist found almost everywhere warm. Common in lowlands on our tour.

**Blue-chested Hummingbird** *Polyerata amabilis* — Small forest-edge species with rich blue chest tones. Observed at Tapirus Lodge.



### **RAILS, COOTS AND ALLIES — Rallidae**

**Russet-naped Wood-Rail** *Aramides albiventris* — Bold, vocal rail often active by day; striking red legs and bill. Several confiding individuals seen at Pierella; also observed on bank of Sarapiquí River.

### **PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS— Charadriidae**

**Southern Lapwing** *Vanellus chilensis* — Aggressive nest defender equipped with sharp wing spurs. Observed from van on road from La Selva toward Tapirus Lodge—Ruta Nacional Primaria 4.

### **JACANAS — Jacanidae**

**Northern Jacana** *Jacana spinosa* — Famous for polyandry; males incubate eggs and carry chicks beneath their wings. Adults and juveniles observed from van on road from La Selva toward Tapirus Lodge—Ruta Nacional Primaria 4.

### **SANDPIPERS — Scolopacidae**

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* — Sex roles reversed during breeding; females defend territories while males incubate. Seen often in Caribbean lowlands on our tour.

### **ANHINGAS — Anhingidae**

**Anhinga** *Anhinga anhinga* — “Snakebird” that spears fish underwater and dries wings afterward. Admired on snags with wings spread in the Sarapiquí River.

### **IBISES — Threskiornithidae**

**Green Ibis** *Mesembrinibis cayennensis* — Secretive forest ibis with an iridescent green sheen. Seen at Pierella, Selva Verde, and on Sarapiquí River trip.

### **HERONS AND EGRETS — Ardeidae**

**Bare-throated Tiger-Heron** *Tigrisoma mexicanum* — Large, patient ambush predator of rivers and wetlands. Seen at Pierella, Selva Verde, and on Sarapiquí River trip.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea* — A crab-specialist heron typically nocturnal, but often active by day in tropical regions. Seen at Selva Verde.

**Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea* — Juveniles white; adults slate-blue with maroon head and neck. Seen at Selva Verde and on Sarapiquí River trip.

**Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula* — Actively forages using bright yellow feet to flush prey.

**Green Heron** *Butorides virescens* — Known to use bait to lure fish within striking distance. Seems to be more confiding in the tropics than it is in US. Seen well on Sarapiquí River trip.

**Western Cattle-Egret** *Ardea ibis* — Expanded globally by following livestock and agriculture. Seen often in Caribbean lowlands on our tour.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* — Once nearly exterminated for plumes; a conservation success story. Observed in Caribbean lowlands.

### **NEW WORLD VULTURES — Cathartidae**

**King Vulture** *Sarcorampus papa* — Apex scavenger often dominates carcasses found by other vultures. Observed soaring high over the canopy at La Selva on our last full day.

**Black Vulture** *Coragyps atratus* — Highly social and aggressive scavenger, common near people. Seen often on tour.

**Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura* — Exceptional sense of smell allows detection of hidden carrion. Seen often on tour.

### **OSPREYS — Pandionidae**

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* — Specialized fish-eater with reversible outer toes and spiny foot pads. One bird observed flying over our boat on the Sarapiquí River.

### **HAWKS, KITES AND EAGLES — Accipitridae**

**Sharp-shinned Hawk** *Accipiter striatus* — Agile forest hunter specializing in birds. Seen flying in Savegre Valley.

**Bicolored Hawk** *Accipiter bicolor* — Rare forest raptor that often follows army ants. Encountered at Bougainvillea.

**Double-toothed Kite** *Harpagus bidentatus* — Follows monkeys to capture prey they flush. Seen soaring high over La Selva.

**Broad-winged Hawk** *Buteo platypterus* — Migratory populations form massive kettles during fall migration. Several soggy birds seen perched on power poles when we drove into Talamanca mountains after a rainstorm.

**Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis* — Highly variable plumage; adaptable and widespread. Costa Rican subspecies seen several times soaring on thermals above Savegre Valley.

### **OWLS — Strigidae**

**Crested Owl** *Lophotrix cristata* — Secretive forest owl with mammal-like facial expression. Heard making a throaty growl on a night walk at Tapirus Lodge.

**Mottled Owl** *Strix virgata* — Common tropical owl that frequently day-roosts in dense vegetation. Two birds seen well day roosting in bamboo thicket at Bougainvillea.

### **TROGONS — Trogonidae**

**Resplendent Quetzal** *Pharomachrus mocinno* — Iconic cloud-forest species; a key disperser of laurel fruits (wild avocados). One male seen each morning outing in Savegre Valley; female also seen at close range feeding on plum-sized avocados the second morning.

**Slaty-tailed Trogon** *Trogon massena* — The largest trogon in Costa Rica and a characteristic deep-forest species of mature lowland rainforest. Two males and one female seen well at La Selva.

**Gartered Violaceous Trogon** *Trogon caligatus* — A common lowland trogon of forest edges and second growth, though uncommonly beautiful. A male was seen well on the final morning at Tapirus Lodge, its yellow eye-ring and rich plumage showing clearly.

**Graceful Black-throated Trogon** *Trogon tenellus* — A trogon of lowland humid forest. A male with blue eye-ring was seen well at La Selva.

**Collared Trogon** *Trogon collaris* — Striking red-and-green plumage; vocal and widespread in foothills. Two Christmas-colored birds seen on Christmas Eve morning in Savegre Valley while searching for quetzals.

### **MOTMOTS — Momotidae**

**Lesson's Motmot** *Momotus lessonii* — Racquet tail formed by self-worn feather tips. Seen often and well at Bougainvillea.

**Rufous Motmot** *Baryphthengus martii* — Large, lowland forest motmot with booming call. Seen at La Selva.

**Broad-billed Motmot** *Electron platyrhynchum* — Heavily built motmot like smaller, compact version of larger Rufous Motmot; often perched motionless in shade. Seen at La Selva and Selva Verde.



### **KINGFISHERS — Alcedinidae**

**Ringed Kingfisher** *Megaceryle torquata* — Crow-sized kingfisher; loud and conspicuous along rivers. One flyby on Sarapiquí River boat trip.

**Amazon Kingfisher** *Chloroceryle amazona* — Medium-sized species of broad rivers and forest edges. Female seen well perched on Sarapiquí River boat trip.

**American Pygmy Kingfisher** *Chloroceryle aenea* — Tiny, jewel-like kingfisher of forest streams. One confiding bird seen well at Pierella.

**Green Kingfisher** *Chloroceryle americana* — Compact kingfisher often perched low over water along forested streams and rivers. Seen multiple times at Selva Verde and during the Sarapiquí River boat trip. Both sexes were observed: males with a solid rufous chest band, females with a green-and-white banded chest.

### **PUFFBIRDS — Bucconidae**

**White-whiskered Puffbird** *Malacoptila panamensis* — Sit-and-wait predator that remains motionless for long periods. Observed at La Selva.

### **JACAMARS — Galbulidae**

**Rufous-tailed Jacamar** *Galbula ruficauda* — Metallic green aerial insectivore that sallies from open perches. One extraordinarily confiding bird at Pierella observed spearing a butterfly with its long beak.

### **TOUCANS — Ramphastidae**

**Northern Emerald-Toucanet** *Aulacorhynchus prasinus* — Compact toucan of montane forest and edges. Seen by one group member at Savegre Valley while searching for quetzals.

**Collared Aracari** *Pteroglossus torquatus* — Social, noisy fruit-eater often feeding in groups. Seen at the feeders at Pierella and in the wild at La Selva.

**Yellow-throated Toucan** *Ramphastos ambiguus* — A large canopy-dwelling frugivore and an important seed disperser in mature lowland rainforest. Frequently heard and seen in the Caribbean lowlands and at Tapirus.

**Keel-billed Toucan** *Ramphastos sulfuratus* — Notable for its enormous, multicolored bill, which is lightweight and honeycombed keratin in structure. The bill functions both as a tool for reaching fruit (and occasionally raiding nests) and as an efficient thermal radiator, shedding excess heat in humid conditions. Seen in the Caribbean lowlands and encountered regularly at Tapirus.

### **WOODPECKERS — Picidae**

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** *Sphyrapicus varius* — Migrant that drills sap wells used by many other species. Observed on morning walk at Bougainvillea.

**Acorn Woodpecker** *Melanerpes formicivorus* — Cooperative breeder that stores acorns in communal granaries. Common in highlands, regular at feeders.

**Black-cheeked Woodpecker** *Melanerpes pucherani* — Distinctive with big black mask. Common in lowland rainforest, forest edges, and second growth. Observed in the Caribbean lowlands.

**Hoffmann's Woodpecker** *Melanerpes hoffmannii* — A boldly patterned Central American *Melanerpes*, superficially similar to species such as Gila Woodpecker. Common in the Central Valley and Pacific slope, especially in open woodland, gardens, and urban areas. Seen well at Bougainvillea, and also observed at Savegre.

**Hairy Woodpecker** *Leuconotopicus villosus* — Widespread species with regional variation. Costa Rican subspecies (darker than the subspecies in our backyards) observed on Savegre hike.

**Lineated Woodpecker** *Dryocopus lineatus* — Large, crow-sized woodpecker with striking red crest. Seen at Bougainvillea on our morning walk.

**Chestnut-colored Woodpecker** *Celeus castaneus* — A large, striking lowland forest woodpecker with rich chestnut plumage. Seen at close range on feeders at Pierella.

#### **FALCONS AND CARACARAS — Falconidae**

**Laughing Falcon** *Herpetotheres cachinnans* — Snake specialist whose maniacal call carries far through forest. Heard and seen at Tapirus on final morning walk.

**Crested Caracara** *Caracara plancus* — Intelligent, opportunistic tropical falcon often seen walking on the ground. Observed at Bougainvillea perched in tallest trees.

**Bat Falcon** *Falco ruficularis* — Crepuscular hunter that targets birds and bats in fast aerial chases. Two of these little raptors engaged in what looked like aerial combat with Scarlet Macaws near Selva Verde.

#### **PARROTS — Psittacidae**

**Barred Parakeet** *Bolborhynchus lineola* — Highland parakeet often detected by calls overhead. One flyover of small flock at Savegre.

**Orange-chinned Parakeet** *Brotogeris jugularis* — Small, fast-moving parakeet common in lowlands and towns. Heard and seen multiple times; observed at close range engaging in upside-down antics at Pierella feeders.

**Brown-hooded Parrot** *Pyrilia haematotis* — Quiet, forest-dependent parrot often overlooked in canopy. Spotted flying at Pierella.

**White-crowned Parrot** *Pionus senilis* — Chunky parrot with distinctive white crown patch. Also at Pierella.

**Red-lored Amazon** *Amazona autumnalis* — Common lowland Amazon with red forehead and loud calls. La Selva and Selva Verde produced sightings of flying birds.

**Yellow-naped Amazon** *Amazona auropalliata* — **(CR)** Endangered species prized for vocal mimicry. Observed at Hotel Bougainvillea.

**Mealy Amazon** *Amazona farinosa* — Largest Costa Rican Amazon; pale, “mealy” appearance. Heard often at Tapirus and several birds seen flying; one bird seen perched.

**Sulphur-winged Parakeet** *Pyrrhura hoffmanni* — **(RE)** Cloud-forest parakeet endemic to the Talamanca highlands. Seen at Savegre Valley while searching for quetzals.

**Great Green Macaw** *Ara ambiguus* — **(CR)** Endangered canopy giant dependent on old-growth forest trees. A few exhilarating flyovers, and one bird seen well perched at La Selva.

**Scarlet Macaw** *Ara macao* — Iconic large macaw of lowlands and river corridors. Seen flying in Caribbean lowlands, and two birds seen perched and crawling into a tree cavity after interacting with Bat Falcons at dusk near Selva Verde.

**Crimson-fronted Parakeet** *Psittacara finschi* — **(RE)** A common and adaptable social parrot found from southeastern Nicaragua through Costa Rica and into western Panama. It inhabits a variety of open and semi-open landscapes, including gardens and urban areas. Heard and seen flying at Bougainvillea.

#### **ANTBIRDS — Thamnophilidae**

**Russet Antshrike** *Thamnistes anabatinus* — Mixed-flock follower of foothill and montane forest. Seen at army ant swarm at La Selva.

**Spotted Antbird** *Hylophylax naevioides* — **(H)** Ant-follower that hunts insects flushed by army ants. Heard at army ant swarm at La Selva.

#### **TAPACULOS — Rhinocryptidae**

**Silvery-fronted Tapaculo** *Scytalopus argentifrons* — **(RE) (H)** Ground-dwelling Talamanca endemic more often heard than seen. Heard well on hike at Savegre Valley but didn’t come into view.

## OVENBIRDS AND WOODCREEPERS — Furnariidae

**Plain-brown Woodcreeper** *Dendrocincla fuliginosa* — Often follows army ants to capture fleeing insects. Seen at La Selva.

**Wedge-billed Woodcreeper** *Glyphorhynchus spirurus* — Small, common woodcreeper with thin, upturned bill. Seen at La Selva and Tapirus.

**Northern Barred-Woodcreeper** *Dendrocolaptes sanctithomae* — Large woodcreeper of lowland forest, often found near ant swarms. Seen at La Selva and Selva Verde.

**Cocoa Woodcreeper** *Xiphorhynchus susurrans* — A long-billed, long-tailed woodcreeper with buffy streaking on the head, neck, and breast. Often detected by its sharp, piercing call. Observed at Pierella.

**Spotted Woodcreeper** *Xiphorhynchus erythropygius* — Mid-sized woodcreeper of foothill forest. Seen at La Selva.

**Streak-headed Woodcreeper** *Lepidocolaptes souleyetii* — Open-woodland species often seen on isolated trees. Seen at Pierella and Selva Verde.

**Spot-crowned Woodcreeper** *Lepidocolaptes affinis* — Montane woodcreeper of cloud forest. Seen twice at Savegre.

**Ruddy Treerunner** *Margarornis rubiginosus* — **(RE)** Specialized bark-gleaner of mossy montane forest. Encountered several times in cloud forest, became instant fan favorite with upside down antics at Paraíso de Quetzales.

**Red-faced Spinetail** *Cranioleuca erythrops* — Active understory species of montane forest, constantly flicking through tangles. Observed on hike at Savegre.

## MANAKINS — Pipridae

**White-ruffed Manakin** *Corapipo altera* — A small forest manakin; the male is glossy blue-black with a striking white throat and neck ruff to attract females; female is dull olive green. One male was seen well at La Selva.

**White-collared Manakin** *Manacus candei* — Famous for explosive wing-snaps and athletic leaping display. Seen at La Selva, and observed displaying in lek at Selva Verde on morning walk.

**Red-capped Manakin** *Ceratopipra mentalis* — Males are striking, with a brilliant red crown contrasting sharply with a jet-black body, and are famous for their moon-walking courtship display. A female was seen at La Selva.

## TITYRAS AND BECARDS — Tityridae

**Black-crowned Tityra** *Tityra inquisitor* — **(H)** Large-headed canopy bird often perched quietly in pairs. Heard at La Selva.

**Masked Tityra** *Tityra semifasciata* — Bold black-and-white plumage with red and black face mask on males; common in forest edge and open woodland. Male and female seen well at Bougainvillea; several also seen at La Selva.

**Barred Becard** *Pachyramphus versicolor* — Small montane becard with barring on underparts. Female seen near road in Savegre Valley.

**Cinnamon Becard** *Pachyramphus cinnamomeus* — Warm-toned lowland species. Seen at Pierella.

## TYRANT FLYCATCHERS — Tyrannidae

**Ochre-bellied Flycatcher** *Mionectes oleagineus* — Quiet understory flycatcher that feeds heavily on fruit. Seen at Tapirus on final morning walk.

**Common Tody-Flycatcher** *Todirostrum cinereum* — Tiny, energetic species of gardens and forest edges. Observed at dusk near Sarapiquí Road and seen the next day along road from La Selva toward Tapirus Lodge—Ruta Nacional Primaria 4.

**Eye-ringed Flatbill** *Rhynchocyclus brevirostris* — A greenish flycatcher with a prominent whitish eye-ring set in a grayish face, giving it a gentle, open expression. Observed at Selva Verde.

**Yellow-bellied Elaenia** *Elaenia flavogaster* — Open-country flycatcher with subtle crest. One bird observed from van on road from La Selva toward Tapirus Lodge—Ruta Nacional Primaria 4.

**Mountain Elaenia** *Elaenia frantzii* — Montane species of cloud forest edges. Observed in highlands around upper Savegre Valley.

**Torrent Tyrannulet** *Serpophaga cinerea* — Specialized riverine flycatcher of fast-flowing streams. Seen near Savegre River at Trogon Lodge.

**Mistletoe Tyrannulet** *Zimmerius parvus* — **(H)** A small canopy flycatcher closely associated with mistletoe. Feeds heavily on mistletoe berries, swallowing the fruit whole and dispersing the sticky seeds to new host branches. Seen on a hike at Savegre.

**Tufted Flycatcher** *Mitrephanes phaeocercus* — Attractive montane species with tufted crest and cinnamon underparts. Seen around Trogon Lodge and in Savegre hike.

**Northern Tropical Pewee** *Contopus bogotensis* — Gray *Contopus* with subtle crest and yellow-tinged belly, very similar to Eastern and Western Wood Pewees. Observed near Sarapiquí Road at dusk just before Bat Falcons and Scarlet Macaws appeared.

**Yellowish Flycatcher** *Empidonax flavescens* — Highland-forest *Empidonax* with yellow wash and teardrop-shaped eye-ring. Observed around Savegre Valley.

**Black-capped Flycatcher** *Empidonax atriceps* — **(RE)** Talamanca endemic restricted to high-elevation forest. Observed around Savegre Valley.

**Black Phoebe** *Sayornis nigricans* — Sooty-black, white-bellied river-edge flycatcher that pumps its tail while perched. Seen along river at Selva Verde.

**Long-tailed Tyrant** *Colonia colonus* — Elegant flycatcher with extremely elongated tail streamers. Seen well perched and flying at Pierella.

**Bright-rumped Attila** *Attila spadiceus* — Loud-voiced forest flycatcher more often heard than seen. Spotted at Tapirus on our final morning walk with its distinctive large body and head, orange eyes, and big hooked bill.

**Dusky-capped Flycatcher** *Myiarchus tuberculifer* — Widespread *Myiarchus* with plaintive, descending call. Seen at Pierella and Selva Verde.

**Great Kiskadee** *Pitangus sulphuratus* — Bold, adaptable flycatcher that thrives in human-altered habitats. Common in lowlands on tour.

**Boat-billed Flycatcher** *Megarynchus pitangua* — Massive bill with strongly arched ridge along the top and unique calls distinguish it from Great Kiskadees. Seen at Bougainvillea and La Selva.

**Social Flycatcher** *Myiozetetes similis* — Great Kiskadee lookalike highly adaptable and common around buildings and open areas. Also seen at Bougainvillea and La Selva.

**Gray-capped Flycatcher** *Myiozetetes granadensis* — Lowland species similar to Social Flycatcher; looks like a cross between Great Kiskadee and Tropical Kingbird. Seen at La Selva.

**Tropical Kingbird** *Tyrannus melancholicus* — Widespread open-country flycatcher with yellow belly and gray head. Common at Bougainvillea and seen in Caribbean lowlands.

## **VIREOS — Vireonidae**

**Rufous-browed Peppershrike** *Cyclarhis gujanensis* — **(H)** Attractive canopy bird easily heard but difficult to see. Heard signing its sweet song on first Savegre hike.

**Lesser Greenlet** *Pachysylvia decurtata* — Small, green canopy vireo often detected by voice. Seen at Selva Verde.

**Yellow-winged Vireo** *Vireo carmioli* — **(RE)** A montane vireo of Costa Rica and western Panama, distinguished by a yellow eyebrow and subtle yellow wing bars. Observed several times around Savegre.

**Philadelphia Vireo** *Vireo philadelphicus* — A Nearctic migrant found in Costa Rica in winter. Observed at Bougainvillea, La Selva, and Tapirus.

**Brown-capped Vireo** *Vireo leucophrys* — A highland and foothill species with a distinctive capped look. Recorded at Savegre.

#### **CROWS AND JAYS — Corvidae**

**Brown Jay** *Cyanocorax morio* — Intelligent, social jay often moving in noisy family groups. Seen well at Hotel Bougainvillea.

#### **SWALLOWS AND MARTINS — Hirundinidae**

**Mangrove Swallow** *Tachycineta albilinea* — Lowland swallow closely associated with rivers and wetlands. Common on our Sarapiquí River boat trip.

**Gray-breasted Martin** *Progne chalybea* — Large martin often nesting in cavities near towns. Observed on wires in Caribbean lowlands.

**Southern Rough-winged Swallow** *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis* — Common swallow of open country and waterways. Seen on Sarapiquí River boat trip.

**Blue-and-white Swallow** *Pygochelidon cyanoleuca* — Abundant highland swallow frequently observed over fields. Seen often at Bougainvillea and Savegre.

#### **GNATCATCHERS — Polioptilidae**

**Long-billed Gnatwren** *Ramphocaenus melanurus* — Secretive understory bird with an exaggerated bill and tail. Observed at Tapirus.

**White-browed Gnatcatcher** *Poliophtila bilineata* — Tiny, active insectivore of dry forest and edges. Also observed at Tapirus.

#### **WRENS — Troglodytidae**

**Southern House Wren** *Troglodytes musculus* — Adaptable wren common around human habitation. Heard at Bougainvillea and seen at Selva Verde.

**Ochraceous Wren** *Troglodytes ochraceus* — **(RE)** Montane species of mossy cloud forest. Seen near Trogon Lodge.

**Timberline Wren** *Thryorchilus browni* — **(RE)** High-elevation Talamanca endemic of dense bamboo and brush. We worked hard to get glimpses of this skulker in the high country before we dropped down the Caribbean slope.

**Rufous-backed Wren** *Campylorhynchus capistratus* — A boldly patterned, loud-voiced wren of open and semi-open habitats. Often occurs in family groups and is a cooperative breeder, with helpers assisting at the nest. Seen at Bougainvillea.

**Black-throated Wren** *Pheugopedius atrogularis* — **(RE) (H)** Lowland forest-edge wren with bold throat pattern. Recorded at La Selva.

**Stripe-breasted Wren** *Cantorchilus thoracicus* — **(RE)** Secretive understory species of foothill forest. Encountered at La Selva and Tapirus.

**Cabanis's Wren** *Cantorchilus modestus* — Common garden and edge wren of the Central Valley. Showed itself at Bougainvillea.

**Bay Wren** *Cantorchilus nigricapillus* — **(H)** Highly vocal lowland species often singing duets. Heard in Caribbean lowlands and seen once Selva Verde.

**White-breasted Wood-Wren** *Henicorhina leucosticta* — **(H)** Shy understory bird with beautiful fluted song. Heard at La Selva.

**Gray-breasted Wood-Wren** *Henicorhina leucophrys* — Montane counterpart to White-breasted; extremely vocal. Finally seen on second Savegre hike after being heard often in high country.

## **MOCKINGBIRDS AND THRASHERS — Mimidae**

**Tropical Mockingbird** *Mimus gilvus* — **(I)** Introduced to Costa Rica; highly vocal and adaptable, thriving in open and urban habitats. Recorded at Savegre Hotel and La Selva, and seen well along road between La Selva and Tapirus.

## **THRUSHES — Turdidae**

**Black-faced Solitaire** *Myadestes melanops* — **(RE)** Cloud-forest songster whose ethereal notes drift through fog and forest. Heard and seen in Savegre Valley.

**Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush** *Catharus gracilirostris* — **(RE)** Montane forest thrush with a rich, fluting song. Seen in both lower and upper Savegre Valley.

**Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush** *Catharus frantzii* — High-elevation species closely tied to cloud forest. Recorded in Savegre Valley.

**Wood Thrush** *Hylocichla mustelina* — Long-distance migrant with one of the most celebrated songs in North America. One seen at Selva Verde near the feeders.

**Sooty Thrush** *Turdus nigrescens* — **(RE)** Large, dark thrush of highland forest with yellow beak and legs. Encountered in upper Savegre Valley.

**Mountain Thrush** *Turdus plebejus* — Common montane thrush often feeding in fruiting trees. Seen at Paraíso de Quetzales and in Savegre Valley, sometimes overlapping with Clay-colored Thrush.

**Clay-colored Thrush** *Turdus grayi* — Costa Rica's national bird; culturally iconic and widely familiar; known locally as the yigüirro. Encountered throughout tour in varied habitats.

## **SILKY-FLYCATCHERS — Ptiliogonatidae**

**Black-and-yellow Silky-flycatcher** *Phainoptila melanoxantha* — **(RE)** Striking cloud-forest species dependent on mistletoe berries. Observed in high country above Savegre Valley.

**Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher** *Ptiliogonys caudatus* — **(RE)** Elegant montane bird with flowing tail feathers. Male and female seen well near Paraíso de Quetzales feeders.

## **FINCHES AND EUPHONIAS — Fringillidae**

**Golden-browed Chlorophonia** *Chlorophonia callophrys* — **(RE)** Jewel-like canopy bird of cloud forest. Seen well at Paraíso de Quetzales.

**Yellow-crowned Euphonia** *Euphonia luteicapilla* — **(RE)** Small fruit-eater with bright crown patch on males. Seen well at Selva Verde feeders.

**Yellow-throated Euphonia** *Euphonia hirundinacea* — Common lowland species similar to above species, but males have yellow—not dark—throat and smaller yellow crown. Seen well at Selva Verde feeders.

**Olive-backed Euphonia** *Euphonia gouldi* — Montane species with olive tones. Observed at La Selva.

**Tawny-capped Euphonia** *Euphonia anneae* — **(G)** Warm-toned euphonia of forest edges and gardens. Observed at La Selva by Johan.

**Lesser Goldfinch** *Spinus psaltria* — A small, active finch of open areas, edges, and gardens, often feeding on seeds. A common resident in much of Costa Rica, especially at middle elevations. Seen in the Savegre Valley.

**Yellow-bellied Siskin** *Spinus xanthogastrus* — A montane finch of forest edges and clearings. Similar to the above species, with bright yellow underparts and black upperparts, but distinguished by a prominent yellow wing patch. Seen in the Savegre Valley.

## **NEW WORLD SPARROWS — Passerellidae**

**Sooty-capped Chlorospingus** *Chlorospingus pileatus* — Common montane species. Seen often in high country on our tour.



**Common Chlorospingus** *Chlorospingus flavopectus* — Widespread species that often forms the backbone of mixed flocks. Seen only once—on second Savegre hike.

**Orange-billed Sparrow** *Arremon aurantirostris* — Understory sparrow with a sharp metallic song. Encountered in Caribbean lowlands and Tapirus.

**Volcano Junco** *Junco vulcani* — **(RE)** High-elevation Talamanca endemic of páramo and open slopes. Its yellow eyes pierced the fog near the Continental Divide.

**Rufous-collared Sparrow** *Zonotrichia capensis* — Familiar songster of open country and gardens. Common on our tour.

**Large-footed Finch** *Pezopetes capitalis* — **(RE)** Ground-foraging cloud-forest sparrow with oversized feet. Seen at Paraíso de Quetzales and Savegre.

**White-eared Ground-Sparrow** *Melospiza leucotis* — Restricted to small highland areas from Honduras to Costa Rica. Usually a skulking understory species but seen well in the open on our morning walk at Bougainvillea.

**Yellow-thighed Brushfinch** *Atlapetes tibialis* — **(RE)** Montane brushfinch with bold yellow tufts at the bases of its legs. Recorded at Paraíso de Quetzales and Savegre.

#### **WRENTHRUSH — Zeledoniidae**

**Wrenthrush** *Zeledonia coronata* — **(RE) (H)** A unique Talamanca endemic and the sole member of its family, sporting an orange crown and behaving more like a wren than a thrush. Forages mouse-like through dense understory and is far more often heard than seen. Heard but not seen in the high country.

#### **NEW WORLD BLACKBIRDS — Icteridae**

**Chestnut-headed Oropendola** *Psarocolius wagleri* — A smaller, darker relative of Montezuma Oropendola, with a rich chestnut head and throat. Typically less common and more localized. A single bird joined Montezuma Oropendolas at the Selva Verde feeders, allowing direct comparison.

**Montezuma Oropendola** *Psarocolius montezuma* — Colonial nester with mechanical, bubbling display calls and pendulous nests. Seen and heard repeatedly, perched and in flight.

**Scarlet-rumped Cacique** *Cacicus uropygialis* — Blue-eyed colonial nester with red rump visible in flight. Found near water and forest edges. Observed at Tapirus.

**Black-cowled Oriole** *Icterus prosthemelas* — Tropical oriole of forest edges and gardens. Seen at La Selva.

**Baltimore Oriole** *Icterus galbula* — Common migrant, with males adding brilliant orange to the winter landscape. Seen beautifully many times.

**Shiny Cowbird** *Molothrus bonariensis* — Brood parasite actively expanding its range northward. Recorded at La Selva.

**Melodious Blackbird** *Dives dives* — Highly vocal blackbird common in towns and open areas. Heard scolding and singing at Bougainvillea, and seen well there.

**Great-tailed Grackle** *Quiscalus mexicanus* — Expanding, adaptable species thriving alongside people. Common on our tour in the lowlands on both sides of the Continental Divide.

#### **NEW WORLD WARBLERS — Parulidae**

**Louisiana Waterthrush** *Parkesia motacilla* — Nearctic migrant; streamside specialist that winters along forest streams. Seen bobbing on bank of Savegre River.

**Golden-winged Warbler** *Vermivora chrysoptera* — Declining Nearctic migrant of conservation concern. Seen at Savegre and Tapirus.

**Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* — Nuthatch-like Nearctic migrant warbler that forages along trunks and limbs. Observed at Savegre.

**Flame-throated Warbler** *Oreothlypis gutturalis* — **(RE)** Brilliant highland warbler endemic to Costa Rica and western Panama. Seen well several times at Savegre.

**Tennessee Warbler** *Leiothlypis peregrina* — Abundant Nearctic migrant that winters widely in Costa Rica. Common at Bougainvillea.

**Northern Yellow Warbler** *Setophaga aestiva* — Nearctic migrant that winters primarily in lowland wetlands, mangroves, and second growth. Formerly included within the widespread Yellow Warbler complex, now often treated as distinct from the resident Mangrove Warbler. Encountered once at Selva Verde.

**Chestnut-sided Warbler** *Setophaga pensylvanica* — Nearctic migrant with bold flank patterning. Seen at Bougainvillea and several times in Caribbean lowlands.

**Black-throated Green Warbler** *Setophaga virens* — Nearctic migrant that winters primarily in montane forest. Seen well a few times at Savegre.

**Chestnut-capped Warbler** *Basileuterus delatirii* — Understory resident warbler of foothills and cloud forest. Recorded at Hotel Bougainvillea.

**Buff-rumped Warbler** *Myiothlypis fulvicauda* — Resident streamside specialist constantly bobbing its tail. Seen on a bank of the Sarapiquí River on boat trip.

**Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla* — Bright-faced, black-capped Nearctic migrant often active in mixed flocks. Common around Savegre.

**Collared Redstart** *Myioborus torquatus* — **(RE)** High-elevation Talamanca endemic with flashing tail pattern. Seen well several times around Savegre.

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#### **CARDINALS AND ALLIES — Cardinalidae**

**Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra* — Nearctic migrant that often feeds on bees and wasps. Seen well many times on the tour.

**Flame-colored Tanager** *Piranga bidentata* — Highland tanager with fiery red-and-black plumage. Common at Savegre.

**Red-throated Ant-Tanager** *Driophlox fuscicauda* — Understory species often following mixed flocks. Seen several times at Selva Verde and once at Tapirus.

**Carmioli's Tanager** *Chlorothraupis carmioli* — Large, dull-green ant-tanager of dense forest. Seen at Tapirus.

**Black-thighed Grosbeak** *Pheucticus tibialis* — **(RE)** Montane species with powerful bill, bold yellow color, and rich song. Observed once near Savegre Hotel.

**Blue-black Grosbeak** *Cyanoloxia cyanoides* — **(H)** Striking blue-and-black species of forest edges. Heard singing its sweet song at La Selva.

#### **TANAGERS AND ALLIES — Thraupidae**

**White-shouldered Tanager** *Tachyphonus luctuosus* — Sexually dimorphic; males jet black with a bold white shoulder patch. A male seen from tram at Tapirus.

**Crimson-collared Tanager** *Ramphocelus sanguinolentus* — Lowland species glowing deep red in good light. Seen at Selva Verde.

**Scarlet-rumped Tanager** *Ramphocelus passerinii* — Males are vividly colored. Abundant in lowlands; often the dominant bird at feeders. Common in Caribbean lowlands on our tour.

**Blue-gray Tanager** *Thraupis episcopus* — One of the most widespread and familiar tropical birds. Common throughout the tour but uncommonly beautiful.

**Palm Tanager** *Thraupis palmarum* — Common in open habitats, gardens, and towns. Frequently observed in Caribbean lowlands on our tour.

**Speckled Tanager** *Ixothraupis guttata* — Canopy species with finely spotted plumage. Seen at Tapirus on final morning walk.

**Golden-hooded Tanager** *Stilpnia larvata* — Brilliant canopy bird of foothills and lowlands. Observed fleetingly a few times; finally seen well on final morning walk at Tapirus.

**Spangle-cheeked Tanager** *Tangara dowii* — (RE) Cloud-forest jewel endemic to the Costa Rica–Panama highlands. Observed while searching for Timberline Wren above Savegre.

**Emerald Tanager** *Tangara florida* — Lowland rainforest species with luminous green plumage. Seen at Tapirus.

**Silver-throated Tanager** *Tangara icterocephala* — Montane species that seasonally descends into foothills. Seen well a few times at Savegre.

**Scarlet-thighed Dacnis** *Dacnis venusta* — Brightly colored canopy species of foothill forest. Seen at Tapirus next to the species below.

**Blue Dacnis** *Dacnis cayana* — Small, fast-moving species often visiting fruiting trees. Seen at La Selva and Tapirus.

**Shining Honeycreeper** *Cyanerpes lucidus* — Frequently forages in the canopy. Observed in the wild away from feeders at La Selva and Tapirus.

**Red-legged Honeycreeper** *Cyanerpes cyaneus* — Iridescent blue males with vivid red legs. Common at feeders at Pierella and Selva Verde.

**Green Honeycreeper** *Chlorophanes spiza* — Largest honeycreeper; powerful bill supports a varied diet. Males and females seen at Selva Verde feeders.

**Slaty Flowerpiercer** *Diglossa plumbea* — (RE) Uses a hooked bill to pierce flowers and steal nectar. Seen nectar thieving near Savegre Hotel.

**Peg-billed Finch** *Acanthidops bairdi* — (RE) (H) High-elevation specialist of the Talamanca range. Heard while searching for Volcano Junco.

**Nicaraguan Seed-Finch** *Sporophila nuttingi* — (RE) Thick-billed seedeater of open lowlands. Observed along road from La Selva toward Tapirus Lodge—Ruta Nacional Primaria 4.

**Variable Seedeater** *Sporophila corvina* — Highly variable plumage; common in grasslands and edges. Seen on Sarapiquí River trip and along road from La Selva toward Tapirus Lodge—Ruta Nacional Primaria 4.

**Morelet's Seedeater** *Sporophila moreletti* — Grassland species with a sharp, snapping song. One bird observed along road from La Selva toward Tapirus Lodge—Ruta Nacional Primaria 4.

**Bananaquit** *Coereba flaveola* — Energetic nectar-feeder found in nearly every habitat from gardens to rainforest. Seen a few times on the tour.

**Buff-throated Saltator** *Saltator maximus* — Large, robust songbird with prominent white eyebrow and a strong, clear voice. Observed at feeders at Pierella and Selva Verde.

**Cinnamon-bellied Saltator** *Saltator grandis* — Forest-edge species with rich cinnamon underparts and prominent white eyebrow. Seen in Bougainvillea gardens.

## **MAMMALS — Mammalia (16)**

**Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth** *Bradypus variegatus* — An extreme arboreal specialist with one of the slowest metabolisms among mammals. Its fur is oriented from belly toward the back—an adaptation to an upside-down lifestyle that helps shed rain—and often hosts green algae that enhance camouflage in the canopy and may provide minor nutritional benefits during grooming. One seen at Pierella.

**Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth** *Choloepus hoffmanni* — More active and more behaviorally flexible than three-toed sloths; despite the name, it has three toes on its hind feet and only two on the forelimbs. Two seen at Pierella.

**Proboscis Bat** *Rhynchonycteris naso* — Day-roosts openly, relying on disruptive coloration rather than the active concealment of tent-making bats. Seen on boat trip roosting on log in the Sarapiquí River.

**Honduran White Bat** *Ectophylla alba* — Famous for roosting beneath leaf “tents” fashioned from heliconia and other broad leaves. Its fur appears pure white, a rare condition among mammals and not

due to albinism, but to structural properties of the hair that scatter light; the translucent skin and yellow ears further enhance the effect. This coloration likely aids camouflage when filtered light passes through green leaves. Seen roosting in a leaf tent at Pierella and observed in flight.

**Lesser Sac-winged Bat (Lesser White-lined Bat)** *Saccopteryx leptura* — Insectivore often seen flitting through forest edges; males use wing sacs to disperse scent during courtship. Seen roosting on side of building at Pierella.

**Central American Agouti** *Dasyprocta punctata* — A keystone seed disperser of Neotropical forests. Agoutis cache large seeds—especially those of canopy trees with fruits too large for birds or bats to swallow—and many cached seeds are never recovered, allowing them to germinate and grow into trees. In this way, agoutis actively shape forest composition and regeneration, planting the forests that later feed them. Seen at La Selva.

**Variegated Squirrel** *Sciurus variegatoides* — Large, adaptable squirrel often seen in open areas and gardens; highly variable in coloration. Seen at Bougainvillea and in Caribbean Lowlands.

**Red-tailed Squirrel** *Sciurus granatensis* — Forest-dwelling squirrel with a distinctive reddish tail; more arboreal than its variegated relative. Seen several times in high country and at Pierella.

**White-faced Capuchin** *Cebus imitator* — Highly intelligent primate known for tool use, social learning, and complex group dynamics. Recently split from the White-throated Capuchin (*Cebus capucinus*) based on genetic and geographic differences. Observed briefly from the tram at Tapirus Lodge.

**Mantled Howler Monkey** *Alouatta palliata* — Among the loudest land mammals; low-energy leaf diet supports their famously booming vocalizations. Heard often, glimpsed at La Selva, and seen well near Sarapiquí River before we boarded our boat. Also seen along road as we left La Selva as we headed toward Tapirus.

**Common Raccoon** *Procyon lotor* — Dexterous omnivore with highly sensitive forepaws; in Costa Rica, primarily associated with wetlands and rivers. Observed at Selva Verde.

**White-nosed Coati** *Nasua narica* — Social relative of raccoons; travels in daytime bands while adult males are typically solitary. A large, confiding group seen at Tapirus from tram and after we unloaded from tram.

**Panamanian White-tailed Deer (Chiriqui White-tailed Deer)** *Odocoileus virginianus chiriquensis* — Widespread and adaptable White-tailed Deer subspecies in Costa Rica; key prey animal that shapes forest-edge dynamics. Seen a few times at Selva Verde.

**Neotropical River Otter** *Lontra longicaudis* — Agile semi-aquatic predator often seen surfacing briefly before diving again; uses riverside rocks and banks as feeding platforms. Observed at Selva Verde hauling a fish onto shore.

**Collared Peccary** *Pecari tajacu* — Social, pig-like mammal of the New World, belonging to a family distinct from Old World pigs; possesses a strong dorsal scent gland used for group cohesion and communication. Typically moves through forest in cohesive groups. Seen at La Selva.

**Baird's Tapir** *Tapirus bairdii* — The largest native land mammal in Central America; a keystone seed disperser and a flagship species for rainforest conservation. Thrilling encounters at Tapirus!

## **REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS — Reptilia and Amphibia (11)**

**Black River Turtle** *Rhinoclemmys funerea* — A semi-terrestrial freshwater turtle that forages both in water and on land. Long-lived and sensitive to disturbance, it is an important indicator of intact riparian habitat. Seen basking on a log in the Sarapiquí River on our boat trip.

**Green Iguana** *Iguana iguana* — Large arboreal herbivore often seen basking in treetops; powerful swimmers that escape predators by dropping into rivers. Seen many times throughout the tour.

**Green Basilisk** *Basiliscus plumifrons* — Nicknamed the “Jesus Christ Lizard” for its ability to run across water using fringed hind feet. Observed perched on a palm leaf at Pierella.

**Middle American Ameiva** *Holcosus festivus* — Fast-moving, ground-dwelling lizard of forest edges and clearings; active forager that rarely stays still long.

**Anole** *Anolis* sp. — Small, adaptable lizards displaying colorful dewlaps used in territorial and courtship signaling.

**Asian House Gecko** *Hemidactylus frenatus* — Introduced species commonly found on buildings; benefits from artificial lighting that attracts insect prey.

**Turnip-tailed Gecko** *Thecadactylus rapicauda* — Large nocturnal gecko with expanded toe pads; named for its thick, carrot-shaped tail. Seen around our rooms at Tapirus.

**Emerald Swift** *Sceloporus malachiticus* — Bright green, highland lizard often seen on rocks and logs; males display vivid blue belly patches during breeding season.

**Red-eyed Tree Frog** *Agalychnis callidryas* — Iconic rainforest amphibian; startle coloration flashes bright eyes and limbs to confuse predators. Seen performing at Pierella, and observed sleeping by tram dock at Tapirus and active on a night walk at Tapirus.

**Masked Tree Frog** *Smilisca phaeota* — Common nocturnal frog of disturbed habitats; name refers to the dark facial mask around the eyes. Heard at Tapirus in the dining area.

**Brown Vine Snake** *Oxybelis aeneus* — Slender, arboreal predator that mimics vines in posture and movement; a mildly venomous rear-fang snake harmless to humans. Seen at La Selva.

## **INSECTS — Insecta**

### **ANTS — Formicidae**

**Leafcutter Ants** *Atta* spp. — Endless trails of workers carry leaf fragments to underground fungus gardens; among the most advanced agricultural systems on Earth, evolving roughly 50–60 million years ago—long before human farming, which developed a mere ~10,000 years ago.

**Army Ants** primarily *Eciton* spp. — Nomadic predators that sweep through the forest in massive columns; their raids temporarily restructure entire insect communities and attract specialized ant-following birds.

**Bullet Ant** *Paraponera clavata* — One of the largest ants in the world; infamous for delivering one of the most painful insect stings known. Observed at La Selva and Tapirus, where their slow, deliberate movements make them easy to notice—and avoid.

**Carpenter Ants** *Camponotus* sp. — Large ants with glossy black bodies often marked with reddish or amber tones on the thorax; nest in dead or softened wood rather than consuming it. Omnivorous scavengers that feed on insects, nectar, plant secretions, and human food scraps. Seen frequently at Tapirus, especially around the tram loading dock.

### **BUTTERFLIES — Lepidoptera**

**Monarch Butterfly** *Danaus plexippus* — Iconic long-distance migrant of the eastern North American population. While most Monarchs overwinter in dense colonies in the fir forests of central Mexico, others disperse more broadly through Central America, including Costa Rica, where they remain active rather than clustering. Common at Hotel Bougainvillea, where flowering gardens provide nectar for wintering individuals.

**Long-winged Julia** *Dryas iulia* — Fast-flying orange butterfly of open habitats; one of the most widespread butterflies in the Neotropics. Admired at Bougainvillea.

**Banded Peacock** *Anartia fatima* — Active, low-flying butterfly of disturbed areas; rapid wingbeats and bold eye-spots make it easy to recognize. Admired at Bougainvillea.

**Yellow-tipped Flasher** *Astrartes anaphus* — Fast-flying skipper with dark wings and distinctive yellow-tipped forewings; males often patrol sunny garden openings. Seen at Hotel Bougainvillea.



**Blue Morpho** *Morpho peleides* — Iconic butterfly of Neotropical rainforests. Iridescent blue wings produced by structural coloration; flashes of blue may confuse predators as the butterfly glides through forest gaps. Encountered frequently on the tour.

**Postman (Heliconius) Butterflies** *Heliconius* spp. — Toxic and slow-flying; unusual among butterflies for feeding on pollen, which dramatically extends adult lifespan and supports long-term pair bonds. Seen at Bougainvillea and Pierella Ecological Garden.

**Owl Butterfly** *Caligo* spp. — Large crepuscular species with eye-spots resembling an owl's face; feeds on fermenting fruit rather than nectar.

**Malachite** *Siproeta stelenes* — Bold green-and-black butterfly of forest edges; strong, gliding flight and territorial behavior. Seen at Bougainvillea and Pierella Ecological Garden.

**Blue Wave** *Myscelia* spp. — Metallic blue upperwings contrast with cryptic undersides; often perches with wings closed, disappearing against bark. Seen at Pierella Ecological Garden with wings open.

**Dirce Beauty** *Colobura dirce* — Striking black-and-white pattern; frequently perches on tree trunks where it blends remarkably well. Seen at Pierella Ecological Garden.

**Cattleheart** *Parides* spp. — Large swallowtail relatives associated with toxic pipevine host plants; bold coloration advertises chemical defenses. Seen at Pierella Ecological Garden.

**Thoas Swallowtail** *Papilio thoas* — Massive swallowtail with bold yellow-and-black patterning reminiscent of tiger swallowtails; a powerful flier of lowland rainforest and forest edges. Observed at Pierella Ecological Garden.

## **FUNGI**

**Polypore Fungus (Polyporales)** — Observed on tree trunks at La Selva Biological Station, these woody, shelf-like fungi of the Polyporales order are major decomposers of forest wood. The visible shelf structures are fruiting bodies, releasing spores from thousands of tiny pores on their undersides—functionally similar to the gills of mushrooms. By breaking down lignin and cellulose, they recycle nutrients back into the ecosystem and help create cavities later used by insects, amphibians, and other forest organisms.

## **PLANTS**

**Guanacaste Tree** *Enterolobium cyclocarpum* — Costa Rica's national tree, a massive, spreading legume with a broad, umbrella-like canopy and distinctive elephant-ear-shaped seed pods. A giant living specimen was admired at Hotel Bougainvillea, and the species was further appreciated at Trogon Lodge, where beautifully crafted tables made from Guanacaste wood highlighted its cultural importance and prized timber.

**Giant Bamboo** *Bambusa* sp. — Fast-growing woody grasses with hollow, jointed stems marked by distinct nodes, a defining feature of the grass family. Unlike trees, bamboo, like all grasses, grows from the base rather than from woody tips, even though some species reach tree-like proportions. Native to Asia and capable of growing more than a foot per day under ideal conditions, Giant Bamboo is widely planted throughout the Neotropics, where it forms dense, vertical stands. At Hotel Bougainvillea, a grove of Giant Bamboo sheltered day-roosting Mottled Owls, while wind moving through the tall stalks produced eerie creaks and groans, giving the stand a distinctly haunted-house atmosphere.

**Bromeliads (Bromeliaceae)** — Diverse family of plants, many of which are obligate epiphytes, growing on tree limbs and trunks for support while gathering water and nutrients from rain, mist, and debris. Key structural elements of cloud forest and rainforest ecosystems, forming miniature aquatic habitats high above the ground. Seen often on forest outings.

**Giant Bromeliad** *Alcantarea imperialis* — Massive rosette bromeliad that stores rainwater in its leaf bases, creating suspended wetlands that support insects, frogs, and other invertebrates. Native to



southeastern Brazil. A facultative epiphyte: most commonly grows terrestrially on rock or soil but can also grow perched on trees without harming them. Admired at Bougainvillea.

**Scarlet Star / Dragon's Tongue Bromeliad (*Guzmania lingulata*)** — A striking epiphytic bromeliad with a glossy green leaf rosette and a vivid red to orange, tongue-like inflorescence of brightly colored bracts (the true flowers are small and short-lived). Admired on the grounds of Bougainvillea and from the tram cars at Tapirus Lodge, where canopy-level bromeliads highlighted how much life exists far above the forest floor.

**Orchids (Orchidaceae)** — Extremely diverse plant family with complex and often highly specialized pollination strategies. Many tropical orchids are epiphytes. Non-native ornamental species were seen at Bougainvillea, while native epiphytic orchids were observed in cloud forest and rainforest growing naturally on trees.

**Bamboo Orchid *Arundina graminifolia*** — Reed-like, terrestrial orchid of open and disturbed habitats; flowers resemble classic orchids but grow in grass-like clumps. Native to Southeast Asia and introduced to Costa Rica, where it persists along roadsides and gardens. Seen at Bougainvillea.

**Bougainvillea *Bougainvillea* spp.** — Woody ornamental vine native to South America. The colorful structures are bracts, not petals, surrounding small white flowers. Attracts hummingbirds and insects. Namesake of Hotel Bougainvillea, where multiple color varieties were a highlight of the world-class gardens.

**Silk-cotton Tree (*Ceiba*) *Ceiba pentandra*** — Towering emergent tree, meaning it rises above the surrounding forest canopy and is visible from great distances. Massive buttress roots stabilize the tree in shallow tropical soils. Provides roosting and nesting sites for birds and bats. Young trees bear sharp defensive thorns, observed and discussed at Bougainvillea.

**Monkey Puzzle Tree *Araucaria araucana*** — Ancient conifer from southern Chile and Argentina, often described as an evolutionary relic from the age of dinosaurs, with stiff, armor-like leaves that deter herbivory. Not native to Costa Rica; observed as a planted ornamental at Hotel Bougainvillea, where its dramatic form sparked discussion of deep evolutionary time.

**Pelican Flower *Aristolochia grandiflora*** — The largest flower in Costa Rica, and among the largest in the world. Emits a strong carrion odor to attract fly pollinators. Flies are lured inside, temporarily trapped for up to a day, coated with pollen, and then released—an example of deception-based pollination. Observed and smelled by a few adventurous participants at Bougainvillea.

**Jade Vine *Strongylodon macrobotrys*** — Striking turquoise flowers adapted for bat pollination. Native to the Philippines and cultivated in Costa Rica as an ornamental. Admired at Bougainvillea.

**Wild Avocados (Laurel Family - *Lauraceae*)** — Fruiting trees central to cloud-forest food webs. These trees are a critical seasonal food source for Resplendent Quetzals, whose movements are closely tied to laurel fruiting cycles.

**Oaks of the Cloud Forest *Quercus* spp.** — Dominant high-elevation trees forming the backbone of Costa Rica's cloud forests. Their branches support epiphytes, mosses, and lichens, while acorns feed birds and mammals. Unlike most tropical forests, Costa Rica's montane forests are oak-dominated.

**Miconias *Miconia* spp.** — Fruit-producing shrubs favored by manakins. Manakins disperse the seeds, helping regenerate the understory that later feeds future generations—an elegant example of plant–bird mutualism.

**Heliconias *Heliconia* spp.** — Iconic “lobster-claw” plants with flowers adapted to hummingbird pollination. Many species are closely associated with hermit hummingbirds, whose curved bills match heliconia flower shapes. Admired at Bougainvillea and observed repeatedly in the wild.

**Tree Ferns (*Cyatheaceae*)** — Ancient lineage of vascular plants reproducing by spores rather than seeds. They thrive in wet ravines and cloud forest understory; their unfurling fronds evoke deep evolutionary time. Observed from tram cars at Tapirus Lodge.

**Lianas (Woody Vines in various families)** — Structural components of tropical forests that use trees for support while competing for light. Provide travel routes and feeding platforms for animals and contribute significantly to forest complexity. Observed from tram cars at Tapirus Lodge and on forest walks.

**Blue Morpho Host Plants (Fabaceae family)** *Machaerium* spp. and related genera — Larval host plants for Blue Morpho butterflies; caterpillars feed on the leaves of legumes, while adults roam widely through forest and edges. Observed at Pierella Ecological Garden, where host plants are cultivated to support complete butterfly life cycles.

**“Broccoli Trees” (Epiphyte-laden Canopy Trees in various families incl. Lauraceae, Moraceae)** — Admired from the tram cars at Tapirus Lodge, where the elevated view reveals the rainforest’s vertical complexity. Not a single species, but large canopy and emergent trees whose crowns are densely coated in epiphytes—bromeliads, orchids, mosses, liverworts, and ferns—giving them a rounded, broccoli-like appearance. In the extremely wet climate of Braulio Carrillo, frequent rain, along with constant cloud cover and horizontal precipitation allow epiphytes to accumulate for decades, turning tree crowns into living canopy gardens that store water and support insects, frogs, birds, and other wildlife.

**Fig Trees** *Ficus* spp. — Keystone trees of tropical forests, figs fruit asynchronously year-round, providing a critical food source when little else is available. Their tiny flowers are pollinated by species-specific fig wasps in one of the classic examples of coevolution. Fruits feed an extraordinary range of wildlife—toucans, parrots, pigeons, monkeys, bats, and more—making figs ecological linchpins. Many species begin life high in the canopy as epiphytes, sending roots downward that eventually envelop the host tree, giving rise to the name “strangler.” Observed repeatedly across forest habitats on the tour.