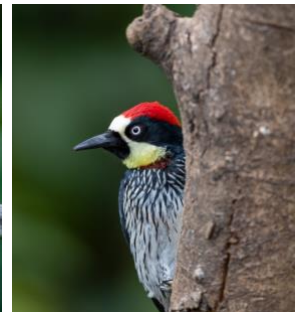


Costa Rica: Birding & Nature | Jan. 5 - 12, 2023

Trip Report | by Pat Lueders



With guides Pat Lueders & Johan Fernandez and participants Bobbie, Denise, Fred, Jan, Jim, Kathy, Maleyne, Michael, Mike, and Peggy



Thurs., Jan. 5

Arrivals | Hotel Bougainvillea

Some of the group arrived a day early to enjoy the beautiful and birdy gardens of the Hotel Bougainvillea. It was difficult to pay attention to the birds while enjoying the orchids, tropical plants and native trees that are found throughout the property. We identified Hoffman's Woodpecker, Tropical Kingbirds, Social Flycatchers, Rufous-naped Wrens and Palm Tanagers. The biggest excitement came when we found the two Mottled Owls roosting secretly in the dense bamboo and had great looks at a calling Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. Lesson's Motmots were spotted as was a Squirrel Cuckoo. What a fabulous introduction to Central American birds! After our introductory meeting with guide Johan and a delicious dinner, we returned to our comfortable rooms and prepared for our first day of the tour.



Fri., Jan. 6 Cartago | Paraiso Quetzal Lodge | Miriam's Restaurant Savegre Valley

After breakfast, we drove to Calle La Luchita in Cartago to find an endemic hummingbird, the Coppery-headed Emerald, and we were rewarded with great looks at this beautiful, small hummingbird. We saw four other species of hummingbirds, a Yellow-faced Grassquit and the lovely Golden-hooded Tanager. Lunch at Paraiso de Quetzales' hummingbird garden provided photo opportunities for five more hummingbirds, and on our walk, we saw Long-tailed Silky-flycatchers, Slaty Flowerpiercers and Large-footed Finches. We stopped for a cup of famous Costa Rican coffee at Miriam's Restaurant and excitedly spotted the lovely Golden-browed Chlorophonia, a Sooty-capped Chlorospingus and Yellow-thighed Brushfinch. Wow! Great photos were had by all. We checked into the world famous Savegre Hotel and enjoyed dinner together. Afterwards we completed our checklist before returning to our room where we slept in anticipation of tomorrow's planned activities.

Sat., Jan. 7 Savegre Valley

On this cool morning, we arrived early to the Resplendent Quetzal area and joined maybe 70 birders from around the world to see this iconic species. We watched the male move slowly up the valley, cross the road and perch in his favorite fruiting tree. He stayed in the area, moving to other trees, and provided a memorable photo opportunity. After our celebratory breakfast, we hiked the primary forest trails above the lodge finding Northern-Emerald Toucanets, the beautiful Flame-throated Warbler and many Collared Redstarts. We also heard the Black-faced Solitaire, what a beautiful hike in the woods! After lunch, most of us hiked above the town of San Gerardo de Dota. Along the lovely river, we saw a pair of Torrent Tyrannulets in the water and two new hummingbirds.

Sun., Jan. 8 Cerro Buenavista communication towers | Finca Cristina Ujarras Rd, Cartago | Rancho Naturalista

We left Savegre and drove to 11,000' in search of the Volcano Junco. Two of this habitat-specific species were perched close to the road. Success! Then we visited a local coffee plantation featuring bird-friendly, shade grown coffee. On our walk along an agricultural road in Cartago, we found Southern Lapwings, Collared Aracari and Brown Jays. Nearby, we also found Groove-billed Anis and Amazon Kingfisher. In the afternoon, we checked



into the friendly Rancho Naturalista, known for its delightful, original cuisine, and began birding from their famous veranda.

Mon., Jan. 9 Rancho Naturalista | La Mina | La Angostura Florencia

After a successful, early morning walk around the lodge, we returned to the veranda and enjoyed close looks at many new species including Crested Guan, Gartered Trogon, Keel-billed Toucan and Mistletoe Tyrannulet. We hated to leave! Just up the road we visited a private residence hoping see the Snowcap hummingbird. Success! Males and females were coming to their favorite flowers and were joined by Bronzy and Stripe-throated Hermits as well as Green Thorntail. Next we drove to La Mina to search along the river for the unique Sunbittern and were rewarded again, albeit with long scope views, of this beautiful, enigmatic species. After lunch, we visited La Angostura Florencia wetlands to scope waterfowl and other birds including Purple Gallinule, Hook-billed Kite, White-tailed Kite and many herons. Another delicious dinner marked the end to a fabulously successful day of birding!

Tue., Jan. 10 Rancho | Guayabo National Monument | Guarumo Lodge

Sadly, we had our last meal at Rancho after an early morning walk. Red-throated Ant-Tanagers, Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner and Montezuma Oropendolas were seen around the lodge. Guayabo National Monument was our first stop, a fascinating archaeological site where rocks were carved into figures around 1100 BC to 1400 AD. We saw three species of antbirds and our first Scarlet-thighed Dacnis. A favorite stop in route to Sarapiquí was the Guarumo Lodge. As we snacked on delicious appetizers, we watched their feeders with Yellow-crowned Euphonia, Crimson-collared Tanager and Bananaquits plus all three honeycreepers were seen coming to fruit, and a Wood Thrush was below them. The food was great, too! We arrived at the Sarapiquí Rainforest Lodge where we enjoyed a lovely dinner and slept comfortably after such an exciting day.

Wed., Jan. 11 Sarapiquí Rainforest Lodge | Le Selva Biological Station Sarapiquí River Boat Tour

During our early morning walk on the lodge grounds, we watched a pair of Yellow-throated Toucans displaying on a bare tree. We also found Fasciated Antshrike, White-collared Manakin, Melodius Blackbirds, four Black-faced Grosbeaks and the Central American Mantled Howler Monkeys that had sent out a wake-up alarm. Staff guided us at La Selva, one of the premier tropical research stations in the world, where we had our first good



looks at Central American Spider Monkeys moving through the canopy. A vibrant yellow eye-lash pit viper was spotted at the base of a tree to the excitement of all, and we were treated to good looks at a Black-throated Trogon, a Rufous Motmot and two Masked Tityras. One of the highlights of the week was the afternoon boat trip on the Sarapiquí River. We started with great views of a Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth taking an afternoon nap in a tree next to the boat ramp. A Bare-throated Tiger-heron was spotted as soon as we launched and the group enjoyed the antics of nine Green Ibis on the shore. Many Amazon and Green Kingfishers were perched on the exposed branches, as were giant Green Iguanas. Mangrove Swallows tried to hitch a ride on our boat, and Anhinga were drying their wings. The captain pointed out a hidden Mexican Porcupine roosting in a hollow tree trunk. What a fabulous way to view nature without disturbing it! Before dinner, we drove to the nearby macaw stakeout road to listen and watch for Scarlet and Great Green Macaws. Our patience was rewarded with scope views of two Scarlet Macaws and then a flyby of three endangered Great Green Macaws. What an exciting day!

Thur., Jan. 12

Departures | Pacific Coast Extension

Sadly, five of our congenial group departed for home this day. Our final early morning walk was quite successful turning up Slaty-tailed Trogon, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Orange-billed Sparrow and a pair of Bananaquits building a nest. On our way to the city, we stopped at the Cinchona Restaurant for coffee and to check out its bird feeders with a dramatic waterfall in the background across from the veranda. Beautiful! We sat with our delicious coffees and watched a variety of new species coming to the feeders including Red-headed and Prong-billed Barbets, Common Chlorospingus, Yellow-billed Cacique and the striking Crimson-collared Tanager. New hummingbirds included Violet Sabrewing and Black-bellied Hummingbirds. What a great ending to a wonderful week of birding! At the transfer point, we reluctantly parted with our new friends, wishing them safe travels on their return home. The extension group checked into the new location, Cerro Lodge, and continued to the Tarcoles River for an afternoon boat tour through the mangroves. We listened for the Mangrove Hummingbird and saw eight species of herons, five species of kingfishers, Panama Flycatcher, many Prothonotary Warblers and the beautiful "Mangrove" Yellow Warbler, a subspecies with striking rufous head. We enjoyed a peaceful sunset over the Pacific and watched feeding Lesser Nighthawks on our return. What a breathtaking start to the extension! During dinner at the lodge, we heard Scarlet Macaws calling as they flew to their nighttime roosts.



Fri., Jan. 13

Carara National Park

We had a productive early morning walk around the Cerro Lodge with Blue-vented and Cinnamon Hummingbirds as Dusky-capped, Streaked, and Brown-crested Flycatchers vied with White-throated Magpie-Jays and White-browed Gnatcatchers for our attention. After a delicious breakfast, we traveled over the crocodile bridge, aptly named as we saw a large number sunning on the banks! We continued our walk, arriving at Carara National Park, considered one of the top ten birding spots in Central America. Here we quickly spotted a pair of White-whiskered Puffbirds and a Rufous-tailed Jacamar. Three Golden-crowned Spadebills were moving quickly near the trail, and a Buff-rumped Warbler was seen near the creek, not far from a group of Gray-headed Tanagers found foraging under some bushes. We then traveled north to La Ensenada, a family-run country lodge on the Gulf of Nicoya and a bird watchers paradise. We moved into our cabins and enjoyed dinner on their spacious patio that overlooks the inviting pool.

Sat., Jan. 14

Ensenada Boat Tour | Morning Walk | Ensenada Salt Ponds

We excitedly left early this morning to tour the mangroves by boat with our experienced captain. At high tide, the many shorebirds, terns, herons and egrets were perched along the shore on low branches for easy viewing. Magnificent Frigatebirds were visiting an island and soaring above us. We happily found a Mangrove Vireo and had close looks at the elusive Mangrove Cuckoo! Boat-billed Herons were hidden deep in the foliage but seen by all. What a wonderful start to this day! After breakfast, we birded a field near the lodge, and Johan located the Pacific Screech-Owl we'd heard at dawn. We also saw Turquoise-browed Motmots, Long-tailed Manakins and Banded Wren. After lunch and a dip in the beautiful pool, we took an afternoon tractor drive to the salt ponds where we had great scope looks at Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbills, Spot-breasted and Streak-backed Orioles, Painted Bunting and Blue Grosbeaks plus 12 species of shorebirds and two Common Black Hawks. On our return, Johan and the Ensenada staff surprised us with a detour to the highest part of the property where we had an unobstructed view of the breathtaking sunset four happy hour. What a great way to end such a successful day!



Sun., Jan. 15

Ensenada Salt Ponds | Return to San Jose

We had to end our tour today and return to San Jose, but we made some productive stops along the way. We visited a shrimp pond and saw 14 species of shorebirds, Black Skimmers and Gull-billed Terns. Johan stopped at an overgrown road where we found several new species including Ruby-throated Hummingbird, our 31st hummingbird species for the tour, Gray Hawk, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet and Chestnut-capped Warbler. We arrived at the Hotel Bougainvillea in the afternoon where this wonderful adventure had begun, thanked Johan for his expert guiding and enjoyable sense of humor, and prepared to return to the U.S. after 12 unforgettable days birding the beautiful country of Costa Rica.

Blue-gray Tanager (Jim Major - JM), Group Photo (Pat Lueders - PL), White-faced Capuchin (Frederick Ruckman - FR), Yellow-throated Toucan (JM), Acorn Woodpecker (JM), Tropical Kingbird (FR), Lesson's Motmot (JM), Salamanca Hummingbird (JM), Butterfly (FR), Fiery-throated Hummingbird (JM), Lesser Violetear (JM), Montezuma Oropendola (JM), Emerald Toucanet (PL), Bee (JM), Resplendent Quetzal (PL), Collared Aracari (JM), Golden-browed Chlorophonia (JM), Crimson-collared Tanager (JM), White Ibis (FR), Red-headed Barbet (PL), Red-legged Honeycreeper (JM), Little Blue Heron (JM), Scarlet Macaw (JM), Magnificent Frigatebird (JM), Crested Caracara (JM), White-faced Capuchin (JM), Gartered Trogon (JM), Boarding the boats (PL), Sooth-billed Ani (JM), White-fronted Parrot (FR), Sunset (FR)