

Costa Rica: Birding & Nature | Trip Report

January 13–20, 2018 | With Pacific Extension Jan. 20–24

— Written by Bob Meinke —



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Guides: Willy Alfaro and Bob Meinke, with local lodge staff, and 11 participants: Pierre, Elisabeth, Tom, Charlie, Sheila, Ellen, Lea, Kurt, Kristy, Judy, and Julie

Thurs., Jan. 11 – Fri., Jan. 12

Pre-Trip Early Arrivals

Early arrivals filtered into San José on Thursday and Friday, before the start of the main trip. We were picked up at the international airport and transferred to the Bougainvillea Hotel, one of the few independently-owned hotels remaining in Costa Rica's Central Valley. Located in the San José suburb of Santa Domingo, the hotel was about a 30 minute drive from the airport. The grounds were surrounded by several acres of immaculate gardens, the rooms were spacious and very comfortable, and the staff superb. The dining options were excellent, and those of us who were on site a day early found the intimate lounge off the main dining room a comfortable place to enjoy a quiet meal before the full group arrived and assembled on January 13.

Several of us managed to connect in the lobby by Friday morning, and we were soon outside investigating the hotel grounds, which were clearly landscaped with the local avifauna in mind. Our first bird of the trip was the ubiquitous Rufous-collared Sparrow, soon followed by Inca Dove, Rufous-capped Warbler, Rufous-naped Wren, Squirrel Cuckoo, Yellow-headed Caracara, Red-billed Pigeon, Blue-and-White Swallow, Peregrine Falcon, and Short-tailed Hawk. North American breeding species that overwinter in Costa Rica were also well-represented here, including Yellow-throated and Philadelphia Vireo, Tennessee and Yellow Warbler, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and Baltimore Oriole. Hoffman's Woodpecker and Crimson-fronted Parakeet, both local endemics, were



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unexpected bonuses right on the hotel grounds (the latter species easily seen as large, raucous groups foraged each afternoon in several of the flowering trees located at the front of the hotel).

Sat., Jan. 13 Rendezvous at Hotel Bougainvillea

After breakfast, the early arrivals continued exploring the hotel grounds. The garden has an observation tower for birders, and the opportunities for photographers were excellent. During one of our forays on the hotel grounds, we ran across several active Lesson's Motmots in the shrubbery, allowing us to approach very closely.

We also discovered a White-eared Ground Sparrow, a species Charlie had studied up on before the trip, and immediately recognized



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(though never having seen it before), when we came across a beautiful adult bird rummaging around in a landscaper's brush pile. Easily the most intriguing and boldly-patterned species we found on the hotel grounds — a seldom seen, near endemic, only known from a few highly disjunct areas of central Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

By Saturday afternoon, almost everyone had arrived at Hotel Bougainvillea. Our lead guide, Willy Alfaro, came by late afternoon for a quick conference with Bob. After that, Willy, Bob, and the group assembled in the dining room for a welcome dinner and introductions. And an eclectic and geographically-diverse group we were, with participants from Oregon to Florida and Louisiana to New England, not to mention British Columbia, Switzerland, and Quebec.

We exchanged stories about past travels, heard from Willy regarding the upcoming trip schedule, and discussed logistics. It was a beautiful evening in the Central Valley, and after dinner many of us walked the garden to enjoy the tropical sunset. We then retired early, in anticipation of an early start tomorrow, as we left for the cloud forests of the Cordillera de Talamanca.

Sun., Jan. 14 San José to Savegre Valley

The whole group assembled early this morning for a quick bird walk with Willy. We saw many of the species those who arrived on Friday had seen previously, providing the later arrivals with an introduction to many of the local birds, including the resident woodpeckers, parakeets, wrens, warblers, and motmots on the hotel grounds.

We then enjoyed our breakfast buffet, checked out, and loaded into the bus for our trip south to the Talamanca Mountains and the cloud forest home of the Resplendent Quetzal. As we headed out of the San José area, we passed through Cartago and by an historic 1912 basilica with its lovely domes and columns. After a quick discussion, the group elected to limit our time in Cartago to a quick view of the basilica from the bus, and we continued straightaway towards our rendezvous with the quetzal.



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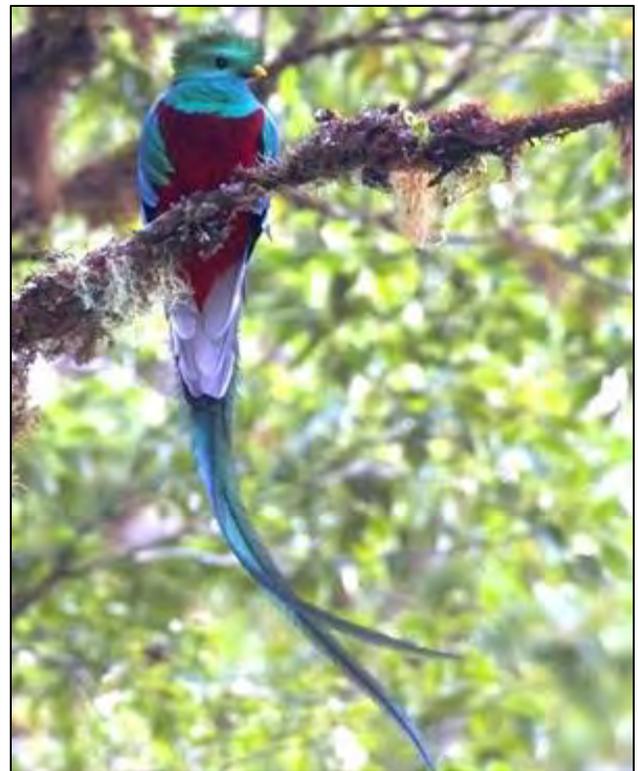
The Talamancas are a spectacular mountain range, rising from sea level on the Caribbean to over 12,000 feet, then dropping back down to the sea on the Pacific side of the country. As we gained elevation, we made a quick stop at a supermarket and gas station to grab some snacks and stretch our legs. Fresh local cheeses, produce, coffee, and some spicy local condiments were all tempting.

Moving on, the low, hanging clouds for which the high montane habitats in Costa Rica are famous for made their first appearance. As we arrived at Mirador de Quetzal, we donned our raincoats for the first time. The mist notwithstanding, we quickly set out along the trail for the quetzal feeding station. Along the way we saw our first Sooty Thrush, the related Clay-Colored Thrush, and the elusive Ruddy Treerunner.

Those who made the climb with Willy to the quetzal feeding station were rewarded with good views of Resplendent Quetzal, generally considered the most spectacular of the many species of trogons and their allies found world-wide.

Back at the lodge, Bob and his group were rewarded with no less than four endemic passerine species, including Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Black-capped Flycatcher, Slaty Flowerpiercer, and a quick view of Yellow-thighed Finch. When the others re-joined us for lunch, we spent a good hour scrutinizing the hummingbird feeders just outside the dining room windows. Despite the damp, the various hummingbirds were not the least put off, and we had good looks at several species, notably the iridescent Fiery-throated, Volcano, and Talamanca Hummingbirds, as well as White-throated Mountain-Gem, all four species being endemic to the area. The Talamanca Hummingbird is a recent split from Magnificent Hummingbird (and now thought to be the closest relative of Rivoli's Hummingbird, from Mexico and the SW U.S.).

After a nice lunch, we moved on towards the Savegre Valley, our destination for the next two nights. We stopped en route at Miriam's Quetzals, a small coffee shop



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with a productive set of feeders, where we had a much appreciated café con leche, and saw more Sooty Thrushes, Mountain Thrush, a swarm of Acorn Woodpeckers, and our first looks at the Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, another narrow endemic.

We arrived at the Savegre Hotel ready for relaxation (and more birds). A quick look at the feeders near the main lodge building yielded the first of what would be many Flame-colored, Blue-gray, and Silver-throated Tanagers, as well as Red-headed Barbet, Rufous-capped Sparrow, and the endemic Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher. But it was time to check in and have dinner and refreshment, and retire to our rooms. Tomorrow would be upon us soon enough.

Mon., Jan. 15 Savegre Valley Birding

Our cabins at the Savegre Hotel Natural Reserve and Spa were brilliant, with ample living space, spotless bathrooms, comfortable beds, and individual Wi-Fi (no tromping back up to the main lodge to get online to work on your bird list!). That said, we were eager to be out of our lodgings early today, to bird the grounds on our own before breakfast.

A Buff-fronted Quail-Dove, another lesser-known endemic species, was spotted near several cabins by a few of our group. Seen on two mornings, it was a noteworthy addition to our list.

Other species picked up this morning included the Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, Stripe-tailed Hummingbird, the endemic Black-faced Solitaire, Slate-throated Redstart, the endemic Collared Redstart, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, the endemic Sulphur-winged Parakeet (flyovers), Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, and Olive-striped Flycatcher.



After breakfast, Willy and the group focused on birding near the lodge. Plans to seek another Resplendent

Quetzal sighting (for those who missed the species at Mirador de Quetzal the day before) were thwarted by wet, foggy conditions higher up, so we contented ourselves with a visit to a nearby complex of fruit and hummingbird feeders that had recently been set up by Savegre Hotel bird guides a mile or so from the hotel grounds, on a steep

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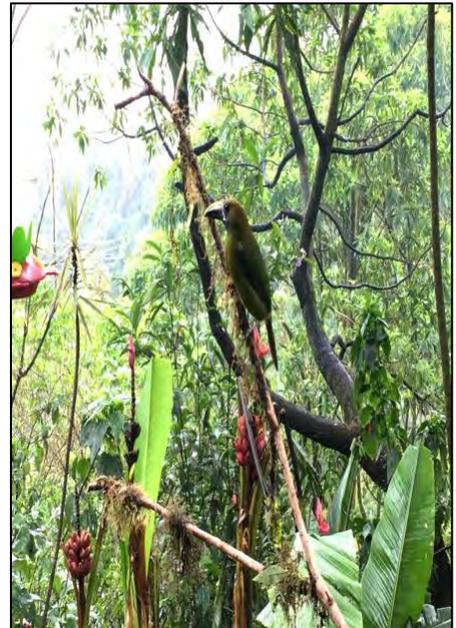
slope. Some of us walked, and other caught a lift up to the feeders, and the birding was more than worth the effort. Hiking up we noted Yellow-bellied Siskin, a perched Dark Pewee (an interesting endemic), Yellowish Flycatcher, and Band-tailed Pigeon overhead.

But when we arrived at the feeder station the birding really took off. Walking down the tiled walk to where numerous feeders were set up, we saw dozens of hummingbirds

present at any given time. Our list included Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Stripe-throated Hermit, Green-crowned Brilliant, White-throated Mountain-Gem, and Volcano and Scintillant Hummingbirds. The latter species, another new endemic for us, is not easy to separate from Volcano on the wing, and having both birds here working the feeders together helped Willy point out the differences to us.

The fruit feeders were also amazing. Without a doubt the most spectacular find was the endemic Golden-browed Chlorophonia. Males were a remarkable mix of yellow, blue, black, grass-green, and gold, and we saw them close up as they worked an apple orchard and visited the feeders. Other noteworthy species we picked up at the feeders and in the nearby forest included Northern Emerald Toucanet, the quite rare White-naped Brushfinch, Slaty Flowerpiercer, the endemic Yellow-winged Vireo, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Tufted Flycatcher, Paltry Tyrannulet, and the striking Flame-throated Warbler (another endemic).

We spent the late afternoon wandering the grounds a bit more, with probably the most bizarre find of the entire trip, an albino Rufous-crowned Sparrow by the main lodge building. An apparent juvenile bird, it was still being tended to by a seemingly bewildered mother, and was pure white. It's chances of survival in the wild would likely be nil, yet near the lodge, who knows. The rest of the evening was spent reviewing our bird list, enjoying another delicious and varied buffet crafted by the hotel chef, and (for some of us) sipping a drink while watching an NFL playoff game (Saints versus Vikings), which regrettably didn't go at all well, in the opinion of most of us. That aside, it was a fine day of birding, and an excellent day at the lodge.



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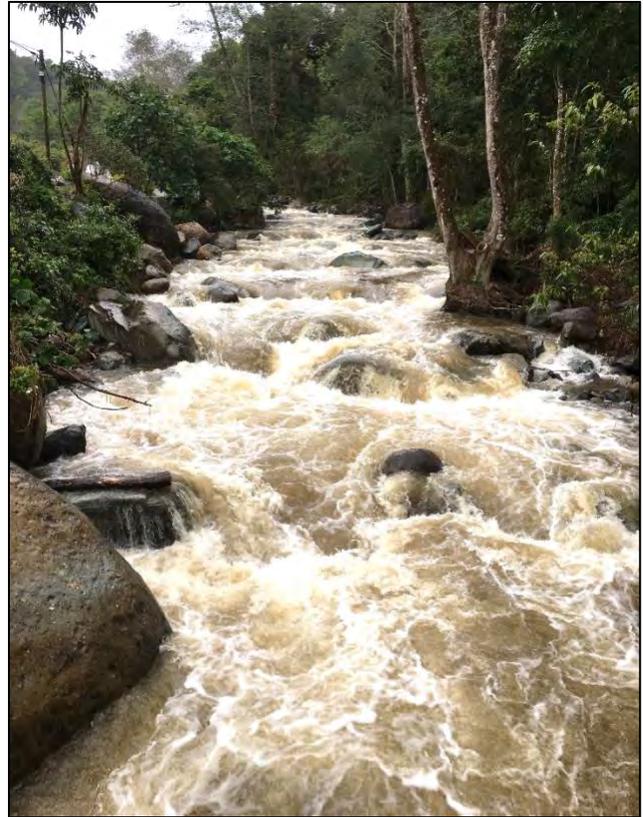
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Tues., Jan. 16 Savegre Valley to Rancho Naturalista | Stop at Guayabo National Monument

The rains came on like gangbusters overnight, and the Savegre River had risen to serious flood stage. The heavy precip was a reminder of what's needed to support the high levels of biodiversity in the area (the deep forest here is truly a mycologist's paradise). But a break in the deluge in early morning finally allowed for an hour or two of quality birding before breakfast, prior to loading up for the road trip to Rancho Naturalista.

Elisabeth headed up a back trail for a bit, and came across the endemic Black Guan that had eluded us thus far. Yes! And Bob encountered a Scaled Antpitta toddling along a narrow creek in the same general area, a species which Willy later said had been recorded here in the past, but not seen in recent years. Based on the birding literature, the Savegre Valley is well above the elevational range limit for the species in Costa Rica.

After breakfast, Willy and one of the owners of the lodge escorted the group on a final birding foray across the extensive grounds of the Savegre property. A covey of Spotted Wood-Quail was a highlight of the walk, and we had very close looks. Also observed along our route were Mountain Elaenia, Common Chlorospingus, Golden-winged Warbler, Collared Trogon (female), Boat-billed Flycatcher, the endemic Spangle-cheeked Tanager, and an apparent family group of Chestnut-capped Brushfinch in the underbrush. Some of us lingered until the bitter end, before loading up, and rustled up a pair Torrent Tyrannulets at a small pond not far from the hotel — habituated to swiftly flowing water (similar to dippers), our birds had presumably been temporarily displaced by the excessive flooding of the nearby Savegre River.



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Once loaded up, we drove out of the valley the same route we came in, and stopped again at the roadside gas station to fuel up and grab snacks. As we drove, Willy continued to keep us informed about what we had seen (check the video-aided discussion on Golden-browed Chlorophonia, below), what we were about to see, and what we could expect later on. He never lacked for preparation or interesting commentary, and the group was certainly the better for it.

After lunch on the road (we were warned the pork chops would be huge), we stopped at Guayabo National Monument. Set on the slopes of the Turrialba Volcano, it is one of Costa Rica's most important archaeological areas. This ancient site is believed to have been home to nearly 10,000 people during its prime around 800 AD. Unlike other pre-Columbian cities, no record of this group was ever mentioned in journals, and the reason for its demise is still unknown. The site covers some 50 acres, of which



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only about one tenth has been excavated. In fact, archeologists estimate that half of the main village area still awaits excavation. The excavations have unearthed paved roads, bridges, temple foundations, retaining walls, mounds used as bases for dwellings, open and closed aqueducts, tanks for storing water, and burial sites.

We were escorted by a National Park guide, who provided a cultural tour, but we also birded the area. The forest was rich in understory species, and at one site the mix of birds present suggested an ant swarm might be nearby. We watched a flock that included Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Zeledon's Antbird, Golden-crowned Warbler, Steak-headed Woodcreeper, and Slaty Antwren all foraging together. In addition, Lea spotted a Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner in the same area (nice pick-up!), and Plain Xenops and Slaty-capped Flycatcher were seen working in the mid-canopy. When our group emerged from the woods at the end of the tour, into a broad forest gap with ancient foundations, edge species such as Keel-billed Toucan, Band-backed Wren, Montezuma Oropendola, and Golden-olive Woodpecker were evident.

We arrived at Rancho Naturalista, our lodging for the next two nights, after dark, and quickly checked in. Common pauraque were calling! The property had a mix of stand-alone cabins and comfortable rooms in the lodge building, featured outside dining on a covered porch, and a public area downstairs with Wi-Fi and ample space to accommodate discussions and species list reviews. The excellent dinner was welcomed and the rooms welcoming. They were soon occupied

Wed., Jan. 17 Birding near Rancho Naturalista

Rancho Naturalista has an impressive collection of bird feeders, including hummingbird feeders on the covered deck of the lodge — on the second story (where coffee is ready at daybreak) — and then an array of benches below, with bananas and papaya for the many frugivorous species. Such a set-up is hard to resist (for birds and birders alike), and many of us were out squinting in the dark for coffee cups before 6:00 AM. The first birds seen (and heard) were the

Gray-headed Chachalacas, which were present from morning to sunset. After that, Rufous Motmot was a steady visitor, as were Collared Aracari, Black-cheeked and Golden-olive Woodpeckers, Gray Catbird, and Bay-headed, Silver-throated, and Speckled Tanagers.



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Less frequent birds at the fruit feeders included Chestnut-headed Oropendola, White-ruffed Manakin, Emerald and Passerini's Tanagers, Bananaquit, Buff-throated Saltator, Red-throated Ant-Tanager, and Olive-backed, Yellow-throated, and Yellow-Crowned Euphonias (the latter species a regional endemic).

White-necked Jacobin was the most frequent of many hummingbird species seen during our stay at Rancho Naturalista, and often posed cooperatively at the edge of the upstairs balcony. Other species that we saw at or near the feeders included Stripe-throated Hermit, Green Thorntail, Green-breasted Mango, Crowned Woodnymph, and Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer. We also saw hummingbirds elsewhere on the property, in more natural settings, such as the uniquely plumaged Snowcap (a regional endemic), the Violet Sabrewing, the elegant Green Hermit, and Lesser Violetear.

After breakfast we walked to the home of the lodge owners, just down the access road from Rancho Naturalista, to search for Black-crested Coquette. Along the road we found Tropical Parula, Ruddy Ground-Dove, Gartered Trogon, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, and Yellow-margined Flycatcher. After waiting patiently, the coquettes appeared, busying themselves at the flowering *Verbena* hedges. They were certainly worth the wait.

After lunch we climbed in the bus and headed out for a hike along the Tius River, not far from the lodge. But the rains that had been intermittent earlier had now morphed into a monsoonal downpour, and the trail Willy had in mind had been literally washed into the river. Our only choice at this point was to meander back to the bus and bird on the way.

Some of us had umbrellas, others did not, but we managed to maintain an upbeat attitude. Helping with that was the fabulous Fasciated Tiger-Heron we found, a rare, seldom-seen species that inhabits rushing rivers from Costa Rica south to Brazil and Argentina. Unfazed by the flood conditions, the bird was casually straddling a series of all but submerged boulders in search of prey. Other noteworthy species (in the trees) as we walked back to the waiting bus included Lineated Woodpecker, Bay Wren, and Plain-colored Tanager (another regional endemic).



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Rounding out the day, we headed to an area where Willy was sure we'd find a Sunbittern, and sure enough, there it was. We followed it as it crept in and out of view, through a grassy pasture that bordered a riparian forest that paralleled a small creek. Best view ever of a Sunbittern. A Black-headed Saltator and a Masked Tityra were added to our list here as we moved along.

Almost time for dinner — another delicious family-style feast — we first made use of the sofas in the lodge building's public area, and went over our ever-increasing list of birds, which was now well over 200 species.

Thurs., Jan. 18 Rancho Naturalista to Selva Verde | Stop at Heliconia Gardens

We got up early this morning and visited the illuminated, white sheets Rancho Naturalista hangs in the forest, which attract moths and other nocturnal insects. The insects in turn attract birds, and the feeding frenzy that ensues is best observed just before sunrise.

During our visit, a number of species that are hard to find and typically wary, at least when not attracted to something like an ant swarm or (in this case) a light station, were ridiculously easy to approach. Included were Plain-brown and Spot-headed Woodcreepers, Plain Ant-Vireo, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Slaty Antwren, Buff-throated Foliage-Gleaner, and Tawny-chested Flycatcher (a scarce endemic). You could come here every morning for a week, and probably see something new each day.



Having largely packed up the night before, we were ready to head out after breakfast. Our visit to Rancho Naturalista was far too short, and we really only scratched the surface of what the lodge and its preserve have to offer. But now our focus was on the Caribbean slope, and our fingers were crossed that the rains that had been a constant companion on the trip might subside. We headed east and descended towards the sea.

Lunch was at a local restaurant near the coast, a great buffet with lots of salad, fruit, and fresh juices to go with chicken and rice. We had the opportunity to spot a few interesting birds by the restaurant, including Gray-rumped Swift, Olive-throated Parakeet, Yellow-throated Toucan (also known as "Black-mandibled"), Gray-

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capped Flycatcher, and Red-legged Honeycreeper. We then left for Heliconia Island, a botanical garden and nature preserve near the Rio Puerto Viejo.

Heliconia Island was lush and the first bird we spotted as we walked to the entrance was a Rufous-tailed Jacamar perched in a nearby tree. We continued on and checked in, and began our tour of the site with Willy. True to its name, there were dozens of impressive *Heliconia* plants, many in full bloom. There were a number of Long-billed Hermits working the flowers, their curved bills matching the angle of the corolla tubes of the *Heliconia* flowers, a testament to natural selection. There were also several Blue-chested Hummingbirds (mostly female) nearby.

Moving along, Willy pointed out a woodpecker that was keeping just out of sight as it worked the opposite side of a tall tree. Clearly a *Celeus* species, at first it appeared to be a Chestnut-colored Woodpecker. Further scrutiny and a bit of patience finally revealed its true identity — Cinnamon Woodpecker, a new species for many of us. White-collared Manakin and Cinnamon Becard were also seen, and several Northern Waterthrush were working the grassy areas near buildings, not bothered by the wet weather. Red-throated Ant-Tanager was seen in the understory, and as the group was moving back to the cars, a beautiful male Dusky-faced Tanager was seen near the reception building (another new species for the trip list). We left Heliconia Island and headed to our accommodations for the next two nights at Selva Verde Lodge.

Selva Verde Lodge occupies a large area on the banks of the Sarapiquí River, in a forested setting, and for some of us there was clearly potential for birding right from the front of your room. A pair of Buff-rumped Warblers greeted us by a small brook as we walked out of reception, and a White-ringed Flycatcher was hawking insects by the river. After unpacking, we were soon reviewing our species lists by the bar, and then on to dinner. Some of us had rooms adjacent to the river, which provided a beautiful view, and a peaceful backdrop for drifting off to sleep.



Fri., Jan. 19 Birding Selva Verde Area | Sarapiquí River Cruise

Naturalist Journeys, LLC / Caligo Ventures PO Box 16545 Portal, AZ 85632 PH: 520.558.1146 / 800.426.7781

Fax 650.471.7667 naturalistjourneys.com / caligo.com info@caligo.com / naturalistjourneys@gmail.com

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Selva Verde Lodge has a very nice observation deck that overlooks several fruit feeders, and the competition is fierce in the morning (among the birders) for space to watch the activity below. Unlike Rancho Naturalista (a small lodge where we were the only guests), Selva Verde has many more rooms and is often full or close to it. So to ensure a prime spot on the deck, arriving by 6:00 AM was essential.

Breakfast was served as a buffet at your leisure, and it was easy to grab coffee, bird for a while on the deck, and then head in to eat. Crimson-collared Tanager, Orange-billed Sparrow, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Green Honeycreeper, and Olive-backed Euphonia were common visitors. During a walk back to his room, Bob ran in to a birder from the UK who insisted he had seen a Tody Motmot on the lodge grounds. We checked the area again together, but with no luck. After digging in to it further, it doesn't appear Tody Motmot occurs in Costa Rica on the Caribbean slope. But then who knows. Bob saw the species a few days later in Panama—it would have been a nice record for Selva Verde if it could have been confirmed!

Normally during visits to this area, the tour would stop for the better part of a day at the La Selva Biological Station, for hiking and birding. But the rainfall had been so heavy over the previous 48 hours that access to the station was largely cut off due to flooding, and Willy wisely decided not to risk trying to visit the area. There was plenty of good birding to be had in lieu of La Selva, so we focused on two sites, the Tirimbina Lodge Reserve and the Selva Verde Reserve (in the heavy forest across from the main lodge grounds where we were staying).

Tirimбина Lodge grounds were not extensive, but they were rich in birds. And this was also where we had good views of a slumbering sloth in the low canopy, just off the small parking lot. The most interesting addition to our bird list here was the Eye-ringed Flatbill, a shy and uncommon flycatcher typically found in the understory of broadleaf forests. We had remarkably good looks at a bird sitting only a few feet away.

We then headed back to Selva Verde where we took a hike across the suspension bridge (170 meters!) that leads to a forest reserve across the Sarapiquí River from the lodge. Within minutes of exiting the far end of the bridge, a Greater Tinamou was spotted in the shaded forest floor — wow! We had excellent views of this normally very hard to locate species — often heard but seldom



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seen. We moved quietly down the trail, keeping our eyes out for other rarities. Looking back across the river we spotted a Broad-billed Motmot perched quietly in the forest, and we had excellent, prolonged looks via the scope. Further down the trail a Slaty-tailed Trogon was perched, as well as a Cinnamon Becard. And later, Willy was very excited to hear a Song Wren, a species he has seldom seen in Costa Rica. And while our attention was focused on the wren, a gorgeous Red-capped Manakin hopped into plain view just a few feet away. On our way back across the bridge a Green Kingfisher was spotted right below us, hunting in shallow pools near the river's edge.

After lunch at we headed out for our afternoon journey on the Sarapiquí River, where we hoped to add a number of species not yet seen during the trip. Spotted Sandpipers were common on the shore, and Neotropic Cormorant, Anhinga, and Snowy and Great Egrets were all seen. We could hear macaws calling in the distance, but they remained out of view, and also had flyovers of Red-ored Parrots and Olive-throated Parakeets. Mangrove Swallows followed the boat as we drifted along, and Ringed, Amazon, and Green Kingfishers were all present. The shoreline was covered with rafts of flowers in some areas, and the landscape was stunning.



The highlight of our time on the river involved a cooperative effort by Willy and Charlie. Out of the corner of his eye, Charlie had detected movement in the riparian forest along the bank, and suggested we might want to circle back and take a quick look. Sure enough, as we approached the spot, a small raptor was located perched high in an open tree. Although it had some features (especially at a distance) of Barred Forest-Falcon, Willy pointed out that the bird was far too small for that species. Further evaluation and contemplation over several minutes confirmed the bird as a Tiny Hawk, another rarity for the trip. Not a species we (or Willy) expected to see!

Once off the river, we stopped on our way back to the lodge to see if we could locate the earlier vocalizing macaws, and Willy led us to a group of trees with active nests. These were endangered Great Green Macaws, and we watched for several minutes as they peered out of nest holes and flew nearby, loudly calling. They were simply spectacular birds. Also nesting nearby were several Orange-chinned Parakeets, another of the many regional endemic species we saw on the trip. And just before leaving we caught sight of a Semiplumbeous Hawk, as we were getting ready to board the bus, a nice exclamation point on a very productive stop. A long day over, we were soon on our way back to Selva Verde Lodge for our final dinner of the trip.

Sat., Jan. 20 San José for Flights Home | Begin Pacific Coast Extension

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We left Selva Verde in the rain, but as we headed back across the mountains to San José and the international airport, the sun finally appeared. We took a more rural route back than we had taken over to Selva Verde, and enjoyed one more stop for a quick coffee and some final birding at Mirador de Aves. The bird feeders were well-stocked and we had close views of a number of colorful species, including Blue-Gray Tanager, Buff-throated Saltator, and Northern Emerald Toucanet, among many others.



The highlights here were ochre-plumaged Prong-billed Barbet, a very interesting local endemic in the same small family as the Toucan Barbet of South America, and the rare Chiriqui Quail-Dove, another local endemic, and a poorly known one at that. Yet the Quail-Dove was meandering around under the feeders in full view, and the Barbets were almost tame, perching on railings and eating bananas and oranges. A pretty special place for the last stop of the main trip.

We pulled in at the San José airport about mid-day, and those of us departing bid farewell to Lea, Judith, Sheila, Charlie, Elisabeth, and Pierre, who were staying on for the extension. All in all an amazing trip, with fabulous birds and lodges, and an excellent, well-prepared guide in Willy! So much to see in Costa Rica, and many reasons to return.

Photo credits: Resplendent Quetzal and Silver-throated tanager (Greg Smith); Rufous-tailed Jacamar (Tom Dove); All others (Bob Meinke).