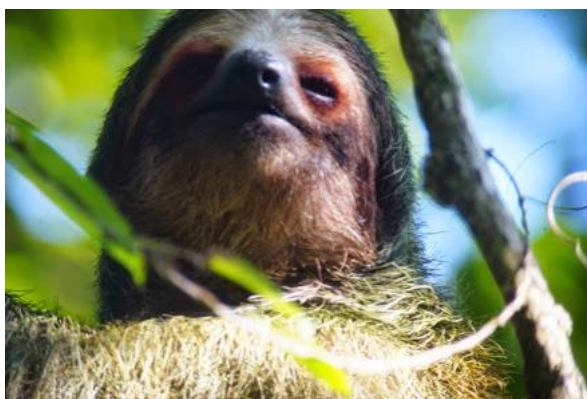


# WILDLIFE TRAVEL

## Costa Rica

**1<sup>st</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2015**



Photos courtesy Peter Jupp

<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Locations &amp; notes</b>
<b>1</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>	Hotel Robledal , San Jose
<b>2</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Hotel Robledal, Poas Volcano, Hummingbird Café, La Paz Waterfall
<b>3</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	San Gerardo de Dota, Paraiso Quetzal, Marion's Place, Trogon Lodge
<b>4</b>	4 <sup>th</sup>	Trogon Lodge, Cerro de la Muerte, Los Quezales National Park
<b>5</b>	5 <sup>th</sup>	Trogon Lodge, Tarcoles, La Ensenada
<b>6</b>	6 <sup>th</sup>	La Ensenada
<b>7</b>	7 <sup>th</sup>	La Ensenada, La Fortuna
<b>8</b>	8 <sup>th</sup>	Hotel Tilijari, La Ensenada, Arenal National Park, La Fortuna
<b>9</b>	9 <sup>th</sup>	Hotel Tilijari, Cano Negro National Park
<b>10</b>	10 <sup>th</sup>	Hotel Tilijari to Sarapiquí, Sueno Azul Resort
<b>11</b>	11 <sup>th</sup>	Sueno Azul Resort, La Selva Biological Research Station
<b>12</b>	12 <sup>th</sup>	Sarapiquí to Tortuguero National Park, La Baula Lodge
<b>13</b>	13 <sup>th</sup>	Tortuguero National Park
<b>14</b>	14 <sup>th</sup>	Tortuguero National Park to San Jose, Hotel Robledal
<b>15</b>	15 <sup>th</sup>	Hotel Robledal, San Jose
<b>16</b>	16 <sup>th</sup>	

## 1<sup>st</sup> February

Thirteen bleary-eyed travellers assembled at Heathrow Terminal 5 for the long and tedious flight to San Jose, via Madrid but it passed smoothly and we arrived on time to be met by Adolfo, who from now on will be referred to as Fito and our driver. As we made our through the gathering dusk of San Jose, a few birds were noted, the most notable being a **scissor-tailed flycatcher**, not a bad bird to start the trip. We arrived at the Hotel Robledal, which is by far the best San Jose hotel I've stayed in, tired and hungry, ready to start our daily intake of beans and rice and a serious assault on the hotel's wine stocks.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> February

Early morning saw many of us walking around the grounds way before breakfast, either through being too excited about the prospective birding or an inability to adapt to the changing time zones, but whatever the reason it was a splendid hour or so, a splendid introduction to some urban Costa Rican birds. Undoubtedly the stars of the morning were the **ferruginous pygmy owls**, obligingly scopable and photographic. Those who managed to resist leaving their beds were dragged kicking and screaming to admire these brilliant birds. Many other birds provided the support acts, chief amongst these was again a very obliging **Hoffman's woodpecker** and there was great excitement at seeing **black vultures**, not realising that it would become the most commonly seen species of the trip. **Eastern meadowlark** was a good spot in an adjoining field while **melodious blackbirds** and a **masked tityra** also caught the attention. Common species first seen in the grounds and then recorded most days included the ubiquitous **great kiskadee** and **tropical kingbird**.

Breakfast called, which is always a great meal in Costa Rica, following which we made our way eventually out of the traffic thronged chaos of San Jose, arriving at a coffee plantation which seems to get busier and busier everytime I come. Refreshed by coffee and toilets we went onto the volcano, stopping twice on the way, the first providing one of a few lacrimose episodes on the trip, as we all piled out by the side of the road to admire a characteristically static **2-toed sloth**, a sight so wonderful that Jan, through the tears, nominated it her most memorable moment. Tears wiped from the eyes, we got on the bus only to get off again some way up the road to see a **zone-tailed hawk** and a **red-tailed hawk**.

Onto the Poas Volcano and despite the cloudy, drizzly weather splendid views of the crater opened up for us, trying to avoid the other tourists and **poas squirrels** we made our way back, enjoying close views of **yellow-thighed finches** and **black-billed nightingale thrush**. Generously allowing a little time for shopping at the Centre we then headed off for what became a pattern for the holiday, a very generous lunch and the realisation that loss of weight would not be a feature of this holiday.

Next stop The Hummingbird Café and a brilliant hour entertained by a series of hummingbirds, tanagers and a splendid **emerald toucanet**, in fact so splendid that Claire thought it her favourite bird. Of the hummingbirds, the **violet sabrewing** was the most dominant, with **green hermit**, **green-breasted mango** and **rufous-tailed hummingbird** all enjoying the fayre provided for them. Tanagers included the common **palm** and **blue and gray**. Although we saw it most days the blue and gray tanager caught John's attention enough to make it his favourite bird. A **silver throated** caught the eye but all these were overshadowed by the incredibly striking **Passerini's tanager**, black with the brilliant flash of red. Jan said that it was her favourite bird, so she got her best bird and most memorable moment out the way on the first day! The **Baltimore oriole** was also a pretty striking visitor to the feeders.

One more stop on the way back at the lovely La Paz Waterfall where a few of us had to do the touristy thing of walking on the ledge behind the Falls and in the bubbling waters we picked up the diminutive **torrent tyrannulet**. Just one stop on the way back to the hotel to admire a **white-winged kite** by the side of the road. Not a bad start to the Costa Rican experience.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> February

The owls were very visible again in the Hotel grounds as we enjoyed another excellent pre-breakfast where new birds included the **crested caracara** and a **cinnamon hummingbird**.

Leaving the Hotel Robledal we headed off to the Cordillera Mountains, a journey made a bit tedious by the fact that the main road had collapsed, so we had to make our way through the back roads, with Fito and the driver trying to convince us that we weren't lost! However, we eventually arrived at the wonderful Paraiso Quetzal for lunch and another feast of hummingbirds of which the star was the **fiery-throated hummingbird**, such a brilliant bird when the light caught the throat and captivated Alan enough for him to make it his favourite bird. The **magnificent hummingbird** was as impressive as its name and also it was lovely to see the **green violet-ear**. It was fabulous just to see the activity around these feeders and the whole experience was enough to make it Claire's most memorable holiday moment. Other birds noted here was our first **Wilson's warbler**, a **mountain elaenia**, **large-footed finch** and a **sooty thrush** doing a very good impression of our own blackbird.

Reluctantly we had to leave this paradise but another paradise beckoned as we descended towards Trogon Lodge, stopping at Miriam's House on the way and another splendid time just watching the coming and going at the feeders. A **flame-throated tanager** certainly caught the eye as did the 3 **acorn woodpeckers** but these were then top-trumped by the superb **long-tailed silky flycatcher** that paraded in the trees behind the feeders.

Back in the bus and we were soon at the heavenly Trogon Lodge and after settling in we re-assembled for a short walk around the gardens, picking up **black phoebe** and a **black-capped flycatcher** as we did so while overhead both **white-collared swifts** and **black and white swallows** swooped around. I don't usually report pigeons but 15 **band-tailed pigeons** was a nice finale to the day. Being at 2200 metres, some of us found the elevation took some getting used to, but a small price to pay for this paradise on earth.

### 4<sup>th</sup> February

Those that got up early for the pre-breakfast walk were treated to good views of **THE** bird of the mountains, the **resplendent quetzal**. First a male and then the female came to a nearby avocado tree so we could then rejoice in the presence of these wonderful birds. A **black guan** put in an appearance while a **mountain robin** and a **ruddy-capped nightingale-thrush** deserve a mention though they come nowhere near the splendour of the quetzals.

After breakfast we went back-up the road to the Cerro de la Muerte, the highest point in Costa Rica and a habitat known as paramo, sort of equivalent to our moorlands. The views were magnificent but the birds fewer but we did get good views of the specialist species of this habitat a **volcano junco**, and a specialist hummingbird, the **volcano hummingbird**, and Fito assured us that not every bird seen up here begins with volcano!

Making our way back to Miriam's House for lunch we stopped along the road to see what was about, and were greeted by a veritable flush of warblers, including **black and white, Tennessee, flame-throated** and **black-cheeked warblers**. It was here that an American birder stopped his car, had a look at all of us and decided that, if he wanted to find out what birds were about, then Pete looked the obvious person to ask. Pete then did a quick resume of what we had seen and the gentleman smiled and departed looking slightly bemused perhaps wondering the why the rest of the group were in convulsions! Pete's expertise was so impressive that Charles thought it his most memorable moment.

A lovely lunch at Miriam's and then back to the Lodge for a couple of hours where some took advantage of a bit of a snooze while others enjoyed watching the feeders that attracted a variety of hummingbirds including both **purple-throated mountain-gem** and **gray-tailed mountain-gem**, while the beautiful little **slaty flowerpiercer** fed incessantly amongst the flowers. Suitably refreshed, we assembled on the bus to go the short trip further down the road to Savegre, but not before most of us got a really good view of a pair of **American dippers**. A very nice amble up a forest track let us catch up with a few woodland species, such as a **spot-crowned woodcreeper** and a few of us got a good view of a **ruddy treerunner**, while it is always a thrill to see a trogon, this time a **collared trogon**. Finding a **black-faced solitaire**, a bird with a fantastic call and a propensity not to show itself, is always a challenge, but thanks to Fito's efforts we managed it. Walking back to the bus an **osprey** sailed over our heads, a good bird to see anywhere in the world, while a fabulous raptor also appeared at this time as well, a **swallow-tailed kite**, my favourite holiday bird.

My third visit to Trogon Lodge and my pleasure of being there never diminishes - a truly magical place.

## 5<sup>th</sup> February

An early start as we left the mountains to head towards the Pacific coast, a long drive but with an absolutely fabulous interlude on the way. At one point we stopped to see a **turquoise-browed motmot**, a superb bird, confirmed by Joyce as her favourite bird. We arrived at Tarcoles for a nice lunch and then onto the river for a couple of hours of pure magic as we took a boat ride down the river.

Before getting on the boat, everyone got to see their first **iguanas**, both **spiny-tailed** and **green** and not long after we took off, great views of the **Jesus Christ lizard**, or **basilisk** were enjoyed. **Spotted sandpipers** were seen along the banks and during the boat trip no less than 10 species of heron were seen, amongst them were the striking **bare-throated tiger-heron**, the smaller **green heron** and the unusual **tricoloured heron**, while the undoubted star was the **boat-billed heron**, just a brilliant bird and it was great that one of us, Celia, voted it her favourite bird. The next treat was wave after wave of **scarlet macaws** flying over the boat and landing in reasonably nearby trees allowing good views of this ridiculously colourful of birds.

Other delights included a few waders along the banks, notably **willet**, **southern lapwing** and **black-necked stilts** while overhead we saw our first **yellow-headed caracara**. **Wood storks** also appeared and an **Amazon kingfisher** was seen on a number of occasions, Small birds included the tiny **common tody-flycatcher** and a bright yellow **prothonotary warbler**, which pleased Charles as it meant that I had to try and pronounce it correctly! We were near enough to the sea for **magnificent frigatebirds** to come gliding over and all the time we were on the water we seemed to be accompanied by both **barn** and **mangrove swallows**.

Non-birding highlights included our first **American crocodiles** loafing on the mud banks and some **slider turtles** on a bank in the middle of the river. This is the fourth time I have done this trip and it is just the most brilliant of wildlife experiences, and I think

everyone felt the same way. We still had a fair way to go to reach Ensenada Lodge but not long after leaving Tarcoles we did stop to enjoy seeing a **crane hawk**.

Arriving in the dark at Ensenada Lodge didn't quite give you much indication of what treats were in store the following day, but having partaken of another splendid meal we retired to the sound of the lapping waves of the Pacific Ocean... and later in the night the howls of the **mantled howler monkeys**, which I know scared the \*\*\*\* out of one person!

## 6<sup>th</sup> February

A whole day around this most wonderful of places, as magical as Trogon Lodge in its own way and so much warmer. At the pre-breakfast walk, those that had been somewhat unnerved by the howler monkeys were now at least able to see them and felt a bit more re-assured. The birds were brilliant; down by the pier there were **royal terns** and **sandwich terns** sitting on every available post while beneath them on the mud scurried a variety of waders, **ruddy turnstone**, **semipalmated**, **western** and **least sandpipers** and a few **whimbrel**. Offshore, more frigatebirds were joined by **brown pelicans** and **neotropic cormorants**.

Looking inland the trees were full of birds, a couple of **black-headed trogons** were particularly notable while three new parrot species were ticked off in a matter of minutes, **white-fronted**, **yellow-naped** and **orange-fronted**, while for those of us who were keen enough we spent a little time sorting out three species of oriole; **Baltimore**, **spot-breasted** and **streaked-back**. All these new birds before breakfast! A sense of avian overload was pervading so we sauntered back to the Centre to sample the breakfast delights after which we set off up a track to explore the dry forest, a new habitat with new birds. First up was the equivalent of our stone curlew, a **double-striped thick-knee**, two in fact. A particularly good view of a very striking **white-collared puffbird** was enough for Sarah to nominate it her best bird of the holiday, while a **western kingbird** was a nice change from its tropical cousin.

The Pacific heat was beginning to sap our strength so we retired back to our cabins where some headed for the cool of the swimming pool while others took advantage of the very inviting hammocks and I went down the pier to see a **sting ray** cruising under the structures. Another fabulous experience followed late afternoon and evening as we took a tractor and trailer ride around the Ensenada Estate. The first stop produced a very close but cryptic **Pacific screech owl** while **cliff swallows** cruised around nearby. We stopped for a few minutes at a swampy pool just enjoying the peace and tranquillity until an inappropriately loud sneeze by your leader sent the previously hidden avifauna off in all directions but at least allowed us great views of **northern jacanas** and this turned out to be Bab's favourite bird!

Next up was to have a look over some saltpans that were full of waders of which **stilt sandpiper** was new while a lagoon we went to afterwards was just packed full of birds. **Wood storks** probed unconcernedly for food in the mud while the sun embellished the already dazzling **roseate spoonbills**. **American wigeon** and **blue-winged teal** floated alongside the far banks and then Fito spotted a small but ridiculously colourful bird, a **painted bunting**, looking just like something you would find in a child's painting-by-numbers book. It was here that we saw our first **anhinga** as well.

It was a lovely spot where you could just spend hours enjoying the life parading before us but Fito seemed anxious to move us on so reluctantly we got on board and not long afterwards we saw why he was displaying a bit of anxiety as we arrived just as the sun was going down at a high point overlooking the Pacific, just the most magical of views. Out came the beers, I believe a few eyes began to moisten at the beauty of it all and **lesser nighthawks** hunted in the darkening skies. For John, Sarah and Fito, this was

the stand out memory of the holiday, though I think it will remain long in the memory for all of us. Making our way back in the dark, we didn't see any owls but a couple of **racoons** more than compensated for this. What a day!

## 7<sup>th</sup> February

Another fabulous pre-breakfast hour was spent down by the pier where over 100 Royal terns were perched mixed with other species already seen, but we did pick out a **laughing gull** as well. Among the waders foraging on the mud were 8 **surfbirds**, a species I've never seen before in Costa Rica, and a couple of **solitary sandpipers**. Other new birds recorded were **ruby-throated hummingbird** and a **northern waterthrush**.

Sadly, after breakfast we had to leave this Pacific paradise. Having recovered from being traumatised by the sound of howler monkeys during the first night, Lesley pronounced that her greatest memory of the holiday was to wake up to the gentle sound of the Pacific Ocean, while for Alan the whole Pacific experience was something that will always remain in his memory. Joyce however, remembered a very specific moment when one of the Lodges staff was being transported on the back of a motorbike.

We headed on up to the Central Pacific area for Arenal enjoying a couple of stops on the way for the compulsory coffee and to get better views of scissor-tailed flycatchers and a couple of **gray hawks**. We then had an excellent 45 minutes around the Arenal Reservoir. Three species of kingfisher (**ringed**, **amazon** and **green**) were fishing nearby, groups of tanagers foraged in the bushes, with **crimson-collared tanager** competing with the Passerini's tanager for sheer beauty and **chestnut-sided warblers** were recorded as well. The undoubted highpoint of this stop though was a **great potoo**, this enigmatic species that resembles a piece of the tree in which it roosted. It seemed that our group had grown in size as a number of strangers queued up to look through the telescope. While we were admiring the potoo a family of **coatimundi** were entertaining the crowds along the side of the road, not surprisingly that was where we found Claire when we were ready to leave!

An excellent lunch was enjoyed at the Don Juan Organic Farm followed by a demonstration by the owner and his replica son in extracting sugar from the cane, an interesting if not occasionally alarming experience! We managed to pick up **golden-hooded tanager** and a **black-cheeked woodpecker** while we were here. Slowly heading for the hotel we stopped to admire a **3-toed sloth** right out in the open while a small pond contained a **least grebe** and a **lesser scaup**. Arriving at the Hotel Tilajari we hadn't quite finished as we were greeted by **keel-billed toucan**, an incredibly striking bird that was enough for Mitch to nominate it as his favourite. The Hotel Tilajari was a very different experience from Ensenada, much more upmarket and as everywhere we went, excellent food.

## 8<sup>th</sup> February

An early morning walk produced good views of some now familiar birds as well as new ones including the unfortunately named **paltry tyrannulet** plus a **tropical pewee** and **red-eyed vireo**, but perhaps the star bird of the morning was a **lineated woodpecker**.

After breakfast we headed for the Arenal National Park where 4 **collared aracari** by the side of the road was the enough for us to call the bus to a halt. It was raining enough at the Park for Mitch to bring out the ultimate fashion statement for rain gear. Comparing him to a mange-tout was perhaps one of the lesser insults he received, but at least he remained perfectly dry which is more than can be said for the rest of us!

The rain kept birds a bit quieter but at the end of the walk the sun came out and it became more active. This was a new habitat, grassland that produced new species such as **variable seedeater** and **yellow-faced grassquit** while a surprise for us all was to see a **merlin** dash across in front of us. Walking through the cloud forest was a bit slippery underfoot but we were continually accompanied by the sound of the howler monkeys. Within the forest a small lagoon housed a couple of roosting boat-billed herons, a bare-faced tiger heron and jacana with chicks. Emerging out of the forest we found a **rufous-tailed jacamar** in a nearby tree while a little more distant but still great views of a **laughing falcon**, looking like a highwayman with its black mask across the face.

Back into Fortuna for yet another superb lunch and for those of us who had a steak the consensus of opinion was that it was one of the best ever tasted. Then another couple of wonderful hours were just spent wandering around the hotel gardens where another couple of boat-billed herons roosted and by the pool a **black caiman** which Charles nearly stepped on and by the time it had recovered its composure, Celia was lining up to take the perfect shot and I walked in front and ruined the whole thing! Another 3-toed sloth loitered in a secropia tree just above our heads. A feeding station attracted a variety of small birds, including 3 species of saltators: **black-headed, buff-throated** and **grayish. Red-legged** and **green honeycreepers** added a real splash of colour, but all these birds fled in panic as up to 10 **gray-headed chachalacas** descended and mopped up any remaining fruit.

Meanwhile, in the trees behind **chestnut-mandibled toucans** entertained us, magnificent birds and Nigel voted it as his favourite bird of the holiday. The birds just kept coming and at the feeders appeared **white-necked jacobin** and then the wonderfully named **Montezuma oropendola** with the amazing call.

Completely birded out, we headed back to the hotel and more wonderful food, any thoughts of losing weight on this holiday well and truly abandoned by now!

## 9<sup>th</sup> February

As if we hadn't had enough never to be bettered days already, today was just another brilliant and unforgettable experience. Pre-breakfast walkers had now dwindled a bit in numbers so they missed out on a couple of new birds, **bright-rumped Attila** and a **rose-breasted grosbeak**.

We then headed to the northern most point of Costa Rica, Cano Negro and another of those brilliant boat trips along the river and at one point we even sneaked into Nicaragua. On the way, **gray-breasted martins** flew alongside the bus and at Los Chiles where we had a coffee before boarding we were overjoyed to tick off **house sparrow!**

Once on the boat, the parade of wildlife began immediately when the pilot took us to tree where along a branch a perfect line of **sac-winged bats** began trembling as we approached them, their defensive mechanism when feeling threatened. Within a few minutes we had seen 3 varieties of monkeys, the now familiar howlers, plus the much smaller **white-faced capuchin** and the incredibly long-limbed **Central American spider monkey**. Another 2-toed sloth snoozed just above the water level while along the banks both green and spiny-tailed iguanas and basilisk lizards allowed us to approach really close. We encountered our first **spectacled caiman** in the water as well.

As for the birds, anhingas were everywhere and every tree seemed to contain a heron, including yet more boat-billed while and getting close to a **sungrebe** and being able to watch it for a good few minutes made Charles come over all emotional so unsurprisingly he announced it as his favourite bird. Another stunner was the tiny **pygmy kingfisher**



that allowed us to get extremely close to it, an exquisite bird and definitely Fito's favourite. Another special moment which Moira remembered as her favourite was a close by laughing falcon battling to eat a snake. An osprey floated over our heads as did a **black-collared hawk**.

A very contented company basked in the glory of a wonderful day and just to add icing to the cake, the clouds parted to give great views of the Arenal Volcano on the way back.

### **10<sup>th</sup> February**

Transition day today, and no early morning walk, but everyone was thoroughly entertained by the feeders by the restaurant, with a new species skulking in the undergrowth, a **wood thrush**, identified by Moira and in honour of this she nominated it her favourite bird. Off then on a journey across to the Caribbean side of the country and the lowland rain forest. We arrived at the Sarapiquí River near La Selva Verda and enjoyed great views of a **fascinated tiger-heron** fishing in the river while both ringed and amazon kingfishers were also nearby and just as we got back in the bus a **peregrine** flew over.

Another splendid lunch in Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí, Fito's home town and then off to our wonderful Lodge at the Sueno Azul Resort. Now, as we approached the hotel the road grew narrower and Sarah's eyes grew wider as we were about cross 'the bridge' into the resort, the only way into and out of it! Anyway, it was negotiated safely and we were soon gathered for a walk around the lovely grounds, with some opting for a quick swim beforehand.

A new habitat and new birds, with **black-headed tody-flycatcher** and an **olive-backed euphonia** competed for the smallest bird of the day while a **chestnut-headed oropendola** was a very impressive new bird, while we could make out a couple of **blue dacnis** in a distant tree. We had a little walk around the grounds and found a few **masked tree frogs** that were very nice to see.

### **11<sup>th</sup> February**

Even before we all gathered for the early morning walk some people enjoyed watching a **pauraque** hawking over the lake outside the rooms, while the walk around the grounds brought a number of new birds, **green ibis, mealy parrot, buff-rumped warbler** and a few **black-faced grosbeaks** amongst them, and perhaps the star bird of the walk a splendid lineated woodpecker.

A splendid day followed at the La Selva Biological Research Station, one of the leading places for research into rainforest ecology. A really close 3-toed sloth was great to see as was a family of **collared peccaries**. One of the station guides led us around the reserve and found us some great rainforest birds, with great views of both **rufous** and **broad-billed motmots** and superb view of a rufous tailed jacamar and the guide managed to get us all to see a **vermiculated screech owl** amongst the dense vegetation. An **ochre-bellied flycatcher** was another good bird to see.

After lunch we started out for another part of the reserve and immediately a huge **king vulture** sailed overhead and a **crested guan** put in an appearance. A number of new birds joined our ever expanding list, a **slaty-tailed trogon** is always worth seeing and though distant, an unusual one sitting in a tree was a pure white **snowy cotinga**. A **band-tailed barbtthroat** and Charles' enjoyment of seeing this was abruptly cut short when he was bitten by a **bullet ant**, a highly unpleasant experience. For Lesley, the view of a stunning **pale-billed woodpecker** was enough to make it her favourite bird of the trip.

In the evening after yet another splendid meal I wandered back to my room only for my way to be blocked by a large snake across the path, which I knew at once to be a **four-de-lance** snake, the most venomous in Central and South America!. Sadly it had slithered off before anyone else could see it so I couldn't put it on the list...but I have anyway!

## 12<sup>th</sup> February

Transition day, so leaving Sueno Azul and thankfully for many the last crossing of that bridge, we headed off to the Caribbean coast, picking up Orlando on the way who stayed with us for the rest of the trip and in keeping with arriving at the rainforest, it rained most of the day. A long and tedious drive through the Del Monte fruit plantations did produce our first **roadside hawk** that excited Charles greatly and seemed to become the mantra for the rest of the holiday! A few **bronzed cowbirds** fed in the fields and an **American coot** that looks exactly like ours.

At last we reached Zacatales and a rather chaotic change before we got on our boat for the hour long trip up the river to our Lodge, zooming past lots of cormorants and herons, a couple of American crocodiles and as we approached Tortuguero a sandbar contained lots of royal terns and laughing gulls including one in splendid summer plumage.

After lunch we headed across the river to have a look around the village of Tortuguero and the Caribbean coast which certainly dispelled any romantic ideas of a sun-drenched, blue-skied, coconut-fringed, azure sea paradise! Still it rained, for a couple of us that rain decided that it should be experienced in the cabins, a soggy introduction to Tortuguero National Park.

## 13<sup>th</sup> February

Not much improvement in the weather but a fabulous day spent in boats on the river and canals. The morning trip was punctuated by very heavy showers but at least it was reasonably warm and we did see some brilliant sights, the first of which was about 30 **swallow-tailed kites** and 5 **Mississippi kites** cruising over our heads on their migration north. I have seen swallow-tailed kites before, but they are such elegant birds and to see this many at once made it my best holiday bird. Fito then spied some **red-capped manakins** in an overhanging tree and with some great manipulation by the boat driver, we saw them doing their display performance which involve them doing great Michael Jackson moonwalk impressions. Another great view of a sungrebe made Charles a happy man. The boat allowed us to get so close to herons, anhingas and a green ibis and the trees were draped with iguanas and the eyes of **spectacled caiman** watched us from the surface of the water. As we headed back to the Lodge a **common black hawk** flew over.

Back at the Lodge we spent time admiring the torrential rain, but in the breaks we all got great views of the **white-collared manakins** that displayed around the grounds, such wonderful little birds that Pete pronounced it his favourite bird.

The rain eased up after lunch so it was back in the boat, heading off in the opposite direction for another wonderful couple of hours spent on the river. Eagle-eyed Lesley spotted a number of large birds in a distant tree which as we got closer we could see were **great green macaws**, 12 of them altogether and truly very impressive birds. Turning down a much narrower canal, we got much closer to the wildlife and all along in the canopy there were frequent sightings of monkeys of all 3 species and a really close view of a juvenile bare-throated tiger-heron as well as a **squirrel cuckoo** and up close to another slaty-tailed trogon. A **great curassow** was another new species seen on this little trip.

Then followed one of the major moments of the trip. A splash in the water along the bank and there almost alongside the boat was a **southern river otter** that seemed completely oblivious to our presence and we spent the most magical few minutes in silence (a bit of a novelty for us) watching the otter get out of the water no more than 20 feet from us, and then proceeded to clean itself, scent mark and then slide unceremoniously back into the water. There are some just sublime moments you can have when watching wildlife and this was one of them. I think I detected another tear or two being shed at this moment. Not surprisingly, Mitch, Nigel, Celia and Pete all thought it as the most memorable point of the whole trip.

So we set off back just remembering what we had just witnessed, egrets were making their way up to the river to a roost and then a **bat falcon** was noticed on top of a tree, the last treat for an exceptional day.

### **14<sup>th</sup> February**

Our last full day in Costa Rica so we headed down the river, slowing down at one point to admire some very close by spider monkeys and then transferred to the bus and off we went through the plantations stopping at one point to have a good look at a **broad-winged hawk** sitting on a fence post. Eventually we got back to a reasonable road and the town of Gaulipes where Fito had arranged for another splendid lunch. After satiating our appetites we strolled around the grounds of the restaurant and we found a young **Northern tamandua (lesser anteater)**, too young really to be separated from its mother, which unfortunately was nowhere to be seen.

Nearby, Fito took us to a friend's place that had a wonderful garden and we got a number of new species, especially hummingbirds that swarmed around the feeders over the pool. **Long-billed hermit, violet-headed hummingbird, violet-crowned woodnymphs, blue-chested hummingbird** and **bronzed-tailed plumeleteer** all were enjoyed, while the collared aracaris delighted us by coming to the feeding station. **A rufous-winged woodpecker** was another delight to see close-up. It was lovely to see both the tiny **blue-jean frogs** and **green and black poison dart frogs** as well.

The traffic of San Jose beckoned and eventually we got back to the Robledal Hotel.

### **15<sup>th</sup> February**

We still had a bit of time before our late afternoon flight so some of us got up for a pre-breakfast walk around the hotel grounds and to re-acquaint ourselves with not one but two ferruginous pygmy owls and then Hoffmans woodpeckers with some young sticking their heads out the nest hole. We said goodbye to the hotel where one of the staff was a birder and he took us to a nearby area which was under developed and just like a bit of a savannah and stacked full of birds, many of them new, but not before saying goodbye to John and Celia who were staying on to enjoy Costa Rica for a few extra days.

A **killdeer** was the first new one then a diminutive **pearl kite** flew over. A distant but very visible **short-tailed hawk** circled overhead before we set eyes on a **striped cuckoo**, not a common bird in Costa Rica. Two new hummingbirds were added to the list, **steely-vented hummingbird** and a **plain-capped starthroat** and then 3 **crested bobwhites** were seen scurrying across the grassland. Two new species were also seen, **plain wren** and an **olive sparrow**, before heading off, via a supermarket which we nearly denuded of coffee, to our final meal in another lovely restaurant with a really nice shop attached to it. Even here there was as new species as a pond hosted a number of **black-bellied whistling ducks** and that was it.









			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
<b>LARIDAE</b>		<b>Gulls &amp; Terns</b>															
78	<i>Larus atricilla</i>	Laughing Gull					X	X	X					X	X		
79	<i>Sterna maxima</i>	Royal Tern					X	X	X					X	X	X	
80	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	Sandwich Tern						X	X								
<b>COLUMBIDAE</b>		<b>Pigeons</b>															
81	<i>Columba livia</i>	Rock Dove							X								X
82	<i>Columba fasciata</i>	Band-tailed Pigeon			X	X				X							
83	<i>Columba cayennensis</i>	Pale-vented Pigeon								X		X	X	X	X	X	
84	<i>Columba flavirostris</i>	Red-billed Pigeon			X			X	X	X							
85	<i>Columba nigrirostris</i>	Short-billed Pigeon										X					
86	<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>	White-winged Dove		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X
87	<i>Columbina passerina</i>	Common Ground-Dove						X									
88	<i>Columbina talpacoti</i>	Ruddy Ground-Dove					X		X	X	X	X		X			X
89	<i>Columbina inca</i>	Inca Dove		X	X		X	X									
90	<i>Leptotila verreauxi</i>	White-tipped Dove		X	X		X	X	X	X	X						
<b>PSITTACIDAE</b>		<b>Parrots</b>															
91	<i>Ara macao</i>	Scarlet Macaw					X										
92	<i>Ara ambigua</i>	Great Green Macaw													X		
93	<i>Aratinga finschi</i>	Crimson-fronted Parakeet			X		X						X				
94	<i>Aratinga nana</i>	Olive-throated Parakeet									X	X	X				
95	<i>Aratinga canicularis</i>	Orange-fronted Parakeet						X	X								
96	<i>Brotogeris jugularis</i>	Orange-chinned Parakeet			X					X	X						
97	<i>Pionopsitta haematotis</i>	Brown-hooded Parrot															X
98	<i>Pionus senilis</i>	White-crowned Parrot								X			X				
99	<i>Amazona albifrons</i>	White-fronted Parrot						X									
100	<i>Amazona autumnalis</i>	Red-Lored Parrot							X	X	X	X			X	X	
101	<i>Amazona auropalliata</i>	Yellow-naped Parrot						X									
102	<i>Amazona farinosa</i>	Mealy Parrot											X		X		
<b>CUCULIDAE</b>		<b>Cuckoos</b>															
103	<i>Piaya cayana</i>	Squirrel Cuckoo									X	X	X		X		X
104	<i>Crotophaga sulcirostris</i>	Groove-billed Ani					X	X	X	X		X		X			X
105	<i>Tapera naevia</i>	Striped Cuckoo															X
<b>STRIGIDAE</b>		<b>Owls</b>															
106	<i>Megascops cooperi</i>	Pacific screech-owl						X									
107	<i>Megascops guatemalae</i>	Vermiculated screech-owl											X				
108	<i>Glaucidium brasilianum</i>	Ferruginous pygmy-owl		X													X
<b>NYCTIBIIDAE</b>		<b>Potoos</b>															
109	<i>Nyctibius grandis</i>	Great Potoo							X		X						
110	<i>Nyctibius griseus</i>	Common Potoo									X						
<b>CAPRIMULGIDAE</b>		<b>Nightjars</b>															
111	<i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>	Lesser Nighthawk						X	X		X						
112	<i>Nyctidromus albicollis</i>	Pauraque											X	X			





<b>TROCHILIDAE</b>		<b>Hummingbirds</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
118	<i>Threnetes ruckeri</i>	Band-tailed Barbthroat											X				
119	<i>Phaethornis superciliosus</i>	Long-billed Hermit														X	
120	<i>Phaethornis guy</i>	Green Hermit		X													
121	<i>Doryfera ludoviciae</i>	Green-fronted Lancebill															
122	<i>Phaeochroa cuvierii</i>	Scaly-breasted Hummingbird						X		X	X						
123	<i>Campylopterus hemileucurus</i>	Violet Sabrewing		X													
124	<i>Florisuga mellivora</i>	White-necked Jacobin								X						X	
125	<i>Colibri thalassinus</i>	Green Violet-ear			X	X	X										
126	<i>Anthracothorax prevostii</i>	Green-breasted Mango		X				X		X	X			X			X
127	<i>Thalurania colombica</i>	Violet-crowned Woodnymph														X	
128	<i>Panterpe insignis</i>	Fiery-throated Hummingbird		X	X		X										
129	<i>Amazilia amabilis</i>	Blue-chested Hummingbird														X	
130	<i>Amazilia saucerrottei</i>	Steely-vented Hummingbird															X
131	<i>Amazilia rutila</i>	Cinnamon Hummingbird			X												X
132	<i>Amazilia tzacatl</i>	Rufous-tailed Hummingbird		X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
133	<i>Eupherusa eximia</i>	Striped-tailed Hummingbird				X											
134	<i>Elvira cupreiceps</i>	Coppery-headed Emerald		X													
135	<i>Chalybura urochrysia</i>	Bronzed-tailed Plumeleteer														X	
136	<i>Lampornis hemileucus</i>	White-bellied Mountain-gem		X													
137	<i>Lampornis castaneiventris</i>	Gray-tailed Mountain-gem			X	X											
138	<i>Heliodoxa jacula</i>	Green-crowned Brilliant		X	X												
139	<i>Eugenes fulgens</i>	Magnificent Hummingbird			X	X	X										
140	<i>Heliodytes barroti</i>	Purple-crowned Fairy							X								
141	<i>Heliomaster constantii</i>	Plain-capped Starthroat															X
142	<i>Archilochus colubris</i>	Ruby-throated Hummingbird							X								X
143	<i>Selasphorus flammula</i>	Volcano Hummingbird		X	X	X	X										
<b>TROGONIDAE</b>		<b>Trogons</b>															
144	<i>Pharomachrus mocinno</i>	Resplendent Quetzal				X											
145	<i>Trogon massena</i>	Slaty-tailed Trogon										X		X	X		
146	<i>Trogon melanocephalus</i>	Black-headed Trogon						X	X		X						





<b>HIRUNDIDAE</b>		<b>Swallows &amp; Martins</b>																
20 1	<i>Progne chalybea</i>	Gray-breasted Martin										X	X		X			
20 2	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Barn Swallow					X	X	X	X								X
20 3	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	Cliff Swallow						X										
20 4	<i>Stelgidopteryx ruficollis</i>	Southern Rough-winged Swallow							X	X		X	X				X	
20 5	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	Northern Rough-winged Swallow										X	X		X	X		
20 6	<i>Notiochelidon cyanoleuca</i>	Blue-and-white Swallow	X	X	X					X						X	X	
20 7	<i>Tachycineta albilinea</i>	Mangrove Swallow					X	X	X		X		X		X	X		
<b>CORVIDAE</b>		<b>Crows</b>																
20 8	<i>Calocitta formosa</i>	White-throated Magpie-Jay						X	X	X								
20 9	<i>Cyanocorax morio</i>	Brown Jay	X						X	X								X
<b>CINCLIDAE</b>		<b>Dippers</b>																
21 0	<i>Cinclus mexicanus</i>	American Dipper			X	X												
<b>TROGLODYTIDAE</b>		<b>Wrens</b>																
21 1	<i>Campylorhynchus rufinucha</i>	Rufous-naped Wren		X	X		X	X										X
21 2	<i>Thryothorus modestus</i>	Plain Wren																X
21 3	<i>Henicorhina leucophrys</i>	Gray-breasted Wood-Wren						<b>H</b>										
<b>TURDIDAE</b>		<b>Thrushes</b>																
21 4	<i>Turdus grayi</i>	Clay-colored Robin		X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
21 5	<i>Turdus plebejus</i>	Mountain Robin				X	X											
21 6	<i>Turdus nigrescens</i>	Sooty Thrush			X	X	X											
21 7	<i>Myadestes melanops</i>	Black-faced Solitaire				X						X				X		
21 8	<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>	Wood Thrush																
21 9	<i>Catharus frantzii</i>	Ruddy-capped N. Thrush				X												
22 0	<i>Catharus gracilirostris</i>	Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush	X	X	X	X												
<b>PTILOGONATIDAE</b>		<b>Silky Flycatchers</b>																
22 1	<i>Ptilogonys caudatus</i>	Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher			X	X												
<b>VIREONIDAE</b>		<b>Vireos</b>																
22 2	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	Red-eyed Vireo								X								
<b>COEREBIDAE</b>		<b>Bananaquit</b>																
22 3	<i>Coereba flaveola</i>	Bananaquit		X	X	X				X	X	X	X					
<b>PARULIDAE</b>		<b>American Warblers</b>																
22 4	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>	Black-and-white Warbler				X												
22 5	<i>Protonotaria citrea</i>	Prothonotary Warbler					X		X		X							
22	<i>Vermivora peregrina</i>	Tennessee Warbler				X					X	X						X









## **MAMMALS**

Two-toed Sloth, *Choloepus hoffmanni*  
Three-toed Sloth, *Bradypus variegatus*  
Northern Tamandua, *Tamandua Mexicana*  
Mantled Howler Monkey, *Alouata palliate*  
Central American Spider Monkey, *Ateles geoffroyi*  
White-faced Capuchin, *Cebus capucinus*  
Variegated Squirrel, *Sciurus variegatoides*  
Red-tailed Squirrel, *Sciurus granatenis*  
Poas Squirrel, *Snteosciurus brochus*  
Southern River Otter, *Lontra provocax*  
Northern Raccoon, *Procyon lotor*  
Coatimundi, *Nasua narica*  
Collared Peccary, *Tayassu tajacu*  
Sac-winged Bat, *Saccopteryx bilineata*

## **REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS**

Cane Toad, *Rhinella marina*  
Green-and-black Poison Dart Frog, *Dendrobates auratus*  
Blue Jean Poison Dart Frog, *Oophaga pumilio*  
Masked Tree Frog, *Smilisca phaeota*  
Black River Turtle, *Rhinoclemys funerea*  
Orange-eared Slider, *Trachemys scripta*  
Central American Whiptail, *Ameiva festiva*  
Jesus Christ Lizard, *Basiliscus plumifrons*  
Spine-tailed Iguana, *Ctenosaura similis*  
Green Iguana, *Iguana iguana*  
American Crocodile, *Crocodylus acutus*  
Spectacled Caiman, *Caiman crocodilus*  
Black Caiman, *Melanosuchus niger*  
Fer-de-Lance, *Bothrops asper*