

# THE TRAVELLING NATURALIST

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## **COSTA RICA**

### **Cloudforests, Jungles & Volcanoes**

**27 February - 10 March 2016**

#### **TOUR REPORT**

**Leader: Alfredo Scott**

#### **Highlights**

- **Emerald tucanets and red-headed barbets on the balcony of the small restaurant where we stopped on our first day.**
- **Spectacled owl at Gavilan Lodge**
- **Cope's house and the elusive grey-necked wood-rail eating rice in front of us**
- **Spider monkeys at the Hanging Bridges trail and white-faced capuchin monkeys in Carara Park**

#### **27 February 2016**

Several flights arrived at the same time, and little by little the group was ready to go. Some decided to walk around the hotel grounds to view the first birds in the trip. As expected, clay-coloured thrush, great-tailed grackle and great kiskadee were the first ones to show up.

#### **28 February 2016**

We left at 8am to drive to the mountains near the Poas Volcano. Coffee plantations were the dominant crop, but at higher elevations we saw chrysanthemums, roses, carnations, and strawberries. The first turkey vultures were found flying above the central valley. Once at the Waterfall Garden, the group was amazed with the size of the Project: large waterfalls you can touch with your hands, a variety of snakes, frogs, butterflies and a huge aviary, were visited by all of us after lunch. The path along the falls was productive and we were surprised by the white-faced monkeys up in the branches looking for food. Without doubt the highlight of the place is the hummingbird feeders, where we saw several endemics like coppery-headed emerald, black-bellied hummingbird and purple-throated mountain-gem.

Once we left the waterfalls we made a stop for about one hour at the viewpoint of San Fernando Waterfall. It was difficult to choose the most beautiful bird that afternoon, as violet sabrewings, emerald tucanets and red-headed barbets came to the feeders and posed for us for a long time. No doubt the emerald toucans were the highlight of the day for Richard, one of his trip's target bird.

## **29 February 2016**

Everyone was up by 6am. Walking along the Sarapiquí River was rewarding as we found sun bittern leisurely walking along the sand bank. This is a hard to find secretive bird, that likes to be close to slow-moving fresh water. We watched this beautiful bird for 30 minutes, the best way to start our day indeed! In a very happy mood after this unexpected encounter, the group continued its way to La Selva Research Station. We Stopped for 20 minutes to eat our packed breakfast at the station facilities and then started a three hour walk with Albert, the local guide. The group saw 40 different species of birds along the trails that morning: white-collared manakin, Long-tailed tyrant, great green macaw, Monezuma oropendola and keel-billed toucan, amongst many other species. We also had the chance to see two and three-toed sloths. It was impossible to finish the day without a visit to Gavilan Lodge, where we had a splendid view of spectacled owl, as well as black-cowled orioles and red-legged honeycreepers.

## **1 March 2016**

Without any doubt one of the activities that the group enjoyed the most on this trip was the visit to Cope's property. Cope is a real self made artist with a fantastic knowledge of the local fauna. He took us to a place where he had found a great potoo some days ago, where we had great views of this amazingly well camouflaged bird. Not content with this, Cope took us to a hidden place where we saw a couple of crested owls very close to us. There was no chance in this world that we could find these owls without him. Back at his place, we enjoyed watching a fantastic collection of extremely colourful birds from the shaded spot he had prepared for us: green honeycreepers, grey necked wood-rail, chestnut-headed oropendola, Passerini's tanager, collared aracari, all coming to the feeder one after the other!!

## **2 March 2016**

Starting the day again at 6am, our first stop was at Arenal Lake. Two ringed kingfishers called for our attention, making their noisy calls from a low branch. We stopped of course and rushed out of the car to get fantastic views of the birds on display as part of the mating season.

The hanging bridges here give visitors the chance to look for plants and birds from the top of the trees. The quiet forest in the dim light of the morning provided amazing views of rufous motmot, the largest of all motmots. An unexpected surprise was finding a small family of spider monkeys, patiently eating near the forest canopy. We had excellent views of a female holding a baby. Several orange-billed sparrows crossed the trails on several occasions, and the sound of white-breasted wood wren and loud cicadas created a fascinating tropical atmosphere.

## **3 March 2016**

After walking the local trail for an hour looking for thick-knee antpitta, we departed Arenal area after breakfast to a totally different habitat. The highlands in Costa Rica have the largest number of endemic birds of the country, the most famous of course being the resplendent quetzal. On the way to Savegre Valley we stopped by a pond located in a private property and found white-crowned parrot, purple gallinule, common moorhen, and several herons and egrets. Not much further, we made a quick stop by the Panamerican Highway to walk in the tall grass and see if a sedge wren might get flushed out. Success!! Two quick views of a bird and it is officially on the list.

## **4 March 2016**

A very cold morning, we started our quetzal quest. We arrived at the spot where the locals found quetzal days before and found a big crowd of people looking for the same thing. We heard it calling and had brief views of a shadow of him as soon as we arrived, but he made us wait a long while before finally showing its beauty spotted perched on an avocado tree. Not much later the quetzal took off and then we all had the opportunity of seeing its long tail suspended on the air. After breakfast we went to visit the house of Mrs Miriam, and enjoyed unforgettable views of flame-coloured tanager, acorn woodpecker and volcano hummingbird, among many other highland specialties.

### **5 March 2016**

After breakfast we left the highlands destined for the southern Pacific, making a stop en route at a place known as Las Torres, one of the highest peaks in the country, and the only place where volcano junco can be found. As soon as we left the main highway and took the gravel road, we saw one. And then another one, and another one! Several juncos actively foraging around us. We continued down the Panamerican Highway to make a quick stop at La Georgina Restaurant just for one bird: the group photographed fiery-throated hummingbird many times while enjoying a hot cup of coffee.

We drove parallel to the Pacific for several hours, making stops here and there. One of the stops was the Baru River mouth, which was good for shore birds like laughing gull, sandwich and royal tern, white ibis and Amazon kingfisher.

### **6 March 2016**

The activities of the day started with a visit to Tarcoles Beach, probably the best place to find scarlet macaw. Feeding on almonds we found a flock of noisy macaws eating in a low branch. The group was speechless with such a show going on right in front of their eyes!! We spent the rest of the morning in Carara National Park where we saw the primitive great tinamou, black-headed trogon, and the amazing turquoise-browed motmot, as well as many antbirds.

Another highlight of the trip was the boat trip on the Tarcoles River. Enormous crocodiles basking on the sun, macaws passing over us, mud banks full of wood storks, roseate spoonbills, muscovy duck, white ibis and great blue herons. However, finding an American pygmy kingfisher, the smallest kingfisher, was the highlight of the day for all of us.

### **7 March 2016**

The last part of the trip took us to the driest habitat in the country. There is not much tropical dry forest left in Central America, and Costa Rica has the largest portion of this special ecosystem. Solimar Lodge is a place that doesn't exist on any maps or on the internet, a hidden jewel where jabiru stork roam in the middle of hundreds of black-bellied whistling ducks, tiger heron, limpkin and double-striped thick-knee.

Our first stop was a salt pan to see a large number of shore birds and waders, all new for our list: sanderlings, western sandpiper, semipalmated and Wilson plover, killdeer, willets, whimbrels, marbled godwits, short-billed dowitchers, among many, many others.

Once at the lodge we met Demetrio, our local guide, who took the group to the wetlands for the rest of the afternoon.

### **8 March 2016**

The day started with a walk around the lodge before the day got too hot. We spotted lesser ground cuckoo, as well as yellow-naped and white-fronted parrots roosting, and noisy groove-billed ani foraging around them. We spent the rest of the day visiting the wetlands in the van. Harri's hawk, white-tailed kite, laughing and peregrine falcon, collared forest falcon, ferruginous pygmy and Pacific screech owl, were just some of the raptors of the day.

### **9 March 2016**

One more visit to the dry forest before leaving for San Jose. A very productive drive, where we saw long-tailed manakin, more jabiru stork, lesser nighthawk. Against all odds, Janet had found a nine-banded armadillo in front of her room the previous evening.

# BIRD LIST

	<b>Tinamidae</b>		<b>Trogonidae</b>		<b>Cotingidae</b>
1	Great Tinamou	101	Resplendent Quetzal	211	Snowy Cotinga
	<b>Anatidae</b>	102	Black-headed Trogon		<b>Pipridae</b>
2	Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	103	Slaty-tailed Trogon	212	White-collared Manakin
3	Fulvous Whistling-Duck		<b>Picidae</b>	213	Long-tailed Manakin
4	Muscovy Duck	104	Acorn Woodpecker		<b>Vireonidae</b>
5	Blue-winged Teal	105	Black-cheeked Woodpecker	214	Yellow-throated Vireo
6	Northern Shoveler	106	Red-crowned Woodpecker		
7	Lesser Scaup	107	Hoffmann's Woodpecker	215	Yellow-winged Vireo
	<b>Cracidae</b>	108	Hairy Woodpecker	216	Lesser Greenlet
8	Gray-headed Chachalaca	109	Chestnut-colored Woodpecker		<b>Corvidae</b>
9	Crested Guan	110	Lineated Woodpecker	217	White-throated Magpie-Jay
10	Black Guan	111	Pale-billed Woodpecker	218	Brown Jay
11	Great Curassow		<b>Ramphastidae</b>		<b>Hirundinidae</b>
	<b>Odontophoridae</b>	112	Collared Aracari	219	Gray-breasted Martin
12	Spot-bellied Bobwhite	113	Fiery-billed Aracari	220	Mangrove Swallow
13	Spotted Wood-Quail	114	Emerald Toucanet	221	Barn Swallow
	<b>Ciconiidae</b>	115	Keel-billed Toucan	222	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
14	Jabiru	116	Black-mandibled Toucan	223	Southern Rough-winged Swallow
15	Wood Stork		<b>Momotidae</b>		<b>Troglodytidae</b>
	<b>Fregatidae</b>	117	Blue-crowned Motmot	224	Rufous-naped Wren
16	Magnificent Frigatebird	118	Rufous Motmot	225	Bay Wren
	<b>Phalacrocoracidae</b>	119	Keel-billed Motmot	226	Stripe-breasted Wren
17	Neotropic Cormorant	120	Broad-billed Motmot	227	Rufous-breasted Wren
	<b>Anhingaidae</b>	121	Turquoise-browed Motmot	228	Banded Wren
18	Anhinga		<b>Alcedinidae</b>	229	House Wren
	<b>Threskiornithidae</b>	122	Ringed Kingfisher	230	Sedge Wren
19	White Ibis	123	Belted Kingfisher	231	Gray-breasted Wood-Wren
20	Glossy Ibis	124	Amazon Kingfisher		<b>Poliophtilidae</b>
21	Roseate Spoonbill	125	Green Kingfisher	232	Long-billed Gnatwren
	<b>Pelecanidae</b>	126	American Pygmy Kingfisher	233	White-lored Gnatcatcher
22	Brown Pelican		<b>Bucconidae</b>		<b>Cinclidae</b>
	<b>Ardeidae</b>	127	White-necked Puffbird	234	American Dipper
23	Fasciated Tiger-Heron		<b>Galbulidae</b>		<b>Turdidae</b>
24	Bare-throated Tiger-Heron	128	Rufous-tailed Jacamar	235	Black-faced Solitaire
25	Great Blue Heron		<b>Capitonidae</b>	236	Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush
26	Little Blue Heron	129	Red-headed Barbet	237	Pale-vented Thrush
27	Tricolored Heron		<b>Semnornithidae</b>	238	Clay-colored Thrush
28	Green Heron	130	Prong-billed Barbet	239	Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush
29	Black-crowned Night-Heron		<b>Cathartidae</b>	240	Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush
30	Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	131	Black Vulture	241	Wood Thrush
31	Boat-billed Heron	132	Turkey Vulture	242	Sooty Thrush
32	Great Egret	133	King Vulture		<b>Ptiliogonatidae</b>
33	Snowy Egret		<b>Pandionidae</b>	243	Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher
34	Cattle Egret	134	Osprey		<b>Parulidae</b>

	<b>Eurypygidae</b>		<b>Accipitridae</b>	244	Tropical Parula	
35	Sunbittern		134	Swallow-tailed Kite	245	Black-and-white Warbler
	<b>Rallidae</b>		135	White-tailed Kite	246	Prothonotary Warbler
36	Gray-necked Wood-Rail		136	Snail Kite	247	Slate-throated Redstart
37	Purple Gallinule		137	Red-tailed Hawk	248	Collared Redstart
38	Common Moorhen		138	Ornate Hawk-Eagle	249	Northern Waterthrush
	<b>Charadriidae</b>		139	Common Black Hawk	250	Wilson's Warbler
39	Southern Lapwing		140	Harris's Hawk	251	Black-cheeked Warbler
40	Black-bellied Plover		141	Roadside Hawk	252	Tennessee Warbler
41	Wilson's Plover		142	Broad-winged Hawk	253	Buff-rumped Warbler
42	Semipalmated Plover		143	Gray Hawk	254	Flame-throated Warbler
43	Killdeer		144	Gray-lined Hawk	255	Yellow Warbler
	<b>Aramidae</b>		145	Short-tailed Hawk	256	Chestnut-sided Warbler
44	Limpkin			<b>Falconidae</b>	257	Black-throated Green Warbler
	<b>Burhinidae</b>		146	Collared Forest-Falcon	258	Blackburnian Warbler
45	Double-striped Thick-Knee		147	Laughing Falcon		<b>Thraupidae</b>
	<b>Recurvirostridae</b>		148	Peregrine Falcon	259	Blue-gray Tanager
45	Black-necked Stilt		149	Crested Caracara	260	Palm Tanager
	<b>Scolopacidae</b>		150	Yellow-headed Caracara	261	Golden-hooded Tanager
46	Willet			<b>Columbidae</b>	262	Spangle-cheeked Tanager
48	Whimbrel		151	Rock Pigeon	263	White-shouldered Tanager
49	Short-billed Dowitcher		152	Pale-vented Pigeon	264	Crimson-collared Tanager
50	Marbled Godwit		153	Red-billed Pigeon	265	Passerini's Tanager
51	Sanderling		154	Band-tailed Pigeon	266	Cherries's Tanager
52	Spotted Sandpiper		155	Short-billed Pigeon	267	Silver-throated Tanager
53	Western Sandpiper		156	White-winged Dove	268	Scarlet-thighed Dacnis
54	Least Sandpiper		156	Inca Dove	269	Green Honeycreeper
	<b>Laridae</b>		158	White-tipped Dove	270	Shining Honeycreeper
55	Laughing Gull		159	Gray-chested Dove	271	Red-legged Honeycreeper
56	Sandwich Tern		160	Common Ground-Dove		<b>Emberizidae</b>
57	Black Skimmer		161	Plain-breasted Ground-Dove	272	Slaty Flowerpiercer
58	Royal Tern		162	Ruddy Ground-Dove	273	Blue-black Grassquit
	<b>Jacanidae</b>			<b>Psittacidae</b>	274	Yellow-faced Grassquit
59	Northern Jacana		163	Olive-throated Parakeet	275	Variable Seedeater
	<b>Cuculidae</b>		164	Orange-chinned Parakeet	276	White-collared Seedeater
60	Squirrel Cuckoo		165	Great Green Macaw	277	Yellow-thighed Finch
61	Lesser Ground-Cuckoo		166	Scarlet Macaw	278	Large-footed Finch
62	Groove-billed Ani		167	White-crowned Parrot	279	Orange-billed Sparrow
	<b>Nyctibiidae</b>		168	White-fronted Parrot	280	Olive Sparrow
63	Great Potoo		169	Red-lored Parrot	281	Black-striped Sparrow
	<b>Strigidae</b>		170	Mealy Parrot	282	Stripe-headed Sparrow
64	Crested Owl		171	Yellow-naped Parrot	283	Rufous-collared Sparrow
65	Spectacled Owl			<b>Thamnophilidae</b>	284	Volcano Junco
66	Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl		172	Black-hooded Antshrike	285	Common Chlorospingus
67	Pacific Screech-Owl		173	Dot-winged Antwren	286	Sooty-capped Chlorospingus

	<b>Caprimulgidae</b>				<b>Cardinalidae</b>
68	Lesser Nighthawk	174	Dusky Antbird	287	Black-thighed Grosbeak
69	Common Pauraque	175	Chestnut-backed Antbird	288	Painted Bunting
	<b>Apodidae</b>	176	Spotted Antbird	289	Red-throated Ant-Tanager
70	Vaux's Swift		<b>Furnariidae</b>	290	Carmioli's Tanager
71	Gray-rumped Swift	177	Red-faced Spinetail	291	Summer Tanager
	<b>Trochilidae</b>	178	Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner	292	Flame-colored Tanager
72	Green Hermit	179	Streak-breasted Treehunter		<b>Icteridae</b>
73	Long-billed Hermit	180	Plain Xenops	293	Red-winged Blackbird
74	Stripe-throated Hermit	181	Long-tailed Woodcreeper	294	Melodious Blackbird
75	Bronzy Hermit	182	Streak-headed Woodcreeper	295	Eastern Meadowlark
76	Violet Sabrewing	183	Spotted Barbtail	296	Great-tailed Grackle
77	White-necked Jacobin		<b>Tyrannidae</b>	297	Bronzed Cowbird
78	Green Violetear	184	Torrent Tyrannulet	298	Black-cowled Oriole
79	White-bellied Mountain-gem	185	Long-tailed Tyrant	299	Orchard Oriole
80	Purple-throated Mountain-gem	186	Black Phoebe	300	Streak-backed Oriole
81	White-throated Mountain-gem	187	Tropical Kingbird	301	Spot-breasted Oriole
82	Green-crowned Brilliant	188	Common Tody-Flycatcher	302	Baltimore Oriole
83	Green-breasted Mango	189	Tropical Pewee	303	Scarlet-rumped Cacique
84	Coppery-headed Emerald	190	Mountain Elaenia	304	Chestnut-headed Oropendola
85	Green Thorntail	191	Great Kiskadee	305	Montezuma Oropendola
86	Crowned Woodnymph	192	Boat-billed Flycatcher		<b>Fringillidae</b>
87	Blue-throated Goldentail	193	Social Flycatcher	306	Scrub Euphonia
88	Scaly-breasted Hummingbird	194	Gray-capped Flycatcher	307	Olive-backed Euphonia
89	Violet-headed Hummingbird	195	White-ringed Flycatcher	308	White-vented Euphonia
90	Fiery-throated Hummingbird	196	Yellow-olive Flycatcher	309	Yellow-bellied Siskin
91	Blue-chested Hummingbird	197	Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher		<b>Passeridae</b>
92	Steely-vented Hummingbird	198	Tufted Flycatcher	310	House Sparrow
93	Rufous-tailed Hummingbird	199	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher		
94	Cinnamon Hummingbird	200	Streaked Flycatcher		
95	Stripe-tailed Hummingbird	201	Piratic Flycatcher		
96	Black-bellied Hummingbird	202	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher		
97	Magnificent Hummingbird	203	Dusky-capped Flycatcher		
98	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	204	Panama Flycatcher		
99	Volcano Hummingbird	205	Brown-crested Flycatcher		
100	Scintillant Hummingbird		<b>INCERTAE SEDIS</b>		
		206	Bananaquit		
		207	Buff-throated Saltator		
			<b>Tityridae</b>		
		208	Rose-throated Becard		
		209	Masked Tityra		
		210	Black-crowned Tityra		



