

Birds at Rainforests, Volcanoes and Beaches
TRIP REPORT - Costa Rica, 16 days
8-23 December 2014
Private trip with Canadian birders-wildlife enthusiasts



Gwen had the idea to have a nice tour with her friends who are also birders or nature lovers. **What would be better than celebrate a passion by travelling with your lifelong birding friends to a unique destination?** How about **visiting one of the World's best birding and wildlife country which has more than 5% of the total biodiversity of our lovely World?** **Let's go birding to Costa Rica! :-)** Great choice Gwen and many thanks for trusting us to organize and lead this tour for you and for your friends: **Robin, Caroline & Allan, Linda & Bob!** Most of the pictures in this report were made by Bob, the once without signature were taken either by Andrea or Gabor.

This tour took us to some of the best **birding areas of Costa Rica visiting various habitats**. The tour we tailor-made for the Gwen and friends considering that they had some places on their wish-list, which we amended based on our more than a decade experience in Costa Rica.

We have been at breathtaking volcanoes, beaches, lush forests, wetlands with incredibly rich flora and fauna. We had seen over 300 species of birds without any kind of big effort and really serious, demanding birding. Since this group was interested in other wildlife and photography as well we spent generally more time at places, not rushing just to tick this or that. The goal was not to find everything, but as many as possible by comfortable walks and taking it easy, get the chance for taking time for photography or simply just observing nature as well.

We have also seen various mammals, butterflies and moth species, reptiles and wildflowers as well during the tour.



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Fact File

- 14 birding days during a 16day long tour visiting world-famous National Parks and nature reserves
- started and finished in San Jose
- used most of the accommodations for 2 or 3nights (except upon arrival) and all of them offered great on site birding

Highlights

- several days at the world famous La Selva Region,
- Turrialba - Talamanca Mountain
- Savegre Reserve, high mountain cloud forests and Paramo,
- Las Cruces - Wilson Botanical Garden
- visited different areas at the Pacific Coast such as Bahia Ballena and foot of the Baru volcano,
- visited Carara National Park and had a boat tour on River Tarcoles,
- visited several sanctuaries, National Parks and reserves
- wide variety of birds, mammals, reptiles, butterflies and habitats

Accommodation

1 night in San Jose, 3 nights at La Selva, Sarapiquí, 2 nights in the Turrialba Region,
2 nights at Savegre Mountain, 3 nights at Wilson's Botanical Garden, 2 nights at Baru,
2 nights at Carara National Park.



Activity level

We had easy to moderate walks; some areas were hot and humid and we had some heavier, really tropical rains as well. But, this is normal, this is why Costa Rica is almost totally covered by rain and cloud forests. :-)

Itinerary with highlight species

Day1 - 8th December, 2014



Gabor and Andrea arrived to **San Jose** from South, from Cancun Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico a bit earlier than those who came from North, so they waited for the group which arrived in the evening. We greeted everyone, hugged the ones we knew already from previous tours we did together in the Yucatan and introduced ourselves to the ones with whom we have not met before. Then we had a transfer to our hotel followed by the dinner and during it we discussed next day's program.

Days 2-5 - 9th-12th December, 2014

During our tour we decided to stay for 3 nights at the **La Selva Biological Station**, since it is the main centre and the crown jewel of the area. Why?? Because over 400 species have been recorded in this area, most of them Caribbean lowland tropical rainforest species.

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Since it is not too far from San Jose, just about 2 hours drive we could arrive before lunch. We checked in, got our rooms at the edge of the forest. After that we drove to the station area, where the restaurant was, had lunch and in the meantime we could already admire some beautiful birds. After lunch we looked around the flowery garden and started to find more birds. One of the first birds were a pair of **Great Curassows**, there were always some **Black** and **Turkey Vultures** around, but we also saw a **Zone-**

tailed Hawk, actually the only one during the whole tour. The other raptor we heard regularly at La Selva was **Collared Forest Falcon**. We also saw **White-winged Dove** and **Short-tailed Pigeon**.

During these days we regularly heard different **Tinamu** species such as **Great, Little & Slaty-breasted**. Another highlight was 2 pairs of **Great Green Macaws** which we actually saw right on the very first day flying over at our accommodation. At the 2nd day we had a group of 8 and also a few more on the last full day we had here.

The parrot family was represented by **Brown-hooded Parrot, White-crowned Parrot, Red-lored** and **Mealy Amazon**. We heard **Olive-throated** or **Aztec Parakeets** and had **Orange-chinned Parakeet** as well. We found a wide variety of different other bird families as well with species ranging from **Crested Guan** till **Chimney** and **Grey-rumped Swift**.

In terms of big and colorful birds we had **Collared, Garthered** or **Violaceous** and **Slaty-tailed Trogons, Collared Aracaris** and it was easy to hear and see every day both **Chestnut** or **Black-Mandibled** and **Keel-billed Toucans**.



Two days we found **Rufous-tailed Jacamar** and male **White-whiskered Puffbird**. On one of the days we heard **Broad-billed Motmot**.

We had a wide variety of colorful Hummingbirds including **Purple-crowned Fairy, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Long-billed** or **Western Long-Tailed Hermit, Striped-throated** or **Little Hermit, Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds**.

This was also a great place to find various Woodpecker species such as **Rufous-winged Woodpecker, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker,**

Lineated and **Pale-billed Woodpecker**.

We also had **Streak-headed, Ruddy** and **Northern-barred Woodcreepers** and every day we also had **Plain Xenops**. On one of the days we also saw a **Western-Slaty Antshrike**.

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We also had a nice variety of **Flycatchers** including **Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Common Today Flycatcher, Rufous Mourner, Long-tailed Tyrant, White-ringed Flycatcher, Dusky-Capped Flycatcher, Grey-capped Flycatcher, Social Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Tropical Kingbirds** and **Cinnamon Becard**.

Masked Tityra was very common, we've seen it every day and it was a great surprise as well on one day to see regularly a flashing male **Snowy Cotinga**. Another nice species, which we have seen regularly also near the restaurant on the bushes was **White-collared Manakin**.

We heard the typical thrills of **Rufous-browed Peppershrike** and also had 4 different **Wren** species: **House Wren, White-breasted Woodwren, Band-backed** and **Bay Wren**.

This was also one of those areas where you can easily compare **Northern** and **Southern Rough-winged, Blue-and-White Swallows**.

Of course we have to mention that we saw every day the **National Bird of Costa Rica**, which is actually not the most colorful or rarest bird, but believe it or not: the **Clay-colored Thrush!!:-)**

We had a long list of various **Warblers** including **Chestnut-sided, Yellow, Black-and-White, Wilson's, Kentucky, Golden-winged** and **Hooded Warblers**.

We should also mention that almost every day we saw the lovely **Bananaquit** and the beautiful **Summer Tanager** as well. :-)

We had several other **Tanagers** as well such as **Golden-hooded, Bay-headed, Plain-colored, Passerini's** or **Scarlet-rumped, Blue-Grey** and **Palm Tanagers**.



We regularly had brightly-colored **Green Honeycreeper** and once a female **Blue Dacnis**.

We also found at some occasions both **Black-striped** and **Orange-billed Sparrows**.

Buff-throated Saltator was common and on 2 days we found **Black-faced Grosbeak** as well.

Baltimore Oriole was also common, but we had **Scarlet-rumped Cacique** just once.



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Every day we had **Chestnut-headed & Montezuma Oropendolas**, which had so lovely colors and also we liked their calls. The family of **Euphonias** was represented by **Olive-backed Euphonia**.

In the evenings we listened and looked for nocturnal species and we managed to hear and also see **Vermiculated Screech Owl, Pauraque** and **Short-tailed Nighthawk**.

Also during the evenings we regularly saw large **Fruit-eating Bats**.

Regarding other **mammals** the area was very productive with several **Mantled Howler Monkeys, Collared Peccaries, 2-toed Sloths, Nine-banded Armadillo** and at one occasion we found fresh **Ocelot footprints** as well.: -)

Reptiles were represented by **Green Iguanas** and **River Turtles**, while **Amphibians** by **Blue-jeans poison arrow frog**.

Other interesting creatures we should mention were **Leaf-cutter Ants** in large numbers, one beautiful and heavy **Hercules Beetle** and an unusual form of fungi, a **Bridal-veil Mushroom**.

Days 5-7 - 12th - 14th December, 2014

When we arrived to Rancho's area we were bit worried, because it was raining heavily before and the road up there is not really an easy one. :-) But Gabor managed to force up our van and finally we arrived. Soon the rain arrived too, so it was just perfect timing to get out..I mean to get in the lodge.



we stayed around the lodge looking for birds and other wildlife.



Rancho Naturalista is located in the **Turrialba region of the Talamanca Mountains**. The height of this mountain ranges between 1900-4500feet.

The lodge itself is around at 2800feet/about 900m, so it is a perfect place to discover the lower and higher elevations as well. According to the owners there have been over 200 species recorded just from the balcony alone!

They have primary and secondary mountain rain forests and some open areas, such as pastures, bushy meadows, all part of the property.

On the way and upon arrival the very first bird what we heard and seen at the feeders was a **Grey-headed Chachalaca** and later on we had some common raptor species like **Turkey** and **Black**

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Vultures, Roadside and **Broad-winged Hawks**, but during the days we had some new ones, such as **Northern-crested Caracara** and even more exciting ones as well like **Bicolored Hawk** or **Merlin**.



Beside the formerly seen **Mealy Amazon, Brown-hooded** and **White-crowned Parrots** we had new parakeets like **Crimson-fronted** or **Finsch's** and **Brown-throated Parakeet**, we also heard a **Barred-Parakeet**.

This was also the first place where we saw **White-collared Swifts**, however not in such incredible number as later on.

Rancho Naturalista had feeders not just at its main building and in front of some of the rooms, but at different points of the trails as well. Thus we could see hummingbirds almost any time of the day anywhere. There was a trail down to the stream with hummingbird pools, which we visited a few times to witness species to drink and bath there. You could have species here which would never or rarely visit feeders. Here is a long list of species what we have

seen during our stay at different parts of the property:

Green Hermit, Stripe-throated Hermit, Long-billed Hermit, Violet Sabrewing, Green-crowned Brilliant, Purple-crowned Fairy, White-necked Jacobin, Bronzetailed Plumeleater, Rufus-tailed Hummingbird, Green-Breasted Mango, Violet-crowned Woodnymph and a local star... the lovely **Snowcap**. No wonder, Rancho calls itself the Home of the Snowcap and indeed it is very rare to leave this place without seeing at least one of these magnificent hummingbirds. :-)



Collared Aracari and **Keel-billed Toucan** were seen here every day. Another nice and colorful bird, **Rufous Motmot** was new. We could not see it anywhere else later on during this tour.

Same is true for **Smocky-brown** and **Golden-Olive Woodpeckers**. This was also the last place where we saw **Black-cheeked Woodpecker**.

This was also the only place where we have found **Buff-throated Foliage-Gleaner** and heard **Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser**, seen as well **Oliveaceous** and **Plain-brown Woodcreeper** was new such as **Cocoa, Spotted Woodcreeper** as well.

After La Selva here we found again **Plain Xenons** and **Streak-headed Woodcreeper**.

From the group of the typical antbirds we found some new ones such as **Russet Antshrike, Immaculate Antbird** and we also heard **Dull-mantled Antbird**.



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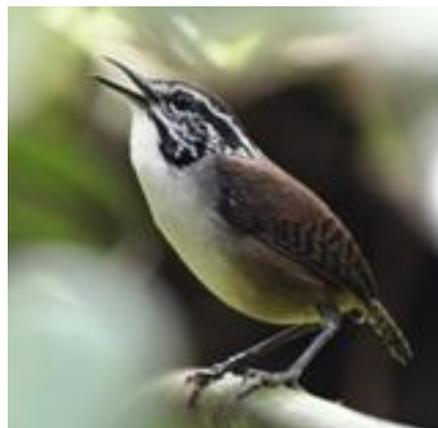
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The forest and edges were very rich in different insect-eating species especially **Flycatchers**. New species were **White-throated Spadebill, Paltry Tyrannulet, Yellow-Olive, Slaty-capped** and **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers**. Other Flycatchers we mention here we had already before such as **Common Tody, Ochre-bellied, Dusky-capped, Grey-capped & Social Flycatcher**, plus **Rufous Mourner** and **Cinnamon Becard**. This was the only place where we had **White-winged Becard** and **Black-crowned Tityra**.

The last **White-Collared Manakin** on the tour was found here as well and we also had the only **White-crowned Manakin**, a female one. We ID-ed a **White-ruffed Manakin** call as well by the help of Henry, a young but very good local guide.

Strangely enough this was the only place where we had **Yellow-throated Vireo** and **Lesser Greenlet** during the tour which we normally see really regularly.



Other new species were here **Brown Jay** and **Silvery-throated Jay**, also **Tropical Gnatcatcher** and **Stripe-breasted Wren**. We also heard a **Black-throated Wren** but we could not find it. On the other hand we all could see **White-breasted Wood-Wren** very well. We also heard **Southern Nightingale-Wren** and **Scale-breasted Wren** as well.

Swainson's Thrush and **Woodthrush** was new here in the forest. We had several new Warbler species as well such as: **Tennessee, Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, Mourning, Golden-Crowned, Rufous-capped** and **Brewster's Warblers**. The latter one is actually a hybrid of Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers.



Tropical Parula and **American**



Redstart were new as well to this tour. Beside the usual Tanagers we saw here **White-lined** and **Crimson-Collared Tanagers** and the first **Silver-throated Tanager**. Also **Scarlet-tighed Ducnis** and **Yellow-faced Grassquit** were new. Although we heard **Chestnut-capped Brush-finch** we could not get a good view of it.

We had both **Scarlet-rumped** and **Yellow-Billed Cacique**. **Chestnut-headed** and **Montezuma Oropendolas** were present on both days.

The forest and its edge was very good for **Euphonias** so we had **Olive-Backed, White-vented, Yellow-crowned** and **Yellow-throated** as well. During the evenings beside our rooms we heard also **Mottled Owl**.

The large **butterflies** we had seen were **Common Blue Morpho** and **Owl butterflies**.

In one of the evenings they put out a white sheet and some special lights so in the morning we could check the

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moth species which were all around. Of course Flycatchers and some other birds learned quickly that a lot of food was offered for them like in a buffet-style breakfast in an all-inclusive hotel. :-)

Days 7-9 - 14th - 16th December, 2014



This morning we had a final birding at Rancho, than we packed, had our breakfast and started our journey towards **Savegre Area**. We were all very excited, because we knew we were heading again to an area which offers completely different habitat thus birding possibilities as well.

A couple of hours later we were descending from **Cerro de la Muerte** into a beautiful valley which was surrounded by incredible mountain cloud forests. Before we arrived to our excellent hotel we broke the journey to have a coffee, but more importantly to

pick up some new species. Here we had **Scaly-breasted, Scintillant Hummingbird, White-throated** and **Grey-tailed Mountain Gem, Acorn Woodpecker, Brown** and **Silvery-throated Jays, White-breasted Wood-Wren, Black-billed Nightingale Thrush, Sooty Thrush** and **Clay-colored Thrush, Sooty-capped Bush Tanager, Flame-coloured Tanager** and **Summer Tanager, Slaty Flower-piercer, Large-footed** and **Yellow-thighed Finches, Rufous-collared Sparrow** and **Golden-browed Chlorophonia**. What a coffee break! This stop turned out to be a very successful one! :-)

Later on we reached our hotel, checked-in, everybody had a nice room with little garden and sitting area in front with great view for the hills and the forest. After refreshing ourselves we slowly went down to the restaurant area, but of course looking for birds also on the way, then we had our nice buffet-style lunch.

A bit later on we went out on foot to discover the area. Alongside the stream we found **American Dipper**. Further on at a small fishpond we saw an **Osprey**. We ventured into the nearby forest where we had **Ruddy Treerunner, Spotted Barbtail, Spot-crowned** and **Streak-headed Woodcreepers, Grey-breasted Woodwren, Collared Whitestart** and **Orange-billed Sparrow**.



We were also very lucky to find some **Black Guans** high in the canopy and heard **Black-faced Solitaire**.

On the way back a small group of **Sulphur-winged Parakeets** flew over our heads.

In the garden we found a **Paltry Tyrannulet** and **Northern Tufted**



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Flycatcher, Red-throated Ant-tanager, Spangle-cheeked, Blue-Grey, Flame-colored, Silver-throated Tanagers and **Baltimore Orioles**. We just got back in time to prepare ourselves for a nice dinner.

Next morning before and after breakfast we enjoyed a bit the Hummingbirds and some other birds at the feeders in front of the restaurant and around in the bushy areas like **Green Violet-ear, Snowy-bellied, Volcano, Striped-tailed, Scintillant** and **Magnificent Hummingbird**.

During the day we visited two different areas, one of them just above the cabanas of the hotel and the other one is just after that forest trail what we did in the morning. We had our lunch between these two visits.

Beside the usual **Black** and **Turkey Vultures** we saw a **Merlin**.

We found again **Spot-crowned Woodcreeper** and **Paltry Tyrannulet**. Other new **Flycatcher** species were **Dark Pewee, Least Flycatcher** and at a stream a **Torrent Tyrannulet**.

Beside **Great Kiskadee** we also had the first **Boat-Billed Flycatcher**, so it was interesting to compare them. **Philadelphia Vireo** was new here as well. We also saw several times **Blue- and-White Swallows**.

We had both **Mountain** and **Souty Thrush** and heard **Black-faced Solitaire** again.

We added some new beautiful species as well including **Ruddy-capped Nightingale Thrush, Flame-throated Warbler, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Townsend's Warbler, Black-cheeked Warbler** and **Common Bush Tanager**.

We also saw **Sooty-capped Bush-** and **Spangle-cheeked Tanagers, Slaty Flower-piercer,** and **Yellow-thighed Finches**.

We looked for **Peg-billed Finch**, but we were not lucky this time. :- (On the other hand once Robin described a bird, which she found and based on the details it must have been a **Black-thighed Grosbeak**.

There was also quite a nice surprise that in the garden we could also enjoy an amazing view of a male **Resplendent Quetzal** and also an **Emerald or Blue-throated Toucanet**. They were almost like posing to all the people watching them. One morning we had the male **Resplendent Quetzal** again, flying across just in front



of our rooms! You can not be luckier than that with this species! :-) It is not really typical to see these birds in areas where there can be a lot of people around, usually they are quite difficult species to find. We also had a **squirrel** in the garden later on.

Of course after our last dinner here at this beautiful place we had to add a lot

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of new species to our list and we also discussed the plan for the next days.

Days 9-12 - 16th - 19th December, 2014

This morning again we started to look a bit for the beautiful and colorful Hummingbirds and other species at the feeders, because it is never enough of these creatures. :-) Then we had our last breakfast, packed and started our the next leg of our "adventure". :-)



We drove up from the valley to higher elevation, but first of course we had to stop at our previous coffee bar where we spent just a little bit of time to look down the forest and hoping for some new birds. But weather was not so clear this time, so we left soon.



Then we went on crossing farmlands, tropical forests, cloud forests and paramo. Since it was very foggy we did not stopped birding here.

Coming down from the hills we approached the Eastern edge of the country, close to the Panamanian border. Here we stayed at the famous **Wilson Botanical Garden** which had great trails in primary and secondary forests, beside the amazing variety of trees and wildflowers in the garden itself.

Since we had here 3 nights we had a half day after arrival and a bit of time before departure and in between 2 full days to discover this amazing area. So we spent a lot of time both in the botanical garden part, also into the primary and secondary forests which belong to the property, but we also ventured out to

surrounding areas as well. After arrival we got our rooms and had a lunch and soon after we went out just around the houses and of course checked out the feeders, because they always attracted a lot of colorful and beautiful birds.

We won't mention all the species we could see during these days, but the most characteristic, special ones and anything that was new.

In the garden we had **Grey-headed Chachalaca** and **Crested Guan** every day. New Doves included **Ruddy Ground** and **White-tipped Doves**.



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We had **Sulphur-winged, Crimson-fronted** and **Orange-chinned Parakeets**, while beside **White-crowned Parrot** we had the first **Blue-headed** one as well. **Squirrel Cuckoo** was common and we found **Smooth-billed Anis** as well.

We saw nice variety of Hummingbirds such as **Stripe-throated Hermit, Purple-Crowned Fairy, Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds** and we also had some new species like **Scaly-breasted** and **Charming Hummingbirds**, plus **White-tailed Emerald** - this latter one is a really excellent species to see! :-)

We also had regularly **Garthered or Violaceous Trogon** and once we found a female **Collared Trogon** as well. **Blue-Crowned Motmot** was the king at the feeder, when he came down all the other smaller birds were flashed away.

Black Mandibled (Chestnut Mandibled) Toucans were also common, but we regularly saw **Keel-billed Toucans** as well. **Red-crowned Woodpecker** was new, but more excitingly we heard the squeaking voice of a **Red-faced Spinetail** which we managed to find and even photograph!



Other new species were **Slaty-Antwren, Lesser Eleania, Scale-crested Pigmy Tyrant** and **Bright-rumped Attila**, but the last one we just heard.

We regularly had **Poultry Tyrannulet** and **Common Tody-Flycatcher**. Other common **Flycatchers** were **Boat-billed, Grey-capped** and **Social Flycatchers**.

Rose-throated Becard was new as well, but a much bigger news was a female **Three-wattled Bellbird!!**

We still have not run out of new species, because we also found **Yellow-winged Vireo** and **Rufous-breasted Wren. House Wren** and **White-breasted Wood Wren** were common here. We had a new Thrush species as well which was a **White-throated Thrush**.

Warblers were represented by **Tennessee, Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian** and **Black-and-White. Northern Waterthrush, Red-crowned Ant-tanager** and **Slate-throated Whitestart** were also new.

Cherrie's and **Speckled Tanager** were both new and very common.

There were a lot from the usual however beautiful Tanagers and Honeycreepers as well which we all mentioned before.

We had **Black-striped Sparrow** and **Buff-throated Saltator** every day, but **Streaked Saltator** we saw just once.

We also had our first **Melodious Blackbird** and **Giant Cowbird** here. This was the only place, where we had **Crested Oropendola, Lesser**



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Goldfinch, Yellow-bellied Siskin and Spot-crowned Euphonia.

In terms of **raptors** we had: **Bicolored, Barred, Broad-winged** and **Roadside Hawks**. Most of these we saw of course over the canopy of the forest from a lookout tower of the Botanical garden.

At a nearby area with at a watery habitat we found **Blue-winged Teal, Great** and **Cattle Egret, Green Heron, Northern Crested** and **Yellow-headed Caracaras**. We also saw **Purple Gallinule** and **Common Moorhen**.

Mammals here were represented by **squirrels and agoutis**.

Of course the daily routine was here as well, that every morning we went out a bit before breakfast just near the houses and to the feeders, then had breakfast and got out longer. Then coming back for lunch and gong out again. Come back for dinner and go to sleep.



Days 12-14 - 19th – 21st December, 2014



Before breakfast we had a last walk, where we had seen species what we had seen before, but we also found one **Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher**.

After breakfast we had to say goodbye to this lovely place and all the birds at the feeders. We packed again and continued our journey. From the Botanical garden we travelled West partly nearby the coast to our final destination close to the slopes of the **Baru Volcano**. During the way we broke our journey a bit at **Park Nacional Marino Ballena**.

From the sea-side we could see **Isla Ballena**, which had nesting seabird colonies, such as **Brown Pelicans, Neotropical Cormorants, Magnificent Frigate Birds, Great, Snowy** and **Cattle Egret** and **Little Blue Heron**.

We arrived to our hotel alongside the **Barucito river** just before lunch.

This place was a kind of ecoresort with nice garden. As

usual we took our rooms first, refreshed ourselves a bit and then went to eat.

After lunch we discovered a little bit the garden and later we went for a walk alongside the river. We found our first **Bare-throated Tiger Heron, Little Blue Heron**.

We saw **Crimson-fronted Parakeets, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird** and a beautiful **Chestnut-mandibled Toucan**.



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We found some new species as well like **Hoffmann's Woodpecker**, **Olivaceous Piculet** and **Wedge-billed Woodcreeper**. The other species we had before like **Plain Xenops**, **Plain-Brown Woodcreeper** and **Ruddy-Woodcreeper**.

During our stay every day we heard **Bared-Antshrike** and **Chestnut-backed Antbird**.

On the Big Day for Gwen, which was her Birthday, we decided not to bird too much, but still birds didn't know about this decision of ours, so they came to visit us. :-)

Just in front of the hotel at the river bank we had **Tricolored Heron** and plenty of **American White Ibises**, **Willetts**, **Greater Yellowlegs** and **Spotted Sandpipers**.

A **Royal Turn** and a **Comon Black Hawk** flew around. Inca **Dove** was new. And as a Birthday present for Gwen we even had the first **Scarlet Macaws** this day.

Also this day once looking up in the sky we had another big surprise in a form of a huge cloud of about **800 White-collared Swifts** circling around in the sky.:-)
Gathered Trogon, **Ringed** and **Green Kingfisher** colored the day further!



We saw some **Blue-and-White Swallows** and our first **Mangrove Swallows** as well.



Riverside Wren was present close to the river, according to its name. We found a beautiful **Black-cowled Oriole**.

Mammal species here were represented by a **Virginia Opossum**. Robin and Andrea also spotted some **White-faced Capuchin Monkeys** on the other side of the river in front of the hotel.

During the evening of the 20th December, which was the birthday of Gwen we had a lovely dinner with some surprise. Like the last gorgeous bird of the day there was a Toucan-design cake for Gwen which Andrea organized. It looked really nice, for a while we did not dare to taste it! :-)

After the dinner and a nice relaxing evening everybody was happy and finally we retreated to our rooms.

Days 14-16 - - 21st - 23rd December, 2014

In the morning we took it quite easy and had a nice buffet style breakfast. After it we still looked around



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a little bit in the garden, then we packed and started to travel to our next hotel and National Park, **Carara**.

On the way we passed **Manuel Antonio National park** as well and **Quepos**, later on driving a bit alongside the **Pacific Ocean**, passed Jaco.



But, before arriving to **Carara**, we already stopped several times, because this is the area for the **Scarlet Macaws** and luckily we saw couple of them flying around. Once they even perched on a tree near the road, so we could enjoy their loud calls and nice colors for quite along time and took some excellent photos. Specially Bog, because for him this species as a lot more were totally new and he was amazed by these birds. And actually they are gorgeous birds.

Finally we arrived to our accommodation, just South of **Carara N.P.**

Carara National Park which boasts of pristine lowland tropical forests and some secondary forest, scrub, wetlands, mudflats and mangrove

thickets, each of which has its own range of species.

As usual after getting our rooms we went for lunch. After lunch we walked in the garden alongside the stream and we had: **Woodstork, Northern Jacana, Spotted Sandpiper, Northern Crested and Yellow-headed Caracaras**. We had both **White-tipped and White-winged Doves**. A group of **Smooth-billed Anis** gathered on a wire offering great photo possibilities for Bob. From a little look-out tower just a few feet away we witnessed a **Long-Billed Hermit** feeding its chick, which Bob photographed very nicely. Other Hummingbirds in the area included: **Scaly-breasted, Steely-vented** and **Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds, White-necked Jacobin**.

We also had **Diademed or Blue-crowned Motmot** and **Chestnut or Black Mandibled Toucan**.

Red-crowned Woodpecker and **Cocoa Woodcreeper** searched food on the tree trunks.

From the denser parts we heard **Chestnut-backed Antbird** and we also saw **Cinnamon** and **Rose-throated Becards**. But one of the highlights was surely a **Blue-crowned Manakin**.



This was the only place where we had **Rufous-naped Wren**, while other wrens were common, such as **House** and **Riverside Wren**.

At the stream we regularly saw both **Louisiana** and **Northern Waterthrush**, plus **Buff-rumped Warbler**.

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Green Honeycreeper, Yellow-throated Euphonia and **Baltimore Oriole** added some colors. There was another species which we debated a lot, because **Elegant Euphonia** normally shouldn't be at this low elevation, but Gabor was sure, he even so a male as well.



Finally we prepared ourselves for the dinner and during it we discussed our plan for the next day and that we were going to do a boat tour on the River Tarcoles.

The boat Safari on the **Tarcoles river** visits the estuary which is one of the best locations to see endangered birds. This time it was a bit more complicated to find the place where the boat started from, but finally we found it! We had to cross farmlands on a dirt road and finally we got to the place! :-)

As we were waiting for the boatman we heard a strange raptor call, which turned out to be a **Crane Hawk** which flew later on directly toward us and shortly landed on the only tree in front of us. Of course Bob took some nice shots.



During the boat ride we had **Black-bellied whistling Duck, Neotropical Cormorants, Magnificent Frigatebirds, Woodstorks, Bare-thorated Tiger Heron**, all the common herons and egrets, plus **Black and Yellow-crowned Night-herons, Boat-billed Heron** and even **Roseate Spoonbill**.

We also saw up-close how an **Anhinga** killed a fish, hence its other name: **Darter**.

Raptors included **Osprey** of course, **Broad-winged** and **Common Black Hawks, Northern-crested** and **Yellow-headed Caracaras** and the only **Peregrine Falcon** of the tour.

We also had **Black-necked Stilt, Whimbrel, Willet** and **Spotted Sandpiper. Grey-headed Dove** was a new species.

Everybody could see very well **Belted** and **Green Kingfisher** and Bob added these birds to his photo collection. After returning from the boat trip we had our lunch and went for a little siesta.

Later on we discovered the area further and we found the following species: **White-wiskered Puffbird, Fiery-billed Araçari, Plain Xenops, Hoffman's Woodpecker, Northern Royal Flycatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Streaked Flycatcher, Yellow-green Vireo, Yellow Warbler** and **Red-legged Honeycreeper**.

We also had a good view of the beautiful **Scarlet Macaws, White-collared Swift, Crimson-fronted Parakeet** and heard a **Chestnut-backed Antbird**.



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On our last morning we heard **Barred Ant-shrike** and **Bright-rumped Attila**, which Gabor stubbornly followed and finally he could show it to everyone. We also had **Streaked Flycatcher**, **Orange-billed Sparrow**, **Buff-rumped Warbler**. What is more we even had some new species such as **Grey-headed Tanager** and **Bronzy Hermit**.

Other wildlife was represented by **Yellow-eared Turtle**, **Basilisk Lizard**, **Howler Monkeys** and **crocodiles**.

After our last breakfast we had to pack for the last time and started our trip back to San Jose to reach our flight. However, some of us stayed for some more nights and spent Christmas here in Costa Rica, while others had a last night in San Jose, same hotel as first night and the 2 of us, Gabor and Andrea flew back to Yucatan Mexico.



We really hope we can bird together again in one of the amazing Latin American countries! Hasta la Vista amigos!



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