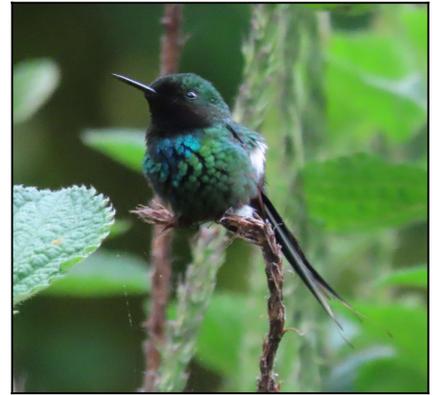




# COSTA RICA

March 5 – 11, 2022  
**TRIP REPORT**



Photos: Resplendent Quetzal, Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, Violet Sabrewing, Green Thorntail, Snowcap (Georges Kleinbaum)



Sunrise Birding LLC

www.sunrisebirding.com

# COSTA RICA Trip Report

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## *Some highlights and top sightings:*

- Quetzals, of course!
- Cabanis's Ground Sparrow
- Elegant Chlorophonia
- Keel-billed Toucan
- Collared Whitestart
- Green Thorntail
- Fiery-throated Hummingbird
- Bosque de Tolomuco
- The waterfall and the Green-fronted Lancebill
- Volcano Junco
- 26 species of Hummingbirds including Snowcap!
- Migrating Broad-winged Hawks
- Sharing the experiences with this lovely group of people
- The excitement and energy of seeing new places, new birds
- Comfortable travel, covid safe
- The charming Rufous-collared Sparrow
- Moths!

## Day 1 — 5<sup>th</sup> March

Everyone arrived at our hotel in San Jose by mid afternoon, and were soon adapting to the warm sun and nice temperatures of Costa Rica.

After settling into their rooms, we gathered in the hotel gardens to enjoy our first Costa Rican birds. Around the swimming pool, the blue Verbena flowers attracted both Canivet's Emerald and Cinnamon Hummingbirds, while nearby, some flowering trees held Spot-breasted Orioles, somewhat of a surprise for this strict dry Guanacaste species. Clay-colored Thrushes, Great-tailed Grackles and both White-winged and Inca Doves showed well.

As we made our way around the gardens we found Melodious Blackbirds and a bright Lesson's Motmot and then got good views of a **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl**, pointed out



to us by the gardener. We later learned that it was nesting in a box in the garden. There were Red-billed Pigeons flying back and forth, a couple of noisy Rufous-backed Wrens, American Yellow Warbler and several Blue-gray Tanagers.

A pair of Hoffmann's Woodpeckers attended a nest with chicks sticking their heads out of the hole now and again, and then a close fly over by a Zone-tailed Hawk caused great excitement.

Other birds on the hotel grounds were bright orange Baltimore Orioles, a Masked Tityra, Tropical Mockingbird, Great Kiskadee, Boat-billed Flycatcher and Social Flycatcher. Not a bad start for a small hotel garden. During the evening Steve tried out his Bat Detector and identified Argentine Brown Bats flying around the hotel grounds.

## Day 2 — 6<sup>th</sup> March

This morning we packed up early and met Ramon our excellent driver and friend for nearly 20 years! We took picnic breakfasts with us so as we could get going and avoid the city traffic. Our first stop was in a small town square where we soon found two **Tropical Screech Owls** roosting in a tree. Noisy Crimson-Fronted (Finsch's) Parakeets flew around and just a short stroll to the side of a nice church found us a pair of American Barn Owls sleeping.



From here we made our way through a winding valley with a couple of roadside stops for Southern Lapwing with a chick and a Northern Crested Caracara. We eventually left the tarmac road and drove along a gravel road until we reached a remote forest reserve and lodge. One of the first birds we saw as we arrived was a male Snowcap feeding on a flowering bush, what a start!

We walked the main track up to the lodge and found a small mixed flock that offered good views of Black-and-Yellow Tanager, Emerald Tanager, Golden-hooded Tanager, and a Mistletoe Tyrannulet. Three White-vented Euphonias showed well and Short billed Pigeons fed in the nearby flowering trees. A nice male White-ruffed Manakin appeared and then quickly disappeared so we all slowly made our way up to the deck of the lodge. A group of Brown-hooded Parrots flew over and then a Short-tailed Hawk was spotted circling above the lush hills.

We enjoyed super close-up views of up to 5 more **Snowcaps** (Photo: Georges Kleinbaum), while listening to the loud call of a Zeledon's Antbird in the distant forest. Looking up into the sky again we watched two King Vultures and shortly afterwards an Ornate Hawk Eagle drifted past. We continued watching the flowers and enjoying the Snowcaps and added Cinnamon Becard and Tropical Parula to our list. A delicious lunch was served and later some more coffee and home made empanadas.

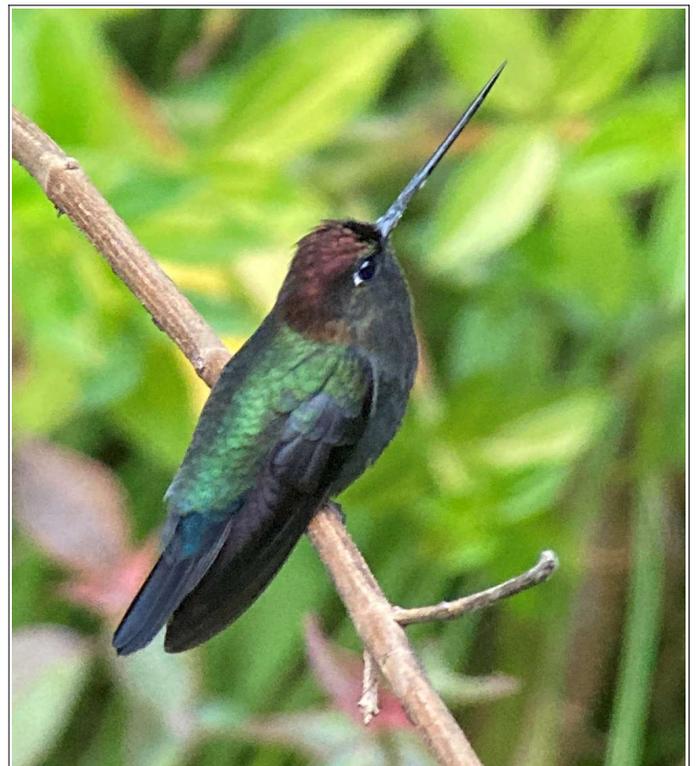




Leaving this wonderful place in the afternoon we made our way slowly back with a quick stop beside a stream where a **Sunbittern** was spotted and watched as it made its way along the waters edge and disappeared around the corner. A Black Phoebe also flitted around on the rocks but did not match the excitement of the Sunbittern!

We continued on and at around 4 pm we arrived at our wonderful lodge and soon had all our rooms sorted and luggage delivered. The welcome lemon grass tea was wonderfully refreshing and we immediately got the feeling that this was a very special place. Some of us couldn't rest so we took a look around the gardens. Up by the waterfall and the hummingbird feeders, we watched a tiny male Green Thorntail, as well as several Green-crowned Brilliants and a stunning Violet Sabrewing.

Down beside the bottom of the waterfall a **Green-fronted Lancebill** put on a great performance and then a White-bellied Mountain Gem and later the endemic Coppery-headed Emerald appeared. Our hummingbird list was really taking shape!



In the forest edge we watched White-eared Ground Sparrow and some unidentified mice. A Crested Guan was spotted high in the trees and Chestnut-headed Oropendolas flew back and

forth. We then returned back in time to meet up for our daily checklist and a terrific, gourmet dinner. A couple of us went up to check the moth light that Steve had set up and recorded Greater Dog-like Bats flying around. John spot-lighted a Kinkajou and we were completely overwhelmed by incredible number of moth species coming to the light.

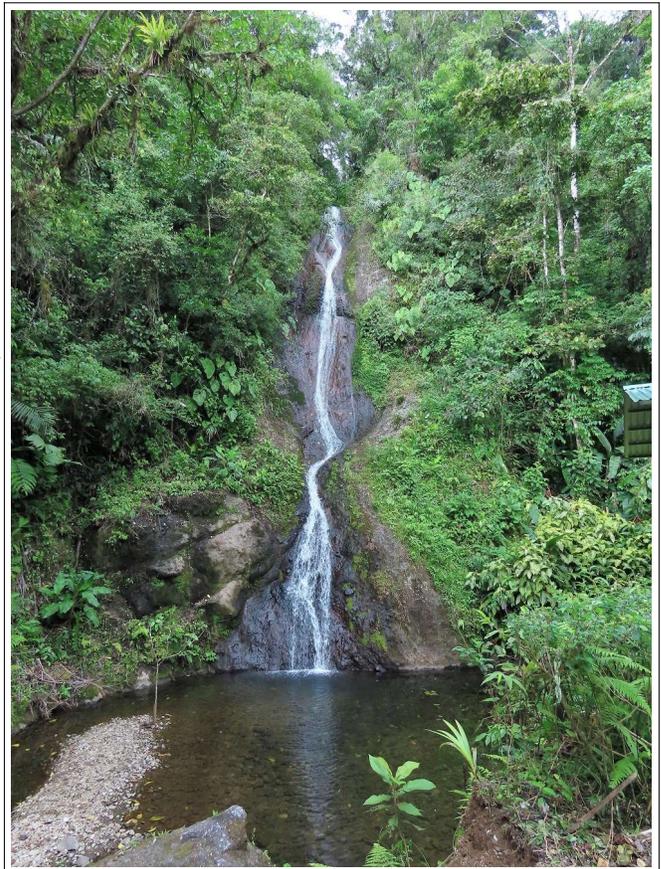


### Day 3 — 7<sup>th</sup> March

Today we walked up to the waterfall at daybreak and surveyed the huge variety of moths that had come to our UV light during the night.

As the daylight improved we positioned ourselves to watch two areas where food was put out into the forest in the hopes of attracting some secretive birds. A pair of Sooty-faced Finches came in first followed by both Chestnut-capped Brush Finch and White-eared Ground Sparrows. The views were fabulous but we soon got distracted by the hummingbirds which included Violet Sabrewings, Green-crowned Brilliants, White-bellied Mountain Gem, and a Black-bellied Hummingbird.

An alert got our attention and we moved quickly and quietly back to our viewing spot as a Scaled Antpitta put in a brief but good appearance. White-naped Brush Finches also appeared and as we hung around to see



more hummingbirds we added Green-fronted Lancebill, Lesser Violetear, Green Thorntail and a Green Hermit.



We returned for breakfast which was disrupted by the **Montezuma Oropendolas** visiting the feeders. After breakfast, we did a short walk below the lodge which produced Keel-billed Toucans, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Mistletoe Tyrannulet, some Brown Jays, Philadelphia Vireo, Bananaquit, then some warblers that included Black-and-white, Chestnut-sided and Tennessee, accompanied by Speckled and Bay-headed Tanagers. Several butterflies were flying around and another short walk on a trail found us Olivaceous Woodcreeper and a nice Blackburnian Warbler.

After a sumptuous lunch and lethargy setting in we had a short rest and then met up at the waterfall. The usual hummingbirds were present and then a Stripe-tailed Hummingbird came in and showed well flitting back and forth among the flowers. A small flock appeared that included Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Black-headed Tody Flycatcher, and Yellow-olive Flatbill.

We then took a short trail into the forest and hadn't gone five minutes when our first mixed flock appeared and included several stunning White-winged Tanagers, Golden-winged and Blackburnian Warbler, Silver-throated Tanager, Streaked Xenops, plus Russet Antshrike, Red-faced Spinetail, Dark Pewee, Northern Tufted Flycatcher, Slate-throated Whitestart and



Tropical Parula. Up the hill we could hear a Chiriqui Quail Dove calling but it just moved further away. A nice Banded Owl Butterfly posed on a tree trunk and then Jose got us all excited when he heard a Sharpbill calling. It called a couple more times but unfortunately did not offer any views.

Back at the waterfall we positioned ourselves to look at the forest feeders. Just 5 or 10 minutes passed and in came White-naped Brush Finch, White-eared Ground Sparrow, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch and Sooty-faced Finch. Thinking to ourselves that this was a pretty good show, low and behold in came a pair of Black-breasted Wood Quail. It's great when a plan comes together!! Later we met for another amazing dinner and check of our fantastic list of species for the day!

#### **Day 4 — 8<sup>th</sup> March**

Today after early morning coffee we left with a picnic breakfast in order to avoid local road construction work. Our first stop was near a coffee plantation where we soon located our target species the increasingly rare and localized Cabanis's Ground Sparrow. After excellent views of a pair of these increasingly rare birds, we watched fly over Hook-billed Kites, a pair of Green Ibis in a tree top, Chestnut-capped and Mourning Warbler, several Mistletoe Tyrannulets, a perched White-fronted Parrot and then a Scarlet-rumped Tanager and Orchard Oriole.



We then moved on to a small park for our picnic breakfast. Here we enjoyed the ruins of a 16th-century Spanish colonial church set among a scenic garden. **Crimson-fronted (Finsch's) Parakeets** were seen canoodling on the face of the church. Overhead, more Hook-billed Kites were seen along with Short-tailed Hawk and the endemic race of Red-tailed Hawk (*costaricensis*). Tennessee Warblers were also seen, Brown Jays, and a perched Gray Hawk and no less than three Streak-headed Woodcreepers. A Lesser Goldfinch fed in some flowers and, while we ate breakfast, a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird and another Mourning Warbler were seen.



We then made our way up to the highlands toward Irazu Volcano. Our first stop found a group of Acorn Woodpeckers and while we were watching them, a Resplendent Quetzal called! Excitement ensued and after some intense searching, we found a male sat high in the trees. It stayed for 30 minutes while we watched it in the scopes and photographed it. Another Quetzal called further up the road another quetzal and we tracked that one down as well.



In between marvelling at the Quetzal, we had Black-cheeked and Flame-throated Warbler in the nearby trees plus Wilson's Warbler and a Fiery-throated Hummingbird. We continued along this road a short distance to our lunch stop and spent a couple of hours watching hummingbirds on the feeders. The show here included Volcano, Talamanca, Fiery-throated and Lesser Violetears. Rufous-collared Sparrows and Tropical Mockingbird showed well and above us flew Short-tailed Hawk and another Red-tailed Hawk.

After a fabulous lunch we drove right up to the paramo habitat at Irazu Volcano. A distant Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher was spotted and we heard a Timberline Wren. We walked part of the road and got fabulous looks at Sooty Thrush



before returning to the bus and driving back to our lodge. For the lucky few, a quick last minute check for the Black-breasted Wood Quail proved a success.

### Day 5 — 9<sup>th</sup> March

Today we departed our wonderful lodge and head up into the mountains. By mid morning we were at our first destination, a fabulous garden full of flowers and fruit feeders. Birds were everywhere and we soon racked up a great list of birds that we would not see elsewhere. White-tailed Emeralds were plentiful along with White-throated Mountain Gem. Silver-throated Tanagers were numerous as were Tennessee Warblers and Baltimore Orioles.



Then with more patience and time on our side, we found Speckled Tanagers, Elegant Chlorophonia, **Red-headed Barbet**, Flame-colored Tanager, Baltimore Oriole, Red-crowned Woodpecker, and Stripe-tailed Hummingbird. Swallow-tailed Kites flew over and, at one point, a group of White-faced Capuchin Monkeys appeared and stole the bananas put out for the birds. A White-nosed Coati did the same and for the lucky few, a Grey-cowled Wood Rail was seen as it ran across the grass. Tiny Scintillant Hummingbirds showed occasionally but star of the show appeared just before we were about to leave when a male Snowy-bellied Hummingbird posed nicely for photos.



It was time for lunch so we drove to a small café overlooking the valley. While we enjoyed lunch we enjoyed views of several Grey-cowled Wood Rails, a lone Crowned Woodnymph, and beautiful **Violet Sabrewings**. Green-crowned Brilliants came to the feeders by our heads and another Swallow-tailed Kite flew by at eye level.



After lunch our next stop was the high Paramo of Cerro de la Muerte. Here we managed to find our target species the **Volcano Junco** before setting off on the last part of today's journey to our wonderful lodge deep in the Savegre Valley.



### **Day 6 — 10<sup>th</sup> March**

This morning we had early coffee and then set off on the short drive to a spot where we could view a Resplendent Quetzals nest hole. We set ourselves up and waited. After half an hour or so, the female Quetzal peered out of the hole and then quickly flew off and out of sight. We continued our wait and then heard the male Quetzal calling. After a while, it flew in and landed in a mossy tree near to the nest hole. It changed positions enabling us to get both front and back views before eventually flying to the nest hole and hanging there for a minute before entering the hole and leaving its long streamers hanging out of the opening. Satisfied with great views, we returned for our breakfast.

Afterwards, we took a look around the lodge gardens and watched White-throated Mountain Gems, Lesser Violetear, Volcano Hummingbird and finally a male Scintillant Hummingbird all feeding on a flowering tree. **Slaty Flowerpiercers** were seen plus gorgeous Flame-colored Tanagers.



Later on, we boarded the bus and drove to the entrance of a forest trail that ran beside the Savegre River. We soon found a mixed flock that included Silver-throated Tanagers, Spangle-cheeked Tanagers, Mountain Elaenia, and then an American Dipper showed well on a pebbly edge of the river. Back onto the flock, we added Flame-throated Warbler, Brown-capped and Yellow-winged Vireos, Yellowish Flycatcher and an Ochraceous Wren.

The American Dipper continued to show and a Torrent Tyrannulet put in a brief appearance. Continuing on we found Black-throated Green and Wilson's Warbler and then Gina spotted some Sulphur-winged Parakeets feeding in a tree. From here we managed to see Grey-breasted Wood Wrens before making our way back to bus.

We had a quick break and then drove to Miriam's Café. From here we had point blank views of Acorn Woodpeckers, **Flame-colored Tanagers**, Large-footed Finch, Black-thighed Finch, Sooty Thrushes, and Slaty Flowerpiercers. Hummingbirds



performed literally inches away with most being Talamanca, a few Fiery-throateds, some Volcano Hummingbirds and Lesser Greenlets. Five Swallow-tailed Kites flew around the valley and then a Hairy Woodpecker came for close views revealing the buffy breast that separates it from the Hairy Woodpeckers of the north. That last highlight was superb looks of a Golden-browed Chlorophonia which appeared in the tree right off the deck.



After a great time at Miriam's, we returned to our lodge and had a short break during which a **Resplendent Quetzal** started calling from the garden. We all rushed out and got great looks at this beautiful male showing amazing colors in the dull light. Some of us went on an early evening walk beside the Savegre River again. It started a little quietly but then another male Quetzal appeared and would not leave us alone as it went from tree to tree testing all our powers of photography. The views were amazing and well, we just could not have asked for more. A small flock of birds included Collared Redstart, Ruddy Treerunner, Louisiana Waterthrush, a Northern Tufted Flycatcher, and a Dark Pewee. What a great ending to a fantastic day.

#### **Day 7 — 11<sup>th</sup> March**

Today we had to leave the wonderful Savegre Valley to head back to San Jose. We reviewed our highlights of the trip over lunch and then went our separate ways with fabulous memories of the wonderful birds of Costa Rica.

Photos by Gina Nichol, Steve Bird and Georges Kleinbaum.



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