



Sunrise Birding, LLC
COSTA RICA
Quetzal/Hummingbird Special!
 January 27 - February 2, 2012
TRIP REPORT





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www.sunrisebirding.com

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Leader: Frank Mantlik and local guides

HIGHLIGHTS (rarities, specialties, or simply a group favorite):

- Many Resplendent Quetzals
- 21 species of Hummingbirds
- Snowcap males & females, many good views and bathing!
- Fiery-throated Hummingbird
- Volcano Hummingbird
- Ochraceous Pewee
- Brown-billed Scythebill
- Black and Crested Guans
- 227 Bird Species
- Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl
- Dusky Nightjar
- Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher
- Great Black-Hawk
- Blue-crowned Motmot
- Wrenthrush
- Volcano Junco
- Blue Morpho and other butterflies
- 35 regional endemic bird species



Day 1 – Arrival San Jose

This was primarily a travel day, with people arriving on their flights to San Jose by early afternoon. Our driver Vernon transferred us all to our hotel pointing out some common bird species along the way. Following check-in, Frank led a leisurely walk on the lovely hotel grounds. We saw our first **Clay-colored Thrushes** (the national bird), **Tropical Kingbirds**, **Rufous-naped Wrens**, **Blue-gray Tanagers**, **Rufous-capped Warbler**, **White-tipped Dove**, **Stripe-headed Sparrow**, and a soaring **Peregrine Falcon**. This was followed by a delicious dinner and some time to get acquainted with each other.

Day 2 – Valley of the Quetzal

We enjoyed an early pre-breakfast bird walk on the Inn grounds with our local guide, Ingrid. Species seen included **Red-billed Pigeons**, **Hoffmann's Woodpeckers**, **Blue-and-white Swallows**, **Lineated Woodpecker**, **Great Kiskadee**, and **Boat-billed Flycatcher**.

A delightful buffet breakfast on the patio included entertainment by two **Blue-crowned Motmots** (Photo: Frank Mantlik) and **Variegated Squirrels** attracted to the fruit feeders, and a captive, vocal Chestnut-mandibled Toucan. Jim and Carol had a surprise meeting with an old photographer buddy and then we departed by roomy van for the drive to the Talamanca Mountains. During a brief stop en route, we saw our first **Rufous-collared Sparrows** and a pair of **Lesser Goldfinches**.



Also along the drive we saw two **White-tailed Kites**. A stop at a cafeteria/market along the Pan-American Highway introduced us to some of the foods and wares of Costa Rica. We arrived at our delightful mountain lodge (8500q elev.) with beautiful gardens and trout ponds in time for lunch. While enjoying the meal, we were treated to many winged jewels visiting close feeders: **Magnificent** and **Volcano Hummingbirds**, **Green Violet-ears**, and **White-throated Mountain-gems**. We also were delighted to meet the author of the CR bird book, Richard Garriques. Then an afternoon birdwalk led by Ingrid, Vernon (an excellent birder as well), and Frank along the road resulted in a nice introduction to the varied birdlife of the high-elevation Pacific slope. Foremost was our first thrilling

encounter with a male **Resplendent Quetzal** (Photo: Jim Zipp), which flew into a tree and provided wonderful scope views. When it eventually took off, the long green tail+ streamers resembled those of a kite. Also seen along the cloud-shrouded hills were four **Swallow-tailed Kites**, a flock of **White-collared** and **Vaux's Swifts**, **Torrent Tyrannulets**, **Tufted Flycatcher**, **Black-billed** and **Ruddy-capped Nightingale-thrushes**, **Collared Redstarts**, **Flame-colored Tanager**, **Large-footed Finch**, **Yellow-thighed Finch**, and **Slaty Flower-piercer**. A scrumptious dinner including fresh trout was capped with desert, Costa Rican coffee, and the camaraderie of recording the day's bird list.

Day 3 – Birding the Savegre Valley

The pre-breakfast bird (and photography) walk was very chilly, but netted an **American Dipper** along the Savegre River, small flocks of **Sooty-capped Bush-Tanagers**, and **Mountain Thrush**. After a delicious breakfast with hot coffee (and feeding hummingbirds!), a short van ride further down the road brought us to a trail along the Savegre River. Known by locals as the way to the waterfall+, this proved to be extremely birdy. AJ found a female **White-throated Mountain-gem** building a nest. Other highlights included **Yellowish** and **Black-capped Flycatchers**, **Ochraceous Wren**, **Common Bush-Tanager**, **Black-cheeked Warblers**, **Brown-capped**, **Yellow-winged**, and **Philadelphia Vireos**, **Scintillant Hummingbird**, a large flock of **Spangle-cheeked Tanagers**, male **Collared Trogon**, **Rufous-browed Peppershrike** (which Vernon called into view), **Ruddy Treerunner**, **Spotted Barbtail**, a number of wintering North American warblers, and **Red-tailed Squirrel**. Being a Sunday, many walkers, birders, and fishermen were enjoying the trail as well. We returned to the Lodge for

lunch and a bit of down time. Our mid-afternoon walk took us on the riverside forest trails behind the Lodge. A main highlight was Vernon finding an **Ochraceous Pewee**, a rarity in Costa Rica. Also seen were **Yellow-bellied Siskins**, **Mountain Elaenia**, **Gray-breasted Wood-Wren**, and **Spot-crowned Woodcreeper**. Meanwhile, Jim & AJ discovered a **Torrent Tyrannulet** nest with two large chicks under the bridge. A late day try for **Dusky Nightjar** resulted in only hearing them, probably due to the damp, drizzly weather.

Day 4 – Cerro de la Muerte – Paraiso Quetzales

There were strong gusty winds in the middle of the night, but the day dawned clear, cool, and sunny. After breakfast, we left by van for a day afield. Along the way, we stopped to try for **Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl** (one heard), and saw beautiful **Flame-throated Warblers**, four **Long-tailed Silky-Flycatchers**, and two female **Elegant Euphonias**. Our next destination was atop 12,000-foot Cerro de la Muerte, an alpine habitat of stunted vegetation and radio towers. Here we encountered cold wind and fog, but Vernon succeeded in getting us great views of **Timberline Wren** and a pair of **Volcano Juncos** feeding in a flowering bush. Then we drove to and birded along the road to Paraiso Quetzales. Highlights included a **Buffy Tuftedcheek** feeding in bromeliads and a female **Barred Becard**. We had family-style lunch here, with views of swarming **Fiery-throated**



Hummingbirds (Photo: Frank Mantlik) at the feeders. Afterwards, we were led up into a lush old-growth cloud forest, where we succeeded in finding our quarry, at least one pair of **Resplendent Quetzals** feeding in avocado trees. Other treats were seeing a **Black Guan**, a male **Collared Trogon**, and **Black-and-yellow Silky-Flycatcher**. On the way back to our Lodge, we stopped at Mirians, a small café with feeders. Here we enjoyed close views and photos of many species. It was then that Vernon tracked down a calling **Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl**. We enjoyed lengthy, eye-level, crippling scope views of this cute, tooting owl, as it was mobbed by hummingbirds and silky-flycatchers! This was definitely a highlight of the tour. Then to top it off, we succeeded in seeing (and hearing) a **Dusky Nightjar**. What a day of birding! Dinner and the bird list concluded it.

Day 5 – Valley of the Quetzal to Rancho Naturalista

Following breakfast, while packing up to leave, a pair of **Quetzals** flew into the tree right outside our rooms! What a treat! After a group photo, we departed the lovely Trogon Lodge for the drive to our second locale of the tour. We stopped to see a pair of **Black Guans** along the highway and Vernon obtained for us views of a singing **Wrenthrush**, a species usually heard but not seen. Also heard was a **Silvery-fronted Tapaculo**. Further along, we visited an organic coffee farm, Finca Cristina. With a complimentary cup, we enjoyed views of feeder birds: **Violet Sabrewing**, **Bananaquit**, **White-lined** and **Summer Tanagers**, **Buff-throated Saltator**, **Yellow-billed Cacique**, and **Melodious Blackbird**. Near our destination, a roadside stop netted **Green Ibis**, **Northern Jacana**, and **Giant Cowbird**.



We arrived at the famous Rancho Naturalista, in time for lunch on the open-air dining room. It was difficult to not be distracted by the wide array of feeder birds where we saw our first **Snowcaps, Gray-headed Chachalacas, Black-cheeked Woodpecker** (Photo: Mahlon Hale), **Golden-winged** and **Mourning Warblers, Orange-billed Sparrow**, and glowing male **Crimson-collared** and **Passerini's Tanagers**. Once settled in, resident British bird guides Harry & Ollie led us all on an afternoon bird walk along the driveway. This lower elevation (3000q), Caribbean-slope habitat provides a much greater diversity in avifauna. We saw **Band-backed Wren, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Social Flycatcher, White-crowned**

Parrots, Montezuma and Chestnut-headed Oropendolas, Golden-hooded and Bay-headed Tanagers, Barred Antshrike, Crested Guan, and new hummers including **Garden Emerald, Stripe-throated Hermit, Purple-crowned Fairy, and Green Thorntail**. Returning to the lodge, we saw a pair of **Keel-billed Toucans** just as a rain shower began. Some heard a calling **Laughing Falcon** and two calling **Pauraques** provided background music for a delicious dinner.

Day 6 – Rancho Naturalista to San Antonio

We met predawn (5:30) on the balcony for more of that great coffee and to listen to the dawn bird chorus and view the feeders and surrounding area. We enjoyed great views of the central volcanic mountain range, including Volcan Irazu and the steaming Volcan Turrialba. Flocks of **Cattle Egrets** flew by, as did a flock of **Crimson-fronted Parakeets**. Harry got a perched **Bicolored Hawk** in the scope. Seen too were **Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Cinnamon Becard, Tropical Parula, and Black-headed Saltator**. Hummingbirds at arms length included **Violet-crowned Woodnymph, White-necked Jacobin, Green Hermit, Green-breasted Mango, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, and Bronze-tailed Plumeleater**. We had breakfast with the birds, which included stunning views of a **Blue-crowned Motmot, Brown Jays, and Black-striped Sparrow**. We then left by van to bird a nearby area. Harry spotted a terrific **Long-tailed Tyrant** along the driveway. Next stop was the village of San Antonio where we spent an enjoyable morning along a bird-rich dirt road to a mountain called El Silencio.

Highlights here were: **Yellow-faced Grassquit, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Gray-capped Flycatcher, Black-cowled Oriole**, soaring **Barred Hawk** and **Great Black-Hawk, Bay Wren, Masked Tityra, and Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant**. Some fruiting trees attracted beautiful **Emerald, Speckled, and Black-and-yellow Tanagers, Yellow-throated** and

Tawny-capped Euphonias, and **Green Honeycreeper**. Some stunning butterflies were seen as well, including a **Daggerwing**, **Banded Peacock**, and the incomparable, blazing **Blue Morpho**.

During the return drive, we stopped to see the plain but very localized **White-throated Flycatcher**. A delightful open-air lunch was followed by some leisure time. The afternoon walk was to the forested trails of the Rancho preserve, led by Harry & Ollie. New birds included **Brown-billed Scythebill**, **Olivaceous** and **Spotted Woodcreepers**, **Plain Xenops**, **White-ruffed** and **White-collared Manakins**, **White-breasted Wood-Wren**, **Golden-crowned Warbler**, and **Red-throated Ant-Tanager**. Insects seen included **army ants**, **leaf-cutter ants**, and a massive **Caligo butterfly**. Finally we hiked to the stream pools at sunset to witness hummingbirds - **Snowcaps** and **Violet-crowned Woodnymphs** - bathing! After our last tasty supper together, we tallied the many new birds seen today.

Day 7 – Rancho Naturlista to San Jose

This was our final day during the overnight hours, Jim and Ingrid heard a calling **Mottled Owl**. Our last birding event was a pre-dawn walk to the lighted moth-sheet, which attracts insects as well as wakening, hungry birds. We saw **Russet Antshrike**, **Plain Antvireos**, **Tawny-chested** and **Sulphur-rumped Flycatchers**, **Bright-rumped Attila**, **Plain-brown** and **Wedge-billed Woodcreepers**, and **Golden-crowned Warbler**. Breakfast, with a pair of **Collared Aracaris** (Photo: Frank Mantlik), was followed by checkout, repacking, a group photo, and fond farewells to manager Lisa, the staff, and the resident guides. We drove back to the San Jose Airport, and the conclusion of the tour.



Many thanks to all of you for joining us on this tour and for making it a very successful and enjoyable experience. We hope to see you on another Sunrise Birding tour!

Frank Mantlik
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Thanks to Frank Mantlik, Jim Zipp and Mahlon Hale for their photos in this report.



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