



Sunrise Birding LLC  
**COSTA RICA**  
**Quetzal/Hummingbird**  
**Special!**  
February 2 - 8, 2012  
**TRIP REPORT**





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www.sunrisebirding.com

# COSTA RICA TRIP REPORT

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## Quetzal / Hummingbird Special!

Leader: Frank Mantlik and local guides

### HIGHLIGHTS

(Rarities, specialties, or simply a group favorite):

- Resplendent Quetzals
- 21 species of Hummingbirds
- Snowcap males & females, and bathing!
- King Vulture
- Green Thorntail
- Flock of Elegant Euphonias
- Emerald Tanager
- Volcano Junco
- 35 regional endemic bird species
- Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl
- Dusky Nightjar
- Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher
- Fiery-throated Hummingbird
- Bicolored Hawk
- Black Hawk-Eagle
- Black Guan
- Blue Morpho and other butterflies
- 228 Bird Species

### Day 1 – Arrival San Jose

Today was primarily a travel day with most people arriving on their flights to San Jose by dinner time. Frank led a leisurely walk on the lovely hotel grounds. This was followed by a delicious dinner and getting acquainted with each other.

### Day 2 – San Jose to the Valley of the Quetzal

We enjoyed a pre-breakfast bird walk on the Inn grounds with our local guide, Ingrid. Species seen included our first **Clay-colored Thrushes** (the national bird), **Tropical Kingbird**, **Red-billed Pigeon**, **Hoffmann's Woodpecker**, **Blue-and-white Swallow**, **Crested Caracara**, **Short-tailed Hawk**, **Striped Cuckoo**, **Great Kiskadee**, **Boat-billed Flycatcher**, **Blue-gray Tanagers** and **Stripe-headed Sparrow**.

A delightful buffet breakfast on the patio included entertainment by **Rufous-naped Wrens** and a **Variiegated Squirrel** attracted to the fruit feeders, and a vocal captive Chestnut-mandibled Toucan. Then it was check-out and off by roomy van for the drive to the Talamanca Mountains. 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 in time for lunch at our delightful mountain lodge (8500qelev.), with beautiful gardens and trout ponds. Then an afternoon bird walk led by Ingrid, Vernon (driver &

bird guide), and Frank along the road above resulted in a nice introduction to the varied birdlife of the high-elevation Pacific slope. Foremost was our first thrilling encounter with a pair of **Resplendent Quetzals** (Photos: Frank Mantlik), each perched in nearby trees. They remained there, affording long looks and attempts at photography. Also seen were a mixed flock of **White-collared**, **Chestnut-collared**, and **Vaux's Swifts**, **Spot-crowned Woodcreeper**, **Ruddy Treerunner**, **Mountain Elaenia**, **Tufted** and **Yellowish Flycatchers**, **Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush**, **Flame-throated**, **Black-cheeked**, and **Wilson's Warblers**, **Collared Redstart**, and **Black-thighed Grosbeak**. Upon returning, a **Torrent Tyrannulet** and an **American Dipper** were seen along the river. A scrumptious dinner was capped with desert, Costa Rican coffee, and the camaraderie of recording the day's bird list.



### Day 3 – Valley of the Quetzal

The pre-breakfast bird walk was a leisurely one, and we saw **Rufous-collared Sparrows**, **Band-tailed Pigeon**, **Sooty** and **Mountain Thrushes**, **Sooty-capped Bush-Tanagers**, and had great looks at a singing **Gray-breasted Wood-Wren**. After breakfast with hot coffee (and feeding hummingbirds) we took a short van ride further down the road stopping enroute to view a **Black Guan** (in the open on a boulder!) (Photo: Frank Mantlik). Our destination was a trail along the Savegre River known by locals as the way to the waterfall. The start of the trail was alive with birds! We saw a roost of 55 **Black Vultures**, a couple **Acorn Woodpeckers**, **Dark Pewee**, **Ochraceous Wren**, **Philadelphia**, **Yellow-winged**, and **Brown-capped Vireos**, **Hepatic Tanager**, and a **Magnificent Hummingbird** on a nest. Further along the trail was equally productive. A mixed foraging flock included **Tennessee**, **Golden-winged**, **Black-and-White**, **Black-throated Green**, and **Wilson's Warblers**, **Spangle-cheeked** and **Silver-throated Tanagers**, and **Common Bush-Tanager**. Further yet, we saw **Scintillant Hummingbird**, several **Black-faced Solitaires**, **Olive-striped Flycatcher**, **Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush**, and **Large-footed Finch**. Vernon and others even saw an **Ornate Hawk-Eagle** gliding along the ridge! An **Osprey** was perched over the river.



We returned to the Lodge just as a rain shower began. Our mid-afternoon walk took us on the riverside forest trails behind the Lodge. Ingrid spotted a perched female **Quetzal** that provided excellent views. Then she spotted a **Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl** that flew in and landed directly overhead, a definite highlight of the trip! In late afternoon, we drove up to Mirian's Café to view her bird feeders. **Flame-colored Tanagers** (Photo: Frank



Mantlik), and **Volcano Hummingbirds** made an appearance, as did a **Slaty Flower-piercer**. Vernon and others heard a calling **Buffy-crowned Wood-partridge**, an uncommon species. Then he heard a **Barred Forest-Falcon** calling repeatedly. We anxiously tried to locate its perch, but unfortunately only saw it as it flew off. **Barred Parakeets** called from their evening roost. As night fell, we heard four **Dusky Nightjars**, and eventually saw some in the light beam. Eureka!

#### Day 4 – Cerro de la Muerte / Paraiso Quetzales

Despite more rain overnight, the day dawned partly sunny and calm. After breakfast, we left by van for a day afield. Along the way, we stopped to see a pair of **Black-capped Flycatchers** and a pair of **Slaty Flower-piercers**. Our destination was the 12,000-foot Cerro de la Muerte, an alpine habitat of stunted vegetation and radio towers. The sun shone and the winds were light. Vernon succeeded in getting us good views of **Timberline Wren** and a pair of **Volcano Juncos**. **Volcano Hummingbirds** were numerous. The view from there was spectacular and we could see the steaming, active Volcan Turrialba in the distance. During a rest stop at a highway cafeteria, Frank spotted a **Swainson's Hawk** soaring overhead.



Then we drove to Paraiso Quetzales. There was little along the entrance road, but we enjoyed the antics of several **Magnificent** and **Fiery-throated Hummingbirds** (Photo: Frank Mantlik) at the feeders. Some saw a **Golden-browed Chlorophonia** as well and we enjoyed a plentiful family-style lunch there.

We headed back to the Valley of the Quetzal and a fortuitous stop along another road resulted in hearing and glimpsing a **Silvery-fronted Tapaculo**. On the way to our Lodge, we stopped near Mirian\$ and saw a pair of **Long-tailed Silky-Flycatchers** and four **Yellow-bellied Siskins**. A steady rain began, so we decided to check the feeders over a cup of coffee at another lodge. Hummingbirds were abundant and swarming the feeders. Multiple **Green Violet-ear**, **White-throated Mountain-gem**, **Magnificent**, and two **Stripe-tailed Hummingbirds** all delighted us.



Also, a flock of 14 male and female **Elegant Euphonias** (Photo: Frank Mantlik) took cover from the rain in one tree just over our heads! Vernon had never seen so many in one place before. Frank bumped into an old birder friend from Connecticut, and here we met Richard Garriques, the author of the *Costa Rica Field Guide*. Tonight was the Super Bowl football championship. Several people watched the game on TV at the Trogon Lodge before and after dinner.

#### Day 5 – Valley of the Quetzal to Rancho Naturalista

Following breakfast, we packed up to leave and checked out. After farewells and a group photo, Vernon led us to the riverside, where he managed to draw out two singing

**Wrenthrushes** from the dense tangle. We departed the lovely lodge for the drive to our second phase of the tour. Heading back down the mountains toward Cartago, we jumped out of the van in time to see a soaring **Black Hawk-Eagle**. The zebra-stripe pattern on its underwings and tail was quite striking.

Further along, we visited an organic coffee farm, Finca Cristina. With a complimentary cup, we enjoyed views of feeder birds: **White-naped Brush-Finch**, **Buff-throated Saltator**, **Great Kiskadee**, and **Melodious Blackbirds**. Another stop at a hydro-power reservoir resulted in views of numerous **Blue-winged Teal**, **Killdeer**, **Spotted Sandpipers**, and a **Greater Yellowlegs**. An apparent **Mallard**, rare in Costa Rica, may have been a hybrid. A short while later, a cow meadow yielded six **Green Ibis** and some **Northern Jacanas** with young.

We arrived at the famous Rancho Naturalista in time for late lunch in the open-air dining room. It was difficult to not be distracted by the wide array of feeder birds including **Gray-headed Chachalacas**, **White-tipped Dove**, **Black-cheeked Woodpecker**, **Mourning Warbler**, **Brown Jays**, **Orange-billed** and **Black-striped Sparrows**, **Palm**, **Summer**, and **White-lined Tanagers**, and glowing male **Crimson-collared** and



**Passerini's Tanagers** (Photo: Frank Mantlik). Hummers included **Violet Sabrewing**, **Green Hermit**, **Violet-crowned Woodnymph**, **Green-breasted Mango**, and **Green Thorntail**. Once settled in, resident bird guides Harry & Ollie led us all on an afternoon bird walk along the driveway. We soon realized that this lower elevation (3000q Caribbean-slope habitat provides a great diversity in avifauna. Frank spotted a **King Vulture** soaring among Blacks and Turkeys. It was a life-bird for Ollie. We also saw **Keel-billed Toucans**, **Montezuma** and **Chestnut-headed Oropendolas**, **Crimson-fronted Parakeets**, **White-crowned Parrots**, **Masked Tityra**, **Boat-billed Flycatcher**, **Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher**, **Southern Rough-winged Swallows**, **Tropical Gnatcatcher**, **American Redstart**, **Blackburnian** and **Chestnut-sided Warblers**, and **Golden-hooded** and **Bay-headed Tanagers**. At a flowering Verbena hedge, we were excited to see our first **Snowcaps** and a **Garden Emerald**. Upon returning, Vernon alerted some of us that he had found a calling **Laughing Falcon** in a Cecropia tree. Calling **Pauraques** provided background music for a delicious beef dinner. In doing the day's bird list, we realized 65 new species for the tour today.

### **Day 6 – Rancho Naturalist / San Antonio**

We met predawn (5:30) on the balcony for more of that great coffee, to listen to the dawn bird chorus, and to view the feeders and surrounding area. It was a calm, humid morning, but shortly the fog burned off. We then enjoyed decent views of the Central Volcanic Mountain Range, including Volcan Irazu and Volcan Turrialba while flocks of **Cattle Egrets** flew by. Hummingbirds fed at feeders at arm's length.

After breakfast with the birds, we left by van to the village of San Antonio. Here we spent an enjoyable morning along a bird-rich dirt road to a mountain called El Silencio. Highlights were: **Yellow-faced Grassquits**, **Thick-billed Seed-Finch**, **Yellow-bellied**

**Elaenia, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Black-cowled Oriole, Squirrel Cuckoo** (Photo: Frank Mantlik), **Cinnamon Becard, Blue-crowned Motmot, Gartered (Northern Violaceous) Trogon, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis**, and five **Groove-billed Anis**. Some fruiting trees attracted beautiful **Emerald, Speckled, Tawny-crested**, and **Black-and-yellow Tanagers, Yellow-throated** and **Tawny-capped Euphonias, Tropical Parula, Rufous Mourner**, and **Green Honeycreeper**. Two **Golden-bellied Flycatchers** were flying down to the stream. Some stunning butterflies were seen as well, including 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. New birds included a perched **Bicolored Hawk, Wedge-billed** and **Cocoa Woodcreepers, Plain Xenops**, and **Golden-crowned Warbler**. Finally we hiked to the stream pools at sunset to witness hummingbirds - **Snowcaps** and **Violet-crowned Woodnymphs** - bathing! We also saw **Swainson's Thrush, Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush**, and **Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser**. After our last tasty supper together, we tallied the many new birds (50) seen today.

### **Day 7 – Rancho Naturalista to San Jose**

Our last birding event was a planned pre-dawn walk to the lighted moth sheet, which attracts insects as well as hungry birds. Unfortunately, a steady rain kept us on the balcony for a while. When we did go, unfortunately almost no birds came in. We examined the wide variety of moths and other insects on the sheet. Breakfast, with a visit by 3 **Scarlet-rumped Caciques**, was followed by checkout, a group photo, and fond farewells to manager Lisa, the staff, and the resident guides. We drove back to the San Jose Airport and said our goodbyes at the airport.

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

Sincerely,  
Frank Mantlik

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