



# Sunrise Birding LLC HONDURAS

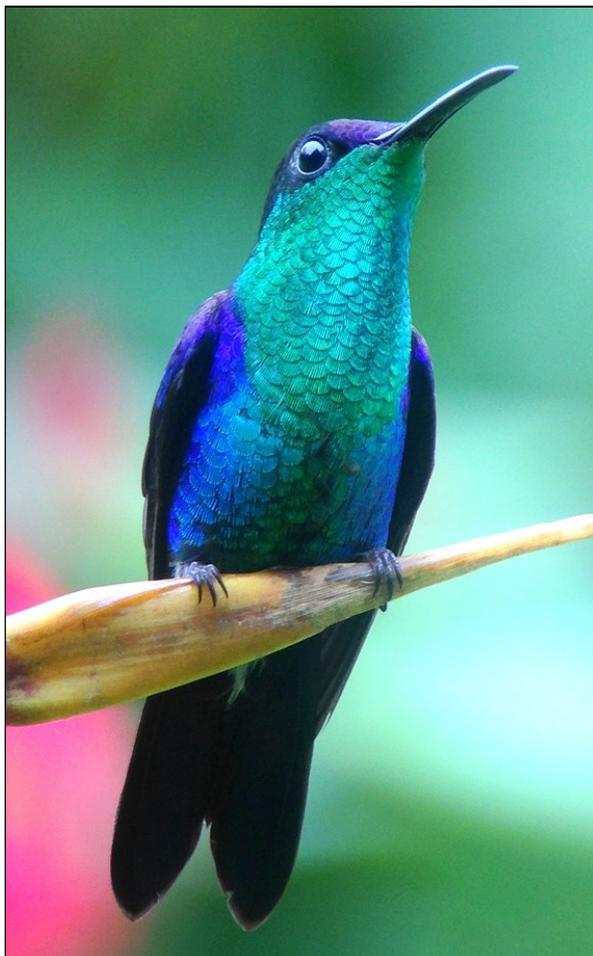
January 16 – 21, 2016

## TRIP REPORT

Report & Photos by Diego Calderon



Photos, top to bottom: Ocelot, White-necked Jacobin, Olive-sided Euphonia, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Crowned Woodnymph, Lesser Roadrunner





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# HONDURAS Trip Report

January 16 - 21, 2016



**Leader: Diego Calderon and local guides**

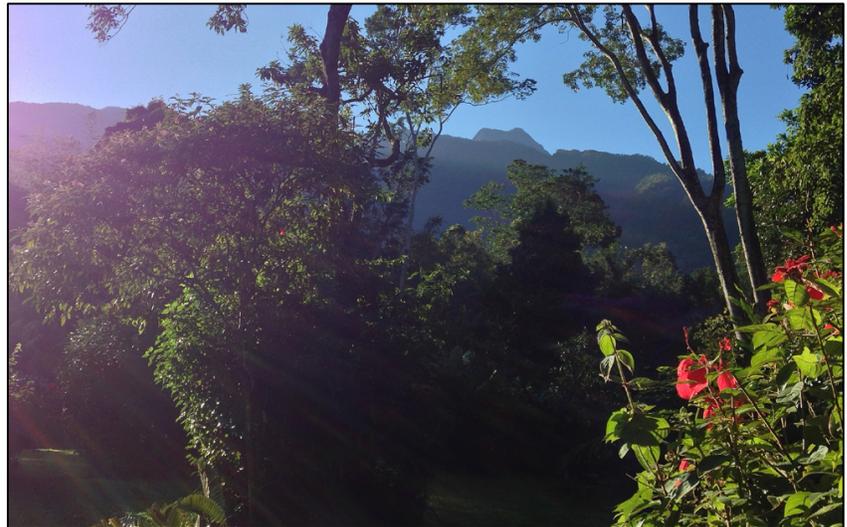
## Top birds & sightings of the trip as voted by participants:

Turquoise-browed Motmot  
Great Potoo  
Stripe-throated Hermit  
Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl  
Lovely Cotinga  
Lesser Roadrunner  
Spectacled Owl  
Montezuma Oropendola  
Northern Jacana  
Keel-billed Toucan  
Olive-sided Euphonia

Vermiculated Screech-Owl  
Derby's Woolly Opossum  
Rufous-tailed Jacamar  
Ringed Kingfisher  
Violet Sabrewing  
Passerini's Tanager  
Striped-tailed Hummingbird  
Ocelot  
Lesser Nighthawk  
Purple-crowned Fairy  
Long-nosed Bat

### January 16

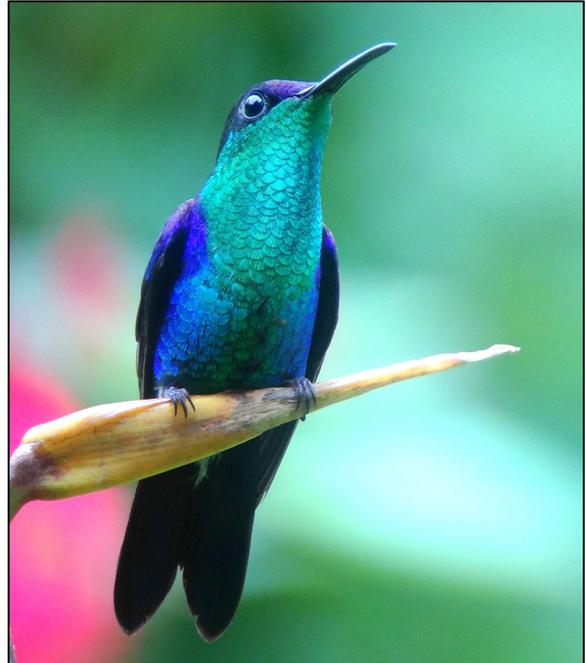
Despite closed US foggy airports, delays based on "*we don't have a pilot yet for your plane*", baggage erroneously sent to Nicaragua, another other such nonsense, most all of us eventually got to the San Pedro Sula airport where Elmer our local guide was waiting. He and the Lodge helped with all of the issues and soon we were on our way to The Lodge at Pico Bonito. We



drove almost for 3 hours through little busy towns, semi-rural beautiful areas with gardens full of bananas and cacao bushes surrounded by huge Ceiba (= kapok) trees. Unfortunately, there were also plenty of large monoculture palm oil and banana plantations. Along the way we saw tons of Great-tailed Grackles and Black Vultures. On arrival, we checked in and then got together for a fine dinner. After dessert we retired for a much-deserved rest after a long, rather distressing, traveling day.

## January 17

We met at the lodge restaurant veranda at 6am for coffee and start our birding. We enjoyed some feeder activity seeing our first hummingbirds: Violet Sabrewing, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, **Crowned Woodnymph** (a species having recently suffered lumping... a strange case in ornithology nowadays that everything is being split – check <http://goo.gl/UZuAST> for more info), and White-necked Jacobin. Sightings included the eye-catching Olive-sided Euphonias coming to the melastome fruits on the garden. Brown Jays (locally known as “bush police”) were everywhere as well as Melodious Blackbirds, Montezuma Oropendolas, and the lovely medium size rodents known as **Central American Agouti** in the garden offering great photo opportunities for Alan and Sheila. We then



went to the observation tower and immediately found Lovely Cotinga in the distance perched on the treetops. Not only one or two, but up to 6 males with at least 3 females around in the same treetop! It was nothing short of incredible to enjoy this buffet of electric, almost psychedelic blue blazes against the green of the canopy. From the tower we also saw White-crowned Parrots, more Montezuma Oropendolas closer by, and great views of Purple-crowned Fairy and Stripe-throated Hermit. Reluctantly, we left the tower to return for a scrumptious breakfast. While we enjoyed our meal, we noted Social Flycatchers, Red-billed Pigeons, Olive-throated Parakeets flying by, and the most cooperative White-crowned Parrots ever.



In the morning, we took a walk down the main entrance road, under a quite overcast sky, scoring amazing views of Red-capped Manakin, Great Potoo, Grey Hawk, and more Lovely Cotingas, appearing especially for Steven that had missed them earlier today. In the afternoon we walked again down the main entrance road and saw the fancy bowing display of several Montezuma Oropendolas. A Little Tinamou couple was calling in the old cacao plantation and even we spent some time trying could not get more than their beautiful vibrant voice. As the afternoon was so slow, we went visiting the butterflies and snakes enclosures having close views of several neat species (a couple of Fer-de-lance or Pit viper species, a Tiger Snake (AKA Yellow Rat Snake), an *Oxybelis* Vine Snake, several

Morpho butterflies, and some Heliconian and Cattlehearts). The skies opened up and heavy rain fell so we return to lodge for some rest and dinner.

### January 18

Today we had early breakfast and then departed for a short drive to board a small train to ride a few kilometers into the Cuero y Salado Reserve estuaries for some boat trip fantastic birding. We started with an amazing Turquoise-browed Motmot and our train driver was kind enough to stop several times when we wanted to see a bird like the smashing Spot-breasted Orioles that we enjoyed at point blank view! White-collared Seedeater was also singing just a few meters from the railway and was seen well. We had our first Roadside Hawk of the trip, several Inca Doves and Ruddy Ground-Doves, as well as dozens of Orchard and Baltimore Orioles as we moved along the track.



At the dock, Thera and Andy got our first Yellow Warbler and then we went into our boats and started with a good load of Kingfishers (Ringed, Belted, and Green). On a little channel, we tried for White-necked Puffbird and eventually had 4 of these birds flying in the mangrove canopy above our heads. Just after that, a troop of Mantled Howler Monkeys were just walking above our heads in this same area. We heard Black-crowned Antshrike (that used to be called Western Slaty Antshrike until relatively recently) and after some playback we got decent glimpses of both male and female. Spot-breasted Wren was loudly singing so we also called it in and from three or four individuals that came we could each at least see one well. We got both Lineated and Pale-billed Woodpecker in the very same area and a Lesser Nighthawk roosting for the day.

We returned to the lodge for lunch, and in the afternoon drove down to Rio Santiago reserve where we saw a huge Montezuma Oropendola colony in the distance and some Crested Caracaras foraging in the open ground, digging, looking for insects or worms

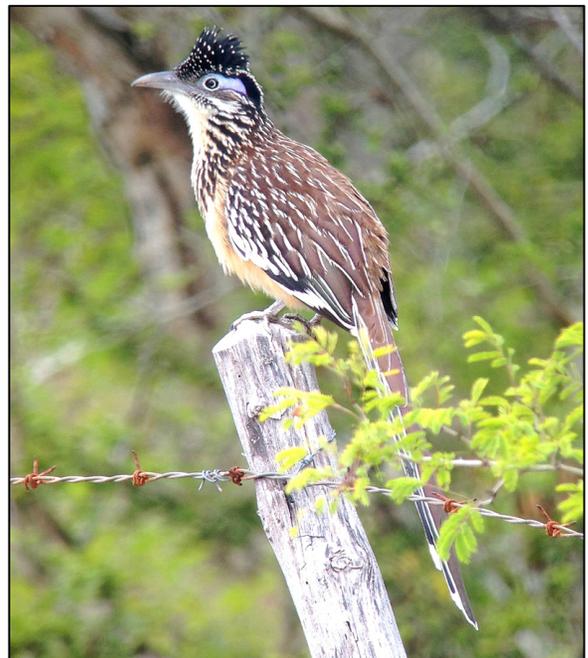
we guessed. At the Rio Santiago feeders (more than 200 scattered all over the place!), we got some goodies to add, namely Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, Band-tailed Barbthroat and Brown Violetear. One of our reasons to visit here was the roosting local **Spectacled Owl**, a young bird which we saw beautifully as well as others like Wood Thrush, Lovely Cotinga, and Streak-headed and Wedge-billed Woodcreepers. We also had the privilege of seeing the cutest baby Ocelot that was being cared for at the reserve after a sad story with local hunters. They will be feeding and caring for it for some time to hopefully return it to the wild. We drove back to the lodge under rainy skies for dinner and rest.



### January 19

Today was our earliest start of the tour as we departed the lodge at 4:00 am for the dry Aguan Valley to look for the only country endemic, the Honduran Emerald. After a picnic roadside breakfast, we drove a bit more to stop at a roadside swamp where Blue-winged Teals were joined by Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers. At this same place, the range restricted White-lored Gnatcatcher was very active and it seemed that a Pygmy Owl was possibly around because several warblers were very agitated. A couple of hummers flew by and suddenly, on a roadside stop, we were all watching Honduran Emerald along with Cinnamon Hummingbird!

We then continue a bit more and did a stop on a bridge area where we had loads of Mangrove Swallows, Amazon Kingfisher, and Common Yellowthroat. A showy Black-headed Trogon was the icing on the cake just before we left. We were close to the Honduran Emerald reserve but we decided to drive slowly on an area where Elmer has seen a very special bird. After just a few minutes of scanning under fences and at the base of trees, Gustavo our driver and I spotted a **Lesser Roadrunner** not far from the road and after a tiny bout of playback it came and perch on the top of a fence post to sing and preen for several minutes; what an incredible cool looking bird and offering such a show!... it even allowed me to set up the scope in the door of the bus and take digiscoped photos with everyone's iPhone!



Delighted, we continued on and got to the reserve where we got the **Honduran Emerald** at the “finger cactus” plant (*Pedilanthus camporum*, nowadays in the genus *Euphorbia*) just at the visitors center. We walked the trails, finding more Honduran Emeralds, Salvin’s Emerald, White-lored Gnatcatchers, White-bellied Wrens, and loads of immature Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, as well as the endemic Black-chested Spiny-tailed Iguana. We also enjoyed the many orchids and the abundance of bromeliads in this dry thorny forest.



After a very successful day, we went to a local ranch where we could taste the real flavor of creole local Honduras food... we just LOVED IT! We drove back to the lodge making a stop at a local park in La Ceiba where Black-and-white Owls regularly roost, but not that day; we added Boat-billed Flycatcher to our trip list there before leaving for the lodge for dinner and a much deserved rest (and exciting times for Nancy as her luggage finally showed up after some days!). Some of us went on a night walk and on the cocoa plantations we found the most obliging **Vermiculated Screech-Owl** ever!

### January 20

Today was our last day and we were scheduled to visit the Lancetilla Botanical Gardens in the neighboring town of Tela. But we had one concern. It had been torrentially raining since 3:00 in the morning that day and the forecast was not great. We drove through the rain to get there, but miraculously, when we got to the gardens, it was not raining anymore and it even turned a bit sunny at times. We started birding near the main gate and were welcomed by a nice Golden-winged Warbler while a couple of Passerini’s Tanagers showed up and were seen very in the scope. There was much activity in the roadside grasses with Thick-billed Seed-Finch and both White-collared and Variable Seedeaters munching seeds all around. Black-headed Trogon offered several views and unfortunately White-collared Manakin and Bright-rumped Attila were only heard. Variegated Squirrels were seen several times in the area. We got brief views of Long-billed Gnatwren and moved further up the road. Another stop got us

below a huge colony of noisy Montezuma Oropendolas allowing us to study their weaving patterns and general activity.

Further on, we tried for Barred Antshrike down a small trail and we got not only a couple of the Antshrikes, but also Sepia-capped Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cacique and Spot-breasted Wren. A Ruddy Crake sang far away a couple of times in a big pasture and finally we lured in a male Rufous-tailed Jacamar to offer us prolonged views in the open. We returned to the lodge for a delicious lunch and in the afternoon visited the lodge tower again nailing down some more Lovely Cotingas and enjoying point-blank views of a **Keel-billed Toucan** that came and perch merely 5 meters away on a Cecropia below eye level!



We left the tower and found a group of Red-throated Ant-Tanagers, a gang of some 20 White-nosed Coatis, and some Masked Tityras before finishing our afternoon session. After dinner some had energy for a night walk during which we were rewarded with amazing views of a rare and cute Derby's Woolly Opossum.

### January 21

This morning we had a leisure late start with a 7am breakfast. Meg got a Blue-crowned Motmot and Ovenbird walking from her cabin to the restaurant for breakfast and we even had time for Elmer to locate a couple of Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls in the garden for Thera & Andy. We then drove to San Pedro Sula airport and said goodbye and returned home after a successful week. Karen and Meg continued for some days on the Panacam extension with Alexander Alvarado who picked them up upon our arrival to airport.

I want to thank everyone that made this a great trip... all our clients were patient and conscious about the less than dry weather we suffered. Even with the rain, our group was enthusiastic to go after the birds. After all, that's why we were in the rainforest! Our Pico Bonito guide Elmer was superb as he knew every single bird, call, and place and was eager to share his knowledge about the areas, habitats and creatures all over the place. Gustavo our driver was not only sharp at his job, but had bins, perfect English, and knew loads of birds so we enjoyed having him to tag along on our day trips. All The Pico Bonito Lodge staff was more than friendly and grand assisting our needs and offering us all a good time and experience while we were there.

Stay tuned for next year because we will be back! – THANKS much, Diego.



Elmer, Alex, Gustavo and Diego