

COSTA RICA

Hummingbirds & Quetzal Special

April 11 - 18, 2026

Trip Report



Text by
Jose Pablo Castillo



TOUR SUMMARY

Sunrise Birding's Hummingbirds & Quetzals Tour has been designed to showcase these two iconic groups while exploring the country's remarkable diversity of habitats—from Caribbean foothills to volcanic slopes, cloud forests, high-elevation oak forests and paramos of the Central and Talamanca Mountains.

The itinerary extends far beyond hummingbirds and quetzals. The cloud forests and valleys host an impressive collection of regional specialties restricted to Costa Rica and western Panama, while comfortable family-owned lodges, lovely local cuisine, and expert guiding and transportation make the tour especially rewarding for both first-time visitors and experienced Neotropical birders.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Spot-breasted Oriole
- Ferruginous Pygmy-owl nesting
- Snowcap
- Speckled Tanager
- Blue-and-gold Tanager
- Bay-headed Tanager
- 23 species of Hummingbirds!
- Volcano Junco
- Collared Trogon
- Lattice-tailed Trogon
- Sunbittern
- Hook-billed Kite
- Tropical Screech-owl
- Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge
- Cabani's Ground-sparrow
- Golden-winged Warbler
- Flame-throated Warbler
- Collared Redstart
- Golden-browed Cholorphonia
- Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher
- Black-thighed Grosbeak
- Resplendent Quetzals nesting and displaying!
- José and Ramón.
- Having time to admire nesting behavior of many species of birds.
- Such a great group of people!



Day 1

Our fifth Hummingbirds & Quetzal tour began smoothly with everyone safely arrived in the SJO Airport and transferred to the lovely Hotel Robledal. After checking-in and settling up our things in the rooms, we gathered in the afternoon for our first birding walk at the hotel grounds. Nesting Ferruginous Pygmy-owl, Lineated Woodpecker, Spot-breasted Oriole, Cinnamon Hummingbird and Blue-vented Hummingbird were some of the highlights.

Day 2

Today we had an early departure to avoid the traffic at the metropolitan area. Our first stop was at Paraíso de Cartago where we enjoyed a roosting family group of Tropical Screech-Owls at a local park. Then we continued our way to El Copal Reserve, where we enjoyed a fantastic full day with multiple tanager species like Bay-headed, Speckled, Blue-and-gold, Black-and-yellow and Silver-throated. We also encountered 3 species of trogons: Gartered-violaceous, Collared and the uncommon Lattice-tailed Trogon.

Hummingbirds were quite active and diverse, some of the highlights include Purple-crowned Fairy, Green Thorntail, Brown Violetear and the one and only Snowcap!

In the afternoon, we arrived at the beautiful and comfortable Hotel Quelitales where we enjoyed their delicious local cuisine.

Day 3 - 4

While staying at Hotel Quelitales we explored its bird-rich gardens and trails where we yielded Sunbittern, White-bellied Mountain-gem, Violet Sabrewing, Green-fronted Lancebill, Green Hermit, Golden-winged Warbler, White-eared Ground-sparrow, Sooty-faced Finch, Keel-billed Toucan and Elegant Euphonia. We also explored a variety of locations like the Ujarrás Valley, where we found many birds like the endemic Cabanis's Ground-sparrow, Hook-billed Kite, Garden Emerald, White-necked Jacobin, Green-breasted Mango, Cape May Warbler, Green Ibis, Barred Parakeet and Crimson-fronted Parakeet. At the Irazú Volcano, we encountered specialties like Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Volcano Hummingbird (Irazú-Turrialba subspecies), Red-tailed Hawk (*costaricensis*), Timberline Wren, Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, Slaty Flowerpiercer and a pair of Resplendent Quetzals feeding on a wild avocado tree!

We also stopped at Café Cristina to buy some wonderful shade-grown, organic coffee, and saw a nice mixed flock with Black-and-white Warbler, Yellow-throated Vireo and Yellow-olive Flatbill.

Day 5 - 6

During this section of the trip we explored the spectacular cloudforest of the Talamanca Mountain range. Along the way we visited Reserva Robles Mimosos, a family-owned conservation project that protects and restores habitat in Vara del Roble. Here we enjoyed amazing views of the endemic Coppery-headed Emerald, Purple-throated Mountain-gem, Stripe-tailed Hummingbird, Scintillant Hummingbird, Talamanca Hummingbird, Northern Emerald-Toucanet (Blue-throated), Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Buffy-crowned Wood-partidge and many more!

We stayed Sueños del Bosque lodge a beautiful and cozy lodge that sits on the side of the Savegre river, one of the cleanest rivers in Central America!

Once in the Talamanca highlands we enjoyed lots of regional endemic birds from the cloud forest and paramos present in this region. Some highlights include Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Talamanca Hummingbird, Lesser Violetear, White-throated Mountain-gem, Volcano Hummingbird (Heliotrope-throated), Coppery-headed Emerald, Black-cheeked Warbler, Collared Redstart, Sulphur-winged Parakeet, Flame-colored Tanager, Black-thighed Grosbeak, Ruddy Treerunner, Black-faced Solitaire, Buffy Tuftedcheek, Yellow-thighed Brushfinch, Volcano Junco, Torrent Tyrannulet, American Dipper, Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Long-tailed and Black-and-yellow Silky-Flycatchers and (of course) we had fantastic moments with the mythical Resplendent Quetzals displaying and feeding chicks on an active nest!

Day 7

On the return journey toward San José, we birded the beautiful grounds of Paraiso Quetzal Lodge, enjoying the overwhelming amount of hummingbirds. Here, we also had amazing views of Golden-browed Chlorophonias.

Back in San José, we stopped at a local park to visit the talented local artist Tamara Rojas and buy some amazingly beautiful apparel with Costa Rican native wildlife. While buying, we also had awesome views of Lesson's Motmot and the elusive Cabanis's Wren.

Day 8

Today, we said goodbye and officially ended our tour.

I sincerely thank all participants for their great energy, enthusiasts and trusting Sunrise Birding and me to guide this journey in my beautiful home country. Special thanks to everyone who helped make the tour run smoothly and our fantastic driver Ramón Vargas for his excellent driving and spotting skills.

Pura vida and until next time!

PHOTOS



Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl



Sunbittern. Photo by Stacey Essaid.

PHOTOS



Common Chlorospingus



volcano Junco

PHOTOS



Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher

PHOTOS



Gartered Violaceous Trogon



Tropical Screech-owl

PHOTOS



Buffy-crowned Wood-partridge



Spangle-cheeked Tanager

PHOTOS



Large-footed Finch

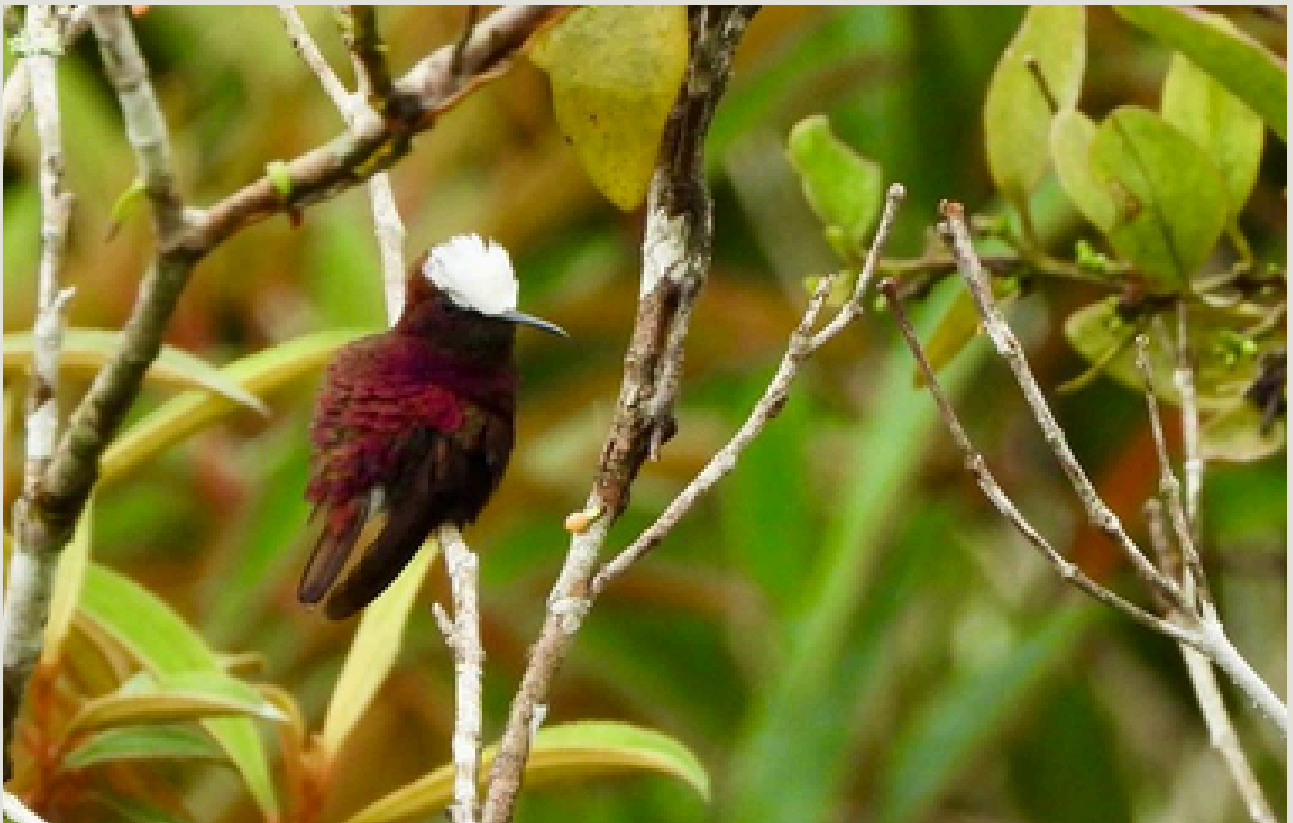


Northern Emerald Toucanet

PHOTOS



Purple-throated Mountain-gem Photo by Alvaro Mejía.



Snowcap. Photo by Meera Mahadevan

PHOTOS



Birding at Hotel Quelitales



Delicious food at Reserva Robles Mimosos

215 SPECIES RECORDED

LINK TO EBIRD TRIP REPORT

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/499500>

