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Southern Costa Rica - January 15-25, 2007 *Trip Report*

Monday, January 15

After a long journey to San Jose, Penny, Carol, Andy, Lois and Gina checked into the beautiful Hotel Bougainvillea. As we drove into the hotel entrance the explosion of color from masses of blooming flowers brought “oos” and “ahs” from the back of the van. We checked in and despite the fact that we had been on the road since the wee hours of the morning, the afternoon light and the lovely gardens beckoned us outdoors. We investigated the paths on our own enjoying the splendid array of tropical plants and orchids as well as the unique sculptures that adorned the gardens. Penny found a Yellow Warbler and, as the afternoon progressed, birds became active all around. Wonderful aromas filled the air as we investigated the eight lush acres. It was truly an oasis.



Finally, Carol, Roland, Jo-Ann, and Annette arrived at the hotel. Gina excitedly told them of the paradise that waited in the gardens and soon we were gathered outside to make the most of the last hour of daylight. Annette was thrilled to find a Rufous-tailed Hummingbird perched on the spike of a large agave. The bird posed for photos and even stayed as we moved around to see it in better light. Blue-and-white Swallows and flocks of Crimson-fronted Parakeets flew over and the light set off their bright green bodies and red underlings.



The hummingbird finally flew from its perch and fed among the many flowers on the adjacent bush. In the tree above was a Clay-colored Robin (Costa Rica's national bird) and a Blue-gray Tanager but the light was bad and we hoped for better views. We got them when we climbed the tower overlooking the gardens. A brilliant Blue-gray flew right by and landed on top of a tree next to the tower. Two Clay-colored Robins worked a dirt mound by the garden wall. Above them, in a tree outside the compound sat a Grayish Saltator. A flock of Brown Jays worked the tree tops in the other direction

and a Plain Wren called from the greenery below. The glow of the setting sun lit the clouds with a beautiful pink-orange color. As darkness fell, we went back to our rooms to freshen up for dinner where we met our guide Willy Alfaro and Enrique from Horizontes. Willy reviewed our plans for the next day and we went off to bed for a well-deserved rest to dream about the wonders that awaited us in Costa Rica.

Tuesday, January 16

We gathered before breakfast to further investigate Hotel Bougainvillea's gardens. Outside the lobby, we spotted a displaying Great-tailed Grackle on roof of the hotel and several Clay-colored Robins and Blue-gray Tanagers at the front feeders. A Rufous-tailed Hummingbird made a quick appearance and flocks of Crimson-fronted Parakeets flew overhead. We headed back through the lobby to the gardens. We didn't get far on the path when both Boat-billed Flycatcher and Great Kiskadee were spotted in the trees. Rufous-collared Sparrows sang from low perches and a Tropical Kingbird surveyed the gardens from high in a tree. A large, leafless tree behind us came alive with two Hoffmann's Woodpeckers, a Wilson's Warbler, and a Baltimore Oriole. As we continued on the path, both Plain and Southern House Wren moved among the low bushes. We walked under the tunnel toward the bird viewing tower when Carol S. stopped us to look at a Blue-crowned Motmot feeding on fruit at the feeder. We admired the bird for several minutes until it moved off only to be replaced by a White-eared Ground-Sparrow. We climbed the tower and looked out over the garden. Turkey Vultures flew in the distance. A White-tipped Dove and a Grayish Saltator landed on some trees just beyond the garden wall. A female Summer Tanager gave us good views and beyond it Gina spotted a Prevost's Ground-Sparrow in a fence row near the compost area. It disappeared from view and the group made a valiant effort but the bird was not relocated until several minutes later when Roland got a quick glimpse. By now, it was time for breakfast and we headed back to the restaurant.

After breakfast, we met Willy and our driver Henry and headed south on the Pan American Highway to the Cartago, the original capital of Costa Rica. We stopped briefly to view the cathedral and admire its imposing façade built over the original wood building. At a local mall, we picked up supplies and then continued south on the Pan American highway through the Talamanca Mountains. As we left Cartago, we noticed several Black Vultures kettling above the hillside and spotted two Red-tailed Hawks above the road. In a short while, we arrived at Finca Mirador de Quetzales near the Cerro de la Muerte Highlands. Set on a hillside overlooking a valley, a cloud forest mist obscured our distant views but there was plenty to see close by. In front of the restaurant, petite Volcano Hummingbirds reluctantly shared the feeders with Magnificent Hummingbirds and the size difference between these two species was impressive. We met our guide Carlos and his faithful dog Lulu who led us down the hillside toward the trails. As we began our tour, we hear Sulfur-winged Parakeets fly over but the fog kept us from seeing them. At the lower feeders, Black-and-Yellow Silky Flycatcher was seen as well as several Fiery-throated Hummingbirds. A gorgeous Flame-colored Tanager appeared as well as a Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher. It was difficult to tear ourselves away from this colorful display which continued as we walked along the farm road with a brilliant Golden-browed Chlorophonia working the trees. A Gray-breasted Wood Wren crossed the road in front of us and a few of us got quick views before it disappeared in to the bushes. We made our way along a woodland trail dominated by large oaks covered with mosses, bromeliads, and vines that swayed in the cool breeze. Here, we saw highland endemics including Sooty Robins and Sooty-capped Bush-Tanagers. Wilson's and Black-throated Green Warblers flitted high in the trees and two Emerald Toucanets flew from a large oak. A Slaty Flowerpiercer worked the low bushes and a female Purple-



throated Mountain-gem fed on nearby flowers. We reached an area with a view down the hillside when Willy heard birds calling that he recognized as Golden-bellied Flycatcher. Two of these birds flew out of the tall trees in front of us and later Willy told us that this bird was rarely seen and would be one of his highlights for the day. We searched the tree tops to try and see the flycatchers again, but to no avail. A persistent Green Violetear called from lower in the same tree and we got excellent scope views of it. A Hairy Woodpecker flew in and Willy pointed out the cream colored breast which is different from our northern version of this species.



All the while, Carlos was searching for the “sacred” bird and suddenly he beckoned us back down the trail, quietly exclaiming “Quetzal, the Quetzal is here!” We hurried back to see a gorgeous male Resplendent Quetzal perched above the trail. Its brilliant green body with long streaming tail feathers was a sight to behold and we all got great views. At one point, the Quetzal moved further up the hill to a perch that gave even better views. We could hardly believe our luck and savored our moments with this spectacular bird. It was pure magic!

We caught our breath and made our way back up to the lodge for lunch and a few last looks at the hummingbirds at the feeders. After lunch we set off for Trogon Lodge and the exhilarating drive down the mountain switchbacks into the pristine valley. Halfway down, we stopped at a private home to see another male Quetzal perched in a tree. We watched in awe for several minutes as the bird sat still for photos. At one point, it flew closer to us to feed on the Wild Avocado tree above us and we got to witness its hovering behavior of the bird as it fed on the fruits. A platform feeder below the tree became a stage for Yellow-thighed and Large-footed Finches. A Yellowish Flycatcher showed briefly. Annette and Roland wondered a short distance

down the trail and got glimpses of a nice Black-billed Nightingale Thrush. After several minutes with the Quetzal, we loaded into the van and continued down into the valley. We noticed some mist falling on the right side of the road and this created a lovely rainbow over the valley on the left side. Henry dropped us off along the road and we hiked down a trail toward the Rio Savegre. From a bridge over the river, we watched a Collared Redstart hawking insects over the rushing water. As we entered the grounds of Trogon Lodge, another Black-billed Nightingale Thrush flew past and several White-collared Swifts circled above the valley as did a few Blue-and-white Swallows. We took a quick look around the lodge and grounds and checked into rooms. In a few minutes, we returned to the restaurant overlooking the trout pond for tea. Carol S. pointed out a lovely Spot-crowned Woodcreeper on a tree while we sat at the bar having tea. Very civilized! We review the bird list, reflected upon our wonderful day and enjoyed a lovely dinner that evening.

Wednesday, January 17

After breakfast, we gathered at the bus to head out to Rio Macho Forest Reserve in the highlands of the Talamanca range. In the bushes around the parking area, some of us saw Yellowish Flycatcher and Gray-tailed Mountain-Gem. A Green-crowned Brilliant was spotted feeding on the feeders in front of the restaurant and a Mountain Elaenia flitted around on the hillside. We were quite pleased to see this bird as we had been hearing the call all morning. As we made our way out to the road, we passed a Tropical kingbird hawking insects from a power line. The group was instructed to refer to

this bird as TK from now on. We drove up the switchback road and it seemed much easier and shorter than the way down. Annette spotted a Red-tailed Hawk perched a bare branch. Further on, the weather began to turn misty and the waning sun created a large rainbow. By the time, we reached the entrance to Rio Macho, two more rainbows had appeared. The wet weather made our hike up the main road of the reserve a real rainforest experience. Just beyond the entrance, we encountered a mixed flock which included Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Sooty-capped Bush-Tanager, Flame-throated Warbler, and Black-and-Yellow Silky-Flycatcher. Several Fiery-throated Hummingbirds were seen feeding on red flowers along the road. As we climbed in elevation, we found a pair of endemic Black-capped Flycatchers and got great views of a Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush. The persistent sometimes heavy mist and the towering oaks laden with mosses are images or our cloud forest walk that we won't soon forget. We decided to wait out the weather with an early lunch stop at restaurant along the Pan American Highway. After lunch, the mist persisted and we decided to move to a lower, dryer elevation.

We headed back down the road toward the Rio Savegre. We got out to bird the road which was extremely quiet. Just when we were beginning to think the birds had taken the day off, a pair of Long-tailed Silky Flycatchers came into view atop a tall oak. Down the road, Willy pointed out a Black-cheeked Warbler and an Ochraceous Wren in a thick tangle. A pair of Collard Redstarts fed actively above the road and several of us tried for photos. The bus followed us and every time we thought we would board it and drive down the mountain, birds distracted us and we continued to walk. At one of the hairpin corners, Jo-Ann spotted two gorgeous Red-tailed Hawks soaring above the valley above several Blue-and-White Swallows. We drove a little way and stopped on a wide corner to check for Quetzals. We didn't see one but we did find a fruiting Shefflera tree with 100 Mountain Robins in it according to Willy. We hoped to find some different species in the Shefflera but all we could see were Mountain Robins. Willy soon revised his estimate to 101 Mountain Robins feeding voraciously on fruits. Henry went down to check the tree and verify Willy's count.

In the background, we could hear the distant, beautiful flute-like song of a Black-faced Solitaire. In front of the bus, Willy spotted a Wilson's Warbler and then another. Further down, Black-throated Green Warbler, more Wilson's Warblers, and a Slaty Flowerpiercer worked a large oak. In the same



area, a number of Green Violetears called incessantly in the forest. A scattered flock of Band-tailed Pigeons flew overhead. We ended our walk at Miriam's place where we had seen the Quetzals yesterday. All seemed quiet there so we boarded the bus and headed further down into the valley.

We continued past Trogon Lodge to the Savegre Hotel where we checked the river for riparian species but none were seen. We walked up toward the lodge and spent a few minutes at a large flowering Hibiscus where a Volcano Hummingbird was observed piercing the large flowers at the base to get nectar. Magnificent Hummingbird and Slaty Flowerpiercer were also in the bush and several of us photographed the feeding activity.

The lodge feeders were very active with Green Violetear, Gray-tailed Mountain-Gem, Magnificent Hummingbird, and Scintillant Hummingbird. We enjoyed coffee and tea al fresco and watched several birds vie for one feeder, each posing, then chasing or being chased off by others. Our camera shutters clicked away at the spectacle and we enjoyed

observing the frenetic scene. At one point, a tiny, gorgeous male Scintillant Hummingbird posed for several photos including an excellent shot taken by Willy. As we boarded the van, yet another

rainbow appeared up the valley adding to the magic of our afternoon. We made our way back to the lodge for the evening reflecting on the wonders of the day. Carol and Roland had enough energy to hike up the trail behind the lodge. Roland was rewarded with a quick view of a Tayra that crossed the trail in front of him. We enjoyed good conversation over a delicious dinner at the lodge restaurant.

Thursday, January 18

Before breakfast, Annette, Penny, and Gina found each other roaming the grounds of Trogon Lodge. Though the sun had not come over the ridge, a few birds were active. A flock of Band-tailed Pigeons flew high over the valley. A Mountain Elaenia called and foraged in a nearby tree. On the ground, Sooty, Mountain, and Clay-colored Robins chased each other around the river. Rufous-collared Sparrows and two Black-billed Nightingale-Thrushes were active. Carol A. joined us and reported Flame-colored Tanagers near her room.



During breakfast, a Magnificent Hummingbird came to the feeders outside the dining room. After breakfast, just as we boarded the bus to leave, Willy called us back out to see a Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, a new bird for the list. Large-footed Finch was also seen near the parking area.

Lois and Jo-Ann decided to walk down the road to look for and photograph some horses that they had seen on the way in yesterday. The rest of us rode down in the bus and we caught up with Lois and Jo-Ann who were very pleased with their pictures. We descended further down the valley to Cabinas Chacon, our birding spot for the day. The feeders were humming and immediately drew us in to watch for a few minutes but we knew there was more to see out on the grounds. Just outside the restaurant, we got our first looks at Acorn Woodpeckers flying into the large oaks that towered over the buildings.

A young male flame-colored Tanager showed well and Willy instructed us on how not to mistake it for a Western Tanager. We began our walk through the lodge grounds and out to a large open field area surrounded by trees. Collared Redstarts worked the foliage and a Tropical Kingbird hawked insects from up on the canopy. There were some dead snags at the edge of the field with numerous perfectly round holes. Willy said they were apartment houses and, in a moment, an Acorn Woodpecker flew across the field and entered a hole on one of the snags. A Dark Pewee landed on top of another snag and we all got great scope views of this endemic species. The trees suddenly came alive as Brown-capped Vireo, Tennessee, Wilson's, and Black-throated Green Warbler, and Black-capped Flycatcher foraged in nearby trees. Lois spotted a Tufted Flycatcher on top of another dead tree. As we all got our fill of that little gem, a Yellow-faced Grassquit appeared in the brush below. Two Red-tailed Hawks soared above but our attention was drawn back to the large oaks as a Flame-throated Warbler showed briefly. A Boat-billed Flycatcher landed on top of a tree and a Yellow-winged Vireo flitted through the foliage below. Just inside the forest, an Ochraceous Wren foraged on the low branches of a towering oak. We heard the raucous calls of Sulfur-winged Parakeets as a flock flew over the field. Turkey and Black Vultures circled above. The activity started to wane so we decide to hike one of the rainforest trails to see what forest species we could find. We entered a narrow trail and soon came upon a flock of Spangle-cheeked Tanagers feeding right above our heads. We were pleased with the close look at these birds that we had struggled to see yesterday. Above the Tanagers, a Ruddy Treerunner foraged but was difficult to see through the dense foliage. Common Bush-Tanagers were also nearby. We continued on the trail to an area with more open canopy where we noticed a few White-collared Swifts flying at the tree tops. Vaux's Swifts were there as well and on the forest floor a Silver-throated Tapaculo called but would not show itself

for us. Further up the trail, a Silver-throated Tanager was spotted below the canopy. We made our way to another open field with several blackberry bushes. We tried the fruits which were beautiful but not quite ripe. The White-collared Swifts were flying lower now and several came within a few feet of our heads. Annette called Willy over to look at something in some distant trees that turned out to be White-faced Capuchin monkeys which Willy had not seen in the area previously. The monkeys dropped out of sight and we watched for several minutes hoping they would reappear but they never did. Gina spotted two Ruddy Pigeons perched on a tree across the valley. The swifts continued their aerobatic show which we enjoyed for a few more minutes before heading back down the trail. It was getting near time for lunch so we walked toward the lodge. Just beyond the field where we had so much activity earlier, a lovely male Collared Trogon perched just above the trail and we all got excellent looks at it. Thrilled with our morning, we made our way back to the lodge restaurant for lunch.

After lunch, we walked up behind the cabins to look for the Sulfur-winged Parakeets that Henry had spotted. Two Slaty Flowerpiercers distracted us as they feed in flowering bushes near one of the buildings. Jo-Ann spotted a Yellow-bellied Siskin on top of one of the trees in the orchard and we all got great views. Henry wandered over to some tall trees where he found the roosting parakeets just as they flew off down toward the river. At least they were low enough for us to see their yellow under wings. A Green Violetear which we now renamed "Jo-Ann's Hummingbird" called incessantly from the hillside. We walked back down the road toward the lodge and stopped to observe a Volcano Hummingbird piercing flowers for nectar. Willy wondered if they pierced their own holes or used the ones made by the Flowerpiercer.

Our goal this afternoon was to find an American Dipper for Carol A so we walked along the river on the road and searched the rocks and rapids as we went. Willy spotted a Dipper that flew off as soon as he saw it so we followed further toward a bridge where we all got excellent views of the bird bathing in the rapids. Carol was elated and we all looked forward to the drink she promised to the one who found and showed her the Dipper.



Willy heard some activity in the oaks so we walked up (always up!) into a parking area where Red-eyed and Yellow-winged Vireos were seen in the trees. Some birders told Annette that they had just seen an Elegant Euphonia and it had flown up to the open area above us. We hiked up to an area with a small pond where there was a Mallard with some domestic ducks. Some of us took advantage of the benches overlooking the pond to sit and rest but soon we were lured back by three very entertaining Acorn Woodpeckers feeding on purple berries of the shrub nearby.

With the Euphonia in mind, we walked around the pond and into the open field that had been so active this morning. Andy spotted an Osprey perched on a large dead branch feeding on a fresh trout and we all enjoyed a glimpse of this familiar bird. We searched the treetops for the Euphonia without success so we headed back down toward the river. On the way down to the parking lot, some birders told us they had just seen the birds in a mistletoe-laden oak in front of us. In a split second, Annette spotted a gorgeous male and we scoped it to get the full effect of its brilliant plumage. A female was also spotted and we commented on her subtle beauty. Thrilled with our views of the Elegant Euphonia, we continued down toward the river to try and find the Black Phoebe. Willy and Annette spotted one flying down the river so we made our way across the bridge and out onto the road and headed downstream. Annette found the bird perched on some dead branches caught by some rocks in the river. Looking downstream, Willy spotted a Torrent Tyrannulet foraging at the water's edge.

We had seen our quarry! Exhausted and elated, we made our way back to the lodge.



Coffee and tea at the hummingbird feeders with the hopes of seeing the Sulfur-winged Parakeets come into their roosting tree. Instead, we enjoyed the antics of Scintillant, Magnificent Hummingbirds, Green Violetear, and Gray-tailed Mountain-Gems at the feeders until it was time to go back to our lodge. We enjoyed another great dinner in the company of several new visitors that had arrived today at Trogon Lodge.

Friday, January 19

After breakfast, we loaded our luggage on the bus and said goodbye to Trogon Lodge. It was a gorgeous day with beautiful blue skies as we headed up the valley toward the Pan American

Highway. As we neared the top of the road out of Savegre, several of us exclaimed "Quetzal!" as a magnificent male hovered next to a fruit laden tree in a pasture. We stopped the bus and piled out to get a better look. For the next several minutes we observed both a male and female coming to the tree to feed and then going back to perch in a nearby tree. At one point, both flew together in what looked like a display flight and then they moved off to a tree further into the pasture. We were delighted with this unexpected show and savored the wonderful start to the day. We continued to the highway and ascended to Cerro de la Muerte feeling very fortunate to have a clear day. The road up to the towers was rough so Henry parked the bus and we walked up to survey the area. There were numerous Volcano Hummingbirds buzzing around and feeding on the flowers that were in bloom. Slaty Flowerpiercer, Sooty Robin, Sooty-capped Bush-Tanager, and Wilson's Warbler were also seen but we were unable to locate the specialties of the area. The views were spectacular and we could see all the way to the Pacific coast. We made our way down the mountain realizing that we would descend from 11,200 feet all the way to sea level today.

We continued along the highway and stopped at Vista del Valle, a roadside café with a number of feeders. New species here were White-tipped Dove, Buff-throated Saltator, Golden-hooded Tanager, Violet Sabrewing, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Cherrie's Tanager along with several Baltimore Orioles, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Flame-colored, Blue-gray, and Silver-throated Tanager, Blue-crowned Mot-mot, Wilson's and Tennessee Warbler, Clay-colored Robin, and House Wren. A Rufous-breasted Wren called from below the feeding area but never showed itself. We had to tear ourselves away from this little paradise to continue our journey. We stopped in Perez Zeledon for lunch at an excellent café and then proceeded toward the Pacific Coast. After lunch we made a quick stop at a water treatment plant where we spotted several new species including Spotted Sandpiper, Mangrove and Southern Rough-winged Swallow, Great Egret, Social Flycatcher, Northern Jacana, and Ruddy Ground-Dove. This was a great, albeit short stop but reminded us that every good tour includes a stop at a water treatment plant!



As we continued out of the city a few Great-tailed Grackles were spotted as well as some Cattle Egrets. As we got near the ocean we could see a few

Magnificent Frigatebirds soaring high in the sky over the ocean. We made a special stop at a beach front area at the mouth of the Rio Baru. When we emerged from the bus, the temperature reminded us we were in the tropics as did the White Ibis that greeted us. We walked to the river edge and looked upstream at a grass covered island with a small beach that had several Wilson's Plovers and two Willets. Across the river were Tricolored Heron, Snowy Egret, Neotropical Cormorant, and several Brown Pelicans roosting in a tree. Laughing Gulls fooled us at first in their winter plumage but soon were easily recognized as they flew up and down the river. We walked out the beach proper to check the seabirds and found four species of terns including - Royal, Sandwich, Bridled and Common. Under some mangrove trees across the river, we saw Ruddy Turnstone, Black-bellied Plover, and Spotted Sandpiper.

The sun was very bright and we welcomed the ocean breeze. We retreated to the shade of the palm trees on the beach and checked a trail of Leafcutter Ants going up a fig tree. It was time to continue our journey so we piled in the air conditioned van, happy to have that luxury!

We continued our journey south to Las Esquinas Rainforest Lodge, adjacent to Piedras Blancas National Park in the Lowland Pacific Rainforest. Along the way, we saw several Yellow-headed and Crested Caracaras perched above the highway. Many Black and Turkey Vultures circled overhead and we checked them carefully for King Vulture. At one point the bus came to a screeching halt as Henry spotted a pair of Crested Guans crossing the road and landing in some trees ahead of us. We quickly piled out and got excellent views of these massive birds. We also scoped a Yellow-headed Caracara behind us as well as some trees filled with roosting Black Vultures. Once again on the road, we were making good time on the highway and Jo-Ann asked what if there were speed limits in Costa Rica. Willy told us that the road signs in Costa Rica were just for decoration. The drive was very exciting with sightings of several birds on the power lines along the road including Ringed Kingfisher, Gray-breasted Martin, Roadside Hawk, and numerous Kiskadees and Tropical Kingbirds. We passed cattle fields and, in some, there was a Cattle Egret or two for each cow. Great-tailed Grackles became more numerous as we went along. We noticed some very dark clouds ahead of us which Willy assured us were in Panama, but just as we turned off the main road down the dirt road to Esquinas the skies opened up and heavy rain began to fall. We crossed some dicey bridges with no problem thanks to Henry's excellent driving. A Spiny-tailed Lizard lumbered across the road in front of us seemingly lethargic until we got close and then it ran off into the brush. One of the bridges was impassable so backtracked to another road to the lodge. As we passed some rice paddies, Variable Seedeater and House Wren were seen in the pouring rain. As we arrived at Esquinas, the rain subsided and we settled into our rooms. We had a lovely dinner and after ward looked at Gina's photos of the Galapagos.

Saturday, January 20

We met before breakfast today to explore the bird life on the lodge grounds and there was plenty of activity. From our meeting place in the parking lot, we got great looks at White-necked Jacobin, Social Flycatcher, Bananaquit, Variable Seedeater, Summer Tanager, Tennessee Warbler, Black-striped Sparrow, Cherrie's Tanager, and Common Tody-Flycatcher. All of this before coffee! We walked through the lodge grounds to the river side where we heard Slaty-tailed Trogons and Riverside Wrens calling. A Wedge-billed Woodcreeper worked its way up a tree trunk and then dropped down to another to start its upward journey again. A Shining Honeycreeper foraged among the fruits of some of the palms above us. We could hear the calls of at least two Slaty-tailed Trogons and we spotted them as they moved in the treetops against the misty sky. Scarlet-rumped Caciques mixed in with the Cherrie's Tanagers and it took us a minute



to sort them out. Cinnamon and Rose-breasted Becard, Palm Tanagers, Gray-capped and Yellowish Flycatcher, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, a flock of Brown-hooded Parrots, and a Buff-throated Saltator were seen by the group. It was time for breakfast and as we were gathering outside the lodge dining room, we spied a Little Hermit feeding on Heliconia flowers. Long-tailed Hermit was also seen in the area.

After breakfast, we walked the trails with Jose, the local guide at Esquinas. We took the "Bird Trail" and immediately started getting new species such as Orange-billed Sparrow, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, and Blue-crowned Manakin. Willy found a unique plant called Dracontium, a member of the Arum and Philodendron family used medicinally by the Bribri and Cabécar people of Costa Rica to treat venomous snake bites. While looking at and photographing a cup fungus, a Brilliant Forest Frog jumped into the picture. We marveled at the diversity of plant life in the forest and saw several "walking" palms with large prop roots. The plant life was fascinating but made it difficult to see the birds. We had some neck breaking looks at a female Spot-crowned Euphonia, some Bay-headed Tanagers in the canopy, and an Orange-collared Manakin in the foliage on the side of the trail. Through an opening in the canopy, Gina spotted three King Vultures and a Broad-winged Hawk that circled around for several minutes so we could all enjoy them. The trails were a little muddy and just when we thought we didn't really need the rubber boots that the lodge had provided; Penny got stuck in some deep mud. Jose had to dig here out while Gina and Willy pulled here by the arms. Thankfully, Penny and her boots were rescued and we continued on the trail. As we continued, we could hear a Slaty-tailed Trogon calling from high in the trees. Jose found it perched and we all eventually got to see it. We came to another opening in the canopy and spied a female Golden-hooded Tanager foraging in some leaves. A Mealy Parrot was perched nearby but flew before we all got to it.



It was getting hot and humid and we were starting to drag a bit until a Rose-breasted Becard and an Olive-sided Flycatcher perked us up. We ended up back out at the entrance road to Esquinas just as a Roadside Hawk flew across. We checked the pond near the entrance sign to Esquinas and saw



Spectacled Caiman and a large Snapping Turtle. The heat finally wore us down and we retired for a siesta until lunch time. Annette, of course, kept birding and found Golden-naped Woodpecker, Baird's Trogon, and a Green Honeycreeper right outside our rooms and alerted us to their presence. While waiting for lunch, we saw Louisiana Waterthrush and Chestnut-sided Warbler bathing in the stream. As we sat down to lunch, Lois noticed a Slender Anole posing on her napkin. After lunch, we checked the pond near the dining room for the resident Caiman and Basilisk. There were several dragonflies there as well.

In the afternoon, we drove the road out from Esquinas to explore the rice and other agricultural fields. We were glad to be in the comfort of the air-conditioned bus and the birding was great! On either side of the road, we had Blue-black Grassquit, Ruddy Pigeon, Little Blue Heron, Eastern Meadowlark, Red-breasted Blackbird, Red-billed Pigeon, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Great-tailed Grackle, Cattle

Egret, Blue Ground Dove, and Variable Seedeater. In a dead tree in the middle of a farm field, we spotted a juvenile White Ibis roosting. Yellow Warblers foraged in the trees nearby.

Yellow-headed Caracara flew across the road in front of us as did Pale-vented Pigeon and Gray-capped Flycatcher. A Lineated Woodpecker was spotted on the limb of a Cecropia tree feeding on the ants. Further on, Annette spotted two Laughing Falcons perched on a distant Cecropia. By now it was pouring rain and while we were cozy, dry in the bus, two Smooth-billed Anis were outside on the posts getting soaked. We moved on and at one point, Annette yelled, "Back it up!" There was a gorgeous Purple Gallinule perched on a palm front near the road. On the other side, two Fork-tailed Flycatchers perched on the fences in the field and we could see their streaming tails when they flew.



As we continued on the road, the rain began to subside improving our visibility. A White-tailed Kite was spotted on a distant post on the far side of a field where a few Northern Jacanas worked the ground near some cattle (each cow with their own egret!). Little Blue Herons foraged in the fields as a Crested Caracara watched from a dead tree. Willy spotted a Bright-rumped Attila in a close tree and a few people got to see it before it disappeared in the foliage. We continued on noting Southern Rough-winged Swallows on the wires. A Crested Oropendola crossed the road in front of us and then circled back over the road. Willy noted that

this species is not in the field guide for Costa Rica as it is a new species expanding its range from Panama.

A tree on the other side of the road hosted Bronzed Cowbirds and a group of Red-lore Parrots flew across the sky in front of a rainbow and on to a tree to roost. We were short on kingfishers, so we stopped on a bridge over the river at the "Bienvenidos a La Gamba" sign. Sure enough, a Green Kingfisher was there but that wasn't all. In the river, Green Heron, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, and Spotted Sandpiper were seen. In the trees above the river, we found Palm Tanager, Yellow-crowned Euphonia, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, and Green Honeycreeper.

Willy called us back up the road to look at two Olivaceous Piculets working some scrub at the end of the meadow. Gray-crowned Yellowthroat and Indigo Bunting were also seen in the meadow and Henry found the Rufous-bellied Seedeater. Willy also spotted a Red-throated Spinetail, a lifer for him. A young Mourning Warbler was seen in some roadside shrubs and Bran-colored and Social Flycatchers hawked insects in the trees. A bird later identified as a Scrub Greenlet was found building a round nest in a tree near the road. The sun was setting and lighting up the clouds with oranges and pink and we know it was time to head back to the



lodge. Darkness fell quickly but gave us the opportunity to observe two more species -- Whip-poor-will, Common Pauraque on the road illuminated by the headlights of the bus.

Before dinner, we checked the bats roosting above the refrigerator in the dining room and reviewed the bird and wildlife list for the day. In one day, we had seen nearly 100 species of birds. That, and the fact that today was Willy's birthday, was cause for celebration. After dinner, the lodge kitchen staff brought out a birthday cake and musicians from the nearby town serenaded us with wonderful local music. Penny and Carol were even inspired enough to get up and dance. Annette, Roland, Andy, and Lois had arranged a night hike through the lodge so they left the party early. The rest of us enjoyed each other's company and shared memories of our wonderful day at Las Esquinas Lodge and Piedras Blancas National Park.

The next day, the night hikers report included a Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth, Tarantula, a Ringed Snail-eater (snake), and the call of a Spectacled Owl. Jose had also showed them a Red-eyed Tree Frog.

Sunday, January 21

Some of us met Willy at 6 AM for early morning birding on the grounds of Esquinas. A Spectacled Owl called from the forest near the restaurant but could not be located. While we were looking for it, Gina, Annette, and Penny saw a close Violet-crowned Woodnymph feeding on some flowers. On our walk down the entrance road, we saw Orange-billed Sparrow, Cocoa and Barred Woodcreeper, Rufous Mourner, Summer Tanager, Purple-crowned Fairy, Orange-chinned Parakeets, Shining Honeycreeper, and male and female Yellow-throated Euphonia. A Chestnut-mandibled Toucan flew across the road and we were able to spot it among the trees. Willy heard a Black-throated Trogon calling and Annette spotted it perched just off the road giving us spectacular looks. Further down the road in an open area we saw Gray-capped Flycatcher, male and female Red-legged Honeycreeper, Tropical Gnatcatcher, Golden-naped Woodpecker, Plain Wren, and Yellow Warbler. It was getting to be time for breakfast but the birding was so good, we didn't want to go back. Willy "heard his mother calling" so we turned back and spotted a distant Swallow-tailed Kite. As we neared the lodge buildings, a Band-tailed Hermit called and was seen and we heard the wing snapping of an Orange-collared Manakin. Willy clapped his hands to mimic the sound and the bird flew out of the forest, shot past us and disappeared in the foliage.

We finally made it back for breakfast and reported on our sightings. After breakfast, we went back out to the trails to do some last minute birding before checking out of the lodge. Golden-hooded Tanager, Red-legged Honeycreeper greeted us in the parking lot. The grounds had quieted down so we walked up to entrance to Ocelot trail. This proved to be a good choice as we saw Chestnut-mandibled Toucan, Baird's Trogon,



Red-capped Manakin, Cherrie's Tanager, Plain Xenops, Philadelphia Vireo, and a few brilliant Blue Morpho butterflies.

It was time to pack up and leave this rainforest paradise so we loaded the van and headed back out the road toward Golfito. The usual Black and Turkey Vultures soared above and Willy told us that the non-migratory population of Turkey Vulture's have a white line that separates the head from the dark plumage so we should look at them more carefully. As we traveled the road, we got to see several of the species we saw the previous afternoon including White-tailed Kite (this time kiting!), Smooth-billed Ani, Scrub Greenlet, Green Kingfisher, and Crested Oropendola. As we got further from La Gamba, we began to see large palm plantations and Willy described how the palms were used to produce foods as well as bases for cosmetics and many other products.

We entered the town of Golfito accompanied by a very close Magnificent Frigatebird flying by so we knew we were near the ocean. We stopped at a mangrove area just outside of town with extensive mud flats. A Green Heron was foraging out in the mud as were Wilson's Plovers, a Willet, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Little Blue and Tricolored Herons, White Ibis, Laughing Gull, and Spotted Sandpipers. An Orange-chinned Parakeet perched in the tree above us giving us excellent views and a few Mangrove Swallows were spotted perching on the mangroves. A Green Kingfisher darted out of the mangroves and then disappeared behind them. We walked up the road and spotted at least ten Chestnut-mandibled Toucans first perching in a tree and then one by one crossing the road to trees on the other side.

We continued to our lunch spot which was at a marina overlooking the bay and we birded for a few minutes before lunch. The tide was out and several Black Vultures fed on the mud flats. On the water's edge, Sandwich and Royal Tern mingled with the gulls and Tricolored Heron, Brown Pelican, Green Kingfisher foraged in the shade of the pier. Gray-breasted Martins perched on the masts of the sailboats tied to the pier. An Elaenia called from the palms above us and we all got close views of it. It was later identified as a Lesser Elaenia.

After lunch, we left Golfito and headed up to Wilson Botanical Garden arriving in mid-afternoon. We settled into our rooms and immediately headed up to the veranda where there were feeders. When we arrived the Red-Squirrels were feeding on the bananas but there was no food on the platform. Willy asked the staff to put out some papaya which immediately attracted a colorful selection of birds

including Silver-throated Tanager, Green Honeycreeper, Golden-hooded Tanager, Cherrie's Tanager, Blue-crowned Mot-mot, Blue-gray Tanager, Palm Tanager, Speckled Tanager, and Thick-billed Euphonia. In the trees around the garden, we spotted Red-faced Spinetail, Blackburnian Warbler, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Charming and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Yellow-bellied Siskins, Chestnut-mandibled Toucans, Black-and-White Warbler, and Bay-breasted Warbler. On



the ground near the feeders, an Agouti scampered around feeding on the scraps. At one point a Gray-necked Wood-Rail appeared near a red sign but disappeared quickly. It started to rain so we moved over to the covered veranda and watched the treetops. White-crowned Parrots were perched

in a dead tree under a rainbow giving us wonderful views. Bananaquits flitted around as male and female Blackburnian Warblers foraged in the dense foliage of the tree tops. A Scarlet-thighed Dacnis appeared on the top of a palm and disappeared quickly toward the other side of the building. We went over the try and see it but to no avail. Just when we thought our birding day was over, four Fiery-billed Aracaris barreled into a tree near the veranda. One by one, these gorgeous birds flew right over us to a large tree in the garden – a spectacular sight and a fitting end to another fantastic day of wildlife watching Costa Rica style. But it wasn't over yet as a large Coati appeared under the feeders. It quickly moved off but not before we all got a chance to see it.

We met again at dinner and enjoyed a family style feast at a large table on the veranda which the staff had reserved especially for our group.

Monday, January 22

We met on the veranda before breakfast to check the feeders and see what was in the gardens at dawn. Annette spotted a Blue-headed Parrot on top of a tree next to the veranda. A brilliant Summer Tanager foraged in the lower branches and a Rose-throated Becard and Baltimore Oriole were also seen there. Birds on the feeder included Blue-crowned Motmot, Golden-hooded, Silver-throated, Blue-gray, and Speckled Tanager, and Green Honeycreeper and provide an awesome color display in the morning light.



After breakfast we returned to the veranda. Sightings included Squirrel Cuckoo, Masked Tityra, and Red-crowned Woodpecker but the most thrilling moment was when three Fiery-billed Aracaris flew in and perched over the driveway for a photo session. The cameras clicked madly as the birds chased each other up and down the branches. It was a feast for the eyes!



Once the Aracaris moved on, we walked down the driveway into the gardens. A Green Hermit flitted among some low flowers while a Scaled Pigeon perched on top of a distant tree requiring scope views for full appreciation. A Spot-crowned Euphonia foraged on a Symphonia plant where two Red-faced Spinetails worked the mosses. A Chestnut-sided Warbler kept distracting us as we searched the foliage for a Mistletoe Tyrannulet which eventually showed briefly. Willy went back for his recorder while we continued to search through the thick foliage. Some of us got glimpses of the Rufous-breasted Wren which sat out and called briefly and then disappeared back into the foliage. A Violaceous Trogon landed on an open branch where we all could easily see it. As Willy returned, the bird moved over our heads and flew off into the forest.

Further down the trail we found a large Leaf-cutter Ant colony and Willy described the life cycle of these amazing creatures. We learned that the colony is a sisterhood of ants and males are only produced for breeding. Some of these subterranean colonies can be as large as football fields. Incredible!

As we continued, a Collared Trogon landed above our heads giving us great looks. A Slate-colored Redstart worked the low vines of a tree in front of us and Willy explained how this species differed from the one we had seen earlier in the week.

We reached an overlook area where we could see several Black Vultures kettling over the valley below. We sat for a few minutes enjoying the spectacular views and clear blue sky and then worked our way back up through the garden. Bay-headed Tanagers worked the canopy of some low trees giving us good views of their brilliant undersides. Two Yellow-headed Caracaras flew into a palm where there was apparently a nest through we could not see much because of the height and angle. Willy pointed out a lovely Heliocarpus tree covered with pink fluffy flowers and explained their life cycle. We moved on to a lower garden and found a Scaly-breasted Hummingbird perched on a branch near the weather station. Another Rufous-breasted Wren was seen and a White-throated Robin was spotted in the thick foliage mostly letting us see its back end. A pair of Elegant Euphonias foraged in the mistletoe in one of the trees. We felt the need for a break so we went back up to the veranda for coffee and some more feeder birding. A nice male Thick-billed Euphonia was seen as well as Speckled Tanager, Common Bush-Tanager, and a gorgeous male Red-crowned Woodpecker.

We continued our morning with a walk down the entrance road and a stop at the gift shop. Annette pulled us out of the shop with a great sighting of a Masked Tityra. As we walked the "formal" garden we got better views of White-throated Robin, Black-striped Sparrow, and Common Bush-Tanager. Just outside the Wilson House, we were entertained by Chestnut-mandibled Toucans feeding on palm fruits by grabbing the fruit, throwing it up and catching it in their massive bills. It was almost time for lunch so we made our way up to the dining area and our table on the veranda. Gina spotted a Swallow-tailed Kite and several Vaux's Swifts flying high in the clouds.



After lunch, we took an afternoon walk with Arietna, a local guide at Wilson. Arietna explained the history of the garden, how it was designed, and how it is used today primarily for research and education. There are 200 plant families represented here with thousands of species in the formal gardens and the premontane rainforest. Arietna pointed out several types of plants and told us about their fascinating natural history. From one of the garden trails, we got great looks at a pair of Red-lore Parrots preening each other on top of one of the palms. An Orange-billed Nightingale Thrush flew into a low bush and remained hidden from most of us. We moved up the hill and once again got to enjoy the antics of the Toucans near the Wilson house. On the way down, we saw larger groups of Red-lore Parrots in the palm trees. As we neared the Ginger gardens, Andy found a brightly colored frog which then was heavily photographed. It was later identified as *Hyla ebraccata* or Hourglass Tree Frog a tiny tree frog that usually lives high in the rainforest canopy and descends to wet areas in the rainforest for breeding. Annette spotted a Louisiana Waterthrush that quickly disappeared down a ravine.

The skies threatened rain so we made our way back up the hill. Before we got far, the skies opened up. We went back to the veranda and enjoyed some hot drinks and camaraderie for the rest of the afternoon. After a lovely pasta dinner, we retired to the library where Willy showed us the "Manakin Moonwalk" and an excellent video on the new discoveries and theories of the origin of feathers

produced by Dr. Rick Prum of Yale University. It was an exciting end to another wonderful day!

Tuesday, January 23

Andy and Lois were on the veranda at first light and as we arrived, they beckoned us to see the Coati which was trying to keep its food from being commandeered by an agitated Agouti. They reported a Gray-necked Wood Rail below the feeders as well. As the sun rose, the birds began to gather at the feeder -- Green Honeycreeper, Clay-colored Robin, Blue-crowned Motmot, Silver-throated, Speckled, and Cherries Tanagers. Large flocks of raucous Red-lored Parrots flew high above the gardens piercing the morning quite with their loud calls. A House Wren made its presence known from under the eaves of the building and a few Blue-crowned Parrots landed in the large Vainillo tree next to the veranda. Yellow-bellied Siskins flitted in the same tree as well as Great Kiskadee, Gray-capped Flycatcher, Rose-throated Becard, and a gorgeous Summer Tanager brightly lit by the rising sun. A Mistletoe Tyrannulet took advantage of a sunlit perch as Chestnut-mandibled Toucans flew across the garden to the bird tree. The squadron of Fiery-billed Aracaris flew over the veranda as they had yesterday and landed in the trees at the end of the driveway. The breakfast bell rang and we tore ourselves away from the veranda to the porch for breakfast.



During breakfast on the porch, a Roadside Hawk coasted through just before a Crested Guan passed and landed in a tall tree below the cabins. We got great scope views of this bird as it sat for several minutes on a branch. As we finished breakfast, two Scaled Pigeons landed atop another tree in the distance and those of us left enjoyed scope views.

We spent the morning exploring the area around San Vito. We noted Gray-breasted Martins on the wires, Rufous-collared Sparrows on the ground as we drove through town, and several Blue-and-white Swallows flying around. We stopped at a roadside pond where some Common Moorhens and Purple Gallinules gave us good looks. Northern Rough-winged Swallows flew over the pond as did a lovely Snowy-bellied Hummingbird. A shy Least Grebe was eventually seen by all of us. Over the tree line in the distance, we noticed several Swallow-tailed Kites among the Black and Turkey Vultures. A Roadside Hawk perched in a Kapok tree on the other side of the pond. We continued on to another larger wetland and pond with a Pied-billed Grebe in residence. A Little Blue Heron flew across the marsh and a Green Heron flew toward us across the pond. As we scoped the area, a Streaked Saltator appeared in the shrubs in front of us much to our surprise. While we were scoping, Henry negotiated with the property owner for us to walk around the pond to see what we could find. A small flock of Blue-winged Teals moved toward the far edge of the pond as we were joined by Danny, an aspiring naturalist who lived on the property. We found a small Locked Turtle in the grass which thrilled Andy. Danny led us further around the trail and some of us spotted a "Moss" Trogon in a large tree. We went as far as we could



on the trail and Danny whistled for the Masked Yellowthroat several times but it never appeared. We did have a Yellow Warbler and a Rufous-tailed Hummingbird foraged in the tree above us and several butterflies vied for our attention as we waited for action around the pond. A Great Egret flew in and perched on a dead tree and we heard and then saw Melodious Blackbirds in the distance. We made our way back to the bus and Danny joined us for the rest of our morning adventures. We stopped briefly for to check what turned out to be an Osprey with a kettle of Black Vultures and another stop for a close Roadside Hawk (on the side of the road). Just beyond, a large Giant Poro tree with bright orange flowers was buzzing with bird activity so we pulled over and got out of the bus to watch the show. There were Rufous-tailed, Snowy-bellied, and Scaly-breasted Hummingbirds, White-necked Jacobin, Red-legged Honeycreepers, Blue-gray, Palm, and Bay-headed Tanagers, several Baltimore Orioles, a Tennessee Warbler, and a Red-crowned Woodpecker. The activity was incredible and the view was spectacular against the clear blue sky.

After getting our fill here, we boarded the bus and searched for the “lost” lagoon which turned out to be dry so we continued on the road through an agricultural area until we reached another large tree filled with birds. It turned out to be a Strangler Fig that had enveloped a large Palm tree and it was loaded with fruits. As we piled out the bus, Willy spotted a gorgeous male Turquoise Cotinga perched in the branches. We struggled to see at first but its brilliant blue color popped out of the tree. A second male and a female were spotted nearby and we marveled at this spectacular bird. The sight brought tears to Danny's eyes and we were all moved by this special moment with these stunning birds. After awhile, we realized that there were loads of other birds in the tree and we started to sort them out. Yellow-crowned and Thick-billed Euphonias, all kinds of Tanagers and Robins fed actively on the fruits. A Scarlet-thighed Dacnis was seen but eluded many of us as it stayed in the thick foliage. A Lesser Elaenia was seen in a small tree across the road. As we made our way back to the bus, a soaring Short-tailed Hawk gave us excellent flight looks. By now, we were very late for lunch so Henry called ahead and the lodge held it for us.



After lunch, we joined Arietna for a walk on the Jaba Trail at the lodge. Just inside the entrance to the trail, Penny spotted a monkey moving high in the trees which turned out to be a White-faced Capuchin. Lois was so thrilled she kissed Penny on the cheek and we all watched the monkey circle around us jumping from tree to tree. Further down the trail, an elusive Rufous-capped Warbler was seen by a few of us. A pair of Lesser Greenlets was more obliging and we all got close views even though this species tends to stay high in the canopy. In another area where there were fruiting trees, we saw a close female White-ruffed Manakin, Rufous Piha, and another elusive Scarlet-thighed Dacnis. We continued on to a Green Hermit lek where several birds were calling and we got some looks through the thick undergrowth. We turned back up the trail and as we passed the fruiting tree area, we saw Spot-crowned Euphonia and a handsome male White-ruffed Manakin. We made our way back up to the lodge and got ready for another lovely dinner on the porch. After dinner, Annette and Lois did a night walk with Rolando while some of the rest of us enjoyed a presentation about the Wilson Botanical Garden by the director, Zak Zahawi. The night walk produced a Four-eyed Opossum and several birds sleeping in the palms.



Wednesday, January 24

On our last morning at Wilson Botanical Gardens, Carol S., Roland, Gina, Penny, Jo-Ann, and Carol A. enjoyed last looks at the usual suspects at the feeders - Green Honeycreeper, Clay-colored Robin, Blue-crowned Motmot, Silver-throated, Speckled, and Cherries Tanagers. It was foggy this morning and the sunrise created an orange mist in the distance. To our delight, two Scarlet-thighed Dacnis came to the Bottlebrush Tree in the center of the veranda and we finally got a look at the red thighs. The squad of Fiery-billed Aracari flew in to their regular tree and performed. Annette, Andy, and Lois walked down to the Tree Fern area which proved to be quite productive with Ruddy Quail-dove, Scaly-breasted Pygmy Tyrant, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Spotted Woodcreeper, and Red-faced Spinetail. After breakfast, we loaded the bus and did one last walk down to the entrance gate. To our surprise, three Gray-headed Chachalacas flew over and quickly disappeared in the canopy. We boarded the

bus for the long journey back to San Jose with a few strategic stops along the way. Not far from Wilson, we spotted Swallow-tailed Kites, Harris's and Short-tailed Hawks soaring with the Black and Turkey Vultures. A roadside stop for a Roadside Hawk produced Lesser Goldfinch, Yellow-margined Flycatcher, and Blue-black Grassquit. We continued to Buenos Aires where we got close looks at a Fork-tailed Flycatcher perched on a power line next to a soccer field. We continued on the Pan American Highway enjoying the wonderful scenery which included rivers, canyons, pineapple and sugar cane plantations. We turned off onto a dirt road toward Skutch's Farm and stopped at a small pond where several Black-bellied Whistling Ducks were seen as well as Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Jacana, and Mangrove Swallow. Willy told us about Alexander Skutch, his life and accomplishments.

We were thrilled to have access to Skutch's Farm and see how he lives. The grounds were lush with birds all around and we were greeted by Tropical Parula and Yellow-throated Vireo as we got off the bus. In a minute, Willy yelled back that there were monkeys in around the back of the grounds, and we saw several White-faced Capuchins bouncing in the trees. There were a number of feeders with bananas that attracted Philadelphia Vireo, Tennessee Warbler, Red-legged, and Shining Honeycreeper. A large Poro tree produced a new species, Steely-vented Hummingbird, which we struggled to see against the light. We toured the grounds and the house and marveled at Mr. Skutch's library, den, and Spartan accommodations. Willy told some stories about this fascinating man and we all enjoyed our visit here.

We continued on our journey through agricultural areas. At one point, we spotted more than fifty swallows perched on a power line included several Bank and Barn Swallow and we



were delighted to add these to our list. We had lunch at the café in Perez Zeledon and spent a few minutes investigating the central market in San Isidro. Our next stop was at Cerro de la Muerte for another try for the Volcano Junco. This time we followed a side trail instead of the road which was just as quiet as the road had been a few days before. We did get to see the Volcano Hummingbird again as well as Sooty Robin, Yellow-winged Vireo, and Sooty-capped Bush-Tanagers.

Some of us needed a shopping fix so Willy found Jack's Souvenir Shop where Jo-Ann and Lois bought beautiful hammocks and hatched a plan on how to get them home. Jack was quite pleased with our visit and gave all the ladies a fresh Calla Lily to take with us. The sun was beginning to sink low on the horizon so we continued our journey to San Jose. We arrived at the Hotel Bougainvillea after a long day of travel and said good-bye to our beloved driver Henry.



Thursday, January 25

Before breakfast, we birded the gardens for one last time. Our goal this morning was a better look at the Prevost's Ground-Sparrow and see Inca Dove for our list. The garden produced Hoffman's Woodpecker, Clay-colored Robin, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Blue-Gray Tanager, and Rufous-collared Sparrow right away. We went to the area where a few of us had seen the Prevost's Ground-Sparrow on the first of the trip and there it was, out in the open for all of us to see. The Grayish Saltator was in the same place as before and Great Kiskadee seemed omnipresent. We walked the paths at the back of the garden through a gate to another area. A Variegated Squirrel gave us close looks above the gate as did a Boat-billed Flycatcher and a Blue-crowned Motmot posed in a tree and then

on the ground. Baltimore Orioles called and we got good looks at Short-billed Pigeon. A small flycatcher flew into a tree and we chased it to get a closer look. It turned out to be a Dusky-capped Flycatcher – new for the list. As we made our way back for breakfast, some Brown Jays called, and then appeared in the large tree not far from the lobby.

After breakfast, packed and went back out for a final look at the gardens. Jo-Ann found and photographed an Inca Dove and we went back to the area and found a nest and a total of four of these charming birds. We also found Melodious Blackbird and a lovely Squirrel Cuckoo. Annette exclaimed, "Everything we wanted to see was here!"

We said our goodbyes to Annette, Jo-Ann, Carol S. and Roland and the rest of us packed and waited for our transfer to the airport. It was a fabulous trip, with lovely people, our fantastic guide Willy, and our expert driver, Henry. Thank you all for a wonderful time!



Scenes from Costa Rica





Farewell Dinner Toast:

Willy, Willy, he's our man
Who helps us to view all that we can
His very quick wit, sure is a hit
From Quetzal's to Cotingas
To Flycatcher's and Hummer's
Not one bird's been a bummer
His knowledge and skills in climbing steep hills
Rewards us with pleasure in very good measure
With Henry at the wheel, it's been a good deal
To enjoy Costa Rica, which surely is unique
Since our Gina's a Gem
This Sunrise Adventure
Has sure been a treasure
Not a day has been boring
Whilst we've been a touring
Three cheers for a great team
And a toast to Good Birding!!!!

Penny Solum

