



# COSTA RICA

## Dragonflies & Nature

### TRIP REPORT June 16 – 25, 2018



# COSTA RICA: Dragonflies & Nature

June 16 - 25, 2018 with Dennis Paulson

## HIGHLIGHTS

Either for rarity value, endemic, excellent views or simply a group favourite.

- Amazon Sapphirewing
- Fiery Darner
- Guatemalan Spinyneck
- Blue-winged Helicopter
- Caribbean Yellowface
- Pied Puffbird
- Chestnut-colored Woodpecker
- Lowland Knobtail
- Scarlet Macaw
- Black Dasher
- Great Tinamou
- Laughing Falcon
- Arch-tipped Shadowdamsel
- Bromeliad Helicopter
- Short-tailed Nighthawk
- Crowned Woodnymph
- Collared Aracari
- Undescribed Perithemis
- Green-and-rufous Kingfisher
- Snowy Cotinga
- Costa Rican Flatwing
- White-collared Manakin
- Amelia's Threadtail
- Dusky-faced Tanager
- Armed Knobtail
- Tawny-crested Tanager
- Morton's Skimmer
- Green-breasted Mango
- Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth
- Peten Dasher
- Andagoya Dragonlet
- Brilliant Redskimmer
- Bat Falcon
- Sooty Saddlebags
- Russet-naped Woodrail
- King Vulture
- Undescribed *Telebasis* sp
- Mexican Scarlet-tail
- Pincertail
- Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth
- Great Curassow
- Red Eyed Tree Frog
- Central American Spider Monkey
- Rufous Motmot
- Dark-saddled Darner
- Metallic Pennant
- Great Green Macaw
- Great Potoo
- Spectacled Owl
- White-fronted Nunbird
- Sulphury Threadtail
- Pale-billed Woodpecker
- Scarlet Dragonlet
- White-nosed Coati

## SUMMARY:

Costa Rica is famed for being one of the most biodiverse countries in the world and on our 9 day tour we got a great taste of that. Despite the challenging weather we saw a total of 72 species of Odonate including our main target species the Amazon Sapphirewing (*Zenithoptera fasciata*). We also saw 2 species yet to be described (*Perithemis* and *Telebasis* species) and 2 species that last year were new for the country, Peten Dasher (*Micrathyria debilis*) and Mexican Scarlet-tail (*Planiplex sanguiniventris*). Being a Nature trip, everyone was interested at looking at all kinds of wildlife. One of the tour highlights was visiting photographer and artist Jose Perez (Cope); we spent a morning with this fantastic naturalist who showed us species like Spectacled Owl, Great Potoo and Bat Falcon, plus some gorgeous Honduran White Bats. Throughout the tour we got to see many great species of birds like Great Green Macaws, Snowy Cotinga and King Vultures and our mammal sightings were also brilliant seeing species like Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth and Mexican Hairy Dwarf Porcupine. Due to all the rain we had we managed to find some fantastic reptiles and amphibians like the Fer-de-lance which is one of the most dangerous snakes in Central America and also the Red Eyed Tree Frog, probably one of the most famous frogs in the World. Selva Verde Lodge and Laguna del Lagarto Lodge were fantastic places to base ourselves. With great food, great people and great wildlife it made our stays very memorable. Overall this tour was a great success with a fantastic group of people seeing some amazing wildlife.



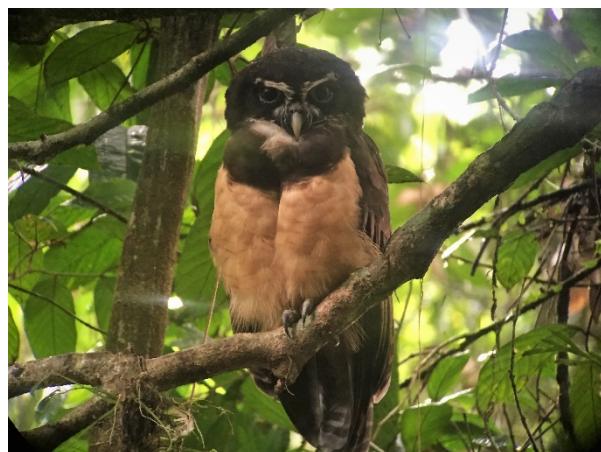
## Braulio Carrillo - Cope - Selva Verde 17th June

Our first full day in Costa Rica started early in the gardens of the Hotel Bueno Vista. Whilst everyone got to know each other we birded the gardens for around 45 minutes seeing some common species such as **Blue-grey Tanagers**, **Great Kiskadee**, **Hoffmann's Woodpecker** and a flock of passing **White-fronted Parrots**. Whilst listening to **Lesser Greenlets** and **Rufous-backed Wrens** we had **Rufous-tailed Hummingbird** and **Steely-vented Hummingbirds** buzzing around the garden flowers. We also got great views of two **Grey-headed Chachalacas** that flew in just before we made our way to breakfast. After finishing breakfast we packed the bus with our luggage and made our way to our first stop. After Alfredo gave us some interesting information about the area and some of the history of Costa Rica we arrived at our first stop, Quebrada Gonzalez station in Braulio Carrillo National Park. Minutes after arriving Ramon found our first **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth** hanging in a Cecropia Tree above the car park. Once everybody got their photos we made our way across the road to look for our first Odes. Due to the poor weather conditions we only found one Ode here, an **Arch-tipped Shadowdamsel (Palaemnema collaris)**.

The birding was also difficult as most species we saw were travelling around in mixed feeding flocks. Some of the group got to see **Tawny-crested Tanager**, **Carmoil's Tanager**, **Wedge-billed Woodcreeper** and even a **Black-and-yellow Tanager**. Whilst listening to a **Chestnut-backed Antbird** everyone got the opportunity to photograph a **White-faced Capuchin Monkey** that watched us pass by on the narrow trail. The highlight bird on this trail was the **Great Tinamou**, a common bird in this area but often difficult to find as they walk on the forest floor. We then made our way back to the car park and checked the small shaded stream before we left. Although the stream had no sunlight we managed to find several **Pale-faced Flatwings (Heteragrion albifrons)** and our first Argia species, an **Oculate Dancer (Argia oculata)**. After everyone got there photos we finally moved to our



lunch stop Rancho Roberto's. Whilst waiting for our lunch we got our first views of two **King Vultures** soaring high above us. Our busy first day continued as we then made our way to meet Jose Perez. After picking Jose up from his house, we made our way to our first site to see a pair of **Bat Falcons** that were on a nest over the Rio Toro Amarillo. This bird is not uncommon but views can often be distant, so to see them that close was incredible. After spending 20 minutes here we moved on to our next spot. Jose then showed us a roosting **Great Potoo** sat high up in a tree. Unfortunately, it started raining so we swiftly



moved on into the forest where he then showed us three **Honduran White Bats** that were tucked away under a leaf. Whilst everyone was taking pictures we found our first **Red-and-black Flatwing (Heteragrion erythrogasterum)** perched over the nearby stream. We then made our way further down the trail where we finally got to see our first and only Owl of the

trip, a stunning **Spectacled Owl**. Finally Jose took us to his house where he showed us his amazing art and photography. As it was late we made the decision to head back to the lodge and settle in to our rooms before dinner.

## La Selva 18th June

This morning we all enjoyed breakfast around the feeders seeing species such as **Crimson-collared Tanager**, **Blue-grey Tanager**, **Red-throated Ant Tanager** and Plenty of **Clay-colored Thrushes**.

After finishing breakfast we loaded the bus and made our way to the famous La Selva Biological Station, one of top wildlife hotspots in the country. Within minutes of arriving and filling in our forms, we enjoyed views of a male and female **Snowy Cotinga**. Before heading across the bridge into the reserve we had close views of **Chestnut-colored Woodpecker**, **Passerini's Tanager** and all three species of Honeycreeper. Moving onto the bridge we had a close **Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth** posing in a tree for photos. Once we finally made our way across the bridge we headed to our

first pond. Due to the heavy rain in recent days the boardwalk was partially flooded but that didn't stop us finding some odes. We found three species, **Black Dasher (Micrathyria atra)**, **Tikal Spreadwing (Lestes tikalus)** and **Costa Rican Wedgetail (Acanthagrion speculum)** which most of us managed to photograph. As the weather started to improve we headed to our next spot which was another boardwalk over a swamp. Here we had a few different species like **Slender Skimmer (Orthemis levis)**, **Swamp Skimmer (Orthemis cultriformis)**, **Carmine Skimmer (Orthemis discolor)**, **Three-striped Dasher (Micrathyria didyma)** and a nice **Golden Amberwing (Perithemis electra)**. Whilst enjoying the Odes a beautiful **Rufous-tailed Jacamar** perched on a nice branch right in the open for us to photograph. We then slowly made our way back for lunch, on the way we picked up a few more species like **Gray-waisted Skimmer (Cannaphila insularis)** and **Blue-eyed Setwing (Dythemis nigra)**. Whilst enjoying Ramon's picnic lunch we saw many bird species coming into the fruiting tree by the restaurant, **Crested Guans**, **White-collared Manakins**, Honeycreepers and a female **Great Curassow** were the highlights. Once we had all finished our food and the heavy rain had stopped we walked down the entrance road and took a trail to a flooded field where we had **Brown Setwing (Dythemis sterilis)**, **Red-mantled Dragonlet (Erythrodiplax fervida)**, **Red-faced Dragonlet (Erythrodiplax fusca)**, **Band-winged Dragonlet (Erythrodiplax umbrata)** and a beautiful **Flame-tailed Pondhawk (Erythemis peruviana)**. A few people got to see the **Pied Puffbird** that perched in a nearby Cecropia. Also a **Rufous-winged Woodpecker** was in a distant tree whilst a **White-throated Crake** and **Black-throated Wrens** were calling. People that were around at the time got to see a **Spine-bellied Dryad (Nephelphelia phryne)**



that Nancy caught. Due to the heavy rain we decided to head back to the lodge and relax before having dinner.

## Selva Verde lodge grounds - 19<sup>th</sup> June

Today started with our usual 7:00 breakfast around the feeders, seeing the usual birds. We then decided to take a walk to the suspension bridge to see what we could find. On the way we had fantastic views of a **Rufous Motmot** near the swimming pool. Once we got to the bridge we had our first encounter with a large **Green Iguana**, this prehistoric looking lizard was sat in a tree watching us as we made our way across the bridge. Once above the river it didn't take us long to find some birds, **Bare-throated Tiger Heron**, **Black Phoebe**, **Neotropic Cormorant**, **Anhinga** and

**Green Kingfisher** were the highlights.



The weather was still poor at this stage but we decided to head to the bungalows as there were two ponds we could check for odors. On our way we crossed a small stream on the lodge grounds and saw **Smoky Rubyspot** (*Hetaerina titia*), **Redstripe Rubyspot** (*Hetaerina miniata*) and lots of **Amelia's Threadtail** (*Neoneura amelia*). Finally we reached the ponds and despite the poor weather we did manage to find some odors, one of the highlights of the trip was to see the **undescribed species of Amberwing** (*Perithemis*), we counted many males on the lower pond but no females. **Brilliant**



**Redskimmer** (*Rhodopygia hinei*) and **Sooty Saddlebags** (*Tramea binotata*) were the two highlights from the top pond but we also saw **Arch-tipped Glider** (*Tauriphila argo*), **Square-spotted Dasher** (*Micrathyria ocellata*) and many **Tiny Forktails** (*Ischnura capreolus*). We then made our way back to the restaurant to have lunch, on the way we saw **Long-billed** and **Stripe-throated Hermits** and lots of singing **Buff-rumped Warblers**. After lunch most of us made our way back to the ponds to try and find some more odors. As we arrived a **Broad-billed Motmot** was calling, and after some searching we finally found it and got some half descent views. We also got fantastic views of a perched **Lowland Knobtail** (*Epigomphus tumefactus*) on the forest edge. As the weather was still dull there were no new notable odors to report so some of us headed down to the "canopy tower" to see what we could find. After finding out we couldn't enter the tower we searched the surrounding area. We found a small **Green-and-black Poison Dart Frog** and some **Banded Peacock** butterflies. The bird activity around here was great as we found **Squirrel Cuckoo**, **Masked Tityra** and **Stripe-breasted Wren**. We also got fabulous views of some inquisitive **Yellow-throated Toucans** that came down low to see what we were doing. After that we headed back to the



lodge where we had some rest before meeting for dinner. Some of us decided to see what night creatures we could find before we went bed. **Red-eyed Tree Frog** was the main target and we found plenty of them around the small restaurant pond. We also saw **White-lipped Mud Turtle**, and several other species of frog. Last but not least whilst we were at the pond a **Crab-eating Racoons** enjoyed devouring the leftover bananas on the bird feeder.

## Selva Verde - Laguna Lagarto - 20<sup>th</sup> June

Once again today started with breakfast on the restaurant decking watching the feeders, there was however a different feeling today, the sun was shining! Once we completed breakfast we



quickly made our way to the bungalow ponds again to see if we could add any new ode species before we left for our next lodge. Once we got there the difference was amazing, there were many more odies and straight away we added **Striped Saddlebags (Tramea onusta)** and the huge **Fiery Darner (Coryphaeschna diapyra)**, which we eventually caught and got photos of in the hand. As we enjoyed the much improved Ode activity, Nancy shouted "Helicopter", we all looked up to see a giant **Blue-winged Helicopter Damselfly (Megaloprepus caerulatus)** elegantly drift over our heads and perch in a nearby tree. We then checked a small flooded area on the forest edge, this different habitat got us a new species for the list, the beautiful **Scarlet Dragonlet (Erythrodiplax castanea)**. Unfortunately we were running out of time and had

to start heading back to our rooms to pack and head to Laguna del Lagarto Lodge. We didn't get very far before Susan called us to a **Bromeliad Helicopter (Mecistogaster modesta)** that was hanging in a nearby tree. Once we got our shots we quickly moved on so we could pack and start heading to our next lodge. We packed the bus and slowly made our way to Los Iguanos Restaurant for lunch. Once we finished there and photographed the huge **Green Iguanas** it was finally time to head to Laguna del Lagarto Lodge, our home for the next five nights. The journey took around three hours with all the stops we made. The first stop was to photograph some **Northern Jacanas** in a flooded field. After searching the field some more we found **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks**, **Southern Lapwings** and **Red-winged Blackbirds**. Moving on further down the road we got some very nice views of a **Roadside Hawk** perched on a fence next to the road. Just before reaching the lodge we stopped at a pond to look for some odies just as it started to rain. We found **Andagoya Dragonlet (Erythrodiplax andagoya)** which is a very common species in the area. We also saw **Arch-tipped Glider (Tauriphila argo)**, **Glossy-fronted Dryad (Nepheleptia flavifrons)** and **Green-eyed Dancer (Argia frequentula)**. After spending around 30 minutes here the rains started and we continued to the lodge. After arriving and settling in we all made our way to the restaurant so we could watch the bird feeders. **Brown-hooded Parrots**, **Blue-grey Tanagers**, **Palm Tanager**, **Honeycreepers** and even a few **Collared Aracaris** braved the rain and came in for some food. Shortly after, the



feeders were stripped of their bananas as a large troop of **White-nosed Coatis** came in to feed. An exciting way to end the day!

## Laguna Lagarto - 21<sup>st</sup> June

Our first full day at Laguna del Lagarto lodge started around the restaurant feeders. We all enjoyed great views of **Golden-hooded Tanagers**, **Black-cheeked Woodpeckers**, **Honeycreepers** and more. The sun was shining, so after breakfast we all made our way down to the two ponds at the front of the lodge. We found **Peten Dasher** (*Micrathyria debilis*), one of our targets for this area as we had found the first record for the country here last year. We made our way around the edge of the right hand pond and after some searching we finally found our first **Amazon Sapphirewing** (*Zenithoptera fasciata*), this was our main target species to see here, so it was great to see one.



As we continued our search for odes we made our way further down the road to check another pond. Along the way we finally got the close views of an **Amazon Sapphirewing** (*Zenithoptera fasciata*) that everyone had been hoping for. We then took a trail that we thought was going to take us to some more water but did not. Some of us had nice views of a male and female **Slaty-tailed Tropicbird** which made the diversion worth it. Once we reached the next body of water we were greeted to the sight of dozens of **Amazon Sapphirewings**. We also had our first **Mexican Scarlet-tail** (*Planiplax sanguiniventris*), **Metallic Pennant** (*Idiaea taphe cubensis*) and **Little Swamp Dasher** (*Micrathyria pseudeximia*). Whilst photographing the odes we had a flock of around 100 **Wood Storks** fly over us high in the blue sky. We then made our way back to the restaurant to have a drink and prepare for lunch. After that most of the group went into the forest to try and find some different odes. Whilst making our way along the forest trail we found **Gray-waisted Skimmer** (*Cannaphila insularis*) and **Red-tailed Skimmer** (*Orthemis schmidti*). Once we made it to the small boardwalk going over a pond we found **Swamp Dancer** (*Argia indicatrix*), **Green-eyed Dancer** (*Argia frequentula*) and a nice **Bristle-tipped Dancer** (*Argia johannella*). Further down the trail we had brief views of **White-lined Tanagers** whilst the **White-collared Manakins** were calling and displaying close by. Once we reached the end of this trail we came to a clearing where we saw more **Red-tailed Skimmers** (*Orthemis schmidti*) and heard the call of a **Black-striped Woodcreeper**. After this we were all tired from the long day so decided to head back to the lodge for well-deserved drink and rest.



## Laguna Lagarto & Reserva Biológica Camino de San Juan -

22<sup>nd</sup> June

After another enjoyable breakfast around the feeders we headed to the Reserve Biologica Camino de San Juan, to check the big lagoon. The weather was cloudy on arrival so the ode activity was not great but we did however find a flock of birds that included **Yellow**



**Tyrannulet**, **Black-striped Sparrow** and many **Passerini's Tanagers**. After some waiting the sun finally came out and so did the odes. Straight away we found **Andagoya Dragonlet** (*Erythrodiplax andagoya*) and **Red-faced Dragonlet** (*Erythrodiplax fusca*). We slowly made our way around the pond and found two **Muscovy Ducks**, we also got very lucky and got some brief views of **Green-and-rufous Kingfisher**, the rarest Kingfisher in South and Central America. Moving further around the pond everyone got to see **Marsh Firetails** (*Telebasis digiticollis*) and **Sooty Saddlebags** (*Tramea binotata*). Whilst looking for more odes, Nancy found a species of

**Bird-eating Snake** that posed for photos. **Guatemalan Spinyneck** (*Metaleptobasis bovilla*) and **Pond Amberwing** (*Perithemis mooma*) were the final odes we saw as we slowly made our way back to the entrance. As the sun was shining many more odes were now on the wing.

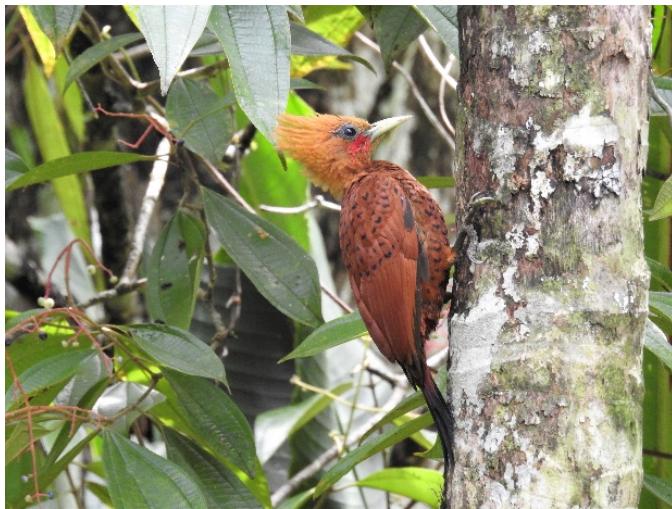
**Tropical Woodskimmer** (*Uracis imbuta*) and many dragonlets lined the edge of the pond, we also finally got to see **Caribbean Yellowface** (*Neoerythromma cultellatum*), one of the species we were unable to find on the previous day. Finally Ramon returned with the bus and we made our way back to the lodge for lunch. In the afternoon we decided to take the bus and head towards the border with Nicaragua. Once we reached the Rio San Juan we stopped at a local's house and they kindly let us in to see and photograph the river.

Whilst scanning the trees in Nicaragua we found a

**Bat Falcon**, **Pale-vented Pigeon** and a couple of other nice birds. We also found one ode here, a **Varied Dancer** (*Argia adamsi*). As the road was getting to rough and muddy we decided to turn around and check a small stream we passed on the way. On this stream we found a couple of new damselfly's for the trip, a **Neotropical Bluet** (*Enallagma novaeispaniae*) and a **Pacific Wedgetail** (*Acanthagrion trilobatum*). We also saw **Smoky Rubyspot** (*Hetaerina titia*), **Purple Dancer** (*Argia pulla*) and **Green-eyed Dancer** (*Argia frequentula*). Flying in the distance was a **Short-tailed Hawk** another new bird for the trip, all in all a good little stop. On the way back to the lodge we had great views of two low flying **Scarlet Macaws** and a stunning **Laughing Falcon** that stayed around for us to take photos. Once we finished with the falcon we made our way back to the lodge to relax and prepare for dinner.



## Laguna Lagarto & Road to Boca Tapada - 23<sup>rd</sup> June



Today was a gloomy, dull day so we decided to spend the morning around the lodge doing our own thing. Throughout the morning lots of us congregated around the lower feeder that overlooks the pond. Here we saw the regular **Chestnut-colored Woodpecker**, **Shining** and **Green Honeycreepers** and the regular tanagers. The rotten bananas were also attracting some nice butterflies like **Red Cracker (Hamadryas amphinome)** and **Variable Cracker (Hamadryas feronia)**. Lots of us spent some time around the ponds searching for more odes, the highlight for the people that got to see it was the **undescribed species of Firetail**

(**Telebasis**) which were not easy to find. We also found **Guatemalan Spinyneck (Metaleptobasis bovilla)**, lots of **Marsh Firetails (Telebasis digiticollis)** and some more common species we had seen on previous days. At lunch Bill showed us one of the odes he caught in the forest during the morning, a **Dark-saddled Darner (Gynacantha membranalis)**. Once we had lunch some of the group decided to take the bus and check a couple of streams near Boca Tapada. The weather had not really improved from the morning so we weren't that confident about finding many new odes, we did however find two

**Scarlet Macaws** perched in a tree which we scoped and photographed. Further along the road we had our second **Laughing Falcon** of the trip. After checking a small stream around Boca Tapada that only held **Smoky Rubyspot (Hetaerina titia)** and a **Red-tailed Skimmer (Orthemis schmidti)**, we moved further down the road into some open grassland where we found **Yellow-faced Grassquit**, **Blue-black Grassquit** and two species of Seedeater. After not seeing many odes we decided to head back to the lodge, just before



we got back we noticed a field full of **Black Vultures**. We pulled over and found a **King Vulture** perched in the middle of the tree. Once we got out and realized there was a dead cow we slowly found more and more, until we ended up seeing a total of 11 **King Vultures** and around 40 **Black Vultures**. I'm sure we could have stayed longer but the rains started so we had to quickly make our way back to the lodge. Some of the new odes that were added to the list by the people who stayed around the lodge were **Wispy Threadtail (Psaironeura angeloi)**, **Pincertail (Desmogomphus paucinervis)**, **Morton's Skimmer (Cannaphila mortoni)** and **Even-striped Dasher (Micrathyria dictynna)**.

## Laguna Lagarto & Adolfo's House 24<sup>th</sup> June

Our final full day in Costa Rica started with a bus trip to the tree that held 11 **King Vultures** the day before. Once we arrived there were less vultures present and only one **King Vulture** remained. Once we finished taking photos we drove further down the road, people who weren't out on the bus yesterday managed to catch up with species like **Yellow-faced Grassquit**, **Long-tailed Tyrant** and **Masked Tityra**. The dull weather meant we saw no notable odes this morning. After lunch, Adolfo the manager of Laguna del Lagarto kindly invited us to his house where he had some bird feeders. Once we arrived and Adolfo put some new fruit out we enjoyed great views of **Passerini's Tanager**, **Blue-gray Tanager**, **Shining Honeycreeper** and **Black-cheeked Woodpecker**.

We also got to see **Yellow-throated Euphonia** and **Yellow-crowned Euphonia** both of which were new for the list. The Hummingbird feeders were also very productive, the highlight was some nice views of **Green-breasted Mango** which was new for the trip. We also saw **White-necked Jacobins**, **Bronze-tailed Plumleteer**, **Crowned Woodnymph** and **Scaly-breasted Hummingbird**. After a couple of hours of fantastic photography we decided to head back to the lodge. On our way out we had nice views of a **Cocoa Woodcreeper** that came into the garden. Once back at the lodge most of us relaxed for the rest of the afternoon enjoying the feeders.

**Collared Aracaris**, **Black-cowled Orioles** and **Brown-hooded Parrots** were all taking their turns to eat the bananas. Jay and Susan shared some of their photos of things they had seen in the morning, the highlight being **Sulphury Threadtail (Protoneura sulfurata)** a species even Dennis has never seen in the Country. They also had **Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher** and **Dot-winged Antwren** both of which were new for the list. Just before dinner we had two **Short-tailed Nighthawks** flying around outside the restaurant, a nice way to end our final night.

## Laguna Lagarto – San Jose – 25<sup>th</sup> June

We had to depart the lodge around 6:30 to head back to San Jose where some of us were leaving the country. We said our farewells to Mary Beth as she was getting picked up to head to Arenal. We couldn't stop very often as we were on a tight schedule but we did see **Collared Aracari**, **Western Cattle Egrets**, **Red-winged Blackbirds** and **Melodious Blackbird** on our trip back to the capital. Once we arrived in San Jose most of us were leaving the group so this is where our fantastic Costa Rica tour officially ended.

Thank you to Dennis and Bill for their invaluable knowledge and thank you to everyone on the tour for making it such fun to lead. Oh and we must not forget the wonderful Ramon!

Tom Bird

