

# Costa Rica trip report

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Costa Rica is a beautiful country, with nature everywhere and lots of beautiful animals. We traveled (me and my girlfriend Noa) with a jeep along the pacific coast, the central highland and the northern part of the country for 3 and a half weeks in June 2026. Noa is kind of a mammal watcher because she is very keen to find wildlife but she doesn't have a lot of patience for birds. I love both. We've seen 20 mammal species in the entire trip. Our itinerary included San Gerardo de Dota, Chirripo, Corcovado, Manuel Antonio, Carara, Monteverde, Rio Celeste, Arenal and Bajos del Toro. During this trip report I will mark **mammals** in red, **birds** in blue and **reptiles** in green.

## San Gerardo de Dota and Chirripo

Even though there are many mammals in the remote cloud forests, they are not easy to see here and the only mammals we saw were **red-tailed squirrel**, **variegated squirrel** and **central american agouti**. It is an amazing area though with beautiful scenery and lots of birds and butterflies. The

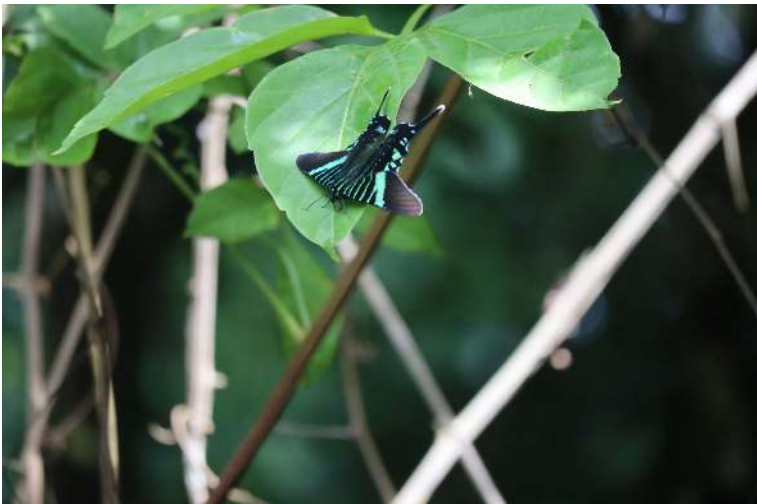


Paraiso Quetzal Lodge had the most productive **hummingbird** feeders I have ever seen, and during a morning trip inside the village of San Gerardo de Dota we managed to find without a guide three amazing **quetzals** in a parking lot just below the entrance to hotel Savegre, and **golden browed chlorophonias** in the same place. The chirripo trail was also nice and we found lots of beautiful butterflies and birds including **emerald toucanet** and **red headed barbet**.



## Corcovado

After missing this area in my first trip to Costa Rica, it has been a dream come true to arrive here. Already on the way you start to feel the wilderness and it keeps on getting wilder and feels like a rare glimpse to how the world once used to be. We stayed at the Drake Bay Wilderness Resort which was outside of Drake Bay in a natural area and was fascinating. It had some trails going out to the forest and the nearby beach and a great lookout towards the sea. We saw both **spider monkeys** and **howlers** along the trail and sometimes inside the resort, and the highlight for us was a small flock of **scarlet macaws** that came to feed just above the pool. We heard from the waiter that a tamandua is coming from time to time to the trees in front of the restaurant but we never got to see it.



We had two day tours organised by the hotel - one to the corcovado sirena station and the other to snorkel in cano island. We knew before and can now confirm that staying a night in the sirena ranger station is a better option if you want to get to see all the mammals of the area, but we chose to skip it this time. Our tour started with a pod of **pantropical spotted dolphins** that swam around our boat for a few minutes, after arriving on shore we immediately started to see animals. The animals of this place were never harmed by people so they are not really afraid and we had close encounters with **howlers**, **spider monkeys**, **squirrel monkeys**, **agoutis**, **peccaries** and **coatis**.



After a long search in the hot sun we also managed to find a big pregnant female **tapir** that was sleeping deeply. Apart from that the forest was amazing, with gigantic trees, and we saw so many unique plants, bugs, crabs, birds and reptiles and it was an amazing day, just make sure to bring a lot of water in reusable bottles (plastic bottles are not allowed) and be prepared to sweat a lot.



the tour to cano island started unwell with a huge storm that made us completely wet and cold, but once we entered the water everything was great, the water are hot and snorkeling was great with lots of **green sea turtles** and a few whitetip reef sharks and many beautiful fish, and the highlight was a pod of **common bottlenose dolphins** that came to visit us.

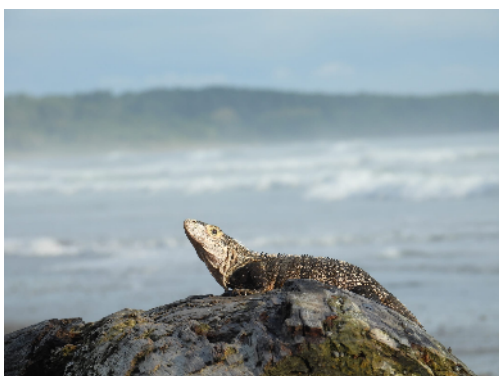


## Manuel Antonio

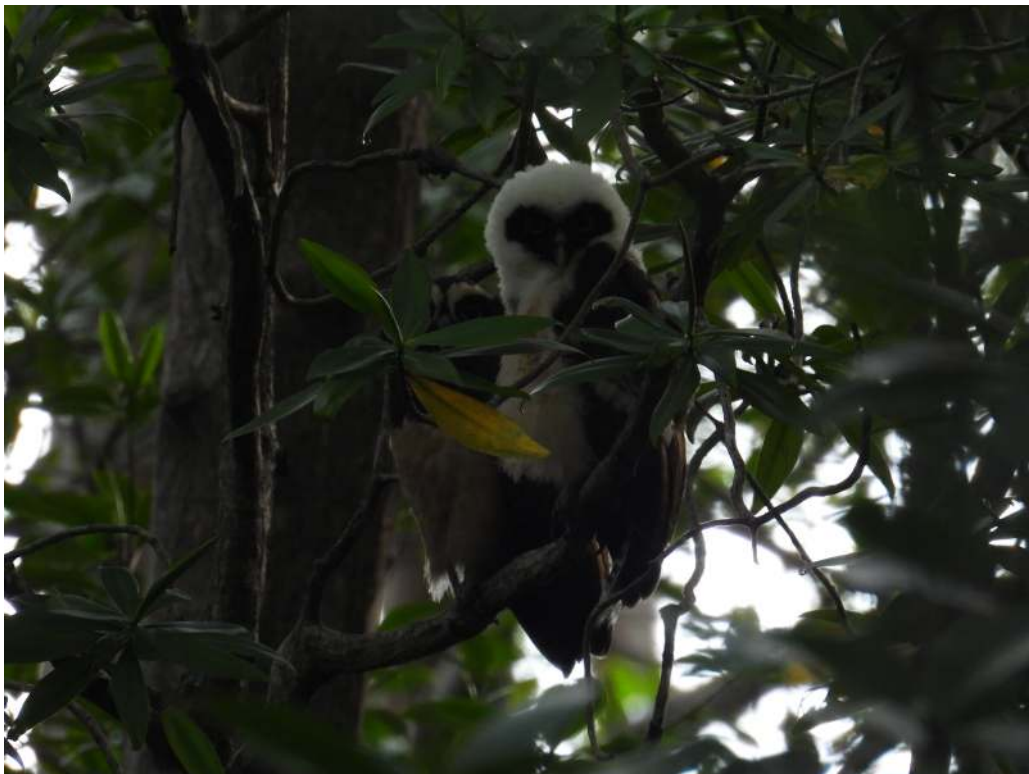
After the wilderness of Corcovado we continued to Manuel Antonio, some of the best sights we had were actually inside the town. From our airbnb in calla vieja in the southern part of Quepos we saw a huge group of one hundred **squirrel monkeys** that fed in the palm trees in the early mornings and also found a **three toed sloth** from the pool.



The national park is a bit overcrowded and has many annoying guides. We walked on our own and found a few **two-toed sloths** in good observations, **coatis**, **variegated squirrel**, **howler monkeys**, **capuchins** and **squirrel monkeys**. Apart from that we had a rare encounter with an **inca tern**, a very rare visitor from South America and we saw many **iguanas** and **basilisks** of course, a cute **parrot snake** and **tent making bats**.

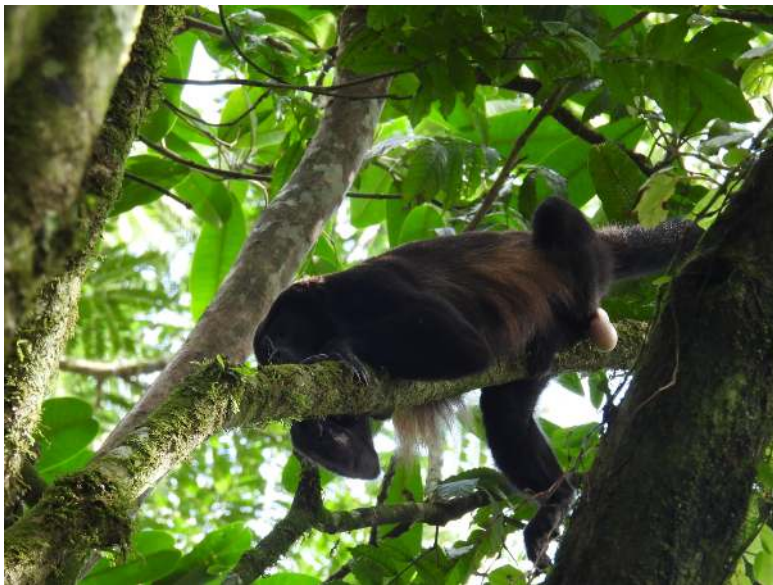


We also tried our luck in the mangroves of Damas Island with Milentours (+506 76998896) which are the best experts to find the silky anteater, but we weren't lucky this time. We did see some **capuchins**, **proboscis bats** and nice birds like the **spectacled owl**.



## Carara

We stayed only one night in the area in the Cerro lodge which is connected with a short and easy dirt road to the crocodile bridge and has a nice forest. During the day the lodge and the road provided a lot of good birds including [scarlet macaws](#) that come to the lodge every morning and afternoon, [turquoise-browed motmots](#), [pacific screech owl](#) and many big [crocodiles](#) from the bridge, as well as a nice group of [howlers](#) that were observed around the lodge. During the night a quick spotlighting from the road provided a few [racoons](#) and a [common opossum](#), and the lodge had a lot of [cane toads](#) and frogs.



The national park was nice but we didn't see a lot of mammals, just a nice family of **spider monkeys** apart from a few birds, butterflies and **black and green poison dart frogs**.



## Monteverde

Monteverde is definitely a beautiful area that contains a lot of different wildlife. We had a great day in Curi Cancha Reserve where we saw **coatis**, **variegated** and **deppe's squirrel**, **agoutis**, **capuchins** and a lot of morphos, a few nice birds like the **chlorophonia** and the **keel billed toucan** and **emerald toucanet** and much more.



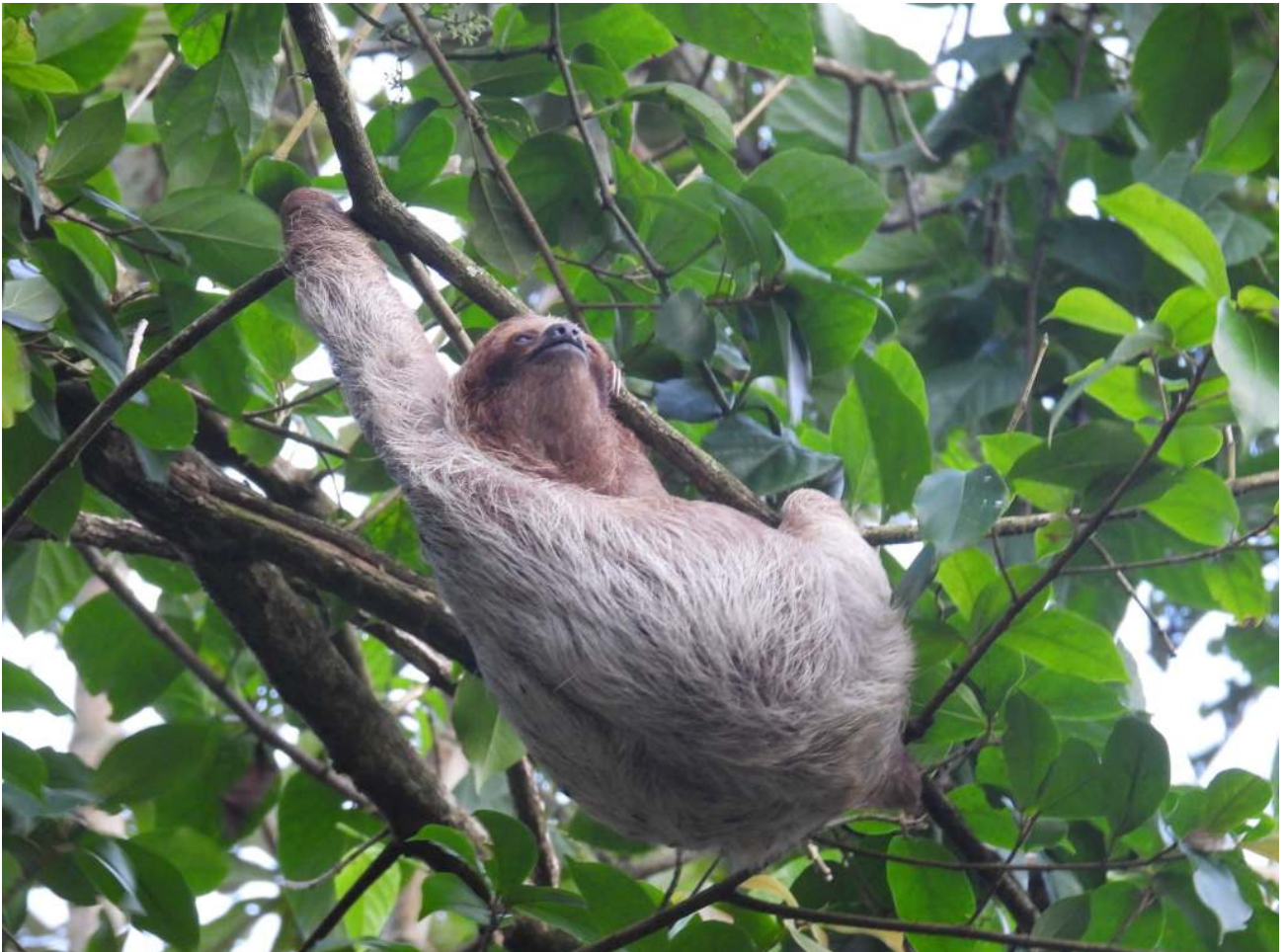
during canopy in selvatura we saw a beautiful **quetzal**, a few **agoutis** and **verigated squirrels**, and the highlight of the area was surely a night tour in lantana with Ever (+506 88396857), he is a great guide and knows very well the mammals of the area. We were happy to get two good observations on an **olingo** which was our main target. We didn't see other mammals this time but Ever can surely find them. We did see some frogs, a **pit viper** and **mottled owls**.



## Rio Celeste

In Rio Celeste we had one of the longest days of our lives with no less than 11 sloths found! In the reserve we found no notable mammals or others, and we went to the Helliocnias lodge where we walked the hanging bridges and found a family of **spider monkeys**. After that we stopped for lunch in the Finca Verde lodge where we found along the trail a few **howler monkeys** and a **two-toed sloth**. Later we accidentally discovered a small place that is called the Bijagua Rainforest Garden, where a small family of nature lovers live and run a small business (+506 89982954). We were guided by Mauro, a teenager that spent his whole life in the forest and knows it very well. We first did a tour around the property and found some nice birds, **three toed sloths**, **howlers**, **strawberry poison dart frogs** and **proboscis bats**, and later in the evening we went to a new location where a tapir had been found often recently. It was a great place and we found there a few **sloths**, lots of good birds including 4 **toucan** species and a **long tailed tyrant**, lots of beautiful frog species and eventually a huge male **tapir** that gave a great observation but wasn't photographed well.





## Arenal

We went to the Boggarin trail where we found both **sloth** species, **agoutis** **squirrels**, **iguanas**, both species of **poison dart frogs**, **red eyed tree frogs** and a few nice birds like the **jacamar** and the **fasciated antshrike**. The highlight of this area was the Arenal Observatory lodge and trails. We made a short visit but found a beautiful big group of **spider monkeys** and two sleeping **spectacled owls**, and the sunset was amazing. During a stay in the Los Lagos hotel we also saw a group of **peccaries**.



### **mammals full list**

1. common opossum - carara
2. three toed sloth - manuel antonio, rio celeste, arenal
3. two-toed sloth - manuel antonio, rio celeste, arenal
4. white faced capuchin - manuel antonio, curi cancha
5. squirrel monkey - manuel antonio, corcovado
6. mantled howler - corcovado, manuel antonio, carara, rio celeste
7. spider monkey - corcovado, carara, rio celeste, arenal
8. olingo - monteverde
9. coati - corcovado. manuel antonio, curi cancha
10. common racoon - carara
11. collared peccary - corcovado, arenal
12. baird's tapir - corcovado, rio celeste
13. agouti - chirripo, corcovado, monteverde, arenal
14. pantropical spotted dolphin - corcovado
15. common bottlenose dolphin - corcovado
16. verigated squirrel - chirripo, manuel antonio, carara, monteverde, arenal, bajos del torro
17. red-tailed squirrel - san gerardo de dota, chirripo, corcovado, arenal, manuel antonio, rio celeste
18. deppe's squirrel - rio celeste, monteverde
19. tent making bat - manuel antonio
20. proboscis bat - manuel antonio, rio celeste

all in all it was an incredible nature experience, more photos below(:  
you are welcome to whatsapp me if you have any questions,  
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