

# Bird and Mammal Trip Report

## Costa Rica May – June 2019

Rob Jansen

Romy Jansen-Houtzager



*Rob Jansen*  
photography

# Introduction

## About us

We are two enthusiastic bird and mammal lovers who travel the world together to search for stunning birds, fascinating mammals and incredible nature.

**Rob Jansen** is biologist and photographer. As a biologist, Rob has a lot of knowledge about species and ecology. In his spare time he photographs birds, mammals and all other beautiful creatures. The photos in this report are made by Rob.

**Romy Jansen-Houtzager** is a marketing professional. The marketing behind our social media accounts, the look and feel of this report and the website are all her work. In the field, she is an excellent spotter and very patient (give me some of her patience ...and hurry!). She is the camera woman and editor of our movies.



**Rob and Romy** on a rainy morning in San Gerardo de Dota

## Information and how to use this trip report

For all photos of our Costa Rica trip or any specific questions, visit our website.

 [www.robjansenphotography.com/costarica](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/costarica)

 [www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography](https://www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography)

Species are highlighted in this trip report: **blue for birds**, **red for mammals** and **green for herpetofauna**. Target species which we missed on a specific spot are written in *italic*. This gives you an idea which species to pay extra attention to. All observations made by us in Costa Rica can be found on Observation.org. We observed a total of 450 bird species and 35 mammal species within four weeks. Click here for the: [total bird list](#), [total mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#).

## Weather and timing

We visited Costa Rica from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May till the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2019. This is at the beginning of the rainy season, but in the tropics it's always quite rainy. The rain mostly started later in the morning, so some afternoons were lost due to rain. Costa Ricans told us it is way less predictable nowadays.

We do recommend traveling during this low season, because places are not very crowded and prices drop (and one can easily get discounts even at the bigger hotels). Although for finding birds this time of year is more difficult. We searched hours for species that are normally easily seen on the feeders in December/January. May - June is also the breeding season, which means that fewer birds were calling and some were already on their nest.

## Transportation

Tickets were booked with Air France. We flew from Düsseldorf via Paris to San José. Our flight back home was from San José via Panama City, via Amsterdam to Düsseldorf. The total ticket cost for two persons was €1091 (US\$ 1320).

We rented a 4x4 via Sunny Cars. For 29 days we paid €649 (US\$ 785) including insurance. Service was good, although they tried to include extra insurance at the local desk. Pickup from airport to car depot was arranged.



Studying the books



Our decent 4x4 at La Selva Biological Station

## Literature

We used the following books and apps:

- The birds of Costa Rica 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2014, Garrigues & Dean. *Great book, a must have.*
- Where to Watch Birds in Costa Rica, 2009, Barrett Lawson. *Just ok, not worth the money in our opinion. Trip reports are more useful.*
- The Mammals of Costa Rica, 2007, Mark Wainwright. *Great book with a lot of in depth info.*
- Reptiles and Amphibians of Costa Rica. *Nice small pocket guide.*
- Merlin app for the birds sound. *Just amazing that the app is free. We didn't miss any sounds.*

## Equipment

**Photography:** EOS Canon 7D mark II + Canon 100-400 II (Rob), Panasonic Lumix Z300 (Romy)

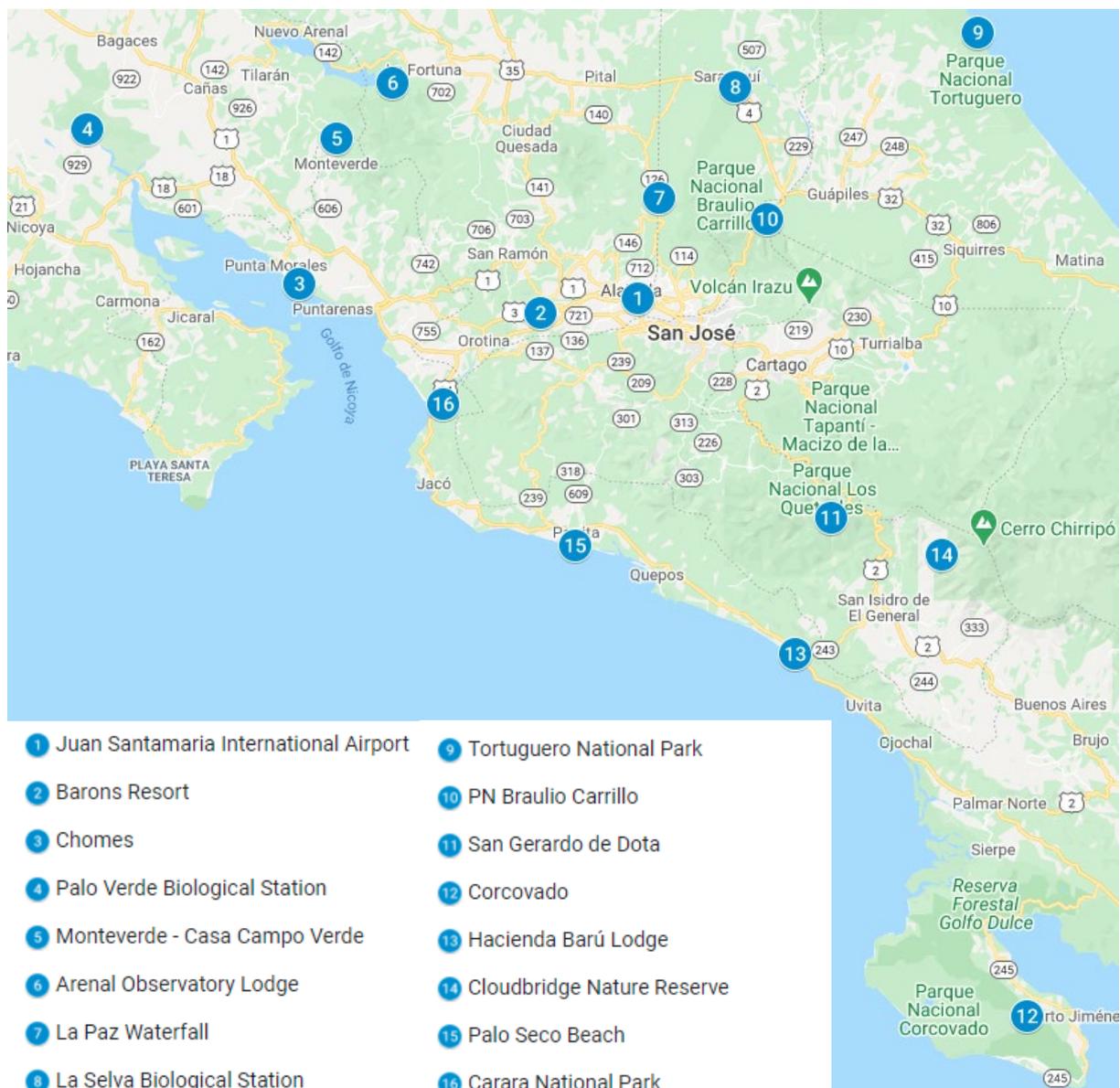
**Binoculars and telescope:** 2x Eden 8x32 XP binoculars, Swarovski 65HD telescope

**Spotlighting:** Fenix TK35 2018-edition (powerful!) and Led Lenser P7R (can be focussed©)

## Map and specific locations

We made a [map in Google My Maps](#) with pointers of all our accommodations, interesting trails and places and specific bird and mammal locations. You can view this map, or you can download the points and add them to your own map (click on the three dots above the legend and download the KML file and drag this to your own map), or add them in the app 'Maps.me'. This app is very useful. It has almost all walking trails on it and you can use it offline. Route navigation by car doesn't always work great with this app though (yes, we found that out the hard way, while driving a bumpy road in the middle of nowhere for three hours).

In the map you can see our route. We planned our first accommodation to the west of San José to avoid traffic jams when just arriving in a new country. We then went clockwise and crossed San José on a Sunday. This way we didn't lose half our day crossing the city like on a weekday. Ending in Carara means that the airport is just one highway away, again: without crossing San José.



# Visited sites

## Barons Resort

[9.96858, -84.4056](#)

**Visited dates:** 24 - 25 May 2019

**Accommodation:** US\$ 77 p.n., including breakfast. This is a really nice hotel with spacious rooms and friendly staff. It is conveniently located, about 35-45 minutes' drive west of the airport. Booked via [booking.com](https://www.booking.com).

We were tired from our flight, so we went to our bed early. We woke up every hour due to the jetlag. The comfortable bed made it pretty ok though. We were so happy when the hour arrived that we opened our eyes and it was actually getting light outside! We observed the valley from our balcony and went into the garden to observe our first hummer in Costa Rica: a **Blue-vented Hummingbird!** We left quite early in the morning with a packed breakfast, because we wanted to be at Chomes with low tide.

## Chomes

[10.02727, -84.90251](#)

**Visited dates:** 25 May 2019

**Accommodation:** None. We went here one morning in between stays.

**How to get there:** Getting to Chomes village is not too hard, taking the 603 from the Pan-American Highway. We did have some trouble finding the right path towards the mangroves from the village though. Make sure to drive the dirt road at the southern end of town ([10.041133, -84.908169](#)). You pass some 'houses' and grasslands, where we saw **White-throated Magpie-jay**.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** High tide is a must for this place. Check this website for the tides at Puntarenas, which are more or less the same for Chomes: <https://www.tideschart.com/Costa-Rica/Puntarenas/>

At high tide thousands of shorebirds make way to Chomes to rest and forage in the salt ponds and shrimp ponds. Just in front of the beach is a good sand bank where it is easy birding with your binos or scope. We saw **Black Skimmer, Collared Plover, Wilson's Plover, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Willet, Marbled Godwit, Hudsonian Whimbrel, Grey Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Laughing Gull, Cabot's Tern, Royal Tern, Laughing Gull, Yellow-crowned Night-heron** and saw **Magnificent Frigatebirds** flying over.

The mangroves are good for **Cinnamon Hummingbird, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Lesser Nighthawk** and **Mangrove Warbler**. We couldn't find it, but the mangroves should be the place to look for **Mangrove Rail** along the edges early morning. Other people have also reported **Panama Flycatcher, Northern Scrub Flycatcher, Mangrove Vireo** and **Mangrove Cuckoo**.



Lesser Nighthawk



Black Skimmer

## Shrimp Farms

[10.0534, -84.9205](#)

If you want to see **Black-necked Stilts**, make sure to make a little detour through the Shrimp Farms on the way back. You can drive your car through it.

## Palo Verde National Park

[10.34519, -85.33874](#)

**Visited dates:** 25 - 27 May 2019

**Accommodation:** Palo Verde Biological Station (US\$ 95 p.n., including dinner). Bookable via [www.tropicalstudies.org](http://www.tropicalstudies.org). It is very basic, but a pleasant place to stay. One walk with a guide is included. One can arrange a boat trip (US\$ 114 for two) along the river as well with them on location.

**How to get there:** Drive towards Bagaces ([10.51669, -85.25449](#)). Then take the dirt road R922 to the south, which leads to Palo Verde NP. Keep a good eye on the fields adjacent to the road. They are good places for **Crested Bobwhite, Scarlet Macaw, Orange-fronted Parakeet, White-fronted Parrot, Yellow-naped Parrot, Black-headed Trogon, Wood Storks, Limpkin** and **Roseate Spoonbill**. You might be luckier than us and spot a **Snail Kite** as well.

A beautiful place, but it might be better during other months of the year. The rain had only started a little bit, and puddles formed on the massive fields. The warm conditions are ideal for mosquitos, and there were many, like light-blackening many (consider taking a blood transfusion bag). Once the rain season is well on its way, the river will overflow and most mosquito larvae will be eaten by fish and amphibians.



Road to Palo Verde Biological Station

Despite the mosquitoes, this is a good place to walk or drive around. Listen for the sound of **Thicket Tinamou** between the shrubs when you drive from the main gate to the lodge. The forest is good for **Turquoise-browed Motmot**, **Black-headed Trogon** and **Scrub Euphonia**. Around the lodge **Great Curassow**, **Central American Agouti**, **Variegated Squirrel** and **Black Iguana** can be quite easily seen. **Mantled Howler Monkey** and **White-tailed Deer** are also present. South of the lodge there are some patches of forest in front of the vast plains start. Those patches are good for **Laughing Falcon**, **Mangrove Cuckoo** and **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl**. At night this area yields **Barn Owl**, **Common Pauraque**, **Northern Black-eared Opossum**, **Northern Raccoon** (they were foraging on the fields, seen from the small wooden lookout) and **Eastern Cottontail**.



Laughing Falcon



Great Curassow

We walked towards the jetty along the river and saw **Turquoise-browed Motmot**, **Double-striped Thick-knee**, **Limpkin**, **Rose-throated Becard**, **Yellow-olive Flatbill** and **Cinnamon Hummingbird**. On the way you pass a farm house with an old mango orchard next to it, where we spotted **White-tailed Deer** and also **Greater Bulldog Bats** hanging from a tree at night (but we couldn't find a hollow). We

also encountered a **Boa Constrictor** on the road, as well as **Scorpion Mud Turtle**, **Cane Toad** and **Yellow Toad**.

## Palo Verde – River Cruise

[10.34163, -85.36612](#)

One can take a boat trip on River Tempisque, which most likely yields **Boat-billed Heron**, **Bare-throated Tiger Heron**, really well camouflaged **Long-nosed Proboscis Bats**, **American Crocodile** and **Common Green Iguana**. A great place to get away from the mosquitos, but the price (US\$ 114 for two) wasn't worth it in our opinion. But even without a river cruise there is lots to see at Palo Verde!

## Palo Verde – Rice Fields

[10.40434, -85.31999](#)

The rice fields are a good place to look for water-bound species like **Amazon Kingfisher**, **Green Kingfisher**, **Limpkin** and **Roseate Spoonbill**. We also found **Pinnated Bittern** in one of the many ditches.



Bare-throated Tiger Heron

Double-striped Thick-knee

## Monteverde

[10.32655, -84.82639](#)

**Visited dates:** 27 – 30 May 2019

**Accommodation:** Casa Campo Verde (US\$ 36 p.n., including breakfast). We booked via booking.com, but it's not on there anymore. It looks like one can still book via other websites. The apartments are comfortable and spacious, standing in a green environment, overlooking the surrounding hills. The owner only speaks Spanish, but that wasn't a problem. A packed breakfast was possible, even as early as 05.00 or 06.00 in the morning.

We have seen **Tree-wattled Bellbird** from the garden in the treetops on the hills you look on from the apartment. Also **White-eared Ground Sparrow** was seen in the garden.

## Don Juan Tours Monteverde

[10.32568, -84.83469](#)

Close by you can find “Don Juan Tours Monteverde”, the place for a (touristy and expensive) chocolate tour. It is also a good place to park your car and watch **White-fronted Amazon**, **Red-lored Amazon**, **Orange-chinned Parakeet** and **Montezuma Oropendola** fly by from the parking.

## Cabanis’s Ground Sparrow Road

[10.32439, -84.84452](#)

A street a bit further west ([10.32439, -84.84452](#)) is the place where **Cabanis’s Ground-Sparrow** is sometimes seen. We only saw **Rufous-browed Peppershrike**, **Yellow-throated Euphonia** and **Orange-billed Nightingale-thrush**.



## Refugio de Vida Silvestre Monteverde

[10.32886, -84.82783](#)

**General information:** Night tours start at 18.00 and 20.00 (US\$ 20/30 per person). Book the tour by just showing up or preferably via <https://refugiomonteverdecr.com/>

This place only does guided tours. The night tours here can be rewarding. Take the second tour, by then they have already some information from the first groups. If the amount of tourists is high they split up in multiple groups and keep in contact via walkie-talkies. We went here on a dry evening without any wind. Perfect conditions! Already on the open patch at the start we had **Central American Agouti**, and it didn’t take long before we heard a **Mantled Howler** calling in the distance and a **Mottled Owl** calling a bit closer by. Furthermore the evening produced **Hoffmann’s Two-toed Sloth**, **Kinkajou**, **Derby’s Woolly Opossum** and **Mexican Hairy Dwarf Porcupine**, besides a cute sleeping **White-necked Jacobin** and **Lesson’s Motmot**. Herpetofauna was represented by a **Side-striped Palm Pit Viper**, **Blunt-headed Tree Snake**, **Common Tink Frog**, **Border Anole**, **Craugastor crassidigitus**. We also had a Giant Walking Stick Insect, Dead Leaf Katydid, the huge Blue Morpho Butterfly and Yellow-edged Giant Owl.

The street towards this place (Calle Los Camachos) is good for **Three-wattled Bellbird**. The same holds for the fields northeast of it. There we also observed **Grey-crowned Yellowthroat** and **Northern Emerald Toucanet**.



Dead Leaf Katydid

Giant Walkingstick

## Monteverde Cloud Forest

[10.30265, -84.79573](#)

**General information:** open from 07.00 till 16.00, every day (US\$ 25 p.p.). Parking is officially not allowed in front of the entrance. In low season it seems to be condoned and we parked here as well. Otherwise you have to park at official parking ([10.3002, -84.80395](#)) (US\$ 5 for parking). Walking up the hill takes about 30-45 minutes from here, but apparently shuttle buses drive up and down at least in high season. Consider a taxi in low season if you have trouble walking or just want to spend all your time walking in the forest.

**Website:** <https://cloudforestmonteverde.com/>

Just before the park restaurant there is a little raised platform with a little pond. Between these plants were two **Side-striped Palm Pit Vipers** ([10.30251, -84.79547](#)).

We wanted to make the most of it and hired a guide for the morning. Inside the park it took quite some effort before we saw our first **Three-wattled Bellbird**, only to realize later it was very easy to see this species this time of the year in other places (see other places in Monteverde). Not much later we had another target: a male **Resplendent Quetzal!** If that was not enough, we also had a **Golden-browed Euphonia** high up in the trees and heard an **Azure-hooded Jay**. The guide showed us a **Green-fronted Lancebill** at the little waterfall ([10.3076, -84.79184](#)). Standing on the platform, look towards the waterfall, about 2/3rds up and look for an overhanging branch. Preferably bring a scope if you have one, it's quite distant.

After parting from our guide we decided to walk in the reserve the rest of the day and saw **Three-striped Warbler**, **Slate-throated Whitestart**, **Collared Whitestart**, **Slaty-backed Nightingale-thrush**,

**Black-faced Solitaire**, a **Chiriqui Quail-dove** crossing the path and a **Mantled Howler**. A good place is the steel bridge, where we saw **Prong-billed Barbet**, multiple **Resplendent Quetzals**, **Spangle-cheeked Tanagers** and an **Ochraceous Wren**. Quite a good list, despite the pouring rain during the last few hours of our walk.

## Café Colibrí

[10.3023, -84.7962](#)

Café Colibrí is just across the street from Monteverde Cloud Forest. Entrance is free, but if you enjoy it, be sure to buy a coffee or an empanada. For us it was a perfect place to have a look at many hummers for the first time, besides the many **Bananaquits**. And when they come that close and stay that long it's quite easy to ID **Coppery-headed Hummingbird**, **Violet Sabrewing**, **Lesser Violetear**, **Brown Violetear**, **Green Hermit**, **Purple-throated Mountain-gem**, **Green-crowned Brilliant** and **Stripe-tailed Hummingbird**.



Bananaquit



Side-striped palm-pitviper

## Reserva Curi Cancha

[10.30642, -84.80753](#)

**General information:** Open from 07.00 till 15.00, every day, all year (US\$ 20 p.p.)

**Website:** <https://reservacuricancha.com/>

The nice Reserva Curi-Cancha is the perfect to observe **Three-wattled Bellbirds**. Walk northeast from the entrance till the first semi-open patches. Walk a bit up the hill and look back. Some dead branches form the perfect perch for the **Bellbird**. The friendly people at the reception can give advice on where to see them, and also where to encounter the local specialties which are sometimes present, like **Bare-necked Umbrellabird**, **Resplendent Quetzal** and **Orange-bellied Trogon**. Fruiting wild avocado trees are the best place to look for them. We only found a **Variegated Squirrel** on them.

The rest area in the middle of the reserve has some hummingbird feeders. From there we went up the higher Puma Trail, hoping for a **Highland Tinamou**, but couldn't find it. We did see a big family of **White-nosed Coatis** and a **Central American Agouti**. We also saw **Chiriqui Quail Dove** and **Prong-**

**billed Barbets** again, a **Lesson's Motmot**, **White-naped Brushfinch**, **White-throated Spadebill** and a **Banded Wren**. Best of all was along the Manga trail on the way back where we heard a group of **Black-eared Wood Quail**, and after a lot of time, viewed through our binoculars.

## Stella's Bakery

[10.30704, -84.81164](#)

Just along the road, just before Reserva Curi Cancha is a bakery which opens every day at 6.30 and closes at 18.00. They have nice pastries. They also have hummingbird feeders, but we didn't see any activity around. Maybe it's better in a different season?



Lesson's Motmot



Three-wattled Bellbird

## La Reserva Bosque Nuboso Santa Elena

[10.34193, -84.79842](#)

**General information:** open from 07.00 till 15.00, every day (US\$ 20 p.p.)

**Website:** <http://www.reservasantaelena.org/>

First ask at the reception if they know the recent roost of **Bare-shanked Screech-owl**. We didn't know it was there, but they were seen the rest of the year ([10.342, -84.795](#)).

A very nice park, which even has a small wheelchair-accessible part. We walked the Sendero Youth Challenge going south, and then took the Sendero del Bajo trail going around, followed by the big loop back to the entrance via the Sendero Encantado Trail. This park is way less touristy than Monteverde Cloud Forest, and holds the same kind of species. We saw **Prong-billed Barbet** and quite some of the Furnariidae family: **Ruddy Treerunner** (common), **Spotted Barbtail**, **Lineated Foliage-gleaner**, **Streak-breasted Treehunter**, **Brown-billed Scythebill**. Along Sendero Del Bajo you walk parallel to a stream, at which we thought to hear a **Silvery-fronted Tapaculo**. On the Sendero Encantado we had a **Chestnut-capped Brushfinch** crossing the path, as well as **Yellow-thighed Brushfinch**, **Zeledon's Antbird**, **Costa Rican Warbler**, **Tawny-capped Euphonia**, **Black-faced Solitaire**, **Slaty-backed Nightingale-thrush**, **Ruddy-capped Nightingale-thrush** and **Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush**. The only mammal we saw was a **Central American Agouti**.

## Selvatura Adventure Park

[10.34193, -84.79842](#)

On the way back to the town Monteverde, be sure to stop at Selvatura Adventure Park. There is a hummingbird garden (entrance US\$ 5 p.p.), where you can see **Coppery-headed Hummingbird**, **Green Thorntail**, **Violet Sabrewing**, **Lesser Violetear**, **Brown Violetear**, **Green Hermit**, **Purple-throated Mountain-gem**, **Green-crowned Brilliant** and **Stripe-tailed Hummingbird**. Pick up a branch from between the shrubs and 'stick' it between the metal feeders for better photo opportunities. The Selvatura Adventure Park is also the place to drop off the family while you go for some die hard birding or mammal watching at La Reserva Santa Elena.



Purple-throated Mountain-gem female



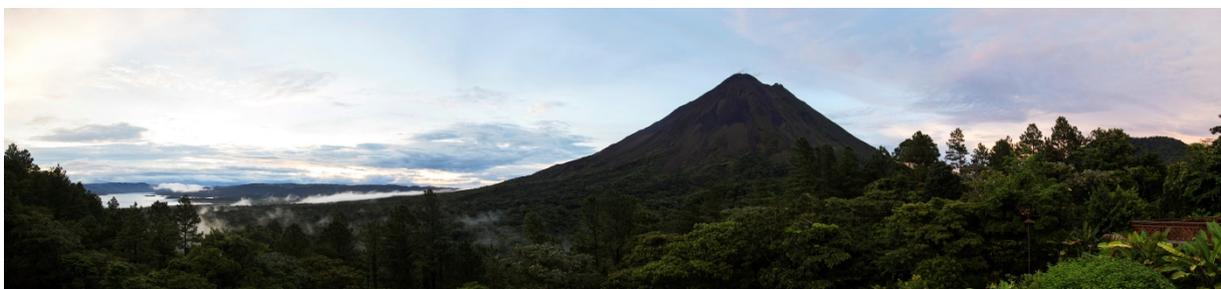
Purple-throated Mountain-gem male

## Arenal Observatory Lodge

[10.43791, -84.71021](#)

Visited dates: 30 May – 02 June 2019

**Accommodation:** Arenal Observatory Lodge - La Casona room (US\$ 88 p.n., including breakfast). The view of the Arenal Volcano is just gorgeous! The accommodation is nice, but a bit pricy compared to our average lodging. A free guided morning tour is included with every booking, but we decided to go out on our own when we saw the huge group which had gathered around the one guide. You also get a map with all the trails, with all the names mentioned in the text below indicated.



### Arenal Observatory Lodge - Garden

The grounds around the hotel are a perfect place for bird and mammal watching. The gardens are great for **Great Curassow**, **Montezuma Oropendola**, **Great Antshrike**, **Stripe-breasted Wren**, **Band-**

**backed Wren**, tanagers like **Bay-headed Tanager** and **Golden-hooded Tanager**, and hummers like **Violet-headed Hummingbird**, **Crowned Woodnymph** and **Purple-crowned Fairy**. The **Black-crested Coquette** is regularly seen feeding on the Verbena that grows along the road towards the spa and in front of the upper Smithsonian rooms.

## Arenal Observatory Lodge - Green gate

Just before going off the property at the green gate, there is a small maintenance building on the right side of the road ([10.4356, -84.70794](#)). This is a good place for **Thicket Antpitta**, especially in the early morning. Pay attention to singing **Northern Nightingale Wrens** in the background. At the green gate we saw **White-nosed Coatis**. Early morning a couple of **Geoffroy's Spider Monkeys** were present and calling there.

## Arenal Observatory Lodge - Danta Waterfall Trail

A couple of hundred meters behind the green gate the Danta Waterfall Trail starts; a nice short trail through well-developed secondary forest, good for **Song Wren**. Walking towards the Danta Hanging Bridge and crossing it gives access to a pasture good for **Northern Rough-winged Swallow**, **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** and the cute **Common Tody-flycatcher**.



Gray Hawk



Geoffroy's Spider Monkey

## Arenal Observatory Lodge - River Trail

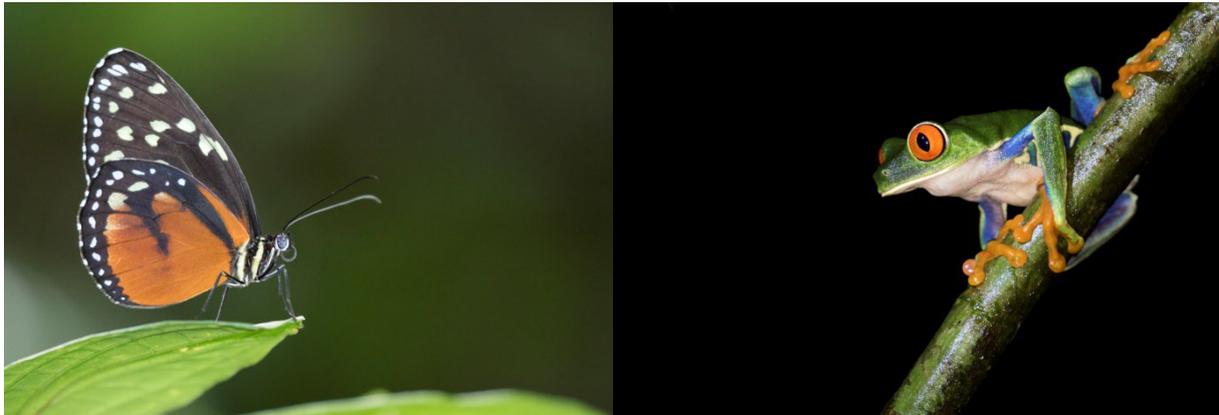
The River Trail, starting at the restaurant, goes downhill very steeply and leads to a...well...you guessed it...a nice babbling brook (it's probably a river in the rainy season though). We had a family of 20 **White-nosed Coatis** here. At the brook I saw a **Salmon-bellied Racer**.

## Arenal Observatory Lodge - Frog Pond

[10.43883, -84.70866](#)

The frog pond is worth visiting every evening, especially after a rain shower! The Frog Pond is well signposted. It is a really good place to observe one of the world's most iconic frogs, the **Red-Eyed Treefrog**. We also saw two snakes; **Slender Snail Sucker** and **Northern Cat-eyed Snake** and multiple

amphibians; **Hourglass Treefrog**, **Mahogany Treefrog**, **Lithobates warszewitschii** and **Incilius melanochloru**.



Cream-spotted Tigerwing

Red-eyed Tree frog

## Arenal Observatory Lodge - Entrance Road

One night we drove back in the dark from la Fortuna to the lodge. There was still quite some traffic on the road, but we wanted to give spotlighting a try. To our surprise we observed an **Oncilla** standing on the road not far from the entrance gate!!! It gave good views, and the many small spots, small size and small ears were clearly visible. Unfortunately it went into the forest when two cars drove by. Going through the gate, near the La Casona rooms, we heard and saw two **Black-and-white Owls** in the trees next to the road. **Common Tapeti** was also seen there, as well as a probable **Vesper Rat**. There is a small lookout tower at the La Casona Rooms, from where we observed a **King Vulture**. When we left the hotel and drove away on our last morning around 09.00, a **Jaguarundi** crossed the road. It stopped on the right side, while I quickly drove up to it. My camera didn't come out of stand-by mode (WHYYYY?! ) and the animal walked into the forest before I could take a proper picture. I jumped out of the car, ran towards the forest and still saw it standing there between all the shrubs. It growled at me, and I don't know why, but my response was to growl back. Funny enough, the animal responded, and this went back and forth a few times. A magical moment, crappy pictures of a paw in the forest, but great memories!

## Arenal Peninsula

[10.46562, -84.75497](#)

We drove this part in the scorching hot afternoon searching for the **Keel-billed Motmot**. It didn't take long before we heard a big group of Motmots high up in the canopy. The rule 'hear it, tick it' doesn't work for this species, as the sound of the **Keel-billed Motmot** is more or less identical to that of the **Broad-billed Motmot**. It took us quite a while before we were able to confirm two individuals in the group of Broad-billeds. The multiple leks of **White-collared Manakins** along the road, the countless **Swallow-tailed Kites** passing overhead and the occasional flyby of a **Keel-billed Toucan** made it all worth-while.

## La Fortuna, Sendero Bogarin

[10.470349, -84.650709](#)

**General information:** opens at 05.00, closes at 18.00 (US\$ 10 p.p.). You get a wristband so you could go back the next day again.

Sendero Bogarin is a great little park which converted agricultural land into forest. Very nice to sit down and watch the feeders, or walk one of the trails. This was one of the few places where the fruit feeders attracted some birds this time of the year. So we were happy to sit down in the hot afternoon and we saw **Scarlet-rumped Tanager**, **Red-legged Honeycreeper** and **Greyish Saltator**. The puddle yielded **White-throated Crake**, **Green Basilisk** (the 'Jesus Christ Lizard'!) and the elusive **Uniform Crake**, which sometimes comes out in the daytime. Be sure to ask the great guys running the place if they go into the forest with you just after closing time when the crake starts calling at dusk. Entering the trail will surely result in seeing **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**, somewhat resembling an oversized hummingbird. Pay attention to **Black-throated Wren** as well. This is probably the easiest place in Costa Rica to see a **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth**! If you take a guided tour you can see up to 20 of them, but consider yourself lucky if you see more than one on your own! There is a roost of **Spectacled Owl** ([10.4717, -84.6532](#)). Be sure to ask the guides if it's not there. They also know a nearby roost of **Boat-billed Heron** if you haven't see that species yet.



Scarlet-rumped Tanager



Red-legged Honeycreeper

## Sky Adventures Arenal Park

[10.424873, -84.735423](#)

**General information:** Opens at 07.00, closes at 16.00. Self-guiding is possible. It is a bit expensive at almost US\$ 30 p.p. (Sky Walk, without guide), but worth it.

We decided to walk the whole Sky Walk to optimize our chances of seeing birds and didn't take the touristy Sky Tram. We arrived around 8:30 and had a **Spotted Antbird** as soon as we entered the forest. On the total walk, you will cross six bridges. The second bridge is a good place to look for **Blue-and-Gold Tanager**. This species is missed more often than seen, and we were no exception to that rule. We did hear the resident **Tody Motmot**. We were lucky enough to run into guide Gabriela Rojas who pointed out a **Central American Dwarf Squirrel** and an **Eyelash Pit Viper** to us! (and she

told us another guide saw a *Jaguarundi* the day before on a path near the entrance!). The stretch till bridge 3 was not very productive, except for a **White-throated Shrike-tanager**, **Black-throated Trogon** and two **Scale-crested Pygmy Tyrants**. The valley between bridge 3 and 4 is the place where **Yellow-eared Toucanet** is regularly seen. Not regular enough for us unfortunately.

Somewhere towards the end we suddenly saw some birds jumping on the forest floor. It didn't take long before we realised we were about to witness a great natural phenomenon. ARMY ANT RAAAAID! If you don't know what that is, imagine American crowds entering a Walmart on Black Friday just after the store opened. Try imagining this again, but then with ants in a tropical forest. These ants march through the forest in a 20 meter wide formation, eating everything that crosses their path. Some birds are specialised in following these raids. They don't eat the ants, but the prey which flee from the first line of attack. We had **Ocellated Antbird**, **Zeledon's Antbird** and **Bicolored Antbird** present! Lie down on the ground to take the best pictures, but be sure to stand up on time.

All caught up in the emotion we walked and talked, when Romy turned around to me and shouted: SNAKE! SNAKE! I made a jump which wouldn't look out of place at an equestrian event when I realised I was actually standing on top of it. Luckily the **Cope's Vine Snake** was able to crawl away unharmed.



Ocellated Antbird



Bicolored Antbird

## La Paz Waterfall

[10.20693, -84.16409](#)

**Visited dates:** 02 June 2019

**Accommodation:** None. We went here on the way from Arenal towards La Selva.

La Paz Waterfall Gardens ([10.20447, -84.16142](#)) is probably worth a proper visit with the family if you are staying nearby. We arrived at the gardens around 14.00, and wanted to arrive at La Selva on time later that afternoon as well. So we only visited the feeders at the entrance, which you can get to without paying the hefty entrance fee (US\$ 45 p.p.). Rob had a **Black-bellied Hummingbird** here, which Romy unfortunately missed due to the long line at the women's toilets.

## Soda y Mirador Cinchona

[10.22229, -84.1673](#)

Soda y Mirador Cinchona is a perfect stop for lunch, while enjoying the stunning view of the waterfall. The feeders attracted lots of species, but not the *Red-headed Barbets* that are seen easily here in December/January. We had *Coppery-headed Emerald*, *Green Thorntail*, *Stripe-tailed Hummingbird*, *Green Hermit*, *Rufous-tailed Hummingbird*, *Green-crowned Brilliant*, *Violet Sabrewing*, *Scarlet-rumped Tanager*, *Silver-throated Tanager*, *White-naped Brushfinch* and a nice cold 'batido'.



Green Thorntail



The view from Soda y Mirador Cinchona

## La Selva Biological Station

[10.43122, -84.00333](#)

**Visited dates:** 02 - 05 June 2019

**Accommodation:** La Selva Biological Station (US\$ 124 p.n., including breakfast and one morning walk with a guide). The cottages are very basic (see photo with the car in the introduction chapter), but why would you stay inside at such a beautiful place? Bookable via [www.tropicalstudies.org](http://www.tropicalstudies.org)



The bridge to the other side of the river



Leafcutter Ants

Where to start? There's just so much to tell about this place. Is it expensive? Yes, quite! Is it worth it? Yes, totally! If you stay here you are allowed to walk all the paths and trails without a guide, day and

night. One morning with a guide is included with every booking. The bird guides are really knowledgeable and you will enjoy it for sure, hard core nature fanatic or not. If you are not staying here you can still do a guided tour, and you can get to just before the reception, where there is a guard to stop you. Yes, good point, let's start there.

## La Selva – Main Road

The main road towards the Biological Station is one of the best places at La Selva for bird and mammal watching, especially the part just before the main parking. Even in the heat we were able to find some good species like **Plain-colored Tanager**, **Crimson-collared Tanager**, **Long-tailed Flycatcher**, **Rufous-winged Woodpecker**, **Pale-billed Woodpecker**, **Cocoa Woodcreeper**, **Northern Barred Woodcreeper**, **Broad-winged Hawk**, **Bright-rumped Attila**, **Yellow Tyrannulet**, **Yellow-olive Flatbill**, **Cinnamon Becard**, **Black-throated Wren**, **Shiny Cowbird** and **Yellow-billed Cacique**. The flowers here attract **Long-billed Hermit**, **Stripe-throated Hermit** and **Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer**, the latter we dipped here. **Great Green Macaws** can be seen flying over the restaurant early morning and late afternoon. Some people have **Snowy Cotinga** and **Tiny Hawk** here as well.



**Great Green Macaws**



**Golden-hooded Tanager**

The main road is also the best area for mammal watching at night. The wires are used by **Kinkajou**, **Mexican Hairy Porcupine** and **Common Opossum** to cross the road. Coming from the main road you make a turn to the left, and then the road bends to the left again at a green fence. Just 50 meters behind the fence is the place where **Middle American Screech-Owl (Vermiculated)** ([10.43554, -84.00364](#)) has a roost, but it wasn't there when we were.



Male Great Tinamou with chick

Common Opossum

## La Selva – Cabin Road and River

[10.43862, -84.00601](#)

Coming from the main road, not turning left but going straight, brings you to the cabins. This stretch of road is also good for spotlighting. We had **Spectacled Owl** here, as well as both **Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth** and **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth** on one night! This Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth was a male, clearly visible by the yellow-orange patch of short hairs on the back. The structure of sloth hairs is quite special, because they have longitudinal grooves (two-toed) or cracks (three-toed) in them. This most likely stimulates the amount of green algae in their fur, making them better camouflaged. As you can see on the picture, his head and shoulders blend in pretty well with the environment.

At the cabins there is a tree where many passerines sleep ([10.43869, -84.00759](#)). Check it out quietly and discover that some birds can be even cuter than you thought. Going past the cabins you can continue about 100m towards the river. It was on this stretch we found a **Mexican Hairy Porcupine** in a tree.

If you stay at La Selva it is worth it to walk towards the river every time you are at the cabins. The sand banks are a perfect place for **Neotropical River Otter** and **Sunbittern**, which are both seen here sometimes. We missed out on both here, but what a nice spot.

To give **Sunbittern** and **Neotropical River Otter** an extra try we chartered a boat in the village nearby ([10.45741, -84.00389](#)) for US\$ 50, and did a 3 hour trip on the river. No luck, but a nice relaxing boat trip where we could put our feet up for a while instead of walking.



Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth

Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth (male)

## La Selva – SAZ Trail

[10.43586, -84.0056](#)

The trails around La Selva have names and abbreviations, of which you will get a map if you stay there. The Arriera and Zompopa Trail (SAZ) brings you from the cabins towards the reception through the forest. The flowers around the cabins are visited by **Long-billed Hermit**, **Stripe-throated Hermit** and **Blue-chested Hummingbird**. See if you can also ID a **Boat-billed Flycatcher** here. Walking the ZAS trail you can encounter three different species of **Tinamou: Little, Great and Slaty-breasted**. We even had one **Slaty-breasted Tinamou** walking out of the cover and one male **Great Tinamou** with chick sleeping on a branch while spotlighting (yes, you read that right: the male Tinamous care for the chicks). The bridge over the creek is a good place to check for **Agami Heron**. The area is quite open here, which is where we saw **Semiplumbeous Hawk** and **Chestnut-colored Woodpecker**. There is a path to the left which takes you to the main road. Take that and stop at the shelter if you want to see **Lesser Sac-winged Bats** in a shelter next to the path ([10.4362, -84.004](#)).

Going past the bridge over the creek the path curves through the forest. This is where **White-collared Manakins** have their lek on both sides of the path (around marker 600). There are plants with big leaves on the right side here as well. Check if they have a weird kink in the veins, parallel to the main stem of the leaf. **Honduran White Bats** chew the veins to create a shelter for the day. A predator climbing on the plant will definitely disturb the bats, so they will be able to fly away before it can catch them. Apparently some **White-faced Capuchins** have learned to jump on the leaf, which causes the bats to fall on the forest floor, where they are caught and eaten! It goes without saying that you shouldn't cause them to fly away if you spot them.

Walking the SAZ trail further towards the reception we encountered many good species, like **White-ringed Flycatcher**, **Red-throated Ant Tanager**, **Dusky-faced Tanager**, **Pied Puffbird**, **White-necked Puffbird**, **Dusky Antbird**, **Band-tailed Barbthroat** and **Slaty-tailed Trogon**. This is where we suddenly saw, a much hoped for, white bird passing by: a **Snowy Cotinga**!



Chestnut-colored Woodpecker



White-collared Manakin

The SAZ trail ends at a soccer field, just before the reception. In the northeast corner of the soccer field you can find a concrete platform between the shrubs. Stand on this platform and look at the corner of the creek. This is the place where **Agami Heron** is regularly seen. The species still eludes us unfortunately.

Right next to the soccer field are some information signs. In one of the wooded poles were some bats, but I am not sure which species. Probably **Myotis spec.**

## La Selva – Scientist Area

[10.43096, -84.00648](#)

On the other side of the river is the scientist area. This semi-open area is great for **Yellow-throated Toucan**, **Keel-billed Toucan**, **Collared Aracari**, **Red-lored Amazon/Parrot** and **(Northern) Mealy Amazon/Parrot**. We had **Rufous Motmot** and **Tawny-capped Euphonia** in the trees here as well. A group of **Collared Peccary** is used to people walking around here. This is a great area to look for **Strawberry Poison-dart Frog** aka **Blue-jeans Frog** after the rain! One of the houses close to the bridge has **Greater Sac-winged Bats** underneath the overhanging roof ([10.4316, -84.00567](#)).



Yellow-throated Toucan with prey



Blue-jeans Frog

## La Selva – STR Trail

[10.43151, -84.00689](#)

The Sendero Tres Rios trail (STR), going north from the scientist area, goes parallel to the river. This belongs to the best trails to walk in the early morning. This trail is paved, like most of the trails here, so it makes for easy walking. We've seen **Great Curassow** and **White-nosed Coatis** crossing the trail,

but **Tayra** is seen here pretty regularly as well! We just missed it on one morning, and we heard of another group seeing it in the afternoon. We had our morning walk with the guide here and heard **Black-eared Wood-quail** calling from the forest, and saw **Eye-ringed Flatbill**, **Broad-billed Motmot**, **Chestnut-backed Antbird**, **Spotted Antbird**, **Black-throated Trogon** and one of the smallest birds in the region: a **Black-capped Pygmy-tyrant**. The guides usually know if there are recent sightings of **Eyelash Pit Viper**. We were lucky; there were two places in between the ferns and we even found a third yellow coloured animal later on. The guides also had a **Silky Anteater** which was present for a few weeks along this trail, but unfortunately it wasn't there anymore. The best birds along this trail are the **Purple-throated Fruitcrows** around marker 800 ([10.4382, -84.0127](#)). They call in the morning. We also saw **Lineated Woodpecker**, **Green Ibis** and **Band-tailed Barbthroat** on the Sendero Experimental Sur trail (CES), which makes a nice loop back to the scientist area.

At night we had an amazing **Kinkajou** climbing up the tree, clinging with all its legs around the tree and using its tail to push itself up. There should be a **Crested Owl** around marker 325 on the river side of the STR trail, but we didn't see or hear it when we were there.



Eyelash Pit Viper



Purple-throated Fruitcrow

## La Selva – SUR trail

[10.42986, -84.0067](#)

We also spotlighted along the SUR trail, which goes to a swampy area. We had a long evening without many sightings. On the way back we did see a **Nine-banded Armadillo**, our first armadillo species! It looks like the forest west of the bridge is just too big to observe many mammals while spotlighting. On the same night we had quite a lot of mammal activity along the main road.

## La Selva – SOR Trail

[10.42838, -84.00404](#)

The Sendero Oriental trail (SOR) goes south from the scientist area, parallel to the river and is not nearly as good as the STR trail. But because this trail is not paved it feels more natural and it is good for **Little Tinamou** and **Great Tinamou**. Around marker 850 there is a big Strangler Fig Tree directly next to the path (on the side of the river), which is hollow. Inside is a big colony with **Common Vampire Bats**. Lower in the tree are some Dog-like Bats, probably **Lesser Dog Like-Bats**. Be careful for all the falling faeces and cover your mouth for the smell inside the tree.



Probable Lesser Dog-like Bat

Common Vampire Bats

## La Selva – Bridge

[10.43132, -84.00501](#)

Going back to the reception/restaurant area you have to cross the Rio Puerto Viejo again. The bridge over the river makes a great vantage point to look over the river and trees adjacent to it. **Howler Monkeys** are regularly seen in the trees and on the bridge itself. According to the guide *Fer-De-Lance* also likes to rest on the bridge itself in the evening because the pavement and railing is still warm.

The trees surrounding the bridge are good for **Slaty-tailed Trogon**, **Gartered Trogon** and **White-whiskered Puffbird**. At the southwestern end of the bridge there is an overhanging tree which has **Greater Sac-winged Bats** hanging under it ([10.4313, -84.0053](#)). See if you can also spot a **Green Kingfisher** and **Black Wood Turtle** at the river. **Neotropical otter** is seen here, but we missed it. We searched the river and its banks every time we crossed it, looking for Sunbittern. We couldn't find it every time we crossed. Just before we left, we had one more look to the right side of the bridge, then to the left side. Just when I wanted to walk away Romy said: to the right, **Sunbittern!!!** This heron-like bird showed its beautiful wings and flew towards one of the banks, to be admired for a while. What a great end of our stay here!



Sand backs along Rio Puerto Viejo

Sunbittern

## Tortuguero

[10.54091, -83.50375](#)

**Visited dates:** 05 - 08 June 2019

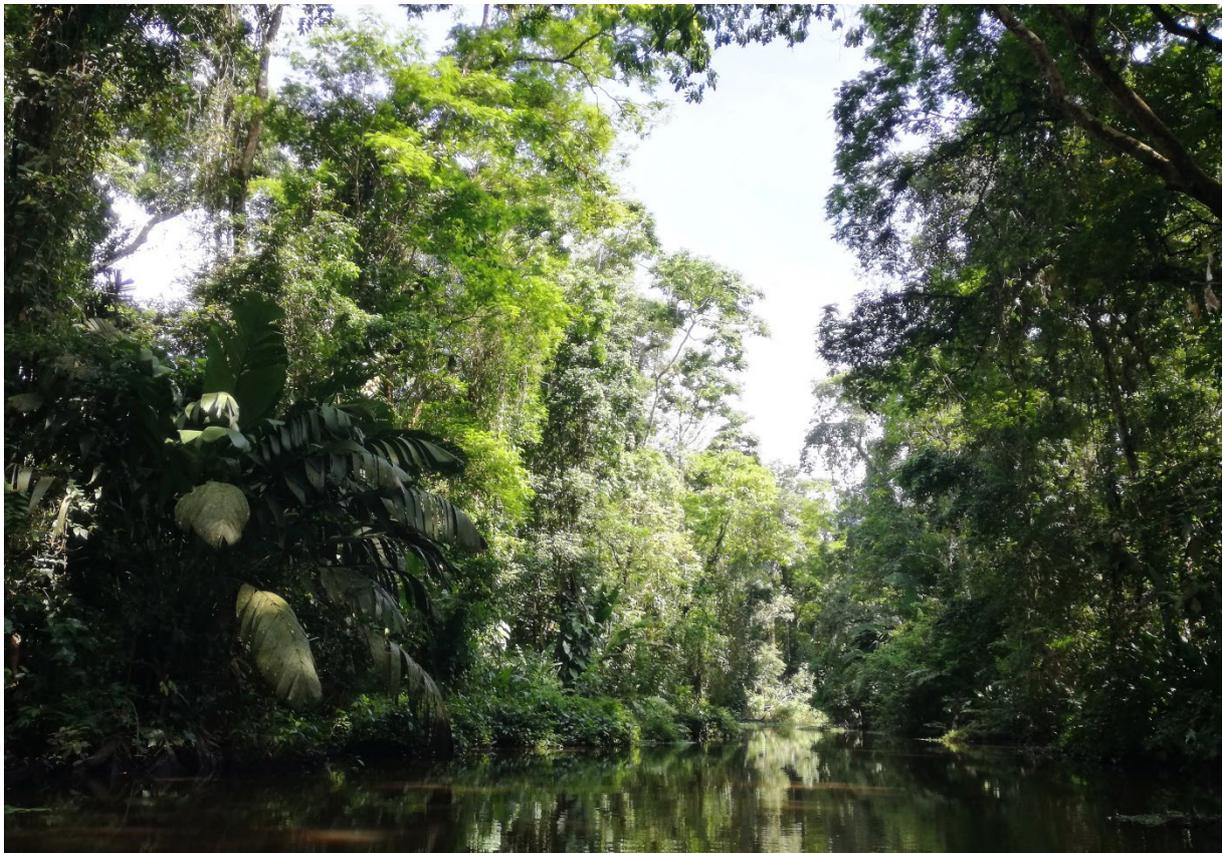
**Accommodation:** Gecko de Tortuguero (US\$ 26 per night) via booking.com. Not recommended. What you pay is what you get.

**How to get there:** To get to Tortuguero you need to take the 247 road from Gúapiles to La Pavona ([10.5445, -83.59643](#)). Look for **Red-breasted Meadowlark** on the way. At La Pavona you can park your car securely for a reasonable price (US\$ 8 a day). Get on a public boat to Tortuguero from here. The trip takes about 1-1,5h and is very pleasant. Boat schedule: to Tortuguero: 07.30, 11.00, 13.00 and 16.30. From Tortuguero: 05.30, 09.00, 11.00, 14.45.

## Tortuguero National Park – Canals

[10.53823, -83.5045](#)

The main activity in Tortuguero is going out by boat on the many canals, leaving from the national park. A nice guide is Jonathan (+506 8461 5233). Give him a text, or ask around, as everybody knows each other in Tortuguero. Jonathan is a friendly young guy who has a sharp eye. He didn't have binoculars but spotted everything way faster than we did. He is still learning, but knows quite some birds already. Jonathan can take you out on one of the quiet canoe-like boats. These boats are slower but silent and go where motorized boats can't go. Your gear is safe on such a canoe; bring a rainproof bag against possible rain though.



On the water we mainly searched for *Neotropical River Otter*. We saw the bubbles multiple times, and even heard one underneath a thick overhanging bush. In the end we couldn't connect with it. We did see **Great Green Macaws**, **Olive-throated Parakeet**, **White-crowned Parrot**, **Boat-billed Heron**, **Central American Spider Monkey**, **White-faced Capuchin** and **Mantled Howler Monkey**. If one is lucky he might even see *Agami Heron* or *Sungrebe*. **Spectacled Caiman** and **Green Iguana** are abundant.



Anhinga

Red-breasted Meadowlark

## Tortuguero National Park – Trail

[10.53805, -83.50413](#)

A trail goes into the forest at the park and can be entered with the same day-ticket. This wet trail (rubber boots recommended) is good for **White-whiskered Puffbird**. In the south of the village there is a big colony of **Montezuma Oropendolas**. At night be sure to point a strong flashlight to the radio towers ([10.539010, -83.504179](#)) near the entrance of the park. There's a **Great Potoo** most nights on the high radio towers. We had a lot of luck; we had another **Great Potoo** on one of the transmitters of a cabin.

## Tortuguero - Sea Turtles

The village is famous for its **Green Sea Turtles**, which come to lay eggs from June till October. The eggs hatch from November till January. **Hawksbill Sea Turtle** and **Leatherback** are rare and can be seen only sometimes from June onwards. A turtle tour is with a maximum of 10 people per guide, at 20.00-22.00 and from 22.00-00.00. Reservations have to be made before 17.00.



Montezuma Oropendola

Great Potoo

## Sendero Cerro Tortuguero

[10.581240, -83.527736](#)

You can get a boat from the village to Cerro Tortuguero (US\$ 2) going at 07.00, 09.00, 11.00, 13.00 and 15.00 from the main harbour in Tortuguero. A short walk (1h) will take you up the cerro. It passes through good forest, past the (distant) river mouth and ends at the top. There you have a gorgeous view of the little town.

This trail is good for **White-fronted Nunbird** (listen for the sound), and the local ranger sometimes knows a **Great Potoo** roost.



Viewpoint at the end of Sendero Cerro Tortuguero trail

## PN Braulio Carrillo

[10.1619, -83.93797](#)

**Visited dates:** 08 - 09 June 2019

**Accommodation:** Guaramo Lodge (US\$ 98 p.n., including breakfast). We booked directly to save the booking.com fee. The room was great and the lodge is nice, but it's next to a busy road. We recommend staying somewhere else and visit these places from there, for example from La Selva Biological Station.

Across the road there is a patch of trees where a **Great Potoo** roosts ([10.21351, -83.86203](#)). For us it was in the westernmost tree, but others had it in the tree in the middle. The road was being widened by the Chinese at the time, so I don't know how long this place is going to be good for this species.

## Donde Cope / José Perez

[10.21334, -83.87304](#)

**Visited date:** 08 June 2019

**General information:** We paid US\$ 35 p.p. for a day, but we've heard of people showing up and paying only US\$ 10 for a morning for two. José Perez his phone number is on his website

**Website:** <http://copeartecr.com/>

José Perez created a hide in his really green garden, so this makes for a great place for photography. He only speaks some basic English, but you will get by with hand gestures for sure. To get to the place you only have to turn right from the main road, 2km after you crossed the Rio Frío, and look for the only green garden around. Right on the driveway José knows where to find a male **Smooth-helmeted Iguana**. There are also two **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloths** in his garden. If you want you can sit down and take pictures of **White-necked Jacobin**, **Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer**, **Green-breasted Mango**, **Stripe-tailed Hummingbird**, **Orange-chinned Parakeet** or **Grey-necked Wood-rail**. José likes his own pictures a lot as well, and he will keep showing all of them on his phone, so you know what you missed here.



**Brown-throated Three-toed Sloths**



**Orange-chinned Parakeet**

On the other side of the road José has a patch of forest where he made a lot of paths. **Brown-hooded Parrot** can be seen flying here. Even though the forest is small, you probably get lost, so go with José. Like a Costa Rican Indiana Jones he will jump, run and chop through the forest with his machete. He showed us a nest of **Long-billed Hermits**. We found **Ochre-bellied Flycatcher**, **Northern Bentbill** and **Semiplumbeous Hawk**. The real reasons to hire José as a guide are the **Spectacled Owl** and the **Crested Owl** roosts. In the forests are some banana leaves underneath which **Honduran White Bats** roost. The white fur with the yellow skin colour is just amazing, and they are just too cute! He

sometimes finds **Common Tent Making Bats** as well. We couldn't find that one, but José found a **Pygmy Round-eared Bat** in an old termite nest.

José also knows the place for the **Great Potoo** mentioned above, but also knew another place. Ask him if you didn't see it yet.



Smooth-helmeted Iguana



Honduran White Bats



Long-billed Hermits

## El Tapir Hummingbird Garden

[10.17467, -83.93051](#)

**Visited dates:** 05 and 09 June 2019

**General information:** El Tapir is an old butterfly garden which is now a bit overgrown. The fence is locked, but one can walk past it 10 meters further south. Entrance fee is said to be US\$ 5, but we saw nobody around when we entered. Later on some people came to check the place, apparently potential buyers. Who knows if this place is going to be preserved in the future?

This might be the best place to search for a bird which is high up on every birders Costa Rica most-wanted list: the **Snowcap**. This little bird has stunning purple feathers and to top it off: a white cap! Just wait around the Verbena flowers right after the entrance. The **Violet-headed Hummingbirds**, **Crowned Woodnymphs** and **Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds** ease the wait. We also had **Shining Honeycreeper**, **Rufous-browed Tyrannulet** and **Black-faced Grosbeaks** higher up in the trees.



Snowcap

Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer

## Braulio Carrillo National Park

[10.1619, -83.93797](#)

**Visited date:** 09 June 2019

### General information:

This was one of the parks where we were really excited about when reading up on it before the holiday. There is a great amount of species which has been seen here, like *Black-crowned Antpitta*, *Lattice-tailed Trogon*, *Yellow-eared Toucanet*, *White-ruffed Manakin*, *Black-and-yellow Tanager*, *Blue-and-gold Tanager*, *Sharpbill*, *Bare-necked Umbrellabird*, *Purplish-backed Quail-Dove* and *Olive-backed Quail-dove*. It's hard not to get really excited with this list, maybe even too excited. We walked the circular trail near the main entrance (which should be the best part) and the trail on the other side of the road. The disappointment was big when we didn't encounter much activity in the forest and only found *White-lined Tanager* and *Rufous-browed Tyrannulet* as interesting species.

## San Gerardo de Dota

[9.55052, -83.80741](#)

**Visited dates:** 09 - 12 June 2019

**Accommodation:** Hotel Savegre (US\$ 64 p.n., including breakfast). Nice spacious rooms and bird-rich gardens between the rooms. Breakfast was a good all-you-can-eat-buffet if there were enough guests. Otherwise you get a menu with minimal options.

The hotel grounds are a good place to search for *Resplendent Quetzal*. Ask around where they have been seen the days before. It all depends on which trees have some ripe wild avocados (beware; these are not in any way comparable to the avocados you buy in the supermarket). We had them in the avocado trees between the cottages.

The hotel grounds are also good for *Scintillant Hummingbird*, *Magenta-throated Woodstar*, *Stripe-tailed Hummingbird*, *Black-billed Nightingale-thrush* and *Black Phoebe*. We also found a really amazing looking *Green Spiny Lizard*! Keep an eye on the sky for *Sulphur-winged Parakeets*. We had a *Torrent Tyrannulet* at the stream next to the road. We dipped on *Yellow-bellied Siskin*, which can be found around the hotel grounds as well.



Green Spiny Lizard



Resplendent Quetzal

## Hotel Savegre - Trails

The hotel has some nice trails, which can also be entered for a small fee when not staying at the hotel. The 1.1mi/1.8km long road to get to the trails is quite steep, so take your 4x4 up to the start of the trails in the early morning to make the most of your time. Keep your window open for passing flocks though, we had a flock with **Golden-browed Euphonia**, **Elegant Euphonia** and **Brown-capped Vireo** along the way! We found the La Cuebrada Trail (1mi/1.6km) the best. The longer Los Robles Trail (3.9mi/6.2km) gets you to higher ground, but we walked 80% of this trail in the pouring rain, so we didn't see much.



Elegant Euphonia



Los Robles Trail

We had **Ruddy-capped Nightingale-thrush**, **Buffy Tuftedcheek** and **Black Guan** near the parking lot at the start of the trails. We had **Spotted Wood-quail** multiple times and heard, and eventually saw, **Costa Rican Pygmy Owl**. Every passing flock has **Sooty-capped Bush Tanager** and **Black-cheeked Warbler** in it, supplemented with the occasional **Ruddy Treerunner**, **Streak-breasted Treehunter**, **Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner**, **Spot-crowned Woodcreeper** and **Ochraceous Wren**. There is a small

stream at the intersection of the La Cuebrada and Los Robles trails, which is a great place for **Silvery-fronted Tapaculo**, **Wrenthrush** and **Grey-breasted Wood-wren**. They can be difficult to hear due to the water, but they are around for sure. Keep listening! We searched, but couldn't find **Scaled Antpitta** and **Highland Tinamou** and also couldn't find any mammals here.



Spotted Wood-quail



Ruddy-capped Nightingale-thrush

## Miriam's Quetzals

[9.58822, -83.79938](#)

This place is a must-go. Not long after you took the turn from the main road into the valley of San Gerardo the Dote, you will see your first high altitude species like **Sooty Thrush** and **Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher**. To really get that bird list going, make a stop at Miriam's Quetzals. The plants and feeders here attract many amazing species: **Resplendent Quetzal**, **Northern Emerald Toucanet**, **Acorn Woodpecker**, **Hairy Woodpecker**, **Slaty Flowerpiercer**, **Flame-colored Tanager**, **Large-footed Finch**, **Yellow-thighed Brushfinch**, **White-throated Mountain-gem**, **Fiery-throated Hummingbird**, **Volcano Hummingbird**, **Talamanca Hummingbird**, **Flame-throated Warbler**, **Mountain Thrush**, **Mountain Alaenia** and **Band-tailed Pigeon**. We had a **Red-tailed Hawk** flying by as well. Does this bird list get you excited? Imagine seeing these birds from a chair, sipping a nice fruit-'batido' or eating a nice Costa Rican 'Casado'.



White-throated Hummingbird



Acorn Woodpecker

If you are driving back from Miriam's to your hotel at night, listen for *Bare shanked Screech Owl*, *Unspotted Saw-whet Owl*, *Costa Rican Pygmy Owl* and *Dusky Nightjar*. We didn't hear them.



Slaty Flowerpiercer



Miriam's Quetzals

## Paraíso Quetzal Lodge

[9.64431, -83.85024](tel:9.64431,-83.85024)

This is the one place in Costa Rica where we actually had some good coffee. Apparently the good coffee is mostly exported to Europe and the USA. If there are no busloads of tourist groups, then this is a great place to watch the valley. The owner showed us a trick, which is how most of the beautiful hummingbird pictures are taken. You take some flowers and spray a water/sugar mixture on it (the same that goes into the feeders). Hide all the normal feeders, because the hummers still find them behind chairs on the ground. After that the hummers will definitely go to the flowers, which allows for some great pictures of **Talamanca Hummingbird**, **Fiery-throated Hummingbird** and **Scintillant Hummingbird**. If it's your thing, this might be the perfect activity on a rainy afternoon.

The owner crafts some beautiful wooden birds, and the restaurant use these on a little platform which serve as salt/pepper stand. These original souvenirs aren't in their souvenir shop, but can be bought if you ask nicely.

The owners know their birds, so ask if they had *Unspotted Saw-whet Owl*, *Bare-shanked Screech Owl* or *Dusky Nightjar* around.



Talamanca Hummingbird



Talamanca and Fiery-throated Hummingbird

## The Road to Providencia

[9.61499, -83.81824](#)

This is a great road for some roadside birding if you are tired of all the walking. The road passes through good habitat, with nice views on the west side of the road and dense bushes on the east side. We found **Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher**, **Black-and-yellow Silky-flycatcher**, **Timberline Wren**, **Black-capped Flycatcher**, **Ochraceous Pewee**, **Barred Becard**, **Yellow-billed Caciue**, **Wrenthrush** and **Silvery-fronted Tapaculo**.

We spotlighted this road in the pouring rain, but we still saw **Dice's Cottontail** and a **Dusky Nightjar**!

## Cerro de la Muerte

[9.55378, -83.75685](#)

This little stretch of road leads to some radio towers and is the most accessible páramo habitat in the area. The stunted shrubs and bamboo next to the road make it the perfect place to look for Volcano Junco. We saw 12 of them from the car! Other birds here are **Volcano Hummingbird**, **Large-footed Finch** and **Black-billed Nightingale Thrush**. We thought we were extra lucky when we saw something which looked like a **Peg-billed Finch**, but this turned out to be a **Slaty Flowerpiercer**. They do occur here, so get your binoculars ready!

If you are in for some walking, park at the entrance of a little trail ([9.56579, -83.75426](#)). This small trail takes you into dwarf bamboo and is the perfect place for **Timberline Wren**. We had a flock lead by **Sooty-capped Bush Tanager** (of course), accompanied by **Ruddy Treerunner**, **Yellow-winged Vireo** and **Flame-throated Warbler**.



Volcano Junco

Timberline Wren

## La Georgina

[9.55833, -83.72369](#)

La Georgina is a road side dinner slash truck stop restaurant, without a lot of ambience in our opinion. They do have some feeders which makes it a nice stop along the way. The feeders attract **Fiery-throated Hummingbird**, **Talamanca Hummingbird** and **Volcano Hummingbird**. The shrubs and vegetable garden attracts **Black-billed Nightingale Thrush**, **Sooty Thrush**, **Large-footed Finch**, **Slate Flowerpiercer** and **Hairy Woodpecker**.



Hairy Woodpecker

Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher

## On the way to and from San Gerardo de Dota

The city **Cartago** is a good place to fill up the tank and take out some money before going to San Gerardo. It also makes a great stop to find a really isolated Costa Rican population of **Sedge Wren** (sometimes split as **Grass Wren**) ([9.85883, -83.96445](#)).

On the way, near **Tres de Junio**, there are some ponds which can be easily scanned from the road ([9.6845, -83.914](#)). This is a good place to tick off **Least Grebe** for birders new to the region.

**Bosque del Tolomuco** is a hotel along the way east of San Gerardo. We stopped for some tea and hoped for the feeders to attract **Red-headed Barbet**. Not this time of year though.

**San Isidro de El General. Universidad Estatal á Distancia.** We haven't been here, but it's too good not to include this for everyone passing by the town San Isidro. A few **Turquoise Cotingas** are seen regularly at the university on both sides of the road here ([9.3502, -83.68461](#)). Thank both Ruben Vlot and Jorrit Vlot for this pointer if you get to see the Cotingas.

## Corcovado

[8.5269, -83.40243](#)

**Visited dates:** 12 - 15 June 2019

**Accommodation:** Los Mineros Guesthouse (US\$ 33 p.n.) via booking.com. Nice host, but not recommended. What you pay is what you get.

The village is not too big and basically consists of two roads. The village itself is actually one of the best places to watch birds around here. Around the accommodation we saw a troop of **Central American Squirrel Monkeys**. During a delicious fresh mango drink at 'Yejos B&B' we observed **Golden-naped Woodpecker**, **Red-crowned Woodpecker**, **Fiery-billed Toucanet** and also had a **King Vulture** flying overhead! Against a wooden pole was a **Marble-colored Frog**, and we suddenly saw a

**Parrot Snake** crawling on the railing of the fence. Josh is one of the owners and can give you up-to-date information and directions to the places described below.



Central American Squirrel Monkey



Central American Squirrel Monkey

## Dos Brazos - Stream

[8.52874, -83.41366](#)

Walking the western road of the village, you cross a stream. There is a little path going left just before the stream. A few hundred meters in you can step into the stream, which should be the place where **White-tipped Sicklebill** breeds. We couldn't find them unfortunately. **Tapir** is seen here as well sometimes (for that species, make a trip towards the ranger centre in the middle of the park, where there is a semi-habituated **Tapir**). We also went searching for frogs here in the afternoon and evening and found **Fitzinger's Robber Frog**, **Savage's Thin-toed Frog**, **Scinax boulengeri**, **Reticulated Glass Frog** and **Green Basilisk**.



Boulenger's Snouted Treefrog



La Palma Glass Frog

## Corcovado National Park – El Tigre Trail

[8.52792, -83.40702](#)

Behind the stream, a little bit further down the road, there is a path to your left into the forest: El Tigre Trail. Corcovado Park rules state you can only go in with a guide, but there is no checkpoint. We went in early morning around sunrise and quickly found **Ruddy Quail-dove**, **Marbled Wood Quail**

and **Black-faced Antthrush**. In this part of the forest we also found a **Baird's Trogon**, **Black-tailed Flycatcher**, heard a **Little Tinamou** and saw a **Red-tailed Squirrel**. Going left at the intersection you enter really beautiful primary forest, and you eventually end up at a stream, which is another place for the **White-tipped Sicklebill**. We only found a bath-taking **Purple-crowned Fairy** and a **Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher**. On the way back we were lucky enough to find a performing **Red-capped Manakin** ([8.52239, -83.4151](#))! We both heard the voice of David Attenborough narrating what was the most beautiful bird watching moment of our trip: "and then...he performs...a dance..."

## Bosque del Rio Tigre Lodge

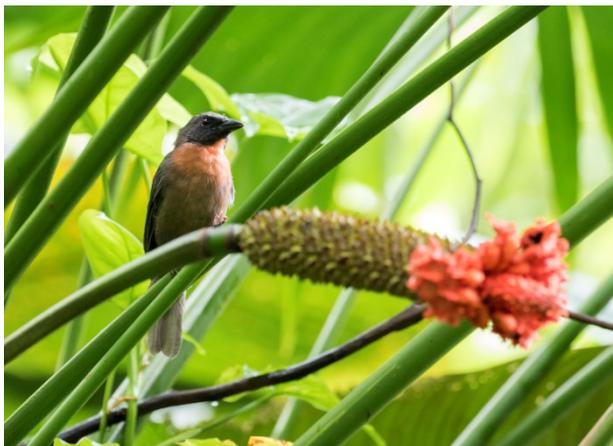
[8.52079, -83.4016](#)

On the other side of town is a birders favourite: Bosque Del Rio Tigre Lodge. The hosts Liz Jones and Abraham Gallo are just great company. The lodge was a bit above our budget, but because there were no guests due to low season Liz and Abraham welcomed us. Abraham agreed to guide us for a morning, and afterwards we were free to walk the trails around the lodge freely. Abraham is a great guide and we had a very productive morning. We had our first **Blue Ground Doves** and a probable **Tomes' Spiny Rat**. We had **Geoffroy's Spider Monkeys**, **Charming Hummingbird** and **Stripe-throated Hermit** in this part of the forest as well. The other places we went are publicly accessible.

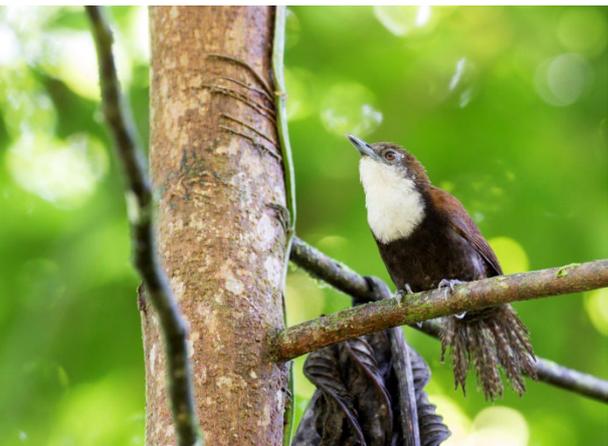
## Dos Brazos – Village Trail

[8.5268, -83.3994](#)

To get there you can cross the big bridge over the river. Going left after the bridge takes you past some houses, after which you turn right. This stretch of forest is a great place where we saw **Black-bellied Wren**, **Rufous Piha**, **Rufous Mourner**, **Striped Woodhaunter** (sometimes split as **Western Woodhaunter**), **Dot-winged Antwren**, **White-throated Shrike-tanager**, **White-shouldered Tanager**, **Eye-ringed Flatbill** and best of all **Black-cheeked Ant Tanager**!!



Black-cheeked Ant-tanager



Black-bellied Wren

## Dos Brazos - Lookout Trail

[8.523, -83.3976](#)

For the best birding, take the same bridge on this side of town, but go straight instead of left. On this stretch of road we saw **Blue-black Grosbeak**, **Thick-billed Seed Finch**, **Ruddy Quail-dove** and heard

**Southern Nightingale-wren.** Rubber boots are recommended, as the road can be muddy and slippery. Pay attention to **Orange-collared Manakin** sounds, which have a lek on the left side of the road half way up the hill. After a steep climb up the hill you will end up at farmland with a great view of the surroundings. Bring a scope if you have one! Along these 200 meters of road we had **Purple-crowned Fairy, Blue-throated Sapphire, Blue Dacnis, Turquoise Cotinga, Black-crowned Tityra, White-collared Swift, Scarlet Macaw, Northern Mealy Amazon, Finch's Parakeet, Red-lored Amazon, Double-toothed Kite, Tiny Hawk** and **Crane Hawk**.



Orange-collared Manakin



Looking for Turquoise Cotinga

## Roadside bird and mammals watching

We went mammal watching and spotlighted for two hours between the main road and Dos Brazos but didn't see anything.

On the way towards or on the way back from Dos Brazos there are two places to check out for birders. Driving further south on the peninsula the road gets bumpy. A good reason to drive this road anyway is the presence of three **Tropical Screech Owls** that roost in branches right above the middle of the road ([8.4773, -83.28189](#)). They are really Tropical Screech Owls, even though the field guide says it's out of the range. Pay attention to **Ruddy-breasted Seedeaters** and **White-tailed Kites** here as well.

Halfway between the Pan-American Highway and the turn towards Dos Brazos is Rincón Restaurant ([8.68978, -83.47591](#)). **Yellow-billed Cotinga** and **Turquoise Cotinga** are sometimes seen in the treetops here. **Neotropical Otter** is sighted from the bridge every now and then, as well as **Mangrove Hummingbird**. We were here in the middle of the day and saw absolutely nothing.



Tropical Screech Owl



Ruddy Seed eater

## Hacienda Barú Lodge

[9.27132, -83.88152](#)

**Visited dates:** 15 - 18 June 2019

**Accommodation:** Hacienda Barú Lodge (US\$ 112 p.n., including breakfast + entrance trails). We got the 3<sup>rd</sup> night for free with our booking). Bookable via [www.haciendabaru.com](http://www.haciendabaru.com). A nice apartment, great swimming pool to cool down and fun trails.

This lodge brings back the forest. Most of the land around the lodge was pasture as recent as 40 years ago. It's amazing to see how the forest can grow back when given the chance.

There are a few cottages next to a pool, from where we have observed **Common Basilisk**, **Black Iguanas** and at night multiple **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloths**. **Common Potoo** is commonly heard here as well. Be sure to ask one of the night guards to wake you up when they hear them. We only had a rainy night left when we talked to the guards about this and haven't heard the species.

## Chirincoco Trail

[9.271593, -83.882385](#)

One trail, the Chirincoco Trail, starts along the main access road at a mango orchard, and goes into the forest alongside a small stream. This is a great place to walk in the early morning or late afternoon. **White-nosed Coatis** crossed the path a few times and **American Pygmy Kingfisher** is no stranger along this stream. There are also multiple **Orange-collared Manakin** leks along the river. While watching one of those birds I heard some noise. An animal was foraging and came towards me! Suddenly I saw a **Greater Grison**, which clearly didn't notice me. I was able to take some pictures before it did notice a slight movement I made and ran away.

The fields at the beginning of this trail are great for spotlighting at night if the mangos are ripe. We found **Kinkajou**, **Central American Woolly Opossum**, **Common Grey Four-eyed Opossum**, **Common Opossum** and **Mexican Hairy Porcupine** feeding on these mangos.



Kinkajou

Common Opossum

## Pizote Trail

[9.271444,-83.881255](tel:9.271444,-83.881255)

The second trail, the Pizote Trail, starts behind the diner, and goes all the way to Centro de Investigación Biológica Hacienda Barú. There are a few leks of **Orange-collared Manakins** in the forest. **Collared Forest Falcon** was heard many times, and seen once. Other birds were **Riverside Wren**, **White-throated Shrike-tanager** and many **Black-hooded Antshrikes**. All four monkey species are supposed to be around, but we only saw **White-faced Capuchin Monkeys**, of which one badly wounded. We also smelled and saw multiple **Collared Peccary**.

We had amazing trails of Leafcutter Ants carrying red coloured leaves. We encountered Leafcutter Ants at most of the places we visited in Costa Rica, but most of them were carrying green leaves. The ants cut up leaves and carry them back to their nest. A highway with many ants is formed and bigger ants keep this clear of leaves and defend it against predators. In the nest the ants clean and crush the leaves, chew them up and put them in the right spot. A fungus grows on these leaves. In this way they farm this fungus, which serves as food for their larvae. The ants keep everything free of pests and moulds and make sure that the leaves brought in are good enough to keep the fungus alive. And apparently it doesn't matter if the leaves are green, red or pink.

We spotlighted on the Pizote at night as well, and found **Northern Black-eared Opossum**, smelled **Collared Peccary** and best of all: we found a **Northern Tamandua** in one of the palm trees not far from the entrance of the path!



Leafcutter Ants

Leafcutter Ants

## Lookout Trail

[9.26249, -83.87191](#)

Crossing the road from the Centro de Investigación Biológica to the other side takes you to the Lookout Trail. One can also park at the start of the trail (Lookout Trail) on the other side of the road. Take the steep path up and go clockwise/left at the T-intersection. After two hills and some info signs on trees you will go up a slope. Here we found another lek of the **Red-capped Manakin**, again performing the moonwalk!! ([9.26397, -83.86986](#)). We also found a **Blue-crowned Manakin** right around this spot. The great way of walking the loop clockwise is that you will be rewarded with a great view at the end, just before returning back to the road again.



Red-capped Manakin

Blue-crowned Manakin

## Cloudbridge Nature Reserve

[9.47215, -83.57762](#)

**Visited dates:** 16 June 2019

**Accommodation:** None. We went here one day while staying at Hacienda Baru Lodge.

**General information:** Open from 06.00 - 18.00. Costs are US\$ 7 p.p.

**Website:** <http://www.cloudbridge.org/>

Cloudbridge Nature Reserve is a great high altitude reserve. This park does a lot on reforestation of agricultural land. The first part of the reserve is relatively steep. We found a stunning Klug's

Clearwing and an even more stunning White-spotted Clearwing. Bird-wise we found **Speckled Tanager**, **Barred Forest Falcon**, **Yellow-thighed Brushfinch**, **Slate-throated Whitestart** and **Scarlet-thighed Dacnis** between the entrance and the waterfalls (Catarata Caldera). On the way back we walked the Sendero Rio (River Trail) and Romy spotted the magnificent **Red-headed Barbet**! This amazing bird eluded us at the feeders, at which it can be seen more easily in December/January. There are some lookouts along the river, from where we saw **American Dipper** and two **Torrent Tyrannulets**. We missed **Olivaceous Piculet** which is regularly seen at Cloudbridge Nature Reserve.

## Garden House Bird Observatory

[9.47047, -83.58329](#)

Along the road towards the reserve make a stop at the Garden House Bird Observatory. This place is great to observe and photograph birds, but it can get crowded in high season. We had **Snowy-bellied Hummingbird**, but dipped on **Rufous-crested Coquette**. Whilst drinking our coffee we had a group of **Barred Parakeets** flying by through the valley.

## Talari Mountain Lodge

[9.40257, -83.66848](#)

In the early morning we stopped by at Talari Mountain Lodge, just past the town San Isidro. It seems like a great place to stay and bird, but we only had a **Riverside Wren** and our only **Garden Emerald**.



Klug's Clearwing

Speckled Tanager

## Palo Seco Beach

[9.49132, -84.33362](#)

**Visited dates:** 18 June 2019

**Accommodation:** None. We went here while traveling between Hacienda Barú and Carara

On road 239 to or from Tarcoles, one can do a small detour to the Palo Seco Beach and the Río Pirris. The site is good for water birds. We had at least a 100 **Lesser Nighthawks** on the beach. Other birds seen here were **Brown Pelican**, **Hudsonian Whimbrel**, **Semipalmated Plover**, **Wilson's Plover**, **Collared Plover**, **Black-necked Stilt**, **Roseate Spoonbill**, **Gull-billed Tern**, **Royal Tern**, **Black Tern**, **Tricolored Heron** and **Wood Stork**.

## Carara

[9.78099, -84.6061](#)

**Visited dates:** 18 - 21 June 2019

**Accommodation:** Cerro Lodge Hotel (US\$ 73 p.n., including breakfast). One of the two birder hotels around, the other one being Villa Lapas. Pretty nice hotel, the cottages have air conditioning. Don't include the breakfast (at least in low season), because we got the leftovers (rice/beans) from the night before. Bookable via <http://hotelcerrolodge.com/>

The hotel has a lot of flowers next to the dining area. We've seen **Cinnamon Hummingbird** on these flowers as well as many butterflies, like Hecale Longwing, Gulf Fritillary and Red Postman. The feeders attract even **Scarlet Macaws**! There is a small trail leading to a lookout. On the trail we had **Lineated Woodpecker, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Rufous-naped Wren, Yellow-green Vireo** and a **Variegated Squirrel**. The lookout was good for a great sunset, as well as **Scarlet Macaws** and a distant **Crane Hawk**!

On a private property along the road from the hotel towards the main road, is a roost of **Pacific Screech Owls** ([9.8148, -84.6148](#)). The hotel knows the owners and can call them. The part of the road just before the hotel is good for **Striped Cuckoo**. An open patch closer to the main road is good for **Rose-throated Becard** and **Blue Grosbeak**.



Cinnamon Hummingbird



Gulf Fritillary

## Tarcoles Crocodile Bridge

[9.8009, -84.60609](#)

Going south on the main road brings you over the Tarcoles Crocodile Bridge. You can park on the north side of the bridge. Traffic is crazy here, so be careful. You can walk on the sides of the bridge to the middle. The main attractions are the **American Crocodiles** here! Scan the surrounding treetops. **Yellow-billed Cotinga** is the best species here, which we were lucky enough to find. We also saw **Finch's/Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Bat Falcon** and **Grey Hawk**.

## Parque Nacional Carara – Main entrance

[9.78099, -84.6061](#)

**General information:** May-November: 08.00 – 16.00, December-April: 07.00 – 16.00 (US\$ 10 p.p.).

Parque Nacional Carara is the main attraction in the area. It's unfortunate that the opening time lies way past sunrise and the closing time way before sunset. This takes away your chances of birding the best hours of the day. The trails can be walked without a guide, but guides here are knowledgeable. Some of the best birds we've seen are **Streak-chested Antpitta**, **Baird's Trogon**, **Black-throated Trogon**, **Hoffman's Woodpecker**, the very cute **Golden-crowned Spadebill** and **Rufous-breasted Wren**. With a guide we searched endlessly for **Royal Flycatcher** which is seen regularly along the river, but could only find some old nests. Other more nondescript birds we did find were **Northern Bentbill**, **Black-hooded Antshrike**, **Tawny-crowned Greenlet** and **Plain Xenops**. More common birds seen were the large **Pale-billed Woodpecker**, the always beautiful **Rufous-tailed Jacamar** and the stunning **Lesson's Motmot**. We saw **Geoffroy's Spider Monkeys** high up in the trees and had a **Central American Agouti** as well! After the rain we had tens of **Green-and-black Poison Dart Frogs** crossing the path.



Green-and-black Poison Dart Frog

Black-throated Trogon

## Parque Nacional Carara – River trail

[9.79328, -84.6023](#)

The River Trail starts about 1mi/1.7km north of the main park entrance. It's best to drive this part, as the traffic goes fast here and you might otherwise end up like the **Opossums** and **Northern Tamanduas** which we saw dead on the side of the street.

The parking is known for car break-ins, so don't leave any valuables in it. We didn't have any problems and there is a guard present some time of the day, but he was already gone before we returned to the car. As you will notice there is no formal entrance where your ticket is checked, but we don't recommend going in before opening time. In the forest there are six rangers strategically positioned in this part of the forest, as part of a total 24 rangers in the whole park. This is an anti-poaching method, which is unfortunately needed because many of the local villagers know that these forests still hold good amounts of bush meat. It's sad to realise that the locals don't share in the profits gained by tourism, at least not enough to see the worth of a National Park full of wildlife. Maybe hire a local guide or eat at a local restaurant instead of at the big hotels.

The Sendero Laguna Meandrica is one path going straight into the forest, bending to the left parallel to the river, and then bending right again. It ends at the river, but this part was closed off in 2019.

We saw **Buff-throated Saltator**, **Great Antshrike**, **Barred Antshrike**, **Chestnut-backed Antbird**, **Grey-headed Tanager**, **Slate-headed Tody-flycatcher** and **Rufous-and-white Wren**. We also had a troop of **White-faced Capuchin Monkeys** just above the trail, throwing branches and faeces to us when we tried to walk further.

The way back is the same route, but you can take a short-cut which is not clearly marked. Maps.me comes in handy here. Somewhere halfway, after a big spiky tree next to the path, is a place where you can hear and see three species of manakin. We saw three **Long-tailed Manakins** and heard many **Orange-collared Manakins** here. **Red-capped Manakin** is also seen here, but we had to (and did!) take enough with the two other species.



Cup Fungus



Romy overlooking the Tarcoles river from Restaurante Tiko Mirador Surf & Turf

## Spotlighting around Carara

If you want to find a **Pacific Screech Owl** at night, than drive the roads west of Lagunillas ([9.839, -84.6083](#)). We found four **Pacific Screech Owls** and a **Northern Black-eared Opossum** here.

As the national park closes early, there is no chance to spotlight there. We spotlighted the road from Vila Lapas going up and had **Black-and-white Owl** in no time next to the road on two different nights ([9.76273, -84.60582](#)) as well as many **Common Pauraques**.

Another road starts 1.4mi/2.3km south along the main road and goes through great habitat ([9.74629, -84.63019](#)). We had a **Boat-billed Heron** hunting at the river and a **Kinkajou** high up in a tree.



Black-and-white Owl

Pacific Screech Owl

## Tarcoles Beach

[9.78022, -84.63683](#)

The beach is the perfect place to go if you want a change of habitat instead of the dark forests. The beach is full of rubbish coming down from the river, but it is still a good place to search for waders. We saw **American White Ibis**, **Wood Stork**, **Tricolored Heron**, **Collared Plover**, **Wilson's Plover**, **Ruddy Turnstone** and **Hudsonian Whimbrel**. **Brown Pelicans** soar over the ocean, **Magnificent Frigatebirds** soar higher in the air. On the sand spit we found four species of tern: **Common Tern**, **Elegant Tern**, **Royal Tern** and **Cabot's Tern**.

Because it was low tide, we were able to walk to the mangroves ([9.78463, -84.63567](#)). Here we found **Panama Flycatcher**, **Mangrove Vireo**, **Scrub Greenlet**, **Ringed Kingfisher**, **Barred Antshrike** and had a huge 16 feet/5 meter long **American Crocodile** swimming by. Glad we were able to return before the tide came up!



Ringed Kingfisher

Wood Stork

## Mangrove boat tour

[9.77817, -84.62596](#)

On our last morning we went on a boat tour through the mangroves with Jungle Crocodile Safari, located in Tarcoles. You can choose between a crocodile tour and a bird watching tour. We paid US\$ 70 total for the two of us. The next morning we found out that we were the only ones on the bird boat. The crocodile boat was fully loaded. As we already went to the sand spit at the river mouth, we just focussed on finding birds in the mangroves. We had **Roseate Spoonbill**, **Green Kingfisher**,

**American Pygmy Kingfisher, Mangrove warbler**, a female **Blue Ground Dove, Rufous-browed Peppershrike** and **Boat-billed Heron** in the mangroves. A bit further up the river **Plumbeous Kites** were seen. We did find one **Mangrove Hummingbird**, and even though this is not the most beautiful hummer, it was a great endemic to add to the list of more than 450 birds in four weeks and to end the trip with before going back to the airport. What a country! We'll come back for sure.



Mangrove Hummingbird



Boat-billed Heron

**You made it! Thank you for reading 😊**

For all photos of our Costa Rica trip or any specific questions, visit our website.

 [www.robjansenphotography.com/costarica](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/costarica)

 [www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography](https://www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography)

All observations made by us in Costa Rica can be found on Observation.org. We observed a total of 450 bird species and 35 mammal species within four weeks. Click here for the: [total bird list](#), [total mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#).

Top 10	Birds	Mammals
1	Red-capped Manakin	Oncilla
2	Ocellated Antbird	Jaguarundi
3	Three-wattled Bellbird	Northern Tamandua
4	Snowcap	Central American Squirrel Monkey
5	Great Potoo	Honduran White Bat
6	Quetzal	Greater Grison
7	Keel-billed Toucan	Geoffroy's Spider Monkey
8	Elegant Euphonia	Nine-banded Armadillo
9	Snowy Cotinga	Central American Dwarf Squirrel
10	White-fronted Nunbird	Kinkajou



Sky Adventures Arenal Park



Tortuguero boat tour



Arenal Observatory Lodge



Sendero Cerro Tortuguero trail



Chomes



Yejos B&B in Corcovado