

Christmas in Costa Rica | Dec. 20 - 28, 2023

Trip Report | by Drew Haffenden



With guide, Drew Haffenden and participants: Cindy, David, Linda, Julia, John, Maita, Matthew, Patricia, Sherryl and Wendelina



David, Julia, Wanda, Spat, Pat, Maita, John, Cindy, Linda and Sherryl joined me for Christmas in Costa Rica, spending three nights in the lowlands at Selva Verde Lodge, and three nights in the mountains at Trogon Lodge, booked by stays at the Bougainvillea Hotel in San Jose, surrounded by beautiful and birdy gardens. Despite some rain and drizzle, we saw 199 species of birds with several more heard, plus mammals, reptiles and butterflies. Significant among the mammals were white tent-making bats, a beautiful, all-white bat and one of the main species of any kind hoped for by Wanda. Once we had seen it, we knew why.

We saw many great birds including excellent views of both male and female quetzals, King Vulture and Rufous-tailed Jacamar all voted best of the tour. Accommodations were wonderful and dining was excellent throughout, especially our private lunch at Casa Dowii. I think all realized that this was a wonderful introduction to Costa Rica and return trips would be necessary to take in all that this small country has to offer.



Wed., Dec. 20 Arrival in San Jose

We all met at the hotel in San Jose, wandering around the gardens where Social Flycatcher, Tropical Kingbird, Great Kiskadee, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Rufous-naped Wren and Green-breasted Mango were found. Most had arrived in time for lunch, then we returned to the gardens. It was windy and cool, with bird activity quieter than in the morning, but we found Blue-throated Goldentail, a pair of Mottled Owls, Lesson's Motmot very close, two Cinnamon-bellied Saltators and a very handsome Yellow-headed Caracara performing to its reflection in a shiny, stainless-steel duct on the roof. A couple of jade vines were flowering; it is nearly impossible to believe its green color is natural. A White-tailed Kite flew over and a couple of us had a two-second view. With the clouds building, we called it a day around 4:30, with plans to regroup at six for welcome drinks and dinner. Maita, Sherryl and David were still outside when a small flock of Orange-chinned Parakeets flew over; up to then we had only heard Crimson-fronted.

We gathered at 6 p.m. and were surprised when our local our guide, Abelardo, joined us for dinner, giving us an overview of what the next day would bring. Abelardo's home is in Sarapiquí, so we would have a hometown advantage while birding there over the next three days. Drinks were shared as we introduced ourselves while we enjoyed a very nice meal, especially the custard, chocolate and strawberry dessert. Then we headed to our rooms, excited for our first full day of Costa Rica birding.

Thurs., Dec. 21 Pierella Gardens | Selva Verde Lodge

Our first destination was Pierella Gardens. San Jose is situated in a large caldera, surrounded by remnants of the volcano and its pups, located on the Pacific side of the Continental Divide. We climbed the rim of the caldera, and just below the ridge we entered an 800-yard tunnel. We emerged on the Caribbean slope where there are different species and subspecies of very similar birds on either side. The traffic was not bad, and after driving for about two hours downhill, mostly through cloudy, wet rainforest, we reached Pierella, a privately owned reserve.

We were welcomed with a long table of fruits and juices, but one glance at the bird feeders and thoughts of eating were gone. The feeders were alive with birds, with White-necked Jacobins darting between us to get to and from the hummer feeders. We gathered to watch and photograph, mesmerized as male and female Red-



legged Honeycreepers, Green Honeycreepers, Blue-gray and Palm Tanagers, Clay-colored Thrushes, Olive-backed Euphonias and even Collared Aracaris fed ravenously. On the ground, brilliant Scarlet-rumped Tanagers fed on rice, later joined by a family of three Crested Guans. A Red-throated Ant-Tanager enjoyed both the rice and the fruit. A couple of Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds joined in occasionally, and a stunning Long-billed Hermit flew to a feeder, hovering about a foot from two of us, too close to photograph. A Buff-rumped Warbler hopped around on rocks and Buff-throated Saltators had their share as well.

The Gardens also raise butterflies, and we had the opportunity to watch as an Owl Butterfly hatched from its chrysalis, a surprisingly rapid event; then a second one started. Over the next hour or so, Crimson-collared Tanagers, Gray-headed Chachalacas, Great Kiskadees, Collared Aracaris and Tennessee Warblers were seen. A Green Basilisk, a.k.a. Jesus Christ Lizard, joined in the food fest at the feeders on the other side of the creek. Eventually the group gravitated to the fruit and delicious Costa Rican coffee. We took a walk on the grounds and found Rufous-tailed Jacamar and Chestnut-sided Warbler. Our local guide, Jose, took us to where a Common Pauraque was roosting. Not far away, a Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth was resting about 15 feet up a tree. A little further along both male and female common basilisks were seen and photographed. Near the netting enclosure, a Sapho longwing fluttered, possibly an escapee, or perhaps a wild butterfly attracted by the concentrated pheromones inside.

Especially exciting for Wendy, a major bat fan, were both common tent-making bats and, her most wanted, white tent-making bats reposing under drooping leaves. Tent-making bats chew on the midrib of a large leaf, causing each half to droop, forming a tent protecting them from predators, rain and sun. Lunch was at a heart of palm farm. Almost no-one had eaten this delicacy before, and we started with fried fritters with accompanying refried beans and a tasty, slightly spicy, white sauce. Delicious. The main meal was also heart of palm, done similarly to a lasagna, also delicious. While this was happening, oranges on sticks attracted several birds, including Baltimore Orioles, honeycreepers, kiskadees and a couple of Bananaquits, and a Collared Aracari reposed in a nearby tree. Then we were treated to a field display of how hearts of palm is harvested and stripped to reveal the edible part, just a small part, and sampled it raw. It had a very pleasant taste with a hint of coconut, not surprising as both are palms. While there, three White-crowned Parrots sat in a nearby dead tree, and two others flew over.



After this wonderful lunch, we made our way to Selva Verde, our rainforest lodge for the next three nights. On arrival we checked in and went to our spacious rooms, surrounded by rainforest. We had free time before our checklist at six, and most took the opportunity to look around a little. Sherry and David had an interesting time watching a “Friar Tuck and Robin Hood” moment on the suspension bridge across the Sarapiquí River. A White-nosed coati was crossing from one side, and a northern raccoon from the other. They met in the middle and paused to consider their best options. After a while, the raccoon blinked, climbing the handrail cable and allowing the coati to make its way on the decking. Animals are better at negotiating a standoff than we are at times. We reviewed our first checklist before dinner. I checked the nearby trees with a light and found a raccoon, likely our standoff chappie. It was a great first day.

Fri., Dec. 22 La Selva Biological Station

We started the day with a very nice buffet breakfast, eaten as quickly as we could, then loaded up to drive to the La Selva Biological Station, one of the first in the tropics and noted for providing both residential and scientific facilities for visiting scientists and students. On the way, Abelardo pointed out the school he attended and his house (now rented as work moved him to La Fortuna). Such personal touches are a welcome aspect of Abelardo, who is very proud of his town, and his beautiful young family.

We met Joel, a guide with LSBS, and headed out, but after just 20 minutes a light rain started, and he suggested that we return to the center and wait it out. Yet in that brief time, we encountered a flock of about 18 Gray-rumped Swifts circling over, soon joined by 16 White-collared Swifts, their larger size and longer tails being quite obvious. A lone Turkey Vulture crouched in a dead tree, eventually lifting its head enough to determine that there was no white nape, so it was a migrant North American bird. A few Red-vented Parrots flew over and a Keel-billed Toucan joined the vulture in the tree. A target bird in this part of Costa Rica is Snowy Cotinga, and Joel was on the lookout. He scoped a bird in a somewhat distant tree that in fact was a Snowy Cotinga! We had reasonable, though distant views, enough to determine that it was indeed a female Snowy, a little grayer than the male.



After the rain eased off, we headed out again. We stopped to admire an adult light morph (most common) Broad-winged Hawk. It cared not a whit about us, not even deigning to glance our way. John commented that he had encountered a kettle of 40,000+ at a hawk watch. We crossed the river via suspension bridge where a black river turtle sat on a log, a true believer hoping some sun would shine on him, as did a large green iguana atop an overhanging branch. As it was breeding season, he was light brown rather than green. And his dewlap was out. He even gave us a session of dewlap expansion and head nodding to enjoy. A Squirrel Cuckoo was somewhat oddly sitting on top of a small tree, rather than within the leaves as is more usual, perhaps drying off from the rain. As we admired the cuckoo, a Scaly-breasted Hummingbird fed on red flowers of a small bush, and a White-ringed Flycatcher, similar to a Social Flycatcher, perched for views not far away. A large millipede was seen and admired, until a slight shift in position revealed it was lying alongside another one, apparently part of the mating ritual.

A little further along we came upon a tree that was quite busy with birds. The tree had small berries that attracted Common Tody-Flycatcher, Lesser Greenlet, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Green Honeycreeper, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis and Plain-colored Tanager. We started to move off when a White-collared Manakin was spotted on the other side of the track at eye level in the open. As we admired him, rain started again, and we retired to a sheltered area in a nearby set of buildings.

A worker pointed out a bat hanging on a wall, in a gloomy corner. Given the color, spread hind legs, long snout and the way it hung with its head arched forward, I thought it was a Long-nosed (Proboscis) Bat, but it turned out to be a similar, white-lined bat, identified by Joel and confirmed by pictures. Once the second round of rain stopped, we made our way back to the bridge to walk another trail. Along the way Joel found a blue jeans poison dart frog, but it was hidden in leaves so all we could make out was a red patch and an eye.

We had some great birding on this trail, starting with two Great Green Macaws that flew over, a critically endangered species. Crested Guans caroled riotously, and a Rufous-tailed Jacamar perched close, then Abelardo saw a Broad-billed Motmot just a branch away! It had its head tucked in, but enough could be seen to make the call. Two very good birds together! Then some movement and – Rufous Motmot! A Black-cheeked Woodpecker



was high in a tree not far from a White-whiskered Puffbird! So, four very good birds in a viewing area of about 15x25 feet! Joel heard a Great Tinamou calling, but it was hard to determine if it was across the river or on this side. He whistled its call and after a few minutes the bird's call was closer – it was on our side. Eventually it came close enough for Abelardo to catch a glimpse, and lucky David did too. It continued to walk along closely, but no further view was had. A Streak-headed Woodcreeper followed by a Plain-brown Woodcreeper were our final two birds before returning to the lodge for lunch.

During and after lunch we feeder-watched, seeing a good variety of birds from the ease of a bench, including. Gray-headed Chachalaca, Collared Aracari, Yellow-throated Toucan, Olive-backed Euphonia, Montezuma Oropendola, Scarlet-rumped Tanager and Buff-throated Saltator. For our afternoon birding, we walked trails on the lodge grounds. We checked the river for a dipper, and while one person may have caught a glimpse of one, we otherwise had no luck. But a Black Phoebe appeared on the rocks, and a Stripe-tailed Hermit fed on a series of flowering bushes. A Neotropic Cormorant flew by as did three Snowy Egrets and a Great Blue Heron, and we caught a quick look at a flyby of two more Great Green Macaws. We then called it a day to have a cabin break, then checklist and dinner.

Sat., Dec 23 Sarapique River | Selva Verde Lodge

This morning was our boat tour on the Sarapique River, but after raining all night and during breakfast, the weather did not look promising. It was supposed to break a little later, so we headed off to the boat that had a roof and side curtains should the rain continue. After we traveled the short distance to the river it was overcast but dry, and we decided to head out. Our young boatman, Daniel, started upriver. The river was high and the current fast, and there were little to no flats along the bank for birds or crocodilians. We saw a rash of birds initially, probably due to a late start to their feeding, including Pale-vented Pigeon, Anhinga, Green Kingfisher, Cinnamon Becard, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler and a flock of 26 Bronzed Cowbirds.

It started to drizzle, then rained a bit harder, but we stayed dry. A Bare-throated Tiger-Heron scampered up the bank and into the brush. David saw some dark shapes ahead high in a tree, and when one flew, its bill revealed them to be ibis, Green Ibis. A bit of maneuvering the boat, not easy in the current, allowed everyone a silhouetted, but definitive, view of the remaining bird. Daniel knew took us to a place where Boat-billed Herons



often roosted, and sure enough one was there, and out in the open, very unusual for these herons. About 1.5 miles up the river we diverged left into the Puerto Viejo River, and the difference in turbidity could be made out, with the Sarapiquí being a little cleaner as it flows down from the Braulio Carillo Volcano NP whereas the Puerto Viejo runs through farmland as well as forest.

After 2.5 hours on the rivers, we returned in pretty solid rain. We did manage to see seven Spotted Sandpipers in very pale, basic plumage, Little Blue Heron, Amazon Kingfisher, Collared Aracari, Keel-billed and Yellow-throated Toucans, Red-lored Parrots, numerous Mangrove Swallows and a couple of Southern Rough-winged Swallows. We could hear Bay Wrens, but never did get eyes on them. Two Northern Waterthrushes, a couple of Chestnut-sided Warblers and several Scarlet-rumped Tanagers rounded out the list. Several groups of Mantled howler monkeys sat mostly high in the trees. Julia spotted a two-meter-long spectacled caiman in the grass on a bank, and Daniel turned it into a “find the caiman” competition. Although wet, it was a very enjoyable trip with new birds and the caiman added to our total. We headed back to our lodge checking for Great Green Macaws at a park in Sarapiquí where one of their favorite foods, sea almond (*Terminalia*) was fruiting, but they weren’t there.

But just a little further along, Abelardo saw two Scarlet Macaws in a tree, and we immediately pulled over. The birds stayed, giving us great views while they all groomed a little – they were quite wet. A Gray Hawk was seen, and we also saw Western Cattle Egrets, a Tropical Kingbird, four Black-striped Sparrows and a Blue-black Grassquit. Once back at the lodge, we had lunch with some opting to sit on the veranda overlooking the feeders. Over the next hour we saw some 20 species, plus the resident, White-nosed coati.

We spent the afternoon birding trails on the lodge grounds, searching for blue jeans poison dart frogs, which Abelardo found to everyone’s delight. He explained that these tiny frogs can make one very sick, though they aren’t as deadly as the ones from Colombia. At an open area near the river, we saw a nice Black-cheeked Woodpecker. A few of us had fallen behind, looking at some plants and fungus, while the rest were closer to the river. Looking up at some circling vultures for a Zone-tailed Hawk, I let out a yell to all – King Vulture! Everyone had great views over the next 15-20 minutes, noting the difference in the shape of the wings and bodies. Soon these were joined by a Crested Caracara, a Broad-winged Hawk and a Zone-tailed Hawk, then a second, immature King Vulture. Quite the hawkwatch!



We walked back towards the rocks, stopping at a log where a green-and-black poison dart frog was sitting in the open in good light! We spent some time admiring it and getting photos before it tired of us and hopped away. Still no luck with a dipper, but we did have great views of another White-collared Manakin feeding on berries. Near the end of our walk, a two-toed sloth was hanging at eye level right next to the trail. It was very wet and curled up, so much so we had a long discussion about which end was which.

After dinner we looked for frogs and other night creatures, spending time getting many photos of a red-eyed treefrog just outside the dining area, and a large carrot-tailed gecko hidden in a joint in the frame of the building. In a nearby tree, several tree-rats were feeding on fruit, and one hung around long enough for everyone to get decent views.

Sun., Dec. 24 Selva Verde Lodge | Casa Dowii Reserve | Trogon Lodge

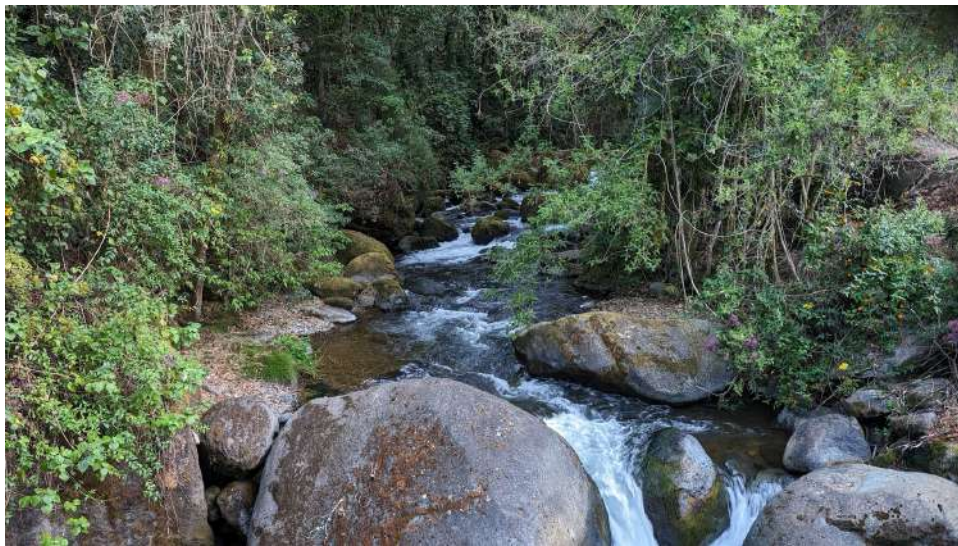
The day began with a familiar sound, Collared Forest-falcon, calling from somewhere up the valley, typical morning behavior for this bird. Today we were leaving Selva Verde and the lowlands to head south and up to Trogon Lodge, situated at 7,800 feet in the Savegre Valley of the Talamanca Mountain Range. It would be a long drive, with a couple of stops and lunch along the way. But as we had not had good views of Great Green Macaw, Abelardo suggested we take a walk to a spot where they had been seen some mornings. They were there, but behind the trees and out of view. We crossed the road to another section of the lodge, where a further hour of birding resulted in 26 species including a couple of new ones: a flock of 16 Brown-hooded Parrots and a Bronze-tailed Plumbeleteer feeding in the bushes. Another good find was a Chestnut-backed Antbird, a large, colorful antbird with bright blue around the eyes. With a bit of patience and work it fortunately it gave us very good views.

Other birds included Long-tailed Hermit, Crowned Woodnymph, White-crowned and Red-lored Parrots, Cinnamon Becard, a flock of 28 Chestnut-headed Oropendolas and close views of two Golden-headed Tanagers. We then returned for breakfast, checked the feeders and said goodbye to the Coati, then boarded our bus for the journey. Our route took us back through San Jose then climbed to Cerro Muerte, named for early settlers from Cartago who were found dead from the cold in their high-altitude cabin. There wasn't much birding to be done along the way as we passed mostly through greater San Jose and Cartago.



Our first planned stop was for lunch at Casa Tangara dowii Reserve, a small private reserve and restaurant run by a Professor of Ecotourism at Costa Rica University. The university was starting its long winter break, and son Sergio was there to cook for us. We watched the birds that were coming to the fruit placed in the trees outside the large windows as Sergio prepared local coffee and prepared the meal. His food uses all local ingredients and is mostly based on his grandmother's traditional recipes, including a ginger drink rather alarmingly called toad water. Through the window we noted Red-faced Spinetail, Mountain Thrush, many Common Chlorospingus, smartly plumaged Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, beautiful Flame-colored Tanagers and several Silver-throated Tanagers. It was obvious we were no longer in the lowlands! Unfortunately, the star bird that the place is named for, Spangle-cheeked Tanager, was a no-show and would remain so until our last day in the mountains. Sergio was a charming host who had carefully prepared special meals for our vegan and pesco-vegetarian members, and he invited us to return for coffee we were headed back to San Jose. We eventually dragged ourselves away from this delightful place for the final hour of our drive to our lodge, many of us with bags of the coffee we had just enjoyed.

We continued our drive along the Pan-American Highway, cresting the ridge at nearly 10,000 feet where the winds were quite fierce, then descended into the Savegre Valley and the community of San Gerardo de Dota. The area has become famous for the Resplendent Quetzals that live here year-round. Images of quetzals are everywhere, and many businesses have Quetzal in their name. The small Savegre River runs through Trogon Lodge, which is mostly built on a hillside at approximately 7,800 feet. The cabins are very comfortable, and a hot water bottle is brought every night. Each evening, we gathered in the bar/recreation room to review our checklist, then headed past the trout ponds to the dining room. Volcano Hummingbirds were the most common bird species here. After settling in, most of us wandered the grounds, seeing Talamanca Hummingbird, White-throated Mountain-gem, Acorn Woodpecker, Blue-and-white Swallows, American Dipper, Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, Louisiana Waterthrush and Slaty Flowerpiercer. Also, common here, and everywhere near human habitation and grass, were one of my favorite birds, the delightfully patterned and voiced Rufous-collared Sparrow. We turned in after our Christmas Eve dinner, looking forward to birding in the mountains and hoping Santa would bring us avian presents the next day.



Mon., Dec 25 Savegre Lodge | San Gerardo de Dota

Although Christmas Day was on the itinerary as a relaxed day, both Abelardo and the group decided otherwise. I began the day, as did several others, with a little birding before breakfast. As with yesterday afternoon, the incessant clicking of Lesser Violetears came from many different directions. A Sooty Thrush was new, as was the well-named, Large-footed Finch, a bird very un-finch-like. Volcano and Talamanca Hummingbirds were feeding, and of course Rufous-collared Sparrows hopped about, occasionally letting forth a short song. After breakfast we loaded into the bus to drive down further into the valley to Savegre Lodge, at about 7,200 feet. At the lodge we climbed into two Toyota 4WDs for a short drive up the mountain behind the lodge. The stopping point was about 600 feet higher up, and from here we walked a very nice two-mile trail down to meet the road about half a mile above the lodge. At this point a few took advantage of the jeeps to drive back to the lodge, while the rest of us walked the road back.

The mountain walk provided us with several new species including Ruddy Pigeon, Collared Trogon, which was high on the list for Spay though this sighting was not good enough for a photo, Sulphur-winged Parakeets at a nest-hole, Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Ruddy Treerunner, two Tufted Flycatchers, the regional endemic Black-capped Flycatcher, Black-faced Solitaire and Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush. A Costa Rican Hairy Woodpecker was also seen, very different to those in the U.S. with its dark tan belly. A pair of Sooty-capped Chlorospinguses were observed building a nest, one of several nesting species seen on the tour.

There was a picnic area and lookout across the valley near where the trail crossed the road. Looking out over the valley some 30 White-collared Swifts were flying about, as well as a Red-tailed Hawk and some Black Vultures. As we continued our descent, the vegetation opened a bit as we transitioned from primary forest into secondary forest. This resulted in different birds than higher up, especially warblers, vireos and other small passerines in mixed feeding flocks. The best three were all regional endemics, Flame-throated Warbler, Golden-bellied Flycatcher and Spangle-cheeked Tanager, which gave us a hunt for our views, always hiding behind leaves and branches and very frustrating for those of us carrying cameras. Other birds included Philadelphia Vireo, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, Black-throated Green and Wilson's Warblers, Collared Redstarts and a Summer Tanager.

After lunch at the lodge, we set out to investigate a nesting Lesser Violetear that Maita had photographed. When we arrived, we could hear the female clicking nearby, and we didn't linger as her behavior indicated she



had chicks. Next on our agenda for this “relaxation day” was a walk along the road to check flowering shrubs and the river for dippers and Torrent Tyrannulet. But first we walked in the opposite direction where Alejandro had seen a quetzal feeding on an avocado tree while we were up on the mountain, but alas, it had departed. We found 12 species on the short walk including one of our targets: Torrent Tyrannulet. A Black Phoebe also on the river rocks gave us closer views than at Selva Verde. A Mountain Elaenia was another new and we had good looks at a previously heard only bird, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren. We then returned to Trogon Lodge to relax, review our checklist and have dinner.

Tue., Dec 26 Quetzal Viewing | Cerro Buena Vista | Miriam’s Restaurant

This morning was an early start for a special bird: Resplendent Quetzal. Although we were only going a short distance to a nearby small lodge, we needed to get there just after sunrise, as the quetzals came early to feed and often leave afterwards. By 6 a.m. we were standing in an open area overlooking fields that contained some aguacatillo trees, the preferred food of quetzals. A Spotted Wood-Quail called from the forest as we waited. About 15 minutes after we arrived, a female was spotted, then not long after a male swooped in, its long tail waving. Over the next 45 minutes, we watched and photographed at least two males and females, but likely one or two more. Two males were easily separated by their tail lengths, and we saw two females at the same time. One time the long-tailed male flew past us quite close, a stunning sight. After about an hour, only one female remained and although there could be continued activity, we had such good views we were ready to return for breakfast and head out to our next and special destination, the high aramo.

After another delicious and filling breakfast, we rose out of the valley to the Pan-American Highway, reaching 11,000 feet where we turned off on a gravel road and continued to Cerro Buena Vista. In Andean countries such as Colombia, the aramo is extensive, here it was just a small patch, maybe a square mile in total. Although surrounded by rainforest for miles in all directions, specialist aramo birds live here. Cerro Chirripó, some 20 miles away, is the only other aramo in Central America. Our targets here were Volcano Junco, Timberline Wren and Peg-billed Finch. Our first junco came as we walked up the road, forging in the grass around rocks. We later saw a second bird standing on a gatepost surveying its realm. Volcano Hummingbirds were common here. Sooty Thrush and Sooty-capped Chlorospingus were also hopping about, but the Timberline Wren was harder to get eyes on, though a family was moving back and forth along the low bushes. One finally popped out on the other side of the road and sang loudly from a fence long enough for great views and photos. Careful scrutiny of a



small, dark bird identified it as a Peg-billed Finch, whose appearance is very similar to Slaty Flower-piercer. Overhead three Red-tailed Hawks were circling.

We left Buena Vista and headed back down to lower elevation. Our next stop was for coffee at the very birdy Miriam's Restaurant. Here the birds were quite close, great for our photographers, with highlights being Talamanca Hummingbird, Acorn Woodpecker, Costa Rican Hairy Woodpecker, Flame-colored Tanager, Slaty Flowerpiercer, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher and Yellow-thighed Brushfinch. The coffee was excellent and the freshly made breach delicious. Then we drove back to San Gerardo de Dota for lunch at Kahawa, a very good restaurant with open air seating. After lunch, we returned to our lodge where the chilly weather made led us to warm ourselves in the bar area, where we reviewed our checklist and enjoyed a few drinks. This was our last night in the mountains, as tomorrow we would return to San Jose and the bougainvillea.

Wed., Dec 27 Paraiso Quetzales Lodge | Casa Dowii | San Jose

We left Trogon Lodge after breakfast to begin our journey back to San Jose. Our morning would be spent at Paraiso Quetzales Lodge and Reserve, about 30 minutes away. On arrival, we spent some time watching birds coming to the feeders from the deck. To no one's surprise, Lesser Violetears were the most prevalent hummer at the feeders, and we had excellent views of them. Volcano, Talamanca and Fiery-throated Hummingbirds and White-throated Mountain-gem were also common here. After a little time on the veranda, we started on the trail and found some nice birds including the striking Buffy Tuftedcheek, Mistletoe Tyrannulet, Tufted Flycatcher, regional endemic Yellow-winged Vireo and Ochraceous Wren. We had great views of a Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush and Black-and-yellow Silky-flycatcher. Other mountain birds included Mountain and Sooty Thrushes, Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, Large-footed Finch and Yellow-thighed Brushfinch. Always active Collared Redstarts made for bright spots in the at times gloomy rainforest.

A sign at the old carcass of a small 2- or 3-seater plane told the story of its crash here when it ran out of fuel. When we got back to the lodge, we spent some time watching the hummingbirds until it was time to continue our drive to San Jose. On the way we stopped at Casa Dowii to visit Sergio and have coffee, tea or hot chocolate. Everyone was looking forward to this, and once again the Spangle-cheeked Tanager was a no-show, but Flame-

colored and Silver-throated Tanagers, another Flame-colored Warbler, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch and Common Chlorospingus kept us entertained and happily clicking away.

After an hour we took off for the final leg of our drive to San Jose. Traffic was heavy due to a local festival, so we an incidental bird list from the bus, even getting a new bird – Mourning Dove. At the hotel we said goodbye to our excellent driver Alejandro, did our final checklist and then enjoyed a farewell dinner with Abelardo. We all had different times for our departures, ranging from late that evening to tomorrow afternoon, so farewells were made to our newly made friends. It had been a very birdy trip with a very compatible group, excellent accommodations and food, a great guide and a driver who quickly became part of the group. Everyone including me got numerous lifers, some over 80. What more could one want in a bird tour?

Photos: Collared Aracari (Maita Tumalak - MT), White-collared Manakin (MT), Yellow-throated Toucan (Andrew Haffenden - AH), Talamanca Hummingbird (MT), Resplendent Quetzal (MT), Green Honeycreeper female (AH), Green Honeycreeper (John Bartos - JB), Red-legged Honeycreeper (JB), Social Flycatcher (AH), Tent-making Bat (AH), Common Paraque (MT), Green Iguana (AH), Group birding (John Bartos), Coati at Selva Verde (JB), Boat-billed Heron (JB), Boat tour (JB), Scarlet Macaws (MT), White-collared Manakin (AH), Green and Black Poison Dart Frog (AH), Rufous Motmot (AH), Christmas Tree (Cindy Bartos), Rufous-collared Sparrow (JB), Trogon Lodge (COrbet), Lesser Violetear (MT), Ruddy Treerunner (JB), Resplendent Quetzal (MT), Scenic (JB), Volcano Hummingbird (AH), Timberrline Wren (AH), Slaty Flowerpiercer (JB), Acon Woodpecker (AH), Flame-colored Tanager (AH), Succulents (JB),