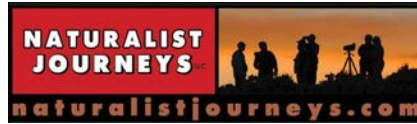


Costa Rica's Caribbean Side Trip Report | October 17 – 27, 2024 by Kent Skaggs



Guides Johan Fernandez and Kent Skaggs, with 10 participants: Barbara, Carol & Dennis, Jean & Cynthia, Kate & Una, Marsha & Bob and Pam



Thurs., Oct. 17 Arrival in San Jose | Hotel Bougainvillea Gardens

Hotel Bougainvillea would be our starting point for our adventure exploring the Caribbean side of Costa Rica. With 10 acres of botanical gardens on the premises of the hotel, it's a great place to be introduced to some of the tropical species we would encounter in the coming days. With an array of tropical trees, shrubs and other flowering plants, the gardens provide excellent habitat for birds, butterflies and a few other critters as well.

Everyone had an opportunity to explore the grounds of the hotel a bit before officially gathering at 4:00 PM for a short walk to see what we could find as a group. As it was late in the day and rain was looming, it was a bit quiet in the gardens, but we managed to get a good look at a couple of Lesson's Motmots as well as a Cinnamon-bellied Saltator. After a brief break, the group gathered in the bar at 6:15 PM for a welcome drink and a chance to get to know each other a bit. We were then joined by our leader/local guide, Johan Fernandez, who gave a presentation on what was in store for the group during the tour. We then moved to the restaurant for dinner before returning to our rooms to prepare for the following day. We were all excited for the tour to start!

Fri., Oct. 18 Travel to Maquenque | Cinchona Waterfall

Travel day! But before we loaded onto the bus, the group met at 6:00 AM to take one last walk through the gardens. It had rained throughout the night and it was a bit foggy as we started our walk around the grounds. Despite this we found several species in view including the motmots again, several flycatchers (Great Kiskadee, Boat-billed and Social Flycatchers and Tropical Kingbird), three species of vireo (Philadelphia, Red-eyed and Yellow-green) and Baltimore Orioles. As we finished up our walk, the fog began to lift, exposing a few more



species perched in the tops of trees including Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Montezuma Oropendola and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Then it was breakfast, finish packing and on the bus.

As we departed the city, Johan gave us some background on Costa Rica and its history as a country. As we headed north, we began to climb in elevation allowing us to get a wider view of the Central Valley. Going up in elevation was also going to allow us an opportunity to see some species we weren't likely to encounter anywhere else on the trip. Our first stop was at a little bird feeding station across from the Freddo Fresas restaurant in the town of Poasito in the Alajuela province. Lesser Violetear, Purple-throated Mountain-gem and Violet Sabrewing were seen at the feeders, while a male Magenta-throated Woodstar was seen visiting flowers nearby. Several Mountain Eleanias were seen flitting about in the trees, along with a Mistletoe Tyrannulet, a Yellowish Flycatcher, a couple of Common Chlorospingus and several White-collared Swifts zoomed about in the skies above.

A short distance up the road we stopped again at a bridge that spanned a small stream. Several new species were seen at this stop, including Mountain Thrush, Long-tailed Silky flycatcher, Yellow-thighed Brushfinch, Black-cheeked Warbler and Slate-throated Redstart. It was at this location that we got a surprise as a male Resplendent Quetzal flew in and perched in clear view. We got the bird in the scopes for everyone to get a closer look. The bird was very cooperative and we were able to soak it in for several minutes before eventually getting back on the bus to try another location a little further up the road. Just outside of the entrance to Poas Volcano National Park, we added Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Scintillant Hummingbird, Yellow-winged Vireo, Black-and-yellow Silky flycatcher, Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, Flame-throated Warbler, Flame-colored Tanager and Black-thighed Grosbeak to our growing list. We then backtracked to a fork in the road where we continued north, making a quick stop to check out a verbena hedge just off of the road. Hummingbirds were buzzing around the flowers including several Volcano Hummingbirds and a Blue-vented Hummingbird, both new species.

From here we continued up the road to where we would be stopping for lunch at Galeria de Colibri y Soda Cinchona (the Colibri Cafe at Cinchona). This little roadside restaurant is a known birding destination, with beautiful scenery and great food! Upon arrival we checked out the feeding station and hummingbird feeders before sitting down for lunch. Black Guan, Red-headed Barbet, Northern Emerald Toucanet, Crimson-collared Tanager, Silver-throated Tanager, Scarlet-rumped Tanager and Buff-throated Saltator were new species seen at the fruit feeding station and Green Hermit, Brown Violetear, Green-crowned Brilliant and Coppery-headed Emerald were new at the hummingbird feeders. The picturesque San Fernando waterfall which is directly across from the restaurant was visible briefly before low clouds rolled in causing it to disappear from view. Our meals were ready so we sat down to enjoy the food and our surroundings.



As much as we hated to leave, we had to continue to push on to our ultimate destination for the day - Maquenque Ecolodge. As soon as we departed we began descending into the Caribbean foothills and then eventually into the lowlands, enjoying the scenery along the way. Mid-afternoon we stopped for a bathroom break. As we got off of the bus a few of us looked up and noticed some birds flying high overhead. Lots of birds actually and they were migrating raptors. Most were Turkey Vultures, but there were a lot of Broad-winged Hawks and a few Swainson's Hawks as well. This was a taste of what we were hoping to experience in about a week along the Caribbean coast. Would we be too late? Only time would tell. Back on the bus and after another hour on the road, we arrived at the Maquenque Ecolodge parking area. After getting our luggage out of the bus, we were ferried across the Rio San Carlos. Once across the river, we got checked in and received directions to our bungalows. After getting settled in, we returned to the reception/restaurant where we tallied our sightings for the day - 102 species seen in total with a half a dozen heard in addition as well. Not a bad day indeed. We enjoyed dinner and then went to bed to get some rest. Our adventure was just beginning.

Sat., Oct. 19 Maquenque Eco Lodge and Trails

Most of the group was up early for the 6:00 AM bird walk. This would be our routine each day for those who wanted to participate. We set out under mostly cloudy skies on a trail that circled a portion of a small lake near our accommodations. As we walked, one of the first birds we encountered was a Rufous-tailed Jacamar perched, waiting patiently for breakfast to present itself. Then we came across a Scaly-breasted Hummingbird looking primed to take on the new day. In a wet meadow adjacent to the lake there were Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Groove-billed Anis, Southern Lapwing, Northern Jacana and a few wading birds. As we made the loop, we saw numerous other species, some familiar and some new. In all we saw 61 species in a little over an hour. We continued to watch birds coming to the feeding stations filled with fruit while we ate breakfast. Yellow-throated Toucans and Collared Aracaris both made an appearance much to the dismay of the smaller birds that were there for breakfast too.

After breakfast, the group headed into the rainforest to see what we could find. To get to the rainforest trail we walked a path that paralleled some water where we heard White-throated Crakes calling and had a flyover by a single Muscovy Duck. We eventually came to a junction where the path continued straight or you could go left across a bridge which we did. As we continued on this path we came to one of the Tree Houses on the property where we stopped as Johan was trying to locate something in the tree canopy. He eventually found what he was looking for and got it in his scope. Each person leaned forward to take a look to discover a Crested Owl tucked



away high in the branches. After everyone had seen the bird, we continued on to where we entered onto one of the rainforest trails. This meant leaving a crushed rock path that was wide enough for two people to easily walk side by side to a dirt path that was single file. We could hear a few birds as we walked but overall it was relatively quiet. We eventually came to a walking bridge that crossed a swampy area full of palm trees. We stopped on the bridge and Johan began to play the call of a bird. It didn't take long to get a response as a Green-and-rufous Kingfisher emerged from the forest and perched on a branch on the backside of a palm tree. The bird circled around us a few times looking for the source of the call, providing good looks of the bird while in flight, but it stayed hidden from view for the most part when it landed. We moved on to the other side of the bridge where the trail connected back to the original path we came in on, and then worked our way back in order to take a brief siesta before having lunch.

After eating lunch and taking another siesta, we gathered near the Reception area before heading down the path that we came in on when we first arrived. Along the way we took a quick detour to check out an area next to the San Carlos River. We were watching a Squirrel Cuckoo hop around in the upper branches of a tree when Johan heard the call of a Scarlet Macaw coming from the other side of the river. He quickly located the bird perched in the upper canopy of trees on the far bank. We got the bird in the scopes for everyone to get a closer look and continued to scan the distant treeline. A group of White-crowned Parrots were perched not far away from the macaw and a single King Vulture was perched on a dead snag. We returned to the path we had started on and walked to the area where the boats ferry people across the river. Several species were moving about including two very vocal Bay Wrens that let us know we were in their territory. We then moved into a cocoa plantation where there were several Great Curassows roaming about looking for food. We continued on through an organic garden where vegetables are grown for the restaurant and saw some livestock that were a part of the farm as well. As we exited this area, we had a very cooperative Yellow-bellied Elaenia pose for extended views as well as a Yellow-throated Toucan grabbing a late afternoon snack from the top of a fruiting tree. We finished up our walk and took a break before gathering again at 6:30 PM to go over the daily bird/wildlife sightings, followed by dinner. It was a very enjoyable day one at Maquenque and we were looking forward to exploring the area further starting in the morning.

Sun., Oct. 20 Maquenque Eco Lodge and Trails | San Carlos River Boat Tour

Most of the group went on the pre-breakfast walk where we saw a lot of species seen the day before but some new ones too: Crested Guan, a flyover by two Great Green Macaws, Barred Antshrike, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Black-throated Wren and Blue-black Grosbeak. We returned for breakfast and then gathered again to explore more of the trails on the property.

We started at the Bungalows where most of the group was staying and found a lot of familiar species before heading on a path that took us back into the forest. A short distance down the path we flushed a Little Tinamou



but we weren't able to relocate it so we continued on. A little further up the path we found an Olive-sided Flycatcher perched atop a dead snag, sallying out from time to time to catch a meal. As we made our way back we stopped near some water where Johan spotted two Black-crowned Tityras in the top of a distant tree. As we watched these birds in the scopes, three Great Green Macaws flew in and landed in the top of a Cecropia tree nearby. Fortunately they stayed put for a while allowing us long looks at these colorful birds. We continued to scan the area for other species when a medium sized raptor came speeding by at close range then disappeared into some trees. Johan determined that

the bird was a Slaty-backed Forest-Falcon. We tried to relocate it, but were unsuccessful. We finished up our walk and then took a siesta before lunch.

After lunch, we boarded a boat for a tour of the Rio San Carlos. Shortly after pushing off, we headed slightly upstream where we saw our first American Crocodile which are relatively common. Then we turned around and headed downstream to see what we could find. The San Carlos River at Maquenque is very broad and turbid and drains into the San Juan River bordering Nicaragua. Not far down the river we found a Gray Hawk and a Roadside Hawk perched in trees fairly close to one another and a little further down a pair of Bat Falcons. Then movement was spotted in the trees to our left. The Captain maneuvered the boat closer to shore in order to get a better look at what turned out to be a group of Central American Spider Monkeys. Most appeared to be resting but some were foraging for fruit as well. We continued on, seeing the occasional Green Iguana lounging on a tree limb up high and a few Emerald Basilisks doing the same down low. Further downstream, the Captain again brought the boat closer to shore where Proboscis Bats were seen roosting on the underside of a leaning tree trunk.

As we neared the border with Nicaragua, a bird was spotted flying over the river that appeared a bit out of place. It turned out to be a Laughing Gull which is typically found along the coast and rarely inland. Maybe it was seeing the sights as well. We turned around and headed a short distance back upstream where we made a brief stop at Boca San Carlos where the group stretched their legs a bit and had the option of purchasing a refreshing drink. During this little break, we witnessed the expert use of a machete by our Captain on how to disassemble a coconut to get to its nutritious inner fruit. Thoroughly impressed with the Captain's skill in removing the outer husk and opening the inner shell, we sampled the fruit before getting back on the boat to return upstream to



Maquenque. In order to make good time, the return trip was at full throttle for the most part, but our time on the Rio San Carlos had been a very relaxing way to spend the afternoon.

After a break to freshen up, a portion of the group went on a short nightwalk where we saw a few species of frogs before returning to the reception/restaurant to tally what was seen during the day. This would be our last dinner at Maquenque as we would be leaving for our next destination in the morning. It had been a wonderful start to the trip, but it was time to see more of the Caribbean side of Costa Rica.

Mon., Oct. 21 Pierella Garden | Selva Verde Lodge

Travel day! But first some of the group did a pre-breakfast walk where we added Snowy Cotinga, White-ringed Flycatcher and Black-faced Grosbeak to our growing list. Then it was breakfast, pack up the remainder of our things and ferry back across the river. Once we were back on the bus, we settled in and enjoyed watching the countryside roll by. It wasn't long before we entered the Sarapiquí region near Puerto Viejo and by late morning we were at Pierella Garden, which is where we would be eating lunch and spending a good part of the afternoon.

As we awaited lunch, we enjoyed the bird activity at a couple of fruit feeding stations next to the reception/restaurant. Crimson-collared, Scarlet-rumped, Blue-gray and Palm Tanagers were all present along with Red-legged and Green Honeycreepers. A Golden-winged Warbler was spotted near one of the stations as were Orange-billed Sparrows. Lunch was now ready so we sat down and enjoyed several tasty dishes served family style, followed by dessert. We finished up and prepared for a tour of the grounds, but before we could start a Gray-headed Kite was seen in the trees nearby. Most were able to get a look at the bird before it moved on and Johan was able to take some video of it to share with the group. We then started walking on a path through the forest that surrounded us. We didn't make it too far before stopping to look at a Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth, then a little further we were shown a Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift nest, then we came across a White-whiskered Puffbird, then we were shown roosting Honduran White Bats, then a Common Pauraque roosting on the ground...there were all kinds of cool critters here! As we continued on we encountered a Rufous-tailed Jacamar, a couple of Slaty Spinetails and a pair of Fasciated Antshrikes tending to their young. After a short break we moved on to the main attraction which were the butterfly enclosures as Pierella Garden is a butterfly farm first and foremost. We entered one enclosure that held the very large Owl and Blue Morpho Butterflies, along with several other species. There was also a small, screened structure that was lined with butterfly pupa/chrysalis. Very cool indeed. We then headed back to the reception to get a demonstration of how chocolate is made and to sample the end product. Yum!



Once we finished up at Pierella Garden it was back to Selva Verde Lodge, which we had passed en route to Pierella, as we would be staying here for the next two nights. We checked in and relaxed a bit before gathering for the daily bird/wildlife list, eating dinner and then heading off to bed. It had been a very enjoyable day.

Tues., Oct. 22 La Selva Biological Station | Sarapiquí River Boat Tour

Part of the group started the day with our pre-breakfast walk around the grounds at Selva Verde Lodge where we added a couple of new bird species - a Broad-billed Motmot hiding out in the trees and a Black Phoebe along the Sarapiquí River. We also had a flyover by six Scarlet Macaws. Then it was back for breakfast.

After breakfast we headed to the La Selva Biological Station. Upon arrival we were greeted by a La Selva staff person who would be our guide. After filling out some required paperwork near the dining hall, we gathered our gear and began to move away when Johan spotted a raptor soaring high above. Momentarily we thought we might have a hawk-eagle, but it ended up being a Hook-billed Kite which was a very good bird as well. While the group was listening to a brief overview of La Selva at a display just outside of the visitor center, Johan found a Rufous Motmot perched in clear view just above a walkway nearby.

We then proceeded to a path that led to a suspension bridge that spanned the Puerto Viejo River. Once across to the other side, we immediately encountered four Crested Guans just lounging in the shade of some trees, another Hook-billed Kite and a Double-toothed Kite soaring high above the forest and several Gray-rumped Swifts flying just above the forest canopy. We were in an area where there were several buildings scattered about with some lawn areas and scattered smaller trees between them. There was a fair amount of bird activity in these trees so we started to inventory what was there. White-ruffed Manakin, White-collared Manakin, Olive-backed Euphonia, Black-cowled Oriole, Golden-winged Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Summer Tanager, Blue-gray Tanager, Golden-hooded Tanager, Plain-colored Tanager, Silver-throated Tanager, Scarlet-thighed Tanager, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Green Honeycreeper and Buff-throated Saltator were all present.

From here, we proceeded down a path that led into the forest. A few minutes later we came upon a male Northern Black-throated Trogon posing nicely just off the path. As we headed further into the forest the trees increased in size, both in height and width, making for some truly spectacular specimens. We eventually turned around and backtracked to where we had entered the forest, spotting a couple of Strawberry Poison Dart Frogs along the way and two Semiplumbeous Hawks that flew across in front of us and perched briefly before



disappearing out of view. Then it was back across the suspension bridge, a quick stop inside the visitor center and back on the bus. It had been a very enjoyable morning at La Selva, but it was time to return to Selva Verde Lodge for lunch.

The group took a brief siesta after lunch before heading to a location nearby for a boat tour on the Sarapiquí River. Upon arrival we boarded the boat and immediately headed upstream. As we slowly cruised along, Spotted Sandpipers were a common sight along the river bank and Mangrove Swallows were ever present over the water. Anhinga, Little Blue Heron, Snowy Egret and Green and Amazon Kingfishers were also present. As we continued upstream, Dennis spotted something red near the bank about 30 feet above the water. It was a male Slaty-tailed Trogon perched out in the open on a vine. It posed nicely as trogons often do, allowing us extended looks of this beautiful bird. Eventually we reached the confluence of the Sarapiquí and Puerto Viejo Rivers, choosing to explore the latter for a while. It wasn't long before we heard a ruckus off to our left. As we zeroed in on the source of the sounds we discovered it was a pair of White-fronted Nunbirds perched in the trees. They were obscured by vegetation at first but then they decided to take flight to the other side of the river landing out in the open where they were easily seen. We enjoyed them for a while before continuing upstream a little further before turning around just past the suspension bridge we had walked across twice in the morning at La Selva. The Captain sped things up a bit on the way back so we sat back and enjoyed the ride. It had been a very pleasant afternoon on the water and a nice way to end the day.

We thanked the Captain and headed back to Selva Verde Lodge. We took a little break before gathering to do the species tally for the day. Then dinner and to bed. We would be moving on in the morning.

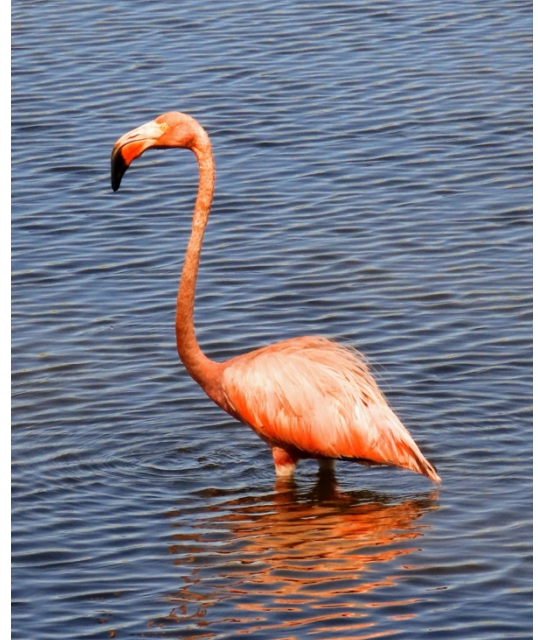
Wed., Oct. 23 To the Caribbean Coast

Travel day! There was no pre-breakfast walk this morning, but we did take some time to check out what was visiting the fruit feeding station near the restaurant at breakfast. Lots of good looks at familiar species were had and a new one was seen as well with the addition of a Northern Barred-Woodcreeper. Then we loaded up and got back on the road.

We settled in for the drive of about three hours to Limón where we would be stopping for lunch. About two-thirds of the way there the traffic had begun to slow down due to a car accident ahead of us. At one point traffic stopped and while we waited for vehicles to start moving again birds were spotted in the air on our left. They were Broad-winged Hawks and lots of them. We watched as the hawks streamed over top of us and then gathered in a thermal to gain altitude before resuming their migration south. This was the second time during

the trip we had witnessed raptors migrating in numbers. Would we experience this again the following day at the hawk watch site? Only time would tell. We eventually arrived in Limón where we enjoyed a very good lunch.

Then it was back on the road, where we had another hour to the Cariblue Beach Resort near Puerto Viejo. Along the way we made



a brief stop to check out an extremely rare visitor to Costa Rica, an American Flamingo. Apparently blown off course by a hurricane in the Caribbean Sea in late September, this bird had been hanging out along the coast since its discovery. It had become somewhat of a celebrity and lots of people were coming to see it. Now it was our turn. The bird was extremely close to shore when we pulled up allowing for great views even without binoculars. It appeared to be in good shape, but whether it was finding enough food in its new surroundings remained to be seen. We scanned the area for other species and added Royal Tern, Neotropic Cormorant and Tricolored Heron to our list before continuing down the road.

Arriving midafternoon, we got checked in and moved into our accommodations. The group then had free time to explore the resort and the adjacent beach. Later we gathered at the resort's restaurant to tally our sightings for the day and have dinner. It had been a long day on the bus, but a good one.

Thurs., Oct. 24 River of Raptors

Some of the group started the day with the pre-breakfast walk, exploring the grounds of the resort and venturing down to the beach to see what was along the shore. At the resort we got a really good look at a juvenile Long-billed Hermit and we finally saw a Bright-rumped Attila after only hearing them at several stops. At the beach, we found a couple of Black-bellied Plovers, a Whimbrel and a juvenile Yellow-headed Caracara. Then it was back for breakfast.

After breakfast, most of the group headed for Casa Calateas which is a rural lodge situated in the lush hills above Cahuita. The group was dropped off to walk the entrance road up to the lodge which was surrounded by old secondary growth forest. Lots of familiar birds were seen and heard on the way in, including our first looks at Stripe-throated Hermit and Crowned Woodnymph. After using the bathroom and getting rehydrated, we continued on a path that led to a viewing platform for watching migrating raptors. Once there, we started scanning the skies. We had seen some raptors overhead on the way in through holes in the forest canopy, but now we had a mostly unobstructed view of the sky. At first there weren't many birds close to the platform, but then a 'stream' formed nearby. Turkey Vultures, Broad-winged Hawks and Swainson's Hawks were now streaming by in large numbers, occasionally stopping to catch a thermal before continuing on. The 'stream' of raptors continued, waning at times but it mostly remained at a steady flow. While we watched the spectacle above us, a female Slaty-tailed Trogon flew in and perched on a branch near the platform, briefly drawing our



attention away from the aerial display. We stayed on the platform for about an hour before retracing our steps back to the bus. Our visit to Casa Calateas had been a great experience and the raptor migration was a major reason why.

Once we were back at the resort, we ate lunch and then everyone had the rest of the afternoon to do what they wished. The beach and taking a dip in the Caribbean Sea was on the docket for some and relaxing around the resort for others. We gathered later for the species list, followed by dinner. Then it was back to our rooms to get packed and get some shut eye. We were on the road again in the morning.

Fri., Oct. 25 Veragua Rainforest | Rancho Naturalista

Travel day! Breakfast, load up and hit the road back up the coast to Limón. From there it was on to Liverpool where we got off of the highway and started working our way southwest up into the mountains. Our destination this morning was the Veragua Rainforest. This ecotourism destination is both an adventure park where you can explore the rainforest on one of the many trails, or see the upper canopy via a sky gondola or by zipline. It is also a research station that focuses on preserving the unique amphibians and reptiles of this region. Our first objective of our visit was to seek out a special bird - the Great Jacamar. A solitary male had been showing up at Veragua for four consecutive years for an extended period of time each year and then would disappear for a while. It was currently in the park and close to the main visitor area so we headed to where it was being seen. It wasn't but a few minutes and we were looking at the bird. Oohs and aahs were heard from the group as we stared at this beautiful bird. We watched it catch and devour a cicada and it eventually began to vocalize for us as well. It was very accustomed to people and did not mind our presence at all. We soaked it in for quite a while before we returned to the visitor area where we would have lunch.

After lunch, we received a short presentation by one of the biologists on the research that was being conducted in the park. Then we walked a bit on some of the trails where we added two more new species in Blue-chested Hummingbird and Rufous-winged Tanager. Then it was back on the bus to head to our final destination for the trip - Rancho Naturalista. It was about two and half hours from Veragua Rainforest, so we settled in and enjoyed the beautiful landscape as we rolled along.

Upon arrival, we checked in and found our accommodations and relaxed a bit before we gathered for dinner at 6:00 PM. After an excellent meal, we went over the species list and retired for the evening.

Sat., Oct. 26 Rancho Naturalista | Sunbittern | Rancho Naturalista

Some of the group were up early to see what birds could be seen from the veranda as things were a bit soaked in after rains overnight. Several White-necked Jacobins were joined at the hummingbird feeders by a couple of Green-breasted Mangos, a pair of Crowned Woodnymphs, a Violet Sabrewing and a Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, while a couple of Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds tried to monopolize a couple of verbena hedges from a Violet-headed Hummingbird and a male Snowcap. Gray-headed Chachalacas were milling about in the trees while several Red-billed Pigeons and White-winged Doves were feeding on seed that had been placed on the ground. The bell rang indicating breakfast was about to be served so we made our way to the dining area.



After breakfast we set off to explore one of the trails on the property. The trail started by winding through the forest, gradually climbing in elevation as we went and ultimately leading to a Guava plantation. Still mostly overcast, patches of blue sky were showing up and we found ourselves standing in the sun. As we scanned around, we found several species of warblers feeding in the Guava trees - Golden-winged, Black-and-white, Tennessee, Bay-breasted and Blackburnian, plus a Yellow-throated Vireo. A Green Thorntail made a brief appearance as well. Johan then found a King Vulture perched in a tree on the hillside above us, so we got it in the scopes for a better look. It eventually took flight, found a thermal and proceeded to circle upwards into the sky. Two more King Vultures joined it and Turkey and Black Vultures were now getting airborne nearby as well. It was a beautiful morning and we had a great view of the valley below us. We continued on the path through the Guava trees where it took us back down the hill and to the entrance road just below the lodge. Most of the group continued down the road, seeing a Rufous Motmot tucked back in the trees and a Lineated Woodpecker busy excavating a hole in a Cecropia tree. We stopped at a location where a new home for the owner was under construction. Next to it was a verbena hedge with a few hummingbirds feeding on the flowers. Johan noticed that one of the hummingbirds was a male Black-crested Coquette. Fortunately it stayed in view long enough for everyone to get a look at it before it disappeared on the backside of the hedge. We then headed back up the road to the lodge and took a little break before lunch.

After lunch, we had a break until mid-afternoon before setting off to the small community of Platanillo to look for a Sunbittern. Upon arrival, we turned off the main road and crossed over a small stream. We got off the bus and walked back to the bridge we had just crossed, looking both up and down the stream to see if our target bird was in view. No Sunbittern, but we did see a couple of Torrent Tyrannulets which were new for the trip. We walked downstream a little ways to check areas not visible from the bridge and in short order Johan had our bird. The Sunbittern was walking on rocks on the far side of the stream looking for prey. It moved slowly but at a steady gate. When it paused, the back half of the body seemed to slightly sway back and forth. It eventually flew upstream a short distance and upon landing the unique pattern towards the end of the wings could be seen. We headed back upstream to get closer where we watched it continue along the bank eventually going under the bridge. As we returned to the bridge, we could still see the bird, but soon it went around a corner out of view.

Successful, we got back on the bus and headed a little further up the road to another location along a stream where we found another Sunbittern before returning to Rancho Naturalista. Once back, the group headed out on a trail that led to a very small stream that had some natural pools that birds use to bathe in. It wasn't long before a male Crowned Woodnymph came to one of the pools. As the daylight faded, more and more birds began to appear. Green Hermit, Violet Sabrewing and Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer were additional hummingbird species seen, while other birds that came in for a bath included Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Slaty-capped Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush, Black-and-white Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Golden-



crowned Warbler, Carmiol’s Tanager and several White-shouldered Tanagers. It was a great ending to a fantastic day.

We gathered at 6:00 PM for another wonderful meal, followed by a special dessert. Johan was celebrating his 40th birthday and the chef had made him a birthday cake that he was gracious enough to share with the group. Afterwards, we did our final bird/wildlife tally and then discussed what everyone’s favorite bird/s or experiences were during the trip which are listed at the end of this report. Then it was off to our rooms to pack up and get some rest for our early departure in the morning.

Sun., Oct. 27 Departures

Some of the group got up a little earlier than the rest to check out the moth/insect observation station, but the light for the station had been shut off as it rained most of the night. We gave it a go anyway as several species of birds had become accustomed to the possibility of a meal here in the mornings. First in were a couple of Brown Jays, but noticing there were no insects they kept moving. A couple of Fawn-throated Foliage-gleaners along with a Golden-crowned Warbler showed up briefly before moving on as well.

We returned to the veranda to take a last look at the hummingbirds before gathering for breakfast. Then back to our rooms to finish packing. Bob and Marsha were extending their stay at Rancho Naturalista a couple of days so we said our goodbyes to them before getting back on the bus. It was overcast with light rain as we departed and remained this way for most of our trip back. We dropped Johan off in Cartago and thanked him for a wonderful trip before continuing on to San Jose. Once back, some were dropped off at the airport and some continued on to their hotels for the night. The trip had come to an end, but wonderful memories of our time on the Caribbean side of Costa Rica would remain with us for some time. Here’s hoping our paths cross again on another adventure with Naturalist Journeys.

A BIG THANK YOU TO JOHAN FOR PUTTING US ON SOME GREAT BIRDS AND TO GERALDO FOR GETTING US TO ALL OF OUR DESTINATIONS SAFELY!!

Best bird/s or Experience

Carol - The motmots
Dennis - King Vulture
Pam - Great Jacamar
Barbara - Snowcap & the raptor migration
Kate - Rufous Motmot
Una - The macaws

Bob - Green-and-rufous Kingfisher, Great Green Macaws & high elevation species
Marsha - All of it
Jean - All of the hummingbirds
Cynthia - King Vulture, the variety from little to big and all of the colors

Photo Credits: Group, Resplendent Quetzal, Volcano Hummingbird, Black Guan, Maquenque Scenic, Kent Skaggs; Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Yellow-throated Toucan, Johan Ferndandez; Orange-chinned Parakeets, Kent Skaggs; Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Dennis Utterback; Group Birding Maquenque, Central American Spider Monkey, Kent Skaggs; Group on the San Carlos River, Red-eyed Tree Frog, Rufous Motmot, Golden-hooded Tanager, Northern Black-throated Trogon, Johan Ferndandez; Sarapiquí River Tour, Kent Skaggs; Johan with Flamingo, Johan Fernandez; American Flamingo, Great Jacamar, White-necked Jacobin, Kent Skaggs; Sunbittern, Dennis Utterback; Johan’s Birthday, Kent Skaggs.