



Costa Rica Birding Trip Report (Jan 11 - 27, 2026)

[Link: Costa Rica Birding Trip Report \(Jan 11 - 27, 2026\)](#)

Day 1: Hotel Doubletree

We started our tour with a brief stroll around the hotel's nearby roads where we saw our first Costa Rican birds, including Red-billed Pigeon, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, and Blue-gray Tanager. After this, we went to dinner and prepared for the next day's adventures.

Day 2: Caldera Mangroves and Dry Forest

We started our day by driving from the Central Valley along the Virilla River drainage, making our way to the Pacific coast to explore the Mata de Limón mangroves near Caldera. This remarkable site, where tropical dry forest meets mangrove habitat, offered excellent birding opportunities. We encountered a diverse array of species, including Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, Mangrove Yellow Warbler, Green-breasted Mango, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Prothonotary Warbler, Rufous-naped Wren, and Wood Stork. Next, we made a stop at the famous Crocodile Bridge over the Tárcoles River. Here, in addition to seeing many huge American crocodiles, we also spotted our first Scarlet Macaws, as well as Southern Lapwing, Scrub Euphonia, Green Kingfisher, and excellent views of a Bat Falcon. We then had a traditional Costa Rican lunch at the lovely Tárcoles Birding Hotel, set on a hill overlooking much of the coastal dry forest and surrounding area. After lunch, we added several new species, including Blue-vented Hummingbird, Crested Caracara, Northern Barred-Woodcreeper, Montezuma Oropendola, and great views of several Streak-backed Orioles. After lunch we finished the day by driving to our home for the next two nights at Hotel Punta Leona.

Day 3: Carara National Park and Tárcoles Boat Tour

We started our third day with a pre-breakfast walk around the resort's lush gardens, where we found many amazing birds including great looks at Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, Gray-headed Chachalaca, and

many Scarlet Macaws. We also saw our first owl of the tour, with excellent views of a very cooperative Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl.



Scarlet Macaws © Blair Dudeck

After breakfast we visited Carara National Park, and it certainly lived up to its reputation! Along the trail we had fantastic views of Black-hooded Antshrike, Chestnut-backed Antbird, and Rufous Piha, as well as Grey-headed Kite, Grateful Black-throated Trogon, and incredible views of Purple-crowned Fairy and Blue-throated Goldentail.



Gray-headed Kite © Blair Dudeck



Graceful Black-throated Trogon © Blair Dudeck

After lunch we took a short drive to the Tárcoles River, where we embarked on a boat trip guided by our expert birder and captain, Juan Carlos. This excursion offered fantastic birding and photography opportunities, with a wide variety of species including egrets and herons (e.g., Tricolored Heron, Snowy Egret, and Bare-throated Tiger-Heron), as well as four species of kingfishers: Ringed, Amazon, Green, and American Pygmy Kingfishers. We also observed numerous shorebirds including Willets, Whimbrels, Western, Least, and Spotted Sandpipers, Wilson's and Semipalmated Plovers. The top highlight, as always, was the striking Roseate Spoonbill, of which we had many amazing views. We finished the day by finding a very confiding Double-striped Thick-knee.



Roseate Spoonbill © Blair Dudeck



Wood Stork © Blair Dudeck



Mangrove Swallow © Blair Dudeck



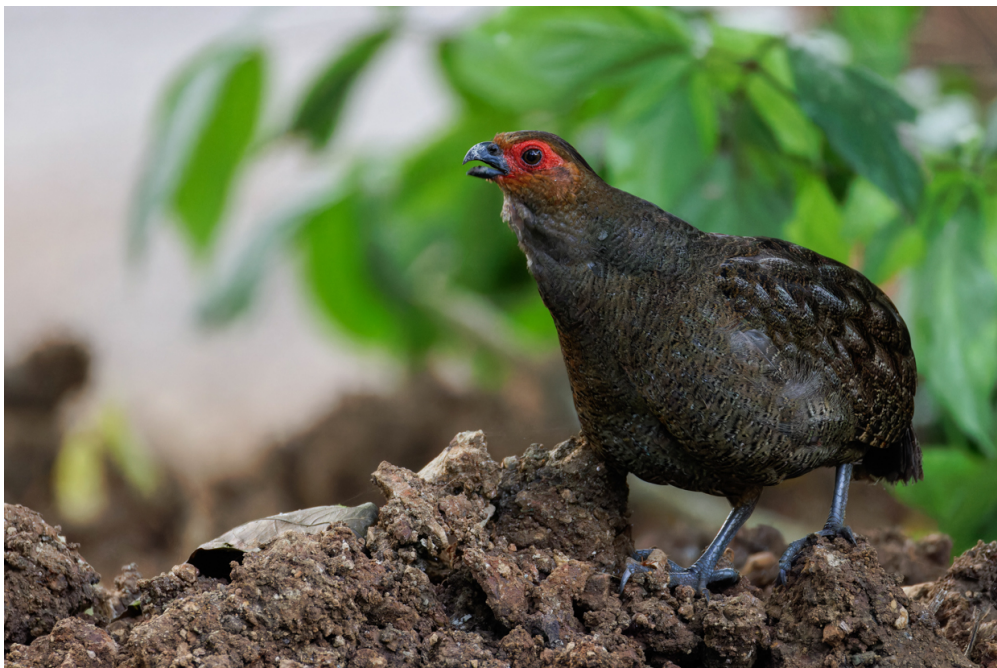
American Pygmy Kingfisher © Blair Dudeck



Double-striped Thick-knee © Blair Dudeck

Day 4: Punta Leona to Osa Peninsula

Before departing, we did an early morning walk around the hotel grounds, where we had great views of both Turquoise-browed and Lesson's Motmots. The morning's best moment was when we were treated to stunning views of a pair of Marbled Wood-Quail!



Marbled Wood-Quail © Blair Dudeck

We started our drive to the Osa Peninsula with a quick stop in the hills near Punta Leona, where we

picked up good views of Crested Guan, White-ruffed Manakin, and Red-legged Honeycreeper. We made another quick stop near Jacó Beach where we had great looks at Laughing Falcon, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and Red-breasted Meadowlark.



Laughing Falcon © Blair Dudeck

We stopped for lunch and the feeders at Esquipulas Rainforest Lodge, where we had great views of Scarlet-rumped Tanager, Yellow-crowned Euphonia, Spot-crowned Euphonia, Golden-naped Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Toucan, and Band-tailed Barbthroat.



Golden-naped Woodpecker © Blair Dudeck

We reached Finca Kobo Lodge shortly before sunset, where warm welcomes from the friendly staff greeted us.

Day 5: Rincón Bridge and Finca Kobo

After an early coffee, we drove a short distance to the bridge over the Rincón River. It gave us a great view of both the rainforest and river, which are key spots for one of our main birds, the endemic Yellow-billed Cotinga. It didn't take long before we started seeing several male and female cotingas in the treetops and flying against the deep blue sky. It was truly amazing to see a total of nine individuals of this critically endangered species.



Sunrise on the Rincon Bridge © Blair Dudeck



Yellow-billed Cotinga © Blair Dudeck

Other highlights included Red-crowned Woodpecker, Black-striped Sparrow, Mangrove Swallow, Gray-breasted Martin, Piratic Flycatcher, Scarlet-rumped Cacique, and a very close Red-lored Amazon.



Red-lored Amazon © Blair Dudeck

After breakfast, we birded the trails at the lodge and had many excellent birds including Baird's Trogon, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Gray-lined Hawk, King Vulture, and several Orange-collared Manakins snapping their wings at a lek.



Orange-collared Manakin © Blair Dudeck



Baird's Trogon © Blair Dudeck



Rufous-tailed Jacamar © Blair Dudeck

After lunch and a short break, we visited the beachside town of Playa Blanca, where we added several seaside species including Laughing and Franklin's Gulls, Sandwich Tern, and great looks at Mangrove Hummingbird.



Mangrove Hummingbird © Blair Dudeck

Day 6: Finca Kobo and Dos Brazos

Before breakfast we walked nearby trails and had brief glimpses of Ruddy Quail-Dove. As we

explored the rest of Finca Kobo's trails we had good looks at White-necked Puffbird and Fiery-billed Aracari.



Ruddy Quail-Dove © Blair Dudeck

After breakfast we drove inland towards Corcovado National Park near the small town of Dos Brazos, an area with incredible diversity. Here we started with a great show of soaring raptors including Swallow-tailed Kite, Double-toothed Kite, Short-tailed Hawk, and several King Vultures. Then we added three species of trogon including Baird's, Gartered Violaceous, and Slaty-tailed. Other good observations included a female Turquoise Cotinga, Lineated Woodpecker, Blue Ground-Dove, and a small troop of Fiery-billed Aracaris. On our drive back we had to stop to watch a Crane Hawk get harassed by a pair of Masked Tityras.



Birding in Dos Brazos © Blair Dudeck



Gartered Violaceous Trogon © Blair Dudeck



Liniated Woodpecker © Blair Dudeck

After lunch back at Finca Kobo, we explored some of the surrounding fields. Here we had a great opportunity to compare three species of cowbird as they came in for a pre-sunset drink, with great looks at Giant, Bronzed, and Shiny Cowbirds. As we walked back to the hotel for dinner we were serenaded by the calls of Little Tinamou and Black-faced Antthrush.

Day 7: Talamanca Highlands

After breakfast we left this fantastic spot to make our way to the Talamanca Highlands. We climbed the Talamanca Mountains and enjoyed clear skies and fantastic views. We stopped for lunch at a local restaurant with several hummingbird feeders, which meant we enjoyed a lovely meal and great looks at several hummingbird species: Brown Violetear, Green Hermit, Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, and Violet Saberwing. We also got great looks at Red-headed Barbet, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Golden-headed Tanager, and Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush.



Snowy-bellied Hummingbird © Blair Dudeck



Golden-olive Woodpecker © Blair Dudeck

We then made a stop at one of the highest points in all of Costa Rica: the Cerro Buenavista communications towers. Even with uncooperative weather, we still managed good looks at Volcano Hummingbird, Slaty Flowerpiercer, and Sooty-capped Chlorospingus!



Volcano Hummingbird © Blair Dudeck

Volcano-Hummingbird-Blair-Dudeck

Day 8: Savegre Valley, PN Los Quetzales, Miriam's Restaurant

We started our day at first light, birding the road just past our hotel in search of Costa Rica's most iconic bird: the Resplendent Quetzal. It didn't take long to find this magnificent species, as we quickly found one very cooperative bird foraging in the avocado trees next to the road.



Resplendent Quetzal © Blair Dudeck

After a lovely breakfast back at the hotel, we did some quick birding around the grounds and added Spotted Wood-Quail to our species list. Our next stop was Parque Nacional Los Quetzales. Wet weather didn't dampen our spirits! Here we found many highland specialties such as Wrenthrush, Ruddy Treerunner, Black-capped Flycatcher, Mountain and Sooty Thrushes, as well as both Black-and-yellow and Long-tailed Silky-Flycatchers.



Spotted Wood-Quail © Blair Dudeck

We took a break from the rain and decided to dry out with some hot drinks and lovely feeders at Miriam's Restaurant. We had splendid views and photo opportunities with Lesser Violetear, Talamanca Hummingbird, Fiery-throated Hummingbird, White-throated Mountain-gem, Flame-colored Tanager, Acorn Woodpecker, and Large-footed Finch.



Flame-colored Tanager © Blair Dudeck



Acorn Woodpecker © Blair Dudeck



White-throated Mountain-gem © Blair Dudeck

After lunch we spent the rest of the afternoon exploring the grounds of Hotel Dantica, which provided us with some great birds including Flame-throated Warbler, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Yellow-winged Vireo, and Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush. However, the biggest highlight was the Baird's Tapir that turned up to feed in the hotel's gardens! Baird's Tapir is an endangered species with isolated populations throughout southern Mexico, Central America, and northwestern South America.



Baird's Tapir © Blair Dudeck



Large-footed Finch © Blair Dudeck

Day 9: Paraiso Quetzal Lodge, Paraíso

After breakfast we departed Hotel Dantica and made a short drive to Paraíso Quetzal Lodge. This is an amazing place with some of the best hummingbird feeders and gardens in the highlands of Costa Rica. Here we got more excellent photo opportunities of Fairy-throated, Talamanca and Volcano Hummingbirds. The gardens provided great views of Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Slaty Flowerpiercer, Large-footed Finch, Black-bellied Siskin, and Black-capped Flycatcher. After filling our camera cards and having a warm drink, it was time to head down into the Central Valley.



Fiery-throated Hummingbird © Blair Dudeck



Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher © Blair Dudeck



Lesser Violetear © Lesser Violetear



Slaty Flowerpiercer © Blair Dudeck



Black-capped Flycatcher © Blair Dudeck

Our next stop was at lower elevations in the town square of Paraíso, where we saw a pair of roosting Tropical Screech-Owls. Here we also learned about conservation efforts focusing on Cabanis's Ground-Sparrow and admired the large sculpture of this species that stands in the park in recognition of this endemic and declining species. We then carried on to the town of Ujarrás for lunch and to explore the nearby Spanish colonial ruins, where we saw Black Phoebe, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, White-crowned Parrot, and Mistletoe Tyrannulet.



Tropical Screech-Owls © Blair Dudeck



Black Phoebe © Blair Dudeck



Our group

Day 10: Ujarrás, Guarumo Lodge, La Quinta de Sarapiquí Lodge

We started the day with a pre-breakfast walk through the farmland of Ujarrás in search of the highly

endemic Cabanis's Ground-Sparrow. We had several quick looks at this interesting sparrow. We also saw many other great birds including Painted Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Black-headed Saltator, Orchard Oriole, White-lined Tanager, and Lesser Goldfinch. We started on our way towards Costa Rica's Caribbean slope after a delicious breakfast, though we made several stops along the way. Our first stop was at Angostura Lagoon near Turrialba, where we had great looks at Snail Kite, Limpkin, Purple Gallinule, and Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks. Just before lunch our driver Jamie spotted a Three-toed Sloth feeding in a tree on the side of the road which prompted a very excited stop for brilliant views and many photos.



Three-toed Sloth © Blair Dudeck

We then stopped for lunch at Guarumo Lodge, which features a beautiful view of the Río Costa Rica and equally beautiful views of Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Gartered Violaceous Trogon, and Purple-crowned Fairy - all while we enjoyed our lunch! After lunch we took advantage of the excellent feeder setup and had breathtaking views of Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, Montezuma Oropendola, and Black-cheeked Woodpecker.



Green-breasted Mango © Blair Dudeck



Russet-naped Wood-Rail © Blair Dudeck



Fasciated Tiger-Heron © Blair Dudeck



Collared Aracari © Blair Dudeck



Keel-billed Toucan © Blair Dudeck



Keel-billed Toucan © Blair Dudeck



Red-legged Honeycreeper © Blair Dudeck



Montezuma Oropendola © Blair Dudeck

The rest of the afternoon was spent driving to and settling into our new lodging at La Quinta de Sarapiquí Lodge.

Day 11: La Selva Biological Station, Puerto Viejo Surrounding Areas

We started the day by birding the entrance road to La Selva Biological Station. Constant rain (typical wet lowland tropical forest!) limited activity in the deep primary forest, but we still managed to see some great wildlife, including Purple-throated Fruitcrow in the canopy and a Tayra scampering around the forest floor. The gardens around the biological station provided some excellent birding: here we saw displaying Red-capped Manakins, Black-faced Grosbeak, and Blue-chested Hummingbird. After lunch we explored the surrounding countryside in search of local specialty species. The first of these was the critically endangered Great Green Macaw, of which we were lucky to find several pairs. While looking for this magnificent species we also had the great fortune to encounter a very vocal Black Hawk-Eagle, which put on an amazing show flying over us several times. We also had our best looks at King Vulture when one circled low overhead.



Black Hawk-Eagle © Blair Dudeck



King Vulture © Blair Dudeck

Our next goal was to find the ridiculously proportioned Nicaraguan Seed-Finch. We found a very vocal male in a small wetland where it belted out its song with its oversized beak. We also got a great comparison with another large-billed finch when a flock of Thick-billed Seed-Finches turned up. We had great looks at Canebrake Wren and Olive-crowned Yellowthroat. Another great day of birding!



Thick-billed Seed-Finch © Blair Dudeck



Nicaraguan Seed-Finch © Blair Dudeck

Day 12: Virgen del Socorro, Soda Cinchona, Medio Queso Wetland

After a quick breakfast we departed Sarapiquí Lodge and headed to the nearby foothills of Virgen del Socorro. Here we walked the road down to the river, picking up many new species for the tour. We encountered several mixed flocks on the way. The highlights of these flocks were Tropical Parula, Golden-winged Warbler, Brown Violetear, Speckled Tanager, and Collared Trogon. We also had several very nice looks at soaring raptors, including Broad-winged Hawk, White Hawk, and Short-tailed Hawk.



Purple-crowned Fairy © Blair Dudeck



Collared Trogon © Blair Dudeck

We then had lunch at Soda Cinchona, whose feeders provided great looks at Black-bellied Hummingbird, Prong-billed Barbet, and Northern Emerald-Toucanet. Once we finished lunch we started our drive north. We finished the day's birding at Medio Queso Wetland, where we immediately found some amazing wetland species including White-tailed Kite, Purple Gallinule, Northern Jacana, Snail Kite, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, and stunning views of a majestic Fork-tailed Flycatcher.



Purple Gallinule © Blair Dudeck

Day 13: Caño Negro, Arenal Observatory Lodge

After an early breakfast, we set out on the boat tour of the Caño Negro wetland system. This is an incredibly unique and diverse ecosystem filled with hundreds of waterfowl and other wetland species. We spent over four hours with our amazing local guide Renato Rodríguez and saw many exciting species and targets including Green-and-rufous Kingfisher, Sungrebe, Nicaraguan Grackle, Boat-billed Heron, Black-collared Hawk, and American Pygmy Kingfisher. After we had seen most targets, Renato had one more surprise for us, taking us to a small patch of floating vegetation where, after a few moments, we were able to see the very elusive Yellow-breasted Crake. We finished the tour with over 100 species seen and heard! After this fulfilling boat tour, we had a quick lunch back at the hotel and then started on our way to Arenal.



Green-and-rufous Kingfisher © Blair Dudeck



American Pygmy Kingfisher © Blair Dudeck



Sungrebe © Blair Dudeck



Black-collared Hawk © Blair Dudeck



Boat-billed Heron © Blair Dudeck



Green Iguana © Blair Dudeck



Yellow-breasted Crake © Blair Dudeck

Day 14: Arenal Lodge, Arenal Observatory

We started the day with a pre-breakfast walk around the hotel grounds where we were treated to some great birding, including Great and Barred Antshrike, Blackburnian Warbler, Tropical Parula, Crimson-collared Tanager, Yellow-faced Grassquit, and a surprise Keel-billed Motmot.



Great Antshrike © Blair Dudeck



Barred Antshrike © Blair Dudeck



Keel-billed Motmot © Blair Dudeck

After breakfast we headed to Arenal Observatory Lodge where we spent the rest of the day watching the world-class fruit feeders and walking the beautiful trails. In the morning, we took a walk through the garden trails; these trails were bustling with mixed flocks of tanagers as well as other species. Highlights included Broad-billed Motmot, Black-crested Coquette, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Slaty Antwren, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher, and Long-tailed Tyrant.



Long-tailed Tyrant © Blair Dudeck



Black-crested Coquette © Blair Dudeck



Broad-billed Motmot © Blair Dudeck

After lunch we explored more trails and found even more exciting mixed-species flocks. The biggest surprises were Great Curassow and a stunning White-throated Shrike-Tanager.



Great Curassow © Blair Dudeck



White-throated Shrike-Tanager

Day 15: Arenal Lodge, Arenal Peninsula Trail

Our pre-breakfast walk provided great looks at Tropical Parula, Golden-hooded Tanager, Band-backed Wren, Slaty Spinetail, and White-tipped Dove.



Tropical Parula © Blair Dudeck

After breakfast we took a short drive to the Arenal Peninsula Trail, an area known for amazing birding on the shores of Lake Arenal. We managed brief views of Thicket Antpitta and heard many more throughout the day. We also saw Red-throated Ant-Tanager, Wood Thrush, White-ruffed Manakin, Lesser Greenlet, Kentucky Warbler, and amazing views of a pair of Rufous Motmots. On our way out of the park we stopped for great views of a Broad-billed Motmot.



Broad-billed Motmot © Blair Dudeck

After lunch back at Arenal Lodge we explored trails on the hotel grounds that lead through broadleaf

forest. We saw many great birds including Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Slaty-capped Flycatcher, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Black-cowled Oriole, and Rufous-winged Tanager. After dinner we took a short walk around the grounds of our accommodations to spot some Common Pauragues and had no trouble getting excellent views of several of these charismatic nightjars.



Common Pauraque © Blair Dudeck

Day 16: Arenal Hotel, San Luis Canopy, San José

On our final pre-breakfast walk of the tour we added a few new birds and got looks at some that we had only glimpsed previously, including Buff-rumped Warbler and Dull-mantled Antbird.



After breakfast we packed our bags and left Arenal to begin our return to the Central Valley. Our last birding stop was at the feeders at Canopy San Luis, where we saw Tawny-capped Euphonia, Emerald Tanager, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, and the highly sought-after Blue-and-gold Tanager. We then drove to San José and had one final evening of birding around the lovely Hotel Robledal grounds. We added Spot-breasted Oriole and had our best looks at a very cooperative and sleepy Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. What a way to finish the tour! Overall, we finished with 431 species and made countless memories.



Emerald Tanager © Blair Dudeck



Blue-and-gold Tanager © Blair Dudeck



Ferruginous Pygmy Owl © Blair Dudeck

[Costa Rica Birding Tour species list Jan 11 - 27, 2026 \(eBird\)](#)