Eagle-Eye Tours



Costa Rica: Caribbean Mountains to Coast Trip Report (Oct 1 -12, 2024)

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Day 1 - Arrival We started the tour with a meet-and-greet at 4:00 PM in the hotel lobby. Spirits were high as everyone gathered for the upcoming adventure! After a brief introduction covering logistics, expectations, and the tour's itinerary, we enjoyed a great dinner together, getting to know each other better. **Day 2** Our day began with a pre-breakfast birding session on the hotel grounds, where we spotted a Lineated Woodpecker, Red-billed Pigeon, Lesson's Motmot, Cinnamon-bellied Saltator, and a sleeping Mottled Owl. After breakfast, we headed to the highlands of the Central Cordillera to explore the cloud forest and paramo of Irazu Volcano. Highlights included Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Timberline Wren, and stunning views of both male and female Resplendent Quetzals. We enjoyed lunch with sightings of highland hummingbirds like the Lesser Violetear and Volcano Hummingbird. Before leaving, we caught another glimpse of the Resplendent Quetzal, Black-cheeked Warbler, Large-footed Finch, and Flame-colored Tanager—species unique to this region. Our day concluded with a visit to a local park, where we saw Barn and Tropical Screech Owls. At our lodge that night, we had a memorable evening session featuring a Scaled Antpitta and Green-fronted Lancebill.



Resplendent Quetzal © Benny Jacob-Schwartz



Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher © Benny Jacob-Schwartz



Scaled Antpitta © Benny Jacob-Schwartz

Day 3 We started with pre-breakfast birding around the lodge, exploring trails and hummingbird feeders. We spotted 53 species, including Black-bellied Hummingbird, White-bellied Hummingbird, White-winged Tanager, Middle American Leaftosser, and the stunning Blackburnian Warbler. Breakfast brought close views of Gray-headed Chachalaca and Silver-throated Tanagers feeding their young. Next, we explored the Ujarrás Valley, where a fruiting fig tree attracted a variety of birds like Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Great Kiskadee, Scarlet Tanager, and Tennessee Warbler. A nearby field offered views of Southern Lapwing and a distant Gray Hawk. We also managed to spot the endangered Cabanis's Ground-Sparrow. Before lunch, we stopped at a nearby park to see Green Ibis and a flock of over 30 Montezuma Oropendola. The day wrapped up with a tour of a coffee farm at Finca Cristina, where we learned about biodynamic farming and its benefits for birds.



Black-bellied Hummingbird © Benny Jacob-Schwartz



Cabanis's Ground Sparrow © Benny Jacob-Schwartz



Green Ibis © Benny Jacob-Schwartz

Day 4 A pre-breakfast birding session at our lodge revealed a Keel-billed Toucan calling across the canyon, a flock of 100+ Band-tailed Pigeons, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Bananaquit, and a Sunbittern foraging near the rooms. After breakfast, we visited a wetland, where we spotted Purple Gallinule, Green Heron, Anhinga, and the surprise sighting of a Great Potoo. Later, we headed to the Caribbean lowlands, where we saw a rare American Flamingo, the first ever reported in the country. We also witnessed a dramatic encounter between a Crested Caracara and a Turkey Vulture. Other sightings included Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Tricolored Heron, and Little Blue Heron. We ended the day with fresh coconuts and live Calypso music at our hotel in Puerto Viejo.



Keel-billed Toucan © Benny Jacob-Schwartz



Purple Gallinule © Benny Jacob-Schwartz



Great Potoo © Benny Jacob-Schwartz



American Flamingo © Benny Jacob-Schwartz

Day 5 Our morning birding session in the lodge's parking lot turned out to be fruitful, with sightings of Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Tawny-crested Tanager, and our first Great Green Macaws. After breakfast, we witnessed a breathtaking migration of raptors, counting 2,500 Broad-winged Hawks, 1,000 Turkey Vultures, 60 Mississippi Kites, 3 Osprey, and 4 Peregrine Falcons. At Cahuita National Park, we saw another 2,000+ Broad-winged Hawks and 35 Eastern Kingbirds. Highlights on the trails included White-whiskered Puffbirds, Common Black Hawk, and several antbird species. Our day ended with swimming in the Caribbean Sea, watching Band-tailed Barbthroats, Stripe-throated Hermits, and a beautiful sunset.



Common Black Hawk © Benny Jacob-Schwartz

Day 6 The morning started with a spectacular sighting of 450 migrating Eastern Kingbirds and seven Great Green Macaws. After breakfast, we explored the foothills, adding Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tyrant, King Vultures, and Zone-tailed Hawk to our list. In the afternoon, we met with the Talamanca Hawk Watch team to learn about raptor migration. We enjoyed more Broad-winged Hawks and heard a Collared Forest-Falcon before sunset.



King Vulture © Benny Jacob-Schwartz



Black-bellied Hummingbird © Benny Jacob-Schwartz

Day 7 We started the day with views of Bright-rumped Attila and Mealy Parrots before heading to Estero Negro. Here, we saw Royal Terns, Collared Plover, and Semipalmated Sandpipers. Later, we visited a feeder site near Braulio Carrillo National Park, where we observed a range of colorful tanagers, including the rare Blue-and-Gold Tanager.



Blue-and-gold Tanager © Benny Jacob-Schwartz

After checking into our hotel, we spotted the Bare-throated Tiger-Heron during an evening walk by the river. **Day 8** Despite a road detour, we reached a special forest patch home to the rare Bare-necked Umbrellabird. After a 25-minute search, we found two individuals and were treated to the sight of a Black Hawk-Eagle soaring overhead. The afternoon provided views of Collared Aracari, Eastern and Red-breasted Meadowlarks, and a Green-breasted Mango nesting on a telephone line. We ended the day counting 64 Great Green Macaws, around 20% of the country's population.



Great Green Macaw © Benny Jacob-Schwartz



Bare-necked Umbrellabird © Benny Jacob-Schwartz



Black Hawk-Eagle © Benny Jacob-Schwartz

Day 9 We made our way to La Fortuna, stopping for a Short-tailed Hawk, Ringed Kingfisher, and Green Kingfisher. A Broad-billed Motmot and a flock of Black-faced Grosbeak brightened our day, which ended at Arenal Observatory Lodge with sightings of Great Curassow and a Black-and-White Owl.



Broad-billed Motmot © Benny Jacob-Schwartz



Black-and-white Owl © Benny Jacob-Schwartz

Day 10 We spent the day birding Arenal Observatory Lodge's grounds, adding Black-and-yellow Tanagers, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, and Black-crested Coquette to our list. A mixed flock brought sightings of Russet Antshrike, Plain Xenops, Dusky Antbird, and Rufous-tailed Jacamar. We recorded 98 species for the day!



Black-crested Coquette © Benny Jacob-Schwartz

Day 11 Our last full day took us to a feeder spot, where we spotted the rare Blue-and-Gold Tanager and a range of other colorful tanagers. After lunch, we returned to the Central Valley, ending with

sightings of Spot-breasted Oriole and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. A closing dinner and gratitude circle capped off our trip.



Spot-breasted Oriole © Benny Jacob-Schwartz

Day 12 Early morning departures marked the end of our fantastic tour. Thanks to everyone for an unforgettable adventure! We hope to see you all on a future outing!



Costa Rica: Caribbean Mountains to Coast species list (Oct 1 - 11, 2024)