Eagle-Eye Tours



Costa Rica Caribbean Trip Report (Oct 19 - 30, 2025)

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Day 1. Hotel Bougainvillea

We gathered late in the afternoon for our first birding as a group, exploring the beautiful gardens of the hotel where we found a good sampling of common Central Valley yard birds including Red-billed Pigeon, White-winged Dove, Clay-colored Thrush, Rufous-collared Sparrow, Lesson's Motmot, Hoffman's Woodpecker and many, many Eastern Wood-Pewees. We also had a large flock of Chestnut-collared Swifts, Vaux's Swift, Spot-fronted Swift and the enormous White-collared Swift.

Day 2. Santo Domingo, Irazú Volcano, Paraíso and Rinconcito Verde

Before breakfast we met our driver, Ricardo Gomez, and drove five minutes down the road to a coffee farm where we were going to look for one of Costa Rica's seven endemic birds, the Cabanis's Ground-Sparrow. The first bird we saw as we got off the bus was a Rufous-browed Peppershrike singing loudly from a small shrub and we heard several ground-sparrows, but they were proving difficult to spot in the dense coffee plantation, however our patience was rewarded as we walked along a narrow farm road we saw several birds hopping ahead of us and there they were, a family of Cabanis's Ground-Sparrows. They were not alone, though, as hopping alongside them was a White-eared Ground-Sparrow and a Swainson's Thrush! Satisfied, we returned to the hotel for breakfast and packed our bags and off we went. We drove east to Cartago, learning about this city's importance in Costa Rica's religious and political history as we went, then worked our way up to Irazú Volcano. Our first stop was in Nochebuena where we birded along the roadside and saw Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, Volcano Hummingbird, Lesser Violetear, Acorn Woodpecker and Slaty Flowerpiercer, Sooty Thrush, Black-capped Flycatcher, Black-and-yellow Silky-Flycatcher and the breathtaking Flame-throated Warbler. One of our most desired birds, though, the **Resplendent Quetzal**, was proving hard to get, but once again our patience was rewarded as a male came in to feed from wild avocados in a tree along the roadside! We drove to the top of the mountain and saw

male Volcano Hummingbirds and caught glimpses of the extremely restricted Volcano Junco.



Resplendent Quetzal © Ernesto Carman

After lunch we enjoyed close-up views of Talamanca Hummingbird and Lesser Violetear at the feeders before driving back down the mountain to the town square of the bustling town of Paraíso where we enjoyed fantastic scope views of Crimson-fronted Parakeets and the two species of resident owls: American Barn Owl and **Tropical Screech-Owl**. We arrived at our hotel and settled in for the next two nights.



Tropical Screech-Owl © Ernesto Carman

Day 3. Ujarrás, Quelitales, Café Cristina and Rinconcito Verde

After breakfast we drove down to the Ujarrás Valley, which is dominated by agricultural landscapes, especially chayote, and new birds came fast and furious, including Green Ibis, Roadside Hawk, Short-tailed Hawk, Black and Turkey Vulture, Green Heron, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, White-tailed Kite and Southern Lapwing. We also had phenomenal views of a **Sunbittern** on the Paez River, along with a Green Kingfisher.



Sunbittern © Ernesto Carman

From here we drove to the mountains near Cachí to Hotel Quelitales where we watched the hummingbirds at the feeders and flowers including Violet Sabrewing, Green Hermit, Green-crowned Brilliant, Stripe-tailed Hummingbird and Black-bellied Hummingbird with its funky eyebrows. We also saw several species of Euphonias and tanagers, White-collared Manakin, Golden-winged Warbler and Tropical Parula. From here we drove to Café Cristina where Ernesto's mother had cooked up an amazing meal for us and after eating a bit more than we should have we did the **coffee tour** to learn how Ernesto's family is producing amazing organic, shadegrown coffee in a way that provides excellent habitat to wildlife at the same time. After filling our bags with coffee and our list with birds we drove the short distance to our hotel for a siesta and a bit of late afternoon birding from the deck where we scoped some distant Wood Storks.



Café Cristina coffee tour © Ernesto Carman

Day 4. El Rincón Grasslands, Trankigarden, Terrazas del Caribe

Before breakfast we birded a small grassland a few minutes from the hotel and saw Variable, Morelet's and Yellow-bellied Seedeaters, Thick-billed Seedfinch, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, White-crowned Parrot, Keel-billed Toucan, White-throated Flycatcher and a pair of **Laughing Falcons** with the male giving the female a snake!



Laughing Falcon © Ernesto Carman

Then it was time for breakfast, packed the bus and off we went, working our way down the Reventazón River valley towards Turrialba where we made a slight detour to visit a small family-run project called TrankiGarden. Here we were greeted by David Corrales who took us to two different feeding stations; the first one was a setup near a swampy grassland where he had cleverly designed a spot where he placed rice and earthworms and a pair of White-throated Crakes came out of their usual hiding places, giving us amazing views, and the second feeder setup was a combination of flowers, hummingbird feeders and fruit feeders where we saw Black-cowled Oriole, Ruddy Ground-Dove, Scarlet-rumped Tanager, **White-necked Jacobin**, Green-breasted Mango, Garden Emerald, Band-tailed Barbthroat and Violet-headed Hummingbird.



White-necked Jacobin © Ernesto Carman

After lunch, as we were about to leave we finally spotted the star of this site, a male Snowcap, flying around the hedge with his head showing like a beacon. We continued our way to the south Caribbean corner of Costa Rica which is a true melting pot for culture and wildlife and as we neared the city of Limón we had to pull over on the roadside because we had spotted a **large kettle of raptors migrating**. But the term “large” does not do it justice as the sky above us and as far as we could see had filled with Swainson’s Hawks; our first taste of massive raptor migration!



Watching raptor migration © Ernesto Carman



Raptor migration Costa Rica © Ernesto Carman

Day 5. Terrazas del Caribe and Puerto Viejo

Before breakfast we gathered to bird the hotel grounds and had many new species including a whole slew of psittacids including Mealy and Red-lored Amazon, Orange-chinned and Olive-throated Parakeets, **Great Green Macaw**, White-crowned and Blue-headed Parrots, Keel-billed and Yellow-

throated Toucans and Piratic Flycatcher.



Great Green Macaws © Ernesto Carman



Yellow-throated Toucan © Ernesto Carman

After breakfast we drove to the town of Hone Creek where we stopped on the roadside to get our next fix of raptor migration and we watched some small kettles forming, with groups of Swainson's Hawks, Turkey Vultures, Mississippi Kites and Broad-winged Hawks made their way southeast,

passing just over our heads in steady flocks.



Raptor Migration © Ernesto Carman

We then birded a gravel road that leads to the town of Carbón and we were dumbfounded as the sky **filled with a steady stream of raptors**, steadily pouring through at times in two separate lines which seemed to never end! It was difficult to take our eyes away from the literal river of raptors, but we also saw **Long-tailed Tyrant**, Little Blue Heron, Greater Yellowlegs, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, Cocoa Woodcreeper and Shining Honeycreeper.



Long-tailed Tyrant © Ernesto Carman

After lunch and some siesta and beach time we went for a short walk and we spotted White-collared Manakin, Peregrine Falcon, Tawny-crested Tanager and Lesser Nighthawks. After contacting our friends at the Talamanca Hawkwatch the totals for the day were astounding: 486,000 total raptors! We had been lucky enough to hit the largest day of the season…No wonder it seemed impressive!

Day 6. Cahuita National Park

As we woke to the sound of Howler Monkeys and groups of Turkey Vultures already beginning to move we birded the beach and saw Brown Pelican, Whimbrel, Spotted Sandpiper and Semipalmated Plover. After breakfast we set out to Cahuita National Park and began our walk on the boardwalk through a magnificent, seasonally flooded forest with gigantic trees towering 50 meters above us. Although some birds were high up in the canopy, one of the greatest parts of birding in Cahuita are the understory mixed species flocks which gave us great views of species such as Dot-winged and White-flanked Antwren, Checker-throated Stipplethroat, Black-crowned Antshrike, Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher,Chestnut-backed Antbird and several Neotropical migrants including Yellow-bellied and Acadian Flycatcher, Bay-breasted Warbler and Prothonotary Warbler. We also saw **Mantled Howlers** and White-faced Capuchin Monkeys, Red-tailed Squirrel and many damselflies, dragonflies and butterflies. When we returned to the parking lot Ricardo had spotted a flock of **Purple-throated Fruitcrows** which gave us fantastic views. After lunch we checked a small estuary in the village of Cahuita and saw Boat-billed Heron, Snowy Egret, Spotted Sandpiper and Amazon Kingfisher and along another side road we were successful at finding one of our afternoon targets, **Black-chested Jay**. As we watched the jays we also spotted a **Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth** feeding at eye level!



Mantled Howler Monkey © Ernesto Carman



Purple-throated Fruitcrow © Ernesto Carman



Black-chested Jays © Ernesto Carman



Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth © Ernesto Carman

Day 7. Terrazas del Caribe, Hotel Los Ríos

After breakfast we began our drive back north along the coast but it was not long before we made our first stop near Cahuita to marvel over the spectacle of raptor migration: a literal river of raptors was flowing overhead with thousands of Turkey Vultures and Swainson's Hawks with some Broad-wings and Mississippi Kites in the mix. We made another stop at an estuary called Estero Negro and saw Ringed Kingfisher, Little Blue Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone and Gull-billed Terns. Our next stop was at La Hoja Garden, a spot with the perfect combination of bird feeders and human feeders and the feeders were great as all three honeycreepers, Shining, **Red-legged** and Green, Golden-hooded and Scarlet-rumped Tanagers, Black-cowled Oriole, **Russet-naped Wood-Rail**, Collared Aracari, Montezuma and Chestnut-headed Oropendolas, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, Long-billed Hermit and Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer.



Red-legged Honeycreeper © Ernesto Carman



Russet-naped Woodrail © Ernesto Carman

After lunch we reached Hotel Los Ríos in time for a walk around the grounds and on the rivers behind the hotel we saw Fasciated and Bare-throated Tiger-Herons, Northern and Louisiana Waterthrush, Neotropic Cormorant, Amazon and Green Kingfisher and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron.

Day 8. Lomas and La Alegría

Today we left the hotel early to visit the areas surrounding Las Brisas Nature Reserve, located on the eastern slopes of Turrialba Volcano and overlooking the Caribbean lowlands. We arrived and enjoyed a picnic breakfast while a Sunbittern creeped along the riverside and Great Green Macaws flew overhead. After birds and breakfast we walked along the road and saw Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Gartered Trogon, Montezuma and Chestnut-headed Oropendolas, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher and Stripe-breasted Wren. Along another road we had amazing views of **King Vulture**, **Emerald,** Golden-hooded, Bay-headed and Speckled Tanagers, as well as all four species of *Contopus* flycatchers!



King Vulture © Ernesto Carman



Emerald Tanager © Ernesto Carman

After our delicious lunch, we returned to our hotel for a siesta and some late afternoon birding on the hotel grounds. Behind the hotel are two rivers, the Guácimo and Guacimito, and the birding from the edges was once again great, with Ringed, Amazon and Green Kingfishers, Fasciated and Bare-throated Tiger-Herons, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Little-Blue Heron, Louisiana and Northern Waterthrushes and Black Phoebe, as well as Broad-billed Motmot and Red-throated Ant-Tanager. After dinner we went out for a night drive and spotted a sleeping White-tipped Dove and Common Parauque.

Day 9. Hotel Los Ríos, La Selva Biological Station, Cinchona, Arenal Observatory Lodge

We departed early to have breakfast on the road and make-up time so we could do some birding along the entrance road to La Selva Biological Station and it was well worth it! We had great views of Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Rufous Motmot, Eye-ringed Flatbill, Northern Barred Woodcreeper, Golden-winged Warbler, Swainson's Thrush and both woodpeckers in the genus *Celeus*, Chestnut-colored and Cinnamon. We then departed to our next destination and drove up the slopes of Poás Volcano to Mirador Cinchona to watch the bird feeders and have lunch, with an amazing view of the San Fernando Waterfall. Here we saw Violet Sabrewing, Green-crowned Brilliant, White-bellied Mountain-Gem, Black-bellied Hummingbird, Coppery-headed Emerald**,** Green Hermit, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, Silver-throated Tanager, **Crimson-collared Tanager**, **Red-headed Barbet** and a Tawny-throated Leaftosser. After lunch we began making our way to La Fortuna, making one stop at a small creek where we saw Torrent Tyrannulet and Slate-throated Redstart. As we neared the lodge we began seeing the perfectly clear silhouette of the Arenal Volcano, welcoming us to this fantastically diverse area.



Crimson-collared Tanager © Ernesto Carman



Red-headed Barbet © Ernesto Carman

Day 10. Arenal Observatory Lodge We started our day birding the incredible hotel grounds with many flowers and fruiting fig trees, all with a backdrop of the impressive cone of Arenal Volcano. Very soon we were seeing new birds left and right, Crested Guans, Bay-headed, Golden-hooded and Emerald Tanagers, Keel-billed and Yellow-throated Toucans, Collared Aracaris, Gartered Trogon, White-collared Manakin, **Blue-throated Goldentail,** Smoky-brown, Lineated and Pale-billed

Woodpeckers, Snowcap, Broad-billed Motmot and White-ruffed Manakin, all before breakfast!



Blue-throated Goldentail © Ernesto Carman

After breakfast we walked one of the trails behind the rooms and little did we know we were about to encounter an enormous mixed species flock which would make our morning go very quickly! We first encountered a Dull-mantled Antbird and Broad-billed Motmot before the flock began crossing the trail and in this flock we saw Russet Antshrike, Spotted and Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, several species of tanagers including Black-and-yellow, Bay-headed and Emerald, Slaty-capped and Sulphur-rumped Flycatchers, increasingly better views of **White-throated Shrike-Tanager**, **Slate-colored Grosbeak**, Slaty Antwren and Golden-winged Warbler. In the end this flock had over forty species of birds participating, a real treasure-trove!



White-throated Shrike-Tanager © Ernesto Carman



Slate-colored Grosbeak © Ernesto Carman

Once the flock had moved on we birded the vervaine hedges to watch for hummingbirds and we saw a female Black-crested Coquette, Green Thorntail, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and many Blue-throated Goldentails! After lunch and a siesta we birded around the grounds and the waterfall trail and, though activity was rather low we did have fantastic views of Buff-rumped Warbler, Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher, Long-tailed Tyrant, Emerald Tanager and eye-

catching views of **Scarlet-thighed Dacnis** from above.



Scarlet-thighed Dacnis © Ernesto Carman

After dinner we went for a night walk and first thing we saw was a **Black-and-white Owl** which is often found hunting by the street lights near the lodge. We saw many different insects and spiders, including a Net-casting Spider and a six inch wood roach and at the frog pond we found Harlequin Tree Frog, the iconic Red-eyed Leaf-Frog and a beautiful **Lichen-colored Snail-eater**, a delicate snake that specializes on eating snails! We also heard Spectacled and Crested Owls singing from the dense canopy before we went back to catch some sleep.



Black-and-white Owl © Ernesto Carman



Lichen-colored Snail-eater © Ernesto Carman

Day 11. Arenal Observatory Lodge, San Luis Adventure Park bird feeders, Hotel Robledal

Today we started our day watching the spider-monkeys having their breakfast before heading out to the forest to feed for the day and we had a good review of the common birds we had been seeing the last couple of days. After breakfast we drove back up the mountains and made a stop at the San Luis Adventure Park to watch the bird feeders and we enjoyed close views of **Silver-throated Tanager**, Emerald Tanager, Scarlet-rumped and Crimson-collared Tanager, Green and Red-legged Honeycreeper, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Black-and-yellow Tanager and a **Black Hawk-Eagle** soaring overhead.



Silver-throated Tanager © Ernesto Carman



Black Hawk-Eagle © Ernesto Carman

We then worked our way to San Ramón where we had lunch at Soda Flory and saw Lesson's Motmot, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Buff-throated Saltator, Gray-headed Chachalaca, Tennessee Warbler and Yellow-crowned Euphonia. We began the last leg of our drive through intermittent rain and arrived at Hotel Robledal and did a bit of birding on the grounds and we found Cinnamon Hummingbird, Hoffmann's Woodpecker, Inca Dove, Lineated Woodpecker and a **Ferruginous**

Pygmy-Owl then we finished off with our farewell dinner, reminiscing over our favorite moments and species and said hasta pronto amigos!



Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl © Ernesto Carman



Our group

[Costa Rica Caribbean 2025-2 eBird list]