Eagle-Eye Tours



Costa Rica Sampler Trip Report (Mar 17 - 28, 2025)

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Day 1: Birding Hotel Bougainvillea

We had our first taste of the tropics in the gardens of the hotel. a brief introduction and then we hiked the gardens where big flocks of Red billed Pigeons were waiting for us! We also enjoyed fantastic views of Mottled Owl which was found at its typical roost in the bamboo! Our highlight of the day was the gorgeous looking White eared Ground-Sparrow, which we found skulking into the heliconias. We also had our first Lesson's Motmot, a very cooperative bird for the photographers in the group. We had dinner around 6:30 pm and afterwards a night hike with a great finding of Tropical Screech Owl! We tried for Golden eyed Frogs but hardly found a pair in the water fountains!



Mottled Owl © Alex Alvarado



Lesson's Motmot © Alex Alvarado



Tropical Screech-Owl © Alex Alvarado

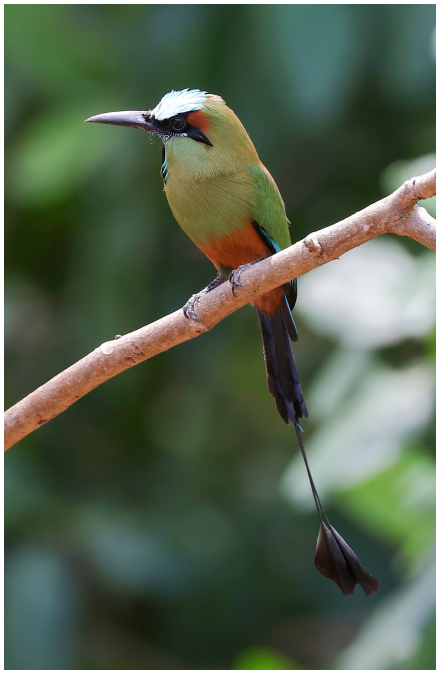
Day 2: Guacimo Road and Bouganvillea

The following day we started at 6:00 am in the gardens of the hotel. We were greeted with good views of Chestnut capped Warbler. White tailed Kite and Montezuma Oropendola! Our time scanning the gardens produced Gray headed Chachalaca and Cinnamon bellied Saltator. We had time to do some scope studies on Great Kiskadee and Social Flycatcher. plus a fantastic and very cooperative Golden-hooded Tanager which posed for the group! A very active Ferruginous Pygmy Owl attracted several migrants including a Summer Tanager. Tennessee Warbler and Chestnut sided Warblers! We came back to the restaurant for breakfast and afterwards packed for our next stop to Punta Leona.



Golden-hooded Tanager © Alex Alvarado

We met our driver Fredy and drove towards the pacific slope. Our first stop at Guacimo Road was highlighted by the handsome looking Turquoise-browed Motmot. We also got shocking views of Black-headed Trogon plus White-throated Magpie Jays on the roadside. We explored the road and encountered other nice birds such as Scrub Euphonia, Streaked Flycatcher, White-lored Gnatcatcher and Inca Dove.



Turquoise-browed Motmot © Alex Alvarado



White-lored Gnatcatcher © Alex Alvarado

Then we drove towards our lunch stop near the Tarcoles River followed by our check-in at the hotel. and as we arrived early we explored the surroundings of the resort and got some fantastic birds! We found the nearly endemic Black-hooded Antshrike, Lesser Greenlet, White-browed Gnatcatcher, Yellow-throated Toucan and White-whiskered Puffbird. Our highlight for the afternoon was the impressive looking Scarlet Macaws which rule these forests. We found several nesting and some defending their tree cavities. We enjoyed the surroundings of the hotel during the afternoon. and we had dinner around 6:30 pm.



Black-hooded Antshrike © Alex Alvarado



Lesser Greenlet © Alex Alvarado

Day 3: Birding Carara National Park

We started the day birding the grounds of the hotel with amazing views on Scarlet Macaws all over the area. We also had a nice encounter with Slaty tailed Trogon. Our time exploring the road also provided a second opportunity of Lesson's Motmot. We had Summer Tanager, Yellow Green Vireo and Piratic Flycatcher all these before breakfast. Then we came across Carara National Park. We spent the morning in the trail system of this amazing forest where we could enjoy wonderful birds such as Riverside Wren. We got shocking views of Chestnut-backed Antbird, more views of Black-hooded Antshrike, the wonderful King Vulture and Green Kingfisher!



Chestnut-backed Antbird © Alex Alvarado

As we explored the area deep in the jungles, we were greeted with a nice troop of White-faced Capuchins plus Howler Monkeys screaming in the background! We also got our first looks of Crested Guans and a gorgeous Fasciated Tiger Heron along the stream. We tried several times for Black-throated Trogon, but it refused to cooperate. Other sightings for the morning included a beautiful lizard (corytophanes cristatus) after a nice hike through the woods we returned to the hotel for lunch followed by a break. During the afternoon part of the group visited Carara National Park again. We explored the Meandrica Trail where we had a marvelous birding session. As we started exploring we found a beautiful Orange-collared Manakin, a pair of Baird's Trogons which delighted our afternoon, plus Gartered, Slaty-tailed, Black-throated and Black-headed Trogon!



Baird's Trogon © Alex Alvarado

After enjoying this “trogon fest” we had more views of Chestnut-backed Antbird. We also saw Fasciated Antshrike, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Royal Flycatcher, Rufous-tailed Jacamar and a few migrants including Kentucky Warbler, Chestnut-sided and Black-and-white Warbler. After a good taste of the tropics we returned to the hotel for the checklist and dinner.



Rufous-tailed Jacamar © Alex Alvarado

Day 4: Birding La caldera and Rio Tarcoles

An early start in the gardens of the hotel was very productive with great views on Grey-cowled Wood-Rail, Rose-throated Becard and Pale-billed Woodpecker were also present in the surroundings. We had time to scout the forest edges and had great views on Red-legged Honeycreepers, Dusky Antbird, the very common Rufous-backed Wren and the lovely Green Honeycreeper! Just before heading for breakfast we had time to enjoy a Greenish Elaenia! We drove about 45 minutes to La Caldera, a great place to chase birds around the mangroves. We were greeted with shocking views of Common Black Hawk just getting out of the bus and also saw Streak-backed Oriole, Scrub Euphonia, Black-headed Trogon, the gorgeous looking White-throated Magpie Jay and a very elusive Mangrove Yellow Warbler. Finding a troop of Howler Monkeys along the village was a highlight during our hike!



Common Black Hawk © Alex Alvarado



White-throated Magpie Jay © Alex Alvarado

Our time here had other amazing birds including Orange-fronted Parakeets, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, not to mention the stunning looking Turquoise-browed Motmot, which provided lots of photogenic poses along the roadside. This fantastic bird is the national bird for 2 countries El Salvador and Nicaragua! We also had a small flock of Stripe-headed Sparrows which cooperated nicely while Cinnamon Hummingbird delighted our birding session! While driving along the way we

got several Whimbrels along the shoreline of Caldera. We had a short break after lunch and then we visited Rio Tarcoles where our local guide Juan Carlos was waiting for us. We had a marvelous experience navigating the river, which was full of amazing birds which included a diverse number of herons and egrets. We immediately spotted a Green Kingfisher just starting the tour! We also had a gorgeous juvenile Bare-throated Tiger Heron, a nicely posed Osprey provided lots of pictures for the group, a very friendly Black-crowned Night-Heron allowed us to get very close, which was such a treat. One the highlights of the afternoon was the tiny but beautiful American Pygmy Kingfisher spotted by our amazing guide Juan Carlos.



American Pygmy Kingfisher © Alex Alvarado

We enjoyed Mangrove Warblers again and tried several times for Rufous-browed Peppershrike but this last one refused our broadcast! We also spotted Crab eating Racoon in the shoreline. Then we came across the other side of the river with Wilson's Plover and Short billed Dotwichers. Laughing Gulls and Royal Terns were also present. We started navigating back with more encounters of Yellow-headed Caracara, amazing views of Yellow-naped Amazons in the sunset light. Then we spotted Double-stripped Thicknee in the grassy vegetation along the riverside. Just before heading back to the hotel we visited a roosting spot for Black-and-white Owl but not look on finding it! We had dinner and checklist around 7:15 pm

Day 5: birding Punta Leona

We had an early birding session in the gardens of the hotel where we were prized with amazing looking birds. Our time in the parking lot and forest edges produced Gartered Trogon, plus more views on Dusky Antbird skulking in the heliconias. We attracted Grey-headed Tanager, but our highlight was a very cooperative Baird's Trogon which delighted our early start. We also got amazing looks on Black-throated Trogon and Rufous-tailed Jacamar. We had a late arrival to the restaurant due to the cooperation of Slaty-tailed Trogon which provided more photographic sessions! After enjoying our "Gallo Pinto" we started our way to Valle de Ujarrás where we stayed for 3 nights. We had another stop on the way out of the forest. where we enjoyed Great Curassow and the fantastic looking Red-capped Manakin. Our time here was brief, as we were "attacked" by a

huge amount of mosquitoes. We drove across San Jose and stopped for lunch on the way. Then we drove to the valley of Ujarras where our main target Cabanis's Sparrow was spotted in the foothills near a coffee plantation. Our time in this spot provided excellent birds such as Gray-capped Flycatcher, Gray Hawk, Scarlet-rumped Tanager, Yellow-bellied Elaenia and Variable Seedeater. Afterwards we made our way to hotel Rinconcito Verde, a very charming place that provided excellent food and nice views over the valley!



Gray-capped Flycatcher © Alex Alvarado

Day 6: Birding Irazu

We had an early departure to the highlands of Irazu where we could enjoy amazing scenery driving through the agricultural fields in the foothills of the volcano. Our first stop provided a great taste on the impressive looking Fiery-throated Hummingbird! Sooty Thrush and Mountain Elaenia were also present. We were also greeted with an amazing find - Costa Rican Pygmy Owl. We drove for another 10 minutes towards the top the volcano. As soon as we came out of the bus a couple of Volcano Juncos provided some quick views on the edge of the road. Several Volcano Hummingbirds were seen whilst exploring the roadside. The mist hitting the mountain was quite dense making a bit difficult to chase the wildlife along the way. Still we got more amazing birds such as Talamanca Hummingbird, lots of Fiery-throated Hummingbirds. We also enjoyed Black-billed Nightingale Thrush and more cooperative Volcano Junco! The entire roadside was full of the gorgeous Slaty Flowerpiercer.



Sooty Thrush © Alex Alvarado

After enjoying this amazing habitat of elf forest we went down the mountains to Restaurante Noche Buena. We tried on the roadside for Resplendent Quetzals and got a female feeding on little avocado trees. Our stop at this place provided other great birds such as Sooty capped Chlorospingus, the stunning looking Flame-throated Warbler, Mountain Thrush and Yellow-thighed Brushfinch. As we enjoyed the female Quetzal we had a nice encounter with Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher and Acorn and Hairy Woodpecker!



Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher © Alex Alvarado

We returned to the top of the mountain and hiked the roadside. We found a couple of Large-footed Finches skulking into the bamboo remains along the way. We also had more opportunities on Black-billed Nightingale Thrush. Due to the mist, we changed location to the lower areas and found a nice male Resplendent Quetzal on the roadside! This fantastic bird it's the national bird for Guatemala, but very common in Costa Rican highlands. After enjoying this beauty for a while we started descending from the mountains. En route to the hotel, we made a quick stop, which provided exquisite views of Green Ibis. Our stop at Paraíso Town got us a roost of Tropical Screech Owl which we all enjoyed at Central Park! We had dinner and checklist at 6:30 pm.

Day 7: Birding Rio Macho

We started our day with an early breakfast at the hotel. A wonderful sight of Squirrel Cuckoo near the swimming pool distracted us while we enjoyed our breakfast! Also, Crimson-fronted Parakeet perched nicely on a Gliricidia tree. Then we drove 30 minutes near Orosi for another birding session. We just came out of the bus and we were welcomed by a pair of White-naped Brush-finches! We also enjoyed Black-bellied Hummingbird, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, Brown Violetear and White-eared Ground Sparrow. As we continued our way up, we came across a good set of wonderful birds including a spectacular Collared Trogon which cooperated nicely on the roadside. We had hundreds of Montezuma Oropendolas and a Double-toothed Kite soaring. Our time exploring the Oropendolas nesting tree provided a Giant Cowbird. We explored more of the forest along the road and we got Bay-headed Tanager, Masked Tytira, Crimson-collared Tanager and the spectacular Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, plus several Swallow-tailed Kites.



Bay-headed Tanager © Alex Alvarado

After a fantastic morning we had a little bit of rain and decided to get back to Orosi where we enjoyed lunch at restaurant "Onde mi Ágüela". We returned to the hotel, but had time to enjoy Southern Lapwing on the way back. During the afternoon we enjoyed the valley of Ujarras where our main target was to find Hook-billed Kites, which we spotted while they were "patrolling" the Chiayote plantations. We saw juveniles, adults and got amazing looks in the scope for a while! We also had great views of Roadside Hawk and Gray Hawk. We then explored the coffee plantations for

more Cabanis's Sparrow didn't have any luck. We had more Blue Grosbeak and lots of Yellow-faced Grassquits! Afterwards we returned to the lodge for dinner and checklist.



Hook-billed Kite © Alex Alvarado

Day 8: Transfer to Arenal Springs. Birding La Selva and La Cinchona

We had a very early departure from Ujarras en route to La Fortuna. Our first stop was at La Selva Biological Station, where we enjoyed a guided tour by Octavio who led us into the trail system of the park. After an introduction to the park we found a troop of White-faced Capuchins looking for food in the dense jungle. In the same place, we had some brief sightings of Snowy Cotinga followed by Keel-billed and Yellow-throated Toucan!



Yellow-throated Toucan © Alex Alvarado

Our time the open areas provided Crested Guans and Gray-headed Chachalaca. We also had Scarlet-rumped Tanager in the nest. Deeper in the forest, we had Rufous Motmot and distant views of Red-lored Amazon. One the most amazing findings of the morning was the spectacular Great Green Macaw, which cooperatively perched on the tree top for a while. Because of the rain this morning, the activity was very slow. Still we enjoyed White-whiskered Puffbird, Squirrel Cuckoo, White-breasted Woodwren and the stunning looking Rufous-tailed Jacamar! Our way back to the parking lot was highlighted by a gorgeous Great Tinamou on the roadside. We also added Fasciated Antshrike and very skulky Black-crowned Anshrike.



Rufous Motmot © Alex Alvarado



Crested Guan © Alex Alvarado



Great Tinamou © Alex Alvarado



White-whiskered Puffbird © Alex Alvarado

After leaving Octavio, we travelled to Mirador Cinchona, a very productive stop for lunch that fulfilled our expectations in the morning. We just found a place to seat when the multicolored Red-headed Barbet made its first appearance. Photographers had a blast with some many wonderful critters at this place. We had Northern Emerald Toucanet providing exquisite views and a Buff-fronted Quail Dove feeding on all the leftovers in the ground. Also a Slaty backed Nightingale Thrush provided some help to the Quail Dove while eating those leftovers of papaya and bananas. We enjoyed Crimson-collared, Scarlet rumped and Blue-gray Tanagers devouring the fruits. We also had excellent views of the outrageous Violet Sabrewing and the amazing looking Green-crowned Brilliant! Plus the amazing Black Guan!!! We hardly wanted to leave the place, but after enjoying a delicious typical meal we moved to Arenal Springs where we had a break during the rest of the afternoon.



Northern Emerald Toucanet © Alex Alvarado

Day 9 and 10: birding Peninsula Road

These fantastic two days we experienced lots of wildlife while chasing birds along Peninsula Road located in the lowlands of Arenal Volcano. a tropical rainforest habitat surrounded by Lake Arenal and the vast density of the forest provided excellent birding opportunities for us. We had to chase birds and rain along the way but it was worthy enough due to the quality of birding. Yellow-billed Cacique behaved friendly enough while skulking the grasslands on the roadside. Red-legged and Green Honeycreepers were also present. We were greeted with good views of the resident species of both Gray-crowned and Olive-crowned Yellowthroat on the edges of the forest! We also enjoyed the beautiful Collared Aracari, plus had good views of Black-cheeked Woodpeckers, and the photogenic motmots made our stay here even better. We got the specialty Keel-billed Motmot providing fabulous views perched only 3 meters high on the road! Broad billed Motmot decided to join the party and perched a few inches next to each other. We had more views of Rufous Motmot and we had time to try for Bare-crowned Antbird which behaved elusive to our broadcast. Long-billed Gnatwren had some minutes of cooperation for the group whilst exploring the tangles along the way. We heard White collared Manakins but they refused to show.



Broad-billed and Keel-billed Motmot © Alex Alvarado

We enjoyed for a few seconds the melodic Bay Wren and had some fascinating views of Bronzy Hermit! We tried several times on Thicket Antpitta but no luck on getting on it. We were covered by rain both days, but we still tried to “squeeze” the forest. The open areas of the road were quite busy with lots of Crested Guans, Gray-capped, Sulphur-bellied and Piratic Flycatchers! We had terrific views of the beautiful Long-tailed Tyrants while scanning the open fields. We spent the afternoons at the relaxing thermal Jacuzzis and swimming pools at the resort.

Day 11: birding San Luis and Alberto Manuel Brenes Biological Reserve

We had a sacrilegious early departure to the highlands of San Luis and unfortunately we had buckets of rain on the way. Our first stop was quickly interrupted by the showers, so we drove straight to Canopy San Luis where we had time to enjoy the birds on the feeders while waiting for better weather. The appearance of Tawny-capped Euphonia very close was a treat. Then the shining Emerald Tanager was a mind blowing experience. We had Bay-headed, Palm, Blue-gray and Crimson-collared Tanager, plus the wonderful Green Honeycreepers which had lots of competition to Silver-throated Tanagers. Besides all these we had Chestnut-capped Brushfinch and Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush.



Tawny-capped Euphonia © Alex Alvarado



Emerald Tanager © Alex Alvarado

We had time to explore the grounds and enjoyed several hummingbirds including the marvellous Green Hermit. We had some females of Crowned Woodnymph and the very territorial Rufous-tailed Hummingbird! After enjoying all these beauties we birded the entrance road to Alberto Manuel Brenes Reserve. A mixed flock foraging the undergrowth provided some North American migrants including Golden-winged Warbler. Wilson’s, Black-and-white and Chesnut-sided Warblers. We had

time to enjoy Northern Plain Xenops and Golden-crowned Warbler. We tried along the way for Bare-necked Umbrella Bird but no luck on finding it. We invested some time on Lattice-tailed Trogon but we could only enjoy its calls refusing to show. Our way out of the forest provided a flock of Stripe-breasted Wrens and fantastic views of Swallow-tailed Kites soaring over the canopy. We returned to San Luis where we enjoyed our lunch followed by more birding in the feeders. After a wonderful morning on these highlands we traveled to San Jose where we had our farewell dinner at Double tree by Hilton Hotel.

Day 12 Travel home

Costa Rica Sampler species list (Mar 17 - 28, 2025)