



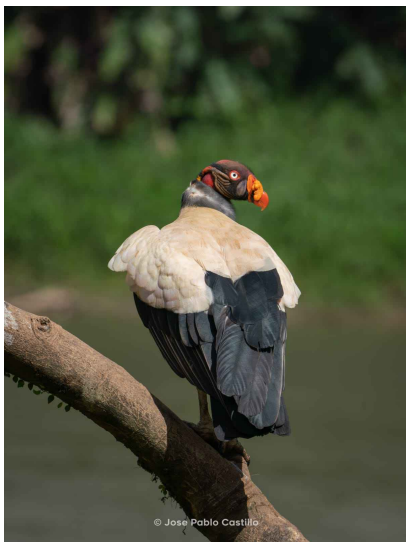
SUNRISE BIRDING LLC

COSTA RICA: TOUCANS & TANAGERS

18-25 February, 2023

TRIP REPORT

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Day 1

Today was arrival day for the clients at the Hotel Robledal, this hotel is conveniently located a few minutes away from the SJO Airport in Alajuela. In the afternoon, I joined some of the clients who had already arrived at the hotel to take a little birding walk around the grounds where we found our very first birds of the trip like Inca Dove, Red-billed Pigeon, Blue-and-white Swallow, Melodious Blackbird, Tropical Kingbird, Clay-colored Thrush (Costa Rica's national bird!), Blue-gray Tanager, Cinnamon-bellied Saltator and Hoffman's Woodpecker. We also spotted a **Ferruginous Pygmy-owl** getting out of its nest-box, a juvenile **Zone-tailed Hawk** soaring along with both Black and Turkey Vultures, and ended our day with excellent views of **Lineated Woodpeckers** foraging in an open tree. At evening we met for a welcome presentation of the tour and we closed the day with a delicious dinner at the hotel's restaurant.



Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl

Day 2

Today, after a nice morning coffee we left before sunrise to the Carara National Park. Our first stop was at the Tárcoles river bridge where some of the first species of the day include a couple of **Bat Falcons** flying very close to us, probably making the Mangrove Swallows, Gray-breasted Martins and **Costa Rican Swifts** very nervous! Additionally, we had great views of an elegant Gray Hawk perched in a beautiful Guanacaste (*Enterolobium cyclocarpum*) tree and spectacular views of several pairs of the colorful **Scarlet Macaw** flying across the river. Among the waters of the river, the gigantic **American Crocodiles** layed quietly under the bridge and various waterfowl such as Great Egret, Little-blue Herons, Black-necked Stilts and Bare-throated Tiger-Herons were easily observable in the distance. Finally, we observed some species close to the grassland and scrub habitat near the river like Variable Seedeaters, Philadelphia Vireos, **Scarlet-rumped Tanagers**, Common Ground-Dove and **Gray-crowned Yellowthroats**.



Orange-collared Manakin

Arriving at the Carara National Park, we hiked the Mendricca Trail, where our first species was a nice Wedge-billed Woodcreeper foraging in a tree at the trailhead very close to us. A little further, a good sized troop of **White-faced Capuchin Monkeys** really surprised the group while eating, jumping around and chasing each others. Not far away from the monkeys a tiny **Northern Bentbill** allowed us to have very good views, even at eye level. This species is often heard here in the national park, however, it is not all the time that it gives those kind of good views for such a long time.

During a very pleasant morning, we were able to observe a good variety of species like the near-endemic **Charming Hummingbird**, a fast male **Red-capped Manakin**, a very cooperative **Orange-collared Manakin** (one of the vertebrates with the fastest muscle in the world!!), **Blue-throated Goldentail**, Purple-crowned Fairy, **Dot-winged Antwren**, Prothonothary Warbler, Ruddy Woodcreeper, Scarlet Macaw, Plain Xenops, White-browed Gnatcatcher, Lesser Greenlet, Rose-throated Becard, Short-billed Pigeon, Slate-headed Tody-flycatcher, Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher, Streaked Flycatcher, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Rufous-and-white Wren, and **White-shouldered Tanager**.



Blue-throated Goldentail

At noon, we visited a local restaurant where we had an excellent typical Costa Rican lunch with natural fruit smoothies and enjoyed the beautiful view of the mangroves that surround the Tárcoles River. In addition, we found the spectacular **Turquoise-browed Motmot**, Ferruginous Pygmy-owl, **Double-striped Thick-knee**, Rufous-naped Wren, Northern Tropical Pewee, Crested Caracara, Cinnamon Hummingbird and several very lazy Mantled Howler Monkeys.

On the way back to the hotel, we made a stop in an open grassland area where we found a really unusual record in Costa Rica, a **dark-morph Red-tailed Hawk**! Depending from where you live in North America, this may sound like nothing very special, but it is if you're in Costa Rica! This was, by the way, my first time seeing this morph on any Red-tailed Hawk subspecies! Arriving back at the hotel after a great day in the Pacific, a couple of spectacular **Spot-breasted Orioles** welcomed us back.



Northern Emerald Toucanet

In the evening we joined again for our daily checklist and another delicious meal at the hotel.

Day 3

After a nice breakfast at the hotel we loaded the bus and started driving to the Central Volcanic Mountain Range in direction towards the Poás Volcano, one of the 6 active volcanoes in Costa Rica! On the way we went through the Alajuela city and as we were going up the mountains we passed several coffee and strawberry plantations. Our first stop was in a bridge that give us nice and close views of the canopy of a small riparian forest. Here we're spotted Mountain Elaenia, Mountain Thrush, **Spangle-cheeked Tanager**, **Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher**, **Yellow-bellied Siskin** and Wilson's Warbler.



Great Green Macaw

Then we stopped for a very productive hummingbird garden where we got amazing views of **Magenta-throated Woodstar**, Lesser Violetear, **Volcano Hummingbird** (Poás-Barva race), **Scintillant Hummingbird**, Blue-vented Hummingbird and **Slaty Flowerpiercer**. Also, we got nice views of Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Eastern Meadowlark, Rufous-collared Sparrows and **Golden-browed Chlorophonia**.

As we crossed the continental division of waters, we made one more stop before lunch in the iconic La Paz Waterfall, where we got some nice mixed flocks with Common Chlorospingus, **Golden-bellied Flycatcher**, Yellowish Flycatcher, **Black-faced Solitaire**, **Tawny-capped Euphonia**, Black-and-White & Golden-winged Warblers, plus a **Green-fronted Lancebill** foraging on a *Cavendishia* nearby the powerful waterfall.

We had lunch at the Mirador Cinchona, with yummy homemade Costa Rican recipes, great coffee, natural fruit juices, and of course good birds! In the feeders we saw several species like **Northern Emerald Toucanet**, **Prong-billed Barbet**, **Black Guan**, and lots of passerine birds like **Silver-throated Tanager**, **Crimson-collared Tanager**, Scarlet-rumped Tanager (Passerini's), Palm Tanager, **Red-legged Honeycreeper**, Buff-throated Saltator, Baltimore Oriole, Bananaquit, **Yellow-billed Cacique**, and Blackburnian Warbler. We also had



Keel-billed Toucan

a few more hummers like **Violet Sabrewing** and Green-crowned Brilliant.

After lunch we continued our way to Boca Tapada and we did a few short stops where we saw Bat Falcons, Swallow-tailed Kite, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and several White-nosed Coatis at the roadside. Also while we were watching a nice **Long-tailed Tyrant**, we saw several dozens of Broad-winged Hawks and Turkey Vultures migrating north!

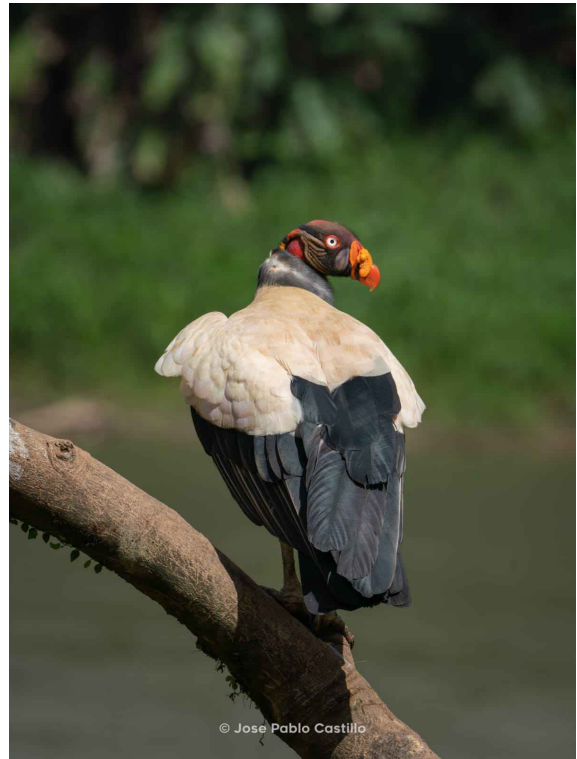
Once we arrived to the beautiful Laguna del Lagarto Lodge, the feeders were full of cool birds! So, we checked-in pretty quick and we met at the deck, where we saw **Great Curassow, Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, Golden-hooded Tanager, Red-lore Parrot, Mealy Parrot, Black-cheeked Woodpecker** and we ended the day with incredible scope views of **Great Green Macaws** perched!

Day 4

We met before breakfast at the hotel's deck where we started the day with great views of **Brown-hooded Parrot, Keel-billed & Yellow-throated Toucans, Collared Aracari, Black-crowned and Masked Tityra, White-necked Puffbird, Pied Puffbird, Cinnamon Becard, Montezuma Oropendola, Northern Waterthrush, Green Honeycreeper** and Olive-backed Euphonia.

Right after breakfast, we went exploring the lagoons and main road of the hotel and we found **White-fronted Nunbird, White-collared Manakin, Summer Tanager, Green Heron, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Ringed Kingfisher, Green Kingfisher, Blue Dacnis** and **Black-throated Trogon**.

After a quick break, we drove to the edge of the San Carlos river where we visited an amazing **King Vulture** hide where we enjoyed spectacular views of this species and learned about its natural history and life cycle. After this, we birded the edges and forest around the river and found a nesting Black-cowled Oriole, **White Hawk, Gray-capped Flycatcher, Lineated Woodpecker, Long-billed Hermit, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Chestnut-sided Warbler** and the minuscule **Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant**, that after some time looking for it in between the dense vegetation we managed to find and enjoy scope views!



King Vulture



Green Honeycreeper

At noon we enjoyed a nice homemade lunch and after a break, we headed back to the hotel while stopping in nice birding habitats like open grassland areas, secondary forests and wetland where we found Yellow Tyrannulet, Thick-billed Seed-Finch, Morelet's Seedeater, **Nicaraguan Seed-Finch**, **Olive-crowned Yellowthroat**, Bronzed Cowbird, Giant Cowbird, Groove-billed Ani, Laughing Falcon, **Purple Gallinule**, Scarlet Macaw, Green-breasted Mango, **Blue-chested Hummingbird**, Gray Catbird, and even a Mexican Parrot Snake!

Back in the hotel we found some new species for the trip like the elegant **Scaled Pigeon**, Green Ibis and **Shining Honeycreeper**!

At night we did a short night walk and saw several **Spectacled Caimans**, and we heard a very active **Central American Pygmy-Owl** at the distance.

Day 5

We started the day birding the hotel grounds before and after breakfast. Besides the birds spotted the morning before we found **Gray-headed Kite**, Plain-brown Woodcreeper, Northern Barred-Woodcreeper, Streak-crowned Woodcreeper and Blue-black Grosbeak. At mid-morning we loaded the bus and departed to the Arenal area. On the way, we got nice views of Roadside Hawk and **White-tailed Kite** and huge **Green Iguanas**!

Once we got to the Arenal area we stopped for lunch in La Fortuna town in an Italian-Costa Rican restaurant with great food and drinks and we got ready to visit the Bogarin Trail. In the Bogarin Trail we found a wide diversity of species like 2 roosting **Black-and-White Owls**, **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**, **Broad-billed Motmot**, **Lesson's Motmot**, White-collared Manakin, Piratic Flycatcher, Gray-headed Chachalaca, **Russet-naped Wood-Rail**, **White-throated Crake**, **Barred Antshrike** and **Black-throated Wren**, plus **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth**, Brown Basilisk (a.k.a Jesus Christ Lizard) and other cool species!

After this very productive birding walk, we drove to the Arenal Observatory Lodge, our lodge for the next 2 nights. Before checking-in we birded the entrance road of the lodge where we found, a perched White Hawk,



Ocellated Antbirds

Slaty-tailed Trogon, White-crowned Parrots, Crested Guans and a nice troop of **Central American Spider Monkeys!** And, of course, we enjoyed the wonderful views of the Arenal Volcano from this amazing hotel.

Day 6

After a very pleasant rainy night, we joined outside the rooms before breakfast to explore the hotel vast grounds and gardens. Here we found **Gartered Trogon, Hepatic Tanager, Carmiol's Tanager, Violet-headed Hummingbird, a female Black-crested Coquette, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, White-necked Jacobin, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Black-faced Solitaire, White-throated Thrush, Wood Thrush.** We also found several **Silver-throated, Emerald, Bay-headed & Golden-hooded Tanagers** congregated feeding on a Strangler Fig (*Ficus pertusa*) tree!



Black-crested Coquette

After enjoying a delicious breakfast while having a clear view of the spectacular Arenal Volcano, we went walking to the trails of the hotel and we found several specialties of the area like **Black-and-Yellow Tanager, Striped Woodhauer, Slaty-capped Flycatcher** foraging on a mixed flock in the forest canopy and some absolutely beautiful **Ocellated, Bicolored & Spotted Antbirds** following Army Ants in the deep and dark understory, also followed by a Collared Trogon, Pale-vented Thrush and Tawny-faced Gnatwren.

After some time birding in the forest we decided to explore some open areas where we found **Black Hawk-Eagle, Barred Hawk, White Hawk, King Vulture** and we heard **Ornate Hawk-Eagle!** A real raptor extravaganza!!



Emerald Tanager

After lunch a heavy rain came pouring down the whole area and didn't ended up till late night. So, we just decided to pick a nice roofed spot and do some "lazy" birding from there enjoying the views of Montezuma Oropendolas, Great Kiskadees, Crested Guans, Masked Tityras and other nice species in the area.

Day 7

Our last day of the trip, started with some heavy rain that made hard to go walking. So, Olivia kindly invited us to bird from the porch of her room, which has a nice view of a long patch of Porterweed (*Stachytarpheta mutabilis*) specially attractive to hummingbirds. And it turn out to be an excellent idea!

Nature provided us with incredible views of **Green Thorntail**, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Stripe-throated Hermit and a male **Black-crested Coquette!!**



Crimson-collared Tanager

After breakfast, we loaded the bus and started driving to the San Ramón area where we stopped at the San Luis Park. Here we enjoyed some really close views of some of the most colorful Tanagers like Emerald, Crimson-collared and Bay-headed Tanagers in the feeders. And we also went exploring the nice trail system, where we found nice birds like **Olive-streaked Flycatcher**, **Collared Trogon** (Orange-bellied), **Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush** Black-and-Yellow Tanager, Carmiol's Tanager and Tufted Flycatcher, and we ended with some amazing views of a **Sunbittern** walking quietly in the river where, we also had a quick glimpse of a very shy **Purplish-backed Quail-dove**.

In the afternoon we drove back to Hotel Robledal and did enjoyed our last birding walk in the hotel grounds along with some of the participants of the Hummingbirds and Quetzal Tour that started the next day! Here, we spotted a couple of very romantic **Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls** mating!!

In the evening we joined to make our last checklist of the trip and have our farewell dinner.

After 7 wonderful days birding in some of the best locations in Costa Rica, I would like to thank all the participants for their great energy and enthusiasm. Also, thanks to our very best driver Ramon Vargas and all my good friends from the lodges and reserves we visited for a great job!

-Pura vida!

Jose Pablo Castillo
Costa Rica, 2023



Collared Trogon (Orange-bellied)

