

ITINERARY
COSTA RICA
March 19-April 3, 2017



Although the colorful Collared Aracari is common in much of Central America, it is a wonderful representative of the tropical birding that awaits us in Costa Rica. Photo by participant Marshall Dahl.

We include here information for those interested in the 2017 Field Guides Costa Rica tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

Costa Rica is in many ways Central America's most attractive country. With its friendly people, democratic government, and striking scenery of volcanic cordilleras and lush tropical forest, it attracts visitors and settlers from all parts of the world. Costa Rica also holds a strong attraction for naturalists and students of tropical biology, who have come in large numbers to this tremendously rich area. Though the country is smaller than the state of West Virginia, there are more than 850 species of birds, a reflection of two important features: Costa Rica's great variety of habitats and its location between tropical South America and temperate North America.

The geological history of Costa Rica has had an enriching effect on the country's natural history. As part of the land bridge that connected North and South America some five million years ago, Costa Rica was a mixing ground for birds

from the north and south, a fact well reflected in the country's avifauna today. Here we find a strong representation of Neotropical families such as hummingbirds, motmots, potoos, jacamars, puffbirds, and toucans, as well as many North American migrants. North American birders visiting in the spring are often startled to hear wintering Black-throated Green Warblers or Swainson's Thrushes singing energetically, while Resplendent Quetzals and Prong-billed Barbets call nearby!

In proportion to its size, Costa Rica's diversity parallels that of the Andean countries of South America. Many of the habitats are similar: lowland rainforest at La Selva in the Rio Sarapiquí region, misty cloudforest at Monteverde, cool temperate forest on the slopes of volcanoes, and even páramo atop Cerro de la Muerte. On the Pacific slope, the transition from humid forest to drier habitats more typical of northern Middle America adds yet a different dimension. Although the diversity here is great, preparation for a visit to Costa Rica is no longer the daunting task it once was. The modern field guide by Stiles and Skutch and a recently published new guide by Garrigues and Dean make studying for a trip here a pleasure!



*Prong-billed Barbet, one of the specialties we will seek in Monteverde.
Photo by guide Jay VanderGaast.*

This tour proposes to sample nearly all of Costa Rica's major habitats and to seek out many of the endemics and specialties of the area. We'll spend some time at two different sites in the lush forests of the Caribbean foothills—Braulio-Carrillo National Park and Rancho Naturalista—where possibilities include Black-crested Coquette, Green Thorntail, the local Snowcap, Lattice-tailed Trogon, Dull-mantled Antbird, Sharpbill, White-throated Shrike-Tanager, Blue-and-gold and Emerald tanagers, and even Lanceolated Monklet. Farther down the Caribbean slope, we'll visit the Rio Sarapiquí region and La Selva Biological Station. A focus for many of the tropical studies in the country today, the preserve and surrounding area at La Selva are home to an impressive array of specialties, from the beautiful Great Green Macaw and Snowy Cotinga to Black-throated Wren and Nicaraguan Seed-Finch.

We'll also travel to three very different areas in the mountainous backbone of the country, each at a different elevation and home to a slightly different cross section of birds. At Monteverde, we'll seek (among many other species) Black-breasted Wood-quail, the scarce Bare-shanked Screech-Owl, Coppery-headed Emerald (a Costa Rican endemic), Prong-billed Barbet, and Three-wattled Bellbird; at Tapantí National Park, targets include Black-bellied Hummingbird, White-bellied Mountain-gem, Barred Becard, Golden-browed Cholorphonia, and Sooty-faced Finch; and at Cerro de la Muerte, in addition to the spectacular Resplendent Quetzal, which can be quite common here, we'll search for the feisty Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Timberline Wren, Wrenthrush, Yellow-thighed Finch, and Volcano Junco.

In the Pacific lowlands, we'll spend several days in and around Carara National Park, situated in the transition zone between the dry northwestern lowlands and the more humid southern Pacific slope. Birds such as Baird's Trogon, Fiery-billed Aracari, Orange-collared Manakin, and Black-hooded Antshrike reach the northern limits of their range here, while species more typical of northern Central America that can also be found here include Turquoise-browed Motmot, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, and White-throated Magpie-Jay. Mangroves and coastal mudflats add another dimension to the birding here and serve to make this region one of the most diverse in the country. Why not join us this spring and discover for yourself why Costa Rica continues to be one of the most popular birding destinations in the Americas!

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: Though Costa Rica is a small country, the habitats are varied and diverse, and we cover a lot of ground on this tour to maximize the use of our two weeks there. We also spend a good deal of our time walking on forest trails in a variety of forest types and with varying trail conditions from place to place. Though we don't have any one walk that is overly steep, strenuous, or long, we are in a mountainous country and in all but the lowland sites there are some ups and downs to the trails. *Participants should be prepared for a certain amount of climbing on trails, with sometimes-uneven footing and/or slippery conditions.* Trail conditions vary from flat, narrow, paved trails at La Selva, to wide, graveled trails at Carara, to hilly, sometimes muddy, trails at Braulio Carrillo and Rancho Naturalista. Generally, we'll spend several hours walking trails at each site. Birds are abundant, and we'll typically proceed at a birder's relatively slow pace, but participants will need the physical stamina to remain in the field for several hours at a time. Carrying a collapsible aluminum stool can be a real benefit on most of the trails, allowing you to take the

weight off your feet from time to time throughout the day. Overall, we probably cover a maximum of 2-3 miles on any given walk (most will be shorter), and with a maximum elevational gain of about 500 feet.

For most of the tour, we will be at low to moderate elevations (generally below 4000 feet) but for a couple of days at the Savegre Mountain Lodge, we will be staying at an altitude of 7200 feet. There, participants should be prepared for some walking (and climbing) on trails above the lodge (up to about 8000 feet in elevation); we generally proceed at a slow pace with frequent rest breaks to allow us to catch our breath, and we'll try to arrange it so that much of our walking is downhill, though this is not always possible. In the highlands, we will also venture up to an altitude of 11,000 feet in pursuit of a couple of páramo specialties, and will likely spend roughly 2-3 hours at elevations between 9000 and 11,000 feet—though here we will do a minimum of walking, and our bus will always be nearby.



The extraordinary Resplendent Quetzal is found in the highlands of Costa Rica. The best-known location to find them is Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve. Photo by participant Paul Bisson.

Costa Rica is a tropical country, and as such, the weather is generally warm (or hot) and humid, though at higher elevations, it can be considerably cooler. We'll try to spend as much time in the shade as possible, but invariably we'll find ourselves in the sun at times, so adequate sun protection is imperative—at high elevations the sun can be intense—and you'll need to be careful to keep yourself hydrated. Daybreak comes early here, and to avoid the heat of the day and to maximize our birding opportunities, early starts will be the norm. On most days, we'll start by 5:00-5:30 a.m., and on at least one or two days, we'll start even earlier. On the back end of the day, the sun also sets quite early and dinners are served shortly after nightfall, so it's usually possible to be in bed by 9:00 p.m., if not earlier. When we can, we'll have rest breaks during the heat of the day, regrouping for some late afternoon birding as the day begins to cool. On at least one night at most sites, we'll be staying out late for some owling; in these situations, we generally try to owl as close to sundown as possible so that we don't get back to the hotel too late.

The majority of our birding will be along forest trails, where a good number of shy, skulking species may take considerable effort to see well (if we see them at all). Taped recordings can make it easier to see many species, and we do use tapes sensitively to lure birds into view. Since we try to show these birds to all participants before they disappear, patience and courteousness to your fellow birders is important in these situations, and good listening skills are important as the guides give directions to the birds. The guides, when possible, will attempt to find these species again, but invariably everyone will miss seeing a few birds. Before the tour, adequate preparation with a

Costa Rican field guide, your field checklist, and the tour itinerary is always an asset, allowing you to associate an image with the name your guide calls out in the field.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

About the Birding Areas

La Selva Biological Station, established in 1968 by the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS), includes approximately 2500 acres of land, almost ninety percent of which is virgin forest. The station, located in the Caribbean lowlands near Puerto Viejo on the Rio Sarapiquí, adjoins Braulio Carrillo National Park and forms the lower end of a continuous forest from near sea level at La Selva to almost 10,000 feet at the summit of Volcán Barva. Since its inception, La Selva has been an important destination for scientists and students studying Neotropical ecosystems, and innumerable projects (including pioneering work on the rainforest canopy) have been undertaken here. Well-marked trails provide access to swamp and rainforest, as well as to the perimeter of the reserve, where there are several successional strips in various stages of regeneration. The bird life is rich and includes (along with hundreds of others not listed here) Great and Slaty-breasted tinamous (sometimes quite tame), Green Ibis, Great Curassow, Tiny Hawk, Semiplumbeous Hawk, Band-tailed Barbthroat, Blue-chested Hummingbird, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Rufous and Broad-billed motmots, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Fasciated, Black-crowned and Great antshrikes, Snowy Cotinga, Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, Yellow-

margined and White-ringed flycatchers, Band-backed, Stripe-breasted, Bay, and Song wrens, Green Shrike-Vireo, Buff-rumped Warbler, Dusky-faced Tanager, and Black-faced and Blue-black grosbeaks. Pasture and edge habitats in the region harbor a different cross section of bird life including Striped Cuckoo, Slaty Spinetail, Yellow Tyrannulet, Long-tailed Tyrant, “Canebrake” Plain Wren, Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, and Yellow-billed Cacique.

Braulio Carrillo National Park, established in the 1980s to protect a large portion of Caribbean slope forest and



watershed just outside San Jose, gives access to an elevation in the Caribbean foothills similar to that of Rancho Naturalista, but the forest here is decidedly wetter—and the birding is generally richer—than at Rancho. There are few trails in this huge park, but we’ll visit a famously productive one on the day we travel from the La Selva area to Rancho Naturalista, for some further explorations of this rich habitat. If the weather is in our favor, this area can be very birdy, and it’s certainly well worth the visit, as there are a number of species here that we won’t encounter anywhere else on the tour. Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Lattice-tailed Trogon, Red-headed Barbet, Yellow-eared Toucanet, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Striped Woodhaunter, Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser, Streak-crowned Antwren, White-flanked and Checker-throated antwrens, the rare Sharpbill, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Tawny-faced Gnatwren, Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush, Nightingale Wren, Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager, White-throated Shrike-Tanager, and Tawny-crested, Carmiol’s, Emerald, and Blue-and-gold tanagers are among the specialties we’ll be targeting.

Rancho Naturalista is a private reserve nestled in the forested Caribbean foothills east of San Jose. Located at an elevation of about 3200 feet, it is perfectly sited to allow exploration into some of the richest birding habitats in Costa Rica. In these humid middle elevations, bird activity is characterized by the movement of large feeding flocks (often made up of ten to fifteen species or more), and these make for exciting (if sometimes frustrating!) birding. Around Rancho Naturalista, we’ll be watching for such species as Little Tinamou, Bicolored Hawk, Gray-headed Chachalaca, White-throated Crake, Purplish-backed Quail-Dove, Brown-hooded Parrot, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Rufous-winged Woodpecker, Brown-billed Scythebill, Dull-mantled and Zeledon’s antbirds, Thicket Antpitta, White-collared, White-ruffed, and White-crowned manakins, Tawny-chested and Slaty-capped flycatchers, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Black-throated and Scaly-breasted wrens, Black-and-yellow, Crimson-collared, and Speckled tanagers, Scarlet-rumped Cacique, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch, and Black-headed Saltator. On the grounds of the lodge itself, hummingbirds—including such dazzling gems as Green and Stripe-throated hermits, Green-breasted Mango, Crowned Woodnymph, Green Thorntail, Black-crested Coquette, White-necked Jacobin, Green-crowned Brilliant, Violet-headed and Rufous-tailed hummingbirds, Snowcap, and Bronze-tailed Plumbeleteer—visit feeders and flowering hedges, often only a few feet from the observer! Nearby areas we may visit from here offer up birds like Snail Kite, Limpkin, the spectacular Sunbittern, and Red-breasted Meadowlark, among many others.

Tapanti National Park is a beautiful cloudforest park tucked away in the northern reaches of the Cordillera de Talamanca. The accessible section of the park ranges from 3500 to 5000 feet in elevation and is home to a good assortment of wet middle-elevation species. Black Guan, Black and Ornate hawk-eagles, Green-fronted Lancebill, Black-bellied Hummingbird, White-bellied Mountain-gem, Prong-billed and Red-headed barbets, Spotted Barbtail, Lineated Foliage-gleaner, Red-faced Spinetail, Barred Becard, Torrent Tyrannulet, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, Black-faced Solitaire, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Elegant Euphonia, and Sooty-faced Finch are just some of the many species we could encounter here. With luck, we may also encounter any of a number of rare and seldom-seen species, including Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge, Scaled and Ochre-breasted antpittas, and Black-banded Woodcreeper.

Cerro de La Muerte, along the Pan-American Highway atop the Cordillera de Talamanca, provides access to some fine temperate forest and páramo habitats between 7000 and 11,000 feet, the highest elevation for this tour. In this range, we'll search for some of Costa Rica's most sought-after birds, many of which are restricted to the mountains of Costa Rica and western Panama. This list includes the rare Red-fronted Parrotlet, Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl, Dusky Nightjar, Fiery-throated, Volcano, and Scintillant hummingbirds, White-throated Mountain-gem, Ruddy Treerunner, Buffy Tuftedcheek, Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Ochraceous Pewee, Silvery-throated Jay, Timberline Wren, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Sooty Thrush, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, Flame-throated and Black-cheeked warblers, Wrenthrush, Slaty Flower-piercer, Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Large-footed, Peg-billed, and Yellow-thighed finches, Black-thighed Grosbeak, and Volcano Junco. Our lodge is situated in beautiful, cool montane oak forest at about 7000 feet, and we sometimes have the good fortune of watching Resplendent Quetzals feeding in favored fruiting trees right behind our cabins!

Carara Biological Reserve, in the Pacific lowlands near Tarcoles, marks the transition between the humid habitats of southwestern Costa Rica and the dry habitats of the country's northwest. Here, the humid forest typical of the southwestern Pacific lowlands reaches its northernmost limit, as does its characteristic avifauna. Specialties of this area are many and include Scarlet Macaw, Baird's Trogon, Golden-naped Woodpecker, Fiery-billed Aracari, Long-tailed Woodcreeper, Black-hooded Antshrike, Streak-chested Antpitta, Orange-collared Manakin, Riverside and Black-bellied wrens, the rare Yellow-billed Cotinga, Spot-crowned Euphonia, and the recently-split Cherrie's Tanager. Other more widespread forest species we may encounter include Black-throated Trogon, White-whiskered Puffbird, Red-capped and Blue-crowned manakins, Royal Flycatcher, Gray-headed and White-shouldered tanagers, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and Orange-billed Sparrow.

In riverine habitats within the park, we'll search for the likes of Anhinga, Boat-billed Heron, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Muscovy Duck, Northern Jacana, and Ringed, Green, and American Pygmy kingfishers, among others. In mangroves fringing the nearby coast, we may find Plumbeous Kite, "Mangrove" (Common) Black-Hawk, Pacific Screech-Owl, the endemic and local Mangrove Hummingbird, White-necked Puffbird, Panama Flycatcher, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, Mangrove Vireo, Scrub Greenlet, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, and "Mangrove" Yellow Warbler, while the adjacent mudflats at the river's mouth are a magnet for migrant waders and shorebirds. Coastal areas are also good for Crested and Yellow-headed caracaras, Crane Hawk, Yellow-naped Parrot, Black-headed Trogon, Rose-throated Becard, and Rufous-naped Wren, as well as a multitude of other species.

Monteverde is probably Costa Rica's most famous natural history destination. Centered atop the continental divide and protecting approximately 25,000 acres of largely undisturbed cloud and upper tropical forest, the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve has been a magnet for naturalists and photographers since its inception in 1972. Reaching an elevation of 5000 feet, the preserve (and neighboring areas) features many birds that we are unlikely to see elsewhere during our tour. Specialties of the area include two of Middle America's most famous cloudforest denizens—the exquisite Resplendent Quetzal, sacred to ancient cultures of Middle America and considered by some people to be the most beautiful bird in the New World, and the Three-wattled Bellbird, whose far-carrying "bongs" ring from treetop song perches across the roof of the forest. Other species we may find in the region include Black Guan, Orange-bellied Trogon, Ruddy Treerunner, Gray-throated Leaf-tosser, Red-faced Spinetail, Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, Black-faced Solitaire, Collared Redstart, and Spangle-cheeked Tanager. Other avian attractions of the area include the famous Monteverde hummingbird feeders—where such dazzling birds as Green Violetear, Violet Sabrewing, Magenta-throated Woodstar, Stripe-tailed Hummingbird, the endemic Coppery-headed Emerald, Purple-throated Mountain-gem, and Green-crowned Brilliant may be seen at arm's length, and forest specialties from Chiriqui Quail-Dove, Prong-billed Barbet, and Streak-breasted Treehunter to Black-breasted Wood-Quail, Azure-hooded Jay, and Bare-shanked Screech-Owl.



The lovely Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher is a near endemic, found only in the highlands of Costa Rica and Panama. Photo by participant Henry Schaefer.

Itinerary for Costa Rica

Note: For a list of each day's special target birds, be sure to check the "About the Birding Areas" section above.

Day 1, Sun, 19 Mar. Arrival. There are many daily flights into San Jose from various North American cities; call our office and we'll be happy to help you determine the flight schedule that best suits your needs. As you exit the custom's area at the San Jose airport (after going through customs and immigration, of course!), you will come to a wall of large glass windows with people waiting on the other side. *If you're arriving on the first day of the tour or if you're arriving early and have a private transfer arranged, look for the Costa Rica Gateway driver holding a sign up with "Field Guides" and/or your name on it.* It's easier to spot this person from behind the glass wall, where it's less crowded. Once you connect with the driver and head out into the public area, he or she will help you with your luggage and take you to the hotel. If you fail to find the representative, please arrange for a taxi to take you to the Hotel Bougainvillea (approximately \$35-\$40 US). If weather and flight times allow, we'll meet in the hotel lobby at 4:30 p.m. on Day 1 for a bird walk on the hotel grounds and in surrounding areas; check for a message from your guide at the front desk when you arrive. Otherwise, we'll gather in the hotel lobby at 7:00 p.m. for dinner. Night at Hotel Bougainvillea.

Day 2, Mon, 20 Mar. To Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí. We'll get going early this morning as we climb the slopes of Volcan Poas before crossing the Continental Divide and beginning our descent of the Caribbean slope. Our first destination will be the beautiful Virgen del Socorro valley, where we'll begin our search for some of the many birds that reside in the area. The scarce Lanceolated Monklet, Rufous-browed Tyrannulet, the oft-heard but seldom seen Nightingale Wren, Slate-colored Grosbeak, and Sooty-faced Finch are some of the specialties we'll hope to encounter here among a variety of more widespread species. As the morning heats up and thermals begin to rise, we'll watch the skies for a variety of soaring raptors, including White and Barred hawks and Swallow-tailed Kite before we move on to the nearby La Paz Waterfall Gardens. Here, we'll spend some time enjoying the frenetic activity around the garden's hummingbird feeders, where Black-bellied Hummingbird, the tiny endemic Coppery-headed Emerald, Green Thorntail, and Magenta-throated Woodstar will be among our quarries. Fruit feeders could bring such treats as Prong-billed Barbet, and Spangle-cheeked and Silver-throated tanagers, while Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, and Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch are just some of the possibilities along the forest trails. We'll also enjoy a restaurant lunch on the grounds before continuing on our way down into the Caribbean lowlands and to our comfortable lodge. **Rain is a strong possibility today, and it would be wise to have an umbrella, poncho, or rain jacket handy on the bus.** Night at La Quinta de Sarapiquí Lodge.



We will keep an eye out for Laughing Falcon in the lowlands near La Selva.

Photo by participant Dave Chantler.

Days 3-4, Tue-Wed, 21-22 Mar. La Selva and the Sarapiquí lowlands. We'll have two full days to explore the various trails and forest types in and around La Selva Biological Station, just a twenty-minute drive from our hotel. Much of our time here will be spent at La Selva itself, home to hundreds of species. (See the area's listing in the preceding "About the Birding Areas" section for more details.) If possible, on at least one night of our stay here, there will be a night excursion to look for Crested Owl, Vermiculated Screech-Owl, Great Potoo, and perhaps a mammal or two. Outside of the reserve, we'll search for such exciting species as Laughing Falcon, Pied Puffbird, Great Green Macaw, and Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, while at a nearby marsh, we may find Green Ibis, Southern Lapwing, White-throated Crake, Yellow Tyrannulet, and Nicaraguan Seed-Finches with their huge pink bills.

Trails are well maintained at La Selva to minimize the impact of foot traffic on the forest. Those trails close to the buildings are concrete walkways, while further afield they consist of wooden boards, finally becoming simple dirt tracks in the far reaches of the reserve. **Comfortable footwear is adequate, but be sure to wear close-toed shoes or boots**

(i.e. no sandals), or you won't be allowed into the reserve property. Although less likely here than in the foothills, rain is still a possibility during all outings, so plan accordingly. Nights at La Quinta de Sarapiquí Lodge.

Day 5, Thu, 23 Mar. To Rancho Naturalista via Braulio Carrillo National Park. After an early breakfast, we'll load up for the trip to Rancho Naturalista. Our route will take us past the Braulio Carrillo National Park region, and we'll make the short detour to spend the morning at the park. On this visit, much of our time will be spent on a wonderful trail inside the forest as we try to catch up with a multitude of interior forest species and perhaps track down one of the large, ever-moving feeding flocks, which is every birder's goal here. The trails here are steep in places with a few muddy sections, but birding is certainly worth the effort; there are a number of species found at Braulio that we won't encounter elsewhere on our tour route. **To be safe and comfortable walking on the trails, you'll need appropriate footwear; we also strongly recommend raingear!**

After a picnic lunch at the park, we'll continue on to Rancho Naturalista, arriving late in the afternoon—perhaps just in time to enjoy a beautiful sunset from the ranch's famous balcony. Rancho Naturalista is a charming converted residence with several additional cabins. It features spacious, comfortable rooms and delicious home-cooked meals, served family-style. Night at Rancho Naturalista.



We will have time to savor many hummingbirds near Rancho Naturalista. Here, a male White-necked Jacobin bathes in a light shower. Photo by participant Barb Wanless.

Day 6, Fri, 24 Mar. Rancho Naturalista. Rancho Naturalista has quickly gained a reputation as one of the birdiest sites in Costa Rica, and the “porch birding” here, overlooking the looming Volcán Turrialba, (which has just recently become active) and the expansive Rio Tuis Valley, can be truly phenomenal! A typical early morning on the porch features a good variety of birds feeding on the cooked rice and bananas put out by the staff, and the hummingbird feeders and vervain hedges are alive with as many as fourteen species of hummers—including the diminutive Snowcap and Black-crested Coquette.

While it may be difficult to pull ourselves away from this spectacle, a number of birds will beckon us from the thick forest just down the path from our rooms, and we'll spend our morning searching them out. After lunch at the lodge, there will be ample free time to relax on the porch, have a snooze in one of the hammocks, or walk to the forest hummingbird feeders before we gather again in the late afternoon. A possible option for the afternoon will be to spend some time at a quiet forest stream where a variety of species, including Snowcap, Purple-crowned Fairy, Violet-crowned Woodnymph, Golden-crowned Warbler, and Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser sometimes come to bathe. Or we may choose to go back out on the trails to try and track down some of the area's tougher species, such as Great Tinamou, Purplish-backed Quail-Dove, and Northern Schiffornis.

The Caribbean slope is typically the area with the highest rainfall in the country, and even during the dry season we are likely to encounter some rain, so bring your raingear along on birding outings. Birding here will be along dirt roads and well-maintained forest trails. The trails follow the undulating terrain of the foothills and may be muddy if there has been significant rain. Night at Rancho Naturalista.

Day 7, Sat, 25 Mar. Rancho Naturalista to Tapanti Media Lodge. We'll have a second full morning to spend around Rancho, and we'll use it to track down whatever Caribbean slope species we have not yet run across. After lunch we'll load up the bus and make the roughly two-hour journey to the scenic Orosi Valley with stops along the way for bird sightings. Night at Tapanti Media Lodge.

Day 8, Sun, 26 Mar. To Savegre Mountain Lodge via Tapantí National Park. The magnificent cloudforests of Tapantí National Park are only about a half hour's drive away from our lodge, so we'll be able to arrive there early and have a full morning of birding before moving on to the highlands of the Cerro de la Muerte region. With the likes of Prong-billed Barbet, Black-bellied Hummingbird, Sooty-faced Finch, and Spangle-cheeked Tanager on our target list, and rarities from Ornate Hawk-Eagle to Scaled Antpitta to Sharpbill among the possibilities, a visit here is always exciting!

After a picnic lunch, we'll get back on the bus and make our way up along the InterAmerican Highway and into the true highlands. Time permitting, we'll make a couple of brief birding stops to look for Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Black-and-yellow Silky-flycatcher, and other highland specialties before we turn off the main highway and drop down into the stunning Savegre Valley, home for the next two days. We expect to arrive at the lodge in the late afternoon or early evening, so be prepared for a long, but wonderful day! **Once again, rain is a possibility today, so keep your raingear handy.** Comfortable footwear will suffice, as most of our birding will take place along graveled roads and trails. Night at Savegre Mountain Lodge.



Volcano Junco is another near-endemic, found only in Costa Rica and Panama. Photo by participant Paul Bisson.

Day 9, Mon, 27 Mar. Rio Savegre Valley and Cerro de la Muerte. The grounds of the family-run Savegre Mountain Lodge can be very productive, and we'll begin our morning's birding right outside the doors of our cabins. Here, Emerald Toucanet, Acorn Woodpecker, Tufted Flycatcher, Mountain Elaenia, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Siskin, and Black-thighed Grosbeak may greet us before we're fully awake! The hummingbird feeders near the restaurant are usually abuzz with Green Violetears, White-throated Mountain-gems, and Magnificent, Volcano, and Scintillant hummingbirds, as well as a Slaty Flowerpiercer or two. And there's always a chance that we could luck into the area's star bird, the glorious Resplendent Quetzal, right by the lodge, as we've done on previous tours.

After a hot buffet breakfast, we'll venture up the narrow dirt road above the lodge to bird the dry oak forest near the top of the ridge. We'll be ferried up the hill in the back of a 4WD truck and then dropped at a trailhead among the towering oaks. The trails up here are rather narrow (but open) and can be steep in places, but we'll walk these at a pace to accommodate everyone and much of our walk will be downhill. We will start off with a climb further into the oak forest though, as we try to connect with species such as Spotted Wood-Quail, Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl, Silvery-throated Jay, and others that we are unlikely to find elsewhere. After lunch back at our hotel and an

early afternoon break, we'll drive up to the high elevation páramo habitat of Cerro de la Muerte to look for Volcano Junco, Sooty Thrush, Timberline Wren, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, and possibly even the rare Peg-billed Finch. Weather depending, we may remain out until just after dark, and try for Dusky Nightjar, Bare-shanked Screech-Owl, and even the poorly-known Unspotted Saw-whet Owl, which was heard on one of our previous tours.

Temperatures today and tomorrow morning—especially early—will likely be the coolest on the tour. You should plan to wear several layers, which you can peel off as the day warms up. Again, raingear is essential, as we're likely to encounter at least mist at some point during the day. Most of our birding will be along dirt and paved roads, but we may encounter some wet or muddy spots if we venture away from the roads in search of specialties. Most of the day's birding will be between 7000 and 9000 feet (11,000 feet in the afternoon), and it will be important to remember not to over-exert yourself at these elevations. Night at Savegre Mountain Lodge.

Day 10, Tue, 28 Mar. To Carara. After a final breakfast at Savegre Mountain Lodge, we'll bid farewell to this lovely, unspoiled valley and head back up into the higher reaches of the Talamanca Mountains. We'll have another chance to track down any highland specialties we may have missed before we descend toward the Pacific lowlands and Carara Biological Reserve. Our route to the coast will take us south towards the city of San Isidro de General, where we'll detour off the main road and make a lunch stop on the grounds of a country lodge. As we enjoy our lunch here, we'll keep our eyes open for Snowy-bellied Hummingbird and White-tailed Emerald, two hummers we won't find anywhere else on the tour route. Cherrie's and Speckled tanagers, Streaked Saltator, and Elegant Euphonia are among the other species we might find around the lodge's gardens. After lunch we'll head west to the coast at Dominical, then north along the coast to the Carara region, perhaps with a birding stop or two en route as time permits. **Removable layers of clothing will be very important today as we make our way down from the cool mountains to the hot and steamy lowlands, and as always, you should keep your rain gear available, just in case.** Night at Villa Lapas.

Days 11-12, Wed-Thu, 29-30 Mar. Carara National Park.

With its great variety of habitats, Carara has a wonderfully diverse avifauna, making it one of the country's top birding areas. Our two full days here will give us ample time to sample these habitats and their unique bird species. The transitional forests of the reserve hold an amazing assortment of birds, including many humid forest species that are restricted to southwestern Costa Rica and adjacent Panama, including Golden-naped Woodpecker, Baird's Trogon, Orange-collared Manakin, and Riverside Wren, and we'll do our best to try to find all of these and more. While in this area, we'll also make an effort to observe the spectacular flight of Scarlet Macaws as they move between feeding areas in the reserve and night roosts in the coastal mangroves. Carara is one of the last strongholds in the country for this species, and we stand a good chance of seeing these stunning birds. And on one afternoon we plan to take a boat trip on the Rio Tarcoles, with the elusive Mangrove Hummingbird as our main goal. We also will do at least one night of owling in the area, which could turn up such species as Black-and-white and Striped owls and Pacific Screech-Owl. Nights at Villa Lapas.



Lesser Ground-Cuckoo. Photo by participant Reg David.

Day 13, Fri, 31 Mar. To Monteverde. We'll spend the final morning in the Carara area birding the southern end of the dry Guanacaste lowlands, the southernmost range of several northern Central American specialties. We could encounter Double-striped Thick-knee, White-fronted Parrot, Orange-fronted Parakeet, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Plain-capped Starthroat, Turquoise-browed Motmot, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Scrub Euphonia, and Stripe-headed and Olive sparrows as we bird the dry scrub along a quiet dirt road. We'll return to the lodge in the late morning, allowing time to pack up before lunch, after which we'll make the roughly 3-hour drive to Monteverde. **The primitive dirt road leading from the main highway up to the town of Monteverde can be quite dusty and very bumpy, so protect your optics accordingly.** We expect to arrive at our hotel by mid- to late afternoon. Night at Hotel Fonda Vela.

Day 14, Sat, 1 Apr. Monteverde Region. Today we'll explore the lush cloudforests of either the Monteverde Reserve or the nearby Santa Elena Reserve, depending on local conditions and information. The well-maintained trails of the reserves allow access to this superb forest type and give us the opportunity to see some of the many resident species. We'll also spend some time at the famous Hummingbird Gallery feeders just outside the reserve, where Stripe-tailed Hummingbird, Purple-throated Mountain-gem, Magenta-throated Woodstar, and the endemic Coppery-headed Emerald are among the stars of the show.

Weather and need permitting, we'll try some night birding on at least one of our evenings here, looking for Bare-shanked Screech-Owl and Mottled Owl as well as nocturnal mammals such as Kinkajou and Olingo. **The cloudforests here near the Continental Divide can be wet at any time of year, so remember to take your raingear along on all of our outings!** Night at Hotel Fonda Vela.

Day 15, Sun, 2 Apr. To San Jose. We'll use our final morning here as a clean up day, visiting whichever area your guides deem offers us the most target species, then we'll start on our drive down to San Jose; we plan to arrive at our hotel by mid-afternoon, so we can have the option of doing a little souvenir shopping (the hotel has a small gift shop), relaxing by the pool, or even a little more birding before dinner. This evening we'll enjoy a farewell dinner at the hotel's excellent restaurant, followed by a final tally of our bird list. Night at Hotel Bouganvillea.

Day 16, Mon, 3 Apr. Departure for home. Time to bid farewell to new friends and this wonderful country as we head for home. Our Costa Rican ground agent will arrange timely transport to the airport for all participants leaving today. *Safe travels!*

About Your Guides

Jay VanderGaast was introduced to birding by his father, and his obsession with birds was evident by age seven when he memorized the plates in Peterson's eastern field guide. He went on to earn a B.S. in biology at university and briefly contemplated a career in research, but two years on the buggy arctic tundra watching ptarmigan do little other than occasionally getting eaten by Gyrfalcons soon put an end to that plan! Instead, he strapped on a backpack and a pair of bins and began roaming the world in search of birds.

His travels eventually led him to Costa Rica, where he stumbled into a job as a birding guide at Rancho Naturalista Lodge. Amazed that he was actually getting paid to watch birds, he jealously guarded his position there for six years. His career with Field Guides coincided with the dawn of the new millennium (if you believe that began in 2000!), and since then he has guided more than 100 tours on several continents.

When he's not on tour, Jay's native habitat is his home near Montreal, where he lives with his partner, Annie, and their three children—daughters Ariane and Elodie, and son Noah.

A **local guide** will be added as tour size warrants.

"Jay VanderGaast was a delight to travel with...incredible at finding the birds and extremely helpful in getting me on the birds—which was much appreciated! His organization and professionalism was first rate. He made the trip an exceptional experience which I will remember for the rest of my life." L.K., Costa Rica

Financial Information

FEE: \$4975 from San Jose

DEPOSIT: \$500 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: November 19, 2016

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$625

LIMIT: 12

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Caroline Lews. Caroline will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

ACCOMMODATIONS Accommodations for our Costa Rica tour are good to excellent throughout. Tapanti Media Lodge is basic, but comfortable, with somewhat intermittent hot water, though it is fine for the one night we are there. Rancho Naturalista has a limited number of rooms and single accommodations may not be available there. Please be aware that credit cards, checks, and traveler's checks cannot be used for purchases (including drinks) at Rancho Naturalista.

ALTITUDE: We will be birding between 7000 and 9000 feet for most of our stay in and around the Savegre Valley. At our highest point (on Cerro de la Muerte) we will reach about 11,000 feet and spend approximately two to three hours at that elevation.

DOCUMENTS: A current passport valid six months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Costa Rica. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Costa Rican consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Please plan to arrive in San Jose on Day 1 (March 19) in time to join the group for a 7:00 p.m. dinner. On Day 16 (April 3) you may make flight arrangements to depart at any time.

Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees. **Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$4975 for one person in double occupancy from San Jose. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 15, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 16, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Costa Rica, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers or guides, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$625. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$500** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by November 19, 2016. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at www.fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.htm and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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