This Broad-billed Motmot on Peninsula Road really showed off for the group!

Costa Rica
Fundraising Tour FAM Trip
October 1-8, 2022
October 1 – Arrival

Upon arrival, the group was transferred to Hotel Bougainvillea. After getting settled in, a break in the rain allowed everyone set out to look for Cabanis’s Ground-Sparrow, a Costa Rican endemic. Brief views were had of these birds moving through the coffee farms. The group then met for a welcome dinner, excited to begin birding the following morning.

October 2 – Irazú, Café Christina, Rancho Naturalista

We got an early start in the hopes of getting better looks at Cabanis’s Ground-Sparrow and did so very quickly upon arrival with several individuals feeding right in the open! The morning was then spent birding Irazú Volcano searching for high elevation species. The first stop quickly yielded a large mixed flock containing several highlight species including Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Wrenthrush, Black-cheeked and Flame-throated Warblers, and the iconic Resplendent Quetzal. At the summit, Volcano Junco, Timberline Wrens, Baird’s Sandpiper, and Large-footed Finch were accompanied by a stunning view of the crater and surrounding mountain range.
October 2 – Continued

Following Irazú, the group had the opportunity to visit Finca Christina, a shade-grown and bird-friendly coffee farm. The owners graciously gave a wonderful tour sharing information covering a wide variety of topics from how to grow, harvest, and prepare coffee to be sold, the benefits of shade-grown, and the benefits of the habitat for wildlife. As a bonus, a group of White-eared Ground-Sparrows showed off for everyone! After leaving Finca Christina, the group arrived at Rancho Naturalista with just enough time to enjoy the busy hummingbird feeders.

October 3 - Rancho Naturalista, Angostura Reservoir, Arte De Plumas

The morning began with a visit to the moth sheet at Rancho Naturalista. Many birds come to this location first thing in the morning to feast on the moths that were attracted the night before. Red-throated Ant-Tanagers, Brown Jays, Orange-billed Sparrows, and Buff-throated Foliage-Gleaners made an appearance while a multitude of species foraged in the canopy above us. Following breakfast, a dedicated effort was made to find the Lovely Cotinga that has called Rancho home for quite some time now. A successful search also provided many other great species including Keel-billed Toucan, Gartered Trogon, and a large flock containing many tanager and migrant warbler species. The group then visited a large flowering garden where everyone enjoyed Snowcap, Black-crested Coquette and a bonus White-crested Coquette that had been around! A visit to Angostura Reservoir added many waterbirds and shorebirds that boosted the list of species for the day! Highlights here included White-throated Crake, Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, Northern Jacana, Roseate Spoonbill, Snail Kite, and more!

Following lunch, the group visited a section of the Tuis River and quickly found the iconic Sunbittern hunting up and down the river. A visit to Arte de Plumas shortly after allowed for an amazing view of Laughing Falcons as well as Silver-throated, Plain-colored, and Bay-headed Tanagers. Rain in the evening resulted in birding from the covered deck at Rancho, enjoying more time with the busy hummingbird feeders.
October 4 – Rancho Naturalista, Centro Manu, Guarumo Lodge, Arenal Observatory Lodge

The group departed Rancho Naturalista early to visit Centro Manu, a large private reserve in the Caribbean lowlands that brought a whole new set of species to the trip. A hike around the property added highlights including Slaty-breasted Tinamou, Slaty-tailed and Black-throated Trogons, Spectacled Owl, Broad-billed Motmot, Yellow-throated Toucan, and the main target of the morning, the endangered Bare-necked Umbrellabird. This large cotinga gave the group a prolonged, close, and amazing experience with a highly sought-after species.

Lunch at Guarumo Lodge included great food, great scenery, and great birds! Collared Aracaris, Yellow-throated Toucans, and a myriad of hummingbird species visited the feeder setups. The group then continued to Arenal Observatory Lodge just in time for a clear view of the Arenal Volcano. Green-fronted Lancebill, Great Curassow, Emerald Tanager, and Red-legged Honeycreeper greeted the group upon arrival.

October 5 - Arenal Observatory Lodge, Bogarin Tail

The birding around the property at Arenal Observatory Lodge yielded over 60 species before breakfast! Montezuma Oropendola displayed overhead, migrant warblers and flycatchers hunted the forest edges, Thicket Antpitta called from deep in the woods and 6 hummingbird species visited the flowers nearby! Following breakfast, the group continued walking the trails around the lodge. While birding in the woods, mixed flocks including Streak-crowned Antvireo, Nightingale Wren, White-throated Shrike-Tanager, Spotted, Dull-mantled, and Dusky Antbirds, and much more highlighted the remainder of the morning.
October 5 – Continued

The afternoon was spent at Bogarin Trails where we quickly found a Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth over the entrance to the trail. White-collared Manakins displayed near the trail, Broad-billed Motmots showed off, Uniform Crake skulked in the thickets, and Rufous-tailed Jacamar made an appearance after singing for a while. Strawberry Poison Dart Frogs were found along the edges of the trail. As we went to leave, we followed a tip and enjoyed several Boat-billed Herons roosting in a tree near a private pond. The final stop that day was to a private property where the group was treated to a delicious homecooked meal. Following dinner, the property came alive with the sound of Red-eyed Tree Frogs, Hourglass Tree Frogs, and Pygmy Rain Frogs. The group spent quite a bit of time enjoying seeing and photographing these frogs well while Common Pauraques sang up the road.
The group birded the grounds of Observatory Lodge again before breakfast while waiting for the next location to open for the day. Many of the same great species seen yesterday were found in the morning with new species highlighting the morning such as Semiplumbeous Hawk, Song Wren, and another mixed flock including Russet Antshrike, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, and more!

The main birding location of the morning was Arenal Sky Adventures. The trail system and hanging bridges over the canopy allow for great opportunities to see many tricky to find species. The trail started out with very close views of Thicket Antpitta, a secretive and generally hard-to-see species. Shortly after, a young Barred Forest-Falcon gave unbelievably close views for such a skittish species. Our first great flock was on one of the hanging bridges where Black-and-yellow Tanagers and a Blue-and-gold Tanager were the highlights. Down the trail a bit further, the group encountered the type of flock every birder hopes to encounter in the tropics where you’re surrounded by many different species. This large mixed flock contained roughly 40 individual birds composed of 35 species! The group was looking at Northern Barred-Woodcreeper, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Tawny-faced and Long-billed Gnatwrens, and Black-headed Nightingale Thrush when perhaps one of the most exciting names you could hear while searching a mixed flock was yelled out, Sharpbill! This species isn’t very well known and Sky Adventure is one of the more reliable locations to see it. The cherry on top of an already incredible flock was a very cooperative Brown-billed Scythebill! The trails at Sky Adventure alone yielded nearly 100 species! A tip of an Eyelash Pit Viper in a bush in the parking lot wrapped up an incredible morning.

Following lunch, the group birded along Peninsula Road, hoping to add many more species to an already impressive day! White-throated Magpie-Jays, Keel-billed Motmot, Rufous-winged Tanagers, and Thick-billed Seed-Finch were among the many highlights.
October 7 - Arenal Observatory Lodge, Cinchona

The group birded the grounds of Observatory Lodge one more time before departing towards San Jose. Along the drive, a great display of raptor migration was visible overhead with hundreds of Broad-winged Hawks streaming over the road. A flat tire along the way didn’t stop the group’s excitement or birding. In the 30 minutes it took before we were back on the road, the group made the most of the time and added Swainson’s Hawk and Bare-throated Tiger-Heron to the trip list! Lunch at Soda Cinchona was fantastic and made better by the wonderful feeder setup that attracted Crimson-collared Tanagers, Northern Emerald Toucanets, the endemic Coppery-headed Emerald, and Buff-fronted Quail-Dove! The group then carried on back to Hotel Bougainvillea in San Jose for a final group dinner before departing back home the next day.
The group saw an amazing **335 species** in 6 full days of birding! Thank you to everyone involved in making this FAM trip such a success!

If you are part of a not-for-profit organization, contact us at info@SabrewingNatureTours.com for more information on how Sabrewing can provide fundraising opportunities for your organization!
Bright-rumped Attila

Coffee Tour at Cafe Christina

Blue-throated Goldentail

Birding the Hanging Bridges at Sky Adventure

Geoffroy’s Spider Monkey