



Ocellated Crake

Costa Rica

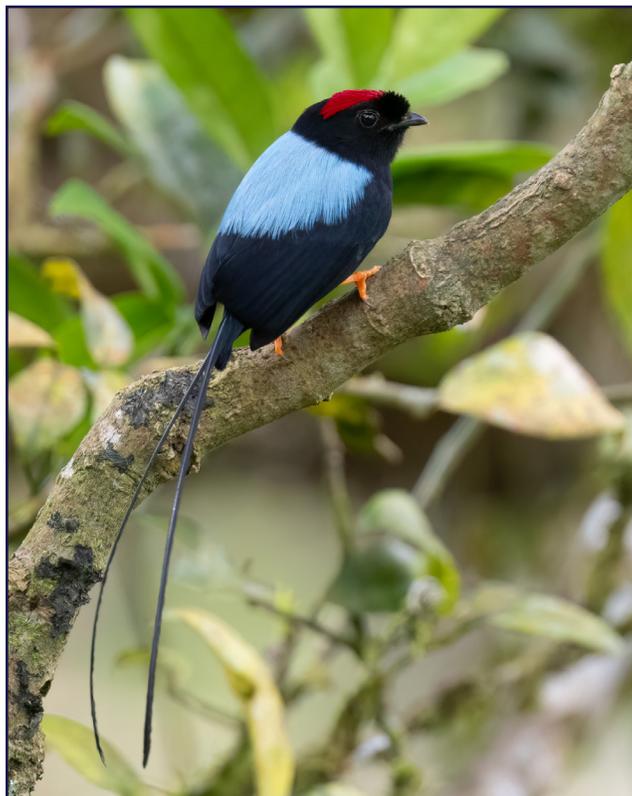
Endemics and Specialties

Tour Leader: Eric Ripma

February 23 - March 5, 2026

February 23 – La Paz Area, La Ceiba Fields, Guacimo Road

Since we turned this tour into a private tour this year, we started our trip with spending a couple of nights at Canto del Rio Eco Resort. So, instead of having to drive from Hotel Bougainvillea to La Paz, we were staying much closer to our destination for this morning. Our first stop this morning were some feeders just outside of La Paz. A family here has an amazing feeder setup and they had just started feeding Long-tailed Manakins - the first time I've heard of manakins coming to feeders! It didn't take long before we had unbelievable views of an adult male. After we had our fill, we spent a short time at their fruit feeders and had good looks at Montezuma Oropendolas, Lesson's Motmot, White-eared Ground-Sparrow, and plenty of Scarlet-rumped Tanagers. Afterwards, we followed one of the owners to a garden they have set up for hummingbirds. Along the way, we had great looks at our only White Hawk of the trip. The garden was busy with the buzzing of hummingbirds and we added our first Green Hermit, Violet Sabrewing, and Stripe-tailed Hummingbirds. And our first Costa Rican endemic of the trip, Coppery-headed Emerald, showed well. A couple of Resplendent Quetzals came flying overhead, but we could never locate them for perched views. On a short walk from the garden, we picked up our only Purple-throated Mountain-gem, a couple of Red-faced Spinetails, and a Chestnut-capped Warbler.

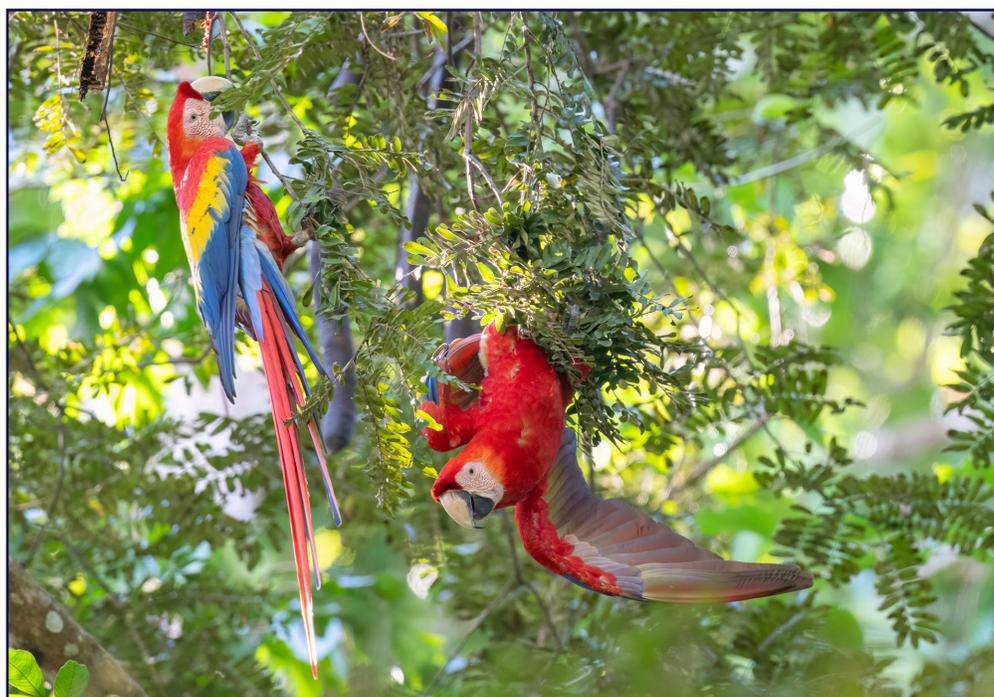


Long-tailed Manakin

Eventually, it was time to continue on, so we started our drive towards the Pacific Coast and after a stop for lunch, we spent some time car birding through La Ceiba Fields. It was quite hot, but we still picked up our first Orange-fronted Parakeets, a Plain-breasted Ground Dove, and a Blue Grosbeak. A troop of Mantled Howler Monkeys with a few babies moved through the forest just outside our

windows. They put on quite the show! Next, we made several stops along Guacimo Road. The dry forest habitat along this road added many species that we wouldn't see throughout the rest of our tour. Our first stop added our first White-throated Magpie-Jays. These big, boisterous birds provided a lot of entertainment. At the same spot, we also found a roosting Pacific Screech-Owl. Our next roadside stop was for Nutting's Flycatchers. While we didn't see the flycatchers right away, we did see Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, White-browed Gnatcatchers, Banded Wrens, and an Olive Sparrow. Eventually, we did see a pair of Nutting's Flycatchers and at about this time we noticed a lot more traffic was passing us by than usual for this road. We eventually figured out that there was construction on the Tarcoles bridge that was causing some huge backups - we were just hopeful it wouldn't be too bad for us. Further down the road, we stopped in some forested habitat where we quickly picked up our two main targets; Black-headed Trogon and Turquoise-browed Motmot. We also added our only views of Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Cinnamon Hummingbird, and a small flock of Painted Buntings here!

It was time to continue to our next lodge, but our hoped-for short drive turned into a long one with the bridge construction. We had over an hour's wait to cross the bridge, but we would later learn that we had it easy. If we hadn't birded this road and cut off a large chunk of traffic, we could have been waiting for over 3 hours!



Scarlet Macaws

February 24 – Punta Leona, Jaco Area, Teleferico Road

Our original plan of birding at Carara National Park changed due to the unbelievably long lines of traffic on both sides of the Tarcoles Bridge. Instead of driving to Carara, we spent the morning birding around the forests on the same property as our hotel. Before breakfast, we took a shorter walk

around our rooms. The birding was quite busy and we had good looks at a Blue-throated Goldentail, a couple Gartered Violaceous Trogons, our first Yellow-throated Toucans, several Rose-throated Becards, Orange-billed Sparrows, and a couple of Streaked Flycatchers. Watching a pair of Rufous-backed Wrens preening each other was a memorable moment from the walk as well. After breakfast, we stopped back by the rooms and while we were on our way, we noticed a small flock of Scarlet Macaws feeding nearby. We had amazing looks of these birds as they foraged and interacted. What an experience!

Afterwards, we headed to a nearby trail. The birding along the trail here, while more difficult due to being within the forest, produced many species we wouldn't see outside of the forest. Very shortly after setting off, we heard a Northern Bentbill and before long had great looks at this interesting (and interestingly named) species. A couple of Northern Plain-Xenops, Dot-winged Antwrens, Black-hooded Antshrikes, Ochre-crowned and Lesser Greenlets, and Riverside Wren were also seen here. As we continued our walk, we added a pair of Pale-billed Woodpeckers at eye level, Ruddy-tailed Flycatchers, and a Chestnut-backed Antbird to our list. Once we had completed the loop, we took a short walk on another trail across the road. Right at the start we saw our only Purple-crowned Fairy, a Common Squirrel-Cuckoo, and a Bay-headed Tanager. Just a short way down the trail, Jay spotted a pair of Great Tinamous on the trail. It's always exciting to see, and not only hear, this shy species. A little further down the trail we also saw our only male Red-capped Manakin of the trip.



Northern Bentbill

On our way to lunch in Jaco, we birded along a road that ends at the beach. The start of the road produced our first two Double-striped Thick-knees of the trip and once we reached the beach, we added many more species. Among the highlights was a Common Black Hawk that perched close be-

fore zipping down to the rocky shoreline where it also showed off well for us. On our way to lunch, we got sidetracked right in the middle of town when we spotted our first Bare-throated Tiger-Heron. After getting out of the vehicle to take a look, we also spotted our first Gray-cowled Wood-Rail for the trip. After lunch, we drove backroads into the foothills and looped around the would-be traffic jam so we wouldn't have to waste our birding time. The backroads were productive and our many stops along them resulted in some great birds. First up, we found a Bare-throated Tiger-Heron nest! Watching the two mostly grown chicks in the nest was definitely a highlight of our day. Once we reached the nearby ridge, our drive back down in another direction was full of bird activity. We started with our first Pale-breasted Spinetails singing so close you could almost touch them. However, you could barely see them at best. A little further down the road, we came across an insane number of Tennessee Warblers - they were everywhere! We were also able to pick out Golden-hooded Tanager, our only Shining Honeycreepers of the trip, and a couple of Bay-headed Tanagers. Further down the mountain, we had great looks at a pair of Black-bellied Wrens, Rufous-breasted Wrens, and a Yellow-billed Cacique. Still further down, we finished off the day with several close Scarlet Macaws with a backdrop of a beautiful sunset. It was the perfect way to end the day!



Bare-throated Tiger-Heron

February 25 – Tarcoles River

We started out early this morning with a short drive to the Tarcoles River where we hopped in a boat and spent two and a half hours birding the marshes, banks, sand spits, and mangroves that make this river so diverse. We started out upriver where we picked up many Muscovy Ducks, several Northern Jacanas, amazing looks at Bare-throated Tiger-Herons, and 4 species of kingfishers (Ringed, Belted, Amazon, and Green). In the grasses along the river, we enjoyed many seedeaters and picked out a couple of Painted Buntings and a Dickcissel. Once we turned around and head-

ed towards the river mouth, we started picking up more coastal birds. Hundreds of Magnificent Frigatebirds, many Brown Pelicans, and a Reddish Egret greeted us. Some scanning through a large flock of Royal and Sandwich Terns netted us an Elegant and a Common Tern. Next up was a journey through the mangroves where we saw Mangrove Yellow Warblers, Mangrove Vireo, Streak-backed Oriole, and best of all, close views of an American Pygmy Kingfisher! Once we returned to the dock, we headed back to our hotel where we had breakfast, packed up, and began our long drive to the Osa Peninsula. In the evening, upon our arrival at Danta Corcovado Lodge, we were greeted by a Charming Hummingbird visiting the flowers.



American Pygmy Kingfisher

February 26 – Rio Rincón Bridge, Danta Corcovado Lodge, Hummingbird Beach

After an early departure and short drive, we reached our destination for the morning, the Rio Rincón Bridge. The main target for this location was the spectacular, Yellow-billed Cotinga. After a short wait, we saw one fly over. We all wondered if this was going to be our only sighting of the morning, but to our relief, the show continued! Throughout the course of the morning, we had good views of perched males and females and many more flyby views of both sexes as well. These birds were definitely one of the highlights of our whole trip! Plenty of other species also showed well while we were at the bridge. A couple of Roseate Spoonbills, Ringed and Green Kingfishers, Brown-hooded and Blue-headed Parrots, Mealy Amazons, and Masked Tityras were also seen. On our drive back to the lodge, we scanned some fields where we had good looks at Red-breasted Meadowlarks among several other species. As the temps were starting to rise, we headed back to the lodge where we had breakfast before heading out on the trail to look for more forest-dependent

species.



Yellow-billed Cotinga

Our main target on our morning walk was the Costa Rican endemic (although there are now a few reports in Panama) Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager. At the start of our walk, we enjoyed close views of Chestnut-backed Antbirds before a Black-faced Antthrush walked across the trail! After a short while, we came across a large mixed flock. This mixed flock stayed in the same area for at least an hour, so we were able to pick through and find as many species as possible. A pair of Pale-billed Woodpeckers started it off! Next up, we saw White-throated Shrike-Tanagers, Western Woodhau-nters, Baird's Trogons, Tawny-winged, Piping Long-tailed, Wedge-billed, Cocoa, and Black-striped Woodcreepers, Chiriqui Foliage-gleaner, Russet Antshrikes, Dot-winged Antwrens, and a Mangrove Cuckoo. Before we left, we thought we heard a Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager. With just the slightest bit of playback, there they were - good looks were had by all!

After lunch at our lodge, we took a short drive to Hummingbird Beach where we would be looking for another endemic, the Mangrove Hummingbird. The activity was somewhat slow when we first arrived, but it didn't take too long before Jay called one out. We all had fantastic looks at a female. As we were walking back towards the vehicle, we came across another large mixed flock. And wouldn't you know, a female Yellow-billed Cotinga perched up in a nearby tree! Other birds included Spot-crowned Euphonias, many Tennessee Warblers, and Red-legged Honeycreepers. Once we arrived back at our lodge, we took another walk to their canopy tower which provides amazing views of the surrounding hillsides. Close views of Golden-naped Woodpeckers, Costa Rican Swifts, Double-toothed Kites, and Red-lored Amazons made for a nice evening. On our walk back down to the lodge, we saw our first Ruddy Quail-Doves. After another delicious dinner at the lodge, we had time to get some rest before another early morning the next day.



Mangrove Hummingbird

February 27 – Ciudad Neily Rice Fields, Las Pangas, Las Cruces Biological Station

With some field breakfasts in hand, luggage packed, and binoculars ready, we loaded into our vehicle before sunrise and made an hour and a half drive to our first birding destination of the day, rice fields south of Ciudad Neily. After a restroom stop, we met Luis Rojas, a local birder who showed us around for the day. As we pulled up to where we were meeting him, he got us on a Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture that was perched up nearby. Soon after, we had good looks at a couple of Savanna Hawks. The temperatures were already rather warm, so we focused on finding a Sapphire-throated Hummingbird since their activity tends to trail off as it heats up here. It wasn't easy, but while we were looking, we enjoyed Yellow-bellied Seedeaters, Smooth-billed Anis, and a pair of Black-striped Sparrows. As we were about to turn around and check another area, an oriole caught our eye, but not one of the species expected here. It was a Yellow-tailed Oriole, a first record on eBird for all of Puntarenas Province. It's always fun to find a local rarity! After a little more effort, we eventually got some brief views of two Sapphire-throated Hummingbirds. And as we were about to load back up and head on to another spot, we saw our only Swainson's Hawk of the trip and a couple of Plain-breasted Ground-Doves.

Our next stop was a bust due to road work, so we quickly moved on to other spots to look for Red-rumped Woodpeckers. Along the way, we saw our only Gray-lined Hawk of the trip, our first Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, and a Thick-billed Seed-Finch. Eventually we ended up with some great looks at Red-rumped Woodpecker too!



Red-rumped Woodpecker

By the late morning, we headed over to Las Pangas to scan through the waterbirds and look for a couple of specialty species. We headed past the wetlands to start to look for Lesser Kiskadee and Rusty-margined Flycatcher. As we were looking through a small flock of Scarlet-rumped Tanagers and Prothonotary Warblers, a large black bird caught our eye. A Greater Ani! This is a rare species anywhere in Costa Rica and it was another first record for Puntarenas Province. It was also a lifer for Luis, our local area guide, and a new bird for Costa Rica for Jay, our local Costa Rican guide. It was great fun to share this sighting with both of them! We also added good looks at a Mangrove Cuckoo and a Rusty-margined Flycatcher here. On our way out of Las Pangas, we took some time to scan the wetlands and added thousands of ducks, shorebirds, and other waterbirds.

After lunch in Ciudad Neily, we continued on our way to our next lodge at Las Cruces Biological Station. On the way, we stopped at a small oropendola colony where we saw our first Crested Oropendolas of the trip. After getting checked in at the hotel, we met back up for some light birding from their back deck and around their gardens. After putting out some bananas, it didn't take long for many birds to start visiting. Among the visitors were Gray-headed Chachalacas, Clay-colored Thrushes, Scarlet-rumped, Speckled, and Golden-hooded Tanagers, and Buff-throated Saltators. In the gardens, we had close scope views of a male, White-crested Coquette. What a stunning hummingbird!

February 28 – Wilson Botanical Garden and Bosque Rio Negro

We spent our whole morning birding around the grounds of our lodge. We started out on the back deck with a cup of coffee and some bananas for the birds. The beautiful Fiery-billed Aracari visited among many of the same birds of the previous evening. After breakfast, we took a walk around the

gardens where we saw our first Buff-rumped Warbler, Snowy-bellied Hummingbirds, and more Spot-crowned Euphonias. Once we walked over to their canopy tower, we started scanning for treetop and soaring birds. The activity was a bit slow, but we eventually picked out some vultures and raptors including a perched King Vulture and an adult Gray-headed Kite. A walk through the forest started off slowly, but we eventually picked up many species. A Rufous Piha followed us the whole way and we saw it well many times. A flock of thrushes turned up our first good looks at White-throated Thrushes. We also saw our only White-ruffed Manakins and a Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher. Eventually we started hearing a Ruddy Foliage-gleaner, a relatively rare species anywhere. Unfortunately, we were only ever to get glimpses of this bird as it moved around in some dense undergrowth. After the foliage-gleaner, we headed back to the lodge for lunch and a short break before heading out for the afternoon.



Fiery-billed Aracari

Our first stop on this afternoon was at Bosque Rio Negro. And, while it didn't take long to hear our target, the Lance-tailed Manakin, we never had any luck getting a view. However, we did enjoy looks at several other species. A Smoky-brown Woodpecker foraged overhead, a Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant briefly perched in the open, and a couple of Golden-winged Warblers foraged in dead leaf clusters. Afterwards, we drove a short distance and birded along the border of Costa Rica and Panama. Birds on one side of the road were Panamanian, while birds on the other side were Costa Rican. We enjoyed looks at our first Lesser Elaenia, our only White-lined Tanager, a Yellow-throated Vireo, and a high-flying flock of Cliff Swallows. It was getting dark by the time we arrived back at the lodge, so we had dinner and tried to have an earlier night, but a very vocal Crested Owl kept some of us up a little later than hoped.

March 1 – Buenos Aires Area, Peje, The Aracari Birding Deck, El Pelicano

Hotel

After a very early departure and an hour and a half drive, we met up with Leandro, our local guide for the morning. Leandro has recently worked with Ocellated Crakes and has been able to lure them out in the open for a quick meal. We didn't know this at the time, but the crakes had been a no show on his last two visits. Since we didn't know this, we were quite confident we would see one. Maybe it was the confidence, maybe not, but not only did we see one, but we saw two! It was thrilling to watch these elusive rails return several times. Eventually, they had their fill, and it was time for us to move on to other birds, but it was an experience none of us will soon forget.



Ocellated Crake

After a bit of a drive to another area, we reached the location where we would be looking for Wedge-tailed Grass-Finch. It was already getting quite hot in the sun, so we were hoping to find one quickly. However, it took some effort, but we did eventually have good looks at two individuals. After a delicious breakfast in Buenos Aires, we started driving to private property in Peje, but Leandro took us on a quick detour to see a Pearl Kite nest. An adult was on the nest, apparently incubating eggs, and we had great scope views. Once we reached Peje, we parked at the private property and started walking a trail through the forest. Our main target here was the beautiful Rosy Thrush-Tanager. As soon as we entered the forest, we came across some great birds including Eye-ringed Flatbill, Blue-black Grosbeak, Graceful Black-throated Trogon, and Golden-crowned Spadebill. A little further down the trail, we noticed some movement on the ground - a male Rosy Thrush-Tanager! After enjoying the male and eventually a female, we continued further on the trail and picked up several more birds. The highlight was a Streak-chested Antpitta that allowed for good looks. Any day you see an antpitta is a good day!



Graceful Black-throated Trogon

After saying our farewells to Leandro, we drove for about an hour until we reached our next destination, The Aracari Birding Deck. On the way, we spotted a Bat Falcon along the roadside. Luckily, there was a nice pull off so we were able to hop out for great views. As always, The Aracari Birding Deck had some great birding and delicious food. Many species visited the feeders including a Streaked Saltator and a couple of Speckled Tanagers and a Laughing Falcon flew by. Jay was able to check down the road and find it perched, so we were all able to have good scope views. After our time at the deck, we finished off our drive to our next hotel. We had some nice downtime in the afternoon, but a Long-billed Starthroat and Costa Rican Brushfinches lured us back into birding mode.

March 2 – El Pelicano Hotel, San Isidro, Mirador Valle del General, Cerro Buenavista Communication Towers, Miriam’s

We had some extra time to sleep on this morning since we would be starting out around the grounds of our hotel. Before breakfast we had views of our first Northern Emerald-Toucanets, Elegant Euphonias, Fiery-billed Aracaris, and spectacular looks at a Chiriqui Foliage-gleaner. While spending time watching some flowers, we added our only, albeit brief, looks at White-tailed Emerald. After breakfast we packed up and headed on to our next destination. Our first stop was in San Isidro to scan the treetops for Turquoise Cotinga. It took some time, but we eventually found several and had good looks. The blue and purple plumage makes this such a striking species! Next up, we started our drive up into the Talamanca Mountains. We made a stop at a roadside restaurant to

check their feeders and have a coffee on our way up. Our only Brown Violetears visited the feeders and our only Red-headed Barbet was seen in the nearby trees. Our next stop was birding along a backroad through the mountains. The activity was rather slow, but we did pick up our first Spangle-cheeked Tanagers, Yellow-winged Vireo, and Ruddy-capped Nightingale Thrushes.



Chiriqui Foliage-gleaner

After lunch at a nearby restaurant, we spent some time in the paramo habitat at the top of the Talamanca Mountains. The activity level here was also rather low, but after a bit of searching, we had good looks at a Volcano Junco. Our first Black-capped Flycatchers and Sooty-capped Chlorospingus also made appearances. With the low activity, we decided to head down into the Savegre Valley where we would be staying for the next two nights. As we started descending, we made a stop at the feeders at Miriam's. The hummingbirds swarmed the feeders, and we had good looks at Lesser Violetear, White-throated Mountain-gem, Talamanca, Fiery-throated, and Volcano Hummingbirds. Many other birds also made their presence known and we had spectacular looks at a Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, a pair of Golden-browed Chlorophonias, a male Yellow-bellied Siskin, several Large-footed Finches, and plenty of Flame-colored Tanagers! One of the best things to come from our stop here, however, was some intel from a local guide about a Resplendent Quetzal nest.

So, we drove further down the valley and stopped along the road in hopes of finding it. The local guide showed up shortly after and showed us where the cavity was. It took some time, but we finally saw the female. While we were watching the female, a male flew in and copulated with her. You don't get to see that very often! Just a short drive later and we had arrived at our lodge. It had been a long day, so after dinner, we were all ready for some rest and excited for a great day of birding the highlands on the next day.



Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher



Resplendent Quetzal Pair

March 3 – Batsu Gardens, Waterfall Trail, Savegre Hotel

After a leisurely breakfast at our lodge, we made a short, 5-minute, drive to Batsu Gardens. The feeders here were a bit slower than normal, but we still had great looks at many hummingbirds, including our only Scintillant of the trip and several Flame-colored and Silver-throated Tanagers. Due to the inactivity, we decided to head back down the valley to the Waterfall Trail earlier than we expected. Again, the activity was a bit slow, but after quite a while, we ran into a nice flock. Black-cheeked and Flame-throated Warblers allowed amazing views and a pair of Collared Redstarts flitted around some nearby trees. Further down the trail, we saw a couple of Dark Pewees, Black-faced Solitaires, and a couple of Spangle-cheeked Tanagers.



Flame-throated Warbler

Afterwards, we had another delicious meal, this time at Alma de Arbol, a great restaurant that is part of the Batsu Gardens property. After a short afternoon break at our lodge, we headed up to the upper trails on our lodges' property. The start of the trail was quiet, but after a little walking we heard our first Silvery-fronted Tapaculo and Wrenthrush. While looking for these skulky species, a quetzal vocalized nearby and we were able to have amazing views of this pair at a potential nest! A little further down the trail, we ran into a large mixed flock. First, we had more Black-cheeked Warblers then brief views of a Buffy Tuftedcheek before more and more species started moving by. Barred Becards, Ruddy Treerunners, Spot-crowned Woodcreepers, Large-footed Finches, Yellow-thighed Brushfinches, Ochraceous Wren and Pewee, and Black-thighed Grosbeak all put in appearances. A family of Tufted Flycatchers also provided quite the show as the adults came in to feed their two fledglings. We quickly realized that this area had a large patch of seeding bamboo which is great for several rare species, but we could only muster a Buff-fronted Quail-Dove. We decided that we would have to come back the next morning to try our luck at this bamboo patch again.



Tufted Flycatcher

March 4 – Savegre Hotel, Providencia Road, Hotel Bougainvillea, Santo Domingo

After breakfast at our lodge, we headed back to the bamboo patch. Unfortunately, none of the bamboo specialists were present, but we did hear a Chiriqui Quail-Dove and had great looks at a couple of Collared Trogons and a Black-thighed Grosbeak. Afterwards, we packed up and headed up the valley and back towards San Jose where our tour would be ending. On our way, we stopped back at Miriam's where we enjoyed good looks at many hummingbirds and several other species before making our way to Providencia Road. Along the start of this road, we had our only looks at a Timberline Wren. Further down, we came across our only Black-billed Nightingale-Thrushes. As we continued walking along the road after the thrushes, we heard a jay-like call. There was a Silvery-throated Jay nearby! This jay is rare throughout its small range in Costa Rica and Panama and while we knew it was a remote possibility here, we didn't expect to hear one. Over the next 10 minutes five Silvery-throated Jays fed overhead and provided excellent views. What a bird! This was even an "eBird lifer" for Jay, our local Costa Rican guide.

After lunch at a nearby restaurant, we made our way back to the city and to our final hotel of the trip, Hotel Bougainvillea. After checking in, we had a short break before a walk around the gardens. Our main highlight here was the ever present, roosting Mottled Owl, but we also added our only Green-breasted Mangos of the trip too. We still had one more mainland Costa Rican endemic left to see, so we headed over to a nearby coffee farm to look for it. Cabanis's Ground-Sparrows are only found in a relatively small section of Costa Rica and mostly use second growth habitat. However, their habitat has been mostly destroyed for the development of cities. Now, the best areas to

find them are in shade-grown coffee farms that provide a similar habitat. It took us some time, but eventually we had one hop out between rows of coffee plants and feed on the ground for a couple of minutes. It was the perfect way to end this tour - with our last targeted endemic of Costa Rica!

March 5 – Departure

All in all, we totaled 426 species (447 species with an extra day included at the start), enjoyed many delicious meals and great lodges, had plenty of laughs, and had an all around fantastic tour in Costa Rica. We can't wait to get back to this beautiful, birdy country!



Silvery-throated Jay