

## Carolina Bird Club Costa Rica Bonus Trip: March 8-18, 2019

*This 9 full day birding tour will visit some of the best areas on the Caribbean slope and lowlands of Costa Rica as well as the highlands on the slopes of two volcanoes. We will start out in the lush middle elevations on the Caribbean slope before descending to the diverse Caribbean lowlands for a two night stay at Ara Ambigua Lodge. Here, we will spend a day near the city of Guapiles, where we will visit a feeding station and the Old Butterfly garden. Our next adventure will take us first by bus and then boat to the palm-lined canals of Tortuguero National Park. Here, we will have a 2 night stay in the lovely Laguna Lodge located next to the Caribbean Sea. Birding will mostly be by boat rides into the National Park. Our next two nights will be at world renowned birding lodge Rancho Naturalista located in the comfortable middle elevations. Here, not only will the birds be memorable with highlights such as Snowcap and Sunbittern but also the delicious meals. Our final destination is the highlands of Turrialba and Irazu Volcanoes using the comfortable Guayabo Lodge as our base. Our time here will be filled with colorful highland birds such as the incomparable Resplendent Quetzal, spritely Collared Redstart, and Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher to name a few. On our final day we will visit the Irazu Volcano crater, one of only two volcanoes in Costa Rica where one can walk just a short distance to look into the crater.*

*We will visit hummingbird and banana feeders at various times throughout the trip allowing for up close and personal study as well as excellent photo opportunities. Professional bird guide Steven Easley will lead our trip, a highly respected authority on Costa Rican birds and other wildlife. This tour is packed with excellent birding, comfortable lodging, and excellent food so join us as we explore the many wonders of Costa Rica.*



Sunbittern near Rancho Naturalista, one of the amazing birds to look forward to in Costa Rica © Wayne Easley

### **Itinerary brief:**

Mar 08: **(Friday)** Arrive to San Jose Costa Rica (SJO), picked up for short transfer to Hotel Robledal for 1 NT  
Mar 09: Day 1: Transfer to Caribbean lowlands via La Paz Waterfall Gardens, Cinchona; 2 NTS at Ara Ambigua  
Mar 10: Day 2: Day visit to Rio San Jose, Cope's, Old butterfly garden; 2nd NT at Ara Ambigua  
Mar 11: Day 3: Transfer to La Selva Rest., meet Laguna transport, boat into Tortuguero; 2 NTS at Laguna Lodge  
Mar 12: Day 4: Full day in Tortuguero with boat rides in AM and PM; 2nd NT at Laguna Lodge  
Mar 13: Day 5: Early AM boat ride, transfer out by boat, meet bus and continue to Rancho Naturalista for 2 NTS  
Mar 14: Day 6: Full day at Rancho and vicinity; 2nd NT at Rancho Naturalista  
Mar 15: Day 7: AM at Rancho, short transfer to slopes of Turrialba Volcano and 2 NTS at Guayabo Lodge  
Mar 16: Day 8: AM visit to Turrialba Volcano, afternoon locally; 2nd NT at Guayabo Lodge  
Mar 17: Day 9: AM visit up Irazu Volcano, continue to near airport and Hotel Robledal for final NT  
Mar 18: **(Monday)** Take Hotel Robledal shuttle to airport in time for your Int'l departure

Geographically, Costa Rica is a small country located in Central America between Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south with the Caribbean Sea to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west. There have been over 900 species of birds recorded in Costa Rica with approximately 800 of these species recorded on a yearly basis. Seven endemics are found in Costa Rica, 4 on the mainland and 3 on Cocos Island 600 kms (373miles) SSW of mainland Costa Rica. What is remarkable is the 90+ near endemics found in Costa Rica, 50+ of which occur in the highlands shared with W Panama.



## Detailed Itinerary

### FLY FROM USA TO SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

Arrive to San Jose Airport (SJO); meet our transport for the short transfer to Hotel Robledal for our first night.

#### Day 1

##### LA PAZ WATERFALL GARDENS, CINCHONA FEEDERS, LOWLAND BIRDING NEAR OUR LODGE

A short walk on the grounds of our hotel will produce many of the common birds of the area. Here we should see our first of many Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds, Great Kiskadee, Clay-colored Thrush, Blue-gray Tanager, Grayish Saltator, and perhaps the resident Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. After breakfast we will set off on a scenic journey through coffee plantations and highland forest patches as we ascend the slope of Poas Volcano. A short stop at a hummingbird feeder station on the upper slopes of the volcano may produce the Cerise-throated race of Volcano Hummingbird, Lesser Violetear, Talamanca Hummingbird and Purple-throated Mountain-gem. No doubt we will see our first of many Rufous-collared Sparrows and perhaps Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Flame-colored Tanager, and White-eared Ground-Sparrow.

Soon after, we will arrive to La Paz Waterfall Garden where hummingbird species await. First however, we may want to take in the fruit feeders at La Paz which attract Silver-throated, Crimson-collared and Passerini's Tanagers, Black-cowled Oriole, as well as Common Chlorospingus to name but a few. The hummingbird feeders below offer an incredible opportunity to see these jewels at very close range. Species here include Green Hermit, Green Thorntail, Violet Sabrewing, Magenta-throated Woodstar, White-bellied Mountain-gem, the endemic Coppery-headed Emerald, and the unique Black-bellied Hummingbird among others. Mixed flocks in the area may include Spangle-cheeked and Bay-headed Tanagers, Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, Spotted Woodcreeper and others while Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush and Sooty-faced Finch tend to be more solitary on the forest floor. After an excellent lunch buffet we will walk the waterfall trail, not only for possible new birds but also the spectacular scenery as we pass by three waterfalls.



Red-headed Barbet and Northern Emerald-Toucanet near La Paz Waterfall and Cinchona © Wayne Easley & Kevin Easley

We will then load up to go a short distance downslope to a feeding station known as Cinchona. Here colorful birds await including Red-headed Barbet, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Passerini's and Silver-throated Tanagers and much more. Soon after, we will find ourselves in the Caribbean lowlands and after checking into our comfortable lodge we will begin to explore this very diverse area. It is here we should see our first of the big toucans, parrots and perhaps even the magnificent Great Green Macaw. We will have 2 nights in the area using Ara Ambigua Lodge as our base. Banana feeders at the lodge will provide great photography opportunities for the likes of Collared Aracari, Red-throated Ant-Tanager, Orange-billed Sparrow, and many others. Be sure and listen for Spectacled Owls in the evening around the lodge.

**Day 2**

**RIO SAN JOSE, COPE'S FEEDERS, OLD BUTTERFLY GARDEN**

We will spend today in the Caribbean lowlands searching out some of its most sought after species of birds, mammals and amphibians. A stop at Rio San Jose usually produces Fasciated Tiger-Heron along with Amazon and Ringed Kingfishers among other riverine species. Our next stop will be at on the edge of Guapiles that has both hummingbird and banana feeders. We should get fine views of White-necked Jacobin, both Long-billed and Stripe-throated Hermits, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Blue-chested Hummingbirds and others. The bananas attract a different set of birds which include Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Montezuma and Chestnut-headed Oropendolas, and Olive-backed Euphonia to name a few.



Black-crested Coquette male on verbena and a standoff of Strawberry Poison-dart Frogs © Kevin Easley

A search in the nearby forest patch often turns up roosting Spectacled Owls and sometimes Crested Owl or Great Potoo. Honduran White Bats are seldom seen but our local guide typically has a stake-out for these tiny adorable tent-making bats. Reptiles and Amphibians likely to be encountered here include the dragon like Green Basilisk, huge Green Iguanas and Strawberry Poison Dart-Frogs. After an excellent lunch we will go slightly upslope to the old butterfly garden. Though the operating garden has long since been abandoned, the flowering plants there persist and attract some of the finest hummingbirds in Costa Rica. The stars of the show are the Black-crested Coquette and the adorable Snowcap males while Crowned Woodnymph, Green Thorntail and Violet-headed Hummingbird are also on display. After this delightful stop we will return to our comfortable hotel for dinner and a night walk for anyone interested. 2nd night at Ara Ambigua

### Day 3

#### **TRANSFER TO TORTUGUERO NATIONAL PARK AND LAGUNA LODGE**

We will bird briefly around the lodge before heading to the boat dock. After organizing the luggage, we will board our boat for the 1 ½ hour transfer to the lodge. Birds will be plentiful along the river with kingfishers, Anhinga, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, egrets, herons, Neotropical Cormorant while Great Curassow is shy but can be encountered as well. Our lodge is set between the Caribbean Sea and a palm-lined channel on Tortuguero's sand bar Island. In the afternoon we will explore the forest patches in hopes of toucans, woodpeckers, Black-crowned Antshrike, Purple-throated Fruitcrow and Brown-capped Tyrannulet to name a few. The breeze from the Caribbean Sea will certainly cool the night down while the distant crashing of waves will no doubt make for a pleasant nights' sleep.

### Day 4

#### **MORNING AND AFTERNOON BOAT RIDES IN TORTUGUERO NATIONAL PARK**

We'll begin with a walk around the gardens in the early morning and after breakfast we will board our boat to explore the canals and channels of Tortuguero National Park. Waterbirds can be abundant here with all of the usual suspects and we also hope to encounter the somewhat elusive Sungrebe. Collared Aracari, Keel-billed and Yellow-throated Toucans will be evident as well as Mantled Howlers, Central American Spider Monkey and White-faced Capuchins. Along the canal edges we hope to find all 6 species of kingfishers found in the New World including the minute American Pygmy Kingfisher. It will however require some luck to find the localized Green-and-rufous Kingfisher. Parrots here are well represented with White-crowned, Brown-hooded, Mealy and Red-lore along with their enormous cousin, the amazing Great Green Macaw. Other forest based species we could encounter include White-necked and Pied Puffbirds, White-collared Manakin, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, and various raptors such as Semiplumbeous Hawk. In the afternoon we will visit another section of the park where more sightings await. 2nd night at Laguna Lodge



Bare-throated Tiger-Heron pair and male Sungrebe – Tortuguero National Park © Kevin Easley

### Day 5

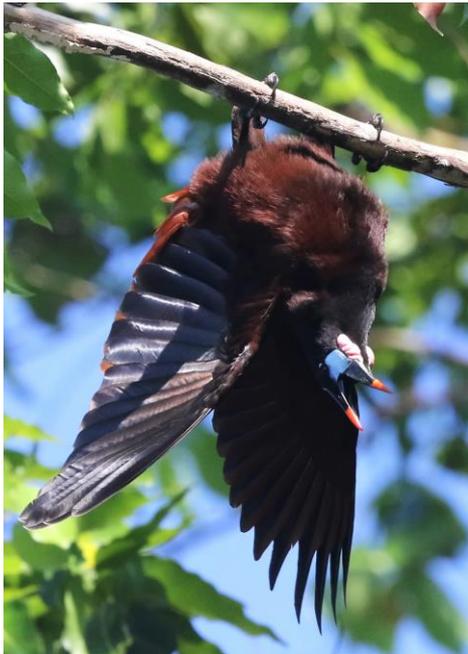
#### **EARLY AM BOAT RIDE THEN BACKTRACK OUT OF TORTUGUERO, TRANSFER TO RANCHO NATURALISTA**

After an early morning boat ride into the channels of Tortuguero National Park we will load up the boat for our transfer out. We will have lunch near Guapiles where we will also meet back up with our bus and driver for the transfer to Rancho Naturalista where we will spend the following two nights. Rancho Naturalista is located at 3,100 ft above sea level making it a comfortable temperature after the Caribbean lowlands. We hope to arrive in time to visit the hummingbird bathing pools a short walk away from the lodge. Here hummingbirds and songbirds come to bathe in the late afternoon. Watch for Crowned Woodnymph, Snowcap and Purple-crowned Fairy as they come in to splash in the crystal clear spring water while Wood Thrush, various flycatchers and even the elusive Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser can be seen sneaking in from the understory. Meals at Rancho are served family style and are typically very delicious. At night listen for the resident Mottled Owl and Pauraque.

## Day 6

### RANCHO NATURALISTA AND VICINITY

Today we will start at the moth light where at dawn, insectivorous birds come for breakfast. Northern Barred, Cocoa and Plain-brown Woodcreepers, Plain Antvireo, White-breasted Wood-Wren, Red-throated Ant-Tanager and the highly localized Tawny-chested Flycatcher are just some of the highlights. After breakfast we will visit a nearby valley where with persistence we will locate the amazing Sunbittern. Whether in display or in flight, we should be able to see the colorful sunbursts of this unique species. Other birds to watch for here include Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Dull-mantled Antbird, Buff-rumped Warbler and tanager flocks. In the afternoon we will visit the gardens and ponds of CATIE, an agricultural school nearby. Our main target is the unique Boat-billed Heron which has an active breeding colony on the campus. Also watch for Green Ibis, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, a variety of woodpeckers, both Masked and Black-crowned Tityras and much more. While at Rancho you can always watch the feeders from the balcony where Gray-headed Chachalaca, Black-striped and Orange-billed Sparrows, Montezuma Oropendola and others come to feed. Vervain flowers in the garden attract a multitude of winged jewels including the adorable Snowcap. 2nd night at Rancho Naturalista



Displaying Montezuma Oropendola and male Snowcap at Rancho Naturalista © Wayne Easley and Steven Easley

## Day 7

### MORNING AT RANCHO, VISIT TO GUAYABO NATIONAL MONUMENT AND SLOPES OF TURRIALBA VOLCANO

After an early morning at Rancho we will load up for the hour transfer to Guayabo National Monument, the largest pre-Columbian archaeological site ever discovered in Costa Rica. Although it doesn't have any of the impressive ruins and pyramids one would see in Mexico and Northern Central America, it is still a very interesting site as there is such little known of this lost civilization thought to be inhabited from 1000 BC to 1400 AD. Also this forest setting is great for birds and we hope to add several new species. After visiting this lovely area, we will continue a short distance to the cool and comfortable Guayabo Lodge for the following 2 nights.

## Day 8

### TURRIALBA VOLCANO

Fabulous scenery and birds is the order of the morning as we bird the upper slopes of Turrialba Volcano. Once considered quite dormant, in 1996 the volcano showed signs of life. Later in 2005 it became more active and has stayed that way to this day with the eruptions being typically ash expulsions rather than lava; sorry, no fireworks. The magnificent oak dominated montane forest on its slopes is excellent for finding the highland specialty birds of which there are many. These include Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Ruddy Treerunner, Yellow-winged Vireo, Black-cheeked and Flame-throated Warblers, Collared Redstart, Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, Slaty Flowerpiercer, Large-footed and Yellow-thighed Finches and many others. Afternoon birding at a lower elevation will produce a different set of birds which may include Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, the endemic Cabanis's Ground-Sparrow, and various warblers and tanagers. This evening we will conduct a night drive to try our luck with Bare-shanked Screech-Owl and Dusky Nightjar. 2nd night at Guayabo Lodge

## Day 9

### IRAZU VOLCANO NATIONAL PARK, TRANSFER BACK TO NEAR SAN JOSE AIRPORT

Our final day will start on the slopes of Irazu Volcano with a full morning of birding as well as a visit the Irazu Volcano crater at the top. We will concentrate on birds we did not see the day before which may include the skulking Buffy-

crowned Wood-Partridge, the aptly named Fiery-throated Hummingbird, the Paramo loving Sooty Thrush, Timberline Wren and Volcano Junco. This will be our best opportunity to see one of the most beautiful birds in the world, the Resplendent Quetzal. We will start in the oak forests on the slopes before rising to the treeless Paramo at the top.



Resplendent Quetzal  
© Steven Easley



Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher  
© Steven Easley

Resplendent Quetzal male and Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher male © Steven Easley



Irazu Volcano Crater © Kevin Easley

After lunch we will return to the Central Valley, work our way through the bustling capitol of San Jose, and eventually arrive to the Hotel Robledal for our final dinner and night of the tour in beautiful Costa Rica.

#### Departure Day

#### **HOTEL TRANSFER TO SAN JOSE AIRPORT (SJO) FOR INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURES**

We will take the hotel shuttle a short distance (15 mins) to the airport where we check-in for our Int'l flight home.

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### **About the Trip Leader**

**Sherry Lane** lives in Wilmington NC with her husband and son. She has had a long career as a Physician Assistant in Cardiology but her passion is tropical birding. She has led three very successful Carolina Bird Club bonus trips to Costa Rica in 2017 and 2018. She has participated in other birding trips to Brazil, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica and Ecuador.

### **About the Trip Guide**

**Steven Easley** lives in Costa Rica near Turrialba with his lovely wife Magdalena and their two dogs Rafiki and Misty. Growing up with a father and older brother who loved birding it wasn't long till he caught the bug himself. This became evident when he lived in Kenya for 5 years. Steven is a very accomplished nature photographer, specializing in birds, mammals and insects. His wealth of knowledge on all things natural will be evident from day one whether it is butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, leafhoppers, reptiles or amphibians. Steven has been guiding for Costa Rica Gateway for the past 15 years and has developed a large following of loyal birders who not only appreciate his guiding skills and birding knowledge but also his sense of humor and his many stories of living in Kenya. He is a bird guide who is serious about birding but also wants everyone to have a good time in the process. These rare traits make for an unforgettable experience while on tour with him in Costa Rica.

### **Trip Information**

**Group Size** 9 participants

**Price per person double occupancy based on 9 participants: \$2685.00**

**Single supplement: \$477.00**

(Single supplement applies to anyone staying in a room by themselves, hotels charge more per person for single rooms)

**Entrance fees** and activities as outlined in the itinerary are all included in the price.

**Birds** Expect over 275 species on this tour with a good representation of Costa Rica's hummingbirds, toucans, woodpeckers, trogons, tanagers, oropendolas and much more. A checklist will be provided to each participant from our agents in Costa Rica. Every evening, either before or after dinner, our guide will go over the daily checklist with us.

**Mammals** Tortuguero will be the best area for mammals on this tour with possibilities of seeing Mantled Howler, Central American Spider-Monkey, White-faced Capuchin, White-nosed Coati, Neotropical River Otter, and both Two-toed and Three-toed Sloths. Near Guapiles we may see Central American Agouti and Honduran White Bat among others. Rancho Naturalista holds other mammals, though often more difficult to locate such as Tayra and Alfaro's Pygmy-Squirrel. Other common species on the tour include Red-tailed Squirrel and Variegated Squirrel.

**Photography opportunities** are excellent at feeder sites, during our boat rides and around the lodges. Depending on your equipment and skill you will have good chances on the wider trails in the forested areas we will visit.

**Meals** All meals from breakfast – Mar 9 through breakfast – Mar 19 are included in the price. Dinner the night of arrival (Mar 8) is not included in the price as it depends on our flight schedule. The hotel we will be staying has a restaurant where you can order a-la-carte and pay for directly to the hotel for this meal.

**Special Diets** Our agents in Costa Rica will pass on all such requests to the hotels and they will do their best to ensure (but of course cannot guarantee) that your needs will be met. Please be sure to tell us about any dietary restrictions in detail in order that they can make the necessary arrangements.

**Water** will be provided on the bus throughout the tour in the form of refill jugs.

**Transport** By comfortable Toyota Coaster which has seats for 16+ passengers. It is equipped with AC and is the perfect vehicle for our tour to Costa Rica. We will have a safe and dedicated driver with us throughout our tour. For the Tortuguero portion we will go by comfortable and safe boats.



**Walking & Altitude** Costa Rica is a mountainous country so expect some trails to be steeper in parts - these will be taken slowly, with frequent stops to bird and rest. Rainforest trails can sometimes be muddy, best to have sturdy waterproof boots along for this trip. Sneakers or sandals are often ok for the lodge areas. The walking effort is mostly easy, but can be moderate at times due to the terrain and/or altitude at a few spots. On Irazu Volcano we will be birding at higher elevations with a couple of hours near the crater which is just above 10,000 feet in altitude.

**Insects** March being the dry season, we should not expect a lot of annoying insects during our time in Costa Rica. That being said, insect repellent is always good to have on hand in case we do run into mosquitoes or other annoying insects. It can be purchased once in Costa Rica should you not want to bring it down in your luggage.

**Weather** March is during Costa Rica's dry season but rainfall can occur anytime. The lowland areas are hot and humid in the middle of the day while the middle elevations are very pleasant. In the highlands it can get cold but never below freezing. You should definitely bring a fleece along for the evenings and early mornings while in the highlands .

**A VALID PASSPORT IS REQUIRED TO ENTER COSTA RICA FROM THE USA** and you must have at least 6 months left on your passport to enter so be sure your passport does not expire before Sept 8, 2019.

**There are NO mandatory vaccinations to enter Costa Rica and there is NO risk of malaria either.**

**Items NOT INCLUDED in the tour price:**

Tips to guide, driver, boatmen, hotel staff, waiters, porters etc.  
Any items of a personal nature such as phone calls, laundry, internet service etc.  
Sodas or alcoholic beverages that are not provided as included in the meals  
Any item not specifically mentioned as included above

**Interested Birders:**

**Contact Sherry Lane for registration information**

[Slane360@yahoo.com](mailto:Slane360@yahoo.com)

**The tour is limited to 9 participants which will fill on a first come, first basis.**