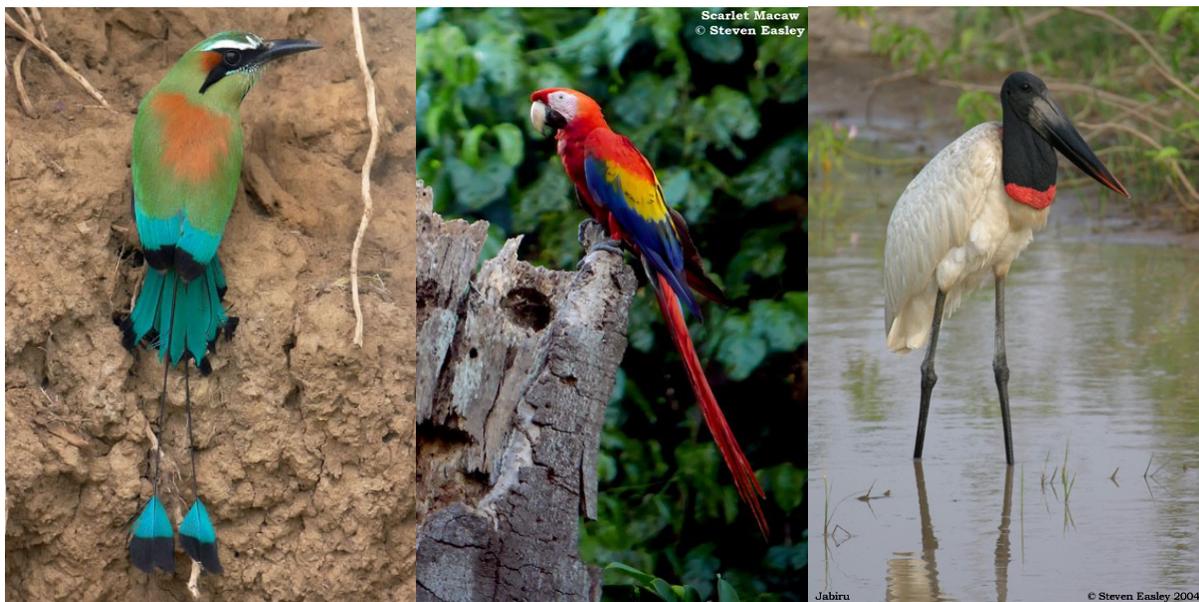




Northern Costa Rica Bonus Trip: Sat Feb 17 - Mon Feb 26, 2018

8 full days of birding with professional bird guide Steven Easley

During this tour we will visit the best birding sites of the Central Pacific near Carara NP, the dry NW known as the Guanacaste, the Northern Caribbean wetlands of Cano Negro, and the Caribbean foothills of scenic Arenal Volcano.



Turquoise-browed Motmot

Scarlet Macaw

Jabiru

Photo credits: Steven Easley

Feb 17: Arrive to SJO Airport, picked up for short transfer to **Hotel Robeldal 1 NT**.

Feb 18 & 19: We will start out in the Central Pacific lowlands near Carara NP. Here we will have 2 full days to explore this diverse area including the Pacific mangroves, a boat trip on the Rio Tarcoles, and of course the Pacific rainforests of Carara NP. Highlights of these areas often include Great Tinamou, numerous Scarlet Macaw, the endemic Mangrove Hummingbird, up to 5 sp of trogons including Baird's, the incomparable Turquoise-browed Motmot, up to 5 species of colorful manakins including Red-capped and Orange-collared, Royal Flycatcher, antbirds and so much more. Mammals of the area include Black Howler, Central American Spider Monkey and White-faced Capuchin, both Two-toed and Three-toed Sloths, and Crab-eating Raccoon. Green and Spiny-tailed Iguanas are both present but the reptile of note is the massive Central American Crocodile found along the Rio

Tarcoles. The flight of the macaws going back to roost in the late afternoon is a site not soon forgotten by nature lovers. Being in the lowlands the temperatures will be warm and humid but the AC of our rooms at the beautiful Hotel Villa Lapas will ensure a good nights sleep. **2 NTS Hotel Villa Lapas**

Feb 20: After a final early morning in the Carara area we will transfer north to the dry Guanacaste and Hacienda Solimar for an afternoon and following morning of spectacular wildlife viewing. A working cattle, Hacienda Solimar has long been involved in the preservation of habitat including extensive wetlands as well as dry forest. An afternoon outing by air-conditioned bus to the wetlands will provide superb views of waterbirds including the nocturnal feeding Boat-billed Heron, the enormous Jabiru which nests here, 1,000's of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, and many species of kingfishers. Other species located in the grassy areas and forest remnants include the nocturnal feeding Double-striped Thick-Knee, roosting Lesser Nighthawk, both Spot-breasted and Streak-backed Orioles, and a plethora of raptors. The diurnal Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl is common here while Spectacled Owl can usually be found on its forest roost. Another WOW species of the area is the amazing Long-tailed Manakin and with luck we can peek in on the males at their lek. Mammals in the area include Coyote, Tamandua (Lesser Anteater), and Mexican Hairy Porcupine, along with the more common Variegated Squirrel, White-nosed Coati and Central American Agouti. This area provides excellent photography opportunities. During our time around the lodge watch for roosting Pacific Screech-Owl as well as the large and impressive White-throated Magpie-Jay. The rooms are rather basic in nature and it does get hot during the day but the nights cool down sufficiently where a fan usually enough to keep you relaxed. The food is rather simple but full of natural flavor. **1 NT Hacienda Solimar**



Sungrebe
© Steven Easley



Double-striped Thick-Knee © Wayne Easley

Sungrebe

Double-striped Thick-Knee

Photo credits: Steven Easley, Wayne Easley

Feb 21 & 22: From Hacienda Solimar we will travel north and then east, arriving to the Northern Caribbean wetlands of Cano Negro where our comfortable lodge awaits. For birders and photographers, the highlight of the area is the excellent boat rides on the nearby Rio Frio and Lake Cano Negro. Birds are plentiful and this area holds a host of specialty birds, none more so than the Nicaraguan Grackle which only breeds on 3 lakes, with Cano Negro being the only lake in Costa Rica. Other notable species include Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Black-collared Hawk, Gray-headed Dove and Spot-breasted Wren. While on the boat rides, always be alert for Sungrebe swimming in the water under the overhanging trees, Russet-naped Wood-Rail which is plentiful here, Green Ibis, and all 6 of the New World kingfishers. Spectacled Caiman are common here, similar to a smaller version of the American Alligator. Cano Negro is excellent for nocturnal birds and during our night drive one evening we hope to find such highly prized species as Striped Owl, Black-and-white Owl, and Great Potoo along with the ubiquitous Common Pauraque. Our lodge is comfortable and air-conditioned and has a refreshing swimming pool as well (free of caimans I hope). **2 NTS Cano Negro Natural Lodge**

Feb 23 & 24: Our last early morning in the Cano Negro area will have us scanning the rice fields for the localized Nicaraguan Seed-Finch along with Red-breasted Meadowlark and potential raptors. Soon we will be boarding yet another boat ride on the narrow Medio Queso canal. This canal is loaded with birds and highlights often include

crakes, more Nicaraguan Grackles, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, and a host of herons and other waterbirds. Enroute to Arenal we will make a stop at a small reserve on the edge of La Fortuna. The feeders here are typically alive with Gray-headed Chachalaca, euphonias, honeycreepers, tanagers and saltators while White-throated Crakes are often seen along the edges of the pool below. A short walk on the trails may produce a sloth, Strawberry Poison-Dart Frog or the iconic Red-eyed Leaf-Frog. The late afternoon will find us arriving to our beautiful lodge located at the base of the ominous Arenal Volcano. Awaking at the lodge is simply magical and we will waste no time in birding the gardens and nearby trails. The vervain planted in the garden is great for hummingbirds and up to 9 species can be expected including Black-crested Coquette. Banana feeders attract a colorful array of tanagers, oropendolas, honeycreepers, euphonias and even the occasional Great Curassow. Trails nearby can be excellent for skulking species such as Thicket Antpitta, antbirds, Song Wren and many others. We will also bird along the lakeshore road looking for Broad-billed and Rufous Motmots along with the rare and local Keel-billed Motmot. Both Keel-billed and Yellow-throated Toucans are present here along with the smaller Collared Aracari. This day will certainly be one of the highlights of your birding in Costa Rica! **2 NTS Arenal Observatory Lodge**

Feb 25: On this our final full day of the tour will find us in the clouds, well, high enough to feel like you are in the clouds. An impressive undertaking, the trails and swinging bridges of the Arenal Sky Walk will give us access not only into the forest understory but also into the canopy where we have a chance to look at eye level at canopy species. When not looking through mixed species flocks of tanagers and furnarids keep an eye skyward for raptors that may include the aptly named Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Swallow-tailed Kite, and the always impressive White Hawk. We will have a full morning to properly bird this unique site before taking lunch in La Fortuna. Time permitting we will stop on our transfer back to San Jose at some hummingbird feeders for even more close up views of these winged jewels. Our destination and final night of the tour will be on the slopes overlooking San Jose in one of the most lovely hotels in Costa Rica. **1 NT Hotel Bougainvillea**

Feb 26: Transfer to the SJO Airport in time for International departure or continue on our Southern Costa Rica Tour!



Arenal Volcano

A

Trip Information

Birds Expect over 250 species on this tour with a good representation of Costa Rica's hummingbirds, toucans, motmots, trogons, tanagers, oropendolas and much more. A checklist will be provided to each participant. Every evening, either before or after dinner, we will go over our daily checklist.

Photography opportunities are excellent at feeder sites 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 – Feb 18 through breakfast – Feb 26 are included in the price. Dinner the night of arrival (Feb 17) 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.

Water Safe drinking water will be provided on the bus throughout the trip 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.



Level of activity to expect: 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. The walking effort is mostly easy, but can be moderate at times due to the terrain.

Insects February being the dry season, you 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.

Weather February 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 cool especially at night.

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 Aug 18, 2018.

Group Size 7 to 9 participants

Price per person double occupancy based on 7 participants: \$ 2,630

Price per person double occupancy based on 9 participants: \$ 2,350

Single supplement: \$ 503

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

What is included in the price:

As per the itinerary all accommodations from Feb 17 till Feb 26. All meals from breakfast Feb 18 through breakfast Feb 26. Fulltime local guide Steven Easley from Feb 18 AM till Feb 25 PM. Transportation by comfortable Toyota Coaster which has seats for 16+ passengers. We will have a safe and dedicated driver with us throughout our trip. All activities, boat rides and park entrance fees. Airport pickup and drop-offs.

BRIEF ITINERARY:

Feb 17: (Sat) Arrive to San Jose Costa Rica (SJO), picked up for short transfer to **Hotel Robledal for 1 NT**

Feb 18: AM on Guacalillo Rd and Bird Observatory, afternoon boat ride on Rio Tarcoles; **2 NTS at Hotel Villa Lapas**

Feb 19: Full day in Carara NP: **2nd NT at Hotel Villa Lapas**

Feb 20: AM locally, transfer to the Guanacaste for afternoon birding the amazing wetlands; **1 NT at Hacienda Solimar**

Feb 21: AM at Hacienda Solimar, transfer to the Central North Caribbean; **2 NTS at Cano Negro Natural Lodge**

Feb 22: AM and PM boat rides at Cano Negro plus owling; **2nd NT at Cano Negro Natural Lodge**

Feb 23: AM boat ride on Medio Queso, transfer to La Fortuna; **2 NTS at Arenal Observatory Lodge**

Feb 24: Full day in Arenal area; **2nd NT at Arenal Observatory Lodge**

Feb 25: AM at the Arenal Sky Walk, transfer back to near SJO Airport; **Hotel Bougainvillea for final NT**

Feb 26: (Mon) Take shuttle to airport in time for your **Int'l departure**

GUIDING AND TRANSPORT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE:

Full time local guide Steven Easley from Feb 18 in AM to Feb 25 in PM; 8 full days
Transport in a Toyota Coaster throughout the tour, 8 full days. All fuel is included in the price.
Airport pickup and drop-offs are also included in the price
All expenses of the guide and driver are included in the price

ENTRANCE FEES AND ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN THE PRICE:

Entrance fee to Bird Observatory in Guacalillo
Boat Ride on Rio Tarcoles
Entrance fee to Carara NP
Boat Rides (2) at Cano Negro
Entrance fee to Cano Negro NP
Boat Ride at Medio Queso
Entrance fee to Bogarin Reserve
Entrance fee to Arenal Sky Walk

MEAL PLAN: All meals are included from BR – Feb 19 through BR – Feb 27

Feb 17: **no meals included as it depends on your flight schedule**
Feb 18: BR – Hotel Robledal / L & D – Villa Lapas
Feb 19: All meals at Villa Lapas
Feb 20: BR – Villa Lapas / L – locally / D – Hacienda Solimar
Feb 21: BR & L – Hacienda Solimar / D – Cano Negro Natural Lodge
Feb 22: All meals Cano Negro Natural Lodge with L – a-la-carte
Feb 23: BR – Cano Negro Natural Lodge / L – locally / D – Arenal Observatory Lodge
Feb 24: All meals at Arenal Observatory Lodge with L – a-la-carte
Feb 25: BR – Arenal Observatory Lodge / L - locally / D - Hotel Bougainvillea
Feb 26: BR – Hotel Bougainvillea

What is NOT included in the price:

Airfare to and from San Jose, Costa Rica and travel insurance
Tips to local guide, driver, boatmen, hotel staff, waiters, 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
Airport Exit Tax of \$29 USD per person (check your flight ticket as it is often included)

About the Trip Leaders:

Sherry Lane lives in Wilmington NC . She led a successful Carolina Bird Club bonus trip to Costa Rica in Feb 2017. She led a personal group birding trip to Costa Rica in 2016. She has been on birding trips to Panama, Colombia and Brazil. She works as a Physician Assistant, but her passion is tropical birding.

Steven Easley lives in Costa Rica near Turrialba with his wife Magdalena. Steven is a very accomplished nature photographer, specializing in birds. 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 in Costa Rica for the past 13 years. He is a bird guide who is serious about birding but also wants everyone to have a good time in the process.

Interested birders:

Contact Sherry Lane for registration information.
slane360@yahoo.com

Group is limited to 9 participants on a first-come, first-serve basis.