

## Southern Costa Rica CBC Bonus Trip: Sun Feb 25 - Tue Mar 6, 2018

*8 full days of birding with professional bird guide Steven Easley*

*This tour takes in the best birding sites of the Highlands, Pacific foothills and Pacific Southwest of Costa Rica. This one is very diverse as it takes us from the top of the highlands all the way to the SW coastal lowlands. Nice lodging, delicious food, comfortable transport and of course excellent birding will make for yet another fabulous tour to Costa Rica.*



**Fiery-throated Hummingbird**

**Resplendent Quetzal**

**Collared Redstart**

*Photo credits: Kevin Easley, Steven Easley, Kevin Easley*

**Feb 25:** Arrive to SJO Airport, picked up for transfer to **Hotel Bougainvillea for 1 NT.**

**Feb 26 & 27:** After an early morning outing in the gardens of our lovely hotel we will load up to ascend the Southern backbone of Costa Rica, the Talamanca highlands and Cerro de la Muerte. Our first stop will be at a lodge located at 9,000 ft with hummingbird feeders. New species will come quickly, expect Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Lesser Violet-ear, Volcano Hummingbird and Magnificent Hummingbird. Other common highland species here include Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher and Sooty Thrush and we will always be on the lookout for Resplendent Quetzals which are not uncommon here. Further along we will stop in at another lodge, lower in altitude. They too have hummingbird feeders as well as fruit feeders. Expect Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, Violet Sabrewing, Green-crowned Brilliant and many others. At the fruit, Cherrie's, Speckled and Silver-throated Tanagers and often the amazing Red-headed Barbet makes an appearance. We will descend to the foothills in time to familiarize ourselves with the gardens of the lodge and the many birds found there including Lesson's Motmot, and both Green and Red-legged Honeycreeper among many others. Our lodge is located along a river, has excellent meals and even a swimming pool to cool off in the heat of the day.

*The gardens come alive at dawn, and so shall we to enjoy the new sites and sounds of wildlife seemingly everywhere. After a garden walk and breakfast we will head over to Los Cusingos Reserve for the remainder of the morning. Once the home of the famed naturalist Alexander Skutch, it is now a forest reserve in honor of his dedication and study of Costa Rica's wildlife, especially birds. Here we will sample the birds of this zone which may*

include highlights such as Turquoise Cotinga, Baird's Trogon, Orange-collared Manakin and many others. In the afternoon we will bird the more open areas where we hope to find such prizes as Laughing Falcon, Fiery-billed Aracari, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, and another chance for Turquoise Cotinga should it warrant. Night birds in the gardens of our lodge include Tropical Screech-Owl and Common Pauraque. **2 NTS Talari Mountain Lodge**

**Feb 28 & Mar 1:** After early morning birding in the garden and a delicious breakfast we will load up and head back to the Talamanca Highland; this time for 2 nights in the famed Savegre Valley. On our way we will visit the Paramo zone at an elevation of 11,000 feet, the highest point of the Pan American Highway in Central America. Here, the Chusquea Bamboo dominated habitat is perfect for several localized specialties including Volcano Junco, the timid Timberline Wren as well as the nomadic Peg-billed Finch. Our next stop will be along the 9 km entrance road down the Savegre Valley perhaps at a feeder site where one can get close up views of highland specialties such as Volcano Hummingbird, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Large-footed and Yellow-thighed Finches as well as the vibrant Flame-colored Tanager and the vocal Acorn Woodpecker. We will then arrive to our lodge to settle in before a late afternoon birding outing. Temperatures will be cool here, some say even cold at night.

Our full day in the Savegre Valley will begin right in the gardens of our lodge hoping to find a covey of Spotted Wood-Quail or a skulking pair of Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch. Our main target however is the incredible Resplendent Quetzal; considered by many to be the most beautiful bird in the New World. With patience we should get exceptional views of males and females coming to the aguacate trees to feed. Anytime we are along the nearby Savegre River keep an eye out for American Dipper, Torrent Tyrannulet, and wintering Louisiana Waterthrush as well. After breakfast we will load up in a small 4x4 truck which will take us to the forest trails above the lodge. Here in the oak dominated cloud forest we will look for an array of birds, many of which are specialties of the Talamanca Highlands - those species found only in the highlands of Costa Rica and extreme W Panama. Birds to watch for include Ruddy Treerunner, Black-faced Solitaire, Black-cheeked Warbler, Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, and many others. Before dusk we will travel up the road to a site that has been excellent for Dusky Nightjar and with luck we will get superb views of this highland specialty. **2 NTS Suenos del Bosque**



Black-cheeked Ant Tanager - © Kevin Easley



Fiery-billed Aracari - © Kevin Easley

**Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager (endemic)**

**Fiery-billed Aracari**

*Photo credits: Kevin Easley*

**Mar 2, 3 & 4:** We will start once again right around the grounds of the lodge before setting off to the warmer climate of the Southwest Pacific lowlands of Costa Rica. We will arrive in time to start our birding of this area along the back road to Golfito. Be on the lookout for Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, Blue-headed Parrot, Great Antshrike, and Red-breasted Meadowlark along the open areas while Yellow-throated Toucan, Slaty-tailed and Gartered Trogons, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, and Black-hooded Antshrike hold more to the forested

Our comfortable hotel this evening is located in the town of Golfito next to Golfito Bay while the following 2 nights we will be at a nearby lodge nestled in primary Pacific lowland rainforest.

Our first full day in this area will have use departing early to bird the agricultural fields to the South. We will now be very close to the Panama border in search recent arrivals species such as Savanna Hawk, Brown-throated

Parakeet, Sapphire-throated Hummingbird, Veraguan Mango, and Crested Oropendola. Two fairly recent splits present here are Gray-lined Hawk and Isthmian Wren. As the day heats up we will transfer to our 2nd lodge and after settling in we will begin to bird the gardens which are usually teeming with wildlife. Great Curassow, Crested Guan, Charming Hummingbird, Long-billed Hermit, Fiery-billed Aracari, Baird's Trogon, Golden-naped Woodpecker, Black-striped Woodcreeper, Buff-rumped Warbler, and Orange-billed Sparrow are just a sampling of what to expect. We will certainly conduct a night drive here during our stay which in the past has produced Striped Owl, Black-and-white Owl, Spectacled Owl, Common Potoo and Common Pauraque. Frogs are prevalent along with reptiles including Spectacled Caiman.

Our next day will be spent exploring the lodge gardens and trails as well as the very productive side roads nearby. One main target is the localized and endemic Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager which lives in the forests around the lodge. Also watch for a host of woodpeckers including Pale-billed and the localized Golden-naped, Black-faced Antthrush, Rufous Piha, Orange-collared Manakin, Royal Flycatcher, and Riverside Wren to name a few. Scanning along a forested road nearby often produces several swift species and sometimes King Vulture. It will be warm and humid here. They do not have AC but do have fans in the rooms and their small pool fed by a creek is most delightful during our siesta period which is the hottest part of the day. Meals are often based on local fruits and vegetables, some of which will be completely new to your taste buds.

**1 NT Hotel Sierra & 2NTS at nearby Esquinas Rainforest Lodge**



Mantled Howler

Spectacled Caiman

Photo credits: Steven Easley

**Mar 5:** An early wakeup call this morning as we depart predawn for Rincon Bridge on the Osa Peninsula. Once there we will set up on the bridge waiting for one of the most angelic birds in the world; Yellow-billed Cotinga. They typically fly out of the mangroves early in the morning to forage in the nearby forests. They often perch aloft the tallest trees on open branches as they make their way giving us an excellent opportunity to admire them. Turquoise Cotingas can sometimes join them making for an explosion of blue and white on a background of green. Scarlet Macaws make their presence known by their call often before you can even see them. Other birds of this area include no less than 5 species of trogon, both Yellow-throated Toucan and Fiery-billed Aracari, numerous woodpeckers and woodcreepers, and the range restricted Spot-crowned Euphonia. A mangrove site nearby should give us views of another endemic species to Costa Rica, the Mangrove Hummingbird.

Following these fabulous few hours this morning we will backtrack along the top end of the Golfo Dulce before heading North up the coastal highway past Dominical, Quepos, and Joco; eventually arriving to our hotel near the San Jose Airport (SJO) for our final dinner and night in Costa Rica. **1 NT Hotel Robledal**

**Mar 6:** Take Hotel Robledal shuttle to the San Jose (SJO) Airport in time for International departure.

### **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 26 through breakfast – Mar 6 are included in the price. Dinner the night of arrival (Feb 25) 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 and/or altitude at a few spots. At Savegre, we will be birding at elevations over 7,000 ft above sea level with a couple of hours at a higher elevation, in the paramo zone, of around 11,000.

**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 cold but never below freezing. A fleece should be brought for the time 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 Aug 18, 2018.

**Group Size** 7 to 9 participants

**Price per person double occupancy based on 7 participants: \$ 2,375**

**Price per person double occupancy based on 9 participants: \$ 2,115**

**Single supplement: \$ 405**

(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 25 till Mar 6. All meals from breakfast Feb 26 through breakfast Mar 6. Fulltime local guide Steven Easley from Feb 19 AM till Feb 26 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 and park entrance fees. 4x4 truck ride Savegre. Airport pickup and drop-offs.

**BRIEF ITINERARY:**

**Feb 25: (Sun)** Arrive, picked up for transfer to **Hotel Bougainvillea for 1 NT**

**Feb 26:** AM Paraiso Quetzal, afternoon at Tolomuco Lodge; **2 NTS at Talari Mt Lodge**

**Feb 27:** AM visit to Los Cusingos Reserve, afternoon locally; **2nd NT at Talari Mt Lodge**

**Feb 28:** AM locally, transfer via Paramo to Savegre Valley and **Suenos del Bosque for 2 NTS**

**Mar 01:** Full day in the highlands of Savegre Valley; **2nd NT at Suenos del Bosque**

**Mar 02:** Early AM locally, transfer SW to Golfito; **Hotel Sierra for 1 NT**

**Mar 03:** AM birding W of Cd Neily, afternoon La Gamba area; **2 NTS at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge**

**Mar 04:** Full day in Esquinas area; **2nd NT at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge**

**Mar 05:** Early AM visit to Rincon Bridge on Osa Peninsula, afternoon transfer to **Hotel Robledal for final NT**

**Mar 06: (Tue)** Take Hotel Robledal 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 26 in AM to Mar 5 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

**ENTRANCE FEES AND ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN THE PRICE:**

Entrance fee and Lunch at Paraiso Quetzal  
Entrance fee to Tolomuco Lodge  
Entrance fee to Miriam's feeders  
4x4 transport to trail head at Savegre  
Entrance fee to Los Cusingos Reserve

**MEAL PLAN: All meals are included from BR – Feb 26 through BR – Mar 6**

Feb 25: D - Hotel Bougainvillea not included as it depends on their flight schedule

Feb 26: BR – Hotel Bougainvillea / L – Paraiso Quetzal / D – Talari Mt Lodge

Feb 27: All meals at Talari Mt Lodge

Feb 28: BR – Talari Mt Lodge/ L – locally / D – Suenos del Bosque

Mar 01: All meals at Suenos del Bosque

Mar 02: BR – Suenos del Bosque / L – locally / D – Hotel Sierra

Mar 03: BR – Hotel Sierra / L – locally / D – Esquinas Rainforest Lodge

Mar 04: All meals Esquinas Rainforest Lodge

Mar 05: PB provided by CRG / L – locally / D - Hotel Robledal

Mar 06: BR – Hotel Robledal

**\*Purified water will be provided on the bus throughout the tour in the form of refill jugs.**

**What is NOT included in the price:**

Airfare to and from San Jose, Costa Rica and travel insurance

Tips to local guide, driver, 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 14 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.