

# **Bird's Wildlife & Nature**

## **Costa Rica**

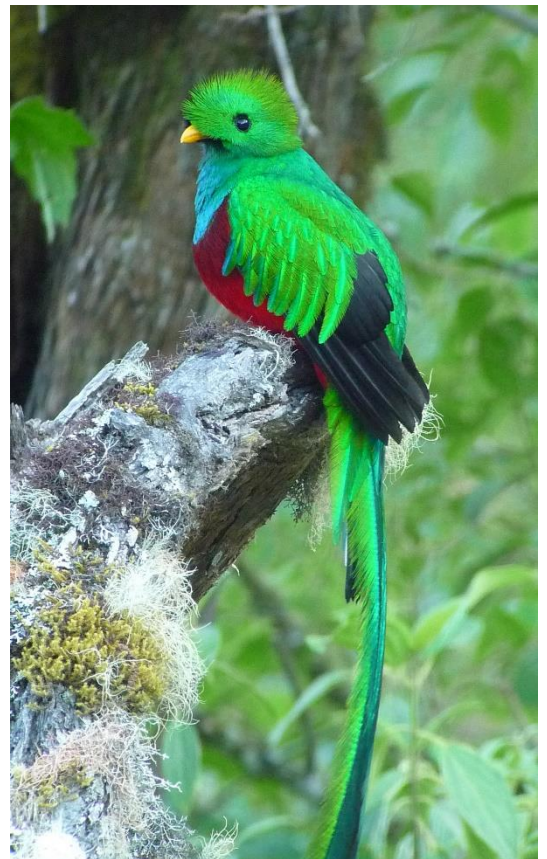
### **A Birder's Paradise!**



**With Howard Vaughan**

**Sunday 03<sup>rd</sup> Nov – Monday 18<sup>th</sup> Nov 2024**

With Costa Rica being one of the safest countries to travel to, we are very happy to offer this fabulous tour to a tropical paradise. We will visit a variety of bird rich hotspots in central Costa Rica, staying at many of the country's very best lodges offering superb value for money and the chance to see nearly half the country's birds in just one trip! Relax in comfort while enjoying myriads of birds. From the Caribbean lowlands, to Pacific coast and then the forested highlands we offer the opportunity to experience a wealth of differing habitats that all hold their own special birds. A good number of hummingbirds can be seen coming to feeders alongside colourful tanagers, absurd oropendolas, toucan-like aracaris, honeycreepers and euphonias. We have three fantastic boat trips takes us along a bird filled estuary and into the mangroves, and also two slow flowing rivers where countless species allow close approach and ideal photo opportunities. We can expect Sungrebe, Pinnated Bittern, kingfishers, crakes and much more. In the highlands we will look for one of the world's most beautiful birds the Resplendent Quetzal a highlight to a tour ablaze with colourful, exotic and simply superb birds. With huge butterflies, dragonflies, lizards, several monkeys, sloths, and forests laden with orchids and flowers this is a must visit destination for anyone with an interest in wildlife. Rest assured we are envied for setting up and running Costa Rica's very best birdwatching tours with itineraries that work. It seems many people visiting Costa Rica get their itinerary wrong which can lead to frustration and a lot of disappointment. With so many good things to see it makes sense to travel with the people that know the country best! With over 25 years' experience and over 40 tours under our belt we offer the best of the best!



## **Targets:**

- Resplendent Quetzal
- Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl
- Scintillant Hummingbird
- Streak-chested Antpitta
- Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher
- Flame-coloured Tanager
- Fasciated Tiger-Heron
- Fiery-throated Hummingbird
- Scarlet Macaw
- Snowy Cotinga
- Sungrebe
- Black-crested Coquette
- Nicaraguan Seedfinch
- Ornate Hawk-Eagle
- Yellow-breasted Crake
- Zeledonia
- King Vulture
- Spotted Antbird
- Swallow-tailed Kite
- Volcano Junco
- Pinnated Bittern
- Spotted Wood-Quail
- Mangrove Hummingbird
- Sunbittern
- Ocellated Antbird
- Golden-browed Chlorophonia

## **Day 1    Arrival – San Jose – Sunday 03<sup>rd</sup> Nov**

Arrival in San Jose on Sunday the 03<sup>rd</sup> Nov and transfer the short distance to our hotel.

Note that this is an arrival day and depending on your flight arrival time there may be opportunities to bird the lodge grounds in the afternoon.

Night San Jose. D

## **Day 2    San Jose – Arenal – 04<sup>th</sup> Nov**

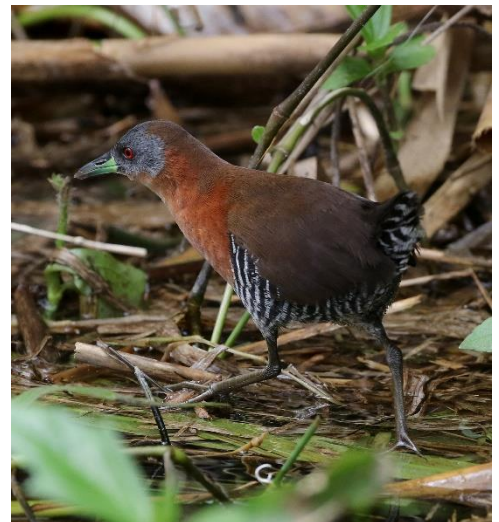
After breakfast we will head for Arenal Volcano. Along the way we will make a quick stop at some bird feeders where we can hope to see the beautiful Emerald and Speckled Tanagers, plus a host of other great birds such as Red-legged Honeycreeper. Another stop near to Arenal will give great



photo opportunities of various birds and our best chances to see White-throated Crake. Moving on we can see the almost perfectly shaped cone of Arenal Volcano, which soars 1,633 meters (5,500 ft) above sea level, and nowadays is a silent. If the clouds do not cover the top, it can make a wonderful view from our perfectly situated lodge. Although the main attraction in this region is the volcano, the area offers fantastic bird watching opportunities, with forest trails, tumbling streams and a huge lake. The lodge gardens abound with wildlife, and feeders and flowers attract a wealth of colourful birds.

A nearby stream often holds

Fasciated Tiger-Heron and occasionally Sunbittern, while forest edges and lodge trails could treat us to Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Collared Aracari, White-throated Magpie-Jays, Keel-billed Toucan, Slaty Spinetail, Bright-rumped Attila, Spotted and Ocellated Antbirds, Black-crested Coquette, Montezuma's Oropendola, Crested Guan and Great Curassow, and possibly the rare Keel-billed Motmot, or maybe a Bare-necked Umbrellabird. Night Arenal Observatory Lodge.



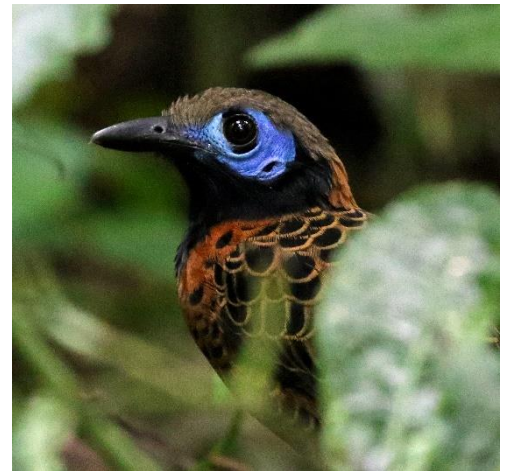


### Day 3 Arenal Observatory Lodge – 05<sup>th</sup> Nov

No doubt we'll be up early checking the feeders at our lodge and hopefully marvelling at the view of the volcano. We'll spend today birding the grounds around the lodge and some nearby trails



within the forest. The entire area is a haven for birds and we will search out rarely seen species such as Keel-billed Motmot, Lanceolated Monklet, Ocellated Antbird and probably only hear the elusive Thicket Antpitta. Easy viewing on the feeders and flowers should include Emerald, Crimson-collared, Hepatic, Blue-grey, Golden-hooded, Scarlet-rumped and Bay-headed Tanagers, while hummingbirds amongst the flowering gardens should include Black-crested Coquette, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Crowned Woodnymph, Purple-crowned Fairy, Stripe-throated Hermit, White-necked Jacobin and maybe Brown Violetear. Many other birds will keep us busy such as Montezuma's Oropendola, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Red-legged and Green Honeycreepers, Orange-bellied Trogon, Spotted Antbird, Crested



Guan and Great Curassow. The shy yet vocal Nightingale Wren will be sought, and we could get to grips with Black-bellied Wren, Bare-crowned Antbird, Trilling Gnatwren, Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush and maybe difficult Yellow-eared Toucanet. Mixed flocks in the forest can be both exciting and exhilarating, so let's see what we can find.

A few mammals are often seen including White-nosed Coatis that will entertain us and we could even see Northern Tamandua. It will be a busy day!

Night Arenal Observatory Lodge.

### Day 4 Arenal – Celeste Mountain Lodge – 06<sup>th</sup> Nov

After a final morning birding the gardens we will then depart and travel past Lake Arenal to the Tenorio Volcano region. The slopes of the Caribbean side of the Tenorio Volcano are covered with rural farms, cattle ranches, small villages, mountain forest, rivers and waterfalls that create one of the most scenic regions of the country. Our afternoon will be spent birding the gardens of our private lodge and maybe some of the nearby trails. The list of birds includes many sought after species and it is these we will try and find, such as Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Tody Motmot, Keel-billed Motmot, Yellow-eared Toucanet, Three-wattled Bellbird, Dull-mantled Antbird, White-tailed Sicklebill, Purplish-backed Quail-dove, Brown-hooded Parrot, Red-headed Barbet, Coppery-headed Emerald, White-collared Manakin, White-ruffed Manakin, Crimson-collared Tanager, Green Shrike-vireo, and Rufous-winged Tanager.

Night Celeste Mountain Lodge.





### Day 5 Celeste Mountain Lodge – 07<sup>th</sup> Nov

Breakfast will be enlivened by the birds coming into the fruit put out by the owners. Black-cheeked Woodpeckers and Clay-coloured Thrushes will dominate but we will also keep a look out for Collared Aracari, Crimson-collared Tanager and Red-legged and Green Honeycreepers. After breakfast we will check an area of flowers that often attracts the sought after White-tipped Sicklebill. We then have the rest of the day to bird the forests and roadsides in search of a wealth of birds. Amongst the special birds here we will look for are Tody Motmot, and if we were extremely lucky and came across an antswarm we may get the chance to observe species that regularly follow these ants in search of insects, spiders and lizards all trying desperately to get out of the way of this carpet of ants. Bicolored and Ocellated Antbird are among our targets while we get to learn about the forest and its many plants. Night Celeste Mountain Lodge.



### Day 6 Celeste – Cano Negro – 08<sup>th</sup> Nov

Today we will spend some of the morning catching up with any species we may have missed before setting off towards Cano Negro National Park. This wonderful park is a stark contrast from where we have just been and it borders Nicaragua to the north. Our wonderful lodge is nestled right beside a bird filled lagoon, where a variety of herons, ducks and even the localised Nicaraguan Grackle, one of our main target birds can be found. There are many other superb species within close vicinity of the lodge and we will search for localised Spot-breasted Wrens, Grey-headed Dove, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, and Olive-throated Parakeet. After a quick lunch or picnic we will set off on the short drive to an area of vast wetland where a boat trip along the narrow river will hopefully get us close to many wetland species and in particular the elusive Pinnated Bittern and even



more elusive Yellow-breasted Crake. There will also be possibilities for Least Bittern, flocks of Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Snail Kite and several species of kingfisher. As the sun sets we will return to our lodge looking for night birds such as Pauraque, Common and Great Potoo and maybe even Striped Owl. Night Hotel De Campo



### Day 7 Cano Negro – La Selva – 09<sup>th</sup> Nov

This morning we will have an early start for our boat trip on the Cano Negro River. This excellent trip will give us chances for many birds including all five species of kingfisher and the sought after Sungrebe. This is one of the only places we can find the very localised Nicaraguan Grackle a bird associated with wetlands and reedbeds. Depending on water levels we could also find the striking



Agami Heron, Boat-billed Heron, Green Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Black-collared Hawk, Grey-necked Wood Rail, Collared Plover, Mangrove Cuckoo, Mangrove Swallow and a host of other species, and if we are fortunate we could even see Neotropical Otter. After this wonderful boat trip we will return to the lodge for a late breakfast before setting off toward our next destination at Sarapiquí and La Selva. Along the way we spend time searching the open grasslands for the Nicaraguan Seed-Finch and Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture if we had not seen them the previous day. The afternoon will give us an introduction to birds in and around our lodge grounds. In the evening we can check for both Strawberry and Green-and-Black Poison Dart Frogs.

Night La Quinta Country Inn



## Day 8 La Selva – 10<sup>th</sup> Nov

After an early breakfast we will spend the full day at the nearby La Selva OTS. At the confluence of two major rivers in the Caribbean lowlands of northern Costa Rica, La Selva comprises 1,600 hectares (3,900 acres) of tropical wet forests and surrounding lands. It averages 4 metres of rainfall that is spread rather evenly throughout the year. Located within the tropical and premontane wet forest, the Station has about 73% of its area under primary tropical rain forest. It was purchased in 1968 by the Organization for Tropical Studies and declared a private biological reserve and station. Since then, it has become one of the most important sites in the world for research on tropical rain forests. For the birder it is a haven for a wide range of sought after species. Before entering the reserve we will spend time birding the approach road an area always alive with birds and



often a surprise or two. Loose flocks may include Barred, Fasciated and Great Antshrikes, Broad-billed Motmot, Rufous-winged, Cinnamon and Chestnut-coloured Woodpeckers, Pied Puffbird, Scarlet-rumped Tanagers, Canebrake Wren, White-ringed Flycatcher, Olive-backed Euphonia, Black-cowled and with luck Yellow-tailed Oriole, Black-thighed and Black-faced Grosbeaks, and occasionally on a tiny stream we have seen the elusive Agami Heron. We will spend both morning and afternoon within the reserve among areas of tropical rainforest where many different species will be sought. Among our continuing quest will be targets such as Snowy Cotinga, Great Curassow, Rufous Motmot, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Black-crowned Antshrike, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Red-capped Manakin, White-collared Manakin, Great Tinamou, Stripe-breasted Wren, Dusky-faced Tanager, White-whiskered Puffbird, Bright-rumped Attila, Northern Barred Woodcreeper, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Rufous Mourner, and if we are in luck there may be a Screech-Owl or Crested Owl on their day roosts, or Great Green Macaws flying noisily overhead. Also, overhead we could see Grey-rumped, Lesser Swallow-tailed and even the rare Spot-fronted Swift and raptors could include Short-tailed Hawk, Grey-headed Kite, King Vulture, or Semiplumbeous Hawk. Night La Quinta Country Inn.



## Day 9 La Selva – Carara National Park – 11<sup>th</sup> Nov

This morning we will set off on our journey to the Pacific coast and a brand new lodge close to the incredibly bird rich Carara National Park. Depending on what we have already seen we may make a few impromptu stops along the way. As we near Carara and can see the huge forest stretching out in front of us, we will make a brief stop at the famous Tarcol Bridge where some of the biggest American Crocodiles laze around on the muddy river edges below. At the lodge we can check out the gardens and a viewing tower where we can introduce ourselves to some of the different wildlife this beautiful area has to offer. Maybe



Fiery-billed Aracaris, and noisy Scarlet Macaws flying overhead. Fruiting trees can attract toucans and a variety of tanagers while several new species of hummingbirds zip around the gardens. We do however have an appointment with a boat, so we will need to get to the nearby river dock for our afternoon excursion on the Tarcoles River. Setting off under the guidance of our expert

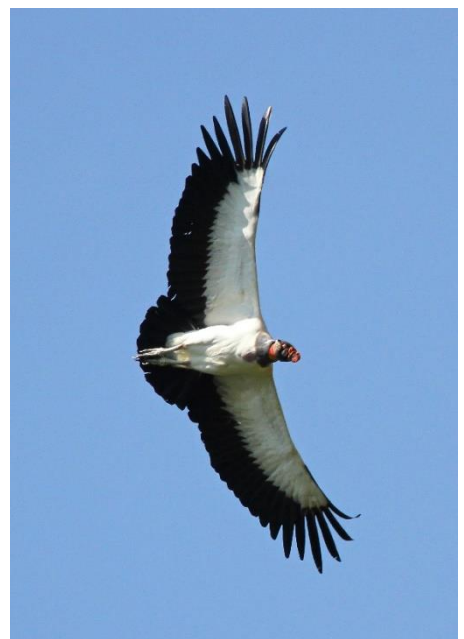


boatman we will first search the estuary and river edges where we can expect to see roosting Boat-billed Herons, plus Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned and sometimes Black-crowned Night-Herons, Green Heron, Tri-coloured Heron, White Ibis, occasionally Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork, Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorant, Spotted Sandpiper, Black-necked Stilt, Purple Gallinule, Northern Jacana, Killdeer, many shorebirds and if we are lucky both Double-striped Thick-knee and Collared Plover. Out towards the mouth of the estuary will see Laughing Gulls and a variety of terns, plus Brown Pelicans, Magnificent Frigatebirds

and the ever-present Ospreys. We then move into the narrower mangrove creeks where we will look for Mangrove Black Hawk, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Prothonotary Warbler and with a lot of luck Mangrove Vireo and Mangrove Hummingbird. As we return with the sun setting, we will see Cattle and Snowy Egrets going to roost and noisy Scarlet Macaws and Yellow-naped Amazons flying overhead. Our finale to this superb trip will be watching Lesser Nighthawks hawking for insects low over the water. 2 Nights Tarcoles Birding Lodge

## DAY 10 Carara National Park – 12<sup>th</sup> Nov

We have a full day to bird this wonderful area including much of the day visiting Carara National Park, which is the northernmost region of Pacific rainforest remaining in Costa Rica, and is the beginning of the transition zone into the tropical dry forests of the northwest. Its 11,600 acres hold a wide range of species and includes the most important area for breeding Scarlet Macaws in the country. Our time will be divided into a morning and afternoon visit with a break for lunch back at the lodge. We will spend time on a several short trails where birding can produce amongst others





Northern Royal Flycatcher, Green Shrike-Vireo, Baird's, Gartered, and Black-throated Trogons, Tawny-winged and Cocoa Woodcreepers, Blue-black Grosbeak, White-whiskered Puffbird, Pale-



bill Woodpecker, Orange-collared Manakin, Chestnut-backed and Dusky Antbirds, Dot-winged Antwren, Black-hooded Antshrike, Blue-throated Sapphire, Band-tailed Barbthroat, Costa Rican Swift, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Rufous-and-white, Rufous-breasted, Riverside and Black-bellied Wrens, Grey-headed and White-shouldered Tanagers, Trilling Gnatwren, Tawny-crowned and Lesser Greenlet, White-winged Becard, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher and Northern Bentbill. Along another trail we hope to connect with a different variety of species

including several understory specialties such as Streak-chested Antpitta, Black-faced Antthrush, Ruddy Quail-Dove and Great Tinamou. We may also check a small stream where Red-capped and Blue-crowned Manakins come in to bathe and sometimes accompanied by Northern Schiffornis. If we have time we may check out a few other areas where overwintering passerines may be possible. In the evening we could take a short walk near the lodge and hope to see Ferruginous Pygmy Owl and maybe even Striped or Black-and-white Owl.

Night at Tarcoles Birding Lodge

## Day 11 Carara – Savegre – 13<sup>th</sup> Nov

After breakfast we will leave and head along the coast for an outside chance of something like a Wandering Tattler or Brown Booby. Then, eventually driving up into the mountains we can start seeing the beautiful Swallow-tailed Kite and the sharp eyed among us may spot the gorgeous Turquoise Cotinga. We will continue our drive up to 11,000ft before going to an area we call 'The



Towers', a high area of paramo where we will search for Volcano Junco and the difficult Timberline Wren.

Species here are few and far between but we should be able to find Black-billed Nightingale-thrush, Black-cheeked Warbler and plenty of Volcano and Talamanca Hummingbirds. After our search we will slowly descend the other side of the Mountain to our beautiful lodge set in a rich forested valley at a comfortable 7,000ft, where we will spend the next 3 nights. As we make our way along this most scenic valley towards the lodge we can make a quick check of the river to see if any American Dippers or Torrent



Tyrannulets are present. Our slow decent should introduce us to a new selection of bird species. Sooty Thrushes sit on fence posts, and at a small café we will check out some feeders where Acorn Woodpeckers, Flame-coloured Tanagers, Green Honeycreeper, Large-footed Finch, Yellow-thighed Finch and Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher allow for excellent photographs. Volcano Hummingbirds will also be seen before we continue down towards our lodge. The lodge has recorded over 200 species of birds with many of

these being highland specialities. The remaining part of the day will allow us to acquaint ourselves with some of these, or just relax and watch hummingbirds among the flowery gardens.

3 Nights Savegre Mountain Lodge.

## Day 12 Savegre – 14<sup>th</sup> Nov

Today we will have a full day of birding in the vicinity of Savegre Lodge. Starting the day with a look around the gardens there will be great opportunities to look for birds such as Lesser Violetear, Scintillant Hummingbird, Volcano Hummingbird, Violet Sabrewing, Grey-tailed Mountaingem, and Talamanca Hummingbird. Noisy Acorn Woodpeckers and flocks of Sulphur-winged Parakeets will distract us from the tame Rufous-collared Sparrows and Slaty Flowerpiercers before we head for



breakfast. We will then take a short jeep ride up a mountain track where we will be dropped off to then bird our way slowly back downhill in time for lunch. Specialties during our walk may include the difficult Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl, Silvery-throated Jay and Spotted Woodquail, while other species to be sought include Large-footed Finches, Black Guan, Collared Redstart, Collared Trogon, Yellow-thighed Finch,

Sooty Thrushes, Mountain Thrushes, Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, Flame-throated Warbler, Ochraceous and Dark Pewee, Yellow-winged Vireo, Black-capped and Yellowish Flycatcher. After lunch we will take a short break before talking an afternoon walk along the river where we may find Torrent Tyrannulet and Louisiana Waterthrush, plus many other birds among the flowers and woods. Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Mountain Elaenia, Flame-throated Warbler Black-faced Solitaire and Stripe-tailed Hummingbird are normally present and often we see Collared Trogon and American Dipper.

For those that wish, we will make a night excursion up the valley by coach where we can try a few spots for Bare-shanked Screech Owl and Dusky Nightjar. Night Savegre Mountain Lodge



## Day 13 Savegre – 15<sup>th</sup> Nov

This morning we will visit the nearby Paraiso de Quetzales. Here we will look at the hummingbird feeders which will be buzzing with Fiery-throated Hummingbirds, Talamanca Hummingbirds, Lesser Violetear and tiny Volcano Hummingbirds. If we can tear ourselves away from this for a short time we will take a walk among the gardens and nearby trails to the preferred habitat of the Resplendent Quetzal. The area is alive with Epiphytes, Orchids and Bromeliads, adorning the trees and making the whole scene a most tifying experience as we search for the Quetzal. Other birds are also present and we will try for the elusive Wrenthrush or (Zeledonia), and have more chances for the beautiful Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Flame-coloured Tanager, Ochraceous Pewee and Black-and-yellow Phainoptila. After lunch and more hummingbirds we will head back towards our lodge with a stop along the way to try for roadside species that may





include Buffy Tufted-cheek, Ruddy Treerunner, more quetzals and possibilities for Bare-shanked Screech-owl or the very elusive Silvery-throated Jay.

Night at Savegre Mountain Lodge

### **Day 14 Savegre – Quelitales 16<sup>th</sup> Nov**

This morning we will have an early breakfast and then set off on our drive towards our next destination near Tapanti National Park. As we descend the mountain we will make a quick stop at a friend's house. He has some feeders that regularly attract Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge and sometimes the elusive Buff-fronted Quail-Dove. After this short break we can continue on to one of our favourite lodges, which sits in the Orosi Valley part of the Talamancan mountain range, and contains 18 square miles (48 square km) of unspoiled cloud forest. Our time will be spent checking the wonderful grounds of the lodge, with a short walk to its waterfall where we can look for one of our main targets, a hummingbird that lives right beside the waterfall, the Green-fronted Lancebill. Other hummingbirds can be seen at the feeders including Green Thorntail and if we are lucky, the Black-bellied Hummingbird. From the shelter of a gazebo, we will wait to see if the resident, Sooty-faced Finches, White-eared Ground Sparrow and Pale-naped Brushfinches appear, and then as it gets towards dusk we may be lucky to see 'Lulu' the Scaled Antpitta that Jose the owner of the lodge has trained to come in for a couple of worms. A new pond in the gardens has attracted a Sunbittern from time to time and other birds we could encounter include, Black Guan, Red-headed and Prong-billed Barbets and the stunning White-winged Tanager. This is also a great place to see some amazing insects and wonderful butterflies.



2 Nights Quelitales

### **Day 15 Quelitales – 17<sup>th</sup> Nov**

This morning, we will head out after a breakfast and a brief look around the garden to a remote lodge which is a hotspot for the delightful Snowcap hummingbird. Once here we will spend time enjoying this tiny hummer and for those with cameras, trying to photograph it. Other birds that can be seen from the balcony of the lodge include White-ruffed Manakin, Black-and-yellow Tanager, Speckled Tanager, Tawny-capped Euphonia, King Vulture, Ornate Hawk Eagle, and if we were very lucky maybe Lovely Cotinga or Red-fronted Parrotlet, both very difficult. The forest trails can often prove very quiet but hold many excellent birds, so we will walk a few parts of the trail and see what we can find.

Lanceolated Monklet would be nice or the localized Tawny-chested Flycatcher. Small streams nearby and on our return sometimes hold the beautiful Sunbittern. Returning in the late afternoon we will have time to relax before dinner or walk up to the waterfall to see what birds are coming to the feeders.

Night Quelitales



## Day 16 **Quelitalles - San Jose – End of Tour – Monday 18<sup>th</sup> Nov**

Today we will have to leave our wonderful and head back to San Jose in time for our international departing flights. We plan to arrive at the airport by 12.00 midday. Please arrange a departing flight that leaves no earlier than 15.00pm

**Leaders:** **Howard Vaughan & Jose Pablo**

**TOUR PRICE:** **£4195.00** - San Jose/San Jose  
16 days

**Single supplement:** £765.00

**Deposit:** £500.00

**Group size:** Minimum for tour to go ahead 6. Max 10

**Included in cost:** Accommodation in twin rooms en-suite, all meals from Dinner on 03<sup>rd</sup> Nov to Breakfast on 18th Nov, airport transfers, ground transport throughout, 3 boat trips, all entrance fees, water, and services of English speaking leaders and the best driver in Costa Rica (Ramon).

**Not included:** International airfare, insurance, drinks, tips, and items of a personal nature.

**Accommodation:** All lodges are of a good standard and offer en-suite rooms, a good variety of meals and cooked breakfasts.

**Tour Code:** This is a standard birding tour with regular birding walks along roads and well-marked trails. We will be taking time to look at all aspects of nature including mammals, butterflies, reptiles etc. There are early morning options and pre-breakfast excursions, followed by morning and afternoon sessions. The weather is generally good to warm, even hot, with possibilities of rain in the afternoons. Be prepared for all eventualities.



This tour will be booked on a first come first serve basis with confirmed places held on receipt of a deposit. Please note that if for any reason the tour does not go ahead you will be entitled to your full deposit refunded. Once the tour is confirmed to go ahead, we will send you information about booking your flights, at this stage the deposit becomes non-refundable. Please **do not** book flights until you receive information from us and are notified that the trip has sufficient numbers to run. Final payment is due Sept 01<sup>st</sup> , 2024.