

Tropical Birding Tours

Costa Rica: Custom Photo Tour



Tour Guide: Ben Knoot

*Please this is my (Ben's) 8th tour in Costa Rica so I generally don't photograph absolutely every scenario now. I personally focus on new birds or new situations for my photography. If you wish to see a comprehensive gallery of images, please view my Flickr (linked here; <https://flickr.com/photos/197504580@N07/albums>) - Cheers!

Tour Introduction

Imagine this scenario -

*A friend of yours: “Okay Ben...I want to go on a trip in Costa Rica. I think it will be my last international trip to the tropics and it will be just me and another friend of mine. What can you do for us?”

*Me: “Say less mate...I gotchu”

What follows is what I genuinely believe to be the most the comprehensive Costa Rica Photo tour on the market and indeed is an amazing trip through all sorts of different habitats to scour this amazing country for its unique and fascinating wildlife. I created this 18 tour for my friend to fully experience the country from its dry, hot and sunny pacific slope, to nearly its northernly reaches just south of Nicaragua all the way into the mild and even somewhat chilly Talamanca highlands just south of San Jose.

The aim of this tour was to photograph everything that moved as long as it presented itself for good photo. We did everything from bats to lizards in between the stunning displays of color from toucans, macaws, tanagers and the numerous hummingbirds this tour offers. We did several night outings where we were privileged to witness Baird’s Tapir and venomous snakes like Eyelash Pitvipers and one of the largest Fer-de-Lance I have her laid eyes on. Not only did we experience some incredible wildlife but we also of course enjoyed the local cuisine, eating mostly at local sodas to really soak in as much local culture as possible.

In the end, I hope my friends on this tour will agree that this is a true comprehensive tour of this country. I truly believe if you only had the ability to do Costa Rica one time that this trip would give you the best sense of this destination, its culture, its people, and of course its incredibly rich wildlife for which is known around the world. Enjoy the report - Pura Vida 🇸🇨



Itinerary

February 26th.....Arrival in San Jose

February 27th.....San Jose to Tarcoles/Afternoon Tarcoles River Boat Ride

February 28th.....Morning Tarcoles River Boat Ride/Villa Lapas Grounds

February 29th.....Villa Lapas Grounds/Afternoon in Orotina with Local Guide

March 1st.....Villa Lapas Grounds/La Ensenada Grounds

March 2nd.....Carrara NP to Sendero Bogarin La Fortuna

March 4th.....Sendero Bogarin to Laguna del Lagarto

March 5th.....Laguna del Lagarto

March 6th.....Laguna del Lagarto

March 7th.....Laguna del Lagarto to Volcan Tenorio/Bird Songs Garden

March 8th.....Morning in Tapir Valley/Night in Tapir Valley

March 9th.....Volcan Tenorio to Sendero Bogarin La Fortuna

March 10th.....Morning Bellbird Tour and San Luis Canopy Adventure

March 11th.....La Fortuna to Frogs Heaven via Soda Cinchona Mirador

March 12th.....Morning with local guide Cope to Savegre Valley

March 13th.....Talamanca Highlands

March 14th.....Talamanca Highlands and Batsu Garden Feeders

March 15th.....Talamanca Highlands to San Jose

March 16th.....Departures

Tour Summary

Day 1: Arrival in San Jose - February 26th

Sometimes guests arrive at a time that allows us to bird the grounds of Hotel Robledal in the afternoon but in this instance, guest arrival was after dark so this was simply a transfer day to the hotel and a nice catch up dinner and some good beer with friends.

Day 2: San Jose to Tarcoles - February 27th

Today we had a little bit of time to kill in the morning as our first boat ride on the mighty Tarcoles River wasn't until the later afternoon. First things first, let's see what's around the grounds of [Hotel Robledal](#). We had a bit of wind which made some of the smaller birds like [Cinnamon Hummingbird](#), which were present and photographable on the verbena bushes tough. A quick side note, I am happy to report I was told on the final morning when I was flying home, the guests were able to photograph this bird! The grounds of the hotel are the best place to photograph this bird on this itinerary so that was awesome they were able to get it. Other birds we photographed included: [Hoffmann's and Lineated Woodpecker](#), [Social Flycatcher](#), [Great Kiskadee](#), [Rufous-naped Wren](#) and a delightful pair of [Spot-breasted Oriole](#).



Spot-breasted Oriole - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Hoffmann's Woodpecker - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Once it was time to leave, we packed up and went for an area of dry pacific forest that I have had some good luck in in the past. As a note for the entire tour but it was extremely evident in this location, Costa Rica and indeed most of the tropics this year were suffering from extreme dryness. My usual patch looked quite thirsty but still gave us some decent birds. First up was a great shooting experience with a **White-whiskered Puffbird**! During this shoot, I heard another great bird, the **Slaty-tailed Trogon**. He unfortunately remained a little high up in the tree but the guests did manage a few good shots of him before we left. Unfortunately, my most wanted target in this area, the **Long-tailed Manakin** only really made a few teaser appearances. There used to be a lek in this area but either the dryness or maybe time of year resulted in no lekking while we were there. Too bad but such is wildlife photography. I am happy these guys got some nice views of this incredible manakin. Onward to Tarcoles to check into our hotel, the lovely Villa Lapas Jungle Village.



White-whiskered Puffbird - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Our first boat ride on the Tarcoles River took place in the afternoon. I like to do two boat rides to really experience different parts of the river in different lighting and behavioral situations. You just never know! In order to keep this report flowing a bit, Here are a list of birds we photographed during this afternoon **AND** the next morning on the **Tarcoles River: Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Pelican, Green and Ringed Kingfisher, Spotted Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Roseate Spoonbill, Bare-throated Tiger Heron, Common Black Hawk, Sandwich and Royal Tern, Yellow-headed Caracara, Little Blue Heron, Green Heron, Mangrove Swallow, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Neotropic Cormorant, Anhinga, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret** and a very unexpected but lovely pair of **Black-headed Trogon**. After a lovely afternoon, we retreated back to our hotel for a great meal and good nights rest



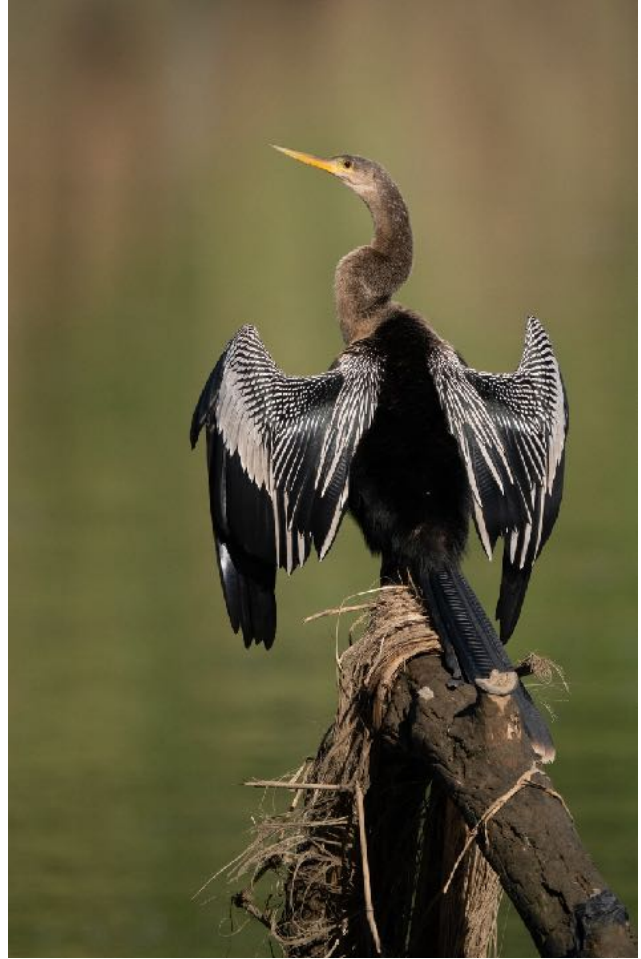
Yellow-headed Caracara - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Magnificent Frigatebird - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Magnificent Frigatebird - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Anhinga - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Day 3: Tarcoles Area - February 28th

As mentioned above, this morning we had another outing on the [Tarcoles River](#).

After our river cruise, we returned to [Villa Lapas Jungle Village](#) for a great breakfast and a quick walk around the grounds. We walked the grounds again in the afternoon so the following is for mid-morning and the afternoon. There is a fantastic little trail system in the back of this hotel that runs parallel to a small river. This area is generally teeming with bird and wildlife. The photography was a bit challenging as we didn't really get started until about 10am (after a relaxing breakfast!) but even still we managed; [Northern Barred Woodcreeper](#), [Rufous-tailed Jacamar](#), [Fasciated Tiger Heron](#), [Gray-capped Flycatcher](#), [Yellow-throated Toucan](#) (a truly wild situation on a banana plant!) [Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher](#) and we were able to see some cool birds like; [Plain Xenops](#), [Common Tody Flycatcher](#), [Gray-chested Dove](#), [White-shouldered Tanager](#), [Fiery-billed Aracari](#), [Golden-naped Woodpecker](#), [Black-hooded Antshrike](#), [Dusky Antbird](#), [Golden-crowned Spadebill](#) and [Mayan Antthrush](#). You really can have some incredible photo opps in here, you never know what you'll run into! We would have two more mornings on the grounds to see what we could add so I wasn't worried.



Lesson's Motmot - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Northern Barred Woodcreeper - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Fasciated Tiger Heron - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Rufous-tailed Jacamar - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Day 4: Villa Lapas Grounds and Orotina Area - February 29th

The morning started in earnest with another walk around the grounds but we didn't manage anything new so after a quick meal, we then headed off towards [Orotina](#) to meet our local guide for the afternoon. With our guide, we checked out several of his local hotspots. The most productive one was this old, plantation style looking property with huge trees, lovely shrubby fields, and wonderful flowering bushes. On this property we managed some great birds like; [Black-headed Trogon](#), [Ferruginous Pygmy Owl](#), [Striped Cuckoo](#), [Great Kiskadee](#), [Lesser Ground Cuckoo](#), and [Stripe-headed Sparrow](#).

Other great stops our guide lead us too provided us with some great opportunities with [Spectacled Owl](#) and [Turquoise Browed Motmot](#). We also thoroughly enjoyed the [Common Paraque](#) show when we got back to our accommodation at [Villa Lapas](#). I enjoyed watching a very tame individual hunt via lamp light right outside my door...awesome stuff.



Spectacled Owl - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Ferruginous Pygmy Owl - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Striped Cuckoo - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Lesser Ground Cuckoo - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Striped-headed Sparrow - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Day 5: Villa Lapas to Carrara NP and on to La Ensenada - March 1st

There were two options for the morning...another walk around [Villa Lapa](#) or to relax in the room and have a nice sleep in. My stubborn self pretty much refuses to relax so while the guests had a nice easy morning, I was up at first light for a bit of a walk around. I started down the main trail and noticed a **Bare-throated Tiger Heron** in the river. I thought, eh sure...let's see what I can get. I followed the heron for a bit before I realized a much better heron waited around the corner. I let the Bare-throated Tiger Heron go and instead focused my entire morning on a stunning **Fasciated Tiger Heron**. I watched three successful hunts but the real fun came during the last 5-minutes of my morning when while sitting in the middle of the river, a **Tayra** came out of nowhere and through a series of leaps and bounds, effortlessly made his way across the river. Luckily once he reached the opposite shore, he gave me a few seconds to snap a few pics...my best of this species so far!



Fasciated Tiger Heron - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Tayra - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Now that [Carrara National Park](#) was open, we hit the trail for a little walk. We aimed to photograph some of Costa Rica's harder dry forest specialties but in this crowded park with full sun and high temperatures, we didn't manage too much. One of the guests found their first [Streak-chested Antpitta](#) but the best photographic highlight of the morning came in the form of a mammal... a small flying mammal to boot! A roosting [Ghost Bat](#) under a cool leaf made for a pretty neat photo.



Ghost Bat - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

The rest of the day was spent traveling towards La Ensenada. After several breaks (it's a long drive) and a fantastic lunch, we finally arrived at our lodge in [La Ensenada](#). This is a wonderfully simple lodge but has some great grounds for dry pacific targets. Since it was still early afternoon, we relaxed for a few hours and then met up for a little walk around the grounds. As we were just getting our bearings we didn't get many killer shots but we got some great ideas on where to spend our time for the next few days. So we grabbed a nice beer, sat down for a lovely ocean side dinner, opened up our laptops and had a fun little editing session before heading off to bed.

Day 6: La Ensenada - March 2nd

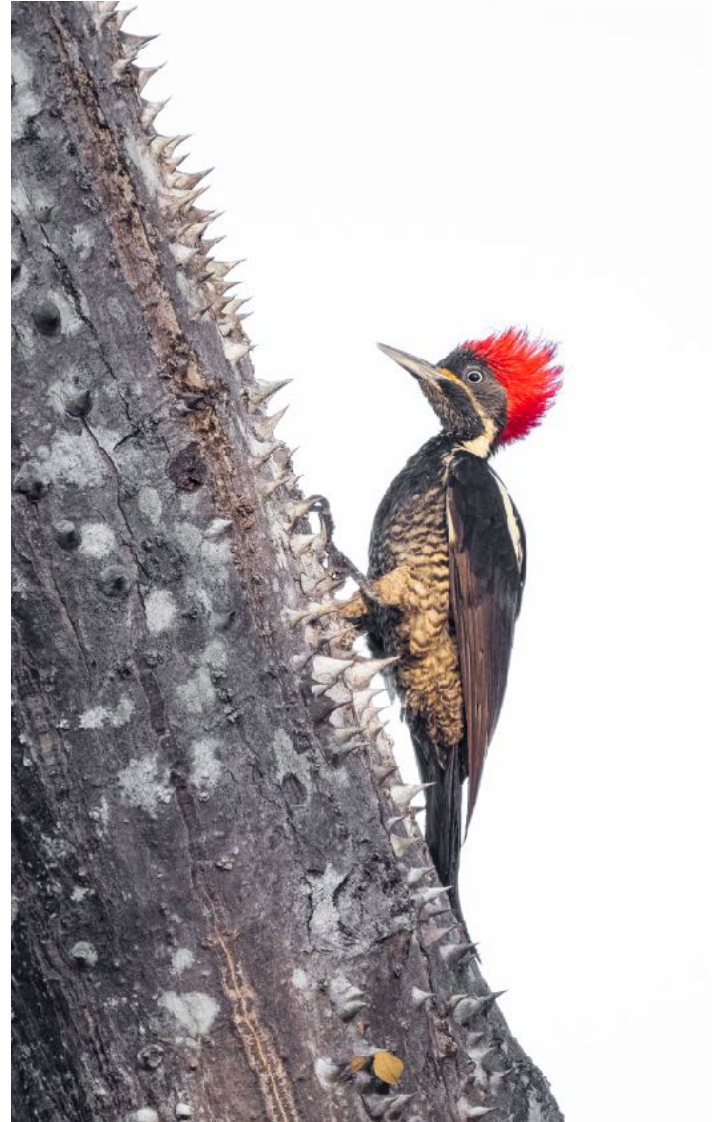
Today is a simple day. Photograph the pacific species [around La Ensenada Lodge](#). Not only did we do that pretty darn well we also had a lovely afternoon by the pool, kicking back with a few beers and just enjoying each others company during the heat of the day. When we were out photographing we managed; **White-throated Magpie Jay** (I was doing the set-up so no pics for me but the guests got some great shots), **Lineated Woodpecker**, **Turquoise-browed Motmot**, **White-necked Puffbird**, **Spot-breasted and Streak-backed Oriole**, **Groove-billed Ani**, **Black-headed Trogon**, **White-tipped Dove**, **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl**, **Black-crowned and Masked Tityra**, **Dusky-capped Flycatcher**, and **Panama Flycatcher**. After a fun day, we had a delicious dinner and called it a night.



White-necked Puffbird - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Turquoise-browed Motmot - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



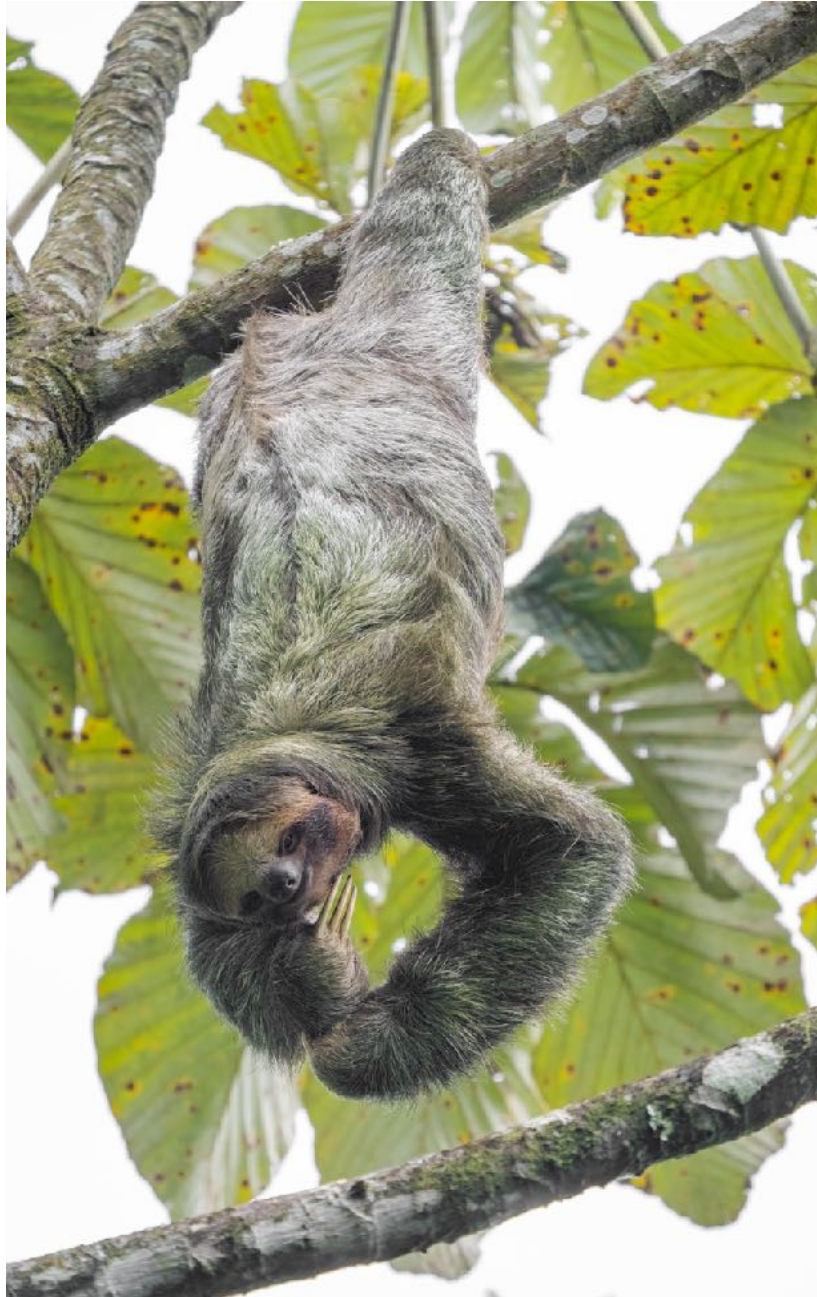
Lineated Woodpecker - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Day 7: La Ensenada to Sendero Bogarin - March 3rd

We had one last leisurely walk around the grounds of La Ensenada and then we ventured off. After lunch on property, we ended up in [Sendero Bogarin Trails](#). This was the first experience for the guests on some classic Caribbean species so we hung around the feeders mostly. Birds like; [Red-legged Honeycreeper](#), [Buff-throated and Black-headed Saltator](#), [Yellow-throated Toucan](#), [Scarlet-rumped Tanager](#), [Melodius Blackbird](#), [Yellow-billed Cacique](#), [Gray-headed Chachalaca](#), [Great Kiskadee](#), [Clay-colored Thrush](#), [Russet-naped Wood-rail](#), [Muscovy Duck](#), [Black-cheeked Woodpecker](#), [Hoffmann's Woodpecker](#), [Green Honeycreeper](#), and [Golden-hooded Tanagers](#). I personally didn't photograph too much in this area.

Day 8: Sendero Bogarin to Laguna del Lagarto - March 4th

We spent the morning in [Sendero Bogarin Trails](#) (I love this place) to see what else we could get. We are mainly here to see if we can photograph WILD sloths...both three-toed and two-toed sloths call this location home but they can still be rather tricky to photograph. We had great luck with one individual. Up against the sky but a clear view of an active **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth** is never to be taken advantage of. We also managed to photograph **Broad-billed Motmot**, and a **Smoky-brown Woodpecker**.



Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth - Photo by guide: Ben Knot



Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth - Photo by guide: Ben Knot



Broad-billed Motmot - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Broad-billed Motmot - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Smoky-brown Woodpecker - Photo by guide: Ben

The afternoon was spent traveling towards our next overnight halt where we'd be based for the next few nights, the stupendous (albeit simple) [Laguna del Lagarto Lodge](#). We had a few hours in the afternoon to shoot some of the local birds. I will list of of the birds in the next paragraph but for this afternoon we stayed mainly on the photo deck and enjoyed the small and large feathered beasts that came to the many feeders on site. Laguna del Lagarto is a famous bird photography lodge on the Caribbean slope and is the best place to photograph a lot of the iconic Costa Rican species, which is why we spend a great deal of time here as it is perhaps the single most productive location on this tour. Something that is not typical was the wonderful **Crested Owl** that we found and photographed on this night alone...awesome stuff!



Crested Owl - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Montezuma Oropendola - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Olive-backed Euphonia - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Days 9&10: Laguna del Lagarto - March 5th & 6th

Our time in Laguna del Lagarto is split between several locations on the property; the [King Vulture Hide](#), the [Photo Deck](#), the [Lagoon](#) and the [Trails](#). Throughout the first afternoon, two full days and last morning, we managed to collect a great set of images for our portfolios. We captured birds like; [Keel-billed Toucan](#), [Yellow-throated Toucan](#), [Collared Aracari](#), [Black-cowled Oriole](#), [Brown-hooded Parrot](#), [Black-crowned and Masked Tityra](#), [Plain-brown and Streak-headed Woodcreeper](#), [Olive-backed Euphonia](#), [Montezuma Oropendola](#), [Black-cheeked Woodpecker](#), [Pale-billed Woodpecker](#), [Great Currasow](#), [Northern Waterthrush](#), [Red-crowned Manakin](#), [Golden-hooded Tanager](#), [Crimson-rumped Tanager](#), [Crested Guan](#), [White-crowned Parrot](#), [Red-lore Parrot](#), [Green Kingfisher](#), [Green Heron](#), [Green Ibis](#), [Summer Tanager](#), [Cinnamon Becard](#), [Slaty-tailed Trogon](#), [Black-and-white Owl](#), [Crested Owl](#), [Central American Pygmy Owl](#), [Palm Tanager](#), [Plain-colored Tanager](#), [Great Green Macaw](#), [King Vulture](#), [Black Vulture](#), [Social Flycatcher](#), [Rufescent Tiger Heron](#), [Anhinga](#), and my personal favorite for this location, an [Agami Heron](#). Ya...Laguna del Lagarto is just that good.



King Vulture - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Red-capped Manakin - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Central American Pygmy Owl - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Collared Aracari - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



King Vulture - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Central American Pygmy Owl - Photo by guide: Ben



Red-lored Parrot - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Brown-hooded Parrot (both) - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot





Plain-brown Woodcreeper - Photo by guide: Ben Knot



Streak-headed Woodcreeper - Photo by guide: Ben Knot



Black-cowled Oriole - Photo by guide: Ben Knot



Green Heron - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Agami Heron - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Crested Guan - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Collared Aracari - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Montezuma Oropendola - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Black-crowned Tityra - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Central American Pygmy Owl - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Day 11: Laguna del Lagarto to Volcan Tenorio - March 7th

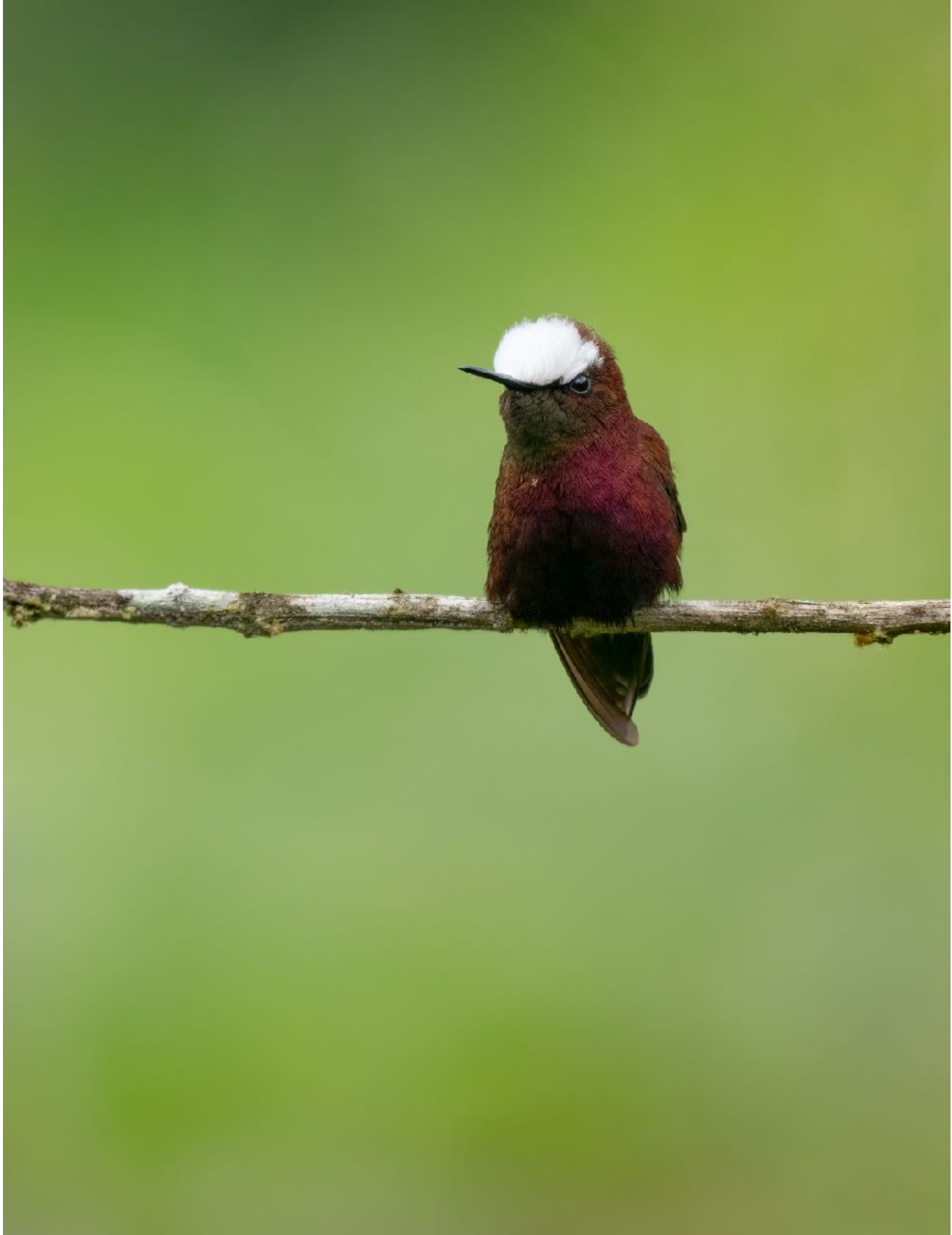
As described above, we had one last morning of photography around [Laguna del Lagarto](#). After a nice lunch here we made another long journey towards our next overnight halt in a much cooler environment, [Volcan Tenorio](#). We got in pretty late so we checked into our hotel and called it a night, only managing a [Gray Hawk](#) in some pretty harsh light, on the way to our hotel.



Gray Hawk - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Day 12: Volcan Tenorio - March 8th

Our time in Volcan Tenorio is spent in two locations, Bird Songs Garden and El Tapir Nature Valley Reserve. Our first stop for the morning was indeed an entire morning in [El Tapir Nature Valley Reserve](#). While we're here we walk around with a guide and luckily he didn't mind just standing in one place because that's exactly what we had to do to photograph our main target for this area, the lovely [Snowcap](#).



Snowcap - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

The rest of the morning was spent walking around, waiting at various verbena patches, and photographing at the property feeders to see what other birds we could snag. We managed; **Blue-throated Goldentail, Black-crested Coquette, Black-faced Grosbeak, Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Morrelet's Seedeater, Rufous Mourner, Squirrel Cuckoo** and an **American Pygmy Kingfisher**.



Violet-headed Hummingbird - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Violet-headed Hummingbird - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Black-crested Coquette - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Olive-crowned Yellowthroat - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



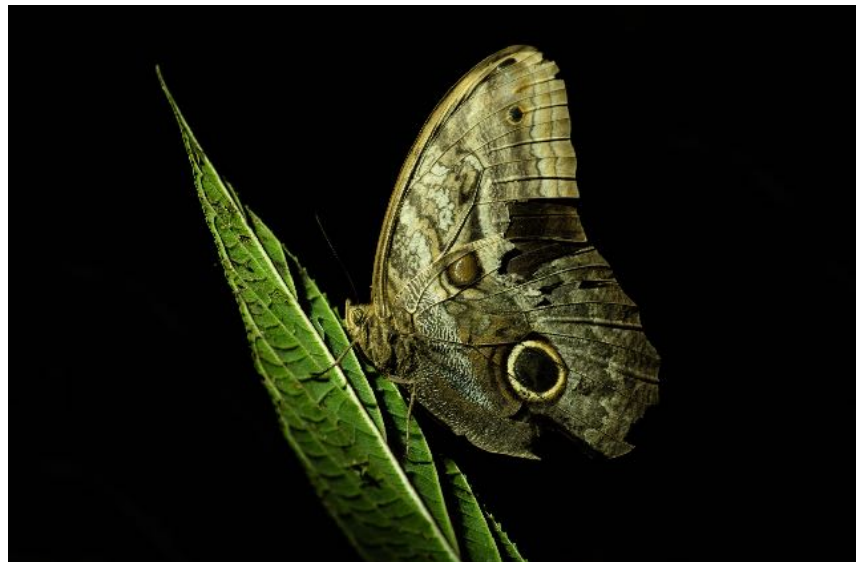
Black-faced Grosbeak - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Blue-throated Goldentail - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

After this wonderful and productive morning, we hit a fantastic spot for lunch and then returned to our hotel for a bit of R&R...mostly by the pool! After pool time, we went back to [El Tapir Nature Valley Reserve](#) for a few hours in the afternoon before we got to experience something even I with my 8 tours to Costa Rica hadn't had the chance to do, a night time excursion in El Tapir Nature Valley Reserve with the hopes of finding and photographing a really cool animal... the Baird's Tapir.

After a fun but semi-stressful night walk (I learned some things for how to do this better next time...) we managed some great photos of several really cool reptiles, amphibians, and various insects that frankly, I don't know the names of - haha but more importantly...we also had an AMAZING experience with Mamacita, the matriarch [Baird's Tapir](#) in the area...so cool!



Day 13: Volcan Tenorio to La Fortuna - March 9th

Today the strategy was to get back to La Fortuna at a reasonable time to once again hit one of my favorite spots, [Sendero Bogarin](#). We arrived at a good time and enjoyed an afternoon walk around the fantastic trail system adding some fun birds like; [Great Antshrike](#), [Rufous Motmot](#), [Golden-olive Woodpecker](#), [Fasciated Antshrike](#), [Boat-billed Heron](#), [Uniform Crake](#), [Broad-billed Motmot](#), [Barred Antshrike](#), [Black-and-white Owl](#) and another fun photoshoot with a [Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth](#). A pretty sweet afternoon at this great spot!



Rufous Motmot - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Great Antshrike - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Barred Antshrike - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Boat-billed Heron - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Day 14: “Bellbird Day” and San Luis area - March 10th

We left in the early hours of the day in order to make our appointment with our guide for the main target of the day. We arrived in good time but our guide recommended based on the cloud cover that we do another bird first...this turned out to be a hell of a call as well arrived and had a fantastic shoot with a stunning **Sunbittern**. This guy was so tame and allowed us near cellphone proximity views...awesome stuff!



Sunbittern - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

When we were done with this guy, we continued on to our main location for the morning. The hilly farmland during this time of year is quite an interesting place. During the morning, we went in and out of cloud cover, mist, wind, etc. which is not ideal for our targets but luckily, as soon as we needed to photograph anything, miraculously, the wind stalled, mist lifted and the cloud cover came in...lucky ducks we were! The morning farmland shoot provided us with two fun photo opportunities while we waited for our bird, the **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** and **Brown Jay**. When the time finally did come, we were treated to decent views but ultimately really tough shooting conditions for the **Three-wattled Bellbird**. We did watch as a male echoed his call through the valley and eventually attracted a female but with that slight breeze and his frustrating perch selection, we were left with a semi-difficult shoot. Oh well, happens! Onward to feeders.



Three-wattled Bellbird - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Lunch and the afternoon was spent in quite an odd but ultimately awesome little spot, [Canopy Adventure San Luis](#). Primarily a forest exploration and zip-lining company, they have expanded wisely and maintain a set of feeders that attract some truly awesome birds. During our sit here, we managed to see; [Speckled](#), [Emerald](#), [Silver-throated](#), [Bay-headed](#), [Crimsons-collared](#) and [Blue-and-Gold Tanager](#), [Tawny-capped Euphonia](#), [Black-cheeked Woodpecker](#), [Clay-colored Thrush](#), [Green Honeycreeper](#) and [Common Chlorospingus](#). Also present were the ever sneaky and hungry, [White-nosed Coati](#) which we were encouraged to scare off with a watering hose every once in a while...tough to do to the little critters but, to prevent the thieving of bananas, we played our part. The end of the day was spent with a nesting pair of [Scarlet Macaw](#). It is always fun to see and hang out with a wild set of macaws.



White-nosed Coati - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Silver-throated Tanager - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Tawny-capped Euphonia - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Scarlet Macaw - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Day 15: Soda Mirador to Frog Heaven in Sarapiquí - March 11th

A nice morning visit to the stunning [Soda Mirador Cinchona](#) lead to some wonderful photographic opportunities. Most of which I had photographed already so I personally didn't shoot much here but I do always take a moment to photograph the few of the areas special birds. The guests enjoyed; [Tennessee Warbler](#), [Baltimore Oriole](#), [Crimson-colored Tanager](#), [Red-legged Honeycreeper](#), [Green-crowned Brilliant](#), [Violet Sabrewing](#), [Rufous-tailed Hummingbird](#), [Ochraceous Wren](#), [Red-headed Barbet](#), [Common Chlorospingus](#), [Buff-throated](#) and [Black-headed Saltator](#), [Scarlet-thighed Dacnis](#), [Palm](#) and [Yellow-winged Tanager](#). The two birds that I generally really want people to photograph here are the [Northern Emerald Toucanet](#) and the **ENDEMIC** [Coppery-headed Emerald](#). Photographing these birds in the shadow of the Cinchona waterfall is quite special and the local food here is quite good too!

The afternoon was spent in [Frogs Heaven in Sarapiquí](#). I don't generally photograph here at the 100% set up stuff, so I don't have any photos to show but we typically have around 5 frogs and several snakes to photograph. Along the grounds we also enjoyed photographing the local [White-collared Manakin](#) Lek and the [Honduran White Bat](#), which is generally my favorite part of this outing. Always a joy watching them bounce around their lek sites. A nice afternoon for sure... tomorrow we head to the highlands, my personal favorite!



Northern Emerald Toucanet - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Coppery-headed Emerald - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



White-collared Manakin - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

Day 16: Sarapiquí to Talamanca Highlands via Cope Arte - March 12th

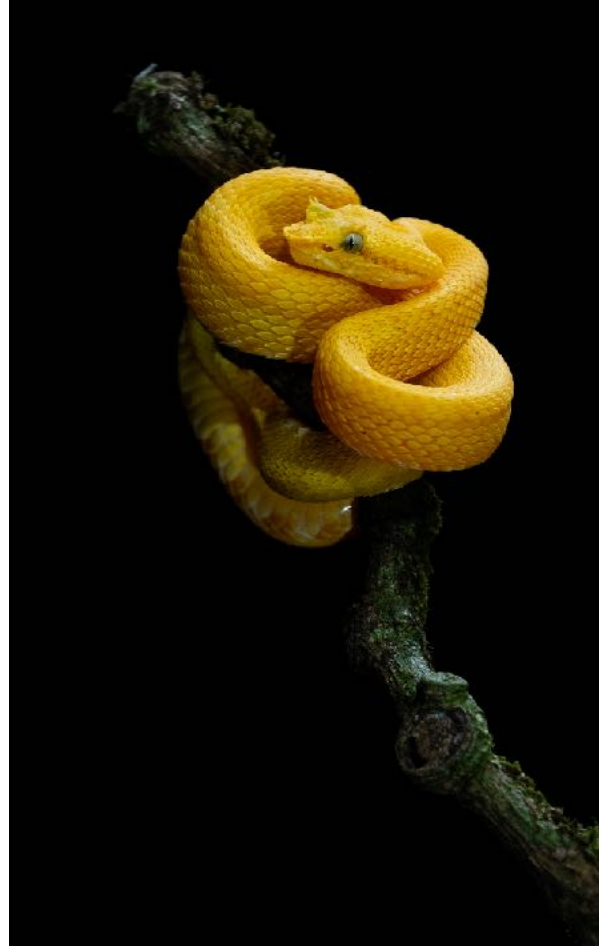
The morning was spent at the incredible hotspot of [Cope Arte backyard feeder](#). We had a hell of a morning weather wise...rain and dark clouds were on the menu this and it definitely affected our morning. Cope has some cool lights that allow us to do a little shooting even in the dark rain. With this we managed; [Red-rumped Cacique](#), [Red-legged Honeyeater](#), [Orange-chinned Parakeet](#), [Long-billed Hermit](#), [Green Hermit](#), [Stripe-throated Hermit](#), [Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer](#), [Russet-naped Woodrail](#), [Green Kingfisher](#), [Great-tailed Grackle](#), [Pale-vented Pigeon](#), [White-necked Jacobin](#), [Olive-backed Euphonia](#), [Collared Aracari](#), [Yellow-throated Toucan](#), [Montezuma](#) and [Chestnut-headed Oropendola](#). We also had a fun shoot with some [Helmeted Basilisk](#), [Eyelash Pit-viper](#), and a [Praying Mantis](#).



Russet-naped Wood-rail - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Helmeted Basilisk - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Eyelash Pit-viper - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



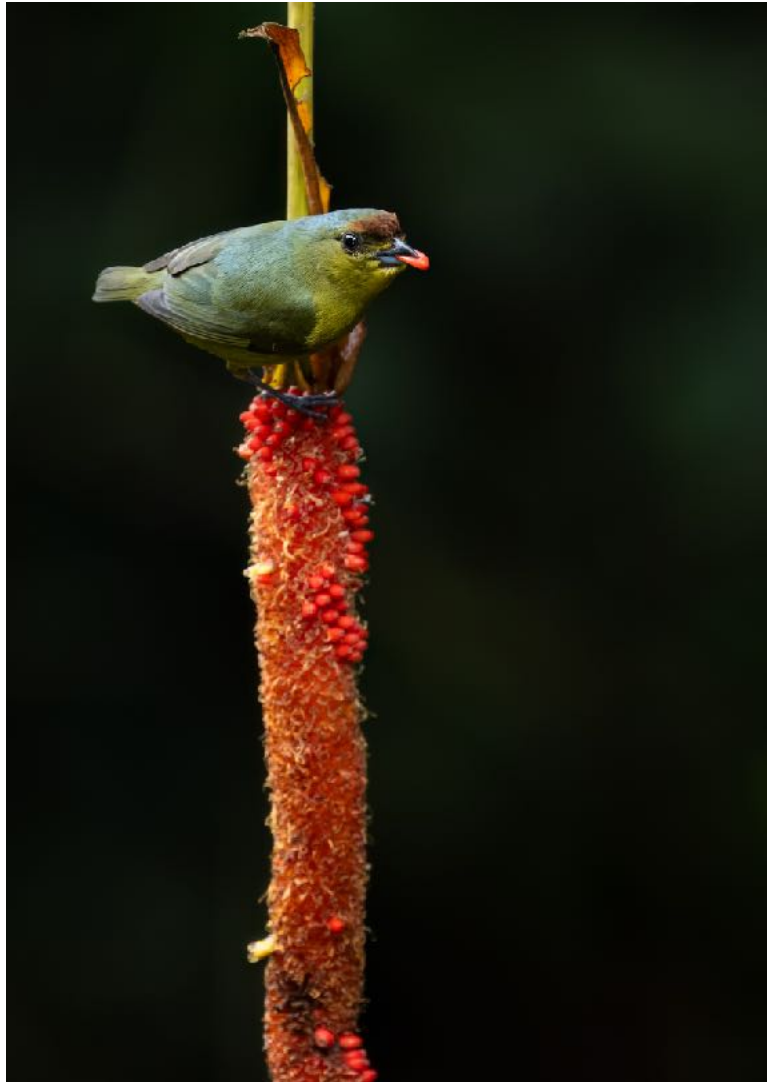
Chestnut-headed Oropendola - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Red-legged Honeycreeper - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Long-billed Hermit - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Olive-backed Euphonia - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

The afternoon was spent traveling. Moving up to the Talamanca Highlands from Sarapiquí takes some doing, especially going through San José. After a long and twisty road up, we landed in the Savegre Valley. The Talamanca Highlands are definitely a special place. Cool nights and mild days make this a lovely place to photograph birds and end the tour. For this section of the trip, I am going to combine the entry days into a single paragraph but we usually spend our time here just cycling through a few different areas.

To get us started, the grounds of Paraiso Quetzal...Here, the fringes of gardens and neotropical cloud forest attract a variety of birds and wildlife ripe with photographic opportunities. Another location is called Batsu Gardens, a feeding site down in Savegre Valley. Lastly, the “Quetzal Tour” which takes place on a few wild avocado farms and aims to get us the “classic” shots of Resplendent Quetzals. We also took a quick trip up to [Cerro del Meurte](#) for the view and of course, the cute little **Volcano Junco!**

On the grounds of [Paraiso Quetzal](#), we photographed; [Golden-browed Chlorophonia](#), [Black-billed Nightingale Thrush](#), [Ruddy-capped Nightingale Thrush](#), [Sooty Thrush](#), [Mountain Thrush](#), [Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher](#), [Yellow-bellied Siskin](#), [Black-capped Flycatcher](#), [Collared Redstart](#), [Wrenthrush](#), [Blue-and-white Swallow](#), [Rufous-collared Sparrow](#), [Sooty-capped Chlorospingus](#), [Large-footed Finch](#), [Slaty Flowerpiercer](#), [Hairy Woodpecker](#), [Spotted Wood Quail](#), [Yellow-thighed Brush Finch](#), [Flame-colored Tanager](#), [Lesser Violetear](#), [Volcano Hummingbird](#), [Talamanca Hummingbird](#) and [Flame-throated Hummingbird](#). We even had a quick run-in with a pair of [Resplendent Quetzal](#) right on the property which is always fun!



Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Volcano Hummingbird (set-up, not Multi-flash) - Photo by guide: Ben Knot



Lesser Violetear (set-up, not Multi-flash) - Photo by guide: Ben Knot



Talamanca & Volcano Hummingbird - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Yellow-thighed Brush Finch - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Wrenthrush - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Sooty Thrush - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Talamanca Hummingbird - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Golden-browed Chlorophonia - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

When we got to the feeding area of **Batsu Gardens**, we were able to photograph more of the same species but better. We also added; **Stripe-tailed Hummingbird**, **White-throated Mountain Gem**, **Tennessee Warbler**, **Flame-colored Tanager**, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** and **Acorn Woodpecker**. We also had an absolutely incredible shoot with a **Spangle-cheeked Tanager**... epic... This is a great place to spend an afternoon for sure and another small bonus is being surrounded by stunning scenery that mixes well inclement weather.



Savegre Valley Scenery - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Lesser Violetear - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Flame-colored Tanager - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Spangled-cheeked Tanager - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot



Rose-breasted Grosbeak - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot

And last but not least, the [wild avocado farms](#)...these areas have been set up for Resplendent Quetzals to eat safely and nest. The farmers along with local guides have also set up perches for the birds so visitors can get the “classic quetzal” images they want. Of course, nothing forces the birds to use the perches and unfortunately, on both of our visits, we were skunked out of the quetzals using the perches. On the last morning however, we did manage some fun “truly wild” imagery of **Resplendent Quetzal** as we watched four males chase around a female through the cloud forest...a pretty sweet way to end this amazing tour with friends. The next day was a travel day back to San Jose and then departures at everyone's leisure.



Resplendent Quetzal - Photo by guide: Ben Knoot