

BIRD TREKS

COSTA RICA

A SPECTACULAR WEEK AT RANCHO NATURALISTA LODGE

Tour dates are Saturday, 28 July through Sunday, 5 August 2012: 9 days & 8 nights

Rancho Naturalista is considered to be one of the **finest birding lodges** in all of Central America. With comfortable, well-kept rooms, peaceful forest surroundings, excellent meals, family style atmosphere, an extensive trail system, banana and hummingbird feeders for the birds, bird bathing pools, and a bird list for the area of more than **400 species**, you can see why it is a favorite destination for birders from around the world! It is located at an elevation of **3000 feet on the Caribbean slope**, providing **mild temperatures** in the day and perfect sleeping conditions at night. Its location also allows for birding day trips into the adjacent lowlands, middle elevations, and highlands, thus providing an even greater diversity of habitats and birds. We will have ample time to explore all of these areas from our comfortable base at **Rancho Naturalista**. So, if you want to **escape the summer heat in the US** or take a break from work to see some amazing tropical birds, please join us for this **Birding Getaway to Costa Rica!**

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RANCHO NATURALISTA LODGE

28 July - 5 August 2012



Day Agenda

- 1 Welcome to Costa Rica! After arriving to the International Airport near San Jose, you will be met for the short van transfer to the lovely Hotel Bougainvillea.
- 2 An early morning walk in the gardens of the hotel provides a great introduction to birding in this wonderful country. Common birds in the garden include **Red-billed Pigeon, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Great Kiskadee, Clay-colored Robin, Plain Wren, Blue-gray Tanager, Grayish Saltator, and Rufous-collared Sparrow**. Often we can find **Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl** and **Blue-crowned Motmot**. Specialty birds here include **Tropical Screech-Owl, Yellow-throated Brush-Finch, White-eared Ground-Sparrow**, and its rare and local cousin, the **Prevost's Ground-Sparrow**. After a nice breakfast we will load up for our day trip to Irazu en route to Rancho Naturalista. A stop on the slopes of the volcano will be our first chance to see some of the highland specialties that may include **Green Violetear, Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Ruddy**

Treerunner, Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Mountain Elaenia, Black-capped Flycatcher, both Long-tailed and Black-and-Yellow Silky-Flycatchers, Ochraceous Wren, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, Black-billed and Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrushes, Yellow-winged Vireo, Black-cheeked and Flame-throated Warblers, Collared Redstart, Yellow-thighed and Large-footed Finches, and the local Lesser Goldfinch. We also have a good opportunity to see **Resplendent Quetzal**, considered by many to be the most beautiful bird in the New World. **Maroon-chested Ground-Dove** has been seen in this area recently, but we would be very fortunate to find this mega-rare bamboo specialist. Once we near the entrance of Irazu National Park, the terrain changes from tall oak forest to stunted alpine brush. Here we will search for **Volcano Hummingbird**, **Timberline Wren**, **Sooty-capped Bush-Tanager**, and **Slaty Flowerpiercer**. The parking area near the crater is a favored area for **Volcano Junco**, another Chiriqui highland endemic. A short walk will take us to the edge of the crater where we will marvel at the aqua-colored lake, fumaroles, and colorful mineral deposits below us. We will continue on our way to Rancho Naturalista, no doubt with birding stops along the way. The entrance road to Rancho makes you wonder what could be at the top, but the last corner reveals a very nice lodge with beautiful gardens and a spectacular view. Once we settle into our comfortable rooms we may have time to bird from the balcony or check out the hummingbird feeders just inside the forest. Dinner and the checklist before we retire for the night.

- 3 We will begin today with early morning birding from the famous balcony at Rancho. Here we will enjoy our morning coffee or tea along with an amazing variety of birds coming to the unique rice and banana feeders. Groups of **Gray-headed Chachalacas**, **Groove-billed Anis**, **Collared Aracaris**, **Brown Jays**, **Passerini's**, **Palm**, and **Blue-gray Tanagers**, **Black-headed** and **Buff-throated Saltators**, and impressive **Montezuma Oropendolas** provide an impressive show. Other likely possibilities include **Blue-crowned Motmot**, **Lineated**, **Black-cheeked**, and **Hoffmann's Woodpeckers**, plus **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher**, **Common Tody-Flycatcher**, **Mistletoe Tyrannulet**, **Yellow-bellied Elaenia**, **Bananaquit**, **Golden-hooded** and **White-lined Tanagers**, **Black-striped** and **Orange-billed Sparrows**, **Scarlet-rumped Cacique**, and **Chestnut-headed Oropendola**. Hummingbird feeders just a few feet in front of you will be buzzing with **Green Thorntail**, the stunning **White-necked Jacobin**, **Green-crowned Brilliant**, **Green-breasted Mango**, **Brown Violetear**, and **Rufous-tailed Hummingbird**. Watch the vervain hedge for **Stripe-throated Hermit**, The unusual **Black-crested Coquette**, and the dazzling **Little Snowcap**! Rancho is the best location in the world to see the charming **Snowcap**, and we will get great views during our stay. In the surrounding trees



Blue-crowned Motmot
 - - Kim Schutsky,
 tour participant

[Remainder of Day 3 is on page 3]



Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl

- - *Kim Schutsky*
tour participant

watch for raptors, **Keel-billed Toucan**, **Brown-hooded** and **White-crowned Parrots**, and both **Masked** and **Black-crowned Tityras**. Secretive species like **Slaty Spinetail**, **Black-throated Wren**, and **Yellow-billed Cacique** can sometimes be seen. This is all before our 7 AM breakfast! A morning walk will take us to the forest hummingbird feeders. Hummingbirds coming regularly to these feeders include the electric **Violet-crowned Woodnymph**, **Snowcap**, **Green Hermit** with its incredibly long, decurved bill, the large purple **Violet Sabrewing**, and more **White-necked Jacobins**, **Brown Violetears**, and **Green Thorntails**. Birds in the surrounding forest to watch for include **White-ruffed Manakin**, **Stripe-breasted Wren**, **Tawny-capped Euphonia**, and **Tawny-chested Flycatcher**, another rare and very local bird in Central America found regularly, if not daily, at Rancho. We will have the rest of the morning and the entire afternoon to explore the extensive trail system at Rancho. The birding on these trails will be described later in this itinerary. Also, every day while at Rancho, we will return to the lodge for a nice lunch and an even better siesta, a luxury we will not have on our day trips. Another superb dinner, a review of the checklist, and some pleasant conversation will complete the activities for this evening.

- 4 Today we will drive to the nearby Tuis Valley. Along the river watch for **Fasciated Tiger-Heron** and **Torrent Tyrannulet**. As the valley narrows and becomes more vegetated, we will make a concerted effort to locate the resident **Sunbitterns** that live along this section of the Tuis River. A handsome and unique bird when perched becomes even more spectacular in flight, when it shows off the colorful sunbursts in its wings. Birds found in this valley that are absent or rare on Rancho's property include **Great Black Hawk** and **Barred Hawk**, **Ornate Hawk-Eagle**, **Swallow-tailed Kite**, **Black Guan**, **Ruddy Pigeon**, **Sulphur-winged Parakeet**, **Vaux's Swift**, **Amazon Kingfisher**, **Red-headed Barbet**, **Smoky-brown Woodpecker**, **Golden-bellied Flycatcher**, the local **Rufous-browed Tyrannulet**, **American Dipper**, **Band-backed** and **Bay Wrens**, **Olive-crowned Yellowthroat**, **Buff-rumped Warbler**, the aptly named **Elegant Euphonia**, a host of **tanagers** including **Emerald**, **Black-and-Yellow**, and **Speckled**, and **Thick-billed Seed-Finch**. One mega-rarity we will search for is the mythical **Lanceolated Monklet**, this valley being the only regular site in Costa Rica in recent years for this diminutive puffbird. The hike is a little demanding in that the trail is up and down and often muddy, but we will go slowly to accommodate everyone. Back to Rancho for lunch and a well-deserved siesta. In the afternoon we will take a short walk into the gorge by the lodge to visit the bathing pools along a small stream. Discovered in 1993 by Kevin

while exploring one afternoon, these pools have delighted many a guest over the years. Apparently hummingbirds like to take an afternoon bath after being around sticky sugar water and nectar all day. These shallow pools provide a perfect place for them to do this. In the late afternoon light we will sit and watch one hummingbird after another come in, hover over the water, and then dip several times into the pools. The most dips ever counted for one hummingbird was a male **Violet-crowned Woodnymph** with a remarkable 48 splashes before flying to a nearby perch to preen. **Snowcaps** and **Violet-crowned Woodnymphs** are regular bathers, along with the stunning **Purple-crowned Fairy**. Non-hummingbirds that sometimes frequent the pools include **Dull-mantled Antbird**, **Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush**, **White-throated Spadebill**, and **Carmioli's Tanager**. From January to April of 2004, a pair of **Tawny-throated Leaf-tossers** delighted guests as they came in like clockwork at 5:30 PM for a 5 to 10 minute splashing. Back to the lodge for a break before dinner. Another pleasant evening, viewing Volcanoes Turrialba and Irazu from the porch.

- 5 Today we will visit the lush valleys, rushing rivers, and mossy pre-montane rainforest of Tapanti National Park. This park is a two-hour drive from Rancho, so we will leave after an early breakfast to make the most of our time there. Located at a higher elevation than Rancho, Tapanti will give us an opportunity to see new birds that are characteristic of this altitudinal belt. Birding the trails and roadside within the park we will look for the local **Black-bellied Hummingbird**, **White-bellied** and **Purple-throated Mountain-Gems**, **Green-fronted Lancebill** along the streams, **Red-headed** and **Prong-billed Barbets**, **Emerald Toucanet**, **Olivaceous Woodcreeper**, **Ruddy Treerunner**, **Spotted Barbtail**, **Buffy Tufted-cheek**, **Lineated Foliage-Gleaner**, **Red-faced Spinetail**, **Immaculate Antbird**, the mouse-like **Silvery-fronted Tapaculo**, **Barred Becard**, **Tufted** and **Yellowish Flycatchers**, **Dark Pewee**, **Eye-ringed Flatbill**, **White-throated Spadebill**, **Azure-hooded Jay**, **Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush**, **Spangle-cheeked Tanager**, and **Sooty-faced Finch**. Rarities that we would be very fortunate to find include **Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge**, **Tiny Hawk**, **Black-banded Woodcreeper**, **Buff-fronted Foliage-Gleaner**, **Ochre-breasted** and **Scaled Antpitta**, and **Sharpbill!** Along the rocks in the river watch for **Torrent Tyrannulet**, **Black Phoebe**, and **American Dipper**. En route to Rancho we will stop at a dam to look for a pair of **Bat Falcons** that have been resident here for several years. Amongst the aquatic vegetation along the lake watch for the comically long-toed **Northern Jacana** and in the clear pools for the tiny **Least Grebe**. A late afternoon stop at the agricultural school CATIE should produce **Purple Gallinule**, nesting **Boat-billed Herons**, **Crimson-fronted Parakeet**, **Cocoa Woodcreeper**, **Mangrove Swallow**, and possibly **Green Ibis** and **Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl**. We will arrive back at Rancho in time to clean up before a delicious dinner.
- 6 Today we will spend another relaxing early morning on the balcony getting to know these birds better. After breakfast we will walk the trails into the primary forest. If we come across a mixed flock the birding can be excellent. Watch for **Spotted Woodcreeper**, **Russet Antshrike**, **Checker-throated Antwren**, **Buff-throated Foliage-Gleaner**, **Slaty-capped** and **Sulphur-rumped Flycatchers**, the darling **Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant**, **Cinnamon** and **White-winged Becards**, **Long-billed Gnatwren**, **Lesser** and **Tawny-crowned Greenlets**, **Golden-crowned Warbler**, **Slate-throated Redstart**, **Carmioli's** and **Bay-headed Tanagers**, **Red-throated Ant-Tanager**, **Green Honeycreeper**, and **Olive-backed Euphonia**. Two splendid birds we will see are the **Broad-billed** and **Rufous Motmots**. **Collared**, **Gartered**, and **Black-throated Trogons**

are resident in the forest along with **Golden-olive** and **Rufous-winged Woodpeckers**. Even a small ant swarm can have accompanying **Dull-mantled**, **Spotted**, and **Immaculate Antbirds**, along with **Northern Barred** and **Plain-brown Woodcreepers**, **Scaly-breasted Wren**, and **Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush**. Walking slowly and watching the forest floor we may find a **Great Tinamou** in the trail, **Gray-chested Dove**, a pair of **Chestnut-capped Brush-Finches** in the leaf litter, or the uncommon and local **Purplish-backed Quail-Dove**. One of the more impressive birds of the forest we should see is the **Brown-billed Scythebill**, a woodcreeper with an incredibly long, decurved bill. Along the upper portion of the trail it is not uncommon to find **Crested Guan**. Mixed flocks here could include **Plain Antvireo**, **Rufous Mourner**, and the local **Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager**. In secondary growth along the edge of the forest we hope to find such jewels as **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**, the tiny **Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher**, **White-vented Euphonia**, and **Scarlet-thighed Dacnis**. After a lunch break and siesta, we will continue birding the forest, hoping to see a displaying **White-crowned Manakin** and at least hear the unique call of the **Thrushlike Schiffornis** (hey RICK' ee). **White-collared Manakin** is also resident and is located by the loud snaps the displaying males give with their wings on their leks. Nocturnal species around the lodge include **Pauraque**, which can be seen at dusk, and **Mottled Owl** that may be called in unless we are fortunate and find one on its day roost. After a full day of birding we will once again gather around the dinner table, followed by our daily checklist tally, and later relax in the comfortable atmosphere of the lodge.

Day 7



Chestnut-mandibled Toucan

- - Kim Schutsky, tour participant

Another special day trip, this time to the Caribbean lowlands. We will depart after an early breakfast for the 90-minute drive to EARTH, an acronym for an agricultural school. The habitat varies from gardens, good secondary growth, and gallery, riverine, and primary rainforest. Once there we should begin seeing new birds such as **Pale-vented Pigeon**, **Gray-rumped Swift**, **Roadside Hawk**, and hopefully **Common Black-Hawk**. Birding the patches of forest around the buildings may produce **Gray-necked Wood-Rail**, the local **Central American Pygmy-Owl**, **Red-lored Parrot**, **Amazon Kingfisher**, **Northern Royal Flycatcher**, **Red-legged Honeycreeper**, **Crimson-collared Tanager**, and **Black-cowled Oriole**, to name a

few. The drive to the primary forest reserve goes through excellent secondary growth, where we will watch for **Striped** and **Squirrel Cuckoos**, **Blue-chested Hummingbird**, **Chestnut-mandibled** and **Keel-billed Toucans**, **White-necked** and **Pied Puffbirds**, **Barred** and **Great Antshrikes**, **Dusky Antbird**, the angel-like **Snowy Cotinga**, and **Plain-colored Tanager**. We will check carefully underneath a shelter at the primary forest reserve for the solitary **Ghost Bat**, a medium-sized pure white bat with a pink face and feet. This building is the only place I have ever seen this remarkable mammal. As with many primary forests, it is often quiet in the middle of the day, but

with patience we should find many good birds which may include **Slaty-breasted** and **Great Tinamous**, **Uniform Crake** (rare), **Semiplumbeous Hawk**, **Olive-backed Quail-Dove**, **Mealy Parrot**, **Bronzy Hermit**, **Slaty-tailed Trogon**, **Pale-billed Woodpecker**, **Cocoa Woodcreeper**, **Chestnut-backed Antbird**, **Red-capped Manakin**, **Bright-rumped Attila**, the local **White-ringed Flycatcher**, and **Blue-black Grosbeak**. We will have our picnic at the shelter before birding our way back to the main road. If we were unsuccessful in finding **Sunbittern** in the Tuis Valley earlier in the tour, we will try another location on our return to Rancho. By now Rancho will feel like home and it will be good to get back and see what the cooks have prepared for us tonight.

- 8 Today you will have the option of a relaxing day at Rancho or taking a rather difficult hike up nearby Silent Mountain. The relaxing day involves coffee and crumpets served at tea time on the balcony, no strenuous hiking, casual birding around the feeders and garden, and a nice long siesta in the afternoon. For those wishing to go on the hike, it will be much different. About 25 minutes by 4WD will take us to the foot of Silent Mountain, where we will begin the climb to the forest at the top. The trail is steep and muddy and quite rugged. The birding, however, can be unbelievable, not so much in the numbers of birds but in the quality. Some of the most difficult birds to see in Costa Rica are regular in this forest. Rarities seen on most hikes include **Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl**, **Rufous-rumped Antwren**, **Sharpbill**, and **Rufous-browed and Zeledon's (White-fronted) Tyrannulets**. This is the only known regular site in Costa Rica for the aptly named **Lovely Cotinga**. Rarities occasionally seen here include **Ornate Hawk-Eagle**, **Red-fronted Parrotlet**, **Yellow-eared Toucanet**, **Strong-billed** and **Black-banded Woodcreepers**, **Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser**, the tiny **Ochre-breasted Antpitta**, and the elusive **Rufous-breasted Antthrush**. That's quite a list of rarities! **Resplendent Quetzals** nest within the forest as well. Other more widespread species to look for include **Barred Hawk**, **Barred Forest-Falcon**, **Sulphur-winged Parakeet**, **Black-bellied Hummingbird**, **Acorn Woodpecker**, **Spectacled Foliage-Gleaner**, **Silvery-fronted Tapaculo**, **Barred and Black-and-White Becards**, **Azure-hooded Jay**, **Zeledonia**, **Spangle-cheeked Tanager**, and **Sooty-faced Finch**! We will carry our pack lunch with us and enjoy it as we watch for the cotingas in a favored open area, well within the forest. It is likely to rain at some point on this hike, usually in the afternoon, making the trails even more of a chore. We will make our way down in the afternoon, most likely wet and a bit muddy. A stop at a marsh on the way back has been productive for **White-throated Crake** and the local **White-throated Flycatcher**. We will be very happy to return to civilization for a hot shower and a substantial dinner, and hopefully a VERY good checklist.
- 9 Our schedule today will depend upon departure times at the San Jose Airport. We may have time for a look around the forest or take our last views of the birds from the balcony before having breakfast and then loading up for the airport transfer. We'll say our final goodbyes at the airport after spending a wonderful week of birding at **Rancho Naturalista**.

A map of the tour route can be seen by clicking here:

<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=117812928873209532533.000462062a3537207c273&z=11>

[Important details on page 7]

Leader **Steven Easley** has been guiding in Costa Rica for many years and has an intimate knowledge of the birds, their vocalizations, and their habits. He was formerly one of the expert resident guides at Rancho Naturalista. For many years he has served as a tour leader for birding groups traveling throughout Costa Rica through Rancho's birding agency. Steven lives in Costa Rica and married Magdalena six years ago, who often guides with him. He will take care of your every need on this tour.



Steven Easley

Price \$2355 per person based upon double occupancy. Single accommodations are available for an extra charge of \$145. These are the same prices as were charged in 2011, no increase! Combine this tour with the Northern Costa Rica Tour that immediately follows it and receive a **\$200 discount** on the combined price of these two fantastic tours.

Includes Expert guide service, lodging for 8 nights, entrance fees, transfers to and from San Jose airport, and all ground transportation within Costa Rica. ALL meals are included, beginning with breakfast on the morning of 29 July. You are responsible for dinner the night of your arrival. The Bougainvillea has a fine restaurant. **ALL tips** are included in the tour fee, except for anything that you may wish to give to your tour leader(s) and drivers.

Does not include cost of airfare to and from San Jose. BIRD TREKS will, upon your request, help you obtain the best airfare. Also not included are the cost of alcoholic beverages and items of a personal nature.

Deposit A \$500 deposit will assure your reservation on the tour. The balance is payable 28 April 2012. Costa Rica is a popular and spectacular birding destination. Send your deposit soon to insure your tour reservation and to obtain the best possible airfare.

Extra Services We offer the services of our exclusive Bird Treks travel agent, **Lori Heathcote**, in arranging your air travel. Lori has 26 years of experience in the travel industry and is a veteran birder. Contact her through Bailey Travel at **1-800-224-5399**, or you can e-mail her at **lori@baileytravel.com**. By dealing with Lori you have the security of a 24-hour toll-free telephone number in case of any travel emergency. She can also assist you with all pre- and post tour travel plans. There may be a fee for these services.

Refund and Cancellation Policy With written notice more than 90 days prior to the first day of the tour, 100% of your deposit will be refunded, minus a \$100 service fee. With 30-90 days notice, you will receive a 50% refund of the full cost of the tour. No refund can be made with less than 30 days notice. You will receive a full refund if you provide a replacement for your spot on the tour. No partial refund can be given once the tour begins. We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect your investment. Contact **Allianz Global Assistance** (formerly Access America) and mention **BIRD TREKS ACCAM # F021096**. You can apply via the Internet at **www.allianztravelinsurance.com** or by phone at **1-800-284-8300**.

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