

Costa Rica: Fall Migration | Trip Report

October 4 – 13, 2018 | Written by Peg Abbott



Guides Max Vindas and Peg Abbott, with 10 participants: Mike, Susan, Nettie, Barbara, Mark, Matthew, Kevin, Katherine, Lynn and Walter



Thurs., October 4 Arrivals in San Jose / Gardens of Hotel Bougainvillea

Our October trip to Costa Rica was designed to show off the Caribbean side of the country which has its best weather each fall of the year. Several of our group arrived early to rest up from travel and to enjoy some time in the gardens of Hotel Bougainvillea. Our host company Horizontes handled our airport transfers with ease, so we all were met and well-taken care of.



It was obvious that these gardens are kept with loving care, and feature both native and exotic tropical plants with numerous palms, and both fruiting and flowering trees. In the understory there were numerous heliconias and gingers in bloom - all quite impressive. The orchids were dazzling.

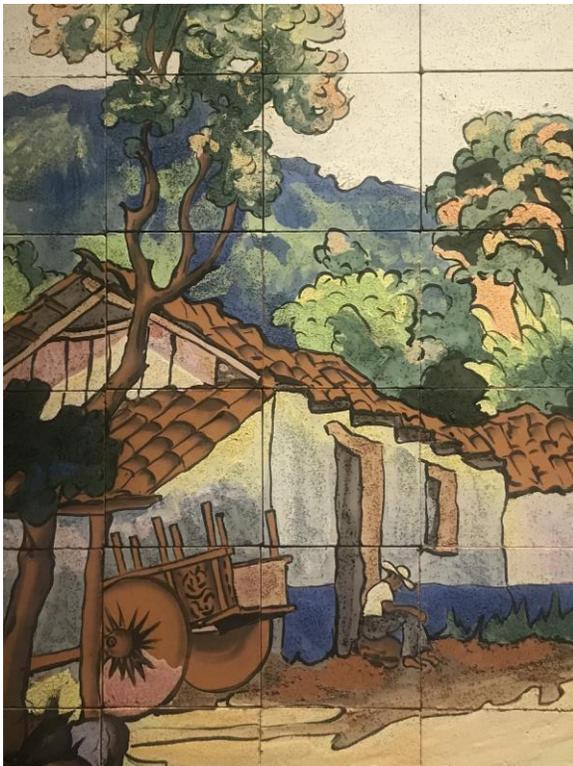


We found Lesson's Motmot to be very tame, and got good views of Blue-gray Tanager, Clay-colored Thrush - about 25 bird species in total. This was first tropical trip for some of the group and it was great fun to spy those first parrots and motmots! The gardens were peaceful and inviting, with water features and sculptures.



After a walk in light rain, we freshened up and met for drinks in the bar, a nice welcome dinner, and introductions for those that arrived this afternoon. We enjoyed the

colorful artwork and ambiance of the dining room.



Susan and Peg stayed up to greet those arriving after 8PM. The hotel was most accommodating and they all still got dinner before a good night's rest. An exciting adventure ahead!



Fri., October 5 Hotel Bougainvillea/Braulio Carillo National Park/ Rainforest Tram/E.A.R.T.H University

Many of us rose early to explore the Hotel Bougainvillea gardens before breakfast. There was a soft mist falling, nothing that got in our way, and the hour we spent seemed to vanish all too quickly. We walked out to find two species that typically greet our groups on Day One in Costa Rica - Rufous-collared Sparrow and Clay-colored Robin, both with sweet songs and tame manners. Two Inca Doves cuddled on a branch, wet from last night's rain, and not eager to move. We found a pair of Red-eyed Vireo, and two gaudy Rufous-naped Wrens, which Max pointed out, are more common in the northwest region of the country so we were not likely to see them again. As ours was mainly a Caribbean circuit (chosen for this October timing), this and a Cabani's Wren, were both good garden finds.

Our attentions were quickly drawn to a Lesson's Motmot which was perched fairly high, but still provided good views. Max pointed out that early on, Dr. Alexander Skutch recognized this as a different species than the former Blue-crowned Motmot. His chosen name would have been the Blue-diademed Motmot, which has a nicer ring than Lessons! Walter remembered visiting Dr. Skutch and his wife Pam with Peg on a Costa Rica trip many years ago. Skutch contributed so much to our knowledge base of the life histories of tropical birds and is still much honored here today.

We made a loop through the garden, where the plant life called to us - such loving care given to the upkeep, with a surprisingly rich variety of plantings. A pair of White-fronted Parrots posed for our scope-viewing while Crimson-fronted Parakeets whizzed by overhead. Hoffman's Woodpeckers came in quite close, as did an accommodating Squirrel Cuckoo which Lynn and Kevin got photos of. One of the favorites was a female Rose-throated Becard who was calling and feeding on fruits at close range.

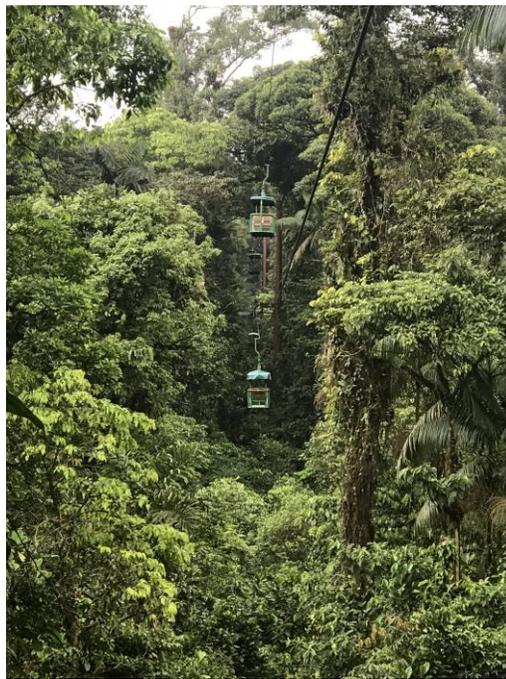




Breakfast was ample, the coffee good and strong, and by 8AM we were packed up and on our way to the Caribbean Lowlands. The drive descending from the Central Highlands was impressive, despite several lanes of busy traffic. One feels the magic of the plant life, noting the huge leaves of Poor-man's Umbrella, lush bromeliad laden vines and tree trunks covering every inch of ground - all towering over the roadway. Rain picked up and gave an even deeper green glow to the landscape.

We pulled into the National Park Visitor site, now modernized (since Peg's last visit) with parking, restrooms and information. A map showed several clearly marked trails, of which we selected a loop of about an hour. At first, we navigated slowly up some steep steps, listening for mixed flocks and any calling, resident birds.

Luckily, the first big action popped out when we topped out from the steps and were on more even footing. This climb was a challenge, so a Song Wren seen well along the way was a nice reward! A small bird explosion in the canopy held Emerald Tanager, beautiful Black-and-yellow Tanager, Tawny-capped Euphonia, Tawny-crowned Tanager and other species. Max had warned that viewing fast moving flocks would be tough in this complexly structured forest. Russet Antshrike was a leader for these gangs, but by following its calls, we were able to keep up for a time. We marveled at the thick tangles, out of which came – Song Wren! What a find!



Next up on our agenda was a chance to relax on a tram ride through the canopy - not a particularly easy way to bird, but a fabulous way to experience a grand view of lush tropical forests. We found a Helmeted Iguana posing near the boarding area and at the turn-around point, we got a good look at a very long, Common Massurana, a luscious-colored black snake that feeds on venomous Fer de Lance.



Two mixed flocks were encountered, giving us a chance to see Blue-and-yellow Tanager (spotted by Mike, our "bird of the day"), a Spotted Woodcreeper, Carmiol's Tanager, and numerous Lesser Greenlets. We did quite well despite the challenge of birding from a moving tram.

We had a nice lunch in the covered, but open-air, dining room, with forest all around us. Nettie had foregone the tram ride and urged us on to see the hummingbird area she had discovered. What a show! A male Snowcap was the



stunning king of the area, chasing off a Violet-headed male, and alongside two female Snowcap, feeding on Vervain. He returned to favorite perches, making our photographers smile. There was an impressive Green Hermit, Crowned Woodnymph, and a Bronze-tailed Plumleteer that showed off its bright red feet.

From here we walked down the road a bit, adding Yellow-faced Grassquit, Eastern Wood Pewee and a few more species. Carlos, our bus driver, kindly followed us and soon we were off, winding down the rest of the mountain gradient to level off in the Caribbean Lowlands. About 45 minutes later, we pulled into E.A.R.T.H. University and checked into our rooms, after marveling at Golden-hooded Tanager. Katherine kept exploring and said with a smile, "There are a ton of birds here!"



Dinner was great for people watching, including students from 15 countries here to study agronomy. We got a peek into this fascinating place, governed by a grandiose mission to engender leadership in sustainable

agriculture around the tropical world. We would see more tomorrow.

Tired from a full day, we tallied our list - 68 species today - and turned in to bed. About 9PM a Mottled Owl called from the wide-spreading trees outside our door. We made an attempt to find it, but to no avail, as it did not respond to our calling.

Sat., October 6 E.A.R.T.H. University Campus/ Bellavista of Guapilles



We awoke to a beautiful sunrise, with shades of orange and pink painting the view of Turrialba Volcano from our balconies. We birded on the grounds of the campus, and enjoyed seeing the dorm rooms. Laundry was hung between potted plants and several students had decorated their porches with oropendola nests, one, intricately painted. Large standing trees were good for finding roosting parrots, parakeets and Montezuma Oropendola. Kevin and Barbara had big smiles watching one turn upside down, emitting its crazy call while in our scope view.



It was a super morning, with good views of Yellow-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, and several parrot family members in the scope, along with Mealy Parrot and both Crimson-fronted and Olive-throated parakeets. Several melastome shrubs were in fruit, attracting a variety of tanagers: Golden-hooded, Blue-gray, Crimson-collared, and Scarlet-rumped. Chestnut-sided and Bay-breasted warblers indicated that the northern migrants were starting to pour in. They joined resident Bananaquit, Tropical Gnatcatcher and Yellow-olive Flycatcher in a fruiting tree. A Green-breasted Mango was feeding high in the canopy and we worked through recognition of Tropical vs. Eastern Wood Pewee with both in view. The hour passed quickly for this optional early morning walk, and as the “coffee bird” was calling loudly, we headed for the dining room.

Once sated, we headed out for a pair of walks this morning on two different lushly forested roads. We got great views of a troop of Howler Monkeys, quite active in a tree, laden with bromeliads but fairly open, affording us super views. Surprising us, were two Spider Monkeys, moving quickly, but parallel to, our walking route. Two Great Green Macaw kept calling but never came into view. We worked on some elusive forest specie - Black-headed Tody Flycatcher in the canopy and a group of Blue-black Grosbeaks down below. We checked rump color on passing swallows and netted a Southern Rough-winged Swallow for our effort.

We had passed through a long area of commercially planted banana crops, learning about how the consumer demand for a clean, easy peel fruit makes for a labor-rich system that uses blue plastic bags wrapped around each bundle, with chemical treatments inside and out. We watched crop dusting planes overhead (and kept the windows closed). Here at E.A.R.T.H, they look at lessening impacts, but to-date, organic bananas have not pulled to the forefront. Maybe some spots on our bananas aren't such a bad thing after all.

Just into the forest, past the fields, we had great views of the iconic Keel-billed Toucan, arguably the most beautiful of its clan. We found more tanagers and other species and at the turn-around point, we found several seedeaters where a margin of forest met grasses laden with seed.



The second walk was on another road with lush forest cover. Just out of the bus, we had good views of a high-soaring Black Hawk Eagle, a study in geometry of wing and tail, very characteristic of the species. A Chestnut-naped Wood Rail crossed the wide trail we walked up, a Squirrel Cuckoo announced its presence loudly and we got striking views of a Broad-billed Motmot.

We then returned to the campus for lunch and took a nice, couple of hours break, before heading out for the afternoon. Max wanted to go up in elevation to a watershed forest reserve near Bellavista of Guapilles. This might give us a chance at seeing migratory raptors along a ridgeline, as well as a few birds in higher than the Caribbean Lowlands we'd been exploring. We did not find a hoped-for movement of raptors, but we did spy a high-flying King Vulture. We found some other good species, including Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Bay-headed Tanager, Stripe-breasted Wren and Yellow-crowned Euphonia.



We had dinner on the route home, at an open-air, corner restaurant that specialized in grilled fish and seafood. Then it was "home" to do the bird list and turn in early after a full day.

Sun., October 7 E.A.R.T.H University Campus Reserve/Solis Family Farm (Frog Heaven)/Maquenque Lodge

We started early in order to return to the dirt road we walked yesterday. While not a long visit, in our short time, we found some great birds - Purple-throated Fruit Crow, Chestnut-backed Antbird, and Red-throated Ant-Tanager.



We also got to see White-faced Capuchin Monkeys and heard multiple troops of Howlers.

Breakfast was a delight in the open-air restaurant named for a huge tree on the grounds, the Kapok. At the buffet, the tropical floral arrangements were stunning and our eggs were cooked to perfection. The salsa picante was crafted with such fine chopping skills, and it was a work of art! At the entry there was



a glass artist at work, crafting lovely poison dart frogs and iguanas and hummingbirds. Several left with our group. Lynn was decorated with one on a necklace for the rest of the trip which we all got to appreciate.



We next headed northwest to the farm of friends of Max, the Solis family, who have recently quit their years of growing cassava and other crops to turn to ecotourism. They started with making the property idyllic for frogs, concerned about the decline of these delicate creatures worldwide. They then added feeders and trails to their property and it has quickly become a hotspot for passing photographers. For us, it was too much FUN! Walter keeps frog tanks and here, was totally in his element. He enjoyed teasing the local guides with photos he'd taken of poison dart frogs in Peru, as if he'd spotted them here.



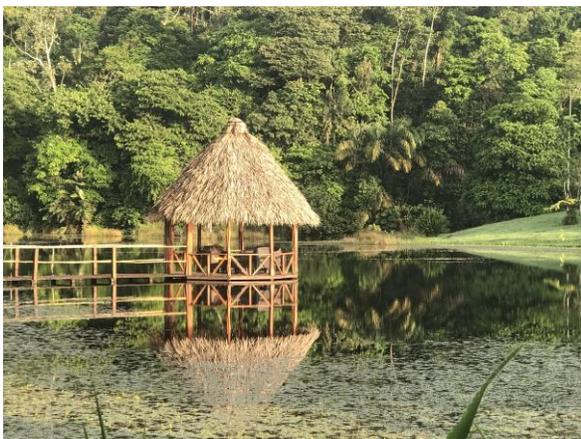
We arrived mid-morning and met the dynamic father/son team that runs this novel project. Walking the trail into the feeder area, we found Lineated Woodpecker, then soon after, a pair of Rufous-winged Woodpecker, a local specialty of the Caribbean side of the divide. The feeders hosted both Green and Red-legged Honeycreepers, several species of tanagers, Buff-throated Saltator and Clay-colored Thrush. The night previous, the father had found a rare Glass Frog and was ready to show us this, and the Blue Jean Poison Dart Frog - both the blue and strawberry races. They worked with us to

get the best photos possible using our phones and tablets, changing light and focus in combinations that

gave the best results of these precious species on their natural perches. Mike took to this quickly and got some wonderful results. A Green-and-black Poison Dart Frog posed for our photo experimentation and was a big hit as well. Nettie enjoyed some time to get to know the family as we headed out on the trail.

Several of us walked a loop looking for birds after getting a look at a Three-toed Sloth. We passed through the forest, finding Barred Antshrike, then into a more open area where a Gray Hawk flew in, calling, then seeming to pose on a very close tree. En route back, several of us found a beautiful Basiliscus Lizard. So much to see! This small property, about 18 acres, has already reached a good habitat diversity in just 9 years and the owners have an amazing future ahead of them. The property is surrounded by farms, an evangelical church (in full swing on this Sunday morning!) and a soccer field, but is a productive wildlife oasis as it is located along a river. Ecotourism now provides for the family's needs, instead of backbreaking farming.

They prepared us a nice homemade lunch with cold, fresh juice, and afterwards, we were on our way north to Maquenque. We had a good birding stop at a pond where we picked up a variety of herons and our first Black-bellied Whistling Ducks.





We arrived mid-afternoon to the smiling faces of the Maquenque staff which helped us unload luggage, as we crossed the San Carlos River by boat, to settle to our “home” for the next few nights.

We welcomed the creature comforts and lovely fabrics and furnishings of our rooms, and the ample porches that had views of the lagoon and its many species. Some chose to rest and enjoy the viewing from their decks, while others joined Max for the first of several walks here.



Happy hour was from 5-6 PM and many of the group gathered to sample local drinks and to relax and enjoy trading stories of our day. Dinner proved to be beautifully presented, with many good choices. Costa Rica is getting “foody!”

Mon., October 8 Maquenque/San Carlos River

A full and wonderful day! We started out with optional early morning birding on the grounds. We set out to walk the wide path down to the boat ramp, but barely got 100 yards when a big group of Collared Aracari flew in. There were at least a dozen and they were on high energy after their wake-up call. What we observed was a lot of sparring. A few individuals (young birds?) flew around and initiated dueling, thrusting their beaks into others, positioning as if to challenge. Two birds would keep at it for several moments, then one would back off or fly away. Some merely hopped down the branch to harass the next in line. Occasionally, a mature bird would make a purposeful flight through and break up the sparring duos. Amid all this, they fed on fruits, petals of Erythrina,



and they poked and probed among leaves. The whole activity was seen at close range and was fascinating!

A Solitary Cacique called and we turned our attention to find it. A bit further down we had very good views of a Long-tailed Tyrant. We watched Mealy Parrot pairs flying over, distinguished them from Red-

lored, which were also present, sorting out the vocalizations. Time passed quickly and soon we had to head for breakfast.



The dining room sits next to the lagoon, and some very active banana feeders in view ensure that few of our bites get taken without an interruption. Lynn and Walter pulled their chairs up right next to the action and had great fun taking photos of Scarlet-rumped Tanager, and even a Purple Gallinule, of all species, up on the banana feeder! Northern Jacana walked the shore, tempting the small Spectacled Caiman nearby.

A troop of Coatimundi greeted us as we gathered for the next outing, a boat ride on the Rio San Carlos. This was the perfect mid-morning way to bird and explore, as the boat motion brought cooling breezes, keeping us quite comfortable.



Along the river we found a good variety of herons, including Bare-throated Tiger Heron. We found two Osprey, a small kettle of migratory Mississippi Kites, and near the pastoral scene of cattle resting on the rivershore, a HUGE American Crocodile nearly covered in mud. No swimming here!

Birding highlights included excellent views of Boat-billed Heron, a trio of Southern Laptwing, and a lone Pectoral Sandpiper hanging out with more numerous Spotted Sandpiper. We sensed a migration movement of Northern Waterthrush with close to a dozen being sighted. It was turning out to be fun to bird here in migration!



We returned for lunch and a nice rest time, during which some elected to swim in the most refreshing swimming pool. The wildlife show at the banana feeders continued, including at one point, having all three honeycreepers: Red-legged, Shining and Green,

feeding together. The Collared Aracaris came in and proved to be quite proficient at feeding on bananas.

Our afternoon walk proved to be very quiet. In dense woods we found a Northern Barred Woodcreeper and a Black-throated Trogon - Matthew's keen eyes helped in spotting both. Peg spotted the nest of a Great Kiskadee and Nettie found a brood of Black-bellied Whistling Duck.

Back to the rhythm of happy hour, dinner and our growing bird list tally.

Tues., October 9 Maquenque/Arenal Region/Celeste Mountain Lodge



This morning we met at 5:30, still a good-sized part of the group opting in, as morning was very productive. Peg held back to see if the Collared Aracari would do their sparing ritual again and indeed they did. This day they also found ripe palm fruits and it was fun to watch them feed. Two pair of Scarlet Macaw flew over but sadly, this trip would net no Great Greens. They had been present the week before, but were off finding their favorite tropical almond trees in more abundant fruit elsewhere. We found Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, and by the open fields at the end of the lagoon, we scored two pairs of Green Ibis, alerted by their distinctive calls.

It was hard to tear ourselves away. The coatimundi troop moved into the banana feeders, climbing nearby stumps but unable to leap. Monkeys they are not. We could feel their frustration!

Max continued his excellent history lecture, this time taking us into modern times, with insights into all of Central America. Time passed quickly ahead of a stop for lunch at Tilijaro, a trendy restaurant with open lawns and feeders along the San Carlos River. Sharing the feeders were Blue-gray, Scarlet-rumped and Palm Tanagers on the wing, and from the ground, several Green Iguana of varied ages. Finally, a BIG Iguana climbed to conquer much of a large papaya in his jaw. We enjoyed the show. Lunch was excellent. We then had a couple hours drive, passing some really lovely scenery near Arenal Volcano, then Tenorio and Miravalles volcanoes.



Our lodge was situated with a fine view of both volcanoes just above Tenorio National Park. It was great fun to walk in and see its innovative architecture with marvelous open spaces, decks, walkways plantings, and furnishings made of recycled materials, such as oil drums. Mark enjoyed surveying the innovations. The couch was covered in what looked like black leather but turned out to be well-crafted pillows and cushions of truck inner tubes! Owners Joel and Selma were on hand to greet us and to encourage us to read about the adventure of building this eco-friendly lodge near Bijagua, now ten years old.

We had time for a walk, finding the most birds just behind the lodge on what Peg dubbed “the magic tree”. Migrants included Yellow Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, and several brilliant Baltimore Orioles. We worked that area awhile, walked down through the gardens, and then continued to the overview of lush forest from the road. People started wandering back, understandably drawn to showers and cocktails, but those who stayed until the end, had a wonderful prize – Tody Motmot!



Celeste Mountain Lodge is very serious about producing wonderful meals from local foods and this evening we had mashed, local sweet potatoes, chicken with a guava sauce, fresh vegetables and rice. Dessert was chocolate cake decorated with butterfly designs.

Wed., October 10 Celeste Mountain Lodge/Tenorio National Park/Blue River

A cascade of sound got us all up early - first the Collared Forest Falcon, then Crested Guan, Fasciated Antshrike, and more. Max had us out at first light, as with other days, which, this time of year means 5:30AM. A Black-cowled Oriole put on a good show, along with a Black-striped Sparrow and several Yellow-throated Euphonia. We worked along the road and found a cooperative pair of Buff-rumped Warbler, and secretive, but providing good looks today, a Streak-crowned Antwreio. Walking back to breakfast we spied 3 Crested Guan. We heard them first, but really had to search, as Walter exclaimed, “How do you hide three turkey-sized birds so well?” The epiphytes literally drip off the trees here; greenery abounds!



We returned for breakfast, then headed down to Tenorio National Park where we hiked a mostly-paved trail, to a lovely waterfall with an opal-blue pool set in the rainforest. Katherine and Susan set the pace, knowing they were bound for a beautiful waterfall in this intriguing place. It was a good trail, paved for half the distance to the falls. There were loads of birds, starting off with a Zone-tailed Hawk, just out of the parking lot. In the forest we hit several mixed flocks. With luck, they seemed to be moving slowly and in time, most got pretty good looks at Black-and-white Warbler, Yellow-crowned Warbler, Plain Xenops, Long-tailed Woodcreeper, Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Slaty-capped Flycatcher, Scale-crested Pygmy

Tyrant and more. Peg had fine views of White-ruffed Manakin, and we heard and had flight views of a pair of Chestnut Woodpeckers.

This was a popular trail, so we had people coming and going, often talking loudly. However, a woman in the party just next to ours gave a loud shriek and we turned to find them staring at a snake. It was a beautiful snake, quite agitated as it normally hangs in trees. It was a vine snake, no thicker than a pencil, but about 2 feet long. Its pattern was lovely, its open gape hinted at a powerful bite. The Green Vine Snake (*Oxybelis* sp.) has a slight venom, enough to stun birds, so it's not to be messed with. It was telling us so; we let it calm and extend itself to slither into the brush. Wow!

In time, Kevin, Peg, Walter and Lynn also got to the falls. Mark had a memorable encounter with a huge caterpillar; others enjoyed the plant life and Mike worked on her photo skills with flowers. Lunch was waiting for us - beef with fresh vegetables, salad and rice, and for those non-beef folks - a nice vegetarian lasagna. The juice today was tart and satisfying.

At 2PM we joined our driver Carlos, to go exploring by bus, crossing over the divide between the volcanoes to Costa Rica's Pacific side. This was a new biome for us, and the views of arching Guanacaste trees over green pastures, mountains behind, wove their spell on us. We found a few birds of that region - Stripe-headed Sparrow, Orange-fronted Parakeet, Brown-crested Flycatcher and the spotted form of Crested Bobwhite. We walked down to a small river before returning to the lodge.

We got back in time to enjoy the sunset and it was a lovely one. Mike used her new iPhone photo skills, learned on our visit to Frog Heaven, to really capture the colors. Nettie just kept smiling, taking all the beauty in. It was nice to gather before dinner, listening to the sounds of the forest through the large, open windows, comfortable on the big couch and its upholstered truck-innertube cushions.



Dinner opened with a heart of palm quesadilla with Dijon mustard and tomato salsa followed by an entrée of tilapia with a delicate sauce from a local fruit, wonderful au gratin potatoes, fresh vegetables and salad. For dessert, oh-too-good cheesecake with a mint and fruit glaze.

Thurs., October 11 Celeste Mountain Lodge Trail/Arenal Lake/Bosque de Paz

The morning started with sounds of a Spectacled Owl followed by a loud chorus of Mantled Howler Monkeys. Alarms started sounding down the row of rooms at 5 AM, from those that wanted to join in an early walk down the road and into the forest. The trail was in excellent shape. Walter commented on the fabric and gravel-fine footing, but the descent was a bit more impressive, so some of the group returned to the road and balcony. Those that continued got good views of Dark-mantled Antbird, Tawny-crowned Greenlet and were serenaded at close range by Nightingale Wren - a beauty. Walking back up, Lynn and Max witnessed two Yellow-throated Toucans raiding the nest of a pair of Collared Aracari.



We made a change in plans to seek out some easier birding for our travel day. Our hosts sent us off with bag lunches, allowing us to explore Arenal Volcano and its surroundings en route. We headed towards the town of La Fortuna, about two hours away. For those that had been to Costa Rica before, the growth of tourism was quite a surprise, with MANY hotels here now, selling riding, hiking, ziplines and hot springs. The volcano itself is quiet, but we could see lava runs from years past, and with clear weather, Arenal's impressive conical shape.



The box lunch was biodegradable, with various sweet and savory treats wrapped in banana leaves. We ate it on benches outside the Arenal National Park office, having walked the quiet road in to look for birds. Among the finds of the day were posing Long-tailed Tyrant and Rufous-tailed Jacamar.



We had a way to go, but took a half hour to poke around town and pick up some gifts, bags of coffee or other souvenirs. Driving to Bosque, we passed through rural areas, and along one ridgeline with fine views of the approaching mountains, keen-eyed Max spied large macaws winging over – Great Greens! We had a scramble to get out of the bus, but once out, we could hear them coming and coming, approximately 25 in total! They passed in twos and threes, and we were able to scope a lone individual perched across the field. What a thrill! It was totally unexpected, but we obviously caught them leaving their feeding area to return to, perhaps a long-ways-off roost area. WOW!

As we ascended the winding mountain road, we passed into light mist, which then turned into heavy rain. The kind staff of Bosque de Paz greeted us with umbrellas and took us into the cozy central room where owner Federico greeted us warmly. We got our keys, found our way to our rooms, then returned for some libations and dinner. Walking to our rooms we spotted Black Guan, a significant species, at the feeders! Just after dark, again at the corn feeder across the stream, a Paca! With these two rare species noted at dusk on our arrival night, we knew we'd landed in a very special place.

Fri., October 12 Bosque de Paz/Zarcero

We met out by the feeders at 5:30AM, and between the good coffee and the amazing level of activity, we did not get far for the first 45 minutes. There were two Black Guan at the feeder early, and seven species of hummingbirds: Violet Saberwing, Purple-throated Mountain Gem, Green Hermit, Black-bellied Hummingbird, Scintillant Hummingbird, Magenta-throated Woodstar and Green-crowned Brilliant. Dense shrubbery surrounded the garden, out of which peeked Chestnut-capped Brush Finch, Silvery-throated Tanager, Wilson's Warbler and numerous Common Chlorospingus.

From here we walked down the main road, finding Black-faced Solitaire, Mountain Thrush, Yellowish Flycatcher, Black-throated Green Warbler and other species. There were many trees in flower, and along the driveway, the lodge owner had placed several spectacular orchids.



After breakfast we headed out on the trails, at first following the rushing stream, then branching off. We found several pair of Tufted Flycatcher and then a mixed flock with Red-faced Spinetail, Ruddy Treerunner, Blackburnian Warbler, Flame-throated Warbler, and a real surprise – a species hard to see in Costa Rica – Black-and-white Becard. The Common Chlorospingus were noisy and clued us in to a canopy flock in which we found Spangle-cheeked and more Silvery-throated Tanagers, and underneath them, Costa Rican Warbler (formerly known as Three-striped). Rounding the bend at a small pond, we found an Orange-kneed Tarantula sunning itself at the mouth of a large burrow. It was a palm-sized, colorful wonder! We walked through incredibly lush woods, all trees just festooned with other life forms, and we whistled encouraging calls to any quetzals that might be feeding in the region. Sadly, none took the bait, and we were not able to find this most beautiful species this day.



We had lunch at the lodge, and several took the afternoon off to rest, pack or simply enjoy

the place and each other. The highlight of lunch was Matthew coming in to ask, "What's this odd bird in the stream?" It was an American Dipper, nearly at the southern end of its range here, but very much at home in the mountain stream. With luck, Lynn had her camera ready, as it put on quite a show, in no hurry to leave the pool and its fast-flowing cascades.

Max had an idea for us and urged us to join him. We set off on the road to Zarcero, a small town known for its beautiful park and church. En route we made several stops, finding Prong-billed Barbet, several Slate-throated Redstart and a Slaty Flowerpiercer. Susan led us on a good laugh at finding quetzal trees (favorite fruiting spots just not in fruit today). The church was packed; some event seemed to be going

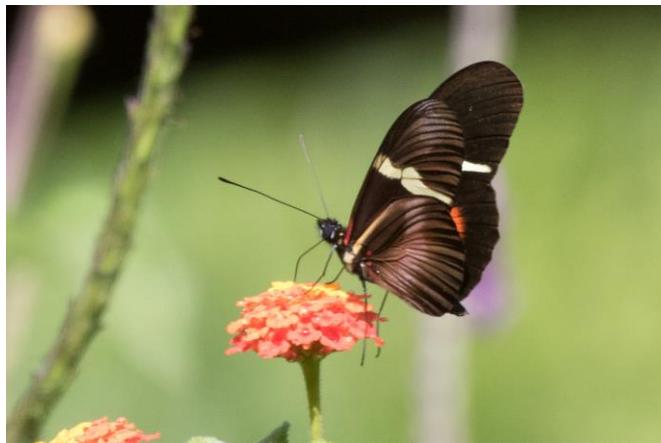
on, with men in suits and booths with food for sale. The park was cute with cypress bushes fashioned into large animals, such as elephants and birds.

We gathered for some wine and conversation, then enjoyed dinner - a breaded fish with tarter sauce, fresh baked cauliflower, and roasted potatoes. For dessert, caramel flan. Peg asked for mentions of some favorite birds. In the list were Blue-and-yellow Tanager, Great Green Macaw, Boat-billed Heron,



American Dipper, the various members of the toucan and aracari clan, and Ochraceous Wren, to name a few. We had done well on mammals, including a Tayra that crossed the road this morning as we came back from the walk. We had a good laugh about Peg's next questions, surprises, and listing out some of the humorous moments of the tour.

Sat. October 13 Return to San Jose from Bosque de Paz/Departures



This trip was a really nice mix of habitat from Atlantic Lowlands to mountain cloud forests. Each lodge was very different and while we probably will not use E.A.R.T.H. again (too much like being back in our college dorms), all the others had real charm, and even E.A.R.T.H. was pretty remarkable for its location, birds and chance to meet up with students from around the world. We loved the wild, remote feel of Maquenque, the splendid views and open-air architecture of Celeste Mountain, and the cozy mountain lodge with big,

spacious rooms at Bosque del Paz. We appreciated the special care each took to be environmentally sound. The lush forests and reserves that surrounded each left us with hopeful spirits.

This morning we hosted one more, short walk and some feeder time, adding yet a few more species. The beautiful Blue-naped Chlorophonia was a treat in a flock of other tanagers, and Dark Pewee finally teed up for a view. A Hairy Woodpecker came into the feeder just after breakfast. Four of our group left quite early to catch a flight, and we had a text that they reached the airport in surprisingly good time. Susan and Mike were lucky enough to have another night at Bougainvillea and a full afternoon to relax.

Max took the scenic route back to the airport, finding a few more species at a lovely waterfall overlook, including Emerald Toucanets.

Until the next adventure, we pledged to trade photos and bid each other adieu!

Photos: Lunch Treats, Collared Aracari with tail cocked, Lynn Feryus. All other photos by Peg Abbott