

Costa Rica

1-17 March 2001

Participants:

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Picture: Lanceolated Monklet

Day 1: Flight from London via Houston to San Jose and transfer to a very comfortable hotel.

Day 2: Everyone was up a first light for a walk around the beautiful grounds of the hotel. Red-billed Pigeons, Inca Doves, Hoffmann's Woodpeckers, Clay-coloured Robins, Great-tailed Grackles, Blue-grey & Palm Tanagers, Grayish Saltators and Rufous-naped Sparrows were common. A nice find was a calling Ferruginous Pygmy-owl whilst we found our first two species of hummingbirds, a single Steely-vented Hummingbird with the numerous Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds. A Blue-crowned Motmot fed on the bird table, two Zone-tailed Hawks flew over and two Rufous-capped Warblers were found but, the best two species were the near endemic Prevost's and White-eared Ground-sparrows. Setting out on our journey to Rancho Naturalista, a single Eastern Meadowlark looked rather incongruous singing in the city and, soon we were seeing regular Cattle Egrets, Turkey and American Black Vultures and Tropical Kingbirds. Stopping at a reservoir for lunch, we added a number of new species including Least Grebe, Blue-winged Teal, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Blue-and-white Swallow and Black Phoebe. Continuing on to Rancho Naturalista, we firstly checked the river for the Lanceolated Monklets but the only birds of note were a flock of Sulphur-winged Parakeets, Collared Trogon, Social Flycatchers, Golden-crowned Warbler and Blue-black Grassquit. After checking into our rooms for our four-night stay and meeting our local guide Matt, we watched the feeding station for a while rapidly adding many more species to our lists. Grey-headed Chachalaca, White-tipped Dove, White-crowned Parrot, Plain and Southern House Wrens, the amazing displaying Montezuma Oropendola and the less common Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Masked Tityra, Groove-billed Ani, Brown Jay, Mourning Warbler, Slate-throated Redstart, Black-throated Saltator, Golden-hooded & Passerini's Tanager and Yellow-faced Grassquit

all showed well whilst the hummingbirds were represented by White-necked Jacobin, Green-breasted Mango, Green Thorn-tail, Violet-crowned Woodnymph and Green-crowned Brilliant. A rather sad event however, was the discovery of the still warm body of a White-tipped Sicklebill, a rarely seen species and the first for Rancho Naturalista. It had been chased into a window by a territorial Rufous-tailed Hummingbird.

Day 3: Dawn found everyone on the balcony drinking coffee and waiting for the birds to appear. We were not disappointed with Collared Aracari's and Black-cheeked Woodpeckers being some of the first. Keel-billed Toucan sat on top of a distant tree whilst flycatchers included Great Kiskadee and Boat-billed & Grey-crowned Flycatchers. Bananaquit, Tennessee Warbler, Summer Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, Melodious Blackbird, Bronzed Cowbird and Black-striped Sparrow were also all new in a wonderful pre-breakfast hour but, the star bird was a Little Tinamou. After breakfast, we took a walk on the trails with our first stop being only a few yards down the paths where two Mottled Owls were roosting. We continued on to the hummingbird feeders where, Little & Green Hermits and Snowcap were all new. The later in particular was a much-wanted bird and several superb males gave excellent views. A rather drab Rose-throated Becard appeared in the trees above us with an American Redstart. The group now split into two for a walk around the forest trails. After lunch we reversed group and during our respective walks, a huge variety of species were seen including Gray-chested Dove, Violaceous Trogon, Broad-billed & Rufous Motmots, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Plain-brown Woodcreeper and Plain Xenops. Russet Antshrike, Plain Antvireo, Chequer-throated, Slaty & Dot-winged Antbirds, Dull-mantled Antbird and Red-crowned Ant-tanager were all seen, showing the groups the importance of ant swarms although, they are an infrequent sight. A wide variety of flycatchers were also found including Sulphur-bellied, Dusky-capped, Yellow-bellied, Yellow-olive and Slaty-capped Flycatchers, Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant, Mistletoe (Paltry) Tyrannulet, Yellow-bellied Elaenia and Cody Tody-flycatcher. Warblers were represented by Wilson's, Chestnut-sided (commonest), Black-and-white, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian and Golden-winged Warblers, Tropical Parula, Lesser Greenlet and Tropical Gnatcatcher whilst tanagers added to the colour with Emerald, Speckled and Black-and-yellow Tanagers with Green Honeycreeper and Scarlet-thighed Dacnis. Black-shouldered & White-lined Tanagers, White-ruffed & White-collared Manakins and Orange-billed Sparrows proved that not everything in the forest is colourful! Before lunch we dropped down into the valley to look for Torrent-tyrannulet but as we searched, we were amazed to find a Sunbittern on her nest. Also seen here were American Swallow-tailed Kite, White-collared Swift and a single Southern Rough-winged Swallow amongst the more common wintering Northern Rough-winged Swallows. Returning to the lodge for lunch, we also took the opportunity to take a rest on the balcony where, Broad-winged & Sharp-shinned Hawks were new and the Little Tinamou showed well again. After lunch we walked around the trails again followed by a visit to the drinking pool. On the way down a Ruddy Quail-dove showed well on the path but a Tawny-chested Flycatcher proved more elusive. Finally, we were treated to good views of a Purple-crowned Fairy bathing, what an end to a fantastic day.

Day 4: After the usual early morning coffee on the balcony watching the birds followed by breakfast, we returned to the valley seeing the Sunbittern again and Ruddy Ground-dove en-route. Immediately we found a Tropical Pewee whilst a couple of Grey-breasted Martins flew overhead. Something very special then followed however, we found not one but two Lanceolated Monklets which, gave amazing and prolonged views for this normally rarely seen species. American Dipper was added to our lists before returning to the lodge where we spent the rest of the day exploring the trails again. We were still finding plenty of new birds and equally importantly, members of the group were able to catch up with species they had previously missed. New birds during the day included Hook-billed Kite, Short-billed Pigeon, Squirrel Cuckoo, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Spotted & Wedge-billed Woodcreepers, Slaty Spinetail, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, White-crowned Manakin, Sulphur-rumped, Olive-striped & Ochre-bellied Flycatchers, Wood Thrush, Louisiana Waterthrush, Buff-rumped Warbler, Scarlet-rumped Cacique, Olive-backed Euphonia, Silver-throated Tanager and Chestnut-capped Brush-finch.

Day 5: After an early breakfast we left for Tapanti flushing a Common Pauraque on the entrance track. En-route, we saw a White-tailed Kite and finally caught up with Torrent Tyrannulet during a rather amusing incident when the bus got stuck under a bridge support! Whilst waiting to pay at the entrance station Red-tailed Hawk and Dark Pewee were also seen. The habitat in Tapanti is slightly different from that at Rancho with a higher elevation and a much larger area of pristine forest. Consequently, we had a lot of new birds to look for. With a combination of birding from the road and walking some of the trails, we added a number of new species although, one of the best was seen at the very beginning, a superb Zeledonia, a notoriously difficult species which, responded well and gave good views to virtually everyone. This was even a lifer for Tony who was in Costa Rica for 4 years previously! Almost as difficult and equally rewarding was a Sooty-faced Finch. The trail down to the river was alive with birds, firstly with thrushes where Slaty-backed Nightingale-thrush and Mountain & White-throated Robins were seen then with funerids, with Streak-headed & Wedge-billed Woodcreepers, Spotted Barbtail, Ruddy Treerunner, Lineated Foliage-gleaner and Streak-breasted Treehunter all found foraging in a loose flock. Azure-hooded Jays showed well near the river before we enjoyed a rest by the river in this beautifully tranquil steep-sided valley. Hummingbirds were represented by Black-bellied Hummingbird and White-bellied & Purple-throated Mountain-gems and a flock of Spangled-cheeked Tanagers were found near the trail entrance before we moved up the valley. Both Prong-billed Barbet & Black-faced Solitaire were heard but not seen but, as we searched for them, a number of Band-tailed Pigeons were found and Double-toothed Kite and Black-chested Hawk seen in flight. Other new species seen during the day included several flycatchers; Bright-rumped Attila, Golden-bellied, Yellowish & Tufted Flycatchers, Dark Pewee and White-throated Spadebill, wrens; Ochraceous Wren and Grey-breasted Wood-wren, tanagers; Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Black-hooded & Yellow-throated Euphonias and Common Bush-tanager and warblers; Brown-capped Vireo and Three-striped Warbler. The return journey was made via a different route to avoid the bridge and we arrived back to Rancho just before dusk with our total for just four full days standing at 219 species.

Day 6: This morning we said farewell to Rancho seeing a Short-tailed Nighthawk as we loaded the coach! With the exception of several very co-operative Roadside Hawks and a fly-by Barn Swallow, little much of note was seen until we reached the entrance road to Earth. Shortly after being allowed in, we had brief views of a Snowy Cotinga followed by 3 Black-crowned Tityras. Meeting up with our host, we firstly visited her garden where Crimson-collared Tanager was the highlight. En-route to the lowland rain forest which is not generally open to the public, we stopped for a Pied Puffbird heard calling. After some time, we managed to locate the bird and were rewarded with excellent telescope views on top of a tree. Shortly after arriving at the forest, a superb King Vulture flew over, shortly followed by Plumbeous Kite and Short-tailed Hawk and Lesser Swallow-tailed Swifts. The forest proved difficult to work as the trails were not designed with groups in mind but we gradually accumulated a reasonable list of birds including Red-capped Manakin and a few reptiles of which Poison Dart Frog was the highlight. Ironically, one of the nicest birds was a Blue Ground-dove found right by the coach when we returned for lunch! We returned to the Earth campus (it is an agricultural research station) to look for a Ringed Flycatcher. Although we didn't find it, we were nevertheless pleased to see several Mangrove Swallows together with a Thick-billed Seed-finch. The Spectacled Owl also proved elusive but, we were somewhat compensated by excellent views of a roosting Common Pauraque and a flock of Olive-throated Parakeets. Continuing on, only common birds were seen from the bus until we found an Orange-chinned Parakeet by the side of the road. Little Blue Heron and Great Egret were added to the list until we eventually arrived at Gaviion Lodge. After unpacking and checking into our rooms, a short walk around the grounds gave us Smoky-brown Woodpecker and Black-cowled Oriole. Driving the short distance to La Selva entrance road, we were able to bird the last couple of hours of daylight. Barred & Black-striped Woodcreepers, Rufous Piha, White-throated Flycatcher, Black-headed Tody-flycatcher, Banded-backed Wren, Long-billed Gnatwren and Yellow-crowned Euphonia all showed well with a brief flyover Blue-headed Parrot as well. Returning to the lodge, we were just changing for dinner when noises outside indicated that everyone was moving. It quickly transpired that a Spectacled Owl had been found and we were all treated to amazing torchlight views. What an end to the day!

Day 7: We arrived at the La Selva entrance road shortly after dawn and birded the road down to the security gate. En-route we had excellent views of a Laughing Falcon eating a snake. A good selection of flycatchers were found including Piratic & White-ringed Flycatchers and Long-tailed Tyrant. A Grey Catbird was also seen while a Semiplumbeous Hawk flew over. We were allowed in at 08.00 and drove on to the information centre where we were met by our local guide. Even as we checked in, we were greeted with superb views of several Chestnut-mandibled Toucans. The trail system is across the river and walking across the suspension bridge was an interesting experience! In fact, the day at La Selva was split into two with morning and afternoon walks returning to our lodge for lunch. Immediately after crossing the bridge we started to see new birds even around the accommodation blocks. A Rufous-winged Woodpecker was nesting in a dead tree and a pair of White-necked Puffbirds were calling from the top of a tree. La Selva is a superb reserve of pristine lowland rainforest with an excellent trail system. You are only allowed in with a guide unless you are staying in the reserve undertaking research. As is usual on forest trails, birdwatching is difficult because most birds are either in the canopy or skulking in the undergrowth. In fact the trails at La Selva are quite wide but even with the most experienced of local guides the situation was no different than other trails we walked both before and after. With a great deal of perseverance however, we slowly added new species to our lists. A flock of Mealy Parrots initially proved hard to find but eventually one was well seen in the telescope. Slaty-tailed Trogons proved somewhat easier but unfortunately, Purple-throated Fruitcrow only showed briefly to a few. A Blue-black Grosbeak proved amazingly difficult to spot compared with its relatives but the two Buff-throateds, Woodcreeper and Foliage-gleaner and Blue Dacnis were more co-operative. Potentially one of the most difficult birds to see was an Ocellated Antbird which, was calling but our guide expertly called it in for everyone to see. Several Dusky-faced Tanagers eventually showed to everyone just as we reached the forest edge and started retracing our steps. On the way back, a tiny Black-capped Pygmy-tyrant gave tantalising glimpses at the top of the very tallest trees and on reaching the accommodation area again hummingbirds included Violet-headed & Blue-chested Hummingbirds and Black-crested Coquette were seen together with a Shining Honeycreeper.

After lunch at the lodge, we returned to meet our guide again and whilst waiting for him enjoyed views of an Iguana at the top of a large tree. Immediately after crossing the bridge again an Agouti entertained us. This time we took another trail where the most amazing find was a Slaty-breasted Tinamou, which seemed oblivious to our presence. Black-faced Antthrush another forest floor skulker showed to most people but thereafter there was nothing new seen and it started to drizzle. With our guide having to return by 17.00, we returned to the information centre seeing a Coatamundi at the exact spot we had earlier seen the Agouti. We were greeted with the news that a Great Potoo had been found at its roost and after hurried negotiations we got our guide to take us back. Because of failing light and our guide's commitments, we had to virtually run back but it was worthwhile as we had splendid views of the bird at roost, a splendid end to the day.

Day 8: Today we visited the valley of Virgen Del Socorro. En-route, a couple of Muscovy Ducks flew over, Red-lored Parrots were found in a tree and we made a brief stop at a small lake where Pied-billed Grebes were seen. The track down into the valley was absolutely superb although we had not expected to see many new birds; we were amazed at the sheer numbers of birds. There were several large feeding flocks and unlike previous experience we were able to look down on them and they remained in the area for a considerable time. There were mixed flocks of warblers and tanagers with the only new ones being Yellow-throated Vireo and Tawny-crested Tanager. Both Gray-headed Kite and White Hawk flew around before the White Hawk obligingly sitting on the top of a tree for everyone to see. Yellow-margined Flycatcher was new but we were also pleased to have prolonged close views of both Golden-bellied and Tufted Flycatchers. A Red-faced Spinetail was the only one of the tour. We only walked half a mile down the valley to the bridge and back for it took us 4 hours such was the number of birds! Our next stop proved to be equally rewarding, a nearby café with hummingbird and other feeders. This was a most relaxing experience birding whilst comfortably seated drinking coffee! Coppery-headed Hummingbird (a virtual endemic) was quite common here but more spectacular were the Violet Sabrewings. From our vantagepoint we were able to watch more feeders in another café and a small ravine with water running down it. The real surprise was a Prong-billed Barbet visiting the other café's feeder, a species we thought we had missed. A Long-tailed Hermit also visited their feeder whilst a couple of Slaty-backed Nightingale-thrushes were found in the ravine. On the return journey to the

lodge, a large group of Red Howler Monkeys were found by the roadside. During the late afternoon we walked around the lodge grounds again with some of the group seeing Scaled Pigeon. Other birds seen included Northern Waterthrush and superb views of Buff-rumped Warbler and Streak-headed Woodcreeper.

Day 9: Leaving Gaviion Lodge, we drove to Braulio Carrillo close to San Jose, seeing Osprey en-route. This is a superb reserve but with steep narrow trails birding can be difficult at times. We were looking for several specialities here and with perseverance saw some of them. A feeding flock close to the entrance contained a number of Tawny-crested Tanagers and Black-faced Grosbeaks together with a real prize, a Blue-and-gold Tanager. We then heard a Black Hawk-eagle calling and eventually saw it a couple of times in flights and briefly perched. Amazingly a second Blue-and-gold Tanager was seen in another feeding flock together with a Slate-coloured Grosbeak before we heard a Lattice-tailed Trogon calling. Unfortunately, even with an extensive search, we failed to find it despite standing under the tree! Moving on, we passed through San Jose before climbing high into the mountains stopping only for lunch. Turning off the main road on the long dirt track down to Savegre Mountain Lodge, we decided to walk some of the way. Immediately we were looking at a Volcano Junco and a Black-capped Nightingale-thrush, it was difficult to know which way to look. New birds then rapidly followed with Acorn Woodpecker, Black-capped Flycatcher, Sooty Robin, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Townsend's Warbler, Slaty, Large-footed and Yellow-thighed Finches and Yellow-throated Brush-finch. Its amazing what a change of habitat can do! Reaching the lodge, we checked into our excellent rooms before assembling on the porch to look at the hummingbirds and what a display! Grey-tailed Mountain-gem, and Magnificent, Scintillant, & Volcano Hummingbirds were all new but several other species were also present. Walking around the grounds before dinner, a number of new species were seen including Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Mountain Elaenia, Ruddy-capped Nightingale-thrush, Flame-coloured Tanager, Black-faced Grosbeak, Sooty-capped Bush-tanager and Slaty Flower-piercer. Finally, to cap an excellent day, the food at the lodge was excellent.

Day 10: It was extremely cold at first light and jumpers/coats were the order of the day! Black-thighed Grosbeaks were around the lodge and after breakfast, we headed uphill towards the forest but it took us a long time to get there because we spent a lot of time looking for the elusive Black-faced Solitaires. Whilst looking for the solitaires we found Yellow-bellied Siskin and several Collared Redstarts and Philadelphia Vireos. Eventually one sharp-eyed member of the group spotted a trogon in a tree. But it wasn't a trogon it was a female Resplendent Quetzal, the Holy Grail for us in Costa Rica! Now all we needed to find was a male! A Rufous-browed Peppershrike was eventually pinned down before we entered the forest. Several members of the group managed to see Silvery-fronted Tapaculo but as usual for this genus it was highly elusive. Two Blue-throated (Emerald) Toucanets performed well in the canopy for all to see and several Buffy Tuftedcheeks were equally obliging. Returning downslope to the lodge for lunch, the group was well spaced and one fortunate member saw a Black Guan. After lunch we watched a Yellow-winged Vireo before driving back up the valley to another site for Resplendent Quetzal, seeing a pair of Collared Trogons incongruously sat on telephone wires en-route. It was suggested that we returned in the morning as they performed best then so we returned to the lodge to walk the trails there again. Two members of the group decided to walk back however and were rewarded with Fiery-throated Hummingbird. The afternoon walk still failed to yield a Black-faced Solitaire but Black Guan, Bat Falcon, Merlin and Silvery-fronted Tapaculo were seen by at least some of the group.

Day 11: First thing this morning we returned up the valley to the other quetzal site and we were not disappointed as within a few minutes we were watching a female. But the best was still to come; a male called and then flew into the trees on the other side of the valley. Although further than we would have liked we all had good views and started to return to the coach. We then found another male, which gave absolutely stunning views so; we were able to return to the lodge in high spirits to pack. One more try for the Black-faced Solitaire but our only consolation was a Ruddy Pigeon as well as many of the species previously seen. The drive back out of the valley proved interesting, the fully laden coach couldn't make it so we had to walk! This proved fortuitous however, as we found a Black-cheeked Warbler. With a fairly long drive in front of us we drove without a stop except for a short lunch-break until we reached a town park. This is a regular roost site for Black-and-white Owl and we were not disappointed with 3 seen exceptionally well. Also present were White-winged Doves, Rufous-naped Wrens and 2 Two-toed Sloths, amazing for a noisy town park! We continued on seeing Crested Caracara en-route until we reached Villa Lapas Hotel, our base for the next two nights. Whilst being checked in someone spotted a tiger-heron perched above us next to its nest. Because it was hunched up it initially proved difficult to identify but eventually we saw the bare throat, so it was of course, a Bare-throated Tiger-heron! Both Mangrove (Yellow) Warbler and Red-legged Honeycreeper were also added before we reached our rooms! Next we drove up the hill high above Carara getting splendid views of the Pacific Ocean and rainforest. Very soon we were seeing our first Scarlet Macaws flying over with some of them settling in distant trees. A small feeding flock of birds included Western Tanager, Blue Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting whilst a lucky few saw 3 Fiery-billed Aracaris. A couple of King Vultures soared overhead with the Turkey Vultures and a raptor on a dead tree below was identified as a Grey Hawk. With the day drawing to a close, we decided to walk some of the way back down the hill and were rewarded with excellent views of 2 Crested Guans.

Day 12: After an early breakfast, we started the day at Carara walking the river trail. To say that it was bird-rich would be an understatement, it was superb. There were several highlights including Baird's Trogon, Orange-collared Manakins at their lek, Northern Royal Flycatcher and Northern Bentbill but the supporting cast was also good. Golden-naped Woodpecker, Chestnut-collared & Dusky Antbirds, Streaked Flycatcher, Riverside & Rufous-breasted Wrens and Kentucky Warbler were all seen. When we got to an oxbow lake from the river Olivaceous Cormorant, Anhinga, Green Heron, American Purple Gallinule, Ringed & Amazon Kingfishers and Louisiana Waterthrush were all seen. Oh yes, there was also the small matter of a colony of Boat-billed Herons at point-blank range! An American Crocodile and several Stenasours (very large prehistoric looking lizards) also entertained us. The morning had simply flown by the time we had to return to the hotel for lunch where a flock of White Ibises were waiting to greet us. After lunch we visited Tarcol Lodge where we were greeted with cold

drinks and a multitude of herons and waders. Brown Pelicans, Yellow-crowned Night-herons, Reddish & Snowy Egrets, Roseate Spoonbill, Black-bellied, Semipalmated & Wilson's Plovers, Whimbrel, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, Ruddy Turnstone, Short-billed Dowitchers, Sanderling, Least Sandpiper, Laughing Gull and Royal Tern were all present with some being harried by the menacing Magnificent Frigatebirds. New raptors included Common (Mangrove) Black-hawk and Yellow-headed Caracara. Returning to Carara, we saw a couple of Ferruginous Pygmy-owls en-route before spending the late afternoon working another trail. The first surprise was a Collared Forest-falcon, which showed superbly, sat in the canopy. The next was an even greater surprise a Great Tinamou walking around virtually in the open. Just when we thought that it couldn't get better it did, a Spectacled Antpitta was feeding on the trail! Of course, it couldn't carry on like this but nevertheless, Black-headed Antshrike, Black-faced Antthrush, Blue-crowned and Red-capped Manakins and Black-bellied Wren all added to our enjoyment before a second Great Tinamou proved even more of an exhibitionist!

Day 13: This morning we walked along the canopy walkway. It was a spectacular walk but fairly quiet birdwise. We heard Long-tailed Manakin and saw a few good species that we had seen previously but, the only new bird was Barred Antshrike. Returning to the hotel for breakfast we added Red-eyed Vireo to our lists. After breakfast we drove to Tarcol village where after a thorough search we found 2 White-throated Magpie-jays. A long walk along the beach was very pleasant but failed to add the expected Collared Plover with Just Sandwich Tern being new. Returning to Tarcol Lodge via the mangroves things started to improve however, with firstly a Yellow-green Vireo found then the Pacific Screech-owl at its roost. Shortly afterwards a Prothonotary Warbler was found soon followed by a pair of Turquoise-browed Motmots. After cold drink we returned to the hotel for lunch, packed and returned to the Tarcol River for an afternoon boat trip. It was a marvellous experience enlivened by getting stuck on a mudbank! Nevertheless, we gradually added Black-necked Stilt, Western Sandpiper, Wood Stork and Peregrine before the tide was high enough to allow us to travel up the main channel. We were looking for kingfishers and mangrove specialist birds. Green Kingfisher caused a brief bit of excitement but we were looking for a smaller one. Greenish Elaenia was new and then one of the specialities was found; a Mangrove Hummingbird. With time running out we headed back but almost immediately a small kingfisher flew across the river, yes, it was an American Pygmy Kingfisher. Finally, a couple of White-fronted Parrots were seen on the return voyage. A wonderful trip with numerous birds but now we had a long coach journey ahead of us. Fortunately we could relax and watch the scenery go by until eventually, just as it was getting dusk, several Lesser Nighthawks were seen flying across the road. We arrived at our new hotel mid-evening, checked into our rooms and had our evening meal.

Day 14: Before an early breakfast we had time to make a brief walk in the grounds of the hotel with Streak-backed Oriole being new. Next we visited the Palo Verde reserve about an hours drive away. At first the entrance road in was rather quiet with the exception of a Roadside Hawk and a superb Laughing Falcon. A sudden stop for a trogon certainly lived matters up however, with Mourning Dove, Common & Pale-bellied Ground-doves, Cinnamon Hummingbird and Stripe-headed Sparrow all being added to the list. Oh, and the trogon, it was also new, A Black-headed Trogon. A Cooper's Hawk soared overhead before our next stop give us an identification problem was it a Yellow-billed Cuckoo? After finally getting good views it was a Mangrove Cuckoo but somewhat out of habitat. Dropping down into an area of rice fields Red-winged Blackbirds were very common and in a dry field we found our first Double-striped Thick-knee. We made several more stops once in the reserve proper seeing a number of Black-headed Trogons in the dry forest together with a single Elegant Trogon. Eventually we reached the marsh and on the lagoons found Glossy Ibis, Blue-winged Teal and Limpkin amongst the numerous Black-bellied Whistling-ducks. Continuing to the river we watched a constant stream of Wood Storks passing over and then finally there it was, the bird we had all come to see here, a magnificent Jabiru soaring in the distance and eventually overhead. Several mammals were seen well including White-tailed deer, Red Howler Monkey and White-faced Capuchin. Retracing our steps, we visited a series of pond where a Harris's Hawk was seen soaring in the distance, Muscovy Duck lurked under the trees and Black-crowned Night-herons roosted in the trees. After lunch at the hotel, we returned to Palo Verde and spent the afternoon seeing many of these species again as well as Swainson's Thrush, White-lored Gnatcatcher and Cherrie's Tanager. On the way out of the reserve a Yellow-headed Blackbird was seen and finally, in the gathering dusk, a number of Lesser Nighthawks flew over the woods.

Day 15: Today was our last full day and we started off well, finding a Lesser Ground-cuckoo in the hotel grounds. It was very elusive but eventually showed well. During our walk in the grounds there was a constant stream of Western Kingbirds flying overhead and we discovered some fruit bats roosting in a palm by the pool. After breakfast we set off for the return journey to San Jose, making a number of stops en-route. Although nothing new was added, it was pleasant seeing many of the species we had seen before. Arriving in our hotel in the late afternoon, we were pleased to find that the two Tropical Screech-owls were showing well. Several members of the group still needed either Prevost's or White-eared Ground-sparrows which, they were able to catch up with either in the evening or the following morning.

Day 16: After some early morning birding in the hotel grounds seeing many of the common species again, we set off for the airport for the return flight home via Houston.

Day 17: Arrival back in the UK at the end of the tour.