

Birding Costa Rica

27. February – 7. April 2011

by Bent Otto Poulsen

Arenal Observatory Lodge; Cerro Lodge; Colorado Salinas; El Tapir Butterfly Garden; Heliconias Lodge; Kiri Lodge; Lagarta Lodge – Nosara; Laguna de Lagarto Lodge; La Paz Waterfall Gardens; La Selva Biological Station; Mata Redonda Marsh; Monteverde Reserve; Paraiso de Quetzal; Quebrada Gonzales; San Gerardo Biological Station; Santa Elena Reserve & Savegre Mountain Lodge.



Cloud forest on the way down to San Gerardo Biological Station, Bosque Eterno de los Niños

- with my family

MAP – COSTA RICA with all sites visited



A Bird-Finding Guide to Costa Rica by Barrett Lawson 2009 is an indispensable companion

Introduction

This trip was my second visit to Costa Rica – the first one took place 24 years ago before any field guides were available. The first trip encompassed Volcan Barva, the Sirena Field Station in the Corcovado NP, Santa Rosa NP, Palo Verde NP, Monteverde Reserve and La Selva Biological Station. In combination with birds seen in South America the present trip therefore only produced 71 new species but a lot of nice re-sightings in this wonderful country. In a brief abstract of the present trip I would mention the following species as the major high-lights:

Slaty-breasted Tinamou, Jabiru, Black-breasted Wood-Quail, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Agami Heron, Boat-billed Heron, Upland Sandpiper, Buff-fronted Quail-Dove, Great Green

Macaw, Mangrove Cuckoo, Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo, Black-crested Coquette, Green Thorntail, Coppery-headed Emerald, Snowcap, Black-bellied Hummingbird, Resplendent Quetzal, Tody Motmot, Spotted Antbird, Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Bare-necked Umbrellabird, Three-wattled Bellbird, Blue and Gold Tanager, Sooty-faced Finch, White-eared Ground-Sparrow, Volcano Junco and Painted Bunting.

There are many different arguments for selecting the above list of species – new species, species seen under brilliant circumstances, colourful species, species in action or interaction, strange behaviour, hard to see or find species or simply species I would like to see for more obscure reasons. But many more species were encountered. They can be found in the list at the end of this report.



Black-breasted Wood-Quail, Monteverde

Cerro Lodge - Carara NP

The Carara NP area is rich in species due to the many different habitats like rivers, ponds, fields, dry forest, wet forest and mangrove forest. The list of species is correspondingly long. However, some species always stand out more clearly than others. Here are some of the more memorable ones from my list. Cerro Lodge: *Black and White Owl*, *Scarlet Macaw*, *Muscovy Duck*, *Western Tanager* male in breeding plumage; Carara NP: *Royal Flycatcher*, *Orange-collared Manakin*, *King Vulture*, *Boat-billed Heron*, *Rufous-breasted Wren*, *Riverside Wren*, *Black-bellied Wren*, *Black-faced Antthrush*, *Blue Grossbeak* male. Rio Tarcoles: *Double-striped Thick-Knee*, *Southern Lapwing*; *Orchard Oriole*. I missed *Yellow-billed Cotinga*, *Fiery-billed Aracari*, and *Bairds Trogon* from this area - though, the latter two were seen in *Corcovado NP* on my first trip.

Trails: It's possible to park at the NP parking lot and bird the trail system there. The River Trail close to the bridge over Rio Tarcoles only has a small often unguarded parking area (3-4 cars) steep down from the main road. You can park at the bridge near by, but if there is no policeman or park guard there (they often arrive late), it's better to park at the NP parking lot and then walk back along the road to River Trail (2.5 km ~ 25 minutes walk). There are many break-ins in cars along the Carara NP road.

Altitude: Cerro Lodge is 220 m above sea level.

Life Zone: tropical Pacific on the boundary between wet and dry.

Accommodation: Cerro Lodge is a comfortable place, reasonably priced with a good restaurant and a pool. Cabins are spacious with private bath and fan. Cerro Lodge is situated 10 minutes drive from Carara NP 3 km from the main road along a well-maintained dirt-road. At the main road opposite the access road there's a cheap restaurant. The lodge is in a peaceful setting with splendid views over dry forest and mangroves in the distance at the Pacific.



Black and White Owl, Cerro Lodge

Kiri Lodge - Tapanti NP

Nice birds seen in the Tapanti National Park included *White-bellied Mountain-Gem*, *Purple-crowned Fairy*, *Red-headed Barbet*, lots of *Spangle-cheeked Tanagers*, a lovely pair of the *White-winged Tanager*, *Golden-bellied Flycatcher*, and at the river *Dark Pewee* and *American Dipper*. There is a small colony of the less common *Chestnut-headed Oropendola* at the entrance gate opposite the ranger house. We only stayed for two nights, but could easily have stayed longer. There are many more birds to see here – both along the dirt-road after the entrance and the narrow trails leading off that road. But avoid weekends – people from San Jose invade the area.

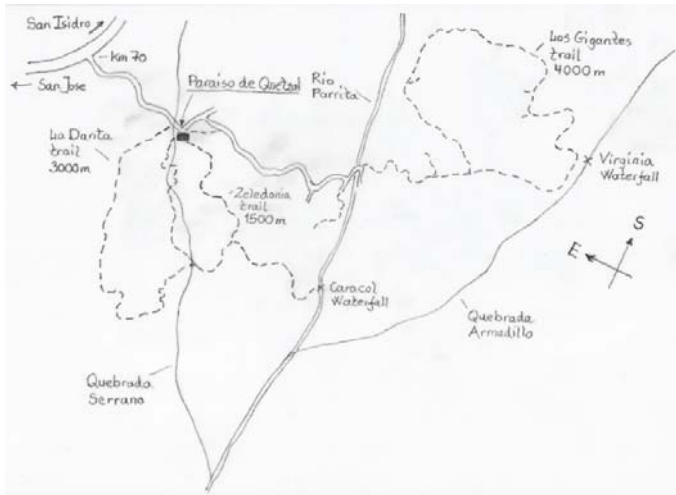
Altitude: 1200 m

Life Zone: Caribbean middle slope

Accommodation: Kiri Lodge is the only option near the lower entrance to the Tapanti NP. Kiri Lodge has small rather dark rooms with a spacious private bath. They are clean, comfortable and reasonably priced. The restaurant serves nice, varied Costa Rican food – also at a reasonable price. Outside the restaurant fruit is served to attract birds and there is also a hummingbird feeder.



Double-toothed Kite, Laguna de Lagarto Lodge



Paraiso de Quetzal Lodge

Most high-altitude species can be found here. Feeders at the restaurant were busy with *Fiery-throated Hummingbird*, *Magnificent Hummingbird* and *Volcano Hummingbird*. In the surrounding forest I found *Buffy Tufted-cheek*, *Resplendent Quetzal*, *Black-capped Flycatcher*, *Barred Becard*, *Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher*, *Black and Yellow Silky Flycatcher*, *Flame-throated Warbler* and *Golden-browed Chlorophonia*. After dark a *Dusky Nightjar* could be localised on the dirt-road with a spotlight. With a bit of luck you may also run into Silvery-throated Jay, Ochraceous Pewee, Wren-thrush and Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl here. Only Wrenthrus was seen on the first trip.

Altitude: 2650 m

Life Zone: humid cloud forest on upper Pacific slope.

Accommodation: very small rustic cabins with private bath. However, it's so cold during night at this altitude that larger cabins would be a problem with out any heating. Lots of blankets and a hot-water bottle each evening is provided which will keep you warm all night long. Unfortunately, meals are small in the cosy restaurant – a problem for hard-working birdwatchers with high energy demands. I survived on left-overs from the plates of my children, and the empty and almost cleaned plates weren't analysed in the kitchen since limited amounts of foods also were on the menu the following days. Here some improvement is necessary. When this is said the people of Paraiso de Quetzal, owner, adult sons and others are very pleasant, kind and helpful people, and the place is simply wonderful with great forest, eminent trails, fantastic views and a magnificent landscape. We didn't complain (a clear mistake) about the shortage of food, at least for the adults, and I am convinced that if you mention it after the first meal they will adjust it to your needs.



Savegre Mountain Lodge, Dota Valley

We paid a one day visit to Savegre Mountain Lodge from mid-morning till late afternoon. If you buy their lunch buffet you have access to their trail system. The lunch buffet is absolutely gorgeous. Use your car to access the trail system – it's a very long strenuous walk uphill to reach it. We only birded the easy Quebrada Trail, but didn't really see much here (time of the day) – however, two *Black Guans* was a nice encounter. The feeders outside the restaurant have many attending hummers, e.g. *White-throated Mountain-Gem* and *Scintillant Hummingbird*. The common but strikingly coloured *Acorn Woodpecker* was also in the vicinity of the feeders. *Resplendent Quetzal* was a good bonus on the drive way between the entrance and Boyle Bridge. One could easily spend several days in this lovely place.

Altitude: 2200 m

Life Zone: humid cloud forest on upper Pacific slope

Accommodation: excursion from Paraiso de Quetzal. Tried to book three nights at Savegre Mountain Lodge 7 months before arrival, but they could not offer more than one night!



Dusky Nightjar, Paraiso de Quetzal – Km 70



Bananaquit, Monteverde Reserve

Cerro de la Muerte

An early morning visit produced extraordinary views on the sunrise, clouds and mountains below our altitude of 3400 meter above sea-level.

Timberline Wren and *Volcano Junco* were added to the list in the area around the communication towers. I dipped on Peg-billed Finch.

Accommodation: excursion from Paraiso de Quetzal.



Pacific Screech-Owl, Heliconias Lodge

La Selva Biological Station

Memorable sightings from this locality are a lek of *White-collared Manakin* just outside our cabin 'La Tortuga', a perching pair of *Vermiculated Screech-Owl*, four *Scaled Pigeons* perfectly preening in a leafless tree at dawn, a juvenile confident *Tiny Hawk* on the access road, brilliant views on the shy and wary *Slaty-breasted Tinamou*, a pair of *Great Green Macaws*, *Sungrebe* from the hanging bridge, but these are just a few goodies mentioned because La Selva is teeming with feathered creatures all over the place. Amidst all this you walk with COLLARED PECCARIES and *Great Curassows* on the lawns. A truly great place to stay. We loved it and

could easily have stayed for longer. New interesting sightings seem to appear all the time from an almost inexhaustible pool of organisms. Also great for La Selva to be linked up on Braulio Carillo NP considering the immense destruction of forest in Costa Rica's Atlantic lowlands.

Altitude: 60 m

Life Zone: humid Atlantic lowland.

Accommodation: Nice clean dormitory-style rooms with fan, bunk beds, and shared baths. Despite more than four beds available you can get the accommodation as a private family room.

Food: Plenty of very nice varied Costa Rican food. Good atmosphere in the semi-open cantina full of natural history visitors and researchers discussing daily experiences and observations.



Boat-billed Heron, Carara NP

Quebrada Gonzales – Braulio Carillo NP

Two brief visits to this site produced some nice birds, but many species were also missed. An attempt to bring out *Black-capped Antpitta* using replay failed – it responded three times distantly but never appeared to approach. The attempt soon ran into difficulties because of heavy traffic with young volunteers carrying gravel for the trails. So I had to stay on the distant part of the loop trail to get free of the traffic. Nice encounters here were e.g. good views on a mixed species flock containing a pair of *White-throated Shrike Tanager*, fifteen *Olive Tanagers*, *Black and Yellow Tanager*, *Emerald Tanager* and the uncommon *Blue- and-gold Tanager* at close range. Brilliant views on the hard to see *Green Shrike-Vireo* was also a success here. Its unique call is the key to find it high up in the canopy. Unfortunately no trogons were recorded – Lattice-tailed Trogon would have been welcome.

Altitude: 500-600 m

Life Zone: humid lower Atlantic slope

Accommodation: excursion from La Selva Biological Station.

Access: Excursion from La Selva Biological Station – only 40 minutes drive on an excellent tarmac road.



Orange-collared Manakin, Carara NP.

El Tapir Butterfly Garden

Despite rumours of destroyed fuel plants for hummers, we found a full flowering garden of violet *Stachytarpheta* bushes, Verbenaceae. And the hummers were certainly back. We had six species here in the burning heat around midday. First to mention is a minimum of two males and a female *Snowcap* flying in out of the bushes. It's not hard to understand why birders are so keen on watching this aberrant jewel among hummingbirds. It is gorgeous. Snowcaps were accompanied by a male and a female *Green Thorntail*, *Violet-headed Hummingbirds*, *Violet-crowned Woodnymphs*, *Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds* and a female *Black-crested Coquette*.

Altitude: 500-600 m

Life Zone: humid lower Atlantic slope

Accommodation: Excursion from La Selva Biological Station.

Access: Excursion from La Selva Biological Station – only 40 minutes drive on an excellent tarmac road. El Tapir is only 2 km down-slope from Quebrada Gonzalez. Actually the road first goes uphill from Q. Gonzales, but the direction is towards the Atlantic. El Tapir is on the south-side of the main road – the same side as Q. Gonzales Ranger Station. There is plenty of parking space along the roadside just outside El Tapir, but consider to drive your car inside the fence if the guards at the place will allow it. Car break-in is quite common here. Entrance fee is 5 US \$. This place is probably the second most reliable place for Snowcap in the country.



Brown Violet-ear, La Paz Waterfall Garden

Laguna de Lagarto Lodge

Highlights seen here were *Agami Heron*, *American Pygmy Kingfisher*, *Great Green Macaw*, *Scarlet Macaw*, *Great Curassow*, *Red-capped Manakin*, *White-fronted Nunbird* and *Pied Puffbird*. Brilliant views on the colourful *Brown-hooded Parrot* was also a good experience from this site.

Despite a relative long bird list from Laguna de Lagarto Lodge it was very disappointing to see how severe the fragmentation is in this area. Plantations and pastures everywhere. It is only a matter of time before there is nothing to come for here. Add to this that also half of the fragment of the lodge was turned over by a recent hurricane.

Altitude: 40 m

Life Zone: tropical Caribbean lowland

Accommodation: Comfortable, spacious rooms with private bath and a common veranda. Good restaurant with fine views to the surroundings.

Evening meals were delicious, but lunch was to the cheap and less sophisticated side.

Access: horrible dirt-road from Pital to the lodge – duration almost 2 hours.



Violet Sabrewing, Kiri Lodge, Tapanti NP.



Green Thorntail, female, El Tapir Butterfly Garden



Spotted Antbird, Volcan Arenal NP

Arenal Observatory Lodge

I was searching for Keel-billed Motmot in this area, but in vain. I used two digital recordings from recognized sound libraries claiming to be this species, but they only attracted *Broad-billed Motmot* resulting in no less than 14 individuals seen in a morning! Hard for the similar and sympatric Keel-billed Motmot to compete in such an environment. Fine birds seen were *Fasciated Tiger-Heron*, *White Hawk*, *Laughing Falcon*, *Bicolored Antbird*, *Spotted Antbird*, *Dusky Antbird* and *Russet AntShrikes*. Also *White-collared Manakin*, a pair of *Song Wren*, *White-throated Shrike-Tanager* and the handsome *Long-tailed Tyrant* added nicely to the list of species.

Altitude: AOL 750 m; Sendero Toucan and Ceiba 500-600 m; Arenal Hanging Bridges 600 m.

Life Zone: tropical Caribbean lower slope.

Accommodation: stayed at Arenal Observatory Lodge in two types of rooms. First a standard room and then we had to move to the more expensive Smithsonian room with direct view to the volcano. We didn't make our reservation in due time.

However, despite the fine view on the volcano from the Smithsonian room there is much more space in a standard room and it's cheaper. You can get the views to the volcano from the restaurant and the observation platform.

Access: Birding Arenal took place in the garden of Arenal Observatory Lodge (AOL) and in the vicinity: 1. From the gate of AOL down slope along the access gravel road to the second bridge (the first bridge is small and close to the gate), 2. On the private trail El Toucan in secondary forest starting 100 m before the AOL gate crossing the river (watch for *Fasciated Tiger-Heron* here) 3. On the Ceiba trail starting from the national park headquarter and 4. The private Hanging Bridges Trail is accessed from a minor road at the Arenal Lake Dam. The access road is around 3 km long.

Heliconias Lodge

Highlights seen here were *Tody Motmot*, *Ornate Hawk-Eagle*, *Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo*, *Pacific Screech-Owl*, *White-ruffed Manakin* and *Black-crested Coquette*. There were no army ants near the trail system when we were there, but we were fortunate to run into a *Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo* despite that it is almost always found near the ants. An attempt to call in *Tody Motmot* with a recording also containing army-ant following antbirds resulted in a curious but rather frightened ground-cuckoo that started running when it discovered us sitting on the ground. The motmot was never found by our guide (the only place we used a guide for one morning) - the species is attending its nest at this time of the year and therefore doesn't respond to imitations of its voice. But if you hear it you'll see it. However, persistent walking for 3-4 hours one afternoon passing along two territories finally produced excellent views on this surprisingly large green motmot when one bird flew over the trail and perched silently in the understory! It lacks the long tail of other motmots but it certainly has the body of other medium-sized motmots. One gets a false impression of the body size of this bird in many books.

At first it seems surprising that one also encounters the two Pacific species *Black-hooded Antshrike* and *Long-tailed Manakin* on the trails of this lodge.

However, Heliconias is placed right in the gap between the Caribbean side and the Pacific side in the continental divide flanked to the south and the north by the two volcanoes – Tenorio and Miravalles. From the lodge, especially in the late afternoon, you have a marvellous view on Lake Nicaragua with two larger islands and the Costa Rican Caribbean lowland in front of it.

Altitude: 800 m

Life Zone: transition zone between humid Caribbean slope and dry Pacific slope.

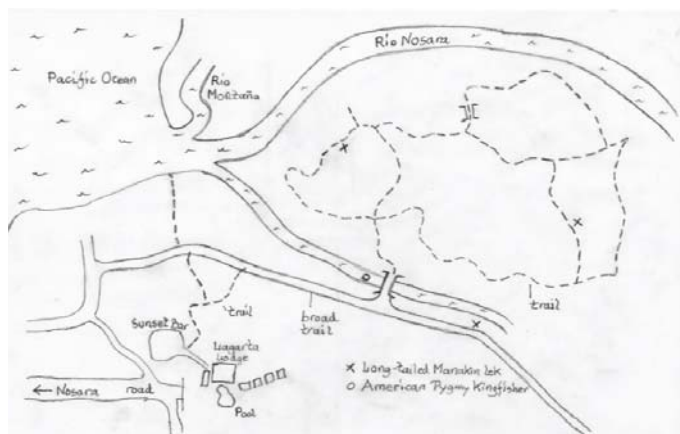
Accommodation: spacious cottage with nice beds for four people, but ventilation was insufficient resulting in humid room conditions. Heliconias Lodge serve nice reasonably priced Costa Rican style meals in a small restaurant.

Birding: Heliconias Lodge also included a trip to Rio Celeste - a part of Volcan Tenorio NP. Heliconias is neighbour to this park. Heliconias maintain some excellent trails in its beautiful rainforest. Heliconias also has skilled local guides that can help you to find some of the species.

Access: It took us 4 hours driving (including 45 minutes lunch) from Arenal Observatory Lodge (AOL) to reach Heliconias Lodge. On recommendation from AOL we went over La Fortuna, Tanque and Upala to reach the small town of Bijagua. From the main road somewhere in the middle of Bijagua a 3 km long dirt road leads uphill to the lodge. It's on your left hand side coming from Upala.

Rio Celeste is a very beautiful place, but you need to drive early to reach the trail 11 km away from the Upala-Bijagua main road. It's yet another one of the many horrifying Costa Rican dirt roads. We spent an afternoon there. There is an entrance fee to be paid at the national park.

Passed Rincon de la Vieja NP to the following destination and walked Los Pailas Trail during the midday heat to see volcanic activity. Absolutely worth the visit – boiling water, boiling mud, water vapour with hydrogen sulphide gas, sulphur depositions and roaring mini-volcanoes. However, we got chickers (famous and reliable place for these small bastards). Few birds around, but good views on *Elegant Trogon* pair and *Orange-fronted Parakeets*.



Lagarta Lodge – Nosara

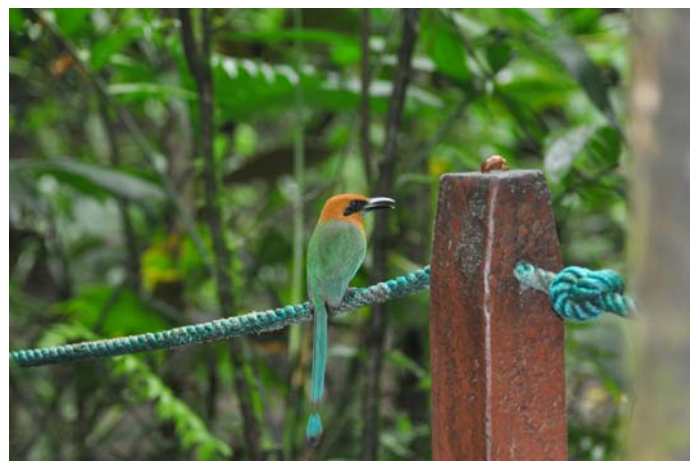
This site seems to be undiscovered by birders, but it certainly deserves your attention. There are many birds around and fine habitat. A selection of birds

observed at Lagarta Lodge - Nosara is e.g. *Belted Kingfisher*, *American Pygmy Kingfisher*, *Elegant Trogon*, many *Scissor-tailed Flycatcher*, at least three lek's of *Long-tailed Manakin*, *Mangrove Cuckoo*, *Mangrove Vireo*, *Rose-throated Becard* fairly common, a lovely pair of *Painted Bunting* – the male in full breeding dress, *Collared Forest-Falcon*, *Plain Chachalaca*, the only place where *Banded Wren* was observed. One evening a JAGUARUNDI was seen next to the lodge in the light from our car.

Altitude: 0 m, the lodge is situated on top of a 40 m high hill.

Life Zone: tropical deciduous forest, rock pools with waders and mangrove forest.

Accommodation: Lagarta Lodge - Nosara is a comfortable swiss owned lodge on top of a 40 m high hill next to the coast with a marvellous view on the Pacific. If you like luxury, reasonable pricing, good food, the best breakfast in Costa Rica, lovely pool, 'sundowners' while looking at incredible sunsets, nice birds around in good habitat this is the place. The lodge has its own private reserve at the estuary of Nosara River on the Nicoya Peninsula with a mixture of high mangrove forest and dry deciduous forest. Well-maintained trails penetrate this habitat. The Lagarta Lodge also cooperates with local English-speaking people which can take you on early morning boat rides in the mangrove forest.



Broad-billed Motmot, Arenal Hanging Bridges

Mata Redonda Marsh

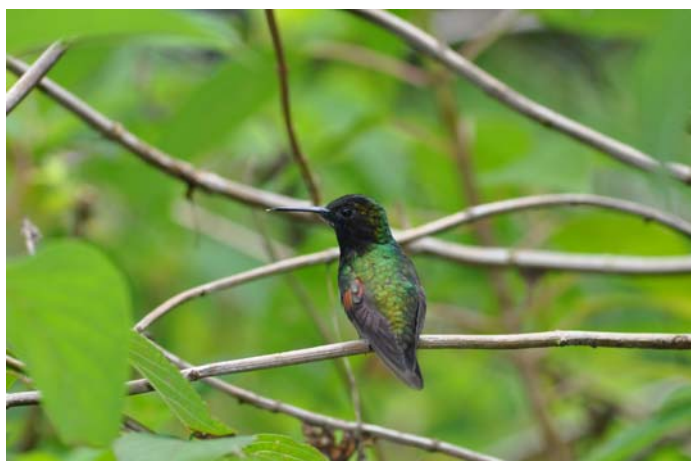
A real highlight was the ten thousands of waterfowl assembled here at the top of the dry season. Birds included among others many *Jabiru*, *Limpkin*, *Roseate Spoonbill*, *White Ibis*, *Fulvous Whistling Duck* and thousands of *Blue-winged Ducks*, *Black-bellied Whistling Ducks* and *Wood Storks*.

Altitude: 0 m

Life Zone: tropical marsh and lake in the Rio Tempisque plain, but on the west side of the river compared to Palo Verde NP.

Access: despite a limited distance in kilometres, it takes 2 ½ hours drive from Nosara to Mata Redonda (1 ½ hour to Nicoya and 1 hour from here to the marsh). Along the coast from Nosara the road is bad and made of gravel and pot-holes – it's the same from Nicoya to Mata Redonda.

Accommodation: Excursion from Lagarta Lodge, Nosara on the coast. Birded Mata Redonda during the middle of the day. The area is immense, and you can easily spend much more time birding here.



Black-bellied Hummingbird, La Paz Waterfall Garden

Colorado Salinas

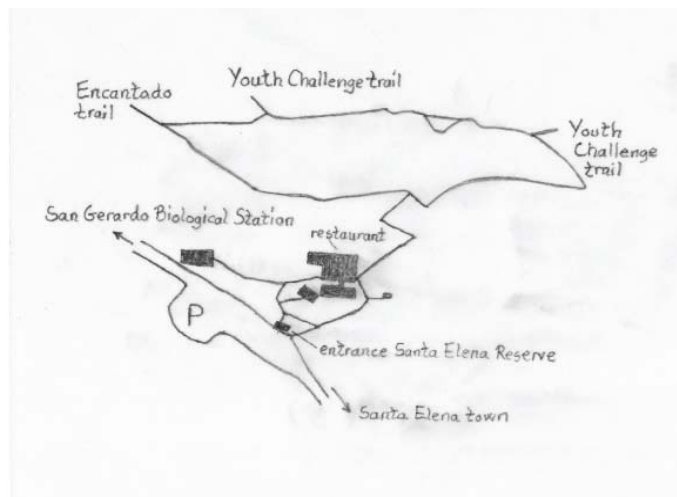
On our way from Lagarta Lodge to Santa Elena we paid a brief visit to the eastern salinas in the village of Colorado. It was past midday and therefore we didn't have time for the western salinas which is supposed to have many terns and gulls also.

However, the eastern salinas gave us good views on several species of waders, many in breeding dress, for example two *Upland Sandpiper*, *Wilson's Plover*, many *Stilt Sandpiper*, *Least Sandpiper*, *Western Sandpiper* and *Semipalmated Sandpiper*.

Altitude: 0 m

Life Zone: dry, coastal zone with deciduous forest, mangroves and salinas for extraction of salt.

Accommodation: We came from Lagarta Lodge, Nosara on the coast and slept the following nights at Hotel Sunset, Santa Elena.



Santa Elena Reserve

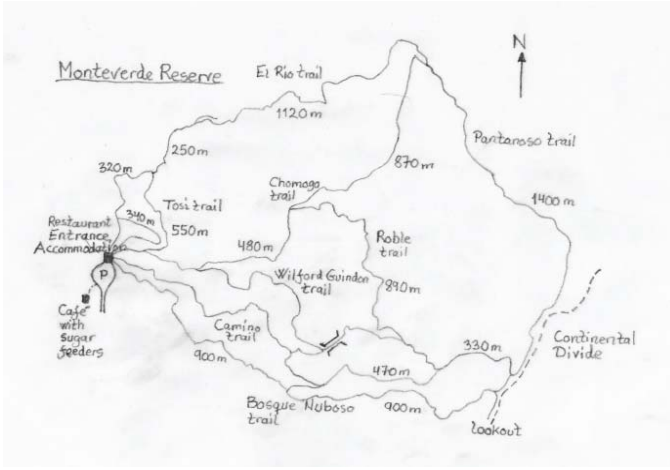
The Santa Elena Reserve is at a higher altitude than Monteverde and only 20 minutes drive away from Santa Elena Town. A well maintained trail system is present here, and on the Youth Trail you find a watch tower with excellent views to the Arenal Volcano and the surrounding vegetation. Along the trails I encountered fine birds like a male *Silvery-fronted Tapaculo* out in the open, *Eye-ringed Flatbill*, confident *Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrushes*, good views on skulky *Chestnut-capped Brush-Finches*.

Altitude: 1600 m

Life Zone: upper humid Caribbean slope; cloud forest. Altitudes are lower here compared to the south.

Accommodation: stayed at Hotel Sunset in Santa Elena Village. Rooms are rather dark, clean and of a reasonable size with a spacious private bath, but no luxury. Hotel Sunset has its own trail through secondary and a bit of primary forest along a small stream and canyon. It can be walked within an hour or so.





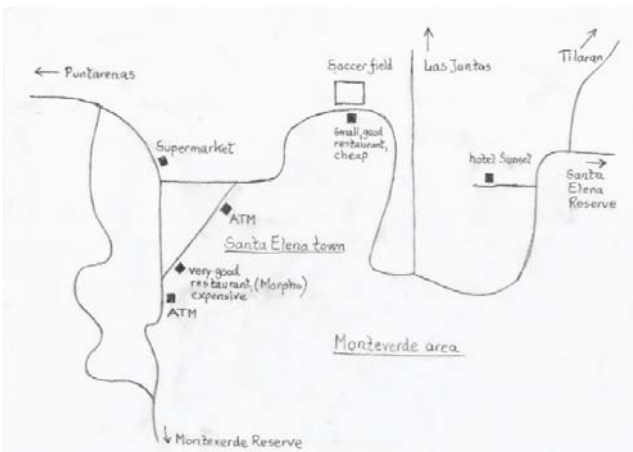
Monteverde Reserve

Many excellent trails penetrate the cloud forest at the famous Monteverde Reserve. The extensive trail systems secures that you have enough space to get away from the many tourists and travel groups that walk here. If you are ready at the entrance in the morning when they open you also get a lead. Remember to visit the small café accessed from the start of the Parking lot when you get back from your walk. Feeders here are very busy with hummingbirds and their chocolate cake is a delicious experience together with excellent Costa Rican coffee. An early encounter was a flock of *Black-breasted Woodquails* almost next to the entrance where you buy your ticket. Soon after I ran into two busy foraging *Buff-fronted Quail-Doves*, *Stripe-tailed Hummingbird*, *Coppery-headed Emerald*, *Orange-bellied Trogon*, *Prong-billed Barbet* pair at nest, a pair of *Sooty-faced Finch* were some of the other good birds adding to the list.

Altitude: 1400 m

Life Zone: upper humid Caribbean slope; cloud forest.

Accommodation: stayed at Hotel Sunset in Santa Elena Village.



Green Violet-ear, Savegre Mountain Lodge

San Gerardo Biological Station - Bosque Eterno de los Ninos

Hard to beat at this site was the show of large birds gathered in a big fruiting tree full of olive-sized green and purplish fruits. The tree contained a male *Bare-necked Umbrellabird* with five *Three-wattled Bellbird* males, three *Crested Guans* and a *Resplendent Quetzal* pair. *Rufous-breasted Anthrush* and *Song Wren* were singing during the show – the Song Wren some 150 m above its normal altitudinal distribution. On another occasion the fruit-tree had several *Black Guans* and half a dozen *Emerald Toucanets* as visitors. San Gerardo was the only site where *Azure-hooded Jays* and *Crimson-collared Tanager* were encountered. At the end of Tabacon Trail a pair of *Gray-throated Leaf-tosser* was demonstrating their skills and worth mentioning is also a small group of the uncommon *Giant Cowbird* attending a small colony of *Chestnut-headed Oropendola* in a pasture near the station. *Great Curassows* often walked along the forest edges in small pastures just below the station. In a cloudy evening after dark thousands of nocturnal butterflies were flying around and sitting in the electric light on the first floor common veranda – an incredible show of tropical biodiversity.

Altitude: 1150 – 1220 m

Life Zone: middle humid Atlantic slope; cloud forest.

Accommodation: stayed at San Gerardo Biological Station in a first floor small room with four beds and a private bath. No luxury, but clean and comfortable. Probably one of the best views in Costa Rica from the first floor shared balcony: Lake Arenal, Volcan Arenal and Volcan Chato in the distance with undulating hills dressed in primary rainforest in the foreground. Nice food is prepared in the cantina below by the manager's wife.

Access: went by taxi to the parking lot of Santa Elena Reserve at around 1600 m above sea-level. From here you walk downhill to 1200 m. It takes no more than 1-1.5 hour easy walk on a well-marked broad trail. You need to book and pay your stay in advance at the office of the station situated next to the road that leaves Santa Elena village towards the Monteverde Reserve. Food, sleeping gear and towels are provided at the station. If you ask for help the staff at the entrance to Santa Elena Reserve will call a taxi when you come up again from San Gerardo. It takes some 20-25 minutes for a taxi to arrive from Santa Elena village to the Reserve's parking lot.



Great Curassow, male, La Selva Biological Station

La Paz Waterfall Gardens

This location is primarily a zoo attraction with native Costa Rican species in large cages, e.g. Puma, Jaguar and other cats. But La Paz is also beautiful primary forest along a series of attractive waterfalls. The forest is the home of many hummers that are attracted by the sugar-feeders in the zoo area. Here we got splendid views on *Black-bellied Hummingbird*, *Coppery-headed Emerald* and *Brown Violet-ear* – species that can be hard to find in other places.

Altitude: 1500 m.

Life Zone: upper humid Atlantic slope.

Accommodation: stayed at friends in Santa Ana.

Access: 1-1.5 hour easy drive from San Jose on tarmac roads.



Sooty-capped Bush-Tanager, Paraiso de Quetzal

The bird list completed at 443 species, reptiles at 19 species, amphibians identified – at poor 4 species and mammals at 16 species. We didn't spotlight for mammals in the evening.

List of bird species recorded

h = only heard; taxonomy follows Garrigues & Dean, *The Birds of Costa Rica* 2007

TINAMIDAE

Great Tinamou

Little Tinamou

Slaty-breasted Tinamou

ANATIDAE

Black-bellied Whistling Duck

Fulvous Whistling Duck

Muscovy Duck

American Wigeon

Blue-winged Teal

Northern Shoveler

Lesser Scaup

CRACIDAE

Plain Chachalaca

Grey-headed Chachalaca

Crested Guan

Black Guan

Great Curassow

ODONTOPHORIDAE

Marbled Wood-Quail **h**
Black-eared Wood-Quail **h**
Black-breasted Wood-Quail

PODICIPEDIDAE

Least Grebe

SULIDAE

Masked Booby

PELICANIDAE

Brown Pelican

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Neotropic Cormorant

ANHINGIDAE

Anhinga

FREGATIDAE

Magnificent Frigatebird

ARDEIDAE

Fasciated Tiger-Heron
Bare-throated Tiger-Heron
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricoloured Heron
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
Agami Heron
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
Boat-billed Heron

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

White Ibis
Green Ibis
Roseate Spoonbill

CICONIIDAE

Jabiru
Woodstork

CATHARTIDAE

Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
King Vulture

ACCIPITRIDAE

Osprey
Swallow-tailed Kite
White-tailed Kite
Double-toothed Kite
Tiny Hawk
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Crane Hawk
Barred Hawk
White Hawk
Mangrove Black Hawk
Roadside Hawk
Gray Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Ornate Hawk-Eagle

FALCONIDAE

Collared Forest-Falcon
Crested Caracara
Yellow-headed Caracara
Laughing Falcon

RALLIDAE

Grey-necked Wood-Rail
Purple Gallinule

HELIORNITHIDAE

Sungrebe

ARAMIDAE

Limpkin

BURHINIDAE

Double-striped Thick-knee

CHARADRIIDAE

Southern Lapwing
Black-bellied Plover
American Golden Plover
Wilson's Plover
Semipalmated Plover

HAEMATOPODIDAE

American Oystercatcher

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Black-necked Stilt

JACANIDAE

Northern Jacana

SCOLOPACIDAE

Spotted Sandpiper

Greater Yellowlegs

Willet

Lesser Yellowlegs

Upland Sandpiper

Whimbrel

Semipalmated Sandpiper

Western Sandpiper

Least Sandpiper

Pectoral Sandpiper

Stilt Sandpiper

LARIDAE

Laughing Gull

Franklin's Gull

Gull-billed Tern

Caspian Tern

Royal Tern

Sandwich Tern

COLUMBIDAE

Pale-vented Pigeon

Scaled Pigeon

Red-billed Pigeon

Band-tailed Pigeon

Ruddy Pigeon

Short-billed Pigeon

White-winged Dove

Inca Dove

Common Ground-Dove

Plain-breasted Ground-Dove

Ruddy Ground-Dove

Blue Ground-Dove

White-tipped Dove

Gray-chested Dove

Buff-fronted Quail-Dove

PSITTACIDAE

Crimson-fronted Parakeet

Olive-throated Parakeet

Orange-fronted Parakeet

Great Green Macaw

Scarlet Macaw

Orange-chinned Parakeet

Brown-hooded Parrot

White-crowned Parrot

White-fronted Parrot

Red-lored Parrot

Mealy Parrot

CUCULIDAE

Squirrel Cuckoo

Mangrove Cuckoo

Striped Cuckoo **h**

Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo

Groove-billed Ani

STRIGIDAE

Pacific Screech-Owl

Vermiculated Screech-Owl

Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl

Black-and-white Owl

CAPRIMULGIDAE

Lesser Nighthawk

Common Nighthawk

Common Pauraque

Dusky Nightjar

NYCTIBIIDAE

Great Potoo **h**

APODIDAE

Black Swift

White-collared Swift

Vaux's Swift

Costa Rican Swift

Gray-rumped Swift

TROCHILIDAE

Green Hermit

Long-billed Hermit

Stripe-throated Hermit

Violet Sabrewing

White-necked Jacobin
Brown Violet-ear
Green Violet-ear
Green-breasted Mango
Violet-headed Hummingbird
Black-crested Coquette
Green Thorntail
Violet-crowned Woodnymph
Fiery-throated Hummingbird
Blue-throated Goldentail
Steely-vented Hummingbird
Rufous-tailed Hummingbird
Cinnamon Hummingbird
Striped-tailed Hummingbird
Black-bellied Hummingbird
Coppery-headed Emerald
Snowcap
Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer
White-bellied Mountain-gem
Purple-throated Mountain-gem
White-throated Mountain-gem
Green-crowned Brilliant
Magnificent Hummingbird
Purple-crowned Fairy
Magenta-throated Woodstar
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Volcano Hummingbird
Scintillant Hummingbird

TROGONIDAE

Black-headed Trogon
Violaceous Trogon
Elegant Trogon
Collared Trogon
Orange-bellied Trogon
Black-throated Trogon
Slaty-tailed Trogon
Resplendent Quetzal

MOMOTIDAE

Tody Motmot
Blue-crowned Motmot
Rufous Motmot
Broad-billed Motmot
Turquoise-browed Motmot

ALCEDINIDAE

Ringed Kingfisher
Belted Kingfisher
Amazon Kingfisher
Green Kingfisher
American Pygmy Kingfisher

BUCCONIDAE

Pied Puffbird
White-fronted Nunbird

RHAMPHASTIDAE

Red-headed Barbet
Prong-billed Barbet
Emerald Toucanet
Collared Aracari
Keel-billed Toucan
Chestnut-mandibled Toucan

PICIDAE

Acorn Woodpecker
Black-cheeked Woodpecker
Hoffmann's Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Smoky-brown Woodpecker
Rufous-winged Woodpecker
Golden-olive Woodpecker
Chestnut-coloured Woodpecker
Lineated Woodpecker
Pale-billed Woodpecker

FURNARIIDAE

Slaty Spinetail
Red-faced Spinetail
Spotted Barbtail
Ruddy Treerunner
Buffy Tuftedcheek
Striped Woodhaunter
Lineated Foliage-gleaner
Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner
Streak-breasted Treehunter
Plain Xenops
Streaked Xenops
Grey-throated Leaf-tosser
Plain-brown Woodcreeper
Long-tailed Woodcreeper
Wedge-billed Woodcreeper

Northern Barred Woodcreeper
Cocoa Woodcreeper
Black-striped Woodcreeper
Spotted Woodcreeper
Streak-headed Woodcreeper
Spot-crowned Woodcreeper

THAMNOPHILIDAE

Barred Antshrike
Black-hooded Antshrike
Western Slaty-Antshrike
Russet Antshrike
Plain Antwreio
Slaty Antwren
Dot-winged Antwren
Dusky Antbird
Chestnut-backed Antbird
Spotted Antbird
Bicolored Antbird

FORMICARIIDAE

Black-faced Antthrush
Rufous-breasted Antthrush **h**
Black-crowned Antpitta **h**
Thicket Antpitta **h**

RHINOCRYPTIDAE

Silvery-fronted Tapaculo

TYRANNIDAE

Northern Beardless Tyrannulet
Southern Beardless Tyrannulet
Greenish Elaenia
Yellow-bellied Elaenia
Mountain Elaenia
Torrent Tyrannulet
Ochre-bellied Flycatcher
Slaty-capped Flycatcher
Paltry Tyrannulet
Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant
Common Tody Flycatcher
Eye-ringed Flatbill
Yellow-olive Flycatcher
White-throated Spadebill
Royal Flycatcher
Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher
Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher

Tufted Flycatcher
Olive-sided Flycatcher
Dark Pewee
Yellowish Flycatcher
Black-capped Flycatcher
Black Phoebe
Long-tailed Tyrant
Bright-rumped Attila **h**
Rufous Mourner
Dusky-capped Flycatcher
Nuttings's Flycatcher
Brown-crested Flycatcher
Great Kiskadee
Boat-billed Flycatcher
Social Flycatcher
Gray-capped Flycatcher
White-ringed Flycatcher
Golden-bellied Flycatcher
Streaked Flycatcher
Piratic Flycatcher
Tropical Kingbird
Western Kingbird
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

Genera INCERTAE SEDIS

Rufous Piha
Barred Becard
Cinnamon Becard
White-winged Becard
Rose-throated Becard
Masked Tityra
Black-crowned Tityra

COTINGIDAE

Bare-necked Umbrellabird
Three-wattled Bellbird

PIPRIDAE

White-collared Manakin
Orange-collared Manakin
White-ruffed Manakin
Long-tailed Manakin
Red-capped Manakin

VIREONIDAE

Mangrove Vireo
Yellow-winged Vireo

Yellow-green Vireo
Lesser Greenlet
Green Shrike-Vireo

CORVIDAE

White-throated Magpie-Jay
Brown Jay
Azure-hooded Jay

HIRUNDINIDAE

Mangrove Swallow
Blue and White Swallow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Southern Rough-winged Swallow
Bank Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow

TROGLODYTIDAE

Band-backed Wren
Rufous-naped Wren
Black-throated Wren
Riverside Wren
Stripe-breasted Wren
Rufous-breasted Wren
Rufous and White Wren
Banded Wren
Plain Wren
House Wren
Ochraceous Wren
Timberline Wren
White-breasted Wood-Wren
Gray-breasted Wood-Wren
Nightingale Wren
Song Wren

CINCLIDAE

American Dipper

SYLVIIDAE

Long-billed Gnatwren
White-lored Gnatcatcher

TURDIDAE

Black-faced Solitaire
Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush
Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush

Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush
Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush
Swainson's Thrush
Wood Thrush
Sooty Robin
Mountain Robin
Pale-vented Thrush
Clay-coloured Robin
White-throated Robin

PTILOGONATIDAE

Black-and-yellow Silky-Flycatcher
Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher

PARULIDAE

Golden-winged Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Flame-throated Warbler
Tropical Parula
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Prothonotary Warbler
Northern Waterthrush
Olive-crowned Yellowthroat
Wilson's Warbler
Slate-throated Whitestart
Collared Whitestart
Golden-crowned Warbler
Rufous-capped Warbler
Black-cheeked Warbler
Three-striped Warbler
Buff-rumped Warbler

Genus INCERTAE SEDIS

Bananaquit

THRAUPIDAE

Common Bush-Tanager
Sooty-capped Bush-Tanager
Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager
Black-and-yellow Tanager
Dusky-faced Tanager
Olive Tanager

White-throated Shrike-Tanager
White-shouldered Tanager
Tawny-crested Tanager
White-lined Tanager
Hepatic Tanager
Summer Tanager
Western Tanager
White-winged Tanager
Crimson-collared Tanager
Passerini's Tanager
Cherrie's Tanager
Blue-gray Tanager
Palm Tanager
Blue-and Gold Tanager
Emerald Tanager
Silver-throated Tanager
Bay-headed Tanager
Golden-hooded Tanager
Spangle-cheeked Tanager
Scarlet-thighed Dacnis
Blue Dacnis
Green Honeycreeper
Shining Honeycreeper
Red-legged Honeycreeper

EMBERIZIDAE

Blue-black Grassquit
Variable Seedeater
White-collared Seedeater
Thick-billed Seed-Finch
Yellow-faced Grassquit
Slaty Flowerpiercer
Sooty-faced Finch
Yellow-thighed Finch
Large-footed Finch
White-naped Brush-Finch
Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch
Orange-billed Sparrow
Black-striped Sparrow
White-eared Ground-Sparrow
Stripe-headed Sparrow
Rufous-collared Sparrow
Volcano Junco

CARDINALIDAE

Streaked Saltator
Grayish Saltator

Buff-throated Saltator
Black-headed Saltator
Slate-colored Grossbeak
Black-faced Grosbeak
Black-thighed Grossbeak
Blue-black Grossbeak
Blue Grossbeak
Painted Bunting

ICTERIDAE

Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Melodious Blackbird
Great-tailed Grackle
Bronzed Cowbird
Giant Cowbird
Black-cowled Oriole
Orchard Oriole
Streak-backed Oriole
Baltimore Oriole
Yellow-billed Cacique
Chestnut-headed Oropendola
Montezuma Oropendola

FRINGILLIDAE

Scrub Euphonia
Yellow-throated Euphonia
Olive-backed Euphonia
White-vented Euphonia
Tawny-capped Euphonia
Golden-browed Chlorophonia

PASSERIDAE

House Sparrow

List of reptile species

Taxonomy follows Savage, The Amphibians and Reptiles of Costa Rica 2002

CROCODYLIANS

Crocodylidae (Crocodiles, Caimans, Alligators and False Gharial)

- American Crocodile
- Spectacled Caiman

TURTLES

Emydidae, Freshwater Turtles

- *Chrysemys ornata*

LIZARDS

Corytophanidae, Helmet Lizards

- *Basiliscus basiliscus*
- *Basiliscus plumifrons*
- *Basiliscus vittatus*

Iguanidae, Iguanas

- *Ctenosaura similis*
- *Iguana iguana*

Anguinae, Anguid Lizards

- *Mesaspis monticola*

Teiidae, Macroteiid Lizards

- *Ameiva undulata*
- *Ameiva festiva*

Xanthusiidae, Night Lizards

- *Lepidophyma flavimaculatum*

Polychrotidae, Anoloid Lizards

- *Norops lemurinus*

SNAKES

Viperidae, Crotalinae (Adders and Vipers)

- *Porthidium nasutum*
- *Bothriechis schlegelii*

Elapidae, Elapinae (Coral snakes, cobras, sea snakes and allies)

- *Micrurus nigrocinctus*

Colubridae (harmless and rear-fanged snakes)

- *Leptodymus pulcherrimus*
- *Chironius grandisquamis*
- *Sibon nebulatus*

List of amphibian species

Taxonomy follows Savage, The Amphibians and Reptiles of Costa Rica 2002

FROGS AND TOADS

Dendrobatidae, Poison-arrow Frogs

- *Dendrobates pumilio*
- *Dendrobates auratus*

Hylidae, Tree frogs

- *Agalychnis calidryas*, Red-eyed Tree-Frog

Bufonidae, Toads

- *Bufo marinus*, Cane Toad

List of mammal species

Taxonomy follows Wainwright, The Mammals of Costa Rica 2007

SLOTHS

Bradipodidae

- Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth

Megalonychidae

- Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth

BATS

Emballonuridae, Sac-winged Bats

- Northern Ghost Bat
- Lesser White-lined Bat

MONKEYS

Cebidae

- White-throated Capuchin Monkey
- Mantled Howler Monkey
- Central American Spider Monkey

RODENTS

Sciuridae

- Alfaro's Pygmy Squirrel
- Variegated Squirrel
- Montane Squirrel

Dasyproctidae

- Central American Agouti

RABBITS AND HARES

Leporidae

- Tapiti

PROCYONIDS

Procyonidae (Cacomistles, Racoons, Coatis, Olingos and Kinkajou)

- White-nosed Coati

CATS

Felidae

- Jaguarundi

PIGS

Tayassuidae

- Collared Peccari

DEER

Cervidae

- White-tailed Deer



View over the Pacific from the restaurant at Lagarta Lodge, Nosara

Bent Otto Poulsen,
1. October 2011