

# Costa Rica

## Classic Neotropical Birding

**Saturday 05 February – Monday 21 February 2011**

Leaders: Mike Witherick and local guides

2011 Cost **£3,699** single room supplement **£380**

**Friday 03 February – Sunday 19 February 2010**

Leaders: Richard Coomebr and local guides

2012 Cost **£3,799** single room supplement **£390**



**C**osta Rica is only the size of Wales, but it has an astonishing range of habitats and birdlife. Ten per cent of the land area comprises national parks and a further ten per cent is protected as biological or forest reserves. Cloud forest, lowland tropical forest, dry savannah, mangroves and freshwater marshes are all covered in our itinerary. Distances are comparatively short, allowing more time in the field. Several factors make this an especially attractive tour, including the friendliness of the local people, the peaceful stability of the country (it is a democracy with no standing army), the great profusion of wildlife and the government's enlightened attitude towards it. In addition, our agents provide a highly efficient, expert and personal service, and supply very experienced naturalist guides and even a driver who is a keen birder. As is usual on tropical tours we will be up early most mornings to take advantage of the coolest and clearest time of day. Ornitholidays has now visited this region more than 30 times within the last 18 years.



Keel-billed Toucan

### ITINERARY

#### Days 1 & 2

We leave London in the morning on a non-direct flight to San José. We arrive in San José in the evening and transfer to our hotel for a stay of two nights. The next day we have our first taste of Costa Rican birding as we head towards the high country, south along the Pan-American Highway birding en route. We should see our first wintering warblers from North America, together with resident woodcreepers, tanagers and Resplendent Quetzal. Varied roadside vegetation includes lilies, fuchsias, mauve melastoma, wild dahlia and gunnera. We should encounter a steady stream of new species as we gain height, and those we will look for include Black-and-yellow and Long-tailed Silky-Flycatchers, Volcano Hummingbird, Flame-throated Warbler, Acorn and Hairy Woodpeckers, Ruddy Treerunner and Sooty-capped Bush-Tanager.

#### Days 3 to 5

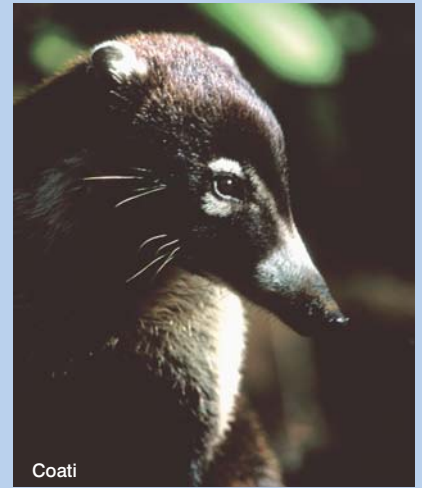
This morning we make the transfer southwest by plane to the Pacific coastal lowlands at Tiskita Lodge, for a three-night stay. The 160 hectares here include some untouched rain forest with secondary growth, as well as some agricultural land and a beautiful beach overlooking the Pacific. Local specialities include: King Vulture, White Hawk, Mealy Parrot, Baird's and Black-throated Trogons, Black-hooded Antshrike, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Blue-crowned and Red-capped Manakins, Riverside Wren and many species of hummingbird and tanager. Along the shore, Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Pelican, Willet and Hudsonian Whimbrel are common.

#### Days 6 to 8

We now escape the heat of the coast, and move to the cool of the highlands. We have three nights at Monteverde. We explore the cloud forest and meadows of this beautiful area and visit the Santa Elena Reserve and Bosque Nuboso. It is the Quaker dairy farmers that we have to thank for preserving the forests here, for they realised that they needed to keep the forest cover to prevent erosion of their dairy pastures and to keep the water-table stable. Our chief prize here will be finding the magnificent Resplendent Quetzal, but we would also hope to be able to explore fully the trails and paths to see many of the beautiful epiphytes that festoon the



Sunbittern



Coati

**Outline Itinerary**

<b>Day 1</b>	Fly to San José
<b>Day 2</b>	San José
<b>Days 3-5</b>	Tiskita
<b>Days 6-8</b>	Monteverde
<b>Days 9-11</b>	Solimar
<b>Days 12-15</b>	Selva Verde
<b>Day 16</b>	Depart San José
<b>Day 17</b>	Arrive London

**Party Size**

Maximum of 14 clients.

**Accommodation**

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms, with private facilities. Please note there are a limited number of single rooms available at Solimar.

**Transport**

By private coach and minibus

**Includes**

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, airport taxes and tips.

**Gradings**

Good

380

Cool to Hot

Moderate

Special

Moderate

Good

Moderate

Scheduled



American Pygmy Kingfisher

tall trees, and find some of the colourful frogs and butterflies that have made this area the most famous in Costa Rica. Many species of hummingbird can be found taking nectar from the flowers, and we can hope to find Green Violetear, Steely-vented, Rufous-tailed and Striped-tailed Hummingbirds, as well as Purple-throated Mountain-gem, Green-crowned Brilliant and Magenta-throated Woodstar. We will also look for Black Guan, Prong-billed Barbet, Orange-bellied Trogon, and much more. The time here will be very exciting, as there is so much to see!

**Days 9 to 11**

We now transfer to the Hacienda Solimar Lodge in the Guanacaste Lowlands for a three night stay. On our way to Solimar, we will divert to Tarcoles for a boat-trip in the mangroves of the Tarcoles Estuary. Here, the density of herons, egrets and kingfishers is remarkable. In particular, we will look for American Pygmy Kingfisher, Mangrove Hummingbird, Southern Lapwing and Double-striped Thick-knee. Flocks of White Ibis fly up ahead of the boat, and Royal Terns, Laughing Gulls and various waders rest on the beach. Raptors include Osprey, Mangrove Black Hawk, Crested and Yellow-headed Caracaras. Scarlet Macaws nest in the area, and American Crocodiles haul out on the muddy banks. The ranch at Solimar has extensive grounds (1,300 hectares) and abuts the Palo Verde National Park. The habitat is a mixture of dry tropical forest, mangrove and estuary. Within the wetland complex Northern Jacanas, Tricolored Herons, Limpkins, Wood Stork, Anhingas and Neotropic Cormorants are sometimes joined by Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Muscovy Duck and Blue-winged Teal. With luck we may see Snail Kite, Great Black Hawk and Boat-billed Heron. At dusk Lesser Nighthawks swoop over the wetlands and Pauraques sit on the dry tracks. Nearby are huge cacti and flowering cotton-trees and tabebuias. Dry forest is Costa Rica's most endangered

habitat, with only one per cent of Central America's original dry forest remaining. We will look also for Black Howler Monkey, Thicket Tinamou, Ruby-throated and Cinnamon Hummingbirds, woodcreepers, Long-tailed Manakins, Brown-crested and Northern Royal Flycatchers, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Gray-headed Tanager, and Olive and Striped-headed Sparrows. With luck we may be able to see the Pacific Screech-Owls and Spectacled Owls that are often near the lodge.

**Days 12 to 15**

Our journey now takes us to another area, the Caribbean Lowlands, and our base for the next four nights, the Selva Verde Lodge. There are a variety of habitats to explore during our stay here. The riverine habitat is very rich, and birds in the gallery forest include Ruddy Quail-Dove, Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Araçari, Cinnamon Becard and Red-throated Ant-Tanager. Kingfishers fly up and down the river and with luck we may find the secretive Sunbittern moving in and out of the shadows of overhanging trees and bushes or even a Southern River Otter. Fruit on the bird tables attracts a host of new birds, including Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Rufous Motmot, Crimson-collared Tanager, Olive-backed Euphonia and Black-cowled Oriole. One of the attractions of the area are the wooded trails of the research station of La Selva, where we will be spoilt for choice: Slaty-breasted Tinamou, Red-footed Plumeleteer, Crowned Woodnymph, Broad-billed Motmot, Black-throated Trogon, White-fronted Nunbird, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Snowy Cotinga, Rufous Piha, Rufous Mourner, White-collared Manakin and Shining Honeycreeper can all be found.

**Days 16 & 17**

This morning we return to San José and after saying farewell to our driver and guide we catch the non-direct flight back to London, where we arrive early next morning.