

Costa Rica Eye Candy

In 2022, we took the birding trips originally planned for 2020. As reported in that year's Annual Report, we were in Austin planning to visit Houston before flying to Costa Rica when word about COVID arrived. Claire gave us explicit instructions to come home immediately, which we did.

Photographs from this trip can be [found online](#). You can also click on any of the photos in this document to see a larger version of the photo online. If you don't see the information about the photo, click on the (i) symbol in a browser window. On your phone, scroll down for the information.

We met a *real* photographer, Mac Walter, on the tour. He convinced me that I needed a better camera and suggested an alternative to the one I was carrying. Of course, we are in different leagues when it comes to cameras. He had just spent as much on a lens as I had for new binoculars and telescope. I borrowed the camera he suggested from a friend in San Francisco and used it on the Bolivia trip, which is reported [separately](#). You can compare the results. Mac generously shared his photos from CR, so you can compare those to mine. His are at <https://photos.app.goo.gl/t5bKQPkULArAuEuNA>.

For this trip, we added a private tour of part of Costa Rica to replace Part 1 of Mark Pretti's Tour. We joined his tour for Part 2.

We landed in San Juan and spent the night recovering from the travel (actually not a hard trip, certainly by our history). The next day, we flew to the Osa peninsula, a far corner of CR near the border with Panama. This has the only remaining stand of tropical humid rainforest in the country. During a short drive to the fabulous El Remanso Rainforest Wildlife Lodge, we were treated to a view of a mother and pup Neotropical Otters, a critically endangered species. They were competing with several Bare-throated Tiger-herons for food in a small pond by the side of the road. The Tiger-herons were cooperative. The otters were not. In case you are wondering about the name Tiger-heron, here is a young bird that looks like the name.



Juvenile Bare-throated Tiger-heron



Adult Bare-throated Tiger-heron

The lodge managed to combine good wildlife viewing with superb food and great service.

The birding around the lodge was wonderful, with several great sightings right outside our cabin. One was this Red-lored Parrot, which was a regular visitor.

We spent one day visiting Corcovado National Park, reached by an hourlong boat ride and wading ashore. The

highlight of the park is Baird's Tapir, which we stumbled upon while hiking to the Visitors' Center.

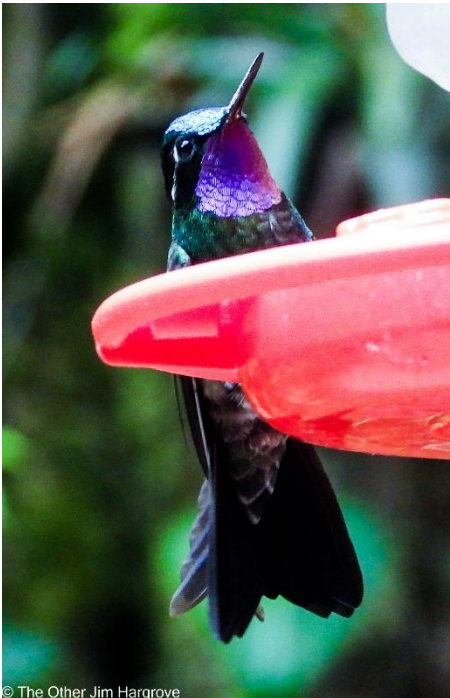


Baird's Tapir

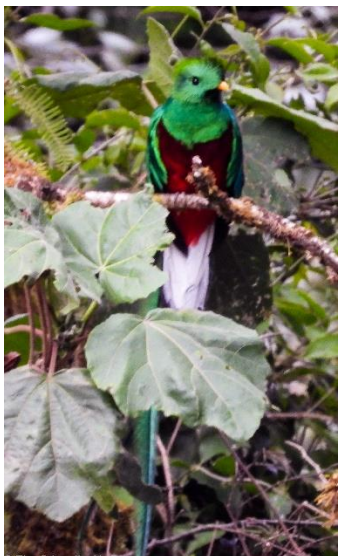


Red-lored Parrot

After three nights at El Remanso Lodge, we flew back to San Juan and traveled to the Monteverde Area. This was one of the highlights of our first tour to Costa Rica in 1994. The area is quite a bit different now, but still has some great areas for wildlife. The Hummingbird Center, a short drive from our hotel, provided some eye candy, such as this lovely, Male Purple-Throated Mountain-Gem at a feeder.



© The Other Jim Hargrove
Male Purple-Throated Mountain-Gem



Resplendent Quetzal

After several days in the area, we drove all day to reach Trogon Lodge in the highlands south of San Juan. Here, we hoped to get looks at the Resplendent Quetzal, which we had seen before, but wanted to see again as it's a spectacular bird. We weren't disappointed. There was a nest at the edge of the lodge property. We actually saw 4 of them on a single day, including one right outside our room.

Then, after several wonderful days on our private trip, we met Mark Pretti's group for more birding.

Our first stop was the famous Braulio Carillo NP, which we remembered from 1994, but of course looked quite different now.

Just to show that we aren't exclusively birders, here is a picture of an interesting Anole lizard that we saw in Braulio Carillo.

Something new since our last visit: **Copé's house**. Copé, a local birding guide, has set up his house and nearby areas as a place to see interesting birds and mammals. Our first treat was these precious Honduran White Bats, tiny animals about the size of my thumb roosting under a large leaf.



Anole in Braulio Carillo



Honduran White Bats

We also managed to finally get a look at Spectacled Owl, *Pulsatrix perspicillata*, the source of one of Jim's *Noms de Web*. This species has eluded us for decades. Jim is only spectacled now, after cataract surgery, when he needs to read the small print. When he adopted the name, he wore glasses with lenses taken from old coke bottles, according to some people who worked with him.



Spectacled Owl



"Blue Jeans" Frog

We also had stunning looks at the “Blue Jeans” frog near Copé’s house.

Next, we went to Selva Verde for eye candy, and Cano Negro, for wetland species. A boat ride produced the expected looks at Boat-billed Heron, a weird looking bird that refused to let me photograph it, favoring Linda instead, and an amazing [Video of a Sungrebe](#) swimming beside the boat. (You may have to download this video to play it.) This is a notoriously hard bird to see, sought after because there are only



Boat-billed Heron

three species in that family of birds. The voice in the background of the video is Mark Pretti, one of our favorite guides.

We also saw this beautiful Rufous Motmot.



Rufous Motmot

Then we headed to the final stop on our tour, Arenal Observatory Lodge, near the Arenal Volcano. We had a surprise when we recognized Linda and Evan Arredondo in the dining room. They used to live near us in Austin, and we had stayed at their house in Tucson in 2021.

Here is a beautiful photograph of an American Pygmy Kingfisher that Linda (Hargrove, not Arredondo) took while I was not around.



American Pygmy Kingfisher

This lovely little bird is one of the prettiest kingfishers, which is saying a lot as the family has several spectacular species.

Costa Rica is a great place for birding. The two coasts, separated by a mountain range, have many different species available. The infrastructure and lodging are excellent. We recommend this trip frequently to people who are looking for something easy and interesting.