

Raptors, Quetzals & Macaws; Costa Rica

March 2024

*Hawk Mountain and the Kéköldi Raptor Migration Watchsite
Invite you to join the 2024 Birdwatching 10-day excursion*



Cost: \$3,900 plus airfare for ten-day trip, double occupancy

Leaders:

Dr. JF Therrien, Senior Scientist at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary
Pablo Porras, Biologist and Director of the Kéköldi Raptor Migration Count Site
José Castillo, birding guide, Costa Rica

Beautiful Costa Rica

Costa Rica definitely stands out for its richness in biodiversity and for being the best in the world when it comes to birding and wildlife sightings. Nowhere else on the planet can you witness the passage of millions of raptors during migration one day, while catching a glimpse at quetzals and other amazing species in the dense forest the next day.

What doesn't stand out so much is the richness in Costa Rican culture that is diverse and enriched by the warmth of the Costa Ricans. When it comes to cultural diversity, Costa Rica's history is the makeup of our indigenous heritage, the Spanish colonization and the arrival of Caribbean, Chinese, Indian, Arab and European settlers to create a melting pot of languages, flavors, shades, and spices. To these cultures, we add the tropical flavors and freshness of their cuisine, and Costa Rican food becomes a culinary delight!

With this birding tour, we aim to provide one of the best opportunities to experience it all. A few details, in a nutshell:

- Participant numbers limited to 12 so we keep proximity
- All ground transportation in Costa Rica with an experienced driver
- Expert local, bilingual guide
- Expert North American guide
- All admission fees to National Parks and lookouts
- All meals while in Costa Rica (wine/beer are extra)
- Lodging in comfortable rooms, double occupancy (\$550 supplement for single room)
- Instruction in raptor identification
- Snacks and water daily
- A contribution to the Kéköldi Raptor Migration Watchsite conservation programs

Not included:

Airfare to Costa Rica.

The round-trip to San Jose (Costa Rica) will vary with city of origin but is estimated at \$600-700 per person.

Regardless, contact JF with your tentative flight arrangements before making any reservations as things can change and to find out what flight we are using. Make sure your flights are refundable or have no change fees. We strongly suggest everyone to purchase trip insurance to cover unrecoverable costs in case of illness or need to cancel.

Deposits/Payment: Trip is limited to 12 adult participants on a first come, first serve basis. If less than six participants sign-up, we may merge our trip with another or cancel.

To hold a slot on the trip register through Hawk Mountain or call/email Dr. JF Therrien at 570-943-3411 x 104 (therrien@hawkmountain.org) and submit a \$500 deposit by Dec 31, 2023. Balance of payment is due Jan 31, 2024. The refund policy is attached.

Trip philosophy

The Kéköldi Raptor Migration Watchsite excursion is designed for the hawk-watcher/conservationist/birdwatcher. We have designed the trip to provide maximum opportunities to view the spectacle of the migration, to benefit local raptor conservation efforts and to gain an appreciation for the Costa Rican culture away from the tourist destinations. We will stay in the local community to ensure our dollars support the local people and allow the participants to experience Costa Rican culture first-hand. Flexibility and good humor are required to make the tour a successful adventure for each participant. It is important to recognize that Costa Rica small-town hotels and restaurants may not all be on par with U.S. AAA standards. However, they hold a unique charm and atmosphere that you will find enchanting. We will ensure that tour participants are given clean, safe rooms with fans or air-conditioning and treated to excellent, healthy local fare. Facilities are informal and friendly. Previous tour groups have said they enjoyed being away from the normal tourist routine and long to return. The trip schedule is very full, but participants are encouraged to take a morning or afternoon off from the group and rest or relax on their own to make the trip at your own pace.



Tour Leaders

JF Therrien first went to Costa Rica 20 years ago to study raptor migration as an academic trainee. Now Senior Researcher at Hawk Mountain, he keeps helping and overseeing the scientific monitoring for this phenomenal migration bottleneck. He has been to Costa Rica several times and always want to go back.



Pablo Porras is a Costa Rican native who came to Hawk Mountain as a Conservation Science trainee in 1999. Following this experience, he went back to his home country to set up the basis of the Kéköldi Raptor Migration Count site. He now oversees the raptor migration count and loves to show his wonderful country to visitors.



José Castillo is an established birding guide in Costa Rica. He has led groups for more than 10 years and enjoys sharing his passion with everyone. He always makes sure everyone is having a good time.



Raptors, Quetzals & Macaws; Costa Rica 2024 – Itinerary

Summary:

Day 1	Arrival – Hotel Robledal or similar San José.
Days 2-3	Macaw Lodge Carara & Turrubares Hills Central Pacific Lowlands
Days 4-5	Paraiso Quetzal Lodge Los Quetzales Highlands
Days 6-7-8-9	El Pizote Lodge or similar South Caribbean
Day 10	Return to airport and departure

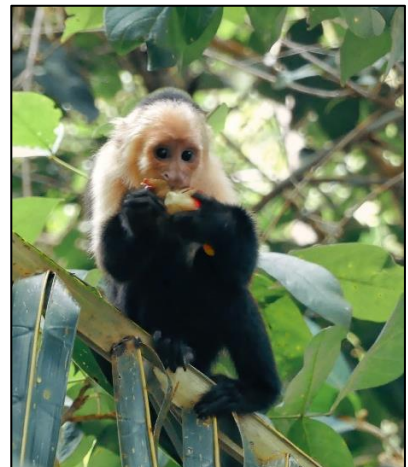
Though relatively small in size, Costa Rica is home of the richest biodiversity in the world. Encompassing four birding zones and numerous micro-ecosystems, Costa Rican birds and wildlife are virtually on display in their natural habitat. During both Spring and Fall, this narrow strip of land connecting North and South America witness the most spectacular raptor migration in the World with more than 2 million birds from 30+ species passing overhead. Costa Rica is also home to more than 50 hummingbird species, so whether in cloud forest, humid Caribbean lowlands, or mangroves, both the largest and smallest birds are highly accessible to visitors. The country's natural wealth is no accident. In the mid-20th century, Costa Rican leadership realized the importance of conservation for the future of the nation. Today,



27 percent of Costa Rica has been officially designated as protected land and rather than devoting resources to developing a military, Costa Rican officials instead chose to build educational and social security programs. Despite the ensuing growth of tourism, the country remains safe, friendly and open to visitors. Costa Ricans continue to exude appreciation and joy for the many treasures of their country.

Day 1 | Hotel Robledal or similar | San Jose Central Valley | Arrival.

Arrival in San José (Juan Santamaria International Airport). Dinner and accommodation at Hotel Robledal where you can explore the lodge garden and maybe find the Ferruginous Pigmy-Owl living in the hotel grounds.



Day 2 | Macaw Lodge | Carara & Turrubares Hills Central Pacific Lowlands

In the morning of Day 2, after breakfast, we depart San Jose heading to Macaw Lodge on the Pacific side. Located between two different life zones, the humid tropical forest and the high humidity pre-montane forest, it is surrounded by expanses of mature and secondary forests, rural roads, pastures and organic farming plots. These bioclimatic, ecological and landscape conditions bear an amazing abundance and diversity of birds. The regional specialties include the endemic Fiery-billed Aracari, Sunbittern, Blue-crowned Manakin, White-crested Coquette, Tanagers and more Toucans. We will visit the Paramos and the continental divide for Volcano Junco and Timberline Wren. We will arrive to the lodge for dinner and then fall asleep to the sound of the local frog chorus! Overnight at Macaw Lodge.

Day 3 | Macaw Lodge | Carara & Turrubares Hills Central Pacific Lowlands

Day 3 will begin with an early morning birding walk, around the lodge. Following breakfast, we will continue birding the trails and botanical garden, with a visit to the waterfall trail in search for manakins. This garden is a collection of more than 500 plant species from around the planet for ornamental, medicinal and food purposes. The collection is distributed in a mosaic of blocks, among ponds and natural streams, with great opportunities for birdwatching. Return to the lodge for lunch and get ready for a hike in the local roads, with your guide searching for the endemic Fiery-billed Aracari and other Macaw Lodge specials. Relax and enjoy dinner in the evening. Overnight at Macaw Lodge.



Day 4-5 | Paraiso Quetzal Lodge | Los Quetzales Highlands

On Day 4, we will travel to the Talamanca highlands (lunch *en route* at the legendary Casa Tangara dowii, watching for barbets, partridges and quail doves, and arrive to Paraiso Quetzal Lodge during the afternoon. The Highlands is a fantastic region to enjoy the presence of regional endemic species which evolved in the highest mountains of Costa Rica and Western Panama, a perfect destination for bird lovers. More than 170 species have been recorded in the tropical cloud forest and nearby subalpine paramo-covered peaks. We will spend the afternoon enjoying the trails in the cloud forest.

Before breakfast on Day 8, we will walk the internationally famous Quetzal Tour, which consists of birding along the trails of a local oak forest in a reserve, while looking for the large numbers of the strikingly beautiful Resplendent Quetzal. The region is home to a number of birds that are only found at this elevation, such as the Collared Trogon, Emerald Toucanet, Fiery-colored Tanager, Spotted Wood-Quail, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Elegant Euphonia and Tufted Flycatcher.



Breakfast will be taken at the lodge after which we will enjoy the morning by watching the feeding stations and gardens looking at the incredible number of hummingbirds flying through the grounds. After lunch in the area we can bird along the lodge's scenic waterfall trail, looking for Talamanca regional endemics like the White-throated Mountain Gem, Collared Redstart, Volcano Hummingbird, Black-cheeked Warbler and the new species to Costa Rica, Talamanca Hummingbird. Overnight at Paraiso Quetzal Lodge.

Days 6-9 | El Pizote Lodge or similar | South Caribbean

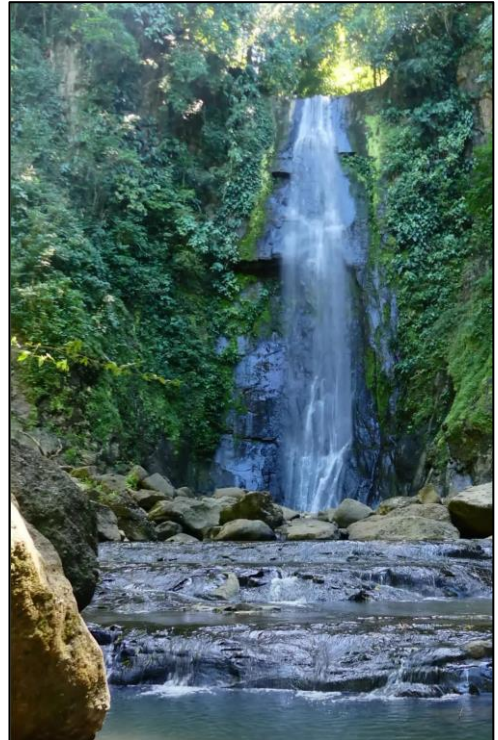
After an early breakfast on Day 6 and we will start our 3-hour road trip to the Caribbean coast. We will travel through mountains and valleys of Braulio Carrillo National Park until the coast, then stop for lunch in Cahuita and take a walk on the easy trails of Cahuita National Park. There we could see a great diversity of coastal birds, 3 species of monkeys and various frog species. We will then head for dinner at the hotel (Pizote Lodge, Puerto Viejo), our home for the next 4 nights.

The next 2 days (Day 7 and 8), we will hike the 30 min uphill walk in the rainforest to reach the world-renown Kéköldi Hawkwatch. The facilities are rustic but charming. The indigenous family who runs the place will welcome us (lunch provided). We will meet the raptor migration counters and spend time on the observation tower where more than two million raptors cross the Costa Rica's skies annually. The site is famous for one of the largest migration of Peregrine falcons in the globe as well as Swainsons and Broad-winged Hawks, Mississippi and Plumbeous Kites, and many more. This is also a good location for resident raptors such as King Vultures and Black Hawk-eagles.



For people interested in a longer hike in the rainforest to see forest-dwelling birds and wildlife, we can walk to the magnificent Bribri waterfall (2 hours) – pictured here.

On Day 9, we will visit the National Refuge Gandoca-Manzanillo, a great area for coastal birds.



Day 10 | Return to airport and departure.

After breakfast at the lodge, we will head back to SanJosé (Juan Santamaria International Airport) for departure.