

# Costa Rica 2017



June 12<sup>th</sup> - June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017







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Our first stop in Costa Rica was at La Paz Waterfall as we crossed the continental divide on our way to La Quinta de Sarapiquí, our lodge for the next two nights.





Fortuna

Chilamate

Arenal National Park  
Ecocentro Danaus

Catarata del Toro

San José

Tárcoles

Crocodile River Tour

San Gerardo de Dota

La Georgina

Savegre Lodge

Quepos

Manuel Antonio National Park

Barú Wildlife Preserve



# QUICK FACTS

## GOVERNMENT

The Costa Rican government is democratic, with presidential elections every 4 years, and no standing army.

## CURRENCY

While Costa Rica has its own currency (the Colón), US dollars are readily accepted throughout the country.

## NATURE

Costa Rica is the leader in ecotourism and the proof is in their natural resources, with nearly 30% of all the land mass protected under national parks, wildlife refuges and forest preserves. The country hosts more than 5% of the world's biodiversity.

- 130 species of freshwater fish
- 175 species of amphibians
- 250 species of mammals
- 225 species of reptiles
- 894 species of birds
- 1,251 species of butterflies
- 8,000 species of moths
- 1,200 varieties of orchids
- 9,000 species of plants
- 34,000 species of insects

## CLIMATE

Costa Rica's weather is fairly stable with humid and warm temperatures at sea level and pleasantly cold at higher elevations. Daily rain is almost guaranteed at lower elevations of both the Caribbean and Pacific slopes. The temperature during the day is about 85°F and humid in the lowland rainforest, and about 70° in the cloud forests at 9,000 feet elevation.

## PEOPLE

Half of the 4.1 million people in the country live in the capital city of San José. The life expectancy is about 77 years, one of the highest in the world.

Ticos, as the locals call themselves, are among the friendliest and warmest people of Central America. Their saying "Pura Vida" translates to "pure life", a good way to summarize their happiness, their national patrimony and their living in harmony with nature.

# ABOUT COSTA RICA

## FOOD

The typical breakfast consists of gallo pinto (black beans mixed with rice and cilantro), eggs and fresh fruits accompanied by coffee or freshly made juice of local fruits such as papaya, mango, pineapple or passion fruit. The typical lunch is called "casado", which again may include white rice, some kind of beans, meat (fish, chicken, beef or pork), flanked with vegetables and even a slice of local cheese. Fish is often served fried from head to tail with salad and patacones (smashed and fried green plantains)....delicious!!!



Bill Kracov



Passerini's Tanager

Lee Tavel



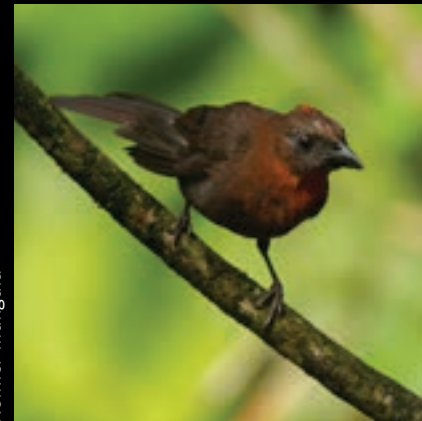
Coatimundi

Beverly Tavel



Blue Trumpet Vine

Reinier Munguía



Red-throated Ant-tanager

Jimye Russell



Young Gray-headed Chachalaca

Lee Tavel



Unknown Sp.

Reinier Munguía



Black-cowled Oriole

Lee Tavel



Stauffer's Treefrog

Reinier Munguía



Hooker's Hot Lips

Paula Powell



Philodendron Sp.

John Russell



Netted Stinkhorn Mushroom

Bill Kracov



Green Honeycreeper (male)



# CHILAMATE

La Quinta de Sarapiquí is a lodge nestled in the rainforest of the Caribbean lowlands and surrounded by the Río Sardinal. Large trees along the river provide a wildlife corridor for Howler Monkeys and a variety of birds including parrots and toucans. Bird feeders provided us with countless opportunities to capture beautiful birds attracted to a mix of bananas and papaya. The man-made ponds of the lodge were a great place to find frogs at night. In fact, our first photos were those of frogs and insects found during our first night hike.



Jimye Russell

Craugastor Sp.



Lee Tavel

Stauffer's Tree Frog



Reinier Munguia

Green Basilisk



Bill Kracov

Spectacled Owls



Reinier Munguia

Boulenger's Snouted Tree Frog



Lee Tavel

Central American Bullfrog



# CATARATAS DEL TORO

The next morning we headed to Cataratas del Toro. The hike to the bottom of the waterfall was our most arduous hike in the whole trip, but very rewarding. Going down was easy, coming back up, not so much. The hummingbirds in this place were outstanding and so was Wil and his staff.

John Russell



Jimye and Paula at one of the overlooks on the way down to the waterfall.

Jimye Russell



John braces his camera against an old fence post while shooting this magnificent waterfall.

Jimye Russell



Located in the central mountains of Costa Rica, this 270 feet tall waterfall is part of an ancient volcanic crater. Four hundred steps later you reach the bottom to be engulfed by the noise and water spray.

Reinier Munguía



John Russell

*As you get closer to the bottom, the walls are alive with green and yellow mosses maintained by the constant water spray. Smaller water falls add to the beauty that can't be seen from the top of the crater. The Gunnera plants, also known as Poorman's Umbrella, give this place a Jurassic feel.*







# CATARATAS DEL TORO

Besides shooting the waterfall, our goal was to capture two species of hummingbirds that were hard to find anywhere else, the Black-bellied and the Green Thorntail hummingbirds. The gardens here are teeming with Blue Porterweed, a flowering plant that attracts butterflies and hummers. Along the trails, you could also find various native tropical flowers typical of a medium elevation rainforest and exotics such as the Clock Vine (right) around the hummingbird gardens.

Reinier Munguía



Green Thorntail Hummingbird

Reinier Munguía



Spiral Ginger

Reinier Munguía



Coppery-headed Emerald

Reinier Munguía



Black-bellied Hummingbird (male)

Lee Tavel



Black-bellied Hummingbird (female)

Lee Tavel



Violet Sabrewing Hummingbird

Lee Tavel



Green-crowned Brilliant



Shooting poison dart frogs requires patience and quick reflexes as the little buggers don't stay put in one place for long. Focusing on these tiny subjects tests your skills and your camera's ability to focus quickly. This was a great opportunity to practice macro photography and the use of flash.

# POISON DART FROG SHOOT



Lee Tavel

Teamwork is essential to success when shooting these tiny frogs. Beverly was constantly following the frogs as they departed the shooting area.



Jimye Russell

Green & Black Poison Dart Frog

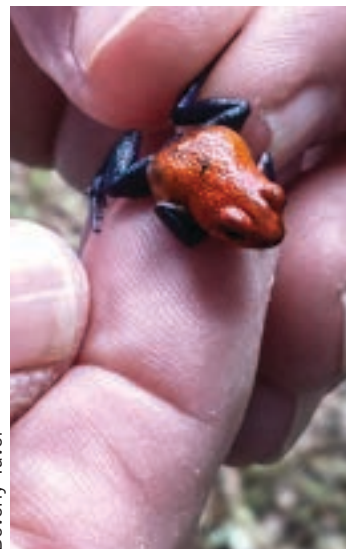


Bill Kracov

The Green & Black Poison Dart Frog can be twice the size of the Strawberry Poison Dart Frog. Both inhabit the moist floor of the lowland rainforest.



Reinier Mungaía



Beverly Tavel

*Poison Dart Frogs gained their name from the poisonous skin secretions they produce. The Emberá, an indigenous people of Colombia, used the frogs' powerful poison to coat the tip of their blowgun darts used for hunting. It's believed the poison toxicity is the result of their diet composed of insects such as ants, termites and beetles which in turn obtain their own defenses from chemicals in the plants they consume.*



# THE DIRT ROAD

On our third day in Costa Rica, we went to explore the dirt roads near the lodge. We were hoping to find the Great Green Macaws, but instead we found a surplus of interesting wildlife, including our first encounter with Howler Monkeys and toucans.

Bill Kracov



Red-lore Amazons

Reinier Munguia



White-crowned Pionus

Lee Tavel



Grooved-billed Ani

Lee Tavel



Golden Mantled Howler Monkey

Jimye Russell



Golden Mantled Howler Monkey



# BIRDS OF LA QUINTA

Bill Kracov



Red-legged Honeycreeper

Reinier Munguía



Grayish Saltator

Reinier Munguía



Gray-headed Chachalaca

Lee Tavel



Green Honeycreeper

Bill Kracov



Blue-gray Tanager

Reinier Munguía



Golden Hooded Tanager

Jimye Russell



Passerini's Tanager

Reinier Munguía



White-collared Manakin (female)

Lee Tavel



Passerini's Tanager & Red-legged Honeycreeper



Bill Kracov



Chestnut-mandibled Toucan

Jimye Russell



Buff-throated Saltator

Reinier Mungaíá



Malachite

John Russell



Boat-billed Heron

Jimye Russell



Green Iguana

Bill Kracov



Crimson-collared Tanager

Bill Kracov



Green Honeycreeper (female)

John Russell



Blue Morpho

Lee Tavel



Eyelash Viper

Jimye Russell



White-throated Magpie Jay

Paula Powell



Torch Ginger

Bill Kracov



Red-eyed Treefrog



# FORTUNA

The town of Fortuna was our second stop on a long journey through Costa Rica. Located in the foothills of the Arenal Volcano, this peaceful town is a busy tourist destination, perfect for outdoor adventures. Horseback riding, ziplining, hiking and white water rafting are some of the best attractions. Due to its proximity to an active volcano, there are several hot springs in the area. Here we had the opportunity to visit the Arenal Volcano National Park, The Frog Ponds at Arenal Oasis and the Danaus Nature Preserve.



Reinier Munguia

Arenal Volcano is the main attraction at La Fortuna. Often covered with clouds, this volcano has a perfect cone.



Reinier Munguia

The Arenal Volcano is an andesitic stratovolcano looming 5,385 feet high and with a nearly perfect cone. The crater is 460 feet wide. This is a young volcano, less than 7,500 years old, one of six active volcanoes in Costa Rica.



Bill Kracov

A Laughing Falcon welcomed our arrival to La Fortuna, giving us plenty of time to get photos.



Beverly Tavel

Food is pretty good in town with a large variety of cuisines represented, including Italian, Chinese, Argentinian, and of course Costa Rican. The fresh fried tilapia was a hit at La Rana Roja restaurant. The watering hole was also well received by everyone. From Margaritas to Guaipirifias, we all had a good time before heading for dinner at the lodge.



# AROUND THE LODGE

On our first morning in La Fortuna, we got treated to a colorful show provided by toucans and aracarís.

Bill Kracov



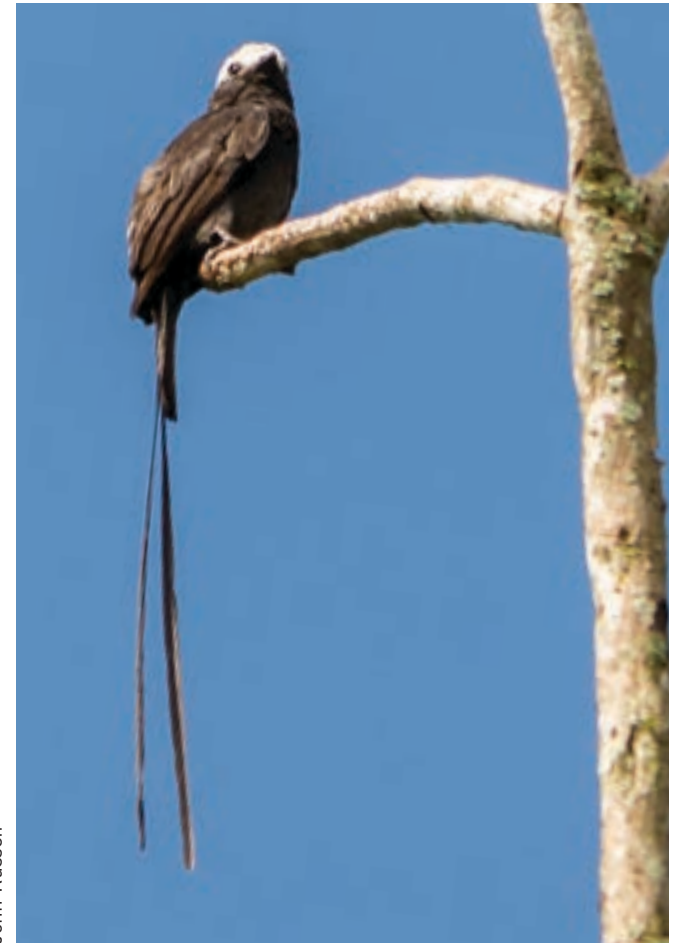
Chestnut-mandible Toucan

Reinier Munguia



Collared Aracari

John Russell



Long-tailed Tyrant

Lee Tavel



Collared Aracari

Reinier Munguia



Rufous-tailed Hummingbird

Lee Tavel



Chestnut-mandible Toucan



# THE FROG POND

Lee Tavel



Male Red-eyed Tree Frog looking for a mate.

Jimye Russell



*Red-eyed Tree Frogs are the most iconic animals of the rainforest. These particularly bright colored frogs have an interesting life cycle and defenses. These frogs use sounds as well as vibrations to communicate. The males call for females during the rainy season from high branches near water. Once they find their mate, they embrace in amplexus for several hours until ovoposition occurs. Eggs are deposited on a broad leaf using a binding gel that keeps them moist. On average, the tadpoles hatch in 6-10 days if undisturbed, but they exhibit phenotypic plasticity, which allows them to leave the egg when attacked by predators. The developing tadpole can discern between the vibrations caused by water droplets and that of an approaching Cat-eyed Snake, which typically feeds on their eggs. The tadpoles' embryos in this picture are positioning themselves with their gills close to the area of the membrane that provides the best gas exchange.*

Reinier Munguía



Vaillant's Frog

Jimye Russell



Hourglass Tree Frog in amplexus



# ARENAL VOLCANO NATIONAL PARK

On this morning, we headed over to the Arenal Volcano National Park to check for Eye-lash Vipers and any other species. We walked Las Coladas trail and climbed the lava rocks to admire the view of the volcano and nearby Lake Arenal.



Reinier Munguía

White-throated Magpie Jay



Jimye Russell

Blue & Green Grasshopper



Reinier Munguía

Central American Whiptail



Lee Tavel

Eyelash Viper



John Russell

A view of Arenal Volcano from the end of the trail



Beverly Tavel

Looking over Lake Arenal







# DANAUS ECO RESERVE

Danaus is a small private preserve on the outskirts of La Fortuna. The place is home to a good variety of wildlife including Agoutis, Sloths, Spectacled Caimans and a large variety of birds. They also have a really nice butterfly enclosure and an indigenous art gallery.

Beverly Tavel



Shooting at the feeders.

Bill Kracov



Yellow-throated Euphonia

Reinier Munguía



White-vented Euphonia

Reinier Munguía



*Leafcutter ants can be found almost anywhere in Costa Rica. They are considered the first farmers, as they grow their own fungus which they feed with freshly cut plant material. These ants live in highly advanced colonies divided into castes: minimis, minors, mediae and majors. Each caste has a unique function inside the colony. Minims take care of the larvae and the fungus gardens and minors are the first line of defense along the harvesting trails. Mediae are the foragers that bring the leaf cuttings and the Majors are the large soldiers close to the mound. They also have a way to dispose of all waste created by the colony, which can host more than 8 million individuals. Besides humans, Leafcutters are the most complex animal society on Earth.*

Lee Tavel



Palm Tanager

Reinier Munguía



Olive-backed Euphonia



Jimye Russell



Unknown Butterfly

Reinier Munguía



Agouti

Bill Kracov



Great Kiskadee

Lee Tavel



Boat-billed Heron

Bill Kracov



Crimson-fronted Parakeets  
We found these two on our way to Tárcoles



Paula Powell



Yellow-headed Caracara

Lee Tavel



Green Heron

John Russell



Clay Robin (National Bird of Costa Rica)

Bill Kracov



Plumbeous Kite

Lee Tavel



Rose-throated Becard (female)

Bill Kracov



Scarlet Macaw

Reinier Munguía



Streaked Flycatcher

John Russell



Green Heron

Bill Kracov



Turquoise-browed Motmot

Reinier Munguía



Rufous-naped Wren

Lee Tavel



Brown Basilisk

Bill Kracov



Yellow-Headed Caracara



The Tárcoles River is a magical place amid a fishing village and a cattle ranch. The river hosts the largest concentration of American Crocodiles in Costa Rica. From an early morning boat tour, one can easily spot dozens of macaws cruising the sky as they move from their roost in the mangroves to their feeding grounds in the mountains. This area is rich in raptors with some great finds such as the Yellow-headed Caracara, Black Hawk and the Plumbeous Kite.

# TÁRCOLES RIVER

John Russell



Crocodile with butterfly eyelashes

Bill Kracov



Tárcoles River from the boat

These butterflies are males. They are sipping minerals from the tears of this crocodile. The minerals are essential nutrients for the production of sperm. The crocodiles here can be more than 15 feet long. The river provides lots of food in the form of fish and animals that drown during the tidal fluctuations.

Lee Tavel



Great Kiskadee

John Russell



Green Iguana

Lee Tavel



Amazon Kingfisher



# TÁRCOLES RIVER



Bill Kracov

Turquoise-browed Motmot



Lee Tavel

American Crocodile



Paula Powell

Bare-throated Tiger Heron



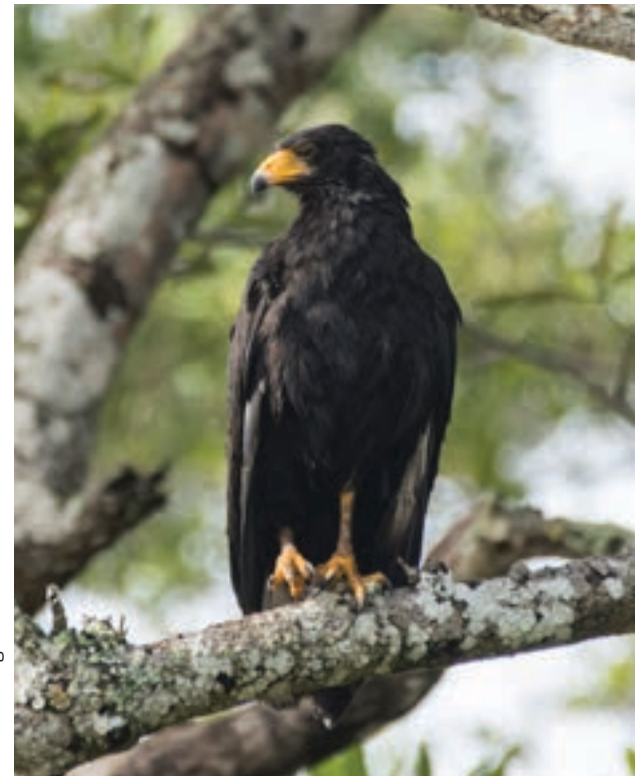
Reinier Munguía

Yellow-headed Caracara



John Russell

Crested Caracara



Reinier Munguía

Black Hawk







# CERRO LODGE



John Russell

Variegated Squirrel



Reinier Munguia

*Motmots belong to a family in the order Coraciiformes that includes the kingfishers, bee-eaters and rollers, thus their habit of nesting underground. Both males and females have a racketed tail. A male with a longer tail increases its chances of finding a mate. Both birds will swing the tail in a pendulous fashion as a way to warn a possible predator that they have been seen and there's little chance for a successful capture.*

Turquoise-browed Motmot



Reinier Munguia

Turquoise-browed Motmot



Jimye Russell

Azure Cracker



# CERRO LODGE

Lee Tavel



Rose-breasted Becard

John Russell



Imperial Moth

Jimye Russell



Scarlet Macaw (juvenile)

Reinier Munguia



Blue-nosed Caterpillars

Bill Kracov



Cinnamon Hummingbird



Bill Kracov



Black Spiny Iguana

Paula Powell



White-faced Capuchin

Bill Kracov



Ferruginous Pygmy Owl

Reinier Mungaía



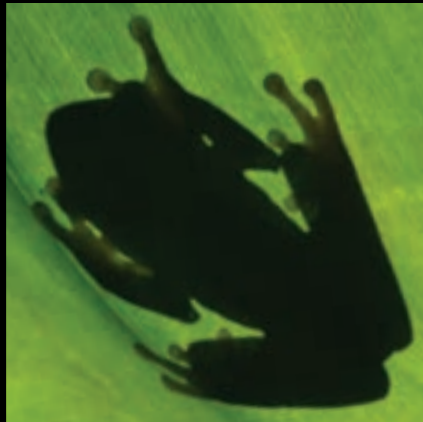
Tamandua

Jimye Russell



Squirrel Monkeys

Reinier Mungaía



Hourglass Frog

Lee Tavel



Three-toed Sloth

Bill Kracov



Crab-eating Raccoon

Reinier Mungaía



Coatimundi

Bill Kracov



Fiery-billed Aracari

John Russell



Orange-chinned Parakeet

Jimye Russell



Rosenberg's Gladiator Frog



Quepos is the gateway to the Manuel Antonio National Park, the crown jewel of the National Park system in Costa Rica and the most visited of all the parks. Nestled between the rocky outcrops of an ocean cove, the park is home to three of four species of monkeys in the country. Here you can get a closer look at the White-faced Capuchin, the Mantled Howler and the tiny Squirrel Monkey. The park also hosts a variety of birds, reptiles and crustaceans due to its proximity to fresh and saltwater. Coatis and Crab Eating Raccoons are common and both species of sloths can be found here along the trees that line the shoreline of some of the most beautiful beaches in Central America.

# QUEPOS



Lee Tavel

Manuel Antonio Beach



Bill Kracov

Three-toed Sloth



John Russell

White-faced Capuchin



John Russell

Black Hawk anting



Reinier Munguia

Halloween Crab



# MANUEL ANTONIO NATIONAL PARK

Reinier Mungaía



Golden-mantled Howler Monkey

John Russell



Grey-necked Wood Rail

Reinier Mungaía



Squirrel Monkey with Baby

Jimye Russell



Rosenberg's Gladiator Frog

Bill Kracov



Ctenosaur Iguana







# BARÚ WILDLIFE REFUGE

Barú is an 815 acre wildlife refuge located near Dominical. The coastal rainforest hosts a variety of wildlife including jaguars, ocelots and tapirs. On the beach trail, we found a large troop of White-faced Capuchins foraging through the almond trees. This reserve also contains a healthy population of sloths and we were lucky to find a Tamandua, a type of anteater that lives in the canopy.



Jimye Russell

Fiery-billed Aracari

Lee Tavel



Playa Dominical

Reinier Munguía



Hundreds of caterpillars on this tree!

Jimye Russell



Inca Dove

Reinier Munguía



Yellow-headed Gecko



John Russell



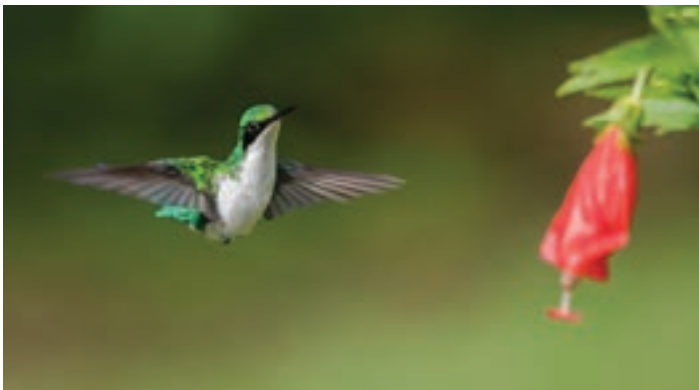
Tamandua

Reinier Munguia



Two-toed Sloth

Reinier Munguia



Purple-crowned Fairy Hummingbird

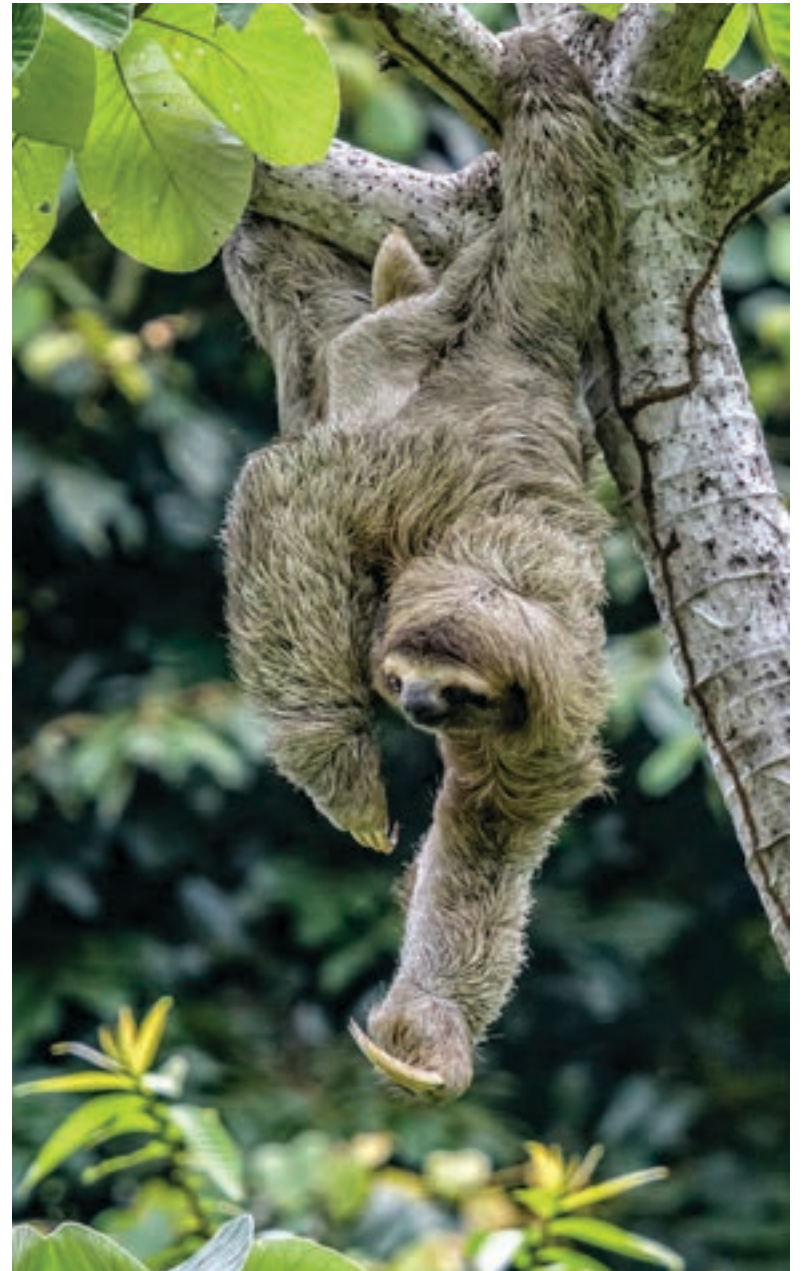
Jimye Russell



Three-toed Sloth

Males have a beautiful patch on their backs.

Lee Tavel



Three-toed Sloth

## BARÚ WILDLIFE REFUGE

*Sloths are drowsy tree-dwellers, sleeping up to 15 hours a day. They are so slow that algae grows on their fur. This fur also hosts up to 300 species of moths that breed on the sloth's body. Three-toed sloths are strictly folivores (only eat leaves). Their stomach contains four pouches each holding food at different levels of digestion. It may take them a week to digest a single meal; therefore, they only go to defecate every other week. They use their stubby tail to dig a hole at the base of the tree. This in turn fertilizes the tree and ensures it is healthy for years to come.*



Bill Kracov



Green Violet Ear

Lee Tavel



Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher

Beverly Tavel



Fuschia Sp.

Lee Tavel



Golden-browed Chlorophonia

Jimye Russell



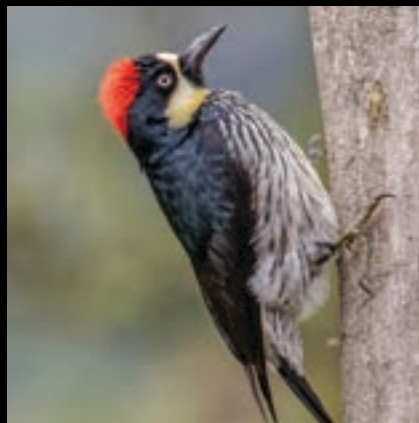
Flame-colored Tanager

Lee Tavel



Blue-throated Toucanet

Bill Kracov



Acorn Woodpecker

Reinier Munguía



Blue-gray Tanager

Reinier Munguía



Silver-throated Tanager

Jimye Russell



Fiery-throated Hummingbird

John Russell



Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher (juvenile)

Bill Kracov



Rufous-naped Sparrow



Savegre is an idyllic place located at 7,000 feet on the Pacific slope of the Talamanca Mountains. No other place in Costa Rica is as colorful as Savegre. From the gardens to the birds, the flashes of colors are reminiscent of a painting. This is the home of the Resplendent Quetzal, the largest and most beautiful of the trogons. The sacred bird of the Mayans and the Aztec can be as long as three feet counting its tail. But Savegre hosts many other great birds, some of which are captured in the pages to follow.



Reinier Munguía

Savegre River



Bill Kracov

Red-headed Barbet



John Russell

Slaty Flowerpiercer



Reinier Munguía

Resplendent Quetzal



# SAVEGRE



Lee Tavel

Sulphur-winged Parakeets



Bill Kracov

Magnificent Hummingbird



Jimye Russell

White-naped Brush Finch



Lee Tavel

Black-faced Solitaire



John Russell

Flame-colored Tanager



Bill Kracov

Purple-throated Mountain Gem



John Russell

Emerald Swift or Green Spiny Lizard



Jimye Russell

Acorn Woodpecker







# SAVEGRE

Bill Kracov



Yellow-thighed Finch

Lee Tavel



Blue-throated Toucanet

Lee Tavel



Black & Yellow Silky Flycatcher

Jimye Russell



Silver Throated Tanager

Reinier Munguia



Torrent Tyranulet



John Russell



White-throated Mountain Gem

*At nearly 7,000 feet above sea level, Savegre is a paradise for bird lovers. Up to 10 species of hummingbirds can be seen around the gardens while tanagers make constant visits to the fruit feeders. Some other highlights included the Collared Redstar, the Slaty Flowerpiercer, a little bird that competes with hummingbirds for nectar, and the Blue-throated Toucanet. At Batsu Gardens we were able to photograph countless bird species and even fight a hungry Red-headed Barbet that kept photo-bombing the set.*

Reinier Munguia



Spangled-cheeked Tanager

Lee Tavel



Fiery-throated Hummingbird

Reinier Munguia



Collared Redstar

Bill Kracov



Red-tailed Hawk



# MORE ADVENTURES

Jimye Russell



Time for a wine run at the local super market.

Jimye Russell



The girls and the ox cart in Tárcoles Beach.

Jimye Russell



Dinner at Costa Linda Restaurant, Manuel Antonio.

Jimye Russell



Jimye and John in paradise.

Jimye Russell



Feeding wild iguanas in Muelle de San Carlos.



# MORE ADVENTURES

Jimye Russell



Steve and Paula ziplining Barú National Wildlife Refuge near Dominical.

Jimye Russell



It's a bird...It's a plane...It's Superman!!! Not really, just a vulture.



Steve had his chance to jump in the ox cart.

Paula Powell



Ready to Zipline through the rainforest at Barú!

Jimye Russell



Beverly stalking birds with her cellphone.

Jimye Russell



John being attacked by a walking stick.

Jimye Russell



Heliconia leaf also know as poor-woman's umbrella.



PEOPLE

Jimye Russell



Waiting for the rain to stop in Playa Espadilla.

Beverly Tavel



Cemetery near San Miguel.

Jimye Russell



Shooting birds at Bantú Gardens, Savegre.



Jimye Russell



Paula feeding iguanas.

Paula Powell



Pineapple workers in Chilamate.







# Costa Rica 2017

John & Jimye Russell, Lee Dennis & Beverly Tavel, Steve & Paula Powell, William Kracov & Reinier Munguía

