Winter 2024

Birds of Costa Rica: Journal & Sketchbook

Clara Magsarili

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Birds of Costa Rica
Journal & Sketchbook
Fall 2023 Study Abroad Experience

Clara Magsarili

Advised by Eli Loomis
Honors Capstone
Winter 2024
Introduction

At four years old, my mom introduced me to birds. She took me out to Powell Butte, an extinct volcano, which is about a 20-minute drive east of our house in SE Portland. It was a warm sunny day in early summer and she made sure to bring her user-friendly Birds of Oregon field guide. We walked up the paved path, through grasses that were taller than me. The path went up the butte to a lookout that revealed five different mountains on a clear day. As we moved along the trail, the most brilliant blue I had ever seen in nature caught my eye. It was a bird with an orange chest. Using my mom’s field guide and with her help, we flipped to the blue section of the book. We found the Lazuli Bunting; the first piece to an endless puzzle that has since become an extension of my identity. As I began to learn the different birds around Portland, they became familiar faces. They were my friends who were with me on my walk to school or when I looked out my bedroom window. Their constant presence in my life only deepened my feeling of connection towards birds. I get to spend time with them, even if I do not know it at first. Their songs have become the background music of my life. While I have lived my life, they have lived alongside me.

I have been lucky to have people in my life who encouraged my interest in birds. In first grade, my teacher let me sit at the desk next to the window to look out at the bird feeders. The next year, my parents organized a birdwatching-themed birthday party where we crafted binoculars out of toilet paper rolls. In high school, my passion for birds expanded to plants and the environment when I was hired for my first job on the Youth Conservation Crew at Portland Parks. During my third and fourth year with them, I led birdwatching mornings with my crew which made me realize how much I love to share my passion with others.

Birds greatly influenced my decision to study abroad in Costa Rica as it is the home to 903 different bird species (Garrigues & Dean, 2014) which is a significant number of species, especially when considering the size of the country. The unique location of Costa Rica, a narrow country stretched between two large continents and bordering two oceans, fosters extensive biodiversity. The narrowing of the migratory land path welcomes many visiting birds from the North in the winter. Furthermore, the diversity of Costa Rica’s ecosystems provides an equal diversity of habitats and microclimates for the birds to use.

While studying in Costa Rica, I had the opportunity to take a Tropical Birds class at Veritas University in San Jose. My professor, Mariana Elizondo, taught our class of seven study abroad students about the natural history of birds while taking us on biweekly bird watching trips to the outskirts of the city. The most memorable part of this class was an overnight birdwatching field trip to CAT-IE (Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza) and La Marta Wildlife Refuge providing us with the opportunity to view a variety of bird species we had not seen yet. Despite having an interest in birds my entire life, this was the first formal bird class I had ever taken. During our field trips, I learned how to use eBird to build checklists containing our observed birds. Mariana offered an expansive knowledge about birds that helped us with identification. We additionally used the Merlin Bird ID app to identify unknown species.

I felt grateful for Mariana and the introduction to birding tools as I felt challenged being in a place where most birds were unfamiliar. Studying abroad in Costa Rica was the ultimate opportunity for me to get to know new bird species and revisit some old ones too. And most of all, I was able to learn more about myself.
Locations

1 Host Family’s House: Located in San Jose, in the neighborhood known as Zapote. It was a 15-minute walk from Veritas University, where I went to school. I lived on Calle 43.

2 Veritas University: The small university I attended. It was in a Zapote which has lots of houses and parks. I spent most of my time during the week here or around here.

3 Monteverde: The location of my first excursion during my first weekend studying abroad. It was about a four-hour bus ride northwest of San Jose into the cloud forests of Costa Rica.

4 University of Costa Rica: A large university campus in San Jose that had a lot of green spaces which attracted birds. It was about a ten-minute drive from Veritas. I liked to go on runs to this campus.

5 Sarah Pequena Park: A park near my house that I would often walk to. It was by a small river and had huge trees and plants everywhere. There was a ramp that went into the vegetated area by the river that I could walk down. In the park were logs and tables and benches to sit on.

6 Parque de la Paz: Located in San Jose just south of Veritas University. A large city park with a wetland area and paths to walk on.

7 Finca Los Lotes: A location on the border of the provinces of San Jose and Cartago. We bird-watched on a trail that was started at the top of a valley on a rural dirt road and went into a heavily forested area.

8 Bocas del Toro: A series of islands in Panama near the border of Costa Rica.

9 Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro: Located in the province of Cartago, this park was a forested area with muddy trails to hike on.

10 Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park: The location I went for my Land Vertebrates class field trip. It was a rainforest with many educational facilities and trails throughout the forest. There was a river running through the forest.

11 Manuel Antonio: Located on the Pacific coast, I took a six-hour bus ride to spend a weekend here and visit the national park.

12 Coffee Plantation: Located in east San Jose, we bird watched in a location with a coffee plantation near some soccer fields.

13 Osa Peninsula: A peninsula located in southern Costa Rica on the Pacific coast in the province of Puntarenas. I visited Puerto Jimenez on the east end of the peninsula near the coast.

14 Tamarindo: Located in the province of Guanacaste, it had a beautiful beach on the Pacific coast.

15 Uvita: Located on the Pacific coast near the Osa Peninsula. I went here for my Conservation Biology and Endangered Marine Species class. We took an hour boat ride to Caño Island to snorkel around the coral reef located near the island.

16 Volcán Irazú National Park: Located in the province of Cartago on a volcano, I went on a hike that overlooked the city of Cartago.

17 CATIE: Located in the province of Cartago, I visited this place for my final overnight field trip. Here, there was a lake and wetland area as well as roads nearby that we walked along to birdwatch.

18 La Marta Wildlife Refuge: Located in Cartago, I stayed here overnight and did two days of hiking around it during my final field trip for my Tropical Birds class. There was an old coffee processing plant in the forest and a river.

19 Represa de Cachí: This was a dam we stopped at while on our way to the ruins.

20 Ruina de Ujarrás: I visited this place on my way back from my Tropical Birds overnight field trip. It was a park with the ruins of an old Spanish Colonial church. There were lots of gardens and trees and a playground.

Tools

eBird is a great tool that saves the location, date, time, number of birds and any other details of each observation we made to a public database that anyone can access. It is used by birders all over the world.

Merlin Bird ID is an app that has bird identification tools for birds all over the world. I changed my location to Costa Rica which allowed me to look at photos, sounds, descriptions and distribution maps of each bird. The app can also do sound identification and has an easy step by step process to identify unknown bird species.

Birds of the World is a platform created by Cornell Lab of Ornithology that has extensive information about every known bird species.

Great Kiskadee
*Pitangus sulphuratus*

The Great Kiskadee is a bold bird with a black-and-white striped crown and bright yellow underparts. It is reported to have a yellow patch on its crown, a detail I never spotted. It has a brown back with some rufous on its wings.

If I could write a love letter for the Great Kiskadee, the first bird I saw in Costa Rica, I would. But I do not think I could write one better than the one it wrote for me. The call of the kiskadee is noisy and nothing seems to make them stop talking. Honestly, most people do not care for it. “Kis-ka-dee” they call over and over. And when they are done calling, they sigh with a “Kis-whew” as if they have exhausted themselves. Then, after a short break, they continue.

When I first saw the Great Kiskadee, I was standing in my host family’s kitchen and looking out the sliding glass door to a tree that grew outside in the garden. In these branches sat a Great Kiskadee which I only knew as a beautiful yellow bird in that moment. My first tropical bird. Over the next three months, I would watch many tropical birds frequent this tree, including the chatty kiskadee. I spent my mornings eating breakfast and gazing at the tree waiting for birds to visit. The one who came around most often was the Great Kiskadee. I would see them on my walk to school, when I would sit in the park to draw or journal and even when I traveled out of the city to new places, they seemed to follow me wherever I went. Almost every birdwatching field trip I went on with my class had Great Kiskadees on our checklists.

On our first field trip to the University of Costa Rica (UCR) campus, we spotted a Gray Hawk sitting at the top of a snag watching for prey. But the real spectacle was the kiskadees squawking and harassing the hawk. They repeatedly swooped down towards the hawk in a team effort to get it to leave. This was my first insight into the aggression of these birds. I thought about how there are so many lookalikes of the kiskadee like the Social Flycatcher and Boat-billed Flycatcher. The distinct colorations could be a warning not to mess with them.

I seldom saw solitary kiskadees. They would be at least in pairs, always close to human settlements. Often, I would see them find perches on human-made structures such as benches and telephone wires. From city parks, coffee plantations and neighborhoods near the coast, the Great Kiskadee has made its home throughout Costa Rica. Their vast habitat choice caused them to be a part of my everyday life.

First recorded sighting on October 2 at my host family’s house.

Great-tailed Grackle
*Quiscalus mexicanus*

The Great-tailed Grackle was the American Crow of Costa Rica. They were the most common bird I saw and heard. To most people, I think they blend into the background. The males are black and the females are brown. Both have white eyes. They would walk along the ground or perch on telephone poles or wires. When I would sit in the park, each morning they would come up close to me, wondering if I had any treats to share with them. Their calls were loud and were more like shrieks. I saw them in groups most of the time, either crowded around a food source or spread out along the ground. Through my time in Costa Rica, I saw Great-tailed Grackles slowly molting. I did occasionally see a grackle lacking their great tail. They seem like curious birds who are not afraid of people. I only really saw them in open areas near human settlements.

The first recorded sighting was near Veritas was on October 2.

Swainson’s Thrush
*Catharus ustulatus*

This elusive bird has been the source of the singing in the background of my life for as many summers as I can remember. They have a beautiful song that ascends into the leaves perfectly encompassing the Oregon summer ambience. That is why it was quite a startled when I spotted one for the first time lying in the middle of the sidewalk on my walk to university in San Jose, Costa Rica. Perfectly intact, the Swainson’s Thrush had tiny ants crawling around its closed eyes and stiff body. After hearing it for so many years, I was able to get up close and observe it in its unfamiliar silence. I was able to see the spots scattered from its throat to its bel-

I only saw the Swainson’s Thrush one other time in Costa Rica. At Finca Los Lotes, we saw the thrush hopping around on the ground on the path ahead, foraging for insects in the detritus. With it not being the breeding season, the song was still absent. I felt impressed when thinking about the migratory path of the Swainson’s Thrush. These birds breed in Alaska, Canada and northern US. They migrate as far south as Argentina. To find them in the Pacific Northwest (PNW), one can follow their song in coniferous forests during the breeding season in the spring and summer.

Recorded sightings on October 4 on my host family’s street and October 24 at Finca Los Lotes.
The Brown Jays were large, loud and aggressive. When they were around, they made their presence known. At first glance, the large bird could be mistaken for a bird of prey by a naïve eye like mine. I remember seeing a bird of prey at the UCR on our first field trip. It promptly flew away and we looked for it for a little while. I had to resist pointing out a Brown Jay, realizing it was in fact not a bird of prey when I saw a large dark bird in a tree.

Jays are very common in the PNW and we have a few different species. In Portland, I see both Scrub Jays and Stellar’s Jays pretty much equally. However, in Bellingham, I have only seen Stellar’s Jays as Scrub Jays do not hang out as much that far north.

On my first weekend trip to Monteverde, during a night hike, we saw a few Brown Jays huddled together sleeping. This was the most peaceful I ever saw them. The rest of the times I spotted the Brown Jays, they were anything but peaceful. At Finca Los Lotes, I had the pleasure of seeing a group of Acorn Woodpeckers for the first time. In the same tree, four Brown Jays were harassing the woodpeckers, informing them to get out of their territory. I often saw the Brown Jays in groups. Power with numbers, I suppose. They would call “Kleer, Kleer, Kleer” as if saying “Clear the way! Brown Jays are here.”

First recorded sighting on October 6 at Monteverde.

In the mornings after breakfast, I would make my way to the park next to my university called Parque Montealegre. A couple of conifer trees with heavily shaded branches grew beside the table I liked to sit at. Almost always, there would be at least a few doves and pigeons sitting on those shady branches. The Red-Billed Pigeon sat just out of sight and cooed. I also saw them sitting on telephone poles and telephone wires and it seemed to me they were content and well-adapted to human infrastructure. I saw them in other environments too, including in Veragua Rainforest. In less urban areas, it was more likely that they would be perched high in trees instead of on the ground like many of the city pigeons I see in the US.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

Like most hummingbirds, the Green-Breasted Mango did not stick around for long. Busy keeping itself fed, I spotted the mangos quickly extracting nectar from a flower and then disappearing again. I find the plumage of both the males and females very beautiful. They have a dark, almost black throat. The males are all green with reddish tails. I loved the female and it was easier for me to distinguish her because of the dark stripe from her throat down her breast. The hummingbird species I saw in Costa Rica had common names that reflected their bright, playful nature. The Green-Breasted Mango was definitely a sweet treat.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

I feel a rush of joy spotting any woodpecker and it was no different with Hoffmann’s Woodpeckers. Right after exiting the van on our first birdwatching field trip, I was pleasantly overwhelmed by all the newness. I was with a new group of people, in a new place, about to see birds that I had never seen before. One of the first species we saw was the Hoffmann’s Woodpecker. There was a male and female pair hopping along the trunk high in a tree. They were the most common woodpecker species I saw in Costa Rica. It got to the point where if I saw a woodpecker shape in a tree, I would assume it was a Hoffmann’s until proven not. And usually, it was. When I saw them, they would hop up the tree, focused on foraging for tasty insects living in the grooves of the bark. At UCR, I also saw a female Hoffmann’s drinking nectar from a large flower high in a tree. Near a coffee plantation where my class went birdwatching, I saw a male Hoffmann’s clasping a banana flower hanging over the path, possibly enjoying the nectar or the invertebrates attracted to the nectar.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.
**Social Flycatcher**  
*Mesocontis similis*

This bird is one of the classic Costa Rican telephone wire birds. I often saw them perched, if not on a telephone wire then on a high branch. Sometimes I saw them sitting on a wire and fluttering up in a loop, then landing once again, catching the flies that surrounded them. I also mostly saw them in pairs or groups. On a very windy day, I was walking down my street and saw two Social Flycatchers sitting on a telephone wire above a neighbor’s house. They sat facing the powerful and gusty wind, moving their tails back and forth in a balancing act. I thought it was funny how these birds would not even let a windstorm stop them from perching on their wires.

They are amongst the Great Kiskadee lookalikes with black masks and yellow undersides, so identifying them was difficult for me at first. However, with time, the differences became very clear. Social Flycatchers are much smaller than the common lookalikes like the Great Kiskadees and Boat-billed Flycatchers. They were one of the bird species I saw most days and their range includes almost all of Costa Rica.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

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**Tropical Kingbird**  
*Tyrannus melancholicus*

The Tropical Kingbird was the other classic Costa Rican telephone wire bird. Despite the similar behavior to the Social Flycatchers, the gray heads made the Tropical Kingbirds easy to identify. With an upright posture, this bird would sit with its long tail stretching straight down. I saw the Tropical Kingbirds all over Costa Rica. They were often in pairs or groups sitting on wires or high perches. In La Marta Wildlife Refuge, I saw a Tropical Kingbird sitting on a telephone wire with a swarm of flies around it so dense that I could see them from 40 feet away. It was doing loops, fluttering up and snatching flies in midair.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

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**Crimson-fronted Parakeet**  
*Psittacara finschi*

These bright green birds have a crimson forehead, distinguishing them from other parakeets. They were always so loud and would squawk when flying in huge groups. When I saw one, I saw many. On my first field trip at UCR, I recorded seeing almost three dozen Crimson-fronted Parakeets. Usually, there were more birds than I could count and always grouped together. The huge flocks filled the tree branches. Being loud and social, I always heard them before seeing them. Their bright green color with an almost yellow underside seemed like it would make them easy to spot, but in the trees, they camouflaged perfectly, displaying the exact shade of green produced by the leaves with sunlight shining through them. When we approached the parakeet-filled tree, the would all fly away suddenly in a chorus of squawks, disturbed by our presence, scolding us as they left.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

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**Rose-throated Becard**  
*Pachyramphus aglaiae*

I saw the Rose-Throated Becard only once during my time in Costa Rica. I was at the UCR and saw one perched in a tree enjoying a bug. It was my first birdwatching field trip and unfortunately, I never saw one again despite going on many more field trips.

First and only recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.
I would describe the Rufous-Collared Sparrow as a small and adorable bird. On my walk to Sar- ah Pequeña Park near my house, I routinely saw dozens of them blanketing the ground and low branches of trees growing in a deserted lot on the side of the path. When I arrived at the park, there were dozens more Rufous-collared Sparrows. Often hopping around on the ground searching for food, these sparrows kept themselves busy. They made a chorus of chipping sounds in their big groups as they moved through their environment.

Rufous-collared sparrows are not as much perching birds as hopping, fluttering and up-and-down birds, never staying anywhere for more than a few seconds. They were one of my favorite birds in Costa Rica. Their commonness made them familiar to me so quickly. I left Costa Rica having seen probably hundreds of them, thanks to our common interest: the parks nearby.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

**Baltimore Oriole**
*Icterus galbula*

The Baltimore Oriole is a common United States bird that I saw for the first time in Costa Rica. Not found west of the Rocky Mountains, I never had the opportunity to try and spot them. The males are a beautiful black and orange color that pop right out of the green trees. The females are more muted with yellow and brown. Both have white wing bars. I think these orioles have a unique shape to them with a very pointed beak and tail. They spent their time high in trees, where fruit and bugs were available to munch on. I have a good friend who I met in Costa Rica who absolutely adores Baltimore Orioles, which I think influenced my love for them. They migrate from the United States and even Canada through Central America and into South America. The orange on the males looked like a sunset in the trees. I saw females with males, but usually, there were more males around. I hope to one day see a Baltimore Oriole in the US.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

**Melodious Blackbird**
*Dives dives*

The Melodious Blackbird is named for its melodious song. Its call is an ascending whistle that sounded almost metallic. They also have a chorus that I only heard one or two times of many notes and pitches jumbled together in something harmonious and weird. I heard the bird more than I saw it, but regardless, it would let us know it was around with its distinct and lovely call.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

**Yellow Warbler**
*Setophaga petechia*

These birds positioned themselves on the ends of branches as if they grew right from them. Their bright color would pop out of the foliage in a glimmer. I have seen the Yellow Warbler at home during late spring and summertime. Like most warblers, they are restless birds and like to stay hidden in the foliage. Usually, before I even realized I saw one, it was already gone. Having migrated all the way to Costa Rica, I was happy to see the Yellow Warbler. This is a small bird. So small it looks like a leaf at first glance. What power does it contain to carry itself across continents like leaves blowing in the wind?

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.
My dear Rufous-tailed Hummingbird. I fell in love with this bird over and over again. On my campus at Veritas, there was a garden where my friends and I would sit to eat lunch. Painted on the table where we sat was a beautiful hummingbird created by some students the year before. There, we would sit and at least one or two Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds would visit each day. They were the most common hummingbirds I saw in Costa Rica. Flowers grew abundantly in the warm weather and they would flit from flower to flower, visiting dozens of flowers in just a few minutes, flashing their rufous tails in the sunlight.

When I would sit at the park before class, there was a large bush of purple flowers that guaranteed the presence of Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds. I would see them every day and think about how it was the same individuals coming each day and spending their mornings with me.

If I had to choose a bird that encompasses my experience in Costa Rica, I would choose the Rufous-tailed Hummingbird. Almost every time I made an eBird checklist, I recorded seeing one. I would see them perched often too. Hummingbirds move in such intentional ways, perfectly hovering at the height of each flower, with just enough space for their tongue to reach in for the nectar. The movements were quick and precise. However, when I would see one perch, the Rufous-tailed Hummingbird looked like it was taking a pause from its fast-beating heart and need for fuel, it would cock its head, maybe sit for a minute and then be off again. I feel like this was similar to me during my time in Costa Rica. I would be busy with classes and new friends and traveling, but there were few moments when I could pause and take it in, before being off again to fill my time as best as I could.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

**Rufous-tailed Hummingbird**

*Amazilia tzacatl*

I only saw the Masked Titra once while in Costa Rica. I saw two perched in a tree at the UCR. The rose mask has a brilliant contrast with their white feathers. First and only recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

**Masked Titra**

*Tityra semifasciata*

The first tanager I saw in Costa Rica was the Blue-gray Tanager. Maybe it’s because of the Lazuli Bunting I saw all those years ago, or maybe it is because blue is a rare color in nature, but this blue bird was fascinating to me. The PNW has its beautiful tanager called the Western Tanager which can also be found in northwest Costa Rica. This past summer, I saw this special bird for the first time. The males look like tropical birds themselves, being bright yellow and red, so it was not a surprise that the tropics have a colorful array of tanagers. I was lucky to see a dozen species of tanagers that span between two families, Thraupidae and Cardinalidae.

I was lucky to have numerous sightings of the Blue-gray Tanager mostly seen flying to and from trees. They would perch for a little bit and then fly away with a little “chirp” as if saying goodbye on their way out. I stayed at a hostel one weekend on the Osa Peninsula in Puerto Jiménez and we would put our fruit and vegetable scraps on a platform for the birds. The Blue-gray Tanager happily enjoyed the fruit offered. That was the closest I ever got to observe them. Even in the heavy rain, they were out looking for food and collecting scraps from the humans nearby. I enjoyed the beauty of the Blue-gray Tanager throughout October, November and December. First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

**Blue-gray Tanager**

*Thraupis episcopus*

The Lesson’s Motmot was one of those “wow” birds for me. I saw a couple perched in a tree at the UCR on my first field trip. The foliage shaded them, so their long tails were the first things I noticed about them. I had never seen a tail like it. It was as long as its body with round feathers on the tip that looked like only a string attached them to the tail. Although I saw the Lesson’s Motmot multiple times, I never saw it move. It was a very inactive bird that kept still on its perch, scanning for prey. These magnificent birds were patient and on display for passersby like me to enjoy.

On my last morning in Costa Rica, I did a final walk to Sarah Pequeña Park by my house. This walk was up my street, around the corner from Colibri convenience store, down a long hill, past an empty lot and along a small river to the park. I did this walk at least one or two times a week for three months. I never saw a Lesson’s Motmot on this walk until the day I left for good. It perched near the sidewalk above the river at the bottom of the hill. Right where I could see it. I felt as if it was saying farewell to me.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.
The Eastern Wood-Pewee was difficult for me to differentiate from the Western Wood-Pewee. The only difference I can see is that the lower mandible of the Eastern is orange with a black tip whereas only the base of the lower mandible of the Western is orange. I only saw the Eastern Wood-Pewee a couple of times. They were small birds with dark coloration that blended in well. At Sarah Pequeña Park, the wood-pewee was very noticeable against the white sign it perched on.

Recorded sightings on October 12 at UCR and October 19 at Sarah Pequeña Park.

The Boat-billed Flycatcher looked like the Great Kiskadee. However, it had less rufous on the wings and a massive bill, hence its name. The behavior of the Boat-billed Flycatcher from what I noticed was less aggressive than the Great Kiskadee. It was similar to the Social Flycatchers and Tropical Kingbirds. I only ever saw them perched or snacking. I never heard them call or be territorial like the Great Kiskadee. Because of this, I did not see the Boat-billed as much.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

In my memory, I pair the Blue-and-white Swallows with the blue-and-white sky. I cannot separate them in my head because they were never separate when I saw them. Always flying, doing loops in the sky, in large groups. The Blue-and-white Swallows were common in Costa Rica, taking advantage of the high numbers of insects flying with them. Foraging with their precise swoops, I enjoyed watching these birds.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

The national bird of Costa Rica may not appear special when looking at it. They were common all over Costa Rica and I encountered them in most of the places I visited. I liked how the national bird was a common bird I would see while walking the neighborhoods of Costa Rica. These plain clay-colored birds, however, had a lovely simple song with a musical quality. The calls were an ascending whistle that they would often call from the ground or low branches.

I primarily saw the Clay-colored Thrush on the ground. Their brown feathers with their warmer belly reminded me of the American Robin. I would see the thrushes foraging for worms or other invertebrates and grubs. They would walk around sticking their heads up high, displaying a tall posture, then scurry around for more food. I also saw them spend time together in trees in large numbers. Once I saw a tree at UCR with large numbers of both Clay-colored Thrushes and Great Kiskadees.

The birds that are most important to me are the common, less colorful ones. Although I enjoy seeing a lifer, a bird that I am seeing for the first time, with unique, bright plumage, the everyday small brown birds have a special place in my heart. The Clay-colored Thrush was a perfect example of a common bird that often gets overlooked being highlighted as the national bird, receiving the attention it deserves.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

I had never seen a warbler quite like the Black-and-white Warbler. Its intense black-and-white coloration allowed it to hide in the shadows, but when I spotted one, it was vastly different from the surrounding environment. I only saw them once at UCR. I saw a few of them hopping up and down a tree trunk like a woodpecker, foraging in the grooves and on the surface of the bark.

First and only recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

The birds that are most important to me are the common, less colorful ones. Although I enjoy seeing a lifer, a bird that I am seeing for the first time, with unique, bright plumage, the everyday small brown birds have a special place in my heart. The Clay-colored Thrush was a perfect example of a common bird that often gets overlooked being highlighted as the national bird, receiving the attention it deserves.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

I saw the Cinnamon-bellied Saltator on a couple of occasions. Those eyebrows of theirs added some spunk to them, although I never observed them long enough to know their personality. Perched in trees nearby, they would raise their eyebrows as we passed.

Recorded sightings on October 12 at UCR and November 16 at the coffee plantation.
Chestnut-sided Warbler
*Setophaga pensylvanica*

These cute little warblers had the yellow coloration common in many of the species, but that chestnut flank was unique with this one. For me, warblers were extremely hard to differentiate especially when they were far away or constantly moving. I had seen the Chestnut-sided Warbler a few times but had not had a good look at the chestnut color until the last time I saw it. At La Marta Wildlife Refuge, I was able to see the Chestnut-sided Warbler perched on the low branches of a tree. I observed a very prominent chestnut color and I finally got to get a good look at this unique bird as it decided to hang out a bit longer than it had in the past.

First recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

Gray Hawk
*Buteo plagiatus*

I saw the Gray Hawk only once in Costa Rica at the UCR. It sat high in a snag, surveying its surroundings for prey. It was probably watching us watching it, or maybe it was too distracted by the Great Kiskadees harassing it. Either way, it held its ground for as long as possible high in that snag before taking off to find a quieter spot.

First and only recorded sighting on October 12 at UCR.

Yellow-throated Vireo
*Vireo flavifrons*

The Yellow-throated Vireo is a bouncy little bird that hops along the branches of trees. I saw them only a few times in Costa Rica, with their yellow spectacles on their face.

First recorded sighting on October 19 at Parque de la Paz.

Orange-chinned Parakeet
*Brotogeris jugularis*

The first time I saw the Orange-chinned Parakeets was at Parque de la Paz during my third weekend in Costa Rica. They arrived together in a flock, landing on a tree in the middle of the park. They were loud and some went in and out of hollowed-out bits of the tree. They were cute little social birds who seemed comfortable in a big flock.

I have never seen two birds that look more in love than the Orange-chinned Parakeets paired at the top of the tree at UCR. They pressed their bodies together, so they became practically one bird. There they sat preening each other. We stood underneath their tree looking at other birds, spotting lots of different species. Below them, birds hopped around on the branches and ground going about their business. Throughout it all, for several minutes, the Orange-chinned Parakeets stayed, wrapped up in their world. We left before they did.

First recorded sighting October 19 at Parque de la Paz.

Inca Dove
*Columbina inca*

The Inca Dove was my favorite dove that I saw in Costa Rica. The first time I saw one, I was alone in the park. It was the smallest dove I had ever seen. However, the most unique part about it was its feathers that looked like scales. In my head, the Inca Dove looks like the bird version of a pangolin, cute and scaly. In most dove species, I think their feathers look extra homogenous and smooth with their uniform markings. So, in groups of different species of doves and pigeons, the Inca Dove stood out with its unique scaly feature. Among the species of doves I saw, the Inca Dove was among the least common.

First recorded sighting on October 22 at Sarah Pequeña Park.
White-tipped Dove
*Leptotila verreauxi*

I would get the White-tipped Dove mixed up with the White-winged Dove. They look very similar from a distance. However, the White-tipped Dove was a bit plainer than the White-winged. I only recorded seeing it a couple of times while I was in Costa Rica. I would hear their “woo-wooing” call that was low and ominous.

Recorded sightings on October 22 at Sarah Pequeña Park and on December 3 in Uvita.

White-winged Dove
*Zenaida asiatica*

Every time I see or even mention the White-winged Dove, Stevie Nicks’s “Edge of Seventeen” chorus gets stuck in my head. It started with my classmates in the Tropical Bird class singing it and now I cannot seem to get the song out of my system. I only recorded seeing them a couple of times, but they hung out around my campus a lot. I would see them on the walk to school sitting on the telephone wires and poles. We went birdwatching during our class at Veritas and saw a group of a couple dozen sitting on a telephone wire. They all flew in a huge flock away when something spooked them. They had a more distinct “coo” call than the White-tipped Dove along with a black marking on the cheek, blue around their eyes and white bars on their wings.

First recorded sighting on October 22 at Sarah Pequeña Park.

Summer Tanager
*Piranga rubra*

The male Summer Tanager was a brilliant bird to watch. Growing up in the PNW, we do not have an all-red bird like the Northern Cardinal, so maybe that is why seeing the Summer Tanager was so exciting for me. I saw a lot of striking tanagers in Costa Rica, but this one takes the cake. My favorite color is red so a bright red tanager existing is definitely unfair to the other birds. I first saw the Summer Tanager in the same tree in my host family’s garden where I first spotted the Great Kiskadee. I was so excited and showed my host parents who for some reason seemed less impressed than me.

I managed to see the male Summer Tanager many more times during my time in Costa Rica which I was thrilled about. Even though I lived in the largest city, San Jose, there were many parks and green spaces in the neighborhoods. Loads of yards and streets had beautiful gardens too. The Summer Tanagers used the trees within these green spaces. One thing I miss most about Costa Rica is how green it is. The greenness gives it so much life, even when the tropical rain seems never-ending. It is a quality that is absent from the winters in the PNW even with the conifers. And there, amongst all that green, would perch the Summer Tanager like a freshly polished ruby. I only ever saw the female once and she was beautiful too. Where she lacked the red, yellow prevailed. Overall, I think the Summer Tanager was one of my favorite birds I saw throughout my time in Costa Rica.

First recorded sighting on October 22 at Sarah Pequeña Park.

Lesser Violetear
*Colibri cyanotus*

I only ever saw the Lesser Violetear perched. This bright hummingbird, I am sure, was busy filling itself with sugar throughout its days. Because I observed the Lesser Violetear perched, I could observe its beautiful purple cheeks that were a striking contrast to the green body.

First recorded sighting at Finca Los Lotes on October 24.
Scintillant Hummingbird
Selasphorus scintilla

This bird was quite a cute, small hummingbird. The colors of the Scintillant Hummingbird were unique because of the copper taking over its body. It was like a brightly shining penny with wings. From my perspective, this species was noticeably the smallest hummingbird I had seen. Its distribution is only along a narrow strip along the mountains in Costa Rica into Panama. The fact that this bird does not exist anywhere else also made it more special to observe.

First recorded sighting at Finca Los Lotes on October 24.

Red-tailed Hawk
Buteo jamaicensis

This hawk I am all too familiar with. I have seen the Red-tailed Hawks soaring in the sky for as long as I can remember. Over the dozens of Red-tailed Hawks I have seen throughout the years, I have learned that each hawk is different, some with lighter feathers than others. A few times I have even seen Red-tailed Hawks without red tails. However, each one has a shape and presence characteristic of their species. I had no idea that Red-tailed Hawks live in Costa Rica, but when we saw one perched at the top of a tree at Finca Los Lotes, it was magnificent, presiding over the whole valley we looked into.

First and only recorded sighting at Finca Los Lotes on October 24.

Acorn Woodpecker
Melanerpes formicivorus

I have a bird book that has sat on the bookshelf in my childhood bedroom called Birds of the Willamette Valley Region. On the cover of this book is the Acorn Woodpecker. As a result of this, the Acorn Woodpecker was familiar to me, but only because it sat on my bookshelf for years. Never did its existence leave the four walls of my bedroom until I saw nine in Costa Rica. At Finca Los Lotes, I saw five hanging out together, pecking on a snag. They are very social birds and it is common to see them in groups. At the same location, I saw four more together at the top of a tree about an hour later. They have striking faces with bold black and white colors. From a distance, I could see their bright white eyes. There were Brown Jays not too far from them making a fuss, but the Acorn Woodpeckers did not seem to care.

First and only recorded sighting at Finca Los Lotes on October 24.

House Wren
Troglodytes aedon

House Wrens are familiar birds in my life. They breed in the PNW, so spring and summer have been filled with their intricate song. The House Wren is a small, brown bird with a tail that sticks straight out. In Costa Rica, I observed them hopping along branches, changing their body angles. I only saw them a couple of times.

Recorded sightings at Finca Los Lotes on October 24 and Uvita on December 3.
Gray-breasted Wood-wren

*Henicorhina leucophrys*

I love the tail, or lack thereof, of the Gray-breasted Wood-wren. I feel like I associate wrens with their tails, so these stubs are quite funny-looking to me. The black, white and chestnut feathers made this wren easy to identify, although they liked to hide in the bushes, so I only caught glimpses. However, their musical song was noticeable enough that I knew they were there, even if they were hiding.

Recorded sightings at Finca Los Lotes on October 24 and at Volcán Irazú National Park on December 9.

Common Chlorospingus

*Chlorospingus flavopectus*

This bird twittered in the trees. I observed it doing nothing else but chirping and calling. The Common Chlorospingus was a cute little bird with a distinct white eye marking. I only saw three on one day and never again.

First and only recorded sighting at Finca Los Lotes on October 24.

Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher

*Ptiliogonys caudatus*

These birds had a beautiful yellow crest that both stuck straight up and smoothed back into a sleek hairdo. I saw both males and females perched at the top of a tree together looking very elegant. They appeared much larger when they flew away because I could see their long tails stretched out.

First and only recorded sighting at Finca Los Lotes on October 24.

Flame-colored Tanager

*Piranga bidentata*

The Flame-colored Tanager reminded me a lot of the Western Tanager from back home. It has very similar coloration with black wings and bright warm colors. However, the Flame-colored Tanager has more red and orange and less yellow like the Western. I only saw it once, but I remember it distinctly sitting at the top of a tree, waiting to be admired.

First and only recorded sighting at Finca Los Lotes on October 24.
Purple-throated Mountain-gem  
*Lampornis calolaemus*

Again, I love the common names of hummingbirds. The Purple-throated Mountain-gem was a precious gem, perched on a tree at Finca Los Lotes. It then flew down the valley quickly. I tried to spot it again in the long grasses that grew on the slope, but I never did spot it again.

First and only recorded sighting at Finca Los Lotes on October 24.

Wilson’s Warbler  
*Cardellina pusilla*

I first saw the Wilson’s warbler last spring during a class field trip. It was a beautiful, sunny spring day in Bellingham and we were hiking along Chuckanut Creek. I knew a male Wilson’s Warbler was in a huge Big Leaf Maple that was shading the creek because he was singing for the whole world to hear. After several minutes, I found the little yellow bird with his black cap perched among the low branches. I watched him move around a bit, trying to find him each time he moved.

At Finca Los Lotes, I spotted the male Wilson’s Warbler on a small tree. He did not stay for long, but I did catch his black cap as he swooshed away. This migratory bird could have traveled all the way from Bellingham to Costa Rica.

Recorded sightings at Finca Los Lotes on October 24 and at Volcan Irazu National Park on December 9.

Streak-headed Woodcreeper  
*Lepidocolaptes souleyetti*

There is a bird like this one in the PNW called the Brown Creeper. I have seen the Brown Creeper clinging to the thick bark of the Douglas Firs and creeping up the tall trees. The Streak-headed Woodcreeper crept up and down the trunk in a similar manner, though they looked bigger than the Brown Creeper. I spotted them a few times throughout my time in Costa Rica always doing the same thing. I only ever saw them up on the top half of the tree, never straying too close to the ground.

First recorded sighting at Finca Los Lotes on October 24.

Yellow-faced Grassquit  
*Tiaris olivaceus*

I did not observe many juvenile birds while in Costa Rica, but I did see a Yellow-faced Grassquit juvenile sitting on the path ahead of us at La Marta Wildlife Refuge. It resembled the female without the bright yellow face, but it could not fly well. It would flap its wings to get some air and then flutter back down to the ground. Eventually, it was able to fly away to a low branch as we approached.

Recorded sightings at Finca Los Lotes on October 24 and at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

Three-wattled Bellbird  
*Procnias tricarunculatus*

The Three-wattled Bellbird was the coolest bird I saw while studying abroad. Ironically, I did not even see it in Costa Rica. I do not like playing favorites, but it was special to me to see this bird mostly because I knew they were rare. Even my professor who is from Costa Rica had only seen it twice. While in Bocas del Toro, Panama, my study abroad program organized two days of boat rides around the islands. We went to a cove that was called La Piscina. The day could not be more perfect. The water was clear and blue along with the sky and the weather was warm. We wandered away from the beach and into the trees to look for monkeys. We did not end up finding monkeys but instead heard a machine-like bird call. I was shocked by how loud it was which meant it had to be nearby. We stood in a little clearing and the Three-wattled Bellbird perched in a tree near the open space. It was a male and he was so loud. These birds are so funky with three black wattles hanging from their bills that look like three black worms. As he called, the wattles would jiggle.

First and only recorded sighting at Bocas del Toro on October 28.
I saw the Scarlet Macaw for the first time perched at the top of a mangrove tree on an island in Bocas del Toro. We stopped for lunch and there was a boardwalk above the water surrounded by mangroves that led to our lunch spot. The bright red bird stood out in the green leaves. Scarlet Macaws are birds I think of as pets, but it was so special to see them in the wild in their natural habitat. I saw them fly above me several times in small groups. They looked so majestic with their long tails outstretched behind them.

First recorded sighting at Bocas del Toro on October 28.

Brown Boobies are magnificent birds that I had always wanted to see. At Bocas Del Toro, we took a boat to an island called Isla Pájaros which, as expected, was abundant with birds. I saw quite a few Brown Boobies settled along the rocks of the island. I saw one on a palm leaf and on the palm leaf next to it was a Yellow-headed Caracara. We were on a boat observing from a distance, yet the whole island looked like a beautiful painting. I wish I had more time by the island so I could see all of the life that was thriving there.

First and only recorded sighting at Bocas del Toro on October 28.

I had never heard of a tropicbird before my bird class. One of my classmates said that it was his favorite bird. I understand why. The Red-billed Tropicbird was majestic as a couple of them flew past the boat near Isla Pájaros. They have these long narrow tail feathers that flow through the air with their movements. Their eyes also look like they have a bold cattail painted on them.

First and only recorded sighting at Bocas del Toro on October 28.

Brown Booby
*Sula leucogaster*

Red-billed Tropicbird
*Phaethon aethereus*

“Frigate!” is what my friends and I would yell whenever we would see a frigatebird. I saw Magnificent Frigatebirds pretty much any time I was near the coast. I only ever saw them flying above. I have multiple memories of laying in the warm sand and looking at the sky at the frigatebirds flying by. Their V-shaped wings and forked, pointed tails were the field markers that helped me identify them.

First recorded sighting at Bocas del Toro on October 28.

Yellow-headed Caracara
*Daptrius chimachima*

I saw the Yellow-headed Caracara a few times. Each time they were doing something interesting. The first one I saw was perched next to a Brown Booby at Isla Pájaros. The next one I saw was perched on top of a cow. I am not sure if the cow and caracara had an unspoken agreement.

The final time I saw Yellow-headed Caracaras was at UCR. I was with my bird class and we watched a male and female flying back and forth carrying nest materials. They were flying low to the ground at some points. We followed them to a tall palm tree where they were building their nest. It was amazing to see them working so hard, carrying one blade of grass or one stick at a time. They also flew a good distance to gather the nest materials, being very picky about what goes into their home.

First recorded sighting at Bocas del Toro on October 28.
**Black Vulture**
*Coragyps atratus*

Black Vultures were a common occurrence throughout Costa Rica. I saw them all over Costa Rica, usually soaring. When identifying them while they were soaring, I looked for their white-tipped wings among their all-black body. There were a few times I saw them perch. They were huge, with bald, wrinkly heads. I saw a few Black Vultures sitting near garbage cans in CATIE and a group of around thirty soaring in a thermal. I usually saw them in groups of at least a few.

First recorded sighting in Bocas del Toro on October 29.

**Violet Sabrewing**
*Campylopterus hemileucurus*

This was the biggest hummingbird I had ever seen. The size surprised me! Of course, it is a small bird but relative to hummingbirds, it looked like a giant. Along with the size, the Violet Sabrewing flew by fast. I never saw it perch. While flying, I heard it chirping.

First and only recorded sighting at Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro on November 2.

**Barred Antshrike**
*Thamnophilus dolius*

The Barred Antshrike looked like an optical illusion with black-and-white stripes all over its body. The male we saw was calling repeatedly which led us to him. If we had not heard him, I am sure he would have stayed hidden in the leaves. He was hopping around and calling. I also observed him bobbing his body as he moved around. We saw him at Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro. On this day, I was not in the mood to birdwatch. The weekend prior I had traveled to and from Bocas del Toro, Panama and I felt exhausted. The last thing I wanted to do was go to school at 5:30 in the morning. We walked through the forest along extremely muddy trails. Some areas I could not avoid, although I tried and my ankles sunk into the mud. Additionally, during our field trip we had not seen many birds, and I was not feeling stoked about being awake or being muddy. However, the Barred Antshrike made the outing worth it. I had never seen a bird like it.

First and only recorded sighting at Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro on November 2.

**Dusky-capped Flycatcher**
*Myiarchus tuberculifer*

The Dusky-capped Flycatcher is a small flycatcher with black, brown and yellow. I saw three perched high in a tree together. Because this day was particularly underwhelming, I was underwhelmed seeing these sweet birds.

First and only recorded sighting at Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro on November 2.

**White-naped Brushfinch**
*Atlapetes albinucha*

The White-naped Brushfinch is another bird that was cute with solid colors combined. This bird has a bright white head and a yellow throat. I saw one standing on a bridge and as quickly as it appeared, it disappeared into the trees.

First and only recorded sighting at Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro on November 2.

**Yellow-billed Cacique**
*Ambycephalus holosericeus*

The Yellow-billed Cacique was a great introduction to the diversity of the Icteridae family. This family includes Red-winged Blackbirds, orioles and grackles, but also the Cacique and oropendolas. When we saw the Yellow-billed Cacique, people smirked at the name as it is the cheap liquor sold in Costa Rica that is very well known among study abroad students. I am fascinated by the pointed bills of this family. The Yellow-billed Cacique looked like it had an arrowhead on its face. It kept moving about on the low branches of a tree as I observed it.

First and only recorded sighting at Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro on November 2.

**Gray-headed Chachalaca**
*Ortalis cinereiceps*

Another exciting part about the field trip in Río Loro was seeing the Gray-headed Chachalacas perched in a couple of trees next to each other. There was a flock of about ten of them. They were huge birds that looked way too big for the branches they were perched on. I saw a few move around awkwardly, snapping twigs as they shifted their body weight.

First and only recorded sighting at Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro on November 2.
Turkey Vulture
Cathartes aura

The Turkey Vulture is one of the very few birds that I am confident in identifying when they are soaring. The black cross that its body and wings form has been something I have been able to spot for many years now. In Costa Rica, I learned how to distinguish the soaring Black Vulture as well. Maybe vultures are very easy for me to identify because I am just looking for black or white shapes in their feathers when they soar. I saw quite a few Turkey Vultures throughout my time in Costa Rica usually in groups soaring above me.

Although they have been common birds throughout my life, there have been only a handful of times when I have seen Turkey Vultures up close. One time I was in eastern Oregon with my mom and we were standing on the edge of a cliff. These Turkey Vultures flew so close to us we could touch them. Another time I was kayaking in my favorite spot on Willamette River in Portland and saw a group of them munching on a dead animal that had washed up on the shore. In Uvita, on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica, there was a Turkey Vulture perched on a log near the dirt road we were walking on. It was huge and acted completely undisturbed by a group of fifteen people walking by. I was able to take a good long look at its bald pink head, its defining feature.

First recorded sighting at Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro on November 2.

White-tailed Kite
Elanus leucurus

The White-tailed Kite was too far away from me to see its piercing red eyes. That is probably a good thing though because they look like they could turn me to stone. Like most birds of prey that I observed, it perched at the top of a tree overlooking a field. It was hard to identify but the white body and gray wings eventually led to the White-tailed Kite.

First and only recorded sighting at Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro on November 2.

Tufted Flycatcher
Mitrephanes phaeocerus

I saw this small flycatcher in the foliage of leaves. The Tufted Flycatcher is a plain bird. But maybe it is the fact that its eyes are as big as its bill that made it an adorable hidden gem hiding amongst the leaves.

First and only recorded sighting at Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro on November 2.

Cabanis's Wren
Cantorchilus modestus

If the Great Kiskadees and Great-tailed Grackles did not exist, the Cabanis’s Wren would have been the most talkative bird I encountered in Costa Rica. What I love about wrens is the fact that they like to stay hidden, but also let me know that they are there. They taunt me, allowing me to pinpoint the exact perch where they are located as they ex cessively call, but hide right behind a leaf, only allowing me glimpses. How much they are seen is completely in their control.

First recorded sighting at Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro on November 2.

Chestnut-capped Warbler
Basileuterus delattrii

I saw the Chestnut-capped Warbler but cannot say much else. It was one of many warblers I saw. It is a lovely little bird, but I only saw it once and did not have any observations to report.

First and only recorded sighting at Parque Ambiental Municipal Río Loro on November 2.

Blue-chested Hummingbird
Polyerata amabilis

Arriving in Veragua Rainforest was very exciting. I was carsick for the entire four-hour car ride which made arriving at the destination all the more appealing. This was also my first overnight field trip for a class. I was taking three classes that had overnight field trips and I went to Veragua Rainforest for my Land Vertebrates class. I was also excited to use my friend’s higher-magnification binoculars that she kindly let me borrow for the weekend. My class’s goal for the weekend was to see as many land vertebrates as possible, but primarily frogs, snakes and lizards. I was looking for birds though. However, seeing them was difficult as our longest hikes were at night when the birds were sleeping. On the first night of my field trip, I heard the Mottled Owl eerily calling in the darkness but never spotted it.

We stayed in rooms with bunk beds and the door opened overlooking shrubs and plants and the surrounding forest. There was a purple flower that hummingbirds frequented. I saw the Scintillant Hummingbird come and go. But I also saw the Blue-chested Hummingbird. I had not seen a hummingbird like it and I had to scour my Merlin Bird ID app and then my field guide to find it. It had a beautiful indigo chest that shimmered as it collected the nectar from the purple flowers.

First recorded sighting at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 4.
Sunbittern
*Eurypyga helias*

I did not even know the Sunbittern existed before seeing it. I had not birdwatched near water much yet in Costa Rica, so seeing a wading bird was new for me. I spent more time near water during my second half of studying abroad. It is the only member of its family, Eurypygidae. It had beautiful markings and colors throughout its body. It was standing on the bank of the river, hunting. It was intently watching the water with its wings folded. One day I hope to see the Sunbittern unfold its wings because that is a piece of artwork. It has a beautiful red and black pattern on its wings.

Recorded sightings at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 4 and Represa de Cachi on December 17.

Bat Falcon
*Falco rufilatus*

I spotted the Bat Falcon on two different occasions. Both times it was a couple and I am not sure if that is a coincidence or not. Each couple seemed to have a strong bond. In Veragua Rainforest, I observed two falcons perched at the top of a snag. I was told that this couple had been seen hanging out there for at least a couple of years. One would fly away and then promptly return. Then the other would leave. They performed this dance longer than I stayed to observe them. The other couple I saw was perched on a telephone wire above Represa de Cachi which was a hydroelectric dam.

Recorded sightings at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 4 and Represa de Cachi on December 17.

Purple-throated Fruitcrow
*Querula purpurata*

The day I saw the Purple-throated Fruitcrow was a challenging day. I had seen so many frogs, lizards and snakes at this point of my Land Vertebreates field trip. We had unexpectedly hiked three hours in the dark the night before and hiked all day this day too. However, instead of shutting down, it made me more excited to see new birds. I saw a few cool lifers including the Purple-throated Fruitcrow. It was in a tree with a Squirrel Cuckoo. I heard it calling and saw it displaying its prominent purple throat.

First and only recorded sighting at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 4.

Squirrel Cuckoo
*Piaya cayana*

I saw the Squirrel Cuckoo twice, both times it lived up to its name. The Squirrel Cuckoo has a long tail and it moves around the tree like a squirrel. Squirrels are very common in Costa Rica just like in the PNW. At first glance, the Squirrel Cuckoo could be mistaken for a squirrel because it was common to see a squirrel moving about the trees, making a ruckus. But then I saw the striped tail and of course the beak and feathers instead of fur.

Recorded sightings at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 4 and UCR on December 5.
My second trogon species, I had a better view of the Slaty-tailed Trogons than the Collared Trogon that I saw a couple of weeks earlier. I saw both a male and female Slaty-tailed Trogon perched in a tree very close to the very steep trail we were hiking up. After hiking straight up for a while, I was hoping for a break. The Slaty-tailed Trogons were wonderful distractions. They sat peacefully preening their tail feathers. I could tell they were a different type of trogon because of their solid dark tail as opposed to the black and white thinly striped tail of the Collared Trogon. They had a red belly and green head, throat and back and a very bright red ring around their eyes.

First and only recorded sighting at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 4.

During my time in Costa Rica, I watched a documentary called “Dancing with Birds” on Netflix that highlighted the Red-capped Manakin mating ritual for two different classes. These handsome males get together to perform mating dances to increase their chances of finding a mate. I hoped to see a manakin but did not expect to see one at night. We were walking along a narrow trail down to the river during our second night hike of the field trip in the Veragua Rainforest. I looked up and saw the underside of the male Red-capped Manakin sleeping above us. He was small and I saw his bright red head peaking out above his black body against my headlamp light.

First and only recorded sighting at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 4.

The raptors I saw in Costa Rica mostly all had the same behavior of perching high in a tree. I surprised, I saw two Broad-winged Hawks perched high in trees on the same morning. Over a month later, I saw another Broad-winged Hawk perched high in a tree while on my final birdwatching field trip. But this one did something interesting; it flew above us too.

Recorded sightings at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 5 and La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

The Mealy Parrot was a cute parrot I saw perched at the top of a palm tree. It was the largest green parrot I saw in Costa Rica and was pretty loud as we walked by it.

First and only recorded sighting at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 5.

I thought the Gray-headed Chachalaca was large when perched in the tree, but the Crested Guan takes the cake. They are both in the same family, but the guan is almost twice as large as the chachalaca. When I saw the Crested Guan, all I could see was a big dark bird in a tree with a long neck. But then it showed its bright red throat right before it flew away. I was birdwatching with a group of people and only a few of us saw it because it did not stay long.

First and only recorded sighting at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 5.
Western Wood-Pewee  
*Contopus sordidulus*

I saw the Western Wood-pewee twice while in Costa Rica. This bird is very similar to the Eastern Wood-pewee. The only difference in looks is their lower mandible. Both times I saw it, it was perched on the low branches of a tree.

Recorded sightings at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 5 and UCR on December 5.

Great Crested Flycatcher  
*Myiarchus crinitus*

The Great Crested Flycatcher looks very similar to the Dusky-capped Flycatcher which I saw a couple of weeks earlier. However, the Great Crested appeared a bit larger and had a light-colored crest and rufous flight and tail feathers.

First and only recorded sighting at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 5.

Yellow-throated Toucan  
*Ramphastos ambiguus*

My first toucan! By the end of my time in Costa Rica, I had seen many toucans among a few different species. This weekend in Veragua Rainforest I had my eye out for toucans. I wanted to see them so bad. I mean, they are stereotypical tropical birds and for good reason. No other bird looks like them and their bright colors are stunning. There were tons of Yellow-throated Toucans in the trees in the rainforest. Something I learned about toucans is that they are loud. They hang out in groups and squawk. Lots of times I heard them but did not see them because they were in trees deep in the forest.

A couple of weeks later, on the Osa Peninsula, I saw an abundance of Yellow-throated Toucans. The Osa Peninsula is home to 2.5 percent of the world’s biodiversity. So, during my weekend there, I saw so many birds. But the toucans were the most abundant. There were these small fruits produced by the palm trees that the Yellow-throated Toucans loved. I spent several minutes watching a toucan eat fruit one by one, using its huge bill to pluck the fruit from the tree. The next day while I was walking about Puerto Jimenez, I saw one that was missing half of its beak in a tree growing in someone’s yard. I had never seen anything like it. It was sitting in the tree trying to eat fruit and I saw it drop some fruit. I hope that it is okay.

In Uvita, I saw a couple of the Yellow-throated Toucans fighting in a tree perhaps defending the tasty fruit tree they occupied. This aggression possibly explained the broken-beaked toucan I had seen in Osa.

First recorded sighting at Veragua Rainforest Adventure Park on November 5.

Fiery-billed Aracari  
*Pteroglossus frantzii*

In Manuel Antonio, my friend and I were walking to our bus stop to leave when I saw the Fiery-billed Aracari fly by. This toucan is perched on the front of *The Birds of Costa Rica: A Field Guide*. I saw it fly by as I was overlooking the ocean and it landed in a tree, perfectly in my view. Aracaris are colorful toucans that I learned existed while in Costa Rica. I thought the red on them looked like flames. The red feathers against the black ones are a contrast that I love to see in nature.

First and only recorded sighting in Manuel Antonio on November 12.

Cabanis’s Ground-Sparrow  
*Melozone cabanisi*

The Cabanis’s Ground-Sparrow is endemic to a very tiny area of land in the middle of Costa Rica. The coffee plantation where we birdwatched in central Costa Rica fell right in this area. This near-threatened bird was hopping along the ground underneath coffee plants. There were rows and rows of small trees of coffee growing on this plantation. I had to get on my elbows and knees to see this bird. I had my binoculars over my eyes as I laid on the ground, watching this rare bird going about its business. My whole class probably looked silly as we were all on the ground trying to spot the Cabanis’s Ground-Sparrow.

First and only recorded sighting at a coffee plantation on November 16.
**Spotted Sandpiper**  
*Actitis macularius*

I was surprised to see the Spotted Sandpiper. To be honest, I do not know where we were on this birdwatching field trip. We were in the city and passed a construction site and parking lot to enter the vegetated area to birdwatch. There was a large basin with a black tarp covering the bottom and sides, making it impermeable. Naturally, it was filled with a layer of water. The Spotted Sandpiper stood on the edge of the water on the smooth, black slope. The tarp seemed to be slippery because it slid down and flew a few inches higher on the slope several times while foraging along the edge of the water.

First and only recorded sighting at a coffee plantation on November 16.

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**Rose-breasted Grosbeak**  
*Pheucticus ludovicianus*

Sitting in a tree was a juvenile Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The red was like neon. It looked like it had a bleeding heart. Even amongst the branches, the breast of this grosbeak stood out. It was cool to see yet another migratory bird from the United States. First and only recorded sighting at a coffee plantation on November 16.

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**Common Tody-Flycatcher**  
*Todirostrum cinereum*

The Common Tody-Flycatcher was one of the most adorable birds that I saw in Costa Rica. They were small round birds that would hop around on the branches, stopping to perch very briefly. Their heads looked too big for their body and they looked like they were wearing a black mask.

First recorded sighting at a coffee plantation on November 16.

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**Variable Seedeater**  
*Sporophila corvina*

I saw a few Variable Seedeaters. They liked to perch near the ground. I observed them on coffee plants and on fences.

First recorded sighting at a coffee plantation on November 16.

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**Lesser Goldfinch**  
*Spinus psaltria*

I have seen the Lesser Goldfinch in Portland and it was a pleasant surprise to learn there is a resident population in Costa Rica. It was perched in tall grass when we spotted it near the coffee plantation.

First and only recorded sighting at a coffee plantation on November 16.

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**Tennessee Warbler**  
*Leiothlypis peregrina*

I saw the Tennessee Warbler several times. They were a common gray and yellow warbler that is migratory. It breeds in Canada and migrates south, east of the Rocky Mountains. I usually saw it in a group of at least a few birds, fluttering around on the branches. I would see it foraging for little fruits or insects. One day, in the neighborhood near Veritas, I saw one that appeared to be slamming itself against a wall repeatedly. It was unusual behavior, but I thought maybe there were bugs on the wall that it was trying to collect.

First recorded sighting at a coffee plantation on November 16.

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**Bare-throated Tiger Heron**  
*Tigrisoma mexicanum*

In the Osa Peninsula, we were driving down a road, doing a tour of the rainforest. We were crossing a bridge over a stream when my friend spotted the Bare-throated Tiger-heron out her window. I was sitting on the opposite side and I remember leaning over my two friends to get a better view of this new heron. It was small and sat very still in the water, waiting for fish or frogs to scurry by. I love herons so I was excited to see a new species.

Recorded sightings in the Osa Peninsula on November 18 and in Uvita on December 3.
Lesser Nighthawk  
*Chordeiles acutipennis*

The Lesser Nighthawk camouflaged well. It is in the Caprimulgidae family which is filled with species that all have similar shapes with large eyes and tiny bills. They all blend into their environments very well.

We were driving down the long dirt road in Osa and found the Lesser Nighthawk nestled in a tree, on the edge of a field. It was sleeping, blending into the bark of the tree. Our tour guide found it for us. I would not have spotted it otherwise because of its superior camouflage.

First and only recorded sighting in the Osa Peninsula on November 18.

Bananaquit  
*Coereba flaveola*

The Bananaquit has similar markings to the Great Kiskadee but has a different shape. It is small and has a more horizontal small bird build with a distinct sharp, curved bill. I saw it a few times over my time in Costa Rica. Each time I saw this species, it was a lone bird.

First recorded sighting in the Osa Peninsula on November 18.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron  
*Nyctanassa violacea*

During my tour in the Osa Peninsula, we drove from town down a long dirt road where we saw a lot of wildlife, including all four species of Costa Rica’s monkeys. We came to a house that served us homemade empanadas and had lots of well-fed dogs weaving in and out of our legs. We were surrounded by forest and White-faced Monkeys inched their way closer, curiously looking at our empanadas. After our snack, we walked a few miles on a muddy trail through the rainforest, learning about various plants and the ecosystem including one that had leaves as sharp as razors. We arrived at a beautiful beach with huge waves. I had not been to such a remote beach in Costa Rica as I had mostly visited touristy areas. There were no footsteps of people on this beach, only the prints of sea turtles who had laid their eggs the night before. There was a river that flowed into the ocean and standing on a log in the freshwater was a Yellow-crowned Night Heron. Its face had very bold black-and-white markings that made it very recognizable. It stood very still, patiently waiting for prey.

First and only recorded sighting in the Osa Peninsula on November 18.

Red-legged Honeycreeper  
*Cyanerpes cyaneus*

The Red-legged Honeycreeper was such an exciting bird to spot in the Osa Peninsula. I was in town in Puerto Jimenez and walked outside of a souvenir shop we were browsing. Across the street was a hanging bird feed filled with birds. I saw Baltimore Orioles and Red-legged Honeycreepers surrounding the feeder. All the birds were so colorful. I love the Red-legged Honeycreepers because both females and males are so bright despite displaying sexual dimorphism. They share red legs, but females are bright green while males are a deep, royal blue with a light blue cap and black mask.

First and only recorded sighting in the Osa Peninsula on November 18.

Tricolored Heron  
*Egretta tricolor*

I spent a weekend in Tamarindo which is on the coast of the province Guanacaste. This was the only time I visited this province. Tamarindo had a beautiful beach that I spent a full day walking along. I walked down the beach away from the busy part, where the shore became rockier. Amongst the rocky parts, pools of water formed with little creatures. There were a few Tricolored Herons taking advantage of the lower tide, catching an abundance of fish. They were larger than the herons I had seen the week prior in Osa, but not as big as a Great Blue Heron.

First and only recorded sighting in Tamarindo on November 25.

Scarlet-rumped Tanager  
*Ramphocelus passerinii*

My friend described this bird as looking like it was wearing a bright red life jacket. They are jet-black birds with a bright red rump that they would flash as they moved their wings. I saw them in Osa on a platform filled with fruit scraps. They were among Blue-gray Tanagers.

First recorded in the Osa Peninsula on November 19.
The Tropical Mockingbird was a large bird that I saw sitting on the fence surrounding the hostel my class stayed at in Uvita. I was in Uvita, which is located on the Pacific coast, for a field trip for my Tropical Marine Biology class. Mariana, my Tropical Birds professor, also taught this class, so on our final morning, we went birdwatching. During both days in Uvita, I saw the Tropical Mockingbird near our hostel.

First and only recorded sightings in Uvita on December 2 and 3.

**Ruddy Ground Dove**
*Columbina talpacoti*

In Uvita, I saw a huge group of over thirty Ruddy Ground Doves in a field. They lived up to their name, as they all were on the ground.

First and only recorded sighting in Uvita on December 3.

**White-crowned Parrot**
*Psittacara senilis*

This parrot was one of the most colorful small parrots I saw. A group of them was in a tree and they were very spunky while conversing with each other.

Recorded sightings in Uvita on December 3 and La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 16.

**Snowy Egret**
*Egretta thula*

During our birdwatching morning, my class walked on dirt roads through what felt like a rural neighborhood. The sun felt fresh and shone brightly against all the foliage surroundings each house and property. We walked along a road with houses on our left and a huge field to our right. In the field stood cows scattered about. Amongst the cows were Snowy Egrets standing about. Every one of them were very still, as the sun became hotter above them.

First and only recorded sighting in Uvita on December 3.

**Montezuma Oropendola**
*Psarocolius montezuma*

This bird had the most unique display calls I have seen and they were not afraid to show off. I observed them leaning forward, sticking their tail above their heads and having an ascending, spiraling, booming call. The groups of males would sit in trees, showing their display calls. I had seen them a few times calling, but in the last location of our final field trip at Ruinas de Ujarrás, I saw a huge number of them fill a tree. They all flew together and perched in the surrounding trees, calling. In addition to their unique call, they were beautiful birds with funky faces. They had an orange tip at the end of their black, pointy bill. Once I saw both males and females sitting in the tree and the males were almost twice as large as the females, although they looked similar.

First recorded sighting in Uvita on December 3.

**Roadside Hawk**
*Rupornis magnirostris*

I saw a Roadside Hawk for the first time while in Osa. This was yet another bird that lived up to its common name. I always saw it on the side of the road. It would perch high above me, looking for prey. In Uvita, I saw one on the road eating a rodent. As we approached it, it flew up onto a fence to keep eating. They also seemed vocal. I experienced them calling at my group a couple of different times.

First recorded sighting in Uvita on December 3.

**Blue-black Grassquit**
*Volatinia jacarina*

I saw the Blue-black Grassquit a couple of times. Each time, I saw a couple of males who were all black but had a brilliant blue hue when sunlight shone on them.

Recorded sightings in Uvita on December 3 and in La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

**Smooth-billed Ani**
*Crotosphyaga ani*

The Smooth-billed Ani was a very unique-looking bird that I saw in Uvita. What I find cool about these birds are their bills. They look like dinosaurs with a hump on the top of their bill. They were in a group of four sitting on a log when I saw them.

Only recorded sighting in Uvita on December 3.
Little Blue Heron
_Egretta caerulea_

I love Great Blue Herons and I had no idea there was a smaller, cuter version of them until I saw it perched by the water in Uvita. The Little Blue Heron was small and had solid purple-ish and dark gray-blue plumage. I do not think it resembled a Great Blue Heron at all and it was grayer and more purple than blue, but nevertheless, the Little Blue Heron was a spectacular sighting.

Only recorded sighting in Uvita on December 3.

Rufous-naped Wren
_Campylorhynchus rufinucha_

I heard the Rufous-naped Wren before I saw it. It was calling from inside bushes and I got the slightest glimpse of it behind some branches as it liked to stay hidden.

Only recorded sighting at UCR on December 5.

Lineated Woodpecker
_Dryocopus lineatus_

I first saw the Lineated Woodpecker when I was walking by the park near Veritas. I saw a couple of people looking up at a dead tree. Naturally, I walked over to see what they were looking at. A beautiful woodpecker with a large red crest latched onto the bark while pecking loudly. It reminded me of a Pileated Woodpecker which is always a treat to see in the PNW. I saw the Lineated Woodpecker one more time at UCR. We heard it drilling holes in trees for a while. It was echoing throughout the campus, taunting us because although it had a bright red color, we could not find it. We followed the sound. Right when we got close, the Lineated Woodpecker rapidly swooped away, giving me one glimpse of it before I heard it pecking from a distance again.

Recorded sightings near Veritas on December 4 and UCR on December 5.

White-eared Ground-Sparrow
_Melospiza leucotis_

I remember someone spotting the White-eared Ground-Sparrow on the ground next to a dumpster by pointing and saying, “What is that weird bird.” It looked like it was wearing spectacles. After seeing the Cahani’s Ground-Sparrow and now this one, I noticed that ground-sparrows have unique markings that make them very cool to look at. I also only ever saw ground-sparrows on the ground which makes sense.

Only recorded sighting at UCR on December 5.

Prothonotary Warbler
_Protonotaria citrea_

My bird class was walking along a covered bridge on the UCR campus in the shade of bamboo trees when we saw a male Prothonotary Warbler underneath the roof with us. It was trying to fly up but only was hitting the ceiling. It seemed confused as it perched, looking for a way to escape. It eventually flew away after some trial and error. A couple of days later I saw a few near Veritas.

Recorded sightings at UCR on December 5 and near Veritas on December 7.

Black Phoebe
_Sayornis nigricans_

The Black Phoebe is a little bird I only saw a couple of times, each time perched. The second time I saw it, it was bobbing its tail repeatedly.

Recorded sightings near Veritas on December 7 and at Represa de Cachí on December 17.

Flame-throated Warbler
_Oreothlypis gutturalis_

As I was finishing up a hike where I did not see many bird species, I approached a tree that had three different species in it. The Flame-throated Warbler popped out with its bright orange throat against its gray body.

Only recorded sighting at in Volcán Irazú National Park on December 9.
I went on a hike in the province of Cartago on my last free weekend in Costa Rica. It was a beautiful, sunny day. We went to Irazú Volcano, Prusia Sector. At this point in my time in Costa Rica, I was missing home. I had enjoyed the past few months and felt content and ready to leave. This hike revitalized me because it reminded me of home. There were huge evergreens that had been planted there that were so different from the tropical rainforests I had typically hiked in. The mountain air felt crisp as the humidity could not reach me that high up. The Black-cheeked Warbler was one species among a few that stuck out right away when we started our hike. There was not a ton of bird activity in the large trees that we could see, but this warbler was in the low branches overhanging the path.

Only recorded sighting at in Volcán Irazú National Park on December 9.

The Collared Redstart was similar in size to the Slate-throated Redstart and had the same reddish-orange cap on top. But the Collared Redstart had a bright yellow face and belly. It was in a tree near the trail I was hiking with a small collection of birds in it.

Only recorded sighting at Volcán Irazú National Park on December 9.

The Black-throated Green Warbler was one species among a few that I saw while on my final bird field trip. My class did an overnight field trip during my final weekend studying abroad. The first location we visited on this field trip was CATIE which had a lake and wetland area. The Purple Gallinule had beautiful purple-blue feathers with a bright red beak and yellow legs. I also noticed its massive feet to help it balance on top of floating vegetation in the water. It was walking around on the edges of the lake with the Northern Jacana.

As we were walking along a road that went around the lake, we found a dead Purple Gallinule lying in the middle. I was able to observe all its features very up close, but it had its guts spilling out onto the dirt.

Only recorded sighting at CATIE on December 16.

The Purple Gallinule is the most brightly colored wading bird I have seen. I saw it while on my final bird field trip. My class did an overnight field trip during my final weekend studying abroad. The first location we visited on this field trip was CATIE which had a lake and wetland area. The Purple Gallinule had beautiful purple-blue feathers with a bright red beak and yellow legs. I also noticed its massive feet to help it balance on top of floating vegetation in the water. It was walking around on the edges of the lake with the Northern Jacana.

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Only recorded sighting at CATIE on December 16.

I saw quite a few Northern Jacanas walking along the edge of the lake. I observed a male and two juveniles foraging for a while. What I remember most vividly about the Northern Jacanas were their ridiculously large feet. This adaptation is important to their lifestyle of walking on floating vegetation, allowing them to distribute their weight, but they looked like clown feet.

Only recorded sighting at CATIE on December 16.

I saw an individual, Black-crowned Night Heron perched next to the lake. It was in a compact posture with bright red eyes scanning the water for food.

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Only recorded sighting at CATIE on December 16.
Anhinga
*Anhinga anhinga*

To me, the Anhinga looked like a snake in the water. I had never seen a bird swim in such a way. These big black birds have dense bones that cause them to sink, so only their head and curved necks can stay above the water. In the middle of the lake, I saw Anhinga heads moving throughout the water, then dipping below when they would dive underneath to find food.

There was a log that extended in the middle of the lake. It was a hot, sunny day and a few Anhingas were perched on the log with their wings stretched out, drying their feathers. I also saw an Anhinga attempting to swallow a massive fish as it perched in the warmth of the sun.

Only recorded sighting at CATIE on December 16.

Green Heron
*Butorides virescens*

When I think of a heron or an egret, I usually picture a large Great Blue Heron or Great Egret with long legs, standing in the water waiting for prey to swim by. However, what is remarkable about this family is their variety in size. The Green Heron is a small heron. It cannot wade or stand in the water like a Great Blue Heron. Instead, it uses its environment to assist in hunting. The one Green Heron I saw in Costa Rica was almost vertically upside down, using a strong grip to hold its body on a bamboo stem, while it was hunting. Its face was only inches above the water. I stood and watched it long enough to see it catch a fish, only moving its neck to pierce the water with its dagger of a bill.

Only recorded sighting at CATIE on December 16.

Boat-billed Heron
*Cochlearius cochlearius*

The Boat-billed Heron is the ultimate dinosaur bird. I had only ever seen pictures and videos of them before I saw them at CATIE. I have always noticed their resemblance to dinosaurs but seeing them in person only confirmed their obvious heritage. They are large birds with bulging black eyes and bills the shape of boats (hence their common name). I saw two perched next to the water being very vocal.

Only recorded sighting at CATIE on December 16.

Great Blue Heron
*Ardea herodias*

When I thought about the possible birds I would see in Costa Rica, somehow, herons did not make the list. I thought of the typical tropical birds like parakeets and toucans. I even thought about all the migratory warblers that would be there. But the diversity of herons surprised me. I was able to see quite a few new species of herons which was exciting because these birds are special to me. Amongst many new wading bird species to me in this lake, the Great Blue Heron stood tall and familiar.

It is the most common large bird I see in Bell- ingham. I enjoy going to the bay and it is almost guaranteed that I will see one if not more than one when I go. I have been able to spend many hours watching them. I always say that if I were a bird, I would be a Great Blue Heron. Maybe it is because I strive to be like one. They are the most patient birds I know. They will stand still for up to several hours, waiting for their prey to come to them. I think patience is a quality that I possess and that I continuously strive for. But of course, there may always be something that will set me over the edge, just like a Great Blue Heron giving up and moving locations.

Only recorded sighting at CATIE on December 16.

Green Ibis
*Mesembrinibis cayennensis*

I saw several Green Ibises perched in bamboo that grew on an island in the lake. They were well shaded, so they were hard to see at first because of their dark feathers. They sat side by side on a slanted bamboo stalk. I enjoyed watching them preening and grooming each other. They ran their long, curved bills along their feathers, making sure their plumage stayed in excellent condition.

Only recorded sighting at CATIE on December 16.

Scarlet-thighed Dacnis
*Dacnis venusta*

The Scarlet-thighed Dacnis is one of the jaw-dropping species for me that I wish I saw more. The males that we saw had radiant blue hoods and the rest of their body was ink black. As we wandered away from the lake at CATIE, we saw two of them eating small fruits in a large tree.

Only recorded sighting at CATIE on December 16.
Keel-billed Toucan
*Ramphastos sulfuratus*

Keel-billed toucans look very similar to the Yellow-throated Toucan but distinguish themselves with their vibrant green beak. I saw them only a few times during this final weekend. I would hear them flying overhead, calling loudly. But I got the best glimpses of a couple that I saw perched in trees. They were very vocal and moved energetically throughout the tree.

Recorded sightings at CATIE on December 16 and at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

Green Honeycreeper
*Chlorophanes spiza*

Green Honeycreepers are as radiant as Red-legged Honeycreepers if not more. The males are a bright turquoise color with a black head and the females are bright green. There was a cute house near the lake at CATIE. In the front yard of this house, there were beautiful flowering shrubs and plants in bloom. A couple of male Green Honeycreepers perched in a large flowering bush right in the front and center of the yard. The next day, I saw a female perched on a tree.

Recorded sightings at CATIE on December 16 and at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

Golden-hooded Tanager
*Stilpna larvata*

I learned about the Golden-hooded Tanager when I was flipping through my *Birds of Costa Rica* field guide. It became one of the top birds that I wanted to see. When a classmate of mine came back from a weekend with cool photos of a Golden-hooded Tanager, it became a goal of mine to see one. The contrast in their colors looked so stunning. During this overnight field trip weekend, I was fortunate to spot them on multiple occasions, perched in both trees and shrubs. When I saw them at La Marta Wildlife Refuge, they were amongst a diverse array of tanager species.

Recorded sightings at CATIE on December 16 and at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

Yellow-throated Euphonia
*Euphonia hirundinacea*

The Yellow-throated Euphonia was one of four different euphonia species I saw on my final weekend in Costa Rica. All of them were similar sizes and colorations besides the Olive-backed Euphonia. The males typically have black bodies with yellow throats, bellies and foreheads. Depending on the species, the yellow forecrown extends to different parts of the head. All the females are green with slightly different markings depending on the species. The male Yellow-throated Euphonia we saw had a yellow forecrown and a white spot on his belly.

Only recorded sighting at CATIE on December 16.

Snowcap
*Microchera albocoronata*

During one of my Land Vertebrates classes, a guest speaker came in to talk about birds. He was passionate about photography and the environment and displayed a photo of a Snowcap he had taken, showcasing its exquisite beauty.

At La Marta Wildlife Refuge, our accommodations had a purple flowering bush out front. I was told that the Snowcaps loved to come to this spot. With my luck, a Snowcap arrived right as we did. I watched in awe as it flitted from flower to flower, then disappeared into the canopy. Throughout our stay, the Snowcap made repeated visits. I was able to watch it perch on one of the small branches, a fleeting yet profound moment that highlighted the beauty in this world.

Recorded sightings at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 16 and 17.
La Marta Wildlife Refuge was a forest consisting of different levels of canopy. The dense forest housed the remnants of a coffee processing plant. Some trails weaved throughout the forest and a river flowed through it. As we were walking past the coffee processing plant, now just a concrete skeleton, there was tall bamboo growing a few dozen feet high. Perched in the foliage were two sleeping Crested Owls. My only owl species in Costa Rica!

I grew up with Hairy Woodpeckers coming to the suet feeders in my backyard. They are medium-sized black-and-white woodpeckers and the males have a red marking on the back of their heads. In La Marta, there was a clearing of trees in a small parking area. On a tree with large, exposed branches, the female Hairy Woodpecker made her way up a thick, high branch. At first, I thought it was a Hoffmann’s Woodpecker, not knowing that Hairy Woodpeckers also took residence in Costa Rica. However, the distinct black-and-white markings showed me otherwise.

I saw the Orange-billed Sparrow up on a hill in short shrubs. It was perched near the ground and called persistently. It has a black-and-white head, with a bright orange beak. To me, the beak looked like a carrot stuck on its face as if it were a small snowman.

The Green Hermit is a beautiful hummingbird I saw feeding on a flower in a tree. Hermits are characterized by their curved bill that can reach deep into flowers to collect nectar. Like most of the hummingbirds I saw, the Green Hermit made quick movements and zoomed away.

My Tropical Birds class woke up early to go on a field trip at 5:30 in the morning. We walked along the road that led out of the forest canopy and into an open area. There were some shrubs and trees that lined the road, but it was much more open than the forest that we had hiked in the day prior. This morning, we saw many different tanager species. The Bay-headed Tanager is among many species of vibrantly colored tanagers. It has a bright blue-and-green body with a red head. Among the group of tanagers it was with, the Bay-headed Tanager stood out.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.
White-vented Euphonia  
*Euphonia minuta*

The White-vented Euphonia looked very similar to the Yellow-throated Euphonia. I remember standing there watching the male in a tree for several minutes. I studied its subtle movements and angles. Bird identification is an impressive skill because I could not find the difference between the two species with my few glances at them. The key distinguishing features of White-vented Euphonias were a white belly and vent. So finding that distinguishing marking was difficult when the bird was not at the right angle.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

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White-lined Tanager  
*Tachyphonus rufus*

I saw both male and female White-lined Tanagers. As we were walking down the road, there were a couple in bushes on the side. I could see the tiny white marking on the fold of the wing. It stood out against the black body of the male. The cinnamon-colored female hung out with the males in the bushes.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

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Cinnamon Becard  
*Pachyramphus cinnamomeus*

The Cinnamon Becards were beautiful bright birds. I saw four hanging out in a tree. Their plumage displayed two distinct shades of cinnamon.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

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Red-throated Ant-Tanager  
*Habia fuscicauda*

The male Red-throated Ant-tanager was a fun sighting. It was yet another tanager with bright red colors. It was not quite as bright as the Summer Tanager but did have a bright red breast as if its heart was bleeding. It was perched in a tree in the deeper branches. I could only briefly spot it before it became hidden again.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

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Olive-backed Euphonia  
*Euphonia gouldi*

The Olive-backed Euphonia was an easier euphonia species to distinguish. The male was a green bird with an orange forecrown and belly. The color pattern was similar to the other two species I saw, with different colors.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

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Purple-crowned Fairy  
*Heliothryx barroti*

The Purple-crowned Fairy was my last new hummingbird in Costa Rica. It was a green hummingbird in Costa Rica. It was a green hummingbird with a bright throat and belly. On top of its head was a tiny purple crown. I love the common name of the Purple-crowned Fairy. I am very grateful for all the hummingbirds I was able to see while in Costa Rica. Now I believe that fairies are real; they are in the form of hummingbirds.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

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The Tawny-capped Euphonia had similar markings to the other euphonias, but with an orange cap that extended further than the other species. I thought that this bird looked a lot like the Slate-throated Restart as they have the same colors. However, I noticed the Tawny-capped Euphonia was different once I observed it perched in a tree for a long moment.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.
Black-striped Sparrow
*Arremonops conirostris*

This bird has a beautiful gray plumage in which thin black stripes stretch across its head. Additionally, its wings and back are mustard yellow. I saw the Black-striped Sparrow perched up the hill, in small bushes near the ground.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

Speckled Tanager
*Ixothraupis guttata*

The Speckled Tanager had some of the most unique markings I saw. Not only did it have vibrant green and blue feathers, but it had a black scaly look to it. After looking at photos of them closer, I noticed that their feathers were black with colored edges, giving them a speckled look. I saw a sole Speckled Tanager amongst a group of different species of tanagers in a tree.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

Tawny-crested Tanager
*Tachyphonus delatrii*

The Tawny-crested Tanager males were attractive birds that were in a large group in a tree. They were loud and at first, I only saw a few. Then I realized it was a large group of males all hanging out together. These all-black birds were displaying their spiky orange caps. I noticed a lot of tanager species hanging out mixed among each other, but these guys were keeping to themselves in their tree. Along the same walk down the road at La Marta, I saw a few different large groups of Tawny-crested Tanagers.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

Emerald Tanager
*Tanagara florida*

The Emerald Tanager glimmered like a jewel in the trees. The neon green and black contradiction was so vibrant amongst all the already brightly colored tanagers. It was absolutely stunning. I was looking forward to seeing so many species of tanagers in Costa Rica and finally, on my last weekend, I was grateful to see many different species.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

Buff-throated Saltator
*Saltator maximus*

The white eyebrows characterize the saltators, at least the species that I saw. I watched as a Buff-throated Saltator did loopy loops high in a tree finding insects to eat.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.

Gartered Trogon
*Trogon caligatus*

This was the final new bird species I saw at La Marta Wildlife Refuge. The Gartered Trogon was well camouflaged, so when someone in my class spotted it, we all searched for several minutes trying to find it. I did not know what the Gartered Trogon looked like, so I was blindly searching for a trogon-looking bird in the foliage. The other trogon species I had seen were green and red, but the Gartered Trogon has a dark head and wings, a green back and a bright yellow belly. It also has a distinct black and white striped tail. I stood there, straining my neck as I was searching in the tree. Finally, I found it perched high on a branch with only seconds to spare because the van pulled up to bring us back for breakfast. Unfortunately, many of my classmates never got to see it, but this bird became my third and final trogon species.

Only recorded sighting at La Marta Wildlife Refuge on December 17.
**Chestnut-headed Oropendola**

Psarocolius wagleri

On our way back from our final field trip, we stopped at Ruina de Ujarrás. There, we were the ruins of a Spanish colonial church turned into a park with a playground, trees, paths and gardens. At the ruins were dozens of Montezuma Oropendolas. But amongst their chatter, we heard what sounded like a water drop, the call of the Chestnut-headed Oropendola. Their all-white beak is an easy way to distinguish them from the larger Montezuma Oropendolas. One of my classmates was able to spot it, but I could not find it.

The weekend had been long and it was a hot day. We all one by one gave up looking and dispersed throughout the park. I laid on a bench for a long time, waiting to leave soon, slowly forgetting about the Chestnut-headed Oropendola. After some time, I crossed the park to the bathrooms before we left to return to San Jose. In the garden outside of the bathroom, I heard the water drop call clear as day. In the tree, right by the bathroom, perched the Chestnut-headed Oropendola.

I was all alone when I spotted it. There was no chance to find my classmates as I had walked all the way across the park. I stood there for a little while staring at this bird and was captivated by its blue eyes and large white beak that looked too big for its face. Soon, my classmates joined, as they were looking for me so we could leave. I was happy I got to share this bird with them too. I tried to point it out to them and some of them got to see it before our group presence scared it away. This bird now holds significance for me as it was my last new bird in Costa Rica.

Only recorded sighting at Ruina de Ujarrás on December 17.

**Conclusion**

I have never combined school and birds until this year. Taking the Tropical Birds class was the best decision I could have made. This class shaped my whole experience in Costa Rica. I was able to bring what I learned in that class into other spaces too. Outside of class, I traveled all over Costa Rica, bringing my binoculars and watching birds. Because of this, I was able to see many more bird species than just the ones seen on field trips.

Involving art with school was also new to me. Art has always been something I do on the side and I knew it was ambitious to illustrate so many birds. It feels good to be able to hold these illustrations and see my hard work. I used both watercolors and colored pencils to create each bird. In Costa Rica, I met friends who also love to art as we called it. I felt more creative there than I have anywhere else. The friends I made, the art we did and the birds we saw all inspired this project.

My observations, memories and illustrations have allowed me to reflect on a very informative time. I decided to illustrate each bird I saw in Costa Rica as a small tribute to each one and to myself. Some birds had more meaning for me attached to them than others. Although I had more to say about some than others, I spent time looking at photos I took, my field guide and photos online of each bird to give each one attention and care. Reflecting on almost 150 bird species was a huge feat. I feel so fulfilled by the fact that I now feel some connection to each bird I saw.

Being able to revisit every birdwatching day has helped me add closure to my time in Costa Rica. I am forever grateful to my experiences studying abroad. The other day I was listening to an old voice memo that I accidentally took while I was in the Osa Peninsula. The presence of the birds filled up the space. The chorus of birds in the background is something I will continue to hold onto and seek throughout my life.

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