

# *Costa Rica Trip -- November 2011*

*By: Karen Chiasson*

**Tour Organiser—John Van der Dol**

**Tour Operator and Guide—Alfredo Porras**

**Bus Driver—Max**

Aline, a very good friend of mine had mentioned she wanted to go to Costa Rica for her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday present and asked me if I would join her. Since I had never been there, of course I said yes. It was just by chance I found this “Sandwich Bird Tour” going to Costa Rica during the timeframe we wanted to go as well. “Google” is a wonderful internet search tool!

In addition to our guide, Alfredo and our bus driver, Max, the other twelve participants were from England and already knew each other. What made this trip even more enjoyable was our cohesive group. We got along splendidly! Max, our bus driver, was the best! He was very considerate by driving slow on any of the rough roads we travelled.

The trip was well thought out and planned by John and Alfredo as we stayed in five different lodges not including our lodging in San Jose at the beginning and end of the trip. This gave us the opportunity to see many more species of birds and mammals in the different habitats. In order to keep the cost down, we were going on the edge of the wet season. But we were hoping for the best. We can't let some raindrops slow us down.

Between us we saw and heard around 350 bird species in the two weeks there, including beautiful species such as Resplendent Quetzal, Jabiru, Green Ibis, Great Tinamou, Great Green Macaw, Scarlet Macaw, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, and Spectacled Owl. We saw 33 hummingbird species, one of the most memorable of these being the Snowcap. The reason I say this is because we waited around in the rain, under the shelter of a porch, for approximately two hours. Now, that's what you call dedication. But, what else are you going to do while it's pouring down rain. It was worth the wait seeing this little beauty show up just as we were giving up hope and we also added a few more species for the trip while waiting.

The mammals, reptiles, etc we saw are listed below:

Mantled Howler  
Tree Dwelling Lesser Anteater  
Central American Agouti  
Mexican Hairy Dwarf Porcupine  
Red-Tailed Squirrel  
Northern Tamandua  
Black Ctenosaur  
Common Basilisk  
Tent-Making Bats

White-Headed Capuchin  
Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth  
White-Nosed Coati  
Eastern Cottontail  
Variegated Squirrel  
American Crocodile  
Spiny-Green Lizard  
Narrow-Headed Vine Snake  
White-Lined Bats

Another highlight of the trip was finding two species which our guide, Alfredo, had never seen in Costa Rica, his home. This brought his Costa Rican list to 700. We celebrated while sipping wine and watching the sunset from the mountaintop at La Ensenada. There were Lesser Nighthawks flying around us and we had Paraques calling from the valley floor. We had a great time!