

# Bird Wing Report

September 2024





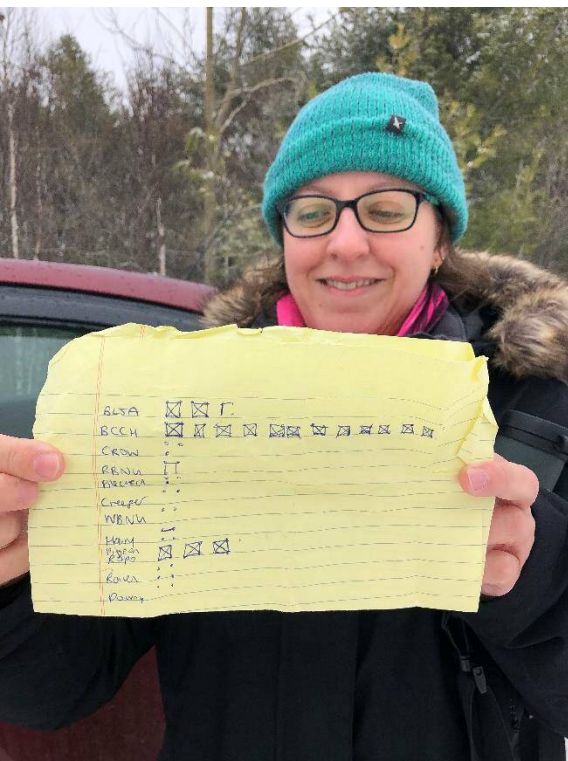
## Upcoming Events

**Bird Bash:** Bird Bash takes place over the weekend of **October 5-6**. Mark the date on your calendars, although I will send out a reminder.

**Global Big Day:** Global Big Day is on **October 12**, first day of the Thanksgiving weekend. All you do is watch for birds anywhere on October 12, even in your own backyard, and enter what you see and hear on eBird. It doesn't matter if you are an expert bird watcher or a novice one. If you already have an eBird account, you don't need to do anything extra – just enter your sightings as usual. If you are not on eBird, you can set up an eBird account for free for your Global Big Day sightings. For instructions and information on Global Big Day, visit <https://ebird.org/news/october-big-day-12-oct-2024#:~:text=Wherever%20you%20are%20on%202012,new%20record%20for%20October%20birding>.

**Bird Wing:** Instead of our normal meeting on the evening of October 22, we are once again doing something different. We will be meeting Oriana Pokorny at the main entrance of Nipissing University on **Saturday, October 26, at 10:30 am** and from there, Oriana will lead us to the ornithology lab to show us 100-year old taxidermy birds and more recent lab specimens. Afterwards, we can have lunch or just something to drink at the university. Details will follow closer to the date, but be sure to mark this change on your calendars.

**Christmas Bird Count:** As I type this, it is about two months to December and for birders, December means the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), although it's difficult to think of snow and cold when we are having such lovely September weather – except during the September Bird Bash! This year, the CBC runs from Saturday, December 14 to Sunday, January 5, 2025, and as we usually do, we will hold North Bay's on the first Saturday of the count, **December 14**.



We are not able to get 176 Lakeshore to hold our tally supper party on December 14, but we can get it for lunch on Sunday, December 15. So all will be the same, only the pot-luck tally party will be a lunch party and not a supper party. This may work out better for some in the southern tier who might want to attend, but can't in the evening.

Lori Anderson has agreed to be our compiler yet again, so if you already know you want to participate in this long-standing and important event, let Lori know at [lori.anderson58@hotmail.com](mailto:lori.anderson58@hotmail.com).

Rachel Sturge, photo by Sarah Wheelan

## Looking for birds 4,864 km from the North Pole

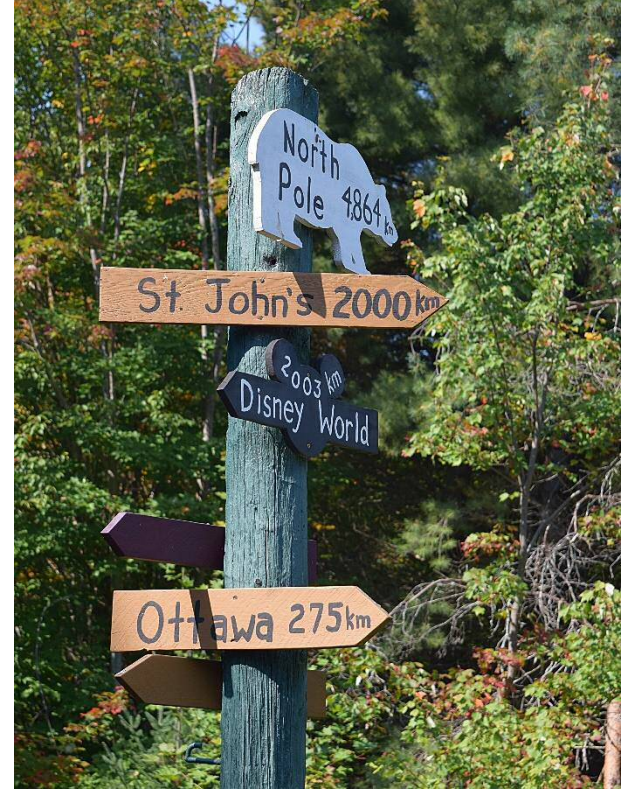
### In lieu of a September meeting

*By Renee Levesque: photos as indicated*

On September 14, Bird Wing broke out of its box and held a bird outing and a barbecue in lieu of a September meeting on a lovely sunny and warm Saturday morning and early afternoon. We held it 4,864 km from the North Pole, or if you wish, 2,003 km from Florida's Disney World! (The sign Garry made at right does not lie!)

Garry Waldram, host, made all 14 of us (photo on next page) welcome at his tranquil property in Bonfield Township. After showing us around the property by his house, we headed off by vehicle to another area of Garry's property to walk that area looking for birds. I suppose we could have walked the couple of km to get to the property, but some of us had game legs and knees, one having had knee surgery in the spring, another due to get knee surgery in early October, another due for knee surgery in late October, another requiring a knee brace and another being 92 years of age!

On Garry's immediate property, while we milled around admiring it and having coffee or tea that Garry had ready for us as soon as we arrived, we saw Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadees, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, a couple of Common Grackles, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak (photo at right) and a Dark-eyed Junco.



*Renee Levesque*



*Renee Levesque*

In the large pond Garry built towards the back of his property was a Midland Painted Turtle basking on a rock, taking in the warmth of the brilliant sunshine. Later, upon our return, we heard a Common Raven and a Pileated Woodpecker.

On our walk, we saw a couple of Magnolia Warblers (photo of an immature below), a Hairy Woodpecker, some Chipping and White-throated Sparrows, a Song Sparrow and a Lincoln's Sparrow (**Garry's photo on the cover**), the highlight of the outing for some – a lifer for Faye Oei and Angela Mills and the first time Dick Tafel has seen one this year! We heard a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and an American Pipit.



*Renee Levesque*



*Renee Levesque*

Looking upwards, we saw a Turkey Vulture (photo of an immature at left) and a Broad-winged Hawk. Many of the latter have already migrated south, so we were lucky to still see one.

Someday soon, birds will no longer carry the names of the people they were named after, so when I come across the name of a bird named after a person, I am curious why it was so named. In the case of the Lincoln's Sparrow, it was not named after Abraham Lincoln as I had once thought, but rather after

Thomas Lincoln, an avid naturalist who travelled with John James Audubon in 1833 on an expedition to the coast of Labrador. On this expedition, while they were in Natashqyan, Quebec, they found a little sparrow, a specimen of which Lincoln brought back for study. (It was originally named Lincoln's Pinewood-finch because in those days, sparrows, buntings, grosbeaks, cardinals and finches were thought to belong to the large family of finches.)

Had we all, including two whom I will not name – you know who you are! – been able to get to Garry's earlier, no doubt we would have seen more species; but no matter, we had fun seeing what we did, and we had a great barbecue of hamburgers and hotdogs with all the trimmings. Garry barbecued the hamburgers, even the veggie ones, expertly. To go with them were at least four different salads, thanks to Garry's generosity. After the main course, we had brownies and whipped cream thanks to Faye Oei.

The meal was delicious and the company was great, with all 14 of us sitting in a circle in the shade, along with Garry's two dogs, Tank and Jenny. His cat, Frida, remained indoors. (Tank is in the group photo with us.)



I think everything aligned to result in a perfect September Saturday. The weather was fantastic, the host was gracious, the venue was lovely, there were still birds around despite our starting out a bit late, the barbecue was delicious and the Bird Wing members were good company. And if that wasn't enough, Garry gave each of us a jar of Red Currant Jelly he made himself and fresh vegetables from his garden! (By the way the jelly was delicious. I had it on my toast the next morning.)

## Seeds and Cones

*By Renee Levesque; photos as indicated*

**Bird banding, Hilliardton Marsh:** One of our new members, Alex Dumouchelle, volunteered banding birds at Hilliardton Marsh during the month of August. Alex joined us for the outing and barbecue at Garry Waldram's on September 14. It was the first time I and many others had met him in person – always nice to have a new member join in our activities and meetings. It was on our way to the outing that Alex told me he had been banding birds and that he had met Garry while Garry was at Hilliardton in August. Alex is trained to band passerines, but not hummingbirds, owls or hawks. Selfies of Alex with a Black and White Warbler and an Ovenbird at Hilliardton are below.



Alex, who graduated from Canadore College's Environmental Technology program, is currently in his first year of Environmental Biology at Nipissing University.

**Lucas Beaver:** Some of us have run into Lucas Beaver during our bird watching travels, and eBirders have surely noticed his copious comments on eBird, including his exact counting of birds. (Once when I ran into him at Powassan Lagoon, I estimated there were 500 Canada Geese. Lucas's exact count was 536! That either says something about my estimating ability or about Lucas's dedication to the world of science.) Some years ago, Lucas's mother, Bird Wing member Mary Young, told me that when Lucas was young, he took the Young Ornithologist Workshop at Long Point and I have since learned that he subsequently did an internship at Long Point Bird Observatory. Not surprising then that he is now employed by Birds Canada as the Indigenous Liaison Coordinator for Northern Canada. If you run into Lucas while out birding,

you will find he will patiently help you identify birds, will provide an exact count of all the species, and will find birds you didn't even know were there!

**Rare find:** The Carolina Wren is not necessarily a rare bird, but it is one that is not often found in our area, although one seems to turn up every year or so. However, this year two turned up, one at Rick Tripp's feeders in the spring and now one in Diane Deagle's yard. Diane had been hearing an unfamiliar call around her house, but on the morning of September 18, the bird finally came into view and Diane was able to get a photo of it (at right) and identify it as a Carolina Wren. It was an exciting early morning for Diane, especially as the bird is a lifer for her!



*Diane Deagle*

**Lifers on one's travels:** For the past few years, Mary Young and a friend who recently began birding have been going on birding trips in Southern Ontario during spring migration. Mary reports, "During our first few trips to Point Pelee and Rondeau, I was able to add some lifers to my list, including Cerulean and Prairie Warblers, but the past two years were lifer-free for me. (As a new birder, my friend adds many every year.) So I made it my mission this year to add at least one lifer, which we both agreed should be a Tufted Titmouse, a species that has eluded us so far. I did my research and determined that our best chance to add this species to our lists was at the Ojibway Prairie in Windsor. So armed with a pocketful of sunflower seeds, off we went and I am pleased to say we were successful! I did my happy dance!"

Another lifer for Mary was during a holiday this summer on the Gaspé Peninsula. Mary reports, "In June, my husband, Dave, and I took a road trip around Gaspé Peninsula. I was anticipating seeing lots of sea birds with my new spotting scope, and particularly wanted to see some Harlequin Ducks (photo below), lifer birds for me and Dave. We were exploring Forillon National Park at the tip of Gaspé with fog lurking near the shore all day. We took a path out to the coast where we observed large rafts of mixed scoters and Common Eiders, all partially obscured by the fog. Then Dave observed four smaller ducks near the shore. I got my binoculars on them and said, "Harlequin Ducks!" We sprung into stealth mode, sneaking up closer to them every time they all dove at once, eventually getting quite close. If the couple behind us on



*Renee Levesque*

the trail saw us, they must have wondered what we were doing! Or thought, “Those crazy birders!” (Especially if Mary did her happy dance after seeing the Harlequins!)



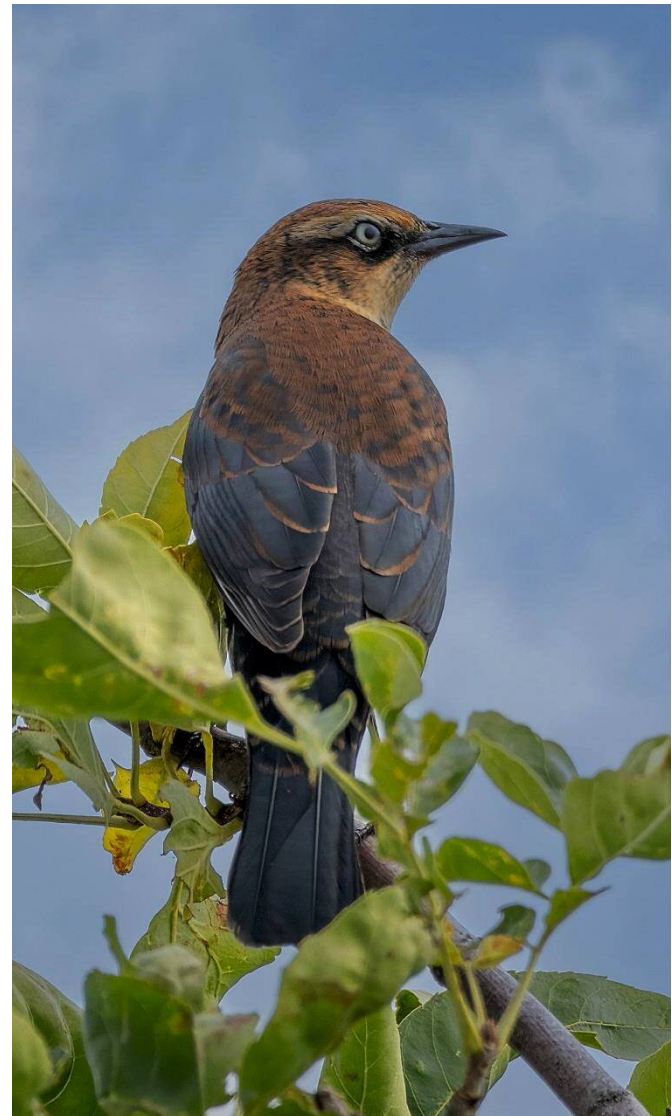
Renee Levesque

**Lifers:** Closer to home, some members saw a lifer or two: Garry Waldram, an Orange-crowned Warbler he saw in the Talon Lake area in late September; Mary Young, a Solitary Sandpiper ; Faye Oei, in addition to the Lincoln’s Sparrow she saw during the outing at Garry’s, a Pied-billed Grebe she saw during September’s Bird Bash; a Lincoln’s Sparrow Steve Pitt saw at his sister’s in Powassan before he saw the one at Garry’s; Angela Mills, a Canada Jay, as well as the Lincoln’s Sparrow she saw at Garry’s; Linda Stoner and Pat Stack, a Semipalmated Plover (photo above) they saw at Sunset

Park during September’s Bird Bash; and Pat Stack, a Lesser Yellowlegs and a Rusty Blackbird (photo at right).

**Bears:** It has been a bear September in North Bay with many sightings. Twice now on my morning walk checking out what birds were in my yard and immediate area, bears got in my way. The first time, a medium-sized bear was about a football field away from me when we spied each other; the next time, a cub ran in front of me about three feet away, practically in my own backyard. I was standing in the easement at the back of my yard looking up in the sky counting Canada Geese flying by when something bounded in front of me. I thought it was our neighbour’s dog until I realized it was a bear.

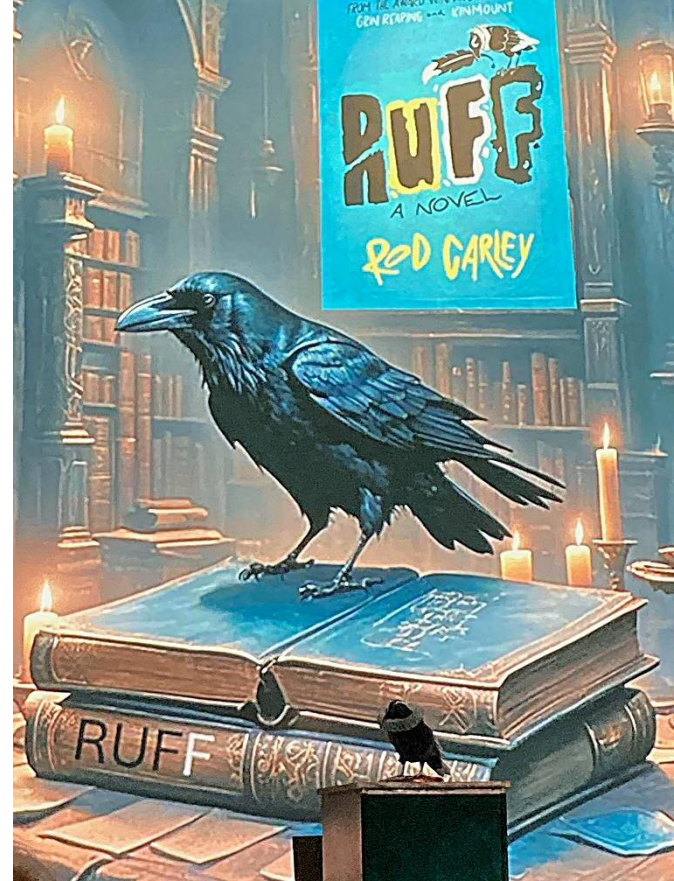
The thing about solo birding and bears is that you tend not to make any noise and you tend to be looking through your binoculars in bushes and trees trying to find a bird, so when a bear suddenly is there almost in front of you or in your binoculars, it can be very startling! Maybe other birders have had encounters with bears recently.



Pat Stack



**Ruff:** In mid-September at Canadore College, my husband John and I attended a reading of Rod Carley's book *Ruff*. (You may know Rod from his many years in North Bay as a director, actor and playwright.) I was struck by the promotional graphic for Rod's fourth novel with its crow standing on top of a weighty book in a library full of weighty books. (Photo at right.) I knew the novel was a humorous and modern take about a bad year in the life of Will Shakespeare, but what did the crow on the cover signify? It is a bird that figures in most of Shakespeare's plays, often as a bad omen, but this is highly unlikely the case in a humour novel. Rod wouldn't say because it could give away the story, but he did say he likes crows, that they are his favourite bird. (With the novel being called *Ruff*, perhaps a Ruffed Grouse would have been appropriate, but somehow a grouse doesn't seem very Shakespearian, although a partridge did make an appearance in *Much Ado About Nothing*.)



Renee Levesque



Renee Levesque

**Northern Cardinal:** For the second straight year, Rick Tripp has proof that another Northern Cardinal was fledged this spring/summer to the cardinal couple that seem to live permanently in his area and visit his feeders daily, except when Dick Tafel shows up to see them! I am hoping Rick will get a good picture of it.

**Hummingbird departure:** The Ruby-throated Hummingbird arrives in May and departs sometime in September. My last sighting of one in my yard (photo at left) was on September 17, a bit later than usual. Most years it leaves my area around September 8 to 10. With the warm September weather, other birders may have also noticed later departures.

## A week in the life of a birder in Costa Rica

*Text and photos by Garry Waldram*



*Streak-backed Oriole*

### **Introduction:**

On a whim last November, I was looking to go somewhere tropical to enjoy the warmth and do some birding and ended up deciding on Costa Rica! After checking online for deals, I made the decision to do an all-inclusive vacation package at Occidental Tamarindo, a resort located in the province of Guanacaste and nestled on the northern Pacific coast. I really had no expectations except that I knew I was going to see birds that I had never seen before, along with a few that I had.

Before I left, I contacted the tour company, Viator, to book day trips from my resort to see birds and other wildlife and to partake in a little Costa Rican culture. I soon found out that many of the tours were geared to culture and adventures like chocolate, coffee, hot springs and waterfall swims, ziplining, horseback riding, etc.

## November 24, arrival:

On my arrival at the resort on November 24, I was greeted by a torrential downpour while checking in. Little did I know that this would be the last big rain in Tamarindo as the rainy season was ending and the dry season was beginning. After checking in around sunset, I headed to my room and as I stepped out onto my third floor balcony, I was greeted by my first Tropical Kingbird (at right).



I did see a few birds I was able to identify on the bus ride from the Liberian airport. In the fields, it was easy to spot Cattle Egrets, Double-striped Thick-knees, Great-tailed Grackles, White-winged Doves and a Crested Caracara.

Before I left, I had spent many hours watching YouTube videos on Costa Rican birds and studying a field guide I had purchased for the trip – *Second Edition The Birds of Costa Rica by Richard Garrigues and Robert Dean*, a field guide I highly recommend. I decided not to use Merlin on my first trip, but when I returned to Costa Rica in March 2024, it definitely made birding a whole lot easier, especially in identifying flycatchers that were very similar in appearance.

## November 25, Day 1:

My first day trip was to Llanos de Cortez Waterfall and a walk through the rainforest at the base of the Tenorio Volcano. This tour tended to be a bit disappointing because the area we went to produced few birds. The walk which was supposed to be two hours to look for birds, sloths and frogs was a mere 45 minutes. It didn't help any that our guide didn't speak English and showed little interest in finding wildlife. Thank goodness our driver, Oliver, could interpret for him.

We also had a coffee and chocolate tour that proved to be quite interesting.

In the end, the highlight of the tour was the swim at Llanos de Cortez Waterfall.

But by far, the best part of this day was my morning walk on the beach at the hotel where I found many shorebirds, some of which we find here in Nipissing District - Green Heron, Spotted Sandpiper and Semipalmated Plover. Other birds I saw that morning were Tricolored Herons, Great Egrets, Great-tailed Grackles and the noisy Great Kiskadee.

### **November 26, Day 2:**

I had no tours booked and so spent the day exploring the resort, the beach area of the estuary next to the resort, and along the streets from the resort towards the town of Tamarindo.

I found many lifers and each day I was amazed by the diversity of wildlife found around the resort. The resort was incredible. (Photo from their website below.) The staff were friendly, the resort and grounds were spotless and the rooms were clean and comfortable. The coffee was amazing and the food was tasty, with the buffets providing much variety. The only negative thing about the resort was that it was out of the way from the main roads to get to the various day tour locations.





Along the beach, I saw Collared Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones, Brown Pelicans and Royal Terns, to name a few. In the tree tops at the resort, I saw Orange-chinned Parakeets (photo at left) squabbling and chattering nosily with Hoffman's Woodpeckers that were flying around the palm trees carving out new nesting sites. A Common Black Hawk visited daily, hanging out around the pool looking

for opportunities for a free meal. I saw many hummingbirds, like the Plain-capped Star-throat, gathering nectar from the various plants. My favourite birds around the resort were the Rufous-naped Wrens and the vibrant yellow and black Streaked-backed Orioles (at heading).

### **November 27, Day 3:**

I had an amazing day with an early morning bird watching tour to Hacienda El Roble & Adventure Centre where people can ATV, zipline, horseback ride and bird watch.

The ranch was massive with a freshwater lagoon where we saw many shorebirds. During the 2 1/2 hour walk along the trails composed of grassland, forest and wetland, we found 50 species of birds.

We found birds like the Common Pauraque sleeping in the trees near the parking lot. Along the fields, we saw Scissor-tailed Flycatchers sitting on fence posts and Gray Hawks hunting over the fields. As we neared the forest, we saw a Squirrel Cuckoo and Black-headed Trogons, and as we neared the lagoon, we got a thrill

when the air erupted with a flock of 100+ Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Limpkins, Bare-throated Tiger-Herons, Little Blue Herons (photo of one at right) and Tricolored Herons, to name a few. And if that wasn't enough, we saw a Wood Stork and Crested Caracara fly over and flocks of Southern Lapwings and Black-necked Stilts wading in the shallow waters along with many other birds.

Of all the tours on my first trip to Costa Rica, this was one of my favourites. Our guide, Juan Carlos Orozco Mora, was amazing at identifying birds just from songs and calls.



After a delicious lunch, we headed back to the resort where I took a break for the afternoon before heading out around the resort for a couple of hours before sunset to search for and photograph more birds and wildlife.

#### **November 28, Day 4:**

It was another busy day with a morning boat tour to the Tamarindo Estuary in the Las Baulas National Marine Park to see monkeys, crocodiles and birds. Much to my surprise and delight, my guide from the day before was the guide for this tour. Herons were everywhere – Yellow-crowned Night Herons, Green Herons, Tricolored Herons, Little Blue Herons, as well as Snowy and Great Egrets.



Since Juan Carlos knew my main focus was birds, when we got off the boat to find monkeys in the mangrove forest, he went out of his way to find me a Long-tailed Manikin (photo at left).

Again during the afternoon, I spent time searching around the resort and found adult and juvenile Yellow-headed Caracaras and American Oystercatchers, as well as many other species.

### **November 29, Day 5:**

I had a tour booked to Palo Verde National Park with its many species – Rosetta Spoonbills, Jabiru and Boat-tailed Herons to name some - but it ended

up being cancelled at the last minute. Although I was disappointed, I spent the day searching for birds in the streets, around the resorts and in the mangrove forests. I did not find many new birds, but I did find a Banded Wren (at right) and my first Prothonotary Warbler, hanging out with a Yellow Warbler and enjoying a bird bath.



### **November 30, Day 6:**

On my last full day, I was up early and off on a long four-hour drive to Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve. It is a renowned conservation area located near the town of Monteverde not far from Arenal. It is a “lush expanse of wilderness celebrated for its high biodiversity and the striking beauty of its cloud-

shrouded forests. At elevations ranging from 4,000 to 5,400 feet, it houses a complex ecosystem where endless varieties of flora and fauna thrive, many of which are endemic and rare.”

Upon arriving, we were greeted by our guide, Dennis Fernaindec, who took us through the reserve and helped us find and identify birds, while also explaining the flora and park history. Our quest was to find and see a Resplendent Quetzal – and we were fortunate to find it! (Photo at right.) We also found the Costa Rican Warbler (or Black-eared Warbler), Bananaquit and Spotted Woodcreeper. Near the entrance of the reserve there was a cafe and souvenir shop where a hummingbird garden was set up. Here we had a bite to eat while we enjoyed watching several species of hummingbirds - the Green Hermit, Green-crowned Brilliant, Violet Sabrewing (at end of article), Purple-throated Mountain-gem and others.



We really could have used more time to explore the park better, but it was still a great tour!

### **December 1, last day:**

Because my shuttle bus back to Liberian airport was not due to pick me up until 9:30 in the morning, this gave me a few hours to hike around the resort and streets looking to find a new bird to add to my life list. I met with success near the pool where I found a pair of White-fronted Parrots perched in a dead tree.

As many feel on the last day of a wonderful vacation, I didn't want to leave, but knew that I would be returning to Costa Rica again! **(Note: And Garry did**



return not long afterwards, in March 2024. He is also going again in March 2025, this time on a photography bird tour with 12 others.)

**Conclusion:**

My trip overall was amazing even though there were some tours I couldn't go on because most required a minimum of 2 to 4 people and I was by myself. So unless on these occasions someone else signed up for the tour, I was out of luck.

I saw a total of 97 species, with 79 being lifers. I highly recommend that if you want to go on a birding vacation, you make Costa Rica a destination!

Upon returning to Canada I put together a YouTube video of my trip to Costa Rica:  
<https://youtu.be/TRH9whVNidY>



*Violet Sabrewing*