

Costa Rica – 12-22 March 2010



For Iowa State University's 2010 Spring Break, Jim Pease and I took a group of 14 students to Costa Rica as part of a study abroad course entitled "Natural History of Costa Rica". The 11-day trip would include time in San Jose and extended stops in four different life zones scattered throughout the country. Overall, we had a great trip and managed to tally 15 species of mammals, 283 species of birds, 27 species of reptiles and amphibians, and an excellent diversity of plants and insects.

12 March

We gathered at Science Hall II on the Iowa State University campus in Ames at 10:15 a.m., caravanned to Des Moines, and departed the Des Moines airport at 1:30 p.m. We arrived in Dallas at 3:25 p.m. and departed at 7:30 p.m. after a 3-hour delay. After a long day in airports, we finally arrived in San Jose at 11 p.m., and then transferred to our hotel by 12:10 a.m. There was a major mix-up with our reservation (it was lost), and there were no rooms available, so we finally found another motel and were in bed by 1:30 a.m. This was not an ideal start to the trip!

13 March

We met at 7 a.m. for breakfast at Hotel One [fresh fruit, toast, cas, coffee]. Afterwards we took a short hike downtown to visit Parque Central and the market. We were back at the hotel by



10:15 a.m., met Franklin, and were on the road by 10:30 a.m. We left San Jose, skirted Cartago, and headed for Savegre, stopping along the highway for lunch [chicken and rice, beans, fruit juice]. We arrived at Savegre Lodge at 1:15 p.m. after seeing a Swallow-tailed Kite and several Sooty Thrushes along the roadside.

We met at 2 p.m. for a short hike to the waterfall south of the lodge. Despite overcast skies and intermittent rain showers, we enjoyed a male Resplendent Quetzal at a nest site plus many other birds – Band-tailed Pigeon, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Collared Redstart, Flame-colored Tanager, Slaty Flowerpiercer, and of course many hummingbirds at the lodge feeders. We returned to the lodge at 5 p.m., took a short break, and then met for dinner at 6:30 p.m. [buffet with trout cakes, calamari, beef on rice, baked potato, salad bar, and dessert]. After dinner we held a short meeting and adjourned for bed by 8 p.m. [mostly cloudy, temperature 64-87°F, wind light and variable, light rain in afternoon]

14 March

We spent the entire day hiking the trails at Savegre. Some of us were up early to walk the lodge grounds before breakfast and saw many of the common birds plus a Violet Sabrewing and Stripe-tailed Hummingbird at the feeders. We met at 7 a.m. for breakfast [buffet with eggs, rice, cheese tortillas, fresh fruit, and juice] and then met our guide, Marino, at 8 a.m. After a short discussion, Marino decided we would drive up to Los Robles and spend our time hiking in the higher



ele

vati on forest. It was a wise choice. On the way up the mountain we saw Black Guan and many other common forest birds. At the top we hiked the undisturbed forest and saw a flyover Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Spotted Wood-Quail, nesting Emerald Toucanet, Green-fronted Lancebill, Collared Trogon, Ruddy Treerunner, Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Ochraceous Pewee, Black-



capped and Golden-bellied flycatchers, nesting Silvery-throated Jays, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Golden-winged, Flame-throated, and Black-cheeked warblers, Wrenthrush, and Yellow-thighed and Large-footed finches. A real highlight was seeing a total of 11 Resplendent Quetzals for the day, including 3 adult males in view at once!

We met for lunch at noon [buffet with chicken, trout, rice, mixed vegetables, fresh fruit, and juice] and then split up for the afternoon. Most of the group took a one hour horseback ride to Los Robles and back while others hiked in the nearby forest. Some of the birds we saw included Osprey, Masked Water-Tyrant, and Silver-throated Tanager. After a long day of hiking in the mountains, dinner [buffet with trout, a steak casserole, rice, green beans, and dessert] was a welcome relief. After dinner we held a short group meeting and adjourned by 8 p.m. [partly cloudy, temperature 60-78°F, wind light and variable]



15 March



We awoke by 6 a.m. to walk the lodge grounds before breakfast at 7 a.m. [buffet with rice, eggs, rolls, toast, and fresh fruit]. After breakfast we hiked south down the valley towards the lower waterfall.

Unfortunately, we discovered that a new trout rearing facility with many cement ponds is being constructed in the middle of the old trail, just a few meters from the site of a quetzal nest in 2004! The area was posted private property and with our limited time we were unable to access the waterfall, much to the chagrin of the class. We did see American Dipper, Masked Water-Tyrant, Beryl-spangled Tanager, and Green Spiny Lizard on our hike. We returned to Savegre, packed the bus, and departed for La Selva at 10:15

a.m. We climbed out of the valley and turned west on the main highway to make a quick stop in páramo habitat. Most of the group went on a short, but steep (!), hike in the scrubby habitat at 10,400' where we saw Volcano Hummingbird, Timberline Wren, and Volcano Junco, but little else. At 11:30 a.m. we left and stopped for lunch at a small café outside Cartago (I had chicken with rice and beans) and then stopped at a supermarket for coffee and other souvenirs. We continued past Cartago, skirted San Jose, and drove north through Braulio Carillo National Park. Soon after we left the park we stopped for sodas and then continued on to La Selva. Along the

way Franklin spotted a Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth and we enjoyed looks at White-tailed Kite, Northern Jacana, Pale-vented Pigeon, Keel-billed Toucan, and a colony of nesting Montezuma Oropendolas before arriving at La Selva at 5 p.m.

The La Selva welcoming committee consisted of Great Curassow, Crested Guan, Snowy Cotinga, and many other birds near the main lodge plus a calling Great Tinamou behind our cabin. After checking the group into their cabins we met for dinner at 6 p.m. [rice, a beef onion soup, mixed veggies, salad bar, and juice] and joined more than 120 people in the packed dining hall! We then went for a night hike to the swamp across the river. On our hike we saw a Central American Bullfrog, several other frogs, and a Reticulated Crowned Snake. We held a short group meeting afterwards and then adjourned at 8:30 p.m. [temperature 76-90°F, winds light and variable, partly to mostly cloudy]



16 March



We spent the entire day at La Selva Biological Station. Several of us hiked the main station grounds before breakfast and saw both Hoffmann's Two-toed and Brown-throated Three-toed sloths, a River Otter, and many birds including a pair of Gray-headed Kites. We met for breakfast at 7 a.m. [rice, eggs, meat or cheese roll, fruit, juice, and coffee] and then met two guides for a guided morning walk. We split the class in half (8 per

group) and hiked until 11:30 a.m. My group had an excellent hike and saw 4 species of snakes (a yellow Eyelash Viper was the highlight), Central American Bullfrog, Sungrebe, Olive-throated Parakeet, White-crowned Parrot, Long-tailed Hermit, Violet-crowned Woodnymph, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, 3 species of toucans, Rufous and Broad-billed motmots, White-collared manakin, Band-backed Wren, and Buff-rumped Warbler.





At noon we met for lunch [chicken with rice and beans, baked or sweet potato, and a cookie-like cake for dessert] and then adjourned for a short break. We met again at 1 p.m. for an afternoon hike to the arboretum and saw Semiplumbeous Hawk, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Green Honeycreeper, Black-cowled Oriole, and Scarlet-rumped Cacique. A highlight was watching a courting pair of Slaty-tailed Trogons courting and displaying at close range. We returned to our cabins at 3:45 p.m., just in time to pack for a short drive to view a nesting pair of Great

Green Macaws. The macaws were using an old pasture just north of La Selva property, and other birders were watching the pair when we arrived at 4:15 p.m. We viewed the birds from a distance for about a half hour and then returned to our cabins. At 6 p.m. we met for dinner [baked fish, mustard greens, carrot soup, raspberry/strawberry cake for dessert] and then went for a short night hike along the river past the soccer field. We managed to find a roosting Slaty-tailed Trogon plus Noble's Rain Frog, a vine snake, many interesting spiders and other insects, and a calling Mottled Owl. We had a short group meeting until 8:15 p.m. and then adjourned for the night. [temperature 78-88°F, partly cloudy, winds light and variable]



17 March



This was our last morning at La Selva and some of us met at 5:45 a.m. on the main station grounds. We enjoyed close looks at Great Curassow, Crested Guan, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift, Great and Western Slaty- antshrikes, Snowy Cotinga, Long-tailed Tyrant, Black-crowned Tityra, and Black-headed Saltator. Breakfast [egg omelette, rice, fresh fruit, banana bread, and juice] was at 7 a.m., followed by a short hike across the river on one of the main trails. The woods were quiet but we still managed to see Tiny Hawk, Rufous-winged

Woodpecker, and Black-throated Wren. We were back in camp by 10 a.m., packed, and gathered sack lunches prepared by the staff for our long drive to Palo Verde National Park. Along the long entrance road to the station we spotted a cooperative Laughing Falcon and saw several Double-striped Thick-knees, including one bird on a nest and another with a brood. We arrived at Palo Verde National Park at 5:10 p.m., checked into our rooms, and then met at 6 p.m. for dinner [rice and beans, fresh salad, banana bread for dessert]. [partly cloudy, temperature 82-95°F, wind variable then west 15-25 mph in evening]



18 March



Some of us hiked the station grounds before breakfast and saw many of the common dry forest birds, including fantastic looks at Great Curassows. We met for breakfast [scrambled eggs, rice with beans, fresh fruit, pancakes] at 6:30 a.m. and then met Rafael Ramirez, station naturalist, for a guided hike the rest of the morning. We began by hiking across the dried lagoon to a small area of water packed with waterbirds – Muscovy Duck, hundreds of herons and egrets that included 2

Jabirus, a Northern Harrier, and several Black-necked Stilts. However, the real highlight was the discovery of a male Comb Duck, apparently the first record of this species for Costa Rica! We then continued north along the lagoon edge to the mango grove where we found cooperative troupes of Golden-mantled Howler Monkeys and White-faced Capuchins, plus White-nosed Coati and Collared Peccary. From here we circled back east and climbed the valley above the station where we saw Thicket Tinamou, Crested Guan, Laughing Falcon, Common Pauraque, White-fronted and Yellow-naped parrots, Streaked Flycatcher, and White-lored Gnatcatcher. We returned to our cabins by noon and immediately met for lunch [rice with chicken, beans, fresh fruit].



After lunch we took a long siesta because of the mid-day heat before meeting at 3 p.m. for an afternoon hike to Mirador la Roca. The view of the wetland and Tempisque River was excellent, and the breeze was a welcome relief from the heat. After enjoying the view for half an hour we continued east up the road to the natural spring (now nearly dry) and saw Great Black-Hawk, Black-headed Trogon, and Streak-backed Oriole. We returned to the station by 6 p.m., just in time for dinner [ribs, rice and beans, (starchy

food like French fry), salad, and pineapple tarts for dessert]. [mostly clear, temperature 84-96°F, wind west 10-20 mph]



19 March

Some of us met at 5:45 a.m. for a short hike to the remaining water in the middle of the lagoon, where we refound the Comb Duck, saw many other waterbirds including Peregrine Falcon and Sora, and enjoyed close looks at >40 American Crocodiles loafing in the shallow water. We returned to the station for breakfast [rice and beans, sliced ham, toast, and fresh fruit] before re-grouping at 7 a.m. for our morning hike. We hiked up above the camp, then north to the mango grove, and then back along the edge of the lagoon. Some of the wildlife seen on this hike included large troupes of Golden-mantled Howler Monkeys and White-faced Capuchins, Collared Peccary, Central American Agouti, White-nosed Coati, Thicket Tinamou, two pairs of Scarlet Macaws, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Long-tailed Manakin, and Yellow-throated Vireo. We returned to camp by 10 a.m. for a siesta to pack and shower before lunch [grilled chicken, beans and rice, and fresh fruit].



We left Palo Verde National Park at 12:45 p.m. and headed towards Carara. We ate dinner [choice of chicken, fish, or shrimp platter with rice, beans, and salad] at a local restaurant south of Carara and returned to the hotel by 7:45 p.m. [partly cloudy, temperature 80-96°F, wind WSW 15-25 mph and gusty]

20 March

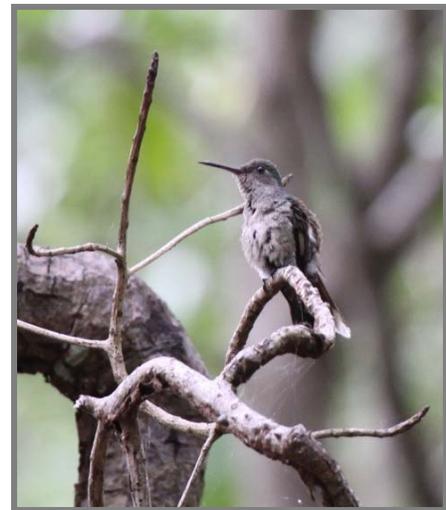
Some of us awoke early to hike the road north of the hotel where we saw Gray-necked Wood-Rail, many Scarlet Macaws, Long-tailed Woodcreeper, Golden-naped Woodpecker,



Brown-hooded Parrot, White-winged Becard, and Swainson's Thrush. Breakfast [scrambled eggs, rice, toast, fresh fruit, and juice or coffee] was at 7 a.m. and we left at 7:45 a.m. for a morning hike in Carara National Park. We first obtained park passes (\$10 per person for a 1-day visit) and then parked at the trailhead just east of the bridge across the Tarcoles River. From here we hiked generally north to the lagoons, returning to the trailhead by 10:45 a.m. because of the intense heat. Along the hike we saw Spectacled Caiman, Black and Green Poison Dart-frog, and many birds including Boat-billed Heron, Hook-billed Kite, Dusky Antbird, Dot-winged Antwren, Barred Antshrike, Blue-crowned Motmot, Baird's Trogon,

Tropical Gnatcatcher, and Cherrie's Tanager. We were back at the hotel by 11 a.m. for a short siesta and swim before lunch at noon [shrimp and fish soup, choice of fish, chicken/beef, or vegetarian, rice and beans, mashed potatoes, plantains, and freshly squeezed fruit juice].

After lunch we rested for another hour to avoid the mid-day heat, and then went for a 2-hour boat ride on the Tarcoles River (\$25 per person). The trip was excellent and we saw many birds including Boat-billed Heron, nesting Mangrove Black-Hawks, Yellow-headed Caracara, Laughing Falcon, a pair of Double-striped Thick-knees with a chick, Black-bellied Plover, Willet, Whimbrel, American Pygmy Kingfisher, and a cooperative perched Mangrove Hummingbird. We then returned to the hotel for a short break before walking to a small restaurant next door for dinner [choice of fish, chicken, beef, or pork chop with potatoes, rice and beans, salad, and fresh fruit for dessert]. [partly to mostly cloudy, temperature 80-95°F, wind light]



21 March

A couple of us walked the road north of the hotel beginning at 5:45 a.m. and saw Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Green-breasted Mango, an American Pygmy Kingfisher, and White-throated Magpie-Jay. We returned by 7 a.m. for breakfast [scrambled eggs, rice, toast, fresh fruit, and juice or coffee]. After breakfast we took our last group hike along the road north of the hotel, ending near the mouth of the Tarcoles River. We saw many of the common birds, including extended looks at several Green-breasted Mangos, and were back at the hotel by 9:30 a.m. This



left an hour and a half for a last swim and time to pack before we checked out and left at 11 a.m. We took the new highway to San Jose, arriving on the outskirts of town in less than an hour (as opposed to the 2+ hour drive in previous years)! We stopped at a mall for lunch, and finally arrived at Hotel Rincon de San Jose at 1:30 p.m. We then split up and walked downtown to shop for souvenirs before dinner. We ate our final dinner at a nice restaurant nearby and the food was excellent! [partly to mostly cloudy, temperature 82-95°F at Carara, cooling to the 70s in San Jose, winds west 5-10 mph]

22 March

This was our travel day home, so we met at 7 a.m. for a short ride to the airport, where we arrived at 7:30 a.m. despite heavy traffic. We said good-bye to Franklin (our driver) and boarded our flight to Dallas, where we arrived at 2:30 p.m. We spent almost 2 hours in customs and immigration and finally boarded our flight to Des Moines at 7:30 p.m., arriving there at 9:30 p.m. An ISU shuttle was waiting for us at the airport and transported us to campus, where we arrived at 10:30 p.m. after a very long travel day.

Mammals

Common Opossum
Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth
Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth
Bat sp.
White-faced Capuchin
Golden-mantled Howler Monkey
Red-tailed Squirrel
Variegated Squirrel
Central American Agouti
Eastern Cottontail
Northern Raccoon
White-nosed Coati
Neotropical River Otter
Collared Peccary
White-tailed Deer

Birds

Great Tinamou
Thicket Tinamou
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck
Comb Duck
Muscovy Duck
Blue-winged Teal
Crested Guan
Black Guan
Great Curassow
Spotted Wood-Quail
Brown Pelican
Neotropic Cormorant
Anhinga
Magnificent Frigatebird
Fasciated Tiger-Heron
Bare-throated Tiger-Heron
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Boat-billed Heron
White Ibis
Glossy Ibis
Roseate Spoonbill
Jabiru
Wood Stork
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Gray-headed Kite
Hook-billed Kite
Swallow-tailed Kite
White-tailed Kite
Plumbeous Kite
Northern Harrier
Tiny Hawk
Semiplumbeous Hawk
Mangrove Black-Hawk

Great Black-Hawk
Roadside Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Gray Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Ornate Hawk-Eagle
Crested Caracara
Yellow-headed Caracara
Laughing Falcon
American Kestrel
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Gray-necked Wood-Rail
Sora
Sungrebe
Limpkin
Double-striped Thick-knee
Black-bellied Plover
Killdeer
Black-necked Stilt
Northern Jacana
Spotted Sandpiper
Willet
Whimbrel
Ruddy Turnstone
Least Sandpiper
Laughing Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Royal Tern
Elegant Tern
Rock Pigeon
Pale-vented Pigeon
Red-billed Pigeon
Band-tailed Pigeon
Ruddy Pigeon
Short-billed Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
White-winged Dove
Inca Dove
Common Ground-Dove
Ruddy Ground-Dove
White-tipped Dove
Crimson-fronted Parakeet
Olive-throated Parakeet
Orange-fronted Parakeet
Great Green Macaw
Scarlet Macaw
Orange-chinned Parakeet
Brown-hooded Parrot
White-crowned Parrot
White-fronted Parrot
Mealy Parrot
Yellow-naped Parrot
Squirrel Cuckoo
Mangrove Cuckoo
Groove-billed Ani
Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl
Mottled Owl
Lesser Nighthawk
Common Pauraque

White-tailed Nightjar
Black Swift
Chestnut-collared Swift
White-collared Swift
Chimney Swift
Vaux's Swift
Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift
Long-tailed Hermit
Green-fronted Lancebill
Violet Sabrewing
Green Violetear
Green-breasted Mango
Violet-crowned Woodnymph
Mangrove Hummingbird
Rufous-tailed Hummingbird
Stripe-tailed Hummingbird
Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer
White-throated Mountain-gem
Magnificent Hummingbird
Volcano Hummingbird
Scintillant Hummingbird
Slaty-tailed Trogon
Black-headed Trogon
Baird's Trogon
Violaceous Trogon
Black-throated Trogon
Collared Trogon
Resplendent Quetzal
Blue-crowned Motmot
Rufous Motmot
Broad-billed Motmot
Turquoise-browed Motmot
Amazon Kingfisher
Green Kingfisher
American Pygmy Kingfisher
Rufous-tailed Jacamar
Emerald Toucanet
Collared Aracari
Keel-billed Toucan
Chestnut-mandibled Toucan
Acorn Woodpecker
Golden-naped Woodpecker
Black-cheeked Woodpecker
Hoffmann's Woodpecker
Rufous-winged Woodpecker
Golden-olive Woodpecker
Lineated Woodpecker
Pale-billed Woodpecker
Ruddy Treerunner
Plain-brown Woodcreeper
Long-tailed Woodcreeper
Northern Barred-Woodcreeper
Cocoa Woodcreeper
Spotted Woodcreeper
Streak-headed Woodcreeper
Spot-crowned Woodcreeper
Great Antshrike
Barred Antshrike
Western Slaty-Antshrike
Dot-winged Antwren

Dusky Antbird
Silvery-fronted Tapaculo
Yellow-bellied Elaenia
Mountain Elaenia
Ochre-bellied Flycatcher
Common Tody-Flycatcher
Tufted Flycatcher
Dark Pewee
Ochraceous Pewee
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Tropical Pewee
Empidonax sp.
Yellowish Flycatcher
Black-capped Flycatcher
Black Phoebe
Masked Water-Tyrant
Long-tailed Tyrant
Dusky-capped Flycatcher
Panama Flycatcher
Nutting's Flycatcher
Brown-crested Flycatcher
Great Kiskadee
Boat-billed Flycatcher
Social Flycatcher
Gray-capped Flycatcher
Golden-bellied Flycatcher
Streaked Flycatcher
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher
Tropical Kingbird
Western Kingbird
White-winged Becard
Rose-throated Becard
Masked Tityra
Black-crowned Tityra
Snowy Cotinga
White-collared Manakin
Long-tailed Manakin
Yellow-throated Vireo
Yellow-winged Vireo
Brown-capped Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Lesser Greenlet
White-throated Magpie-Jay
Brown Jay
Silvery-throated Jay
Gray-breasted Martin
Mangrove Swallow
Blue-and-white Swallow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Southern Rough-winged Swallow
Bank Swallow

Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow
Band-backed Wren
Rufous-naped Wren
Black-throated Wren
Stripe-breasted Wren
House Wren
Timberline Wren
Gray-breasted Wood-Wren
American Dipper
White-lored Gnatcatcher
Tropical Gnatcatcher
Black-faced Solitaire
Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush
Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush
Swainson's Thrush
Wood Thrush
Sooty Thrush
Mountain Thrush
Clay-colored Thrush
Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher
Golden-winged Warbler
Flame-throated Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Northern Waterthrush
Louisiana Waterthrush
Wilson's Warbler
Collared Redstart
Black-cheeked Warbler
Buff-rumped Warbler
Wrenthrush
Bananaquit
Sooty-capped Bush-Tanager
Passerini's Tanager
Cherrie's Tanager
Blue-gray Tanager
Palm Tanager
Spangle-cheeked Tanager
Silver-throated Tanager
Green Honeycreeper
Red-legged Honeycreeper
Grayish Saltator
Buff-throated Saltator
Black-headed Saltator
Blue-black Grassquit
Variable Seedeater
White-collared Seedeater
Yellow-faced Grassquit
Slaty Flowerpiercer

Yellow-thighed Finch
Large-footed Finch
Rufous-collared Sparrow
Volcano Junco
Summer Tanager
Flame-colored Tanager
Red-winged Blackbird
Melodious Blackbird
Great-tailed Grackle
Bronzed Cowbird
Black-cowled Oriole
Streak-backed Oriole
Baltimore Oriole
Yellow-billed Cacique
Scarlet-rumped Cacique
Montezuma Oropendola
Olive-backed Euphonia
Yellow-bellied Siskin
House Sparrow

Reptiles and Amphibians

Smooth-skinned Toad
Giant Toad
Strawberry Poison-dart Frog
Green and Black Poison-dart Frog
Common Rain Frog
Nobles Rain Frog
Spectacled Caiman
American Crocodile
House Gecko
Yellow-headed Gecko
Common Basilisk
Green Basilisk
Brown Basilisk
Five-keeled Spiny-tailed Iguana
Black Spiny-tailed Iguana
Green Iguana
Green Spiny Lizard
Central American Whip-tailed Lizard
Carpenter Anole
Black Wood Turtle
Box Turtle sp.
Eyelash Viper
Green Parrot Snake
Satiny Parrot Snake
Reticulated Crowned Snake
Green Vine Snake
Central American Bullfrog



Map available at http://www.wildland.com/trips/centralamerica/cos_map.aspx

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