

Esquinas Lodge, Golfito, Costa Rica

11-12 July 2009



Red-eyed Tree-Frogs

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General

This was a short weekend trip with the purpose of seeing two specialties of southeastern Costa Rica; the endemic Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager and the near-endemic Spot-crowned Euphonia. I stayed for one night (1 ½ days) at Esquinas Lodge, which is near Golfito. I was lucky to get company from my Costa Rican friends and colleagues Jo Lindstad and Priscilla Blanco.

The two target birds were bagged rather easily and we saw a good selection of other restricted range species. Esquinas Lodge proved to be a very comfortable place and can be much recommended. It is settled in a foothill valley with fairly extensive primary forest in direct proximity.



Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager...



... and Spot-crowned Euphonia

Besides the birds, it was also memorable in terms of frogs, and I finally saw my first Red-eyed Tree Frog, one of the key symbols of Costa Rica.



Itinerary

11/7



Approaching Golfito airport



Peering over the shoulder of the pilot

I took the 6.00 Sansa flight from San Jose to Golfito. It was a small 12 passenger aircraft and we had a stunningly beautiful flight across the mountains and coastline. If it was the scenery that made the pilot snapping a lot of dude photos, or if it was his first time, I'd rather not speculate about. Anyway, the flight went very well and we touched down at the tiny airstrip in Golfito 50 minutes later. Esquinas Lodge had arranged a taxi to take me the rough 25 minutes drive to the lodge. When arriving I directly met up with Jo and Priscilla who had driven from San Jose the day before.

We had a quick breakfast during which time a Marbled Wood-Quail burst into song not far away. After breakfast, we set out in search of Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager up along Ocelot Trail. The forest was by 8.30 rather quiet, but up on the ridge we stirred up some activity and soon lay our eyes on the target endemic. We hit several flocks on the descent and all in all it was rather birdy. We then spent some time around the lodge itself as well as had lunch. With the Euphonia still missing, I spent the major part of the afternoon walking along the access road and eventually turned up a male Spot-crowned Euphonia, even showing the spots. Around 16.00 Jo and I walked along the Waterfall Trail and also the Bird Trail, but bird activity was fairly slow. Instead I staked out the rocking chair on the veranda, drink in hand.

Soon after dusk I checked the tiny pond and finally saw a pair of Red-eyed Tree Frogs, one of the trip highlights. With dinner and drinks downed, we set off for a night walk in search of reptiles along the streambed near the Bird Trail. Two hours later we had seen a good selection of frogs (best being the tiny Glass Frogs with their eggs on the banana-leaf where it was even possible to see the soon-to-be froglets moving around). In spite of significant effort we did not manage to turn up the wanted Fer-de-lance snake. The biggest surprise was a 1.5 meter Caiman that was suddenly discovered one meter away from us when we waded through the stream!

12/7

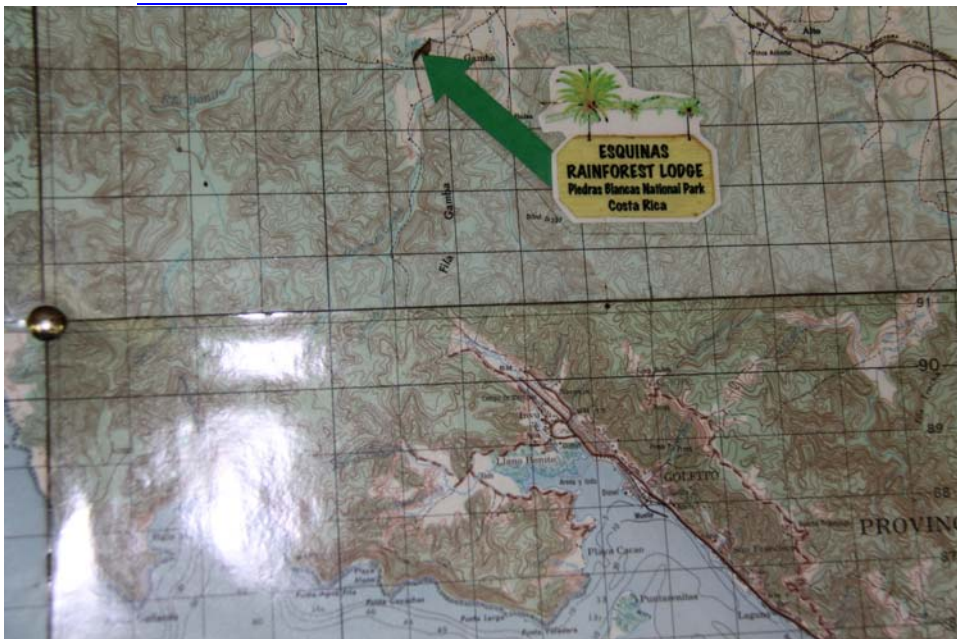
We were up at the crack of dawn at 5.00 and birded around the lodge until it got light enough to hit the Bird Trail in search of Wood-Quails. Unfortunately I scored nada, so I returned to the lodge for a quick breakfast. Soon after, we set off along the Waterfall Trail in search of White-throated Shrike-Tanager. None was seen, but we had a nice walk along the trails and stream-beds, although very quiet. Back at the lodge by late morning, we refreshed and I decided to give it another try so I made the same trail another time, but this time only half way round. I did not add any big surprises, and then it was time for lunch and packing up by 12.30. Before the taxi arrived he birded along the access road until 14.20 when I left for Golfito airport. Jo and Priscilla stayed behind for another morning.

Weather

In spite of being the wet season, we were treated to excellent weather. It was hot and humid, with only a light and quick shower in the early evening.

Logistics

Esquinas Lodge can be booked through internet www.esquinaslodge.com. For domestic flights I used Sansa airlines at www.sansa.com.



Topographic map of the general area with Golfito just below the centre.

Site descriptions

Esquinas Lodge

The lodge is situated at the edge of primary foothill rainforest. There are several well maintained trails in the area, many of them leading up and along the ridges some 100 meters above the valley. Birding along the access road and around the lodge itself was also very productive. Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager was rather frequently recorded inside the forest on several of the trails and was a member of almost all encountered mixed species flocks. Spot-crowned Euphonia is more of an open forest edge species and was seen along the access road and in the lodge garden itself. My third target bird, White-crested Coquette, is fairly rare and should not be counted on, and is reportedly more easily seen on the Osa Peninsula proper. Next time...



Frogs, everywhere...



...and they are making even more...



Birds

Great Tinamou, *Tinamus major*

A few heard and three flushed at Esquinas lodge area.

Brown Pelican, *Pelecanus occidentalis*

Two at Golfito.

Green Heron, *Butorides virescens*

Two at Esquinas lodge area.



Green Heron

Black Vulture, *Coragyps atratus*

A few at Esquinas lodge area.

Turkey Vulture, *Cathartes aura*

Several at Esquinas lodge area.

Roadside Hawk, *Buteo magnirostris*
 One at Golfito.

Black Hawk-Eagle, *Spizaetus tyrannus*
 One heard both days at Esquinas lodge area.

Barred Forest-Falcon, *Micrastur ruficollis*
 One heard at dawn at Esquinas lodge area.

Marbled Wood-Quail, *Odontophorus gujanensis*
 Two heard at Esquinas lodge area.

White-throated Crake, *Laterallus albigularis*
 Two or three heard in the pastures outside the Esquinas lodge area.

Gray-necked Wood-Rail, *Aramides cajanea*
 Three seen in the pastures outside the Esquinas lodge area.

Purple Gallinule, *Porphyrio martinica*
 One at Esquinas lodge area.

Northern Jacana, *Jacana spinosa*
 One at Esquinas lodge area.

Pale-vented Pigeon, *Patagioenas cayennensis*
 One at Golfito.

Short-billed Pigeon, *Patagioenas nigrirostris*
 Several at Esquinas lodge area and frequently heard throughout the day.

Ruddy Ground-Dove, *Columbina talpacoti*
 Several at Esquinas lodge area.

Blue Ground-Dove, *Claravis pretiosa*
 One at Esquinas lodge area.

Gray-chested Dove, *Leptotila cassini*
 Several at Esquinas lodge area.

Parakeet sp, *Aratinga* sp
 Four fly-over at Esquinas lodge area, either Scarlet-fronted or Brown-throated.

Orange-chinned Parakeet, *Brotogeris jugularis*
 Several at Golfito.

Brown-hooded Parrot, *Pionopsitta haematotis*
 Two at Esquinas lodge area.

Parrot sp, *Amazona* sp
 A few fly-over at Esquinas lodge area, either Red-lore or Mealy.

Squirrel Cuckoo, *Piaya cayana*
 Two at Esquinas lodge area.

White-collared Swift, *Streptoprocne zonaris*
 Large flocks seen several times at Esquinas lodge area.

Costa Rican Swift, *Chaetura fumosa*
 Three at Esquinas lodge area.

Bronzy Hermit, *Glaucis aenea*
 Two at Esquinas lodge area.

Long-billed Hermit, *Phaethornis longirostris*
 A few at Esquinas lodge area.

White-necked Jacobin, *Florisuga mellivora*
 A few at Esquinas lodge area.

Violet-headed Hummingbird, *Klais guimeti*
 One male seen several times at Esquinas lodge area.

Violet-crowned Woodnymph, *Thalurania colombica*
 A few females at Esquinas lodge area.

Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, *Amazilia tzacatl*
 Several at Esquinas lodge area, the most frequent hummer.

Charming Hummingbird, *Polyerata decora*
 One male at Esquinas lodge area.

Purple-crowned Fairy, *Heliothryx barroti*
 One at Esquinas lodge area.

Baird's Trogon, *Trogon bairdii*
 One female and two males at Esquinas lodge area.

Black-throated Trogon, *Trogon rufus*
 Three at Esquinas lodge area.

Green Kingfisher, *Chloroceryle Americana*
 One at Esquinas lodge area.

American Pygmy Kingfisher, *Chloroceryle aenea*
 One at Esquinas lodge area.

Rufous-tailed Jacamar, *Galbula ruficauda*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

White-whiskered Puffbird, *Malacoptila panamensis*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Fiery-billed Aracari, *Pteroglossus frantzii*

Four together in the early morning at Esquinas lodge area.



A group of Fiery-billed Aracaris

Black- (Chestnut-) mandibled Toucan, *Ramphastos ambiguus*

Several heard and seen at Esquinas lodge area.



Black-mandibled Toucan, sometimes, but doubtfully, split as Chestnut-mandibled

Golden-naped Woodpecker, *Melanerpes chrysauchen*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Red-crowned Woodpecker, *Melanerpes rubricapillus*

One at Esquinas lodge area and one at Golfito.

Rufous-winged Woodpecker, *Piculus simplex*

Two at Esquinas lodge area.

Plain Xenops, *Xenops minutus*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Striped Woodhaunter, *Hyloctistes subulatus*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner, *Automolus ochrolaemus*

Three at Esquinas lodge area.

Tawny-winged Woodcreeper, *Dendrocincla anabatina*

Two at Esquinas lodge area.

Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, *Glyphorhynchus spirurus*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Black-striped Woodcreeper, *Xiphorhynchus lachrymosus*

Two at Esquinas lodge area.

Streak-headed Woodcreeper, *Lepidocolaptes souleyetii*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Russet Antshrike, *Thamnistes anabatinus*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Dot-winged Antwren, *Microrhophias quixensis*

Five at Esquinas lodge area.

Chestnut-backed Antbird, *Myrmeciza exsul*

A few seen and a few heard at Esquinas lodge area.

Black-faced Antthrush, *Formicarius analis*

One seen and one heard at Esquinas lodge area.

Streak-chested Antpitta, *Hylopezus perspicillatus*

One heard at Esquinas lodge area.

Rufous Piha, *Lipaugus unirufus*

Three at Esquinas lodge area.



Rufous Piha

Turquoise Cotinga, *Cotinga ridgwayi*

One female on a dead tree outside the gate at Esquinas lodge area.

Orange-collared Manakin, *Manacus aurantiacus*

Two female-types at Esquinas lodge area.

Red-capped Manakin, *Pipra mentalis*

Several seen at Esquinas lodge area.

Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, *Mionectes oleaginosa*

Two at Esquinas lodge area.

Paltry Tyrannulet, *Zimmerius vilissimus*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Eye-ringed Flatbill, *Rhynchocyclus brevirostris*

Two at Esquinas lodge area.

Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher, *Myiobius sulphureipygius*

Several at Esquinas lodge area.

Bright-rumped Attila, *Attila spadiceus*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Great Kiskadee, *Pitangus sulphuratus*

A few outside Esquinas lodge area.

Boat-billed Flycatcher, *Megarynchus pitangua*

A few outside Esquinas lodge area.

Social Flycatcher, *Myiozetetes similis*

A few at Esquinas lodge area.

Gray-capped Flycatcher, *Myiozetetes granadensis*

Several at Esquinas lodge area.

Tropical Kingbird, *Tyrannus melancholicus*

A few outside Esquinas lodge area.

Black-crowned Tityra, *Tityra inquisitor*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Riverside Wren, *Thryothorus semibadius*

Several at Esquinas lodge area.

Plain Wren, *Thryothorus modestus*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

House Wren, *Troglodytes aedon*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Scaly-breasted Wren, *Microcerculus marginatus*

Two heard at Esquinas lodge area.

Clay-colored Robin, *Turdus grayi*

A few outside Esquinas lodge area.

Greenlet sp, *Hylophilus* sp

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Green Shrike-Vireo, *Vireolanius pulchellus*

One heard at Esquinas lodge area.

Buff-rumped Warbler, *Basileuterus fulvicauda*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Bananaquit, *Coereba flaveola*

Several at Esquinas lodge area.

White-shouldered Tanager, *Tachyphonus luctuosus*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager, *Habia atrimaxillaris*

Many encounters were made of this specialty at Esquinas lodge area, probably involving 15-30 birds. Most sightings were in the primary forest on the slopes along Waterfall and Ocelot Trails.

Cherrie's Tanager, *Ramphocelus costaricensis*

Many at Esquinas lodge area.

Blue-gray Tanager, *Thraupis episcopus*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Palm Tanager, *Thraupis palmarum*

A few at Esquinas lodge area.

Spot-crowned Euphonia, *Euphonia imitans*

This specialty of the area was seen several times at Esquinas lodge area. Mostly around the lodge and the access road, but also once just inside the forest. Female is easy to identify with chestnut forehead and belly/vent. The male was bright yellow all under and with good views the spots could be seen.

Bay-headed Tanager, *Tangara gyrola*

Several at Esquinas lodge area.

Golden-hooded Tanager, *Tangara larvata*

Several at Esquinas lodge area.

Green Honeycreeper, *Chlorophanes spiza*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Shining Honeycreeper, *Cyanerpes lucidus*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Variable Seedeater, *Sporophila corvine*

Several at Esquinas lodge area.

Thick-billed Seed-Finch, *Oryzoborus funereus*

A female was attending its nest at Esquinas lodge area.



Thick-billed Seed-Finch

Orange-billed Sparrow, *Arremon aurantiirostris*

Several at Esquinas lodge area.

Black-striped Sparrow, *Arremonops conirostris*

A few at Esquinas lodge area.

Buff-throated Saltator, *Saltator maximus*

Several at Esquinas lodge area.

Blue-black Grosbeak, *Cyanocompsa cyanoides*

One at Esquinas lodge area.

Great-tailed Grackle, *Quiscalus mexicanus*

Several at Golfito.

Mammals

Central American Squirrel Monkey, *Saimiri oerstedii*
Two at the Esquinas Lodge.



Inside the bar...



Outside the bar...