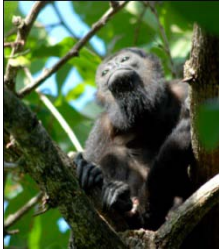


# HOW TO BECOME A BIRD WATCHER

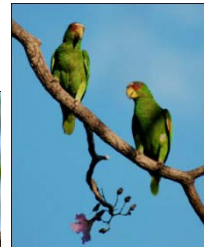
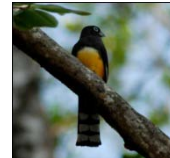
WRITTEN BY KAMILLE & LARS FRIIS FROM DENMARK

In 2009 we visited Costa Rica and Lagarta Lodge in Nosara for the first time. We were instantly caught by the beauty of the place and the prosperity of nature in this area. How lucky we were. We were compelled by the howling of the monkeys in the morning and seeing the families with little babies pass by our room and drop mangos on the roof. Looking at their faces and gestures is something that we never seem to tire of. We also

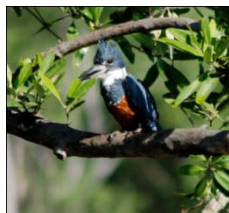


took to swimming in the ocean – soft and powerful at the same time. Sunshine every day, walking to Peladas or Guiones for a drink together with Sina, the hotel guide dog, and taking a dip on the way. It quickly became a rhythm. What a perfect way to spend a vacation.

At that point, we hardly knew anything about birds. However, it is hard to visit Lagarta and not notice them. Colorful in comparison with the birds in our home country and easy to observe close up, for instance from the terrace overlooking La Boca (the river mouth), the Pacific Ocean and the belt of green stretching as far as the eye can see. From there, you don't just look up at birds – you look down too – at Vultures floating by, Hummingbirds and many more.



Our dawning interest in birds was encouraged by Regina at Lagarta: She told us about her own favorites – and pointed out birds to us over breakfast, such as the Baltimore Oriole, and the Hoffmann Woodpecker. We went on a bird watching tour on the river and saw the Egrets, the Herons, Pelicans, Kingfishers and many more. We didn't know it then, but we were hooked. When we returned to Denmark, visiting the coast and forest had changed. We started to look up and follow the singing in the trees. We discovered that the area, where we had been walking the dogs for years without noticing, boasts a large number of nightingales! We now see hawks, buzzards, woodpeckers, wrens, robins and many more on our daily walks.



Within the last year, we have entered the Danish Bird Association and have acquired a number of books on Danish and European birds to learn more about our flying fellows. When we decided to return to Lagarta for our vacation, we knew, we wanted to take the bird watching to a new level. Within the 10 days we have been here, we have enjoyed the most beautiful walks along the coast, in the Biological Reserva and of course, sailing up the river.

We have seen more than **60 species**, among these



the Turquoise-browed Motmot,



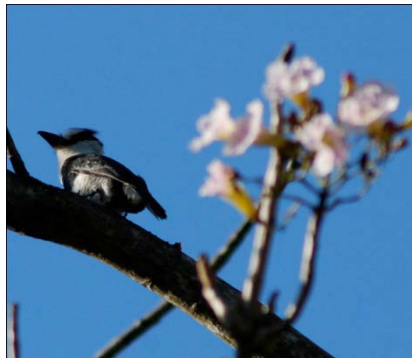
the Long-tailed Manakin,



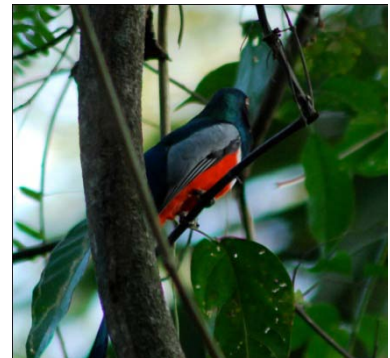
the Laughing Falcon,



the Black Mangrove Hawk,

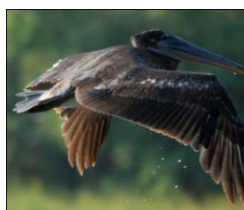
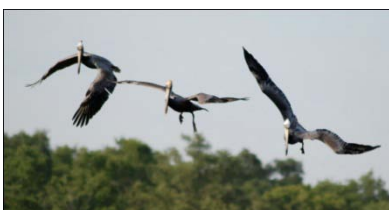


the White-necked Puffbird and



the Elegant Trogon.

One of our favorite pass times has been to go to the river mouth, La Boca, in the late afternoon, and watch the Brown Pelicans dive for fish in the sunset. Watching these dinosaur-like creatures' acrobatic moves – you can't help but smile and feel blessed to watch these heavy yet elegant birds in action.



While still pure amateurs, we did get a better lens for our camera – and it has worked wonders and helped us greatly in determining some of the birds that we have seen. We are grateful for having had our eyes open to the world of birds – and if it hadn't been for Costa Rica, Lagarta, and Regina we can't be sure it would have happened. Lagarta is an easy place to start and it is almost impossible not to get fascinated by the wealth of birdlife flying by.

All Photos: Kamille & Lars at Lagarta Lodge – February 27<sup>th</sup> – March 10<sup>th</sup> 2010.