



## July 2023 Newsletter

### Image of the Month



Recently, I went to the Arenal Observatory Lodge in search of the [Green-fronted Lancebill](#) which was the only remaining hummingbird in the area I live that I'd not yet been able to see. (Mission accomplished! Photo below.)

After photographing the Lancebill, I was pleasantly surprised to find three [Brown Violetears](#) hanging out in the gardens. This year saw a drop in reports of the Brown Violetear in the early months of the year, reasons unknown. So it was good to see several of them again. This individual kept perching on this flower, although would fly off if I tried to get close. I managed to get close enough and line up the shot to have a mostly clean background. I liked how the flowers in the background are far enough away that they are blurred out so as not to be a distraction while serving to frame the hummingbird in the shot.

### Featured Artist

I met Jean Bonilla by accident on an early morning expedition photographing Quetzals with my dad a couple years ago. He gave me some helpful pointers and we've kept in touch ever since. He is an international birding and herping (snakes) guide, and often who I turn to when I need help IDing a reptile. While he takes some fantastic macro photos of reptiles and amphibians, this picture of a Sword-billed Hummingbird (Colombia) caught my eye. It's on my Top 5 list of birds from South America I want to photograph some day.



The Sword-billed Hummingbird has the distinction of being the hummingbird with the longest bill in the world. And the bird with the longest bill relative to its body size too! The bill is 3.5 - 4.5 inches long (longer in females). With a total length of 6.75 - 8.75 inches, that means it's bill is as long or longer than its body. For comparison, the longest billed hummingbird in Costa Rica is the Green-fronted Lancebill I mentioned above and shown below. Its bill is about half of it's body length and only about 1.3 inches long.



I particularly like Jean's editing style. I'm a big fan of contrasty, dark and moody style wildlife images. Imagine if Rembrandt used Photoshop. Plus his travels as a guide take him to places with some really cool wildlife. Definitely worth a follow.

[Jean's Instagram](#)

**Fascinating Fact**

This year is an El Niño year, a natural weather pattern that happens in the Pacific Ocean. During El Niño, the ocean gets warmer than usual. This can disrupt the food chain in the ocean, which in turn affects wildlife, such as fish, seabirds, and marine mammals. As a result, many seagoing birds have to roam further afield to avoid starvation. That has led to some very unusual bird sightings in Costa Rica's Pacific waters this year!



Normally, in Costa Rica you will only consistently see Brown Boobys (right). Infrequently you might see a Blue-footed Booby (left). The Peruvian Booby (center) had only been seen once before in Costa Rica and further south. We saw one Peruvian and around 55 Blue-footed Boobys, but other birders visiting Isla Guyabos in the Gulf of Nicoya have seen as many as three and 80 respectively. That makes these individuals the northernmost Peruvian Boobys ever reported. They're pretty far from their home in the Humboldt Current off the coast of Peru.

El Niño years can have devastating effects on populations of seabirds. For example, a study of the population of Peruvian Boobys during an El Niño pattern in the 1980s found that their population dropped from 2.7 million to 700,000 breeding pairs in one year. These individuals showing up in Costa Rica aren't on vacation, they're fighting for their lives. Hope they make it.

## News

### Hummingbird Week

As this newsletter goes out, Hummingbird Week 2023 is coming to an end. As I mentioned last month, Cornell University launched their "Wonderful World of Hummingbirds" online course in July. To kick it off they encouraged people to post hummingbird pictures with the #HummingbirdWeek2023 and also featured seven hummingbird photographers from around the world. I was privileged to be featured on day two ([link](#)) and chose the image that was also last month's Image of the Month.

The course is now live and there's an early bird discount if you want to take it. I decided to send this email out a bit early, so you have time (until Friday evening) to upload your own hummingbird pictures with

the #HummingbirdWeek2023 hashtag and could win free access to the course. I'm about 1/3rd of the way through it already and have learned a bunch!

Wonderful World of  
Hummingbirds  
Course

## Rare Birds for Days

In addition to the two species of Boobys mentioned above, there have been a lot of rare bird sightings in the last month! As this month's newsletter is already getting quite long, instead of going into detail about all of them I will just share a link to the AOCR (Costa Rican Ornithological Association) Bird Alarm page, where rare bird sightings are shared. While El Niño doesn't directly affect the Caribbean there have been a bunch of recent sightings of rare ocean going birds on that coast as well.

AOCR Bird Alarm

### Tyler Wenzel Photography

La Fortuna, Costa Rica  
<https://tylerwenzel.com>

This email was sent to {{contact.EMAIL}}  
You've received it because you've subscribed to our newsletter.

[Unsubscribe](#)

