

La Selva Biological Station Trip Report

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July/August 2019



Silky Anteater (*Cyclopes didactylus*)

I spent seven nights at La Selva Biological Station in Costa Rica in late July/early August, looking for mammals and herps. I coordinated my visit with David and Arlene Karesh, who I met at CICRA Los Amigos Biological Station in Peru last December. La Selva has a large trail system, and most paths near the lodge are concrete. I found this to be annoying, and my feet hurt after a couple nights of walking. The dirt trails further from the lodge were poorly maintained and slippery. I spent most of my time walking at night on the CCL/CCR loop and STR trail.

Unlike other rainforest sites I have visited, La Selva is quite crowded with large student groups and a small number of researchers and tourists. However, I only rarely ran into other people on the trails at night.

Fer-de-lance was common, so I would recommend the use of rubber boots or snake guards as a precaution. That said, I don't think there are many



Sylvia's Treefrog (*Cruziohyla sylviae*)

records of bites. It would be difficult to miss an adult Fer-de-lance on the concrete paths, but immatures can be surprisingly inconspicuous.

My most notable mammal observations all happened within about two hours in the same morning. Silky Anteater was one of my top targets, and I spent many hours thermal-scoping the sub-canopy in the hopes of seeing one. This did not produce a Silky Anteater, but I did see a surprising number of Mexican Porcupines. I was getting tired of staring through the thermal scope when, on the fifth night, David texted me to say that he had found a Silky Anteater just above eye level at the lodge clearing! Luckily, I was in my room and got his text message. I rushed over to see the Silky Anteater curled in a ball in a vine tangle. It seemed very sensitive to white light, and would close its eyes and curl tighter whenever I shined one on it. After I switched to my red light, the Anteater started grooming and eventually moved slowly along the branches and vines. It is an amazing little creature. Perhaps they are less canopy-specific in Central America than in South America? That would explain why they are seen more frequently in Costa Rica (rarely) than in Amazonia (almost never).



Northern Naked-tailed Armadillo (*Cabassous centralis*)

After seeing the Silky Anteater, I walked the CCL trail. About 350 meters along the trail, I happened upon an armadillo noisily digging out a Bullet Ant nest. I watched from a safe distance, cautious to avoid the hordes of angry Bullet Ants. At first, I assumed that this was the “standard” Nine-banded Armadillo, which is quite common in the area. After about ten minutes, it left the nest and I was surprised to see that it was the “other” armadillo — the Northern Naked-tailed Armadillo! I never expected to see a species in this genus (its Southern relative spends 99.75% of the time underground according to one study). I jumped up, and (of course) broke my flash. I followed it for maybe 50 meters in the forest before it started digging again. This time, it wasn’t digging for food but instead for shelter. I walked up to the burrow after it disappeared beneath the ground to see that it had sealed the burrow behind itself, but I could still feel the armadillo moving underground. Due to my early caution and later lack of flash, none of my photos turned out great. I did get one diagnostic shot.

I went back to the bullet ant nest to examine the damage. The Armadillo had dug about five holes in the nest, presumably searching for brood chambers filled with nutritious larvae. The ants seemed disoriented, but were not aggressive. As I was taking photos of the nest, I heard a large mammal moving quickly through the forest. I looked up to see a Baird’s Tapir run across the trail about four meters from me. It stopped suddenly and stared at me for a minute before noisily running away.



Eyelash Viper (*Bothriechis schelegelii*)

1 Species Lists

I've included lists of mammals, reptiles and amphibians observed below. Sightings due only to David and/or Arlene alone are marked with a *.

1.1 Mammals

1. Central American Woolly Opossum (*Caluromys derbianus*) - seen nightly, with up to six in one night. Activity levels seem to vary significantly night-to-night.
2. Mouse Opossum sp (*Marmosa sp*) - only one seen, which uncharacteristically managed to evade my camera. In swamp habitat.
3. Silky Anteater (*Cyclopes didactylus*) - one seen next to the cabins. See above for more information.
4. Northern Tamandua (*Tamandua mexicana*)* - one seen by David on the ARB trail.
5. Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth (*Choloepus hoffmanni*) - seen most nights. An individual with a baby was often near the dining hall/reception area.
6. Northern Naked-tailed Armadillo (*Cabassous centralis*) - one seen on the CCL trail. See above.

7. Nine-banded Armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*) - seen most nights, with up to three in one night.
8. Proboscis Bat (*Rhynchonycteris naso*) - a group was roosting on my cabin.
9. Common Vampire Bat (*Desmodus rotundus*) - about 20 roosting in a large hollow tree about 700 meters along the SOR trail. The tree is unmissable.
10. Honduran White Bat (*Ectophylla alba*) - there was a well-known roost site about 600 meters from the lodge on the SPL trail.
11. White-faced Capuchin (*Cebus capucinus*) - a couple found sleeping at night.
12. Mantled Howler (*Alouatta pigra*) - many found sleeping at night with the thermal scope.
13. Vesper Rat (*Nyctomys sumichrasti*) - seen most nights.
14. Armored Rat (*Hoplomys gymnurus*) - seen nightly. A boom year? Surprisingly, no *Proechimys* were seen.
15. Mexican Porcupine (*Coendou mexicanus*) - seen nightly. Fairly common when searching with the thermal scope; I found up to six in one night. Without as scope, it was still easy to find on the suspension bridge.
16. Central American Agouti (*Dasyprocta punctata*) - one seen early in the morning on the CCL trail.
17. Paca (*Cuniculus paca*) - surprisingly, only seen a couple times.
18. Northern Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) - one seen at the Cantarrana swamp.
19. Forest Rabbit (*Sylvilagus gabbi*) - in the clearing.
20. Olingo (*Bassaricyon sp*) - seen most nights. I am somewhat confused by this species, as the individuals here look more like *B. alleni* than photos of *B. gabbi* from Monteverde.
21. Kinkajou (*Potos flavus*) - seen most nights.

22. Striped Hog-nosed Skunk (*Conepatus semistriatus*) - seen several times, on the STR and CCL trails.
23. Ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*)* - one seen by David on the STR trail.
24. Collared Peccary (*Pecari tajacu*) - a tame herd sleeps next to the cabins. Also seen feeding at night in the forest.
25. Baird's Tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*) - one seen on the CCL trail. See above.

1.2 Reptiles

1. White-lipped Mud Turtle (*Kinosternon leucostomum*) - several seen at the Cantarrana swamp.
2. Black Wood Turtle (*Rhinoclemmys funerea*) - seen basking from the suspension bridge.
3. Green Basalisk (*Basaliscus plumifrons*) - one seen sleeping at the Cantarrana swamp.
4. Striped Basalisk (*Basiliscus vittatus*) - a few seen near the lodge clearing.
5. Casque-headed Lizard (*Corytophanes cristatus*) - David found one sleeping on the CEN trail. They don't move much and I was able to re-find it later at exactly the same spot.
6. Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*) - common around the suspension bridge. They show up in the thermal scope in the evening.
7. Anoles (*Norops sp*) - at least three species seen sleeping. Will confirm with photos later.
8. Neotropical Chameleon (*Polychrus gutturosus*)* - David and Arlene were extremely lucky to see one fall from the canopy near the Honduran White Bat roost.
9. Litter Gecko (*Lepidoblepharis xanthostigma*) - a couple found under logs.
10. Turnip-tailed Gecko (*Thecadactylus rapicauda*) - a few seen around the lodge and on the trails.

11. Yellow-spotted Tropical Night Lizard (*Lepidophyma flavimaculatum*) - many found under logs. Seen a couple times on trees.
12. Annulated Tree Boa (*Corallus annulatus*) - several seen. Easily found by eyeshine.
13. Eyelash Viper (*Bothriechis schelegelii*) - two seen on the STR trail, one yellow and one gray.
14. Fer-de-lance (*Bothrops asper*) - the most common snake. Seen nightly.
15. Blunthead Tree Snake (*Imantodes cenchoa*) - a few seen, including one that very slowly approached a Slender Anole before striking and catching it.
16. Satiny Parrotsnake (*Leptophis depressirostris*) - one found sleeping.
17. Red Coffesnake (*Ninia sebae*) - one found by David near the cabins.
18. Calico Snake (*Oxyrhopus petolarius*) - a beautiful immature seen on the STR trail.
19. Lichen-colored Snai eater (*Sibon longifrenis*) - two seen.
20. Cloudy Snai eater (*Sibon nebulatus*) - several seen. The most common colubrid.
21. Halloween Snake (*Urotheca euryzona*) - one seen on the STR trail.
22. Spectacled Caiman (*Caiman crocodylus*) - several seen at the Cantarana swamp, and in the various creeks.

1.3 Amphibians

1. Litter Toad (*Rhaebo haematiticus*) - common.
2. Marine Toad (*Rhinella marina*) - common.
3. Glassfrogs (*Centrolenidae*) - at least two species seen. Will confirm with photos later.
4. Rain Frogs (*Craugastoridae*) - at least three species seen. Will confirm later with photos.

5. Strawberry Poison Frog (*Oophaga pumilio*) - amazingly common, especially by ear.
6. Lovely Poison Frog (*Phyllobates lugubris*)* - one seen by David.
7. Common Tink Frog (*Diasporus diastema*) - extremely common.
8. Scarlet-webbed Treefrog (*Boana rufitela*) - this beautiful frog was seen several times. Breeding aggregations were heard distantly.
9. Hourglass Treefrog (*Dendropsophus ebraccatus*) - seen at the Cantarrana swamp.
10. San Carlos Treefrog (*Dendropsophus phlebodes*) - seen at the Cantarrana swamp.
11. Boulenger's Snouted Treefrog (*Scinax boulengeri*) - a couple seen.
12. Olive-snouted Treefrog (*Scinax elaeochrous*) - several seen.
13. Common Mexican Treefrog (*Smilisca baudinii*) - common, both in forest and near the clearings. I need to check my photos to see if any are of *S. puma* or *S. sordida*.
14. Masked Treefrog (*Smilisca phaeota*) - a couple seen.
15. Savage's Thin-toed Frog (*Leptodactylus savagei*) - very common.
16. Nicaragua Narrowmouth Toad (*Hypopachus pictiventris*) - a couple seen.
17. Red-eyed Treefrog (*Agalychnis callidryas*) - common after rain, uncommon when dry.
18. Gliding Treefrog (*Agalychnis spurrelli*) - common after rain, uncommon when dry.
19. Sylvia's Treefrog (*Cruziohyla sylviae*) - one of my top targets. Heard intermittently, but never close enough to track down. Luckily, I found one by eyeshine on the STR trail on the last night.
20. Vaillant's Frog (*Lithobates vaillanti*) - seen at the Cantarrana swamp.