

The Bellbird

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From the Editor

March is the high season for birding in Costa Rica and quite a few people make it to Panama as well. More birders visit now because the combination of drier weather, wintering species and some migrants, and more bird song results in lots of excellent birding opportunities. Tours at this time of the year can record 400 and even 500 plus species during two weeks of serious birding!

We are enjoying the birding bounty as well and hoping to get shots of species not shown on our apps over the next few weeks. Those missing birds aren't shown yet because they are so difficult to photograph but we will keep trying until we get them! In the meantime, our full version apps still have written information, range maps, and sounds for those species (things like Tawny-faced Gnatwren, Tawny-crowned Greenlet, and Tawny-faced Quail).

While birding in Costa Rica and Panama during March and April, remember that you can always send us images and sounds for identification with the "Which Bird is It? function".

Pat O'Donnell

App Updates

Fresh updates for the [Costa Rica Birds Field Guide app](#) and the [Panama Birds Field Guide app](#) will be available any day now. These include new images of Maguari Stork, White-faced Ibis, White-tailed Nightjar, and improved images of several other species. You will also find additional vocalizations including Gray-breasted Crake.

Basic apps for Costa Rica and Panama are also now available instead of the free lite versions. These basic versions are available for \$2.99 and showcase:

- 350 plus species including common birds and some spectacular, key species.
- Vocalizations for most of these birds.
- Range maps and information for every species on the app.

- Easy search filter and search by name function, and other features available on the full versions.

Birding Tip of the Month

Looking for Antbirds

While preparing for an inaugural trip to the Neotropical region, it's hard to get a handle on antbirds. They look kind of like wrens, warblers, shrikes, and other familiar families but they aren't. We wonder how they are going to behave and if they will be easy to see (we hope so!). It's not until we start the birding that we realize that most antbirds are far from easy to watch. Although range maps show that they should be around, they aren't exactly hopping around hotel gardens or feeding on flowering trees.

If we bird with a local guide, we quickly discover that antbirds are much easier to hear than see, and we eventually do see them but only with a lot of patience. Most are shy forest birds, some only show up around army ants, and others skulk in dense second growth. Some do travel with mixed flocks but for most, it's a question of hearing the bird call and waiting for it to appear. This is where it really pays to know their vocalizations (and our apps can help in this regard), and knowing how to quietly wait for the bird to show.

Most antbird species are found in good forested habitat, although a few also occur at the edge of the forest and in second growth.

Featured Birding Site

Metropolitan Park, Panama City

There are very few city parks that offer fantastic birding. Central Park comes to mind during spring migration but even that fails to compare to the number of species possible in the heart of Panama City. Not only is Metropolitan Park an easy escape from the traffic and concrete of a capital city, it's also a wonderful place to hike through moist forest and see a host of tropical birds.

This is one of the easiest places in the world to hear and see the stunning Rosy Thrush-Tanager.



It's also a great place to encounter White-bellied Antbird, various wren species, greenlets, toucans, parrots, and many other birds. This park is so productive for birding because it is connected to a much larger area of forest that flanks the Panama Canal. This means that even rare species like Tiny Hawk and Pheasant Cuckoo can show up, along with a chance to see sloths and Geoffrey's Tamarin.



The next time you bird Panama, make sure to visit this excellent urban park. Opening times may vary but 7:30 would be a good bet.

Both of these pictures were provided by Cindy Beckman and were taken on one of her [Cheapers! Birding on a Budget](#) tours.

How to get there: Search for Parque Metroplitano Panama in Google maps to see where it is located. This is easier than attempting to give directions here. Local birding guides and taxis will also know how to get there.

App Tips

Compare similar species

This feature is the best way to learn how to identify birds that look very similar to each other. Compare thumbnail images of the species in question, then check each bird individually and touch the "i" for field marks.

Take notes on birds

Just touch the note icon for any bird species, mark it as seen or heard, or just "write" down notes for sites where the species was encountered, or where to look for them.

Three FAQs and Concerns

Where is the written information?

One or two of our customers have left bad reviews about the app because they said that no written information was available. This is patently false and our apps actually have as much or more written information than some field guides. This, we can only assume that they did not know how to access the information about field marks, description, habitat, and notes. To see information for any bird, touch the "i" icon in the upper right corner of the screen.

Are there plans to include images of missing species?

Actually, information and range maps for all species on the checklist for that country are included on the app. Although photos for around 90% of the birds on the checklist are on each app (more than 800 species for Costa Rica and more than 840 for Panama), we do lack images and vocalizations for some species. We are working to acquire those photos and vocalizations and will provide free updates of the apps on a regular basis just as we have been doing from the start.

What is the difference between the Basic and Full versions?

The main difference is with the number of species featured. While the Basic Costa Rica app shows 360 plus species, the full version has:

- Information and range maps for 900 plus species (all species on the Costa Rica list).
- Vocalizations for close to 600 of those.
- Images for 800 plus species.

The Basic Panama app shows around 370 species, whereas the full version has:

- Information and range maps for 981 plus species (all species on the Panama list).
- Vocalizations for more than 600.
- Images for more than 840 species.

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