

The Bellbird

Volume I, Issue 1

From the editor

Welcome to the first issue of the BirdingFieldGuides newsletter. In this and future newsletters, we aim to provide up to date information and tips for birding in Costa Rica, Panama, and elsewhere. You will also find the latest information about our field guide apps, as well as tips for using them. Enjoy and please feel free to share this newsletter!

Pat O'Donnell

App updates

Our most recent updates for the [Costa Rica Birds Field Guide app](#) and the [Panama Birds Field Guide app](#) were released during the earlier part of 2015. If you have the full version, make sure to update to the latest version for free at the same app store where the purchase was made.

We are currently working hard on new versions that will include every species on the lists for Costa Rica and Panama, more vocalizations, and new features. Although it is difficult to say when these will be available, we hope to have the first new version ready by August.

Birding tip of the month

Not sure where to look? - Focus on the head

Every bird species has certain characteristics that help with identification. Those field marks might come in the form of wing bars, tail pattern, streaks on the underparts, or a combination of the above. In general, though, since most birds can be identified with a good look at the head, this is the best, first place to focus with binoculars.

A good look at the head of a bird gives us a good look at the bill. In looking at the shape of the beak, is it stout like that of a finch? Thin and slightly curved like a wren's? Or hooked like a raptor?

How about the eye? Is there an eye ring, a spot behind the eye, or a line through the eye? Pay close attention to the pattern on the face because this is usually the easiest way to identify a bird to species.



The Common Chlorospingus and several other species have a white spot behind the eye.

After looking at the head, then you can move on to the wings and other parts of the bird. If you only see the head of the bird, and aren't sure, try searching by “headpattern” with the search filter on the app.

Featured birding site

The Cafe Colibri, Cinchona, Costa Rica

This gem of a site is an easy way to see and photograph Emerald Toucanet, Prong-billed Barbet, Silver-throated Tanager, several common species, and various hummingbirds including Green Thorntail and the local White-bellied Mountain-Gem. The bird-friendly owners keep the fruit tables and hummingbird feeders stocked and also serve delicious, country Costa Rican fare.



This Silver-throated Tanager was at the Cafe Colibri.

This place is an excellent stop when traveling to the Sarapiquí lowlands (The Nature Pavilion, Tirimbina, La Selva, etc.), or when birding the Virgen del Socorro/Varablanca area. The excellent photo opportunities rely on donations so please be generous.



An Emerald (Blue-throated) Toucanet at the Cafe Colibri.

To visit the Cafe Colibri, from Varablanca, take the main road north towards Sarapiquí and the La Paz Waterfall Gardens. After the La Paz Waterfall, drive 15 minutes and watch for the cafe on the right. The structure stands alone, and has an obvious sign.

App Tips

See the field marks for a species by touching the “i” icon in the upper right corner. This reveals the field marks and other information about a given species.

Use more than one search filter. For example, if you saw a small black and white bird in the Pacific lowlands, you might find it by filtering for Colors “black” and “white” but will find it a lot quicker if you also filter for Region “Pacific”. Likewise, if you saw a motmot in the Pacific northwest, search for Group “motmots” and Region “Tropical Dry Forest” and see what comes up.



The filter page.

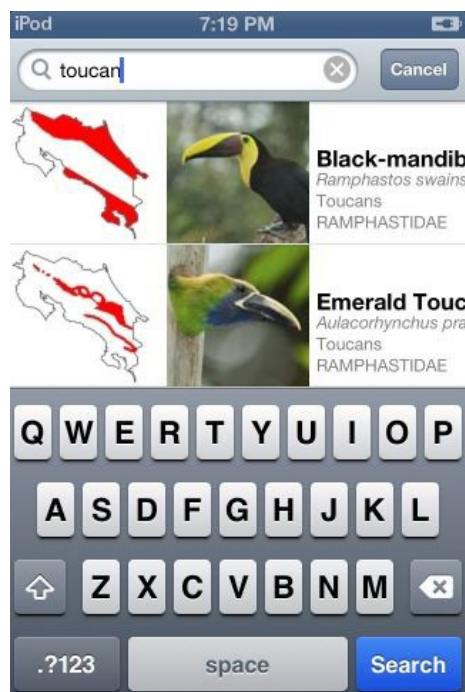
Study before your trip. The combination of images, range maps, and vocalizations make the apps an excellent study guide before your trip. If you only plan on birding in one part of the country, use the search filter to pick Region and only see the birds that occur in the “Highlands”, “Canal Zone”, or other region where you will do most of your birding.

Three FAQs and Concerns

Why can't I find information about any birds? To see information for a particular species, touch the species, then touch the small “i” in the upper right corner of the screen.

Are updates free? Yes, so far, as long as you have purchased the app, all of our updates are free.

How can I search by name? Go to the very top of the screen (above the first bird shown- usually Acadian Flycatcher), touch the search field, start typing the name of a bird. As you type, the birds will appear below. This is a really quick way to get to a bird if you already know part of its name. If you don't know the name of the bird you saw, but know the family, you might find it by typing in part of the family name. Or, you can also look at species arranged by family or group and go from there.



Searching for “toucans” by name.

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