

The Bellbird

Volume I, Issue 6

From the Editor

It's winter in Costa Rica but that doesn't have nearly the same connotation as the cold, gray days in the north. In Costa Rica, locals actually refer to this time of year as "verano" ("summer") because of the frequent sunny days around San Jose and on the Pacific coast. Over on the other side of the mountains, it's often a different story punctuated by overcast skies and heavy rain.

Of course winter also means wintering birds from the north. We have lots of Baltimore Orioles, Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Northern and Louisiana Waterthrushes, and many Tennessee, Yellow, Black-throated Green, Chestnut-sided, and Wilson's Warblers, along with smaller numbers of Golden-winged Warblers, Philadelphia Vireos, and several other migrants.

Visit Costa Rica and Panama right now and you will see those along with hundreds of exciting resident species, including dozens of hummingbirds. These tiny feathered dynamos are always fun to watch and in this issue, we give some tips on seeing them.

Pat O'Donnell

App Updates

The new, updated Android versions of the [Costa Rica Birds Field Guide app](#) and the [Panama Birds Field Guide app](#) will be available this week. Expect an update with images of more species (including Unspotted Saw-whet Owl) by the end of the year.

One of the new features on the Android update is a small menu at the top right of the screen. We did this because while the regular app menu is readily visible on most Android tablets, it either doesn't readily appear on other tablets. This provides an easy solution to that problem.

Birding Tip of the Month

Flowers=Hummingbirds

Feeders are a great, easy way to attract hummingbirds and they do indeed work very well in the highlands of Costa Rica and Panama. Some lowland sites also have busy feeders (such as sites around Gamboa, Panama), but sugar water is far from necessary to watch hummingbirds in action. Find the right types of flowers, and you will also get your fill of hummingbirds in the field.



Female Green Thorntail.

When looking for hummingbirds, the flowers we need to find usually have small, tubular corollas, and are often red, but some important flowers are also purple or white. Since they can also feed at bushes, trees, or vines in the canopy, keep an eye out for hummingbirds visiting flowers from the ground to high up in the trees.

If you see a flowering bush or other possible food source, wait around a bit to see if anything shows up. If there is food, hummingbirds will be present and will make that known in a matter of minutes. Keep in mind that they might not visit until the afternoon when the plant is producing more nectar. There might also be several hummingbirds present, or ones that show up for just a minute. Keep watching and might see several species.

Some of the most popular flowers are:

- **Porterweed**- A bush with small flowers on long, thin stems.
- **Inga**- Any of several tree species that have white, feathery, filamentous flowers.

- **Flamebush**- A bush with many orange or red flowers.
- **Erythrina**- These are trees that produce red spiky flowers or lots of orange flowers.
- **Heliconias**- These prominent red flowers are the main food source for hermit species and White-tipped Sicklebill.

Featured Birding Site

El Tapir Hummingbird Garden

This abandoned butterfly garden has become a hummingbird hotspot and the most accessible place to see Snowcap anywhere in its range. Located just an hour's drive from San Jose, the masses of flowering Porterweed attract several species in addition to the Snowcap, including Violet-headed Hummingbird, Green Thorntail, Black-crested Coquette, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Crowned Woodnymph, and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird. White-necked Jacobin, and occasional Brown Violetear and Blue-chested Hummingbirds can also make appearances.



A Black-crested Coquette visits Porterweed at El Tapir

While you enjoy the hummingbird display, keep an eye out for tanager flocks that move through the edge of the foothill rainforest, raptors overhead, and toucans, parrots, and occasional Great Green Macaws that perch in the tops of nearby trees.



The hummingbird viewing spot at El Tapir.

This site is not signed but is easily accessible on highway 32 between San Jose and Guapiles. If coming from San Jose, pull into the first "driveway" on the right around one kilometer after the Quebrada Gonzalez ranger station. If the fence is closed, open it and bring the vehicle in to park it in front of the small house. When the caretaker shows up, please pay him the entrance fee (\$12 at time of writing).

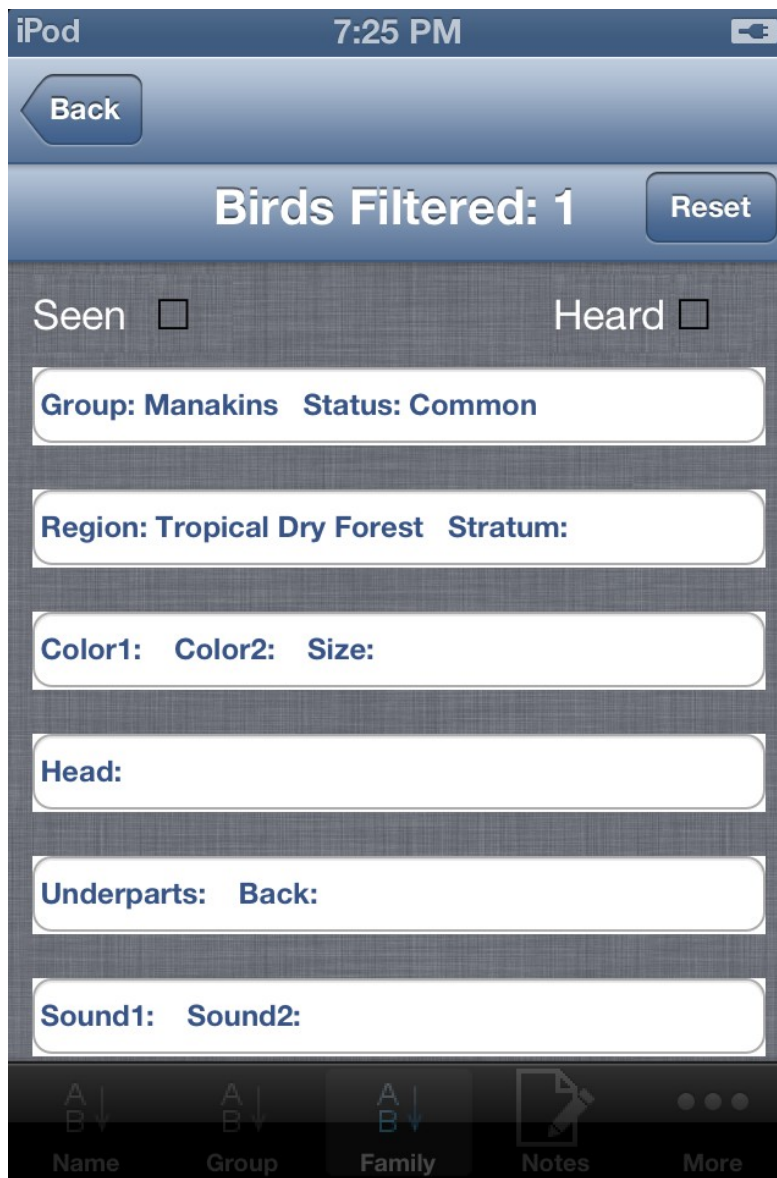
App Tips

Study before the trip

As every birder knows, the more we study before a trip, the more we notice and identify. With information and images for 800 plus species, our apps are an excellent study tool. Try listening to sounds while looking at photos, noting the field marks, and using the similar species tool.

Filter by region

This is an easy way to know what birds to expect when visiting Monteverde, Costa Rica, or the Canopy Tower in Panama. Just go to the search filter, touch "region", and scroll to the region you will be visiting. Touch "done", go back, and scroll through the species that are listed.



Searching for common manakins of dry forest on the Costa Rica Birds Field Guide app.

Three FAQs and Concerns

Can I contribute photos for the app? Although we are already working with several contributors, if you would like to contribute images of species not pictured on our apps, yes, please contact us at support@birdingfieldguides.com

Will apps be available in Spanish? Hopefully, some day. At the present time, because of the way the apps are coded, we haven't figured out a way to do this without a huge investment in time.

Where is the main menu on the Android version? On some tablets, you may have to

press a button twice or change the settings to see the menu. To resolve this issue, the menu will also be accessible in the top right corner in the next Android update (available any day now).

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