

# The Bellbird

## Volume II, Issue 1

### From the Editor

A new year has begun and many of us use it as an opportunity to make changes in our lives. Those changes and opportunities can take the form of a new travel bucket list, goals concerning work, family, and education, and, for those of us who watch birds, another chance to see if we can add a few new species for the yard and life list.

As for those of us at BirdingFieldGuides, we hope to see new birds, visit new sites in Costa Rica and Panama, meet more birders, and continue to update our apps with more images and vocalizations. These are a few changes happening this year:

- We are starting the year with updates for our full Costa Rica and Panama apps. These updates will show more than 800 species on the Costa Rica app, and more than 840 for the Panama app.
- New Basic apps for Costa Rica and Panama that show 300 plus birds commonly seen during a vacation, along with several spectacular species that can also be encountered.
- Apps for more countries- we are working on these and hope to have them ready during 2016.
- Bimonthly newsletter- each newsletter will cover two months.

Whether you have been to Costa Rica and Panama or not, we hope that you get the chance to visit these beautiful countries in 2016. The birding is fantastic, and the tourism infrastructure makes it easy to have a fun and exciting vacation even if you don't happen to watch birds. These countries are also much closer to the USA and Canada than most people realize. Hope to see you in the field!

*Pat O'Donnell*

### App Updates

The new, updated IOS and Android versions of [Costa Rica Birds Field Guide app](#) and the [Panama Birds Field Guide app](#) are available. Get the free update for images of Highland Tinamou, Unspotted Saw-whet Owl, Gray-throated Leaf-tosser, and a few other challenging species to see and photograph.

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**

### **Bird in Quality Habitat to See More Bird Species**

Since most birders will probably view this as a no-brainer, the real question is how to recognize high quality habitat. To do that, we need to imagine what the natural landscapes in Costa Rica and Panama looked like before deforestation, urbanization, and large-scale conversion for agriculture. Since those historical landscapes are the ecological situations in which the local avifauna lived and evolved for thousands of years, this is where we are going to find more bird species.

A lot of birds can still be seen in hotel gardens and other edge and second growth situations, so it's easy to conclude that these are the best places for birding. They are if you hope to get good looks at a variety of common and edge species but if we want to see the highest variety of species, we need to spend more time birding in large areas of old growth forest. These are the places that most closely resemble the historical habitats in much of Costa Rica and Panama and provide the best habitat for many raptors, tinamous, antbirds, manakins, and other forest-based species. This is also where we have a higher chance of running into Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo (the only chance really), wood-quails, and other shy birds that are typically hard to find. Although the high canopy and dense vegetation don't give us any birding breaks, primary forest is where you need to go to see more species of birds (and snakes, and other animals).

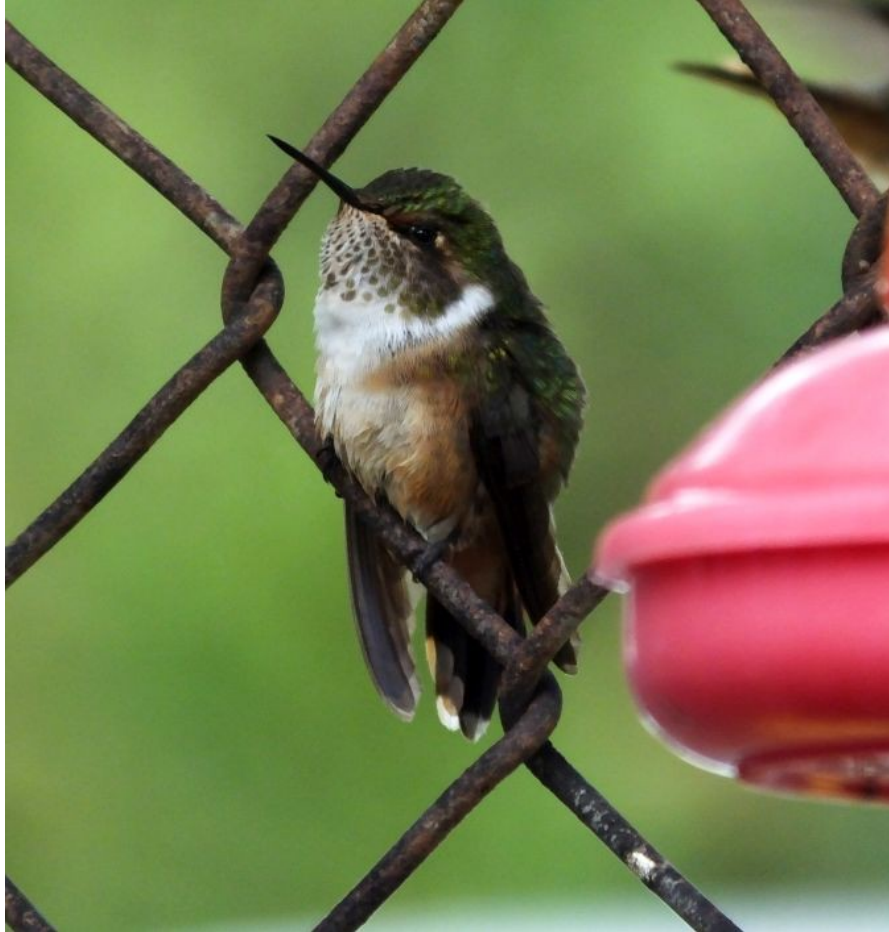
## **Featured Birding Site**

### **Poas Volcano, Costa Rica**

Although this site is left off of many itineraries, it's one of the most accessible places in Costa Rica for a fine selection of high elevation species. The proximity to the airport (45 minutes) also makes it an easy place to start and end a trip to Costa Rica. Birding can be

done in the national park although some of the best birding seems to be found along the road up to the park entrance.

The best place to start birding is at the Volcan Restaurant. This is a locally owned place situated in a forested riparian zone along the road to the national park. Watch for it on the left, two minutes after the turn off to Vara Blanca and the Waterfall Gardens.



*Volcan Hummingbird at the Volcan Restaurant.*

Hummingbird feeders at the restaurant attract Green Violetear, Magnificent (Rivoli's) Hummingbird, Volcano Hummingbird, Purple-throated Mountain-gem, Violet Sabrewing, Green-crowned Brilliant, and occasional Magenta-throated Woodstar and Stripe-tailed Hummingbird. Rarely, Fiery-throated and Scintillant Hummingbirds also show up but be very careful about identifying immature Volcano Hummingbirds that look a lot like Scintillant (Volcano has a wide, dark subterminal band and pale tips to the tail).

After checking the feeders (and patronizing the restaurant to support this bird and birder friendly place) keep an eye on the canopy of the forest behind and near the restaurant for

perched Long-tailed Silky-Flycatchers. Quetzal is uncommon but it can also appear at any time as a few move through this riparian zone most days! Quetzals also show up in the wild avocado trees just across the street, especially when the trees are fruiting (usually February to April). This area can also turn up any number of cloud forest species including Yellowish Flycatcher, Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, brown-capped Vireo, Prong-billed Barbet, and many other species. It can also be very quiet but wait around and these and other species might show.

Continue on the road towards the park and stop wherever there are patches of forest. Although the birding isn't so great in the section between the Volcan Restaurant and the Poas Lodge, it can still turn up Elegant Euphonia, Yellow-bellied Siskin, and Red-faced Spinetail. The bridge over a deep ravine can also be good for a variety of highland species including Flame-throated Warbler, Prong-billed Barbet, and others.



*Black and yellow Silky-Flycatcher*

After Poas Lodge, the habitat changes to high elevation forest along with scattered trees in pasture. The most intact forest is past a turn-off on the left, on the left or western side of the road. The best way to bird this area is by pulling over wherever other vehicles have enough time to see the car (this road sees a fair amount of traffic). Many high elevation species can turn up anywhere along this road, often in mixed flocks that have

Black and yellow Silky-Flycatcher, Flame-throated and Black-cheeked Warblers, Yellow-winged Vireo, Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Buffy Tuftedcheek, Red-faced Spinetail, Ruddy Treerunner, Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, and other species. Sooty and Mountain Thrushes are also usually present, and Golden-browed Chlorophonia is fairly common. This last stretch of road can also be good for Black Guan, especially at fruiting trees. Quetzal can also occur but is pretty uncommon. Wrenthrush and Silvery-fronted Tapaculo can also be found in the undergrowth but are pretty uncommon and easier in the national park itself.

Once past the entrance gate to the park (open from 8:00 to 3:30), the road goes through nice forest. Unfortunately, it is difficult to bird this forest because there is no place to pull the car off the road. After paying the \$15 entrance fee and going to the parking area, you can walk to the crater through elfin forest or walk a couple of trails. Fiery-throated Hummingbird is especially common, and the elfin forest near the crater can be good for Peg-billed Finch. The forest and trails are also better places to look for the tapaculo and Wrenthrush, and you might also get lucky with Highland Tinamou and Buff-fronted Quail-Dove (both rare but present in the area). Keep a close eye out for seeding bamboo that can host Peg-billed Finch, Barred Parakeet, Slaty Finch, and maybe even Maroon-chested Ground-Dove.

To reach the Poas area, just follow the brown national park signs from Alajuela or put in "Poas" into the GPS navigator.

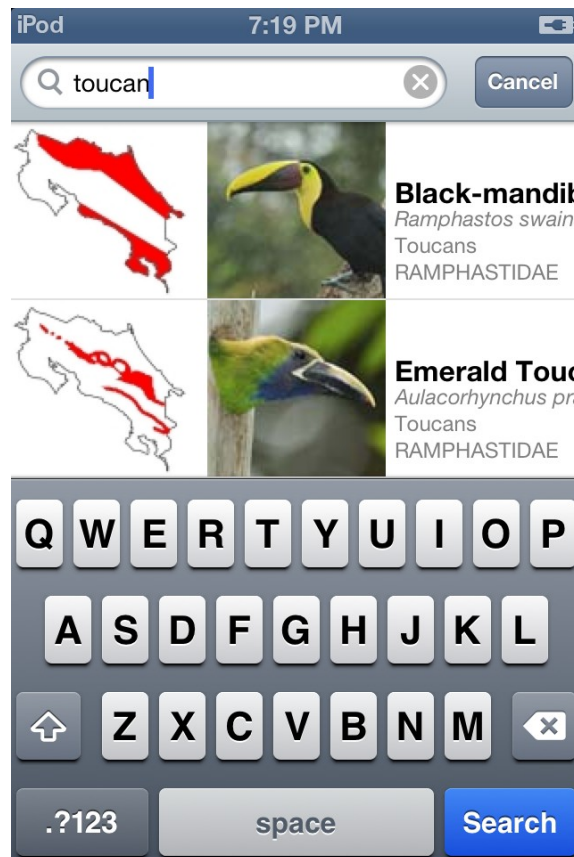
## **App Tips**

### **Study birds by group**

Familiarize yourself with antbirds and other types of birds not found back home. This will make it easier to recognize antwrens, foliage-gleaners, tinamous, and other unfamiliar families when they are encountered.

### **Try out the search by name function**

If you already know part of a bird's name, this is a quick and easy way to see it on the app. Just go to the top of the page and type in whatever you are looking for. You don't even have to put in the entire name. For example, type "woodp", and all woodpecker species will show except for Yellow-bellied Sapucker.



*Searching for "Toucans" by name.*

### **Three FAQs and Concerns**

#### **What are the images with a question mark?**

These are for bird species for which we still need images. We decided to include these species even though we lack images for them because we thought it would be better to show information and range maps for every species on the country list instead of leaving some birds off. Most missing species are pelagic birds, very rare migrants, and a few other species that are very difficult to photograph. Nevertheless, we provide free updates for the app as we acquire images of these species, and will keep doing so until we show all of them.

#### **How can I see which species are shown on the app?**

To see the species for which the full apps show vocalizations and images, see the links on our site for the [Costa Rica Birds List](#), and the [Panama Birds List](#).

#### **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 versions 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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