

# The Bellbird

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## From the Editor

Another year is coming to an end and with it comes a new set of birds. By now, all of the "winter" migrants have arrived except for duck species that will probably show up in a few weeks. The winter birds include Chestnut-sided Warblers, Prothonotary Warblers, Philadelphia Vireos, Baltimore Orioles, and other species that breed far to the north. They have picked a good time of the year to be here because although it might be winter up north, it's the summer dry season in most of Costa Rica and Panama.

Although those migrants aren't usually the main targets of birders visiting from Canada and the USA, who can deny the beauty of a bright orange and black Baltimore Oriole? Who can argue that the many warblers, flycatchers, and vireos aren't as much a part of the tropical avian landscape as the species that live here all year long? The migrants have been making this trip for eons and are just as important to local tropical ecosystems as the antbirds, motmots, and puffbirds. A Great-crested Flycatcher that nests in the woodlands of Pennsylvania is just as much at home when sallying for insects in the rainforests of the Canal Zone.

Although most visiting birders would rather see the resident species, the more birds the better and whether bringing binoculars to cloud forest, rain forest, dry forest, mangroves, estuaries, or your own tropical garden, there are literally hundreds of bird species to look for.

Keep watching, you just might pick out a rare warbler, vagrant flycatcher, or other rarity among the hundreds of regular migrant species.

*Pat O'Donnell*

## App Updates

Another update is in the works for the [Costa Rica Birds Field Guide app](#) and the [Panama Birds Field Guide app](#). This one will include several new images and sounds and should be available in December.

## **Birding Tip**

### **Looking for Tinamous**

Browse our field guide apps by family and the first one we see is the Tinamidae (the tinamous). These strange ground birds are shaped kind of like an American football, and would hardly ever be seen if they didn't vocalize on frequent occasions. Like so many other terrestrial species, tinamous tend to be shy, very difficult to see, and even more so in places where they are hunted. However, there are certain things we can do to increase our chances of viewing every species of Tinamou in Costa Rica and Panama, including these suggestions:

**Look in protected areas:** Although most tinamou species in both countries are fairly common, if you don't look for them in protected areas, you probably won't see them. In forests that experience even very occasional hunting, tinamous are extremely shy and almost never seen except maybe one or two that immediately burst into flight before you can view them with binoculars. Fortunately, in national parks and other protected sites, tinamous can become quite confident and even tame.

**Keep a close eye on the ground:** You won't see tinamous up in the trees. Keep a close eye on the ground, scanning the trail ahead and as far as you can see into the forest. Watch for any movement and check any "rocks" on the forest floor because some tinamous can look very much like a random stone lying on the ground.

**Learn their songs:** Tinamous frequently vocalize and this is the best way to find them. If one calls nearby, carefully try to locate where the call is coming from and patiently, quietly scan until you find the singing bird.

**Watch antswarms and beneath fruiting trees:** Like so many other bird species of tropical rainforest, tinamous take advantage of scarce resources. Therefore, they will often frequent antswarms and may pick fallen fruit off of the ground.

**Some especially good sites for tinamous:** Although we can find tinamous in most protected forest sites, the following are especially reliable to see tinamous-

### **Costa Rica**

**-Carara National Park:** An excellent site for tame Great Tinamous.

**-La Selva Biological Station:** Watch for tame Great and Slaty-breasted Tinamous along trails in the reserve.

**-Tirimina Biological Reserve:** This is another good site for Great and Slaty-breasted Tinamous.

**-Bosque del Rio Tigre Lodge:** Little Tinamou often comes to the lodge to pick rice off the ground.

**-Palo Verde National Park:** One of the most reliable sites for Thicket Tinamou in the country. Watch for them in any forested area.

**-Monteverde area:** Any of the cloud forest reserves are a very good place to see Highland Tinamou.



*A Great Tinamou from Tirimina.*

## **Panama**

**-The Pipeline Road:** A good area to see Great Tinamou and, with a lot of patience, Little Tinamou.

**-The Darien:** Watch for Choco Tinamou in heavily forested, lowland sites.

## **Featured Birding Site**

**La Selva Entrance Road Costa Rica**

La Selva Biological Station is one of the top, classic birding sites in Costa Rica. Pay a visit and you will see dozens of bird species including various uncommon birds of the Caribbean lowlands. However, if you don't pay rather high prices for basic accommodation, nor take one of their scheduled morning tours, you can't bird the trails and other sites inside the station. Fortunately, birders who don't have the time or resources to bird inside La Selva can still see a lot just outside the reserve on the entrance road, and a road that borders its northern perimeter.

Although some of the deep forest species and raptors aren't as likely outside of the biological station, more than a hundred other species are still possible on the entrance road and edge of the forest. As the entrance road passes through old second growth and crosses a small stream, it bisects territories and habitat for a wide variety of lowland species including three species of trogons, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, various flycatchers including White-ringed and Long-tailed Tyrant, Pied Puffbird, Broad-billed Motmot, woodpeckers, woodcreepers, and the list goes on.

If the road is quiet at first, just wait and birds will eventually show. Many occur in mixed flocks that can have Fasciated Antshrike, Bright-rumped Attila, and four woodcreeper species, and others fly into fruiting trees. Watching those fruiting trees and the canopy in general is the best way to see Snowy Cotinga, another regular species at this site.

The road that runs along the northern perimeter of the property has forest on one side and open farmland on the other. This is a good area to see parrots and even Great Green Macaw in flight, as well as toucans and other species perched in the tops of trees. This is also a good area for seeing fruiting trees visited by many birds.



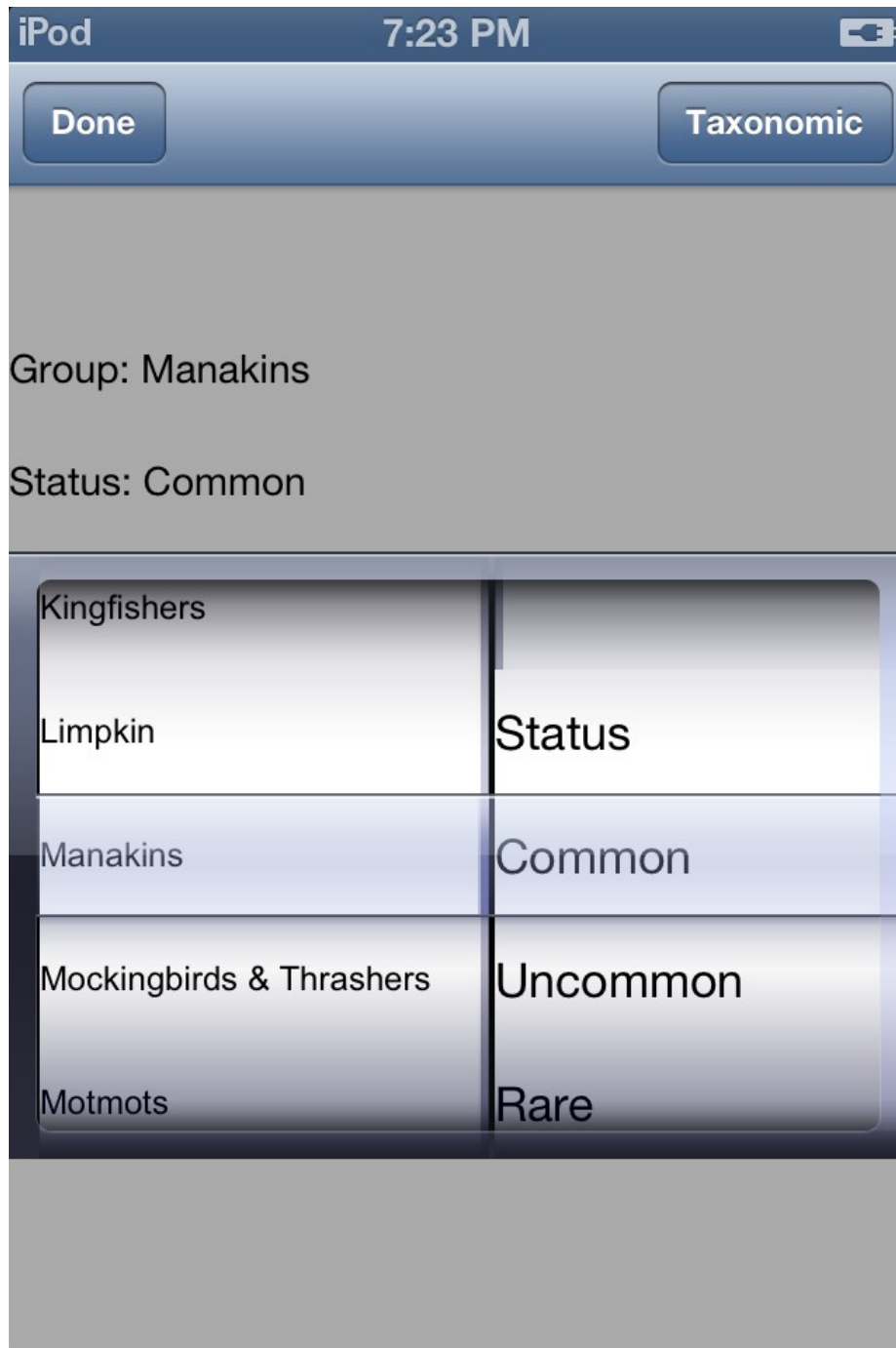
*Slaty-tailed Trogon from the entrance road.*

**How to get there:** The La Selva Biological Station is situated a few kilometers south and east of Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí, and the entrance is marked by a prominent sign. To get there from the San Jose area, take the highway towards Guapiles and Limon, and take a left at the intersection for Rio Frio and Puerto Viejo. This is a main intersection just after crossing the mountains. Drive north on this straight road for around 25-30 kilometers and watch for the sign for the station on the left. Take this left and start birding on the perimeter road to the right, or the main entrance road on the left. You can bird up to the gate but the station doesn't seem to want people to enter beyond that gate if they aren't staying there or on one of their scheduled tours.

### **App Tips**

#### **Check common species first**

If you see a species and aren't sure what it is, use the filter to only show the common birds first. Since common species are the ones we see the most, this is the best first "place" to check. From there, we can continue to filter by region, color, and family to narrow the options for the mystery bird.



### **Use a speaker with the apps**

A small bluetooth speaker or earphones offer the best means of studying the bird sounds on the app. This is because some devices don't have built-in speakers that cover some of the lower frequencies made by certain species.

## **FAQs and Concerns**

### **Why are the thumb images so small on my Android device?**

After the most recent update, we found that thumb images were tiny on certain new Huawei devices along with a few other issues. This is being fixed and an update will be available soon. In contrast to IOS, the high number of different Android devices results in issues that occasionally arise on different devices. Since we can't test the apps on every different device and new version of the same device, we sometimes don't find out about problems until after the app is released.

### **Are there basic versions for the field guide apps?**

Yes, we have basic versions of Costa Rica and Panama. These have fewer species for a lower price although still include more than 300 of the more common and spectacular bird species found in each country.

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