

ITINERARY

COLOMBIA: BOGOTA, THE MAGDALENA VALLEY & SANTA MARTA
January 11-26, 2020



One of the range-restricted species we'll seek on this tour is the Russet-throated Puffbird, which occurs in northern Colombia and Venezuela. We'll watch for this regional endemic when we visit the dry inland areas near Riohacha, on the Caribbean coast. Photograph by guide Mitch Lysinger.

We include here information for those interested in the 2020 Field Guides Colombia: Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

1900+ species. Subtract the species recorded on *that* archipelago off Central America (San Andres, if you care), and Colombia is still ahead of Brazil and Peru, let alone our most popular South American destination, Ecuador, which is several hundred species behind. Which brings us to the point that at least two of our guides think that Baffin Island is their favorite tour, and the others who have been to Baffin won't admit it. But 1900. What would it take to see only one species in Colombia? A blindfold in the transit lounge after the first species of swallow (Blue-and-white or Brown-bellied? Probably Brown-bellied unless you saw a Rufous-collared Sparrow first), and right back onto the next plane, window shade drawn down. This is a rich, beautiful, and wonderful country with a truckload of birds and well worth a visit (or three).

Within the last 15 years, there has also been a steady growth in Colombian ornithology and the establishment of many private nature reserves to complement the public ones, all making locating many of the special birds more practical. Colombia has not had time to catch up to the ecotourism standards of its neighbors, and so be forewarned that while birding in Colombia is fun and feasible, there are a few more rough edges than on comparable tours in, for instance, Ecuador. All of our trips will have local support from our in-country operators and a local guide both before and during the tour.

This is a rock and roll tour. It seeks some endangered species that are not easy even when they are common. And they are not common: They are Endangered. We will look for these and other tough ones, see some and miss some, and in the process also enjoy a number of endemics and regional specialties that are far easier while accumulating a very sizeable triplist for a sixteen-day period. This itinerary features two small ProAves reserves with lodges that make seeing these specialties possible.

Note: *In the following we have highlighted in green any text that we consider requires your special attention*



Some of the trails we take will be steep, potentially slippery and a bit rough, but we'll also see many wonderful birds! Photograph by participant Diane Drobka.

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: There are no *major* difficulties with this tour, but there are a number of points that need to be considered carefully to determine if this tour is right for you; with a little flexibility and a sense of humor, it will be a blast. Some of this relates to basic facts about Colombia: The tourist infrastructure is early in its re-birth after security problems, and habitat destruction endemic to this planet means it can be a long way between spots where threatened, endemic birds are to be found.

The focus will be on the endemics, although at times we will pursue the widespread because in a country in which two subspecies of Gray-breasted Wood-Wren (one of which has been recently split) can be found within a kilometer of each other, not just once, but twice, even the widespread becomes very interesting. And we will generally look at the widespread species because we like looking at birds, and widespread species are often what is in front of us. Still, this is just to say that these trips are special, and while this trip is not a radical departure from general Field Guides tours, it is like some others in which there is an emphasis on specialties, as opposed to being a general survey trip.

This tour involves several lengthy drives. The countryside is interesting, and while the environment is generally greatly disturbed, there are actually fewer devastated areas than in many other countries: There are large trees, or riparian corridors, or secondary woods. The pros and cons are that when we travel, that is really all we do—little roadside birding, few stops to check out birds; and when we bird, we are birding on trails and tracks as close to the wild as we

can be, escaping from the bustle of roadside and cities. And on the subject of transportation, the ability to hop onto a horse, or allow yourself to be pushed up onto a horse, and stay on it (they don't give tourists broncos), is a requirement to make it to one area (good birding around the lodge if you don't), and steep, often slippery trails are reality at two others. But we go slowly, because there are loads of birds for which to look.

For all these reasons listed above, long drives, slippery trails, horseback rides, lots of walking, and its length, we would describe this tour as moderately difficult. It will be a tough tour for people with back problems, walking or balance issues, or weak stamina.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

SPECIAL NOTE: This tour will be limited to just SIX participants, which means, of course, that it costs more than tours with larger limits. We realize that the price of a tour always matters, but we maintain the small limit for several reasons. First, lodges have very few rooms, and while we certainly can't promise singles, we would very much like to avoid triples. Second, comfort in the vehicles matters on a trip long in miles and days, and we would like to preserve an open seat or two in our bus and also reduce crowding when we use multiple 4WD vehicles on several segments of the tour. Third, a smaller group makes the birding easier. So when you see similar, less expensive itineraries with tour limits of 8, 9, and 10, please remember that there's a good reason that our tour is more expensive.

About the Birding Areas & Related Subjects



The Bogota Region—We will start around the capital, located at 8500 feet (2500m) on the Sabana de Bogota. The Sabana (savannah) shows the signs of the nine million inhabitants, and the once vast wetlands are now tiny pockets, so two of the endemics for which we will look are Endangered: Bogota Rail and Apolinar's Wren (related to Sedge Wren). Thanks to conservation efforts, there are preserves at which we can look for these species with good chances of success, along with an isolated population of Spot-flanked Gallinule, the elusive Noble Snipe, wintering Soras, and Yellow-hooded Blackbirds.

Above Bogota, the Eastern Andes are still forested in places, and we will visit one of the accessible portions of immense Chingaza N.P. for a morning, hoping above all for decent weather and for Pale-bellied Tapaculo and Rufous-browed Conebill. Other stops provide opportunities to see Glowing and Coppery-bellied pufflegs, and, if we are lucky, something like Bronze-tailed Thornbill. Other birds in this region include several species of hemispingus and mountain-tanager, White-chinned Thistletail, Rufous Antpitta, Golden-fronted Redstart (Whitestart), and Pale-naped Brush-Finch.

Mariquita region—Mariquita is the lowlands of the Magdalena Valley. For a morning we will drive above the town of Libano, and then investigate some truly shrinking patches of forest above 6000 feet (1800m) in a disturbed landscape in search of

several very rare birds. Yellow-headed (formerly "Olive-headed" but they aren't olive) Brush-Finch (Endangered) is a decidedly easier quarry, and we should (famous last words) manage to find a pair in remnant strips of woodland. Although the endemic Crested Ant-Tanager may be easier on our other tour of the Colombian Andes, there is a spot and we will make a substantial effort to pull one out because this is this tour and we want one. There will be other birds that you will like (Rufous-naped Greenlet, maybe Moustached Puffbird or Bar-crested Antshrike), but overall we will have a morning of focus on the few.

Near Mariquita we will also have a chance to see birds of lower elevations, including some typical of the more arid upper Magdalena Valley. Endemics for which we will look are Apical Flycatcher and Velvet-fronted Euphonia. Other exciting birds around here include Dwarf Cuckoo (we could use some luck), Spectacled Parrotlet (nearly endemic), Barred Puffbird, Olivaceous Piculet, White-bellied and Jet antbirds, White-fringed Antwren (*hondae*), and Tropical Gnatcatcher (*anteocularis* of the *bilineata* group). Small marshy pools are home to Wattled Jacana (a striking black form) and Yellow-chinned Spinetail. Marshy pastures en route to our next stop have more variety, including Northern Screamer, Bare-faced (Whispering) Ibis, a few herons, Colombia's one babbler or near babbler (Black-capped Donacobius), and White-headed Marsh-Tyrant.

La Victoria and Rio Claro Nature Reserve—We will explore over two days the system of trails found within this protected area from which drains the Rio Claro into the Rio Magdalena. The reserve is located on the east slope of the Central Cordillera with a spectacular canyon and surrounding humid tropical forest. It is home to a myriad of birds including a few important CO endemics: White-mantled Barbet (Endangered), Beautiful Woodpecker (as split from Golden-naped in many lists; and increasingly more difficult to find), Antioquia Bristle-Tyrant (only described in 1988 and

Endangered on IUCN Red List), and Sooty Ant-Tanager (Near Threatened) (ignore the vibes from "sooty"—this is a lovely bird). Other birds with limited ranges (often including eastern Panama) are Saffron-headed Parrot (scarce), Blue-chested Hummingbird, Shining-green Hummingbird, Southern Bentbill, and Black-bellied Wren. A bird found here and given near species status in some lists is Channel-billed Toucan (*citrolaemus*; "Citron-throated").

RNA Reinita Cielo Azul (Cerulean Warbler Reserve)—This small forest reserve is a ProAves buffer to the much larger, and generally inaccessible, Yariquies National Park. It is traversed by the 150-year-old Lengerke trail, a slippery, cobbled trading route. After a half-hour horseback ride up from the lodge located next to a shade coffee plantation, we will bird through the oak forest in pursuit of a host of special birds, including five endemics: Gorgeted Wood-Quail (Endangered; we will be lucky to hear it, although we will certainly try to see any that are close); Parker's Antbird (described in 1997; endemic, but increasingly more difficult as the vegetation grows up); Magdalena Tapaculo (Endangered; described in 2005, along the upper parts of the trail); and Black Inca (Vulnerable; not uncommon inside the forest). Some other interesting forest birds along the trail include White-bellied and Ochre-breasted antpittas, Yellow-throated Spadebill, and even Cerulean Warbler (Vulnerable, and the reserve is named after it!). We have several endemics to find right around the lodge, including Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird, which has even visited the lodge feeders, and Turquoise Dacnis, which may be with any of the small flocks in the shade trees of the adjoining coffee plantations. Those same plantations also support Bar-crested Antshrikes, which seem to find the coffee bushes a suitable place to hide from birders.

RNA Hormiguero de Torcoroma (Bushbird Reserve)—This small ProAves reserve at 5300 feet (1600m) is home to the Recurve-billed Bushbird (Endangered, with a population under 1000). This legendary species (only recently rediscovered in Colombia and Venezuela after 40 years with no sightings) is nothing if not a challenge, but it is an exciting challenge. We will focus on it in its bamboo patches (the favored habitat here, but not everywhere), along with Gray-throated Warbler (Near Threatened; fairly common but shy) and Moustached Brush-Finch. The bird diversity is low, but there are other species of interest, and we could find any of a number of thrushes, including Chestnut-bellied, Black-headed and Burnished-buff tanagers, Klage's Antbird, or possibly even White-ruffed Manakin. Win or lose on the bushbird, in the afternoon we may switch venues to try some other nearby forest patches.



The Recurve-billed Bushbird uses its unusual bill to pry open bamboo stalks in search of insect larvae. We've had a chance to see the birds and witness this interesting behavior on past tours. Photograph by participant Greg Griffith.

Parque Nacional Isla Salamanca: Coastal Habitats—Isla Salamanca is a barrier island separating the Caribbean from a huge lagoon, Cienega Grande. It stretches from near Santa Marta to the mouth of the Rio Magdalena near Barranquilla. We will try to get off the busy two-lane highway wherever possible to sample a variety of habitats including saltwater ponds, freshwater marshes, mangroves, scrubby woodland, and open fields. If we can hit one or two of the right little flocks, we could find a prize like Chestnut Piculet or Golden-green

Woodpecker (*xanthochlorus*), and other birds here include Common Black-Hawk, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Black-crested Antshrike, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, and Bicolored Conebill. We will look hard for the endemic Chestnut-winged Chachalaca in the desert scrub. Another hoped for species is Sapphire-throated Hummingbird (scarce), which is similar to a fantasy bird, Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird, yet another hoped for species (?) that we may see in the mangroves.

Freshwater marshes on the inland side of the road have Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures, Snail Kites and Limpkins (must be apple snails galore out there, too), a variety of widespread herons and migrant ducks and shorebirds, Purple Gallinule, five species of kingfisher, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, and Pied Water-Tyrant. Open areas with scattered trees host a variety of widespread species such as Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Cattle Tyrant, and Bicolored Wren. Along with widespread icterids like Yellow-hooded Blackbird and Carib and Great-tailed grackles, we could find Bronzed Cowbird, the only population in South America (*armenti*; "Bronze-brown" Cowbird).

Guajira Peninsula: Coastal Desert—Along the shores of the Caribbean away from the moist lower slopes of the Sierra, little rain falls and a coastal desert is to be found. The main peninsula still has some “wild west” elements, but it is feasible to travel as far east as the placid town of Riohacha. There we will bird along the road to Parque Nacional Los Flamencos, where in the coastal lagoon we may well see the flamencos (Caribbean Flamingos), although they are most often a distant shimmer of pink. At closer range will be an assortment of waterbirds, potentially including Reddish Egret (white and dark morphs), Magnificent Frigatebird, a few migrant shorebirds, and a half dozen species of gull and tern.

But we will only check the lagoon after we have invested substantial time in the dry scrub, where regional endemics (also occurring in northern Venezuela) are Rufous-vented Chachalaca (potentially noisy, but furtive), Bare-eyed Pigeon, Buffy Hummingbird, Russet-throated Puffbird, Chestnut Piculet (scarce), White-whiskered Spinetail (lovely and common), Slender-billed Inezia (plenty), Glaucous Tanager, Orinocan Saltator, and Vermilion Cardinal (uncommon; threatened by the pet trade). We may also see Blue-crowned Parakeet, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Blue-tailed Emerald, Pale-legged Hornero, Black-crested Antshrike, (Northern) White-fringed Antwren (*intermedia*), Pale-tipped Inezia (uncommon), the widespread Vermilion and Brown-crested flycatchers, Tropical Mockingbird, Tropical Gnatcatcher (*plumbiceps*), Scrub Greenlet, Pileated Finch, Grayish Saltator, Yellow Oriole, and Trinidad Euphonia.



*We've had good luck in seeing the tiny Santa Marta Woodstar on many past tours.
Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta—The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is reputed to be the tallest mountain close to the ocean and to have the highest concentration of continental range-restricted birds of anywhere. How do you measure this stuff? In any case, we will accept the claims as true because they are good for business, and we will tell you about the great lodge at ProAves Reserva Natural de las Aves ("RNA") El Dorado that makes visiting this famous birding spot so much easier than Field Guides first tour to this area in 1992. Rooms and cabins with private facilities have a view of the Caribbean and the town of Santa Marta far below, and are just a minute through the lovely gardens from the main lodge. And if you are looking for avian gold, El Dorado is the place. Located at 6300 feet (1900m), the lodge is near the center of the reserve, which extends from 3000 to 8700 feet (900 to 2600m) on the San Lorenzo ridge, an outlying ridge above the town of Santa Marta. All but two (Santa Marta Wren and Blue-bearded Helmetcrest) of the Sierra's endemics occur on this ridge, although one is exceptionally rare (here and in the main Sierra: the endangered Santa Marta Sabrewing) and another is erratic (Black-backed Thornbill). We have a good chance for the remainder, although species such as woodstars and antpittas present their own challenges.

We would like to take you to look for the Santa Marta Wren, Bearded Helmetcrest, and other high-elevation inhabitants of the Sierra, but there is no road into the central massif. It is also rough country, and not just topographically. For centuries the Sierra Nevada has been a place for people to hide from the law, and that has not changed. Fortunately, at our El Dorado, the road from Santa Marta ends in a series of communication towers and an army base, and the San Lorenzo ridge is a safe area. As for the main Sierra, the best we can do is hope for a clear morning from the ridge top so that we can photograph the snowy peaks that rise to over 19,000 feet (5700m). As for the security situation on the rest of the tour, these are other parts of Colombia that have been on the mend for years, and we will see the hustle and bustle of a resurgent Colombia. Our local agent has resident employees in the area and extensive experience bringing groups here, and we will get their reports should there be any alterations based on changes in the security situation.

"Endemics" does not just mean little, brown jobs (LBJs). The fifteen or so species that have long been considered endemic species are not only distinct, but often striking. White-tailed Starfrontlet is bold (both sexes, different as they are). Santa Marta Warbler (Vulnerable) is really different. Santa Marta Parakeet (Endangered), Santa Marta (Black-cheeked) Mountain-Tanager and Yellow-crowned Redstart (Whitestart) are variations on a theme, but they are fine themes. Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant (Endangered) and Santa Marta Antpitta (Vulnerable) aren't quetzals, but they are OK. Brown-rumped and Santa Marta tapaculos are emphatically LGJs (G = gray), but you can't have everything. But hey, the Rusty-headed Spinetail (Vulnerable) and Santa Marta Brush-Finch are nice. Another endemic (to Colombia, not the Sierra) is the distinctive Blossomcrown (Vulnerable), an understory hummingbird that requires some sharp eyes to find.

The factoid about "continental range-restricted birds" has the qualifier of "continental"; of course many oceanic islands have more. Of course the Sierra Nevada is an island of a different kind, a biogeographic island on land, hence the endemism, with over 60 named avian taxa. The Sierra de Perija, the somewhat depauperate northern extent of the main Andes and itself a center of endemism, is a mere 35 miles (60 kilometers) from the southwestern flank of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, and the full richness of the Eastern Andes is a further 140 miles (200 km) away. While the lowlands are certainly a barrier to avian dispersal, much remains to be understood about the birds of the Sierra. For instance, is the lack of bush-tanagers (as with the few species of *Tangara* tanagers) because these species are poor colonizers, or because despite the lushness of the Sierra's forests, not enough tanager essentials (fruiting trees, insects) have also colonized this continental island?

A visit to the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta will also allow us to play taxonomist. While we will look hardest for the endemic species accepted by all, we will look for everything on the mountain because we are birders who enjoy seeing as much as possible. In the process we will see montane taxa that range from being indistinguishable from populations in the Andes to those considered endemic species by all authorities. In between are some subspecies that seem particularly intriguing, differing in appearance and voice, such as Masked Trogon and Montane Woodcreeper, while in others the differences are noticeable, but seem "cosmetic," such as Tyrian Metaltail, Emerald Toucanet, and the extra-cinnamon Cinnamon Flycatcher. Other great tropical birds with local representatives include Sickle-winged Guan, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, and Swallow Tanager. In one intriguing case, two subspecies of Gray-breasted Wood-Wren occur, one above the other on the slopes; surely one must be a separate species, but should it be both? These are judgment calls, about which there will be many opinions; we will point out every bird we can find, and leave with not just a high concentration of checkmarks in front of range-restricted taxa, but an appreciation for the island biology of the Sierra.

While most of the region's birds had been found by the time of W. E. Clyde Todd & M. A. Carriker Jr.'s classic *The Birds of the Santa Marta Region of Colombia: A Study in Altitudinal Distribution* (1922), the age of discovery is not over. Santa Marta Screech-owl was just recently described and has been found around our lodge; it is most likely the mystery screech-owl on which Todd and Carriker reported on the basis of one distinctive specimen, but now its voice and appearance are well known, and we will try to see it. Niels Krabbe's recent studies, published in 2008, demonstrated that what had been treated as a subspecies of Ruddy Foliage-gleaner is a distinct species, being called Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner, and may even belong in a different genus, *Hylocryptus*; we will try hard for this endemic.

The affinities of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta are not just with the Andes to the south, but also with the cordillera of Venezuela. Some species also seen in the Venezuelan ranges are Band-tailed Guan, the stunning White-tipped Quetzal, Groove-billed Toucanet, Rusty-breasted Antpitta (n nominate), Venezuelan Tyrannulet (scarce here), Golden-breasted Fruiteater (also in the northwestern Andes), Yellow-legged and Black-hooded thrushes, and Black-headed Tanager. Many of these are characteristic of moist, not wet, forests.

The habitats of the Sierra are a complicated mix of dry and wet, depending on rainfall distributed in relation to exposure to moist winds. The upper parts of the San Lorenzo ridge catch the clouds, and support wet forest, but lower down, and generally to the south and west, many areas are drier. As you would expect, endemism decreases at lower



The Santa Marta Screech-Owl has only recently been described as a distinct species. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.

elevations, but the semi-deciduous forests at lower elevations do support some local and special birds, including Military Macaw (we need a lucky flyover, but they are around; Vulnerable), Coppery Emerald (erratic), Black-backed Antshrike, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, Rosy Thrush-Tanager (tough), and the gorgeous Golden-winged Sparrow. Other birds in these areas include Steely-vented Hummingbird, White-vented Plumeteer, White-bearded Manakin, Golden-fronted Greenlet, Long-billed Gnatwren, and Rufous-capped Warbler. More mesic areas of the lowlands and lower slopes support a variety of classic tropical species, including King Vulture, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Rufous-breasted and Rufous-and-white (great voice) wrens, and Crimson-backed Tanager. These lower slopes have suffered more than a century of abuse, and birds apparently lost from this region include a mystery tinamou (a Red-legged type; it must be somewhere still) and the critically endangered Blue-billed Curassow; we don't expect to see Crested Guans at all, which were seen by Carriker a century ago at a rate of 40-50 in a "half-day's tramp through the woods."

North American Migrants—The primary reason to visit Colombia is not to see North American migrants, but it can be a fun and interesting aspect of the trip. While the variety and numbers are not like parts of Central America, Colombia is still the home to a fair variety. In addition to the waterbirds at the coastal lagoons and marshes, some of the more regular species include Acadian and Great Crested flycatchers, Gray Kingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Tennessee, Yellow, Blackburnian, Prothonotary (arriving in August, already scarce by March), Black-and-white, and Canada warblers, Northern Waterthrush, American Redstart, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. North Americans tend to think of them as "our birds" because they breed around us, but most of them actually spend more time on the wintering grounds than on the breeding grounds. Most species have a distinct winter ecology, for instance Prothonotary Warblers love mangroves, Yellow Warblers occur in open habitats in the lowlands, and Blackburnians prefer montane forests above 5000 feet (1500m).

Mammals—Mammals are scarce on this trip. If we are lucky, in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta we could see Night Monkeys in the evening near the El Dorado lodge, and Venezuelan Red Howler Monkeys are often heard in the nearby forests. There is doubtless some species of squirrel in our future, and we will probably be lucky with something else (a Crab-eating Raccoon in the mangroves?), but fur will be in short supply in comparison with feathers.



The view from the San Lorenzo Ridge in the Sierra de Santa Marta is spectacular. Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.

Itinerary for Colombia: Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta

Day 1, Sat, 11 Jan. Arrival in Bogota. Most flights from North America arrive in the evening; transfers will be scheduled from the airport to our hotel in Bogota. Those who wish to adjust for a day or two, or visit Bogota attractions, such as the Gold Museum (Museo del Oro), Cerro Monserrate, or the Candelaria neighborhood, will need to schedule an earlier arrival. Night in Bogota (8600 feet).

Day 2, Sun, 12 Jan. A day around Bogota: Chingaza NP and the Sabana de Bogota. We will leave our hotel for the highlands, reaching 10,000 feet (3000m), which is the highest elevation of the tour. But we will move slowly, without

doing anything strenuous at all, and sleep lower, in Bogota, reducing the effects of an immersion in thin air. After a picnic breakfast and lunch and afternoon birding, we will return to Bogota. Night in Bogota.



Crested Ant-Tanager is a Colombian endemic that occurs in a small strip along the Andes in western Colombia. We'll try to find them in the Mariquita area. Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.

Day 3, Mon, 13 Jan. Bogota to Mariquita. Our morning is flexible, probably involving early hours in a marsh, a late-morning stop on the wooded slopes as we drive west (at Tabacal), dropping through the foothills. Evening will find us approaching the town of Libano. Night in Libano.

Day 4, Tue, 14 Jan. The Central Andes above Mariquita. Early morning will find us on the western slope of the Central Andes searching for rare birds in something even rarer, good forest (forest fragments will have to do; that is why the birds are endangered). Afternoon will find us having lunch in Libano, after which we will descend into the Magdalena Valley and bird another site. Somewhat late arrival to hotel. Night in Mariquita.

Day 5, Wed, 15 Jan. Mariquita to Rio Claro. We will leave early with a picnic breakfast to bird La Victoria (about 1h 15m from Mariquita). We will spend several hours in the morning at this site before covering a moderate distance up the Magdalena Valley, seeing the Rio Magdalena at a couple of points and crossing it near La Dorada before continuing on to Rio Claro. Birding in the afternoon depends on our arrival time. Night near Rio Claro.

Day 6, Thu, 16 Jan. Rio Claro. We will spend the day birding the various trails within the Rio Claro protected area. Night near Rio Claro.

Day 7, Fri, 17 Jan. Rio Claro to RNA Reinita Cielo Azul (Cerulean Warbler Reserve). We will have a last few hours to bird our way out of the reserve, then a drive to the town of San Vicente where we will transfer to 4WD vehicles for the ascent to our lodge. Night at RNA Reinita Cielo Azul (a simple, small lodge with private facilities and limited singles available).

Day 8, Sat, 18 Jan. RNA Reinita Cielo Azul. This is a challenging day because we need to gain and lose almost 2000 feet (600m) of elevation. The first half of it is through pastures with few birds, and we aim to save time and effort by using horses (and their local wranglers) that regularly take tourists up this hill. Once at the forest edge, we will still have a challenging climb on an old, cobbled road that can be very slippery when wet, which, in a forest like this, is often. **If you use a walking stick or benefit from resting on the perch of a folding stool, this is the place for them.** We will work our way steadily upward, trying for a variety of fine birds, and have a picnic lunch in the forest. In the afternoon we will bird near the lodge in hopes of finding Niceforo's Wren and Turquoise Dacnis. It is not a strenuous day (we don't go fast), but it is a tiring day that requires concentration to avoid slipping. Night at RNA Reinita Cielo Azul.

Day 9, Sun, 19 Jan. RNA Reinita Cielo Azul to Ocana. We will have a few hours during which we will look for birds such as Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird and Yellow-browed Shrike-Vireo that inhabit the shade coffee below the lodge. We will transfer by 4WD back down to San Vicente and head back out to the main highway, stopping and birding along the way in the coffee finca. We will aim for a picnic lunch (or possibly in the town of San Vicente) and then drive the rest of the afternoon (it is a moderate travel day) to Ocana, where we will have dinner. Night in Ocana.

Day 10, Mon, 20 Jan. Ocana and RNA Hormiguero de Torcoroma (Bushbird Reserve). An early start (of course!) takes us a short way up the hill to the small reserve that is home to the Recurve-billed Bushbird. The reserve is small and trails are good, but they can be quite steep for short stretches, and we may end up repeatedly visiting various bamboo patches in pursuit of the bushbird, alternating some short-but-steep ups and downs with standing around, so this could be

a good place for a stool and/or a walking stick. Win or lose on the bushbird, sometime after lunch we will switch venues to try some other habitats. Night in Ocana.

Day 11, Tue, 21 Jan. Ocana to Santa Marta, a travel day. This will be a strange day, but it works. We will leave Ocana at something like 4:30 a.m. and drive and drive and drive, stopping for a breakfast at a roadside restaurant, and reach Santa Marta in time for a late lunch. It makes sense to beat the steadily building traffic. We will use the late afternoon to look for Chestnut-winged Chachalaca at a nearby spot. Night in Santa Marta. **NOTE: A long travel day.**

Day 12, Wed, 22 Jan. Santa Marta to Riohacha. We will start the day with an exploration of the coastal habitats of Parque Nacional Isla Salamanca. After lunch in Santa Marta we will drive farther east along the coastal hills, watching the transition to steadily drier habitats. Late afternoon will find us near Riohacha, where we will have a start on the birds of the desert scrub and coastal lagoons. Night in Riohacha.

Day 13, Thu, 23 Jan. Riohacha to Minca. We will be up early to go the short way to our birding destination in the desert scrub. We will spend the morning there and drive back to Santa Marta and then drive up into the foothills, stopping for some of the deciduous forest birds that we may have missed. Night in Minca.

Days 14-15, Fri-Sat, 24-25 Jan. Minca to El Dorado Lodge. We will leave Minca early in 4x4s for the climb up to the El Dorado lodge. En route we will be birding and make several stops before arriving to our destination just before lunch. There will be plenty of time to enjoy the birds in the garden, where the photographic opportunities are excellent, as Crowned Woodnymphs and Lesser Violetears throng the hummingbird feeders, Blue-naped Chlorophonias and Black-capped Tanagers come to the fruit, and many gorgeous flowers are stationary targets. There are always a few Santa Marta Brush-Finches about, and the scraps behind the kitchen attract Sierra Nevada Brush-Finches. The lodge is in a small clearing and the forested road extends above and below, easy birding territory for those with more energy during breaks. We will make at least one outing in the evening for nightbirds and other creatures. Our second early morning will be spent up on San Lorenzo Ridge looking for several key endemics. Nights at El Dorado Lodge.

Day 16, Sun, 26 Jan. El Dorado Lodge to Santa Marta; connections home. Where we bird this morning will depend on what we are missing, but in general we will be working our way down the mountain, checking forest patches. The tour ends mid-day at the Santa Marta airport where participants can meet flights after 1:00pm to Bogota and connections home. Transfers can also be arranged through our office to the Barranquilla airport, 90 miles to the west of Santa Marta, where participants can meet flights departing after 3:00pm.

About Your Guide

Mitch Lysinger, a native of Florida, grew up birding the southern part of the state as well as other parts of the US before moving to Ecuador to work at La Selva Lodge (for two years) and then with Field Guides since 1997. Mitch is fascinated by bird sounds and has spent many years intensively birding and tape-recording the birds of Ecuador and other Neotropical countries on tours and in his free time. As a result (and hundreds of field-recorded cassettes later!), Mitch and John Moore teamed up and published the two-volume cassette, *The Birds of Cabanas San Isidro*, and then went on to tackle (with other co-authors) the multi-volume CD set—with four published and more to come—of the birds of Ecuador. An updated CD of *The Birds of San Isidro* by Mitch, John Moore, & Niels Krabbe was published in 2011.

Mitch has more recently become involved in the conservation scene in Ecuador, working closely with the Jocotoco Foundation on land purchase for the purpose of setting up new reserves in areas critically in need of protection. When not on tour, Mitch can often be found with his wife Carmen and their two children (Martin and Sara) at Cabanas San Isidro—their cloudforest lodge on the east slope of the Andes—where they see to the needs of their guests and continue to expand the lodge's already vast 1200-hectare reserve with the hopes of widening the existing forest corridor that bridges the gap between two large national parks.

“Mitch Lysinger! He is amazing in his ability to spot and hear birds, to call them in, to accommodate to each individual, and to stay cheerful, patient, and energetic.” D.S., Montane Ecuador

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for Mitch's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

Financial Information

FEE: \$7975 from Bogota and ending in Santa Marta or Barranquilla

DEPOSIT: \$800 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: September 13, 2019

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$650 [*Note: singles are very limited at Cerulean Warbler Reserve, some may have to share*]

LIMIT: 6

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Ruth Kuhl. Ruth will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

ACCOMMODATIONS: At two places we will stay at reserve lodges that are simple and small, with private facilities. Singles cannot be guaranteed at Cerulean Reserve and it may be impossible to accommodate everyone and some may have to share doubles; singles in that case will be assigned on a first come, first served basis. In two small cities, the hotels are simple but sufficient. The hotels in larger cities are good, and all higher elevation places have hot water. A couple of hotels in the lowlands (where it is hot) do not have hot water.

A NOTE ON ALTITUDE: We will have one day of birding near 10,000 feet (possibly to 12,000 feet or 3600m), beyond that most days are spent at 3000-8500 feet (900-2600m).

DOCUMENTS: A current passport valid six months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Colombia. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Colombian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: You may plan to arrive at any time on Day 1. On Day 16, flight departures can be made from Santa Marta after 1PM or Barranquilla after 3PM (it is a 2 hour drive from Santa Marta to Barranquilla). You may contact our office for assistance with flights if needed.

Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility. **For this tour, please limit your bags to one medium-sized duffel or suitcase and a carry-on.** Laundry will be available at most places where we stay more than one night.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$7975 for one person in double occupancy from Bogota. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 15, all meals from breakfast on Day 2 through lunch on Day 16, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader. Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if

you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Colombia, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$650. *Singles are very limited at Cerulean Warbler Reserve and cannot be guaranteed.* If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$800** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by September 13, 2019. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. **Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii.** We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance with InsureMyTrip (www.insuremytrip.com) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. Please let us know if you have any questions about this. If you purchase the insurance within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it

is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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