

ITINERARY  
**COLOMBIA: SANTA MARTA MOUNTAINS  
& CARIBBEAN COAST**  
*February 1 – 9, 2025*



*Santa Marta Parakeet is listed as endangered, largely due to habitat loss in its limited range. We'll look for them at San Lorenzo, where we've seen them on past tours.  
Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2025 Field Guides Colombia: Santa Marta Mountains & Caribbean Coast 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

*These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:*

- 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 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

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is reputed to be the tallest coastal mountain range and to have the highest concentration of continental range-restricted birds in the world. 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 planned tour to this area in 1992. Rooms with private facilities are set on luxurious forested slopes, 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, on the northwest flank of the Santa Marta range. All but three (Santa Marta Wren, Santa Marta Sabrewing, and Blue-bearded Helmetcrest) of the Sierra's endemic species occur on this ridge. We have a good chance for the remainder, although species such as woodstars and antpittas present their own challenges. The higher elevations of the central massif, where the paramos are home to the SM Wren and Helmetcrest, are on indigenous lands with restricted access and require a long, rough hike and basic camping to reach... which is why we don't plan to target them on the tour anytime soon. You understand, I'm sure. The SM Sabrewing has been a mystery bird for decades, with only a couple questionable records until 2022, when it was rediscovered on the southeast flank of the range in drier habitats. At this time, there is no tourism infrastructure there.

Fortunately, at our El Dorado Lodge, the road from Santa Marta ends in a series of communication towers and an army camp, and the San Lorenzo ridge is one of the few accessible areas with temperate cloudforest habitat. 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, such as Pico Colón (Colombia's highest peak), that rise to over 19,000 feet (5700m).

"Endemics" does not just mean little brown jobs (LBJs). The fifteen or so species that have long been considered endemic are not only distinct, but often striking. White-tailed Starfrontlet is bold (both sexes, different as they are). Santa Marta Warbler (Vulnerable) looks like the Three-striped Warbler of the main Andes, but is actually more closely related to Citrine Warbler. Santa Marta Parakeet (Endangered), Black-backed Thornbill, Black-cheeked Mountain-Tanager, and Yellow-crowned Redstart are variations on an Andean theme, but they are fine themes. Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant (Endangered), Sierra Nevada (formerly Rufous) Antpitta, and Santa Marta Antpitta (Vulnerable) aren't quetzals, but are too large to be LBJs... maybe MSBJs (=Medium Sized Brown Jobs)? Brown-rumped and Santa Marta tapaculos are emphatically LGJs (G = gray), but you can't have everything. On the other hand, the Rusty-headed Spinetail (Vulnerable), Sierra Nevada and Santa Marta brushfinches are quite attractive. And now, the distinctive genus of blossomcrowns has been split recently: Santa Marta Blossomcrown (Vulnerable) is an understory hummingbird that requires some sharp eyes to find, even in the planted gardens that are our best chance.



*Santa Marta Blossomcrown was recently elevated to full species status. We've seen these attractive hummingbirds at El Dorado, where we'll check for them in the flower gardens. Photograph by participant Bill Maynard.*

The factoid about "continental range-restricted birds" has the qualifier of "continental"; many oceanic islands have more endemics. Of course, the Sierra Nevada is an island of a different kind, a biogeographic island on land (similar idea to the "Sky Islands" of Arizona), hence the endemism, with over 60 named endemic avian taxa (that is: subspecies as well as species). The nearby 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 Santa Martas. For instance, is the lack of bush-

tanagers (along with the limited selection 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? How did some *paramo* and treeline species such as the tapaculos, Helmetcrest, and the Thornbill get here, but so many other widespread Andean species never make it (or made it but subsequently went extinct)?

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, Montane Woodcreeper, while in others the differences are noticeable but seem "cosmetic," such as Tyrian Metaltail, Southern 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, some of the Gray-breasted Wood-Wrens have been split and live one above the other on the slopes—the higher-elevation Hermit Wood-Wren, was granted full species level but the lower subspecies has yet to be split from other populations of Gray-breasted (although this may yet happen). 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 Santa Martas.



*Another recently recognized species is the Hermit Wood-Wren, which occurs at higher elevations than the related Gray-breasted Wood-Wren. Photograph by participant Steve Parrish.*

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. A recently-described (2017) species of screech-owl (conveniently named Santa Marta Screech-Owl) is 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 it is something we will endeavor to see. 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—again, rather thoughtfully named the Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner—and further genetic studies have merged it into *Clibanornis* with Canebrake Groundcreeper and a few other foliage-gleaners; we will search for this skulking endemic. A 2012 study elevated the Santa Marta (Long-tailed) Antbird to species status; this endemic is unusual among its siblings in inhabiting lower-elevation bracken rather than high-elevation bamboo. And in 2015, and again in 2024, a mysterious population of large antpitta that bears a strong similarity to Undulated Antpitta has appeared in the El Dorado area. It is not yet clear whether this is best considered a subspecies of Undulated or could be a new species... time will tell.

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 (nominant), Spectacled Tyrannulet (formerly part of Paltry 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 Santa Martas are a complicated mix of dry and wet, depending on rainfall distribution in relation to exposure to moist winds and elevation. The upper parts of the San Lorenzo ridge catch the clouds and support wet forest, but lower down, and generally to the north and east, many areas are drier. As you would expect, endemism decreases at lower 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 (an erratic altitudinal migrant), 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 Plumeleteer, White-bearded Manakin, Golden-fronted Greenlet, Long-billed Gnatwren, and Chestnut-capped Warbler (Recently split from the Middle American Rufous-capped). More mesic areas of the lowlands and lower slopes support a variety of classic tropical species, including King Vulture, Rufous-tailed Jacamar (but a form with a ridiculously long tail that is found on the arid Caribbean coast of Colombia and Venezuela), 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 that have retreated to remote patches (we won't be able to visit) include a mystery tinamou (a Red-legged type) and the critically endangered Blue-billed Curassow; nor do we expect to see Crested Guans, which were seen by Carriker a century ago at a rate of 40-50 in a "half-day's tramp through the woods."

*We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.*

## Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of walking (up to 3 miles per day), along roadsides and trails, some of which will be flat (in the lowlands), some of which will be somewhat steep, with loose gravel underfoot. Walking sticks and/or folding stools can be useful for participants who use them.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** Although this is the easiest of our Colombia offerings, we do drive for long periods several times on this tour. Participants should be able to step up (and step down) 10-12 inches to get into and out of our vehicles, whether small buses or 4x4 Land Cruisers. The road to El Dorado Lodge and San Lorenzo ridge is very rough, and although the drivers drive slowly, there is quite a bit of bouncing around. Our lodging in Riohacha is fairly basic but the best available. At El Dorado, the reserve lodge has private facilities, but singles cannot be guaranteed. Electricity can be intermittent away from Barranquilla (portable chargers can be useful). Our evening and day spent at Camarones in the Guajira desert can be hot (~95F) and sunny.
- **PACE:** After breakfast (a few as early as 4:00 a.m., usually at 5:00 a.m.), we bird until lunch time. We sometimes pack a picnic breakfast or lunch, to extend our time in the field. Normally, weather permitting, we bird after lunch or continue traveling to our next destination. On occasion, we may take a siesta of several hours after lunch, especially if weather is particularly hot or rainy.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures will range from the low 50s at night in higher elevations to the 90s (all in Fahrenheit) in lowlands during the day. Rain showers are possible, but expect baking sun in the lowlands.
- **ELEVATION:** We reach elevations of up to 8700 feet on this tour and spend four nights at an elevation of 6300 feet.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions. We switch vehicles between a small bus and 4x4 SUVs, so the rotation is not perfect.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Participants should be prepared to make comfort stops in nature, as there are simply no other options (away from our lodgings) on many sections of this tour's route.

- **OPTING OUT:** When we're staying at the El Dorado Lodge, participants can opt to sit out a day or a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

**Other considerations:** The reserve lodge is new, simple, and small, with private facilities; singles cannot be guaranteed (and are unlikely); electricity can be intermittent. A second series of rooms, called "Kogi Habs" (named for their similarity to the thatch and daub huts of the Kogi Indians of the region... but considerably more luxurious in their furnishing) and a dining hall, have been built on a ridge above the original lodge buildings, and there have been years when all meals have been offered at this higher dining hall. One must either hike uphill the 500 meters of track to get to this hall or ride in a 3-wheeled motorcar between the two parts of the lodge; headlamps are recommended. The management here has its hiccups, and there have been issues (power outages, dining facilities being updated and thus unavailable, or the 3-wheeler track being too muddy from rain to be passible), so it is not impossible that we will need to be flexible with which buildings are available for meals or rooms. The lodging in Camarones is fair, with A/C in most rooms, but some with a fan only, so ranking on the better end of "basic" (one night; warm, lowland climate), but it is just by the beach and should be restful and quiet. The hotel in Barranquilla is good, but can be noisy if the tour is set near Carnaval. In many ways it is like visits to neighboring countries 15 or 20 years ago, which were perfectly acceptable traveling and great birding.

The food is good, and with only a few brief exceptions, during all our tours individual health has been good. At the El Dorado lodge the menu will be fixed (but will take into account personal food issues). At restaurants in the larger cities and hotels, the usual choices are available, with an emphasis on good seafood. Breakfasts may be more basic but sufficient; early breakfasts are one of the last things to evolve in the ecotourism world; restaurant lunches and dinners are often huge. Overall, there is plenty of tasty food over this trip, and you won't lose weight unless you work at it.

The focus will be on the endemics and specialties, but 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. While many will take this tour because of the allure of "Santa Marta X, Y, & Z" and an opportunity to sample Colombia, this trip is several things, including a good introduction to the birds of South America (most Neotropical families are well represented in the region) and a species-packed escape from a week of work and the mud or snow of winter, and there is no requirement other than an enthusiasm for birding and the out-of-doors.

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 for the tour.

***This tour may be combined with Colombia's Marvelous Magdalena Valley, January 22 – February 1, 2025.***



*The San Lorenzo Ridge offers a spectacular view as well as some of the best birds! Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

## About the Birding Areas & Related Subjects



**Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta**—We have already had two pages on the subject, so there ain't much more to say. To set the scene a little more, the evergreen forests on the San Lorenzo ridge can be divided, very roughly, into "tropical" and "temperate" climates and the lodge is near the turnover of the two. We will bird several times on foot by walking along the road near the lodge and on its trails, but also go by vehicle a little lower to get even more into the "tropical" zone. Many endemics and specialties are only to be found one to two thousand feet higher, and we will drive up to the upper ridgeline at least once, possibly twice, and bird these higher elevations, where the forest is more stunted, humid (mossier) and the bamboo even thicker. Whereas the reserve and adjacent areas are hardly pristine, many areas are in fine shape and the forest intact for long stretches, making the scene for birding good for both quality and ambience. And the scattered clearings and disturbed areas are not without birding benefits, ranging from higher densities of fruiting shrubs to the types of habitats that a number of species prefer, such as the Santa Marta Antpitta, one of those "thicket" (not forest) antpittas. In 2016, two fires burned about 30% of the area that we normally bird on top of the ridge (and none of the lower areas). We still saw almost all the birds, and most also occur in smaller numbers in areas a little lower. We don't know what the long-term changes will be from the fire or a major hurricane that took a few trees in 2016, but believe that the birding will continue to be more than good enough for an exciting visit. Beware that the higher temperate portion of the San

Lorenzo ridge is the \*only\* accessible example of this habitat, and as such it is visited by many birders. This means that we may have to plan out our visits to avoid excessive overlapping with other groups, and some species may not be as responsive to our coaxing methods as we'd like. But we will make all efforts to bring them in!

**Parque Nacional Isla Salamanca: Coastal Habitats: mangroves and the marshes of the Río Magdalena**—For those who arrive a day early, we will offer an optional morning visit to this area near Barranquilla. Isla Salamanca is a barrier island separating the Caribbean from a huge lagoon, Ciénega Grande. It stretches from near Santa Marta to the mouth of the Río Magdalena near Barranquilla. We will try to get off the busy two-lane highway where possible to sample a variety of habitats including saltwater ponds, freshwater marshes, mangroves, scrubby woodland, and open fields. At one of the park stations, we will poke as far as we can into the mangroves, where a boardwalk has now been partially reconstructed. 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, the strange-voiced Groove-billed Anis of the region, Straight-billed Woodcreeper, Black-crested Antshrike, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, and Bicolored Conebill, not to mention wintering birds more familiar to us such as Prothonotary Warbler and Northern Waterthrush. Another hoped for species is the Critically Endangered Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird, known only from a couple of specimens from the mangroves of this area, and subsequently lost for more than a century; on several occasions, we, and others, have recently seen birds that appear to be this species, and not the nearby, and similar, Sapphire-throated Hummingbird, although some authorities think the two may be color morphs of the same species. Freshwater marshes along the Magdalena River on the inland side of the road have Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures, Snail Kites and Limpkins (must be apple snails galore out there), a variety of widespread herons and migrant ducks and shorebirds, Purple Gallinule, five species of kingfisher, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, and Pied Water-Tyrant. A rare, and perhaps seasonal or nomadic, visitor here is the local Northern Screamer, most range-restricted member of the family. Open areas with scattered trees host a variety of widespread species, such as Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Cattle Tyrant, and Bicolored and Stripe-backed wrens. 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*; split off as the endemic "Bronze-brown" Cowbird by some as it is tiny compared to North American forms).



*The Vermilion Cardinal is an endemic found only in the dry coastal scrub of the Caribbean coast in Colombia and Venezuela. Though they are uncommon, we should see them in the scrub along the coast. Photograph by guide Dan Lane.*

**Guajira Peninsula: Coastal Desert**—Along the shores of the Caribbean away from the moist lower slopes of the Santa Martas, little rain falls and a coastal desert is found. The main peninsula still has some 'wild west' elements, but it is feasible to travel as far east as the bustling little (noisy!) 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 (American Flamingos), although they are most often a distant shimmer of rose. 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 fairly common), Slender-billed and Pale-tipped tyrannulets, Glaucous Tanager (scarce), Orinocoan Saltator, and Vermilion Cardinal (uncommon; threatened by the pet trade). We may also see Blue-crowned Parakeet, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Red-billed Emerald (*nitens*), Pale-legged Hornero (*longirostris*), Black-crested Antshrike, (Northern) White-fringed Antwren (*intermedia*), the widespread Vermilion and Brown-crested flycatchers, Tropical Mockingbird, Tropical Gnatcatcher (*plumbiceps*), Scrub Greenlet, Pileated Finch, Olive-gray (formerly part of Grayish) Saltator, Yellow Oriole, and Trinidad Euphonia.

**North American Migrants**—Whereas the primary reason to visit Colombia is not to see North American migrants (although if you *really* don't want to see North American migrants, we suggest any of our Old World tours!), but it can be a fun and interesting aspect of the trip. Although the variety and numbers are not like parts of Central America, Colombia is still home to a fair representation. In addition to the waterbirds at the coastal lagoons and marshes, some of the more regular species include Great Crested Flycatcher, Gray Kingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Tennessee, Yellow, Blackburnian, Prothonotary (arriving in August), Mourning (skulky and hard to encounter, just as elsewhere), and Black-and-white warblers, Northern Waterthrush, American Redstart, Summer Tanager, 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 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). And who knows, we may even encounter a "vagrant" such as a Lesser Black-backed Gull or a Yellow-rumped Warbler!

**Mammals**—Mammals are scarce on this trip. At our lodge at El Dorado, the staff has recently been feeding Gray-handed Night Monkeys at dusk outside the dining room, 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? a Crab-eating Fox in the garden?), but fur will be in short supply in comparison with feathers.



*The Santa Marta Antpitta is one of our primary targets on the tour. Like many other antpitta species, these birds can be difficult to see, but park guards have habituated some to come to worming stations, allowing us to see them well.*

*Photograph by participant Lois Wood.*

## Itinerary for Colombia: Santa Marta Mountains & Caribbean Coast

**Day 1, Sat, 1 Feb. Arrival in Barranquilla.** This tour is scheduled around a direct flight from Miami to Barranquilla. Other flight schedules could involve an arrival in Bogota or Panama, with a flight to Barranquilla. Some may wish to arrive a day early, to ensure that winter weather does not prevent a timely arrival, to rest up, or to tour the historic city of Barranquilla. **If several arriving early are interested, we can offer a half-day of fun birding on Isla Salamanca; check with the office.** Transfers will be scheduled from the airport to our hotel in Barranquilla.

**Day 2, Sun, 2 Feb. Barranquilla to Camarones.** We will start the morning with a dawn search for Chestnut-winged Chachalaca in scraps of the woodland habitat not far (<30 min) from our hotel, and continue after breakfast with an exploration of the mangrove or marsh habitats of Parque Nacional Isla Salamanca en route to Santa Marta. After lunch we will continue eastward to the village of Camarones, stopping in the late afternoon for a first taste of birding in the coastal desert and perhaps a quick check of the lagoon. Once settled in our lodge, we may have time to see what we can find in the late afternoon and around dusk. This is the longest travel day of the trip, so we need to be thoughtful of how much time we spend at stops en route. Night in Camarones.

**Day 3, Mon, 3 Feb. Camarones to Minca.** We will take advantage of the calmer and cooler early-morning hours (a.k.a. an early start) for some birding around the lodge before breakfast, and then to explore a trail through more varied scrub and woodland patches nearby, aided by a guide from the local community. After lunch by the beach, and a thorough check of the lagoon, we will drive west along the coastal hills, watching the transition to steadily wetter habitats. Late afternoon will find us back near Santa Marta, where we will bid adieu to our bus in exchange for several 4WD SUV-style vehicles and climb a short ways into the foothills to our comfortable lodge (and its great hummingbird feeders) at the edge of the small town of Minca (2000 feet; 600m). Night in Minca.



**Day 4, Tue, 4 Feb. Minca to RNA El Dorado and El Dorado Lodge.** We will be up early for breakfast and an outing nearby, probably including a walk on a side road through second growth. Among our targets today will be the very attractive Golden-winged Sparrow, among other lower-elevation species of the foothills of the Santa Martas. Later we will head upslope for about two hours to the lodge at El Dorado, making a few stops along the way. Night at El Dorado Lodge.

**Days 5-7, Wed-Fri, 5-7 Feb. El Dorado Lodge and San Lorenzo ridge.** Our general routine will be an early (pre-dawn, perhaps 4:00 a.m., on the one or two mornings we go to the top of the ridge) departure; a simple breakfast (either at the lodge or as a picnic, depending on our destination for the day); a focused morning of birding; lunch at the lodge; a break after lunch; and easy birding in the late afternoon, followed by happy hour and the list and dinner at the lodge

There will also be plenty of time to enjoy the birds in the garden, where the photographic opportunities are excellent, as Crowned Woodnymphs (*colombica*) and Lesser (formerly Green) Violetears through the hummingbird feeders, rarer hummingbirds are realistic (White-tailed Starfrontlet, Santa Marta Woodstar, and, exceptionally, Black-backed Thornbill), Blue-naped Chlorophonias (endemic yellow-fronted form *psittacina*) and Black-capped Tanagers come to the fruit, and many gorgeous flowers are stationary targets. There are always a few Santa Marta Brushfinches about, and the scraps behind the kitchen attract Sierra Nevada (part of the former Stripe-crowned, now split up into a plethora of species) Brushfinches (*basilicus*); the folks that live there can be expected to say that the Black-fronted Wood-Quail (Vulnerable) were there yesterday, and they undoubtedly were! From 2014-2018, yesterday was today, and the wood-quail were even coming to a feeder at the corner of the lodge. Then in 2019, our only wood-quail came as distant duets from farther downhill. Some years, we only hear them, so don't get your hopes up too much. Sickle-winged and Band-tailed guans can be rather raucous around the clearing and gang up at feeders and the composting area. In other words, it can be boom or bust in certain departments, but this is always a wonderful place. 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, and there are a couple of trails on which one or two quiet birders can surprise Lined Quail-Dove or Gray-throated Leaf-tosser. Nights at El Dorado Lodge.

**Day 8, Sat, 8 Feb. El Dorado Lodge to Barranquilla.** 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 for the morning. Following lunch and a short break at the Hotel Minca, we will finally exit the mountains and drive west along the coast from Santa Marta to Barranquilla, arriving around 5:00 p.m., with time to re-pack for flights tomorrow. Our day will conclude with a farewell dinner at a pleasant restaurant near the hotel. Night in Barranquilla.

**Day 9, Sun, 9 Feb. Barranquilla to Home.** We will transfer to the airport after breakfast at the hotel.

## About Your Guide

**Dan Lane** was an active birder in his home state of New Jersey until he moved to Louisiana to pursue a master's studying Neotropical birds at Louisiana State University. By 1999, he'd received his degree and participated in three LSU expeditions to Peru and Ecuador, discovering a new species of bird (Scarlet-banded Barbet) along the way. His increasing experience with Peruvian avifauna landed Dan co-authorship on the Birds of Peru--alongside his childhood heroes Ted Parker and John O'Neill. Meanwhile, his continuing fieldwork has resulted in uncovering additional new species to science. His favorite areas are in tropical Latin America (Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia), but on occasion he leads tours to other corners of the globe and of course near his home in Louisiana.

*“Dan Lane is superior in all aspects as a guide—excellent recognition of bird sounds, patient in drawing birds in for views, able to relate to group members with relaxed courtesy and helpfulness. We rate Field Guides the highest.” J.N. & E.H., Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for Dan's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

## Financial Information

**FEE:** \$4575 from Barranquilla

**DEPOSIT:** \$450 per person

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** August 5, 2024

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$650 (*Singles at the El Dorado Lodge are limited.*)

**LIMIT:** 8

**All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (which includes a booster for those eligible to have one).** Note too, that many travel destinations may still require proof of vaccination for entry to bypass testing delays or quarantine, and that entry requirements for a destination can change at any time. Proof of a booster shot, too, may be a requirement for some travel destinations.

## Other Things You Need to Know

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

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** Accommodations range from comfortable to basic, depending on the remoteness of the area. We strive to pick the best hotels/motels, but in some locations there are limited options. Our very comfortable lodging in Barranquilla is in a high-rise hotel, complete with in-house restaurant, bar, and swimming pool. Our lodging in Riohacha is fairly basic but the best available. At the scenic El Dorado, the reserve lodge is rustic but with private facilities, hot water, and electricity.

**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:** There are direct flights from Miami to Barranquilla and flights via Panama City or Bogota on other carriers. You may plan to arrive at any time on Day 1 and depart at any time on Day 9. Many may wish to arrive a day early to avoid travel delays from winter weather, etc.; if more than a few are interested, we can arrange a local birding excursion.

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.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** The **tour fee** is \$4575 for one person in double occupancy from Barranquilla. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 8, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 9, 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 at the El Dorado Lodge are limited.* 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, please contact us at [fieldguides.com/contact-us/](https://fieldguides.com/contact-us/). Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$450** per person, or see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by August 5, 2024. We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 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.

**TOUR LIMITS:** Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases, one seat in the van or bus will be taken by the guide in training. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

**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 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (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 that 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 airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. 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, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (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 information from us 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. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

**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 thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

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 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. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible 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.**

DFL 06/24;