

COLOMBIA: THE CENTRAL & WESTERN ANDES HUMMINGBIRDS, ANTPITTAS, TANAGERS, AND ANDEAN ENDEMIC

JUNE 10-25, 2013

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Colombia is often referred to as the ultimate birding destination, the “holy grail” for birders. There are two reasons for this; one being that more birds have been recorded in Colombia than in any other country on the planet, and the second being that, for two decades, civil unrest has made visiting remote areas within the country almost impossible. During that time, birders have looked longingly at the illustrations in the 836 page Birds of Colombia, (often referred to as the “bible” for Colombian birds), and longed for the chance to see some of these remarkable birds. And now that opportunity has arrived. Colombia has changed dramatically in the past few years and birders worldwide are now flocking to this beautiful country in hopes of getting a look at some of the approximately seventy endemic species found here.

Colombia’s diverse topography is indeed inspiring with soaring mountains, snow-capped volcanoes, cloud-filled valleys, savannas and rainforests—and its magnificent birdlife ranging from tiny hummingbirds (there are more than 160 species!) to gaudy parrots, toucans, fruitcrows and an almost unbelievable palate of colorful tanagers. This new trip is a perfect complement to our popular Magdalena Valley and Santa Marta tour which we offered for the first time beginning in early 2009. While that trip features several lower elevation sites, the present trip focuses on higher and cooler elevations with more spring-like temperatures. This trip concentrates on endemics, as well as hummingbirds, antpittas and colorful tanagers, which are a hallmark of mid-elevations in the Andes. As an added bonus, one site now has an antpitta “feeding station” where two to three species of antpittas come regularly and others occasionally. Another site offers an excellent possibility of seeing the rare Cauca Guan, a species once feared extinct. This area also boasts one of the highest known concentrations of Red-ruffed Fruitcrows, a species that is typically scarce and hard to find elsewhere. At another site, which has some of the most beautiful cloud forest in Colombia, our focus will be on rare Bangia tanagers (Gold-ringed and Black-and-gold) and other endemics. At two other sites we will be searching for endangered parrots including the very rare and endemic Indigo-winged Parrot, at one site and the beautiful and very local (and nearly endemic) Yellow-eared Parrot at another. At both sites we should have the opportunity to see plenty of other exciting highland birds.

About this trip: Colombia lags behind other Latin American countries in tourism infrastructure but we’re happy to report that this is changing rapidly. Also, Colombia’s extremely mountainous terrain and heavy rainfall complicate tour planning. Note, however, that virtually all sites on this trip are at cooler highland sites where temperatures are pleasant. Birding will take place along roads and trails

Colombia: The Central & Western Andes, Page 2

where walking conditions may vary greatly; sometimes easy, sometimes involving walking over or around extensive landslides, and on steep, slippery mountain trails where a walking stick is helpful. On this tour most walking is relatively easy (and downhill as much as possible) but at the Montezuma site walking distances are long and clients need to be able to walk at least six miles on trails or jeep tracks that are at times steep, rough and require both uphill and downhill hiking. The Montezuma section of the trip is fairly physical and in order for us to reach at least one upper elevation site we will use horses for a mostly predawn, one and a half to two hour ride to this upper zone area (we walk back). In general, birding on this trip will take place on foot (take note that footing at some of these sites may be uneven and/or slippery).

Before determining if this trip is a proper match for you please consider the following issues:

- There are some moderately long travel times between sites (up to 3-5 hours) which are mostly in a comfortable, air-conditioned bus. Also, most drives are on curvy mountain roads (it may seem as if there are no straight roads at all). We will also be using 4x4 vehicles (jeeps) at three sites (Cerro Tatamá National Park, Manizales, and Jardín) where roads are often muddy and poorly maintained. These back roads also can also be dusty at times. Because of high rainfall in the Colombian Andes, landslides (and hence delays or detours) can be major and on-going issues. Truck traffic is particularly heavy on some mountain roads and is often complicated by extensive road construction. Consequently, moving from site to site often takes longer than one anticipates (although occasionally we are pleasantly surprised). In some areas the good birding sites are separated by considerable distance because of deforestation or habitat disturbance.
- Food is generally good and meals generous (often too large and with large portions of meat) but we have had relatively few problems with health issues related to food and water and, in fact, tap water is fine in Bogotá (although we strongly recommend bottled water everywhere else). If you enjoy spicy foods bring your own hot sauce. Hotel breakfasts are usually light (as usual in pre-dawn hours) but we supplement them and also provide snacks for mid-morning breaks.
- You should be in reasonably good physical condition to enjoy this trip, be able to walk both uphill and downhill for extended periods on roads or trails at elevations of 400-8500 feet or higher⁵⁶. Above all, you should bring a sense of adventure to this trip because unexpected detours or other events may necessitate some last minute rearrangement of the itinerary.
- Security is fine in all of the sites that we will visit on this trip and, while security issues remain in remotes areas (mostly along international borders), this should not be an issue on the present route.
- Finally, this trip will focus on Colombia's endemic species, some of which are uncommon, endangered and difficult to find. We won't find them all, but we will find as many as we can, and in the process, we will see a nice cross-section of Colombia's Andean birds and wildlife. You also will see a wonderful sample of the beauty of Colombia's fabled Andes where all their delicious coffee is grown and where so many beautiful birds occur.

NOTE: In the itinerary that follows, endemic bird species (and some near-endemics) are noted in boldface type.

June 10, Day 1: Arrival in Bogotá at El Dorado International Airport (airport code BOG). Participants may arrive Bogotá anytime today. Upon arrival you will be met and transferred to our nearby hotel for the night. Bogotá is a bustling city of more than seven million, with mountains visible almost all around, signature red-tile roofed buildings, and a gold museum that boasts an exquisite array of pre-Colombian gold artifacts that are presented in a series of stunningly beautiful displays. In the past few decades, the city has transformed its internal transportation system with sleek, rapid double buses that enter and exit elevated stations and are capable of loading and unloading rapidly. The views of the imposing eastern range of the Andes will be spectacular from almost anywhere in the city but Bogotá, at an elevation of 8,600 ft, is high enough that visitors may want to rest and relax upon arrival. Because of the elevation, and because there are so many things to do in Bogotá (both birding and cultural activities), many people have opted to arrive a day or two early. For your local pre-trip activities we recommend Diana Balcázar, an English-speaking Bogotá native who conducts both birding trips and city tours. You should contact her directly for these arrangements at diana.balcazar@etb.net.co or azulejo500@hotmail.com. For assistance with hotel reservations and transfers for early arrivals please contact the VENT office.

NIGHT: Hotel Dann Norte, Bogotá, dept. of Cundinamarca

June 11, Day 2: Early morning flight from Bogotá to Cali. Day of birding in Cauca Valley. Once we arrive in Cali we'll load into our bus with plans to make several birding stops in the middle Cauca valley today. One of our first and most important sites will be Lago de Sonso, an old oxbow lake formed from the Cauca River. The reserve of about 600 hectares is close to the city of Buga and about an hour's drive from the Cali International airport. Almost all of the natural vegetation of the valley has been replaced with agricultural crops including sugar cane, rice, cotton and other products so the Sonso area provides one of the few sites where good natural habitat remains. It is a large and important wetland and also has fairly extensive woodland and plantation-like habitat. Overall the area provides an excellent introduction to birdlife of rural farmland in southwestern Colombia. A sample of species here includes Black-bellied and Fulvous whistling-duck, Horned Screamer (the only population west of the Andes), Spotted Rail (scarce or difficult to see), Dark-billed Cuckoo, Striped Cuckoo, Dwarf Cuckoo, Little Cuckoo, **Spectacled Parrotlet** (near endemic), Black-throated Mango, Steely-vented and Rufous-tailed hummingbird, Common (Gray) Potoo, Limpkin, Purple Gallinule, Common (Moorehen) Gallinule, Wattled Jacana, Snail Kite, Northern Crested Caracara, Yellow-headed Caracara, numerous egrets and herons, Bare-faced and Green ibis, **Grayish Piculet** (endemic), Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Jet Antbird, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Sooty-headed Tyrannulet, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Pied Water-Tyrant, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, **Apical Flycatcher** (rare), Cinereous Becard, Barred Antshrike, Pale-breasted Spinetail, Black-billed Thrush, Thick-billed Euphonia, Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, Saffron Finch, Yellow Oriole, Red-breasted Blackbird. More recently Red-capped Cardinals (an exotic from Brazil and Argentina) have been found here (doubtless escaped cagebirds).

We also may stop at a nearby site in the foothills of the Western Andes. Known as Bosque Yotoco, the area lies at about 1200-1400 m elevation and the forest is humid but a little too dry to be classified as cloud forest. For such a small reserve, a remarkable number of interesting and range-restricted species have been reported here. Birds of the reserve include **Cauca Guan** (endemic), **Grayish Piculet** (endemic), Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Collared Trogon, Scarlet-fronted Parakeet, White-necked Jacobin, Western Emerald, White-vented Plumleteer, Chestnut-crowned Gnateater (scarce), Golden-faced Tyrannulet, White-throated Spadebill, White-bearded Manakin, Striped Manakin, **Bar-crested Antshrike** (near endemic), Plain Antvireo, Guira Tanager, Orange-bellied Euphonia, **Multicolored Tanager** (endemic but scarce here), Golden, Bay-headed, Scrub and Blue-necked tanager, **Dacnis Tanager** (endemic but rare here), Blue Dacnis, Green Honeycreeper, and Yellow-backed Oriole among numerous others.

In the afternoon we should have time for one relatively brief but important stop in the dry, rain-shadow valley of the Río Dagua. Here the vegetation changes dramatically, from humid forest at higher elevations to desert scrub within just a few kilometers. This happens because the valley makes an abrupt bend to the south and intervening high mountain ridges block the flow of warm, moist (east-flowing) Pacific coast air from reaching the valley which is lower in elevation and hotter than the ridges above. Consequently the cooled air passing over

Colombia: The Central & Western Andes, Page 4

the ridges warms as it descends into the upper Dagua Valley and rarely reaches a temperature cool enough to cause precipitation. This local climatic system has persisted for thousands of years and a distinctive flora and fauna now occupies this unusual valley which is flanked, at higher elevations, both to the west and the east by cloud forest. We may be able to add a few arid-country species, among them Common Ground-Dove (very common), **Bar-crested Antshrike** (near-endemic), Bran-colored Flycatcher, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Vermilion Flycatcher (common), **Apical Flycatcher** (endemic), **Dagua Thrush** (scarce), Ultramarine Grosbeak, Streaked Saltator, Scrub Tanager and possibly **Grayish Piculet** (endemic). We hope to arrive at our lovely and very comfortable country hotel (about 1850 m) a little before nightfall. Temperatures here are usually cool and pleasant.

NIGHT: Hotel Faro (near “El 18”), department of Valle del Cauca

June 12, Day 3: Early morning departure for day-long trip into the Río Anchicayá Valley with birding stops beginning along the lower portion of the road. Once regarded as one of the top birding roads in the world, this area has not been much visited by birders for nearly two decades. With security no longer an issue, birders are returning to this exciting area. We’ll depart quite early because it is a fairly long drive to the lower portion of the road (all of the upper section is now paved). We’ll do most of our birding between ca. 300 and 550 m elevation, where we’ll be looking for Chocó-Pacific species. A sampling of species here could include Barred Hawk, Blue-headed, Mealy and Rose-faced parrot, White-whiskered Hermit, Rufous-breasted Hermit, Blue-chested and Purple-chested hummingbird, Green Thorntail, Purple-crowned Fairy, Chocó Trogon, Chocó Toucan, Chestnut-mandibled Toucan, Spot-crowned Barbet (common), Broad-billed Motmot, Chestnut-backed and Immaculate antbird, Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher, Pacific Flatbill, Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, Lemon-browed Flycatcher, White-thighed Swallow, Slate-throated Gnatcatcher, Bay Wren, Golden-bellied Warbler, Tawny-crested, Dusky-faced, Golden-chested, Scarlet-browed and Scarlet-and-white tanager, and Black-winged Saltator. This also an excellent area for many small *Tangara* tanagers, including, Blue-necked, Golden-hooded, Rufous-winged, Bay-headed, Blue-whiskered, Silver-throated, Rufous-throated and Gray-and-gold tanager. Other species include Pied Puffbird, Long-tailed Tyrant, Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireo, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Yellow-collared Chloroponia, Ochre-breasted Tanager, Russet-backed Oropendola, and Scarlet-rumped Cacique among many more. We’ll return to the the El 18 area tonight.

NIGHT: Hotel Faro (near “El 18”), department of Valle del Cauca

June 13, Day 4: Cloud forests along crest of Western Andes. We plan to spend the morning in the vicinity of our hotel (ca. 1850-1900 m el) and in nearby highland sites where there are good opportunities to see the endemic and much-sought **Multicolored Tanager** (endemic) as well as many other species. We also will have access to hummingbird feeders (a house and later a restaurant) where several species of hummingbirds are sure to be present and some are so habituated to the presence of humans that they will alight on one’s fingers to sip nectar. Examples of species in this area include Gray Tinamou (most likely only a voice), **Chestnut Wood-Quail** (endemic and likely another voice), **Colombian Chachalaca**, (endemic), Scarlet-fronted Parakeet, Barred Parakeet (seasonal), Red-headed Barbet, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Uniform Antshrike, Montane Woodcreeper, Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, Streak-capped Treehunter, Streaked Xenops, Nariño Tapaculo, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Marble-faced and Variegated bristle-tyrant, Cinnamon Flycatcher, Golden-crowned Flycatcher, Andean Solitaire (beautiful song), Three-striped Warbler (common), Rusty Flowerpiercer, and Orange-bellied Euphonia. Colorful *Tangara* tanagers are apt to dominate whenever we encounter mixed species flocks and likely species include Saffron-crowned, Golden-naped, **Metallic-green** (near endemic), Golden, Bay-headed, Black-capped, and Beryl-spangled as well as Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager and Dusky Bush-Tanager. Hummingbirds are star attractions at feeders and we may spend some time at two sites where the hummingbird show should be good. Some of the species possible in this area are White-necked Jacobin, Green Violetear, Brown Violetear, Black-throated Mango, Blue-headed Sapphire (seasonal), Booted Racket-tail, Speckled Hummingbird, Andean Emerald, Bronzy Inca, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Buff-tailed Coronet Long-tailed Sylph, and Purple-throated Woodstar. After lunch today we’ll pack up and retrace a portion of route back down the Cauca Valley toward the city of Armenia and on toward Pereira and the nearby Otún-Quimbaya sanctuary.

NIGHT: La Suiza Lodge, Otún Quimbaya Sanctuary (near Pereira), dept. of Risaralda

June 14, Day 5: Otún Quimbaya Sanctuary. We will have a full (and busy) day, as well as a few hours tomorrow morning, to enjoy this pleasant area. Our focus here will be on endemic species, in particular the **Cauca Guan (E)**, **Chestnut Wood-Quail (E)**, **Stile's Tapaculo (E)**, and **Crested Ant-Tanager (E)**. The Cauca Guan, once feared extinct, is common here and usually easy to see, the wood-quail common but not so easy to see, and the ant-tanager likely confined to sites along the river and of lower priority because we will likely see it at our next site as well. The endemic **Multicolored Tanager** also occurs here but it will take some luck to find this scarce and fast-moving species. Birds around the lodge buildings include Common Pauraque (at night), Great Antshrike, Whiskered Wren, Flame-rumped Tanager (here with scarlet rump), Highland Hepatic-Tanager, and Golden-rumped Euphonia, as well as Black Phoebe, and on the nearby river the Torrent Tyrannulet, and Torrent Duck. Good forest (some of it a mix of plantation species) is found along the road, which continues upward to circa 2,000 m (6,600 ft.) and will be the focus of much of our attention. Wattled Guans also occur here, although they are generally quite difficult to see. Other species include Tawny-bellied Hermit, Greenish Puffleg, Booted Racket-tail, Collared Inca, Golden-headed Quetzal, Blue-crowned (formerly Highland) Motmot, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, **Red-ruffed Fruitcrow** (remarkably "common" here and we could easily see a dozen or more), Moustached Puffbird, Azara's Spinetail, Streak-capped Treehunter, Slaty Antwren, and Green (Inca) Jay. Mixed species flocks here often include Masked Trogon, Streaked Xenops, Montane Foliage-gleaner, Marble-faced and Variegated bristle-tyrant, Rufous-breasted Flycatcher, Plumbeous-crowned Tyrannulet, Pale-edged Flycatcher, Andean Solitaire, Golden-fronted Redstart, Blue-naped Chlorophonia, Orange-bellied Euphonia, Masked Flowerpiercer, Black-winged Saltator, and various *Tangara* tanagers including Golden, Metallic-green (scarce), Beryl-spangled, Saffron-crowned, and Black-capped. Forest trails are good places to search for more reclusive species such as Moustached Antpitta, Sharpe's Wren, Chestnut-breasted Wren (common but usually the devil to see), Pale-eyed Thrush, and Russet-crowned Warbler. One or more species of *Megascops* owls also occur here and we have, on occasion, seen oilbirds foraging in the forest at night. We are certainly unlikely to see all of these species mentioned here but we should be able to find a good number of them and we are confident you will enjoy this pleasant area.

NIGHT: La Suiza Lodge, Otún Quimbaya Sanctuary (near Pereira), dept. of Risaralda

June 15, Day 6: Early morning in the Otún Quimbaya reserve followed by an overland trip to Tatamá National Park (dept. of Risaralda). Our destination today is a small country lodge located close to the edge of beautiful Chocó-Pacific cloud forest. There will be an overland drive from Pereira west across the Cauca Valley (here rather narrow) and up the eastern flank of the Western Andes through the small towns of La Virginia and Apía to Pueblo Rico. For the last hour of the trip the road has some poorly-maintained stretches where 4-wheel drive vehicles will be needed. It will likely be late afternoon before we reach the lodge. The lodging is basic—essentially a small country house—with shared bathroom facilities but the facility has been recently remodeled updated. The rooms are very clean, the food excellent and the owner (a relatively young woman recently widowed) is extremely gracious and eager to please. We feel lucky to have located this site because, although the lodging facilities are small, the birding opportunities here are spectacular and we believe that the birding far out-weighs a few inconveniences. Birding trails begin almost at the lodge and are about 4800 ft feet elevation (ca. 1,450 m). The climate here will be cool and decidedly humid as this region receives high rainfall (close to 4,000 mm) spread fairly evenly through the year.

NIGHT: Reserva Natural Cerro Montezuma, (near Pueblo Rico), dept. of Risaralda

June 16-17, Days 7-8: Reserva Natural Cerro Montezuma and Tatamá National Park. This small reserve (designed as such by the local community) lies adjacent to Cerro Tatamá National Park and much of our birding will be within Cerro Tatamá National Park itself. The park figures large in the history of Colombian ornithology because it was an early and important collecting site, with a long list of Chocó-Pacific birds first known from this area. This is a rainy region lying on the cusp of the famous super-wet Chocó-Pacific region, but mornings tend to be clear even here. On the first day, weather permitting, we'll leave very early by vehicle for the approximately hour and a half to two-hour ride up to the end of the road where we will begin our birding

Colombia: The Central & Western Andes, Page 6

activities. We'll also explore the lower part of the reserve at ca. 1,300-1,600 m, which is in the vicinity of the house where we will be staying. And, at the house itself, we will be quite close to beautiful wet, mossy forest and hummingbird feeders at our guest house usually attract several interesting species including White-tailed Hillstar and Velvet-purple Coronet. The list of birds in these upper and lower zones is almost a complete list of montane Chocó-Pacific species including many that have been seen by only a small number of birders previously. Among them are two endemic *Bangsia* tanagers, the **Black-and-gold Tanager**, and **Gold-ringed Tanager**. At the very highest elevations the **Munchique Wood-Wren** has been reported (a species first discovered in southwestern Colombia by Hilty in the late 1970s but not described until 2003) as well as the Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer, a species heretofore known from only a handful of high elevation sites in the Western Andes. Weather permitting, we will reach a mountaintop where we have a good chance to see this rare species as well as many other species of higher elevations. And, another recently described species, the **Chocó Vireo** (near endemic) also has been found here but is scarce and local. A sample of species that occur close to where we will stay and higher include: Barred Hawk, **Chestnut Wood-Quail** (endemic), Sickle-winged Guan, Blue-fronted Parrotlet, **Cloud-forest Pygmy-Owl**, Western Emerald, Green-crowned Woodnymph, Brown Inca (fairly common seasonally), White-tailed Hillstar (rivers), **Empress Brilliant** (near endemic of higher elevations), Greenish Puffleg, Velvet-purple Coronet, Violet-tailed Sylph, Purple-throated Woodstar, Crested and Golden-headed Quetzal, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, **Fulvous-dotted Treerunner** (near endemic of upper elevations), Lineated Foliage-gleaner, Uniform Treehunter, Streak-capped Treehunter, Plain Antvireo, **Bicolored Antvireo** (local), the still undescribed **Alto Pisones** (name not confirmed), **Tapaculo** (likely also endemic), Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant, Bronze-olive Pygmy-Tyrant, Smoky Bush-Tyrant, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Green-and-black Fruiteater, **Orange-breasted Fruiteater** (near endemic), Golden-breasted Fruiteater, Scaled Fruiteater Olivaceous Piha, Club-winged Manakin, **Beautiful Jay** (scarce near endemic), **Black Solitaire** (near endemic), **Glistening-green Tanager** (near endemic), **Multicolored Tanager** (endemic), **Indigo Flowerpiercer** (near endemic), Golden Tanager, Saffron-crowned Tanager, Golden-naped Tanager, Silver-throated Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, Scrub Tanager, Blue-necked Tanager, Black-capped Tanager, Beryl-spangled Tanager, Flame-faced Tanager, Rufous-throated Tanager (this is an astonishing 11 species of *Tangara* found here!), Blue-winged, and Black-chinned mountain-tanager, Dusky Bush-Tanager, Yellow-throated Bush-Tanager, **Crested Ant-Tanager** (endemic and surprisingly common here), Tricolored Brush-Finch, Black-winged Saltator, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia, and Thick-billed and Orange-bellied euphonia.

NIGHTS: Reserva Natural Cerro Montezuma (near Pueblo Rico), dept. of Risaralda

June 18, Day 9: Tatamá National Park to the city of Manizales. We will have an hour or two of birding early this morning before packing and meeting our 4-wheel drive jeep transportation back to the main road where we will continue by bus to the lovely city of Manizales which is spread along a high ridge. Depending upon our arrival time in Manizales we may have time for some late afternoon birding close to the city or even in a city park. Manizales lies at ca. 1,500 m elevation and has a pleasant spring-like temperature.

NIGHT: Hotel Varuna, Manizales, dept. of Caldas

June 19, Day 10: Río Blanco Reserve, Department of Caldas. This splendid reserve, located less than thirty minutes from the city of Manizales, is owned by Aguas de Manizales, a municipal water company. A guest house and other visitor facilities are operated by the Fundación Gabriel Arango Restrepo (FUNDEGAR). The area features several excellent forest trails with good mixed species flocks, well-attended hummingbird feeders and, more recently, several remarkable antpitta feeding sites where Chestnut-crowned Antpitta and **Brown-banded Antpitta (E)** are regular visitors and Chestnut-naped Antpitta, Bicolored Antpitta and Slate-colored Antpitta also are likely. Other species that regularly visit the antpitta feeding sites include Gray-browed Brush-Finch (formerly Stripe-headed Brush-Finch but now split into six species) and Green-and-black Fruiteater (no kidding!). Other species have also turned up periodically at this feeding site, making it an exciting must-do destination at the Río Blanco reserve. The reserve protects forest over a wide elevation range from 2,000 to 3,400 m (circa 6,600-11,200 ft.) and is regarded as one of the top birding spots in the central Andes of Colombia. Endemics, however, are only a small part of the appeal of this reserve as many rare other infrequently-seen species also occur here including Rusty-faced Parrot, Golden-plumed Parakeet, Black-collared

Jay, Powerful Woodpecker, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Bicolored Antpitta, Moustached Antpitta (rare), Ocellated Tapaculo (which occasionally visits the antpitta feeding stations). Chestnut-naped Antpitta, Black-billed Peppershrike, Golden-faced Redstart, Plushcap, and two prized species, the Red-hooded Tanager, and Masked Saltator, which are scarce, very local and much-sought by birders throughout their range. Other species, including a number of rare or locally distributed ones, include: Tyrannine Woodcreeper, Montane and Lineated Foliage-gleaner, Rusty-winged Barbtail, Pearled Treerunner, Dusky Piha, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Grass-green and White-capped Tanager, Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager, and (Northern) Mountain-Cacique. During the year, hummingbird feeders attract over ten species including Green Violet-ear, Sparkling Violet-ear, Speckled Hummingbird, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Mountain Velvetbreast, Bronzy Inca, Collared Inca, Buff-tailed Coronet (normally common), Tourmaline Sunangel, Long-tailed Sylph, and White-bellied Woodstar. Patches of bamboo, especially at higher elevations, are frequented by Black-capped Tyrannulet, Sharp's Wren, Citrine Warbler, Black-capped, Oleaginous, Superciliaried, and Black-eared hemispingus, Plushcap, and Yellow-billed Cacique. Trails inside the forest harbor numerous skulking species for patient observers including Ocellated, Blackish, and Spillman's tapaculos. At night Rufous-banded Owl and White-throated Screech-Owl can be heard in the forests.

NIGHT: Hotel Varuna, Manizales, dept. of Caldas

June 20, Day 11: Mountain forest near Manizales, department of Caldas. We will begin our day high on the slopes of the Nevado del Ruiz today and continue with a long descent through a forested valley, ending eventually almost back in the city of Manizales. Weather permitting (and weather is always a factor in these high elevation regions) we could amass a long list of species today. Much of the region we will traverse is similar to the Río Blanco forest we visited yesterday although we will begin at considerably higher elevation. Thus, almost all of the species mentioned yesterday also occur in the valley we will visit today. In particular, we'll be looking for some that occur above the elevations we visited yesterday. Among them are Viridian Metaltail, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Mountain Velvetbreast, Golden-breasted Puffleg, Shining Sunbeam, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Bar-bellied Woodpecker, Tyrannine Woodcreeper, White-browed Spinetail, Undulated Antpitta, Crowned Chat-Tyrant, Rufous-crested Tanager, Black-headed Hemispingus, Hooded Mountain-Tanager, and Pale-naped Brush-Finch. This region is relatively little explored by birders and we would not be surprised if, during our descent from nearly 11,000 feet down to less than 6000 feet in elevation, there are a few birding "surprises" in store for us along the way.

NIGHT: Hotel Varuna, Manizales, dept. of Caldas

June 21, Day 12: Nevado del Ruiz, Los Nevados National Natural Park, department of Caldas. This exciting area is about an hour and a half from the city of Manizales and offers access to some of the most easily-accessible páramo (a tropical alpine grassland above tree line) vegetation anywhere in Colombia. The Nevado del Ruiz, at 5,429 m (17,788 ft), is the northernmost volcano in the Andes and is glacier-covered but still active (although not since ca. 1985). We plan to reach elevations of about 4,000 m (13,200 ft), the highest of the tour today, and temperatures can be cold at least during the early hours of the morning (although are cool and pleasant some mornings). We will go as far as the national park entrance as all the key high elevation specialists of the low, damp elfin woodland mixed with páramo can be found here. Among them are the delightful little Bearded Helmetcrest, Viridian Metaltail, Stout-billed Cinclodes, Tawny Antpitta, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Golden-crowned Tanager, Black-backed Bush-Tanager, Glossy Flowerpiercer, and endemic **Rufous-fronted Parakeet** (this latter species scarce and unpredictable). All of these species can be found along the last few kilometers of road leading to the national park entrance or in patches of dense low elfin woodland at slightly lower elevations. We'll be searching for Shining Sunbeam, Mountain Avocetbill (scarce), Golden-breasted Puffleg, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Sword-billed Hummingbird (also scarce and seasonal) and Tyrian Metaltail (generally common), as well as Andean Pygmy-Owl, Andean Tit-Spinetail, Many-striped Canastero, White-chinned Thistletail, Páramo Tapaculo, Sedge Wren, and Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager. If or when the weather becomes foggy mid to late morning (it usually does) we will make our way back down to Manizales and begin the approximately four to five hour drive to the city of Jardín. This is Juan Valdez territory and

Colombia: The Central & Western Andes, Page 8

although several actors have played the part of the fictional Juan Valdez made famous by the Colombian Coffee Growers, the current “Juan Valdez” is from the picturesque little town of Andes, which is less than 30 minutes below the town of Jardín. We may make a stop in some dry forest and scrub habitat en route this afternoon where it is possible to see several new species, among them the endemic **Grayish Piculet (E)**, Barred Antshrike, **Bar-crested Antshrike** (near endemic); and the endemic **Apical Flycatcher (E)**. For a longer list of possibilities in this area see species mentioned on Day 15.

NIGHT: Hotel Campestre Hacienda Balandú, Jardín, dept. of Antioquia

June 22, Day 13: Reserva Natural Loro Orejiamarillo (Yellow-eared Parrot Reserve). This morning we'll depart quite early for the approximately one-hour trip via 4-wheel drive vehicles to this small but important reserve owned by the ProAves conservation organization. Established in 2006, this reserve of circa 300 hectares (741 acres) protects one of Colombia's rarest birds, the critically endangered **Yellow-eared Parrot** (a near endemic species and one unlikely to be seen outside of Colombia). This species needs tall, high-elevation wax palms (*Ceroxylon* spp.) for foraging sites as well as roosting and nesting holes. Deforestation and palm cutting have deprived this species of most of its natural habitat. Once common and widespread in the Colombian Andes, the population plummeted to perhaps a few hundred individuals. The establishment of protected reserves, public education programs and the construction of artificial nest boxes by dedicated conservationists have helped to re-establish this species in several areas; the present population has climbed to an estimated 750 birds and recently a heretofore unknown population also has now been discovered in the Eastern Andes. Although formerly found in south to central Ecuador, the species may no longer occur in that country and now survives only in isolated sites in Colombia.

The steep landscape surrounding Jardín and en route to the reserve is a mixture of pasture land and patches of forest. The parrots—some 350 which represent a significant portion of the world's population—are found in this area, and often range widely over reserve forest as well as surrounding semi-open areas, sometimes even close to the city. While our goal will be to see these parrots, some 250 other species of birds have been recorded in this area including the **Red-bellied Grackle (E)** and **Munchique Wood-Wren (E)**. Other species found here include Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Acorn Woodpecker (same species as in North America), White-browed Spinetail, Chestnut-naped Antpitta, Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, Spillman's Tapaculo, Ocellated Tapaculo, Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant, Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant, Chestnut-crested Cotinga (always scarce and local), Golden-faced Redstart, Citrine Warbler, Golden-crowned and White-capped Tanager, and Tanager Finch. Mixed species flocks in the reserve forest contain a variety of interesting furnariids, flycatchers, warblers and tanagers.

NIGHT: Hotel Campestre Hacienda Balandú, Jardín, dept. of Antioquia

June 23, Day 14. Reserva Natural Loro Orejiamarillo or nearby areas in the morning followed by afternoon drive to Medellín. Depending upon weather and our success yesterday we may return to the reserve early this morning, or spend a few hours in areas in or near the city of Jardín before departing for Medellín. At some point we will pay a visit to a nearby lek of Andean Cock-of-the-rocks which are quite accessible. We also may stop in an area of dry forest and scrub en route to Medellín to search for species typical of this lower, warmer zone including **Spectacled Parrotlet (E)**, Steely-vented Hummingbird, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Whooping Motmot, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Moustached Puffbird, **Grayish Piculet (E)**, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Barred Antshrike, Bar-crested Antshrike (near endemic), White-fringed Antwren, Sooty-headed Tyrannulet, **Apical Flycatcher (E)**, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Black-tailed Flycatcher, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Rufous-naped Greenlet (near endemic); White-breasted Wood-Wren, Long-billed Gnatwren, Tropical Gnatcatcher, Rufous-capped Warbler, Blue Dacnis, Guira Tanager, Crimson-backed Tanager, Scrub Tanager (near endemic), Streaked Saltator, Black-striped Sparrow, Thick-billed Euphonia, Yellow-bellied Seedeater and perhaps a surprise or two. From here we will continue on to Medellín, a trip of about two more hours beyond the dry zone along the Río Cauca.

NIGHT: Hotel Estelar Milla de Oro, Medellín, dept. of Antioquia

June 24, Day 15, Morning in park in Medellín, followed by afternoon flight to Bogotá for conclusion of trip. We'll visit a small park within the city limits of Medellín this morning where two much-sought endemics occur, the **Red-bellied Grackle** and **Yellow-headed Manakin**. This also is a good place to observe many commoner mid-elevation birds including a good variety of tanagers, thrushes, wrens and species typical of forest borders and second growth woodland. A sample of species here includes Western Emerald, Blue-crowned Motmot, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Azara's Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, Bar-crested Antshrike (near endemic), Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, Blackish Tapaculo, Golden-faced Tyrannulet, Pale-edged Flycatcher, Brown-capped Vireo, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, Three-striped Warbler, Common Bush-Tanager, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, Scrub Tanager, Metallic-green Tanager, Black-capped Tanager, Rusty Flowerpiercer, White-naped Brush-finch, Yellow-backed Oriole, and Orange-bellied Euphonia. Typical North American migrants (overwintering) include Swainson's Thrush, Tennessee, and Blackburnian Warbler, American Redstart, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Summer Tanager. We'll have lunch in Medellín and take a mid-afternoon flight back to Bogotá for the conclusion of our trip.

NIGHT: Hotel Dann Norte, Bogotá, dept. of Cundinamarca

June 25, Day 16: International Departure. The tour ends this morning in Bogotá with transfers to El Dorado International airport for flights homeward. Note: breakfast is included as part of a room package at our hotel but may not be available for those departing on very early international flights.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 12 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Steve Hilty and local Colombian guide, Luis Eduardo Ureña

Steve Hilty is the senior author of *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*, and author of *Birds of Venezuela*, both by Princeton University Press, as well as the popular *Birds of Tropical America, A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity*. He has also written a number of scientific papers on birds and plants, has described two species of birds new to science in Venezuela, and was one of a team of authors describing another new species in Colombia. He also wrote the text and species accounts for the tanager family for the acclaimed *Handbook of Birds of the World*, published by Lynx Press in Barcelona. Steve holds a Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Arizona and has worked at the Arid Lands Department at the University of Arizona, as a consultant to The Nature Conservancy, and as a broker with Merrill Lynch. He is currently a research associate in ornithology at the University of Kansas Biodiversity Institute. Since 1983 he has worked for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, guiding trips throughout North and South America, and co-leading trips to India, the Orient, and Australasian regions. With four decades of experience in South America and a wide range of natural history interests, he brings a unique breadth of expertise to his Neotropical tours. At night he often turns his binoculars towards the skies for stargazing. Steve lives in Kansas City with his wife, Beverly. They have two daughters.

Luis Eduardo Ureña is a young biologist from Tolima University in the state of Tolima, Colombia. He started his work in ornithology eleven years ago, and was the director of the Blue-billed Curassow conservation program for four years for the ProAves Foundation in Colombia. He and his fiancé, Andrea, also a biologist, are active in various conservation projects. Luis combines excellent field skills with an eagerness to please, and enjoys showing people the birds of his country. Luis and his fiancé also own and operate Manakin Nature Tours, a new company offering high quality birding tours, dedicated to providing services for birders in Colombia.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is ~~\$6,995~~ **\$6,695 (tour fee reduced by \$300!)** per person in double occupancy from Bogotá. This includes all meals from breakfast on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 16, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, internal flights, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Bogotá and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may be charged.

Colombia: The Central & Western Andes, Page 10

The single supplement for this tour is **\$450**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. Single rooms are not available in the Montezuma Rainforest Reserve.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay the initial deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at www.ventbird.com) should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: Initial tour deposits may be made by MasterCard, Visa, check, money order, or bank transfer. All other tour payments, including second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc., must be made by check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation Penalties and Refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less \$250 per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

If you cancel:

120 days or more before departure date
Fewer than 120 days before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$250.
No refund available.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider.** Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available, however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. **Contact Travel Insured International prior to registration for details.** Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: *All participants are required to purchase a medical evacuation policy for this tour and will be asked to sign and return to the VENT office a waiver stating that this has been done. Such a policy should be available from any insurance company which provides trip cancellation coverage.*

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

BAGGAGE LIMITS: All tour participants are asked to limit their baggage to **a single bag of no more than forty pounds and a single carry-on item such as a small backpack. Please pack in duffels if possible** as these will fit better in our buses and will be more useful in the lodges where we stay, which are relatively small. In general, this is a fairly vigorous trip and amenities at the lodges where we stay vary (but should include the transport and movement of luggage from buses to lodges, in and out of boats, etc.). **When packing, we urge you to give some thought to traveling lighter rather than heavier. We also recommend that you bring a few plastic bags large enough to protect your clothing and/or luggage in case of rain.**

CLIMATE: Weather conditions can be somewhat variable on this trip due to the range of mostly highland elevations visited. However, all of the sites visited on this trip are in the highlands where temperatures are cool and pleasant. We will stop at one lower elevation site (dry and warm) for an hour or two. The Colombian Andes can be somewhat rainy at almost any time of the year so we advise you to **bring an umbrella and/or rain jacket. Rubber boots are advisable** (although not absolutely necessary) as some trails may be quite muddy. The Andes should be somewhat drier during our winter (February to March) trip than during the June-July period. However, please be aware that, because Colombia sits so close to the equator, rainier and drier periods are not well-defined and rain, and wet and/or muddy conditions, and muddy and slippery trails can be encountered at any time of the year in the Colombian Andes. One morning at tree line on Nevado del Ruiz will be quite damp and cold (perhaps also some fog) and all visitors should bring a warm jacket that includes a fleece layer (or vest) underneath, a warm hat and gloves, and a rain jacket large enough to slip on over your jacket. Temperatures on Nevado del Ruiz may be in the mid- to high 30s to low 40s. F. All other areas will be warmer, but nights can be cool and, mornings at most sites will be cool and require a light jacket. You may want to have a light weight jacket with you during most day hikes as well.

CLOTHING: Medium weight field clothing will be fine for most of the trip. ***Please do not wear white or brightly colored clothes***, including hats or raingear, as it makes movements more conspicuous to shy birds and animals. We suggest loose-fitting khaki clothing (or blue jeans) or other cotton clothing in a dark green, dark blue, tan or brown shade. Military camouflage clothing should not be worn as it conveys an inappropriate image to police and military personnel, whom we are likely to encounter at various highway checkpoints. Also, please avoid nylon or plastic jackets and/or rainwear of similar materials as noisy clothing may frighten birds and animals. Long pants and long-sleeved shirts are recommended as protection against insects and sun. A long, waterproof poncho or rain jacket, warm sweater or down jacket (or jacket and down vest combination in layers), warm hat, and gloves will be needed. Bring a broad-brimmed hat for sun protection and a good sunscreen. Rubber boots should not be necessary but you should have a pair of gore-tex water-resistant/waterproof hiking boots (some trails are sure to be muddy), and a second pair of sturdy walking shoes and/or sneakers. Expect some rain and muddy trails. Shower thongs also will be useful. Expect both roadside birding and trail birding in almost all areas.

LAUNDRY: **Laundry service is limited to one or two areas.** We recommend that you bring sufficient clothes to see you through at least half of the trip and, especially, bring items that can be washed easily and will dry

Colombia: The Central & Western Andes, Page 12

quickly (i.e. cool-max shirts etc). A good laundry service is available at the Hotel Varuna in Manizales (3 nights here) and it is possible that one-day service may be available at the Hotel Campestre Hacienda Balandú in Jardín.

NOTES ABOUT THIS TOUR: Until recently, Colombia was rarely visited by birders. Tourism infrastructure is limited but developing rapidly. Accommodations are surprisingly comfortable and the food is good. There are some lengthy bus rides when moving between sites; one area (Jardín) requires 4-wheel drive access on a rough, winding road. Birding is on forest trails and country roads with little traffic. Trail conditions vary, but include some steep hills and moderately strenuous walking (one site) at altitudes of ca. 4,500-10,000 feet. One day we reach 11,000 feet. Temperatures are generally cool and refreshing throughout. Expect some rain.

HEALTH PRECAUTIONS: Malaria has been confirmed in Colombia, including the chloroquine-resistant strain in rural areas. It is not expected to be a problem on this route. There are two malaria prophylaxis recommended in areas where chloroquine-resistant malaria is present: Mefloquine (Lariam) and Malarone. For travelers who are unable to take either Malarone or Mefloquine, the CDC recommends the drug Doxycycline as an alternative. Please consult with your physician or local travel clinic for recommendations.

Hepatitis A vaccination is strongly recommended as a precaution. While not a requirement for entry into Colombia unless you are arriving from an infected area in another country, a yellow fever vaccination is a good idea for most people traveling to third world, tropical countries, and the vaccination is good for 10 years. People with compromised immune systems should consult with their personal physician before getting any vaccination. Your polio, tetanus, and typhoid protection should be current. Leishmaniasis is a disease transmitted by a small fly that is mainly active at dusk or during the night. It is not a common insect and only a few of the flies are disease carriers, proper clothing and the use of insect repellent are the best protection. Dengue fever also is very infrequent and is transmitted by day-flying *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes. Again, proper clothing and use of some insect repellent, especially in lowland areas, is the best protection. You may check with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta at 877-FYI-TRIP or www.cdc.gov/ for further health information.

INSECTS: Insects should not be a problem over most of our route (the highlands should be particularly free of biting insects), but depending on rain, we could encounter some biting insects, as well as chiggers, in the lowland sites. Wear loose-fitting long pants and long-sleeved shirts, and bring bottles or roll-on sticks of Cutter's or similar insect repellents. Spraying shoes, socks and lower portion of pants with insect repellent will help reduce problems with chiggers. Pants pretreated with permethrin are also helpful. We urge that you not bring very strong-scented "natural" repellents if possible because these often have strong unpleasant odors that are inappropriate in group situations.

CURRENCY: Colombian Peso: as of May, 2012: 1.00 USD = 1,810 COP. **You may exchange some dollars into Colombian pesos at the airport or once you reach the hotel in Bogotá. There also is an ATM machine on the second floor of the Carulla supermarket which is located less than a half block from the hotel.**

DOCUMENTS: For U.S citizens, a passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure is required. A visa is not required for stays of less than 60 days. A tourist card will be issued by your airline. All non-United States citizens should check with their local Colombian consulate or embassy.

EQUIPMENT: We strongly recommend that participants **bring a wide-mouth water bottle** that can be easily refilled from a large water container, **a reliable portable alarm clock**; **a day pack**; plastic bags for water-proofing gear in the field; plenty of snacks such as trail mix or dried fruit, and any personal medications. A **small, compact umbrella** is highly recommended, and **raingear** (rain jacket or poncho) is necessary. Earplugs may come in handy at a couple of the lodges or hotel.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS: There will be some opportunities to recharge batteries for electronic equipment but participants should bring enough spare batteries to last several days between charges. Electrical plug-ins in Colombia are two flat-pin type (same as in USA) and current are usually 110 at the hotels and lodges where we

will be staying; a surge protector also is strongly recommended. Because much of this route traverses relatively remote regions where the variety (although not quantity) of food may be limited, we recommend that everyone, including especially those persons with dietary restrictions or other dietary requirements, bring at least some trail snacks and other emergency food items that are portable. Other items should include 1) bird book, 2) field checklist for re-cap's in evening (provided by VENT); 3) small notebook, pens, etc. and other personal items. Both guides will have telescopes but we encourage participants also to bring a scope if they wish.

INTERNET SERVICE: Internet (wi-fi) will be available in all hotels except the Otún Quimbaya park site and the Montezuma site at Tatamá National Park. Cell phone service (local providers are Movistar and Comcel) is available at all sites. Those that have an international phone connection (or a chip that permits connecting) will be able to access the internet with iPhones, Blackberries, iPad, etc., virtually everywhere (note that local provider COMCEL has better service in remote areas). The other major telecommunication provider, MOVISTAR, is also available but their coverage in rural areas not as complete as that of COMCEL. Sometimes this entails a trip to a local telecommunications service center, something best done in Bogotá before the trip begins. Cell phone access is now virtually country-wide in Colombia although a few sites located in deep valleys may not be able to receive signals (this is usually a local issue). ***Before leaving home we suggest that you check with your personal service provider for roaming rates and coverage use areas pertaining to your personal calling plan.***

SUGGESTED READING: Our website at www.ventbird.com offers an online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from our store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com, which specializes in ornithology books.

Field Guides:

Hilty, S. L. and W. L. Brown. *Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. 1986. Now a classic and still a good source for Colombia bird identification. Good source of information on voice, behavior, breeding and status and habitat, range maps for almost all species. Taxonomy is now quite dated as there have been many changes since publication of this text. Users, in particular, need to update the section on tapaculos (*Scytalopus*). A bit heavy to carry in the field but very useful reference when you are back in your room in the evening.

McMullan, M., T. M. Donegan, and A. Quevedo. 2010. *Field Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. Newly published, paperback format, extremely compact and a **must have book for all visitors** as it can be easily carried in the field. Illustrates all species and includes a tiny range map. While the illustrations and maps are small (and illustrations of some groups are deficient) and there is no text (just brief comments), this little book will be an indispensable aid for all visitors. Order from www.Buteobooks.com.

Restall, R., C. Rodner, and M. Lentino. *Birds of Northern South America*. Vol. 2. Plates and maps. Christopher Helm, London. Has up-to-date taxonomy and somewhat simplistic color plate style, but similar in size and weight, to the Hilty & Brown book. Covers seven countries (over 7000 images) which complicates field use because of large number of illustrations. Illustrations good for more colorful/distinctive species but not helpful for many flycatchers and other difficult groups. Vol. 1 is an accompanying text.

Natural History:

Hilty, Steven. *Birds of Tropical America: A Watcher's Introduction to Behavior, Breeding and Diversity*. University of Texas Press, 2005. **Highly recommended for background information on how things work in bird communities in tropical latitudes.**

Colombia: The Central & Western Andes, Page 14

Kricher, John C. *A Neotropical Companion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. Excellent broad-based resource on just about everything from plants and birds to insects, herps and mammals in the Neotropics.

Snow, David. *The Web of Adaptation: Bird Studies in the American Tropics*. Quadrangle, New York Times Book Co.: Demeter Press, 1976. A classic. Deals with fruit-eating birds and their adaptations in the American tropics.

General Travel:

Porup, J, K. Raub, C. Soriano & R. Reid. 2009. *Lonely Planet Guide to Colombia*. A good introduction to Colombia life, culture and just getting around the country. A little time with this or a similar book should provide a richer travel experience for almost anyone. Note that there are several other travel books available (Rough Guide, etc) and any of these may be equally good. See on www.Amazon.com

Recordings:

Alvarez, M., V. Caro, O. Laverde and A. M. Cuervo. *Guía sonora de las aves de los Andes Colombianos (A Guide to the Bird Sounds of the Colombian Andes)*. CD discs 1-7. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. 2007. Good source for bird sound recordings for the Andes of Colombia (over 600 species). Songs are not introduced at beginning of each track (follow with booklet).

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motor coach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept 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. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved 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. 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 leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect May 17, 2012, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.