



Rainforest Biodiversity Group

Protecting the Great Green Macaw to Protect Biodiversity

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Hello from Madison,

The end of the year is fast upon us, and soon Rainforest Biodiversity Group will be at the start of its 10th year of operation as a conservation organization! The reason that we are reaching this milestone is through the hard work of many and the support of our constituents, so thank you!

The [Costa Rican Bird Route](#) website has been given a new look for the new year, and we encourage you all to visit the revised website. Hopefully you will find it easy to navigate and useful in providing the information that you are looking for, and we always welcome feedback!

Something else I am excited to report on is that Rainforest Biodiversity Group has secured a third grant for the Bird Route project! The grant was awarded to RBG in conjunction with one of our partners, the Sara-piqui Conservation Learning Center, through the Program for South-South Cooperation. For more information, please see the article within this newsletter.

Enjoy the news and happy holidays!

Holly Robertson, President, RBG

Outside Magazine

If you have never read an issue of Outside Magazine, now is the perfect time to start. An article on the Costa Rican Bird Route project will be in the December issue of the magazine, accessible both online and in the stores.

Outside Magazine is a great monthly source of information for the latest on fitness, sports, gear, and travel and adventure in the great outdoors. The Outside website is also chock full of resources for anyone planning a trip, especially for those looking to travel to South Africa for the World Cup, or Vancouver for the Olympics. A great feature that we really appreciate is their [Eco Adventurer](#) section where anyone can write in with their questions about how to travel green!

Be sure to pick up a copy next month!



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RBG Receives New Grant for the Costa Rican Bird Route

Rainforest Biodiversity Group (RBG), in conjunction with one of our Costa Rican partners, the Sarapiquí Conservation Learning Center (SCLC), has recently been awarded a grant through the Programme for South-South Cooperation (PSC). PSC is a program that focuses on the pursuit of sustainable development and long term partnerships, between the partner countries of Benin, Bhutan and Costa Rica.

Knowledge exchange and reciprocity guides the PSC and its projects



and activities. Mutual projects are based on established themes and objectives of common interest between the three partner countries. Partners are jointly committed to cooperate by developing and sharing experience, knowledge and expertise for the benefit of at least two of the partner countries.

RBG and the SCLC will be partnering with the country of Benin as represented by the organization Benin Ecotourism Concern.

Benin Ecotourism Concern (BEC) is working to develop an ecotourism project for the Lama Reserve Forest in Benin. In the communities surrounding Lama Forest, pressure on natural resources has been growing for a variety of interlinked reasons. The region is marked by low wages in the primary agricultural sector, a relative absence of mea-

sures to mitigate periods of water shortage, as well as the near total exclusion of women from income generating activities. In relation to these causal factors, there is also a lack of environmental awareness. Ecotourism was chosen as a tool to create an effective and sustainable link between the preservation of natural resources and biodiversity, and the social and economic development of the villages of Koto and Zalimey.



The situation in these villages of Benin is similar to that of the commu-

nities of northeastern Costa Rica. These Costa Rican communities are primarily sustained through cattle and agriculture, and often families cannot rely on stable wages year-round. Environmental education and an understanding of biodiversity is also lacking in this region. Since 2005, RBG has been implementing the Costa Rican Bird Route project in Costa Rica, to protect wildlife habitat as well as offer economic support, to combat these issues.

By working under the South-South Cooperation program, knowledge

and information on sustainable practices and methods can be exchanged between Benin and Costa Rica. This is vital to provide international assistance and understanding among the local people. This project can help local people understand the importance of conserving their habitat, as well as provide a mutual understanding of similar livelihoods on a global scale.

Rainforest Biodiversity Group and the Sarapiquí Conservation Learning Center are very excited to share what we have learned through the development of the Bird Route and other projects to others doing similar work across the globe. We are equally excited to learn from our Benin partners.

Stay tuned to future editions for updates on this new partnership.



Phase III of the Costa Rican Bird Route Project

The funds available from this grant will shift the Costa Rican Bird Route project into Phase III. The focus of this third phase will be on education and training for the communities involved with the Bird Route. Work done in Phase III will be based on the following themes:

- Eco-tourism business management
- Sustainability practices
- General business knowledge
- Action plan implementation
- Sustainable infrastructure concepts

Third Rainforest Alliance Sustainability Workshop Conducted

On October 17 and 18, Rainforest Alliance conducted the third and final workshop in the sustainable tourism series for the landowners participating in the Costa Rican Bird Route. The first workshop was conducted on March 7 and 8 of this year, followed by the second on July 31st and August 1. The overarching theme of all three workshops is how to run a successful and sustainable rural tourism business.

Nine people from three Bird Route sites were in attendance, along with other members of the community who had an interest. The sites represented were Bosque Tropical del Toro, Santa Elena, and Maquenque Eco-Lodge. The workshop was held at the Sarapiquí Conservation Learning Center in Chilamate, Sarapiquí. The

instructor for the day was Rainforest Alliance professional, Ingrid Ayub, a biologist and sustainability consultant. Ingrid has also been a bird guide for more than 18 years.

The main topic for the workshop was: ***“What is and how to develop a sustainability policy for a site.”***

The workshop also focused on discussing what characteristics, products and services a business should have.

An important component of the workshop was that the landowners received one-on-one assistance in creating their own plans and objectives for sustainable development at their individual sites.

Now that all three workshops are completed, the landowners who attended will now have a bet-

ter knowledge of good business practices that will help them implement sustainable tourism on their properties. A big thank you to Rainforest Alliance in helping RBG conduct these workshops.

Pictured below: Workshop participants, photos by Andrew Rothman



New Site Added to the Costa Rican Bird Route

Rainforest Biodiversity Group is proud to announce that it has selected the 14th private reserve of the Costa Rican Bird Route: **Quebrada Gonzalez!**

Quebrada Gonzalez makes a wonderful addition to the Bird Route as it offers access to the impressive Braulio Carrillo National Park, which protects 115 acres of highland rainforest and cloud forest. Unlike other popular Costa Rican parks, much of Braulio Carrillo remains unexplored and unmanaged, with only three ranger stations servicing the entire park, including Quebrada Gonzalez.

The site is approximately 26 miles north of San Jose and easily accessible from the Route 32 highway. It is

the perfect place to stop on your way out of the city, as it offers restroom facilities, a picnic area, trails, and most importantly: amazing birdwatching!



Braulio Carrillo National Park, photo courtesy of wikipedia.com

From the 864 species in CR, 550 species have been reported for this national park. Some of the species that can be observed are three wattled bell bird (*Procnias tricarunculata*), black solitaire (*Myadestes melanops*), solitary eagle (*Harpyhaliaetus solitarius*), and the quetzal (*Pharomachrus mocinno*).

An induction ceremony is being held on November 14 and 15 at the site, to celebrate Quebrada Gonzalez being added to the Bird Route. Look for pictures and a write up on the event in the next edition of the newsletter.

The Costa Rican Bird Route Website: A New Look for the New Year

The Costa Rican Bird Route website has been given a new look! With the help of website designer, Jennifer Davis, RBG has been busy revising the project's website, so that it is more navigable and user-friendly. [Click here](#) to visit the updated Bird Route website.

One goal of this revision was to make it as easy as possible to plan a trip to the Bird Route. On the [Visiting the Bird Route](#) page, it is clearly laid out the avenues available for taking a trip to the sites. Itineraries have been created for which you can sign up, or you can work with the Bird Route Coordinator on customizing your own trip. If you want to visit on your own and make your own arrange-

ments, we offer some useful tips on how to do it.

Another goal of the revision was to provide an area for [trip reports](#) from the Bird Route region. We are encouraging people to share their observations, sightings and experiences so that others planning a trip may benefit from that knowledge. We also want to encourage people who keep bird lists to report their observations to [eBird](#), to assist with bird monitoring efforts. And remember, it is never too late to [submit a trip report to us](#), or to report your bird observations to eBird!



Tours to the Bird Route in 2010

The Bird Route can be visited any time of the year, and we would love to help you do it. Four trip itineraries have been created that capture the essence of the Costa Rican Bird Route. You can read about these [Signature Experiences](#) on the Bird Route website. Keep in mind that these itineraries are flexible, and can be lengthened or shortened to meet your needs.

In addition, there are two other tours, shown below, that are going to the Bird Route next year. Anyone may join, space permitting. Go to the [Visiting the Bird Route](#) page of the website for more information. Continue checking back to the website for additional opportunities that may be added next year!



On the Trail of the Great Green Macaw

May 20-29, 2010

This tour provides ample opportunity to search for and learn about the Great Green Macaw



Communities and Culture

November 1-10, 2010

This tour will give you an insider look at the culture of Costa Rica living.

Volunteer Corner

Rainforest Biodiversity Group continues to place volunteers at Bird Route sites to assist in various ongoing projects. RBG wants to send a special thank you to two recent volunteers: Helena and Stephen King. Helena, a native of the Czech Republic, and Stephen, a native of England, volunteered from April 1 to June 29th at [Finca Pangola](#).

The couple's primary task was to teach English to the community members with the objective of incorporating environmental education into the lessons. The couple were even able to add in some geography, and taught their classes about their native countries, much to the delight of the students.

The Kings taught or assisted with five different classes in the community as well as conducted private tutoring sessions. RBG and the Pangola community truly appreciate the time and effort they put in to their assignment, and want to say thank you for their contributions.

Bird Monitoring Workshop

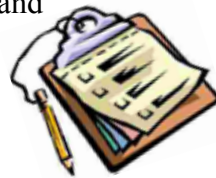
Rainforest Biodiversity Group recently conducted a workshop on bird monitoring methods in Costa Rica. The program was held on October 16 at the Sarapiquí Conservation Learning Center, and was attended by 14 participants, consisting of local guides, landowners, and members of the community who had an interest. The program included three different presentations.

The first presentation was given by Pablo Elizondo, from the Costa Rican Ornithological Association and Partners in Flight. Pablo spoke on bird monitoring efforts in Costa Rica. Pablo has been instrumental in coordinating some of the bird banding stations in the country, with the goal being to establish an extensive network of bird banding stations in order to consistently monitor resident and migrant bird species.

The following presentation was given by Andrew Rothman, the project director of the Costa Rican Bird Route. Andrew pre-

sented information on how to use the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird program. eBird is a real-time, online bird checklist program that can be used by anyone. eBird has revolutionized the way that the birding community reports and accesses information about birds and bird observations.

The third and final presentation of the day was presented by Raquel Gomez, the Costa Rican Bird Route Coordinator. Raquel discussed the initiative recently launched by Rainforest Biodiversity Group to monitor the birds being sighted at the Bird Route sites. The objective of the program is to collect data on birds at each of the Bird Route reserves, and make this information available to the public through the eBird database.



A checklist has been created and distributed at all sites so that guides and visitors can collect information during their birding tours at the Bird Route sites. Completed check-

lists will be collected monthly, whereupon this information will be entered into eBird.

eBird Costa Rica

Have you been to any of the [Bird Route sites](#)? Did you keep a checklist of birds and want to enter them into eBird?

Here is how:

- Create your own account on eBird to enter data.
- Click on **Submit Observations** and select an entire city, county or state.
- Select Costa Rica under the Country menu bar. Make sure that you check the little box to show Bird Hotspots before you click continue.
- Select a State/ Province. Select Alajuela or Heredia (Bird Route sites are in both provinces and click continue again. Now you can use the Birding Hot Spots menu bar to select the site where you birded.
- Enter your data for that particular site.

Save the Date! More than one-half of Wisconsin's breeding birds spend the winter in Latin America, entirely dependent on the region's diminishing tropical forests for survival. They need our help! On Saturday, April 24, 2010, the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, in partnership with the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, will unveil a new international collaboration - **"Orioles and Ocelots: Wisconsin's Connection to Costa Rica"** - during a very special evening event at the Milwaukee County Zoo. World renowned tropical ecologist and author Dr. Adrian Forsyth will headline a captivating program to showcase and generate support for Wisconsin's exciting migratory bird conservation efforts on Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula, characterized by National Geographic as "one of the most biologically intense places on earth." For more information contact: Craig Thompson, (608) 785-1277, Craig.Thompson@wisconsin.gov.



Photo by Dave Frericks

Where to buy Shade Grown Coffee

A bag of delicious, environmentally-friendly coffee makes the perfect stocking stuffer for those java lovers in your life.



Organic brands of coffee are becoming easier to find at regular supermarkets, however just because they are certified organic does not mean that they are necessarily shade grown, so read your labels carefully.

The coffee that Rainforest Biodiversity Group offers packs a quadruple punch for the benefit of the birds and for people. RBG's coffee, Bird Route Brew, is organic, shade grown, fair trade, AND the proceeds from each sale go toward supporting the Costa Rican Bird Route project. [Click here](#) to purchase a bag of Bird Route Brew today.

To directly benefit the cerulean warbler, you can also check out [Cerulean Warbler Conservation Coffee](#).

Shade Grown Coffee: the benefit for wintering migratory birds

A new study finds that shade grown coffee plantations in the Venezuelan Andes provide high quality wintering habitat for neotropical migratory birds on par with primary forests.

This is good news for the **cerulean warbler**, a breeding bird from the Eastern United States that has seen severe population declines recently.

The study provided the first non-breeding demographic estimates for the threatened bird. Population densities for the cerulean warbler

Approximately 40–50% of all shade coffee plantations in Latin America were converted to sun coffee by the 1990s.

were 14x higher in shade coffee plantations than primary forest. Also the estimated monthly survival rate was very high (approximately 97%) and its body condition improved significantly throughout the winter months.

The researchers conducted mist-netting and banding in the plantations to evaluate changes in avian body condition and apparent monthly survival. They also used distance-based line transects to estimate density of wintering migrants in both primary forest and shade coffee plantations.

The study recorded 325 individuals from 17 species in shade coffee plantations compared to 114 sightings from 15 species observed in primary forest. Detection adjusted density estimates for the four most

common species ranged from 3 to 14x higher in coffee plantations. This study is the first to compare bird density in primary forests and shade coffee plantations adjusting for detection bias.

These results highlight the importance of shade coffee systems in providing wintering habitat for neotropical migratory birds. This is especially true given that the montane forests of the northern Andes have suffered from very high rates of deforestation.

Unfortunately, shade coffee plantations have been declining as well. The traditional agroforestry practice of growing coffee in plantations with a diverse canopy of trees is being lost in many parts of Latin America as farmers switch to intensive and less environmentally friendly sun coffee plantations and pasture. The fate of the cerulean warbler and other birds may rest on whether this trend changes.

[Click here](#) to read the study.



Above: Cerulean warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*). Photo courtesy of conservationmaven.com

