



Rainforest Biodiversity Group

Protecting the Great Green Macaw to Protect Biodiversity

Hello from RBG,

It's been a very busy summer for us here at Rainforest Biodiversity Group, and fall is already starting to creep up, letting us know that before long this won't be a "summer" edition! We have a lot to report, including some pretty significant changes within RBG. RBG welcomes new faces to its Board of Directors, and a new President as founder Andrew Rothman has stepped down to assume his new role as Executive Director of the Sarapiquí Conservation Learning Center (SCLC) in Chilamate, Costa Rica. Read all about the new members of the Board and the SCLC in this jam-packed Summer edition of the newsletter.

We are also very happy to announce that the RBG website is getting a much-needed face lift. While we have always been proud of our website, we felt it was time to update all the information and get a cleaner, crisper look. It's undergoing renovation even as I type. Check it out at www.rainforestbiodiversity.org or you can also use the same URL of www.greatgreenmacaw.org. We hope to have it finalized within the next couple of weeks. We also want to make everyone aware that we have a new email for the organization: info@rainforestbiodiversity.org. There is also a similar email for the Bird Route: info@costaricanbirdroute.com.

We hope you are all having a great summer. Enjoy the news!

*Holly Robertson
President, RBG*

About the Board

The Rainforest Biodiversity Group welcomes its newest leader **Holly Robertson**. Holly has a broad background in natural resources. She is currently the Wildlife Rules and Regulations Assistant for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. She comes to RBG originally from Maryland, however she has worked across the US, including New England, California, New York, South Carolina, Washington DC as well as in Canada. She brings new enthusiasm to the organization in which she has been a dedicated volunteer for the past year. Her deep care for the natural resources of our world, and in particular her long interest in rainforest conservation will serve her and the organization well as she looks to grow the organization.

Holly is not the only new face to the organization. There was a need for more active members of the board, and the organization was able to get two more active volunteers to step up and take on more responsibilities for the organization.

Rebecca Osborn, the new Secretary of the RBG, grew up in the desert of New Mexico, establishing adoration for an ecosystem that is often abused and overlooked. She studied Wildlife Biology and Spanish at Colorado State University, during which she spent time in Costa Rica working at Hacienda Barú Wildlife Refuge, a privately owned reserve located on the Pacific coast. At Hacienda Barú, Rebecca led ecological tours through the rainforest, and conducted research to look at the comprehensive effects of a road that bisected the refuge property. Rebecca moved to Madison, WI in 2005 and now works as a Wildlife Health Biologist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. In addition to wildlife and rainforest conservation, Rebecca has interests in food ethics, music, Latin American culture, sports, and politics. She looks forward to delving deeper into the world of international conservation.

Continue reading about the new board on page 5.

RBG's Executive Board of Directors

President: Holly Robertson
Past President: Andrew Rothman
Vice President: Russ Rothman
Secretary: Rebecca Osborn
Treasurer: Daniel Schneider

Advisory Council:
 Carl Leopold
 Bobbie Webster

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Costa Rican Bird Route Challenge!

February 21-27, 2009

The Costa Rican Bird Route Challenge is the **official opening event** of the Costa Rican Bird Route, the first birding trail in Costa Rica. The 13 site birding trail includes 6 new private reserves along with world famous birding areas such as La Selva Biological Station, Selva Verde Lodge, and Laguna Lagarto Lodge.

The Challenge, which will be held Feb. 21st-Feb. 27th, is a contest to see which team of bird watchers can observe the most number of birds in the Bird Route over a period of three days. Each team will consist of six people, two of which will be local guides. The remaining four slots are for you and your teammates. There will be a total of six teams racing through the Costa Rican Bird Route in search of the most number of birds possible. Each team will be equipped with either two 4 wheel drive vehicles or a single 4 wheel drive van.

The Challenge itself is being run to raise funds for improving infrastructure at new biological reserves, and to raise awareness about the Costa Rican Bird Route. Each team is required to raise a minimum of \$500 to help support the

development of bird tourism at the new private reserves. The winning team will receive a plaque, as well international recognition as the winners of the first Costa Rican Bird Route Challenge.

Upon arrival for the Challenge you will meet your Costa Rican guides and will participate in an opening ceremony and dinner at the famed Bougainvillea Hotel outside of San Jose. The following day each team will have a travel day to get to their starting location and will be assigned three sites within the route. Each team will have three Big Days of counting, one at each of the assigned sites. The fourth day each group will have the morning to bird at their final site, and then all groups will meet back at the Bougainvillea by mid afternoon with their final counts. On the evening of the 20th everyone will participate in the grand awards banquet where the winning team and sites will be announced.

You can start your own team or join an existing team for just \$1100. Rainforest Biodiversity Group is offering this trip at cost. This price of this trip includes 6 nights lodging (2 at

Bougainvillea, 2 at a Bird Route Portal Site, 2 at a Bird Route Remote Site), all transportation during the trip including transfer to and from the airport, 2 local bird guides, all meals for the trip including the two banquets, a Costa Rican Bird Route Challenge T-shirt and a complimentary Bird Route Map and Guide. This DOES NOT include flight, airport taxes, snacks, tips or donations.

There is a down payment of \$250 / person to reserve a spot in the Challenge due by Nov. 1st. As mentioned each team, as part of the cost of the tour, is required to raise \$500 per team as a donation to support new reserves within the Route. This is in addition to stated cost of the trip.

The official list for the Costa Rican Bird Route is 520 species. ***How many will you be able to see?***

To reserve your space, visit www.costaricanbirdroute.com/challenge.htm or contact Raquel Gomez at Raquel@costaricanbirdroute.com.

New Reserve Added to the Costa Rican Bird Route

The **Reserva Santa Elena** has recently been added to the CRBR. This community owned reserve, similar to that of Quebrada Grande, is located in the northwest sector of the CRBR. The community has been very active in developing eco-tourism and community development projects over the last few years and is a good addition to the route. The addition was possible at this moment because the Lomas Sardinal site was unable to commit to the contractual responsibilities required of it by RBG and the CRBR. Look for more info on Reserva Santa Elena on the CRBR website www.costaricanbirdroute.com/sites.

Area Around the Sarapiquí Conservation Learning Center Studied for Connectivity

The communities and lands that surround the Sarapiquí Conservation Learning Center and Selva Verde lodge are being studied by University of Costa Rica students Adriana Baltodano Fuentes and Juan Carlos Zamora Pereira. The goal of their study is to identify methods with local landowners to maintain connectivity of habitat from Selva Verde Lodge to La Selva Biological station. This study looks to identify critical areas to reforest, as well as finding ways such as using living fences to get local landowners, even with small amounts of land, and no property title involved in conservation.

New Private Refuge Created

The farm formerly known at Finca La Martita was purchased by a Swiss group of investors that is committed to habitat conservation. The Finca, now known as Refugio Lapa Verde or the Great Green Macaw Refuge, protects over 500 hectares (1250 acres) of forest and has additional areas in wetland and reforestation habitat.



Visit www.ecovida.ch for more information. The refuge is of utmost importance the CBSS as it is the smallest connecting point within the whole corridor where Refugio Lapa Verde connects with Selva Verde.

Second Phase of the Costa Rican Bird Route Begins

As mentioned in our last newsletter, RBG has secured funding for at least another 18 months of activity to ensure the development of the Costa Rican Bird Route. This second phase will be led by Raquel Gomez Ramirez of Costa Rica and will work with landowners to develop their sites for tourism and more importantly will work to get tour operators to visit the new reserves within the CRBR.

Raquel will work under Andrew at the Sarapiquí Conservation Learning Center. The SCLC will donate space, phone, internet and printing to support the Costa Rican Bird Route.

ICE to Affect CBSS

The government monopoly energy company known as ICE is about to impact the San Juan- La Selva Biological Corridor (CBSS) significantly. On August 30th, ICE released sediment that gathered behind the dam at the Cariblanco hydroplant near Albergue el Socorro. The sediment will fill the Sarapiquí River with a yet unknown huge amount of sediment. This sediment release could have many short and long term effects on the fish and riparian based bird species of the Sarapiquí River.

Additionally, the ICE is planning on erecting 160 transmission towers along the eastern edge of the CBSS. The ICE did conduct a significant environmental impact study to determine which is the best route for the transmission line, however as we know, any thing that we put up on the landscape will have birds crash into it. With the annual Raptor migration occurring in this same area, along with transmission line location being in areas that the endangered Great Green Macaw use, the transmission line presents a threat to the biodiversity of the Corridor.

Online Advertising with Birdwatcher's Digest and Birder's World!

To help get the word out about our exciting opening event for the Costa Rican Bird Route, we secured prime placement on both the Birder's World and Birdwatcher's Digest websites for the month of September.

On the Birdwatcher's Digest website, look for our banner on all of the pages in the travel section, as well as the BWD e-newsletter. Our button ad takes a premium spot on Birder's World entire website. Special thanks to Julie Remp for doing the artwork for us.



RBG will be taking its second tour to the Costa Rican Bird Route this November. The tour will visit six of the Bird Route sites, and features a beautiful ride up the Sarapiquí River. To visit the Bird Route, pick up a Map and Guide or contact us at info@costaricanbirdroute.com for help planning your trip.



Sarapiqui Conservation Learning Center

Rainforest Biodiversity Group will be further developing our education programs in the region of the Costa Rican Bird Route through our new connection with the [Sarapiqui Conservation Learning Center \(SCLC\)](#). The SCLC is a fully independent U.S. and Costa Rican non-profit organization. The SCLC works to link communities and conservation through education and ecotourism in the Sarapiqui region of Costa Rica's northern lowlands. The SCLC focuses its efforts in four areas: environmental education; community development; conservation; and eco-tourism – in order to help form future environmental leaders, raise the organizational capacity of local communities, promote sustainable land use, and connect tourists to the local community.



The SCLC is located in one of the most important areas in the San Juan-La Selva Biological Corridor (CBSS). As it is located on the property of Selva Verde lodge, one of the Costa Rican Bird Route's Portal Sites, this Costa Rican non-profit will continue to help with the development of the Costa Rican Bird Route and the CBSS.

Four Signature Tours Developed for the Costa Rican Bird Route



LAPA VERDE TOUR

The high caliber interpretation on this tour creates an experience for the visitor that produces a sense of understanding of the plight of the Great Green Macaw and its need for conservation.

6 Nights – 5 days.

SPIRIT OF SARAPIQUI RIVER: RIVER AND CULTURE TOUR

This trip down the Sarapiquí River takes the visitor to hidden settlements on its shores, and introduces one to what it is like to live in close relationship with the natural world.

3 Nights – 2 days.



BEST OF THE BIRD ROUTE BIRDING TOUR:

This tour has been designed to give the visitor the best opportunity to see the largest amount of birds in the Costa Rican Bird Route. It provides comfortable lodging accommodations while promoting and supporting the eco-tourism activities of local residents who are protecting bird habitat at the grassroots level.

4 nights – 3 days. Various sites included.

MAKING CONNECTIONS: COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVATION

The tour offers a view to how local people attempt to work and live in harmony with the nature that surrounds them. While visiting these communities, get to know local leaders, their children and the birds that are part of their community.

3 Nights – 2 days.



Choose Your Own Adventure: Work with our operators to develop an itinerary that best meets your needs and wants. Reservations must include at least two sites.

For detailed information on any of these tours please visit
<http://www.costaricanbirdroute.com/tours.htm>

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The new Treasurer, **Daniel Schneider**, was one of the first volunteers for RBG. After returning from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point's 2001 Ecotourism class trip to Costa Rica, Daniel heard of the exciting work that RBG was doing. By the summer of 2002 he had a bunk at the project's El Retorno farm and was conducting bird surveys, planting trees, and maintaining the organic gardens. The short time at El Retorno remarkably influenced Dan's life, as he is now a Field Ornithologist for the University of Wisconsin-Madison, spending most of his time researching grassland birds in southern Wisconsin. When not studying birds here, he regularly gives in to the thrill and true adventure of birding in the tropics.

Russ Rothman changes his position to Vice President where he will continue to provide valuable information for the organization, with his long experience in promotion and marketing, and organization assistance.

A new position on the board has been created to keep the link with founder and former President **Andrew Rothman**. The position of Past President holds a vote and will allow Andrew to maintain contact and participation in the organization as he steps aside to let the organization move in a new direction. He too will be moving in a new direction as he takes over as the Director of the Sarapiquí Conservation Learning Center (SCLC). This position will allow him to be more involved with local conservation and education programs within the San Juan-La Selva Biological Corridor. Read more about the SCLC on page 4 of the newsletter.

RBG to Speak at International Eco-tourism Conference

Andrew Rothman has been selected to speak at The International Ecotourism Societies (TIES) North American Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, Oct. 27 – 29th. Andrew will present information on the bird route and bird tourism's effect on local communities.

Andrew will chair a session on bird tourism that will include Nancy Millar and Shelly Plante, who work on birding trails in Texas.



The Official Blog of RBG: The Macaw!

No more waiting for website updates or newsletters! RBG will utilize the blog to regularly post news and events, as well as share any news or tips from the conservation world. Check us out at <http://rbg-themacaw.blogspot.com/>.

Volunteers Continue to Improve the Bird Route Sites

David Kramer, of San Diego, CA, was the most recent volunteer on the Bird Route project, working for almost three months at Bosque Tropical del Toro. David worked on cutting and maintaining trails, making signs for the trails/houses, planting/caring for a garden, and teaching English. He is the 8th volunteer RBG has placed in Costa Rica this past year. Volunteer opportunities are available year-round in both the U.S. and Costa Rica. Contact holly@rainforestbiodiversity.org for more info. Read an excerpt of David's journal on page 6.

Fundraising Update

Summertime in Madison means music festivals on the city's eastside, and an opportunity for RBG to raise some money for the organization. RBG had a booth at both the Waterfront Festival as well as the Orton Park Festival this summer, the booth featuring both a silent auction and a raffle.

The items at our booth were donations from area businesses that included Erewhon, Fair Indigo, R.E.I., Boulders and Capitol Ford. Although stormy weather forced us to leave the Waterfront Festival early, the Orton Park Festival was a



beautiful two days and our booth was a success. People generously supported our efforts, and many showed a great interest in our project, providing an opportunity for education and outreach. RBG hopes to continue its outreach efforts by having a table at the Dane County Farmer's Market downtown on Saturday, September 13th, as well as having a booth at the Willy St. Fair on September 21st. **Thanks to all those who donated or came out and supported the organization!**

RBG has teamed up with the Just Coffee Coop to create RBG's very own brand of coffee: **Bird Route Brew!** [Just Coffee](#) is a Madison, Wisconsin-based company with partners all over the world and a 100% Fair Trade supply chain. Fair trade coffee ensures that the coffee growers are receiving a just wage for their beans and are not being taken advantage by middle men.

Bird Route Brew is not only Fair Trade Certified, but it is organic and shade-grown as well!

What is shade grown coffee?

It is exactly what it sounds like, coffee grown under the shade of trees. This is important because it means that habitat is being preserved for birds and other animals, but farmers can still cultivate their beans and make a living. This also translates into less pesticides being used because this natural habitat will provide natural predators (like birds!) of all those insects that like to prey on crops. Shade-grown coffee varieties take longer to go to market and require more care, which is why so many big coffee producers that are common in supermarkets have switched to sun-grown coffee in order to more quickly fill those shelves. Unfortunately, this has resulted in the loss of significant amounts of rainforest habitat.

Make the switch today to a more environmentally and socially friendly coffee!

RBG currently has the following available for purchase:

- Guatemalan Medium (whole bean)
- Dominican Republic French Dark (whole bean)
- Mexican Decaf (ground only)

These 12 oz. bags of coffee will be available soon on our website for the price of \$10.50, plus \$3.95 shipping and handling in the United States.* For international orders, please directly contact holly@rainforestbiodiversity.org to discuss options.

*** Madison, WI (or surrounding areas) residents may arrange for a free pick-up**

For all you Face-bookers out there, be sure to check out [RBG's page](#) on this social networking site, and become a fan!



An excerpt from David Kramer's journal about his time spent volunteering at Bosque Tropical del Toro (BTT):

...The resourcefulness with which these people make do with the little around them is admirable. The cautious use of precious resources such as food and water, humbling. I will strive to learn to live as they do and remember that the most important lessons of life lie where I have not expected them.

BTT is a place where I so often found myself in awe: flowing down the Rio Toro in kayak, eyes fixed on troops of spider monkeys in the canopy above, studying the rare birds of the forest... The life there affected me greatly and will continue to do so in inexplicable modes.