



Rainforest Biodiversity Group

Protecting the Great Green Macaw to Protect Biodiversity

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Happy New Year from your friends at Rainforest Biodiversity Group! The past year was an eventful one as we wound down two grants for the implementation of the [Costa Rican Bird Route](#) project. Rainforest Biodiversity Group has been implementing this project since 2006 when we received our first Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) grant from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. 2010 was also our tenth year as a non-profit organization, and for this we thought a trip down memory lane was appropriate.

Our trip down memory lane takes the form of a timeline, appearing at the bottom of each page of this newsletter. It starts in the year 2000, when the organization was founded by Andrew Rothman as Friends of the Great Green Macaw. Since that time the organization has faced a number of challenges, from floods and earthquakes to lack of funding. Through it all though, RBG has been committed to habitat conservation on behalf of the Great Green Macaw, migratory birds and biodiversity in general.

*Besides giving you highlights from the past ten years, we are very excited to announce that the **second edition of the Costa Rican Bird Route Map & Guide is now available!** This new version is a bi-lingual spiral bound booklet and features pages for notes and perforated calling cards to leave at businesses to identify yourself as a birder. For more information see the second page of this newsletter.*

We look forward to another year of conservation work and as we chart our course for 2011 we look forward to keeping you informed!

Best wishes for a happy and prosperous new year!

Holly Robertson, President

Become a Member in 2011

Help support Rainforest Biodiversity Group in 2011 by becoming a member! For a donation of \$25, one receives a one year membership. Donations of \$40 and higher make you eligible for a one year membership as well as a free RBG tee-shirt.

Your generous donations are very important in helping sustain the organization and its conservation work. In 2011, RBG looks forward to continuing to monitor its easement property on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, support the Costa Rican Bird Route through website maintenance and promotion, placing volunteers, and exploring new partnerships and projects.

If you would like to support these projects, please send a donation to Rainforest Biodiversity Group at 7 N. Pinckney St. Suite 220, Madison, WI 53703. Or use our [secure Paypal page online](#). Thank you!

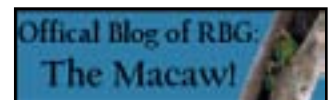
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2nd Edition of the Costa Rican Bird Route Map and Guide Available

The second edition of the Costa Rican Bird Route Map and Guide has been printed and is available for order from the [Costa Rican Bird Route website!](http://www.costaricanbirdroute.com) The cost continues to be \$10 plus shipping and handling. This updated version is in a new spiral bound format and the text is presented in both Spanish and English.



site and make reservations. The new version also features maps on each of the site pages, to further aid in navigating your way to the site, should you be arriving via personal car.

Some of the other new features of this edition include space for jotting down notes and a page of perforated Costa Rican Bird Route “calling cards.” The purpose of these calling cards, front and back shown below, are to let the communities visited on your Costa Rican adventure that you are there because of the amazing biodiversity of their country. By leaving these cards behind at businesses as you go, hopefully it will promote wildlife habitat conservation.



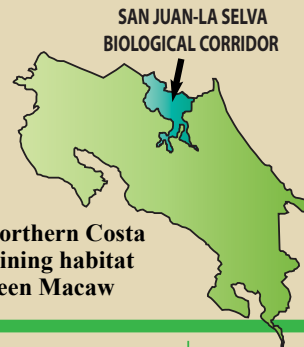
The Map and Guide features a bird checklist for the Bird Route region, and we encourage you to use the program [eBird Costa Rica](http://eBird.org) to enter your lists when you go home! It also contains information on all 18 of the Bird Route sites, including emblematic wildlife species and directions on how to reach the

Please let us know if you have any questions and if we can help facilitate a trip to the Bird Route!

DECEMBER 2000
Organization founded as Friends of the Great Green Macaw (FGGM)



NOVEMBER 2001
The Executive Committee of San Juan-La Selva Biological Corridor is established, of which FGGM is a founding member. The committee is formed to protect habitat in this region of northern Costa Rica, where the last remaining habitat remains for the Great Green Macaw



AUGUST 2001
Organization begins to work in Costa Rica at farm called *El Retorno*, and initiates several projects including: reforestation, sustainable agriculture, and point count bird surveys



JUNE 2002
Organization begins to support an incentive program for landowners to protect macaw nest trees on their land, and also participates in the first annual Bi-National Macaw Festival with Costa Rica and Nicaragua

Two New Volunteers Placed at Costa Rican Bird Route Site

On January 12, two new volunteers arrived at the Costa Rican Bird Route site [Chilamate Rainforest Eco-Retreat](#) (CRE), ready to start their assignments. The volunteers, Ryan and Sarah Helcoski, are fresh from another volunteer post in the mountains of Ecuador where they mainly taught English, but also took on a number of side projects such as reforestation, eco toilets, and composting. RBG is very happy to now have them using these same skills within the Bird Route and the community of Chilamate!

Chilamate Rainforest Eco-Retreat is a family run site that is continuously striving to improve their sustainability. The site utilizes solar panels to heat water, collects rain water to use around the site, and at night uses candles instead of harsh lights that will disturb wildlife.

They have also gotten very involved with the nearby community of Linda Vista, offering English lessons, teaching environmental topics and much more.

During their six month position, Ryan and Sarah will assist CRE in these education and outreach efforts, and hopefully expand the existing program areas. They will help design and teach environmental education curriculum, utilizing the environmental education packets Rainforest Biodiversity Group had made with funds from its last grant. They will also help distribute items made to promote awareness of the Costa Rican Bird Route in the community, items like hats, shown here, and pencils for school children. Also, the volunteers will work to encourage the implementation of composting and organic gardening in the community.



The municipality of Chilamate does not currently have a recycling program, so it is also important for the community to learn how they can reduce their waste and come up with inventive ways to utilize recyclables instead of throwing them out. We are hoping that the volunteers will be of assistance with this as well.

Lastly, Ryan and Sarah will assist in keeping wildlife observation lists at the site, and various other ongoing projects at its host site.

We look forward to keeping you up to date on how their assignments are going!

For more information about RBG's volunteer program, please contact Holly Robertson at holly@rainforest-biodiversity.org.

2003

FGGM moves to farm, *Bosque Tropical del Toro*, and begins major reforestation program at site. Volunteer program expands and enjoys all time high of 40 volunteers over course of year. Concerted environmental education efforts also begin with local schools, traveling college groups and conservation organizations, reaching over 800 people



2005

FGGM changes name to Rainforest Biodiversity Group (RBG) and focuses on building partnerships by becoming a member of the Bird Conservation Alliance and partnering with Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative. Submits grant proposal to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to pursue funding for birding trail initiative



MAY 2004

FGGM establishes office in Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí but suffers significant loss when office is flooded later this year in December

APRIL 2006

RBG is awarded a grant through the USFWS Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act to implement the Costa Rican Bird Route (CRBR) project



Costa Rica Says “No” to Open-Pit Gold Mine in Las Crucitas

For more than a year Rainforest Biodiversity Group has been reporting to you on the fight of environmentalists in Costa Rica and Nicaragua to keep an open pit gold mine project from being implemented in the northern zone of Costa Rica. A project that would have greatly affected ground water and other shared natural resources between the bordering countries.

We are pleased to inform you that the appeals court of Costa Rica has said “no” to the gold mine, ruling that the project’s concession is invalid! The court ruled that the environmental studies required to grant the mining concession were incomplete, and the contract therefore illegal. The court also annulled the decree signed by former Costa Rican president Oscar Arias that allowed the removal of 50 hectares of forest, including Al-mendro trees, in order to build the mine. Cutting down almendro trees is illegal in Costa Rica because of their value to the endangered Great Green Macaw.

A criminal investigation is being conducted on top government officials, including Arias, since there is

evidence of misconduct. Also, the court has ordered Industrias Infinitos, the Canadian company responsible for the gold mine, to pay environmental damages for destruction caused during years of sporadic construction at the site. According to the ruling, mine workers removed 2,391 trees and cleared a total of 121 hectares of land. The company also took over 76 additional hectares of land that has been previously used by farmers.

Finally, judges ordered the National System of Conservation Areas to set aside funds to help mitigate the environmental damage done at Las Crucitas.

What an amazing victory for the environment and for the people of Costa Rica and Nicaragua! Thanks to anyone who supported the fight via petition, letter, or protest.

[Click here](#) to read the complete article in the newspaper *Tico Times*, from which information for this article was obtained.

▶ JUNE 2007

Initial sites selected for the Costa Rican Bird Route project; website completed for CRBR



▶ APRIL 2008

RBG awarded 2nd NMBCA grant to continue developing the CRBR project

▶ FEBRUARY 2008

First official tour to the CRBR is conducted for ecotourism and bird conservation professionals; Map and Guide for the CRBR is completed



▶ SEPTEMBER 2009

RBG awarded grant through the Program for South-South Cooperation to collaborate with partner organization in Benin, Africa to advance community based conservation

Border Dispute Between Costa Rica and Nicaragua Continues

On January 12 Costa Rica and Nicaragua headed to world court to plead their arguments in an ongoing border dispute between the two countries. The dispute began in October of last year when the Nicaraguan government began to dredge 21 miles of the San Juan River in the area of Isla Calero.

Costa Rica claims that violation of its sovereignty took place as Nicaraguan troops had entered Costa Rican territory, and the dredging of the river caused environmental damage in the wetlands at Isla Calero. Nicaragua rejected all claims and have also argued that the dispute was caused by a lack of well-defined borders. In addition, Nicaragua has recently been asserting that it is the Costa Ricans who have been polluting

the San Juan River for years, and that they are claiming to be trying to clean it.

On the first day in front of the court, Costa Rica opened the day by accusing Nicaragua of endangering the stability and peace that exists between the two neighboring countries, while urging the court to rule to remove Nicaraguan troops from their “illegitimate” occupation of the Isla Calero. The Costa Rican contingent also urged the court to rule to cease the “imminent and irreparable environmental damage” caused by Nicaragua in the border region.

In the meantime, Costa Rican President Laura Chinchilla and Public Security Minister José María Tijerino took steps at home

that indicate an increased concern for security along the border. Tijerino recently announced that work had begun in late December to enhance security along three Costa Rican rivers that join the Río San Juan, which serves as the border between Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

The increased security measures include plans for heliports to facilitate government air traffic and to monitor security along the border. The plans also include installing fences around the border’s river deltas to control access in and around the area, and new roads to provide better access to border regions.

[Click here](#) to read more in the *Tico Times* newspaper.

▶ **OCTOBER 2009**
RBG becomes the recipient of a conservation easement on property on Pacific coast of Costa Rica, protecting nearly 300 acres of primary rainforest habitat



▶ **FEBRUARY 2010**
Partners from Benin, Africa visit Costa Rican Bird Route



▶ **2009 - 2010**
Costa Rican Bird Route enjoys considerable coverage in major media outlets: Washington Post, New York Times, Outside Magazine, Lonely Planet’s Guide to Costa Rica, AAA Magazine and Birding Adventures TV

▶ **JUNE 2010**
Steering Committee of the Costa Rican Bird Route formed