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## **Rainforest Biodiversity Group Annual Report 2008 January 1, 2008 through December 31, 2008**

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Rainforest Biodiversity Group's mission is to protect biological diversity, including migratory bird species, through the protection of habitat for the Great Green Macaw and the creation of local conservation initiatives. We accomplish our goals through the creation and support of public, as well as, private conservation initiatives. This annual report covers our activities for the calendar year of 2008.

### **Annual Summary**

Rainforest Biodiversity Group (RBG) focused their efforts on the Costa Rican Bird Route (CRBR) in 2008. The first National Migratory Bird Conservation Act grant received by RBG was completed on June 1. RBG continued to implement and maintain the Costa Rican Bird Route project by securing a second grant in the amount of \$30,000 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, awarded in April 2008, the period for the grant being June 2008 to June 2010. The funds from this grant allowed RBG to hire Raquel Gomez as the Bird Route Coordinator whose duties include maintaining communication and outreach activities with reserve owners, communities and tour operators; coordinating sustainable tourism and conservation workshops with landowners and local guides; assisting landowners to enroll in environmental service incentive land protection programs and managing an eBird-based bird monitoring and data collection program for the CRBR.

RBG also maintained Andrew Rothman as Director of the Bird Route project for a portion of 2008. Additionally there were many people who were involved in one way or another with the development of the Costa Rican Bird Route. These people included Holly Robertson, Olivier Chassot, Russ Rothman, Daniel Schneider, Rebecca Osborn, Guisselle monge, Jon Kohl, Matt Kemp, , Pablo Elizondo, Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, and the Costa Rican Ornithological Association.

Rainforest Biodiversity Group continued to carry out promotional and fundraising activities in 2008 to further build the capacity of the organization, through networking and a presence at local festivals. RBG also continued to provide education and outreach services to its members via newsletters, email updates , social networking sites on the web and educational presentations.

### **2008 Activities**

**The Rainforest Biodiversity Group completed the following during the 2008 Annual Cycle.**

1. **Maintained staff and operational needs** for the Costa Rican Bird Route project

- a. RBG has maintained the services of Raquel Gomez as Bird Route Coordinator in Costa Rica, and Andrew Rothman as Project Director in the United States and in Costa Rica.
2. Completed the **editing and printing of the official Costa Rican Bird Route Map and Guide**. The Map and Guide is an essential tool for visiting the Bird Route and includes: road map of the Sarapiquí/San Carlos area; information on all the Bird Route sites, including GPS coordinates; Bird Route bird checklist; contact information for guides in the region; and birding Code of Ethics. The Map and Guides were put on sale on both the RBG and the Bird Route websites for a price of \$10. In 2008, 20 Map and Guides were sold for a net profit of \$198.69, and 30 more were distributed at conferences and on trips to the Bird Route. Work was done on determining ideal locations within Costa Rica for the sale of the Map and Guides.
3. The private reserve Lomas de Sardinal was removed as one of the sites of the Costa Rican Bird Route due to lack of participation, and replaced with a **new private reserve: Santa Elena Reserve**. Reserva Santa Elena is a community-owned reserve and has been very active in developing eco-tourism and community development projects over the last few years.
4. Continued to work on the **development of action plans** for each Costa Rican Bird Route site. These action plans are the plans that will be implemented by each site to meet the sustainable standards developed by RBG for the Costa Rican Bird Route. These action plans also lay out timelines for implementing the plans and the development of the site for tourism.
5. Began work on planning the **“Best Practices for Sustainable Tourism” workshop series** in conjunction with Rainforest Alliance. This series of three workshops will be held for the private landowners during the first quarter of 2009, and will be designed to help remote sites understand what sustainable tourism is and why it is important. The workshops will also help the landowners put into practice the “best practices” recommended by Rainforest Alliance, based on the activities summarized in their action plans.
6. Conducted the **first tour of the Bird Route in February 2008**. This tour was a Familiarization Tour for ornithological and tourism professionals. The purpose of the tour was to get feedback on the feasibility of this project as a tool for habitat conservation in Latin America, as well as a mechanism to get feedback on the development of the Bird Route itself. The participants on this trip were: Will Weber/Journeys International; Susan Hannon/University of Alberta; Sue Sill/North American Butterfly Association; Bill Volkert/WI Department of Natural Resources; John Christian/WI Department of Conservation; Terry Rich/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Partners in Flight; Christina Cavaliere/The International Ecotourism Society; Henk Morelisse/Finca Pangola; Lisa and Chris Garrett/Wild Bird Center; Brad Jacobs/Missouri Department of Conservation; Pablo Elizondo/Partners in Flight (guide); Holly Robertson and Andrew Rothman (guides).
7. Conducted eight **community education programs** about the Costa Rican Bird Route to various communities throughout the region of the project.

8. Began work on an **Ornithological Education Program** for the remote sites and their associated communities. The objective is to educate sites and local communities on the importance of bird diversity and their habitat conservation, and train them on how to monitor bird biodiversity in their community. RBG will collaborate with the Costa Rican Ornithological Society, the Sarapiquí Conservation Learning Center, the Bird Sleuth program (Cornell Lab or Ornithology program), and the portal sites of the Bird Route to carry out this initiative, to begin in January of 2009.
9. Created a **new Christmas Bird Count Circle in the Maquenque region** of the San Juan – La Selva Biological Corridor. RBG coordinated with the Costa Rican Ornithological Society to organize the very first Christmas Bird Count in the “Maquenque Circle” which was held January 3, 2009.
10. **Four signature tours were developed for the Costa Rican Bird Route**, to be offered year-round were developed.. 1) Lapa Verde Tour, providing multiple opportunities to see the Great Green Macaw as well as providing high caliber interpretation of the conservation issues surrounding this bird. 2) Spirit of Sarapiquí River, takes the visitor to hidden settlements along the shore of the Sarapiquí River. 3) Best of the Bird Route Birding Tour, gives the best opportunity to see the largest amounts of birds in the Bird Route by including multiple sites. 4) Communities and Conservation Tour, visiting community-operated reserves and getting to know the locals involved in operating the reserve.
11. Work continues to be done on completing the **Business and Operation Plan** for the Costa Rican Bird Route.
12. Began work on planning the **opening event for the Costa Rican Bird Route**, to be held in February 2009. The idea for the opening event is that it will be a birding challenge among six teams of six people, to see which team can observe the most number of birds at the Bird Route sites over a period of three days.
13. Conducted the **second tour to the Costa Rican Bird Route** from November 2 to 9, 2008. The tour consisted of 11 participants and traveled to six of the 13 sites. The cost of the tour included a donation to the organization, and therefore raised a total of \$2,200 for RBG.
14. Continued to maintain communication with sites of the CRBR.
15. Worked on approaching organizations in Costa Rica to help with funding of initiatives within the Bird Route.
16. **Two volunteers** were placed at the Bird Routes site of Quebrada Grande and Bosque Tropical del Toro. Clodagh de Brun worked on trail development and maintenance in the Quebrada Grande Reserve as well as doing gardening work for her homestay family. David Kramer worked at Bosque Tropical del Toro cutting and maintaining trails, making signs for the trails/houses, planting/caring for a garden, and teaching English.
17. Started to work on planning a **Guide Certification Program**, which is an initiative to train members of the Bird Route communities to be guides for the Costa Rican Bird Route.
18. Work continues to be done on improving the volunteer program.

## **19. Promotion of Costa Rican Bird Route:**

- a. Attended a tourism trade show at Tirimbina Rainforest Center in Costa Rica on October 15<sup>th</sup>. The trade show was attended by representatives of tourism wholesalers from around the globe and information on the Bird Route distributed.
- b. Had a booth for the Bird Route at the VII Rural Tourism and Sustainable Living Fair in San Jose, Costa Rica on November 19-21. The fair was visited by 9,000 people, including local tour operators, Costa Ricans, and international visitors.
- c. Attended the annual International Ecotourism Society (TIES) meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia. Andrew Rothman of RBG was a speaker at the conference and gave the presentation “Conservation Issues in Northeastern Costa Rica” which discussed issues that the region faces, and the concept of the Costa Rican Bird Route.
- d. Worked with Lonely Planet guides to have the Costa Rican Bird Route be featured in the 2009 version of the Lonely Planet Costa Rica.
- e. Worked with Washington Post travel writer Carol Sottili to have Carol attend the November trip to the Bird Route and write an article for the cover page of the Washington Post travel section.
- f. Articles on the Costa Rican Bird Route appeared in various newsletters including that of: the Bird Conservation Alliance, Partners in Flight, Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, and the Audubon newsletter.
- g. Costa Rican Bird Route signs with the Bird Route logo have been produced for the portal sites and are awaiting delivery to the sites.
- h. RBG updated the Costa Rican Bird Route brochure and did a second printing of 1,000 brochures. These brochures continue to be distributed at promotional events, conferences and festivals.
- i. The Costa Rican Bird Route website was updated and maintained ([www.costaricanbirdroute.com](http://www.costaricanbirdroute.com)).

### **Additional Activities:**

#### **Associations:**

- Became partners with the Sarapiquí Conservation Learning Center.
- Became official partners with the Sarapiquí Tourism Board, or CATUSA, to further develop communication within the Sarapiquí region on the Bird Route project.
- Outreach efforts with the Ceiba Foundation, a Madison-based non-profit working for similar objectives as RBG.
- Maintained membership within Executive Committee of San Juan – La Selva Biological Corridor.

#### **Awards:**

- Certificates of appreciation were given to Clodagh de Brun and David Kramer to recognize their significant contributions in Costa Rica to the Bird Route project.
- A plaque of appreciation was given to Andrew Rothman to recognize his eight years of service to Rainforest Biodiversity Group.

#### **Promotion of Activities/ Outreach:**

- Held fundraising activities: Spring Bird-a-Thon and a booth at the Orton Park Festival and Waterfront Festival in Madison, Wisconsin.
- Designed and printed new Rainforest Biodiversity Group t-shirts.
- Worked with local coffee purveyor Just Coffee to create a custom brand of coffee for RBG: Bird Route Brew. The coffee is used to create awareness about RBG and shade grown coffee, as well as raise funds for the organization.
- Started using the program Constant Contact to maintain the distribution list and create more professional emails to constituents.
- Created an official blog for the organization called The Macaw.
- Created a Facebook page for the organization, and continued to update the organization's Myspace page.
- In 2008 RBG published 3 newsletters. Issues number 33, 34, and 35. The newsletter list serve contains close to 400 people.
- The RBG website was completely re-designed and updated in 2008.

## **MEMBERSHIP:**

### **Board of Directors:**

In 2008 the Board of Directors still maintained two parts, an Executive Board, and an Advisory Board. The Executive Board held voting responsibilities on issues and policies, and the advisory board provided recommendations and oversight of the development and implementation of these same topics, as well as acting as the tie-breaking vote.

The directors of the Executive Board changed in 2008. Andrew Rothman stepped down as President, and Holly Robertson was voted to take his position. A position on the board was created for Andrew, that of Past President. Russ Rothman became Vice President, replacing Bill Volkert, and Rebecca Osborn was voted in as Secretary, replacing Holly Robertson, and Daniel Schneider was voted Treasurer to replace Russ.

### **The Executive Board 2008:**

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

### **The Advisory Board 2008:**

Carl Leopold  
 Bobbie Webster  
 Bill Volkert

### **General membership:**

In 2008, the board of directors decided that any person who donated \$25 or more would automatically be granted a membership, regardless of the nature of their donation. Based on this policy, 66 people were considered members of RBG in 2008. 12 of these were officially renewing memberships.

## 2008 DONORS / General Members

First	Last
Paul	Anderson
Adam	Baltz
Jasmine	Batten
Stephen	Bielke
Shawn	Castellanos
John	Christian
Chad	Courtney
Jeanine and Richard	Courtney
Karen	Dorris
Sally	Edelsberg
Dave & Diane	Edwards
Mark & Shari	Eggleston
Peter (Martha Crump)	Feinsinger
Doug & Stacy	Fuller
Chris and Lisa	Garrett
Cheryl	Hageman
Susan	Hannon
Jen	Haverty
Finn and Catherine	Hubbard
Lindsay	Hubbard-Van Stelle
Bob & Gretchen	Hunter
Brad	Jacobs
Ronaele and Arnold	Jacobsen
Scott and Kimberly	Jaeger
Damon	Jeffrey
Terrance and Carol	Knight
Edward	Krempasanka
Julie	Langenberg

First	Last
Carl	Leopold
Henk	Morelisse Sr.
Lauren	Nelson
Lisa	Newman
Larry and Paula	Osborn
Rachael	Osborn
Thomas	Powell
Eric	Preston
Alex	Queen
Terry	Rich
Jim & Nita	Roethe
Judy	Roethe
Russ	Rothman
M. Louise	Rothman-Riemer
Robert	Rothschild
Dan	Schneider
Kay	Schneider
Sue	Sill
Jaclyn	Smolinsky
Guy	Somers
Carol	Sottili
Joan	Spector
David	Stehr
Bill	Volkert
Jennifer	Walter
Jerry & Janice	Waters
Brooke	Williams
Jennifer	Wirth

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## RBG General Accounting

### CASH DONATIONS 2008:

**2008 Total Donations: \$7,408.97**

Membership total: \$524.15

Bird-a-Thon donations: \$1165.15

Adopt-a-Nest: \$200

Merchandise Sales: \$794.33

Orton Park Festival donations: \$1,038

Trip Donations: \$3,200

Other donations: \$487.34

## **IN-KIND Donations 2008:**

### **Work:**

- Volunteer hours:
  - Holly Robertson: \$15,600 (=1040 hours @ \$15/hr)
  - Andrew Rothman: \$3,600 (=180 hours @ \$20/hr)
  - Raquel Gomez: \$2100 (=105 hrs @ \$20/hr)
  - Rebecca Osborn: \$2,600 (=200 hours @ \$13/hr)
  - Daniel Schneider: \$962(=74 hours @\$13/hr)
  - Clodagh de Brun: \$1,920 (=240 hours @ \$8/hr)
  - David Kramer: \$1,920 (=240 hours @ \$8/hr)
  
- Food cost for volunteers: \$900
- Russell Stevens Marketing: \$3,000
- EMK Designs: \$5,000
- Donations for the RBG fundraising event at Waterfront Festival: \$1,905.33

**TOTAL IN-KIND US 2008: \$39,507.33**

**TOTAL DONATIONS US 2008: \$46,916.30**

## **EXPENDITURES US 2008**

### **Total Expenditures: \$7201.42**

- Includes: Office supplies, website fees, donations to other conservation projects, postage fees, organization fees, printing costs, costs for promotional and educational materials for the organization and the Costa Rican Bird Route, and fundraising efforts.

## **Bird Route Accounting:**

### **NMBCA Funds Spent in 2008:**

In 2008 RBG used \$24,152.61 of the \$50,000 grant. These funds were used to pay salaries of staff, purchase office items, print initial round of Bird Route signs, printing of Bird Route brochures, conduct a bird count, paying for work on the CRBR website, and for travel within and to Costa Rica. For detailed information please contact the organization. The grant balance had been expended in 2006 and 2007.

## **CASH ACCOUNTING TOTALS:**

**Total Donations 2008: \$7,408.97**

**Total Income for FAM Tour and November Trip to Bird Route: \$19,015.67**

**GRAND TOTAL INCOME: \$26,424.64**

**Total Expenditures 2008: \$7,201.42**

**Total Expenditures for FAM Tour and November Trip to Bird Route: \$18,585.98**

**GRAND TOTAL EXPENDITURES: \$25,787.40**

**DIFFERENCE of Income/Expenditures: \$637.24**

**CASH ON HAND FOR RBG:**

**Jan 1. 2008: \$4,618.58**

**Dec. 31 2008: \$5,255.82**

**Difference = \$637.24**

**BIRD ROUTE ACCOUNTING:**

**TOTAL DISPURSED to RBG from USFWS grant: \$22,665.35**

**TOTAL EXPENDED by RBG: \$22,542.35**

**DIFFERENCE: \$123.00**