



Mass Audubon  
Natural History Travel

Glistening-green Tanager

## Colombia: Birding the Central Andes

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**Leader: Dave Larson**  
February 29 to  
March 12, 2020

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A paradise for birders, Colombia has the highest bird species count of any country in the world, with well over 1900 species. The diverse topography includes three Andean Cordilleras, two inter-Andean valleys, the Amazon and Orinoco Rivers, the Pacific and Caribbean Coasts, and the rich Chocó biogeographical region, which all add up to one of the most complicated topographies in South America!

We return to the Central Andes where we are sure to find many endemic birds, as well as some familiar species from other Andean countries. Our trip will include the Upper Anchicaya Valley, Otún Quimbaya Sanctuary, the Río Blanco cloud forest reserve, stunning Los Nevados National Park, the lovely town of Jardín, and Cauca Valley, and ending at famous Las Tángaras Reserve (a tanager paradise!). Trip begins in Cali and will finish in Medellín.

If you have a life list, a delight in traveling off the beaten path, early starts, and long days filled with challenging birding—this is the trip for you!



Yellow-eared Parrot



Munchique Wood-Wren

## ABOUT THIS TRIP

**FOCUS:** Birds. This tour is not for everyone! Colombia boasts more bird species than any other country on Earth. The birding is therefore intense and challenging.

**PACE AND COMFORT:** Days will almost always start with a 5:30 AM breakfast—birding (or traveling) all day. We will be in the field most of each day. Most of the walking will be on easy to moderate trails, however there is one day where the trail is quite difficult. Travelers who wish to relax at the lodge on a non-travel day can certainly do so.

**TRANSPORTATION:** We'll be in vans, jeeps, or small buses depending on the size of the group. Roads are often rough.

**LODGING:** Most of the lodges are located in or near excellent birding spots. All have en-suite bathrooms. There is a mix of hotels—from very basic to four stars. Food was judged to be very good to excellent by past travelers. You will eat in a variety of places—hotels, lodges, and local restaurants and cafes.

**WEATHER:** We will be traveling just before the usual rainy season: however, there may be occasional rainfall. Temperatures during the day will be warm (70s to 90s), but can drop to the 50s at night in some locations. There will be a couple of days where we will be birding at elevations of 6,000–12,800 ft. Overnights are all at lower elevations.

**BIRDS:** Several rarely seen and highly sought-after birds among a list that should approach 400 species (the asterisks indicate the endemics).

## SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS

- Cauca Guan\*
- Chestnut Wood-Quail\*
- Long-tailed Sylph
- Buffy Helmetcrest\*
- Andean Condor
- Lanceolated Monklet
- Black-billed Mountain-Toucan
- Grayish Piculet
- Rufous-fronted Parakeet\*
- Yellow-eared Parrot\*
- Moustached Antpitta
- Scaled Antpitta
- Brown-banded Antpitta\*
- Ocellated Tapaculo
- Tatama Tapaculo\*
- White-chinned Thistletail
- Andean Cock-of-the-Rock
- Red-ruffed Fruitcrow
- Apical Flycatcher
- Long-wattled Umbrellabird
- Antioquia Wren
- Munchique Wood-wren\*
- Red-bellied Grackle
- Crested Ant-Tanager\*
- Golden-Chested Tanager
- Multicolored Tanager



Canopy Tower Ladder at Otún Quimbaya



Andes



Cinnamon Flycatcher

## Day-to-Day Itinerary – Main Trip

### Day 1 February 29: Arrive In Cali

The trip will begin at the Alfonso Bonilla Aragón International Airport, where you will be met by our local guide, Pablo, and the driver. The drive from the Cali airport to our hotel is ~ 35 minutes. We ask that you arrive in the afternoon, so you can have some free time before our welcome dinner.

**Overnight:** Hampton by Hilton Cali | (D) | Excellent hotel.

### Day 2 March 1: Cali to Upper Anchicaya Valley

After early morning breakfast, we will head to La Finca Alejandría cloud forest about an hour away. This very humid and lovely premontane forest (altitude ~ 3000 ft) is on the western slope of the Andes, and is home to many species of tanagers and hummingbirds.

Although there are several different small reserves and farms here of interest, we will spend most of our time at La Finca Alejandría where superb feeder arrays bring in hummingbird species such as Long-tailed Sylph, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Blue-headed Sapphire, Purple-throated Woodstar, Green Hermit, and more. The lively banana feeders draw in the endemic Multicolored Tanager, along with Scrub, Golden, Golden-naped, Beryl-spangled, Metallic-green, and Saffron-crowned Tanagers. We'll also look for Chestnut Wood-Quail, Scaled Antpitta, Scaled Fruiteater, Crested Quetzal, and Moustached Puffbird.

After lunch at La Finca Alejandría, we'll drive an hour west to the Upper Anchicaya Valley to explore the habitat around El Queremal. We'll bird along quiet road through a mix of secondary and mature cloud forest (between 4000 – 5000 ft).

A few miles outside of El Queremal town are wonderful feeders maintained by a farmer where we'll hope to see: Green Thorntail, Tooth-billed Hummingbird, Black-headed Brushfinch, Tricolored Brushfinch, White-lined, Glistening-green, and Rufous-throated Tanagers, Red-headed Barbet, and Black-chinned and Blue-winged Mountain-Tanagers. To finish the day, we'll bird the surrounding forest looking for Toucan Barbet, Black Solitaire, Scaled Fruiteater, Choco Tapaculo, Crested Ant-Tanager, and Barred Hawk.

**Overnight:** El Hotel Campanario (or similar) | (B,L,D) | Hotel is very basic, rustic, clean, quiet, safe hotel, and close to the birds.

### Day 3 March 2: Anchicaya Valley

Starting with coffee at 5 am, we will head off to explore a lowland rainforest about 90-minutes away. This area is home to many specialties of the Chocó bioregion. Located below the western slope of the Andes, lowland Anchicaya comprises very humid and mossy jungles. When we arrive, we'll fortify ourselves with a packed breakfast, surrounded by splendid Los Farallones de Cali National Nature Park.

Our morning walk will be on a legendary forested road—famous for the huge, mixed flocks! Some of our targets will be: Sapayoa, Solitary Eagle, Lita Woodpecker, Golden-chested and Moss-backed Tanagers, Tooth-billed Hummingbird, Green Manakin, Blue-whiskered, Rufous-winged, Emerald, Gray-and-gold, and Golden-naped Tanagers, Stub-tailed, Esmeraldas, and Dull-mantled Antbirds, Spot-crowned and Five-colored Barbets, Pacific Flatbill, Slaty-capped Shrike-Vireo, Lanceolated Monklet, Black-breasted Puffbird, Lemon-spectacled Tanager, Spot-crowned Antvireo, Scarlet-and-white Tanager, Yellow-green Chlorospingus, Blue-tailed Trogon, Baudo Guan, Semiplumbeous Hawk, Dusky Pigeon, Purple Quail-Dove, Hoary Puffleg, White-faced Nunbird, Plumbeous Forest-Falcon, Orange-crested Flycatcher, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Slate-colored

Seedeater, Crested Ant-Tanager, and Choco and Tatama Tapaculos. It's very unlikely we'll see them, but we'll keep our eyes open for Thicket and Plain-backed Antpittas, and even the very rare Banded Ground-Cuckoo.

Also difficult to spot, but worth looking for are some exciting mammals such as: Northern Tamandua, Jaguarundi, Crab-eating Fox, Coati, Kinkajou, Olinguito, Tayra, Collared Peccary, Three-toed Sloth, Nine-banded Armadillo, Common Opossum, Mantled Howler, Spider Monkey, Black Agouti, Paca, and Colombian Weasel.

**Overnight:** El Hotel Campanario (or similar) | (B,L,D)



Golden-olive Woodpecker

## Day 4 March 3: Anchicaya Valley, Then Drive to Otún Quimbaya

Our morning will be filled with more birding in Anchicaya Valley before we drive to Otún Quimbaya Flora and Fauna Sanctuary. It is a long drive but we'll break it up with a birding stop at the Laguna de Sonso Nature Reserve to look for: Apical Flycatcher, Grayish Piculet, Dwarf Cuckoo, Bar-crested Antshrike, Jet Antbird, Spectacled Parrotlet, and many other open country birds.

**Overnight:** Hotel Sonesta | (B,L,D) | Very good hotel, upgrade from last year.



Black Agouti

## Day 5 March 4: Otún Quimbaya Flora & Fauna Sanctuary, Then Manizales

We will have breakfast and lunch here at Otún Quimbaya. Set along the Río Otún, this sanctuary enjoys a high level of biodiversity. Our charming lodge sits amidst subtropical forest, and many of its special birds can be seen just a short walk from our rooms: Hooded Antpitta, Cauca Guan (endemic), Chestnut Wood-Quail (endemic), Grayish Piculet (endemic), Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, Golden-plumed Parakeet, Moustached Antpitta, Chestnut-breasted Wren, Wattled Guan, Black-winged Saltator, Torrent Duck, White-capped Dipper, Metallic-green Tanager, Variegated Bristle-Tyrant, Plumbeous-crowned Tyrannulet, Green-fronted Lancebill, Rusty-winged Barbtail, Streak-capped Treehunter, and Cerulean and Golden-winged Warblers. After a full day of fine birding, we'll drive 2 hours to Manizales.

**Overnight:** Hotel Stelar El Cable | (B,L,D)

## Day 6 March 5: Río Blanco Nature Reserve & Central Andes

Breakfast at the hotel will be very early so we can get on the road and drive about 45 minutes to begin our exploration of Reserva Ecológica Río Blanco, an undeveloped cloud forest nature reserve located on the western slope of the Central Andes.

Some of the wonderful birds we'll be looking for are: Masked Saltator, Rusty-faced Parrot, Golden-plumed Parakeet, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Dusky Piha, Ash-colored and Ocellated Tapaculos, Tyrannine Woodcreeper, Sharpe's Wren, Smoky Bush-Tyrant, and Scaly-naped Parrot. The reserve also features some extraordinary antpitta feeders (!) which attract Brown-banded (endemic), Bicolored, Chestnut-crowned, Chestnut-naped, and Slate-crowned Antpittas! We'll spend the afternoon birding the reserve trails, while keeping an eye for some of the other charming residents like Mountain Coati, Paca (rare), and Andean Squirrel.

**Overnight:** Hotel Stelar El Cable | (B,L,D)



Bay-headed Tanager

## Day 7 March 6: Parque Nacional Natural Los Nevados & Páramo del Ruiz

We'll head out early to Los Nevados National Park. The views here of the snow-covered volcanic peaks are some of the most stunning in the Colombian Andes. (The park can be rainy and cool with an elevation 10,200 - 12,800 ft). We'll make stops along the road to search for a number of scarcer hummingbirds, including the famous Buffy (formerly Bearded) Helmetcrest (endemic), Black-thighed and Golden-breasted Pufflegs, Mountain Avocetbill, Rainbow-bearded and Purple-backed Thornbills, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Shining Sunbeam, and Buff-winged Starfrontlet.

Other birds of note found here include: Rufous-fronted Parakeet (endemic), Páramo Tapaculo, White-browed Spinetail, Black-backed Bush Tanager, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Andean Condor, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Stout-billed Cinclodes, Tawny Antpitta, Crowned Chat-Tyrant, Black-collared Jay, Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager, Páramo Seedeater, Andean Tit-Spinetail, White-chinned Thistletail, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch, Black-eared Hemispingus, and Plushcap.

This region has the benefit of similar habitat to Rìo Blanco, but with far fewer people traveling here, so birds are much more responsive to playbacks. We'll head back to our hotel for dinner and an early bedtime.

**Overnight:** Hotel Stelar El Cable | (B,L,D)

## Day 8 March 7: Manizales to Jardín

Early breakfast at 5:30 am and then we're off to Jardín with stops in Cauca Valley to try for Antioquia Wren, Grayish Piculet, Colombian Chachalaca, and more.

We'll check into our hotel, then take some time to explore this lovely town, and enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. Jardín is one of the one of most beautiful Andean towns of Colombia. After lunch, we'll bird the low part of Jardín area to see birds like Red-bellied Grackle and Torrent Duck before heading to a wonderful Cock-of-the-Rock lek. We'll spend about an hour observing the lek and birding the area.

To end the day, we'll head back to the hotel to clean up and then enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

**Overnight:** Hotel Balandu or similar | (B,L,D) | Excellent hotel. A former big estate perched on the hillside with wide grassy lawns, pool, patios, etc. Modern beds and showers, with good food.

## Day 9 March 8: La Reserva Natural de Las Aves Loro Orejiamarillo

We'll make our earliest departure of the trip (around 4:45 am) to head to the Yellow-eared Parrot Reserve. (Note: The drive up the mountain is on a very rough and steep road that is often muddy and slick, but we'll do our best. If weather or road conditions are poor, we will not do this drive.)

The birding at this elevation (6200-10,000 ft) is superb, and we'll enjoy a packed breakfast in the field while we search for Chestnut-crested Cotinga, Munchique Wood-wren

(endemic), Tanager Finch, White-capped, Red-hooded, Golden-crowned, and Saffron-crowned Tanagers, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Golden-fronted Redstart, Barred Fruiteater, Citrine Warbler, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Gray-hooded Bush Tanager, Mountain Cacique, and Golden-rumped Euphonia. We'll keep our fingers crossed for sightings of the critically endangered Yellow-eared Parrot (endemic).

**Overnight:** Hotel Balandu or similar | (B,L,D)

## Day 10 March 9: Cauca Valley, Then Drive to La Reserva Natural de las Aves Las Tángaras

We'll start out early to bird Cauca Valley for birds like the Grayish Piculet, Antioquia Wren, Bar-crested Antshrike, Spectacled Parrotlet, and many more. Later in the morning, we'll stop for breakfast at a local restaurant. After a few more hours of birding, we'll head to Las Tángaras Nature Reserve about 90-minutes away. We'll check in and then enjoy the sights and sounds of the many species of birds visiting the feeders beside our accommodation. We'll spend time exploring the grounds, eating both lunch and dinner at the lodge.

**Overnight:** Las Tángaras | (B,L,D)



Toucan Barbet

## Day 11 March 10: La Reserva Natural de las Aves Las Tángaras

What a day we'll have! Las Tángaras, like Anchicaya Valley, is a paradise for tanagers!! Possibilities include two prized endemics: Gold-ringed and Black-and-gold Tanagers, plus Crested Ant-Tanager (endemic), Purplish-mantled, Glistening-green, Lemon-spectacled, Rufous-throated, Metallic-green, Silver-throated, and Flame-faced Tanagers, and Yellow-green Bush Tanager.

Other superb birds seen here include Black Solitaire, Buffy Tuftedcheek, Fulvous-dotted Treerunner, Choco Vireo, Cloud



Black-capped Tanager

-forest Pygmy-Owl, Chestnut Wood-Quail, Semicollared Hawk, Colombian Screech-Owl, White-chested Swift, Dusky Starfrontlet, Lanceolated Monklet, White-faced Nunbird, Blue-fronted Parrotlet, Greater Scythebill, Ashy-headed Tyrannulet, Beautiful Jay, Turquoise Dacnis, Tanager Finch, Slate-colored Seedeater, Toucan Barbet, Bicolored Antvireo, Yellow-breasted Antpitta, Solitary Eagle, Ornate and Black Hawk-Eagles, Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Rufous-breasted Antthrush, Bronze-olive Pygmy-Tyrant, Yellow-breasted Antwren, White-headed Wren, Yellow-vented Woodpecker, Rufous-browed Tyrannulet, Olivaceous Piha, Olive Finch, Uniform Treehunter, Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner, and Yellow-collared and Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonias. For hummingbirds, we'll look for Empress Brilliant, White-tailed Hillstar, Brown Inca, Velvet-purple Coronet, Violet-tailed Sylph, Purple-bibbed Whitetip, and Purple-throated Woodstar. Montezuma Road is also home to Nariño, Choco, and the newly discovered Tatama Tapaculo (endemic). We'll eat all our meals on the reserve.

**Overnight:** Las Tángaras | (B,L,D)

## Day 12 March 11: Las Tángaras, Then Drive to Medellín

After an early breakfast at the lodge, we'll spend the morning birding this magical place. After lunch, we'll settle in for a nap on the 3-5 hour drive to Medellín (traffic is unpredictable and can be heavy). We'll check into our hotel, and then have dinner there or at a local restaurant.

**Overnight:** GHL Style San Diego Hotel | (B,L,D) | Very good hotel with very good location and restaurants nearby.

## Day 13 March 12: Farewell Breakfast, Then Transfer to Airport

We'll have our last meal together, then everyone will be taken to the José María Córdova International Airport. (B)

## Mass Audubon Naturalist



**David Larson** is Director of Mass Audubon's Birder's Certificate Program, a college-level ornithology course, and has taught a bird ecology course for naturalist guides in Belize.

He is the Science and Education Coordinator for Mass Audubon's Joppa Flats Education Center in Newburyport, where he designs and leads educational programs and field trips for adults. He holds a PhD in zoology from the University of Minnesota and has served on the faculty of Boston University. He is the president of the Nuttall Ornithological Club and writes a regular column for the journal *Bird Observer*.

He has birded and led tours throughout North America, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Trinidad, Belize, Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, Brazil, Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, England, Hawaii, Mongolia, and Japan.

**Main Tour Price:** \$4900 per person, double occupancy. Single supplement: \$800 (*single rooms are very limited*). Price based on a minimum of 8 travelers. If the group does not reach the minimum, additional small group supplement fee (~\$300) may be added.

### Price Includes:

- All meals and accommodations as shown in the itinerary
- Services of Mass Audubon naturalist leader
- Local guides and naturalists
- All excursions and entrance fees
- Extensive trip preparation notes and bird checklist
- Transportation within Colombia
- Medical evacuation insurance
- Carbon offset credits for your international flights
- All tips and gratuities (*included if we have the minimum of 8*)

### Price Excludes:

- International airfare
- Passport and visa fees; trip cancellation insurance
- Airport taxes; excess baggage charges
- Items of a personal nature, including alcoholic beverages, laundry, and telephone calls; other items not specifically mentioned as included.

## HOW TO BOOK

**Email or call** us at [travel@massaudubon.org](mailto:travel@massaudubon.org) or **800-289-9504** to reserve your place.

### APPLICATIONS, RESERVATIONS, DEPOSITS

Early applications are strongly encouraged. Trip rosters usually must be finalized 4 months before departure! **All applications must be accompanied by a completed reservation form and \$1000 deposit.** Deposits can be by check or credit card (Visa or MasterCard). We reserve the right to decline your application. In the case of questionable health, we reserve the right to require a physician's certification to affirm you are capable of the activities. Final payment is due 90 days before the departure date. **Final payment must be by check or money order.**

**RATES:** All tour prices are based on double occupancy. If you would like us to find you a roommate, we will do our best, but cannot guarantee a share. If we cannot find a share, you will need to pay the single supplement. All forms and fares are accurate at the time of publication (July 2019) but are subject to change at any time prior to departure. It is our policy to only pass on the actual amount of any increases in airfares or land costs such as those increases due to the devaluation of the dollar. Rarely, a price increase may be called for if the group falls below the minimum, as listed in the itinerary.

**TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:** A U.S. passport valid for at least six months beyond the trip's departure date is required.

**FLIGHTS: You, the traveler, are responsible for booking and paying for your own international flights.** Once you reserve your space, we will provide you with suggested flights and tell you which flights our staff will take. You may book flights directly with the airline, online, or with a travel agent. Please be aware that most tickets are non-refundable, therefore you should not book your flight arrangements until you have checked with us to be sure the tour has the minimum number of participants for the trip to go. We ask that you provide us with your flight details

**TRIP INSURANCE:** A brochure and application for optional trip cancellation, illness, and baggage insurance will be sent to you upon registration. We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself. See [insuremytrip.com](http://insuremytrip.com).

**PHOTO CREDITS:** All bird photos by Francesco Veronesi (CC BY-SA 2.0, Flickr); canopy tower ladder photo via Otún Quimbaya Flora and Fauna Sanctuary; Andes photo by Carl and Kathy Woodward; and Black Agouti via Las Tángaras Bird Reserve.

**PHOTOS:** Mass Audubon reserves the right to make use of any photographs taken on the tour. We guarantee that no photos of a compromising nature will be used. If you have questions or concerns, please contact us.

**CANCELLATION POLICY: If you need to change your booking, you must inform us immediately in writing.** All cancellations must be done in writing and are effective upon receipt in the Massachusetts Audubon Travel Office. Cancellations received up to 121 days prior to departure will be refunded deposits less a \$300 per person fee. For

cancellations between 120 and 90 days prior to departure, no deposits will be refunded, but any payment balance will. There are no refunds for cancellations 90 days or less from departure. We strongly urge all travelers to purchase trip cancellation insurance. You will be sent information from the Massachusetts Audubon Society upon receipt of your deposit.

**YOUR RESPONSIBILITY:** Although every precaution is taken to safeguard you and your belongings, group travel trips by their nature involve a certain amount of risk. Trip participants should understand that the domestic and international trips sponsored/operated by Massachusetts Audubon Society (Mass Audubon Tours)—hereafter collectively M.A.S. —involve known and unknown risks. M.A.S. assumes no responsibility for injuries, death, financial losses or damage to clients' property caused by or occurring during participation in any of the travel trips sponsored/operated by M.A.S. Trip participants must assume responsibility for having sufficient skill and fitness to participate in the trips and activities offered or sponsored by M.A.S. Trip participants must also certify that they have no medical, mental or physical conditions which could interfere with their abilities to participate in the activities and/or trips they are participating in and they must assume and bear the cost of all risks that may be created, directly or indirectly, by any such condition. It is the responsibility of trip participants to have in place adequate insurance to cover any injury, damage or emergency transportation costs related to their travel and/or participation in trip activities and/or to bear the costs of such injury, damage or emergency transportation costs. Because of the risks associated with the travel trips sponsored by M.A.S. we urge all trip participants to supplement their own insurance with travel or vacation or emergency response types of insurance. M.A.S. requires that all trip participants acknowledge and assume these risks by reading and signing an M.A.S. Release and Waiver and Assumption of Risk contract prior to departure.

**CONDITIONS OF TRAVEL:** Travelers will be provided with an itinerary and trip preparation information. It is expected that travelers will read this information prior to trip departure. Travelers will be responsible for completing an application reservation form, including the personal information and a release of liability (see attached). Travelers will be expected to abide by the terms set for in the invoice. During the tour, travelers are asked to respect and follow the directions of their guide and leader.

