

A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica

By Gary Stiles, Alexander F. Skutch

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
Costa Rica, a country of no larger than West Virginia, hosts more than 830 species of birds, more than in all of North American north of Mexico. It may well be the only country in the world with as many bird species and habitats to be found in such a small area. Within two hours' drive from San Jose, one can see quetzals in highland forests, antbirds in lowland forests, or shorebirds and ibises in mangrove swamps.

This lavishly illustrated book is the most comprehensive treatment of a rich tropical avifauna ever presented in a single volume suitable for its use in the field. With its full coverage of waterbirds and migrants as well as resident tropical species, and its coverage of such topics as plumages, vocalizations, food habits, nesting, and distribution, it is truly a guide to the birds themselves, not merely a guide to their identification.

Gary Stiles and Alexander Skutch first set the stage for the birds by briefly describing the landforms, vegetation, and climates of Costa Rica. For those who want to take "that second long look" to interpret what they see, the authors discuss some aspects of evolution, ecology, and behavior of Costa Rican birds, and report on the costly and courageous conservation efforts the country is making in face of discouraging odds. The family and species accounts that follow, covering some 400 pages, make up the bulk of the book, with 52 magnificent color plates illustrating virtually every species of Costa Rican bird, migrants as well as residents. There are also practical tips for trips in the field and descriptions of good birding locations, with specific directions for travel by car, public transport, and on foot, as well as three maps.

A highly readable, portable encyclopedia to the fascinating, ever-surprising birds of Costa Rica, this book will be welcomed by birders and other naturalists, professional and amateur ornithologists, ecologists, travelers, and conservationists throughout the northern Neotropics.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Comstock: Cornell Univ. Pr. Oct. 1989. c.656p. permanent paper. illus. maps. bibliog. index. LC 88-43444. ISBN 0-8014-2287-6. \$65; pap. ISBN 0-8014-9600-4. \$35. ref This is a superior field guide to a country with one of the richest assortments of bird life anywhere. Written and illustrated by top experts, this book has it all: 52 excellent color plates, detailed species accounts, brief write-ups of 70 birding localities, and extensive introductory materials, often skimmed on in books of this genre, on geography, climate, habitats, and conservation, accompanied by helpful photographs. Costa Rica has a fine park system and has long been the most popular Central American country for visiting naturalists. Since the destruction of natural areas in the Neotropics is finally receiving the publicity it deserves, books such as this are urgently needed. It is the first Costa Rican bird book since Paul Slud's *The Birds of Costa Rica* (1964. o.p.), a respected but unillustrated monograph. A splendid job. Highly recommended.

- *Henry T. Armistead, Thomas Jefferson Univ. Lib., Philadelphia*

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Review

"A superior field guide to a country with one of the richest assortments of bird life anywhere. Written and illustrated by top experts, this book has it all: 52 excellent color plates, detailed species accounts, brief write-ups of 70 birding localities, and extensive introductory materials . . . on geography, climate, habitats, and conservation, accompanied by helpful photographs."?Library Journal

"This book is much more than a field guide to the birds; it is a complete guide to birding in Costa Rica. It is so much more comprehensive and helpful than other country field guides that it sets a new standard for field guide utility and comprehensiveness."?Naturalist Review

"An excellent field guide, one that sets the industry standard . . . at least for this reviewer, who has subsequently compared every bird guide to 'Stiles and Skutch.' . . . The authors are two top experts on neotropical birds in general. . . . Absolutely indispensable for Costa Rica, and very useful for countries which share Costa Rican avifauna."?British Bulletin of Publications, April 2000

"This long-awaited, much-needed volume may be the best field guide I've ever seen, and it's sure to become the standard against which all new field guides will be measured. Tehcnically excellent and comprehensive, it's the kind of book readers will not put down at the end of the day, but will savor in the evenings back at camp."?Marcy F. Lawton, University of Alabama

From the Back Cover

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