



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures



White-tailed Starfrontlet by Dubi Shapiro

IMPACT ADVENTURES *with* AUDUBON

ROCKJUMPER Tours for Biodiversity



Wyncote Audubon Society
Serving Philadelphia and Montgomery Counties, Pennsylvania

Colombia's Megadiverse Santa Marta Mountains

15 - 22 February 2020 (8 Days)

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TOUR OVERVIEW

Less than a 4-hour flight from Miami, with more bird species than any other country, Colombia owns a staggering total list of 1,900 species. This huge diversity includes a remarkable 74 endemics – and these are a result of the equally diverse range of habitats. The most unique of these is surely the isolated snow-capped Santa Marta Mountains. Here, in Colombia’s fabulous north, the Caribbean coast rises dramatically, from the lower dry forests to towering peaks above 16,000 feet at Pico Bolívar and Pico Cristóbal Colón. Still relatively little-known, it remains debated which peak is higher, but regardless, these are the nation’s highest points, amid arguably the world’s highest coastal mountain range. Isolated from and older than the Andes, possessing a rich, unique geological history, these forested mountains bristle and burst with no less than 36 showy, endemic birds.

In 2016, the National Audubon Society together with partners in Colombia, such as the Calidris Association (calidris.org.co) and Patrimonio Natural (patrimonionatural.org.co) established the Northern Colombia Birding Trail. Funded in large part by USAID, this brand new trail hosts superb birding and a number of Audubon-trained local guides. Impact Adventures: Explore Perija tour, features in Northern Colombia Birding Trail also, and the two trips can be paired for a magical combination. These spots are great examples of how bird-based tourism leads to a more stable future for the area’s birds, the local guides employed, and local businesses, too.

The Santa Martas are utterly unique and this trip is a prime example of how birders can make a positive impact, as they are thrilled by stunning, special birds. Many experts regard the Santa Martas as the most biodiverse place on the planet, and this Megadiverse Santa Marta Mountains tour provides access to nearly each altitudinal band of habitat in the range, giving us a chance at the lion’s share of unique birds here. From the Caribbean coast – where flamingos gather and strut – to the adjacent dry forest – where Vermillion Cardinals perch prominently – to the endemic-rich heights of the Santa Martas, these 7 days teem with fascinating birds in a world-renowned area for biodiversity.



ROCKJUMPER & AUDUBON

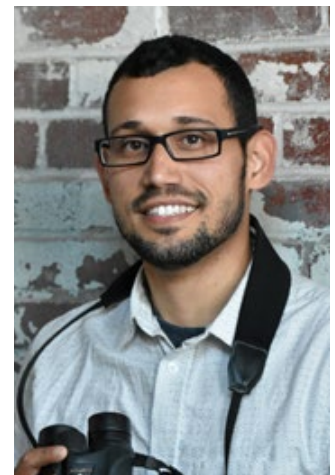
Rockjumper is proud to partner with the National Audubon Society in support of their unrivaled, on the ground work protecting birds and the places they need while training area residents in guiding, business, and hospitality. Through Rockjumper’s Impact Adventures with Audubon, we showcase amazing nature spectacles while celebrating the efforts and expertise of local businesses and conservationists, fostering sustainable economic growth in Neotropical hotspots with high biodiversity. Support the National Audubon Society’s work by joining a Rockjumper Impact Adventure today.



Wyncote Audubon Society

Serving Philadelphia and Montgomery Counties, Pennsylvania

This Megadiverse Santa Marta Mountains tour serves as an opportunity for WAS supporters and friends to travel together, and see one of the most incredible birding locations on Earth, while supporting the work of National Audubon Society, and raising some funds for Wyncote Audubon. It is guided by a Rockjumper guide, Audubon-trained local guide(s), and also your Wyncote Audubon host, Robin Irizarry. Robin has served on the Wyncote Audubon Board’s Education and Important Bird Area committees since 2015. He also works full-time as the Philadelphia Watershed Coordinator for the Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership, helping to rally their communities around environmental conservation on the local level. When he’s not out birding or leading nature walks Robin enjoys wood-carving, biking and exploring his neighborhood creek with his family.



Robin Irizarry

ACTIVITIES



Bird Watching



Photography

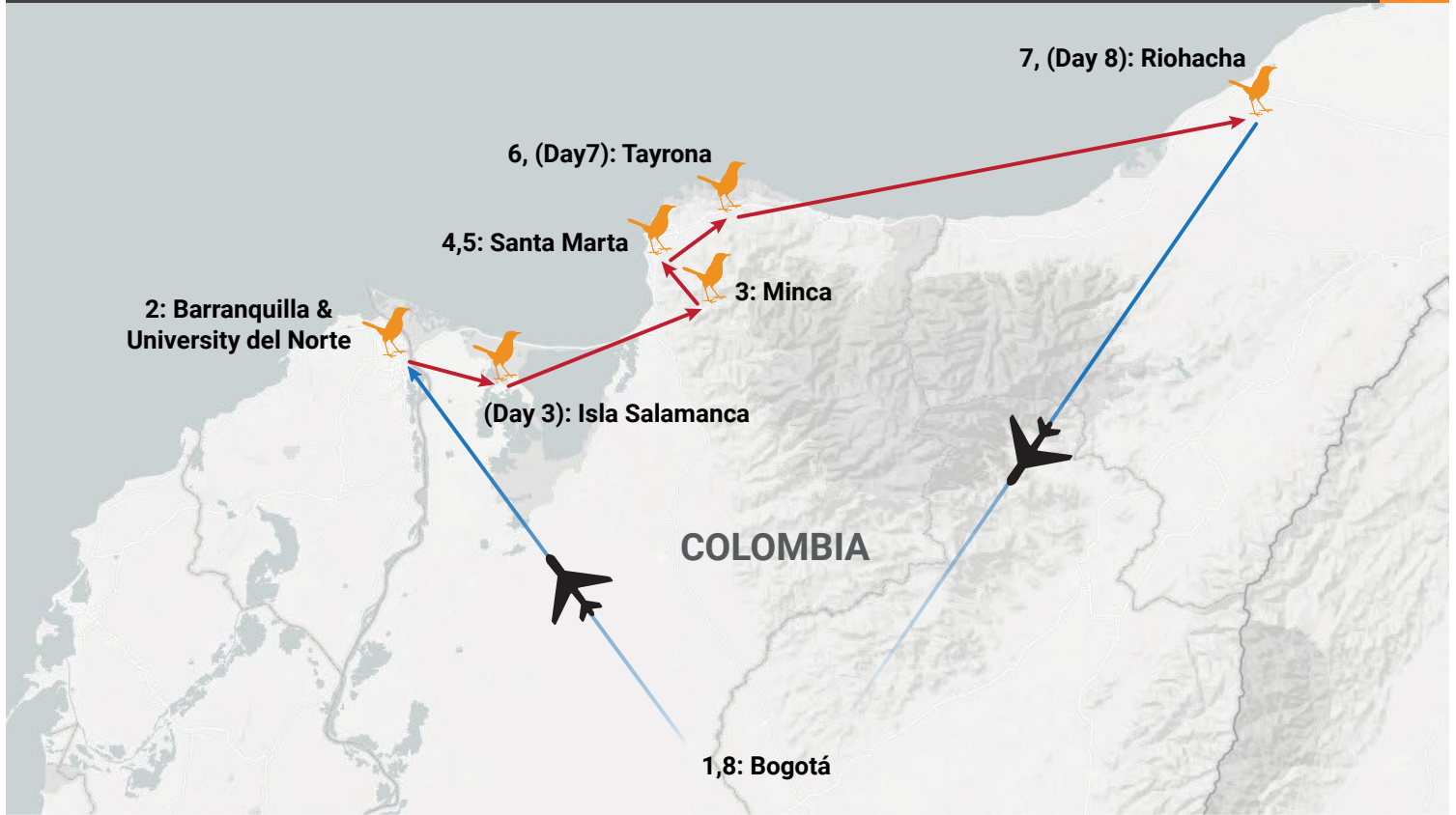


Walking/Hiking



Audubon Conservation

THE TOUR IN DETAIL



Day 1	Arrival in Bogotá
Day 2	Morning flight to Barranquilla, Universidad del Norte
Day 3	Isla Salamanca to Minca
Day 4	Minca to El Dorado Lodge, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta
Day 5	High-elevation birding in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta
Day 6	Descending the Santa Martas, and on to Tayrona
Day 7	Tayrona National Park, drive to Riohacha, Los Flamencos Sanctuary
Day 8	Dry Forest birding, & mid-day flight to Bogotá

DAY 1 ARRIVAL IN BOGOTÁ

Upon arriving in the city of Bogotá, you will be met at the airport and then transferred to our well-appointed hotel. A welcome dinner with your Rockjumper guide will be our first group meeting, as we begin to talk through the exciting adventures to come! Night in Bogotá. (Some participants may prefer to forego the first night in Bogotá and instead begin this Impact Adventure in Barranquilla. See FLIGHTS below).

DAY 2 MORNING FLIGHT TO BARRANQUILLA, UNIVERSIDAD DEL NORTE

After a morning flight to Barranquilla, we will grab lunch in town, and then venture to the Universidad del Norte. Here, we stand a reasonable chance to find the range-restricted Chestnut-winged Chachalaca, and could encounter our first Crested Bobwhite, Russet-throated Puffbird, Black-crested Antshrike, Bicolored Wren, Yellow Oriole, and still much more. Night in Barranquilla.

DAY 3 ISLA SALAMANCA TO MINCA

Isla Salamanca National Park, here on Colombia's Caribbean coast, offers access to a unique area featuring some special birds. Fringed with mangroves and lined with deciduous woodland, this morning we will explore this distinctive habitat, and do our best to connect with special birds, such as Chestnut-winged Chachalaca, Golden-green Woodpecker, Bicolored Conebill, Shining-green Hummingbird, and also the Critically Endangered endemic: Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird. The latter requires some luck to see, as it looks quite similar to the more widespread Sapphire-throated Hummingbird that occurs here in numbers too.

The mangroves are fantastic for wintering Neotropical migrants too, including the gorgeous Prothonotary Warbler for which this is an important wintering area, and so it occurs here in surprising numbers. In recent years, our tours have encountered a number of vagrants and rare winter warblers, including Bay-breasted, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Townsend's and Prairie, so keen eyes may reveal some locally rare species too. The nearby salt flats and estuaries around the mangroves will net many new species for our tour also, hosting a huge array of wintering shorebirds, herons, egrets, gulls, terns and waterfowl.



Chestnut-winged Chachalaca by Adam Riley



Santa Marta Toucanet by Adam Riley

Next up is the rural tourist town of Minca. Attracting national tourists, foreign hikers, bikers and birders alike, Minca's charm is undeniable. It is also conveniently located in the foothills of the famed Santa Marta Mountains. This is our first taste of what Colombians call the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, and the great birding that the Santa Martas mountains have to offer. This afternoon and evening, we search for Coppery Emerald, Rufous Nightjar, Keel-billed Toucan, Black-backed Antshrike, Pale-billed Inezia, Pale-eyed Pygmy Tyrant, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant, Rufous-breasted and Rufous-and-white Wrens, and the boldy-colored Golden-winged Sparrow.

DAY 4 MINCA TO EL DORADO LODGE, SIERRA NEVADA DE SANTA MARTA

The drive from Minca to El Dorado is one that no birder can forget. The views are impressive, the birding grand, and the road up the mountains is a river of huge rocks, potholes and seemingly impassable stream crossings that our drivers, in 4X4 Land Cruisers, will deftly manoeuvre to deliver us safely and comfortably to the loveliest lodge of the tour. All in all, it makes for quite an exciting day! With 19 accessible Santa Marta endemic bird species to search for, we begin searching through mixed flocks that often contain Scaled Piculet, Groove-billed Toucanet, and the Specious Tyrannulet. With luck, we might cross paths with an antswarm, attracting Ruddy Woodcreeper, Gray-headed Tanager and other opportunists. There are several choice territories too for more Santa Marta specialties. En route we have good chances for Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner, Santa Marta Antbird (only recently split from Long-tailed Antbird), Santa Marta Tapaculo, and even the lovely Santa Marta Blossomcrown – which, miraculously, we have managed to locate on every previous tour here to date.



White-tipped Quetzal by Adam Riley



Our target destination today is El Dorado Reserve. Named for the mythical city of gold, El Dorado is indeed a goldmine for birders. Perched at an elevation of over 6000 feet, the lodge offers wonderful views of the Santa Martas and its forested slopes, and hosts nearly all the Santa Marta endemic birds. Established in 2010 by ProAves (proaves.org), one of Colombia's most accomplished bird conservation organizations, the reserve has grown to over 2000 acres. And this is a special place not only for its endemic birds, but also because it protects a number of endangered species, including birds, plants and amphibians.

After getting settled in at our comfortable lodge in El Dorado, we will hold a vigil at the feeding stations and prowl a trail or two for bird species frequenting the lodge proper. And the grounds are truly beautiful. Landscaped with native flowers, and tucked perfectly into the cloud forest amidst thousands of acres of untouched habitat, and a clear view of the Caribbean coast some 30 miles to the north, this lodge is always a favorite, and never disappoints.

In the afternoon and evening, we will look for Band-tailed Guan, near-endemic Black-fronted Wood Quail, the handsome endemic Santa Marta Screech Owl (still awaiting formal scientific description), the striking White-tailed Starfrontlet, rare Lazuline Sabrewing, Santa Marta Woodstar, Gray-throated Leaf-tosser, Golden-breasted Fruiteater, White-tipped Quetzal, Santa Marta Toucanet, Santa Marta Antpitta (which sometimes comes to feeders), Black-hooded Thrush, endemic White-lored Warbler, and Colombia and Santa Marta Brush Finches.

DAY 5 HIGH-ELEVATION BIRDING IN THE SIERRA NEVADA DE SANTA MARTA RANGE

We will dedicate the entire day for high-elevation species that are endemic to the upper subtropical and temperate forests of the Santa Marta Mountains, of which there are a great many. Near the highest reaches of the road, atop the San Lorenzo Ridge, we will park in the early morning and begin birding our way downhill. Key species here include Military Macaw (rare), the endangered endemic Santa Marta Parakeet, Rusty-capped and Streak-capped Spinetails, the spatioator subspecies of Rufous Antpitta (a certain split), Brown-rumped Tapaculo, Santa Marta Bush Tyrant, Santa Marta Mountain Tanager, Paramo Seedeater, Yellow-fronted Whitestart and the finely-patterned Santa Marta Warbler. Frequently, we are met with success by lunchtime, in which case, we may return to the lodge for more photo opps, and chances for key species we might've missed the previous afternoon.

DAY 6 DESCENDING THE SANTA MARTAS, AND ON TO TAYRONA

On our final morning in the majestic Santa Martas, we shall spend some time trying to shore up any holes on our birding list, and/or enjoying the many birds around the grounds. Then we head back downslope, with maybe a birding stop or two. Keen eyes may yield sightings of White-rumped Hawk, Montane Solitary Eagle, Scaled Antpitta, Scarlet-fronted Parakeet, or even a prize mammal – such as Colombia Red Howler Monkey or Guianan Brown Capuchin. Our descent out of the Santa Martas should keep us in the company of birds the whole way, until we hit the foothills, and then we head straight on to Colombia's most popular national park, at Tayrona. Night outside Tayrona National Park.

DAY 7 TAYRONA NATIONAL PARK, DRIVE TO RIOHACHA, LOS FLAMENCOS SANCTUARY

This morning we will explore what Colombians describe as the crown jewel of their national park system. Tayrona offers scenic Caribbean coastline and humid tropical forest. Among birders it is probably best known as a site where one has at least a chance to see the Critically Endangered Blue-billed Curassow. While the birding gods would need to smile upon us, we will try to enter the park early, as Tayrona is home to very few pairs of these rare curassows, which is the most endangered Cracid in the world.



Blue-billed Curassow by George L. Armistead



Tayrona National Park by George L. Armistead

It is exceptionally shy too, but the birds at Tayrona at times forage at trees by the edge of the road and are actually occasionally seen by birders.

We'll give it a shot and hope for the best, and as we go there are a host of more widespread Neotropical birds, likely new for our list, that we should chance upon including, Blue-headed Parrot, Lineated Woodpecker, White-bellied Antbirds, Lance-tailed and White-bearded Manakins, Crimson-backed Tanagers, Red-legged Honeycreepers and perhaps Crane Hawk or Boat-billed Heron. We'll need to stay alert for mammals too, as we could encounter monkeys such as White-fronted Capuchin or the diminutive Cotton-top Tamarin.

After our morning in Tayrona, we head on for our final destination, at Riohacha on the Guajira Peninsula. A coastal town, Riohacha is famous as one of the home areas of the indigenous Wayuu people.



Vermilion Cardinal by George L. Armistead

As elsewhere in Colombia, Audubon has been instrumental in training local guides here, and with their help we will pursue the local specialties. Just outside of town lies one of the oldest wildlife sanctuaries in the country, Los Flamencos Sanctuary. Set aside in 1977, as a reserve for the namesake American Flamingo, here tidal flats meet the edge of the Guajira Desert. We will check the tides and see what is best for birding the tidal flats, but with some luck we should see good numbers of flamingos, and always there are a good variety of shorebirds, gulls, terns, and herons and ibis and the area holds good potential for finding vagrant birds. Both Kelp Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were both considered rare here not long ago, but today are regular. The unique dry forest, is shorter and sparser here than inland, and the coastal xeric scrub holds a number of new snazzy birds for us. We shall hope for sightings of White-whiskered Spinetail, Chestnut Piculet, Russet-throated Puffbird, Pileated Finch, or even the shockingly red Vermilion Cardinal. Night in Riohacha.

DAY 8 DRY FOREST BIRDING, & MID-DAY FLIGHT TO BOGOTÁ

Our flight time today will determine a lot, but we expect a mid-day flight, which could allow for a last bit of morning birding. Then we transfer to the airport to head back to Bogotá, where this Impact Adventure concludes.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

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Tour prices can be adjusted to accommodate different group sizes in some cases. For more info on pricing, please contact Rockjumper's Conservation Tours Department at: conservationtours@rockjumperbirding.com.

Tour Price:

- \$3,550 with 8 participants
- \$3,200 with 10 participants
- \$2,950 with 12 participants

Single Supplement: \$260

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 8;
- Some soft drink with meals;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Extra activities mentioned in the itinerary;
- Reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services.)
-

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- All alcoholic and any additional beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

IMPORTANT NOTES

PLEASE NOTE:

- a) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient participants, a small party supplement will have to be charged.
- b) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.
- c) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and/or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

SPECIAL NOTES:

- This tour involves the occasional long hike. We will be at fairly high altitude on some occasions and on some days we will be on our feet for most of the day. You should, therefore, be in good health and of sound fitness to undertake this tour. If you have any physical limitations or medical conditions of any sort, please let the Rockjumper office know in advance of the tour.
- We will be birding in some remote areas well away from modern medical facilities.
- The hotels are of comfortable standard throughout.
- Transport is by small coach or minibus and the roads are mostly in good condition. However, due to the nature of the topography, there is the possibility of landslides interfering with our trip, though we have minimised this risk by undertaking the tour during the drier season.
- We expect the weather to be mostly dry and often sunny; it can be hot in the lowlands, quite cool at higher elevations, especially at night. There is likely to be some rain at some point as well, possibly even heavy rain.

FLIGHTS:

The main tour will start and finish at El Dorado International Airport, Bogotá (IATA: BOG), which is the main port of entry for international flights into Colombia. Some participants may wish to pair this trip with the Impact Adventures: Bogotá Birding tour, or another Colombia offering, most of which begin/end in Bogotá. Day 2 of this, Megadiverse Santa Marta Mountains, tour begins with a flight into Barranquilla, which is an international airport. Some participants/groups may prefer to forego the night in Bogotá and instead begin their Impact Adventure in Barranquilla.

Rockjumper has an in-house travel agent who can assist with booking flights. Ask us for help at conservationtours@rockjumperbirding.com.

IMPORTANT: If you opt to book your own flights, please DO NOT book any international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.

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