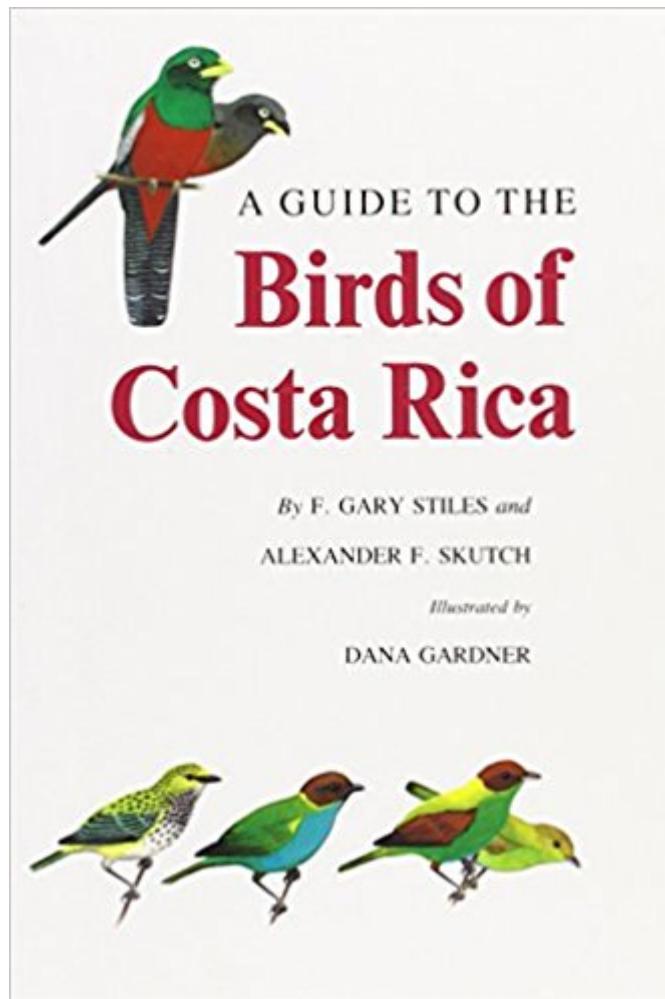


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# A Guide To The Birds Of Costa Rica



## Synopsis

Costa Rica, a country of no larger than West Virginia, hosts more than 830 species of birds, more than in all of North Amerian 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 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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"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 neo-tropical 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

Yes, it's too big for the field. Yes, it was published in 1989, and no update is imminent (presumably). But no birder traveling to Costa Rica should do so without this work (and offers a great price). It's also true that Garrigues and Dean have now offered a much more portable guide that can (and should) be carried in the field, and for that I'm especially grateful. But when puzzles arise (as they invariably do), the encyclopedic information from Stiles & Skutch must be readily available (in the car or hotel room). The supplementary information offers an insightful view of a country that for many of us is the ultimate tropical prototype. The species profiles are detailed and yet concise, and the illustrations are both beautiful and representative. If you're a birder going to Costa Rica, don't leave home without it. One additional note - I did buy an inexpensive, worn used copy from which I had a copy service separate the plates from the text and bind each separately. The plates will accompany me in the field. Those plates will probably help me narrow down my diagnostic choices more quickly. For examples, in Garrigues-Dean I have twelve plates for woodcreepers and antbirds, while I have to peruse only four plates from Stiles-Skutch.

This book was very helpful to me when I was in Costa Rica. Some people there ripped out the coloured pages inserted into the Guide and carried them around instead of the entire book. Every evening when I was back in my room, I marked off all the birds that I had seen that day. There are so many beautiful and colourful birds in Costa Rica: some very large, others quite small...The ecology there is magnificent.

For a field guide I must recommend the Garrigues and Dean book as it is much more portable and practical in the field. However this book has much more information on the birds albeit separate from the photos plates. Personally I like to know information beyond identification so this book is a nice addition to keep at home. Another issue is it does not have range maps.

This is a must-have for any serious birder. Our professional birding guides knew the plate number and position of each bird on the plate, so this book is the standard used by all. This includes researchers in the biological stations. Many serious Costa Rican birders and others removed the plates so they would not have to lug around the entire book. The next time I go, I will do the same. You may want to purchase a new one for reference and remove the pages in another, perhaps a used tattered copy, so you can carry the plates with you. I suggest placing them in some kind of waterproof bag, especially if you plan to be on the Caribbean slope in the rain or cloud forest. If

you're not a birder they sell a nice laminated fold out bird reference for about \$10 in every souvenir shop in the parks.

My daughter did a foreign study program down in Monteverde in environmental studies, and ended up doing (or attempting) field research on Motmots. We went down to visit on vacation, and bought a copy of Skutch and Stiles before we went. When we got down there I mentioned we had brought a field guide, and pulled out this one. Turns out it was the right choice. Skutch was a giant in this field, and this book is the one the researchers use, although it is still very accessible to the layman. The price is right as well. It is widely available in a great many places down there, but always at list. --!! TAKE THE TIME TO PUT A CLEAR PLASTIC COVER ON IT. The cloud forest is a perpetual rain machine. I used shelf-liner, and was very glad I did. Also, take good quality waterproof 8x42 (optically optimal because of the light transmission characteristics - the forest is dark, even at noon) binocs (I like Leupold Cascades and Pinnacles, but I'd also check out EagleOptics SRT 8x42 offerings (great value for the money)) and top lens covers that are tied to your neck strap. And Goretex jacket and pants. We saw a great many tourists wandering around in plastic trash bags looking in the trees trying to see the Quetzals and other birds and standing in line to use the guide's birding scope. Thousands in travel and hotel expenses, and missing the fun for lack of a couple of hundred spent on binoculars. You have to try the creamery in Monteverde - best ice cream in the world. And my wife got addicted to Cafe Britt (who ship to the U.S. from their web site). Oh, and the roads are a disaster - rent the diesel 4Runner, you'll need the heavy front-end suspension. And especially, enjoy; it's a beautiful country and the Tico's are wonderful, funny and friendly people.

I am a very casual outdoors person and am going to Costa Rica. Last year I went to Belize and saw birds I had never seen before and thought it would be fun to get a book and readup on the birds of Costa Rica and prepare me for the two birdwatching trips I plan on doing while I am there. The Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica is known as the bible of birdwatching but for me it was way more than I needed. There are birds that have slight color variances that separate them from one another in the subspecies to me this was an overkill because as a casual observer I would never be able to spot the slight differences. Also, this book has well done color drawings but I was hoping for actual pictures. For someone who really understands birds and wants to see as many birds in Costa Rica as possible and needs help identifying them this is a go to book. For someone who wants to see parrots, toucans and other such birds this book may be an overkill. Still it is well done with a lot of work and effort put into it.

Great guide to birds of costa rica, I woulnd't recommend taking it to the field as it is large. This book is a good resource for after a day of birding.

This is a fabulous book. We have had a copy for many years and purchased this as a gift for our granddaughter, who is going to Costa Rica this spring.

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