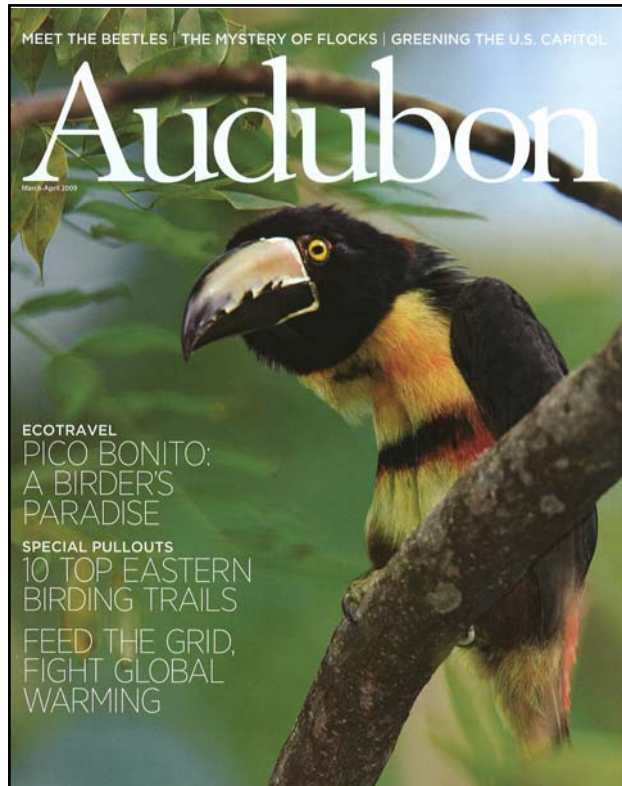


INTRODUCTION TO BIRDING IN HONDURAS

Honduras offers the birdwatcher, amateur and professional alike, an incredible opportunity to observe its avian fauna in a wide variety of habitats. To date, almost 800 bird species have been recorded here. The country is dotted with national parks and reserves which alone harbor most of the species at one time or another throughout the year. From August to March one can observe huge numbers of migratory species which are either passing through on their journey further south, or residing here temporarily in order to escape the northern winter months.



Pico Bonito National Park
Cover of Audubon Magazine, April 2009

In the south along the Gulf of Fonseca are a myriad of wetlands that are important for many migrating waterfowl. To the east, the remote La Mosquitia region is home to rarities such as the agami heron, harpy eagle, macaws, ant birds, snowy cotinga and the recently discovered green-and-rufous kingfisher. Throughout the remainder of the country are rugged mountains that comprise some 85% of the territory. These are home to a huge diversity of species such as the resplendent quetzal, three-wattled bellbird, white-ruffed manakin, various euphonias, chlorophonias and a host of migratory warblers. In the huge Aguan Valley, south of Pico Bonito National Park, one can find Honduras' only endemic species, the Honduran emerald hummingbird (*amazilia luciae*).

The single richest area for birding in Honduras is the North Coast and Pico Bonito National Park. The park is a virtually unexplored 270,000 acres of low to mid elevation tropical wet forests, cloud forests and an unknown number of associated micro habitats. The nearby, bird rich Cuero y Salado Manatee Refuge, 35,000 acres of wet-

land and coastal mangrove habitats. A thorough study of both areas would probably render more than 500 bird species, possibly 600. We have counted 423.

The Lodge at Pico Bonito is uniquely located at the foot of Pico Bonito National Park and is nestled between the Corinto (east) and Coloradito (west) Rivers. Our 400 acre preserve borders the park and is comprised of various habitats including plantation areas (coffee, banana, orange and cacao), riparian habitat, and lowland tropical wet forest. Each area harbors its own set of bird species with some being confined to very specific areas, while others can be seen at several sites. The Lodge's three, strategically located observation towers offer maximum viewing and photography opportunities. The adjacent mountains, rising to nearly 8000 feet, enable us to enjoy a host of altitudinal migrants which descend seeking more favorable conditions during the cooler winter months. Many species which are rarities elsewhere, (lovely cotinga, keel-billed motmot, green shrike-vireo, emerald toucanette) are happily common around The Lodge. The Lodge is the ideal base for excursions to Pico Bonito National Park, Cuero y Salado Manatee Refuge, Rio Aguan Valley and other areas of Honduras, all of which provide excellent birding opportunities.