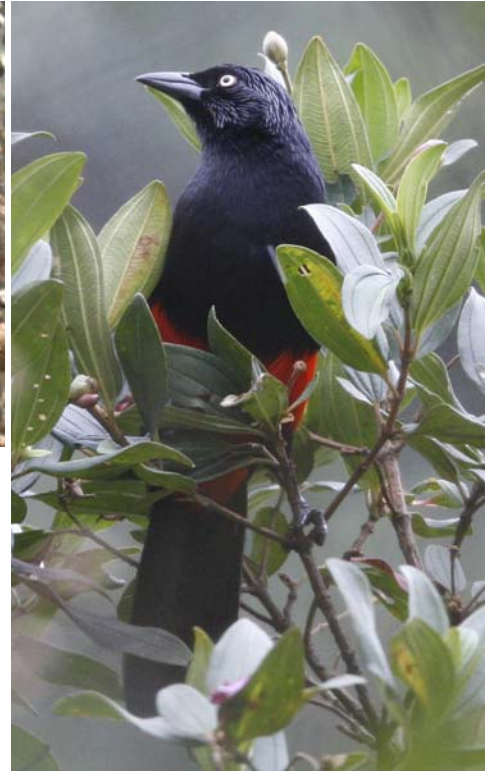




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The Colombian Andes

With more than 800 bird species, the Colombian Andes are one of the richest and most diverse regions on earth. The mountains are divided into three ranges or "cordilleras" that bisect the central part of the country running roughly parallel to each other north to south. The Western Andes run adjacent to the Pacific Coast. The Central Andes bisect the center of the country and include the cities of Medellín, Manizales and Pereira. The Eastern Andes, the largest of the three ranges, includes the capital city of Bogotá and extends all the way into Venezuela.

Eastern Andes

The Eastern Andes of Colombia is the largest of the three mountain ranges and includes the capital city of Bogotá which itself provides a wide array of options for birding in and nearby the city. Not far from the city there are some large areas of virgin forest still remain particularly in the Eastern slope. Habitats here range from humid montane and premontane forest to paramo. The region generally gets less than 2 meters of precipitation per year.



Birding Opportunities

The area contains up to fifty unique specialties. Bogotá and its surrounding area provide excellent options to see some endemics even inside the city itself and short term visitors can arrange birding excursions to look for species such the Bogotá Rail, Silvery-throated Spinetail, and Apolinar's Wren. Near-endemics here include Rufous-browed Conebill, Andean Duck, Subtropical Doradito, and Rufous-tailed Tyrant and there is an isolated population of Spot-flanked Gallinule.

A short day-trip to the mountains east of Bogotá can yield several interesting hummingbirds, such as Black-tailed Trainbearer, Shining Sunbeam and Sword-billed Hummingbird. Lodging and dining options in Bogotá are virtually unlimited, and can be tailored to any budget.

Just few hours from Bogotá to the northwest is the Soatá area where several endemics as Mountain Grackle, Chesnut-bellied Hummingbird, Indigo-capped Hummingbird, Apical Flycatcher, and Niceforo's Wren can be seen. Other very interesting endemic or near-endemic species as Black Inca and Recurve-billed Bushbird are also on offer here. Near-endemics include Bronze-tailed Thornbill, Rufous-browed Conebill, Rusty-faced Parrot, Moustached Brush-Finch, and Golden-fronted Redstart in the vast unbroken forest of high Andean Neotropical oaks.

Between Bogotá and Soatá there is a private reserve where the endemic Black Inca can be seen as well as the near-endemic Lazuline Sabrewing and Short-tailed Emerald. These species are easy to see around the garden flowers. Combine that with a walk on the ridges near the house and you can add the endemic Matorral Tapaculo to your list.

Central Andes

The Central Andes is the oldest of the three mountain ranges of the Colombian Andes and encompass montane and premontane rainforests and the páramos. Rainfall ranges between 2 - 3 meters annually. In the Central Andes, birdwatching options are mainly divided between those in the north (Medellín and nearby areas) and those in the heart of the range (Café Triangle).

Birding Opportunities

In the northern section of the range, more than 300 species have been recorded including the endemic Stiles's Tapaculo, White-mantled Barbet, Red-bellied Grackle, and the Multicolored Tanager and many can be seen not far from Medellín. Further south, near Manizales and Pereira, there are several excellent birding localities which hold species like the endemic Cauca Guan and specialties like the Red-ruffed Fruitcrow plus many tapaculos, antpittas and mountain-tanagers which can be seen with relative ease.



Río Blanco Reserve near Manizales has been designated as an IBA and is a hotbed of bird activity. In the forests of the reserve are at least eight species of antpitta including the near-endemic Bicolored and the endemic Brown-banded. Add to that five species of tapaculo, Rusty-faced Parrot, Rufous-fronted and Golden-plumed Parakeets, Gray-breasted and Black-billed Mountain-Toucans, and Masked Saltator and you have a fantastic birding experience. But it does not stop there. Buzzing around the feeders at the main lodge, there are up to 20 species of hummingbirds including Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Sparkling Violetear, White-bellied Woodstar, Speckled Hummingbird, Long-tailed Sylph, Collared Inca, Bronzy Inca, and Tourmaline Sunangel.

The Río Blanco highlands is a remarkable area for viewing paramo such as Black-chested Mountain-Tanager and Los Nevados National Park can yield Purple-backed Thornbill and Bearded Helmetcrest. Also found in the páramo are Black-backed Bush-Tanager, Stout-billed Cinclodes, Red-crested Cotinga, and Tawny Antpitta. Overhead, watch for the magnificent Andean Condor (Colombia's national bird).

Otún-Quimbaya, another sanctuary in the Central Andes holds a wealth avifauna the highlights here being the endemic Cauca Guan and the striking Red-ruffed Fruitcrow. One trail runs along a river which can offer close views pairs of Torrent Duck in the crystalline waters of the Ucumarí River. Birding from the main road, you can add the gorgeous and highly local Multicolored Tanager to your life list.

The "Coffee Triangle" in the heart of the central range has some 120 species of special interest because they are endemics such as Parker's Antbird, were recently described such as Chestnut-capped Piha or are threatened by some degree of extinction like the Brown-banded Antpitta.

Western Andes

The Western Andes is the lowest and geologically youngest mountain range in Colombia. Montane humid forests cover the western slope with rainfall up to 4.5 meters annually and dry forests are found on the eastern slope. Páramo habitat occurs at the higher elevations.

Birding Opportunities

The Western Andes hold a variety of interesting birding areas, with some 60 species restricted to this range including Yellow-eared Parrot, Dusky Starfrontlet and Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer.

To the south, the main city in the range is Cali which itself offers several fine options for birding with a good chance of seeing the endemic Multicolored Tanager.

Further north, the slopes near El Cairo hold several endemics including Black-and-gold Tanager and Gold-ringed Tanager as well as the recently described Munchique Wood-Wren. Galapagos Road is the best birding area here and can produce many middle-elevation Choco specialties including the endemic Chestnut Wood-Quail and Crested Ant-Tanager. Other specialties include White-tailed Hillstar, Brown Inca, Fulvous-dotted Treerunner, Uniform Treehunter, Bicolored Antvireo, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Scaled Fruiteater, Olivaceous Piha, Club-winged Manakin, Beautiful Jay, Indigo Flowerpiercer, Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager, Flame-faced Tanager, Glistening-green Tanager, Rufous-throated Tanager, Dusky Bush-Tanager, Tricolored Brush-Finch, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia and Yellow-collared Chlorophonia.



Still further north, is the beautiful village of Jardín located at an elevation of 2000-2500 meters. This area it harbors many marvelous Andean birds and just 30 minutes from town is the Alto de Ventanas, the road of dreams for restricted-range species like the near-endemic Tanager Finch, Chestnut-crested Cotinga and the endemic Dusky Starfrontlet. Birding along the road can be intense as mixed flocks of tanagers, hummingbirds, flycatchers, and warblers, are encountered. This is also where the endemic and highly-endangered Yellow-eared Parrot is found. A life experience is to watch these birds as they come in to feed or roost just before dusk. Other areas around Jardín can yield a splendid array of tanagers, euphonias, chlorophonias and hummingbirds. There is even the chance for the stunning, dark-orange Andean Cock-of-the-Rock and the endemic Turquoise Dacnis.

Magdalena Valley

The massive Magdalena River carves a deep path between the Central and Eastern Andes of Colombia as it flows north to its terminus in the Caribbean Sea. The fertile Magdalena Valley sits nestled between these two giant mountain ranges, and the whole area is one of the newest additions to the list of Biodiversity Hotspots. From a base in Rio Claro or Victoria you can access such specialties as White-mantled Barbet, Tody Motmot, Sooty Ant-Tanager, Yellow-tufted Dacnis, Beautiful Woodpecker, and Velvet-fronted Euphonia. This area is a must visit from Medellín, Manizales or Bogotá cities, where the Magdalena is 3-4 hours drive.



Birding Opportunities

The Magdalena River passes by well preserved forested areas in Antioquia that are home to endemic jewels like Blue-billed Curassow and the Antioquia Bristle-Tyrant, among many others. In Río Claro Reserve, you can stay in cabins located in the forest canopy affording spectacular views of the river and forests below. Here toucans, honeycreepers, and endemic Yellow-tufted Dacnis forage for fruit just off your terrace! Walking the trail along the river can produce close sightings of Dull-mantled and Chestnut-backed Antbird. It is possible to achieve a day list of 150 species including several endemic and near-endemic species (Citron-throated Toucan, Sooty Ant-Tanager, White-mantled Barbet, Saffron-headed Parrot, plus more) One of the most wanted endemics is the highly range-restricted Antioquia Bristle-Tyrant, which can be found in very active pairs while walking one of the trails at the back of the reserve.

Close to the reserve, there is an Oilbird cave that can be accessed by a following a path along which large mixed flocks are common and many species are possible, among them Slaty-winged Foliage-Gleaner, Pacific Antwren, One-colored Becard, Trinidad Euphonia, Thrush-like Schiffornis. Here you can see striking Blue-crowned and White-bearded Manakins engaging in their curious displays. Near the cave is an open pasture, where up to ten species of tyrant flycatchers can be seen, including the spectacular Long-tailed Tyrant.

On the way to or from Río Claro, there is a restaurant which not only serves mouth-watering local Antioquia cuisine to birders but also has a myriad of birds flocking to the banana feeders just feet from your table. A leisurely walk along the road behind the restaurant can yield the endemic Colombian Chachalaca and near-endemic Bar-crested Antshrike, as well as White-mantled Barbet, Pacific Antwren, Wire-crested Thorntail, and both Yellow and Flame-rumped Tanagers.

Maceo is another excellent birding area by the Magdalena River, well worth spending a few days if you are traveling to the Medellín area from the north. Specialties here include Black Oropendola, Saffron-headed Parrot, Citron-throated Toucan, Sooty Ant-Tanager and White-mantled Barbet. A nearby trail makes for a nice birding day with many antbirds, tyrant flycatchers and puffbirds for the list, plus the chance of spotting endemic wandering Blue-billed Curassows.

Pacific Choco Lowlands

In western Colombia, bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Western Andes to the east, is a renowned biodiversity hotspot, the Pacific Chocó lowlands. This amazing lowland jungle region is one of the wettest places on the planet receiving more than 6.5 meters of rainfall per year. Here, the lush humid tropical forests of the Baudó and Darién mountain ranges hold an amazing number of special birds. Access is by air to Bahía Solano airport from any Colombian city and then a one-hour journey via 4WD to the small town of El Valle. It is well worth the bumpy ride to get here as nearly 650 bird species inhabit the Colombian pacific. Endemics including Baudo Oropendola and Baudo Guan are among the many jewels of these jungles. A wonderful beach-side ecolodge has a number of species in its own forest as well as opportunities for whale and dolphin watching from boats or right from the beach.



Birding Opportunities

The road from Bahía Solano to El Valle offers the opportunity to see Gray-chested Dove, White-necked Puffbird, White-fronted Nunbird, Crimson-bellied Woodpecker, Black-tipped and Blue Cotingas, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Scarlet-thighed and Blue Dacnis, and Fulvous-vented Euphonia. It is one of the best birding roads in Colombia and can yield more than 120 species in a single day! Mammals are also possible while birding along the road including Neotropical Otter, Taira, and Geoffroy's Tamarin.

Access to Utría National Park is possible via a walking trail from El Valle which contains a wealth of distinctive species including Great Curassow, Plumbeous Hawk, Dusky Pigeon, groups of Great Green Macaws, Choco Toucan, Northern Barred Woodcreeper, Black-headed Antthrush, and Streak-chested Antpitta, as well as Brownish Flycatcher, Sirystes and at least five species of dancing manakins. Ant swarms are followed by crowds of antbirds and a variety of woodcreepers along the trail from El Valle. Best of all, there is a nesting colony of endemic, long-lost Baudo Oropendolas not far from the main path. These enigmatic birds love to feed acrobatically right near the trail!

A local ecolodge offers great birding and is built on a hillside complete with trails that lead up to platforms providing dazzling views of the canopy and the near shore. Rose-faced and Saffron-headed Parrots, Purple-crowned Fairy, Black-breasted and Pied Puffbirds. Many canopy tanagers (Blue-whiskered, Golden-hooded, Plain-colored, Rufous-winged, Summer, Lemon-browed, Tawny-crested, Scarlet-browed and Scarlet-and-white to name a few!) can be easily spotted right from the platform. Other trails provide opportunities to see the dance of Red-capped and Blue-crowned Manakins at their leks and a chance to see such Chocó restricted specialties as Berlepsch's Tinamou and Slate-throated Gnatcatcher. Nearby areas hold such rarities as the Colombian Crake, Sooty-capped Puffbird, and Blue Cotinga.

Eastern Llanos

The Colombian Llanos is a vast savanna, extending from the eastern slope of the Eastern Andes all the way to the Orinoco River at the Venezuelan border. The Llanos have their own distinct flora and fauna, and are fascinating both for the birding and unique geography. Habitats in the llanos include rich tropical grasslands that are teeming with life with more than 700 species of birds and 100 mammals. The landscape here is diverse with riverine areas, flooded plains, grasslands and dry forests as well as the lower slopes of the Eastern Andes.

Birding Opportunities

The birding route begins in Bogotá with a drive southeast to Villavicencio, the Llanos capital. Along the way, a roadside stop in the right area can yield endemics including Cundinamarca Antpitta and Brown-breasted Parakeet, in addition to Black-and-chestnut Eagle alongside active mixed flocks which are present throughout the day in this spot.



The plains and lower slopes around Villavicencio region offer many options for birding. The slopes of the cordillera near the city are great for a full birding day in a forest area that can hold Little Cuckoo, Black-faced Antbird, and White-bearded, Wire-tailed, and Golden-headed Manakins. Heading further east into the plains is Puerto López, where along the road, many worthwhile stops offer the chance to see hundreds of Wood Storks, Roseate Spoonbills, Fulvous and White-faced Whistling-Ducks (as well as several species of egrets, ibises and herons) congregating in small ponds to dine on the plentiful fish. Horned Screamers can also be found here.

A huge park reserve, just 40 Km of Villavicencio encompasses very good birding habitats which are home to Hoatzin, several ibises, Sunbittern and Great Potoo. Continuing to the east there is another area for Pied Lapwing and more chances for Hoatzins and Screamers.

There is also an option to visit a mountain ridge which holds Burnished-buff, Blue-necked, Speckled, Yellow-bellied and Turquoise Tanagers as well as a local home for a cup of coffee while snapping up-close photographs of the endemic Colombian Chachalacas that come to the banana feeders. The chachalacas are often joined by Gilded Barbets, Bare-eyed and Pale-breasted Thrushes and Rufous-breasted Wrens, all of which are restricted to the eastern Colombia plains and Andean slopes.

Amazonia

The verdant Amazon jungle covers the vastness of the southern Colombian lowlands and offers an incredible birding experience with the possibility of seeing almost half of the more than 700 Amazonian species in just a week or less of birding this magnificent jungle and river landscape. Tours to this area are staged from Leticia, Colombia's southernmost city which can be reached via a one hour flight from Bogotá. This peaceful, isolated town sits on the bank of the mighty Amazon River giving access to more remote birding areas and unique species. The Amazon River flows through this region bounded on its banks by lush tropical rainforest with an annual rainfall of more than three meters. The forests and river edges are home to indigenous Makuna and Huitoto communities and you can choose to lodge in those communities if you want to live closely with these fascinating people while learning from their rich traditions and folklore.



Birding Opportunities

In and around Leticia, there are flocks of noisy Canary-winged, Orange-cheeked, and Maroon-tailed Parakeets, Short-tailed Parrots, plus the hard to see Orange-headed Tanager, and Band-tailed and Casqued Oropendolas. In the forests, army ant swarms attract many species, including the very sought-after White-plumed Antbird. Amazon specialties here include Fiery Topaz, Pearly Antshrike, Yellow-browed Antbird, White-eyed Tody-Tyrant, Plum-throated Cotinga, and Rufous-bellied Euphonia. Once night falls, it is worth taking a short walk around to find Tropical Screech-Owl, Crested and Black-banded Owls, and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Short-tailed Nighthawk and Common Pauraque.

There is much birding along the river and visits to the river islands must be included on any itinerary here. Isla Ronda is a great choice and just a one-hour boat trip from Leticia. Here, it is possible to camp and bird for 2+ days or, alternatively, you can stay in a hotel in Leticia and visit the island during the day. On Isla Ronda, there are river-restricted specialties including Zimmer's Woodcreeper and Castelnau's Antshrike. Horned Screamer, Spangled Cotinga, Bare-necked Fruitcrow, Amazonian Umbrellabird, Hauxwell's Thrush, and Solitary Black Cacique also inhabit this island.

Following against the flow of the river further to the north-west, the Amacayacu & Puerto Nariño area also offers exceptional birding. Gray-winged Trumpeter, Chestnut-capped Puffbird, Scarlet-crowned, Gilded, and Lemon-throated Barbets, Orange-fronted Plushcrown, Rusty-belted Tapaculo, Lawrence's Thrush, and Yellow-bellied Dacnis are among more than 150 species to look for in the vicinity. As with all the birding localities near the river, herons, egrets, sandpipers, kingfishers, etc. abound, along with plenty of raptors and toucans.

Santa Marta

& Caribbean Lowlands

In northern Colombia, bordered by the Caribbean Sea, is a unique area of highly contrasting habitats that include the tallest coastal mountain range on earth in close proximity to lowland habitats stretching to the coast. Santa Marta and the surrounding area is a world class hotspot for endemics. At least 635 bird species have been recorded in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta accounting for an impressive 35% of the whole Colombia avifauna in less than 1.5% of the national territory. The Sierra is the most important endemism center in the world with 36 unique bird species (and 55 subspecies). Eight national natural parks have been established here and 15 IBAs have been setup in the region to protect the numerous specialties and endemics of the area. If you chose one place to bird in Colombia, do it here!



The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is the tallest coastal range in the world and where highest summit of Colombia is found: the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta reaching 5,700 meters above sea level. Nearly all habitats that occur in the Neotropics are present in the Sierra making it terrifically diverse and complex. The Sierra Nevada is home to numerous indigenous communities and Santa Marta city is located at its base. The Sierra itself is primarily dry forest with incursions of humid forest on the mountainous slopes. Annual rainfall ranges from 1.2 meters in the mountains to less than a half meter along the coast. The coastal areas are primarily dry scrub and xerophytic desert and also provide excellent opportunities to see Caribbean endemics.

Birding Opportunities

Birding the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta begins in the town of Santa Marta which is easily reached with a short flight from Bogotá. A 2-hour drive in a vigorous 4WD up the hill to reach the San Lorenzo Ridge is worth the bumps as these mountain slopes contain up to 16 endemics including Santa Marta Parakeet, Santa Marta Antpitta, Santa Marta Tapaculo, Brown-rumped Tapaculo, Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant, Yellow-crowned Whitestart, White-lored Warbler, Santa Marta Warbler, Santa Marta Mountain-Tanager and the Santa Marta Brush-Finch among others.

In addition to the endemics, mixed flocks in the forest can hold Coppery Emerald, Streak-capped Spinetail, Trinidad Euphonia, Rusty-headed Spinetail, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Santa Marta Foliage-Gleaner, Black-fronted Wood-Quail and Band-tailed Guan. The list of birds to look for here seems endless with Military Macaw, White-tailed Starfrontlet, Black-cheeked Mountain-Tanager, and Flammulated Treehunter. While walking the road at mid-elevation many excellent species can be entered including White-tipped Quetzal, Golden-breasted Fruiteater, Sooty-capped Hermit, several potentially split toucanets, Black-hooded Thrush and Rusty-breasted Antpitta. Options for

Santa Marta & Caribbean Lowlands (continued)

lodging include National Park cabins or the cozy El Dorado Lodge where birds around the building can include the superb Blue-naped Chlorophonia, Red-billed Emerald, and Crested Oropendola. Birding the Caribbean lowlands also begins in Santa Marta heading east along the coast to Guajira. The route includes areas around Riohacha, Tayrona National Park and Los Flamencos Flora and Fauna Sanctuary and includes chances to see Buffy Hummingbird, Chestnut Piculet, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, Slender-billed Inezia, Orinocan Saltator, and Vermilion Cardinal plus White-whiskered Spinetail, Glaucous Tanager, Black-crested Antshrike, White-fringed Antwren, Brown-throated Parakeet and Green-rumped Parrotlet, Bare-eyed Pigeon, Caribbean Hornero, Slender-billed Tyrannulet, Russet-throated Puffbird, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant, Pileated Finch, Yellow-breasted Flycatcher and Tocuyo Sparrow. Around the coastal lagoons several species of shorebird are possible as well as Scarlet Ibis, American Flamingo, and Cayenne Tern.

To the west of Santa Marta is Barranquilla and the route also includes good opportunities for birding. At Isla Salamanca, the endemic Chestnut-winged Chachalaca can be found near the dry cactus scrub. Mangroves and wetlands are filled with shorebirds, ducks, herons and terns and other species found here include Bicolored Conebill, Scrub Flycatcher, Bicolored Wren, Prothonotary Warbler and Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird.

HOW TO BOOK YOUR PRIVATE TOUR

- The enclosed information provides details you need to plan your itinerary. Read it carefully to determine where you wish to bird in Colombia.
- When you are ready to arrange your tour, complete the tour planning sheet and contact us with your preferred dates, number of travelers, and preferences as to locations, species, and accommodation. We'll get right to work to will fashion the perfect itinerary for you.
- Tours are arranged 6 - 12+ months in advance.
- Sunrise Birding guides are available to accompany your group in addition to our expert Colombian guides.
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Santa Marta & Caribbean Lowlands (continued)

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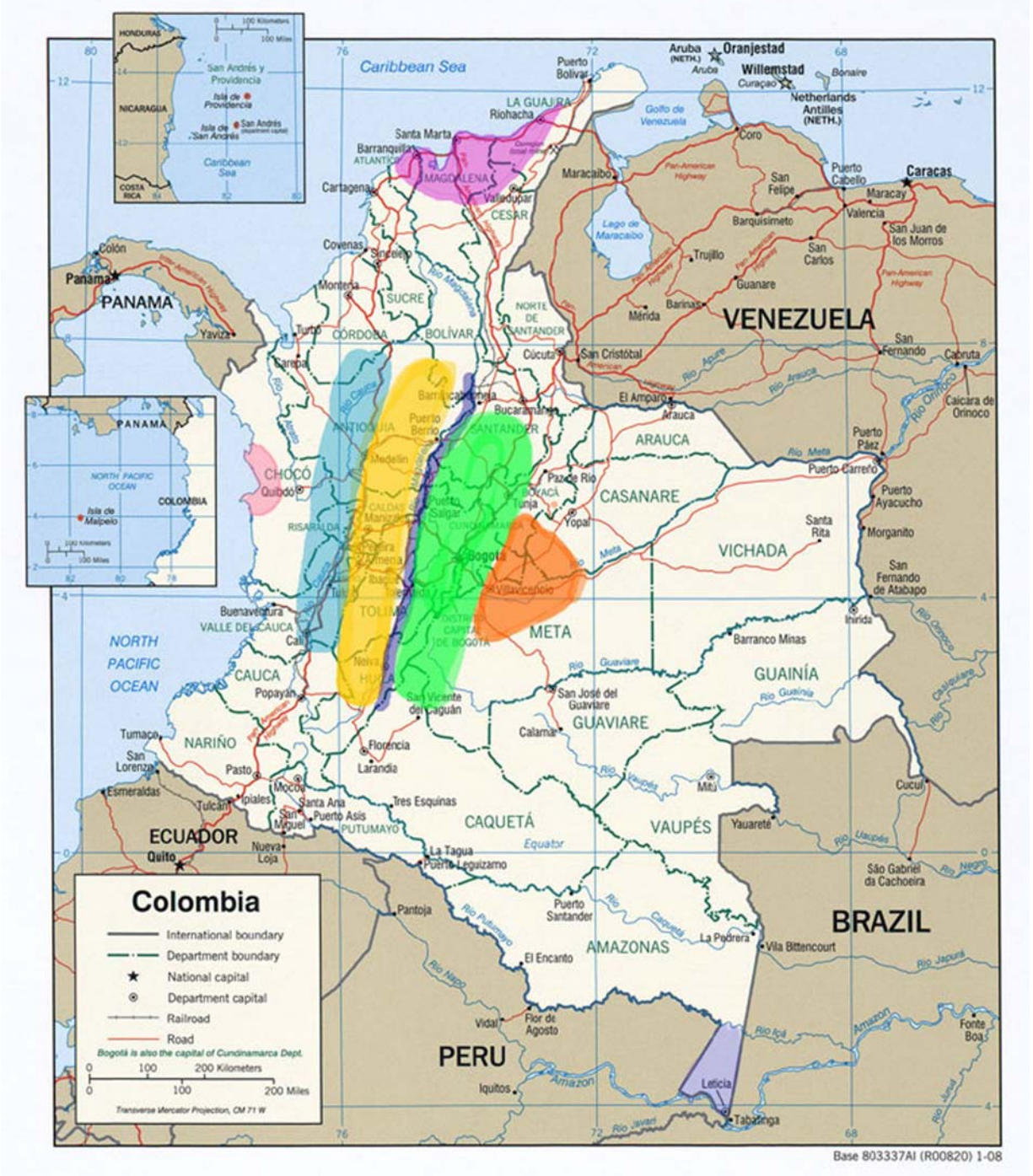
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COLOMBIA BIRDING MAP

PACIFIC CHOCO LOWLANDS	SANTA MARTA	WESTERN ANDES	CENTRAL ANDES	MAGDALENA VALLEY	EASTERN ANDES	EASTERN LLANOS	AMAZONIA (see bottom of page)
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