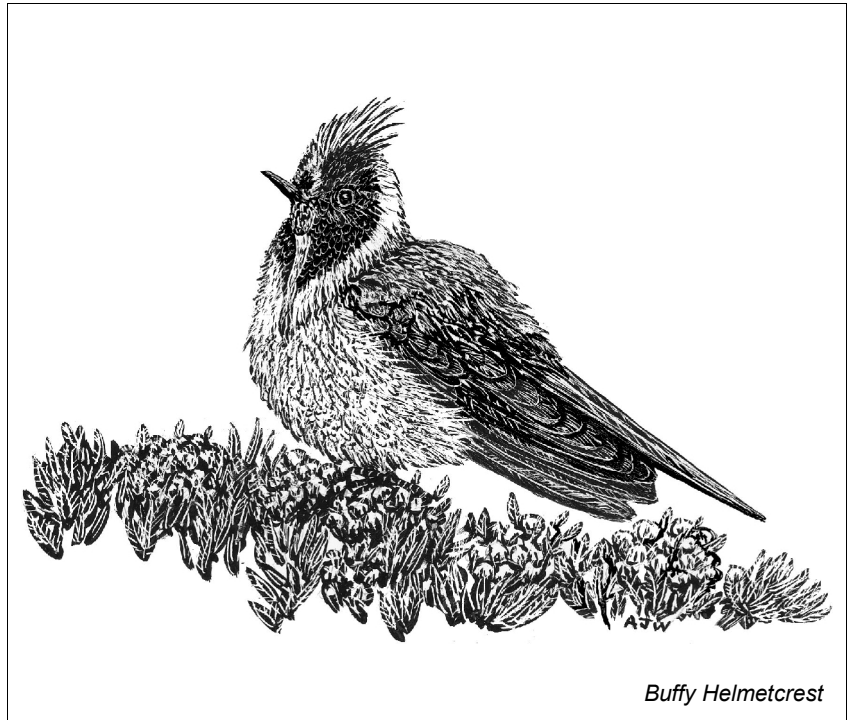


COLOMBIA

Choco specialities and Andean endemics – the new Colombian High!



Buffy Helmetcrest

Colombia holds the world's most diverse avifauna with a bird list topping 1900 species and there are more than 70 species whose range is restricted to the country. This new tour blends birding adventures in cloud forest and on the paramo with visits to vibrant hummingbird feeders and antpitta feeding stations. We can expect to see as many as 600 different species, some just newly described and a good number being endemic to the country.

Here at their northern extent, the Andes divide into three separate ranges, stretching northwards towards the Caribbean. The wide valleys of the Cauca and Magdalena rivers divide the three magnificent cordilleras. The tour starts in the Cali region in the beautiful foothill forests of the Anchicaya Valley. Here, as elsewhere, the forests are full of technicoloured tanagers and a spectacular array of hummingbirds. Continuing northward the tour winds its way along the Cauca Valley through the heart of Colombia's famous coffee country. The Otun Quimbaya Sanctuary is home to the endemic Cauca Guan and has recently enhanced its reputation with the discovery of the near mythical Hooded Antpitta on its trails.

In Manizales we will visit the Rio Blanco reserve, without doubt one of the best birdwatching sites in Colombia. Rio Blanco is renowned for its antpitta feeding stations which offer prolonged and often point blank views of up to half a dozen of these otherwise tricky forest floor dwellers. On the Pacific slope of the western Andes, Las Tangaras reserve is a hugely diverse and important area of tropical forest protecting the Choco's most important watershed.

The tour concludes in the capital Bogota from where we will make excursions to high level temperate and cloud forest reserves. The birdlife on the eastern Andean cordillera is different again and high elevation species include Andean Condor and the Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, plus a variety of glamorous mountain tanagers.

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ITINERARY

CALI AND THE ANCHICAYA VALLEY

Arriving in Bogota after an overnight flight, we take a short internal flight to Cali where we will spend the first three days of the tour. The main birdwatching site here is the old Buenaventura Road in the Anchicaya Valley. Tropical forests blanket the hillsides of the Choco foothills. Whilst the endemic Multicoloured Tanager is a target, the list of others in this family is almost endless. Golden, Golden-naped, Metallic-green, Purplish-mantled, Flame-rumped, Saffron-crowned, Scarlet-browed and Lemon-spectacled Tanager head the cast. Rarities include the Blue-tailed Trogon, Lita Woodpecker and the flycatcher-like Sapayoa which remains something of a taxonomic puzzle.

On day four we transfer north to Pereira stopping on the way at the Sonso Lagoon in the Cauca Valley. A variety of herons and egrets include Cocoi Heron and Roseate Spoonbill. In the lowlands of the Cauca Valley we can search for endemics such as the Apical Flycatcher and Greyish Piculet.

PEREIRA AND MANIZALES

We have a two night stay at the Otun Quimbaya Flora and Fauna Sanctuary near Pereira. This is the site where the endemic Cauca Guan was rediscovered and they are easily found in the forest edge along the El Cedral trail. The striking Red-ruffed Fruitcrow is another sought-after species here. Moustached Antpitta is common, whilst we will also attempt to see the elusive Hooded Antpitta. Torrent Duck and White-

capped Dipper live on the fast flowing river that runs through the reserve. At night Mottled Owl and the restricted-range Colombian Screech Owl can be heard near the lodge.

Our next stop is Manizales at the heart of the Café Ejetero (coffee region). Rio Blanco Nature Reserve is rated as one of the top three birding destinations in the world. There are several trails and one of the main attractions are three antpitta feeding stations. Here you may regularly observe Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, Brown-banded Antpitta, Bicoloured Antpitta, Slate-crowned Antpitta and Bicoloured Antpitta. In addition Grey-browed Brush-finch and Green-and-black Fruiteater also visit. The raucous White-capped Tanager is regularly seen along with endemics such as the Masked Saltator and Chestnut Wood-quail.

On day nine we set off early to Las Brisas at the entrance to the Nevado de Ruiz National Park. At an elevation of 13000ft in the paramo, the mountain scenery is spectacular. Where yellow Frailejones flower we should find the enchanting Buffy Helmetcrest. The endemic Rufous-fronted Parakeet can be found in the elfin forest and sometimes feeds on the open hillside. The confiding Tawny Antpitta hops around at the roadside and other specialities include the stunning Golden-crowned Tanager. We stop for lunch at a hot springs hotel where hummers sip from handheld sugar feeders, including Great Sapphirewing, Shining Sunbeam, Mountain Velvetbreast, Golden-breasted and Black-thighed Pufflegs and the gorgeous Rainbow-bearded Thornbill.

JARDIN AND LAS TANGARAS

The tour continues on day ten to the beautiful hill town of Jardin, for a two night stay. A population of the rare and endangered Yellow-eared Parrot was discovered here quite recently. We will take breakfast at a farmhouse overlooking the forest as the parrots leave their roost. They nest in holes in the Wax Palm, the national tree of Colombia and the tallest palm in the world. Feeders at the farm also attract the magnificent Sword-billed Hummingbird. As we head back down the Rio Sucio road we can look out for the rare Tanager Finch and the rather gorgeous Red-hooded Tanager. The localised Chestnut-crested Cotinga can sometimes be found perching high on a snag above the canopy.

Back in town we can experience the delights of old colonial architecture and a lively pueblo. Rather conveniently, a very accessible Andean Cock-of-the-rock lek lies just ten minutes walk away from the main square!

Our base for the next three nights is a new and very comfortable lodge situated on the edge of the cloud forest. The Las Tangaras bird reserve was created in 2009 by the Pro Aves Foundation. This forest is one of the most species rich and bio-diverse areas in the world. The bird list includes a mouth-watering mix of Choco specialities. Amongst the mixed flocks in the forest interior we should find Choco Vireo, Toucan Barbet, Gold-ringed Tanager, Black-and-gold Tanager, Black Solitaire, Beautiful Jay, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Uniform Treehunter, Pacific Tuftedcheek, Fulvous-dotted Treerunner, Crested Ant-tanager, Olive Finch, Alto Pisones Tapaculo and Yellow-collared and Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonias. Around the lodge we can find the Cloud Forest Pygmy Owl, whilst hummingbird feeders attract Empress Brilliant, Brown Inca and Velvet-purple Coronet.

BOGOTA

After an internal flight from Medellin we will spend the final two nights in the capital, Bogota. Chingaza National Park protects an altitudinal range extending through East Andean forest and paramo. Over 250 species have been recorded here and we shall hope to see Andean Condor as well as

localised species such as Rufous Antpitta, Rufous-browed Conebill, Coppery-bellied Puffleg and Bronze-tailed Thornbill.

On the final morning we will visit Chicaque Natural Park which protects an area of extensive cloud forest. At the reserve entrance we should see Scarlet-bellied Mountain-tanager, Moustached Brush-finch and Black-crested Warbler, whilst the attractive Golden-bellied Starfrontlet visits feeders at the restaurant. After lunch we will return to our hotel to prepare for our overnight flight back to the UK.

CLIMATE AND PACE

The climate is temperate or sub-tropical in the Andes, depending on altitude. The highest elevation we visit is around 13,000ft at Sierra Nevados, for one morning, and then up to 10,500ft above Bogota. The rest of the time will be spent at much lower elevations. On most days breakfast will be taken around 6am, giving us plenty of time in the productive morning period. On two days we will take breakfast in the field. There will normally be a break in the day with a siesta when possible. Walking will be at sensible pace but expect some steeper trails in the mountains.

ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD

Full board accommodation is provided, with three nights at the Hotel Campanario, Cali, two nights at Otun Quimbaya Reserve, three nights at Hotel Recinto, Manizales, two nights at the Hacienda Balandu, Jardin, three nights at the Las Tangaras Lodge and the final two nights in a city hotel in Bogota. All accommodation is of a good standard and has en suite bathrooms and hot water.

PRICE INCLUDES

All birdwatching excursions with Bird Holidays leader and expert local guide, full-board accommodation (starting with breakfast on 13th, ending with lunch on 28th), soft drinks at meal times, bottled water throughout, local transport by coach and 4x4 vehicles, reserve entrance fees, domestic and international flights.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

Travel insurance. Personal items, alcoholic drinks, laundry.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

Return flight from London Heathrow to Bogota using the scheduled services of Avianca Airlines. Outbound flight departs late evening, return flight arrives back mid-afternoon. **Domestic flights from Manchester and other UK airports are available on this tour. See booking form for details.**

17 nights including two overnight flights:	12th to 29th November 2018
Principal leader:	John McLoughlin
Local guide:	Juan Lopez Zuluaga
Maximum group size:	8 clients with one leader and a local guide
Cost with discount (if you book before 30th July 2018):	£4490 per person sharing (£390 single supplement)
Full Cost:	£4640 per person sharing
Deposit:	£1000 per person