



# Majestic Feathers

In  
Costa Rica

*A birding Expedition lead by  
Edwin Ramirez*

February 2010

## June 2010 Trip

**A bird watching eco-tourism expedition that could be life changing for you!  
You are invited to come along!**

### *Special Points*

#### *of Interest:*

- Bird watching in the South Pacific Lowlands.
- Rainforest bird walks in both Primary and Secondary Growth
- Night walks searching for owls, Parauques and Pototo
- Visit two Botanical Gardens in different eco-zones for birding among the blooms.
- Spend relaxing time mesmerized at hummingbird feeders and habitat.
- Go birding in the tropical wet forest of the Caribbean Lowlands.
- See and bird at the Arenal Volcano.
- Bird watch from above from suspension bridges cutting through primary premontane wet forest.
- Search for a Jabiru Stork in the Wetlands and Lagoons of the Sol Y mar.
- Pursue the Turquoise Cotinga along the Java River
- Enjoy the cool mist of the Cloud forest and breathtaking beauty of the Resplendent Quetzal.
- See flocks of Scarlet Macaw in the Cararra National Park.
- Take a nap by the pool.
- Wake up to the sound of Howler Monkeys and the song of the Ferruginous Pygmy-owl.

This last March I went on a birding tour to Costa Rica that changed my life. It changed my life because it brought home to me how vital this Central American country is to the birds that migrate to North America each spring to breed and rear their young. You might be thinking that I should have known how important the habitat of Costa Rica is, and intellectually I did, but I have to say that it wasn't until I actually saw for myself the hordes of shorebirds making their way north along the Pacific Coast, the Orchard, Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles munching on tropical fruit, and thrushes foraging in the rainforest that it hit home for me. It really impacted me to see for instance a Spotted Sandpiper right next to a Caiman and think, "my gosh I could see that very same sandpiper along the Big Wood River a couple of months hence." On that day I will tick it off my year list but this time it will be different. I will have the vision of a Spotted Sandpiper nearly beak to snout with a Caiman in my mind, a sight that I had never even thought of before, an image that now communicates to me volumes about this bird's incredible

journey.

The spring and fall migration will never be the same for me. Now I know where some of my yard birds and those striking Swainson's Hawks are going and what their habitat is like in their winter home. It now makes total sense to me why the Bullock's Orioles and the Black-headed Grosbeak devour the orange halves and the grape jelly that I put out for them in May and June. They are used to eating fruit in their tropical winter home!

I really can't say enough about how much I gained from my trip to Costa Rica and as you might imagine it wasn't just the 427 birds that we saw and enjoyed. It was far more. I gained a greater



sense of the interconnectness of everything; plants, insects, and people. I came away with an expanded awareness of the impact of habitat loss and forest fragmentation on the resident birds, wintering birds and seasonal migrants. Previously I had little to no knowledge about altitudinal migration and now I do. Besides this, I experienced the breath-taking sight of one of the most sought after altitudinal migrants in the world, the Resplendent Quetzal. I am not kidding, my breath caught in my throat and tears came to my eyes. It sounds a bit hokey but in that instance I knew why this bird was sacred to the Mayan and the Aztec. I thought that I might fall to my knees! Cont on page 2



Yes, Costa Rica is a land populated with jewels with wings, 882 species of them to be exact, and then there are the butterflies, that account for 10 % of all known species in the world. I can't even imagine how many insect species there are but the bottom line is this, when it comes to diversity and density of flora and fauna this country is a winner and you will have hit a birders dream jackpot when you go on this trip!

## Meet Our Guides

Edwin Ramirez is a native of Costa Rica born and raised on a coffee and tomato farm. From the time he was a youngster he experienced an ever-growing interest in the natural world around him. It was not uncommon for Edwin to put aside his coffee-picking basket to pursue a complex and intriguing song coming from the woods to discover the iden-

tity of the bird that brought this song to his ears. His love for birds eventually led to big trouble, especially in the instance of releasing his father's prized caged Blue-crowned & Golden-browed Chlorophonias! But this did not end his love of birds. Edwin's passion for the living planet around him increased and when he got the chance to attend the Universidad Nacional to study for a career as a Tropical Biologist he didn't hesitate. It was during this time period while on a field trip in to San Isidro del General that Edwin met Alexander F. Skutch (yes) the co-author of the "Bible" of birds in

Costa Rica: A Guide to The Birds of Costa Rica, Stiles and Skutch) who introduced him to the art of bird-watching. Edwin refers to Skutch as a "one of a kind maestro", and his inspiration. Skutch became his birding instructor and friend.

Edwin has facilitated birding expeditions for the ABA, Audubon Soc., Elderhostel, Holbrook Travel Inc., and for his own tours like these 2010 trips.

To quote Edwin, "I love the art of Birding and try to make it contagious and fun to any one around me."

You can take my word for it Edwin is a wonderful guide and teacher and you will have the time of your life birding with him!

(see page 7 for more guide info)



**Bird Guide and Naturalist, Edwin Ramirez**

## Our Itinerary

### June Tour 2010

*DAY 01 (JUNE 25): ARRIVE HOTEL IN SAN JOSE (CENTRAL VALLEY).*

*DAY 02 (JUNE 26): ESQUINAS RAINFOREST LODGE (NEAR GOLFITO AREA IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC).*

*DAY 03 (JUNE 27): ESQUINAS RAINFOREST LODGE.*

*DAY 04 (JUNE 28): WILSON BOTANICAL GARDENS (NEAR SAN VITO AND ALMOST NY BORDER WITH PANAMA).*

*DAY 05 (JUNE 29) : SAVEGRE HOTEL DE MONTAÑA (SAN GERARDO DE DOTA VALLEY AMIDST HIGH TALAMANCA MOUNTAINS).*

*DAY 06 (JUNE 30) : SAVEGRE HOTEL DE MONTAÑA.*

*DAY 07 (July 1) : VILLA LAPAS HOTEL ( CENTRAL PACIFIC NEAR AND CLOSEST HOTEL TO CARARA NATIONAL PARK ).*

*DAY 08 (July 2): VILLA LAPAS HOTEL.*

*DAY 09 (July 3): SELVA VERDE LODGE (IN CHILAMATE DE SARAPIQUI, HEREDIA. CARIBBEAN SLOPE).*

*DAY 10 (July 4) : SELVA VERDE LODGE.*

*DAY 11 (July 5) : ARENAL LODGE ( IN LA FORTUNA DE SAN CARLOS NEAR VOLCANO ARENAL).*

*DAY 12 (July 6) : ARENAL LODGE .*

*DAY 13 (July 7) : HOTEL IN SAN JOSE (CENTRAL VALLEY).*

*DAY 14 (JULY 8) : FLIGHT BACK TO THE U.S.A.*

SAN JOSE : THIS CITY IS LOCATED IN THE CENTRAL INTERMOUNTAIN VALLEY OF COSTA RICA AT AN ALTITUDE OF 3.600 FEET. PLEASANT WEATHER CONDITIONS PREVAIL THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. AVERAGE TEMPERATURE IS 78 F. ABOUT 60% OF PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY LIVE IN THE VALLEY FOR REASONS SUCH AS VOLCANIC SOILS AND OF COURSE WEATHER.

**DAY 01: (JUNE 25) ARRIVE SAN JOSE HOTEL.TBA**

--UPON ARRIVAL YOU'LL BE MET BY GUIDE AND TRANSFERED TO HOTEL IN SAN JOSE.  
 ACTIVITIES: --BRIEFING OF PROGRAM AND BIRDING EXPEDITION ( BY YOUR COSTARICAN GUIDE: EDWIN RAMIREZ )  
 --WELCOME DINNER.  
 --MAIN LUGGAGE MUST GO IN BUS FOR DRIVER TO MOVE AHEAD OF GROUP (DOMESTIC FLIGHT NEXT DAY WITH HAND LUGGAGE).

**DAY 02: (JUNE 26) ESQUINAS RAINFOREST LODGE.**

ACTIVITIES: --6:30 (A.M.) BREAKFAST AT HOTEL IN SAN JOSE.  
 --7:30 (A.M.) BUS TRANSFER TO PAVAS AIRPORT FOR DOMESTIC FLIGHT ( FLIGHT SAN JOSE TO PALMAR SUR APPROX. 50 MINUTES).  
 AIRCRAFT PROVIDED BY NATURE AIR ( CANADIAN MANUFACTURED TWIN OTTER ).  
 WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS ON LUGGAGE OF 25 POUNDS PER PERSON.  
 --9:00 (A.M.) BOARD WITH NATURE AIR.  
 --10:00 (A.M.) LAND IN PALMAR SUR AIRSTRIP AND MEET MAIN BUS AND DRIVER. START HEADING FOR ESQUINAS.  
 --12:00 (A.M.) ARRIVE TO HOTEL FOR LUNCH.  
 -- 1:00 (P.M.) TIME TO SETTLE IN OUR ROOMS.  
 2:30 (P.M.) BIRDWATCHING AROUND HOTEL GROUNDS ( BIRDS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC LOWLANDS ).  
 7:00 (P.M.) DINNER AND BIRD CHECK LIST REVIEW.

**DAY 03: (JUNE 27) ESQUINAS RAINFOREST LODGE.**

ACTIVITIES: --5:45 (A.M.) EARLY MORNING BIRDING AROUND HOTEL GROUNDS.  
 --7:00 (A.M.) BREAKFAST.  
 --8:30 (A.M.) RAINFOREST BIRD WALK. OCELOT TRAIL ON PRIMARY AND SECOND GROWTH FOREST OF PIEDRAS BLANCAS NATIONAL PARK.  
 APPROX. 2 AND A HALF HOURS OF WALKING AND BIRWATCHING.  
 --12:00 LUNCH AT HOTEL.  
 2:30 (P.M.) FIELD TRIP TO OLD GRAVEL ROAD BETWEEN LA BAMBA AND GOLFITO. IN SEARCH OF TROGONS.  
 7:00 (P.M.) DINNER AND BIRD CHECK LIST REVIEW.  
 8:30 (P.M.) NIGHT WALK ALONG ROAD FOR OWLS, PARAUQUES AND POTOO.

**DAY 04: (JUNE 28) WILSON BOTANICAL GARDENS.**

ACTIVITIES: --6:00 (A.M.) EARLY BIRDING AROUND GROUNDS OF ESQUINAS.  
 --7:30 (A.M.) BREAKFAST AT ESQUINAS.  
 --9:00 (A.M.) DEPARTURE FROM ESQUINAS AND BUS DRIVE TO SAN VITO DE COTOBUS (WILSON B. GARDENS).  
 --11:00 (A.M.) ARRIVAL TO WILSON BOTANICAL GARDENS.  
 12:00 LUNCH AT LODGE  
 2:00 (P.M.) BIRDING HOTEL GROUNDS AND TRAIL TO JAVA RIVER. IN PURSUE OF THE TORQUOISE COTINGA.  
 6:00 (P.M.) DINNER.  
 7:00 (P.M.) INTRODUCTORY TALK AND SLIDES AND HISTORY OF BOTANICAL GARDENS ( BY HOST AT W.B.G.)  
 8:00 (P.M.) GOING OVER BIRD CHECKLIST.

**DAY 05: (JUNE 29) SAVEGRE MOUNTAIN HOTEL.**

ACTIVITIES: --5:45 (A.M.) EARLY MORNING BIRDING FROM LOOK OUT AT BOTANICAL GARDENS.  
 7:00 (A.M.) BREAKFAST AT WILSON B.G.  
 8:30 (A.M.) OPTIONAL GUIDED WALK ON TRAILS THROUGH PLANT COLLECTION ( BY HOST AT W.B.G.)  
 ROUGHLY 2 HOURS OR BIRDING WITH OUR GROUP AS USUAL.  
 11:00 (A.M.) SUITCASES TO THE BUS AND LAST MINUTES OF BIRDING IN SAN VITO.  
 12:00 (NOON) LUNCH AT BOTANICAL GARDEN  
 1:00 (P.M.) START 4 HOUR DRIVE TO SAN GERARDO DE DOTA (SAVEGRE MOUNTAIN HOTEL).  
 5:30 (P.M.) CHECK IN AT SAVEGRE IN THE HIGH MOUNTAINS.  
 7:00 (P.M.) DINNER AND BIRD CHECKLIST REVIEW.

**DAY 06: (JUNE 30) SAVEGRE MOUNTAIN HOTEL.**

ACTIVITIES: --6:00 (A.M.) EARLY BIRDING AROUND HUMMINGBIRD FEEDERS.  
 7:30 (A.M.) BREAKFAST  
 8:30 (A.M.) WALKING AND BIRDING TRAILS ALONG THE SAVEGRE RIVER. WITH GREAT CHANCES OF COMING ACROSS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BIRD IN THE AMERICAS, THE RESPLENDENT QUETZAL.  
 12:30 (P.M.) LUNCH AT HOTEL 2:00 (P.M.) MORE BIRDING AROUND HOTEL GROUNDS. 6:30 Dinner and Review Bird List.

**DAY 07:** (July 1) VILLA LAPAS HOTEL.

ACTIVITIES: --6:30 (A.M.) BREAKFAST AND LUGGAGE CALL  
 -- 7:30 (A.M.) LEAVE SAVEGRE AND START ADVENTURES ON ROAD TO TARCOLES ( VILLA LAPAS HOTEL).  
 -- 1:00 (P.M.) LUNCH IN VILLA LAPAS.  
 2:00 (P.M.) TIME TO SETTLE AT HOTEL.  
 3:00 (P.M.) BOAT TRIP ON TARCOLES RIVER ( BIRDS OF GALLERY FOREST, SHOREBIRDS, WADERS, BIRDS OF MAN-GROVE FOREST).  
 7:00 (P.M.) DINNER AND BIRD CHECKLIST REVIEW.

**DAY 08:** (July 2) VILLA LAPAS HOTEL.

ACTIVITIES: --5:30 (A.M.) EARLY MORNING BIRDING ( VILLA LAPAS A DAILY FLYWAY FOR SCARLET MACAWS).  
 --6:30 (A.M.) BREAKFAST AT HOTEL.  
 --7:15 (A.M.) FIELD TRIP AND BIRDING OLD-GROWTH FOREST OF CARARA NATIONAL PARK. RESIDENTS AND MI-GRANTS OF A MOST TRANSITIONAL FOREST (CARARA AS AN OVERLAP BETWEEN DRY AND WET FORESTS).  
 LAS ARACEAS TRAIL: APPROX. 3 AND A HALF HOURS.  
 --12:30 (P.M.) LUNCH BACK IN VILLA LAPAS.  
 -- 2:30 (P.M.) SECOND FIELD TRIP TO CARARA N.P. . LAGUNA MEANDRICA TRAIL SUCCESSIONAL FORESTS.  
 -- 6:30 (P.M.) DINNER AT HOTEL AND BIRD CHECKLIST REVIEW.  
 -- 7:30 (P.M.) SHORT BUS DRIVE FOR OWLS.

**DAY 09:** (July 3) SELVA VERDE LODGE.

ACTIVITIES: --5:30 (A.M.) LUGGAGE CALL AND EARLY BREAKFAST  
 --7:15 (A.M.) TRANSFER FROM VILLA LAPAS TO SELVA VERDE LODGE VIA LA PAZ WATERFALL GARDENS.  
 --11:00 (A.M.) TIME TO EXPLORE TRAILS AND GROUNDS AT LA PAZ WATERFALL GARDENS. Tanager and HUM-MINGBIRD FEEDERS.  
 --12:30 (P.M.) LUNCH AT LA PAZ W.G.  
 --4:00 (P.M.) CHECK IN AT SELVA VERDE LODGE.  
 --6:30 (P.M.) DINNER AND BIRD LIST REVIEW.

**DAY 10:** (July 4) SELVA VERDE LODGE.

ACTIVITIES: --6:00 (A.M.) EARLY BIRDING ON HOTEL GROUNDS.  
 --7:00 (A.M.) BREAKFAST IN SELVA VERDE  
 --8:00 (A.M.) FIELD TRIP AND VISIT TO WORLD FAMOUS BIOLOGICAL STATION LA SELVA: TRAIL WALK AND INTRO-DUCTION TO BIRDS OF TROPICAL WET FORESTS OF CARIBBEAN LOWLANDS.  
 --12:00 LUNCH BACK IN SELVA VERDE  
 2:00 (P.M.) SECOND INCURSION TO LA SELVA STATION.  
 6:00 (P.M.) BIRD LIST REVIEW AND SUPPER IN SELVA VERDE.

**DAY 11:** (July 5) ARENAL LODGE BY ARENAL VOLCANO.

ACTIVITIES: --6:00 (A.M.) BIRD WALK AROUND SELVA VERDE LODGE  
 --7:00 (A.M.) BREAKFAST  
 --8:00 (A.M.) DEPART FROM SELVA VERDE AND COMMENCE DRIVE TO ARENAL VIA LA VIRGEN DEL SOCORRO FOR-EST RESERVE.  
 HIKING AND BIRDING AT FOREST RESERVE (ABOUT 3 HOURS).  
 --12:00 LUNCH EN-ROUTE  
 --3:00 (P.M.) ARRIVE TO ARENAL LODGE.  
 --7:00 (P.M.) DINNER AND BIRD CHECKLIST REVIEW AT ARENAL LODGE.

**DAY 12:** (July 6) ARENAL LODGE BY ARENAL VOLCANO.

ACTIVITIES: --6:00 (A.M.) EARLY MORNING BIRDING SESSION ON HOTEL GROUNDS.  
 --7:00 (A.M.) BREAKFAST AT HOTEL.  
 --8:00 (A.M.) VISIT TO ARENAL SUSPENSION BRIDGES. A COMBINATION OF 2 MILES OF TRAILS, FOOT BRIDGES AND SOME 6 SUSPENSION BRIDGES CUTTING THROUGH PRIMARY PREMONTANE WET FOREST. BIRDWATCHING FROM ABOVE.  
 --1:00 (P.M.) LUNCH AT RESTAURANT OF ARENAL OBSERVATORY.  
 2:00 (P.M.) BIRDWATCHING TRAIL OF OBSERVATORY LODGE.  
 ( ABOUT 2 AND A HALF HOURS)  
 7:00 (P.M.) DINNER AND BIRDS OF THE DAY AT ARENAL LODGE.

**DAY 13:** (July 7) **HOTEL IN SAN JOSE, TBA**

ACTIVITIES: --6:30 (A.M.) BREAKFAST AT ARENAL LODGE.

--7:30 (A.M.) RETURN BUS DRIVE TO CENTRAL VALLEY (SAN JOSE AREA) VIA FINCA SOL Y MAR.

-10:30 (A.M.) BIRD WATCHING THE WETLANDS AND LAGOONS OF SOL Y MAR. ONLY CHANCE IN TRIP FOR THE LARGEST BIRD OF COSTA

RICA AND BIGGEST STORK IN THE AMERICAS, THE JABIRU.

--12:30 (P.M.) LUNCH AT SOL Y MAR

--1:30 (P.M.) DRIVE FROM SOL Y MAR TO SAN JOSE.

--4:30 (P.M.) ARRIVAL TO HOTEL IN SAN JOSE.

--6:30 (P.M.) FINAL BIRD REVIEW OF TRIP AND BIRDING EXPEDITION

--7:00 (P.M.) FAREWELL DINNER.

**DAY 14:** (JULY 8) **FLIGHT BACK TO THE U.S.A.**

ACTIVITIES: --TRANSFERS TO AIRPORT.



**Jabiru Family**

## Expedition Costs and other Particulars

**Contact Kathleen if you have any questions about the trip.**

**This tour includes:** 13 nights of lodging, three meals a day (beginning with the welcome dinner the first night through to breakfast on the day of departure), a 40 min. domestic flight in a Twin Otter, Canadian manufactured aircraft (flight from San Jose the morning of June 26 to our first birding destination in Palmar Sur), plus a Toyota Coaster air-conditioned bus with a full time driver for all of our trip, fees for your bird guides, National Park, Reserves, and Botanical Gardens fees, (in other words any entry fees), double-occupancy rooms (2 people and 2 beds per room) for a cost of **\$2,850.00 per person**. If you do not wish to have a roommate please add \$700 to your total. Your desire to be a single must be requested when you notify Kathleen that you want to reserve a spot on a tour.

**Not Included:**

Airfare to and from the U.S. to San Jose, Costa Rica. (you will receive flight recommendations once you are a confirmed participant.) If there are several people in your party we may be able to arrange for discounts with the airlines.

Alcoholic beverages and soft drinks at hotels and lodges

Airport Tax \$26 paid at the airport on the day of departure back to the U.S. (required by the Gov. of C.R.)

Gratuities (optional and not an obligation but in Costa Rica greatly appreciated) for staff at hotels, driver, guides.

Life and health insurance. Every participant must make all pertaining arrangements and have some type of health coverage prior to arrival. The chances of accident or serious health issues are extremely low but it is always advisable to have insurance. Trip cancellation insurance is also recommended.

**Of special note and Very Important:**

A non-refundable initial deposit of 50% (\$1,425) of the tour fee must be sent to Kathleen (addresses and various forms will be provided) The June 2010 trip first deposit deadline date is 4/18/10.

The remaining 50% of your fee must be received no later than 5/18/10 also sent to Kathleen.

Every person enrolled for the trip must sign a liability agreement form with Edwin Ramirez. This form

## Of special note and Very Important: continued...

will be provided to you once you have indicated to Kathleen that you will be sending a deposit. Your signed liability form must be submitted with your initial deposit.

### **You will need a valid Passport.**

Concerning Vaccinations: please visit the CDC's website: <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationCostaRica.aspx#vaccines>

### **Extremely Important:**

Once your deposit has been received and transferred to Edwin and he has made deposit payments to hotels and lodges he will be bound by the policies of those establishments covering cancellations within the last weeks before our arrival. It will not be possible to refund any participants money who has to cancel for any reason. This can't be emphasized enough, a last minute cancellation can't be refunded and this is out of Edwin's or my control. I highly recommend that you purchase trip insurance to cover such an unexpected occurrence.

### **Very Helpful:**

The 4/18/10 deadline for the initial deposit for the June trip is rapidly approaching and the trips are filling. Contact Kathleen immediately to reserve your spot. We have to have a minimum of 10 (Max. 14) participants to go forward with each of these trips. It is also acceptable to send your initial deposit before 4/18/10. The final deposit deadline of 5/18/10 must be observed. Initial deposits will not be transferred to Costa Rica until we have 10 participants. **Contact Kathleen: majesticfeathers@cox.net subject line, Bird Tour.** Please establish contact with me via email before sending your initial deposit. Thank you.

**Do not book flights until you have been notified that we have 10 people signed up for the tour!**

### **More Information to Come Your Way:**

Once I have received your enrollment form and deposit by April 18, 2010 you will receive additional information from me regarding packing recommendations, carry-on information, in-country travel, care for camera equipment in the tropics, clothing recommendations, time, currency, electricity, phones, etc.

### **Some Birding Related Information:**

We recommend that you familiarize yourself with the birds of Costa Rica. Two field guides that we recommend are A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica, by F. Gary Stiles and Alexander F. Skutch, and The Birds of Costa Rica, Richard Garrigues and Robert Dean. The later is a good size to carry along on the trip. We will have a couple of copies of the Stiles and Skutch book with us on the bus so if you don't want to carry this hefty book along don't.

Also if you need a good pair of binoculars or other birding related gear please include my friend Poo Wright-Pulliam's online store in your search: <http://www.binocularsandscopespro.com/home>

**The June trip offers the best chance in our 2010 schedule to see the Three-wattled Bellbird and to hear the resident birds at their vocalizing best!**

**It Would Be Great to have You on Board for our Majestic Feathers Birding Expedition in Costa Rica!**

**Pura Vida!**

**Kathleen Cameron cell 208 721-0687 majesticfeathers@cox.net  
(see page 7 for more important information)**



## Important Information cont...

### A portion of the proceeds from your tour will be donated to forest restoration in the La Paz River cloud forest

Here is a brief description about this restoration Foundation by Edwin Ramirez

The La Paz Cloud Forest is located in the county of San Ramón (province of Alajuela) approximately one hour and 30 minutes Northwest from Costa Rica's main international airport. Here beautiful remnants of the original forest that once covered the whole of the uppermost portions of the Tilarán Mountain Range thrive and resist the ever-increasing pressures that humans continue to put on this delicate and fragile mosaic of ecosystems.

My very first visit to this magical place was some 30 years ago when a friend of mine invited me to come along and help him round up and herd some cattle. As we started to pierce and cut through this evergreen realm of trees covered with bowl-shaped bromeliads and the yellow, white and purple-colored flowers of different orchids, many creeks and a river as avenues of crystal clear waters played before us, and the voices and songs of birds followed me as I walked up and down. I could not help it, and a big part of me got trapped and actually continues to dwell amongst the breezes and mosses of this heavenly spot, Si La Paz de San Ramón, where the Sunbittern nests and displays, and the wild aguacatillos (avocados) get dispersed by the Quetzales. This is my idea of paradise, where our moisture charged alisios (trade winds) bathe the ridges atop the continental divide, and the rain shadow swings back and forth towards the depths of el Río La Paz.

I had many trips, hikes, days of camping, and months of birding in this precious corner of Costa Rica over these 30 years. It was some 10 years ago that I woke up at night and realized that, as I tried to go back to sleep, something within was bugging me. It only took me a few minutes to discover that the time had come for a closer connection to this sacred (to my thoughts and understanding) site. Next morning, I took the public bus to the end of the paved road and started my walk on the mud and gravel sections (the filter) and began to carefully look for a piece of land I liked. And again, to my eyes, they all looked beautiful in their own way--little parcels that the Costarican Agrarian Institute had been given to the people of La Paz de San Ramón, little pieces of land that were meant to be the farming territory for sugar cane, strawberries, and a few other crops. Very, extremely, poor had been the results since the true vocation of this soil is to sustain areas of forest.

And yes, I did it! I bought my first small chunk of land that urged repair. And then second and third ones came. I have restored forest in my own land quite well, but then I came to the point where I realized I cannot/ should not buy all the land that needs protection. Instead it will be much more meaningful if many other people join me in this Forest and River conservation/restoration project. This is when the Foundation for the Protection and Conservation of the La Paz River and surrounding Forests was born.

The members of this group include friends, neighbors, and family members. We all cooperate in order to talk to farmers and convince them to let us plant some native trees to the area in a section or two on their plot of land. We have our own tree nurseries.

Perhaps the greatest reward of all has been to see a pair of Resplendent Quetzales (the most beautiful bird in the Americas) come and pluck wild avocados from a tree I planted some seven years ago.

**On some Majestic Feathers Costa Rica trips we will visit the restoration project and may even have the opportunity to plant some trees!**

#### MORE ABOUT THE GUIDES

Edwin Ramirez does a great job of sharing about the history and culture of Costa Rica, knowledge about this ecosystem, and he is a wonderful naturalist and just a great bird guide! You will really enjoy him. He has been guiding throughout Central and South America for 18 years and he is able to take you places that other tours can't because of his personal connections.

Kathleen Cameron co-leader and trip photographer will assist Edwin along the trails and will offer specialized photography lessons on select trips for those interested in improving their digital photography skills especially as they apply to photographing birds in the tropics. Photo lesson details TBA.