



COSTA RICA: OPERATION RUBYTHROAT

HUMMINGBIRD EXPEDITION (EAST)

with Dr. Bill Hilton Jr.

January 20-28, 2018



Each winter since 2004-05, Dr. Bill Hilton Jr., executive director of Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History, has offered excursions for teachers, citizen scientists, and other nature enthusiasts to Central America to observe and band Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (RTHU) on their wintering grounds. An internationally recognized hummingbird expert and educator-naturalist, Hilton is the only scientist conducting long-term systematic studies of RTHU in Central America, and together with teams of citizen scientists has banded more than 1,350 RTHU in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Belize, and El Salvador — far more than the 46 that had ever been captured prior to Hilton's first expedition in 2004.

No field experience is necessary, just a willingness to help discover new information about ruby-throats on the other end of their migratory route.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Become a partner in science by assisting with the capture and banding of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (RTHU).
- Learn about RTHU and other Neotropical migrant and resident bird species through in-hand views and comprehensive presentations.
- Enjoy opportunities for nature photography.
- Discover and appreciate Costa Rican history and culture.
- Earn optional graduate credit (and/or CEUs for educators).
- For more information visit hiltonpond.org or rubythroat.org.

ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

JANUARY 20 - ARRIVAL & PARAÍSO

Fly to San José's modern international airport, where you'll be met by trip leaders Dr. Bill Hilton Jr. and Ernesto M. Carman Jr. Depart for Paraíso Orocaý Lodge and have some time this afternoon to get settled and unpack. Watch the sunset over nearby volcanic mountains (daily). Supper at lodge is followed by an evening orientation. *Overnight at Paraíso Orocaý Lodge. (D)*

JANUARY 21 - UJARRÁS/TAPANTÍ

Have breakfast at a local restaurant and then continue to the study site at Ujarrás chayote plantations. Typical procedure: Erect mist nets and traps; capture, band, measure, photograph, color mark, and release Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (RTHU); record observations of RTHU behavior. This afternoon take a bus trip to Tapantí National Park and the adjoining reserves that cover hundreds of square miles of unspoiled cloud forest that reach all the way to Panama. Waterfalls are a highlight, as are diverse birds and wildlife. Supper at lodge. Evening instruction. *Overnight at Paraíso Orocaý Lodge. (BLD)*

JANUARY 22 - UJARRÁS/FINCA CRISTINA

Morning field work at chayote farms. This afternoon take a bus trip to Finca Cristina for lunch and a behind-the-scenes look at a fully certified shade-grown and organic coffee farm. Tour the farm with Linda Moyher to see how shade-grown coffee helps over 300 species of both resident and neotropical migratory birds by providing habitat. Linda will also explain how organic farming allows coffee to be grown with minimal negative impact on the local environment by not using chemical fertilizers, fungicides, herbicides, or insecticides. Continue evening discussions and presentations. *Overnight at Paraíso Orocaý Lodge. (BLD)*

JANUARY 23 - UJARRÁS/LANKESTER GARDEN

Morning field work at chayote farms. Afternoon bus trip to Lankester Gardens to tour a comprehensive collection of orchids and take a walk on the facility's well-designed interpretive trails. Watch for large assemblages of ducks and other waterbirds in the adjoining pond. After the evening meeting, embark on a night walk to view nocturnal creatures. *Overnight at Paraíso Orocaý Lodge. (BLD)*

JANUARY 24 - RANCHO NATURALISTA/CATIE

Take a morning trip to Rancho Naturalista, home to many species of hummingbirds that come to feeding stations, for up-close viewing. Rancho Naturalista, located within Costa Rica's ecologically diverse Cordillera Talamanca, is an internationally known birding site with more than 450 species on its checklist. Local hummers at Rancho Naturalista include Snowcaps, Purple-crowned Fairies, Violet-crowned Woodnymphs, and Black-crested Coquettes. Have lunch on the hummingbird veranda at Rancho. This afternoon visit the 45-acre botanical garden at CATIE (Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center), which maintains nearly 4,400 genetic samples that represent more than 280 species from all over the world. Excellent opportunity for botanical photography. *Overnight at Paraíso Orocaý Lodge. (BLD)*

JANUARY 25 - UJARRÁS/IRAZÚ VOLCANO

Morning field work at chayote farms. Afternoon bus trip to Irazú Volcano National Park, whose summit is above the tree line and resembles an alien moonscape. Irazú, the tallest of Costa Rica's volcanoes, last erupted in 1994. Today it has several craters, one filled with brilliantly colored rain-fed water and rimmed by gnarled, scorched trees. At nearly 10,000 feet, the view from Irazú in all directions is breathtaking. The endemic Volcano Hummingbird and Volcano Junco are target birds for Irazú. There's also a chance for Resplendent Quetzals and other highland species. *Overnight at Paraíso Orocaý Lodge. (BLD)*

JANUARY 26 - UJARRÁS/CHURCH RUINS

Morning field work at chayote farms. Afternoon in Ujarrás to visit the ruins of one of the oldest churches in Costa Rica, Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de la Limpia Concepción, built during early colonial times, in the 1650s. Explore nearby natural areas, including riparian habitats. Evening presentations. *Overnight at Paraíso Orocaý Lodge. (BLD)*

JANUARY 27 - UJARRÁS/CASONA DEL CAFETAL

Morning field work at chayote farms. Lunch at Casona del Cafetal on the shores of Lake Cachi (watch for Yellow-crowned Night-Herons) with a visit to the town of Orosí, one of the wettest places in tropical Costa Rica. Look for Bat Falcons in the gorge below the dam that forms the lake. Last chance to buy Costa Rica souvenirs at the shops in Orosí. This afternoon take a nature walk in the area. Evening discussion of the banding results, tally of bird species seen, and "Farewell Fiesta." *Overnight at Paraíso Orocaý Lodge. (BLD)*

JANUARY 28 - SAN JOSÉ & DEPARTURE

Transfer to the San José airport by bus. Early afternoon flights home. (B)

ABOUT YOUR LEADER



Dr. Bill Hilton Jr. defines himself as an "educator-naturalist," with a lifetime dedicated to teaching about the wonders and beauty of nature. Hilton has a B.A. in Philosophy from Newberry College, an M.A.T. in Biology from Winthrop University, an M.S. in Ecology and Behavioral Biology from the University of Minnesota, and an honorary doctorate (D.Sci.) from his undergraduate alma mater. He is based in South Carolina at Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History, a non-profit research, education, and conservation organization he founded in 1982. Hilton is also a celebrated writer, having been published numerous times in major newspapers and periodicals. His ongoing series of photo essays about nature phenomena entitled "This Week at Hilton Pond" has a large international following.

In the neotropics, Bill is assisted by Ernesto Carman Jr., one of the most competent and accomplished young naturalists and bird guides in Central America. Ernesto is bilingual and has dual citizenship in the U.S. and Costa Rica; he lives on and helps operate an organic shade-grown coffee farm (Finca Cristina) at Paraíso, east of Cartago.

PROGRAM PRICING

\$2,475 (12 participants)

Cost includes accommodations, activities, meals, entrance fees, in-country transportation, and full-time guide.

Cost does not include international airfare or gratuities. Holbrook can assist with flight arrangements if desired.

THE FINE PRINT

Cost is based on double occupancy; for a single room throughout the trip add \$355 per person. A \$200 per person non-refundable deposit and completed enrollment form are required by September 22, 2017 to hold your space on the trip. Final non-refundable payment is due in full by October 17, 2017. Travel/trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. For more information call Travel Insured at 800-243-3174 or visit travelinsured.com. Holbrook Travel's agency number is 15849.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ENROLL:

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Visit holbrook.travel/rubythroateast18