

GRAND VENEZUELA
PART I: THE NORTHERN CORDILLERA,
COASTAL LAGOONS AND DESERTS
MARCH 11-19, 2011

PART II: THE BARQUISIMETO DESERT, THE ANDES,
AND THE CEDRAL RANCH IN THE LLANOS
MARCH 18-29, 2011

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This is our premier Venezuela tour. We have operated it longer than any tour in Venezuela and it visits the broadest cross-section of habitats and records by far the greatest number of birds. We are offering this trip in two parts, making it more accessible for the convenience of those with limited time or simply want a shorter trip, or you can make this a single action-packed Grand Venezuela experience by doing both parts. You can chose from either part separately to fit your schedule.

Venezuela is one of the most economically advanced countries in South America. It has a rich avifauna and many productive areas that are easily accessible, often from paved roads. Good accommodations, good roads, and a new bird book authored by Steve Hilty, who is guiding both trips, should assure a superb experience on either trip. Visitors to Venezuela always remark on how easy birds are to see. Those taking both parts may see nearly five hundred species including everything from tiny bejeweled hummingbirds to showy tanagers and bizarre-looking hoatzins.

Part I - The Northern Cordillera, Coastal Lagoons of Chichirivichi, and the Barquisimeto desert. Among the traditional destinations on this trip are the Colonia Tovar area and the famed Henry Pittier (Rancho Grande) National Park, both in the Coastal Cordillera, as well as the saline lagoons, dry forests and ranchland of Chichirivichi, and the deserts of Barquisimeto at the northern end of the Andes. By popular request we have added an extra day at the quaint little German-heritage village of Colonia Tovar, an area that teems with colorful tanagers and hummingbirds.

Of course, no trip to northern Venezuela would be complete without a visit to the famous Biological Station of Rancho Grande and the surrounding Henry Pittier National Park. This park alone boasts a list of over five hundred species, and has one of the best dawn chorus birding spectacles anywhere on the continent with toucanets, quetzals, woodcreeper, hummingbirds and tanagers virtually nonstop! At vast coastal lagoons near Chichiriviche we'll see Scarlet Ibises, thousands of flamingos and many waterbirds. We'll also spend a morning in tropical dry forest searching for species typical of drier northern South America habitats including Plain-flanked Rail; Caribbean Hornero; Black-backed Antshrike; Northern White-fringed Antwren; White-bellied Antbird; and Lance-tailed Manakin among others. Humid ranchland nearby offers a different avifauna with Horned Screamers, Red-and-green Macaws, Collared Aracaris, Orange-crowned Orioles and Ruby-topaz Hummingbirds.

Finally, we'll end Part I with a morning in a peaceful desert valley near Barquisimeto and what a morning it should be, with desert flowers and bird specialties such as Bare-eyed Pigeon; the endemic Pale-headed Jacamar; White-whiskered Spinetail; Venezuelan Troupial (the national bird); Bicolored Wren; the exquisite Vermilion Cardinal and plenty of little flycatchers, hummingbirds, and finches.

Part II - The Barquisimeto Desert, the Andes and foothills and the Cedral Ranch in the Llanos. *The good times continue on this Part II section of the Grand Venezuela tour. A couple days longer than Part I, our exploration of Venezuela will continue with visits to the Maracaibo basin, both slopes of the Andes, a brief visit to the high country above treeline, a display site of Andean Cocks-of-the-rock, and finally, two and a half days at the incomparable Cedral ranch in the grasslands (llanos). Birds are surprisingly easy to see in the Andes of Venezuela and there is an ever changing palette of hummers, trogons, thrushes, and tanagers as we ascend the west slope, then descend the east slope.*

The pace picks up even more once we reach the famed "llanos" or grasslands and gallery woodlands at the Cedral Ranch. This ranch is renowned for its enormous concentrations of waterbirds—regarded by many as the greatest spectacle of waders and waterfowl on the continent—as well as large numbers of easy-to-see birds of all descriptions including even rarities such as Yellow-knobbed Curassow; Orinoco Goose; and Agami Heron. There also are plenty of "must see" species like Hoatzin; Great Potoo; Scarlet Macaw; Red-billed Scythebill; and Russet-throated Puffbird; as well as enormous Orinoco Crocodiles, thousands of Capybara, and the occasional Giant Anteater—so much diversity, in fact, that most visitors come away in awe of the wildlife here.

**PART I:
THE NORTHERN CORDILLERA,
COASTAL LAGOONS AND DESERTS**

March 11, Day 1: Mid-day Arrival in Venezuela at Maiquetia International Airport. Participants should plan your flights to arrive Caracas, Venezuela (Maiquetia International Airport, airport code CCS) by noon today. After clearing customs and immigration, you will be met by our ground operator and from the airport travel a little over two hours westward from Caracas to the quaint mountain village of Colonia Tovar. This avoids the congestion of the city and allows us to be just minutes from our morning destination. Time should be available for birding after our arrival there. In the gardens and wooded patches around the hotel we have seen, among other things, Green Violetear; Lazuline Sabrewing; Rufous-shafted Woodstar; Black-throated Spinetail (endemic); Black Phoebe; Venezuelan Tyrannulet; Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush (common voice); Bare-eyed and Pale-breasted thrush; Gray-breasted Wood-Wren; Speckled; Bay-headed and Blue-capped Tanager and sometimes White-sided Flowerpiercer. Colonia Tovar's unique German ancestry (the city was founded about 1835 by a small group of Germans and, for nearly a century, remained completely isolated from the rest of the country) is distinctive and colorful and you are likely to hear German spoken by many people here.

NIGHT: Hotel Freiburg, Colonia Tovar

March 12, Day 2: Colonia Tovar. We'll spend the day in the Tovar area, stopping in the afternoon for a picnic lunch. At elevations of about 2,000 meters (7,000 feet) and ranging downward to perhaps 1,000 meters (3,500 feet), we will walk through highland forests that in places are wet, misty, and often shrouded in fog. However, our visit coincides with the dry season. At this time of year we are more likely to experience a day of sunshine than one of fog. At higher elevations, bamboo is a dominant component of the forest understory; while at slightly lower elevations, the forest structure is more diverse. Because this is our first day, we'll spend the morning becoming acquainted with the more common birds of the coastal highlands, but if a Chestnut-crowned Antpitta or Caracas Tapaculo calls, we will certainly try to peer into the undergrowth for a glimpse of one of

these elusive species. Birds we may see could include any of the following: Green Violetear; Speckled Hummingbird; Tyrian Metaltail; Booted Racket-tail; Long-tailed Sylph; Rufous-shafted Woodstar (rare); Golden-olive Woodpecker; Groove-billed Toucanet; Spot-crowned, Olive-backed and Strong-billed woodcreepers; Red-billed Scythebill; Black-throated and Stripe-breasted spinetail; Montane Foliage-gleaner; Streaked Xenops; Green-and-black and Golden-breasted fruit-eater; Venezuelan Tyrannulet; Mountain Elaenia; White-throated Tyrannulet; Flavescent Flycatcher; Cinnamon Flycatcher; Golden-crowned Flycatcher; Blue-and-white Swallow; Gray-breasted Wood-Wren (common voice); Glossy-black Thrush; Three-striped Warbler; Slate-throated Redstart; Bluish Flowerpiercer; Red-legged Honeycreeper (erratic and seasonal); Beryl-spangled, Golden, Speckled, Bay-headed and Black-capped tanagers; Common Bush-Tanager; Oleaginous Hemispingus (hard to see); and Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch. Occasionally a Black Hawk-Eagle is spotted overhead and the coastal cordillera is generally a good place to see North American breeding migrants on their wintering grounds. Commoner species here include Yellow, Tennessee, and Black-and-white warbler; and Golden-winged Warbler (less common); as well as Baltimore Oriole among others.

NIGHT: Hotel Freiburg, Colonia Tovar

March 13, Day 3: Colonia Tovar to Maracay. This morning we'll continue birding in the Tovar area, looking for species of slightly higher and wetter forest, including Barred Forest-Falcon; Streak-capped Treehunter (scarce); Streaked Tuftedcheek; Montane Woodcreeper; Slate-crowned and Chestnut-crowned antpitta; Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant; Green-and-black Fruit-eater; Three-striped Warbler; Oleaginous Hemispingus; Common bush-Tanager; Yellow-billed Cacique (scarce) and Caracas Tapaculo. In the afternoon we will descend the dry southern slope of the coastal cordillera to the town of La Victoria and continue on to Maracay, our base for the next two nights. At lower and drier elevations this afternoon we should see a new component of Venezuelan birds. Some examples could include Cattle Egret; Yellow-headed and Northern Crested caracara; Brown-throated Parakeet, Green-rumped Parrotlet; Orange-winged Parrot; Black-throated Mango; White-necked Jacobin; Sparkling Violetear; White-vented Plumleteer; Golden-tailed Sapphire; Copper-rumped Hummingbird; Rufous-tailed Jacamar; Russet-throated Puffbird; Red-crowned and Red-rumped woodpecker; Plain-fronted Thornbird; Barred and Black-crested antshrike; Mouse-colored Tyrannulet; Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet; Forest and Yellow-bellied elaenia; Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant; Yellow-olive Flycatcher; Common Tody-Flycatcher; Great Kiskadee; Boat-billed, Social flycatcher and Brown-crested flycatcher; Buff-breasted Wren; Flavescent and Golden-crowned warbler; Golden-rumped (now split from Blue-hooded) and Trinidad euphonia; Scrub and Golden-crowned greenlet; Burnished-buff, Black-faced and White-lined tanager; Streaked Saltator and Blue-black Grassquit. We plan to arrive in Maracay early enough for a short rest before dinner.

NIGHT: Hotel Italo, Maracay

March 14-15, Days 4-5: Henry Pittier (Rancho Grande) National Park. Henry Pittier National Park was Venezuela's first national park, and its existence and all who enjoy it today is owed to Henry Pittier, a Swiss-born botanist who adopted Venezuela as his home during the early part of this century and spent most of his life studying the plants of this remarkable country. Eventually Henry Pittier turned his efforts to encouraging the preservation of the Rancho Grande region, now a national park. The park received further publicity when famous explorer and scientist William Beebe and fellow workers spent nearly two years here almost forty-five years ago. Today Rancho Grande is one of the premier birding locations on the South American continent and counts more than five hundred species, from boobies, pelicans, and hummingbirds to majestic eagles, within its borders. From Maracay, two roads lead north across the Coastal Cordillera which forms the backbone of this park. Beginning in the dry interior valley at Maracay, both roads climb into progressively wetter and higher vegetation, through cloud forest at elevations from 3,000 to about 5,000 feet and then descend back through drier forest, ending in desert thorn scrub at the coast.

Lying in the heart of the lower cloud forest along the Maracay-Ocumare road is the Rancho Grande Biological Station. Once the mountain retreat of notorious Venezuelan dictator, Gómez, the immense old building was abandoned for a number of years then partially restored when Beebe and his crew occupied it. Now it has been even further renovated and serves as a research center for university students and teachers and as an important

Grand Venezuela, Page 4

destination for birders and naturalists. Feeders attract oropendolas, tanagers, euphonias and a variety of hummingbirds, while swifts, flycatchers and swallow-tanagers nest in holes in various parts of the building. From the upper floor balconies and roof one can observe up to three species of hawk-eagles (black, ornate and black-and-white); White Hawk; numerous swifts; Blood-eared Parakeet; Red-billed Parrot; Chestnut-crowned Becard; several bristle-tyrants; Golden-crowned Flycatcher; Montane Foliage-gleaner; and a parade of tanagers including the spectacular Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager.

Along the roadside and in cloud forest adjacent and above the biological station it is possible to see a long list of species. Among them are Violet-chested Hummingbird; Velvet-fronted Brilliant; White-tipped Quetzal; Moustached Puffbird; Groove-billed Toucanet; Smoky-brown Woodpecker; up to a half-dozen species of woodcreepers; Crested Spinetail; Guttulated Foliage-gleaner (endemic); Gray-throated Leaf-tosser; Venezuelan (Plumbeous) Antvireo (endemic); Plain-backed Antpitta; Short-tailed and Rufous-tailed antthrush; Handsome Fruiteater; Marble-faced and Venezuelan bristle-tyrant; Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant; Black-and-white Becard; Moustached Wren; Gray-breasted Wood-Wren; Orange-bellied Euphonia; Rufous-cheeked Tanager (endemic); Golden, Bay-headed, Speckled, Fulvous-headed, and White-winged tanager; Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager; and Green Honeycreeper. The rollicking, yodel-like calls given by groups of endemic Venezuelan Wood-Quail are often heard at dawn during the dry season though one must be very lucky to see these furtive denizens of the shady forest floor. Several North American breeding warblers are also common here during the northern winter months, among them Tennessee and Black-and-white warbler; and American Redstart as well as an occasional Golden-winged Warbler. White-tipped Swifts often buzz the old rancho grande building where they also nest in drain pipes. Several other swifts including Chestnut-collared; Vaux's and Lesser Swallow-tailed swift also occur here.

Depending upon time available to us we may also bird some drier woodland at lower elevations near Maracay where there is a chance to see Rufous-tailed Jacamar; Rufous-and-white Wren; Pale-breasted, White-throated, and Cocoa thrushes; Golden-fronted Greenlet and occasionally Golden-winged Sparrow.

On the second day we will explore forests along the road leading to Choroni. Here we may start higher up the slopes with an early breakfast and later continue down the north slope, before returning to Maracay mid-day for lunch. In addition to most of the species mentioned for yesterday, we may also encounter Sooty-capped Hermit; White-vented Plumleteer; Green-tailed Emerald; Buff-fronted and Montane foliage-gleaners; the endemic Black-throated Spinetail; Long-tailed Antbird; Cinnamon, Flavescent, and Pale-edged flycatcher; Rufous-and-white Wren; Stripe-breasted Spinetail; and near the pass, a variety of tanagers including Blue-capped, Beryl-spangled, Rufous-cheeked, Golden, and Black-capped. Ochre-breasted Brush-Finches often lurk in roadside shrubbery, as well as Rufous-tailed Antthrush and Chestnut-crowned Antpitta. Both of the latter are more often heard than seen. Several cracids also occur in these wetter, higher forests, especially the rare and much-sought Helmeted Curassow, as well as Band-tailed Guan, though we would have to be very lucky to see either of them.

After picking up our bags at the hotel and lunch we'll our journey northwestward to the coastal lagoons of Chichirivichi and nearby Morrocoy National Park, which is mostly a marine park, composed of shallow lagoons and salt flats, and a number of small islands and cayes. Red Mangroves border most of the marine habitats, but the park also includes a lovely, limestone ridge of tropical dry forest, known as Cerro Chichiriviche, which overlooks the salty lagoons. The ridge reaches an elevation of almost a thousand feet. In addition to the waterbirds and raptors, many birds characteristic of South America's dry northern coast occur here.

NIGHTS: Hotel Italo, Maracay (Day 4)
Hotel Napoli Suites, Tucanas (Day 5)

March 16-17, Days 6-7: The Chichiriviche Area. We will be out early to take advantage of the first few hours of dawn when temperatures are cool and birds are most active. A sampling of species this morning in tropical dry forests close to the coast may include Rufous-vented Chachalaca; Pale-legged Hornero; Brown-throated Parakeet; Green-rumped Parrotlet; Yellow-crowned and Orange-winged parrot; Squirrel Cuckoo; Glittering-throated Emerald; Blue-chinned Sapphire; Blue-tailed Emerald; Russet-throated Puffbird; Red-rumped and

Lineated woodpecker; Caribbean (Pale-legged) Hornero; Barred, Black-crested, and Black-backed antshrike (local); Northern White-fringed Antwren; White-bellied Antbird; Lance-tailed Manakin; Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet; Pale-tipped Tyrannulet; Fuscous Flycatcher; Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant; Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant; Ochre-ored (Yellow-breasted) and Yellow-olive flycatcher; Brown-crested Flycatcher; Vermilion, Social, Piratic and Boat-billed flycatcher; Rufous-breasted and Buff-breasted wren; Long-tailed Gnatwren; Tropical Gnatcatcher; Bare-eyed Thrush; Scrub Greenlet; Glaucous, Blue-gray and Palm tanager; Yellow Oriole; and Flavescent Warbler. During the afternoon, we'll survey the vast collection of waterfowl and waders usually present in lagoons around Chichiriviche. A sample of species may include Frigatebird; American Flamingo (usually thousands),; Scarlet and Glossy ibis; Blue-winged Teal (1,000s winter here); White-cheeked Pintail (a few); Black-necked Stilt; Willet; Whimbrel; Least Sandpiper; Royal and Gull-billed tern; and many waders including Reddish, Great and Snowy egret; both night-herons; Cocoi, Great Blue, Striated and Green heron; and occasionally Stripe-backed Bittern. Bare-eyed Pigeons occur here in small numbers as well, and we will be searching various mangrove habitats for Bicolored Conebill. David Ascanio recently rediscovered the Plain-flanked Rail in this region and we'll be making a special effort to locate this rarely observed and little known, Venezuelan endemic, as well as the resident coastal form of Yellow Warbler, which is sometimes considered a separate species, the Golden Warbler.

On our second morning we will visit a rural area of slightly higher rainfall. The place is usually alive with birds in the early morning hours. In addition to several of the species mentioned for day six, some of the species possible here are Horned Screamer, Rusty-flanked Crake (voice); Red-and-green Macaw, Yellow-crowned Parrot; Striped Cuckoo; Collared Aracari; Caribbean (Pale-legged) Hornero; Straight-billed Woodcreeper; Lance-tailed Manakin (at least voice); many flycatchers (most of the ones mentioned for previous days); Cinereous Becard; Black-capped Donacobius White-eared Conebill; Hooded and Crimson-backed tanager; Yellow and Orange-crowned oriole; and Eastern Meadowlark. This area has also proved good for raptors. Some of the species we've noted here are Gray-headed Kite; Harris's Hawk; Roadside Hawk; Common Black-Hawk; Crane Hawk; Laughing Falcon; Bat Falcon; and both Yellow-headed and Northern Crested caracaras.

Late this morning we'll begin traveling westward toward the city of Barquisimeto, stopping at a marsh for lunch en route. Although the marsh has many interesting birds, the species we most hope to find here is the Rusty-flanked Crake, a Venezuelan endemic that is confined to a relatively small area of the country. Other interesting possibilities include Little Cuckoo and Russet-throated Puffbird. We will spend the balance of the afternoon driving to Barquisimeto (about 2½ hour more) and should arrive with plenty of time to relax. Participants arriving for the Grand Venezuela Part II tour will join us for dinner on the evening of Day 7 in Barquisimeto.

NIGHTS: Hotel Napoli Suites, Tucanas (Day 6)
Hosteria Obelisco, Barquisimeto (Day 7)

March 18, Day 8: Morning in the Barquisimeto, Lara. Tour participants from both parts will meet early this morning for our joint excursion into one of Venezuela's northwestern deserts. Desert scrub vegetation covers a good portion of the northwestern part of Venezuela. This region is home to a good number of species of birds found only here in this extremely arid belt, which also extends westward into adjoining Colombia. We will be out in the desert scrub at daybreak this morning when desert birds are most active. Some of the desert species that we will be looking for here are Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl; Bare-eyed Pigeon; Harris's Hawk; Zone-tailed Hawk; Buffy Hummingbird; Pale-headed Jacamar; Russet-throated Puffbird; White-whiskered Spinetail; Black-crested Antshrike; Northern White-fringed Antbird; Slender-billed Tyrannulet; Northern Scrub-Flycatcher; Southern Beardless Flycatcher; Tawny-crowned Pygmy-Tyrant; Pale-headed Pygmy-Tyrant; Stripe-backed and Bicolored wren; Tropical Gnatcatcher; Tropical Mockingbird (abundant); Scrub Greenlet; Vermilion Cardinal; Gray Pileated-Finch; Black-faced Grassquit; Orinocan Saltator; Yellow Oriole; and Troupial.

For those departing Part I of the Grand Venezuela tour, which ends here in Barquisimeto, there will be a late morning return to the hotel followed by a transfer to the airport for your afternoon flight today back to Maiquetía Airport on the coast near Caracas. Time should be available this afternoon for last minute errands, or just for relaxing amidst the pleasant surroundings and grounds of the hotel.

Grand Venezuela, Page 6

For those continuing to Part II of the Grand Venezuela trip, we will leave Barquisimeto shortly before lunch for our drive southward to the Andes and the tiny Andean town of La Azulita. It's a long drive, but it will take us into a completely new flora and fauna as we continue our exploration of western Venezuela.

NIGHT (Part I Departing Participants): Hotel Ole Caribe, Caracas
NIGHT (Participants Continuing to Part II): Centro Ecologico El Tao, La Azulita

March 19, Day 9: Early morning flights home. Part I tour ends this morning with an early transfer to the Caracas airport in time for flights departing between 8-10:00 AM. Transfers for flights departing at other times can be arranged in advance at an additional charge.

PART II THE BARQUISIMETO DESERT, THE ANDES, AND THE CEDRAL RANCH IN THE LLANOS

March 18, Day 8: Caracas. Participants arriving for Part II should plan their international flights so that they arrive in Caracas, Venezuela (Maiquetía International Airport; airport code CCS) by **noon** today in time to connect with a continuing afternoon flight from Caracas to Barquisimeto. Upon arrival, you will be transferred to your hotel to join the participants from Part I for dinner tonight.

NIGHT: Hostería Obelisco, Barquisimeto.

March 19, Day 9: Morning in the Barquisimeto, Lara. All tour participants will meet early this morning for our joint excursion into one of Venezuela's northwestern deserts. Desert scrub vegetation covers a good portion of the northwestern part of Venezuela. This region is home to a good number of species of birds found only here in this extremely arid belt, which also extends westward into adjoining Colombia. We will be out in the desert scrub at daybreak this morning when desert birds are most active. Some of the desert species that we will be looking for here are Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl; Bare-eyed Pigeon; Harris's Hawk; Zone-tailed Hawk; Buffy Hummingbird; Pale-headed Jacamar; Russet-throated Puffbird; White-whiskered Spinetail; Black-crested Antshrike; Northern White-fringed Antbird; Slender-billed Tyrannulet; Northern Scrub-Flycatcher; Southern Beardless Flycatcher; Tawny-crowned Pygmy-Tyrant; Pale-headed Pygmy-Tyrant; Stripe-backed and Bicolored wren; Tropical Gnatcatcher; Tropical Mockingbird (abundant); Scrub Greenlet; Vermilion Cardinal; Gray Pileated-Finch; Black-faced Grassquit; Orinocan Saltator; Yellow Oriole; and Troupial.

We will leave the Barquisimeto area shortly before lunch for our drive southward along the western side of the Andes to the tiny Andean town of La Azulita. It's a long drive but the road is paved and generally quite good and it will reposition us on the western slope of the Andes where a completely new flora and fauna awaits us as we continue our exploration of western Venezuela. With a few brief birding stops this afternoon, including one especially for the extremely local Pygmy Palm-Swift, the drive usually takes about 5-6 hours, and we should arrive about dusk or slightly before. The elevation of our new site this evening is about 3600 feet (1100 m). Evenings are cool and refreshing here.

NIGHT: Centro Ecologico El Tao, La Azulita

March 20-21, Days 10-11: The West Slope of the Andes at La Azulita. We plan to devote most of two days to this fascinating area, birding both above and below the town of La Azulita. La Azulita is situated in the heart of the coffee plantation zone and there is excellent birding right on the hotel grounds, as well as in the abundant shade trees along the road above and below town. The coffee zone is one of the easiest places in the Andes to see birds. North American breeding migrants, including Blackburnian, Cerulean, Canada, Mourning and Tennessee warbler; and American Redstart are relatively numerous. A sampling of other birds of this zone include Striped Cuckoo; Rufous-tailed Hummingbird; Cinnamon Becard; Yellow-legged Thrush; Moustached

Wren; Blue-necked, Crimson-backed, and Magpie tanagers. Species heard here, although most are difficult to see, include Brown Tinamou, Black-mandibled Toucan, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, and Short-tailed Antthrush. In the rainy season one also may hear Rusty-breasted and Undulated antpittas on the steep slopes of this region. At times in the past (mostly the dry season), we have encountered immense roosts of Scarlet-fronted Parakeets in the lower elevations near La Azulita, as well as the very rare Gray-throated Warbler. Time permitting in the afternoon, we may drive down toward the Maracaibo Basin, perhaps far enough to find the endemic Pygmy Palm-Swift if we have not seen it previously

On the second day we'll spend the morning in cloud forest at much higher elevation (about 2,200m) and then continue on to the city of Mérida for the night. Here, at this higher altitude, we may find the endemic Rose-crowned (headed) Parakeet, as well as Chestnut-collared Swift; White-capped Parrot; Collared Inca; Tyrian Metaltail; Masked Trogon; Rufous Spinetail; White-throated Tyrannulet; Variegated Bristle-Tyrant; Barred Becard; Mountain Wren; White-fronted Redstart; Black-crested Warbler; White-sided Flowerpiercer; and Moustached Brush-Finch. We should finish these days with long lists of birds and possibly a few surprises from this very rich region.

NIGHTS: Centro Ecologico El Tao, La Azulita (Day 3)
Hotel Belansante, Mérida (Day 4)

March 22, Day 12: Sierra Nevada National Park (Mucuy Entrance) and the High Country. We will drive to the nearby Pico Humboldt part of Sierra Nevada National Park and spend the morning in this pretty area. The cool subtropical forest (the shady valley is quite cool in the early morning) here is tall and humid and we'll have an opportunity to walk on a long, gradually ascending forest trail, eventually leading us to even cooler, mossier forest several hundred feet higher than where we started. In addition to Rose-headed Parakeets and Moustached Brush-Finches, which are possible here, we have a good chance of finding two more species endemic to Venezuela, the Mérida Sunangel (or Longuemare's Sunangel following some taxonomic treatments) and Gray-capped Hemispingus. Other exciting possibilities that we have found here include Strong-billed and Spot-crowned woodcreepers; Chestnut-crowned Antpitta; Mérida Tapaculo (hard to see); Green-and-black Fruiteater; Andean Solitaire; White-collared Jay; Russet-crowned and Three-striped warbler; Masked, White-sided and Bluish flowerpiercer; and Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia. We have seen the Slate-crowned Antpitta and rare Undulated Antpitta here as well, though the latter is very uncommon and sings little in the dry season. Most of the birds we see today will be members of mixed species flocks, often foraging rapidly, and this will contribute to some frustrating and exciting moments. Despite the difficulty of seeing some flock species, persistence usually results in everyone seeing most of the birds. After a late lunch, we'll drive northeastward by bus toward the páramo and a pass at about 12,000 feet (3,300 m) before continuing down slope a short distance to our hotel. Our hotel tonight is located at about 7500 feet elevation.

NIGHT: Hotel Moruco, Santo Domingo

March 23, Day 13: The High Country and the Páramo. We'll begin the morning in some treeline forest at a slightly lower elevation than where we stay. Here it is possible to see such high country species as Orange-throated Sunangel; Tyrian Metaltail; Azara's Spinetail; Pearled Treerunner; Red-crested Cotinga; White-throated Tyrannulet; White-fronted Redstart; Blue-backed Conebill; Blue-and-black Tanager; Lachrymose Mountain-Tanager; as well as Torrent Duck and White-capped Dipper. Later we'll work our way up into the high páramo (perhaps as high as 14,000 feet or just over 4,100 m) this morning. At the highest elevations we will move slowly, but fortunately most of the birds should be relatively easy to see, as they occur close to the road and are not shy. Some target species of this region include Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle; Andean Snipe (local and difficult to find); Bar-winged Cinclodes; Streak-backed Canastero (also hard to find at this time of the year); Andean Tit-Spinetail; Ochre-browed Thistletail (endemic); Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant; Mérida (Páramo) Wren; (endemic) Páramo Pipit; Plain-colored Seedeater; and Plumbeous Sierra-Finch. On everyone's list of favorites is the little Bearded Helmetcrest and, although this hummer is common here in the rainy season, it is unreliable and difficult to find in the dry season. The páramo's most characteristic plants are members of the Asteraceae family. Few of these plants, all of which are various members of the genus *Espeletia* (also known as Frailejon in Spanish), will be blooming, but they will be present everywhere. Superbly adapted to regions above treeline,

Grand Venezuela, Page 8

they provide food and shelter for many of the small birds here, and the various species (there are over 50 species in Venezuela) serve as prime indicators of the uniquely high Andean region known as páramo. A few páramo plants, among them lupine (*Lupinus*) and paint brush (*Castilleja*), will be familiar to northern visitors.

A few other commoner birds of this region include Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Sierran and Mountain Elaenia; Streaked-throated Bush-Tyrant; Torrent Tyrannulet; White-capped Dipper (along the stream); Great Thrush; Brown-bellied Swallow; Glossy and Mérida Flowerpiercer; Slaty Brush-Finch; and the ubiquitous Rufous-crowned Sparrow. Occasionally, we have found the rare and local Tawny-rumped Tyrannulet in shrubbery near the hotel.

NIGHT: Hotel Moruco, Santo Domingo

March 24, Day 14: Mid-elevation on the East Slope of the Andes: San Isidro Cloud Forest. Today's destination is located about an hour from our hotel and at much lower elevation (about 5,000 feet here). This valley is covered with humid subtropical forest (and there is a distinct possibility of rain). To reach the best areas we'll have to walk about a mile or a mile and a half beyond a rock quarry, so day packs, and walking shoes or rubber boots will be required as we will be carrying snacks and drinks. The list of birds from this valley is large and any of the following are possible: White-rumped Hawk; Black-and-chestnut Eagle (rare); Booted Racket-tail; Long-tailed Sylph; Golden-tailed Sapphire; Golden-headed and Crested quetzal; Red-headed Barbet; Immaculate Antbird; Golden-winged Manakin (another rare species); Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrant; Golden-crowned, Cliff, Cinnamon, Slaty-capped, and Olive-striped flycatchers; Stripe-breasted and Azara's spinetails; Moustached Wren; Chestnut-breasted and Blue-naped chlorophonias; Golden, Bay-headed, Speckled, Blue-necked and Saffron-crowned tanagers; Highland (Scarlet-rumped) Cacique; and Russet-backed Oropendola. In 1976 our tour found an Orange-eared Tanager here, a first record for this species in Venezuela, and it has been seen occasionally since that visit. Andean Cocks-of-the-Rock also are present in this valley and with a little luck we may see them at their lek or display site. Sometime this afternoon we will descend into the Santo Domingo Valley to Barinas, located on the llanos plain, just a short distance east of the Andes.

NIGHT: Hotel Bristol, Barinas

March 25, Day 15: Barinas to the Llanos at Hato El Cedral. Hato El Cedral (hato is a word used in Venezuela to denote a large ranch) will be our headquarters for exploration of the "low" llanos. The grasslands or llanos of central Venezuela are contiguous with those of northeastern Colombia and form a large natural biogeographical unit known as the "northern grasslands." The region is very flat, though everywhere it slopes ever so gently—an inch or so a mile—toward the Orinoco River. Because of its flatness and because almost all of the rainfall each year falls during a five or six month period from May or June through October or November, the llanos become flooded for several months each year. Areas closer to the Orinoco are subject to more frequent and prolonged flooding each year than the slightly higher areas around the perimeter of the llanos. It is these lower, wetter, and more open areas that host the greatest concentrations of waterbirds.

We will make an early morning stop along a little stream for a picnic breakfast and some birding, then continue to the ranch. It's about 4 hours to the ranch and we are not likely to arrive until noon or a little after. We'll pass flock after flock of waterfowl and waterbirds along our route and there will be many temptations to stop (and we will occasionally), but the birdlife will only be more abundant and more accessible once we reach the ranch. In the late afternoon, we will take a short trip by truck on the ranch, which will produce an astonishing number of birds. Within a stone's throw of our rooms we are likely to see flocks of ibises, egrets, herons, whistling-ducks, Orinoco Geese, groups of Hoatzins; Scarlet Macaws; chattering flocks of Green-rumped Parrotlets; Yellow-throated Spinetails; kingfishers; Cattle Tyrants; Pied Water-Tyrants; Red-capped Cardinals; and much more. Shortly before dusk, we may climb aboard a truck for a short drive out into the ranchland.

NIGHT: Hato El Cedral, Los Llanos

March 26-27, Days 16-17: Hato Cedral, the Heart of the Llanos. During the next two days everyone will have an opportunity to see practically all of the llanos wildlife—birds, mammals, and reptiles alike. Day trips will concentrate more on birds because they're the most visible portion of the diurnal wildlife. The spectacle of wildlife rivals that found anywhere on the South American continent and includes hundreds of Jabiru; Wood Storks; Maguari Storks; and tens of thousands of herons; ibises; and egrets. Up to seven species of ibises are likely, including Scarlet, White, Whispering (Bare-faced), Green, Sharp-tailed, Buff-necked, and Glossy.

This is the time of year when the llanos are drying up and many waders begin concentrating around the drying pools and vast water catchment basins where they feed on trapped fish, crustaceans, and various reptiles and amphibians. The numbers of wildlife at these lagoons can be spectacular and they provide wonderful photographic opportunities as well as the chance to simply marvel at an abundance of wildlife that all too often has disappeared from many regions on Earth. In just one of the big marshes at El Frio we may be able to see many thousands of whistlings-ducks; ibises; egrets; and herons; and a sprinkling of rare Orinoco Geese; Comb Ducks; Muscovy Ducks; bitterns; and gallinules—a spectacle of wildlife never to be forgotten. Other species of marshes and fields that we should see include Whistling Heron, Horned Screamer (rare on the ranch); Rufescent Tiger-Heron; Pied Lapwing; South American Snipe (a few Wilson's Snipe also occur here); Collared Plover; Double-striped Thick-Knee; White-headed Marsh-Tyrant; and Oriole Blackbird.

In tree-lined lagoons and on the muddy banks of wooded streams and rivers we're likely to see another spectacular array of wildlife; for just as the drying lagoons attract hundreds, even thousands of long-legged waders, the woods provide cover for many kinds of species that seek watercourses for food and shelter. As the floods recede and shallow channels dry out, the larger watercourses and lagoons act like magnets for many kinds of birds. Ubiquitous Hoatzins gather in trees bordering permanent water and stare down with brilliant red eyes and unkept, frazzled crests. Along the muddy stream banks delicate Sunbitterns protest our intrusion, wood-rails scurry from view, and kingfishers warn of our approach. Other creek side species include Crane Hawk; Roadside Hawk; Scarlet Macaws (common); Yellow-crowned Parrots (also common); Black-throated Mango; Rusty-backed Spinetail; Social, Rusty-margined, and White-bearded flycatchers; Great and Lesser kiskadees; and Red-capped Cardinals. The forests and woodlands of Hato El Cedral also harbor many small birds and some of our early morning and late afternoon activities will be devoted to searching for these birds. Some examples include Russet-throated Puffbird; Rufous-tailed Jacamar; Pale-headed Jacamar (very local in most areas but fairly common here); Scaled Piculet; Spot-breasted Woodpecker; Streak-headed, Striped, Straight-billed, and Buff-throated woodcreepers; Red-billed Scythebill; Black-crested Antshrike; Ochre-lore (Yellow-breasted) and Yellow-olive flycatchers; Buff-breasted Wren; Scrub Greenlet; Silver-beaked, Glaucous, and Hooded tanagers; Trinidad Euphonia; and three species of saltators. We'll look for the rare White-naped Xenopsaris; as well as its look-alike, the Cinereous Becard. In open fields we will listen for the buzzy songs of Yellowish Pipits and Grassland Yellow-Finches. Around the ranch buildings there are usually hoards of Red-capped Cardinals; Yellow Orioles; Gray Seedeaters; tanagers, and such less common species as the Orange-fronted Yellow-Finch.

As evening approaches and trees cast long shadows across the llanos, we're likely to hear the evening chorus of pauraques and the thin whistles of White-tailed Nightjars in the distance. These sounds mingle with the last cries of Buff-necked ibises as they seek the shelter of tall palms for a nighttime roost. A few interesting birds can be seen during dusk and the early hours of darkness, but it's the chance to observe some remarkable mammals that draws us out for nighttime activities too. Most mammals of the llanos are active by night and we may see some of the following: Giant Anteater; Ocelot; Crab-eating Raccoon; Crab-eating (Savanna) Fox; and of course the ubiquitous Capybara. Both Great and Common potoos; Band-tailed and Nacunda nighthawk (latter mainly rainy season); Spectacled Owl; and various nightjars occur on the ranch, as well as many Boat-billed Herons. Hato Cedral, like other ranches in the llanos, provides more than just an opportunity to see large numbers of birds easily. Here one also can observe the daily routine of life on a large cattle ranch, for it is still, first and foremost, a working ranch. And, nighttime skies here are as inky black as those seen by our ancestors and the stars unimaginably abundant.

Grand Venezuela, Page 10

On your last morning you may want to rise before dawn and stand at the east end of the ranch compound. As the stillness of night gives way to the first bird cries of dawn, the eastern sky turns from mauve purple to pink. Straining to see, you pick out silhouettes of macaws, ibises, cormorants, herons, egrets, and caracaras, each tracing small black lines across an awakening landscape as they leave nighttime roosts. The sounds of birds mingle with those of cowboys already moving off to distant ranges, for in this brief dawn everyone hurries to get as much done as possible during the cool freshness. It is a magical moment and you may feel a sense of urgency pulsing through your veins. You want to drink this moment to the fullest—to hold it forever in your mind. This is the llanos.

NIGHTS: Hato El Cedral, Los Llanos

March 28, Day 18: Hato Cedral to Barinas and Flight to Caracas. After breakfast we will drive eastward to the city of Barinas, to meet our midday commercial jet flight back to Caracas. Time should be available this afternoon for last minute errands, or just for relaxing amidst the pleasant surroundings and grounds of the hotel.

NIGHT: Hotel Ole Caribe, Caracas

March 29, Day 19: Conclusion of Tour. The tour ends this morning with an early transfer to the Caracas airport in time for flights departing between 8-10:00 AM. Transfers for flights departing at other times can be arranged in advance at an additional charge.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

TOUR SIZE: Grand Venezuela Part I and Part II will be limited to 8 participants each.

Tour Leaders: Steve Hilty

Steve Hilty is the senior author of *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*, and the recently published *Birds of Venezuela*, both by Princeton University Press. Other credits include *Birds of Tropical America*, *A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity*, which has just been republished by the University of Texas Press. He has also written a number of scientific papers on birds and plants, and is presently preparing the text and species accounts for the tanagers for a forthcoming volume of the acclaimed *Handbook of Birds of the World*, published by Lynx Press in Barcelona. Steve holds a Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Arizona and has worked at the Arid Lands Department at the University of Arizona, as a consultant to The Nature Conservancy, and as a stockbroker. He is currently a research associate at the University of Kansas Museum of Natural History. Since 1975, he has led tours throughout North and South America, and co-led trips to India, the Orient, and Australasian regions. With three decades of experience in South America and a wide range of natural history interests, he brings a unique breadth of expertise to his Neotropical tours. At night he often turns his binoculars towards the skies for stargazing. Steve lives in Kansas City with his wife, Beverly. They have two daughters recently graduated from college.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for Grand Venezuela Part I is **\$tba** per person in double occupancy from Caracas, Venezuela. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 8, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, internal flight between Barquisimeto - Caracas (Day 8) and ground transportation during the tour.

The fee for Grand Venezuela Part II is **\$tba** per person in double occupancy from Caracas, Venezuela. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 8 to dinner on Day 18, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, internal flights Caracas - Barquisimeto (Day 8) and Barinas - Caracas (Day 18), and ground transportation during the tour.

All tour fees include gratuities and guide services provided by the tour leaders. Tour fees do not include airfare from your home to Caracas and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged. Participants combining Part I with Part II will receive a combine tour discount of **\$tba** (\$tba from each tour).

The single supplement for Part I is **\$tba**; and the single supplement for Part II is **\$tba**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. Single participants combining Part I with Part II will receive a combine tour discount of **\$tba** (\$tba from each tour).

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person for Part I and an additional **\$500** deposit per person for Part II. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less \$300 per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. *We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.*

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$300.
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation** insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends *Travel Insured International* as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply** usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. Contact *Travel Insured International* prior to registration for details. Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase

insurance through a company other than *Travel Insured International*, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

BAGGAGE: We request you limit your baggage to one large duffel (or soft sided suitcase) and one carry-on. Also, as a precaution, we recommend packing your binoculars, walking shoes, a change of clothes, personal medications and toiletries, and your travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Laundry stops are available at Maracay and Hato Cedral.

CLIMATE AND BIRDING CONDITIONS: The llanos will be hot and moderately humid. In the mountains it will be pleasant, with colder temperatures at high elevations. You should have a warm coat, gloves, and an umbrella or rain jacket. A fair amount of walking is done on the tour, mostly on roads, but we may occasionally scramble down a creek bank or road ditch. There will be a limited amount of walking on forest trails and at least one boat trip.

CLOTHING AND OTHER ITEMS TO BRING: No special footwear for water or wet weather is needed. Tennis shoes or a lightweight hiking shoe or other comfortable walking/hiking shoe is appropriate for this trip. Sturdy hiking boots are also appropriate if you prefer more support. Rubber boots are not necessary. Shower thongs or sandals are useful in bathrooms and for relaxing in evenings. Walking shorts may be worn on a few days (ie. at the ranch), but long pants, as well as long-sleeved shirts, are generally more useful. Tours November through March take place during the dry season; therefore rubber boots are not necessary.

All participants should bring sunscreen, a good hat or cap for shade, a durable and reliable flashlight, extra batteries, ear plugs, rubber bands, snacks (if you like something special), plastic bags, a daypack and/or small backpack, shower thongs. **Please bring a one quart (or one liter) Nalgene (or similar) wide-mouth water bottle with a tight fitting cap so that it can be refilled easily with bottled water. This is very important.** We recommend the one quart size so that it does not have to be refilled so often. Your leader will have a telescope, but if you have one, we encourage you to bring it as it will be very useful almost every day of the tour. This is **especially important** if you plan to take digital pictures through a telescope.

The essentials: All participants should bring a day pack; Nalgene water bottle (wide mouth; easy for refilling); a battery operated alarm clock with extra batteries; and at least one small head lamp or flashlight which you can use during our night excursions.

DEPARTURE TAX: Departure and airport tax is Bs 90,200, about USD \$45 and included in the cost of your air ticket.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Venezuela is required. Visas are not required for entry by United States citizens. Non United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions. You will be issued a tourist card by the airline you arrive. Please hold on to the copy they return to you upon entering immigration in Venezuela as you will need it to exit the country.

HEALTH: If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

No vaccinations are required to enter Venezuela. The CDC does suggest, however, that your polio, tetanus and typhoid protection be up-to-date. Malaria is present in some rural areas of Venezuela (mainly in very limited areas in the llanos), including the chloroquine-resistant strain. In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

You should not drink local water or use it for brushing your teeth. All hotels will supply drinking water in thermos bottles in your room (or in large bottles in hotel hallways and lobbies). Bottled water of various kinds is available at all restaurants. Extra water for rooms may be purchased by tour participants and will always be available when we are in the field. But all participants must have a canteen or water bottle.

INSECT PROTECTION: Insects are present but not usually troublesome. There are chiggers inside the forest at Rancho Grande and in the llanos; repellent is strongly recommended for those areas. We recommend bringing an adequate supply of insect repellent, including a stick-type form for your hands and face, plus a pump-style container of OFF or Cutter's for your clothing.

A Note About Chiggers: This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world's tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of the world's species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids, however, through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger's digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body's natural process of reabsorbing it that typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, like around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees, and elbows.

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking, or standing in particular, in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique commonly employed by many.
- Apply a cream-style insect repellent, such as "Cutters" to your body from the waist down BEFORE putting on your clothing.
- Spray your pants and socks with a spray repellent such as "Cutters" or "Off." Repellents with high concentrations of DEET (70-100%) are most effective. You do not need to apply these to you skin, only to clothing. (Be careful as DEET will damage plastics and lens coatings). Repel Permanone is an odorless aerosol insecticide that offers perhaps the best defense against chiggers. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online. It should only be applied to clothes and allowed to dry before you dress. Never apply Permanone directly to the skin. Permethrin is known to be a highly toxic chemical to insects. It is the active ingredient in Permanone, but is present in a small amount (0.5%).

Grand Venezuela, Page 14

- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings.
 - Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.
- By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Currency - Bolivar
- Electric Current - 110 Volts (some adaptors may be needed)
- Language - Spanish
- Time – ½ hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com which specializes in ornithology books.

Birds:

- Hilty, Steven L. *Birds of Venezuela*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. **This is the most appropriate book for this trip. It treats and illustrates all of the species you will see.**
- Hilty, S.L. and W.L. Brown. *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986. This covers most of the birds found in Venezuela and has some of the same plates.
- **Hilty, Steven L. *Birds of Tropical America: A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005. Provides good natural history background for many aspects of tropical bird behavior.**
- Restall, Robin; Rodner, Clemencia and Miguel Lentino. *Birds of Northern South America: An Identification Guide*. Volume 2: Plates and Maps. Helms Field Guides. 2006. Good new book with interesting format but no text in volume 2 and, with over 6000 illustrations, it treats far more species than most travelers to Venezuela would want or need.

Ecology:

- Beebe, William. *High Jungle*. New York: Duell, Sloan, Pearce, 1949. In part, relates to Beebe's experiences at-the Rancho Grande Biological Station. Out of print. Check your local library.
- Forsyth, Adrian and Michael Fogden. *Portraits of the Rainforest*. Canada: Camden House, 1990.
- **Forsyth, Adrian and Ken Miyata. *Tropical Nature*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984. Excellent introductory reading on tropical natural history.**
- **Kricher, J.C. *A Neotropical Companion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. Good coverage of tropical natural history.**

History:

- Moron, Guillermo. *A History of Venezuela*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1964. A not-quite-unopinionated history of Venezuela by a Venezuelan, but nevertheless worth reading for an overview on Venezuela's interesting past.
- Vigneras, Louis-Andre. *The Discovery of South America and the Andalusian Voyages*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976. An account of the various Spanish voyages of exploration, beginning with the third voyage of Columbus, and most of those which centered on the Venezuelan coast.

Mammals:

- Emmons, L.H. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals. A field guide*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. Paperback. Very good.

Recording:

- At present there are no CD's or cassettes of bird vocalizations specifically for Venezuela. The most useful for travelers in Venezuela is probably Krabbe, N, J.V. Moore, P. Coopmans, M. Lysinger and R. S. Ridgely, 2001. *Birds of the Ecuadorian Highlands: The upper Montane and Paramo Zones of Ecuador*. John V. Moore recordings: a four-CD publication which has voices of many of the Andean species we will see in Venezuela. A DVD by P. Boesman (Birds of Venezuela, 2003; Bird Songs International) provides photos and songs of many Venezuelan birds but we have found information in DVD format to be less useful than a combination of a field guide and CD's and/or cassettes.

General:

- Dunsterville Branchy, Hillary. 2003. *Venezuela. The Bradt Travel Guide*. 4th edition. Globe Pequot Press. Good overview of the country. Also see Lonely Plant Guide; Insight Guide; Rough Guide to Venezuela and others of general interest.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect at the time of publication and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.