

# Global Bird Weekend – in the Neotropics

Penny Robinson

A record-breaking weekend of birding worldwide, raising money for BirdLife International: what could be better? This account from one of the organisers explains how a brand-new event captivated Neotropical birders in particular.

**O**n 17 October 2020, birdwatchers across the world recorded 7,120 species of bird – around three-quarters of the planet's total avifauna – as part of a brand-new event called Global Bird Weekend. This set a new world record, beating the previous peak of 7,060 species seen in one day in May 2018 as part of the eBird/Cornell event Global Big Day (for which see *Neotropical Birding* 20: 3–6 and 27: 2). The weekend count totalled 7,281 species, another world record (for the most species seen in two consecutive days). Just as excitingly, the weekend event brought more than 32,000 birdwatchers together from 169 countries spread across all seven continents. But how did it come about? What was it designed to achieve? And how did it manifest itself in the Neotropics?

## Global Bird Weekend: the what, how, where and when

The inaugural Global Bird Weekend was the keystone event of a new initiative called Global Birding ([globalbirding.org](http://globalbirding.org)). This is the brainchild of UK birder and conservationist Tim Appleton, who was seeking a new challenge after running the world-renowned British Birdwatching Fair for over 30 years. For Tim, with his long-held passion for and lifelong commitment to wildlife conservation, Global Birding offered a way to continue making a difference.

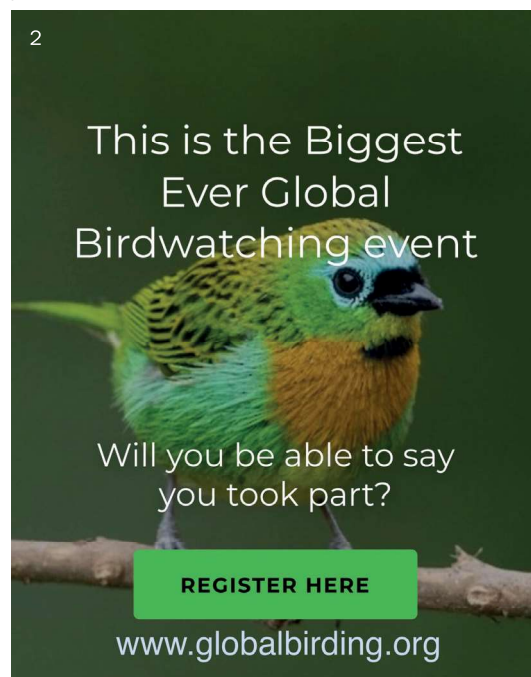
As worldwide restrictions tightened subsequently, an idea for a Global Bird Weekend began to blossom – organised from Tim's kitchen table. So much of life was becoming 'virtual': rather than watch someone else on a TV or computer screen telling them what might be outside their own back door, Tim wanted people to experience nature at first hand. The event would aim to



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encourage everyone everywhere to go outside and enjoy their local natural surroundings – however this would be possible within restrictions imposed – whilst feeling part of a global effort. If people were housebound, they could still take part by recording species from their windows or balconies.

Tim was convinced that the plan could work. He commissioned an emotive logo – including birds of both land and water – from artist John Cox (Fig. 1). Big names – eBird (through Chris



1 Global Bird Weekend logo (John Cox).

2 Were you one of the 32,000 birdwatchers who clicked on the 'Register' button to participate in Global Bird Weekend on 17–18 October 2020?