Museum of Natural Science researchers publish the first birds of Bolivia field guide

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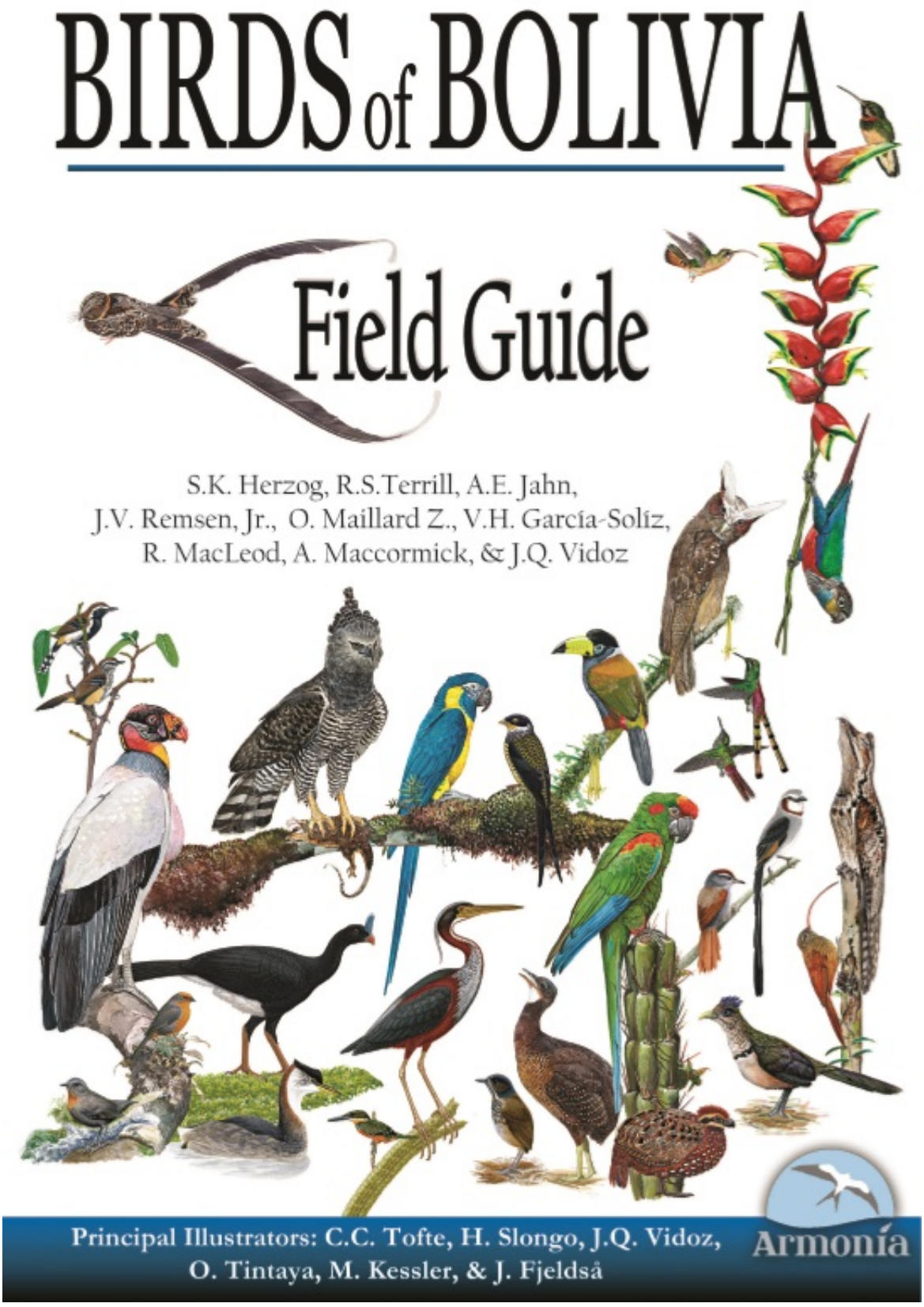

LSU Museum of Natural Science researchers and research collaborators in

Bolivia have authored the first field guide book to birds of Bolivia. Credit: Asociación Armonía

Bolivia has more species of birds than any other land-locked country in the world. It is sixth in the world in terms of diversity of bird species, which is notable given that it has no marine birds. LSU Museum of Natural Science researchers and research collaborators in Bolivia have authored the first field guide book to birds of Bolivia.

"Bolivia is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of biodiversity," said LSU Museum of Natural Science Curator of Birds and John S. McIlhenny Distinguished Professor J.V. Remsen, who is a co-author of Birds of Bolivia.

The LSU Museum of Natural Science has the world's largest collection of Bolivian birds, which is the backbone of data for the book and its illustrations. The field guide illustrates all 1,425 bird species of Bolivia and provides a concise synopsis of distribution, habitat, feeding behavior and diet, plumage variations, vocalizations, and behavior for each species, much of which was previously unpublished. Birds of Bolivia is also the first field guide to birds to apply computer algorithms called "ecological niche modeling" to map species distributions. These maps are more precise and objective than those in traditional field guides.

The book is the culmination of decades of research by LSU Museum of Natural Science researchers. Remsen began LSU's field program in Bolivia in 1979. He and LSU Museum of Natural Science staff and students have added 111 bird species to the list of species known from Bolivia.

"LSU museum staff and students typically spent two to three months

each year from 1979 through 1993 conducting fieldwork in Bolivia," Remsen said. "LSU doctoral candidate and field guide co-author Ryan Terrill has rejuvenated the fieldwork in Bolivia and led the project for the past six years."

LSU's recent fieldwork in Bolivia is made possible by support from the Coypu Foundation and other private donors. The nine-person international author team includes two Bolivian researchers. Two of the guide book artists are also Bolivian.

"I am proud to be part of one of the only bird field guides to a Latin American country that was written and illustrated in part by home-grown talent," said Remsen, who emphasized the importance of developing in-country resources for the future of ornithology and conservation in Bolivia. Remsen and Terrill also predict that the new field guide will catalyze an increase in ecotourism in Bolivia by visiting bird-watchers.

"Guidebooks like this put a lifetime of research into the hands of nature enthusiasts," said LSU Museum of Natural Science Director Robb Brumfield, who has made two research trips to Bolivia. "Natural science research collections make work like this possible, providing opportunities to discover new species, study our planet's rich biodiversity, share this rich knowledge with the public and inspire the next generation of environmental stewards."

All proceeds from the book sales will go directly toward bird conservation, ecotourism capacity building and raising environmental awareness in Bolivia through Asociación Armonía, which is the leading bird conservation organization in Bolivia and is committed to protecting the country's most endangered species.

More information: Birds of Bolivia: birds-of-bolivia.org/

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