Clarion Review

Photography

Nature's Paradise: Costa Rica
Douglas Goodell
Marco T. Saborío
Nature Arts Press
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Four Stars (out of Five)

This rich, visual tour of the biodiversity of a remarkable land expresses loyalty to environmental conservation.

Elements of biogeography and biodiversity are captured in words and exquisite photographs to present a luminous biography of the Republic of Costa Rica in this book by Douglas Goodell and Marco Saborío. The pair has created a photo essay of the wild places and wildlife of what they call "paradise." The images presented inform that designation.

Bound by the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, this country is tropical and mountainous. Much of its land is contained within a system of national parks and reserves that make up twenty-five percent of the country's landmass. In fact, it is the largest protected area within any single nation in the world. A varied population of animals and plants thrive in the lush geography and microclimates of this part of the land bridge between North and South America.

The authors provide significant detail in their narrative to accompany the photographs, providing insight into the diverse regions of the country. Given the tropical nature of the land, photographs of birds proliferate. Their names are exotic—Jabiru, Chachalaca, Aracari, Quetzal, and hundreds of others—and their vibrant plumage shines through on these pages. It is no surprise that birding captures the largest segment of ecotourism in the country, and given the preserved habitat and landscape, general conservation-oriented tourism also thrives here.

In addition to providing photographs, Goodell and Saborío write knowledgeably about their subjects, breaking the fauna kingdom down into chapters on the birds (of course), as well as reptiles and amphibians, mammals, insects and spiders, and marine life, followed by the

exotic plant life of this paradise. The captions of the photographs are extensions of the narrative essays in each chapter; they present detail of the special places or animal species. Grounded in a thorough knowledge of this environment, these are authors who live their subject.

Both Goodell and Saborío are photographers, and they split the pages evenly, giving a balance to their differing views of this diverse land. They begin their book with a quote from Edward Paul Abbey, a nature writer who focused on the desert landscape, as opposed to a tropical locale. But his statement serves as a call to indulge in what the landscape has to offer and (the reader can infer) to protect it forever: "The love of wilderness is more than a hunger for what is always beyond reach; it is also an expression of loyalty to the earth." *Nature's Paradise* is an elegant expression of that loyalty.

Pete Warzel