



Peace is much more than doves: The economic benefits of bird-based tourism as a result of the peace treaty in Colombia



Jorge H. Maldonado^{a,*}, Rocío del Pilar Moreno-Sánchez^b, Sophía Espinoza^b, Aaron Bruner^b, Natalia Garzón^c, John Myers^d

^a Department of Economics, CEDE, Universidad de los Andes, Calle 19A 1-37E, W-814, Bogotá, DC 111711, Colombia

^b Conservation Strategy Fund, United States

^c Department of Economics, CEDE, Universidad de los Andes, Colombia

^d Leader for Strategic Partnerships, WWF Colombia, Colombia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Accepted 24 January 2018

Keywords:

Contingent valuation

Ecotourism

Bird watching

Peace process

Armed conflict

Colombia

South America

ABSTRACT

Colombia has the greatest bird diversity of any country in the world, with approximately 1900 recorded species, equivalent to 20% of all bird species worldwide. Advances made by the Colombian government to achieve greater security within the country – putting an end to the long-standing armed conflict – and to promote ecotourism can help position Colombia as one of the most important bird watching destinations worldwide. This study estimates the economic benefits from bird-based tourism in post-war Colombia. In particular, we estimate the value that members of the US-based National Audubon Society place on a birding tour that includes the participation of local communities (some of whom were victims of the armed conflict), and visits to important areas for bird watching that are increasingly accessible. The study also approximates the demand for international bird watching tourism to the country. Through the application of the contingent valuation method, we show that birding enthusiasts would be willing to pay, on average, an additional \$58 per person per day for a tour in Colombia, as compared to a similar tour in terms of duration and services in Costa Rica, currently one of the main tourism destinations for bird-watchers. Our analysis indicates that a total of 278,850 North American bird watchers would be interested in visiting the country, generating an annual profit of \$9 million and 7516 new jobs. In addition to confirming demand for bird-based travel, the study provides information about potential visitors' preferences, which can help guide the development of a strategy to promote bird-based tourism to Colombia.

© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Bird watching is the fastest growing recreational activity in the United States, and is bringing about the development of specialized tourism around the world (IDB, Audubon & CREST, 2015). In this market, tropical Latin American countries are attractive and are taking advantage of opportunities to develop a range of bird watching tours. Colombia stands out among these countries for its tremendous potential due to a diversity of current ecotourism activities and its status as the country with the greatest diversity of birds on the planet.

The peace agreement signed in August 2016 and then ratified in November 2016, between the government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas, is expected to benefit tourism and attract more foreign visitors to the country. Considering these facts, and that bird watching is an activity done mainly by North Americans and Europeans, there are high expectations for an increased demand for bird watching tours in Colombia. Therefore, it is valuable to know the preferences of potential tourists and their willingness to spend money on what post-war Colombia has to offer.

This study seeks to answer these questions by analyzing the potential value of bird-based tourism in a post-war Colombia scenario. The strategy is to determine the Willingness to Pay (WTP) for a hypothetical bird watching tour in Colombia's Northern Caribbean, which offers great diversity of birds, visits to previously inaccessible areas that were occupied by illegal armed groups, participation of local communities in the provision of tourist services, and improved security while traveling. The analysis also

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: jmaldona@uniandes.edu.co (J.H. Maldonado), rocio@conservation-strategy.org (R.P. Moreno-Sánchez), sophia@conservation-strategy.org (S. Espinoza), aaron@conservation-strategy.org (A. Bruner), na.garzon663@uniandes.edu.co (N. Garzón), john.myers@wwf.org (J. Myers).

includes an estimate of the potential demand for a bird-based tourism sector in Colombia and the benefits it would generate in the country.

The rest of this manuscript is structured as follows. The following section briefly describes the importance of bird watching as part of the travel industry globally and in Colombia. The third section describes the study methodology. The fourth section gives the main statistical and econometric results, as well as presenting the estimated demand for bird watching tourism in Colombia. The final section provides conclusions and recommendations based on the results.

2. Background

Tourism linked to bird watching is a rapidly growing activity worldwide, mainly in developing countries. The growing number of birdwatchers and birding trips is due to factors that include declining prices for birding equipment, an increased number of bird documentaries on television, innovation and technological sophistication in photo and video cameras, an increase in specialized guides, the variety of books about the subject, and a growing number of bird watching festivals. Tropical countries have great potential to develop attractive options for this group of specialized tourists. In multiple regions, bird tourism represents a good alternative for generating income in the private sector, protected areas and local communities (Glowinski, 2008). However, success will depend not only on the presence of birds, but also on safety, accessibility, infrastructure, and knowledgeable and experienced guides (IDB, Audubon & CREST, 2015).

Thanks to its many ecosystems, Colombia is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world (Romero, Cabrera, & Ortiz, 2008). This condition has permitted the development of specialized nature tourism, focused on the observation and appreciation of nature and traditional cultures. One of the categories included within nature tourism is ecotourism, which focuses on areas with special natural and cultural attractions, under a framework of sustainability. Within ecotourism, various specialized segments have been developed, among them bird watching, an activity characterized by observing and interpreting the behavior of birds in their natural environment (MCIT, 2012). This type of tourism is typically characterized by managing small groups of birdwatchers, with packages that are often costly because of the level of expertise required (Sanchez & Tsao, 2015).

Colombia has the greatest bird diversity of any country in the world (Remsen et al., 2016). Approximately over 1900 species have been recorded, equivalent to 20% of the global total. The country also has 79 endemic species, 193 near endemic (Chaparro-Herrera, Echeverry-Galvis, Córdoba-Córdoba, & Sua-Becerra, 2013), and a total of 139 species that are threatened or at risk of extinction (Renjifo et al., 2014).¹ The country is investing in these natural advantages, and bird watching is one of the activities with high growth prospects within Colombia's nature-based tourism sector (MCIT, 2013). Colombia currently has 59 national natural parks, covering approximately 11.3% of the country's land area. Currently the national parks authority promotes birdwatching in at least 25 of them.²

The country of origin of international birdwatchers traveling to Colombia is led by the US, with over 20% of visitors. Foreign birdwatchers most frequently visit the Departments of Boyacá, Caldas, Quindío, Risaralda, Cundinamarca, Tolima and Huila (GEF et al., 2014). Among several initiatives to promote birdwatching in

Colombia, the Audubon Society has been conducting a project whose goal is to use bird watching as a tool for economic development and biodiversity conservation in the north of the country. Northern Colombia has places of biological importance, such as the Perijá Mountains and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, as well as highly threatened ecosystems, such as the dry tropical forest (Audubon, 2016). There are four national natural parks in this region: Flamencos, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Tayrona y Catatumbo-Barí.

Although tourism in Colombia is a dynamic and growing sector, the armed conflict and the country's image regarding insecurity has affected the influx of tourists. The nature-based tourism market acknowledged this problem, with multiple areas identified as high security risks (MCIT, 2013). For instance, regions such as the Perijá Mountains and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, both of which are important for biodiversity conservation, were also associated with the permanent presence of illegal groups involved in the armed conflict (for details see, for example, Gutierrez and Lemus (2014)).

In 2012, the Colombian government officially resumed peace talks with representatives of the armed guerrillas, aimed at putting an end to a war that lasted more than 50 years. The peace process, which culminated in a signed treaty with the FARC in 2016, constituted a major step forward. Statistics show a major decline in violence due to armed conflict. The Resource Center for Conflict Analysis (CERAC for its acronym in Spanish) states that the internal armed conflict between the FARC and Colombian national army has declined to its lowest levels in 52 years, in terms of number of victims, fighters wounded or killed, and related violent actions. Specifically, CERAC points out that the peace process prevented the death of approximately 2800 people, reduced military combats from 867 in 2007 to 105 in 2015 and 13 in 2016, and reduced civilian deaths from 1270 in 2007 to 101 in 2015 and 3 in 2016 (CERAC, 2016, 2017).

Therefore, the peace process and its observable outcomes have generated a sense of greater security through the country. Among the economic opportunities afforded by this security is the chance to tap into Colombia's bird watching tourism potential by allowing safe access to areas that were formerly inaccessible for tourism. Furthermore, new tourism could be an opportunity to work towards a sustainable economic future with local communities that have been affected by the armed conflict. While the second most important illegal leftist armed group, ELN, started peace negotiations in 2017, it is important to note that there are still some small illegal groups trying to take advantage of newly guerrilla-free areas, mainly for drug trafficking purposes.

3. Methodology

3.1. Valuation and demand estimation

This study used the Contingent Valuation (CV) method as the main tool for analysis. This method focuses on determining the value people assign to changes in their wellbeing as a result of changes in supply conditions of an environmental asset with no market value (Barzev, 2002). Contingent valuation is part of the family of stated preference methods used to estimate the value of a good or service through surveys that ask people if they would be willing to pay a certain amount of money for an increased environmental good or service (Bateman et al., 2002). The method is based on the random utility model (Haab & McConnell, 2002), which assumes that (in the case of an environmental improvement), an indirect utility function can be used to estimate the maximum amount of income that an individual would sacrifice to gain the relevant environmental improvement. To do that, the

¹ Details about the diversity of birds in Colombia can be found in the extensive guide by Hilty and Brown (1986).

² www.parquesnacionales.gov.co.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات