



## Toucan Nest

Poems of Costa Rica

Peggy Shumaker

What happens when we enter unfamiliar realms, when we open ourselves to the unknown? Sometimes that not-knowing makes art possible. When we enter places where we don't know the rules, we have to pay close attention. That mindfulness allows the imagination to open wide. Peggy Shumaker's a newcomer to Costa Rica. Her first vivid encounters with basilisk lizards, bats, and bromeliads, with crocodiles, sloths, and strangler figs refresh and renew our world.

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*Toucan Nest: Poems of Costa Rica*

By Peggy Shumaker

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### Biographical note:

**Peggy Shumaker** is Alaska State Writer Laureate. Her most recent book of poems is *Gnawed Bones*. Her lyrical memoir is *Just Breathe Normally*. *Toucan Nest* grew from an eco-arts writing workshop in Costa Rica. Professor emerita from University of Alaska Fairbanks, Shumaker teaches in the Rainier Writing Workshop. She is founding editor of Boreal Books, publishers of fine art and literature from Alaska. She edits the Alaska Literary Series at University of Alaska Press. Please visit her website at [www.peggyshumaker.com](http://www.peggyshumaker.com).

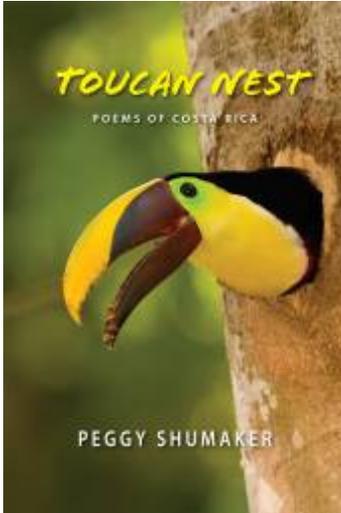
### Praise for *Toucan Nest*:

“This is a book of burnished, lapidary attention. Its poems—vibrant with seeing, quickened with sound-work, subtled by insight—peel open landscapes both outer and inner. The costs of our human presence and extractions are in these pages, but also the radiant return of human awareness. *Toucan Nest* is a unique account of encounter, imaginative inquiry, and expansion.”

—Jane Hirshfield, author of *After* and *Given Sugar, Given Salt*



**More Praise for *Toucan Nest*:**



“Shumaker’s vivid *Toucan Nest* is about learning to see—Costa Rica serving as the textbook. Between the parentheses of arrival and departure, the pages burst with lessons—rich, beautiful, and sometimes terrifying. For us, looking over her shoulder, it is education by proxy. So iridescent is Shumaker’s language, we are there, floating downriver with the crocodiles, watching panicky iguanas hustling from a fire, the basilisk lizard “zipping / zigzag on hind legs,” a flash of green and ruby eyes, and oh, did you hear it? the love cry of the jaguar and the cry of the quetzal whose morning song brings the whole blessed world to life. A dazzle of a book.”

—Alice Friman, author of *Vinculum*, *The Book of the Rotten Daughter*, and *Inverted Fire*

**“Cloud Forest Trail”**

Whirring frenzy—chitter  
as if they mean to probe  
my ears for nectar—  
motley humming flock  
whips up misty air.  
Band-tailed barbthroat,  
rufous tail, long-billed  
hermit, wood nymph,

green-breasted, violet-crowned,  
sabrewing, fierce purple-green  
Jacobin. Slick flick of humming-  
birds’ tongues. Guainambí.  
Emerald, ruby, star-  
throat. Iridescent,  
impulse-quick—  
desire given wing.

