

Of Tiny Ecuador on the Wall... Which is the Fairest Part of All?

The delightful problem with Ecuador is that there are so many great places to go—and thus a variety of itineraries. Throughout the country, only the size of Oregon or Colorado, every year brings new developments in the ecotourism infrastructure, from new preserves and lodges to new “eco-trails” and hummingbird pavilions. Some places even boast “comederos de lombristas,” or earthworm feeders for antpittas! But which is the fairest Ecuador of all? How do you decide?

It could be the Andes of the North. On the west side they boast Mindo and the Tandayapa Valley, with their fantastic hummingbird bonanzas and numerous specialties. Picture Velvet-purple Coronets elbowing Purple-bibbed Whitetips or Empress Brilliants out of the way to get to the feeders, or the fruiting trees with Toucan Barbets and Plate-billed Mountain-Toucans...and in the same neighborhood such scarce and alluring specialties as Dark-backed Wood-Quail, Tanager Finch, Club-winged Manakin, Barred Puffbird, Giant and Yellow-breasted antpittas, and Yellow-collared Chlorophonia. And the North has the paramo of Papallacta Pass, where we'll seek Rufous-bellied Seedsnipes en route to Tourmaline Sunangels at Guango.

And on the northern Andes' east slope, certainly one of the main attractions is Hacienda San Isidro with its Wattled Guans and a tame Chestnut-crowned Antpitta as yard birds. Set in a grassy clearing overlooking cloud forest and serving delicious home-style meals, the cabañas are within earshot of Rufous-banded Owls and are but minutes away from some tremendous east-slope, subtropical birding. Recent highlights here have included point-blank looks at more antpittas (White-bellied and Slate-crowned), lovely Black-billed Mountain-Toucans, and a Tyrannine Woodcreeper at eye level.

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The Violet-tailed Sylph, though a common hummingbird, is a showstopper in the Ecuadorian Andes. [Photo by guide Richard Webster]

Birding: Being Whole

My magazine subscriptions accumulate in an ever-hopeful pile on the living room table, drawing my eye for a furtive glance between a quick lunch and the daily mail check—I imagine you can relate. Today, between bites of an apple, I scanned the covers of, among others, backlogged issues of *The Nature Conservancy*, *Birding*, *The New Yorker*, and *Audubon*. And there it was, a simple challenge at the top of the March-April issue of *Audubon*: “Why We Bird.” Turning to page 136 for a quick look, I ended up reading the five pages of what turned out to be an excerpt from Jonathan Rosen’s *The Life of the Skies*, published in February by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Rosen writes of his birding epiphany 14 years ago, not knowing at all what warblers were but overhearing an excited conversation in late March about their imminent arrival in Central Park, and knowing he would find out. He reports realizing soon thereafter in an introductory birdwatching class how poor an observer he was...though as a writer he considered himself a careful one. And he discovers that “it is simply the pleasure of looking that hooked me.” That simple looking, he conveys, makes him whole, more fully alive, more fully complete. We all need more of this.

Last summer, on a walk in the boreal forest, I heard a Gray Jay call. I whistled back, and the jay appeared atop a distant spruce. I kept whistling, and the jay came a little closer. Two other hikers came by and paused, curious. We were far from any campground, and I couldn’t be sure, but I pulled a peanut out of my trail mix and held it up on the palm of my hand. In an instant the jay launched off the treetop and glided about 100 feet to land directly on my hand and grab the peanut, to my delight and the

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GuideLines *with George Armistead*

PANAMA'S CANOPY TOWER



I spent seven formative years at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, and during most of that time Robert S. Ridgely was the senior research ornithologist. Bob was a mentor to me and I had long admired his *Birds of Panama*, and so I remember well when I went into his office one day to tell him about an opportunity I'd stumbled upon to go to the Canal Zone. It would be my first trip to the historic Republic. When I mentioned to Bob, with some concern, that virtually all of our field work would be spent on just one road called the Pipeline Road, his eyes glowed and he said, "George, you don't understand. You could go out that road every day for a month or more and see something new each time." He was absolutely right.

The Canal Zone was beyond anything I'd hoped it would be. Many birds, mammals, and the odd antswarm found me admiring them on that first trip. One memory that stands out was my lifer Great Jacamar at the Rio Limbo. I recall the jacamar suddenly zipping into view, seemingly out of nowhere to snatch a large, bright blue Morpho butterfly from the air. The glowing green bird returned with its catch to its perch and then sat there, smacking this exquisite butterfly against the branch so that the cobalt scales fell like blue glitter, slowly through the thick, moist air. The image of this iridescent emerald and oddly proportioned bird with a cloud of blue glitter all around it was surreal indeed.

Since that trip I've been back at least seven more times and I continue to marvel at the richness of the region. Soberania National Park (which encompasses Pipeline Road and the Canopy Tower) is certainly the prized patch of habitat, but there are so many great spots in such close proximity to one another. The Canopy Tower has proven popular because not only is the view fantastic and the food superb, but it puts you right in the midst of so many good birding spots that you are spared much travel time; you don't have far to go to find all those toucans, trogons, puffbirds, and motmots.

Panama was a great jumping off point for me, a place to get my feet wet in tropical birding, but it is also so rich that new surprises greet me upon every return. With such friendly and accommodating local help, great food, and routinely rewarding birding it's no wonder that it has become a favorite tour for so many of us at Field Guides.

Dates for 2009 PANAMA'S CANOPY TOWER tours and Canopy Lodge Extensions are

January 17-24 (ext. to Jan. 28) with Jay VanderGaast & local guide

February 21-28 with John Coons & local guide

February 28-March 7 (ext. from Feb. 24) with Chris Benesh & local guide

March 21-28 (ext. from Mar. 17) with Jan Pierson & local guide

*Our tours are limited to **eight participants**. This way we are ensured of riding in the same Canopy vehicle when we travel to and from birding sites and of having a better participant-to-ornithologist/guide ratio in the field and at meals than with a larger group. As with all Canopy birding groups, ours are accompanied by a local Tower guide who has the most up-to-date knowledge of the area and is excellent at finding birds and quickly putting them in the spotting scope for everyone to see. Yet in a small group our Field Guides can more effectively impart a wealth of knowledge that is otherwise difficult to get from local guides who have not had the breadth and depth of Neotropical experience that characterizes all our Panama guides.*



Great Jacamar [Photo by guide John Rowlett]

Last Spaces

We have a few summer tours with one or a few spaces open at the time of printing. For a more complete look at upcoming tours, please check page 8.

Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga, Peru I, June 24-July 5 with John Rowlett (1 space)

Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge III, July 1-10 with Jay VanderGaast

Australia: Kakadu, Kununurra & Cape York, July 6-22 with John Coons

Iceland, July 18-27 with Ned Brinkley (2 spaces)

Papua New Guinea, July 21-August 12 with Phil Gregory & Dave Stejskal

Mountains of Manu, Peru, July 26-August 10 with Rose Ann Rowlett (1 space)

Summer Costa Rica, July 26-August 10 with Megan Crewe (1 space)

FRESH FROM THE FIELD

Reports from Recent Tours

compiled by Alvaro Jaramillo and Abbie Rowlett



Our inaugural **Heart & Sole of Chile** tour went off beautifully. Above is the group on our last day of birding at Farellones in the Andes of Santiago, and they are all smiles. We did very well with the birds with great birding in the forests and mountains (the heart) as well as on the coast and pelagics (the sole). We also sampled some nice food and had a fun trip to this ever popular destination. Far left, a bit of snow remains in the middle of summer in the Andes of Puyehue National Park. Near left, a Chimango Caracara, one of the common birds of the far south. Although related to a falcon, ecologically it is the southern version of the crow. [Photos by guide Alvaro Jaramillo and participant Pamela Conley]



Cranes and sea-eagles are among the top draws of our **Winter Japan** tour. There are several crane species possible, the quintessential one being the Red-crowned or "Japanese" Crane. The photo at top is, however, of another species on our tour, the White-naped Crane, which breeds largely in Mongolia. Above, the gorgeous mammal looking cozy on his perch is a Siberian Marten. To the right, Lake Miike, one of Japan's important bird areas. [Photos by guide Phil Gregory]



Hawaii is certainly the most exotic of all US destinations, a Polynesian tropical island, well away from the rest of the world with non-stop volcanos, rainforest, near deserts, and some rather funky looking native birds. The goodies live on land and at sea, like this Red-tailed Tropicbird (above) at Kilauea Point, Kauai. The liwi (right) is perhaps the best known of the Hawaiian Honeycreepers, with its fantastic red plumage and curved red bill. Along with the Hawaiian natives, there are a number of introduced species like this Zebra Dove, one of the most common of lowland birds on the islands. [Photos by guide George Armistead]

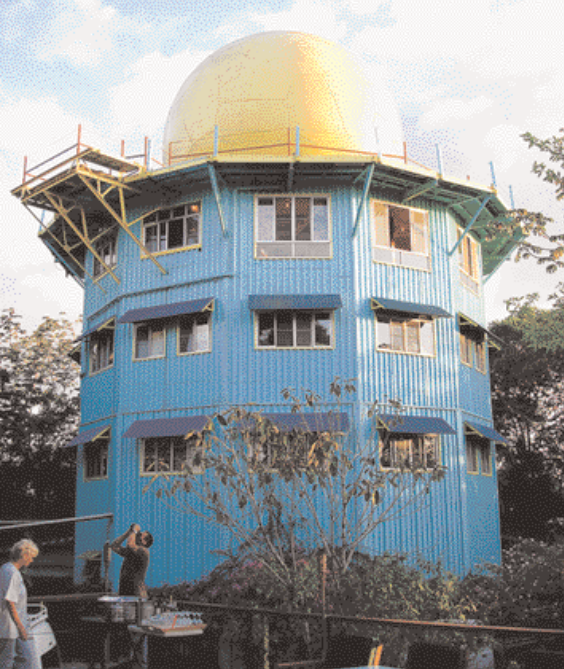


FRESH FROM THE FIELD

The **Lesser Antilles** is a rather unusual tour, as we do a lot of island hopping in order to find the endemic birds of this region. Fortunately the airports are small and the flights short! But what they provide is access to sometimes entirely different neighboring islands, not only in the endemic birds, but also in language and culture. Furthermore, widespread species change little by little as one proceeds up the island chain—these islands are as much a wonderful example of evolution in action as the Galapagos. Below, a Lesser Yellowlegs on Antigua, a Bananaquit on Martinique, and an annual tradition—lobster lunch on Barbuda! Right, a view of gorgeous Antigua on our way to Montserrat to see the volcano and the Montserrat Oriole. [Photos by guide Alvaro Jaramillo]



A stark and striking landscape, the *caatinga* (above), from a native word meaning “White Forest,” is a dry shrubland entirely endemic to **Northeast Brazil**. As one would expect, this habitat has several endemic birds including the incredible Lear’s Macaw. At top right, one of the regional endemics, the Pygmy Nightjar. At right, the well named Swallow-tailed Hummingbird. [Photos by guide Bret Whitney]



Left, a mixed rookery with Great Egrets and Roseate Spoonbills. Seeing these wading birds in full breeding colors is a real highlight of birding coastal Texas in the spring; it's not just migrants that catch the eye on our **Texas Coast Migration Spectacle** tour. Above, a coastal wetland typical of northeastern Texas and western Louisiana. When the migration is hot, migrants will drop out into the reeds, but the best spots are higher patches of oak forests of which High Island is the most famous. [Photos by participant Peter Heilbronner]



We offer four different Panama itineraries, with four separate departures of our **Panama's Canopy Tower** trip alone! The following are recent photos from several Panama adventures. At top, the Canopy Tower, a converted military installation which is now a comfortable and birdy destination. The Black-throated Trogon (above) and White-throated Capuchin monkeys (left) were photographed by guide John Rowlett on our **Wild Darien** tour.



Our **Texas Hill Country** trip takes us to this unique island of habitat where breeding Golden-cheeked Warblers and Black-capped Vireos are found. It is a short trip surprisingly rich in birdlife. After a day of Painted Buntings, Yellow-throated Warblers, and many more, a highlight is a visit to the Mexican Free-tailed Bat nursery. Millions of bats exit a small cave entrance, filling the skies with fluttering wings while Red-tailed Hawks make passes at the bats. With densities this high, it is difficult not to succeed. Below, our 2008 group. [Photos by guide John Rowlett]



OMAN & THE UAE

Hypocolius & Desert Birds

A new tour for 2009 with Phil Gregory and George Armistead



This new Field Guides tour visits some of the best winter birding areas in two friendly countries in the Middle East. We'll enjoy excellent desert and wetland birding with a few seabirds thrown in for good measure, and we'll seek out the monotypic *Hypocolius* in the old olive and date palm groves that it favors. These are fascinating places to visit, and both are safe and indeed welcoming for tourists.

The United Arab Emirates, or UAE, consist of seven small desert sheikhdoms of, in order of size, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Fujairah, Ras Al-Khaimah, Umm al Qawain, and Ajman. Rich in oil and gas reserves, the UAE has of late become less dependent on natural resources as a source of revenue. There has been a massive investment in infrastructure and tourism that has fuelled an astonishing building boom. Guest workers, mostly from Asia, now vastly outnumber the local inhabitants, and as a suddenly popular retirement destination, the UAE seems to be giving little thought to sustainable development in terms of land and, perhaps more importantly, water resources. Now large, green irrigated areas dot the desert, lined with totally inappropriate vegetation. Strange and bizarre as it all is, the result is an oasis for birds that might otherwise perish in these vast arid lands. Migrant and vagrant species that might normally be pushing hard to get through the desert now find verdant golf courses and wetland habitats that may support them through the winter.

The desert sultanate of Oman is ruled by Sultan Qaboos, a benign western-educated modernist. We will be visiting both the southern

and northern parts of the country. Near the oasis of Salalah, in Dhofar Province, the combination of reed-fringed coastal lagoons and desert scrub proves a major attraction to both Palearctic migrants from the north and Ethiopian migrants from the south. In this bird-rich area, we'll be looking for, among many others, Hume's Owl, Verreaux's Eagle, Arabian Partridge, Blackstart, Arabian Warbler, Mourning Wheatear, and Rueppell's Weaver, and there's a chance of Golden-winged Grosbeak.

Beautiful and stark desert scenery, lush oases, and a clear blue sea are all features of this trip. We'll visit spectacular dry *wadis* and mountains (*jebels*) and enjoy some excellent desert birding. The north in winter is the best place to see a number of difficult species such as *Hypocolius*, Eastern Pied, Hume's, and Red-tailed wheatears, and Plain Leaf-Warbler, as well as Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark, Cream-colored Courser, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, and Hoopoe-Lark. The Gulf coast is good for

seabirds and shorebirds such as Persian Shearwater, White-cheeked Tern, and Sooty Cormorant. Another unique area we'll visit is the Qitbit desert oases, home to wintering migrants such as Long-legged Buzzard, Lesser Whitethroat, Bluethroat, and flocks of Spotted and perhaps Crowned sandgrouse. We also plan to spend a couple of days birding around the beautiful capital city of Muscat in the north, where irrigated farms act as a magnet for migrants and residents alike, including Hooded Wheatear, Desert Lesser Whitethroat, Long-billed Pipit, and Blue Rock-Thrush.

Dates are January 10-25, 2009.



At top, a desert scene at Qitbit Spring, United Arab Emirates. Above, two birds of the region are the Desert Wheatear (right) and, the star of the show, the *Hypocolius* (left). The latter is in its own family and has a range restricted to parts of the Middle East.

MOUNTAINS OF MANU, PERU

It's a fabulous destination with so much to offer birders, both veterans of Andean birding and those new to South America.

To start with, birds in the east-Andean foothills are numerous, many of them charismatic and easily seen. At Amazonia Lodge, the vervain and adjacent feeders are abuzz with activity, and as many as a dozen species of hummers can be seen while we sit sipping lemonade on the veranda. Among them are species that will interest even the most experienced tropical birder: the endemic Koepcke's Hermit, the scarce and striking Gould's Jewelfront, and even the relatively unknown Rufous-webbed Brilliant (rare, but a recent addition to the feeders list!). Bananas and rice attract such dazzlers as Masked Crimson Tanager and Scarlet-hooded Barbet, and the canopy tower on the hill behind offers some fabulous viewing of those fabled canopy species that are so hard to see from the forest floor, from Lanceolated Monklet and Striolated Puffbird to Golden-collared Toucanet, Ivory-billed Aracari, and Plum-throated Cotinga. We've seen Crested Eagle from the tower more than once, and spectacular White Hawks often sail past at eye level or below. On one trip we watched a pair of Scarlet Macaws dive-bombing a passing Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle!

The network of trails at the lodge offers a long list of alluring forest species, from shy antpittas and army-ant followers to bold Hoatzins sitting shoulder to shoulder above oxbows of the river. Long-tailed Potoos have nested right at the clearing edge, where their calls combine with those of Common and Great potoos, Black-banded Owls, and Tawny-bellied Screech-Owls to mold your dreams by night.

On our way to and from Amazonia Lodge, reached from Cusco in our professionally driven bus over one of the most beautifully forested ribbons of road in Peru, we bird arid intermontane valleys, high-Andean puna and treeline forest, and rich montane forest right down to the eastern base of the Andes. Based at Cock-of-the-rock Lodge at about 4500 feet, we'll enjoy a host of different hummers and tanagers at the feeders and a fabulous nearby lek of displaying Andean Cocks-of-the-rock. We'll see numerous specialties of southeastern Peru, including many localized Peruvian endemics. Then some of us will continue on an extension to Machu Picchu afterward, spending two nights at the luxurious Hotel Pueblo, a birding Mecca in itself!

I'd love to share the birds of Peru with you, and now, with the publication of the fabulous new *Birds of Peru*, it's so much easier to prepare. Come help us find the new tanager that was recently discovered right along the road!

Rose Ann Rowlett

There's one space open on our 2008 tour, July 26-August 10 (Machu Picchu Extension to August 13) with Rose Ann Rowlett.

2009 Dates

*July 25-August 9 (Extension to August 12) with Rose Ann Rowlett
October 10-25 with Dan Lane*

Our birding group on the **Mountains of Manu** tour enjoying lunch! Guide Rose Ann Rowlett is wearing the red scarf and as always has a smile on her face. The Andean Cock-of-the-rock is a spectacular denizen of highland forests here. Seldom photographed this well, the Cinnamon-faced Tyrannulet. [Photos by participant Francesco Veronesi]



Birding: Being Whole

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silent astonishment of the hikers. The jay hopped up onto a nearby branch. I passed a peanut to one of the hikers and told her to put her hand out. The jay obliged, swooping again for the prize and spreading a look of sheer joy across the hiker's face as she felt the light touch of feet and the brush of wings on her hand—her own epiphany, perhaps?

Our summer visitors again grace my yard in Maine—beautiful Chestnut-sided and Black-throated Green warblers, flitting American Redstarts, a vocal Great Crested. The simple pleasure of looking is heavenly, as it is anywhere. Birding awaits, and completeness with it. Spread the word.

—Jan Pierson

Recounting a memorable event from our SPECTACULAR SOUTHEAST BRAZIL tour, participant Romney Bathurst sent us the following.

A memorable event—oh my, there were so many! As I began entering my sightings in my database, I jotted down various species about which I might choose to write a paragraph. I'm now up to 16, so obviously that's too many. However, I can say that the repeated wonder of having several species of tapaculo virtually parading before us, combined with delights such as lingering over Frilled Coquettes feeding at blossoms just outside my door (Monte Verde), and the discovery of one delicious antshrike after another (the "Starry, starry Night" Antshrike, for instance—a.k.a. Large-tailed Antshrike) all combined for a truly memorable experience, "Close Encounters of the Brazilian Kind"!

Then there was the day we tried for the Marsh Tapaculo, a simply wonderful experience despite the fact that we never saw the bird! Being in the midst of the marsh, absorbing oh-so-quietly all the sights and sounds, while keeping absolutely still, every sense keyed on the constant call of the elusive little devil—that's the stuff of fun, challenging birding. Oh yes, then there was the Blue-bellied Parrot that came rocketing in, a gorgeous male, glowing, grass green, with that beautiful, blue belly patch shining out at us from his perch, how could I leave that one out? And the incredible excitement of seeing both the male and female Gray-winged Cotinga, when I really thought even a glimpse of the female would be an outside chance. Being among the first birding groups to see a soon-to-be named antbird species with the young researchers whose work will help document it was certainly a unique privilege.

UPCOMING TOURS

BELOW IS A PARTIAL LISTING OF UPCOMING TOURS.

If you would like details on any trip or trips, please call or email for a tour itinerary, either online or mailed to you.

September-October 2008

RIO NEGRO PARADISE: MANAUS, BRAZIL—September 5-19, 2008 with Bret Whitney. Rainforest birding along the fabulous Rio Negro from Manaus, with specialties from Crimson Fruitcrow to Rufous Potoo. **Limited to 8 participants.**

BOLIVIA'S AVIAN RICHES—September 6-21, 2008 (Blue-throated Macaw Pre-trip from September 1) with Dan Lane & second guide. Survey tour of the special bird life of the Bolivian Andes; wonderful mountain scenery and easier than you may think.

AUSTRALIA (Part I)—September 26-October 16, 2008 (Pelagics pre-tour from September 24) with Chris Benesh & Dave Stejskal. Begins our two-part tour with Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, southwest Australia, and Alice Springs.

NEW GUINEA & AUSTRALIA—October 2-20, 2008 with Phil Gregory. A rich and diverse sampler of the best birding of New Guinea and Australia.

BRAZIL: ITATIAIA, IGUAZU FALLS & PANTANAL II—October 9-24, 2008 with Jan Pierson & George Armistead. Comfortable tour visiting three locales (Itatiaia, Iguazu, and the southern Pantanal) world-famous for their abundance of birds and wildlife in spectacular settings right outside our doors; also an overnight in Rio.

SOUTH AFRICA—October 10-November 1, 2008 with Rod Cassidy & Jay VanderGaast. Survey tour of the birding highlights of this beautiful country, from Cape Town to the Drakensberg and Natal.

AUSTRALIA (Part II)—October 14-29, 2008 (Tasmania extension to November 3) with John Coons & second guide. Completes the continent with Darwin, Cairns, Atherton Tableland, and O'Reilly's.

NORTHWESTERN ARGENTINA—October 28-November 16, 2008 with Dave Stejskal & Jesse Fagan. Comprehensive survey tour of the diverse bird habitats of the northwest, with numerous specialties.

November-December 2008

NORTHERN PERU: ENDEMIC GALORE—November 1-21, 2008 (Russet-bellied Spinetail Extension to November 22) with Rose Ann Rowlett & Richard Webster. A tour to one of the least-known and most endemic-rich areas of South America, with many recently-described species from the Andes and the Marañon basin.

MADAGASCAR, MAURITIUS & REUNION—November 8-December 5, 2008 (Seychelles extension to December 9) with Dan Lane & Megan Crewe. More than 130 endemics and a dozen lemurs are the focus on these other-worldly islands; optional extension to the beautiful Seychelles.

SOUTHERN ARGENTINA—November 15-December 2, 2008 with George Armistead & Jesse Fagan. Superb springtime birding through southern South America amid stark and spectacular landscapes.

SOUTHERN INDIA—November 16-December 7, 2008 with Terry Stevenson. From the mammal-rich lowlands of Nagarhole to the mountains of the Western Ghats rich in endemic birds and the tranquil beauty of the south Indian backwaters. **Limited to 9 participants.**

NEW ZEALAND—November 23-December 11, 2008 with Phil Gregory. Beautiful landscapes as a backdrop for nearly 50 endemic birds plus a great selection of seabirds.

January-February 2009

THAILAND—January 10-31, 2009 (Gurney's Pitta & Nicobar Pigeon Extension to February 5) with Dave Stejskal & Uthai Treesucon. Our

popular itinerary featuring a wide variety of forest birds—of both Himalayan and tropical affinities—in the friendly heart of Southeast Asia.

NEW OMAN & THE UAE: HYPOCOLIUS & DESERT BIRDS—January 10-25, 2009 with Phil Gregory & George Armistead. Some of the best Arabian Peninsula birding in two very friendly and scenic countries with many regional endemics and specialty birds, including a good chance for the unique Hypocolius. An array of desert, wetland, and coastal habitats.

AMAZONIAN ECUADOR: SACHA LODGE I—January 15-24, 2009 with Rose Ann Rowlett. One-site tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with one of the birdiest and sturdiest canopy platforms anywhere. Well-appointed lodgings with electricity, hot water, and delicious food; extensive trail system and boat trips on the Rio Napo. Limited to 8 participants. May be combined with JEWELS OF ECUADOR.

YELLOWSTONE IN WINTER—January 16-24, 2009 with Terry McEaney & second guide. A winter birding, wildlife, and landscape adventure to one of the world's legendary destinations.

COLIMA & JALISCO—January 17-25, 2009 with Chris Benesh & Megan Crewe. A popular and comfortable introduction to the Neotropics with many West Mexican endemics and specialties; lovely coastal and montane scenery. May be combined with OAXACA.

VENEZUELA—January 17-31, 2009 with John Coons. The best of this modern, bird-rich country in the beautiful Andes, lush Rancho Grande/Henri Pittier National Park, and the teeming waterbirds and wildlife of the vast llanos. Limited to 9 participants. May be combined with VENEZUELA: TEPUIS ENDEMIC.

PANAMA'S CANOPY TOWER I—January 17-24, 2009 (Canopy Lodge Extension to January 28) with Jay VanderGaast & local guide. A towering introduction to Neotropical birds based entirely in one unique lodge; great birding from the Tower with quick access to famous Pipeline Road and other locations. Limited to 8 participants. May be combined with WILD PANAMA: BURBAYAR, MOGUE & THE HARPY EAGLE.

NORTHEAST BRAZIL: LONG LIVE THE LEAR'S!—January 18-February 8, 2009 (Minas Gerais Extension to February 13) with Bret Whitney. From beautiful beaches to barren badlands, we traverse Northeast Brazil in a quest for specialties of the endangered caatinga, chapada, and Atlantic Forest habitats, plus endemics of the middle Rio São Francisco.

NORTHERN INDIA: BHARATPUR, CORBETT & THE HIMALAYAN FOOTHILLS—January 24-February 15, 2009 with Terry Stevenson. Fantastic adventure from the Ganges plains to the Himalayan foothills, with the Bharatpur wetlands, a good chance of Tiger, and the wondrous Taj Mahal. Limited to 9 participants.

JEWELS OF ECUADOR: HUMMERS, TANAGERS & ANTPITTAS—January 24-February 10, 2009 with Mitch Lysinger. Survey tour of Andean Ecuador; transects the north from Pacific lowlands to east-slope foothills and includes stunning Podocarpus and Cajas national parks in the south; diverse avifauna dominated by colorful hummers and tanagers and more subtle and haunting antpittas. Limited to 8 participants. May be combined with SACHA LODGE.

WILD PANAMA: BURBAYAR, MOGUE & THE HARPY EAGLE—January 24-February 2, 2009 (Canopy Lodge Extension to February 6) with John Rowlett. Dynamite birding in remote Panama Province for some legendary species—Harpia, Xenornis, Sapayoa, Pittasoma, and more; two nights of outfitted camping in lowland Darien for

Harpy Eagle. Limited to 8 participants. May be combined with PANAMA'S CANOPY TOWER.

OAXACA—January 25-February 1, 2009 with Jesse Fagan & Dan Lane. Superb birding with two dozen Mexican endemics and fascinating ruins while based in lovely Oaxaca City. May be combined with COLIMA & JALISCO.

VENEZUELA: TEPUIS ENDEMIC—January 30-February 8, 2009 with Jay VanderGaast. Short, one-site tour focusing on the many endemics and other specialties of eastern Venezuela. Limited to 9 participants. May be combined with VENEZUELA.

THE HEART & SOLE OF CHILE—January 31-February 14, 2009 (Easter Island Extension to February 16) with Alvaro Jaramillo & Ricardo Matus. A sampling of Chile's "heart" between Santiago and the Chiloe Island, including coastal birding and a pelagic, the "sole." This tour does not replace our longer, comprehensive tour, but allows a shorter and more relaxed visit to this increasingly popular and incredibly scenic country.

SOUTHWESTERN ECUADOR SPECIALTIES: JOCOTOCO FOUNDATION RESERVES—February 1-15, 2009 with Rose Ann Rowlett. Focuses on the many specialties of the southwest, from Tumbesian endemics to very local Ecuadorian endemics of the humid foothills and mountains. Limited to 8 participants.

WINTER JAPAN: DANCING CRANES & SPECTACULAR SEA-EAGLES—February 7-20, 2009 with Phil Gregory & local guide. A tour for Japan's winter birding spectacles, including the fabulous cranes and Steller's Sea-Eagle. Limited to 10 participants.

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO I—February 7-16, 2009 with Megan Crewe. Wonderful introduction to South America's bird riches, including bellbirds, toucans, manakins, and motmots with birding right outside our doors. Limited to 10 participants.

WESTERN MEXICO: SAN BLAS & THE SINALOA HIGHLANDS—February 11-21, 2009 with Jesse Fagan & David Mackay. Superb and varied birding in one of Mexico's richest areas with a number of northwestern Mexican endemics and plenty of scenery.

WILD DARIEN: CANA & CERRO PIRRE—February 12-21, 2009 with John Coons. A true wilderness area accessed by charter aircraft; rich Neotropical avifauna with many endemics and species of restricted range, including Beautiful Treerunner, Pirre Warbler, Dusky-backed Jacamar, and the monotypic Sapayoa. Limited to 8 participants. May be combined with PANAMA'S CANOPY TOWER.

SURINAME—February 13-28, 2009 with Dave Stejskal. Guianan specialties in fine wilderness settings in a friendly country with a flavor all its own. Limited to 8 participants.

AMAZONIAN ECUADOR: SACHA LODGE II—February 19-28, 2009 with Dan Lane. One-site tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with one of the birdiest and sturdiest canopy platforms anywhere. Well-appointed lodgings with electricity, hot water, and delicious food; extensive trail system and boat trips on the Rio Napo. Limited to 8 participants.

PANAMA'S CANOPY TOWER II—February 21-28, 2009 with John Coons & local guide. A towering introduction to Neotropical birds based entirely in one unique lodge; great birding from the Tower with quick access to famous Pipeline Road and other locations. Limited to 8 participants. May be combined with WILD DARIEN: CANA & CERRO PIRRE.

BIRDING PLUS VENEZUELA'S LLANOS: BIRDING & PHOTOGRAPHY—February 20-March 2, 2009 with George Armistead. More photo opps in the context of slower-paced birding than on our regular tours. We'll take advantage of good opportunities for photographing birds as we find them, and we'll mix these with spotting and identifying a good many of the myriad species possible at our two main sites. If you enjoy both birding and photography, you'll enjoy this tour! Limited to 9 participants.

GUATEMALA: SHADE-GROWN BIRDING—February 25-March 7, 2009 with Jesse Fagan. Numerous Middle American specialties, among them Resplendent Quetzal, a host of hummingbirds, Azure-rumped Tanager, and a chance for the mythical Horned Guan, set against a dramatic volcanic landscape and colorful Mayan culture. Limited to 8

participants. May be combined with HONDURAS: LAND OF THE EMERALDS.

BRAZIL: ITATIAIA, IGUAZU FALLS & PANTANAL—February 28-March 15, 2009 with Louis Bevier & second guide. Comfortable tour visiting three locales (Itatiaia, Iguazu, and the southern Pantanal) world-famous for their abundance of birds and wildlife in spectacular settings right outside our doors; also an overnight in Rio.

PANAMA'S CANOPY TOWER III—February 28-March 7, 2009 (Canopy Lodge Pre-trip from February 24) with Chris Benesh & local guide. A towering introduction to Neotropical birds based entirely in one unique lodge; great birding from the Tower with quick access to famous Pipeline Road and other locations. Limited to 8 participants. May be combined with WESTERN PANAMA.

Holiday Tours

If holiday birding with Field Guides is in your plans for later this year, it's good to get flights booked early for this busy travel time to allow yourself the best options and fare. Call our office and our travel agents can help you sort out the possibilities. Our holiday destinations include:

THANKSGIVING VENEZUELA: TEPUIS ENDEMIC II—November 22-December 1, 2008 with Jay VanderGaast. One-site tour focusing on the many endemics and specialties of eastern Venezuela. **Limited to 9 participants.**

THANKSGIVING AT SAN ISIDRO, ECUADOR—November 22-December 1, 2008 with Mitch Lysinger. Based at comfortable cabanas with dramatic cloud forest vistas and fabulous food, our small group will bird rich east-slope Andean forest from the foothills to treeline and paramo. **Limited to 8 participants.**

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO—December 27, 2008-January 5, 2009 with Megan Crewe. Wonderful introduction to South America's bird riches. **Limited to 10 participants.**

NEW YEAR IN MEXICO: OAXACA & THE PACIFIC COAST—December 27, 2008-January 7, 2009 with Chris Benesh & second guide. In addition to our regular Oaxacan haunts and the incredible spectacle of Oaxaca in its Christmas finery, the tour will spend a few days on the Pacific coast for a different avifauna with additional Mexican specialties.

HOLIDAY COSTA RICA: RANCHO NATURALISTA—December 27, 2008-January 4, 2009 with Jesse Fagan & local guide. A one-site tour based at one of Costa Rica's premier birding lodges, with day visits to Tapanti National Park, Irazu Volcano, and the Caribbean lowlands.

WILD DARIEN: CANA & CERRO PIRRE II—December 27, 2008-January 5, 2009 with Dave Stejskal. Remote wilderness at Cana and outfitted camping on the slopes of legendary Cerro Pirre for such endemics and near-endemics as Beautiful Treerunner, Pirre Warbler, Dusky-backed Jacamar, and the monotypic Sapayoa. **Limited to 8 participants.**

HOLIDAY AT SAN ISIDRO, ECUADOR—December 27, 2008-January 5, 2009 with Jay VanderGaast. Based at comfortable cabanas with dramatic cloud forest vistas and fabulous food, our small group will bird rich east-slope Andean forest from the foothills to treeline and paramo. **Limited to 8 participants.**

Of Tiny Ecuador on the Wall... Which is the Fairest Part of All?

Continued from page 1

Yet the Andes of the North don't have the South's Podocarpus National Park—only thirty minutes from our hotel—and its tree-line forests with Rainbow Starfrontlets and Bearded Guans. Podocarpus offers superb birding from dramatically beautiful trails (with Rufous, Undulated, and Chestnut-naped antpittas and the recently described Chusquea Tapaculo) to the forested entrance road—which over the last few years has offered up such goodies as sun-bathing Red-hooded Tanagers, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucans duetting and bill-clapping, and a Spectacled Bear feeding on fruits in the canopy below! And the South boasts another gem, Las Cajas National Park near Cuenca with its paramo grassland studded with big *Polylepis* groves and sparkling Andean lakes. Such is the habitat of the fabulous Giant Conebill and the Tit-like Dacnis, as well as a very local endemic hummer, the Violet-throated Metaltail, and another almost-endemic, the striking Chimborazo Hillstar. It's a land of breathtaking scenery where, at any moment a Carunculated Caracara or a magnificent Andean Condor could sail overhead.

But it's true, the Andes aren't Amazonia. The Andes are short on macaws, jacamars, puffbirds, antbirds, manakins, and monkeys. Single lodges in Amazonia have lists almost as long as the lists of Texas and California, and our principal lodge in Amazonian Ecuador, Sacha, is one of the most comfortable (hot water and private facilities) as well as one of the richest for birds, butterflies, and everything else. Situated along the north bank of the giant Rio Napo, one of the three major tributaries that combine to form the upper Amazon, Sacha is located only two-and-a-half hours down-river from the Amazonian frontier town of Coca. A network of trails from the lodge offers easy access to a wonderful expanse of seasonally flooded forest (*varzea*) and to some of the finest canopy viewing we have encountered anywhere, opening a whole new dimension to formerly earth-bound birders. Already Sacha's bird list approaches 500 species and boasts a fantastic array of regularly occurring Amazonian inhabitants. So if you have dreams of a Zigzag or Agami Heron, thirst for Hoatzins, wish to scan for rap-

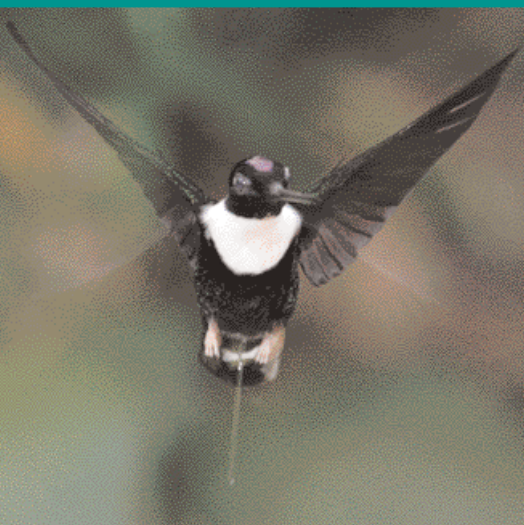
tors and cotingas from canopy towers, and want a chance for an army-ant swarm, head for Sacha in the Amazon Basin.

Our most comprehensive coverage of the Andes is JEWELS OF ECUADOR with Mitch Lysinger, our only Andean tour covering both the North and South. With 50-plus hummingbirds and 50-plus tanagers and four or five antpittas seen (more heard), "Jewels" is the right name. It can be combined with a full-length visit to Sacha Lodge to produce an epic bird list.

Look for some of the best of our Jewels and Sacha trips in a "sampler" offering and you'll spot the ECUADOR: RAINFOREST & ANDES itinerary. It combines two prime sites in the northern Andes with five nights at Sacha. Or are you looking for something during the summer? MONTANE ECUADOR has two departures, one in June and the other in July and August. This short tour traverses the Andes of the North from west to east and can be combined with either our SACHA LODGE tour or that great natural history experience of the GALAPAGOS. And for a holiday escape to luxuriate in good food and incredible birds on the east slope of the Andes of the North, plan ahead for HOLIDAY AT SAN ISIDRO at Thanksgiving and New Year's.

Been there, done that? May we recommend yet a different slice of Ecuador's 1700-species pie: SOUTHWESTERN ECUADOR SPECIALTIES: JOCOTOCO FOUNDATION RESERVES in February. This tour visits the marvelous deciduous dry and humid forests that comprise a large yet endangered area of southwestern Ecuador, the northern extension of the Tumbesian endemic center, a critical area for many bird species that can only be found here and in adjacent northwestern Peru. The habitats we will be birding range from high misty Andean forested ridges and dry desert-like intermontane valleys to humid, west-slope foothills and the deciduous Bombax forests and deserts of the central Pacific coast. Several Ecuadorian endemics, including the El Oro Parakeet, the recently rediscovered Pale-headed Brush-Finch (thought to be extinct until 1998), and the newly described Jocotoco Antpitta occur along our route.

A huge diversity of birds, some great itineraries on which to see them, and an excellent field guide in Ridgely and Greenfield's *The Birds of Ecuador*. All that's left is to decide: which is your fairest Ecuador of all?



These birds, along with many others on our Ecuador tours, are avian gems—attractive, colorful, and desirable species to see. From left to right: A Collared Inca relieving himself of extra liquids, of which nectar sucking hummers always have an abundance; Highland Motmot; Velvet-purple Coronet; Brown Violetear. [Photos by guide Richard Webster]

Ecuador in a nutshell

Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge

January 15–24, 2009 with Rose Ann Rowlett

February 19–28, 2009 with Dan Lane

June 30–July 9, 2009 with Dan Lane

July 22–31, 2009 with Dave Stejskal

Jewels of Ecuador: Hummers, Tanagers & Antpittas

January 24–February 10, 2009 with Mitch Lysinger

Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes

March 21–April 4, 2009 with Mitch Lysinger

September 5–19, 2009 with Mitch Lysinger

Montane Ecuador

June 12–21, 2009 with Mitch Lysinger

July 30–August 8, 2009 with Mitch Lysinger

Galapagos

June 20–30, 2009 with Mitch Lysinger

July 18–28, 2009 with George Armistead

August 8–18, 2009 with Alvaro Jaramillo

Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves

February 1–15, 2009 with Rose Ann Rowlett

Holiday at San Isidro, Ecuador

November 22–December 1, 2008 with Mitch Lysinger

December 27–January 5, 2009 with Jay VanderGaast

All Field Guides Ecuador land itineraries are limited to 8 participants. Galapagos is limited to 12.

Our new BIRDING PLUS tours for 2009

Add an extra element to your birding focus: For 2009 we introduce Field Guides Birding Plus tours combining birding and, in our current schedule, bird photography in Venezuela, in-depth learning about seabirds or migration in North Carolina or at Cape May, traditional Irish music and culture, or a banding research project in El Salvador. These tours will weave together the birding we all love with the other goals of the particular itinerary listed below in order to enjoy the best of both. If you find yourself drawn both to birding and other interests and would like to combine them in your travel, one of these may be just the ticket for you!

BIRDING PLUS itineraries for 2009

Venezuela's Llanos: Birding & Photography—February 20–March 2, 2009 with George Armistead

We'll take advantage of good opportunities for photographing birds as we find them, and we'll mix these with spotting and identifying a good many of the myriad species possible at our two main sites. If you enjoy both birding and photography, you'll enjoy this tour!

North Carolina: Petrels & the Deep Blue Sea—May 16–25, 2009 with George Armistead & second guide

Demystify those ocean birds on this itinerary scheduling 3 pelagic trips into North Carolina's rich off-shore waters along with informative presentations on seabird I.D. and natural history. And we'll also enjoy some landlubber birding in some of NC's best forest and shorebirding spots.

Cape May Migration: Orient Yourself!—October 3–9, 2009 with George Armistead
See bird migration in action and learn about regional movements, local influences, and orientation, and pick up important identification tips for raptors and other groups in our field-and-presentation format itinerary to one of the best migration hotspots in North America.

Ireland: Birds, Traditional Music & Pubs—October 30–November 8, 2009 with Terry McEneaney

We're already inaugurating this itinerary for fall 2008, and that departure virtually sold out immediately. It fits right into our Birding Plus concept, and the name pretty much says it all—it should be great fun again in 2009!

El Salvador & Banding—October 31–November 7 with Jesse Fagan
*A unique opportunity to combine the up-close experience of netting and banding birds in a research program with several days of birding in lovely settings: birds in the hand **and** in the bush for a great, week-long learning-and-birding experience that will build your birding skills and knowledge.*

BIRD BUZZ

It had been a frustrating forty-five minutes for all of us on the AUSTRALIA tour; we'd climbed a rough slope strewn with prickly plants (leaving our socks full of exceptionally spiky burrs), stood for long, silent minutes listening for telltale sounds of our elusive quarry (the wary Dusky Grasswren), and seen and heard absolutely nothing. Defeated, we made our way downhill, heading for the bus. Then, suddenly, magic. As we neared the parking lot, we were surrounded by a snow globe whirlwind of Splendid Fairywrens—including two shockingly blue males—which proceeded to twitch through a brush pile literally at our feet. The colorful spectacle, and the endearing lack of concern the birds showed at our presence, proved to be a real antidote for our previous disappointment and provided a very special memory—and some great photos!

Megan Crewe

A striking male Splendid Fairywren
[Photo by guide Chris Benesh]





Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo [Photo by participants Will and Gill Carter]

BIRD BUZZ

Cuckoo in Panama

No widespread Neotropical genus haunts a birder more than *Neomorphus*, a group of 11 closely related “roadrunners-on-steroids” that are currently treated as constituting four to five species but that may eventually be understood to comprise seven or more. All forms are rare and seldom seen, some designated Endangered. As wary, terrestrial birds dependent on extensive humid forest from Nicaragua to Bolivia and Brazil, their future is not bright. Since the 1980s I've recommended the Cana area in Darien as the most reliable place to get lucky with the Central American representative of Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo, *N. geoffroyi salvini*, for I have seen *geoffroyi* more often there than anywhere throughout its range.

The chief mystery this bird still held for me was its song. I'd read descriptions of a low mooing, yet I had never heard anything from it but its electrifying bill snapping. Nor were there any audio recordings of the song of this taxon—until this February when, while feverishly birding a big swarm of raiding army ants in the company of my Cana tour group, I heard a soft, repetitive low humming that I immediately suspected belonged to *Neomorphus*! I quietly stepped aside from the group and recorded the spontaneous song for several minutes. Upon playback the vocalization ceased; then the bird rushed us, running to a log in the trail to emit a loud bill-snap before retreating across the trail into dense cover only to continue vocalizing in a slightly higher register at shorter intervals between phrases. Even though we hadn't seen this knockout as we had hoped, finally learning the song of this taxon and getting a quality recording was, for me, the knockout of the trip! *John Rowlett*

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BIRDING TOURS WORLDWIDE

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

CONSERVATION Field Guides contributes to the following conservation organizations: The Nature Conservancy, Birdlife International, Conservation International

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