

fieldguides®

JULY 2010

B I R D I N G T O U R S W O R L D W I D E

Birding Vietnam

Dave Stejskal

Juvenile Crested Goshawk, a widespread species of southern Asia, in Cuc Phuong National Park, Vietnam. (Photo by guide Uthai Treesucon)

There's no doubt about it—Southeast Asia is home to one of the richest avifaunas on the planet, with some thirteen hundred species recorded in the six or so mainland countries that make up this region. Throw in the related avifaunas of the vast Indonesian and Philippine archipelagos, and the numbers start to get a little crazy. I've found myself guiding tours in this part of the world more and more in recent years, getting away from my wholly Neotropical tour schedule of years past. But I can't seem to help myself. When viewing the region as a whole—mainland Southeast Asia, Indonesia, the Philippines—it's clear that this region has been (and still is—speciation is a dynamic process, after all) a true hotbed of bird speciation and endemism. That overall view, however, is primarily due to the fact that a huge chunk of the region is made up of thousands of islands, big and small, that have been isolated from others nearby for many millennia, and various groups of islands have been influenced by different outside avifaunas at different times during their geologic and evolutionary history. It's probably no more or no less of a compelling story of complexity and richness than of the Neotropics—it's just different.

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Getting Lucky

Jan Pierson

Last week I spent a full and beautiful day on the waters of the Gulf of Maine, showing a boatload of birders puffins, Razorbills, shearwaters, and storm-petrels, terns (including some gleaming Roseates), gannets, and more on an annual Maine Audubon outing I help lead. I don't know how many times I've

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A TASTE OF AUSTRALIA... AND NEW GUINEA, TOO!

Jay VanderGaast

Every birder I've ever met loves Australia. Even those who've never been before are certain they're going to love it. And why not? It's a remarkable country with tons of great birds, bizarre and wonderful animals, beautiful places to visit, and good hotels. And in addition, the language barrier is minimal. (There *are* a few Ozzie words and phrases that will leave you scratching your head, of course!) Overall it's a pretty comfortable place to visit.

And every birder I've met dreams of visiting Papua New Guinea, imagining a wild and untamed island covered in thick, impenetrable forest and inhabited by wildly painted indigenous people—and home to amazing and incredible birds. Well, it is a developing nation, of course, but as with so many formerly hard-to-reach birding destinations, PNG has come of age, offering reasonable, even very good accommodations and reliable travel—so that we have a terrific chance of observing many of those birds you have to see to believe!

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The last color you'd choose to describe this bird is brown; nevertheless, it's a Brown Sicklebill, a bird-of-paradise from Papua New Guinea. (Photo by guide Phil Gregory)



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GuideLines *with Rose Ann Rowlett*

Reflections on Beginnings

Recent contemplation of retirement has triggered a sobering realization: that I may be co-leading my last tour with my brother this coming fall. I've started cutting back on the number of tours I guide, relishing more time at home, with Richard and my neglected friends, and for the multiple projects that have been relegated (for years) to lower priority than the guiding I so love. I've been guiding for 35 years now, and I admit to wrestling still with which tours to drop from my schedule; so I'm not sure how long the process will take, and I'll likely continue to guide a few tours for the next few years beyond the 2011 schedule to which I am happily committed. But, as with most folks who've started receiving all that unsolicited mail about Medicare options, contemplation of endings inevitably elicits reflections on beginnings, both new and old.

It was a long time ago, but when I'm asked about how I started birding, several memories stand out. I vividly remember when Miss Mink, my second-grade teacher in Austin, taught a unit on nature. My particular assignment was to label a poster for the hall; she had pasted little cards she had collected from cans of Arm & Hammer Baking Soda, each depicting an American bird (illustrated by the great Fuertes, I would come to learn) around the margins of a big poster board. But there were no identifying captions. My task was to identify and label the birds—a task made easy (and great fun!) by using the field guide she gave me for that purpose: the 1949 edition of Richard Pough's *Audubon Land Bird Guide*, with wonderful color illustrations by Don Eckelberry. I remember getting to take that book home with me and showing it to my brother, who was equally taken with the striking colors and incredible diversity of birds. Whether it was Miss Mink or my parents who were ultimately responsible for giving me that book, I came to own it shortly thereafter, for I remember well having met my brother to walk home from school one spring afternoon and seeing a brilliant orange-and-black bird in a live oak outside our school. We didn't know its name at the time, but we'd seen its picture in the book; we ran most of the several blocks home to get to the book and turn to the orioles plate—where Baltimore Oriole stood out as the bird we had seen! We also identified as a male Black-and-white Warbler the bird that we had called a "jailbird" when we'd seen it crawling around a trunk out our bathroom window. The thrills engendered by those early, shared experiences were probably responsible for the beginnings of our lifelong close bond to each other and to birds—which would be central to both our lives thereafter. Of course, we would never have guessed we would someday be among the founders of a birding tour company whose aim is to perpetuate that kind of sharing—and the caring and knowledge to which it leads.

We had some of the usual difficulties of growing up at a time when birding was still considered freakish. In fact, there were times, especially on Sunday mornings during spring migration in Texas, when we would hide in the bushes to avoid being seen by all the folks dressed up and on their way to church. And I remember the sinking feeling I had in the fourth grade when a male American Kestrel flew in, conspicuously, to a bare tree just outside my classroom window, catching the attention of the whole class. When my teacher misidentified it, I spoke up with authority: "No, it's a male Sparrowhawk," and explained why, only to see everyone turn to stare at me as if to say, "Only a freak birdwatcher would know that." Oops, I had "outed" myself.

But our parents were supportive, having purchased each of us a pair of cheap binoculars (after it became quite clear that our sharing their little pair of opera glasses would not work!) and allowing us to bicycle all over our wooded neighborhood in search of birds. And, more importantly, we had each other—to share the excitement of our growing life lists, even if secretly for a while. We kept little journals of the birds we identified each day, and we drew crayon sketches of many (including one that we identified as a Snow Bunting, right there in west Austin! Perhaps an albino House Sparrow?). We collected feathers, broken eggshells, abandoned bird nests, and, yes, those Fuertes bird cards from A&H baking soda cans.

But it wasn't until a neighbor, aware of our interest, told us about a local Travis Audubon Society field trip to Zilker Park, on the Colorado River (before Town Lake was dammed), and we convinced our father to take us on it, that we discovered that there were other birders out there, with equally consuming interests in this pastime we had developed. And a great set of

people it was! That day, September 2, 1956, marked another beginning for us—a period of rapid learning about birds, birding, habitats, plants, and people. Fred Webster, the field trip leader, not only showed us a whole slew of lifers, in a totally new (to us!) habitat (within 8 miles of where we lived, but beyond our bicycle limits), but he taught us to imitate the whistle of an Eastern Screech-Owl (which we perfected with much practice), enabling us to call in a wide range of small birds for wonderful looks. Fred and his wife, Marie, started inviting us to go birding with them, and, with our parents' permission, we spent many a happy weekend birding with them around central Texas, often on additional TAS field trips. And it was through Fred and Marie, and the Audubon field trips, that we met Elizabeth Henze (who would teach us central Texas plants) and two other birders who would have a major influence on our lives: Edgar B. Kincaid, Jr., who would really become our mentor, and Frank Oatman, Jr., with whom we would share many formative years of birding together as we grew into adulthood. Frank (Poncho) was four years older than I, and he already had his driver's license when we met him; that gave us all a new level of independence to bird when



The "Lean, Not so Mean, Birding Machine." Field Guides back in the late 80s. Who says birds are in decline? There were eight species back then: (back row from left) the Kite, Kingfisher, Solitaire, Roadrunner, and Peppershrike; (front row from left) the Gannet, Grebe, and Tinamou. Perhaps there was a Puffin behind the camera, too! While the Tinamou is emeritus on the checklist, since then we have gained a Merlin, Motmot, Owl, Cacique, Chat, Barbet, Sicklebill, Honeyguide, Treerunner, Vanga, Manakin, Raven, and more! You'll need to check our catalog or website to find out who is who—and unfortunately, immature plumages are not included.



Our Grebe, Rose Ann Rowlett, at a lunch break in the paramo on a birding expedition to Laguna de los Condores, or Lake of the Condors, in northern Peru. (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

and where we wanted, to explore new areas, and never to miss an exciting TAS field trip. We owe much to all those early members of the TAS, who shared their knowledge so generously and encouraged our continued interest, which by now had become a passion.

But it was Edgar Kincaid who first exposed us to the Neotropics. We would never recover from that! During our school holiday over Christmas of 1960 (when I was 14, going on 15), he took "The Beavers" (as Poncho, John, and I had come to be known among Austin birders) on our first trip to Mexico. We birded from the Rio Corona and El Salto Falls as far south as Xilitla, and we were totally blown away. Two years later, he took us all the way to Mexico City and Cuernavaca, and in 1964 we drove from Austin to western Mexico, all the way to San Blas and back. On each of these trips, with Edgar's tutelage, we would record carefully not only every bird we identified, but the locality, time, elevation, and mileage for the first "grass tree," the first palm, the first pines, the first evidence of a change in plant communities. Edgar was a habitat-oriented birder, and that's what we too became. There was plenty of habitat in those days, or so it seemed, but the "Cassowary" (as he came to be known at his own insistence, for it symbolized a certain hostility toward mankind in general) clearly perceived the environmental devastation wreaked by mankind worldwide. This, too, would instill in us a certain sense of urgency to experience and to protect the creatures we so loved and their environments—now in an ever-widening world.

Together, those Mexico trips were a beginning of a different kind: Someday we too would be teaching, sharing with others a deep-seated love of birds and wild places. We were developing an increasing realization that commitment to protecting begins with caring, that caring stems from love, no matter how simple its beginnings. Through birding, love grows one bird, one region, one giddy immersion at a time. Looking back, it's little wonder that all three of "the Beavers" became bird-tour guides.

Rose Ann, named "Western Grebe" by Edgar on that first trip to Mexico, was one of the founders of Field Guides in 1985. After a career of guiding, she and her brother John (the "Peppershrike") are scheduled to guide together BRAZIL: ITATIÁIA, IGUAZU FALLS & THE PANTANAL, October 16-31, 2010.

For details on that tour, go to our website.

For a complete listing of Grebe's upcoming tours, visit www.fieldguides.com/guides/rose-ann-rowlett.

Getting Lucky

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been out on the water in Maine looking at puffins and such, but it's a lot. And I never tire of it. A binocular-full of "sea-parrots," the velvety head of a Greater Shearwater, the smell of the salt air, the harsh cries of terns, the pass of a Minke Whale. The next morning in my email I found a simple message from a birding friend who was also on board: "Great fun and great trip. More of this stuff is good." So true. And more of this stuff for more people would be even better.

While we were out on the boat, I wondered to myself how many of my fellow Mainers had experienced this, had been offshore, had seen the abundance of sea life beyond the coastal lobster shacks and seafood restaurants that are the public face of this beautiful state? Relatively few, I imagine.

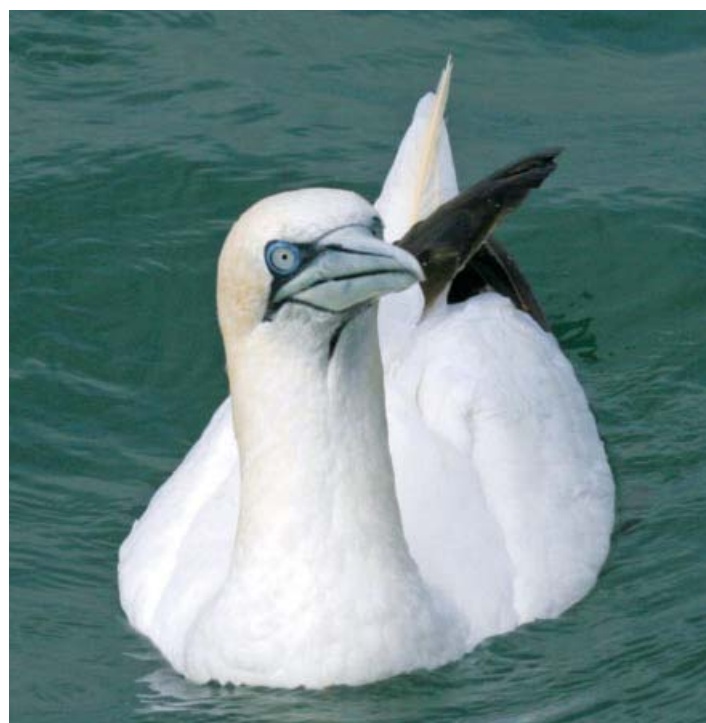
Then yesterday I went for a walk near my home and, passing a house I'd strolled by dozens of times before, heard for the first time a Scarlet Tanager singing above it at the edge of the woods. I wondered, do the folks who live there know they have as a yard bird a brilliant red-and-black bird that spent the winter in northern South America? If they're at home next time I pass, I'll ask.

Way back when, I got very lucky. And if you are reading this and I can thus safely assume you are interested in birds, you got very lucky, too. Someone awakened each of us to our surroundings, to looking at and listening to what's happening around us in the woods, over the fields, on the water, anywhere on Earth.

The obvious aesthetic pleasures of watching birds and everything around them might be luck enough. But luckier yet, perhaps, is being aware, being connected to our environment, wherever we go. By contrast, a friend of mine who teaches college biology sometimes despairs as what he sees as a steady decoupling of his students from knowledge of the outdoors over the past twenty-five years. Lots of digital life, but no dirt on their knees, no mud on their shoes.

But I know those students and my fellow Mainers can get lucky, too. It just takes one person to get that life-long lucky streak going. I want to be that person, don't you?

Start small. Recouple one person. And imagine it multiplied by the thousands of you reading this.



Northern Gannet (Photo by guide George Armistead)

Birding Vietnam

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Endemism on the mainland of Southeast Asia is a little tougher to demonstrate than it is on its associated island groups, with most Southeast Asian countries boasting only a few endemic birds within their borders. There are loads of regional endemics in Southeast Asia, and each country has a complementary sampling of these compared with its neighbors, but few countries have more than just one or two genuine endemics. Thailand, for instance, has only one, the Siamese Partridge (as split from the closely related Chestnut-headed Partridge) found in the extreme southeast. (I'm assuming that the enigmatic Deignan's Babbler is merely a race of the more widespread Rufous-capped Babbler, which may or may not be correct.) There just wasn't enough geographic isolation for a long enough period of time within Thailand's borders to have fostered much uniqueness in its avifauna (but it does have lots of fabulous regional specialties, helping to make it one of the most enjoyable tours we offer). The one exception to the general rule here on the mainland is Vietnam.

Unlike other countries of the region, Vietnam has a respectable showing of endemics—and it seems like more are being found every few years. What Vietnam has that other Southeast Asian countries don't are the Central and Southern

Annam highlands. These mountains have been isolated from those of Tonkin and farther north and east (the Himalayan foothills, essentially) for a long, long time, and some of Vietnam's most intriguing birds can be found here. Our tour is designed to visit one of the richest sites for these birds in the southern highlands around the town of Da Lat on the Langbian Plateau. In a mix of pine and evergreen broadleaf forest, we have a very good chance of seeing Collared Laughingthrush (the most beautiful laughingthrush that I've seen to date), Gray-crowned Crocias (the only other member of the genus is on Java), and Vietnamese



The Green-tailed Sunbird is a bird of South Asian montane forests, one of the 130 or so members of the *Nectariniidae*, or Sunbirds and Spiderhunters. The family name notes a predilection for nectar-feeding, and this along with their colors often invites comparison to hummingbirds. But the sunbirds, an amazing and gorgeous group of birds, are unique and utterly unlike hummingbirds.



A boy works on his Water Buffalo in Sa Pa, a frontier town in the highlands of northwestern Vietnam, gateway to some awesome birding. (Photos by guide Dave Stejskal)

Greenfinch, or such endemics-in-waiting as "Orange-breasted" Laughingthrush (subspecies *annamensis* as split from Spot-breasted), "Vietnamese" Cutia (subspecies *legalleni* as split from Cutia), the distinctive *margaritae* race of Gray-headed Parrotbill, or "Vietnamese" Crossbill (subspecies *meridionalis* as split from, you guessed it, Red Crossbill). There are lots of other distinctive Annamese subspecies throughout the highlands that make birding there some of the most interesting and rewarding in all of Southeast Asia. Vietnam has also recently lost a few endemics after they were found just across the borders of Cambodia and Laos, but you won't see the likes of Black-hooded and White-cheeked laughingthrushes, the newly-described Limestone Leaf-Warbler, or "Gray-crowned" Tit (subspecies *annamensis* as split from Black-throated Tit) on any other tour but this.

A TASTE OF AUSTRALIA...AND NEW GUINEA, TOO!

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You want to see them, but perhaps you'll only go to that part of the world once and you'd like to visit both Australia and New Guinea. Or perhaps you plan to return some day, but first you want to sample both. Well, Field Guides has the answer...a combo of eastern Australia plus the highlights of Papua New Guinea all on a single trip—the **NEW GUINEA & AUSTRALIA** tour I'll be leading this fall. Take several of Australia's best birding sites from Cairns to Sydney, add a taste of birding at a couple of spectacular sites in PNG, and you've got an excellent introduction to the unique avifauna of this region of the world.

Our birding starts around Cairns, easily one of the most diverse birding regions in Australia. The city itself is home to a great variety of birds, and it is here that we'll first make the acquaintance of some of Oz's unique avian inhabitants. The sight of colorful swarms of Rainbow Lorikeets passing noisily overhead, a pair of strikingly pied Magpie-larks strolling across a football pitch, or an iconic Laughing Kookaburra chuckling raucously from a Eucalyptus tree could all greet us here on our first outing, a fitting welcome to the joys of birding down under. But soon we'll find ourselves in the

cooler mountains outside the city, waiting in anticipation for our first glimpse of a huge cassowary, while honeyeaters and riflebirds raid the nearby feeders for fruit. Over the next five days in the region, we'll learn the subtleties of separating Brolgas from Sarus Cranes, scour the highland rainforest for secretive tableland endemics such as Chowchillas and Fernwrens, and even squeeze in some time to look for some of Australia's cool mammals, like Platypus and Sugar Glider.

From Cairns a short hop across the Coral Sea

takes us to Port Moresby, the bustling capital of PNG. Our time in the country will be short but sweet, highlighted by visits to two amazing birding areas. First, we'll visit the superb Varirata National Park, where Raggiana Bird-of-paradise and Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher headline the day's birding with a stellar supporting cast that varies with each visit to the park, but could include such beautiful birds as Rufous-bellied Kookaburra, Black-capped Lory, and Pink-spotted Fruit-Dove. Our second destination is the central highlands,



Our 2009 group with Huli Tribesmen. The Huli, or "Wig Men," are perhaps the most colorful and best known of Papua New Guinea's many amazing indigenous cultures. (Photo by participant Phyllis Wilburn)

And those regional specialties? Just about every Indochinese endemic that you could name is possible on this tour and we'll visit a couple of impressive national parks (Cat Tien, northeast of Ho Chi Minh City, and Cuc Phuong, south of Hanoi) on our late fall tour that host a good many of these. During our ample time visiting these two parks (both of which are much more comfortable to visit compared to just a few years ago), we'll seek out such gems as Germain's Peacock-Pheasant, Siamese Fireback, Red-vented Barbet, Blue-rumped and Bar-bellied pittas, Ratchet-tailed Treepie, and Yellow-breasted and White-winged magpies, among others. And to get a taste of those Himalayan foothills, a visit to Tam Dao NP just north of Hanoi should do us well and a short visit to the coast at Xuan Thuy NP, with its many waterbird species, including Black-faced Spoonbill, Saunders's Gull, and maybe a Spoon-billed Sandpiper or two, will round out our tour nicely.

Vietnam is and has been for several years now welcoming western tourists with open arms, and travel throughout is a relative breeze. Over the past fifteen years, Uthai Treesucon, my co-leader for this tour, has led two dozen or more tours to this intriguing country, and he has few bird guiding peers in Southeast Asia. I can't wait to join him on my fourth visit to Vietnam. Won't you come along with us in November? Dates are **November 20-December 11**. Please call or check our website for complete details. (VIETNAM will not be offered again until 2012.)

where bird-of-paradise diversity is the greatest. The BoPs here include King-of-Saxony, Superb, Lesser, and Blue, as well as Brown Sicklebill and the impossibly stunning Ribbon-tailed Astrapia. Papuan Lorikeets, Crested Berrypeckers, and Regent Whistlers will be among the many species that will help fill in the time.

All too soon we'll leave PNG behind and head back to Australia, with two more stops before we head for home. At the famous O'Reilly's Guest House in the mountains above Brisbane we'll be bombarded by a bunch of new species from gorgeous Regent Bowerbirds and Crimson Rosellas, to more subtle species like Red-browed Treecreeper or Eastern Whipbird, and we may even be lucky enough to find that endearing symbol of Australia, the cute and cuddly Koala. And our time in the Sydney area will find us attempting to track down the world's largest Passerine, Superb Lyrebird, and the localized endemic Origma, or Rock Warbler, in the forests and Beautiful Firetail and Southern Emuwren in the coastal heathlands.

By the time it's all over, we'll have experienced a tantalizing taste of what Australia and PNG have to offer. Why not join me and come see for yourself?

Dates for Jay's tour are September 30-October 15, 2010. You may download a tour itinerary on our website or call our office for more details.

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:

GUATEMALA THANKSGIVING: TEMPLES OF TIKAL, ANTIGUA & FINCA LAS NUBES—November 23-December 2 with Jesse Fagan. A new holiday birding tour combining exciting birding at lovely fincas in the highlands as well as the Mayan ruins of Tikal in the Peten lowlands.

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO—December 18-27 with Wayne Petersen & local guide. Wonderful introductory birding tour to South America's riches (including bellbirds, toucans, manakins, and motmots).

HOLIDAY COSTA RICA: RANCHO NATURALISTA—Two Departures: December 18-26 and December 29-January 6, 2011 with Jesse Fagan & local guide. One-site holiday birding tour based at the comfortable Rancho Naturalista Lodge, with excursions to other habitats on Costa Rica's bird-rich Caribbean slope.

HOLIDAY AT SAN ISIDRO, ECUADOR—December 26-January 4, 2011 with Mitch Lysinger. A bird-rich holiday tour, based primarily at the very comfortable San Isidro Lodge.

MEXICO: OAXACA & THE PACIFIC COAST—December 27-January 7, 2011 with Chris Benesh. Superb birding with numerous Mexican endemics and fascinating ruins in lovely Oaxaca City, plus a visit to the Pacific Coast for additional specialties.

PANAMA'S WILD DARIEN: CANA & CERRO PIRRE—December 29-January 7, 2011 with John Coons. Birding tour to a true wilderness area accessed by charter aircraft; diverse Neotropical avifauna with many endemics and species of restricted range.

Last Spaces

MACHU PICCHU & ABRA MALAGA, PERU
June 25-July 4 with Dan Lane & Jesse Fagan
August 7-16 with Dan Lane

NEWFOUNDLAND & NOVA SCOTIA
July 2-12 with Chris Benesh & John Coons

NEW CALEDONIA
July 24-August 2 with Phil Gregory

SUMMER COSTA RICA
July 31-August 15 with Jay VanderGaast



Sunbittern (Photo by participant Kevin Heffernan)

FRESH FROM THE FIELD



Scenery at the Colorado National Monument is spectacular and the birding superb! White-throated Swifts overhead, Pinyon Jays and Juniper Titmice in the shrubs, and Black-throated Gray Warblers and maybe even Gray Vireo sing from the slopes! Oh yeah, there are some "chickens," too—Gambel's Quail and maybe, just maybe, Chukar. The **Colorado Grouse** tour is devoted to finding the chicken-like birds—grouse, prairie-chickens, quail, turkeys, even pheasants...we do it all. Far left, a male Dusky Grouse. Once lumped as "Blue" Grouse, Dusky Grouse around Gunnison are in short deciduous scrub, not conifers. Near right, Greater Sage-Grouse display at a "lek" with males booming at each other, while females do their best to ignore the goings-on. (Photos by guide Alvaro Jaramillo)

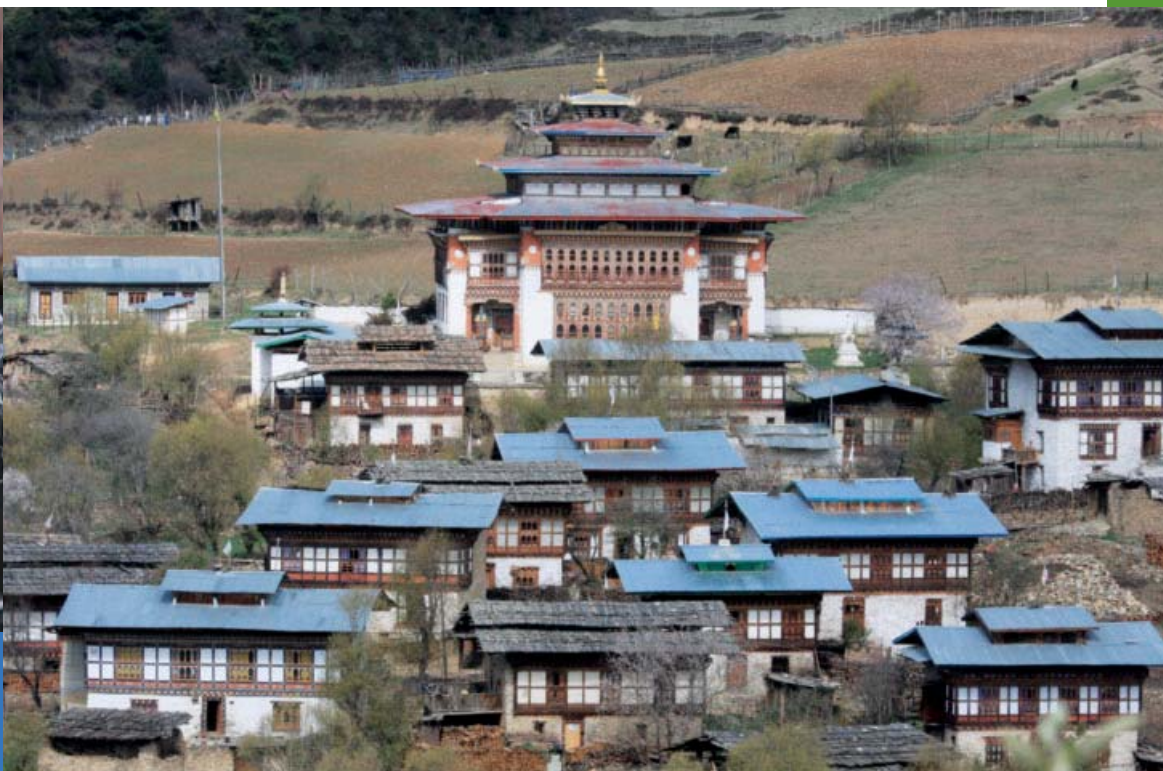


We find white, black, and even green sand beaches on our tours, with the pink on Eleuthera Island on our **Bahamas: Birds & Butterflies** tour adding to this colorful diversity. At left above, the surprising red-ringed eye of a Great Lizard-Cuckoo peers over some tall coppice. Found only on the Greater Antilles, lizard-cuckoos are overdone versions of our Yellow-billed or Black-billed and appear to be more closely related to them than to the similarly large and long tailed Squirrel Cuckoo. Above center, a pair of breeding Laughing Gulls at Governor's Harbour. And above right, Thick-billed Vireo, a common (and vocal) resident of the Bahamas. It's an Antillean version of White-eyed and, during the non-breeding season, the two can be found in the same habitats. (Photos by guide Jesse Fagan)





The Golden-breasted Fulvetta from our **Bhutan** tour is a lovely Asian species that has gone from being a true fulvetta to an outcast. More clearly allied to the Old World warblers, it's now in its own genus, *Lioparus*. Below it, a show-stopping Fire-tailed Myzornis feeding at rhododendron flowers in Thrumsing La. Formerly a babbler, it's also a single-species genus, but its true affinities are still unclear. Many "babblers" are being shifted to other families now that we have genetic information that helps us work out relationships. It's an exciting time to be a birder! Above, the town of Ura in Bumthang district. Part of the appeal of birding Bhutan is the country, the people, the culture, and the amazing scenery of this one-of-a-kind nation.



If you've never been to **Hawaii**, well...what's taken you this long? With its own local color and culture, it sometimes seems like a different country—and the birds are just as unfamiliar. The stars of the show are the native landbirds, most of which are Hawaiian Honeycreepers. These "Drepanids," or "dreps" for short, include some very cool birds with some major bill developments, some outdoing even the Galapagos finches. On the facing page, the I'iwi, the dreps poster bird, is redder than red with a funky red bill for probing into similarly shaped flowers. Below it, a Black Noddy, a native seabird on the Big Island of Hawaii. Its contrasting gray tail (and orange legs, not visible here) are so different that many think it should be a separate species. Above, our group with local expert David Kuhn on the famed Alakai boardwalk where most birds are native Hawaiian landbirds, including some very rare species we saw this year! (Photos by guides George Armistead & Rose Ann Rowlett)



THE bird of the **Dominican Republic**—in fact the national bird—is the Palmchat. The single member of its family, it's isolated on the island of Hispaniola and best seen in the DR. Its nest (above) is essentially a huge mass of vegetation within a palm. The bird itself (above left) is an oddly shaped, striped bird with a startled look. The Narrow-billed Tody (left) is another specialty of the island. Todies are endemic to the Greater Antilles, and the Dominican Republic has two species! (Photos by guide Jesse Fagan)

FRESH FROM THE FIELD



The smallest country in South America with a population of under half-a-million (think tens of thousands of square miles of undisturbed wilderness), **Suriname** is a great place to bird. Imagine yourself floating down the Tapanahony River, like our group at left. Above right, a pair of *Donacobius*, a mysterious but widespread Neotropical species now thought, of all things, to be closely related to Old World *Sylvia* warblers! At right, the unique Guianan Cock-of-the-rock. Now there is a bird! (Photos by guide Dave Stejskal)



Chris Benesh sent in some nice photos from his **Panama** tours. Above, Chris and local guide Jose Perez. Over time, local guides often become part of our extended family, and many friendships are established with our colleagues throughout the world. Below left, a Golden-hooded Tanager, one of the many colorful tanagers in the genus *Tangara*. There are toucans, toucanets, mountain-toucans, and aracarís. Aracarís are dark above, yellow below and often banded on the breast. Each has a colorful red or blue area around the eye, and a brightly patterned bill, but this Fiery-billed Aracari (below right) overdoes it on the reds.



New Zealand's not a place to rack up 600+ species of birds, but what it lacks in numbers, it makes up for in endemism. Kiwi anyone? Yes, New Zealand has some rather special birds, many of which have seen major declines due to introductions of predators. But the "Kiwis" (in this case, New Zealanders) have stepped up to save those that remain. On our seabird jaunts, other creatures often show up, like this Sperm Whale (at top) showing its flukes. Above left the endemic Kea, a tough parrot known to take apart cars in parking lots! Above right, the New Zealand Bellbird or "Korimako," an endemic Honeyeater. (Photos by guide Chris Benesh)



UPCOMING TOURS

If you would like details on any trip or trips, please call our office or check our website, where you may download a tour itinerary.

August-September

GALAPAGOS—August 7-17 with George Armistead & local guide. A must for any interested naturalist and birder in search of a fascinating set of endemics; small-group birding tour with broad coverage of the islands with plenty of time for the birds, exploring, and photography.

MACHU PICCHU & ABRA MALAGA, PERU—August 7-16 with Dan Lane. Birding tour to southern Peru's east-slope, temperate zone at its best, featuring lots of endemics and scenic Andean puna; also Machu Picchu and great subtropical birding on and near lovely hotel grounds.

ECUADOR: RAINFOREST & ANDES—August 29-September 12 with Jay VanderGaast. Highlight birding tour of the best of Ecuador's rainforest birding at Sacha Lodge (think cotingas, parrots, antbirds, and canopy towers) combined with two exciting destinations in the Andes, the Mindo/Tandayapa area and San Isidro (think myriad hummingbirds and tanagers, quetzals, and cock-of-the-rock).

FRANCE: CAMARGUE & PYRENEES—September 4-14 with Megan Crewe & Jesse Fagan. Two of Europe's finest birding destinations combined in this wonderful 9-day birding tour, with varied highlights and some great French food.

SLICE OF CALIFORNIA: SEABIRDS TO SIERRA—September 4-13 with Chris Benesh. A wonderfully diverse birding tour with a mix of West Coast specialties, montane species, and pelagics in rugged and scenic sites.

EAST AFRICA HIGHLIGHTS: KENYA & TANZANIA—September 4-24 with Terry Stevenson. A three-week birding tour combining the richest spots in Kenya and northern Tanzania: an impressive diversity of habitats, many with spectacular scenery.

CHINA: BEIDAHE & THE TIBETAN PLATEAU—September 10-28 with Dave Stejskal & Jesper Hornskov. A truly fabulous birding tour adventure, beginning with a tide of stunning autumn migrants at Beidahe and Happy Island and concluding high in the mountains of China's remote Tibetan Plateau.

BOLIVIA'S AVIAN RICHES—September 11-26 (Blue-throated Macaw and More Extension) with Dan Lane & George Armistead. Comprehensive survey birding tour of the special bird life of the Bolivian Andes; wonderful mountain scenery.

RIO NEGRO PARADISE: MANAUS, BRAZIL—September 11-24 with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. Birding tour to the rainforests and rivers of the mighty Amazon and Rio Negro in an unforgettable mix of forest hikes and live-aboard luxury.

OUTBACK AUSTRALIA: PLAINS-WANDERER & MORE—September 11-October 3 with Phil Gregory. Specialty birding tour for some of Australia's least-known birds off the beaten track; several remote areas, starkly beautiful landscapes.

ECUADOR: RAINFOREST & ANDES—September 12-26 with Mitch Lysinger. Highlight birding tour of the best of Ecuador's rainforest birding at Sacha Lodge (think cotingas, parrots, antbirds, and canopy towers) combined with two exciting destinations in the Andes, the Mindo/Tandayapa area and San Isidro (think myriad hummingbirds and tanagers, quetzals, and cock-of-the-rock).

AUSTRALIA—September 24-October 14 (Pelagics Pre-trip; Part I) with Chris Benesh & Megan Crewe and October 12-27 (Tasmania Extension; Part II) with John Coons & Jesse Fagan. Our Australia birding tour is split into two parts for those who have limited time at their disposal. Part I will cover the environs of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, southwest Australia, and Alice Springs. Part II will begin in Darwin and continue to Queensland (Cairns, Atherton Tableland, and O'Reilly's Guest House). Both parts combine for a complete bird-tour experience of Australia.

SERRA DOS TUCANOS, BRAZIL—September 25-October 5 with John Rowlett. A short but rich birding tour immersion in the avifauna of the Atlantic Forest, based at one lovely site near Rio.

NEW GUINEA & AUSTRALIA—September 30-October 18 with Jay VanderGaast. A rich and diverse birding tour sampling of the best sites of New Guinea and Australia.

October-November

KENYA SAFARI SPECTACULAR—October 1-29 with Terry Stevenson. Unsurpassed in its combined wealth of bird life and mammal spectacle; includes the coast. Time-saving internal flights to and from the Masai Mara and from Malindi back to Nairobi.

BIRDING PLUS—CAPE MAY: ORIENT YOURSELF!—October 2-8 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 birding tour to one of the best migration hotspots in North America.

BRAZIL'S CRISTALINO JUNGLE LODGE—October 4-15 with John Rowlett. A week in pristine rainforest on our birding tour to Brazil's beautiful Rio Cristalino.

NEW GUINEA & AUSTRALIA—October 7-25 with Phil Gregory. A rich and diverse birding tour sampling of the best sites of New Guinea and Australia.

SOUTH AFRICA—October 7-30 with Rod Cassidy. Endemic-rich birding, spectacular landscapes, and a unique flora are the highlights of our energetic survey tour of this beautiful country, from the Karoo to Cape Town, and the Drakensberg to the Eastern Transvaal.

BRAZIL: ITATIAIA, IGUAZU FALLS & THE PANTANAL—October 16-31 with John Rowlett & Rose Ann Rowlett. Comfortable birding tour visiting three Brazil locales world-famous for their abundance of birds and wildlife in spectacular settings right outside our doors; also an overnight in Rio.

SAFARI BRAZIL: THE PANTANAL & MORE—October 16-November 1 with Mitch Lysinger. Our birding tour to the spectacular wetlands of the Pantanal, with Hyacinth Macaws and Jabirus, combined with the many specialties of Brazil's Planalto Central (including Emas National Park, Cipo, and Caraca), makes the perfect first birding trip to Brazil.

NORTHWESTERN ARGENTINA: THE CHACO, CORDOBA & NORTHERN ANDES—October 20-November 7 with Dave Stejskal. Comprehensive survey birding tour of the many bird habitats of the diverse northwest.

SPECTACULAR SOUTHEAST BRAZIL—October 29-November 14 (Part I) and November 12-28 (Part II) with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. Prepare to be blown away, two times over, on this birding tour through the center of avian endemism in eastern Brazil; particularly well endowed with hummingbirds, cotingas, antbirds, and beautiful scenery. Part I: North of the Tropic; Part II: South of the Capricorn.

SRI LANKA—October 30-November 16 with Megan Crewe & local guide. A brand-new, two-week birding tour for an introduction to Asia's birds, including more than two-dozen species endemic to the island, with one of the country's foremost birders as a co-leader.

CHILE—October 31-November 20 with Alvaro Jaramillo & Ricardo Matus. Comprehensive tip-to-tip survey birding tour of this visually spectacular and tourist-friendly country.

MADAGASCAR, MAURITIUS & REUNION—November 3-December 1 (Seychelles Extension) with Jay VanderGaast & Phil Gregory. In-depth birding tour coverage of the accessible parts of Madagascar, remarkable in every way: many endemic birds, striking lemurs, bizarre flora and chameleons, fascinating culture. Includes endemic-rich smaller islands of the Indian Ocean with optional Seychelles extension.

LOUISIANA: RED BEANS & YELLOW RAILS—November 4-8 with Dan Lane. Late autumn birding tour on the Gulf Coast targeting Yellow Rails and other migrants and wintering species of the region.

BIRDING PLUS—EL SALVADOR & BANDING—November 6-13 with Jesse Fagan. A unique opportunity to work in a banding operation, learn basic techniques, terminology, and

instruction on aging and sexing birds in the hand (both resident and migrants). Also, expect an equal amount of time in "normal" tour birding. A special tour to a country with a rich ornithological history and over 540 species of birds!

SOUTHERN ARGENTINA: THE PAMPAS, PATAGONIA & TIERRA DEL FUEGO—November 6-23 with George Armistead. Our tour featuring superb springtime birding through southern South America amid stark and spectacular landscapes.

NORTHERN PERU: ENDEMIC GALORE—November 7-27 with Rose Ann Rowlett & Richard Webster. Dry-season birding 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. Targets geographic specialties as it surveys the rich and diverse habitats of northern Peru, including some remote and beautiful wild areas.

NEW ZEALAND—November 11-29 with Chris Benesh. Beautiful landscapes as a backdrop to our birding tour for nearly 50 endemics plus a great selection of seabirds.

SOUTHERN INDIA: WESTERN GHATS ENDEMIC—November 14-December 5 with Terry Stevenson & local guide. Journey on our birding tour from the mammal-rich lowlands of Nagarhole to the endemic-rich mountains of the Western Ghats and the tranquil beauty of the south Indian backwaters.

VIETNAM—November 20-December 11 with Dave Stejskal & Uthai Treesucon. Intriguing survey birding tour to bird-rich but poorly known Vietnam. Fascinating culture and interesting (i.e., good) cuisine.

GUATEMALA THANKSGIVING: TEMPLES OF TIKAL, ANTIGUA & FINCA LAS NUBES—November 23-December 2 with Jesse Fagan. A new holiday birding tour combining rich birding at lovely fincas in the highlands as well as the Mayan ruins of Tikal in the Peten lowlands.

December

BIRDING PLUS—IRELAND IN FALL: BIRDS, TRADITIONAL MUSIC & PUBS—December 2-12 with Terry McEaney & John Rowlett. The birds, culture, music, and pubs of this beautiful country in fall.

URUGUAY: BIRDING THE LAND OF THE GAUCHOS—December 3-17 with Alvaro Jaramillo. Our tour for the birds of the Pampas and then some. We'll stay in estancias (or ranches, where the life of the gaucho lives on) and rural guesthouses in small towns. Wonderful destinations and wonderful birding with wide-open spaces, some of which are seldom birded by foreigners.

BACKCOUNTRY BRAZIL—December 8-17 with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. Bird two of Brazil's remote national parks in a daring escape from Old Man Winter that will leave you flying high until springtime.

See Page 5 for complete listing of our Holiday Tours.



The Importance of the Right Underwear

By Staff Anonymous

You are ready for the field. Hanging off one belt loop is a carabiner with your umbrella. On the belt itself is a pouch with your liter water bottle and another one with the Leatherman Tool the TSA hasn't had to confiscate yet (but will, memory is not perfect) and which you need to open the seemingly adult-proof packaging of the snacks that are in the bulging belt pack that also contains sunscreen, camera ... At this point, your pants are headed south down your Pufflegs, exposing two inches of underwear. But are you wearing the right underwear? Your outer clothing is of the earth tones that your guide prefers so as not to startle any shy birds that aren't scared off by eight overlaid-but-prepared human beings in earth tones, but wouldn't a dash of color perhaps attract that Lucifer, Jacobin, or Hairy Hermit you are dying to encounter, if not now, then certainly during a rest stop? Of course it would! And that boring white underwear is surely not doing the group any good when your laundry is out on the line (see the photo above that started all of this silliness). It is time for an Underwear Upgrade—Be a Coquette to get a Coquette!

Avian vision is similar to human vision (although the vision of birds expands into UV), so what you see is pretty much what the

hummingbird is going to get. Hundreds of species of plants have evolved with hummingbirds as their primary pollinators, and almost all of these are at the red end of the spectrum—so if you plan on letting your underwear do the attracting, yellow, orange, and red are the best bets. (On the other hand, if you wish to attract a moth, blues and purples may be the ticket.) Co-evolution between a specific hummingbird and a specific plant species has not been demonstrated (hummingbirds depend on so many resources over the course of a year), so we do not anticipate any discrimination between Hanes and Victoria's Secret, except from your human co-travelers. If you choose to wear red-shifted underwear, Field Guides cannot assume any liability for damages caused by any Flowerpiercers, nor any ensuing attentions by short-billed, non-pollinating nectar thieves like Metaltails following the work of the Flowerpiercers. Because many hummingbirds routinely encounter a plant in which only a few flowers have a juicy load of nectar while most are empty (known as the “bonanza-blank” strategy, it forces hummingbirds on to the next plant, increasing cross-pollination), Field Guides believes that the safe use of Underwear will not harm the hummingbirds. And besides, the hummingbirds at the pictured Undergarments are evolution in action, a few mental dwarfs and wimps that can't hack it at the feeders five meters from the laundry. In Brief, it is a tough world out there.

A Green-crowned Brilliant and Steely-vented Hummingbird are “looking in the drawers” at Reserva Arrierito Antioqueña, Colombia.
(Photo by guide Richard Webster)

fieldguides.com

If you haven't already seen it, we'd recommend a visit to our website where you can view our hummer slideshow, starring thirty (just ten per cent!) of some of the most beautiful and most interesting hummingbirds in the New World (none at underwear I'm afraid). They come in all shapes and sizes—though admittedly they're all pretty small—and a truly dazzling array of colors.

And where on a single tour can you find 30, 40, even 50 or more species of hummingbirds? Our itineraries to the tropical highlands, or combining highlands and lowlands, offer the greatest treasure. The Andes of South America are home to the greatest number of species, in particular in Ecuador and Peru, where numerous birding itineraries see 30 or 40 or more species. Some Ecuador itineraries even regularly break the 50 species mark! Several other tropical destinations are also particularly rich and offer numerous sites with active feeding stations: our itineraries to the mountains of Costa Rica, Venezuela, and Panama immediately come to mind. Of course, there are hummingbirds to be seen on all of our Neotropical tours from Mexico to Argentina, with numerous itineraries regularly recording 15 or more species.

Closer to home for US and Canadian travelers, of course, is Arizona, where the diversity of hummers is unrivaled elsewhere north of Mexico. Ten species are regulars, and on numerous trips several additional species are also present.

Visit www.fieldguides.com/hummers

50-plus species

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NORTHEAST BRAZIL: LONG LIVE THE LEARS
SPECTACULAR SOUTHEAST BRAZIL
MACHU PICCHU & ABRA MALAGA, PERU

Best in US, 10-plus

ARIZONA (May/Jul/Aug)



New Tour Slideshows

When you finish with the hummers, be sure to visit Rose Ann's new Ecuador slideshows just posted for the two tours she guided this past year—*Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge* and *Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves*. Then you can enjoy slideshows of the *Bahamas* and the *Lesser Antilles* that Jesse Fagan put together after his recent trips there. Just go to the tour page and click on "play slideshow" in the left-hand column.

Revised *Birds of Peru* now in paperback... plus a Spanish version

Having a great field guide to one of the world's richest birding destinations co-authored by our own Dan Lane is good, but it gets even better! Just released is a revised/updated paperback edition from Princeton Field Guides. As Dan notes: "The most obvious change is the binding (lighter than the hardback). We corrected some mistakes, changed some taxonomy, and I added new illustrations."

Also exciting news south of the border was the March release of the Spanish-language version, *Aves de Peru*, making this great resource now available to myriad additional birders! And you can put the new edition right to use on the following open Peru tours:

Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga, Peru, August 7-16 with Dan Lane
Northern Peru: Endemics Galore, November 7-27 with Rose Ann Rowlett & Richard Webster



We do love our hummingbirds, and how could we not? Here's a sampling. At top, a Sparkling Violetear from Ecuador; above left, a Planalto Hermit in Brazil; and above right, a Golden-tailed Sapphire from Ecuador. (Photos by guide Richard Webster & participant Leslie Flint)

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