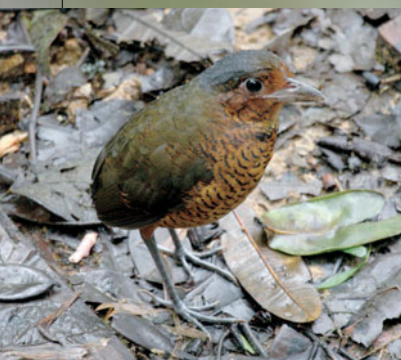


Jewels of the Andes

Rose Ann Rowlett



Jewels indeed! One example from each of three important groups we seek on our *Jewels of Ecuador* tour: Giant Antpitta, Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager, and Violet-tailed Sylph. [Photos by guide Richard Webster & participant Ed Hagen]

Like most North American birders, you've probably wandered south from time to time, at least among the colorful plates of the many exciting books on the birds of South America. If you find the comfort of cooler temperatures appealing, you've probably been drawn to the birds of the Andean countries. If you have yet to make the plunge, which species do you dream of seeing? What would you list as the *classiest birds of the Andes*?

Do you dream of Torrent Ducks repeatedly plunging from rocks into rushing water and bounding back onto the rocks? Do you imagine a White-capped Dipper hopping through the mist at the base of a tall waterfall? Or have the showier birds grabbed your attention? How about a tree full of displaying Andean Cocks-of-the-rock? Or maybe a fruiting tree with both Crested and Golden-headed quetzals? Surely you would include a mountain-

toucan, probably Gray-breasted, for the dynamite colors on its bill! Then there's the multicolored Toucan Barbet, with a bill so strange it has recently been accorded family rank (along with Prong-billed Barbet of Costa Rica and Panama). You might throw in a dramatically beautiful woodpecker, maybe a Powerful or a Crimson-mantled? How about a flock of Turquoise Jays, gleaming blue as they hop along mossy branches? If you're into raptors, you've probably imagined a massive male Andean Condor circling in the sun below a snow-capped volcanic peak...or a Black-and-chestnut Eagle diving for prey at close range. If you love night birding, you may have imagined a spectacular male Lyre-tailed or Swallow-tailed Nightjar circling overhead, its tail streamers flowing in the spotlight. Oh, or maybe the mysterious Andean Potoo or a big, spectacular owl, something like Band-bellied perhaps? (Or how about an undescribed species!) *Continued on page 2*



White-throated Kingfisher, photographed by participants David & Judy Smith

Northern India Tiger, Birds & the Taj Mahal

Terry Stevenson

Though it hardly seems possible to me, we've been visiting northern India now for over ten years, and by carefully tweaking the itinerary here and there, we have what we think is the very best tour available. From the misty dawns among the waterfowl at Bharatpur to the clear air and forests of Corbett National Park, with Indian Elephant, Spotted Deer, and Wild Boar, Ibisbill on the river at Ramnagar, and woodpeckers, redstarts, forktails, and laughingthrushes in the Himalayan foothills, we visit all the best areas on the northern subcontinent. *Continued on page 3*

Three Streams

Jan Pierson

I'm sitting at the confluence of three figurative streams this morning ...world birds, world birding places, and world bird photos. For world birds, it's our annual database update (the program we use to generate all our checklists), based on the Clements 6.6 version recently released online by Cornell (Common Gallinule is back!) *Continued on page 10*

Jewels of the Andes

Continued from page 1

Speaking of spectacular, can it be that I haven't yet mentioned hummingbirds or tanagers? These two families—at their greatest diversity in northwestern South America—must certainly contain among the foremost jewels of the Andes. But which species to include among the “classiest”? Would it be the Sword-billed for its incredibly long bill? Or the male Booted Rackettail with its unique tail and extensive, puffy boots? Or one of the long-tailed sylphs with their iridescent crowns and tails? For exuberant color, you might pick the chartreuse-and-violet Purple-backed Thornbill, the Glowing Puffleg (which glows all over!), the splendid Rainbow Starfrontlet, or the unreal Velvet-purple Coronet? There are so many gems among the hummers, it's impossible to choose.

As for tanagers, one can throw the whole Thesaurus at the many colorful *Tangaras* that seem so distinctive on the plates and then challenge the observer to retain their complex patterns long enough for ID: things like Paradise, Flame-faced, Golden, and Golden-eared. And what about the lovely mountain-tanagers of the high-elevation forests...or the tasteful *Iridisornis* (like Golden-crowned Tanager)? You might have to consider the stunning Red-hooded Tanager that sings from treetops above epiphyte-laden cloud forest? And what of those noisy flocks of aberrant White-capped Tanagers, flying along a distant Andean ridge, that approach suddenly and begin screaming and bowing, jay-like, their plush white crowns erect? Would you include a Giant Conebill foraging under the tissue-like scales of the *Polylepis* bark?

If you've been to The Bird Continent, you may be dreaming of slightly more subtle species, perhaps some of the tougher ones, or some that have grabbed your attention for their unique behavior or structure or their specialized habitat. Maybe you dream of a pair of ptarmigan-like Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe picking through cushion plants on a paramo peak? You may be thinking of such scarce and intriguing loners as Black-streaked Puffbird, Lanceolated Monklet, or Scaled Fruiteater? If you're into skulkers, you've probably mused about a big, spectacular Ocellated Tapaculo emerging from the bamboo to sit out sunning on a mossy log...or an Elegant Crescentchest working its way to the top of a dense thornbush in an arid interior valley...or a covey of twittering wood-quail (*of any species!*) emerging from the dark understory of a neblina-enveloped cloud forest? How about the scarce and aberrant Tanager Finch, with colors befitting a tanager but a brush-finch-like pattern and song (and now placed in the Emberizids)? If you've pored through the South American field guides, you could be lusting after an entire spectrum of shy and rarely seen antpittas, ranging from the largest (Giant) to the fanciest of the tiny *Grallaricula*'s (Crescent-faced). Of these rarely encountered ground-antbirds, the more the better!

You may have caught the news in *Science* of the discovery of the stridulation mechanism—unique among vertebrates—by which a male Club-winged Manakin produces harmonic tones during his courtship display; it's essentially the way a cricket produces its sound! If so, you're likely to include that species in your “classiest” list. Or you may have read of such threatened species as Red-faced Parrot, White-necked Parakeet, or Orange-breasted Fruiteater and be eager to track them down. If you're into birdsong, you may have read that scientists now regard the song of the group-living Plain-tailed Wren as “one of the most complex singing performances yet described in a nonhuman animal.” While some may dream of dramatic tanagers, a precisely singing Plain-tailed Wren may be a jewel to you! (And while we're dreaming, how about a Spectacled Bear?)

Well, you may have surmised by now that there's only one Field Guides tour on which every one of these species has been seen: our JEWELS OF ECUADOR: HUMMERS, TANAGERS, & ANTPITTAS tour. Though we've never seen them all on any one tour (such is the nature of birding in the Andes), we keep trying—and we do see the majority on each tour. Some sixty-five species of hummers is par for the course, along with jillions of so-called “tanagers.” With some help from the antpitta feedings at Refugio Paz and San Isidro, we've actually *seen* as many as 10 of the 15 possible antpittas on one tour! We typically see the beautiful “San Isidro Owl,” still undescribed officially; we've seen coveys of Dark-backed Wood-Quail, and we've seen Spectacled Bear on at least five tours! In our 16 days of birding, we see oodles of additional species, of course, usually totaling some 500+ species. How's that for an immersion in Andean birding? In the process we stay in some wonderful settings (right in good habitat), eat gourmet food, and enjoy wonderful Ecuadorian hospitality. JEWELS offers a good introduction to South American birds, and it's great for veterans as well. In fact, you veterans should hear some *late-breaking news*: Marcelo at San Isidro recently succeeded in training a Peruvian Antpitta (such a rare and recent addition to the Ecuador list that it's not even in the book) to come for bits of earthworms! Feelin' lucky? Come join us for one of our upcoming tours to survey the Jewels of Ecuador.

2012 dates for our two Jewels of Ecuador tours are, January 21-February 7 with Rose Ann Rowlett & Willy Perez and February 11-28 with Mitch Lysinger & Willy Perez. Both tours may be combined with a visit to the lowlands at Sacha Lodge, January 13-22 and February 3-12.

And, if you're looking for a shorter tour or for a different time period, we have a number of other Andean tours, including Montane Ecuador, Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge, Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes, and Holiday at San Isidro.

Finally, if you'd like to see a slideshow of some of the splendid hummers you can expect on our Ecuador tours, visit www.fieldguides.com/hummers for a taste of what the Andes have to offer.



More birding “bling” from Ecuador's Andes: from top right, the fantastic Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, a White-bellied Antpitta at San Isidro, another sylph, this time Long-tailed, and above, the well-camouflaged Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe. And if you'd like to have some fun with woodpeckers from around the world, check out our new woodpecker slideshow at www.fieldguides.com/woodpeckers. [Photos by guides Richard Webster & John Rowlett & participant Frank Gilliland]



Three stars of a tour to Northern India: the common and gorgeous (and wild!) Indian Peafowl, an Indian Roller surveying open country, and the spectacular Tiger. [Photos by participants David & Judy Smith & Marshall Dahl]

Northern India

Continued from page 1

A boat trip on the Chambal River, near Agra and the Taj Mahal, is a recent addition to the tour. Here, Red-naped Ibis walk along the banks, Black-bellied Terns feed over the open water, and (with luck) the endangered Ganges Dolphin surfaces close by. To the south, Kanha National Park, where we spend three nights, is the best place in all of India to see that most magnificent of cats—the fabulous Tiger! The park also gives us a chance for the rare Dhole (or Indian Wild Dog), Gaur, Sloth Bear, and even Leopard, as well as a number of birds that should include Painted Francolin, Alexandrine Parakeet, Sirkeer Malkoha, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Asian Paradise-Flycatcher, and Indian Scimitar-Babbler. In several areas we benefit from the assistance of some excellent local guides, giving us an even better chance than ever to see some of the rarer species like White-rumped and Indian vultures (both critically endangered) or a Tawny Fish-Owl, perhaps a fruiting tree with hornbills, barbets, and greenbuls or a dense thicket with a wintering Siberian Rubythroat or secretive Long-billed Thrush.

But northern India isn't just about traveling from one birding hotspot to another. For a first-time visitor, the sheer mass of vibrant color, gorgeous women in saris, vegetable stalls piled high with produce, unfamiliar smells of unusual spices, and the jostle of camel carts, rickshaws, painted trucks, and buses will all have your senses running amok. Add to this some of India's most famous historical sights, including the Palace of Akbar the Great and the just out-of-this-world Taj Mahal, and Northern India really is a tour not to be missed.

*You can join Terry Stevenson on our next **Northern India: Tiger, Birds & the Taj Mahal** tour from January 21-February 12, 2012. For a combination of both birds and mammals, only Africa gives you more species than what we regularly see on this exciting tour. For details, visit www.fieldguides.com/bird-tours/india-north where you may download a tour itinerary, or call our Austin office and they will be happy to mail you one.*

FRESH FROM THE FIELD



As usual, we operated two summer **Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga, Peru** tours this year, one with guide Dan Lane and the other with Jesse Fagan at the helm. Among the numerous Andean specialties were various flowerpiercers including this Moustached above on Jesse's tour, and the boisterous yet tiny



Unstreaked Tit-Tyrant (because, you guessed it, the other six species are streaky below!). Below, our first departure's group with guide Dan Lane at another Andean specialty—fantastic Machu Picchu. [Photos by guides Jesse Fagan & Dan Lane]



We've got 11 distinct itineraries to Brazil these days, including two summer itineraries, **Alta Floresta & the Northern Pantanal** and **Jaguar Spotting**. Both include a stint in the amazing Pantanal, a delightful birding area. Guide Marcelo Padua returned from this year's AFNP tour with these photos of Bearded Tachuri, Great Rufous Woodcreeper, and a glowing Helmeted Manakin.



Did the wildfire news slow us down? No way! Two **Arizona's Second Spring** tours this summer, starring Five-striped Sparrow and (a sleepy) Spotted Owl and others like Pacific-slope Flycatcher, delighted our groups with John Coons and Dave Stejskal (who brought home these photos). We've arranged our two May 2012 **Arizona: Birding the Border** trips to now begin a week apart, May 11 and May 18. See you there?





Ethiopia returned to our schedule in 2011, and it's good to have it back. Guide George Armistead joined Terry Stevenson for a great tour and grabbed these images of a massive Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill dwarfing a Carmine Bee-eater, a stop to share a few pics with some local children, and Gray-headed Kingfisher. Terry heads back in May 2012 with Richard Webster co-leading, and we've already got a May 2013 departure on the docket, too. [Photos by guide George Armistead—and check out George's great slideshow linked from our web page for the tour!]



The frigatebird recipe for life: 1) Inflate male's red neck pouch. 2) Impress female. 3) Hook up. 4) Raise young. 5) Repeat process indefinitely to propagate species. Looks like things were working well here for both species on our **Galapagos** tours—a male Magnificent in full bloom, and a female Great feeding her nestling. Meanwhile, that Woodpecker Finch looks to be in need of a cactus spine to find some food in the cavity. [Photos by guide George Armistead]



Have you have heard of umbrellabirds, those huge passerines of Central and South America? We think this is one of the most unusual images of Amazonian Umbrellabird we've seen...not fully "deployed" (though it was raining and you'd think it might want a bit of cover!) but instead showing the cool black-and-white feather pattern of the retracted "umbrella." Also from our **Mountains of Manu** (Peru) tour: Slaty Antwren and a White-necked Jacobin hummer. [Photos by guide Dan Lane]



Guides Rose Ann Rowlett and Willy Perez, at right, teamed up once again, this time for one of this summer's **Montane Ecuador** tours. The result? Raves. Birding both slopes of the Andes here is a bit like being in an eye-candy store...there are great birds everywhere, and we could have filled this entire page with various examples—but here are just a couple: a covey of Dark-backed Wood-Quail and a Toucan Barbet. It's time to start holding a space if you hope to travel with either Willy or "the Grebe" in 2012. [Photos by guide Rose Ann Rowlett]



FRESH FROM THE FIELD



Alaska is immense and immensely rewarding...that's why we run two tours, each in two parts, every year. Around the clock here from 2011: guide Dave Stejskal, ready to show us some birds; a Tufted Puffin that's apparently been dipping into the hair gel; a Red-necked Pond-Spinner (oops, we mean Phalarope); a big pile of Steller's Sea Lions; and a Semipalmated Plover (the tundra is just crawling with all kinds of great nesting shorebirds). [Photos by participant David Disher (of Dave & sea lions) & guides Dave Stejskal & George Armistead]



Participants David and Judy Smith returned from our summer *Manu Wildlife Center* tour to Peru with these fine images of two Amazonian classics: Black-capped Donacobius, which are lively features in seemingly every oxbow lake, and a male Crimson-crested Woodpecker. Guide Dan Lane added this image of Black-bellied Thorntail, a tiny hummer showing the pale rump-band characteristic of thorntails and coquettes.



An arresting trilogy: some well-plumed Capped Herons putting on a show, a much-tamer-than-usual Sungrebe, and a (completely show-stopping) Jaguar—all photos by guide Marcelo Padua from the new *Jaguar Spotting: Pantanal & the Garden of the Amazon* tour he inaugurated this summer. Wow!





to Glacier tour. On tap this past summer were spectacular scenery (here a long view to the East Front of the Rockies), some hefty and impressive large animals (the Griz, for one), and a whole lotta birds and mammals to watch through binocs and scopes. [Photos by guide Terry McEneaney & participant Bob Mandel]

Are you thinking this might be Alaska? Not a bad guess, though it's much closer: our **Montana: Yellowstone**



Some damp weather didn't slow down our **Point Pelee Migration Spectacle** group much, and the stars of the show, the warblers, were still aglow, including this Black-throated Blue, Chestnut-sided, and Prothonotary by participant Marshall Dahl. And, of course, we'll be heading back next May for more in this great Canadian birding hotspot on the Lake Erie shore.



We had great luck on this year's **Peru's Magnetic North: Spatuletails, Owlet Lodge & More** trip...an evening walk (here guide John Rowlett with group) down the trail for a fantastic Long-whiskered Owlet (it used to be a legend, now it's reality!), now-reliable looks at incomparable Marvelous Spatuletails, and the enchanting Johnson's Tody-Tyrant (you weren't thinking flycatchers could be cute, right?). [Photos by participant Evelyn Ralston]



Images from one of our two **Papua New Guinea** trips this summer: the interface of savanna and humid forest at Varirata NP outside Port Moresby, a preening Raggiana's Bird-of-paradise, and, in profile, one of the truly, wonderfully bizarre birds of the world—the Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise, a veritable avian radio antenna! [Photos by guide Phil Gregory]



UPCOMING TOURS

For details on any trip or trips, please call our office or check our web site, where you may download tour itineraries.

January-February 2012

Mexico: Colima & Jalisco—January 13-21, 2012 with Megan Crewe. A popular and comfortable introduction to Neotropical birds; many West Mexican endemics and rarities; lovely coastal and montane scenery.

Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge I—January 13-22, 2012. One-site tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere.

Nowhere But Northeast Brazil!—January 13-30, 2012 (Part I) and January 28-February 13, 2012 (Part II) with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. From beautiful beaches to barren badlands, Part I of our tour is a quest for specialties of the endangered caatinga, chapada, and Atlantic Forest habitats. Part II takes us from the forests of southern Bahia through northern Minas Gerais and west to the Araguaia.

Yellowstone in Winter—January 14-22, 2012 with Terry & Karen McEneaney. A winter birding, wildlife, and landscape adventure to one of the world's legendary destinations.

Colombia: Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta—January 14-30, 2012 with Jesse Fagan. Energetic, endemic-oriented tour connecting reserves up the Magdalena Valley from Bogota to the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

Thailand—January 14-February 4, 2012 (Gurney's Pitta & Nicobar Pigeon Extension) with Dave Stejskal & Uthai Treesucon. A wide variety of forest birds in the friendly heart of Southeast Asia (and fabulous Thai food).

Panama's Fabulous Fortnight—January 20-26, 2012 (Part I) and January 26-February 2, 2012 (Part II) with Chris Benesh. An exploration of the best of Panama in two parts: Part I—rich rainforest birding in Panama's central lowlands from our base at the Canopy Tower, giving us quick access to famous Pipeline Road and its raiding army ants; Part II—cloud forest birding in unsurpassed surroundings featuring many biogeographic endemics.

Colombia: The Cauca Valley, Western & Central Andes—January 21-February 6, 2012 with Richard Webster. Energetic, endemic-oriented tour connecting reserves up the Cauca Valley from Medellin to Cali.

Jewels of Ecuador: Hummers, Tanagers & Antpittas I—January 21-February 7, 2012 with Rose Ann Rowlett & Willy Perez. Survey of Andean Ecuador; diverse avifauna dominated by colorful hummers and tanagers and more subtle and haunting antpittas.

Northern India: Tiger, Birds & the Taj Mahal—January 21-February 12, 2012 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.

Mexico: Oaxaca—January 22-29, 2012 with Megan Crewe. Superb birding with two-dozen Mexican endemics and fascinating ruins while based in lovely Oaxaca City.

Panama's Fabulous Fortnight—January 26-February 2, 2012 (Part II) with Chris Benesh. (see above for description)

The Heart of Chile—January 28-February 11, 2012 (Easter Island Extension) with Peter Burke & Ricardo Matus. A sampling of Chile's "heart" between Santiago and Chiloe Island, including coastal birding and a pelagic. A shorter, more relaxed visit to this popular and incredibly scenic country.

Nowhere but Northeast Brazil!—January 28-February 13, 2012 (Part II) with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. (see above for description)

Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge II—February 3-12, 2012 with Dan Lane. One-site tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere.

Best of the Pacific Northwest: Skagit Valley & Puget Sound, Washington—February 4-8, 2012 with Terry McEneaney. A winter birding and wildlife tour to a surprisingly mild maritime climate with breathtaking mountain backdrops and beautiful seascapes peppered with islands.

Winter Japan: Dancing Cranes & Spectacular Sea-Eagles—February 4-19, 2012 with Phil Gregory. Japan's winter spectacles, including the fabulous cranes and Steller's Sea-Eagle.

Panama's Canopy Tower I—February 10-17, 2012 with John Coons & local guide. A towering introduction to Neotropical birds based entirely in a unique lodge; quick access to famous Pipeline Road; includes train ride back from Colon after Achiote Road.

Jewels of Ecuador: Hummers, Tanagers & Antpittas II—February 11-28, 2012 with Mitch Lysinger & Willy Perez. Survey of Andean Ecuador; diverse avifauna dominated by colorful hummers and tanagers and more subtle and haunting antpittas.

Panama's Wild Darien: Cana & Cerro Pirre—February 17-26, 2012 with John Coons. A true wilderness area accessed by charter aircraft; many endemics and species of restricted range.

Cambodia—February 18-March 1, 2012 with Phil Gregory. A "last chance" destination for some of the large, rare Asian waterbirds now extinct in neighboring countries, plus additional regional specialties and world-famous Angkor Wat.

Guatemala: Shade-grown Birding—February 22-March 3, 2012 with Jesse Fagan. Numerous Middle American specialties, among them Resplendent Quetzal, a host of hummingbirds, and Azure-rumped Tanager, set against a dramatic volcanic landscape and colorful Mayan culture.

Panama's Canopy Tower II—February 25-March 3, 2012 (Canopy Lodge Extension) with Chris Benesh & local guide. A towering

introduction to Neotropical birds based entirely in a unique lodge; quick access to famous Pipeline Road; includes train ride back from Colon after Achiote Road.

Trinidad & Tobago—February 25-March 5, 2012 with Megan Crewe & local guide. Wonderful introduction to South America's bird riches including bellbirds, toucans, manakins, and motmots.

March-April 2012

Suriname: Wild & Wonderful—March 2-17, 2012 with Dan Lane. A top-shelf rainforest birding experience for those who love to walk, listen, and be surprised.

Honduras: Land of the Emeralds—March 3-11, 2012 with Jesse Fagan. Tour for the endemic Honduran Emerald plus arid Pacific slope, Central Highland, and Caribbean lowland coverage; nearly 300 species!

Birding Plus: Egypt—March 3-20, 2012 (Petra Extension) with Terry Stevenson. A new itinerary combining the best of Egypt's birding with some of its best-known archaeological treasures.

Borneo I—March 15-April 1, 2012 with Rose Ann Rowlett & Dave Stejskal. Three prime areas on this tour to some of the Earth's richest forests while based in comfort right in the wild.

Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge—March 16-26, 2012 with John Rowlett & Willy Perez. Our tour exploring the riches of the eastern Andean foothills of northern Ecuador for numerous specialties at the recently opened Wildsumaco Lodge.

Colombia: Santa Marta Escape—March 17-25, 2012 with Richard Webster & local guide. Birding tour featuring an easier subset of "Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta," reached by a direct flight from Miami, and with a couple more days for a more leisurely approach.

Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves—March 17-31, 2012 with Mitch Lysinger. Birding tour focused on the many specialties of the southwest, in particular the very local endemics of the humid foothills and mountains, and Tumbesian specialties.

Brazil Nutshell: Atlantic Forest, Iguazu Falls & the Pantanal—March 17-31, 2012 with Marcelo Padua & John Coons. This medium-length tour hits three of Brazil's premier birding venues, staying several nights at each to ensure an unhurried pace as we rack up some 400 species of birds.

Costa Rica—March 17-April 1, 2012 with Megan Crewe & local guide. Resplendent Quetzals, Three-wattled Bellbirds, Scarlet Macaws in a beautiful country with easy travel.

Ghana—March 17-April 2, 2012 with Phil Gregory & local guide. A new addition to our schedule, in search of numerous West African specialties as well as White-necked Rockfowl.

Puerto Rico—March 18-24, 2012 with George Armistead. A week of respite to a very birdy and beautiful Caribbean island, a mix of North American and local culture and cuisine; 16 endemic birds and a number of other Caribbean specialties.

Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes I—March 18-April 1, 2012. Highlight birding tour of the best of Ecuador's rainforest birding at Sacha Lodge combined with two exciting destinations in the Andes, the Mindo/Tandayapa area and San Isidro.

Dominican Republic—March 24-31, 2012 with Jesse Fagan. Short tour for many specialties and endemics including the unusual Palmchat.

Spring in South Texas—March 24-April 1, 2012 with Chris Benesh. Magnificent Whooping Cranes, lots of South Texas specialties, and spring hawk migration on this exciting birding tour.

Bahamas: Birds & Butterflies—March 31-April 5, 2012 with Jesse Fagan. Small-group tour for three Bahamian endemics, several Caribbean endemics, a few early migrants, Kirtland's Warbler, and a sampling of West Indian butterflies; exciting birding at a relaxed pace.

Hawaii—April 1-10, 2012 with George Armistead. We'll visit three of the major islands—Oahu, Kauai, and Hawaii—giving us a chance to sample a great portion of the Hawaiian endemics and the seabird specialties.

Namibia & Botswana—April 3-22, 2012 with Terry Stevenson. Southwestern Africa's bird specialties, striking scenery, wilderness, and the famed game of Etosha and the Okavango.

Colorado Grouse I—April 4-14, 2012 with Chris Benesh. A short birding tour to seek out the state's prairie-chicken and grouse species.

Bhutan—April 6-27, 2012 with Richard Webster. Spellbinding birding amidst awe-inspiring landscapes on a journey through the lush forests and mountains of this "lost" Himalayan kingdom.

Belize—April 8-14, 2012 with Jesse Fagan. A terrific introduction to (or continuation of!) your tropical birding, including some regional bird specialties.

Texas Coast Migration Spectacle I—April 14-20, 2012 with John Coons. Birding tour to the migration mecca of High Island plus specialties of the Big Thicket and myriad waterbirds and shorebirds.

Colorado Grouse II—April 14-24, 2012 with Dan Lane. A short birding tour to seek out the state's prairie-chicken and grouse species.

Birding Plus: Scotland: Famous Grouse in the Land of Whisky—April 20-May 1, 2012 with John Rowlett & local guide. Imbibing Highland Scotland's famous grouse, distilling the birds of the Hebrides, and sampling Scottish whisky and bagpipe culture sum up the smooth shots to be taken on this Birding Plus tour.

Texas Coast Migration Spectacle II—April 21-27, 2012 with John Coons. Birding tour to the migration mecca of High Island plus specialties of the Big Thicket and myriad waterbirds and shorebirds.

Texas's Big Bend & Hill Country—April 21-30, 2012 with Chris Benesh. Colima and Golden-cheeked warblers, Montezuma Quail, and other southern borderland specialties in Texas's grand desert mountain landscapes.

Classical Greece—April 27-May 11, 2012 with Megan Crewe & local guide. Fine southeast European birding tour—at the peak of migration—with archaeological and cultural stops.

May-June 2012

Arizona Nightbirds & More I—May 3-7, 2012 with Dave Stejskal. A short birding tour focused on this area's many owl and nightjar specialties.

Ethiopia: Endemic Birds & Ethiopian Wolf—May 5-25, 2012 (Lalibela Extension) with Terry Stevenson & Richard Webster. A remarkable journey through a remarkable land, from Rift Valley lakes to the Bale Mountains and south for Prince Ruspoli's Turaco and the strange Stresemann's Bush-Crow.

Brazil's Rio Roosevelt: Birding the River of Doubt I—May 6-16, 2012 with Marcelo Padua. A birding adventure on the remote Rio Roosevelt in the spirit of Teddy himself, as we search for bushbirds, ant swarms, and, of course, the unknown.

Arizona Nightbirds & More II—May 10-14, 2012 with Dave Stejskal. A short birding tour focused on this area's many owl and nightjar specialties.

Arizona: Birding the Border I—May 11-20, 2012 with John Coons. Comprehensive birding tour of one of the most exciting destinations in North America with a backdrop of spectacular mountain scenery.

Point Pelee Migration Spectacle—May 12-19, 2012. Exciting migration birding at several premier hotspots on the Lake Erie shore.

Uganda: Shoebill, Rift Endemics & Gorillas—May 17-June 7, 2012 with Phil Gregory. The rare Shoebill and a wealth of other birds and many Central African specialties on our birding tour, combined with opportunities to trek for Chimps and Mountain Gorillas.

Arizona: Birding the Border II—May 18-27, 2012 with Dave Stejskal. Comprehensive birding tour of one of the most exciting destinations in North America with a backdrop of spectacular mountain scenery.

Virginias' Warblers—May 30-June 3, 2012 with John Rowlett & John Coons. Unsurpassed locale for breeding wood-warblers; cool, mountain climate in both beautiful states on our birding tour; optional visit to Monticello.

Alaska I—May 31-June 9, 2012 (Part I) and June 8-18, 2012 (Part II) with Chris Benesh & Jesse Fagan. Comprehensive survey birding tour of spectacular Alaska in two parts: Part I to the Pribilofs and Denali; Part II to Nome, Seward, and Barrow.

Central Peruvian Endemics: The High Andes—June 1-18, 2012 with Dan Lane & Willy Perez. Birding tour for the high-Andean endemics of central Peru in extraordinarily scenic settings, including Huascaran National Park, Lake Junin, and the Carpish Mountains.

Alaska II—June 7-16, 2012 (Part I) and June 15-25, 2012 (Part II) with George Armistead & Megan Crewe. Comprehensive survey birding tour of spectacular Alaska in two parts: Part I to the Pribilofs and Denali; Part II to Nome, Seward, and Barrow.

Montana: Yellowstone to Glacier—June 7-17, 2012 with Terry McEneaney & John Coons. Great western birding and wildlife amidst the scenery of Big Sky country.

Borneo II—June 7-24, 2012 with Rose Ann Rowlett. Three prime areas on this birding tour to some of the Earth's richest forests while based in comfort right in the wild.

Montane Ecuador: Cloudforests of the Andes I—June 8-17, 2012 with Mitch Lysinger. Small-group tour for superb Andean subtropical birding on both East and West slopes.

Alaska I—June 8-18, 2012 (Part II) with Chris Benesh & Jesse Fagan. (see above for description)

Alaska II—June 15-25, 2012 (Part II) with George Armistead & Megan Crewe. (see above for description)

Rainforest & Savanna: Alta Floresta & the Northern Pantanal, Brazil—June 15-July 1, 2012 with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. A birding tour in pristine rainforest on the beautiful Rio Cristalino combined with the wilds of the Pantanal in search of Hyacinth Macaw, Harpy Eagle, Jabiru, Jaguar, and a large piece of the meaning of life.

Galapagos: An Intimate Look at Darwin's Islands I—June 16-26, 2012 with Alvaro Jaramillo & local guide. A must for any naturalist and birder; small-group birding tour with broad coverage of the islands with plenty of time for the birds, exploring, and photography.

Spitsbergen & Svalbard Archipelago: A Cruise to the Norwegian Arctic—June 23-July 5, 2012 with John Coons. A high-arctic adventure aboard a comfortable vessel for fantastic seabirds, marine mammals, Polar Bear, and fabulous scenery.

Papua New Guinea I—June 24-July 16, 2012 with Phil Gregory. Birds-of-paradise and bowerbirds are the crown jewels of one of the most remarkable bird faunas, set against a fascinating cultural backdrop far removed from our own.

Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge III—June 29-July 8, 2012 with Mitch Lysinger. One-site birding tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere.

Newfoundland & Nova Scotia—June 29-July 9, 2012 with Chris Benesh. A birding tour for boreal specialties, seabird colonies, and numerous breeding landbirds in the beautiful Canadian Maritimes.

Peru's Magnetic North: Spatuletails, Owllet Lodge & More—June 30-July 10, 2012 with John Rowlett & Pepe Rojas. A 12-day taste of northern Peru's east-slope Andes. Five nights at Long-whiskered Owllet Lodge; much time in the field, yet no camping.

Manu Wildlife Center, Peru I—June 30-July 12, 2012 with Dan Lane. One-site birding tour to the most species-rich rainforest on Earth. Macaw lick, canopy tower, tapir wallow, and wonderful trails through Amazonian lowlands of Manu Biosphere Reserve.

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 19-28, 2011 with Jesse Fagan. A holiday tour combining rich birding at lovely fincas in the highlands as well as the Mayan ruins of Tikal in the Peten lowlands.

Holiday at San Isidro, Ecuador—November 19-28, 2011 with Mitch Lysinger. A bird-rich holiday escape based primarily at the very comfortable San Isidro Lodge.

Brazil's Rio Roosevelt: Birding the River of Doubt—December 15-28, 2011 with Bret Whitney. A birding tour adventure on the remote Rio Roosevelt in the spirit of Teddy himself, as we search for bushbirds, antswarms, and, of course, the unknown.



Trinidad & Tobago—December 17-26, 2011 with Wayne Petersen. Wonderful introduction to South America's bird riches including bellbirds, toucans, manakins, and motmots.

Holiday Costa Rica: Rancho Naturalista I & II—December 18-26, 2011 with Jesse Fagan & local guide or December 30-January 7, 2012 with Jay VanderGaast & 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.

Panama's Canopy Lodge: El Valle de Anton—December 27, 2011-January 3, 2012 with Chris Benesh. A superb birding tour as an introduction to Neotropical birds or to complement your broader Middle American birding, all based at a charming lodge.

Mexico: Oaxaca & the Pacific Coast—December 28, 2011-January 8, 2012 with Megan Crewe & Mike Crewe. 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, 2011-January 7, 2012 with John Coons. Birding tour to a true wilderness area accessed by charter aircraft; many endemics and species of restricted range.

Arizona Winter Specialties—December 30, 2011-January 4, 2012 with Dave Stejskal. Exceptional winter birding on a short tour with numerous specialties and potential rarities.



Destination: **Trinidad & Tobago**. Targets: Manakins! Participant Brian Schoeffler returned from the isles earlier this year with these fantastic shots of Blue-backed, Golden-headed, and White-bearded. They are all on tap again for our holiday tour departing December 17 with guide Wayne Petersen or our February 25-March 5, 2012 tour with Megan Crewe.

Why I Hate Pheasants*

Richard Webster

To start with, just look at them. Stupid birds. There are four species that are regularly seen in Bhutan, and we always see several and often all of them. But tour guides are really into control, and over pheasants we do not have much control. Pheasants in Bhutan are most easily seen from the bus while driving along the road, which means we are dependent on the pheasants to step out onto the road just before we get to an unknowable “there,” not before some other vehicle gets to that spot. OK, so a bunch of luck is involved, but luck, as the saying goes, can be the residue of design, and we do have strategies.

Strategy number one is to be out early, or perhaps also late. What do pheasants do the rest of a nice day? I have no idea; reading William Beebe’s *A Monograph of the Pheasants* on their 3G Kindles under a rhododendron has yet to be disproved as a possibility. In comparison with the introduced Ring-necked Pheasants we see in fields in North America, these pheasants are closely associated with forest and treeline scrub as cover, and they seem plenty savvy about sneaking away from approaching birders, even quiet approaching birders. What brings pheasants out of the forest? Bad Weather: Neither sleet nor snow stops either our Post Office or pheasants, although the advent of electronic mail seems to be stopping our post office, whereas it is helping pheasants by reducing logging for paper production. Indeed, bad weather emboldens pheasants, so strategy number two is to make the best of bad luck. Last year we had wonderful looks at Blood Pheasants our first morning, and didn’t see any the rest of the trip because the weather was too nice. In other years, we have seen as many as 30 Blood Pheasants along the same roads during a late spring snow storm. You start to get the picture: Early + late or bad luck (weather), + some (good) luck = pheasants.

Pheasants are sexually dimorphic. So if a female Himalayan Monal steps out onto the road, is its ptarmigan-like beauty completely satisfying? Not for most. None of this electronic ink coloring for our tour groups; we are a Color Nook or iPad crowd, and we want males!

* BTW, I don’t *really* hate pheasants. But the relationship is complicated!



Now suppose you could only see one of the two above? Which one would you take? A Blood Pheasant without “blood”? Fortunately, we usually see both sexes. This Satyr Tragopan, at right, is not on a road. But you better believe it was just on a road. Fortunately it was not in a hurry, so it was soaked in. [Photos by guide Richard Webster]



And see the next installment in this series: “Love-Hate Relationships with the Good and Bad Laughingthrushes: A Study in Birding Ambivalence”

Richard will happily show you as many pheasants as he comes across in Bhutan this year, April 6-27.

For details, call our office or visit www.fieldguides.com/bird-tours/bhutan where you may download a tour itinerary.

Three Streams

Continued from page 1

Everything’s a redstart! And my favorite new split name might be Transvolcanic Jay...); for world birding places, it’s the beginning of our scheduling committee’s fine-tuning, guide assignments, and new-tour explorations for 2013; and for world bird photos, it’s the steady inflow from the field of fresh images by our participants and guides.

To put it mildly, the three streams are at flood level—it’s just incredible how much we can know, go, and show these days. Knowledge about birds, their taxonomy, distribution, habits, and ID is accumulating at an astounding pace. Access to new or better birding sites around the world continues to grow (is there a corner we can’t reach?). And between all of the birders out there digiscoping or hauling DSLRs or now-tiny video cameras, are there many species left we have not yet photographed? From an information and access standpoint, what an amazing time to be birding. Let’s get prepping, and we’ll meet you out there!



Orange-cheeked Parrot and Cobalt-winged Parrotlet, Sacha Lodge, Ecuador, by guide Dave Stejskal, September 2011

LAST SPACES

Madagascar, Mauritius & Reunion,
November 8-December 4, 2011 (Masoala Peninsula Extension) with Phil Gregory.

Guatemala Thanksgiving & Temples of Tikal,
November 19-28, 2011 with Jesse Fagan.

Oman & the UAE: Birding Arabia II,
December 1-17, 2011 with George Armistead.

Uruguay: Birding the Land of the Gauchos,
December 3-17, 2011 with Alvaro Jaramillo.

Spitsbergen & Svalbard Archipelago: *A Cruise to the Norwegian Arctic*

Teresa Paschall



Teresa is part of our fantastic office staff and has traveled to many of the locations of the tours she manages. She recently returned from a cruise around Spitsbergen in the Norwegian arctic, a tour we first offered in 2011 and will again in 2012. The trip will again be guided by John Coons. Here's Teresa's report from her trip.

It was a scorching summer here in Austin, Texas. Since we couldn't do anything about the weather, and complaining didn't seem to help, those of us in the Field Guides office decided to embrace the sweltering heat; we checked the temperature daily and counted the days to see if we were going to set the record for the most days in a row over 100°F—which we did, rather depressingly, at 80 days.

Coincidentally, Field Guides was offering a new tour to Spitsbergen, which is located in the archipelago of Svalbard, the most northerly part of Norway in the Arctic Circle. So when the opportunity presented itself to visit that part of the world, I had tickets purchased before anyone in the office could blink. I called my husband and told him to pack his bags, that we were headed to a cooler climate.

Now, if you're thinking "unbearably cold temperatures," this warm-weather Texan can tell you that on some days the weather was quite balmy, in the upper 30's to the low 40's. Other days, when the wind was blowing, it was downright chilly—hat and glove weather—but, *wow*, what a magical place to visit. Spitsbergen has been used for whaling and coal mining, and it was actually bombed by the Germans during World War II. We toured it aboard

the *m/v Plancius* (the same ship we use for our Antarctica tour), an extremely comfortable vessel with a great crew. Our floating hotel offered fantastic scenery, and each day and each turn gave us new sights. At one stop, we counted 14 glaciers. Each fjord we visited was different; some were still frozen while others had nice beaches that reminded me of the tropics—until I noticed a herd of walrus sunning themselves along the water's edge. Our stop at Alkefjellet brought cliffs loaded with nesting birds, every nook and cranny filled with a feathered fowl—even the elusive Ivory Gull showed up. We had a Blue Whale sighting and also Humpback, Finback, Minke, and Belugas. Spitsbergen has a large population of Polar Bears, and one of the highlights for me was a momma bear with two cubs. We were fortunate to see a total of nine bears during our trip.

Each evening after dinner there were lectures on different subjects ranging from research on Ivory Gulls to whaling art, geology, arctic archeology, and more. One evening's lecture was interrupted by a Polar Bear sighting. If you want to take some time off, you can remain indoors and view the scenery from the lounge, which has a panoramic view, comfortable seating, and hot chocolate 24/7. So if you're thinking of visiting a cooler destination next summer, consider Spitsbergen. It's *cool* in every sense of the word.

Dates are June 23-July 5 and, as noted above, the tour will be guided by John Coons. If you'd like details, call our office or visit www.fieldguides.com/bird-tours/spitsbergen where you may download a tour itinerary.



Above, a few of Teresa's photos from her Spitsbergen trip this summer: at top, a Polar Bear and cubs make for a classic scene; above, Thick-billed Murres, a Ringed Seal surfacing near the Zodiac, and a Walrus showing us what "chillin'" really means—on an ice floe.

fieldguides®

BIRDING TOURS WORLDWIDE

FIELD GUIDES INCORPORATED

9433 Bee Cave Road / Building 1, Suite 150 / Austin, TX 78733
800-728-4953 / 512-263-7295 / fax: 512-263-0117
fieldguides@fieldguides.com / www.fieldguides.com

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BIRDING TOURS WORLDWIDE



From top left, Golden-fronted Redstart, Gold-ringed Tanager, Santa Marta Antpitta, Bearded Helmetcrest [Photos by guide Richard Webster]

COLOMBIA

*We only have room to show you
4 great birds here...*



...but there are another 1800+ when you get there!

Colombia: Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta, January 14-30 with Jesse Fagan

Colombia: The Cauca Valley, Western & Central Andes, January 21-February 6 with Richard Webster

Colombia: Santa Marta Escape, March 17-25 with Richard Webster