

Kicking off Birding in the Neotropics? You'd better 'Belize' it!

Peter Burke

Collared Aracaris feeding (Photo by participants David & Susan Disher)

I'm often asked by birders wanting to spread their wings just which New World destination they should choose to begin birding the Neotropics at a "gentler" pace. A quick look through a Central or South American field guide with all its exotic birds makes it easy to see why they want to visit those southern climes—there are so many birds. But the other side of the coin is—there are so many birds!

Just look at the flycatcher plates and your head begins to spin. Isn't one of your goals to remember when you get back home which of those Little Brown Jobs you saw?! And not only that, but how do you make sense of the different habitats and niches that such a diversity of species fits into? Coming to terms with over 500 species on a two-week trip can be daunting—you don't even know how to pronounce *Xenopsaris*, *Donacobius*, *Hoatzin*, *Graveteiro*, *Hemispingus*, or *Huet-Huet*, let alone what they look like!

My answer to the question of where to start your tropical birding experience is simple—Belize. Only a three-hour flight from the US, this small English speaking country is a perfect introduction to birding the Neotropics, and our seven-day tour there is the perfect way to become more closely

acquainted with many of those unfamiliar bird families. We stay at two very birdy lodges so that we'll have time to get to know the habitats and the full complement of birds that inhabit each.

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Fun at the Circle Z

At the end of August a whole bunch of our Field Guides got together for our annual business meeting. As usual, it was a great time to catch up, share stories, work a little, and get out in the field together—what a great group! We've put together a collage of pics on page 11 so you can feel like you were there, too. A few team members couldn't make it from far-flung corners of the world or while holding the "fort" at our Austin office, but we can't wait to see them next year! —Jan Pierson

Kicking off Birding in the Neotropics?

Continued from page 1

Our first destination, Crooked Tree, lies only an hour's drive north of the international airport along the shores of the very birdy Northern Lagoon, so we are almost immediately immersed in an abundance of waterbirds that include Black-collared Hawk, Boat-billed and Agami herons, Jabiru, five species of kingfisher (including American Pygmy), and Gray-necked Wood-Rail. While there, we should also see a number of Yucatan specialties like Yucatan Jay and Yucatan Parrot. After a couple of days we'll move west to the higher elevation Blackrock Lodge, situated along the Macul River. Here we can explore the pine-oak, semi-deciduous, and broadleaf tropical forests that are home to birds like manakins, toucans, aracarís, woodcreepers, saltators, flatbills, puffbirds, becardos, gnatwrens, tody-flycatchers, attilas, spinetails, motmots, jacamars...a good sampling of many new Neotropical groups. There should be plenty of time to get to know many of them through repeated observation.

If you are looking for the perfect springboard into the Neotropics, join me this February for the Field Guides Belize tour. It may be the start of a great Neotropical adventure for you.

Dates for Peter's Belize tour are February 17-23.



In addition to his work with Jesse Fagan on the northern Central America guide, Peter Burke (right) is currently involved in illustrating plates for the field guide to the birds of Brazil that Bret Whitney (left) is writing with two Brazilian coauthors. It will be published by Lynx Edicions. They caught up at our recent business meeting in Southeast Arizona where they spent some time looking over a few of those finished plates. They look great and we can hardly wait to use the new guide in the field.

In the background, you can just make out another artist in our group, Dan Lane, who was one of the principal illustrators and coauthor of the *Birds of Peru*. Dan will also be working with Bret on the Brazil project.

The Birds of Northern Central America project

Two of our guides, Jesse Fagan and Peter Burke, are currently working on a field guide to the birds of northern Central America to be published by Zona Tropical. It will include the countries of Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras and will present much new information about distribution, habitat, and plumages. In addition, they will include some vignettes of specific behavioral cues to aid in identification. The three illustrations Peter has provided here are examples of these vignettes and may whet your appetite both for the forthcoming guide and for the kinds of experiences they depict, the kinds of experiences awaiting you in Belize.



Encountering a roaming band of Collared Aracarís is one of my favorite things about birding tropical forests in Belize. Their huge bills and short, quick flight make them look like avian torpedos!



Finding yourself on the edge of an army ant swarm with its attendant birds is a lifetime highlight for any birder. Here, three opportunistic woodcreepers taking prey flushed by the ants—Northern Barred (right), Tawny-winged (center back), and Ruddy (two leftmost).



Searching patiently for the source of a loud understory song that penetrates deep into the forest is usually the way to see Mexican Anthrush. But the reward of having one walk into sight... pure birding gold!

Trogon Shoe Sizes

Richard Webster

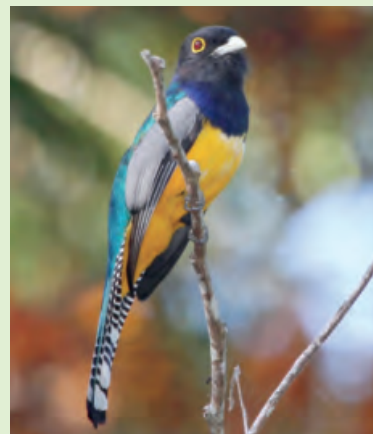
I was (jokingly) asked the other day if trogon parents bind their children's feet to keep them so small. I covered up my ignorance, and spluttered "Of course not! The Trogoniformes are signatories through the I.O.C. [International Ornithological Congress] to all the U.N. conventions on child welfare." The question came from a close observer of Dave Stejskal's photograph of Elegant Trogon that has been appearing on our website and is shown here. I had to admit that I did not know where trogons find Size Two shoes.

Those are dinky pinkies: The trogon proportion of leg muscle to body weight is 3%, around record low in the bird world, and less than half of that of most birds (*Handbook of the Birds of the World*). Trogons can land on the ground, but they cannot walk, and they cannot turn around on a perch without the use of their wings. The toes you see in the photograph are zygodactylous, two front and two back, like woodpeckers and parrots, although they are unique in that it is the inner toe that is reversed, with a correspondingly unique arrangement of tendons. Although relatively undermuscled, those trogon tendons and toes are not weak: Trogons are very good at clinging to tree trunks at the nest hole and at climbing in and out of deep nest cavities, and they can sidle along a branch.

This is a case of use or lose; after all, birds have gone flightless many different times. Birds have not gone footless (apart from the *apoda* early skins of birds-of-paradise, which were sent back to Europe without feet), but swifts and hummingbirds are close, which seems less of a surprise on such flying machines than on a more "standard" bird like a trogon. Trogons are actually quite good fliers, and have 22% of body weight invested in flight muscles. Nimbleness in flight is important for feeding by trogons, which pluck most of their fruit after a sally and a brief hover. Although trogons are thought of as frugivorous, that is true only of the larger quetzals, and most species are omnivorous (*Condor* 95: 178), with the African species largely carnivorous. Trogons capture large insects such as caterpillars and katydids (and even small lizards) by flying to the ground to grab them or by sallying to snatch them off of a branch. Occasionally trogons will even pursue a slow-flying insect. Trogons will never challenge needletails or falcons for avian speed records, but should be thought of as resourceful fliers with minimalist feet.



Elegant Trogon photographed in Southeast Arizona by guide Dave Stejskal



Gartered Trogon photographed in Panama by guide Chris Benesh



Elegant Trogon in flight photographed in Southeast Arizona by guide Dave Stejskal



Baird's Trogon photographed in Costa Rica by guide Jay VanderGaast

Other Shoe Sizes



We can't resist—we think they're all size EE! As in, from left, sharp-EE, bone-EE, nast-EE, chubb-EE, webb-EE, stick-EE, buzz-EE, and daint-EE, or, more formally, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Ostrich, Crested Fireback, Common Bronzewing, Silver Gull, Pied Heron, Rufous-crested Coquette, and Splendid Fairywren. That's ranging the world! Thanks for the pics to participants Paul Thomas and David & Judy Smith, guides Dave Stejskal & Chris Benesh, and participants Marshall Dahl (gull) & Paul Cozza (coquette).

FRESH FROM THE FIELD



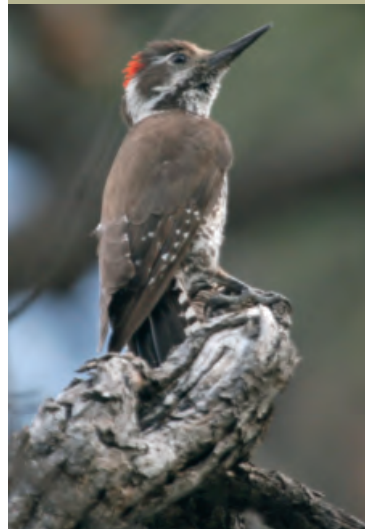
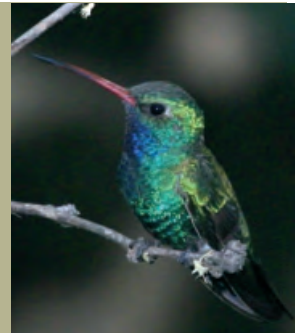
Some things are so wonderful, you just have to do them twice, which is why our **Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga** tour has two departures, this year both led by guide Jesse Fagan. In addition to a host of super birds, like the Giant Hummingbird at left and the endemic Unstreaked Tit-Tyrant at right, our groups enjoyed plenty of quality time at the deservedly famous ruins, as well as meeting some colorful local folks like Maxima (above with Jesse), who lives right in one of the great birding areas we visit at Abra Malaga. (Photos by guide Jesse Fagan and participant Bill Denton)



Though rarities and Siberian vagrants are high on the list of most birders visiting **Alaska** (and our groups this year enjoyed such things as Emperor Goose, White-tailed Eagle, and Gray-tailed Tattler), the regular northern birds are pretty special too. What's not to like when the 'regulars' include such great birds as Rock Ptarmigan, Tufted Puffin, and Thayer's Gull? (Photos by guides Jesse Fagan and George Armistead)

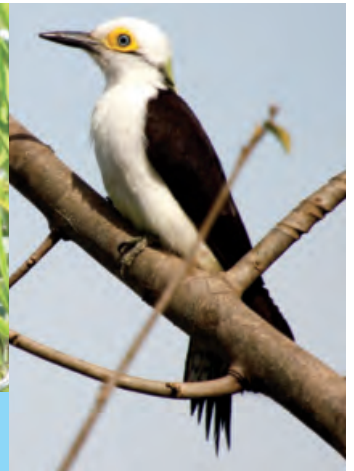


The birding was terrific, according to guide Dave Stejskal, reporting in after his **Arizona: Birding the Border** tour this spring. The trip started with a fancy Red-faced Warbler north of Tucson and wrapped up with a surprise Plain-capped Starthroat a few days later. A whole bunch of other great birds were tallied in between, among them some real Arizona specials like the Broad-billed Hummingbird and the Arizona Woodpecker, and some birds that get around more like the Great Horned Owl (below right) pictured here. (Photos by guide Dave Stejskal)





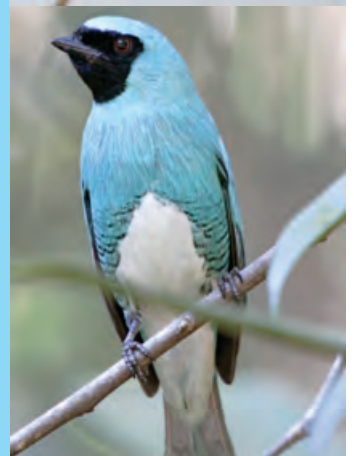
Borneo has been enjoying a surge in popularity lately, leading us to offer up two regular tours this year. Guide Rose Ann Rowlett provided these wonderful images from the second of the regular tours. Above, Rose Ann (second from left) and her group strike a pose in front of the verdant montane forest on Kota Kinabalu, while at left, a Whitehead's Trogon and, above the trogon, perhaps the strangest of the island's birds, a Bornean Bristlehead, headline a list of roughly 300 species recorded on the trip!

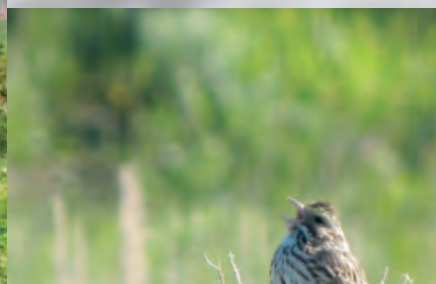


The Galapagos Islands are remarkable for a number of reasons, and the tameness of the wildlife is one of them, a feature that makes the islands a paradise for photographers. Guide Megan Crewe came back from the second of our three **Galapagos** outings this summer with these shots of some of the fearless birds found there. Above, perhaps the most easily recognized feet in the bird world, those of the iconic Blue-footed Booby; top right, the endemic Swallow-tailed Gull is definitely a contender for the world's best-looking gull; at right, a male Great Frigatebird puffs out his chest at a passing female.



After leading a successful initial outing of **Jaguar Spotting** in 2011, Marcelo Padua was back at the helm again this summer. Could the trip avoid the dreaded sophomore slump? Well, looking at these pictures, I think we can safely say it did. Yup, that's a Jaguar above, one of several tallied on the tour. Big cat safely under their belts, the group could settle down and enjoy the wealth of bird life this tour offers, White Woodpecker (above right) and Swallow Tanager (at right) included. (Photos by participant Bruce Hallett)

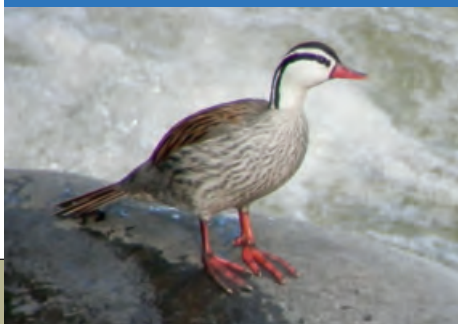




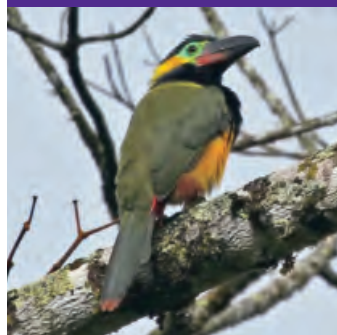
Guides Terry McEneaney and John Coons joined forces to lead our **Montana: Yellowstone to Glacier** tour this spring. Traveling through some of the country's finest national parks, their group enjoyed some stunning mountain scenery, an example of which can be seen above; some amazing wildlife spectacles (Gray Wolf and Grizzly Bear headlining an incredible 26 mammal species); and a wonderful assortment of grassland and mountain birds, among them the Western Tanager (top), Savannah Sparrow (far right) and Marbled Godwit (right) shown here. (Photos by guide Terry McEneaney and participant Pat Newman)



Continuing the mountain theme, tour participant Eileen Wheeler joined one of our **Montane Ecuador** tours and returned home with some wonderful memories and these great photos. At top, guide Willy Perez works hard to spot some White-capped Tanagers on the Guacamayos Ridge; at right, an unbelievable Sword-billed Hummingbird adds some length to its crazy bill by sticking out its tongue; below, a striking male Torrent Duck is right at home amid the raging waters of a mountain river.

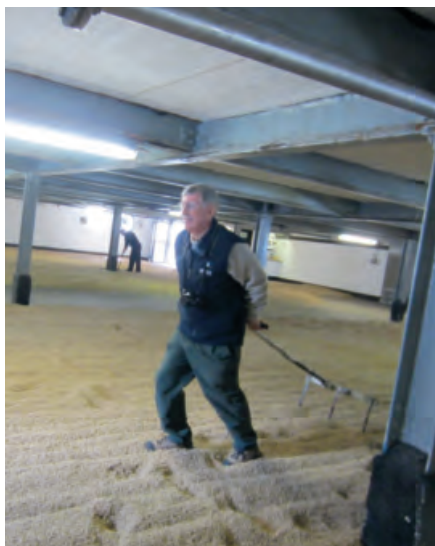


With legendary birds like Marvelous Spatuletail and Long-whiskered Owlet, it's easy to understand the attraction of **Peru's Magnetic North**. (It's not just the magnetic charm of guides John Rowlett and Pepe Rojas!) On this year's tour, only one of the two star birds cooperated; the owlet, though vocal, stayed resolutely out of sight. But there were about 300 other cooperative species to make up for the owlet's reticence, including the ones seen here: above, a trio of White-fronted Nunbirds; below left, a Golden-collared Toucanet; below, a female Rufous-crested Coquette. (Photos by participant Paul Cozza)



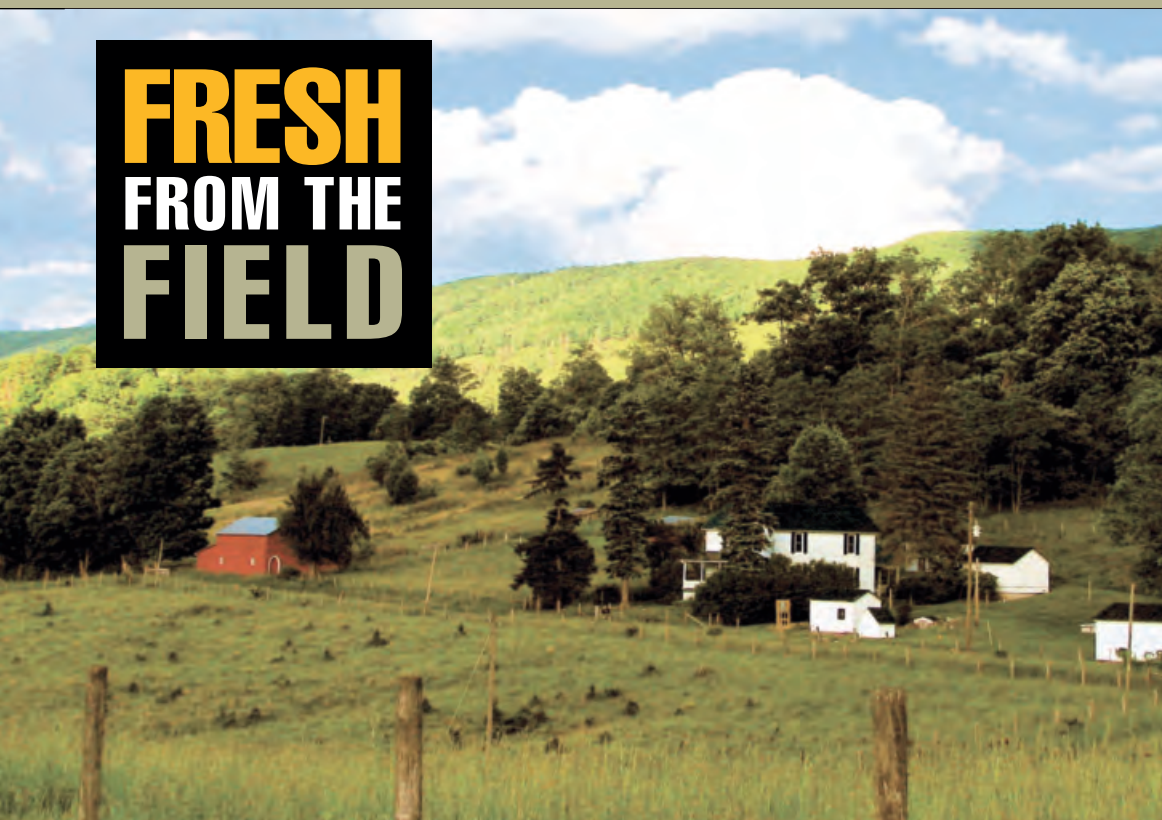


It may look like a swarm of insects, but those are seabirds, including puffins, murres, and Razorbills seen during the Witless Bay boat trip on our recent tour to **Newfoundland & Nova Scotia**. Guide Chris Benesh reports that it was a fun trip, with some fine birds, including the Black-throated Green Warbler and Piping Plovers to the right. Chris also raved about the stellar marine mammal showing, with 2 dolphin species, 4 whales, and some confiding Gray Seals, like this one to the right. (Photos by guide Chris Benesh)



On the other side of the Atlantic, seabird swarms also caused a stir (above photo) on our inaugural **Scotland: Famous Grouse in the Land of Whisky** tour. Grouse and whisky were also featured, surprisingly enough, illustrated (thanks to the photographic evidence provided by tour manager Sharon Mackie, who joined John Rowlett on the tour) by the images of tour participant Wayne Wathan pitching in to make some whisky and the famous, and cooperative, Red Grouse.

FRESH FROM THE FIELD



The picturesque Bluegrass Valley with its undulating terrain (above photo) is just one of the many scenic areas visited by guides John Rowlett and John Coons (top right) and their group of followers on this spring's **Virginias' Warblers** tour. This short tour featured a wonderful array of birds including plenty of warblers. The gorgeous Prairie Warbler (bottom right) was the first of 25 species seen on this year's tour! (Photos by participant Bill Meyer and guide Jesse Fagan)



Guide Phil Gregory was once again at the helm of this year's **Uganda** tour, and as Phil reports, they got things started on a high note, nailing super views of the star bird, the bizarre Shoebill (at far right), within 10 minutes of setting out on their search on the very first morning! Another 500 species or so followed in the next 3 weeks, including the regal-looking African Fish-Eagle (above), the declining Gray Parrot (at right) and a bunch of Albertine Rift endemics from Stripe-breasted Tit to Ruwenzori Apalis to Regal Sunbird. As a bonus feature of the tour, the accommodations (like the Masindi Hotel at top right) are surprisingly good throughout! (Photos by guide Phil Gregory and participant Deborah Linde)



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

Nowhere but Northeast Brazil! (Part I)—January 8-25, 2013 with Marcelo Padua & Dan Lane. From beautiful beaches to barren badlands, Part I of our birding 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.

Oman & the UAE: Birding Arabia—January 10-26, 2013 with Phil Gregory. Some of the best Arabian Peninsula birding in two friendly and scenic countries; many regional endemics and specialty birds, including a chance for the Hypocolius.

Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge I—January 11-20, 2013 with Willy Perez. One-site tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere.

Yellowstone in Winter—January 12-20, 2013 with Terry McEneaney & 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 12-28, 2013 with Jesse Fagan. Energetic, endemic-oriented tour connecting reserves up the Magdalena Valley from Bogota to the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

Thailand—January 12-February 2, 2013 (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).

NEW/South Texas Rarities I—January 18-24, 2013 with Chris Benesh. Escape the winter birding doldrums on our week-long tour to the bird-rich Rio Grande Valley, with specialties from kiskadees and Green Jays to Hook-billed Kites and Altamira Orioles. And the winter potential for Mexican vagrants is terrific!

Panama's Canopy Tower I—January 19-25, 2013 with John Coons. A towering introduction to Neotropical birds based entirely in a unique lodge; quick access to famous Pipeline Road.

Mexico: Oaxaca—January 19-26, 2013 with Megan Crewe & Pepe Rojas. Two dozen Mexican endemics and fascinating ruins while based in lovely Oaxaca City.

Colombia: The Cauca Valley, Western & Central Andes—January 19-February 4, 2013 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 19-February 5, 2013 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 19-February 10, 2013 with Terry Stevenson. Birding and wildlife adventure from the Ganges plains to the Himalayan foothills,

with the Bharatpur wetlands, a good chance of Tiger, and the wondrous Taj Mahal.

Nowhere but Northeast Brazil! (Part II)—January 23-February 8, 2013 with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. From beautiful beaches to barren badlands, Part II of our birding 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.

NEW/South Texas Rarities II—January 25-31, 2013 with Chris Benesh. Escape the winter birding doldrums on our week-long tour to the bird-rich Rio Grande Valley, with specialties from kiskadees and Green Jays to Hook-billed Kites and Altamira Orioles. And the winter potential for Mexican vagrants is terrific!

Winter Japan: Dancing Cranes & Spectacular Sea-Eagles—February 1-16, 2013 with Phil Gregory. Japan's winter spectacles, including the fabulous cranes and Steller's Sea-Eagle.

Jewels of Ecuador: Hummers, Tanagers & Antpittas II—February 1-18, 2013 with Mitch Lysinger & Pepe Rojas. Survey of Andean Ecuador; diverse avifauna dominated by colorful hummers and tanagers and more subtle and haunting antpittas.

Best of the Pacific Northwest: Skagit Valley & Puget Sound, Washington—February 2-7, 2013 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.

Trinidad & Tobago—February 15-24, 2013 with Megan Crewe. Wonderful introduction to South America's riches, including bellbirds, toucans, manakins, and motmots.

Cambodia—February 16-March 1, 2013 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.

Belize—February 17-23, 2013 with Peter Burke & John Coons. A terrific introduction to (or continuation of!) your tropical birding, including some regional bird specialties.

Guatemala: Shade-grown Birding—February 20-March 2, 2013 (Tikal Extension) 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 23-March 1, 2013 (Canopy Lodge Extension) with Chris Benesh. A towering introduction to Neotropical birds based entirely in a unique lodge; quick access to famous Pipeline Road.

March-April

Philippines—March 1-24, 2013 (Visayan Islands & Mindoro Extension) with Dave Stejskal & local guide. Survey tour of the endemic-rich Philippines (Luzon, Palawan, and northeastern Mindanao) with an excellent chance to see the critically endangered Great Philippine Eagle.

Honduras: Land of the Emeralds—March 2-10, 2013 with Jesse Fagan. Tour for the endemic Honduran Emerald plus arid Pacific slope, Central Highland, and Caribbean lowland coverage; nearly 300 species!

Brazil Nutshell: Intervalles, Iguazu Falls & the Pantanal—March 2-16, 2013 with Marcelo Padua & John Coons. We'll hit 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.

Birding Plus: Egypt—March 3-20, 2013 (Petra Extension) with Terry Stevenson & local guide. Inaugurated in 2012, this Birding Plus tour combines the best of Egypt's birding with some of its best-known archaeological treasures.

Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves—March 7-21, 2013 with Mitch Lysinger. The many specialties of the southwest, in particular the very local endemics of the humid foothills and mountains, and Tumbesian specialties.

Borneo I—March 11-28, 2013 with Rose Ann Rowlett & local guide. Three prime areas on this tour to some of the Earth's richest forests while based in comfort right in the wild.

Bahamas: Birds & Butterflies—March 12-17, 2013 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.

Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge—March 15-25, 2013 with Willy Perez. Our tour exploring the riches of the eastern Andean foothills of northern Ecuador for numerous specialties at Wildsumaco Lodge.

Colombia: Santa Marta Escape—March 16-24, 2013 with Richard Webster & local guide. An easier subset of Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta, reached by a direct flight from Miami with a couple more days for a more leisurely approach.

Costa Rica—March 16-31, 2013 with Megan Crewe & local guide. Resplendent Quetzals, Three-wattled Bellbirds, Scarlet Macaws in a beautiful country with easy travel.

Dominican Republic—March 17-24, 2013 with Jesse Fagan & local guide. Short tour for many specialties and endemics including the unusual Palmchat.

Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes I—March 17-31, 2013 with John Rowlett. 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.

Spring in South Texas—March 23-31, 2013 with Chris Benesh. Magnificent Whooping Cranes, lots of South Texas specialties, and spring hawk migration on this exciting birding tour.

Birding Plus: Birds & Wines of Chile and Argentina—March 23-April 6, 2013 with Marcelo Padua & local guide. A new March tour combining an exploration of the great birds and vineyards of these two wonderful countries!

Ghana I—March 23-April 8, 2013 with Phil Gregory & local guide. In search of numerous West African specialties as well as White-necked Rockfowl.

Puerto Rico—March 24-30, 2013 with Eric Hynes & Pepe Rojas. 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.

Lesser Antilles—March 30-April 14, 2013 with Jesse Fagan. All the accessible endemics (many highly endangered) of the southern Caribbean on 10 attractive islands.

Namibia & Botswana—April 2-21, 2013 with Terry Stevenson. Southwestern Africa's bird specialties, striking scenery, wilderness, and the famed game of Etosha and the Okavango.

Bhutan—April 5-24, 2013 with Richard Webster. Spellbinding birding amidst awe-inspiring landscapes on a journey through the lush forests and mountains of this "lost" Himalayan kingdom.

Colorado Grouse I—April 7-17, 2013 with Dan Lane. A short tour to seek out the state's prairie-chicken and grouse species.

Ghana II—April 10-26, 2013 with Phil Gregory. In search of numerous West African specialties as well as White-necked Rockfowl.

Texas Coast Migration Spectacle I—April 13-19, 2013 with John Coons. The migration mecca of High Island plus specialties of the Big Thicket and myriad waterbirds and shorebirds.

Colorado Grouse II—April 14-24, 2013 with Megan Crewe. A short tour to seek out the state's prairie-chicken and grouse species.

Birding Plus: Scotland: Famous Grouse in the Land of Whisky—April 19-May 1, 2013 with John Rowlett & Hugh Buck. Imbibing Highland Scotland's famous grouse, distilling birds in the Hebrides, sorting out crossbills, 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 20-26, 2013 with John Coons. The migration mecca of High Island plus specialties of the Big Thicket and myriad waterbirds and shorebirds.

Texas's Big Bend & Hill Country—April 20-29, 2013 with Chris Benesh & Pepe Rojas. Colima and Golden-cheeked warblers, Montezuma Quail, and other southern borderland specialties in Texas's grand desert mountain landscapes.

Arizona Nightbirds & More I—April 25-29, 2013 with Dave Stejskal. A short tour focused on this area's many owl and nightjar specialties.

Birding Plus: Do the Charleston! Spring in South Carolina—April 27-May 4, 2013 with Jesse Fagan. Our new tour combining spring migration and a touch of the mountains with lovely and historic Charleston, South Carolina.

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 fares. Call our office and our travel agents can help you sort out the possibilities. Our holiday destinations with space available include:

Brazil's Rio Roosevelt: Birding the River of Doubt—December 14-27, 2012 with Bret Whitney. 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.

Holiday at San Isidro, Ecuador—December 27, 2012-January 5, 2013 with Mitch Lysinger. A bird-rich holiday escape based primarily at the very comfortable San Isidro Lodge.

Arizona Winter Specialties—December 28, 2012-January 2, 2013 with Dave Stejskal. Exceptional winter birding with numerous specialties and potential rarities.

Holiday at Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge—December 28, 2012-January 7, 2013 with Willy Perez. The riches of the eastern Andean foothills of northern Ecuador for numerous specialties at the recently opened Wildsumaco Lodge.

Holiday in Honduras: The Lodge at Pico Bonito—December 30, 2012-January 4, 2013 with John Coons & local guide. A new holiday tour over New Year's based in a lovely and bird-rich setting at The Lodge at Pico Bonito.

ECUADOR: Been there? You've definitely not done that!

Each of our guides loves novelty as much as the next birder, including visiting new countries. But when one country just a few hours away is among the elite bird-diversity champions for its size (and in the top 5 of *all* countries, in fact!), well, why bother going farther afield for another trip or two after our first visit? Ecuador fits the bill to a tee—in fact, at about a quarter the size of Peru and Colombia, it's probably the champion in terms of return-on-birding-investment per square mile we have to cover! Birding Ecuador is like having lifers-on-demand...should we go west, east, north, or south on our next trip (or even our next day)? It doesn't matter—there'll be LOTS of lifers in any direction! So, if you've only done one birding trip there, it's time to consider a second one and head to a new corner of Ecuador—it'll be like birding most of the rest of the world's countries for the *first* time—though probably much richer! Not only that, but if you've been once, you know there's the added luxury of great birding only a short drive outside the capital of Quito so you can get your birding pulse racing right out the door on the first morning.

Here's what we have coming up early in 2013—there's some fab birding ahead!



Our JEWELS OF ECUADOR: HUMMERS, TANAGERS & ANTPITTAS tour, (on which participant Mike Healey took this photo of a Wire-crested Thorntail, a bird more common than it looks like it should be) is an 18-day tour that combines a transect of the north with a sampling of specialties from stunning Podocarpus and Cajas national parks in the south. It represents our most thorough coverage of Andean Ecuador in a single tour. *January 19-February 5 and February 1-18.*



SOUTHWESTERN ECUADOR SPECIALTIES: JOCOTOCO FOUNDATION RESERVES is our 15-day tour focusing on the many specialties of the southwest, especially the very local Ecuadorian endemics of the humid foothills and mountains and on Tumbesian specialties. This is the tour to see the recently discovered Jocotoco Antpitta, pictured at left. We'll be based primarily in the lovely Jocotoco Foundation lodges, right in the heart of good birding. *March 7-21.* (Photo by guide Rose Ann Rowlett)



AMAZONIAN ECUADOR: SACHA LODGE is our one-site tour to one of the most comfortable and best-run lodges in western Amazonia, with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere. We spend six full days there birding a variety of lowland habitats for parrots and macaws, antbirds, tanagers—all the many rainforest residents including this Cream-colored Woodpecker, one of a dozen or so woodpeckers possible. *January 11-20 and June 28-July 7.* (Photo by guide Dave Stejskal)



One of our newer tours, **ECUADOR'S WILDSUMACO LODGE: FOOTHILLS OF THE EASTERN ANDES** visits a comfortable and modern lodge which locates us on the flanks of Volcan Sumaco in the precious ecotone between upper tropical and subtropical forest of Ecuador's east slope, and features species especially difficult to find anywhere along the Andean massif, like the Chestnut-crowned Gnatcatcher pictured here. We'll also get a taste of higher elevation birding with two nights at San Isidro Lodge. *March 15-25.* (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

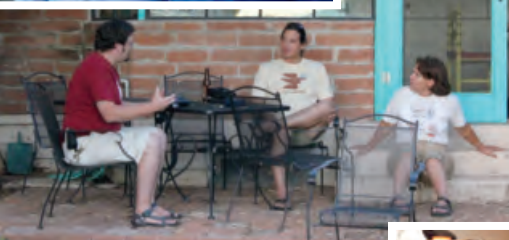


ECUADOR: RAINFOREST & ANDES is our 15-day sampler that includes some of the highlights of a transect of the north, from western foothills and humid Andean slopes to east slope montane forests and foothills combined with four days in Amazonian rainforest at Sacha Lodge. One of the birds we'd be on the watch for on the west slope is this Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan, a Choco endemic that is a real standout, though not always easily seen. *March 17-31 and September 8-22.* (Photo by participants Bob Sprague & Amy Levengood)

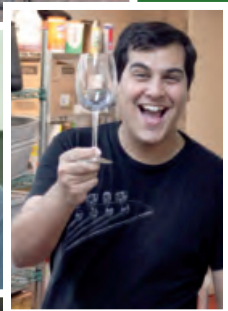
Ecuador tours scheduled for later in the 2013 season include

Ecuador's Shiripuno Lodge: Heartland of the Waorani,
September 28-October 7
Galapagos, June 15-25, July 6-16, and August 3-13
Montane Ecuador, June 7-16 and July 26-August 4
Holiday at San Isidro, November 23-December 2

If you love hummingbirds, be sure to take a look at the Hummer Slideshow on our web site; you can access it from any Ecuador tour page.



For one week each year, a lot of us Field Guides aren't traveling...so it's annual meeting time in AZ! From the top (sort of): arrival time at the ranch; a first morning's birding (great leader to participant ratio—almost infinity!); a second morning's birding (that's Bret videoing...and getting passed by); Dave finally meets someone his size—and not shy at all; Rose Ann and Pete catching up; Pepe and Eric posing for the paparazzi; a little bird talk on the patio for Dan, Pepe, and Megan; Jan and Jesse in the kitchen; Marcelo discovers the perfect study tool for his Birds & Wine tour to Chile/Argentina; Bret prepping his famous Brazilian moqueca; Megan and Tiara starring in *Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow*; Chris with the most minimalist field gear we've ever seen him carry (hey, Leica bins—what else could you need?!); and a group photo: we somehow managed to herd all the cats together...and it wasn't hard to make 'em smile. Can't wait till next year!



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