



Pavonine Quetzal



Wire-tailed Manakin



White-eared Jacamar

Iquitos— My Quest for Northern Amazonian Birds in Peru

Pepe Rojas

When I lived at Tambopata in the rainforests of southeastern Peru, I used to wonder about other parts of Amazonia, especially that part reaching into northern Peru around the Iquitos area. There, the Marañon and Ucayali rivers join to form the mighty Amazon that meanders all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. How many other species of birds might I find there? Beyond the excitement of exploring a new area, I was attracted not only by the prospect of new birds but also by the knowledge that many of these were close relatives, replacing the species I was so familiar with in southern Amazonia.

The Amazon is a natural barrier in South America, dividing the avifauna of this part of the continent in two, north and south of the river. This division alone contributes to species richness in the Iquitos area, among a complex web of habitats from *varzea*, oxbow lakes, and marshes to terra firme forest, palm swamps, and more. Add the shifting river islands that are peculiar to the silt-laden Amazon, as well as the ancient white-sand forest

patches, and we are talking about a very different, rich set of new species to be seen.

I had a long list of birds I hoped to find in Peru's northern Amazonian reaches, ranging from large to small and inconspicuous. I was very excited about the possibility of seeing so many new ones, from Black-necked Red-Cotinga, Nocturnal Curassow, Black-faced Hawk, Short-tailed Parrot, Lanceolated Monklet, Pavonine Quetzal, and Black-tailed and Short-billed leaf-tossers, to Undulated Antshrike, Hairy-crested Antbird, Reddish-winged Bare-eye, Black Bushbird, Ochre-striped Antpitta, Chestnut-belted Gnatcatcher, Wire-tailed Manakin, Purple-throated Cotinga, Orange-eyed Flycatcher, and Band-tailed Oropendola. As if that was not enough, there was a whole new set of highly specialized river-island birds and, to make things even better, four new species that had recently been discovered on the white-sand forests of Allpahuayo-Mishana within the town of Iquitos!

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2014 ~ Our 30th Year of Birding Tours

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Iquitos: My Quest for Northern Amazonian Birds in Peru

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Pepe Rojas

Additionally, I was keen to see the species replacing those I knew so well from southern Amazonia. For instance, I wanted to see Black-capped Parrot, which replaces the White-bellied Parrot of the south; and White-eared Jacamar, which replaces the Purus Jacamar; and the same goes for Wire-tailed and Band-tailed manakins and White-shouldered and Goeldi's antbirds, just to mention a few species pairs. So much to explore and to learn!

I started on my quest even before joining Field Guides by visiting the Iquitos area for a series of birding workshops at several Explorama lodges, including the ACTS canopy walkway. Later, a combination of freelance birding trips and some research expeditions gave me the chance to return to the Iquitos area and to deepen my knowledge of the birds there. I spent time birding the white-sand forests of the Allpahuayo-Mishana Reserve, where a few years ago our very own Bret Whitney, along with Jose (Pepe) Alvarez, described four species new to science: Ancient Antwren, Allpahuayo Antbird, Mishana Tyrannulet, and Iquitos Gnatcatcher. With the exception of the antwren, which was found later in Ecuador, the other three are Peruvian endemics. The birding there can yield other species restricted to white-sand forests, among them birds not as easily seen elsewhere in Peru: Brown-

banded Puffbird, Pearly Antshrike, the *duidae* subspecies of Fuscous Flycatcher, Zimmer's Tody-Tyrant, Citron-bellied Attila, Zimmer's Antbird, Pompadour Cotinga, and Saffron-crested Tyrant-Manakin.

I was also particularly eager to explore another habitat, the river islands, which in the 1980s had been the subject of study by Gary Rosenberg from LSU, defining a set of birds tied to this special environment: Olive-spotted Hummingbird, Pale-billed and Lesser horneros, White-bellied and Parker's spinetails, Castelnau's Antshrike, Ash-breasted Antwren, Black-and-white Antbird, Brownish Elaenia, River Tyrannulet, Lesser Wagtail-Tyrant, and Bicolored and Pearly breasted conebills. These were all new birds for me, and Iquitos was the best place to see them!

By now I've been able to see all but five of these exciting species, and that's one of the many things I love about birding in the tropics—no matter how many times you bird an area, there remains something novel to find! I love being out on the trails and waiting for the unexpected, and I love the thrill of seeing birds, especially new ones. Each time I visit the Iquitos area I still get the same feelings as I did the first time—the same butterflies in my stomach and the same sense of excitement at visiting a “new” area. I can't wait to return, and I'm very much looking forward to sharing the thrill with our December holiday group!

*Pepe Rojas returns to Iquitos **December 20-31, 2014**. With Pepe joined by Dan Lane (co-author of the **Birds of Peru** guide you'll likely be using), our group should be in excellent hands! Contact our office if you would like to reserve space.*

In 2015 we'll be offering eight Peru tours that reach the richest areas of that very birdy country, including two tours to Iquitos in August and December. Take a look at the list that follows and let us know if you'd like further details. Or, check the tour page on our web site where you may download a tour itinerary.

Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga, Peru

Southern Peru's east-slope, temperate birding at its best, featuring several endemics and scenic Andean puna; also Machu Picchu and great subtropical birding on and near lovely hotel grounds. *July 21-30, 2015 with Jesse Fagan*

Central Peruvian Endemics: The High Andes

High Andean endemics of central Peru in extraordinarily scenic settings, including Huascaran National Park, Lake Junin, and the Carpish Mountains. *June 5-21, 2015 with Dan Lane & Mitch Lysinger*

NEW/Holiday Southern Peru

A new tour over the Thanksgiving break to many birding sites south of Lima to Arequipa, Lake Titicaca, and Cusco. Coastal and Andean birding at its best. Lots of endemics and Peruvian near-endemics. *November 21-December 3, 2015 with Jesse Fagan & Chris Benesh*

Northern Peru: Endemics Galore

Dry-season tour to one of the least-known and most endemic-rich areas of South America. Targets geographic specialties as it surveys the rich and diverse habitats of northern Peru, including some remote and beautiful wild areas. *November 1-21, 2015 with Richard Webster & Willy Perez*

Peru's Magnetic North: Spatuletails, Owlet Lodge & More

A 12-day taste of northern Peru's east-slope Andes! Five nights at Owlet Lodge. *July 22-August 2, 2015 with Dan Lane & Pepe Rojas*

Mountains of Manu, Peru

Our in-depth transect of the higher-elevation half of the Manu Biosphere Reserve along the “birdiest road in the world.” *September 19-October 4, 2015 with Pepe Rojas*



Long-whiskered Owlet by participant Becky Hansen

Peruvian Rainforests of the Tambopata: Macaw Lick Extraordinaire

Three-site tour to the most species-rich rainforest on Earth. Largest known macaw lick, canopy walkway and towers, eagles and monkeys. *October 4-17, 2014 and October 3-16, 2015 with Pepe Rojas*

Iquitos, Peru: Canopy Walkways & Ancient Forests

An immersion in one of the richest regions in Amazonia, including the white-sand forests near Iquitos. River travel on the Amazon and Napo rivers, canopy access via the famed walkway. *August 1-12, 2015 with Pepe Rojas and December 19-30, 2015 with Pepe Rojas & Dan Lane*

FRESH FROM THE FIELD

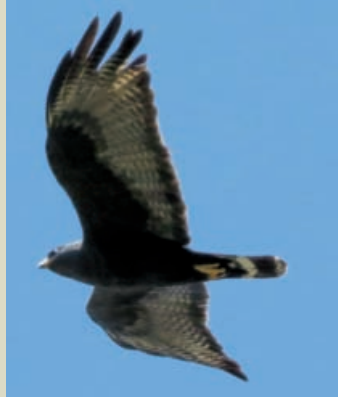


A clear day gave one of our [Alaska](#) tours this awe-inspiring view of Denali.

Almost any mountain can impress anyone who grew up on the prairies, but Denali might best be described as an over-achiever; it's easy to see how it came to be called the Great One and a symbol for the grandeur of the state. Other encounters on the tours included a shaggy Caribou among an array of other wildlife in Denali, and the Parakeet and Least auklets on the breeding ledges on the Pribilofs. (Photos by guides Megan Edwards Crewe & Chris Benesh)



Our two [Arizona: Birding the Border](#) tours tallied nine hummingbird species between them, including the rare White-eared and the more widespread Broad-billed, pictured above. It's enough to test the loyalties of those of us who live in areas with just a single hummer. Also on the docket were good looks at a number of Gambel's Quail and a Zone-tailed Hawk flyover near Patagonia. (Photos by participants Howard Patterson & David Baker)



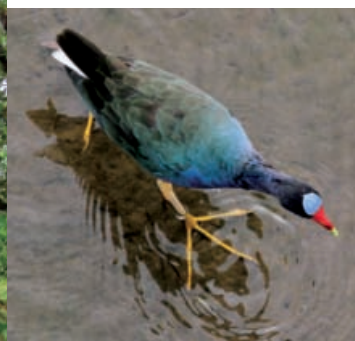
Walking down a forest trail and suddenly noticing a Harpy Eagle perched overhead is not necessarily what participants on our [Alta Floresta & the Northern Pantanal, Brazil](#) tour were expecting, but anything's possible in the rainforest, and there's that subadult Harpy to prove it. Other more predictable sightings included the Channel-billed Toucan (middle) and a striking Ringed Woodpecker from the Alta Floresta tower. (Photos by participant Randy Siebert and guide Marcelo Padua)



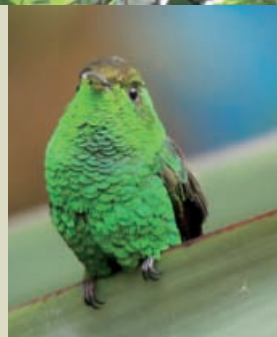
The sometimes difficult-to-see Dusky Grouse (above right) proved almost ridiculously tame on our spring [Colorado Grouse](#) tours, standing in the middle of the road and wandering among the tour group, according to guide Megan Edwards Crewe. American Dippers were also seen well, though not as close-up; the one above is celebrating after subduing a rival. At left, Jesse Fagan and his group survey the surrounding fields for dancing chickens (the snow isn't typical!). Jesse's the tall one who seems to have forgotten his gloves... (Photos by participants Jakapat Vanichanan & Doug Happ and guide Eric Hynes)

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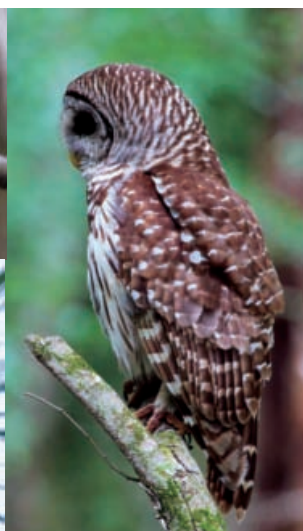
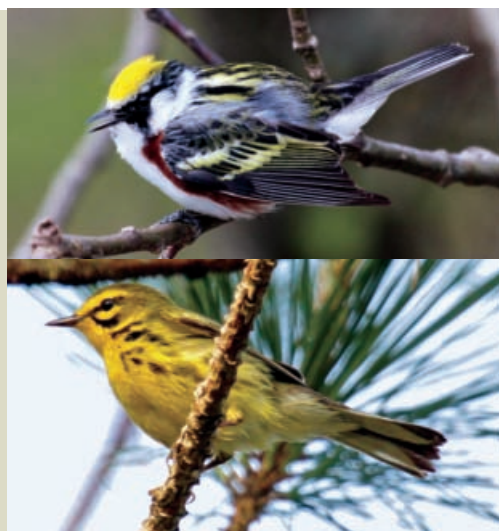
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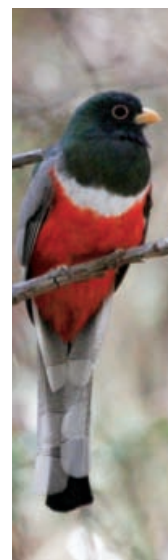
This unusual view of Purple Gallinule (above) from our [Costa Rica](#) tour really shows off the bird's feet, which make it possible for it to walk on lily pads. The Black Guan, above right, is a Chiriqui endemic, and the little Coppery-headed Emerald, below the guan, a Costa Rican endemic. Our group enjoyed the rich birding at La Selva Biological Station in the Caribbean lowlands. (Photos by participant Chris DeCilio and guide Megan Edwards Crewe)



The birding was good this spring in South Carolina and Georgia on our [Birding Plus: Do the Charleston](#) tour. Guide Jesse Fagan reports that it was a twenty-species warbler trip, including the two at right, a very sharp Chestnut-sided—certainly an under-appreciated warbler, though there is stiff competition in the group—and a Prairie. A hunting Barred Owl up-close was a bonus. (Photos by Jesse)

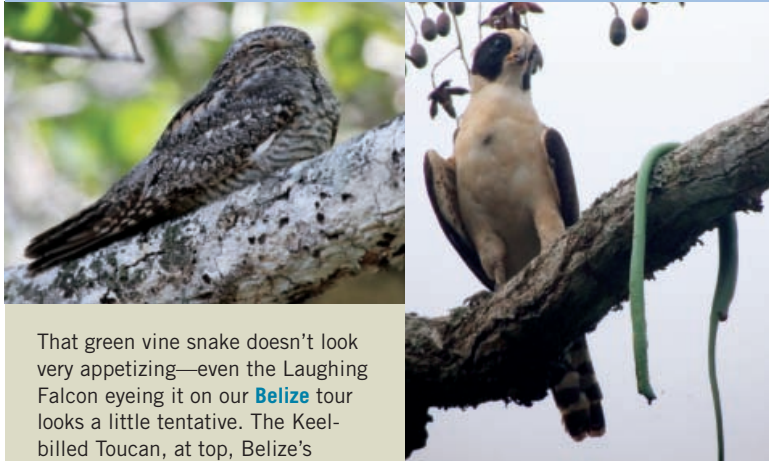
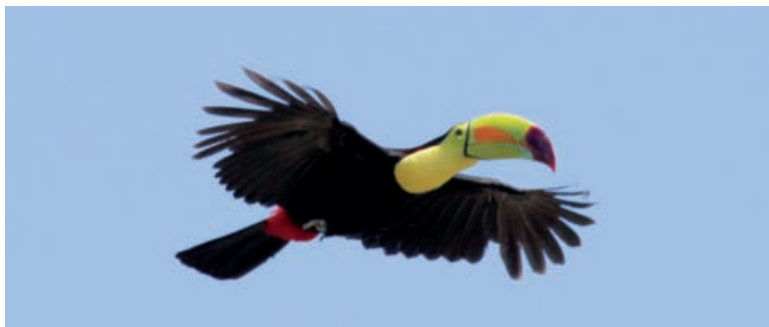


The little Northern Pygmy-Owl below made a welcome, last-minute appearance on Dave Stejskal's [Arizona Nightbirds & More](#) tour this spring. In addition to seven owls, there were a number of flycatchers to study—that's Dusky-capped Flycatcher at bottom—and the Elegant Trogon, seen well on the second tour. (Photos by guides Dave Stejskal & Chris Benesh)



We keep saying it—there are a lot of birds in tiny Ecuador, including a lot of tanagers. The Golden-naped Tanager, above left, was one of thirty-plus seen on Willy Perez's new [Northern Ecuador](#) tour, which visits areas in the Central Highlands and the West Slope, as well as the famous Otavalo Market. The Collared Aracari, above right, is widespread, but any bird this big and colorful is fun to see. And that's Willy putting it all in the scope for us. (Photos by participants Larry Peavler & Michael Turisk)





That green vine snake doesn't look very appetizing—even the Laughing Falcon eyeing it on our [Belize](#) tour looks a little tentative. The Keel-billed Toucan, at top, Belize's national bird, and the perched Lesser Nighthawk also gave us great sightings. For next year, guide Peter Burke has redesigned the tour to take advantage of a part of the country off the beaten path yet rich in birdlife. For much of the tour we'll be based out of the southern town of Punta Gorda in the Toledo District at the end of the Southern Highway. The tour's new name: [Rarely Visited Belize](#). (Photos by participant Ron Pera and guide Peter Burke)



Seeing tapaculos well is a bit like seeing antpittas well before the introduction of feeding programs—it's very difficult to get a good look at the bird. But our [Colombia: Santa Marta Escape](#) group seems to have found the ticket with the endemic Brown-rumped Tapaculo, which they viewed in comfort. Antpittas, like this endemic Santa Marta Antpitta at left above, are easier now, though never a sure thing—as guide Richard Webster points out, antpittas have minds of their own! And yet another endemic—there are lots on this tour—and a spectacular one, the White-tailed Starfrontlet. (Photos by participant Sandy Paci and guide Richard Webster)



There are not many places to see a Long-wattled Umbrellabird (top left), but our [Southwestern Ecuador's Specialties](#) tour visits one of them. If you

look carefully at the photo, you'll see that the mop at the top is the "umbrella"—you can see the bird's eye below—and the long piece hanging down behind the branch is the bird's feathered wattle! (If you're wondering how the bird can fly, it contracts the wattle in flight.) Other sightings included eye-to-eye looks at Barred Puffbird (be sure to check Mitch Lysinger's triplist online for video) and hummingbirds, lots of them—it's Ecuador after all—including the one at left of White-necked Jacobin. (Photos by participant Ted Buerger and guide Mitch Lysinger)



Seeing—or in one case hearing only—all the [Dominican Republic's](#) endemics is rewarding, especially when it includes great looks at such birds as this Ashy-faced Owl above—not a great photo but, according to guide Jesse Fagan, a tour highlight—and the Ridgway's Hawk at right, a rare raptor that thanks to a monitoring program is now possible to see. The today, this one the Broad-billed, is yet another endemic, though much easier to see—and cuter—than the other two. (Photos by participant Brian Stech and guide Jesse Fagan)



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FRESH FROM THE FIELD



The **Galapagos** is remarkable for many things, one being the tameness of its wildlife, witnessed here by the Espanola Mockingbird that looks like it wants to take a bite out of Megan's toe. (That's guide Megan Edwards Crewe in case you don't recognize her.) Above, a Waved Albatross takes flight off its volcanic island. The Galapagos Hawk, left, was another close encounter for the group (as was the often-difficult Galapagos Rail). That big, old Galapagos Tortoise is not hard to spot, though you wouldn't want him interested in your toes. These guys can weigh upwards of 500 pounds! (Photos by participant Rick Woodruff and guide Megan Edwards Crewe)



Hawaii is well known for its many endemic—and disappearing—species. The Palila, at right, one of the rarest of the endemic honeycreepers encountered on the tour, is a good example—it's been declining steadily in spite of conservation efforts. The Red-footed Booby, at top, hiding his red legs, looks rather graceful in flight; the widespread Pacific Golden-Plover, like robins on the mainland, can be found on people's lawns. (Photos by participant Tony Quezon)

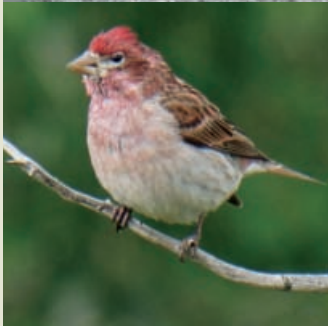


Highlights of our **Ghana** tour this year included the Picathartes, or White-necked Rockfowl, which made an eleventh-hour appearance this year to the great relief of guide Phil Gregory, and this lovely Egyptian Plover (top middle), spotted by participant Ruth Brooks along a river where people were doing their laundry. The rope walkway at Kakum is a great place to see birds, including this Fire-bellied Woodpecker, above. White-bellied Kingfisher, top left, was one of the daytime stars of Ankasa. (Photos by guide Phil Gregory)

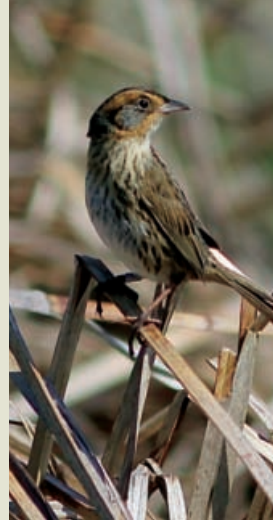




Our **Montana: Yellowstone to Glacier** tour is filled with gorgeous scenery—vast vistas and magnificent mountain ranges—but some of the quieter, interior areas are beautiful as well, like this scene of Avalanche Creek cutting through its mossy narrow canyon. A couple of the bird species that enliven the area—not to mention the many mammals—include the little Rock Wren (top) and Cassin's Finch. (Photos by participant Paul Demkovich and guide Terry McEaney)



Eric Hynes might be celebrating the first-run of his new **Maine: Birding Downeast** tour atop misty Mount Washington (the tour makes a slight detour into New Hampshire)—or maybe it's the Bicknell's Thrush the group had just seen. With ten sparrow species, this was a good tour for getting to know the group; the Saltmarsh at right was the most numerous at Scarborough Marsh. And of course in spring there were twenty species of warblers to brighten the landscape—here the favorite bird of the tour, a lovely Canada. (Photos by participant Andrea Robinson and guide Eric Hynes)



Rufous-capped Warbler (top left) was first seen in Texas in 1973 by two "skilled observers," since then it has made only irregular appearances in the state, so it was exciting for our **Texas's Big Bend & Hill Country** tour to find it near Uvalde. Other warbler specialties of the area included Golden-cheeked, Colima, and Tropical Parula. Scott's Oriole, at the park itself, is another regional specialty; and a day-roosting owl, like this Eastern Screech-Owl, is always a welcome sight. (Photos by participant Don Faulkner and guide Chris Benesh)



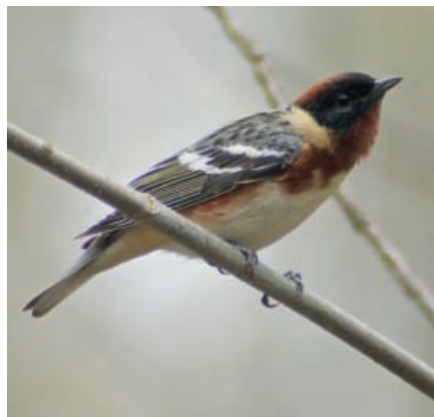
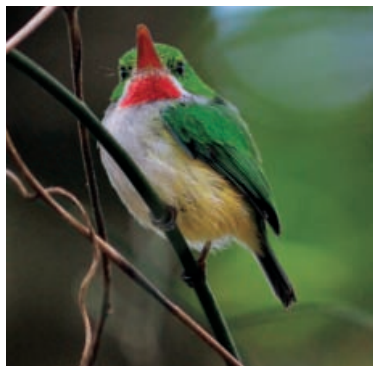
Warblers are supposed to be difficult to see well, but that wasn't the case for the two shown here from our two **Texas Coast Migration Spectacle** tours, the Swainson's (lower left) in full song for the second tour, and the Kentucky (top right), usually a lurker in thick undergrowth, giving our first tour an eye-to-eye look. Red-headed Woodpeckers have to be among the handsomest of the group, and seeing a pair this well doubles the pleasure. (Photos by participants Karen Lewis & Brooke Miller)

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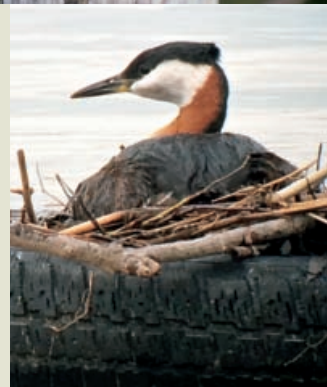
It might be repetitive to say it again, but Peru—like Ecuador—has a lot of hummingbirds and tanagers, and it's possible to see a bunch of them (well over thirty species of each is the norm) on our [Mountains of Manu](#) tour. Shown here from left, a male Rufous-crested Coquette at the vervain at Amazonia Lodge, and Golden and Golden-eared tanagers at Cock-of-the-rock Lodge. One of the thrills on this tour is seeing the tanagers in a mixed flock consisting of everything from antshrikes and antwrens, woodcreepers and foliage-gleaners, to hordes of those breathtakingly beautiful tanagers. (Photos by participant Steve Wakeham and guide Dan Lane)



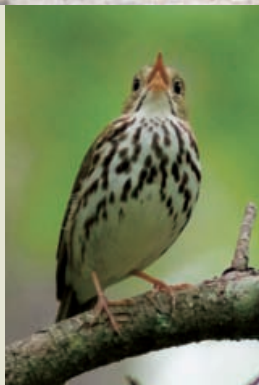
Our spring [Puerto Rico](#) tour managed a clean sweep of all 17 Puerto Rican endemics, including the endangered Puerto Rican Parrot, and in addition saw a number of Greater Antillean endemics. Three of those PR endemics pictured here are the little Puerto Rican Tody, above (what can you say about a bird so cute except that it's cute?); Puerto Rican Woodpecker; and Puerto Rican Emerald showing its long, forked tail. (Photos by guide Eric Hynes)

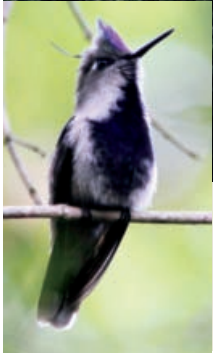
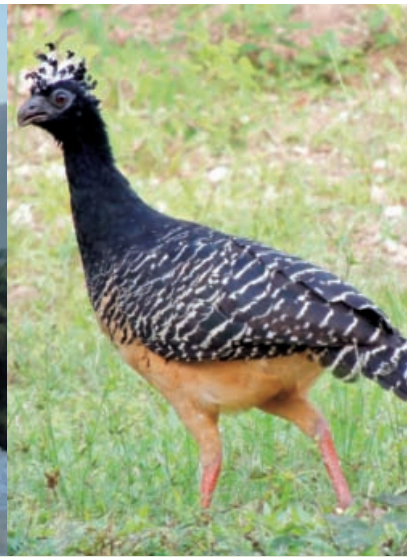


Guide Peter Burke points out that “variety is a big part of what makes our [Point Pelee](#) tour so much fun,” and some of that variety is on view here. This was a good year for Bay-breasted Warblers (one above), which are more numerous in years of spruce budworm abundance (good news for the warblers; bad news for northern spruce forests); an Upland Sandpiper at right above in the early morning light at Carden, an open grassland north of Toronto; and an elegant Red-necked Grebe on a floating tire nest in Lake Ontario. (Photos by guide Peter Burke)



This group following Megan Edwards Crewe seems to be walking with a purpose, which is to enjoy the birding on our inaugural [Spring in Cape May](#) tour. One of the highlights of a Cape May spring is the chance to get “up close and personal” with many species of shorebirds, including these Ruddy Turnstones, above. And lest we forget the warblers—there were 23 species throughout the week—here's a bathing Blue-winged Warbler (above right) and a point-blank Ovenbird taking account of the day. (Photos by guides Tom Johnson & Megan Edwards Crewe)





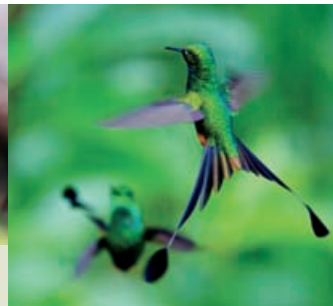
Our **Brazil Nutshell** tour visits three of the most spectacular venues in Brazil—Intervalles State Park in the Atlantic Forest, the famed Brazilian Pantanal, and Iguazu Falls, and the photos here are representative of each area. Brazil may not have the longest list of hummingbirds, but it's home to some real stunners, among them this Plovercrest at left, seen at a lek near Intervalles. This female Bare-faced Curassow is as pretty as her partner and is fairly common in the Pantanal. And Iguazu, what to say about it except "wow"—here we have the Brazilian side of the falls. (Photos by participant Max Rodel and guide Marcelo Padua)



Guides John Rowlett and Bret Whitney joined forces this spring for our five-day **Virginias' Warblers** tour, which visits some of the prettiest country you'll ever see. The tour celebrated its name with two-dozen breeding warblers, among them some of the flashiest, like this Blackburnian at top right. Our group, birding along a little-traveled road on the Blue Ridge, is seeing something good. These just fledged Eastern Screech-Owls in the Blue Grass Valley were a highlight on our last morning thanks to John Spahr who had found them earlier in the day on his owl census. (Photos by guide Bret Whitney)



Guide Phil Gregory describes our **Uganda: Shoebill, Rift Endemics & Gorillas** tour as having it all: great birds, charismatic mammals, friendly people, and fantastic scenery. We had good looks at the giant Shoebill again this year as well as so much else. The Gray Crowned-Crane, above, seen repeatedly on the tour route, looks like it belongs on the Paris runways, while the Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill is perhaps not so lucky in his looks, though it's still hard to keep your eyes off him. This chimp seems to be skeptical of what he's seeing below, though it may be our group trying to get his picture—and check the triplist online for some great video of the group's encounter with gorillas. (Photos by participant Rachel Hopper and guide Jesse Fagan)



The little Ochre-breasted Antpitta at center above is one of two species of antpitta (the other being Plain-backed) now habituated at **Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge**. Masked Flowerpiercers (above left) were common at the higher elevations, and a Booted Racket-tail shows off his fantastic tail. East Slope birds like the one here have orange boots (one just peeking out), while those on the West Slope have white. (Photos by participants Pam Pappone & Margaret Kelch)



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UPCOMING TOURS

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

November-December 2014

Spectacular Southeast Brazil—October 31–November 16, 2014 (Part I) with Bret Whitney & Jay VanderGaast and November 14–30, 2014 (Part II) (Iguazu Falls Extension) with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. Prepare to be blown away, two times over, in 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. The Iguazu Falls Extension features an amazing landscape with additional great birding.

Sri Lanka—October 31–November 17, 2014 with Megan Edwards Crewe & local guide. A two-week 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.

Southern Argentina: The Pampas, Patagonia & Tierra del Fuego—November 1–18, 2014 with Dave Stejskal & local guide. Superb springtime birding tour through southern South America amid stark and spectacular landscapes.

Northern Peru: Endemics Galore—November 2–22, 2014 with Richard Webster. Dry-season tour to one of the least-known and most endemic-rich areas of South

America. Targets geographic specialties as it surveys the rich and diverse habitats of northern Peru, including some remote and beautiful wild areas.

Birding Plus/Ireland in Fall: Birds, Traditional Music & Pubs—November 6–16, 2014 with Terry McEaney & Karen McEaney. The birds, culture, music, and pubs of this beautiful country in fall.

Madagascar, Mauritius & Reunion—November 8–December 4, 2014 (Masoala Peninsula Extension) with Phil Gregory. In-depth coverage of the accessible parts of Madagascar: many endemic birds, striking lemurs, bizarre flora and chameleons, fascinating culture. Mauritius and Reunion provide an additional bevy of rare and interesting endemics.

New Zealand—November 9–27, 2014 (Hauraki Gulf Pelagic Extension) with Dan Lane & local guide. Beautiful landscapes as a backdrop for nearly 50 endemic birds plus a great selection of seabirds.

Southern India: Western Ghats Endemics—November 16–December 7, 2014 with Terry Stevenson & local guide. Journey from the mammal-rich lowlands of Nagarhole to the endemic-rich mountains of the Western Ghats.

January 2015

Yellowstone in Winter—January 3–11, 2015 with Terry McEaney & Karen McEaney. A winter birding, wildlife, and landscape adventure to one of the world's legendary destinations.

Costa Rica: Birding the Edges—January 5–14, 2015 (Part I) and January 13–22, 2015 (Part II) with Jay VanderGaast & Tom Johnson. A two-part tour to this bird-rich country exploring sites and birds not covered on our March or holiday tours.

Holiday Tours

Holiday at San Isidro, Ecuador—November 22–December 1, 2014 with Mitch Lysinger. A bird-rich holiday escape based primarily at the very comfortable San Isidro Lodge.

Holiday Costa Rica: Rancho Naturalista I & II—December 20–28, 2014 with Megan Edwards Crewe & local guide and December 27, 2014–January 4, 2015 with Chris Benesh & local guide. One-site holiday tour based at the comfortable Rancho Naturalista Lodge, with excursions to other habitats on Costa Rica's bird-rich Caribbean slope.

Iquitos, Peru: Canopy Walkways & Ancient Forests—December 20–31, 2014 with Pepe Rojas & Dan Lane. An immersion in one of the richest regions in Amazonia, including the white-sand forests near Iquitos. River travel on the Amazon and Napo rivers, canopy access via the famed walkway.

Arizona Winter Specialties—December 27, 2014–January 2, 2015 with Dave Stejskal & Tom Johnson. Exceptional winter birding on a short tour with numerous specialties and potential rarities.

Panama's Canopy Lodge: El Valle de Anton—December 27, 2014–January 3, 2015 with John Rowlett & local guide. A superb introduction to Neotropical birds or a complement to your broader Middle American birding, all based at a charming lodge.

Holiday in Honduras: The Lodge at Pico Bonito—December 29, 2014–January 3, 2015 with Jesse Fagan & local guide. A holiday birding tour over New Year's based in a lovely and bird-rich setting at The Lodge at Pico Bonito.

Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge I & II—January 9–18, 2015 with Willy Perez and February 13–22, 2015 with Dan Lane. One-site tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere.

Winter Japan: Dancing Cranes & Spectacular Sea-Eagles—January 9–24, 2015 with Phil Gregory & local guide. Japan's winter spectacles, including the fabulous cranes and Steller's Sea-Eagle.

Colombia: Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta—January 12–28, 2015 with Jesse Fagan & local guide. Energetic, endemic-oriented (30+) tour connecting reserves up the Magdalena Valley from Bogota to the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

Nowhere but Northeast Brazil!—January 13–30, 2015 (Southern Bahia Extension) with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. From beautiful beaches to barren badlands, our tour is a quest for specialties of the endangered caatinga, chapada, and Atlantic Forest habitats. The Southern Bahia Extension offers an opportunity to see many additional endemics birds, some of which are not seen on our Spectacular Southeast Brazil tours.

South Texas Rarities I & II—January 17–23, 2015 and January 24–30, 2015 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!

Mexico: Oaxaca I & II—January 17–24, 2015 with Pepe Rojas & Dan Lane and January 24–31, 2015 with Pepe Rojas. Superb birding with two-dozen Mexican endemics and fascinating ruins while based in lovely Oaxaca City.

Jewels of Ecuador: Hummers, Tanagers & Antpittas—January 17–February 3, 2015 with Willy Perez. Survey birding tour of Andean Ecuador; diverse avifauna dominated by colorful hummers and tanagers and more subtle and haunting antpittas.

East Africa Highlights: Kenya & Tanzania—January 17–February 6, 2015 with Terry Stevenson. Combines the richest birding and mammal spots in Kenya and northern Tanzania: Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, Great Rift Valley, Kakamega Forest, and more. An impressive diversity of habitats, many with spectacular scenery.

Thailand—January 17–February 7, 2015 (Peninsular Thailand & 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 Canopy Tower I, II & III—January 19–25, 2015 with John Coons & local guide; February 8–14, 2015 (Canopy Lodge Extension) with John Rowlett & local guide;

and February 21–27, 2015 (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.

Panama's Canopy Camp: Lowland Darien—January 24–February 1, 2015 with John Coons & local guide. A birding tour to a remote part of Panama with many specialties seen nowhere else in Central America.

Trinidad & Tobago—January 30–February 8, 2015 with Eric Hynes & Tom Johnson. Wonderful introductory birding tour to South America's riches, including bellbirds, toucans, manakins, and motmots.

Guyana: Wilderness Paradise—January 31–February 11, 2015 with Megan Edwards Crewe & local guide. A survey birding tour of the country's vast untrammeled rainforest, with an emphasis on Guianan shield specialties, and side trips to coastal and savanna regions and spectacular Kaieteur Falls.

February 2015

Cambodia—February 7–20, 2015 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.

Colombia: The Cauca Valley, Western & Central Andes—February 7–22, 2015 with Richard Webster & local guide. Endemic-oriented tour connecting reserves up the Cauca Valley from Medellin to Cali.

Guatemala: Shade-grown Birding—February 12–21, 2015 (Temples of 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.

Best of the Pacific Northwest: Skagit Valley & Puget Sound, Washington—February 14–19, 2015 with Terry McEaney. A winter birding and wildlife tour to a surprisingly mild maritime climate with breathtaking mountain backdrops and beautiful seascapes peppered with islands.

Birding Plus/ Birds & Wines of Chile and Argentina—February 14–28, 2015 with Marcelo Padua & John Coons. A tour combining an exploration of the great birds and vineyards of these two wonderful countries!

Northern India: Birds, Tiger & the Taj Mahal—February 16–March 10, 2015 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.

Philippines—February 28–March 23, 2015 (Visayan Islands & Mindoro Extension) with Dave Stejskal & local guide. Survey of the endemic-rich Philippines (Luzon, Palawan, and northeastern Mindanao) with an excellent chance to see the critically endangered Great Philippine Eagle.

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March 2015

Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes—March 1-15, 2015 with Willy Perez. Highlights 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.

Ethiopia: Endemic Birds & Ethiopian Wolf—March 6-26, 2015 (Lalibela Extension) with Richard Webster & local guide. 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.

Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves—March 7-21, 2015 with Mitch Lysinger. Focuses on the many specialties of the southwest, in particular the very local endemics of the humid foothills and mountains, and on Tumbesian specialties.

Brazil Nutshell: Intervalles, Iguazu Falls & the Pantanal—March 7-21, 2015 with Marcelo Padua & Pepe Rojas. 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 7-22, 2015 with Jay VanderGaast & local guide. Resplendent Quetzals, Three-wattled Bellbirds, Scarlet Macaws in a beautiful country with easy travel.

Dominican Republic—March 14-21, 2015 with Jesse Fagan & Tom Johnson. Many specialties and endemics including the unusual Palmchat.

Spring in South Texas—March 14-22, 2015 with Chris Benesh. Magnificent Whooping Cranes, lots of South Texas specialties, and spring hawk migration on this exciting tour.

Borneo—March 17-April 3, 2015 with Rose Ann Rowlett. Three prime areas in some of Earth's richest forests while based in comfort right in the wild.

Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge—March 19-29, 2015 with Willy Perez. Exploring the riches of the eastern Andean foothills of northern Ecuador for numerous specialties at Wildsumaco Lodge.

Ghana—March 20-April 7, 2015 with Phil Gregory & local guide. In search of numerous West African specialties as well as White-necked Rockfowl.

Puerto Rico—March 21-27, 2015 with Eric Hynes & Tom Johnson. A week of respite to a very birdy and beautiful Caribbean island, a mix of North American and local culture and cuisine; 17 endemic birds and a number of other Caribbean specialties.

Rarely Visited Belize: Punta Gorda—March 28-April 5, 2015 with Peter Burke. A terrific introduction to (or continuation of!) your tropical birding, including some regional bird specialties.



Oaxaca Sparrow



Fiery-throated Hummingbird



Golden-collared Manakin

MIDDLE AMERICA

Middle America is one of our favorite places to bird. In fact for many of us at Field Guides, our first birding trip outside the US or Canada was to Mexico, or Guatemala, or Costa Rica, or Panama...and our eyes were opened by all the wonderful birds beyond our borders. And regardless of where we've traveled since, we still love to visit those areas and to share their wonders with tour participants. The following is a listing of our Middle America tours from January through March with brief excerpts from last year's tour reports.

Costa Rica, Mar 7-22—"Chiriqui specialties were the theme in the highlands of the Cerro de la Muerte region, where many species restricted to Panama and CR can be found. We encountered more than 30 of these Chiriqui endemics, a list that included such treats as the scarce Silvery-throated Jay that suddenly appeared in the forest beside us, the skulking Wrenthrush in the thick bamboo along the Savegre River, the charming Collared Redstarts that flitted about on the trail sides, and the glittering Fiery-throated Hummingbirds that darted about at the feeders, their fiery throats glowing brilliantly when the light was just right." Jay VanderGaast

Costa Rica: Birding the Edges, Jan 5-14 (Part I) and Jan 13-22 (Part II)—"The bird-rich foothills of the Arenal Volcano region served as the grand finale, with a fruiting tree with no fewer than 11 Snowy Cotingas, by far the largest group I'd ever seen! The birding at Arenal itself was awesome, with too many highlights to recount, though a few that stood out were the distant but brilliant Lovely Cotinga, the very local Keel-billed Motmot, the gorgeous Black-and-white Owl calling loudly from above the road, stellar looks at Spotted, Dull-mantled, and Bare-crowned antbirds, and the easiest Thicket Antpitta I've ever met up with!" Jay VanderGaast

Guatemala: Shade-Grown Birding, Feb 12-21—"Other highlights included the pair of Fulvous Owls (they really stole the show, didn't they?) at Las Nubes, a pair of Pink-headed Warblers at Fuentes (they really stole the show...wait), our scoped Pheasant Cuckoo (wow, wow, wow), and that flyby Resplendent Quetzal, and we finished it up in style with Belted Flycatcher along the shores of the 'most beautiful lake in the world.'" Jesse Fagan

Mexico: Oaxaca, Jan 17-24 and Jan 24-31—"In addition to seeing so many wonderful birds, we also had the opportunity to visit ruins of the late Zapotec culture at Monte Alban (where we got our first views of an Ocellated Thrasher and a very cooperative Rock Wren). We tasted the great cuisine of the area, and of course the smoky and strong mescal. We also learned about the ancient weaving techniques that have been passed down through generations, and some of us brought home a few of those amazing works." Pepe Rojas

Panama's Canopy Tower, Jan 19-25, Feb 8-14, and Feb 21-27—"During our stay we made three visits to famed Pipeline Road, where we found a number of lowland specialties and mixed-species flocks with the highlight being an encounter with a Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo (one of the most sought-after birds in Central America). Other great sightings included a Great Tinamou stealthily moving through the forest, a tiny Rufous-crested Coquette, five species of trogons, a Broad-billed Motmot right over our heads, a wonderful Great Jacamar, Spot-crowned Antvireo, a miniscule Moustached Antwren, Bicolored, Spotted, and Ocellated antbirds, Golden-crowned Spadebill, stunning male Blue Cotingas, Golden-collared Manakin, and Green Shrike-Vireo." John Coons

Panama's Canopy Camp, Jan 24-Feb 1—"On our inaugural trip to the new Canopy Camp, we found a number of birds that cannot easily be seen anywhere else, as well as many more that occur nowhere else in Central America outside of eastern Panama. This was exemplified by our near-daily views of a magnificent male Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, a species not even illustrated in the Panama guides. Other birding highlights of the trip were many and included the perched Semiplumbeous Hawk, a very close Black-and-white Owl, the Great Potoo, a tiny American Pygmy Kingfisher near the bank of the Rio Chucunaque, Barred Puffbirds right in camp, a scope view of Gray-cheeked Nunlet, Golden-green and Spot-breasted woodpeckers, a tiny Spectacled Parrotlet, multiple Golden-headed Manakins, nice looks at a local White-eared Conebill, and great views of rarely seen Black Oropendolas, among others." John Coons

Newly Redesigned Rarely Visited Belize, Mar 28-Apr 5—"The small country of Belize is a perfect birding destination, and with this newly redesigned itinerary, we plan to take advantage of an area of the country that is off the beaten path yet rich in birdlife. For much of the tour we'll be based out of the southern town of Punta Gorda in Toledo District at the end of the Southern Highway. There are comfortable lodgings available and close access to some fantastic birding along quiet secondary roads and reserves. (with Peter Burke)

The Spectacular Pico Bonito with Jesse Fagan, Dec 29, 2014- Jan 3, 2015—"When it's 12 degrees F outside, you don't want to hear, 'Honey, we should have gone to Honduras for New Year's. Oh, and somebody needs to shovel the driveway...again.' Instead, you could be enjoying some fabulous tropical birding—good fun with long, warm days at a world-class lodge set inside a pristine forest. You will love The Lodge at Pico Bonito. We'll look for specialties (think Keel-billed Motmot), beauties (Red-capped Manakin, Shining Honeycreeper...oooh), and the endemic Honduran Emerald. Night life? How about prowling for potoos and Black-and-white Owl? (And trail cameras reveal lots of jaguars and pumas—we might just get lucky...) Come ring in 2015 with me!" Jesse (aka the Motmot)

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Panama's Canopy Tower

January 19-25, 2015 with John Coons
February 8-14, 2015 with John Rowlett
February 21-27, 2015 with Chris Benesh

Panama's Canopy Lodge

December 27, 2014-January 3, 2015 with John Rowlett
December 27, 2015-January 3, 2016 with John Coons

Panama's Canopy Camp

January 24-February 1, 2015 with John Coons
December 26, 2015-January 3, 2016 with John Rowlett

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