

Brazil in a Nutshell: Getting Started in One of the World's Richest Birding Destinations

Bret Whitney and Marcelo Padua

Brazil is by far the largest country in South America—it's about the size of the lower 48 US states—and is home to one of the richest avifaunas on Earth including some 220 endemic species. Brazil is also one of the top tourist destinations in the world, not only because of its wealth of beautiful places and rich cultural heritage, but also because infrastructure for tourism works in Brazil: air service is excellent, hotels and *pousadas* are clean and cozy, the food is fabulous, and people in the service industries and countryside alike invariably go out of their way to make things happen the way you want them to.



White Woodpecker by participant Max Rodel

Field Guides remains deeply committed to advancing birding tourism in Brazil, which directly supports the preservation of natural habitats there. That's why we offer so many different itineraries for birding tours to Brazil, with 11 in our schedule for 2015. "ELEVEN different trips!?" you say. "Where do I begin?" Well, as one option for your first birding trip to Brazil, try our rich sampler tour, titled **Brazil Nutshell: Atlantic Forest, Iguazu Falls & the Pantanal**. It's just right for seeing the highlights (outside of Amazonia) at a leisurely pace. The report that follows from Marcelo's tour earlier this year will give you an idea of what some of those highlights might be.

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2014 ~ Our 30th Year of Birding Tours

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"This is always a great tour, birding three of the most spectacular venues in Brazil, and our 2014 tour was no different. We started off at Intervalles, a state park that together with two others is responsible for the conservation of the largest remaining tracts of Atlantic Forest. The birding was great even before we got to the park, with Streamer-tailed Tyrants, Black Hawk-Eagle, and Red-legged Seriemas seen on our way there. But once we reached the park, the birding was simply incredible. Tropical Screech-Owl, Red-and-white Crake, Common Potoo, and Red-ruffed Fruitcrow were some of the goodies our local guides had reserved for us, and as the days went by we came across a soon-to-be-split taxon of bristlefront as well as White-breasted Tapaculo, Black-fronted Piping-Guans, and myriad spinetails, foliage-gleaners, and tanagers that had our heads spinning for a few days.

"We then headed to Iguazu Falls, where we found another Black-fronted Piping-Guan but this time with chicks. We also saw the beautiful Creamy-bellied Gnatcatcher, the range-restricted Southern

Bristle-Tyrant, and the endemic Uniform Finch along with many other goodies. But the true star of our visit was undoubtedly the falls in all of their splendor, with thousands of Great Dusky Swifts coming in to roost and a rare phenomenon that only occurs in clear, full-moon nights—the silvery rainbows in the mist of the falls. I think this alone was worth the trip there.

"Last but certainly not least, we finished the tour in the Pantanal, where we woke up the first morning to hundreds of birds that ranged from whistling-ducks and Bare-faced Ibises to Jabirus, Greater Rheas, and Bare-faced Curassows. The birding was so good right at the lodge that we had a hard time getting away from the buildings on the first morning, but once we did we found such other great species as Band-tailed Antbirds and Black-collared Hawks on a pleasant boat trip. Our remaining time in the Pantanal seemed to go by just a bit too quickly as we enjoyed good looks at Ruby Topaz Hummingbird, Zigzag and Boat-billed herons, and more woodpeckers than we could count."

Consider joining Marcelo and co-leader Pepe Rojas for this rich taste of birding Brazil on our next departure, March 7-21, 2015. It should be not only great birding but great fun.



From left: Black-fronted Piping-Guan; Black-capped Foliage-gleaner; Streamer-tailed Tyrant; and Peach-fronted Parakeet by guides Marcelo Padua & John Rowlett and participant Max Rodel



California Condor by guide John Coons

Condor News

Our **Northern Arizona: Canyons & Condors** tour groups with Flagstaff-based Field Guide John Coons have been delighting in condors for the last two years, but now it's official: word from on high (the ABA Recording Standards and Ethics Committee, that is) is that the California Condors at the Grand Canyon are "countable." Whatever the official math, John's counting on more good times on the May 30-June 4, 2015 tour!

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A Day Birding at Ecuador's Shiripuno Lodge

Willy Perez

At Shiripuno, a rustic lodge about fifty miles southeast of the town of Coca along the Shiripuno River in the remote lowland rainforest of the Waorani nation, our first day of birding sometimes begins in the evening, just after our arrival dinner when the chorus of nocturnal birds gets started. At other Ecuadorian sites I know, I've never heard such a combination of diverse species in one place, some of them rare: Bartlett's and White throated tinamous lead the dusk concert, followed by Nocturnal Curassow and of course Great Potoo. With all these magnificent sounds around us, we find ourselves thinking that if this is night, what will tomorrow's daylight birding bring?

Early the next morning, we have our answer: in the courtyard of the lodge, Spix's Guans and Blue-throated Piping-Guans compete for the best fruits of the cecropia trees, while just behind the lodge, at the head of a mile-long loop trail, we see birds which elsewhere we'd have to take a long walk to find. The first to appear are the Yellow-browed and Lunulated antbirds, then Yellow-billed Jacamar, and with patience, even Brown Nunlet. Walking a little farther we spot Black Bushbird, Fiery Topaz, and a Rufous Potoo on its dayroost. We have our eyes out for the elusive Gray-winged Trumpeter, a regular possibility here, too, and there are many other species of birds to be seen such as trogons, toucans, parrots, and of course my favorites, the beautiful manakins, including three of the prettiest—Blue-crowned, White-crowned, and Golden-headed.

Checking our watches, we find that our entire first morning has quickly passed, full of amazing sightings.

As we return to the lodge for lunch, there's more: with a cool drink in hand as reward for our morning's efforts, we're interrupted by kingfishers and barbets. After lunch, a canoe trip along the Shiripuno River is super productive as we spot Blue-and-yellow, Scarlet, and Red-and-green macaws, some flying in groups but others sitting in palms along the banks of the river. Our canoe ride continues with Olive and Casqued oropendolas crossing in front of us, and good views of both Lettered Aracari and Orange-cheeked Parrot. We keep our eyes open, too, for the rarely seen Salvin's Curassow, which I've seen before along the river's edge. At dusk, we put ourselves in place to try for Black-banded Owl, and then watch as a pair flies directly over our heads!

Our first 24 hours complete with the sightings of so many magnificent birds, we return to the lodge for dinner, and the dusk avian concert strikes up again. Once more my mind turns to tomorrow's possibilities...perhaps Pearly Antshrike, Spotted Puffbird, Ash-throated Gnateater, and more. Fabulous stuff!

Willy's next tour to **Shiripuno Lodge: Heartland of the Waorani** is scheduled for September 25-October 4, 2015. Check our web page for all the details, or contact our office to hold a space. And to see some fun clips from the lodge's trap (trail) camera, check out their YouTube channel.



From left: Willy Perez; Great Potoo; Blue-and-yellow Macaws; Orange-cheeked Parrot; Black-banded Owl; and Gray-winged Trumpeter by guides Marcelo Padua & Dave Stejskal and participants Barbara Williams, Bob Sprague & Amy Levensgood, and Larry Peavler

FRESH FROM THE FIELD



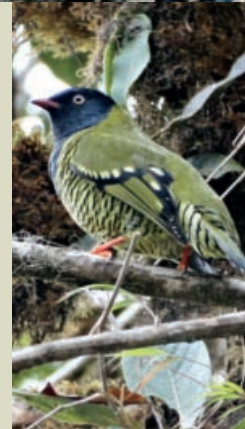
Few people ever venture as far north as **Spitsbergen & the Svalbard Archipelago**. Only 650 miles from the North Pole, it's starkly beautiful country with breeding bird cliffs jammed with various species including the Thick-billed Murres and Black-legged Kittiwakes our group is viewing here, and the Dovekies at left, small alcids about the size of a starling that spend most of their life at sea. Mammals include whales, Walrus, seals, and the likes of this giant male Polar Bear. (Photos by participants Jan Shaw & Joyce Takamine)



Every trip to the Amazonian rainforest is full of surprises, and Willy Perez's **Sacha Lodge** tour this summer had a few good ones, including a Harpy Eagle and a Giant Anteater, as well as seeing more than 130 species in a morning at the canopy tower. Other treats included the Amazonian Umbrellabird above, thought to be South America's largest passerine; close views of a Long-billed Woodcreeper (at right above); and a not uncommon but lovely Ivory-billed Aracari. (Photos by participants David Bates & David Wendelken)



Dan Lane and his trusty ground crew pose with their **Bolivia's Avian Riches** tour group, and below them are two of the many avian riches they encountered along their route, a Scarlet-headed Blackbird, a bird that stands out in its marshy habitat, and a Barred Fruiteater, a temperate zone species of the northern Andes. Other sightings included close looks at a perched Crowned Eagle and a Dot-fronted Woodpecker, a life bird for Dan after many Bolivia tours. (Photos by guide Dan Lane)



Showy birds-of-paradise like Superb and Twelve-wired and King-of-Saxony are always among the highlights of our **Papua New Guinea** tours, but there are other, less flashy but appealing members of the group to be seen, like this Short-tailed Paradigalla at near left with its yellow and blue wattles visible; look closely at the photo at far left and you'll see a Barred Owlet-Nightjar peeking back at you; at right, lovely Plumed Whistling-Ducks, part of a group of sixty birds, the largest number ever recorded in the country according to guide Jay VanderGaast. (Photos by participant Peter Gasson)





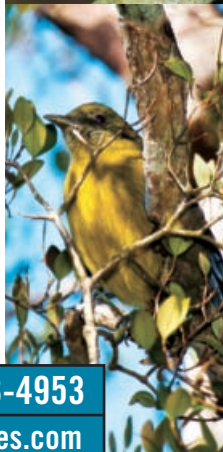
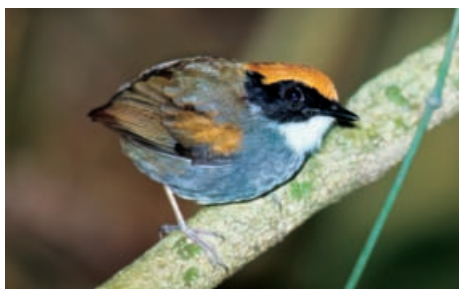
According to guide Mitch Lysinger, “The **Montane Ecuador** tour has yet to disappoint; there is always a hefty set of rare and colorful birds, staggering scenery around every curve, and comfortable accommodations...with some mighty delicious food in between!” A few of those colorful birds are pictured here: at left, a pair of Golden Tanagers above and a Golden-naped below them, two species among well over forty seen on the tour, and a very white-bibbed Collared Inca, one of 49 hummers seen on the tour including the rare Mountain Avocetbill. And this staggering view is of Volcan Pichincha from the subtropical zone on the west slope. (Photos by participants John Hershey & C.V. Vick)



Like Spitsbergen, Newfoundland is known for its seabird colonies. At right, a partial view of the thousands of Northern Gannets that crowd the cliffs of Cape St. Mary's, and above left, a close up of a pair of those gannets; witnessing this spectacle is always a highlight of our **Newfoundland & Nova Scotia** tour, and with perfect weather, this year was one of the best guide Chris Benesh could recall. But the tour's not just about seabirds; there were many landbirds as well—thrushes, sparrows, and others including 17 species of warblers, the Black-and-white above among them. (Photos by guide Chris Benesh and participant Christine Stevens)



Until a few years ago, the Long-whiskered Owllet was an almost mythical bird, so few people had seen it. But there it is at left, in person, a photo from Dan Lane's **Peru's Magnetic North** tour this year. And although the Magnificent Spatuletail is the hummingbird star of the tour, we see a number of other lovely ones including this Golden-tailed Sapphire at left below. On a trip with so many endemic birds, Johnson's (formerly Lulu's) Tody-Flycatcher is a great one to see. (Photos by guide Dan Lane and participant Becky Hansen)



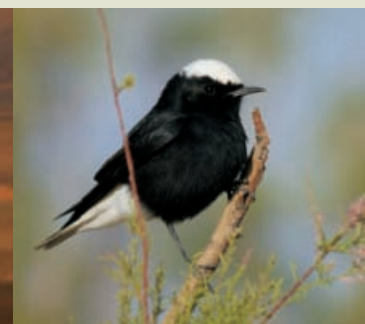
This year's **Serra dos Tucanos, Brazil** tour was, in the words of guide John Rowlett, “...an excellent, brief trip to the Atlantic Forest with our usual 100 or so endemics...” At left, one of the most prized of those endemics, Gray-winged Cotinga, first described to science in 1980 after it was discovered in a skin tray of Black-and-gold Cotingas by ornithologist David Snow. Another endemic at right above, a lovely Saw-billed Hermit, a frequenter of the lodge feeders. And to round things out, a cute little Black-cheeked Gnatcatcher, yet another endemic seen on the trails around the lodge grounds. (Photos by participant Gregg Recer)

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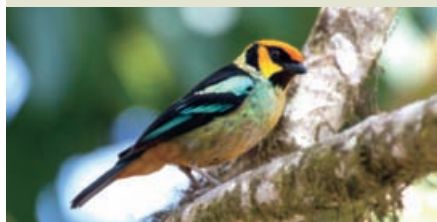
FRESH FROM THE FIELD



With a remnant population of only several hundred birds in Morocco and Syria, it's always a relief to see the critically endangered Waldrapp, or Northern Bald Ibis, above right. Guide Jesse Fagan reports that his **Morocco** tour this year saw about thirty of the ibis in the Atlas Mountains, as well as all 12 lark species on the checklist—Temminck's Lark above—and 7 species of *Oenanthe* (wheatears), including this pretty White-tailed, below. Those are migrant Kentish Plovers flying over the Tagdilt Track at left, a road through the desert of southern Morocco good for many of those larks and wheatears our group saw. (Photos by guide Jesse Fagan and participant Sandy Paci)



Across two Andean cordilleras to the Amazon rainforest of the eastern lowlands, our **Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes** covers much of the north of this small country—and it sees some fabulous birds, like this sampling from Rose Ann Rowlett's recent tour. Clockwise from above: A dazzling Crowned Woodnymph at the the Milpe feeders, and next to it a female Buff-tailed Coronet feeding nestlings in a beautiful lichen-covered nest; Black-bellied Cuckoo, a trip highlight when viewed close at hand from the canopy tower; and one of the fancy *Tangara*, Flame-faced Tanager. (Photos by participants Marshall Dahl & Peggy Keller)



Our popular **France: Camargue & Pyrenees** tour combines great birding with amazing food—and we might add, beautiful scenery, as can be seen from this photo of our group with guides Megan and Jay at Lac des Gloriettes in the Pyrenees where they saw the Wallcreeper, one of the trip highlights. At left, a Eurasian Griffon, and below, a sleeping Alpine Marmot, a species introduced to the Pyrenees in the 1940s that is now a source of food for the Golden Eagles—though this marmot doesn't seem too worried. (Photos by guide Megan Edwards Crewe and participant Donna Bray)





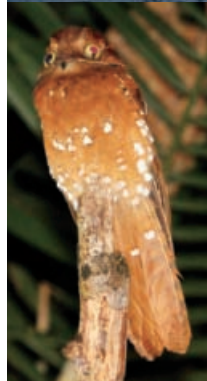
Here's a tiny slice of the action on our recent **Slice of California** tour. On the pelagic, a Laysan Albatross, more graceful in the air, where it can travel hundreds of miles per day with barely a wingbeat, than in the water, and below, what looks like a Clapper Rail but isn't; the California birds have recently been split and are now known as Ridgway's Rail. (Photos by participant Chris DeCilio)



The Masai Mara is one of the world's most spectacular wildlife reserves, and here's a view from Terry Stevenson's **Kenya Safari Spectacular** tour; it's quintessential Africa with Blue Wildebeest—and are those elephants in the background?—spread across the Mara plains. The impressive Kori Bustard, below middle, Africa's heaviest flying bird, was another impressive Mara sight. And speaking of heavy, this Hippo looks a little out of his element catching a nap on dry land. The African Bare-eyed Thrush, below right, was a pretty sight in Samburu. (Photos by guide Terry Stevenson)



Jaguar Spotting? Oh yes, and just look at this guy below, one of several our **Jaguar Spotting: Pantanal & Garden of the Amazon** group spotted in the Brazilian Pantanal. But enough of spots, though on this tour there are a lot of them: there are also great birds—Harpy Eagle for one group, as well as the very rare Cone-billed Tanager. Bare-faced Curassows, like the male above, are not uncommon, and those lovely Black-capped Donacobius, at right, are a pleasure to see—and hear. (Photos by participant Cliff Hensel)



It's called **Rio Negro Paradise: Manaus**, and you can believe it from the photos above. At top, our group returning to our comfortable Brazilian houseboat after a day of birding on the river, and below it, three of the tour's regulars: at left, Rufous Potoo—we had dynamite looks at this sometimes difficult potoo; at center, Glossy Antshrike, among numerous antbirds; and Wire-tailed Manakin, one of the more incredible of this incredible group. And be sure to check out Bret's videos of the Rufous Potoo and Wire-tailed Manakin on the 2014 tour triplist. (Photos by guide Marcelo Padua and participant Cliff Hensel)

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FRESH FROM THE FIELD



Go far, far north in October? What are we, crazy? Well, just a bit, but when the draws are pink-hued Ross's Gulls plus other arctic goodies like Snowy Owl, Yellow-billed Loon, and with luck even Polar Bear, our

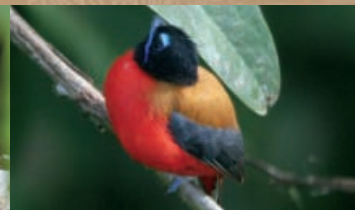
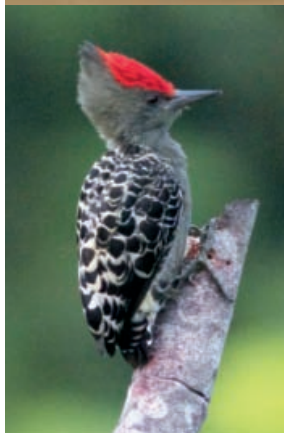
Barrow, Alaska:
Search for Ross's Gull
tour is well worth a few days of going bananas at the edge of the Chukchi Sea! (Photos by guides Eric Hynes & Tom Reed and participant Ann Hobbs)



A parade of incomparables from our two recent **Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga** tours in Peru: Bearded Mountaineer (another imaginative hummer name), Blue-naped Chlorophonia (straight-up eye candy), Masked Fruiteater (a Peruvian endemic), and Stripe-headed Antpitta—an antpitta of higher elevations that doesn't require a worm handout to come out into the open! (Photos by guides Jesse Fagan & Dan Lane)



Arizona is all about some very cool birds and birding, and these three species from our **Arizona's Second Spring** tour were indeed very chill: Montezuma Quail, the male keeping an eye out at top, Red-faced Warbler, and a Five-striped Sparrow. Did you know that late July and early August, during the monsoon, can be a wonderful time to visit, weather-wise? (Photos by guide Tom Johnson)



From a boat (no surprises!) is how we want to be watching Asiatic Elephants on our **Borneo** tour. When it comes to the avian delights of the destination, however, closer is better, especially with the likes of this tiny but lovely Gray-and-buff Woodpecker (left), a button-eyed Black-and-yellow Broadbill, and Scarlet-rumped Trogon. (Photos by guide Dave Stejskal & participant Ken Havard)

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 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-parted tour to this bird-rich country exploring sites and birds not covered on our March or holiday tours.

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 & Eric Hynes and January 24-31, 2015 with Pepe Rojas & Dan Lane. 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.

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.

NEW/Jamaica—

March 3-8, 2015 with Eric Hynes. A six-day birding tour in search of Jamaica's 27 endemics in our new itinerary featuring Green Castle Estate.

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. Tour for 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. Short tour for 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 the 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.

April 2015

Colorado Grouse I & II—

April 1-11, 2015 with Chris Benesh & Tom Johnson and April 12-22, 2015 with Eric Hynes. A short tour to seek out the state's prairie-chicken and grouse species.

Hawaii—

April 2-11, 2015 with Dan Lane & Megan Edwards Crewe. We'll visit three of the major islands—Oahu, Kauai, and Hawaii—giving us a chance to sample a great portion of the Hawaiian endemic birds and the seabird specialties.

Bahamas: Abaco, Andros, Eleuthera & Kirtland's Warbler—

April 4-9, 2015 (Andros Extension) with Jesse Fagan. Small-group tour for four 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.

Bhutan—

April 4-22, 2015 with Richard Webster. Spellbinding birding amidst awe-inspiring landscapes on a journey through the lush forests and mountains of this "lost" Himalayan kingdom.

Texas Coast Migration Spectacle I & II—

April 11-17, 2015 and April 18-27, 2015 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 18-27, 2015 with Chris Benesh & Tom Johnson. Colima and Golden-cheeked warblers, Montezuma Quail, and other southern borderland specialties in Texas's grand desert mountain landscapes.

Birding Plus/Scotland: Famous Grouse in the Land of Whisky—

April 18-May 1, 2015 with John Rowlett & local guide. Imbibing Highland Scotland's famous grouse, distilling birds in the Hebrides, sorting through geese, sorting out crossbills, and sampling Scottish whisky and culture sum up the smooth shots to be taken on this *Birding Plus* tour.

NEW/Hungary & Romania: The best of Eastern Europe—

April 25-May 11, 2015 with Terry Stevenson & local guide. Fabulous birding in some of the most spectacular landscapes of Eastern Europe: the Danube Delta, Carpathian Mountains, Torda Gorge, Hortobagy, and Kiskunsag.

Birding Plus/Do the Charleston!: Spring in South Carolina—

April 26-May 2, 2015 with Jesse Fagan. Our tour combining spring migration and a touch of the mountains with lovely and historic Charleston, South Carolina.

Arizona Nightbirds & More I & II—

April 30-May 4, 2015 and May 7-11, 2015 with Dave Stejskal & Tom Johnson (II). A short tour focused on this area's many owl and nightjar specialties.

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Graceful Ground-Tyrants!

Jesse Fagan

This was my sixth year guiding one or more of our Field Guides summer **Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga** tours to Peru, and I thought to myself at some point, “Man, what a great tour for ground-tyrants!” I’m not sure why I have an affinity for drab, open-country birds (see my article on canasteros from January 2012!), but I do, and ground-tyrants are some of my favorites, plumaged in whites, grays, and soft steely blues. Some show a dark eye-line or paler supercilium, but others also have small patches on the crown and nape with flashes of ochre or rufous-brown. Despite acting like thrushes, hopping along the ground in the open with an erect posture, they are actually tyrant-flycatchers, in the same family as North American phoebes and kingbirds.

Muscisaxicola is a New World, Southern Hemisphere genus of 13 species occurring mainly in the Andes and Patagonia. Several species that we see on the tour are austral migrants (visiting from more southerly regions between the months from April to September), and a few others are resident. Almost all the species we encounter occur above 9000 feet elevation, and at least three species are found well above timberline on the flat, boggy plains within the puna grassland, for example, Taczanowski’s and Ochre-naped ground-tyrants. The Little Ground-Tyrant can be found on sandy river banks.

In total, eight species of these graceful creatures are possible on our Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga tour, with Spot-billed, Rufous-naped, White-browed, and Cinereous rounding out the roster. It’s a delightful flycatcher aesthetic I enjoy year after year.

Dates for Jesse’s next tour to Machu Picchu and Abra Malaga are July 2-11.



Ground-tyrants are a snap to identify...well, um, at least to “ground-tyrant”! Their sleek shapes are easy on the eyes, however, so we won’t mind taking a few moments in the field to clench the ID by checking for nape color or a pale eyebrow or forehead or a dark face. It’s a subtle open-country challenge, with such players as the Ochre-naped, White-browed, and Rufous-naped ground-tyrants shown here. Game on! (Photos by participant Marshall Dahl and guides Dave Stejskal & Jesse Fagan)

GUIDES

In Your Words and Ours

Marcelo Padua has been described as being enthusiastic, funny, smart, and very knowledgeable, a guy with the uncanny ability to “spot dark birds in dark places.” He knows the area, the people, the birds—“he even remembers which bird you missed and gets you on it if it’s found again (even if it’s days later).” But what participants on Marcelo’s tours also discover about him is that he loves guiding tours—and from his expression in this photo from his Manaus tour, you see that it shows.

Bret Whitney not only knows Brazil’s birds, but he’s had field experience with more of them than any other birder or ornithologist—and that’s a whole boatload of birds. But what Bret enjoys as much as seeing birds is showing them to participants on his tours. “Bret has so much knowledge of the birds, the history, and the culture of Brazil and he shares so much that it is a full experience,” a participant on his recent Rio Roosevelt tour wrote. “I just loved this trip! I feel very privileged to have been able to go.”

You can’t help but have a great time with **Willy Perez** in the lead, whether it’s in his native Ecuador, where the bulk of his 2015 schedule will be, or on his jaunts to France or Northern Peru. He’s not only a fantastic birder and guide, but a warm and wonderful guy to host your birding vacation. And as the father of two (great) young girls, let’s just say he knows how to deal with just about anything unexpected!

Dan Lane has had a big year-and-a-half. He competed with the winning Field Guides team in one of the Peru Birding Rallies, and as part of the LSU group, he helped set a new world big day record in Peru. So, Dan is skilled at finding birds, but he also cares about showing those birds to others. “Patient in drawing birds in for views” according to one of his tour participants and “excellent at getting participants on birds” says another.



● **Megan Edwards Crewe** was joined by new guide **Tom Johnson** for Meeg's Spring in Cape May tour (and Jan Pierson slipped in as well). How did things go? Well, here's what one participant had to say. "Despite having full days... I am feeling invigorated. The pace of the tour and the number of participants was just right. I found the time to ask the questions I wanted in the field and felt I learned a great deal in addition to seeing a lot of birds...the guides really made the tour." That's music to our ears.

● This shot of **Chris Benesh** was taken on our Australia tour, where he usually spends a few weeks in October. Most of Chris's other tours next year are in North America, with short detours to Panama and Peru. After a tour with Chris, participants frequently comment not just on his birding skills, but on "how generous he is about sharing his knowledge with others..." And of course almost everyone remarks on his sense of humor, or as a participant put it recently, his "unintimidating and often hilarious style."

● Tour participants frequently comment on **Pepe Rojas's** knowledge of the birds, the plants, and the general ecology of his native Peru, not to mention its history and culture. But many also remark on his wonderful enthusiasm, which is contagious. "I will always remember him," a recent participant on his Peruvian Rainforest tour wrote, "lying on his back on the steps watching a mixed tanager flock and saying, 'I am in heaven!'" Not that hard to believe if you know Pepe and if you've birded with him in Peru.

What does it take to be a successful guide? Numerous skills are involved, from being a great host for the group to having the ability to find birds and show them to birders.

● Guide **John Coons** has both traits in spades, and a participant on a recent Arizona tour noted that "John's ability to hear, identify, and locate birds seems magical. He did a fantastic job of ensuring that all participants saw every species." Plus he's a font of fascinating information about the birds and the area, good at logistics, lots of fun... Need we hammer on?

● **Jesse Fagan** has been spending a fair amount of time in Africa these days, specifically Morocco and Uganda—and here, the tall one at left, on a recent South Africa tour with Terry Stevenson. But some of Jesse's favorite birds are those closer to home, though since that home is in Lima, Peru there's a wide range to choose from (see Jesse's article on ground-tyrants on the facing page). Wherever he goes, Jesse makes friends *and* sees a lot of birds; it's not unusual for tour participants to comment on his "superb birding skills" and to describe him—as a recent fan did—as "delightful, personable, and highly knowledgeable."

● **Dave Stejskal** will be birding Asia on four tours next year—to Thailand, the Philippines, Borneo, and in the fall, a new China tour to Yunnan Province. But no matter where he goes, whether it's around his home state of Arizona or to more exotic destinations, he's the best. "He did a phenomenal job," one participant told us recently, "identifying the birds...and juggling the demands of tour leading with a calm demeanor and intact sense of humor."

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Yellowstone in Winter, Jan 3-11
South Texas Rarities, Jan 17-23 and Jan 24-30
Best of the Pacific Northwest, Feb 14-19
Spring in South Texas, Mar 14-22
Colorado Grouse, Apr 1-11 and Apr 12-22
Hawaii, Apr 2-11
Texas Coast Migration Spectacle, Apr 11-17 and Apr 18-24
Texas's Big Bend & Hill Country, Apr 18-27
Do the Charleston!: Spring in South Carolina, Apr 26-May 2
Arizona Nightbirds & More, Apr 30-May 4 and May 7-11
Arizona: Birding the Border, May 8-17 and May 15-24
Point Pelee Migration Spectacle, May 9-16
Spring in Cape May, May 17-23
Maine: Birding Downeast, May 23-31
Virginias' Warblers, May 27-31
Alaska, May 29-Jun 6 and Jun 5-15 (I); Jun 5-13 and Jun 12-22 (II)
Northern Arizona's Canyons & Condor, May 30-Jun 4

