

fieldguides®

NOVEMBER 2015

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

GHANA

Kakum's suspended walkway, where we too can travel through the Ghanaian rainforest canopy. (Photo by participants David & Judy Smith)

Phil Gregory

This was our sixth tour to Ghana in as many years, and once again it proved very successful. Favorite birds of the trip were many, and top highlights were, of course, the incredible White-necked Rockfowl (White-necked Picathartes), Egyptian Plover, Hartlaub's Duck, Blue-moustached Bee-eater, Blue-bellied Roller, White-throated Francolin, and the many amazing butterflies, which added a nice dimension to our trip.

The Rockfowl, or Picathartes as it is commonly called, is a member of a family with only two species, and the White-necked is

a West African endemic. The birds have bald heads with brightly colored and patterned skin, and male and female are essentially identical. Our sighting of the bird this year was outstanding! We waited about 90 minutes, and then an absolute stunner hopped in and posed for us on a boulder for several minutes in great light. Just as we were about to go, two more birds appeared and began foraging in the shadows, with one actually jumping up and sitting in one of the mud nests on the cave wall. I have rarely seen the birds so well.

Continued on page 2

Puerto Rico *Tom Johnson*

Our week in Puerto Rico was a remarkably fun and relaxed way to experience the island, as well as to see all of its endemic bird species and many regional specialties. From the Puerto Rican Parrots at Rio Abajo to the seaside birding at La Parguera, the birding was great every day, and we had good weather throughout, typical of this trip.

We left San Jose early and headed west to Rio Abajo, a state forest, with enough darkness left to track down our first endemics of the tour, some Puerto Rican Screech-Owls calling from bamboo patches. Our walk on a wide track through the forest led us to a spot where, after a bit of waiting, we heard and then saw a pair of Puerto Rican Parrots! These birds landed nearby and we tracked them down, spending about 30 minutes admiring them. This is a critically endangered species that is barely hanging on in the wild—the birds we saw were being tracked at Rio Abajo as part of a reintroduction program on the island.

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Antillean Crested Hummingbird
(Photo by guide Tom Johnson)

GHANA

Continued from page 1

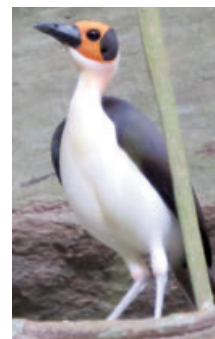
We visited several of the country's national parks, including Kakum Forest with its spectacular canopy walkway, ideal for providing access to a range of canopy dwellers—Violet-backed Hyliota, Rosy Bee-eater, Black-collared Lovebird, and Cassin's Spinetail among them. The park also hosts a remarkable array of hornbills, though some species were very tough this year; we saw five of the rare Brown-cheeked—a West-African endemic—but there was no sign of the two big casqued species (Black-casqued and Yellow-casqued). Other fine birds in the general area were Fire-bellied Woodpecker, Blue-throated Roller, a great Brown Nightjar perched at dusk, Rock Pratincole (with a juvenile), White-throated Blue Swallow, the rare dark morph of Senegal Coucal, Preuss's Swallow, and White-crowned Lapwing, the first I'd seen at this spot since 2009. We worked in a visit to the International Stingless Bee research site at Abrafo late one morning, where we sampled some of their honey—apparently sweat bees are also honeybees!

The innovation of camping in the forest at Ankasa in decent-sized tents with comfortable beds was well worth it and saved hours of commuting. Stars here were an amazing 17 Hartlaub's Ducks, African Pygmy-goose, White-bellied, Chocolate-backed, and African Dwarf kingfishers, Blue-headed Wood-Dove, Swamp and Yellow-bearded greenbuls, and Reichenbach's, Tiny, and Mouse-brown sunbirds. Hearing Nkulengu Rail calling at a great distance well before dawn raises hopes for next year...and two fine Blue-moustached Bee-eaters over the main track were a surprise—the first I'd seen here.

The north was in good shape with more rainfall, and Mole National Park was quite green. We did well here with White-throated Francolin, Forbes's Plover, Standard-wing Nightjar, Pied Flycatchers, and Melodious Warbler. Black-faced Firefinch and Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver were other good finds, as were Lavender Waxbill, Brown-rumped Bunting, and Rufous Cisticola (found again), and some unexpected sightings included Gray-headed Bush-Shrike, Yellow-bellied Hyliota, and my lifer West African Seedeater. Elephants were very nice with great views of four bathing near the waterhole, while Olive Baboons, Tantalus, and Patas Monkeys proved diverting.

Continuing north, we headed to the town of Bolgatana near the border with Burkina Faso. With a change in timing this year, we drove out to the White Volta River the next morning, which proved excellent. We had, among others, Black-headed Lapwing, Four-banded Sandgrouse, White-billed Sparrow-Weaver, Speckle-fronted Weaver, a brief sighting of Rufous Scrub-Robin, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, and of course the star of the show, great looks at four Egyptian Plovers on a sandbar in the river, one a subadult with a buffy forehead that kept calling to a nearby adult—it's not often you get to hear them vocalizing. It was one of the birds of the trip, as ever, and usually treated as an endemic African family.

Our next Ghana tour is April 1-19 with Phil Gregory.



A sturdy base for the canopy walkway helps us feel a little more naturally at home high above the ground! Below the walkway, some fine sightings from our 2015 tour: Senegal Coucal, Olive Baboon, and the incomparable White-necked Picathartes! (Photos by participants David & Judy Smith and guide Phil Gregory)

We also have three other Africa tours scheduled for this spring.

Ethiopia, May 20-June 9, 2016 with Terry Stevenson (Lalibela Extension)

Ethiopia's remote mountains are home to a unique variety of birds and mammals. From the gorgeous White-cheeked Turaco to the somber Sombre Chat, Mountain Nyala, and the enigmatic Ethiopian Wolf, there are many highlights to be found here and virtually nowhere else on Earth!

Morocco, May 21-June 2, 2016 with Jesse Fagan

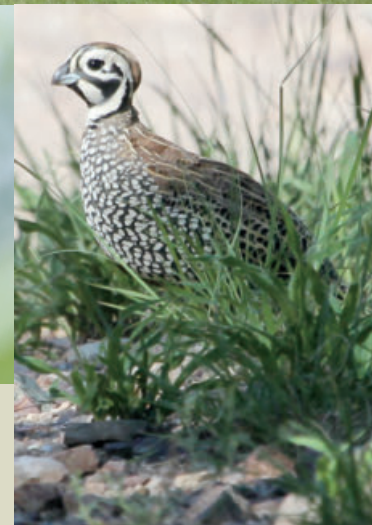
Blessed with the richest birdlife in Northwest Africa, Morocco ranks as one of the Western Palearctic's great birding destinations. We'll traverse the country from the scenic Atlantic coast through the High Atlas Mountains to the very edge of the great Sahara Desert.

Uganda: Shoebill, Rift Endemics & Gorillas

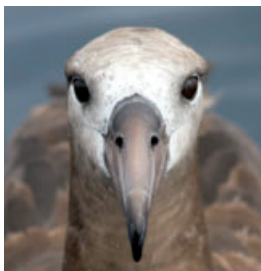
May 21-June 10, 2016 with Phil Gregory

Murchison Falls, Lake Victoria, Shoebill, the Impenetrable Forest, Mountain Gorillas—Uganda is home to each of these legendary names, and our tour rediscovers the spectacular avifauna and wildlife this country has to offer.

FRESH FROM THE FIELD



It's difficult to imagine Arizona as green as the photo at top shows it to be, but if the summer rains are good, as they were this year, our **Arizona's Second Spring** tour benefits from the lush landscape. One group had close views of the striking Montezuma Quail (six of them; one at right) and the eye-catching Hooded Oriole at fruit. (Photos by guide Megan Edwards Crewe and participants Pete Peterman, Charm Peterman, and Scott Harvell)



Our two recent **Slice of California** tours enjoyed their time birding the Golden State, which, in spite of the on-going drought, was fruitful. The pelagic trip out of Half Moon Bay produced thousands of shearwaters, three sulids—including a Northern Gannet—and much else. But the stars of the pelagic were the seven or so Black-footed Albatrosses (a face-on view of one from 2014 at top left). A few of the landbirds encountered included Yellow-billed Magpie, shown here in flight; a Greater Sage-Grouse (below the albatross), a group favorite; and White-headed Woodpecker. (Photos by guide Tom Johnson)



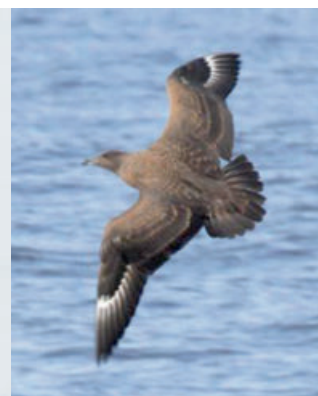
"The perfect little trip," is how a participant on one of our **France** tours this fall described it, and with some special birds, fabulous food and wine, and comfortable accommodations, it's hard to disagree. A few of the tour's sights shown here: at top, the fortified ancient city of Carcassonne; below it, a Squacco Heron (at left) and a pretty Northern Wheatear; and at right, White-throated Dipper. (Photos by guides Eric Hynes & Megan Edwards Crewe and participant Gregg Recer)



FRESH FROM THE FIELD



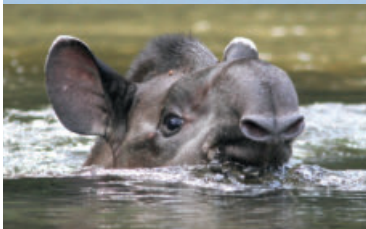
There's no place in the world like Machu Picchu, as this other-worldly view of the ruins nestled in the high Andes suggests. Our **Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga** tour with Jesse Fagan spends a couple of days there, where other sights might include such endemics as this Green-and-white Hummingbird, at left. Jesse loved the hunt for the little Yungas Pygmy-Owl (far left) and the great views of the bird that resulted. Saffron-crowned Tanager is a show-stopper on a tour with a bunch of other glamorous tanagers. (Photos by guide Jesse Fagan and participant Jose Padilla-Lopez)



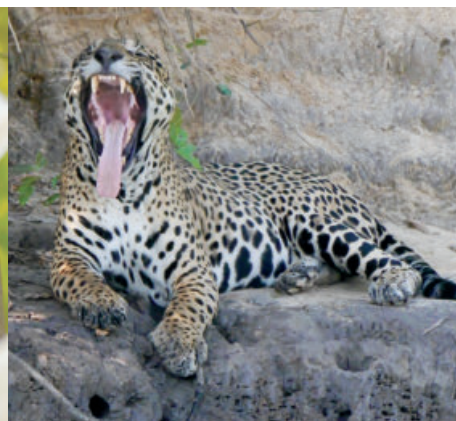
Morocco is a land of exotic experiences, including the avian sights guide Jesse Fagan's recent tour savored. Perhaps the most exotic, certainly the rarest, is the Northern Bald Ibis, or Waldrapp, shown above left in flight. No one would call it a beauty, but it's a beautiful sight nonetheless. The Great Skua, above right, was seen on the pelagic trip out of the city of Agadir on the Atlantic Coast. A pretty Moussier's Redstart (below right) and a Levaillant's Woodpecker, a North African endemic, round out the gallery. (Photos by participant Randy Siebert)



There's a lot of variety pictured here, just as there is on our **Iquitos, Peru: Canopy Walkways & Ancient Forests** tour, from rare species that have only just been described, to the more common and widespread—though it seems almost a crime to call either the Green Honeycreeper at top right or the Tui Parakeets below it common! The Squirrel Monkey and the gorgeous Blue-winged Dragonfly were among the many other sights Pepe Rojas's August tour enjoyed. (Photos by participant Bruce Sorrie)



Guide Marcelo Padua reports that his **Alta Floresta & The Pantanal, Brazil** tour struck gold this year with an antswarm at the Cristalino Lodge that produced an extremely localized Bare-eyed Antbird and the army ant specialist White-chinned Woodcreeper, as well as many other birds. The Large-billed Antwren, at top, was seen from the observation tower at the lodge, the Spix's Guan (right) along the Cristalino River, with the fantastic Brazilian Tapir swimming in it. The splendid Jabiru, seen here in flight, is one of the hallmark birds of the Pantanal. Did we mention the Harpy Eagle and the Jaguar? (Photos by guide Marcelo Padua)



You can see that once again Marcelo Padua came through on his **Jaguar Spotting** tour—there's the big guy yawning at us to prove it—though to be completely honest, there was not one Jaguar on the first tour, but rather four. It wasn't just Jaguars, though (never thought we'd say that) but birds as well, loads of them, including the three pictured here. From top, a splendid Blue-necked Tanager (fancier than the rarer Cone-billed, which was also seen), the Blue-throated Piping-Guan at center, and these magnificent Hyacinth Macaws. (Photos by participant Valerie Gebert)



New Caledonia, Fiji & Vanuatu (returning to our schedule in 2017) is a tour with lots of endemics, including the bizarre Kagu, or Gray Ghost of the Forest (near right), a flightless bird standing almost two feet tall with an elaborate display reminiscent of a Sunbittern. Guide Phil Gregory tells us that this year's tour saw three birds one day and six the next while at Riviere Bleue Provincial Park, pictured above. The New Caledonian Imperial-Pigeon—the largest arboreal pigeon in the world, it's also called Goliath Imperial-Pigeon, which gives an idea of its size—was also found at the park. (Photos by guide Phil Gregory)



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UPCOMING TOURS

For details, please call our office or check our web site.

March 2016

Colombia: Santa Marta Escape—March 5-14, 2016 with Richard Webster & local guide. An easier subset of "Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta," reached by a direct flight from Miami, and with a couple more days for a more leisurely approach.

Brazil Nutshell: Intervalles, Iguazu Falls & the Pantanal—March 5-19, 2016 with Marcelo Padua & Megan Edwards Crewe. 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.

Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves I—March 5-19, 2016 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.

Costa Rica—March 5-20, 2016 with Jay VanderGaast & local guide. Resplendent Quetzals, Three-wattled Bellbirds, Scarlet Macaws in a beautiful country with easy travel.

Jamaica—March 7-13, 2016 with Eric Hynes. A quick adventure in search of Jamaica's 27 endemics and numerous regional specialties at Green Castle Estate.

Panama's Canopy Tower & Lodge—March 7-14, 2016 with John Coons & local guide. This tour combines the best of both worlds into a great week: The Canopy Tower and Pipeline Road with the Canopy Lodge and the montane forest of El Valle de Anton.

Dominican Republic—March 12-19, 2016 with Tom Johnson & local guide. Short tour for many specialties and endemics including the unusual Palmchat.

Spring in South Texas—March 12-20, 2016 with Chris Benesh. Magnificent Whooping Cranes, lots of South Texas specialties, and spring hawk migration on this exciting tour.

Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge—March 13-23, 2016 with Willy Perez. Exploring the riches of the eastern Andean foothills of northern Ecuador for numerous specialties at Wildsumaco Lodge.

Borneo I—March 15-April 1, 2016 with Dave Stejskal & local guide. Three prime areas in some of Earth's richest forests while based in comfort right in the wild.

Puerto Rico—March 19-25, 2016 with Tom Johnson & Pepe Rojas. 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 19-27, 2016 with Peter Burke. Off the beaten path in Belize; a wonderful tropical birding experience, including some regional specialties.

NEW/Western Panama: Chiriqui & Bocas del Toro—March 20-29, 2016 with Jesse Fagan. A new tour to two new Panamanian destinations located in the Chiriqui highlands and Caribbean lowlands at Bocas del Toro.

Hawaii—March 31-April 9, 2016 with Dan Lane & Megan Edwards Crewe. 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.

April 2016

Ghana—April 1-19, 2016 with Phil Gregory. In search of numerous West African specialties as well as White-necked Rockfowl.

Bahamas: Endemics & Kirtland's Warbler—April 2-8, 2016 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; fun, exciting birding at a relaxed pace.

Colorado Grouse I & II—April 2-12, 2016 with Chris Benesh & Tom Johnson and April 10-20, 2016 with Eric Hynes & Pepe Rojas. A short tour to seek out the state's prairie-chicken and grouse species.

Bhutan—April 2-20, 2016 with Richard Webster & local guide. Spellbinding birding amidst awe-inspiring landscapes on a journey through the lush forests and mountains of this culturally fascinating Himalayan kingdom.

Guyana: Wilderness Paradise II—April 3-14, 2016 with Bret Whitney. A survey 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.

Lesser Antilles—April 10-26, 2016 with Jesse Fagan. Comprehensive tour searching for all the accessible endemics (many highly endangered) of the southern Caribbean on 10 attractive islands.

Texas Coast Migration Spectacle I & II—April 16-22, 2016 and April 23-29, 2016 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 23-May 2, 2016 with Chris Benesh & second guide. Colima and Golden-cheeked warblers,

Montezuma Quail, and other southern borderland specialties in Texas's grand desert mountain landscapes.

Hungary & Romania: The Best of Eastern Europe—April 23-May 9, 2016 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.

China: Manchuria & the Tibetan Plateau—April 26-May 17, 2016 with Jay VanderGaast & Jesper Hornskov. A truly fabulous adventure—six possible crane species and a multitude of coveted waterbirds and scarce landbirds in Manchuria and the monotypic Przevalski's Rosefinch high in the mountains of the remote northeastern Tibetan Plateau.

Arizona Nightbirds & More I & II—April 29-May 3, 2016 with Dave Stejskal and May 5-9, 2016 with Tom Johnson. A short tour focused on this area's many owl and nightjar specialties.

May 2016

Classical Greece—May 1-15, 2016 with Megan Edwards Crewe & local guide. Fine southeast European birding—at the peak of migration—with archaeological and cultural stops.

Arizona: Birding the Border I & II—May 6-15, 2016 with John Coons and May 12-21, 2016 with Dave Stejskal. One of the most exciting destinations in North America with a backdrop of spectacular mountain scenery.

Spain: La Mancha, Coto Donana & Extremadura—May 14-26, 2016 with Marcelo Padua & local guide. To La Mancha, famous Coto Donana, Extremadura, and the Gredos Mountains for some of Europe's best birding.

Spring in Cape May—May 15-21, 2016 with Tom Johnson. Spring migration at one of the country's famed birding hotspots.

Ethiopia: Endemic Birds & Ethiopian Wolf—May 20-June 9, 2016 (Lalibela Extension) with Terry Stevenson & 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.

Maine: Birding Downeast—May 21-29, 2016 with Eric Hynes. A late-spring tour for warblers, boreal specialties, puffins, "lobstah," and more.

Morocco—May 21-June 7, 2016 with Jesse Fagan. Endemic, rare, and specialty birds from coastal wetlands and towering cliffs to the Atlas Mountains and the northwest corner of the Sahara.

Uganda: Shobill, Rift Endemics & Gorillas—May 21-June 10, 2016 with Phil Gregory. The rare Shobill and a wealth of other birds and many Central African specialties combined with opportunities to trek for Chimps and Mountain Gorillas.

Alaska I—May 26-June 3, 2016 (Part 1) and June 2-12, 2016 (Part 2) with Chris Benesh & Pepe Rojas. Survey in two parts: Part I to the Pribilofs and Denali; Part II to Nome, Seward, and Barrow.

June 2016

Alaska II—June 2-10, 2016 (Part 1) and June 9-19, 2016 (Part 2) with Dave Stejskal & Tom Johnson. Survey in two parts: Part I to the Pribilofs and Denali; Part II to Nome, Seward, and Barrow.

Borneo II—June 2-19, 2016 with Megan Edwards Crewe & local guide. Three prime areas in some of Earth's richest forests while based in comfort right in the wild.

Northern Arizona's Canyons & Condor—June 4-9, 2016 with John Coons. A tour for mountain and high-desert birds of the western US amidst stunning scenery with California Condors at the Grand Canyon, all guided by our own Flagstaff-based resident expert, John Coons.

Montana: Yellowstone to Glacier—June 9-19, 2016 with Terry McEneaney. Great western birding and wildlife amidst the scenery of Big Sky country.

Brazil's Rio Roosevelt: Birding the River of Doubt—June 10-24, 2016 with Bret Whitney. A birding adventure on the remote Rio Roosevelt in the spirit of Teddy himself, as we search for bushbirds, ant swarms, up to 10 species described to science only in 2013, and, of course, the unknown.

Galapagos: An Intimate Look at Darwin's Islands I & II—June 11-21, 2016 with Willy Perez & local guide and July 9-19, 2016 with Pepe Rojas & local guide. A must for any naturalist and birder; small-group, broad coverage of the islands with plenty of time for the birds, exploring, and photography.

Rainforest & Savanna: Alta Floresta & the Northern Pantanal, Brazil—June 11-27, 2016 with Marcelo Padua. Pristine rainforest on the beautiful Rio Cristalino combined with the wilds of the Pantanal in search of Hyacinth Macaw, Harpy Eagle, Jabiru, Jaguar, and a large piece of the meaning of life.

Iceland—June 21-30, 2016 with Eric Hynes & local guide. Seabird colonies, endemic landbirds, spectacular scenery, and high-latitude natural history.

Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves II—June 21-July 5, 2016 with Willy Perez. Focuses on the many specialties of the southwest, in particular the very local endemics of the humid foothills and mountains, and on Tumbesian specialties.

Newfoundland & Nova Scotia—June 26-July 6, 2016 with Chris Benesh. Boreal specialties, seabird colonies, and numerous breeding landbirds in the beautiful Canadian Maritimes.

GUIDES

IN YOUR WORDS AND OURS

We love spending time in Irish pubs and in the Irish countryside with **Terry McEneaney**, and so, from what we hear, do participants on his Ireland tours, both spring and fall. "Terry showed us Ireland as we would never have seen it on our own. The combination of birds and music is perfect." This shot of Terry, however (joined here by his wife, Karen, and two participants), was taken in the Pacific Northwest, where he guides another popular tour. He'll round out his 2016 schedule with a trip in his home state of Montana.

Outstanding birder with a fine sense of humor—that's the lowdown on **Chris Benesh**. But what we also hear is that he has the ability to bring alive in the field the fine points of bird identification, even wading in to those pesky flycatchers, while at the same time never telling you more than you want to hear. As one participant so nicely put it, "Despite his superior birding skills, Chris's style is unintimidating and often hilarious." In the year ahead you'll find Chris all over North America—Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Texas, and Newfoundland & Nova Scotia—as well as in Panama, Mexico, and Australia.

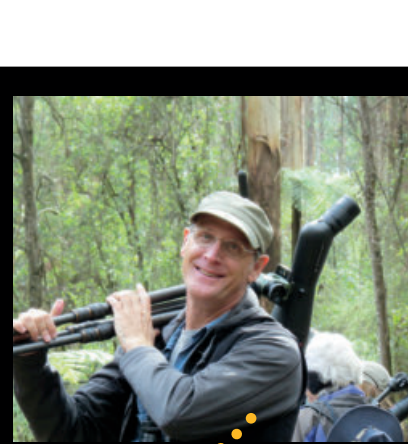
Bret Whitney loves and lives his work, and, as a recent participant on one of his tours pointed out, "...we, as group members, reap the rewards of his passion for the birds of Brazil." He can tell you just about anything you'd want to know about those birds—or, let's face it, about birds in general—and show you just about any you want to see—though he draws the line at Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, which just as surely don't occur in Brazil anyway. Bret's Brazil tours will be in the northeast and the southeast and on the Amazon, the Negro, and the Roosevelt. And to mix things up a little, he'll be making a short jaunt to Guyana.

Pictured here with two of our beloved veteran guides, **Tom Johnson** is what one recent tour participant described as "a rising star." It's certainly true in our estimation: Tom gets consistently stellar marks for his bird skills, his people skills, his knowledge of bird and wild life, and his willingness to share all three. "No question seemed too small or silly to him" is the word. And Tom will be bringing all these resources to his 2016 trips, which will include Alaska and several other areas in North America, Middle America and the West Indies, Trinidad & Tobago and Brazil and—not least—Australia. That's a star trek!

After a recent trip with **John Coons**, one participant commented that "at no time during the tour did John drop below 100%." That's a pretty high mark, but we're counting on our "Kingfisher" to better it—maybe 110%? With tours to Panama, Texas and Arizona, Australia, and Spitsbergen, he'll be working on it in the year ahead, bringing his birding skills, experience, patience and good humor, and great stories to every tour he guides.

"How many superlatives can I put into one tour evaluation?" a recent participant on **Megan Edwards Crewe's** Guyana tour wondered. "Megan is an excellent birder who ensured that participants got stunning views of the birds...her enthusiasm for birding made for a great tour dynamic." We couldn't agree more, and would only add that it's hard not to speak in superlatives when speaking of Megan—here on a stop at the Portal home of Rose Ann Rowlett (on porch) and Richard Webster (front). In addition, Megan's a great explainer of all things avian, something she'll be doing next year on tours to Brazil and Borneo, Guyana and Greece, and Cape May, Hawaii, Sri Lanka, France, and Costa Rica.

Continued on page 8



GUIDES

IN YOUR WORDS AND OURS

Continued from page 7

Eric Hynes (shown here with his France group; that's Jay VanderGaast, second from left in back) is a valuable addition to the Field Guides team—as many of you had predicted he would be. “This was my first trip with Eric,” one happy participant wrote, “but it won't be my last.” It goes without saying that he's a good birder, but he's also an enthusiastic communicator, sharing his knowledge of the birds and their behavior, which enhances the experience of seeing them and inspires you to learn more. Eric's 2016 schedule includes four islands—Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica, and Iceland—and Colorado, Maine, and Brazil.

We hear a lot of good things about **Jay VanderGaast**—top-flight birder who really knows his stuff, great guy to travel with, or as a recent participant put it, “His acute hearing and sight and genuine interest and caring resulted in our seeing many exquisite birds...”—but what we hadn't heard, or seen, until his recent trip to Brazil's Rio Aripuana with Bret Whitney where this photo was taken, is that butterflies seek him out, too. Jay will be spending much of the first part of next year in Costa Rica, where he'll guide three tours before heading off to China, Papua New Guinea, Australia, and Bolivia.

From his Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga tour (pictured here) to Morocco, Central and South America, and the Antilles, **Jesse Fagan's** tours invariably cause participants to remark that “having Jesse as a leader makes the trip...he's organized, patient and clear.” They also comment on his knowledge and his ability to spot and hear birds, and as importantly, his care in showing them to others. And to top it all off, spending time with Jesse is always a lot of fun!

It's not often you'll find **Dan Lane** lying down on the job, though it may be that he's come up with a new technique for spotting New Zealand's many pelagic birds. Next year, Dan will be spending some quality time in Bolivia, Ecuador, Oaxaca, and of course Peru—Iquitos, Peru and Peru's Magnetic North tours, where, in the words of participants, “his wide-ranging knowledge of the behavior and biology of the birds and other wildlife in the area” greatly enriches his tours. And closer to home, he'll be on the lookout for those Yellow Rails in Louisiana.

For some of us at Field Guides, Thailand with **Dave Stejskal** is one of our most wanted trips—or Vietnam or Borneo. Unfortunately, we don't always get to go where we want. But people who do go to Thailand with Dave (or Alaska, Argentina, Arizona, or Brazil in the next year) always remark on his “fabulous ear and his ability to hear and find the birds and then get folks on them.” They also mention his ability to handle anything that comes up with a calm demeanor and intact sense of humor, and his knowledge, or, as one participant put it, “He's a goldmine of information about everything.” Well, maybe *almost* everything!

You might notice that **Mitch Lysinger** has the smallest space here. Those who've traveled with Mitch know, however, that we could fill this entire newsletter with his praises, from his bird savvy to his knowledge of Ecuador to his charming personality. And while we're singing his praises, how about Mitch and his team setting the world record for birds seen in a day—an amazing 425 species in Ecuador! Mitch would be delighted to show you some of those birds, whether in Ecuador's Southwest, Shiripuno or Sacha lodges, or at his home in San Isidro.





If you think about some of the places **Phil Gregory** has lived since leaving his native England—southwestern Africa, the Falkland Islands, Papua New Guinea, and now Queensland, Australia—most birders would be envious. If you think about the places Phil leads tours—the Arabian Peninsula, Japan, Cambodia, Ghana, Uganda, and Madagascar in 2016—you may want to join him, especially since he's a skilled and knowledgeable birder and a terrific traveling companion! As a recent participant on one of his tours noted, "Somehow, Phil seemed to meet the needs of all levels of birders on the trip—amazing guide with a great, dry sense of humor."

Richard Webster looks like he could be in heaven. And he's certainly not far from it, standing next to a beautiful waterfall in Colombia where he's just seen a Yellow-eared Parrot. Participants on Richard's tours invariably cite his "encyclopedic knowledge of birds," but they also describe him as an "exceptional birder who is patient and dedicated to getting others on the birds." Next year on the docket (he's a lawyer after all), Richard has two Colombia tours (where he might show you the Yellow-eared Parrot), extraordinary Bhutan, and glorious Northern Peru.

It's hard to imagine a country more scenic than Ecuador—or one as diverse, given its small size. And who better to visit it with than **Willy Perez** (pictured here with his group at Papallacta), with his vast Ecuadorian experience. Participants on Willy's tours, whether in Ecuador, Chile and Argentina, or elsewhere, agree that he's "a wizard at finding birds and calling them into view," incredibly knowledgeable about the birds, environmental issues, and much else, and is a great storyteller. "I would go anyplace where Willy is leading a tour," one participant told us. "If Field Guides announced a tour with Willy to, say, Rochester, New York, you bet I'd sign up!"

Terry Stevenson has lived in Kenya for four decades and knows it, and a big chunk of the rest of the continent, like the back of his hand. With so much experience, so much birding know-how, Terry is unbeatable in Africa. As a recent tour participant put it, "Terry is the best guide in the world for this tour. He is the world authority on birds in Kenya and surrounding countries..." Did we also say that he's a great guy and a great storyteller and a pleasure to bird with, whether somewhere in Africa—Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Namibia & Botswana, and Ethiopia next year—or on one of his trips to India or Hungary & Romania?

Marcelo Padua (here on the Jaguar Spotting tour with fellow guide Pepe Rojas) loves manakins, as you might surmise from his t-shirt (if we'd made this photo large enough for you to read it). A recent participant on one of his tours described him as "both one of the best birders and naturalists that I've ever met (and as a biologist I've met quite a few) and also one of the most enjoyable people I've traveled with." He'll be traveling in the year to come to every part of Brazil, where he seems to know all the locals—both avian and human—and to Spain, where he plans to use his Jaguar spotting skills on the Iberian Lynx.

Tour participants regularly remark on **Pepe Rojas's** incredible eyes and ears, his patience in making sure everyone sees each bird, and his depth and breadth of knowledge of birds and of general ecology, particularly in his native Peru. But most also note his "joie de vivre that enriches every tour he does and makes every moment memorable and seemingly effortless." Pepe's tours in 2016 include several to Peru—Iquitos, Mountains of Manu, Southern Peru, and Peruvian Rainforests—to Southern Argentina, the Galapagos, and Brazil, and to Puerto Rico, Alaska, and Colorado Grouse.



Puerto Rico

Continued from page 1

Our second full day found us walking around La Parguera at dawn, getting our first taste of Yellow-shouldered Blackbirds and other coastal species. In the afternoon, we visited Laguna Cartagena, part of the US National Wildlife Refuge system, where West Indian Whistling-Ducks and a Eurasian Wigeon (rare for the island) highlighted a nice bit of scrub and wetland birding. At dusk, we found ourselves in dry coastal scrub forest near Guanica, where we were soon surrounded by the sounds of calling Puerto Rican Nightjars as darkness fell.

An early morning start sent us up into the mountains, where we enjoyed the mature forest and endemic-packed environs of Maricao. Among many other birds, this is the home of the Elfin-woods Warbler, and we had repeated and great views of this island endemic first described only in 1972. After lunch and a break, we had an afternoon trip to the quiet forest gaps of Susúa, where we had a few brief encounters with Ruddy Quail-Dove and an extended visit with two Key West Quail-Doves.

Next up were the saline flats and coastal mangroves of Cabo Rojo. In addition to a welcoming flock of Venezuelan Troupials, we studied large flocks of Semipalmated and Stilt sandpipers, finding Wilson's Plover, Western Sandpiper, and other goodies. Pulling up stakes, we headed east, stopping at Comerío to find a Caribbean specialty, Plain Pigeon, before continuing on to our lodging on the edge of El Yunque National Forest.

We began our last full day of birding winding our way out of the mountains from Casa Cubuy down to the coast at the Humacao wetlands. On our way, we enjoyed some new hummingbirds and great looks at Brown Boobies and Magnificent Frigatebirds. We capped off the afternoon with scope views of Antillean Euphonia in the El Yunque forest above Casa Cubuy.

I had a wonderful time leading this short but sweet trip to a fun and scenic bit of the United States; in 2016, Pepe Rojas will be joining me as co-leader. If you're interested, there are still a few spaces available to join in the fun—it should be another great trip! Dates are March 19-25.

See our complete 2015 triplist with plenty of great images at: <http://fieldguides.com/triplists/ptr15.html>

From the top, four Puerto Rico endemics: Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo, Puerto Rican Tody, Elfin-woods Warbler (did you think for a moment it was a Black-and-white?), and Yellow-shouldered Blackbird. (Photos by guide Tom Johnson)



“The enthusiasm, kindness, birding knowledge, and patience of your guides is amazing to me. How they can stay organized and on 24/7 is a true talent. I am looking forward to my next trip with Field Guides!”



Our Annual Meeting

It's FG's 31st year!

Classic Arizona landscapes, quail with painted faces, nocturnal outings for owls and kangaroo-rats, hummingbirds and Southeast Arizona bird specialties galore, gourmet group-made dinners from Brazilian to Thai, many a tall tale and plenty of hilarity, and, it's true (really!), even some working sessions woven into the schedule—what's not to like? As ever, our guides and office staff had a fabulous time catching up at the Field Guides annual business meeting (in Portal, AZ). The only thing that could make it better? A few of our far-flung “family” couldn't make it across the various oceans to join us. Next year perhaps? Fingers crossed, and we're looking forward to the 2016 meeting!

Early 2016 Tours

We have a great selection of winter tours ranging in length from 6 to 22 days, many of them to warm, southern, and very birdy climes. Here are a few of the many possibilities.

ADDED DEPARTURES

Oaxaca—In addition to seeing many wonderful birds, we'll have the opportunity to visit ruins of the late Zapotec culture at Monte Alban. We'll sample the great cuisine of the area, and learn about the ancient weaving techniques, all while based in the beautiful colonial city of Oaxaca. Dates are January 16-23 with Dan Lane.

Guyana—There are fewer and fewer truly wild places left in the world, but Guyana is one of them. We'll visit the country's vast untrammelled rainforest, with an emphasis on Guianan shield

specialties and side trips to coastal and savanna regions and spectacular Kaieteur Falls. April 3-14 with Bret Whitney.

TOUR OPENINGS

South Texas Rarities—The bird life of South Texas is characteristic of northeastern Mexico. Within the United States, many resident species and Mexican vagrants are known only from South Texas, and for this reason, it has become a “must” for every North American birder. January 16-22 and January 23-29 with Chris Benesh.

Colombia: The Cauca Valley, Western & Central Andes—We'll be birding in the country with the world's longest bird list in a part of that country notably rich in endemics—and notably scenic as well. Limited to just six participants, the tour will

be guided by Richard Webster, who designed the tour ten years ago and has been fine tuning it ever since. Dates are February 5-20.

Panama's Canopy Tower offers the pleasures of rich Neotropical birding while staying at a single lodge under the leadership of John Coons, a guide who has done more tours to the Canopy Tower than even he—renowned for his ability to remember everything—can recall. Dates are February 7-13 with a Canopy Lodge Extension from February 3.

Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge gives us access to the riches of the eastern Andean foothills of northern Ecuador, while staying right in the habitat we want to bird, eating well, and sleeping in the comfort of a beautifully designed lodge with an incredible view of the Andes. March 13-23 with Willy Perez.

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BIRDING TOURS WORLDWIDE

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NEW GUINEA with Jay VanderGaast



BORNEO with Dave Stejskal



SPAIN with Chris Benesh



ARIZONA with Megan Edwards Crewe



KENYA HIGHLIGHTS with Terry Stevenson



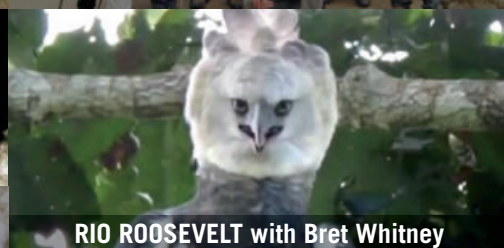
MACHU PICCHU & ABRA MALAGA
with Jesse Fagan



ALASKA I (PART II)
with Chris Benesh & Tom Johnson



PERU'S MAGNETIC NORTH
with Dan Lane & Pepe Rojas



RIO ROOSEVELT with Bret Whitney



NEWFOUNDLAND & NOVA SCOTIA
with Chris Benesh



ALTA FLORESTA & PANTANAL
with Marcelo Padua



SPITSBERGEN with John Coons

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