

ITINERARY

***Do The Charleston! Spring in South Carolina & Northern Georgia***  
***April 23-29, 2017***



*Bachman's Sparrow is a denizen of the southern pine forests. We'll search for these secretive sparrows, as well as Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and spring migrants of all sorts, on this week-long tour. Photo by guide Jesse Fagan.*

*We include here information for those interested in the 2017 Field Guides Do the Charleston! tour:*

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

*Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:*

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

**C**harleston, South Carolina is the heart of the Deep South with a rich history and a distinctive culture. Originally "Charles Towne," the peninsula and river systems of the Ashley and Cooper were first observed by the English in 1670, and the name Charleston was later adopted in 1783. South Carolina was one of the original thirteen colonies, and Charleston played an important role in the American Revolution. Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox," survived the Siege of Charleston in 1780 and escaped into the nearby mosquito-infested forests and swamps to continually surprise and harass occupying British forces with his small, volunteer militia. The Swamp Fox was the founder of modern guerilla warfare.

South Carolina's past is also deeply rooted in African slaves and the cash crops of tea, silk, cotton, and rice. Rice was so important to South Carolina's economy that it was referred to as "Carolina Gold," and it was the slaves who cleared the swamps for the rice to be planted. Without slaves, South Carolina's economic and financial existence would have been compromised, and as a result, South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20, 1860. On April 12, 1861, Union-held Fort Sumter, situated on an island in Charleston Harbor, was fired upon on by Confederate troops under the command of Pierre G.T. Beauregard, and thus it was in Charleston that the Civil War began.

There is no denying the city's historic importance. Culturally speaking, Charleston has become world famous for its cuisine (*shrimp and grits*, *oyster bisque*, *sweet tea*), art, music (the annual Spoleto Festival in late May and early June), the Charleston Museum (the first museum in the US, which opened in 1824), and its great beaches. Also notable are the Charleston Aquarium and the *USS Yorktown* aircraft carrier, dry-docked at Patriot's Point and open to the public as a memorial and museum. There are loads of things to see and do! And then there is the shopping...!

On the other hand, most people have probably *not* heard of Dahlonega, Georgia. A pleasant little town located in the foothills of the rolling Appalachian Mountains that had its heyday in the pre-'49 Gold Rush. Indeed, Dahlonega was the site of the first major gold rush in the nation in 1828. There was even a United States Mint that operated there from 1838 to 1861. Dahlonega was also home to thousands of Cherokee and Creek Native Americans, who were sadly driven out of their lands as part of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. For the Cherokee, the Trail of Tears began in northern Georgia. Today Dahlonega is known for its soft tourism centered on wine (local vineyards thrive in the area), antique shopping, rafting on several of the larger mountain rivers, and as a jumping off point for hiking the Appalachian Trail or "AT."

Of course, despite the many historical and cultural attractions, there is another good reason for coming on the tour: the birds! We will enjoy some of the best birding that the Southeast has to offer. Birding highlights include regional specialties such as Bachman's Sparrow and Red-cockaded Woodpecker, as well as, breeding Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, and Chestnut-sided warblers, Louisiana Waterthrush and Ovenbird. Scarlet Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks breed in the north Georgia mountains, and we may get lucky and spot a soaring Swallow-tailed Kite over a cypress-tupelo swamp. The coastal areas around Charleston are excellent for shorebirds and other wetland birds, including a distinctive looking Atlantic subspecies of Clapper Rail (*crepitans*) and Marsh Wren (Worthington's). We will round out our list with Barred Owls, Broad-winged Hawks, Pileated Woodpeckers, and White-breasted Nuthatches among many others.



A view of downtown Charleston from the west. Photo by participant Mike Boustead.

#### About the Physical

**Requirements & Pace:** Our main purpose on this tour is for all to see well and enjoy a rich diversity of species, as well as to learn something about the history of this significant area. On two mornings in Charleston we will have very early starts (5:00 or 5:30 a.m.) in order to take advantage of the cooler temps and the dawn activity. On both these mornings we'll have a picnic breakfast in the field and later return to Charleston for lunch. On another day we plan to hike a bit on the Appalachian Trail. The total hike is around 3 miles and of moderate difficulty.

The first two-thirds are easy, but the remaining third is a relatively

steep climb up to the overlook. We will pace ourselves accordingly. Participants will need to be able to climb in and out of vans but will be assisted by a step stool (or running board on some vehicles). Most of our birding will take place along roads or wide tracks, and the viewing conditions are generally excellent. Temperatures early and late may be chilly (or even downright cold in the mountains), although middays will usually be warm.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

## About the Birding Areas



**Francis Marion National Forest**—Located 45 minutes north of Charleston, Francis Marion National Forest protects more than 260,000 acres of land. It is a mix of swampy cypress-tupelo forest, pitcher plant (*Sarracenia*) bogs, upland mixed-oak forests, and longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) savannah. This ecosystem is part of the Middle Atlantic Coastal Forests ecoregion. Birding in this mix of habitat types can be very productive. Breeding warblers include Prairie, Black-and-white, Yellow-throated, Northern Parula, Common Yellowthroat, the elusive Swainson's Warbler (difficult), Louisiana Waterthrush, and the distinctive subspecies of Black-throated Green Warbler (*waynei*), also known as Wayne's Warbler. This special subspecies is smaller overall, with males showing less black on the throat than nominate forms, and breeding is confined to a narrow strip of mid-Atlantic coastal forest from Virginia to South Carolina. In addition, we'll seek out several of the pinewoods endemics including Bachman's Sparrow, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and Brown-headed Nuthatch.

### *A few important factoids about Francis Marion National Forest:*

1. It is named after the Revolutionary War guerilla fighter a.k.a. The Swamp Fox.
2. The last confirmed sighting and photograph in April 1962 of the now extinct Bachman's Warbler was from the l'on Swamp, which is part of the Francis Marion. In fact, the l'on Swamp, which was the last stronghold of the warbler, was where the reverend John Bachman, a pastor for 56 years in Charleston, discovered the species in 1832. Bachman, of course, is also the namesake of Bachman's Sparrow.
3. Hurricane Hugo destroyed much of the longleaf pine-savannah in the Francis Marion during its march across the state on September 9, 1989. The area suffered a direct hit from a category 4 hurricane, which to this date is the second most intense hurricane to ever hit the Atlantic seaboard. The storm destroyed most of the forest's mature longleaf pine, which housed important nesting cavities for the federally endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker. As a result, the US Forest Service began experimenting at this site with artificial cavity boxes that have since proved quite successful as replacements for natural cavities (usually placed in less mature longleaf pine stands or in other species of pine), thus enabling this rare and endangered species to continue nesting.

**Around Charleston**—There is good birding to be had around the immediate vicinity of downtown Charleston. Folly Island, (or Folly Beach), with its sandy beaches, wind-worn oak mottes, and coastal marshes is a great place to check for migrant warblers, orioles, and tanagers, along with rails and shorebirds. The eastern (nominate) Painted Bunting, believed by some authorities to be a separate species, is found here and should be in full song during our visit. Scanning offshore we may find a lingering Black Scoter (which winter along the coast in the thousands) or a Northern Gannet. The abundance of birds at this migrant trap is of course highly dependent on daily movements of birds, a bit of weather, and some luck. We will hope for the best. Other nearby sites that we will visit include Pitt Street Bridge, which, if the tide is right, can be a great place for shorebirds, as well as Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island. Fort Moultrie was built in 1776 out of palmetto logs to help protect Charleston from British war ships; it led a successful defense of the city that same year. It was later reinforced with earthen walls during the Civil War, but now stands as a historic site with large, draping oak trees that are good for attracting migrating birds.



We will look for Ovenbirds and other warblers that breed in the area, or that are migrating through. Photo by guide Jesse Fagan.

**Ace Basin National Wildlife Refuge** is located roughly 25 miles south of Charleston. Ace Basin protects approximately 12,000 acres of Low Country habitat. The refuge headquarters is located in the historic antebellum Grove plantation home, built in 1828 and elegantly restored. The refuge itself contains areas of bottomland forest, upland mixed pine-oak forest, and coastal saltmarsh. Water impoundments offer sanctuary to wintering waterfowl, shorebirds when levels are low, and breeding Wood Storks.

**Around Dahlonega, GA**—A hike to Preacher's Rock is well worth the climb. We will be walking the famous Appalachian Trail to Preacher's Rock, a famous overlook with a spectacular view of the rolling Appalachian foothills. The mixed hardwood forest and rhododendron understory along the trail is excellent for breeding birds such as Scarlet Tanager, Black-throated Blue Warbler (the Appalachian subspecies *cairnsi*), Ovenbird, Least Flycatcher, and Blue-headed Vireo (Appalachian subspecies *alticola*). The total hike

is around 3 miles and of moderate difficulty. The first two-thirds are easy, but the remaining third is a relatively steep climb up to the overlook. We will pace ourselves accordingly. Another site we will visit, Vogel State Park, is one of the oldest state parks in Georgia located at the base of Blood Mountain within the Chattahoochee National Forest. Several trail systems wander through the tall and extensive mixed hardwood forest. This is an excellent spot for breeding warblers, tanagers, and flycatchers similar in composition to what may be found at Preacher's Rock, and giving us additional chances for species we may have missed.

## Itinerary for Do The Charleston!

**Day 1, Sun, 23 Apr. Arrival in Charleston, SC.** If you are flying in, please take a taxi from the airport to our hotel located at the corner of Marion Square in downtown Charleston. We will meet in the lobby at 6:30 p.m. If you arrive early to Charleston, you may consider taking a trip to Fort Sumter (approximately 30-minute boat ride), visiting the *USS Yorktown* at Patriot's Point, Charleston Museum (the first established museum in the nation), or dropping by the Charleston Aquarium. Both the aquarium and boat dock (for the Sumter tour) are within a fifteen to twenty-minute walking distance of the hotel. Night in Charleston.

**Day 2, Mon, 24 Apr. Francis Marion National Forest.** We will depart the hotel at 5:00 a.m. for the approximately forty-five-minute drive to the Francis Marion NF north of Charleston. We'll want to arrive early to take advantage of the cooler temps and the dawn activity. We will have a picnic breakfast in the forest and be there until mid-day. We'll return to Charleston for lunch and later visit Pitt Street Bridge and Sullivan's Island for shorebirds and possible migrants. Night in Charleston.

**Day 3, Tue, 25 Apr. Ace Basin National Wildlife Refuge.** We will have another early departure at 5:00 am for the 50-minute drive to Ace Basin, where we'll have a picnic breakfast at the refuge headquarters and spend all morning birding the refuge. We'll return to Charleston for lunch. This afternoon we will have a bus city-tour of Charleston (about an hour-and-a-half). Night in Charleston.

**Day 4, Wed, 26 Apr. Drive to Dahlonega.** We will depart at 5:45 a.m. for Folly Island. We'll spend a few hours at this migrant trap and have breakfast at a local café. This will be mainly a travel day to Dahlonega, Georgia (in northern Georgia), which will take approximately six hours. We will make a few stops depending on time and weather. One stop we would like to make is at the Francis Beidler Forest outside of Columbia, South Carolina. We can do a bit of birding here before continuing our journey north. Night in Dahlonega, Georgia.

**Day 5, Thu, 27 Apr. Preacher's Rock (Birding the Appalachian Trail).** We will be at the trailhead around dawn so that we can make the most of our walk. We can decide how far we would like to go along "the trail," but plan on walking a minimum of three miles this morning on a moderate-difficulty trail. Our distance and progress will depend upon the birds we are seeing. We will visit Amacolola Falls mid-morning, then lunch in Dahlonega and visit the Gold Museum on the square in the afternoon. In the evening, we will enjoy a planetarium/observatory show at the University of North Georgia and later some owling for those that wish. Night at Smith House in Dahlonega, Georgia.

**Day 6, Fri, 28 Apr.** We will visit Vogel State Park for a pleasant trail walk and morning birding. We'll have lunch in Atlanta and visit the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic site in the afternoon. Night in Atlanta near the airport.

**Day 7, Sat, 29 Apr. Departure Day.** Departure from Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. *Please note that the tour begins in Charleston and ends in Atlanta.*

## About Your Guide

**Jesse Fagan** (a.k.a. the Motmot or just "Mot") has been passionate about birds since his teens, when he had an encounter with a flying Pileated Woodpecker. He has birded throughout the United States, including spending seven years in Texas, and since 1995 has been birding and for a time living in northern Central America. He is currently in the final stages of completing a field guide to the region (which will include the countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Belize), due to be published in 2014. In addition, Mot has birded in or led tours to Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, France, Morocco, and Madagascar. He also enjoys leading many of the Field Guides tours in the Caribbean. He likes to think he can bird anywhere at any time and still show you the birds, but most importantly, a good time.

Jesse holds a B.S. and an M.S. in mathematics from Texas Tech University. He is currently living in Lima, Peru.

*"This was a fantastic tour. Jesse Fagan was delightful, personable, and highly knowledgeable. The accommodations were great and the food was outstanding." K.L.R., Do the Charleston!*

Visit <http://fieldguides.com/guides> for Jesse's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$2875 from Charleston**

**DEPOSIT:** \$300 per person

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** December 24, 2016

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$600

**LIMIT:** 7

## Other Things You Need to Know

**TOUR MANAGER:** The manager for this tour is Ruth Kuhl. Ruth will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** **Please note that the tour begins in Charleston, SC and ends in Atlanta, GA.** Participants should arrive on Day 1 in time to meet in the lobby of the Embassy Suites Historic Charleston by 6:30 p.m. You may leave anytime on Day 7.

Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees. **Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

**LUGGAGE:** Since this is a relatively short tour, and laundry service is available at the hotel in Charleston, we ask that you limit yourself to one medium-sized bag and a carry on. Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** The tour fee is \$2875 for one person in double occupancy from Charleston. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 6, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 7, all ground transportation except arrival transfer (taxi to hotel), entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to Charleston and from Atlanta, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$600. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$300** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by December 24, 2016. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

**SMOKING:** Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult

with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at [www.fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.htm](http://www.fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.htm) and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

6/16 JFF

8/16peg