

Birding Northern Central America

Jesse Fagan

With the return of Belize (check out our 2011 tour, April 9-17) to the Field Guides schedule, we are now offering tours to every country in Northern Central America (NCA). This is probably my favorite region to bird—and it shows, considering I lead all of the tours to this area and helped to develop several of them! I thought it would be fun to explain a bit more about each tour, country by country, to give you a better idea of what you may expect on one of our tours to the region.

Guatemala

Guatemala has a magical hold on those who visit—the land of the quetzales, where active volcanoes still shape the terrain and descendants of proud Mayans sell wares in bustling colorful markets. We offer two exceptional tours to Guatemala.



Our Guatemala: Shade-grown Birding tour takes place on the Pacific Slope visiting six coffee plantations along with stops in historic Antigua and a boat ride across the caldera lake, Lake Atitlan. It's no surprise that Guatemala has some of the best coffee in the world. Coffee is cultivated at mid-elevations along the Pacific Coast where the temperature, moisture levels, and fertile volcanic soils create ideal growing conditions. Many of the coffee plantations that dot the hillsides of Guatemala have set aside patches of forest as conservation easements or for erosion control. Birding on shade-grown coffee

Continued on page 10

The Pink-headed Warbler is a fantastic little bird endemic to northern Central America, where Guatemala is its stronghold. It is the closest relative of the Mexican Red Warbler, another stunner from south of the border. [Photo by guide Jesse Fagan]

Just finished, and in the pipeline

Jan Pierson

Recent fun: our annual business meeting with great opportunities to catch up, poke fun at each other, see very cool pix and video, share stories, perfect a new team-building game (involving a volleyball and a lot of accidental pool-water intake by some of us), watch hummers abuzz, admire the San Rafael grasslands, and consume some truly fantastic cooking by the gang. *Upcoming fun:* the new Field Guides **Facebook** page (*Field Guides Birding Tours* on FB); new tours to **Sri Lanka, Ghana, Jaguar Spotting** (Brazil), **Colombia** (3rd itinerary), and more; and latest goings-on on our news page (www.fieldguides.com/news) with just-out triplists, fresh itineraries for 2011, birding wrap-ups from completed tours, and recent emailings with latest photos. *Opportunity knocking?* Do you recall that for every four tours you take with us, you receive a **5 percent discount** on the fifth? If you're not sure exactly where your count stands, contact our office...your next trip just might be the one!

Brazil Nuts

Jay VanderGaast

I've got a confession to make: I am a Brazil Nut. I'm afraid this nuttiness goes back to before I ever visited the country, to the day I first opened Ridgley and Tudor's *The Birds of South America* and saw the likes of Hooded Berryeaters and Brassy-breasted Tanagers practically flying off the pages. From that moment I began my downward (or is it upward?) spiral into Brazil Nuttiness.

When I did get to Brazil for the first time, Intervals State Park was the first stop on my itinerary, and it became instrumental in driving me deeper and deeper into nuttiness. I was like a kid in a candy store: a scarce Black-legged Dacnis appeared in a fruiting tree next to the road; a humongous Large-tailed Antshrike popped out behind the cabins; a Black Jacobin hawked for insects over the parking area. I didn't know where to look and we hadn't even unloaded the bus yet! In fact, it's amazing we ever managed to get the luggage out before nightfall!

Continued on page 3



The superb Black-fronted Piping-Guan is found only in southeast Brazil and adjacent nations; Iguazu Falls is a good site to see this beauty. [Photo by guide John Rowlett]

GuideLines *with Dave Stejskal*



Do you remember what you were doing way back in the summer of 1969? It was a pretty crazy time in the US and elsewhere around the globe. There was a lot going on in the world—probably no more than in any other given year, but pretty memorable stuff nonetheless. Many of you were no doubt glued to the TV watching the Apollo 11 moon landing when Neil Armstrong first stepped out of the lunar landing module and put his boots onto the moon's dusty surface. Others were likely following the improbable story of the "Miracle Mets" as they clawed back to win the National League pennant and, ultimately, the World Series. You "trekkies" were undoubtedly caught up in the last episode of *Star Trek* to air on TV. A few of you may have made a trip to rural New York to attend a little rock concert at Max Yasgur's dairy farm near a town called Woodstock. The Vietnam War was dragging on, the Fifth Dimension's "Aquarius" was on all the radio stations, Warren Burger was sworn in as Chief Justice, and *Midnight Cowboy* hit the movie theaters.

What was I doing? Well, I was wrapped up in the things that skinny nine-year-old boys do during their summer vacations—I played a lot of basketball with my brothers in the driveway of our home in Phoenix, played Little League baseball, listened to the latest hits on the radio, spent a bunch of time in the backyard pool playing Marco Polo, getting water-logged, and getting terribly sunburned, and otherwise tried to stay out of trouble as best I could. Most of the events that made the news that summer never really registered much with me, though I was glued to the TV watching that moon landing. I did go on another long, fun camping vacation with my family, and I sure remember that. When my four brothers and I were kids, my parents did a great job of getting us out of the heat of the Phoenix summers and into the "Great Outdoors." We saw most of the national parks and monuments in the western US during my childhood years, and that summer, the summer of 1969, we headed for Northern California and Oregon. Birds weren't yet a part of my life, but that would soon change. The most memorable stop for me on the camping trip was Lassen Volcanic NP in the southern Cascades of northeastern California—it altered my life forever.

I can't remember what was planned for that particular summer's day. We had already seen lava beds, snow-covered peaks, and beautiful mountain lakes in the prior days, but one morning while at Lassen I decided to do a little exploring on my own on a trail out of the campground where we had set up our tent trailer. After walking down the trail for a bit and after checking out all of the butterflies and other critters that I encountered (I was already pretty enthralled with the natural world at that age), I came upon a little pond in the evergreen forest. Sitting down on a big boulder on the edge of the pond, I just took in the peacefulness of the scene in front of me and watched the dragonflies skimming the surface of the water. And then, it started. Arriving in one's and two's initially, I watched as a big mixed flock of robins, bluebirds, nuthatches, flickers, juncos, and others (all identified much later) landed just a few feet from my perch to drink and bathe at the water's edge. I tried to be as still as a statue as I watched them all ignore my presence and carry on with the

tasks of drinking and bathing, none of them more than a few feet away. I was completely transfixed—they were all so close that I could see every fine detail of their plumage. I had never seen any birds so intimately before in my short life and, to this day, I can still see some of the individual birds there in my mind's eye.

Absolutely ecstatic, I ran back toward camp to tell my mom and dad what had just happened. Along the way, my eye caught a movement on the trunk of a conifer. I quietly walked up to the trunk and carefully peered around the edge just as a Red-breasted Sapsucker on the other side was doing the same. For a split second I was eye-to-eye with that gorgeous woodpecker and that breathtaking moment forever sealed the deal for me. Birds have been my life ever since and it's no surprise that they are the central focus of my career.

My career as a guide with Field Guides, dating back nearly to the genesis of the company in 1985, has taken me to a remarkable number and variety of birding destinations, each presenting me and my fellow travelers with innumerable lasting encounters with countless species. Whether it's a Flammulated Owl poking its head out of a nest hole in the Chiricahua Mountains in Arizona, a stunning male Bluethroat singing his little head off in a willow a few meters away from my group of fellow birders near Nome, a displaying male Blue Bird-of-paradise near Ambua Lodge in the western highlands of Papua New Guinea, a soaring Great Philippine Eagle in the forested mountains of Mindanao, or one of the last remaining Spoon-billed Sandpipers feeding in the mud of a coastal salt pan in Thailand, each tour I do is punctuated by at least one of those types of moments that got me hooked more than forty years ago. Every moment like that on a tour I'm guiding brings back that feeling of wonder and excitement when it all began for me back in 1969. It's a feeling that I love sharing and it will hopefully keep me birding for another 40 years!

Dave will be guiding trips to Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines this winter as well as trips in the US, South America, and Africa later in the year. For a complete listing visit www.fieldguides.com/guides and click on his photo.



It is said that if you encounter a wild animal a great defense in case it turns on you is to "look tall." Dave doesn't need to do this—he is tall—and this Asian Elephant at Rang Sit Marsh in Thailand obviously isn't going to charge him! [Photo by participants Ron & Susan Polniaszek]

fieldguides.com

What's happening on our website? Well, new 2011 itineraries are being added and you may download a copy of the itinerary for any of our tours by going to a tour's page and clicking on itineraries in the right-hand column. You'll also find there bird lists from past tours that will give you a sense of what you might expect to see on the tour—though as John Coons writes in his Panama's Wild Darien article (page 4), there's always the splendid possibility of coming across that species you never thought you'd see.

You may also check for our Birding Wrap-ups, short summaries of recent tours. And don't miss our slideshows in the left column of the tour pages.

Brazil Nuts

Continued from page 1

The next few days were just a whirlwind of new and exciting species: Saffron Toucanet, the gorgeous Plovercrest, Ferruginous Antbird, spectacular Blond-crested Woodpeckers...and I found myself becoming nuttier with every bird we saw. Mixed feeding flocks with a variety of tyrannulets (Bay-ringed, Oustaler's, Sao Paulo), ovenbirds (Sharp-billed Treehunter, Black-capped Foliage-gleaner), and a myriad of other species pushed me nearer and nearer to the point of no return. By the time we saw some of our final new species at the park—White-bearded Antshrike, Amazonian Royal-Flycatcher, the superb Black-fronted Piping-Guan—there was no more hope for me. I was a Brazil Nut and I would never recover.

Over time, I've learned to accept my nuttiness, to embrace it, and yes, even to feed it. In fact, I'll be feeding it again soon when I join my friend, colleague, and Brazilian Brazil Nut, Marcelo Padua, on our upcoming **Brazil Nutshell** tour. And Intervales, the place that began it all for me, will once again be on the itinerary along with two other wonderful destinations (Iguazu Falls and the Pantanal) that offer even more nutty possibilities. I have no doubt that all three places have even more ways to drive me to new depths of nuttiness, and it's a journey on which we would love to have your company. You don't have to be a Brazil Nut to join Marcelo and me on this tour, but be forewarned, by tour's end you may very well be as Brazil Nutty as we are.

Dates for Jay and Marcelo's trip, Brazil Nutshell: Atlantic Forest, Iguazu Falls & the Pantanal, are February 18-March 4. You may call our office or check our website (<http://fieldguides.com/bird-tours/brazil>) for a detailed itinerary of the tour.



Our new February **Brazil Nutshell** tour focuses on three very birdy sites: lovely Intervales State Park (above), whose endemic-rich habitats feature numerous Atlantic Forest endemics; awe-inspiring Iguazu Falls, with the velvety-topped Plush-capped Jay often right on our hotel grounds; and the northern Pantanal, where Yellow-collared Macaws join the fabled Hyacinths. [Photos by guides Bret Whitney & Dave Stejskal & participant Brian Schoeffler]



Birders are often puzzled by the names ornithologists give birds. Here are two birds likely to be seen in Trinidad whose names may puzzle. Did Linnaeus not notice those yellow legs of this Purple Honeycreeper? Why did Reich call this hummingbird Blue-chinned Sapphire? Okay, soft parts fade and, in the hand, a few blue feathers can be seen on the very chin of this hummingbird. [Photos by participant Dave Kutilek & guide Alvaro Jaramillo]



\$100 Off Trinidad & Tobago Tours

Megan Crewe has created this word search puzzle with bird names from Trinidad & Tobago. If you send us your correctly completed copy, we'll give you a \$100 discount on either the December 2010 or February 2011 Trinidad & Tobago tour—and this includes those of you already registered for the tours. So get out your pencils and get cracking. Good luck!

Words may be up or down, forward or backward, or on any diagonal.

H G T D E R N R E T T I B I E
 O N A R R O R O P E N D O L A
 N I N I I I O E R I V R O N C
 E W T B H L B N A I O I B I H
 Y E W T P B A L I W R B Y K A
 C R R N P I N D L O A C T A C
 R B E A A R I E N E D I O N H
 E A N A S D E R N D B P M A A
 E S M I T D E N A C U O T M L
 P N B A A T A N A G E R O O A
 E I O K C B N O G O R T M A C
 R G S R N A U G G N I P I P A
 T I M R E H J E U P H O N I A
 K G U L L H S U R H T T N A O

- Ani
- Antbird
- Antthrush
- Antwren
- Bellbird
- Bittern
- Booby
- Chachalaca
- Euphonia
- Gull
- Hermit
- Heron
- Honeycreeper
- Ibis
- Jacamar
- Kiskadee
- Manakin
- Motmot
- Oilbird
- Oriole
- Oropendola
- Owl
- Piping-Guan
- Rail
- Sabrewing
- Sapphire
- Tanager
- Tern
- Toucan
- Trogon
- Tropicbird
- Vireo

Panama's Wild Darien Cana & Cerro Pirre

John Coons

One of the most exciting aspects of birding is coming across a rarity—discovering something you never ever expected. I often tell people that highland Darien is one of my favorite places in the world and has the best birding in Central America; there are so many great birds one expects to see there. But it is the chance of seeing rarities and unexpected birds that puts Darien over the top. There are many birds that are known to occur only there or in adjacent northwest Colombia, and there are several more South American species that are only found in Central America at this spot.

Since a number of my colleagues are usually lined up to do this tour, I last got to Darien in February of 2009, and boy am I psyched to be going back in December. We'll fly in by charter plane to a landing strip where we're dropped off for a week of adventure. Within minutes of stepping off the plane and while the park staff is still unloading the gear, food, and beer, I've seen Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle, Great Green Macaw, and Rufous-crested Coquette. While we are getting settled into our rooms, Black-tipped Cotinga, Choco Toucan, and Dusky-backed Jacamar are often hanging around at the edge of the clearing. An afternoon excursion on one of the trails may reveal an army ant swarm and its attending Spotted, Bicolored, and Ocellated antbirds, with as good a chance of seeing Black-crowned Antpitta and Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo as there is in Central America. You never know what will be around the next bend or beyond the next rise. A Great Curassow could be standing in the trail, a tinamou might be strolling through the vegetation, or a Sapayoa, a little-known species that seems to be placed in a different family every other year, might be quietly perched on an overhanging branch.

Over the more than eighteen years I've been visiting Darien, I've seen many changes in and around the clearing. We used to take our own sleeping bags, tents, food, and cook, and it was certainly roughing it. Today, this remote site boasts solar-heated showers, newly constructed verandas overlooking flowers and fruiting trees, and a rather quiet generator that provides electricity for a few hours after dark. What has not changed are the wonderful forested trails loaded with excitement. All of our birding is done



on foot; once the plane leaves, we don't see a motorized vehicle until it returns for us a week later—unless you count the broken-down bulldozer that helped construct the airstrip and the old train locomotive with a tree growing through it that is a reminder of the gold mining days and the reason the clearing exists.

Our camp on the Pirre Ridge, a full day's hike from the main camp at Cana, still requires tent camping, but a large metal and thatch roof covers all of the tents and we now dine at a large table that is also covered. There is even a flush toilet. Though I have visited many times I am still looking for my first Choco Tinamou, which I know is just around the next bend. I can't wait!

Dates for John's upcoming Panama's Wild Darien tours are December 29-January 7, 2011 and February 10-19. The February tour may be combined with his Panama's Canopy Tower tour, February 19-26.

In 2011 Field Guides will be offering several tours to other parts of bird-rich Panama. First, there's *Panama's Canopy Tower* where we've scheduled two tours (*Feb 19-26 with John Coons and Feb 26-Mar 5 with Chris Benesh*). All nights will be spent at the Tower in the birdy lowlands of Central Panama where we'll hope to see along Pipeline Road such birds as Streak-chested Antpitta, Pheasant Cuckoo, Black-tailed Trogon, and with luck a raiding army ant swarm attended by some fascinating antbirds. We'll spend one day birding Achioté Road and the mangroves around Fort Sherman for an exciting taste of humid Caribbean lowland species, including Pied Puffbird, Golden-collared Manakin, White-headed Wren, and Black-headed Saltator (among others). And we'll also visit long-famous Tocumen Marsh for a variety of wetland possibilities and boreal migrants.

A new tour this year, *Panama's Fabulous Fortnight* (in two parts, *Feb 18-24 and Feb 24-Mar 3 with John Rowlett*), will combine the rainforests of the central lowlands and the cloud forests of the western highlands, though each part may be taken separately. In the lowlands we'll be situated at the Gamboa Rainforest Resort just outside the gate of Pipeline Road and Soberania National Park; in the highlands we'll stay at two outstanding birding lodges in Chiriqui.

Later in the year we've scheduled a holiday tour to *Panama's Canopy Lodge* (*Dec 27-Jan 3, 2012*) where we hope to welcome in the New Year with a Tody Motmot or Rosy Thrush-Tanager, or maybe a Black-crowned Antpitta or Rufous-browed Tyrannulet. Oh yes, and there's a Canopy Lodge extension to the second Canopy Tower tour if you'd like to combine the two.

For complete itineraries you may call our office or download a copy from our web page.



Facing page: These Night Monkeys do seem surprised to see daylight. Also known as Owl Monkeys for their owl-like vocalizations, these nocturnal representatives of an otherwise diurnal group of New World monkeys have undergone a splitting spree, from a single species to as many as eight! Our group at Cana seems to be spotting something good.

This page at top, a rather needle-billed Dusky-backed Jacamar, found only in Darien and neighboring Colombia. Below the jacamar, Bicolored Antbird—the snarl of these “professional antbirds” almost always signals a raiding antswarm. The classy looking Golden-collared Manakin is one of the dancing manakins: males gather in a loose assembly of individual display courts where they Baryshnikov across their stages, intent on attracting a female. Below the manakin, the usually furtive Streak-chested Antpitta. [Photos by guides George Armistead & Dave Stejskal & participants John Sullivan & Laura Johnson, Kevin Heffernan & Markus Lagerqvist]

Holiday Tours (with space available)

If holiday birding with Field Guides is in your plans for later this year, it's good to get flights booked early for this busy travel time to allow yourself the best options and fare. Call our office and our travel agents can help you sort out the possibilities. Our holiday destinations include:

GUATEMALA THANKSGIVING: TEMPLES OF TIKAL, ANTIGUA & FINCA LAS NUBES—November 23-December 2 with Jesse Fagan. A new holiday birding tour combining exciting birding at lovely fincas in the highlands as well as the Mayan ruins of Tikal in the Peten lowlands.

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO—December 18-27 with Wayne Petersen & local guide. Wonderful introductory birding tour to South America's riches (including bellbirds, toucans, manakins, and motmots).

HOLIDAY COSTA RICA: RANCHO NATURALISTA—December 18-26 with Jesse Fagan & local guide. One-site holiday birding tour based at the comfortable Rancho Naturalista Lodge, with excursions to other habitats on Costa Rica's bird-rich Caribbean slope.

MEXICO: OAXACA & THE PACIFIC COAST—December 27-January 7, 2011 with Chris Benesh. Superb birding with numerous Mexican endemics and fascinating ruins in lovely Oaxaca City, plus a visit to the Pacific Coast for additional specialties.

PANAMA'S WILD DARIEN: CANA & CERRO PIRRE—December 29-January 7, 2011 with John Coons. Birding tour to a true wilderness area accessed by charter aircraft; diverse Neotropical avifauna with many endemics and species of restricted range.



Last Spaces

Australia (Part II)—Oct 12-27 with John Coons & Jesse Fagan

Birding Plus—El Salvador & Banding—Nov 6-13 with Jesse Fagan

Northern Peru: Endemics Galore—Nov 7-27 with Rose Ann Rowlett & Richard Webster

Louisiana: Red Beans & Yellow Rails II—Nov 11-15 with John Coons

Spectacular Southeast Brazil: South of the Capricorn—Nov 12-28 with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua

Southern India—Western Ghats Endemics—Nov 14-Dec 5 with Terry Stevenson

Sunbittern (Photo by participant Kevin Heffernan)

FRESH FROM THE FIELD



One of the hallmarks of our **Central Peruvian Endemics** tour is high Andean endemics—there are many to be found along our way. But it's also a great adventure. Above, a comfortable lunch overlooking famed Lake Junin, home to the flightless and endemic Junin Grebe. Top right, this upright grayish bird has a name that's a bit tricky to spell; it's called Taczanowski's Ground-Tyrant. Try building a puzzle with that one! Lower right, a Junin Canastero, one of the regional specialties that came in close for a fine view. [Photos by guide Dan Lane]



Above left, a Buffy Fish-Owl, a widespread species of Southeast Asia, seen during a night cruise on the Menanggul River on our **Borneo** tour. These birds usually look a little more rounded than this one does, but when owls wish to hide, or at least look less conspicuous, they sometimes make themselves look skinny. (Too bad we can't all do that.) Above right, a male Blue-headed Pitta, a Bornean endemic and also a heck of a good-looking bird, and a male Great Argus at his display court. [Photos by participant Johnny Powell]



Guide George Armistead reports that his **Alaska** tour group found a couple of small pods of Orcas (Killer Whales) in Resurrection Bay, out of Seward. This photo documents one of the whales as well as the absolutely breathtaking scenery of this part of Alaska...or, should we say, much of Alaska? At top right, a breeding adult-plumage Long-tailed Jaeger in flight, the smallest and most graceful of these aerial hunters known as jaegers. Below the jaeger, the identification and taxonomy of the redpolls is difficult to say the least, but in Nome both the Common and Hoary can be found. The very pale pink breast, largely unstreaked flanks, and overall pale coloration identify this as a Hoary Redpoll. Knock on wood (or Alaskan ice if that is nearby), but recently we've had great luck finding Polar Bears at Barrow. All smiles and hands up, our gang celebrates a Polar Bear sighting. [Photos by guides George Armistead & Dave Stejskal]



Facing page: on our **Manu Wildlife Center** tour, Lynette escapes the clutches of a strangler fig...with a smile no less! To her right, a Lined Forest-Falcon, a bird-eating falcon of the Amazon Basin. Its body and wing shape are much more like that of an *Accipiter* hawk than the typically sharp-winged falcons. This is perhaps not surprising, but the level of convergence is much more striking when you realize that falcons and hawks are now known to be very distantly related. Above, a Giant Otter, which is not only a giant of an otter but one of the largest members of the weasel family. They give Sea Otters and Wolverines a run for their money. [Photos by guide Dan Lane]



At top, thousands of American Flamingos in the Estero de Celestun on our **Yucatan & Cozumel** tour. These birds are sometimes known as Caribbean Flamingos, though Caribbean is a bit problematic for a species that is also found on the Galapagos! When you do find flamingos, there tend to be numbers of them, though in the Caribbean Basin, their distribution is patchy. The Yucatan is a good place to see them. Above, Tzompantli, or wall of skulls at Chichen Itza; this is where the skulls of sacrificial victims were displayed. Above right, an Altamira Oriole. [Photos by participant Charles Lowe]



FRESH FROM THE FIELD



Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga is one of our most popular Peru tours. The birds are superb and the views and cultural sights are amazing. Above, guides Dan Lane and Jesse Fagan enjoying time at Machu Picchu—and maybe listening for an Inca Wren. At right above, Unstreaked Tit-Tyrant is an unusually long-tailed tit-tyrant. At right, the warbler-like Parodi's Hemispingus is in fact a tanager endemic to Peru. [Photos by participant Dominic Sherony & guide Jesse Fagan]



Above, a comical looking Red-capped Manakin from our **Costa Rica** tour. As you can see, he's black with a red head; what you can't see well are his yellow garters, which he shows as he moonwalks across a branch.



Pale-billed Woodpecker, at right above, is an impressive woodpecker. It's not quite an Ivory-billed, though it's in the same group, the genus *Campephilus*, and like the Ivory-billed, it gives a loud double knock as its territorial drum sound. Below the woodpecker, the bird with the crazy haircut is a Great Curassow. It's said that the name derives from the fact that the first examples of these birds in Europe were shipped from the island of Curaçao, though it's possible the name means "curly hair" in some native language. [Photos by participant Kevin Heffernan]



Terry McEaney had such a successful run of autumn Ireland tours that he decided to show us the land as it was waking from its winter sleep—and **Ireland in Spring** was born! Above left, a gorgeous panorama of Slea Head on the Dingle Peninsula. Above right, the Dunnock, or Hedge Sparrow, is not a sparrow at all but an Accentor, the only bird



family completely endemic to the Palearctic. And though he may look subdued, he's, can we say, free in the bedroom. Dunnocks form a variety of unions and chicks within broods often have different fathers! They are wilder than they look. Above, the island of Little Skellig seen from Skellig Michael. [Photos by guide Terry McEaney & participant Lisa Spellman]

A ram Bighorn Sheep from our **Montana: Yellowstone to Glacier** tour takes a rest. For much of the year, finding food in the cold and snow can be difficult for these mountain sheep, so in summer, they may want to relax a bit. For birders, the summer is also the time to be here. Migrant birds like this eye-popping male Western Tanager, above left, come here to breed in droves. Above right, a male Ruby-crowned Kinglet shows that you can't always judge a book by its cover. When the bird is excited, a bright red flame of a feather tract is revealed on the crown of this usually subdued species. [Photos by guide Jesse Fagan].

UPCOMING TOURS

If you would like details on any trip or trips, please call our office or check our website, where you may download a tour itinerary.

January-February

Antarctica: Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia & the Falklands—January 5-26, 2011 with George Armistead. The ultimate seabird and wildlife cruise, including fabulous South Georgia and the Falkland Islands. Variable fee depending on cabin choice.

Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves—January 8-22, 2011 with Rose Ann Rowlett. Birding tour focused on the many specialties of the southwest, in particular the very local endemics of the humid foothills and mountains, and on Tumbesian specialties.

Oman & the UAE: Birding Arabia—January 13-29, 2011 with Phil Gregory. Some of the best Arabian Peninsula birding in two friendly and scenic countries; many regional endemics and specialty birds, including a good chance for the Hypocolius.

Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge I—January 14-23, 2011 with Jay VanderGaast. One-site birding tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere.

Mexico: Colima & Jalisco—January 15-23, 2011 with Chris Benesh & Megan Crewe. A popular birding tour and comfortable introduction to Neotropical birds; many West Mexican endemics and rarities; lovely coastal and montane scenery.

Yellowstone in Winter—January 15-23, 2011 with Terry McEaney. A winter birding, wildlife, and landscape adventure to one of the world's legendary destinations.

Venezuela—January 15-29, 2011 with John Coons. Comprehensive survey birding tour of this modern, bird-rich country: best areas of the beautiful Andes, many endemics in lush Henri Pittier NP, and teeming waterbirds and wildlife of the vast llanos.

Colombia: Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta—January 15-31, 2011 with Jesse Fagan & local guide. Energetic, endemic-oriented birding tour connecting reserves up the Magdalena Valley from Bogota to the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

Colombia: The Cauca Valley, Western & Central Andes I—January 15-31, 2011 with Richard Webster & local guide. Energetic, endemic-oriented birding tour connecting reserves up the Cauca Valley from Medellin to Cali.

Thailand—January 15-February 5, 2011 (Gurney's Pitta & Nicobar Pigeon Extension) with Dave Stejskal & Uthai Treesucon. Our birding tour for a wide variety of forest birds in the friendly heart of Southeast Asia (and fabulous Thai food).

Northeast Brazil: Long Live the Lear's!—January 16-February 5, 2011 with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. From beautiful beaches to barren badlands, our birding tour traverses Northeast Brazil in a quest for specialties of the endangered caatinga, chapada, and Atlantic Forest habitats.

Jewels of Ecuador: Hummers, Tanagers & Antpittas I—January 22-February 8, 2011 with

Mitch Lysinger. Survey birding tour of Andean Ecuador; diverse avifauna dominated by colorful hummers and tanagers and more subtle and haunting antpittas.

Northern India: Tiger, Birds & the Taj Mahal—January 22-February 13, 2011 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.

Mexico: Oaxaca—January 23-30, 2011 with Megan Crewe & Dan Lane. Superb birding with two-dozen Mexican endemics and fascinating ruins while based in lovely Oaxaca City.

Venezuela: Tepuis Endemics—January 28-February 6, 2011 with Jay VanderGaast. Short, one-site birding tour focusing on the many endemics and other specialties of this beautiful region.

The Heart of Chile—January 29-February 12, 2011 (Easter Island Extension) with Peter Burke & Ricardo Matus. A sampling of Chile's "heart" between Santiago and Chiloe Island, including coastal birding and a pelagic. A shorter, more relaxed visit to this popular and incredibly scenic country.

Panama's Wild Darien: Cana & Cerro Pirre—February 10-19, 2011 with John Coons. Birding tour to a true wilderness area accessed by charter aircraft; many endemics and species of restricted range.

Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge II—February 11-20, 2011 with Dan Lane. One-site birding tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere.

Panama's Fabulous Fortnight—February 18-24, 2011 & February 24-March 3, 2011 with John Rowlett. An exploration of the best of Panama in two parts: Part I—rich rainforest birding in Panama's central lowlands with quick access to famous Pipeline Road; Part II—cloud forest birding in unsurpassed surroundings featuring stunning views of Resplendent Quetzal and Three-wattled Bellbird, as well as many biogeographic endemics.

Brazil Nutshell: Atlantic Forest, Iguazu Falls & the Pantanal—February 18-March 4, 2011 with Marcelo Padua & Jay VanderGaast. 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.

Panama's Canopy Tower I—February 19-26, 2011 with John Coons. Birding tour offering a towering introduction to Neotropical birds based entirely in a unique lodge; quick access to famous Pipeline Road; includes train ride back from Colon after Achote Road.

Trinidad & Tobago—February 19-28, 2011 with Megan Crewe. Wonderful introductory birding tour to South America's riches (including bellbirds, toucans, manakins, and motmots).

Cambodia—February 19-March 3, 2011 with Phil Gregory. Birding tour to a "last chance" destination for some of the large, rare Asian waterbirds now extinct in neighboring countries,

plus additional regional specialties and famed Angkor Wat.

Colombia: The Cauca Valley, Western & Central Andes II—February 19-March 7, 2011 with Richard Webster & local guide. Energetic, endemic-oriented birding tour connecting reserves up the Cauca Valley from Medellin to Cali.

Jewels of Ecuador: Hummers, Tanagers & Antpittas II—February 19-March 8, 2011 with Mitch Lysinger. Survey birding tour of Andean Ecuador; diverse avifauna dominated by colorful hummers and tanagers and more subtle and haunting antpittas.

Guatemala: Shade-grown Birding—February 23-March 5, 2011 with Jesse Fagan. A birding tour for numerous Middle American specialties, among them Resplendent Quetzal, a host of hummingbirds, and Azure-rumped Tanager, set against a dramatic volcanic landscape and colorful Mayan culture.

Panama's Canopy Tower II—February 26-March 5, 2011 (Canopy Lodge Extension) with Chris Benesh. Birding tour offering a towering introduction to Neotropical birds based entirely in a unique lodge; quick access to famous Pipeline Road; includes train ride back from Colon after Achote Road.

Philippines—February 26-March 20, 2011 (Visayan Islands & Mindoro Extension) with Dave Stejskal. Survey birding tour of the endemic-rich Philippines (Luzon, Palawan, and northeastern Mindanao) with an excellent chance to see the critically endangered Great Philippine Eagle.

March-April

Borneo—March 3-20, 2011 with Rose Ann Rowlett. Three prime areas on this birding tour to some of the Earth's richest forests while based in comfort right in the wild.

Suriname: Wild & Wonderful—March 4-19, 2011 with Bret Whitney & Dan Lane. A top-shelf rainforest birding experience for those who love to walk, listen, and be surprised.

Honduras: Land of the Emeralds—March 5-13, 2011 with Jesse Fagan & John Coons. Birding tour for the endemic Honduran Emerald plus arid Pacific-slope, Central Highland, and Caribbean lowland coverage; nearly 300 species!

Costa Rica—March 12-27, 2011 with Megan Crewe & local guide. Birding tour for Resplendent Quetzals, Three-wattled Bellbirds, Scarlet Macaws in a beautiful country with easy travel.

Mexico: Yucatan & Cozumel—March 18-27, 2011 with John Coons & local guide. A tour for the most interesting birds of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula amidst its attractive Mayan sites and only a short flight from the US.

Colombia: Santa Marta Escape—March 19-27, 2011 with Richard Webster & local guide. Birding tour featuring 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.

Hawaii—March 19-29, 2011 with George Armistead. On our birding tour to Hawaii we'll visit three of the major islands—Oahu, Kauai, and Hawaii—giving us a chance to sample a great portion of the Hawaiian endemics and the seabird specialties.

Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge—March 19-29, 2011 with Mitch Lysinger & John Rowlett. Our birding tour exploring the riches of the eastern

Andean foothills of northern Ecuador for numerous specialties at the recently opened Wildsumaco Lodge.

Ghana—March 19-April 2, 2011 with Phil Gregory & local guide. A new addition to our schedule, in search of numerous West African specialties as well as White-necked Rockfowl.

Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes I—March 20-April 3, 2011 with Jay VanderGaast. Highlight birding tour 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.

Bahamas: Birds & Butterflies—March 21-26, 2011 with Jesse Fagan. Small-group tour for three Bahamian endemics, several Caribbean endemics, a few early migrants, Kirtland's Warbler, and a sampling of West Indian butterflies; exciting birding at a relaxed pace.

Dominican Republic—March 26-April 2, 2011 with Jesse Fagan. Short birding tour to the eastern half of the endemic-rich island of Hispaniola. Many specialties and endemics including the unusual Palmchat.

Spring in South Texas—March 26-April 3, 2011 with Chris Benesh. Magnificent Whooping Cranes, lots of South Texas specialties, and spring hawk migration on this exciting birding tour.

Puerto Rico—April 2-8, 2011 with George Armistead. A week of respite to a very birdy and beautiful Caribbean island, a mix of North American and local culture and cuisine; 16 endemic birds and a number of other Caribbean specialties.

Namibia & Botswana—April 5-24, 2011 with Terry Stevenson. Southwestern Africa's bird specialties, striking scenery, wilderness, and the famed game of Etosha and the Okavango.

Colorado Grouse I—April 7-17, 2011 with Megan Crewe & Chris Benesh. A short birding tour to seek out the state's prairie-chicken and grouse species.

Bhutan—April 8-29, 2011 (Kahna N.P. India Pre-tour) with Richard Webster. Spellbinding birding amidst awe-inspiring landscapes on a journey through the lush forests and mountains of this "lost" Himalayan kingdom.

Birding Plus—Belize: Birds, Banding & Mayan Ruins—April 9-17, 2011 with Jesse Fagan. A terrific tropical birding introduction including a bird-banding element and visits to Mayan archaeological sites.

Colorado Grouse II—April 15-25, 2011 with Dan Lane. A short birding tour to seek out the state's prairie-chicken and grouse species.

Texas Coast Migration Spectacle I & II—April 16-22, 2011 & April 23-29, 2011 with John Coons. Birding tour to 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, 2011 with Chris Benesh. Our birding tour for Colima and Golden-cheeked warblers, Montezuma Quail, and other southern borderland specialties in Texas's grand desert mountain landscapes.

Texas Hill Country—April 25-30, 2011 with John Rowlett. Golden-cheeked Warbler, Tropical Parula, and Black-capped and Gray vireos head the list of enticing birds to be sought on our tour to the wildflower wonderland of the Edwards Plateau.

Birding Northern Central America

Continued from page 1

plantations is excellent especially when habitat has been preserved at various elevations throughout the farm. Don't get me wrong, the birds are in the canopy above the coffee, too.

So, what birds can you expect to see at any one of the farms where we stay? Resident species that like the coffee or surrounding edge habitat include Blue-crowned Motmot, Rufous-capped Warbler, Prevost's Ground-Sparrow, Bushy-crested Jay, and even Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge; there are a number of common wintering visitors as well such as Tennessee and Wilson's warblers, Warbling Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, and Summer Tanager. Above the coffee belt, the humid semi-deciduous forest and coffee give way to pine-oak and cloud forest. It is here that many specialty birds and regional endemics occur including Fulvous Owl, Highland Guan, Azure-rumped Tanager, Resplendent Quetzal (national bird of Guatemala), Blue-throated Motmot, Black-throated and Unicolored jays, and Wine-throated Hummingbird. Of the 45 NCA endemics, Guatemala has a very respectable 34.

Realizing that many have dreamed of visiting the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Tikal, we designed a second tour, **Guatemala Thanksgiving: Temples of Tikal, Antigua & Finca las Nubes**, that takes you there over the Thanksgiving holiday. Imagine spending two days among the other-worldly Classic Mayan temples of Tikal, watching a pair of Orange-breasted Falcons nesting on Temple 4 or a parading group of Ocellated Turkeys in the main plaza, and then spending Thanksgiving at a one of the oldest operating coffee fincas in the New World, Finca Las Nubes, documented in photos in 1875 by the creator of modern cinema, Eadward Mulbridge! A few of the bird species we might encounter in the cloud forest preserve above the finca—in addition to Resplendent Quetzal, that is—include Spotted Wood-Quail, Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, Green-throated Mountain-gem, Spotted Nightingale-Thrush, Cinnamon-bellied Flower-piercer, and Hooded Grosbeak, and both Ornate and Black hawk-eagles live on the property.

Guatemala is one country you don't want to miss.

El Salvador

Heading south along the volcanic chain, we reach the small country of El Salvador, the only country in NCA without a Caribbean border. Our **Birding Plus—El Salvador & Banding** tour works a little differently since a portion of our time is dedicated to learning about birds in the hand. We've partnered with SalvaNATURA, a regional conservation NGO, to work with local Salvadoran biologists at two bird monitoring stations in western El Salvador, one in cloud forest the other in tropical semideciduous forest. Here participants learn to set up mist-nests, extract birds from the nets, handle and process birds, and safely release them. Want to learn about molt? This is the tour for you. Participants go at their own pace and it is exciting to process and release your lifer Fan-tailed Warbler, Ruddy Woodcreeper, or even White-faced Quail-Dove. In 2009 we banded 21 species.

But the tour isn't all banding, as we spend an equal amount of time birding, including the sites of Cerro Verde (cloud forest), El Imposible



National Park (semideciduous forest), and Barra de Santiago and Walter Deininger Protected Area, both located along the Pacific Coast. At Barra de Santiago, we visit the tall white mangrove forest by boat and also bird the humid lowlands on foot where we have chances for Rufous-breasted Spinetail, Gray-headed Kite, and Yellow-naped Parrots. Walter Deininger has excellent riparian and dry forest where species we'll encounter include Blue-throated Goldentail and Long-billed Starthroat, White-lored Gnatcatcher, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, and, one of my favorites, Rufous-naped Wren. At just over a week, this tour is a perfect combination of scientific discovery and fun birding, all at a relaxing pace.

Honduras

Honduras is the last birding frontier in NCA, and with its towering peaks, virgin rainforest, endemic hummingbird, and nearly 720 species of birds (300 of which we see on the tour!), it is a compelling destination. Our **Honduras: Land of the Emeralds** tour begins in the highlands at La Tigra National Park and then cuts a comma-shaped path north to end along the north coast in the unexplored wilderness of Pico Bonito National Park.

Pico Bonito is a massive east-west chain of mountains found between Tela in the west and La Ceiba in the east. The mountains rise from sea-level almost straight up—there are few foothills to speak of—and because of this rugged topography, the Cordillera Nombre de Dios (which Pico Bonito NP protects) is covered in virgin forest and all the large animals like tapir, puma, and jaguar are present. Thankfully for us, one of the nicest lodges in Central America sits at the base of this range. The Lodge at Pico Bonito, with its luxurious cabins and excellent restaurant, makes for an ideal base to explore

the surrounding region. The lodge itself sits on approximately 400 acres, and trails behind the lodge are excellent places to see Keel-billed and Tody motmots, Lovely Cotinga, Sunbittern, Tawny-faced Quail, and Black-and-white Owl among 417 other species that have been recorded from this site.

The Honduran Emerald (*Amazilia luciae*), a medium-sized hummingbird of interior dry valleys and a Honduran endemic, is another important reason to visit the country. The species was largely unknown until 1988 when it was found to be locally common in the arid Aguan Valley. It has now also been found in several other interior valleys, including the Agalta Valley, where I saw my lifer in August 2003. But despite its being locally common in a few areas, this species is still extremely rare (listed as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International) and highly susceptible to continued habitat destruction.

Belize

Field Guides will be returning to Belize in 2011 with a fresh new itinerary, **Belize: Birds, Banding & Mayan Ruins**. There are more than a few reasons to visit Belize. It's only a short flight from the US; it has several

excellent ecologies; and most importantly, with 75% of the country in natural vegetation, there are 618 species of birds, which makes it a birder's paradise.

We plan to take a little different approach from a typical birding tour. There will be, of course, several days of intense birding at some great sites where we'll hope to see among many others Black-faced Anthrush, Barred Antshrike, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Gray-throated Chat, and maybe even a Solitary Eagle or Orange-breasted Falcon! In addition, there will be a couple of evening presentations on tropical ecology and birds that will include such topics as antbirds, important tropical plants and their relationships with birds, lekking, migration, and more! And further, we hope to have a two-day session on bird banding where our focus will be on basic instruction (no prior experience required). Topics will include handling and releasing, data entry, molt, and aging and sexing of birds in the hand. We will work closely with experienced local biologists.

These tours are designed to see a great variety and number of birds and regional endemics (while learning more about them), to experience the rich local culture from Mayan to Spanish colonial, and to give us an appreciation of the countries we visit. From towering volcanoes, to lush lowland rainforest, to arid valleys and dry forest, let me show you why I love this land.

If you'd like more information on any of these tours, please call our office or check the tour page on our website where you can download a trip itinerary.

Dates for the tours Jesse describes are—

Guatemala Thanksgiving: Temples of Tikal, Antigua & Finca las Nubes—

Nov 23-Dec 2, 2010

Guatemala: Shade-Grown Birding—Feb 23-Mar 5, 2011 and Nov 19-28, 2011

El Salvador & Banding—Nov 6-13, 2010 and Nov 5-12, 2011

Honduras: Land of the Emeralds—Mar 5-13, 2011

Belize: Birds, Banding & Mayan Ruins—Apr 9-17, 2011



A plethora of images from an eyeful of a region, Northern Central America! Our tour choices in this part of the world are now unbeatable! This is very much due to our Central American devotee and expert, guide Jesse Fagan (facing page), here at La Tigra National Park in El Salvador. Right of Jesse is a view of Pico Bonito National Park, a beautiful spot we visit on our Honduras tour. And below the park, an adult Long-tailed Manakin in the hand. This bird was recaptured in El Salvador and is known to be six years old. Part of the thrill of visiting El Salvador with Jesse is that we are able to catch and band birds.

This page: top left, two male Black-crested Coquettes fighting—certainly not coquettish behavior. Middle left, dinner at The Lodge at Pico Bonito, Honduras. At left, view of the ruins at Tikal. Above, a male Ocellated Turkey, a species that makes our wonderful turkey look plain! [Photos by guides Ned Brinkley, Rose Ann Rowlett, Richard Webster & Jesse Fagan & participants Mary & Max Rodel]



PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Lewiston, ME
Permit #82

FIELD GUIDES INCORPORATED

9433 Bee Cave Road / Building 1, Suite 150 / Austin, TX 78733
800-728-4953 / 512-263-7295 / fax: 512-263-0117
fieldguides@fieldguides.com / www.fieldguides.com

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

CONSERVATION Field Guides contributes to the following conservation organizations: The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, BirdLife International, Population Biology Foundation/Yanacocha Biological Station



10/10



Share some great Suriname rainforest birding with Bret Whitney in March—and help him jump a hurdle without breaking his stride!

In his 31 years of professional tour guiding, Bret has never had a tour cancel for lack of bookings. Wow. Can we let it happen now?

NO! But Bret's March *Suriname: Wild & Wonderful* tour currently has just two people signed up, clearly because folks don't know that he and co-leader Dan Lane are going to lead a simply fantastic trip with gobs of great birds to this tiny country on South America's ancient Guianan Shield. If you enjoy traipsing after trumpeters, sleuthing out the secrets of mixed-species foraging flocks, angling for antswarms, and hunting for owls, nightjars, and potoos in remote rainforest settings, here's an unusual opportunity to get in on the ground floor of a truly remarkable tropical birding experience in the expert hands of Bret and Dan.

So, "What's going on in March, anyway?" If you can't think of anything important, then do something really nice for yourself and call our office to reserve space or visit us online for Bret's tour description and itinerary. (fieldguides.com/bird-tours/suriname)

Bret in Brazil recently, all geared up for Suriname! [Photo by Marcelo Padua]