



Panama sightings: Golden-collared Manakin, Cinnamon Woodpecker, and Bicolored Antbird [Photos by participant Paul Thomas, guide John Rowlett, and participant Kevin Heffernan]

## Birding Pipeline Road, Top to Bottom

John Rowlett

**W**hat do Pheasant Cuckoo, Golden-collared Manakin, Streak-chested Antpitta, Blue Cotinga, Speckled Mourner, Ocellated Antbird, and Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo have in common? You guessed it—Panama's Pipeline Road! These are just a few of the thrilling lowland species to be found along one of the finest roads to bird in all of Middle America—a legendary road most birders have heard of, even if they've never yet birded in the American Tropics. These seven wonders of the Panama gap—of course there are many others, I must add—are on my perennial short list of birds to show off to the groups I've guided here for more than 30 years now. An extraordinary

wilderness area located adjacent to the Panama Canal in vast Soberania National Park, Pipeline Road offers a step back in time different in scope from any other in the former Canal Zone. It is the premier birding area in all of central Panama.

In addition to the extensive lowland rainforest protected by the park, there are two singular features of Pipeline Road that make birding there exceptional. One is the recently constructed observation tower at the Rainforest Discovery Center about two kilometers from the road's beginnings. This large, sturdy tower provides a fabulous early morning panorama of birds awakening in the

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## THE RICH PERKS OF BIRDING COLOMBIA

Richard Webster

**C**offee is wasted on me. Here I am guiding tours to Colombia, arguably (but Colombians won't argue about it, they treat it as a Fact) home to the best coffee in the world, and I only have a mild interest in coffee. But it need not be wasted on you during our Colombia trips, coming, of course, with all meals. If you want more at other times, then a little stimulus spending will generate much stimulus from only a small stimulus bill, and not much of a deficit, no GAO accounting required. Our newest tour, *Colombia: The Cauca Valley, Western & Central Andes*, crisscrosses coffee country above the Cauca Valley, offering insight into the

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Bearded Helmetcrest of the subspecies *stuebelii* restricted to Colombia's western Andes, photographed by guide Richard Webster



## Spring Fling

Jan Pierson

**W**inter's lurking, and as the days have grown shorter I've already begun anticipating a need for some spring birding relief. So, in a fit of winter blues prevention (I'm writing from Maine, after all) I put together my dream version (well, two, actually) of a spring escape beginning in March. I left out the tours that are already full (these include, sadly, Borneo with the "Grebe"—I know she'd show me a Bristlehead and that new flowerpecker

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### *Growing Up With Irish Music*

*How is it that Field Guides came to offer an Ireland tour combining birds, music, and pubs? Terry gives a little background—and just a little taste of the fun of traveling with him.*

**M**y full name is Terrence Patrick McEneaney. Our unusual family surname can be traced as far back as 1623, which is quite amazing for any family, not just mine. And coincidentally, one of the many Gaelic translations of the McEneaney surname is “son of the birdman.” My ancient relatives were gamekeepers at an abbey near where they lived in Ireland. All four of my grandparents came from Ireland.

My ties to Ireland, Irish music, and birds actually began in Dover, New Hampshire, where I was born. My father was conceived in Ireland but his parents then moved to New Hampshire to find work. But almost as soon as they arrived in “the states,” they learned that if they were to lay claim to the McEneaney farm in Ireland, they must return immediately and work the land. So they repacked all their possessions and sailed back to the homestead near Keady (County Armagh, Ireland). After nine years of harvesting flax for the nearby Keady textile mills that produced Irish linen, they again headed across “the pond” to the textile area of New Hampshire to work the mills and make a new life there with their relatives and close friends.

Keady and Dover are connected not just by the mills, but by Irish music, bird hunting, fly fishing, nature, and family gatherings that featured a cast of characters and culture known as *craic*, which is Gaelic for “fun” Irish style. Many of my relatives were entertainers—either musicians, singers, dancers, poetry readers, story tellers, comedians—and all of them knew the lyrics to the rare Irish songs that most people in the states have never heard of. The most famous of our relatives were the Greenses and the Makems. My grandmother was a Greene and closely related to the famous “singing Greenses of Keady.”

But the most important person in my family’s music tradition was Sarah Greene Makem, a cousin who married into the Makem family from the Keady area, many of whom were talented fiddlers and pipers. Sarah became an Irish music legend and is often credited with saving Irish music as we know it today. It’s said that from the day that she could talk to the day she passed away and from the moment she woke up to the hour she went to bed, she sang Irish songs. She had a repertoire that numbered in the thousands, probably more like 4000-plus. Until her time, songs had not been written down but simply remembered and passed down orally, but Sarah recorded all the lyrics and the music to boot to preserve it for posterity. People traveled from all over the world to hear her singing in her kitchen in her unique yet angelic voice, and to record these rare songs.

Sarah Makem had two talented sons, Tommy and Jack—one who wanted stardom and the other who was happy to stay at home. Tommy, the younger, moved to New Hampshire and teamed up with another Irishman named Liam Clancy. The two began to perform in bars and pubs in New York until Ed Sullivan heard about their music and invited them to play on his show, and “The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem” was formed. From that time on they traveled the world, even playing in the White House for President Kennedy on St. Patrick’s Day. Sarah Makem, Tommy Makem, Jack Makem, and Liam Clancy are no longer with us, but their music lives on.

On my first trip to Ireland in 1977, I took my mother with me. One of her dreams was to visit the close relatives and to see the site of the McEneaney family homestead. I vividly recall visiting Keady and seeing the gorgeous green countryside and observing my first White-throated Dipper at the Old Mill. But it wasn’t the birds or the countryside that blew me away—it was the people and the music. My uncle, Jimmy Greene, whom I’d never met before, took us to a pub that nightly contained a cast of characters. People came in from miles around to meet the “Yanks”—and Jimmy Greene’s relatives—at the pub. I heard over and over again people saying, “Come on Jimma, sing us a song,” and his reply would be, “Not now, I’m with relatives.”

As the night progressed with a series of stories, jokes, poetry readings, and instrumental music, I realized I had struck it rich. What impressed me most was how Irish music is traditionally done in a kitchen or pub in a slow but semi-organized format. By late in the evening there were chants from the entire crowd, “Come on Jimma, sing us a song” and my uncle Jimmy Greene gracefully agreed. He politely put down his pint of Guinness and stepped onto a chair. He stretched out his arms and the noisy crowd went silent. I’d heard of his reputation as an Irish pub singer, but I wasn’t prepared for the beauty of his rich baritone singing “The Nightingale” that put a chill down my spine. And the entire evening was like this, a pub full of people of all ages singing songs in unison, a convivial group of people, a “sessun” like no other, a big party. I was hooked on Ireland—its birds, its people, and its music.

Whenever I visit, I want it to be the experience of a lifetime, not only for me but for the special people who travel with me—life is too short for it to be any other way. On our **Ireland: Birds, Traditional Music & Pubs** tours we’ll take part in many unique musical sessions that encompass a wide variety of traditional Irish music. On the fall tour, essentially eastern Ireland north and south of Dublin, one special stop will be the Keady area and the Makem session house known to the locals as Tossie’s Cottage. On the spring tour, which covers the south and west, we’ve recruited local musical talent and will make visits to special pubs and bars.

The birding is also surprisingly good. By late fall the many migrant birds that winter in Ireland have returned, including Whooper Swan from Iceland, Bewick’s Swan from Russia, and Greater White-fronted and Pink-fronted geese from Greenland. And while Ireland is not a birding hotspot, the sheer number of birds you see is impressive, particularly shorebirds (Common Redshanks, Northern Lapwings, Common Greenshanks, and Eurasian Golden-Plovers), gulls (Black-headed and Mew), waterfowl (Tufted Ducks, Common Pochards, “Eurasian” Teal, and Eurasian Wigeon), and corvids (Rooks, Common Ravens, Eurasian Jackdaws, and Hooded Crows). For the spring tour in May, migrant birds are beginning to return, seabirds are amassing in impressive nesting colonies, and resident and migrant species are beginning to vocalize, many with rich song. The famed “Irish spring” is a lovely time to visit, with folk ballads and avian melodies alike celebrating an ancient renewal of hope.

So consider joining me in spring or fall, and—as the Irish say—Slainte! “Slan-ti-a!” or, in other words, to your good health!

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*Dates for Terry’s 2011 Ireland tours are May 12-22 or December 1-11. You may call our office for details or download a tour itinerary from our web site. And visit [www.fieldguides.com/guides](http://www.fieldguides.com/guides) for Terry’s complete tour schedule (tours to Montana in summer, Yellowstone in winter, and to the Pacific Northwest). Just click on his photo.*

# Ecuador's Wildsumaco

Mitch Lysinger

I have been living in Ecuador for almost twenty years now... never looked back at states-side life once I planted my feet here. In my free time I'd bird as many of Ecuador's wild corners as I could find, some accessible by car, others only by rustic trains with chickens in the aisles! Some of the places I stayed were pretty hospitable, while others weren't; I remember one spot where the only place to stay was an old schoolhouse that became infested with hundreds of cockroaches at sunset. But the birding was always worth it.

Where am I going with this? Well, one of the last birding frontiers for me in Ecuador (and for many others, I'm sure) was the eastern foothills of the Andes. The highlands had places to stay, the west slope had already been mostly opened up, and even the Amazon had some very nice lodges in nice habitat, but the eastern foothills were an overlooked and poorly-birded area with little access to the really pristine habitat. Back then, birding this area involved long drives to the prime spots where you were left with no option other than to camp (if you planned to be there at dawn or dusk)...which was actually quite fun but lacking the creature comforts that many traveling, international birders hope to find when targeting a spot to bird.

Finally, though, a new age has dawned, with a lodge that fulfills all the needs of birders ready to dive headfirst into Ecuador's eastern foothills in a way never possible before: enter Wildsumaco! Birds that were until only recently considered very difficult to find—Ecuadorian Piedtail, Yellow-throated Spadebill, Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater, and Gray-tailed Piha among them—are now seen along the trails and forested roadsides of a wonderful



new lodge right at ground-zero. The designers and owners of Wildsumaco are birders, so it comes as no surprise that they planted their feet—and foundations—right where the special birds are the richest. After the Amazon, the eastern foothills are next in line as one of the most bird-rich spots on the planet, with many regional endemics and some even close to being country endemics, such as the gorgeous Coppery-chested Jacamar. As you might have guessed, Wildsumaco's property birdlist is on the overwhelming side and has soared to over 450 species in

its relatively short existence...wow! Black-throated Brilliant, Many-spotted Hummingbird, Blue-rumped Manakin, Scarlet-breasted Fruiteater, Rufous-naped Greenlet, or Blue-browed Tanager, anyone? We've seen them all on our previous visits.

The setting is breathtaking and affords scenic views of the extinct outlying volcano, Sumaco, right off the spacious back deck...an ideal sunset! Rooms are comfortable and modern. Access from Quito is easy along mostly recently paved roads, but the lodge is perfectly situated well away from any main highway—eight kms up a gravel road—so the setting is tranquil and the lodge is still surrounded by the healthy forest we birders so need to nab our quarry.

So what are you waiting for? John Rowlett and I, both real Ecuador addicts from way back, are revved up and sitting on 'go' to wring out all of the bird bio-diversity we can—with you alongside us!

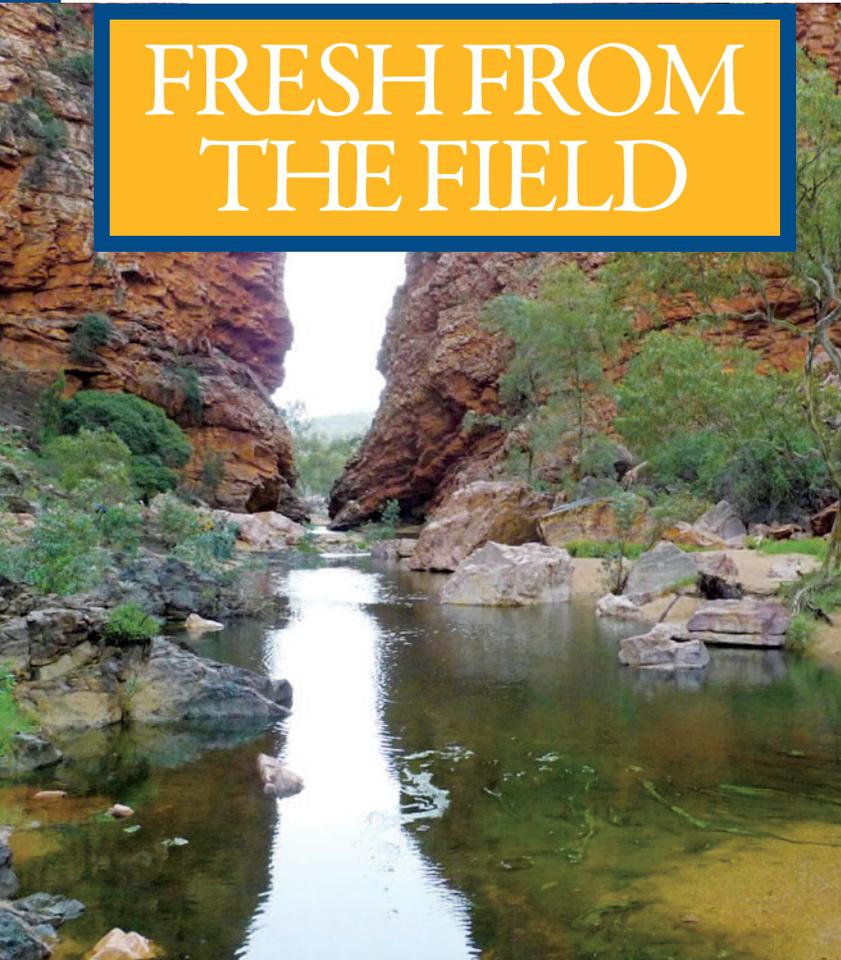
*Dates for Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge are March 19-29. For complete details, call our office or visit our web site, where you can download a tour itinerary.*



A little preview of paradise? A Sparkling Violet-ear hovering at one of Wildsumaco's feeders (thorntails also appear!); a Band-bellied Owl on a night outing; kicking back on the Wildsumaco porch, with birds out front and a view of distant Volcan Antisana; the lodge interior, where great sustenance is provided; and a male Chestnut-crowned Gnateater in the forest understorey. [Photos by guides Richard Webster & Rose Ann Rowlett]

# FRESH FROM THE FIELD

Which picture seems out of place: a Laughing Kookaburra, the Rainbow Bee-eater, or Simpsons Gap west of Alice Springs, all from Part I of our recent **Australia** tour with guides Chris Benesh & Megan Crewe? The one with water! Delightfully this year, after a long stretch of bad drought, the rains had finally come and the birds were breeding like crazy. Hallelujah! [Photos by guide Chris Benesh]

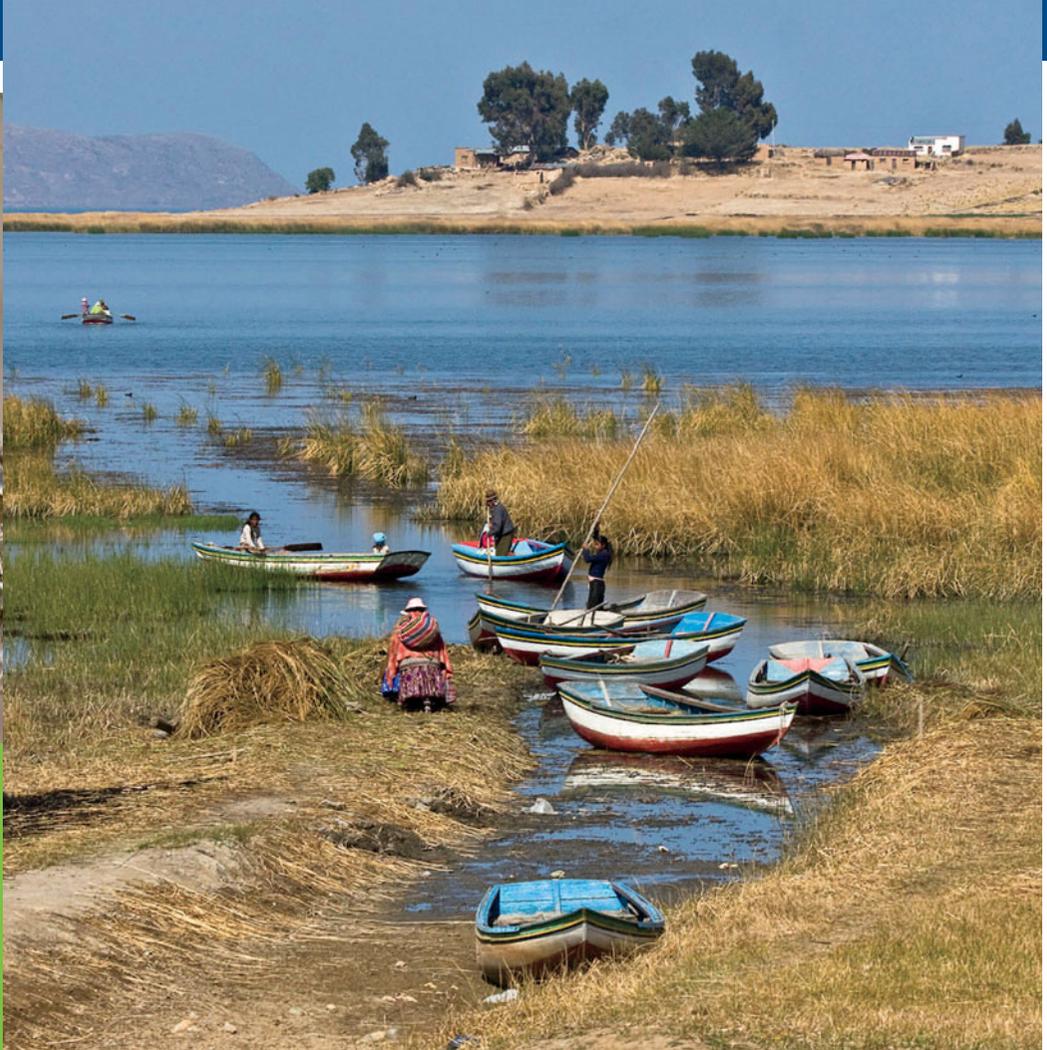


When a "sampler" tour records 650 species but you get less than half a page in *Fresh from the field* to show them off, space seems a bit tight! So here's just a very small teaser from our most recent **Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes** tour with Mitch Lysinger in three photos from participant Don Faulkner: a white-eyed Choco Trogon in the northwestern foothills; a cacophony (but, sorry, no audio here) of Dusky-headed Parakeets in for a beakful of mineral-rich mud in the eastern lowlands near Sacha Lodge; and of course you all know Pinocchio well. No, wait, it claims to be a Sword-billed Hummer at Yanacocha...but can you believe it?





Superlatives are the order of the day for these images from our recent **Bolivia's Avian Riches** tour and extension: boaters returning from work on Lake Titicaca, largest lake by volume in South America and highest commercially plied body of water in the world; Blue-throated Macaw, rarest macaw in the wild and confined to a tiny area in north-central Bolivia; and a lovely, bar-tailed female Giant Antshrike, at 13 inches an antbird you can really set your eyes on. [Photos by guide George Armistead]



From water level paddling through the *Montrecharidia* to the treetops where Spangled Cotinga and the canopy walkway await, Ecuador's **Sacha Lodge** offers visiting birders a fantastic (and literal) cross section of the Amazonian rainforest experience. Sacha's so popular with Field Guides participants, in fact, that we've visited it on 7 tours in 2010 alone(!)—five Sacha Lodge weeklong stays and two **Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes** trips. These images are from participants Connie Nelson and Theresa Redmond on one of our summer tours this year. Next up? Sacha departures on January 14 with Jay VanderGaast and February 11 with Dan Lane.



Birds have feet but do they have hands? Hmm...let's see, a White-necked Jacobin above, showing its tiny feet; a Grass-green Tanager with matching orange toes-and-nose; and a Pavonine Cuckoo showing feet and...well, "hands"! Pavonine, Pheasant, and Striped cuckoos all fan out their alulas (those feathers constituting a hand-like "bastard wing") in display when excited, and this bird's got its crest up, too. Cool. [Photos from by participant Sandy Paci and guides Dan Lane and Rose Ann Rowlett from two of our recent **Mountains of Manu, Peru** trips]



# FRESH FROM THE FIELD



A tiny portion of immense and spectacular **Iguazu Falls** frames one of our recent Brazil groups with guides Rose Ann Rowlett and Marcelo Padua, right and front. Add in a Maroon-bellied Parakeet and Rufous-headed Tanager to represent **Atlantic Forest** endemics, and we've shown off two of the three special birding venues Marcelo and co-leader Jay VanderGaast will feature on our upcoming February 2011 sampler tour, **Brazil Nutshell**. Also included? The fabulous Brazilian **Pantanal**. [Photos by guide Rose Ann Rowlett and participant Fred Dalbey]



With the number of endemics recorded on our regular **Papua New Guinea** tour approaching 200, you get the idea: PNG is an amazing place for novel birds. Birds-of-paradise hog the limelight, of course, from standard-bearing "BoP" species like Raggiana's to the what's-an-astrapia Ribbon-tailed with long, white streamers and a bizarrely iridescent head. But PNG is also filled with all kinds of less famous yet still fantastic endemics, of which the lovely Black-breasted Boatbill is one example. [Photos by guide Dave Stejskal]



Birding our way from the Camargue to the Pyrenees involves, of course, some great avian finds (who'd turn down a chance at Wallcreeper, Black Woodpecker, Little Bustard, Lammergeier, and so many others?)... but it's also classic **France** along the way, so we had to pay homage to the cyclist monument at famed Col du Tourmalet, a feared and revered *hors catégorie* climb on the *Tour de France*; enjoy some tailgated *hors d'oeuvres* pre-eagle-owl; and absorb the majesty of the Pyrenees in a quiet moment of scanning. [Photos by guides Jesse Fagan and Megan Crewe]





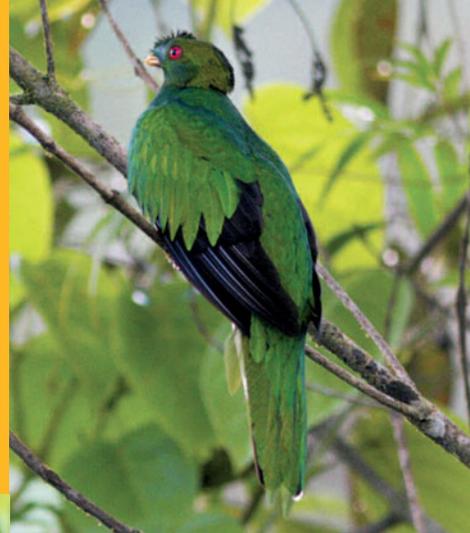
Dance, soar, skulk on our **Galapagos** tours: Blue-footed Boobies, famous for their foot-waving displays, the magnificent Waved Albatross, with eyes seemingly as deep as the ocean, and a tiny Galapagos Rail, in search of which we head to the highlands of the central island of Santa Cruz. [Photos by guide George Armistead]



Above, our **Serra dos Tucanos, Brazil** group birding the wetlands in the REGUA Atlantic Forest reserve, protecting one of the fragments of that once expansive habitat. At left, an endemic Brazilian Tanager—it suggests a brilliant and super-saturated version of its close and more widespread cousin, Silver-beaked Tanager. [Photos by participant Bob Polkinghorn]



Three of note from our **Peru's Magnetic North: Spatuletails, Owllet Lodge & More** tour, guided by John Rowlett: a male Crested Quetzal, wing coverts shaggy and red eye ablaze, at Abra Patricia; a Gray-mantled Wren at Afluente, and the handsome "Maroon-belted" form of Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrant—an "armchair lifer" waiting in escrow for when the official split comes. [Photos by participant David Disher]



# UPCOMING TOURS

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

## February-March

**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.

**Brazil Nutshell: Atlantic Forest, Iguazu Falls & the Pantanal**—February 11-25, 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 Fabulous Fortnight**—February 18-24, 2011 (Part I) & February 24-March 3, 2011 (Part II) 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. Each part may be taken separately or combined.

**Panama's Canopy Tower I & II**—February 19-26, 2011 with John Coons & February 26-March 5, 2011 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 Achiotte 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 Medellín 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.

**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.

**Borneo I**—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.

## April-May

**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 & II**—April 7-17, 2011 with Megan Crewe & Chris Benesh & April 15-25, 2011 with Dan Lane. 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.

**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.

## June

**Arizona Nightbirds & More I & II**—May 5-9, 2011 & May 12-16, 2011 with Dave Stejskal. A short birding tour focused on this area's many owl and nightjar specialties.

**Ethiopia: Endemic Birds & Ethiopian Wolf**—May 5-25, 2011 (Rock Churches at Lalibela Extension) with Terry Stevenson & George Armistead. 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.

**Spain: La Mancha, Coto Donana & Extremadura**—May 6-18, 2011 with Chris Benesh & local guide. To La Mancha, famous Coto Donana, Extremadura, and the Gredos Mountains for some of Europe's best birding.

**Birding Plus—Ireland in Spring: Birds, Traditional Music & Pubs**—May 12-22, 2011 with Terry McEaney & John Rowlett. The birds, culture, music, and pubs of this beautiful country in spring.

**Arizona: Birding the Border I & II**—May 13-22, 2011 with John Coons & May 21-30, 2011 with Dave Stejskal. Comprehensive birding tour of one of the most exciting destinations in North America with a backdrop of spectacular mountain scenery.

**Point Pelee Migration Spectacle**—May 14-20, 2011 with Jay VanderGaast. Exciting migration birding at several premier hotspots on the Lake Erie shore.

**Uganda: Shoebill, Rift Endemics & Gorillas**—May 19-June 9, 2011 with Phil Gregory. The rare Shoebill and a wealth of other birds and many Central African specialties on our birding tour, combined with opportunities to trek for Chimps and Mountain Gorillas.

**Birding Plus—North Carolina: Petrels & the Deep Blue Sea**—May 21-30, 2011 with Jesse Fagan. Demystify those ocean birds on this birding tour scheduling 3 pelagic trips into North Carolina's rich offshore waters along with informative presentations on seabird I.D. and natural history. And we'll also enjoy some landlubber birding as well.

**Virginia's Warblers**—June 1-5, 2011 with John Rowlett. Unsurpassed locale for breeding wood-warblers; cool, mountain climate in both beautiful states on our birding tour; optional visit to Monticello.

**Churchill & Southern Manitoba**—June 2-8, 2011 (Part I) & June 7-14, 2011 (Part II) with John Coons & local guide. Perennial favorites among Field Guides travelers; Part I includes varied birding through prairie, marshlands, and deciduous and boreal forests; Part II includes the tundra, coast, and spruce forests of Hudson Bay; always something exciting to see at Churchill, including Ross's Gull. Each part may be taken separately or combined; Part I is limited to just 8 participants.

**Alaska (First Tour)**—June 2-11, 2011 (Part I) & June 10-20, 2011 (Part II) with Chris Benesh & George Armistead. Comprehensive survey birding tour of spectacular Alaska in two parts: Part I to the Pribilofs and Denali; Part II to Nome, Seward, and Barrow.

**Alaska (Second Tour)**—June 9-18, 2011 (Part I) & June 17-27, 2011 (Part II) with Dave Stejskal & Megan Crewe. Comprehensive survey birding tour of spectacular Alaska in two parts: Part I to the Pribilofs and Denali; Part II to Nome, Seward, and Barrow.

**Montana: Yellowstone to Glacier**—June 9-19, 2011 with Terry McEaney & Jesse Fagan. A tour for great western birding and wildlife amidst the scenery of Big Sky country.

**Borneo II**—June 9-26, 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.

## BIRD BUZZ

# The Kirtland's Warbler

## Eleuthera Island, Bahamas

Jesse Fagan

**T**he Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*) is one of the rarest of the temperate New World warblers. It is listed as a federally endangered species and Near Threatened by BirdLife

International. Nearly its entire population (current estimates of 3626 individuals) breeds in north-central Michigan in young jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*) forests. These forests were once naturally fire-maintained ecosystems, but now are heavily managed through controlled burns and harvesting. Though native to the Great Plains, Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) spread into Michigan in the 1880's following the felling of eastern forests, which acted as a natural break to the expansion of this species eastward. Cowbird parasitism rates on Kirtland's Warbler were once as high as 70%, but with control measures that began in the 1970's, this rate dropped to a low of 3%, and warbler productivity tripled. The population of Kirtland's Warbler has continued to grow since the 1990's, so much so that the federal government is beginning to think about delisting it. Pairs are now breeding in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Ontario, and most recently in central Wisconsin. Despite still being very rare in migration, birds are being found with more frequency, including at least two seen in northwest Ohio in May 2010. I was fortunate to see a female on migration in late September 2006 on Folly Island (Charleston County), South Carolina.

Surprisingly though, my experiences with Kirtland's have not occurred where most people probably see them. I mentioned the bird in migration (my lifer), but I have now had the pleasure of seeing Kirtland's Warbler on its wintering grounds in the Bahamas. In late April 2008, I made my first visit to the island of Eleuthera in the Bahamas to scout the area for a Field Guides tour there. Eleuthera is one of just two islands in the archipelago where visitors can see Great Lizard-Cuckoo (*Coccyzus merlini*), though I must admit I had Kirtland's on my mind as well. I searched extensively throughout the island but didn't find a one. I suppose the late date of my trip may have had something to do with this. Kirtland's generally arrive on their breeding



grounds in mid-May, which would mean that many of them have probably left or are beginning to leave the islands by late April.

It was the following year in early April 2009 while leading the tour that I got my first look at a wintering Kirtland's Warbler. We had spent the previous day on Eleuthera tracking down the Great Lizard-Cuckoo, eventually finding several individuals around our hotel grounds on the north end of the island near Gregory Town. These oversized *Coccyzus* cuckoos spend much of the day in the shadows of tall coppice hunting *Anolis* lizards. Occasionally they like to come out and sun themselves. They also make amazing cackling or growling sounds. However, on this day I knew I needed to find some good low scrub or coppice if we

had any chance of locating a Kirtland's, our remaining target bird. We set out and after driving several kilometers south of Governor's Harbour, I eased the van over to the right shoulder at a spot where the habitat looked good—a mix of low open scrub with visible bare ground between bushes. No sooner had we gotten out of the van than we began hearing a rich call note, *tsip!*, coming from the vegetation. All of a sudden, a bird popped up in front of us in the closest small scrub. A little surprised, I remember saying to the group, "Hey guys, that's a Kirtland's Warbler!"

We ended up finding a total of five Kirtland's that day at two different sites. In April 2010 our tour group found another female. That totals six sightings of Kirtland's in two years. Not bad, I believe, considering the paucity of records on the wintering grounds. All our sightings were of unbanded birds and most appeared to be females or first-year birds. It is surprising to me that we didn't find any males, but maybe males prefer a slightly different habitat type or maybe we just missed them. Adult male warblers typically leave the wintering grounds before females, but early April is still probably too early for migration of either sex.

It is exciting when tour leading and science can mix. I know our participants enjoy being a part of something that is not well studied—a feeling that every little photo or written note is helping us to learn a bit more about a species, in this case the Kirtland's Warbler.



At left, a few resident friends that Kirtland's Warblers get to see in winter: the rose-throated Bahama Parrot (likely to be split from Cuban), a glowing male Bahama Yellowthroat, and the dark-eyed Thicket-billed Vireo [Photos by guide Jesse Fagan]

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So, what's going on at fieldguides.com? Well, there are lots of mouthwatering photographs taken by our guides or sent to us by tour participants to whet your appetite (we hope) for travel with Field Guides both near and far. And there are new tour slideshows put together by our guides, one of the latest being Dan Lane's from his recent **Mountains of Manu, Peru** tour.

There are weekly Birding Wrap-ups that report on some of the fascinating places we've visited in the last couple of months, and there are also back copies of our monthly e-mailings—and, by the way, if you don't already receive it and would like to, let us know and we'll put you on the e-mail list—as well as listings of recently posted itineraries and triplists, all downloadable from our website.

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# What's this?

The difference between night and day, of course!



Blue-headed Pitta, Borneo, asleep and awake

What is that ball of feathers above, you might have wondered, had you come across it on an evening walk in Borneo, as did guide Rose Ann Rowlett and group. Find out more about this fun sighting and other gee-whizzes from Field Guides tours in a great, new online slideshow of 30 images from around the world titled "Discoveries & Sightings." To view it, visit:

[www.fieldguides.com/discover](http://www.fieldguides.com/discover)

## Spring Fling *Continued from page 1*

species; Hawaii, because I desperately need an Iiwi; Ghana, where my lifer Rockfowl awaits in a cave; Bhutan (some of those pheasants look amazing); and several other personal wanna-dos. But I know there's space for me on some early spring tours. So here goes.

### Spring Fling I: Northern South America

As one option, I'd begin in **Suriname** on March 4 with Bret and Dan, and I'd especially want to see Guianan Cock-of-the-rock (freakishly amazing birds), Capuchinbird (which sounds like a distant chainsaw to me [you know, the Maine woods perspective] and a mooing cow to others), and Gray-winged Trumpeters (how great a bird name is trumpeter!). Then I'd fly to Bogota on March 19 and join Richard for the **Colombia: Santa Marta Escape** trip because, well, I would just get a pile of endemic lifers (all kinds of Santa Marta this-and-thats...hmmm, the antpitta would be especially nice) and, besides, I've never been allowed off the plane in Bogota when passing through (I *need* that country). I'd fly home near the end of the month with crowded memories of many hundreds of very cool birds (and, from Suriname, perhaps some sakis, spiders, and howlers, too—monkeys, that is!). Heck, I might even head back out on April 9 after a little break to **Belize** for a week-plus of turkeys (of the Ocellated sort), motmots (Keel-billed, anyone?), manakins, Mayan ruins, and one of my faves, Great Curassow (that female is a head-turner—and head-curler).

### Spring Fling II: Island Fever

I can't get visions of a warm beach and rustling palm trees out of my head right now (they're brought on by stove-stoking, apparently, or an attempt to block out sugar plums), so for my second option I'm heading offshore. First, I'm booking a March 21 flight to join Jesse (the "Motmot") in the **Bahamas** for his Birds & Butterflies jaunt. What do I most want to see, Mot man? A Great Lizard-Cuckoo, because...well, I just love cuckoos, and lizard-cuckoos are a key treatment for cucuphilia (and there'll be several more L-Cs to come on this spring fling!). Then I'm going to continue with the Motmot on a quick island-hop over to the **Dominican Republic** on March 26. Jesse tells me one of the first endemics we'll see is Palmchats with their bizarre communal stick-nests, and (bonus!) they're in their own bird family. But I really want to see those *two* endemic (darling) todies, and of course, it's big cuckoo heaven here—not one but *two* endemics in the DR, Bay-breasted and Hispaniolan! I'm going to take my final dose of island therapy by continuing on to **Puerto Rico** on April 2, where no doubt I'll find George raring to go out in search of Yellow-shouldered Blackbird, lovely little Adelaide's Warblers, the elegant Puerto Rican Woodpecker, and...what else? Oh, you are *sooooo* good, how'd you guess? *Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo!!!* I'm in heaven. Beam me back home, Scotty. Therapy completed, I'll be fully recovered from those winter blues.

# THE RICH PERKS OF BIRDING COLOMBIA

*Continued from page 1*

complications of coffee: One of the world's chemically most complex flavors grows superbly well on the slopes of the Andes and is an important component of Colombia's economy, but it is the cause of much deforestation, particularly for the increasingly favored monoculture of "sun coffee" (as opposed to shade coffee, grown under a sparse canopy of trees that do support some birds) (coffee is only partly the villain; did it not exist, some other monoculture or pasture would often be in its place).

Colombia's birds are not wasted on me. Birding the reserves and parks scattered among the many fincas and ranches provides all the stimuli any birder needs. Several recently discovered species are present, such as Parker's Antbird, Stiles's Tapaculo, Chestnut-capped Piha, and, with some luck, Choco Vireo. Many endemics are possible (making for an outstanding collection in conjunction with our other two-week tour, **Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta**), including some that are decaf in appearance, such as Grayish Piculet and Brown-banded Antpitta. It is also a highly-threatened avifauna, but we stand a good chance of finding a number of threatened species, including the spectacular Yellow-eared Parrot, which is benefitting from nest box programs, and Cauca Guan, which is increasing with protection (and thrives in an abandoned ash plantation!).

Even better than the coffee are those families at their richest in the Andes: hummingbirds and tanagers, although I would not dare equate them with chocolate (Colombia grows some fine cacao, arguably not on a par with that of West Africa or Brazil, but good enough). With the hummingbirds we will be aided by some dynamite arrays of feeders, although we will pursue some



Above, the lovely Purlish-mantled Tanager, restricted to the western Andes of Colombia and NW Ecuador. At right, Cloud-forest Pygmy-Owl—one of the last things we guarantee is a pygmy-owl, because they can be reeeaaally difficult, as this one was for six hotshot birders who didn't notice it until our lodge manager, handling the horses, pointed it out, as close to us as when it was photographed! [Photos by guide Richard Webster]



species in the wild, such as Bearded Helmetcrest in the páramo of Los Nevados N.P. And the tanagers include, no surprise, some potential stimulus overloads, including Black-and-gold, Gold-ringed, Multicolored, and Purplish-mantled.

Our first two years of scouting and tours have gone well, and we expect the upward trend in Colombia to continue (as evidenced by the strong candidates in the recent presidential election). We have four offerings in the first quarter of next year, one that is full—**Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta** (January 15-31), one that is nearly full—**Colombia: Santa Marta Escape** (March 19-27), and the tour featured here—**The Cauca Valley, Western & Central Highlands** (January 15-31 and February 19-March 7) with spaces.

I am Richard Webster, and I approve this message, even the admission that I do not thrive on coffee.

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*Visit any of our Colombia pages on our website for a link to our informative overview, Colombia: Field Guides Tours.*

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## Birding Pipeline Road, Top to Bottom

*Continued from page 1*

forest canopy and subcanopy. Often Cinnamon Woodpeckers or Black-tailed Trogons are settled on exposed perches harmonizing their rhythms with that of the rising sun. Amazon parrots shallow-wing over the canopy, their loud, insistent calls interrupted periodically by perhaps a Plumbeous Hawk wailing from its exposed perch below. A pair of Green Shrike-Vireos may spend half an hour working over the fruits of a bare Gumbo-Limbo while a tail-slinging Bay-breasted Warbler reminds you how far away from your summer home you both are. Mid-morning, when it begins to heat up, one can cool down by repairing to the facilities at the Rainforest Discovery Center headquarters to enjoy coffee, a snack, and the Center's set of hummingbird feeders which are perhaps the best lowland feeders in Panama in terms of the number of diverse species attracted.

Second, birding along Pipeline Road offers the birder an excellent chance of experiencing the excitement of a raiding army ant swarm, one of the most remarkable phenomena of the American Tropics. With a lot of road to bird, one can make a rich transect of habitat, covering ground while listening attentively for the soft snarling and churring of Bicolored and Ocellated antbirds, both professional ant-followers that indicate the presence often of many other species, all taking advantage of the ants as they assiduously comb the leaf litter, the saplings and small trees for an astonishing array of

bioforms—from spiders to cockroaches to scorpions and skinks. The bill-snapping of antbirds and woodcreepers (and yes, with luck, that electrifying loud snapping of a *Neomorphus*!) capturing forms of protein that the ants are dispersing from their hiding places is a sensational show. One second to none...unless one favors the more aesthetic performance of a snappy assembly of lekking Golden-collared Manakins collectively displaying a few inches off the ground over their individual courts; or the individual fluting of a Pheasant Cuckoo virtually motionless on an exposed limb, its ample tail spread wide, its small bill pointing skyward.

Any way you like it, Pipeline's got what birders are after in lowland Panama. Staying only 10 minutes away in the comfortable Gamboa Rainforest Resort on Part I of my new **Panama's Fabulous Fortnight** tour (we visit Western Panama on Part II), we'll be there in plenty of time—with plenty of time—to maximize our chances of encountering the short list cited above, as well as experiencing the two most compelling features of Soberania National Park: canopy birding and ant swarm birding—birding from top to bottom!

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*Part I of John's Panama's Fabulous Fortnight, scheduled for February 18-24, will visit Central Panama and Pipeline Road. Part II, February 24-March 3, will travel to Chiriqui in Western Panama.*

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## BIRDING TOURS WORLDWIDE

### 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

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## Last Spaces

**Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge**  
 January 14-23 with Jay VanderGaast

**Mexico: Colima & Jalisco**  
 January 15-23 with Chris Benesh & Megan Crewe

**Yellowstone in Winter**  
 January 15-23 with Terry McEneaney

**Venezuela**  
 January 15-29 with John Coons

**Colombia: The Cauca Valley, Western & Central Andes**  
 January 15-31 with Richard Webster & local guide

**Thailand**  
 January 15-February 5 (Gurney's Pitta & Nicobar Pigeon Extension) with Dave Stejskal & Uthai Treesucon

**Northeast Brazil: Long Live the Lear's!**  
 January 16-February 5 with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua

**Northern India: Tiger, Birds & the Taj Mahal**  
 January 22-February 13 with Terry Stevenson

**Mexico: Oaxaca**  
 January 23-30 with Megan Crewe & Dan Lane

**Venezuela: Tepuis Endemics**  
 January 28-February 6 with Jay VanderGaast

**The Heart of Chile**  
 January 29-February 12 (Easter Island Extension) with Peter Burke



With 6 Brazil tours on his schedule for 2010 already and 9 more coming up in 2011, guide Marcelo Padua's been just a wee tad busy! Still, he took a few days out to join Rose Ann Rowlett and our group at Iguazu Falls ("big water") recently (sometimes it "mists" from all the water thundering by, but on this day there was actually a bit of drizzle, thus the umbrella and very stylish raingear!). The falls will be just one great stop of three on Marcelo's upcoming BRAZIL NUTSHELL tour, February 11-25 (Jay will co-lead). The other two sites? Famous Intervales Park in the Atlantic Forest and the northern Pantanal. And the birds? Galore!!

