



SPIRIT OF THE INCA

Dan Lane

Machu Picchu: One of the most visited cultural and archaeological sites in the western hemisphere! Anyone who visits Peru certainly should make an effort to see it—both for the opportunity to peek into the pre-Columbian history of the region and to take in the awesome vista that the site commands. It is simply breathtaking! But there are also some fine birds there, as well—no least of which is a rather local but not hard-to-find species of wren that makes its home in the Chusquea bamboo patches that are present on the slopes around the ruins: the aptly-named Inca Wren.

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At top, a view of the valley to the north of Machu Picchu. It's no wonder this site attracts millions of tourists per year! Above, perhaps the most iconic of birds to be seen at the world famous ruins of Machu Picchu, the Inca Wren. [Photos by guide Dan Lane]

Uganda: Shoebill, Rift Endemics & Gorillas

Phil Gregory

Uganda is one of my favorite tours, and for several reasons. It's a country that was long off-limits to visitors and birders, but thankfully over the past 20 years it has changed, and modern Uganda is a

bustling, thriving, enterprising place with a well-resourced tourist sector and friendly people. Ugandan parks are also far less crowded than the parks of some other East African countries, and in places like Bwindi with the gorilla tourism you can see just how important the tourist dollar has become to the local economy.

As ever, a burgeoning human population portends problems down the track, but at the moment everything seems to be holding together well. Murchison Falls has some beautiful lodges on the banks of the Victoria Nile where we can watch hippos

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On the lookout for the Shoebill—and success comes with the bird itself. Formerly known as Whalehead (still reflected in its genus, *Balaeniceps*), the giant Shoebill is the single species in its family. [Photos by guide Phil Gregory]



Memory & Memories

Jan Pierson

Birding at its best is both memory and memories—the first an accumulation of birding knowledge and familiarity through learning, the second a series of memorable experiences and their recollection. And by those definitions, I've had a good week.

On Sunday I walked Florida's Daytona Beach Shores (while at the Space Coast Birding Festival) with Chris and Alvaro amidst thousands of gulls of multiple species,

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GUIDELINES *with Mitch Lysinger*



At left, a Chestnut-crowned Antpitta at San Isidro; above, a Yellow-breasted at Angel Paz's. [Photos by guide Richard Webster & participant Don Faulkner]

Antpittaland

There are many of you who have visited Angel Paz's farm on Ecuador's West Slope since Mitch Lysinger first reported on it three years ago, so you already know what a great time it is. One of our recent groups there, for example, saw not just three species of antpitta well (who would have ever thought that antpittas could be so confiding?), but also such specialties as Toucan Barbet, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, and Orange-breasted Fruiteater. And in addition, following a morning of birding, Señora Paz served a hearty breakfast and, for a dollar, the Paz children washed our rubber boots.

*But we see antpittas elsewhere as well. There are two possible at San Isidro, White-bellied and Chestnut-crowned, and one of our 2010 tours, the aptly named **Jewels of Ecuador: Hummers, Tanagers & Antpittas**, which visits both slopes in the north of the country as well as the southern Ecuadorian Andes, had a total of 15 antpittas, with 10 seen and 5 heard only. A recent **Rainforest & Andes** tour which doesn't visit the south but does include Sacha Lodge, recorded 11 species of antpitta with 7 seen. On the **Southwestern Ecuador** tour there were a total of 10 antpittas, with 6 seen including the only recently discovered Jocotoco. And though it falls slightly behind Peru and Colombia in the number of species, it's hard to come up with a better place than Ecuador to see antpittas.*

I know there are plenty of folks out there who have birded the Neotropics at least once or twice and who are still dreaming of that first antpitta experience; on plenty of my trips, after an "antpitta victory," a participant or two will come up to me—jubilant—about this being their first! This is as much of a charge for me as it is for them, because it is such a special and traditionally difficult-to-find group, right?

Well, not anymore... at least not in the highlands of northern Ecuador. Who would have ever thought that these stealthiest of birds, capable of approaching to within a few feet (without revealing even a feather!) and then vanishing into the forest understory without even the faintest wiggle of a leaf, could be tamed with a little sweet talking and a few worms for bait? Have a look at Maria, the now well-known Giant Antpitta who turned the birding world on its ear when she decided to take a chance and trust a friendly and entrepreneurial campesino by the name of Angel Paz.

Angel once had other plans for his beautiful reserve on Ecuador's west slope—agriculture, valuable hard woods, etc.—but it didn't take long for him (being the quick study that he is) to realize, after chatting a bit with neighbors involved in the ecotourism world, that his land had a greater value and sustainable future. Angel set out on a quest that nobody else had ever thought of: earn the confidence of these almost mythical birds so that they would creep out of their dark haunts and birders and other nature buffs could see them in all of their splendor...right on the trail, and in many cases, too close to focus binoculars! It took some time, but Angel persisted, and within only a few months—not missing a day of hard effort—he had three of the most coveted antpitta species scurrying in



for their morning feeding sessions: Giant, Moustached, and Yellow-breasted. What a brilliant suit! Who would have ever believed that by his calling, "Maria, Maria, Maria!" or "Esmeralda, Esmeralda, Esmeralda!" these elusive bird-treasures would materialize in such an innocent and confiding fashion?

What a feat this is: the Giant Antpitta was only rediscovered in the early 90's after decades of essentially being 'lost.' Without knowledge of its voice, we knew even less of the Moustached—a few old specimens from Colombia were our only clue of its existence. And the Yellow-breasted was only recorded within Ecuador's borders in the 80's. While we now know that these three species are relatively common, seeing them satisfactorily has always been the challenge; I'd be willing to bet that many of you have stood patiently (and painfully) for long stints of playback, only to throw up your arms in exasperation after yet another "antpitta defeat." What all of this means from a birding standpoint is obvious: see some dandy antpittas with much less effort in a way that lessens the stress on the very creatures that we all hope to protect!

Conservationists consider this an opportunity to spark local interest in saving forests in a way never thought possible before. Of course, this momentum doesn't end with tossing worms to antpittas; many local folks here in Ecuador are catching on and grasping the idea that standing forests are worth more than cheap cash crops. This all means a growing and contagious awareness.

A heartening epilogue: My first visit to Angel's paradise was a couple of years ago with a few members of the Jocotoco Foundation—as a break after a few days of long meetings—and with my wife Carmen, of Cabañas San Isidro. After a spectacular show of antpittas, I remember one of the board members turning to me with a giggle and saying how here we were, all of us birding and conservation heavyweights, taking lessons from a man whom many would have written off years before. A little later, Carmen remarked, "We have been a bunch of fools. We can do this at San Isidro!" and so Carmen and I enlisted a keen young worker at San Isidro by the name of Marcelo to start this very same process. And wouldn't you know it? Now San Isidro has Chestnut-crowned and White-bellied antpittas doing just about the same thing within shouting distance of the dining room. I just wish we could convince that Peruvian Antpitta at San Isidro to do the same!

Dates for upcoming Ecuador tours on which antpittas may be seen include
ECUADOR: RAINFOREST & ANDES, March 6-20, 2011 & September 11-25, 2011
MONTANE ECUADOR, June 10-19, 2011 & July 29-August 7, 2011
AMAZONIAN ECUADOR: SACHA LODGE, July 1-10, 2011 & July 21-30, 2011
HOLIDAY AT SAN ISIDRO, November 19-28, 2011
JEWELS OF ECUADOR, January 21-February 7, 2012 and February 18-March 1, 2012
SOUTHWESTERN ECUADOR SPECIALTIES, January 7-21, 2012

We hope you'll plan to join us for one of these.

SPIRIT OF THE INCA

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There is an interesting story behind this wren, a species only described to science as recently as 1985. The ruins of Machu Picchu were officially brought to the attention of the world in 1911 when Hiram Bingham was first shown them by his local guide. Over the next two decades, the ruins were cleared of the dense montane vegetation that had grown over them, and as more of the ruins became visible, appreciation for them grew. The clearing of trees and shrubs at that time also created openings that allowed for dense patches of Chusquea bamboo to colonize them. By the 1960s, we know that the bamboo was thick enough for the wrens to be present within it at the edge of the ruins. Thus, in 1965, it was first reported by (who else?) John O'Neill and his advisor and then-curator of the LSU Museum of Natural Science, George Lowery. But it was nearly a decade before there were specimens from which to describe the bird. After another decade, during which O'Neill partnered up with another well known name of Neotropical ornithological legend, Ted Parker, the two published the description of this local and unique species. (Species descriptions are often quite time-



Another Peruvian endemic we'll hope to see, a Bearded Mountaineer showing us why he's called bearded. [Photo by guide Dan Lane]

consuming as it can take several years to assemble the evidence, conduct the comparisons, and write the paper.)

By the time the description was published, the bird was known from several sites in addition to the Machu Picchu ruins (including the humid slope of Abra Malaga), but the ruins remain the most convenient place to find the bird. And the species does not try to avoid detection; it belts out loud song duets that can be heard from the floor of the Urubamba Valley nearly 500 meters below the ruins! With a little coaxing, the birds can sometimes be seen within a few feet. The sharp details of the black streaks on the face, breast, and belly, and the rich rufous of the upperparts make them rather fetching.

If the possibility of seeing this lovely inhabitant of the Sacred Valley whets your appetite, we can oblige: our *Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga* tour visits the ruins where we'll make a point of seeing Inca Wren (as well as several other local specialties of the area!). So come along, won't you?

Dates are June 24-July 3 with Dan Lane and July 15-24 with Jesse Fagan.

Uganda: Shoebill, Rift Endemics & Gorillas

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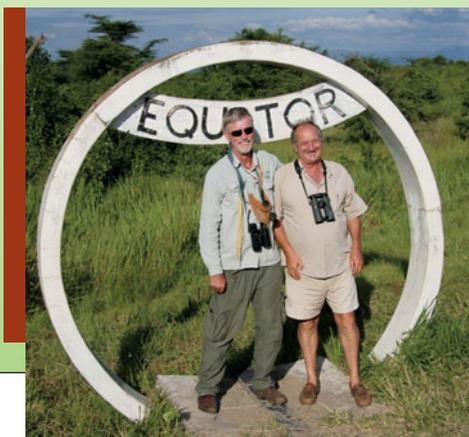
and crocodiles from the balcony, and those charismatic mammals like giraffes and elephants are still quite easy to see. The Falls themselves are pretty darn spectacular, too, with the entire Nile squeezing through a gap in the gorge that a foolhardy person could jump across. And there are some terrific birds around—Red-winged Gray Warbler, a very local and difficult species, is relatively easy here, and Rock Pratincoles hawk insects over the Falls. The drive in to the falls is great for savanna species, and there is a very good chance of seeing Shoebill in the papyrus swamps, along with Goliath Heron, Water Thick-knee, African Black Crake, Blue-headed Coucal, Papyrus Gonolek, and Red-throated Bee-eater.

In total contrast comes the evocatively named Bwindi-Impenetrable Forest, where the rare Mountain Gorillas are a major highlight—they are often found quite close to the luxurious camp areas. Here, also, a number of Albertine Rift Endemics are possible, species essentially found only in Rwanda otherwise—Purple-breasted Sunbird, the bizarre tesia-like Neumann's

Warbler, White-bellied Robin-Chat, and the rare Chapin's Flycatcher come to mind. At higher elevations around the new lodge at Ruhija we can make a wonderful trek down to Mubwindi Swamp, which lies in a depression amidst the Congo rainforest and is THE place to see Grauer's Broadbill, one of the great icons of African birding. The walk in is well worth the effort as we may also see Yellow-eyed Black Flycatcher and Grauer's Scrub-Warbler. A short trail to a local primary school usually turns up Ruwenzori Apalis, Ruwenzori Batis, Grauer's Warbler, Stripe-breasted Tit, and Strange Weaver. If only those kids were birders!

A final highlight is Lake Mburo, a park with open savanna thornscrub and the only populations of zebra and impala in Uganda; it's a fantastic place to see African Finfoot, White-backed Night Heron, and Pennant-winged Nightjar.

I hope you can join me soon for Shoebills, Mountain Gorillas, and more, *May 19-June 9.*



Guides Phil Gregory and Terry Stevenson together at Earth's middle. This Mountain Gorilla is one of a troop that visited our camp in the Bwindi-Impenetrable Forest on our 2010 tour, giving us a bonus encounter with these impressive animals. And happy kids near Kabale in Uganda's extreme southwest. [Photos by guide Phil Gregory]

FRESH FROM THE FIELD

MADAGASCAR

Jay VanderGaast

I was delighted to get back to Madagascar this fall for another visit, and I have to say it was a great return. Not only did our group see a lot of the special endemic birds, mammals, and reptiles that make the country such a unique place, but we also tried a couple of new things that worked out well. And to top it all off, this was the first time I've ever enjoyed pizza and ice cream in the country, so that was a real treat, too! Madagascar is definitely improving its tourism infrastructure!

The various endemic bird families are always among the most coveted on this tour and, as usual, they provided many of the highlights. One of our biggest thrills was excellent views of all five of the ground-rollers. Ranomafana gave us good looks at Pitta-like and Rufous-headed, Long-tailed was amazingly confiding at a nest burrow in the Ifaty spiny forest, and an adult Scaled with a recently fledged juvenile practically fell into our laps, leaving the ever-elusive Short-legged to give us the runaround again. But even that bird was easier than ever, and we had long, satisfying views of a pair after a short search!

In addition, two of the three mesites gave fabulous views, and three of four asities showed incredibly well, particularly that first Common Sunbird Asity perched at eye level a few yards away and that glowing male Velvet that we spotted, lighting up its fluorescent green facial skin! We also did extremely well on the remaining two families, getting good looks at all the possible members of the Malagasy Warblers and the newly expanded Vanga family. Memorable among these were those lovely Appert's Greenbuls



at Zombitse, a pretty cooperative pair of Yellow-browed Oxylabes at Vohiparara, a close pair of Red-shouldered Vangas in the coral rag scrub near Toliara, and that incredibly loud and attractive Red-tailed *Newtonia* at Andohahela. Nice birds all around.

A few other sightings will mark this trip for me, and I expect for many of our group as well. This was the first of my Madagascar tours to record Meller's Duck and only the second time we had Bernier's Teal! Both are rare species, and we had super looks. It was a banner year for Humblot's Herons, too, with no fewer than half a dozen seen well, including one near the road that snatched a drowned rat from a Great Egret that was about to swallow it! It was also a good trip for Reunion Harriers, and we had both forms. Other rare species also fell into place, from Madagascar Grebe to Madagascar Fish-Eagle to Madagascar Ibis, and we even had the time to boat down to Anakao for Littoral Rock-Thrush.

Toss in a few lemurs (at least 21 species by current taxonomy!), a trio of tenrecs (including an unidentified shrew-tenrec), and some neat herps (think loads of chameleons, geckos, egg-eating snakes...), and it was a successful tour from all perspectives.

Phil Gregory, who co-led the 2010 tour with Jay, returns for our 2011 tour, November 2-30, with a Seychelles Extension to December 5.

Classic highlights of a visit to Madagascar are many, but

certainly the ground-rollers, in a bird family endemic to the island, and the fantastic lemurs, likewise restricted, are among the top draws. Above, in images by guide Phil Gregory from our 2010 tour, are a Long-tailed Ground-Roller spotted by group in the spiny forest of the southwest, and a Diademed Sifaka (one of the larger species of lemurs) high in a rainforest tree at Mantadia. Read much more about this recent tour in guide Jay VanderGaast's notes at left.



Numerous things about Outback Australia seem out of the ordinary...and therein lies its great attraction! Certainly some of the species we encounter on outings for the nocturnal Plains-wanderer (right) might be a surprise. Would you believe nighttime shorebirding? Sure...with Inland Dotterel (above left) on the same evening. And the Outback will even throw in a Little Buttonquail (above right) on a night drive to keep us off balance! [Photos by guide Phil Gregory]





Scenes from our **Southern Argentina** tour: Top left, the trip favorite Magellanic Woodpecker (here a lovely recurve-crested female); lower left, a nuthatch-like White-throated Treerunner showing well at Tierra del Fuego National Park; and a bustling colony of “Imperial” Shags—mostly King’s with some Blue-eyed mixed in. [Photos by guide Chris Benesh]



“Large-tailed Antshrike” seems a boring name for a **Spectacular Southeast Brazil** highlight when the male is covered with bright silver dots and the female (left, top) with gold ones—we prefer to call it “Starry-night Antshrike,” for obvious reasons! At left: A male Plovercrest hummingbird at close range is always among the top birding moments on this tour. This is the purple-crested, southern subspecies *loddigesii*, soon to be split from the northern, emerald-crested *lalandi*. Above, looking out across the clouds as we head up Pico da Caledonia for Gray-winged Cotinga and more. [Photos by guide Marcelo Padua & participant Sam Febba]

FRESH FROM THE FIELD

KENYA SAFARI SPECTACULAR

Terry Stevenson

Our October 2010 Kenya Safari Spectacular tour had more than the usual strange weather—from far wetter than normal at Kakamega to exceptionally dry at the coast. As with all trips, you miss a few birds you normally expect to see, but you always also find the unexpected. Highlights from this tour included almost tame Jackson's Francolins on Mt. Kenya, spectacular flights of Lesser Flamingos against a blackening sky at Nakuru, 40 species of raptors, Crab Plovers at Mida Creek, Great Blue Turaco and Blue-headed Bee-eater at Kakamega, a flock of striking White Helmetshrikes at Kongelai, our best ever looks at the endangered "Taita" Thrush, and the uncommon Green-backed Twin-spot feeding right on the trail in Sokoke Forest. We also did really well with the big cats, seeing a mother Cheetah with babies at Samburu, Lions in three different reserves, and amazing looks at Leopard in Masai Mara.

For many, the highlight of a visit to Kenya is Masai Mara, and we flew there from Nairobi for a two-night stay. Traveling across the plains in an open-sided Landrover is indeed the best way to see game, and finding a Leopard only 5 minutes from the airstrip was a dream start to our visit. Thousands of Wildebeest just across the river were impressive, too, but so is just being out on the plains with a dramatic sky, the perfect acacia tree, and mixed species herds all around. New birds were also coming in at a steady pace, with Lappet-faced

Vulture, Wattle Lapwing, Small Buttonquail, Schalow's Turaco, Southern Ground-Hornbill, Greater Honeyguide, Rufous-necked Wryneck, Moustached Grass-Warbler, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, and Scarlet-chested Sunbird being just a few of the most memorable.

Upcoming tours, each limited to just six participants, are scheduled for June 24-July 22, 2011 and September 2-30, 2011. Both will be guided by Terry.

GUATEMALA THANKSGIVING: Temples Of Tikal, Antigua & Finca Las Nubes

Jesse Fagan

Sometimes the birds take a backseat to the experience of the trip. I say this only because it is hard to imagine a more memorable Thanksgiving than that we spent at Finca Las Nubes in Guatemala. We dined on moist turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce, and homemade pies, sipped local rum, and spent the evening in the company of good friends and family. The memorable non-birding experiences continued on this tour when we crossed Lake Atitlan by boat and flew to Tikal, where we star-gazed in the Grande Plaza between Temple I and II!

The birds, however, were great, as well! Highlights on the Pacific side included Hooded Grosbeak, Great Black-Hawk (a first for the Las Nubes site), Fulvous Owl, Black-capped Siskin, Pink-headed Warbler, and that little maestro who stole our hearts, the Wine-throated Hummingbird! At Tikal, we enjoyed an evening of owling with Black-and-white and Mottled owls, along with Yucatan Poorwill. Who doesn't enjoy nightbirding?! Orange-breasted Falcons were back on top, literally, at Temple 4. Then there was the Slaty-breasted Tinamou right on the edge of the road and the Ocellated Turkeys, like everywhere! Plus we had some great mixed-species flocks.

2011 dates are November 19-28 with Jesse.



If you love the sense of birding discovery somewhere few others have visited, then put **Brazil's Rio Roosevelt** tour on your must-do list...fantastic wilderness in relative comfort (river and cabanas shown here), lots of birds (some of them discovered by Bret Whitney and as yet "officially" undescribed—special bonus!), and we've even scheduled it as a holiday getaway. Bret recently wrapped up our 2010 Christmas tour and has another one planned for this December. [Photos by guide Bret Whitney]

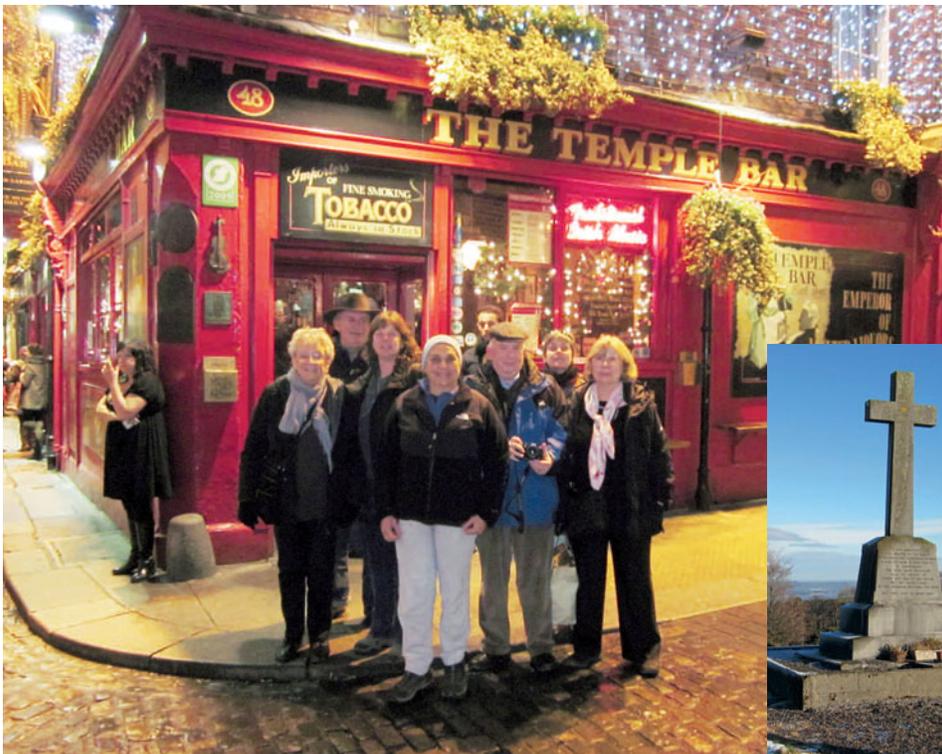


On our recent **Sri Lanka** tour, the cozy mass of Toque Macaques shown above seemed to be having a hard time waking up! We found them at first light, right near the entrance to Uda Wattakele Royal Park, in the city of Kandy. Elsewhere, a stop at a schoolyard fig tree was a highlight of one of our travel days—the tree was absolutely heaving with Crimson-fronted Barbets like this one, which swarmed over the branches in search of ripe fruits. [Photos by guide Megan Crewe]





Northwestern Argentina can be combined with our Southern Argentina trip (see page 5, top) for north to south birding coverage of this South American country. A brilliantly sunny morning greeted our group at Tafi del Valle (above), save for the low fog over the reservoir below town. This location yielded our first taste of Andean waterbirds such as Andean Gull, Andean Goose, Yellow-billed Teal, and a Wilson's Phalarope. Inset: It's a bird, it's a plane...nope, it's a Black-bodied Woodpecker, endemic to the region from north-central Argentina to southern Bolivia and central Paraguay! At right, Red-legged Seriema, one of the coolest grassland birds on the tour. [Photos by guides Dave Stejskal & Peter Burke]



As a longtime client said upon first hearing of our **Birding Plus Ireland** tour: "Birds, traditional music, and pubbing...that sounds just about perfect!" Guide Terry McEaney recently returned from our fourth such trip to the Emerald Isle with these pics: posing outside a pub in Dublin one evening; the monument in County Waterford to victims of the historic Irish (potato) famine; and a little group-dancing Irish style at a music session at Tossie's Cottage. *Sláinte!*



FRESH FROM THE FIELD

BRAZIL'S CRISTALINO JUNGLE LODGE

John Rowlett

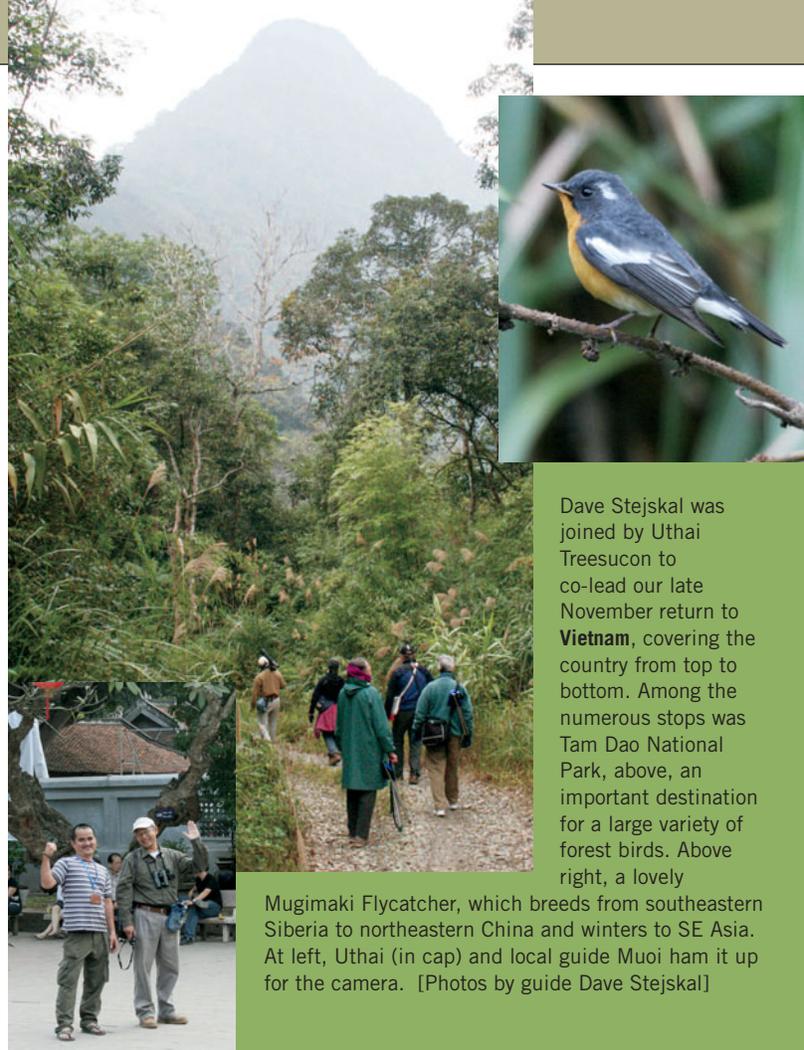
Ours was an awfully cool if unseasonably hot trip to the Cristalino Jungle Lodge. We did exceptionally well on all the “must-see” species, but surprisingly, we missed some expected species, none of which were singing during our very dry visit (and we found no raiding army antswarms). Well, compensation came in a sensational Bald Parrot, the second record for the area.

As unfavorable as the conditions appeared, we actually did remarkably well with the birds—and with mammals and snakes, the latter represented by an immature Amazonian Tree Boa and a beautiful, adult Red-tailed Boa, both lifers for all of us. Among the most exciting highlights were Snethlage’s Gnateater, Spotted Antpitta, and Musician Wren, all of which made the list of three favorite birds. This list of fancy species also included Black-girdled Barbet, Red-necked Aracari, Bald Parrot, Agami Heron, Razor-billed Curassow (seen numerous times along the river bank), Blue-cheeked Jacamar, Sunbittern, Red-headed Manakin, Red-necked and Cream-colored woodpeckers, and Green Ibis. Uncommented upon but nice to see so well was Cryptic Forest-Falcon (a pair below the tower, one of which we got in the scope). The most unsettling sighting was a Plum-throated Cotinga, a species not found (to my knowledge) east of the Madeira. I’ve certainly never seen it

on the Rio Cristalino before. The most tantalizing bird encountered but not seen was a ground-cuckoo species that was bill-clacking repeatedly close to the Cristalino’s edge. We heard it from the boat while floating the river, and we put in downriver in order to go ashore and walk toward the bird. Limited entry placed us on the bank so far from the bird that we could only approach to within about 50 meters. Alas, no response to playback.

Our pre- and post-Cristalino birding in the Chapada provided a pleasant change in landscape, temperature, and a plethora of species not found in southern Amazonia. Highlights in this scenic area included Chapada Flycatcher, Rufous-winged Antshrike, Rusty-backed Antwren, Blue-winged and Red-shouldered macaws, White-eared Puffbird, Curl-crested Jay, White-banded and White-rumped tanagers, and migrating Mississippi Kites!

Our 2011 tour is scheduled for October 3-14, again with John.



Dave Stejskal was joined by Uthai Treesucon to co-lead our late November return to Vietnam, covering the country from top to bottom. Among the numerous stops was Tam Dao National Park, above, an important destination for a large variety of forest birds. Above right, a lovely

Mugimaki Flycatcher, which breeds from southeastern Siberia to northeastern China and winters to SE Asia. At left, Uthai (in cap) and local guide Muoi ham it up for the camera. [Photos by guide Dave Stejskal]



One prescription for an abundance of birds in the US in November? Our Louisiana: Red Beans & Yellow Rails tour! We had two departures this past fall, with guides Dan Lane and John Coons, and here are just two scenes: a large flock of wintering White-faced Ibis and a Clapper Rail at East Jetty. And the Yellow Rails and others? Fantastic! [Photos by participants Charlotte & Bill Byers]



Above, a long-distance view from Abra Barro Negro—just a small sample of the vast and beautiful landscapes to take in along our **Northern Peru: Endemics Galore** tour route. While not distracted by the scenery, of course, our recent group turned its attention to some smaller gems: the incomparable Marvelous Spatuletail at far right, the endemic Rusty-crowned Tit-Spinetail, race *cajabambae*, foraging upside down (below left), and the not-so-small (and endangered) White-winged Guan, whose population in the wild stands at just 250 birds. [Photos by guide Richard Webster]



At left, a namesake of our **Uruguay: Birding the Land of the Gauchos** tour. Guide Alvaro Jaramillo brought home these pics from his second successful visit to this small South American country wedged between Brazil and Argentina. At near left, a Tropical Screech-Owl portrait, and at right the lovely and rare Saffron-cowled Blackbird. Who knew you could round out your list of SA countries with such great birding?



UPCOMING TOURS

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

April-May

Puerto Rico—April 2-8, 2011 with George Armistead & John Coons. 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 9-16, 2011 with Peter Burke. 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.

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 McEneaney & 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 14-21, 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.

June-July

Virginias' 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 I—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 II—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 McEneaney & 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.

Montane Ecuador I & II—June 10-19, 2011 with Mitch Lysinger & July 29-August 7, 2011 with Rose Ann Rowlett. Small-group tour for superb Andean subtropical birding on both East and West slopes.

Rainforest & Savanna: Alta Floresta & the Northern Pantanal, Brazil—June 17-July 3, 2011 with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. A two-week-

long birding tour in pristine rainforest on the beautiful Rio Cristalino combined with the wilds of the Pantanal in search of Hyacinth Macaw, Harpy Eagle, Jabiru, Jaguar, and a large piece of the meaning of life.

Galapagos I, II & III—June 18-28, 2011 with Jay VanderGaast; July 9-19, 2011 with Megan Crewe; & August 6-16, 2011 with George Armistead. A must for any interested naturalist and birder in search of a fascinating set of endemics; small-group birding tour with broad coverage of the islands with plenty of time for the birds, exploring, and photography.

Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga, Peru I & II—June 24-July 3, 2011 with Dan Lane & July 15-24, 2011 with Jesse Fagan. Our birding tour to southern Peru's East-slope; temperate birding at its best, featuring lots of endemics and scenic Andean puna; also Machu Picchu and great subtropical birding on and near lovely hotel grounds.

Kenya Safari Spectacular I—June 24-July 22, 2011 with Terry Stevenson. Unsurpassed in its combined wealth of bird life and mammal spectacle; includes the coast. Time-saving internal flights.

Papua New Guinea I & II—June 26-July 18, 2011 with Phil Gregory & July 10-August 1, 2011 with Jay VanderGaast. Birds-of-paradise and bowerbirds are the crowning jewels of one of the most remarkable bird faunas, set against a fascinating cultural backdrop far removed from our own.

Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge III & IV—July 1-10, 2011 with Mitch Lysinger & July 21-30, 2011 with Dave Stejskal. One-site birding tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere.

Newfoundland & Nova Scotia—July 1-11, 2011 with Chris Benesh. A birding tour for boreal specialties, seabird colonies, and numerous breeding landbirds in the beautiful Canadian Maritimes.

Manu Wildlife Center, Peru I—July 2-14, 2011 with Dan Lane. One-site birding tour to the most species-rich rainforest on Earth. Macaw lick, canopy tower, tapir wallow, and wonderful trails through Amazonian lowlands of Manu Biosphere Reserve.

Peru's Magnetic North: Spatuletails, Owllet Lodge & More—July 13-24, 2011 with John Rowlett. A 12-day birding tour for a taste of northern Peru's east-slope Andes, designed for birders with little vacation time and hence unable to take our longer, more diverse NORTHERN PERU tour—or for those who, having delighted in that tour, long for a San Martin reprise!

Jaguar Spotting: Pantanal & Garden of the Amazon—July 23-August 3, 2011 with Marcelo Padua. This short but action-packed Brazil tour features the Pantanal at its best, a nice taste of southern Amazonian birds, and excellent chances of seeing a Jaguar.

Mountains of Manu, Peru—July 23-August 7, 2011 with Dan Lane. Our in-depth birding tour transect of the higher-elevation half of the Manu Biosphere Reserve.

Arizona's Second Spring I & II—July 30-August 8, 2011 with John Coons & August 6-15, 2011 with Chris Benesh. An ideal time for visiting one of the best birding regions in North America: great for local specialties and Mexican vagrants.

Summer Costa Rica—July 30-August 14, 2011 with Megan Crewe & local guide. Our "green-season" birding tour for Costa Rica's numerous specialty birds, from Resplendent Quetzals and Three-wattled Bellbirds to Scarlet Macaws; beautiful landscapes with easy travel, good facilities, and welcoming people; a wealth of other interesting natural history.

August-September

Carajas: Lower Amazonian Brazil—September 1-10, 2011 with Marcelo Padua. A birding tour to a huge, remote forest reserve with excellent Amazonian forest access, lots of specialty birds, some unbelievably big dump trucks, and a fine hotel.

France: Camargue & Pyrenees—September 2-12, 2011 with Megan Crewe & Jesse Fagan. Two of Europe's finest birding destinations combined in this wonderful nine-day birding tour, with varied highlights and some great French food.

Kenya Safari Spectacular II—September 2-30, 2011 with Terry Stevenson. Unsurpassed in its combined wealth of bird life and mammal spectacle; includes the coast. Time-saving internal flights.

Sierra of California: Seabirds to Sierra—September 3-12, 2011 with Chris Benesh. A wonderfully diverse birding tour with a mix of West Coast specialties, montane species, and pelagics in rugged and scenic sites.

New Caledonia, Fiji & Vanuatu—September 6-23, 2011 with Phil Gregory. Island endemics and tropical Pacific specialties abound on this tour to three highlight destinations.

Morocco—September 9-26, 2011 with George Armistead & Dave Stejskal. Birding tour for endemic, rare, and specialty birds from coastal wetlands and towering cliffs to the Atlas Mountains and the northwest corner of the Sahara.

Rio Negro Paradise: Manaus, Brazil—September 10-23, 2011 with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. Birding tour to the rainforests and rivers of the mighty Amazon and Rio Negro in an unforgettable mix of forest hikes and live-aboard luxury.

Bolivia's Avian Riches—September 10-25, 2011 (Blue-throated Macaw & More Extension) with Dan Lane & Jay VanderGaast. Comprehensive survey birding tour of the special bird life of the Bolivian Andes; wonderful mountain scenery.

Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes III—September 11-25, 2011 with Mitch Lysinger. 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.

Australia—September 23-October 13, 2011 (Pelagics Pre-trip & Tasmania Extension) (Part I) with John Coons & October 11-26 (Part II) with Chris Benesh & Jay VanderGaast. Our Australia birding tour is split into two parts for those with limited time. Part I will cover the environs of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, southwest Australia, and Alice Springs. Part II will begin in Darwin and continue to Queensland (Cairns, Atherton Tableland, Outback Queensland, and O'Reilly's Guest House). Both parts combine for a complete birding tour of Australia.

Serra dos Tucanos, Brazil—September 24-October 4, 2011 with John Rowlett. A short but rich birding tour immersion in the avifauna of the Atlantic Forest, based at one lovely site near Rio.

JUST ADDED TO OUR SCHEDULE...

THE NORWEGIAN ARCTIC

Spitsbergen & the Svalbard Archipelago Cruise

*A high-arctic adventure aboard a comfortable vessel for fantastic seabirds, marine mammals, Polar Bear, and fabulous scenery.
June 27-July 9 with John Coons.*

With its rugged mountains, sweeping tundra, and enormous ice-caps, Spitsbergen embodies the high Arctic. The largest island in the Svalberg Archipelago—part of Norway to its south—the island lies just 600 miles from the North Pole.

Beginning in the capital of Longyearbyen, we'll sail around the north end of the island aboard the 50-passenger *M/V Plancius*. The ship was recently refurbished (2008) for expedition travel and is comfortable, eminently practical, and perfectly designed for smooth cruising in Arctic waters.

Known as a region that is uncompromising to those species that inhabit it, the Arctic is one of the most beautiful and yet least birded areas of the world. The list of birds occurring in the far North is small when compared to tropical reaches, but the quality of the species is great. The magnificent bird cliffs along the Spitsbergen coast are a breeding ground for tens of thousands of Black Guillemots and Thick-billed Murres, with Atlantic Puffins, Dovekies, Northern Fulmars, and Black-legged Kittiwakes also in abundance on or around the cliffs. On the flowering tundra, Arctic Terns, Common Ringed

Plovers, Purple Sandpipers, and Great Skua and all three species of jaeger thrive alongside nesting shorebirds and a species that's making a comeback, the White-tailed Eagle. And then there are those elusive gulls—Ross's, Sabine's, and the ghostly Ivory, a bird so dependent on ice-covered environs it seems to have mystical qualities.

Spitsbergen's coastal waters support several seal species including Bearded and Ringed, and the small Beluga, or white whale, as well as Minke and Fin whales are frequently seen. Walrus can be found lounging on the ice-floes and on the beaches, and the lush tundra is home to the indigenous Svalbard Reindeer and Arctic Fox. And, with 20 percent of the world's Polar Bear population, there is also an excellent chance of encountering this most engaging of mammals, one that is also among the largest carnivores in the world.

The tour itinerary is ready so call our office or check our web site (<http://www.fieldguides.com/bird-tours/spitsbergen>) where you can download a copy.



Just a small sample from our Spitsbergen cruise. The Atlantic Walrus seen here might weigh up to 3500 pounds, though it has been known to be the prey of the smaller (1000-1500 pounds) Polar Bear. At center, an Ivory Gull, one of the rarest of gulls, showing its completely white plumage. Our ship from the air. [Photos by Rinie van Meurs, Rob Tully & Oceanwide Expeditions]

Memory & Memories

Continued from page 1

recommitting to memory the range of variation on a theme that each presented; the sheer variety was wondrous. On Tuesday I stood washing dishes in my Maine kitchen when a whirl of 20 Common Redpolls magically appeared at our window feeder—for the first time in ten years. On Thursday an image from our recent Antarctic cruise whisked me back twenty years to blue icebergs, petrels wheeling in the sky, and the waft of penguin guano. It felt like a wonderfully analog week in a digital world.

We can't (perhaps fortunately!) provide the olfactory component of birding penguin colonies or salt air in this issue of our newsletter, yet we hope it proves informative to all and brings back great memories to those of you who have traveled with us. We look forward to watching birds with you soon!



Guide George Armistead photographed these Cape Petrels wheeling in front of a blue iceberg on our recent Antarctica cruise.

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BIRDING TOURS WORLDWIDE

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MAY BIRDING IN ARIZONA AWAITS!

Arizona: Birding the Border (May 13-22 and May 21-30)

Arizona Nightbirds & More (May 5-9 and May 12-16)

LAST SPACES

Suriname: Wild & Wonderful

March 4-19 with Bret Whitney & Dan Lane (1 space)

Bahamas: Birds & Butterflies

March 21-26 with Jesse Fagan (1 space)

Dominican Republic

March 26-April 2 with Jesse Fagan (1 space)

Spring in South Texas

March 26-April 3 with Chris Benesh

Puerto Rico

April 2-8 with George Armistead & John Coons

Namibia & Botswana

April 5-24 with Terry Stevenson (1 space)

Belize: Birds, Banding & Mayan Ruins

April 9-16 with Peter Burke

Texas Coast Migration Spectacle II

April 23-29 with John Coons

Texas's Big Bend & Hill Country

April 23-May 2 with Chris Benesh (1 space)

Texas Hill Country

April 25-30 with John Rowlett

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Spotted Owl, photographed by guide Dave Stejskal.