



## Alaska's Nesting Seabirds

Megan Crewe

When it comes to bird spectacles, the bustling breeding cliffs of Northern Hemisphere seabirds are in a class of their own. And my favorite such cliff is on the Pribilofs on Saint Paul Island—a tiny flyspeck of land in the middle of the vast Bering Sea. It's one of the first places we visit on our Alaska tour, and the combination of frenetic activity and arm's-length birding makes for a truly unforgettable experience.

The rocky headland of Ridge Wall juts out into the cold sea like the prow of a very tall ship. We leave the warmth of the bus and walk a narrow track toward the water, weaving through colorful patches of emerging Arctic wildflowers. Ahead of us, birds stream back and forth along the edge of the cliff, wings churning. As we reach the headland, the scene expands.

All around us, birds flash like flakes in a giant snow globe. Hundreds more dot the surface of the water below. Even when they dive, we can still see them, "flying" through the clear green water in pursuit of prey. A cacophony of sound rises from the colony: the onomatopoeic "kittiwake" of Black-legged Kittiwakes, the high, excited trills of Least Auklets, the throaty, nasal laughter of murres, and the occasional sputtering roar of a distant Northern Fur Seal. The fishy smell of guano hangs heavy in the air. "Smells like birds," someone quips.

*Continued on page 10*



The fabulous Ridge Wall on St. Paul Island allows birders to get up close and personal with a great variety of nesting seabirds, such as the Thick-billed and Common murres to the right. (Photos by guide Megan Crewe)



## NORTHERN PERU *The Long and the Short of It*

John Rowlett

Yes, Field Guides offers an extraordinary tour across northern Peru that is no doubt already high on your shortlist of must-do-before-you-die tours. Yes, we have been offering our "Endemics Galore" tour annually since the last century, so we are no first-timers pleasurably leading you astray. Yes, and nobody does it with more experience, expertise, and enthusiasm than Richard Webster and Rose Ann Rowlett. Yes..., I could go on, but the long and the short of it is that for

*Continued on page 11*

As our two fine tours this year showed, the once mythical Long-whiskered Owl is now a very real (though definitely not guaranteed!) possibility. (Photo by guide Richard Webster)

## Recent words from you

Jan Pierson

*Thanks for sending these and all the others!*

*"Every minute was great. Best features were hard to pick: great places, great birds, mammals, great guide in Chris Benesh, great people."* D.F., Australia 2011

*"Thanks so much to guides Dave Stejskal and Willy Perez for making this 'a trip of a lifetime' to always be remembered up there in the 'top 10.'"* C.&R.S., Ecuador 2011

*"A great tour start to finish! Guides Dan Lane and Jesse Fagan were terrific."* S.P., Louisiana 2011

*"I have been with Field Guides many times—always an excellent tour and heads above other tours."* N.D., Cape May 2011

*Good birding and safe travels from all of us at Field Guides!*

# Travels in Asia

with Dave Stejskal

**E**ver since the late nineties, when during the first three months of the year I began flying to the west out of LAX across the Pacific instead of to the south out of Miami and across the Caribbean to South America, I've grown to appreciate more and more the complex and stunning avifauna of southern Asia. Most of those flights across the Pacific were to lovely Thailand, but they were soon followed by regular visits to nearby Vietnam and Malaysia/Borneo, and then to the diverse archipelago of the Philippines. For me, antbirds at that season were replaced by babblers, toucans by hornbills, motmots by bee-eaters. It was quite a change, but one that I've thoroughly embraced and grown to love. I still get to show off those Neotropical lovelies to clients at other times of the year when I guide tours to Ecuador, Argentina, and other Neotropical destinations—I'll never be able to give up my antbirds, toucans, and motmots entirely!

Since my first visit to Asia, Field Guides has offered more and more tours there, many of which I've been lucky enough to guide, and I've predictably started hearing an obvious question from clients: Where the heck do you start? A tough question indeed.

The right answer really depends on what you want to get out of birding in Asia. If you want just to sample it once and never return, I'd have to recommend Thailand. A fun, comfortable tour with a particularly outstanding ground crew, a co-leader second to none, fantastic food, and loads of birds just about everywhere with representatives of nearly every Southeast Asian bird family that you could think of make this one, in my view, the obvious choice for the one-time Asia birding holiday.



But, if you take that one Thailand trip, you're guaranteed to come back for more! Want the quintessential Himalayan experience? Jump on board for Bhutan. Got a hankering for Bengal Tiger, the incomparable Taj Mahal, a rich culture, and a boatload of birds and mammals, try Northern India. Are you looking for a trip that's a bit more demanding physically but full of riveting endemics? Try the Philippines or our Borneo tour. And don't forget Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Japan, Southern India, Cambodia—they've all got great birds, are a heck of a lot of fun, and are all culturally fascinating. Odds are that you'll never be able to take just one and that you, like me, will fall in love with this incredible region of our diverse planet!

*Our Field Guides Asia tours for 2012 include:*

*Bhutan, April 6-27*

*Cambodia, February 18-March 1*

*Northern India: Tiger, Birds & the Taj Mahal, January 21-February 12*

*Southern India: Western Ghats Endemics, November 11-December 2*

*Winter Japan: Dancing Cranes & Spectacular Sea-Eagles, February 3-18*

*Borneo, March 15-April 1 and June 7-24*

*Sri Lanka, October 26-November 12*

*Thailand, January 14-February 4*

*Vietnam, November 17-December 8*

*Call our office or visit our web site for complete details including tour itineraries.*



Asia has a huge variety of birds to offer, so how do you choose where to go? Will it be (clockwise from top left): Hoary-throated Barwing in Bhutan, Banded Kingfisher in Thailand, Ceylon Magpie in Sri Lanka, or Green-tailed Sunbird in Vietnam? Or do you opt for southern India to experience elephant-back birding? Decisions, decisions! (Photos by guides Richard Webster, Dave Stejskal & Mike Crewe, and participant Margaret Hartman)

# FRESH FROM THE FIELD

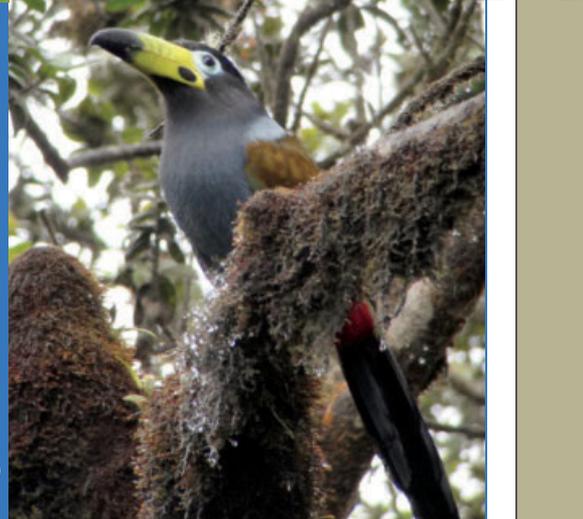


This year's **Safari Brazil: The Pantanal & More** tour offered up some wonderful photographic opportunities alongside some great birding. Clockwise from left: two endemic species of tanagers, Brassy-breasted and Gilt-edged, adorn a tree like so many brilliant Christmas ornaments; a group of Guira Cuckoos tries to occupy as little space as possible; a handsome Green-barred Woodpecker strikes a pose. (Photos by participants Bob Sprague & Amy Levensgood)

On the first half of our two-part **Australia** tour, guide Jesse Fagan snapped this picture of co-leader John Coons demonstrating the "Magnum Method" for beating the heat at Alice Springs (we'll take any excuse for having some ice cream!). Jesse also digitally captured the two beauties below, the southwestern endemic Red-eared Firetail and a splendid male Variegated Fairywren (not to be confused with a superb male Splendid Fairywren also seen on this tour!).



With two species of endemic macaws, Bolivia is a must for parrot fans. This year's **Bolivia's Avian Riches** tour tallied both endemic macaws, including the above pair of rare Blue-throats. Amethyst-throated Sunangel, above left, and an eleventh-hour Hooded Mountain-Toucan, right, the final new bird of the trip, were also among the nearly 500 species recorded on this tour. (Photos by guide Dan Lane)



# FRESH FROM THE FIELD

When a bird takes top billing in a tour name, one hopes for a great performance from that species, and that's exactly what occurred on this year's **Louisiana: Yellow Rails & Crawfish Tails** tour. The group scanned plenty of rice fields (photo above right by guide Dan Lane) and saw somewhere around 60 Yellow Rails, but the one at right was a real show-off, judging from guide Jesse Fagan's super photo! Not to be outdone, a much sought-after Bachman's Sparrow also posed for Jesse's camera. At press time, there was no word as to whether the crawfish tails were as easily found, though one would assume so.



It looks like guide Jesse Fagan and his group had a lot to be thankful for on the November **Guatemala Thanksgiving** tour. Clockwise from upper left, an iridescent male Rufous-tailed Jacamar, a wonderful female Pale-billed Woodpecker, and a cuddly-looking White-whiskered Puffbird were just three of the many beautiful tropical species encountered on the trip. And that's not even mentioning the incredible ruins at Tikal or the wonderful old colonial architecture of Antigua city. (Photos by guide Jesse Fagan)



Our **France: Camargue & Pyrenees** tour has been a popular autumn offering for several years now, and it's not hard to figure out why. In addition to the cultural appeal of France (not to mention the food and wine!) there are some great birds to be found, including the Whinchat and the Greater Flamingo at left. Below the birds is a panorama of the Crau Steppe, home to some of Europe's rarest grassland birds, including Little Bustard and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. (Photos by guide Jesse Fagan)

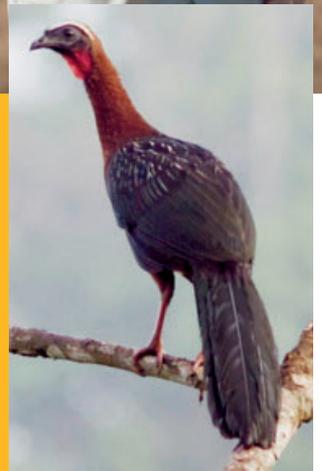


Looking for birding bang for your buck? Then it's hard to beat the **Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes** tour, which averages close to 600 species of birds in a two-week period! Dave Stejskal led our 4<sup>th</sup> and final 2011 offering in September and came back with these images. Clockwise from upper left: a stunning male Orange-breasted Fruiteater, once a tough bird, but now found regularly on the West Slope; a female White-necked Jacobin on her nest in the eastern lowlands; a Glossy Flowerpiercer ready to pounce on an unsuspecting blossom in the highlands at Yanacocha.

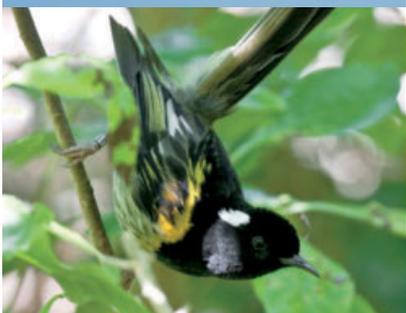




Carajas may be the site of one of the world's largest iron-ore mines, but it is also the destination for some wonderful birding as our group found out on the recent **Carajas: Lower Amazonian Brazil** tour. Guide Marcelo Padua dug out some prized avian nuggets on the trip, including the great Rufous-capped Antthrush, left, and White-crested Guan at right. If the smiles on the participants' faces are anything to go by, this was a highly successful and enjoyable (bird-)mining operation. (Photos by guide Marcelo Padua)



George Armistead guided our recent **New Zealand** tour with "Kiwi" guide Andrew Crossland to accolades and great results. Among them were, at left, a long-winged Australasian Gannet gliding effortlessly across a cloudless sky; a male Stitchbird, center, one of the many New Zealand species that are making a comeback on predator-free islands; and a handsome Tui, or Parsonbird, at bottom, one of the few endemic Passerines that is still widespread and common on the main islands. (Photos by guide George Armistead)



It's hard to beat a birding safari to east Africa, as evidenced by the great pics that participants David and Judy Smith returned with from our recent **Kenya Safari Spectacular** tour. Clockwise from lower left: a stunning male Northern Red Bishop in all of its breeding-plumaged glory; a trio of feisty Red-and-yellow Barbets laying claim to a termite mound; a pair of range-restricted Sokoke Scops-Owls seeming nonplussed at the appearance of our group in their roosting thicket.

# FRESH FROM THE FIELD



Cruising along Brazil's Rio Negro sounds like a wonderful way to spend a week, and even better when star Brazil guides Bret Whitney and Marcelo Padua are leading the way. Our group had a memorable time on this year's *Rio Negro Paradise: Manaus* trip, plying the river and enjoying such brilliant birds as the Black-spotted Barbet and Cream-colored Woodpeckers pictured at left. Bret and Marcelo will be teaming up again in 2012, so book early if you don't want to miss the boat! (Photos by guide Marcelo Padua)



Guides Marcelo Padua and Bret Whitney also teamed up for both parts of our two-part *Spectacular Southeastern Brazil* tour. Loaded with endemics (roughly 170!), this corner of Brazil has more than its fair share of beautiful, exciting birds. Just check out these images Marcelo snapped on this year's tour: is it really fair that any one country can claim Crescent-chested Puffbird (above left), Frilled Coquette, and Brassy-breasted Tanager as its own? Maybe not, but there's just one thing to do: head down there yourself (again with Bret and Marcelo in 2012).



Though Argentina wasn't on our advertised schedule of tours this year, we did run a private group tour to *Southern Argentina* with Dave Stejskal at the helm. Dave's group had a wonderful time birding the vast Pampas grasslands in the Buenos Aires region right on down to Ushuaia at the southern tip of the continent, picking up a bevy of gorgeous birds en route. From top left, a Narrow-billed Woodcreeper probes a trunk for edible treats; a Black-faced Ibis strolls the rocky coastline at Ushuaia; a Green-barred Woodpecker keeps a wary eye on the group of bipedal creatures below. Argentina, both north and south, is returning to our schedule in 2012! (Photos by guide Dave Stejskal)



Canasteros may be found on any of our Andean tours, a sampling of which includes:

Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga, Peru

Peru's Magnetic North: Spatuletails, Owlet Lodge & More

Montane Ecuador: Cloudforests of the Andes

Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes

The Heart of Chile

Bolivia's Avian Riches

Northwestern Argentina: The Chaco, Cordoba & Northern Andes



# The Colorful Canasteros...Huh?

Jesse Fagan

I like canasteros. I like canasteros a lot. There are only five people in the world who like canasteros more than I do, and they ain't admitting it. However, I have decided to break with the status quo (don't voluntarily humiliate yourself in public) and admit my infatuation with these long wiry-tailed brown jobbies that live in brown places and probably eat brown things. Canasteros, to put it in terms my mom would understand, are neat. To put it in terms my brother would understand, canasteros are gettin' jiggy with it.

The Spanish word *canastero* means simply "basket-maker." Canasteros make baskets, sort of. Their nests, which are made of fine grasses or small twigs, resemble baskets. Canasteros belong in the family Furnariidae, and are classified in one of two genera: *Asthenes* and *Pseudasthenes*. The genus *Asthenes* also includes Itatiaia Spinetail and 8 species of thistletail, which are, for all intents and purposes, also canasteros.

If you read a description of the habitat or location of canasteros, you will find a repetition of the words "arid" and "Andes." So, though technically many canasteros are found well within the New World tropics, you may be wearing a warm jacket when you see one; there could be snow on the ground and quite possibly no trees in sight. If you read about their songs (if you can call what comes out of their syrinx a song), then you will find clarifying tidbits like "repetition," "trill," "descending," "sometimes ascending," or "strident." These birds are loud vocalists, but their voices are not necessarily their endearing marks. Or, at least no one is describing them as accomplished songsters. Now then, what does one look for visually to distinguish them, that is, what are their field marks? *Streaking* (presence or absence; above or below). *Chin patch* (presence of?). *Any rufous on the tail?* *Any rufous on the wing?* Oh boy, this sounds like a bit of a challenge. Hey, look at that Mountain Caracara! Woooooow.

Canasteros can be a bit of a mystery. While we were distracted by a flicker or that caracara, one has snuck in like a mouse, making its way through the bunchgrass, popping its little head up, sitting up to take a peek, moving closer, until just a few feet from our group it's up on a rock, head held high, tail cocked, and singing. Okay, maybe just trilling, but it's loud and we are still shocked. *How did it get here so quietly and without our noticing?!* Now, of course, this doesn't happen every time. Sometimes it just pokes around in the grass or rocks, calls a few times, and we never see it. This frustrates us no end. It's partly because in the field guide description on distribution it states many canasteros are "local and rare" or "local and uncommon" and always punctuated with "hard to see." True, but that's part of the allure.

Wish me luck. I am now on a Canastero Quest. You all are the first to know. Forget warblers, hummingbirds, and who needs those *Tangara* tanagers, anyway? I want brown, streaky, loudly trilling, local, and difficult to see. I want behavioral problems. I want *color* without the color.

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Guide Jesse Fagan (a.k.a. the Motmot) still has a bunch of canasteros to see. And where can **you** hope to see a canastero? Certainly on either of Jesse's MACHU PICCHU & ABRA MALAGA, PERU tours listed above, or on any of the other Andean tours we offer. See the partial list above or check our website for a complete listing of tours to these areas.



A canastero quest will surely include a good deal of birding in high Andean habitat like that pictured above, as roughly 50% of these birds occur only above 8000 feet in elevation, including the Streak-throated (top) and the Junin (middle), both of which can be found on the Machu Picchu tour, and the more grassland Scribble-tailed Canastero at bottom. (Photos by guides Dan Lane & George Armistead)

# UPCOMING TOURS

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

## March-April 2012

**Suriname: Wild & Wonderful**—March 2-17, 2012 with Dan Lane. A top-shelf rainforest birding experience for those who love to walk, listen, and be surprised.

**Honduras: Land of the Emeralds**—March 3-11, 2012 with Jesse Fagan. Tour for the endemic Honduran Emerald plus arid Pacific slope, Central Highland, and Caribbean lowland coverage; nearly 300 species!

**Birding Plus: Egypt**—March 3-20, 2012 (Petra Extension) with Terry Stevenson. A new itinerary combining the best of Egypt's birding with some of its best-known archaeological treasures.

**Borneo I**—March 15-April 1, 2012 with Rose Ann Rowlett & Dave Stejskal. Three prime areas on this tour to some of the Earth's richest forests while based in comfort right in the wild

**Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge**—March 16-26, 2012 with John Rowlett & Willy Perez. Our tour exploring the riches of the eastern Andean foothills of northern Ecuador for numerous specialties at the recently opened Wildsumaco Lodge.

**Colombia: Santa Marta Escape**—March 17-25, 2012 with Richard Webster & local guide. An easier subset of "Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta," reached by a direct flight from Miami, and with a couple more days for a more leisurely approach.

**Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves**—March 17-31, 2012 with Mitch Lysinger. Birding tour focused on the many specialties of the southwest, in particular the very local endemics of the humid foothills and mountains, and Tumbesian specialties.

**Brazil Nutshell: Atlantic Forest, Iguazu Falls & the Pantanal**—March 17-31, 2012 with Marcelo Padua & John Coons. 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.

**Costa Rica**—March 17-April 1, 2012 with Megan Crewe & local guide. Resplendent

Quetzals, Three-wattled Bellbirds, Scarlet Macaws in a beautiful country with easy travel.

**Ghana**—March 17-April 2, 2012 with Phil Gregory & local guide. A new addition to our schedule, in search of numerous West African specialties as well as White-necked Rockfowl.

**Puerto Rico**—March 18-24, 2012 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.

**Dominican Republic I**—March 24-31, 2012 with Jesse Fagan. Short tour for many specialties and endemics including the unusual Palmchat.

**Spring in South Texas**—March 24-April 1, 2012 with Chris Benesh. Magnificent Whooping Cranes, lots of South Texas specialties, and spring hawk migration on this exciting tour.

**Bahamas: Birds & Butterflies**—March 31-April 5, 2012 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.

**Hawaii**—April 1-10, 2012 with George Armistead. 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.

**Namibia & Botswana**—April 3-22, 2012 with Terry Stevenson. Southwestern Africa's bird specialties, striking scenery, wilderness, and the famed game of Etosha and the Okavango.

**Colorado Grouse I**—April 4-14, 2012 with Chris Benesh. A short tour to seek out the state's prairie-chicken and grouse species.

**Bhutan**—April 6-27, 2012 with Richard Webster. Spellbinding birding amidst awe-inspiring landscapes on a journey through the lush forests and mountains of this "lost" Himalayan kingdom.

**Belize**—April 8-14, 2012 with Jesse Fagan. A terrific introduction to (or continuation of!) your tropical birding, including some regional bird specialties.

**Texas Coast Migration Spectacle I**—April 14-20, 2012 with John Coons. Tour to the migration mecca of High Island plus specialties of the Big Thicket and myriad waterbirds and shorebirds.

**Colorado Grouse II**—April 14-24, 2012 with Dan Lane. A short tour to seek out the state's prairie-chicken and grouse species.

**Birding Plus: Scotland: Famous Grouse in the Land of Whisky**—April 20-May 1, 2012 with John Rowlett & Hugh Buck. Imbibing Highland Scotland's famous grouse, distilling the birds of the Hebrides, and sampling Scottish whisky and bagpipe culture sum up the smooth shots to be taken on this Birding Plus tour.

**Texas Coast Migration Spectacle II**—April 21-27, 2012 with John Coons. 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 21-30, 2012 with Chris Benesh. Colima and Golden-cheeked warblers, Montezuma Quail, and other southern borderland specialties in Texas's grand desert mountain landscapes.

**Classical Greece**—April 27-May 11, 2012 with Megan Crewe & local guide. Fine southeast European birding—at the peak of migration—with archaeological and cultural stops.

**Dominican Republic II**—April 28-May 5, 2012 with Jesse Fagan. Short tour for many specialties and endemics including the unusual Palmchat.

## May-June 2012

**Arizona Nightbirds & More I**—May 3-7, 2012 with Dave Stejskal. A short tour focused on this area's many owl and nightjar specialties.

**Ethiopia: Endemic Birds & Ethiopian Wolf**—May 5-25, 2012 (Lalibela Extension) with Terry Stevenson & Richard Webster. 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.

**Brazil's Rio Roosevelt: Birding the River of Doubt I**—May 6-16, 2012 with Marcelo Padua. A birding adventure on the remote Rio Roosevelt in the spirit of Teddy himself, as we search for bushbirds, ant swarms, and, of course, the unknown.

**Arizona Nightbirds & More II**—May 10-14, 2012 with Dave Stejskal. A short tour focused on this area's many owl and nightjar specialties.

**Arizona: Birding the Border I**—May 11-20, 2012 with John Coons. Comprehensive tour of one of the most exciting destinations in North America with a backdrop of spectacular mountain scenery.

**Point Pelee Migration Spectacle**—May 12-19, 2012. Exciting migration birding at several premier hotspots on the Lake Erie shore.

**Uganda: Shoebill, Rift Endemics & Gorillas**—May 17-June 7, 2012 with Phil Gregory. The rare Shoebill and a wealth of other birds and many Central African specialties, combined with opportunities to trek for Chimps and Mountain Gorillas.

**Arizona: Birding the Border II**—May 18-27, 2012 with Dave Stejskal. Comprehensive tour of one of the most exciting destinations in North America with a backdrop of spectacular mountain scenery.

**Virginias' Warblers**—May 30-June 3, 2012 with John Rowlett & John Coons. Unsurpassed locale for breeding wood-warblers; cool, mountain climate in both beautiful states on our birding tour; optional visit to Monticello.

**Alaska I**—May 30-June 7, 2012 (Part I) and June 6-16, 2012 (Part II) with Chris Benesh & Jesse Fagan. Comprehensive survey tour of spectacular Alaska in two parts: Part I to the Pribilofs and Denali; Part II to Nome, Seward, and Barrow.

**Central Peruvian Endemics: The High Andes**—June 1-17, 2012 with Dan Lane & Willy Perez. Tour for the high-Andean endemics of central Peru in extraordinarily scenic settings, including Huascarán National Park, Lake Junin, and the Carpish Mountains.

**Alaska II**—June 6-14, 2012 (Part I) and June 13-23, 2012 (Part II) with George Armistead & Megan Crewe. Comprehensive survey 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 7-17, 2012 with Terry McEneaney & John Coons. Great western birding and wildlife amidst the scenery of Big Sky country.

**Borneo II**—June 7-24, 2012 with Rose Ann Rowlett. Three prime areas on this tour to some of the Earth's richest forests while based in comfort right in the wild.

**Montane Ecuador: Cloudforests of the Andes I**—June 8-17, 2012 with Mitch Lysinger. Small-group tour for superb Andean subtropical birding on both East and West slopes.

**Rainforest & Savanna: Alta Floresta & the Northern Pantanal, Brazil**—June 15-July 1, 2012 with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. Pristine rainforest on the beautiful Rio Cristalino combined with the wilds of the Pantanal in search of Hyacinth Macaw, Harpy Eagle, Jabiru, Jaguar, and a large piece of the meaning of life.

**Galapagos: An Intimate Look at Darwin's Islands I**—June 16-26, 2012 with Alvaro Jaramillo & local guide. A must for any naturalist and birder; small-group tour with broad coverage of the islands with plenty of time for the birds, exploring, and photography.

**Spitsbergen & Svalbard Archipelago: A Cruise to the Norwegian Arctic**—June 23–July 5, 2012 with John Coons. A high-arctic adventure aboard a comfortable vessel for fantastic seabirds, marine mammals, Polar Bear, and fabulous scenery.

**Papua New Guinea I**—June 27–July 15, 2012 with Phil Gregory. Birds-of-paradise and bowerbirds are the crown 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**—June 29–July 8, 2012 with Mitch Lysinger. One-site tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere.

**Newfoundland & Nova Scotia**—June 29–July 9, 2012 with Chris Benesh. Boreal specialties, seabird colonies, and numerous breeding landbirds in the beautiful Canadian Maritimes.

**Peru's Magnetic North: Spatuletails, Owlet Lodge & More**—June 30–July 10, 2012 with John Rowlett & Pepe Rojas. A 11-day taste of northern Peru's east-slope Andes. Five nights at Long-whiskered Owlet Lodge; much time in the field, yet no camping.

## July-August 2012

**Manu Wildlife Center, Peru I**—July 2–14, 2012 with Dan Lane. One-site 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.

**Kenya Highlights**—July 4–22, 2012 with Terry Stevenson. Our spectacular tour hitting Kenya's best birding and mammal viewing areas in less than 3 weeks.

**Jaguar Spotting: Pantanal & Garden of the Amazon I**—July 7–18, 2012 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.

**Galapagos: An Intimate Look at Darwin's Islands II**—July 7–17, 2012 with Megan Crewe & local guide. A must for any naturalist and birder; small-group birding tour with broad coverage of the islands with plenty of time for the birds, exploring, and photography.

**Papua New Guinea II**—July 11–29, 2012 with Dave Stejskal. Birds-of-paradise and bowerbirds are the crown jewels of one of the most remarkable bird faunas, set against a fascinating cultural backdrop far removed from our own.

**Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga, Peru I**—July 13–22, 2012 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.

**Montane Ecuador: Cloudforests of the Andes II**—July 19–28, 2012 with Willy Perez. Small-group tour for superb Andean subtropical birding on both East and West slopes.

**Jaguar Spotting: Pantanal & Garden of the Amazon II**—July 21–August 1, 2012 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 21–August 5, 2012 with Dan Lane. Our in-depth birding tour transect of the higher-elevation half of the Manu Biosphere Reserve.

**Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge IV**—July 27–August 5, 2012 with Willy Perez. One-site birding tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere.

**Arizona's Second Spring I**—July 28–August 6, 2012 with John Coons. An ideal time for visiting one of the best birding regions in North America: great for local specialties and Mexican vagrants.

**Arizona's Second Spring II**—August 4–13, 2012 with Megan Crewe. An ideal time for visiting one of the best birding regions in North America: great for local specialties and Mexican vagrants.

**Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga, Peru II**—August 4–13, 2012 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.

**Galapagos: An Intimate Look at Darwin's Islands III**—August 4–14, 2012 with George Armistead & local guide. A must for any naturalist and birder; small-group birding tour with broad coverage of the islands with plenty of time for the birds, exploring, and photography.

**Kenya Safari Spectacular**—August 31–September 28, 2012 with Terry Stevenson. Unsurpassed in its combined wealth of bird life and mammal spectacle; includes the coast. Time-saving internal flights. Kenya Highlights—July 4–22, 2012 with Terry Stevenson. Our spectacular tour hitting Kenya's best birding and mammal viewing areas in less than 3 weeks.

# The Royal Flycatcher

Jay VanderGaast

Arguably, more birders are disappointed by their first encounter with the Royal Flycatcher than with any other bird on Earth. Instead of a spectacular bird with a gaudy, fan-shaped crest, they're faced with a rather dumpy, beige-colored bird without anything too distinctive about it. Sure, it does have an odd hammer-headed appearance, and a particularly good view might net one a glimpse of the scarlet and blue crown feathers, but it certainly doesn't appear deserving of the name "Royal."

It is only when the bird is excited, usually during courtship or intra-sexual competition (or when caught in a mist-net), that it displays its crowning glory. The lucky birder who witnesses this amazing display has no question as to the royal pedigree of this species, no matter how fleeting the encounter. So, though the Royal Flycatcher may normally resemble a king without a crown, under that somber plumage, royal blood courses through its veins, and you just might get to see the proof in your next encounter! Guide Marcelo Padua's wonderful pictures from his recent Southeast Brazil tour show that it clearly is a possibility!



Split personality? A Royal Flycatcher shows both sides of its identity. Will it become even more fractured? This species could very well be split into 4 in the near future: Northern (Colombia and Venezuela northwards), Pacific (west Ecuador and Peru), Amazonian (Amazon basin), and Swainson's (SE Brazil).

## LAST SPACES

**Mexico: Oaxaca**, January 22–29 with Megan Crewe & Chris Benesh

**The Heart of Chile**, January 28–February 11 with Peter Burke & Ricardo Matus

**Nowhere But Northeast Brazil! Part II**, January 28–February 13 with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua

**Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge II**, February 3–12 with Dan Lane

**Panama's Canopy Tower I**, February 10–17 with John Coons & local guide

**Panama's Canopy Tower II**, February 25–March 3 with Chris Benesh & local guide

*When only one or two spaces remain open on a tour, we'll post that information on the tour page on our web site, so you can check on any tour there.*

# Wild & Wonderful Suriname

**T**here are not many places left nowadays where you can go to “escape it all.” There is internet even at many remote lodges on the Amazon—lodges that didn’t have electricity until a few years ago—and guests can log on to find out the latest news, stock prices, and football scores. You can be in the middle of nowhere and yet not miss a step.

But wait a second—what about visiting a place where you can leave the outside world behind, where the ups and downs of politics and the news simply melt away and you instead find yourself in the midst of vast stretches of pristine wilderness and incredible wildlife (including birds, of course!), with two full weeks to totally immerse yourself in this truly wild and wonderful place. If that’s what you’re looking for, think Suriname.

Suriname is South America’s smallest sovereign nation, with a population under half-a-million people of a dozen tongues, the vast majority of whom live near the Caribbean coast. This immediately translates to “tens of thousands of square miles of undisturbed habitats with no people and no tongues,” definitely a wild & wonderful thing. Consider next that there are few roads anywhere into the interior, which means you have to take wild & wonderful charter flights into dirt airstrips in the middle of nowhere. As the porters scramble up to unload the plane at Foengoe Island and it hits you that the friendly pilot will now be leaving for...how many days was it?...you are

overcome with the strangest mix of trepidation and excitement (after all, two hours in a big turbo-prop covers a good piece of ground) that, amazingly, vanishes instantly as a troop of earnestly prayed-for Red-fan Parrots squeals into the trees to check us out; yes, another w & w thing! One hour and nine lifers later, at the lodge down by the river, still trying to wrap your head around those macaws, you’re pleasantly surprised to see that the rooms are really neat and as you lather up in the shower, you find yourself smiling so much that you catch a mouthful of soap. Nothing like a frosty drink to reset the palate and, as we wrap up the daily list, it smells like there’s something tasty coming out of the kitchen. When it gets there, no one can identify it but heck, this is Suriname, and as you dig in, it actually turns out to be one of the best meals you’ve had in forever.

In this world where we can Skype from one side of the globe to the other, it’s nice to experience a brief throwback to what it was like to travel just a few decades ago. If you are interested in refreshing your memory, come join us in Suriname!

Guide Dan Lane, who, while he admits that it may sound a bit old-fashioned, says “This is the way I like to spend time on a tour, enjoying the antics of Gray-winged Trumpeters or listening for the mooing call of a Capuchinbird high in the canopy, rather than checking on stocks at the end of the day...” will be taking a small group this **March 2-17** to Suriname. For full details visit our tour page where you may download a detailed tour itinerary.



Some of what makes Suriname Wild & Wonderful, from left, viewing a riverside Zigzag Heron, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Bronzy Jacamar, Crested Bobwhite, and Rose-breasted Chat. (Photos by guides Dave Stejskal & Dan Lane, and participant Paul Thomas)

## Alaska’s Nesting Seabirds

*Continued from page 1*



“Look, the Parakeet Auklets are squabbling over turf again! And that Crested Auklet, wagging his curlicue crest! Who does he think he is anyway?” Tufted Puffins look down on their neighbors. (Photo by guide George Armistead)

Below us, bunched on crowded ledges, Common and Thick-billed murres jostle for position, their beaks pointed skyward. Pairs of Parakeet Auklets squabble over turf. Crested Auklets preen and wag their crests at each other. Red-faced Cormorants add giant mouthfuls of damp vegetation to growing nests. Horned and Tufted puffins doze at burrow entrances, their bright beaks glowing against the dark volcanic rock. Pairs of Northern Fulmars gently nibble each other’s neck feathers. In every direction, birds are doing the things birds do—and our clifftop perch gives us the perfect location from which to watch and photograph.

Once everyone’s gotten a good look at all possible lifers, we can settle down to learning more: about how the various species divvy up the cliff so that each gets its preferred nest site, about the courtship and nesting strategies of the cliff’s inhabitants, of the subtle differences between Red-

legged and Black-legged kittiwakes in flight, the best ways to distinguish Common Murres from Thick-billed Murres at a distance, the key field marks for identifying auklets on the water. By the time we leave the island, we’ll have had multiple hours in which to practice and hone our skills.

And we’ll have had multiple hours of enjoying thousands of birds going about their busy lives—feeding, courting, preening, resting—within mere yards of where we stood. In the world of bird spectacles, that’s mighty hard to beat!

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*You can join Megan and George or Chris and Jesse on a seabird cliff next spring. Dates for our Alaska tours are*

*Alaska I—May 30-June 7, 2012 (Part I) and June 6-16, 2012 (Part II) with Chris Benesh & Jesse Fagan.*

*Alaska II—June 6-14, 2012 (Part I) and June 13-23, 2012 (Part II) with George Armistead & Megan Crewe.*

*Part I is to the Pribilofs and Denali; Part II, to Nome, Seward, and Barrow.*

*Can’t make it to Alaska in June? We have a few other tours that also feature breeding seabird cliffs. Try Scotland: Famous Grouse in the Land of Whisky in April, Ireland in Spring in May, Newfoundland & Nova Scotia in late June, or Spitsbergen & Svalbard Archipelago: A cruise to the Norwegian Arctic in July.*

## Jay & George

Astute observers of our website might be wondering “What happened to Jay’s 2012 tour schedule?” Guide Jay VanderGaast, whom many of you have traveled with on exciting tours around the globe since Jay joined our staff eleven years ago, now has, with partner Annie,

quite the clutch of nestlings at home...three young ones, to be exact! And so touring and long stints away from home have become too much to juggle and it’s now time for “the Vanga,” as we know Jay, to shift from being a “long-distance migrant” to places far-flung to “permanent resident” in Québec (at least for now!). We’re delighted, however, that Jay will still be connected to the Field Guides family and have his finger on the pulse doing some valuable part-time work for us behind the scenes from home. But we’ll miss you out in the field, Vanga!

You may also have noticed some changes in guide George Armistead’s 2012 schedule. “The Owl” earlier in 2011 joined the ranks of the betrothed by marrying his lovely bride, Laura Oppenheim, and there is continued courtship feeding (yes, there are some fab restaurants in Philly!) and pair-bond maintenance (good grief, bird-geek talk here!) to consider, and these have dictated a somewhat reduced future travel schedule for the Owl. There’s no “permanent resident” status for George, though...in 2012 he’ll still be migrating to Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Alaska, the Galapagos, and Southern Argentina!



George



Jay

## NORTHERN PERU

### *The Long and the Short of It*

*Continued from page 1*

those of you with a detectable pulse who are wondering if you’ll live until you can find three weeks off your demanding schedules, rest assured that you can—without in any way preempting the longer possibility—make an enriching down payment, securing some third of those endemics outright, by taking our “Magnetic North” tour, a safe, working stiff’s 11-day-resolution to an anxiety dream.

Our abbreviated version of northern Peru is becoming better known as the “Long-whiskered Owllet/Marvelous Spatuletail Tour” because on the powerful attraction of these two marquee species—the long and the short of it—that are now possible since the construction of the fabulous “Owlet Lodge” at Abra Patricia and the development of the Huembo Spatuletail Reserve below the pass at Florida de Pomacochas. The miniscule owl with the long whiskers, a creature of mythic proportions that had not been observed outside a net when we began guiding tours to northern Peru, is the smallest owl in the world, no longer (if much bulkier) than an adult male Spatuletail, bereft of its marvelous, extravagantly long, spatula tail. The owl is now being seen with regularity on the lodge property (our groups—both short and long—had sensational views of an adult perched a mere 15 feet away in 2011, as captured by Richard’s photo). And the Spatuletail—a hit-or-miss encounter when we began running the tour years ago—is now a virtual certainty, along with a dozen or so other hummers—at feeders regularly maintained at the reserve. Yet our short sortie is also notable for another 15 or so possible endemics and specialties seldom seen away from the forest-clad knife-ridges that transect and make up the starkly beautiful east-slope habitat of the Abra Patricia area in the departments of Amazonas and San Martin.

Our birding, some of the best to be had on the east slope of the Andes, begins and ends in Tarapoto, as the tour makes an electrifying short circuit from tropical lowlands of the Rio Huallaga, up the drainage of the Rio Mayo through Moyobamba and on upslope to the lodge at Abra Patricia, our base for six splendid nights of birding subtropical cloud forest and the drier Rio Chido drainage, before retracing our steps to Tarapoto for one last morning of birding in the upper tropical zone. In July of 2012 Field Guides will operate our seventh iteration of this short-and-sweet attraction, and each exciting year has led to greater logistical and pacing know-how and to a keener knowledge of the birds and their whereabouts.



A happy group of birders about to set off in search of the legendary Long-whiskered Owllet. You should have seen them when they got back! At right, a marvelous male spatuletail is now almost a sure thing! (Photos by participant Evelyn Ralston)



So all you overworked dreamers, whether drawn more to the specialties or to the thrill of birding mixed-species flocks of tanagers, fruiteaters, quetzals, and barbets (did I mention the *Grallaricula*, Ochre-fronted Antpitta, or the *Grallaria*, Pale-billed Antpitta [one of several endemic species of antpittas to be seen], or the lovely Yellow-scarfed Tanager, Johnson’s Tody-Tyrant, Bar-winged Wood-Wren, or White-faced Nunbird?); whether drawn more to scoring scores of Oilbirds or to finally winning a prize look at that furtive Chestnut-crowned Gnateater or that elusive Lanceolated Monklet that has always just slipped your view, take it from me: you are ensured immeasurable benefits from the long-lasting dividends of going short.

*Our short tour, Peru’s Magnetic North: Spatuletails, Owllet Lodge & More is scheduled for June 30-July 10. The longer Northern Peru: Endemics Galore, for November 4-24. Call our office or check our web site for complete details on both tours.*

# fieldguides®

## BIRDING TOURS WORLDWIDE

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*Classic Texas and lush Hawaii this spring.*

Hawaii, April 1-10 with George Armistead  
Texas's Big Bend & Hill Country, April 21-30 with Chris Benesh