



A Journey to the High Arctic

Guide John Coons reports on the 2015 Spitsbergen & Svalbard Archipelago Cruise.

Thick-billed Murres really do resemble penguins when in breeding plumage; an iconic mammal of the Arctic, Walrus. (Photos by participant Warren Cairo)

What a great time we had exploring the High Arctic of Spitsbergen and the Svalbard Archipelago! Bears, walrus, whales, and (of course) birds all came together for a truly great experience. We arrived from Oslo to wonderful weather in Longyearbyen, the furthest north true town in the world. After checking in at our very comfortable hotel (the furthest north hotel in the world by about 200 yards), we did a bird walk and got our first taste of Arctic birds. We saw Snow Buntings feeding young in town before walking to Longyearbyen's outskirts. There, we found brilliant pairs of both Red and Red-necked phalaropes swimming quite close to us, as nearby a Glaucous Gull was being snapped at by several female Common Eiders protecting their young. It was a bit of a surprise to find both a Northern Pintail and Eurasian Wigeon there along with several Dunlin.

In the afternoon, we boarded our ship and headed out. Over the next nine days, we had many great encounters. Some of the highlights were the show put on by the mother and calf Blue Whale; many Belugas close to the ship; sitting on a tundra slope as tiny Dovekies landed among nearby rocks; a pair of Long-tailed Jaegers followed closely by a quite curious Arctic Fox; colorful King Eiders; close views of three Rock Ptarmigan; Atlantic Puffins and Northern Fulmars passing the ship at all hours; a rather uncommon Great Black-backed Gull at Ny Ålesund; and the zodiac ride along the spectacular bird cliff at Alkefjellet where over 100,000 murres, guillemots, and kittiwakes were present.

However, three of the biggest highlights had to be the Polar Bears, Ivory Gulls, and Walrus. We saw at least eight Polar Bears walking on

Continued on page 11

Spring Finch Forecast: China!

Jay VanderGaast

In Ontario, where I live, the arrival of winter finches is so eagerly anticipated that each autumn a "Winter Finch Forecast" is published. With this in mind, I've decided to make a finch forecast of my own, though mine is not for North America but for my *China: Manchuria & the Tibetan Plateau* tour, where I predict that there will be finches galore—indeed, I expect to see somewhere in the vicinity of 20 species of these gorgeous little birds.

Now, if you're wondering how I can possibly imagine we'll see upwards of 20 species of finches, just have a look at the tour's

Continued on page 11



Przevalski's Rosefinch and Ala Shan Redstart. (Photos by guide Dave Stejskal)

Tom Tours Down Under

Tom Johnson

When I was in college, the ornithology class I took focused on global bird diversity as a prism to help understand biology and evolution. We pored over skins in the museum and compared special features that can be used to distinguish the world's bird families. While I've always had an interest in worldwide birds, it became rather clear to me that Australia harbors some of the world's most amazing family-level diversity. Lyrebirds, honeyeaters, pardalotes, the cassowary, and even a few birds-of-paradise—wow! So, when an opportunity to travel to Australia presented itself, I was beyond excited, not just at the prospect of seeing new species of birds, but of gaining new experience with entire families of birds. Oh, and koalas and kangaroos sounded neat, too. Don't forget about the mammals!

Co-leading *Australia* Part II in October with John Coons presented a number of novelties for me, including my longest plane flight to date. The overnight flight from Los Angeles to Brisbane went by rather quickly, though, as I managed to conk out immediately and was also afforded the extra legroom of a bulkhead seat—an important consideration for my 5'6" frame. Before I knew it, I was in the steamy tropics of Darwin.

That first afternoon was a blur as I visited the Darwin Botanical Gardens and East Point, soaking in Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Torresian Imperial-Pigeons, Rainbow Lorikeets, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, and Mistletoebirds. Wow—lots of new shapes and sounds all at once. Part of the joy of world birding is surrendering to the overwhelming experience of being surrounded by novelty, and I yielded immediately. Fortunately, field guide and audio studying started to pay off, and I settled in to thoroughly enjoying the little explosions that were going off in my brain each time a new bird would pop up—"So THAT'S what a bronze-cuckoo looks like? Hmm... smaller than I was expecting, but WOW!" I checked in to the hotel and decided to take a short "nap" around 4 p.m. and woke up in confusion around midnight. I'm sure the exhaustion resulted from some combination of jet lag and the startling new avifauna, but fortunately it only took me another day to get my body on an Australian schedule.

John arrived in town the following day, and we ran around Darwin to do some more pre-tour scouting. When the group arrived, fresh off Part 1 with Chris Benesh and Jesse Fagan, we were ready to go, and things got off to a marvelous start with Barking Owls, Red-headed Myzomelas, and lots more. One of the aspects of Australian birding that I was most looking forward to was the opportunity to see long-distance migrants from Asia, and so the flocks of shorebirds around Darwin were particularly wonderful for me—Little Curlew was a dream bird, and here they were! I can't say that a Little Curlew really holds a candle to a Rainbow Pitta in terms of colors, but there's something about a well put-together shorebird that has just flown several thousand miles that gets me every time.

I've been very lucky in my 18 months with *Field Guides* to have opportunities to travel to several new countries in the company of veteran guides who have

been taking groups to these places for years. In the case of Australia, I was partnered up with John Coons (our Kingfisher), who has been guiding trips to Oz since the 1980s, and with whom I had worked previously in Arizona. Kingfisher and I get along well, but I still owe him a debt of gratitude for his help in getting me acquainted with Australia and its birds.

The rest of our time in Darwin flew past, punctuated by plenty of lifers and several revelations about "speaking Australian." I learned to employ the phrase "She's a ripper!" frequently in order to convey enthusiasm about an especially good look at a bird, and I was disappointed not to hear "Crikey!" around every corner. (My Crocodile Hunter-addled brain needed some re-training.) It quickly became clear that I'd been mispronouncing the word "gerygone" for a long time ("Jerry gone?" Nope, he's still here)—it's "jeh-rig-uh-nee."

After Darwin, we flew to Cairns, and I was immersed once again in Asian shorebird bliss (Hello, Broad-billed Sandpiper, nice to meet you!). We also received an introduction to a Southern Cassowary with a chick. It was nice to stand eye-to-eye with a bird for once. More highlights came quickly, but an experience with a Victoria's Riflebird particularly stuck with me. I suspect I'm not alone in my fascination with birds-of-paradise, and during our stay at Chambers Wildlife Rainforest Lodges, a few riflebirds were active right behind our cabin. We had the opportunity to see a male on his display perch and even had the rush of watching him lift his wings like the conductor of some fantasy orchestra.

Our time around Cairns, the Atherton Tablelands, and the Outback of Georgetown was only the midpoint of the tour, but I find myself running up against the word count constraints of the newsletter format. Our visit to O'Reilly's Guest House in Lamington National Park was amazing, not just for the splendid food and accommodation and the Albert's Lyrebirds and Regent Bowerbirds, but also for the other animals around including my first Koala, Whiptail Wallabies, and a superbly camouflaged Southern Leaf-tailed Gecko. The tour was capped off with an extension to Tasmania,

which was a delightfully cool way to enjoy our last few days down under, in the company of Swift Parrots and Forty-spotted Pardalotes. I'll never forget my first time in Australia; the diversity of unique birds is tremendous, and the other wildlife and landscape have to be seen to be believed. I can't wait to head back next year with John again, but this time for Part 1 of the tour.

2016 Australia dates are:

Part I: Sep 30-Oct 20

with John Coons and Tom Johnson

Part II: Oct 18-Nov 2

with Chris Benesh and second guide

Guide Tom Johnson tries his best not to break into a huge grin when Australian King-Parrots drop in for a visit. (Photo by participant Char Glacy)



FRESH FROM THE FIELD



All the beautiful birds on this page are from our recent **Australia** tours. Jesse Fagan joined Chris Benesh, who took these photos, for Part 1 of the tour. At top left, the group had unbelievable looks at this Southern Emu-wren belting out his song; to the right of the wren, a Chestnut Quail-Thrush and below it, a Malleefowl attending a mound; at bottom left, a boldly patterned Golden Whistler; and the often difficult to see—though you'd never guess it from this look—Striated Grasswren.

John Coons and Tom Johnson stepped in for Part 2. (See Tom's article on the facing page about his first Australia tour.) You might have already noticed that one of the sights from that tour was a male Victoria's Riflebird on his display perch below, lifting his wings, as Tom remarked, like the conductor of some fantasy orchestra. At far left, a striking Double-eyed Fig-Parrot; next to the parrot, a Striated Pardalote; and finally, a sprite-like Red-backed Fairywren. (Photos by guide Tom Johnson and participant George Sims)



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FRESH FROM THE FIELD



Our **Barrow, Alaska: Search for Ross's Gull** tour travels to the Arctic Ocean in October to witness the annual fall migration of Ross's Gulls; at top right is one of the more than 200 Ross's that passed the point over three days of this year's tour. Other sightings included more than two-dozen Snowy Owls; the two at right—one carrying prey—show the range of variability in plumages in the owls. (Photos by guide Dan Lane and participant Peter Relsen)



One of the prettiest migrants seen by both of our recent **Cape May Megan's Way** tours, each a week-long visit in fall to the migration birding hotspot and guide Megan Crewe's longtime home, was this Black-throated Blue Warbler at right. Raptors, like the Osprey (top right), are a big part of Cape May's fall migration. The Semipalmated Sandpiper was seen in a large, mixed flock of Semis and Leasts, which made for great comparisons of the two. And the sweet Marsh Wren, above, which may be an overwintering bird, gave one group great views. (Photos by participants Peter Hart & Jerry Taylor)



Jesse Fagan's new **Colombia: The Llanos & More** tour visits the eastern grassland plains (those Llanos), as well as some Andean sites near Bogota not covered on our other Colombia tours. The birding was fantastic, according to Jesse. Llanos birds seen well included the pair of Orinoco Geese above looking as though they are tip-toeing through the water, and the Sharp-tailed Ibis, below right. At a site near Bogota, the group enjoyed a great hummer show with Indigo-capped Hummingbird (top right), a Colombian endemic, among the highlights, and in Chingaza NP above Bogota another endemic, Golden-fronted Redstart. (Photos by guides Jesse Fagan & Richard Webster)





You might have guessed that the group pictured here is not in Barrow, but rather on our **Safari Brazil: The Pantanal & More** tour with guide Marcelo Padua looking for pipits (perhaps Ochre-breasted) on the tour's extension to Canastra NP. Other birds seen along the regular tour route included the White-winged Nightjar, above left; the Plumbeous Ibis (left), a bird of the Pantanal; and this Red-winged Tinamou as you would rarely see it, out for a morning stroll. (Photos by participants Bill Byers, Peter Bono & David and Judy Smith)



In August we ran the first of Bret Whitney's new **Great Rivers of the Amazon** tours, this one **Exploring the Rio Aripuana**, and what we heard from participants was that it was not only an excellent trip, but a great adventure. The group traveled aboard the *Tumbira*, pictured above, a comfortable houseboat with an outstanding crew. Along the way, they saw some newly discovered species, like this Chico's Tyrannulet, above left, described in 2013, as well as some as yet unnamed species, and enjoyed some wonderful wildlife encounters. Perhaps one of the most thrilling was meeting a Giant Anteater which approached to within eight feet! While not a rare bird, the King Vulture is rarely seen this well. (Photos by participants David and Judy Smith & Rick Woodruff)



These images from Terry Stevenson's recent **Kenya Safari Spectacular** tour show some of the experiences to be encountered in a land so varied. Great mammal sightings, like the herd below coming to a watering hole in Tsavo; a glimpse of East African culture with a performance by Samburu dancers; and most importantly to birders, a



remarkable birdlife. It's hard to take your eyes off the Superb Starling, at left; the Secretary-bird is one of the most distinctive species of sub-Saharan Africa. (Photos by participant Don Fallon)



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Our **Rio Negro Paradise: Manaus, Brazil** group (one of two this year) looks like they're having a wonderful time birding with guides Marcelo Padua (far right on steps) and Rose Ann Rowlett (far left; that's Richard Webster behind her). It was a glorious journey along the largest rivers on Earth surveying some of the richest avifaunas. A small sampling of the riches encountered includes, at right: a dapper Black-and-white Antbird, a river-island specialist seen on the Rio Madeira; an endangered Brazilian Bare-faced Tamarin, one of a troop encountered on the last day of the tour; and an exquisite Opal-rumped Tanager, seen well from the INPA tower near Manaus where we begin the tour. (Photos by guides Rose Ann Rowlett & Richard Webster and participant Peggy Keller)



Pepe Rojas's **Peruvian Rainforests of the Tambopata** visits three biologically diverse areas of Southeastern Peru that offer some of the world's most exciting birding. A fully-grown Harpy Eagle, though not pictured here, was one of the birds of prey seen on the tour, as was the more predictable Black Caracara, above. Below the caracara, nice looks at the big-billed Purus Jacamar, and a Long-tailed Potoo adult with a chick posing alongside. Game species, like this Blue-throated Piping-Guan, are a good indication of true wilderness. (Photos by participants Ian Resnick & Dana Little)



It was a challenge to choose just four photos from Terry Stevenson's recent **South Africa** tour; it meant leaving out so much, the gorgeous Narina Trogon, the Cape Sugarbird, the Karoo Bustard, the nine African Wild Dogs! But here's a try, from top left: a sometimes shy Bokmakierie; a striking Purple-crested Turaco (Knysna seen, too); Crimson-breasted Gonolek; and a just amazing Greater Double-collared Sunbird. (Photos by participant Becky Hansen)



The beauty of the country is one reason to take Dan Lane's **New Zealand** tour—that's Mt. Cook at top, New Zealand's highest mountain. The birds, of course, are another. It's the home of many endemic families of birds comprising the likes of this North Island Kokako, above right, with his wonderful wattles, and the noteworthy Kea, above middle, found on the South Island, so curious that it is sometimes considered a pest. Though the handsome Red-billed Gull shown here is mostly coastal, the tour does include two exciting pelagics—one as an optional extension—on which a few of the birds this year included Black-browed Albatross, Little Shearwater, and New Zealand Storm-Petrel. (Photos by guide Dan Lane)

Guide Willy Perez describes the **Ecuador's Shiripuno Lodge** tour as being like going back in time. To reach it, one must travel by plane, bus, and then canoe deep into the rainforest—though this takes but a day—to a magical place that seems like another world. Large macaws like Scarlet and Blue-and-yellow (middle) were seen on Willy's recent Shiripuno tour every day around the lodge. Secretive species like antbirds, while not easy to spot, were seen in numbers. Raptors, including the handsome Black-faced Hawk pictured here, were numerous. The Rufous Potoo (far right), which can be a challenge to find, was seen on a day roost. (Photos by guide Willy Perez)



Just about anything in **Madagascar** looks strange to our eyes, and with so many birds and other creatures found nowhere else, it probably is. A few of those comely strangers on Phil Gregory's recent tour from left: Pitta-like Ground-Roller, one of five ground-rollers on the tour; a pretty Malagasy Kingfisher; a female Madagascar Paradise-Flycatcher sitting tight on her small cup nest; and a rare and colorful Diademmed Sifaka, one of the largest of the lemurs. (Photos by guide Phil Gregory)



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FRESH FROM THE FIELD



From our recent **Chile** tour, a lineup of King Penguins, some doing calisthenics, was a delightful sight. The penguin colony is a fairly recent discovery and is the only one in Chile accessible from land. Variable Hawks, left, at a nest, were formerly split as Red-backed and Puna; they're fairly common in southern South America. The beautiful Long-tailed Meadowlark is also widespread south of the Atacama Desert; it's known by Chileans as Loica, probably from its scientific name *Sturnella loyca*. And that Andean Flicker in the center coming out of his hole could just have been awakened from a nap. (Photos by guide Peter Burke)



This was guide John Rowlett's last year to do the **Serra dos Tucanos, Brazil** tour; our resident Brazilian "Manakin," Marcelo Padua, will take over in 2016. Highlights for this wonderful trip to Brazil's Atlantic Forest were many and included the Three-toed Jacamar, top right, one of the scarcest endemics seen on the tour; Surucua Trogon, top left, a stately male whose frayed tail indicates he's been spending time in the nest cavity; Maroon-bellied Parakeet, a regular at the lodge feeders; and Burnished-buff Tanager, among several other Tangaras whose names—Green-headed, Red-necked, Brassy-breasted, Red-necked—make you want to get your Brazil visa in order. (Photos by participant Jerry Ziarno)



This is not a human version of the King Penguins pictured above. No, it's our **Spectacular Southeast Brazil** Part 2 tour group on the lookout for an Ochre-breasted Pipit (pipits were popular last year). Southeast Brazil is loaded with special birds, among them (clockwise from top left) a standout Yellow-fronted Woodpecker; an Azure-shouldered Tanager on a nest, giving us just a hint of its beauty; a Red-tailed Parrot, which guide Bret Whitney reports was easily seen this year (always a relief); and a Speckle-breasted Antpitta, or maybe not, as the southern population of this bird will soon be described as a new species! There were many, many more that unfortunately we couldn't show you here, though Bret will be happy to on next year's tour. (Photos by participant Chuck Holliday)



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UPCOMING TOURS

For details, please call our office or check our web site.

May 2016

Arizona Nightbirds & More I & II—April 29-May 3, 2016 with Dave Stejskal and May 5-9, 2016 with Tom Johnson. A short tour focused on this area's many owl and nightjar specialties.

Classical Greece—May 1-15, 2016 with Megan Edwards Crewe & local guide. Fine southeast European birding—at the peak of migration—with archaeological and cultural stops.

Arizona: Birding the Border I & II—May 6-15, 2016 with John Coons and May 12-21, 2016 with Dave Stejskal. One of the most exciting destinations in North America with a backdrop of spectacular mountain scenery.

Spain: La Mancha, Coto Donana & Extremadura—May 14-26, 2016 with Marcelo Padua & local guide. To La Mancha, famous Coto Donana, Extremadura, and the Gredos Mountains for some of Europe's best birding.

Spring in Cape May—May 15-21, 2016 with Tom Johnson. Spring migration at one of the country's famed birding hotspots.

Ethiopia: Endemic Birds & Ethiopian Wolf—May 20-June 9, 2016 (Lalibela Extension) with Terry Stevenson & local guide. 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.

Maine: Birding Downeast—May 21-29, 2016 with Eric Hynes. A late-spring tour for warblers, boreal specialties, puffins, "lobstah," and more.

Morocco—May 21-June 7, 2016 with Jesse Fagan. Endemic, rare, and specialty birds from coastal wetlands and towering cliffs to the Atlas Mountains and the northwest corner of the Sahara.

Uganda: Shoebill, Rift Endemics & Gorillas—May 21-June 10, 2016 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.

Alaska I—May 26-June 3, 2016 (Part 1) and June 2-12, 2016 (Part 2) with Chris Benesh & Pepe Rojas. Survey in two parts: Part I to the Pribilofs and Denali; Part II to Nome, Seward, and Barrow.

June 2016

Alaska II—June 2-10, 2016 (Part 1) and June 9-19, 2016 (Part 2) with Dave Stejskal & Tom Johnson. Survey in two parts: Part I to the Pribilofs and Denali; Part II to Nome, Seward, and Barrow.

Borneo—June 2-19, 2016 with Megan Edwards Crewe & local guide. Three prime areas in some of Earth's richest forests while based in comfort right in the wild.

Northern Arizona's Canyons & Condor—June 4-9, 2016 with John Coons. A tour for mountain and high-desert birds of the western US amidst stunning scenery with California Condors at the Grand Canyon, all guided by our own Flagstaff-based resident expert, John Coons.

Montana: Yellowstone to Glacier—June 9-19, 2016 with Terry McEaney. Great western birding and wildlife amidst the scenery of Big Sky country.

Brazil's Rio Roosevelt: Birding the River of Doubt—June 10-24, 2016 with Bret Whitney. A birding adventure on the remote Rio Roosevelt in the spirit of Teddy himself, as we search for bushbirds, ant swarms, up to 10 species described to science only in 2013, and, of course, the unknown.

Rainforest & Savanna: Alta Floresta & the Northern Pantanal, Brazil—June 11-27, 2016 with 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.

NEW/Iceland—June 21-30, 2016 with Eric Hynes & local guide. Seabird colonies, endemic landbirds, spectacular scenery, and high-latitude natural history.

Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves II—June 21-July 5, 2016 with Willy Perez. Focuses on the many specialties of the southwest, in particular the very local endemics of the humid foothills and mountains, and on Tumbesian specialties.

Newfoundland & Nova Scotia—June 26-July 6, 2016 with Chris Benesh. Boreal specialties, seabird colonies, and numerous breeding landbirds in the beautiful Canadian Maritimes.

July 2016

Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge—July 1-10, 2016 with Mitch Lysinger. One-site tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere.

East Africa Highlights: Kenya & Tanzania—July 2-22, 2016 with Terry Stevenson. Combines the richest birding and mammal spots in Kenya and northern Tanzania: Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, Great Rift

Valley, Kakamega Forest, and more. An impressive diversity of habitats, many with spectacular scenery.

Papua New Guinea—July 3-21, 2016 with Jay VanderGaast. 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.

Jaguar Spotting: Pantanal & Garden of the Amazon—July 4-15, 2016 with Marcelo Padua. This short but action-packed Brazil birding tour features the Pantanal at its best, a nice taste of southern Amazonian birds, and excellent chances of seeing a Jaguar.

Spitsbergen & Svalbard Archipelago: A Cruise to the Norwegian Arctic—July 6-18, 2016 with John Coons. A high-arctic adventure aboard a comfortable vessel for fantastic seabirds, marine mammals including Walrus and Polar Bear, and fabulous scenery.

Galapagos: An Intimate Look at Darwin's Islands—July 9-19, 2016 with Willy Perez & local guide. A must for any naturalist and birder; small-group, broad coverage of the islands with plenty of time for the birds, exploring, and photography.

Peru's Magnetic North: Spatuletails, Owllet Lodge & More—July 20-31, 2016 with Dan Lane & Jesse Fagan. A 12-day taste of northern Peru's east-slope Andes! Five nights at Long-whiskered Owllet Lodge; much time in the field, yet no camping.

Arizona's Second Spring I & II—July 23-August 1, 2016 with Chris Benesh and July 30-August 8, 2016 with John Coons. An ideal time for visiting one of the best birding regions in North America: great for local specialties and Mexican vagrants.

Peruvian Rainforests of the Tambopata: Macaw Lick Extraordinaire—July 24-August 4, 2016 with Pepe Rojas. Three-site tour to the most species-rich rainforest on Earth. Largest known macaw lick, canopy walkway and towers, eagles, and monkeys.

NEW/Brazil's Mouth of the Amazon: Mexiana Island, the Lower Xingu & Carajas—July 30-August 13, 2016 with Bret Whitney & Marcelo Padua. New two-week tour through diverse habitats around the mouth of the mighty Rio Amazonas as we seek most of the endemics of lower Amazonia.

August 2016

Machu Picchu & Abra Malaga, Peru—August 4-13, 2016 with Jesse Fagan. Southern Peru's east-slope, temperate birding at its best featuring several endemics and scenic Andean puna; also Machu Picchu and great subtropical birding on and near lovely hotel grounds.

Kenya Safari Spectacular—August 26-September 22, 2016 with Terry Stevenson. Unsurpassed in its combined wealth of bird life and mammal spectacle; includes Mt. Kenya, the arid north, Rift Valley lakes, Kakamega Forest and the far west, Masai Mara, Tsavo and the Taita Hills, and the coast. Time-saving internal flights.

France: Camargue & Pyrenees—August 27-September 6, 2016 with Megan Edwards Crewe & Tom Johnson. Two of Europe's finest birding destinations combined in this wonderful eleven-day tour, with varied highlights and some great French food.

September 2016

Rio Negro Paradise: Manaus, Brazil I & II—September 3-17, 2016 with Marcelo Padua & Dave Stejskal and September 11-25, 2016 with Bret Whitney & Pepe Rojas. Bird the rainforests and rivers of the mighty Amazon and Negro in an unforgettable mix of forest hikes and live-aboard luxury.

Bolivia's Avian Riches—September 3-18, 2016 ("Bountiful Beni: Bazillions of Birds" Extension) with Dan Lane & Jay VanderGaast. The special bird life of the Bolivian Andes; wonderful mountain scenery.

Slice of California: Seabirds to Sierra I & II—September 8-17, 2016 with Chris Benesh and September 13-22, 2016 with Tom Johnson. A diverse mix of West Coast specialties, montane species, and pelagics in rugged and scenic sites.

Ecuador's Shiripuno Lodge: Heartland of the Waorani—September 22-October 1, 2016 with Mitch Lysinger. A tour to Shiripuno Lodge, gateway to the Yasuni Biosphere Reserve in Ecuador's Amazon region.

Cape May Megan's Way—September 24-30, 2016 with Megan Edwards Crewe. See bird migration in action at one of the country's top migration hotspots.

Serra dos Tucanos, Brazil—September 24-October 4, 2016 with Marcelo Padua. A short but rich immersion in the avifauna of the Atlantic Forest, based at one lovely site near Rio.

Australia—September 30-October 20, 2016 with John Coons & Tom Johnson (Part I) and October 18-November 2, 2016 (Tasmania Extension) with Chris Benesh. In two parts for those with limited time. Part I covers the environs of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, southwest Australia, and Alice Springs. Part II begins in Darwin and continues to Queensland (Cairns, Atherton Tableland, Outback Queensland, and O'Reilly's Guest House). Both parts combine for a complete birding tour of Australia.

Southwestern Ecuador Specialties: Jocotoco Foundation Reserves

Willy Perez

Ecuator's Southwest is a unique corner of the country; the northern extension of the Tumbesian endemic center, it supports more endemic bird species than any other area of Ecuador. Our *Southwestern Ecuador Specialties* tour is designed to visit a variety of habitats in the Southwest with the opportunity to see a staggering number of those endemics, including the incredible Long-wattled Umbrellabird, El Oro Parakeet, Pale-headed Brush-Finch, and of course the eponymous Jocotoco Antpitta. And, in addition to seeing many rare or endangered birds, we'll gain an understanding of the conservation hotspots that support these precious creatures.

By staying at the Jocotoco Reserves, we are not only able to fulfil our dreams of seeing some spectacular birds, but we are also supporting the Jocotoco Foundation and the major conservation work it's doing to protect these special habitats, crucial for so many endemics to survive.

We'll visit several reserves, including Jorupe (think White-tailed Jay), Tapichalaca (Red-hooded Tanager), and Buenaventura (El Oro Parakeet). Buenaventura was established to protect the parakeet, which was discovered there in 1980. It's an extraordinary place where two major bioregions—the wet humid forests of the southern limit of the Choco and the dry scrub of the Tumbesian—merge. The resulting biodiversity—more than 330 bird species have been recorded there—never fails to impress.

The gorgeous facilities at Jorupe are surrounded by excellent and mature deciduous forest, where large *Bombax* trees draped with Spanish moss hang over the lodge and drip with birds typical of the zone, birds like Henna-hooded Foliage-gleaner, Black-and-white Tanager, and Pale-browed Tinamou (but on the ground!). Tapichalaca, at the southern boundary of Podocarpus National Park, is the oldest of the reserves; it was established to protect the Jocotoco Antpitta, which we'll hope to see along with the reserve's many hummers and tanagers.

The Jocotoco lodges have been purposefully designed for birders. Set within the forest, they make birding comfortable and easy. We can literally spot and scope to our heart's content from our lodge, as well as enjoy the numerous trails within the reserves.

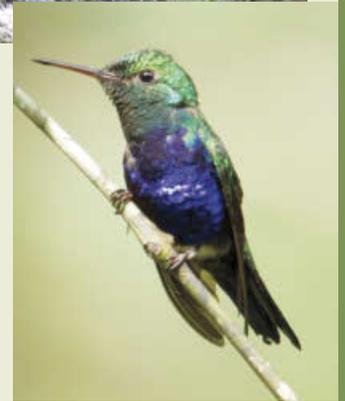
With all that this trip has to offer in terms of dazzling birds in beautiful surroundings, it will also be a lot of fun. Why not consider joining me this summer?

Dates are June 21-July 5. And check out Willy's other Ecuador tours for 2016. These include

Ecuador: Rainforest & Andes—*Highlights 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. February 28-March 13*

Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge—*Exploring the riches of the eastern Andean foothills of northern Ecuador for numerous specialties at Wildsumaco Lodge. March 13-23 and December 29-January 8, 2017*

Galapagos: An Intimate Look at Darwin's Islands—*A must for any naturalist and birder; small-group, broad coverage of the islands with plenty of time for the birds, exploring, and photography. July 9-19*



From the top: Jocotoco Antpitta with an earthworm; Violet-bellied Hummingbird; Long-wattled Umbrellabird; and Red-hooded Tanager. (Photos by guides Mitch Lysinger & John Rowlett and participant John Drummond)



A Journey to the High Arctic

Continued from page 1

the land and ice, with the most memorable one spotted ahead on the pack ice. This bear was quite curious and ended up walking closer and closer...right up to the ship for a good sniff before moving off. What a tremendous view! Again in the pack ice, we found a few beautiful Ivory Gulls flying about the ship, with one bird sticking around a bit longer and landing on the ice near the stern. It almost disappeared when it landed on the completely white ice. This is one of the truest Arctic birds there is. After seeing a few Walrus from the ship, we went ashore at Torellneset to approach a rookery of many lying in a pile on the beach. Before we knew it, several surfaced in the bay just off the beach and inspected us carefully with tusks completely emerging from the water. What a lovable beast.

It's not just the wildlife that makes this place so special. The scenery alone would merit a trip here, with deep-cut valleys and mountains that have been carved by ice. I think some of the fjords we entered are some of the prettiest places I have ever seen. Above 80° N latitude, 600 miles further north than Barrow, Alaska, we reached places few people ever see. Overall, the crew and staff on our ship were extremely hospitable and went out of their way to fulfill

Spring Finch Forecast: China!

Continued from page 1

triplists from the past two years and you'll see the "research" on which I'm basing this prediction.

The term "finch" is not terribly specific, but even limiting it to include only the finches in the family Fringillidae, we're still looking at roughly 15 species (19 possible on the checklist). This group includes such beauties as Gray-headed Bullfinch, White-winged Grosbeak, and a bunch of rosefinches such as the rare Tibetan Rosefinch and the stunning Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch. If you think Purple Finches are gorgeous (and who doesn't?) wait until you see some of these creatures! We also stand a good chance of a pile of snow—*snowfinches*, that is. While these finches lack the brilliant colors of the Fringillids, there's a subtle beauty about them. A close encounter with a Rufous-necked Snowfinch, for example, is sure to win over any primary-colored heart. Six species of snowfinch are possible, and both recent tours enjoyed them all.

Last, but not least, the most important "finch" of all can also be found on this trip—Przevalski's Rosefinch. Though superficially like



White-browed Tit-Warbler.
(Photo by guide Dave Stejskal)



The magnificent glacier at Magdalenafjorden; a pair of Dovekies; a Polar Bear jumps the ice. (Photos by guide John Coons and participants Betsy Fulmer & Warren Cairo)

our wants and desires. It was very strange to get back to Oslo and see the sun again dropping below the horizon and some semblance of darkness, and even stranger to get home to total darkness for many hours each night. But those long days will be remembered by all of us.

Spitsbergen & Svalbard Archipelago: A Cruise to the Norwegian Arctic is on the schedule for July 6-18, 2016 again with John Coons.

the other rosefinches, this species is unique enough that it has recently been placed in a family of its own, Urocynchramidae.

So, that's my finch forecast, but why stop there? Heck, I'm going to predict a bunch of buntings, too (15 species possible), including a chance for the highly endangered Rufous-backed Bunting. And redstarts (9 possible) with standouts like the exquisite Ala Shan and White-throated redstarts. Tits as well (10 species, 11 if you count Chinese Penduline-Tit) with endemics like Yellow-bellied and White-browed tits, plus the unusual Ground Tit, and

we could even add two more if we include the charming tit-warblers. How about some cranes? With 7 possible species including Siberian Crane, I predict we'll have some awesome encounters. Gamebirds are a bit more challenging, but with 11 species possible, from stunning Blood Pheasants to Tibetan Snowcock, we'll try pretty hard to get some good looks at these incredible birds as well.

I could easily go on and on making predictions, but I think you get the idea. There are some seriously sexy birds awaiting us in China, and I personally can't wait to show them to you.

Dates are April 26-May 17 with Jay VanderGaast and Jesper Hornskov.



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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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BORNEO



We've still got **one space** left on our June **Borneo** tour with Megan Crewe, where a host of endemics—including the gorgeous Whitehead's Trogon pictured here in the cool highlands of Mt Kinabalu—are possible.

If you've never been in the presence of the aptly named Rhinoceros Hornbill, nothing will quite prepare you for the din of a big group taking flight from a tree overhead; the sound of the wind rushing through the gaps created by missing underwing coverts sounds rather like an approaching hailstorm. Join us for the chance to experience the phenomenon for yourself!

Dates for Megan's tour are June 2-19.

(Photos by guide Dave Stejskal and participant Becky Hansen)

