

SEPTEMBER 2016

fieldguides®

B I R D I N G T O U R S W O R L D W I D E

Mouth of the Amazon

OUR TOURS

Jan Pierson

As we go to press with this issue, we've just wrapped up our annual Field Guides meeting in Arizona and are heading back to Kenya, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, England, and numerous locations stateside. It wasn't a birding tour (though of course we went out birding!), yet there were many parallels with Field Guides tours. Several folks put in a lot of quiet and detailed logistical work behind the scenes to set it all up; there was the great camaraderie of being on site; someone was always double-checking to be sure everyone who wanted to make an outing or see something in particular had a chance to do so; chairs were shifted at a table to welcome one more person; each of us touched base with every other person at the meeting; and there was a steady stream of smiles and laughter.

For more than 30 years, our goal has been to make every Field Guides tour a great individual and group adventure, a rich learning experience about birds and much more, a chance to share discoveries with friends old and new, an exploration of nature's great



Iceland

destinations, and, of course, a fun and carefree holiday for you. On tour or at our annual meeting, it's who we are.

Combined, our guides and office are a tight-knit community of professionals who know each other well, work together seamlessly, and care deeply about the success of your tour—we love what we do. Our community also includes myriad long-time clients who have become good friends over the years. They are our best advertising and often enjoy introducing new clients to the “Field Guides way” as much as we do!

Just back from our annual gathering, we look forward to the coming year. Let's go have a great tour experience together!

Photos by guide Eric Hynes and participants David & Judy Smith, Henry Trombley & Valerie Gebert

Texas

Jaguar Spotting

Also in this issue: 2/Upcoming Tours 3/Fresh From The Field 9/Our Guides

UPCOMING TOURS

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

January 2017

Nowhere but Northeast Brazil!—

January 9-27, 2017 (Southern Bahia Extension) with Bret Whitney & Dan Lane. From beautiful beaches to barren badlands, our tour is a quest for specialties of the endangered caatinga, chapada, and Atlantic Forest habitats. The Southern Bahia Extension offers an opportunity to see many additional endemic birds, some of which are not seen on our *Spectacular Southeast Brazil* tours.

Guyana: Wilderness Paradise I & II—

January 12-23, 2017 and January 28-February 8, 2017 with Megan Edwards Crewe & local guide. A survey of the country's vast untrammeled rainforest, with an emphasis on Guianan shield specialties and side trips to coastal and savanna regions and spectacular Kaieteur Falls.

Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge I & II—

January 13-22, 2017 with Willy Perez & local guide and February 3-12, 2017 with Mitch Lysinger & local guide. One-site tour to one of the most comfortable lodges in western Amazonia with some of the birdiest canopy platforms anywhere.

South Texas Rarities—January 14-20, 2017 with Chris Benesh. Escape the winter birding doldrums on our week-long tour to the bird-rich Rio Grande Valley, with specialties from kiskadees and Green Jays to Hook-billed Kites and Altamira Orioles. And the winter potential for Mexican vagrants is terrific!

Costa Rica: Birding the Edges—January 14-23, 2017 (Part 1) and January 22-31, 2017 (Part 2) with Tom Johnson & local guide. A two-parted tour to this bird-rich country exploring sites and birds not covered on our March or holiday tours.

Colombia: Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta—January 14-29, 2017 with Jesse Fagan & local guide. Energetic, endemic-oriented (30+) tour connecting reserves up the Magdalena Valley from Bogota to the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

Thailand—January 14-February 4, 2017 with Dave Stejskal & Jay VanderGaast. A wide variety of forest birds in the friendly heart of Southeast Asia (and fabulous Thai food).

Winter Japan: Dancing Cranes & Spectacular Sea-Eagles—January 20-February 4, 2017 with Phil Gregory. Japan's winter spectacles, including the fabulous cranes and Steller's Sea-Eagle.

Jewels of Ecuador: Hummers, Tanagers & Antpittas I & II—January 21-February 7, 2017 and March 21-April 7, 2017 with Willy Perez. Survey of Andean Ecuador; diverse avifauna dominated by colorful hummers and tanagers and more subtle and haunting antpittas.

Northern India: Birds, Tiger & the Taj Mahal

January 28-February 17, 2017 with Terry Stevenson. Fantastic adventure from the Ganges plains to the Himalayan foothills, with the Bharatpur wetlands, a good chance of Tiger, and the wondrous Taj Mahal.

February 2017

NEW/Colombia: Medellin Escape: Andes & Valleys—February 4-13, 2017 with Richard Webster & local guide. Rich forests from the foothills to treeline are accessed from good country hotels and comfortable ecotourism lodges at some of Colombia's best private reserves. Many Colombian endemics expected, but the tour is primarily an opportunity to gorge on the birds of the Andes after a short flight across the Caribbean.

Birding Plus/Birds & Wines of Chile and Argentina

February 4-18, 2017 with Marcelo Padua & John Coons. A tour combining an exploration of the great birds and vineyards of these two wonderful countries!

Cambodia: Angkor Temples & Vanishing Birds

February 4-18, 2017 with Phil Gregory. A "last chance" destination for some of the large, rare Asian waterbirds now extinct in neighboring countries, plus additional regional specialties and world-famous Angkor Wat.

Panama's Canopy Tower—February 5-11, 2017 (Canopy Lodge Extension) with Chris Benesh & local guide. A towering introduction to Neotropical birds based entirely at a unique lodge; quick access to famous Pipeline Road.

Mexico: Oaxaca—February 11-18, 2017 with Dan Lane. Superb birding with two dozen Mexican endemics and fascinating ruins while based in lovely Oaxaca City.

Guatemala: Shade-grown Birding—February 11-19, 2017 (Temples of Tikal Extension) with Jesse Fagan. Resplendent Quetzal, a host of hummingbirds, and Azure-rumped Tanager set against a dramatic volcanic landscape and colorful Mayan culture.

Trinidad & Tobago—February 11-20, 2017 with Tom Johnson & local guide. Wonderful introductory tour to South America's riches, including bellbirds, toucans, manakins, and motmots.

NEW/Owlberta: Alberta's Owls & More—February 18-24, 2017 with Jay VanderGaast. A short tour targeting owls and other winter specialties in the boreal forests, prairies, and foothills of the Canadian province of Alberta.

Jamaica I & II—February 26-March 4, 2017 with Jesse Fagan & local guide and March 5-11, 2017 with Eric Hynes & local guide. A quick adventure in search of Jamaica's 27 endemics and numerous regional specialties at Green Castle Estate.

Borneo I—February 28-March 17, 2017 with Megan Edwards Crewe & local guide. Three prime areas in some of Earth's richest forests while based in comfort right in the wild.

March 2017

Colombia: Santa Marta Escape—

March 4-12, 2017 with Richard Webster & local guide. An easier subset of "Bogota, the Magdalena Valley & Santa Marta," reached by a direct flight from Miami with a couple more days for a more leisurely approach.

Southwestern Ecuador Specialties:

Jocotoco Foundation Reserves—

March 4-18, 2017 with Mitch Lysinger. Focuses on the many specialties of the southwest, in particular the very local endemics of the humid foothills and mountains and Tumbesian specialties.

Brazil Nutshell: Intervalles, Iguazu Falls & the Pantanal I & II—

March 4-18, 2017 and March 25-April 8, 2017 with Marcelo Padua. 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.

East Africa Highlights: Kenya & Tanzania—

March 4-24, 2017 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.

Puerto Rico

March 11-17, 2017 with Tom Johnson. A week of respite to a very birdy and beautiful Caribbean island, a mix of North American and local culture and cuisine; 17 endemic birds and a number of other Caribbean specialties.

Spring in South Texas

March 11-19, 2017 with Chris Benesh. Magnificent Whooping Cranes, lots of South Texas specialties, and spring hawk migration on this exciting tour.

Panama's Canopy Tower & Lodge—

March 12-19, 2017 with John Coons & local guide. Combining the best of both worlds into a great week—the Canopy Tower and Pipeline Road with the Canopy Lodge and the montane forest of El Valle de Anton.

Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge—

March 12-22, 2017 with Willy Perez. Exploring the riches of the eastern Andean foothills of northern Ecuador for numerous specialties at Wildsumaco Lodge.

Western Panama: Chiriqui & Bocas del Toro

March 18-27, 2017 with Jesse Fagan. A new tour to two new Panamanian destinations located in the Chiriqui highlands and Caribbean lowlands at Bocas del Toro.

Costa Rica—March 19-April 3, 2017 with Jay VanderGaast. Resplendent Quetzals, Three-wattled Bellbirds, Scarlet Macaws in a beautiful country with easy travel.

Hawaii—March 30-April 8, 2017 with Dan Lane. We'll visit three of the major islands—Oahu, Kauai, and Hawaii—giving us a chance to sample a great portion of the Hawaiian endemic birds and the seabird specialties.

Ghana: Window into West African

Birding—March 30-April 18, 2017 with Phil Gregory & local guide. In search of numerous West African specialties as well as White-necked Rockfowl.

Holiday Tours

November 2016

Holiday at San Isidro, Ecuador—

November 19-28, 2016 with Mitch Lysinger. A bird-rich holiday escape based primarily at the very comfortable San Isidro Lodge.

Holiday Mexico: Yucatan & Cozumel—

November 19-28, 2016 with Chris Benesh & local guide. A tour for the most interesting birds of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula amidst its attractive Mayan sites and only a short flight from the US.

Peru's Rarely Explored South: High Arid

Deserts & Nazca Lines—November 19-December 1, 2016 with Jesse Fagan. A tour over the Thanksgiving break through grand Peruvian landscapes to many birding sites south of Lima, from Cusco and Arequipa to Lake Titicaca and Nazca. Coastal and Andean birding at its best. Lots of endemics and Peruvian near-endemics.

December 2016

Iquitos, Peru: Canopy Walkways & Ancient Forests—December 17-28, 2016 with Dan Lane. Two-week immersion in one of the most species-rich regions of Amazonia, including the white-sand forests near Iquitos.

Holiday Costa Rica:

Rancho Naturalista I & II—December 18-26, 2016 with Megan Edwards Crewe & local guide and December 30, 2016-January 7, 2017 with Jesse Fagan & local guide. One-site holiday tour based at the comfortable Rancho Naturalista Lodge, with excursions to other habitats on Costa Rica's bird-rich Caribbean slope.

Arizona Winter Specialties—

December 29, 2016-January 4, 2017 with Chris Benesh. Exceptional winter birding on a short tour with numerous specialties and potential rarities.

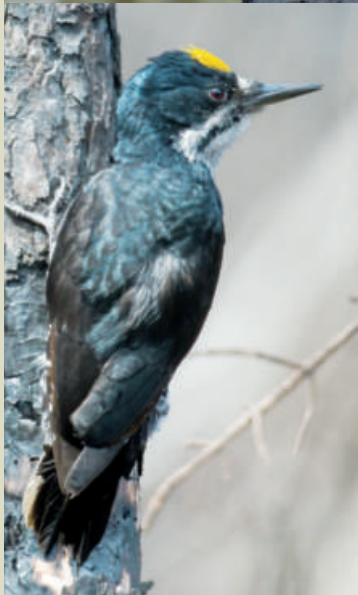
Ecuador's Wildsumaco Lodge—December 29, 2016-January 8, 2017 with Willy Perez. Exploring the riches of the eastern Andean foothills of northern Ecuador for numerous specialties at Wildsumaco Lodge.

Panama's Canopy Lodge: El Valle de Anton—

December 30, 2016-January 6, 2017 with John Coons & local guide. A superb introduction to Neotropical birds or a complement to your broader Middle American birding, all based at a charming lodge.

Trinidad & Tobago—December 30, 2016-January 8, 2017 with Tom Johnson & local guide. Wonderful introductory tour to South America's bird riches, including bellbirds, toucans, manakins, and motmots.

FRESH FROM THE FIELD



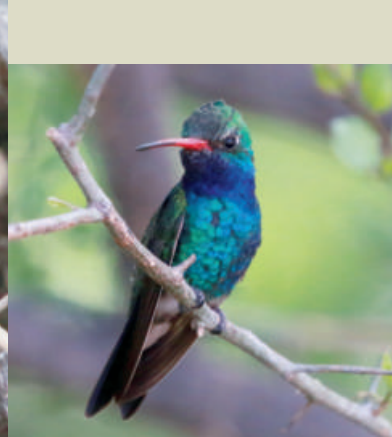
Our two **Alaska** tours are always filled with exciting birds; pictured here, just a handful of them from our visits to the Pribilofs and Denali on Part One of the recent tour guided by Chris Benesh and Pepe Rojas. (Dave Stejskal and Tom Johnson guided the second tour.) At top left, Horned Puffin—no matter how often you see that bill, it still looks like it can't be real; next to the puffin, a White-winged Crossbill, another bird with an interesting bill; continuing along, a beautiful Arctic Tern and a Black-backed Woodpecker showing a male's yellow cap; and finally, a pair of Red-necked Phalaropes with the duller male on top, an example of reverse sexual dimorphism, which is rare in birds. (Photos by participant Herb Fechter)



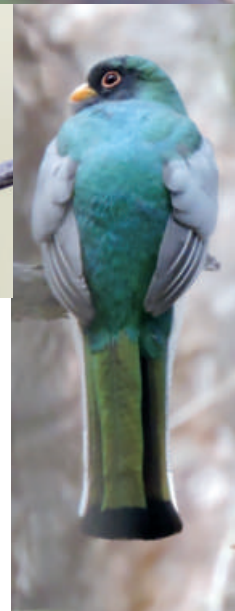
On Part Two of our **Alaska** adventure, we travel to Nome, the Seward Peninsula, and Barrow, where Dave and Tom's group enjoyed what Dave describes as some of the best looks at Spectacled Eiders he's had in his many years of going to Barrow. Other sights included another tundra species, this Willow Ptarmigan at top right that has molted from his winter whites; the cute Hoary Redpoll at far left; and American Golden-Plover among many species of shorebirds showing their breeding plumages. (Photos by participants Doug Clarke and David & Judy Smith)

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FRESH FROM THE FIELD



These photos from our two recent **Arizona: Birding the Border** tours, guided by resident Arizonans John Coons and Dave Stejskal, show a few of the reasons birders flock to Southeast Arizona. For one, there's the possibility for Mexican vagrants, like the Slate-throated Redstart, top left, seen by the second tour in the Chiricahuas; for another, there's a wide variety of hummingbird species, like the Broad-billed at top right, and the beautiful little Lucifer that was also seen; and there are many resident species of restricted range, like the Five-striped Sparrow and the Elegant Trogon shown here. And if we had more space, we could show you some of the other reasons—the owls and nightjars, the mammals and herps, and the outstanding scenery. (Photos by guide Dave Stejskal and participant Doug Happ)



Tangara tanagers are the most colorful of a colorful group, but this Paradise Tanager from Marcelo Padua's recent **Rainforest & Savanna: Alta Floresta & the Pantanal, Brazil** tour, takes the cake. As you can guess from the tour name, we concentrate on two sites in Brazil—the rainforest of Alta Floresta and the vast savanna of the Northern Pantanal, each with very different habitats and thus different birds. The Zigzag Heron, above right, is—like the tanager—a denizen of the rainforest, while the Red-legged Seriema beside it hails from the Pantanal. (Photos by participant Bill Fraser)



Ah, the Grand Canyon, one of the stars of guide John Coons' **Northern Arizona's Canyons & Condor** tour.

The other headliner, though not pictured here, also put in a star appearance on both of the two recent tours—such a wonderful bird to see. And since it's Arizona, there were other great raptors as well as the condor, including the Zone-tailed Hawk above, which provided both groups with excellent views. The male Olive Warbler is a colorful addition to the landscape; the sole member of its family, Peucedramidae, the warbler has been increasing in numbers in Northern Arizona in recent years. (Photos by guide Cory Gregory)



Guide Mitch Lysinger (pictured below with his recent tour group) claims he's running out of ways to tell us just how much he loves guiding the **Southwestern Ecuador's Specialties** tour. "Not only is the set of birds we search for so special—rare, strange, endemic, and strikingly beautiful," he notes, "but the diverse landscapes, key reserves, and comfortable Jocotoco lodges are all just so dreamy." A couple of the birds that help make this tour such a hit—in addition, of course, to the very local Jocotoco Antpitta and a host of beautiful hummers—include the simply stunning Barred Fruiteater, top left, and the mesmerizing Long-wattled Umbrellabird—just look at that wattle! (Photos by participant Randy Beaton)



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As guide Megan Edwards Crewe remarks about her recent **Borneo** tour, "Where do you start a highlight list for a trip with so many highlights?" Well, it has to be done, so here are just three from Megan's tour: a Diard's Trogon, top left, sitting stock still mere feet from where the group stood; a Bornean Green-Magpie on a log with a dead snake clutched in one foot—voted bird of the trip by the group; and a Wallace's Hawk-Eagle keeping its eye on some nearby flying squirrels. (Alas, we've failed to mention the Orangutans and Proboscis Monkeys, the Bearded Pigs and flying treefrogs, or any of the plants.) (Photos by guide Megan Crewe and participants Bob & Connie Reau)



The two unusual peaks in the photo above are called the Mule Ears—they're in Big Bend National Park where guides Chris Benesh and Cory Gregory and their **Texas's Big Bend & Hill Country** tour group spent several days this spring. Colima Warbler, an essentially Mexican species at home in the wooded upper canyons of the Chisos, is one of the special birds of the park. The Clarke's Grebe, looking out of place in the dry, West Texas desert habitat, was seen at Lake Balmorhea, a stop on the way to the Hill Country. (Photos by guide Chris Benesh and participant Raylene Wall)



The majestic Gelada, endemic to the Ethiopian highlands, is—according to Terry Stevenson who guided our recent **Ethiopia** tour—also known as the Bleeding-heart Monkey, and you can see why from this photo. White-throated Bee-eaters, like the one at top right, were described by Terry as being fairly common and satisfyingly tame—and exuberant songsters; the name says it all for Beautiful Sunbird, which was also common at several of the tour sites; and the nicely posed Silvery-cheeked Hornbill was one of six species of hornbill seen on the tour. (Photos by participant Becky Hansen)



Megan Edwards Crewe and her **Classical Greece** tour participants were able to enjoy spring migration and breeding birds amidst Greece's lovely countryside, as well as visiting some of the country's ancient attractions, among them the Erechtheion, a smaller temple flanking the Parthenon atop the Acropolis in Athens. The six caryatids (pillars carved to look like women) are replicas; the originals have been moved to the new Parthenon museum. Two of the breeding birds the group observed included a Great Spotted Woodpecker working on its nest and a male Subalpine Warbler carrying food. (Photos by guide Megan Edwards Crewe and participant Merrill Lester)



FRESH FROM THE FIELD



Cape May is a wonderful place to be in spring, and according to Tom Johnson, who guided our **Spring in Cape May** tour there along with Doug Gochfeld—that's Tom above scanning for seabirds and shorebirds—warbler migration was excellent this year, with Cape May, Bay-breasted, Magnolia, Blackburnian, and many others. The Black-crowned Night-Heron nests on Cape May and also passes through in migration, and there were what Tom describes as “scads of Red Knots” (a few below) as well as flocks of other shorebirds flying by or wandering the beaches. (Photos by participant Tatiana Neumann)



Owls, owls, owls—it's the byword for our two **Arizona Nightbirds & More** tours, guided this year by Dave Stejskal and Tom Johnson, and well it should be with each tour tallying eight owl species, including the Whiskered Screech-Owl, above, and the highly-sought Spotted Owl beside it. A light-morph Swainson's Hawk perched next to the road was just one of the “& More” sightings in the Chiricahuas. (Photos by guides Dave Stejskal & Tom Johnson and participant Doug Happ)



According to guide Jay VanderGaast, our **Point Pelee** tour hit the jackpot this year with a migrant fallout on the second day of the tour that produced nearly 20 species of warblers, including vibrant male Cape Mays and Bay-breasted. The gorgeous Golden-winged Warbler, top left, was the last of the 29 warbler species seen on the tour. Always noteworthy, Scarlet Tanagers brightened the landscape; and the Wilson's Snipe, below, was nice to see in a grassland area north of Toronto known as the Carden Plain. (Photos by guide Jay VanderGaast and participant Grace Donald)



Of all the many fascinating birds to see in **Papua New Guinea**, birds-of-paradise are usually at the top of everyone's list, and there's no question why when you look at the four pictured here, all seen on Jay VanderGaast's recent tour: from top left, a female Brown Sicklebill catching a yellow snack; a Blue Bird-of-paradise, showing its white eye crescents and bright blue wings; Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise, a very showy member of an extravagant group and the hands down favorite of the trip; and Lesser Bird-of-paradise, seen both flying over and in display with other males and several females. (Photos by participant Steve Rannels)

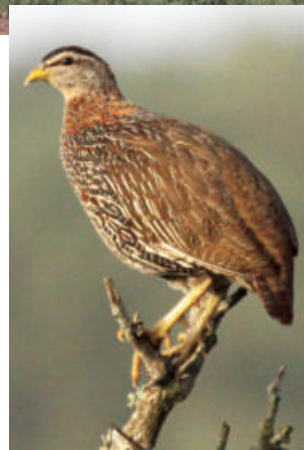




As Eric Hynes notes of his recent **Iceland** tour, one of that beautiful country's avian treasures is its many shorebirds in breeding plumage, like the two above, a lovely russet Black-tailed Godwit that Eric describes as the best looking shorebird on the planet—and this from a former Mainer who knows his shorebirds—and a Common Redshank. Above the shorebirds, an elegant Black-headed Gull, a bird that was seen almost every day of the tour, and an equally elegant and entertaining Red-throated Loon that apparently got into a squabble with a Common Eider. (Photos by guide Eric Hynes)



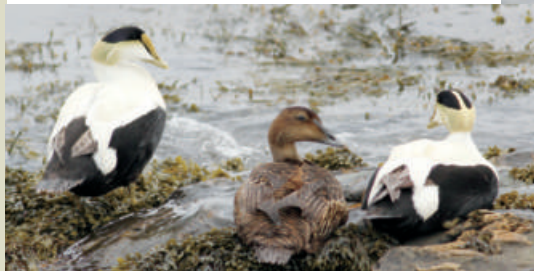
There are probably no more than 500 Northern Bald Ibis (below; a.k.a. Waldrapp) left on Earth, so seeing 25% of them (leaving it to you to do the math) on Jesse Fagan's recent **Morocco** tour couldn't help but be a highlight. Seeing this Double-spurred Francolin extremely well—his best looks ever according to Jesse—was another. And let's not forget the marvels of traveling in an exotic land of giant dunes and ancient fortified cities—one example, Ait Benhaddou, shown here—and great food. (Photos by guide Jesse Fagan)



It's difficult to sum up Terry Stevenson's recent **Hungary & Romania: The Best of Eastern Europe** in the space here, but we'll give it a go. Three nights on a houseboat enjoying delicious food while birding the channels and lagoons of the Danube Delta for many great European birds, including the breeding plumaged Eurasian Spoonbill below; 25 Great Bustards, with a displaying male in Hungary, and amazing looks at Corncrakes in Romania; a slew of raptors; watching Black Bears from a hide—a youngster here looking like he might be getting into trouble; and a number of cultural stops, including a visit to Bran—or Dracula's—Castle below. (Photos by participant Jan Shaw)

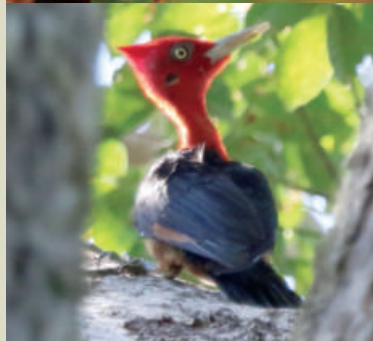


Eric Hynes (fourth from left) and his **Maine: Birding Downeast** tour spent nine enjoyable days this spring birding the state where he began his guiding career. Among the many shorebirds to be seen in Maine, the Piping Plover at right that walked almost through the group is a nice one; below the plover, a Prairie Warbler—among 23 species of warblers seen—belting out his song; and Common Eiders—common, that is, on the coast of Maine—another bird that apparently wanted to join the group. (Photos by guide Eric Hynes)



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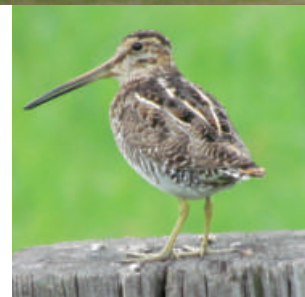
FRESH FROM THE FIELD



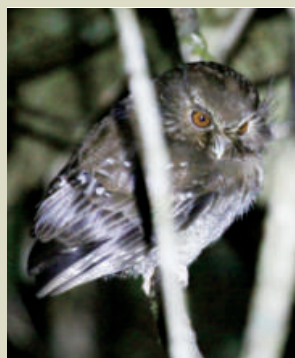
A Jaguar photo like this, up close and personal, must come from one of Marcelo Padua's popular **Jaguar Spotting** tours—there's just not much that compares with spotting a Jaguar in the wild and being able to spend some time observing its behavior. The Yellow-breasted Crake, top left, is widely distributed in freshwater marshes throughout the Neotropics, but seldom seen this well. Red-necked Woodpecker is a large species in the genus *Campephilus* with a remarkable red head and breast; it's found in Amazonian forest. (Photos by participant Rick Thompson)



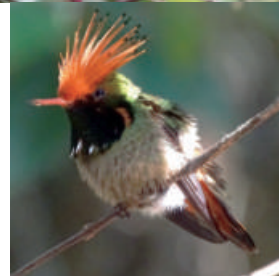
Birding Montana on Terry McEneaney's **Montana: Yellowstone to Glacier** tour means being surrounded by scenes like the one above in the Mission Valley—a landscape that is as sublime as it is beautiful. And in the midst of it, this year's tour group enjoyed moments of discovery: the incredible flight maneuvers of a Peregrine, a Gray Partridge defending its chicks, Ferruginous Hawks keeping a watchful eye on their vulnerable nesting young, a Long-tailed Weasel hunting Columbian Ground Squirrels, and good looks at a number of birds, including the two here—Wilson's Snipe and Western Meadowlark—both seen almost daily. (Photos by guide Terry McEneaney and participant Sheran Clark)



Seeing scads of parrots at a lick is a remarkable experience, and a predictable one on our **Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge** tour, guided by Mitch Lysinger. These are Cobalt-winged Parakeets below, feeding at one of the two licks we'll visit during the tour. We don't see as many Wire-tailed Manakins (above) or Green-backed Trogons, but we do see these and many, many more very well. (Photos by participant Lisa Spellman)



We like to see the little guy, above left, on these pages; he's the Long-whiskered Owlet, a rare bird indeed and one of the specialties of our **Peru's Magnetic North** tour, guided by two Peru guys, Dan Lane and Jesse Fagan. There are many other great birds as well, like the two tanagers shown here, the Yellow-scarfed next to the owlet and the Flame-faced; both seem to be pretty good at finding themselves a bite to eat. The group also enjoyed a plethora of hummingbirds; the Marvelous Spatuletail, one of those "you have to see it to believe it" birds was seen well, as was the little Rufous-crested Coquette, shown here. (Photos by guides Dan Lane & Jesse Fagan)



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OUR GUIDES

IN YOUR WORDS AND OURS

A couple of years ago, **Bret Whitney** introduced his “Great Rivers” program at Field Guides, tours to some of Brazil’s most important waterways, many of them poorly known ornithologically. It has proved an exciting series—traveling with Bret anywhere can be an adventure, but to places that few people have birded and new species are being discovered is pretty neat. “Being in such a remote location was a privilege, being there with Bret was mind-blowing...” and “No one knows more about the birds of Brazil than Bret, and he can lure anything into view...” In the year to come, Bret will be—where else?—birding Brazil, with trips to the Northeast (that chunk sticking out into the Atlantic), the Rio Roosevelt, the Madeira-Tapajos interfluvium, the Rio Negro, the remote Rio Tapajos, and the Rio Aripuana.

“Jesse was the best feature of the tour—a real gem,” is the kind of thing we often hear about **Jesse Fagan**. But what does this mean? Well, having an “eagle eye” and being “an amazing birder, an expert at handling tour logistics” who is also “infinitely patient at getting everyone on the difficult birds,” doesn’t hurt, but it’s not the whole story. Just as importantly is taking care that the people on the tour are having fun, and at that our ‘Motmot’ is also an expert. As one recent participant wrote, “We enjoyed the tour even more because Jesse keeps the group energized and happy.” Next year look for Jesse just about everywhere, with tours in South America (Colombia, Peru, and Galapagos); Middle America (Costa Rica, Panama, Jamaica, and Guatemala—did you know he’s got a new Northern Central America field guide coming out this fall?); North America (South Carolina and the Bahamas); plus Morocco and Australia.

“Where to start!” a recent tour participant wrote in after a tour with **Chris Benesh**. “He so obviously loves Alaska that the enthusiasm he created for the group was palpable.” Chris has the skills a guide needs—he obviously knows the birds and where to find them—but he’s got those Field Guides extras, too, the ability to communicate both his knowledge of the birds he’s showing you and his joy in showing them to you, and he’s a very funny guy. In the year ahead, you’ll find Chris all over North America—Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, California, Texas, and Newfoundland & Nova Scotia—as well as Panama, Mexico, Spain, and Australia.

With an ever-present twinkle in his eye, **Mitch Lysinger** is living proof that doing what you love keeps you young. It goes without saying that Mitch is a great birder: “His ability to hear bird song/chip notes (!) and then locate a bird for the group is outstanding,” says one of his recent tour participants. And there’s more: “His sense of humor is simply wonderful—he makes everyone happy to be there.” Mitch would love nothing more than to show you some of Ecuador’s birds in the coming year, whether in the Southwest, at Shiripuno or Sacha lodges, or at his home at San Isidro.

It’s been said of **John Coons** that he’s a champion guide and a fine fellow to boot. “Tireless, considerate, thorough, one step ahead and yet in the moment...he’s the real deal in the world of birding.” That’s our ‘Kingfisher’ to a tee—a world-class birder who rarely forgets anything he ever learned about a bird, or about much else for that matter, and who brings his birding skills, experience, patience, good humor, and great stories to every tour he guides. Next year those tours will be to Panama, Texas, Arizona, Australia, Brazil, Chile and Argentina (birds & wine!), and Spitsbergen.

We regularly hear from participants that **Willy Perez** is engaging and positive, focused on seeing the birds but always ready to lend a hand, and that he’s the best bird spotter a participant has encountered in fifty years of birding with some of the world’s best. Oh, and that he tells a good story at dinner! Willy combines the best of birding and guiding and makes his tours a very rewarding experience—“We learned so much,” a recent participant commented, “and we’d travel with him anywhere.” For 2017, that means 8 different Ecuador tours, including a new one to the Northwest (*Cloudforests of Ecuador: All the Best of the Wild Northwest*) as well as trips to Chile and Brazil. He’ll be busy!

Continued on page 10



OUR GUIDES

IN YOUR WORDS AND OURS

In the Acknowledgements for her novel *Oryx and Crake*, the novelist Margaret Atwood thanks Sue and **Phil Gregory** for showing her the Red-necked Crake from the balcony of their house in Queensland, Australia. Over the years, many of us have also thanked Phil for showing us birds both rare and not-so-rare on the many Field Guides tours he's guided in Africa, Asia, and Australasia. "We really appreciated Phil's skill in finding the birds and then taking care that we saw them, especially in the case of the White-necked Rockfowl, which we saw extremely well." In 2017, Phil will be offering two new tours, *Mongolia: The Gobi Desert, Steppe & Taiga* and *Papua New Guinea & New Britain in Style*, as well as our tried-and-true itineraries in Japan, Cambodia, Ghana, and Madagascar.

"Eric was the consummate guide," or "I just can't say enough good things about Eric," is what we usually hear about **Eric Hynes**—shown here in Jamaica with his two assistants. That, and "I valued all the descriptions he gave us of the birds and tried to remember and apply them to the birds I saw..." and "I appreciated his taking the extra time to help me get better at identifying birds." The only wistful comment we ever hear is that people wish he were doing more tours. There are a couple of wonderful little girls to watch growing up, however, so for 2017 it's Jamaica, Maine, and Iceland on the tour side and some important Field Guides work from home, too!

"I never expected to have so much fun," one participant commented, having just returned from one of **Terry McEneaney's** Ireland tours. "The landscape was beautiful, the birding excellent, and the music extraordinary." Terry designed our popular Ireland tours, and it's his knowledge of the country and of the musicians, many of whom are relatives, that makes the tours so successful. It also doesn't hurt that he has a great partner in his wife, Karen, who brings both personal attention and a lively sense of humor to the mix. Next year Terry and Karen will be in Ireland in the spring—they'll do the fall tour this November—and then for Terry it's on to Montana for his Yellowstone to Glacier tour.

Since **Tom Johnson** joined Field Guides two years ago, we've heard rave reviews. "I've been on several tours with other companies, and Tom was probably the best leader I've birded with," are the words of one participant. And another: "Tom took extra time and effort for those who had trouble finding birds or were inexperienced birders... he is a sensitive, intelligent steward of nature and is especially articulate. He is a young gem." A tall one, too, as you might be able to tell from this photo, and one who's becoming a key part of our Field Guides family. Next year you'll find Tom in numerous New World locales—Trinidad, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Colorado, Arizona, Cape May, Alaska, and California—as well as Australia. In addition, he'll be doing a Great Rivers trip with Bret to Brazil and a new tour to Pennsylvania for spring migration.

Dave Stejskal is regularly described as having a "fabulous ear" and a remarkable ability to hear and find birds and to then show them to others. People also mention his ability to handle any situation with a calm demeanor and a sense of humor (just get him going on word play some time). If you're like a number of Dave's recent tour participants who have remarked that they would like to travel with Dave as often as possible, you'd have a number of good possibilities in 2017—in Asia, for instance, trips to Borneo, China, and Thailand; in South America, Brazil and Peru; and in North America, Colorado and Arizona.

Here's a picture of **Dan Lane** standing in front of a mountain in Peru—but it's not just any mountain. Dan and that mountain have a history. Years ago he spent two months there as part of an LSU expedition, working the forests from bottom to top; it's one of the places he honed the vast knowledge of Neotropical birds he brings into play with participants on each of his southward tours (and something that has helped him identify a few new species along the way, one of which is why we call him the 'Barbet'). They also benefit from his positive attitude that "makes getting up at the crack of dawn a lot more fun" (always helpful!). Next year the Barbet's doing two Oaxaca tours, trips to Northeast Brazil and Manaus, both Iquitos and Peru's Magnetic North, Hawaii, New Zealand, and Louisiana (where you can discover *boudin* and much else).





At the top of **Marcelo Padua's** 2017 schedule is his *Birds & Wine of Chile & Argentina* tour (yes, that one the 'Kingfisher' will be on). Then he'll return to Brazil (Brazil Nutshell, Rainforest & Savanna, Jaguar Spotting, and more), and in the fall he'll join Megan in France. People almost invariably comment on Marcelo's "incredible eyes, ears, and memory," and "his amazing ability to instantly hear distant birds." But just as important as his birding skill is his ebullient personality. As a participant on one of his Brazil tours put it, "I cannot think of a better guide...he seemed to know everyone we met...and just by being Marcelo, managed to iron out any travel issues with apparent ease."



● **Megan Edwards Crewe** does many things well— "Megan's birding skills are amazing," she gives "great directions for finding each bird," "her sense of humor, wonderful stories, and dedicated professionalism are great assets." But one thing that stands out in many of your comments is that she's a natural teacher, "...she is caring and willing to impart any information you show interest in. I learn so much from her," a recent participant wrote, and that makes for a richer tour experience. Megan will be busy next year on tours to many parts of the world— Guyana, Borneo, Belize, Alaska, France, Cape May, Chile, and Trinidad—quite the peripatetic schedule!



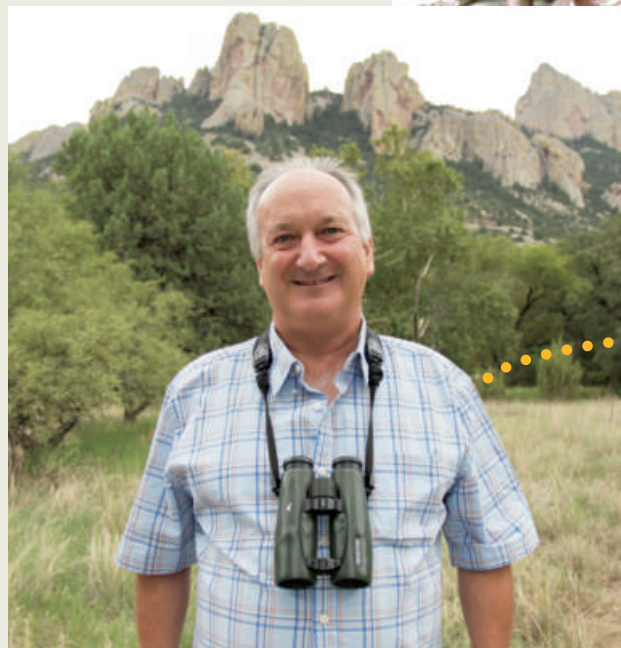
● **Richard Webster** is invariably described as having a deep knowledge of birds combined with exceptional birding skills. "Richard Webster is so inspiring in his knowledge of birds in general and with the birds of Bhutan in particular that I really enjoy birding with him," said one participant recently. "He is also very honest and forthright about what he knows and



doesn't know, and this reflects confidence and security and is totally refreshing." He's also very good at reimagining his tours, something he's done for two Colombia tours next year—Medellin Escape and Cali Escape, both short, ten-day tours to the forests of the central and western Andes. In addition to these two, you'll find him on another Colombia tour in Santa Marta, in Bhutan, and in Ethiopia.

● As a guide, **Jay VanderGaast** is the real deal. "Jay is IMPRESSIVE in every way," one participant remarked following a recent tour. "He's all that anyone could ever hope for in a guide...Plus, his friendly, outgoing personality and keen sense of humor mean he's a pleasure to be with." Many

of you who have traveled with Jay already know this, but he's also apparently a great negotiator—here he's using those skills with the wigmen of Papua New Guinea, though we're not sure what he has in mind buying. Jay's tours next year include trips to Costa Rica, Thailand, New Guinea, Australia, Point Pelee, and France. Oh yes, and a new trip he's calling Owlberta, targeting owls and other winter specialties of the Canadian province of Alberta...cool!



● With so much experience, so much birding know-how, you expect **Terry Stevenson** to know the birds and wildlife like no one else. But what people who haven't traveled with Terry don't always anticipate is that he's such an amiable guy with a fund of great stories. "The best feature of the tour," according to a recent participant on Terry's Kenya & Tanzania tour, "was having Terry as our guide...not only did he know his stuff, he was generous in sharing his knowledge and a charming and fun-loving host to boot." In the coming year, Terry will be guiding two tours outside of Africa—in Northern India and Hungary & Romania—as well as Kenya & Tanzania (two departures), Kenya, and Namibia & Botswana. Stories aplenty there, no doubt.



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Field Guides business meeting 2016: front (l. to r.), Marcelo Padua, Mitch Lysinger, Jesse Fagan, Sharon Mackie; standing (l. to r.), Richard Webster, John Rowlett, Carmen Bustamante, Abbie Rowlett, Lynn Yeager, Caroline Lewis, Eric Hynes, Karen Turner, Ruth Kuhl in front of Tiara Westcott, John Coons, Peggy Watson, Chris Benesh, Karen & Terry McEaney, Peg Wallace, Dan Lane, Rose Ann Rowlett, Megan Edwards Crewe, Dave Stejskal, Bret Whitney, Doug Gochfeld, Cory Gregory, Terry Stevenson, Jan Pierson, and Tom Johnson

Good birding from all of us at Field Guides!

