



CHEEPERS! NEWS

Volume 1, Issue 2

February 28, 2010

WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

Welcome to Volume 1, Issue 2 of Cheepers! News issued by Cindy and Jim Beckman.

We are in the middle of a very busy period having just returned from a 20-day trip to Ecuador (see trip report below), heading to the San Diego Birding Festival in a couple of days (see article on page 2) and then we are going to Belize on March 19 for 9 days of birding for a fundraising trip we put together for the Dayton Audubon Society.

As a reminder, we formed **Cheepers!** with the goal of providing affordable options for international birding during challenging economic times. We offer birding trips to some of the world's best birding locations using expert in-country guides while staying at comfortable (but not expensive) lodges and maintaining a lower per-day cost than the vast majority of other birding tour companies.

If you have suggestions for articles, please drop us an email (cheepers@sbcglobal.net) with your suggestion(s).

Special Interest Articles:

- Welcome to our Newsletter
- Cheepers! Ecuador Trip Report Highlights

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CHEEPERS! Ecuador Trip Report Highlights

Cheepers! just completed 17 full days of Ecuador birding (Feb 7 – Feb 23) with 661 species seen and 67 additional species heard (we saw or heard 44.4% of all species in Ecuador).

The trip was split into 3 parts - the Northwest Andes, the Eastern Andes and an Amazon River Basin extension.

During the 1st part of the trip, we saw 317 species with 29 additional species heard while birding in and around Yanachocha Reserve, Old Nono-Mindo Road, Upper and Lower Tandayapa Valley, Tony Nunnery's Gardens, the Angel Paz "Paz de las Aves", an Oilbird Cave, Milpe Bird Sanctuary, Silanche Bird Sanctuary, Pacto-Pachijal Road, and Calacali.

For the 2nd part of the trip, we saw 312 species with 51 additional species heard while birding in and around Antisana Reserve, Papallacta Pass, Guango, Guacamayos Ridge, Loreto, Gareno Lodge, and San Isidro.

For the 3rd part of the trip, we flew from Quito to Coca, then went down the Napo River for about 2 ½ hours to Sani Lodge where we saw 206

species with 36 additional species heard during our 5-day, 4-night stay (basically 3 ¼ days of birding as most of day 1 and all of day 5 was travel). *PLEASE NOTE: The combined total for the 3 parts is greater than the total species seen and heard as some species were seen in multiple parts of the trip.*

Native Ecuadorians Andres Vasquez (co-author of the Spot Field Books for Birds of Northwest Ecuador and Birds and Common Mammals of Ecuadorian Amazon) and Marcelo Andy provided excellent organization, planning and birding expertise in leading our 12-person group through parts 1 and 2 of the trip. Marcelo led the group at Sani Lodge with the assistance of Sani native guide Domingo.

Trip highlights included:

- 64 hummingbird species including Fiery Topaz and Giant Hummingbird
- 60 tanager species (97 if we

count all the species in the Thraupidae family)

- 20 parrot species
- 5 of 6 Aracari species
- 6 of 7 Kingfisher species
- 8 of 9 Jacamar species
- Andean Cock of the Rock
- Andean Condor
- Cocha Antshrike
- Crested Eagle (very rare adult dark morph perched, viewed by all thru scope)
- Gray-breasted Crake (one of many Napo River Islands endemics we saw)
- Oilbirds (in a sun-lit gorge and flying at night)
- Tanager-Finch (rare and highly localized in NW)

(Please visit our website for a detailed trip report)

This was the 2nd Ecuador birding trip for **Cheepers!** owners Cindy and Jim Beckman. We have a return trip scheduled in November 2010 following an itinerary very similar to this trip, as well as a new itinerary covering the southwest part of the country to be scheduled for 2011.



Cindy and Jim at the 2009 Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival

San Diego Bird Festival

Cindy and Jim will have a vendor booth at the San Diego Bird Festival on March 4, 5 and 6. The festival will be based out of the Marina Village Conference Center in Mission Bay. Birding & Optics Expo exhibitor hours are 9AM to 8PM on March 4 and March 5 and 11AM to 3PM on March 6.

Cheepers! will be promoting scheduled 2010 and 2011 birding trips to Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador,

Namibia, and South Africa.

Each San Diego Festival participant who registers for a **Cheepers!** trip by April 6, 2010, will receive a free birding guide from **Cheepers!** for their destination country and will be entered into a drawing for a Z-Bolt Laser Pen, with the drawing to be held on April 10, 2010.

See page 5 for a similar offer for birders who cannot attend the San Diego Festival.

CHEEPERS! - Costa Rica 2010 Updates

Cheepers! is accepting registrations for our July/August birding trip to Costa Rica. Join us for a 10-day trip to **Central Costa Rica** where we visit the most renowned birding sites in the central part of the country: La Selva Biological Station, Arenal Volcano, Monteverde and Carrera National Park.

This trip begins on July 16, ends on July 25, and is priced at \$2100 with a single supplement of \$345.

You can depart for home on day 10 or join us for a 10-day visit to remote areas of **Southern Costa Rica:** Corcovado National Park, Wilson's Botanical Gardens, Las Cruces Biological Station and Los Quetzales National Park.

This trip begins on July 25, ends on August 2, and is priced at \$2182 with a single supplement of \$480.

Visit our website for detailed itineraries and registration information for these two trips.



Resplendent Quetzal

Possible at Monteverde

Probable at Savegre Mountain Lodge

Spotlight on Villa Lapas

During our Central Costa Rica trip, we will stay 2 nights at Villa Lapas, one of our favorite sites in Costa Rica. This eco-resort, located on the Pacific coast, and a favorite of birdwatchers, features 57 rooms surrounded by lush tropical gardens sitting in the midst of a private 500-acre rain forest reserve near the Tarcoles River.

The Villa Lapas private reserve is adjacent to Carara National Park, one of the largest protected areas in Costa Rica, where one of few remaining populations of Scarlet Macaws in the country exist. Carara is distinctive in that it encompasses both the wet rainforest of the southern Pacific and the dry tropical forest of the northwest. Located in this unique transition zone, Carara National Park hosts flora and fauna that you might see in the Osa Peninsula or Guanacaste Province. Over 400 species of birds inhabit the park, making it a "must-

visit" site on any birder's itinerary.

Standing on a bridge over the Tárcoles River near Villa Lapas in late afternoon often rewards birders with great looks of pairs of Scarlet Macaws as they fly to their roosting spots at dusk. This river is also home to many crocodiles that can be easily seen from the river bridge.

On the property is a Sky Walk consisting of 5 hanging bridges between platforms 200 feet above the forest floor. Early morning walks here will give us the opportunity to see canopy species at eye level, truly an amazing experience.

Also on the property are a small swimming pool, gift shops, and a cantina that you can enjoy during your afternoon rest time. A zip-line is available for the adventurous (at extra cost).

With comfortable accommodations, lovely grounds, great food, and world-class birding at our doorstep, you can see why Villa Lapas is high on our list of favorite Costa Rica sites!

CHEEPERS! - Brazil 2010 Updates

Cheepers! is accepting registrations for our 2010 Brazil birding trips. Join us for a 16-day trip to **Brazil** where we will bird in the Cerrado, Amazonia and Pantanal biomes followed by an 8-day extension to the **Atlantic Forests** of coastal eastern Brazil, where we will bird Ubatuba and the Itatiaia National Park.

This trip begins on October 2, ends on October 17, and is priced at \$4790 (the single supplement is \$500) while the extension begins on October 17, ends on October 24, and is priced at \$2390 (the single supplement is \$250). See our website for a detailed itinerary and registration information.

If you sign up for both trips, the price is \$6880, a \$300 savings.

Expected/possible sightings include:

- Harpy Eagle, Crested Eagle, and Ornate Hawk Eagle
- Recently discovered Cryptic Forest Falcon (2001) and Chapada Flycatcher (2001) and the Cone-billed Tanager, a species rediscovered in 2004 after 68 years with no sightings.
- Jaguar, Brazilian Tapir, Giant Anteater, and Giant River Otter
- Nesting Hyacinth Macaws
- 600 – 700 species of birds

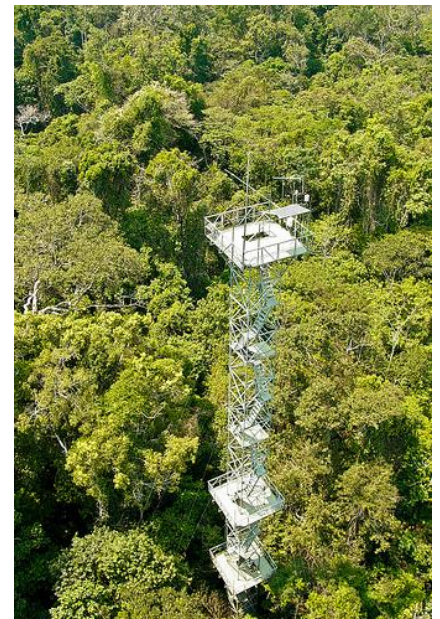


Spotlight on Cristalino Jungle Lodge

We will stay at Cristalino Jungle Lodge for 4 nights when we bird the Amazona biome. While this exquisite lodge is not within the price range that Cheepers! normally seeks, the birding and wildlife viewing opportunities offered at Cristalino are just too good to resist.

The Cristalino Jungle Lodge offers one of the most unique and exciting opportunities for wildlife viewing in the entire world, containing a great variety of medium to low altitude eco zones, different types of forest cover, lakes, micro habitats, around 600 species of birds, and diverse neo-tropical wildlife in its private reserve of more than 29,652 acres (that's an area twice as big as Manhattan Island). Its location, near the junction of two rivers – one a “White-water” and the other a “Black-water” river – gives the reserve a combination of two different soil types which in turn translates into a wonderful diversity of topography, trees, orchids, and bromeliads, terrestrial mammals, monkeys, bats, birds, reptiles and fish, butterflies (approximately 2000 species), and other insects.

The lodge has a 50-meter (164 feet) high galvanized Canopy Tower located in the middle of the Rainforest Reserve. There are three different stations at 20, 30 and 50 meters high. The tower allows viewing of many rainforest layers and, on the top, you can stand above the canopy. The sight is remarkable, especially during sunrise and sunset. Many birds and mammals that inhabit the canopies such as falcons, macaws, toucans, cotingas, and monkeys can be seen there. Also featured at Cristalino is a floating dock above the river, great for swimming and resting during your free time, and a rustic screened tree house in the forest which is used for spotting tapirs and peccaries.



You can see why we included this site in our itinerary, regardless of cost. It promises to be one of the many highlights of an amazing Brazilian journey.

At less than \$300 per day and including some of the best that Brazil has to offer (such as Cristalino Lodge), these tours are an exceptional value!

CHEEPERS! - 2010 Trip Schedule

CHEEPERS! 2010 Schedule				
From	To	Destination	Price	Guide(s)
03/16/10	03/28/10	Belize	Sold Out	Glenn Crawford
04/16/10	04/28/10	Panama Canopy Lodge & Canopy Tower	Sold Out	Canopy Tower & Canopy Lodge Guides
06/18/10	06/28/10	California Custom Specialties	Sold Out	
7/16/10	7/25/10	Costa Rica Central Tour	\$2100	Marcos Soto
7/25/10	8/02/10	Costa Rica Southern Tour	\$2182	Marcos Soto
10/02/10	10/17/10	Brazil Cerrado, Amazonia and Pantanal Biomes	\$4790	Fabiano Ficagna de Oliveira
10/17/10	10/24/10	Brazil Atlantic Forests Extension	\$2390	Fabiano Ficagna de Oliveira
11/20/10	12/04/10	Ecuador NW and Eastern Andes	\$2685	Andres Vasquez and Marcelo Andy
12/03/10	12/08/10	Ecuador Amazon Basin Extension	TBD	Marcelo Andy

Cheepers! has moved its previously scheduled February 2011 Ecuador trip to November 2010. During our recent February 2010 trip, we encountered rain on several days which we hope to avoid or reduce by moving the trip from February 2011 to November 2010. In addition, the Cock-of-the-Rock males will be openly displaying on their lek as we will be there during breeding season.

CHEEPERS! - 2011 Trip Schedule (Tentative)

CHEEPERS! 2011 Tour Schedule				
From	To	Destination	Price	Guide(s)
01/15/11	01/23/11	Costa Rica Central Tour	TBD	Marcos Soto
02/??/11	02/??/11	Panama	TBD	Guido Berguido
03/11/11	03/20/1/1	Belize	TBD	Glenn Crawford
03/26/11	04/03/11	Costa Rica Leisure Birding	TBD	Marcos Soto
04/??/11	04/??/11	SW Ecuador	TBD	Andres Vasquez/Marcelo Andy
07/16/11	07/24/11	Costa Rica for Young Birders	TBD	Marcos Soto
07/29/11	08/07/11	Costa Rica Central Tour	TBD	Marcos Soto
08/06/11	08/15/11	Costa Rica Southern Tour	TBD	Marcos Soto
10/01/11	10/27/11	South Africa	ZAR 52330	TBD

CHEEPERS! - 2010/2011 Birding Festival Schedule (Tentative)

From	To	Destination	
03/04/10	03/07/10	San Diego Bird Festival	San Diego, CA
04/08/10	04/11/10	Galveston FeatherFest	Galveston Island, TX
Nov 2010		Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival	Harlingen, TX
Jan 2011		Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival	Titusville, FL
Mar 2011		San Diego Bird Festival	San Diego, CA
04/01/11	04/03/11	ABA Bird Fare	King of Prussia, PA
Nov 2011		Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival	Harlingen, TX



CHEEPERS! - Partner Tours

If there is a destination you would like to visit, one that is not listed on our website, contact us! With partners offering tours all over the world, we may be able to find just what you are looking for.

Check our website for detailed itineraries and registration information for these exciting partner tours to Namibia and South Africa.

The **Namibia** tour runs from September 1 – 18, 2010, and is priced at \$6139* (ZAR 47,410). Birding sites include Walvis Bay, Spitzkoppe, Hobatere Game Reserve, Ruacana, Kunene River, Etosha, Rundu, the Caprivi Strip, Mahango Game Preserve, Okavango Delta (in Botswana), Zambezi River, and Victoria Falls (in Zambia).

The **South Africa** tour is in two parts. The Western Cape Tour runs from October 1 – 12, 2010, is currently priced at \$2570* (ZAR 19,850 and includes a 1-day pelagic trip. The Subtropical Tour runs from October 12 – 27, 2010, is currently priced at \$4206* (ZAR 32,480), and includes Kruger National Park and the Mkuze Game Reserve. If you do both parts, you are likely to see 550 of the 750 regularly-occurring South African bird species plus you are likely to see lion, cheetah, leopard, elephant, rhino, giraffe, buffalo, antelope, crocodile, hippopotamus, and more.

*Please note - currency fluctuations will impact final price. Current USD prices are quoted based on February 27, 2010 8:00PM EST currency exchange rates of 7.72280 ZAR = 1 USD.

CHEEPERS!

Binding on a Budget

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We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.cheepersbirding.com

CHEEPERS! - Promotions and Discounts

Cheepers! is offering a free field guide to your destination country if you register for a **Cheepers!** trip by March 30, 2010. In addition, you will receive one entry to win a Z-Bolt Laser Pen, with the drawing to be held on April 10, 2010.

Cheepers! is offering a repeat customer discount of \$100 off the price of your next **Cheepers!** trip if you register at least 4 months prior to trip departure.

CHEEPERS! - Testimonials from Customers

2010 January Panama Canal Zone & Chiriqui Highlands – 375 species seen and heard

"Thank you so much for the great trip to Panama! I'm so glad that I went. You two made sure everyone was comfortable and having a good time. Seeing 96 lifers was great, but being with such great people as yourselves was even more important to me. I hope I can join you again on a future trip!" - Mary Warren, Ohio

"It was much more than we expected. Guido was undoubtedly the best guide we've ever had. Jim and Cindy went out of their way to ensure our comfort and enjoyment. At all times we felt safe." - Bernie and Jude Uerbersetzig, Texas

CHEEPERS! - Travel & Lodging Recommendation

During our January Panama Canal Zone and Chiriqui Highlands trip, we made a birding stop at the **Cielito Sur Bed and Breakfast Inn** near Volcan in the Chiriqui Highlands. Glenn Lee, owner of the B&B along with his wife Janet, made us feel very much at home during this unscheduled visit. Glenn and Janet have a beautiful property with many hummingbird feeders and fruiting trees that hosted a couple of mixed flocks during our visit. If you are looking for a place to stay on your next trip to western Panama, Cheepers! highly recommend this B&B. For more information, visit their website at www.cielitosur.com.