

Cheepers! News

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WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

Welcome to Volume 2, Issue 1 of *Cheepers! News* issued by Jim and Cindy Beckman. If you are interested in reading previously issued newsletters, click [here](#).

2010 IN REVIEW

Reflecting back on 2010, we are very thankful for all the wonderful birders who traveled with us this year to Panama (2 trips), Ecuador (2 trips), Belize, and California. While staffing a vendor booth at birding festivals in San Diego, Galveston, Sierra Vista, Monterey, and Rio Grande Valley, we were continually amazed at the interest by the festival attendees in the Cheepers! Birding on a Budget mission - **bird the best birding locations using comfortable lodging and expert local bilingual birding guides while maintaining a lower per day cost than comparable tours offered by the major birding tour companies.**

In addition to the trips and birding festivals, we also made a 12-day familiarization trip to Guyana and spent a lot of time in May birding in and around Magee Marsh in northwest Ohio. All together our birding job/passion had us on the road for about 130 days in 2010.

On a personal note, Cindy and I each added a couple hundred new birds to our life lists this year. Cindy ended the year at 2100 thanks to the Cattle Tyrant seen in Coca (Ecuador) while I finished with 2001 (my 2000th was an Olive-backed Foliage-Gleaner seen on the trail near Napo Wildlife Center coming back from seeing the Black-necked Red Cotinga; number 2001 was the Cattle Tyrant in Coca).

ECUADOR HIGHLIGHTS

Cheepers! recently completed 17 days of Ecuador birding (Nov 21 - Dec 7) with 581 species seen, 59 species heard, 11 fly-bys (views were not good enough to count as seen), and 6 species seen only by the guides for a grand total of 657 species we were exposed to. In addition, we saw 15 eastern sub-species of species we saw in the northwest.

The trip covered three parts of Ecuador - the Northwest Andes, the Eastern Andes and an Amazon Basin extension to Napo Wildlife Center.

During the Northwest Andes part of the trip, we birded in and around Quito, Yanacocha, Old Nono-Mindo Road, Bellavista Lodge, Sachatomia Lodge, Refugio de las Aves, an Oilbird roosting site, Mashpi, Silanche, Celica Road, Milpe, and Calacali.

During the Eastern Andes part of the trip, we birded in and around Antisana Reserve, Papallacta Lake, Guango Lodge, San Isidro Lodge, Loreto Road, Wildsumaco Lodge, and Coca.

During the final part of the trip, we birded in and around Napo Wildlife Center, on the Napo River and in Coca.

Trip highlights included:

- 10 Andean Condors in **one binocular view** at Antisana Reserve (two groups of five)
- The recently discovered Cattle Tyrant in Coca
- 92 species of Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)
- 81 species of Thraupidae (Tanagers, Honeycreepers, Bananaquit and Plushcap)
- 64 species of Trochilidae (Hummingbirds - including 3 seen by guides only)
- 33 species of Thamnophilidae (Typical Antbirds)
- 21 species of Picidae (Woodpeckers and Piculets)
- 19 species of Emberizidae (Emberizine Finches)
- 19 species of Psittacidae (Parrots including fly-bys)
- 15 species of Ramphastidae (Toucans)
- 13 species of Cotingidae (Cotingas)
- 11 species of Dendrocolaptidae (Woodcreepers)
- 10 species of Ardeidae (Herons and Egrets)
- 9 species of Pipridae (Manakins)
- 8 species of Strigidae (Owls)
- 8 species of Trogonidae (Trogons and Quetzals)

This was our second Ecuador trip in 2010 (third overall) and we were very pleased and surprised to gain 72 lifers including 13 new hummingbirds to add to the 64 hummingbirds we saw in February 2010. Just goes to show that even if you have previously birded specific areas of a country, you can still gain a substantial number of new species on a re-visit to the same areas. We are looking forward to our first visit to Southwest Ecuador where we expect to see 500+ species of which 300+ are expected to be lifers for us.

Cheepers! – 2011 Birding Tour Schedule

January	Jan 11-Jan 19 2011	Costa Rica 9-day Highlights \$2185 CLOSED
February	Feb 11-Feb 19 2011	Galapagos Islands Island Hopping \$3230 CLOSED - See Nov trip
	Feb 18-Feb 27 2011	Panama Canal Zone and Chiriqui Highlands \$1798 SOLD OUT
	Feb 19-Mar 5 2011	Southwest Ecuador Tumbesian Endemics \$2895 CLOSED
	Feb 26-Mar 7 2011	Best of Belize with Glenn Crawford \$2485 SOLD OUT
April	Apr 5-Apr 16 2011	Panama Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge \$2285 2 spaces available
July	Jul 15-Jul 23 2011	Costa Rica 9-day Highlights \$2185 Accepting registrations
August	Aug 20-Sep 6 2011	Peru Machu Picchu and Manu \$4454 2 spaces available
October	Oct 1-Oct 12 2011	South Africa Part I: 12-day Cape Tour 26,019 ZAR 2 spaces available
	Oct 12-Oct 27 2011	South Africa Part II: 16-day Subtropical Tour 32,236 ZAR SOLD OUT
November	Nov 11-Nov 19 2011	Galapagos Islands Island Hopping \$3260 Accepting registrations
	Nov 19-Dec 4 2011	Ecuador Part I: Northern Ecuador SOLD OUT
December	Dec 3-Dec 8 2011	Ecuador Part II: Amazon Basin Extension SOLD OUT

Cheepers! – 2012 Birding Tour Schedule

January	Panama Canal Zone and Chiriqui Highlands \$1798
February	Ecuador Part I: Northern Ecuador \$TBA
	Ecuador Part II: Amazon Basin Extension \$TBA

The remainder of the 2012 schedule is currently being finalized. We expect to include Galapagos (Mar), SW Ecuador (Mar), Panama Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge (Apr), Alaska (Jun), Southeast Arizona (Jul), and Brazil (Sep). Other possibilities include Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guyana, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago.

If you have a group interested in any destination, we can develop a custom trip to meet your needs.

INTERESTED IN BIRDING IN BRAZIL OR GUYANA?

We have heard from several people interested in birding Brazil in 2011. If we receive word from 6 birders who are ready to commit to a Brazil trip, we will add Brazil to our 2011 schedule, probably in September. If you would like to be one of the 6 people to sign on for this amazing trip which includes 4 biomes in one of the birdiest countries in the world, please contact us for more details including itinerary and expected costs.

If anyone is interested in Guyana as an adventurous birding destination, please contact us. We can add a Guyana trip to our 2011 or 2012 schedule if there is sufficient interest. If you would like to read an interesting trip report covering our Guyana familiarization trip, please send us an email requesting a copy.

Established to provide affordable options for international birding during challenging economic times, Cheepers! strives to provide the best birding experiences at the best prices. Cheepers! has been able to offer outstanding birding trips to world-renowned birding sites at a much lower cost than comparable trips offered by the major tour companies.



BEST BIRDING LOCATIONS

COMFORTABLE LODGING

EXPERT LOCAL GUIDES

LOWER PER DAY COST

www.cheepersbirding.com

Cheepers! - 2011 Birding Tours by Country

Belize

Feb 26-Mar 7 2011: **Best of Belize with expert guide Glenn Crawford** **SOLD OUT**

An excellent introduction to tropical birding with Glenn Crawford, Belize's best birding guide. We will bird 3 distinct geographical areas of Belize: 1) in and around the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, the Mayan ruins at Lamanai, and Monkey Bay Sanctuary, 2) Blue Hole National Park, the Mayflower-Bocawina National Park, Cockscomb Jaguar Preserve, coastal lagoons and mangroves and 3) the Mountain Pine Ridge National Park, the Mayan ruins at Caracol, and the Hidden Valley Falls. We saw 289 species and heard another 12 species during our sold-out March 2010 Belize trip.

Costa Rica

Jan 11 - Jan 19 2011: **9-day highlights of Costa Rica** **CLOSED - See Jul trip**

Jul 15 - Jul 23 2011: **9-day highlights of Costa Rica** **Accepting registrations**

La Selva. SaVegre. Monteverde. Carara. If you've dreamed of birding in Costa Rica, you've heard these names! These sites are visited by most birders who visit Costa Rica for one very simple reason - BIRDS. All of these sites offer distinct habitats and all boast impressive bird lists. Join us as we visit Costa Rica's most renowned birding sites. We expect to see 300+ species during this trip.

Ecuador

Feb 11 - Feb 19 2011: **Galapagos Islands - Island Hopping** **CLOSED - See Nov trip**

Feb 19 - Mar 5 2011: **Southwest Ecuador Tumbesian Endemics** **CLOSED**

Using two full-time expert Ecuadorian guides, we will bird in and around Manglares-Churute Ecological Reserve, the Jocotoco Reserves at Buenaventura, Jorupe, Utuana, and Tapichalaca, Podocarpus National Park, and the Zamora-Loja Road. As February is the peak of breeding season in southern Ecuador, we expect to see 425 to 450 species on this trip, including many Peruvian species.

Nov 11 - Nov 19 2011: **Galapagos Islands - Island Hopping** **Accepting registrations**

We will be island hopping, staying on land each night, as we visit San Cristobal Island, Wolf Island, Kicker Rock, Punta Pitt, Floreana Island, Isabela Island, and Santa Cruz Island. During our island hopping, we will bird, swim with penguins, sea lions and sea turtles, snorkel with rays and reef sharks, and visit the Charles Darwin Research Station.

Nov 19 - Dec 4 2011: **Part I: Northern Ecuador** **SOLD OUT**

Using two full-time expert Ecuadorian guides, we will bird the best that Northern Ecuador has to offer: Yanacocha Reserve, Old Nono-Mindo Road, Upper and Lower Tandayapa Valley, the Angel Paz Antpitta Reserve, an Oilbird roost, Mashpi Reserve, Pacto-Pachijal Road, Silanche Bird Sanctuary, Milpe Bird Sanctuary, the Calacali area, Antisana Reserve, Papallacta Pass, Guango, San Isidro, Guacamayos Ridge, and Wild Sumaco Lodge. Combined with the Amazon Basin Extension, we saw 581 species and heard another 59 species during our sold-out November 2010 trip. Marcello Andy and Galo Real are our guides for both this trip and the Amazon Extension.

Dec 3 - Dec 8 2011 - **Part II: Amazon Basin Extension** **SOLD OUT**

Join us as we travel by boat from Coca down the Napo River to the entrance of the Napo Wildlife Center Reserve where we switch to smaller, dugout canoes and are paddled up the blackwater creek to the lake and lodge. The lodge is owned and managed by Quichua Indians on their tribal land. During our days at Napo Wildlife Center, we will be birding in several ecosystems which only occur lower than 300 masl: Terra Firme and Riparian forests, Varzea and Igapo flooded forests, and the River Islands, plus we will visit the famous Yasuni National Park Parrot Clay Licks.

Panama

Feb 18 - Feb 27 2011: **Canal Zone and Chiriqui Highlands** **SOLD OUT**

Our itinerary offers opportunities to bird in most of the habitats that Panama has to offer. We will search the protected wet rainforests, mangroves, wetlands, and dry forests of the Canal Zone before we drive to the Chiriqui Highlands to search for Resplendent Quetzels and other birds of the cloud forest. During our sold-out January 2010 trip following a similar itinerary, we saw 349 species, heard an additional 22 species plus 4 species were seen by one person only for a total of 375 species heard and seen.

Cheepers! - 2011 Birding Tours by Country (continued)

Panama (continued)

Apr 6 - Apr 17, 2011: **Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge** (only 2 spaces available)

Come with us to one of the most famous birding destinations in the world - the renowned Canopy Tower in Central Panama. Our tour includes five nights at the Tower and five nights at the Tower's sister facility, the lovely Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton. Birding at different elevations and in a variety of habitats affords us the opportunity to see a more diverse array of species. Our last afternoon and evening will be spent at the Miraflores Locks where we will tour their Panama Canal Museum, watch ships transit the locks and enjoy a scrumptious buffet dinner overlooking the locks. For convenience, our last night will be spent near the airport. During our sold-out April 2010 trip following this itinerary, the group saw 320 species, heard an additional 7 species and our guides saw 4 species that no one else saw for a grand total of 331 species seen and heard. Carlos Bethancourt will be our guide at both the Canopy Tower and the Canopy Lodge.

Compare the Cheepers! price for this tour to the big tour companies. The per day cost of the Cheepers! tour is \$190 vs. from \$371 to \$400 per day for Field Guides, VENT and Wings. Yes, there may be slight differences in sites visited, but we are staying at the same places, eating the same meals and using the same guides.

Peru

Aug 20 - Sep 8 2011 **Machu Picchu and Manu** (only 2 spaces available - group size is max 8)

Peru has more bird species than found in all of North America and Europe combined, including well over 100 endemic species. It holds the record for the most species found in a single place (650) and for the highest number of species seen in a single day (361). The Manu Biosphere Reserve has arguably the highest diversity of life anywhere on earth, making it one of, if not THE, best birding destinations in the world. With something in the neighborhood of 1800 species (depending on the reference you use), Peru is a birder's dream destination. Come with us and share the trip of a lifetime.

South Africa

Oct 1 - Oct 12 2011 **Part I: 12-day Cape Tour** (only 2 spaces available - group size is max 8)

This epic tour begins with 12 days of birding the scenically spectacular Western Cape Province of South Africa. Here in the Cape, there are more endemic birds than anywhere else on the entire African continent, and pelagic trips off Cape Town rank amongst the finest in the world. Key areas we visit during this leg of the tour include the fynbos biome (the richest biome for plants on the planet – even more diverse than the Amazon - and with attendant endemic birds), the West Coast, Karoo, Overberg (Agulhas Plains) and the Garden Route.

Oct 12 - Oct 27 2011 **Part II: 16-day Subtropical Tour** **SOLD OUT**

After the Cape trip, we fly to Durban to begin birding Subtropical South Africa for 16 days. This part of South Africa provides a representative sample of the very best that African birding can offer. Huge numbers of bird species are seen on this leg of the tour, and we will also find a plethora of endemics, including a great number of birds restricted to the imposing Drakensberg escarpment. Apart from yielding a big bird list, this dream African experience also provides the possibility of seeing Africa's big (and small) mammals, such as lion, cheetah, leopard, elephant, rhino, giraffe, and all the others, and spectacular, diverse, scenery. Key sites we visit during this leg of the tour include Sani Pass into Lesotho, Wakkerstroom and other highland areas, temperate and subtropical forests at varying altitudes, Zululand with its mega-diversity of birds and big animals, the Kruger National Park, and many other sites.

Please visit our website at www.cheepersbirding.com for itineraries and registration materials.

Maximum group size for any trip is 12 including trip leaders Cindy and/or Jim Beckman. Some trips have a limit of 8 or 10 including trip leaders (Cindy and/or Jim).

Cheepers! – Birding Festival Drawing Winners

Congratulations to the following book winners from our birding festival Birders Survey drawings:

2010 Southwest Wings Birding and Nature Festival Sierra Vista AZ	2010 Monterey Bay Birding Festival Watsonville CA	Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival Harlingen TX	Space Coast Birding Festival Titusville FL
Amanda Damin Stokes Warblers	Alan Ferguson Hawks from Every Angle	Janel Nye Birds of Costa Rica	Edith Bartlett Hawks from Every Angle
Gay Gilbert Birds of Brazil	Jane Olson Hawks from Every Angle	Irene Tretiak Birds of South Africa	Marion Monaghan
Marcee Sherrill Hawks from Every Angle	Marilyn Trabert Birds of Peru	Lynn Wearsch Hawks from Every Angle	Sara Turner
			Carol Wyninger Birds of Brazil

Cheepers!

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We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.cheepersbirding.com

Cheepers! – Promotions and Discounts

If you complete the *Cheepers!* Birding Survey at our booth at any of the bird festivals we attend and then register for one of our trips within 30 days of the festival, we will reduce your trip price by \$100.

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

Cheepers! – Testimonials from Customers

2010 November Ecuador and Amazon Extension - 657 species seen and heard

We will definitely travel more trips with Cheepers!. We think your company has it "right" in terms of travel and customer service. Jim and Cindy looked after the welfare of each birder. You provided ample water, snacks and forgotten or needed supplies. The friendliness of your company was "over the top". Our birding experience with your company was fantastic. We loved the fanny pack, water bottle, pens and paper. The checklists were a welcome addition to our individual birding experience.....John and Diane F., Helodes, TX

The two of you made the trip extra special. . . It is incredible that you are able to pick such great guides.....Bernie U., LaFeria, TX

Cheepers! – Website Facts

During 2010, the *Cheepers!* Birding on a Budget website had visitors from 99 countries and all 50 states plus the District of Columbia.

Search engines are great. Top searches for *Cheepers!* include: cheepers birding, cheepers, cheepers birding tours, cheepers bird tours, cheepersbirding, birding on a budget, cheepersbirding.com, cheep birding trips, cheepers birds, cheepers llc, and cheepers birding on a budget. In addition, based on lodge references in trip reports and itineraries, *Cheepers!* was found by searching for Ayalir Lodge, Gareno Lodge, Wildsumaco Lodge, Sani Lodge, San Isidro Lodge, Mama Noots Lodge, Soberania Field Station, Canopy Tower, and Canopy Lodge. In total, visitors have accessed *Cheepers!* through 882 different keyword searches.

Cheepers! – Website Updates

Photos from our recently completed Ecuador trip are posted.