



CHEEPERS! NEWS

Volume 1, Issue 4

May 3, 2010

WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

Welcome to Volume 1, Issue 4 of Cheepers! News issued by Cindy and Jim Beckman.

We finally have a little down time from our busy 2010 schedule. We completed sold out trips to the Panama Canal Zone and Chiriqui Highlands in January, Ecuador Western and Eastern Andes plus Amazon Basin Extension in February, Belize in March, and Panama Canopy Lodge and Canopy Tower in April plus participated in the San Diego Bird Festival in March and the Galveston FeatherFest 2010 in April.

We plan to do some leisure birding at McGee Marsh and Ottawa Wildlife Refuge (just east of Toledo OH) this month and then have a little more down time before we lead a custom California Specialties Trip in June and then head to Costa Rica for 19 days in mid-July.

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! Panama Canopy Lodge/Tower Trip Highlights

Individual Highlights:

Bird Festivals 2

Cheepers! Save now on Costa Rica 2010 2

Cheepers! Brazil 2010 Update 3

Cheepers! Partner Tours 4

Cheepers! Promotions and Discounts 4

Cheepers! Testimonials from Customers 4

Cheepers! Travel & Lodging Recommendation 4

Cheepers! 2010 Trip Schedule 5

Cheepers! 2011 Trip Schedule (Tentative) 5

Cheepers! 2010 – 2011 Birding Festival Schedule (Tentative) 5

CHEEPERS! Panama Canopy Lodge/Tower Trip

Cheepers! just completed 11 days of April birding in Panama at the Canopy Lodge in El Valle and the Canopy Tower in Gamboa. During the trip, the group saw 320 species and heard an additional 7 species plus our guides saw 4 species that no one else saw. Our grand total was 331 species.

Highlights of the trip included:

- A **Common Potoo** on the nest – we were able to see an egg!
- A **Sunbittern on the nest**
- A **Rufous Nightjar** with chick roosting on the ground
- A rare endemic species – the **Veraguan Mango**
- All 4 resident motmots – **Tody**, **Whooping** (Blue-crowned), **Rufous**, and **Broad-billed**.
- 6 Trogons – **White-tailed**, **Violaceous**, **Orange-bellied**, **Black-throated**, **Black-tailed**, and **Slaty-tailed**.
- The **Barred Puffbird** – an accidental species for this area
- 122 species seen in one day plus an additional 13 species heard that same day

The following species listed as rare:

- **Black Guan**
- **Barred Hawk**
- **Black Hawk-Eagle**
- **Sora**
- **Limpkin**
- **Pheasant Cuckoo**
- **Crested Owl**
- **Rufous Nightjar**
- **White-tipped Sicklebill**
- **Green Thorntail**
- **Yellow-eared Toucanet**
- **Buff-throated Foliage-Gleaner**
- **Slaty Antwren**
- **Southern Bentbill**
- **Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher**
- **White-thighed Swallow**

Lots of “Ant” birds

- **Barred, Fasciated, Great, and Western-slaty Antshrikes**
- **Plain and Spot-crowned Antvireos**

- **Checker-throated, Dot-winged, Moustached, Slaty, and White-flanked Antwrens**
- **Bicolored, Chestnut-backed, Dusky, Jet, Spotted, and White-bellied Antbirds**
- **Black-faced Antthrush**
- **Streak-chested Antpitta**
- **Red-crowned and Red-throated Ant-Tanagers**

(A detailed trip report will be available on our website later this month)

While this was the 5th Panama birding trip for **Cheepers!** owners Cindy and Jim Beckman, this was our 1st birding trip to Canopy Lodge and Canopy Tower. We are planning a return visit to Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge in April 2011.

Cheepers! booth at Galveston FeatherFest 2010



Bird Festivals

Galveston FeatherFest – Drawing Winners

Jim participated at the Galveston FeatherFest 2010 Bird Festival in early April. Each visitor to the **Cheepers!** booth who completed a **Cheepers!** Birder's Survey was entered into a daily drawing to win a field guide. **Cheepers!** is pleased to announce that Cheyenne Gage (Sibley East), Kay Lovelace (Belize) and Carrie Sample (Belize) were the winners and each has received their field guide.



**Save now on
Costa Rica 2010**



Collared Redstart

Cheepers! still has plenty of room left on our two-part Costa Rica tour scheduled for this summer.

Because the trip is not full, we are offering a special rate for people who register before May 17.

July 16 - July 25 - 10 days/ 9 nights originally priced at \$2100, now just \$1975

July 24- August 2 - 10 days/9 nights originally priced at \$2182, now just \$2032

July 16 - August 2 - 18 days/ 17 nights originally priced at \$3890 now just \$3780

All trips will proceed only if we have a minimum of 6 participants; full refund of deposits will be given if the trip is canceled due to low numbers. Maximum participants is 10 + 2 tour leaders.

As always, **Cheepers!** saves you money while providing tours that include many of the same birding sites and lodges as the big tour companies, with an expert native guide to help us find and identify the amazing tropical avifauna of Costa Rica.

Our July 2010 trips are scheduled to coincide with El Veranillo, or "Little summer", a dry spell within the green season. While no one can guarantee that weather will be good regardless of the time of year a tropical trip is scheduled, we expect to enjoy this special time of year when we can observe nesting behavior with relatively few showers to disturb our birding. Our guide, Marcos Soto, tells us this is his favorite time of year to bird!

Highlights of Part 1:

Some of the most famous birding sites in Costa Rica!

La Selva Biological Station - Four major tropical life zones provide habitat for more than 400 species of resident and migratory birds, representing almost half of Costa Rica's bird species. Within its borders, La Selva contains over 5000 species of vascular plants of which 700 are trees. The fauna is similarly diverse, with large predators such as jaguars and pumas. Lovely, easy trails with LOTS of birds - a great place to begin our journey!

Arenal Volcano - Experts estimate that approximately half of Costa Rica's land-dwelling vertebrate species (birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals) live in Arenal Volcano National Park. In addition to amazing birding, you will be positioned to see one of the most perfect conical volcanoes in the world, one that has been consistently active with small, daily eruptions known as strombolian activity since 1968. Explosions produce impressive ash columns and send boulders the size of houses careening down the slopes. On clear nights, we should be able to enjoy fiery displays of lava and glowing boulders from the safety of our hotel.

Monteverde - We will visit the massive 10,500 hectare Reserva Biológica Bosque Nuboso

Monteverde, an area known for its amazing diversity. This is the Costa Rican cloud forest with the largest number of orchids in the world, with 34 of its 500 species newly discovered. The famed Resplendent Quetzal resides here seasonally, and we hope to get good looks of this amazing beauty on our trip.

Carara - Located between the dry forests of the north and the humid ones of the south, Carara is situated in a "ecotone" or melding area that gives it amazing diversity. Many endangered and threatened species live and breed here, such as the American Crocodile and the Scarlet Macaw. In fact, Carara is one of the best places to view Scarlet Macaws in Costa Rica! Imagine standing on a bridge with massive crocodiles below and pairs of Scarlet Macaws flying overhead - join us for this amazing sight!

Visit our website for details on Part 2 of this trip.

Registration forms and detailed itineraries are available at www.cheepersbirding.com.

Prices are valid through May 17, 2010.

Contact Cindy or Jim Beckman for more information:

937-862-4505 or

937-974-0802

CHEEPERS! - Brazil 2010 Update

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget has 4 spots left on an amazing tour to Brazil scheduled for October 2010. For participants who register before May 17, we are offering a **discount of \$100 on our already-low prices:**

October 2 - 17, Pantanal, Cerrado, and Amazonia biomes - 17 days, 16 nights for \$4790, now just \$4690!

October 17 - 24, Atlantic Forests extension - 8 days, 7 nights for \$ 2390, now just \$2290!

October 2 - 24, combined trip - 24 days, 23 nights for \$6880, now just \$6780!

This trip is comparable to Brazil tours offered by major tour companies in every way: the very best birding sites in the country, first-rate lodging, and one of the best birding guides in Brazil! But **Cheepers!** provides this tour at a much lower cost - we encourage you to compare our itinerary and our price with other tour companies!

During this tour, we will

- ~ witness the largest freshwater wetland in the world, the Pantanal
- ~ visit some of the best birding sites in the world!
- ~ be likely to see mammals such as Giant Anteater, several species of monkeys, and others
- ~ take a boat tour where there is high probability (50%+) of sighting a jaguar on the banks
- ~ visit a lodge where the observation platforms are moved to trees that are currently fruiting,
- ~ stay in superior rooms at the beautiful and renowned Cristalino Lodge
- ~ see nesting Hyacinth Macaws, the (highly endangered) largest of the macaws
- ~ visit a spot where Tapir sightings are virtually guaranteed
- ~ see Giant River Otters at close distances
- ~ enjoy amazing scenic views of waterfalls, 1000-foot sandstone cliffs, plateaus, and other landforms
- ~ swim in a natural pool of crystal clear water with hundreds of tropical fish
- ~ have the chance to see a Harpy Eagle, the largest of all eagles in the western hemisphere
- ~ stand atop a 150-foot tower overlooking the canopy for a different vantage point for birding
- ~ **observe over 500 species of birds, often more than 100 species per day!**

Reduced prices are in effect until May 17, 2010.

Detailed itineraries and registration forms are available at www.cheepersbirding.com

For more information, contact Cindy or Jim Beckman at:

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Only 4 spots remain open for this exciting Brazil trip.





CHEEPERS!

Binding on a Budget

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We're on the Web!
Visit us at:
www.cheepersbirding.com

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 ZAR 47,410 (currently \$6424.99*). 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 ZAR 26,019 (currently \$3524.75*) and includes a 1-day pelagic trip. The Sub-tropical Tour runs from October 12 – 27, 2010, is currently priced at ZAR 32,236 (currently \$4366.96*), 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.

CHEEPERS! - Promotions and Discounts

Cheepers! is offering special reduced prices on the following trips:

- Costa Rica 10-day Central Tour – was \$2100, new price is \$1975
- Costa Rica 10-day Southern Tour – was \$2182, new price is \$2032
- Brazil Cerrado, Amazonia and Pantanal Biomes – was \$4790, new price is \$4690
- Brazil Atlantic Forests Extension – was \$2390, new price is \$2290

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 Panama Canopy Lodge and Canopy Tower – 320 species seen by the group

We just wanted to thank you again for putting together a fantastic trip. We had a great time. We logged 307 birds (183 of which were lifers!) The trip exceeded our every expectation. The guides, the food, the lodges all terrific. Couldn't have asked for more. We would certainly recommend Cheepers to anyone and, of course, we'd love to hook up with you guys on another trip someday. Good luck with the business and keep up the good work.

Matt and Cathy, Mastic, NY

CHEEPERS! - Travel & Lodging Recommendation

During our March 2010 Brazil trip, we stayed at the Crooked Tree Lodge, a small family run lodge consisting of six stand alone cabanas nestled amongst the log wood, coconut palm and bullet trees, right on the edge of the Crooked Tree lagoon and in the heart of the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. Becoming very well known for its relaxed and friendly atmosphere and a fantastic mix of authentic home cooked Belizean and European food, Crooked Tree Lodge is also one of the premiere locations in the country for bird watching. Whether you are looking for a chill-out place to stay for a few days while you update your travel blog or want to soak up the incredible wildlife or just lay in a hammock and enjoy the cooling breeze with a cold beer, Crooked Tree Lodge is a home away from home and you will leave with fond memories of feeling like you were part of the family. Visit their website at www.crookedtreelodgebelize.com.

CHEEPERS! - 2010 Trip Schedule and 2011 Trip Schedule (Tentative)

2010 Trip Schedule						
From	To	Destination	Open Slots	Initial Price	Promotional Price	Guides
06/18/10	06/28/10	California Custom Specialties		Sold Out		
07/16/10	07/25/10	Costa Rica 10-Day Central Tour	8	\$2100	\$1975	Marcos Soto
07/25/10	08/02/10	Costa Rica 10-Day Southern Tour	8	\$2182	\$2032	Marcos Soto
10/02/10	10/17/10	Brazil Cerrado, Amazonia and Pantanal Biomes	4	\$4790	\$4690	Fabiano Ficagna de Oliveira
10/17/10	10/24/10	Brazil Atlantic Forests Extension	4	\$2390	\$2290	Fabiano Ficagna de Oliveira
11/20/10	12/04/10	Ecuador NW and Eastern Andes	2	\$2685		Marcelo Andy and Galo Real
12/03/10	12/08/10	Ecuador Amazon Basin Extension	2	\$990		Marcelo Andy and Galo Real
2011 Trip Schedule (Tentative)						
From	To	Destination	Open Slots	Initial Price	Promotional Price	Guides
01/15/11	01/23/11	Costa Rica 9-Day Central Tour	10	TBD		Marcos Soto
02/17/11	02/27/11	Panama	10	\$1949		Guido Berguido
03/11/11	03/20/11	Belize	10	\$2485		Glenn Crawford
03/26/11	04/03/11	Costa Rica Leisure Birding	10	TBD		Marcos Soto
04/??/11	04/??/11	SW Ecuador	10	TBD		Marcelo Andy and Galo Real
07/16/11	07/24/11	Costa Rica for Young Birders	10	TBD		Marcos Soto
07/29/11	08/07/11	Costa Rica 10-Day Central Tour	10	\$2100		Marcos Soto
08/06/11	08/15/11	Costa Rica 10-Day Southern Tour	10	\$2182		Marcos Soto
10/01/11	10/27/11	South Africa	6	ZAR 52330		TBD
11/20/10	12/04/10	Ecuador NW and Eastern Andes	10	TBA		Marcelo Andy and Galo Real
12/03/10	12/08/10	Ecuador Amazon Basin Extension	10	TBA		Marcelo Andy and Galo Real

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

From	To	Destination	
09/23/10	09/26/10	Monterey Bay Birding Festival	Watsonville, CA
11/10/10	11/14/10	Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival	Harlingen, TX
01/26/11	01/31/11	Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival	Titusville, FL
03/03/11	03/06/11	San Diego Bird Festival	San Diego, CA
04/01/11	04/03/11	ABA Bird Fair	King of Prussia, PA
Sep 2011		Monterey Bay Birding Festival	Watsonville, CA
Nov 2011		Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival	Harlingen, TX

Stop by if you are at the festival. Fill out our Birders Survey for a chance to win a birding Field Guide or a green laser pointer.