

Cheepers! News

March 20, 2011

Vol. 2 Issue 2



WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

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

As we tell everyone we talk to, our mission is to **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.**

At **Cheepers!**, we love to bird, we love to travel, we love birding new destinations, and we even love to revisit countries we have previously birded. We offer escorted tours, partner tours and custom tours.

On **escorted tours**, Jim and Cindy accompany the tour. In their capacity as tour leaders, the Beckmans make sure the needs of all participants are met, handle any logistical problems or changes, take care of emergencies, assist the guides, and help make sure that every birder is able to see the birds found by the group. In addition, Jim maintains an electronic copy of the daily list while Cindy takes photographs of the places, people, and many of the birds seen on the trip. At the conclusion of the tour, a detailed daily and cumulative list of sightings and a DVD with hundreds of photos is provided for each participant. In most cases, a detailed trip report is also provided.

For **partner tours**, Jim and/or Cindy may or may not join the tour, depending on the number of participants who registered through **Cheepers!**. These tours will typically include travelers who signed up directly with the partner. When the Beckmans do not accompany a partner tour, **Cheepers!** cannot provide a final list of sightings, a DVD of photos, or a trip report at the end of the tour.

Cheepers! custom tours are normally led by Jim and/or Cindy, depending on the preferences of the group arranging the tour. When the tour is led by the Beckmans, all of the services provided in escorted tours are available to the group. If the group opts to schedule an unescorted tour, we do all we can to ensure that their needs will be met by carefully planning every facet of the tour and arranging for a highly qualified local guide. The trip coordinator would then assume the duties as tour leader, in which case **Cheepers!** would not be able to provide the final list of sightings, the DVD of photos, or the trip report at the end of the tour.

Cheepers! is accepting registrations for the following escorted tours:

2011

- Jul 15 - 23 **COSTA RICA**
9-day Highlights \$2500
- Oct 1 - 12 **SOUTH AFRICA Part I**
12-day Cape Tour 26,019 ZAR
- Oct 12 - 27 **SOUTH AFRICA Part II**
16-day Subtropical Tour 32,236 ZAR
- Nov 11 - 19 **GALAPAGOS**
Island Hopping \$3260

2012

- Jan 7 - 16 **PANAMA**
Canal Zone/Chiriqui Highlands \$1888
- Feb 11 - 25 **ECUADOR Part I**
Northern Ecuador \$3260
- Feb 24 - 28 **ECUADOR Part II**
Amazon Extension
Napo Wildlife Center \$1196
- Mar 1 - 10 **GALAPAGOS**
Island Hopping \$3695 - \$3900 *
- Mar 10 - 24 **ECUADOR**
Tumbesian Endemics \$3395
- Apr 23 - May 4 **PANAMA**
Canopy Tower and Lodge \$2595
- Jun 2 - 10 **ALASKA Part I**
Denali and Kenai \$3350 - \$3900 *
- Jun 10 - 14 **ALASKA Part II**
Nome Extension \$1858 - \$2256 *

* Final price depends on number of registrations received.

Visit the Cheepers! website at www.cheepersbirding.com for itineraries & registration forms.



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Cheepers! is working to finalize the following escorted trips tentatively scheduled for the 2nd half of 2012:

Aug - Australia
Sep - Papua New Guinea
Oct - Argentina

We will post dates and prices on the website as soon as plans have been finalized.

For 2012, the following partner trips have been confirmed:

Mar - Belize
Aug - Peru
Oct - South Africa

Please visit our *Cheepers!* website for more information on these partner tours.

Standard and custom itineraries are available for the following destinations:

Alaska
Argentina
SE Arizona
Belize
Bolivia
Brazil
California (CA Specialities)
Costa Rica
Florida
Ecuador
Ecuador Photographer's Tour
Southwest Ecuador
Guyana
Namibia
Panama
Peru
South Africa
South Texas

Please call or email to discuss scheduling one of these destinations for your group.

These *Cheepers!* escorted trips are sold out, but if you would like to be placed on a standby list should a cancellation take place, please call or email:

Apr 2011 - Canopy Tower/Lodge
Aug 2011 - Peru
Nov 2011 - Ecuador
Dec 2011 - Amazon Extension

Group photo from February 2011 Panama trip



PANAMA HIGHLIGHTS

Cheepers! recently completed 8 days of Panama birding (Feb 19 - 26) with **350** species seen, **23** species heard, **4** fly-bys (views were not good enough to count as seen), and **7** species seen only by the guides for a grand total of **384** species we were exposed to (in 8 days).

During this trip, we covered the hotspots around the Canal Zone, drove from Panama City to the Chiriqui Highlands with several birding stops along the way and birded in the highlands on both sides of the Continental Divide. Birding sites included the grounds of the Gamboa Research Station and Lodge, the Ammo Dump, the Marina at the Gamboa Rainforest Resort, Pipeline Road, the Rainforest Discovery Center, Plantation Road, Madden Dry Forest, Summit Ponds, Summit Gardens, Las Macanas Wetlands, Fortuna, Cuestra de Piedra, Volcan Lakes, La Amistad International Park, Baru Volcano National Park, Rio Cristal Mountain Lodge, and the area around the David airport.

Trip highlights included:

- **46 species of Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)**
- **27 species of Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)**
- **24 species of Thraupidae (Tanagers and Honeycreepers)**
- **19 species of Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles and Kites)**
- **12 species of Thamnophilidae (Typical Antbirds)**

Even more impressive, while visiting Rio Cristal Mountain Lodge, we saw six male and three female **Resplendent Quetzels** at one time in the same fruiting tree.

This was Jim and Cindy's third *Cheepers!* Panama trip in the last 13 months (our 6th trip overall) and we added **8** lifers. Our Panama bird count is now at 543 species. If we count Panama species we have seen in other countries, we have seen 723 of the approximate 970 species which can be seen in Panama.

I am considering putting together a 10 - 14 day custom trip to go after the hard to find Panama species (quality, not quantity). If you are interested in joining this adventure, please email me (Jim) at cheepers@sbcglobal.net.

Spotlight Tour

GALAPAGOS - Island Hopping Nov 11 - 20, 2011 and Mar 1 - 10, 2012

Visit the Galapagos Islands with an expert naturalist guide who specializes in bird watching. We will travel from island to island searching for endemic species while also enjoying other wildlife of the Galapagos Islands.

Snorkel with Galapagos Penguins, Flightless Cormorants, Sea Lions, Marine Iguanas, Sharks, Sea Turtles, and more! Stay in comfortable but modest hotels on San Cristobal (2 nights), Floreana (1 night), Isabela (3 nights), and Santa Cruz Islands (1 night) while traveling to other islands of the archipelago for wildlife viewing. We will use speedboats to travel around the islands and to travel from island to island.

Our itinerary is:

Day 1 - Arrive in Ecuador. Overnight in either Quito (Nov) or Guayaquil (Mar).

Day 2 - Fly to San Cristobal island. Bird San Cristobal highlands and El Junco Lagoon.

Day 3 - Bird Wolf Island, Kicker Rock, Puerto Grande Beach, and Punta Pitt. Besides birding, snorkeling* is an option at Kicker Rock with the possibility of being in the water with rays, reef sharks and hammerhead sharks.

Day 4 - While enroute to Floreana Island, we will circle Espanola Island searching for the Galapagos Hawk. On Floreana Island, we will visit some old pirate caves. In addition, we will have time to snorkel* in "Luz del Dia" (Light of Day) where there is an abundance of penguins, sea lions, rays, and tropical fish.

Day 5 - Travel to Isabela Island and bird Tintoreras Islet, Galera Islet and Loberia Islet. Swimming and snorkeling* is possible at all locations.

Day 6 - Bird the Sierra Negra Volcano, the National Park Giant Tortoise Breeding Center and the marshlands of Isabela Island.

Day 7 - Bird the Tunnels (one of the best snorkeling* spots on Isabela), Playa de los Perros for the Flightless Cormorant and Galapagos Penguin and the lagoon near the hotel.

Day 8 - Snorkel* on 4 Brothers Island and then bird the highlands of Santa Cruz Island, ascending through all seven different vegetation zones.

Day 9 - Visit the Charles Darwin Research Station, then afternoon flight to Quito (Nov) or Guayaquil (Feb).

Day 10 - Depart for home (Nov or Mar) or for the SW Ecuador trip (Mar)

* *Snorkeling is optional. Birding with guide is available for non-snorkelers.*



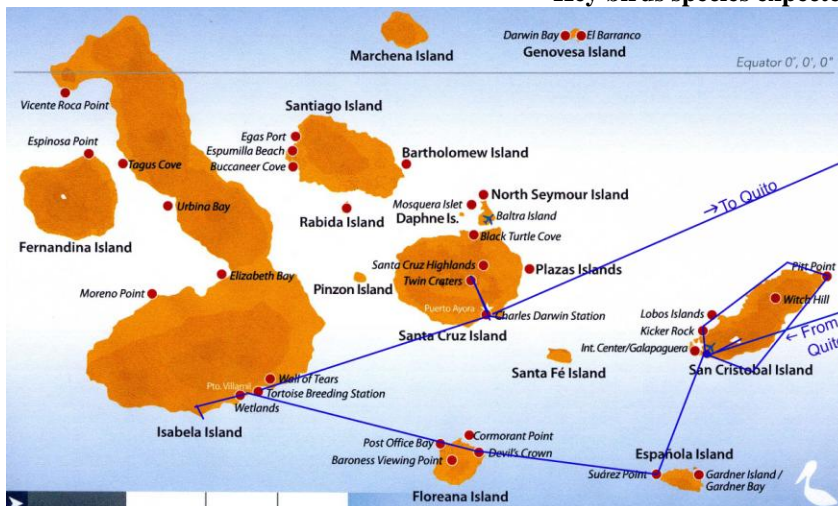
NAZCA BOOBY



GALAPAGOS PENGUIN

Key birds species expected to be seen include (but are not limited to):

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Albatross | Large Ground Finch |
| American Oystercatcher | Lava Gull |
| Baird's Sandpiper | Lava Heron |
| Black-necked Stilt | Magnificent Frigatebird |
| Blue-footed Booby | Medium Tree Finch |
| Charles Mockingbird | Nacza Booby |
| Dark-billed Cuckoo | Paint-billed Crake |
| Flightless Cormorant | Phalaropes |
| Galapagos Flycatcher | Red-footed Booby |
| Galapagos Hawk | Shearwaters |
| Galapagos Mockingbird | Short-eared Owl |
| Galapagos Penguin | Small Ground Finch |
| Galapagos Rail | Storm Petrels |
| Gray-blue Heron | Swallow-tailed Gull |
| Great Flamingo | Tropicbirds |
| Great Frigatebird | White-cheeked Pintail |
| Large Cactus Finch | Woodpecker Finch |



Cheepers!

Birding Festival Drawing Winners

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

2011 Space Coast Birding Festival Titusville FL

Edith Bartlett - Hawks from Every Angle
Marion Monaghan - The BirDs of Ecuador
Sara Turner - Has not yet selected a book
Carol Wyninger - Birds of Brazil

2010 Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival Harlingen TX

Janel Nye - Birds of Costa Rica
Irene Tretiak - Birds of South Africa
Lynn Wearsch - Hawks from Every Angle

2010 Monterey Bay Bird Festival Watsonville CA

Alan Ferguson - Hawks from Every Angle
Jane Olson - Hawks from Every Angle
Marilyn Trabert - Birds of Peru

2010 Southwest Wings Birding and Nature Festival Sierra Vista AZ

Amanda Damin - Stokes Warblers
Gay Gilbert - Birds of Brazil
Marcee Sherrill - Hawks from Every Angle

2010 Featherfest Galveston TX

Cheyenne Gage - Birds of Belize
Carrie Sample - Birds of Belize
Kay Lovelace - Birds of Belize

2010 San Diego Bird Festival San Diego CA

Michael Carle - Birds of Costa Rica
Keith & Julie Horder - Birds of Costa Rica
Doug Nail - Hawks From Every Angle

Cheepers! Website Fact

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

Cheepers! – Testimonials from Customers

Any birding trip involving a group needs to be led by an excellent birding guide and to be organized so that all goes smoothly. In addition, it helps greatly if all the leaders have not only leadership skills but personalities that lend themselves to an enjoyable and successful experience. Jim and Cindy, you were great in all that you did, and it is clear that you both give a lot of forethought into how you plan your trips. You were especially helpful to Georgene and me in arranging for the extra day on each end of our regular trip. Guido was just an excellent birding guide and his knowledge of Panamanian birds and their songs was most impressive, as well as his interest in getting all in the group on the birds. He is also well acquainted and able to inform in general regarding the flora and fauna of Panama. I would recommend this trip without hesitation to anyone interested in a Panama birding experience.

Bob and Georgene B, Salt Lake City, UT (Panama February 2011)

This was our first birding tour, and we thought it was fantastic! Jim and Cindy went out of their way to make sure everyone saw the birds and that our needs and expectations were met. The price was right. The expertise of the guides was great and their bird calls added extra enjoyment to our adventure.

Terry and Pam S., Murray, UT (Panama, February 2011)

I added over 200 new birds to my life list. Wow! The trip was well-planned and organized to obtain as many birds and varieties as possible. Excellent guides and leaders. Accommodations comfortable and at times luxurious . . . The food was a bonus, simple tasty meals, well done! Good job, Jim and Cindy!

Gloria N., Harlingen, TX (Panama February 2011)

We have considerable experience birding Central and South America with 5 or 6 different bird guides. Our trip to Costa Rica with Cheepers! struck a good balance with an excellent English-speaking guide, a great choice of birding locations nicely spaced with comfortable accommodations, good food, and great driver. We added well over 100 lifers to our list while viewing over 300 species. We were extremely satisfied and will strongly recommend Cheepers to our birding friends.

Karen and Dick U., Walla Walla, WA (Costa Rica January 2011)

I just returned from a wonderful, wonderful trip to Costa Rica. I cannot say enough about the guide. He is just amazing. I was speechless at his remarkable, almost scary, ability to see and hear birds. And he works intensely to get those birds. If he hears it, 99% of the time, he gets it. It was unbelievable. His hearing is remarkably acute. The lodges were good. This was a well planned trip and went perfectly. The checklist you made, Jim, was a real prize. It was so helpful, so efficient. We met every night to go over the checklist, and later, when I went to record the birds in my birdbook, the checklist was valuable. I really enjoyed this trip, and will recommend Cheepers to anyone I can. I think I got more value from this trip than any trip . . . Thank you so much for working so hard to provide a good, solid birding experience within a reasonable cost.

Susan H., Tampa, FL (Costa Rica, January 2011)

Visit our website for more testimonials. These are just the most recent.

TWO OPENINGS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

Due to a recent cancellation, we have 2 slots open for both South Africa Part I and Part II (October 2011). If you are interested, please call or email for more information.