

Cheepers! News

May 16, 2011

Vol. 2 Issue 3



WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

Welcome to Volume 2, Issue 3 of **Cheepers! News** issued by Jim and Cindy Beckman. If you are interested in reading previous newsletters, click [here](#).

As we at **Cheepers!** have no trips scheduled in May, we are spending three to four days each week birding at Magee Marsh and Ottawa Wildlife Refuge near Toledo OH. Magee, Ottawa and the surrounding area comprise the largest migrant trap in Ohio (and usually recognized as one of the top 10 birding spots in North America). Migrants land here to rest and feed before heading across Lake Erie to nesting grounds further north.

Thousands of birders from around the country will be birding this area in May, many of them participating in The Biggest Week In American Birding (BWIB) from May 5 - 15 and International Migratory Bird Day on May 14.

This offers **Cheepers!** a great opportunity to interact with birders from around the country and to explain our mission which 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.**

To help get our message out, we have two billboard advertisements, one near Bono eastbound toward Magee Marsh and one near Camp Perry westbound toward Magee Marsh.



For additional advertising, we have placed 6' banners on Route 2 across from the Magee and Ottawa exits. To maximize **Cheepers!** visibility in the Magee parking lot, we display magnetic **Cheepers!** signs on our car which we are typically able to park very close to the main boardwalk entrance. We also have several friends who have agreed to place magnetic signs on their vehicles and to wear **Cheepers!** t-shirts while birding. Of course, we will be wearing **Cheepers!** hats, shirts and vests when we are birding. Say hello if you see us.

Cheepers! is accepting registrations for the following escorted tours:

2011

- Oct 1 - 12 **SOUTH AFRICA Part I**
12-day Cape Tour 26,019 ZAR
Nov 11 - 19 **GALAPAGOS**
Island Hopping \$3260

2012

- Jan 7 - 16 **PANAMA only 4 spots left**
Canal Zone/Chiriqui Highlands \$1888
Feb 11 - 25 **ECUADOR Part I**
Northern Ecuador \$3260
Feb 24 - 29 **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 SOLD OUT**
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 *

Scheduled by request
ECUADOR for Photographers
\$2265 - \$2865 *

* 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

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

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.

If you are interested in a birding destination that we do not currently offer, please let us know. We may have enough interest from other birders to schedule that destination or we may have a partner tour company offering that destination.

We are 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.

Group photo from April 2011 Panama trip Dinner at the Panama Canal Miraflores Locks



PANAMA CANOPY TOWER & LODGE HIGHLIGHTS

Cheepers! recently completed 10 days of birding at the world famous Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge in Panama. We finished with **317** species seen, **26** species heard, and **1** species seen only by the guides for a grand total of **344** species seen and heard.

Carlos Bethancourt was our birding guide at both the Canopy Tower and the Canopy Lodge. We covered the usual hotspots around the Canal Zone and El Valle. Birding sites in the Canal Zone included Semaphore Hill, Ammo Dump Ponds, Pipeline Road, Rainforest Discovery Center, Summit Gardens, Summit Ponds, Old Gamboa Road, Gamboa Rainforest Lodge Marina, and Plantation Road. El Valle birding sites included the Canopy Lodge grounds and entrance road, Le Mesa, Altos del Maria, Rio Indio, Jordanal, El Chiru, rice fields, Santa Clara, Valle Chiquito, Juan Hombron, and Cariguana Trail.

Trip highlights included:

- **43 species of Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)**
- **22 species of Thraupidae (Tanagers and Honeycreepers)**
- **21 species of Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)**
- **18 species of Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles and Kites)**
- **14 species of Thamnophilidae (Typical Antbirds)**
- **10 species of Troglodytidae (Wrens)**

Species highlights included:

Pheasant Cuckoo	White-tipped Sicklebill	Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant
Tody Motmot	Veraguan Mango	Lance-tailed Manakin
Snowcap	Barred Puffbird	Rufous-browed Peppershrike,
Great Potoo,	Yellow-eared Toucanet	Rosy Thrush-Tanager
Marbled Wood-Quail	Blue-throated Toucanet	Sulphur-rumped Tanager
Tiny Hawk	Dull-mantled Antbird	Emerald Tanager.
Spectacled Owl	Brownish Twistwing	
Mottled Owl	Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant	

On the last night of the trip, we visited the Miraflores Locks and enjoyed an excellent buffet dinner there. We were joined at dinner by Carlos and his wife Evelyn and Raul Arias de Para (owner of the Canopy properties) and his son Daniel.

This was Jim and Cindy's fourth *Cheepers!* Panama trip in the last 15 months (our 7th trip overall). With so many return trips to basically the same locations in Panama, it is getting tougher to add lifers. We did add **2** lifers (Pheasant Cuckoo and Dull-mantled Antbird) and our Panama bird count is now at 545 species. If we count Panama species we have seen in other countries, we have seen 725 of the approximate 970 species which can be seen in Panama.

Spotlight Tours - ECUADOR



Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan



Violet-tailed Sylph



Inca Jays

Northern Ecuador - 15 days/14 nights	Feb 11 - Feb 25, 2012
Amazon Extension - 6 days/ 5 nights	Feb 24 - Feb 29, 2012
Galapagos Islands - 10 days/ 9 nights	Mar 1 - Mar 10, 2012
Southwest Ecuador - 15 days/14 nights	Mar 9 - Mar 23, 2012

Northern Ecuador - We will be birding all the great locations in Northern Ecuador from northwest of Quito (Yanacocha, Old Nono-Mindo Road, the Upper and Lower Tandayapa Valley, Angel Paz Antpittas Reserve, an Oilbird Roost, Silanche Bird Sanctuary, Milpe Bird Sanctuary, and Calacali) to the high Andes (Antisana and Papallacta Pass) to the eastern Andes (Guango Lodge, San Isidro Lodge, Guacamayos Ridge, Wildsumaco Lodge) and the road to Coca. We expect to see between 450 and 475 species on this trip.

Amazon Extension - We will stay at the Napo Wildlife Center for 4 nights and bird the trails and waterways around the lodge, visit the Yasuni National Park (including the Parrot clay licks) and search for endemics on several Napo River islands. We expect to see 125 to 150 new species on this extension. When combined with the Northern Ecuador trip, we expect to see between 575 and 625 species including about 60 hummingbird species.

Galapagos - We will visit 5 islands, sleep on land each night and use speed boats each day to travel around and between the islands. While birding is the primary activity, there will be ample opportunity to swim/snorkel in waters containing sea lions, sea turtles, rays, reef sharks, penguins, white-tip sharks, and of course, an abundance of tropical fish.

Southwest Ecuador - We will be birding the Manglares-Churute Ecological Reserve, the Jocotoco Reserve near Buenaventura, the Jorupe Reserve, the Tapichalaca Jocotoco Reserve, Cahanuma and Bombuscaro entrances to Podocarpus National Park, and the Zamora-Loja Road. We expect to see 500 - 550 species on this trip. For those who have previously birded Northern Ecuador, you should add 250 - 300 or more new species to your life list on this Tumbesian Endemics trip.

As these trips run consecutively, Northern Ecuador and the Amazon Extension can be combined, the Amazon Extension and Galapagos can be combined, and Galapagos and Southwest Ecuador can be combined. Of course, if you want the ultimate Ecuador birding experience, you can sign up for all four trips and see 825 to 950 species.

Please visit our website for more information on these Ecuador trips including detail itineraries and 2010 & 2011 Northern Ecuador trip reports, Northern Ecuador list of species seen and Northern Ecuador photos.

Cheepers!

USING GREEN LASER LIGHTS

In the tropics, to help everyone in the group find the bird, nearly every birding guide uses a green laser light to supplement verbal instructions. The laser lights are extremely helpful when trying to find the particular "tree", the particular "Y" or fork in the tree, "10 o'clock" in that tree, or any of the other directions used to help locate the bird.

When using a green laser, it is important to follow these guidelines:

- Point the light at a location near the bird but never directly on the bird
- Provide directions to the light if needed (approximate distance, type of tree, at what level [ground, eye level, 45 degrees, etc])
- Then provide directions from the light to the bird (for example, 3 foot above the light, next tree back on the right at the same level as the light, down and to the left, etc)

Depending on the density of vegetation you are looking through, not everyone may see where your light is shining. Be patient in helping everyone find your point of light.

As mentioned earlier, don't "light up" the bird by placing the light directly on the bird.

Also, you generally should not circle the bird with your light. If the bird is in the middle of dense vegetation, the light will hit many layers of the vegetation as it circles and will create almost a kaleidoscope of light points which may confuse the bird and possibly scare it away.

I am often asked "what laser strength do I use?" and "where do I buy the lasers I use?"

During our tours, I use several lasers depending on the light conditions. I typically carry three green lasers, a 50mW for very bright conditions and far distances (greater than 75 yards), a 30mW for regular light and distances to up to approximately 75 yards, and a 5mW for use in poor light and close distances (less than 10 yards). I also carry a red 5mW for close sightings in very poor light.

As birding tour leaders, Cindy and I recognize the importance of using quality lasers. We have purchased from Amazon and other sites and found we get what we pay for; lower price often means lower quality.

We purchase green lasers from Darrin Lewer at Texas Nautical Repair, Inc., also known as Land, Sea and Sky in Houston TX. Darrin will give you a 10% discount if you order by phone (713-529-3551) and mention **Cheepers!** as your referral source.

Cheepers! – Testimonials from Customers

Cindy, Thanks for the link to your bird photos. And I am looking forward to the disk with all our combined photos. I totally enjoyed looking at all the Panamanian birds again. Since most of these birds were lifers for me, it really helps to see them in the setting where I first got to see them live and in person. Maybe next time when I am on a Cheepers! Birding on a Budget tour, I will be able to ID some of the birds without the excellent help of you, Jim (and his laser pointer) and of course Carlos, the most awesome bird guide EVER. The Canopy Tower really has a gem with Carlos. Not only did he make sure we all got on the bird, he did it with enthusiasm and you could tell he totally loved doing it. And thanks to Carlos, I got some great digiscope photos with my little digital camera. I thought the tour was organized beautifully. The sunset dinner at the Mira Flores Locks and stay at the airport hotel on the last night was a perfect way to end the trip. **Thanks for making my first real birding tour a fantastic one.** Can't wait to go with you guys again!

Janel N., Austin, TX (Panama Canopy Tower/Canopy Lodge April 2011)

*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)

TWO OPENINGS FOR SOUTH AFRICA PART 1

Due to a recent cancellation, we have 2 slots open for our South Africa Part I 12-day trip (October 2011). If you are interested, please call or email for more information