



CHEEPERS! NEWS

Volume 1, Issue 3

April 7, 2010

WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

Welcome to Volume 1, Issue 3 of Cheepers! News issued by Cindy and Jim Beckman.

We continue to be very busy as we just returned from the Belize trip we put together as a fundraiser for the Dayton Audubon Society (see trip report highlights below), head to Galveston FeatherFest 2010 (April 7 – 10) where we will have a vendor table (see article on page 2) and then travel to Panama for our April 16 to 28 Canopy Lodge/Canopy Tower birding trip.

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).

CHEEPERS! Belize Trip Report Highlights

Cheepers! just completed 9 days of March birding in Belize with Glenn Crawford as our guide. During the trip, we saw 289 species and heard an additional 12 species. In total, we saw or heard almost 50% of all species recorded in Belize.

Highlights of the trip included:

- An extremely rare **Orange-breasted Falcon** in flight and then perched/preening in the open at eye level about 300 feet away.
- A **Laughing Falcon** swallowing a snake (he actually had to swallow the snake twice as the snake almost escaped the swallowing process).
- A **Jabiru** devouring an eel.
- Two **Aplomado Falcons** double-teaming and catching a Barn Swallow (should have heard the screeching brakes as we stopped to watch the acrobatics and coordination between the two Aplomados).

- While standing atop the main Mayan ruin at Caracol, we saw a male **Bat Falcon** deliver a White-bellied Emerald to its mate for a mid-morning snack.
- We were amazed to see a **Slaty-Tailed Trogon** and a **Black-headed Trogon** sitting in the same tree on adjacent branches within 12 inches of each other.
- We had very good looks at normally secretive **Worm-eating, Kentucky** and **Hooded Warblers** as they feasted on the insects disturbed by an army ant swarm.
- We were able to compare size and fields marks of **Wedge-billed** (5¾"), **Tawny-winged** (7¼") and **Northern-barred** (10½") **Woodcreepers** as they enjoyed the bounty created by the same ant swarm.
- We were pleasantly surprised to see two **White Hawks** and one **Great Black-Hawk**

soaring in the same binocular view.

- 28 Warbler species
- 16 Hawk, Eagle and Falcon species
- All 5 resident Kingfishers species (Amazon, American Pygmy, Belted, Green, and Ringed)
- All 4 resident Trogons on the same day (Black-headed, Collared, Slaty-tailed, and Violaceous)
- 9 of the 11 possible Woodpecker species

(Please visit our website for a detailed trip report)

This was the 2nd Belize birding trip for **Cheepers!** owners Cindy and Jim Beckman. We have a return trip scheduled March 11 – 20, 2011 following the same itinerary as this trip.

Special Interest Articles:

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

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FeatherFest Special
Special price for
Costa Rica Central
Tour for anyone
registering by April
30, 2010.



Cindy and Jim at the 2009 Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival

Bird Festivals

Galveston FeatherFest – April 8 – 11, 2010

Jim will have a vendor table at Galveston FeatherFest 2010 promoting scheduled birding trips to Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Namibia, Panama, and South Africa (see page 5 for a complete listing of trips, dates and prices). **Cheepers!** is offering a FeatherFest special of \$1995 for the Costa Rica Central tour for anyone registering by April 30, 2010.

San Diego Bird Festival – Drawing Winners

Cindy and Jim participated at the San Diego Bird Festival in early March. Each visitor to the **Cheepers!** booth who completed a **Cheepers!** Birder's Survey was entered into a daily drawing to win a birding related book. **Cheepers!** is pleased to announce that Doug Nail, Keith & Julie Horder and Michael Carle were the winners and all have received their birding book.

See page 5 for other **Cheepers!** promotions

CHEEPERS! - Costa Rica 2010 Updates

Cheepers! is accepting registrations for our July birding trips 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 Jul 16, ends Jul 25, and is priced at \$2100 with a \$345 single supplement.

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 Jul 25, ends Aug 2, and is priced at \$2182 with a \$480 single supplement.

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

Spotlight on Savegre Mountain Lodge

Our favorite place to visit among the many amazing birding sites in Costa Rica is Savegre Mountain Lodge. On our first visit, we observed nesting Resplendent Quetzals just a few hundred feet from the restaurant. Other guests spoke of watching the male fly

across the courtyard with its magnificent tail flowing behind it, so beautiful it seemed surreal. When we returned a few years later, the nest tree had fallen, but it took less than 5 minutes for the guide to show us to a spot where he knew the quetzals could be seen. Both male and female sat patiently as we photographed them from about 30 feet away.

While other sites boast Resplendent Quetzals among their birdlife, no other spot can consistently provide visitors with good views of this exquisite species. With well-maintained trails near a rushing river offering opportunities to see a wide variety of species, lovely rooms with the comforts of home, and excellent dining at the on-site restaurant, it seems that Savegre has it all.

Located in San Gerardo de Dota, a small community in the Talamanca Mountains, Savegre is at an elevation of 2200 meters (7220 feet). The forest around the lodge is one of massive oaks, colorful plants and an incredible variety of animal life. Numerous insects, amphibians and mammals dwell in the forest, and the pristine valley is a paradise for birdwatchers: over 170 species of birds can be seen in this cloud

forest, including 10 species of hummingbirds, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Silvery-throated Jay, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Volcano Junco, and Spangle-cheeked, White-winged and Flame-colored Tanagers to name a few. But the list of bird species is crowned by the magnificent Resplendent Quetzal, which lives here year round.

Savegre Mountain Lodge's Private Biological Reserve is located in the environs of the Cerro de la Muerte, a well-known birding hot spot. It consists of 400 hectares (988 acres) of cloud forest with elevations varying from 1,220 and 2,560 meters above sea level. 80% of the reserve is virgin forest, with the newer growth of the remainder including reforestation programs using native species, especially laurels.

Don Efraín Chacón and his family arrived here in 1954 and were the first pioneers to settle in this valley. The Chacón family not only developed this wonderful hotel, which is still owned and run by the family, but have taken advantage of the crisp weather to grow apples, plums, and peaches, which are served in the lodge's restaurant.



Resplendent Quetzal

Possible at Monteverde

Probable at Savegre Mountain Lodge

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 October 2, ends October 17, and is priced at \$4790 (the single supplement is \$500) while the extension begins October 17, ends 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
- 500 – 600 species of birds



Fabiano F. Olivera

Only 4 spots remain open for this exciting Brazil trip.

Spotlight on Pantanal Wildlife Center

We will stay at the Pantanal Wildlife Center for 2 nights when we bird the Pantanal biome. Our visit is planned for the best time of the year for viewing Giant Otters (tend to be visible daily from June 15 through December 15), Jabirus (nests are active from July through early November) and Jaguars (July through October historically are the best months to see Jaguars on the river banks).

Owned and operated by professional wildlife biologists, Pantanal Wildlife Center is located 2.5 km off the Transpantaneira Road, on the forested banks of the wildlife-rich Pixaim River. With air conditioned rooms and accessible riverine forest, PWC offers the Pantanal's best value for serious birders, naturalists, and photographers. PWC offers boat outings that feature the world's tamest Giant Otters. Other exclusives are the Pantanal's only mobile canopy towers strategically located at fruiting and flowering trees and silent, electric river catamarans for photographers using long lenses on tripods. PWC also offers horse rides, cattle drives, walks on scientifically-designed forest trails, research lectures, mammal spotlighting, star chart for study of the spectacular night sky, and Brazilian barbecues.

PWC has 10 double-occupancy rooms with air conditioning and private, hot-shower bathrooms. The large, screened dining room and lounge features a full bar specializing in caipirinhas, the Brazilian national cocktail.





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 \$3502* (ZAR 26,019 and includes a 1-day pelagic trip. The Subtropical Tour runs from October 12 – 27, 2010, is currently priced at \$4339* (ZAR 32,236), 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!

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 Galveston FeatherFest 2010 special of \$1995 for the Costa Rica Central tour for anyone registering by April 30, 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.

Congratulations to Mike Higgiston, winner of a Z-Bolt Green Laser Pen. Mike's name was drawn from the trip registrations received in March as part of a recent Cheepers! promotion.

CHEEPERS! - Testimonials from Customers

2010 Ecuador Northwest & Eastern Andes with Amazon Extension – 661 species seen

"We had a wonderful time trekking through the rainforests of Ecuador. Our guides, Andres and Marcelo, were awesome and the trip leaders, Jim and Cindy, were always pleasant and addressed any concerns we had. They carried a first aid kit and extra flashlights for those of us who needed extra supplies. All of the transportation was top notch and impeccably timed. The pre-trip information was very informative. We highly recommend to anyone to tour with Cheepers!."

Debra Johnson & Annie Balash, Florida

CHEEPERS! - Travel & Lodging Recommendation

During our February 2010 Ecuador trip, while staying at Bellavista Lodge, we made a birding stop at the residence of Tony Nunnery and his wife Barbara. Tony grew up in the states but has spent the last ten years in a house he and his wife built on some 70+ hectares in the Tandayapa Valley. They have been reforesting the former pasture and have established a phenomenal hummingbird garden right outside their house. There is no electricity or telephone on the property (he doesn't see the need), so booking ahead is not usually possible. The mainstay of the garden is the lawn with hummingbird feeders, but there are also 17km of trails throughout the whole of the property, which can offer a great variety of extra species. He extends a warm welcome to birders and appreciates any donations made to help offset the cost of bird food. Ask for directions at Bellavista if your guide does not know where Tony's house is.

CHEEPERS! - 2010 Trip Schedule

CHEEPERS! 2010 Schedule				
From	To	Destination	Price	Guide(s)
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 10-Day Central Tour	FeatherFest Special - \$1995	\$2190 Marcos Soto
7/25/10	8/02/10	Costa Rica 10-Day Southern Tour	\$2182	Marcos Soto
10/02/10	10/17/10	Brazil Cerrado, Amazonia and Pantanal Biomes	} Only 4 spots left	\$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	} Only 4 spots left	\$2685 Marcelo Andy and Galo Real
12/03/10	12/08/10	Ecuador Amazon Basin Extension		TBD Marcelo Andy and Galo Real

CHEEPERS! - 2011 Trip Schedule (Tentative)

CHEEPERS! 2011 Tour Schedule				
From	To	Destination	Price	Guide(s)
01/15/11	01/23/11	Costa Rica 9-Day Central Tour	TBD	Marcos Soto
02/17/11	02/27/11	Panama	\$1949	Guido Berguido
03/11/11	03/20/11	Belize	\$2485	Glenn Crawford
03/26/11	04/03/11	Costa Rica Leisure Birding	TBD	Marcos Soto
04/??/11	04/??/11	SW Ecuador	TBD	Marcelo Andy and Galo Real
07/16/11	07/24/11	Costa Rica for Young Birders	TBD	Marcos Soto
07/29/11	08/07/11	Costa Rica 10-Day Central Tour	TBD	Marcos Soto
08/06/11	08/15/11	Costa Rica 10-Day 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	
04/08/10	04/11/10	Galveston FeatherFest	Galveston Island, TX
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 Fare	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 book or a green laser pointer.