



Cheepers! News

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September 26, 2011

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Welcome to Volume 2, Issue 5 of **Cheepers! News** issued by Jim Beckman with review, critique and photos provided by Cindy Beckman. If you are interested in reading previous newsletters, click [here](#).

As a reminder, the Cheepers! 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.**

Cheepers! is accepting registrations for the following escorted tours:

2012

- Jan 7 - 16 **PANAMA (nearly full)**
Canal Zone/Chiriqui Highlands \$1888
- Feb 11 - 25 **ECUADOR SOLD OUT**
Northern Ecuador \$3395
- Feb 24 - 29 **ECUADOR SOLD OUT**
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
- Apr 23 - May 4 **PANAMA (nearly full)**
Canopy Lodge and Tower \$2595
- Jun 2 - 10 **ALASKA** ✓
Denali and Kenai \$3350 - \$3900 *
- Jun 10 - 14 **ALASKA**
Nome Extension \$1858 - \$2256 *
- Jul 8 - 13 **BRAZIL**
Cristalino Jungle Lodge \$1495 - \$1695 *
- Jul 13 - 27 **BRAZIL**
Cerrado, Pantanal & Eastern Forest
\$4595 - \$5495 *
- Oct 1 - 19 **AUSTRALIA**
Eastern Australia - \$5485AUD
- Oct 19 - 23 **AUSTRALIA**
Tasmania Extension - \$1485AUD

Scheduled by request

ECUADOR for Photographers \$2265-\$2865 *

* **Final price depends on number of registrations received.**

What's new!

Trips Filling Fast

Our very popular Panama trips are filling fast. We have just a few spots open on each of these trips:

- Jan 2012 Panama Canal Zone and Chiriqui Highlands
- Apr 2012 Panama Canopy Lodge and Canopy Tower

If you are interested in one of these trips, please call or email at your earliest convenience and then follow up by sending your registration form and deposit as soon as possible to guarantee your spot(s).

August 2011 Peru Trip Pictures Are Online

Pictures from our recent Peru trip have been posted on the Cheepers! Website. From the home page, click on "PHOTOS FROM OUR TOURS!" and then on the "PHOTO GALLERIES" webpage, click on the "Andean Cock-of-the-Rock" picture to view the Peru pictures. Or click [here](#) to go straight to the Peru photos

July 2012 Brazil Trip Added to Schedule

Brazil has been added to the **Cheepers!** 2012 schedule with two trips. First, we will visit the world famous Cristalino Jungle Lodge (July 8 thru 13) as a pre-trip extension followed by the main trip where we will visit excellent birding locations in the Cerrado, Pantanal and Eastern Forests from July 13 thru July 27.

October 2012 Australia Trip Finalized

Dates and the double occupancy price for the October 2012 Eastern Australia trip have been finalized. The trip is scheduled for October 1 thru October 19 with departure from the US on October 1 and arrival in Cairns on October 3.

We have also added a **Tasmania Extension** where we will focus on birding Bruny Island (all 12 Tasmania endemics can be found here). This extension is scheduled for October 19 thru 23.

Visit the *Cheepers!* website at www.cheepersbirding.com for prices, detail itineraries & registration forms.



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We are working on our 2013 schedule and the following trips are confirmed:

- Jan 5 - 14 Panama Canal Zone and Chiriqui Highlands- Price TBA
- Feb 9 - 23 Northern Ecuador - \$3495
- Feb 22 - 27 Amazon Extension - \$1295
- Apr 15 - 26 Panama Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge - \$2795

We are in the process of updating the website to include these trips these trips.

For 2012, the following partner trips have been confirmed:

- Feb and Mar - Belize
- Oct - South Africa
- Nov - Namibia
- Nov - Bhutan

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 Specialties)
- Costa Rica
- Florida
- Ecuador Photographer's Tour
- Maine
- Namibia
- Northern Ecuador
- Southwest Ecuador
- Guyana
- Namibia
- Panama
- Peru
- South Africa
- South Texas

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

SUMMER BIRDING IN COLORADO

Cindy and I spent a week in Colorado in late July visiting family in Pueblo and doing some birding. From a birding perspective, we were on a quest. Despite being in many prime western US birding locations over the past 15 years, we have continually missed the American Three-toed Woodpecker everywhere we birded.

During our visit, we attended the ABA annual meeting and evening barbecue in Colorado Springs. During the barbecue, we asked several local attendees "is there someplace within a reasonable driving distance where we can find a Three-toed Woodpecker?".

We also reached out to SeEtta Moss from the Arkansas Valley Audubon Society Chapter with the same question plus we looked at the 2011 summer history of Three-toed Woodpecker sightings on the Colorado List Serve.

Bottom line, we ended up with 5 different locations to seek this elusive bird; two locations near Beulah, one near Colorado Springs (Old Stage Road) and two west of Denver (Pine Valley and Jefferson). We drove almost 500 miles to visit all 5 sites and we **STRUCK OUT**. So the **QUEST** will continue. Next time we are in Colorado, we will drive to Rocky Mountain National Park where the sightings seem more frequent and more reliable.

As we live in Ohio with its abundance of eastern species, it is always exciting to go far enough west to see some of the western species. We were not disappointed. Sightings included Band-tailed Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Rufous Hummingbird, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Williamson's Sapsucker, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Western Kingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Plumbeous Vireo, Steller's Jay, Black-billed Magpie, Mountain Chickadee, Bushtit, Pygmy Nuthatch, Western Bluebird, Sprague's Pipit, Audubon's Warbler, Western Tanager, Spotted Towhee, Oregon Junco, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole, and Red Crossbill. Not too bad a list considering we were there to spend time with family.

Western Tanager



Spotted Towhee



Steller's Jay



Photos by Cindy Beckman



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Spotlight Tour - Alaska

Our **Alaska Introductory Tour** focuses on prime birding locations in and around Denali National Park and the Kenai Peninsula with an optional 5-day **Nome Extension**.

Day 1 Arrive in Anchorage at your convenience. No activities are scheduled for this day.

Day 2 will be spent in Anchorage birding along the Coastal Trail and a possible visit to an Alaska Native culture museum before heading north toward Denali.

Days 3 and 4 will be spent birding and wildlife viewing in Denali and east of Denali.

Day 5 will begin with birding around the lodge before heading south to Anchorage, birding along the way .

Days 6 thru 9 will be spent on the Kenai Peninsula with day trips out of Seward. We will visit Turnagain Arm, Kachemak Bay, Resurrection Bay, and the Sealife Center in addition to birding shorelines and forest trails.

Day 10 concludes the Introductory Tour and begins the Nome Extension. Those going on the Nome Extension will fly to Nome where we will bird after arrival.

Days 11 thru 13 will be spent birding in and around Nome.

Day 14 will begin with final birding around Nome and then the return flight to Anchorage.

Day 15 – Depart Anchorage

The **Alaska Introductory Tour** is priced at \$3900 per person if we have a group of 6 or \$3350 if we have a group of 8.

- This price includes 9 nights of lodging (days 1 thru 9), all land transportation within Alaska, airport transfers, entrance fees, and an expert birding guide.
- This price does not include roundtrip airfare from your home airport to Anchorage, meals, tips, and expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, extra drinks and snacks, souvenirs, etc.

The **Nome Extension** is priced at \$2258 per person if we have a group of 6 or \$1858 if we have a group of 8.

- This price includes 5 nights of lodging (days 10 thru 14), all land transportation within Alaska, airport transfers, entrance fees, and an expert birding guide.
- This price does not include roundtrip airfare from Anchorage to Nome, meals, tips, and expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, extra drinks and snacks, souvenirs, etc.

Some of the key species we are searching for include Red-throated, Arctic and Pacific Loons, Gyrfalcon, Spruce Grouse, Willow and Rock Ptarmigan, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Red Knot, Red-necked Phalarope, Long-tailed Jaeger, Arctic and Aleutian Terns, Horned and Tufted Puffins, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Arctic Warbler, Bluethroat, Yellow and White Wagtails, and Northern Wheatear.





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Highlights of Recent Peru Trip

Cheepers! visited Peru from August 19 thru September 6. During this trip, we birded south of Lima and around Cusco, visited Machu Picchu, birded Manu Road from Cusco to Ithahuania, birded the lodge properties at Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge, Amazonia Lodge and Manu Amazon Lodge, visited a parrot lick, and birded the Madres de Dios River from Ithahuania to Laberinto. The group saw 433 species, heard another 38 species and we had 3 counted as fly-bys (as we need better views to see field marks).

Machu Picchu is an amazing place to visit. Manu Road is definitely not for the faint-of-heart. The boat ride from Manu Amazon Lodge to Laberinto was over 10 hours as the river was low and a lot of zig-zagging was required because of sand bars and tree trunks in the water.

Included in our count were 49 Tanager and Allies species, 43 Tyrant Flycatcher species, 34 Hummingbird species, 27 Ovenbird and Woodcreeper species, 27 Typical Antbird species, and 21 Parrot species.

Highlights included Andean Cock-of-the-Rock (male and female), Amazonian Umbrellabird, Sungrebe, Sunbittern, Orange-eared Tanager, Rufous-crested Coquette, Gould's Jewelfront, Wire-crested Thorntail, Great Potoo, Golden-collared Honeycreeper, Blue-naped Chlorophonia, Razor-billed Curassow, Horned Screamer, Pale-winged Trumpeter, Humboldt Penguin, Buckley's Forest-Falcon, Tui and Rose-fronted Parakeets, Curl-crested Aracari, Bamboo Antshrike, Striated Antbird, Many-colored Rush-Tyrant, White-cheeked Tody-Flycatcher, Yungas Manakin, Purplish Jay, Black-goggled Tanager, Paradise Tanager, Black-billed Seedfinch, and Torrent Ducks with ducklings.

We also saw 8 species of monkeys (Brown Capuchin, Common Wooley, Pervian Squirrel, Dusky Titi, Red Howler, White-fronted Capuchin, Monk Saki, and Saddle-backed Tamarin), Agouti, Capybara, Coatimundi, Llama, Peccary, Sloth, Tapir, Tayra, and Viscacha plus dozens of butterflies, several lizards/skins, and a snake or two.

Cindy has posted her pictures on the **Cheepers!** Website. From the home page, click on "PHOTOS FROM OUR TOURS!" and then on the "PHOTO GALLERIES" webpage, click on the "Andean Cock-of-the-Rock" picture to view the Peru pictures. Or click [here](#) to go straight to the Peru photos.

Andean Cock-of-the-Rock



Rufous-crested Coquette



Red-and-green Macaw



Photos by Cindy Beckman



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Australia Highlights

Eastern Australia - Cairns to Sidney

16 full days of birding along the east coast including in and around Cairns, the Great Barrier Reef, the Daintree River (including a river cruise), the Atherland Tableland, Wooroonooran National Park, Mission Bay, Lamington National Park including 2 nights at O'Reilly's Guesthouse, Girraween National Park, in and around Stanthorpe, a pelagic trip out of Wollongong, Barren Grounds Nature Reserve, the Blue Mountains, and Capertee Valley. Depart from the US on Oct 1 and arrival in Cairns on Oct 3. Bird Eastern Australia from Oct 3 to Oct 18 with departure from Sydney on the 19th for the Tasmania Extension or to catch your international flight home.

Tasmania Extension

We will focus on birding Bruny Island, where all 12 Tasmania endemics can be found, plus we will visit several great birding locations near Hobart. This extension is scheduled for Oct 19 thru 23, 2012, with a return flight from Hobart to Sydney arriving in Sydney with time to spare before boarding your international flight home.

Brazil Highlights

Brazil! From the tiny Minute Hermit to the flightless Rhea, Brazil is home to over 1700 species of birds in 72 families and is considered one of the top birding destinations in the world. Our Brazilian tour includes three biomes in the main tour and a fourth in the extension: Amazonia, Cerrado, Pantanal, and Atlantic Forests. Located in Brazil's southern Amazonia, Cristalino Lodge will serve as our home away from home during our 5-day pre-trip extension as we explore pristine terra firme forest that harbors rich diversity in an area where two rivers separate many bird populations. Our main tour begins in Cuiaba where we will enjoy birding in the beautiful Cerrado landscape of Chapada dos Guimaraes. This Brazilian savanna features many waterfalls and steep sandstone formations and is home to a wide variety of species. The Pantanal, the world's largest freshwater wetland, has a variety of ecological sub-regions such as river corridors, gallery forest, perennial and seasonal wetlands, and lakes. We expect to see over 100 species a day birding in open areas where finding birds is much easier than in typical tropical birding conditions. The main tour finishes with several days in the Atlantic Forest, a unique ecosystem that harbors more of Brazil's 182 endemic species than any other biome. Come with us to experience the biodiversity of Brazil!

Ecuador options if you have already birded Northern Ecuador

If you have birded Northern Ecuador but haven't experienced the Ecuador Amazon Basin or the Galapagos, consider joining **Cheepers!** for the Feb 24–28 2012 Amazon Basin Extension and/or the Mar 1–10 2012 Galapagos Island Hopping trips. These two trips can easily be combined and we can arrange day activities for you on Feb 29. *NOTE: Current Amazon Basin pricing does not include lodging and meals in Quito on February 23 or the flight from Quito and Coca to meet the group heading down the Napo River and the return flight from Coca to Quito on February 28. Contact us for more details.*

The Galapagos Island Hopping and Southwest Ecuador trips can also be combined. Fly into Guayaquil for the flight to the Galapagos, then return to Guayaquil for the start of the Southwest trip. The Southwest trip ends in Guayaquil where you can connect with your international flight home. Of, if you want to spend time in Quito either before or after these trips, you can fly into Quito and then to the Galapagos and return to Quito after your Galapagos and/or Southwest trips are completed. We can arrange birding/sight-seeing activities for you in Quito if you arrive before March 10 and/or stay later than March 24.

Panama Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge – Price Comparison

Compare the Cheepers! price for this tour to the big tour companies. The per day cost of the **Cheepers!** 2012 Canopy tour is \$216 vs. approximately \$350 to \$375 per day for Field Guides, VENT and Wings. There are some differences in sites visited and in time of year of year visited, but we are staying at the same places, eating the same meals, using the same guides, and generally seeing the same resident birds.



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Registration Gift Pack

Each person who registers for a **Cheepers!** trip receives a gift pack 6-8 weeks prior to trip departure which includes:

- ✓ 1 fanny/waist pack large enough to hold your trip field guide
- ✓ 1 refillable water bottle
- ✓ 1 microfiber lens cloth
- ✓ 1 customized trip checklist
- ✓ 1 bookmark
- ✓ 1 pen
- ✓ 1 pencil
- ✓ 1 pocket-sized notepad
- ✓ 1 adhesive Family Species index for your field guide

The customized checklist with a waterproof cover and back page contains:

- Names of trip participants
- Names of trip leaders
- Names of trip birding guides
- 2 pages to list daily places visited
- Country list of species with enough columns to record birds seen each day
- Bird species cross-reference to the page/plate in the country field guide
- Alpha list of all country species with cross-reference to location in checklist and in field guide
- Daily Species Tally Page
- 2 pages to list other sightings
- Species Family Index cross-referenced to the appropriate pages in the checklist
- 1-page map of locations to be visited
- Quick Index to Families for your country field guide

Birding Festival Schedule

Cheepers! is currently scheduled to participate in the following birding festivals:

- Nov 2011 – Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival (Harlingen TX)
- Jan 2012 – Space Coast Birding Festival (Titusville FL)
- May 2012 – Biggest Week in American Birding (Port Clinton, OH)

If you attend one of these festivals, please look for us at our vendor's booth or say hello to us on the boardwalk at Magee Marsh.

Current Scheduled Custom Trips

- Apr 2012 - Panama Canal Zone & Chiriqui Highlands
- Apr 2012 – Texas Upper Texas Coast and Hill Country
- Sep 2012 – Northern Ecuador & Amazon Basin

If you have a group interested in a birding destination, please allow us an opportunity to submit a proposal.

Do you need a guest speaker for a local chapter/club meeting?

Depending on our schedules and the proximity of your group to one of the birding festivals we plan to attend or if you are in Ohio or in a state bordering Ohio, we are available as guest speakers for your local group. We have the following presentations available:

- 2009 Harpy Eagle Trip to Panama
- Birding in Costa Rica (covers 3 trips)
- Birding in Ecuador (covers 3 trips)

I am working on a Peru presentation and will have one available after our South Africa adventure later this year.

Guest Speaker Schedule

No scheduled speaking engagements for the rest of 2011.

Trip Cancellation Policy

Sometimes, you have to cancel out of a trip after you have registered for the trip. If this happens, please notify **Cheepers!** in writing, either postal mail or email.

If notice of cancellation is received at **Cheepers!**:

- at least 6 months in advance, your deposit is fully refunded.
- between 4 and 6 months of the trip, 50% of your deposit is refunded.
- less than 4 months prior to your trip, 0% of your deposit is refunded

If cancellation occurs after full payment is made, a refund will be given only if the vacant spot is filled.





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Cheepers! - Scheduled Custom Trips

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.

Apr 2012 - Panama Canal Zone & Chiriqui Highlands

This standard 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 fly to the Chiriqui Highlands to search for Resplendent Quetzels and other birds of the cloud forest. The group should see 325 to 350 species on this trip. Cindy is leading this trip.

Apr 2012 – Texas (Upper Texas Coast and Hill Country)

We start this custom 9-day trip with a visit to the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge during the annual Prairie Chicken Festival. Then we head east to bird the Sam Houston National Forest, Jones State Forest, Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, Bolivar Peninsula, and High Island. After visiting these Upper Texas Coast hotspots, we drive to the Texas Hill Country and bird Kerr Wildlife Management Area, South Llano River State Park, Lost Maples State Natural Area, and Garner State Park. Jim is leading this trip.

Sep 2012 – Northern Ecuador & the Amazon Basin

This is a custom 11-day itinerary jam-packed with many of the best Ecuador birding locations including Yanacocha, Old Nono-Mindo Road, the Antpitta Reserve, an Oilbird roost, Tandayapa Valley, Calacali, Antisana Reserve, Papallacta Pass, Guango, and the Napo Wildlife Center. Jim and Cindy are leading this trip.

Tourmaline Sunangel



Giant Antpitta



Oilbird



Striped Manakin



Pale-mandibled Aricari



Photos by Cindy Beckman

If you have a group or organization interested in a birding destination, please allow us an opportunity to present a proposal. To develop a proposal, we need the following information:

- Where do you want to go (country or state)?
- Any specific locations?
- Any specific birds you want to see?
- When do you want to go?
- How many days should the trip be?
- What is your expected group size?
- If you are a non-profit organization, would you like this trip to be used as a fund-raiser?
- Do you want **Cheepers!** representatives to lead this trip?

Email or call for more information.

cheepers@sbcglobal.net

937-862-4505 or 937-974-0802



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The Ohio Young Birders Club is raising money for habitat restoration

The Ohio Young Birders Club is a statewide group for nature enthusiasts ages 12 to 18. The club is part of the education program of the Black Swamp Bird Observatory, a research and education organization based in Oak Harbor, OH.

The mission of the OYBC is to encourage, educate and empower our youth conservation leaders. We provide monthly outdoor experiences that help develop a deeper awareness and appreciation of our natural world. We also recognize that it takes more than the ability to identify birds to be good stewards of our natural resources. We strive to give young people the tools to empower their ability to be strong conservation leaders. Financial support is critical for conservation efforts, and teaching the students about fundraising and charitable giving is an important part of their leadership development.

Student members of the OYBC are taking a “stand” against habitat loss with a BIG SIT fundraiser to support habitat restoration at the Port Clinton OH Lakeshore Preserve. The Big Sit is scheduled for Saturday, October 15th from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Port Clinton Lakefront Preserve.

To make a pledge or donation to support this fundraiser, please visit the OYBC website at <http://www.ohioyoungbirders.org> and click on “Big Sit Fundraiser at the Port Clinton Lakefront Preserve - Sat, Oct 15” under Upcoming Events: at the top of the page.

Cindy and I have been adult supporters of the Ohio Young Birders Club (OYBC) since its inception in 2006 and have mailed in a donation for this “BIG SIT”. We hope you will, too.

5th Annual Ohio Young Birders Club Conference

The 5th Annual Ohio Young Birders Club Conference will be held Saturday and Sunday, November 5 and 6, 2011, at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center, 505 W. Whittier Street, Columbus, OH 43215 (614-545-5475). This conference showcases outstanding student presentations, a Kenn Kaufman Bird I.D. Quiz, field trips, fabulous prizes, and a keynote presentation by Rachael Butek, of Colfax, WI, who was selected as the 2010 American Birding Association’s Young Birder of the Year. You do not have to be a member to attend and adults are encouraged to attend too. Visit <http://www.ohioyoungbirders.org> for more information.

New Product – S4GEAR LockDown Optics Deployment System

During the recently completed Midwest Birding Symposium in Lakewood, OH, I occasionally stepped away from the **Cheepers!** booth to walk around and see what other vendors were offering. I ended up purchasing a new strap for my binoculars, a product called LockDown Optics Deployment System.

I currently use a conventional cross-the-back harness that I find very comfortable and keeps my binoculars from bouncing around (some movement does take place). I do occasionally bump my binoculars getting in and out of vans or busses and I have to remember to cover my binoculars when it starts to rain.

I will be field-testing this new strap on our upcoming South Africa and Ecuador trips and will document my evaluation in a newsletter later this year. What really influenced my decision to buy this system is the pliable cover for a low profile fit (which provides protection from the rain and from bumps) and the ShockCord Security Straps that fasten the optics for maximum security. I will have to get used to the fit as this system hooks around the waist vs. the more conventional harness which has straps that go over your shoulder and under your arm plus this system is a little more bulky.

For more information on this product visit the S4 GEAR website at www.s4gear.com select the PRODUCTS tab and then select “LockDown”.

