

# *Birdwatching Breaks 2020*

*Over 30 years of guided tours*



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Front cover: Bald Eagle *Photo: George Matz*

Back cover: Red-necked Phalarope *Photo: George Matz*

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# Tour Calendar

## January 2020

Senegal ..... SE Senegal & Dindéfello ..... January 10-23  
Colombia ..... The World's Best Birding Country ..... January 11-25

## February

Japan ..... Cranes, owls and eagles ..... February 7-22

## March

Ethiopia ..... Birds and mammals of Ethiopia ..... March 6-20  
France ..... Camargue and Corsica ..... March 7-14  
Scotland ..... Highlands & Aberdeenshire ..... March 28-April 4

## April

Norway ..... Winter birds of the High Arctic ..... April 4-10  
Cyprus ..... Birds of the Mediterranean ..... April 4-11  
Scotland ..... Spring in the Highlands ..... April 25-May 2

## May

Scotland ..... Mull, Tiree & The Uists ..... May 3-10  
Bulgaria ..... Spring in the Balkans ..... May 4-14  
Canada ..... Long Point ..... May 7-16  
Scotland ..... Birds of Caithness and Orkney ..... May 11-17  
Siberia ..... Lake Baikal and Buryat ..... May 22-June 5

## June

Alaska ..... The last frontier ..... June 13-28 (extension to July 1)

## August

Australia ..... Northern Territory & Alice Springs ... August 27-September 12

## September

Scotland ..... Autumn migration ..... September 19-26  
Sweden ..... Migration at Falsterbo ..... September 26-October 3  
Scotland ..... Western Isles ..... September 27-October 3

## October

Argentina ..... Pampas, Iguazu and North East ..... October 2-15  
Shetland ..... Autumn in the Northern Isles ..... October 3-10  
Ireland ..... Northern Ireland & Donegal ..... October 17-24

## November

Senegal ..... Pelagic birds and the Sahel ..... November 6-14  
Lesser Antilles ..... Islands of the Caribbean ..... November 20-December 4

## December

Rwanda ..... Birds of the Albertine Rift ..... December 5-17  
Scotland ..... Islay at New Year ..... December 30-January 4

## January 2021

Senegal ..... SE Senegal & Dindéfello ..... January 13-26

## February

Japan ..... Cranes, owls and eagles ..... February 5-20

# Welcome to Birdwatching Breaks 2020

A warm welcome to our 2020 brochure of birdwatching holidays, this being our 33rd year of operation.

In 2020, we have introduced new tours to interesting countries around the world, all of them having had an inspection trip either by us or our local tour operators.

In Asia and Australasia, we have destinations to Australia, Japan and Russian Siberia. For those who wish to witness the winter wonderland of Japan, we have tours in February 2020 and 2021. The country continues to be a popular destination and we have modified the winter tour slightly to visit an area for Japanese Murrelet. Siberia is repeated in 2020 after our visit to this stunningly beautiful region of Russia with equally impressive bird life. Later in the year we return to the Northern Territories of Australia along with the red centre around Alice Springs. I have added a few days in Singapore a surprisingly bird-rich destination to add diversity.

In Africa, we have departures to

Ethiopia, Senegal and Rwanda. These destinations offer you an extremely wide range of African birds and mammals from the Sahel in Senegal to the birds and mammals of Rwanda. Rwanda is a small country in Central Africa and relatively unexplored for birds and wildlife. We have a tour here December 2020. In Senegal we have a new tour taking in a pelagic trip off Dakar and the Sahel region along the Senegal River. Ethiopia has been reinstated with a comprehensive tour taking in the major birding sites of this beautiful country.

In The Americas, a birding tour to Colombia, the world's best birding country, is planned for January 2020. Later in the year we visit the last frontier state of Alaska, a comprehensive tour taking in iconic birding destinations of Nome, Barrow, Denali National Park and the remote Pribilof Islands. During the winter of 2020 a wonderful tour of the Lesser Antilles takes in nine of the Caribbean islands and their endemic birds. In October 2020 a new



Grasshopper Sparrow, Canada *Photo: Simon Papps*



**Birding in Siberia** Photo: Jo Finn

tour is being offered to NE Argentina where visits to the pampas, lakes and Iguazú Falls is bound to produce a long bird list and spectacular vistas.

Closer to home, we have departures to Belgium, Bulgaria, Canary Islands, Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Spain and Sweden. These countries offer you great birding among spectacular countryside and vistas. Extreme Northern Norway is being offered in April – a prime time to watch some spectacular winter birds of the High Arctic. In 2020 a week-long tour to southern France and the island of Corsica should provide exceptional winter birding and two European endemics. Other tours include the Canary Islands with its endemic species and seabirds where we visit four islands in total. I have reintroduced our tour to Northern Ireland and Donegal in October for late migrants and winter birds.

Falsterbo in Sweden in late September is offered again for the spectacular migration of birds.

2020 sees the 15th year of **Black Isle Birding** which covers all our holidays operating in Scotland. This sector has grown significantly over the last few years and we

are pleased to say that we have a growing reputation as one of Scotland's premier birding companies. Jo and I operate our popular "holiday at home" programme based at Cygnus House. Its location, overlooking the Cromarty Firth and set in two acres of wildlife habitat, makes it an ideal base for visiting northern Scotland. We have several other Scottish tours to Islay, Shetland and Fair Isle and an island special visiting Mull, Tiree and The Uists.

I firmly believe we offer you the best birding packages in Scotland, with the country's top birding guides, along with a friendly and welcoming service with no hidden extras.

The team at Birdwatching Breaks looks forward to welcoming you on one of our tours.

Finally, my thanks go to Russell Turner for proof-reading our 2020 brochure and for the layout and design.

**Mark Finn**  
**Birdwatching Breaks**  
**Cygnus House**  
**Gordons Mill, Balblair**  
**Black Isle, Ross-shire IV7 8LQ**  
**Scotland**

# Birdwatching Breaks Leaders



**Mark Finn** lives on the Black Isle in Scotland and is the principal leader of *Birdwatching Breaks* having formed the company in May 1987. In 2005, Mark set up *Black Isle Birding* for tours based in Scotland. Mark originally trained in hotel management and catering before pursuing careers in the Merchant Navy, industrial catering and, finally, as a sales representative. He has travelled widely in search of birds both whilst leading trips and on reconnaissance trips for future tours. His travels have taken him to a wide variety of destinations around the world. Mark is also a member of the Scottish Ornithologists Club. In between leading tours, Mark deals with the administration work of *Birdwatching Breaks*. He has a keen interest in sport, particularly cricket and soccer, and enjoys wine and good food.



**Harriet Kemishiga** lives in Kampala, Uganda. Harriet is Uganda's only female bird guide and one of the directors of Harrier Tours. Her passion for wildlife and birds started when she was a little girl growing up with her grandfather at the edge of Kibale National Park. Harriet has successfully guided many birding trips in Uganda and Rwanda since 2003. She has also worked for the avian vocalisation centre recording sounds of rare species that have not been recorded to science. Harriet is probably one of the best birding guides within Africa today with an incredible knowledge of birds and sounds within her native Uganda.



**Anders Faugstad Møeland** lives in central Norway and has been a birder from a young age. Anders has established himself as a professional guide in Norway and taken part in a wide variety of ornithological surveys and biodiversity projects. He was the main ringer and migration counter at Jomfruland bird observatory from 1997-2011 before setting up Norwegian Birding. Anders has an intimate knowledge of his native Norway and its abundant wildlife, especially in the far north of the country.



**Igor Fefelov** lives in Irkutsk, Siberia. Igor is a skilled bird guide and naturalist having written several papers on waders and swifts which occur around Lake Baikal. Igor has an interest in anything concerning the natural world. His ability, professionalism and personality are second to none making him an ideal guide for Birdwatching Breaks in this huge area of Russia.



**Assen Ignatov** is one of the most experienced birdwatching and wildlife guides in Bulgaria. He has an MSc in biology from the University of Sofia and now he works in National Natural History Museum Assen. He is also an excellent wildlife artist with many paintings and drawings in numerous books, calendars and others. He leads birdwatching, wildlife, butterflies and photography tours.



**Mike Jarvis** lives in Darwin, Australia and operates his own birding company. He has been a nature enthusiast from his earliest memory and has lived in Perth, Geraldton and Carnarvon on the west coast. Mike and his wife Jenny are Wildcare volunteers and care for injured and orphaned wildlife, mainly birds and reptiles. With decades of research, observation and wildlife experiences behind him, he enjoys the privilege of sharing this with others by leading tours to wild places in Darwin and the Top End.



**Simon MacLaughlin** lives near Inverness in the Scottish Highlands and is currently a warden for the RSPB. Simon has worked in conservation for many years and has a vast knowledge of forestry and the wildlife that occurs within it. Simon has a good knowledge of birds and is exceptionally good with people and his enthusiasm and passion for wildlife. He is a welcome addition to the Birdwatching Breaks team.



**Ass Ndiaye** lives in Dakar, Senegal. Ass has worked with Birdwatching Breaks since we initiated tours to Senegal in the mid-1990s. Ass is a skilled birder with a happy knack of locating unusual birds. He has a particularly good eye for raptors and owls. Ass lives with his wife and young son and is an avid follower of football, particularly the English Premier League.



**Simon Papps** lives in Waltham Abbey, Essex. Simon is a vastly experienced birder having travelled to a wide range of countries in pursuit of birds. He was formerly the sub-editor at *Birdwatch Magazine*, the highly respected monthly publication for birders. Currently, Simon works as the Commissioning Editor for Natural History Books at *New Holland Publishers* based in London. Away from birding, Simon enjoys all sports, but particularly football.



**Jane Stylianou** lives in Nicosia, Cyprus. Jane has been interested in birds since the age of five and has continued birdwatching since moving to Cyprus in 1985. She has worked as a Development Officer for BirdLife Cyprus for over four years and is currently carrying out field work and doing conservation-based projects on a freelance basis. Together with another local birder, Jane operates Cyprus Birding Tours.

# Holidays with Birdwatching Breaks

Our holidays are friendly and exciting and run by professional guides with a passion for birding and natural history. Our guides have a professional background from bodies like the RSPB or other conservation organisations. On overseas tours we use local ornithologists who are highly experienced in the country they operate and work in. Our groups are based on a ratio of eight clients to one leader.

All tours have inspection trips before we offer them to our clients

We cater for all abilities of birders, from beginners to those with more experience and clients who wish to visit more adventurous countries around the globe in their quest of birds. Our tours range from short breaks in Europe to weeks in Scotland and Eastern Europe. Generally speaking, African and Asian tours are up to 15 days and those to Australia and South America of 16-28 days duration. To participate in our tours you need to have a reasonable degree of fitness for the tour you select. If you wish to know more about a tour we have bird lists and tour reports or, in the case of inspection trips, a general information package. You can access these by visiting [www.birdwatchingbreaks.com](http://www.birdwatchingbreaks.com) or simply contact us by phone, or mail. On booking your Birdwatching Breaks holiday we send you all the relevant information including flight details, accommodation, maps, what to take with you, health and visa regulations, titles of field guides and where to obtain them.

## *A typical day with Birdwatching Breaks*

Naturally we spend most of our time in the field but this does vary on each tour. In temperate climates we generally have breakfast early and take a packed lunch with us for the day. Returning in the evening, we try to allow you at least one hour before dinner to shower and freshen up. In Africa, Australasia, parts of Asia and South

America, birds are most active at dawn, hence we start birding at this time. We usually arrange coffee or tea before going out and come back mid-morning for brunch. In countries with a hot climate we take a siesta in the middle of the day or travel between sites. We return to birding late afternoon when bird activity starts again. To balance early starts we try to return earlier in the evening. Before dinner, we have drinks and go through the daily log of birds observed.

## *Where to stay*

We endeavour to stay in hotels, lodges and family homes as close as possible to areas of birding interest. Wherever possible, we stay in accommodation reflecting the character and atmosphere of the country we are visiting rather than 'standard type' hotels. Rooms have private facilities unless otherwise stated. In some locations without a tourist infrastructure, facilities may be shared or, in areas without permanent accommodation, a chemical toilet and bush shower are used. Hotels around the world are phasing out single rooms and accommodating clients in double/twin rooms. This has, in effect, pushed up the price of a single room quite considerably. If you are a single traveller, please consider sharing a room. If you have ticked twin-bedded room on your holiday booking form but we are unable to find you a suitable roommate, a single room supplement will apply. Food is important to our clients and is on a half-board basis of breakfast and evening meal with a packed lunch in the field. We try to ensure food is based upon the cuisine of the country we are visiting. On occasions where half-board is not available, you can choose from a la carte menus. If this is the case, we make an allowance for evening meals.

## *What the tour price includes*

Tour prices are fully inclusive of accommo-



**American Redstart** *Photo: Simon Papps*

dation, meals, guidance, entry permits into reserves, tips and taxes. Not included in your tour price are air fares which are quoted separately with our best estimate of the fare. Also not included are credit card and baggage charges (where applicable), drinks, laundry and telephone bills, visa fees and travel insurance and items of a personal nature and any relevant fuel surcharges.

### **Flights**

Because of fluctuating fuel prices it is becoming very difficult to obtain accurate quotes for airfares. Tour prices are broken down into two elements – the basic cost of the tour which includes everything except the cost of the international and internal flights and secondly our best estimate of the air fares when the tour was costed. Please advise us if you wish us to book your flights. When we send invoices for the tour, we will only charge you the exact airfare and hope that many of these will be near the price quoted in our brochure.

### **Arranging your own flights**

You should arrive at least one hour before the main group or be booked onto the

same flight. On departure, flight times should be after or at the same time as the group. Birdwatching Breaks are not responsible for your own flight arrangements and you must ensure you have adequate travel insurance in place to cover your flights.

### **Flying from regional airports**

On some occasions flights from regional airports and those which connect with the London hubs cost more than London/London flights. Whilst we are happy to arrange these for you, where possible, the additional charge will be passed on to you.

### **Your money paid to Birdwatching Breaks**

Air holidays and flights in our 2020 brochure are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is 4324. In the unlikely event of our insolvency, the CAA ensures you are not stranded overseas and will arrange to refund you for any monies paid in advance to Birdwatching Breaks. Visit the ATOL website [www.atol.org](http://www.atol.org). UK for further details.

In accordance with Passenger protection policy for insolvency cover in respect of the

Package Travel & Linked Travel Regulations 2018 all passengers booking with Birdwatching Breaks are fully protected for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation costs, arising from cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of Birdwatching Breaks. There is no requirement for Financial Protection of day trips, and none is provided. Consumer aware: Your booking is insured by IPP Ltd and its panel of insurers. This insurance is only valid for passengers who book and pay directly with/to Birdwatching Breaks. If you have booked and/or paid direct to a Travel Agent for a holiday with Birdwatching Breaks please request proof of how the booking is secured as this will not be covered by IPP Ltd in this instance. This Insurance has been arranged by International Passenger Protection Limited and underwritten by Liberty Mutual Insurance Europe SE. For further information please go to [www.ipplondon.co.uk](http://www.ipplondon.co.uk)

**CLAIMS PROCEDURE:** You must notify IPP as soon as practically possible giving full details of what has happened quoting the name of your Travel Operator: IPP Claims at Cunningham Lindsey Oakleigh House 14-15 Park Place Cardiff CF10 3DQ, United Kingdom. Telephone: +44 (0)345 266 1872 Email: [Insolvency-claims@ipplondon.co.uk](mailto:Insolvency-claims@ipplondon.co.uk) or online at <http://www.ipplondon.co.uk/claims.asp>

## ***Credit cards***

We accept most major credit cards with the exception of American Express. Credit card payment is ideal for late bookings and airline seats which we have to secure quickly if departure is imminent.

## ***Passports and visas***

You must be in possession of a current passport with a minimum of 6 months to run after your chosen holiday has ended. If you are applying for a new passport, the quickest and most efficient process is through your local high street post office. This process, in some cases, may take up to 8 weeks. With regards to visas, many countries, particularly in the underdeveloped

world, require you to have a visa in order to enter the country. Birdwatching Breaks will supply you contact addresses, email and phone numbers in order for you to obtain the correct visa. This should be done when you receive your final documentation from us around 12 weeks before departure. If you are a non-UK national, British Subject or live overseas, you are responsible for obtaining your own visa from your country of residence.

## ***Health***

The majority of tours in Europe do not require compulsory vaccinations when entering from the UK. We do recommend that your injections are current for polio, hepatitis A and tetanus. Travel to Africa, Asia and parts of South America require protection against yellow fever (if coming from an infected country), typhoid, diphtheria and tuberculosis. The threat of malaria around the globe also makes a course of anti-malaria tablets a necessity. We will advise you in our final documentation of the health requirements you need to enter the country. We would also recommend you consult your doctor/surgery to confirm the current requirements.

## ***Travel insurance***

It is a legal requirement that you have adequate travel insurance. On your booking form we require proof of travel insurance before we process the final documentation. Insurance covers and protects you whilst on tour and also if you have to cancel prior to holiday commencement through illness or accident. If you are over 65 (in some cases 70) you are subject to additional insurance premiums.

## ***Foreign office advice***

The Foreign Office Advice website is at [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk) or on television information pages. Generally speaking this is good, sound advice but on occasion it may be inaccurate or harsh in its message. If you cancel through advice from the Foreign Office, your insurers may not cover the claim of your cancellation with Birdwatching Breaks.

# *Black Isle Birding - birding holidays in Scotland*

Welcome to Black Isle Birding, one of Scotland's premier birding companies specialising in the Scottish Highlands, Speyside, Mull, Tiree, Islay, Lothian, Shetland and the Western Isles.

We offer you the following services:

■ Accommodation at Cygnus House on a full board basis using locally produced meat, fish and vegetables. Complimentary drinks and wine at the table

■ Excellent location on the Black Isle overlooking the Cromarty Firth and Udale Bay

■ No single room supplement at Cygnus House

■ Wi-Fi access in all rooms

■ Visits to areas of the extreme north and islands for birds and other wildlife

■ Complimentary travel by 9 seat minibus with individual seats and seatbelts

■ Small group size with one leader

■ One of Scotland's top birding guides with up-to-date knowledge of where to find and show you the country's birds

■ Complimentary pick-up services from Inverness Airport or Inverness railway station

Flights to Inverness area available from Birmingham, Bristol, London Heathrow, London Gatwick, London Luton, Southampton and Manchester. If using Flybe, many flights are via Manchester to Inverness.

**Day trips, private tours and RSPB Groups are also catered for. Please contact us for details.**

Cygnus House, our base, is situated on the Black Isle, north of Inverness, the capital of the Highlands. Inverness has good air, rail and road connections with the rest of Britain and Ireland. When we collect you from the airport or railway station, we make the short journey across the Kessock Bridge and onto the rolling farmland and forests of the Black Isle to Cygnus House. This gives you a feel of the area and scenery and the idyllic surroundings where we live. Our home is located next to Udale Bay RSPB Reserve and is surrounded by a



**Pine Martens at Cygnus House**

variety of habitat including rough grassland, saltmarsh, woodland, farm land, estuarine mud and river and eco-friendly gardens. This combination of habitats ensures a healthy birdlife throughout the year. In the garden and adjacent area we have recorded over 155 species of bird to date, with the most unusual species being Snow and Greenland White-fronted Geese, American Wigeon, Hobby, Common Quail, Glaucous and Little Gulls, Pomarine Skua, Red-rumped Swallow, Blue-headed Wagtail, Marsh Warbler, Hawfinch and the Northern races of Eurasian Bullfinch and Lesser Redpoll. From early April until the end of September, Ospreys regularly fly over the house to fish in the Cromarty Firth. Numerous bird feeders attract a variety of species throughout the year including Great Spotted Woodpecker, Tree Sparrow, Eurasian Siskin, tits, Brambling, Reed Bunting and Yellowhammer. The winter months bring Waxwing, Fieldfare, Redwing and Mistle Thrush. Mammals using the garden on a regular basis include Pine Marten, Badger and Roe Deer

Our base is ideally situated for visiting the remote and beautiful counties of Caithness and Sutherland, Wester and Easter Ross, Speyside, Moray Firth coast and the mountains and forests of Cairngorm and Speyside.

Our Scottish programme also includes tours to Mull, Tiree and the Uists, Aberdeenshire, Caithness, Fife, Islay, Orkney and Shetland, many of which can be combined with your stay at Cygnus House.

# Spring in the Highlands

Birding in springtime in the Highlands of Scotland is an exciting and rewarding experience. Our base on the Black Isle gives easy and quick access to the major birdwatching areas of Northern Scotland and Speyside. Cygnus House and the adjacent fields, shore and woodland have so far recorded 155 species of birds since 2003. During your stay we visit the Cairngorm Mountains in search of Rock Ptarmigan, Snow Bunting and Eurasian Dotterel. Nearby, the ancient Caledonian pine forests host Capercaillie and a wide range of breeding and resident species. During the spring, we embark on Black Grouse safaris, and further north visit the flow country of Caithness and Sutherland for waders, owls and harriers. On the west coast, interesting species present are Great Northern, Red-throated and Black-throated Divers, White-tailed Eagles and, from late April, Corncrakes. The seabird colonies on Handa are present from April. During spring rare migrants are regularly found and have included White-billed Diver, Ring-billed Gull, Blue and Green-winged Teals, Smew, King Eider, Snowy Owl, European Bee-eater, Eurasian Hoopoe and Great Grey Shrike on previous tours. Please note the following itinerary is subject to change due to tides and other factors.

■ This tour can be combined with Mull, Tiree & The Uists on page 23

**Day 1:** Travel to Cygnus House, our home situated on the Black Isle and overlooking the RSPB reserve of Udale Bay. Depending on tides, we check Udale Bay for wildfowl, waders, gulls and terns. On the lower garden, flocks of Pink-footed Geese linger into early May before embarking on their long flight to Iceland. Feeders have Eurasian Siskin and Eurasian Tree Sparrow while migrants include Barn Swallow, House Martin, Grasshopper and Sedge Warblers, Common Whitethroat and Common Cuckoo. Northern Wheatear, Eurasian Linnet and Yellowhammer occur on the entrance track. In the evening you have a high chance of observing Pine Marten and Badger.

**Day 2:** Wester Ross is our destination, an area of huge bays and low cliffs hugging the Atlantic Ocean. En route we stop for Slavonian Grebe, Red Kite and wildfowl. Along the valley bottom, lochans and marshes may have Whooper Swan, Eurasian Wigeon, Common Scoter and Wood Sandpipers. Our journey takes us to remote areas of Wester Ross with breeding White-tailed Eagles, and Loch Ewe where the sea loch attracts Red-throated and Black-throated Divers, auks and Arctic Terns. Poolewe often has Greenshanks and other waders, plus the possibility of

## Dates

Saturday April 25th – Saturday  
May 2nd 2020

Leader: Mark Finn

Group size: 7

Birds: 125-145

Otters. Nearby, an isolated village is reliable for Northern Gannet, Northern Fulmar, European Golden Plover, gulls, Fieldfare and Redwing, White Wagtail and Twite.

**Day 3:** A visit to Strathconon for Common Sandpiper and Northern Wheatear, and in the birch woodlands for Blackcap, Wood and Willow Warblers. Later in the morning we visit a private estate which has Common and Scottish Crossbills and, on occasions, Parrot Crossbill. We travel towards Bonar Bridge for Goosander and Red-breasted Merganser. The moors and birch forest beyond offer us Red Grouse, Golden Eagle, Hen Harrier, Tree Pipit and Whinchat. Loch Fleet is reliable for Osprey, ducks and waders. Embo is close by with an old jetty and rocks which attract waders at high tide including Purple Sandpiper, Common Knot and Sanderling. We end the day at Nigg Bay for Black-



**Wood Sandpiper** Photo: Jo Finn

tailed Godwit, Whimbrel and other wildfowl and waders.

**Day 4:** A change of scenery today as we head into Sutherland and to the island of Handa. Our journey takes us past lochs with beautiful Black-throated Divers. Beyond Ullapool, the scenery becomes more dramatic and rocky. Handa is accessed by boat from Tarbat. On arrival, we walk around the island on boardwalks and footpaths. Moorland sectors have impressive numbers of Great and Arctic Skuas, Common Snipe and Common Stonechat. Handa, however, is famous for breeding seabirds on its high-vertical sandstone cliffs. We can expect Northern Fulmar, Black-legged Kittiwake, Common Guillemot, Razorbill and Atlantic Puffins. After leaving Handa we head to Durness, the most north-westerly village in mainland Britain. After dinner, we can check meadows for calling Corncrakes and, on the beach, migrant Black-tailed Godwits and Sanderling along with Barnacle and Pink-footed Geese and Whooper Swans. Rarities occur on a regular basis at

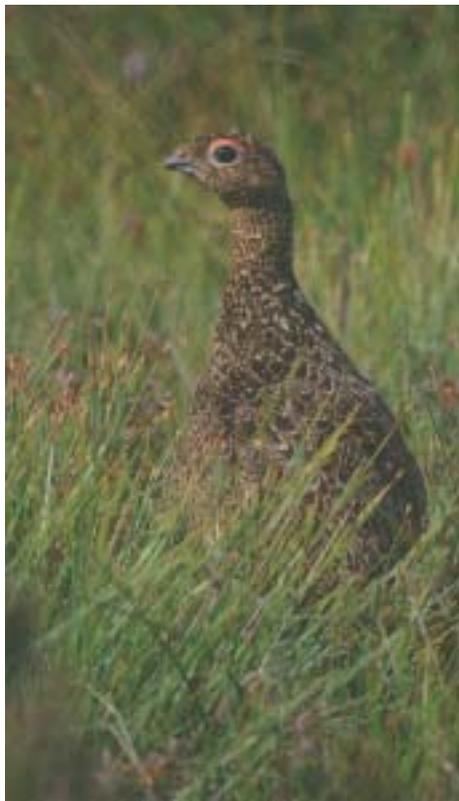
Durness with Little Stint, Yellow Wagtail, Ring-necked Duck and Common Crane in recent years. Accommodation for the night is at Durness.

**Day 5:** Loch Eriboll is our first destination, a large sea loch holding Great Northern and Red-throated Divers in summer plumage and, on recent tours, White-billed Divers. Nearby, the Hope Valley is reliable for Golden Eagle and Redwing. We follow the coast, stopping at Dunnet Bay, a regular haunt of divers, Long-tailed Duck, Greater Scaup, Great and Arctic Skuas and Sandwich Terns. St John's Pool is a productive area for birds, attracting Arctic and Common Terns, Whimbrel and scarce breeding ducks of Northern Scotland including Gadwall and Northern Shoveler. Unusual species on recent visits have been Garganey, Lesser Scaup and Ring-necked Duck. In late April we may find lingering Greenland White-fronted Geese. Later, we travel to Broubster Leans, located in the flow country of Caithness where we should encounter Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, European Golden Plover and Dunlin.

# Northern Scotland and the Highlands

Return to the Black Isle with stops for divers, ducks and Common Scoter on loch-side pools.

**Day 6:** Nairn is our destination today where the deep waters of the Cromarty Firth attract migrant seaducks including Long-tailed Duck and in recent years King Eiders. Portsoy is further east in Aberdeenshire and is a regular and reliable place for migrating White-billed Divers. Lossiemouth often has shorebirds including Common Knot, Sanderling and Sandwich Terns fishing in the bay. Loch Spynie is a new reserve managed by the RSPB and often attracts interesting birds in the spring. Later in the day, we venture into the Findhorn Valley for Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, European Golden Plover and White-throated Dipper, the latter preferring boulder-strewn rivers. Along the Farr



**Red Grouse** Photo: Jo Finn

Road we may find Merlin and parties of Red Grouse.

**Day 7:** Corrimony is our first stop today, a remote reserve of woodland and moors. Our main interest is in locating Black Grouse, which finds a stronghold here. After breakfast a visit to the Cairngorm Mountains. Recent changes have permitted us to walk out from the Ptarmigan Restaurant, which is accessed by the funicular railway, to search in the boulder fields for Rock Ptarmigan, Ring Ouzel, Eurasian Dotterel and Snow Bunting. In Abernethy Forest, a reserve of Caledonian pines interspersed with lochs, our main interest is to observe Capercaillie, a rare and declining species and we may encounter Coal and Crested Tits, Eurasian Treecreeper, Tree Pipit and Common Redstart. Nesting boxes on the lochs lure Common Goldeneye while Greylag Goose and Goosander are regularly observed.

**Day 8:** Depending on flight and travel times, a visit to the Black Isle Forest is planned for woodland birds including Red Kite, Common and Scottish Crossbills, Crested Tit and Lesser Redpoll.

## Prices

Tour Price: £995

Deposit: £150

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, complimentary pre-dinner drinks and wine at Cygnus House and Durness, complimentary transport, Cairngorm railway and any boat fees.

**Not included:** insurance and items of a personal nature. Entry into RSPB reserves if you are a non-member. Drinks purchased in hotels away from Cygnus House

# Autumn in the Highlands

Autumn birding in the Highlands of Scotland is an exciting and rewarding experience. Our base on the Black Isle gives easy and quick access to the major birdwatching areas of Northern Scotland and Speyside. During your week, we visit the Cairngorm Mountains in search of Rock Ptarmigan and Snow Bunting. It is also an optimum time to visit Caledonian pine forests for Capercaillie and parties of Crested Tits. Other specialities which are easier to see in September include Black Grouse, Scottish and Parrot Crossbills and the first winter thrushes of the autumn. On the Moray Firth and North Sea coasts, the main arrival of geese and ducks starts along with good seabird passage in north/south easterly winds. If the former are blowing we expect Sooty Shearwaters, Great and Arctic Skuas and possibly rarer species in Pomarine Skua and Sabine's Gulls. Coastal scrub and bushes along the east coast often lure migrants at this time of the year.

■ This tour can be combined with the Western Isles on page 28.

**Day 1:** Arrive at our home situated on the Black Isle and overlooking the RSPB reserve of Udale Bay. Feeders have Eurasian Siskin and Eurasian Tree Sparrow while lingering migrants include Barn Swallow and Common Chiffchaff. Northern Wheatear, Eurasian Linnet, Twite and Yellowhammer occur on the entrance track. In Udale Bay we may find Slavonian Grebe and Greater Scaup. Chanonry Point is an excellent viewing point for sea birds in the right wind conditions. If these are blowing, we may observe Great and Arctic Skuas, Common, Arctic and Sandwich Terns, Razorbill and Common Guillemot and the most northerly Bottle-nosed Dolphins in Britain.

**Day 2:** Wester Ross is our destination, an area of huge bays and low cliffs hugging the Atlantic Ocean. Before reaching the west coast, we visit Applecross, a remote village. Our main interest here is low-level Rock Ptarmigans which reside on the boulder fields. Further along the coast, a village has White-tailed Eagles. Gairloch and Rubha Reidh hug the rocky coastline of Wester Ross with the former holding concentrations of Black-throated Divers and other seabirds. Rubha Reidh is a noted seawatching point and, if the winds are westerly, we expect a wide range of seabirds. Poolewe attracts waders at high tide including Greenshank. Further along the coast, fields regularly host Greylag Geese and Twite.

## Dates

Saturday September 19th -  
Saturday September 26th 2020

Leader: Mark Finn

Group size: 8

Birds: 120-140

**Day 3:** Today we visit Abernethy Forest, a reserve of Caledonian pines interspersed with lochs. Our main interest is to observe Capercaillie, a rare and declining species. In the pinewoods themselves we may encounter Woodcock, Coal and Crested Tits, Eurasian Treecreeper, Eurasian Bullfinch, and Scottish and Parrot Crossbills. Later in the day, we venture into the Cairngorm Mountains for Rock Ptarmigan, Red Grouse and Snow Bunting. A stop at the Ness Islands in Inverness is made for Goosander, Dipper and Grey Wagtail.

**Day 4:** A change of scenery today as we head to Caithness and visit Noss Head and Dunnet Bay, two migration hot-spots. At Noss Head, bushes and shrubs around the lighthouse are attractive to Ring Ouzel, Whinchat, Common Stonechat, Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, Willow Warbler and Pied and Spotted Flycatchers. Rarer migrants regularly appear including Wryneck, Bluethroat, Red-breasted Flycatcher and, perhaps, Yellow-browed Warbler. Dunnet Bay is further west, attract-



## Bohemian Waxwings

Photo: Jo Finn

ing gulls which have included Mediterranean, Sabine's and Bonaparte's in recent years. Within the bay we may see the first returning Common Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks. St John's Loch is a privately run nature reserve attracting wildfowl and terns. On our return south, we visit Embo and Loch Fleet for waders and wildfowl.

**Day 5:** Corrimony is our first stop today, a remote reserve of woodland and moors. Our main interest is in locating Black Grouse, which finds a stronghold here. Near Dingwall we visit a private estate for Capercaillie and other woodland birds including Common and Scottish Crossbills and Lesser Redpoll. On our return to the Black Isle, a river complex may have Red Kite, Osprey and migrant shorebirds. Depending on tides, a visit to Udale Bay is planned where shorebirds occur including Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Knot and Dunlin. Pink-footed Geese, Eurasian Wigeon and Eurasian Teal numbers increase in September and attract hunting Peregrine Falcons.

**Day 6:** Today we travel to the coastal towns of Lossiemouth and Burghead in Moray. Burghead Bay probably holds the largest concentration of seaducks in Britain. October sees good numbers of Long-tailed Ducks arriving to join Common and Velvet Scoters and, in recent years, Surf Scoters. Along the shore Arctic and Sandwich Terns may be present. The rocky foreshore at Burghead often has Purple Sandpiper. Lossiemouth is reliable for gulls, terns and waders including Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Greenshank. Loch Spynie, nearby, has waterbirds and migrant passerines and the possibility of Common Otters.

**Day 7:** We travel to Easter Ross and visit Portmahomack for Purple Sandpiper and Ruddy Turnstone. Tarbatness is close by, an important migration point. From the point we should see Red and Black-throated Divers, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Eider, Common Scoter and Long-tailed Duck. Stubble fields regularly attract Whooper Swans, migrant geese, Peregrine Falcon and Merlin. If winds are from an easterly direction, Sooty Shearwater, Great, Arctic and Pomarine Skuas and large numbers of auks occur. We end the day at Nigg Bay for Black and Bar-tailed Godwits, Common Knot and other wildfowl and waders.

**Day 8:** Depending on flight and travel times, a visit to the Black Isle Forest is planned for woodland birds including Common and Scottish Crossbills, Crested Tit and Lesser Redpoll.

## Prices

Tour Price: £975

Deposit: £150

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, complimentary pre-dinner drinks and wine at Cygnus House, complimentary transport and any boat fees.

**Not included:** insurance and items of a personal nature. Entry into RSPB reserves, if you are a non-member. Drinks purchased in hotels away from Cygnus House.

# Late Winter birds of the Highlands and Aberdeenshire

The wild and dramatic scenery of the Scottish Highlands and the adjacent North Sea and Atlantic Ocean coasts offer some of the finest winter birding in Britain. You are visiting at the optimum time for concentrations of divers, sea ducks, geese and other wildfowl along the coast and inland lochs. In the forests and glens we have a chance of observing Capercaillie, Black Grouse and birds of prey. On beaches and exposed headlands we can expect flocks of waders, finches and buntings. Aberdeenshire is one of the largest counties of Scotland, situated in the north-east of the country. It has an extremely long coastline bordering the North Sea, and several headlands which attract migrants. Your tour takes in some of Scotland's most important bird areas including Loch of Strathbeg, Rattray Head and the Ythan Estuary. In recent years, Aberdeenshire has built up a reputation for rare migrants with Snow Goose, Buff-breasted and Pectoral Sandpipers and Red-breasted Flycatchers being recorded.

■ Travel arrangements should be into Inverness and out of Aberdeen.

**Day 1:** Arrive at Cygnus House situated on the eastern half of the Black Isle, overlooking the RSPB Reserve of Udale Bay, for a four-night stay. Feeders in our garden are well stocked, attracting Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Eurasian Siskin, Brambling and other common garden birds. The lower garden regularly has Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard, Yellowhammer and Reed Bunting. Further inland, on the extensive farmland of the Black Isle, we should encounter Red Kite. As dusk falls, we have an excellent chance of observing hunting Barn Owl. Mammals at Cygnus House include Pine Marten and Badger, both of which occur on a regular basis.

**Day 2:** Udale Bay is situated in the Cromarty Firth, which is literally on our doorstep, an exceptional area for birds. The deeper water sections have Red-throated Diver, Slavonian Grebe, Red-breasted Merganser, Greater Scaup and Black Guillemot. The new reserve at Nigg Bay attracts thousands of geese and shorebirds including Eurasian Oystercatcher, Eurasian Curlew, Common Knot, Dunlin and Bar-tailed Godwit. Tarbatness is a long spit of land jutting into the North Sea. Fields attract geese, swans, finches and buntings and predatory Peregrine Falcon and Merlin. Off the coast, we should see divers,

## Dates

**Saturday March 28th – Saturday April 4th 2020**

Leader: Mark Finn

Group Size: 7

Birds: 120-135

seaducks, auks and gulls. Loch Eye, on our return journey, is an important roosting site for Greylag and Pink-footed Geese and Whooper Swan.

**Day 3:** This morning we travel southwards into Speyside and Abernethy Forest. Species of interest include Common, Scottish and Parrot Crossbills, Crested and Coal Tits. With luck, we may encounter the rare and declining Capercaillie along forest trails. Later in the day, we head towards the Cairngorm Mountains where we have a chance of locating Red Grouse, Rock Ptarmigan and parties of Snow Buntings at low levels. Early migrants including Ring Ouzel and Northern Wheatear often appear around the lower car park.

**Day 4:** Early morning visit to Corrimony for lekking Black Grouse followed by visits to Gruinard Bay and Little Loch Broom in Wester Ross. Travelling through the coun-

tryside, we pass fast-flowing rivers and dramatic mountain ranges to reach the heavily indented coastline of Wester Ross. An island in Gruinard Bay may have White-tailed Eagles. We have excellent chances of locating Red-throated, Black-throated and Great Northern Divers. Other species present include Barnacle Goose, Common Eider, Golden Eagle, Common Guillemot and Razorbill. Passerines are few but may include Lesser Redpoll and Twite.

**Day 5:** Today we head south-east towards Aberdeen via the coastal town of Portsoy - a reliable staging post for White-billed Divers. Girdle Ness, an exposed promontory jutting into the North Sea, attracts Great Northern Diver, Great Skua and possibly returning Sandwich Terns. As we head north, we stop at the River Don for waders with Ruff and Black-tailed Godwits being possible in late March. Travel to Peterhead for a three-night stay.

**Day 6:** Rattray Head has a good reputation for migrants among the nettles and docks. Regular migrants include Redwing, Fieldfare, Common Chiffchaff and Goldcrest while the beach attracts Snow Buntings, and on occasions Horned Lark. Loch of Strathbeg is nearby, one of the premier RSPB Reserves in Scotland for wild-fowl and waders. We should see Whooper Swan, ducks, Pink-footed and Greylag Geese plus Barnacle and Greenland White-fronted Geese and occasional Snow and Pale-bellied Brent Geese. Marshes and scrub lure hunting Short-eared Owl, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon. Recent rarities have included Garganey, Eurasian Spoonbill, Great Egret, Little Gull, Green-winged Teal and Common Crane.

**Day 7:** Today we visit the Ythan Estuary and Sands of Forvie, an interesting tidal area of mud flats, beaches, sand dunes and moor. Ythan is an important staging point for ducks including Common Goldeneye and Long-tailed Duck and in recent years King Eiders. The commoner waders occur in roosts along the river. Offshore waters have Red-throated Diver, Greater Scaup and Common and Velvet Scoters. In the afternoon a visit to Haddo



**Purple Sandpiper** Photo: Anders Mæland

Country Park, with its woodland and wetlands, is planned. The former has Great Spotted Woodpecker and variable numbers of Brambling and Eurasian Siskins. If time permits, we revisit Loch of Strathbeg for the spectacle of roosting geese and swans.

**Day 8:** Return to Aberdeen visiting Black Dog en route. Extensive sandy beaches border the North Sea. Offshore we should find Common Eider, Common, Velvet and occasional Surf Scoters. Transfer to Aberdeen airport for early afternoon connections to the rest of Britain.

## Prices

Tour Price: £1,395  
Deposit: £150

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, complimentary drinks at Cygnus House, complimentary transport and any boat fees.

**Not included:** insurance and items of a personal nature. Drinks in hotels at Peterhead. Entry into RSPB reserves if you are not a member.

# Birding at the top end of Scotland

This is a new tour visiting the north-easterly corner of mainland Scotland and the nearby Orkney Islands. Caithness is relatively unknown for birds but it has several important sites in a small area. Just across the Pentland Firth are the Orkney Islands with its seabird colonies and important populations of breeding species. Please note you should stay in Inverness on the nights of May 10 and 17.

**Day 1:** This morning we head north along the A9 towards Thurso, the largest town in Caithness. We have an afternoon ferry to Orkney with a good selection of seabirds: Northern Gannet, Manx Shearwater, four species of auks and the possibility of migrant Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas if the winds are favourable. On arrival in Stromness we transfer to Kirkwall the main town of the islands for a four-night stay.

**Day 2:** Today we start our exploration of Mainland with a visit to the old red sandstone cliffs of Marwick Head. During May the cliffs are home to Black-legged Kittiwake, Common Guillemot, Razorbill, Rock Dove and Northern Raven. The Loons RSPB Reserve is close by where breeding ducks include Northern Pintail, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Shoveler. Also present in the marsh are Arctic Tern, Common Redshank and displaying Common Snipe. In the afternoon a visit to Birsay Moors, which is an important area for Hen Harrier, Merlin, Short-eared Owl and Red-throated Divers.

**Day 3:** Today we visit the island of Hoy which is fairly mountainous in nature and holds little in the way of human population. Our interest is in the moorland birds which come to breed in the northern part of the island and includes substantial numbers of Great and Arctic Skuas. Other species include Golden Plover, Dunlin, Eurasian Curlew, Common Stonechat and Twite. A visit to the towering cliffs of St John's Head is productive for auks including Atlantic Puffin, Peregrine Falcon and rarely White-tailed Eagles.

## Dates

Monday May 11th – Sunday May 17th 2020

Leader: Mark Finn

Group Size: 7

Birds: 120-140

**Day 4:** A check of Kirkwall Harbour for any lingering Iceland and Glaucous Gulls before heading into East Mainland. Deer Sound is an important area holding Great Northern Diver and seaducks during mid-May. On the foreshore we should find migrant waders including Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone. Our journey continues south to South Ronaldsay and Burray which is linked by the famous Churchill Barriers. This is a good area for lingering Black-throated Diver and Slavonian Grebe. If the winds have been southerly or easterly in nature migrants may be located. In recent years this has included Common Crane, Woodchat Shrike, Bluethroat, Pied Flycatcher and Common Redstart.

**Day 5:** Head to Stromness for the ferry back to Scrabster. On arrival we can check the harbour for Common Eider, Black Guillemot and possibly Iceland Gulls. We follow the coast, stopping at Dunnet Bay, a regular haunt of divers, Long-tailed Duck, Greater Scaup, Great and Arctic Skuas and Sandwich Terns. St John's Pool is a productive area for birds, attracting Arctic and Common Terns, Whimbrel and scarce breeding ducks of Northern Scotland including Gadwall and Northern Shoveler. Unusual species on recent visits have been Garganey, Lesser Scaup and Ring-necked



**Pink-footed Geese** Photo: Jo Finn

Duck. Later, we travel to Broubster Leans, located in the flow country of Caithness where we should encounter Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, European Golden Plover and Dunlin. Transfer to Thurso for two nights.

**Day 6:** A change of direction today as we cross the county boundary of Caithness into Sutherland, a large and sparsely populated area of Britain. Our first stop is the Hope Valley - a reliable area for Golden Eagle, Greenshank, Eurasian Woodcock and in some summers Redwing and Brambling. The marshy areas around Loch Hope often have Whooper Swan. At Durness, the most north-westerly village in mainland Britain, migrant Bar-tailed Godwits and Sanderling are joined on the beach by Sandwich and Arctic Terns. Slightly inland the water meadows of Balnakeil often have lingering Barnacle and Pink-footed Geese and Whooper Swans. Rarities occur on a regular basis at Durness with Ring-necked Duck, Common Crane, Little Stint, Western Yellow Wagtail and Red-breasted Goose in recent years.

Return to Thurso via Bettyhill where the fields often hold Whinchat and Twite.

**Day 7:** We check areas in and around Thurso before making our way south to Inverness. Along the way are stops at Brora where the estuary attracts unusual birds in spring, notably Little Gull. Loch Fleet is further south with nesting Ospreys and a wide selection of waders and wildfowl. The tour concludes in Inverness later in the day.

## Prices

Tour Price: £1,595  
Single room: £100  
Deposit: £150

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, complimentary transport and any boat fees.

**Not included:** Drinks, insurance and items of a personal nature.

# New Year in the Inner Hebrides

The island of Islay is located in the large and spectacular region of Argyll and Bute. Islay is one of the largest islands in the Inner Hebrides chain and is literally just north-west of Ireland. The mild climate attracts thousands of wintering geese, mainly Barnacle, and the distinctive race of White-fronted Goose on the fields and moors. Islay is almost split into two by the large sea loch of Loch Indaal. This in turn is an important wintering area for divers, grebes, seaducks and waders, which find a mild climate to spend the winter in.

**Day 1:** This morning we travel to Argyll and Bute from Edinburgh and Glasgow and along the shore of the spectacular Loch Lomond. Our journey takes us through increasingly spectacular scenery to Lochgilphead and eventually to the ferry terminus at Kennacraig. The ferry crossing offers us Great Northern, Red-throated and Black-throated Divers, Northern Gannet, Common Guillemot and Razorbill. On arrival at Port Askaig or Port Ellen, we make the journey to our accommodation at Bridgend, which is ideally situated for exploring the island and views towards Loch Indaal.

**Days 2-4:** Islay has many places in which to observe birds in a wide variety of habitat. Loch Gruinart, situated at the head of a sea loch amidst low lying hills and moorland, is famous for Greenland White-fronted and Barnacle Geese. Careful scanning of the goose flocks may reveal annual but rare visitors in Cackling and Snow Geese from Greenland and Canada. With thousands of geese present their presence attracts good numbers of raptors including: Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Hen Harrier and, on occasions, Golden Eagle. The reserve has areas which flood, attracting wildfowl and waders which usually include flocks of Northern Lapwing, European Golden Plover, Eurasian Curlew and on occasions wintering Ruff and Greenshank. Loch Gruinart is blessed with a well-placed hide where we watch hundreds of wintering ducks including scarcer species such as Gadwall, Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail. The drier islands attract wintering

## Dates

**Wednesday December 30th 2020 -  
Monday January 4th 2021**

Leader: Mark Finn

Group size: 8

Birds: 90-115

Common Snipe and the uncommon Water Rail. The surrounding dykes and damper areas attract Barn Owl and Eurasian Woodcock at dusk, along with the spectacle of geese coming in to roost.

Ardnave Point, a remote peninsula, juts out towards Colonsay. The loch often has Whooper Swans, Common Goldeneye, Tufted Duck and, occasionally, vagrant Green-winged Teal and Ring-necked Duck. The machair at Ardnave has Red-billed Chough and Twite and Snow Buntings along the sandy shoreline.

Loch Indaal, a large sea loch with mud flats, beaches, rocky promontories and several piers, almost severs Islay in two. Greater Scaup are numerous along with smaller numbers of Great Northern, Red-throated and Black-throated Divers, Slavonian Grebe, Common Scoter, Long-tailed Duck and Common Goldeneye. Rocky beaches and mud flats attract Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwit, and Common Knot. The mud at Bridgend is one of the best areas for waders and we may locate uncommon birds for Islay including Pink-footed Goose, Pale-bellied Brent Goose, Red-breasted Merganser, Grey Plover and in some winters the Icelandic race of Black-tailed



**Greater Scaup** *Photo: Jo Finn*

Godwit. Near Bridgend the fast-flowing rivers attract Grey Wagtail and occasionally White-throated Dipper. A large freshwater loch often holds Little Grebe and the commoner ducks.

Woodland on Islay is generally stunted and old, attracting Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits, Eurasian Treecreeper and Goldcrest. In the open fields Fieldfare, Redwing, Mistle and Song Thrushes form large flocks before making the short migration across to Ireland.

In the south of Islay we visit the harbour at Port Ellen, which is sheltered from the worst of the elements. This is a reliable area for wintering Glaucous and Iceland Gulls although their numbers vary from year to year. The maltings around the coast attract Reed Bunting and Yellowhammer.

The Mull of Oa is close by, a RSPB reserve with important populations of Golden Eagle and Red-billed Chough and in recent years the huge White-tailed Eagle.

Islay does have a good track record for rarities and we will look for these if they turn up during our stay.

**Day 5:** Today we take the morning ferry back to the mainland at Kennacraig and travel to Glasgow and Edinburgh where the tour concludes late afternoon.

## Prices

Tour Price: £1,695  
Deposit: £200

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, ferry fares, transport and guidance.

**Not included:** insurance and items of a personal nature. Entry into RSPB reserves if you are a non-member.

# Springtime on the islands

The islands of Mull and Tiree are situated off the western coast of Scotland in Argyll and Bute. We also visit the rugged and remote Ardnamurchan Peninsula. Tiree is the most westerly of the islands with habitats ranging from machair to low wet moorlands. The island has significant numbers of nesting ducks, terns and shorebirds and Corncrakes, which can number over 300 calling males. Mull is a large mountainous island dominated by rugged peaks and indented coastal lochs with White-tailed and Golden Eagles in high densities. The sea crossing between Oban and Tiree is exceptional for seabirds and cetaceans. The Outer Hebrides, straddling the western coast of Scotland, is an area of outstanding natural beauty. This tour visits the remote islands of Barra, South Uist and Benbecula. Habitat ranges from the wind-lashed west coast to upland moors and bogs and, on the eastern seaboard, indented sea lochs. In recent years, the islands have built up a reputation for rare and unusual species. Extensive coverage of the islands has also revealed a rich vein of migrants and vagrants. On recent tours we have found our clients White-billed Diver, Surf Scoter, Laughing and Bonaparte's Gulls, Grey and Red-necked Phalaropes, Snowy Owl, Long-tailed and Pomarine Skuas, Black-billed Cuckoo and Red-rumped Swallow.

■ This tour starts and finishes in Inverness, which has good flight connections with the rest of Britain. Clients should book accommodation in Inverness on the nights of May 2 and 10.

■ This tour can be combined with the Scottish Highlands on page 12.

**Days 1-2:** After leaving Inverness, we pass through Skye and on to the port of Uig. On arrival, we transfer to Balranald situated on the north-west coast of North Uist. The area is made up of crofts using traditional farming methods, thus ensuring a healthy population of Corncrakes from late April and resident Corn Buntings. Lochs and marshes have Whooper Swan, Eurasian Teal, Gadwall and Tufted Duck. Nesting waders comprise Northern Lapwing, Common Redshank, Ringed Plover and Dunlin. Aird an Runair, close by, is an excellent sea-watching point particularly in spring when, in favourable weather conditions, Northern Fulmar, Manx Shearwater, European Storm and Leach's Storm Petrels and Pomarine Skuas pass offshore. Eurasian Dotterels are occasionally seen resting on the machair. Benbecula is situated between the two larger islands. From the coast road we should see a variety of species including Red-necked Phalarope, Common Eider, Long-tailed Duck and, in May, Common, Arctic and Little Terns along with harassing Arctic Skuas. Three nights on Benbecula

## Dates

**Sunday May 3rd – Sunday May 10th 2020**

Leader: Mark Finn

Group Size: 8

Birds: 120-140

**Day 3:** Loch Druidibeg is our destination, a rather harsh landscape of shallow lagoons, marshes, and machair and dune systems. On the lagoons we should find Black-throated Diver, Whooper Swan, Greylag Geese and a wide range of ducks. On surrounding moors we have a chance of finding Golden Eagle, Merlin, Short-eared Owl and Hen Harrier. Agricultural land around the loch may have Common Redpoll, Twite and Corn Bunting. In the afternoon, a visit to an indented sea loch with patches of woodland is planned. We have excellent chances of Golden and White-tailed Eagles and a range of passerines including Willow Warbler and endemic subspecies of Dunnock and Wren. Nearby, on the Atlantic Ocean coast, sheltered bays and beaches with seaweed attract Pale-bellied Brent



**Atlantic Puffins** *Photo: Jo Finn*

Geese and lingering Glaucous and Iceland Gulls, while shorebirds gather in huge concentrations.

**Day 4:** Morning ferry from Eriksay bound for Barra, the southernmost island of the Western Isles. The waters around Barra have recently been mooted as a potential marine reserve as they hold good numbers of Great Northern Diver, Razorbill, Common and Black Guillemots and other seabirds. Eoligarry is a good spot for Golden Eagle and the adjacent seas usually hold Black-throated and Red-throated Divers. Barra has a few small reedbeds which attract Sand Martin, Sedge Warbler and, on occasions, Whinchat. Any stands of mature trees are worth checking on Barra as they often have migrants. Later in the afternoon, we make the ferry crossing to Tiree our base for two nights.

**Day 5:** We start our initial exploration of Tiree with a visit to Loch a'Phuill, a large, shallow lagoon bordered by farmland and flower meadows. Loch a'Phuill often has Common Tern, Water Rail, Eurasian Wigeon, Common Teal, Tufted Duck and rarer breeding species in Northern

Shoveler and Northern Pintail, whilst Whooper Swans occasionally over-summer. On our return to Scarinish, a stop at The Reef is productive for flocks of north-bound European Golden Plovers and prospecting Arctic Terns. Balephetrish Bay has Great Northern Diver, Arctic and Little Terns, Sanderling, Ringed Plover and Ruddy Turnstone. Farmland is an important factor on Tiree for nesting Common Snipe, Northern Lapwing, Dunlin, Common Redshank, Rock Dove, Eurasian Skylark, Raven, Hooded Crow, Twite, Reed Bunting and substantial numbers of Corncrakes. Tiree holds around 300 pairs of this rare and declining species and we have excellent opportunities to locate one giving its distinctive 'crex-crex' calls during daytime.

**Day 6:** From Tiree we board a morning ferry bound for Oban, our base for the next two nights. Sea birds from the ferry include Northern Gannet, Manx Shearwater, European Storm-petrel, Great, Arctic, Pomarine and, occasionally, Long-tailed Skuas, Common Guillemot, Razorbill and Atlantic Puffin. Cetaceans are often observed and Atlantic White-sided Dolphin, Harbour Porpoise, Minke Whale and the

huge Basking Shark are all possible. From Oban we head south to Loch Nell, an enclosed freshwater loch surrounded by woodland. On the loch, Little Grebes and Mute Swans are present with the nearby woodlands alive with the songs of Willow Warbler, Common Whitethroat, Blackcap and, sometimes, Pied Flycatchers. Glen Loran is nearby, a site for Whinchat, Grey Wagtail and the highly localised Garden Warbler.

**Day 7:** Oban is the departure point for Mull and we make a day trip to the island. Reaching Mull, we head to Lochdon, a small shallow sea loch. Common and Arctic Terns fish on the loch edge while resident species include Red-breasted Merganser and Common Eider. White-tailed Eagle and Common Buzzard are frequently seen hunting overhead or sitting in large trees. Passage waders occurring in Lochdon usually include Grey Plover, Sanderling, Knot, Bar and Black-tailed Godwits, Green Sandpiper and Ruff. Glen More is a long, wide, open valley flanked by mountains and patches of conifer plantations. Glen More is an important area for birds on Mull and an optimum site for upland species. Careful scrutiny may reveal Golden Eagle, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl and Raven. Lower down in the valley, Eurasian Curlew, Common Cuckoo, Whinchat, Common Stonechat, Wood Warbler and Northern Wheatear breed. Before returning to Craignure, we visit the capital of Mull - Tobermory. This picturesque town is home to Dipper and, on occasions, white-winged gulls. Return to Oban for the night.

**Day 8:** We leave Oban and head north to the remote and rugged Ardnamurchan peninsula. Our main interest is Glenborrowdale, an oak wood with stands of pines and adjacent moors. Typical woodland species include Common Redstart, Wood Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher. On the moors, we may find Golden Eagle, Hen Harrier, European Golden Plover, Ring Ouzel and Whinchat. We return to Inverness in the late afternoon where the tour concludes.



**Great Skua** Photo: Jo Finn

## Prices

Ground Price: £1,995  
Single room: £150  
Deposit: £200

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, ferry fares, complimentary transport and guidance.

**Not included:** insurance and items of a personal nature. Entry into RSPB reserves if you are a non-member.

# Autumn migration in the Northern Isles

The remote Shetland Islands are closer to Scandinavia than the Scottish mainland and are approximately 90 miles in length. The islands have in recent years seen a surge in birders seeking to find their own rarities in a stark but beautiful landscape at the very northern tip of the British Isles. The list of rarities found in recent autumn tours is impressive with many species from the east which make landfall on migration. If the winds are of a westerly direction there is the prospect of species from North America. We have two bases on Shetland giving us good access to all the birding sites.

■ The following itinerary is only a guide and it is likely diversions to see rare birds will be made.

■ Please note it is advisable to arrive in Shetland on October 2nd.

**Days 1-4:** Our base is at Sumburgh Head, which is ideally situated for visiting the southern half of Mainland Shetland. The hotel gardens often have migrants and is a rarity hotspot itself. Our precise plan is dependent on the prevailing weather conditions and news of recent arrivals. We visit a number of sites in the southern part of Shetland mainland. Sumburgh Head and Grutness are well known for migrants which may include Siberian Stonechat, wheatears, Marsh Warbler, Richard's Pipit, Red-backed Shrike and Eurasian Wryneck. Open ground and stone walls are important for tired migrants and we search these for anything of interest, especially warblers, thrushes and flycatchers.

Pool of Virkie attracts waders with Black-tailed Godwit and Curlew Sandpiper being regular visitors and occasional rarities including Killdeer. Nearby gardens lure migrants which have included



Radde's Warbler Photo: Neil Norvock

## Dates

Saturday October 3rd – Saturday  
October 10th 2020

Leader: Simon MacLaughlin

Group Size: 8

Birds: 100-120

Western Bonelli's Warbler. Virkie willows are a reliable spot for Yellow-browed Warbler, a regular autumn migrant on the islands. They are often joined by annual migrants in the form of Barred and Icterine Warblers, Red-backed Shrike and Common Rosefinch. Rarer species noted in recent years include Lanceolated and Arctic Warblers, Red-flanked Bluetail and Great Snipe. Quendale Mill with its habitat of damp vegetation can sometimes be good for warblers with recent records of River and Syke's.

Places such as Scatness, Exnaboe and Toab are locations likely to be on the agenda for interesting migrants. Many of the species associated with Fair Isle are possible, and mouth-watering rarities often appear at these locations during the autumn. Rarer species seen in this area have included Pallid Harrier, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Citrine Wagtail. Loch of Spiggie attracts wildfowl including Common Goldeneye, Eurasian Wigeon, Whooper Swan, Greylag Geese and in 2018 Pied-billed Grebe and Lesser Scaup.



**Common Eiders** Photo: Jo Finn

We also explore other locations further north on the mainland with the plantations of Kergord, Vidlin and Voe having more cover than much of Shetland and hence often encourage tired migrants to linger a little longer. Recent visits have produced Long-eared Owl, Brambling and Red-breasted Flycatcher. The numerous mussel farms attract Slavonian Grebe, Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Eider and more recently Surf Scoter and King Eider.

**Days 5-7:** These three days have been set aside to explore the extreme north of Shetland with visits to the islands of Fetlar, Yell and Unst. Our base is at Saxa Vord. All of the islands have easy access via ferry services and their remoteness and birding potential is huge. Unst is the most northerly of the islands and we concentrate on the sycamore plantations and gardens at Norwick, Uyeasound and Baltasound. Recent visits have produced sightings of Lesser Whitethroat, Eastern Yellow and Citrine Wagtails, Blyth's Reed Warbler and Barred Warbler. There is always something unexpected with the possibility of Snowy Owl or a vagrant wader from North America. Yell is the second largest of the islands with Yell Sound being important for passage and wintering birds including Common Eider and Long-tailed Duck.

Fetlar is a small and compact island where a search of gardens and crofts may be productive for migrants. Recent sightings have included Olive-backed Pipit and Greenish Warbler. It is also possible to have falls of Redwing, Fieldfare and, more rarely, Ring Ouzel during our visit.

**Day 8:** Travel back south to Lerwick with birding stops en route. The tour concludes after lunch in order to catch connecting flights back to mainland UK.

## Prices

Ground Price: £1,495  
Single room: £150  
Deposit: £150

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, complimentary transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** travel to and from Shetland, accommodation in Shetland on October 2nd, drinks, insurance, and items of a personal nature.

\* Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights.

# Autumn migrants on the edge of Europe

The Outer Hebrides, straddling the western coast of Scotland, is an area of outstanding natural beauty. This tour visits Lewis and Harris in the north and the southern islands of North and South Uist and Benbecula. Habitat ranges from the wind-lashed west coast to upland moors and bogs and, on the eastern seaboard, indented sea lochs. In recent years, the islands have built up a reputation for rare and unusual species. Extensive coverage of the islands has also revealed a rich vein of migrants and vagrants from North America. Anything can and does turn up on these remote islands of Scotland. On recent tours we have found our clients White-billed Divers, Surf Scoter, Laughing and Bonaparte's Gulls, Grey and Red-necked Phalaropes, Snowy Owl, Long-tailed and Pomarine Skuas and Red-rumped Swallow. If wind conditions are favourable, you can expect close views of Leach's Storm-petrel, Sabine's Gull and rare waterbirds from North America; Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral and Buff-breasted Sandpipers, American Coot, Lesser Scaup and Ring-necked Duck have been seen regularly in recent years.

■ This tour starts and finishes in Inverness which has good flight connections with the rest of Britain. Clients should book accommodation in Inverness on the nights of September 26th and October 3rd.

■ This tour can be combined with our Scottish Highlands autumn tour on page 15.

**Day 1:** Morning departure from Inverness, passing over Skye to Uig for a ferry crossing to Lochmaddy on North Uist. En route, a short stop at Broadford Bay on Skye which is one of the few areas with extensive areas of mud and grass islands. Waders may be numerous and we will be on the lookout for rare migrants which in recent years have included Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper. The bay is also a regular stopping off point for Pale-bellied Brent Geese and overhead skeins of Pink-footed Geese heading east and south. As our journey passes through the mountains, it is possible to have views of eagles and other raptors. On arrival in North Uist, we check Vallay Strand, a huge inter-tidal area, for waders and wildfowl and the possibility of American vagrants. Transfer to our base on Benbecula for four nights.

**Days 2-3:** The Uists have a range of habitat from shallow lagoons, marshes, machair and dune systems to the open sea and sandy beaches. Our main interest is in locating migrants from Europe and North America. In recent years The Range and nearby Loch Bee have hosted Pectoral,

## Dates

Sunday September 27th –  
Saturday October 3rd 2020

Leaders: Mark Finn

Group Size: 8

Birds: 100-120

Buff-breasted and White-rumped Sandpipers and Grey and Wilson's Phalaropes. On lochs and sheltered sea bays, we may find Great Northern, Red-throated and Black-throated Divers and a wide range of ducks including Long-tailed Duck, Greater Scaup and Common Goldeneye. The return passage of waders comprises Purple Sandpiper, Common Knot, Dunlin, Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone. On surrounding moors and high peaks, we have a chance of finding White-tailed and Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Short-eared Owl and Hen Harrier. Agricultural land holds Twite, Snow Bunting and, sometimes, Lapland Buntings. Rubha Ardvule is a noted seawatching point in westerly winds, providing close views of seabirds including Leach's Storm Petrel



**Ruddy Turnstone** Photo: Jo Finn

and, on occasions, Sooty Shearwater and Sabine's Gulls. Various lochs may have Whooper Swan and wildfowl including American Wigeon and Ring-necked Duck in recent autumns. Stands of bushes may harbour migrants and occasional rarities. Loch Aynort has mature trees, a rare habitat on the lower islands. Careful searching in the right weather conditions may reveal the presence of Spotted and Pied Flycatchers, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Goldcrest, Common Redpoll, Common Crossbill and the local races of Dunnock and Eurasian Wren.

**Day 4:** Today a day trip is planned to the island of Barra, which is the most southern of the Western Isles. In recent years the island has built up a reputation for attracting rare birds from North America and Asia. Any patch of bushes or trees are worth checking for regular migrants including Yellow-browed Warbler, Pied and Red-breasted Flycatchers and, perhaps, the irregular Ring Ouzel. In addition to these species, Barra holds reasonable numbers of Golden and White-tailed Eagles whilst the sheltered bays attract divers and sea-ducks.

**Day 5:** Travel to North Uist and cross the

Sound of Harris into Lewis and Harris. Our main destination is the Butt of Lewis and its adjacent fields, lochs and scrub. Seabirds we may encounter from the 'Butt' include Manx and Sooty Shearwaters, European and Leach's Storm Petrels, Sabine's Gull, Great and Arctic Skuas and, possibly, Cory's and Great Shearwaters. Nearby fields sometimes attract vagrants including, in recent years, American Golden Plover, Pectoral and Buff-breasted Sandpipers and Ruff among the hundreds of European Golden Plovers. Passerines are few but may include migrant Snow and Lapland Buntings. The harbour at Stornoway attracts gulls and the possibility of Glaucous and Iceland Gulls. To the north of the town a small freshwater reservoir attracts Long-tailed Ducks whilst offshore we have good chances of finding skuas and other seabirds in onshore winds. Transfer to Stornoway for two nights.

**Day 6:** This morning we check the grounds of Stornoway Castle for any recently arrived migrants. We spend the remainder of the day exploring sites along the exposed western shore of Lewis. Rare migrants are always possible; in recent years these have included Barred Warbler, Citrine Wagtail, Isabelline Shrike and Eurasian Wryneck. If the wind is blowing onshore, we have further opportunities to watch south-bound seabirds from the Butt of Lewis.

**Day 7:** Morning ferry to Ullapool, sea-watching en route. Transfer to Inverness where the tour concludes later in the day.

## Prices

Ground Price: £1,795  
Single room: £150  
Deposit: £150

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, guidance, tips and taxes, transport and ferry fares.

**Not included:** insurance, drinks and items of a personal nature.

# Birds and wildlife of the Rift Valley

Ethiopia is located in north-eastern Africa, a mountainous country with the Great Rift Valley being a prominent feature. Our tour covers the migration period when bird activity and migration is at its peak. A highlight of Ethiopia is the remote and beautiful Bale Mountains National Park, home to Ethiopian Wolf. This tour to Ethiopia promises outstanding birding and sightings of rare mammals in the Ethiopian Highlands.

■ Please note the itinerary below is sometimes subject to change.

**Day 1:** Fly to Addis Ababa, with arrival early the next day. Transfer to the centre of the city for a night's stay.

**Day 2:** Today we head to Debre Birhan, travelling through farmland attracting Egyptian Vulture, Tawny and Steppe Eagles, Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, Thick-billed and Fan-tailed Ravens and flocks of wintering Red-throated Pipits. On arrival at Debre Birhan, we explore the road to Ankober. On lower fields we can expect Streaky Serin and Ortolan Buntings. The road climbs steeply through woodland, fields and traditional villages. Overhead we



Rouget's Rail Photo: Jo Finn

## Dates

\* Friday March 6th – Friday March 20th 2020

Leaders: Mark Finn and local guides  
Group Size: 8  
Birds: 390-450

\* This tour may depart one day earlier/later due to flight schedules from the UK.

may locate Lammergeier and Mountain Buzzard plus flocks of Alpine and Scarce Swifts. Our main interest is finding Ankober Serin, a scarce Ethiopian endemic. Night at Debre Birhan.

**Day 3:** A visit to the Jemma Valley which holds Harwood's Francolin, a rare Ethiopian endemic. The cliffs and boulder-strewn slopes of the Jemma Valley may have White-billed Starlings, Stone Partridge and the extremely rare Salvadori's Serin. In gorges with small bushes, we hope to locate Foxy Cisticola, Speckle-fronted Weaver and Black-throated Firefinches. The monastery of Debre Libanos is adjacent to mature woodland holding Banded Barbet, African Lemon Dove and White-cheeked Turaco. Nearby, a gorge attracts White-winged and Mocking Cliffchats, Ruppell's Chat and, in scrubby areas, Erckel's Francolin. On our return to Addis Ababa, we explore the Suluta Plain, an important habitat for Blue-winged Goose, Wattled Ibis and Spot-breasted Lapwing.



**Vulturine Guineafowl** Photo: Jo Finn

**Day 4:** Today we join the Djibouti road and visit the seasonal crater lakes around Debre Zeyit. Chelekleka is an important area for Greater and Lesser Flamingos, passage ducks and shorebirds. Hora Lake is nearby where we may find Black-winged Lovebird, White-breasted White-eye, Grey-headed Batis and African Yellow Warbler. Transfer to Awash National Park and visit the acacia scrub and riverside campgrounds. The former has White-headed Buffalo Weaver and Nile Valley Sunbird. Along the river, we can expect Bruce's Green Pigeon, Nubian and Bearded Woodpeckers and Sulphur-breasted Bushshrikes. As dusk starts to fall, we should find Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Arabian, Kori, Black-bellied and Buff-crested Bustards and, on occasions, the rare Hartlaub's Bustard. Two-night stay at Awash Station.

**Day 5:** Today we join the Kudu Loop track running through acacia trees and past isolated villages. Typical birds of the area include Red-bellied Parrot, Gillet's Lark, Ashy Cisticola and Somali Fiscal. The

Fantalle Mountains dominate the landscape, a semi-dormant volcano resulting in a habitat of lava-flows and deep fissures. Interesting birds in this unique habitat include Sombre Chat, Blackstart, Yellow-throated Sombre Serin and Bristle-crowned Starling. Later in the day, we travel through the Sababer Plains where we should find Black-headed Lapwing, Superb Starling, Cyprus Pied, Pied and Isabelline Wheatears and Striped Kingfisher.

**Day 6:** After breakfast, we make the journey to Sodore where the River Awash is bordered by mature trees and gardens. Open areas have Clapperton's Francolin and Ethiopian Sawwings. By the river, migrants include Lesser Whitethroat, Thrush Nightingale and resident Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike, White-browed Coucal and Slender-billed Starlings. Later in the day, we travel to Lake Langanu where the grounds of the hotel are excellent for birds, including many migrants from Europe and Asia. A steep escarpment attracts Little Rock Thrush. Scrub lures Boran Cisticola, Ruppell's and Lesser



**Stresemann's Bush Crow** Photo: Jo Finn

Masked Weavers and Red-billed Firefinches.

**Day 7:** Bale Mountains National Park is our destination and the town of Goba. En route we pass through farmland used for cereal production and sheep grazing. Birds of prey can be numerous including Eastern Imperial Eagle, Lanner Falcon and Lesser Kestrel. Grass verges attract White-colored Pigeons, Ethiopian Longclaw, Red-breasted Wheatear and Alpine Chats whilst scrub lures Moorland and Chestnut-naped Francolins and Cinnamon Bracken Warblers. In the forest of Dinsho we expect to find White-backed Black Tit and Abyssinian Ground Thrush. Goba is our base where we have a two-night stay.

**Day 8:** Beyond Goba is an extensive stand of juniper forest, home to Abyssinian Catbird, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, African, Abyssinian and Bare-faced Thrushes, Abyssinian Woodpecker and the endemic sub-species of Brown Woodland Warbler. Colourful Ruppell's Robin-chats frequent the roadside. In the park itself,

pools attract remnant populations of Ruddy Shelduck, Wattled Crane and endemic Rouget's Rail. Our main objective is to find and study Ethiopian Wolves hunting for mole rats. Less than 600 of these impressive animals survive. Return to Goba, revisiting the forest for Tacazze and Malachite Sunbirds. Fields in and around Goba have Black-winged Lapwing, Erlanger's Short-toed Lark and Groundscraper Thrushes.

**Day 9:** We retrace our steps towards the main road at Awassa with a visit to Lake Awassa for close views of White Pelican, Fulvous and White-faced Whistling Ducks and Grey-headed Gulls. In the more sheltered areas of reeds we may find African Pygmy Goose, Lesser Moorhen and White-backed Duck. Flooded fields lure waders and African Snipe. Transfer to Aregash Lodge for an overnight stay.

**Day 10:** Today we pass through acacia and desert-like habitats to the remote town of Negele. Around Negele, woodland holds the spectacular Ruspoli's Turaco, White-

winged Collared Dove, Juba Weaver and Brown-rumped Bunting. Overnight at Negele.

**Day 11:** Early start to visit the Liben Plains which hold several interesting birds in dry, open country. The plains support Heuglin's Bustard, endemic Sidamo Larks, Rufous Short-toed Lark, Tiny Cisticola and Golden Pipit. Flowering shrubs attract Hunter's Sunbird. Transfer to Yabelo for two nights.

**Day 12:** Yabelo is an important junction town in the middle of a red sandstone landscape dotted with termite mounds and acacia trees. Around the hotel complex, Red-winged and White-crowned Starlings nest in old buildings. Several spectacular birds occur south of Yabelo, notably the charismatic Stresemann's Bush Crow and parties of colourful Vulture Guineafowl. Acacias attract Pygmy Falcon, Grey Wren Warbler, Shelley's, Magpie and Golden-breasted Starlings, Red and Yellow Barbet and Black-billed Woodhoopoe. After lunch, we visit a traditional area for White-tailed Swallows, Crested Francolin, Yellow-necked Spurrow and African Black-headed Orioles. Birds of prey can be numerous around Yabelo and include Lappet-faced and White-headed Vultures, Wahlberg's Eagle and migrant Lesser-spotted Eagles.

**Day 13:** A travelling day to the city of Awassa, an important area for birds and wildlife. On arrival, an exploration of the grounds may produce African Spotted Creeper, Grey and Bearded Woodpeckers, Pringle's Puffback and Blue-headed Coucal. Overnight at Awassa.

**Day 14:** Morning visit to Lake Awassa and the fish quay. The latter has Yellow-billed Kite, Black Egret, Black Crake and, in surrounding large trees and scrub, Black-winged Lovebird, Banded Barbet, Red-fronted Tinkerbird and Eastern Black-headed Oriole. Lake Awassa, although small in size, is a regular haunt of Pink-backed Pelican, African Pygmy Goose, Marsh Harrier and migrant ducks and warblers. After lunch, we transfer to Wondo Genet watching the rocky hillsides for Long-billed Pipit and grasslands holding Grey-backed

Fiscal, Woodchat Shrike and Plain-backed Pipit. On arrival at Wondo Genet, we search the grounds for Dark-headed Oriole, White-breasted White-eye and Silvery-cheeked Hornbills. Overnight at Wondo Genet.

**Day 15:** Pre-breakfast walk into the forest for Yellow-fronted Parrot, Half-collared Kingfisher, Crowned and Hemprich's Hornbills and Abyssinian Hill Babbler. Along the tracks, we may encounter Mountain Wagtail, Yellow-bellied Waxbill and Eastern Olive Sunbird. Further up the track, we have a chance of locating Narina Trogons. In the afternoon, we head back to Addis Ababa and the Ghion Hotel. Its extensive gardens attract Blue-breasted Bee-eater. After a farewell dinner, we transfer to the new airport for our flight home to Europe where arrival is early on the following day.

## Prices

Ground Price: £3,995  
Single room: £210  
Deposit: £400  
\*Air Fare: £500

This holiday is fully inclusive of flights, accommodation and meals, transport, entrance and permit fees, guidance and tips.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance and items of a personal nature and any fuel surcharges.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Birds and mammals of Rwanda's National Parks

Rwanda is a small country, around a fifth the size of England. Despite this the country is blessed with extensive areas of forest, lakes and swamps which in turn attract many species of birds and mammals. Rwanda is a wonderful destination for wildlife tourism and an excellent area to watch Mountain Gorillas. Our tour visits Akagera National Park, a mix of wetlands and forest, and the bird-rich Nyungwe Forest National Park. We expect to see almost twenty-five of the range-restricted Albertine Rift endemics. Birding within Rwanda is still in its infancy and this tour could well bring a few surprise species within the extensive forest systems.

**Days 1-2:** We have a flight to Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, with arrival on Day 2. Transfer to Akagera National Park in eastern Rwanda which is close to the border with Tanzania. En route we should encounter the commoner birds of the countryside: Hamerkop, Sacred and Hadada Ibis, Augur Buzzard, Long-crested Eagle, Village, Black-headed and Vieillot's Black Weavers. The journey passes through large tracts of agricultural areas where Grey-backed Fiscals reside whilst patches of marsh and reeds attract Fan-tailed Widowbird and Carruther's Cisticolas. Four nights at Akagera Lodge.

**Days 3-5:** Akagera National Park was founded in 1934 to protect animals and other wildlife using a mixed combination of gallery forest, swamps and lakes. Almost 500 bird species can be found in the park. A boat trip on Lake Ihema should reward us with views of Rufous-bellied Heron, and papyrus-loving Lesser and Greater Swamp Warblers, Slender-billed Weaver, and Swamp Flycatcher. The lakes also offer us the chance of Shoebill although this species has become scarce here in recent years. Other species we may see include Goliath, Black-headed, Striated, and Squacco Herons, Little Bittern, Grey-crowned Crane, African Openbill, African Darter, Black Crake, Wattled, Long-toed and Senegal Lapwings, Water Thick-knee, Blue-headed Coucal, and Giant Kingfisher. In the forests and savannah we have a chance of locating Black-chested, Brown,

## Dates

**Saturday December 5th - Thursday December 17th 2020**

Leader: Harriet Kemishiga and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 300 - 350

and Western Banded Snake Eagles, White-headed Vulture, Ross's Turaco, Black-colored and Red-faced Barbets, Bennett's Woodpecker, Bare-faced Go-away Bird, and Klaas's, Red-chested, and Black Cuckoos. In the grasslands we search for Black-bellied Bustard, Red-necked Francolin, Red-billed and occasionally Cardinal Queleas.

**Day 6:** Transfer to Nyungwe Forest National Park. En route stops at papyrus swamps may produce Papyrus Gonolek, White-winged Warbler and the uncommon Papyrus Canary. In roadside marshes we search for another rare regional endemic - Grauer's Swamp Warbler. Arrive at Nyungwe Top View Hotel, our base for five nights.

**Days 7-10:** The next few days are spent exploring the forests of Nyungwe. Within the reserve several well maintained trails allow access to this extensive forest, one of the largest remaining within Africa. Albertine Rift endemics occurring in Nyungwe include Handsome Francolin,



**Augur Buzzard** Photo: Jo Finn

Great Blue and Ruwenzori Turacos, White-headed Wood-hoopoe, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo, Chestnut Owlet, Olive and Elliot's Woodpeckers, Stripe-breasted Tit, Red-collared Babbler, Archer's and White-bellied Robin Chats, Doherty's Bush-Shrike, Mountain Masked, Black-faced, Chestnut-throated, and Collared Apalises, Rwenzori Batis, Grauer's and Short-tailed Warblers, White-tailed Blue-flycatcher, Chapin's Flycatcher, Rwenzori Apalis, Purple-breasted and Regal Sunbirds and Strange Weaver. Birding in dense forest can be challenging but a wide range of birds is possible. We should encounter Black-and-white Casqued Hornbills, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eaters, Pink-footed Puffback and more skulking species in the form of African Hill Babbler, Dusky Crimsonwing and Grauer's Warbler. Walking along roads and trails can be productive for African Broadbill, Willard's Sooty Boubou, Mountain Oriole, Mountain Illadopsis, Archer's Robin and Red-faced Woodland Warbler. On the canopy walk we search for Black-billed Turaco, Kivu Ground Thrush and Purple-headed Sunbird. Along the waterfall trail we have chances of Grey Apalis, Cabanis's Greenbul, Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye and Yellow-eyed Black Flycatcher. Almost anything may turn up at this undiscovered forest.

**Day 11:** Today we return to Kigali after a final visit into the forest.

**Day 12:** Travel to the swamps of Gahanga and Gashora for our final full day in Rwanda. Areas near sugar cane factories can be productive for Blue-headed Coucal, Red-faced Cisticola, Papyrus Canary and White-winged Warblers. Gashora is an important bird area in Rwanda holding several species of migrants from Europe plus Cape Wagtail, African Snipe, Red-chested Cuckoo and Carruther's Cisticola.

**Day 13:** Morning flight back to the UK with arrival on the same day.

## Prices

Ground Price: £4,595  
 Single room: £450  
 Deposit: £400  
 \*Air Fare: £600

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, guidance and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, airport departure taxes and items of a personal nature. Visa to enter Rwanda.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Birds of SE Senegal and Saloum

Senegal is one of West Africa's most stable countries with a heavy French influence dating back to colonial days. The first half of the tour concentrates on the little-visited far east of the country on the border with Guinea Conakry at Wassadoo and the almost unknown Dindéfello region on the border with Guinea and Mali. The former area is the most reliable in West Africa for the beautiful Egyptian Plover and the localised African Finfoot. Dindéfello also holds significant numbers of mammals and over 220 species of birds, making it one of the premier wildlife areas of West Africa. Our final destination on this tour is Saloum National Park, an area of inter-tidal rivers, scrub and savannah. The range of bird species in Senegal is impressive - Arabian and Savile's Bustards, Goliath Heron, Saddle-billed Stork, African Swallow-tailed Kite, Fox Kestrel, Adamawa Turtle Dove and Kulikoro Firefinch to name a few. Birdwatching Breaks has operated in excess of 25 tours to Senegal since the 1990s and is pleased to offer these unique birding tours at a peak time for birdlife.

**Day 1:** Fly to the new airport south of Dakar. On arrival, we transfer to the seaside village of Popenguine for a two-night stay.

**Day 2:** Dawn visit to the coastal scrub reserve of Popenguine where we should find Blue Rock Thrush and European Crag Martin, rare visitors from Europe. To the south of Mbour is Lac Sarene bordered by farmland and just inland from the Atlantic Ocean. Lac Sarene is an incredible area for waders, wildfowl, terns and gulls with recent visits recording Greater Painted Snipe, Marsh and Curlew Sandpipers and high numbers of wintering Ospreys from Europe. Recent visits have produced rarer species, notably Great Snipe and Citrine Wagtail. In the surrounding acacia woodland we should locate a wide range of wintering warblers and flycatchers. Later in the afternoon we visit Lac Somone for close views of waders and terns and the possibility of the scarce Brown Sunbird.

**Day 3:** After breakfast, we travel to Wassadoo via Tambacounda, the largest city in eastern Senegal. En route we may encounter the beautiful African Swallow-tailed Kite, Dark Chanting Goshawk and, in the dry acacia woodland, Black-bellied Bustard, Black Scimitar-bill and Piapiac.

## Dates

Friday January 10th – Thursday

January 23rd 2020

Wednesday January 13th –

Tuesday January 26th 2021

Leader: Mark Finn and Ass Ndiaye

Group Size: 8

Birds: 260-320

Seasonal pools adjacent to the road lure small birds to drink including Cut-throat Finch, Exclamatory Paradise and Pin-tailed Whydahs, Sudan Golden Sparrow, Village Indigobird and hunting Shikra. Near Tambacounda we may locate Senegal Batis, Yellow Penduline Tit, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weaver and the uncommon and localised Brown-rumped Bunting. As dusk falls, we should encounter Four-banded Sandgrouse. Three nights at Wassadoo.

**Days 4-5:** The area is home to over 300 species of birds, some of the more interesting being Bateleur, Martial Eagle, Denham's Bustard, Egyptian Plover and Violet Turaco. The Gambia River meanders slowly through the region with extensive vegetation along the banks, sand-bars and banks attracting Saddle-billed and Woolly-



**Greater Blue-eared Starling** Photo: Jo Finn

necked Storks, African Finfoot, Giant and Shining-blue Kingfishers, White-headed Lapwing and Oriole Warbler. In recent visits we have seen Pel's Fishing Owls at one of the few known sites in West Africa. During our stay within the park, we make several excursions to birding hotspots. Savannah habitats offer us Helmeted Guineafowl, Stone Partridge, Black-headed Heron, Hadada Ibis, Palm-nut Vulture, Short-toed, Beaudouin's, Brown and Banded Snake Eagles, Bateleur and Black-crowned Crane. Also present in the savannah in lower numbers are Sun Lark, Pied-winged Swallow and a wide range of estrildids - Black-bellied and Black-faced Firefinches and Black-faced and Black-rumped Waxbills. Wassadoo also has patches of gallery forest holding Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Green Turaco, Spotted and Wahlberg's Honeyguides, Little Green and Buff-spotted Woodpeckers, Swamp Palm Bulbul, Green Crombec and Crimson Seedcracker. Wassadoo attracts many birds, with previous visits recording Red-throated, Green and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters, Greater Honeyguide, Grey-

headed Bushshrike, Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike, Yellow-bellied and Senegal Eremomelas, Swamp Flycatcher, White-crowned Robin-chat, Blackcap and Brown Babbler, Lesser Blue-eared Starling, African Pied Wagtail, Orange-cheeked Waxbill, Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah, Vitelline Masked Weaver and Pygmy Sunbird.

**Day 6:** This morning we continue our journey south towards the border with Guinea and Mali. The habitat starts to change slowly as the border has cliffs, gallery forest and ravines. In the afternoon we visit the forest and bush area of Samecoute. This is an interesting place where we may find the rare Senegal Lapwing, Lanner Falcon, Violet Turaco and Black-rumped Waxbill. Our base for the next three nights is in the regional town of Kedougou.

**Days 7-8:** Our main interest is visiting the Dindéfello Nature Reserve, formed by a partnership of the Jane Goodall Institute and the Rural Community of Dindéfello to protect an isolated population of chim-

panzees. It also protects areas of forests, cliffs and waterfalls which are rare habitats within Senegal. Rare species occurring include Fox Kestrel, Narina's Trogon, Mocking Cliff-chat, Neumann's Starling, Dybowski's Twinspot and Kulikoro Firefinch. Several recent surveys have found species at the edge of their ranges or rare migrants from Europe. These have included Black Stork, Red-chested Goshawk, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Common Buttonquail, Forbes's Plover, Rock Martin, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Olive Sunbird and Wilson's Indigobird. In other areas, we may encounter Guinea and Violet Turacos, African Cuckoo, Northern White-faced Owl, Fanti Sawwing, Yellow-bellied Hylia, Singing, Short-winged and Rufous Cisticolas, Green-headed Sunbird and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. In the evenings the balcony viewing point of our hotel should give us views of Long-tailed and Standard-winged Nightjars and Pearl-spotted Owlet.

**Day 9:** A travel day back towards Kaolack and on to Keur Saloum where we have a four-night stay.

**Days 10-12:** Today we head to Saloum National Park, an extensive region of forests and mangrove swamps. As we approach our hotel, we expect to find Black Woodhoopoe, Fork-tailed Drongo, Fine-spotted Woodpecker, African and Bruce's Green Pigeons. On one morning, depending on tide times, we take a boat trip through mangrove swamps and visit isolated sandbars. The hotel quay sometimes has Blue-breasted Kingfisher and Goliath Heron. Shorebirds are numerous and include White-fronted, Kentish, Common and Little Ringed Plovers, Curlew Sandpiper, Eurasian Curlew, Eurasian Oystercatcher and Greenshank. On previous visits, we have observed White-crested Bittern, White-backed Night Heron, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Shikra, Bronze Mannikin, Brown Babbler, Klass's Cuckoo, Western Grey Plantain-eater, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, Lavender Waxbill and Brown Sunbird. An afternoon visit is planned to a forested area where birds of prey abound. We may find Grasshopper Buzzard, Brown

and Baudouin's Snake Eagles, Short-toed Eagle, Grey Kestrel, African Hobby and Palm-nut Vulture. Open areas attract European, Blue-cheeked and, occasionally, Little Green and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters. On one evening, we visit a huge raptor roost site which holds hundreds of African Swallow-tailed Kites, Lesser Kestrels and possibly three species of hawks - Marsh, Montagu's and Pallid.

**Day 13:** Today we return to Popenguine and visit a series of wetland lagoons adjacent to the coast where it is possible to find wintering Audouin's and Mediterranean Gulls and, in recent years, Franklin's Gulls from across the Atlantic. Anything is possible here and recent rarities have included American Golden Plover. The dry acacia woodland holds many of Europe's warblers here on their wintering grounds.

**Day 14:** A remote lodge is visited for the scarce Black Scrub Robin whilst the nearby coast is a reliable spot for Pallid and White-rumped Swifts. Later today we return to Dakar for flights to Europe with arrival early the next day.

## Prices

Ground Price: £2,795  
Single room: £250  
Deposit: £250  
\*Air Fare: £720

This tour is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, park entrance fees and permits, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance and items of a personal nature.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Pelagic birding and the Birds of The Sahel

Senegal is one of West Africa's most stable countries with a heavy French influence dating back to colonial days. The coastline has two important wetlands of international importance which are protected in the form of national parks. The north of the country has a wide belt of Sahel holding several species which prefer sub-desert habitats while the south is primarily savannah dotted with stands of acacia trees and secondary forest. We visit Djoudj National Park which is a wetland where Palearctic migrants winter in their thousands. The range of bird species in this little-known country is impressive, Arabian and Savile's Bustards, Goliath Heron, Saddle-billed Stork, African Swallow-tailed Kite, Little Grey Woodpecker and Cricket Warbler all being found regularly on recent tours. Birdwatching Breaks has operated several tours to Senegal since the 1990s and is pleased to offer these unique birding tours at a peak time for birdlife.

**Day 1:** Fly to Dakar and transfer to Popenguine for an overnight stay.

**Days 2-4:** Dawn visit to the coastal scrub reserve of Popenguine where we should find Blue Rock Thrush and European Crag Martin, rare visitors from Europe. On the cliffs we have a chance of watching Gosling's Buntings. Yellow-billed Kite is abundant in the region and on our journey northwards birds of prey can be numerous and include Lappet-faced, Ruppell's Griffon, Hooded and White-backed Vultures. Near St Louis itself, we should find Red-necked Falcons in roadside palm trees. For the next few days we are based at Ranch de Bango and Djoudj National Park from where we explore sub-Saharan Senegal. The grounds of the ranch offer excellent birding with regularly seen species - Western Red-billed Hornbill, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Grey Woodpecker, Blue-naped Mousebird, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Red-billed Firefinch, Beautiful and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, African Silverbill, Sudan Golden Sparrow and Long-tailed Glossy Starlings. Wintering Palearctic migrants are common and include Melodious, Subalpine and Western Olivaceous Warblers, Common Redstart, Red-throated and Tree Pipits. Our base, adjacent to the Senegal River, is a haven for waterbirds - Long-tailed Cormorant, Squacco and Purple Herons, Purple

## Dates

**Friday November 6th – Saturday  
November 14th 2020**

Leader: Mark Finn and Ass Ndiaye

Group Size: 8

Birds: 200-250

Swamphen, Spur-winged Lapwing, African Fish Eagle, Malachite and Pied Kingfishers African Jacana, Winding Cisticola, Abyssinian Roller and Senegal Coucal. A thorn forest regularly has roosting Long-tailed Nightjars. The drier ground is home to Senegal Thick-knee, Black-billed Wood Dove, Little Bee-eater and Grey-headed Sparrow.

**Marigot One:** This is, in effect, a privately run nature reserve. Our main interest here is in locating the internationally scarce Savile's Bustard. Other sub-Saharan birds present include Marsh, Montagu's and, occasionally, Pallid Harriers, Barbary Falcon, Cream-coloured and Temminck's Coursers, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, and Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark. A lake attracts shorebirds and many species of heron, including Black Heron. A stop at dusk may give us Verreaux's Eagle Owl, a local resident.

**Marigot Two and Three:** We spend a



**African Spoonbill** Photo: Roger Ridley

day in this area and typical species include Northern Anteater-chat, Black and Rufous-tailed Scrub Robins, Senegal Batis, Long-tailed and Chestnut-bellied Starlings, Green Woodhoopoe and Blue-naped Mousebird. If cattle are present, we may find Yellow-billed Oxpeckers. Patches of acacia trees are home to specialised Sahelian birds - Cricket Warbler, Sennar Penduline Tit and Little Grey Woodpecker. Other birds may include Great, Intermediate and Little Egrets, Sacred and Glossy Ibis, Common Snipe, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Black Crake and Collared Pratincole. We have further opportunities for bustards in this area.

**Djoudj National Park:** Djoudj National Park is the third most important wetland in the world. We have two nights here in a purpose-built camp just outside the reserve. En route we travel through acacia forest looking for Striped Kingfisher, Vieillot's Barbet, and Desert Wheatear. The

hotel grounds attract many interesting species - Speckled Pigeon, Northern Crombec, Village Indigobird, Yellow-backed, Village and Little Weavers and wintering Eurasian Wryneck. We take a boat safari into one of nature's wonders. Our boat takes us along a branch of the Senegal River, which is alive with birds, to a colony of White Pelicans. This area usually holds large numbers of ducks and herons. Seasonal lakes in Djoudj attract Marsh Harriers and Striated Heron, kingfishers, Black Crake, and Yellow-billed Stork. Other highlights include Black-crowned Night Heron, White-faced and Fulvous Whistling-ducks, Osprey, Caspian, Gull-billed, Black and Whiskered Terns and the range-restricted River Prinia. Lac de Kahr and Grand Lac hold Greater and, sometimes, Lesser Flamingos. Grand Lac also holds thousands of Garganey with lesser numbers of Eurasian Teal, Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail. Isolated trees on the surrounding desert landscape

provide hunting perches for migrant Peregrine and Lanner Falcons. The park has what is possibly the only protected area for Arabian Bustard, a species under constant threat from hunting and, in this area of Africa, greatly endangered. On the return to Ranch de Bango, roadside lagoons may hold Eurasian and African Spoonbills, Spur-winged and Egyptian Geese, Greater Painted Snipe and shorebirds including Avocet, Marsh Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint and Black-winged Stilt.

**Days 5-6:** Richard Toll and Podor: A new road running east towards the town of Richard Toll allows us to explore the extensive Senegal River floodplain and the Sahelian environment. Among the many birds that we may encounter here are African Pygmy Goose, Black-shouldered Kite, Montagu's and Pallid Harriers, Wahlberg's, Short-toed and Booted Eagles, Kittlitz's Plover, Common Quail, African Reed Warbler, Short-eared Owl, Black-crowned Sparrow Lark, Kordofan Lark, Singing Bush Lark, African Quailfinch, Desert Cisticola, Grey-backed Eremomela and, occasionally, Hoopoe Lark. This is also a known area for Arabian and, in some years, Denham's Bustard. To the east of Richard Toll and towards the settlement of Podor several species occur which are hard to see elsewhere in the country. The dry grasslands with scattered bushes are reliable for Cricket Warblers and the shy Fulvous Babbler. The habitats around Podor offer us the chance to observe the rarely seen Golden Nightjar, Little Grey Woodpecker and wintering Cream-coloured Coursers. Nights in Richard Toll

**Days 8-9:** Today we travel south towards the capital city of Dakar. There are several birding locations along the way including Technopole which is a failed shopping complex with lakes and reedbeds. Careful scanning of the grass islands and shallow pools may produce a variety of gulls including Audouin's and Mediterranean and occasionally stragglers from North America which has included Franklin's in recent years. Waders can be numerous and often reveal the presence of rarer species which

in recent years have included Buff-breasted Sandpiper and American Golden Plover. On Day 9 we take a pelagic trip off Dakar where the deep cool waters of the North Atlantic attract a variety of species. In the right weather conditions we should encounter Cape Verde and Scopoli's Shearwaters, the uncommon Baroli's Shearwater, Pomarine, Arctic and Long-tailed Skuas, a wide range of terns comprising Caspian, African Royal, Common, Arctic, Roseate, Little and Sandwich, the latter being quite common. Other possibilities include Grey Phalarope and rarer species such as Bulwer's Petrel, Leach's, Wilson's and Madeiran Storm Petrels, South Polar Skua and Sabine's Gull. Nights in Popenguine

**Day 10:** This morning we travel south to visit birding areas near the coastal city of Mbour (or take the boat trip if weather conditions have been poor). Habitats include several patches of acacia scrub which are attractive to recently arrived migrants from Europe and may include Bluethroat, Spotted and Pied Flycatchers and Iberian Chiffchaff. Several small ponds dot the landscape which attract a wide range of waterbirds including numerous ducks and waders. Later in the day we return to Popenguine to freshen up and travel to the airport for our late night flight back to the UK.

## Prices

Ground Price: £2,195  
 Single room: £175  
 Deposit: £200  
 \*Air Fare: £720

This tour is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, park entrance fees and permits, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Northern Territory, Alice Springs and Singapore

Birdwatching Breaks are pleased to offer you this unique opportunity to visit the tropical habitats around Darwin in the Northern Territory, Alice Springs in the red centre of Australia and finally the amazing habitats in and around Singapore. Our tours starts in Darwin, the city having several interesting areas for birds, and then visits the world famous Kakadu National Park before moving to Alice Springs for some hard-to-see Australian birds including the scarce Grey Honeyeater. Our final birding stop is in Singapore where we have three days in this extraordinary area for birds in SE Asia.

**Days 1-3:** Fly to Darwin the largest town in the sparsely populated Northern Territory, arrival is on Day 3.

**Day 4:** We start by visiting East Point for returning shorebirds. A walk through monsoon forest may reveal Rainbow Pitta, Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, Varied Triller and Brown Whistler. A boardwalk through the mangroves often has Red-headed Honeyeater, Broad-billed Flycatcher and Collared Kingfisher. Savannah woodland habitat holds Forest Kingfisher, Double-barred and Long-tailed Finches and Red-tailed Black Cockatoo. Later we drive out to Fogg Dam for Blue-winged Kookaburra. The dam has Magpie Geese, egrets, Pied Heron, Royal Spoonbill, White-browed Crake and Black-necked Stork. On the forest edge we look for Crimson Finch, Rufous-banded Honeyeater, Lemon-bellied Robin, Sacred Kingfisher and Paperbark Flycatcher. Another area of fringe wetlands is attractive to Arafura Fantail and Shining Flycatcher. We stop at Adelaide River Bridge and search for Mangrove Golden Whistler then continue to the Mary River Wilderness Retreat, our base for the night. In the evening we may see and hear Bush Thick-knee, Tawny Frogmouth and Barking Owl.

**Day 5:** We leave early for Kakadu National Park searching out some Kakadu escarpment endemics - Chestnut-quilled Rock Pigeon and White-lined Honeyeater. Other species today include Partridge Pigeon and Northern Fantail. We head to our accommodation at Jabiru.

## Dates

**Wednesday August 26th - Sunday September 13th 2020**

Leader: Mike Jarvis, Mark Finn and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 250-300

**Day 6:** We start the day at Burringui Rock where we should find Banded Fruit-dove, Sandstone Shrike-thrush and Sandstone Helmeted Friarbird. Other species include Emerald Dove, Northern Rosella and Spangled Drongo. Later we embark on a river cruise for sightings of Brolga, Radjah Shelduck, Wandering and Plumed Whistling-ducks, Green Pygmy-goose, Rufous-crowned Night Heron, Comb-crested Jacana, Royal Spoonbill, Azure and Little Kingfishers, and Buff-sided Robin. Night at Cooida

**Day 7:** We leave Jabiru via the Kakadu Highway with Australian Bustard on flat open plains. We visit Gunlom and search for more endemic species and explore an area where a pair of Red Goshawks have recently bred, and another location for Silver-backed Butcherbirds. Continue to Pine Creek which has Hooded and Red-winged Parrots, Grey-crowned Babbler and Great Bowerbird. Night at Pine Creek.

**Day 8:** We check out early from our accommodation at Pine Creek and head down to a waterhole on the Fergusson



**Red-collared Lorikeet** Photo: Rob Gully

River a reliable area for Gouldian Finch. Other target species here are Banded, Bar-breasted and Rufous-throated Honeyeaters, Cockatiel, Varied Lorikeet, and sometimes Budgerigar. We then head south to bird around Katherine township. Near the Victoria River Roadhouse we explore the river's edge for Yellow-rumped Mannikin and Purple-crowned Fairy-wren. Night at Victoria River Roadhouse.

**Day 9:** We continue west where the habitat changes dramatically as we travel through magnificent escarpment country where raptors include Wedge-tailed Eagle, Black-breasted Buzzard, Spotted Harrier and Square-tailed Kite, there are recent records of the rare Grey Falcon in the area too. There are many waterholes attracting Star, Zebra and Crimson Finches, Crimson Chat and Red-browed Pardalote. Timber Creek has Purple-crowned Fairywren, Pictorella and Yellow-rumped Mannikins, Yellow-tinted and Black-chinned Honeyeaters. The airfield sometimes has Crimson Chat and Inland Dotterel.

**Day 10:** We check out early and have a bush breakfast at old Victoria River crossing. We continue west along Victoria Highway through magnificent ranges and sandstone outcrops. This is great raptor country and we search the skies for Black-breasted Buzzards and Wedge-tailed Eagles. On the Western Australian border is our westernmost park - Keep River National Park. Here we search for Spinifex Pigeon, White-quilled Rock-Pigeon and Sandstone Shrike-thrush, before continuing on across the border into WA. Night at Lake Argyle.

**Day 11:** We meet the boat at 5.30am for the five-hour birdwatching cruise on Lake Argyle. Unique birds we hope to see on this cruise include Yellow Chat, Australian Pratincole and a great variety of waterbirds and shorebirds. We explore areas between Lake Argyle and Kununurra looking for Gouldian and, Star Finches, Yellow-rumped, Chestnut-breasted and Pictorella Mannikins. Overnight at Kununurra.

**Day 12:** We explore areas around



**Australian Painted Snipe** Photo: Rob Gully

Kununurra where Australian Reed Warbler, various finches, honeyeaters and waterbirds are found. Later in the day we fly back to Darwin for an overnight stay.

**Day 13:** Morning flight to Alice Springs in the red centre of Australia where we have a three-night stay. On arrival we make an initial exploration of Simpson's Gap National Park, an interesting mix of red rocks, scrub and desert habitats with sparse vegetation. Central Australian birds using the area include Pied Butcherbird, Western Gerygone, Grey-headed Honeyeater, Zebra Finch, Black-faced and Little Woodswallows and Dusky Grasswren. If it has rained recently we may find nomadic species in Budgerigar, Diamond Dove, Rufous Songlark and Painted Firetail.

**Days 14-15:** These two days will be spent searching for the specialties that occur around Alice Springs. The local sewage works often have the only water for miles around and attract rare migrants or nomadic Australian birds. Of particular interest are Bourke's Parrot, White-browed

Treecreeper, Rufous-crowned Emuwren, Slaty-backed Thornbill, Banded Whiteface and three very localised honeyeaters - Black, Pied and Grey. In addition to these we should also locate Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Little Buttonquail, Australian Crake, Black-tailed Native-hen, Spinifex Pigeon, Mallee Ringneck, White-winged and Splendid Fairywrens, Redthroat, Inland Thornbill, Singing, White-plumed and Yellow-throated Honeyeaters, Red-capped and Hooded Robins and Little Crow.

**Day 16:** Fly to Singapore via Darwin with arrival later the same day.

**Day 17:** Today we head to Changi village where on recent visits Sunda Pygmy Woodpecker, Yellow-crested Cockatoo and Tanimbar Corella may be found with Red-breasted Parakeets. Pulau Ubin is an island which has so far avoided the modernisation of Singapore. The coast here attracts Collared Kingfisher, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Olive-backed Sunbird and Asian Glossy Starlings. At the eastern end a



**Azure  
Kingfisher**

*Photo:  
Rob Kelly*

boardwalk allows us to walk around pristine habitats for White-rumped Sharma, Straw-headed Bulbul and Ashy Tailorbird. The many palms attract Laced Woodpecker. In the afternoon we visit Pasir Ris Park, which can be good for Spotted Wood and Buffy Fish Owls. Other species may include Common Flameback, Pied Triller, Golden-bellied Gerygone and Asian Koel. We end the day at Lorong Halus which may have Long-tailed Shrike, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Daurian and White-shouldered Starlings, Lesser Coucal and Sooty-headed Bulbul.

**Day 18:** An early departure to the Central Catchment Nature Reserve, home to Oriental Scops Owl and Brown Hawk Owl, whilst Large-tailed Nightjars roost on the golf course. The tower hide allows views over the forest with Long-tailed Parakeet, Olive-winged and Red-eyed Bulbuls, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Chestnut-bellied Malkoha, Greater Green Leafbird and Orange-bellied Flowerpecker all being possible. Sungei Buloh is an important area for birds with its mudflats attracting migrant waders and the mangroves holding kingfishers - Common, Stork-billed and White-throated. Kranji Marsh is our final destination where Malaysian Hawk Cuckoo, Pied Triller, Yellow-rumped Flycatcher and Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker reside.

**Day 19:** A morning visit to Bukit Batok, the

only area of primary lowland forest in Singapore. Several interesting species occur including Black Baza, Blue-rumped Parrot, Blue-winged Pitta, Ferruginous Flycatcher, Buff-vented Bulbul, Short-tailed Babbler, Yellow-vented Flowerpecker and Crimson Sunbird. The main aim is to find a fruiting tree which may attract Pink-necked Green Pigeon, Black-naped Oriole and Lineated Barbet. A walk through the forest may be productive for Pin-striped Tit-babblers, Yellow-vented Bulbul and Dark-necked Tailorbird. Later in the day, we fly from Singapore back to Europe with arrival on the next morning.

## Prices

Ground Price: £6,495  
Single room: £600  
Deposit: £600  
\*Air Fare: £1,215

This holiday is fully inclusive of flights, accommodation and meals, transport, boat trips, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature. A visa to enter Australia.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Winter birds in the Land of the Rising Sun

Japan is a huge archipelago stretching along the northern Pacific Ocean. Our tour concentrates on four contrasting regions: Kyushu, Hokkaido, Katano on the Sea of Japan and Karuizawa in the Japanese Alps. This winter tour to Japan should produce many memorable highlights in a country steeped in its own tradition and culture. Interesting species present in winter include Pacific Diver, White-naped and Hooded Cranes, Baikal Teal, Blakiston's Eagle Owl and impressive concentrations of Steller's and White-tailed Eagles.

This is probably the most comprehensive Japanese winter tour available today, taking in a wide range of habitats and sites. Birdwatching Breaks has been running tours to Japan since 1996, totalling 20 tours to date. Mark Finn has an extensive knowledge and experience of Japan's unique birdlife and where to find it. Over the years, Birdwatching Breaks has built up trust with local Japanese birdwatchers, making the company one of the market leaders to this wonderful country.

■ The following itinerary is sometimes subject to change due to ferry schedules from Nagoya.

**Days 1-2:** We fly to Tokyo, arriving on the morning of Day 2. On arrival, we travel to Tokyo station and take the bullet train to Karuizawa for a two-night stay. Karuizawa is a picturesque town situated in the foothills of the Japanese Alps. We make an initial exploration of woodland and forest habitats for Brown Dipper, Japanese Wagtail, Oriental Turtle Dove, Oriental Greenfinch, Hawfinch, Brambling and Rustic Buntings.

**Day 3:** This morning we walk the forest trails of Karuizawa searching for the rare Copper Pheasant. Feeders attract Japanese Green Woodpecker, Long-tailed and Pallas's Rosefinches, Japanese and Varied Tits, Japanese Grosbeak and Meadow Bunting. Near the river, we may locate Japanese Accentor and, in trees laden with mistletoe, Japanese Waxwings. During the afternoon we explore rural roads around Karuizawa in search of Japanese Green Pheasant. Patches of mature woodland often have White-backed Woodpecker and wintering Daurian Redstarts.

**Day 4:** Today we travel back to Haneda airport for an internal flight to Miyazaki in Kyushu. On arrival, we transfer to Hyuga. Night at Hyuga.

## Dates

**Tour A: Friday February 7th –  
Saturday February 22nd 2020**

**Tour B: Friday February 5th –  
Saturday February 20th 2021**

Leader: Mark Finn

Group Size: 8

Birds: 155-175

**Day 5:** Our main interest today is the near-endemic Japanese Murrelet which is best viewed by taking a short boat trip offshore. After seeing the murrelet, we travel to Miike, a forested area of evergreens and deciduous trees surrounding a volcanic lake. En route there is a short diversion to a coastal wetland which has on recent visits produced sightings of Oriental Stork, Baer's Pochard and Long-billed Dowitcher. At Miike we walk along the paths with views of Daurian Redstart, Red-flanked Bluetail and Grey and Yellow-throated Buntings. A campground is productive for Japanese Green, Pygmy and White-backed Woodpeckers, Olive-backed Pipit, Varied Tit and Japanese Grosbeak. En route to Izumi we may locate Mandarin Duck, Chinese Bamboo Partridge and Russet Sparrow. On arrival, we have a two-night stay in Izumi.



**Steller's Sea Eagle** Photo: Jo Finn

**Day 6:** This morning we visit Arasaki crane reserve, with wintering Hooded and White-naped Cranes and, possibly, Sandhill, Common, Demoiselle and Siberian Cranes. Extensive estuarine habitats at Arasaki attract Japanese Cormorant, Intermediate Egret, Black-eared Kite and wildfowl. Agricultural fields are a winter home to Greater Painted Snipe, Japanese Skylark, Oriental Rook, Daurian Jackdaw and Rustic,

Black-faced and Meadow Buntings. Gardens and hedgerows of Arasaki attract Pale Thrush, Hawfinch, Oriental Greenfinch and Japanese Grosbeak. In the afternoon, we visit a boulder-strewn river holding Long-billed Plover, Crested Kingfisher, Blue Rock Thrush and Japanese Wagtail.

**Day 7:** An early start today as we travel to Ariake-kai, a coastal bay north of Arasaki,



**Red-crowned Cranes** Photo: Jo Latham

which has extensive areas of mudflats, river estuaries and agricultural fields. At high tide we study roosting and feeding Saunders' Gulls, Black-faced Spoonbills and shorebirds. Deep-water channels hold Falcated Ducks. Muddy dykes usually have Spotted Redshank and Marsh Sandpipers with Chinese Penduline Tits in the reeds. A remnant patch of marsh near Saga is reliable for Japanese Green Pheasant, Eurasian Woodcock and Ruddy Crake. Transfer to Saga for the night.

**Day 8:** Today we revisit Ariake-se before heading north to Shikanoshima Island which is reached via a causeway. Shikanoshima is a regular haunt of Red-throated, Black-throated and Pacific Divers whilst sheltered bays offer a safe refuge to Black-necked Grebe, Smew, Greater Scaup and other wildfowl. Shikanoshima is a reliable area for wintering Japanese Bush Warbler, Pale Thrush and, on offshore stacks, Japanese Cormorants. Transfer to Fukuoka for our flight to Komatsu on the Sea of Japan for a two-night stay.

**Days 9-10:** Our main interest is the wetlands and rice fields of Katano bordering the Sea of Japan. Although small in size, Katano attracts geese and ducks in winter including the globally-threatened Baikal Teal. Other species occurring on a regular basis include Middendorf's Bean and White-fronted Geese, Eastern Marsh Harrier and Grey-headed Lapwing, whilst rarities comprise Tundra Bean and Lesser White-fronted Geese, Siberian Crane and Swan Goose. Along the Sea of Japan, we search for Red-necked Grebe, Ancient Murrelet and other seabirds. Woodlands around Katano hold the commoner Japanese birds and, on occasions, Chinese Grosbeak and Japanese Waxwings. Nearby, a flooded woodland gives us a good chance of seeing the rare Solitary Snipe. On Day 10 we take the express train to Nagoya where we board a comfortable ferry bound for Tomakomai in Hokkaido. We have two nights aboard in first-class en-suite cabins.

**Day 11:** A whole day seawatching in the North Pacific Ocean. We can expect White-

billed and Pacific Divers, Laysan Albatross, Streaked and Short-tailed Shearwaters, Ancient Murrelet, Pomarine and South Polar Skuas, Black-tailed Gull and Red-necked and Grey Phalaropes. Rarities may include Short-tailed Albatross and Tristram's Storm-petrels. We also have a chance of observing Northern Fur Seals and Pacific White-sided Dolphins.

**Day 12:** Before docking at Tomakomai, we may see Least Auklet and Common and Brunnich's Guillemots. Transfer to Chitose airport for an internal flight to Kushiro. On arrival we travel to Nemuro, our base for three nights. Furen-ko should provide us with Grey-headed Woodpecker, Marsh Tit and other woodland species. In Nemuro itself we may locate parties of Bohemian Waxwings.

**Day 13:** Our main interest today is the sheltered bays and estuaries en route to Cape Nosappu overlooking the Kurile Islands. The Nemuro Straits concentrates divers, sea ducks, gulls and alcids. We should find Pelagic Cormorant, Harlequin Duck, Spectacled Guillemot, Least Auklet and, possibly, Long-billed Murrelet. The frozen capes have Steller's and White-tailed Eagles and the harbours, Glaucous and Glaucous-winged Gulls. In the afternoon, we visit Cape Kiritappu, an exposed peninsula jutting into the Sea of Okhotsk where a private house with feeders often has Asian Rosy Finches. Off the cape, we may see Red-necked Grebe, Red-faced Cormorant, Black and Asiatic Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks. At the end of the day, we visit a private farm for Blakiston's Eagle Owl.

**Day 14:** Today, we head north towards Notsuke Hando, a remote peninsula. Odaito feeding station allows a close approach to Whooper Swans. On our journey north, we check harbours for Smew. Depending on the severity of the winter, we may find Short-eared Owl and Snow Buntings. At Notsuke Hando hundreds of Steller's Sea Eagles congregate on the ice or in bare trees, a truly spectacular sight. Also present are White-tailed Eagle, Slaty-backed and Kamchatka Gulls, Greater Scaup, Common Goldeneye and Common Mergansers. Ice-

free rivers are home to Brown Dipper. If we have not managed to see Blakiston's Eagle Owl, we will make a short diversion to Rausu.

**Day 15:** We leave Nemuro and visit Tancho no Sato, a feeding area for Red-crowned Cranes. In January this delightful bird often dances in the snow accompanying itself with bugling calls. After this finale, we head towards Kushiro Airport for an internal flight to Tokyo and our final night in Japan.

## Prices

### Tour A

Ground Price: £4,995

Single room: £400

Deposit: £500

\*Air Fare: £1,550

### Tour B (provisional)

Ground Price: £4,995

Single room: £400

Deposit: £500

\*Air Fare: £1,550

This holiday is fully inclusive of ferries, accommodation and meals, transport, guidance and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature, air passenger duty taxes, excess baggage and fuel surcharges.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Lake Baikal, taiga, forests and wetlands

This Birdwatching Breaks tour brings us to central Siberia, Lake Baikal and the Buryat Republic on the border with Mongolia. As the vast evergreen forests of Russia's Siberian taiga extend southward toward Mongolia, the ground rises and the terrain becomes more varied. The border between Siberian Russia and Mongolia is a natural divide here, with rugged hills and mountains forming a series of ranges between the sprawling Russian forests to the north and rolling steppes to the south. About midway along this border is Lake Baikal, situated in a region of unsurpassed beauty, its forested shores dominated by the snow-clad peaks of the Khamar-Daban, Sayan, and Barguzin Mountains. Birding in this area of Russia is still relatively unknown and it gives you the opportunity to find and study birds that are major rarities further west in Europe.

**Day 1:** Fly to Ulan-Ude via Moscow where arrival is early on Day 2.

**Day 2:** Ulan-Ude is the capital and main city of the Buryat Republic and lies on the Selenga River, which flows into Lake Baikal. After checking into our hotel, we make an initial exploration of the area. Common birds within the city include wheeling flocks of Pacific Swifts and Baikal Wagtail. The Selenga River has sandy islands attracting migrant waders including Marsh, Green and Wood Sandpipers and waterfowl. Willow scrub is attractive to Daurian Partridge, Azure Tit, Chinese Penduline Tit and Azure-winged Magpies. Return to Ulan-Ude for the night.

**Day 3:** This morning we travel southwest towards the city of Gusinoozersk where we have a two-night stay. En route we stop at a riverside woodland where should find our first Radde's Warblers, Siberian Rubythroat, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Long-tailed Rosefinches. Another area of fields with bushes should reveal rarer species in Chestnut-eared Bunting and Isabelline Shrike. Our journey takes us to a large wetland surrounded by reeds. This is an important area for birds with the open waters attracting ducks including Asiatic Scoter, Black-necked Grebe and rafts of Common Goldeneye. Raptors use the area on a regular basis and include Eastern Marsh, Hen and possibly Pied Harriers. In

## Dates

Friday May 22nd – Friday June 5th  
2020

Leaders: Igor Fefelov and Mark Finn  
Group Size: 8  
Birds: 160-180

the stands of reeds we should find Eastern Water Rail and observe Oriental Reed, and on occasions Paddyfield Warblers. The dry country surrounding the lake attracts Citrine and Eastern Yellow Wagtails, Asian Short-toed and Greater Short-toed Larks. We end the day by birding along the road towards Beloozersk with Eastern Imperial Eagle, Amur Falcon, Isabelline Wheatear and Rock Petronia all being possible.

**Day 4:** An early departure today as we explore the two lakes near Beloozersk. The open steppe habitat attracts Demoiselle Crane, Cinereous Vulture, Steppe Eagle, Upland Buzzard, Eurasian Hobby, Blyth's Pipit and displaying Eurasian Skylark, Mongolian and Horned Larks. Our main interest is the lakes that host hundreds of Ruddy Shelduck, Whooper Swan, Slavonian and Black-necked Grebes and numerous ducks which may include Long-tailed Duck and Smew. The lakes occasionally hold the very rare Swan Goose. On the muddy margins of the lake we may find migrant shorebirds including Pacific



**Steppe Eagle** Photo: Jo Finn

Golden Plover, Red-necked, Long-toed and Temminck's Stints, Eastern Black-tailed Godwit, Marsh Sandpiper, and summer breeders - Pied Avocet and Little Ringed Plover. We also check riverside woodland with cliffs for migrant passerines, Golden Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Azure Tit, Meadow and Black-faced Buntings.

**Day 5:** Today we travel back to Ulan-Ude via an area of riverine woodland where migrants may include Dark-sided Flycatcher, Siberian Blue Robin and Little Buntings. Beyond the village of Orongoy a visit to seasonal lakes may be productive for Eurasian Bittern, White-winged Tern, Eurasian Curlew, Spotted Redshanks and colonising Pallas' Buntings.

**Days 6-7:** Today we travel north towards Vydrino and Utulik on the shores of Lake Baikal where we stay for two nights. The taiga forest has a plethora of interesting species - Oriental Cuckoo, White-backed and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, Red-flanked Bluetail, Olive-backed Pipit, Dark-sided, Asian Brown, Mugimaki and Taiga Flycatchers, Radde's, Arctic, Yellow-

browed, Pallas's, and Two-barred Greenish Warblers, Siberian Blue and Swinhoe's Robins, and Black-faced Bunting. Uncommon species that are known to occur in the forests near Vydrino include Yellow-browed Bunting, Siberian Jay, White's, Eye-browed and Siberian Thrushes and, above the forest, White-throated Needletails. On the morning of Day 7 we revisit the forest before heading in a westerly direction to the village of Utulik. The gardens here hold the commoner birds plus Daurian and Common Redstarts, Eurasian Nuthatch and Azure-winged Magpie. An area of forest nearby may be productive for the scarce Siberian Bush Warbler, Olive-backed Pipit, Lanceolated Warbler and Common Rosefinch. Stands of silver birch dominate the area where we should locate the attractive Chestnut Bunting, Oriental Turtle Dove, Eurasian and Baikal Bullfinches, Hawfinch and various woodpeckers. On one afternoon we take the ski-lift to an area of coniferous forest for migrating Oriental Honey Buzzards, Spotted Nutcracker and Three-toed Woodpecker.



**Common Rosefinch** Photo: Jo Finn

**Day 8:** Kultuk is on the shores of Lake Baikal and is a noted migration hotspot with recent visits recording Grey-tailed Tattler and Green Sandpiper and the near endemic Mongolian Gull. The grass edges of the lake sometimes attract Pallas's Reed and Lapland Buntings. Offshore, large flocks of Asiatic Scoter, Goosander and Common Goldeneye are often present. The habitat starts to open up into farmland dotted with seasonal lakes that are attractive to Garganey, Wood, Marsh and Green Sandpipers and displaying Common Snipe. The large lakes near Arshan lure Demoiselle and Common Cranes along with Eastern Imperial Eagle and Black-eared Kites. Two-night stay at Arshan.

**Day 9:** Today we visit the Tunka marshes, an area dominated by snow-capped peaks, patches of woodland, grass meadows and several small lakes with reedy margins. Before reaching Tunka, the bushes are worth checking for Siberian Rubythroat,

Tree Pipit and Pine Bunting. In the meadows Richard's Pipits are common whilst stands of trees and scrub hold Eurasian Wryneck, Northern and Brown Shrikes and perhaps a returning Thick-billed Warbler. A walk around Tunka Marshes may reveal Eurasian Bittern, Common Pochard, Greater Spotted Eagle, White-winged Tern, Siberian Stonechat and singing Yellow-breasted Buntings. Tunka is also reliable for calling Japanese Quails, although our chances of seeing one are slim. Scarcer birds occurring at Tunka include Black Grouse, White-tailed Eagle, Eastern Buzzard and Little Gull.

**Day 10:** A morning visit to the birch forest and river habitats at Arshan. The leaf cover should be minimal giving us a good chance of Pallas's, Dusky and Radde's Warblers, Red-flanked Bluetail, Siberian Blue Robin, Willow, Coal and Long-tailed Tits. High above us in the forest we should locate White-throated Rock Thrushes giving their

distinctive songs. In the village itself we may find Taiga Flycatcher. After lunch we travel to Irkutsk, one of the largest cities of Siberia and also known as an open museum with its authentic wooden houses. The city is built on the shores of the Angara River, a tributary of the Yenisey River. Two-night stay in the old city by the river.

**Day 11:** Irkutsk is blessed with a wide range of habitats, from forests to marshes, and several river systems. Our first birding spot is the extensive marshes of Novo-Leninsky within the city boundary. This is a truly wonderful place for birds with the willow scrub and birch attracting Bluethroat, Yellow-breasted and Eastern Reed Buntings and Siberian Stonechats. In the marshy grasses we have excellent chances of locating Pallas's Grasshopper and Lanceolated Warblers giving their distinctive songs. On the shallow pools wildfowl abound and may include the scarce Falcated Duck. The drier meadows here give us the opportunity to find Eurasian Bitterns in the open with Northern Lapwings and possibly migrant waders. In the poplars Fieldfares occasionally breed whilst the pylons sometimes attract Ospreys on migration. Over the lakes Common Tern of the race *longipennis* (sometimes split as Siberian Tern) occur with colourful White-winged Terns. Depending on time, we may have an opportunity to visit other areas of the city.

**Day 12:** Today we travel east to Bolshoye Goloustnoye, a remote village on the northern shores of Lake Baikal. Our first stop is in the meadows at Ushakovka River, a regular haunt of Swinhoe's Snipe which gives its aerial display flight above the fields. In the longer grasses Corncrakes give their distinctive calls. Mature trees attract Black Woodpecker. Along the river we have a chance of Azure Tit, Siberian Chiffchaff, Tree Pipit, Oriental Crow and the extraordinary songs of Swinhoe's Robins that are delivered from the tops of pine trees. Our journey takes us through mature forest holding Eastern Buzzard, Oriental Honey Buzzard, Peregrine Falcon and Red-throated Thrush. Transfer to the village of Bolshoye Goloustnoye where our base is in

an attractive guesthouse for two nights.

**Day 13:** The village attracts Hill Pigeon, Barn Swallow of the race *tytleri*, Lesser Whitethroat, Thick-billed Warbler, Blyth's Pipit and a colony of Daurian Jackdaws. On the shores of Lake Baikal we may find Red-breasted Merganser and Mongolian Gull. In the short-cropped grasses Northern and rarer Pied Wheatears occur. To the north of the village an open steppe-like habitat attracts Booted and Imperial Eagles, Isabelline Wheatear and Richard's Pipits. A careful scan of the rocky outcrops may reveal the highly localised Godlewski's Bunting giving its distinctive song.

**Day 14:** After breakfast we head back towards Irkutsk. An open area with high cliffs is good for Golden Eagles but our main interest is in the taiga forests that border the road. These undisturbed forests are home to a wide range of birds and, with luck, we should connect with Hazel Grouse, Oriental and Common Cuckoos, Mugimaki, Asian Brown and Dark-sided Flycatchers, Siberian Rubythroat, Siberian Blue and Swinhoe's Robins, Eurasian Nutcracker and many others. Return to Irkutsk for our last night in Siberia.

**Day 15:** Fly to London via Moscow with arrival later the same day.

## Prices

Ground Price: £3,495  
Single room: £200  
Deposit: £350  
\*Air Fare: £700

This holiday is fully inclusive of flights, accommodation and meals, transport and permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature. Visa required for Russia.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Spring migration in South-East Europe

Bulgaria, with its biodiversity, is indeed a unique birding destination with visits to marshes and lakes and the riverside habitats of the River Danube and the Black Sea with its diverse habitats. Our tour starts in Sofia and then goes south towards the border with Greece and the Rhodope Mountain range, home to Wallcreeper and other mountain birds. Our tour then meanders towards the Black Sea coast via the attractive interior of Bulgaria, which is dotted with picturesque villages and churches. This tour should produce around 200 species of birds and a selection of mammals.

**Day 1:** Morning flight from the UK to Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. On arrival we transfer to the Rhodope Mountains. En route we should encounter European Honey Buzzard, White Stork, Red-backed Shrike and Black-headed Buntings recently arrived from their wintering grounds in India. Transfer to our hotel in a quiet and remote location for two nights.

**Day 2:** The focus of our explorations today is the Trigrad gorge near the Greek border. Beside a swiftly flowing river a spectacular valley gradually narrows into a steep-walled gorge. Our main target here is the butterfly-like Wallcreeper which feeds on sheer rock faces. We should also find Pallid Swift, Eurasian Crag Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Black Redstart and Spotted Nutcracker.

**Day 3:** Today we travel through some magnificent mountain scenery to Krumovgrad for three nights. Krumovgrad is located in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains, an area of rich biodiversity, and is widely considered to be one of the best places to find large birds of prey. During the transfer there are opportunities to find Black Stork, Spanish Sparrow, Lesser Grey Shrike, Red-rumped Swallow and Eurasian Scops Owl. Other species we are likely to encounter include European Turtle Dove, Grey and White Wagtails, Firecrest, Eurasian Jay, European Serin and Rock Bunting.

**Day 4:** Today a visit to Stouden Kladenets.

## Dates

Monday May 4th – Thursday May  
14th 2020

Leader: Assen Ignatov

Group Size: 8

Birds: 180-210

Perhaps the greatest attractions of the day are Eurasian Griffon, Egyptian and Cinereous Vultures attending a feeding station. Other possible birds include Short-toed Eagle and Black Kite. The rocky habitats and stunted trees attract Black-eared Wheatear, Woodchat and Masked Shrikes and a range of warblers - Sardinian, Eastern Subalpine, Eastern Olivaceous, Barred, and Eastern Orphean.

**Day 5:** Dolna Kula is a scenic area with woodland and bushes. It is important for Hawfinch, Blue and Rufous-tailed Rock Thrushes and Rock Nuthatch. Small trees and scrubby slopes attract Cirl, Ortolan and Corn Buntings, Eurasian Golden Oriole, European Roller, Eurasian Wryneck, and Common Nightingale. We also search for the scarce Sombre Tit and Chukars calling from rocky hillsides.

**Day 6:** This morning we head towards Burgas on the Black Sea coast for a two-night stay and stop en route for Eastern Imperial Eagle and to explore dry hillsides, home to Isabelline Wheatear and Olive-tree Warbler. Gradually the landscape flattens out and becomes more intensively



**White Stork** Photo: Jo Finn

farmed, the cereal crops being ideal habitat for Montagu's Harriers. Burgas is a large port and main harbour for Bulgaria's fishing fleet. During our stay in the area we explore the surrounding freshwater lakes, brackish lagoons and salt pans.

**Day 7:** Our morning starts with a visit to Pomorie salt pans where we expect to locate Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Sandwich and Common Terns and Kentish Plover. The pans are situated on the Via Pontica migration route, a stopover for a considerable number of birds. The Bourgas Lakes have extensive reed beds, flooded meadows, marshes, low hills, and oak forests. Colonies of Pygmy Cormorants, Purple Heron, Glossy Ibis and Eurasian Spoonbills are found in the reeds. Over 500 pairs of Pied Avocets nest whilst Mediterranean Gull and Yellow-legged Gulls are numerous. Gull-billed Terns can be found among Sandwich Terns which are encouraged to nest on artificial islands. Also present in the reeds are Great Reed, Savi's and Cetti's Warblers and Bearded Reedlings with Eurasian Penduline Tits utilising the willow trees. Other species we should see around Burgas include Little Bittern, Black-crowned Night Heron, Garganey, White-tailed and Lesser Spotted Eagles, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Little Gull, Little Tern, Black-headed Wagtail and Spotted Flycatcher.

**Day 8:** We drive northwards to Kavarna for a two-night stay. On the way an oak woodland has Semi-collared Flycatcher. This is also a good area for Levant Sparrowhawk, Short-toed Treecreeper, Black and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers.

**Day 9:** This morning we visit Lake Durankulak, which holds a selection of birds including Squacco Heron, Ferruginous Duck and Collared Pratincole. The prime attraction is Paddyfield Warbler, here at the westernmost limit of its range. In complete contrast are the dramatic limestone cliffs at Cape Kaliakra which has Pied Wheatear, Alpine Swift, Calandra and Greater Short-toed Larks and nomadic Rosy Starlings. Off the coast we should see European Shag and Yelkouan Shearwaters. At the end of the day we may find Eurasian Eagle Owls on the cliff.

**Day 10:** We have time for birding in the Kavarna area before driving west to Vetren for an overnight stay. Srebarna Nature Reserve is famous for the endangered Dalmatian Pelican. Various waterfowl occur including Ferruginous Duck. The dead trees attract White-tailed Eagles. In the evening Eurasian Scops Owl call in the lodge grounds and Golden Jackal is present in the area.

**Day 11:** Transfer to Bucharest and departure back to the UK

## Prices

Ground Price: £1,795  
 Single room: £0  
 Deposit: £200  
 \*Air Fare: £150

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, guidance and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Spring migration in the Eastern Mediterranean

Situated in the Eastern Mediterranean, the island of Cyprus is an ideal staging point for migrant passerines, water birds and birds of prey during the spring. A visit in April gives the opportunity to see a wide range and variety of birds. Many species of wheatear including Black-eared, Desert and Hooded occur. Ruppell's, Subalpine, Barred, Eastern Orphean and Eastern Bonelli's Warbler are regular while Isabelline Shrike, Cream-coloured Courser, Trumpeter Finch, Baillon's Crake, Caspian Plover and Cinereous Bunting are among the less regular but almost annual rarities. Cyprus has three full breeding endemics - Cyprus Scops Owl, Cyprus Warbler and Cyprus Wheatear. The tour will cover both mountain and coastal areas and is based in the coastal city of Larnaca.

**Day 1:** Morning flight to Larnaca airport. The rest of the day is spent around Larnaca Salt Lake and the Larnaca Sewage Pools and their surrounds to check for migrating waders including possible Greater Sand Plover. Transfer to our hotel in Larnaca.

**Day 2:** We explore the Akrotiri Peninsula taking in Zakaki Marsh, Lady's Mile, Bishop's Pool, Akrotiri Salt Lake, Akrotiri Gravel Pits, coastline, and Phassouri Reed Beds. At this time of year, the area should be alive with migrant passerines, waders and herons. Regular species include Little Crake, Collared Pratincole, Little Bittern, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Collared Flycatcher and various wheatears. Interesting breeding birds include Black Francolin and Ferruginous Duck. Later in the day, we visit Germasogeia Dam for the endemic Cyprus Warbler.

**Day 3:** We drive to Paphos and then to the Akamas area and Evretou Dam. Villages en route are used by hunting Bonelli's Eagle and Long-legged Buzzard. Then we travel to the Polis-Latchi area, stopping at Polis Reed Beds and the Baths of Aphrodite to search for Masked Shrike, Common and Thrush Nightingale, Red-rumped Swallow and Savi's Warbler. Migrating raptors may be possible, including Lesser Spotted Eagle. Inland, we visit Neochorio village and the Smyies area including Agias Minas. Return to Limassol

## Dates

Saturday April 4th – Saturday April 11th 2020

Leader: Jane Stylianou  
Group Size: 8  
Birds: 130-155

via Kannaviou Dam and Forest where we may find the endemic Cyprus Wheatear and breeding Cretzschmar's Bunting.

**Day 4:** This will be spent on the eastern end of the island as we travel to Cape Greco and Agia Napa Sewage Works. The scrub vegetation here holds many migrants including Ruppell's and Subalpine Warbler, Eurasian Wryneck, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, European Roller and several races of Yellow Wagtail. This is a good spot for the resident Spectacled Warbler. Migrating raptors include Pallid and Montagu's Harrier. Paralimni Lake and Sotira Pools attract crakes and herons. On the way back to Limassol, we stop at Oroklini Marsh, one of the island's best sites for Spur-winged Lapwing.

**Day 5:** Today, we head west to explore the Paphos Plain and Asprokremmos Dam area. We visit the Paphos Sewage Works, Ezousas Pools, and Mandria. All can hold surprises during migration with Mandria a good place to check for Bimaculated and Calandra Larks. Asprokremmos Dam and



**Cyprus Scops Owl**

*Photo: Jane Stylianou*

its surrounds will be checked for migrant herons, crakes and waders while the wooded utility area often has passerines - Ortolan Bunting, Pied, Collared, and, on occasions, Semi-collared Flycatchers. Nearby, Anarita Park is a site used by migrating Lesser Kestrel and resident Bonelli's Eagle.

**Day 6:** We visit the Troodos Mountains for the endemic subspecies - Cyprus Coal Tit, Eurasian Jay, and Short-toed Treecreeper. We travel via Souni, Omodhos and Pachna with stops at Platres, Troodos Square, Livadhi tou Pashas and Kannoures Track, which holds Masked Shrike, Olivaceous Warbler, Pallid Swift and Common Crossbill. Eurasian Crag Martin is also possible. Returning to the coast, we visit Kensington Cliffs and nearby Curium Stadium to search for the few remaining Griffon Vultures on the island. Eleonora's Falcon could be present, as should Alpine Swift together with both Sardinian and Cyprus Warblers.

**Day 7:** We start today at Paphos Headland for a morning walk around this famous migration area. Wheatears, shrikes, warblers, several yellow wagtail races and Greater Short-toed Larks use the area during spring. Another migration staging point to be checked further north is Cape Drepanum. We also check a few Paphos sites for roosting Cyprus Scops Owl. A probable return to either Mandria or Akrotiri is scheduled for later in the day to check for the arrival of new migrants into the area.

**Day 8:** Checking out of our hotel, we drive to Kivisilli fields where we should find Lesser Kestrel, Red-footed falcon and Montagu's Harrier. Nearby Kiti Dam will be checked for waterbirds and its wooded areas usually hold Great Spotted Cuckoo, Golden Oriole, Wood and Eastern Bonelli's Warbler. Transfer to Larnaca Airport for an afternoon flight to the UK.

## Prices

Ground Price: £1,995

Single room: £125

Deposit: £200

\*Air Fare: included

This tour is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, park entrance fees and permits, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, and items of a personal nature, air passenger duty taxes and fuel surcharges.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Winter birding in the Mediterranean

This tour covers the French region of Provence-Alpes-Cote-d'Azur, a beautiful area close to the Mediterranean Sea and the island of Corsica. We visit the limestone hills of Les Alpilles and the wetlands of the Camargue which in winter offer some superb birding for desired species such as Wallcreeper, Citril Finch, Alpine Accentor, Little Bustard and spectacular concentrations of wildfowl from further north and east. This area is bound to produce a few surprises in winter, with recent tours encountering Greater Spotted Eagle and wintering Richard's Pipits. Corsica is located further south in the Mediterranean Sea and offers memorable birding amid some spectacular mountainous landscapes. In particular it hosts two endemic birds: Corsican Nuthatch and Corsican Finch, with other exciting possibilities including Marmora's Warbler, Audouin's Gull and maybe even Lammergeier.

**Day 1:** We take an early morning flight to Marseille and transfer to our base at Beaucaire. En route we should see our first Little and Great Egrets, White Storks, and birds of prey such as Common Buzzard and Marsh Harrier. If time permits we will make an initial exploration of the northern part of the Camargue.

**Days 2-4:** During our stay we explore three main areas with our daily routine determined by the weather and our success in finding our target species.

We will have plenty of time to explore the world famous Camargue, France's largest wetland. Greater Flamingos are among the most famous inhabitants and are present in good numbers. Wintering species from northern Europe include large numbers of ducks which may include Ferruginous Duck and Red Crested Pochard, Common Crane and perhaps Bewick's Swan also likely. Raptors include Marsh and Hen Harriers, with White-tailed Eagle and Greater Spotted Eagle also occurring on an annual basis. The extensive reedbeds host Eurasian Bittern and Glossy Ibis with passerines including Penduline Tit, Cetti's Warbler and, with luck, Moustached Warbler.

Inland from the Camargue is La Crau a steppe-like habitat that is home to groups of Little Bustard and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Great Grey Shrike, Eurasian

## Dates

**Saturday March 7th - Saturday  
March 14th 2020**

Leader: Simon MacLaughlin

Group Size: 8

Birds: 120-135

Thick-knee and Calandra Lark are further possibilities.

Les Baux de Provence, is a small town dating back to medieval times and which is perched on top of a huge rocky outcrop with high cliffs. It is known as a regular wintering site for Wallcreeper with other possibilities including Alpine Accentor, Crag Martin, Black Redstart, Wood Lark, European Serin and Blue Rock Thrush.

On one day we visit the impressive forest and montane habitats of Mount Ventoux. The road passes through areas of forest home to Firecrest, Crested and Coal Tits, Short-toed Treecreeper, Common Crossbill and with luck perhaps the impressive Black Woodpecker. The upper slopes of the mountain above the tree-line offer us Alpine Accentors and the uncommon White-winged Snowfinch. Nearby the Pont du Gard, an ancient Roman aqueduct, is a regular site for Rock Petronia.

**Day 5:** This morning we return to Marseille and fly to Bastia in the north-east of



**Spotted Nutcracker** Photo: Jo Finn

Corsica. Etang de Biguglia is our first birding stop. Spotless Starlings and Red Kites should be easily encountered. The lake is important for waterbirds and we should find Tufted Duck, Great Crested and Black-necked Grebes. A few Sandwich Terns can usually be found, whilst we have an excellent chance of seeing Audouin's Gull. Transfer to the old, historic town of Corte, our base for the next three nights.

**Day 6-7:** Corte is conveniently placed for exploring the mountainous centre of Corsica which is dominated by pine woods, rocky gorges and areas of marquis. Our main interest is in locating the island's two endemic birds: Corsican Nuthatch and Corsican Finch. We also expect to find a selection of woodland species including the local *koenigi* subspecies of Eurasian Wren. In the low marquis scrub we search for Marmora's Warbler and Eurasian Wryneck. The mountains of central Corsica hold a few pairs of Lammergeier. Other species we hope to see include Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Golden Eagle, Blue Rock Thrush, Cirl Bunting, Northern Raven, White-throated Dipper and on the highest slopes Yellow-billed Cough. A visit to the east coast coastal lagoons should reveal Common Sandpiper and Little Ringed Plover. Areas of scrub host Sardinian

Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Blackcap and perhaps some early returning spring migrants. If there are onshore winds we may see Yelkouan and Cory's Shearwaters and the local race of European Shag.

**Day 8:** We return to Bastia and fly back to Marseille on the French mainland. In the early afternoon, we fly back to London where the tour concludes.

## Prices

Ground Price: £1,995  
 Single room: £100  
 Deposit: £200  
 \*Air Fare: £250

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport and permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, baggage and credit card charges, items of a personal nature and any relevant fuel surcharges.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Autumn migrants and birds of N Ireland and Donegal

Northern Ireland and Donegal are relatively under-watched by visiting birders from the United Kingdom. This tour is timed to maximise the opportunity to locate scarce species from North America and the southbound migration of geese, swans and wildfowl from further north and east. Our tour takes in a diverse range of habitats including Strangford Lough and Lough Beg, Bann Estuary and Lough Foyle. We also spend a few days birding in Donegal, the most north-westerly county in the Republic of Ireland. Our main objective here is visiting the remote island of Tory and the rugged north-west coast of Donegal. Malin Head is an excellent sea-watching point in favourable conditions whilst Lough Swilly attracts a wide range of water birds. Recent rarities at this time of the year have included Snowy Owl, American Golden Plover, Buff-breasted and Baird's Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitcher and Black Brant.

■ Please note you should arrive in Belfast on the evening of October 16th. The itinerary below is subject to change due to weather conditions and incoming flight times from Inverness.

**Day 1:** The tour commences in Belfast from where we head to Castle Espie. Strangford Lough is famous for its thousands of Pale-bellied Brent Geese and, occasionally, Black Brant which feed on expanses of eel grass. Waders use the lough on a regular basis with huge numbers of Eurasian Oystercatcher, Common Redshank, Dunlin, Red Knot and Bar-tailed Godwits. Adjacent fields harbour Common Stonechat, Linnet, Twite, Tree Sparrow and Reed Bunting. One-night stay at Castle Espie.

**Day 2:** After breakfast, we head west towards the Myroe Levels in County Londonderry. In recent autumns, the levels have attracted White-rumped, Buff-breasted and Pectoral Sandpipers, and American Golden Plover among flocks of European Golden Plovers. Lough Foyle is close by, an important area for Whooper and Bewick's Swans, Pale-bellied Brent, Greenland White-fronted and Greylag Geese and concentrations of Eurasian Wigeon and other ducks. Transfer to Letterkenny in Donegal for a two-night stay.

**Day 3:** This morning we drive north to Malin Head, the most northerly point in mainland Ireland. If north-west winds are

## Dates

Saturday October 17th – Sunday  
October 25th 2020

Leader: Mark Finn

Group Size: 8

Birds: 100-120

blowing, we expect a range of seabirds including Manx and Sooty Shearwaters, Leach's Petrel, Sabine's Gull, Great and Arctic Skuas and, possibly, Little Auks. Grassy areas around Malin Head regularly attract Red-billed Choughs. In the afternoon, we visit Lough Swilly, a long sea lough with a variety of habitats. Shallower waters lure Great Northern and Red-throated Divers and Slavonian Grebes. Shorebirds are few but we may find more unusual species in Ruff, Little Stint and Spotted Redshank, and wintering 'Icelandic' Black-tailed Godwits. Raptors present include Common Buzzard, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin and, on occasions, Short-eared Owls. Lough Swilly regularly attracts wildfowl from North America with recent sightings of Ring-necked Duck and Lesser Scaup.

**Days 4-5:** An early start in order to catch

the ferry across to Tory Island, situated eleven kilometres off the Donegal coast. The island is isolated with a population of a few hundred Gaelic-speaking people. Due to its unique geographical location, anything may appear in this under-watched birding location. There is very little in the way of cover on the island apart from low bushes and stone walls. We hope to locate passerine migrants which have in the past included Grey Phalarope, Barred and Yellow-browed Warblers, Common Redpoll (Greenland races), Common Rosefinch, Snow and Lapland Buntings and a host of seabirds passing offshore. If a westerly airflow is blowing, the possibility of North American passerines is high. Two-night stay on Tory Island. Seawatching off Tory can be productive for Great, Pomarine, Arctic and Long-tailed Skuas, European Storm and Leach's Storm Petrels.

**Day 6:** Today we leave Tory Island. Once on the mainland, we continue westwards to Sheskinmore Loch adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean. Sheskinmore has a wide range of habitats in a relatively small area and has the potential to attract North American passerines. Other species we may encounter include Greenland White-fronted and Barnacle Geese, Common Redpoll, Snow Bunting and, occasionally, Lapland Buntings. Transfer to Bruckless for two nights.

**Day 7:** Today we travel to the town of Donegal and Donegal Bay, the latter being an important region for birds. En route we visit Killybegs Harbour, the centre of Ireland's deep-sea fishing fleet. Although this is early in the 'gull season', we may locate American Herring, Iceland and Glaucous Gulls. Careful scanning of Donegal Bay may reveal Black-throated Diver, Common, and more rarely Velvet and Surf Scoters, Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Common Eider and Red-breasted Mergansers. Along the shore, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, Sanderling, Greenshank and Bar-tailed Godwits occur in varying numbers.

**Day 8:** We leave Donegal, enter Northern Ireland and visit the Bann Estuary near

Coleraine which has a reputation for rare waders with records of Long-billed Dowitcher and Wilson's Phalarope. Commoner waders comprise Dunlin, Knot and Curlew Sandpipers. Lough Beg is nearby, adjoining Lough Neagh, the largest body of fresh water in the British Isles. Our interest is along the north-west shore of Lough Beg which attracts a wide range of shorebirds with Little Stint, Common and Jack Snipe and the possibility of North American vagrants. Open water holds diving ducks, mainly Common Pochard, Tufted Duck and Common Goldeneye. Overnight stay at Portstewart.

**Day 9:** After breakfast, we make the short journey to Belfast airport where the tour concludes.

## Prices

Ground Price: £1,995  
Single room: £150  
Deposit: £200

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, ferry fares and guidance.

**Not included:** flights to and from Belfast (it is recommended to fly in and out of Belfast City Airport), insurance and items of a personal nature.

Comfortable accommodation with en-suite facilities within Ireland. Guesthouses at Letterkenny and Tory Island. Transport by 9-seater minibus. Short to medium walks on roads, tracks and footpaths. Warm clothing and stout waterproof footwear are recommended.

# Eider ducks and the Aurora Borealis in Varanger

This tour concentrates on the wintering birds of Northern Norway and along the border with Russia. At this time of the year daytime temperatures can be low, even in early April. We have exceptional opportunities to watch and observe many familiar and uncommon European species birds that winter in and around the Varanger Fjord, which includes several species of owls, ducks and High Arctic species.

■ Please note you should arrive in Oslo on April 3rd as the flight to Kirkenes is early on the 4th.

**Day 1:** Fly to the mining town of Kirkenes in extreme Northern Norway. On arrival we drive towards the taiga forest in the Pasvik valley where our base is at Svanvik for two nights. The vegetation of Pasvik is dominated by pine and birch forests.

**Day 2:** We birdwatch along the border with Russia and in the Pasvik National Park. Some of the species we look for include Eurasian Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Pine Grosbeak, Siberian Jay, Siberian and Willow Tits, Arctic Redpoll and the northern race of Eurasian Bullfinch which often forms small flocks. Birds of prey include Merlin and White-tailed Eagle. We also have a good chance of seeing Northern



**Pine Grosbeak** Photo: Anders Mæland

## Dates

**Saturday April 4th – Friday April 10th 2020**

Leaders: Anders Mæland

Group Size: 7

Birds: 60-90

Hawk and Short-eared Owls and, if it is a good rodent year, Great Grey Owl. Resident species of interest include Great Spotted, Lesser Spotted and Three-toed Woodpeckers and Bohemian Waxwing.

**Day 3:** Drive towards the Varanger peninsula and through the Tana Valley. As we cross the Tana Valley with its rocky outcrops we should keep an eye out for Rough-legged Buzzard, Golden Eagle and Northern Hawk Owls, which are a distinct possibility along the road. Stunted willows attract flocks of Arctic Redpolls. At the highest point of the road the edges and any exposed rocks may have Willow and Rock Ptarmigans, both of which will be in their 'white' winter plumage as we approach our base at Batsfjord for the next two nights.

**Day 4:** Today is spent birding around Batsfjord and Berlevåg. The landscape and scenery is quite dramatic with snowfields, frozen lakes and Arctic tundra. The fishing port of Batsfjord has Steller's, King and Common Eiders at close range along with Long-tailed Ducks and Goosander. In the afternoon we drive slowly towards the isolated settlement of Berlevåg. This can be a



**Steller's Eider** Photo: Anders Mæland

productive area in late winter for Merlin, Gyrfalcon and Rough-legged Buzzard. The harbour at Berlevåg often holds large numbers of gulls which may include Glaucous, Iceland and the northern races of Herring. In recent years both Ivory and Ross's Gulls have put in an appearance. Shorebirds present include Purple Sandpiper.

**Day 5:** Today we drive back over the mountains towards the spectacular Varangerfjord, a huge indented sea loch where White-tailed Eagles are particularly numerous. Stops along the shore at Nesseby, Varangerbotn and Vestre Jacobselv allow good vantage points into the fjord where we should find White-billed and Red-throated Divers, Common and Velvet Scoters, Black Guillemot and the three eider species. Transfer to Vadso for two nights.

**Day 6:** This morning we visit the fishing port at Vardø for a trip to the fantastic birds cliffs at Hornøya. It is a short boat trip from the harbour to the cliffs where Common and Brunnich's Guillemot, Razorbill, Atlantic Puffin, Black-legged Kittiwake and

European Shag all breed. Later in the day we visit Svartnes and Kiberg harbours in search of anything we may have missed earlier in the tour.

**Day 7:** Return to Kirkenes for our flights south to Oslo and on to London with arrival later the same day.

## Prices

Ground Price: £2,995  
 Single room: £200  
 Deposit: £300  
 \*Air Fare: £350

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature. Night in Oslo and meals on the 3rd.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Autumn migration at Falsterbo

Falsterbo is located at the end of a narrow peninsula in south-west Sweden. Due to its unique geographical location migrant birds are literally funnelled down to the point when they have to decide to migrate across the Baltic Sea or stay until conditions are right. The birding week and itinerary is dependent on the weather situation. We mainly stay on the peninsula when the conditions are good for migration. On some days we explore the wonderful Baltic Sea coastline and several lakes and wetlands in the province of Skane.

**Day 1:** Clients should arrive at Copenhagen (Denmark) international airport on the morning of September 26th. From Copenhagen we drive across the bridge connecting Denmark and Sweden and turn south to Falsterbo, our base for the week.

**Days 2-7:** Falsterbo is a charming village, surrounded by wetlands, meadows and small woodlands. On the north-west side of the peninsula extends a tiny strip of land, covered with sedge and salt marsh vegetation. The migration is at the most intense from late September to the middle of October. Barnacle Goose, Brambling, Common Chaffinch, Woodpigeon, Blue Tit and Starling are the most numerous species. Eurasian Siskin, European Linnet, Meadow Pipit, Common Eider and Eurasian Wigeon are just some of the many other species that migrate in large numbers.

The raptor migration is perhaps the most famous attraction. Here you can see most

## Dates

**Saturday September 26th –  
Saturday October 3rd 2020**

Leader: Anders Mæland

Group size: 7

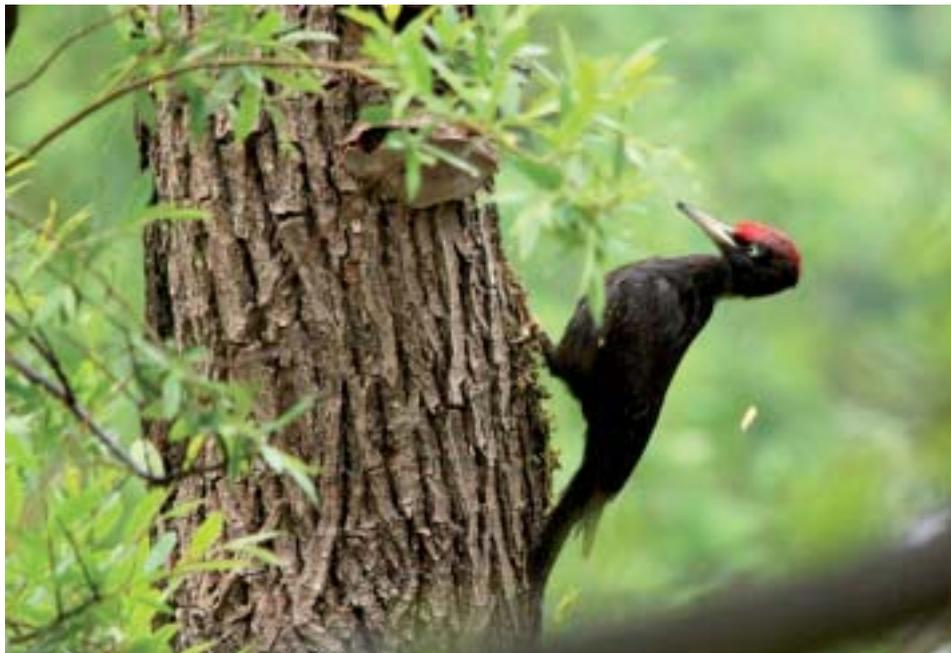
Birds: 110-130

of the North European species during a single day. Common Buzzard and Eurasian Sparrowhawk are the most numerous in September and October when the daily numbers can reach several thousands. Other common raptors at this time are Red Kite, Hen Harrier, Merlin and Eurasian Kestrel. Rarer species which occur on a regular basis include Pallid Harrier, Black Kite, Peregrine Falcon, White-tailed Eagle and Golden Eagle.

On the west side a sandy beach stretches all the way south to Nabben. East and North is an area of mudflats uncovered during low tide which attracts thousands of Dunlin and other waders. During our stay



**Broad-billed  
Sandpiper**  
Photo: Anders  
Mæland



**Black Woodpecker** Photo: *Pandion Wildlife Tours*

we see less common species - Little Ringed Plover, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper and Pied Avocet. This is also a good area for resting terns, gulls, waterfowl and pipits.

A short drive inland takes you through the countryside, to beech forests, meadows and lakes. The bird fauna here is quite different from that on the Falsterbo peninsula. Some of the species you can find are Great Crested Grebe, Black and Green Woodpeckers, Bearded Reedling, Marsh Tit, Hawfinch and Common Kingfisher. Large flocks of geese rest and feed and may include Tundra and Taiga Bean Geese and increasing numbers of Greylag Geese. Another feature of the area are migrant Common Cranes which can occur in huge numbers, feeding in the meadow and fields. The nutritious lakes Krankesjon and Vombsjøen are attractive for waterfowl and other freshwater species including Whooper Swan, European White-fronted Goose and, in some autumns, the rare Lesser White-fronted Goose. Many birds of prey linger in Southern Scania, waiting for ideal migration weather. With some luck

rare species like Red-footed Falcon, Lesser and Greater Spotted Eagles can be observed from strategic watching points.

**Day 8:** A final morning birding around Falsterbo before returning to Copenhagen for flights back to Britain.

## Prices

Ground Price: £1,995  
 Single room: £200  
 Deposit: £200  
 \*Air Fare: £200

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Birds of the High Arctic and Bering Sea

Alaska is geographically separated from the rest of the United States and is the largest in size of all the states. The habitats range from vast forests and glaciers to rugged mountains and tundra. This range of habitats in turn attracts a wide range of species to breed. Our tour takes in the major birding sites of Alaska which includes the tundra habitat around Barrow, home to the endangered Spectacled Eider. Nome is another isolated town with literally three roads running out of it, we will explore these for a wide range of sought-after species including Bristle-thighed Curlew and vagrants from Asia. In the interior of Alaska is Denali, a state park with spectacular scenery and vistas including Mount McKinley, one of the highest peaks in North America. Some of our time is spent around Anchorage with its varied habitats and a few days at Seward where seabirds can be numerous in the inlets. Finally we have an optional extension to the Pribilof Islands where close encounters with auks and seabirds are guaranteed.

**Day 1:** Fly from the UK to Anchorage via Seattle. Arrival is later the same day.

**Days 2-3:** Morning flight to Barrow, the most northerly city in Alaska, which has access to the Arctic tundra - a magnet for breeding birds. Our main targets include Steller's, Spectacled and King Eiders and stunning Red-necked and Grey Phalaropes in their breeding dress. The roadside lakes and small ponds attract Pacific Diver, Pectoral, Semipalmated, and Western Sandpipers, Dunlin and Long-billed Dowitchers. We also have good chances of finding White-billed Divers in breeding plumage whilst the tundra itself attracts Snowy and Short-eared Owls and Pomarine Skua if it is a lemming year. Other birds in and around Barrow include flocks of Snow and Lapland Buntings, Arctic and Common Redpolls.

**Day 4:** A final morning birding around Barrow followed by a flight to Anchorage where we overnight. On arrival we visit Westchester Lagoon, a reliable spot for Red-necked Grebe, American Wigeon, Greater Scaup, Bald Eagle, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Hudsonian Godwit, and Short-billed Dowitcher.

**Day 5:** Today we travel north through a habitat of black spruce and willow scrub to

## Dates

Saturday June 13th – Sunday June 28th (extension to the Pribilofs until July 1)

Leader: Mark Finn and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 140-180

the eastern end of the Denali Highway. Along the way stops are made for Spruce Grouse, Bohemian Waxwing and, with luck, Northern Hawk-Owl. Our overnight stop is at Paxson with a mix of tundra habitats holding Trumpeter Swan and the scarce and localised Smith's Longspur.

**Days 6-7:** An early departure this morning to bird along the Denali Highway. En route we should encounter Spruce Grouse, Bohemian Waxwing, Arctic Warbler, and further opportunities of Northern Hawk Owl. Trails near the park entrance hold Grey Jay, Varied Thrush, Golden-crowned Sparrow, White-winged Crossbill and Common Redpoll. Our base for the next two nights is on the edge of Denali National Park. On Day 7 we enter the park and utilise the shuttle buses for a round trip where we hope to encounter Willow Ptarmigan, Gyrfalcon, Golden Eagle, Long-tailed Skua and Northern Shrike. Mammals



**Bristle-thighed Curlew** Photo: George Matz

are a star draw with Grizzly Bear, Reindeer and Elk being of interest.

**Day 8:** Depart from Denali and travel back to Anchorage. We will be on the lookout for any recently burnt areas which give the group chances of locating American Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers, Boreal Chickadee and Bohemian Waxwing. There are many lakes supporting Great Northern Divers and in some years colonies of Bonaparte's and Common Gulls. Night in Anchorage.

**Day 9:** This morning we visit various parks and forested areas around Anchorage looking for White-winged Crossbill, Alder Flycatcher, Lincoln's Sparrow, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers. In the afternoon we travel in a southerly direction to the town of Seward. The route passes through mountain scenery and on to the Kenai Peninsula. Seward has large areas of Sitka Spruce where many species find a toehold in Alaska. Careful searching should reveal Rufous Hummingbird, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Varied Thrush, Townsend's

Warbler, Fox Sparrow and Pine Grosbeak. Two nights in Seward.

**Day 10:** We spend the day birding in Resurrection Bay and Blying Sound, a spectacular region dominated by glaciers and deep water habitats to the south of Seward. Several large seabird colonies are home to Tufted and Horned Puffins, Rhinoceros Auklet, Ancient Murrelet, Brunnich's and Common Guillemots and Black-legged Kittiwakes. If we encounter groups of Marbled Murrelet we may find the uncommon Kittlitz's Murrelet among them. Marine mammals present include Steller's Sea Lion, Sea Otter and Humpback Whale.

**Day 11:** A final morning birding around Seward with a visit to the Exit Glacier and its numerous trails. It is possible to locate Steller's and Grey Jays, Hermit and Varied Thrushes, American Dipper, Northern Waterthrush, Orange-crowned, Townsend's and Wilson's Warblers and White-winged Crossbill. Later we head back to Anchorage with a stop at Potters Marsh for Slavonian Grebe, Sandhill Crane, Alder Flycatcher



**Red-breasted Nuthatch** *Photo: Simon Papps*

and Rusty Blackbird. Night in Anchorage.

**Day 12:** Morning flight to Nome, which is situated close to the Barents Sea. Nome has three dead-end roads which run out in various directions for us to explore. Our first visit is along the Teller Road where roadside pools have Red-breasted Merganser and Common Gull. Low scrub and bushes may reveal White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Grey-cheeked Thrush and Wilson's and Yellow Warblers. Patches of lichen-covered rocks allow Horned Larks to breed along with nesting shorebirds, notably Pacific Golden Plover, Western Sandpiper and Red Knot.

**Day 13:** Morning visit to the Nome River where we should locate Arctic and Aleutian Terns and Cackling Geese. The road towards Cape Nome often has Long-tailed Skuas. At the cape a scan of the sea may provide views of Pelagic Cormorant and showy Harlequin Ducks. Safety Sound is close by, an area attractive to Surf-bird, Black Turnstone and Sandhill Cranes. The low scrub often has Lapland Bunting and Arctic Warbler here at the end of its extensive eastern range. The Council Road

meanders on towards a bridge which often hosts Gyrfalcon, American Pipit and Say's Phoebe. At the end of the road a patch of pine forest should have Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers and Rusty Blackbirds.

**Day 14:** Kougarak Road is our destination this morning where the hillsides are home to American Golden Plover, Bristle-thighed Curlew and the Hudsonian race of Whimbrel. The road also allows us to see Bufflehead, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Waterthrush and Alder Flycatcher. Back in Nome we can check for American Wigeon, Black and White-winged Scoters and any other species we may have missed.

**Day 15:** Fly back to Anchorage for an overnight stay

**Please note: The Pribilof extension is subject to weather which can cause delays or cancellations.**

**Days 16-17:** Flights back to Europe via Seattle where arrival is on the following day, or fly to St Paul in the Pribilof Islands



**Sandhill Crane** Photo: George Matz

for a two-night stay. On St Paul Island we explore the numerous seabird colonies which offer exceptionally close views. St Paul is renowned for Parakeet, Least and Crested Auklets, Horned and Tufted Puffins. We should also see the range-restricted Red-faced Cormorant and Red-legged Kittiwake along with Rock Sandpipers and Glaucous-winged Gulls. St Paul holds very few passerines but it may include Grey-crowned Rosy-finch, Lapland and Snow Buntings. Rarer species which occasionally turn up on the islands include Sabine's Gull, Emperor Goose and Mackay's Bunting. St Paul also has a reputation for vagrants from Asia and hopefully some may be present during our stay.

**Day 18:** A final morning on St Paul and then fly back to Anchorage for the night. Departure is the following day back to Europe.

## Prices

Ground Price: £6,495  
 Single room: £1,000  
 Deposit: £600  
 \*Air Fare: £1,275

Pribilof Extension: £2,400  
 Deposit: £250  
 \*Air Fare: included

Please note single rooms are not always available on the Pribilof Islands and Barrow.

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** Visa to enter USA, drinks, insurance, and items of a personal nature.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# NE Argentina: The Pampas, Iberá wetlands and Iguazú

Our tour of Argentina covers the northern part of this huge country. After departing from the capital city of Buenos Aires we travel through large swathes of pampas, which are internationally important for birds. The huge wetlands in this part of Argentina offer superb birding and, combined with nearby forests and marshes, a large bird list is likely. Our final stop is at the world famous Iguazú Falls - remarkable place to visit and a fitting finale to the trip.

**Days 1-2:** Fly to Buenos Aires with arrival on the morning of Day 2. Afternoon birding in Costanera Sur Nature Reserve marshes, located by the Rio de la Plata and a few minutes from downtown Buenos Aires. White-tufted Grebe, Coscoroba and Black-necked Swans, Rosy-billed Pochard, Silver Teal, Rufous Hornero, Rufous-bellied Thrush, Chalk-browed Mockingbird, Red-crested Cardinal and Black-and-Rufous Warbling-Finch are among the species we should see.

**Days 3-4:** Early departure to San Clemente del Tuyú, birding the pampas grasslands on the way. Our route takes us through extensive areas of grassland dotted with pools. The main birding areas we visit are at the Punta Rasa migratory bird reserve and other areas near our base. Species we may encounter include a mix of migrants from North America and resident species. Interesting birds occurring on a regular basis include Spotted Tinamou, Buff-breasted and White-rumped Sandpipers, Southern Screamer, Snowy-crowned Tern, Black Skimmer, American Oystercatcher, Hudsonian Godwit, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Red Knot, American Golden Plover, Olog's Gull, Dot-winged Crake, South American Painted-Snipe, Field Flicker, Firewood Gatherer, Hudson's Canastero, Bay-capped Wren-spinetail, Warbling Doradito, Correndera and Hellmayr's Pipit and Scarlet-headed Blackbird. Two nights at San Clemente del Tuyú.

**Days 5-7:** After some early morning bird-

## Dates

Friday October 2nd – Thursday  
October 15th 2020

Leaders: Simon Papps and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 300- 330

ing we return to Buenos Aires to catch a flight to Posadas. Upon arrival, transfer to an estancia in the Iberá marshes for a three-night stay. The Iberá marshes are one of the largest wetlands in the world and our base is located at the very heart of this amazing area. We go birding in the morning and afternoon in subtropical grasslands, woods, and of course the wetlands themselves, which we'll also explore on a boat trip. The list of birds is impressive and we have good chances of locating the following species: Greater Rhea, Red-winged Tinamou, Jabiru, Plumbeous Ibis, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Pinnated and Stripe-backed Bitterns, Azure Gallinule, Rufous-sided Crake, Large-billed Tern, Savanna Hawk, Little and Scissor-tailed Nighthjars, Striped Cuckoo, Black-and-white Monjita, Strange-tailed Tyrant, Crested Doradito, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, Donacobius, Ochre-breasted Pipit, Purple-throated Euphonia, Yellow-billed Cardinal, Green-winged Saltator, Wedge-tailed and Lesser Grassfinches, seedeaters, Yellow-rumped Marshbird and Chopi and Scarlet-headed Blackbirds.

**Day 8:** After another morning birding the forests and marshes of Iberá, we drive to



**Spot-billed Toucanet** Photo: H R Goñi

Posadas, on the shore of the Paraná river. Night in Posadas.

**Days 9-10:** Morning birding near the hotel. Check out and continue our way north towards a forest lodge located near Urugua-í Provincial Park. Birding will become more exciting as we start dealing with a greater diversity of forest habitats and their numerous associated bird species. Morning and afternoon birding the forest trails of the reserve which hold an amazing range including Solitary Tinamou, Black-fronted Piping-Guan, Rusty-marginated Guan, Pauraque, Short-tailed Nighthawk, Slaty-breasted Wood-Rail, Maroon-bellied Parakeet, Blue-winged Parrotlet, Great Dusky Swift, Black-faced and Surucua Trogons, five species of toucans, twelve species of woodpeckers, Lesser Woodcreeper, White-eyed and Black-capped Foliage-gleaners, Tufted and Spot-backed Antshrikes, Plain Antvireo, Rufouswinged Antwren, Short-tailed Antthrush, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, three species of manakins (Blue, White-bearded and Band-tailed), Southern Antpiper, Long-tailed Tyrant, Yellow Tyrannulet, Three-striped Flycatcher, Sirystes, White-throated Spadebill, Eared Pygmy-Tyrant, Grey-hooded Flycatcher, White-winged Swallow, White-necked Thrush, Creamy-bellied Gnatcatcher, Streamside Warbler, Black-throated Grosbeak, Giant Cowbird, Red-

rumped Cacique, Blue Dacnis, Chestnut-bellied Euphonia, Blue-naped Chlorophonia and tanagers including Guira, Green-headed, Magpie and Chestnut-headed.

**Days 10-11:** After another morning birding the forest around the lodge, we move to Puerto Iguazú, planning to arrive in the afternoon. If time permits, we visit the famous hummingbird feeders in town. On Day 11 we have a full day at the mighty Iguazú Falls. A well designed network of walkways lets us approach the falls to enjoy magnificent views of the river and forest. Birding here is excellent, with potential highlights including Black-fronted Piping-Guan, Common Squirrel-Cuckoo, Toco Toucan, Rufous Gnatcatcher, Plush-crested Jay, various tanagers including Blue Dacnis and Swallow Tanager, a wide variety of antbirds and the iconic sight of Great Dusky Swifts flying in behind the torrents of water. If conditions are suitable the phenomenon of clouds of thousands of butterflies of hundreds of different species is one of the most astonishing sights in the natural world.

**Day 12:** Check out and fly back to Buenos Aires for connecting flights back to Europe. Arrival is on the following day.

## Prices

Ground Price: £4,995  
 Single room: £450  
 Deposit: £500  
 \*Air Fare: £1,200

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, any relevant airport departure taxes within Argentina and items of a personal nature.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Spring migration at Long Point, Ontario

Following past successful visits to Long Point in Ontario, we are once again returning to this beautiful, bird-rich area of Canada. For those fortunate to have witnessed it, a fall of North American songbirds in springtime is an exciting and memorable experience. Warblers, orioles, tanagers and grosbeaks frequently abound, their colours and characters defying adequate description. This holiday offers the opportunity to encounter many such visually stunning species. Our visit is timed to coincide with the spring migration of songbirds, mid-May being the prime period. We also search for breeding species in southern Ontario and lingering winter migrants around the Great Lakes. We have extended the tour by two days to visit the Algonquin and Carden Alvar areas which hold several scarce species and migrants during May.

**Day 1:** We fly from London to Toronto in the Canadian province of Ontario. On arrival, we transfer to Orilla for a two-night stay.

**Day 2:** A visit to the beautiful wilderness of Algonquin Provincial Park. Near the park entrance, fields attract mixed flocks of sparrows: White-crowned, Chipping, Savannah and White-throated. The forest edge has Eastern Phoebe, Northern Raven and Grey Jay. Opeongo Road is a good area for American Black-backed Woodpecker and Ruffed Grouse, while Boreal Chickadee and Spruce Grouse are both possibilities. Other species include Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Golden-crowned Kinglets. Spruce Bog Trail has tame Black-capped Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches and mammals in the form of Moose and Groundhog.

**Day 3:** We start our exploration of Carden Alvar by visiting Kirkfield Lift Lock which has Cliff and Northern Rough-winged Swallows. Nearby, a check of meadow habitats may reveal the presence of Northern Harrier, Wilson's Snipe, Upland Sandpiper, Cedar Waxwing, the endangered eastern race of Loggerhead Shrike, Grasshopper Sparrow and Bobolink. Patches of marsh are worth checking for the highly localised Sedge Wren and we may hear the calls of Yellow, Virginia and Sora Rails and glimpse an American

## Dates

Thursday May 7th – Saturday May  
16th 2020

Leader: Simon Papps

Group size: 6

Birds: 160-190

Bittern. Drier sections of the marsh with scrub may attract Golden-winged Warbler, Indigo Bunting and Clay-coloured and Field Sparrows whilst in recent years rarities have included Lark Sparrow and Prairie Warbler. Transfer to Port Rowan

**Day 4:** Long Point is our first destination today. This site is world famous for migrant songbirds and rarities which occur during spring migration. Falls of migrants occur with regularity at the time of our visit. One area of woodland, on a good day, can hold in excess of a hundred species. On occasions it can be difficult to know where to look next as birds of every colour adorn the trees. For many, however, it is the flocks of warblers which are the biggest draw. At Long Point in springtime you stand the best chance of observing large mixed flocks of these birds which are always stunning both in their diversity and in the brightness of their plumage. Several species occur on a regular basis: Magnolia, Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warblers, Palm and Mourning Warblers, American



**Blackburnian Warbler** *Photo: Simon Papps*

Redstart, the enigmatic Black-and-white Warbler and the stunning Blackburnian Warbler. Other species which are regularly recorded include Baltimore Oriole, Indigo Bunting, Scarlet Tanager, Grey Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher and American Robin. The undergrowth can be alive with Grey-cheeked and Swainson's Thrushes, Ovenbirds, Lincoln's and White-throated Sparrows. Rarities encountered on previous tours include Worm-eating Warbler and Harris's Sparrow. We visit Long Point and Old Cut several times during the week in order to stand the greatest chance of witnessing songbird migration at its best.

**Day 5:** Today we head straight for Wilson Tract, an area of old Carolinian forest. It will be an early start to this birding hotspot with breeding Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos, Blue-winged, Black-throated Blue, Cerulean, Prothonotary and Hooded Warblers and Louisiana Waterthrush.

Broad-winged and Cooper's Hawks can also be found. Nearby, an old orchard holds Eastern Bluebirds and meadows are home to Grasshopper and Vesper Sparrows. Later in the day, after a stop at Long Point to discover the state of the day's migration, we progress to nearby Port Rowan and birdwatch around the pond and the cemetery where Orchard Orioles occur on a regular basis. Port Rowan sewage ponds are close by where shorebirds rest on their northward migration. Wilson's Phalarope, Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper and Short-billed Dowitcher often turn up along with American Black Tern and Common Nighthawk. Lake Erie itself often has Great Northern Diver, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Redhead and Caspian Terns.

**Day 6:** After a visit to Long Point to check on the day's migration potential, we head north-east to Turkey Point. En route, we visit Spooky Hollow which, along with typical woodland species, provides the oppor-



**Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Photo: Simon Papps*

tunity to discover Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Cerulean and Canada Warblers and, on occasions, Louisiana Waterthrush, Carolina Wren and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Turkey Point itself is an excellent site for shorebirds, gulls and terns. We can expect Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers. The overlook of Turkey Point Marsh is a reliable site for Wood Duck and the impressive Bald Eagle. Along the roadside we search for Red-bellied Woodpecker and Carolina Wren. The forest at Normandale should provide us with Least Flycatcher, Black-throated Green Warbler, Nashville Warbler, and Wood and Hermit Thrushes.

**Day 7:** After our morning visit to Long Point we progress to the extensive areas of wetlands at Big Creek Reserve and Hahn Marshes. Several species of interest are present including American Bittern, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal,

American Black Duck, Sandhill Crane, Forster's Tern, Purple Martin, Marsh Wren and Common Yellowthroat. Woodland tracts sometimes have a few migrants including Brown Creeper, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, Acadian Flycatcher and Solitary Vireo.

**Day 8:** Rondeau is west of Simcoe, a peninsula facing south-west into Lake Erie. Rondeau is a noted migration hotspot although not as well known as Long Point. The entrance road can be a reliable place to see Great Horned Owls. However, our main interest is the feeders outside the visitor centre. On our last visit we recorded Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-headed, Red-bellied, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Goldfinch, White-crowned Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Northern Cardinal. A walk along a boardwalk through a swamp should provide us with Prothonotary Warbler and Winter



**American Woodcock** Photo: Simon Papps

Wren. There are several trails at Rondeau providing good access to woodland, scrub and the shore of Lake Erie. Walking along South Beach Trail, we may encounter Field Sparrow, Pileated Woodpecker, Bay-breasted Warbler, Common Yellowthroat and Brown Thrasher. After an early dinner, we return to Rondeau to observe the remarkable display flight and feeding actions of American Woodcocks. Common Nighthawk is also a distinct possibility as dusk falls.

**Day 9:** Today we head towards Backus Woods to look for Blackburnian, Canada, Cerulean, Blue-winged and Black-throated Green Warblers. Backus Woods also provides us with a chance of locating Red-shouldered Hawk, Wild Turkey, Barred Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Orchard Oriole. Lakeland Drive follows the shoreline of Lake Erie with several vantage points. We may locate lingering Bufflehead offshore and Semipalmated Plovers along the muddy shore. Fields and weedy areas may hold Savannah Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolink.

**Day 10:** After a final visit to Long Point, we head for Niagara Falls. Sightseeing at Niagara will be arranged to suit the group. Visually, the falls are a stunning spectacle

with rainbows in the spray. The force of the falling water is astounding. Nearby are towers that have been erected to give the very best viewpoint from which to survey the falls. Niagara is noted for Bonaparte's Gulls and Double-crested Cormorants. The gorge below the falls attracts Ring-billed Gulls in their thousands and, occasionally, Great Black-backed Gull. We then travel to Toronto Airport for our flight home with arrival on the next morning.

## Prices

Ground Price: £2,295  
 Single room: £230  
 Deposit: £250  
 \*Air Fare: £520

This holiday is fully inclusive of flights, accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** Visa to enter Canada, drinks, insurance, and items of a personal nature.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Endemics and antpittas in the world's best birding country

Colombia is home to a staggering total of over 1,900 bird species - more than any other country on Earth - and the world's best birding country is once again safe and open for business. This tour, which has been specially designed to see as large a selection of species and as many endemics as possible, will begin at the legendary endemism hot-spot of Santa Marta on the Caribbean coast, and then focus on the various cordillera of the central Colombian Andes. The wonderful birdlife, combined with friendly people, good food, quality accommodation, efficient infrastructure and varied geography, from the High Andes to the Caribbean coast, make Colombia arguably the number one birding destination anywhere in the world.

**Day 1:** Flight from London Heathrow to Bogotá, arriving in the evening. Transfer to a hotel in the north of the city for one night.

**Day 2:** Bogotá is located at an altitude of around 2,300m, nestled in a large plateau in the Eastern Cordillera of the Andes. We have an early start to visit La Florida, which holds three endemic birds: Bogotá Rail, Silvery-throated Spinetail and Apolinar's Wren. There is also a good chance of Subtropical Doradito, Noble Snipe, Rufous-browed Conebill and the local race of Least Bittern. We also become acquainted with widespread species such as Roadside Hawk, Blue-and-white and Southern Rough-winged Swallows, Great Kiskadee, Fork-tailed and Vermilion Flycatchers, Masked and Black-crowned Tityras, Buff-breasted Wren, Black-billed and Pale-breasted Thrushes, Saffron Finch, and wintering Blackburnian and Canada Warblers. We then catch a late morning flight from the nearby airport to the city of Riohacha, which is the setting for parts of several novels by Gabriel García Márquez, including *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The nearby Los Flamencos Sanctuary on the Guajira Peninsula is an important coastal wetland and dry forest reserve created to protect a large population of American Flamingos and numerous other birds including herons, waders, Wood Stork and Roseate Spoonbill. Scarlet Ibis can usually be found in the small flocks of White Ibis. Scattered trees and brush by the lagoons may pro-

## Dates

Saturday January 11th – Saturday January 25th 2020

Leader: Simon Papps and local leader

Group Size: 6

Species: 450-500 including up to 42 endemics

duce Scaled Dove, Glaucous Tanager, Grey Kingbird and Yellow Oriole.

**Day 3:** We spend the morning birding in the Guajira desert near Los Flamencos. Inland, xerophytic scrub dominates, which is very productive for Guajira specialties restricted to north-east Colombia and north-west Venezuela. These include Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Bare-eyed Pigeon, Buffy Hummingbird, Russet-throated Puffbird, Chestnut Piculet, White-whiskered Spinetail, Slender-billed Inezia, Orinoco Saltator, Pileated Finch, Tocuyo Sparrow and Vermillion Cardinal. We also search for Crested Bobwhite, Blue-crowned and Brown-throated Parakeets, Green-rumped Parrotlet, Black-crested Antshrike, White-fringed Antwren and Northern Scrub-Flycatcher. By around 11am the scorching desert sun is overpowering, so we head west, and ascend to the famous El Dorado reserve in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta for a three-night stay.



**Blue-naped Chlorophonia** Photo: Simon Papps

**Days 4-5:** The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is the jewel in the crown of Colombian birding and is home to no less than 19 endemic bird species, including the recently described Santa Marta Screech Owl. Birding around the lodge is productive for Santa Marta Brush-Finch and Crested Oropendola. Hummingbirds include the uncommon endemics, Blossomcrown and Santa Marta Woodstar. Tanagers visit the feeding trays, with Black-capped Tanager and Blue-naped Chlorophonia being possible. The lodge clearing, with a view of the Caribbean below, is a good place for Scarlet-fronted Parakeets and White-rumped Hawks. Black-fronted Wood-Quail, Santa Marta Toucanet, White-tipped Quetzal, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Streak-capped Spinetail, Grey-throated Leaf-tosser, Santa Marta Antpitta, Golden-breasted Fruiteater, Black-hooded Thrush and White-lored Warbler are present in forests adjacent to the lodge. Many of the endemics are found at higher elevations

above the lodge, including Santa Marta Parakeet, White-tailed Starfrontlet, Rusty-headed Spinetail, the distinctive endemic subspecies of Rufous Antpitta, Brown-rumped Tapaculo, Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant, Santa Marta Mountain-Tanager, Yellow-crowned Whitestart and Santa Marta Warbler. The peaks of the sierra - the highest in Colombia - are usually visible in the early morning. Watching the skies may reveal the presence of Scaly-naped Parrots and raptors including Andean Condor, Black-and-chestnut Eagle and Semi-collared Hawk.

**Day 6:** We bird down the road towards Minca this morning looking for species such as Black-backed Antshrike, Golden-winged Sparrow, Golden-fronted Greenlet, Coppery Emerald and Rosy Thrush-Tanager. The little known Santa Marta Sabrewing is occasionally seen here. We then take a flight from Santa Marta to Colombia's second largest city, Medellín,

and from here head west, crossing over the western Andes. The Chocó rainforest in western Colombia contains one of the highest concentrations of range-restricted biodiversity in the world, with many birds, plants and amphibians at risk of extinction. We will be based in the comfortable Las Tangaras lodge for the next three nights. The endemic Crested Ant-Tanager is regularly seen in the lodge garden.

**Days 7-8:** We will have two full days to explore the reserve proper, where we will look for a number of endemics such as the Chocó Vireo, Gold-ringed Tanager, Black-and-gold Tanager, Chestnut Wood-Quail, Red-bellied Grackle and Alto de Pisones Tapaculo (a species not yet officially described!). Other specialty species of the area include Beautiful Jay, Black Solitaire, Fulvous-dotted Treerunner, Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Toucan Barbet and White-headed Wren. We will also visit a hummingbird feeding station within the reserve where we will see Velvet-purple Coronet, Violet-tailed Sylph, White-tailed Hillstar, Empress Brilliant, Purple-throated Woodstar, and Tawny-bellied Hermit.



**Buff-tailed Coronet** Photo: Simon Papps

**Day 9:** After a final morning's birding at Las Tangaras, we head back over the mountain pass to the pleasant colonial town of Jardin for a two-night stay, stopping en route to look for the endemic Greyish Piculet in some degraded forest fragments by the roadside.

**Day 10:** The reserve above Jardin is the best place to find the spectacular and critically endangered endemic Yellow-eared Parrot (c.350 birds). Munchique Wood-Wren has recently been discovered here and we have a good chance of seeing this critically endangered Colombian endemic. The forests are also home to the Colombian subspecies of Acorn Woodpecker, White-browed Spinetail, Chestnut-crowned Cotinga, Golden-faced Whitestart, Black-and-white Seed-eater and Tanager Finch. Groups of White-capped Tanagers are occasionally found.

**Day 11:** The next morning we visit a forested valley for the endemic Red-bellied Grackle if we have missed it at Las Tangaras. Alternatively, we will visit a lek of Andean Cock-of-the-Rock which, incongruously, is situated just five minutes' walk from the town centre. In the afternoon, we drive down the Central Andes to the city of Manizales, in the so-called coffee zone (although in fact coffee is grown over much of the country), for a two-night stay.

**Day 12:** A full day in the hills above Manizales at the magical Rio Blanco reserve which is home to a large variety of endemics and specialties representative of the Central Cordillera. Cabins at the reserve entrance are festooned with hummingbird feeders and we expect to see up to ten species, including Tourmaline Sunangel and the diminutive White-bellied Woodstar. Birding activity is exceptionally good with large mixed-species flocks frequently encountered. Flocks contain an incredible diversity of furnarids, tanagers and flycatchers, including Tyrannine Woodcreeper, Dusky Piha, Handsome Flycatcher, Golden-faced Whitestart, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager and Grass-green Tanager. Understorey flocks in areas of

bamboo are of particular interest and include Plushcap, Black-eared Hemispingus, Yellow-billed Cacique, Black-billed Peppershrike and Masked Saltator. Other highlights include the noisy Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Powerful Woodpecker, Northern Mountain-Cacique, Black-collared Jay and White-capped Tanager. This is also a good area for parrots, including Rusty-faced Parrot, Golden-plumed Parakeet and the endemic Rufous-fronted Parakeet. The skulking Ocellated, Blackish and Spillmann's Tapaculos and Chestnut-naped Antpitta can sometimes be tempted into view. Rio Blanco's highlight, however, is its antpitta feeding station. Chestnut-crowned and the endemic Brown-banded Antpittas are regular while Slate-crowned and the endemic Bicoloured Antpittas are occasional visitors. We have dinner at the cabins and stay after dark for Rufous-banded Owl and White-throated Screech-Owl.

**Day 13:** An hour's drive from Manizales, the road up to Nevado de Ruiz National Park passes through elfin forest and paramo where we search for a very special high-elevation hummingbird - the remarkable Bearded Helmetcrest. Other species we may encounter are Viridian Metaltail, Tawny Antpitta, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Stout-billed Cinclodes and Glossy Flowerpiercer. Lower down, the road passes Laguna Negra, a glacial lake that is home to Andean Duck and Andean Teal. Golden-breasted Puffleg, Andean Tit-Spintail, White-chinned Thistletail, Black-backed Bush-Tanager and many others also occur. The park entrance road passes through elfin forest patches, home of the scarce and elusive endemic Rufous-fronted Parakeet. This forest also has Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Andean Pygmy-Owl, White-browed Spinetail, Crowned Chat-Tyrant, Ocellated and Paramo Tapaculos, Golden-crowned Tanager, Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager and Pale-naped Brush-Finch. In the afternoon, we drive to the La Suiza lodge in the Otun-Quimbaya regional park, near the city of Pereira, for a two-night stay.

**Day 14:** Today we visit Otun-Quimbaya

reserve which holds the Cauca Valley and Central Cordilleran endemics Cauca Guan, Chestnut Wood-Quail, Multicoloured Tanager, Crested Ant-Tanager and Greyish Piculet. Other key species in the upper subtropical and montane forest include Moustached Puffbird, Bar-crested Antshrike, Moustached Antpitta, Chestnut-breasted Wren and Slate-coloured Seedeater. Two trails and a road passing through the forest are good for finding Highland Motmot, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow and Andean Cock-of-the-Rock. Mixed flocks may contain Moustached Puffbird, Streak-capped Treehunter, Bar-crested Antshrike, Rufous-breasted Flycatcher and Plumbeous-crowned Tyrannulet. The cabin area is good for Great Antshrike, Whiskered Wren, Golden-rumped Euphonia and Flame-rumped Tanager, while the river is home to Torrent Duck and White-capped Dipper. The road continues to El Cedral where a mule trail leads up to cabins at La Pastora, an area for Dusky Piha, Flammulated Treehunter, Masked Saltator, Golden-fronted Whitestart, White-capped Tanager and Black-collared Jay.

**Day 15:** After another morning's birding at Otun-Quimbaya, we take a flight from Pereira to Bogotá and connect with a flight back to the UK. Arrival is on the following morning.

## Prices

Ground Price: £4,895  
Single room: £400  
Deposit: £450  
\*Air Fare: £850

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature, fuel surcharges.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*

# Endemics and birds of the Eastern Caribbean

The Lesser Antilles island group straddles the Eastern Caribbean region between the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. In total, we visit nine islands: Antigua, Barbuda, Montserrat, Dominica, St Lucia, St Vincent, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago. Most islands have at least one endemic bird species with St Lucia holding the largest number of seven. Our travels take us to some truly breathtaking areas in this little-watched area of the world for birds. You can expect to observe many of the Caribbean region's endemic birds plus several which are shared with the larger islands of the Western Caribbean.

**Day 1:** A morning flight to St John's in Antigua where we have a three-night stay.

**Day 2:** Today, a short flight to Barbuda, a dry, flat island north of Antigua, which makes up the other half of this two-island country. Our main interest is locating the endemic Barbuda Warbler. Other species we may find include Lesser Antillean endemics - Green-throated Carib and Lesser Antillean Bullfinch. Barbuda is also home to a large colony of Magnificent Frigatebirds, Brown Pelican, Brown Booby, Royal Tern, West Indian Whistling Duck, Black-whiskered Vireo, Golden Warbler (split from Yellow Warbler) and Carib Grackle. Return to Antigua either by air or ferry.



**Barbuda Warbler**

Photo: Antigua Tourist Board

## Dates

Friday November 20th – Friday  
December 4th 2020

Leader: Mark Finn and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 135-155

**Day 3:** This morning we embark on a short flight to Montserrat, an island which was partially destroyed by the Soufriere Hills Volcano which erupted in 1995. Our main interest is the Montserrat Oriole found in the Central Hills Reserve. Other species present include Purple-throated Carib, Brown Trembler, Pearly-eyed Thrasher and the shy Forest Thrush. With a little luck, we may find the uncommon Bridled Quail-dove and Antillean Crested Hummingbirds. More widespread species on Montserrat are Red-billed Tropicbird, Little Blue Heron, Great and Snowy Egrets, American Kestrel, Merlin, Common Ground Dove and Mangrove Cuckoo. Return to Antigua for the night.

**Day 4:** Antigua has several lagoons and salt pans which we can explore this morning. The island holds a good population of White-cheeked Pintail and Caribbean Coot. Wintering shorebirds from the High Arctic include Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Willet and Solitary Sandpipers. Among the resident species, we may find Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night Herons, Wilson's Plover, Great Blue, Little Blue, Tricoloured and Green Herons and



**Trinidad Motmot** *Photo: Barry Lancaster*

White-crowned Pigeon, which reaches the southern end of its range on Antigua. Later in the day, we take a flight south to the forested island of Dominica for a three-night stay.

**Days 5-6:** Today we start our exploration of Dominica by travelling from Portsmouth to the Northern Forest Reserve on the lower slopes of Morne Diablotin. Dawn is the best time to encounter the uncommon, endemic Red-necked Parrot from a viewpoint. A little more time and luck is required to locate the extremely rare Imperial Parrot, probably the hardest of the Lesser Antilles endemics to see. The reserve has extensive trail systems bordered by tree ferns and huge trees. Species we expect to find include Lesser Antillean Swift, Blue-headed Hummingbird, Lesser Antillean Peewee, Lesser Antillean Flycatcher and Dominica House Wren. As we wander around the trails, sightings of Caribbean Elaenia, Scaly-breasted Thrasher, Plumbeous Warbler, Red-legged Thrush and Antillean Euphonia should be possible. Lower down in the mango stands, we search for the uncommon Lesser Antillean Saltator and

Scaly-naped Pigeon. Returning to Portsmouth, we should see more widespread species - Broad-winged Hawk, Ruddy Quail-dove and the impressive Belted and Ringed Kingfishers. The coast road also offers us Roseate Tern, Cliff Swallow, Caribbean Martin and Tropical Mockingbird. On the morning of Day 6, we have another visit to the Northern Forest Reserve in case we have missed anything on the previous morning. In the afternoon we visit Portsmouth on the coast road where we may find Grey and Semipalmated Plovers, Spotted Sandpiper, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Scaly-breasted Munia. Stands of scrub may hold wintering American Redstart.

**Day 7:** Depending on flight times, we explore another area on Dominica before making the short flight to St Lucia and a two-night stay.

**Days 8-9:** St Lucia is an island dominated by lofty peaks rising from the Caribbean Sea. The island also has seven endemic birds which we hope to find. Our main inter-



**Copper-rumped Hummingbird** *Photo: Barry Lancaster*

est is the Edmund Forest Reserve holding St Lucia Parrot, St Lucia Warbler, St Lucia Black Finch and St Lucia Oriole. On Day 9 we visit the dry north-eastern area of St Lucia for the localised and rare St Lucia Wren. We also have further opportunities for St Lucia Peewee, White-breasted Thrasher and Bridled Quail-dove. Other species we may see include Purple-throated and Green-throated Caribs, Grey Trembler, Bare-eyed Thrush and Black-whiskered Vireo. On the afternoon of Day 9, we make the short flight across to the island of St Vincent where we stay for two nights.

**Day 10:** St Vincent is a mountainous island with extensive stands of forest. Our main interest is in locating the three endemic birds - St Vincent Parrot, St Vincent Wren and the beautiful Whistling Warbler. Other species we may find include Common Black Hawk, Cocoa Thrush, Grenada Flycatcher, Lesser Antillean Tanager and Eared Dove.

**Days 11-12:** This morning we fly to

Grenada, the most southerly of the Lesser Antilles. Our target species here is the highly endangered Grenada Dove. We concentrate our search in the southwest of the island at Mount Hartman Estate. Other species include Rufous-breasted Hermit, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Yellow-bellied Seedeater and Shiny Cowbird.

**Day 13:** Today we fly to Tobago, the southernmost island of the Lesser Antilles chain, for a three-night stay. On arrival we head to southwestern Tobago to visit Hilton and Bon Accord and the Grafton Caledonia Bird Sanctuary. We should observe Laughing Gull, Royal Tern, Smooth-billed Ani, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Tropical and Grey Kingbirds, Caribbean Martin, Bare-eyed Thrush, Tropical Mockingbird, Scrub Greenlet, Bananaquit, Blue-grey Tanager, Black-faced Grassquit, Carib Grackle, and Crested Oropendola. At the Grafton Caledonia Bird Sanctuary we may find Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Blue-crowned Motmot, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Fuscous Flycatcher, Blue-backed Manakin, and Scrub Greenlet.



**Red-necked Parrot** Photo: Barry Lancaster

**Day 14:** We start the day by visiting the Gilpin Trace high in the central range of Tobago. Montane forest birds are the focus of our visit and include White-tailed Sabrewing, Blue-backed Manakin, Yellow-legged Thrush, Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Collared Trogon, Red-crowned Woodpecker and White-fringed Antwren. Later in the day, we visit The Tobago Main Ridge Forest Reserve where the cool montane forests hold Great Black Hawk, Orange-winged Parrot, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Stripe-breasted Spinetail, Venezuelan Flycatcher and Rufous-breasted Hermit.

**Day 15:** Early morning flight to Trinidad and onward connections to the UK.

## Prices

Ground Price: £5,995

Single room: £500

Deposit: £600

\*Air Fare: £1,500

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature and any relevant fuel surcharges. All airport departure taxes from each island are payable locally.

*\*Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*





# Terms and Conditions

Birdwatching Breaks, founded in May 1987, is the trading name of Mark Finn. The terms and conditions listed below form the contract between Mark and his clients.

**Reservation:** A reservation is made when the booking form and deposit have been confirmed by Birdwatching Breaks. Bookings by telephone should be confirmed in writing or e-mail and received within seven days accompanied by the appropriate deposit. To secure air flights booked within 72 days of departure, we require full payment (of the flights) by credit card. In return, you receive a confirmation invoice with details of the holiday you have chosen, departure dates and airline timings if known at the time of booking. We agree to operate your holiday as stated in our 2019 brochure. The contract is deemed to have been made at Cygnus House, Gordons Mill, Balblair, Ross-shire, Scotland and is therefore governed by Scottish law and is subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of Scottish courts.

**Balance:** The balance for all bookings is twelve weeks before the holiday is due to commence. In the case of holidays in Scotland, the balance is due eight weeks before holiday commencement. If the balance has not been paid by the appropriate date, we regard your holiday as being cancelled. Cancellation charges would be levied.

**Cancellations:** A cancellation can only be accepted in writing or by e-mail and takes effect on the date we receive it at Cygnus House. Cancellations received twelve weeks or more before the holiday commencement will involve the loss of deposit. If, however, flights have already been bought and paid for, these will be charged to you and it is your responsibility to try and obtain a refund from either the airline or your insurance company. Thereafter, the following charges will apply:

Over 96 days before departure - deposit only  
40-95 days before departure - 80%  
Under 40 days until the day of departure - 100%

**Tours:** We do everything in our power to ensure all our tours are operated as advertised. However, situations may arise which are outside our control and these may necessitate change. If such circumstances arise, we reserve the right to alter or curtail the itinerary. We reserve the right to alter the tour or substitute leaders or accommodation if necessary. You will be informed if this action takes place. If major changes to the tour take place, we will inform you and advise the following: 1/ accept the new arrangements 2/ an alternative holiday if available (with you paying any additional sums or alternatively Birdwatching Breaks refunding you the difference) 3/ cancelling your chosen tour for a full refund 4/ compensation for a major change made by Birdwatching Breaks which is: above 95 days - nothing, 14-94 days - £30, under 14 days - £50. A major change is defined as a significant change of itinerary. At the time of going to print, airlines currently flying to the stated destinations on the days quoted and internal flight schedules have been checked. It is beyond the control of Birdwatching Breaks if airlines change their schedule

which may necessitate us amending the stated itinerary. Change of UK airports excludes the London hub of Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and Luton. No compensation is due from Birdwatching Breaks where cancellation or change results from unforeseeable or unusual circumstances beyond our control. This includes war or threat of war, terrorist activity, riots, civil disorder, natural or nuclear disasters, epidemics, fires, adverse weather conditions, strikes by air traffic controllers in the European Union and elsewhere in the world, no fuel availability preventing carriers, hoteliers and other suppliers from carrying out their duties. In addition to the above, no compensation is payable if the balance is not paid on time or the tour is cancelled due to insufficient bookings. Save for the above compensation in (4) we will be under no further liability to you. We reserve the right to change any of the prices in our 2019 brochure before we enter into a contract with you. If there is a change, we will notify you by e-mail or in writing. Birdwatching Breaks reserves the right to cancel tours up to 6 weeks before departure if sufficient numbers are not obtained. In this event, we can offer you an alternative holiday or a full refund of monies paid.

**Flights:** Because of fluctuating fuel prices, it is becoming very difficult to obtain accurate quotes for airfares. Tour prices are broken down into two elements - the basic cost of the tour which includes everything except the cost of the international and internal flights and, secondly, our best estimate of the air fares when the tour was costed. When we send invoices for the tour, we will only charge you the exact airfare and hope that many of these will be near the price currently quoted in our 2019 brochure.

**Party Size:** The minimum size of group necessary for our tours to operate is four. If the party size is not attained, the client will be informed in writing eight weeks before holiday commencement.

**Birds and Mammals:** The birds and mammals mentioned in this brochure are only a guide to what you might expect to see on the tour you have selected. Whilst many additional species will be seen, we are unlikely to see every species mentioned in our text. However, you should see a good proportion of them if you participate fully in the tour and have reasonable eyesight.

**Liability:** We have taken all reasonable steps to ensure holidays published in our 2019 brochure have been properly arranged. The travel agents, vehicle hire operators, hotels, motels and restaurants we use are reputable. We will accept liability as a direct result of our negligence or breach of contractual duty in making arrangements for you, including acts or omissions by our agents. We will accept liability for death, bodily injury or illness arising out of our proven negligence or that of our employers or our sub-contractors or suppliers or their servants and/or agents, providing they were acting in the scope of their employment at the time. Claims in respect of the above matters shall fall within the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of Scotland. All

claims must be made in writing to us within 28 days of your return from holiday. We do not accept liability for animal or snake bites, as we have no control over them. We cannot accept liability for claims arising out of carriage by air and sea. We have no control over the carriers concerned and you are subject to their terms and conditions, some of which exclude or limit liability in respect of death, injury, delay and loss of baggage. We do not accept liability for delays in air flights, ship sailing times or other conveyances used in carrying out our tours. We accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in flights or lost airline or ferry tickets, other services, weather, active volcanoes and ash clouds, strikes, terrorism activity, war or Acts of God. All such losses will be borne by the passenger. Birdwatching Breaks is not responsible for loss, damage or theft of luggage, cameras, binoculars, telescopes and personal belongings, or for accidents or illness, death or personal injury. We accept no claims arising out of your own acts or omission or those of a third party not connected with the provision of your holiday. For your own protection it is highly advisable to have adequate insurance cover. This is a legal requirement.

**Visiting countries:** At all times it is advisable to follow the customs of the country you are visiting and comply with the laws and regulations which may be in force. You must conduct yourself in a manner deemed by the leader to be compatible with the tour. Birdwatching Breaks reserves the right to send any client home, at their own expense, if they disrupt the tour through unreasonable or unacceptable behavior. We will make no refund, nor pay or be liable for any compensation.

**Surcharges:** All our prices are based on exchange rates at the time of going to press and we reserve the right to make reasonable adjustments if the pound falls in value or foreign rates fall below what our prices are based on. In certain circumstances we may levy a surcharge on tour prices involving departure taxes, landing fees, transport costs including fuel, scheduled airfares and any other airline surcharges and ground agent and tour operator increases. We will absorb any minor fluctuations of up to 2% of the full tour price. Anything above this will be surcharged until 10% is reached. If the latter is reached, you are entitled to cancel your booking for a full refund. To exercise this right, you must inform Birdwatching Breaks in writing or e-mail within 14 days of the invoice date.

**Fuel Surcharges:** If any fuel charges are passed on to us by airlines on booking flights in conjunction with your holiday, we reserve the right to pass these on to our clients. We have no control over oil prices and the volatile nature of the airline industry as our prices are based on fares and other factors nearly a year in advance.

**Currency:** We plan our tours many months in advance. Our prices are based on tourist exchange rates from The Post Office on July 12th 2019. All rates are equal to £1.00 sterling. £1.00 is equal to €1.09 and US\$1.23 All European/Middle East destinations, with the exception of the United Kingdom are based on Euro rates. In the Americas, rates are based on US\$ rates. Asia, with the

exception of Japan, is based on US\$ rates. Otherwise, the following rates apply: Australian Dollar 1.74, Canadian Dollar 1.58, Japanese Yen 128.86, Norwegian Kroner 10.21, Swedish Krona 11.17. All other destinations not listed above use US Dollars, Euro or Pounds Sterling.

**Booking and Financial Security:** Birdwatching Breaks holds an ATOL (Air Travel Operators Licence) Number 4324 issued by Civil Aviation Authority. This licence means that we are fully bonded against financial insolvency for packages which include flights. We are not in a position to name the operator or state the type of aircraft or its destination. The Civil Aviation Authority is a government-approved organisation. Anybody booking a holiday through Birdwatching Breaks can do so with complete financial security. Our bonding arrangements guarantee your holiday will continue in the unlikely event of our insolvency. With regard to holidays involving land-based travel, you are covered by International Passenger Protection (IPP) details are on page 10.

**Your Financial Protection:** When you buy an ATOL protected flight or flight inclusive holiday from us you will receive an ATOL Certificate. This lists what is financially protected, where you can get information on what this means for you and who to contact if things go wrong." "We, or the suppliers identified on your ATOL Certificate, will provide you with the services listed on the ATOL Certificate (or a suitable alternative). In some cases, where neither we nor the supplier are able to do so for reasons of insolvency, an alternative ATOL holder may provide you with the services you have bought or a suitable alternative (at no extra cost to you). You agree to accept that in those circumstances the alternative ATOL holder will perform those obligations and you agree to pay any money outstanding to be paid by you under your contract to that alternative ATOL holder. However, you also agree that in some cases it will not be possible to appoint an alternative ATOL holder, in which case you will be entitled to make a claim under the ATOL scheme (or your credit card issuer where applicable)." For land based travel you are covered by IPP

**Hand Luggage on Aircraft:** Please note many airlines are extremely strict about the amount you can take on board with you. The maximum weight allowance is 10 kilograms (subject to change) in the case of low cost carriers. To keep the weight down, pack your tripod in your main case, in addition to any books you do not need in transit. Any sharp implements such as scissors, penknives and screwdrivers should be packed in your hold luggage.

**Complaints:** If you have any complaints on tour, please notify the leader so that they can be addressed immediately. If this is not done to your satisfaction, please notify us by writing or e-mail within 28 days of your return.

**Names and addresses:** We keep these on our computer systems for use by Birdwatching Breaks and no other parties. If you wish to be removed from our database, please contact us at the relevant address. Your details are kept secure by us and conform with current data protection rules May 2020

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