

Birdwatching Breaks 2019

Over 25 years of guided tours



Destinations

BLACK ISLE BIRDING - SCOTLAND

Scotland	Scottish Highlands – spring	12
Scotland	Scottish Highlands – autumn	15
Scotland	New Year in the Highlands	17
Scotland	Scottish Highlands – late winter birds	19
Scotland	Scottish Highlands and Aberdeenshire	21
Scotland	Fife, Lothian and Islay	23
Scotland	Mull, Tiree and the Uists	25
Scotland	Fair Isle and Shetland	28
Scotland	Western Isles	30

AFRICA

Morocco	Atlas Mountains & Sahara	32
Rwanda	Albertine Rift endemics and mammals	34
Senegal	SE Senegal and Dindéfello	36
Senegal	Pelagic and The Sahel	39
Seychelles	Mauritius, Rodrigues and Reunion	42
South Africa	Drakensburg, Kruger and Wakkerstroom	45

EUROPE AND MIDDLE EAST

Belgium and France	Ardennes and Nord Pas-de-Calais	48
Canary Islands	Endemics and winter sun	50
Cyprus	Birds of the Eastern Mediterranean	52
France	Camargue and Corsica	54
Greece	Springtime in Lesbos	56
Norway	Birds of the High Arctic	58
Sweden	Autumn migration at Falsterbo	60

ASIA

Bhutan	Land of the Thunder Dragon	62
Japan	Kyushu and Hokkaido	66
Russia	Birds of Lake Baikal and Siberia	69

THE AMERICAS

Canada	Long Point	73
Colombia	The World's Best birding country	76
Chile	Atacama to Tierra del Fuego	80

Front cover: Blacksmith Lapwing *Photo: Jo Finn*

Back cover: Atlantic Puffins *Photo: Jo Finn*

Layout and design www.russellturner.org Printed by Speedprint, Inverness

Copyright © Birdwatching Breaks 2018

Tour Calendar

December 2018

Rwanda Albertine Rift and mammals December 1-13
Canary Islands Winter sun and endemics December 21-28

January 2019

Chile Atacama to Tierra del Fuego January 12-February 5

February

Japan Cranes, owls and eagles February 15-March 2

March

Scotland Fife, Lothian and Islay March 9-16

Scotland Winter birds of the Highlands March 17-24

Morocco Atlas Mountains and Sahara March 21-31

April

Belgium & France Ardennes and Nord Pas-de-Calais April 9-14

Cyprus Birds of the Mediterranean April 10-17

Lesbos Spring migrants of Greece April 18-27

May

Scotland Spring in the Highlands May 4-11

Canada Long Point May 9-18

Scotland Mull, Tiree and The Uists May 12-19

Siberia Birds of Lake Baikal May 24-June 7

June

Norway Breeding birds of the High Arctic June 6-15

August

Seychelles Mauritius, Reunion and Rodrigues August 28-September 11

September

Shetland Fair Isle and Mainland September 6-14

Scotland Autumn migration September 14-21

Scotland Western Isles September 22-28

Sweden Migration at Falsterbo September 28-October 5

Scotland Highlands and Aberdeenshire September 29-October 6

October

Bhutan Land of the Thunder Dragon October 12-29

November

Senegal Pelagic birds and the Sahel November 8-16

December

South Africa Drakensberg and Kruger December 2-16

France Camargue and Corsica December 7-14

Scotland New Year in the Highlands December 28-January 4

January 2020

Senegal SE Senegal and Dindéfello January 10-23

Colombia The World's Best Birding Country January 11-25

February

Japan Cranes, owls and eagles February 7-22

Welcome to Birdwatching Breaks 2019

A warm welcome to our 2019 brochure of birdwatching holidays, this being our 32nd year of operation.

In 2019, 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, we have destinations to Bhutan, Japan and Russian Siberia. For those who wish to witness the winter wonderland of Japan, we have tours in February 2019 and 2020. The country continues to be a popular destination and we have modified the winter tour slightly to visit an area for Japanese Murrelet. Bhutan is like stepping back in time with most of the country covered in forest and the stunning scenery of the Himalayan mountains. Siberia is coming back again with a visit to this stunningly beautiful region of Russia with equally impressive bird life.

In Africa, we have departures to Senegal, South Africa 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 2018. In Senegal we have a new tour taking in a pelagic trip off Dakar and the Sahel region along the Senegal River. South Africa has been reinstated with a comprehensive tour to the Drakensberg Mountains, Wakkerstroom and Kruger National Park. I have also brought back our Indian Ocean islands tour visiting the Seychelles, Mauritius, Rodrigues and Reunion. These four islands hold some extremely rare endemic species found nowhere else on the planet.

In January 2019 we revisit Chile taking in



European Scops Owl, Lesbos *Photo: Jo Finn*



Birding above the Arctic Circle Photo Anders Mæland

the whole country from the Atacama Desert down to Tierra del Fuego. This is probably the most comprehensive tour available to Chile today. A birding tour to Colombia, the world's best birding country, is planned for January 2020.

Closer to home, we have departures to Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Norway, Spain and Sweden. These countries offer you great birding among spectacular countryside and vistas. Lesbos is a migrant-filled spectacle which takes place every April and our visit is timed for maximum chances. Extreme northern Norway is also being offered in June a prime time to watch some spectacular birds of the High Arctic. Later in 2019 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 Belgian Ardennes and Nord Pas-de-Calais, and a migration fest at Falsterbo in Sweden in late September.

2019 sees the 14th 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 and Lothian, 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 2019 brochure and for the layout and design.

I would also like to thank Chris Bradshaw who has given loyal service and guided with me for several years. Chris is pursuing his birding activities in Asia and Jo and myself wish him the very best in his travels

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.



Enrique Couve lives in Punta Arenas in extreme southern Chile. Enrique is one of the co-founders of *Far South Expeditions* who specialise in this fascinating country of South America. Enrique has his origins in engineering but his real passion is for nature and birds. Over the years he has written over twenty books and led countless tours in his native country.



Rinchen Drakpa lives in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan where he runs his own tour company. Rinchen has a wide knowledge of the fascinating birds which occur in this tiny country sandwiched between the highest mountains in the world and India. Rinchen has led many birding tours over the years. He enjoys the culture and history of Bhutan and finding birds along the east/west road.



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.



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 the far north of the country.



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*.



Mohamed Zaki lives high in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Mohamed is a Berber by birth and extremely proud of his heritage and traditional way of life in the isolated mountain village where he resides. He has been operating *Zaki Tours* for several years specialising in birds and the rich natural history that Morocco offers. Mohamed is probably one of the most skilled birders residing permanently in Morocco today. His people skills and ability to find unusual birds is second to none.

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 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



Maghreb Magpie, Morocco

Photo: Simon Papps

trips, a general information package. You can access these by visiting 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.

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, 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



Jay Photo: Jane Stylianou

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 accommodation, meals, guidance, entry permits into reserves, tips and taxes. Not included in your tour price are airfares 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 currently quoted in our 2018 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 2018 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.uk for further details. With regards to land-based holidays in Scotland, your money is kept in a Trust Account held by Barclays Bank PLC and withdrawn after the completion of your holiday. *Birdwatching Breaks* comply with all current European Union legislation regarding holidays.

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, e-mail 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 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



Golden Eagle

variety of habitat including rough grassland, saltmarsh, woodland, farmland, 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 150 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.

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, Fife, Lothian and Islay, Fair Isle 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 151 species of birds since 2003. During your stay we visit the Cairngorm Mountains in search of Rock Ptarmigan, Snow Bunting and Dotterel. Nearby, the ancient Caledonian pine forests host Capercaillie and a wide range of breeding and resident species. During the spring, we embark on special Black Grouse safaris, and further north, we 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, Green-winged Teal, 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 and the Uists on page 25.

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.

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 Gairloch 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 Otters. Nearby, an isolated village is reliable for Northern Gannet, Northern

Dates

Saturday May 4th - Saturday May 11th 2019

Leader: Mark Finn

Group size: 7

Birds: 125-145

Fulmar, European Golden Plover, gulls, Fieldfare and Redwing, White Wagtail and Twite.

Day 3: An early start with a visit to Abernethy Forest, a reserve of Caledonian pines interspersed with lochs. Stands of pines attract Parrot and Scottish Crossbills. Our main interest is to observe Capercaillie, a rare and declining species. Loch Garten is famous for nesting Osprey and we should have excellent views as they perch on top of their nest. In the pinewoods 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. Later in the day, we venture into the Findhorn Valley for Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, European Golden Plover and Dipper, the latter preferring boulder-strewn rivers. Along the Farr



Rock Ptarmigan *Photo: Bob Martinka*

Road we may find Merlin and parties of Red Grouse. Later in the day, we visit Strathconon for Common Sandpiper and Northern Wheatear, and in the birch woodlands Spotted Flycatcher, Blackcap, Wood and Willow Warblers.

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 Tarbert. 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 Ring-necked Duck, Common Crane and Red-breasted Goose 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 early May 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. Return to the Black Isle with stops for divers, ducks and Common Scoter on loch-side pools.

Day 6: Today we travel 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 for Rock Ptarmigan, Ring Ouzel, Dotterel and, with luck, Snow Bunting in the boulder fields. Depending on time, we visit the coastal towns of Lossiemouth and Burghead in Moray. The former often has shorebirds including Common Knot, Sanderling and Sandwich



Atlantic Puffin Photo: Jo Finn

Terns fishing in the bay. Offshore waters at Burghead have Long-tailed Duck, Common and Velvet Scoters, whilst White-billed Divers have also been regularly seen off Moray in recent years.

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. In the woodland, summer visitors arrive including Common Redstart. After breakfast in Dingwall, we visit a private estate which has a good population of Capercaillie and other woodland birds. 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 and Redwings. Loch Fleet is reliable for Osprey, ducks and waders. We end the day at Nigg Bay for Black-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel 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 Red Kite, Common and Scottish Crossbills, Crested Tit and Common Redpoll. Again, depending on flight times, we make a short stop at the Ness Islands in Inverness for Goosander, Dipper and Grey Wagtail.

Prices

Tour Price: £995
Deposit: £150
Single Room: £35 (Durness only)

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 and a small fee to enter Loch Garten for the Capercaillie watch. 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 specialties 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 30.

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. Charonry 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 remote 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 14th -
Saturday September 21st 2019

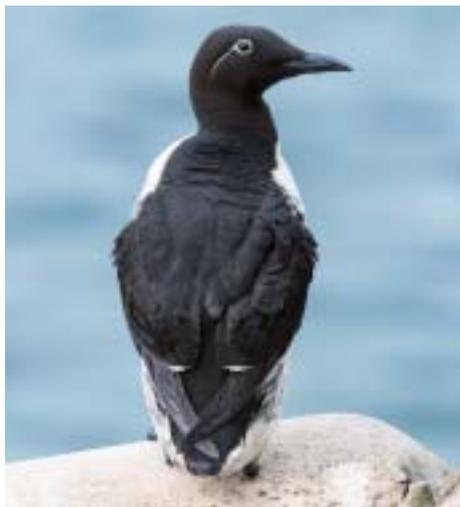
Leader: Mark Finn

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,



Common Guillemot

Photo: Jane Stylianou

attracting 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 October 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 area. 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.

New Year in the Scottish Highlands

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.

Day 1: Arrive at Cygnus House situated on the eastern half of the Black Isle, overlooking the RSPB Reserve of Udale Bay. 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.

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, 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 Great Spotted Woodpecker, Common, Scottish and Parrot Crossbills, Crested and Coal Tits. With

Dates

**Saturday December 28th -
Saturday January 4th (2019)**

Leader: Mark Finn
Group Size: 7
Birds: 105-120

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.

Day 4: Sutherland is a remote and rugged county located in northern Scotland. Further north, the sea off Embo hosts divers, grebes and Long-tailed Ducks. Exposed rocks have Ruddy Turnstone, Purple Sandpiper and Rock Pipit. Loch Fleet is almost separated from the North Sea, offering a sheltered haven for dabbling ducks and waders. Brora is a regular haunt of Little Gulls. Further north in Caithness, around the towns of Wick and Thurso, we search for Glaucous and Iceland Gulls. Dunnet Bay and St John's Loch regularly have divers and seaducks. Rarities in recent years have been Ring-necked Duck, American Wigeon, Ivory and Bonaparte's Gulls. We end the day at a new reserve for roosting Greenland White-fronted Geese, Whooper Swan, Hen Harrier and an outside chance of Short-eared Owl.

Day 5: Gruinard Bay and Little Loch Broom



Snow Bunting
Photo: Jo Finn

are our destinations today. Travelling through the countryside, we pass fast-flowing rivers and dramatic mountain ranges to reach the heavily indented coastline of Wester Ross. Loch Ewe often has White-tailed and Golden Eagles whilst the sheep fields attract flocks of Northern Lapwings and European Golden Plovers. We have excellent chances of locating Red-throated, Black-throated, Great Northern and, possibly, White-billed Divers. Other species present include Barnacle Goose, Common Eider, Common Guillemot and Razorbill. Passerines are few but may include Lesser Redpoll and Twite.

Day 6: Loch Flemington is situated east of Inverness. Although small in size, it is a reliable spot for Tufted Duck, Common Goldeneye and rarer species such as Smew. As we pass through the town of Forres, Bohemian Waxwings are a distinct possibility. Further east, we visit Burghead Bay, arguably the best site for concentrations of seaducks in Britain. We can expect Common, Velvet and occasional Surf Scoters and King Eiders. Long-tailed Duck numbers may reach 500 birds. In Lossiemouth, we head towards the beach for wintering Snow Buntings and occasional Lapland Buntings. If time permits, we visit a privately owned loch near Lossiemouth for grebes and ducks.

Day 7: Chanonry Point on the Black Isle is a noted area for seabirds and Bottle-nosed Dolphins, the latter a speciality of the Moray Firth. Later, we visit a wide range of localities in the Inverness area. The city itself regularly has Goosander, Grey Wagtail and Dipper. On nearby moors, we may find Northern Shrike and Common Stonechat. Wildfowl congregate in the Moray Firth and may include Pale-bellied Brent Goose, Greater Scaup and Green-winged Teal.

Day 8: After breakfast, the tour concludes with a visit to the Fairy Glen, a reserve of woodland and burns.

Prices

Tour Price: £995
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. Entry fees into RSPB reserves if you are not a member.

Late winter birds of coast and highlands

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. In early April it is also possible to witness the first spring arrivals of the year.

■ This tour can be combined with Fife, Lothian and Islay on page 23.

Day 1: Arrive at Cygnus House situated on the eastern half of the Black Isle, overlooking the RSPB Reserve of Udale Bay. 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.

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, seabirds, 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 Great Spotted

Dates

**Sunday March 17th - Sunday
March 24th 2019**
Leader: Mark Finn
Group Size: 7
Birds: 115-130

Woodpecker, 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. Depending on weather conditions, it is also possible to observe returning Ring Ouzels at lower levels of the mountains. Ospreys may be present at Loch Garten after spending the winter in Africa.

Day 4: Sutherland is a remote and rugged county located in northern Scotland. Further north, the sea off Embo hosts divers, grebes and Long-tailed Ducks. Exposed rocks have Ruddy Turnstone, Purple Sandpiper and Rock Pipit. Loch Fleet is almost separated from the North Sea, offering a sheltered haven for dabbling ducks and waders. Brora is a regular haunt of Little Gulls. Further north in Caithness, around the towns of Wick and Thurso, we search for Glaucous and Iceland Gulls. Dunnet Bay and St John's



Black Grouse

Photo: Jo Finn

Loch regularly have divers and seaducks. Rarities in recent years have been Ring-necked Duck, American Wigeon, Ivory and Bonaparte's Gulls. We end the day at a new reserve for roosting Greenland White-fronted Geese, Whooper Swan, Hen Harrier and an outside chance of Short-eared Owl.

Day 5: Gruinard Bay and Little Loch Broom are our destinations today. Travelling through the countryside, we pass fast-flowing rivers and dramatic mountain ranges to reach the heavily indented coastline of Wester Ross. Loch Ewe often has White-tailed and Golden Eagles whilst the sheep fields attract flocks of Northern Lapwings and European Golden Plovers. We have excellent chances of locating Red-throated, Black-throated, Great Northern and, possibly, White-billed Divers. Other species present include Barnacle Goose, Common Eider, Common Guillemot and Razorbill. Passerines are few but may include Lesser Redpoll and Twite.

Day 6: Loch Flemington is situated east of Inverness. Although small in size, it is a reliable spot for Tufted Duck, Common Goldeneye and rarer species such as Smew. As we pass through the town of Forres, Bohemian Waxwings are a distinct possibility. Further east, we visit Burghead Bay, arguably the best site for concentrations of seaducks in Britain. We can expect Common, Velvet and occasional Surf Scoters and King Eiders. Long-tailed Duck numbers may reach 500 birds. In Lossiemouth, we head towards the beach

for wintering Snow Buntings and occasional Lapland Buntings. If time permits, we visit a privately owned loch near Lossiemouth for grebes and ducks.

Day 7: We start the day by visiting a Black Grouse lek at Corrimony. Chanony Point on the Black Isle is a noted area for seabirds and Bottle-nosed Dolphins, the latter a speciality of the Moray Firth. Later, we visit a wide range of localities in the Inverness area. The city itself regularly has Goosander, Grey Wagtail and Dipper. On nearby moors, we may find Northern Shrike and Common Stonechat. Wildfowl congregate in the Moray Firth and may include Pale-bellied Brent Goose, Greater Scaup and Green-winged Teal.

Day 8: After breakfast, the tour concludes with a visit to the Fairy Glen, a reserve of woodland and burns.

Prices

Tour Price: £975

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. Entry fees into RSPB reserves if you are not a member.

Autumn 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 northeast of the country. It has an extremely long coastline bordering the North Sea, and several headlands attracting migrants in October. 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.

■ This tour can be combined with the Western Isles on page 30.

■ Flights should be arranged 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.

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, seabirds, auks and gulls. Loch Eye, on our

Dates
<p>Sunday September 29th - Sunday October 6th 2019 Leader: Mark Finn Group Size: 7 Birds: 120-135</p>

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 Great Spotted Woodpecker, 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.

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 countryside, we pass fast-flowing rivers and dra-



Red Grouse

Photo: Jo Finn

matic 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 Common Redpoll and Twite.

Day 5: Today we head southeast towards Aberdeen, and onto Girdle Ness, an exposed promontory jutting into the North Sea. If the winds are easterly, we may see Great Northern Diver, Great and Pomarine Skuas and possibly Little Auks offshore. As we head north, we stop at the River Don for waders with Ruff, Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper being possible in October. 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 in October include Redwing, Fieldfare, Pied Flycatchers, Common Chiffchaff and Goldcrest while Red-breasted Flycatcher, Barred, Pallas's and Yellow-browed Warblers are almost annual at this time of the year. On the beach, Snow Buntings occur in reasonable numbers. Loch of Strathbeg is nearby, one of the premier RSPB Reserves in Scotland for wildfowl 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 Eurasian Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis, White-rumped, Buff-breasted and Pectoral Sandpipers and Bluethroat.

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 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: £1,295
Single room: £130
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: flights, insurance and items of a personal nature. Drinks in hotels at Peterhead. Entry into RSPB reserves if you are not a member.

Winter birds of Scotland

Black Isle Birding and Birdwatching Breaks are pleased to offer this new tour which takes in some of the optimum winter birding areas in Eastern Scotland and Argyll. It is timed to coincide with the movement of seabirds off the east coast. In addition to this, we will witness the amazing spectacle of geese, swans and ducks in their wintering areas.

Islay is particularly important for birds of prey and geese from Greenland and northeast Canada. Barnacle and Greenland White-fronted Geese winter on Islay in their thousands and constitute a large percentage of their respective world populations. Red-billed Chough has its last stronghold in Scotland on Islay.

This tour starts and finishes in Edinburgh, which has excellent transport links with the rest of the UK. It is also possible to return from Glasgow on November 24th or March 16th. Clients should arrive in Edinburgh on the night of November 16th or March 8th

■ This tour can be combined with the Scottish Highlands on page 19.

Day 1: This morning we visit Fife Ness before making our way to Vane Farm and Loch Leven. The loch is an important area for wildfowl including thousands of geese and swans. On the muddy edges we may find a wintering Green Sandpiper, Northern Lapwing or European Golden Plover. Hunting Peregrine Falcon and Merlin are regular visitors to the area. The feeders attract a variety of finches and tits. In the afternoon, we make the short drive to Perth and visit Scone Palace. The grounds here are extensively wooded and we may see Hawfinch. Other woodland birds present include Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Eurasian Jay. Transfer to the Edinburgh area for a three-night stay.

Day 2: We begin our exploration of the Edinburgh area with a visit to Musselburgh Lagoons. The river mouth is an important area for gulls and we may find rarer species in Mediterranean and Little. A walk around the seawall which overlooks the sea may be productive for grebes, seaducks and divers, with recent visits producing sightings of Black-necked and Red-necked Grebes, Common, Velvet and Surf Scoters and, if there have been strong gales, Little Auks. The wader scrapes regularly attract Ruff among the commoner species. Aberlady Bay is a superb site for birds during the winter with several rarities being recorded in recent years including Water Pipit, Horned Lark and Black

Dates

Saturday November 17th -
Saturday November 24th 2018
Saturday March 9th - Saturday
March 16th 2019

Leader: Mark Finn
Group size: 8
Birds: 120-140

Redstart. Aberlady has similar birds to Musselburgh with the addition of Jack and Common Snipe and, along the shoreline and scrub, Twite, European Linnet and Snow Buntings.

Day 3: Today starts with a visit to Barns Ness, an important migrant trap adjacent to the North Sea. Within the campsite, scattered bushes should be checked for passerines, which are mainly Goldcrests and thrushes. Skateraw is near Dunbar and another migration hot spot. The fields and bushes here can be alive with migrants and on the fields we have the opportunity of finding finches including Brambling and in some years Lapland Buntings. On the beach we check for migrant Black Redstarts and roosting waders on the rocks.

Day 4: This morning we travel to Argyll and Bute from Edinburgh and take the ferry to Islay. The ferry crossing offers us Great



Glaucous Gull Photo: Jane Stylianou

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 on the island.

Days 5-7: 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. Birds of prey include Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Hen Harrier and, on occasions, Golden Eagle. The reserve has areas which flood, attracting wildfowl and waders. 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 and, occasionally, vagrant Green-winged Teal and Ring-necked Duck. The machair at Ardnave holds Red-billed Chough and Twite. 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 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. Woodland on Islay is generally stunted and old, attracting tits, Eurasian Treecreeper and Goldcrest. In some years Iceland and Glaucous Gulls appear around Port Ellen. The Mull of Oa is close by, an RSPB reserve with important populations of Golden Eagle and Red-billed Chough.

Day 8: Today we take the ferry back to the mainland at Kennacraig and travel to Glasgow and onto Edinburgh where the tour concludes late afternoon.

Prices

Ground Price: £1,795
Single room: £150
Deposit: £175

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. More important are the large concentrations of 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. Anything can and does turn up on these remote islands of Scotland. 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 11 and 19.

■ 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

Dates

Sunday May 12th - Sunday May 19th 2019

Leader: Mark Finn

Group Size: 8

Birds: 120-140

with harassing Arctic Skuas. Three nights on Benbecula.

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 Red and Black-throated Divers, 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

Mull, Tiree and the Uists

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

Day 4: Morning ferry from Eriskay 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. It 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 wood-



Corncrake on Tiree

Photo: Jo Latham

land 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.

Prices

Tour Price: £1,995

Single room: £200

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

Dr W Eagle Clarke first visited Fair Isle in 1905 and quickly realised that the island offered almost unrivalled opportunities for the study of migration. Study of the island's birds continued and an observatory was officially opened in 1948. The name Fair Isle has become synonymous with the occurrence of wind-blown vagrants from all directions and has hosted more new birds to the British List than any other location in the British Isles. The island has some magnificent scenery and is endowed with a very special charm. On this holiday we will hope that we are blessed with favourable weather conditions for observing bird migration and that we might encounter species such as Citrine Wagtail, Lanceolated Warbler and Yellow-breasted Bunting, which have become regarded as Fair Isle specials. Whilst we will hope for winds from an easterly quarter, winds from other directions can produce some amazing birds. On Fair Isle almost anything can and does turn up. In addition to our time on Fair Isle, we also spend a few days on mainland Shetland where we have further opportunities to search for interesting migrants and visit a range of other habitats not present on Fair Isle.

Day 1: From Shetland (you should arrive in Shetland on the evening of September 5th) we take a morning flight to Fair Isle. The island is situated 24 miles southwest of Sumburgh Head, Mainland. The total land area of the island is approximately 765 hectares and is around three miles by 1½ miles in size. The main habitats are sandstone cliffs that reach almost 200 metres in places. In the northern half of Fair Isle there are sheep-grazed areas of heather and grassy hillocks. In the southern part it is mainly small crofts which in turn have patches of land given over to the production of root vegetables and oats. All these habitats regularly attract migrants as cover on the island is very limited. Fair Isle has recorded well over 345 species, which is more than any other location in the British Isles. As with most migration hotspots, we hope for winds with an easterly element that inevitably brings migrants from Scandinavia and points further east. During our stay on the island, we should, with luck, locate scarce species and the commoner migrants which have bred in Northern Europe over the summer months. On arrival in Fair Isle, we transfer to the bird observatory and take an early opportunity to birdwatch around the building and nearby crofts. The resident wardens will keep us informed during the week of any interesting species that have made landfall on the island.

Dates

Friday September 6th - Saturday
September 14th 2019

Leader: Simon MacLaughlin
Group Size: 8
Birds: 90-110

Days 2-5: We will be based at the recently redeveloped observatory situated on the eastern side of the island, overlooking the picturesque North Haven. The island has some magnificent scenery with towering cliffs and coastal stacks and an interior of crofts and moorland. Each day we explore the island in search of migrants and, hopefully, some of Fair Isle's rarer visitors. There will also be opportunities to observe the work of the observatory and see some of the more interesting species being ringed.

Commoner birds that feature on a daily basis will be the residents and lingering breeding birds. These include Northern Fulmar, Northern Gannet, European Shag, Great Skua, Black Guillemot, Rock and Meadow Pipits, Northern Wheatear and Twite. The local Wrens are of the endemic Fair Isle subspecies *fridariensis*. Although not blessed with extensive wetland habitats, Fair Isle does attract some waders. Common Snipe occur in good numbers whilst Jack Snipe,

Knot and Sanderling are regular. Although not a notable place for sea-watching, a scan offshore is always worthwhile and may produce species such as Great Northern Diver, Sooty and Manx Shearwaters, European Storm Petrel and Common Eider. Flocks of geese pass south over the island and significant movements of Pink-footed Geese are sometimes in evidence.

All this is wonderful, but it is, of course, the migrants that will be the primary focus for our birding. Almost anything can turn up just about anywhere on the island. You are almost as likely to bump into something unusual along the roadside as you are in one of the sheltered Geos or on one of the crofts. Winds with an easterly element in them are most favourable and it is then that commoner migrants are likely to include Whinchat, Common Redstart, Garden Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, and Pied and Spotted Flycatchers. Scarcer migrants that are regular in such weather conditions include Eurasian Wryneck, Bluethroat, Barred, Icterine and Yellow-browed Warblers and Little Bunting. Over the years, Fair Isle has developed a reputation for being *the* place to see a number of national rarities that have become known as 'Fair Isle specialities'. These species include Great Snipe, Citrine Wagtail, Pechora Pipit, Lanceolated and Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and Yellow-breasted Bunting. Our visit is timed to give us excellent chances of encountering these sought after birds. Amongst the scarce and rare species our group in 2013 encountered were Red-backed Shrike, Common Rosefinch, Subalpine and Arctic Warblers and American Golden Plover.

Day 6: We catch the afternoon flight back to Tingwall, from where we will begin our exploration of mainland Shetland.

Day 7-8: Our precise plans for these two days on Shetland will be shaped by the prevailing weather conditions and news of recent arrivals. We will certainly visit a number of sites in the southern part of Shetland mainland. Places such as Scatness, Sumburgh Head, Quendale, Exnaboe and Toab are all locations likely to be on the agenda and locations where we will search

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 at the time of our visit in previous years have included Pallid Harrier, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Citrine Wagtail. The Pool of Virkie is good for waders with Black-tailed Godwit and Curlew Sandpiper amongst the species our 2013 group saw here. Nearby gardens attract passerine migrants and another species seen by our 2013 group in this area was Western Bonelli's Warbler. Loch of Spiggie attracts wildfowl including Goldeneye, Wigeon, Whooper Swan and Greylag Geese.

We will also explore other locations further north on the mainland with the plantations of Kergord and Vidlin and Voe being amongst our likely destinations. These sites have some more substantial cover than much of Shetland and hence often encourage tired migrants to linger a little longer. Once again, commoner warblers and finches are the most likely possibilities but scarce migrants such as Yellow-browed or Barred Warbler are always on the cards and there is always the chance of something even rarer.

Day 9: Flights out of Shetland.

Prices

Ground Price: £1,695

Single room: £150

Deposit: £150

*Air Fare: £100 (Fair Isle flights only)

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 September 5th, 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, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, 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 21st and 28th. It can be combined with our Scottish Highlands autumn tour on page 15 or the Highlands and Aberdeenshire tour on page 21.

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 - 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 both eagles and other raptors. On arrival in North Uist, we check Vallay Strand, a huge inter-tidal area, for waders and wild-fowl and the possibility of American vagrants. Transfer to our base on Benbecula for three 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

Dates

**Sunday September 22nd -
Saturday September 28th 2019**

Leader: Mark Finn
Group Size: 8
Birds: 100-120

nearby Loch Bee have hosted Pectoral, 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



Great Skua

Photo: Jo Finn

westerly winds, providing close views of seabirds including Leach's Storm Petrel 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 is 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 southbound 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: £1,695
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 migrants of Southern Morocco

Although Morocco is mainly known for tourism, it is one of the best birding areas in North Africa and holds many sought after Western Palearctic species that cannot be readily found elsewhere. Our tour takes us into the Atlas Mountains, across high altitude plateaux to the Anti Atlas Mountains, south into the Sahara Desert and west to the Atlantic coast.

Day 1: We leave London and fly to Marrakech, arriving in the late morning. From Marrakech we travel to Oukaimeden, checking the Ourika Valley for Barbary Partridge, Red-rumped Swallow, White-throated Dipper and Hawfinch. Two-night stay at the ski village of Oukaimeden.

Day 2: Today we explore the forests and mountain regions around Oukaimeden. In the village itself we should encounter Alpine Accentor, Atlas Horned Lark, Black Redstart, Rock Petronia, Red-billed and Yellow-billed Choughs. A walk in the mountains may reveal Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, African Crimson-winged Finch and Seebohm's Wheatear. In the afternoon, we visit orchards and juniper forests for Levaillant's Woodpecker, Western Subalpine Warbler, Firecrest, African Blue Tit, and the North African races of Common Chaffinch and the recently split Moroccan Wagtail.

Day 3: Today we leave Oukaimeden and cross the High Atlas Mountains. Our first stop in the Tawha Forest is a reliable area for the North African race of Long-legged Buzzard and Booted Eagle. On the descent towards Ouarzazate, we start to find White-tailed Wheatears and, with luck, the localised Maghreb Wheatear and Saharan Scrub Warbler. Transfer to Boulmane Dades for a two-night stay.

Day 4: An early start as we visit the Plateau d'Anved, a large area of stony desert interspersed with areas used for agriculture and farm buildings. The plateau is an important region for desert species - Cream-coloured Courser, Black-bellied

Dates

Thursday March 21st - Sunday
March 31st 2019

Leaders: Mohamed Zaki and Simon Papps
Group size: 8
Birds: 170-200

Sandgrouse, Greater and Lesser Short-toed, Desert, Hoopoe, Thick-billed, Thekla and Temminck's Larks. Wheatears in the area include Desert and Red-rumped. In the afternoon, we return to Boulmane Dades and explore an oasis adjacent to the Dades River for migrants.

Day 5: From Boulmane Dades we head towards the impressive Todra Gorge where the steep valley sides attract Bonelli's Eagle, Blue Rock Thrush and Eurasian Crag Martins. As we travel south the scenery changes to a distinct desert habitat. One area with a spring often attracts Spectacled Warbler and family parties of Trumpeter Finches. After passing through the desert town of Erfoud, we check in at an auberge situated within the Sahara Desert for two nights.

Day 6: We leave the auberge this morning and continue into the true Sahara. Our main objective is to locate Houbara Bustard, Spotted Sandgrouse and African Desert Warblers. Adjacent to the desert are several villages and seasonal lagoons, the former attracting Brown-necked Ravens and Desert Sparrows. Stands of acacia trees attract numerous migrants here - Black-eared Wheatear, Tawny Pipit,



Cream-coloured Courser

Photo: Simon Papps

Western Bonelli's and Western Olivaceous Warblers. We end the day at Mgouna Lake, an important area for Greater Flamingo, Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet, Black-tailed Godwit and, possibly, lingering winter ducks. Later in the evening we try for Egyptian Nightjar, which occasionally occurs in the auberge grounds.

Day 7: An early start this morning as we head towards Ouarzazate via the town of Rossini. The many oases here attract migrants, Fulvous Babbler and a small population of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters. Beyond Rossini we re-enter the desert and visit a cliff face for Desert Eagle Owl and the localised Brown-necked Raven. One-night stay in Ouarzazate.

Day 8: The Iriri Valley is our first birding stop and is an important area for raptors and migrants. Raptors regularly seen include Lanner Falcon, Eurasian Hobby, Bonelli's Eagle, Marsh and Montagu's Harriers. Our journey eventually takes us towards the Souss Valley where we may find Black-shouldered Kite, Common Quail, Maghreb Lark, Western Yellow Wagtail and the near endemic Maghreb Magpie. Transfer to Taroudant for an overnight stay where the city walls harbour colonies of Pallid and Little Swifts.

Day 9: We revisit the Souss Valley and check a hillside for roosting Red-necked Nightjars, Eurasian Thick-knee and migrants using the olive trees. Afterwards, we head northwards along the coast towards Tamri, an area famous for

Northern Bald Ibis. In the afternoon, we visit the Souss River in Agadir, an excellent stop-over point for Collared Pratincole, Kentish Plover, migrant shorebirds, gulls and terns. Overnight stay in Agadir.

Day 10: An early start this morning as we head to Oued Massa, an important wetland south of Agadir. The walk adjacent to Oued Massa may produce Purple and Squacco Herons, Glossy Ibis, Eurasian Spoonbill, Marbled Duck and a wide range of northward-bound waders. Bushes and scrub attract Black-crowned Tchagra, Eurasian Wryneck and migrant warblers.

Day 11: This morning we do some local birding if time allows before transferring to the airport for our flight back to the UK.

Prices

Ground Price: £1,995
 Single room: £130
 Deposit: £200
 *Air Fare: £275

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

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

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

Birds and mammals of Rwanda's National Parks

Rwanda is a small country which is 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 a wide 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. On arrival 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. Three nights at Akagera Lodge.

Days 3-4: 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 1st - Thursday
December 13th 2018**

Leader: Harriet Kemishiga and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 300-350

and Western Banded Snake Eagles, White-headed Vulture, Ross's Turaco, Black-collared 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 5: 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 four nights.

Days 6-8: 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,

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, Short-tailed Warbler, White-tailed Blue-flycatcher, Chapin's Flycatcher, and Purple-breasted and Regal Sunbirds. 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

Day 9: From Nyungwe we travel north to Lake Kivu where we embark on a cruise to Napoleon and Bat Islands. The shores of Lake Kivu offer us African Fish Eagle, African Harrier Hawk, African Hobby, Brimstone Canary, Lesser-striped and Red-rumped Swallows, Malachite and Pied Kingfishers, Green-headed, Bronze, Red-chested and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds. On our return transfer to Rwiza Village where we overnight.

Day 10: Today we continue northwards to Gisenyi, birding en route with stopovers at wetlands and along the shore. The Gishwati Forest is close by another excellent area for forest birds. Several specialties occur within the forest including Ruwenzori Turaco, Western Green Tinkerbird, Mountain Boubou, Doherty's Bushshrike, Ruwenzori Batis, Black-faced Prinia, White-browed Crombec, Strange Weaver, Blue-headed, Regal and Purple-breasted Sunbirds. Raptors may include Cassin's Hawk Eagle, whilst woodpeckers using the forest comprise Green-backed, Golden-crowned and Olive.

Day 11: Continue north to Volcanoes National park which is on the border with Congo and Uganda. The skyline is dominated by the area's towering peaks which can be seen on a clear day. A stop at a patch of forest just outside the reserve may



Green Woodhoopoe Photo: Roger Ridley

be fruitful for Narina's Trogon and White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher. Two nights at Davinci Lodge

Day 12: Today has been set aside to track Mountain Gorillas (this is only an option) otherwise we go birding in the forests for the day. Within the lodge grounds, tangles of vegetation attract Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, Black-crowned Waxbill, Pin-tailed Whydah, Streaky Seedeater, and Variable Sunbird.

Day 13: Today we return to Kigali where the tour concludes in time to connect with international flights home.

Prices

Ground Price: £3,595
 Single room: £420
 Deposit: £350
 *Air Fare: £800

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.

**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 which is 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 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 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

Leaders: 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 with 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-necked Storks, African Finfoot, Giant and Shining-blue Kingfishers, White-headed



Greater Honeyguide Photo: Roger Ridley

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 Babblers, 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 Samecota. 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, which was formed by a partnership of the Jane Goodall Institute and the Rural Community of Dindéfello to protect an isolated population of chimpanzees. 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 onto 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: £2,695
Single room: £250
Deposit: £250
*Air Fare: £700

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

Not included: visa, drinks, insurance, 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 past 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 - 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 Swamphen, Spur-winged

Dates

**Friday November 8th - Saturday
November 16th 2019**

Leaders: Mark Finn and Ass Ndiaye
Group Size: 8
Birds:200-250

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 Northern 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 day in this area where typical species



African Jacana *Photo: Roger Ridley*

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 5-7: 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 - 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: £1,995
 Single room: £150
 Deposit: £200
 *Air Fare: £700

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*

Endemic birds and seabirds of the Indian Ocean

The Seychelles, a group of granite islands in the Indian Ocean, is a birdwatcher's paradise. Mahe, Praslin, La Digue and Cousin hold eleven endemic species. Some of these are extremely rare, including the beautiful Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher and the restricted Seychelles Magpie Robin. We are visiting at a peak time for nesting seabirds and migrant shorebirds from Asia. After our stay in the Seychelles, we travel to the Mascarene Islands of Mauritius, Reunion and Rodrigues situated east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. Our main base is on Mauritius, the largest of the three islands and once home to the legendary Dodo. From here we make excursions by air to neighbouring Reunion and Rodrigues. The islands hold fourteen extremely rare endemics with seven on Mauritius, five on Reunion and two on Rodrigues. In addition to these 'special' birds, we can also study tropicbirds, shearwaters and terns that breed in abundance on offshore islands. Each of the islands has its culture, climate and unique habitat. The local inhabitants are extremely friendly, their ancestry dating back to the days of slavery. This holiday gives you an opportunity to study and observe some of the world's rarest species and relax in delightful surroundings on remote and beautiful Indian Ocean islands.

Day 1: We have an evening departure to the main Seychelles island of Mahe. Arrival is the following afternoon.

Day 2: At the airport, we can expect close views of Madagascar Fody and Zebra Doves. High volcanic peaks shrouded in natural forest dominate the island. Around the edges are muddy beaches and mangrove trees. We transfer to our hotel situated on the north coast of Mahe, passing through the quaint capital of Victoria. In the afternoon, we visit Union Vale and search for our first endemic birds. Seychelles Swiftlet, Seychelles Sunbird and Seychelles Bulbul are all relatively common on the lower slopes and in flowering gardens.

Day 3: We have a full day exploring the varied habitats on Mahe. An area close to Victoria Harbour has extensive mudflats attracting Crab Plover, Greater Sandplover, Common Greenshank, Terek and Curlew Sandpipers. Various piers and jetties offer resting places for Saunders' and Black-naped Terns and ever-present Grey and Striated Herons. The cross-island road traverses some spectacular scenery offer-

Dates

Wednesday August 28th -
Wednesday September 11th 2019

Leader: Mark Finn and local guides
Group Size: 8
Birds: 80-100 including 30 endemics

ing views of distant coral-lined islands. The village of Port Glaud, nestling under huge granite cliffs, is our destination. This is a reliable site for the extremely rare and tiny Seychelles Kestrel. The fields have Cattle Egrets, Madagascar Turtle-dove and Common Myna. As we travel on meandering roads into the forested peaks, we should find the gaudy-looking Seychelles Blue Pigeon. In the evening we are joined by a local ornithologist who can show us the elusive and little known Seychelles Scops-owl.

Day 4: A morning visit to a remote village situated high above Mahe for Seychelles White-eye of which fewer than twenty pairs remain. We can re-check Victoria Harbour for shorebirds, herons and terns. In the afternoon, we make a leisurely exploration



Brown Noddy Photo: Jo Finn

of north Mahe with a visit to the Plantation Club for Yellow Bittern and the endemic sub-species of Common Moorhen.

Day 5: Transfer to Praslin, the second largest of the islands for a three-night stay. Prasline has a much slower pace of life and is home to the endemic Coco de Mer palm. Later in the morning we visit the nearby island of La Digue. The star bird here is the Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher which inhabits the vanilla woods. Other species we may encounter include Yellow Bittern and Common Waxbill. The shoreline usually holds a few Whimbrel, Common Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone and Sanderling. On our return to Prasline, we have a chance of observing Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Lesser Noddy and elegant Fairy Terns.

Day 6: Today we travel to Aride, an outlying island seabird colony holding 20,000 White-tailed Tropicbirds, nearly a quarter of a million Sooty Terns and significant numbers of Bridled and Roseate Terns. On the crossing, we should encounter Wedge-tailed and Tropical Shearwaters. After a barbecue lunch on the beach, we visit the north side of Aride, an area of steep cliffs attracting large numbers of Great and Lesser Frigatebirds. Return to Praslin, watching seabirds in abundance.

Day 7: After breakfast, we travel by boat to Cousin, a low-lying island of natural woodland and one of the most important islands for breeding seabirds. A slow walk takes us into the trees where we can see White-

tailed Tropicbirds nesting around tree trunks and Fairy Terns perched on bare horizontal branches. We can also expect hundreds of nesting Bridled Terns, Lesser and Brown Noddies and, overhead, the menacing threat of Great Frigatebirds. A rare endemic form of Common Moorhen is present on Cousin. The island has a few introduced Giant Tortoises that scuff up the earth revealing worms. This is important for the Seychelles Magpie Robins that walk around your feet. Other endemic species present are the critically endangered Seychelles Fody and increasing populations of Seychelles Warbler. Back on Prasline, we visit the Coco de Mer plantations in the Vallee de Mai. This fascinating place holds the rare Seychelles Black Parrot, Seychelles Swiftlet and Seychelles Bulbul. Mammals occurring include the introduced Tenrac and endemic Seychelles Fruit Bat. We can check out an area known as Zimbabwe which gives views of Cousin and Aride. The woodlands have Seychelles Blue Pigeon while the shoreline has wintering waders which may include Grey Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit.

Day 8: Transfer to Prasline airport via Grand Anse Bay, an important area for waders and Crested Terns. A short visit to Praslin Golf Club may produce a vagrant Ruff. Return to Mahe for the two-hour flight down to Mauritius in the Mascarene Islands. Transfer to our hotel for four nights.

Day 9: Mauritius is dominated by high, thickly wooded peaks towering above swathes of sugar cane fields in the lowlands. The Indian Ocean here is a brilliant turquoise blue lapping gently onto palm-fringed beaches. Our main interest, however, is the island's endemic birdlife. Most species find a stronghold in the Black River Gorges National Park and surrounding area. Today we concentrate on the lower altitude of the park. Passing through the countryside, we may find Grey Francolin and parties of Mascarene Swiftlets and Mascarene Martins. Careful checking of telegraph poles and dead trees should yield the beautiful Mauritius Kestrel. This species dwindled to less than ten wild birds when it was saved from extinction by a cap-

tive-breeding programme. We should also locate endemic Mauritius Bulbuls and the common Mauritius Grey White-eye. Common species include Rose-ringed Parakeet, Spotted Dove, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Village Weaver and Yellow-fronted Canary.

Day 10: Travel to the north west of Mauritius for a boat trip to Round and Serpent Islands off the north coast. The crossing may produce Mascarene and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and pods of Humpback Whales. These two islands hold thousands of breeding seabirds with significant numbers of Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbirds, Trinidade Petrel, Great and Lesser Frigatebirds, Masked and Red-footed Boobies, Bridled and Sooty Terns, and Brown and Lesser Noddies. Return to Mauritius for lunch and a return visit to Black River Gorges.

Day 11: A special day with visits to two closed areas of Black River Gorges National Park accompanied by staff from the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation. We should see all the endemic species including Mauritius Kestrel, Mauritius Cuckoo-shrike and Mauritius Bulbul. Two species, namely Mauritius Olive White-eye and Mauritius Fody, are attracted to flowering plants. They probably number less than 100 individuals and are critically endangered. The other two species, Pink Pigeon and Mauritius (Echo) Parakeet, are slowly increasing in numbers and we expect close views at feeding stations situated in an area of natural forest. A visit to Combo, a stronghold of the rare Mauritius Paradise Flycatcher, is also planned.

Day 12: Transfer to the airport for an internal flight to Rodrigues, an isolated and rather barren island. The island has a distinctly West Indian atmosphere in contrast to Mauritius. On arrival, we make the short journey to our hotel for a night's stay. The hill opposite our base is home to endemic Rodrigues Fruit Bats.

Day 13: Morning visit into the interior and Solitude Forest Station. It is here that the two endangered endemic species,

Rodrigues Fody and Rodrigues Warbler, reside. Both are slowly increasing in numbers due to careful conservation work on the island. Transfer to the airport for our flight to Mauritius and on to Reunion, an isolated French territory for a two-night stay.

Day 14: Reunion is literally the top of an extinct volcano jutting 3,000 metres above the surrounding Indian Ocean. Coastal cliffs can hold good numbers of White-tailed Tropicbirds. Our main interest is the central ground of the island where we can look for endemic land species in Reunion Paradise-flycatcher, Reunion Cuckoo-shrike, Reunion Stonechat, Reunion Bulbul and Reunion Olive White-eye. Species shared with Mauritius, but more numerous on Reunion, include Mascarene Swiftlet, and the closely related Reunion Grey White-eye. Open areas with scrub and brush attract near endemic species in Reunion Harrier and Mascarene Martin. We can visit St Pierre on the south coast for close observations of the critically endangered Barau's Petrel as it flies inland to its nesting sites on the edge of an extinct volcano.

Day 15: A final morning birdwatching on Reunion. We then transfer to Plaisance Airport on Mauritius for our flight home to England. Arrival is early the next morning.

Prices

Ground Price: £4,995
Single room: £200
Deposit: £500
*Air Fare: £1,800

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

Not included: drinks, insurance and items of a personal nature. Airport departure taxes from the Seychelles, Reunion and Mauritius.

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

Birds of the Drakensberg, Wakkerstroom and Kruger National Park

South Africa is a large, modern and developing country situated at the 'bottom end' of the African continent. The country has large protected areas in the form of national parks within its boundaries, thus offering visiting birders a huge range of bird and mammal life. This unique itinerary takes in the Drakensberg Mountains, the rural community of Wakkerstroom and the world famous Kruger National Park. You can expect a high percentage of South African endemic bird species and a wide range of mammals within Kruger.

Days 1-2: A late afternoon flight from London to Johannesburg where arrival is on the following morning. After clearing customs, we transfer to our remote hotel which is located high in the Drakensberg Mountains. En route the highway passes through extensive agricultural areas dotted with marshes where birds may include Black-shouldered Kite, Blacksmith Lapwing and displaying Long-tailed Widowbirds. Two-night stay in the Drakensberg Mountains.

Day 3: Our isolated hotel is unique in location with a vulture feeding station close to the rooms. It is possible to get close views of Cape Griffon and Bearded Vultures, Jackal Buzzard and White-necked Ravens which regularly attend the feeding station. Around the gardens we should locate groups of Red-winged Starling, Greater Striped Swallow, Familiar Chat, Malachite and Greater Double-collared Sunbirds, Drakensberg Siskins and White-rumped Swifts. Later in the morning we drive up towards The Sentinel which has incredible views down into the valley below. Raptors are well represented in the area with Verreaux's Eagle, Black Harrier, Rock Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon. Ground Woodpecker and Cape Rock Thrush prefer the rocky outcrops. Our main interest is locating the endemic Drakensberg Rockjumper which inhabits the highest areas.

Dates

Monday December 2nd - Sunday
December 15th 2019

Leader: Mark Finn and local guides
Group Size: 8
Birds: 280-320

Day 4: Today we leave the mountains and visit Witkoppen Reserve. En route we should encounter large numbers of Amur Falcons on wires and fences. Witkoppen should reveal Eastern Long-billed Lark, South African Cliff Swallow, Banded Martin and mixed flocks of Common and Alpine Swifts. A check of the grasslands may reveal the beautiful Blue Bustard and the localised Secretarybird. Travel to the birding hotspot of Wakkerstroom where we stay for three nights

Days 5-6: Our base is at a farmhouse close to Wakkerstroom with easy access to the main birding areas. Before breakfast an exploration of one of the many dirt roads running through the region should reveal Red-throated Wryneck, Buff-streaked Chat, Red-capped Lark, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Cape Sparrow and displaying Long-tailed Widowbirds. In the extensive grasslands, sightings of Southern Bald Ibis, Grey-crowned Crane and Denham's and Blue Bustards are possible. On one day a drive along the Amersfoort road for Black-winged and Crowned Lapwings, Eastern



Lilac-breasted Roller *Photo: Jo Finn*

Clapper and Spike-heeled Larks, Drakensberg Prinia, Pale-crowned and Zitting Cisticolas. The area around Daggakraal and Fickland Pan is famous for larks and we hope to connect with the rare Rudd's Lark and highly localised Botha's Lark. Several wetlands in the area attract Maccoa Duck, Southern Pochard, Red-billed Teal, Cape Shoveler and African Spoonbill. Closer to base an extensive marsh is attractive to Purple Swamphen, South African Shelduck, Hottentot Teal, Lesser Swamp and Little Rush Warblers and hunting African Marsh Harriers.

Day 7: Before driving to Kruger we check the farm gardens and adjacent bush for African Hoopoe, Crested Barbet, Olive Thrush, Black-throated Canary, Streaky-headed Seedeater and, on flowering plants, Amethyst Sunbirds. We enter Kruger at Malelane and stop at the Crocodile River. Here the birds are both varied and different from earlier in the tour.

The water edge should provide views of Water Thick-knee, White-faced Whistling Duck, Goliath Heron and Three-banded Plovers. Berg-en-Dal is a short distance away from our base for the night. The gardens attract Magpie Shrike, Lilac-breasted Roller, Southern Red-billed and Yellow-billed Hornbills, Blue Waxbill and noisy Swainson's Francolins.

Days 8-9: A dawn start to Skukuza Camp with plenty of mammals along the route. Typical birds include Yellow-throated Longclaw, Red-billed Oxpecker, various starlings including Cape and Burchell's, Martial Eagle, Arrow-marked Babbler, Red-crested Bustard and grass-loving Natal and Crested Francolins. On arrival in Skukuza we have brunch and then a walk around the grounds which hold African Paradise Flycatcher, African Green Pigeon and Violet-backed Starlings. Later in the day there is a visit to a bird hide and pool for wetland birds and a drive into the bush for

Jacobin Cuckoo, Red-faced Mousebird, White-crested Helmetshrike, Green-winged Pytilia and the inquisitive Pearl-spotted Owllet. On Day 9 a pre-breakfast drive in a westerly direction from Skukuza. The grasslands attract Southern Ground Hornbills and a range of raptors: White-backed Vulture, Bateleur, Brown Snake Eagle and African Hawk Eagle. Other interesting species include Little and Southern Carmine Bee-eaters, Woodland Kingfisher, Black-crowned Tchagra and White-browed Scrub Robin. The scattered bush habitat and rock outcrops may have Rattling Cisticola, Black-backed Puffback, Long-billed Crombec and the localised Southern Black Tit.

Days 10-11: Next on the agenda is the Sabie River which holds storks and White-crowned Lapwings. Satara is our next base with chances of Senegal Lapwing, Purple Roller and White-winged Widowbird en route. In the evening a night drive is planned for African and Southern White-faced Scops-Owls, African Barred Owllet, Spotted and Verreaux's Eagle Owls, Fiery-necked, Square-tailed and Freckled Nightjars and Bronze-winged Courser. On Day 11 an early morning game and bird-watching drive around the eastern area of the park. The open savannah habitat with large trees has a high population density of herbivores and attendant predators: Tawny, Steppe and Lesser Spotted Eagles. Kills attract White-headed, Lappet-faced, African White-backed, Hooded Vultures. The afternoon is spent birdwatching in the woodlands where we may find Bennett's and Golden-tailed Woodpeckers, Green Woodhoopoe and Burnt-necked Eremomela. Satara often has species within the camp with previous visits recording Yellow-breasted Apalis, Orange-breasted Bushshrike and Brown-headed Parrots.

Day 12: Today we leave Kruger and head back into the Drakensberg Mountain range via the Blyde River Canyon - the third-largest in the world. The canyon is home to one of the world's rarest raptors, the tiny Taita Falcon. Nearby, a botanical garden can be productive for Yellow-fronted and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds, Black-collared

Barbet, Ashy Flycatcher and Scarlet-chested Sunbird. Later in the day we arrive at Mount Sheba and our hotel surrounded by Afromontane Forest.

Day 13: A full day at Mount Sheba where the forest trails hold the endemic Knysa Turaco. In the undergrowth a search for skulking species - White-starred Robin, Chorister Robin Chat, Barratt's Scrub Warbler and Yellow-throated Woodland Warblers. If we are lucky a Narina Trogon may show, hunting for insects. Other species within the forest include Red-necked Francolin, Black Sawwing, African Dusky Flycatcher, Forest Canary and Swee Waxbill. Outside our rooms common species comprise Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Cape Batis, Olive Woodpecker, Bar-throated Apalis and Cape White-eye.

Day 14: Pre-breakfast walk around the hotel grounds followed by a transfer to Johannesburg Airport. Flights depart for Europe in the evening with arrival early on the following day.

Prices

Ground Price: £3,995
Single room: £250
Deposit: £400
*Air Fare: £695

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

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

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

Birds of the Ardennes and Northern France

Belgium and Northern France are essentially on our doorstep in Northern Europe and offer exceptional birding in April. The first summer migrants and lingering winter birds stay on the polders and reserves along the English Channel coast. Our journey starts in the Ardennes, a sparsely populated area of southern Belgium, and progresses to areas in Northern France. This tour offers you chances of rare breeding birds and migrants of Europe.

Day 1: A morning flight to Brussels and then journey south to the Ardennes. The Ardennes has a wide range of habitats from quarry workings to areas of woodland and blanket bogs. Hertogenwald is a large forest of beech and spruce where we search for the localised Grey-headed Woodpecker. Other species include Middle-spotted Woodpecker, Short-toed Treecreeper and Hawfinch. Before dusk a visit to a quarry along the river Ourthe may reveal calling and hunting Eurasian Eagle Owls. Two nights at La Roche-en-Ardenne.

Day 2: Our main interest is Hautes-Fagnes, the highest point in Belgium and an exceptional area for bird life. Hautes-Fagnes supports a few Black Grouse and within the forested areas Black Woodpecker, Woodlark, Eurasian Siskin, Common Redpoll and Common Crossbill. At this time of the year it is also possible to find returning migrants, which may include Black Stork, Common Crane, Hen Harrier and Red Kite. Around the information centre bird flocks may include Willow, Marsh and Coal Tits. In the afternoon we visit Fagne de Malchamps, an area of heath and bogs holding Eurasian Nutcracker and Common Stonechat among others. Wanne is a reliable spot for Eurasian Nutcracker, Crested Tit, Firecrest and Great Grey Shrikes, which find a stronghold here. Any fast-flowing rivers hold populations of White-throated Dipper, Grey Wagtail and Common Kingfisher. As dusk falls, a return visit to Hautes-Fagnes for the possibility of Tengmalm's Owls which utilise the nest boxes.

Dates

Tuesday April 9th - Sunday April 14th 2019

Leader: Mark Finn

Group Size: 8

Birds: 120-150

Day 3: Today we leave the Ardennes and travel to Northern France via Harchies and Pommeroeul Marshes near Mons. The ponds, a result of the defunct mining industry, have a habitat of open water, reedbeds, poplar stands and a series of hides. Species we may encounter include Black-necked Grebe, Eurasian and Little Bitterns, Garganey, Eurasian Marsh Harrier, Great and European Reed Warblers and colonising European Penduline Tits. Rare species which appear on a regular basis include Purple Heron, Osprey, Whiskered, Black and White-winged Terns. Transfer to Escalles near Cap Blanc Nez for three nights.

Day 4: This morning we head south to Crecy Forest, a rich woodland dominated by beech trees and open areas of scrub. A wide range of birds use the forest with the cleared areas attracting Tree Pipit, Common Whitethroat, Blackcap, Garden and Willow Warblers and Common Chiffchaff. The more mature trees attract Green Woodpecker, Eurasian Nuthatch, Common Redstart and possibly a returning Honey Buzzard or Eurasian Hobby. En route to Marquenterre, a short diversion to an area of marshes may produce sightings of European Turtle Dove, Bluethroat and



White storks

Photo: Jo Finn

Whinchat. Once at Marquenterre we take a walk around the extensive trail system overlooking lagoons, patches of scrub and pinewoods. The lagoons attract high numbers of waders in spring which include Black and Bar-tailed Godwits, Common, Green and occasionally Curlew Sandpipers, Whimbrel, Eurasian Curlew, Dunlin and breeding species, Black-winged Stilt and Pied Avocet. The reserve also attracts high numbers of Little Egret, Eurasian Spoonbill, White Stork, Mediterranean Gull and on occasions Great and Cattle Egrets and Black-crowned Night Heron.

Day 5: This morning we head to Cap Gris Nez, which juts out into the English Channel with views of the Kent coast on clear days. The 'cap' is a noted migration spot and a check of bushes and fields can reveal interesting species, notably Common Nightingale, Black Redstart and migrant warblers. In the bare fields European Golden Plover and Northern Lapwing often rest on migration. If the winds are northerly or westerly in direction a short seawatch may reveal passing Northern Gannets, Brent Goose, Common Scoter, Arctic Skua, Common, Arctic and Little Terns and chances of Manx Shearwater and Little Gulls. Later in the day we visit Hardelot, an upmarket town

with holiday homes set in a pinewood. Our main interest here is a population of Lesser-spotted Woodpecker, European Serin, Crested Tit and, in sandy areas, Crested Larks.

Day 6: Today we head back to Brussels for late afternoon flights back to the UK. If time permits a visit to Oye Plage for waders and terns will be made as it is close to the motorway network.

Prices

Ground Price: £1,095

Single room: £85

Deposit: £150

*Air Fare: £110

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*

Endemics and seabirds of the Canaries

The seven Canary Islands belong to Spain and can be divided, based on the type of habitat, into two groups. The Western Islands comprise Tenerife, Gomera, La Palma, El Hierro and Gran Canaria. The eastern islands of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura are situated off the African coast. We visit Tenerife, Gomera, and Fuerteventura which hold a good percentage of the endemic species found in the Canary Islands. The islands have been isolated long enough to offer the opportunity to see the highest number of endemics to the region along with a great number of endemic sub-species. Fuerteventura has the endemic Canary Islands Chat and many other desert species including Houbara Bustard. The islands are volcanic in origin and offer some spectacular scenery and an avifauna found nowhere else on Earth.

Days 1-3: Morning flight to Fuerteventura. Once on the island, we drive south and make several stops to locate the endemic Canary Islands Chat. Jandida has a variety of habitats to explore. Species we can expect here include Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Eurasian Thick-knee, Cream-coloured Courser and Lesser Short-toed Lark. Las Penitas, Los Molinos and Tindaya are important birding areas on the island. At Las Penitas we can look for Ruddy Shelduck, Barbary Partridge, Egyptian Vulture, Common Buzzard, Eurasian Kestrel, Sardinian and Spectacled Warblers and the recently split Ultramarine Tit. The introduced Barbary Ground Squirrel also occurs in the area. On Day 3 we drive through semi-desert plains looking for Houbara Bustard, Trumpeter Finch, Lesser Short-toed Lark and Southern Grey Shrike.

Day 4: Morning flight to Tenerife and transfer to our hotel situated in the centre of the island for a three-night stay. On arrival we can look for the endemic Blue Chaffinch and the recently split Tenerife Blue Tit. Other interesting species present include endemic sub-species of Great Spotted Woodpecker, Eurasian Kestrel and Rock Dove. Five of the endemics, Canary Islands Chiffchaff, Canary Islands Kinglet, Plain Swift, Berthelot's Pipit and Atlantic Canary, are quite common in the pine woods and surrounding area.

Dates

Friday December 21st - Friday
December 28th 2018

Leader: Mark Finn and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 60-90

Day 5: Today we visit Teno National Park looking for Barbary Falcon which can often be seen from the cliff at Teno. On the way to the area, we cross the most spectacular National Park found in the Canary Islands. Teide National Park, in the high mountain zone, offers a superb panorama of lava fields, craters and the highest active volcano in Spain at 12,198 feet. We make a stop for Rock Petronia and Spanish Sparrow on our return journey. In the south of Tenerife, wintering birds often include Eurasian Spoonbill, Common Greenshank, Grey Plover, Whimbrel and Common Ringed Plover.

Day 6: Today we explore the island of Gomera. The ferry crossing offers us the opportunity to observe Bulwer's Petrel, Manx, Barolo's, Scopoli's and Cory's Shearwaters. Rarer species include Great and Sandwich Tern. Cetaceans seen on previous tours include Short-finned Pilot Whale and Common and Bottlenose Dolphins and, with luck, we may see Pilot Whales. Our destination on Gomera is



Canary Islands Chat Photo: Eduardo Garcia del Rey

Garajonay National Park where the endemic Bolle's and Laurel Pigeons occur. Other species present include Eurasian Sparrowhawk and the Canary Islands race of Common Buzzard. This promises to be an interesting day in a remote and unique area of Gomera. In the afternoon we have further chances of seabirds on the return crossing to Tenerife.

Day 7: Today has been set aside for us to revisit areas on Tenerife for birds which we may have missed. Our local contacts may have news of any unusual birds wintering on the island. In the south of Tenerife we can check golf courses for wintering Red-throated Pipit and on occasions rarer waders which have included American Golden Plover and Pectoral Sandpiper. El Medano is one of the better sites for waders on Tenerife and it usually holds Ringed and Kentish Plovers, Dunlin, Greenshank, Ruff and Ruddy Turnstone and sometimes Bar-tailed Godwit and Whimbrel.

Day 8: Fly back to the UK where the tour concludes.

Prices

Ground Price: £1,995
 Single room: £100
 Deposit: £200
 *Air Fare: £350

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

Not included: drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature and any relevant fuel surcharges, baggage and credit card charges and any flight meals to and from the Canary Islands.

**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 mid-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 Crane, Caspian Plover and Cinereous Bunting are among the less regular but almost annual rarities. Cyprus has two full breeding endemics - Cyprus Warbler and Cyprus Wheatear - as well as four endemic sub-species, one of which, Cyprus Scops Owl, is now accepted by some authorities as a full endemic species in its own right. Cyprus has increasing populations of Spur-winged Lapwing and Black Francolin. The trip will cover both mountain and coastal areas and is based in the coastal city of Limassol.

■ This tour can be combined with the island of Lesbos on page 56.

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 the Limassol area.

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 Crane, 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.

Dates

Wednesday April 10th -
Wednesday April 17th 2019

Leader: Jane Stylianou

Group Size: 8

Birds: 130-155

Migrating raptors may be possible, including Lesser Spotted Eagle. Inland, we visit Neochorio village and the Smyies area including Agias Minas. Return to Limassol 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.



Masked Shrike

Photo: Jane Stylianou

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 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, Short-toed Treecreeper and Cyprus Scops Owl (the latter now accepted by some authorities as a full species). 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. 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: £1,895

Single room: £125

Deposit: £150

*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 we are sure to find them in good numbers. Wintering species from northern Europe include large numbers of ducks, with 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 using the area regularly. 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 winter flocks of Little Bustard and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, although the latter can be tricky to locate. Southern Grey Shrike,

Dates

Saturday December 7th - Saturday
December 14th 2019

Leader: Simon MacLaughlin

Group Size: 8

Birds: 120-135

Eurasian Thick-knee and Calandra Lark are further possibilities, whilst there is also a regular site where small numbers of Richard's Pipits spend the winter and our group encountered a flock of five here in 2017.

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 and we will prioritise finding this sought-after bird. Other possibilities include Alpine Accentor, Crag Martin, Black Redstart, Wood Lark, 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 in which we hope to find 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 treeline are likely to have patches of snow and here we have an excellent chance of



Western Black Redstart

Photo: Jane Stylianou

finding flocks of Alpine Accentors and we also hope to see the sometimes tricky to find White-winged Snowfinch. We will also try to find time to visit the impressive Pont du Gard, an ancient Roman aqueduct that is a regular site for Rock Petronia and also sometimes attracts wintering Wallcreeper.

Day 5: This morning we return to Marseille and fly to Bastia in the north-east of Corsica. Etang de Biguglia is very close to the airport at Bastia and is our first birding stop. Spotless Starlings and Red Kites should be easily encountered. The lake is one of the more important areas for waterbirds on the island 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. We will then head up 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 maquis. Our main interest is in locating the island's two endemic birds: Corsican Nuthatch and Corsican Finch. Exploring some of the

spectacular mountainous valleys we expect to find a selection of commoner woodland species including the local *koenigi* subspecies of Eurasian Wren. In the low maquis scrub, typical of more open areas, we search for Marmora's Warbler and with luck Wryneck, small numbers of which winter on Corsica. The mountains of central Corsica still have a few pairs of Lammergeier, and we visit a valley to search specifically for these magnificent birds. Other species we hope to see include Sparrowhawk, Golden Eagle, Blue Rock Thrush, Cirl Bunting, Raven, Dipper and on the highest slopes Yellow-billed Cough. A visit to the eastern coast will allow us to explore some coastal lagoons where we have a chance of seeing a variety of wildfowl and waders such as Common Sandpiper and Little Ringed Plover. Areas of scrub host Sardinian Warbler, Serin, Common Chiffchaff, Blackcap and perhaps some early returning spring migrants. If there are onshore winds we may try some sea-watching in the hope of seeing Yelkouan and Cory's Shearwaters and perhaps 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: £1,895
 Single room: £150
 Deposit: £200
 *Air Fare: £300

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*

Spring migration in the Eastern Mediterranean

Lesbos is the third-largest Greek Island situated in the Aegean Sea. The coast of Turkey is a few kilometres eastwards. The geographical position of Lesbos attracts migrants on their way to Turkey and beyond. The island has a varied and fascinating landscape with mountains and pinewoods in the south, rocky valleys in the centre and areas of damp meadows, wetlands and seasonal rivers running into the sea. Lesbos has some sought-after species in Rock and Kruper's Nuthatches and the internationally scarce Cinereous Bunting. The main purpose of our visit is to witness the spectacular spring migration which takes place every year. The air can be literally alive with herons, marsh terns, birds of prey, hirundines and passerines. Kaloni Salt pans will be visited on most days for shorebirds as the numbers and variety of birds change daily. This tour to Lesbos takes in the very best of birdwatching the eastern half of the Mediterranean region. Our base will be at Skala Kalloni throughout our stay.

■ Lesbos can be combined with our Cyprus tour on page 52.

Day 1: We take a flight to Athens where we have a connection to Mytilini on Lesbos. On arrival we make the journey to Skala Kalloni, our base for the week.

Day 2: Our hotel at Skala Kaloni is situated near an area of wetlands, salt pans and olive groves, good habitats for migrant birds. Species we can expect to see in the town itself, or flying over, include White Stork, Glossy Ibis, Wood Sandpiper, Garganey, Little Owl, Eurasian Bee-eater and White-winged Terns. The East River is a major staging post for water birds. We can expect Little Bittern, Great and Little Egrets, Black-crowned Night, Squacco, Grey and Purple Herons and, with luck, Little and Spotted Crakes. Emergent riverside vegetation often harbours warblers of which Great Reed and Eurasian Reed, Sedge and Savi's can be numerous. Wetlands often have terns, most of which will be Whiskered and White-winged although there is an outside chance of Gull-billed and Caspian. Passerines include Common and Lesser Whitethroats, Olivaceous Warbler, Red-throated Pipit, Short-toed Lark, Lesser Grey, Red-backed and Woodchat Shrikes. Raptors pass overhead with some regularity and include Western Marsh and Montagu's Harriers, Eurasian Hobby, Red-footed Falcon, Short-toed Eagle and perhaps an early Eleonora's

Dates

Thursday April 18th - Saturday
April 27th 2019

Leader: Mark Finn

Group Size: 8

Birds: 125-145

Falcon. The Gulf of Kalloni may have lingering Great Crested and Black-necked Grebes and Mediterranean Gulls. Later in the day we visit a site for Eurasian Scops Owls.

Day 3: Today we drive westwards to Sigrí along winding roads passing through rocky mountainous country. Birds en route include Black-eared, Isabelline and Northern Wheatears, Common Nightingale and Subalpine Warbler. Ipsilou Monastery is unique in having nesting Long-legged Buzzards on its rocky escarpments. Other species, which prefer this environment, include Red-rumped Swallow, Eurasian Crag-martin, Rock Nuthatch, Rock Sparrow, Blue Rock and Rufous-tailed Rock Thrushes, Sombre Tit, Woodlark, Common Raven, Ortolan and Cinereous Buntings. A track, which meanders northwards, should produce Short-toed Eagle, Black Kite, Red-footed Falcon and Hooded Crow. Fields

often have migrants including Black-headed Wagtail, Common Redstart and Whinchat. Any stand of oaks is worth scanning for Middle-spotted Woodpecker. Sigri is a village in western Lesbos overlooking several offshore islands. Lesser Kestrel and Eurasian Jackdaws can be numerous around old buildings and ruins. Sigri attracts many migrants with previous visits producing Common and Great Snipe, Baillon's and Spotted Crakes, Tawny and Tree Pipits, Citrine Wagtail, River and Barred Warblers, Red-breasted and Collared Flycatchers, Rufous-tailed Bush Chat and Golden Oriole. Telegraph wires attract European Bee-eaters, European Roller, Lesser Grey, Red-backed, Masked and Woodchat Shrikes.

Day 4: Today we travel north to Molivos. The cliffs and castle near Molivos hold many breeding birds. Offshore we should find Audouin's Gulls. We can expect to see Orphean and Ruppell's Warblers and Rock Nuthatch whilst raptors include Peregrine Falcon. Coastal ravines are covered in scrub attracting migrants and resident Chukars. We end the day at Kaloni salt pans where herons, egrets and shorebirds abound - Eurasian Spoonbill, Collared and, more rarely, Black-winged Pratincoles, Stone Curlew, Wood and Curlew Sandpipers, Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Little Stint, Ruff and Common Greenshank. On previous visits we have observed Black Stork, Common Crane and Great Spotted Cuckoo.

Day 5: Agiassos is our destination today. This town is situated high in the mountains below the summit of Mount Olympus. Woodland starts to dominate the area just beyond the village. This holds a range of interesting species. Familiar birds include Northern Goshawk, Common Buzzard, Common Raven, Mistle Thrush, Woodpigeon, Long-tailed Tit and Short-toed Treecreeper. On our return to Kaloni, a stop will be made at an old army camp. Kruper's Nuthatch has bred here for the last few years. With luck, we should see this highly localised bird along with Collared and Pied Flycatchers, Black-eared Wheatear and European Serin. Derbyshire, an area similar to its namesake in England, is close by. The

wetlands here attract Black Stork, Great Egret and Ruddy Shelduck.

Day 6: Today we start with a visit to the Potamia Valley, home to the highly secretive Olive Tree Warbler which prefers the overlap of oak and olive trees. Other birds we may encounter include Common Buzzard, Masked Shrike and Spotted Flycatcher. Further on, we arrive at Parakila Marsh, home to breeding Black-winged Stilts, Great Reed Warblers and other marshland birds. Marsh terns are regularly seen along with Little Crake, Common Moorhen and Common Coot. We continue west to Tavari, passing through dry rocky hillsides and damp valleys. Birds we are likely to encounter are Middle-spotted Woodpecker, European Roller and Alpine Swift. Seawatching at Tavari should reward us with passing Scopoli's and Yelkouan Shearwaters and the local race of European Shag. We make our way back through the central mountain road which will give us another chance to locate birds which are mentioned under day 4.

Days 7-9: Birdwatching in and around the Kaloni area or a return visit to Sigri. At this time of the month we can expect our first Black-headed Buntings from their wintering grounds in India.

Day 10: Transfer to Mytilini airport for our connection to Athens and our flight home.

Prices

Ground Price: £1,495
 Single room: £100
 Deposit: £150
 *Air Fare: £400

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*

Breeding birds of the High Arctic

This tour concentrates on the breeding birds of Northern Norway and along the border with Russia. At this time of the year there is very little darkness although the daytime temperatures can be low even in June. We have exceptional opportunities to watch and observe many familiar birds that winter in Britain, plus the addition of spectacular birds of the High Arctic which includes several species of owls, waders and warblers.

■ Please note you should arrive in Oslo on the night of June 5th as the flight to Kirkenes is early on the 6th.

Day 1: Fly to the mining town of Kirkenes in extreme Northern Norway. One of our first birding stops is the large wetland of Ferdesmyra which is a good place for Tundra Bean Goose, Common Crane and Short-eared Owl. Our journey takes us towards the Varanger Fjord where we may encounter divers, seabirds and the first White-tailed Eagles of the tour. Transfer to Vadsø where we stay for three nights.

Day 2: 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. The island is also home to Barnacle Geese, Red-throated and Rock Pipits. Back on the mainland, we check the area around Ekkerøy for Common, King and Steller's Eiders, Little and Temminck's Stints, Purple Sandpiper, Bar-tailed Godwit and Long-tailed Skuas. Passerines comprise Lapland and Snow Buntings, Common and Arctic Redpolls.

Day 3: Today we head towards the old, deserted fishing village at Hamningberg. This is a beautiful drive along the Persfjord and through the delta at Sandfjord. This is a good area for the rare White-billed Diver whilst Red-throated and Black-throated Divers can be numerous and Red-necked Phalaropes are on almost every patch of water. Sea-ducks form loose flocks and comprise Long-tailed Duck, Velvet and Common Scoters, all three eiders and

Dates

Thursday June 6th-Saturday June 15th 2019

Leader: Anders Mæland

Group Size: 7

Birds: 125-145

Common Goldeneye. Other species we search for along the coast include Little Stint, Temminck's Stints, Willow Ptarmigan, Red-throated Pipit and Bluethroat. We drive into the Komag valley to look for colourful, lekking Ruffs, Jack Snipe and dainty Little Gulls. There are also several other localities we visit including Vadsøya for ghostly white Arctic Redpolls.

Day 4: After leaving Vadsø, we drive along the Varangerfjord towards the Tana Valley. We make stops in the inner part of the fjord, at the Tana river delta. Spotted Redshanks occur here along with other waders. As we cross the Tana Valley with its rocky outcrops we should keep an eye out for Rough-legged Buzzards, Golden Eagle and, in recent years, Gyrfalcons. Passerines are few in this bleak landscape but good numbers of Ring Ouzel and Bluethroat are present in June. Northern Hawk Owls are a distinct possibility along the road as we approach our base at Batsfjord for the next three nights.

Days 5-6: The next two days are spent birding around Batsfjord and Berlevåg. The landscape and scenery is quite dramatic



Siberian Jay Photo: Anders Mæland

with snowfields, lakes and Arctic tundra. If it is a lemming year, we expect to see high numbers of the beautiful Long-tailed Skua and Rough-legged Buzzards, and we have an outside chance of Snowy Owls. Waders using the tundra comprise Eurasian Dotterel, Common Ringed, Temminck's Stint and European Golden Plovers. Passerines such as Horned Lark, Snow and Lapland Buntings, Rock Pipit and Willow Warbler are also present. Long-tailed Ducks breed on the small ponds. The fishing port of Batsfjord has Goosander and Common Goldeneye whilst the seaweed-strewn beaches attract Purple Sandpipers and Ruddy Turnstones to feed. On the second day, we drive to the little fishing village of Berlevåg, a good place to find Glaucous and Iceland Gulls and in 2018 Ross's Gull. Along the way, we look for Gyrfalcon and Twite. Kjølnes lighthouse is a great sea-watching point with passing

Northern Gannet, Northern Fulmar (blue phase birds) and Pomarine Skuas, if winds are favourable.

Day 7: Today we drive towards the taiga forest in the Pasvik valley where our base is at Svanvik for three nights. The vegetation of Pasvik is dominated by pine and birch forests.

Days 8-9: We birdwatch along the border with Russia and in the Pasvik National Park. Some of the species we look for include Smew, Eurasian Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Pine Grosbeak, Siberian Jay, Siberian Tit, Arctic Warbler and Little Bunting, the latter two species not arriving until mid-June. Moose is often seen and, if we are lucky, Brown Bear is also possible. The shallow parts of the river and adjacent wetlands attract Whooper Swan, Tundra Bean Goose and other wildfowl. Birds of prey include Merlin, White-tailed Eagle and Osprey. We also have a good chance of seeing Hawk and Short-eared Owls and, if it is a good rodent year, Great Grey Owl. Bogs and marshes are breeding areas for a variety of waders, including Bar-tailed Godwit, Jack Snipe and the scarce Broad-billed Sandpiper.

Day 10: 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: £325

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 5th.

**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 southwest 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 28th. 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 northwest 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 of the North European species

Dates

**Saturday September 28th -
Saturday October 5th 2019**

Leader: Anders Mæland
Group size: 7
Birds: 110-130

during a single day. Common Buzzard and Eurasian Sparrowhawk are the most numerous when in September and October, 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 we see less common species – Little Ringed



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



Black Woodpecker Photo: *Pandion Wildlife Tours*

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 here 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 is migrant Common Cranes which can occur in huge numbers, feeding in the meadow and fields. The nutritious lakes Krankesjön and Vombsjön 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: £150

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*

Land of the Thunder Dragon

Bhutan or 'Land of the Thunder Dragon' is a small, forested country nestling in the heart of the Himalayan Mountains. A large percentage of Bhutan is covered in pristine forests of oak and a mix of rhododendron and bamboo. The country also has spectacular river systems originating from the high Himalayas attracting the spectacular and rare Ibisbill. Bhutan still retains much of its historical culture, heritage and centuries old rituals. Our journey in Bhutan starts at Paro in the west and continues along the west/east road to Samdrup Jongkhar, the entry point into northeastern India and Assam. This is a comprehensive tour of Bhutan visiting a wide range of sites among some of the most spectacular scenery on earth. We can expect a range of incredible birds including Satyr Tragopan, Blood Pheasant, Beautiful Nuthatch and Fire-tailed Myzornis.

Day 1: We have a flight to Delhi in India.

Day 2: Morning flight to Paro in Bhutan. Transfer to our hotel situated above the River Paro. A walk around the garden may be productive for Nutcracker, Buff-barred Warbler, Rufous-fronted and Green-backed Tits, Long-tailed Minivets and noisy parties of Yellow-billed Blue Magpies. After lunch, we visit the Paro Valley and Drugyel Dzong a 17th century fort surrounded by pinewoods. Around the dzong we should find Kalij Pheasant, Rufous Sibia and Blue Whistling Thrush. On our return journey we check boulders in the Paro River for Brown Dipper and White-capped and Plumbeous Redstarts.

Day 3: An early start is essential to visit the impressive Chele La Pass, an important area for Bhutan's pheasants. We have a good chance of locating Himalayan Monal, Blood Pheasant and the highly sought after Satyr's Tragopan. After reaching the summit we take the pass to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. Birds at higher altitudes may include Dark-rumped and White-browed Rosefinches and White-winged Grosbeak. Lower down, mixed feeding flocks may comprise Black-faced and Spotted Laughingthrushes, Red-headed Bullfinch, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Brown Parrotbill and Stripe-throated Yuhina. Before reaching Thimphu, a sector of river is reliable for Ibisbill, River Lapwing,

Dates

Saturday October 12th - Tuesday October 29th 2019

Leaders: Rinchen Drakpa and Mark Finn

Group size: 8

Birds: 290-320

Long-billed Plover, Ruddy Shelduck, Wallcreeper and wintering Oriental Skylarks. Night's stay in Thimphu.

Day 4: This morning we leave early in order to be at Dochu La for sunrise. Our interest lies in the cool broad-leaved forests and the mixed feeding flocks they attract. Along the road we may encounter Golden Bush Robin and Grey Bushchat. Mixed flocks may have Blue-winged, Red-tailed and Chestnut-tailed Minlas, White-browed and Nepal Fulvettas and Whiskered, Rufous-vented, Black-chinned and White-bellied Yuhinas. At higher elevations we look for Grey-winged and White-collared Blackbirds, White-throated Laughingthrushes, Rusty-flanked Treecreeper, Golden-spectacled, Yellow-rumped and Tickell's Leaf Warblers. Lower down in stands of oak, we have a chance of Yellow-browed Fantail, White-tailed Nuthatch, Grey-hooded Warbler and Yellowish-bellied Bush Warblers. Open areas attract altitudinal Himalayan migrants in Rosy Pipit, Mrs



Blood Pheasant Photo: Rinchen Drakpa

Gould's Sunbird and Ashy-throated Warblers. Later in the day, we visit the Do Chu River where the rare White-bellied Heron and Pallas's Fish Eagle reside. Two-night stay at Punakha the old capital of Bhutan.

Day 5: The Mo Chu valley is our destination, a mix of river and forest habitats. Agricultural fields attract Siberian Stonechat, Rufous-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, Hodgson's Redstart, Long-tailed and Grey-backed Shrikes. Mixed feeding flocks occur near the hotel gardens and may include Yellow-bellied Fantail, Grey-cheeked, Grey-hooded, Hume's and Lemon-rumped Warblers and Oriental White-eyes. After a late breakfast, we pass the spectacular Punakha Dzong, a combined monastery and fortress overlooking the river. Along the Fo Chu River we may encounter Pallas' Fish Eagle, Crested Kingfisher and lingering winter ducks. The road passes by patches of woodland holding Barred Cuckoo Dove, Red-tailed Minla, Black-throated Tit, Asian Brown and Slaty-blue Flycatchers. Entering the national

park, river systems have Scaly-backed Forktails. Flocks of birds occur on a regular basis here and we should connect with Yellow-vented and White-spectacled Warblers, White-throated Fantail, White-bellied Epornis and Rufous-capped Babblers. Flowering trees attract Great Barbet, Large Nilvata, Orange-bellied Leafbird and Black-throated Sunbirds. The area is also a regular wintering ground for Long-tailed Thrushes.

Day 6: Our tour takes us through broadleaf and evergreen forests to Pele La at 3,000 metres. The lower slopes have Golden-throated and Blue-throated Barbets, White-tailed and Chestnut-bellied Nuthatches and Fire-breasted Flowerpeckers. At higher altitudes Speckled Piculet and Black-eared Shrike Babbler are possibilities. We make a stop at a regular haunt of Yellow-rumped Honeyguide. After setting up camp in Dungdung, we make an afternoon visit to Probjikha, for Black-necked Cranes, Hen Harrier and Red-billed Chough. A check in the extensive bamboo thickets may reveal White-browed Rosefinch and Crimson-

browed Finches whilst Himalayan Griffon Vultures cruise overhead. We have one night camping at Pele La.

Day 7: Near camp is the old Pele La road where we scan the slopes for Himalayan Monal. Higher up the road, Alpine Accentor, Great Parrotbill, Dark-throated Thrush, Hoary-throated Barwing and Black-faced Laughingthrushes are all possible. In the pinewoods we may locate Dark Rosefinch and Grey-crested Tit. We transfer to Trongsa through cool broad-leaved forests where Chestnut-crowned and Black-faced Laughingthrushes, Red-billed Leothrix and Grey-sided Bush Warblers reside. Night at Trongsa.

Day 8: An early start is essential as we enter the Black Mountain National Park via the town of Zhemgang. The road passes farms and patches of forest holding Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler, Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler, Verditer Flycatcher and Crested Buntings. Near a river we search for Chestnut-bellied and Blue Rock Thrushes, Ashy Bulbul and Blythe's Leaf Warbler. At the summit we look for Asian Barred Owlet, Black Drongo, and Mountain, Striated and Black-crested Buleuls, and a variety of barbets. The forest floor here may reveal Slaty-bellied Tesia. Transfer to our camp at Tingtibi at one of the lowest elevations in Bhutan and surrounded by forest.

Day 9: Around the camp Great Pied Hornbill, Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker, Spankled and Lesser Racket-tailed Drongos are present. The latter often attracts Greater and Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrushes, White-throated Bulbul, White-headed Babbler and Maroon Oriole. Further up the road, we visit a haunt of the rare Beautiful Nuthatch. Other interesting birds are Yellow-cheeked and Sultan Tits, Black-winged Cuckooshrike and White-browed Shrike Babblers. In the afternoon, we visit another sector of forest for Rufous-necked Hornbill, Streaked Spiderhunter, Golden and Grey-throated Babblers, Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler and Crimson Sunbirds.



Himalyan Monal Photo: Rinchen Drakpa

Day 10: Return to Trongsa looking for Crested Goshawk, Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Fulvous-breasted, Grey-capped and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, Spotted Forktail and Little Pied Flycatcher. Overnight stay at Trongsa.

Day 11: Bumthang is just less than 70 kilometres away and reached via the Yotongla Pass. We eventually enter the Bumthang Valley, home to Beautiful Rosefinch, Spotted Laughingthrush and wheeling flocks of Snow Pigeons. Specialities, which need a little searching for, include Fulvous, Great and Brown Parrotbills, Rufous-breasted and White-browed Bush Robins. We also have a good chance of locating Himalayan Black Bear feeding on the hillsides. On arrival at Bumthang, a seasonal marsh is reliable for Solitary and Wood Snipe, Buff-bellied Pipit and Citrine Wagtail. Overnight stay at Bumthang.

Day 12: We continue eastwards to Thrumsing La, the highest point on the east/west road. The road drops dramatically after this point into an area of pristine semi-tropical rain forest, gorges and cliffs.

This is generally known as the Limithang Road, one of Asia's premier birding spots. En route to Sengor we may find Chestnut-breasted Partridge, Blue-naped Pitta, Blue-fronted Robin and four species of Wren-babblers - Long-billed, Rufous, Wedge-billed and Bar-winged. Accommodation at Sengor is poor so we have three nights under canvas.

Days 13-14: Two days spent exploring the Limithang Road, one of the best areas to find Bhutanese specialties. We hope to locate Collared Scops Owl, Collared Owllet, Himalayan Swiftlet, Striated, Black-crested, White-cheeked, Ashy, Black and Mountain Bulbuls, Hoary-throated Barwing, Fire-tailed Mizornis, Golden-breasted and Yellow-throated Fulvettas, Slender-billed, Rusty-cheeked and Coral-billed Scimitar Babblers, Hill Prinia and Bronzed Drongos. At lower levels we may find Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush, Yellow-cheeked Tit, White-spectacled Warbler, Rufous-necked and White-crested Laughingthrushes and Grey Treepies.

Day 15: Mainly a travel day to Trashigang in northeast Bhutan where we stay overnight. En route, an area of pines holds Pygmy Blue, Blue-throated and Blue-fronted Flycatchers and Green Magpie. On the decent into Trashigang we may encounter Brown-throated Treecreeper, the scarce Grey-sided Laughingthrush and Little Bunting.

Day 16: Today we travel southeast towards Narthang, passing through pine forest and sub-tropical broadleaved forest. Birding en route may produce sightings of Mountain Hawk Eagle, Upland Buzzard, Yellow-rumped Honeyguide, White-browed Shrike Babbler, Beautiful Nuthatch, and Bhutan Laughingthrush.

Day 17: Drive further south to the border town of Samdrup Jongkhar on the border of India. The sub-tropical broadleaved forest has rich avifaunal diversity with possible species in Rufous-bellied Eagle, Rufous-throated Partridge, Great, Wreathed, Oriental Pied and Rufous-necked Hornbills, Pin-tailed Green Pigeon,

Cutia, Chestnut-tailed and Asian Pied Starlings, Crested, White-throated and Common Kingfishers, Spotted Forktail and Black-naped Monarch. Night in Samdrup Jonghar.

Day 18: Cross the border into India and transfer to Guwati for flights to Delhi and on to London.

Prices

Ground Price: £5,095
Single room/tent occupancy: £300
Deposit: £500
*Air Fare: £1,420

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

Not included: drinks, insurance and items of a personal nature. Entrance fees into historical monuments and any related camera fees. Visa to enter India and Bhutan.

Good to basic accommodation in Bhutan and India. Tented accommodation at rural locations in Bhutan (better standard and cleaner than local hotels). Packed lunches provided. Choice of evening meals based on Indian and Chinese cuisine.

**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

Dates

**Tour A: Friday February 15th -
Saturday March 2nd 2019**

**Tour B: Friday February 7th -
Saturday February 22nd 2020**

Leader: Mark Finn

Group Size: 8

Birds: 155 -175

Kyushu. On arrival, we transfer to Hyuga. Night at Hyuga.

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 Mike, a forested area of evergreens and deciduous trees surrounding a volcanic lake. En route 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 Mike 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



Red-crowned Cranes Photo: Jo Latham

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.

Day 6: This morning we visit Arasaki crane reserve, with wintering Hooded and White-necked 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 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.

Day 16: Transfer to Narita for our flight to Europe. Arrival is later the same day.

Prices

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.

■ Igor Fefelov is a prominent birder within the region and has an intimate knowledge of the birds, flora and fauna of this vast area of Russia. This is the third Birdwatching Breaks tour to Lake Baikal.

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 many sandy islands that attract migrant waders in the spring and may include Marsh, Green and Wood Sandpipers and migrant waterfowl, and Azure Tit and Azure-winged Magpies as sedentary species inhabiting scrub. 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

Dates

Friday May 24th - Friday June 7th
2019

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

Common Goldeneye. Raptors use the area on a regular basis and include Eastern Marsh, Hen and possibly Pied Harriers. In the stands of reeds we should observe Eastern Water Rail and 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,



Siberian Blue Robin *Photo: Scott Maxwell*

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 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, Daurian Partridge, Golden Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Azure Tit, Meadow and Black-faced Buntings.

Day 5: Revisit areas around Beloozersk or the itinerary on Day 3 before returning to Ulan-Ude for the night.

Days 6-7: Today we travel north towards Vydrino and Teplie Oзера 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, Three-toed 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,



Demoiselle Crane

Eurasian and Baikal Bullfinches, Hawfinch and various woodpeckers.

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. Off-shore, 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 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 and Eurasian Nutcrackers. High above us in the forest we should locate White-throated Rock Thrushes giving their distinctive songs. In the village itself we may find the highly localised 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 Falcatid 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 and cliff-nesting Peregrine Falcons. 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 *provisional
Single room: £200
Deposit: £350
*Air Fare: £600

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

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

**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 Carden Alvar area which holds 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 the provincial town of Newmarket for a two-night stay.

Day 2: 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 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.

Day 3: Revisit areas of Carden Alvar and then travel back to Toronto and south to the Port Rowan area, which is our base in southern Ontario. The guesthouse where we stay is operated by birders, with numerous feeders and nest boxes within the gardens and amazing photographic opportunities from the balcony. En route to Port Rowan we should encounter the commoner species of rural Ontario - Red-tailed

Dates

Thursday May 9th - Saturday May 18th 2019

Leader: Simon Papps

Group size: 6

Birds: 170-190

Hawk, American Kestrel, Tree Swallow and noisy parties of Red-winged Blackbirds.

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 Redstart, the enigmatic Black-and-white Warbler and the stunning Blackburnian Warbler. Other species which are regularly recorded include Baltimore Oriole, Indigo



Black-throated Blue Warbler *Photo: Simon Papps*

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 opportunity 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 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: £2,095
 Single room: £175
 Deposit: £200
 *Air Fare: £520

This holiday is fully inclusive of flights, accommodation and meals, transport, permit fees, 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*

Spectacular scenery and wildlife of South America

Chile is situated in South America, a land of great contrasts, from the deserts of the north to Tierra del Fuego in the extreme south. We are visiting central Chile including Santiago, the Pacific Ocean and the Andes mountain range. Chiloe Island has estuaries for shorebirds and other marine life. From Puerto Montt we fly over 1,500 kilometres to Punta Arenas, the most southerly city in the world. Surrounding the city are huge expanses of steppe-like habitat and mountain ranges reaching down to the sea. A highlight of Chile is Torres del Paine National Park. The park is a world biosphere reserve and includes numerous glaciers, lakes and towering peaks. Our final destination is Arica in extreme northern Chile and the nearby Andean plateau near Putre. This tour to Chile, which takes in some of the world's most spectacular scenery and wildlife, is truly the experience of a lifetime.

Days 1-2: An evening flight to Santiago de Chile. From Santiago we transfer to Laguna El Peral where reedbeds hold Stripe-backed Bittern and Black-headed Duck, the only parasitic duck in the world. The reeds also attract Wren-like Rushbird and Many-coloured Rush-tyrant. Transfer to Vina del Mar for a two-night stay.

Day 3: This morning we board a fishing trawler to visit the cold Humboldt Current which is considered one of the world's best for pelagic birding. Species occurring offshore include Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters and Peruvian Diving-petrel. As we enter colder waters, we may encounter Black-browed, Wandering, Northern Royal, Buller's and, more rarely, Chatham Islands, Shy and Salvin's Albatrosses. Other species include Southern Giant Petrel, Cape, White-chinned, Westland, Juan Fernandez and Masatierra Petrels, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Brown Skua, Grey Phalarope and Inca Tern. Ventanas is close by, a coastal lagoon fringed by reedbeds holding Lake Duck, Chiloe Wigeon, Spot-flanked Gallinule and Red-gartered and Red-fronted Coots. Further north, we reach Cachagua to see a colony of Humboldt Penguins. The rocky shoreline also has Red-legged Cormorant, Blackish and American Oystercatchers and Surf-bird.

Dates

Saturday January 12th - Tuesday February 5th 2019

Leaders: Enrique Couve and Mark Finn

Group Size: 8

Birds: 280-310

Day 4: Concon is a coastal resort with a large reedbed and lagoon attracting Great Grebe and White-winged Coot. A careful exploration of rocks may reveal Chilean Seaside Cinclodes. Rock outcrops and offshore waters attract Peruvian Booby, Guanay Cormorant and Grey and Franklin's Gulls. Later, we visit La Campana National Park near Olmue for White-throated Tapaculo and Dusky-tailed Canastero. Campana is also home to the impressive Giant Hummingbird. Near La Campana we visit a rocky hillside for Crag Chilia. In the afternoon, we visit a marsh for South American Painted Snipe and continue our journey to Santiago for an overnight stay.

Day 5: Today we head south to Talca and Vilches Altos, home to the range-restricted endemic Chestnut-throated Huet-huet and other Andean forest birds. Fields with scrub attract Chilean Tinamou. At Vilches we walk the forest trails searching for Striped



Austral Rail *Photo Enrique Couve*

Woodpecker, Green-backed Firecrown and Chucao Tapaculo. At dusk, we revisit the park for Rufous-legged Owls and other nocturnal species. Overnight near Vilches Altos.

Day 6: This morning we visit an Andean reservoir searching for Dusky Tapaculo and the endemic Chilean race of Burrowing Parrot. Return to Santiago for a two-night stay.

Day 7: Yeso Valley is our destination, an exceptional region for Andean birds. We can check fields for Black-winged Ground-dove, Band-tailed and Mourning Sierra-finches, White-browed Ground-tyrant and Rufous-banded Miner. A scan of rocky ravines may reveal Crag Chilia, a little-known Chilean endemic. Other interesting mountain birds include Andean Condor, Mountain Caracara, Black-chested Buzzard-eagle, White-sided Hillstar and Grey-flanked Cinclodes. Before reaching

Yeso, we check deserted buildings for Greater Yellow-finch and Plumbeous Sierra-finch. Grasslands and streams dominate El Yeso, home to the beautiful and rare Diademed Sandpiper-plover. We should also find Grey-breasted Seedsnipe, Cinererous, Black-fronted and Rufous-naped Ground-tyrants, Band-tailed Miner and Thick-billed and Yellow-rumped Siskins.

Day 8: Today we fly south to Puerto Montt. We have to cross the Chacao Channel to reach Ancud on Chiloe Island. The channel offers us Imperial and Rock Cormorants and Common Diving-petrel. Caulin is a superb area for shorebirds including Hudsonian Godwit. The lake itself has Silvery Grebe, Ringed Kingfisher and Snowy-crowned Tern. Transfer to Ancud for a two-night stay.

Day 9: During the morning, we explore a dirt road running eastwards towards the

Pacific Ocean. At the end, we should locate Kelp Goose and other marine species. Chiloe has important populations of endemic Slender-billed Parakeet and Chilean Pigeon. Entering the wet rain forest, we should find the beautiful and active Green-backed Firecrown and shy Patagonian Tyrants. Open fields attract Chilean Flicker, Austral Thrush and Long-tailed Meadowlark.

Day 10: We return to the mainland and head to Puyehue, an area of forests and towering volcanoes. Walking along forest paths, we should find Chucao and Magellanic Tapaculos running along fallen logs, striking Black-throated Huet-huets and elusive Ochre-flanked Tapaculos. We also have a chance of the rare and declining Magellanic Woodpecker. Overnight stay in Antillanca.

Day 11: After re-checking the forest at Puyehue, we transfer to Puerto Montt and our flight to Punta Arenas. It is a different world down here with wind-swept pampas and knarled woodlands. Vast expanses of land have Upland and Ashy-headed Geese, Lesser Rhea and Rufous-chested Dotterels. Overnight in Punta Arenas.

Day 12: We cross the Straits of Magellan with Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel and Magellanic Diving-petrels for company. On arrival in Porvenir we search an area of salt lakes for Magellanic Plover. Other waders present include Two-banded Plover and Tawny-throated Dotterels. In the large salt lakes and adjacent fields we should find Coscoroba Swan, Spectacled Duck, Wilson's Phalarope, White-rumped and Baird's Sandpipers and Patagonian Yellow-finches. A visit to Laguna Verde is also planned for a recently discovered colony of King Penguins. Overnight in Porvenir.

Day 13: Porvenir Harbour often has Flightless and Flying Steamer-ducks and South American Terns. From Porvenir we travel northeast, to cross the straits. Magellanic Horned Owl and parties of Short-billed Miners are possible en route. A wetland adjacent to the Straits of Magellan

has Ruddy-headed Geese and numerous waterbirds. After the crossing, we visit Palisado for Aplomado Falcon, Least Seedsnipe, Rufous-chested Plover, Tawny-throated Dotterel, Common Miner, Band-tailed Earthcreeper, Austral Canastero, Cinnamon-bellied Ground-tyrant, Chocolate-vented Tyrant and the rare Black-throated Finch. Transfer to Puerto Natales for the night.

Day 14: From Puerto Natales, we head north to Cerro Guido, a remote hacienda overlooking the Torres del Paine National Park, our base for the next two days. Gardens here abound with wildlife and we expect Lesser Rhea, Southern Crested Caracara and Austral Thrush to be present.

Day 15: We visit a remote village set high in the Andes. En route we should see Andean Condor, Cinereous Harrier, Patagonian Mockingbird, Ochre-naped Ground-tyrant and Black-billed Shrike-tyrant. A search of low grasslands may reveal Least and Grey-bellied Seedsnipe. In the village we have a chance of White-throated Caracara and Yellow-bridled Finch. After lunch we visit a sector of Torres del Paine National Park. In the park steppes we may locate Scaly-throated Earthcreeper. A wetland regularly has White-tufted Grebe, Spectacled Duck, Andean Ruddy Duck and Red Shoveler and, in recent years, Austral Rail.

Day 16: From Cerro Guido we head south to Punta Arenas. Along the road we have an opportunity to find Ashy-headed Geese, Silver Teal and noisy parties of Buff-necked Ibis. Transfer to the airport and a flight to Santiago where we spend the night.

Day 17: We leave Santiago and transfer to Arica, the northernmost town in Chile (or transfer to Santiago airport for our flight home to Europe). The beaches of Arica are a haven for gulls, waders and seabirds including Grey Gull. Our main interest is the Azapa Valley, a lush oasis set in an arid region. The valley is home to Peruvian Shearwater and Chilean Hillstar. Other species we hope to find include Burrowing Owl, Oasis Hummingbird, Peruvian

Meadowlark, Andean and Chimney Swifts and Slender-billed Finch. Overnight in Arica.

Day 18: Today we drive towards the sleepy town of Putre for a two-night stay. En route we look for Peruvian Thick-knee and Greyish Miner. Putre stands at an elevation of 3,000 metres and is the entrance point to Lauca National Park. In the afternoon, we birdwatch around Putre in search of Sparkling Violetear, Dark-winged Canastero, White-browed Chat-tyrant, Blue and Yellow Tanager, Golden-billed Saltator and Hooded Siskin.

Day 19: Another day birding around Putre searching for high-altitude species. We hope to locate Aplomado Falcon, Mountain Parakeet, the very scarce White-throated Earthcreeper, Straight-billed Earthcreeper, Black-throated Flower-piercer and D'Orbigny's Chat-tyrant.

Day 20: A visit to Lauca National Park, the highest lake in the world and a Biosphere Reserve. Two volcanoes, Pomerape and Parinacota, overlook the habitat of bogs, pools and saline lakes with puna grasslands. The lakes hold Andean and Puna Flamingos, Andean Avocet, Puna Ibis, Puna Teal and Giant and Andean Coots. The grasslands have Andean Gull, Andean Lapwing, Andean Flicker, White-fronted Ground-tyrant, Cordilleran Canastero and Andean Swallows. Passerines of interest at Lauca are Rufous-naped and Puna Ground-tyrants, Streaked Tit-spinetail, Black-hooded and White-throated Sierra-finches, Black Siskin, Puna Yellow-finch, White-winged Diuca-finch and Greenish Yellow-finch. Transfer to Arica for one night.

Day 21: This morning we make a short diversion south of Arica for the localised Tamarugo Conebill and the scarce Chilean Hillstar. Return to Arica for a flight to Calama where we transfer to San Pedro de Atacama for three nights.

Days 22-23: We explore the Atacama Desert and adjacent habitats for Chilean, Andean and Puna Flamingos, Andean Hillstar, Puna Miner, Rock Earthcreeper,

Grey-bellied and White-tailed Shrike-tyrants, Andean Negrito and Ash-breasted Sierra-finch. We also visit Miscanti and Minque for the rare Horned Coot. An area of lagoons near the border with Bolivia is productive for Andean Goose, Puna and Speckled Teals, Ochre-naped, Rufous-naped and Dark-fronted Ground-tyrants, Black-hooded and Red-backed Sierra Finches and Andean Negrito.

Day 24: Final birding morning around San Pedro de Atacama before transferring to Calama for the flight to Santiago and our final night.

Day 25: Morning flight back to Europe with arrival on the following afternoon.

Prices

Ground Price: £9,690
Single room: £880
Deposit: £900
*Air Fare: £1,820

Shorter tour until Day 17

Ground Price: £6,495
Single room: £500
Deposit: £600
*Air Fare: £1,425

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 and fuel surcharges.

**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, Tocuayo 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,



Buff-tailed Coronet Photo: Simon Papps

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.

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 Cincloides 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: £750

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

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

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

Birdwatching Breaks

Booking
Form 2019

Title	Name (exactly as it appears on passport)	Name you prefer	Surname	Date of birth

Address:	Number or house name
	Street
	Village or town
	Country
	Postcode
	Home telephone/Fax number
	Work telephone
	Email address

Please reserve me	place(s) on your	holiday
I will be making my own flight arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If possible I would like to fly from London (hubs)	<input type="checkbox"/> Manchester	<input type="checkbox"/> Glasgow
	<input type="checkbox"/> Edinburgh	<input type="checkbox"/> Birmingham
Accommodation required (please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/> Single	<input type="checkbox"/> Twin
	<input type="checkbox"/> Double	
I would be prepared to share in twin-bedded accommodation	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
What type of passport do you hold	<small>(Must have at least 6 months to run after return date of your holiday)</small>	
(a) British Citizen <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) British Subject <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) Other <input type="checkbox"/>
Passport number(s)	Date of expiry	
Passport number(s)	Date of expiry	
I/we hold an annual/single trip insurance policy with	Please forward a copy of your insurance policy to us	

If you have any special dietary requirements please circle as listed	Fish only	Vegetarian	Vegan	Gluten free
Is there any food you dislike?	<small>(This helps when contacting hotels)</small>			
Have you any food/and/or other allergies?				
Have you any pre-existing medical conditions?				
Where did you hear about Birdwatching Breaks?				
I enclose a deposit of £ <input type="text"/> with the balance payable as quoted in your terms and conditions, which I confirm I have read and agree to. If paying by credit card a 3% surcharge applies.				
Please deduct my Visa/Mastercard/Delta No.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
with the appropriate deposit	Expiry date	Security code		
Signature	Date			

Please make your cheques payable to Birdwatching Breaks and send your remittance to:
Mark Finn, Birdwatching Breaks, Cygrrus House, Gordons Mill, Balblair, Black Isle, Ross-shire IV7 8LQ, Scotland
Tel: +44 (0) 1381 610495 Email: m.finn@birdwatchingbreaks.com www.birdwatchingbreaks.com

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 behaviour. 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 6th 2018. All rates are equal to £1.00 sterling. £1.00 is equal to €1.10 and US\$1.27 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: Japanese Yen 138.16, Moroccan Dirham 12.51, Norwegian Kroner 10.19, South African Rand 17.25 Swedish Crowns 10.94. 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, your monies are kept in a separate account and only withdrawn after the holiday has concluded.

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)."

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 data protection rules current at May 2018

*Enjoy a relaxing Scottish
break with
Black Isle Birding*



*Birdwatching holidays from
the Borders to Shetland*

www.birdwatchingbreaks.com