

welcome to Birdwatching Breaks 2011



Birding group in New Zealand (Mark Finn)

Awarm welcome to our 2011 brochure of birdwatching holidays, this being our twenty-fourth year of operation.

In 2011, 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 two new destinations including the new hotspot of the Philippines, a country made up of many islands. We visit three islands including an extension for the magnificent Philippine Eagle plus the added bonus of many endemic birds. Cambodia, a country now actively encouraging tourism, is our other new tour in Asia. Cambodia has several interesting birds in the form of Giant and White-shouldered Ibis and the cultural splendours of Angkor Wat. A new tour has been designed featuring Northwest India, visiting the little-known areas of Gujurat and Rann of Kutch for several rare species on the Indian sub-continent and with an extension for tigers. In Africa we have two new tours. The first in March concentrates on the Zambezi River and Caprivi Strip taking in the special birds and wildlife of this unique region. Later in the year, we visit Zimbabwe and Mozambique two countries that have recently emerged as tourist destinations again after recent problems. Both areas offer you an opportunity to observe scarce East African birds.

Our New Zealand tour is taking place in January 2012 with the most comprehensive birding tour of the country available today. You have a good chance of seeing all the 'accessible' endemic birds as well as a huge range of seabirds.

In the Caribbean region we have a tour of the Lesser Antilles in the Eastern Caribbean. You visit several islands in total which hold up to 35 endemic birds in simply breathtaking and beautiful surroundings. One of the most exciting new destinations is the South American country of Colombia which has more species of birds than any other. This is an exceptional birding destination in a relatively compact area which includes up to 45 endemic birds. In the Americas, we have reintroduced our tour to Long Point in Canada and Guatemala features again in December. Our Chile tour departs in January 2012, to a beautiful country with a wide-range of habitats and birdlife.

Japan continues to be a popular destination and we have modified the winter tour slightly to visit an area for Japanese Murrelet. I have also brought back our spring tour to Japan at the peak of the migration and breeding season, visiting offshore islands and Hokkaido. In January 2011, a tour to Vietnam is planned, a country still relatively unknown to birders from Europe. Vietnam offers you the chance to encounter species which were recently rediscovered during the 1990s. Malaysia, in south-east Asia, has two tours: one to the peninsula, the other to Borneo. Syria and Oman also feature

in 2011, countries which have increased in popularity for birding in recent years. For those who wish to escape Christmas, we have put on a tour to Taiwan to study wintering birds and the fifteen endemics.

In Africa, we have departures to Ethiopia, Madagascar, Morocco and Senegal, the latter being to the unknown eastern part of the country. These four destinations offer you an extremely wide-range of African birds and mammals from the Sahel in Senegal to the beautiful scenery of Ethiopia.

Closer to home, we have two departures to Poland which is extremely rich for breeding birds and spring migration in early May. A visit in early April is a must for prospecting woodpeckers and owls. Further north we have a six-day tour to Iceland with its fantastic landscapes and wildlife. Spain also features with tours to Extremadura in May and Gallocanta in November. After many years, we have decided to revisit Israel with a winter tour in December. This should produce an avian spectacle of wintering birds.

2011 sees the seventh year of Black Isle Birding which covers all our holidays operating in Scotland. This sector has grown significantly over the last year 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 therefore extended our Scottish programme in 2011 at Cygnus House and other destinations around Scotland including Islay, Aberdeenshire, and the Western Isles.

We 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.

We look forward to welcoming you on one of our tours whether in Europe or further afield.

Finally, my thanks go to Rosie Green for proof-reading our 2011 brochure and to Al Knight for the layout and design.

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Blue Duck
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