

BORDERLAND TOURS NEWS

COLORS, IMPRESSIONS, AND COMMENT FROM THE WORLD OF BIRDS

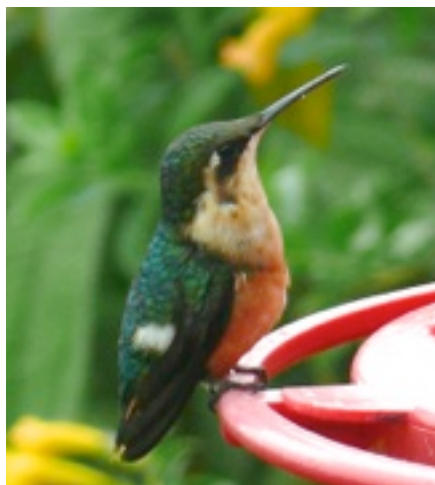
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Explore the Living Museums of the World

THE BORDERLAND PHOTO ALBUM

FRONT COVER PHOTO: NORTHERN POTOO, SAN BLAS, MEXICO BY JOHN YERGER



SANTA MARTA WOODSTAR, COLOMBIA,
BY RICK TAYLOR



PUERTO RICAN WOODPECKER
BY RICK TAYLOR



CHESTNUT-CROWNED ANTPITTA, ECUADOR,
BY LARRY SASSAMAN



AGAMI HERON, ECUADOR, BY LARRY SASSAMAN



BLACK STILT, SOUTH ISLAND, NZ, BY RICK TAYLOR



JUDITH SPARROW WITH KAKA, STEWART ISLAND, NZ, BY RICK TAYLOR



BARRED BECARD, ECUADOR, BY LARRY SASSAMAN

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FROM RICK'S DESK:

I just returned from my annual visit with la familia Vazquez in San Blas—and my annual pilgrimage to the West Coast of Mexico to see a couple of hundred species of birds to launch my new year. I've gone back to enjoy the wonderful hospitality of the Hotel Garza Canela over 30 times since my first trip in 1981. Birding the environs of San Blas in 2015 was as productive as always. Among well over 250 goodies for the week were cooperative Rufous-necked Wood-Rail, Colima Pygmy-Owl, Bumblebee Hummingbird, Russet-crowned Motmot, San Blas Jay, and Rosy Thrush-Tanager.

This year, too, our tour was treated to a wildly displaced Purple Sandpiper from the northeast Atlantic, Mexico's first or second national record, depending on your level of credulity. Discovered three weeks earlier, it obligingly remained put with a group of Surfbirds and Sanderlings on a small rock jetty on the town beach almost that entire time—except when the flock draped itself under an invisibility cloak and utterly vanished. It took two visits, but the second time we finally had to walk off and leave the Purple Sandpiper to amuse itself without our prying eyes.

Another of the highlights for me was the scope view of just the head of a Lesser Ground-Cuckoo. It was that close.

It was a brilliant find by my co-leader John Yerger. Although the bird was in attack mode—unprovoked it unexpectedly began its loud, shrill calls from a thorny tangle practically at our feet—its whereabouts in the living trellis remained a mystery until John saw its eye blink. Next thing our troop of intrepid Borderlanders were filing past a scope portrait of a bill, an eye surrounded by a livid patch of bright blue skin, and, really, very little else. Put that bird at less than 15 feet!

John Yerger. It's an unusual name, but one I think everyone that travels with Borderland Tours will learn to like a lot. John is a 31-year-old bird guide who's been headquartered in the Chiricahua Mountains in Southeastern Arizona with his wife Morgan and their faithful puppy Madison for the past several years. When he's not leading tours, John is building his own home just below Portal in a birdwatcher's paradise at the mouth of Cave Creek Canyon. The walls are up and the roof is on. Before too much longer I'm hoping the spacious and beautiful loft will be the brand new office for Borderland Tours.

Aside from the ability to return the glare of an irate cuckoo, John brings an impressive skills set to Borderland Tours. Our 2015 brochure and this Newsletter exemplify his computer expertise. His fundamental knowledge of the biological universe is another. John has birded widely in the Western Hemisphere. An easy-going sense of humor coupled with a naturally practical approach to problem-solving make him likable and worth knowing at the same time. Speaking of time, John is innately generous. He has the sweet gift of patience that lends value to any conversation and, of course, to any bird tour.

I was sorry to see the week wind to its end in San Blas. For another winter, no more of Betty's wonderful seafood pasta, no more silly meditations on the meaning of life with Doris and Diana Vazquez before the group arrived at the table. But it was clear to me that the apprenticeship of John Yerger as a bird tour leader was completed years earlier. John's an expert.

I am genuinely looking forward to the course John Yerger will help set as Borderland Tours sails blithely into our rosy future years.

READY TO TRAVEL NOW!

(These tours are guaranteed-to-go!)

- There are few countries in the world where one could realistically encounter up to 600 species of birds over the course of a three-week-long tour. **Colombia**, April 8–28, is one of those places! Rick Taylor teams up with Luis Urueña once again to explore perhaps the single-most biologically diverse place on the planet. Possibilities include everything from the endemic Blossomcrown (hummingbird) to the stunning Ocellated Tapaculo, plus anything with “Santa Marta” in the name (Santa Marta Antpitta, Santa Marta Mountain-Tanager, etc.) – all confined to this scenic, 19,000 foot tall coastal mountain range.
- Big Bend National Park in **West Texas**, April 30–May 7, is the only place in the United States where Colima Warbler is found. Because the optional hike into their habitat usually means a 1-3 mile walk, we will take it easy and look for other Southwestern U.S. specialties along the way. To balance our hike, the rest of the tour involves very little walking and yet can yield other highly sought-after species like Lucifer Hummingbird and Varied Bunting. A stop-over in the Davis Mountains is probably the most reliable location in the U.S. for the elusive Montezuma Quail. John Yerger leads to this little-visited wilderness along the U.S.-Mexico border.

FEATURED TOURS

(A few of our favorites!)

- Offering our tour to **Costa Rica** on July 1–13 is no scheduling accident – the choice is deliberate! This is the “off-season” for tourists, and temperatures are actually 10–15°F cooler than the windy dry season that corresponds to the North American spring. It won’t be chilly by any means, but it can’t hurt to think “snow” for this tour - Snowy Cotinga and Snowcap, that is! The latter, a purple-bodied little hummingbird with a dazzling white cap, is often found at Rancho Naturalista – where we will spend several days. This is a fabulous trip for anyone seeking a bird-filled summer escape: Scarlet Macaws and Resplendent Quetzal are enticing enough, but toucans, motmots, and the probability of 30+ species of hummingbirds mean that this tour “sells itself” time and again with very little promotion on our part. Our primary guide, Carlos “Charlie” Gomez, has been delighting groups with his exceptional leadership and his warm personality since 1986.
- We’re also excited to reintroduce our sampler tour of northern **Argentina**, November 5–18. Owing to its rank as the second largest country on “The Bird Continent” (and eighth largest nation in the world!), it can be difficult for the average traveler to decide how to divide one’s time here. We have opted for the greatest

diversity. The tour begins in the scenic northwest, where lush subtropical Yungas forest blankets the foothills of the central Andes. Here, the rare Rufous-throated Dipper navigates seemingly impossible torrents. In stark contrast, Burrowing Parrots inhabit dry valleys filled with tall columnar cacti reminiscent of southeastern Arizona. Saline lakes in the adjacent altiplano may yield three species of flamingos, as well as Andean Avocets and Andean Plovers. En route we’ll hope to encounter the impossibly large Giant Hummingbird. Moving to the northeastern corner of the country, we’ll stand awe-struck before the raw power of Iguazú Falls. If we can avert our eyes even momentarily, we should see flocks of Great Dusky Swifts slicing through the mist to roost behind the cataracts themselves. Originally, Argentina hosted only 5% of all Atlantic lowland forest habitat in the world. Now, due to immense clearing of land in neighboring Brazil, Argentina contains 50% of that same habitat. While it is unfortunate that Brazil has lost so much, that means that the habitat around Iguazú is well-preserved, and harbors regional specialties like Black-fronted Piping-Guan, as well as more widespread species like Blond-crested Woodpecker and Chestnut-eared Araçari. Finally, we’ll wrap up with several days at a picturesque “estancia” in the heart of the Argentine Pantanal, known as the Íbera Marshes. Southern Screamer and Strangetailed Tyrant are a few avian oddities we may encounter, not to mention the stately Greater Rhea. Even within Buenos Aires, one of the great capital cities of the world, we might find Pampas region birds such as Freckle-breasted Thornbird and Red-crested Cardinal. Add to all of this the fine steaks and superb wine for which Argentina is renowned, and you have the ingredients to an unforgettable trip!

Our guides for this tour are native Argentinian Miguel Castelino, who currently resides only a few miles from Iguazú Falls, and John Yerger, who traveled throughout Argentina for several months – and now enjoys yerba mate as much as any local!

EARLY 2016 “ONE-WEEKERS!”

Philosophically speaking, Borderland Tours enjoys an in-depth exploration of any area. These trips afford that opportunity for genuine intimacy with a bird community, as well as the human community which shapes the environment in which these birds live. To that end, we are offering the following visits to some of the richest birding locales in the world.

- SAN BLAS JUNGLE & BARRANCA, MEXICO – JAN 19-26
- HONDURAS, THE LODGE AT PICO BONITO – FEB 1-7
- A WEEK IN OAXACA VALLEY, MEXICO – MAR 18-25
- SANTA MARTA ENDEMIC WEEK, COLOMBIA – APR 7-14

All of these destinations are within easy reach of major U.S. airports!

STAFF NOTES

At press time, **MORGAN JACKSON** and husband **JOHN YERGER** were still expecting their first child (probably born by the time this newsletter hit your doorstep...). We're all looking forward to welcoming this newest member of the Borderland family!

John and Morgan are already there, but now it seems like we're all moving to the Chiricahua Mountains! **BARBARA BICKEL** and her husband Bill have purchased a second home in Whitetail Canyon upstream from Rick and Lynne. Originally built by Ralph Morrow, perhaps Arizona's most famous game warden, the Bickels are in the process of renovating this 1920's cabin.

RICK AND LYNNE TAYLOR are easing back on the throttle as well. This past summer they moved Lynne's beloved kitties out to Whitetail and are now calling that home their primary dwelling.

On her recent trip to New York, **CHARLIE GOMEZ'S** wife Vicki purchased an iPad mini so Charlie could Skype while on the road. It wasn't long before Charlie discovered the built-in camera function, and he is now sending her bouquets of birds and sunsets from every lodge with Wi-Fi!

Moez Ali and Chris Sharpe are just returning from Belize as you read this, and we are all expecting the usual great finds to appear in the trip report.

MOEZ ALI has been up to his usual tricks. Prior to co-leading with Rick and Charlie last summer in Costa Rica, where once again his eyes and ears were nonpareil, Moez returned to his duties with the National Park Service as a Survey Field Lead.

CHRIS SHARPE and Iokiñe have elected to raise their three boys in Great Britain. When not editing *Cotinga*, the journal of the Neotropical Bird Club, Chris still conducts bird tours and continues avian research in the Americas.



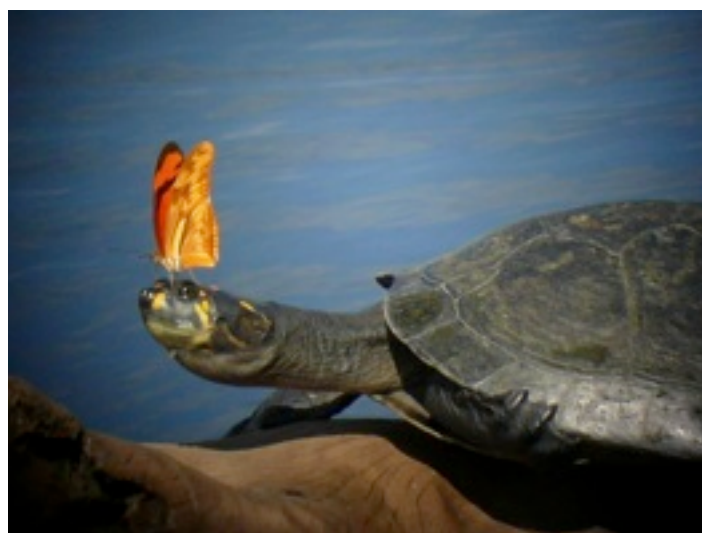
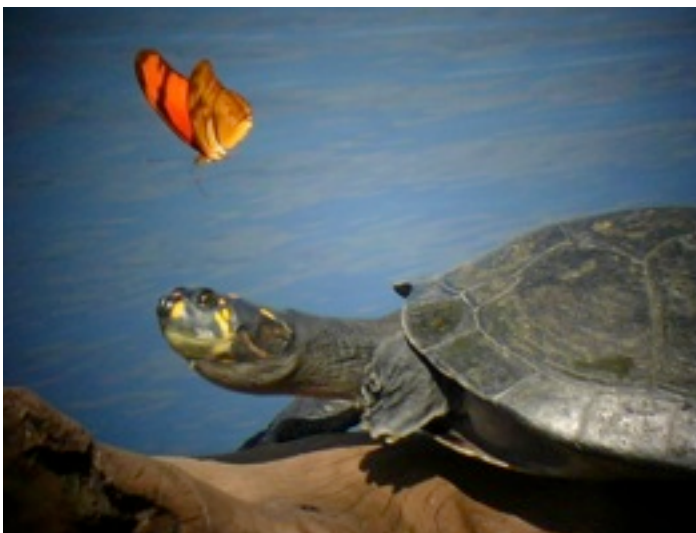
E-NEWS

Readers may be pleased to know that they can now follow Borderland Tours online through Facebook! While you're clicking through photos and one-liners from family and friends, why not take a moment and see how the birds are doing? By clicking "Like" on our Facebook profile, the latest tidbits from Borderland Tours will appear in your News Feed:

<http://www.facebook.com/BorderlandToursBirding>

Had enough of perusing silly cat photos on the internet? Bored at work? If you're looking for a more educative distraction, why not enjoy a few articles from our blog?

<http://borderland-tours.blogspot.com>



While the focus of a birding tour is of course birds, it was hard to ignore this touching moment between a Julia butterfly and a Yellow-spotted River Turtle at the Napo Wildlife Center Lodge one afternoon during the siesta hour.
Photos by Rick Taylor:

2015 BORDERLAND TOUR SCHEDULE

(Tours scheduled now through December 31, 2015 - stay tuned for 2016!)

NORTH AMERICA

WEST TEXAS, BIG BEND & DAVIS MOUNTAINS

April 30–May 7 at \$2395 with John Yerger

ARIZONA, OWLING WEEKENDS

May 6–10, May 13–17, May 20–24 at \$1595 with John Yerger

ARIZONA, HUMMINGBIRD WEEKENDS

July 29–Aug 2, Aug 5–9, Aug 19–23 at \$1595 with John Yerger

ALASKAN WILDLIFE I, PRIBILOF ISLANDS

June 2–8 at \$4295 with John Yerger & Moez Ali

ALASKAN WILDLIFE II, DENALI & KENAI PENINSULA

June 7–15 at \$3695 with John Yerger & Moez Ali

ALASKAN WILDLIFE III, NOME & BARROW

June 14–23 at \$4395 with John Yerger & Moez Ali

¡MÉXICO!

VERACRUZ, RIVER OF RAPTORS

October 1–12 at \$3995 with Rick Taylor & John Yerger

YUCATÁN I, BIRDS & RUINS

December 1–11 at \$3995 with Rick Taylor & John Yerger

YUCATÁN II, BIOSPHERE RESERVES

December 11–17 at \$3295 with Rick Taylor & John Yerger

CENTRAL AMERICA

COSTA RICA

July 1–13 at \$4495 with Carlos Gomez & John Yerger

SOUTH AMERICA

COLOMBIA

April 8–28 at \$7995 with Rick Taylor & Luis Urueña

ARGENTINA, ANDES TO IGUAZÚ FALLS

November 5–18 at \$5995 with Miguel Castelino & John Yerger

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA “LIGHT”

September 15–25 at \$5995 with South African leader & John Yerger

For more information or to register, please contact us at:

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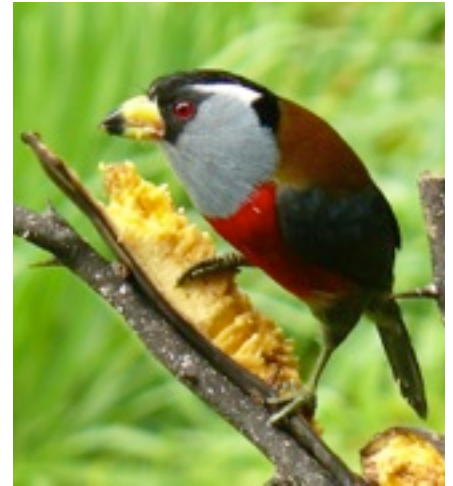
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CLOUD FOREST PYGMY-OWL, ECUADOR
BY RICK TAYLOR



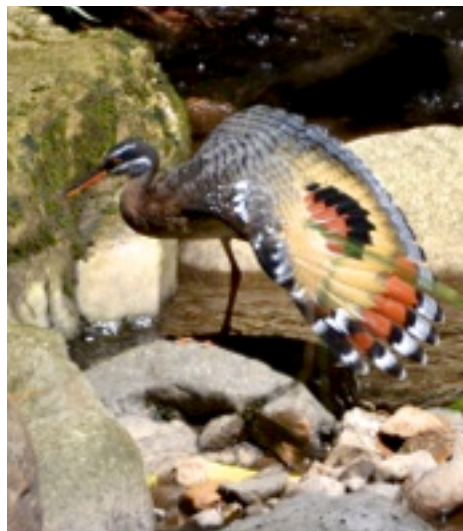
FASCIATED TIGER-HERON, COLOMBIA
BY RICK TAYLOR



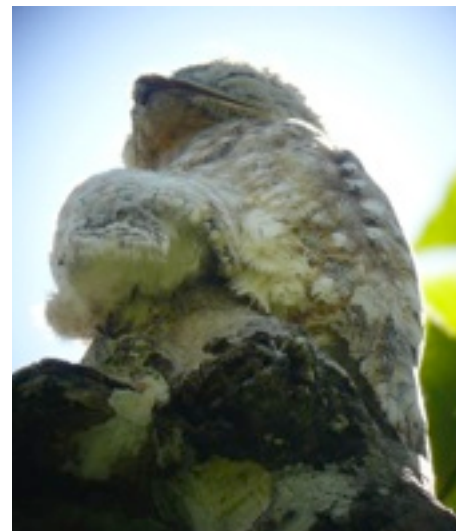
TOUCAN BARBET, ECUADOR
BY RICK TAYLOR



GIANT RIVER OTTER, ECUADOR
BY RICK TAYLOR



SUNBITTERN, COSTA RICA
BY JOE FAULKNER



GIANT POTOO WITH BABY, ECUADOR
BY RICK TAYLOR



KAIKOURA BEACH, NEW ZEALAND
BY RICK TAYLOR



CHARLIE GOMEZ AND ANGEL PAZ,
RESERVA ANGEL PAZ BY RICK TAYLOR

BACK COVER PHOTO: COBALT-WINGED PARAKEETS AT A CLAY LICK ON THE RÍO NAPO, BY RICK TAYLOR

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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