

BIRD HOLIDAYS

w o r l d . w i d e

WINTER 2013
NEWS

Hi Folks!

Hi Folks!

We trust that you all had a pleasant Christmas and New Year, and are now looking forward to an exciting year of birding and wildlife watching.

Last year we celebrated 21 years of tour leading. Building on a great 2011, we once again enjoyed our busiest year ever. This success makes it easier for us to give something back to nature. After a meeting with representatives from BirdLife International at last year's Birdfair, we were keen to support their work. In September we became a BirdLife Species Champion, supporting their efforts to conserve the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and other endangered species.

Many of you will know of Phil's exploits in Siberia last summer. He joined the WWT/BirdLife Russia expedition to Chukotka which aims to create a breeding program at Slimbridge, as well as safeguarding the birds at their breeding, wintering and migration sites. Later in this newsletter he gives you an idea about what he got up to.

In 2013 we are running new trips to South India, NE Ecuador and Manitoba, as well as revamping our Southern Turkey trip to include the newly discovered Brown Fish Owls. We have plans to recce Papua New Guinea, John is visiting Georgia in spring 2013, and Andy is putting together a Tanzania itinerary, following his successful recce there last year.

Our aim is to provide you with an enjoyable and memorable holiday. When you travel with Bird Holidays remember that you are travelling as much as our friends as our customers. Although some of our 2013 trips are full already, there is still plenty of availability to tempt you.

We look forward to seeing you soon....

Paul, Andy, Roger, Phil and John

carbon balanced

professional leaders

regional airports

established 1991

small friendly groups

sensible pace

fully inclusive

ATOL bonded



Bird Holidays,
10 Ivgate, Yeadon,
Leeds, LS19 7RE

Tel: 0113 3910510

www.birdholidays.co.uk



In September 2012 we were thrilled to become a BirdLife Species Champion, helping to save the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper from extinction. This one was photographed by Phil at Meinyopil'gyno last summer.



Jeremy Clare 1944-2012

As some of you may already know, our long-time customer and friend, Jeremy Clare passed away at Lake Kerkini in May last year. Jeremy first travelled with us to the Coto Donana in April 1995 and was a regular on our tours thereafter. He was very enthusiastic about birding and ran a USA birdwatching course in his home town of Cambridge. He even introduced some of his 'students' to us at the 2011 Birdfair. Despite many tours, he had never connected with a Sombre Tit, one reason for his visiting Kerkini. Whilst resting under the shade of a tree he found his own Sombre Tit, and then its nest, and was absolutely thrilled. That evening he retired early to his room and passed away peacefully. Our deepest sympathy goes to his wife and family.

Bird Fairs

In 2012 we had a stand at the inaugural Scottish Birdfair. Despite some wet weather it was a great success. We had a lovely time and managed to recruit a few new customers. Unfortunately the 2013 dates just do not work for us, coming right in the middle

of our busiest time for May tours. However, we will definitely return in 2014 – more details later.

The Rutland Birdwatching Fair is always a great experience for us and 2012 was no exception. It was a fun weekend, meeting

old friends and making new ones. It goes without saying that we'll be back for 2013. Make a note in your diaries for 16th to 18th August 2013.



John's son, Alfie, draws the winner of the prize draw on Friday afternoon

Birdfair Prize Draw Winners

We ran a prize draw at the Rutland Birdfair last year, asking people to name their dream birding destination. The results were very interesting, with the top three destinations all places we do not currently advertise! In third place was Australia and Tasmania, in second place was Papua New Guinea and in first place was New Zealand. We had better sort out a few new reces by the looks of it!

A name was pulled out of the hat each afternoon, and the winners were presented with a Pacific Diver canvas print, photographed by Phil. They were Roy Evans (Friday), regular customer Jacky Buckton (Saturday) and T Barker (Sunday).



Mr T Barker receives his Pacific Diver print on Sunday afternoon

Early Bird
OFFER 2013

Early Booking Discount

There is still some availability on trips in the first half of the year. We have a few places left on our trip to Bhutan in April, in search of the wonderful Himalayan pheasants. Arizona is a great birding destination and April is our favourite time of year to visit. Elegant Trogons are arriving in the wooded canyons, Red-faced Warblers and Painted Redstarts are singing their hearts out, and migrants abound. The climate is superb too.

There are several places left on our popular Belarus, Czech Republic and Camargue and Corsica trips in May.

We have extended the discount date for all these trips to 16th February 2013. Book before then to save hundreds of pounds.

HIGHLIGHTS
2012



Paul, John, Roger, Andy and Phil look back.

Picking out highlights is almost as tricky as answering what is your favourite bird or country. However we have all tried to think of a few things that spring to mind when we look back at 2012.

Despite being busy in the office, **Paul** still found time to do what he enjoys most, leading tours. Here are the highlights of three of his trips in his own words. 'In twenty one years of leading tours, staying in some beautiful hotels and lodges, I have rarely been so well looked after as I was at Lamanai, Chan Chich and Hidden Valley in Belize. Beautiful accommodation surrounded by pristine natural habitat typifies this tour. With the help of various local guides we saw the rare Orange-breasted Falcon, the rarely seen Stygian Owl and the spectacular Ornate Hawk-eagle and Solitary Eagle. The views of these four iconic birds were superb.



This Stygian Owl was seen at its daytime roost at Hidden Valley Inn in Belize's Mountain Pine Ridge (photo: Paul Willoughby).

HIGHLIGHTS
2012

continued

In April I visited SW Turkey with York RSPB Members' Group. The weather was perfect for the whole week, allowing forays into the mountains, as well as marshes and woodland nearer the coast. Red-fronted Serin, White-throated Robin, White-breasted Kingfisher and Kruper's Nuthatch are all to be expected, and did not let us down. Finsch's Wheatear and Cinereous Bunting were also found at a regular site. A bonus was provided by two beautiful Broad-billed Sandpipers which were found close to our hotel on our last day. Superb!



We saw several Finsch's Wheatears in SW Turkey this time (photo: Paul Willoughby).



We had high hopes of seeing an Orange-breasted Falcon in Belize, but no one imagined we'd get views like this! (photo: Paul Willoughby)

Madeira is an unusual destination, one very different from any other we do. It provides quality rather than quantity, in the form of a few ultra-rare seabirds; Fea's Petrel, Madeiran Storm-petrel, Barolo Shearwater, Bulwer's Petrel and the almost mythical Zino's Petrel. Once again we were lucky to choose a superb night for seeing the Zino's Petrels. There was not a breath of wind on top of 6000ft Pico de Arieiro, and as darkness set

in, the birds started to vocalise. Their eerie calls were once thought to be the souls of dead nuns, murdered by pirates at a nearby convent in the 16th Century. On this night there was enough moonlight to see that the calls came from seabirds; in fact, one of the world's rarest with just 80 pairs.

John's tours in 2012 took him to many magical destinations. Here are the details of just two of them, firstly Chile, then Madagascar.

'High up in the El Yeso National Park we reached one of the few accessible breeding locations of the Diademed Sandpiper-plover. Luck was on our side at the first area of suitable habitat, finding two pairs feeding close together in a crystal clear stream. Andean Condors were in their element and we watched several soaring across the stupendous Andean peaks.

Later in the Conguillio National Park we walked the length of the Sendero Los Carpinteros ("woodpecker trail"). Along the way we group-hugged a 1500 year old giant Araucaria tree and bagged at least a dozen giant Magellanic Woodpeckers. We obtained prolonged views of a family group bashing their way up and down huge *Notofagus* trees.

An early start to the famous Mantadia National Park in Madagascar saw the group following a short but steep walk along a side trail. Here we were treated to

exceptional views of a Short-legged Ground Roller. The mournful calls of the Indri filled the forest to add to the atmosphere, making this one of the best moments of the whole tour. Lemurs also provided the other highlight of the day as we eventually tracked down four beautifully marked Black-and-white Ruffed Lemurs. Later we stood mesmerised as six Diademed Sifakas took it in turns to effortlessly leap from tree to tree across a small clearing in the forest. Madagascar mon amour!

We asked **Roger** about his experiences in 2012. 'Last year started on a very pleasant high. I toured around Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala with top Kerala birder Satheesh Nair, to check out if a new trip would work as I hoped. It turned out to be one of those reces when the best places to see wildlife all had fine accommodation nearby and good local guides, thereby making my job pretty straight forward.

It was my decision to make 2012 my last

tour to Oman. It is now in John's safe hands, but almost immediately I got home I was missing the wonderful sunlight, raptors, food, landscapes and people.

August in the Pantanal of Brazil was where I saw my bird of the year. Here is an excerpt from the tour report:

30th August 2012. We birded the Agua Fria Road again but this time the temperature was higher and the birds were much quieter, so we set off for Serra d'Araras with

lunch at a pleasant restaurant en route. Along the way we found Red-legged Seriemas and Greater Rheas. At our pousada we unloaded our bags before heading for the Harpy Eagle nest site. Even as we left, new birds demanded attention, but our luck was really in as we were soon watching an adult Harpy, then a huge handsome 'chick' dismembering an armadillo on the large stick nest. That night I, for one, fell asleep very happy.'

It was a busy start for **Andy** with several big trips at the beginning of the year. It was the first time he had taken a group to Ethiopia and it was very pleasing that all went to plan. They totted up more than five hundred species of bird, even with our relaxed pace. Mammal sightings were excellent too with at least twenty Spotted Hyenas at one den and several sightings of Africa's most endangered carnivore - the elegant Ethiopian Wolf. A couple of weeks at home and he was heading west to Panama. The trip was as good as ever but with another four or five hundred species to contend with his

mind was boggling with the thousand or so bird species he had seen by the beginning of March. Then he was off to Nepal and Bhutan for one of his favourite trips where the birds and scenery try to outdo each other for superlatives. Despite some unseasonal dodgy weather he had some of his best views ever of Himalayan Monal and Satyr Tragopan. Less than two weeks at home and still in April and he was birding on a fourth continent... much closer to home, when he went to the Coto Donana and Alentejo and had some fantastic bustard and eagle sightings.

Then it was back to Africa to recce a trip to Tanzania... and perhaps that was his real highlight of 2012, seeing the migration of the Wildebeest and watching a Cheetah family in the Serengeti. A bit more continent hopping took to him to Peru where the wildlife and Machu Picchu were as good as ever, then back to Europe for an autumn Hungary trip. Finally Florida just before Christmas was wonderfully hot and sunny and the birds were incredibly confiding. It is a tough life but someone's got to do it!

For **Phil**, 2012 was another great year that was coincidentally brought to mind recently. A three part BBC series about Spitsbergen's Polar Bears evoked memories of our July tour. Here is the story of his year in his own words. 'The group were thrilled to watch a bear that was guarding some whale bones. However, the highlight for me was the thousands of Little Auks that wheeled and wailed above our heads as an Arctic Fox meandered through their colony. David Attenborough's Africa series concentrated on the exact spots we visit in Namibia. Our group were able to see the sky filled with clouds of sandgrouse, plus Leopard, Wildcat and Black Rhino in Etosha. Finding a Wilson's Phalarope spinning amongst 30 Red-necked Phalaropes was the biggest surprise.



Having seen singing Terek Sandpipers in Belarus, Phil watched this bird at Meinypil'gyno. Later in the year he found two wintering in Namibia. (photo: Phil Palmer)

HIGHLIGHTS
2012*continued*

I saw Terek Sandpipers wintering in Namibia as well as displaying in the marshes of Belarus. These same primeval wetlands were home to a pair of Azure Tits feeding chicks, while the forest held a hunting Great Grey Owl that was super-close. The European Bison there were

shockingly large but the honour for my favourite mammal of 2012 goes to a small female Giant Panda. She lay on her back beside a forest track in China. We dare not breathe until she relaxed and resumed chewing bamboo just feet away. After a while she got up and walked along the valley, crossed a river and melted into the forest. Moments like that are magical. But then...mmm...perhaps...mmm... yes... the Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec in Madagascar was very special. Oh, I don't know. Each trip is amazing, so it is hard to choose.

I guess bird wise my best was possibly a Mrs Gould's Sunbird, as it was quite a shock to see such a tropical-looking bird in China's frosty Qinling Mountains. But watching a Madagascar Plover cover its eggs with leaves in an attempt to shade them from the sun was the most intriguing. Every tour has amazing moments and I can't wait for 2013. Kicking off with our conservation tour to Myanmar!

Phil's Spoon-billed Sandpiper Expeditions

In 2003, I visited Chukotka in Arctic Russia as part of an expedition to survey areas where no ornithologist had ever been. We were specifically looking for Lesser White-fronted Geese and Spoon-billed Sandpipers, but we found neither! Not a good start, but we were working with species that were heading towards extinction in the region and the survey highlighted how desperate things were. Prof Evgeny Syroechkovskiy and I spent the cold nights in camp discussing action plans for the sandpipers.

I still had the desire to see a Spoon-billed Sandpiper surrounded by pink flowers on the tundra, an image planted in my head by some old photographs. I had fallen in love with the tundra and by the time I next visited Russia in 2009, the hard slog to convince the world to help save the Spoon-billed had begun. Only two colonies were known, one at Belyaka Spit and the other at Meinypil'gyno. Both are very remote and were only open to Russian researchers in an attempt to keep specimen collectors away.

So in 2009, Evgeny and I were joined by Christoph Zöckler to check other parts of the region that could conceivably hide a few pairs. This time I found a calling male but it was alone and not present the next day. Not a great return for 6 more weeks in the field!

By 2012, the Belyaka Spit population had gone, coinciding with the destruction of migration site Saemangeum in South Korea. I longed to visit Meinypil'gyno; the only place where the species was known to breed regularly.

Having earned the respect of the Russian scientists, I was invited to join them again in 2012, but money was tight and getting time off work was awkward. I had always paid my way, while contributing to Russian researcher's costs too. But there was no way that I could afford to miss this chance to help the Spoon-billed while achieving a lifetime ambition. I bit the bullet, took a load of unpaid leave and funded myself again. I was grateful to the guys in the Bird Holidays office that covered for me.

Meinypil'gyno is situated on the Pacific coast and can only be reached by helicopter if the weather is perfect. In some years the Russian team wait for over a month before getting there. A brief respite from the freezing fog allowed me to get in early. I was welcomed by a mob of barking dogs and Chuckchi hunters all keen to hear if we had brought tinned milk, flour and vodka. The sea was still partly frozen and the snow reached the windowsills of houses raised on 2m platforms.

We spent the first week crossing melting ice to count the thousands of Stejneger's Scoters, Harlequin Ducks, phalaropes and skuas that hurried north. Brown Bears fed on old walrus carcasses making me wary of surprising one if I rounded a large snow drift too quickly.

I was then dispatched with Pavel Tomkovich, the great Russian wader expert, to an area where Spoon-billed Sandpiper had previously been recorded with chicks. Meanwhile, Christoph had his eye on thawing pools by the village where the first waders were dropping in after long flights from China, Thailand and even Australia! He found the first Spoon-billed Sandpiper of the season and so I was allowed to go there the next day. It didn't take long to spot one among the Red-necked Stints, Dunlin, Grey and Ringed Plovers. It crossed a small river towards an area still solidly crowned with snow. I walked onto the ice and crouched down. It felt very unnerving as if walking on a glass table where one could see through to the floor below. The birds came closer, stabbing at the snow or wading in shallow water.

Trembles of excitement turned to shakes of cold. The melting ice creaked below me and water was coming in through my pockets, waistband and collar to reach parts that I



Phil sits, just inches from a Spoon-billed Sandpiper, on a small gravel island in a frozen river during a white-out. Taking photos for the Bird Holidays Christmas Card is something he takes very seriously! (Picture by Baz Scampion www.bazscampionnaturephotography.co.uk)

A fine drake Stejneger's Scoter on the sea at Meinypil'gyno. (Phil Palmer)

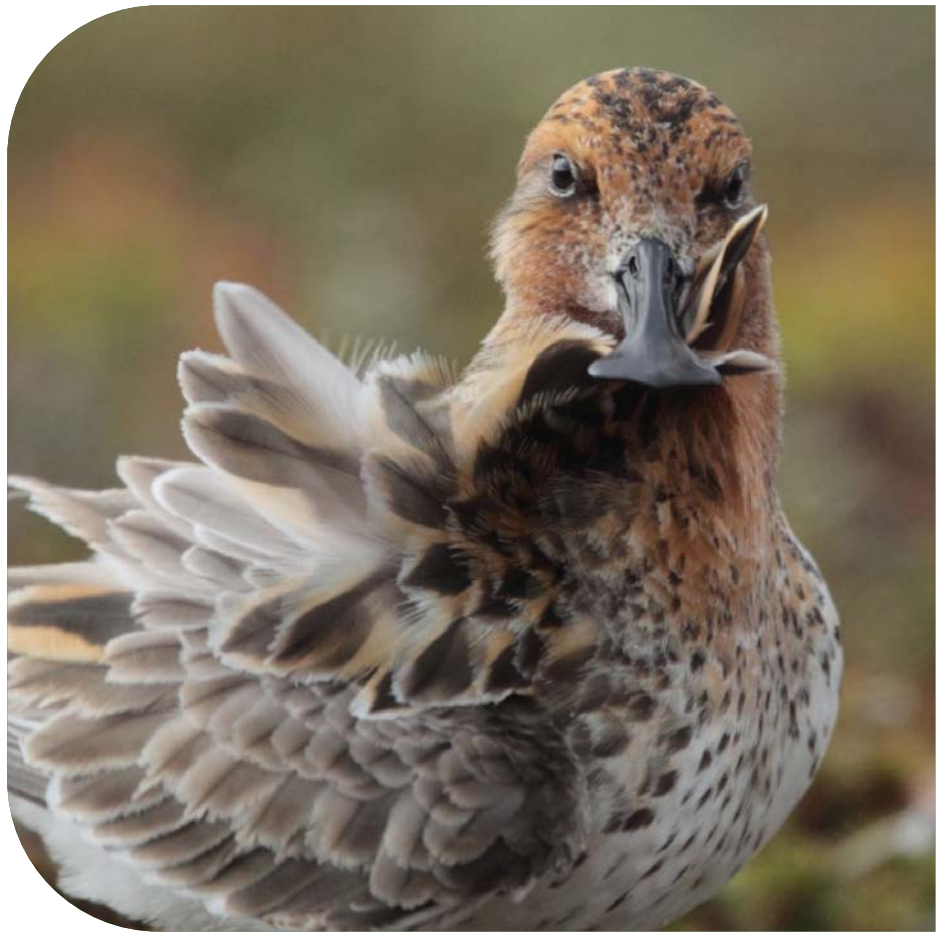


Phil's Spoon-billed Sandpiper Expeditions *continued*

did not want to freeze! I reminded myself that I didn't need to have any more kids. Periodically the wader flock would take flight as skuas flew by, but with time they became accustomed to my presence. The Spoon-billed Sandpiper would come close before being chased away by a territorial Terek Sandpiper. By noon, I had taken 30 gigabytes of photos having laid flat on the ice barely daring to move as the birds approached.

By mid-afternoon, a smart red Spoony was coming so close that I couldn't focus my camera. I just lay there as it fed unconcerned near my face. Even the normally shy Terek could see that my body temperature was so low that I couldn't react with the speed of a predator.

Satisfied with my pictures, I got up and edged towards the shore. The ice broke but rested on a bed of gravel. It took a while to



A Spoon-billed Sandpiper preens just feet from Phil.



Approaching Meinypil'gyno (Phil Palmer). Taken by putting my head out of the window of a helicopter – now I know what wind-chill really means!

get to safety, but I knew the experience was worth all the risk. I was numb from the chest down. Only my neck and head retained any feeling. I flicked off my wet gloves to check the photos. "Excellent" I thought.

But something was wrong. A small symbol on a screen said they were of lower quality than usual. Panic set in as I realised that all six cards filled to the brim with stunning images had been saved at the lowest quality setting. The cold had got to the

camera and it must have reset itself, presumably to factory settings. I was gutted.... No devastated! I hadn't the strength to do it all again the next day, but knew that I must.



A pair of Sandhill Cranes circle their Siberian breeding grounds (Phil Palmer)

Next morning, the Terek was still hassling some Red-necked Stints, Dunlins and my Spoony, but much more of the river had thawed. The snow had gone and only thin ice topped permafrosted mud. Flurries of snow tried to break my spirits but I obtained the 2012 Christmas card image you may have been sent. But like a fisherman, the photos that got away were far better.

I took myself off into the mountains, where the bears dozed on snow patches to keep cool. By now, I had become part of the local wildlife to every duck and wader. Even the bears seemed to tell that I was no threat, despite being hunted here by the Russians. They just sniffed and lay down as I walked by. The Long-tailed Ducks and Sandhill Cranes were delightful and

surveying for singing Spoon-billed Sandpipers was the tonic I needed. The buzz one gets from seeing the world's most threatened wader is unforgettable.

In the weeks that passed, I was able to locate nests for the WWT's captive breeding project as well as watching a Spoony walk up to me, look me in the eye, tuck one leg under its belly, then go to sleep. A moment I will never forget.

On my return, it was great to hear such positive feedback about BirdLife Russia's involvement and the WWT project. Despite the population halving since my first visit to Russia, there is far more optimism now than in the past decade.

In December, Christoph, Evgeny and I visited 'our' chicks at Slimbridge. All 17 are

thriving, in addition to the ones brought over the previous year.

I leave for Myanmar, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper's main wintering grounds, next week. We are taking a Bird Holidays group to encourage ecotourism at the site. It will also help Christoph's aim of stopping wader hunting there. In the meantime, Evgeny and his Russian team strive to protect and further understand Spoon-billed Sandpiper breeding biology and migration routes.

Bird Holidays has joined the ranks of BirdLife Species Champions and it is our hope that many of you will one day all be able to see a Spoon-billed Sandpiper in its fine summer dress. Hopefully on a Bird Holidays tour!

Look out for our new trips

The development of new tours is a vital part of our business, and one which is great fun at the same time. There is the anticipation of a new destination; the planning of a recce, scrutinizing maps, pouring over online trip reports, and then the recce itself. ... Will the destination live up to expectations? Of course, most destinations exceed expectation and we cannot wait to return with clients.

Phil still intends to recce Papua New Guinea, although that one is a long time in the planning. Hopefully a recce to Latvia in May should have quicker results. He is also reintroducing Uganda, having rested that one for a few years.

Not put off by Jessica Hynes and Hugh Bonneville's World's Most Dangerous Roads TV programme, John is visiting Georgia in May 2013. He promises he'll stick to the tarmac in his quest for

Caucasian Black Grouse and Great Rosefinch! John is also recceing Thailand, which will be advertised as a trip in February 2014. He first went there in 1988, as part of a Gurney's Pitta Rediscovery Expedition, and is looking forward to visiting again, this time to see wintering Spoon-billed Sandpipers.

Andy visited Tanzania last year, and we hope to feature that destination in our brochure for the first time in 2014. Roger has done a lot of research on Sri Lanka, and hopes to design a trip based on endemic birds and Blue Whales. Paul has his eye on Cambodia and Vietnam; perhaps the lure of Bengal Florican and Greater Adjutant, coupled with a cultural visit to Ankor Wat, will prove a future hit.

MEET THE TEAM

We gave John a few questions in this regular feature on our leaders.

John where did you start birding?

Believe it or not, in Birmingham, well to be more precise on the outskirts of Brum at a place called Bartley Reservoir. I was 8 or 9 and I can still vividly remember seeing a pair of Great Crested Grebes from the causeway. My friend had a pair of binoculars with him, I wonder where he is now?

When did you start tour leading?

Ah, this memory is not so vivid but I am pretty sure it was in Romania in the autumn of 1996, co-leading with Paul. We found a flock of 1000 Collared Pratincoles and I was hooked. My first self led tour was to New England in The Fall a couple of years later - magical.

Do you have any other interests?

I used to like cross country running and we used to run around the racecourse in Doncaster when I was at school. Nowadays I enjoy watching sport, primarily football and rugby as well as athletics. I loved the London Olympics (who didn't?). I have been following Leeds United, through thick and thin, since I went to my first match in 1975. I have a passion for history both ancient and modern and like to design my tours with some culture in mind. We have visited many fascinating archaeological sites in pursuit of birds on our tours across the world.

What is your favourite bird or birds?

Lots of species, but my particular favourites are Black Grouse, Merlin and Hen Harrier, as I have spent a lot of time watching and studying them. I love little brown jobs like warblers, particularly the leaf warblers. Pallas's Warbler is a particular favourite of mine. Also skulking birds of the forest floor like pittas, ant-pittas, couas and babbler... Banded Pitta's are just superb!

Favourite non bird?

Although I haven't got the best of sea legs I love to watch whales and dolphins. There is something special about getting up close to them. I am lucky that we have the opportunity to do other things besides just birding on our tours.

What is your favourite destination?

In the UK that's easy. It's the Isles of Scilly, such an atmospheric collection of islands set in the wild Atlantic. One day you feel you are on a sunny Mediterranean island and the next in the middle of an Atlantic storm. What a wonderful place. Abroad, well that is more difficult. Mongolia has such amazing open landscapes and at night superb starry skies. Then in contrast, Thailand is full of wonderful people, fabulous birdlife and perhaps the finest cuisine in the world. On reflection it has to be Thailand.

Anywhere you would like to go?

I suppose Papua New Guinea... money no object... all the Birds of Paradise in one go!

Best Birding Moment?

Setting eyes on my first Banded Pitta, pow!... dazzling in the half light of the forest floor... it hopped along the fallen tree trunk that I was sat on. Finding three Pallas's Warblers in one day on the Isles of Scilly, when they were still a rarity. Ace birds, ace place, plus it was early November and there were no other birdwatchers there!

Worst or most embarrassing moment?

Every time on a tour when I shout out "there's a so and so" and quickly realise that it's the right name but the wrong bird on the wrong continent.... say no more!



John at Jalman Meadows, in the Khentii Mountains, Mongolia, with one of the local guides.

TRIPS WITH AVAILABILITY EARLY IN THE YEAR

BHUTAN

30th March to 20th April 2013

There is so much colour on this trip, from the beautiful pheasants to the prayer-flag covered monasteries, and from the dazzling Fire-tailed Myzornis to the flowering rhododendron forests it inhabits. This comprehensive exploration of the country with Phil will leave every visitor impressed.

SE ARIZONA

13th to 26th April 2013

From the desert floor with its Roadrunners and Cactus Wrens, through sycamore canyons with rare Spotted Owls and Elegant Trogons to the tops of the sky islands that are home to birds more often found in Canada, Arizona is very rich in diversity. Short drives on well-maintained roads allow access to all these habitats, providing a wonderful experience from start to finish.

BELARUS

4th to 12th May 2013

For the second year running we have included this exciting and relatively new birding destination in Eastern Europe. Last year we saw a hunting male Great Grey Owl and in contrast a confiding Pygmy Owl. Also expect otherwise difficult to see species such as Terek Sandpiper and Azure Tit. Contact us for last year's mouth watering trip report.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

10th to 17th May 2013

This wonderful journey combines both birds and culture along with the beautiful unspoilt landscape of Bohemia and southern Moravia. This is a great trip on which to catch up with elusive forest species such as Tengmalm's Owl, and White-backed and Three-toed Woodpeckers. The striking male Collared Flycatcher is the signature bird of this well established tour.

Long-tailed Ground-roller, Ifaty,
Madagascar, October 2012 (Phil Palmer)

CAMARGUE AND CORSICA

18th to 26th May 2013

We first ran a tour to the Camargue back in 1992 and it has run every year since. It is always a pleasure to be reacquainted with old friends, the pair of Eagle Owls not far from the hotel being a prime example. When combined with the rugged beauty and endemic birdlife of Corsica, this is a trip which will appeal to anyone who loves great wildlife spectacles in wonderful scenery.

MANITOBA

1st to 13th June 2013

A tour to surely whet the appetite of even the most seasoned traveller. Manitoba provides the winning combination of forested lakes and open prairies still grazed by Bison, ruled by bears and haunted by loons. The forest's unlocked secrets include a host of colourful warblers, grosbeaks and the tiny Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that drink tree sap alongside Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. Heading north to Churchill, we visit one of the most accessible places to witness Arctic wildlife.

MONGOLIA

3rd to 18th June 2013

Join John on his fourth visit to this magical land of nomadic horsemen and Shaman. This tour combines a visit to the wonderful landscapes of the Gobi Desert and the mountains on the fringe of the extensive Siberian taiga. We will go in search of globally threatened species such as the White-naped Crane, Oriental Plover, Henderson's Ground Jay and the attractive Saxual Sparrow. Flocks of the mythical Pallas's Sandgrouse fly in to drink at freshwater pools in the desert. Step back in time and visit the land of blue skies and perpetual sunshine.

SPITSBERGEN

11th to 21st July 2013

Have you been gripped by the fascinating insight into the family life of Polar Bears shown recently on the BBC? If so why not take the opportunity to join Andy on our regular summer visit to the seas and islands within the Arctic Circle. We usually have several fascinating encounters with the kings of the cold, the Polar Bear. Expect good sightings too of Walrus as well as Bearded and Ringed Seals. The ghostly Beluga Whale frequents these cold waters along with other cetaceans. The graceful Ivory Gull is usually seen in good numbers on this tour too.



email: info@birdholidays.co.uk

www.birdholidays.co.uk