



# Newsletter



*Award-winning image of a Grizzly Bear, Alaska by Andy Skillen (see pages 12-13 for our new portfolio of Wildlife Photography tours)*

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## Welcome from the Naturetrek Team!

We have another bumper 24-page newsletter for you this spring — with a wonderful selection of 15 new tours (pages 12-13 and 16-23), including a portfolio of five Wildlife Photography tours to Zambia, Brazil's Pantanal, Dartmoor, the Cairngorms and Northumberland, each led by an award-winning wildlife photographer. In Central and South America, we are offering two new birdwatching holidays to Colombia as well as a 'Surf & Turf' holiday to enjoy Andean endemics and the rich birdlife supported by the Humboldt Current in Peru. In Panama we have an exciting new 2-centre butterfly tour, and in the far south of the continent our new 18-day 'Best of Chile' holiday goes in search of Blue Whales, Pumas and much more. We're also launching a 16-day birdwatching holiday to Papua New Guinea to see its stunning birds-of-paradise and 'Huli wigmen', while closer to home we have two new holidays to Scotland's Ardnamurchan Peninsula: on the spring tour one of the highlights will be watching lekking Black Grouse, and our autumn tour will coincide with the Red Deer rut.

Congratulations to Janet Baldey, winner of our 2015 Writing Competition (winners are listed on page 5), whose prize-winning article about amorous Tigers in Tadoba National Park charmed us all (page 6). Janet wins a Naturetrek holiday in Europe. We are also pleased to announce the winners of our 2015 Photography Competition, Andrew Lapworth and Jenny Grewal, and share their stunning photos (page 8-9).

In addition, there's an interview with Naturetrek's Operations Manager for Brazil, Dan Free, about the Pantanal (page 10-11). Dan talks about some of the highlights from our 2015 Jaguar-watching tours, advises on which month is best for a visit and outlines some of our exciting future plans for tours to this superb wetland. Finally, we have details of our recent donations to Butterfly Conservation and the World Land Trust, and tour leader Nick Acheson reports back on his year-long quest in 2015 to see as many of the world's big cats as possible!

## News from the Indian Subcontinent

### India

Tiger sightings have been very good in Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Tadoba and Pench National Parks; however, the beautiful Central Indian reserve of Satpura continues to hold the record for Sloth Bear and Leopard sightings — one evening safari in November yielded seven different individual Sloth Bear sightings! At Panna National Park, the Tiger population has made an amazing comeback from zero to a thriving (and sustainable) 35 individuals in the last two years, and we're pleased to report regular Tiger sightings at Bandhavgarh National Park right from the beginning of the season. At Kanha National Park, the dominant male Tiger continues to charm everyone with his swaggering, defiant gait — you don't need to be a Tiger, or an ethologist, to read his body language! Another pleasing development this season has been the resurgence of Dhole (Asian Wild Dog) sightings which, though negligible during the last two seasons, have been very consistent in the winter of 2015/16 so far.

### Sri Lanka

Over the last few months, over a hundred people have travelled with us to Sri Lanka in search of the country's endemic birds, its elusive Leopards, fascinating culture and magnificent Blue Whales which arrive annually off the south coast ... and the season hasn't ended yet! Our 'Sri Lanka — Endemic Birds' groups have managed to see all 33 endemics as well as over 150 other bird species. So far, 2015/16 has also proved superb for Blue Whale sightings, and as many as 12 Blue Whales in a single day have been seen on some of our 'Sri Lanka — Blue Whales & Leopards' tours, and female Bryde's Whales with calves have been seen. Leopard sightings have included solitary males and mating couples; an Indian Pangolin also made a surprise appearance. All of our 'Sri Lanka — Wildlife & History' holidays have managed to record more than 200 bird species, and up to 22 mammal species. Our 'Wild Sri Lanka ... In Style!' group had a rare False Killer Whale encounter, and those on our Bargain Mammals tour saw Grey Slender Lorises — another rare treat!



## New Tailormade Brochure

Four new destinations plus cruises!

We are delighted to announce the release of our new Naturetrek Tailormade brochure! In addition to all our existing tailormade destinations, the new brochure also includes Kenya, South Africa, Argentina and Mongolia! In total we now feature 22 incredible wildlife destinations from across Africa, the Americas and Asia, as well as an introduction to some of our favourite wildlife cruises from around the world. Our team of expert wildlife consultants is on hand to discuss and assist with your plans for future tailormade wildlife holidays, whether you should wish to visit our friendly offices or speak to us by phone or email.

### To make an enquiry ...

Should you wish to make an enquiry to discuss a tailormade wildlife holiday itinerary, please either call 01962 733051 or email Robin Smith, Naturetrek's Tailormade Holidays Manager, at robin@naturetrek.co.uk

We look forward to hearing from you!



### Order your free copy

To receive your free copy, please call the Naturetrek office on 01962 733051 or email Georgie at georgie@naturetrek.co.uk



Cirque de Gavarnie

Join us  
in the  
French  
Pyrenees

for our 30th  
Anniversary Tour



Do join us to help celebrate our 30th anniversary in the French Pyrenees this summer. Many of our most popular tour leaders and members of staff will be leading this special holiday in search of birds, wild flowers and butterflies amongst spectacular mountain scenery.

Whilst our 10th June departure has been fully booked for some time, we still have places left on our Friday 3rd – Friday 10th June 2016 departure.

■ Please call Tom Mabbett on 01962 733051 or email tom@naturetrek.co.uk for further information.



## New Face at HQ

Alison Steel

Alison joined our busy Operations Department in November 2015 and now assists with organising a wide portfolio of tours. Following a BSc in Zoology at the University of Glasgow, Alison worked on various conservation projects including a 2-month stay in Ecuador studying hummingbirds, and four weeks in Indonesia monitoring bats, tarsiers and coral reef systems. Her travel experience also includes a 6-week trip to New Zealand which involved studying the natural history of the country. Alison has a bird-ringing permit and she's a keen wildlife photographer. We're very pleased to welcome her to the team!



Giant Antpitta



Black-and-chestnut Eagle

© Luis Revalde



CONSERVATION

Cloudforest

# Naturetrek's Ecuadorian Cloudforest Reserves are Extended!

In September 2015 Naturetrek donated a further \$118,000 to the Ecuadorian conservation charity Fundacion EcoMinga, via the World Land Trust, in order to secure the purchase of four more plots of land. These acquisitions will extend EcoMinga's Naturetrek Reserves to a total area of 996 acres, and our eventual aim is to fund the acquisition of sufficient land to build a protected forest corridor across the upper Rio Pastaza watershed in order to connect the Los Llanganates National Park, to the north, with the Sangay National Park, to the south — a corridor that has been classified by the World Wide Fund for Nature as one of the 200 most important in the world. Negotiations with local landowners for the remaining target sites have established both the potential for acquisition for conservation, but also the threat of sale to agricultural developers. It is Naturetrek's aim to prevent the latter from happening.

It was in 2007 that we began purchasing Ecuadorian cloudforest for this purpose, and we have now spent £197,550 of the £270,978 raised up until now. This funding has been achieved by Naturetrek setting aside £15 for every person booking on a long-haul holiday and £5 for those booking a short-haul tour. This amount provides a gesture towards the off-setting of our company's and our clients' carbon footprints by allowing us to prevent this rich habitat from being cut down and burnt, releasing its stored carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. However, even more importantly, our aim is to protect such valuable habitat and the species it holds. Indeed, the Andean cloudforests of central Ecuador that we have purchased as Naturetrek Reserves for protection by Fundacion EcoMinga are very special. Not only are they amongst the world's most biologically important, holding a staggering biodiversity as well as a wealth of endangered wildlife, but they are amongst the most threatened forests on account of clearances for Naranjilla (*Solanum quitoense*) plantations.

In particular, these cloudforests are very rich botanically, being home to dozens of very special terrestrial orchids which exhibit dramatic species radiation. Indeed the area holds more endemic plant species than the much more famous Galápagos Islands and, in recent years, two new tree species and more than 40 new species of orchid have been discovered in the area by a team of botanists led by Naturetrek tour leader and Fundacion EcoMinga co-founder Lou Jost (one new orchid species even being named after Naturetrek in recognition of the company's contribution to the preservation of this unique area).

These special forests also form a biological corridor, enabling mammals such as Mountain Tapir, Spectacled Bear, Puma, and two locally rare species of monkey, the Red Howler and White-fronted Capuchin, to move between the two national parks — such corridors being absolutely vital, not only to the survival of such key species, but also for the preservation of the diversity of a region's flora and fauna. The birdlife here is also very

special, with species such as Black-and-chestnut Eagle, Andean Cock-of-the-rock and Giant Antpitta, while the Reserves' mixture of primary and secondary cloudforest provides an extremely rich centre for plant endemism with nearly 200 plants (and counting!) found in the upper Rio Pastaza watershed that are found nowhere else on Earth!

In addition, because the Naturetrek Reserves connect higher altitude cloudforest to the vulnerable riparian forests along the valley floor, they not only provide vital river access for large mammals and other species but also extend protection to the more diverse lower elevations that are not protected by the highland national parks in this watershed. For example, a recently discovered and very rare tree, *Blakea attenboroughii*, is not known from any national park yet is present in the Naturetrek Reserves.

It is also our aim to develop wildlife tourism, and an awareness of the value and importance of our Reserves and the two national parks, in the local town of Baños. Whilst it is already one of Ecuador's major tourist destinations, Baños' local tourism operators have yet to appreciate the value of the region's unique potential for ecotourism. This is something that we, at Naturetrek, hope we can influence ... by demonstrating that the area's forest and its wildlife have economic value, and that a more sustainable local economy is on the doorstep ... an alternative to deforestation and farming.

It was with this in mind that our Tailormade Manager, Robin Smith, visited the area recently. He enjoyed a stay in a remote and simply furnished cabin in the heart of this fine cloudforest, enjoying the walking trails, the isolation, the beauty and the fabulous birdlife and flora — a highlight being the night-time walks to discover the fascinating variety of invertebrates and frogs around the cabin!

For the adventurous, a visit to this area can easily be incorporated into any Naturetrek Tailormade Ecuador itinerary, or can be included as an 'add-on' to one of our Ecuador group tours detailed below. We hope we can encourage you to visit one day. You will be welcome!

## Our tours to Ecuador for 2016:

### Andean Flora of Ecuador

Sat 17th Sep – Sun 2nd Oct 2016

Cost: £3,895

### Ecuador — Andes & Amazon

Tue 8th – Tue 22nd Nov 2016

Cost: £3,895

### Ecuador — Cock-of-the-rock

Sat 19th – Sun 27th Nov 2016

Cost: £2,395



Sobralia luerorum

For details of our group holidays to Ecuador please call Andy Tucker on 01962 733051 or email [andy@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:andy@naturetrek.co.uk). If you would like to discuss a tailormade holiday to Ecuador, please call Robin Smith on 01962 733051 or email [robin@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:robin@naturetrek.co.uk)



Purple-edged Copper



Chequered Skipper

# Help for Butterflies

Naturetrek takes great pleasure in contributing to many conservation organisations and one of these is Butterfly Conservation. As a top-category 'Gold' corporate sponsor of Butterfly Conservation (BC) we annually donate £1,200 to the charity. As well as this, since 2002 we have donated 10% of all income generated by an annual programme of Butterfly Tours that we run in partnership with BC, with Naturetrek additionally gifting BC membership to all non-members joining these tours (at a cost of £856 in 2015). Our latest donation, a cheque for £23,684.80, was presented by Naturetrek's Dave Shute to Butterfly Conservation's CEO, Martin Warren, and Chairman, Dr Jim Asher, at the charity's recent AGM and Members' Day held in Surrey. This brings the total we have raised since 2002 to £142,629.80.



If you would like to join one of our Butterfly Tours in 2016/17, and help us with our fundraising, we can offer the following choice:

<b>Croatia</b> Mon 6th – Mon 13th Jun 2016	Cost: £1,495	<b>France — The Vercors</b> Wed 20th – Wed 27th Jul 2016	Cost: £1,395	<b>The Italian Dolomites</b> Thu 7th – Thu 14th Jul 2016	Cost: £1,395
<b>Hungary</b> Tue 14th – Tue 21st Jun 2016	Cost: £1,395	<b>Armenia</b> Sat 25th Jun – Sat 2nd Jul 2016	Cost: £1,795	Thu 14th – Thu 21st Jul 2016	Cost: £1,395
<b>France — The Cévennes</b> Wed 15th – Wed 22nd Jun 2016	Cost: £1,295	<b>La Brenne</b> Thu 30th Jun – Tue 5th Jul 2016	Cost: £995	<b>Normandy</b> Thu 7th – Mon 11th Jul 2016	Cost: £895
<b>Southern Greece</b> Sat 18th – Sat 25th Jun 2016	Cost: £1,495	<b>The Swiss Alps</b> Sun 3rd – Sun 10th Jul 2016	Cost: £1,695	<b>South Africa</b> Mon 28th Nov – Thu 8th Dec 2016	Cost: £2,995
<b>Spain's Picos de Europa</b> Sat 18th – Sat 25th Jun 2016	Cost: £1,295	<b>French Pyrenees</b> Wed 6th – Wed 13th Jul 2016	Cost: £1,395	<b>Sri Lanka</b> Sat 25th Feb – Mon 6th Mar 2017	Cost: £2,095
<b>Sweden</b> Sun 19th – Fri 24th Jun 2016	Cost: £1,495	<b>Spanish Pyrenees</b> Wed 6th – Wed 13th Jul 2016 Wed 13th – Wed 20th Jul 2016	Cost: £1,395		



NB. A year's **FREE Butterfly Conservation membership** is given by Naturetrek to all non-members joining any of the tours below.

■ For further information about any of the above holidays please email [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk) or call Georgie on 01962 733051.

## Writing Competition 2015 — RESULTS!

We had a wonderful response to our 2015 Writing Competition with almost 40 entries! Many thanks to everyone who entered. The writing was of an extremely high standard and we thoroughly enjoyed reading your articles about experiences on Naturetrek holidays; some were very recent, and some were taken a long time ago but remained perfectly fresh in your memories!

We are delighted to announce the winners of our 2015 competition as follows:

**First prize:** 'Indian Love Song' by Janet Baldey (published on page 6 of this Newsletter). Janet wins a Naturetrek holiday in Europe OR a £1,000 Naturetrek Voucher.

**Our thoughts:** Seeing Tigers in the wild for the first time is, for many wildlife enthusiasts, a much longed-for event and Janet's lighthearted piece conveys the excitement of the experience very well.

**Second prize:** 'The Bird Designed by a Committee' by Alan Peters (published on page 7 of this Newsletter). Alan wins a £500 Naturetrek Voucher.

**Our thoughts:** We were impressed by this evocative description of Alan's quest to see the bizarre Yellow-headed Picathartes in Ghana; it's a tale a great many birders will be able to relate to!

**Third prize:** 'Creek Clowns — Hoatzins of the Amazon' by Yvonne Butorac (to be published in our June 2016 Newsletter). Yvonne wins a £250 Naturetrek Voucher.

**Our thoughts:** A very pleasing and entertaining article.

Congratulations to all our prize winners and many thanks to everyone who entered.

For details of our 2016 Writing Competition please see below.

N.B. The judges consisted of our Newsletter editor, Catherine Strong, and our Operations team.

*Spires of Pride of Madeira (Echium candicans), Madeira*

## NEW 2016 Writing Competition WIN a Naturetrek holiday in Europe!



*Great Bustard*

**W**e love to hear about your experiences on our holidays, and nothing gives us greater pleasure than to know that you've had a good time on a holiday we've organised for you! So, once again, we offer you the chance to put your experiences and wildlife encounters from a Naturetrek holiday into words, to share with us and others, by entering our 2016 Writing Competition. Therefore, if you fancy yourself as a writer, please do enter our competition — you could win a **FREE Naturetrek holiday!**

### The way to win!

Our judges are looking for a short piece of travel writing (500-800 words) that may include one or all of the following ingredients: it might elicit the essence of a particular Naturetrek tour or region, present a flavour (amusing or otherwise) of travelling as part of a wildlife tour group, and/or incorporate your tour's wildlife highlight(s) — the goal of most of our clients. It must be written in clear, concise prose and convey a vivid sense of place, as well as the excitement and joy of experiencing the natural world.

### Our prizes

The winner will receive one place on a European Naturetrek holiday of his/her choice (excluding cruises), OR a £1,000 Naturetrek Voucher. There will be a second prize of a £500 Naturetrek Voucher, and a third prize of a £250 Naturetrek Voucher. To whet your appetite, please do browse our European holidays in our 2016 brochure, or on our website: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

### Publication of the winning & other entries

Although this competition will be open throughout this year (2016), and the winner decided on 31st December 2016, all suitable entries will be posted on the Naturetrek Blog (please note that we have been experiencing some problems with our Blog, so entries will be posted once it is up and running again!) for the enjoyment of others as soon as they are submitted to us. The winning story will ultimately be published in our February 2017 e-newsletter, and possibly also in our Spring 2017 Newsletter.

### How to enter:

Entries should ideally be sent by email (to [catherine@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:catherine@naturetrek.co.uk)) though handwritten entries submitted by post will also be considered. Please include your name, plus the title and date of the Naturetrek holiday your article refers to. Please send your entries at any stage over the course of the year — the earlier the better from both our, and perhaps your, point of view. And please note, there is no limit to the number of entries that you may submit, should you wish to write about more than one Naturetrek holiday!

Good luck!

# Indian Love Song

Winner — Janet Baldey

Some wildlife experiences are hard to beat and seeing a Tiger in the wild for the first time is one of them! In this memorable piece, Janet describes the thrill of an encounter with a pair of amorous Tigers in India's Tadoba National Park.

**H**uddled in blankets against the pre-dawn chill and, still groggy from sleep, we swayed against each other as our jeep lurched along the rocky path leading deep into the heart of the jungle. Then, one hissed word cut through our torpor and tiredness vanished:

'Tiger!'

The 'Gypsy' jolted to a stop, the engine cut and, in the sudden silence, our heads swung to the right, following the line of our eagle-eyed guide's pointing finger. There, in a clearing beside the track, their vibrant colouring muted by the swirling early morning mist, was the outline of not just one, but two, adult Tigers, one much larger than the other.

'A mating pair,' breathed our guide.

Not daring to speak, we sat as if turned to stone while the male Tiger prowled around his mate. Lazily, she raised her head and looked at him and her tail twitched. They nuzzled briefly, then the male turned impatiently, circling his lady three times before slipping silently into the jungle. Still the Tigress lingered. 'Was she rejecting him?' we wondered. Then, it came. The sound we had travelled thousands of miles to hear: haunting and atonal, vibrating through the air, a wild Tiger's mating call: 'AAARROOOM!' Then again: 'AAARROOOM!' Its yearning intensity made us shiver. It obviously stirred the Tigress as well because, with one fluid movement, she rose to her feet and disappeared into the gloom leaving us, our eyes straining against the dim light, desperate for one last glimpse.

'They will be together for about seven days before parting. And, yes, a litter of cubs is certain,' we were told. It was then that somebody said: 'Does anybody realise what day it is?' Mouths opened as pennies dropped. Of course! It was February 14th, 2015. Our Indian friends weren't aware of the day's significance but, when it was explained, they were delighted and later the whole lodge at Tadoba buzzed with the news that our party had witnessed a mating pair of Tigers on St Valentine's Day and, what's more, had been the first of only two jeeps on the scene.

This wasn't our first sighting, and it wasn't our last. Soon after arriving, we'd trundled around the jungle delighting in its sights and sounds. Groups of



Spotted Deer grazed on fruit that a group of hyperactive langur monkeys threw down to them from the trees, while Scarlet Minivets, Purple Sunbirds and parakeets fluttered from branch to branch like living jewels. From all around echoed the insistent piping of barbets, a family of birds that never seem to tire; sad-eyed Sambar Deer peered nervously from the shadows and groups of Wild Boar rooted in the earth. But, all the while, we were cushioning ourselves against the disappointment of not seeing a Tiger, which all realised would be unlikely on our very first game-drive. We were wrong. On turning a corner Indrajit, our tour leader, leapt up, his face alive with excitement.

'When you see a sight like this,' he advised, 'it means only one thing!'

Sure enough, lying half in and half out of a lake, a tawny-and-black striped shape basked in the late afternoon sun. It was unclear how long the Tigress had been sleeping but our guide thought it had been for some time. A bit of skilful manoeuvring on the part of our driver and we had a clear view. As we watched, she raised her head and yawned.

'If she yawns five times, she'll get up,' we were told, but the Tigress had obviously not read the manual for, after the third yawn, she rose. From out of kohlined eyes, she cast a brief smouldering glance in our direction and padded leisurely up the slope towards us. Completely unfazed by her audience, she sauntered along the track leaving it only to mark her territory. At last, she tired of our attention and disappeared abruptly into the bush.

The other animals in the jungle were fascinating: immense Gaur, the largest cattle in the world, Wild Boar, Sloth Bear, Leopard, Dhole (Asian Wild Dog), jackals and a plethora of birds, monkeys and deer, but it was Tigers we had come to see and they didn't disappoint. We had seven sightings in all, each one unique and memorable.

What's more, seeing a Tiger in the wild never palls, judging by the delighted grins and 'high fives' given by the local drivers when we had a particularly spectacular view. The thrill of seeing this charismatic big stripy cat is obviously addictive, and now we are hooked and can't wait to go back.

## Tour details:

### Tiger Tours

If you would like to join us in 2016/7 on a Tiger-watching holiday we are offering the following departures:

#### Tiger Marathon

13 days

Thu 24th Mar – Tue 5th Apr 2016

Thu 3rd – Tue 15th Nov 2016

Cost: from £2,995

#### India — Tiger Direct!

10 days

Sun 3rd – Tue 12th Apr 2016

Sun 13th – Tue 22nd Nov 2016

Sun 18th – Tue 27th Dec 2016

Sun 8th – Tue 17th Jan 2017

Sun 12th – Tue 21st Feb 2017

Cost: from £2,295

#### Tadoba extension: Janet Baldey

was on safari in Tadoba National Park when she saw the mating Tigers mentioned in her winning article. We offer a 4-day pre-tour extension to Tadoba National Park which costs from £795.

#### India — Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve

9 days

Wed 19th – Thu 27th Oct 2016

Wed 2nd – Thu 10th Nov 2016

Cost: £1,995

#### Just Tigers!

13 days

Fri 4th – Wed 16th Nov 2016

Cost: £2,595

■ For further details please call Rajan Jolly on 01962 733051 or email [rajan@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:rajan@naturetrek.co.uk)



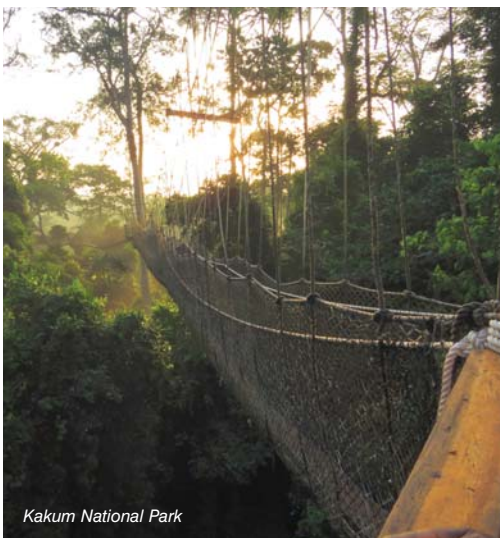
# The Bird Designed by a Committee

Second prize — Alan Peters

Alan was on our May 2012 'Ghana — Picathartes' holiday. In his article Alan marvels at the bizarre physical appearance of this West African bird, a species that he decides proves even more peculiar-looking in the flesh than in the books!

I wonder if, as a child, you ever owned one of those books in which the pages were in two sections, so that by turning the sections independently you could create fantastic creatures, for example an animal with a lion's head and a zebra's body! I went on a short birding trip with Naturetrek to the West African country of Ghana, known in the past as the Gold Coast. With a country bird list of around 750 species it has many fabulous birds but one species is straight out of that old children's book. The Yellow-headed Picathartes looks as if it has been put together by a committee and its habits and behaviour are just as strange as its appearance; there are only two species in the family worldwide and both are scarce with limited distribution. The day I saw this almost mythical creature had everything: it was hot, demanding, exciting, rewarding and still lives in my memory.

Four days of intensive, mainly forest, birding enduring high temperatures and humidity were very tiring but also rewarding with many hoped-for target species seen well. Walking a wide forest trail on the afternoon of day four we were all surprised to round a bend and come across a large Spitting Cobra in the middle of the path. It reared up briefly and extended its hood before dropping down and quickly disappearing into the undergrowth. No one's brain in our group was quick enough to log



Kakum National Park

'big snake' and at the same time send a message to their fingers to operate their camera, so there were, sadly, no images to keep.

On our fifth day, breakfast was at 4.30am, after which we left our lodge to drive to Aboabo on the eastern border of Kakum National Park. We walked slowly along forest tracks for almost five hours, picking up plenty of good birds such as Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher (looks as good as it sounds), Kemp's Longbill, Black-throated Coucal and the menacing Black Sparrowhawk.

There were many spectacular butterflies, including the commonly seen and evocatively named commodore and pathfinder species. Less welcome were the African stingless bees which seemed to find our eyes, ears, nose and hair of particular interest. After a quick stop for lunch we had an hour's drive to the village of Bonkro which was at the end of a narrow and deeply rutted track. The bus door opened to the usual crowd of excited children all wanting plastic water bottles; and also to ferocious heat. It was now 1.30pm and the temperature was around 35°C. The village was a collection of red mud houses with corrugated iron roofs opening onto a flat dusty square. Our guide told us to make sure that we had enough water in our backpacks as we had a steep climb up through the forest to the rocky cave area that the Picathartes favoured.

Two men from the village led the way, swinging their machetes with consummate ease to open the path, their biceps rippling under their ragged T-shirts. We initially made good progress on fairly level ground, then the gradient steepened up through thick forest until it was quite demanding as we scrambled upwards using roots to pull ourselves on the last section. A large dark scorpion had taken up residence under the final handhold just before we reached level ground and whispers of 'Watch out!' were passed back along the group. Finally, we were in position, about 25 metres from a large rocky outcrop with a flat platform of rock in front of it. It took us some minutes to get our breath and recover normal respiration.

The guide instructed us to be very quiet, and watch the flat rocky area. It was 3pm ... we waited until 5.15pm. Then an urgent whisper: 'To the right'.



Yellow-headed Picathartes

A Picathartes had materialised out of nowhere. Although we had prepared and studied the field guide the bird in life was amazing: large, slender, a bright yellow head with a round black patch, long tail and clean white underparts completed its bizarre description. In total, four appeared, and after our guide had made sure that we had all seen them we left quietly and started our descent in the rapidly fading light.

That evening as we enjoyed our well-earned meal, one of our group — a retired Norwegian diplomat — got to his feet to say that he felt that it had been a wonderful day and that everyone had enjoyed a remarkable 'lifer' seeing the Picathartes. It was also Norway's National Day (17th May) and he could think of no better way to celebrate than to buy everyone a beer! We toasted Norway and the amazing Picathartes, the bird that looks like it's been designed by a committee.

## Tour details:

## Ghana — Picathartes Tour

If you would like a chance to see a Yellow-headed Picathartes for yourself, we are offering the following departure in 2016:

### Ghana — Picathartes

9 days

Sun 13th – Mon 21st Nov 2016

Cost: £2,195

■ For further details, please call Kerrie Porteous on 01962 733051 or email [kerrie@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:kerrie@naturetrek.co.uk)



## Photography Competition 2015 — RESULTS!

Many thanks to all of you who sent in photos from your Naturetrek holidays for our Photography Competition. We have thoroughly enjoyed looking at them and are pleased to announce Andrew Lapworth's superb photo of a Rufous-crested Coquette as our 'Image of the Year' winner. Congratulations to Andrew who wins our £100 first prize!



### Winning Image

Rufous-crested Coquette by Andrew Lapworth

We all loved Andrew's delightful image which shows off this tiny hummingbird's striking plumage! It was photographed by Andrew on our October 2015 'Northern Peru' holiday.

For further details of this holiday, which features Marvellous Spatuletail amongst a number of Peruvian endemics, please call Andy Tucker on 01962 733051 or email [andy@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:andy@naturetrek.co.uk). There are also opportunities for hummingbird photography on our holidays to Ecuador, Costa Rica, Trinidad & Tobago and Honduras — do call for details.

#### Northern Peru

An 18-day holiday combining the best of northern Peru's birds, wildlife and culture. Fri 14th – Mon 31st Oct 2016  
Cost: £4,495

## Runners-up

Each of our three runners-up receives a £25 prize. Congratulations to Jackie Edwards, Richard Harding and Hilary Thompson!

#### Shoebill



**Tour:** Tailormade Uganda holiday — June 2015  
**Photographer:** Jackie Edwards

Naturetrek's 2016/17 Uganda tours:

#### Uganda — Shoebills to Gorillas

Wed 2nd – Thu 10th Nov 2016  
Wed 22nd Feb – Fri 3rd Mar 2017  
Wed 1st – Thu 9th Nov 2017  
Cost: from £2,895

#### Uganda — Mammals & Mountains

Thu 12th – Tue 24th Jan 2017  
Cost: £4,695

For further details about our group holidays to Uganda please call Paul Stanbury on 01962 733051 or email [paul@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:paul@naturetrek.co.uk)

Alternatively, if you are interested in a tailormade holiday to Uganda, please email our Tailormade Holidays Manager, Robin Smith, at [robin@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:robin@naturetrek.co.uk)

#### Polar Bear



**Tour:** 'Spitsbergen — Realm of the Polar Bear' cruise, July 2013  
**Photographer:** Richard Harding

Naturetrek's 2017 Spitsbergen Cruise:

**Spitsbergen — Realm of the Polar Bear (exclusive wildlife charter):**  
Tue 27th Jun – Fri 7th Jul 2017  
Cost: from £4,995

For further details of our Spitsbergen cruises please call Paul Stanbury on 01962 733051 or email [paul@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:paul@naturetrek.co.uk)

#### Humpback Fluke



**Tour:** 'Spirit Bears, Grizzlies & Humpbacks — Cruising the Great Bear Rainforest', September 2014  
**Photographer:** Hilary Thompson

Naturetrek's Spirit Bear Cruise 2017:

**Spirit Bears, Grizzlies & Humpbacks — Cruising the Great Bear Rainforest**  
Sun 5th – Tue 12th Sep 2017  
Cost: from £4,595

Our 2016 tour is full. Please call Paul Stanbury on 01962 733051 or email [paul@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:paul@naturetrek.co.uk) for further information about this cruise.



## WINNER: Best Collection of Images — Jenny Grewal

Congratulations to Jenny Grewal for her stunning set of 30 images taken on a tailor-made holiday to Costa Rica in November/December 2015. Jenny wins a £200 prize.



*Emerald Basilisk*



*Fishermen*



*Green-crowned Brilliant*



*Northern Jacana*



*Flame-coloured Tanager*



*Central American Spider Monkey*

Jenny's complete set of winning images can be seen here: [http://www.naturetrek.co.uk/website/2015photo\\_comp\\_results.aspx](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk/website/2015photo_comp_results.aspx)  
Our next group tour to Costa Rica is from Saturday 2nd to Saturday 16th April 2016 and costs £3,995. For details of this tour please call Paul Stanbury on 01962 733051. Alternatively, if you are interested in a tailor-made holiday to Costa Rica, please email our Tailormade Holidays Manager, Robin Smith, at [robin@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:robin@naturetrek.co.uk)

## Best Collection of Images — Runners-up

Each of these three runners-up receives a £100 prize for their superb galleries. Well done!  
All of the winning photographs and galleries will be featured online, in a forthcoming e-news and on our Facebook page.



*Mountain Nyala by Paul Wild*



*Capped Heron by Nikki Humphrey*

**Paul Wild** was on a tailor-made holiday to Ethiopia in October 2015 (please email our Tailormade Holidays Manager, Robin Smith, at [robin@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:robin@naturetrek.co.uk) for further information).

**Nikki Humphrey** was on our 'Brazil — Just Jaguars!' holiday in September 2015. (For further details about this tour please see page 15 of this Newsletter.)



*Walrus by Peter Stott*

**Peter Stott** was on our 'Spitsbergen — Realm of the Polar Bear' cruise in June/July 2015.



## Photography Competition 2016

We are now accepting entries for our 2016 photography competitions, so please continue to send us your very best shots from your Naturetrek holidays!

For further information, please visit the following link on our website: [http://naturetrek.co.uk/photography\\_competition.aspx](http://naturetrek.co.uk/photography_competition.aspx)



Jaguar

# Brazil — The Pantanal



When Operations Manager Dan Free joined Naturetrek in 2011, one of his first aims was to head to Brazil in search of Jaguars, a species he'd missed seeing during a month-long trip he made to

the country as an independent traveller in 2007. In this article, he talks about how the Pantanal ranks alongside other wildlife destinations, relates some of the highlights from our 2015 tours, discusses which time of year is best for a visit, and how our holidays to the Pantanal are coping with the growing popularity of this vast wetland area.

**Q. In the time that you've been with Naturetrek, the Pantanal has become one of our most popular wildlife destinations. How does it rank with your other wildlife travel experiences?**

For me, it's very difficult for any destination to compete with the all-round wildlife experience that you get in many African countries, but if anywhere can, it's the Pantanal. I've been very lucky with my sightings and enjoyed fantastic views of Giant Anteater, Brazilian Tapir, Ocelots and Giant River Otters, but it's the Jaguar sightings that have left the greatest impression and I have no hesitation in saying that the experience of seeing these big cats is up there with anything that I've seen in Africa.

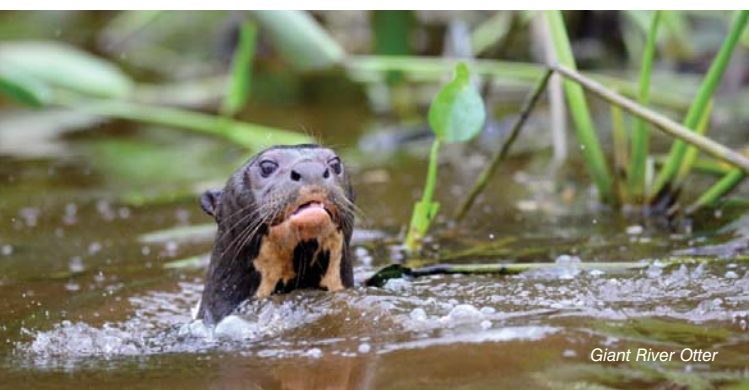
Whilst the mammals often steal the headlines, it's the whole experience of being in the Pantanal and the sheer profusion of life that marks it out as such a special destination. Not only are there thousands of Yacaré Caiman and large herds of Capybara, but as the Pantanal dries out you see fantastic congregations of storks, egrets, ibises and herons, all jostling for position in the shallows, picking off the remaining fish and amphibians. Raptors abound and it's not unusual to see Snail Kites, as well as Savannah, Black-collared, Roadside and Great Black Hawks all within a few minutes of each other. Throw in the world's largest parrot, the Hyacinth Macaw; the largest toucan, the Toco Toucan; the largest bird in South America, the Greater Rhea; and the tallest flying bird on the continent, the Jabiru Stork and hopefully you can start to see why I rate it so highly?!

**Q. When is the best time to go?**

The Pantanal is the largest wetland in the world, covering 210,000 square kilometres (the size of Portugal). Between June and October the water slowly begins to dry up, not uniformly over the entire area but in patches until, by the end of October, the whole area is almost completely dry. Having run tours from June through until the end of October for the last few years, it is clear that the Jaguar and Giant River Otter sightings are pretty consistent throughout this entire period. However, what varies most significantly is the temperature.

In June and July there's still plenty of water around and scenically the Pantanal is probably at its best. Temperatures typically rise to a maximum of 30°C and with the comparatively cool temperatures, Jaguars are often more active in the daytime.

As we near the end of July and get into August it heats up further, typically peaking in mid-September when the mercury can hit 40 degrees during the middle of the day. With the remaining water gradually drying out in patches, you start seeing huge aggregations of birds exploiting the remaining concentrations of fish. The higher temperatures may result in the Jaguars being slightly more lethargic during the middle of the day, but with less



Giant River Otter

water around, it can make sightings of Brazilian Tapir and Giant Anteater easier as they venture out during daylight hours in search of water.

By October much of the Pantanal has dried out, but the rivers still hold a good amount of water and consequently attract much of the remaining wildlife. With the clouds beginning to build, the heat is not quite so intense and as the water levels in the rivers are at their lowest, the river margins can be fantastic for Jaguar and Brazilian Tapir.

The season traditionally ends in November, with the onset of the rains; however, we've been enjoying some excellent sightings of Jaguar and Giant River Otter in the first few weeks of November. By then temperatures have dropped to the high 20s again, which is more comfortable, and about 90% of the tourists have gone. You can expect it to rain for between 30 minutes and 2 hours every day, but the sightings are so good that I think it's worth taking the chance with the rain.

**Q. Many tour operators offer wildlife trips to the Pantanal. What makes our tours worth considering?**

We've run tours to the Pantanal for more than 10 years and in recent years we have sent more clients to the Pantanal than any other specialist wildlife tour operator. We know the best lodges, the best places to go to see wildlife and how long to spend in each location. You want a good balance between time on the river looking for Jaguars and Giant River Otters, and time spent on land which is better for seeing other wildlife such as the two anteater species, cats (Puma, Ocelot and Jaguarundi), primates, peccaries and deer.

We've already touched on the weather and, whilst June to October is generally considered the dry season, it's worth noting that a cold front can come up from the south at any time, bringing rain and causing temperatures to plummet by 20 degrees. This can be a game-changer for mammal sightings, as many species go to ground and it's at this time that our accommodation choices come into their own.



We started using the Jaguar Flotel in 2012 and haven't looked back. It really has transformed our Jaguar sightings. Located in the heart of the 'Jaguar Zone', it's in the best area for seeing Jaguars and Giant River Otters and this means that, if we're back at the Flotel for lunch and we receive reports of a sighting, we can simply jump into the boat and go. The nearest alternative lodge is over 40 minutes away and you simply don't have this degree of flexibility when staying there. The Flotel also has its own network of spotter boats, meaning that we're often the first to hear about a sighting and, as we're closest to the action, at the end of the day we can be the last to leave.

When we first started using the Flotel it only had very simple en suite cabins, but following an extensive refurbishment it now has 12 very comfortable rooms, each with doors opening onto the river, two double beds, en suite facilities and air conditioning — these are the 'standard rooms' on our 'Brazil — Just Jaguars!' tour.

**Q. Any particular highlights in 2015?**

We had fantastic sightings in 2015 — it was our best year yet! We averaged between five and six different Jaguars per tour, often with multiple sightings of the same individuals. Our clients watched Jaguars



Capped Heron



Lesser Anteater

hunting Capybara and Caiman, and saw several kills during the season (see back cover image). We saw Giant River Otters practically every time we went out on a boat, and also had very good views of Brazilian Tapir (on about 75% of the tours) and Giant Anteater (on about half the trips). The reptilian river action was really exciting last year too — clients were treated to Anacondas preying on Caiman and vice versa! In 2015 we also had some superb sightings of Ocelot on night-drives from SouthWild Pantanal Lodge.

**Q. Are there any downsides to Jaguar tourism in the Pantanal, and what are we doing to tackle them?**

The biggest challenge is the growing popularity of the Pantanal. It has been featured in a lot of TV programmes and in the media — for instance some clips of a Jaguar killing a Caiman on YouTube went viral. There are a limited number of lodges, and so the area can only hold a certain number of tourists, and there can be quite a few boats around in peak season. We're aware of these issues and the tour is coping well with them — the Pantanal is an enormous place, and we have boats that are specially designed to cover large distances quickly, so we are well equipped to escape the crowds. Secondly, being based at the Flotel gives us great flexibility. We don't have to 'commute' back and forth to distant lodges. Most excitingly, this year we'll be using a new 40,000-acre ranch that's never been used for ecotourism before. Initially, in 2016, we'll be going there on night-drives from the Flotel, but in time we hope to develop a terrestrial-based model of Jaguar tourism in the Pantanal and our Brazilian partners are confident that this will help protect Jaguars in the longer term.

**Q. Tours in the Pantanal obviously afford wonderful opportunities for photographers. Do you have any particular advice?**

The photographic opportunities are fantastic, even using a fairly simple camera on any of our Pantanal tours. However, we are now introducing a new Photography tour for those who are especially keen to get even better images. (Details are given on page 13 of this Newsletter.)

I've picked out some of my personal favourites from 2015 tours (shown in this article), and there are plenty more photographs from previous Jaguar tours on our website.

**Q. Lastly, what are your personal Jaguar-watching highlights?**

It's difficult to pick out just a few, but probably watching a Jaguar hunt a Capybara along a river's edge — the Capybara ended up letting out an alarm call and then threw itself into the water to swim away (it escaped). I was also in a boat, in a narrow channel, just 5 metres away from an enormous male Jaguar that was pacing through the marginal vegetation. And we were the only boat there — I'll never forget that one! We wouldn't normally advise getting so close, but given the narrowness of the channel, there wasn't much choice!

**'Brazil — Just Jaguars!' tours for 2016**

We have 14 departures which still have places between June and October 2016, plus a new departure in November (from 4th – 15th November 2016), priced from £3,595.

■ Please contact Dan Free on 01962 733051 for further details about any of our holidays to the Pantanal or other regions of Brazil.

# NEW An Exciting Programme of Expertly Guided Wildlife Photography Tours



Mountain Hare, Cairngorms by Robert Harvey



Andy Skillen's winning image for the 2015 Zoological Society of London Photographer of the Year competition



Red Squirrel, Cairngorms by Robert Harvey

We are often asked how suitable a Naturetrek wildlife holiday is for a keen amateur photographer, and we usually answer that, whilst most of our holidays provide fantastic opportunities for taking some stunning photographs, the focus of our tours is always primarily wildlife watching, above anything else. So, for some time we have been looking for the right people, the right locations, and the right timing to launch a new range of dedicated photographic wildlife holidays. This brand new programme will offer a range of tours, each pitched at a particular skill level which will be detailed in individual itineraries. Broadly, we are aiming at wildlife photographers of varying levels of experience and ability, from the keen amateur looking to hone his/her skills, to beginners with ambitions to learn and improve.

By working with award-winning wildlife photographers who share our goals of spending quality, informed time watching — and capturing — once-in-a-lifetime moments, we are confident that joining one of our Wildlife Photography tours will not only improve your techniques and sharpen your reflexes, but will also give you the best possible chance of getting 'that' image.

Our expert photographer-leaders on these new tours will ensure that you are in the best possible location at the right time of day for wildlife photography. Our time in the field will focus on maximising the best lighting conditions, and will also ensure that we have plenty of time to wait for things to happen. Wildlife does not perform on cue, and our leader and local guides will be constantly assessing the situation to ensure we are in the right place at the right time. Patience will be key to achieving good results! The best photographic opportunities often happen once you slow down, and wait. At that point you really begin to notice your surroundings, and appreciate the smaller things such as plants and insects (that also make fantastic subjects!), as well as mammals and the scenery around you. Being a good wildlife photographer is not about getting 'the' photo at the expense of the subject and on these tours we will cause minimal disturbance to our surroundings and wildlife, while trying to maximise our photographic success.

Our group sizes on these new holidays are strictly limited, not only to enable each participant to have plenty of room in which to work, but, just as importantly, to enable you to benefit from the dedicated time of our expert leaders. Our leaders are there entirely for the benefit of the group, to sharpen your techniques, challenge your thinking, and help ensure you are getting the most out of your trip at all times; and this will include being available for some time each evening to help with editing photos and/or to pass on further advice about technique.

If you would like to join us on a Naturetrek Wildlife Photography holiday we are offering the following departures:

## NEW Wildlife Photography Tours

### Birds & Mammals of the Cairngorms (with Robert Harvey)

Some of the finest opportunities for photography in Britain are to be found in the Cairngorms. During this short break we hope to photograph several charismatic species that are rare or absent south of the Scottish border, such as Red Squirrel, Mountain Hare, Red Grouse and Ptarmigan, using a combination of specialist photography hides and tracking on foot in mountainous terrain. At Loch Morlich we will photograph Cairngorm itself, which may well be snow-capped at this time of year.

**Dates:** Tue 29th Mar – Sat 2nd Apr 2016

**Maximum Group Size:** 6

**Cost:** £1,195

**Web quick search:** GBR53

### Northumberland — Seabirds & Castles (with Robert Harvey)

The Northumberland coast is photogenic — with mile upon mile of sandy beaches and big skies, its broad vistas and moody, changeable cloud formations are pleasing to the eye ... and the photographer's lens! Our visits to the Farne Islands will provide excellent opportunities to photograph a tantalising array of seabirds at close range, from the exquisite but feisty Arctic Terns bringing Sandeels to their chicks, to Guillemots, Razorbills, Kittiwakes and, of course, the ever-photogenic Puffins. Back on the mainland, we will photograph some of the county's iconic castles, including Dunstanborough and Bamburgh, making the best use of light and tides to capture atmospheric images.

**Dates:** Wed 29th Jun – Sun 3rd Jul 2016

**Maximum Group Size:** 8

**Cost:** £795

**Web quick search:** GBR54

### Jaguars, Giant River Otters & Macaws: The Pantanal in Pictures (with Andy Skillen)

The Brazilian Pantanal offers some of the finest wildlife photography on the planet. Resident mammals include the bizarre Giant Anteater, Brazilian Tapir, Ocelot and Giant River Otter, whilst the exotic avifauna includes the gorgeous Hyacinth Macaw. However, it is the enigmatic Jaguar that will be our main target during this new dedicated wildlife photography tour. We shall enjoy six full days of morning and afternoon boat safaris from the Jaguar Flotel, taking to the water before dawn and arriving back after dusk to utilise the best of the light. A further four days at two separate lodges, exploring on foot and in our open-sided safari truck, will allow us to see and photograph many of the Pantanal's other famous mammalian inhabitants and a diverse range of birds.

**Dates:** Thu 1st – Tue 13th Sep 2016

**Maximum Group Size:** 6

**Cost:** £5,995

**Web quick search:** BRA10

### Dartmoor: Tors & Hidden Valleys (with Robert Harvey)

From our comfortable hotel in the heart of Dartmoor National Park, we will enjoy a full programme of photographic excursions from early morning until after sunset. The high granite

tors, little-known valley of Tavy Cleave, Wistman's Wood, medieval clapper bridges and prehistoric stone formations all make superb subjects. Our holiday is timed to coincide with late-flowering heather on the moors and the possibility of early morning autumn mist in Dartmoor's valleys. Dartmoor also benefits from some of the darkest skies in southern England, and, weather permitting, we will do a little astrophotography.

**Dates:** Thu 29th Sep – Sun 2nd Oct 2016

**Maximum Group Size:** 8

**Cost:** £595

**Web quick search:** GBR55

### Leopards & Lions of Zambia's South Luangwa (with Andy Skillen)

Zambia's South Luangwa National Park is the country's foremost wildlife reserve. We begin with a 2-night stay at the beautiful Mfuwe Lodge where we will enjoy our first safari drives before transferring deep into South Luangwa National Park for a 6-night stay at the remote Lion Camp which offers some outstanding game-viewing. This quiet corner of the park sees very few visitors, but is favoured by the local Lion pride which we hope to photograph hunting, sleeping and playing. Large flocks of Southern Carmine Bee-eaters nest on the river banks at this time of year, pods of lazy Hippo wallow in the river, and South Luangwa is one of the best places in Africa to see Leopards.

**Dates:** Sun 2nd – Wed 12th Oct 2016

**Maximum Group Size:** 5

**Cost:** £5,995

**Web quick search:** ZMB08

## Other Wildlife Photography Tours for 2016/17

### The Spanish Pyrenees (with Sergio Padura)

**8 days**

**Dates:** Sun 29th May – Sun 5th Jun 2016

Sat 1st – Sat 8th Oct 2016

**Cost:** £1,395

**Web quick search:** ESP25

### Brown Bears in Finland (with Tim Melling)

**4 days**

**Dates:** Thu 30th Jun – Sun 3rd Jul 2016

**Cost:** £1,395

**Web quick search:** FIN02

### India's Wildlife (with Himanshu Rathore)

**12 days**

**Dates:** Wed 26th Oct – Sun 6th Nov 2016

Wed 29th Mar – Sun 9th Apr 2017

Wed 25th Oct – Sun 5th Nov 2017

**Cost:** £2,595

**Web quick search:** IND03

### Winter Photography in the Spanish Pyrenees (with Sergio Padura)

**5 days**

**Dates:** Thu 23rd – Mon 27th Feb 2017

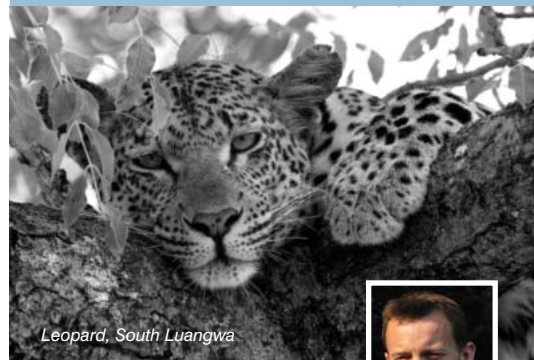
**Cost:** £995

**Web quick search:** ESP39

■ Please call Kerrie on 01962 733051 or email [kerrie@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:kerrie@naturetrek.co.uk) for further details about our wildlife photography holidays.



## Our Expert Wildlife Photography Leaders



Leopard, South Luangwa



**Andy Skillen** is a widely published wildlife photographer who has been recording the natural world in images for over 20 years. His work has been recognised internationally, and he is the current Zoological Society of London Photographer of the Year. He was also a finalist in the 2015 National Geographic Traveller Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition. It is Andy's belief that the photographer — amateur or professional — is a major force for good in wildlife conservation. Andy focuses on the needs of the photo-traveller. Regardless of your level of ability, he will help you to improve your photography techniques, enabling you to get the images you have always wanted, but were not previously sure how to achieve. Of course, it should all be good fun too, and Andy places great emphasis on the privilege of being in special locations.



Arctic Tern, Northumberland



**Robert Harvey** is a zoologist and professional photographer. In 2010 he was awarded the Associateship of the Royal Photographic Society for his work on coastal landscapes. In 2015 he gained the Excellence award of the Fédération Internationale de l'Art Photographique for his portfolio of 115 wildlife and landscape images that have been accepted in international exhibitions around the world. Robert joins Naturetrek to share his passion for the natural world with aspiring photographers. He plans trips carefully, in order to optimise lighting, time of day, seasons, tides and the positions of the sun and moon. All his tours provide opportunities to learn new photographic techniques, for example making sharp images of birds in flight, capturing mammalian behaviour, stitching panoramas, high dynamic range, focus stacking and post-processing.



Cheetahs

# My Big Cat Year

By Nick Acheson



Tour leader Nick Acheson spent 2015 on a quest to see as many of the world's big cats (as well as some medium and small ones!) as possible. Twelve months later he'd

seen 164 cats of 13 species! In this article he describes some of the highlights — focusing in particular on his search for Pumas in Chile with our inaugural 'South America's Big Cats' group. Despite his success, Nick has not yet had his fill of feline company, and plans more trips for 2016 and beyond.

**C**ats. The whole of my 2015 was devoted to cats — large, small, spotted and striped — I searched for them high in the Himalaya and low on the African plains, in far-flung places as well as at home. And I'm pleased to report that my quest was a great success. I spent the early part of the year leading Naturetrek tours in Tanzania, India and Borneo, seeing Cheetahs, Servals, Leopards (African and Asian), Lions (African

and Asian), Snow Leopards, Jungle Cats, Tigers, Leopard Cats and a Flat-headed Cat. In the summer, after a great deal of work, I saw a Wildcat in Scotland, and in the autumn I went to South America. There, after a hugely successful 'Brazil — Just Jaguars!' holiday, I led our first ever 'South America's Big Cats' tour which began in the far south of South America, where the continent dips its toe into the bitter water of the Magellan Strait. A little to the north, reached by a Chilean road with Ashy-headed Geese at its grassy sides and Andean Condors overhead, is the most dramatic mountain landscape you will ever see: Las Torres del Paine. Here, among the groves of southern beech, the Huemul (or South Andean Deer) may be seen, or perhaps a Magellanic Woodpecker or Austral Pygmy Owl, while the open hills are home to Patagonian Hog-nosed Skunks, to Darwin's Rheas and to great herds of Guanacos.

We have come to southern Chile in search of Pumas, the most widespread cat in the Americas. However, despite its widespread distribution — from Alaska to the southernmost reach of South America — the Puma is a very hard animal to see: wary, reclusive, able to hide in the merest tuft of scrub. In



Tiger

the past 10 years, Torres del Paine has emerged as the best place in its vast range to see this breathtakingly beautiful cat, thanks to the skill and dedication of local trackers and guides (and it is these guides who lead us out on our daily quests). However, it is the Guanacos that we watch here, and it is to them that we listen. They live in fear of Pumas, and frantically posture and alarm if they see one, in turn alerting our guides. Of all the seven cats traditionally known as 'big cats' (the Cheetah and the Puma technically aren't big cats but they are known as such) the Puma was the one I was most afraid of missing. It is, you'll remember, famously reclusive. I need not have worried. On our first afternoon in Torres del Paine we saw two — close to a recent kill at the edge of a small lake. The following day we saw eight. Yes, eight individual Pumas in a single day: a record for our brilliant local guide who has studied these cats for more than 20 years. We left the spectacular scenery of Torres del Paine, having seen 14 individuals in total, elated and amazed.



Iberian Lynx

From here we went to the Pantanal and saw 11 individual Jaguars, including a handsome young male lapping water from the river's edge with Band-tailed and Nacunda Nighthawks snipping the dusk around him, and a female hunting along a steep silty bank, then probing the beds of water hyacinth for Yacaré Caiman prey. 'South America's Big Cats' is a sensational tour for cats, not to mention the huge diversity of wildlife found in the Pantanal and in southern Chile.

But my adventures with cats did not end there. Naturetrek has unrivalled success with the rarest cat in the world: an 80% success rate on tours in search of the exquisite Iberian Lynx. In Doñana, where White Storks gather in the marshes and flocks of Common Cranes drift across the plains, having searched high and low, we saw a young male Iberian Lynx diving into cover with a Rabbit in his mouth then emerge to lick his bloodied paws at the edge of a tamarisk stand.

I finished the year having seen 164 cats of 13 species, thanks to the splendid range of Naturetrek tours I was lucky enough to lead. My cat year is over but, be it on 'Brazil — Just Jaguars!', 'Tiger Direct!', 'Rare Mammals & Birds of Gujarat', 'Borneo by Night' or 'Spain — Realm of the Iberian Lynx', at Naturetrek we will continue to share with you the rare, beautiful cats of the world and the great landscapes they inhabit, and feel privileged to do so.

■ Please call Gail on 01962 733051 or email [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk) for further details about any of our Big Cat tours.

# Big Cat Tours for 2016/17



Leopard

If you would like to join us in 2016 or 2017 on a Big Cat holiday we are offering the following departures:

## South America:

### Chile — Just Pumas!

An 11-day wildlife holiday in search of the Pumas of Torres del Paine National Park, plus a wonderful variety of birds and other mammals in a spectacular setting.

**Dates:** Thu 7th – Sun 17th Apr '16

**Cost:** from £3,995

### Brazil — Just Jaguars!

A 12-day holiday in search of the largest of South America's cats and the abundant wildlife of Brazil's Pantanal.

**Dates:** 17 departures between Jun and Nov '16

**Cost:** from £3,995

### South America's Big Cats

A 16-day holiday in search of South America's iconic big cats, the Jaguar and the Puma, as well as other wildlife, amongst the stunning scenery of the Pantanal in Brazil and the Torres del Paine National Park in Chile.

**Dates:** Fri 30th Sep – Sat 15th Oct '17

**Cost:** £6,195



Puma

## Africa:

### South Africa — Just Cats!

A 12-day tour of South Africa focusing on cats — including Lion, Cheetah, Leopard, Serval, Caracal and African Wild Cat — and other wildlife, visiting the Kruger National Park and the world-famous Sabi Sand Game Reserve.

**Dates:** Mon 10th – Fri 21st Oct &

Mon 24th Oct – Fri 4th Nov '16

**Cost:** £4,195

### Tanzania's Highlights

A 15-day birdwatching and mammal-viewing safari through the magnificent national parks of Arusha, Tarangire, Ngorongoro, Lake Manyara and Serengeti.

**Dates:** Thu 3rd – Thu 17th Nov '16

**Cost:** £5,395

## Asia:

### India — Tiger Direct!

An exciting tour taking you straight into the heart of Tiger country on a 9-day safari that combines Pench and Kanha Tiger Reserves, two of India's finest, plus an optional pre-tour extension to Tadoba National Park and post-tour extension to Satpura National Park.

**Dates:** Sun 3rd – Tue 12th April, Sun 13th – Tue 22nd Nov & Sun 18th – Tue 27th Dec '16; Sun

8th – Tue 17th Jan & Sun 12th – Tue 21st Feb '17

**Cost:** from £2,295

### Borneo by Night

An exciting and adventurous 13-day tour in search of the nocturnal wildlife of the Bornean rainforest.

**Dates:** Tue 5th – Sun 17th Apr '16

**Cost:** £3,995

### Rare Mammals & Birds of Gujarat

A 13-day wildlife holiday to Gujarat in search of the rare birds and mammals of this little-explored region.

**Dates:** Sun 13th – Fri 25th Nov '16

**Cost:** £2,995

### Ladakh — A Snow Leopard Quest

An exciting and pioneering 14-day tour in search of Snow Leopards and other high-altitude winter wildlife in the mountains of Ladakh, north-west India.

**Dates:** Thu 17th – Wed 30th Nov '16

Thu 16th Feb – Wed 1st Mar '17

**Cost:** £2,995

## Europe:

### Navarra in Winter — Realm of the Wildcat

A 6-day holiday to look for the elusive Wildcat and other wildlife among the dense forests, uplands and remote valleys of Navarra in northern Spain.

**Dates:** Sun 13th – Fri 18th Mar '16

Sun 12th – Fri 17th Mar '17

**Cost:** £1,095

### Spain — Realm of the Iberian Lynx

A 6-day holiday to the lesser known corners of the Coto Doñana and the rugged regions of the Sierra Morena, together the last refuge of the critically endangered Iberian Lynx, and home to a wealth of other mammals and birds.

**Dates:** 5 departures between Oct '16 and Jan '17

**Cost:** £1,095

# Colombia



In November 2015, almost 20 years after his last visit, Naturetrek's General Manager, Andy Tucker, returned to Colombia. The country's staggering bird diversity has

never been in question; and now, after years of civil unrest, tourism is beginning to flourish once again as the country enjoys a new period of stability and peace. Andy reports on his recent recce, and launches two new tours to this beautiful bird-rich country.



Buffy Helmetcrest

Colombia, with almost 1,900 recorded species at the last count, including about 80 endemics, is the undisputed number one country on the planet for bird diversity. During most of my 20 years in the travel industry Colombia has, regrettably, been plagued by civil unrest. Whilst ecotourism flourished in neighbouring Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil and Peru during the 1990s and 2000s, Colombia remained in the doldrums, waiting patiently for the chance to reveal its wonderful landscapes, birds and people to the world once more. Since the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's travel advice relaxed,

friends and contacts have waxed lyrical about how wonderful Colombia is so, in November 2015, I finally returned to see for myself how the country had changed since my last fleeting visit in 1996. I mused over many questions during my flight to Bogota. How would the birding in Colombia compare with that offered in my beloved Ecuador? Would I at any stage feel unsafe or threatened? How would I find the infrastructure and travel? Would my hosts talk about the difficult years, and effectively demonstrate Colombia's new-found appetite for inbound tourism? Yes, and how many 'lifers' would I see?



Montezuma

After a comfortable overnight (direct) flight from London to Bogota and an early morning connection, I arrived in Cali, the salsa capital of the world (not that you'll ever find me willingly on a dance floor!). The birds of the Cauca Valley and the fabled old birding site of 'KM18' beckoned. Nestled in the mountains to the west of the city, I found myself in a beautiful birders' retreat called Finca La Lolita, lovingly restored and managed by Juan Fernando Conde and his wife Gladys. The rooms were beautifully appointed, the food delicious (scrumptious salads to accompany melt-in-the-mouth dishes straight from a traditional clay oven), the conversation lively. My welcome back to Colombia could not have been warmer. Birds filled the garden — tanagers, thrushes, doves and orioles, while the hummingbird feeders buzzed with activity. After dark, the bright lights of Cali shimmered way below in the distance.

Early the following morning we drove up to Finca Alejandria, where Multicoloured Tanager was the much-anticipated target, along with plenty of *Tangara* tanagers — my favourite family of Neotropical birds — drawn to the feeding tables laden with fresh fruit. The old road down towards the port city of Buenaventura also produced some wonderful birding along a heavily forested, traffic-free route, with several Chocó endemics cropping up as we dropped in altitude.



My next stop was Cerro Montezuma in Tatamá National Park, situated in Colombia's western Cordillera, a site well known for Chocó endemics, tanagers and hummingbirds. It should be noted that some of the access routes to top birding sites in Colombia are not for the faint-hearted, and this very special place is accessible only by 4WD. The basic but welcoming Montezuma Lodge (1,300 metres) acts as a convenient base, especially as its owner, a charming lady called Leopoldina, is one of the sharpest bird guides I've had the pleasure of meeting. She enthusiastically accompanies her guests up the mountain with pink laser pointer and iPod in hand! Setting out well before dawn after a peaceful night's rest, daybreak found us at the top of Cerro Montezuma appreciating spellbinding views across to the wild peaks of Cerro Tatamá. Enjoying breakfast and sipping steaming coffee above the clouds, we quickly found two coveted endemics, the Munchique Wood-wren and Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer. The rest of the morning was spent walking down the same wide track we'd driven up earlier, stopping for particular targets or encountering a busy feeding flock. It was quickly turning into one of the best birding days I could remember, with a number of endemics mixed in with favourite, more widespread, Andean birds that I had previously enjoyed in Ecuador and Venezuela. The tanagers stole the show, including such gems as Purplish-mantled Tanager, Glistening-green Tanager, Grass-green Tanager, Blue-winged and Black-chinned Mountain-tanagers plus Green and Black Fruiteater, all of which appeared in the same breathtaking mixed flock. Just around the next bend, the endemic Gold-ringed Tanager (not generally found in mixed flocks) was especially confiding and rounded off an unforgettable 60-minute period. After lunch (which had been transported up the mountain for us by motorbike), the highlights continued with Black Solitaire and Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia while, lower down the slopes, birds such as Parker's Antbird, Chocó Tapaculo, Chocó Warbler, Crested Ant-tanager and Black-and-gold Tanager swelled our day-list toward the 100 mark. This was Pacific-Andean birding at its best, with no traffic and no other birders in sight! Just a bumpy ride up and one spectacular feeding flock after another!

The following day we drove back, south-eastwards, across the Cauca valley to Otún Quimbaya, with a stop for lunch at Pereira. The pleasant La Suiza Lodge made for another ideal base, with more fantastic habitat and endemic birds on offer, including Cuaca Guan (once feared extinct but common here), Chestnut Wood-quail and the enigmatic Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, more easily seen here than anywhere else in its range. A bridge on the way in to the lodge also afforded views of another Andean specialty — Torrent Duck.

I always anticipate a visit to the high Andes with great enthusiasm; the 5,429-metre-high Nevado del Ruiz is an easy drive from Otún Quimbaya and its slopes offered a wide range of exciting new birds. Hatted, gloved and fleeced, and sipping tea, I watched as the appearance of a stunning endemic Buffy Helmetcrest drew audible gasps of appreciation, while Great Sapphirewing, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Black-thighed Puffleg, Golden-breasted Puffleg, Shining Sunbeam and Sword-billed Hummingbird, as well as a range of seedeaters and sierra-finches, kept us busily entertained.

Our next destination was the superb Rio Blanco

Reserve situated just 30 minutes from the city of Manizales. What I found here was yet more superb, accessible habitat and, remarkably, antpitta feeding stations to rival those of Angel Paz in Ecuador. We sat goggle-eyed with cameras clicking as passionate resident local guide Albeiro Uribe fed Chestnut-crowned, Slate-crowned and Brown-banded Antpittas a breakfast of fat earthworms. Time constraints meant we missed out on Bicoloured Antpitta, but more energetic flocks came our way, plus the sought-after Golden-plumed Parakeet, Buff-breasted Mountain-tanager and tricky Masked Saltator.

Next we flew north to the humid Caribbean coastline and Santa Marta, from where we drove west to the hot and arid Guajira Peninsula. Local guide José Luis Pushnaina proved the next in a succession of outstanding guides that I met during the trip, finding a whole suite of specialities for us, including Vermilion Cardinal, Tocuyo Sparrow, Buffy Hummingbird, Orinoco Saltator, Chestnut Piculet, Pileated Finch, White-whiskered Spinetail, Rufous-vented Chachalaca and Glaucous Tanager.

Finally, we drove up to ProAves El Dorado Reserve and the El Dorado Lodge, a birders' paradise perched on the San Lorenzo ridge in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the loftiest coastal mountain range on Earth. This well-appointed and spectacularly-located lodge is expensive, but worth it, offering easy access to a suite of endemic birds ... plus Caribbean sunsets in one direction and awe-inspiring snow-capped mountains in the other. Indeed, our morning high up on San Lorenzo ridge with the sun rising over Colombia's highest peak and with a Santa Marta Brushfinch taking crumbs from our breakfast table, will live long in the memory! Over the course of a brief 2-day stay, I saw 17 Santa Marta endemics, with perhaps the screech owl and mountain-tanager being highlights. This was all I imagined and more: a magical, unforgettable place!

So, in conclusion, what did I make of Colombia, the country avoided for so long by so many? The coffee is splendid, even for a tea-drinker like me. The people are extraordinarily welcoming and charming, and also extremely proud of their natural heritage. The food is very good. The roads are rough in parts. At no stage did I feel remotely threatened in any way. The habitats are diverse and largely in pristine condition. The birding is out of this world. Do come and join us on one, or both, of our two new birding tours to Colombia.

## NEW Birdwatching Tours to Colombia

### Multicoloured Tanager Tour

This new 11-day holiday, which can be combined with our 'Santa Marta Endemics' tour, includes Cali and Finca La Lolita, and visits KM18 for Multicoloured Tanager plus a host of other tanagers and hummingbirds. It also includes two nights at Montezuma Lodge, Otún Quimbaya, and Rio Blanco for antpittas, tanagers and hummingbirds.

**Dates:** Tue 22nd Nov – Fri 2nd Dec 2016

**Cost:** £2,495

**Web quick search:** COL02



Multicoloured Tanager

### Santa Marta Endemics

This new 10-day tour, which can be combined with our 'Multicoloured Tanager Tour', focuses on the specialities of the Guajira Peninsula including Tocuyo Sparrow, Buffy Hummingbird and the stunning White-whiskered Spinetail. It includes a 3-night stay on the lower slopes of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta at Minca, and three nights at El Dorado Lodge, during which we'll be making a concerted effort to see all Santa Marta's endemics and regional specialities.

**Dates:** Thu 1st – Sat 10th Dec 2016

**Cost:** £2,295

**Web quick search:** COL01

### Combine both tours:

Those wishing to combine our 'Multicoloured Tanager Tour' and 'Santa Marta Endemics' holiday, can achieve this with an extra night in Bogota and a day's birding in the city's parks and marshes on Friday 2nd December. (Save £500 by combining tours.)



Purplish-mantled Tanager

# NEW Bargain Birding Tour



## Peru — ‘Surf & Turf’

with Jose Antonio Padilla

**A 10-day birding tour in search of the special birds of Peru’s western Andean slopes and the Humboldt Current ecosystem.**

After arriving in Lima (on BA’s new direct flight from London Gatwick), we begin our holiday on Peru’s expansive Pacific seaboard, under the southern hemisphere’s bright blue summer skies. Here we will search for Great Grebe, Many-coloured Rush Tyrant, ducks, herons, waders and Peruvian Thick-knee in and around Lima’s coastal lagoons and marshes. We next drive east along the spectacular Santa Eulalia road, which takes us up into the rugged Andean foothills high above Lima. Here we will search for several highly-prized endemics including Rufous-breasted Warbling-finch, Bronze-tailed Comet, Black-necked Woodpecker, Great Inca-finch, Thick-billed Miner and Rusty-bellied Brush-finch. Tall stands of introduced *Eucalyptus* trees often hold the diminutive Peruvian Pygmy-owl and, if the weather is favourable, Andean Condor may take to the air. Higher still, we will explore patches of threatened *Polylepis* forest at sunrise in search of the beautiful endemic White-cheeked Cotinga.

We then continue our journey, driving 100 miles east of Lima to the desolate, windswept páramo at Marcapomacocha, where we’ll wrap up warmly to scour these high-altitude cushion

plant bogs for two charismatic species: the endemic White-bellied Cinclodes and the beautifully patterned Diademed Sandpiper-plover. Dark-winged Miner and Junin Canastero are two further target endemics, along with more widespread birds such as Streak-throated Canastero, Plain-breasted Earthcreeper and White-winged Diuca-finches.

We next drive back down the central Andean highway to Lima before turning south to the Reserva Nacional de Paracas, the most important wildlife sanctuary on the Peruvian coast. Pelagic birds nest on the offshore islands in such impressive numbers that their nitrogen-rich droppings (guano) collect in quantities large enough to be commercially exploited for fertiliser. During a morning excursion to the islands we will hope to see Humboldt Penguin, Chilean Skua, Peruvian Tern and the beautiful Inca Tern, as well as up to four gull species, Peruvian and Blue-footed Boobies, Peruvian Diving-petrel and the resident sea lion colony. Jose Antonio Padilla, known to many of our clients for his expert guidance in Peru and Bolivia, will lead this exciting new tour.

**Dates:** Tue 6th – Thu 15th Dec 2016  
Wed 25th Jan – Fri 3rd Feb 2017

**Cost:** £2,595

**Web quick search:** PER03

■ Please call Andy Tucker on 01962 733051 or email [andy@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:andy@naturetrek.co.uk) for further details.



*Inca Tern*

## Panama’s Butterflies

with Jenn Sinasac & Tino Sanchez

**An 8-day holiday to enjoy the rich diversity of butterflies in this Central American country.**

On this new 2-centre holiday we will explore Panama’s western highland cloudforests and central lowland rainforests in search of butterflies — we have a good chance of seeing over 200 of the country’s 1,000+ species. Our tour begins in western Panama with a 4-night stay at the Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton. The lodge’s gardens are full of butterfly-friendly flowers, attracting species such as Green-celled Cattleheart, Brilliant Greenmark and Golden-headed Bolla. There is a wonderful variety of *Lepidoptera* in the forest surrounding the lodge including Starry Cracker, Zebra Longwing and Blue-and-orange Eighty-eight, whilst the lower slopes of nearby Cerro Gaital (1,066 metres) are home to Giant Forest and Banded Owl-butterflies, Blue-patched Eyed-metalmark and Blue-grey Satyr. The epiphyte and moss-laden trees here

play host to the gorgeous Pink-tipped Satyr and stunning iridescent blue Menelaus Morpho (with a wingspan of 15 centimetres). Meanwhile, on the mountain trails of the Altos del Maria we may encounter White-patched Emesis, Lotus Ruby-eye and the impressive Creon Skipper.

For the second part of our tour we transfer to the central lowlands for a 3-night stay at the Canopy Tower in Soberanía National Park. This rainforest eco-lodge boasts a 50-foot observation deck which provides the opportunity to view canopy species at eye level. Possibilities include Broad-banded Swallowtail, the spectacular Regal Hairstreak and White-tipped Cycadian. On the nearby Pipeline Road (of legendary status amongst birdwatchers) which penetrates 17 kilometres into the rainforest, we will look for Ilus Swallowtail, Sky-blue Hairstreak and the stunning Glorious Blue-skipper, whilst the dry forest of the Metropolitan Natural Park in Panama City is also rewarding, with species such as Emerald-patched Cattleheart, Polydamas Swallowtail and Tropical Chequered Skipper all possible.

At both lodges a ‘black light’ will be run at night to attract some of the country’s numerous moths, including large and spectacular sphinx and silk moths. So please do join our expert local guides as we explore this hospitable and wildlife-rich country in search of an exciting variety of butterflies and moths.

**Dates:** Sun 2nd – Sun 9th Oct 2016

**Cost:** £2,395

**Web quick search:** PAN05



*Zebra Longwing*



*Banded Owl-butterfly*



*Canopy Lodge*

■ Please call Dave Shute on 01962 733051 or email [davidshute@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:davidshute@naturetrek.co.uk) for further details.



# New British Breaks for 2016



Ardnamurchan

## Scotland

Following the great success of our 'Scotland's Mammals & Highlights of the Highlands' tour we are delighted to launch two brand new holidays to the glorious Ardnamurchan Peninsula at different times of the year, each in search of a host of special mammals and birds.



Black Grouse

### Wild Scotland in Spring

with Marcus John

**A new 8-day holiday focusing on the birds and mammals of the Ardnamurchan Peninsula. Highlights include a day on the Isle of Mull and lekking Black Grouse.**

The Ardnamurchan Peninsula is one of the most wonderfully remote areas on the British mainland. Bordered by the sea on three sides and accessed via one single-tracked road, it is a true wilderness and a fantastic place to explore, particularly for those with a love of wildlife.

For the first four nights we will be based on the peninsula itself at the ideally situated

Glenborrodale Centre on the southern coast. We will enjoy morning walks along Loch Sunart to look for Otters, and another enigmatic mustelid, the Pine Marten, can be enjoyed from the comfort of our living room as this delightful species visits the centre regularly after dark, offering some superb photographic opportunities! The Scottish Wildcat is the focus of a great deal of ongoing conservation effort on Ardnamurchan and, though they are rarely seen, we will search by spotlight at night in order to try to find this beautiful, but extremely elusive, feline.

Following three full days of exploration on the peninsula, we will spend a day on the Isle of Mull, travelling by ferry. The island is famous for its White-tailed Eagles, and we will hope to see these fantastic birds as well as Golden Eagle.

Next we transfer to the fantastic Ballimore Estate, which is situated to the east of Oban. The estate's luxury 5-star cottages and lodges will be our base for the final three nights of the holiday. Our main focus here is on seeing the superb displays of lekking Black Grouse nearby. With the help of the local estate manager we'll use special blinds to get very close to this dramatic event, during which the males attempt to impress the hens. The sight (and sound) of this event is sure to provide a fitting finale to our holiday in this beautiful and wild region of Scotland.

**Date:** Sat 6th – Sat 23rd Apr 2016

**Cost:** £1,195

**Web quick search:** GBR51

### Ardnamurchan — The Red Deer Rut

with Marcus John

**An exciting 5-day holiday focusing on the Red Deer rut as well as some of the peninsula's other wildlife amongst breathtaking scenery.**

The sight and sound of rutting Red Deer is one of Europe's most dramatic wildlife events, and our new autumn tour to the beautiful



Red Deer

Ardnamurchan Peninsula focuses on witnessing this exciting spectacle. Every year the highlands come alive with the roaring and bellowing of Red Deer stags as they attempt to fend off rivals and secure their harem of hinds. With the help of the region's top Red Deer manager we will watch the mighty, testosterone-fuelled stags do battle and have the best possible opportunity to view these magnificent animals at close quarters.

We will be based for all four nights of the holiday on the Ardnamurchan Peninsula's south coast at the comfortable Glenborrodale Centre (next to Glenborrodale Castle). Our accommodation is ideally situated for watching the action during the rutting season, and we will head out each day to observe the deer, using blinds and 4x4 vehicles to get as close as possible. During our stay we will also learn about the ecology of the deer, as well as about life in this remote part of Scotland.

Although the focus of this tour is on witnessing

the rutting Red Deer, we will also enjoy some of the region's other special species. The centre is an excellent place to see Pine Martens; peanuts, a favourite food of theirs, are regularly scattered across the floodlit patio of our accommodation — so have your cameras at the ready! There are Scottish Wildcats in the area and, though notoriously elusive, there will be a chance to go on a night-drive during which we might be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of one. Otters thrive on the peninsula, while Golden and White-tailed Eagles are just some of the avian highlights we will be hoping to see. If witnessing one of Britain's most exciting wildlife spectacles in a remote and tranquil location away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life appeals to you, then please do join us this autumn.

**Dates:** Thu 29th Sep – Mon 3rd Oct 2016

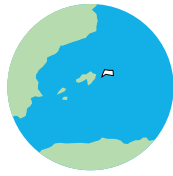
**Cost:** £795

**Web quick search:** GBR52

■ Please call Tom Mabbett on 01962 733051 or email [tom@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:tom@naturetrek.co.uk) for a detailed itinerary for either of the above tours.



NEW



# Menorca in Autumn

An 8-day holiday on the Mediterranean island of Menorca to enjoy the thousands of migrant birds which arrive each autumn, as well as the island's history.

Wednesday 19th October — Wednesday 26th October 2016 Cost: £1,395



## Outline itinerary

- Day 1** Fly Mahon; transfer Matchani Gran.
- Day 2/7** Daily birdwatching excursions all over Menorca from our base near Mahon.
- Day 8** Return UK.

## Accommodation

A comfortable, renovated Menorcan farmhouse, set in open countryside. All rooms have en suite facilities and there is an outdoor swimming pool.

## Food

All included in the price.

## Grading

Grade A. Easy morning and afternoon walks only.

## Focus

Mainly birds; also butterflies and dragonflies plus sites of historic and cultural interest.

## Leader

Ian Nicholson.

## Single room supplement

£150.

Web quick search: ESP40

Situated in the western Mediterranean Sea, just over 200 kilometres as the crow flies from Barcelona, Menorca is the second largest of the Balearic Islands. Lying to the north-east of both Mallorca and Ibiza, Menorca has managed to evade the widespread tourist development that has taken place on these neighbouring islands, and this is due in part to Menorca's status as a UNESCO Biosphere reserve. Menorca is relatively flat — Monte Toro is its highest peak at 358 metres — and enjoys a mild climate year-round with hot dry summers and cool moist winters; spring and autumn are particularly pleasant. The north of the island is more exposed to the 'tramuntana' wind as well as sea breezes, and has a higher rainfall than the south, where sheltered coves and ravines provide ideal potential shelter for migrants. Fringing the island are delightful rocky bays known as 'calas' enclosing turquoise-coloured sea, and mile upon mile of sandy beaches backed by tall pines. Mahon is the capital of the island and boasts the second largest natural harbour in the world; it also offers the keen birdwatcher a variety of interesting species to look out for including Audouin's Gull, Kingfisher and Booted Eagle. Menorca's splendid harbour, together with the island's strategically important position in the western Mediterranean, has attracted foreign powers and invaders since ancient times. The Phoenicians, Romans, Moors, Carthaginians, Spanish and British have all left their mark — and the island contains many cultural and historic sites of interest.

Our accommodation for the week is a

splendid, and lovingly restored, 18th century farmhouse. Set in 10 acres of unspoilt countryside this is a most relaxed setting. From this delightful base it will be possible to explore many of the most exciting areas of the island, using our minibus to access the best sites which we will then explore on foot. Our holiday is timed to coincide with peak autumn bird migration, and thousands of migratory species will either be resting on the island en route south, or arriving to spend the winter. Robin, Song Thrush, Black Redstart and Chiffchaff are among the most common species we can expect to see, but it pays to be vigilant as avian surprises are very possible! As well as migrants, we can expect to see Menorcan residents such as Audouin's Gull, Hoopoe, Purple Swamphen, Peregrine, Booted Eagle, Ferruginous Duck and Red-crested Pochard. In addition, the island is home to Europe's only sedentary population of Egyptian Vulture; the species is thriving here and now has a breeding population of about 60 pairs.

During this holiday we will visit a variety of key sites in wetland and marshy areas. These hold large numbers of wildfowl and grebes which overwinter on the island, as well as many herons and egrets, and the island's small population of Ospreys. We will visit the rugged cliffs of the rocky north coast, home to Peregrine and Blue Rock Thrush; and, if conditions are right for a fall of migrants, the low, scrubby vegetation here can come alive with recently arrived birds. This coast is also rich in plant-life, including several rare and endemic

species, although very few will be in flower at this time of the year.

As a complete contrast, we will enjoy walking in the shady wooded areas of the sheltered gorges on the island's south coast which might harbour some recently arrived migrants. We will visit El Toro, from which there are spectacular views over much of the island, and we'll keep a keen look-out for raptors here, too. There is a small religious community in the old buildings at the summit, and also a café from which we may see Firecrests in the pine trees. If conditions allow, we will be able to take a boat trip out to Isla d'el Aire, a small islet just off the south-eastern coast of Menorca. In spring and autumn there is a bird-ringing station here, and the islet is also home to an unusual subspecies of Liiford's Wall Lizard. Menorca has a large number of prehistoric sites scattered across the island, including rock mounds, caves and huge megalithic stones unique to Menorca; we will include a visit to at least one of these sites during our stay.

By October the roads are relatively traffic-free and the majority of holidaymakers have departed, which gives us a chance to explore the island in comparative peace. After a leisurely week exploring Menorca's birdlife and other natural history as well as some of its culture, all in a gentle autumn climate, it will be time to return home.



Egyptian Vulture



Purple Swamphen



Cala Mitjaneta

# Papua New Guinea

A 16-day birdwatching holiday to the magnificent forests of New Guinea in search of the remarkable birds-of-paradise and other exotic species, together with a glimpse of the unique culture of the indigenous Melpha people and 'Huli wigmén'.

**Tuesday 14th June — Wednesday 29th June Cost: £8,495**

New Guinea is the world's second largest island and lies in the south-west Pacific to the north of Australia. The island is divided between two countries: Papua New Guinea (PNG) in the east and Indonesia in the west. It is one of the wildest and least explored regions on Earth, with some 90% of the country still covered in forest. It has the richest avifauna of any island, with more than 360 endemic species, including the majority of the birds-of-paradise, perhaps the most extraordinary of all the world's bird families. Although their remarkable displays are often shown on television, to watch them in the field is a priceless experience of a lifetime. In addition, the island holds a wonderful and varied assembly of pigeons, parrots and kingfishers, not to mention gorgeous jewel-babblers and fairywrens, as well as stunning species such as Red-bellied Pitta, Flame Bowerbird and Golden Monarch. New Guinea is also home to seven endemic bird families and we may see species from all seven during our time here. Raptors are not numerous, but we have a chance of observing one of the most magnificent, the New Guinea Harpy Eagle.

We begin our holiday in Port Moresby, where we will spend the afternoon exploring the grounds of the Pacific Adventist University. Comprising a mosaic of dry woodland, gallery forest and small water bodies, the grounds provide a perfect introduction to the Australo-Papuan bird families that we are likely to encounter; Fawn-breasted

Bowerbird, White-shouldered Fairywren, Black-backed Butcherbird and a variety of honeyeaters are all possible here. The following day we will visit the eucalypt and evergreen forests of Varirata National Park in the nearby foothills, where we can hope to see such specialities as Brown-headed Paradise-kingfisher and Raggiana Bird-of-paradise, along with a plethora of fruit-doves, cuckooshrikes and flycatchers.

From Port Moresby we fly to the Western Highlands for a 3-night stay at Rondon Ridge Lodge, one of PNG's premier lodges. Birding in the high-altitude forest near the lodge, we have an excellent chance of seeing some of PNG's most iconic species, such as both Black and Brown Sicklebills, Princess Stephanie's Astrapia and Blue, Superb and King of Saxony Birds-of-paradise, not to mention Loria's Satinbird and Wattled Ploughbill. Our stay will include a visit to Kumul Lodge, famous for its bird feeding table where species such as Brown Sicklebill, Ribbon-tailed Astrapia, Brehm's Tiger-parrot and Belford's Melidectes are among the many species seen; there will also be an opportunity to learn about the culture and traditions of the local Melpha people.

Next, we relocate to the shores of Lake Murray in the lowlands of Western Province for a 3-night stay. Taking to the water, we will explore the habitat around PNG's largest lake as we search for a very different array of species, including the magnificent Southern Crowned Pigeon, Blyth's Hornbill, Southern Cassowary,

New Guinea Flightless Rail and, with luck, the exquisite King Bird-of-paradise.

We then return to the highlands, flying to Tari for the grand finale of the tour — three nights at the incomparable Ambua Lodge. Here we can again feast our eyes on several species of birds-of-paradise, including Ribbon-tailed Astrapia and Lawe's Parotia, as well as a host of other interesting species such as Brehm's Tiger-parrot, Eastern Crested Berrypecker, Blue-capped Ifrit, Mountain Firetail and Orange-crowned Fairywren. The lodge is positioned at Tari Gap in the central highlands and is home to people from one of the most immediately recognisable cultures in Papua New Guinea, the 'Huli wigmén'. A proud, flamboyant tribe — known for their ornate ceremonial wigs, and dances and songs fashioned on the mating rituals of the birds-of-paradise — an encounter with the Huli tribespeople will be a truly fascinating experience.

All too soon we must return to Port Moresby where we will spend a final evening together before flying back to London, via Singapore, after what promises to be an exciting and memorable adventure.



Raggiana Bird-of-paradise



Ambua Lodge

Huli wigmén



## Outline itinerary

- Day 1/2** Depart London/in flight.
- Day 3** Arrive Port Moresby. Afternoon birdwatching.
- Day 4** Varirata National Park.
- Day 5/7** Rondon Ridge.
- Day 8/10** Lake Murray.
- Day 11/13** Ambua Lodge.
- Day 14** Port Moresby.
- Day 15** Depart Port Moresby.
- Day 16** Arrive London.

## Accommodation

Comfortable lodges. All rooms have private facilities.

## Food

All included in the price.

## Grading

Grade B.

## Focus

Birds, wildlife and culture.

## Leader

Terry Reis.

## Single room supplement

£1,595.

Web quick search: PNG01

NEW



# The Best of Chile

An action-packed 17-day wildlife holiday in search of the Blue Whales of Chiloé Island, Pumas of Torres del Paine and rich marine-life of the Magellan Straits.

Friday 3rd February — Sunday 19th February 2017 Cost: £6,995



## Outline itinerary

- Day 1** Depart London.
- Day 2** Arrive Puerto Montt; transfer Puerto Varas.
- Day 3/6** Chiloé Island.
- Day 7/10** Torres del Paine National Park.
- Day 11** Porvenir.
- Day 12** Useless Bay.
- Day 13/14** Francisco Coloane Marine Park.
- Day 15** Punta Arenas.
- Day 16** Depart Punta Arenas.
- Day 17** Arrive London.

## Accommodation

Comfortable lodges, all with private facilities, except on Carlos Island Biological Station where we stay in twin-bedded 'domes' with shared facilities.

## Food

All included in the price.

## Grading

Grade A/B.

## Focus

Mammals and birds.

## Leader

Rodrigo Tapia (or Enrique Couve).

## Single room supplement

£995.

## Extensions

A wide range of extensions are available including Easter Island and the Atacama Desert. Please call Dan Free on 01962 733051 for further details.

Web quick search: CHL04

The topography of Chile is one of the most extraordinary of any country in the world: a ribbon of land stretching over 4,000 kilometres from the arid Atacama Desert in the north to the sub-Antarctic islands of the south. Nowhere more than 180 kilometres wide, the country is separated from neighbouring Argentina by the high mountains of the Andes which create some of the most spectacular mountain scenery in South America and provide refuge for some of the continent's most sought-after wildlife. From the rugged coastline and temperate rainforests of Chiloé Island, to the awe-inspiring Torres del Paine National Park and windswept plains of Tierra del Fuego, this new tour takes you on a journey in search of the best of Chile's birds and mammals.

Arriving in Puerto Montt, we will spend one night in the picturesque town of Puerto Varas, before crossing the Chacao Channel to Chiloé Island for a 3-night stay. Steeped in history, the island is home to a unique range of habitats and wildlife. We will search for a variety of interesting mammals including the very rare Southern River Otter and critically endangered Darwin's Fox, as well as Pudu, Kodkod (the smallest of South America's cats) and Marine Otter. The abundance of seabirds around the coastline provides a mouthwatering selection for birdwatchers, with such attractions as Black-browed Albatross, Flightless Steamer Duck, Kelp

Goose and the chance to see Humboldt temperate forests, we can hope to find endearing little tapaculos and the giant Magellanic Woodpecker, whilst coastal mudflats are the haunt of wildfowl and waders, amongst them assemblies of many hundreds of Black-necked Swans. Before leaving Chiloé Island we will enjoy an 8-hour whale-watching trip along the west coast of Chiloé Island, where up to 100 Blue Whales have been recorded in recent years, including a number of calves, suggesting that these cold waters might be used as a nursery.

Returning to Puerto Montt, we then fly south to Punta Arenas, before embarking on a scenic drive to the spectacular Torres del Paine National Park for a 4-night stay. Images of the stunning peaks of Torres del Paine illustrate many a guide book to Chile and we will have ample time to enjoy the spectacular scenery as we search for the mammals and birds that frequent the mountain slopes, grassy plains and clear blue Andean lakes of the national park. Residents include soaring Andean Condors, herds of Guanaco, South Andean Deer, South American Grey and Culpeo Foxes, Patagonian Hog-nosed Skunk and Hairy Armadillo; however, our prime objective here will be Chile's apex predator, the Puma. Despite their relative abundance in the park it is no easy task to find these beautiful predators; however, aided by expert local guides, we should have an excellent chance of seeing this elusive cat in arguably the most breathtakingly scenic setting of its extensive range.

Next we travel south-east, across the vast windswept steppes that border Argentina before reaching the Magellan Straits where we take a short ferry ride across to Tierra del Fuego. From here we continue our journey south to the small village of Porvenir on the northern peninsula of Useless Bay. Home to the only colony of King Penguins on mainland South America, we will spend the following morning observing and photographing these remarkable birds before returning to Punta Arenas later that afternoon.

Taking to the water, we next embark on a voyage through the Magellan Straits to Carlos III Island in the heart of the Francisco Coloane Marine Park, where we will be based at a comfortable research station for two nights. The whale-watching opportunities here are regarded as some of the finest in Chile, and we will assist the island's resident biologists with their studies on the transient populations of Humpback Whales found in these waters. With luck, we will have the chance to observe these magnificent animals at very close range, as well as playful Peale's Dolphins and large breeding colonies of South American Sea Lions and Southern Fur Seals. Complete with an impressive avian cast that is likely to include Southern Giant Petrel, Magellanic Diving-petrel, King Cormorant, Chilean Skua and Dolphin Gull, we really will be spoilt for choice.

All too soon it will be time to return to the mainland where we will enjoy a farewell dinner in Punta Arenas before flying back to London the following day, thereby concluding a remarkable wildlife-filled journey in this beautiful and little-visited country.



Puma



Torres del Paine National Park



King Penguins

# Sweden — Spring Birds & Flowers of Öland

A 7-day holiday to enjoy both the breeding birds and spring migrants, as well as the spectacular display of flowering orchids and other plants, to be found on the limestone island of Öland off the east coast of Sweden.

Friday 27th May — Thursday 2nd June 2016 Cost: £1,495

The limestone island of Öland lies just off the coast of south-eastern Sweden. Although connected by a bridge since 1974, the island's rugged, rural flavour is quite unique. Like the Orkneys in Britain, Öland has a rich blend of natural, cultural and historic attractions: its Great Alvar Plain, divided by immaculately fashioned dry stone walls; ancient coastal hay meadows and pasturelands; unusual linear villages fashioned in the Middle Ages; many Iron Age, Stone Age and medieval remains; and an exceptional flora and rich birdlife have all earned southern Öland World Heritage status.

The island is particularly well known for its birdlife. By early June a host of breeding waders will have arrived to establish their territories amongst the damp meadows and flat coastal pastures. This land has been cut or grazed over thousands of years, without the use of any fertilisers, and the flora is very rich; by late spring the ground is pink with Bird's-eye Primroses (*Primula farinosa*) and a profusion of orchids. Dunlin, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Redshank and Avocet breed in these meadows which, during the early summer, are full of colour and activity. The island's meadows and woodlands are also the summer home of such localised breeding species as Montagu's Harrier and Corncrake, as well as Thrush Nightingale, Barred and Icterine Warblers, Collared Flycatcher and Common Rosefinch.

At the southern tip of this long sinuous island lies the famous Ottenby Bird Observatory and Nature Reserve, the oldest bird observatory in Sweden (established in 1946) and a place of pilgrimage for Scandinavian birders. Here, tired spring migrants take a break in the bushy gardens around the old stone lighthouse, or the adjacent meadows, after their 300-kilometre northbound journey across the Baltic Sea. Late May and early June is the best time for rarities from south-east and eastern Europe, with such species as Red-footed Falcon, Marsh Sandpiper, Red-rumped Swallow, Greenish Warbler and Rose-coloured Starling being amongst the more regular of the unusual visitors at this time. The wet meadows to the north-east of the observatory have benefited from centuries of hay-making and grazing. Filled with such typical plants of this habitat as Glossy Eyebright, Common Milkwort, a host of different grasses and sedges, and many orchids, the area is very colourful at this time of year, and also provides a wonderful environment for breeding waders. Inland, and to the west of these meadows, lies Ottenby Wood, the largest deciduous

woodland in southern Öland. Here, birch and oak trees dominate and host such rare breeding species as Red-breasted Flycatcher and Golden Oriole, whose songs fill the wood at the time of our visit. To the west of the wood lie the ancient grazing pastures of the Västtra Mark. Still grazed today by cattle and sheep, such plants as Burnt-tip Orchid, Yellow Milk-vetch, Buckshorn Plantain and Glasswort are common, whilst breeding birds include Oystercatchers, Ringed Plovers, Lapwings, Turnstones, Redshanks, gulls, Little Terns and Northern Wheatears.

The lighthouse gardens and point at Segerstad offers an outstanding spot for incoming migrants and vagrants, as well as a chance for a little sea-watching; here too, delightful flower-filled pastures are filled with breeding waders and the dry stone walls that divide them make ideal resting spots for tired migrants. More than 300 species of birds have been recorded here by our resident guide, perhaps the highest number ever recorded from a private European garden! White-tailed Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, Caspian and Black Terns are amongst the breeding birds of the region, and such species as Black Stork, plus a host of rare passerine migrants, have been recorded in spring.

The most striking characteristic of Öland, though, is the Great Alvar Plain. An alvar occurs on hard limestone bedrock and is a flat area where bare rock breaks through thin soil. The Great Alvar Plain is the largest grazed alvar in the world, and is an extensive limestone plateau strewn with windswept junipers, and granite boulders deposited during the last Ice Age 11,000 years ago. The plateau has been grazed continuously from the Neolithic period until relatively recently, thus, in early summer, this wild area is carpeted by many species of colourful orchids. Further, the thin alvar soil is subject to both extreme drought and flooding, and the plants living here are particularly well adapted to this peculiar and harsh environment in which both alpine and Siberian species live side by side with sun-loving species from southern Europe and a number of endemics, including the Öland Rockrose (*Helianthemum oelandicum*) and Öland Wormwood (*Artemisia oelandica*).

During the week our superb resident guide, Christian Cederroth, will introduce us to this wealth of flora and birdlife on the peaceful island that he calls home, with the island's ambience, manageable size and quiet roads ensuring a most leisurely and enjoyable break.



## Outline itinerary

- Day 1** Fly Kalmar (via Stockholm); transfer Öland.
- Day 2/6** Daily birding and botanical excursions around Öland.
- Day 7** Transfer Kalmar; fly London.

## Accommodation

A charming, family-run guesthouse that was formally a traditional Öland farmhouse. All rooms have en suite facilities.

## Food

All included in the price.

## Grading

Grade A. Easy day walks only.

## Focus

Birds, plants (spectacular carpets of orchids in particular) and other natural history.

## Leader

Christian Cederroth.

## Single room supplement

£180.

Web quick search: SWE01



Black-tailed Godwit



Burnt-tip Orchids



Segerstad, Öland

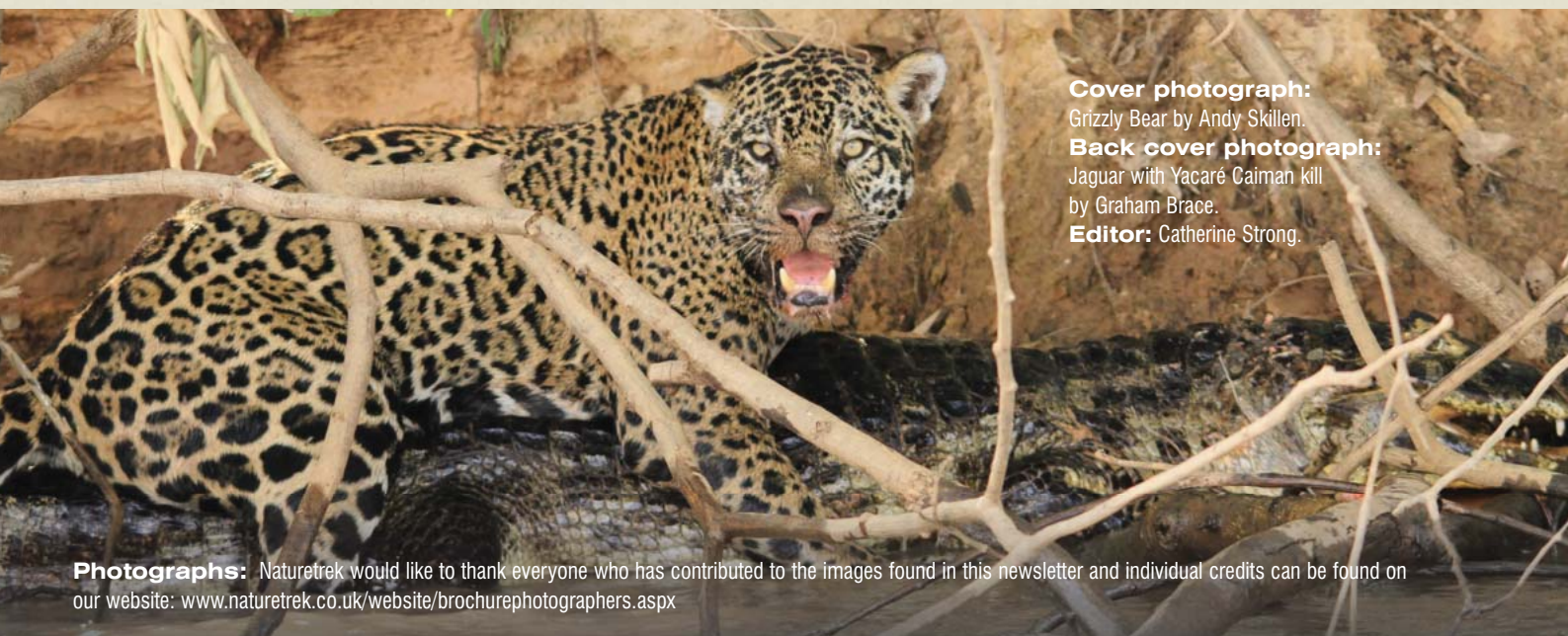


Pasqueflower

# Late Availability

We still have some places remaining on the following tours departing within the next 3 months:

<b>BRAHMAPUTRA CRUISE</b> Thu 31st Mar – Wed 13th Apr Cost: £3,595	<b>FRANCE – CARCASSONNE &amp; CATHARS</b> Thu 21st – Thu 28th Apr Cost: £1,395	<b>THE CAMARGUE IN SPRING</b> Wed 4th – Sun 8th May Cost: £895
<b>SOUTHERN MOROCCO</b> Thu 31st Mar – Sat 9th Apr Cost: £1,795	<b>FRANCE – PROVENCE IN SPRING</b> Thu 21st – Thu 28th Apr Cost: £1,395	<b>CROATIA &amp; SLOVENIA – SPRING IN ISTRIA</b> Wed 4th – Wed 11th May Cost: £1,295
<b>BOTSWANA'S DESERT &amp; DELTA</b> Fri 1st – Sun 10th Apr Cost: £2,895	<b>SPRING BIRDING IN SICILY</b> Thu 21st – Wed 27th Apr Cost: £1,395	<b>BULGARIA IN SPRING</b> Fri 6th – Sun 15th May Cost: £1,395
<b>COSTA RICA</b> Sat 2nd – Sat 16th Apr Cost: £3,995	<b>BOTSWANA'S DESERT &amp; DELTA</b> Fri 22nd Apr – Sun 1st May Cost: £2,695	<b>KAZAKHSTAN</b> Fri 6th – Sun 15th May Cost: £2,095
<b>INDIA – TIGER DIRECT!</b> Sun 3rd – Tue 12th Apr Cost: £2,995	<b>MENORCA</b> Fri 22nd – Fri 29th Apr Cost: £1,395	<b>GREAT WHALES OF THE AZORES (SÃO MIGUEL)</b> Sat 7th – Sat 14th May Cost: £1,495
<b>SPAIN – COTO DOÑANA IN SPRING</b> Mon 4th – Fri 8th Apr Cost: £995	<b>ALDERNEY – WILDLIFE &amp; HISTORY IN STYLE!</b> Fri 22nd – Tue 26th Apr Cost: £695	<b>GREAT WHALES OF THE AZORES (PICO)</b> Sat 7th – Sun 15th May Cost: £1,595
<b>CRETE</b> Tue 5th – Tue 12th Apr Cost: £1,295	<b>MALLORCA'S BIRDS (BEGINNERS)</b> Sat 23rd – Sat 30th Apr Cost: £1,295	<b>BELARUS IN SPRING</b> Sun 8th – Sun 15th May Cost: £1,500
<b>BORNEO BY NIGHT</b> Tue 5th – Sun 17th Apr Cost: £3,995	<b>LESBOS</b> Sat 23rd – Sat 30th Apr Cost: £1,495	<b>CORSICA – THE SCENTED ISLE</b> Sun 8th – Sun 15th May Cost: £1,395
<b>CHILE – JUST PUMAS!</b> Thu 7th – Sun 17th Apr Cost: £3,995	<b>COTO DOÑANA – BIRDS (BEGINNERS)</b> Mon 25th – Fri 29th Apr Cost: £995	<b>FRANCE – THE VERCORS (BY TRAIN)</b> Sun 8th – Sun 15th May Cost: £1,395
<b>SPAIN &amp; MOROCCO: BIRDWATCHING</b> Fri 8th – Fri 15th Apr Cost: £1,495	<b>FLOWERS OF ITALY'S GARGANO PENINSULA</b> Mon 25th Apr – Mon 2nd May Cost: £1,395	<b>THE CAMARGUE IN SPRING (BEGINNERS)</b> Sun 8th – Thu 12th May Cost: £895
<b>ZAMBIA'S SOUTH LUANGWA</b> Sun 10th – Tue 19th April Cost: £2,695	<b>PANAMA – CANOPY TOWER (BIRDS)</b> Wed 27th Apr – Thu 5th May Cost: £2,395	<b>SLOVAKIA – BIRDS</b> Mon 9th – Mon 16th May Cost: £1,395
<b>CRETE</b> Tue 12th – Tue 19th April Cost: £1,295	<b>TUSCANY IN SPRING</b> Thu 28th Apr – Thu 5th May Cost: £1,495	<b>SPAIN'S SIERRA DE GUARA</b> Tue 10th – Tue 17th May Cost: £1,295
<b>JAMAICA – ENDEMIC BIRDS</b> Tue 12th – Wed 20th Apr Cost: £2,595	<b>ROMANIA'S DANUBE DELTA &amp; CARPATHIANS</b> Thu 28th Apr – Sat 7th May Cost: £1,495	<b>ISLES OF SCILLY</b> Wed 11th – Wed 18th May Cost: £950
<b>THE GAMBIA IN STYLE! (SPECIAL PRICE)</b> Fri 15th – Fri 22nd Apr Cost: £1,895	<b>POLAND'S PRIMEVAL FORESTS</b> Fri 29th Apr – Mon 2nd May Cost: £795	<b>PANAMA – CANOPY TOWER (MAMMALS)</b> Wed 11th – Sat 21st May Cost: £2,895
<b>THE ISLAND OF SAMOS</b> Fri 15th – Sat 23rd Apr Cost: £1,495	<b>HUNGARY IN SPRING</b> Sat 30th Apr – Sat 7th May Cost: £1,495	<b>SPRING IN CANADA'S PACIFIC NORTH-WEST</b> Thu 12th – Wed 25th May Cost: £5,395
<b>MALLORCA</b> Sat 16th – Sat 23rd Apr Cost: £1,295	<b>CZECH REPUBLIC – SPRING BIRDING</b> Sun 1st – Sun 8th May Cost: £1,495	<b>FRANCE – THE DORDOGNE</b> Thu 12th – Thu 19th May Cost: £1,295
<b>NEPAL'S BUTTERFLIES</b> Sat 16th – Wed 27th Apr Cost: £2,995	<b>CORSICA – THE SCENTED ISLE</b> Sun 1st – Sun 8th May Cost: £1,395	<b>ALBANIA IN SPRING</b> Fri 13th – Fri 20th May Cost: £1,395
<b>GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS</b> Mon 18th – Sat 30th Apr Cost: £4,195	<b>SPAIN – BIRDS &amp; WINES OF NAVARRA</b> Tue 3rd – Mon 9th May Cost: £1,295	<b>FRANCE – THE VERCORS (BY AIR)</b> Sun 15th – Sun 22nd May Cost: £1,395
<b>FLOWERS OF ITALY'S GARGANO PENINSULA</b> Mon 18th – Mon 25th Apr Cost: £1,395	<b>CATALONIA – THE EASTERN PYRENEES</b> Wed 4th – Wed 11th May Cost: £1,395	<b>POLAND IN SPRING</b> Sun 15th – Sun 22nd May Cost: £1,395
<b>SOUTH AFRICA'S RARE MAMMALS</b> Mon 18th – Sat 30th Apr Cost: £4,595	<b>SPAIN – EXTREMADURA &amp; GREDOS MTS</b> Wed 4th – Wed 11th May Cost: £1,495	<b>FRANCE – THE CÉVENNES</b> Wed 18th – Wed 25th May Cost: £1,295
<b>CRETE</b> Tue 19th – Tue 26th Apr Cost: £1,295	<b>SPAIN'S COTO DOÑANA &amp; EXTREMADURA</b> Wed 4th – Thu 12th May Cost: £1,495	<b>THE CHARM OF THE CHILTERN HILLS</b> Wed 18th – Fri 20th May Cost: £350



**Cover photograph:**

Grizzly Bear by Andy Skillen.

**Back cover photograph:**

Jaguar with Yacaré Caiman kill by Graham Brace.

**Editor:** Catherine Strong.

**Photographs:** Naturetrek would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the images found in this newsletter and individual credits can be found on our website: [www.naturetrek.co.uk/website/brochurephotographers.aspx](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk/website/brochurephotographers.aspx)