

Welcome to Birdwatching Breaks 2017

A warm welcome to our 2017 brochure of birdwatching holidays, this being our thirtieth year of operation.

In 2017, we have introduced a new tour to interesting countries around the world, all of them having had an inspection trip either by us or our local tour operators.

In Asia, we have a new destination to Sichuan in China which offers you an insight into the fascinating birdlife of interior China. Other tours in Asia include Sri Lanka with over 30 endemic bird species. For those who wish to witness the winter wonderland of Japan, we have a tour in February 2017. The country continues to be a popular destination and we have modified the winter tour slightly to visit an area for Japanese Murrelet. In the early winter of 2017, we revisit Western India with a revised tour taking in the holy city of Amritsar for some rare Asian birds that spend the winter in India.

In Africa, we have departures to Benin, Senegal and Uganda. These destinations offer you an extremely wide range of African birds and mammals from the Sahel in Senegal to the birds and mammals of

Uganda. Benin is a small country in West Africa and relatively unexplored for birds and wildlife. We have a tours here January 2017. In Senegal we have a new tour taking in the extreme east and south-east of the country which holds many regional species including large numbers of Egyptian Plovers.

Our Australasian birding tour visits the islands of Tahiti, New Caledonia, Fiji and Samoa an area with many endemic bird species. We also revisit New Zealand, taking in all the major islands including the Chathams which are several hundred miles east. New Zealand has many rare and endemic birds with this tour giving you an exceptional opportunity to see many of them.

In the Caribbean region, we have a tour of Jamaica in the Western Caribbean. Jamaica holds up to 28 endemic birds in simply breathtaking and beautiful surroundings. We also visit Puerto Rico which has 18 endemic species. The two islands can be combined to make an interesting two week tour. We have also reinstated our Lesser Antilles tour for 2017 with an improved itinerary taking in Grenada and an optional extension to Trinidad. In the Americas, we have a tour to Grand Manan in late August the start of the North American migrant season. In addition to this we have added the bird rich state of Montana and a long weekend in New York. Further south in South America a birding tour to Colombia the world's best birding country.

Closer to home, we have departures to Cyprus, France, Greece, Norway, Israel and Spain. These six countries offer you great birding among spectacular countryside and vistas. A winter visit to Israel specifically to Eilat and the Hula Valley should produce an avian spectacle of migrant and wintering birds. Lesbos is a migrant-filled spectacle which takes place every April and our visit is timed for maximum chances. Extreme Northern Norway is also being offered in mid-June a prime time to watch some spec-



Puffins Photo: Jo Finn



Birding in Lesbos. Photo: David Boniface

tacular birds of the High Arctic. Early in 2017 a week long tour to southern France and the island of Corsica should provide exceptional winter birding and two European endemics. Finally, we have an extensive birding tour of Iran taking in all the major birding habitats. This is a very diverse country with a growing band of birders who are passionate about its wildlife. We have excellent chances of seeing the endemic Pleske's Ground Jay, breeding Grey Hypocolius and the little-known Sind Woodpecker.

2017 sees the twelfth year of Black Isle Birding which covers all our holidays operating in Scotland. This sector has grown significantly over the last year and we are pleased to say that we have a growing reputation as one of Scotland's premier birding companies. Jo and I operate our popular "holiday at home" programme based at Cygnus House. Its location, overlooking the Cromarty Firth and set in two acres of wildlife habitat, makes it an ideal base for visiting northern Scotland. We have several other Scottish tours to Dumfries and

Galloway, Shetland and Fair Isle and an island special visiting Mull, Tiree and The Uists.

In 2017, we continue to offer tours in North and East Yorkshire during the spring and autumn migration periods. These are four/five days in duration, taking in the major areas for birds under the guidance of Chris Bradshaw who lives near Scarborough.

I firmly believe we offer you the best birding packages in Scotland, with the country's top birding guides, along with a friendly and welcoming service with no hidden extras.

The team at Birdwatching Breaks looks forward to welcoming you on one of our tours.

Finally, my thanks go to Rosie Green for proof-reading our 2017 brochure and to Russell Turner for the layout and design.

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