

# WILDLIFE TRAVEL



more than just a wildlife holiday: discover a new world

## Spring 2018 Newsletter

The last few months have been a busy time for us, with Wildlife Travellers enjoying some great wildlife around the globe.

December's visit to **Norfolk** coincided with an impressive roost of Starlings coming in to spend their nights in the reedbed at Strumpshaw Fen RSPB reserve, and the murmuration of the 50,000-strong flock was one of the stand out highlights of this trip, along with the nearby crow roost at Buckenham the same evening. Later in the month (and a little warmer it has to be said!), we spent the festive period in **Morocco**, avoiding tinsel and repeats on TV, and instead enjoying blue skies and sunshine, with Northern Bald Ibis and the endemic *Narcissus broussonetii* amongst the wildlife highlights.

2018 opened with a return to **Ecuador** in search of some of the country's exciting mammals. Luck was certainly on our side on this trip, with amazing sightings of Spectacled Bear, Mountain Tapir, Giant Otter, Olinguito and Pygmy Marmoset keeping us all very happy! This was followed by our first ever visit to **Sri Lanka** where, as I type, our group are heading out to look for Blue Whales and Spinner Dolphins in the Indian Ocean: somewhere we definitely plan on returning to in the future!



*Bomarea pardina*, Ecuador



*Narcissus broussonetii*, Morocco

## Looking ahead to 2019

It feels like 2017 has only just come to an end, with our 2018 holiday programme just getting going, but our eyes are already turning to 2019, with plans afoot for another year of Wildlife Travelling. In February we hope to be visiting the endemic-rich mountains of **Ethiopia**, in the company of Ethiopian Wolf, Gelada Baboons and the endearing Stresseman's Bush Crow. April will see a long-awaited return to the enchanted **Galapagos**, home to giant tortoises, Darwin's finches and Marine Iguanas. In southern Africa we have plans for repeat visits to both **Botswana** and **Namibia**, while for those who aren't so keen on the heat and prefer their holidays a little icy, we are planning our first ever visit to the seventh continent, with an itinerary taking in **Antarctica** and the Falkland Islands.

## Where to next? You tell us!

We are always looking for new Wildlife Travel destinations. Recent years have seen new itineraries to Estonia, Svalbard, Devon and New Caledonia, among others. But without you, our Wildlife Travellers, none of those holidays would be running. Where would you like to go? Where is the next 'must visit' wildlife destination? If there is somewhere high up your 'bucket list', please let us know and we will look at ways of making it happen.



## Limiting our Carbon Footprint

The impact our business activities have on the environment is always on our minds. We were among the first wildlife travel companies to include carbon offsetting for all our flights, rather than as an optional extra.

Since 2007, we have done this through the World Land Trust's '**Carbon Balanced**' programme, offsetting our greenhouse gas emissions through the protection and restoration of carbon-rich wildlife habitats in Ecuador. Over the past decade this means we have contributed **almost £35,000** to this vital conservation work.

In January, our group visited the **Yanacocha Cloud Forest Reserve** in the Andes just above Quito, where the first £6,000 of our payments went to help with re-forestation and on-going habitat protection. The reserve protects high-altitude Polylepis cloud forest, a habitat under threat from land clearance for agriculture and charcoal production and home to the Critically Endangered Black-chested Puffleg. Alas, we weren't lucky enough to find the puffleg on this occasion, but there were some great orchids to be seen, and the feeders were busy with plenty of other hummingbirds, including the spectacular Great Sapphirewing feeding alongside the owner of the longest bill (relative to body size) of any bird, the Sword-billed Hummingbird.



*Passiflora cumayensis*, Yanacocha



Great Sapphirewing, Yanacocha

## Wildlife Travel and Sunvil

For almost all of our 30 years, our partners have been Sunvil Holidays, who provide legal and financial protection for your bookings through their ABTA membership, ATOL and AITO bonding.

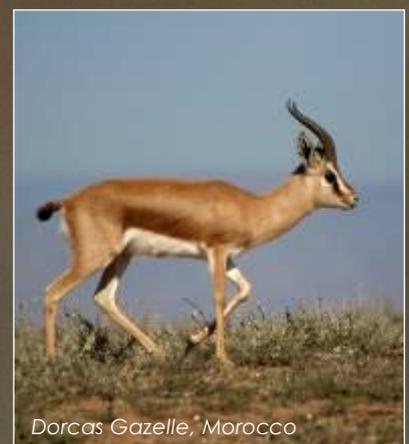
We design, plan and organise our holiday programme, and then work with Sunvil to ensure that the holidays are run using the best of our joint experience. Your contract is with Sunvil, who book your flights and deal with your payments. If you have any questions about payments, speak to Sunvil: for everything else, your first port of call should be us.

Sunvil Holidays is a long-established and well-respected package travel company based in Old Isleworth, Middlesex. In business since 1970, they have won many industry awards, most recently the Sunday Times Travel Editor's Award in 2017. Their chairman and former managing director, Noel Josephides, is currently chairman of ABTA: with Sunvil behind us, we are confident that our travellers are in safe hands.



## Morocco at Christmas

Morocco has been one of our favourite destinations over recent years, due in no small part to our friends at the Atlas Kasbah Eco-lodge, just outside Agadir. Following a very successful (and fully-booked) holiday over Christmas 2017, the highlights of which included a male Tristram's Warbler, a speedy North African Elephant Shrew and some great Berber festivities, we will be returning to spend the festive period in the sunshine of southern Morocco once again, with holiday dates **21st to 28th December 2018**. Do let us know if you'd like details of what promises to be a very popular trip.



Dorcas Gazelle, Morocco

# Holidays 2018: places still available

Although several of our trips for 2018 are already fully booked, we do still have places available on the following trips.

## MALLORCA: spring in the western Mediterranean

19th to 26th April. Leader: Charlie Rugeroni & local guide

Flights available from Leeds-Bradford, Bristol and London Heathrow

We explore limestone mountains, visit internationally important wetlands and enjoy walks near Mallorca's beautiful north east coast.

£1595 per person, full board, single room supplement £95

## ESTONIA: spring wildlife and orchids of the Baltic

25th May to 1st June. Leaders: Charlie Rugeroni & local guide

A visit to the meadows and forests of Estonia, home to courting birds and good numbers of orchids, including the spectacular Lady's Slipper.

£1675 per person, full board, single room supplement £160

## THE VERCORS: wild flowers of the Pre-Alps (by train)

9th to 16th June. Leaders: Charlie Rugeroni & Jess Hatchett

With its rugged landscape, diversity of wild flowers and unspoilt character, the Vercors is a wonderful setting for our week in France.

£1795 per person, full board, single room supplement £110

## NEW CALEDONIA: wildlife of the South Pacific

3rd to 17th September. Leaders: Philip Precey & Mark Hanger

We will explore the iconic island in search of its wildlife, with five endemic plant families and twenty endemic birds, including the flightless Kagu.

£4745 per person, full board, single room supplement £670  
(international flights not included)

## BULGARIA: easy birding on the Black Sea coast

8th to 15th September. Leader: Laurie Jackson & local guide

Peak autumn migration, with raptors overhead, waders thronging the wetlands and sea birds passing by off-shore.

£1545 per person, full board, single room supplement £95

## ANDALUCIA: easy birding Coto Doñana and Tarifa

10th to 17th October. Leader: Mike Russell & local guide

A week focussing on the hotspots of southern Spain, with a whale watching boat trip and a chance of finding Iberian Lynx.

£1725 per person, full board, single room supplement £240

## CHILE: Chiloé, Juan Fernández and Easter Islands

18th Nov to 5th Dec. Leader: Laurie Jackson & Claudio Vidal

A real 'once in a lifetime' itinerary takes us from the rainforests of Chiloé to endemic-rich Juan Fernández and then out into the Pacific to Easter Island and its famous 'moai' statues.

£7250 per person, full board, single room supplement £750

## NORFOLK: winter wildfowl and natural history

3rd to 7th Dec. Leaders: Philip Precey & second leader tbc

Justly famous for its winter wildlife, we return to Norfolk in search of spectacular gatherings: wildfowl and waders, roosting raptors and cranes, and maybe even an otter if we are lucky.

£1095 per person, B&B, single room supplement £250

Wildlife Travel holidays are operated by Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218, AITO), protecting your booking.



# 30th Birthday Travellers Days

To celebrate our 30th birthday, we will be hitting the road, to explore some of the amazing wildlife to be seen closer to home, with four Travellers' Days around the country. Philip and Laurie will be joined by more Wildlife Travel leaders at each of the Travellers Days, so do come along and say hello! This is also an opportunity for those who have yet to travel with us to come and have a taster of what a Wildlife Travel holiday might be like, and to see some great wildlife along the way. There may even be cake!

There is plenty more to see and do in each of the four areas we will be visiting, and we will be including advice on where else to visit and how to make a full weekend of it, including nearby accommodation.

Places are limited, at a cost of **£25 per person** (£12 if you bring a new traveller with you!), so let us know if you would like to join us, and we will send the full details. We look forward to seeing you!

## SOMERSET: Avalon Marshes, 5th May

We will be spending a full day exploring this network of protected sites at the heart of the Somerset Levels and Moors, one of the **largest lowland wetlands** in the country. In recent years, these wetlands have been home to some amazing concentrations of **breeding birds**, including egrets, Little Bittern and Common Crane, as well as an amazing 46 booming Bitterns! **Otters** and Water Vole are a not-infrequent sight, and Marsh Harriers and Hobby should both be seen overhead.



Marsh Harrier

## LANCASHIRE: Gaits Barrow and Leighton Moss, 16th June

Gaits Barrow NNR protects one of the finest areas of limestone pavement in the country. We will look for a trio of **rare butterflies**, with Duke of Burgundy and both Pearl-bordered and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries likely to be on the wing. Gaits Barrow is also home to a re-introduced population of the spectacular **Lady's Slipper Orchid**: we may be a little late to enjoy them at their peak, but we will be keeping our fingers crossed for one or two late flowering plants. Nearby, we will visit the RSPB's Leighton Moss Reserve, where Bittern, **Bearded Tit**, Otter and Red Deer could all be seen.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

## SUFFOLK: Dunwich Heath and Walberswick, 28th July

Dunwich Heath and nearby Walberswick form part of the Suffolk Sandlings, an area of **lowland heathland** along the Suffolk coast. July will see the heath at its most colourful, with the heather and gorse in full flower. Amongst the flowers we will be looking for Silver-studded Blue, Dartford Warbler, solitary bees and flowering sundews. Nearby marshes are home to Marsh Harrier, Bittern and Otter. If the weather is good, we may pay an evening visit to look for **Nightjars** performing their churring display.



Bell Heather

## YORKSHIRE: Spurn Point NNR, 13th October

Spurn Point, jutting out into the North Sea at the mouth of the Humber estuary, is a famous **bird migration hotspot**. October can be an exciting time to visit, with flocks of waders and wildfowl arriving to spend their winter on the mud flats and large numbers of thrushes and Goldcrests passing through, occasionally joined by **Siberian 'sprites'** such as Yellow-browed Warbler or perhaps a real rarity. At this time of year, **anything could turn up!**



Goldcrest

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All photos by Philip Precey/Wildlife Travel except page 3: Lady's Slipper (NatourEst), New Caledonia (M. Dosdane/Nouvelle Caledonie Tourisme Point Sud), Iberian Lynx (Manuel Morales/Birding Tarifa), Easter Island Moai (Claudio Vidal/Far South Expeditions)

Our profits are donated to the Wildlife Trusts