

# Birding the World

## Strategies for the Modern Birder



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Having reached your target number of species for your ABA list, you've decided to

turn your attention toward world birding. But with so many birds and destinations to choose from, where on Earth do you start? Literally. With countless birding options ranging from glittering flocks of tanagers in Ecuador, to swarms of bee-eaters swooping over riverbanks in South Africa, to pittas skulking in the bamboo forests of Malaysia, the choices are bewildering. This article plots a few strategies for seeing as many of the world's birds as possible in the most cost-effective way.

### Skinning the "World Birding" Cat

An old and slightly bizarre idiom goes, "There's more than one way to skin a cat." It means that the same thing can be done in many different ways. Undoubtedly, you can choose from many strategies to see the world's birds. First, you have to decide what it is about birding that interests you most. Perhaps you enjoy the great migrations, which would make High Island in Texas, Beidaihe in China, and Israel's Eilat top priorities. Or perhaps you have a particular interest in the world's cranes, which would lead you to the gathering of 8,000 Hooded Cranes



**Vulturine Guineafowl (*Acryllium vulturinum*).**  
Buffalo Springs National Park, Kenya; October 1999.  
© Keith Barnes.



and 2,000 White-naped Cranes at Japan's Arasaki Reserve and the intermingling of Blue, Southern Crowned, and Wattled Cranes in the Creighton area of South Africa.

I have taken an approach that may be especially attractive to many budget-conscious birders. My strategy is to visit the fewest countries with the goal of getting the highest total number of bird species while spending the least amount of money. Critics might argue that this is a narrow and somewhat "chase-minded" mentality, but I'd counter that my destinations give a broad appreciation of the world's avifauna, including a great diversity of families and flagship species, a broad spectrum of the world's habitats, and several unique avian phenomena. In addition, my strategy offers fantastic cultural and wildlife experiences, which are often an equally magnetic draw for international travel. This strategy gets you the most bang for your buck. The strategy assumes that the reader has birded the ABA Area extensively, and it therefore excludes the ABA Area. Besides, there are many sources of information on how to bird the ABA Area. This strategy is

**Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*).**  
Pak Thale, Thailand; February 2008.  
© Larry Sansone.



designed for the ABA birder who is about to make that next quantum leap—to start birding the world!

**Sifting the Wheat from the Chaff**

While planning, you might flip through a world atlas and start birding vicariously by scanning across the Amazon basin or along the Himalayas, and fantasize about which countries offer the best forests for seeing Amazonian Umbrellabird or Himalayan Rubythroat. Skimming through the 194 countries recognized by the U.S. State Department will probably leave you feeling a little bewildered about where to start. However, factors such as global dynamics, lack of infrastructure, and physical abilities immediately restrict the number of countries we can visit.

**Global Dynamics**

This aspect of planning is dominated by the Big Three: war, politics, and terrorism. Right now, for example, I'd not go looking for Basra Reed-Warbler. Basra, a city in Iraq, is currently a lot more famous as the British base in the Iraq War than it is for its flat-headed *Acrocephalus* warbler. Conflict zones eliminate a number of places, and politics eliminate

others. The military junta in Myanmar, the Maoists in Nepal, and the unruly leadership of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe cut out these "birdy" destinations. Parts of several countries also suffer from potential terrorist threats. We need to consider all these factors before choosing where to travel.

**Lack of Infrastructure**

Many countries are quite safe but suffer from a critical lack of infrastructure that makes it impossible for birders to visit them easily. Good examples include Niger, Burkina Faso, and parts of Indonesia. However, several have also recently developed good infrastructure, including Guyana and Gabon, and this situation is changing constantly.

**Physical Abilities**

This is a personal consideration because it depends on each individual's own physical condition. Some destinations are perfectly safe and offer reasonable infrastructure, but birding them requires considerable physical fitness because of steep terrain and difficult trails. The fitness factor will eliminate some, but not all, destinations, and must be borne in mind when individuals consider their own strategies for birding the world. Good examples of physically tough trips include the Solomons, Irian Jaya (West Papua), and the Philippines. Of course it is not mandatory to visit the tougher spots at these destinations, and customized trips can go without visiting them. Certain trips, though, do require long days over tough, steep trails, normally in thick jungle and rainforest. These trips can be very satisfying, but they demand physical fitness.

**The Evolving Birding World**

While they certainly limit the number of countries that can be visited, politics, war, and lack of infrastructure are often transitory. In some years a country is safe, and in others it is better not to go. Informing yourself is crucial. As a way of illustrating just how quickly things can change for the traveler, look at the



**Top Map:** African countries that were generally avoided by birders in the 1980s (shown in black). Analysis by Keith Barnes; map by Kei Sochi.

**Bottom Map:** African countries that are difficult for birders to visit at the present time (shown in black). Analysis by Keith Barnes; map by Kei Sochi.

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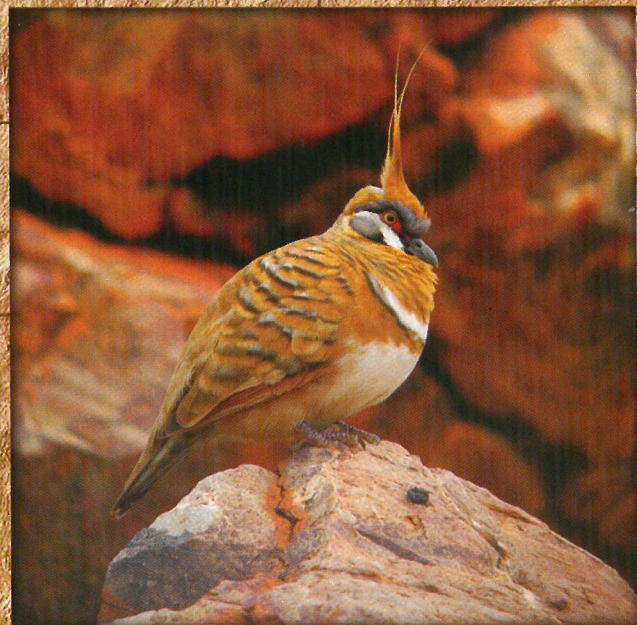
**King Parrot (*Alisterus scapularis*).** Lamington National Park, Australia; July 2001. © Keith Barnes.



stark contrast in birdable countries in Africa from the 1980s to the 1990s (see maps, p. 63). The countries in black were considered unvisitable during this time period. The situations in west-central and southern Africa were vastly different. In the 1980s, almost every country in west-central Africa was open and accessible, the exception being Gabon, which had little infrastructure at the time. In southern Africa, Angola and Mozambique were engaged in protracted decades-long wars, and Apartheid South Africa and Namibia were shunned. For the visiting birder, the only safe haven in the region was the then-young and exciting democracy of Zimbabwe, led by the freedom fighter Robert Mugabe.

By the 1990s, west and central Africa were in chaos, with the longest stable democracy in Africa, Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), thrown into discontent, and Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa) all zones of conflict.

**Spinifex Pigeon (*Geophaps plumifera*).** Victoria River, Australia; June 2005. © Iain Campbell.



The southern African situation was even more remarkable. Nelson Mandela controlled a more-enlightened government in South Africa, and with the wars in Mozambique and Angola over, birders were flooding into the region. Ironically, Robert Mugabe was by now considered a power-hungry, racism-mongering lunatic and international pariah. It's funny how things change so quickly. Global dynamics are pliable. Inform yourself of the current situation.

**Money, Money, Money, Must be Funny in the Rich Man's World**

Having eliminated the "unbirdable" parts of the world, more than 100 birder-friendly countries remain. That's still a lot. Also, we have not discussed the final, but most crucial, limitation to where you can go: money. Almost all of us have budget constraints. Because of differing budget limitations, I have divided potential ABA world

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birders into three categories: (1) dabblers, (2) moderates, and (3) addicts.

**Dabblers**

Dabblers are people who want to see some of the world, but who are not addicted to travel. Their goal is to see about 2,000 species. This goal is feasible by making four international trips in a lifetime to see a broad range of birds. Each trip should be to a different biogeographic realm: the Neotropics, the Afrotropics, the Oriental realm, and Australasia.

The first place for any neophyte dabbler is probably South America, the undisputed "bird continent." If you are going to make only one Neotropical journey, then head straight for Ecuador. It is a tiny country with good infrastructure and towering Andean mountain ranges splicing the Amazon basin from the endemic-rich Choco forests on the west slope. Nowhere is Neotropical diversity more apparent. Imagine: You could be watching the spectacular Ecuadorian Hillstar (an endemic high-altitude hummingbird) in the morning and by the afternoon be surrounded by the pig-like squeals of lekking Andean Cocks-of-the-rock in subtropical forest.

At a little less than 100,000 square miles (a bit smaller than Arizona), Ecuador supports a mind-boggling 1,600 bird species, more than half of South America's birds. It is possible, depending on the birding intensity you desire, to see between 500 and 800 species in a three-week trip. Lots of time would be spent in the Andes, where the greatest diversity lies, with an emphasis on the species-rich foothills and subtropics. The best place to start would be a week in the incredible world-famous Tandyapa Valley. Highlights should include duetting Toucan Barbets, Plate-billed Mountain-Toucans, and myriad hummingbirds. A few days at the highest-altitude alpine areas such as Yanacocha, Papallacta, and Antisana should net some of the world's most fantastic bird species, including the unbelievable Sword-billed Hummingbird and the strange Rufous-bellied Seed-snipe. Ecuador's southern Andes are also worth considering as the complicated topography results in a number of near-endemics occurring here. None is more spectacular than the magnificent and huge Jocotoco Antpitta, a bird that is now being hand-fed worms.

While the cool Andes are impressive, a 40-minute flight will have you in the sweltering Amazonian lowlands, which will yield hun-

**Violet Sabrewing (*Campylopterus hemileucurus*).** Cinchona, Costa Rica; November 2005. © Nick Athanas.



**Rainbow-bearded Thornbill (*Chalcostigma herrani*).** Yanacocha, Ecuador; August 2007. © Jose Illanes.



**Sword-billed Hummingbird (*Ensifera ensifera*).** Yanacocha, Ecuador; January 2006. © Sam Woods.

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dreds of species, including a bevy of amazing jacamars, antbirds, and puffbirds. Standing astride a canopy tower 180 feet above the forest floor and having tanager flocks and parrots whiz past your head is an experience not to be missed. A final consideration in Ecuador is the mosaic of dry forest, woodland, and *Cieba*-dominated scrub called the Tumbes. This strange habitat is home to more than 60 near-endemics shared only with Peru.

In the Afrotropics, dabblers simply must visit Kenya. Despite recent political trouble, the country has settled down and reverted to normal. The diversity here is just too much to ignore; the Kenyan list has nearly 1,150 species. With habitat diversity ranging from coastal forest, to moist and dry savannas, to montane forest, to desert, and to vestiges of lowland west African rainforest, nowhere else in Africa can compare. This diversity makes it possible to see 800 bird species in a four- to five-week trip. It is Africa in a nutshell. Kenya's habitats, combined with the parks that make it the world's premier big-mammal watching destination, make it an ultimate destination for the naturalist. It is possible to see more than 50 species of mammals on a birding trip. Not only are the classic safari Big Five (lion, leopard, rhino, buffalo, and elephant) likely, but so also are the huge herds of wildebeest and zebra in the famed Mara-Serengeti system. Western Kenya also supports the most eastern vestige of Congolese rainforest. Here, incredible birds, including the comical Great Blue Turaco and the stunning Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye, compete with the Blue-headed Bee-eater and the localized Turner's Eremomela for your attention.

In the Orient, Thailand should be your first choice. With more than 900 species, it offers some of Asia's greatest habitat and bird diversities. Located at Southeast Asia's crossroads, Thailand features many colorful resident birds alongside wintering Palearctic and Himalayan migrants. The Thai peninsula offers humid lowland forests where one can encounter the endangered Gurney's Pitta; this gold-and-sapphire gem is surely one of the world's top 10 birds. Moving north, scouring wetlands near Bangkok may reveal the inimitable Spoon-billed Sandpiper alongside other eastern shorebirds and waterbirds before you venture into the Sino-Himalayan mountains. Here there is a collection of exciting Asian babblers, with names like laughingthrush, minla, and yuhina. The stars of the show are the enormous Giant Nuthatch, the elegant Mrs. Hume's Pheasant, and the superb Coral-billed Ground-Cuckoo. The

**Resplendent Quetzal (*Pharomachrus mocinno*).** Cerro de la Muerte, Costa Rica; January 2006. © Glenn Bartley

visitor who explores the country in search of handsome hornbills, spectacular broadbills, and stunning pittas will probably amass an incredible 400–450 bird species in three weeks.

The dabbler's final destination is Australia's eastern coastline, stretching from tropical Queensland to temperate Tasmania. Australia is huge and worth many visits, but by working the east coast you will see 400–420 species, more than half the Australian avifauna, in just under three weeks. Australia's long geological isolation resulted in many of its bird families being endemic. With 238 endemic species, it is one of the top countries for endemics, and most of its non-endemics are likely to be new to first-time visitors, too.

**Table 1.** Destinations, number of expected species, number of days, and range of costs for a Dabbler.

Destination	# Species	# Days	Ground Cost
Neotropics—Ecuador	500–800	25 days	\$3,500–5,000
Afrotropics—Kenya	600–700	21 days	\$5,500–9,000
Oriental—Thailand	400–450	21 days	\$4,200–7,500
Australasia—Eastern Australia	400–420	21 days	\$4,300–8,500
<b>Lifetime Total</b>	<b>1,700–2,300</b>	<b>88 days</b>	<b>\$17,500–30,000</b>

*Note: The lifetime total does not quite add up because of some overlap in the species at the different destinations.*

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The best trip starts in Cairns, visiting the Great Barrier Reef, the rainforests, and savanna grasslands of the Atherton Tablelands, where one looks for humid-tropics birds like Victoria's Riflebirds, prehistoric Southern Cassowaries, and throngs of honeyeaters. You then move south to Brisbane and the cloud forests of Lamington National Park, where you can hand-feed the incredible King Parrot and the regal Regent Bowerbird. Farther south in New South Wales, the *Eucalyptus* forests and the Mallee should be worked before heading inland into the "Outback" where you can sample the desert avifauna of interior Australia. The final frontier is the temperate woodlands, coastal heaths, and estuaries of Tasmania. A week's extension to the Northern Territory will add even more amazing birds, from Gouldian Finch, Purple-crowned Fairywren, Rainbow Pitta, and Hooded Parrot in the Top End, to Spinifex Pigeon in the Red Centre. This area has a fascinating landscape, with stunning sandstone canyons and the unforgettable Uluru (Ayers Rock). While birding, you will also get to see the ancient aboriginal rock galleries.

In summary, check out Table 1 (p. 66). As a dabbler, you can expect to see 1,700–2,300 species worldwide for a ground cost (excluding airfare) of \$17,500–30,000, depending on where you go and whether you use bird tour companies or go independently.

**Moderates**

Moderates will take 10–15 international trips in their lifetimes, and they will invest a significant amount of money and time visiting the world's best birding destinations, taking multiple trips to each of the major biogeographic realms.

*The Neotropical Strategy: Ecuador, Brazil, Venezuela, and Mexico*

The Ecuador strategy is identical to that outlined above for dabblers. Brazil is massive and full of birding options, and it requires a more specific plan. A combination of the endemic-rich southeastern Atlantic forest around Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo and a mix of the Pantanal and southern Amazon will be your best

**Garnet Pitta (*Pitta granatina*).** Taman Negara, Malaysia; July 2007. © Sam Woods.



**Brown Sicklebill (*Epimachus meyeri*).** Mt. Hagen, Papua New Guinea; June 2007. © Iain Campbell.



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**Blue-throated Barbet**  
(*Megalaima asiatica*).

Naini Tal, India;  
December 2006.  
© Keith Barnes.

Although the dabbler visits Kenya because of its amazing diversity, that country falls out in the strategy for the moderate because South Africa, Ethiopia, and Cameroon yield a larger cumulative list.

Modern South Africa, with its amazing infrastructure and mega-diversity, offers some of the finest and easiest birding in Africa. The southwestern part of the country contains two habitats found nowhere else: the endemic-rich heath-like fynbos and the semi-desert Karoo, which are among the most interesting floral systems on Earth. South Africa supports 58 endemic and near-endemic birds, more than any other African country, and most can be seen on a three- to four-week trip. Included are sensational species such as Jackass Penguin, Blue Crane, Cape Rock-jumper, and Knysna Turaco. In the country's northeast, South Africa metamorphoses into bush and savanna, where diversity increases dramatically. Spectacular species include storks, vultures, eagles, bee-eaters, hornbills, kingfishers, barbets, sunbirds, waxbills, and bush-shrikes. The icy

*The Afrotropical Strategy: South Africa, Ethiopia, and Cameroon*

bet for a single trip. The wet rainforests along Brazil's southern coast are a birder's delight, and are full of endemics. Spectacular species include a host of endemic antbirds, Swallow-tailed Cotinga, Buff-throated Purple-tuft, and such spectacular tanagers as Green-headed. Just a hundred miles inland, the rainforest is replaced by savanna and gallery forest, with very different birds, including endemics. The Pantanal, a vast wetland system in southwestern Brazil, is famous for huge congregations of birds and mammals. The birding here is laid back, and the sight of your first Hyacinth Macaw will leave you breathless. The Pantanal is easily combined with the southern Amazon basin, where the birding is tougher, but the rewards greater. The Cristalino Jungle Lodge has a mind-boggling bird list of more than 500 species. A combination of these sites is likely to leave you with both a burgeoning Brazilian bird list and a good feeling for this large and diverse country.

Venezuela is another incredibly diverse country. Both Amazonian and Andean ecosystems hold many species that do not overlap with Ecuador. In addition, the arid littoral and coastal ranges, as well as the amazing swamps of the Llanos, yield such fantastic birds as Scarlet Ibis and the amazing Sunbittern. Birding the Guianan forests and the Tepuis combine to add 200–300 species that you didn't get in Ecuador, with a total of 500 species likely in three weeks.

The final piece in the Neotropical puzzle is a visit to Mexico, which supports 1,100 bird species, including nearly 100 endemics; a customized four-week trip could net 550–600 species. Many key areas are easily accessible from the city of Oaxaca. Short trips from the city allow you to see Slaty Vireo in the Oaxaca Valley, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia in the Gulf-slope cloud forests, Keel-billed Toucan in the Gulf-slope rainforests, and Orange-breasted Bunting and Red-breasted Chat in the Pacific-slope thorn-forests. A bit farther away, the Chiapan highlands hold Horned Guan, Pink-headed Warbler, and Resplendent Quetzal. But we can't forget the phenomenal Yucatan Peninsula, which supports not only many incredible birds like Ocellated Turkey, but also the world's most impressive Mayan ruins.

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Benguela Current is a key pelagic birding area, and it's possible to go on a trip where thousands of albatrosses flock around the boat with gannets, shearwaters, and petrels. In three weeks in South Africa, you might see 500 bird species.

Ethiopia has more than 900 species, 65 of which are more easily seen there than anywhere else in the world. It is also the core of several African biomes, including the Afro-tropical highlands, with rich forests, open grasslands, and alpine habitats where you can see the dapper Rouget's Rail, Chestnut-naped Francolin, Spot-breasted Lapwing, and many others. The dry savannas of Ethiopia are also the most accessible on the continent, and this habitat is home to some of the finest avian desert-dwellers in the world, including Stresseman's Bush-Crow, Vulturine Guinea-fowl, and Arabian Bustard. Combined with the highly diverse Rift Valley lakes with mixed mesic woodlands on their fringes, the result is a diverse assemblage of water and woodland birds. Ethiopia is therefore a key African birding destination where you can see more than 500 species in three weeks.

The final Afrotropical destination is Cameroon, which can well deliver more than 500 species in three weeks.

Cameroon probably supports the most diverse forest systems on the continent, having an excellent representation of both lowland Congo Basin and highland forests that hold more than 20 endemics of their own, including the highly desirable Mt. Kupe Bush-Shrike. These forests also support Grey-necked Rockfowl, one of only two species in the family Picathartidae, perhaps the most sought-after of all bird families. With its brightly colored bare skin on the head, its communal, swallow-like, mud-cup nests, and its habit of skulking along the ground to feed, the rockfowl definitely deserves the distinction of being one of the world's oddest birds. Farther north, Cameroon has a wonderful gallery forest-woodland mosaic, as well as some of the best Guinea savanna and broadleaved woodland forest, where days with more than 100 species are regular. In the far north, the Sahel habitat is accessible through Waza National Park, where Egyptian Plover, Black Crowned-Crane, Abyssinian Roller, Barbary Gonolek, and Quail Plover are all likely.

**Crested Berrypecker (*Paramythia montium*)**. Mt. Hagen, Papua New Guinea; June 2007. © Iain Campbell.



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**Red Warbler (*Ergaticus ruber*)**. Jalisco, Mexico; November 2005. © Melanie Dicus.

*The Oriental Strategy: Thailand, Borneo, India, and China (Sichuan)*

A visit to Thailand is a great start for both dabblers and moderates. From the rainforests of the southern peninsula to the high mountains of the north, Thailand has an amazing range of ecological diversity. The ease of birding and travel (not to mention all the great food) makes Thailand an obvious choice for birders and non-birders alike.

Moderates will wish to add in a trip to the montane and lowland forests of Malaysian Borneo. With its 38 endemics, including Whitehead's Trogon, the vivid green Whitehead's Broadbill, and the incomparable Bornean Bristlehead, Borneo is a must for all birders looking to beef up their life lists. In combination with Thailand, you can expect 450–500 species in four weeks of watching spectacular hornbills, beautiful broadbills, glowing pittas, and dazzling pheasants.

The subcontinent of India is the next stop along this birding extravaganza. Supporting 183 species that are more easily seen here than in any other country, India cannot be missed. While sampling tasty curries and observing the amazing Moghul architecture, you will want to combine a trip out to the wetlands of the Gangetic Plain with a foray into the Himalayas. A good strategy is

to include Bharatpur, a world-famous reserve for thousands of wintering waterbirds, and then to journey up into the Himalayan foothills around Naini Tal and the tiger reserve of Corbett National Park. This route will result in around 400 species in just three weeks. Bharatpur offers a host of waterbirds, including storks, herons, and ibises; passerines and raptors also abound in this marvelous area. Up around Naini Tal, the montane birding is riveting, as the giant peaks to the north create an impressive amphitheater in the background. Meanwhile, the passerine flocks hold a dizzying array of barbets, strikingly patterned woodpeckers, fulvettas, minlas, gaudy minivets, cool nuthatches, and pink-hued rosefinches, as well as a possible encounter with one of the world's most amazing mammals, the awe-inspiring Bengal tiger.

Your final stop in the Oriental realm is China. Another massive and diverse country, China is a place in which your efforts are best spent targeting the endemic-rich central province of Sichuan. This "heavenly kingdom" offers some of the finest pheasant viewing in the world, with an amazing 15 species, including the mind-blowing Temminck's Tragopan, as well as White-eared and Golden Pheasants. You will look for the spectacular Firethroat, the rare Black-necked Crane, and the bizarre Hume's Ground-Tit, you will marvel at stunning mountain scenery, and you will enjoy the famed spicy Sichuan cuisine, making this an

**Table 2.** Destinations, number of expected species, number of days, and range of costs for a Moderate.

Destination	# Species	# Days	Ground Cost
<i>Neotropics</i>			
Ecuador	700–800	25 days	\$3,500–5,000
Venezuela	550–650	21 days	\$3,500–5,500
Southeastern Brazil & Pantanal	550–650	21 days	\$4,000–6,000
Mexico	550–650	21 days	\$3,500–5,000
<i>Neotropics Subtotal</i>	<i>1,700–1,900</i>	<i>88 days</i>	<i>\$14,500–21,500</i>
<i>Afrotropics</i>			
South Africa	450–550	21 days	\$4,500–7,000
Cameroon	550–600	21 days	\$5,000–9,000
Ethiopia	500–550	21 days	\$4,000–7,500
<i>Afrotropics Subtotal</i>	<i>1,200–1,400</i>	<i>63 days</i>	<i>\$13,500–23,500</i>
<i>Oriental</i>			
Northern Thailand & Borneo	450–500	25 days	\$4,000–5,500
North-central and Southern India	380–500	21 days	\$3,500–5,500
China (Sichuan)	250–270	15 days	\$3,200–5,000
<i>Oriental Subtotal</i>	<i>900–1,000</i>	<i>61–69 days</i>	<i>\$10,700–15,500</i>
<i>Palaearctic</i>			
China (Beidaihe)	180–250	7 days	\$2,000–3,500
Morocco	250–300	14 days	\$3,500–5,000
<i>Palaearctic Subtotal</i>	<i>350–450</i>	<i>21 days</i>	<i>\$5,500–8,500</i>
<i>Australasia</i>			
Eastern Australia	400–420	21 days	\$4,300–8,500
Papua New Guinea	300–350	18 days	\$6,900–10,000+
<i>Australasia Subtotal</i>	<i>600–650</i>	<i>39 days</i>	<i>\$11,200–18,500+</i>
<b>Lifetime Total</b>	<b>4,600–5,200</b>	<b>272–280 days</b>	<b>\$55,400–87,500+</b>

*Note: The subtotals and lifetime total do not quite add up because of some overlap in the species at the different destinations.*

incredible part of the world to visit. Your trip here should yield more than 270 species.

*The Palaearctic Strategy: China (Beidaihe) and Morocco*

Although the Palaearctic is the least diverse of the world's bird realms, it still deserves considerable attention. Beidaihe is the ultimate eastern Palaearctic migration hotspot. On the coast, not far from Beijing and the Great Wall, Beidaihe commonly produces birds that ABA members fantasize about. Red-flanked Bluetail, Siberian Rubythroat, Siberian Blue Robin, and Siberian Thrush are seen on a daily basis. Beidaihe definitely beats weeks of miserable cold and tin-can meals for the outside chance of just one or two birds on Attu. This is the Palaearctic's version of High Island, Texas, and it is possible to see an 180–220 incredible east Asian species in little more than a week.

The other Palaearctic destination is Morocco, which has a list of about 460 species. The coastal estuaries throng with waterfowl, gulls, terns, and shorebirds, while the towering Atlas Mountains provide homes for just about every temperate bird species in the western Palaearctic. Furthermore, the massive and expansive Sahara Desert offers specialties such as coursers, sandgrouse, and larks.

*The Australasian Strategy: Eastern Australia and Papua New Guinea*

Papua New Guinea is a huge and diverse island that is home to some of the most outlandish and fascinating birds on the planet. The birds-of-paradise, more than 20 of which can be seen on a standard three-week tour, are the most iconic birds of this spectacular island, but there are more than 300 other species that are endemics. These include such improbable birds as the giant Southern Crowned Pigeon and the strikingly bright Flame Bowerbird. The highlands, with the amazing King-of-Saxony Bird-of-Paradise, must rank among the finest birding spots on Earth. A good Papua New Guinea trip will score 300–350 species, more than 200 of which will be new. The trip will probably net 20 species of birds-of-paradise!

Table 2 (p. 70) shows that to amass an impressive 4,500–5,200 species in their lifetimes, moderates would need to spend about 277 days away from home at a lifetime cost of \$52,400–92,500.

**Addicts**

Addicts will probably travel to more than 30 international destinations in their lifetimes and invest a huge amount of money and time in order to see more than 7,000 bird species. In addition to the destinations already mentioned, Peru, Colombia, Argentina, the Caribbean, Madagascar (with its 120 endemics), Uganda, Zambia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia's Northern Territory, and New Zealand would be added to the list. Just a couple hundred thousand dollars more, and that should do it!

I hope these strategies will give you some ideas for expanding your birding horizons outside the ABA Area. One thing's for sure: Whether you're a dabbler, a moderate, or an addict, you're going to have the time of your life!



**Masked Flowerpiercer (*Diglossopsis cyanea*).** Northern Ecuador; December 2005. © Joe Fuhrman.