Another year of tours throughout the Oriental region is about to close, and it is fun to relive some of the great memories and birding experiences again in the newsletter. The Birdtour Asia philosophy has always been to offer the very best birding experience in the region and to that end we still offer the smallest group sizes possible, continually adapt our itineraries to include the best birding areas and most importantly our guiding team are amongst the most experienced in the region, all passionate birders who will go the extra mile to get you the birds you want. You would be surprised how many tour companies are running trips with guides who have little or no knowledge of the destinations, definitely a major consideration when booking a holiday.

Our 2013 tours have produced an exceptional haul of over 2000 species, although as always the quality is what counts! The Birdtour Asia life list now stands at over 2400 species and if there was ever any doubt as to the experience of the Birdtour Asia team, we have now seen 95% of the regions birds!

It's not just the numbers that are important however, it's also about the views and particularly of those many stunningly beautiful birds (and even whole families) that are endemic to Asia. As we have seen such a high proportion of the species of the region we are in a pretty good position to decide on Asia’s top 10 birds! Rob and James decided to come up with their lists, and it wasn’t easy! How would your lists compare to theirs?
Although we tend to concentrate on endemics, there is a multitude of other superb species that we always expect to find and they include some absolute stonkers, Black-and-Yellow Broadbill takes some beating for example.

James has chosen the ground cuckoo as number one as it is such an outrageously unique but beautiful oddity. Anyone who has chased this bird with us will know about the spine-tingling moment you hear that EEEK alarm next to the boat after hearing the distant WOO-HOO for over half an hour! After that, finding the pumping of the tail, followed by jigsaw views, then once every few sightings a pair will come out into full view giving amazing views of what was an enigmatic, extreme rarity when we both visited Borneo for the first time – it was then known as Sunda Ground Cuckoo, lumped with its Sumatran counterpart.

Rob went for the spectacular dancing display of the Western Parotia, one of the most amazing sights in the bird kingdom, not as flashy as the Wilson’s BOP (which also makes the top 10 of course!) but what a mover! The other species are well spread across the whole region, showing just what a diverse range of places and habitats we cover and that all are essential destinations!

We ended 2012 with Mark leading a very successful Philippines custom tour around Luzon, Palawan and the Visayas, then 2013 kicked off with three more Philippines tours, all of which produced an outstanding set of endemics as always. In fact the Philippines, with more endemic birds for its land area than any other country in the world is perhaps the most important world birding destination, and we usually log around two thirds on our scheduled tours!

This year we found 140 endemics on the shorter tour and 150 on the standard three-week tour, but more important were the species we found. The majestic Philippine Eagle, national bird of the Philippines, performed wonderfully although it was a tense wait for it to appear on the first tour! Philippine Cockatoo, Ashy Thrush and Steere’s Pitta were just a few highlights, while the ever-popular Palawan Peacock Pheasant continued to strut his stuff at St. Paul’s and Falcated Ground Babbler gave some of our best ever views.

Owls were a big feature with Giant Scops Owl giving the now customary Birdtour Asia style, with Rob finding the bird in the middle of the night so that everyone could enjoy cracking views having been roused from their beds on Mount Kitanglad. We also had day-time Mantanani Scops Owl on both tours, and the first tour were lucky enough to score not only Philippine Eagle Owl but point blank views of Luzon Scops Owl.

There were bonuses on each tour as always - Mindanao Wattled Broadbill appeared on our first visit to lowland Mindanao, Celestial Monarch on both tours but particularly obliging on the second, and a fine Red-headed Flameback was a rare treat!

The deforestation in eastern Mindanao continues apace and the forest where this Mindanao Wattled Broadbill was photographed was already gone by the next tour. Anyone wishing to look for the likes of the broadbill and Celestial Monarch should get there urgently.

We also ran a very successful Remote Philippines tour visiting lowland Mindoro, the Sierra Madre of Luzon, Cebu, Bohol and Negros. The Critically Endangered Black-hooded Coucal and Mindoro Hornbill kicked things off before a host of babblers and fruit doves were topped by the mythical Whiskered Pitta in Northern Luzon. An unexpected typhoon didn’t stop us getting Visayan Wattled Broadbill, Yellow-breasted Tailorbird and other targets on Bohol, before Black Shama and an amazing daytime Cebu Boobook on Cebu, and a host of endemics on Negros rounded things up, highlighted by Visayan Rhabdornis, Negros Striped Babbler and the stunning Flame-templed Babbler. Owls were again a feature and we found 4 of the 7 recently split endemic boobooks; Mindoro, Luzon, Cebu and Camiguin, and some of us who sneaked in a Philippine Scops in Manila also saw all three of those splits with Everett’s Scops on Bohol and the amazing Negros Scops Owl winning bird-of-the-tour! We have no Remote scheduled for a custom Remote Philippines tour in 2015 may be on the lookout for more people, stay tuned to our website and facebook pages for details, or email us to register interest.

Also early in the year, our annual Oriental Bird Club fundraising trip to Cambodia and Laos again combined the delights of Cambodia with some exciting recent discoveries in Laos. Although bird numbers are low in Laos they do include some very special species, amongst them Sooty Babbler, Limestone Leaf Warbler and the distinctive (although not terrible attractive!) Bald-headed Bulbul which amazingly escaped detection until described as new to science in 2009. In Cambodia we were again able to return to our old stomping ground at Bokor and found the birds as good as ever with Chestnut-headed Partridge, Indochinese Magpie, Blue Pitta and others performing splendidly. The greatest surprise of the tour was seeing a distinctive little tailorbird not far from the capital city, which has since been described as the country’s second true endemic – Cambodian Tailorbird! James’s photo of which even made the main headlines on the BBC website. Mekong Wagtail, displaying Bengal Florican, White-rumped Falcon and typically good looks at White-shouldered and Giant Ibis completed a memorable tour.

Our next Cambodia and Laos tour is scheduled for 1st – 15th February 2015.

Gujarat and Rajasthan in West India lie in a region long neglected by birders but which is rapidly becoming a popular must-visit destination owing to the large number of very rare and continually decreasing subcontinent endemics reliant on the natural grasslands of Central and West India.

The Philippines is full of cool endemics, 234 of them according to the latest IOC World List in fact, and this number is sure to rise over the next few years. Among the funkiest is surely Apo Myna, what a haircut!
James’s favourite - It’s hard to believe that Bornean Ground Cuckoo was once one of the islands most enigmatic birds, its call was unknown and there were only a handful of field sightings. It’s still a very, very tough bird to see but while other tours get lucky once in a while, our record with it is truly enviable!

In January-February on the scheduled tour co-lead by James and Frank we managed a clean-sweep of all but one of the specialities of the region, with pride of place going to the regal Indian Bustard which showed so well. Although we recorded just 299 species the list of megas was impressive; as many as 40 Green Avadavat feeding just metres away, Macqueen’s Bustard in the Little Rann of Kutch with Asiatic Wild Ass providing the backdrop, Hypocolius, 15 critically endangered Sociable Plover just metres away, Sykes’s Nightjar, White-naped Tit, several Crab-Plover, 13,000 Demoiselle Cranes, all swirling around us en-mass at the famous village of Keechan, 35,000 Common Crane flying overhead to roost, Stoliczka’s Bushchat, a last-gasp Mottled Wood Owl suddenly appearing in the spotlight and to finish off, the critically endangered Forest Owlet. Add in some impressive mammals including the majestic Asiatic Lion, and this was a wonderful visit to one of India’s most exciting areas. Our next scheduled tours to West India are 11th – 26th January 2014 and 10th – 25th January 2015 and 10th – 25th January 2016, early booking recommended for this very popular tour!

Borneo is one of our most popular destinations with three thrilling tours this year confirming just why it’s one of the ultimate world birding destinations. In the mountains the ‘Whitehead’s Trio’ again performed and other difficult specialities like Bare-headed Laughingthrush and Everett’s Thrush were on show. Bornean Ground Cuckoo kept up our outstanding record as did the bird everyone must see here – Bristlehead – the islands famous endemic family (seen on 23 out of 24 tours must put us in the premier league for both species!). Special treats included a male Giant Pitta giving prolonged views in March, and the same species appearing in our very last 30 minutes of birding on the summer tour to become our sixth pitta species of that tour, including all the endemics.

Our November tour was an extended custom tour in an attempt to see a larger number of general species – which we did, with 343 species including 45 endemics (depending on your taxonomy, of course!), and the tour was highlighted once again with excellent views of Bornean Ground Cuckoo (surely James will dip this one day?!), Whitehead’s Trogan, and at Danum Valley we encountered all endemic pittas superbly (three of which were on our first day!). As with some of our tours now, we headed over to a peat-swamp forest for the highly localised Hook-billed Bulbul – we’re still the only company that has done this.

There can’t be many keen world birders who haven’t heard of ‘Eaglenest’ and this hot birding destination in the Himalaya is one of the highlights of our North-east India tours. Our scheduled tour this spring confirmed that the reputation is more than justified with highlights including the Bugun Liocichla which first shot Eaglenest to fame when it was discovered in 2006, Ward’s Trogon, Beautiful Nuthatch, Sikkim Wedge-billed Babbler, Long-billed Wren Babbler, Temminck’s Tragopan, Himalayan Monal, critically endangered Bengal Florican and the highly range-restricted Chestnut-backed Laughingthrush. As always there were a few surprises including a White-winged Duck in the incongruous setting of Digboi Oil Fields!

At the same time a custom Eastern Himalaya tour visited a sumptuous combination of Mishmi, Eaglenest and Bhutan. This long-winding tour certainly lived up to expectations, in the Mishmi Hills we picked up the endemic wren babbler and walk-away views of Cachar Wedge-billed Babblers. Dabbling in the lowlands of Assam, Chestnut-backed Laughingthrush, Blue-naped Pitta and Chestnut-winged Cuckoo were added before heading back up into the hills where Fire-tailed Mynorns, Solitary Snipe, male Blyth’s Tragopan, Ward’s Trogon, Beautiful Nuthatch, Sikkim Wedge-billed Babbler, Chestnut-breasted Partridge and our best-ever views of Bugun Liocichla.

A week-long drive through Bhutan may not have been the untouched wilderness we had been expecting due to the horrendous ‘road improvements’ now taking place, but the idilic dzongs, Himalayan Monal, Satyr Tragopans, displaying Wood Snipes in broad daylight, Dark-rumped Swifts and, best of all, a White-bellied Heron made for a wonderful visit to the Land of the Thunder Dragon. If that wasn’t enough, a mornings stop-over in Kathmandu delivered us the country’s only endemic, the supposedly elusive Spiny Babbler! Our next visit to this bird-rich region is 16th April – 3rd May 2015.

Our north-east India tour has opened up a plethora of species which people used to rush to the likes of Bhutan to see. Ward’s Trogon is always one of the most highly-desired species, and with good reason! We still have a 100% record with it on our north-east India tours – 9 out of 9.

Currently the only tour offered by any company to see the little-known Wood Snipe, reliably, is in Sichuan, at a single site. However, on our inaugural tour to Bhutan we found what could turn out to be the largest known population of them – we had views down to 3 metres! We had similar views in Sichuan this year also!

Recently rediscovered in Sichuan we wasted no time in taking an intrepid custom group up to see the Chinese endemic Prezevalski’s Parrotbill, and even finding the first-ever nest and recording the birds undescribed song!
Among the mega endemics that Borneo has to offer, the ‘Whitehead’s Trio’ are among the most desirable. All are tough to find but we found all again on two of three tours this year, including this very obliging Whitehead’s Trogon.

Falcated Ground Babblers (middle-right) offered amazing views this year - our best ever, one of the Philippines best looking endemics but not many get to see them quite this well!

No trip to south-east Asia would be complete without hornbills, with White-crowned Hornbill always a firm favourite on our Sabah tours.

Borneo is surely the best destination for aspiring pitta-hunters and we have a good track record with the endemics such as this cracking Black-crowned Pitta, helped greatly by of small group sizes in Borneo. Besides the endemics we also saw Hooded Pitta, and on two tours the highly desirable Giant Pitta this year! Bottom-right, all at Birghtour Asia admit to having a bit of a soft spot for night-birds and we do very well with them! Philippine Frogmouth is always a favourite on tours.
Since being elevated to family status many have been attracted to the Tibetan Plateau to see Przevalski’s ‘Finch’, formerly known as ‘Pink-tailed Bunting’, it is actually neither a finch or a bunting so how about Przevalski’s Pinkie as a more appropriate name?

Although we didn’t find Tibetan Sandgrouse at the ‘traditional’ site of Er La, we did encounter them on another two occasions and as you can see, the group enjoyed cracking views (middle-left).

An outrageously beautiful gem, that has to be seen to be believed is Stoliczka’s Tit-warbler, a bird found on both our Sichuan and Tibetan plateau tours (middle-right).

On Sumatra, during a search for Red-billed Partridges, with the group stealthily concealed, we were more than surprised when this magnificent Asian Golden Cat appeared on the trail instead! It seems that the cat was probably eyeing the Red-billed Partridges for dinner but they fled up into the trees, offering these outstanding, prolonged views for one of the most surreal but exciting moments of the year!
Moving on to Hokkaido gave opportunities to see many birds in full song that we are more used to seeing skulking around on their wintering grounds, this ‘Lancy’ was a perfect example.

In June Rob, James and Frank took a well-earned holiday to the southern Japanese islands of Ishigaki, Okinawa, Amami and Miyaki-jima with a full clean-up, as expected. The birding was excellent on all islands and highlights included Ryukyu Serpent Eagle, Amami Thrush and Amami Woodcock, Pryer’s Woodpecker, exceptional views and good numbers of Okinawa Rail, Styan’s Gropper and Ijima’s Leaf Warbler. James and Frank then continued to enjoy the delights of spring in Hokaiddo, where it was a delight to be able to study some skulkers which are familiar in their wintering grounds, here singing their little hearts out right out in the open on their summer territories. The abundant Middendorff’s Gropers in roadside rhubarb, Lanceolated Warblers sat motionless, feet away and White’s Thrushes singing away in the open. New birds included Sakhalin Leaf Warbler, Northern Hawk Cuckoo and several Tufted Puffins flying overhead at their last remaining Japanese breeding site. Though the pair of Blakiston’s Fish Owls on a roadside telegraph pole typically stole the show!

Hopefully we can squeeze some Japan tours into our very busy schedule soon – hopefully in the Spring of 2016!

Sichuan is one of our most diverse tours, not only are the birds abundant but it has exciting culture and varied habitats and scenery, and with consistently great food! Our unsurpassed local knowledge again helped us cope admirably with the closure of some regular areas, and both our scheduled and custom tours were a great success. A glance at the final species lists on Frank’s tour reveals specialities like Rufous-headed Robin, Firethroat, Barred Laughingthrush, Sukatchev’s Laughingthrush, and 13 species of galliform including Wood Snipe, Chinese Monal, Golden Pheasants and amazing encounters with Temminck’s Tragopans.

While James’s custom tour also squeezed in visits to Yunnan where Biet’s Laughingthrush, Yunnnan Nuthatch and Moupinia were highlights, and a trek into the mountains of Sichuan for the rare Przevalski’s Parrotbill (where we recorded its undescribed song, and nest!). Also included was Shaanxi for the prized Blackthroat once again, a species whose breeding grounds were only discovered two years ago, and which Birdtour Asia pioneered trips to see. Besides planned custom tours to Sichuan we also have the follow scheduled tours planned; 26th May – 14th June 2014, 25th May – 13th June 2015 and 23rd May – 11th June 2016.

Our traverse across the Tibetan plateau of Qinghai in June produced all of the hoped for goodies with evocative names including Przevalski’s Redstart, Roborovski’s Rosefinch, Kozlov’s Bunting, Szechenev’s Monal Partridge, Tibetan Sandgrouse and many other cool birds. Of course we also had multiple sightings of the all-important Pink-tailed Finch for the family-listers which gave superb close views and spectacular parachute display flight.

After the closure in 2012 of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, including its capital city Lhasa we were thrilled this year that despite a general closure to foreign visitors we were able to secure Tibet permits and enjoy Tibet’s three true endemics; Prince Henri’s Laughingthrush, Giant Babax and Tibetan Eared Pheasant as well as Tibetan Blackbird and the range-restricted Lord Derby’s Parakeet in eastern Tibet.

In July our scheduled Sumatra and west Java tour returned, starting in Java where a combination of coastal wetlands, lowland forest scraps and glorious montane forests meant an endemic-packed first week. Black-banded Barbet, Javan White-eye, Javan Kingfisher, Javan Hawk Eagle, Javan...
One of the biggest surprises on this year’s tour was prolonged views, on several days, of no less than two Blue-faced Rails. This shy and elusive bird has previously been seen by just a handful of birders, and is ever a lifer for Birdtour Asia!

Frequently voted as the best bird in the WORLD (though Rob’s fifth!), Wilson’s Bird-of-Paradise is certainly a mind-blowing bird and our West Papua group certainly weren’t arguing, making it a clear winner as bird-of-the-trip – tour participant Lars Petersson got this fab photo.

Trogon and no less than 6 Javan Cochoa made the headlines. Skipping across the Sunda Straits, Way Kambas had White-winged Duck and some outstanding night-birding, with Oriental Bay Owl and Bonaparte’s Nightjar the best.

The mountains of Sumatra provided a superb finish with 3 Schneider’s Pitta, singing Sumatran Cochoa, Sumatran Wren Babbler, Sumatran Frogmouth, Sumatran Trogon and both endemic whistling thrushes appearing in our first 24 hours on Mount Kerinci. Add in the amazing sight of a Golden Cat chasing Red-billed Partridges into the trees for us to get perfect views, and outrageous views of both Marbled Wren Babbler and Graceful Pitta to complete a brilliant tour.

Our West Papua tour in July and August was expertly guided by Frank and produced excellent views of the many West Papuan endemics and other specialities of the region. Wilson’s Bird-of-Paradise is often acknowledged as one of the best birds in the world and indeed it ran away with the bird-of-the-trip this time around. Other highlights included both Biak and Numfor Paradise Kingfishers, Biak Monarch in Geelvink Bay, Greater Ground Robin, Wattled Ploughbill, McGregor’s Honeyeater, Crested Satinbird and more amid spectacular surrounding of the Baliem Valley and Lake Habemama, Pale-billed Sicklebill and Twelve-wired Bird-of-Paradise in the steamy lowlands at Nimbokrang, Red Bird-of-Paradise and the regal Western Crowned Pigeon at Batanta and Salawati, and Long-tailed Paradigallia, Western Parotia, Mountain and Feline Owlet Nightjars and a hard-fought White-striped Forest Rail in the Arfak Mountains.

Our next scheduled visit to West Papua is 7th September – 3rd October 2015.

The Lesser Sundas followed recent form, starting on Sumba with a complete clean-up including two endemic owls, Orange-crested Cockatoo and Sumba Hornbill. After a diversion to the neglected island of Roti - we are still the only tour company visiting this wonderful island, and no doubt this will change once everyone realises what they are missing out on – with its endemic boobook, fantail and undescribed Phylloscopus. Timor gave the expected Black-banded Flycatcher, Buff-banded Bushbird and Timor Sparrow, and best of all we had further views of the parrotfinch which was discovered during our 2012 tour and which will undoubtedly prove to be a species new to science! Flores weighed in with megas like Flores Monarch, White-rumped Kingfisher, Flores Hawk Eagle, Wallace’s Scops Owl and Bare-throated Whistler which is loud enough to make your ears hurt! We finished as always with Komodo where the immense dragons provided a fitting climax.

Our next departure to the Lesser Sundas is 6th – 27th September 2015.

Alongside the Lesser Sundas, an equally endemic-packed destination is the combination of Sulawesi and Halmahera. Our tour there this year was thrilling throughout, starting with a ‘Sulawesi Brown Flycatcher’ the still-undescribed muscicapa from the island.

Lore Lindu gave us a cracking start including some of the tour highlights like roosting Diabolical Nightjars, Purple-bearded Bee-eater, the all-important Hylocitrea for the family-listers and the big effort of hiking the Anaso track three times was rewarded with a crippling Geomalai. Moving to north Sulawesi added the likes of Maleo, Oberholser’s Fruit Dove, Matinan Flycatcher and Sulawesi Ground Dove, yet all were outshone by the stunning performance from two Blue-faced Rails which were seen on two days, often parading in the open! Halmahera delivered...
One of Sulawesi’s toughest endemics is the enigmatic Geomalia and this year proved no exception. It was down to the determination of our group that scaled the Anaso track no less than three times but did come away with mega views for their efforts!

the goods with all possible night-birds (Moluccan Scrubfowl included here), Purple Dollarbird, Ivory-breasted Pitta and a superb experience again at the Wallace’s Standardwing lek where the birds displayed right overhead. A cracking finish at Tangkoko included day-roosting Ochre-bellied Boobook and three more endemic owls!

We are offering three departures in 2014, two more in 2015 (13th September – 3rd October and 10th – 30th October) and are already taking bookings for 17th July – 6th August 2016.

Following the resounding success of our first Banda Sea Cruise in 2011, Frank took another intrepid group in October to some of the remotest, least visited islands in the Indonesian archipelago. Starting with Tanahjampea Monarch and Blue Flycatcher (only one birder other than the 23 on our tours have seen either species since 1927) on the tiny island, of, you guessed it, Tanahjampea. Following this most of the islands visited would probably need googling to work out exactly where they are on a map – Pantar, Alor, Wetar, Leti, Damar, Babar, taking in such little-known endemics as Damar Flycatcher – again, after being collected is only known from being rediscovered in 2001 during survey-work and subsequently seen during our 2011 cruise. Kisar Friarbird and Wetar Ground Dove along with a whole host of fascinating taxa is in drastic need of a taxonomic revision that will make these islands even more enticing in the future. We finished the tour on Tanimbar, and the final endemic of the tour, Fawn-breasted Thrush showed superbly.

We will be operating the cruise once again in 2014, and although the tour is full already please do express an interest if you wish to do this tour in the future so we can get organising! Unless you have literally months and months of time available, this is currently the only way of seeing all these endemics.

A short custom tour to Timor-Leste in November was a new area for Birdtour Asia, and indeed we are the first bird-tour company ever to visit Asia’s newest country. Timor-Leste was formed in 2002 after 24 years of Indonesian occupation, and before that Portuguese rule. Birding here is sure to become more and more attractive as the numbers of birds in West (Indonesian) Timor continues to decrease with birds like Timor Green Pigeon probably no longer available, and Timor Coucal only found in the easternmost part of the island. During the six-day tour we were struck at just how different the birding was compared to West Timor, which is part of our Lesser Sundas tour. Parrots and pigeons abound and Iris Lorikeet, quite dippable in the west, was easily found within an hour of the capital, Dili. Timor Coucal showed exceptionally well, and we obtained the first field photos of this odd, white coucal. Timor Green Pigeon, listed as endangered, on the other hand left it to the nail-biting end when we eventually located a single bird, phew! We certainly expect to return to this fabulous country as most of other endemics from Timor were also encountered including nesting Timor Imperial Pigeons and over 50 Olive-shouldered Parrots in a single morning!

A highlight of our leaders ‘holiday’ in southern Japan in June were numerous sightings of Okinawa Rail, literally running all over the place!

Another reputedly tough bird to find is Amami Woodcock, this one flew in and landed right beside us at our first attempt! Expect summer tours to Japan to begin shortly!
We have always strived to be leaders in the field, not only adding new and exciting tours but also trying to cram in as many endemics as possible by visiting new sites as they become known. We were the first to visit the Blackthroats after they were discovered and quick off the mark with the likes of Chestnut-eared Laughingthrush in central Vietnam, Przewalski’s Parrotbill in Sichuan, White-winged Ducks in Cambodia, all of those soon-to-be splits (at least 4!) on the island of Roti on our Lesser Sundas tour, Philippine Eagle Owl in the Philippines and we were the first bird tour company to head to Laos for the Bare-faced Bulbul which combined nicely with our Cambodia tours.

Examples such as these prove that we know these areas better than anyone else as we have the confidence and know-how on how to incorporate them without adding extra time to our scheduled tours. In the coming years we plan several more including Hook-billed Bulbul (right) in Borneo and Lombok Battang Flycatcher (middle-left) in Sulawesi.

After our successful exploits there last year we again visited the island of Roti on this year’s Lesser Sundas tour and had a great performance from Roti Boobook, as well as several distinct taxa, currently classed as subspecies but watch this space…!(middle right)

Our Lesser Sundas tours finish visiting the immense Komodo Dragons, the birds on this tour are fantastic but the experience of wandering among these huge beasts almost beats them all. Always one of the big targets in Sulawesi, Purple-bearded Bee-eater rarely disappoint...
2014 sees some exciting new tours making an appearance. The first is the South-east China and Taiwan combination, the former set to receive a lot of attention now that Cabot’s Tragopan, Courtois’s Laughingthrush, Chinese Crested Tern and Reed Parrotbill are all readily available.

James will be running a ‘Grand tour of China’ for a lucky bunch. Starting in Inner Mongolia searching for Jankowski’s Buntings, to Tibet for Lord Derby’s Parakeet, via Reeve’s Pheasant, Cabot’s Tragopan, Chinese Crested Tern, Hainan Peacock Pheasant and Nonggang Babbler! It promises a busy 23-day tour, especially as some 11 internal flights are involved!

Another totally new tour is our ‘Remote Sumatra’ tour, with Sumatran Ground Cuckoo and Sumatran Laughingthrush the most eagerly-awaited endemics we also hope to clean-up on those offshore island scops owls! Also in Indonesia Rob will be leading a Moluku tour, with the potential for some virtually unknown species including Black-chinned Monarch on Boano and Black-lored Parrot on Buru plus a stack of other endemics on Buru, Seram and Kai.

Finally, we will be revisiting the Flores and Banda Sea islands on-board our boat once again, hoping for a repeat of our success in 2011 and 2013 with Tanahjumpea Monarch, Wetar Ground Dove and Damar Flycatcher being the headliners among other goodies. This cruise is currently the ONLY way to see these species without having to spend weeks on end on-board Indonesians notorious passenger ferries...

2015 may seem like a long way off, but time flies faster than a White-throated Needletail and we are already planning several exciting new tours on top of our regular offerings. A three-week north-east India extravaganza will take us across the easternmost Himalaya combining the Mishmi Hills and Assam with the ever-popular ‘Eaglenest’.

We will also be repeating our rather arduous ‘Remote’ Sulawesi tour, where although there might be relatively few birds on offer, there are some really rare gems on offer; Cerulean Paradise Flycatcher, Red-and-blue Lory, Banggai Crow, Togian Boobook and our previous bird-of-the-trip, Bare-eyed Myna.

Looking to the future, we don’t want to give too much away at this point, but we have already started planning some new tours and itineraries to remoter areas of Asia, as well as always looking to improve on our regular scheduled tours as logistics and infrastructure continually improve, enabling us to cover greater distances and in turn, get you more and more endemics and specialities!

Facebook and Twitter

Social media like Facebook and Twitter are a great way for people to follow our tours through regular updates from the field. Facebook is packed with albums of images taken during the tours, including some that can’t be squeezed into the trip reports, and Facebook users are welcome to post comments or ask questions. To keep in touch simply click ‘Like’ to receive all our latest Facebook news or follow us on Twitter @BirdtourAsia.

Season’s Greetings

2013 has been another brilliant year for us all, we have thoroughly enjoyed the tours and look forward to birding with you again soon. We will all be taking a break for Christmas and New Year ready for an exciting 2014 tour schedule which will hopefully include seeking out some long neglected Kashmiri specialities, and innermost Borneo in search of the islands most difficult endemics, while a long-awaited visit to Mongolia in planned for our 2014 summer.