

BIRDMAN

Vacation for the birds

BY TED A. GLOVER

I have written before about how fun it is to travel and search for new birds you have never seen before or to see birds you haven't seen in a long time. A big advantage of being retired is being able to travel and to travel to new and exciting places. This past February, my wife and I were able to take a cruise down through Mexico, Central America and into Ecuador and Peru. The cruise began and ended in San Diego and, since we have relatives there, we decided to drive there and actually begin our "birding expedition" right from our

home in Oregon, making note of every species of birds we saw along the way.

Our first stops were our favorite national wildlife refuges in northern California—Sacramento and Colusa. Both of these areas had an unusually large number of waterbirds this season due, I think, to the unusually cold and dry weather in the Northwest during November, December and January when so many northern birds are heading south. There were exceptionally large flocks of snow geese and white-fronted geese, as well

as northern pintail ducks and northern shoveler ducks.

The birdlife around the San Diego area is always plentiful and this year was no exception. Along the flood control channel at Ocean Beach, we saw plenty of brown pelicans, willets, marbled godwits, whimbrels, and even a little blue heron. By the time we left San Diego for our cruise, our bird count was already at 136.

We had arranged via the Internet to have a local English-speaking guide at several of our ports of call beginning in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Local guides know the best places close to the port where you can find a good variety of local birdlife—the cost is just about equal to the cost of the shore excursions offered by the cruise line, and you avoid the busloads of people! Our favorite new bird in this area was the beautiful Rufous-capped warbler.

Along the Pacific coast of Central America, we stopped in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. The birdlife, as you can imagine, is prolific in this part of the world. We particularly enjoyed seeing so many warblers here for the winter that make their way north to our area in the spring, including the Wilson's, yellow, Thompson's, black-throated gray, and Nashville. By the time we left Central

America, our bird count had reached 244, including 19 birds we had never seen before.

Our trip to Peru included a stopover of three days, so we arranged for a guide to take us out for two full days around the Lima area. This was the highlight of our trip since we had never been to Peru. As our ship pulled into the harbor, we were greeted by hundreds of Inca terns, a bird endemic to Peru with a sooty plumage, long dark tail, vibrant red bill and legs, and spectacular white tufts. We saw 36 new birds while visiting the area around Lima, including the giant Peruvian pelican, the croaking ground dove, the colorful white-cheeked pintail duck and even the Humboldt penguin.

By the time we left South America and headed back to San Diego, our count had reached 300. We made a few stops in Mexico on our way back picking up a few more species and bringing our total count to 317. What a great adventure!

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Photo above: Rufous-capped warbler (<http://ibc.lynxeds.com>). Photo at right: Humboldt penguin (<http://en.wikipedia.org>).



Folks, this is normal!

BY DELLA MERRILL

(Author's note: This article was inspired by Joel Salatin's new book, *Folks, This Ain't Normal: A Farmer's Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World*. Salatin is a third-generation alternative farmer from Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.)

There's nothing like getting your kids outside in the dirt, among the flowers, nose to nose with farm animals, walking energetic dogs, sowing vegetable seeds, all the while learning how to collaborate, work as a team and experience the joy of meaningful work.

Children today spend way too many hours in front of video games and television; most studies report 25 hours a week or more. Home chores are great, but having youth volunteer in the greater community builds their self-esteem and helps them understand the world from other points of view. Why not give them the opportunity to turn some of their unproductive video hours into something real, where they connect and work alongside other people doing work that is meaningful, gratifying and truly important.

Sanctuary One offers just this kind of opportunity. There is much to be done on the farm: working with animals, cleaning the barn, helping in the garden, moving hay and a whole array of other jobs. Participating in life on the farm builds camaraderie as it creates a sense of personal satisfaction and accomplishment.

Last fall, for example, a whole class of second graders, working together, picked up all the irrigation pipes in our main pasture. It took four kids to pick up one pipe, but they were steady and determined and would not stop until the job was done. All the while their laughter and enthusiasm was contagious.

Another big job we ask of our visitors is to show our many rescued and abused animals that humans can be kind, loving and respectful. By and large, the animals in our care have not experienced humans in this way. So it's a big responsibility of our visitors to participate in the healing of our animals, building our animals' sense of trust and confidence in humans. This is meaningful work that benefits both the animals in our care and the humans who are given this opportunity to interact with them.

Working in the garden is another important and never-ending source of joy, discovery and work to be done. Gardening teaches balance, it teaches us about where our food comes from and what it takes to produce it. It teaches us the importance of healthy soil and what it takes to create it. It teaches us about our profound dependency on a healthy environment.

Participating in life on the farm helps us to understand—and more importantly feel—the interconnectedness of all things. Our culture increasingly divides humans and nature. The bigger the divide, the less



we care what happens outside our picture window. And yet we all know that we cannot exist long in an unhealthy world. Let's give our youth a chance to feel that connection, to learn to value it, and hope that in the end they will be motivated to protect it.

If you want a hands-on experience while touring Sanctuary One, the last Saturdays of June, July and August have been set aside for just this reason. Join us for a hands-on day at the farm. Participants seven years and older are invited; children under 18 must be accompanied by an

adult. The work will vary depending on what is needed. We ask that you bring with you a sense of awe, a willingness to be flexible, and a commitment to work hard.

Hands-on tours are offered June 30, July 28 and August 25. Regular farm tours are offered most Wednesdays and Saturdays. For reservations, please call 541-899-8627.

See you at the farm!

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