



Wildwings

IN SEARCH OF SPOON-BILLED SANDPIPER

SPECIAL OFFER! 5% DISCOUNT if booked and deposited by 31/10/11!!

With its unique spatulate-shaped bill, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper is surely one of the world's most extraordinary shorebirds and whilst Wildwings have run a number of highly successful trips to see this species on its wintering grounds in Thailand, very few people have had the privilege of watching it on the breeding grounds in the far east of Siberia. This, however, is precisely what this special trip is aiming to achieve.

With the world population seemingly in freefall and now thought to number less than 200 pairs, this voyage is a genuine collaboration between our good friend Rodney Russ and his team at Heritage Expeditions, Birdlife International and the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Taskforce.

One of the key goals of the trip is to genuinely help in saving this critically endangered bird and as well as visiting Meinypil'gyno, the main monitored breeding site for the species, participants will also spend part of the expedition exploring the remote Chukotka coastline looking for unknown breeding sites.

Despite being one of the rarest birds in the world, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper is very specific over the type of habitat it requires and working with three members of the Recovery Taskforce, the 2011 expedition made ornithological history by discovering an important new breeding area for this icon species. Wildwings leader, Chris Collins, and client Roger Stansfield were part of the ground party who found the birds and it is difficult to think of a bigger birding highlight one could have than this!

The 2012 trip will follow a similar itinerary, albeit checking other bays along the vast length of the Chukotka coastline, and there are genuine hopes that more important discoveries will be made.

The scenery in this region is truly stunning with snow capped mountains, active volcanoes and alpine meadows, however, the potential species list is simply mouth-watering. As well as Spoon-billed Sandpiper, we stand an excellent chance of seeing many other waders including Mongolian Plover, Grey-tailed Tattler, Far Eastern Curlew,

Great Knot, Red-necked and Long-toed Stints and Rock Sandpiper. The area is also rich in alcids and other seabirds and the 2011 expedition saw Spectacled, Brunnich's and Pigeon Guillemots, Whiskered, Crested, Parakeet and Least Auklets, Tufted and Horned Puffins, Ancient and Kittlitz's Murrelets, as well as Laysan Albatross, Red-legged Kittiwake, Pacific Diver, Short-tailed Shearwater, Fork-tailed Storm-petrel and both Red-faced and Pelagic Cormorants.

The landings were also extremely productive with the star bird surely being one of the world's ultimate raptors, the Steller's Sea-eagle, of which an incredible sixty individuals were seen over the course of the voyage! With the supporting cast including Steller's and King Eiders, Harlequin Duck, Sandhill Crane, Pacific Swift, Buff-bellied, Red-throated and Pechora Pipits, Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler, Lanceolated and Dusky Warblers, the recently split Kamchatka Leaf Warbler, Red-throated Flycatcher, Siberian Rubythroat, Bluethroat, Dusky Thrush, Grey-crowned Rosy Finch, Pine Grosbeak and Oriental Greenfinch, those on the trip saw an excellent range of Eastern specialities.

The expedition also provides some fantastic opportunities to see some exciting mammals with the 2011 sightings including Arctic Fox, Brown Bear (35+ individuals), Pacific Sea Otter, Walrus, Steller's Sea-lion, Northern Fur Seal, Larga, Ringed, Ribbon and Bearded Seals, Baird's Beaked Whale, Orca, Dall's Porpoise, Beluga, Sperm, Northern Minke, Grey, Northern Right and Humpback Whales, Arctic Ground-squirrel, Kamchatka Marmot and Mountain Hare.

Depending on your flight arrangements, you may have time to stay in Petropavlovsk and/or Anadyr pre and/or post cruise and we can book hotels and birding excursions in both.

Itinerary

- Day 1: Arrive Petropavlovsk and overnight group hotel.
- Day 2: Transfer from hotel in Petropavlovsk to board the vessel and sail.
- Day 3: Zhupanovo River, Kamchatka Peninsula. Zodiac cruise for nesting Steller's Sea Eagles and then ashore searching for Long-toed Stint, Lanceolated Warbler and Yellow-breasted Bunting.
- Days 4&5: Two days in the Commander Islands. Visit the community of Nikolskoye where we will look for Rock Sandpiper, Pechora Pipit and Glaucous-winged Gull. Zodiac cruise for Parakeet Auklet and Brunnich's Guillemot. Explore further east for Horned Puffin, Red-faced Cormorant, Grey-crowned Rosy Finch, Pacific Sea Otter and Baird's Beaked Whale.
- Day 6: Karaginsky Island. An afternoon landing, with opportunities to see an excellent range of waterfowl, waders and passerines including Pacific Golden Plover, Red-necked Stint, Dusky Warbler and Buff-bellied Pipit.
- Day 7: Verkhoturova Island and Goven Peninsula. A morning ashore on an island where there are some vast seabird colonies including Tufted Puffins and Brunnich's Guillemots. Good numbers of Steller's Eiders have also been seen here previously. In the late afternoon, zodiac cruise the Goven

- Peninsula for Brown Bears and sea ducks such as King Eider, Black and Stejneger's Scoters and Harlequin Duck.
- Day 8: Tintikun Lagoon and Olyutorskiy Bay. Explore a spectacular lake in the morning with the chance of Aleutian Tern and other seabirds later in the day.
- Days 9&10: Chukotka coastline. Two days to explore isolated bays looking for new breeding sites for Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Other species we could encounter include Gyrfalcon, Sandhill Crane and Pechora Pipit.
- Day 11: Bukhta Natalia. A spectacular alpine walk where Bluethroats breed and the chance of seeing the poorly known Kamchatka Marmot.
- Days 12&13: Meinyopil'gyno. The main monitored Spoon-billed Sandpiper breeding site. We hope to be able to take all participants to at least one territory although viewing is likely to be at a minimum of 25 metres. This area is rich in wildlife and we could also see Emperor Goose, Beluga and Grey Whale.
- Day 14: Cape Navarin. This coastline is rich in marine mammals and we will look for Walruses and Grey Whales. There is also a chance of finding Kittlitz's Murrelet and Least Auklet.
- Day 15: Anadyr. Disembark and transfer to the city or airport.

Please note: All itineraries are subject to weather, local conditions and final approval by the relevant Russian authorities.

Voyage information

Dates: 24th June – 8th July 2012

Leader/s: Chris Collins and ship's expedition team.

Cost:

Sharing a triple basic (upper & lower berths)	£4559
Sharing a twin basic (lower berths)	£5249
Sharing a twin with facilities (upper and lower berths)	£5625
Sharing a superior twin with facs. (lower berths)	£5969
Sharing a suite with facilities from (beds)	£6249

Deposit: 25%

Prices based on £1 = US\$1.6

Price includes: Voyage with accommodation as booked, including all meals, tea/coffee, shore excursions, lectures and services of WildWings leader/s and the expedition team, day by day bird and mammal checklist. Pre-cruise hotel night with breakfast and dinner (twin share). Group transfers airport hotel, hotel to ship, ship to airport.

Price excludes: Landing fees and port taxes (currently US\$500, payable onboard the ship), return economy class flights from approx £1155 (London – Petropavlovsk, Anadyr – London), other pre-cruise hotel nights if applicable, post-voyage accommodation if

required, travel insurance, onboard gratuities (suggest US\$7 per day), Russian visa (c£90) and other drinks.

Contact us for the ship's colour brochure. 2011 voyage report and species list due late July.