

The Hargrove Annual Report for 2010

This was an eventful year for us, including a wedding, a near-death experience, a birding year on four continents, and grandchildren growing even cuter and smarter. The end of the year finds us in good health, enjoying retirement, and ready for more of the same, but without the wedding.

Claire and Ron Get Married



The big event of the year was a California wedding as Claire married Ron Ricci and, to the astonishment of all, changed her name. She is still “Dr. Hargrove” at the hospital, but the rest of the time, she now goes by Hargrove Ricci. Not to be outdone, Ron changed his name as well, so they are both Hargrove Ricci, without any hyphens.

Planning was intense, with Claire and Killen, the professional planner, doing most of the work. We made a special trip in March for Kiera’s birthday, and to help make decisions about the wedding. In June, we drove out to the Bay Area, taking four days with a bit of birding along the way. We stopped to visit friends in Tucson that we’d met on our Antarctica cruise (see below) and even managed a lifer during a brief stop in New Mexico.

Festivities began on Thursday with a traditional Hargrove-style rehearsal dinner, complete with a slide show of the happy couple from an early age to the present. (The PowerPoint presentation used is on the web site, Hargrove.org/2010.) After Friday’s rehearsal, we had an even bigger party to celebrate Ron’s birthday. Claire gave him a chain saw and protective gear to use while working on the property, *Rancho Relaxo*, near Philo, in Mendocino County not far from The Apple Farm, site of the wedding.

Claire recruited a friend, Ligaya to officiate at the beautiful service. Ron’s nephews served as ring and vow bearers; Kai and Kiera scattered flowers. Following the meal and a great reception, we had the usual series of speeches and toasts. Ron’s best man confided that Ron had told him the morning of the wedding, “I think Claire is going to go thru with it.” Claire said that June 12th was the “happiest day of my life.”

On Sunday morning, we assembled one last time for a brunch, where Charles presented his traditional quiz. If you think you know about Ron, Claire, or the two of them, you can try your hand on the quiz on the web site. We drove home by way of Colorado, visiting friends along the way. We saw our former foster daughter, Rosalind and her family. Rosalind has been having many medical problems this year. We’re hoping she will feel better soon. Meanwhile, her brother, Bubba, lives in Missouri with wife Jenny and adorable daughter, Becca.

Jim and Linda Go A-Roaming

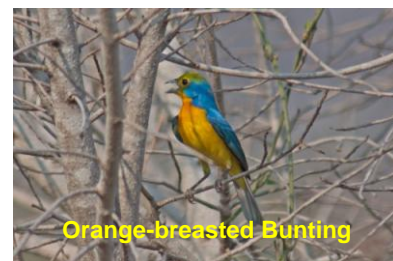


Freed from the strictures of working, we arranged our year to be gone about half the time. We spent much of the time with our frequent traveling companions, Jenny and Terry Cloudman. Jenny is one of our birding converts. As she tells it, “I said I’d like to go with them sometime. They said, ‘We’ll pick you up at 5:30 a.m.’ We went to the sewage ponds.” Any experienced birder will tell you that sewage ponds are great sites. Terry meanwhile, serves as photographer for our expeditions, supplementing Jim’s offerings on occasion, as well as posting his own shots online.

We began the year visiting Antarctica, starting in Ushuaia, Argentina, where we spent a day at the nearby National Park before boarding the *Plancius*, our home for the next two weeks. We visited the Falklands, which we found more English than England itself, were caught in a storm for a day and half, almost froze on South Georgia Island, and finally set foot on the Antarctic continent, our seventh. Full details are on the web site.

The Cloudmans joined us for a short trip to Pico Bonito, in Honduras, with Granny and Flo, as well as a Mexican Road Trip. We postponed the latter last year due to the Swine Flu kerfuffle. In Mexico, in addition to some endemic birds and a *very local rattlesnake*, we saw a country hit hard by the economic downturn.

Our **Big Trip™** for the year was a six-week tour of southern Africa. We started with a visit to Namibia, Botswana, and Zambia, which lived up to our high expectations. The highlight of that part of the trip was undoubtedly the view of two leopards *mating* in a tree in the Moremi Game Reserve in Xakanaxa, Botswana.



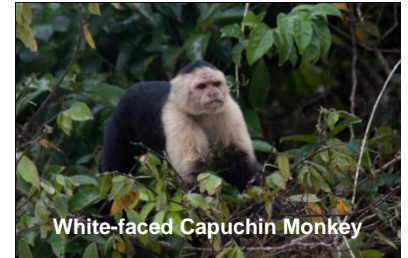


Male Leopard in a Tree

Since we were already so far from home, we added three weeks in South Africa. We spent one week in the Cape area. In Kruger, we had a close, and very improper, view of a mother cheetah with two cubs gorging on a Common Duiker. Our driver, a park employee, left the road and drove within 10 meters of the animals, warning us to keep quiet about it. So much for that! On the trip, we tallied 535 species of birds as well as 75 species of mammals, including our *first* Elephant Shrew (*Petrodomus tetradactylus*). See hargrove.org/2010 for details.

We still had more trips planned: a short week's visit to Panama with Granny and Flo. The canal is fascinating, both historically and technically, and the country seems to be in much better shape now than when we last visited. We were treated to great views of White-faced Capuchins during a boat ride on Gatun Lake, and the first look ever at a Strawberry Poison-dart Frog on an island in Bocas del Toro.

We managed a quick trip to New York City to visit some old friends and relatives. First, we stopped off in Northampton, MA, to see Linda's cousin, Leslie Fuller. Then on to the Big Apple, where we saw three plays and one ballet, ate at several good restaurants, and stayed at a quaint, European-style hotel in the heart of Greenwich Village. *Billy Elliot* and the 50th anniversary show of the *Alvin Ailey Dance Troupe* were especially outstanding. We left town before the blizzard hit, but still found the Northeast cold and dark.



White-faced Capuchin Monkey

Christmas in California



Special Delivery!

With our children and grandchildren in the Bay Area, we naturally headed to California for Christmas. We returned to *Rancho Relaxo*, aka *Purple Haze*, to see how work on the *cabin* was progressing. The cabin, a nice two-bedroom, one bath bungalow, held everyone except Amy for a weekend visit. For the adults, the highlight of our time there was a lesson in mushrooming from Ryan, a local expert. Kai and Kiera found the large box a mattress had come in much more fun. Every adult received at least one *special delivery* package and Kai slept in the box at night.

We prepared an early Christmas Dinner (we had several) at Claire and Ron's condo featuring wild Oyster Mushroom fritters as an appetizer, followed by a vegetarian meal with Jim's Eggplant and Shrimp casserole as the main dish. The next day, Charles and



Kai with new dinosaur hat

the kids met us at the California Academy of Sciences, a fabulous place for kids and adults both. When Linda pointed to some animals in the Madagascar exhibit and said, "Look, Kiera, turtles," Kiera immediately corrected her, "Those aren't turtles, Nana, they're tortoises." Of course, she was correct.



Oyster Mushrooms

Claire and Ron flew to Virginia for Christmas with Ron's family, leaving us in charge of her condo and cat Princess Moonbeam. We ate another Christmas Dinner, on Christmas Eve at Amy and Charles's before moving to Berkeley for our final Christmas Dinner the next day at the home of Amy's Mother, Mormor. On Sunday, we squeezed in a Christmas Bird Count in Marin County, where we failed to see the Varied Thrush yet again. We had already participated in the Mad Island Matagorda County count, which will probably be the top count again.

We hope that your year has been fulfilling. Best wishes for 2011.