

# 'Birdman' nearing species seen record

By Francesca Fontana  
The Register-Guard

EUGENE (AP) — Ever since avid birdwatcher Noah Strycker read the Guinness Book of World Records long ago, he knew he wanted to set a world record.

Growing up with a fascination of birds, Strycker considered embarking on a yearlong trip to break the world record for most bird species seen in one year.

And now, the Eugene native is nearing his goal. As of earlier this week, Strycker said he has seen 4,018 species of birds, approaching the previous record, set by British couple Ruth Miller and Alan Davies in 2008, of 4,341 species. There are an estimated 10,000 bird species worldwide.

The idea for a global trip came into focus as Strycker hiked the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail in 2011, during which he learned how to pull off an elaborate travel project, Strycker said from Tanzania in an email interview this week.

"Slow and steady does it, walking — or birding — every single day," Strycker said. "And packing very light."

Strycker has been bird watching on every continent. He began his expedition on Jan. 1 in the Antarctic.

After visiting South America, Mexico, the United States — including back home in Oregon — and Europe, Strycker is now making his way through Africa, with plans to head to Uganda after leaving Tanzania. From Africa, he plans to travel through India, Asia and Australia before returning home next year.

While Strycker was motivated by the world record, he said he also wanted to meet

other "birders" from around the world. He said he likes to think that birding has no borders. "Unlike us, birds need no passports," he said.

"So far, I've found that birders everywhere — from the Amazon rainforest to Ghana to Oregon — have more similarities than differences," he added.

Strycker said he has a "most-wanted bird" for every new region he visits.

"Maybe the most prized bird so far was a harpy eagle, which I saw on a nest in South America before the end of January," Strycker wrote in his email. "Harpies have feet the size of dinner plates and eat monkeys."

To track his sightings, Strycker said he uses a free Web-based program called eBird, operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, which runs as an app on his iPhone and updates to Cornell's database of bird populations.

Strycker said he studies bird field guides and carries electronic field guides, in addition to taking lots of bird photographs in order to identify his sightings.

"This year, I am birding every day with local people who know the birds in their area very well — and we confer on the IDs," he said.

The eBird app also allows reviewers to question sightings that might be unusual or improbable, he said.

"Bird watching is only hard when I can't get out to do it!" Strycker wrote. "Like a true addict, I would love to bird every single day, all day long."

Strycker is traveling light, carrying only a 40-liter backpack. He estimates his total expenses will be \$60,000 to \$80,000. He is paying for his trip though a book contract

he has with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and a blogging contract with The National Audubon Society. He blogs about the birds he finds and about his preparations for the trip. His book, which should be released in 2017, will detail his travels.

After Strycker finished the Pacific Crest Trail four years ago, he said people asked if he would plan another trek, but he felt he was "sort of done with long-distance hiking."

"Birding is different," Strycker said. "I'll always be itching to get out there."

**"Birding is different. I'll always be itching to get out there. — Noah Strycker"**

"Birds are accessible, beautiful, musical, and somewhat mysterious — and, for me, the game of finding and listing them never gets old," Strycker said.

While Strycker expects to set the world record, "Records are made to be broken," he said. A Dutch birder named Arjan Dwarshuis has announced he will try for the record in 2016.

"I wish him the best of luck," Strycker said.

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