

A stylized, layered landscape illustration. The foreground features rolling green hills in various shades of green, with a dark brown path winding through them. On the left, there is a green tree with rounded foliage, a purple flower, and a cluster of orange flowers. A small red and white bird is flying in the upper left. The background consists of light blue and white wavy bands representing a sky or distant hills.

# Planning Your Big Trip!

Tips from savvy birders

# Travel Experts!



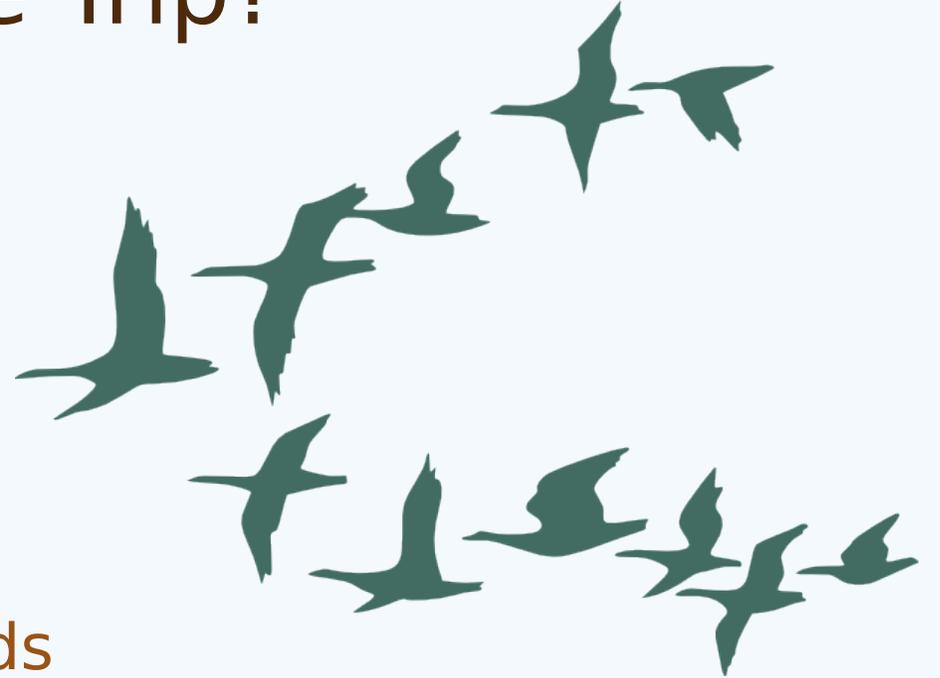
Don Jones



Martin Selzer

# What is the Purpose of the Trip?

- Chase a specific bird
- Add to your life/ABA/state list
- Witness a spectacle
- Catch a migration
- Photograph and spend time with birds
- Explore an area



# You Can Go Your Own Way

- Professional Tour Company
- Tour planned by a club
- Shared Expense with a group
- Group Trip planned by a friend
- Go on your own



# Considerations:

- How much \$\$ can you spend?
- How much time can you spend?
- What is the pace of the trip?
- What are the health and safety concerns?
- Are there travel restrictions such as visa required?



# Professional Tours

- Time of year, itinerary set
- Hotel, meals, transportation included
- Pros know how to get the birds
- Size of the group may be a concern
- Expense
- Many tour companies to choose from



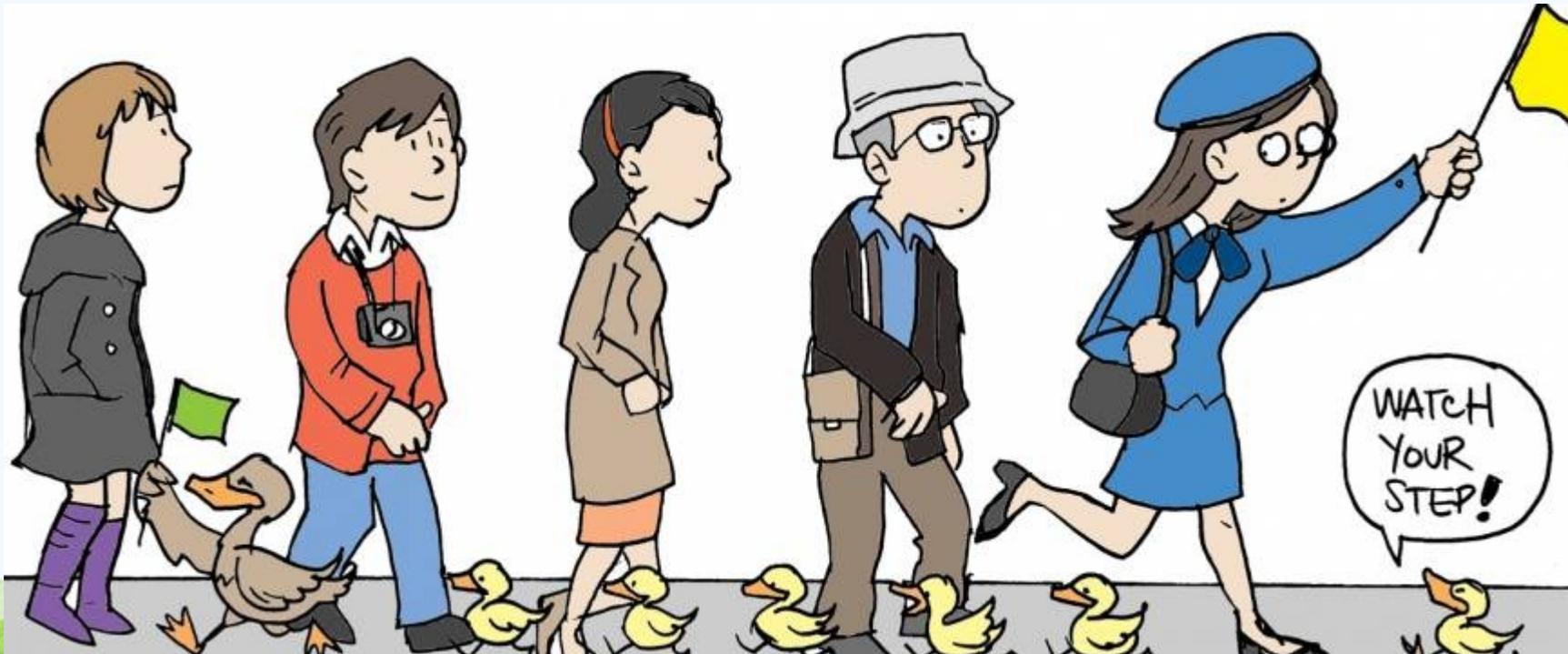
# Group Trip with a Club

- Club sets itinerary and timing
- Usually a large group with special offer



# Shared Expense or Small Group Trips

- Finding others with a Shared Purpose
- Who will coordinate and run the trip?
- Is the leader expert in the area?



# Planning Your Own Trip (Freewheelin')

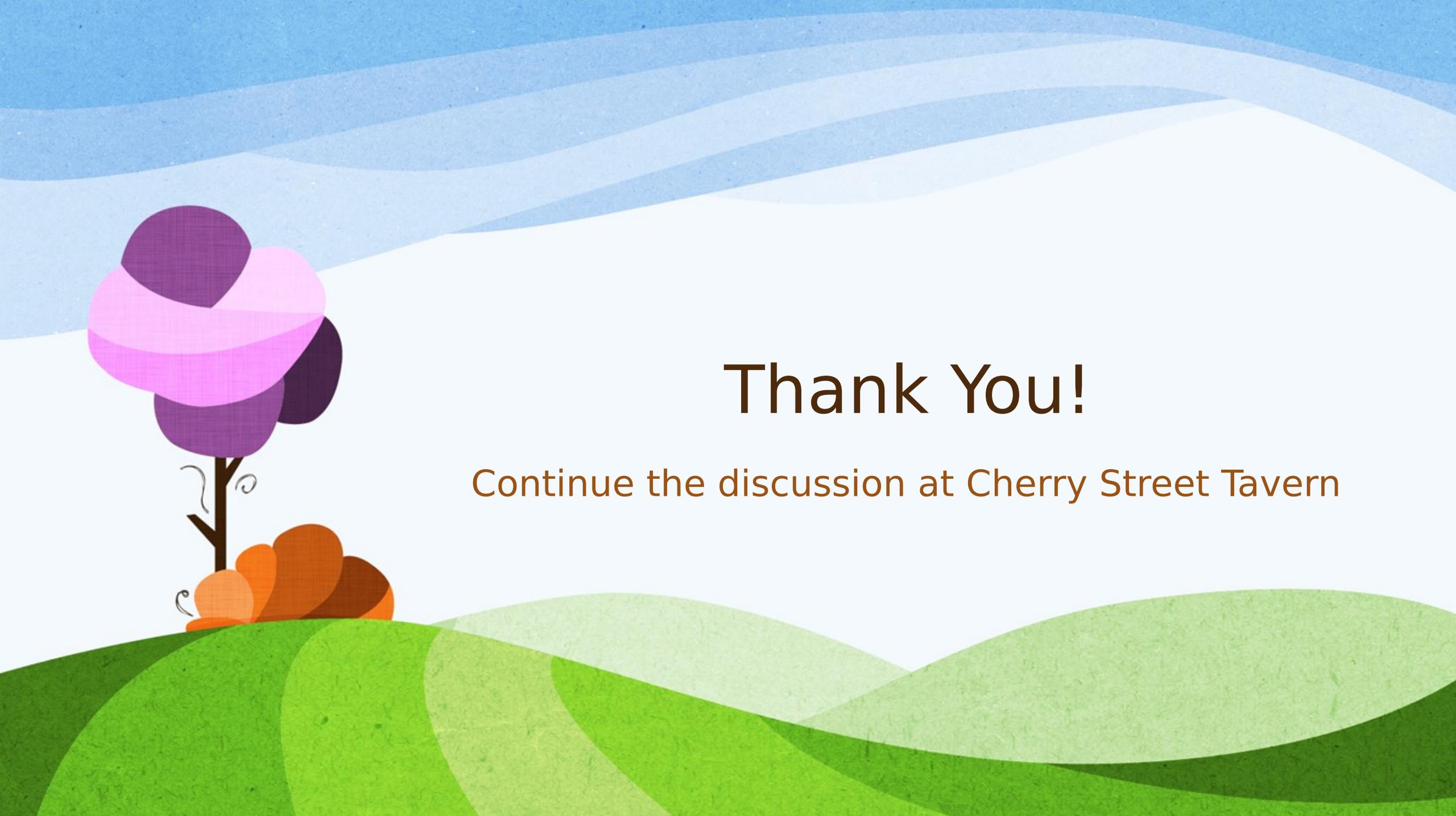
- Flexible
- Half the fun is planning and researching the trip
- Hire a guide when needed
- Trade-off could be missed target birds
- May go over budget



**Who Decides What?**

Type of Trip	Who Decides What?				Size of the Group
	Specific Birding Itinerary	Lodging, Meals, Transportation Arrangements	Cost	Duration of Time Spent at Each Birding Location	
Professional Tour Company	Company	Company	Company	Company	Usually large; some trips need a quota to go
Tour Arranged by Club or Group (i.e. DVOC; Audubon Societies; etc.)	Club/Group	Club/Group	Club/Group with some negotiation based on number of participants	Club/Group	Usually large
Private Tours (self organized; everyone shares equally in ground transportation costs**)	Organizer(s)	Organizer(s)	Organizer(s)	Organizer(s)	Whatever the organizer(s) dictate
Modified Private Tour* (self organized)	Organizer(s)	Participants	Organizer and Participants	Organizer and Participants	Whatever the organizer(s) dictate
Private Tours (professionally arranged)	General Area-Participant; Specific Locations-Company	Company	Negotiable but ultimately Company decides	Company with input from Participant	Up to the professional tour company; cost often a factor in cost
Going It Alone	You alone (or with help from Lodge or hired guide)	You	Negotiable but ultimately You decide	You and hired guide jointly	One or two (perhaps more if a family)
like self-organized private tour but others can join or leave at any point of the tour and make their own transportation and lodging arrangements, and meals if they wish					
air costs are usually separate from ground transportation costs for all types of trips					

Your Purpose?	Cost	Length of Tour	Time of the Year for Tour	Pace of Tour	Safety	Other Considerations
Chase a specific bird	A generally expensive, and should be for a quality tour since everything is done for you; remember Martin's axiom "cheap is cheap"	Dependent mostly on your time availability and financial situation	Consider the temperature and potential weather; this will also determine how much and type clothing/footwear you need to bring	Do you prefer a fast pace to see the most birds (often requires a frequent change of accommodations to visit diverse habitats)?	From crime: tour companies or guide knowledge provide safest experience.	Do you want to combine birding with some other pursuit? Perhaps visiting nearby historical or cultural sites (i.e. museums, historical landmarks, etc.); some other sites can also be excellent birding locations (Mayan ruins in Belize)
Maximize your life birds	B somewhat less than A especially if large group	Do you get "birded out" after a period of time?	Many areas have a dry and wet season. Rain or showers may lessen the amount of time you can actually bird, but lodging rates are often substantially lower in wet (often called "green") season	Is a more relaxed pace more your style. If a professional tour, ask the tour company or organizer of a private tour	From disease: Again tour companies/guides can advise. The CDC can provide immunization information for various regions	Is a visa required for foreign trip in addition to your passport?
Explore an area more thoroughly	C can vary greatly depending on type of accommodation (e.g. camping vs. hotel); meal type (e.g. restaurant or picnic)			Consider your physical ability; particularly as you age you may not be able to keep up with others on a tour	Take medical supplies: an antidiarrhea; antibiotic ointment for scrapes and cuts; prophylactic for malaria and other possible diseases in the area visited	For your first foreign trip it is probably better to use a Type A, B, or E trip; this can also be the case for a domestic trip although with e-Bird it is less so than in the past where only limited area guides were available for planning
Photograph; more time specific in a specific location is obviously best; are there feeders or other features that attract birds (i.e. fountains, etc.)	D like C but participants have more control				For foreign visits, it is best to drink only bottled water; consider the source for ice and other items that may contain unbottled water	How much prep time are you willing to spend? Professional guides have the skill and knowledge (especially bird voice recognition) you are unlikely to attain even with long prep times.
Sound record; consider the size of the group	E likely more than A assuming this is just a small number of participants (2 to 4) but can be less if only local guides are used					Laundry (how many changes to pack?); usually a separate charge if available at all
Witness a migration	F can be anywhere in the mix but you have the final say on all costs					On trips where you don't know everyone (especially ones with large groups), there can be jerks but in my experience this is not common but will occur occasionally; simply be prepared for someone to jump in front of you just as you get the bird in focus or hog the group scope



# Thank You!

Continue the discussion at [Cherry Street Tavern](#)